

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICS: CASE
STUDY ALBANIA

by

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Abstract

This research is about the Albanian youth and their engagement in Albanian politics. The significance of this study is to describe the forms that Albanian youth participation in politics and also to compare the Albanian youth engagement with the one of the Croatia.

The main research question of this study is “how does Albanian youth engages in politics?” The significance of this study is to describe the forms that Albanian youth participates in politics and also comparing between one (of youth forum of the political parties, or directly an activist on a higher level; secondly is during election times by voting and convincing others to vote for their political parties; thirdly is in general, just following the latest developments in politics; and fourthly is engaging in “civic” duties.

The results of the interviews made with 10 young people of each of four main political parties, respectively The Democratic Party, The Socialist Party, The Socialist Movement for Integration, and The New Democratic Spirit show that the Albanian youth is active in youth forums and the political parties that they are in represent their ideals.

The study suggests that youth should be engaged more because they have potential and they have a vital importance in political decision making of Albania.

Keywords: Youth, Political Participation, Political Party, Albania

Abstrakti

Ky studim është për rininë shqiptare dhe përfshirjen e tyre në politikën shqiptare. Rëndësia e këtij studimi është për të përshkruar mënyrat që rinia shqiptare përfshihet në politikë dhe gjithashtu për të krahasuar përfshirjen e rinisë shqiptare me atë kroate.

Pyetja kryesore që do të ndiqet është “si përfshihet rinia shqiptare në politikë?” Hipoteza e kërkimit është që rinia shqiptare merr pjesë në politikë duke pasur interesat e tyre personale. Nga gjetjet, kuptohet se rinia shqiptare merr pjesë në politikë në katër forma: fillimisht duke qenë anëtarë të forumeve rinore të partive politike ose direkt aktivë në një nivel më të lartë; së dyti gjatë kohës së votimeve duke votuar, së treti në përgjithësi duke ndjekur zhvillimet më të fundit të politikës dhe së katërti duke qenë pjesë e jetës civile.

Nga rezultatet e intervistave të kryera tek dhjetë të rinj nga katër partitë kryesore politike, respektivisht Partia Demokratike, Partia Socialiste, Lëvizja Socialiste për Integrim dhe Fryma e re Demokratike është se ata janë aktivë në forumet rinore dhe partia që ata bëjnë pjesë përfaqëson idealet e tyre.

Studimi sugjeron se rinia duhet të përfshihet më shumë, sepse ata kanë potencial dhe kanë një rëndësi vitale në procesin e vendimarrjes në Shqipëri.

Fjalët kyçe: Rini, Përfshirje Politike, Parti Politike, Shqipëri.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, including my brothers and grandparents, especially to my grandfather who passed away this year. My family has supported me in my educational life and every achievement done so far deserve a great thank to them. I am very grateful for their support and I truly love them.

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Last but not least, an important value had also my colleagues whom are my office mates, Erinda and Sonila, and as well as my other colleague Griselda. During the working period of four months as a research assistant at the Centre for European Studies, my colleagues were very friendly and supportive.

Declaration Statement

1. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

2. The program of advanced study of which this thesis is part has consisted of:

i) Research Methods course during the undergraduate study

ii) I have neither given nor received, nor have I tolerated others' use of unauthorized aid.

Emirjona Huti

June 2015

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List of Abbreviations

ACFR:	Albanian Council on Foreign Relations
AS@N:	Network Albanian Students Abroad
CEI:	Central European Initiative
CLEEN:	Child Led Environmental Education Initiative
CRCA:	The Children's Human Rights Centre for Albania
DEMYC:	European Democratic Youth Organization
DP:	Democratic Party (of Albania)
EC:	European Council
ECOSY:	European Community Organisation of Socialist Youth
EDU:	European Democratic Union
EU:	European Union
FRESSH:	The Albanian Euro Socialist Youth Forum
FRPD:	Youth Forum of Democratic Party (of Albania)
GRUD:	Student Youth Organization of the Democratic Party
ILO:	International Labour Organization
IOM Save the Children:	International Organization for Migration Save The Children
IPA:	Independent Practice Associations
IPEC:	International Program on Elimination of Child Labour
IUSY:	The International Socialist Youth
IYDU:	Youth Union International Democrat
LRI:	Youth Movement for Integration (of Albania)
MDG:	Millennium Development Goals
PPSH:	The Communist Party (of Albania)
PVN:	International Volunteers Project
SCI:	Service Civil International
SIFE:	Students in Free Enterprise
SMI:	Social Movement for Integration (of Albania)
SP:	Socialist Party (of Albania)
UNDP:	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA:	United Nations Populations Fund Albania

UNICEF:	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
UNOPS:	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNV:	United Nations Volunteer Program
USAID:	United States Agency for International Development
YEPP:	Youth Democratic People’s Party
Youth CSO:	Youth Civil Society Organization

List of Publications by the Candidate

E. Huti and B. Cinar (2014), “Discrimination in Higher Education is Source of Conflict: Albania in Macedonia” *On the International Conference on Economic and Social Studies “Regional and Economic Development”*, held in Sarajevo Bosnia and Herzegovina on 24-25 April 2014.

1 Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

This study tries to investigate the engagement of Albanian youth in politics by explaining the forms of Albanian youth engagement.

What is youth? The definition given by the United Nations (UN) is “the people between the age of 15 and 24 years old” (UN, 2015, p. 1), by not taking into consideration the other definitions of the member states. Despite of the definition of youth, there are changes from one state to another, accordingly to the various circumstances of different societies. The definition mentioned above of the UN can be taken in consideration as a universal definition for the term help an in this study.

In several national and international reports are acclaimed that Albanian population is dominated by young people, which makes a considerable percentage in decision making process; one of these reports' data indicates that the percentage of youth is 26.7% out of three million people in Albania (ICP Innovation in Civic Participation, 2009, p. 2).

At the political history of the Albanian State, there were exceptional cases, which have been associated mainly with major historical changes. During the period of Ahmet Zogu who used to be the Albanian Man of State when he was 24 years old, as he became a prime minister he was 28 years old and King of Albanians when he was 33 years old in 1928 (Saraci, 2006). This political event shows that Albanian youth has a significant role in Albanian politics. Thus the role of youth in Albania has changed from the period that Albania declared its independence in 28 November 1912 until 1st of June 2015. The Albanian tradition of youth representation in politics is related with the culture, history

and political systems inherited from the past. Despite Albania remains a patriarchal society, where freedom of speech and the decision is limited by age (customary law).

During the period of communism in Albania, according to Fjerza, especially in 1944, 70% of the leaders of the Communist Party of Albania were between the ages of 21-33 years old which was a very important turning point of Albanian political history. What interesting was the fact that another youth generation brought down the communist regime that took place in December 1990. This youth movement consisted of the students' participation, 60% of whom were 18-22 years old. Further, in the modern political system of Albania, the Prime ministers of 1997 and 1998 represent exceptional cases by having age of 28 years old Ilir Meta and age of 30 years old Pandeli Majko (Fjerza, Gega, & Memaj, 2014, p. 5).

The question of this research study is "how the Albanian youth is engaged in politics?"

The thesis consists five chapters. The first chapter contains introduction, methodology and literature review. The first pages of this chapter describe the aim of the study, the findings and also the description of methodology is given in order to explain the way the study was conducted.

The second chapter treats the approach of Albanian youth with politics. Accordingly there are four of them: engagement in political parties, in civic life, engagement during elections and engagement in general. Each of these forms of engagement is analysed by considering the youth political forums, youth organizations and statistical data that show how Albanian youth is interested on being involved in politics.

The third chapter describes the comparison between the Albanian youth and one of EU member country, like Croatia.

The fourth chapter is about the case study of Albania, which describes in detail the case by explaining the results of the interviews conducted for this topic. Lastly main conclusion and suggestion of the study would be reserved.

The fifth and last chapter is about the future perspectives of Albanian youth engagement in politics. It is vital to know what form will take the engagement of Albanian youth in politics and what spirit they are going to give to this field.

1.2 Methodology

The research approach is a qualitative research because this study tries to investigate the behaviour of Albanian youth in terms of their political engagement. The statistical data is taken from secondary sources which gives information about the youth interest in politics and also about their involvement in political life. This study uses a quantitative research because some statistical data are being used to make the comparison of youth engagement, clear and accurate. Further, the study uses qualitative methodology in order to understand the detail information why the youth is involved in politics and political participation.

Regarding the research purpose, the topic is mainly descriptive due to the fact that the study tries to find out the reasons before the youth engagement in politics. It is also to some extent explanatory because there are several actors which affected the involvement or non- involvement of Albanian youth in politics.

The research strategy refers to a case study of this research which is the Albanian case. By this case study the current situation is explained by taking into consideration the related events which were organized for this issue. The case helps us not only to understand how Albanian youth engages in politics but also what they believe about

their engagement. The case also includes the examples of young influential Albanian political figures.

A structured interview was conducted through internet for this study. Purposive and snow-ball sampling has been implemented. The target group were selected from four main political parties, namely The Socialist Party (SP), The Democratic Party (DP), The Social Movement for Integration (SMI) and The New Democratic Spirit (NDS).

For each party 10 people were asked through internet. The social networks are useful tool for this kind of research. For this study these mediums were very helpful to distribute the questions to the respondents. In this way, the respondents would feel free to express their own opinions. The Facebook was used and many of the respondents were personally known by me. In a period of three months, the interview was conducted respectively from June to August 2015. During this period of time the local elections of 2015 were made which influenced in the answers of the respondents. The influence was done because, by being a period of electoral campaign, youth are engaged more in youth political forums.

Referring to the second data, which are used also by other people, I have mainly focused on reports and journals written by Albanian or foreign academicians. More over information from different websites of organizations which organize some workshops is being taken in order to show that some actors are trying to change the mentality of the society.

The data analysis consists on the collection of data which analyse within the case analysis. This means that data and sources are collected to explain and describe more the current situation of Albanian case. The study complies with the measurement of research such as validity and reliability as well as the code of ethic. So, it is made to

consider what I think about the topic but also to know whether the measures I use are consistent.

1.3 Literature Review

Academics and researchers have contributed on this topic but also a lot of events and programs were organized in Albania for the issue of Albanian youth engagement in politics. Evidently, this issue is very daily and concerns the Albanian society.

Referring to the article of Cinar & Erbas on the political interests and participation of youth in Albania, it is very important for the government to have young people involved in politics and listen to their ideas and opinions (Cinar & Erbas, 2013, p. 375). The functions of politics in both the public and the government sphere should be in that way that people should be encouraged to represent the “people’s will” and to reflect them in the best way. For the article of Cinar & Erbas, there were made some interviews which resulted that students and adults are not much aware of the importance of involving in politics in Albania. Young people have been involving in politics through the membership in civic or community organizations. This also creates a chain effect because if youth know that their engagement will bring a benefit to them, they will do it again and as a consequence affect each other. The political participation of young people is very essential to the future of a country. In this way the political parties should make some policies to involve and attract more young people and also should explain to the government their importance in the fate of the country (Cinar & Erbas, 2013, p. 376).

I agree with the above source of the potential as well the energy that the youth population has, but I do not agree with the claim that if the engagement in politics

would bring happiness and gratification they would do it. They already know what kind of interest politics offers but still they do not want to get involved.

It is not easy to engage youth in a region where there is a history of coerced volunteerism, where there is insufficient understanding of the non-governmental sector, and where respect is often gained by securing a paying job. According to Risto Karajkov, “In post-communist countries, there is a deficiency of volunteerism and a sense of apathy, exclusion, uselessness, and a lack of opportunities” (Thorup & Kinkade, 2005, p. 9). This explains the passivity of people in different fields of life. “Balkan youth are urgently in need of opportunities to acquire the skills and knowledge to be effective in building strong economies and workable democracies, likewise to learn the values and principles of character that build stable societies” (Thorup & Kinkade, 2005, p. 9). Balkan youth has the right skills to build strong economies in democratic countries and also to build healthy societies.

The heritage of communism is perhaps felt on its impact in personal initiative, trust and the social responsibility. “The experience of many former communist societies is that communism created many habits excessive dependence upon the State, leading to an absence of entrepreneurial energy; an inability to compromise; and a disinclination to cooperate voluntarily in groups like companies or political parties – that have greatly slowed the consolidation of either democracy or the market economy” (Thorup & Kinkade, 2005, p. 9). The heritage of communism is seen also on its effect on the future of the new democratic states, because it created some typical habits like the dependence on the State, inability to compromise and also in the lack of creation of groups or parties to represent the will and rights of people.

Youth have found their own freedom in the Balkans, but their economic opportunities remain circumscribed, and political instability and constant nationalism raise the possibility of a return to political authoritarianism. For these reasons many youth feel agitated and choose to leave their country instead of staying and trying to make a change. For example, 80 % of youth in Albania and 83 % in Bosnia-Herzegovina are considering leaving their countries in search of better educational and job opportunities abroad (Thorup & Kinkade, 2005, p. 9). In this context, a lot of programs are made to encourage youth to face these problems. The idea is to attract the attention of young people by offering them the chance to develop their skills in order to create new opportunities for them. During the process, program managers can face down the scepticism and passivity of young people (Thorup & Kinkade, 2005, pp. 9-10). I agree with this source in terms that youth should be motivated with different programs which will show their skills in order to create new opportunities for them.

As mentioned above, the contributions vary from the different programs that were held in Albania during the last years with the main purpose to raise the awareness of people for youth engagement in politics. On 27 February 2013, the Albanian Council on Foreign Relations in cooperation with Friedrich Ebert Foundation organized a seminar on "Political Culture of our Future Elite" in Vlore with representatives from civil society, academia, students, young professionals and members of parliament. The seminar addressed the need to involve youths in politics. Among other things, was emphasized the importance of youth representation in local authorities, district councils, municipalities and communes. During the discussion representatives from civil society noted the need for political engagement of young people in long-term investment for each. Youth forums representatives raised concerns about the need for the involvement of young people in politics, especially by women, immigration as a tool to remove them

from Albania, the need for decision-making, the perception that young people do not get involved in politics except to gain votes, the need for political activism but also structural representation through political organization structures chosen through a system of values and merit. The seminar was an active discussion between panellists and participants from the ranks of students, young professionals, civil society organizations, academia, etc., who presented their concerns and raised issues facing today's youth and their expectations from politics as well as their representatives in local and central institutions. Through this seminar in Vlore, Albanian Council on Foreign Relations began the first step toward the final goal-the promotion of ideas for increasing cooperation and reducing future political elite divergences and promotes youth participation in social and political life of the country, which will be achieved through a series of workshops in other cities of Albania (ACFR, 2013). Another event relevant to this topic, was organized in Tirana on 6 April 2015 by Children's Human Rights Centre of Albania, an organization that works towards ensuring that the rights of children and youth are respected, in partnership with the Tirana Youth Leadership and the following Youth Forums of Socialist Party, Socialist Movement for Integration, Republican Party, Human Rights Party, New Democratic Spirit, Party for Justice, Integrity and Unity and Red and Black Alliance, held the ceremony for signing the Cooperation Agreement for the promotion of the Social Contract For Youth in Elections 2015. The Social Contract is a document, prepared by CRCA and Youth Leadership in consultation and with the participation of more than 300 youth in Tirana includes youth priority issues and recommendations for candidates in Local Elections to be held in Albania on 21 June 2015, such as the following:

1. Increase the participation and representation of the youth in decision-making;
2. Youth Employment;

3. The Students' Card;
4. Youth from the Minority groups;
5. City Green spaces;
6. Improvement of the social/local infrastructure;
7. Social services, environmental and city council accommodation;
8. Establishment of multi-functional Youth centres;
9. Municipality support for Youth Civil Society Organization's
10. Youth awareness (ODIHR, 2015).

The political youth forums signed this Memorandum of Understanding and committed themselves to encourage their respective political parties to address priority youth issues and in particular to promote a greater participation and representation of young people in the City Councils in Albania, starting from the local elections of 2015, and continuing with the next Parliamentary elections. The leaders of political youth forum declared that the signature of the social contract is not only important but above all this represents the common commitment of political youth forums towards youth issues. They emphasised the fact that nowadays the youth requires concrete solutions and they shall commit themselves to provide alternative solutions. In order to guarantee that the youth plays an important role in decision making a successful lobbying should be put into action. The approval of this Memorandum of Understanding comes in a moment that we should present it to the respective political assembly and why not some of the youth become part of city councils list of representatives of 2015 local elections (Eurostat, 2015). The events are very positive, because they show that in Albania the past is being left behind and programs and events are organized in order to catalyse the power that the youth has in the political field.

2 Chapter Two: The Approaches of Youth Engagement in Politics

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is about the approaches of Albanian youth engagement in politics. An important attention is being paid also to the historical background which has influenced the current developments until June 2015. The historical background part gives a reflection of the history since the independence times until nowadays by giving importance at the youth engagement in politics.

The chapter is being composed also by four subsections with the four basic approaches of youth engagement in politics. Each subsection will have an explanation of the reasons why youth uses that form to involve in politics.

2.2 Historical Background

The representation of Albanian citizens in Albanian politics is related with the culture, history and also the political systems which changed during the past years. During the times when Albania was proclaimed Republic and Monarchy, it was leaded Ahmet Zogu, who was a young leader in age (Saraci, 2006). With the establishment of the communist regime in Albania in 1944, 70% of the leaders of the Communist Party of Albania were between the ages of 21-33 years. In December of 1990, the youth movement consisted by the participations of students, where 60% of members were 18-22 years old (Saraci, 2006). In the modern political system of Albania, during the years 1997-1998, young Prime Ministers were elected, like Ilir Meta (28 years old) and Pandeli Majko (30 years old) who represented the exceptional cases in which young politicians were active in Albanian political life (Fjerza, Gega, & Memaj, 2014, p. 5).

The data presented in the Table reflects the youth representation in parliament during the transition period until 2013's elections. This table shows that also in Albanian parliament, young politicians were involved. The decision of non-participating in politics, is linked with other relevant factors such as a career without meritocracy, political engagement brings privileges in work etc. (Fjerza, Gega, & Memaj, 2014, p. 6).

Table: Member of Parliament in Albania (1991-2013)¹

Year	Nr.	Under 28	DP	SP
1991	240	5	2	3
1992	140	8	3	5
1996	140	10	8	2
1997	155	5	2	3
2001	140	5	1	4
2005	140	6	3	3
2009	140	4	2	2
2013	140	0	0	0

The youth participation is high related with the Political Party commitment when people believe or predict that this Political Force is going to win the elections. During the periods 1991-1996 most of the youth were engaged in PD, 1996-2005 most of the youth engagement was in SP, 2006-2009 most of the youth engagement was in the PD structures, and the last election campaign most of the youths were engaged with the

¹Source: Orjona Fjerza, Elsa Gega and Fatmir Memaj, "Youth Participation in Albania", *International Journal of Management Cases*, 2014, p 5.

political forums of SP-LSI coalition. The under 28 years will not be represented in parliament according to the election of 23 June 2013.

2.3 Forms of Engagement

This section describes in detail the four forms of Albanian youth engagement in politics. Firstly it is the engagement through the youth forums of political parties where it is given a historical background of four youth forums. The four main youth political forums are derived from the four main political parties like SP, DP, SMI and NDS. Apart from the historical background of each political youth forum, an overview of the main activities is explained. Secondly, it is during election time by explaining that they do so through voting. Albanian youth engages in politics by using the power of vote with their free will. Thirdly, their engagement is in general by being active only by following politics in general. Not all Albanian young people are active in voting or in membership of youth political parties, but just following the latest developments in politics. And lastly their engagement in civic life through organizations which try to emphasize their needs. In Albania this form of engagement is as much as at the youth political forums. A lot of organizations are active which tend to gather a lot of young activists which want to make some changes in the Albanian civic life.

2.3.1 General Engagements

This section explains that sometimes Albanian young people are not always active in youth political forums or in different organizations which make up the Albanian civic life. The other engagements may include the engagement by just being active in following the latest development of political news and also by just being active during the election period in voting or in membership of observation commission. Some of them are in general, which do not pay too much attention to politics by being active in

one certain form but just can follow the latest development of Albanian political life or they are active in voting during the election period of time.

According to statistics from Innovations in civic participation in 2009, youth part of population is considered 15-29 years, and just 26, 7% of population is youth out of 3 million people (ICP Innovation in Civic Participation, 2009). Only 11 % of the respondents are very much interested in the political developments in the country, while males are more interested than females. The Albanian young people are not much interested in the political developments abroad, as only 16.3 % of them are interested in political developments in the Balkans and only 15.1 % of them are interested in the developments at the international level. Just 61.4 % of the Albanian young people have political views that are generally or nearly complaint to the views of their parents (Cela, Fshazi, Mazniku, Kamberi, & Smaja, 2013, pp. 171-172).

2.3.2 Political Parties

One of the engagement forms is through the political parties. Some of the youth are members of political youth forums whereas some of them which have a considerable age and experience are part of the board of that certain political party. The political party forums that operate in Albania are listed as below:

a) The Albanian Euro Socialist Youth Forum-FRESSH

The Albanian Euro Socialist Youth Forum, was established on 15 January 1992 by a group of youth with the mainly purpose of establishing the biggest youth organization in the country. FRESSH Albania was the approach of the European mentality referring to the concept of democracy and the rule-making process and the brightest ideas of European social democracy. Since the early years of the establishment, FRESSH is a member with full rights in the International Socialist Youth (IUSY), the Socialist Youth

Organization and the European Social (ECOSY). FRESSH has the statute, program and his symbol and operates as an internal structure of the Socialist Party of Albania. From the official webpage of the FRESSH, it is being noticed that a lot of events were organized from this youth forum. The most recent event is the meeting done on 4 June 2015, at the headquarters of the SP in Tirana with young people from the city of Gjirokaster. These young people met the deputies of their city, Anastas Angjeli of SP and also Vangjel Tavo of SMI. This meeting was also attended by the head of the youth forum Joleza Koka, whom emphasized the importance of the power of vote and also of the youth engagement in politics. This meeting was done in accordance to the local elections which were held on 21 June 2015 (FRESSH, 2015).

b) Youth Movement for Integration-LRI

Youth Movement for Integration LRI is a political youth organization of the Socialist Movement for Integration. It is a voluntary association of Albanian youth on the basis of ideas, beliefs, opinions and common political interests that seek to strengthen the role of youth in the life of the country. LRI is a partner with LSI-the Socialist Movement for Integration, and operates independently based on its statute and program. LRI was founded in September 2004 and since then has been committed to increasing the participation of Albanian young men and women in decision-making, both locally and nationally. Currently Erisa Xhixho is the head of the youth forum. This forum has some different accounts in social networks but not an official webpage.

c) Youth Forum of Democratic Party-FRPD

Youth Forum of Democratic Party-FRPD was officially created in August 1991 and consisted of a group of students whom initialize the December movement for Democracy, back on 1990. On its beginnings, this party was having a debate whether to

have a youth forum or not. The majority of the leaders insisted that it was not necessary to have a youth forum because they thought the youth forums did not have any significant role and the same model was followed by the former regime. Due to the need for an organized political youth organization in addition to DP and advice of foreign experts European Democratic Union (EDU) agreed to create FRPD the status of the partner organization within the Democratic Party. Its members would not necessarily be DP members, member's age was 17-28 years old, and decisions would be independent, fundamental policies will be the same as PD, the choice of the management team would be independent of the Democratic Party. The first head of FRPD used to be Ridvan Peshkëpia and currently Gert Bogdani is the chairperson. It is worth mentioning that Bogdani is not chosen but is appointed by the President of the Democratic Party since 2007. So no election process was conducted for the head of FRPD. FRPD is accepted in the European Democratic Youth Organization (DEMYC) in 1995, a member of the Conservative Youth (1996), is co-founder of Youth Democratic People's Party in 1997 (YEPP), and is a member of Youth Union International Democrat 2008(IYDU). From 2012 President of FRPD, Bogdani is one of the Deputy / IYDU presidents. FRPD structure is the same as DP organization in the country, organized by sections and branches. Its role is especially important in electoral campaigns. There is no fixed membership, and there is no clear division between student and non-student youth. For a long time student youth was organized in parallel branches as party or as, student youth organization of the Democratic Party (GRUD).

This youth forum does not have any official webpage to take any information about their activities but only some accounts in the social network such as Facebook.

d) Youth Forum of the New Democratic Spirit

Youth Forum of the New Democratic spirit in the beginnings of the New Democratic Spirit many young people attended, like those disappointed in other political forces such as Red and Black alliance (RBA), but mostly coming from structures of Democratic Forum party FRPD or youths without engaging before in Politics. The youths Forum, despite the enthusiastic young volunteers, had failed to organize and to operate as the other major parties as mentioned above. New Democratic Spirit was officially opened on 30 April 2012, the temporary chairman Gazment Oketa and a pioneer group composed of Alexander Biberaj and three other member of the civil society. The new party created at that time featured a higher profile for voter integrity and was perceived by voters as a political force that would be the new home of the Albanian Moderate Democrats. After leaving the position of President of Albania, Mr. Bamir Topi joined FRD. He was appointed by the leadership as President of this new political force. General Coordinator of Youth was the former chairman of the Democratic Party Youth Forum Mr. Afrim Krasniqi who had proper authority for the direction and extent of youth structures of the New Democratic Spirit in the entire Albania Youths Structures. This youth forum has created a lot of activities in order to increase the youth engagement in politics.

2.3.3 Election Period

During the election period, youth is being active in several ways, like by being members of youth forums or by being part of different events that they organize. Here we can differentiate youth which is always active in political parties, which that part of youth which is active during elections for personal interests and reasons.

Young activists, by being members of youth forums are in charge of different duties. These duties include the distribution of leaflets, joining propaganda and also sticking the

posters of the political party or the political leaders. The distribution of leaflets is very common for all political youth forums, especially during the election period, when they distribute them in different buildings. Other activists have organizational duties to make receptions, meetings and other events to gather more young activists which want to work as volunteers at the relevant political youth forum. In all these duties, the main idea is to have more young people as members at the youth political parties which also should be active in different activities organized by the leading staff of the political youth forum.

2.3.4 Engagement in Civic Life

Youth and the importance that presents itself as a target group, by political parties, has some extraordinary features as strength, expectations, vitality, energy and capability to welcome and support innovative ideas that make the difference between negative models of the Albanian transition and Western models of democracy. An active youth in political decision-making and governance of the country as a vital part of society effects on the image of the Albanian country. By being active in civic life refers to the engagement of young people in some organizations which help to improve the community life and future also.

Albanian youth appear also infringed in the rights for its own economic and social conditions of the country, which have contributed to the high emigration during the transition period, increasing unemployment in the country, because of not enough support from state institutions. A report of United Nations Volunteers in 1992 shows that “volunteer work” was sometimes forced and used as a punishment in Albania (ICP Innovation in Civic Participation, 2009).

In Albania there are many organizations, foundations, associations, youth activist groups on which we focused on promoting youth decision making, like followings: Albanian Youth Council, Albanian Youth Parliament or Action Plus.

There also operate international organizations and donors who have their focus on developing youth protection as United Nations Coordinator, UNDP, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, United Nations Populations Fund Albania, International Labor Organization / International Program on Elimination of Child Labor, European Council, EU, United States Agency for International Development ,the European Commission, the British Council, United Nations Office for Project Services, International Organization for Migration Save the Children, U. S. Embassy, Austrian Embassy, German Embassy, Italian, Greek Embassy, etc. Also mention of Albania and Participation in European Regional Initiative which will include Council of Europe; Directorate of Youth and Sports International Organization of la Francophone and Central European Initiative (CEI) etc. Indeed there are many organizations related to youth projects which were awarded funding from various projects mainly Independent Practice Association International and European community, etc. but their impact is relative and have no coherence (Fjerza, Gega, & Memaj, 2014, pp. 7-8).

According to a report by the United Nations Volunteers², prior to 1992, "volunteer work" was sometimes forced and used as punishment in Albania by the regime. As a result of this regime forceful action against the youth, there was a large amount of apathy and limited youth action in the country. After 1992 and onwards, the organizations that are active in Albania appear to be primarily internationally-based.

²This information is taken from homepage of Innovations in Civic Participation which in the reference list.

Moreover, recently the government has begun to develop more directorates and sections primarily focused on young people, with a few locally-based programs gaining recognition. This is considered one of the good movements in Albanian politics and for the youth.

A major organization beginning to make an impact with Albanian youth was the MJAFT! movement. Established in 2003, MJAFT! promoted “active citizenship, democracy, the attainability of change, strong communities, equal opportunities, solidarity, volunteerism and the indisputable power of debate” by encouraging citizen participation on both a local and national level and by rehabilitating the concept of protestation. It is Albania’s largest civic engagement movement with branches in 18 cities nation-wide advocating for change on a local level, and has over 8,000 members organizing and participating in MJAFT! events and over 1,000 volunteers who form the backbone of the organization (ICP Innovation in Civic Participation, 2009).

International Volunteer Projects (PVN) is a civil society organization that focuses on environmental issues, integration of migrated communities from rural areas, raising awareness about youth issues and working with socially disadvantaged young people. PVN is affiliated with Service Civil International (SCI), a large international volunteer organization, which aims to promote civic engagement in order to create a thriving society. PVN accomplishes its goals by offering a series of workshops and training sessions and the organization of several types of volunteer camps including: environmental/agricultural restoration, social work with people/children with disabilities and a work/study program (ICP Innovation in Civic Participation, 2009).

Strengthening Student Participation in Southeast Europe is one organization in Albania aiming to promote a student network within Southeast Europe and to increase student

participation within universities by advocating for student needs, academic preparation, improved student mobility inside the country, and improved student cultural and entertainment life. In Albania, the organization focuses on increasing the availability of services for students at universities to allow them to build their knowledge and improve student life. There are six departments: Professional Department which deals with professional education of those students who want a certain profession, Student Concerns Department which deals with different problem that the students might have, Activities Department directly dealing with student activities to enhance their will in participation in different activities, Student Housing Department which deals with accommodation of the students, Public and International Department deals with the admission of students in Albania and Albania , Information Department provides different information needed for the students(ICP Innovation in Civic Participation, 2009).

Finally, UNICEF works with the Albanian government to develop and implement youth-friendly social policy, advocacy, and research and information distribution. A new program called the Child-Led Environmental Education Initiative (CLEEN) is being developed in order to teach primary school children about sustainability and the environment, as well as working with the government to protect young people from abuse and human trafficking. Children will participate in a “teaching-learning environment which promotes active learning” and encourages child-led environmental action. Overall, UNICEF is working to protect and empower young people in Albania by aiming to eliminate youth discrimination. UNDP is also active in Albania, with the main goal of sustaining human development with a particular focus on young people born between the years of 1980-1994, as well as to accomplish Albania’s MDGs by 2015 (ICP Innovation in Civic Participation, 2009).

Since the collapse of the communist government in 1992, the Albanian governmental structure has gone through a series of changes. In 2005 the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports became the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, and, in 2007, five main General Directorates were established with programs focusing on young people being overseen by the General Directorate for Policies for Art, Culture and Youth. The General Directorate contains three subsections: the Directorate for Arts & Literature with a Section for Literature and a Section for Visual Arts, Music and Performing Arts; the Directorate for Sports, with a Section for Sports for All and a Section for Qualitative Sport; and the Directorate for the Coordination of Youth Policies. However, there is an Albanian Youth Parliament that contains 200 young people between the ages of 14-18 who aim to bridge the gap between the young people of Albania and the country's decision makers. Those on the Albanian Youth Parliament directly participate in debate and development of "civic and social plans of action" in the country.

2.4 Conclusion

Youth engagement in politics has been reflected in different forms which shape the Albanian youth's interest in politics. Firstly they participate in youth forums where they tend to make their voice heard in political parties and also to be part of events that these forums organize. By this participation they pay their time to the events that the youth political forums organize in order to show themselves active in the political life of Albania. There exist four main youth forums which create spaces and opportunities for Albanian young people. Secondly they are active during the election times by using their power in hands, vote. Albanian young people, even if they are not members of any youth political forum, they tend to be active by just voting the political party which they

are interested in. Thirdly, they are active in general, which means they are passive in political life but just follow the latest developments of politics. This shows that not all Albanian young people live to pay their time to the political youth forums or even the different organizations. Lastly they are active in civic life by being part of non-governmental organization and also those international organizations. By this way, Albanian young people want to contribute to in the improvement of the community life of Albania, or different cities where they live.

3 Chapter Three: Albanian Youth vs. Croatian Youth

3.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a comparative perspective of the case study by comparing the youths of two countries, Albanian and Croatian. It starts with a description of country profile for each of the countries to create an idea about the type of system and the explanation of the distribution of three main powers (executive, legislative and judiciary). To make this comparison more clear and accurate, the country of Croatia is selected because also this country is a member of EU but also it is in the same region with Albania. Other reasons may be that they had the same historical backgrounds because both of these countries had the communist regime and are new born democracies after the collapse of communism

The comparison is done in this way: firstly the features of youth engagement in politics of both countries are compared, by explaining the Albanian youth political forums and then the Croatian youth political forums; secondly the engagement during the election period is described; thirdly the general form is explained and lastly the involvement in different organizations is explained by describing firstly the Albanian youth organizations and then the Croatian youth organizations.

This chapter has the purpose to emphasize the similarities and differences that the youth of these two countries have. Another reason is also to understand if Albanian youth meets the EU standards.

3.2 Albania: Country Profile

The Republic of Albania gained its independence after (the collapse of communism) on 29th of April 1991. Albania is a parliamentary republic with a renewed constitution in

1998 and is member of NATO since 2009 and has the status of candidate member of EU. It is located in the Balkan region, by having a strategic position it has access to the sea and also is the gate for entrance into Balkan region.

The power is divided into three branches: executive, legislative and judiciary. The executive branch is on hands of the head of the state and government. The head of the state is the president of the republic. It is elected for five year term by the assembly or the parliament by secret ballot, with a majority of 50%+1 of the votes of all deputies. The current president since 2012 is Bujar Nishani. The president acts as a commander in chief of the armed forces, has the power to exercise the duties of parliament and appoints the prime minister which is also the chairman of council of ministers. The council of ministers (Cabinet) rests on the executive power. It is headed by the prime minister, which is appointed by the president. The ministers are nominated by the president but based on the recommendations of the prime ministers. The cabinet is responsible for foreign and domestic policies. The current prime minister, since 2013 is Edi Rama. The legislative power is vested to the Assembly of the republic of Albania, or the parliament of Albania. There are 140 deputies in the assembly which are elected by a party- list proportional representation system. The president of the parliament or the speaker has two deputies, chairs of assembly. Parliamentary elections are held every four years. The assembly has the right to ratify laws, international treaties, declare war to another state and direct domestic and foreign policy. The judicial system is divided into the High Council of Justice, the Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal and Courts of First instance Albania is divided into 12 administrative counties, which are divided into 61 municipalities (BBC, Albania profile-Overview, 2015).

3.3 Croatia: Country Profile

The Republic of Croatia gained its independence on 25th of June 1991, after being a country governed by communist regime. Croatia is a parliamentary republic and is members of different international organizations by including here NATO and EU. It is located at Balkan region and has access on the sea which makes it a very strategic country.

Croatia had the semi-president system until 2000s but it switched to parliamentary system. The government powers are divided into legislative, judiciary and executive whereas the legal system of Croatian law is the civil law.

The head of the state is the president of the republic, which is directly elected for a five-year term with a chance of two times election. He/she is also the commander in chief of armed forces and also has the duty to appoint the prime minister with the authorization of the parliament. He/she has some influence on the foreign policy. The recent elections were held on the January of this year by making Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović the president of Croatia. The government is headed by the prime minister, who has four deputy ministers and also a cabinet composed of 17 ministers. The current prime minister is Zoran Milanovic. The parliament (in this case is named Sabor) is a unicameral legislative body. Croatia has two largest parties which are Croatian Democratic Union and Social Democratic Party of Croatia. Also, it has a three tiered judicial system composed of the Supreme Court, County Courts and Municipal Courts (BBC, Croatia country profile - Overview, 2015).

3.4 Comparison between Albanian and Croatian Youth Engagements

In order to have an accurate comparison, the analysis will be done same as in case of Albania, which means that also in Croatian case will be seen the four forms of youth

engagement in politics. Firstly the features of Albanian youth engagement will be described which will be followed by the ones of Croatian youth. For instance, as below firstly the political party form of engagement is described. In this way the Albanian youth political forums are written and then the Croatian political youth forums are written too. The second form of engagement is during election period which the features of youth of both countries are being compared. The third form is in general and is being described in the same way as above mentioned form of engagement in politics. The last form of engagement which is being compared is the involvement in different organizations which gather the attention of different young people in both countries.

3.4.1 General Engagements

The statistics of 2009 of Innovations is civic participation statistics show that youth part of population is considered 15-29 years, whereas 26, 7% of population is youth out of 3 million people (ICP Innovation in Civic Participation, 2009). From a study for Albanian youth in “Between present hopes and future insecurities” in 2011, only 11 % of the respondents are very much interested in the political developments in the country, while males are more interested than females. The Albanian young people are not much interested in the political developments abroad, as only 16.3 % of them are interested in political developments in the Balkans and only 15.1 % of them are interested in the developments at the international level. Just 61.4 % of the Albanian young people have political views that are generally or nearly complaint to the views of their parents (Cela, Fshazi, Mazniku, Kamberi, & Smaja, 2013, pp. 171-172).

In Croatian case, referring to Euro barometer, only 6 % of respondents claim that they are part of political organization and 12 % claim that they are part in different youth organizations.

This sections seems to involve all forms of engagement, but it explains that by showing statistics that they are not part/ are part of youth political forums or youth organizations, respectively they are engaged in general in the politics. This explains that they are active by following the latest development of politics and by voting during the Election Day.

3.4.2 Political Parties

In both cases, one of the engagement forms is through the political parties. This finding is expected because both countries have influential political parties which form influential youth forums in order to involve youth in politics too. Some of the youth are members of political youth forums whereas some of them which have a considerable age and experience are part of the board of that certain political party. So, the engagement in political parties is mostly done through engagement in youth political forums. In Albania there are four main political parties. The first one is FRESSH, whichAs mentioned at Chapter 2, FRESH is one of among the first Albanian political youth forums established on 15 January 1992 by a group of youths with the mainly purpose of establishing the biggest youth organization in the country. FRESSH Albania was different and special because it was the approach of the European mentality referring to the concept of democracy and the rule – making process and the brightest ideas of European social democracy. FRESSH is a member with full rights in the International Socialist Youth (IUSY) and adheres to Socialist Youth Organization and the European Social (ECOSY). FRESSH has the statute, program and his symbol and operates as an internal structure of the Socialist Party of Albania.

The second important youth forum is LRI, which is a political youth organization of the Socialist Movement for Integration. LRI was founded in September 2004 and since then has been committed to increasing the participation of Albanian young men and women

in decision-making, both locally and nationally. Currently, LRI is led by Erisa Xhixho. This association is a voluntary one, based on the basis of ideas, beliefs, opinions and common political interests that seek to strengthen the role of youth in the life of the country. LRI is a partner with LSI - the Socialist Movement for Integration, and operates independently based on its statute and program.

The third one is Youth Forum of Democratic Party-FRPD. Referring to Chapter 2, FRPD was officially created in August 1991 and consisted of a group of students whom initialize the December movement for Democracy, back on 1990. The majority of the leaders insisted that it was not necessary to have a youth forum because they thought the youth forums did not have any significant role and the same model was followed by the former regime. Due to the need for an organized political youth organization in addition to DP and advice of foreign experts European Democratic Union (EDU) agreed to create FRPD the status of the partner organization within the Democratic Party. Its members would not necessarily be DP members, member's age was 17-28 years old, and decisions would be independent, fundamental policies will be the same as PD, the choice of the management team would be independent of the Democratic Party. FRPD structure is the same as DP political party of Albania, organized by sections and branches. Its role is especially important in electoral campaigns. There is no fixed membership, and there is no clear division between student and non- student youth. For a long time student youth was organized in parallel branches as party or as, student youth organization of the Democratic Party (GRUD).

The last one to be mentioned here is Youth Forum of the New Democratic Spirit. According to the information given on Chapter 2, Youth Forum of the New Democratic spirit in the beginnings of the New Democratic Spirit had many youths attend, like those

disappointed in other political forces such as Red and Black alliance (RBA), but mostly coming from structures of Democratic Forum party FRPD or youths without engaging before in Politics. The youth's forum, despite the enthusiastic young volunteers, had failed to organize and to operate as the other major parties as mentioned above. New Democratic Spirit was officially opened on 30 April 2012, the temporary chairman Gazment Oketa and a pioneer group composed of Alexander Biberaj and three other member of civil society. The new party created at that time featured a higher profile for voter integrity and was perceived by voters as a political force that would be the new home of the Albanian Moderate Democrats. After leaving the position of President of Albania, Mr. Bamir Topi joined FRD. He was appointed by the leadership as President of this new political force.

For the case of Croatia the two major parties are taken in consideration for the comparison. The first youth forum is Youth Forum of Social Democratic Party-SPD. The Youth Forum of Social Democratic Party is the youth organisation of the Social Democratic Party of Croatia. Youth Forum is committed to build a democratic society in which solidarity, freedom, equality, social justice and quality education will be available to everybody. Youth forum see a society in which the dignity of the individual will be guaranteed in social, legal and economic certainty. Its goal is to enable young people to participate in public life and decision-making process. Every young Croatian citizen from 16 to 30 years of age can become a member of Youth Forum. That is to say members don't have to be members of the Social Democratic Party of Croatia, but should not be members of another political party. The structure of the organization is determined by organisation's statute. The organization is organised at the state level and consists of county, city and municipal organizations. The central authorities are Convention, Main Board, The Supervisory Board, The Presidency and the President.

The highest body of the Youth forum is the Convention. Convention consists of delegates elected on the conventions of local organizations. Delegates elect the President, Vice-Presidents and the Supervisory Board for a term of two years. President of Youth forum is representing the organization to the public. Student wing of Youth forum is Social Democratic Students Union (SSU).

The second one is Youth Forum of Croatian Democratic Union-MHDZ. The Youth of the Croatian Democratic Union, abbreviated to MHDZ, is the youth organisation of the Croatian Democratic Union. To be a member, one has to be between 16 and 30 years old. The MHDZ was founded on 13 September 1990. The MHDZ is member of the Youth of the European People's Party (YEPP), a European umbrella organisation of Christian democratic and conservative youth organisations of Europe, the Democrat Youth Community of Europe (DEMYC) and the international umbrella organisation International Young Democrat Union (IYDU).

3.4.3 Election Period

In both cases, during the election period, youth is being active in several ways, like by being members of youth forums or by being part of different events that they organize.

This is a case where youth is only active during the election period nor before or after the elections. Also, it can be mentioned that they are involved in youth political forums during this period of time. Here we can differentiate youth which is always active in political parties, which that part of youth which is active during elections for personal interests and reasons. By being active in this period of time, they are active in membership of youth forums, in organizations of different events, meetings or forums which discuss the problems that they have in order to reflect them at the political leaders. Other form of engagement during the election period may be working at the

offices of these political youth forums and attracting more young people. Also distribution of leaflets, t-shirts, posters and other things present for the youth political forum and also for the relevant political party. These features are the same for the both cases of Albania and Croatia.

3.4.4 Engagement in Civic Life

The case of Albania is explained firstly, by mentioning all the organizations that are active nowadays and have influence in Albanian political life. All these information are taken from Chapter 2. In this case the engagement in civic life means that their contribution that they give in different organizations which are national or international. In Albania there are many organizations, foundations, associations, youth activist groups on which we have focused on promoting youth decision making, like followings:

1. Network Albanian Students Abroad (AS @ N)
2. Albanian Youth Council
3. Albanian Youth Parliament
4. Action Plus
5. Gender Alliance for Development
6. Center for the Rights of Children
7. Albanian Association of the United Nations
8. Students in free enterprise- SIFE Albania
9. KRIIK – Albania(Fjerza, Gega, & Memaj, 2014, p. 8)

There also operate international organizations and donors who have their focus on developing youth protection as United Nations Coordinator, UNDP, United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund. According to a report by the United Nations Volunteers, prior to 1992, “volunteer work” was sometimes forced and used as punishment in Albania. As a result, there remains a large amount of apathy and limited youth action in the country. The organizations that are active in Albania appear to be primarily internationally-based. However, recently the government has begun to

develop more directorates and sections primarily focused on young people, with a few locally-based programs gaining recognition. Referring to the Chapter 2 one of these organization was MJAFT movement. This organization was among the first one which created a direct impact on the Albanian citizens and youth too. It was founded in 2003 the MJAFT Movement which promoted “active citizenship, democracy, the attainability of change, strong communities, equal opportunities, solidarity, volunteerism and the indisputable power of debate” by encouraging citizen participation on both a local and national level and by rehabilitating the concept of protestation. This movement has the largest number of membership and engagement by having branches in 18 cities nation-wide advocating for change on a local level, and has over 8,000 members organizing and participating in MJAFT! Events and over 1,000 volunteers who form the backbone of the organization.

Another important organization, referring to the information shown in Chapter 2, is International Volunteer Projects which is a civil society organization that focuses on environmental issues, integration of migrated communities from rural areas, raising awareness about youth issues and working with socially disadvantaged young people. PVN is affiliated with Service Civil International (SCI), a large international volunteer organization, which aims to promote civic engagement in order to create a thriving society. PVN accomplishes its goals by offering a series of workshops and training sessions and the organization of several types of volunteer camps including: environmental/agricultural restoration, social work with people/children with disabilities and a work/study program.

Also Strengthening Student Participation in Southeast Europe which operates as one organization in Albania aimed at promoting a student network within Southeast Europe

and to increase student participation within universities by advocating for student needs, academic preparation, improved student mobility inside the country, and improved student cultural and entertainment life. In Albania, the organization focuses on increasing the availability of services for students at universities to allow them to build their knowledge and improve student life, has a major impact.

Finally, referring to chapter 2 UNICEF works with the Albanian government to develop and implement youth-friendly social policy, advocacy, and research and information distribution. A new program called the Child-Led Environmental Education Initiative (CLEEN) is being developed in order to teach primary school children about sustainability and the environment, as well as working with the government to protect young people from abuse and human trafficking. UNDP is also active in Albania, with the main goal of sustaining human development with a particular focus on young people born between the years of 1980-1994, as well as to accomplish Albania's MDGs by 2015.

In the Croatian case one of the youth organizations is National Youth Council which has the mission that young people in Croatia should participate in decision-making processes which affect quality of their life using e-democracy and digital economy infrastructure. This organization also tries to raise the awareness of active youth citizenship and build up infrastructure for participatory democracy as E-Local Youth Councils Networks (CNYC, 2015).

Another youth organization is the Youth Network which tries to raise awareness among young people about active and responsible participation in society through networking and empowering youth organizations and individuals, co-creates and advocates quality youth policies at the local, national and international level and puts youth rights on the

social agenda, contributes to the development of civil society through shaping and implementing policies related to the development of civil society (On Croatia's Youth Network, 2015).

The change of regime of Albania in 1992 influenced in some governmental structure changes. In 2005 the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports became the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, and, in 2007, five main General Directorates were established with programs focusing on young people being overseen by the General Directorate for Policies for Art, Culture and Youth. The General Directorate contains three subsections: the Directorate for Arts & Literature with a Section for Literature and a Section for Visual Arts, Music and Performing Arts; the Directorate for Sports, with a Section for Sports for All and a Section for Qualitative Sport; and the Directorate for the Coordination of Youth Policies. Also in the case of Croatia, there is The Ministry of Social Politics and Youth of the Republic of Croatia is the ministry in the Government of Croatia which performs administrative and professional tasks related to the social welfare institutions, the care and protection of people and families, youth, persons with disabilities, victims of trafficking, refugees, asylum seekers and professional activities related to foster care and adoption.

3.5 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter is to give again the overview of the ways that Albanian youth engages in politics with the Croatian youth. The state of Croatia is taken in consideration for several reasons like: it is a member of EU, it is located at the same region with Albania, for instance Balkan Region, it is a Parliamentary Republic and also that the historical backgrounds of these two states are similar due to the fact that are former communist countries. Another reason for this comparison is to see if Albania

meets the standards of a member of EU. This issue is of particular interest for the European Union, as its Treaties¹ stipulate that it shall encourage the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe. The Youth Strategy 2 also underlines the need to support young people's participation in representative democracy and civil society. Whereas in Albania this is done through programs and events which aware the young people to get more involved in politics.

The comparison is done properly to show the ways they are engaged in politics but in different ways. In both cases they are involved in politics through the youth forums of political parties. Some of the youth are members of political youth forums whereas some of them which have a considerable age and experience are part of the board of that certain political party. In Albanian case, there are four main youth forums like FRESSH, FRPD, LRI and Youth forum of FRD. In the case of Croatia there were two main youth forums SPD and MHDZ.

The second way of engagement is during the election period. In both cases, during the election period, youth is being active in several ways, like by being members of youth forums or by being part of different events that they organize. Here we can differentiate youth which is always active in political parties, which that part of youth which is active during elections for personal interests and reasons.

The third way of engagement is in general which means that youth is interested in politics somehow even though is not active in political parties. In Albanian case, young people are not much interested in the political developments abroad, as only 16.3 % of them are interested in political developments in the Balkans and only 15.1 % of them are interested in the developments at the international level. Just 61.4 % of the Albanian young people have political views that are generally or nearly complaint to the views of

their parents (Cela, Fshazi, Mazniku, Kamberi, & Smaja, 2013, pp. 171-172). In Croatian case, referring to Euro barometer, only 6 % of respondents claim that they are part of political organization and 12 % claim that they are part in different youth organizations.

The last form of engagement in politics is through the civic life. It is being noticed that in Albania there exist a lot of governmental and non-governmental organizations and also national and international ones. The engagement in civic life means that their contribution that they give in different organizations which are national or international. For instance, there are many organizations, foundations, associations, youth activist groups on which we have focused on promoting youth decision making.

There also operate international organizations and donors who have their focus on developing youth protection as United Nations Coordinator, UNDP, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, United Nations Populations Fund Albania, International Labor Organization/International Program on Elimination of Child Labor, European Council, EU, United States Agency for International Development, the European Commission, the British Council, United Nations Office for Project Services, International Organization for Migration Save the Children, U.S. Embassy, Austrian Embassy, German Embassy, Italian, Greek Embassy, etc.

An important organization beginning to make an impact was the MJAFT! Movement. International Volunteer Projects (PVN) which is a civil society organization that focuses on environmental issues, integration of migrated communities from rural areas, raising awareness about youth issues and working with socially disadvantaged young people had also its own importance. Strengthening Student Participation in Southeast Europe operates one organization in Albania aimed at promoting a student network within

Southeast Europe and to increase student participation within universities by advocating for student needs, academic preparation, improved student mobility inside the country, and improved student cultural and entertainment life. Finally, UNICEF works with the Albanian government to develop and implement youth-friendly social policy, advocacy, and research and information distribution.

In the Croatian case one of the youth organizations is National Youth Council which has the mission that young people in Croatia should participate in decision-making processes which affect quality of their life using e-democracy and digital economy infrastructure (CNYC, 2015). Another youth organization is the Youth Network which tries to raise awareness among young people about active and responsible participation in society through networking and empowering youth organizations and individuals, co-creates and advocates quality youth policies at the local, national and international level and puts youth rights on the social agenda, contributes to the development of civil society through shaping and implementing policies related to the development of civil society (On Croatia's Youth Network, 2015). It is being understood that Albanian youth is more likely to engage in youth organizations more than the Croatian youth which did not have such a higher number of organizations.

4 Chapter 4: Case Study Albania

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is focused only at the Albanian case by giving a detailed explanation of the results of the interviews. The interviews were made to ten members of four main political parties in Albania, respectively the Democratic Party, the Socialist Party, the Social Movement for Integration and the New Democratic Spirit. The interviews were conducted via internet by sending to all these people the structured interview with open questions. In this way they could all express their opinions freely without limiting their thoughts by giving closed questions by alternatives.

Apart from the analysis of interviews, some cases when youth is part of decision making are explained. Main young political figures are involved too in order to show that Albanian youth was part of high political leadership positions and also had influence over the Albanian political life. For instance, young people that are part of Albanian government have a voice for the needs and requests of Albanian youth.

4.2 Analysis of the Interviews

The process of interviewing the members of political parties has actually a small target group for reason that it is only done to explain the current situation of the youth forum of main Albanian political forces. There were asked 5 questions to 10 members of each of four youth political forums. The first question consisted on the position in the youth political forum. This question was formulated in order to find out in what position are the members positioned. The second question was followed with the information requested about their duties. Respectively their duties should be accordingly to their positions. The third question consisted on asking if they were active enough in their

youth political forum. The third question was about the reasons that stood behind their activation in the youth forum. The last question was if the youth political forum that they were members represented their ideals or not.

Firstly, the question which is about the position in the political party, most of the Albanian young people are members of the youth forums. Just few of them have more organizational positions within the youth forum. The second question consisted on the duties that each of the respondents had according to their positions. For all youth forums there exists a formal hierarchy of positions like followings: the head of youth forum, the deputy head of it, the general secretary and members. According to different cities, there exists the same hierarchy but for the electoral zones of that city. The same hierarchy is applied for the management of students in different universities (if that city has or not). All four main political parties had hierarchical system. An interesting finding is that in LRI youth is very eager to attract new members in their forum. This was seen at the duties that the current members had. Also in the other forums this phenomena happened, but more concerning with the idea of having an organized youth forum. In all youth forums, some of them had the duty to organized events in order to raise awareness and attract Albanian young people. But during the election period, most of them had to stick different posters and to deliver leaflets. The third question consisted on how much they were active in the youth forum. It is very interesting how much willing are the members of the NDS youth forum to be active because they want to raise awareness of the people that they exists as a consolidated youth forum. LRI members seem also very active, because this youth forum is always updating its agenda for new events like parties, receptions, seminars and summer camping. Lately, FRESSH is doing the same thing as LRI, seen this from the answers of the respondents. Also FRPD is trying to be very active, to have also a strong opposition in terms of youth forums. The fourth question

consisted on the reasons behind the activation within the youth forum. It is very interesting, even though we know the current situation that the coalition forces SP and SMI, respectively their youth forums, try to make active their members against a possibility to have a job position. During the election period, they work very hard in all duties given, to pull the attraction of main leaders, in order to have some recommendations for future jobs. This phenomenon is highly seen at these youth forums, but also the FRPD sometimes uses this way to attract people and to misuse their energy and contribution at this forum. The last question is about if the political party that they represent (for instance the youth forum) their ideals. Most of the respondents, from all the youth forums, were explaining that the youth forum tries to be a mutual voice for the Albanian youth, tries to deliver to the government the needs and requests that they have and also builds a bridge of communication with the civil society and also with the government. Few of members of the FRPD answered that they were member of this youth forum because it highly represented their democratic ideals and with the interpretation that Albania should have a well-constructed democracy.

Finally, an analysis of all should be done but in comparative mode. All youth political parties of the SP, DP, SMI and NDS have the same organizational hierarchy by having same leadership positions. Another mutual feature is that all of them try to organize events where more young people can come and grab with themselves their friends too. Also, somehow the duties of the members are the same by mentioning here that members deliver leaflets, posters and other material that advertise the political party and even their relevant electoral program. The LRI apparently tries more to attack Albanian youth by different ways like for example in summer with summer camps at the seaside of Albanian south. The youth of LRI is active because by fulfilling their duties they might have the chance to find a job position since the fact that SMI is always on

position because of coalitions. The FRPD has the youth which has strong persuasion on the ideals of having a democratic state, and currently having a strong opposition to point out the problems of the current government which is led by the SP and SMI. Meanwhile the youth of NDS is composed by those young people who are disappointed by all three main youth forums. They tend to have the ideals of bringing a new spirit but lately this ideal changed because of the coalition of SP with NDS.

4.3 Albanian Youth

The foundation of Friedrich Ebert has published 2 years ago a study about the thoughts of Albanian youth based on a study done in the whole country. According to this study, youth does not seem to have an influence from the events because they are sceptical about the most of the questionnaire. According to "Voice of America" the study has found that over the 50% of the youth they are willing to emigrate abroad and approximately the same percent think that the economic improvement of Albania in the future 10 years will be modest, however according to them Albania could be member of European Union in the future decade.

More than half of the youth is willing to leave the country. It cannot be imagined. In a country where it is supported by the young generations, half of the youth wants to leave. It is better to be a waiter in Italy than a car washer in Albania, they think- says Frank Hantke, director of the foundation Friedrich Ebert. -This is extraordinary. They think that their country does not offer opportunities to the young generation, even though most of them are in Albania. (Translated from Albanian by the author of this study) (DuresLajm.com, 2013).

Within a lot of questions over the family, generation, society and education, the youth expresses skepticism over politics. Only 10% of them are interested in politics and the same percentage thinks that their vote has the importance in the way that the local government is governed. Albanian youth is also very active in elective processes: they

take part in electoral campaign and 93% of them vote regularly, but only 3% of them feel themselves represented in politics.

Young people do not trust politics, they do not trust any political organization, they do not trust anyone-says Frank Hantke, the representative of the foundation- The youth does not trust political parties, but they become members of them just to find job, but this is a clean pragmatism. This is the problem in Albania. They do not trust their skills but they need to find job. They know that things are not in the right direction, but the only way is to have a job position to be involved in this reality, or they will be not involved at all. In west countries, the opposite thing happens, the youth has their own chances in their own hands-he says. (Translated from Albanian by the author of this study) (DurrësLajm.com, 2013).

The desire in voluntary engagement in community is 16% and most of them think that non-governmental organizations are just source of money and they see them as way of finding job again.

For the sociologists in meeting is paradoxical the fact that Albanian youth is pro and massive emigration abroad and do not trust in politics and public administration, but on the other hand over 50 % of them say that they would like to find a job position at the public administration, and this tendency tends to grow while they are older and have more education.

Albanian youth on the other hand shows that is very connected to the family. Over 80% of them, rich or poor, live with their parents. On the other hand this study shows that over 60% of them have the same political preferences as their family members. The most important source of the information about youth is television, meanwhile the internet is used just for entertainment for 80% of them, and only 20% of them use it for work purposes. This study of the foundation is the first that shows in details their psychology and their ideas by interviewing them for every dilemma they have.

This section about Albanian youth is also giving as example the youngest deputy that Albania government had. Referring to Kejdi Mehmetaj, she was a young activist at LRI since in high school. In 2013 she was appointed as deputy in Albanian parliament, as a representing the SMI. Even though her educational background was about engineering, she was very willing to be the voice at the Albanian parliament, of the youth. Mehmetaj was very active at the LRI, and gained the full attention of the leaders like Ilir Meta and Monika Kryemadhi. As a consequence, she began to show herself on TV with the consent of the SMI, and today she is raising her voice not only for the youth of her political party, but also for all Albanian youth.

Erion Veliaj is one of the young people which were influential in Albanian political life. Currently he is the mayor of the capital city of Albania, Tirana. He finished the studies for Political Sciences in United States of America at Grand Valley State University and then the master degree in United Kingdom at University of Sussex for the same major but focused on the European integration. Veliaj entered in politics by his engagement in the civil society, international organizations and media. For this reason, in 2003 he founded the “MJAFT” movement that unified the protest and activist feeling and spirit of the Albanian youth for the first time in the Albanian history. In 2004 he won a price from the UN for the civil society. This movement was leaded by him until 2007. After that Veliaj joined the initiate for the European stabilization which is a key point in promotion of the deepening of EU. After that in 2011 Erion Veliaj decided to join the leadership of the Socialist Party as the secretary for youth and emigration. In the parliamentary elections of 2013 he was elected as deputy of Gjirokaster District. After that he was appointed as the minister of Social Welfare and Youth. The local elections of this year gave him the chance to be the mayor of the capital city of Albania (BIRN, 2015).

4.4 Conclusion

This is the main chapter because it analyses the case by going into details which are gathered from the results of the interviews. For the study of this topic, an interview was conducted via internet to 10 members of the four main political parties in Albania, for instance SP, DP, SMI and FRD. This interview had a small target group just in order to explain what is the current situation in Albania and what does actually the Albanian youth do while engaging in youth political forums.

From the results, it is noticed that young people are very active in youth forums, some all the time and some occasionally during elections. There are reasons the respondents that they are part of the youth forums because it represents their ideals which is also related with the last question. It seems like youth likes to be an active member of political youth forums.

Another aspect which this chapter covers is the example of two young influential Albanian political figures. Apart from this another study is showed in order to describe the thoughts that Albanian youth has. Firstly the case of Kejdi Mehmetaj is mentioned, which is the youngest deputy in the Albanian assembly. She is the representative of SMI and also represents the youth of LRI. She used to be an activist at LRI and climbed the stairs of career by making herself very successful and currently she still is a deputy in the parliament. Secondly, the figure of Erion Veliaj is taken as example because he was the first young person to found an organization which would make change in Albanian civic life. With a western education, he knew how to show his potentials in Albania and how to climb the stairs of career to end up currently as the mayor of Tirana. These young people should be as example for all young people because each of young people

should use their potential skills and education also in order to make some radical changes in Albania to be a member of EU.

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was focused on Albanian youth by trying to investigate the reasons behind the youth engagement in politics. The main research question was “how does Albanian youth engage in politics?” Regarding the research purpose, the topic is mainly descriptive due to the fact that my research question is to describe and go deeper the reasons which are behind the youth engagement in politics. It is also to some extent it is also explanatory because there are several actors which affect the involvement or non-involvement of Albanian youth in politics. The research strategy refers to the case study of this research which is the case of Albania. Going on to the research approach it is a qualitative research because this study tries to investigate the behaviour of Albanian youth in terms of their political engagement. Some statistical data are taken from secondary sources which give information about the interest of youth about politics and also about their involvement in political life. In other words, it is both quantitative study and also qualitative because the analysis is mixed with the data in order to make an accurate study.

The thesis was composed in five main chapters which explained in detail the topic. Each of these chapters concluded a finding which was related to the research question. The four approaches of the youth engagement in politics bring facts about Albanian youth political behaviour. Historical backgrounds have their own impact too. The past was very important to be mentioned because it left some traits at the future of Albanian politics. The findings are interesting because it was noticed that Albanian youth are active in politics and somehow interested on it but in different forms. Firstly they are very active by being member of political parties’ youth forums. According to this there are 4 main youth forums like FRESSH, FRPD, LRI and youth forum of New

Democratic Spirit party. The Albanian youth is part of these youth forums by being based on their political sympathy and their own interests. The following engagement was during the election period where the youth is influenced by the political campaign and is active on voting. Also they are active in general by being passive, like being member at youth forums or even civic life but active in following the latest developments of the Albanian politics. The last form is by being active in civic life through different organizations which are non-governmental or even international ones.

Another important finding is resulted from the comparison of Albanian youth engagement with the one of Croatian. The idea is give again the overview of the ways that Albanian youth engages in politics with the Croatian youth. The state of Croatia is taken in consideration for several reasons like: it is a member of EU, it is located at the same region with Albania, for instance Balkan Region, it is a Parliamentary Republic and also that the historical backgrounds of these two states are similar due to the fact that are former communist countries. Another reason for this comparison is to see if Albania meets the standards of a member of EU. The comparison is done properly to show the ways they are engaged in politics but in different ways. In both cases they are involved in politics through the youth forums of political parties. Some of the youth are members of political youth forums whereas some of them which have a considerable age and experience are part of the board of that certain political party. In Albanian case, there are four main youth forums like FRESSH, FRPD, LRI and Youth forum of FRD. In the case of Croatia there were two main youth forums SPD and MHDZ. The second way of engagement is during the election period. In both cases, during the election period, youth is being active in several ways, like by being members of youth forums or by being part of different events that they organize. The third way of engagement is in general which means that youth is interested in politics somehow even though is not

active in political parties. In Albanian case, young people are not much interested in the political developments abroad, as only 16.3% of them are interested in political developments in the Balkans and only 15.1% of them are interested in the developments at the international level. Just 61.4% of the Albanian young people have political views that are generally or nearly complaint to the views of their parents (Cela, Fshazi, Mazniku, Kamberi, & Smaja, 2013, pp. 171-172). In Croatian case, referring to Euro barometer, only 6% of respondents claim that they are part of political organization and 12% claim that they are part in different youth organizations. The last form of engagement in politics is through the civic life. It is being noticed that in Albania there exist a lot of governmental and non-governmental organizations and also national and international ones. In the Croatian case on of the youth organizations is National Youth council which has the mission that young people in Croatia should participate in decision-making processes which affect quality of their life using e-democracy and digital economy infrastructure (CNYC, 2015). Another youth organization is the Youth Network which tries to raise awareness among young people about active and responsible participation in society through networking and empowering youth organizations and individuals, co-creates and advocates quality youth policies at the local, national and international level and puts youth rights on the social agenda, contributes to the development of civil society through shaping and implementing policies related to the development of civil society (On Croatia's Youth Network, 2015). It is being understood that Albanian youth is more likely to engage in youth organizations more than the Croatian youth which did not have such a higher number of organizations.

The case study is the main part of the thesis. It explains in detail the interview conducted and its results. There were selected four main political parties, SP, DP, SMI

and youth forum of NDS. For each party 10 people were asked through internet. From the results, it is noticed that young people are very active in youth forums, some all the time and some occasionally during elections. The reasons of the respondents who have answered that they are part of the youth forums is because it represents their ideals which, is also related with the last question.

Finally, the main results from this study are that Albanian youth tends to be active in political life of Albania. Their engagement is reflected in the four main approaches which are engaged in youth political forums, in civic life, during elections and in general. Meanwhile, all this engagement has reasons behind which are reflected from the interviews done to them. The main reason is to have opportunity of a job vacancy. Whereas the comparison with the Croatian youth shows that Albanian youth is engaged as much as Croatian youth and in some cases (like in civic life) more.

Suggestions for this topic would be like raising awareness of Albanian youth to make them more active in the political life. Youth has power, energy and an innovative vision which the Albanian politics is in need. Also by engaging more young people no place for the old politicians (which are active since communism regime) would be left and in this case the transition period of Albania would be continuing but with bigger steps. As for the future aspects, Albanian youth seems very eager and attracted from politics. The next generation of politicians will be with those young people who used to be active in different youth forums. Somehow, these youth forums and youth organisations seem like an educational political institution to them by preparing them to be the next influential deputies, prime ministers or even presidents.

My suggestions would be the same as the mentioned above but I would add that youth should have a self-actualisation to be engaged in politics not only for their own personal

interests but firstly because it is a duty of each citizen which has the right capacity to contribute for the well-being of the community or country. Somehow, this is in hands of the youth political forums because they tend to attract them by a job position not because they might have the right potential.

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