

ALBANIAN YOUTH 2011

“Between Present Hopes and Future Insecurities!”

Alba Çela

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**FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG**

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FOREWORD

“The Albanian Youth 2011” is a novel study trying to shed light on the Albanian youth stances vis-à-vis the current Albanian society values.

This publication is an initiative of the German “Friedrich Ebert” Foundation (FES), supported by German and Albanian professors. It is special in its kind as it aims at providing a general reflection of the stances of Albanian youth on certain issues like the family, religion, society, education, employment, leisure time or their views on Albania’s relationship with other regional and EU countries. The study is a testimony of the youth representation level vis-à-vis international development and changes undergone by the Albanian society.

“The Albanian Youth - 2011” study is methodologically complete and aims at being widely used from people having an interest on views of the Albanian youth. The study is simple to read, while its structure provides the necessary spaces to have an in-depth treatment of issues covered by different chapters. In addition, the national survey the study is based into sheds light on the developing values of the young people, which are not often times conceived in the same way by the rest of the society. The study provides a good coverage of stances of young people coming from both urban and rural areas, belonging to all genders, educational or economic levels and various age groups.

When we decided to conduct this study we knew that we had a long and a challenging road ahead. Frequent meetings with experts, where ideas were confronted and long discussions held on the findings, or on what we later called “novelties”, and on the contradictions identified in the answers provided by the young people, were a tremendous value to this initiative. To this end, we highly appraise the extraordinary advice from Prof. Dr. Klaus

Hurrelman, a Professor at the Hertie School of Governance in Germany and one of the co-authors of a study called "Jugendstudie", focusing on the German youth and funded by SHELL Company. He has been present since the very first steps of the initiative for drafting such a study for Albania. After making an assessment of the needs in the country, we got convinced that this study could be an entrepreneurship trying to shed light on the real situation. From this point of view, we are convinced that we have tried to provide the most authentic testimony possible of the social and ideology phenomena of the various youth age groups of the Albanian society.

The study refers to the current reality of Albania, which still is part of a prolonged transition. In such stage, it is natural that the Albanian youth is somehow unsustainable when it comes to stances on social, economic, political and inherited values. The Albanian reality is confronted with rapid changes, therefore FES's ambition is to make a reassessment of these stances at a later stage in time.

Through this study, the "Friedrich Ebert" Foundation aims at providing a platform for debate where everybody has his or her space to reflect upon and to change in relations with the young people. This report is a reference point vis-à-vis the system of values remained or changing in the road of the Albanian society towards the European and the global integration. From this angle, selection of the Albanian youth as the subject of this study aims at filling the gap of publications of this nature in the country and at serving as a background for other publications of the future focusing on the Albanian youth. This makes us proud of our ambition, in hopes that this publication shall serve as an additional asset in the fund of publications for this subject matter in Albania.

FES Coordinator

Jonida Smaja

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“The youth of a Nation are the trustees of posterity.”

By the renowned English politician and novelist Benjamin Disraeli

Which is the identity of Albanian youth today? Who are the trustees of Albania's posterity?

Which are the features, characteristics, peculiarities, benefits and shortcomings of the Albanian youth? How do they spend free time, how do they behave with the relatives and with friends? What do the young people dream of in Albania and what is it that worries them the most? Are they tolerant, or do they easily fall prey of prejudice? Do they appreciate novelties, or do they mainly fall prey of the “traditional”? Are they satisfied and do they feel represented by the politically elected people and what is their opinion of the current government of the country? Do they see Albania in Europe as their predecessors of the 90s?

The variety of replies coming in answers of the above-referred-to questions is fully justified with the natural attention that should be cast to the ones in charge of the future of the country. What plans and projects do young people have? What shall future be like, according to their opinion? This analysis on the current situation, seen from their world, reflection, feelings and opinions is indeed an exercise in predicting the future.

This study is an effort to give subsequent replies to the above questions, unfolding them in an analytical manner through qualitative and quantitative data.

Naturally so, the study starts with the chapter **“The youth and the community: beliefs and values.”** The reason why this chapter is the first one in the study is related to the fact that belief plays a major role as a simplifier

of joint experiences and is the basis of every interaction both with the young people and with the adults. Initially the chapter reflects a panorama of the level of force of belief of the Albanian young people in relations with other stakeholders in the society. Second, it examines various discrimination factors the young people are confronted with and various forms of discriminations they show against others. Lastly, this part of the study analyses some of the major values serving as orientation points for the young people and the level of their commitment in support of the community. This part includes as well an analysis of the religious belief as a key form of dependency.

Through the question about defining the trust the young people have in different groups, we have managed to get an assessment on their general horizontal trust level. It implies the trust in citizens, not conditional to hierarchy, but established on a casual manner from the various economic and social interactions.¹

In some previous studies related to horizontal trust in Albania, results have shown of a low-trust society, often times suspicious of things. The current study on the Albanian youth shows that the general level of trust beyond family and relative structures is still low. The family, followed by the relatives, is the main source of trust for the absolute majority of young people. This is a conclusion reached even by a study of the Institute for Democracy and Mediation, which emphasizes that "trust on the family and relatives is [in Albania] in relatively high levels, feeding a clan-based mentality, which seems to not support the trust in public institutions"². Compared to the general values of horizontal trust in Europe, Albania seems to have more skeptical young people than other countries in Europe. According to the latest survey conducted in EU, one on three young people in Europe trusts the citizens of his/her country.³ The radical change of trust in different stakeholders, while the range of interaction gets beyond blood connections, is a characteristic many scholars

¹ The definition is generalized by "modernization, cultural change and democracy", Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzer, Cambridge University Press 2005.

² "Social trust and institutional authority in the Albanian democracy", IDM: Tirana, 2011. The report can be found at: <http://idmalbania.org/social-trust-and-institutional-authority-albanian-democracy-0>

³ "United Dreams of Europe", Foundation for Future Studies (Hamburg) 2011, p.220.

attribute to the consequences of the communist system. According to them “the citizens of post-communist societies trust their relatives and friends more, and the people in general less.”⁴ Therefore, the Albanian young people have an average level of trust in their friends and colleagues, a low level of trust in people with a different religious background and different political convictions and a very low level of trust in their neighbors, which shows of their very weak connection with the communities they are a part of.

Prejudice seems to be a fundamental characteristic of the Albanian youth. While found in face of an important experiment during the survey, encouraged to think of the scenario of a different hypothetical neighborliness, they reported they would be welcoming to all, despite their ethnic, regional or economic distinctions. This case is an exception to the discriminating attitude shown for the ones having a different sexual orientation. From their replies, it was remarked that most of the young people would not welcome a couple of homosexuals living close to them. Men were in particular very objecting to such a scenario. However, the same situation is also remarked in the outcomes of the World Survey of Values, where homosexuality is unacceptable according to 85% of the answers in 1998 and to 93% of the answers in 2002.

On the other hand, the data of this Chapter show that about 16 percent of the young people were prey of discrimination, while the family and regional background are considered as key factors having led to discrimination. In addition they have reported even other rare episodes or instances rooted on religion and political dependency, as well as the respective level of education and less the economic status or gender.

About values, the youth consider as of most importance such values as personal dignity, tolerance and correctness, while other values as the creativeness, enrichment and competition are mentioned as such only by a minority of young people.

Speaking of social commitment, according to the survey, only 16 percent of the young people were involved in voluntary activities in the last year

⁴ Sapsford R, Abbott, P., “Trust, confidence and social environment in post communist societies”, *Frontiers of sociology*, Sweden, 2005. f.14.

in Albania. Similar figures are also reported in the Civil Society Index of 2010, where 18 % of the respondents reported they have contributed with voluntary work, while the same number of respondents reported that they are part of different organizations having a social profile.⁵ The low level of voluntarism is often explained as a reaction to forced voluntary labor during communism in Albania. Even though perception on voluntarism in general should have been affected by the experiences and memories of the past, it is not enough to explain why the young people up to the age 27, who have either not lived in the time of communism, or lived for a few years under the regime, are not interested and not willing to take part in the voluntary activities.

The relationship of young people with religion shows the changes the Albanian society has undergone over the last twenty years, following a long period of compulsory atheism. The young people declaring they are atheists, or not practicing a certain religion are just a handful. Most of the young people relate themselves with one of the main religious beliefs in the country; however, these figures do not necessarily show the intensiveness of practicing of religious rites. One of the most interesting data in this regard is the practice of visiting a sacred place belonging to another belief, an experience underwent by over half of the Albanian young people.

Stemming from the fact that the main hearth of belief and dependency of youth is the family, the study gets in more depth of analyzing the data showing the progress of relations, behaviors and dependency of their relations, behaviors and stances on the families. This includes the source families – that is the families of their parents, and the future families – that is the families they expect of establishing in the future.

The chapter on **"Relations with the family and social connections"** focuses mainly on the stance of the Albanian young people on the family and the way they perceive ties with their social networks. In general we see that they consider their birth families and the families they aim at establishing

⁵ Civil Society Index for Albania 2010, Civicus and IDM http://idmalbania.org/sites/default/files/publications/CSI%20Albania%20ACR_ENG.pdf

in the future upon marriage as an important social institution. The survey outcomes show that despite the difficulties the Albanian family is encountered with during the prolonged socio-economic transition, it has still remained a place where young people feel protected and safe vis-à-vis the numerous insecurities offered by the everyday reality. Inclinations for early detachments from the “source” family and the start of an independent life are still weak due to the economic incapacities and the difficult reality, transforming the family into a “social cushion”, mitigating the negative consequences and problems they might feel as confronting with the difficulties of daily routine.

Following several questions, the groups of young people chosen at the national level have expressed through their answers their appreciation on the role of their family and the weight it plays in making important decisions. Despite various changes our macro and micro environment has gone through and where the current Albanian family operates, the Albanian young people consider it as the safest shelter and one of the safest elements for their emotional well-being. All the social categories of the interviewed youth vis-à-vis the level of incomes, geographical distribution or descend from the urban or rural areas show their appreciation of the family, a continuity of tradition which seems to not be affected by the above dependency. The young people, through answers provided to the survey, assert that the role the family plays on their important decision-making processes is more than evident, in particular the role of the father, as a testimony of the yet considerable weight of this institution in the Albanian family. Speaking of the other aspects related to the assessment of young Albanians towards relations in a couple and the institutions deriving from them, such as cohabitation or marriage, they prefer the later as a better alternative to cohabitation, again showing of an inclination of a traditional relation in a couple. Despite the changes the Albanian society has gone through, the answers of young people show that they are not relieved from regional, religious and wealth descend when it comes to their future spouse. Their personality and compliance of opinions are amongst the main elements of relevance to them, but the look is also of importance to them, considering it an indicator of physical beauty young people are growingly introduced with through the

media, films and models of success.

This chapter does somehow extend the interest circuit, shedding light on the social relations as well. The survey data show that the Albanian youth have friendly ties with their peers, which shows of a social interaction encouraged even further by the presence in such venues as pubs, bars, fitness centers and the soccer fields. In general, the youth chosen for the survey report of a high presence in violent acts in such social venues like the neighborhood, pubs, fitness grounds, etc., but do also report of a greater participation of violence in the school venues. This is an important indicator reassessing the school role as one of the most important social micro-environments following the family related with aspects of youth behavior and stances.

Main venues youth meet with the reality and start thinking of their future are the education institutions and the job placement. Education is the major activity of young people, while participation in education is a crucial indicator of possibilities for country's development, while employment remains a natural and major challenge for them. It is for this reason that one of the main chapters of the study is dedicated to **"Education and Employment"**, focusing on stances and behaviors of the young people to employment in the coming years.

In this chapter, data from the survey show clearly that women make up for most of the young population attending schools. Overpopulation of schools by girls versus boys progresses proportionately with progression of the level of education. Also, higher education remains high in the list of priorities of most of the Albanian young people. Eight out of ten young people report that they are already attending or planning to attend higher education. Even in this regard, women show of a stronger will and insistence to reach this objective, for as long as 84.7 % of them report that they wish to continue higher studies vis-à-vis 72% of men reporting the same thing.

The relationship of Albanian young people with the school and the learning process is clearly reflected in the data reflecting the time they

dedicate to learning. The Albanian youth spend on average 2 hours and 43 minutes a day for learning, while boys dedicate less time to learning than girls. The data of the survey shows that most of the boys, about 62.5 percent, spend less than two hours for learning; in addition, about 35 percent of the boys report they spend less than one hour to learn, while only 24.4 percent of girls spend less than two hours to get prepared for school. The distinction between boys and girls becomes more evident amongst those spending more than three hours a day for learning, where boys are reported to make up for 15.7 percent of this category, while girls cover 42.7 percent of such category.

Consequently, it might be asserted that education is more important to girls, considering it as a means to fulfill their aspirations or to have a better life. This is shown not only from the school years, but even by the time spend by girls to study, which ranges on average to 3 hours and 14 minutes as opposed to 2 hours and 12 minutes for boys. Most of the Albanian youth see school as a rewarding experience, but young people from the rural areas seem to appraise this experience more than their peers.

For as long as education is related to outcomes and education of the youth, the survey data show that half of the interviewees have average achievements in school, getting mostly 7s and 8s, a part belongs to the high level achievers, having mostly 9s and 10s, while one third belongs to the low level achievers having mostly marks lower than 6. In such case, there is a natural connection between the time spend for studying and the results attained, where boys are the majority in the first threshold of marks, covering 43.6 of this category, as opposed to girls covering 16.3 percent of such category, while girls prevail in the medium and high level categories, covering respectively 52 and 45.1 percent as opposed to boys.

The Albanian youth have a high perception of corruption in education through forms of “bribes for marks”, or “buying of exams” in Universities. As a result, over 90 percent of the ones going to school report that the phenomenon of bribes in exchange of better marks in exams is present

in their schools or universities frequently, occasionally, or rarely.

About employment, the Albanian youth are not very optimistic on the job opportunities in the future. Only 54.9 percent of them believe that they will find a job after school, while 30.7 percent of the young people do not believe that they will find a job soon. However, in all the years of country's transition, the public administration and the other institutions which staff are paid by the state budget has significantly reduced, while almost half of the Albanian youth would wish to find a job in this sector.

Speaking of the factors that might help them in finding a job, they trust more in personal connections and friends, while professional skills, education or political affiliations come afterwards. Amongst the decisive factors promoting them to find a job, the first is the salary/income, second comes the sustainability of the job, satisfaction from it, and the possibility to work for people they like comes at the end.

Although the concern for a job is significantly one of the major concerns among the young people, it is not the only thing they worrying about. The Chapter on **"Concerns and Aspirations"** focuses on some interesting aspects of the Albanian youth related with their concerns, reactions, but even with their aspirations for the future. In this Chapter the replies they provide frequently become contradictory and unclear. For instance, although they are optimistic for the future of the country, in most of the cases they want to migrate to other countries; although they think that in life one needs to have well-defined goals and objectives, they say the last say is on the luck and on the support of the relatives.

About 90 percent of the Albanian youth think that in the 10 coming years the situation in the country will get improved. As already mentioned above, this optimism seems to run contrary with the figure of 70 percent of the young people wishing to leave Albania. The wish to migrate is related with several other elements, hence the wish for a better education is equally important to the economic reasons,

listing at the end motives related to tourism, familiarization with other cultures and civilities. England is listed from them as the most desired country for having a good education, while the best preferred country for migration keeps being Italy.

In addition to the idea of having a better life abroad, the youth consider migration in the country, mainly towards urban zones, such as the capital, as a possibility to handle their difficulties and concerns. The phenomenon of internal migration is on the decrease, but it is nonetheless present in the rural areas of the country. About 43 % of the youth would like to change their place of domicile, while a considerable inclination is remarked to moving towards Tirana.

While speaking of the appreciation of moral norms by the youth, such as values and features similar to courage, optimism, accompaniment or openness, there are minor changes based on gender, regions, ages or economic level. About 70 % of young people consider the presence or respecting of moral norms as very important for the operation of the society in general. However, the individual motto more than 80% of the Albanian youth believe into is "He who dared, wins!" On its turn, this is related with clear and well-defined aims in life, which the young people consider of a great importance. However, they do not exclude the element of "luck" in life, while over 60% of them think that it is determinant for the course of life and the one has to rely on luck to get what it offers to you.

Even though most of them have a positive appraisal of the future of the country, they say that everything in the country is unsafe therefore, there is no point in setting objectives. Thus, the main mechanism of young people to get protected from the difficulties and to fulfill their dreams seems to be the establishment of a close personal network. For this reason, 90 percent of the youth think that in life one has to be surrounded by people whose support they trust.

But, while the young people think about and prepare themselves for the future, there are aspects of their current life which raise a lot of debates, in particular their leisure time, style of living and the collective phenomena

they produce. For this important space of their life the Chapter on **"Recreation, consumption and tendencies"** tries to provide a view on the activities the Albanian youth realize in their leisure time, what is in fashion for them, their main expenses and other details from their living style, including smoking, alcohol and sexual activity.

Music, television and browsing the Internet are the three main activities covering a considerable part of not only the youth time, but of their routine days in general. Spending on average three hours in front of the TV set and three other hours in front of the computer screens, it is evident that they remain with not much time to spend for activities in nature or for social activities. It is for this reason that their level of voluntarism and participation in other activities and sports have lowered.

Financial possibilities and location of their domicile are the two main factors having an impact on the kind of activities the young people spend their time with. That said, for certain activities, the gender aspect can also be transformed into a significant obstacle. The data show that young women have fewer possibilities to visit friends as compared to male peers. Another gender difference is remarked in the ways of spending leisure time. It seems that books are not good friends of male youths in Albania, while just a few women of this age practice sports. The most preferred TV programs for the Albanian youth are music and foreign films. More specifically, the boys prefer the action films and soccer games, while girls are very much after soap operas. In general, young people follow what happens via news, but most of them leave the TV screen when the famous political debates are launched.

New information technologies are being transformed into the main means the Albanian youth are resorting into for building another model of spending free time. Only a minor part of the young people in Albania does not have the possibility of navigate into the Internet. Internet is mainly used for leisure, while very little attention is paid to other practical aspects, such as work, information or management of personal finances. As their peers all over the world, most of the youth

are very much after social networks, the possibility to communicate through chat and listening to the latest videos in YouTube. Albanian youth think that the looks and the brand clothes as two major aspects, following the example of their peers in the world and reflecting the global power of the fashion marketing industry. As a result, the youth spend considerable amounts on their clothes and of other elements related to fashion, while spending on bars and coffee shops is one of the major spending trends.

Participation in politics and in other civil society organizations is considered as an outdated practice by young people, which is as well reflected in the very low level of voluntary organization, treated in more details in the following chapters.

Increased consumption of smoking and alcohol are now transformed into a routine for the Albanian youth. The data show that the young people are amongst the main smoking consumers, where figures for both male and female youth stand above the national average. Although men are the main alcohol consumers, it seems that at the week-ends both genders consume alcoholic drinks equally, especially in the capital, where most of the night life happens. Perception on alcohol divides the young people in two more or less similar groups – the first category being the ones considering it unacceptable and the second one composed of the ones accepting it, or considering it necessary in order to be able to be part of a social network.

Clashes between modernity and what the youth have inherited from traditional values are reflected in the opposition of their views on virginity. A considerable number of youth, especially men, consider virginity a value, while there is a considerable number of the ones considering it outdated, sometimes even considering it a psychological burden. Speaking of the sexual activity, most of the youth assert through answers provided that they have a regular partner, although a considerable part of male youth report experiences with different partners. In this framework, both this study and other previous studies of different natures reassess the need for wider and more extended

information campaigns related with the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases that might be caused from the unprotected sexual behavior that is a characteristic of the young people nowadays.⁶

Last chapters of the study do somehow displace attention to appraisal of the "micro-environment" issues by the youth, such as democracy, governance or the European integration of the country. In this regard the Chapter on "**Democracy and Governance**" represents a snapshot of interesting differences, where youth position themselves in front of the judgment on the political arena, discuss political commitment and representation, or express their opinion on how the country is governed. In this Chapter, the survey data reflect a significant concern of the Albanian youth on failure to enforce laws, as one of the major quality indicators for country's governance. Also, they appraise as important even those aspects of governance related to life security, focusing on the crimes in roads, which have a direct impact on their daily activities. However, through the answers provided, the Albanian youth report that they feel less at risk from dangers coming from HIV/AIDS or terrorist attacks stemming from the information they possess, or from the individual assessment they make on such phenomena.

One of the main elements directly related with their assessment on the governance is the high concern over unemployment, poverty and insecurity in the work place. Social categories of young people considering these elements as concerning vary and include even young people coming from families with a high income level, and the ones having university and post-university degrees. Anxiety and lack of sustainability of government policies related to development and rare opportunities, drive young people to be hesitant on their appraisal of the predictions for the future. Asserting that in the last ten years Albania shall have a modest economic development, the Albanian youth report of being optimistic and uncertain at the same time. On the other hand, the interest of the Albanian young people on the political developments in the country shows to be low. Only

⁶ According to the data of the Public Health Institute in Albania, the low use of the protection measures in Albania is a problem for all the diseases. <http://www.kohajone.com/zarticle.php?id=56785>

11 percent of the young people report they are very interested on political developments in the country, while male show a higher interest level than females. In the meantime, they are even less interested on the political developments abroad, where only a small group shows an interest on the developments in the Balkans and on international politics.

Television is the major source of information for the Albanian youth when it comes to political events, followed by the discussions with friends and relatives and the Internet.

The political convictions of the youth do widely comply with those of their parents, while two third of them assert that they share political views that are similar or very similar with the views of their parents. Young people report they are very active in electoral processes, taking an active part in each voting process, while only 8.3 percent of the ones already gaining the right to vote report they have never taken part in elections. However, they do not believe that their vote has any impact on the way the institutions are governed. Only one in ten young people believes that their vote has a major importance in the way how central government institutions are run. The situation is just a bit more optimistic in the perception for the local government elections, as 17.8 percent of the young people report that their vote has a major impact on how the municipality or the commune they live into is governed.

In face of such opinions, they also have a feeling of being unrepresented inappropriately in politics, although they make up for an important part of the Albanian society. Only a very small group of young people – that is 3.8 percent, feel highly represented from the youth in politics, one in three young people feels a bit represented, while another one in each three young people does not feel represented at all from the new politicians.

It is not coincidental, but instead symbolical that the chapter on **“Albania and the EU”** comes at the very end of the study. At the end of the ‘90s, the young people changing the political system shouted concurrently **“We want Albania as the rest of Europe”**! Albania’s integration process in the European Union is a wish and desire of all the Albanian society. The data

from this study show that this wish has very slightly changed amongst the youth. The Chapter contains a set of data related to the youth perception on benefits from the European Union in the potential membership case, their appraisal of the hitherto progress and the hypothesis on the potential time of Albania's membership in the EU.

In a hypothetical referendum on Albania's membership in the EU, 88.6 percent of the Albanian young people report they would vote in favor of this decision. Their ideas and reflections on Albania's membership in the EU affect not only aspects of free movement, but also aspects having an impact on the economic and political development of the country. Speaking of the perception on the commitment of the Albanian government in the membership process, although most of the young people think that a great deal is done in this respect, most of them say that Albania's membership in the EU is not expected of happening in less than ten years.

For the overwhelming part of the Albanian youth, the EU represents a package of freedoms and rights, but only a few of them have more detailed information on the obligations or the potential consequences from the membership process. For most of the interviewed youth, membership in the EU is related with the visa liberalization process, but even with an easier stay in the EU member countries. Although a part of the Albanian youth have some perception on the impact of Albania's membership in the EU, such as the use of EURO, again the majority part of them sees this process more at the level of benefits rather than of obligations.

In general, the conclusions of this study based on the national survey "The Albanian Youth 2011" data are just a "snapshot" of the behavior of the Albanian youth on various aspects. The study is just a starting point and is the first evidence towards a tradition, giving possibilities to institutions, academicians, parents, journalists to have an in-depth analysis of the most important group of the Albanian society.

CHAPTER I

YOUTH AND THE COMMUNITY: BELIEFS AND VALUES

“We are suspicious, but trust in the values of the past.”

Prepared by:
Alba Çela

1. Overview

The current Albanian society is defined as a society lacking trust, being suspicious and displaying a low level of horizontal trust. The World Values Survey of year 1998 and 2002 show that the overwhelming part of the respondents (respectively 66 percent in 1998 and 72 percent in 2002) are of the opinion that there is a need to be careful in the relations with other citizens, while not many think that there is a need to trust in people (about 24 percent in the two years).⁷ A study of 2010 by the Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS) provides interesting data on horizontal trust before and after country's transition to democracy. Asked on their assessment of the general level of trust of citizens in each-other, respondents answer that trust was rather high before the 90s. However, after the change of regime in the country – that is after 1990, 82 percent of the citizens report that they trust each-other a little or very little⁸. This low level of trust is accompanied by the same level of the voluntary civic commitment, which is often explained only partially as a reaction to voluntary work during communism in Albania.

In addition to the low trust, the Albanian society shows problems even in terms of its discrimination against other categories, be it because of gender, ethnic or economic reasons. Gender discrimination inherited from the patriarchal mentality of the Albanian society is present everywhere. In addition, media is active in showing incidents involving the Roma minority, a generally poor category having limited possibilities of benefitting from public services. However, homophobia, which seems to have engulfed

⁷ The World Values Survey, the third and the fourth wave, www.worldvaluessurvey.org

⁸ "Albania twenty years after fall of communism: reflections on the State and the Democracy". AIIS: Tirana, December 2010, p. 57-58. The study draws no age difference amongst the respondents.

most of the Albanian society, is a serious issue and has been referred as such in several different reports.⁹

Speaking of the religious faith, Albanians re-found religion after a long period of atheism, when believing in God was not allowed to them. The development of rituals, religious institutions and elements in Albania has recognized an extraordinary progression over the last two decades or so, but often times practicing of religion is interpreted as amere celebration of religion feasts once or twice per year, or as just visiting of the sanctuaries. According to the IIS, 30 percent of the citizens do never follow the rituals, 38 percent follow such rituals in special cases over a year, and only 22 percent follow them only a few times in a month.¹⁰ An interesting aspect is the practice of visits in a sacred place of the religion of "the other", an old and meaningful practice as well as a testimony of religious harmony that is a distinct feature for Albania.

What is visible from the study is the fact that the report highlights as the most "appreciated" values in the character and behavior of people the traditional values, such as honor, personal dignity, etc.commonly related to the character of people and less with their appearance.

Albanian youth live in a quickly changing environment, but their judgment and assessment on certain aspects of values and trust make up for a fundamental element of the way how they perceive the society they live into.

⁹ The Albanian Group of Human Rights reports that the Albanian homosexuals are confronted with "the lack of tolerance, with physical and psychological violence." – Balkan Insight, 24/06/2010.

¹⁰ "Albania – twenty years after the fall of communism", AIIS, p. 55. Same data are provided by a joint ORT/USAID report of 1998, according to which: 34 percent of Albanians follow region rituals only in special occasions, while 32 percent of them never follow religious rituals." Albania's Road to Democracy- A Fascinating country in Transition, p. 45

2. Main findings

- The Albanian youth trust their families the most. They have less trust in their neighbors.
- The two main factors of discrimination for the youth are their background (or descend) from rural areas (versus the city background) and their regional background.
- The Albanian youth are generally tolerant and open to different social groups, but they have a strong prejudice on homosexuals (they are homophobic).
- Only 16 percent of the young people are involved in voluntary activities.
- The most important values amongst the young people in Albania are personal dignity, tolerance and punctuality.
- About 80 percent of the youth identify themselves as having faith in a certain religion and only 1/5th of them report they are atheists.

Interesting findings

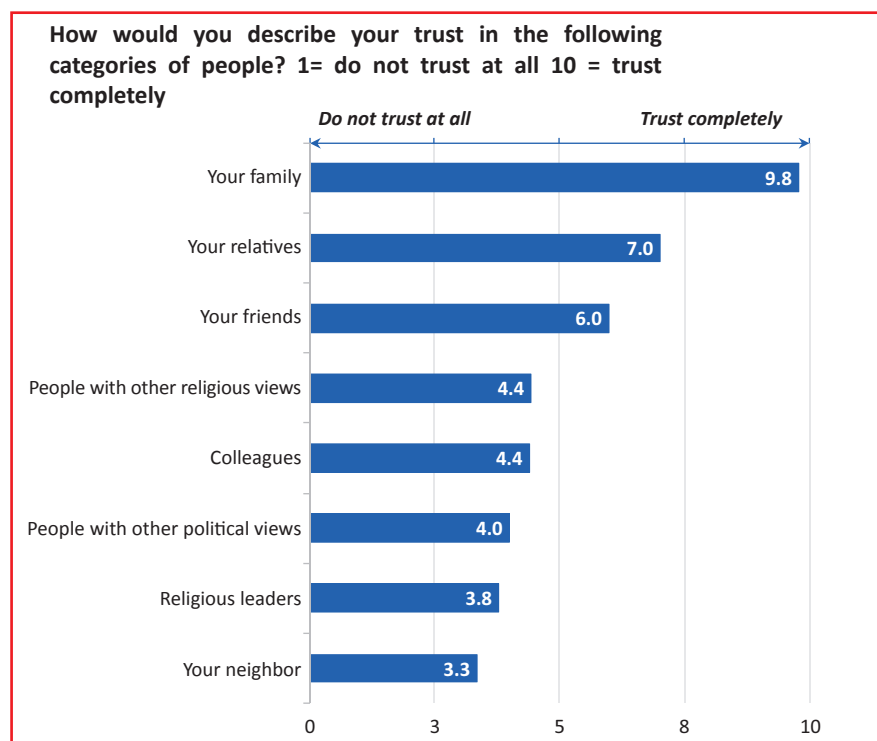
- *The trust of the young people from the capital in their neighbors is almost inexistent (almost zero).*
- *Most of the Albanian youth feel happier if they have a neighbor from a Western European country, or the USA, rather than from Albania.*
- *One in ten young people from the riche population strata are discriminated against because of their wealth.*

3. A detailed data analysis

3.1 Religion and dependency

In order to measure the level of trust of the young people in the different stakeholders present in their lives, they were asked to answer the questions from 1 to 10, where 1 represented a complete lack of trust and 10 represented an absolute trust. The following table illustrates the average answers provided by the respondents.

Graph no 1.



As it can be seen from the answers provided by the respondents (as shown above), the social groups can be classified in those the young people have a high trust in, those where they have a limited trust in and those groups the respondents are mostly suspicious about.

The ranking shows that young people trust their families most. The score is very close to the maximum limit (9.8 points), thus showing that young people do almost have an absolute trust in their families. Amongst the youth, there is not much difference in their level of trust in their families, although such trust is stronger in the rural areas. Thus, 92 percent of the respondents from rural areas report of having an absolute trust in their families, against 83 percent of the respondents living in Tirana reporting an absolute trust in their families. Compared to the general data of the World Values Survey, one can easily identify a continuity of the progress of the trust in families. In this survey, 92 percent of the respondents in 1998 and 87 percent of respondents in 2002 reported that love and respect for their families was sustainable and unconditional. Consequently, over 99 percent of the respondents in both surveys qualified their families “as very important”.

Trust in the relatives is also a substantial element. On a national average, allotting 7 out of the maximum of 10 points, the Albanian youth include relatives in groups of people they trust considerably. However, it should be highlighted that the first signs of lacking trust become evident the minute we get further from the close family circuit. In the case of the family members the lack of trust was almost zero. The same level of trust is also true in the case of relatives. The male respondents have a higher trust in their relatives (16 percent) versus the female respondents (10 percent).

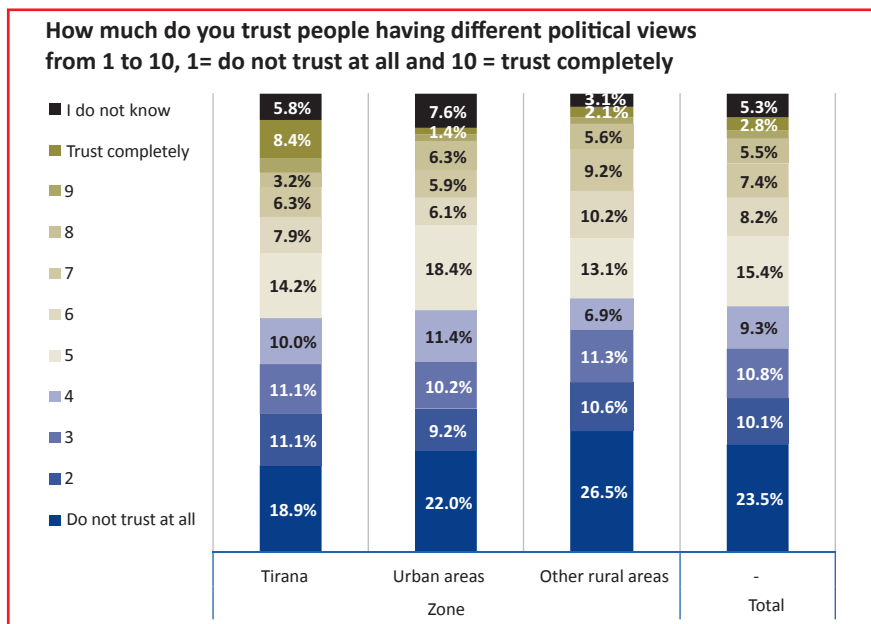
The national average is expressed by nearly 6 points out of a total of 10 points when it comes to the trust in friends. In this case, the respondents report of a medium-level trust in friends. We also see that there is a slight total suspicion in friends out of 7.2 percent of the respondents at the national level. Out of this group, the female respondents reporting a 0-level trust in their friends make up for 8.6 percent of the total respondents, versus 6 percent of male respondents reporting of 0 trust in their friends. Speaking of the ones having a full trust in their friends, 9 percent of male

respondents say that fully trust their friends, versus 6 percent of female respondents providing the same answer (11.4 percent of them). Compared to the general figures reported in previous years, it seems like there is an underestimation of friends, as the respondents taking part in the World Values Survey reporting that "friends are very important to them" have always been high in numbers (87 percent in 1998 and 84 percent in 2002¹¹).

The average level of trust in colleagues and collaborators at the national level is only 4.40 out of a total score of 10 points, thus showing a level of controlled suspicion by the respondents. If we consider gender-based differences, we see that only 3.8 percent of male respondents and 1 percent of female respondents have a full trust in their colleagues, while about 14 percent of youth have no trust in people they work with.

In addition, youth report doubtfulness even when it comes to relations with people belonging to other religions. For this category, the average value of trust is 4.43 out of 10. About 19.3 percent of the respondents report they have no trust in this category of people. Male respondents turn out to be more suspicious (21 percent) compared to female respondents (17.5 percent). The lack of the religious impact on the level of personal trust on others is higher in Tirana, where 13.2 percent of the respondents report they have no problem with the religion of other people and that they fully trust in people having a different religion. At the national level, only 4.8 percent of the respondents report of a full trust on this category of people, thus showing they are not affected by religion. We see that trust in people having another religion increases in parallel with a growing educational level of the respondents.

¹¹ The World Values Survey, the third and the fourth wave, www.worldvaluessurvey.org

Graph no 2.

Political differences and deepening of divisions amongst the Albanian society because of its chaotic transition and political crisis have left strong traces in the Albanian youth. Consequently, the trust of young people in the people sharing different political views from theirs is low, getting an average score of only 4 points out of the total of 10 points. Although one in four Albanian youth used to not have trust in the ones having a different political view from them, a slight change is seen in Tirana compared to the national average. Only one out of five people in Tirana does totally lack trust in someone having a different political orientation. In addition, the survey data on the youth of Tirana show that it is again in Tirana that the highest number of the respondents having full trust in others having a different political orientation from them and being least impacted by such factor are to be found. One of the major problems the young people come up with is empowerment of a certain political class at a certain time, leading to conditioning of the reciprocal trust amongst the ones having different political views and preferences. This situation derives from the approach of the political class on power, considering it (the power) as a game where the winner (of elections) gets everything and the loser loses everything.

"The pragmatic understanding" of friends having other political views

The youth seem to be pragmatic when it comes to their friends who share different political views. Although they accept they debate with those friends sharing different political opinions either frequently or occasionally, most of them report that they understand their peer's opinion because of the interest they find in politics. Such interest is either demonstrated in the possibility of gaining something, like getting a job or the fear of having their parents lose their jobs because of political issues.

Erlind explains that: "for the moment it is interest that leads one towards politics, while there is no division between the left and the right wing. It is mere interest or benefit from politics that encourages you to support a certain political party."

Bajonela says: "personal interest is the one that makes the difference in political views of friends."

Irena says: "friends with different political views behave in a certain way because they want to keep their jobs."

Kristi says: "one would normally serve to the party that keeps him in the job he has. I often go out with a friend having different political views from myself and tell him that his political bias is related to his narrow individual interests."

Ana says: "Many say they are democrats or socialists in order to maintain their jobs, or their parents' jobs. I often feel intimidated of having my mother be sacked if another party comes in power. I know it is not fair to have your views established in such way, but this is how it works."

Rudina says: "A classmate of mine is a party member. In such quality, she was given a task by her party, which made her even closer and a bigger fan of the party. She is so close to the party and has become totally blind to analyze even a party scandal impartially. In addition, she even makes fund of the scandals. I often debate with her about such issues, but I have no intension to quarrel about party affairs."

Erioni says: "A friend of mine dealing with political activities tells me he is politically active because he wants to get a job, although he knows it is not easy to find a job."

Alisia remarks: "Such types of relations between young people and politics are hypothetical, as they appear as left wing or right wing only for minor interests", - adding that: "there are people having a real interest in political parties."

Redion says: "It is a friendly obligation to understand the interest of your friend, for as long as such interest is related to the well-being of his/her family, including "use" of political views. Interest-based party affiliation is understandable when somebody has a family interest.

Dëshir says: "When one has no interests in politics, all friends are equal. It does not matter if your friends are Democratic Party or Socialist Party supporters."

The respondents accept the fatigue caused by the political conflict in the country, saying that their friends often debate just for the sake of having a (political) debate.

Irena says: "Political talks between my friends have gradually been reduced. "I hear too many people saying: Please do not talk of politics because we are fed up with it."

Arbër says very strictly that "I have no interest in speaking left-wing or right-wing politics with my friends."

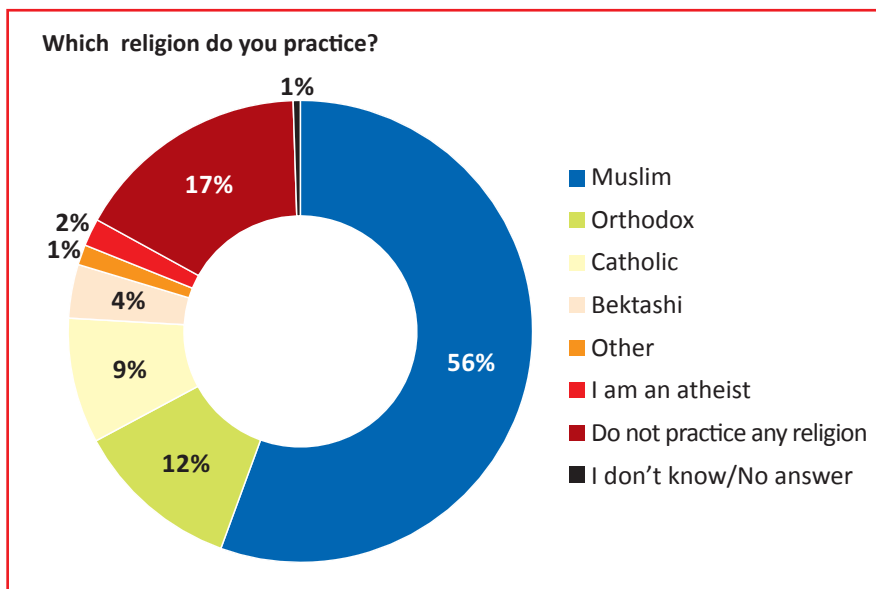
Redion says: "political debates were very hot until some time ago, but people see reality a bit differently now. They are less interested. Probably they have come to understand that all parties pretend they are quarreling with one-another in their name, although this is not really the case."

Relations with neighbors have always been an important indicator of the Albanian society, but new trends have appeared because of the deep socio-economic changes in the country. In this context, it is impressive to see that the Albanian youth show a high level of distrust in their neighbors, probably marking the most obvious change compared with the past, where neighborliness was considered as a strong connection of social, trust and communication ties. The average value of trust in neighbors is 3.35, thus being the lowest value out of any other category mentioned in the list of values. In general, 32.8 percent of the respondents answered that

they have no trust in their neighbors, which is higher in the capital with 42.6 percent of the respondents going in favor of this trend. The answers provided show that none of the young people in Tirana, or young people from rich families in other parts of the country have no full trust in their neighbors.

One of the factors having an impact on the level of trust in neighbors in Albania are demographic movements, especially migration, mainly migration from different part of the country to Tirana, migration from the north to the south, and migration from rural areas to urban areas. The change of the mosaic of neighbors has often led to communities having closer ties. Another striking element is the conflict because of condominium space, or of shared spaces between blocks of apartments. Weak neighborhood ties are also shown by the problematic administration of the condominium, especially in Tirana. In the meantime, property issues continue to keep this relation a hostage, especially in rural areas, where crimes between neighbors are frequent, mainly due to strong land-related conflicts.

Although there seem to be a revival of religion, in general, young people have no trust in religious leaders. The average value of faith is 3.78 out of 10. Hence 40 percent of the respondents report that they have no trust in the religious leaders, while only 8 percent report they have full trust in them.

Graph no 3.

Religion

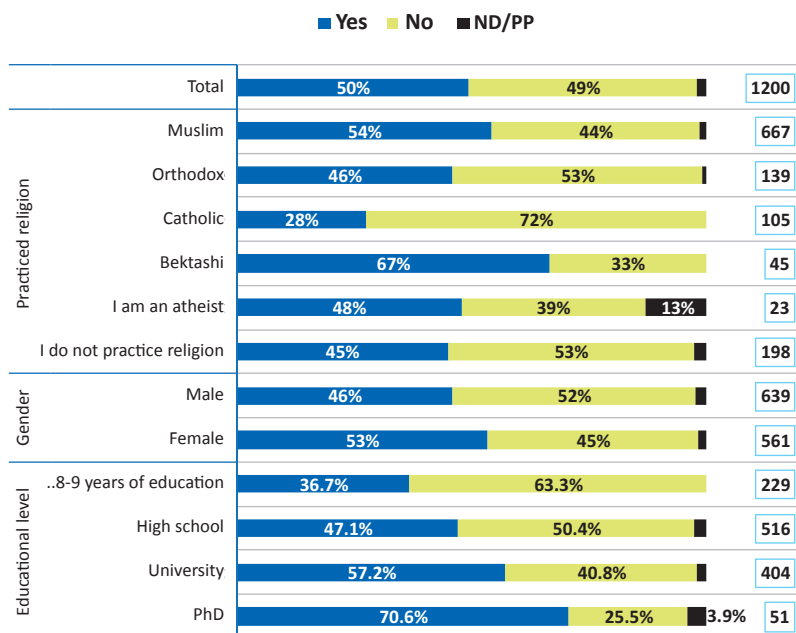
All over the world, faith and practicing religion in a religion community are identified as deep forms of social belonging. Stemming from statements of the respondents on religion, the survey provides that 56 percent of the Albanian respondents are Muslims, 12 percent are Orthodox, 9 percent are Catholics, and 4 percent are Bektashis. However, 16.5 percent of the respondents report they do not practice any religion. This figure is higher in the capital, where 22 percent of respondents report they do not practice any religion at all. Out of this category, most of respondents are males, as one out of five males report they practice no religion compared to one to ten females providing the same answer. Only a small number of youth – 2 percent, report they are atheists.

In the course of 2010 half of the Albanian youth reported they have visited one sanctuary of another belief. The Muslim youth show of a higher tendency to visit sanctuaries of other religions, while this tendency is

smaller amongst the Catholic youth. In addition, the female respondents report of paying more visits of this nature than the male respondents, especially in Tirana.

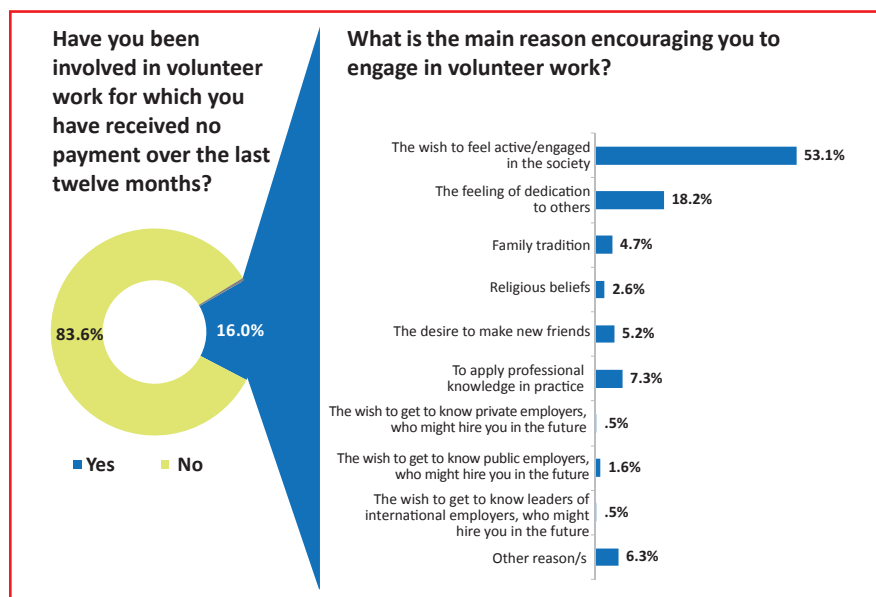
Graph no 4.

Have you ever visited sanctuaries of a religion different from yours?



Voluntarism

Graph no 5 & 6.



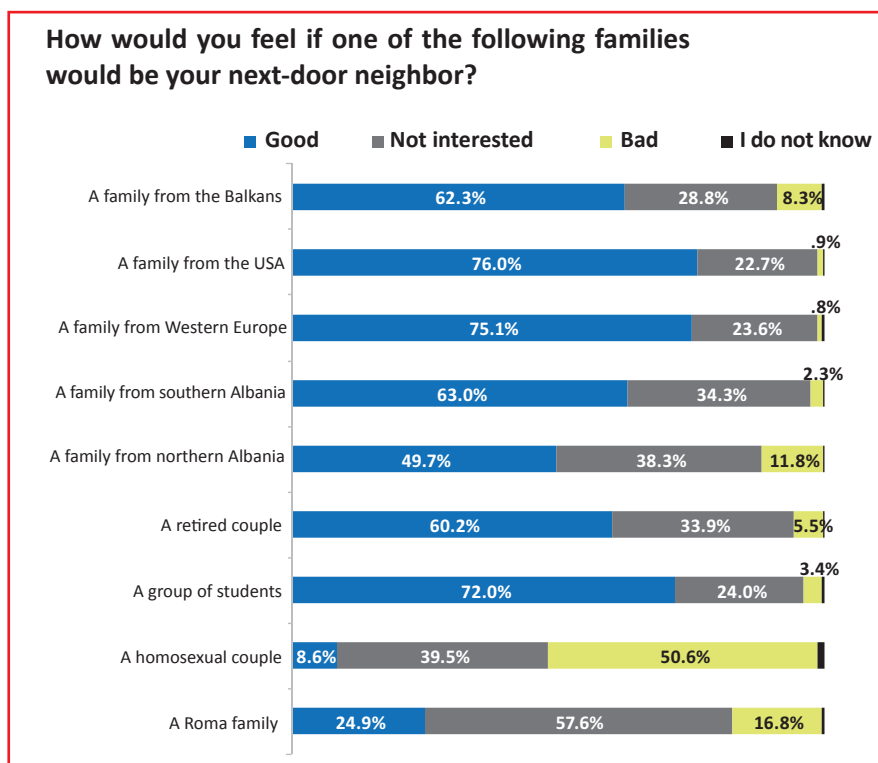
Voluntary commitment in various initiatives is one of the ways of expressing connection, dependency or dedication for a certain community. About this part of the survey, 16 percent of the Albanian respondents report they were involved in voluntary activities in the last year. This high figure of negligence is, without doubt, a sign of passiveness, as is the case with the low trust in neighbors, showing a very weak connection of the youth with the surrounding environment.

Although about 55.7 percent of activities of a voluntary nature are concentrated in cleaning and maintenance of public spaces, voluntarism is one of the major problems of the Albanian society nowadays. Assistance to others through voluntary trainings in different fields makes up for 22 percent of the activities, while one third of the participating respondents have identified other activities not included in the Survey's preliminary list.

Over 50 percent of the respondents who have been volunteers in different initiatives show that they were driven by the wish to be active, while only 20 have referred to the feeling of dedication to the others as being the main drive for voluntarism. The age group of 16-17-year-olds report of a higher involvement in voluntary activities, as one out of four respondents of the same category report they have "volunteered" for something over the last year. It is worth mentioning that it seems like not many young people are aware of the benefits of voluntarism, such as quoting their volunteer work in their CVs or establishing contacts for a potential employment opportunity.

3.2 Prejudice and discrimination

Graph no 7.



As a result of the several changes the Albanian society has gone through, the respondents show of prejudice or elements of discrimination on certain groups and individuals. For this part of the survey, the youth were introduced to an imaginary scenario, asked to provide their reactions in case a family or a couple with certain characteristics would be their next-door neighbor. Answers to this mental experiment provide background information to analyze prejudice, stereotypes, and get the youth opinion on the different categories of the society. Also, the experiment of hypothetical neighbors helps in measuring the impact of education and origin of the respondents on their capacity to “embrace”, or fail to accept the differences of these groups, or the individual differences expressed in different forms.

The survey data show that one out of four respondents would welcome neighbors from a Roma family, while most of them – 58 percent, say they would not be impressed by such neighbors. However, prejudice exists as 17 percent of the respondents report that they would feel bad or very bad having a Roma family as their neighbor. The 17-18-year-olds are more receptive, but prejudice seems to be higher in Tirana, where 20 percent of the young people declare they would feel bad if found in such a situation, out of 7 percent of respondents from the north providing the same answer.

Prejudice of young people on people with different sexual orientation is very strong.¹² Hence, 50 percent of the respondents would not welcome as their neighbors a homosexual couple and would feel bad or very bad about such fact. Males show of a higher level of prejudice, with over 67% of respondents saying they would feel bad or rather bad because of such neighbors, compared to 46 percent of female respondent providing the same answer, while homophobia is present in both categories. The highest figures of such prejudice are seen in the rural areas, where 58 percent of the respondents consider this type of neighbors as something very bad compared to 45 percent of the respondents from Tirana providing the same answer. From the gender perspective, females are more in number when

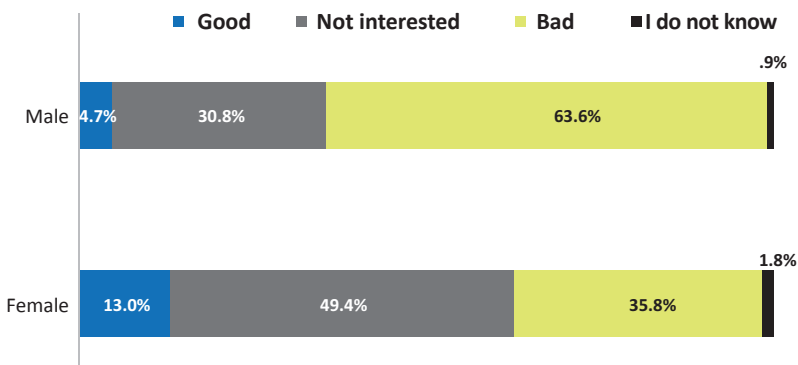
¹² In fact the question does not make a distinction between the homosexual, lesbian and transgender couples, however it is assumed that prejudice would still be high, while dynamics of prejudice would vary depending on the gender of the respondent.

it comes to the ones not interested in such neighborhood, saying they would be indifferent to a similar situation. In addition, only 8.5 percent of the young people would welcome such a situation. Again females are less prejudicing than males.

Graph no 8.

How would you feel if a couple of homosexuals would be your next-door neighbour?

Male vs. Female



Albanian youth as homophobic

The Albanian youth have strong prejudice against homosexuals, which is as well shown in discussions with them. Asked on how they would react in a situation where such people were their neighbors, respondents from the urban areas answer using a humiliating and depreciating tone:

-Evisa: "I would have no connection with them."

-Alketi: "I cannot stand them."

-Romeo: "I would see on whether they look good together."

-Dafina: "The only thing I would say in such a situation is: they are really

to feel pity about!”

-*Sajmiri*: “I would not react, but the mere fact that they would be my neighbors would make me feel sick of them.”

-*Rudina*: “If you ask Albanians on what they think on this matter, before cameras they would say they are not racist and the homosexuals have their own life, but the matter of fact is that they are considered as people with psychotic problems and they are very much against such affairs between people of the same sex.”

For Redion, 25, it is good that reaction to homosexuals only remains at the level of prejudice: “In this regard we are racists and cannot say we are not concerned. It is true that a homosexual couple would be regarded with depreciation, but we are not violent against them.”

The male respondents from the rural areas are stricter in their reactions against such cases.

Olsi says: “I hate them to death”, while Arbër says: “I would not talk to them, and I would never want them to be my neighbors.”

In his turn, Ulqi says: “if they would come to live next door, I would just say: take my house as well, as I am leaving from here.”

Some have less strong reactions. For instance, Erlind would accept that: “I cannot say what I would do, as I have never been neighbors with such people. To tell the truth, it is not that I like them, but they have their rights as well.”

However, girls show to be much more tolerant than boys, even in the rural areas. They say they would not be impressed by such neighbors.

Alisia summarized the situation in a simple expression: “it is better to mind your own business, there is nothing bad with them,” while Kune said: “it would be a problem if they harass you or cause problems to you; on the contrary you have to mind your own business and keep going.”

It is interesting to see that in this part of the discussion none of the respondents uses the term “homophobic” to refer to this type of discrimination, but most of them frequently use the terms of “racism” or “racists.”

In face of such prejudice, the overwhelming part of the respondents report they would be indifferent, or would welcome such neighbors as a couple of retired persons or a group of students without any problem. A slight feeling of prejudice can be felt against students in Tirana, where the ones reporting they would feel unhappy if having students as their next-door neighbors mount to 4.2 percent. That said, about 5 percent of the respondents would not want to have elderly people as their neighbors.

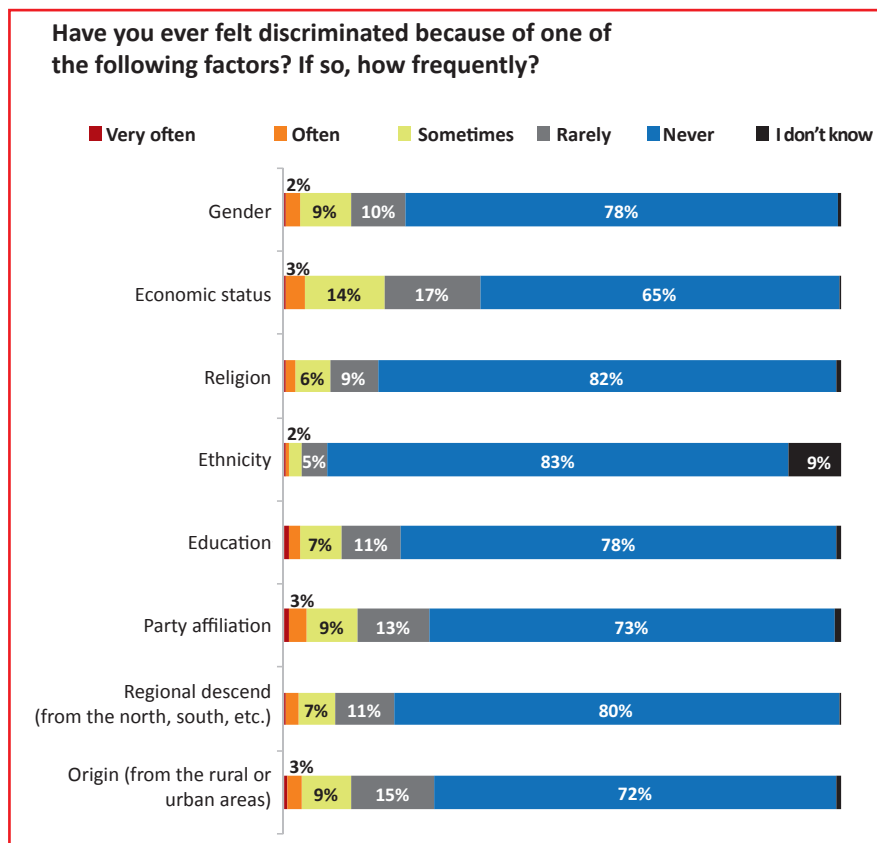
In the verge of such assessment, from the answers from the respondents is it clear that most of them would be indifferent or would welcome a family coming from a certain region of the country as their neighbor. Only a small percentage of the respondents would feel unhappy or very unhappy with a neighboring family coming from a different region of the country. Less "inviting" to neighbors from the other regions are the respondents from the capital; however such figures are still very low.

The Albanian young people would have the same feeling of content for foreign neighbors coming from the USA and Western Europe. None of respondents say they would feel bad if they had such neighbors. In addition, most of the respondents report they would feel happy, rather than indifferent to these neighbors. But, the situation changes if the neighbors are from the regional countries. One out of ten Albanian young people reports that he/she would feel unhappy with their neighbors coming from the neighboring countries, while only 5 percent of female respondents provide the same answer. Prejudice against neighbors from the regional countries seem to be more substantial in Tirana, where the ones not happy with such neighbors mounts to 12 percent. However, the Balkan neighbors are more acceptable for the respondents living in South Albania. Only 5 percent of the respondents from this part of the country say that it would be a problem for them to be living next to such neighbors.

Factors of discrimination

Regarding discrimination, the young people feel, perceive and encounter it due to different factors, but at different levels. The analysis of questions related to the cases encountered or perceived as discrimination shows that 16.3 percent of the respondents have themselves felt discriminated against "sometimes" or "frequently" because of one of the eight reasons contained in the questionnaire.

Graph no 9.



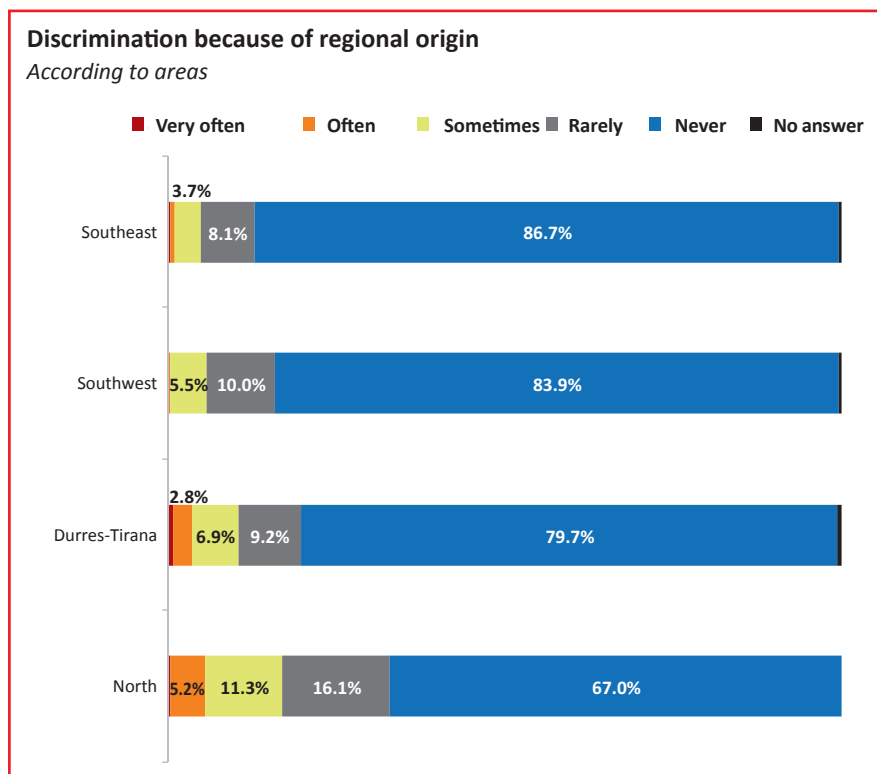
Gender; economic status; religion; ethnicity; education; party affiliation; regional descend (from the north, south, etc.); background (from the rural or urban areas)

The family background (that is the rural or urban descending) and the regional background is on the top of the list of factors for discrimination as perceived by the respondents. These two categories are on average assessed with 10.1 and 10.4 points in the scale of 0-100, where 0 means “very often” and 100 “never”. Said in other terms, these two kinds of discrimination are closer to 0, meaning that they are “very often” present in

the lives of the respondents. The religion, political affiliation/views, ethnic dependency and education level are the factors mentioned less frequently, but are nonetheless cause of the discrimination the respondents have to face. However, economic status and gender are assessed with respectively 30.8 and 39.1 points according the above-referred-to scale, thus ranked as factors being comparatively closer to the value of 100, which means "never".

The survey data shows that 2.5 percent of the respondents in Albania have often times encountered discrimination due to their rural or urban origin, 9 percent report they have encountered that type of discrimination often and 14.8 percent have "never" been subject of this discrimination. It is interesting to see that the young people outside Tirana, in the urban and rural areas against the ones living in the capital, report double the number of casual or repeated discrimination because of their background. Not much change is encountered in the case of frequent discrimination when it comes to percentages of the respondents in and out of Tirana.

When it comes to discrimination due to the regional background, about 19 percent of the respondents report they have been subject to discrimination sometimes or often. The young people from the north report of being subject to discrimination more often that the young people from other areas of the country. About 5.2 percent of the ones from this area report frequent discrimination, while in the southeast and southwest such figures are close to zero. In the metropolitan area of Durrës and Tirana this figure is also very low – that is less than 3 percent. However, 11.3 percent of the young people from the north regions of the country report they are subject of a casual regional discrimination, thus reporting they are discriminated against "sometimes", while for the other regions this figure does not even reach the level of 7 percent.

Graph no 10.

Speaking of discrimination because of political views, about 9 percent of the respondents report they consider it as a casual form of discrimination, while 13 percent report they have encountered it at least once. There is a slight increase of discrimination because of political grounds as people get older and as contacts with politics become more frequent.

About the level of education as a factor of discrimination, the survey data show that one in ten young people is discriminated against because of his/her level of education, but most of the respondents report that such a thing has happened only in a limited number of cases. In this regard, we see that the young people with elementary (9-year) education

report they feel discrimination against more frequently as compared to the other respondents. However, a certain percentage of young people feel discriminated against because of the financial possibilities and their economic status. Consequently, one in ten rich young people reports that he/she has been subject to discrimination several time because of his/her wealth. In the meantime, half of the young people belonging to the category of poor people report they feel prejudiced against the majority because of such phenomenon. It is interesting to note that such cases of discrimination are often encountered in the young people of medium classes.

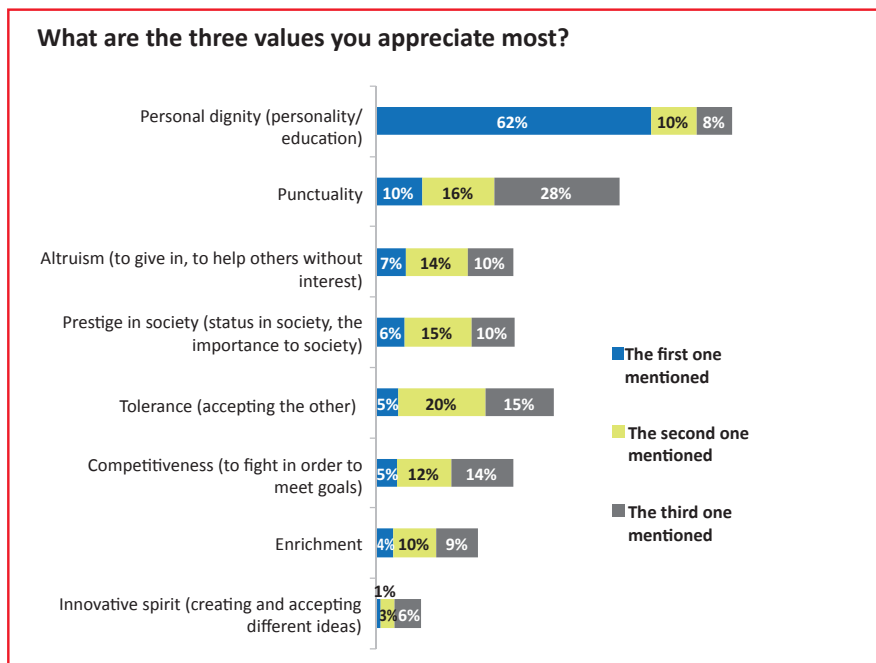
Perception of discrimination based on the religious practice appears to be in a lower level. Only 8 percent of the respondents report that they come across it either frequently or occasionally. This is a sign of religious harmony in Albania -- a value inherited from the past. However, there is a slight tendency in the north to give more visibility to such phenomenon, where 15 percent refer to it as a kind of discrimination happening occasionally, but even frequently.

In addition, the respondents report of a low level of discrimination due to their ethnic background. Only 3 percent of them report they have frequently or several times come across such type of discrimination because of their ethnic background. The answers of the first group make us think that the young people going through ethnic-based discrimination mainly come from the poor Roma community people.

In addition to the above-mentioned elements, gender is also listed as a rear cause of discrimination by the respondents. The survey data show that this type of discrimination is reported as being frequent or casual only by 11.7 percent of the young people at the national level, while 10 percent of the respondents report they have seen such type of discrimination in rare cases. The female respondents report they have come across casual discrimination because of gender more frequently. About 15 percent of them report they have been discriminated against sometimes and 14 percent only rarely, while male respondents report of discrimination in 5 percent of cases. Therefore, what we see is that casual discrimination due to gender is higher in urban than in rural areas.

3.3 Values

Graph no 11.



Following trust, the second most important factor conditioning the relations of the individual with the society are personal values. They dictate behavior and serve as a reference point for the interests of the individual. In order for us to understand which are the most important values of young people in Albania, the respondents received a list of such values. They were asked to select the three most important values and list them according to importance – that is they were asked to provide the first important, second important and third important value. This chapter provides us with possibilities to get acquainted not only with the values guiding the Albania youth, but also to compare the importance of each of these values. From a general view we see that the Albanian youth is still guided by the old traditional values. Thus, in this regard, for them

the factors of "being", or of the character, such as dignity, being correct/punctual, are more important than the "action" factors, or the factors of achievements such as competition or novelty.

In the verge of the hierarchy of values identified by the respondents, we see that personal dignity is the most important value with for 61.5 percent of the respondents qualifying it as the most important value. It is also considered as a very important value from 70 percent of female respondents, versus 55 percent of male respondents.

The second most important value listed by the respondents is tolerance. One out of five respondents report that it comes immediately after personal dignity. On the other hand, 15 percent of the respondents consider it as the third most important value for them.

Although mentioned by many respondents, correctness or being punctual is listed by them as the third most important value out of the list of values. About 28 percent of the respondents have mentioned it as an important value and one out of ten respondents consider it as a valuable feature. It is important to note that male respondents express a higher appreciation for it with 14 percent compared to 6 percent of female respondents.

Another value which is very frequently mentioned by the respondents is altruism. The survey data show that one in three Albanian young people appreciates altruism as one of the most important values in life. Social prestige is also a value of importance for the young people. However, a few of them have listed it as a major value. 15 percent of respondents report that it is the second most important value, while 10 percent report it is the third important value.

The values having less importance to respondents are wealth, competition and the innovative spirit. At first the underestimation of wealth seems to run contrary to the frequent media discussion, according to which becoming rich quickly and having material goods are dominant topics amongst youth. In the meantime, the low appreciation of competitiveness and the innovative spirit makes Albanians go beyond the globalization trends, which in fact do highly appreciate such values. Lack of appreciation

for competition and innovation are strong signals of reflection of the young people on the country's reality, as these two factors are the main drives of the current world economic development. The dishonest practices of competition prevailing in many social relations in Albania seem to have affected the appreciation of respondents on both competition and innovation. However, the weak appreciation of novelties as a means to advance economic and social development highlights the above-referred-to tendency that the strongest values are related with "who you are" rather than with "what you do".

In general, the relation of the Albanian young people with their beliefs and values reflects their relationship with themselves, affected by the social environment where they carry their daily activities. Novelty or the resistance to change their opinions on certain beliefs or values is a consequence of the way they shape their judgment in front of an ever changing reality.

4. Conclusions

The answers provided by the respondents show that the family remains the essence of social interaction. The trust in family reaches the highest value, while the respondents are losing connections with the relevant communities, as shown by skepticism towards the others and the low level of voluntarism. Recognizing the value of voluntarism, the European Commission had proclaimed year 2011: as the "year of the voluntary work". According to a survey made in some European countries, most of the young people and teenagers report that volunteer work should be encouraged through recognition of its value and via different non-material remunerations.¹³ Albania is an exception in this regard, therefore, it is necessary to identify different mechanisms the soonest possible to fight apathy and passiveness, and to boost the feeling of dependency and dedication to the community. This would boost the feeling of trust and social responsibility among the young people as well. The Albanian young people do still have prejudices on certain social groups, where homophobia is an aggressive form of discrimination practiced widely by them. However, the young people in Albania are not different from the other part of the society regarding the different forms of beliefs and religion behaviors, which overwhelmingly are not a cause for prejudice, but rather component parts of the inter-religion harmony in the country.

¹³ "United Dreams of Europe", Foundation for Future Studies p. 230-231.

5. Recommendations

- **Priority should be give to discrimination in general and homophobia in particular in schools and work places, making use of different forms of education, socialization and awareness-raising instruments.** Such actions should be aimed at establishing the norm of zero tolerance to discrimination!
- **Media should be more cautious and demonstrate a special responsibility** allowing for sufficient space to educational and awareness raising campaigns, over-passing the tendencies of treating homosexuality as part of scandalous news.
- **Donors should raise awareness and further encourage civil society** and other initiatives for protecting human rights in general and for fighting discrimination in particular.
- **Educational institutions, youth organizations and civil society should encourage and promote voluntarism** through mechanisms of non-material recognition and appraisal. There is a need for adopting success models of appreciation and promotion of voluntarism, driven by the fact that voluntarism is a European challenge and project.

CHAPTER II

THE FAMILY AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

“Family: “the shelter” that never gets old.”

Prepared by:

Geron Kamberi

1. Overview

Albania entered its transitional post-communist area in the 90s, at a time when the average age of the Albanians was relatively young. The current young generation, composed of individuals aged from 16 to 27, has lived through no form of economic, social and political reality of the communist system overruling the country for about 45 years. However, this generation was target of a long-lasting political and economic transition, and of social transition, putting it in face of several changes in behavior vis-à-vis the traditional values of the Albanian society, such as family, relations with parents, marriage, the social ties, etc. The massive migration and immigration flows, start of social stratification based on incomes and wealth, established different social mediums for the Albanian youth, thus providing a different background for their value system vis-à-vis the family and the society. In rural areas, development of transport, immigration, mass communication networks started to accelerate change in their mind-set, aiming at being closer in mentality to the urban areas. Despite rapid changes, the Albanian family and its weight in the lives and decision-making of young people keeps being an important factor defining their actions in relation to other social micro environments, such as school and society. In the entirety of the value system the family support, the role and impact it has is quite visible through the two-sided sustainable connections established in years. The relations of young people with the society and with friends are part of several changes suited to a newly-established reality since after the 90s. The variety of forms and ways to live in the company of peers is accompanied by lowering of various types of prejudice, facilitating a quicker communication between youth, thus reflecting the dynamics of the Albanian society.

2. Main findings

- 84 % of the Albanian youth continue considering living with their families as a sustainable element of their emotional and economic stability.
- Even young people from rich families have a tendency of living together with their families.
- The family continues having an impact on the most important decisions of young people, including the choice of the partner.
- 64.1 % of the youth report that their father is considered as one of the most influential persons within the family by them, while his (father's) weight is more considerable in the northern part of the country and in rural areas.
- 81.8 % of the young people see themselves married and having a family of theirs in the future.
- Regarding priorities of co-existence and marriage, the Albanian youth consider sharing of responsibilities between partners as the main priority in a marriage.
- Amongst main characteristics of a partner to be chosen for marriage, personality and joint interests are the ones identified on the top of important issues, but appearance does also have an important role.
- The young people have friendly relations with their peers both in the urban and in the rural areas, despite their economic level.
- The young people have more inclination to get in conflicts in schools rather than in other social grounds, such as in a club, disco or in the neighborhood. The young people from rich families seem to be more inclined to get in conflicts than their peers from poorer families, thus reinforcing the distinction of their identity.

3. A detailed data analysis

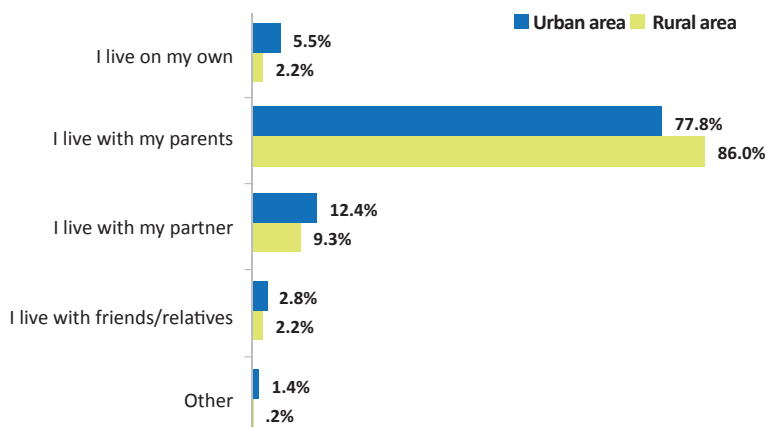
3.1 Relations with parents and the family

One of the elements showing the **sustainability of relations with parents and the family** is the fact that 84 % of the respondents at the national level report they live with their families. The percentage of young people from rural areas living with their families is higher than the percentage of their peers from urban areas reporting they live with their parents (88 % in rural areas against 78 % in urban areas). But, one of the interesting indicators reinforcing such strong connection is the higher percentage of young people from rich families living with their nucleus family as compared to their peers of poor families (84% versus 83.8 %). In the metropolitan area of Tirana –Durrës, such tendency is lower than in the north of the country (79 % vs. 90%), which shows of a more traditional approach of the later group vis-à-vis their parents. The level of education of young people, especially after university studies, is linked with a higher rate of independence from families. About 66 % of the young people are candidates for PhD degrees.

Graph no 12.

Who do you currently live with?

Urban area vs. rural area

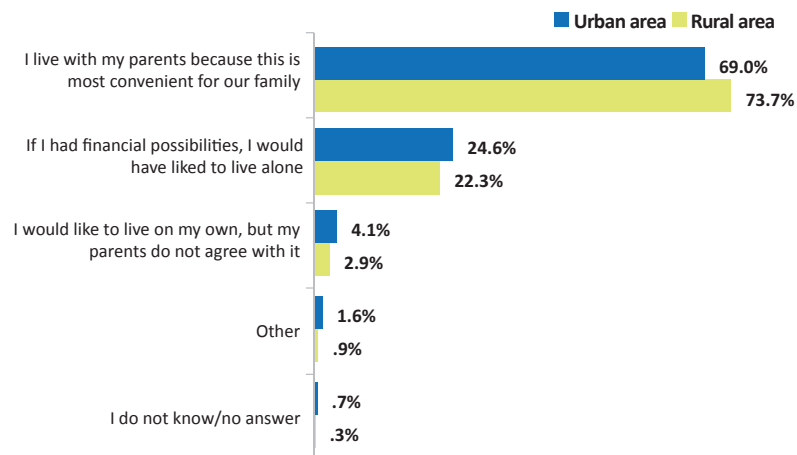


**only for respondents 18-27 years old*

Graph no 13.

What are the reasons why you live with your parents?

Urban area vs. rural area



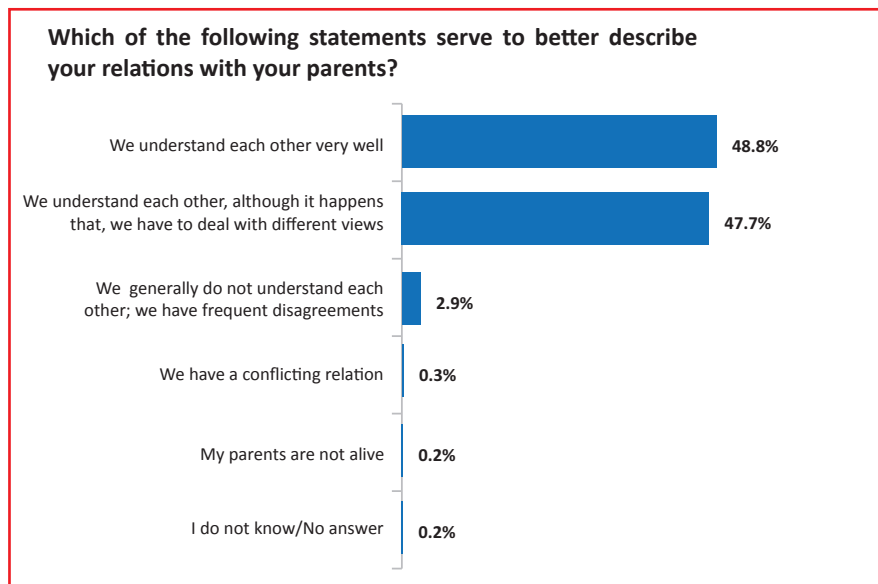
**Only for the respondents from 18-27 years of age living with their parents. (no – 786)*

Reasons of this sustainable trend of the young people to opt for living with their parents

74 % of the respondents at the national level justify their living with their families with the fact that they consider this choice as a reasonable solution. This is common for all types of young people, even for the ones coming from rich families, 70% of whom report they opt for this choice despite the economic possibilities to live an independent life.

Family is an important element for the Albanian young people, who consider it an irreversible value and an opportunity to better face everyday difficulties. The model of relations of peers from Western countries with their families do not serve as a drive to change their stances, but just a model of comparison to identify changes between them.

“In the other countries the model of relations between young people and their families is different from here, but I actually like the very strong proximity we have got with our families, which actually makes Albanians very closely connected with each-other” – says Bajonela, 23, from Tirana.

Graph no 14.

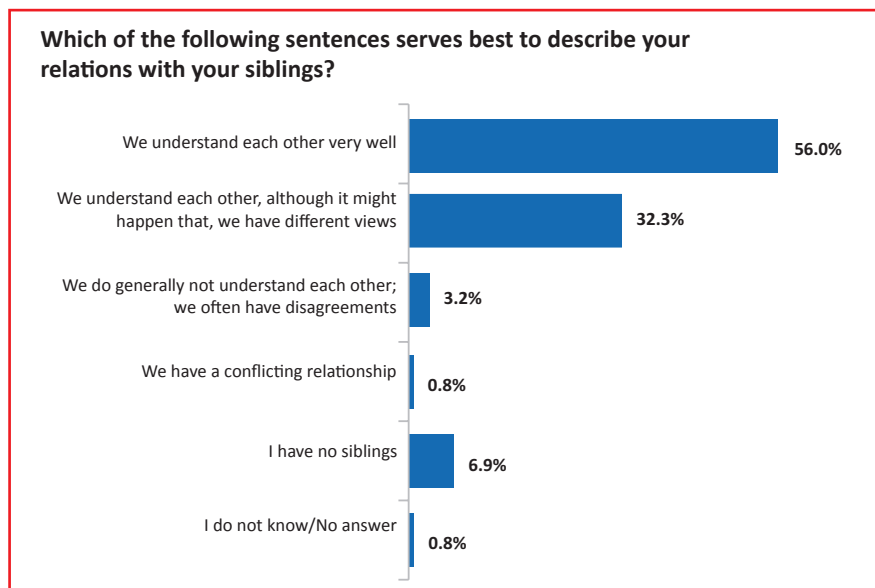
The choice of young people to live with their parents is characterized by different aspects of relations. **Hence, at the national level, 48 percent of the respondents report they have very good relations with their parents,** while 47 percent of the respondents report their relation is good, although they share different points of view. There is a gender distinction in this respect, as girls report of a less higher percentage of very good relations with their parents as compared to boys (52 percent of male respondents vs. 44.9 percent of female respondents), which might imply that girls might have a tendency of being more independent against parental pressure for certain models of behavior. In the meantime, there is a difference between rural respondents and urban respondents when it comes to the very good relations with their parents. So, 58 percent of respondents in rural areas report of having very good relations with their parents against 41.6% of the respondents living in urban areas providing the same answer. This indicator shows of a stronger parental authority thanks to the traditional mentality that is more prevailing in urban areas. The tendency for independence

from parents grows with age of respondents. Also, relations with parents are characterized by debates as respondents get older, as reported by 52.9 percent of them at the age of 18-22 versus the ones aged 16 -17.

Given that living in the **family with your parents defines not only the behavior with the parents, but also with the siblings** 56 % of the respondents at the national level have reported they have good relations with their sisters and brothers, while 32 % of them report they have good relations with their siblings, although they have debates on several matters. Again, there is a change between Tirana, the other urban areas and the rural areas, as only approximately 50 percent of the respondents from Tirana against 62 % of the respondents in rural areas report they have only very good relations with their siblings. This shows that because of the peculiarities of life, and their interests and choices in life, relations between siblings are closer and more unified in the rural areas. A distinction is remarked between respondents of rich families versus the respondents from poor families in relation to their siblings. Hence, 66.7 % of poor respondents report they have very good relations with their siblings, while only 47.9 % of the ones coming from rich families report of same relations with their siblings, because of the division of wealth amongst them.

There is a tendency for getting a stronger personality and more objections between siblings in parallel with the age and their level of education. 48.3 percent of the respondents going to university report they debate with their siblings against 58.8 percent of the respondents who are PhD candidates and report debates with their siblings.

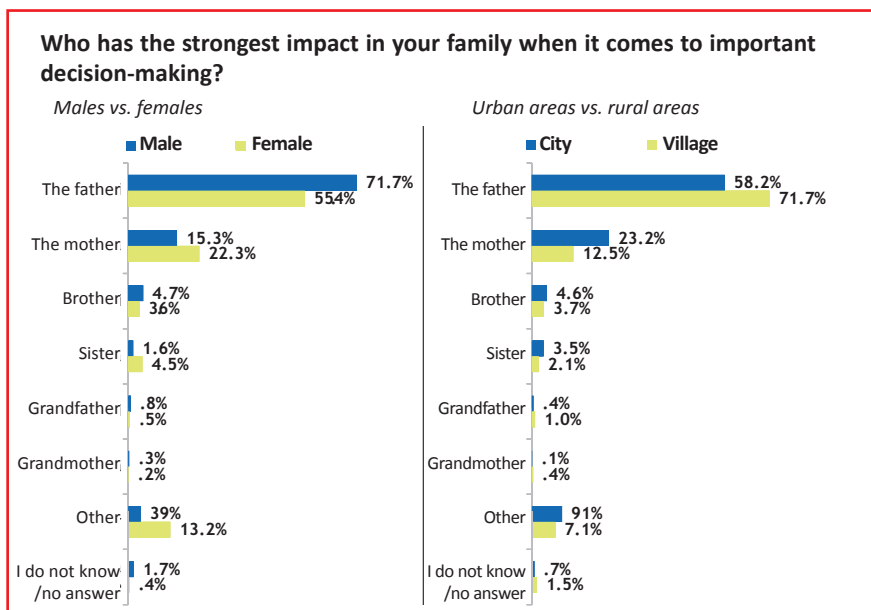
Graph no 15.



Regarding the impact of family members on the decision-making of the respondents, 64.1 percent of the respondents at the national level report that the one being more influential in their decision-making process is their father. This is an indicator of the considerable role of the father in the Albanian family and of his socio-economic contribution for the family progress. In the meantime, there is a difference in the replies provided by male and female respondents, as only 55.4 percent of female respondents are affected by their fathers in the process of taking decisions against 77.4 percent of male respondents reporting of the same thing. However, speaking of the weight and role of their mothers in their decision-making, 22.3 percent of the female respondent's report they are affected in their decision-making by their mothers as opposed to 15.3 percent of male respondents whose decision-making is affected by their mothers. The father's role in the decision-making of the respondents from the rural areas is estimated at 71.7 percent against 58.4 percent of the same impact on the respondents in the urban parts of the country, thus showing a still strong power of the father in the family. However, there is a distinction regarding the father's impact amongst respondents coming from various social-economic classes. The father's role in decision-making is higher amongst the poor respondents (73.8

percent) versus the father's role in decision-making of the respondents coming from rich families (62.9 %). There is a higher influence in the decision-making of the later group of respondents by their mothers.

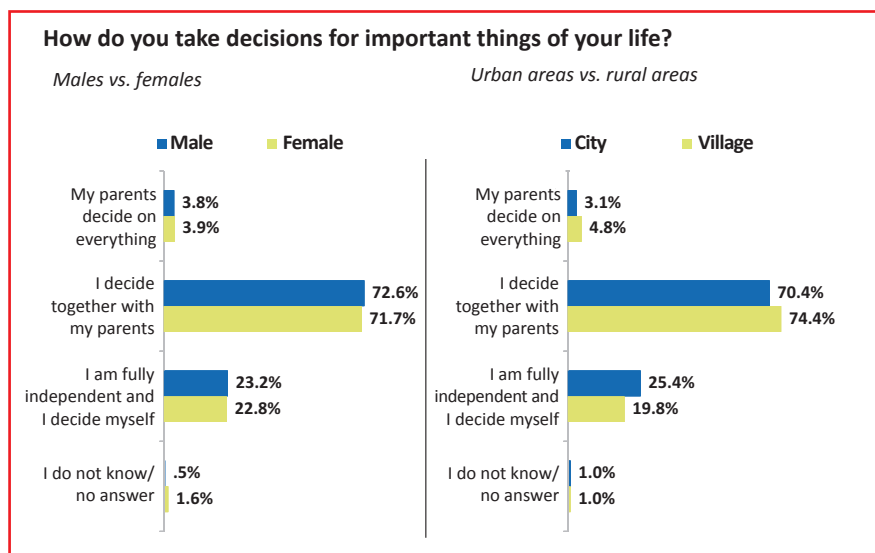
Graph no 16 & 17.



Further on with the decision-making process, the most important decisions for the respondents are the decisions entailing those elements determining their future. So, 72 percent of the respondents at the national level report they take **the important decisions in cooperation with their parents**. Such percentage falls as they get older, thus showing the awareness of respondents to be more independent in their decision-making as they grow older. More specifically, 81 percent of the respondents from 18 to 22 years of age take their important decisions in cooperation with their parents, versus 55.3 percent of the respondents from 23 to 27 years of age taking important decisions in cooperation with their parents. However, there is an interesting difference between respondents from Tirana and Durrës and those from northern Albania. The former group relies more on their parents' opinion when taking important decision. More specifically, 75.4 of respondents from Tirana and Durrës rely on

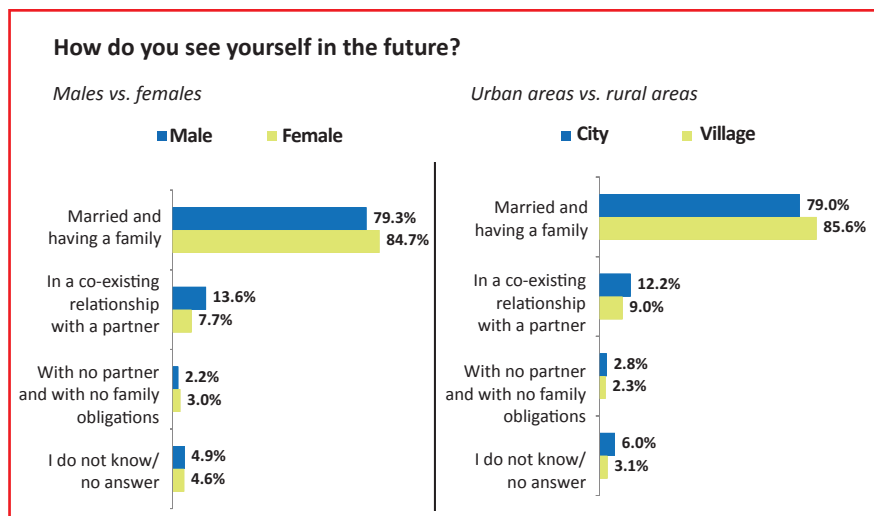
their parents' opinions when taking important decisions, compared 69.1 percent of the respondents from the north reporting same impact on decision-making by their parents. This might be a novelty as in the north of Albania the family keeps playing an important role in the decision-making of people because of the traditional structure of the society. There is a significant correlation between a higher education level in the respondents and their tendency to be independent when taking important decisions. Thus, 70.5 percent of respondents holding a university degree take the decisions in cooperation with their parents, compared to 64.7 of the respondents having a post-university degree who take their important decisions in cooperation with their parents.

Graph no 18 & 19.



3.2 Marriage and relations in a couple

About marriage and the value of a relation in a couple, at the national level, approximately 81.8 percent of the respondents **see their future in a marriage and having a family**. This shows of a sustainable tendency towards and appraisal of the institution of marriage and of the family as an important cell and unit for the progress of the respondents' lives.

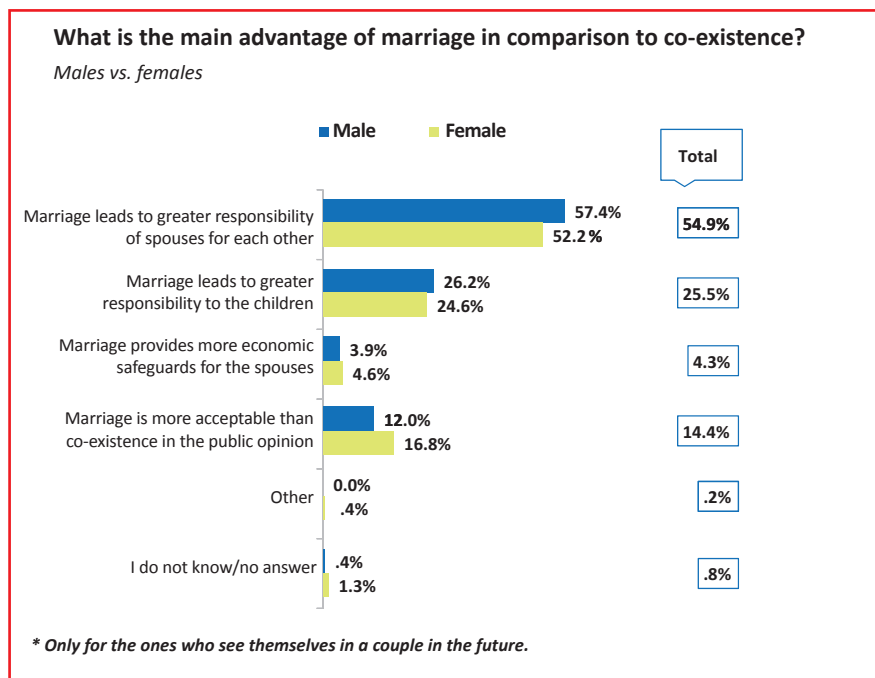
Graph no 20 & 21.

Female respondents are closer to such logics by 84.7 percent, witnessing the proximity with marriage and security ensured by the family against male respondents, reporting their future in a marriage and in having a family by 79.3 percent. However, such tendency seems to be stronger amongst respondents from rural areas, as 85.6 percent of such respondents report of a higher importance of the family and marriage against 79 percent of respondents from urban areas, due to the fact that marriage and family are considered as very sustainable and important elements for the future of young people. Seen from the income perspective, 73.8 percent of respondents having considerable incomes are in favor of marriage against 83.8 percent of the ones having medium-level incomes, showing the impact of incomes on the approach towards marriage and the family and on the possibility of living an independent life.

Inter alia, there is a difference noticed between the young people coming from various parts of the country regarding their ideas for the future focused on the marriage and on raising a family. So, 89.1 percent of the respondents coming from the north of the country support marriage/raising a family against 81.9 percent of the respondents living in the metropolitan area of Tirana and Durrës

and in the southwest of the country. It is interesting to see that such support falls amongst respondents living in the south-eastern part of the country, as only 75.9 percent of them say they are in favor of marriage/a family because of the high immigration in this zone, thus considering marriage and raising a family as a short-term hurdle for their plans to immigrate abroad.

Graph no 22.



Regarding the **priority of marriage**, about 54.9 percent of the respondents at the national level report that they believe that the priority of marriage is related to the responsibility it imposes. However, male respondents believe more in marriage responsibility, answering in favor of it by 57.4 percent, compared to female respondents favoring responsibility in the amount of 52.2 percent. This marriage priority finds more support amongst respondents living in other urban areas different from Tirana, by 56.3 percent of the respondents and those living in rural areas by 57.3 percent of respondents compared to

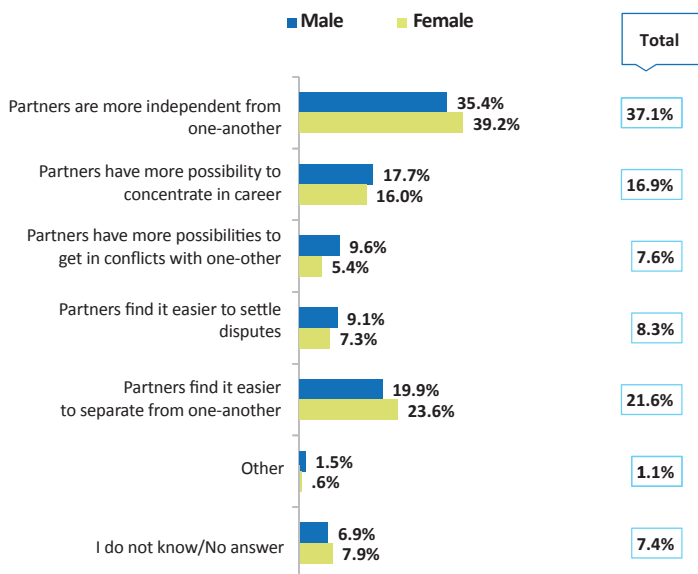
respondents from Tirana, favoring this choice by 42.2 % percent. It is of interest to highlight that despite different income levels, the young people share the same views when it comes to the marriage priority compared to co-existence, thus showing a general trend in favor of this social value. We see that the percentage of respondents from Tirana considering raising of children as the priority of marriage is 32.2 percent compared to 20.8 percent of respondents in the other urban areas and 27.4 percent of the respondents from the rural areas attaching the same priority to marriage. This indicator shows of a full awareness of the respondents from Tirana on shared responsibilities between the two partners for bringing up their children. Regarding the fluctuation of views according to the geographical areas, what is remarking is the fact that the percentage of respondents accepting marriage as a priority because it increases responsibility of spouses for each-other is higher in the north of the country (58.5 percent), compared to the metropolitan area of Tirana and Durrës (50.3 percent).

In addition to the above-referred-to opinion on marriage as a traditional institution for raising a family, the respondents give opinions on other forms of living in a couple, such as co-existence. **At the national level, about 37 percent of the respondents are of the opinion that the priority of coexistence** is the independence of partners. In the meantime, 39.2 percent of female respondents consider independence as a priority compared to 35.4 percent of the male respondents, thus showing of a higher inclination towards independence and of a dominating power of males in other types of relations, such as marriage. Only 33.9 percent of the respondents from Tirana against 39.6 percent of the respondents from rural areas appreciate this priority of coexistence, as they consider separation of partners living together in co-existence as being easier than separating a marriage partner. In its turn, this indicator shows the tendency of the respondents from the capital to have as many affairs and experiences possible in a metropolitan environment, creating such possibilities because of its size and anonymity. Regarding respondents from the north, only 26.7 percent of them appreciate the priority of being independent in a co-existence relationship, against 36 percent of the respondents from Tirana and Durrës, 41.5 percent of the respondents from the south-west and 43 percent of the respondents from the south-east of the country.

Graph no 23.

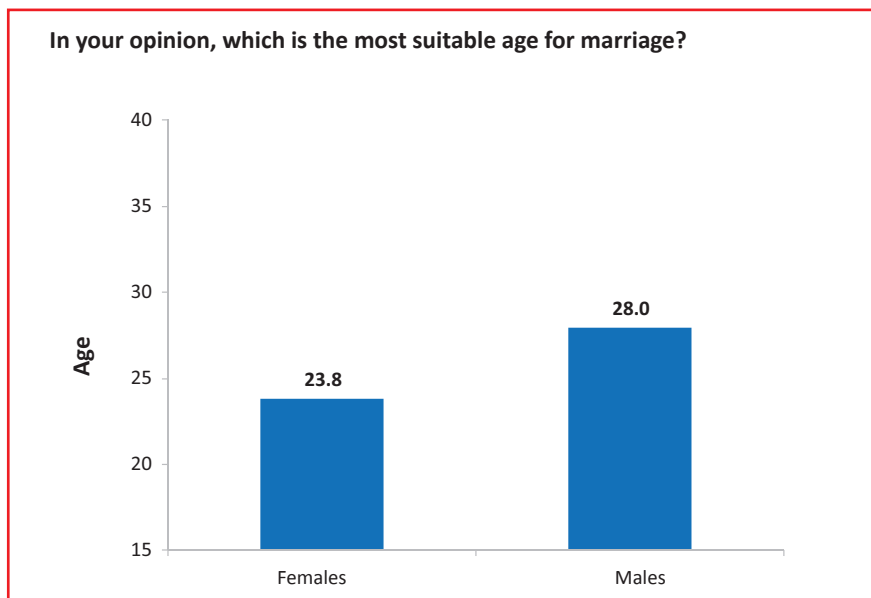
What is the main advantage of co-existence in comparison to marriage?

Males vs. females



* Only for the ones who see themselves in a couple in the future.

Regarding their opinions on marriage, the respondents have several stances related to a number of elements related to marriage, starting from opinions about the most suitable age for marriage from both genders, number of children out of a marriage, as well as preferences on the characteristics of their future spouses.

Graph no 24.

Most of the respondents at the national level **prefer the age of 24, considering it as the most suitable age** for the marriage of females, thus showing the continuity of the tradition of girls marrying at a relatively young age. This is also considered as the most suitable age for marriage by the female respondents as well, who provide the age of 25 as the most preferable for marriage. Such tendency does not change significantly between the respondents from Tirana or from other urban and rural areas. Hence, in the other urban and rural areas, the preferable age for marriage of females reduces to 23 – that is one year below the general national average. This average does not change even due to the fluctuation of the income level. All respondents, be them respondents with low or high incomes, report of an age limit of 24-25 years old for marriage. This indicator does not change for the 16-27-year-olds, geographical differences in the north or the south of the country, or the educational level.

Regarding the best suitable age for **the marriage of males, most of the respondents indicated the average age of 28**, showing the general trend

of a later age for marriage for men, which in its turn is related to the time needed for males for gaining the relevant maturity, especially for being able to find a job ensuring the economic maintenance of the new family. There are no substantial differences in the age of marriage in males amongst the respondents from Tirana, from other urban areas, or from rural areas. In fact, in the rural areas the age threshold for the marriage of males reduces by one year – at the age of 27, showing of the encouragement of an earlier marriage in rural areas because of tradition. Speaking of the geographical coverage, same preference is stated amongst respondents, again stating that the most suitable age for marriage for males is in the limits of 27 – 29 years old, showing a slightly higher age for marriage for the respondents from Tirana and Durres, especially for the ones having a university and post-university degree. This tendency is explained by the metropolitan mentality of marrying at a slightly older age, or the need for first fulfilling the obligations related to their education and qualification, in order for them to afford a greater economic sustainability to the family.

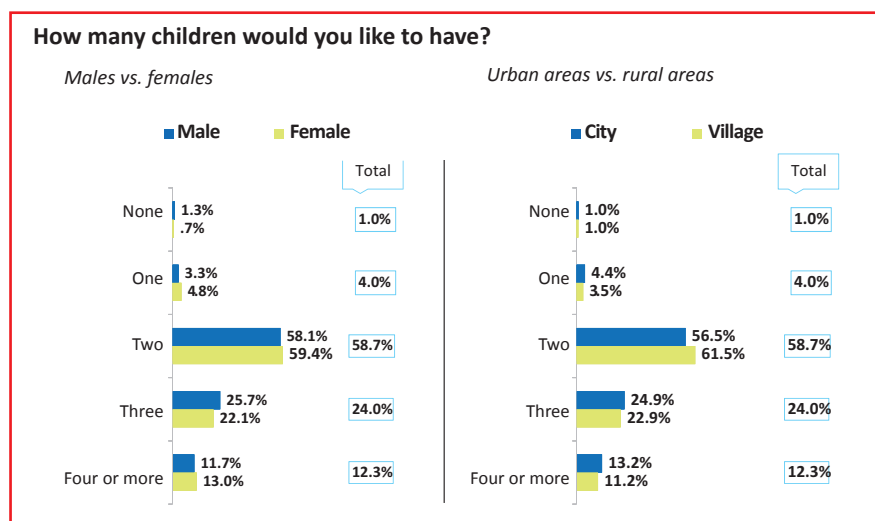
	Most suitable age of marriage for females	Most suitable age of marriage for males
Males	23	27
Females	25	29
City	25	29
Village	23	27

Asked about the **number of children they would like to have in their families**, most of the respondents said they want two children. However, most of the male respondents say they want to have three children, while female respondents report they want to have two children. This gender-based distinction shows a prevalence of the psychology of male respondents to consider the number of children as a kind of social status, while the answer of most of female respondents for two children shows that they still have to deal with most of the work and of the responsibilities when it comes to raising their children. It is interesting to see that there is no change between the young respondents from Tirana and from the other urban and rural areas; although the tendency is that more children

are appreciated in rural areas. In addition, there is a slight increase of the number of children between respondents with a different economic level, where the ones having a better economic status say they want to have up to three children in the future.

In the meantime, the respondents from the north have reported that they want up to three children, against the respondents from Tirana, Durrës, or the southwest and southeast areas of the country, who wish to have up to two children. This is particularly related with aspects of the family tradition in these areas, still seemingly having a considerable impact amongst respondents. An element of interest is the report of respondents with a post-graduate degree wanting up to three children against a general inclination of intellectual families for having fewer children.

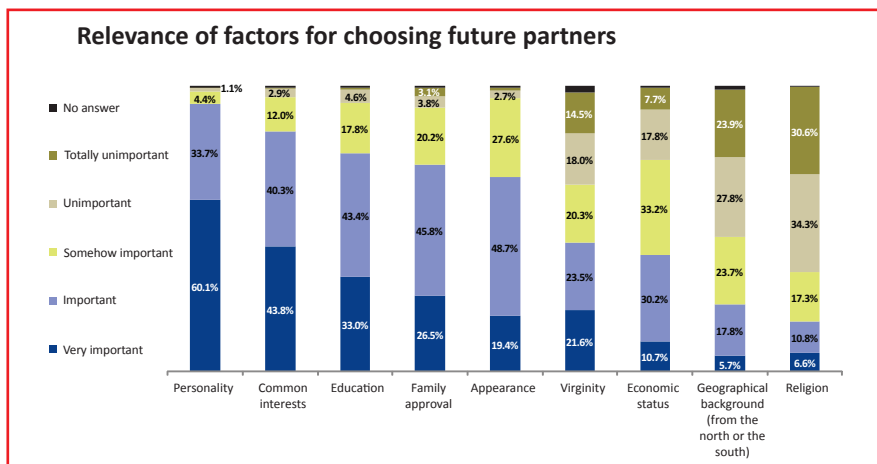
Graph no 25 & 26.



At the national level, all the respondents report **they prefer to have only one daughter**. This tendency remains the same despite geographical location, age or level of income. Also, all respondents say they would like to have one son, thus being in favor of a gender-balanced child approach in their future families (1 son and one daughter). On the other hand, the data

show that male respondents want to have two sons. This is characteristic also for the respondents from the north, denoting the still dominant role and weight of the male child in the traditional mentality of the Albanians.

Graph no 27.



The most important features of the future partner for marriage between respondents are personality, religion, geographical background, social-economic situation, appearance, etc.

Speaking of the **religion of the partner**, 34% of the respondents consider it as unimportant, while 30.6 percent of the respondents consider it as totally unimportant. More specifically, for about 64 % of the respondents, religion of the marriage partner plays no role in their choice. This tendency is true for Tirana, as is for other urban or rural areas of the country. This inclination gets stronger amongst the youth from the capital, where such prejudice as caring about the religion of the partner is totally unimportant in the face of the many challenges in a metropolitan environment. So, if in the other urban and rural areas the importance of the religion of the potential partner is respectively 29.0 % and 28.5 %, in Tirana it is 40.5 %. In addition, the data show that in the north, only 26.5 percent of the respondents do not consider this element important compared to 39.7 percent of the respondents in the southwest and 40.4 percent of the respondents in the southeast of the country. In the north, this

element is related up to a certain degree with strong inclinations for preserving one's identity, be it even through religious dependency. As the education of respondents gets higher, they seem to be less interested in the religion of their partners as criteria of selection. In specific terms, 28.9 percent of pre-university respondents report that the religion of their partner does not matter, compared to 32.2 percent of respondents with a university degree and 39.2 percent of the respondents with a post-university degree providing the same answer.

The economic status of the partner is considered as an important factor for the respondents. Thus, 40.9 percent of the respondents at the national level consider the economic situation of their future partner as an important, or as a very important factor. This indicator shows the importance of the economic means for establishing a family. But, about 33.2 percent of the respondents consider it as a less important element in choosing a partner. We see that this tendency is more obvious in female than in male respondents, because 51.7 percent of female respondents consider the economic status of their partner as important or very important compared to 31.3 percent of male respondents reporting the same thing. This indication can be explained by the priority females relate to this element, considering it as closely related to their requirements for a proper family life and for more security. However, there is a difference in the trend amongst the respondents from Tirana, the respondents from other urban areas and especially the ones from rural areas. Thus, 39.5 percent of the respondents from urban areas consider the economic factor as important versus 26.0 percent of the respondents from rural areas, which implies the economic pressure exercised by living in the capital when it comes to choosing a partner for establishing a family. Geographical location of respondents plays a role as well. Thus, respondents from Tirana and southeast Albania assess this element more, respectively with 34.9 percent and 35.2 percent against 22.6 percent in the north and 25.5 percent in the southwest.

Again, in a long-term relation **the family role in such decision-making** has a considerable weight. Thus, 72.3 % of the respondents consider their family approval as important or very important while deciding on having a partner. This high dependency is related not only with the traditional respect to parents, but also with the early impact of the Albanian family in the important decision-making of their children, where marriage is one of them. This statement is the same between respondents, despite geographical descend or wealth. The

family role is stronger amongst respondents in the north, as 41.7 percent of them consider their family approval as very important against 20.5 percent of the respondents from Tirana and Durres, 26.5 percent of respondents from the southwest or 22.2 percent of the respondents from the southeast providing the same answer. Such data show of the presence of a more traditional family typology in the North. The other answers of the respondents who insisted in providing the "very important" option, not sufficing themselves with the "important" option provided by the respondents from the other parts of the country, serve as a good illustration of the traditional family typology in the north. Thus, for instance, only 29.1 percent of the respondents from the north consider the approval important versus 50 percent of the respondents from Tirana and Durrës.

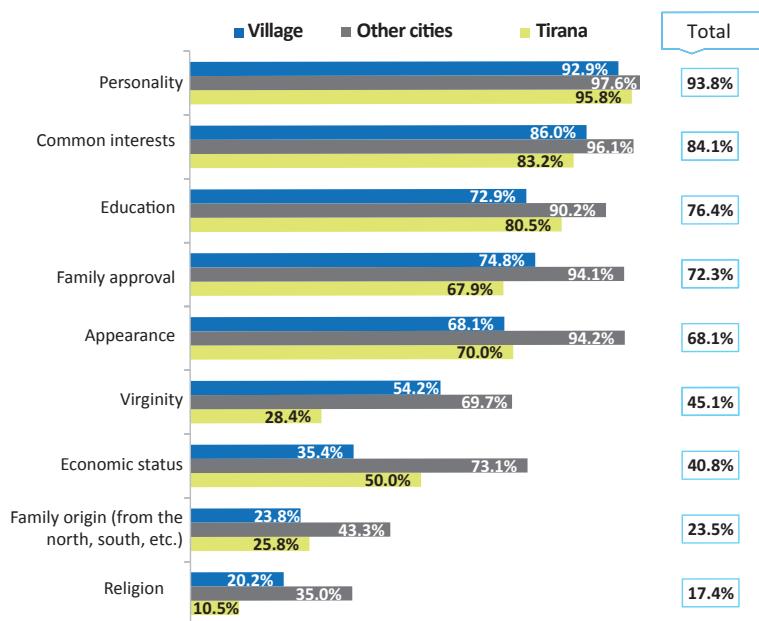
Despite the freedom of relations between young people and liberalization from the sex taboo, still 45 percent of the respondents consider **virginity** as important or very important against 20.3 percent of the respondents considering it as less important, or 18 percent of the respondents considering it as not important for a marriage relation. What is remarkable is the difference between males and females when it comes to their opinion on virginity, where males make up for a greater percentage in favor of it. More specifically, about 27.9 percent of male respondents versus 14.4 percent of female respondents are in favor of virginity, showing that males continue considering virginity as a matter of social pride, while females see it as a way of not prejudicing upon their freedom before marriage. Of course such a tendency is more remarkable in the rural zones versus the urban ones, and is particularly strong in Tirana. Thus, if in Tirana 13.7 percent of the respondents are in favor of virginity, only 19.8 percent of the respondents in the other urban areas and 26.2 percent of the respondents in the rural areas are in support of it. The freedom provided by the big urban centers and the lack of prejudice against the other more isolated areas have an impact on the respondents' approach to virginity. Virginity is supported more amongst the respondents having fewer incomes as compared to the ones having higher incomes (26.7 percent vs. 14.6 percent). However, the importance of virginity fades away with the passing of years. More specifically, 34.5 percent of the respondents of 16-17 years of age consider it as very important versus 16.7 percent of the respondents of 23-27 years of age. Regarding the geographical coverage, the respondents from the south to the north consider virginity equally important, while no major differences are remarked amongst them. An element

worth being highlighted is the education level, as it helps in releasing people from prejudice on virginity. Thus, 25.2 percent of the pre-university students have a prejudice on virginity against 7.8 percent of the post-university students.

Graph no 28.

Relevance of factors for choosing future partners

Only the % of the ones considering it as "very important" or "important"



Regarding **personality**, it seems like the respondents consider it as an element of a special importance when choosing a partner. At the national level, 60.1 percent of the respondents rate personality as being very important in choosing a candidate for marriage. In the meantime, 64.2 percent of female respondents report that personality is very important while choosing their partner against 56.5 percent of male respondents providing the same answer, thus showing that females have a tendency to see features of sustainability and prospects of their relations from the chosen partner. Despite the level of income, the issue of personality has the same support amongst respondents belonging to different social and economic population strata. However, in the

other urban zones this tendency is even stronger than in Tirana, or in rural areas, where the data are respectively 56.3 percent in Tirana and 57 percent in rural areas, while in the other urban zones this support is rated at 64.3 percent. This element becomes more evident with the growing age of respondents. More specifically, 62.6 percent of the respondents of 23-27 years of age rate it as important. A great impact on the assessment is played by the level of education. Thus, 72.5 percent of the respondents with a post-university degree think it is important compared to 57.9 percent of the respondents of a pre-university age. These data are related to a clearer understanding of the weight of the personality of the partner for a sustainable relationship at an older age.

In a social and media environment focusing on "the cult of physical beauty", the respondents give a considerable importance to **the physical appearance when choosing their partner**. More specifically, 68.1 percent of the respondents consider appearance as important or very important against 27.6 percent of the respondents considering it as less important for choosing a partner. This shows that appearance of young people plays a major role and serves as important criteria in choosing a partner. Females are less inclined to consider appearance as less important versus male respondents (34.2 percent for females versus 27.6 percent for males). Such indicator shows that females aim at supporting their criteria in more sustainable elements. Regarding the support of such criteria amongst the respondents living in Tirana or other areas, there is no substantial difference between them. However, in Tirana there is a slight tendency to be more in favor of appearance, with 52.6 percent of the respondents reporting appearance as important versus 49.2 percent of the respondents from rural areas providing the same answer. On the other hand, this shows that in rural areas this element is taking precedence in relations with the others. 55.8 percent of the respondents coming from rich families rate this element as important compared to 42.9 percent of the respondents with lower incomes.

Regarding the educational level, 76.4 percent of the respondents consider **their partner's education level** as an important or a very important criterion against 17.6 percent of the respondents rating it as less important. More specifically, 38.3 percent of female respondents consider it as very important versus 28.3 percent of male respondents considering it as simply important. In female respondents this element takes more priority than in male respondents, as a consequence of a greater care shown by them in choosing a marriage partner. The level of

education is appreciated more amongst the respondents from Tirana. Hence, 38.9 percent of the respondents from Tirana consider it as important compared to 26.9 percent of the respondents from the rural areas. Such percentage increases with a higher level of incomes or education amongst respondents, where, for instance, 54.9 percent of the respondents with a post-university degree appreciate it against 30.8 percent of the respondents with no university degree. In the meantime, the respondents from the metropolitan area of Tirana and Durrës have a tendency to appreciate this characteristic of their partner more compared to the respondents from the northern and southern part of the country, where 38.5 percent of the respondents support this characteristic versus 30 percent of the remaining part of the respondents.

Very important elements taking priority amongst respondents regarding important elements for choosing a partner for marriage are **the common interests**. At the national level, 84.1 percent of the respondents consider joint interests as important and very important between partners, implying that the respondents prefer to pass through a marriage relationship process where common interests are a priority. This ratio is almost equal in male and female respondents (44.0 percent of male respondents and 43.5 percent of female respondents provide this answer). It is interesting to see that the percentage of respondents from the rural areas is almost the same with the percentage of respondents from Tirana regarding rating of this element, as 44 percent of those from rural areas support it versus 44.7 percent of the respondents coming from Tirana, while 34.7 percent of the respondents from the other urban area are in favor of this element. The same difference is remarked between the respondents coming from different geographical locations of the country and the southwestern part of the country. Hence, 54.2 percent of the respondents from the later group attach more importance to common interests versus 32.2 percent of the respondents from the north and 43.3 percent of the respondents from the metropolitan area of Tirana–Durrës providing the same answer. This element becomes even more important in a marriage relationship with a higher education level of partners/respondents. So, 52.9 percent of the respondents holding a post-university degree consider common interests as important versus 45.3 of the respondents holding a university degree providing the same answer.

Prejudice on regional background can be considered irrelevant amongst the respondents, showing that the different demographic movements within

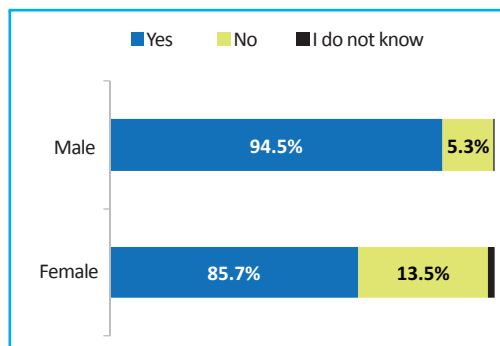
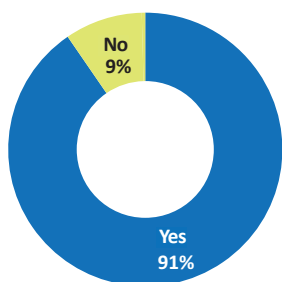
the country have made the respondents more open-minded, free from such prejudice that might condition the choice of their partner. Only 5.7 percent of the respondents at the national level consider geographical descend as important, while 51.7 percent of the respondents consider it as irrelevant or fully irrelevant. This represents the general tendency of the respondents coming from all the zones and levels of education in the country.

3.3 Acquaintances and the social network

Establishment of friendly relations with their peers is one of the most distinct features of the young people nowadays. In addition to school, the young people go to many social environments where they consolidate their social connections. In addition, in the entirety of relations and connections they have with their peers, they do not only create their ideas and get better assessment of the world, but also built social behavior models in the different venues such models are shaped, such as in the school, club, gym, etc.

Graph no 29.

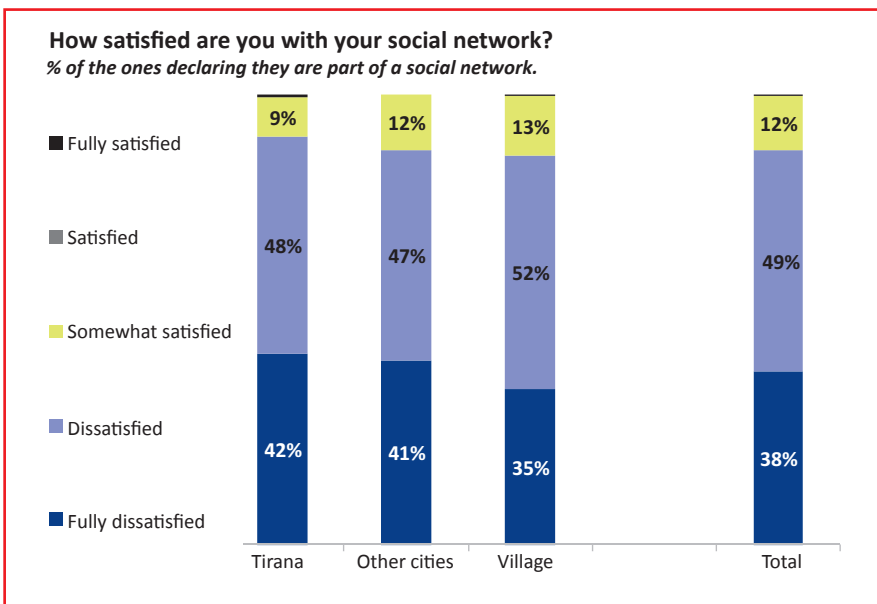
Are you part of a social group of friends where all people knows each other?



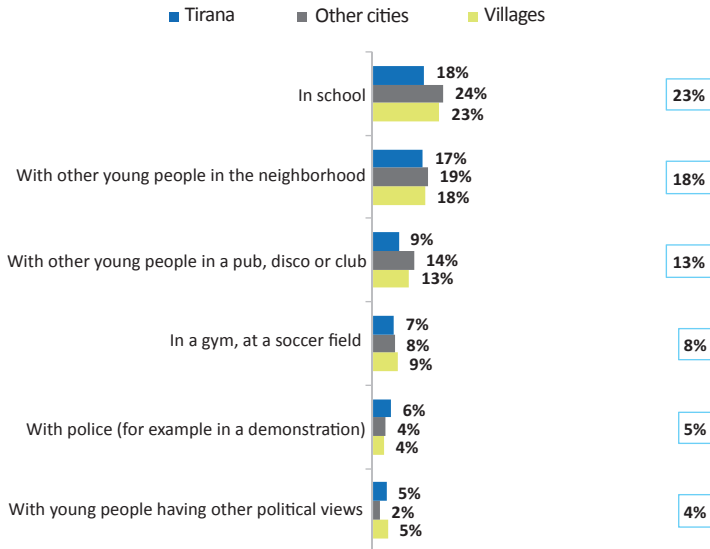
In the verge of these relations, we see that 90.4 percent of the respondents at the national level have reported they are part of **a certain group of friends where everybody knows everybody**. This shows of the great force and weight

of friendly and social relations between respondents and the nature how such relations become tangible. About 95.4 percent of male respondents report they are part of a certain group of friends compared to 85.4 percent of female respondents reporting of the same thing, thus leading us to the assertion that more female respondents are not part of a certain group of friends (13.5 percent) than male respondents (5.3 percent). The higher the income level amongst respondents, the higher the number of respondents who are part of certain groups of friends going out with each-other. This indicator shows that being part of a certain group of friends is related to the possibility of sharing certain activities requiring financial possibilities. In this logic, 84 percent of the poor respondents have certain groups they socialize with compared to 94 percent of the rich respondents. The higher the level of education amongst respondents, the higher their percentage of involvement with certain groups of friends, showing that the university and post-university environment increases the possibility of having consolidated groups of friendships joined around more sustainable professional interests. This is true in post-university respondents (96.1 percent) versus the pre-university respondents (90.6 percent).

Graph no 30.



On the other **hand, 86.8 percent of the respondents report they are satisfied with their social network and their acquaintances.** In this case, the percentage is almost similar for the male and female respondents, according to whom acquaintances or their social networks are not casual. In the meantime, in relation to Tirana and the other urban and rural areas, respondents from rural areas report of less satisfaction from their social network. More specifically, 34.6 percent of the respondents from rural areas report of lower satisfaction from social connection versus 42.4 percent of the respondents from Tirana providing the same answer. This relates to the limited possibilities of respondents in the rural areas to extend their group of friends or their social network. In the meantime, while 44.7 percent of the respondents from rich social classes report they are very satisfied with their groups of friends and with their social network against 32.2 percent of the poor respondents reporting of the same level of satisfaction from social networks. The level of satisfaction reduces with aging of respondents, as they seem to have more requirements for their friends and the acquaintances. Thus, 46.7 percent of the respondents from 16-17 years old report they are satisfied with their acquaintances and social networks versus 32.8 percent of the respondents from 23 to 27 years old providing the same answer. The respondents from the metropolitan area of Tirana - Durrës, from the southeast and southwest are very satisfied with this company, reporting a satisfaction rate by respectively 42.20 percent, 38.9 percent and 45.8 percent, versus the ones in the north, where this inclination is lower (22.7 percent). But the latter category reports of a higher rate of satisfaction with their friends. So, 63.8 percent of the respondents from the north report they are satisfied with their friends versus 45.9 percent of the respondents from the Tirana-Durres area, 49.3 percent of the respondents from the southeast part of the country and 41.4 percent in the southwest part of the country.

Graph no 31.**Involvement in violent conflicts***% of those saying they have been involved in a violent conflict*

For as long as friendship and accompaniment between young people implies certain social behaviors, verbal or physical conflicts in certain circumstances, defining their behavior in relation with various environments, remains an important element. If we consider the close environment of the respondents in their daily lives, at the national level, 81.4 percent of the respondents report they have **never had a conflict in their neighborhood with other peers**. What is interesting is the fact that when the respondents report they have been in a violent conflict, we see that 22.1 percent of the respondents coming from rich families report of being involved in a conflict versus 14.6 percent of the respondents coming from poor families. This implies an effort for confirming the identity of rich respondents, even through violence. Also, the respondents of 16 to 17 years old are more inclined to get into conflicts, as it is natural to have a lower conflict level parallel to a higher education of the respondents.

Even other recreational venues, such as the **pubs, discos or clubs** do not seem to be a place where the respondents aim at showing physical violence through conflicts with others, against a general perception of the public opinion. The data from the respondents show that 86.7 percent of the respondents at the national level have reported they have never entered into a conflict with their peers in pubs, discos or clubs. In the cases the respondents have reported they have been involved in a violent conflict, 14.3 percent of such respondents come from other urban areas (different from Tirana), 12.8 percent of the respondents come from other rural areas and only 8.9 percent of the respondents come from Tirana. Again there is an increased number of the respondents reporting of involvement in a violent conflict coming from rich population strata. In more details, 15 percent of the respondents coming from rich families provide this answer versus 7.5 percent of the respondents coming from poor classes. Also, they have a lower percentage of involvement in a conflict (84.2 %) against the ones coming from poor classes (91.3 %). The tendency to enter into a violent conflict decreases with age and with a higher education level.

Regarding **the gyms of soccer fields**, **91.8** percent of the respondents report they are not involved in conflicts in these venues. Given that sports venues provide a team spirit and involve a wider participation of young people than other venues, they often not serve as a place of conflict for the respondents. In addition, the response is similar despite the economic level, or the geographical background of the respondents.

Regarding school, which is a very important social micro-environment for the respondents, 76.9 percent of the respondents at the national level report they have not been involved in conflicts in school. However, nearly 22.8 percent of the respondents report they have been involved in school conflicts, denoting that a great number of conflicts happen in schools (as against other venues). This phenomenon is more frequent in the other urban and rural areas, not in Tirana. Only 17.9 percent of the respondents from Tirana are involved in violent conflicts in schools, whereas in the other areas it is respectively 24.3 percent and 23 .1 percent of the respondents involved in such conflicts. Again, we see that the respondents from rich classes are more involved in school conflicts, 25.4 percent, versus 17.1 percent of the ones coming from poor classes. The

respondents of 16 to 17 years old report of a high degree of involvement in such conflicts. Thus, 38.9 percent of the respondents of this category report they are involved in conflicts, compared to 11.8 percent of the respondents from 23 to 27 years of age reporting the same thing. The data show that the respondents from Northern Albania are more inclined to be included in such conflicts, while they report of a lower rate of non-involvement in violent conflicts in schools. So, 62.2 respondents from northern Albania report of non-involvement in violent conflicts versus 77.4 percent of the respondents from the metropolitan areas of Tirana-Durrës, 82.9 percent of the respondents from the southwest and 81.9 percent in the southeast providing the same answer.

In a harsh environment of political clashes, often translated in physical violation, the data show that **95.5 of the respondents at the national level** have reported they have not been involved in conflicts with respondents with different political views. This implies the lack of serious political debates between respondents and a more natural acceptance of the political views of others in the social network, or in a group of friends. In general, this percentage is similar in all the different parts of the country despite the economic level or the geographical location of the respondents.

Regarding conflicts and clashes of the respondents in demonstrations or protests, the data show that **95.3 percent of the respondents have not entered into conflicts with the police in demonstrations**. Although Albania has lived through protests and demonstrations featured by clashes with the police, the high percentage of the non-conflicting respondents shows of a peaceful attitude of the respondents, but also of a lack of participation of youth in civil or political protests. Such percentage is similar in Tirana and in other urban zones. It is interesting to see that in the amount of people reporting they have been involved in clashes with the police in demonstrations, the percentage of respondents from rich population is higher than that of respondents of poor population, representing respectively 92 percent against 2.9 percent of the respondents. This implies a greater awareness amongst respondents on human rights and freedoms, which go in parallel with the income level. On the other hand, no other fundamental change is seen amongst the respondents of different ages, regions, geographical background and educational level regarding this aspect.

4. Conclusions

Regarding family and social network aspects, through their contributions, the respondents reflect the changes the Albanian society has gone through these twenty years of transition. The respondents belong to the age group of 18 to 27 years of age, representing the "grown-up" part of the society, having its own opinion and appraisal on such elements as the family, society, marriage, and conflict during the prolonged political and economic transition, initiated at the beginning of the '90s. Twenty years later we see that the role of the family as an important social venue is still strong and its impact on the respondents' decision-making effort is still visible. Confrontation of the respondents with new concepts of relationships in couple and co-existence has not radically changed their preference on the traditional forms of marriage, still prevailing amongst them. However, the constant socio-economic changes and use of information technologies has diminished the difference between the respondents from the urban and rural areas regarding their stance on such issues as virginity, marriage, co-existence or the number of children they want to have in their future families. Social relations between respondents have gone through a substantial transformation, because of more social environments outside the school where the respondents convene and promote their friendship, such as in clubs, restaurants, discos, gyms, etc. Although the level of involvement of the respondents in conflicts or on acts of violence in such venues is low, in face of this fact we see that the school is often the place where conflicts happen. In conclusion, we might say that the approach of the Albanian youth on the family, social connections and other specifically-referred-to elements are a testimony of all the social, economic and cultural factors having an impact over the last 20 years or so on shaping the attitudes described through this analysis.

5. Recommendations

- The responsible institutions should undertake tangible initiatives and steps to raise the awareness of young people regarding the level of violence in different venues, especially in schools.
- Such public venues like sports fields, libraries, and open playgrounds should be more present as they can serve as social grounds, reducing the level of violence between respondents and strengthening their social ties in a more sustainable manner.
- The school programmes and special awareness-raising programmes should maintain and strengthen sustainability of the young people on the family role and values and highlight its indispensability as an important structure for maintaining social cohesion.

CHAPTER III

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

“Education at any cost, but in doubts for the future.”

Prepared by:

Arbjan Mazniku

1. Overview

Education is the most important activity of the young generation, therefore their involvement in the education system is a key indication for the country's potentials for development. Despite the increase of the number of students enrolled in its high and higher education schools, Albania has inherited a low percentage of the enrollment of its youth in schools compared to figures of school enrollment in the regional or other more developed countries' reality. In 2009, according to INSTAT, 73 percent of the young people at the age of high school attended school, while only 37 percent¹⁴ of the ones at the age of higher school attended higher education. This indicator is much lower than in the regional countries. It is called the gross enrolment rate (GER) in the OECD countries, and is over 90 percent for the high schools and over 60 percent for higher schools. However, these two indicators have been on the rise in the last years in Albania.

Transition from school to finding a job is a difficult moment for the young people all over the world, but it even more specific in the conditions of Albania, mainly related to the form of country's development and its long transition. The labor market is a relatively new concept in Albania and has substituted the complete control of the communist state over the job offer and demand reality in the country, including the number of jobs and the kind of employment. Naturally so, the young people are not favored in the labor market, not only because they have to compete with the ones already having a job, but also due to lack of experience and proved skills. This battle becomes even more difficult at the conditions when there are no substantial new jobs, even though there has been a sustainable economic growth of Albania over the last twenty years.

¹⁴ INSTAT – International comparison: age-groups reflected in the education in percentage, accessible in <http://instat.gov.al/>

2. Main findings

- Most the young people studying at the university are females; prevalence of females over males increases with the level of education.
- The Albanian young people use on average 2 hours and 43 minutes per day to learn, while males dedicate much less time to this process than females.
- Most of the Albanian young people go to school with pleasure, but the level of pleasure gets lower with the passing of time (as they grow older).
- About grades achieved in school, 48.5% of the respondents belong to the ones attaining average grades, most of the grades are 7s and 8s, while male respondents receive lower grades than females.
- Only 6.1% of the respondents do not believe in the bribes paid for getting (better) grades. The perception on "grade bribery" is higher in the city of Tirana, where 67.5 percent of the respondents believe that grades are "bought".
- Most of the Albanian young people would like to be educated abroad.
- About 54.9 percent of the Albanian young people are generally optimistic regarding employment potentials in the future. In addition, females are more optimistic than males, while the young people from Tirana are more optimistic than the ones living in other cities of the country.
- About 35.2 percent of the young people at the national level have either a full time or a part time job and males have a better employability rate than females.
- Most of the young people prefer to work for the public administration, as 49.3 percent of them would chose this sector to work into, while this wish gets more prominent with the passing of years and the level of studies.
- The young people trust connections and friends more than the other factors that might help in finding a job.

3. A detailed data analysis

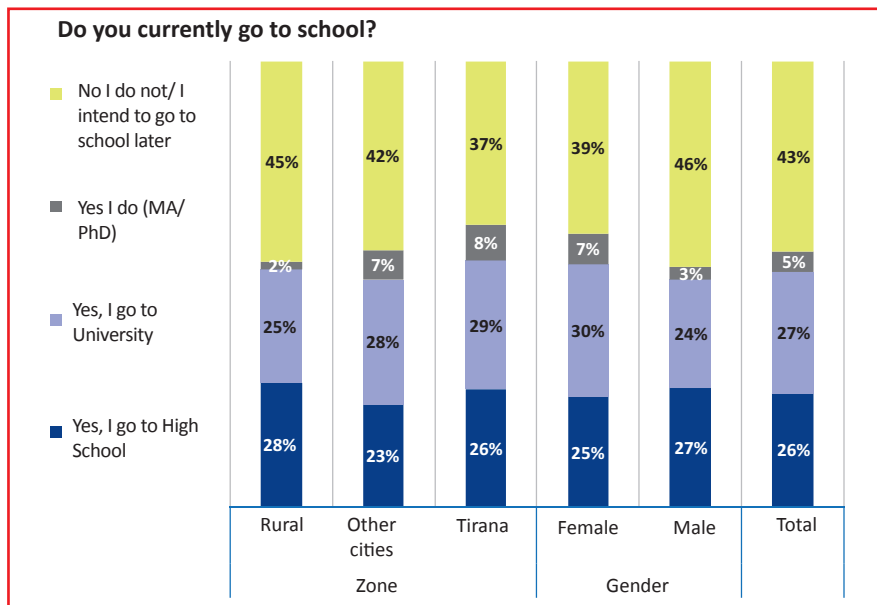
3.1 Education – importance and preferences

The survey data show that at the national level 57.4 percent of the respondents were studying. Of them 25.7 percent were studying in the high school, 26.9 percent in universities and 4.8 percent for an MA/PhD degree.

The increase of the number of young people enrolled in the high and higher education level in the last years is also reflected in the survey. According to the age-group division, the findings are more optimistic than the data provided in 2009. Out the respondents of 16-17 years of age, 93.4 percent attend the high school, while from the respondents of 18-22 years of age about 48.6 percent are enrolled in the university studies.

The data show that male respondents represent a higher level of attendance in high school as opposed to female respondents, being at the level of 26.6 percent against 24.6 percent of females. According to same data, the female respondents report of representing the majority in higher education with 29.9 percent against 24.3 percent of male respondents.

Graph no 32.



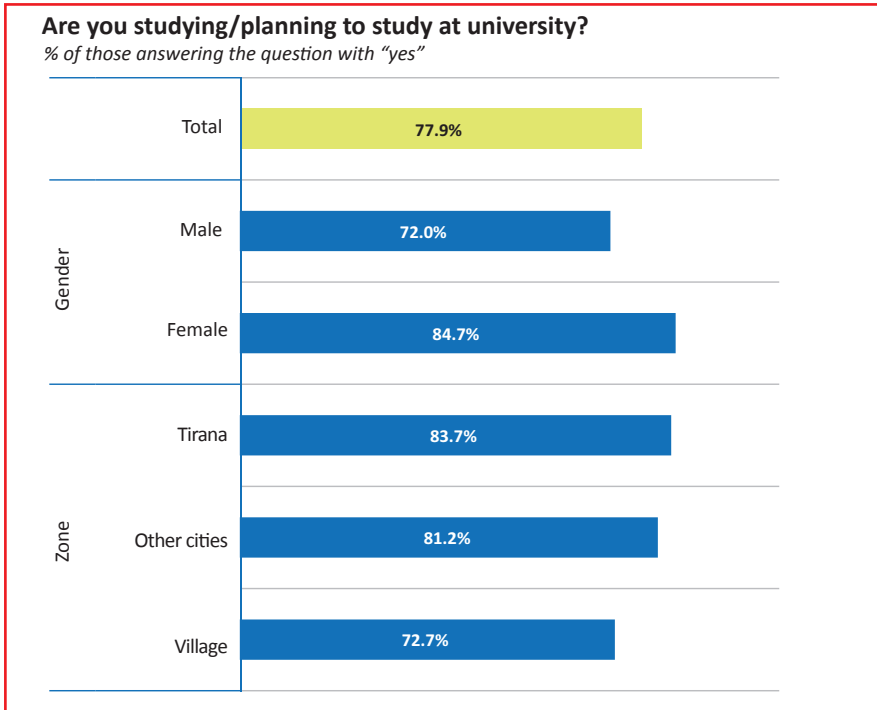
It is important to highlight that the prevailing percentage of females in education increases by double in the higher degree of studies. In this context, 6.8 of the respondents studying for the MA and PhD studies are females against 3 percent of males.

The element of wealth does not seem to play a major role in studying at high schools. The situation is different when it comes to studying in the higher schools. Thus, higher schools are attended by 29.2 percent of rich respondents, three percent above the national average, and only by 21.7 percent of the poor respondents, representing 5.2 percent below the national average of attendance of higher education. The sub-division of poorer respondents represents the highest percentage of the ones not attending school at all. Such indicator is 51.3 percent for this group of respondents, about 8.7 percent above the national average.

Nonetheless, higher education remains an important goal to be achieved by the Albanian young generation. 77.9 percent of them report they are studying or planning to study at university. Thus, female respondents seem to have a higher inclination to study at higher schools, versus male respondents, as 84.7

percent of female respondents have positively answered the question related to attending higher schools, against 72 percent of male respondents providing the same answer.

Graph no 33.



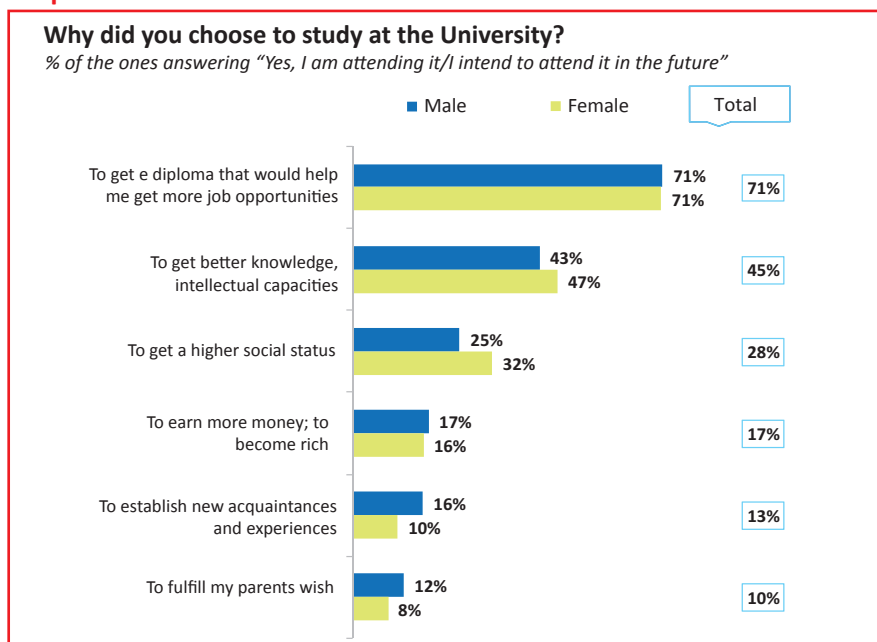
It is also remarkable that the highest wish to study in higher schools is bigger in Tirana and it reduces while we leave from the capital of the country. Thus, 83.7 percent of the young people already studying, or planning to study at a university live in Tirana, 81.2 percent live in other urban areas, and 72.7 percent live in rural areas.

There is a strong correlation between the wealth and the wish or possibility to attend higher education. The sub-group of wealthier respondents have already studied in, or massively wish to study in a higher school institution. More specifically, 84.6 percent of such respondents, or 6.7 percent above the national average, have studied or want to study at a higher education institution. Out

of the poorer sub-group, about 62,5 percent have already studied or want to study at a higher education institution, representing a group that is 15.4 percent lower than the national average.

Higher education is considered important by the young people, especially because of their employability in the future. Asked about the reason why they are studying or want to study at such level education, 70.9 percent of the respondents say they want to get a diploma and want to get better chances of employment in the future. This number is followed by 44.9 percent of the respondents reporting they want to study because they want to have a better knowledge background and better intellectual capacities, 28.3 percent of the respondents report they want to have a better social status and 16.8 percent of them report they want to make more money. Amongst other reasons for attending higher education are: getting a new experience (13.2 percent of the respondents) and satisfying their parents' wish (9.9 percent of the respondents).

Graph no 34.



The data show us that 46.9 percent of female respondents are more inclined to study at a higher school because of their wish for getting more knowledge

and for developing their intellectual capacities versus 42.8 percent of males. Also, females seem to consider higher education as a possibility to improve their social status more than the male respondents.

The young people from the rural areas consider higher education as a possibility to extend their intellectual capacities more than the ones living in Tirana. About 74.1 percent of the respondents from the other cities, except Tirana, see higher education mostly as a possibility to have better chances to find a job. This figure is about 3.2 percent above the national average. At the same time, the data show that only 62.3 percent of the respondents from Tirana think in the same way, representing a group of about 8.6 percent lower than the national average.

In addition, we see that the data show of a sustainable correlation between the rich sub-group of respondents and mentioning of higher education as a possibility to extend knowledge and build intellectual capacities. 54 percent of the respondents belonging to the “poorer” sub-group of respondents prefer the above-cited reasons for attending studies, what represents 9.1 percent more than the overall average and 17.1 percent more than the richer sub-group. Out of this group, only 36.9 percent of the respondents refer to the knowledge and intellectual capacities as a reason to attend higher school.

Asked what they would choose if they had to choose between vocational schools and higher schools, the overwhelming part of the respondents, that is about 82.8 percent of them, opted for the higher schools, and only 15.5 percent of them opted for the vocational education. Amongst respondents opting for the vocational education, male respondents represent a higher percentage than females; respectively 21.6 percent of male respondents versus 8.6 percent of female respondents provided this answer.

Such a solution is more frequent amongst respondents in the rural areas as against those coming from urban areas. An intersecting finding is the fact that the respondents from Tirana, prefer vocational education more than the respondents from the other urban areas of the country.

Choosing the branch of study at higher schools is one of the most important decisions defining the future of a young person. This decision includes three potential factors. First, it contains the wish to follow a certain career, second, the impression on the possibilities provided by a study course for employability and incomes, and, last, spaces to get the right for studying for higher education.

The overwhelming part, that is about 60.6 percent of the respondents, report they have chosen or are choosing the branch they prefer, while 24.1 percent of the respondents report they have chosen the branch they believe will provide more incomes to them, even though this is not what they would chose in the first place. In the meantime, 13.2 percent report they have chosen to study in a branch where it is easier to be admitted and enrolled.

The education and profession – irreversible values.

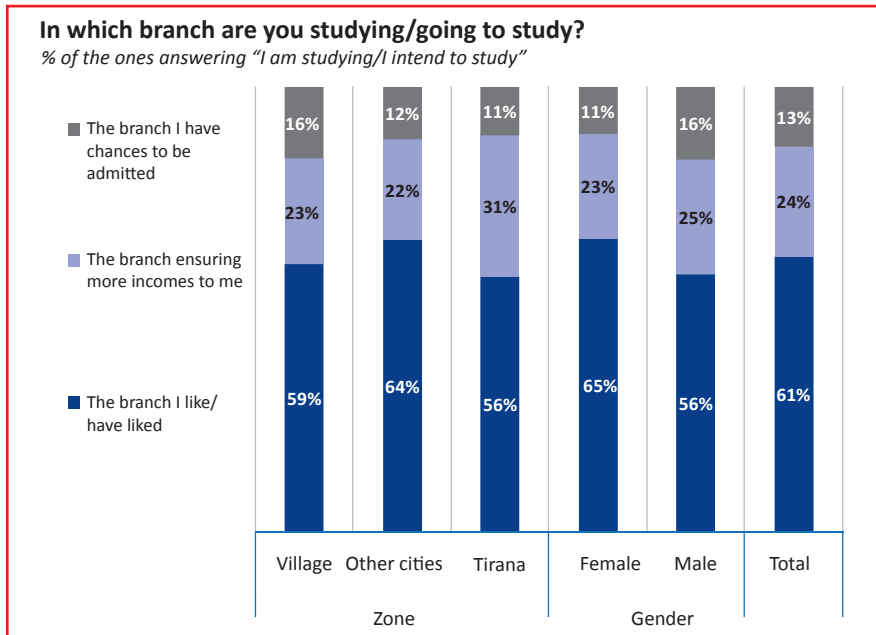
Despite the strong feeling of perception that "friends" and political connections are fundamental in having a career, the respondents keep having a strong belief on the importance of education or of a profession. Jeton, a 26-year-old from Tirana, says: *"Education comes first, because there is nothing to do if you are not educated. If you do not have a school, or a profession, if there is nothing you can do, than what is it you can you ask?"*

Through their answers the respondents show they have a high appreciation for professions, or craftsmanship and for the vocational schools. Mireli, 23 years old, from Tirana, says: *"I think vocational schools should be developed more substantially, because such schools provide us with a profession and might be of more value than a diploma in law or in journalism. Everybody needs an electrician, plumber, or a mechanics."*

"Vocational education is very important. It is good to encourage all young people to enroll in vocational schools",-says Kristi, 22 years old from Tirana.

"I would highly appreciate vocational education, because you are not asked on what degree you have, but about what is it that you can do", - says Ilda, 27, working in two call centers.

The data show us that the respondents from Tirana are more pragmatic than the respondents from other urban or rural areas about the choice of the study course. So, only 56 percent of them chose their course of preference, which is 4.6 percent below the national average, while 30.8 percent of them, or about 6.7 percent above the average, chose the branch they believe is going to provide more incomes to them. In the meantime, the young people from the rural areas are more inclined to choose a branch of study where they have more chances to win.

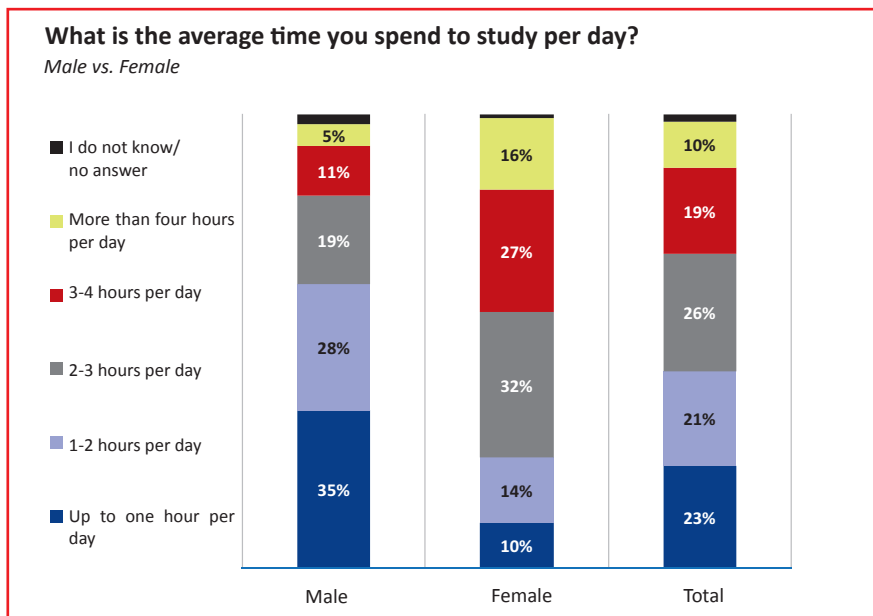
Graph no 35.

The Albanian young people use on average 2 hours and 43 minutes per day to learn, while male dedicate much less time to this process than females. In general, 43.5 percent of the respondents spend less than two hours per day to study, 25.7 percent about 2-3 hours per day to study, while the ones spending more than 3 hours in a day are 29.2 percent of the respondents.

The data show of a great difference between the time spent for studying between females and males. Most of the males, about 62.5 percent of them, spend less than two hours to study. About 35 percent of them study even for less than an hour. In the meantime, only 24.4 percent of the female respondents spend less than two hours to prepare for school, while their number gets higher and surpasses the number of male respondents spending on average two to three hours per day to study. Almost 1/3 of the girls belong to the group of the Albanian youth spending on average two to three hours per day to study, against 1/5th of male respondents spending this much time to study. The difference between male and

female respondents becomes deeper amongst the ones spending more than three hours per day, of which male respondents compose only 15.7 percent against 42.7 percent of female respondents.

Graph no 36.



It can be clearly said that education is (relatively) more important for women when it comes to fulfilling their dreams, or for having a better life. This is seen not only from the years of education of females, but also from the time they spend every day for studying. Thus, female respondents spend on average three hours and fourteen minutes against two hours and 12 minutes spend by male respondents.

Although assessed as one of the most important mechanisms for enabling the transfer of respondents from schools to jobs, involvement of respondents in internships/job placements in their study years remain low. Only 19.7 percent of the respondents report of having had internships, while the data show us of a minor change of figures where females are committed in internships more than male respondents.

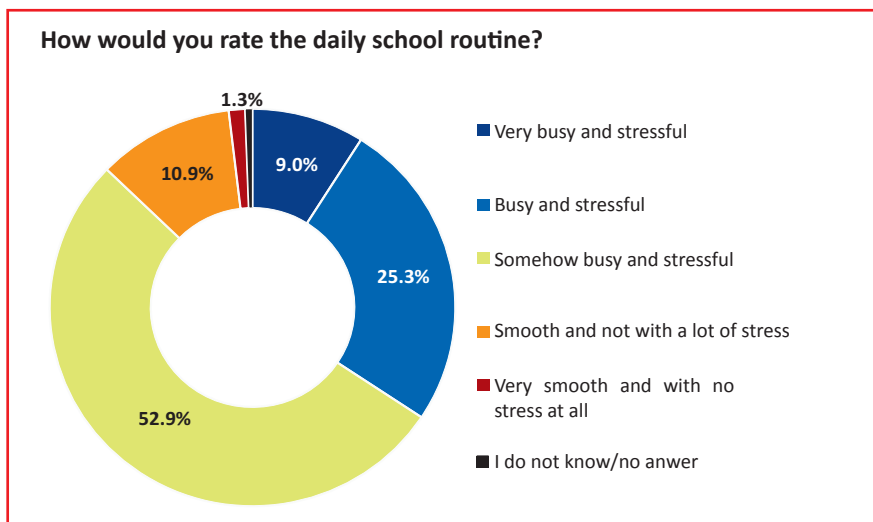
3.2 Assessment on the educational system

Most of the Albanian youth go to school with pleasure. Respectively, 21.1 percent of the respondents report they go to school with a great pleasure, 35.2 percent with pleasure, while 38.5 percent go sometimes with pleasure and sometimes not. They are followed by only 5.1 percent of the respondents going to school without pleasure, out of who 3.8 percent with no pleasure and 1.3 percent with no pleasure at all. The respondents from the rural areas seem to like the experience to go to school more. This is also remarked in their assessment on the extreme experience of pleasure to go to school. The number of the ones reporting “I go to school with a lot of pleasure” is much higher than the number of the ones answering “I go without pleasure at all” in the respondents from Tirana and from other urban centers.

An interesting element deriving from the survey data is that level of pleasure to go to school drops with growing older. In relation with the extreme level of such “pleasure”, going to school with a great pleasure reduces from 25.9 percent amongst the respondents aged 16-17, 20.3 percent in the respondents aged 18-22, and 13.4 percent in the ones aged 23-27. This bias is attested even regarding the other extreme aspect – that is lack of pleasure, which marks a higher percentage when it comes to the ones going to school without pleasure and with an extreme lack of pleasure from 3.2 percent of the respondents in the age group of 16-17-year-olds to 8.3 percent of the respondents in the age group of 23-27-year-olds.

Speaking of the load and the stress they go through, most of the respondents going to school report their day as being busy on average, a bit more than one third consider it as very busy and stressful and only 1 in 10 of the respondents consider it as “simple”. About 52.9 percent of the respondents consider a usual school day as “somewhat busy and stressful”, 9 percent consider it as very busy and stressful, followed by 25.3 percent considering it as busy and stressful. Amongst the respondents considering the school day as simple, 10.9 percent consider it to be smooth and without a lot of stress and only 1.3 percent consider it to be very smooth and without any stress.

Graph no 37.



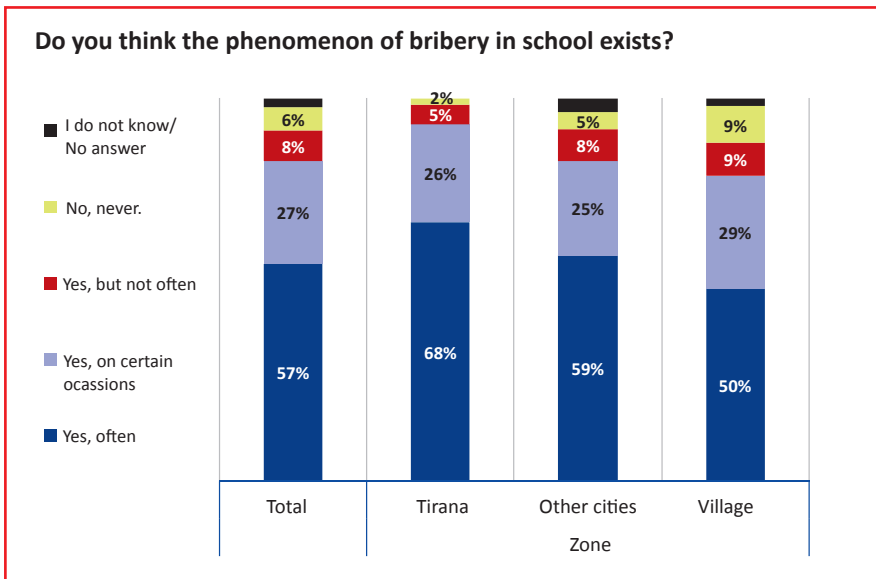
About the results at school, 48.5 percent of the respondents belong to the normal level, with mostly grades of 7s and 8s. On the other hand, about 20.5 percent of them belong to the high level, with most of the grades 9s and 10s, and 29.9 percent in the low level, with most of the grades less than 6s. Regarding the low grades, the highest percentage is composed of males with 43.6 percent, against female respondents with 16.3 percent; while in the medium and high level there is a prevalence of females with 52 percent, versus male respondents with 45.1 percent, especially when it comes to grades of 7s and 8s. Amongst the respondents getting mostly 9s and 10s, one can easily identify a great difference, where females represent 31.4 percent of this group, against male respondents representing 9.6 percent of the ones having the same results.

Regarding corruption in education through “paying bribes for the grades” or “paying for the exams” in universities, the respondents have a strong feeling in favor of paying bribes for the grades, attested by the survey data as well. Asked about the phenomenon of “grade and exam bribery”, 56.8 percent of the respondents report grades and exams are bought frequently; 26.9 percent report it happens on occasions, 7.8 percent report they are bought rarely and only 6.1 percent report this never happens.

Hence, over 90 percent of the respondents going to school report that the exam or grade “buying” phenomenon is present in their schools.

This perception is stronger in the city of Tirana, where 67.5 percent of the respondents believe that grades are often bought, followed by those living in other urban areas, where 58.9 percent of the respondents report the presence of such phenomenon, and last come the rural areas, where about 50.3 percent of the respondents report on paying for the grades they receive. Speaking of the reverse side of such phenomenon, the indicators follow the same trend. Thus, only 1.7 percent of the respondents in Tirana think that this phenomenon is inexistent, against 4.6 of those in other cities. The highest number of respondents negating the presence of such phenomena is composed of the respondents from the rural areas. 9.4 percent of them say they do not pay for grades in their schools.

Graph no 38.



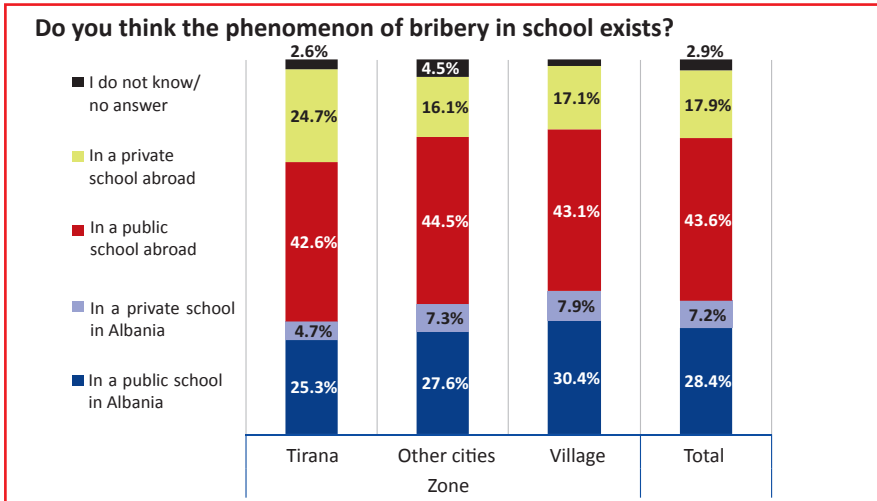
Regarding the overall assessment of the education quality in Albania, most of the respondents – that is 55 percent of them, report they are “somewhat satisfied”, followed by 23.3 percent “not satisfied” and 19.3

percent "satisfied" with the education quality. The lack of satisfaction with the education level is higher in the city of Tirana compared to other urban and rural areas of the country, although the other data suggest that Tirana provides a better quality education. Tirana represents a lower satisfaction of the respondents related to the education quality. Only 14.7 percent of the respondents say they are happy with it, against 20.6 percent of the ones in the other urban areas and 20 percent of the ones coming from rural areas. This tendency is attested when we compare the level of lack of satisfaction with the education level, which is higher in Tirana, reported as such by 25.3 percent, having an inclination to be lower in the other urban areas, with 24.3 percent of the respondents, whereas in the rural areas 21.5 percent of the respondents report they are not satisfied with the quality of education.

The level of satisfaction with higher education in the city of Tirana is higher compared to reported "satisfaction" from the other urban and rural areas, although other data suggest that Tirana provides a better quality education. Tirana represents a lower satisfaction level on the quality of education the respondents receive. Thus, only 14.7 percent of the respondents report they are satisfied with the quality of education versus 20.6 percent of the respondents from other urban areas and 20 percent of the respondents from rural areas providing the same answer. This bias is attested when we compare the level of non-satisfaction from the quality of higher education, which is the highest in Tirana, where 25.3 percent of the respondents provide this answer, with 24.3 percent of the respondents from the other urban areas and 21.5 percent of the respondents from the rural areas who report they are not satisfied with the quality of higher education they receive.

Even though the majority report that they are somewhat satisfied with the quality of higher education in Albania, 61.5 percent of the respondents report they would have preferred to have studied abroad.

The respondents do generally aim at being educated in the public schools abroad, rather than in the private schools. Even in this case, Tirana represents the highest number of the respondents who aim at studying in private schools abroad compared to the remaining part of the respondents from the urban and rural areas.

Graph no 39.

30.4 percent of the respondents from the rural areas report they want to study in a public school, thus composing the biggest category of respondents providing this answer in favor of studying in a public school, followed by 27.6 percent of the respondents from other urban areas and 25.3 percent of respondents from Tirana providing the same answer.

The percentage of the respondents saying they want to study in Albania gets higher parallel with them growing older. However, their wish to study abroad diminishes as the respondents get older.

The survey data show that there is a high number of the respondents aged 16-17 who want to go to study in a public school abroad.

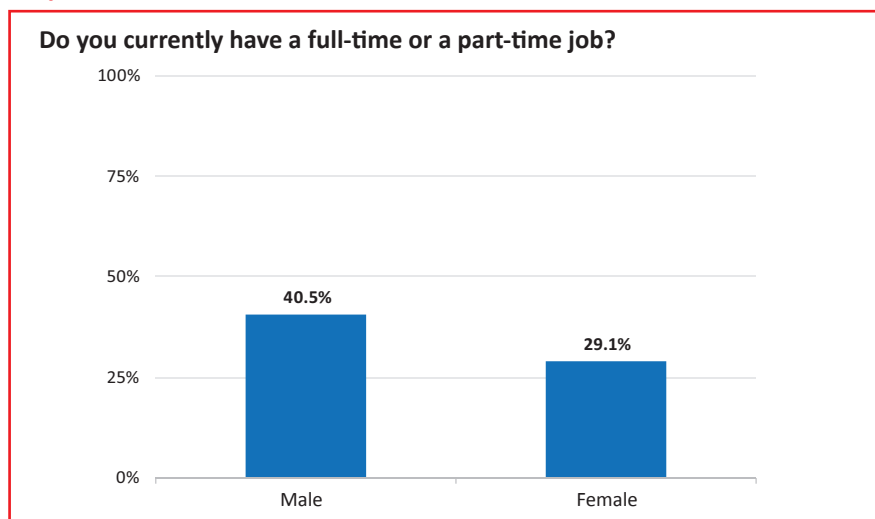
3.3 Employment

Employment of the young people is one of the most serious problems of Albania. It is a major problem in the developing countries as well. Unemployment is very high among the Albanian young people. At the national level, only 35.2 percent of the young people have a full-time or a part-time job. These data are provided by the Labor Force Survey of 2009, conducted by INSTAT, according to which 35.6 percent of the young people of the age-group of 15-29 years old have a job¹⁵. Most of the ones having a job are

¹⁵ INSTAT, Figures on unemployment (Labour Force Survey), Tirana, 2009

males, 40.5 percent of who work versus only 29.1 percent of working females. Employability is higher in Tirana and in other urban areas; it is respectively 37.9 percent in Tirana and 37.3 percent in the other urban areas and only 32.1 percent in the rural area. At the regional level, employability of young people is higher in the region of Tirana and Durres, where 41.3 percent of the young people have a job, and lower in the south-eastern region, where only 28.9 percent of the young people have a job.

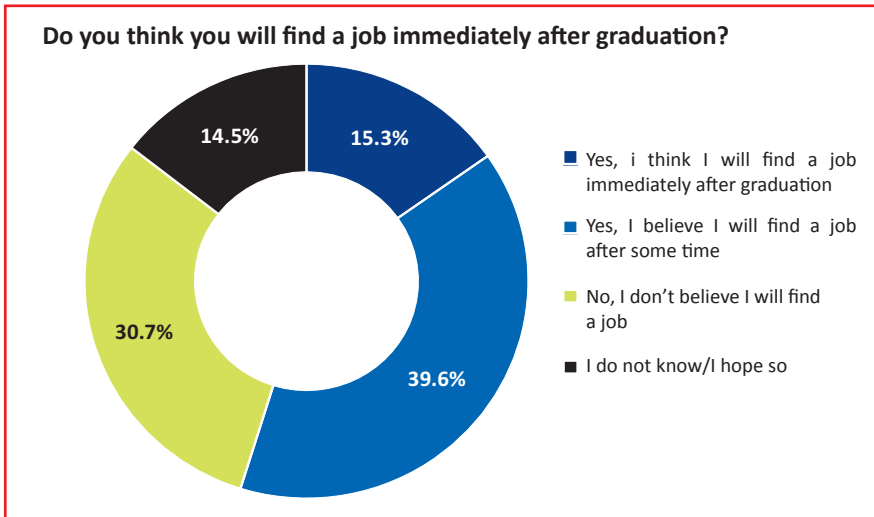
Graph no 40.



The data show that with the passing of years and better education, job opportunities are more considerable. Only 10.5 percent of the respondents of 16-17 years of age have a full-time or a part-time job. 25.6 percent of the respondents of 18-22 years of age have a job, while 60.2% of the respondents from 23-27 years of age have a job. The level of education seems to have a direct correlation with employability. The respondents with a post-university degree have a higher level of employability, if the comparison is drawn based on the level of education. More specifically 58.8 of the respondents having a post-university degree have a job, 41.1 percent of the respondents having a university degree have a job, and only 31.8 percent of the respondents having a high school diploma have a job. At the end of the employability scheme are the ones having only the basic education (of the 8th or 9th class) who are employed at the level of 27.1 percent.

However, the Albanian young people are not very optimistic when it comes to the employability opportunities in the future. Hence, only 54.9 percent of the respondents believe they will find a job after they graduate. Out of this group of optimistic respondents, 15.3 percent believe they will find a job immediately, while 39.6 percent believe they will find a job after some time. In the meantime, 30.7 percent of the respondents do not believe they will find a job soon.

Graph no 41.



Females seem to be more optimistic than males when it comes to their employability. 60.4 percent of the females are positive on opportunities to find a job immediately, or after some time after graduation, versus 49.9 percent of male respondents sharing the same belief.

The ones that feel insecure for the future are the male respondents. About 50.1 percent of male respondents report that they do not believe they will find a job, or say “they do not know if they will find a job”, versus 39.6 percent of female respondents providing the same answer.

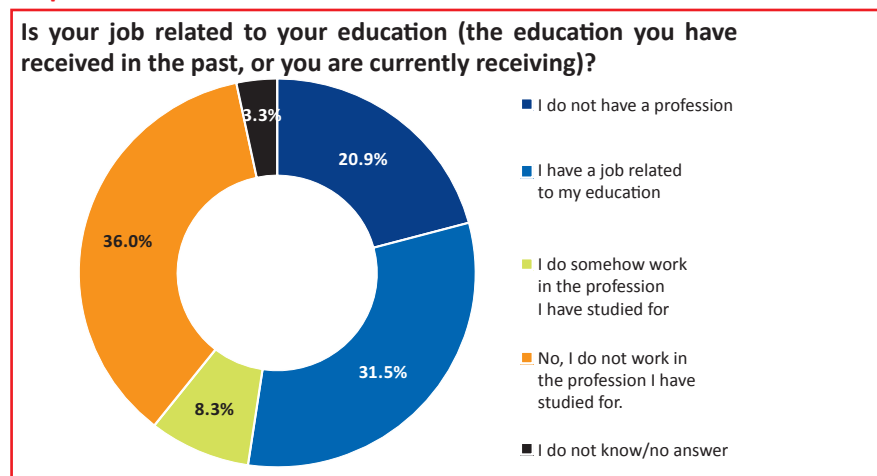
Optimism related to employment seems more concentrated in Tirana, compared to the other urban and rural areas. Therefore, we see that 62.1 percent of respondents from Tirana report they are confident they will find a job, while only 54.7 percent of the respondents from other urban areas provide the same answer. Less optimistic are the respondents from the rural areas, 52.3 percent of who report on the possibility to find a job.

The belief on the employment possibilities in the future gets lower as the age of the respondents grows, and leads to more pessimism. The level of optimism is higher amongst the respondents of 16-17 years of age (65.9 percent), but it reduces to 57.3 percent in the respondents of 18-22 years of age, and gets even lower (45.8 percent) in the respondents of 23-27 years of age.

Hopes and expectations related to employability get higher parallel to the education level. However, those having a post-university degree have a lower expectation than the respondents having a university degree.

Of the respondents already having a job, only a small number of them have a diploma related to the job they do. When asked if they work in the profession they graduated in, 36% of the respondents at the national level provided negative answers, while only 31.5 percent of them said they have a job that is compliant with the education they have received. About 20.9 percent of the respondents already having a job say they have not gained the skills needed for their job through education, thus they do not belong to the above-cited categories. A small number of them, about 8.3 percent, report they have a job that somehow resembles the profession they were educated in.

Graph no 42.



The working respondents report they spend on average 44.2 hours in a week to work, which is somewhat higher than 40 hours, which is the legal duration of working hours in a week. The male respondents report they work more than

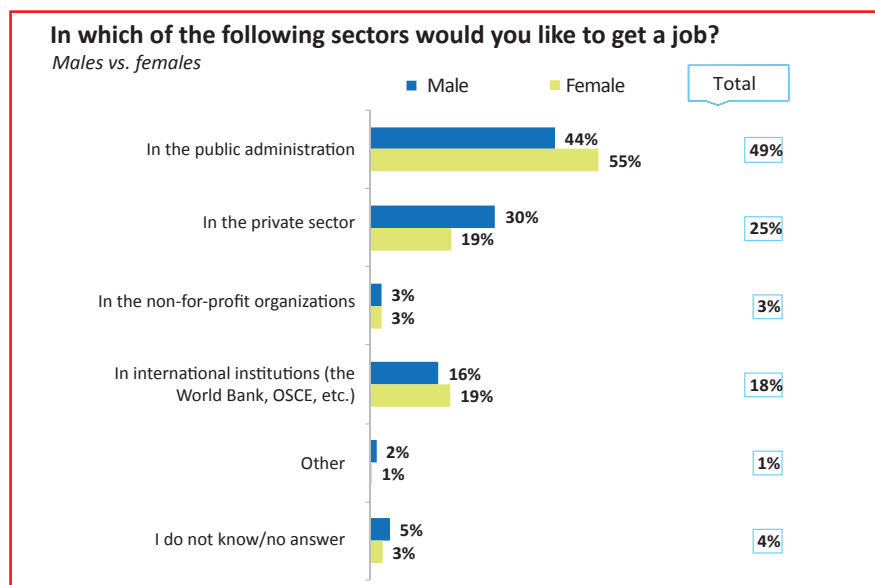
females. According to them, they spend on average 45.2 working hours in a week, against 42.5 working hours reported by female respondents.

It seems like the possibilities to get a job in the profession you get your education for are higher in the other urban and rural areas than in Tirana. Only 25 percent of the working respondents living in Tirana have a job complying to their education, against 38.3 percent of the respondents in the other urban areas and 26.9 percent in the rural ones having a job compliant to their education.

The state public administration and the other employees working for other state-funded sectors have reduced significantly from one year to the other. Despite this fact, an overwhelming part of respondents prefer to work for the public administration. When asked where they would like to work in the future, 49.3 percent of them chose the public administration, 25.1percent the private sector and 17.8 percent the international institutions.

Out of the respondents preferring to get a job in the public administration, 54.9 percent of the respondents are females against 44.3 percent of males. Amongst the respondents preferring to get a job in the private sector, 30 percent of the respondents are males versus 19.4 percent of females.

Graph no 43.



One can easily see from the graph that the wish to have a job in the public administration gets higher with the passing of years as respondents get older. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the high percentage of respondents having a pre-university education, 64.7 percent of who want to get a job in the public sector.

The respondents believe more in connections and friends rather than in other factors that might help them in finding a job. When asked to rate from 1 to 5 (1 the most important element and 5 the least important element) the elements considered as the most important ones to find a job in Albania, the respondents listed acquaintances and friends as the most important element, attaching an average rating of 2.2, followed by professional capacities, with a rate of 2.55, education, with a rate of 2.72, political connections, 3.29, while luck was listed as the least important element, rated with 4.25 points.

Male respondents believe in acquaintances, friends and political connections when it comes to possibilities of employability more than female respondents, while females seem to believe a bit more on the educational level. In the meantime, even the richest respondents believe in acquaintances more, compared to the sub-groups with less economic opportunities. The appreciation of friends and political connections gets higher as the respondents grow older, while their belief in professional capacities and education level gets lower.

When asked about the factors considered decisive by the respondents in order to accept a vacancy, they listed first the salary, giving it 1.6 points, second job sustainability, 2.14 points, third satisfaction from the job, 3.03 points, and last the possibility to work with people they like, with 3.24 points. In this scenario male respondents seem to appreciate incomes more than females, while female respondents appreciate satisfaction from the job more than male respondents. The respondents from other cities (different from Tirana) appreciate higher incomes/salaries more than respondents from Tirana, while the respondents from the other cities appreciate job sustainability more than their peers from Tirana.

4. Conclusions

The data of this part of the survey show us that education and employability remain the two main aspects of the life of the respondents. From the data gathered we can see that the greater and more sustainable investment of female respondents is in education, in the time they spend for learning as well as the results achieved are not always translated in a better job, or in a greater participation in the public life. The Albanian young people consider employment as a problem having a cost not only for them, but for the whole society. Although a greater number of students are enrolled with private and public universities, vocational education, suffering from the missing reforms and inappropriate funding, remains an important alternative for the respondents. The respondents reported they prefer to have a job in the public administration, implying that their education is not sufficiently related to developing entrepreneurial skills and aptitudes. While the quality of teaching in schools and universities comes across several difficulties of the transition, reports of the respondents on informal payments in exchange of grades or exams show of such negative phenomenon seriously affecting the reputation of the institutions charged with the education of the elites of the country in different walks of life.

5. Recommendations

It is recommendable to:

- Establish a real career development system in the higher and university institutions in order to suit the skills of respondents with the labor market requirements;
- Draft and implement concrete programmes encouraging gender equality in compliance with the values, capacities and dedication of women to achieve it;
- Implement policies encouraging employability of the respondents;
- Undertake a total reformation of the vocational education and to provide more funds for encouraging employment of the respondents in the key sectors of the economy.

CHAPTER IV

CONCERNS AND ASPIRATIONS

“Optimist for the future, but immigrants of the present.”

Prepared by:

Tidita Fshazi

1. Overview

The concerns and aims of all the Albanian youth represent a mixture of different elements, including all those elements having an impact on the progress of the society in general. In such case, their judgment on the way how they live through their concerns, or their points of view for the future come as a result of the various phenomena accompanying them all these years through. One of the features exercising a great pressure on the young people is migration and immigration. Although this is an old phenomenon of the Albanian society, migration has a considerable role as one of the ways the Albanian society has used to constantly support its wishes for the future. The cycles of migration of the Albanian society have gone through many phases, where prevailing are the two most important periods of the XXth century; 1920-1940 and 1990-2000. The suspension of this process during the years of the communist regime served as a push for the great migration flows of after the 90s, when over one third of the Albanian population left for the Western countries, the USA and Canada. Nowadays it is hard to find a family in Albania, especially from the small towns and rural parts of the country, not having at least one person migrating in some other place in the world. The majority part of current migrants are young people who have chosen to migrate to countries having a geographical proximity to Albania, such as Italy, Greece, but also Great Britain, Switzerland and France. They chose the neighboring or other countries mostly for education purposes, rather than for other purposes. Now they are integrated in the labor marked not simply as an untrained labor force, but also in other positions. Although mass migration is decreasing, the wish amongst the Albanian young people to choose a place outside Albania for finding a job or for living purposes is still strong.

From the social point of view, Albania keeps being a patriarchal country, with relatively conservative norms prevailing. The Albanians are part of

the Mediterranean area, with a typically Balkan temper, where family and friends are the major force of the individual, as are his/her skills to adopt to and to suit in the society. Although of a relative impact, the moral norms have a major role in the manner of living and in choices of young people in Albania. Despite the social categories the young people belong to, there are no fundamental changes remarked when it comes to this aspect of life. In addition, the Albanian moral and education has undergone fundamental changes, leading to diverse opinions and judgments related to what is "good", or what is "bad" in our times. Also, there is a double standard of opinion and behavior between what the society needs to trust, what you represent, and the real wish of what one wants to do and who he/she wants to represent. However, over the last years, the Albanian youth have built their judgment and opinion on moral norms being in a "struggle" with the generation of their parents, who have lived in entirely different stages of the social, economic and cultural development of the country. Through this confrontation, they have tried to not only define their stance vis-à-vis the newly-established values in the Albanian society, but also to position themselves for the purposes of the future.

2. Main findings:

- Most of the Albanian young people do not intend to leave their current place of residence to go to another city/town or village of Albania, but almost 70 percent of them want to immigrate.
- The economic reason is the main drive for the Albanian young people to migrate either in Albania or abroad.
- The Albanian young people consider as the best places to migrate such countries as Italy and the UK. The UK is also listed as the best place for studying purposes. Compared to males, females want to mainly migrate because of education purposes.
- Most of the young people in Albania are optimistic about the future and see the country as a better place in ten years or so. The young women and the ones attending university are amongst the most optimistic groups about the future of the country.
- For most of the young people, courage is the value assisting them to achieve what they wish for in life.
- In general, there is a prevailing opinion that you will be remunerated in life if you take care of others. The young people from the south share this opinion in a greater percentage compared to the young people living in the capital, or in the north of the country.
- Over 80 percent of the Albanian young people consider moral norms in the society as very important, but they are divided in their opinions on whether to share their regrets/despair with others.

- About 80 percent of the young people think it is very important to be accompanied by people you can count onto. The Albanian young people are divided in half amongst the ones who believe that in life it is sufficient to have some friends and do what you like, the ones who believe that this is somewhat important and the ones who totally reject this way of thinking.
- 60 percent of the young people are of the opinion that career is not the most important thing in life and that the individual should not be isolated in himself/herself, living with the justification that life is very difficult.
- A considerable number of young people are of the opinion that they should show interest on what happens in the society, as this is an important element of life. But, there are some young people that think that it is not very reasonable to go in the same direction with the flow, or be oriented by others.

3. A detailed data analysis

3.1 Migration and immigration

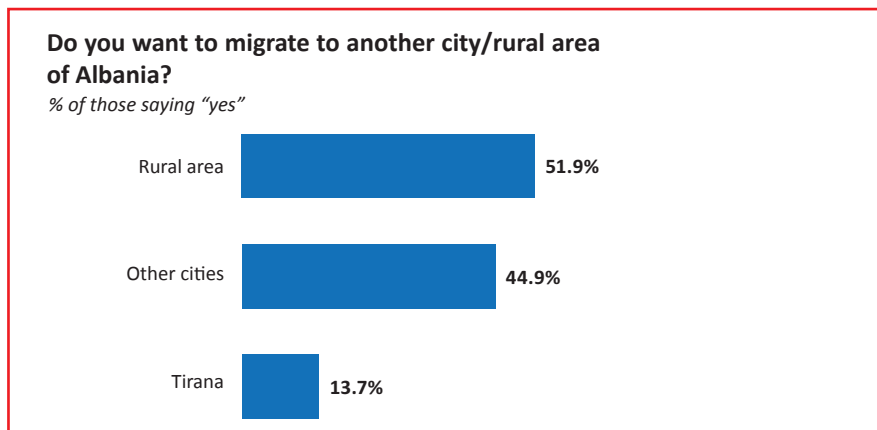
Migration and immigration to other countries have been a distinct feature accompanying the Albanian young people in all their walks of life. The data of this survey show that the desire and will to leave Albania continues to be strong among the young people. 41.3 percent of the respondents at the national level report they want to immigrate abroad to improve their economic situation and living standards, while only a small portion of them report they want to immigrate because of education-related purposes. Although the respondents of 16-17 years of age want to immigrate for a better education, they also consider immigration as a possibility to find a job in the future in those countries.

Regarding the reasons for immigration, there is a difference between respondents of both genders. In this context, females respondents report they want to immigrate more because of education purposes, against male respondents who want to immigrate to ameliorate their economic standards. There is a remarkably low tendency of immigration reported by the respondents having a university degree, and by the respondents from north Albania.

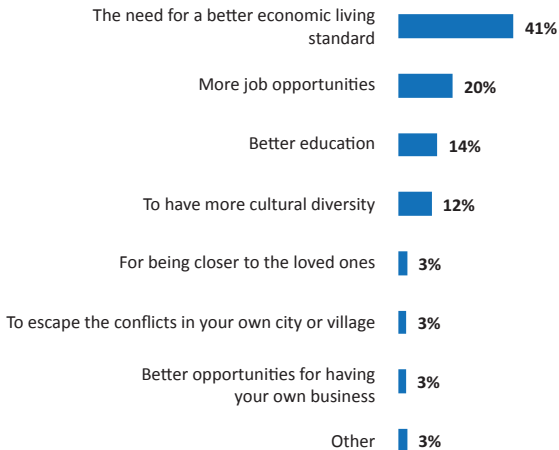
In addition to immigration, after the 90s Albania was confronted with internal displacement of its citizens from mainly other parts of the country towards the metropolitan area of Tirana and Durrës. We see that the aim of young people to move internally has not substantially changed. However, 43 percent of the respondents in Albania report they want to move from their current place of residence to another city of urban area of Albania. The remaining part, that is about 57 percent of

the respondents, report they do not want to move from their country, thus showing sustainability, when it comes to their place of residence or job.

Graph no 44.



The fact that 86 percent of the respondents living in Tirana do not want to move to another city or rural area shows that Tirana keeps being the preferred place of residence in Albania. The areas surrounding Durrës or Tirana are also an attractive place for the respondents to live into, as 69 percent of the respondents living in these areas report they do not want to change their place of residence. This tendency to not change the place of residence is higher amongst the respondents from Northern Albania than amongst the respondents having a university or post-university degree. In both cases, the prevailing reason for migration and immigration is related to the wish of the respondents to improve their living and economic standards.

Graph no 45.**What is the main reason why you want to change the current place of residence?***% of those saying “yes, I would like to move to another place” (no = 516)*

Over these years, the migratory behaviors and tendencies of the respondents have been connected with the fact that Albania is a neighbor to two EU countries – that is Italy and Greece. In particular, the cultural and social ties with Italy keep being strong even for the current young generation of Albania. About 23 percent of the respondents report they prefer Italy as the country they would like to move into, listing the UK the second in the list and the USA the third. There is a growing tendency of the respondents saying they want to migrate to the UK. 26 percent of the respondents aged from 16 to 17 prefer this country, versus respectively 21.9 percent and 19 percent of the respondents aged from 18 to 22 and from 23 to 27. Depending on the migratory tendencies according to the regions of the country, we see that the UK is the country where most of the respondents from the North of the country want to migrate into, while most of the respondents from the South wish to migrate to Greece.

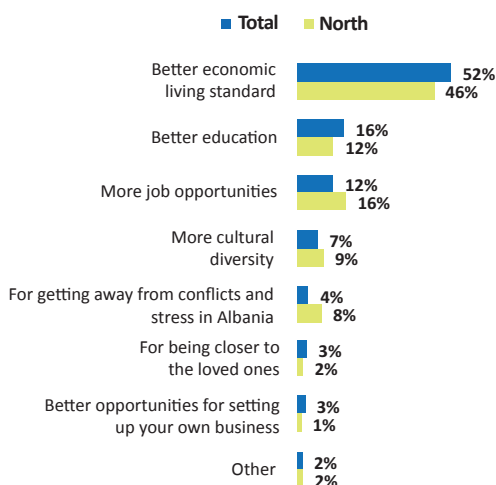
The reasons for immigration from the respondents are related to a number of elements, but in females the major reason is related to better education. Therefore, 23.7 percent of the female respondents report the aim to

immigrate is related to their wish to get better education, versus 9 percent of male respondents reporting of the same wish. This reason serves again as a criterion to put to the fore the difference between the respondents living in Tirana versus the respondents living in the rural areas. About 23 percent of the respondents living in Tirana report that the reason for immigrating has to do with their aspiration to get a better education versus 13.6 percent of the respondents from other cities or from the rural areas providing the same answer.

Graph no 46.

What is the main reason you would immigrate for?

% of the ones reporting "a lot" or "somehow" to the question if they wanted to immigrate (no = 799)



In addition to improvement of economic situation, living standard and education, the respondents list as the third reason to leave Albania the wish to avoid the conflicts in the rural area or the town they live into. Although the percentage of respondents wishing to immigrate for this reason is low, it is related to one the most dangerous social phenomena – that is blood feud, especially in North Albania. The survey data at the national level show that the respondents wishing to immigrate for reasons

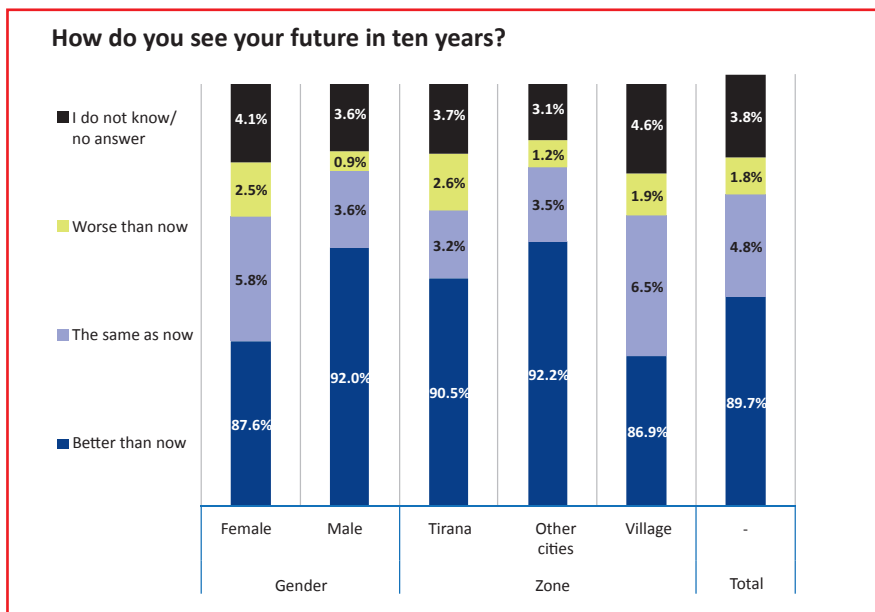
of conflicts in the cities or villages they live is higher in the northern areas than in other areas of the country. Thus, the outcomes show us that about 8 percent of the respondents from the North want to leave the country because of the conflicts in the city of rural area they live into versus 1 percent of the respondents from the other areas of the country wanting to immigrate for the same reason.

The above-referred-to data show that migration or immigration between the respondents is stimulated by several reasons, starting with a better life, education, or blood feud in certain parts of the country. This element continues to visibly define their relationship with the future and is part of one of the preferred choices to change their lives.

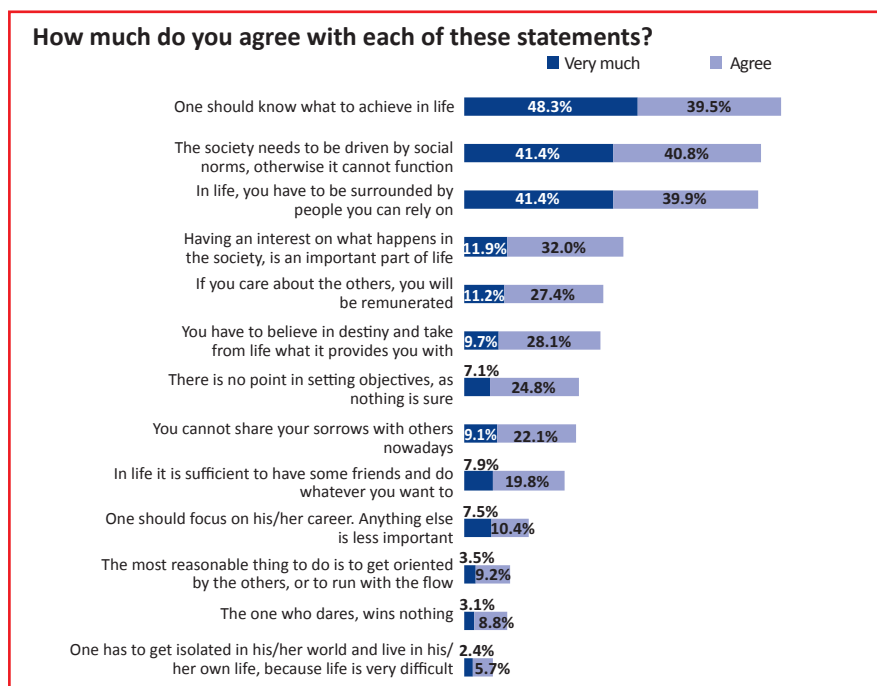
3.2 The future and the purpose of life

The future is not simply a time framework for the respondents, but instead an entirety of social and economic elements directly having an impact on setting their priorities and aims in life. In general, the Albanian young people depict the future of the country with positive tones and are optimistic about it. However, in face of their optimism, the respondents are hostage of their dilemmas, wishes or contradictions, where there is a mixture of the long-term hope with the short-term insecurity for the future. This dilemma or contradiction of assessment of the future appears even in the answers of the respondents taking part in the survey. Thus, although 89.7 percent of the respondents believe that the future of Albania will be better, still, most of them want to leave Albania and to get a job in another country. In such case, there is a higher rate of optimism in the future in the female respondents as 92 percent of them say they are optimistic, versus 89.7 percent of male respondents providing the same answer. Also, the respondents having a university degree and the ones living in vicinity of urban areas shows of a higher level of optimism in the future versus the ones living in rural areas.

Graph no 47.



Even though optimistic for the future, again there is a tendency amongst respondents to be suspicious on the economic perspective of the country. This is reflected in the fact that approximately 60 percent of the respondents believe that it is not worth deciding on objectives, as nothing is sure. However, in face of such distrust, we see that 32 percent of the respondents do not agree with this assumption. In general, there is a contradiction of the respondents when it comes to their trust in the future of the country and the doubt if one could achieve the objectives they have decided for themselves. This might be explained with the general tendency to be optimistic, but the circumstances of the socio-economic development of the country push them towards the suspicion to establish concrete objectives and plans for themselves. Despite the way they see the future, most of them believe that it is important to know what is important to achieve in life. Therefore, 50.7 percent of the respondents at the national level agree with this statement, while in respondents at the post-university level this figure reaches the level of 52.9 percent.

Graph no 48.

In this case, we see as well that females have a tendency to be more oriented towards well-established objectives against male respondents. Thus, 52 percent of female respondents believe that one should know what to achieve in life, versus 44.1 percent of male respondents providing the same answer.

In Albania, courage keeps being considered a virtue leading to victory as an end result. In general, the expression “the one who dares wins” is trusted by 80 percent of the respondents, showing a culture and a relatively active population, believing in the principle that there is a need for daring and taking risks in life. Only 10 percent of the respondents at the national level do not agree with this principle.

Even though most of the Albanian respondents believe in courage as a factor of success in life, a considerable number of them consider fate or destiny as a determinant element for achieving their objectives. In this context, 60 percent of the respondents do partially believe that one should rely in the fate or destiny and take from life what one can and what one is provided with. 28.8 percent of the respondents are of the opinion that one should not believe in destiny and one should benefit what he/she can from life. This is an indicator of the fact that destiny is not determinant in the life and well-being for the Albanian young people, but is instead related to their actions and omissions for the objectives they have put to themselves.

3.3 Altruism and moral

In the Albanian culture, the care for others is always related to the close family relations and to the mentality originating from the tradition of blood ties. In the overwhelming part of cases, the Albanian respondents relate their caring for others with individuals belonging to their family, parents, relatives and parents of their spouses. In most of the rural or urban areas the phenomenon of living in big families asks for taking care of others as a form of co-existence and as a social norm. This is seen in the form of care of wives for their husbands, or care for parents and grandparents.

Also, Albanians are characterized of great hospitality, considered as a very important element in the society, which often times implies the care for the guest/friend, transforming it up to a feeling of sacrifice. In this sense, altruism, expressed in different forms in Albania, does not necessarily mean altruism as appearing in some other countries, which is often related to community work, or voluntary work for the people with disabilities. For this reason, the Albanian youth see care for the others more as a social norm that needs to be respected rather than something related to a voluntary commitment.

That said, 60 percent of the respondents at the national level do either fully or somewhat believe that if you take care of others, you will be remunerated

one day. This belief does somehow reflect a feeling of altruism, which is an inherent part of the culture of respondents, where the effort to help the others is remunerated with gratitude and appreciation.

Naturally so, this tendency is higher in female respondents and more dominant in the urban areas as opposed to the rural areas. This distinction between urban and rural areas is related to the fact that in the later zones the care against others is a natural behavior amongst the young people and is not necessarily related with any form of remuneration.

On the other hand, moral norms are a very important element of a society for it to function as it should. In this regard, the survey data show that 75 percent of the respondents at the national level believe that the moral norms are important and substantial for functioning of the society. Although definition of moral norms in the society is still not clear, in most of cases they imply the entirety of elements leading social life in the relevant areas.

3.4 Relation with the others

Reliance on others is considered as a very important factor in life by most of the respondents. In the Albanian society there is a prevailing opinion that it is friends and relatives the ones that solve the problems in most of the cases, or that establish favorable living conditions. This is reflected by the fact that 90 percent of the respondents believe that in life you need to be surrounded by the people you can rely upon. This is the general tendency, while a few differences can be seen amongst respondents belonging to different economic, social or geographical categories. But, friends are not only seen as people they share fun time with, but also as people they can share their sorrows with. 44 percent of the respondents believe that in life it is not enough to only have some friends and to do what you like.

Despite economic conditions, social relations with others are very important and have an impact on the choice of the respondents to migrate from a certain place.

Rea from Tirana says: *"I have loved my country more every day I have spent abroad. We are good people! We have flows, as everybody else. We have that mentality of caring more of what others do rather than minding our own business."*

Proximity to the family and friends are the main reasons why a considerable part of respondents want to stay in Albania, although they are not satisfied with the living conditions the country provides. Ardian, who studies abroad, says: *"I keep in touch with friends I have left here and I feel good when I get back to Albania, although there are so many problems you find in here when you come from abroad"*

Blerta: *"I could never live in another country. Even though another country might provide a better living to me, I would always feel myself a stranger there."*

Andi says: *"I like staying in Albania. More than Albania I would miss my family if I immigrated."*

These quotations show of the importance and weight of relations with the friends and family for the Albanian youth. Hence, the family and friend support of the young people help them in getting a better social health, having a stronger psychological support for overcoming and facing the difficulties.

4. Conclusions

In this Chapter, the survey data show that despite the current overall tendency of a lower migration rate, the Albanian society has gone through great changes and displacements from the rural areas to the urban ones and from Albania to other countries of the world. Their change of the place of residence has led to tremendous changes in the lives lived by the young people. Consequently, such displacement has led to changes in the values and general concepts based on which the society decides on what is bad or what is good, what is desirable and what is not desirable, what is of value and what has no value. While such movements have been frequent and not controlled, the data show us that there is inconsiderable difference between values and beliefs appreciated in different parts of the country, be them urban or rural areas. However, the consequences of such movement have led to social disorders and raise of the criminality rate, ambiguities and difficulties of adaptation of young people to the requirements of living in urban areas. Even though the data show that the respondents in Albania believe in such values as courage, altruism and being open to the society, they still are of the opinion that the close friendly and family ties are very important to succeed in life. Having “friends”, who resolve a considerable part of problems, starting from employment and family issues, is amongst the greatest “assets” of the individual in the society. According to most of the young people, not having “friends” can hardly lead to achieving what you want in life. This indicator reflects the low level of the institutionalism of the society and the level of independence of the individual to resolve his problems in face of institutions. Although this mentality has a tendency to lose grounds, and despite the fact that there is a growing belief in the personal skills for facing life, connections and friends are still seen as an element of importance for the well-being of the individual.

5. Recommendations

- Application of integration policies for facing migratory movements in the country and implementation of a development strategy for rural areas, in order to diminish the social-economic differences between the different parts of the country.
- Increase of the weight of legal norms regulating the activity of the Albanian society and the trust in institutions is now seen as a need for modernizing the society and for improving the life of young people.
- Effective policies and enforcement of policies for stimulating "migrant gains".
- Discussion and drafting of an effective national and regional plan for the employment of young people in the country, taking into account the global crisis.
- Encouragement and establishment of a merit-based atmosphere in all the employment sectors, especially in the public sector.
- The Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, together with the Ministry of Interior, should draft a strategy on the social inclusion and employment of the young people coming from remote parts of the country and involved in criminal activities.

CHAPTER V

LIVING STYLE: CONSUMPTION, RECREATION AND TRENDS

*“Young people addicted to TV and dependent
on the budget of their parents.”*

Prepared by:

Alba Çela

1. Overview

The collapse of the old political system in Albania in the beginning of the 90s led to a fundamental change of the main factors influencing the living style and the other activities of the Albanian people. While in the old totalitarian system it was ideology and the party deciding upon and strictly controlling the main behavioral norm, the new emerging democratic system, interwoven with incomplete elements of the free market economy, led to a total reverse of such norms. In this framework, other new decisive elements on the style of living come to light. Financial possibilities and approach to different services depending on the place of residence, became the two main factors for choosing the living style and various activities, especially for the young people. The opening of the Albanian society to the world after a long isolation, including migration and the new means of communication, brought new tendencies and ideas in the country. Consequently, the current young generation in Albania is not much different from their peers anywhere else in the world when it comes to the huge impact of the marketing industry, fashion or passion for the information technology.

Some of the negative phenomena affecting the country and involving young people, such as trafficking in human being, use of serious drugs, the HIV/AIDS disease, etc., were less or not all known in the country in the past. They seriously affected the psychology of the Albanian families fostering models of behavior still rooted on gender differences. Although during industrialism¹⁶ there was a partial emancipation of females and of the Albanian society, in the living style of the Albanian society there are still sustainable elements of patriarchy, especially in the rural areas.

¹⁶ Oliver Jens Schmitt: 'The past of Albania is not reflected from an intellectual perspective', Interview for DeutscheWelle.

In the current days, the Albanian young people chose their style of living and are involved in different activities in leisure time, drawing a compromise between the old traditions and the new trends. Despite of the fact that they are totally exposed to globalization and attracted by trends of other countries in the world, they are still limited to some constrains due to the insufficient socio-economic development in the country.

2. Main findings

- The daily activities the young people usually spend their free time with are: music, television and meeting with friends.
- The Albanian young people spend on average three hours in a day before the TV screen and three other hours navigating in the Internet.
- The most preferred TV programmes for the young people are foreign music, action films and soap operas.
- Internet is mainly used for recreational and communication purposes. More specifically, 80 percent of the young people use it for communicating in social networks, 50 percent for chatting, while only 20 percent of them use Internet for work-related purposes.
- The two main budget line expenses for the young people are those related to clothes and the money spent in coffee shops or bars.
- 23 percent of the young people smoke every day, while 10.5 percent of them use alcohol frequently.
- Appearance and designer clothes are in fashion for over 90 percent of the Albanian young people. However, about 60 percent of them consider involvement in politics or in the civil society as out of date.
- Most of the Albanian young people say they are satisfied with their appearance.

- One out of four young people consider virginity as a value for both genders, while one out of three young people consider that as a value especially for females.
- Only 30 percent of the young people who have started their sexual activity use protective measures regularly.

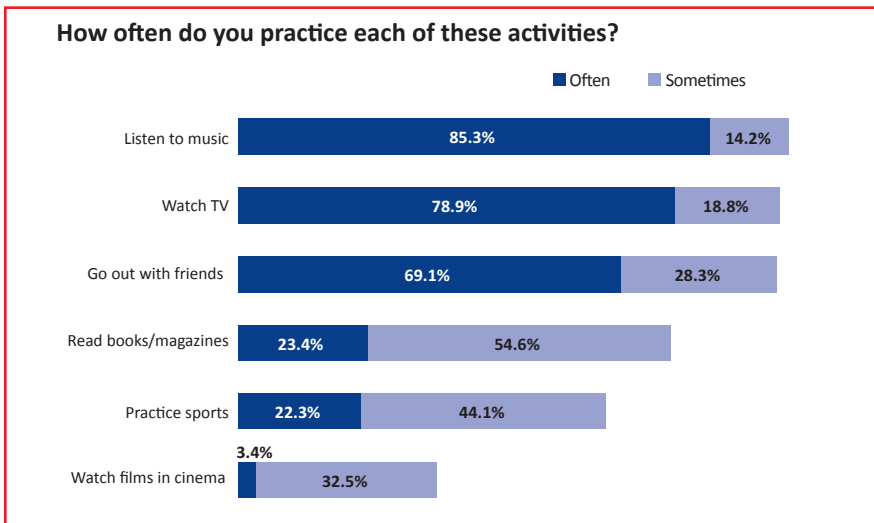
Interesting findings

- *One out of ten male youth in Albania watches soap operas every day!*
- *One out of five young Albanians never reads a book!*
- *30 percent of the 16 and 17-year-olds have already started their sexual activity.*
- *Alcohol and smoking are regularly consumed by the young people, although, according to the legislation, they are under age and should not be allowed to buy such products.*
- *Most of the young people think that marijuana consumption is out of date.*

3. A detailed data analysis

3.1 Free time

Graph no 49.



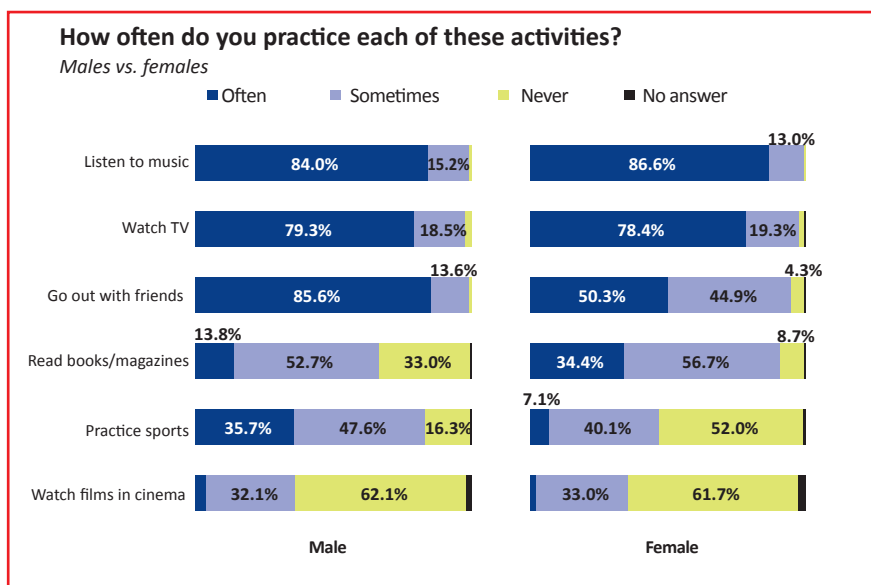
Music is much preferred by the respondents when it comes to leisure time, especially for the respondents from Tirana. 85.3 percent of the respondents report they listen to music frequently in their free time, while a slight age-based variation is remarked. Naturally so, 90 percent of the respondents of the age group of 16-17-year-olds are more enthusiastic about this type of activity to spend their free time with, versus 14 percent of the other respondents reporting they listen to music on occasions.

In addition, the TV screen is another preferred "place" for spending free time. About 80 percent of the respondents report they watch TV frequently, while 18 percent of them watch it on occasions. Because of greater possibilities to pass their free time with, the respondents from Tirana report of watching TV less than their peers in different parts of the country. Thus, 67 percent of the respondents from Tirana report they watch TV in their leisure time as opposed to 81 percent of the respondents from other parts of the country providing the same answer.

Another element filling the free time of respondents is going out with friends. About 70 percent of the respondents report they go out very often, while 28 percent of them report they go out with friends only occasionally. It is interesting to see that gender differences play a role in the frequency of going out with friends. Only half of the female respondents report they go out with friends often compared to 85 percent of male respondents providing the same answer. A considerable part of female respondents, about 45 percent of them, report they go out rarely with their friends, 4.3 percent of them say they never go out with friends, while either of the situations is never encountered in male respondents.

Reading books and magazines is not amongst the frequent activities the respondents deal with in their leisure time. 23.4 percent of the respondents report they read often times, while half of them say they read occasionally. Even in this case, there are distinct gender differences. While 33 percent of male respondents reported they never read, only 8.7 percent of the female respondents provide the same answer. Also, the survey data show that only 13.4 percent of the male respondents read often, whereas 34 percent of female respondents are regular readers. In this regard, it is worth highlighting that the Albanian adolescents are more regular readers than the adults.¹⁷

¹⁷ It seems like reading starts from the early adolescent years. According to a recent OECD study, about 90 percent of the Albanian 15-year-olds read extra-curricular literature for pleasure. For more information, please read: <http://www.panorama.com.al/kurizitete/me-shume-se-90-e-femijeve-shqiptare-lexojne-per-kenagesi/>

Graph no 50.

Although sports activities are generally related to young ages, the Albanian youth share different approaches on sports. Hence, only 22 percent of the respondents report they practice sports often, while 44 percent of them report they practice sports only sometimes. Sports represent another activity where gender-based differences provide for different patterns of preference. While 52 percent of female respondents in Albania do not practice sports, over 35 percent of the male respondents report they are regular applicants of sports, against 7 percent of female respondents providing the same answer. Given that sports are practiced mostly in gyms, for which the respondents have to pay, there seems to be a strong correlation between the economic possibilities of the respondents and their practicing of sports. While 28 percent from rich families practice sports regularly, 42 percent of the respondents from poor families do not deal with sports at all.

Regarding the activity of going to cinemas in the leisure time, only 3 percent of the respondents report they go to the cinema regularly; in special cases, one in three respondents go to cinema. Cinemas are very rare in Albania. They are almost inexistent in rural areas or in other cities (different from

Tirana). This explains the fact why 62 percent of the respondents report they never go to the cinema and the fact that most of the respondents reporting they go to the cinema regularly are located in Tirana.

The respondents from rural areas seek recreation activities in the city

The lack of opportunities to have leisure time in rural areas, and over all the prevailing traditional mentality there, affecting mostly female respondents, push the respondents from rural areas to travel towards the nearest big cities frequently, in search of possibilities to spend their free time.

Erlind and Ulqi, two boys from a village in vicinity of Durrës say: *"the only way to get some fun is getting out of the village. There is nothing you can do here; there is no place where to go."* For the male respondents the city is the place where they can go to the gym, and get out with friends.

Fabiola, from the same village, says: *"Tirana is the best preferred place for me, as there is nigh life and a lot of cultural activities."* The respondents are sensible to the problems of girls and do not approve the mentality of rural areas on girls.

Elsa, from the city, but married in village, remarks: *"I cannot go out here; I do not have a lot of freedom. The mentality is difficult ... there are no conditions either. Boys go after the girls after 5 or 6 o'clock in the afternoon. If you go to a café, everybody sees you with suspicion."*

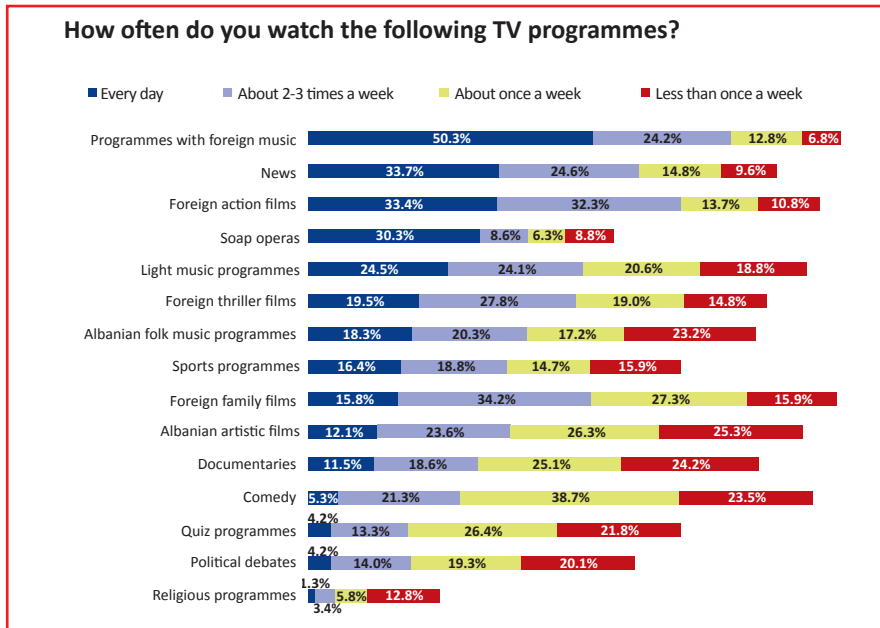
The same opinion is shared by the village boys. Arbëri says: *"We go out more frequently than girls"*, while Erioni says desperately *"this is why everything is upside-down here. For instance, girls are not allowed to go out in the evening by their parents."*

In her assessment Alisia shows herself to be more understanding to the families, explaining that *"the parents leave them, but others whisper in their ears saying "your daughter was seen in the cafe."*

Esmeralda shows: *"Every time I enter into a bar I do not feel at ease. It is years I have not visited a bar, as people would talk about you, they would ask "what was she doing there?". The situation is different in the city. Nobody says "why is she having a coffee?", they are negligent on what you do."*

3.1.1 What do they watch in the big TV screen?

Graph no 51.



The Albanian respondents spend a long time before the TV set – about three hours in a day. A minor exclusion is recorded by the rich respondents and the respondents living in the capital, who have other more acceptable and attractive possibilities.

But, what is it that the respondents like so much about TV? Their answers show that the programmes they watch are different. The foreign music programmes are preferred more over the Albanian music programmes, be it light or folk music, where the latter prevails.

50 percent of the respondents listen to foreign music every day and 24 percent listen to it several times a week. On the other hand, 19 percent of the respondents listens to music more occasionally, but only about 5 percent of them say they never listen to music. Regarding the Albanian light music, 48 percent of the respondents report they listen to it frequently, 39

percent listen to it rarely and 10 percent of the respondents say they never listen to music. While Albanian folk music programmes are frequently watched by 38 percent of the respondents, 50 percent of the respondents report they rarely listen to such music and 20 percent of them report they never listen to such music. Folk music is mostly listened to in rural areas, where 23 percent of the respondents in villages listen to it everyday, versus 33 percent of the respondents from Tirana reporting they never listen to such music.

Also, the Albanian artistic films are becoming more preferable for the Albanian respondents. About 23 percent of the respondents report they watch Albanian films several times a week, while 26 percent report of watching them once a week. However, one in ten respondents in Albania never watches such films. In rural areas the respondents seem to be the ones watching Albanian films the most, as 14 percent of the respondents say they watch Albanian films everyday versus 5 percent of the respondents from Tirana reporting of the same thing. There is a slight increase of audience for these films with the passing of years.

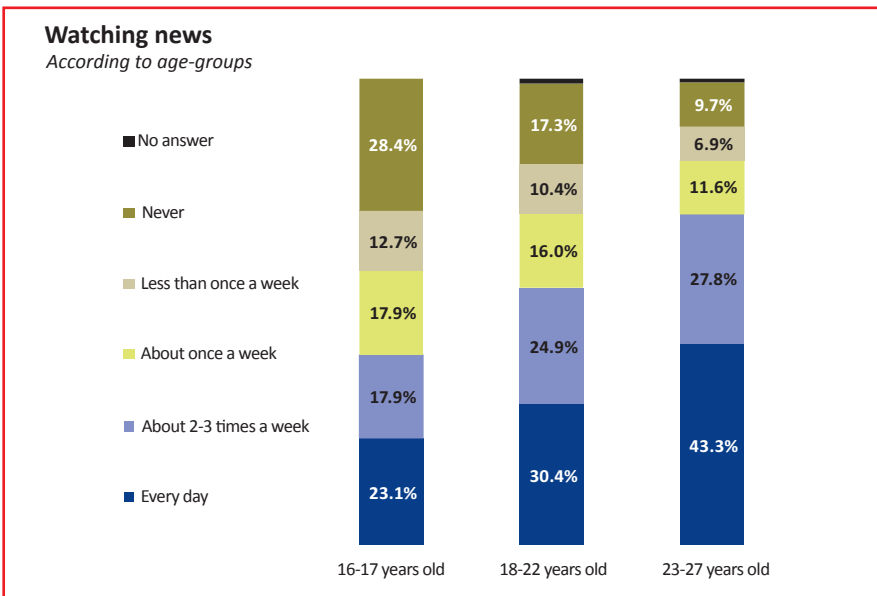
Regarding preference of foreign films, those treating social topics are frequently watched, every day, or, in most of cases, 2-3 times per week by half of the respondents. Also, they are the most preferred type of films for female respondents.

- The young male respondents are passionate for action and thriller films, while female respondents mostly watch soap operas. Over 46 percent of the male respondents versus 18 percent of the female respondents watch such films every day. 16 percent of the female respondents do never watch these type of films, while very few male respondents – that is only 3 percent of them, report of the same thing.
- However, half of the female respondents watch these films only some times a week.
- 53.7 percent of the female respondents in Albania report they watch soap operas every day. About 20 percent of them report they try to watch them once or several times during the week, while most of male respondents – that is over 67 percent, report they never watch soap operas.

- Almost 10 percent of male respondents watch soap operas regularly everyday, while another 10 percent of male respondents reports they watch them once a week.

Regarding news features, in general the respondents seem to not have an interest in following the recent developments and news. The survey data show that only 1/3d of the respondents watch news every day, while 24 percent of the respondents watch news several times in a week. 17 percent of the respondents report they do not watch news at all, while 20 percent of the respondents from Tirana report they never watch news. The respondents from 23 to 27 years old are the ones most interested in news. The ones following news regularly from this group are double as much as the number of the adolescents doing the same thing. In the meantime, 23 percent of the 16 to 17-year-old respondents report they watch news every day, while 43 percent of the respondents over the age of 23 report of watching news every day as well.

Graph no 52.



The hot political debates and TV features focusing on political debates seem to not appeal to the interest of the respondents in Albania. Over 40 percent of the respondents report they never watch such programmes, while only 4 percent of the respondents report they watch such programmes everyday. While 18 percent of the respondents report they watch such programmes once or several times a week, the most regular viewers of such programmes are respondents from the rural areas, recording 5 percent of the respondents versus 0.5 percent of the respondents following political debates from Tirana. The survey data show of a positive correlation between level of education and interest in such programmes.

Regarding scientific and historic documentaries, 11.5 percent of the respondents watch them on a daily basis, while 19 percent of the respondents watch them only occasionally over the course of a week. More than half of the respondents watch these programmes rarely, while 1/5th of the respondents in Albania have no interest in documentaries. Speaking of the gender approach, the male respondents watching these programmes are twice as much as the number of female respondents interested in documentaries.

Other types of TV programmes attended by respondents are sport programmes and sports commenting programmes, especially amongst male respondents. Over 28 percent of them watch such programmes everyday, while only 3 percent of female respondents watch these programmes everyday. About 60 percent of female respondents in Albania never watch programmes dealing with sports comments, while this is true only in one out of ten male respondents. The ones mostly interested in watching these programmes live in Tirana and are adolescents.

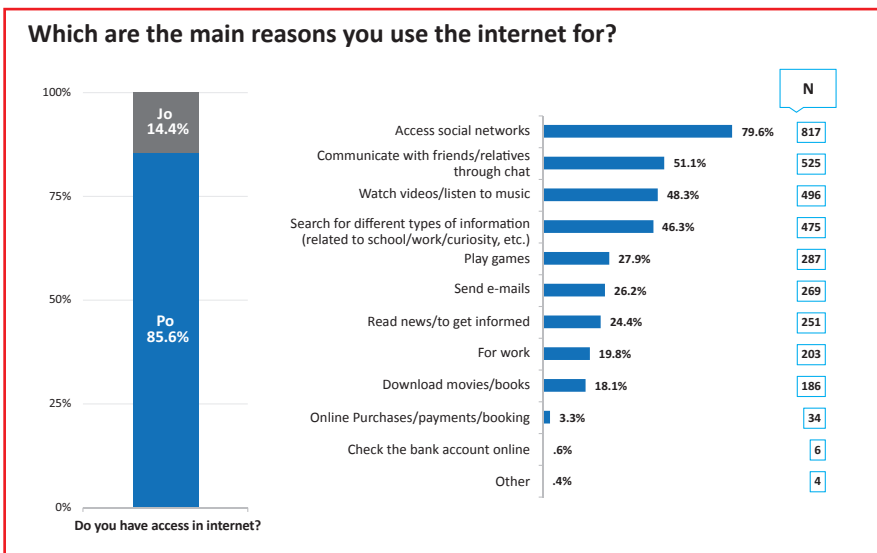
Another group of TV programmes are religion programmes, which have a very low audience. 74 percent of the respondents never watch such programmes, 13 percent watch them occasionally and only 10 percent watch them during the week. Humor programmes are broadcast in the Albanian TV channels once a week, mainly during the week-end. Most of respondents – that is 62 percent of them report they watch these programmes once a week, or once in two weeks.

The survey data show that the interest for such programmes gets lower with

age. Fortune games and TV quizzes have the same percentage of audience as humor programmes, mainly because they are broadcast once a week. They are watched by almost half of the Albanian respondents versus 32.5 percent of the ones reporting that they never watch such programmes.

3.1.2 Internet

Graph no 53.



In addition to the TV screen, another type of screen in front of which the respondents spend a lot of time is the computer screen. Internet is on average used three hours per day from the respondents. Respondents from Tirana spend more time navigating in the computer than their peers in rural areas. The richer respondents have a wider access in Internet and spend more time there. In addition, students spend more time in the Internet than the adolescents.

About 85.6 percent of the respondents have access in Internet. The highest percentage is covered by male respondents with 91 percent, versus female

respondents with 79 percent. Huge changes are remarked between the area of Tirana, where the Internet access rate is over 94 percent versus the other urban and rural areas, where Internet access is respectively in the rate of 80 percent and 70 percent of the respondents. Internet access depends on the respondents' incomes. 72 percent of respondents with lower incomes access Internet versus 96 percent of the respondents with higher incomes. The area having the lowest Internet access rate is the southwest region, which is the only region where only 80 percent of the respondents can use Internet, while in other regions of the country this figure is recorded to 85 percent.

Use of Internet by the respondents is mainly concentrated in recreational and communication activities. As their peers in the other world countries, most of the respondents use the Internet in order to be part of social networks. 80 percent of the respondents have individual profiles in such accounts as the Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn, while we see that male respondents are more inclined than female respondents to use Internet for the social networks. Thus, it is 83.6 percent of them reporting they have used Internet for this purpose, against 74 percent of the female respondents providing the same answer. The online communication through chatting has involved more than half of the respondents who are Internet users, while almost the same amount of respondents report they use it to listen to music or to watch music videos. When it comes to the use of e-mail, it is reported to be used by only 15 percent of all the activities the respondents resort to Internet for, while reading of general information and using Internet for work cover a minor share of the time spend in this means of communication by the respondents. About 60 percent of female respondents use Internet to take information on their work and school, while same reporting is provided by only 36 percent of male respondents, who use it mostly to play online games. However, almost half of the respondents report they use Internet to read curiosities or materials related to school, while 18 percent of them download films or books from it. Speaking of the exploitation of the new information technologies in different fields, we see that the use of Internet by the respondents for buying, online booking, or online banking service purposes is still very poor.

The Facebook generation

The impact and popularity of social networks, especially of the most famous social media in the world – the Facebook - is undisputable. Albania counts about one million Facebook users, most of who are people of young age.¹⁸ The popularity of Facebook has become unimaginable. Making use of a simple and relaxed tone, Irena, 22 years old, says: *“Facebook has become very prominent...!”*

Mireli, 23, says: *“Facebook has become so natural; I am in front of the Facebook account and I do not even realize I am in front of it.”*

Romeo seems to take a lot of pleasure from the use of such network. He says: *“Everybody having an Internet connection at home has done the right thing. Albanians love talking about themselves and others, and this is why Facebook is great fun.”*

Ana, 19 years old, says she uses Facebook, but not frequently. She thinks that Facebook is to be used at the absence of other better alternatives to spend free time. Ana says: *“We do not know what to do, have nothing useful to deal with and this is why we spend a lot of time in Facebook. I think that when somebody does something good, when he has something to do, he does not have a lot of time to spend in front of Facebook.”*

Rudina agrees by saying: *“the reason why I use Internet is to assist me when doing the homework and the idea of having a look at the Facebook account helps. My brother, who is younger than me, is mostly obsessed by Facebook. The first thing I do every morning is open the main newspaper websites. I then check my e-mails as we communicate via e-mail with our professors. When I have exams I never open my Facebook account, while when there is nothing I can do, of course I spend time on Facebook ...”*

For Alket Facebook is a possibility to exchange information on various activities happening in his life and to reflect these activities for others. He says: *“Given that everybody has a mobile phone and a Facebook account, everybody is online. If my friends publish something, I see it, I make my*

18 Internet World Statistics in March of 2011 counted 1091920 uses. The latest data received at the end of November (2011) from “Social Bakers”, also show that the greatest percentage of users (48 percent) are between the age of 18 and 24. (Taken from www.ikub.al)

comments and this is how the entire advertisement process happens."

Rudina closes her talk by trying to explain her preference on Facebook as some type of dependence. *"there are people who are addicted on Facebook, according to a study in the USA. There is no real purpose why these people need Facebook, nonetheless they want to be present in their lives. The human brain has same disorders when you spend time in Facebook as it has when you consume narcotic substances."*

The interviews show that the respondents in the city speak of Facebook more than their peers in the rural areas. In addition, Facebook is important for the teenagers. Hence, from the discussions with the respondents from the rural areas, only Alisa, 17 years old, has mentioned Facebook as a reason to use Internet. Sara, Alisa's peer, living in a city, says: *"We use Facebook a lot. We use it for lessons ... and only when we are asked to find something in the Internet."*

The respondents in the city seem to be more passionate about online games, where 32 percent use them report they play such games regularly, while one in four respondents, users of Internet in Tirana and in the rural areas report they play online. The respondents living in cities and in the capital are more inclined to use Internet to download films than their peers in rural areas, while a higher economic status of level of education usually is associated by use Internet mostly for work-related purposes, or for reading news and having access to different pieces of information. This figure reaches to 56 percent in students and 80 percent for the ones studying for their PhDs. However, only 40 percent of the adolescents at the 9-year elementary school and at high school use Internet for the same purpose.

3.2 Spending money

The respondents live in a consumption society, where they try to satisfy their tastes and hobbies by paying the market price for getting such services. Regarding information on the amount of money they spend for different purposes, the respondents were asked to report on an average amount of money they spent on a monthly basis, including purchases of

certain categories of goods and services. It is generally remarked that the average monthly expenses of the respondents represent a considerable amount of money for the budget of an Albanian family having average incomes. Measured for the last time in 2009, the average salary in Albania is (new)¹⁹ Lek 36,075, while the budget of young people represented in the following graph does not contain expenses for basic commodities, such as food, education and health care. Taking into consideration the fact that most of the respondents do not work²⁰, one can logically jump to the idea that it is the Albanian parents that sacrifice a lot for meeting the requirements and wishes of their children.

Most of the money is spent by the young people to buy clothes, shoes and other related elements. The respondents spend on average Lek 5,160 in a month for these goods, while for amount of these expenses is calculated at Lek 30,000. It is understandable that the greatest expenses are borne on the respondents living in the capital and in cities, rather than the ones living in the rural areas. The rich respondents spend twice as much as the respondents with low incomes. This natural trend is attested by the survey data, where there is a change of the level of expenses going in parallel with the growth of financial capacities.

The money spent in cafes and bars cover a considerable part of the expenses of the respondents. For cafes and bars, the respondents spend on average about Lek 4,660 per month, but most of them remain at the level of Lek 3,000. In this case, the male respondents spend considerably more than the female respondents and Tirana keeps having the main city against the other cities of other rural areas. As already highlighted above, the respondents with high incomes spend twice as much in the cafes and bars compared to the respondents having less financial capacities. On the other hand, the expenses of respondents for going to cinemas and for renting DVDs are limited. They spend on average about Lek 245 for these two activities. Most of the respondents spend no coin for this activity, while the ones spending for this purpose are mainly located in

¹⁹ "Structural Enterprise Survey 1999-2009", Chapter: Enterprise Statistics", INSTAT.www.instat.gov.al

²⁰ Data in the sector of education and employment show that 65 percent of the respondents work neither full time nor part time.

Tirana. Even in this case, the respondents coming from rich families do on average spend two to three times more on going to the cinema than the others. The tendency of young people to use any means facilitating the everyday and constant communication is remarked as well in the expenses in cell phones. The telephone cards cost about Lek 1600 per month to the respondents, but there are respondents reporting they spend up to Lek 12 000 per month in telephone expenses only. Males spend more for mobile phones than females; they do respectively spend Lek1,750 compared to Lek 1,640. The higher the education level, the higher the expenses for this means of communication are, according to the survey.

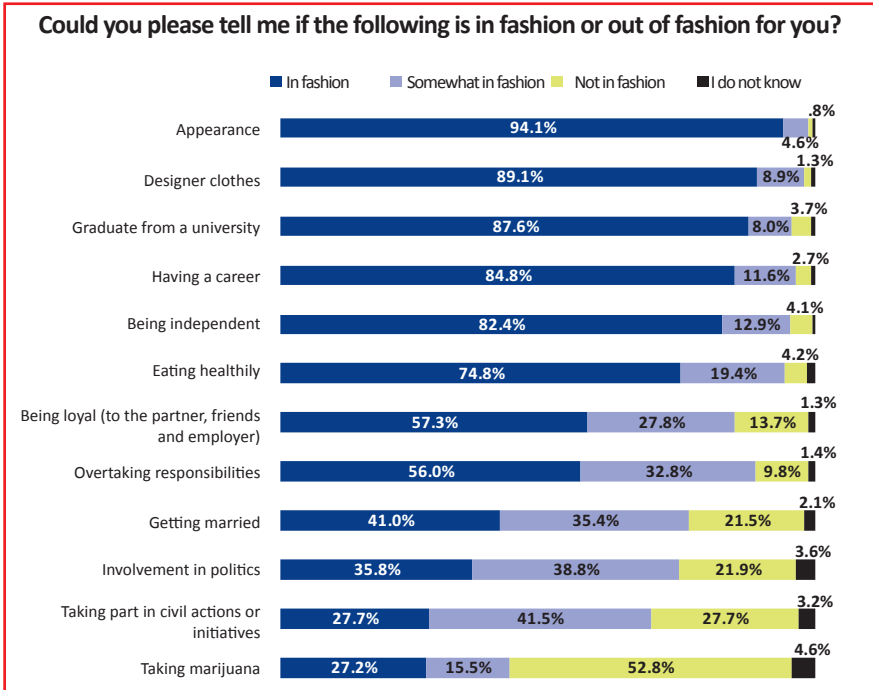
Regarding books, the respondents spend a little money for buying books. This is also reflected by the low level of preference to read books in their free time. An Albanian respondents spend only Lek 390 per month to buy books and magazines. In this regard, women represent a higher interest for such element, as they spend twice as much as male respondents for buying books. As it can be easily deduced, the expenses for books amongst respondents get higher with the a higher education level of the respondents.

A small number of respondents report they spend considerable amounts of money for such categories of expenses as for buying cigarettes, oil for their cars, fees for the public transport, sports activities, such as going to the gym or playing football, or for buying different cosmetic products or having aesthetical services.

Clothes, shoes, accessories	Lek 5,160
Cafes, bars	Lek 4,700
Mobile phone	Lek 1,600
Cinema/DVDs	Lek 245
Books	Lek 390
Total	12,095

3.2.1 What is in fashion?

Graph no 54.



While the respondents have their preference on how they spend their free time, or on how they spend their monthly budget, when asked what is in fashion for them, they provide you with a clear and direct answer. What is in fashion in beauty. Body image or looking beautiful is considered as the major achievement amongst the respondents as part of their effort to be in fashion. 94 percent of them report that appearance is in fashion and looking good is important despite gender, family background or economic possibilities. The same importance is attached to having designer clothes. Approximately 90 percent of the respondents report that the designer clothes are much in fashion, while for only 9 percent of the respondents designer clothes are not important. Such figures show of the respondents' expenses for clothes and accessories, which made up for most of their

expenses. Eating healthily is related to body image. Hence, 75 percent of the respondents report it is in fashion to eat healthily, while one in four respondents does not seem to consider it as being in fashion.

Also, going to university or studying in a university is a fact appreciated as very much in fashion by 87 percent of the respondents. Going to university is very popular amongst the respondents, while 12 percent of them consider it as not being very much in fashion, or not at all in fashion. 91 percent of female respondents consider higher education as being very much in fashion, versus 85 percent of male respondents. The poorest category of the respondents represents the highest percentage of those considering graduation from a university as not in fashion (nearly 8 percent). Graduation from university seems to be less in fashion for older respondents. Career is also popular amongst most of the respondents. For 85 percent of the respondents career is in fashion, while for 11 percent it is not that much in fashion. However, there is a low number of respondents considering career as being out of fashion. Differences start at a young age, where it seems like the 16 and 17-year-old respondents are much more passionate about the idea of having a career. 92 percent of them consider career as something in fashion, compared to 83-84 percent of the respondents from the other age-groups reporting the same thing. More remarkable in this direction is the North, where one in four respondents attach a little of no importance to career considering it as out of date.

Also, independence is highly appreciated by the respondents as being something in fashion as 82.4 percent of them report that being independent is very much in fashion; 13 percent of the respondents report it is not that much in fashion, while only 4 percent of the respondents consider it as out of date. In this regard, 85 percent of the male respondents appreciate it more against 80 percent of female respondents. The survey data show that Tirana hosts the greatest number of the ones according to whom independence is out of date, as 9 percent of the respondents provide such answers. Appreciation for an independent way of living gets higher as respondents get older and have a higher education degree.

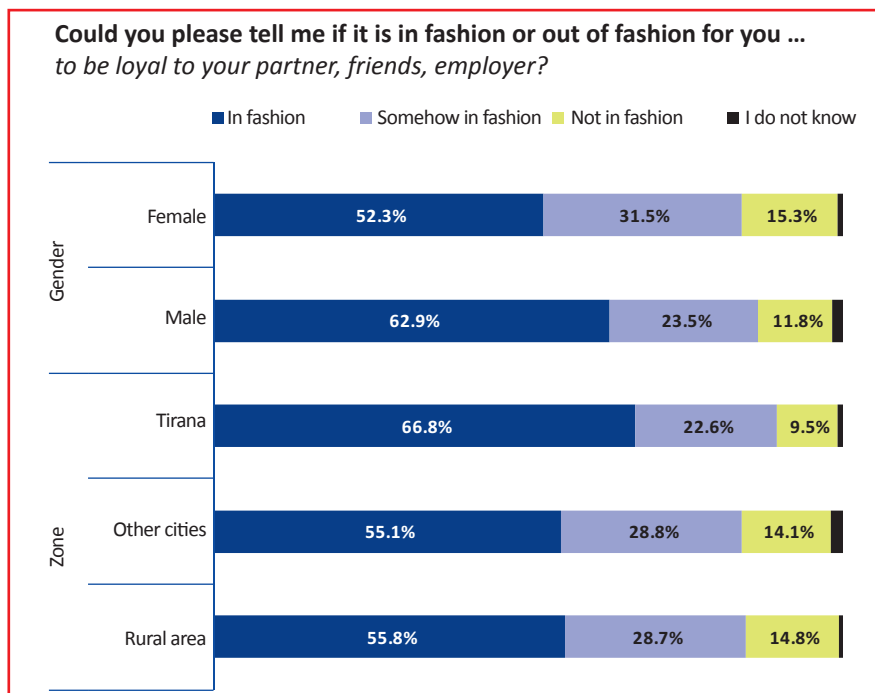
In this context, marriage is a little or not at all popular for more than half

of the respondents. Getting married is in fashion for 41 percent of the respondents, 35.4 percent say it is not in fashion to get married, and 21.5 percent of the respondents report it is not at all in fashion to do so. The respondents from Tirana make up for the highest number of the respondents reporting that marriage is out of date, while the respondents from rural areas mostly report that marriage is very important. The appreciation of marriage as being in fashion reduces considerably amongst the ones belonging to rich families and having a higher level of education. But, these indicators on marriage are translated in an interesting conclusion, when we see that despite the high percentage of the respondents saying that marriage is out of date, 80 percent of the total number of respondents report they see their future in a marriage and in having a family in the future.²¹

In addition to this estimation of marriage, we remark that the element of loyalty is in fashion for 57.3 percent of the respondents, somewhat important for 27.8 percent of the respondents and not at all in fashion for 13.7 percent of them. On a gender approach, 63 percent of the female respondents report that loyalty is more popular against 52 percent of male respondents. In Tirana, loyalty is appreciated as in fashion by 66 percent of the respondents against 55 percent of the respondents from other villages or cities. The level of appreciation for loyalty reduces with older age respondents.

²¹ The results are provided in the Chapter on “Family and Social network” *ibid.*

Graph no 55.



About the idea of taking responsibilities, 56 percent of the respondents report it is in fashion, versus 33 percent of the ones reporting it is somewhat in fashion, while 10 percent of the respondents report it is not at all in fashion. Taking responsibilities is identified by 60 percent of female respondents as being in fashion, versus 54 of male respondents providing the same answer. Even though the respondents in Tirana appreciate it more, respectively 64 percent of the respondents from Tirana compared to 54 percent of the respondents from other cities of rural areas, it is them who compose the highest number of the ones considering undertaking responsibilities as something out of date.

Although respondents consider undertaking of responsibilities as important to them, for one out of five respondents in Albania involvement in politics as a form of taking a responsibility is not at all in fashion. About 39 percent

of them report politics is not in fashion, mostly male respondents, while 32 percent report it is in fashion. Commitment in politics is considered as more in fashion by the category of the respondents having better economic possibilities. It is the only group where over 40 percent of the respondents have considered politics as being in fashion, while the respondents from the metropolitan areas of Durrës and Tirana represent the highest group of the ones reporting politics as being out of date.

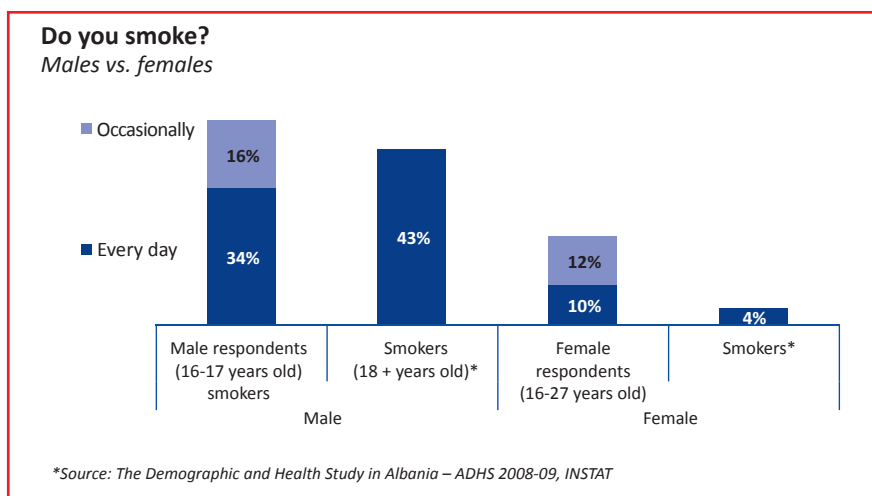
In the verge of the assessment for undertaking responsibilities, we see that participation in civil operations or initiatives is in fashion only for 27.7 percent of the respondents, while it is not much in fashion, or not at all in fashion for most of them. Civic commitment is mostly considered as being out of fashion for the Albanian respondents, which is a consequence of their replies on the low level of participation in voluntary activities, as already discussed in the previous Chapter. Civic initiatives are not at all popular for 32 percent of male respondents, while only 23 percent of female respondents report they are out of date.

When it comes to social behavior, according to the respondents, marijuana and its consumption are the least things in fashion out of all the categories discussed above. Over 52 percent of the respondents report “potting marijuana” is not at all in fashion, 15.5 percent of the respondents say it is somewhat in fashion, while only 27 percent of the respondents consider it as being in fashion. Marijuana is more popular amongst male respondents versus the female respondents. Thus, 32 percent of male respondents report it is in fashion, compared to 22 percent of female respondents providing the same answer. It is being transformed in something more popular in other cities different from Tirana, while the “appetite” for it increases with the growing economic possibilities of the respondents.

3. Other aspects of the living style

Despite the activities they use in their daily life and the choice for spending their budgets, the daily life living style of the respondents is characterized by the consumption of certain products and by the way on how we see and appreciate their physical appearance. On the other hand, a fundamental aspect of the lives of respondents is, without doubt, their sexual experience and the dynamics related to it.

Graph no 56.



In this regard, one of the most distinct features of the respondents is smoking cigarettes. The survey data show that 22.6 percent of the respondents report they smoke on a daily basis, 14 percent of the respondents report they do casually smoke, while 63 percent of the respondents report they do not smoke. Smoking is more frequent amongst male respondents than

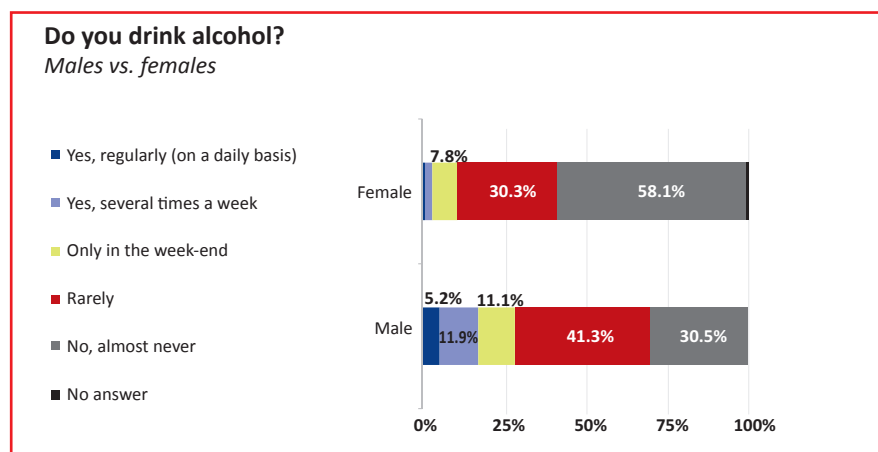
female respondents. Thus, 33.6 percent of male respondents report they smoke every day, against 10 percent of female respondents reporting the same thing. The data show that amongst the poor young people, daily smoking is rare, which shows the inevitable correlation between the financial possibly and following a certain life style. The respondents belonging to the category of poor categories, say the daily use of cigarettes is less frequent in the category of poorer youngsters. Even when they report they smoke occasionally, 16 percent of male respondents report of doing so versus 11.8 percent of female respondents smoking occasionally. The number of respondents smoking occasionally is higher in Tirana, which is related to the power of social pressure. About gender perspective, we see that half of the male respondents report they never smoke, against 80 percent of female respondents reporting the same thing. Against these figures, what is impressive from the survey data is the fact that smoking is used by young respondents, who, according to law, are banned from buying this product. Thus, 9 percent of the respondents of 16 to 17 years of age smoke daily, while 10 percent of them smoke on occasions.

Compared to the average of national consumption reported in 2009, graphically shown above, the young people are the main consumers of smoking in comparison with the other part of the population.²²

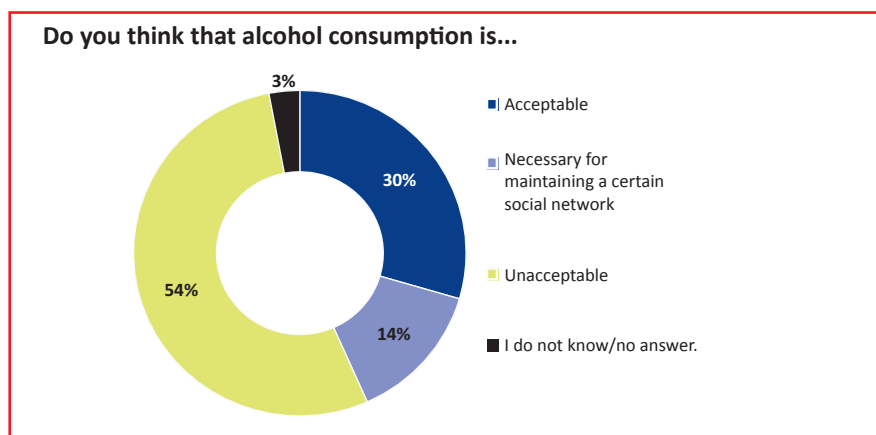
An element ever taking importance in the living style of the respondents is consumption of alcoholic beverages in bars, pubs and restaurants. According to the survey data, use of alcohol happens either daily or takes part several times a week in one of ten respondents in Albania. In the meantime, 10 percent of the respondents report they consume alcohol only during the week-end, 36 percent report they occasionally use alcohol, and over 43 percent report they almost never consume alcohol.

²² Albania Demographic and Health Survey 2008-2009, INSTAT.

Graph no 57.



Speaking of the daily or frequent use of alcohol, male respondents seem to be the most frequent users of alcohol compared to female respondents. About 5 percent of them report they drink alcohol every day, against 1 percent of females consuming alcohol every day. In addition, 12 percent of male respondents report they consume alcohol several times in a week, compared to 2 percent of female respondents providing the same answer. About 60 percent of females report they do never drink alcohol, compared to 30 percent of male respondents providing the same answer, but both groups have same reports of use of alcohol during the week-end. Alcohol consumption during the week-end depends on the financial possibilities, while the young people consuming alcohol during the week-end are double the number of their poorer peers. About 10 percent of the 16 and 17-year-olds report they drink alcohol several times during a week, and 30 percent of them say they do this rarely. For the young people, Tirana is the place where more alcohol is consumed during week-ends, given that night life is more intensive in Tirana.

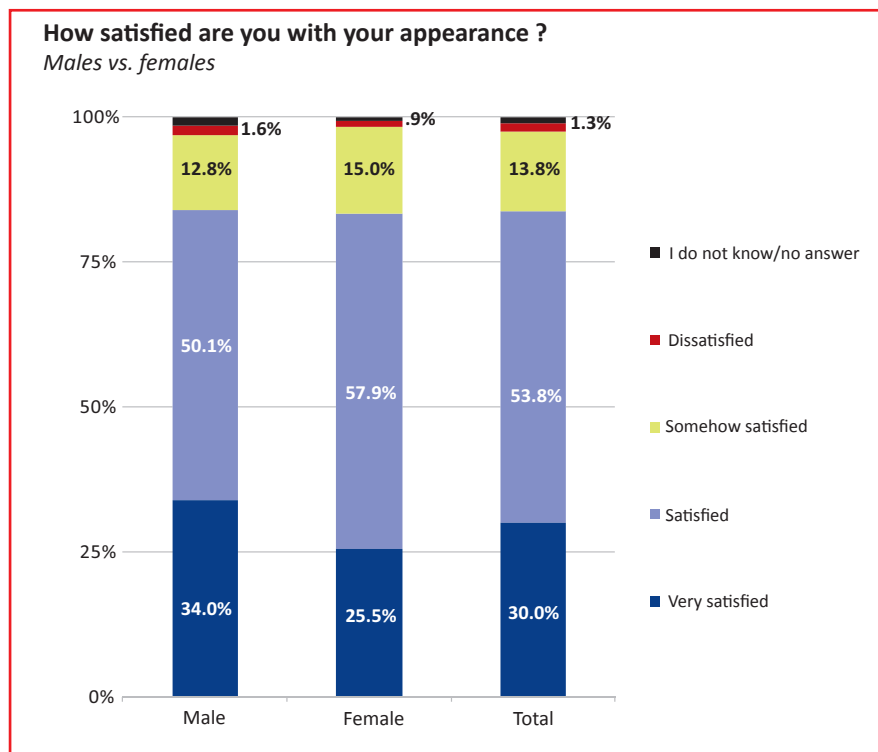
Graph no 58.

Even though 53.7 percent of the respondents report consumption of alcohol is an unacceptable phenomenon, it is assessed as acceptable by 30 percent of the respondents, while 13.8 percent of them consider it necessary to maintain friends. Gender differences are again obvious in answers provided to this question, as 32 percent of the respondents consider it acceptable against 26 percent of female respondents. The same thing is true, even when they say alcohol is important to keep friendship. 17.4 percent of male respondents think alcohol is important for keeping friends, compared to 10 percent of female respondents providing the same answer. The higher the economic level of the respondents is, the higher the percentage of respondents considering alcohol as important to keep friends. This indicator is more acceptable in Tirana and in other cities rather than in the rural areas.

Regarding body image, almost all the Albanian youth are happy with their body image. In this context, 30 percent of the respondents report that are very satisfied with their body image, 54 percent say they are satisfied with it, while 14 percent are somewhat satisfied with their body image. The satisfaction of the respondents on their body images is a positive trend, if compared with the world trend and with problems encountered in this respect by the young people, especially by the adolescents of other

countries. In a study of 2005, in the USA, 1/2 of the young girls and 1/3 of the young boys were totally dissatisfied with their body image and about 48 percent of girls there had friends suffering of such deceases as bulimia or anorexia²³, which are directly related to one's perception on the body image.

Graph no 59.

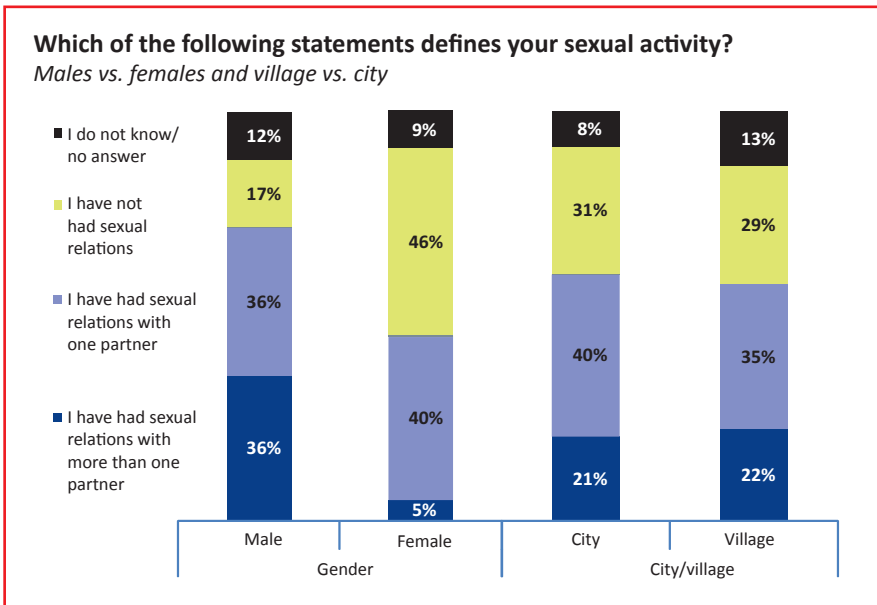


The sexual behavior taboos amongst the Albanian young people have gone through constant changes. The survey data show that sexual activity is reported by 60 percent of the respondents, while 30 percent of the respondents report they are virgin. One in ten respondents, mainly in the rural areas, has not answered this question. Speaking of differences

²³ Jilian Croll: "Body Image and Adolescents" University of Minnesota, School of Public Health, 2005, Chapter: 13.

in the answers from the respondents, there is a gender difference about their sexual activity. 17 percent of the male respondents report they are virgin, 50 percent of female respondents report of being virgin. However, most of the respondents report they have a regular partner. The difference between male and female respondents regarding their different partners in the sexual life is very distinct. Over 35 percent of male respondents report they have had relations with more than one partner, while only 5 percent of the female respondents report of such fact. Most of the ones having sexual relations with different partners live in Tirana and belong to people with medium to high-level incomes. Out of the ones belonging to the rich classes, only 20 percent of them report they have not had sexual relations, against 30 percent of the respondents coming from poorer categories reporting of having had sexual relations. There is an increasing trend of the sexual activity amongst the adolescents. One in three respondents in the age group of 16 to 17 years old has already have a sexual experience, while 8 percent of those over the age of 23 report to be virgin.

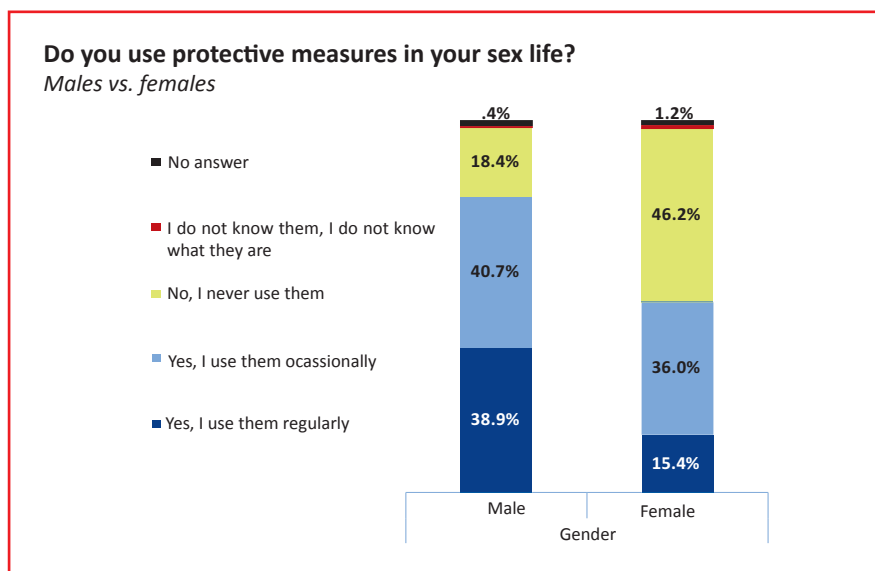
Graph no 60.



The boost of sexual freedom amongst respondents is accompanied by a change of mentality and by more information on the protective measures against sexually transmittable diseases and unwanted pregnancies. According to the survey data, about 30 percent of the respondents being sexually active use protective measures regularly, 40 percent of the respondents on occasions, while 28.3 percent of the respondents never use them.

In this regard, men seem to be more responsible in their relations, as 40 percent of them use protective measures regularly, against 40 percent of the same respondents reporting of using them occasionally. On the other hand, 15 percent of the female respondents do regularly use protective means. Speaking of the failure of use protective measures, only less than 20 percent of males report of never using protective measures, while in female respondents this figure goes to about 50 percent. The low figures of the use of protective measures by women are inter-related to the data provided above. According to them, only 8 percent of women in Albania use modern contraceptive measures, 52 percent take no protective measures, while 40 percent of them say they use traditional methods²⁴, aimed only at avoiding pregnancy, but having no guarantee whatsoever.

²⁴ Albania Demographic and Health Study 2008-2009, INSTAT.

Graph no 61.

The data on use of protective measures by the respondents either regularly or occasionally are higher in Tirana. It is interesting to see than over 50 percent of the respondents of 16 and 17 years old, who have an active sexual life, are the most regular users of such measures, while this care is more casual as the respondents get older.

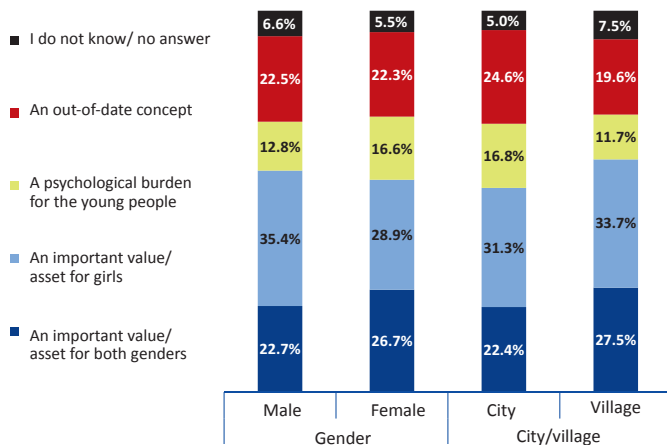
Sex and virginity are two of the taboos accompanying each-other in the social psychology of the respondents. According to the survey data, one out of four respondents in Albania thinks that virginity is an asset for both genders, while 32.3 percent of the respondents are of the opinion that virginity is a value for females only. When it comes to virginity as an important value only for females, it is interesting to see that male respondents have a higher level of support to this idea. So, 35 percent of male respondents think virginity is important for females compared to 29 percent of female respondents in favor of the same option. On the other hand, 15 percent of the respondents think virginity is a psychological burden, while 22.4 percent of them consider it as out of date. The number

of females considering it a psychological burden outweighs the number of males having the same opinion, while both groups equally share the same opinion on virginity as being out of date. The percentage of respondents considering virginity as a value or asset for both genders or only for females is higher in rural areas and lower in the capital. Only 20 percent of the respondents in rural areas consider virginity as being out of date against the ones living in Tirana. Considering the issue of virginity from the geographical aspect, the data show that the respondents from the south-west part of Albania seem to be more conservative and traditional, as the number of the ones considering virginity as an asset is higher in this part of the country.

Graph no 62.

What is your opinion on virginity nowadays?

Males vs. females and city vs. rural areas



4. Conclusions

The above-referred-to data show that the entirety of the activities, choices and the style of living for the Albanian young people is a reflection of world trends, where the ever growing orientation towards technology and information prevails in their everyday life. The wide and frequent access of respondents to Internet, in itself is a good news, but its use should be varied and for practical reasons. The living style of the respondents is shaped by their choices, which vary due of their (age-related) preferences, economic possibilities, place of residence, and boundaries of traditional values. Such interaction of old norms with fresh “temptations” provides a multi-colored reality, which of course has internal objections. The answers to the questions in this Chapter of the survey provide data and are alarm bells, especially for some concerning phenomena that need to be faced with patience. In particular, the acceptance of smoking and alcohol by the young people below the age specified in the law, is an indication of social behavior having a tendency to oppose rules and laws. On the other hand, the difference of sexual behavior of the respondents in urban areas, or in the rural areas, has obviously led to a greater risk for the respondents, due to the still low use of protective means. In the meantime, the experience of social services in the world shows that self-isolation amongst the youth and addiction to technology has led to negative consequences. In the Albanian young people we see than social apathy and the low commitment in community work is a testimony of the lack of trust on models of voluntarism as a way to encourage their social responsibilities.

5. Recommendations

- The law-making structures in the country need to take all relevant measures for a **rigorous enforcement of the law on banning the sale of alcoholic beverages and tobacco to minors and to address the serious situation** of massive use of smoking and of drinking alcohol in Albania.
- The education, health structures and the civil society should support the efforts of law-makers by continuing and **improving the awareness-raising campaigns on consequences of smoking and of drinking alcohol**.
- The public health structures and local health system mini-structures **should give priority to the awareness-raising and education initiatives on the use of protective measures during sexual activity, focusing on girls and young women** – not dealing with such initiatives only in the day on the fight against AIDS, but having them run regularly all over the year.
- The health structures should the soonest possible take measures **for assessing the situation and for investing in an increased amount of contraceptives to be distributed by local medical centers** (consultancy centers, reproductive health centers, outpatient clinics, etc). A greater commitment of relevant structures in schools would also be of help in this regard (such as the role of school psychologists).
- **Donors need to build capacities of civil society, especially outside the capital, in order to help girls and women raise the awareness** on the need of using protective measures and of taking more care about themselves.

- Higher education institutions should encourage **the use of Internet for reading and working purposes**, through a serious project encouraging scientific research in academic databases and media databases, requiring payment of an access fee.²⁵
- The education system structures and youth organizations **should encourage in-site, sports and social activities** so as to avoid the TV “syndrome” and isolation among young people.

²⁵ None of the public higher education institutions in Albania has invested in ensuring access of students to such world academic databases as EBSCO, JSTOR, etc.

CHAPTER VI

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

“Politics and governance between the lack of trust, participation and hope.”

Prepared by:

Arbjan Mazniku and Geron Kamberi

1. Overview

Proper governance and socio-economic development of the country remain amongst the key priorities of the last twenty years. The young generation is the one being affected the most by the progress of these indicators. Despite Albania's changes since the 90s, the indicators of governance and socio-economic development of the country still encounter numerous challenges and are a concern for Albania's young people. The socio-economic development model for Albania is a mixture between remittances from migration, informal economy and the efforts to build a sustainable economy and reliable governance structures. The young people continue to encounter many issues deriving from the long and tiring transition, where poverty, unemployment, insecurity for the future and environmental protection accompany their daily lives. In face of such challenges, they try to shape their behaviors and stances by aiming at assessing the reality and at defining their perspective for the future.

The last twenty years, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and global acceptance of liberal democracy as a better form of governance²⁶, are accompanied by a growing civic apathy. Given that the average age of population in Albania is relatively young – 31 years old, out of the country's population of three million inhabitants, almost 420 thousand are 18 to 24 years old²⁷. Thus, young individuals of the country are a major force for the political and electoral processes. In the elections of 2011, voter registers counted 180 thousand Albanian youth born after the fall of communism who casted their votes for the first time, thus representing more than 12 percent of the voters.²⁸

²⁶ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History And The Last Man* (1992)

²⁷ INSTAT, Annual Average Population According to Age-Groups 2001-2010 - <http://www.instat.gov.al/>

²⁸ INSTAT, Annual Average Population According to Age-Groups 2001-2010 - <http://www.instat.gov.al/>

Following almost half a century of one of the harshest totalitarian regimes of the former east communism, in 1991 Albania changed its political systems heading towards liberal democracy. But even twenty years later, Albania's transition towards this new political regime and economic model still continues facing various challenges and difficulties.

In all over these years, the Albanian transition has faced constant political crisis and a polarized political environment producing deep divisions between different groups of the population. The political debate has forcefully taken the greatest part of the public debate, rendering it an inevitable part in the life of everybody, but also bringing some fatigue against politics as an activity.

The purpose of this Chapter is to identify the interest of young generation in politics, their political stances and behaviors as well as their trust in democracy and its institutions.

2. Main findings

- About 50 percent of the respondents consider failure to enforce laws as the most burning concern of the Albanian society. The Albanian young people coming from poor families see this more as a problem than their peers from rich families.
- Street crime is not only a phenomenon affecting the young people from urban areas, but a concern as well for the ones living in rural areas, affecting poor young people more than their rich peers.
- 86 percent of the respondents at the national level consider unemployment and poverty as the greatest problem, affecting the young people from rich families as well.
- 66 percent of the young people do not feel as if having a safe job, including the ones belonging to rich families and the ones having a post-university degree.
- The threat of spread of HIV/AIDS remains high amongst youth, but it is less threatening in young people having better incomes and a higher education level.
- 65 percent of the young people at the national level believe in a modest change of their economic situation in the coming ten years.
- Only 11 percent 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 percent of them are interested

in political developments in the Balkans and only 15.1 percent of them are interested in the developments at the international level.

- 61.4 percent of the Albanian young people have political views that are generally or nearly complaint to the views of their parents.
- Television is the main source of information for the Albanian young people, followed by talks with friends and acquaintances, and Internet.
- The young people are very active in electoral processes and only 8.3 percent of the Albanian youth say they have never voted in elections.
- The young people believe that their vote does not have any impact on the way how institutions are run. Only 10.7 percent of the respondents report they believe that their vote counts a lot in the way how central government bodies work, compared to 18.7 percent of the respondents reporting they vote counts when it comes to the way how local government works.
- Only a very small group of people (3.8 percent) feels as being very much represented by youth in politics. Most of the respondents feel less represented (33 percent), or not at all represented (30.8 percent).

3. A detailed data analysis

3.1 Governance and its elements

One of the elements showing the impact of governance on the young generation is the failure to enforce legislation. At the national level, 49.3 percent of the respondents report that failure to enforce laws is a high concern for them. 54.2 percent of the respondents from Tirana consider this phenomenon as highly concerning versus 49 percent of the other respondents. One of the indicators showing that failure to enforce laws is a real concern is also the narrow difference of percentages of this finding coming from both rich and poor respondents. More specifically, 47.5 percent of the rich respondents report failure to enforce legislation as a real concern compared to 52.5 percent of poor respondents providing the same answer. However, with respondents getting older, and having a higher education level, we see more awareness and a higher concern for failure to enforce legislation, seen as part of country's governance. At the same time, there is some difference between the respondents from the metropolitan area of Tirana and Durres and the southeast part of the country, who show more concern for failure to enforce laws than their peers in the north. In the language of figures, 54.6 percent of the respondents from Tirana and Durres, 52.2 percent of the respondents from southeastern Albania, and 42.2 percent of the respondents from northern Albania consider failure to enforce laws as a real concern. Because of development, bigger socio-economic interests and the mentality in these areas, the element of failure to enforce laws is seen as more problematic.

Regarding street crime and different types of trafficking as part of governance and public safety, the data show that the respondents think of them as causing different levels of concern and having a direct impact on the young people. Thus 41.1 percent of the respondents at the national level see street crime as a concern, while, of course, female respondents feel more at risk from this type of crime than their male peers (43.3 percent vs. 39.1 percent). An interesting finding is the fact that the respondents from Tirana and those from rural areas consider street crime as more of a problem than their peers from the other urban areas. More specifically, 53.2 percent of the respondents from Tirana consider street crime a

real problem compared to 43.8 percent of the respondents from rural areas and 33.5 percent of the respondents from other urban areas different from Tirana providing the same answer. This is an indicator showing us that rural areas are also being affected by street crime related mainly to difficulties of long distances of school facilities from their houses. Another interesting data is the fact that the respondents from poor families (47.5 percent) are affected more frequently from street crime than the respondents from rich families (36.5 percent). In terms of the geographical distribution, we see that the respondents from Tirana, southeast and southwest Albania consider this more of a concerning problem. Thus, street crime is considered a serious concern by 52.1 percent of the respondents from Tirana, by 41 percent of the respondents from the southeast, by 34.2 percent from the southwest, and by 31.7 percent of the respondents from the North.

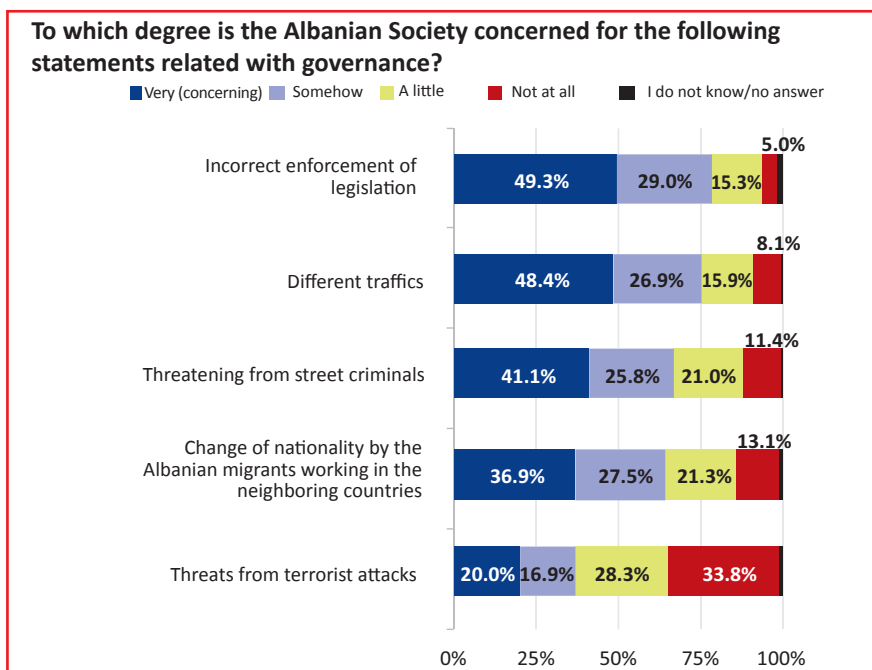
Regarding different traffics, 48.4 percent of the respondents consider them as a concern, out of who 52.2 percent of female respondents consider trafficking as a concern compared to 45.1 percent of male respondents reporting that different types of traffics are a concern for them as well. It is interesting to see that the level of concern from the respondents from Tirana is almost the same as that of other respondents from the rural areas, representing respectively 54.7 percent and 52.5 percent against the ones in other urban areas with 41.6 percent. Because of the size, huge demographic movements, the respondents from the metropolitan area of Tirana –Durrës and the southeast consider trafficking as more concerning, representing respectively 54.9 percent and 52.2 percent of the respondents against the ones from the north and the southwest considering it a concern, representing respectively 40.0 percent and 42.9 percent of the respondents.

Furthermore, 62.1 percent of the respondents at the national level consider terrorist attacks as of little or no concern. But, 20 percent of the respondents consider threats from terrorist attacks as a great concern. The ones attaching a lot of concern to terroristic attacks seem to have more information and a higher level of education, according to the survey data. Naturally so, the respondents living in the area of Tirana–Durrës are more sensible to the threats of terrorist attacks, making up for 25.6 percent of the respondents providing this answer, against the respondents from the southeast or southwest, making up for respectively 17.8 percent and the respondents from the North with 16.5 percent.

Due to the high level of migration, especially to the neighboring countries of Italy

and Greece, where most of the migrants are young people, maintaining your personality in face of economic survival is not that easy. However, only 36.9 percent of the respondents at the national level consider this a concern at a great level. 40.2 percent of the respondents are preoccupied due to the high level of migration against 33.2 percent of the female respondents providing the same answer. In the meantime, only 32.5 percent of the respondents from the poor classes of the society consider this as a concerning issue against 37.5 percent of those coming from rich classes providing the same answer, thus showing that the tendency for a stronger personality increases hand in hand with the boost of economic independence. This tendency gets stronger in the metropolitan area of Tirana and Durrës with 41.3 percent of the respondents providing such answer and the southeastern part of the country, having a higher presence of migration, where 37.4 percent of the respondents report of the same thing, compared to 33.9 percent of the respondents from the north. The data show that the percentage of those not considering this a concerning issues is the same for all the age-groups.

Graph no 63.



3.1.1 Problems of development

Poverty and unemployment are amongst the main issues of development having a direct impact on the perspective of life for the young generation. 86.2 percent of the respondents at the national level consider increase of poverty as concerning. It is worth mentioning that deepening of poverty is reported as a problem from respondents coming both from both, rich and poor families. More specifically, 89.6 percent of the respondents coming from rich families report of increased poverty as a problem versus 81.3 percent of the ones coming from rich classes. With growth of age, the percentage of the ones worried for this concern gets higher, because of the employment possibilities. So, 83.9 percent of the respondents of 18 to 22 years old worry of the poverty phenomenon, out of 88.7 percent of the respondents of 23 to 27 years old reporting concerns over poverty. In addition 94.3 percent of the respondents from the southeast part of the country express more concern over poverty, compared to 85.1 percent of the respondents from Tirana, or 73.5 percent of the respondents from the north. This finding might be related with the huge dependency on migration to the neighboring Greece and the impact of the Greek crisis on them. 92.2 percent of the respondents holding a post-university degree report that increase of poverty is a great problem.

Unemployment is also a great concert for 90 percent of the respondents at the national level, thus showing the high importance of employment for the respondents. This is a general concern affecting the poor respondents and the rich ones (almost equally) – respectively with 92.5 percent and 89.2 percent. With the passing of years this problem becomes more visible and becomes a major concern for the highly qualified youth, as are the respondents with a University degree (90 percent) and the ones with a post-university degree (98 percent). Again, it is seen that is a great problem in the southwest (92.9 percent) and southeast (94.1 percent) of the country, rather than in the north (79.1 percent).

Even in cases they already have a job, the respondents express several insecurities related to the job and risks of occupational safety and health. At the national level, 66.9 percent of the respondents consider job insecurity

as a great concern. This preoccupation is also remarked in rural areas, where, although considered as self-employed in the agricultural sector, 70.8 percent of the respondents feel insecure against 62.7 percent of those in the other urban areas sharing the same feeling. This is also an indicator of the impossibility to find a job and lack of variety of jobs in the rural areas. It is interesting to see that 60.8 percent of the rich people feel insecure for their job as well, against 72.5 percent of the respondents from poor classes. The level of insecurity grows with the approaching of the working age. Again, statistics show of a greater insecurity amongst the youth of the metropolitan area of Tirana-Durrës and in the southeast of the country; respectively by 66.9 percent and 73.3 percent, against 58.3 percent of the respondents in the north reporting of the same concern. Meanwhile, it is with interest to see that this lack of security between them raises despite education or qualification, while 72.5 percent holding a PhD degree feel more insecure against 65.1 percent of those studying at the pre-university level, or 64.1 percent of the respondents holding a University degree.

Job conditions for the working young people are amongst the most fundamental elements having an impact on the progress of their lives. At the national level, 56 percent of the respondents consider occupational safety and health as a serious concern. This is especially visible in the rural areas (62.3 percent) against the other urban areas (49.6 percent), which is related with the still heavy nature of work of the respondents from the village. The poor respondents are less affected by such risks (68.8 percent), against the respondents from rich descend (43.3 percent). Occupational health and safety are perceived to be more important from those starting a job at an early age; so, 60.7 percent of the respondents aged 16-17 see occupational health and safety as a problem versus 52.5 percent of the respondents aged 18-22 year old. In the southeast, the occupational safety and health is an even more concerning problem as 59.6 percent of the respondents report it as a problem, against 51.7 percent of the respondents in the north reporting it as a problem. The higher the respondents' level of education, the less exposed they are to occupational risks and health issues. 55 percent of the respondents belonging to the pre-university group and 50 percent of the respondents from the post-university group report it as a problem.

In addition to the above-mentioned elements and the other aspects related to the quality of life, environmental pollution, climate change, spread of HIV/AIDS are a concern for the young generation. Regarding environmental pollution, 66.9 of the respondents at the national level consider it a serious concern against 22.7 percent of the respondents considering it a concern of a certain degree. It is interesting to see that there is a certain percentage of the respondents in the rural areas, 68.1 percent, considering environmental pollution a concern against 63.5 percent of the respondents from the other urban areas reporting the same thing. Although this is an element having a direct impact on the quality of life, the data show that the rich respondents considering environmental pollution as a problem are fewer (65 percent) than poor respondents providing the same answer (71.3 percent). Almost all the young people, despite age, consider environmental pollution a concern. Their percentage gets higher with age. More specifically 64.2 percent of the respondents aged from 18 to 22 and 69.2 percent of the respondents aged from 23 to 27 report of environmental pollution as a concern. Also, environmental pollution is a greater concern for the respondents of the metropolitan area of Tirana and Durrës, south-east and south-west of the country, respectively with 68.7 percent, 67.7 percent and 69.3 percent, against the respondents from the north, 60 percent of who report it as a concern.

Regarding environmental impact and climate change as an important element in the progress of their lives, the Albanian respondents see no problem to worry about when it comes to Albania. Only 24.8 percent of the respondents at the national level consider it a problem, 30.8 percent consider it "somewhat" a problem and 43.7 percent of the respondents consider it as a minor problem, or as not a problem at all. 28.4 percent of the respondents from Tirana consider environmental impact on climate change important versus 24.2 percent of the respondents from the rural areas sharing the same opinion. When it comes to the social level, the respondents from the rich and poor population have more or less the same opinion on this matter. The data show that awareness increases parallel to the age of the respondents. So, 25.8 percent of the respondents aged from 16 to 17, and 29.4 percent of the respondents aged from 23 to 27 consider this phenomenon as being a concern. It is impressive to see that post-university graduates show of a lower level of concern than the respondents having a pre-university age. Respectively 23.5 percent of the

respondents having a post-university degree think environmental impact on climate change is a concern, versus 25.4 percent of the respondents at the pre-university level sharing the same opinion.

HIV/AIDS and the risk from cancer deceases seem to be a concern for the young generation. As the survey shows, 43.5 percent of the respondents at the national level consider the spread of HIV/AIDS a serious concern. This concern is obvious in the rural areas as well. 49.8 percent of the respondents there think of it as a serious concern, due to the risk and fear caused by the lack of information on HIV/AIDS there. 36.3 percent of the respondents from the urban areas report HIV/AIDS as being a serious concern. 45.4 percent of the poor respondents consider HIV/AIDS a problem versus 35 percent of the rich respondents, showing that the latter group has more information on the virus and on the protective measures.

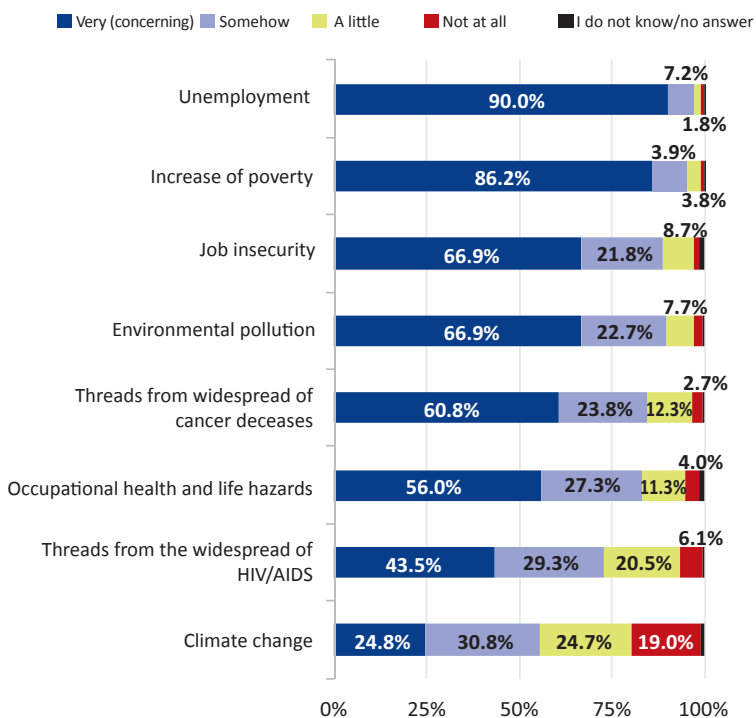
48.9 percent of the respondents aged from 16 to 17 think HIV/AIDS is a real concern against 41.9 percent of the respondents aged from 23 to 27. 51 percent of the respondents from the metropolitan area of Tirana and Durrës and 45.6 percent of the respondents from the southeast part of the country report HIV/AIDS as a high-level or serious concern, against 30.9 percent of the respondents from the north having same level of concern. This is caused due to a more liberal life and more intensive threats in these zones. In the meantime, parallel to the level of information and education, such concern gets less important. 44.9 percent of the pre-university respondents consider it a concern, compared to 35.9 percent of the University respondents considering it a concern.

A very important indicator is the high percentage of the respondents at the national level considering cancer as a serious concern. Thus, 60.8 percent of the respondents consider cancer a serious concern. In this case, 63.1 percent of females versus 58.8 percent of males report of cancer as a serious problem, showing of the media impact on cancer on women, such as breast cancer. An interesting element is the fact that cancer deceases are considered a concern almost alike from the respondents from Tirana (64.2 percent) and the respondents from the rural area (65.2 percent), but less of a concern from the respondents from other urban areas (54.9 percent). Of course the poorest are

mostly risked by such deceases (64.2 percent) against the rich respondents (58.3 percent). This threat is more obvious in the metropolitan area of Tirana and Durrës, in the southeast and the southeast with respectively 64.6 percent, 64.5 percent and 69.3 percent of the respondents and 39.6 percent of the respondents from the north. This shows of a higher death rate related to cancer deceases in these areas. Education level seems to have an impact on rating of cancer as a concern, as 56.4 percent of the respondents with a university background against 74.5 percent of the respondents having a post-university degree report it as problematic.

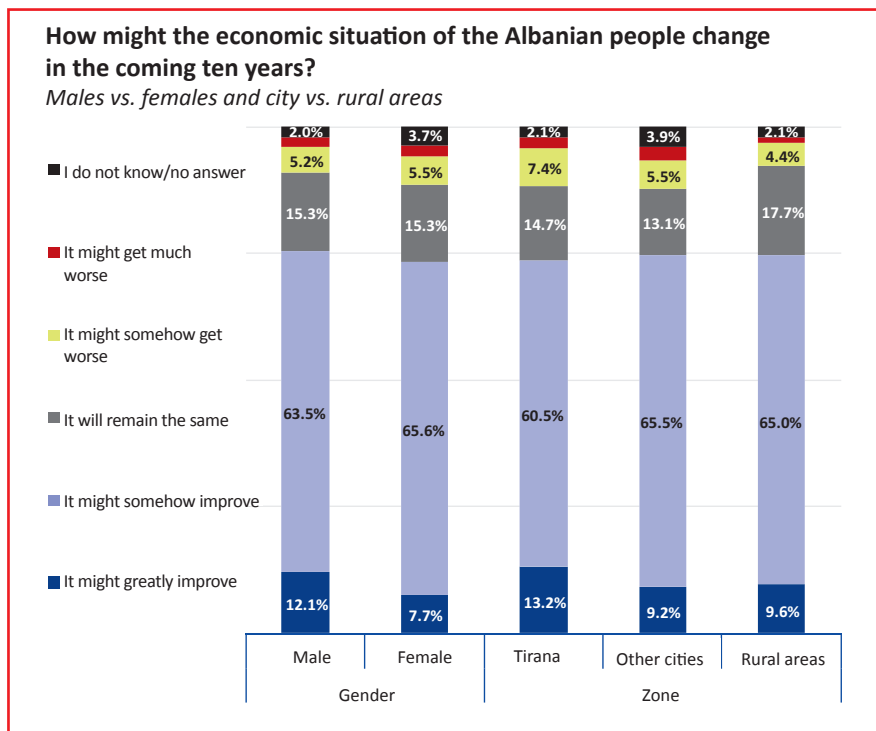
Graph no 64.

How concerning are the listed issues regarding the developments of the Albanian society?



The respondents are reserved regarding the **perspective of economic growth and change of their status in the coming ten years**. Only 10 percent of the respondents think that their economic situation in the coming ten years shall change a lot, while 64.5 percent of the respondents think that the economic situation of the Albanian people shall modestly change. On this particular matter, there is no difference between male and female respondents. However, 60 percent of the respondents from Tirana versus 65 percent of the respondents from the other urban and rural area are in favor of such trend, showing that respondents from Tirana are less optimistic than their peers in the rest of the country. It is interesting to see that the data show that respondents from rich families are less in number (60 percent) than poor respondents (65 percent) reporting they think the economic situation shall modestly change in the 10 coming years. 66 percent of the respondents from the age of 18 to 22 provide the same answer compared to 62 percent of the respondents from the age of 23 to 27, showing that optimism lowers with age. 69 percent of the respondents reporting there will be a modest increase in the coming ten years against 62.6 percent of the respondents from the metropolitan area of Tirana–Durrës providing the same answer. The percentage of the ones thinking that the economic situation shall change hugely is higher in the North. So, 16.1 percent of the respondents from this part of the country say they think huge changes shall occur in the coming ten years, against 10.5 percent of the respondents from area of Tiranë-Durrës, or 4.4 percent of the respondents from the south-east providing the same answer. The higher the education level, the lower the percentage of the respondents believing in a modest economic growth. Hence, 67.3 percent of the respondents with a university degree report of a modest economic growth against 60.8 percent of the respondents with a post-university degree.

Graph no 65.



3.2 Democracy and politics

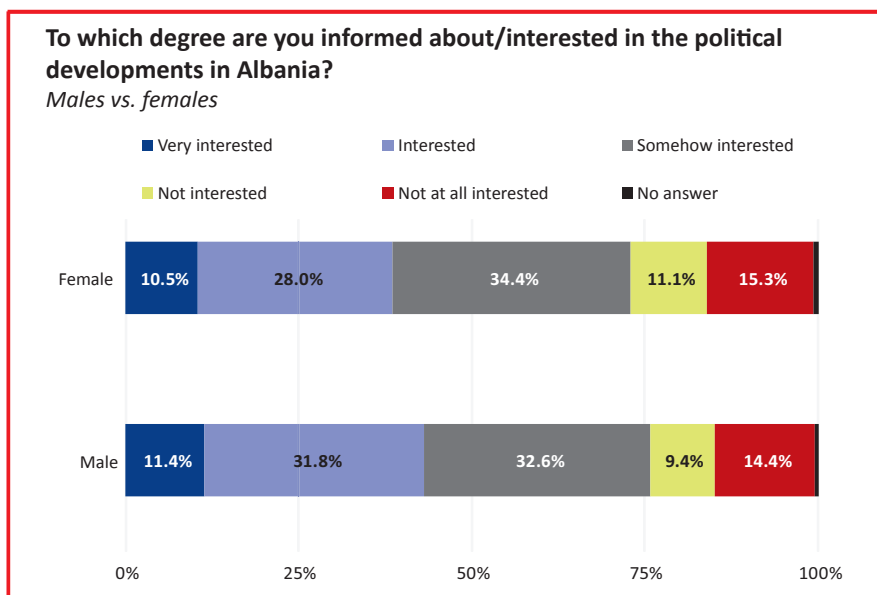
3.2.1 Interest and information on politics

The Albanian young people are not much interested on the political developments in the country. Only a small proportion of them report they are very much interested in politics, but in percentage they are even less than the category of respondents who are entirely not interested in politics. The survey data show that the young people have varied level of interest for the political developments in the country. Only 11 percent of the respondents report they are very interested, 30 percent of the respondents report they are interested and 33.4 percent of them report they are not much interested in the political developments in the country. 10.2 percent of the respondents report they are not interested in this matter, and 14.8 percent of the respondents report

they are not at all interested in the political developments in the country. For purposes of analysis we have joined the categories of respondents who are very much interested and interested in the political developments, and the ones who are not interested and not at all interested. Based on this grouping, we see that 41 percent of the respondents are interested in the political developments, 33,4 percent of the respondents are somewhat interested and 25 percent of the respondents are not interested in the political developments in the country.

From the gender perspective, the data show that male respondents are more interested in politics than female respondents. Thus, 43.2 percent of the male respondents report they are interested in the political developments in the country, against 38.5 percent of the female respondents reporting of the same thing. Consequently, the level of lack of interest for such developments is higher amongst female respondents than amongst male respondents. 26.4 percent of the female respondents report they are not interested in politics, against 23.8 percent of male respondents providing the same answer.

Graph no 66.



Also, the data show of a more direct correlation between age and interest in politics, where the older age groups are more interested than the younger ones. The survey data shows that only 34.1 percent of the respondents of the age group of 16 to 17 years old are interested in the politics of the country. This percentage is the lowest of all the age groups. 40.1 percent of the respondents aged from 18 to 22 and 45.8 percent of the respondents aged from 23 to 27 are interested in the political developments in the country. The same tendency is true for the category of respondents who are not interested in the political developments in the country. The highest percentage of respondents not interested in the political developments in the country is composed of the ones falling in the age-group of 16-17-year-olds. So, 28.4 percent of the respondents of 16-17-year-olds are not interested in the political developments in the country, followed by followed by 25.4 percent of the respondents of 18-22 years old, and 22.7 percent of the respondents of 23-27 years old reporting they are not interested in the political developments in the country.

Interested in politics – But for the wrong reasons!

Although the young people do generally report they have no interest in the political developments in the country, the ones accepting they have an interest in politics seem to be driven mostly by the idea to consider politics as a source of benefit. The impression one gets from the answers is that the young people wanting to be involved in politics consider it as a means of getting benefits, not as a way to fill the gaps and to better serve the public.

"Politics has become a way of living; if somebody does not deal with politics, he cannot be successful", - says Romeo, 27 years old from Tirana.

"It seems like the Albanian society thinks that everybody in a family should be involved in politics", - says Erion, 23 years old from Tirana.

Kristi, 22, from Tirana reports: *"The political commitment does of course change many things. You get to know more people, you are provide with more opportunities."*

About the topic of political commitment, Irena, 25 years old from Tirana says: *"If politically committed we would have been more privileged than we are right now. All political parties provide such possibility to you."*

There is a strong connection between interest in politics and the educational level. The higher the education level, the higher the percentage of the ones interested in political developments. This is the reason why 25.8 percent of the respondents with an elementary education have a low interest in the political developments in the country, against 40.1 percent of the respondents having a high school degree. The interest grows substantially amongst the ones having a university degree, 48 percent of whom report they are interested in the political developments in the country, against about 62.7 percent of the respondents having a post-university degree reporting the same thing.

Also, the data show that young people are more interested in politics than their parents. This might be explained in two ways: they are either more concerned about what happens in the country, or probably the respondents have a feeling as if their parents have a lower interest in politics than themselves. 30.8 percent of the respondents report their parents are interested in the political developments in the country, while 10.2 percent of them report their parents are less interested than they are in the political developments. A considerable part of the parents, about 42.9 percent of them, are not much interested in the political developments, thus representing a group that is 9.5 percent bigger than the group of young respondents showing the same level of interest in the political developments in the country. It seems like the parents not interested in the political developments of the country are as many as the young respondents lacking interest in the field (24.7 percent vs. 25 percent).

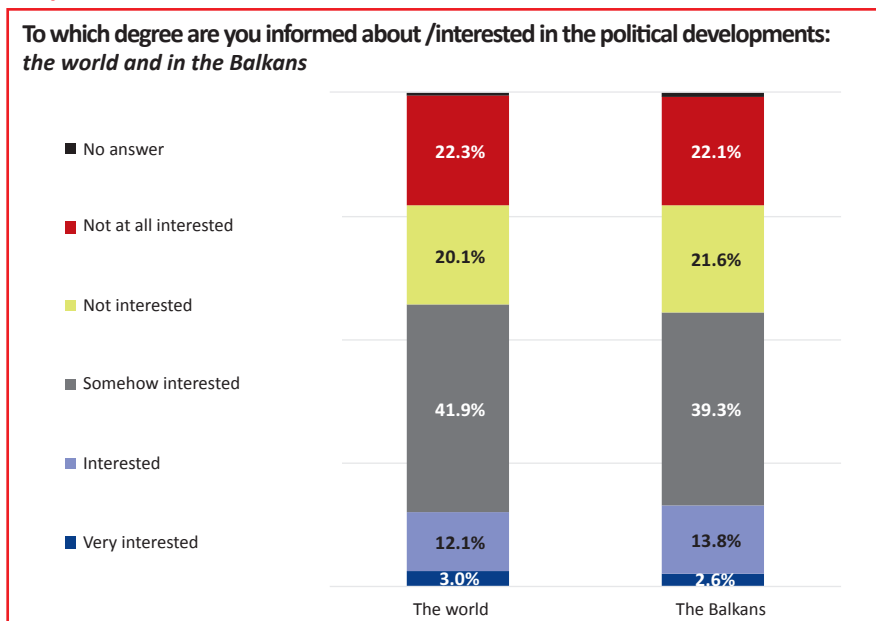
However, the data show of an interesting correlation between the interest of parents and of young respondents in politics. The respondents showing a higher interest in politics come from parents having the same level of interest in politics. The reverse is also true – respondents reporting of a lower interest in politics come from parents having the same level of interest in politics. Out of the respondents having parents interested in politics, 66.5 percent (of the respondents), or 25 percent over the national average, are also interested in politics. Out of the respondents having parents showing no interest in politics, about 56.5 percent, or about 31.5 percent more than the average of all respondents in the survey, follow the trend of their parents.

The Albanian respondents are very uninterested in the political developments happening abroad. Only 16.3 percent of the respondents report they are

interested in the political developments in the Balkans, 39.3 percent of the respondents report they are somewhat interested, whereas the majority of 43.7 percent of the respondents report they are not interested in such developments. Only about 12.6 percent of the respondents from Tirana are interested, while 39.5 percent of the same category of respondents report they are not interested. The respondents from other urban areas and from the rural areas represent a higher percentage of the ones interested and uninterested in the political development of the neighboring countries.

About 15.1 percent of the respondents report that they are interested in the world political developments, against 41.9 percent of the respondents who are somewhat interested in such developments. However, 42.7 percent of the respondents report they are not interested in such developments. It is important to highlight that there is a sustainable correlation between the level of interest in the international developments and age. The respondents of an older age show of a higher interest in the international political developments and only a small portion of them report they are not interested in such developments.

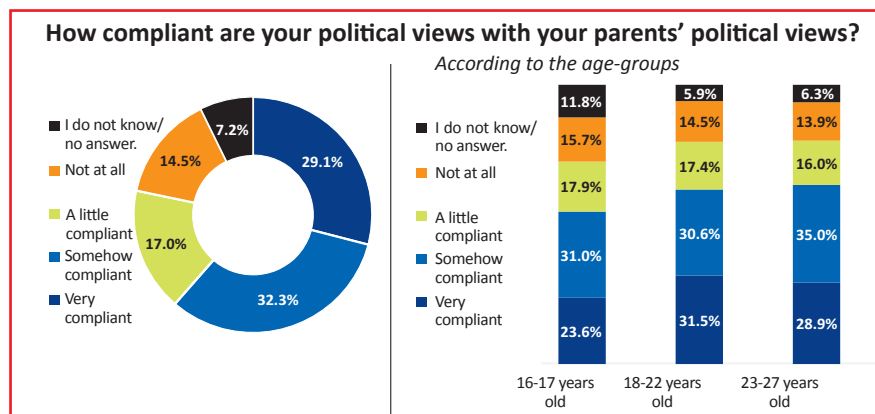
Graph no 67.



Asked about whether their political views coincide with those of their parents, 29.1 percent of the respondents report their views have a great compliance with those of their parents. 32.3 percent report their political views do somewhat comply with the views of their parents, representing 61.4 percent of the overall respondents. While 17 percent of the respondents report that their views do very much comply with the views of their parents, only 14.5 percent of them reported that their political views do not at all comply with their parents' political views. Although statistically speaking changes are inconsiderable, the survey data show that male respondents are more affected by their parents' political views than female respondents. In addition, respondents from Tirana seem to have a stronger impact from their parents when it comes to their political views than their peers in other urban areas, or in the rural areas. According to the survey data, about 38.9 percent of the respondents from Tirana report that their views are very compliant to their parents' views, being 10 percent above the national average. Only 26.5 percent of the respondents from other cities and 27.9 percent of the respondents from the rural areas report that their views are very much like their parents' views.

The survey data show of an interesting correlation between the compliance of political views, age and education. The older age-groups of the survey respondents at the national level have a higher compliance of their views with their parents' views compared to the younger age-groups. Also, there is a higher compliance of political views of the respondents having a high education level with their parents' views.

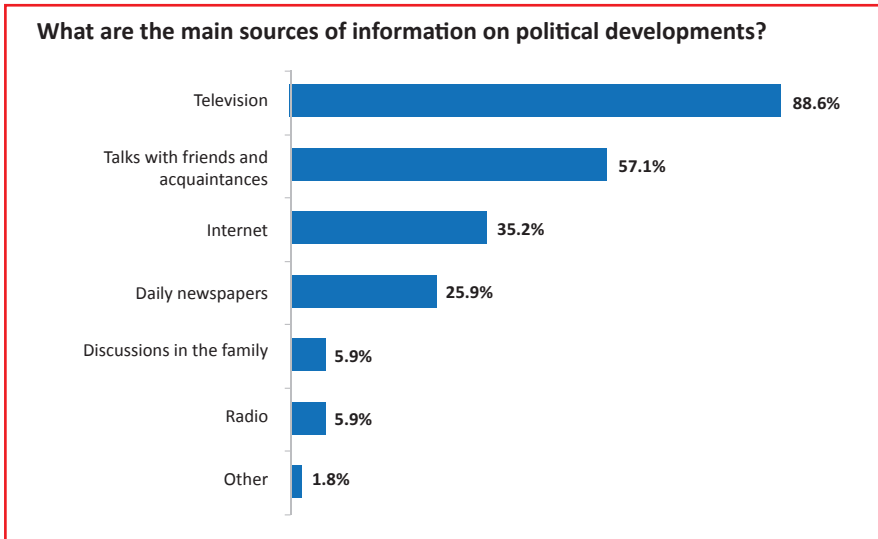
Graph no 68.



Regarding information, television is the major source of information for the Albania youth. More specifically, 88.6 percent of the respondents mention it as the main source of information in the survey. For 57.1 percent of the respondents the second most important source of information are the talks with friends and acquaintances. 5.9 percent of the respondents report that radio stations and family talks are a source of information for them. Internet has become a powerful source of information in the last years. Thus, 35.2 percent of the respondents mention it as a useful source of information, while one fourth of them – that is 25.9 percent of the respondents, report they get news from the newspapers. The survey data show that male respondents read more than their female peers (28.5 percent vs. 23 percent), but female respondents use radio more as a source of information than their male peers (7.3 percent vs. 4.7 percent).

Because of the varied dependence of the respondents on the information means, survey data show that respondents from Tirana are less dependent on television than the respondents from the other urban areas, or the rural areas. An interesting indicator is that the respondents from cities outside Tirana use Internet more than the others.

The survey data show of a strong correlation between wealth and sources of information. Use of Internet as a means of information is reported to be higher amongst the respondents having a better economic position. Out of the respondents belonging to poor families, only 22.5 percent use Internet for this aim, while it is used as a source of information for about 42.9 percent of the rich respondents. Also, the percentage of the respondents reading newspapers increases significantly with the raise of education level. While only 18.8 percent of the respondents studying only at the elementary school mention newspapers as a means of information, 24.2 percent of the respondents having a high school degree, about 31.2 percent of the respondents having a university degree and 33.3 percent of the respondents having a post-university degree report of using newspapers as a means of communication.

Graph no 69.

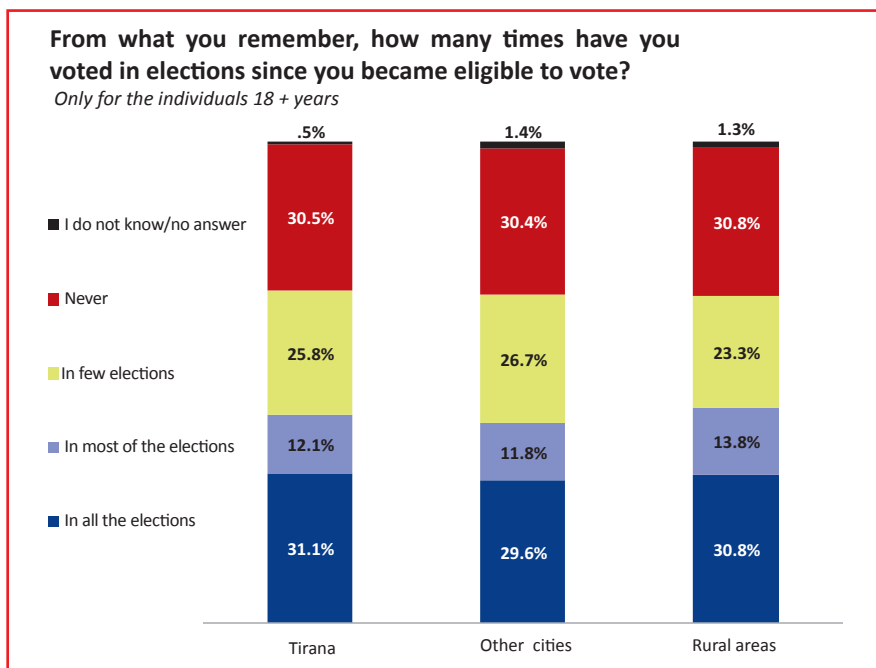
3.2.2 Political behavior

The survey data show that the Albanian young people are very active during elections. From all the respondents, for purposes of analysis we considered only the respondents becoming 18 years old by the end of the year, eligible to vote in the elections of 2011. 41.5 percent of the respondents from 19 to 27 years old report they have voted in every election, 17.8 percent of the respondents said they have voted almost in every elections, 32 percent of the respondents report they have voted in some of the elections and only 8,3 percent of the respondents report they have never voted.

The respondents from the rural areas aged from 19 and above are more active in their participation in the electoral processes. Thus, 43.5 percent of them report they have voted in every possible election, and only 5.6 percent of the same category report they have never voted. However, the survey data show that the respondents from urban areas, especially the ones from Tirana, are less active in this direction. Out of this category,

39,5 percent report they have casted their ballot in each electoral process, while only 10.7 percent of them say they have never voted. Nonetheless, statistical data for Tirana is low. For the same answers the respondents from Tirana replied respectively with 41.5 and 8.9 percent.

Graph no 70.

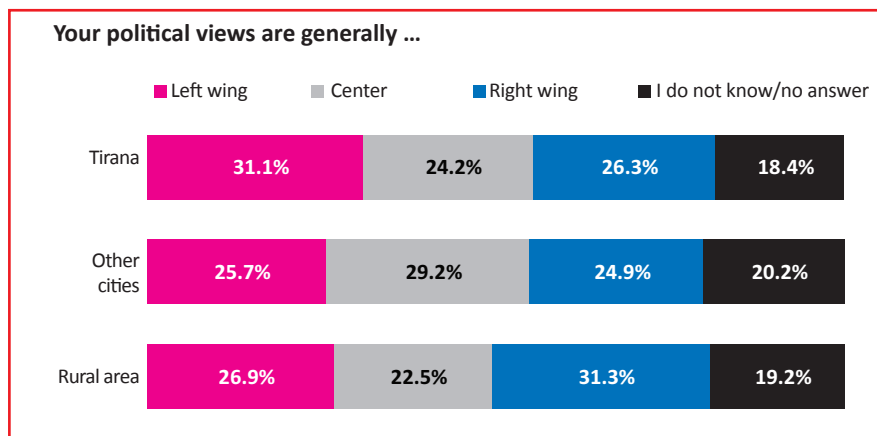


The respondents were asked to describe their political views from 1 to 10, 1 representing the extreme left wing and 10 the extreme right wing. The data show that 27.1 percent of the respondents define their political views as belonging to the left wing (1-4), 25.5 percent of the respondents are positioned in the center (5-6) and 27.9 percent of them define their political views as belonging to the right wing. However, one in five respondents report they "do not know" or that they have no political views.

When dividing the respondents according to the criterion of area they come from, we see that their political orientation changes in proportion to the

national average. In this context, respondents from the rural areas are more inclined towards the right wing as opposed to the respondents from Tirana positioning themselves in the left wing above than the national average.

Graph no 71.



Gender seems to play a role in the political orientation of the young people, where female respondents are more inclined towards the left-wing (27.3 percent) than on the right-wing (24.8 percent), while male respondents position themselves more in the right-wing political views (30.7 percent) than in the left-wing (26.9 percent). Furthermore, females make up for the highest percentage (23 percent) of the respondents saying they do not know what political views they have, or that they do not have a political orientation at all, versus male respondents (16.4 percent).

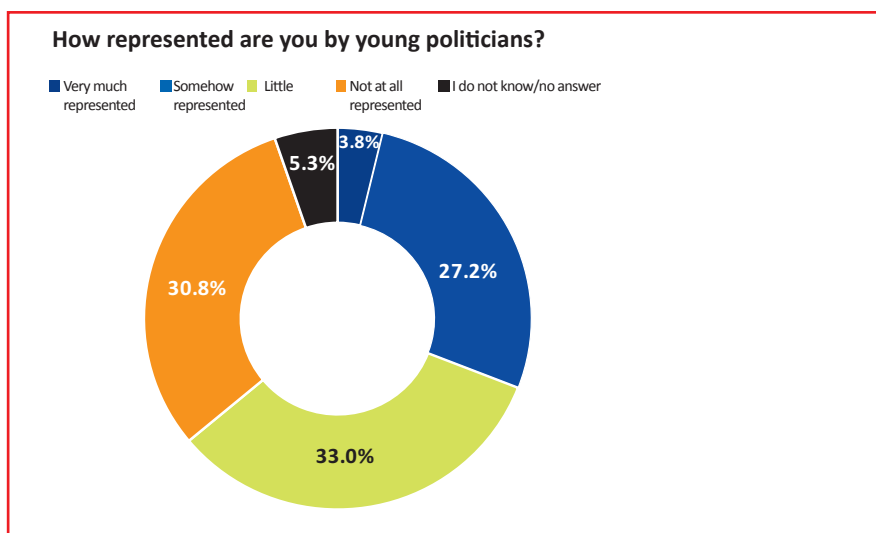
3.2.3 Trust in democracy and in institutions

The respondents were asked about questions related to their trust on how their vote has affected the quality of leadership by the central and local government. The survey data show that the respondents do not believe that their vote has had any great impact on the leadership of institutions. Only 10.7 percent believe that their vote does greatly affect the leadership of institutions and about 29.8 percent believe their vote does somehow

affect the way how institutions are led. A considerable number of respondents, that is about 25.5 percent, believe their vote is of very little importance and 29 percent consider it as not at all important. Although the perception of the vote impact on the quality of governance is higher for local government than central government, against only 17.8 percent of the respondents think their vote has importance at a larger scale. The other part of respondents are divided between the ones thinking that their vote is somewhat important (33 percent), is of very little importance (21.3 percent) and is not important at all (22.8 percent).

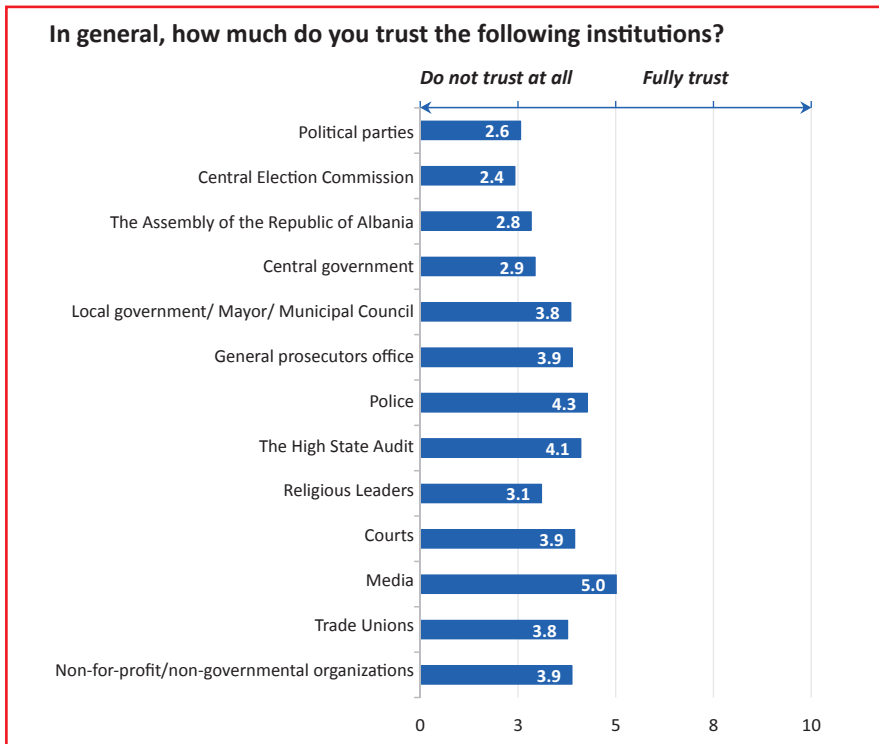
In the last years there has been a wide public debate about the participation of respondents in politics and about those young people actively involved in the political life of the country. The respondents were asked if they felt themselves as being represented by their peers being part of different political forces in Albania. The data show that only a small number of the respondents – that is only 3.8 percent of them, feel very highly represented by the new politicians, whereas 27.2 percent of them feel somewhat represented. Most of the respondents – that is 33 percent of them, feel less represented, whereas 30.8 percent of them feel not at all represented by their peer politicians.

Graph no 72.



The Albanian respondents have different levels of trust in the institutions of the country. From a scale of 0-10, where 0 means the respondents ‘have no trust at all’ in the institutions of the country and 10 means they have ‘full trust’ in institutions, most of the institutions are rated with 3. The Central Election Commission is listed as the least trusted institution (2,4), political parties are listed as the second least trusted institutions (2,6), the Assembly is listed as the third trusted institution (2.8) and the Central Government as the fourth trusted institution (2.9). The most trusted institution for the respondents is media (5), and the second trusted institution for them is the state police (4.3).

Graph no 73.



The level of democracy in Albania represents a sensible issue and is followed by heated debates, especially in the last two years. The renowned “*The*

*Economist*²⁹ ranks Albania in the 87th position in its index of democracy and qualifies it as a hybrid regime. In the meantime, *"The Freedom House"* qualified Albania as a partially free country in its 2011 annual report, having a descending trend of freedoms³⁰.

The respondents were divided in two camps when asked to provide a general assessment of the democracy in the country. The survey data show that only 2.8 percent of them are very satisfied with the level of democracy in the country, against 21.3 percent reporting simply they are satisfied. On the other hand, 21.5 percent of the respondents say they are satisfied with the democracy of Albania, against 6.3 percent of the respondents reporting they are not satisfied with it. Most of the respondents (about 48.2 percent) report they are satisfied with the overall situation of democracy in the country.

²⁹ Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU) Democracy Index 2011 - www.eiu.com/democracyindex2011

³⁰ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2012- <http://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2012>

4. Conclusions

Governance and development of the country are very important elements for the Albanian young people. The survey data show that the respondents consider failure to enforce laws, street crime, and different types of trafficking as the main concerns when it comes to their safety, having a direct impact on them, despite their socio-economic and education level or geographical descend. However, threats of international terrorism or alienation of ethnic identity from their peers in the countries they have migrated into are second-hand concerns for most of the Albanian youth. According to the survey, most of the concerns of the respondents are related to their daily life challenges, such as poverty, unemployment, job insecurity, environmental protection, or the ever increasing cancer deceases. These priority elements define governance and development as two main pylons the respondents see as directly related to the quality of their lives, in order for them to perceive their life as a possibility, not as an anxiety. Although most of the respondents are hopeful when asked about the economic development of Albania in the last ten years, such hopes are still mixed with the feeling of a constant uncertainty of a long and tiring transition.

The data from this Chapter show that the respondents do still have a low level of interest and information on the democratic processes in the country. Given that democracy can be fully operational only when the citizens are interested and properly informed, we see than young people continue considering TV as the main means of information, while Internet has taken precedence in every walk of life in the last years. In addition, the youth have to raise their awareness when it comes to the importance of the electoral processes and use them more as a tool to concentrate on public policies related to their interests and problems. Youth level of trust in public institutions keeps being low, tolling an alarm bell for the

institutions to review their transparency and accountability policies. The youth see governance as closely related to fight against poverty and unemployment, for as long as they are amongst the major concerns of this generation, being the most active labor force in the country.

5. Recommendations

- The awareness-raising campaigns about youth should be mostly targeted at the use of Internet as a medium of conveying messages to them.
- Constant improvement of law enforcement structures is necessary to fight street crime and trafficking, thus raising the level of security in the social environments the young people hold their daily activity, such as the school, neighborhood, recreation places, sports venues, etc.
- Impact of environmental pollution and increasing concerns on its impacts even amid respondents from the rural areas should be accompanied by concrete actions from the responsible institutions.
- Awareness raising and information campaigns on the threads coming from climate change and HIV/AIDS should be concentrated mostly in those groups of young people who are affected by them.
- Such activities as the open days of institutions, periodic meetings with heads of institutions would be of help to the young people in order to better know what these institutions deal with.
- More should be done from the educational system and public stakeholders to promote the interest of respondents on political developments in the country, region and at the international level.
- State structures have to consider fight against poverty and unemployment a national priority for as long as it remains a major concern amongst respondents, who are the most active labor force in the country.

CHAPTER VII

ALBANIA AND EUROPE

“The European Union is an opportunity not to be lost.”

Prepared by:

Tidita Fshazi

1. Overview

Albania's relations with the European Union and its efforts for EU membership are amongst the most important element of the political developments of the last 20 years. In the first years following the collapse of communism, the Albanian young people saw in the EU mainly the prosperity of such countries as Italy, Greece, Germany, France and others, more than the entirety of the institutional relations between the EU and Albania.

Albania got back in the center of attention for the EU as a potentially candidate country following the Stabilization and the Association process with the Western Balkan countries and efforts for signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement were transformed into a process originating the close relations between Albania and the EU. The Stabilization and Association Agreement lays down several obligations to be met by Albania in the political, economic and legislative domains. The SAA became the main political and media topic, while the young generation was trying to get a better understanding and information on "the homework" Albania has to do.

The young people continue to get more information regarding the EU. For a long period of time such relations were equalized with the visa liberalization process to the Schengen area. Although Albania is striving to be a potential candidate country, the young people are aware of the difficulties of this process. The relations between the EU and Albania have been characterized by various fluctuations, but what has remained stable is the wish of the Albanian young people to see Albania's EU membership as a promise awaiting to be kept.

2. Main findings

- Most of the young people in Albania think Albania should be an EU member country, thus marking up for the highest percentage of supporters for this process.
- The Albanian young people believe that the main impact of Albania's membership in the EU shall be the economic and political development of the country.
- Most of the young people in Albania think Albania shall be an EU member state within ten years.
- Generally, the young people relate integration of Albania with the free movement of people, but a part of them relate this process as well with the free movement of goods, use of EURO, or other employment opportunities in other EU member countries.
- A considerable number of Albanians consider the Albanian government efforts as sufficient or somewhat sufficient for country's membership in the EU.

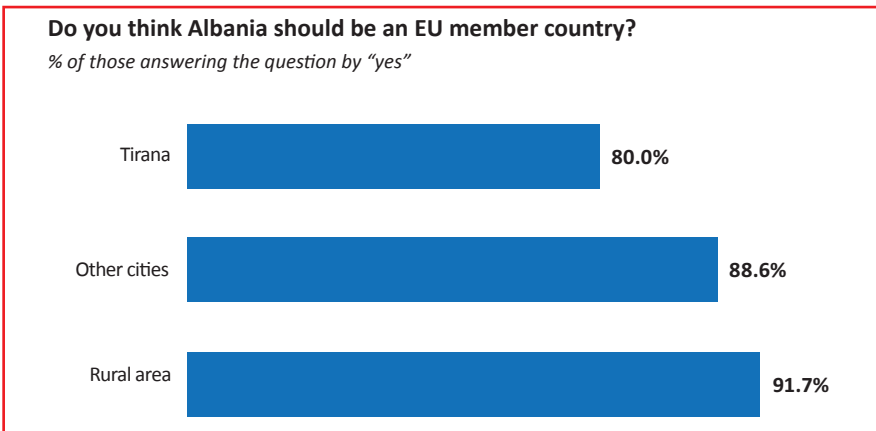
3. A detailed data analysis

3.1 Membership in the EU

About 88.6 percent of the respondents think that Albania should become an EU member state against 9.8 percent of the respondents who are against this process.

There is a slight difference in the percentage of the respondents from Tirana and of the other urban areas about being in favor or against Albania's membership in the EU. The highest number of the respondents reporting they are against Albania's integration in EU comes from Tirana. That said, about 80 percent of the respondents from Tirana report they are in favor of Albania's integration in the EU against 88.6 percent of the respondents from the other cities providing the same answer.

Graph no 74.

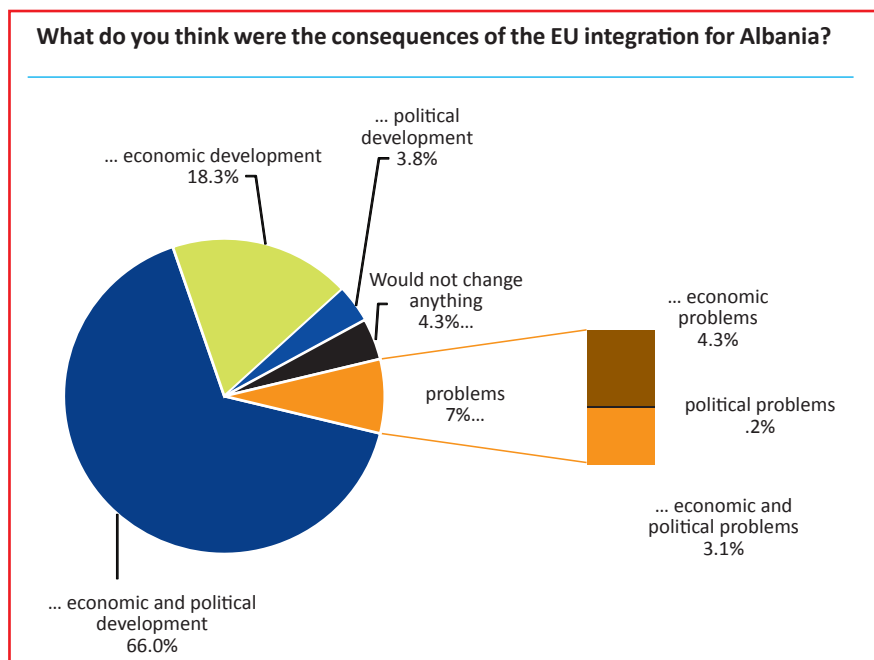


3.2 Membership impacts

Over half of the respondents believe that the most important effect of Albania's integration in the European Union will be its economic and political development. In general, most of the respondents think that the greatest benefit from potential membership is the economic development of the country.

The perspective of Albania's integration in the EU is seen as something very positive for the Albanian respondents. Only a very small number of the respondents think that the membership will bring negative economic and political developments in the country. This type of skepticism is seen more amongst the respondents coming from rich families, but at any case it is very limited to shake the full support and enthusiasm of the Albanian young people for the country's membership in the EU.

Graph no 75.

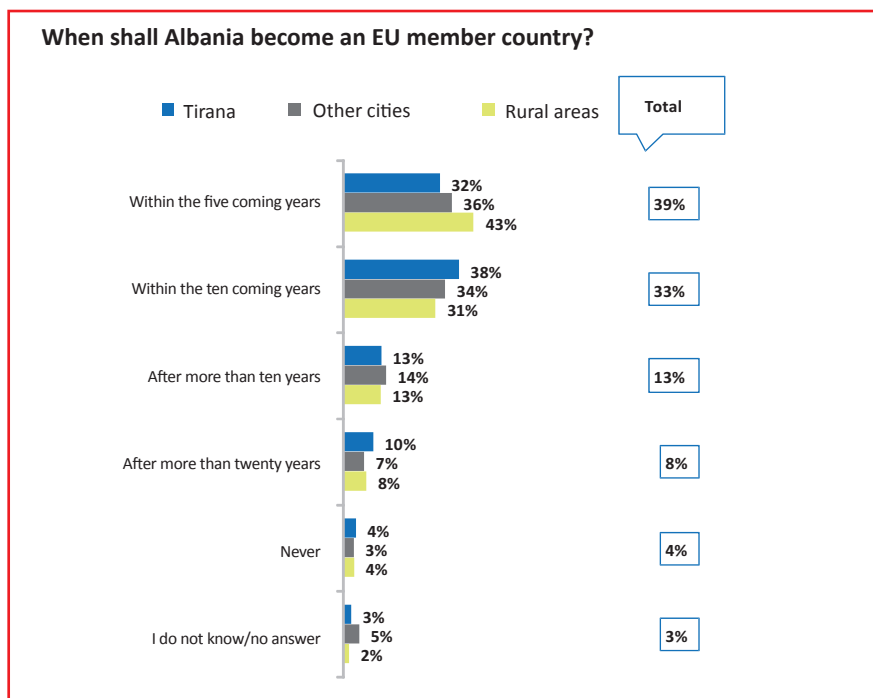


3.3 Time of membership

Asked about the time of Albania's membership in the EU, the respondents say that the membership time shall vary from five to ten years. However, 13 percent of the respondents think that the membership process from now until the EU provides Albania with the candidate status country would take over 10 years, while only a small percentage report that Albania will never become an EU member country.

There is an obvious difference between the opinion of the respondents from Tirana and of the respondents from the other rural areas about the question on the time of Albania's membership in the EU. Consequently, 43.5 percent of the respondents from the rural areas think Albania will become an EU member country in five years, against 32.1 percent of the respondents from Tirana providing the same answer. This optimism of the respondents from rural areas might be related with the level of information they have about the process.

Graph no 76.



A similar difference is also remarked between the respondents from the north and the respondents from the south of Albania when providing answers on the question on the potential time for Albania's membership in the EU. About 53 percent of the respondents from the north believe that membership shall happen in five years, against 30-40 percent of the respondents from the south thinking in the same way. This might be explained by the fact that a relatively small number of the respondents from the north believe that membership shall happen in ten years, while 20 percent of the respondents from the south provide the same answer. Only a minor percentage of the respondents at the national level think that the time for Albania's membership in the EU shall be over 20 years. The overall belief of the Albanian respondents for Albania's membership in the EU within the coming ten years is realistic expectation for the process.

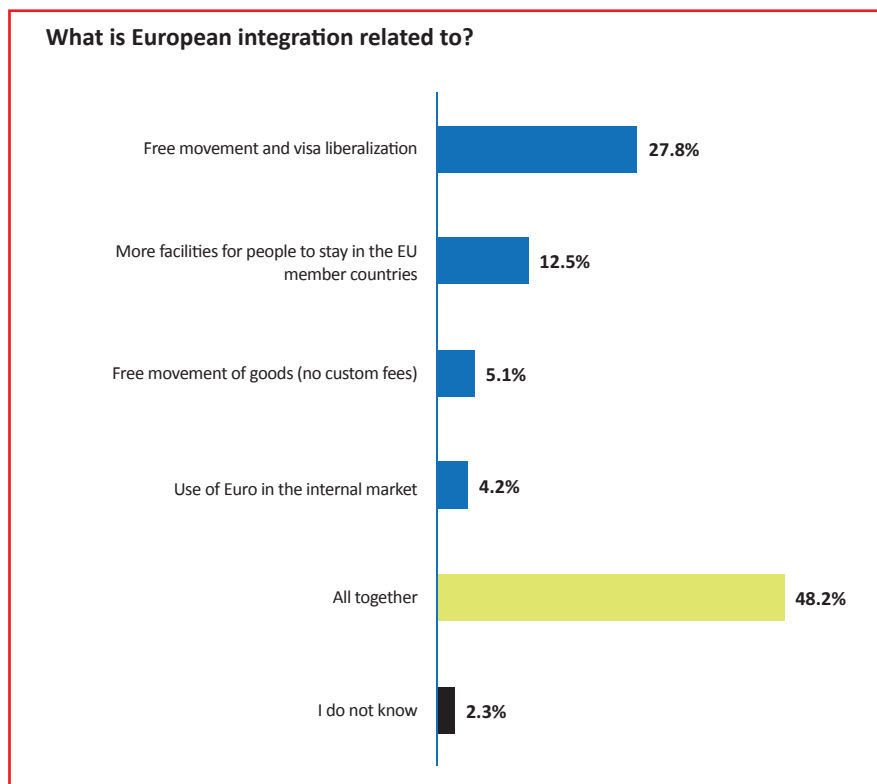
3.4 What is membership about?

For most of the respondents Albania's membership in the EU is mainly related with the visa liberalization and with facilities to stay in any of the EU member countries, while a small number of respondents think that this process is related to use of Euro and aspects of the free movement of goods. In general, the Albanian youth report that EU membership includes free movement of people, of goods, freedom of working in EU member countries and use of Euro. Their answers show that they perceive the EU membership effects accordingly, although the overall tendency is to consider them mostly as principles rather than as common obligations.

There is some difference between the opinion of the respondents from Tirana and the opinion of their peers from other rural areas when it comes to the visa liberalization process in the Schengen area. This aspect of integration is mostly appreciated by the respondents in the rural areas than by the respondents from Tirana.

However, information about the EU seems very limited between the Albanian respondents. The only source of information are TVs and the Internet. The respondents see distribution of information on this matter more as a main priority and task of the government and of the civil society.

Graph no 77.



Ada, from Tirana says: "We might be awkward in getting information about the EU, but if we were provided with that type of information, we would be able to understand it."

The fact that most of the respondents consider the visa liberalization process as one of the greatest benefits of EU membership is a reflection of the media coverage of the matter. Media is in fact the main source of information for the respondents when it comes to integration issues. However, the information of the respondents on the benefits or losses of Albania from the EU membership process is still low, although through their answers they show they are aware of some of the benefits. Most

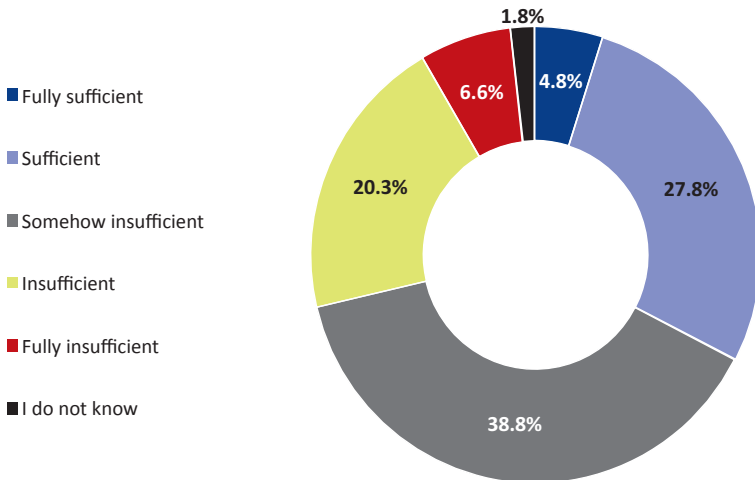
of them think that Albania's membership is less related to goods and more related to possibilities of studying abroad or of moving freely in the EU member countries. The respondents find it hard to mention any of Albania's obligations deriving from its potential EU membership. This shows of their optimism and incomplete information on the process.

3.5 Government commitment

Speaking of the government commitment on the membership process, most of the respondents are of the opinion that it has worked sufficiently well, and somewhat sufficient on the membership issues, while only 7 percent of the respondents think that the government commitment has been fully sufficient.

Graph no 78.

How would you rate the Albanian governments commitment for Albania's membership in the EU?



4. Conclusions

The survey data show that there is a clear and mass perception of the respondents on the several benefits from Albania's integration process on the free movement of people, employment and other development perspectives for the country. This reflects the early and great wish of the Albanian society to be "European", or to be "like Europe". However, there is an increasing trend amongst the respondents seeing membership in the EU with skepticism. Generally this feeling is related with the lack of information on the European Union and on the rights and obligations deriving from the pre-membership of the membership stage. Although the respondents use media as the main source of information on integration issues, they see the relevant state structures as the main stakeholders in the information process, related both to the benefits and obligations of the Albanian state and of the individual. Thus, the Albanian respondents attest that the process of recognition of the EU by them passes through traditional forms of communication, where misunderstandings might be present. Consequently, there is still need for a lot of efforts in order for them to have a proper awareness and information on this process, which is the biggest political project of Albania for the XXIth century.

5. Recommendations:

It would be good to:

- establish a proper information system for the public opinion ensuring systematic and full transparency on all the membership processes, on the role of relevant institutions and economic consequences of the potential membership.
- Include knowledge on the EU and its institutions in the school programmes, providing more information on the benefits and obligations deriving from the membership process.



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