

EVERY VOTE COUNTS!



OCTOBER 2018, PRISHTINA

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INTRODUCTION

The organization of free and democratic elections is the fundamental foundation of a democratic society. Since its first free elections in 2000, organized with the assistance of UNMIK and OSCE, Kosovo has developed a positive practice in organizing the elections by fulfilling most of the democratic standards. However, despite the satisfactory level of their organization, political parties not seldomly have raised the need to reform the current electoral system as a way to further improve the system, with the aim of addressing the will of the citizens in the most appropriate way. In this regard, the will of the citizens, apart from widely contested elections in 2010, has been frequently violated due to invalid ballots, which has been a regular occurrence in all previous elections in Kosovo. Throughout the last four electoral cycles, this problem has been identified, both by local and international election observation missions, as one of the key challenges of the electoral process. Despite the fact that this phenomenon continues to be repeated in all elections, little institutional effort has been made to address and improve this situation. One of the main reasons is the lack of a well-founded research base that would help determine the factors that have influenced the continuous increase in the number of invalid ballots, and which would provide a clear picture of the geographical extent of these votes. Another key factor is the lack of a comprehensive audit of all invalid ballots by the competent bodies that would lead to the determination of the nature of these ballots and their distribution throughout Kosovo.

The role of the competent election institutions has been almost non-existent even with regard to voters' education, while contracted campaigns have so far failed to generate the desired results. Campaigns for voter education and information, besides having no continuity and being launched few days before the elections, they show substantial problems as they continue to be organized by old templates, thus not targeting specific audiences and not attracting voters' attention. As a result of the lack of detailed data for voters, these information and awareness campaigns did not focus on regions and areas where it was needed, but only in the major cities of Kosovo.

The number of invalid ballots has peaked in the 2013 local elections. There were over 35,000 invalid ballots in the 2014 general elections, whereas this number rose to 42,554 in 2017 general elections. During the 2017 local elections, the number of invalid ballots rose sharply again, thus reaching the number of about 80,000. The significant number of invalid ballots was due to the use of two ballots, for municipal assembly and for the mayor. The time period between both elections is supposed to have negatively affected the number of invalid ballots considering the differences related to filling the ballots for parliamentary elections and ballots for local elections.

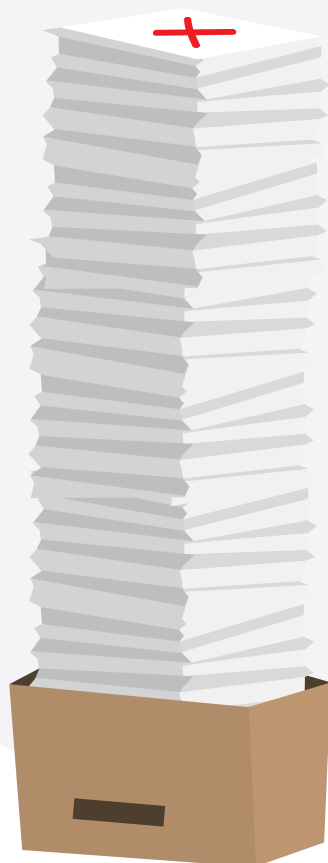
Taking into account the very narrow results in some of the main municipalities during the recent local elections, it can be concluded that invalid ballots could have been crucial in determining the winner of the elections. Some of the municipalities where the number of invalid ballots could have been decisive regarding the determination of the winner are Prishtina (365 votes difference - 627 invalid ballots), Prizren (372 votes difference - 494 invalid ballots), Klokot (10 votes difference - 25 invalid ballots), Istog (14 votes difference - 139 invalid ballots). Even with regard to the previous two general elections, where the percentage of invalid ballots was about 5 %, this could have also been decisive in the ranking of political parties and election winners.

Political parties, election administration institutions, observer missions, as well as citizens who have participated in these processes, have different opinions on why the number of invalid ballots is growing despite the fact that elections in Kosovo are organized according to legislation that has not been amended for about 10 years. Institutions for the administration and organization of elections justify the increasing number of invalid ballots with short deadlines for organizing proper and detailed campaigns on how to vote; political parties blame each other for declaring ballots invalid during the vote counting process, while election observers consider that this process is interconnected due to the gaps in voters' education campaigns and the manner how the election



about 80 thousand

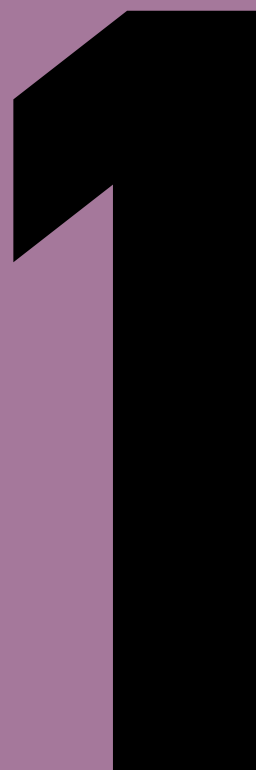
invalid ballots in the 2017 local elections



process is administered. CEC has issued audit reports on invalid ballots on a regular basis after the elections, however, despite all the recommendations, there are no concrete measures for their implementation that would have a direct impact on solving this problem.

A common among the recommendations from the election stakeholders related to invalid ballots is that the ca-

capacity of voters must be improved in order for them to submit valid ballots. This means a comprehensive analysis of the factors that have led to such a high number of invalid ballots. An analytical approach to this problem would create a good intervention ground - hence a well-defined strategy that would contain concrete objectives and activities according to determined timeframes.



ELECTORAL SYSTEMS: KOSOVO AND THE REGION

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1. ELECTORAL SYSTEMS: KOSOVO AND THE REGION

1.1 Background of elections in Kosovo and efforts to reform the electoral system

The first elections in post-war Kosovo were held in October 2000. Throughout a decade afterward, Kosovo has faced other election cycles. Besides carrying out tens of electoral processes, Kosovo has also changed regarding the characteristics of the electoral system. The most immense changes that occurred in the electoral system in Kosovo, since its establishment in 2000, was in 2007 and after the declaration of Kosovo's independence in 2008 and 2009.

Since 2000, the Kosovo electoral system was characterized by the use of a proportional representation system, comprising of a formula which is in favor of medium or small political parties, both, in the elections for the Assembly of Kosovo and for the Municipal Assembly. In the case of mayoral elections, the **"first-past-the-post"** system was used. Promotion of under-represented gender, in the elections process, has been present since 2000.

That period was also characterized by special treatment of non-majority communities through reserved seats in the Assembly of Kosovo and allocation of seats by preference.

An intensive civil society campaign in 2003 affected the opening of electoral lists and as a consequence, political parties began to use the open list model. They were used for the first time in the direct mayoral elections of 2007¹.

Opening the lists also imposed technical changes. In order not to increase the size of the ballot, the names

of the candidates of each party who participated in the elections, for practical reasons were listed in a separate book/brochure, which was placed in each voting booth, a practice that is still being used.

Opening the lists brought a new risk which meant that the names featuring at the top of the list would unduly benefit from the ranking. A report by D4D, which is a Kosovo non-governmental organization, explains that, in order to prevent the dominance of the names at the top of the list, the OSCE lobbied in favor of using the preferential vote. Each voter, at first, had to find the political party he/she intended to vote for, and then identify up to ten names in the list consisting of 110 candidates, and finally tick the relevant numbers in the ballot.

The civil society had, at that time, advocated for other topics such as the possibility of dividing the country into electoral districts for Parliamentary Elections as well - an idea that did not receive support, but was rather fiercely rejected by political entities. Civil society organizations believed that the establishment of electoral districts would have great advantages. The increase of the representation of citizens and greater interconnection between members of the parliament and citizens would have been the most important aspect. One single electoral district would translate to weaker, almost inexistent, accountability between voters and their elected ones².

A report of the Central Election Commission (CEC) on Elections in Kosovo during 2000-2014, which was published in 2017, lists the changes of the elements of the electoral system as follows: use of the interim system of closed lists, introducing the legal threshold for political entities representing the majority community, removal of the absentee voting, and also the compilation and cre-

1 Democracy for Development (D4D). "Election trends 2000-2014: A numerical analysis of the participation and representation". Prishtina: July, 2015.

2 Kosova Democratic Institute (KDI). "Reform in the election system of Kosova". Prishtina: 2010.

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ation of the voters’ registry, changes to the political party registration, changes to the composition of election management bodies, changes to the legal remedies system, etc.

In the same report, it is noted that a special version of the open list system has been applied for the election of members of municipal assemblies, since 2009. According to this variant, the voter cannot cast a preferential vote for the ticket leader (the Candidate No 1 on the list) but only for other candidates. The ticket leader is considered to receive the preferential vote automatically.

In the variant of closed list election system, the voter cannot cast a preferential vote and therefore the candidates will get their mandate in the order determined by the political entity before the elections.

Since 2007 political entities running for the elections of the Assembly of Kosovo have had to pass the threshold of 5% of valid votes to take part in the allocation of seats.

On the other hand, since 2000, non-majority communities have been given, in total, at least 20 seats in each Assem-

bly Kosovo. This represents the set-aside seat system, used until 2010. This model meant that minority political entities got the set-aside seats in addition to the seats gained from the direct votes of voters.

This changed in 2014 when set-aside seats were turned into guaranteed seats. This implies that political entities representing non-majority communities in Kosovo have 20 seats guaranteed in the Kosovo Assembly, and if they receive more votes than the number of 20 seats, they are then allocated additional seats.

However, in order to see in detail of how the elements of the electoral system have changed since 2000, until the last elections which took place in 2017, the below table presents data for Kosovo Assembly Elections, for Municipal Assembly Elections as well as Mayoral Elections. The elements provided in these tables relate to the electoral system, candidates lists, voting, district, number of seats, special seats, electoral threshold, seat allocation methods as well as the gender quota. All the information presented in the tables is based on the CEC public records.

	ASSEMBLY OF KOSOVO 2001	ASSEMBLY OF KOSOVO 2004	ASSEMBLY OF KOSOVO 2007	ASSEMBLY OF KOSOVO 2010	ASSEMBLY OF KOSOVO 2014	ASSEMBLY OF KOSOVO 2017
Electoral System	Proportional Representation	Proportional Representation	Proportional Representation	Proportional Representation	Proportional Representation	Proportional Representation
Candidate list	Closed	Closed	Open	Open	Open	Open
Voting for	Entity only	Entity only	Entity and up to 10 candidates	Entity and up to 5 candidates	Entity and up to 5 candidates	Entity and up to 5 candidates
Districts	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single
Total seats	120	120	120	120	120	120
Special seats	20 reserved	20 reserved	20 reserved	20 reserved	20 guaranteed	20 guaranteed
Threshold	-	-	5%	5%	5%	5%
Seat allocation method	Highest quotient (Sainte-Laguë)	Highest quotient (Sainte-Laguë)	Highest quotient (Sainte-Laguë)	Highest quotient (Sainte-Laguë)	Highest quotient (Sainte-Laguë)	Highest quotient (Sainte-Laguë)
Gender quota	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%

Table 1. Overview of elements of the electoral system for the Kosovo Assembly elections for the period 2000-2017³

3 Central Election Commission. “Elections in Kosovo 2000 - 2014”. Prishtina: 2017.

The table above lists the characteristics of the electoral system during the Kosovo Assembly Elections for six years that these elections were held, namely: 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2014 and 2017. The electoral model applied in all of these elections is the proportional model.

The list of candidates has undergone changes and in 2007 started the implementation of the open list instead of the closed one. Changes have also affected the voting method, which has undergone changes two more times.

In the elections of 2001 and 2004, votes were cast only for the political entity, whereas in 2007 votes were cast for the entity and its 10 candidates. The next change occurred in 2010; voters were provided with the opportunity to vote for the entity and a maximum of five candidates.

This model has applied in the 2013 elections as well as the last elections which took place in 2017.

In terms of electoral districts, all Kosovo Assembly Elections are organized in a single district. The number of seats in the Assembly remains the same since 2001 which according to the applicable legislation is 120. The number of special seats also remained unchanged at 20.

Another change introduced in 2007 is the application of the election threshold of 5%, which was used in 2010, 2013 and 2017. The allocation of seats has always been made in accordance with the highest quotient (**Sainte-Laguë**). Meanwhile, the gender quota has decreased by 3 % since 2007, whereas in the subsequent elections this quota stood at 30 %.

	MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY 2000	MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY 2002	MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY 2007	MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY 2009	MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY 2013	MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY 2017
Election system	Proportional representation	Proportional representation	Proportional representation	Proportional representation	Proportional representation	Proportional representation
Candidate list	Open	Closed	Open	Open	Open	Open
Voting for:	Entity and only one candidate	Entity only	Entity and up to 10 candidates	Entity and only one candidate	Entity and only one candidate	Entity and only one candidate
Districts (each municipality is considered a single electoral district)	30	30	30	36	38	38
Total seats	920	920	920	1,021	994	994
Special seats	N/Z	N/Z	N/Z	N/Z	N/Z	N/Z
Threshold	-	-	-	-	-	-
Seat allocation method	Highest quotient (Sainte- Laguë)	Highest quotient (Sainte- Laguë)	Highest quotient (Sainte- Laguë)	Highest quotient (Sainte- Laguë)	Highest quotient (Sainte- Laguë)	Highest quotient (Sainte- Laguë)
Gender quota	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%

Table 2. Overview of election system elements for Municipal Assembly Elections 2000-2017⁴

4 Central Election Commission. "Elections in Kosovo 2000 – 2014". Prishtina: 2017.

Table 2 lists the characteristics of the election system during the Municipal Assembly Elections, for the six election years, namely: 2000, 2002, 2007, 2009, 2013 and 2017. During these elections we have had a proportional election system as well, that was applied since the first post-war elections in Kosovo in 2000, whereas the candidate's lists were opened in 2007, and remained open thereafter.

The voting method is one of the elements that experienced changes most frequently in terms of local elections. During the 2000 Elections, voters could vote the entity and one candidate only, in 2002 they could only vote the entity, whereas in the 2007 voters could vote for the entity and up to 10 candidates. From 2009 and onwards, Kosovo voters could vote for the political entity and only one candidate.

The election districts have also been subjected to change. In 2000, 2002 and 2007 Kosovo was divided into 30 election districts for the local elections. In 2009 there were 36 districts, whereas in 2013 and 2017 were 38 election districts. The number of seats in the Municipal Assembly, according to legislation, has also been subject to changes throughout the years. Until 2009, there were in total 920 seats, a number that in 2009 increased to 1,021. This number then decreased again in 2013 to 994 seats, whereby in the 2017 elections, there were 994 seats. Another change that was introduced in the 2013

local elections is the application of the special seats for local elections in a total of 20 seats. This was also applied in the 2017 elections. The element of election threshold was never applied to this type of elections as the allocation of seats was always done based on the highest quotient (Sainte-Laguë).

Table 3 has listed the characteristics of the election system during the Mayoral Election for the four election years, namely for the years: 2007, 2009, 2013 and 2017. All of the elections were organized based on the plurality/majority election system.

Moreover, during the 2007 elections, the list of candidates was open, whereas as of 2009 this element is no longer applicable. The ballot is cast for one candidate only, whereas the election districts were subjected to change similarly to Municipal Assembly Elections.

Kosovo in 2007 was divided into 30 election districts, in 2009 there were 36 districts, whereas in 2013 and 2017 Kosovo was divided into 38 election districts. The number of seats based on legislation was also subjected to change, similarly to the number of districts. On the other hand, the special seats, election threshold, and gender quota were never applied for Mayoral Elections.

In all elections organized was applied the two-rounds system (runoff).

	MAYOR 2007	MAYOR 2009	MAYOR 2013	MAYOR 2017
Electoral system	Plurality/ Majority	Plurality/ Majority	Plurality/ Majority	Plurality/ Majority
Candidate list	Open	N/Z	N/Z	N/Z
Voting for:	One candidate only	One candidate only	One candidate only	One candidate only
Municipalities	30	36	38	38
Total seats	30	36	38	38
Special seats	N/Z	N/Z	N/Z	N/Z
Threshold	N/Z	N/Z	N/Z	N/Z
Seat allocation method	Two-Round System (runoff)	Two-Round System (runoff)	Two-Round System (runoff)	Two-Round System (runoff)
Gender quota	N/Z	N/Z	N/Z	N/Z

Table 3. Overview of election system elements for the Mayoral Elections of 2000-2017⁵

⁵ Ibid.

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1.2 Preferences of political entities for Kosovo's election system (2018)

Initiatives to reform the election system have not been scarce in Kosovo's political history after the war. Yet, based on the results generated by the so-far initiatives for election reforms, it is safe to conclude that there is a serious lack of will among the political spectrum to complete this process, with the exception of cases when such process is pushed forward by the international community, adding also the fact that the stances and preferences of political entities on how Kosovo's election system should look are not generally similar.

Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI), under the project "Each vote counts", has prepared a questionnaire⁶ through which were inquired political entities regarding their preferences on particular elements of the election system. It is worth mentioning that during interviews with political entities, during July and August, we have observed a contradiction in opinions between political entities in power and those from the opposition, with regard to whether there should be early elections with the existing electoral system. While political entities in power are urging to complete the election reform within this mandate, i.e. by the end of 2021, the opposition entities are refusing to be part of the election reform process, under the justification that the Government is trying to buy some extra time and avoid early elections, as was the case in the past. According to them, the election reform should be the priority of the next legislature, after the organization of early parliamentary elections.

According to the responses received from political entities⁷, which are presented in the table below, it can be concluded that almost all entities, with the exception of the Aleanca për Ardhmërinë e Kosovës (AAK - Alliance for the Future of Kosovo), prefer to continue using the proportional electoral system. Political entities have similar preferences with regard to electoral lists, which, according to them, should continue to remain open⁸.

In this regard, differences exist only with respect to the preferential vote, i.e. the number of candidates which voters should have the right to vote in the parliamentary elections.

There are significant differences between political entities as far as electoral districts are concerned – both, in the number of districts and rationale, and the manner of their determination. Lëvizja Vetëvendosje (LVV - Movement for Self-Determination) and Nisma Socialdemokrate (NISMA - Social Democratic Initiative) prefer a single electoral district for Kosovo, as, according to them, Kosovo is a small country, both regarding population and area. In their opinion, this model also guarantees the unitary character of the country. On the other hand, Aleanca Kosova e Re (AKR - New Kosovo Alliance) and Partia Demokratike (PDK - Democratic Party), support the idea that Kosovo should be divided into seven electoral districts in accordance with the current administrative division of Courts or the Kosovo Police Directorates; Whereas, according to AAK, the country should be divided into six electoral districts.

Differences in the preferences of political entities exist even with regard to the electoral threshold which is to be applied to central level elections. The only consistency in this regard is that in general, most political entities consider that there should be quota categorization, depending on whether the candidacy in parliamentary elections is in the form of a coalition, political party or independent candidate. AAK stated that the electoral threshold for coalitions should be 7 %, for political parties 5 %, and for independent candidates 2 %.

LVV prefers a similar categorization, with the only difference being the quota for independent candidates, which according to them should be set at 2.5 %. AKR has stated that it prefers to have a reduction and categorization of the electoral threshold. According to them, the electoral threshold of 5 % should only apply to coalitions, the electoral threshold of 3 % to political parties, whereas the threshold for independent candidates should be 1 to 2 %. Meanwhile, PDK stated that the threshold for coalitions should increase and the threshold for independent can-

⁶ For additional information, see Annex I of this paper.

⁷ Political entities such as LDK, PSD and Alternative did not respond to the questions of this questionnaire.

⁸ According to NISMA, the vote for a political entity should automatically be implied as a vote for the bearer of the list, just like for the local level elections.

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Table 4. Preferences of political entities in relation to the elements of the electoral system

Election of the president of Kosovo is one of the issues where substantial differences exist. AKR which included this as the main part of its political program and stance ,

On the other hand, LVV and NISMA believe that the President of Kosovo should continue to be elected by the Kosovo Assembly, taking into account the country's political-legal arrangement as a parliamentary republic. According to these entities, the current manner of electing the president guarantees the non-concentration of exec-

utive power to a single person, considering that the direct election of the President of Kosovo would inevitably lead to discussions regarding the increase of the powers of the president, or even redefining the political regulation of Kosovo to a country with a semi-presidential system.

WhereasFor PDK, the manner of electing the president is exclusively related to his/her current competencies. Consequently, this entity demands constitutional changes, which would be difficult to be achieved in the current situation.

Most of the political entities declared that conditional voting should continue to be applied, despite the fact that the situation and reason for which this model has been imposed no longer exists. AAK, AKR, and LVV prefer maintaining this voting method, whereas NISMA and PDK stated that referring to the problems identified during the past election processes, the conditional voting should be removed. According to PDK, in order to definitely remove the conditional voting, preliminarily the current list of voters should be cleaned, residence addresses should be corrected, and a range of other actions should be taken, whereby guaranteeing citizens the right to vote as close to their place of residence as possible. With regards to voting from abroad, main political entities have already reached a full consensus to maintain its application, as election system element, even throughout future election cycles.

Application of 30 % gender quota and change of the current design of the ballot are two topics to which all political entities– that answered to the questions of the questionnaire regarding the preferences of political entities for election system elements, fully agree.

1.3 Electoral systems of countries of the region

Despite the fact that all countries of Western Balkans have a similar system of the regulation of the state, their electoral systems differ essentially in some key elements such as election lists, election districts, and election threshold. This section outlines electoral systems for central level elections of the countries of Western Balkans, as well as it presents the main characteristics of their electoral systems in tabular form.

In terms of the electoral system, all countries of Western Balkans have in common the proportional voting system. Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina are the only states of the Western Balkans to have open election lists, whereas voting is preferential, whereby voters have the opportunity to select up to five candidates of the concerned entity. Montenegro, Macedonia, Serbia, and Albania apply the system of closed lists.

With regards to the district regulation, Kosovo has a single election district, as it is the case in Montenegro and Serbia. Among the states of the Western Balkans, Albania has the highest number of election districts, with 12 election districts in total, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina with 9 election districts and Macedonia with 7 election districts, of which one district is dedicated exclusively to Diaspora, which has three seats guaranteed in the Assembly of Macedonia. It is worth mentioning that Bosnia and Herzegovina has the most complicated election system among other countries of this region. This results from the internal organization of this state and division into many ethnic zones and districts.

Election threshold is one of the election system elements for which exists a dichotomy between states. A group of states, including Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro⁹, apply an election threshold of 3 %. The other group of states, including Kosovo, Macedonia, and Serbia, apply an election threshold of 5 %.

⁹ Montenegro, in addition to the quota of 3 percent at the central level, applies lower quotes for minority groups. For ethnic groups, which represent at least 15 percent of the population, applies the quote of 0.7 percent. If the Croatian minority does not manage to pass the quote of 0.7 percent, they are provided a seat if they have won at least 0.35 percent of the total number of valid votes.

Macedonia and Serbia apply lower quotes for political entities declared to represent one of the ethnic minorities. Kosovo has a higher standard of inclusion of minorities in decision-making, as it applies guaranteed seats for non-majority communities¹⁰. Albania applies categorized

election thresholds, as the threshold of 3 % applies to political parties running single in elections, whereas the threshold of 5 % applies for coalitions of two or more parties.

State	Voting system	Election lists	Election districts	Election threshold
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Proportional	Open lists (Preferential voting)	9	3%
Kosovo	Proportional	Open lists (Preferential voting)	1	5%
Montenegro	Proportional	Closed lists	1	3%
Macedonia	Proportional	Closed lists	6 +1 (for diaspora)	5%
Serbia	Proportional	Closed lists	1	5%
Albania	Proportional	Closed lists	12	3% for political parties 5% for coalitions

Table 5. Election systems of the states of the Western Balkans

10 According to the legislation in Kosovo, non-majority communities have 20 seats guaranteed in the Assembly of Kosovo. These seats are taken by entities that have won the majority of votes, applying the D'Hondt method.

2

INVALID BALLOTS

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2. INVALID BALLOTS

2.1 Invalid ballots in the 2009-2017 elections in Kosovo: Their distribution and nature

Since the Declaration of Independence in 2008, Kosovo has organized six election processes, of which three were of the central level and three others of the local level.

The phenomenon of a large number of invalid ballots has been identified to be one of the most negative elements of election processes. Consequently, it frequently infringed the integrity of the whole process as a consequence of allegations for deliberate manipulations. If we consider the results of the last general elections and compare them to the other countries of Europe, it results that Kosovo is ranked in the fifth place as to the highest percentage of invalid ballots.

Based on the statistics concerning the invalid ballots, it may be concluded that their trends show that the concentration of invalid ballots is significantly higher in the local level elections, in particular in elections for municipal assemblies. If we consider the election processes following the declaration of independence – six election processes took place during this period, of which three were of central level and three of local level – the average of invalid ballots for three general election processes is around 4.5 %, whereas for local elections, namely municipal assemblies around 8 % and for mayoral around 1.7 %.

First elections organized in Kosovo after 2008 were elections of local level organized in 2009. In these elections, where 700,000 voters participated, around 65,000 votes were declared invalid, of which 53,083 (7.6%) were ballots for municipal assemblies, whereas 10,990 (1.5%) were ballots for mayors.

Following these elections, in 2010 were organized early parliamentary elections, in which 29,217 ballots, or 3.95 % of the total number of votes were declared as invalid.

The highest number of invalid ballots was marked in the 2013 Local elections. Compared to the previous local elections, there was an increase of more than 20,000 invalid ballots. In these elections, 70,782 invalid ballots were identified within ballots for municipal assemblies, which taken as a whole, are greater than all invalid ballots in local elections of 2009. More than 15,000 ballots for mayors were also declared invalid in these elections.

Given this high number of invalid ballots, Central Election Commission requested from a special commission to investigate the nature of invalidity of these ballots¹¹.

This commission selected 100 polling stations as a sample, by analyzing a total of 5,846 invalid ballots. Based on the results of this analysis, ballots may be broken down to the following groups according to the nature of invalidity¹²:

- Ballots where no political entity is selected, but only the candidate (80.75 %);
- Ballots where more than one political entity is selected (9.26 %);
- Valid ballots, but declared as invalid by Polling Station Committees (3.97 %);
- Deliberately damaged ballots (3.63 %);
- Unfilled ballots (1.95 %).

¹¹ Central Election Commission "Hulumtimi dhe analizimi i fletëvotimeve të pavlefshme për zgjedhjet për kuvendin komunal 2013". Prishtina: 2014. p. 2. For more information, see: http://www.kqz-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Raporti-i-hetimit-te-flv-2013_al.pdf

¹² Ibid. p. 3

Similar trend and number of invalid ballots, namely around 1,000 invalid ballots more than in general elections of 2010, was registered in early parliamentary elections of 2014. Despite numerous recommendations with regards to the improvement of the situation as to invalid ballots, 30,647 ballots, or around 4% of the total number of ballots were declared invalid in these elections. By nature of invalidity, invalid ballots of 2014 elections are as follows¹³:

- 1) Ballots where no political entity is selected, but only the candidate – 45.83 %;
- 2) Ballots where more than one political entity is selected – 42.72 %;
- 3) Deliberately damaged ballots – 6.85 %;
- 4) Unfilled ballots – 2.97 %;
- 5) Unstamped ballots – 0.9 %;
- 6) Valid ballots, but declared as invalid by Polling Station Committees – 0.73 %.

In 2017, elections of central and local level took place, even though only the latter took place within the regular legal timeframe. In the early parliamentary elections held on 11 June, the percentage of invalid ballots passed for the first time the election threshold by reaching 5.48 %. This percentage of invalid ballots is the highest ever marked in the general parliamentary elections. In comparison with the general elections of 2013, where the number of invalid ballots reached 30,000, in the 2017 elections this number increased for more than 10,000, reaching 42,554 invalid ballots all over Kosovo.

Local elections held in October 2017 experienced a slight decrease in the number, namely the percentage of invalid ballots, both, in the ballots for municipal assemblies and ballots for mayors. 66,151 invalid ballots for municipal assemblies and 13,184 invalid ballots for mayors is the balance of ballots during elections of 22 October. If

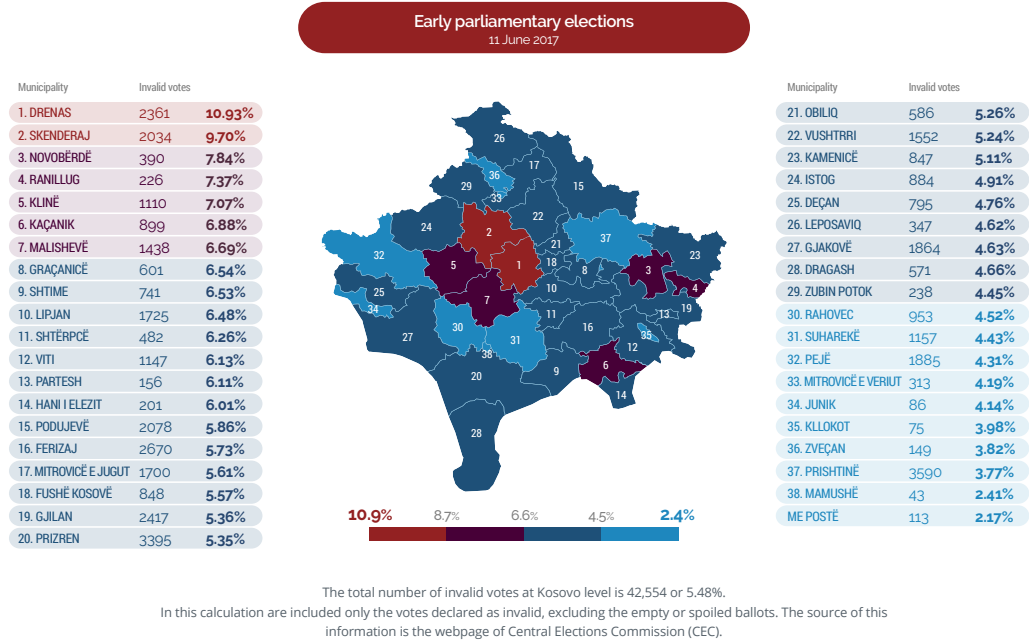


Figure 1. Distribution of invalid ballots in the last 2017 parliamentary elections in Kosovo

13 Central Election Commission "Hulumtimi dhe analizimi i fletëvotimeve të pavlefshme për zgjedhjet për Kuvend të Kosovës 2014". Prishtina: 2015. Pg. 5. For additional information, see: http://www.kqz-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Raporti-i-hetimit-te-flv-2014_al-1.pdf

we compare these statistics with local elections of 2013, the invalid ballots for municipal assemblies marked a decrease of 4,361 votes, as it is the case for mayoral elections that marked a decrease of 1,668 votes.

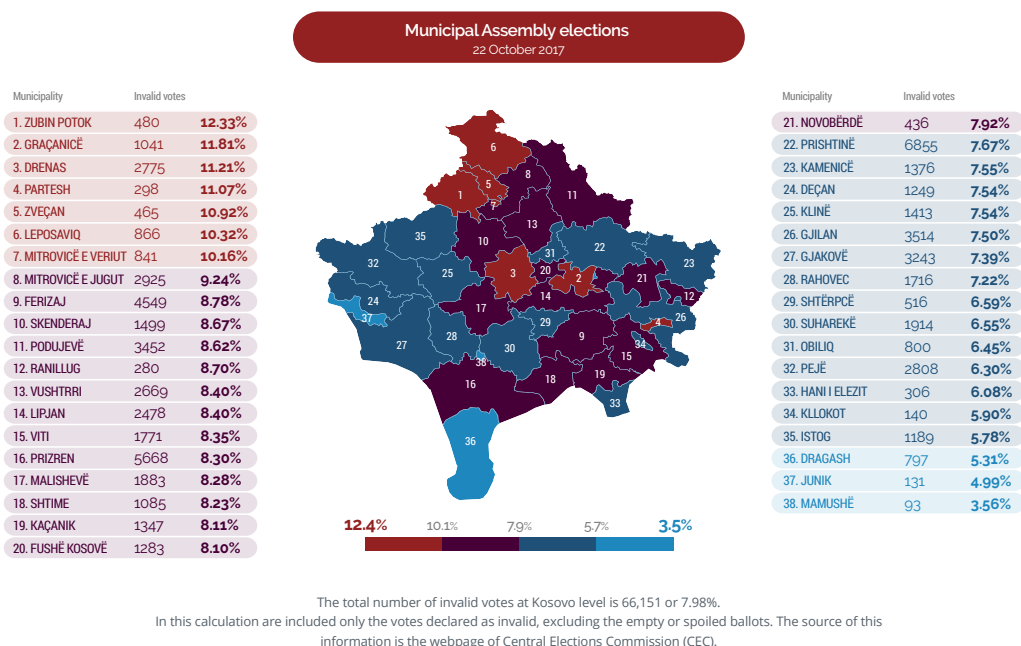


Figure 2. Distribution of invalid ballots in the last local elections for municipal assemblies in Kosovo

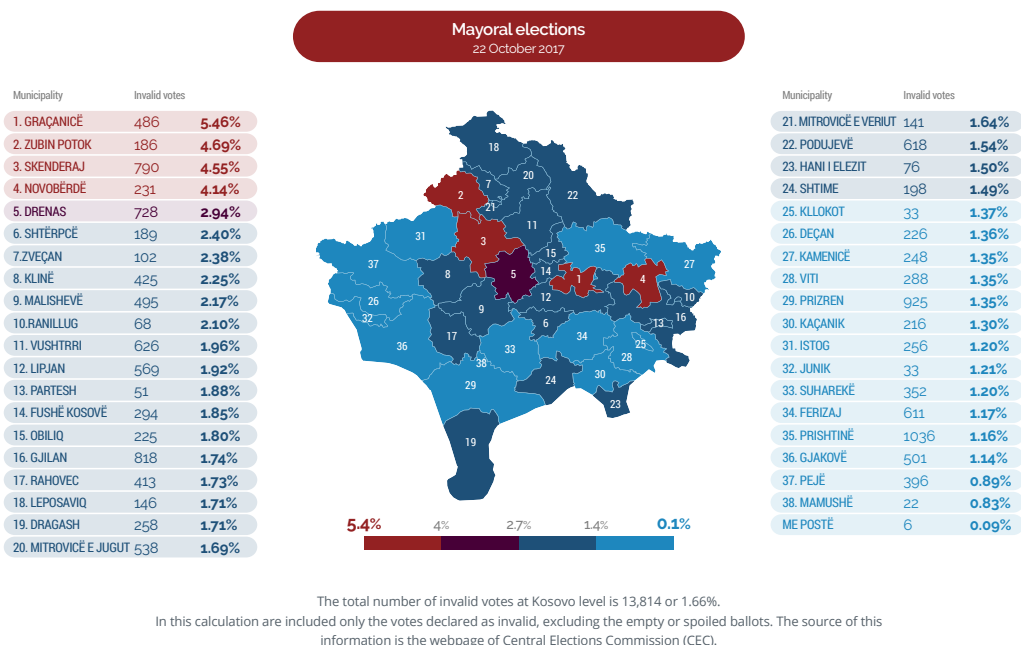


Figure 3. Distribution of invalid ballots in the last local elections for mayors in Kosovo



2.1.1 Distribution of invalid ballots in general elections, by municipalities

The average of invalid ballots at the country level for general elections held following the declaration of independence is around 4.5 %. The percentage varies in different municipalities during elections held in different years.

Broken down by municipalities, five municipalities with the highest percentage of votes compared to the number of voters, in general elections of 2017 are Drenas with 10.9 %, Skenderaj with 9.7 %, Novoberdo with 7.8 %, Ranilug with 7.4 % and Klina with 7.1 %. Municipalities with the lowest percentage of votes in these elections are Mamusha with 2.4 %, Prishtina with 3.8 %, Zvecan with 3.8 %, Klokot with 4 % and Junik with 4.1 %.

In the 2014 elections, Hani i Elezit leads with the highest number of invalid ballots of 7.6 %, followed by Ranilug with 6.8 %, Shterpce with 6.5 %, Shtime with 6.3 % and Partesh with 5.9 %. Ranking of municipalities with the lowest number of invalid ballots remains almost the same. Mamusha has the lowest percentage of 2.5 %, followed by Zvecan with 2.7 %, Prishtina with 2.8 %, Junik with 3 % and Dragash with 3.2 %.

In 2010, when the first parliamentary elections following the declaration of independence took place, which were contested as a result of irregularities and progress, as a coincidence, the number, namely the percentage of invalid ballots was the lowest. The municipality with the highest percentage of invalid ballots is Ranilug with 8 %. Following this municipality, Klokot (7.5 %), Mamusha (6.8 %), Skenderaj (5.9 %) and Mitrovica (5.7 %) are municipalities that conclude the list of five municipalities with the highest number of invalid ballots. On the other hand, the municipality with the lowest number of invalid ballots in the 2010 elections is Zvecan with no invalid ballots identified. This is mainly a result of election boycott and participation in minimum number (158 voters in total) of the population in there. In addition to Zvecan, other municipalities with the lowest number of invalid ballots are Istog with 2.6 %, Zubin Potok with 3 %, Shterpce with 3 % and Prishtina with 3 %.

Below you can find the complete ranking of municipalities, as well as the distribution of invalid ballots for the general elections in each of municipalities:

2.1.2 Distribution of invalid ballots in local elections for municipal assemblies, by municipalities

As mentioned before, local elections, namely elections for municipal assemblies are elections with the highest number of invalid ballots. According to the ballots audit report by CEC, among the main reasons that lead to the increase in the number of invalid ballots compared to the ballots for general elections is the lack of adequate information and education campaigns. However, with regards to the nature of ballots invalidity, more than 80 % of invalid ballots have been declared as such as a result of selection of a candidate, but not the political entity. Therefore, it can be stated that another essential factor is the importance that political entities pay to the competition for mayors, leaving aside the competition for municipal assemblies. Also, the campaigns of candidates are mainly oriented in providing the number on the list of the candidate, and often overlooking the manner of marking the number of political parties. The average of invalid ballots during the three last elections for municipal assemblies is around 8 %, whereas the average for mayors is around 1.7 %. For a clearer overview of the distribution of invalid ballots, this section will provide the distribution of invalid ballots in elections for municipal assemblies and elections for mayors separately.

If elections for municipal assemblies are viewed in a chronological manner since the declaration of independence, then elections of 2009 are elections with the lowest number and percentage of invalid ballots. In these elections, Ferizaj is the municipality with the highest percentage of invalid ballots, namely 11.4 %. Hani i Elezit is the second municipality with the highest percentage, with 10.7 % of invalid ballots recorded. Hani i Elezit is followed by Fushe Kosova with 10.6 %, Obiliq with 10.5 % and Kamenica with 9.7 % of invalid ballots. Out of five municipalities with the lowest percentage of invalid ballots, four are municipalities with Serbian majority, where it is worth mentioning that elections were boycotted during that time, and this had a direct impact on the small number of ballots. In Zvecan, only 1 out of a total of 38 ballots has been invalid, expressed in percentage as 2.6 %. This is the case even for Leposavic, with only 4 invalid ballots, or 3.4 %, recorded. These two municipalities are followed by Novoberdo with 3.5 % and Ranilug with 3.9 %.





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Figure 5. Distribution of invalid ballots for elections for municipal assemblies in Kosovo, by municipalities

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The municipality with an Albanian majority, which has the lowest number of invalid ballots, is Skenderaj with only 3.9 % of invalid ballots.

The highest percentage ever of invalid ballots is that of local elections of 2013, namely elections for municipal assemblies, in which around 70,000 ballots, or 8.5 % of all ballots, have been declared as invalid.

Drenas is the municipality with the highest percentage of invalid ballots (11.6 %). Drenas is followed by Vushtrri (10.8 %), Ferizaj (9.6 %), Viti (9.6 %) and Kacanik (9.5 %). On the other hand, municipalities with the lowest percentage of invalid ballots are Mamusha (4.6 %), Hani i Elezit (5.7 %), Ranilug (5.8 %) and Dragash (6 %).

In last elections of 2017, as in the previous ones, municipalities with Serbian majority lead with the distribution of the highest percentage of invalid ballots. During these elections, the percentage of invalid ballots at the country level was around 8 %, which marks a slight decrease compared to the elections of 2013. Four of five municipalities with the highest percentage are municipalities with Serbian majority. In this list leads Zubin Potok with 12.3 %, followed by Gracanica with 11.8 %, Drenas with 11.2 %, Partesh with 11 %, and Zvečan with 10.9 %. Klokot, with 5.9 %, Istog with 5.8 %, Dragash with 5.3 %, Junik with 5 % and Mamusha, which has the lowest number and percentage of invalid ballots, namely 3.6 %, are ranked at the bottom of the list.

2.1.3 Distribution of invalid ballots in local elections for mayors, by municipalities

Unlike local elections for municipal assemblies, with an average of around 1.7 %, elections for mayors have the lowest number and percentage of invalid ballots in Kosovo. If we add to this the fact that a significant number of these ballots have been declared invalid as they have been deliberately spoiled by the voters, then it can be concluded that this percentage is at a totally acceptable level.

Regular elections for mayors held in 2013 have marked the highest number and percentage of invalid ballots, with

more than 15,000 votes, namely around 1.8 % compared to the elections of 2017, where 14,000 invalid ballots, or around 1.6 %, were recorded, and elections of 2009, with the lowest number of invalid ballots, concretely around 11,000, or around 1.5 %.

Similarly to almost all other elections, in the last elections for mayor held in 2017, municipalities with Serbian majority and municipalities of the Drenica Region, also marked the highest percentage of invalid ballots, unlike other municipalities, with a significantly lower number of invalid ballots compared to the total number of ballots. The municipality with the highest percentage of these ballots is Gracanica with 5.5 %. Gracanica is followed by Zubin Potok with 4.7 %, Skenderaj with 4.6 %, Novoberdo with 4.1 % and Drenas with 2.9 %. On the other hand, the municipality with the same number and percentage of invalid ballots as in the other elections is Mamusha with only 0.8 % of invalid ballots. Mamusha is followed by Peja with 0.9 %, Gjakova with 1.1 %, Prishtina with 1.2 % and Ferizaj with 1.8 %.

A similar trend was marked in several of these municipalities during elections of 2013 as well. In the elections held that year, Zvečan had the highest percentage of invalid ballots, namely 4.8 %. Obiliq (3.7 %), Drenas (3.3 %), Skenderaj (3.2 %) and Klokot (3.2 %) conclude the list of five municipalities with the highest percentage of invalid ballots. Unlike last elections held in 2017, where municipalities with the lowest percentage were mainly large municipalities, in elections of 2013 small municipalities had the lowest percentage, ranging from Junik with 0.7 %, Mamusha 0.8 %, Hani i Elezit with 0.8 %, Malisheva with 1 %, and Shterpce with 1 %.

Zvečan with 13.2 %, Zubin Potok with 5.8 %, Drenas with 5.3 %, Gracanica with 3.6 % and Leposavic with 2.7 %, are five municipalities with the highest number of invalid ballots recorded in 2009 elections for mayors.

In the meantime, municipalities with the lowest percentage of invalid ballots are: Klokot (0.6 %), Mamusha (0.8 %), Istog (0.8 %), Gjakova (0.9 %) and Suhareka (0.9 %). See below the full list of municipalities with the percentage of invalid ballots:



Figure 6. Distribution of invalid ballots for elections for mayor in Kosovo, by municipalities

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2.2. Distribution of invalid ballots in Europe

The phenomenon of invalid ballots is not concentrated in a certain geographic area or region of the globe. Even though at a different extent and nature, somewhere more present and somewhere less, every state that organizes free and fair elections faces such a phenomenon. This paper presents data related to the invalid ballots, namely their distribution to the level of Continent of Europe. Invalid ballots in the last parliamentary elections of 37 states have been counted. The average of invalid ballots at the level of these states is around 2.5 %. This list ranks Kosovo in the fifth place with the highest percentage of invalid ballots in the last parliamentary elections.

The state with the highest percentage of invalid ballots is Bosnia and Herzegovina with around 9 %. This high percentage is attributed mainly to the extremely complicated voting system, and voting at different levels within a day. In order to provide a clear overview of the complexity of the voting system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, below we will provide some information regarding this system. Initially, one of the main problems with elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina is that voters are provided with a very large number of different ballots. This is due to the fact that voters in Bosnia and Herzegovina initially take the ballot for election of the Presidents of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which ballot differs for three different ethnic groups of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Then it is voted for representatives in the parliament of the country, which is not the same for all voters. Then, it continues with ballots for parliaments of both entities¹⁴, each of which has the president, deputy president, prime minister, and their officials. In case of voters who are residents of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, they also vote for the cantonal level, by electing representatives in "cantonal" parliaments for each of 10 cantons.

Bosnia is followed by Luxembourg with 6.8 %. France is the third state with regards to the percentage of invalid ballots and the state with the highest number of ballots, namely more than 2.5 million. One of the main reasons for this high number and percentage of invalid ballots in France, despite the fact that election lists are closed, can be considered the large number of election districts (577 election districts), as well as their extension to the French territories, or other continents, where the level of education and information of educators is not on the desired level. Also, another crucial element mentioned following the last elections of 2017 in France is leaving the ballots blank, as a form to express dissatisfaction, as well as accusations of certain political parties that a part of ballots has been deliberately spoiled by political opponents¹⁵. Belgium is the fourth state with around half million of invalid ballots, namely 5.7 % of the total number of ballots, recorded. On the other hand, the state with the lowest percentage of invalid ballots is the United Kingdom with only 0.23 %.

Among the Western Balkans states, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo remain states with the highest percentage of invalid ballots. These states are followed by Macedonia with around 3.2 %, Serbia with around 2.9 %, Albania with around 2 %, and Montenegro with around 1.4 % of invalid ballots.

If we consider specifics of election systems of these 37 countries, namely their complexity, then we may conclude that the number of invalid ballots is not directly related to elections lists, the number of elections districts or other characteristics. Key factors in this regard are the level of voters' education, namely information, and education campaigns, as well as the level of satisfaction with the performance of political parties. This is because, in most of these countries, the biggest part of invalid ballots have been declared as such because they have been left blank, as a form of expressing the objection or abstention from the election process.

¹⁴ Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into two entities: Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska.

¹⁵ "French Election: Protest Vote for 'Nobody' Was Highest In Half a Century". NBC News. 2017
For additional information, see: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/french-election-protest-vote-nobody-was-highest-half-century-n756261> [accessed on 2 October 2018]

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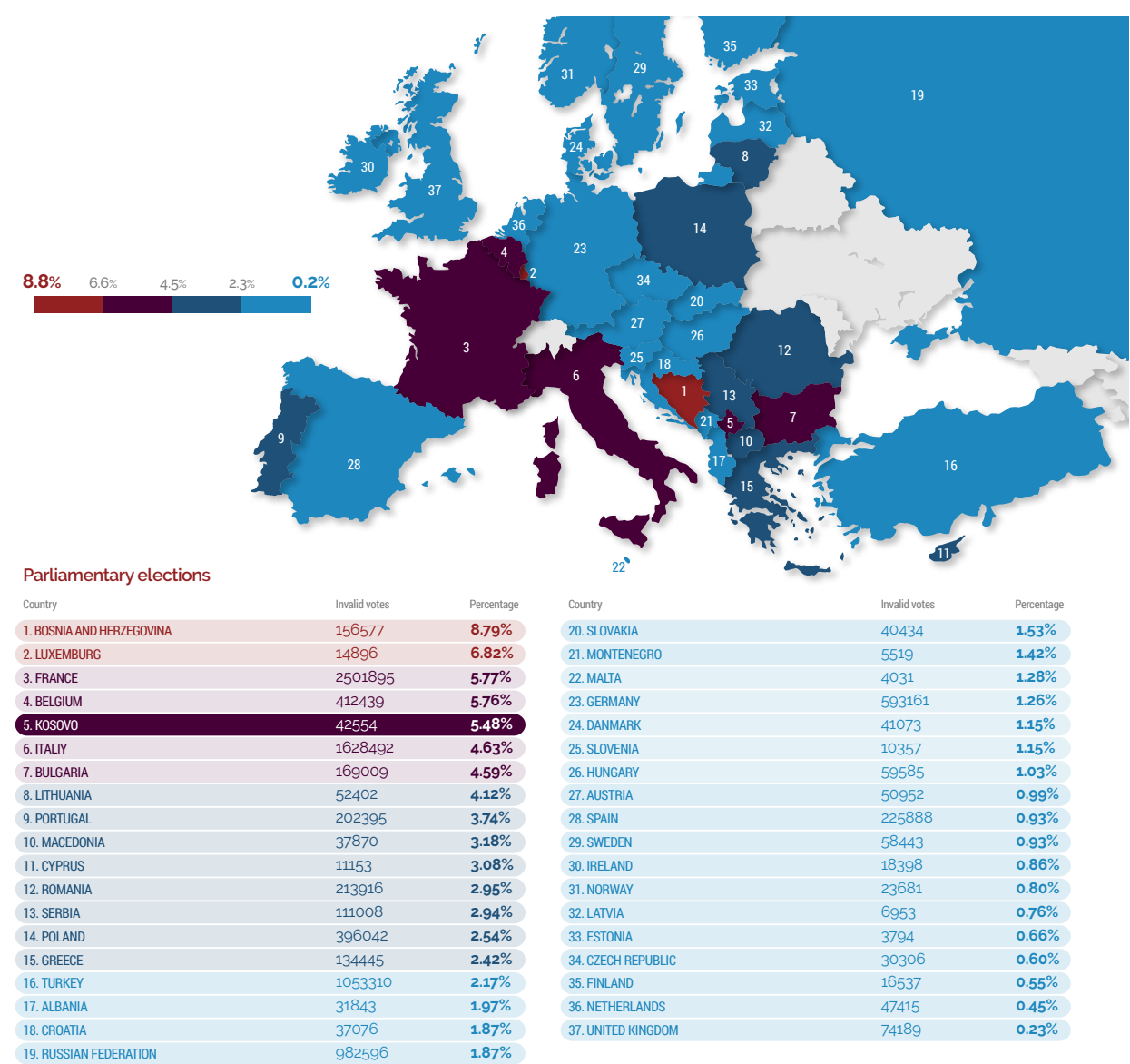


Figure 7. The distribution of invalid ballots in the last parliamentary elections of European countries

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3

VOTERS' INFORMATION AND EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS IN THE LAST TWO ELECTIONS IN KOSOVO

- 32** 3.1 Elections in Kosovo - the up to date experience of the Public Information Campaign
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3. VOTERS' INFORMATION AND EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS IN THE LAST TWO ELECTIONS IN KOSOVO

Despite the fact that many electoral cycles have been carried out, after which it was said that they were the best elections ever organized, the challenges remain almost the same and are repeated in all elections. One of these challenges for the Central Election Commission is the proper organization of the Public Information Campaign (PIC) for Voter Education.

In another aspect, if not ultimately - a professional Public Information Campaign (PIC) would contribute to the establishment of a suitable environment for free and democratic elections, based on the decisions of the well-informed electorate on the importance of participation in elections, their rights, the right to vote and the method of voting. Therefore, in addition to the great challenges of the CEC for the organization of free and democratic elections, professional preparation and creation of appropriate space for all entities and candidates running for elections, is also the aspect of planning and execution of the Public Information Campaign.

Above all, the CEC not only provides conditions for a balanced and fair campaign in relation to all political parties that compete, but it must take an active role to provide the electorate with the many and necessary information for active participation in the elections, as one of the main pillars of modern democracy. Lack of proper campaigns followed directly with scarce information on voting, which often comes from political and state culture, traditions, legal regulation, and self-regulation, have a direct qualitative impact on the results and on the elected officials that will govern.

This chapter aims to critically analyze recent local and general elections in the context of organizing the Public Information Campaign, by focusing on the legal infrastructure and internal regulations, as well as to analyze the CEC's internal strategy for public information. The analysis as well aims to analyse in more detail the professional preparation of the CEC information campaigns, the very unbalanced percentage of advertisements for voters broadcasted in media, compared to the ads of political parties, as well as the audio-visual aspect of the design, messages that are conveyed, up to the technical circumstances of a campaign.

First, the CEC findings are alarming regarding the large number of invalid ballots. They are indirect as a result of the inability to get the right and timely CEC messages on how to vote. In the CEC reports on the investigation of invalid ballots, as one of the main recommendations is suggested to design a special information campaign to eliminate these cases. From other findings, it is also concluded that the information campaign is not only about voters but also about members engaged on the Election Day who, due to the lack of proper preparations and training, make many omissions.

The second aspect is the professional character of the Public Information Campaign, where the findings mainly result in the lack of creativity in terms of content, use of one campaign template for all audiences, lack of tailored messages for target groups in terms of age, region and ethnicity of the voters, use of professional actors in video/radio advertise-



ments and not real voters to convey the messages, and lack of training and drafting of manuals in a simpler way.

Therefore, based on these findings, the analysis will focus directly on the discussion of the circumstances that have affected the poor quality of public information campaigns, resulting in a large number of invalid ballots. It remains a duty not only of the CEC, as an institution that under the Constitution has the mandate to organize the elections, but also of other stakeholders of the civil society, media and parties to engage in creating an environment in which every citizen, regardless of age, gender and education level, within Kosovo or abroad, is informed about the importance of participating in the elections and voting. It is not only a legal responsibility but also a civic one to ensure that the will of citizens is properly translated and is not a result of the lack of information.

Given the need to introduce a proper process of organizing elections and better information of the voter as well as the members participating in the organization of elections, the KDI will list a number of recommendations on what the CEC should undertake to significantly improve the campaigns regarding the professional aspect, and consequently minimize voting errors, as well as to encourage as many voters as possible to participate in the election process. Similarly, this analysis has researched and compared the experiences of at least two countries in the region, Montenegro, as a candidate for EU membership and Croatia, an EU member state. From the findings, it turns out that the experiences and circumstances are different, and the Public Information Campaign in Kosovo needs to be tailored to Kosovar needs and context.

A combined methodology, divided into three aspects, has been applied for drafting this analysis:

- a) The qualitative method by arranging the interviews with stakeholders that are directly involved in the organization of elections, campaigns, who have led the information and election monitoring process;
- b) 'Desk research' – which is based on a profound research of reports and their comparison, various media articles on past campaigns, as well as other findings from local and international election monitoring organizations;
- c) A critical research and analysis regarding the content of the Public Information Strategy and the professional aspect of recent campaigns.

3.1 Elections in Kosovo - the up to date experience of the Public Information Campaign

Organization of the recent early general elections in Kosovo, as well as the urgent need to quickly carry out the technical preparations, was accompanied with shortcomings. One of the findings that followed these elections is the lack of a qualitative information campaign on voter education, their rights and the manner of voting. As a result, the election process resulted in a large number of invalid ballots, but not only. The findings emphasize a campaign that was organized quickly and was inexpensive, and without adequate professional content that confused the message for the right audience and was overwhelmed by the political messages of political entities. These significant shortcomings in the professional preparation of the campaigns, which also came as a result of the short time available, the selection of the same PR company in continuity by the CEC, up to the use of actors in the awareness advertisements, has produced a significant lack of expected results.

On the other hand, in a public opinion poll, conducted by the KDI in September 2018, only 27.3 % of respondents stated that they were informed through the CEC information campaign regarding the procedures and the manner of voting in the last elections. While 30.5 % of respondents rated the CEC's election and voter education campaign as very useful. Some of the representatives of the institutions in charge of organizing the elections, with whom KDI held meetings, admit the CEC's inability to organize a proper voter information campaign.

Enis Halimi, the CEC Chief Executive Officer says that "the preliminary organization of elections and their preparation in a record time has had a bad impact on informing the voters as it was impossible to conduct a normal process for the preparation of professional campaign. Everything was done quickly." According to him, there are also the legal tendering and procurement mechanisms, selection of the company responsible for the campaign that creates a disadvantage from the outset. He states that "it is often the case that under the applicable law, a tender is won by a company that does not have much experience or knowledge but offers the lowest price"¹⁶.

¹⁶ Halimi, Enis. Personal interview, September 2018

Thus, according to Azemine Beqiri, the official responsible for communication in CEC, the procurement procedures, the short time for realization, sometimes less than 48 hours available for 12 TV video clips, affects the realization of a campaign and in communication that is far from professional expectations¹⁷. This official, who deals directly with this component at the CEC, says that: "Until the company is selected, there is some interest within the institution to meet the legal requirement of the tender, but then the things usually have to be done quickly and in a record time". According to Beqiri, in cases when the Public Information Council, which evaluates the products offered by the companies, has more time available, it can happen for the products to be returned for improvement. But it turns out that the Central Election Commission so far has not done any analysis on the progress of these campaigns, inter alia due to the lack of budget. However, in 2019 CEC plans to undertake a detailed analysis of the approach, disadvantages, and advantages of its public information campaign for the first time. All the officials interviewed by KDI have the opinion that the Voters' Public Information Campaign should be as important and with priority as other aspects of the organization of elections

throughout the territory of Kosovo. According to them, this is argued with the fact that CEC focuses more on the technical and constitutional organization of elections starting from meeting the legal deadlines, drafting, and distribution of ballots, compiling the list of commissioners and other requests rather than public information.

With the allocated budget for the PIC, the CEC has never been able to produce more quality in the voter education campaign. Consequently, people believed less in these campaigns because no emotional connection was established, unlike political parties, which dominate the space with paid messages during the time of the campaign. There is a great difference in creativity and professional aspect. A European monitoring report on Kosovo's latest elections, held in 2017, reveals alarming figures regarding the percentage reserved on media for paid messages of political parties to the voters and on the other hand for the voters' education.

Indeed, unlike the CEC, and the nearly negligible small parties, they manage to communicate in different forms with their voters either through the media or in person. So far, the CEC has mainly organized campaigns in tradi-

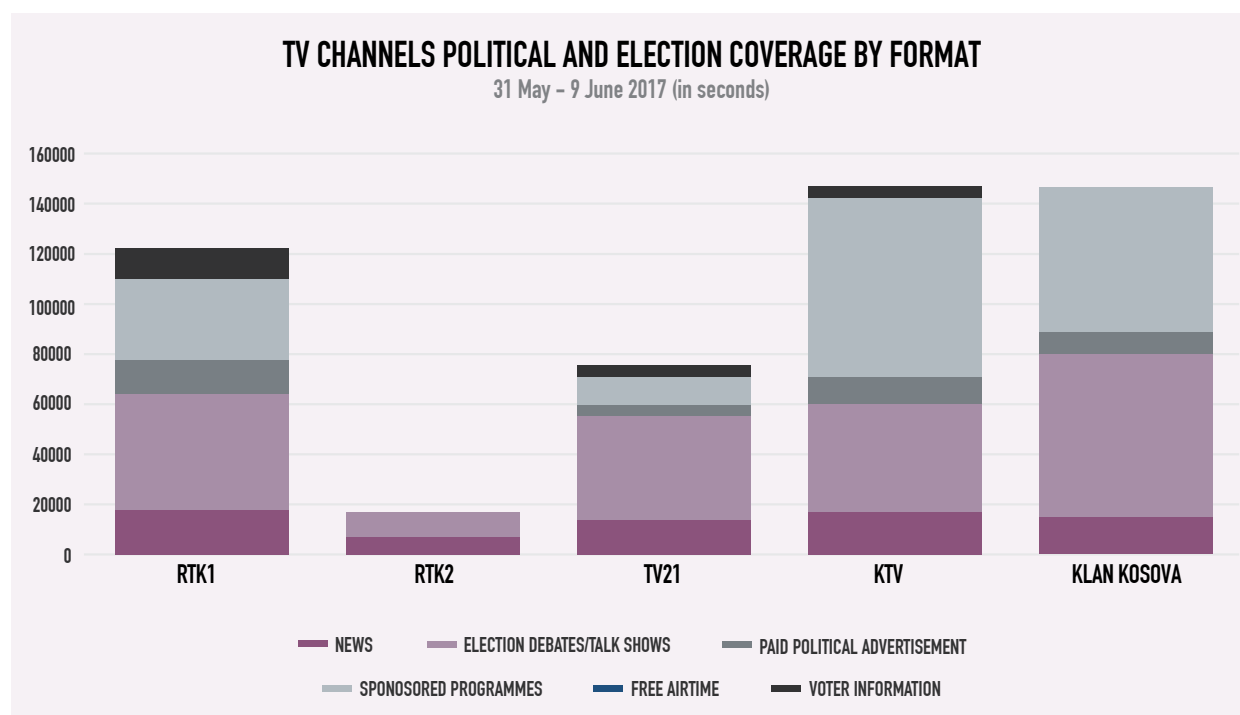


Figure 8. The space that major televisions in Kosovo have allocated to parties' materials and to public information materials, according to the monitoring of the EU mission *

¹⁷ Beqiri, Azemine, Personal interview, September 2018

tional media, and to some extent in social media, but not directly enough with the voters on the ground.

Although the European observers congratulate the CEC on improving voter education during the recent elections, they talk about other challenges that have not yet been legally regulated with regard to not limiting political parties for the space purchased in the media.¹⁸ Thus, according to their arguments, a completely uneven space of presentation of the parties and the CEC in the media is created.

“The unclear legal provisions have allowed the participants in elections to receive sponsored coverage, as an addition to the paid political advertising regulated by law. This has led some TV channels to offer expanded paid programs, unlike editorial coverage, which affects the proper information of voter. The Independent Media Commission did not effectively address violations made by the media during the election campaign”¹⁹. Not only that, the NDI, which refers to the findings of the local monitoring network “Democracy in Action”, has criticized the CEC for lack of voter education. Although the CEC officials have been justified for the lack of sufficient time, the DiA has asked to work much earlier and rely on proper communication strategies.²⁰

3.2 Legal Infrastructure and the Public Information Strategy

The Public Information Strategy is an internal CEC document containing several pages, which generally regulates the grounds for public information during the elections. In this document are mentioned the campaign goals, expectations and objectives that are numerous and ambitious to be implemented in a short period of time as provided by the Law on Elections. According to the Strategy, the CEC is “also responsible for information of other stakeholders as well as political entities, civil society organizations, and media about electoral activities in a comprehensive and timely manner”²¹.

The objectives of the strategy are to provide information on the electoral process to voters and political entities; informing voters of their rights; information on education; on the manner of voting and on increasing participation in elections. Similarly, one of the penultimate objectives is to reduce the number of invalid ballots. Without analyzing the other objectives of the strategy, which cannot be met in a few weeks of campaigning, the focus will be on the objectives associated with voter education and the reduction of the number of invalid ballots.

In this document are also described the target groups, strategy implementation expectations, tools intended to be used such as the traditional and social media, and the direct communication of the CEC officials through media conferences and interviews. According to the document the CEC also foresees distribution of mobile groups and organization of gatherings in rural areas and high schools, in order to inform the voters most in need. In the last part of the document, a list of products is mentioned, which should be designed, produced and distributed throughout Kosovo for target groups.



The unclear legal provisions have allowed the participants in elections to receive sponsored coverage, as an addition to the paid political advertising regulated by law. This has led some TV channels to offer expanded paid programs, unlike editorial coverage, which affects the proper information of voter.

The Independent Media Commission did not effectively address violations made by the media during the election campaign



18 European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM). “Two faces of Kosovo municipal elections”. Prishtina: 2017. For more, see: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/ps_final_formatted.pdf

19 bid.

20 National Democratic Institute Kosovo (NDI). “Kosovo’s June 2017 Parliamentary Elections”. Prishtina: 2017. For more, see: https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20Kosovo%20June%202017%20Election%20Report_0.pdf

21 Central Election Commission. “Public information strategy”. Prishtina: 2017. pg.3

From this perspective, the document is a good guide to keeping the CEC focused on its constitutional and legal obligations. But the activities that are expected to be implemented are almost impossible to implement. This is because the time period is very short; therefore a large budget and a team of professionals need to be established within the CEC to guide the Public Information process 24 hours a day. Some of the activities envisaged in the document do not show the ways and strategies how to meet them, such as the part of cooperation with organizations and institutions. It is also mentioned to actively use the social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, while from a short survey it is noteworthy that they are not updated at all and do not generate any two-way communication with voters. Therefore, there is a great disconnection of communication activities from elections to elections. Given the situation, the CEC needs to install "the concept of permanent campaign management communication and specifically activate it for certain aspects at a time when there are no elections".

One final aspect of the product-related strategy and concept is that the CEC does not direct the company during the bidding phase in substantive aspects and regarding its expectations. Mainly, it relies on company proposals after the selection process, which in most cases results to be unprofessional.

Given this current situation, the KDI considers that the strategic document should clearly highlight the objectives and expectations that are required from the selected company in order to design and implement the campaign. If needed, it will be required an internal institutional and legal re-organization in order to ensure a credible campaign that does not only take place during the election period but several months before the campaign starts. Oftentimes, in the country's media, one may encounter other campaigns calling for votes and voter education, not knowing whether they are from the CEC, political parties or any non-governmental organization. Such campaigns were continuous, creating a kind of cacophony to the voters. Communication experts suggest that it should be "worked on the content, attractive designs of campaign materials that can influence the voters". The CEC advertisements must be distinct because citizens often think they are from political entities and do not pay attention.

The CEC should also include specific requirements in the communication strategy, establish a professional over-

sight mechanism and divide the campaign into several phases.

- First, there should be simple messages which call for greater participation in the polls; A democratic demand to be met as a society,
- Secondly, the voting manner should be communicated - especially by emphasizing the importance of voting initially for the party and then for the candidate. From the information, it turns out that a large number of errors occur here and consequently there is a large number of invalid ballots, and
- Thirdly, in the residential areas with the most invalid ballots, the CEC should use other means rather than the audio-visual communication of the campaign. It needs to simulate and provide voting methods and specific training on how to vote. It should also send out volunteer teams to work more intensively with these categories of people.

However, there is a positive development in CEC since it is planning to change the current practice where everything in the campaign is entrusted to the company. The company was also responsible for deciding about the media plan, and the distribution of television broadcasts on TV. There was only one kind of formal oversight but it was not detailed at all. From now on, CEC plans to draft the plan on ads distribution itself and to deal with their distribution in the media. It is also intended for CEC officials to be more present in the media, by not leaving all the public space to the political parties. The idea of the strategy as an internal document is very good but it needs to be supplemented with content, ideas and an implementation timeline.

3.3 Critical analysis of the professional aspect of the information campaign

The CEC leads the public information campaign in every election. The idea, concept, and spirit of the campaign are mainly proposed by the company that is awarded the tender and is not necessarily a requirement of the CEC. Even though, it should be acknowledged that organizing early and extraordinary elections for the CEC has created many difficulties in preparing a genuine professional campaign. Nevertheless, the situation is not better with regular election



campaigns either. Again there is a large number of invalid ballots. In order to avoid these shortcomings, and in order to facilitate early elections, the CEC should pursue a proactive approach by carrying a continuous campaign in closed groups in the areas with more invalid ballots.

If the public information campaign is more concretely analyzed, products such as advertisements and messages, their language and design, have a large number of shortcomings that almost do not convey enough messages to the voter. The audience is not properly selected. Mostly actors/comedians are used in all advertisements and the same is only translated to voters of other communities.

This causes the non-interest of non-Albanian voters because they look forward to seeing people with whom they can identify themselves. The ads are very long and create a lot of difficulties to be watched until the end by the voters. The charts used to explain the voting method are in most advertisements long and are not voter-centered. From a quick media monitoring, it turns out that most of these ads are not broadcasted at peak time but in negligible timeframes.

From the findings, analyses, and interviews, the KDI recommends a list of guidelines on how to improve legal infrastructure, supplement the strategy document to the technical and professional aspects of campaign and design.

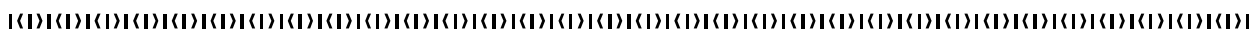
3.4 Comparisons and Experiences of Montenegro and Croatia

Montenegro has organized a series of elections since the declaration of independence from Serbia in 2006. This state organizes parliamentary elections with a single electoral district, to elect 81 MPs, and direct presidential elections in two rounds, if in the first round the candidate does not win more than half of the votes. The State Election Commission, the body organizing the elections in Montenegro, prepares a series of campaigns in an effort to encourage as many eligible voters to participate in the electoral process.

The experiences do not differ greatly in both countries. However, according to SEC data, in the parliamentary elections of 2016, the turnout was 73.41 %, and in the presidential elections of 2018 participated 63.9 %. This high turnout does not result in much from the influence of an effective Public Information Campaign, but by at least two other motives: 1) The citizens of Montenegro have a long experience in participating in elections by building a good turnout experience; and 2) Following the independence, due to the great political conflict between the Montenegrin and opposition parties, which are mainly Serbs, the citizens are extremely mobilized to partici-



Figure 9. A motivational message for youth, with the original in Albanian, but modified in the production for several languages – 2017





There is no legal limitation on the amount of paid advertising, which has caused too much paid space in private media. Most of the media offered discounts to their usual prices, which challenged the legal requirements for equal conditions between candidates.

Consequently, the candidates who had more funds got more space and priority



pate in the elections and decide on the political fate of the country's leadership. Therefore, there is a strong political clash that fosters civic and political engagement.

From a research and comparison of the election awareness campaign, it turns out that Montenegro applies a simple way of distributing the messages. For example, in an educational video in 2016, Montenegro's SEC explains quite simply the entire voting process, simulating a polling station and following all the steps needed for a valid vote. The video clearly shows the documents that can be used to vote, the way of identification and how to vote.²² This body has also made a series of illustrations on how to find a polling station.

Same as in Kosovo, the Commission in Montenegro has not used the social media to distribute the messages in the most efficient way. Similarly, the European observers have noticed that the space on media was mostly occupied by political parties and their candidates, due to the failure to limit the sponsored space.

"There is no legal limitation on the amount of paid advertising, which has caused too much paid space in private media. Most of the media offered discounts to their usual prices, which challenged the legal requirements for equal conditions between candidates. Consequently, the candidates who had more funds got more space and priority"²³.

22 For more, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_2EJZALHxw

23 Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE – ODIHR). "Montenegro Presidential Elections 15 April 2018". Warsaw: 2018. For more, see: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/montenegro/386127?download=true>



Despite the successful organization of elections, the SEC in Montenegro is an institution that has been constantly clashing with various political forces. In the two recent elections 2016-2018, it was distinguished for lack of transparency, due to holding meetings away from the media, and not publishing all its decisions on its website. The CEC of Kosovo in this regard is a champion of transparency and the way of organizing the elections.

Even in other countries, such as Croatia, an EU member state, there is another specific experience that differs from Kosovo. There are almost no awareness campaigns,

but the State Election Commission in this country makes sure to issue regulations governing the seamless flow of the elections; restrictions; rights and deadlines - these are published on the official website of the institution. This is because Croatia does not face the same problem that Kosovo does. The Commission also organizes several kinds of elections, including those for the European Parliament, so it is active throughout the year. Greater care is paid to timely information and the issuance of the necessary rules for the proper flow of the democratic election process.²⁴

²⁴ State Election Commission in Croatia: "The use of electronic voting system". Zagreb: 2018.
For more, see: https://www.izbori.hr/site/UserDocImages/priopcenja/2018_priopcenje_elektronicko_glasovanje.pdf

4

PUBLIC OPINION POLL REPORT “ELECTORAL REFORM AND INVALID BALLOTS IN KOSOVO

- 41** 4.1 General civic perceptions on the political situation
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4. PUBLIC OPINION POLL REPORT "ELECTORAL REFORM AND INVALID BALLOTS IN KOSOVO"

In order to obtain a civic perspective regarding the political situation, the level of accountability of MPs, and in particular their preferences regarding the electoral system that Kosovo should have, the KDI has conducted a public opinion poll during 25 August – 5 September 2018. As far as the research methodology is concerned, it was chosen the quantitative type of research, namely face-to-face interviews in homes. The poll included 1,200 respondents, taking into account the representative sample of Kosovo and the right to participate in elections, which is over the age of 18. Of all the respondents, 49.5 % are men, while 50.5 % are women. In order to ensure the representation of the population on an ethnic basis, 70.8 % of the respondents were Albanians, 16.7 % Serbs and 12.5 % from other non-majority communities. In order to also guarantee the inclusion of the respondents based on their place of residence, 54 % of them were from rural areas and 46 % from urban areas. The error rate is + - 2.74 %.

- I. The questionnaire included close to 40 questions and was divided into four different sections;
- II. General citizens' assessment of the general political developments;
- III. Participation and reasons for voting in elections;
- IV. Perceptions about electoral reform and the voter education and information campaign;
- V. Physical testing of 1,200 new ballots designed by the KDI in order to improve the electoral system and reduce the invalid ballots.

4.1 General civic perceptions on the political situation

The survey was conducted in the period of one year since the consolidation of institutions emerging from the extraordinary parliamentary elections that were held on 11 June 2018. For this reason, the initial questions of the survey pertained to the overall citizen perception, regarding the political situation in Kosovo and the political developments, as well as the work of the Kosovo Government and Assembly one year after their consolidation.

On the question on how they evaluate the direction of developments in the country, most of them (about 74 %) think that things in Kosovo are going in a wrong direction, whereas only 20 % of respondents think that things are going in the right direction. This shows a great dissatisfaction with the work of institutions and the manner of policy-making in Kosovo.

Based on this, the citizens also consider the government's work as weak and inefficient. Of all the respondents, 72 % of them consider that they are dissatisfied with the work of the government in its first year, while 26 % of them think that the government has worked well until this period.

Similarly, as for the government, the citizens have the same appreciation for the work of the MPs and the Assembly of Kosovo. Only 26 % of the citizens positively evaluate the work of the Assembly of Kosovo, while 72 % negatively evaluate the work of the Assembly of Kosovo.



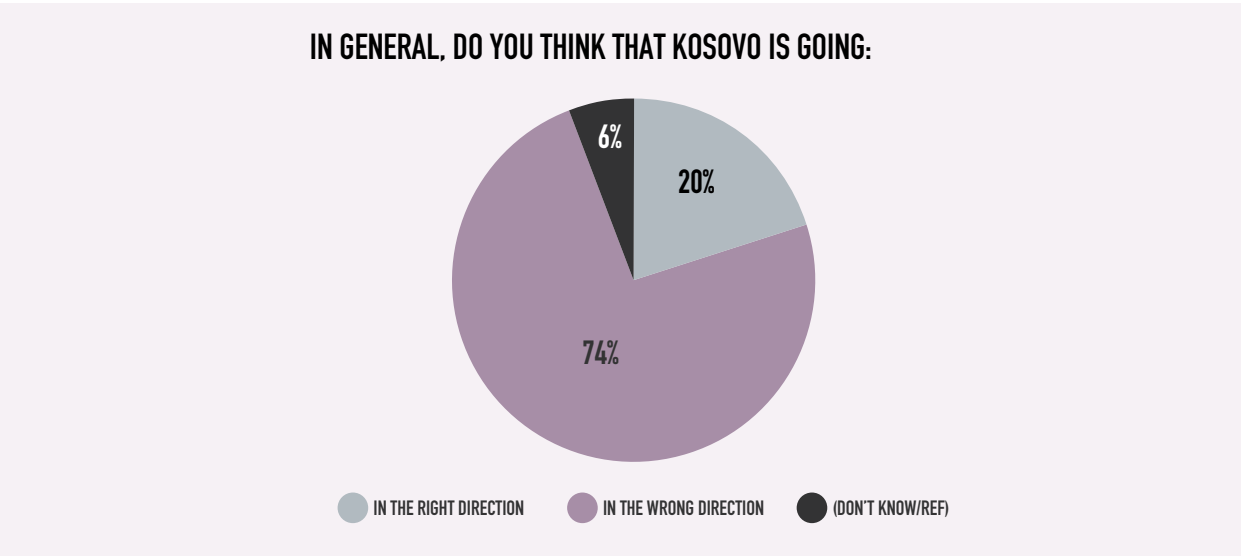


Figure 10. The perception of citizens regarding the situation in Kosovo

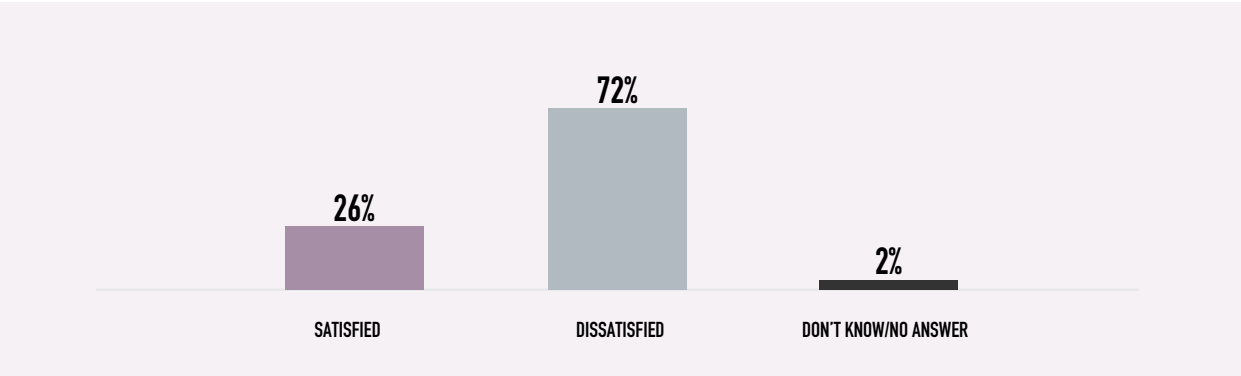


Figure 11. The perception of citizens regarding the work of the Government of Kosovo

4.2 Voters’ participation in the two previous election processes

In order to better analyze the causes of invalid ballots in Kosovo and the need for electoral reform, the poll included questions related to voters’ turnout.

When asked what citizens consider when voting for a political party, it is noted that the respondents almost equally consider the political party as a whole, then the party leader and the candidate list.

However, if a division is made according to how the respondents voted in the extraordinary parliamentary elections of 11 June 2018, then there is a clear difference in voters’ attitudes of different political entities about what they consider when they vote for a political entity. For the purpose of this report, the pre-election coalition between PDK, AAK, NISMA and other entities will be referred to as the PAN coalition; Whereas the coalition between LDK, AKR, and Alternativa, will be referred to as LAA coalition.

The elements considered important by the voters of the PAN coalition in case they vote are the party, the leader and the candidates. 33.9 % of the respondents consider the political party to be important, 34.2 % consider the



leader, 30.6 % consider the candidate lists, while only 1.3 % considers other elements.

The same cannot be said about LAA coalition voters. Most of them, respectively about 42.4 %, consider that the entirety of the political party as such is what plays a role in their determination during the voting. The leader of the party is important for 23.8 % of the respondents, and the list of candidates is important for 32 % of those who voted for this coalition.

Unlike the voters of the two coalitions mentioned above, the voters who voted LVV in the previous elections are obviously mostly based on the party leader when they vote in the elections. Expressed in percentage, about 38.6 % of them consider the leader, 29.6 % consider the list of candidates, and 27.5 % consider the political party.

From this survey, it turns out that 75 % of the respondents stated that they participated in the elections held on 11 June. All the respondents were also asked the question of what was the best way to show that they did not prefer any political entity in case of elections. The results show that non-participation in elections, with 41.7 %, is a good way to show that they have no favorite political entity. The

remaining part of 38.2 %, considers that they have to participate in the election.

In case of no political preference, the citizens deliberately spoiled the ballot. Whereas, 19 % think that empty ballots are another way to show that they do not have a favorite political entity.

From this, it could be concluded that some of the invalid ballots, in a not-large percentage may also be the result of citizen dissatisfaction with political entities. Thus they use their democratic right to participate in the elections, but deliberately spoil the ballot or leave it empty.

The next section of the report will focus on the elections held on 22 October 2017.

Of all the respondents, 79.1 % stated that they participated in the local elections held on 22 October 2018, while 14.6 % did not participate in the elections. The remaining part of 4.4 % did not participate in the elections because they did not have the right to vote.

1.9 % of the respondents refused to answer. This figure shows that there is generally a higher trend of citizen

	POLITICAL PARTY	LEADER OF POLITICAL PARTY	CANDIDATES	OTHER
COALITION PAN (PDK, AAK, NISMA)	33.9%	34.2%	30.6%	1.3%
COALITION LAA (LDK, AKR, ALTERNATIVA)	42.4%	23.8%	32.0%	1.7%
LËVIZJA VETËVENDOSJE! (MOVEMENT FOR SELF-DETERMINATION)	27.5%	38.5%	29.6%	4.3%
LISTA SERBE (SERBIAN LIST)	93.1%	6.9%	0%	0%
OTHER	30%	20%	50%	0%

Figure 12. Citizens' declaration about the elements they consider when voting for a particular political entity
(Respondents are divided by the declaration of their vote in the elections held on 11 June 2017)

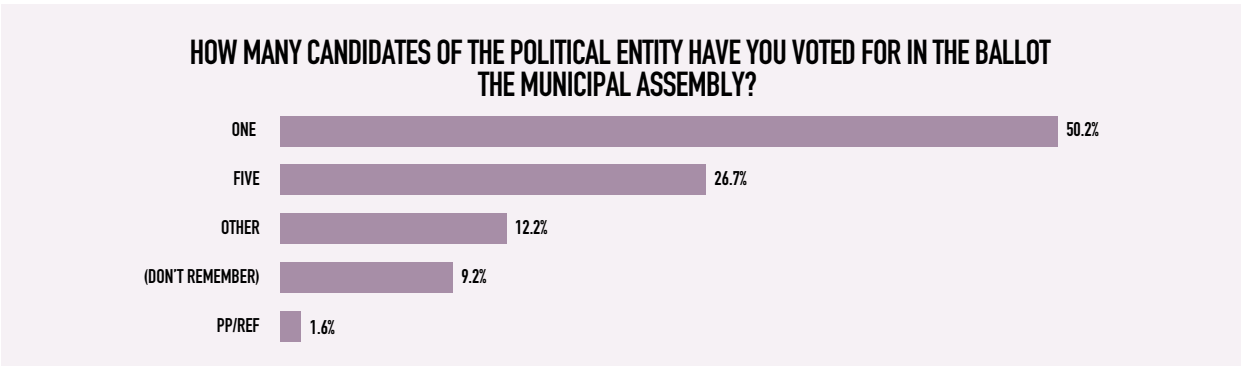


Figure 13. Declaration of the respondents about of the number of candidates they voted for in the ballot for the Municipal Assembly in the elections held on 22 October 2017

participation in local elections than in parliamentary elections.

According to the legislation in force, in the first round of the local elections in Kosovo, the voting for the Mayor and the members of the Municipal Assembly takes place with two different ballots that the voters get. The respondents were also asked about the number of candidates they have voted in the Municipal elections. The data shows that a 26.7 % voted for five candidates, which means that their vote went only for the party, and for none of the candidates.

Moreover, this indicates that there was a lack of voter information and education by the CEC, since only four months before these elections, the extraordinary parliamentary elections took place where up to five candidates were voted, something that based on the nature of the problem clearly manifests the defects of these campaigns. Of those who claimed to have participated in last year's local elections, 11.4 % needed assistance during the vote. 38.3 % of them stated that they received assistance from their family members, 33.4 % received such

assistance from their partner, while 20.4 % from the polling station officials.

75.2 % of the respondents stated that they have participated in the extraordinary parliamentary elections held on 11 June 2017, while about 20 % did not. According to the respondents' declarations, 63.8 % of them voted five candidates, while the rest of 23.9 % voted less than five candidates.

When asked on how they determined to vote for candidates of these political entities, the respondents referred to the popularity of the candidate. 56 % voted for the most popular candidates with their presence in the campaign. 40.4 % of the respondents voted for the candidates who were from their municipality, area or region. Another determining factor was the new candidates on the electoral lists (33.6 %).

24.8 % of the respondents voted for the candidates who they personally knew, 21.4 % voted for women candidates on the list, and 18.5 % voted for the candidates recommended by someone else.

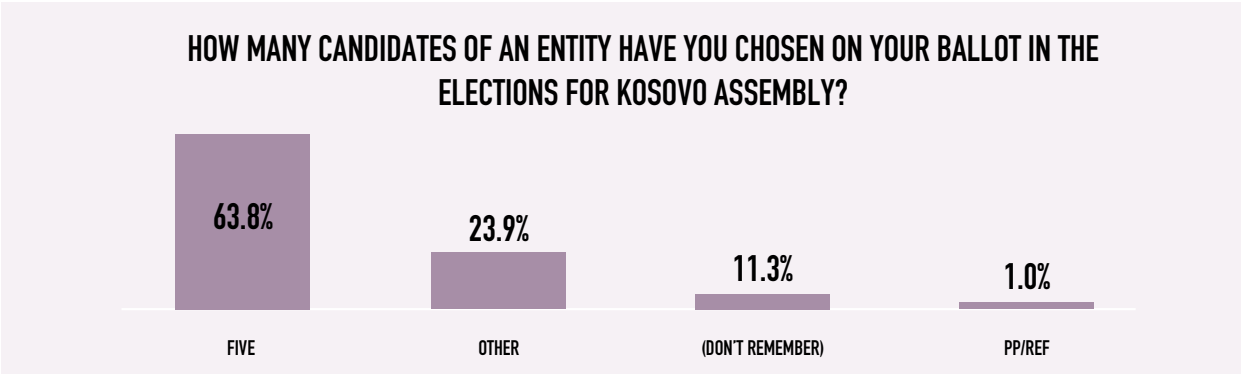


Figure 14. Declaration of the respondents on how many candidates did they vote for in the ballot for the Kosovo Assembly in the elections held on 11 June 2017



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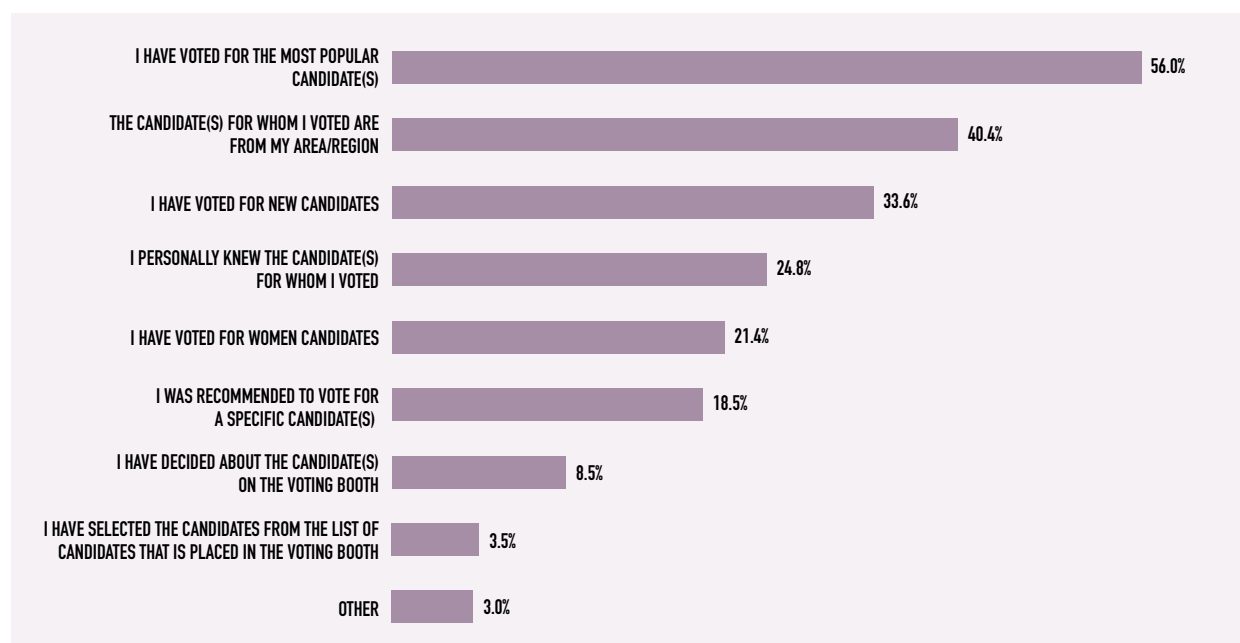


Figure 15. Declaration of the respondents what they consider when deciding to vote for the candidates of the entity they voted for, in the elections held on 11 June 2017

4.3 What kind of electoral system do Kosovo citizens prefer

The overall purpose of this report is to include various elements of the electoral reform, which includes the citizens of this country. In order to better implement this reform and civic participation, a considerable part of public opinion poll has been dedicated to civic preferences for the electoral system, always taking into account the elementary knowledge of the citizens regarding the terms and definitions envisaged by the electoral legislation.

The electoral districts are also an important part of the electoral reform. Kosovo is one electoral district where the political entities compete with open lists for 100 out of the 120 seats in Kosovo's parliament, while the rest of the 20 seats are guaranteed for other non-majority communities foreseen by the Kosovo Constitution.

On the question of how many electoral districts should there be in Kosovo, the respondents claimed almost in the equal percentage in favor of the idea for one or many

electoral districts. 41.6 % of the respondents were declared in favor of one electoral district while 40.1 % of respondents claimed for more districts.

42.2 % of them said that MPs should represent the interests of all citizens of Kosovo, no matter from which zone they come from.

Justification of respondents, which prefer more than one electoral district, is that the interests of a particular district are best protected by the electives of that zone, due to representation in the Kosovo Assembly, where regional representation should exist, while the representation of citizens in different zones is not done in the best way by the MPs of the Assembly of Kosovo. The figure below indicates the reasons why respondents have preferences for more electoral districts in Kosovo.

Considering the fact that political accountability and communication between citizens and elected officials is at an unsatisfactory level, probably due to the current system with one electoral district where one MP can be voted across Kosovo. Out of 1,200 respondents,

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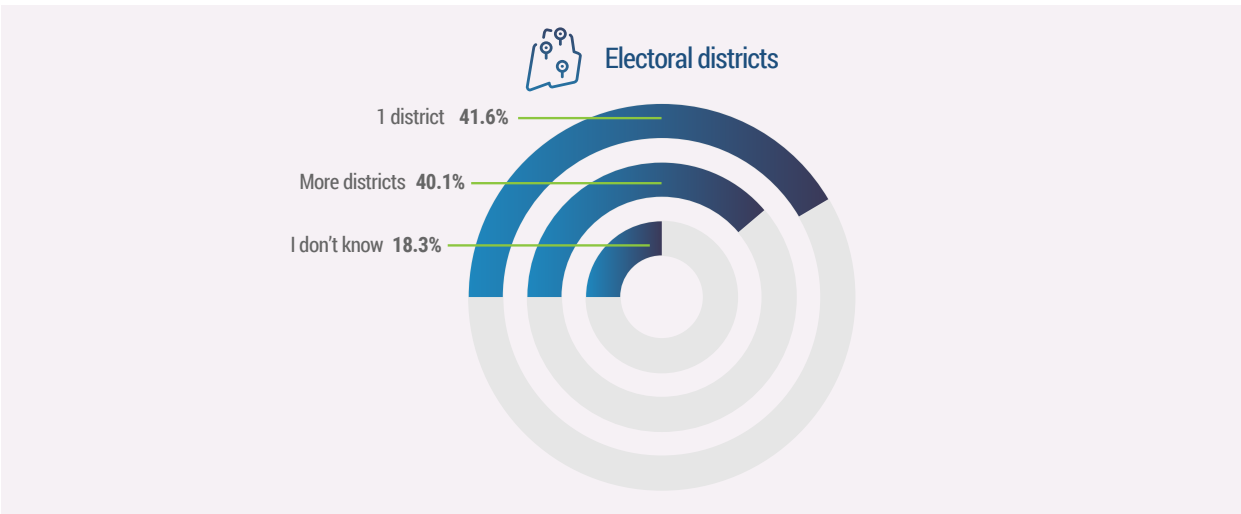


Figure 16. The respondents' preferences regarding the district election system in Kosovo

80.9 % of them declared that they had no communication with the elected MPs since the last parliamentary elections. According to them, the reason for not communicating is their lack of interest in contacting MPs, which is the also same for MPs who made no attempts on meeting the citizens.

Regarding the electoral threshold, the majority of respondents or 41.9 %, prefer the threshold of over 5 % (current system), because the Kosovo Assembly should not only consist of small parties. Meanwhile, 21.7 % of

them prefer that the threshold should be 3-5 %, in order to ensure a representation of entities that receive a general civic support.

69.1% of respondents are for the option of open lists, in order to express their preference for candidates nominated by political entities, while 23 % of them are for the option of the closed list.

Open lists imply the vote for the candidates on the list. Under current legislation in the parliamentary elections

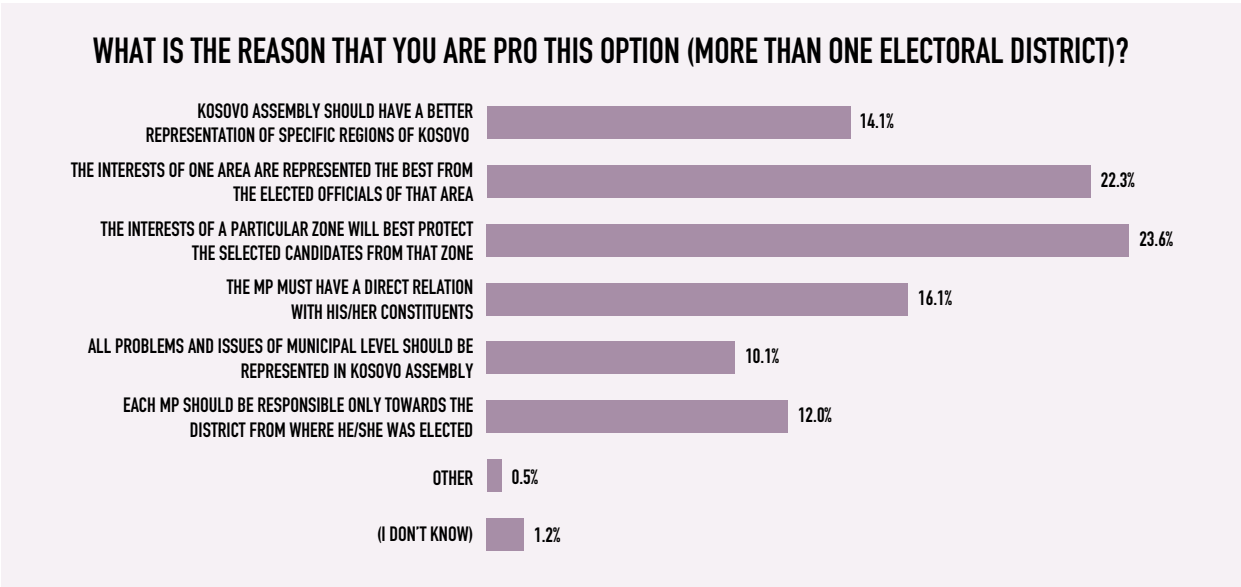


Figure 17. Declaration of respondents regarding the reasons why Kosovo should remain a single electoral district

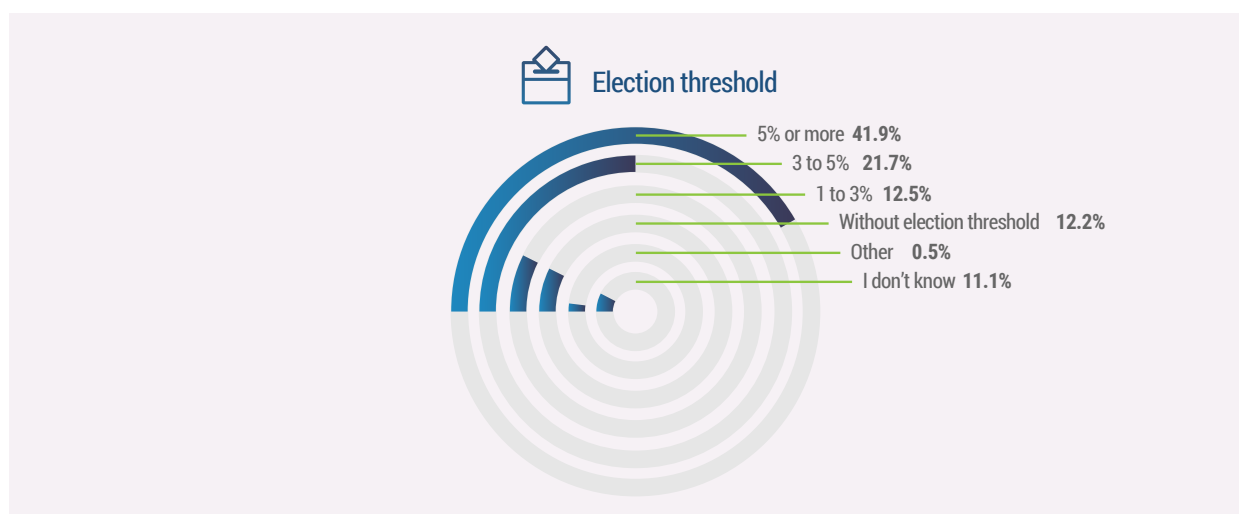


Figure 18. Preferences of respondents concerning electoral threshold in the general parliamentary elections in Kosovo

in Kosovo, it can be voted for up to five candidates of a certain political entity. On the question on how many candidates citizens prefer to vote in elections, 42 % of them, due to the familiarization with the electoral system, prefer to remain the same voting method, by which they can vote up to five candidates. The rest prefers one candidate or up to three candidates.

It is very important to emphasize that 68.9 % of respondent's demand that the 30 % gender quota which is in force in the legislation to continue to be applied.

Regarding the election of the president of the country, 88.3 % of the respondents prefer the president to be directly elected by the citizens of the country, while 8.1 % of

them prefer the president to be elected by the Assembly of Kosovo.

Direct citizen representation and direct votes for mayors through two local election rounds including also the runoff, indicates that citizens still prefer through their vote to decide for the person who will govern them. As a result, 91.1 % of the respondents declared that the mayor should be directly elected by the citizens. Regarding the case if none of the candidates reach the threshold of 50% +1 vote, 58.2% of the respondents expressed their preference to elect the mayor through the runoff, while 41.8% of them did not prefer the runoff, leaving the alternative for the candidate with the most votes in the first round to assume the municipality leadership.

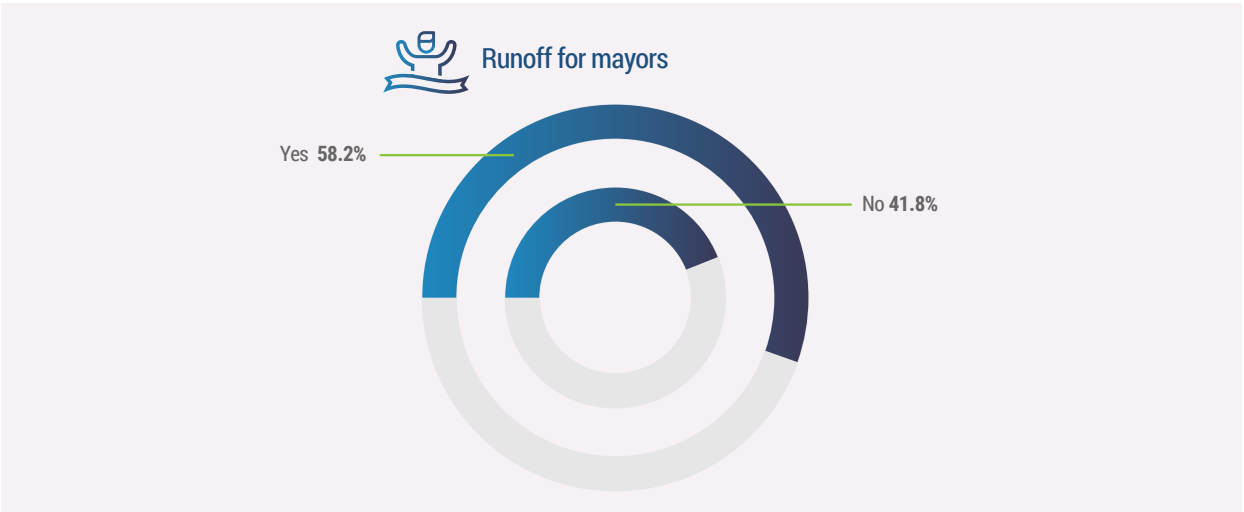


Figure 19. Preferences of respondents concerning electoral threshold in the general parliamentary elections in Kosovo

4.4 Testing of the new ballot design for general elections

One of the most important parts of this research has been physical testing of the new ballot design for general elections. This design was prepared by a group of experts in the respective fields²⁵. The main purpose to physically test the new design consists in comparing the percentage of invalid ballots resulted from this research with invalid ballots in the recent parliamentary elections. Also, based on physical testing have been identified demographic groups with the highest percentage of invalid ballots, broken down by gender, place of residence, age, ethnicity, education and other. This way will be determined social groups with which the Central Election Commission should work more, in order to provide the most adequate information and education regarding the importance and manner of voting. Meanwhile, the main methodological limitations of this test are the lack of pre-information campaigns and the use of new ballots for football clubs instead of for political entities.

From the respondents at the end of the survey were also obtained impressions and comments on the design and

structure of the ballot, in order to see if any of the ballot elements needs improvement or change.

Out of a total of 1,200 respondents of this survey, 95.92 % of them have agreed to fill the new ballot design, while, the overall percentage of respondents who made their ballots invalid is 3.7 %. Estimation of invalid ballots is calculated based on the current rules for the announcement of invalid ballots, including ballots where no football team is marked²⁶, ballots marked with two or more teams and ballots that are deliberately left unfilled by the respondents.

In terms of the nature of invalidity, 67.44 % of invalid ballots have been declared as such, due to marking two or more football teams. It is worth re-emphasizing that these results represent one of the main limitations of the survey, as not always the football teams are associated with political entities. Also, there are frequent cases when respondents who marked two or more teams declared that they prefer both teams, but in the elections, they would vote only for one political entity.

The number of invalid ballots is 16.28 % since they were deliberately spoiled by the respondents. A significant

25 Experts' working group, who participated and contributed in the design of the new ballot, besides the KDI staff, consisted of: Arber Matoshi, Dardan Berisha, Donjeta Sahatçiu, Lum Çitaku, Malda Susuri, Rasim Alija, Rezarta Delibashzade, Valmir Ismaili, Visar Kastrati and Yll Buleshkaj.

26 In order to avoid eventual violations, on this ballot, instead of political entities, were listed the football teams. This is one of the most common methods for testing new ballot papers.



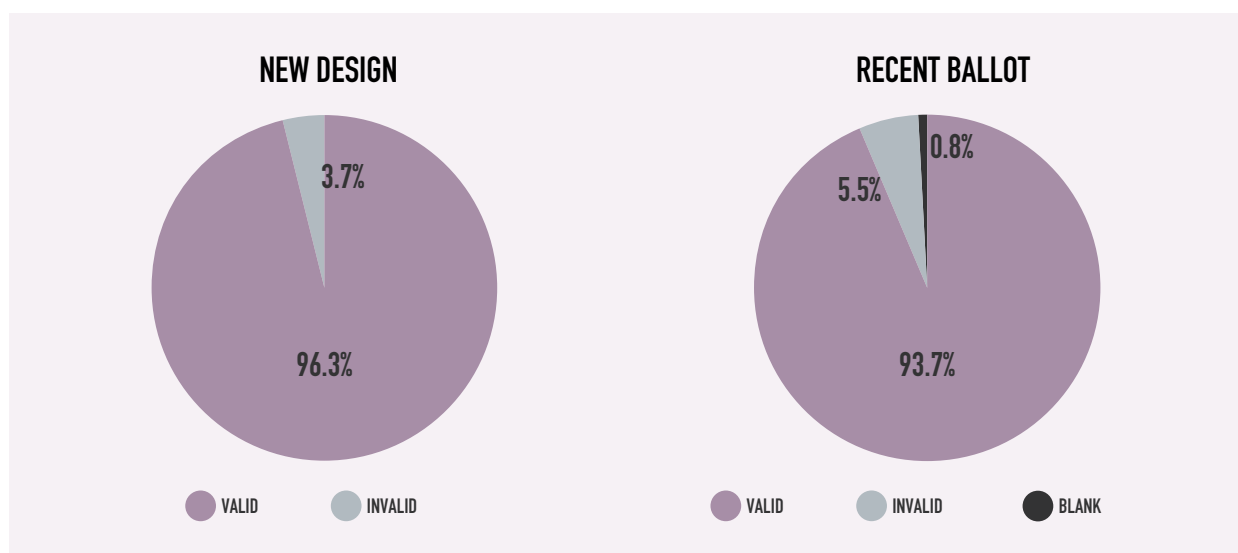


Figure 20. Comparison of valid and invalid ballots, according to the results of testing the new ballot design, and election results of 11 June 2017

proportion of this percentage is surveyed women that declared that they do not have preferences for football teams, which also presents a methodological limitation of the survey.

On the other hand, in 13.95 % of invalid ballots are marked only candidates and not the team too. This, in fact, represents the main achievement of the test, as it has been proven that with the new design, the percentage of invalid ballots of this kind has significantly decreased, which in

the past elections represented approximately 40 % of the total number of ballots.

In the end, the rest of invalid ballots (2.33 %) were unfilled.

In addition to filling and identifying the nature of the invalidity of the designed ballots, another important element of physical testing has been the identification of other aspects, such as requests for assistance in filling the ballot,

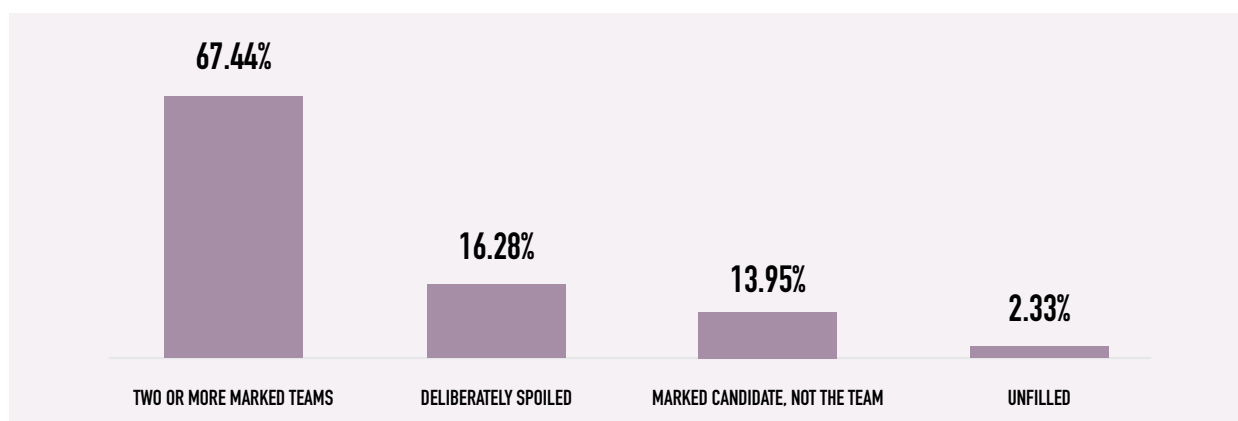


Figure 21. Breakdown of invalid ballots (3.7 %) by the nature of their invalidity

satisfaction with the structure, design, and information provided on the new ballot. It is worth mentioning that for all these aspects are taken preferences and stances of the respondents for both parts of the ballot, i.e. the part for the team as well as the part for the candidate.

In general, the number of respondents who requested assistance in filling the team part is 24.7 % and 25.4 % who requested assistance in filling the candidate’s part. In this regard, if respondents are divided on a gender basis, it appears that women (27.7%) requested assistance for a slightly higher percentage than men (21.7 %).

From the aspect of respondent’s age-group classification, it turns out that in general, as older the respondents who filled the ballot were, the higher was the percentage who asked for assistance to fill its parts. Percentage of

respondents, classified by age-groups, requesting assistance in filling the two parts of the ballot, is as follows:

Another significant factor in the high percentage of ballots is the citizens’ level of education. If this parameter is considered, the data from this research indicate that respondents with lower levels of education have higher levels of asking for assistance in filling out two parts of the ballot. The main conclusion of this analysis is that the more educated citizens are, the less they need instruction or assistance during the voting.

At the end of the physical testing of the new ballot design, were taken the respondents’ impressions regarding the instructions set on the ballot, the design and in general, the structure of the new ballots. Based on the survey method, the surveyors found that the number of

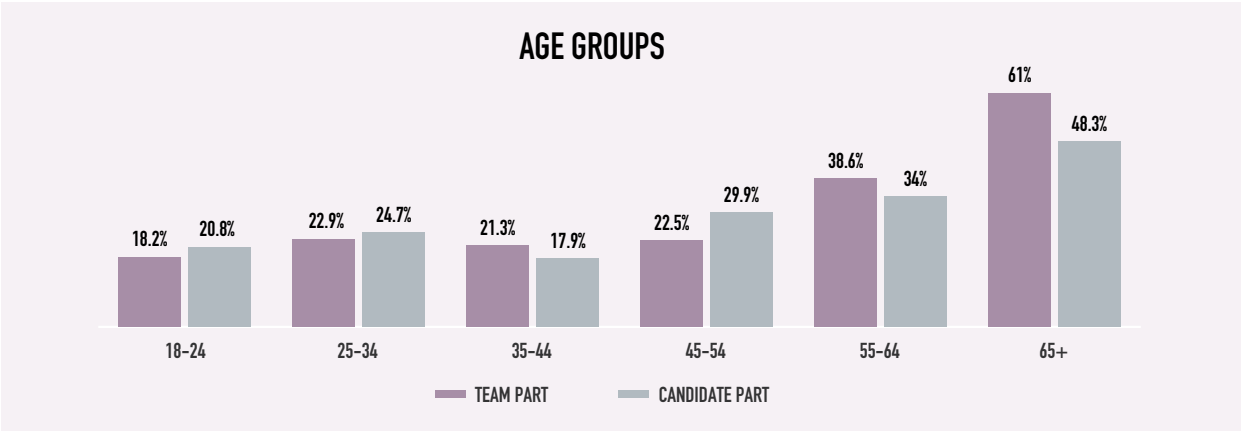


Figure 22.Respondents who requested assistance in filling the ballot, broken down by age-groups

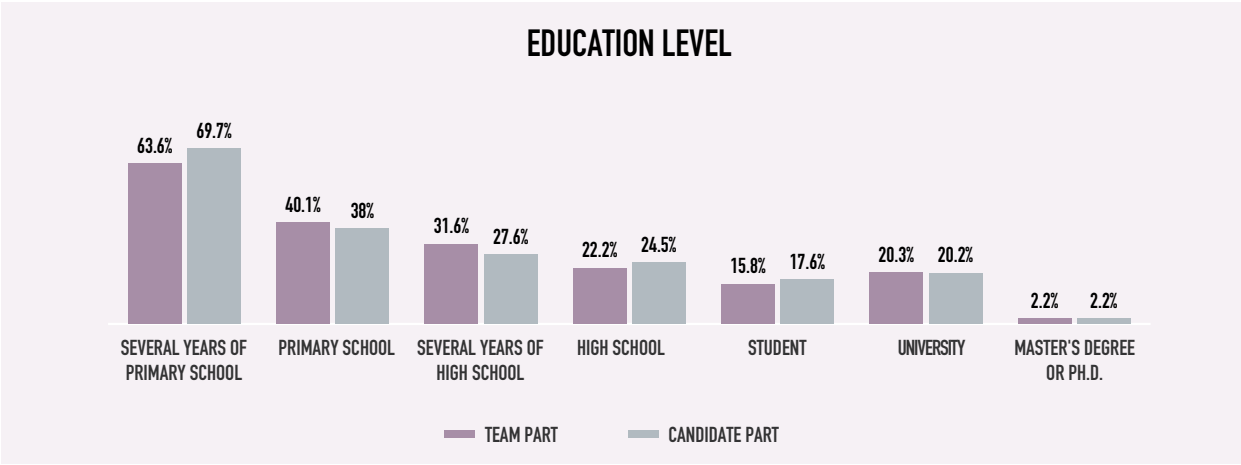


Figure 23.Respondents who requested assistance in filling the ballot, broken down by the education level

respondents who read the instructions on the ballot is 31.2 %, which differs from the ballot's previous version. This percentage is more emphasized among the younger age groups, while there is a drastic decline in elderly voters, the overwhelming majority of whom have not read the instructions at all. While, in general, over 90 % of respondents agreed that new ballot instructions are understandable. On the other hand, only 9.1 % of the respondents did not agree that the ballot instructions are understandable. Similar percentage and similar trends are also identified in questions concerning the ballot structure and ballot design.

The number of respondents who stated that they agree that the ballot design and structure is good is 90.4 % and only 9.6 % disagreed that the new ballot design and structure is good. In terms of regions, Peja and Ferizaj possess the highest percentage of the declared satisfaction for the ballot structure and design with 99.2 %. Following them, the region of Gjakova is ranked with 97.8 %, Mitrovica 95.8 %, Gjilan 91.6 %, and Prishtina with 85.6 %. The region with the lowest level of satisfaction for the ballot structure and design, compared to all other regions is Prizren, with 71.6 %.

Approximately 17.7 % of the respondents commented about parts of the ballot. These comments have been considered and addressed in the final version of the ballot.

90.4%
of the respondents
stated that they agree
that the ballot design
and structure is good
and only 9.6 %
disagreed that the new
ballot design and
structure is good.



BALLOT DESIGN AND STRUCTURE IS GOOD:

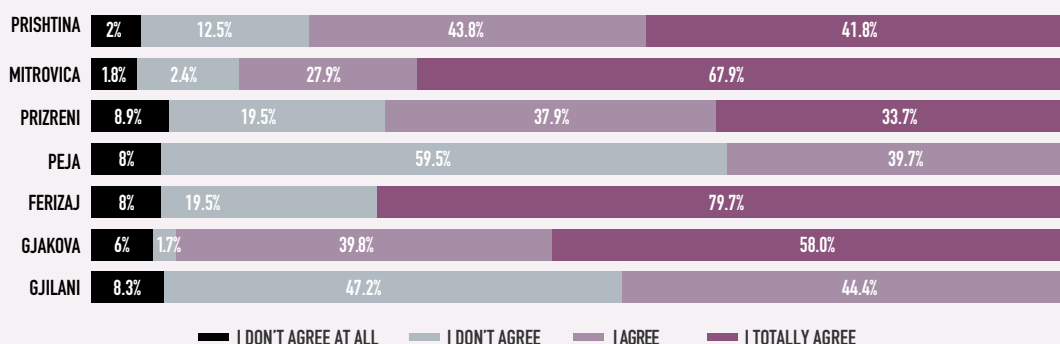


Figure 24. Respondents who requested assistance in filling the ballot, broken down by education level

CONCLUSIONS

The electoral reform process and the problem of the large number of invalid ballots are two of the main issues that the current Legislature of the Assembly of Kosovo, respectively the institutions dealing with the organization and administration of elections have to deal with. This process has been prolonged so far due to a significant lack of political will of political entities. At this point, significant influences had major topics with which the institutions were dealing, which in a way have overshadowed an important process such as electoral reform. What has come to light when taking political party preferences is the fact that almost all political entities agree that this process should have been completed until now, as the draft prepared by the **ad-hoc** parliamentary commission on electoral reform includes to a large extent all the elements that should be included in the electoral system. All entities declared that attitude toward the reform may also change due to the circumstances, which have often affected the delay of the process. It is also worth mentioning that the completion of electoral reform is a request of the ruling parties, while on the other hand, opposition entities require that this process is done only after re-legitimizing the institutions through early parliamentary elections.

In respect for invalid ballots, it can be concluded that there is not only one determining factor that has led to a large number of invalid ballots. In this regard, several factors were considered, such as inadequate CEC voter information and education campaigns, or 'wild' misleading political entities' campaigns, which have been focused on candidates, leaving entirely in second plan marking of political entities on the ballot. Based on the analysis of the distribution of invalid ballots at the coun-

try level, it can be concluded that urban and rural areas have no difference in the percentage of invalid ballots. Exceptions to this point are only Drenas and Skenderaj, where this phenomenon is significantly more expressed. While in general, Serb-majority areas and other non-majority community areas are where invalid ballots are significantly more expressed. There is a need to work more with these groups, through voter information and education campaigns, in order to improve the current situation.

In this public opinion poll which has been carried out as an activity of this project, resulted that most citizens are satisfied with the current electoral system and would not change any of its elements. The exception is only the election of the President, a matter for which, the overwhelming majority of the respondents declared that they would like to be chosen directly by the citizens.

According to the public opinion poll conducted by KDI in September 2018, only 27.3 % of respondents declared that they were informed through CEC information campaigns. Regarding the procedures and the manner of voting in recent elections, over half of them (56.6 %) belong to age-group of over 65 years old. Such a finding tells about the need to have a campaign that suits the preferences of young people and specifically targets them.

In the same poll, it is also noted that only 29.7 % of the surveyed women considered the CEC's voter education and information campaigns very useful. Such an indicator also emphasizes the need to have adequate and specific campaigning for women when it comes to information regarding the voting process.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the identified findings in this report, in particular, those addressing the issue of the large number of invalid ballots, as well as inadequate campaigns for voter information and education, the Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI), provides the following recommendations:

- 1 The electoral reform process shall be completed by the current legislature. In case of dissolution of the Assembly before the end of the mandate, the new legislature shall, with priority, complete this delayed process;
- 2 All political entities shall participate in the electoral reform process with a view of inclusion and providing as many ideas as possible to improve the current system;
- 3 Central Election Commission, as a permanent constitutional institution, with a regular mandate, shall create special information and education programs for voters, and not view them as **ad hoc** processes, which takes place only within the period from the announcement to the holding of the elections;
- 4 Ballot design for all elections in Kosovo shall be changed, making them more understandable;
- 5 Special advertisements for different communities shall be designed and produced, and transmitted to the local media where they have access. Due to the refusal to cooperate with state institutions in the north part of the country, the CEC may use the readiness of Serbian community media in the center and south of the country to convey their messages, in order to reach the targeted audience;
- 6 In these advertisements is not preferred to engage professional actors, who have been part of other various campaigns and are well-known faces of different products. Companies may organize auditions with ordinary people who are likely to vote, therefore to send a more natural message;
- 7 There should be differences in campaign concepts for local and central elections. So far, the CEC has not done much regarding these differences. In this regard, it is necessary to involve experts of different fields, NGOs and different interest groups. Also, coordination of activities with other state institutions would be an added value to the campaigns. An example of this could be the cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology for targeting young people to exercise their right for the first time, cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs in relation to information and education campaigns for voters who are in prison, or even NGOs dealing with issues related to people with disabilities, in order to provide the most adequate campaigns to this audience.
- 8 A special evaluation mechanism shall be established for the company leading the campaign, to evaluate the aspect of its professionalism and experience, and thus not the cheapest offer;

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9

In areas where the number of invalid ballots is higher, the CEC shall use other means than the audio-visual communication of the campaign. Several weeks before the elections, it shall promote and provide voting methods and training on how to vote. More specific treatment shall be provided to older people;

10

Messages shall be simple, short and divided for each ethnic group. Not like so far, where an advertisement made with Albanian actors, is accompanied by subtitles in respective Kosovo languages (For example, a recent motivational advertisement for teenagers contains the same message in several languages). The minimum of what can be done is that the sheet containing a message shall be printed in several languages, and not to be changed during the video editing process, because everyone may find it as false.

11

The CEC shall also work with political parties and individuals within, in order to explain to them that these types of campaign they use for voter education shall be changed because, in fact, these lead to the confusion and more mistakes. The requests of candidates to voters, to vote their number on the list, have negatively affected the latter because they have often forgotten to vote for the number of the party.

12

The CEC shall request from the parties, through their volunteers, to educate them on the importance of the vote and participation in voting;

13

More work shall be addressed on the content and design of campaign materials. In particular, CEC materials shall be distinguished from others, because citizens often think they are from a political entity and consequently they do not pay attention to it;

14

The public information campaign shall be viewed as a priority for the CEC, like other aspects of the technical and substantive organization of elections, from ballots, commissioners and other requests rather than the campaign. The CEC has mainly considered the aspect of the information campaign as a legal obligation, without overseeing and guiding it in detail. They consider it as a legal obligation and not as an important and vital part of the whole organization of elections, an approach that needs to change.

15

Institutional and legal reorganization shall be carried out within the CEC, to ensure a better awareness campaign;

16

Unacceptable CEC advertisements showing the technical aspect of organization and progress which is a responsibility of trained commissioners who are paid for this. Citizens are not interested to know what happens after polls are closed. Therefore, this is an unnecessary cost, which should rather be focused on educating and raising citizens' awareness of the elections;

17

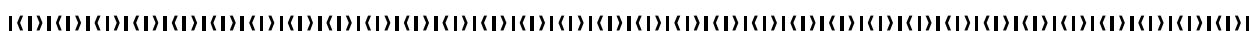
Simple language and easily memorable images shall be used. For example, the phrase 'vote no less than five'... could be replaced with 'vote up to 5 candidates and not more';

18

The CEC, as well as the parties, shall be able to physically organize a group of volunteers in order to explain to the people how to vote. This shall be provided in at least 7 major municipalities in the country.

19

Producing videos, that are of the nature of TV news reports, which may address particular aspects of voter awareness and reflect the CEC's public information campaign. Those can also be broadcasted in the advertising breaks of most watched political debates on TV.



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20 It is preferable that the CEC messages come exclusively from the Head of the CEC and Chief Executive Officer, as professional individuals of the organization of the electoral process, in order to avoid, whether in appearance, political figures that the public usually recognizes through clashes at CEC meetings.

21 Social media activities targeting the younger audience, many of them voting for the first time shall be significantly increased. KDI public opinion poll points out that only 17.6 % of respondents received information via social media regarding voting procedures.

22 Official Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages usually contain either news links of the CEC website or videos without sufficient explanation. Regarding social media management, a special team shall be engaged, especially on Election Day. All accounts, especially Twitter, shall provide information minute-after-minute about the progress and at the end, the election results. The strong point of the CEC is the online publication of results on their website. This action shall be strengthened more, due to the extraordinary interest of voters on the night of the announcement of the results.

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ANNEX I - Questionnaire on the preferences of political entities regarding the elements of the Kosovo electoral system

- 1) What electoral system shall Kosovo have?
- 2) How many electoral districts do you think Kosovo shall have?
- 3) Shall the electoral lists remain open or close?
- 4) What should be the electoral threshold for central level elections?
- 5) How should the President of Kosovo be elected?
- 6) Should non-majority communities continue to have 20 guaranteed seats in the Kosovo Assembly? If not, how should the issue of their representation be regulated?
- 7) How many candidates shall citizens have the right to vote in general elections?
- 8) Shall conditional and voting abroad be allowed?
- 9) What should be the gender representation quota in general and local elections?
- 10) How many members should the Assembly of Kosovo have?
- 11) Which institution shall conduct the auditing of political parties' finances?
- 12) Should the ballot design change?
- 13) What other additional elements shall include the electoral reform?

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ZGJEDHJET E PARAKOHSHME PËR KUVENDIN E REPUBLIKËS SË KOSOVËS 2017
PREVREMENI IZBORI ZA SKUPŠTINU REPUBLIKE KOSOVO 2017
2017 KOSOVA CUMHURIYETI MECLISI ERKEN SEÇIMLERI



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosovo - Republic of Kosovo
Kosova e Kosovës - Kosovo
Central Election Commission



1 **Votoni vetëm një** Glasajta samo za jedan **Sadece bir** **siyasi varlık**
subjekt politik **politički subjekat** **için oy kullanınız**
















<input type="checkbox"/>	111.		Club Atlético de Madrid
<input type="checkbox"/>	112.		FC Barcelona
<input type="checkbox"/>	113.		FC Bayern München
<input type="checkbox"/>	114.		Club Brugge
<input type="checkbox"/>	115.		PFC CSKA Moskva
<input type="checkbox"/>	116.		Borussia Dortmund
<input type="checkbox"/>	117.		Galatasaray AŞ
<input type="checkbox"/>	118.		TSG 1899 Hoffenheim
<input type="checkbox"/>	119.		FC Internazionale Milano
<input type="checkbox"/>	120.		Juventus
<input type="checkbox"/>	121.		Liverpool FC

2 **Votoni deri në pesë kandidatë**
Shënjoni deri në pesë kandidatë të subjektit politik që keni zgjedhur në anën e majtë

Glasajte do pet kandidata
Označite do pet kandidata političkog subjekta kojeg ste odabrali na levoj strani

Beş adaya kadar oy kullanınız
Sol tarafta seçtiğiniz siyasi varlığın beş adayını işaretleyiniz

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35
36	37	38	39	40

<input type="checkbox"/>	122.	 FC Lokomotiv Moskva
<input type="checkbox"/>	123.	 Olympique Lyonnais
<input type="checkbox"/>	124.	 Manchester City FC
<input type="checkbox"/>	125.	 Manchester United FC
<input type="checkbox"/>	126.	 AS Monaco FC
<input type="checkbox"/>	127.	 SSC Napoli
<input type="checkbox"/>	128.	 Paris Saint-Germain
<input type="checkbox"/>	129.	 FC Viktoria Plzeň
<input type="checkbox"/>	130.	 FC Porto
<input type="checkbox"/>	131.	 Real Madrid CF
<input type="checkbox"/>	132.	 AS Roma
<input type="checkbox"/>	133.	 FC Schalke 04
<input type="checkbox"/>	134.	 FC Shakhtar Donetsk
<input type="checkbox"/>	135.	 Tottenham Hotspur FC
<input type="checkbox"/>	136.	 Valencia CF

<input type="checkbox"/>	41	42	43	44	45
<input type="checkbox"/>	46	47	48	49	50
<input type="checkbox"/>	51	52	53	54	55
<input type="checkbox"/>	56	57	58	59	60
<input type="checkbox"/>	61	62	63	64	65
<input type="checkbox"/>	66	67	68	69	70
<input type="checkbox"/>	71	72	73	74	75
<input type="checkbox"/>	76	77	78	79	80
<input type="checkbox"/>	81	82	83	84	85
<input type="checkbox"/>	86	87	88	89	90
<input type="checkbox"/>	91	92	93	94	95
<input type="checkbox"/>	96	97	98	99	100
<input type="checkbox"/>	101	102	103	104	105
<input type="checkbox"/>	106	107	108	109	110

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Prishtinë | Priština | Prištine

ZGJEDHJETPËRKUVEND KOMUNAL 2017
IZBORI ZA SKUPŠTINU OPŠTINE 2017
BELEDIJE MECLISI SEÇIMLERİ 2017



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosovo
Republika Kosovo
Central Election Commission









1 **Votoni vetëm një subjekt politik** që nënkupton votë edhe për bartësin e listës
Glasajte samo za jedan politički subjekat što podrazumeva glas i za nosioca liste
Sadece bir siyasi varlık için oy kullanınız ki bu liste taşıyıcısı için de oy anlamına gelir

<input type="checkbox"/>	111.		Club Atlético de Madrid
<input type="checkbox"/>	112.		FC Barcelona
<input type="checkbox"/>	113.		FC Bayern München
<input type="checkbox"/>	114.		Club Brugge
<input type="checkbox"/>	115.		PFC CSKA Moskva
<input type="checkbox"/>	116.		Borussia Dortmund
<input type="checkbox"/>	117.		Galatasaray AŞ
<input type="checkbox"/>	118.		TSG 1899 Hoffenheim
<input type="checkbox"/>	119.		FC Internazionale Milano
<input type="checkbox"/>	120.		Juventus

2 **Votoni vetëm një kandidat** Shënjoni vetëm një kandidat të subjektit politik që keni zgjedhur në anën e majtë
Glasajte samo za jednog kandidata Označite samo jednog kandidata političkog subjekta kojeg ste izabrali na levoj strani
Sadece bir aday için oy kullanınız Sol tarafta seçtiğiniz siyasi varlığın sadece bir adayını işaretleyiniz

<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	6
<input type="checkbox"/>	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	8	<input type="checkbox"/>	9	<input type="checkbox"/>	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	11
<input type="checkbox"/>	12	<input type="checkbox"/>	13	<input type="checkbox"/>	14	<input type="checkbox"/>	15	<input type="checkbox"/>	16
<input type="checkbox"/>	17	<input type="checkbox"/>	18	<input type="checkbox"/>	19	<input type="checkbox"/>	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	21
<input type="checkbox"/>	22	<input type="checkbox"/>	23	<input type="checkbox"/>	24	<input type="checkbox"/>	25	<input type="checkbox"/>	26
<input type="checkbox"/>	27	<input type="checkbox"/>	28	<input type="checkbox"/>	29	<input type="checkbox"/>	30	<input type="checkbox"/>	31
<input type="checkbox"/>	32	<input type="checkbox"/>	33	<input type="checkbox"/>	34	<input type="checkbox"/>	35	<input type="checkbox"/>	36

<input type="checkbox"/>	121.	 Liverpool FC
<input type="checkbox"/>	122.	 FC Lokomotiv Moskva
<input type="checkbox"/>	123.	 Olympique Lyonnais
<input type="checkbox"/>	124.	 Manchester City FC
<input type="checkbox"/>	125.	 Manchester United FC
<input type="checkbox"/>	126.	 AS Monaco FC

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	37	38	39	40	41
<input type="checkbox"/>	42	43	44	45	46
<input type="checkbox"/>	47	48	49	50	51
<input type="checkbox"/>	52	53	54	55	56

ANNEX IV - New ballot design for the first and second round of local mayoral elections



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ZGJEDHJET PËR KRYETAR KOMUNE 2017
IZBORI ZA SKUPŠTINU OPŠTINE 2017
BELEDIJE MECLISI SEÇIMLERI 2017

Votoni vetëm një
kandidat

Glasajte samo za
jednog kandidata

Sadece bir aday için
oy kullanınız

<input type="checkbox"/>	10.		Antoine Griezmann Club Atlético de Madrid
<input type="checkbox"/>	30.		Lionel Messi FC Barcelona
<input type="checkbox"/>	33.		Manuel Neuer FC Bayern München
<input type="checkbox"/>	41.		Mats Rits Club Brugge
<input type="checkbox"/>	48.		Vitali Zhironkin CSKA Moskva
<input type="checkbox"/>	55.		Marco Reus Borussia Dortmund
<input type="checkbox"/>	61.		Eren Derdiyok Galatasaray AŞ
<input type="checkbox"/>	88.		David Otto TSG 1899 Hoffenheim

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Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova
Republic of Kosovo
Komisioni Qendror i Zgjedhjeve
Centralna Izborna Komisija
Central Election Commission



RAUNDI I DYTË I ZGJEDHJEVE PËR KRYETAR KOMUNE 2017
DRUGI KRUG IZBORA ZA PREDSEDNIKA OPŠTINE 2017
2017 BELEDIYE BAŞKANI SEÇİMLERİ'NİN İKİNCİ TURU

Votoni vetëm një
kandidat

Glasajte samo za
jednog kandidata

Sadece bir aday için
oy kullanınız



10.

**Antoine Griezmann**

Club Atlético de Madrid



30.

**Lionel Messi**

FC Barcelona

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK
DANIDA | **INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

**Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC**

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*KDI is a non-governmental organization (NGO) committed to supporting the development of democracy through the involvement of citizens in public policy-making and empowerment of the civil society sector with the aim of influencing the enhancement of transparency and accountability by public institutions.

For more information on KDI please visit www.kdi-kosova.org



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