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- We host the new Dutch Ambassador in Tiran in a Foreign Policy Forum dedicated to the enlargement perspective of Albania and the Western Balkans. Read more in "Our events", pg 4.
- We appear on several Television shows and debates to talk about various research projects that AIIS has undertaken during this time and bring our voices to the latest policy debates. Read more in "Other activities and contributions", pg 4.
- Our staff and speakers meet up with the students in the University of Elbasan to discuss Europe, the EU and Albania's path to integration in the framework of the European Forum initiative. Read more in "Our events", pg 4.
- AIIS is always enriching its team. Two new interns join our projects logistical team. Read more about them in "Guests!", pg 2.

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AIIS Newsletter

3 / March 2015

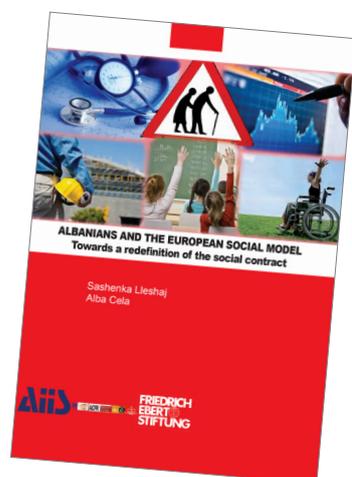
Highlight

Albanians and the European Social Model: Towards a redefinition of the social contract

Selected findings: How does the current institutional design affect citizens' stands over issues of democracy, market economy, equal opportunities, social protection and solidarity? What are citizens' views on the welfare state? What general principles are at the centre of citizens' answers throughout the survey and how can they be generalized on a societal level? These are some general issues this executive summery will try to touch upon.

'It is a partial democracy we live in':

The majority of the Albanians citizens we interviewed (72 percent) believe that they live in a *partial democracy*, or what scholars have defined as a hybrid regime. Whether the answer is "Albania is more democratic than non



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Announcing:

AIIS proudly announces that it was listed among the best think tanks in the world according to the 2014 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report authored by James G. McGann, Ph.D., Director of the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program at the Lauder Institute of the University of Pennsylvania. In the list of Think Tanks in Central and Eastern Europe, AIIS ranked 22nd in the 2014 Global Go To Think Tank Index (GGTTI), gaining two places up the list from the previous year. In terms of sectorial focus, AIIS ranks 85th in the global ranking for Defense and security research area and 64th in the global ranking for Foreign policy and international relations.

Recognizing the quality of research and advocacy of the AIIS and collecting the positive feedback from peers, the Index acknowledges for the fourth year in a row the professionalism and impact of AIIS work. More than 3500 experts from academia, civil society and decision making institutions participated in the process of nominating and then ranking institutions worldwide in this one of a kind exercise that has become a reference point for those who seek to understand the standing of think tanks whether by geographical or thematic classification.

The ranking is organized on a yearly basis by Think Tanks and Civil Society Programs at the University of Pennsylvania, which conducts research on the role policy institutes play in governments and civil societies around the world.. This year's report was published on January 22, 2015. AIIS is the only Albanian think-tank to appear in the ranking.

The full report is available at: http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1008&context=think_tanks

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democratic” or “Albania is more non democratic than democratic”, citizens perceive the level of democracy in the country as being somewhere in between democracy and non democracy. Nevertheless, it is important to notice that a bigger share of respondents (43 percent) believed that “Albania is more non democratic than democratic”. Albanian citizens’ perception of the regime/level of democracy looks consistent with the wide literature on hybrid regimes, which considerably relates the transition period with this form of regime.²

‘We want a market economy but not an economy led by the market’:

From respondents’ answers to some questions on the market economy, the state intervention in economy, the states’ regulatory role in economy and the states’ minimal role in economy, it is appropriate to say that citizens’ views are mostly trying to describe a *mixed economy* as the right economic system for Albania, at least in principle. Thus, Albanians seem supportive of an economy where the state is present

to a considerable extent. When citizens’ were asked whether or not the *market economy* was the right economic system for Albania, the majority of respondents (65 percent) answered that it was. On the following question, when answering whether or not the state in Albania should intervene in economy in defining prices, protecting certain strategic businesses, etc, more than 2/3rd of the sample (71 percent) answered that the state should intervene. Furthermore, 84 percent of respondents answered that they agreed with the statement “the state in Albania should regulate economic relations, general rules on competition and trade, etc”. A wide majority of respondents (77 percent) did not agree with the statement “the state in Albania should intervene and be present as little as possible in economy as the market regulates itself”.

‘We want a wide-sized state, despite our satisfaction with public services’ provision’:

When asked about who should be the *main provider of some core public services*, respondents were relatively consistent in their opinion that the state had to be the main provider. Thus, the state was the preferred provider starting from jobs with the lowest 66 percent of respondents’ answers indicating the state as the main provider, and then going to public safety with 91 percent of respondents’ answers indicating the state. For other services like justice, education, social protection, health care, infrastructure, electricity, water supply, post offices and housing the state was indicated as the main provider in between 66 and 91 percent of respondents’ answers

(chart 21). Furthermore (chart 31), 70 percent to 90 percent of respondents answered that the state should ensure child care services, unemployment assistance, paid maternity leave, adequate health care and 91 percent answered that the state should ensure disability assistance. When specifically asked about education, health care and retirement fund (pensions) provision, the majority of respondents answered that education and health care in Albania should be “public and funded by general taxation”, while pensions should be “publicly managed and funded by social contributions, but allowing those who choose to do so to devote part of the contributions to a private fund”. Finally, while most of respondents (66 percent) indicate that privatization makes state enterprises more effective in providing services, even more respondents (72 percent) think that not all state enterprises in Albania should be privatized. It looks like the preferred solution for citizens – with 70 percent of answers – would be the application of a model where the state continues to be the owner of important enterprises while private companies are contracted only for the management part.

‘Services should be public² although we are not sure if we are ready to pay more taxes’

Although, as noticed above, Albanians are asking for an omnipresent state in relation to public services, they are undecided in relation to paying more in order to get better/wider services. Thus, 49 percent of respondents agreed that “the level of taxation should increase if this would bring to

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GUESTS:

ERION KULLSI, Intern- Erjon is a MA student at the European University of Tirana studying on the subject ‘Security Matters’. He joined the AIIS projects logistic team and learned about the process of research projects that involve national polling.

ARTESILA JAKU Intern- Artesila is a graduate of the University of Tirana, she has finished with distinction the Scientific Master program of the Institute of European Studies entitled “Politics and governance in Europe”. Artesila previous experience includes data collection for research projects of the Tirana Institute for Economic Research.

1. For some views on Central and Eastern Europe see: Elisabeth Bakke and Ingo Peters (eds.). *20 Years since the Fall of the Berlin Wall: Transitions, State Break-Up and Democratic Politics in Central Europe and Germany*. (Berlin: BWV Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2012).
2. “Public” in this context refers to the universal access to services offered by the state. The difference “public” versus “private” in this study is done according to the general understanding in Albania – the provision of services by the state which are accessible by everyone versus the provision of services by a private entity which are accessible through a certain payment fee.

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better services” against 51 percent that disagreed with the statement. The majority (70 percent) agreed that “who earns more should pay more” and 62 percent disagreed that “income taxes should have a fixed rate despite the level of incomes”. From respondents’ answers it could be concluded that citizens would prefer a progressive taxation in relation to the flat one and that the social gap is meant to be reduced by the higher payment/contribution of those who earn more.

“The multi-actor decision-making on public services is desirable but not applied”

Citizens see a *collaborative multi-actor decision-making* on public services as the optimal model. Asked on whose responsibility should decision-making on public services management and priorities be, more than half of respondents (58 percent) answered that such decisions should be taken by “both experts/policymakers and the general public or community groups which benefit and contribute to these services”. From the rest of respondents, 1/4th answered that the “community and the general public should be much more involved in shaping these services while indicating priorities to policymakers”. When people were asked on who should be responsible for taking important decisions on wages, working hours and workers’ rights in Albania, a wide majority of respondents (61 percent) answered that the “government and policymakers in collaboration with the trade unions” should be responsible for this. Furthermore, 1/5th of respondents answered that these decisions should be “mainly discussed and decided by trade unions while the government and policymakers are the endpoint of the process or the receiving end”. The majority of citizens feel like having little or no influence in decision-making on a national and/or local level. Thus, 80 percent of



respondents answered that they have “little” or “no influence” over the local level decision-making process and 89 percent answered in the same way over the national level decision-making process. In the same way, trade unions’ activity in Albania is generally unknown by citizens — a detail that tells a lot about their low public engagement. Thus, 86 percent of respondents were not able to agree or disagree with the statement that trade unions today are “active and effective in supporting workers’ rights”.

“We want a fairer society and more solidarity”

Judging from this survey, it looks like the majority of Albanian citizens wants to live in a society that provides considerable social protection and that is led by solidarity. This was first visible when respondents were asked to *define a fair society* and they were mainly divided between two statements: that in a fair society “who pays more gets more, but certain disadvantaged segments of society should be assisted by the state” and “no one is left without basic public services despite their ability to contribute” — with both of the statements being indicated by 36 percent of respondents each. Furthermore, when asked

specifically on the *unemployment assistance* in Albania, a large majority of respondents (83 percent) answered that the current allocated sum per household was too small. The other two options — where the unemployment assistance is stated as high or as about right — got some insignificant indication percentages compared to the above option.

Albanian citizens are very keen on having an active and wide-sized state that takes care of many aspects of citizens’ lives. The majority of respondents (from 72 percent to 91 percent) also want the state to be active in providing services to disabled and disadvantaged people, working parents, poor families, retired people, etc. Moreover, 43 percent of respondents think that the Albanian state should “have an active redistribution role in lowering the rich-poor gap” and 35 percent think that it should “moderately engage in redistribution policies”. Only 12 percent of respondents think that “the rich poor gap is not a matter the state should be dealing with”.

For more information please contact the AIIS Researcher and co-author of this report Sashenka Lleshaj at sleshaj@aiis-albania.org

OUR EVENTS:



On 13 January 2015, AIIS hosted the Foreign Policy Forum lecture **'Talking today's Kosovo: domestic and foreign policy'** by Hashim Thaci former Prime Minister of Kosovo and current Deputy prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the republic of Kosovo. Mr Thaci gave the opportunity to the audience to engage in any questions and discussions about the new realities of domestic politics in Kosovo as well as on the future of the talks with Belgrade and Kosva's integration perspective.



On March 31, 2015 AIIS organized the Foreign Policy Forum **"The European perspective of Albania and the Western Balkans: A view from the Netherlands"**. Ambassador Dewi van der Weert. "The Netherlands has been critical of Albania's readiness for the candidate status in the past. And we still are," the ambassador said, citing problems with the proper functioning of political dialogue, the functioning and independence of the judiciary, corruption as well as media freedoms and independence. "It is clear that a lot of work remains to be done before the opening of negotiations could realistically come into sight," the ambassador said. "The countries of the Western Balkans all have a genuine prospect of EU accession – their integration in the EU will contribute to regional and European stability – but they are responsible for determining the pace of their accession," Van de Weerd said.

In the context of the project **'European Forum'** AIIS organized a series of lectures at the **Public University of Elbasan 'Aleksander Xhuvani'** on March 16, 2015. The event was saluted by AIIS Deputy Director, Jorgji Qirjako who also explained the objectives of the project. Prof. Dr. Gjergji Sinani spoke on "The concept of subsidiary and of completion as the basis of the functioning behind European institutions."

Other activities and contributions:

In February of this year, AIIS Deputy Director **Alba Cela**, took part in the Friedrich Ebert organized conference: "Youth in East Europe (YEE)- Challenges and Perspectives in Times of Transition". Cela is one of the authors of the Albania Youth Study, edition of 2011 and forthcoming edition of 2015.



AIIS Researcher, **Ebi Spahiu**, talked on Balkan Magazine, a program of Ora News TV, about the Islamic State, its global and regional impact and how the countries of the Western Balkans are and can be affected in the future.

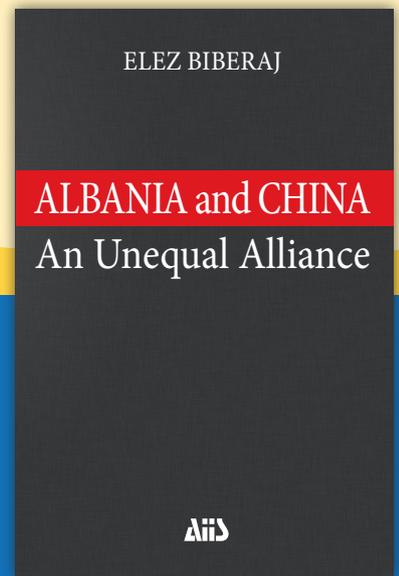
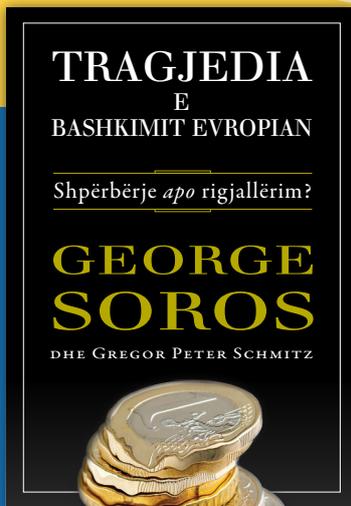
AIIS Deputy Director, **Alba Cela**, spoke for Top Channel afternoon show *'Pasdite ne TopChannel'* on the issue of youth migration from Albania. She discussed some of the findings in comparison from the Albania Youth Study 2011 and the upcoming one 2015, for which she is one of the authors. The youth studies are organized and published by Friedrich Ebert Albania.

Announcing:

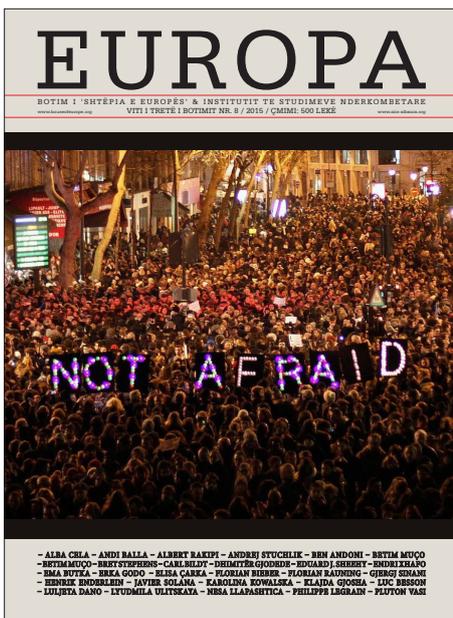
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Our magazine *Europa* latest issue:

'Europa' magazine is a novel and pioneering publication targeting Albanian readers with the aim of encouraging a new, involving and critical approach to European integration, providing more space to promotion of European values including arts and culture as well as featuring thoughtful analysis on current developments within the EU. The magazine promotes critical thinking, open debate and provides the reader with a fresh perspective on both current events and more general trends. For subscriptions, inquiries and advertising please contact aiis@aiis-albania.org

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