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Democracy in Action

ELECTION CAMPAIGN MONITORING

Early Elections for the Assembly of Kosovo 2021

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Early Election
Observation Report
Kosovo Assembly
Elections

**Election Campaign
Monitoring
Early Elections for
the Assembly of
Kosovo 2021**

Report from
media monitoring
during the election
campaign: Elections
for the Assembly of
Kosovo

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List of abbreviations

AAK	Alliance for the Future of Kosovo
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DiA	Democracy in Action
NIPHK	National Institute of Public Health of Kosovo
KDTP	Turkish Democratic Party of Kosovo
CEC	Central Election Commission
MEC	Municipal Election Commissions
LDK	Democratic League of Kosovo
LVV	Vetëvendosje Movement
WHO	World Health Organization
PDK	Democratic Party of Kosovo
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army

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Introduction

For the fifth time in a row since the declaration of independence Kosovo again held early elections. Central Election Commission (CEC) set the February 14, 2021 to be the election day, and decided that the election campaign shall be ten days, respectively from 3 to 12 February 2021, followed by a day of election silence.¹ A total of 28 political entities took part in these elections, of which 21 were political parties, 2 coalitions and 5 citizens' initiatives.

This report contains primary data from the monitoring of progress of election campaign for early elections for Assembly of Kosovo by the long-term observers of Democracy in Action (DiA) coalition.² The paper is organized in several sections. Firstly, it provides a detailed description of the structure and methodology of the paper and the way how data were received and processed by observers in the field. Then it provides a brief background information to describe the context in which early election were organized. It also includes the political impact of the "Special Court" on the election campaign. Finally, it provides key information from the field which is summarized in the main part of the paper "Election Campaign Monitoring", which is divided into specific areas and provides qualitative and quantitative information on the development of the ten-day election campaign.

In general, election campaign was smooth and without any serious incidents. Relevant institutions were not notified for a significant part of events organized by political entities. The most common activity during the campaign were visits with citizens, door-to-door activities and visits to specific institutions. These activities were accompanied by large gatherings of people, not complying with the rules for physical distance and for wearing masks properly. The campaign was also characterized by low participation of women in election campaign events as participants and as speakers. Further, the campaign was characterized by elements of hate speech. Ensuring access for persons with disabilities to premises where political entities organized election campaign activities continues to remain a challenge. However, there were no obstacles for the media and civil society organizations to monitor and follow the campaign activities.³

1 Kallxo.com, "Election campaign from 3 to 12 February", 07 January 2021

2 Democracy in Action is a coalition of non-governmental organisations established in 2007, which supports promotion of free elections as most essential part for a democratic society. DiA promotes participations in free elections through voter education; promotes citizens' right and obligation to be part of the election process; cooperates with local, regional and international organisations in building a transparent and democratic process.

3 Democracy in Action, "DiA: Calls upon citizens to participate in elections", 13 February 2021

Methodology

Democracy in Action (DiA) has monitored the election campaign by engaging 16 observers in the field, who operated in seven major municipalities of Kosovo, Prishtina, South Mitrovica, Peja, Prizren, Gjilan, Ferizaj and Gjakova, and in two Serb-majority municipalities, North Mitrovica and Gračanica, in the period from February 3 to February 12, 2021. The vast majority of the information used in this paper is firsthand information obtained directly from the event venues and in specific cases, political programs and expenditures of political entities were received in writing through email contacts. While a small portion of information and citations in this report are secondary.

The observers monitored the development of political entities' election campaign and reported on daily basis on observed events, meetings with political entities, meetings of the Municipal Election Commissions (MECs), and various irregularities recorded during the election campaign. Observers completed specific forms during the monitoring, which were entered into a database and sent to the DiA's centre as scanned documents scanned together with relevant photographs, which were later used to verify and process the information.

The forms that observers filled in recorded data such as location of the event/meeting (city/municipality where the event took place), date and time of the beginning and the end of the event/meeting, observer's first and last name. In the form for monitoring events of political entities, observers had to monitor the event before it started, during and after it ended. Some of the categories of the form included:

- Activities organized by political entities,
- Citizen participation in election activities,
- Electoral messages of political entities,
- Speakers in activities of political entities,
- Use of public resources in the campaign,
- Atmosphere of electoral activities,
- Presence of the media during activities,
- Adherence to anti-COVID-19 measures.

DiA observers also took part in the regular MEC meetings to obtain information on events announced by political entities, in order to monitor such events and report if the MEC had been notified by political entities about the monitored event or not.

Background

Kosovo held early elections on October 6, 2020, which resulted in the victory of the Vetëvendosje Movement (LVV), which was followed very closely by the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK). LVV and LDK agreed on a ruling coalition which lasted only 52 days. Disagreements between the coalition partners were deep and made the LDK initiate a motion of no-confidence in the government, which was passed successfully in the Assembly. As a result, Kosovo ended up in a new institutional crisis, all in the midst of dealing with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

After the vote of no-confidence in the government was passed, former President Hashim Thaçi sent three written letters to the LVV as entity that had won the elections, requesting a new nominee to form the government. LVV never responded to president's request and it was of the opinion that the country should go to the polls after the overthrow of the government.⁴ Since LVV did not propose any nominee for prime minister, President Thaçi concluded that the right to nominate a candidate had been exhausted, thus proceeding with the nomination of another candidate. After conducting consultations with political entities, President Thaçi requested the LDK, as political entity that came second in the parliamentary elections of October 6, 2019, to nominate a candidate. LDK responded positively to such a request proposing Avdullah Hoti as a candidate for prime minister. As a result, the president decreed Avdullah Hoti as a prime minister-designate, thus opening the way for forming the new government. On June 3, 2020, the Assembly of Kosovo with 61 votes in favor, 24 against and one abstention, voted the new government of Kosovo with Avdullah Hoti as Prime Minister.⁵

The voting procedure, however, turned out to be problematic. LVV filed an appeal with the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Kosovo alleging that Etem Arifi's vote had no legitimacy due to the fact that he was convicted by the Basic Court in Prishtina with a final decision. MP Arifi was sentenced to one year and three months' imprisonment by the Court of Appeals for subsidy fraud. Although convicted, Arifi voted 'for' the election of the Hoti government in the session of June 3, and his vote was decisive to forming the Hoti government.⁶

On December 22, 2020, the Constitutional Court issued a judgment on LVV's appeal and found that the vote of MP Etem Arifi for the election of Hoti Government was invalid. As a result, the Court ordered organization of election within 40 days. The incumbent President of Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani, dissolved the seventh Legislature of the Assembly of Kosovo, setting February 14 as the date for parliamentary elections.

Although it was decided to have a ten-day election campaign, political entities started their campaigning before the official deadline that was set from 3 to 12 February 2021. Lack of legal regulation created room for the so-called election pre-campaign. Political entities took advantage of this opportunity to campaign unhindered using resources and organizing various activities up to February 3, when the election campaign officially started.

⁴ Radio Free Europe, "Thaçi requests again the name of the mandated person from Vetëvendosje", 15 April 2020.

⁵ Bekim Shehu, "Parliament of Kosovo voted the new government with the Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti", Deutsche Welle, 03 June 2020.

⁶ Top Channel, "Constitutional Court decides! Kosovo to have elections in 40 days", 21 December 2020.

The impact of “Special Court” on the election campaign

In June 2020, the Specialist Prosecutor’s Office of Kosovo of the Specialist Chambers, otherwise known as the “Special Court”, through a public notice announced that a ten-count indictment had been filed with the Specialist Chambers, in which Hashim Thaçi, Kadri Veseli and other persons were charged with a range of crimes against humanity and war crimes, including murder, enforced disappearance of persons, persecution, and torture.⁷

The news caused a great commotion in Kosovo and caused a drastic change in the public discourse shifting the debate on the war of Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), its doings, and potential damages that the Special Court was causing for Kosovo. Publication of indictments continued throughout the year, including those of well-known KLA figures such as Rexhep Selimi, Jakup Krasniqi and others, as well as indictments for obstruction of justice against Hysni Gucati and Nasim Haradinaj.

The appearance of these political exponents at the Special Court as defendants had a significant impact on the election campaign. On the one hand, their absence in election activities may have had an impact on dampening the enthusiasm of their supporters, but on the other hand it was used as a reason to mobilize voters. At least three of the political entities: PDK, Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) and NISMA, which are known as parties that emerged from the war, based their political discourse on the liberation war and showed support for the indicted persons in The Hague. More specifically, AAK chose the

slogan “Forca e Kosovës” (Kosovo Force), while the Social Democratic Initiative NISMA “Me Çlirimtarët” (With the liberators), which aimed to mobilize the electorate using patriotic sentiment and the support for Kosovo liberation war. “The KLA is not the past, it is the very foundation of the state. We are proud of this legacy and will defend it. With the Liberators, this is who we are, this is what defines us”, leader of NISMA Fatmir Limaj wrote on Facebook.⁸ In contrast, the PDK focused on economic recovery so their slogan was “Recovery”, but the discourse on the KLA prevailed as a topic during the election campaign.

7 Kosovo Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor’s Office, Press Statement, 24 June 2020.

8 Zëri.Info, “With the Liberators’ NISMA’s slogan for 14 February elections”, 26 January 2021.

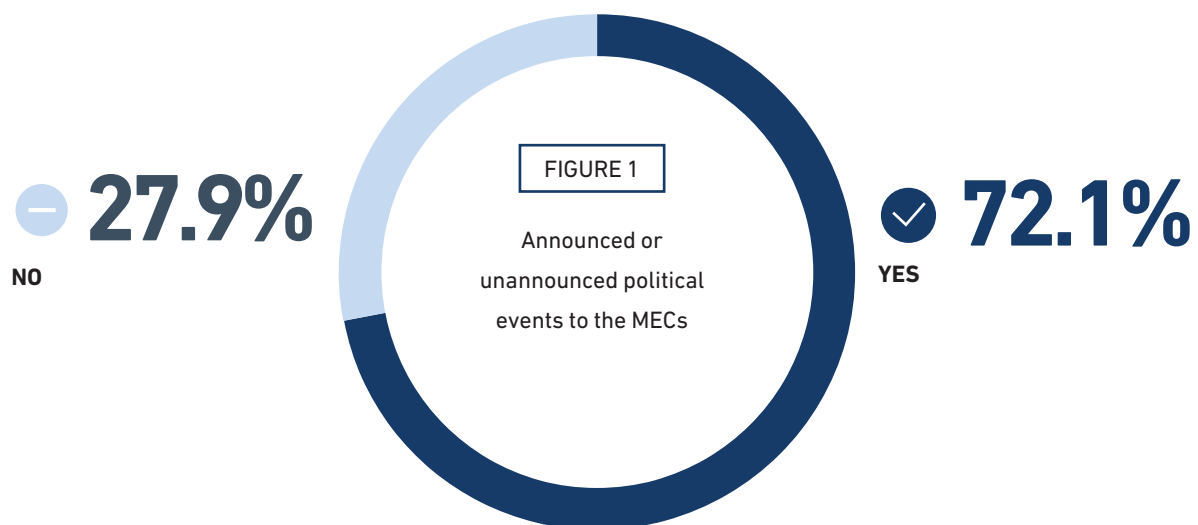
Election Campaign Monitoring

Election activities by political entities, municipalities and forms of organization

During the entire election campaign, DiA observed 179 election activities, mostly those for which MECs were notified. Political entities violated the law by failing to notify Municipal Election Commissions (MECs) of respective municipalities for all the events planned during the election campaign, as provided by the CEC Operational Plan on the Security of Early Elections for the Assembly of Kosovo.⁹

Despite the legal requirement, political entities neglected reporting of a significant portion of events prior to holding them. Based on the election regulation No.13,

Article 44 and 62.2, point (a) and (b) and article 128.2 of the Law no. 03/L-073 on General Elections, political entities are required to notify MECs of all their election campaign events, in normal conditions 72 hours before the event, or in case of early elections such as those of February 14, at least 24 hours before the event.¹⁰ According to the information received from observers in the field, only 72.1% of monitored events were reported to the MEC, while the other 27.9% were not reported at all.



⁹ Central Election Commission, Decision: On the adoption of CEC Operational Plan for the Security of Early Elections for the Assembly of Kosovo, 13 January 2020.

¹⁰ Central Election Commission, "Election Regulation No. 13/2013 – Electoral Campaign and Notice for Political Events", 03 July 2013

DiA has made a request for information on the total number of appeals and complaints. According to the information received, number of appeals is 578, while the number of complaints is 21, or 599 in total. A total of 35 complaints and two appeals were filed related to the election campaign. While the largest number of complaints, 102.¹¹, was filed on the day of election silence.¹²

Election activities of political entities monitored by DiA observers include walking in the squares; public gatherings; meetings with targeted groups; stands and door-to-door visits. The most popular forms of election activities among them were public gatherings and meetings with targeted groups. According to observers' reports, political entities have organized a total of 136 public rallies, while there were 33 meetings with targeted groups. There were no more than five other events but it should be noted that a significant number of walking in the squares were not reported at all to the MECs.

Due to the situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic and measures in force, election campaign was conducted more in the form of door-to-door visits in smaller groups, which was difficult to be monitored by DiA observers, and as such, a significant number of them were not reported to the competent authority, namely the MEC. Organized events divided into specific categories are shown below:

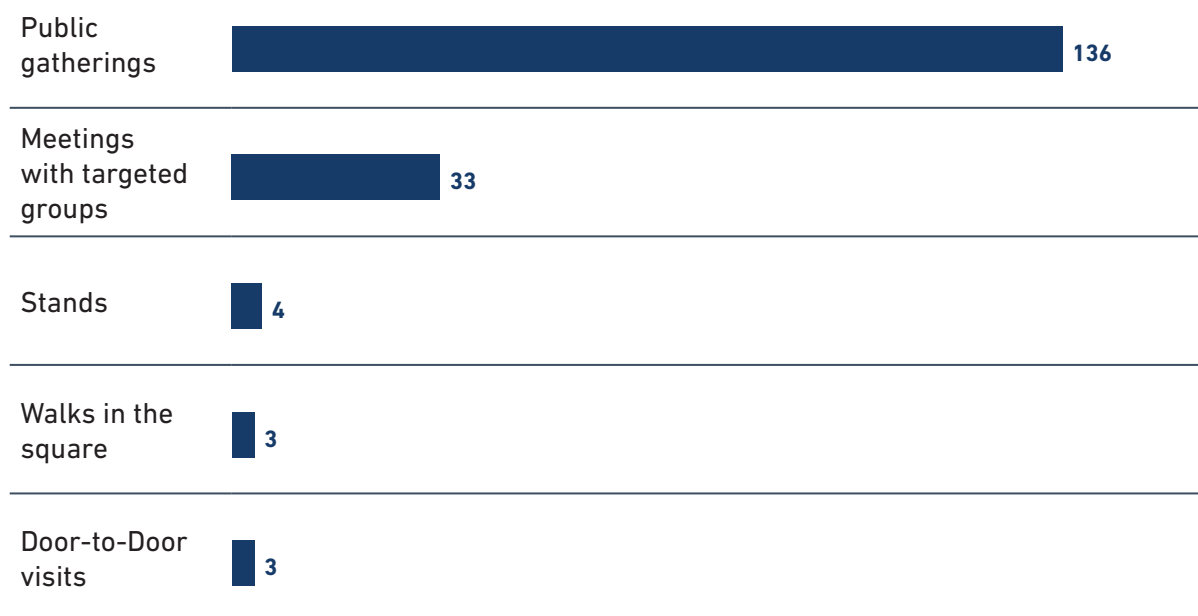


FIGURE 2 Type of events monitored during the campaign

¹¹ Information received via email from Central Election Commission.
¹² Ibid.

An interesting feature about the organization of events is the fact that the number of events in municipalities did not necessarily correspond to the number of population in those municipalities. From the data obtained from DiA field observers, the capital had a lower number of organized events, 11, compared to municipalities

of Peja and Prizren which had 34 and 35 respectively. There was a large number of events in municipalities of Ferizaj, Gjilan and Mitrovica, while in other municipalities there are no more than 10. A detailed overview of the number of monitored events is presented in the graph below:

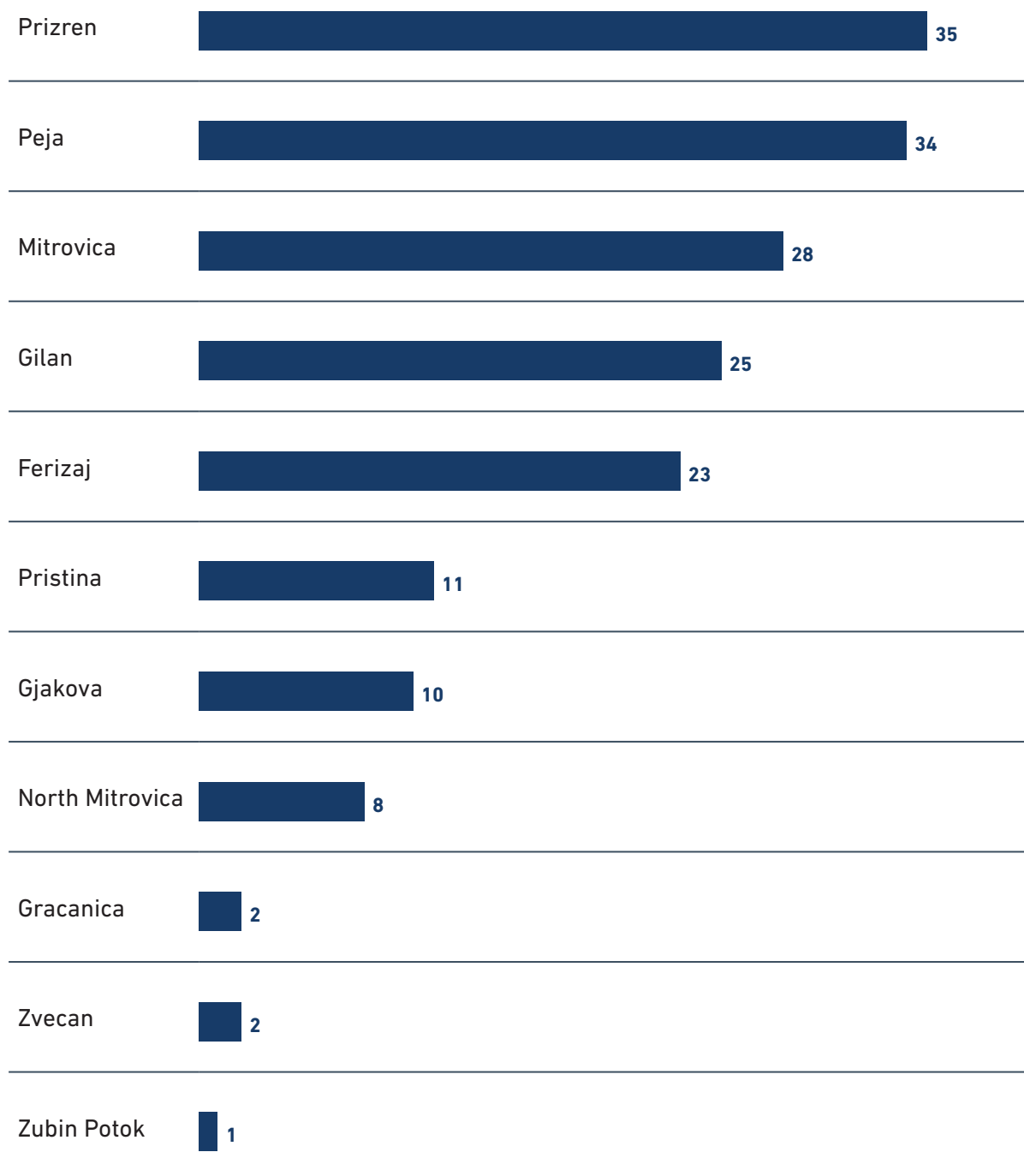


FIGURE 3 Organization of election events by municipalities

There is a difference in the organization of events by political entities. LVV leads in organizing events with a total of 58, followed by LDK with 44 and PDK with 35 events. Other entities do not exceed 20, while there is only one event organized by political entities from minorities, not including the Serbian List which organized eight events.

As for the organization of events in specific municipalities, there is a distinction between political entities regarding municipalities in which their election campaign was focused. LVV organized most election ac-

tivities in the municipalities of Ferizaj and Prizren with 12 activities respectively. LDK events were organized mainly in municipality of Peja with 13 events and municipality of Gjilan with 10 of them. Whereas, PDK was not specifically focused in any municipality, however, the municipality of Gjilan leads with eight activities, followed by municipalities of Mitrovica and Prizren with seven activities in total. The focus of AAK in organizing events was the municipality of Peja with a total of nine organized events.

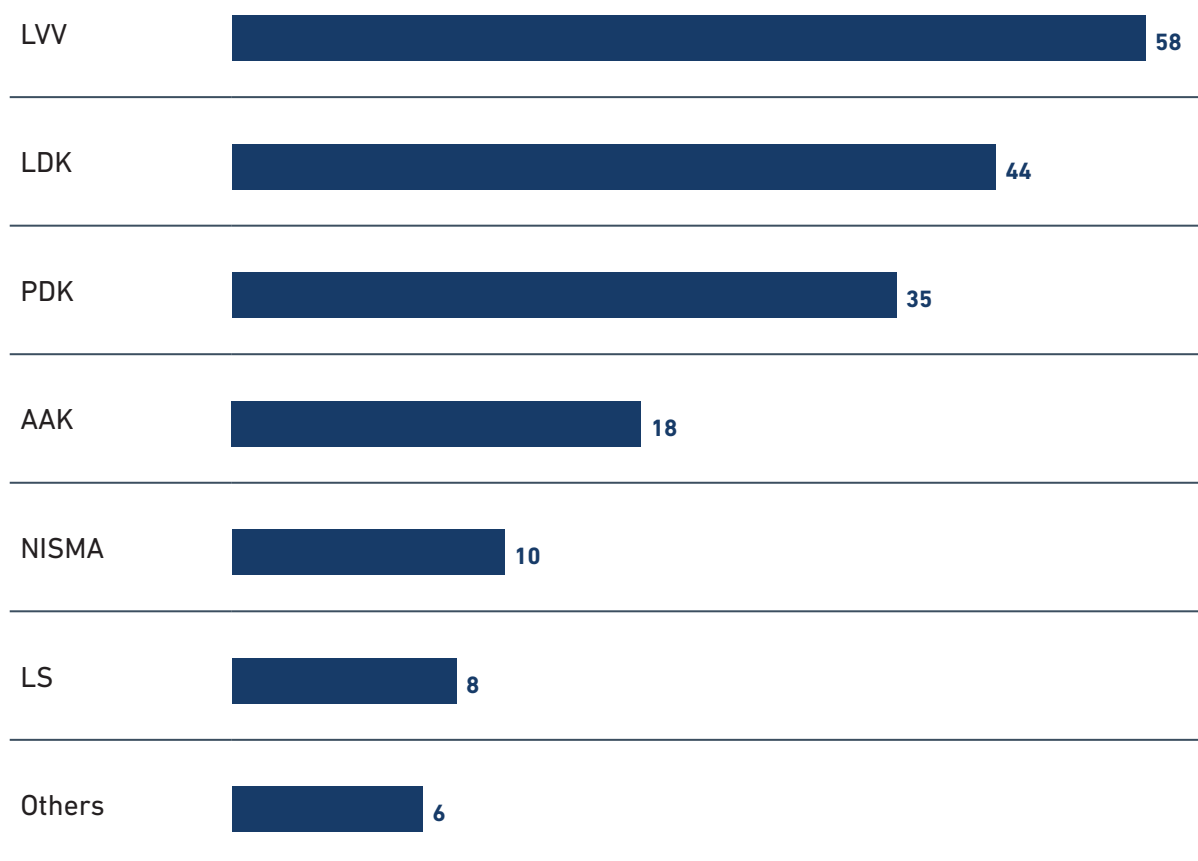


FIGURE 4 Organisation of election events by political entities

A total of 26,678 participants were reported to have taken part in all political party activities and events that were monitored.¹³ On average, there were about 149

participants per event. Considering the measures in force for protection against COVID-19 pandemic, this number was relatively high, especially taking into account the limitations of indoor (up to 30 people) and outdoor gatherings (up to 50 people).

¹³ Number of participants is based on perceptions of field observers, who have determined total number of participants based on their individual assessments.

The publication of election campaign expenditures remains an issue. DiA has requested from political entities to understand more about the expenditures of political entities, however, only three political entities responded to such request, namely LVV, Turkish Democratic Party of Kosovo (KDTP) and Party Fjala. While other political entities have not indicated their willingness to show transparency for their financing and expenditures.¹⁴

Adherence to anti-COVID 19 measures

Since these elections were organized under exceptional conditions, at a time when the country was still facing the COVID-19 pandemic, DiA has included another aspect in its observation: how much political entities respected the government's measures for management of pandemic. Three days before the election day, respectively on February 11, 2021, at the request of the incumbent Prime Minister, Avdullah Hoti, a decision was adopted to ease measures for protection against COVID-19 pandemic. The new decision, among other things, lifted the curfew and restriction of movement for municipalities that were in red zones. Whereas, all economic operators in the municipalities that were in the red zone, were allowed to work until 22:00.

DiA received this decision with a concern at a time when the country was facing a steady increase in the number of infected persons. Moreover, this decision of the government was contradictory and discriminatory due to the fact that measures were eased only for the citizens living in Kosovo, while for citizens living abroad, measures remained the same - when entering Kosovo they were required to present a negative RT-PCR test done no more than 72 hours before or otherwise to self-isolate for seven days.¹⁵

Despite easing of the measures, in the vast majority of both outdoor and indoor election activities, anti-COVID-19 restrictions recommended by the relevant institution, National Institute of Public Health of Kosovo (NIPHK) and imposed by the Government of Kosovo

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were not respected. Political entities continued to organize activities with large numbers of citizens, disregarding the restrictions on the maximum number of participants allowed. At the same time, non-compliance with physical distancing and wearing masks has been evident in almost all monitored activities.¹⁶

In the events organized indoors, respect for the social distance was almost completely neglected, only in 12 cases the political entities respected the social distance, which represents a very small number. Out of 179 monitored events, 78 events did not adhere to any measures, including wearing masks, distancing, providing disinfectants and limited participation in up to 30 people.

¹⁴ Democracy in Action, "DiA: A campaign without data on the method of financing of political entities", 9 February 2021.

¹⁵ Reaction in the social network Facebook, Democracy in Action, "DiA: Government to review new anti-Covid measures which could discriminate voters coming from abroad", 11 February 2021.

¹⁶ Democracy in Action, "DiA: Dynamic election campaign but with no adherence to measures against COVID-19", 6 February 2021.

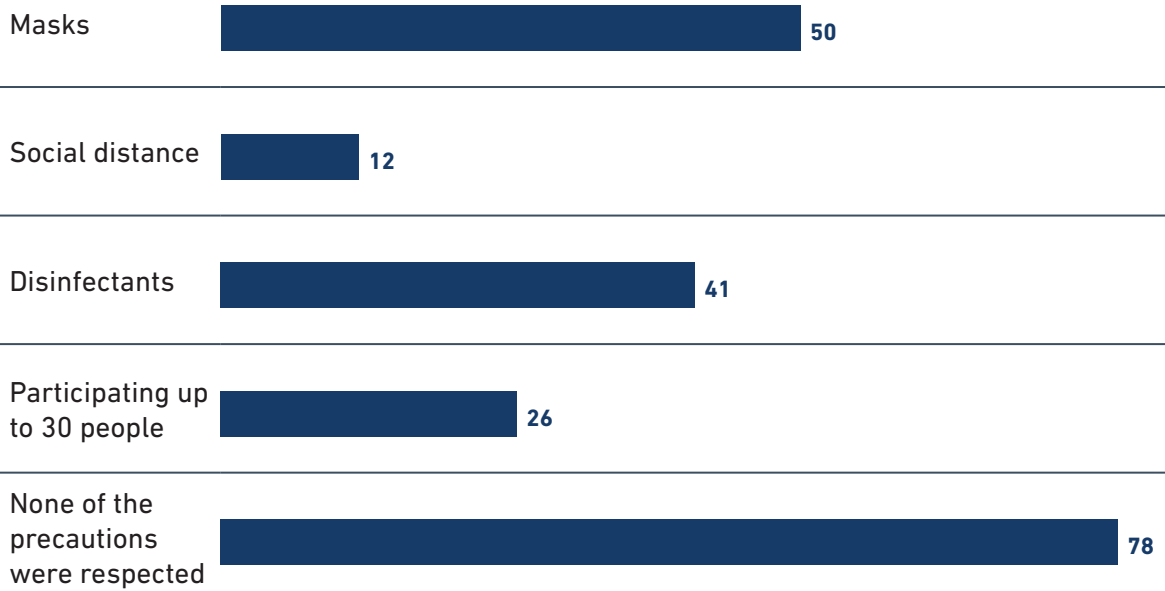


FIGURE 5 Adherence to anti-COVID-19 measures indoors

Whereas, in the events organized in open spaces, we noticed a better compliance with the imposed rules. Only eight cases were identified in which no measures were respected and only in seven cases the distancing was not

respected. However, in both cases there were violations of rules by persons and political entities that were competing to represent the people, and which at the same time put the public health at risk.

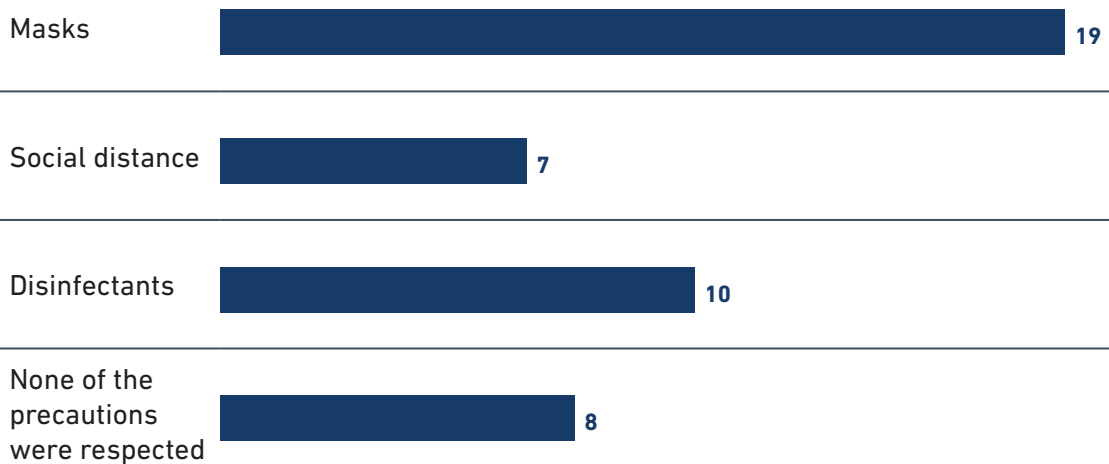


FIGURE 6 Adherence of anti-COVID-19 measures outdoors

Use of official vehicles and presence of public servants in the campaign

The legislation in force prohibits the use of public, financial and human resources by the ruling political entities, as their use would create a distinct advantage and disrupt the principle of equal competition between entities. According to the law 03/L-073 on General Elections, respectively article 2 states that “[T]he use of public office, resources, or staff of any institution at a central or local level for the purpose of supporting a political entity in an election is strictly prohibited.¹⁷ Whereas, Article 3 explains what is meant by resources: “[R]esource’ shall include tangible and intangible items as defined in the applicable rules of an institution, such as vehicles, expendable material, photocopy, phone, cell phone, office equipment, premises.”¹⁸

The use of official vehicles and presence of public servants in the election campaign has been generally low. DiA observers recorded a few cases during the monitoring of field activities. In the monitored events were reported nine cases of use of official vehicles in the campaign. This year there has been a significant progress compared to the 2019 parliamentary elections in

which the use of official vehicles has been reported in 38 activities.¹⁹

Furthermore, 19 public servants were reported to have participated in election campaigning. Number of public servants is higher than the use of official vehicles. Even in this aspect there has been a significant improvement compared to the 2019 elections, in which were recorded 124 cases of public servants’ participation in the campaign.²⁰ An overview of the use of official vehicles and public servants is included below:



FIGURE 7 Use of official vehicles and presence of public servants in the campaign

17 Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo, Law on General Elections, 15 June 2008.
18 Ibid.

19 Democracy in Action, “Election Monitoring Report: Election for the Assembly of Kosovo”, December 2019.
20 Ibid.

The media and general atmosphere of the election campaign

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, measures in force and failure of political entities to report election events to the MEC, the media have been present in most election campaign activities. Based on

the information obtained in the field, the media were present in 103 events, out of a total of 179, or 58% of the events. On the other hand, no case of media obstruction during the election campaign was reported. Below is a graph illustrating the information obtained from the field:

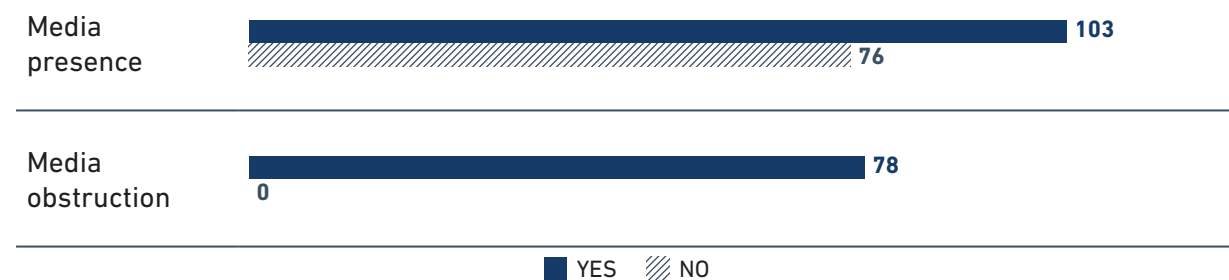


FIGURE 8 Media presence and media obstruction in the election campaign

The atmosphere in the events organized by political entities was also calm and there were no serious incidents. Out of 179 cases monitored, only one case was reported as “not calm”, which did not have any impact on the overall atmosphere of election campaign.

was extremely low, respectively less than 30% in the monitored events.

Participation in the campaign by gender

Inclusion and representation of women in the election campaign continued to be low. Despite the adoption of laws for greater representation of women in institutions, namely the *Law on Gender Equality and the Law on General Elections*, this is not being reflected in the participation of a higher number of women in election campaign. Also, despite numerous promises from political entities for more space for women, their inclusion still remains low.

In the first case, women participation in election campaign events was extremely low. Women were present only 24% compared to men. In the other case, we noticed a slight increase in the number of women who were speakers during the election campaign, but this increase is very small compared to the overall participation of women in the monitored events, where number of women speakers for political entities has been only 5% higher, or 27% compared to men. Numbers were relatively the same in the 2019 parliamentary elections. Only 25.3% of speakers in all activities organized by political entities were women, while the number of female participants in election campaign was only about 25%.²¹ An overview of gender participation is provided below:

Regarding women participation in election campaign and their participation as speakers of political entities they represented, there is a significant discrepancy compared to men. In both cases, participation of women in the campaign and their participation as speakers

²¹ Democracy in Action “Election Monitoring Report: Election for the Assembly of Kosovo”, December 2019.

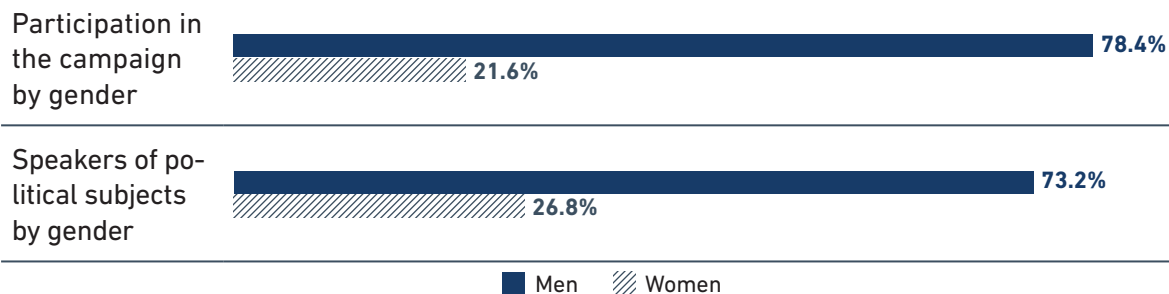
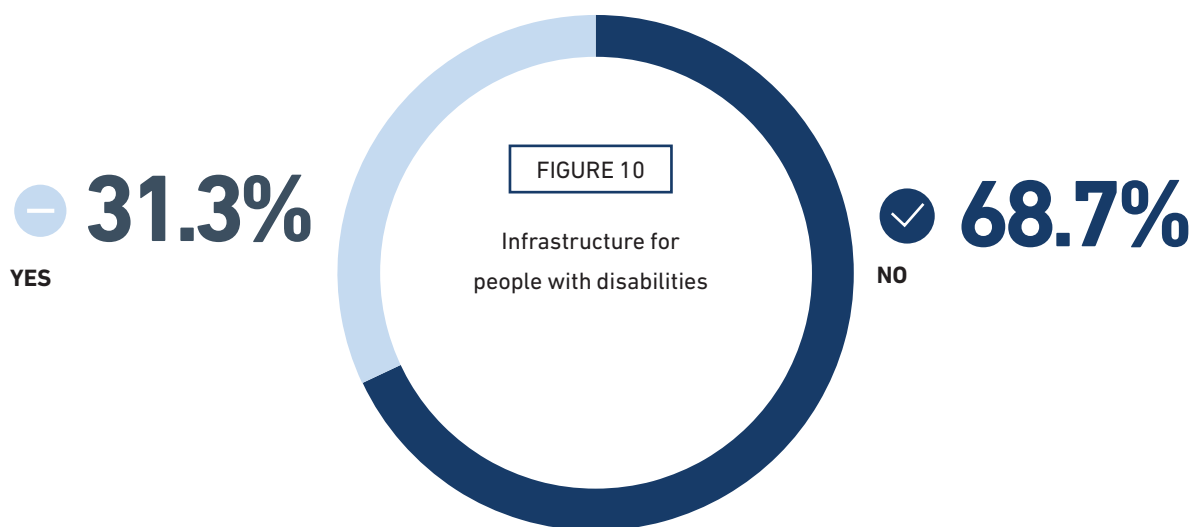


FIGURE 9 Participation in the campaign by gender

Infrastructure for people with disabilities

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) data, it is estimated that people with disabilities represent about 15% of the population or about 150,000-200,000 people.²² However, providing infrastructure for people with disabilities remains a challenge in Kosovo. During this election campaign, DiA has also monitored the access and space that people with disabilities have in election activities, based on the fundamental right of all citizens to be informed.

DiA observers reported a large number of events in which persons with disabilities were not provided with minimum infrastructure to access the event. According to reports, about 31% of events organized by political entities did not provide the necessary infrastructure for these persons. This makes the situation worse compared to parliamentary elections 2019, in which adequate physical access was not guaranteed for people with disabilities in 27.5% of election activities.²³



22 Group for Access to Elections, "Guide for inclusion of disabled persons for participation in election and political processes", June 2016.

23 Democracy in Action, Election Monitoring Report: Election for the Assembly of Kosovo", December 2019.

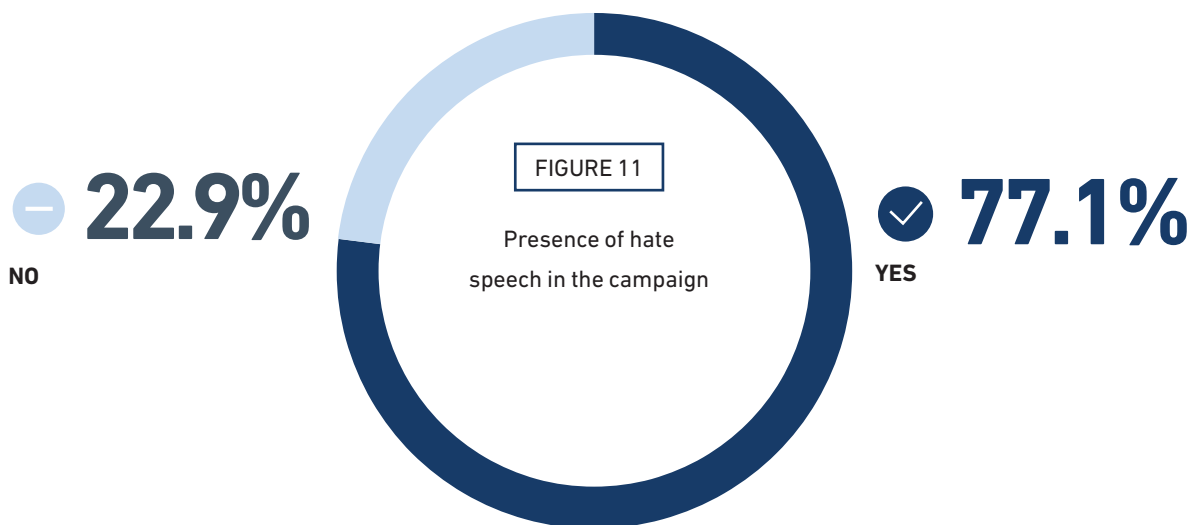
Presence of hate speech in the campaign

Hate speech is regulated with the Constitution and the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo. According to the Constitution, respectively Article 40.2 "The freedom of expression can be limited by law in cases when it is necessary to prevent encouragement or provocation of violence and hostility on grounds of race, nationality, ethnicity or religion".²⁴ Whereas the Criminal Code in Article 141 (Inciting discord and intolerance), point 1 defines that, "Whoever publicly incites or publicly spreads hatred, discord and intolerance between national, racial, religious, ethnic and other groups or based on sexual orientation, gender identity and other personal characteristics, in a manner which is likely to disturb the public order shall be punished by a fine or imprisonment of up to five (5) years".²⁵

Hate speech has been relatively present in the election campaign. According to observers in the field, 41 cases were reported, or 22.9% of total number of monitored cases. Hate speech has been mainly on personal and political grounds. In the reported cases, there were calls not to vote for certain persons or political entities that do not want to maintain good relations with Kosovo's allies. Further, in some cases, some persons from some political entities were labeled as traitors or extortion-

ists of the country. In some other cases were attacked persons who had changed political entity. Also, political opponents were not restrained from ad-hominem attacks against their rivals.

In the context of monitoring the election campaign, Democracy in Action filed a series of complaints against political entities. Two of these which were approved by the ECAP, were precisely related to the hate speech used in two spots by political entities AAK and NISMA, which were fined with 20 thousand EURO each.

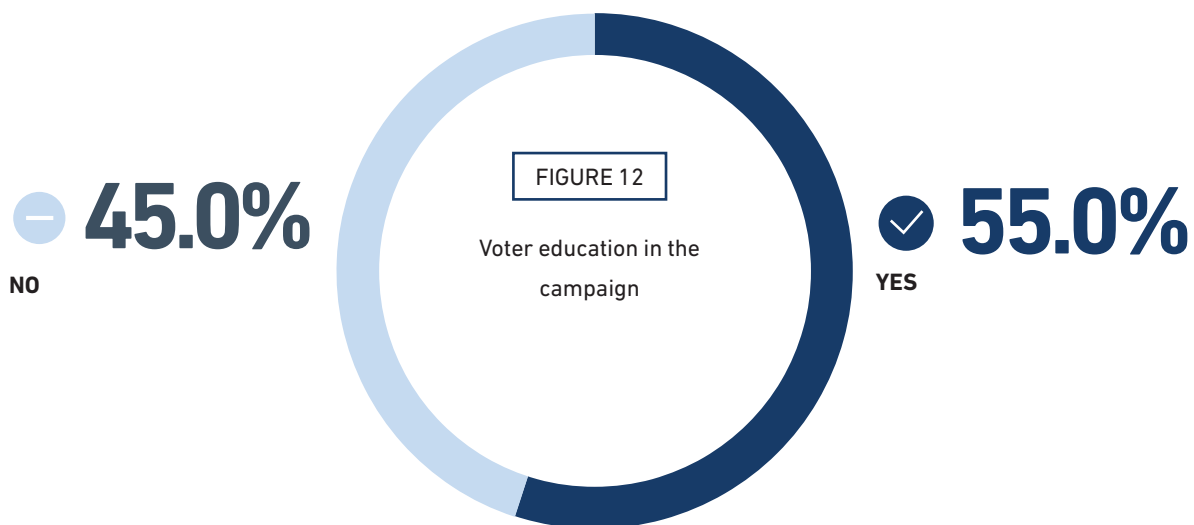


²⁴ Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo.
²⁵ Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo.

Voter education by political entities

In terms of voter education, political entities were not very interested in educating their electorate on how to vote on the election day. DiA observers reported that in

only 55% of monitored cases political entities were engaged in voter education. In the recorded cases, candidates from political entities were focused on educating voters how to vote for specific candidates by referring to their numbers on the list.



Political programs and topics discussed in the election campaign

The election campaign discourse was focused mainly on domestic issues, especially on economic and social welfare issues. In particular, 1) Economic development, agriculture, and employment; 2) Education; and 3) Health insurance, pensions and social welfare were the three most discussed topics in the campaign. Other topics like culture, youth and sports as well as justice and rule of law were also quite present in the campaign.

Whereas, a very little interest was noticed among political entities to discuss about foreign policy and Kosovo-Serbia dialogue. This is in stark contrast with the campaigns in the past in which promises and discussions about reciprocity with Serbia, demarcation of the border with Montenegro, visa liberalization or membership in international organizations, were traditionally key aspects of discussions by competing political entities. The main political forces in the country, LVV, PDK, LDK and AAK, albeit with a delay, published their political programs on their official websites. LVV published the political program with priorities that are based on ten

areas: education and economy; public health; justice; addressing war crimes; public safety; Kosovo defence and security force; foreign policy; art; cultural heritage and sports.²⁶ PDK has also published their governing program on their official website which was based on recovery policies that were focused on four main pillars: economy; health; rule of law and foreign policy and image.²⁷ Further, LDK has published its program on the official website focusing on eight key areas: Comprehensive economic development; health; justice/law and order; social policy; foreign policy; education and science; diaspora and culture, youth and sport.²⁸ Whereas, AAK was focused on four pillars: economy; security and rule of law; welfare and foreign policy.²⁹

26 Vetëvendosje Movement, political program, February 2021.

27 Democratic Party of Kosovo, political program, February 2021.

28 Democratic League of Kosovo, political program, February 2021.

29 Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, political program, February 2021.

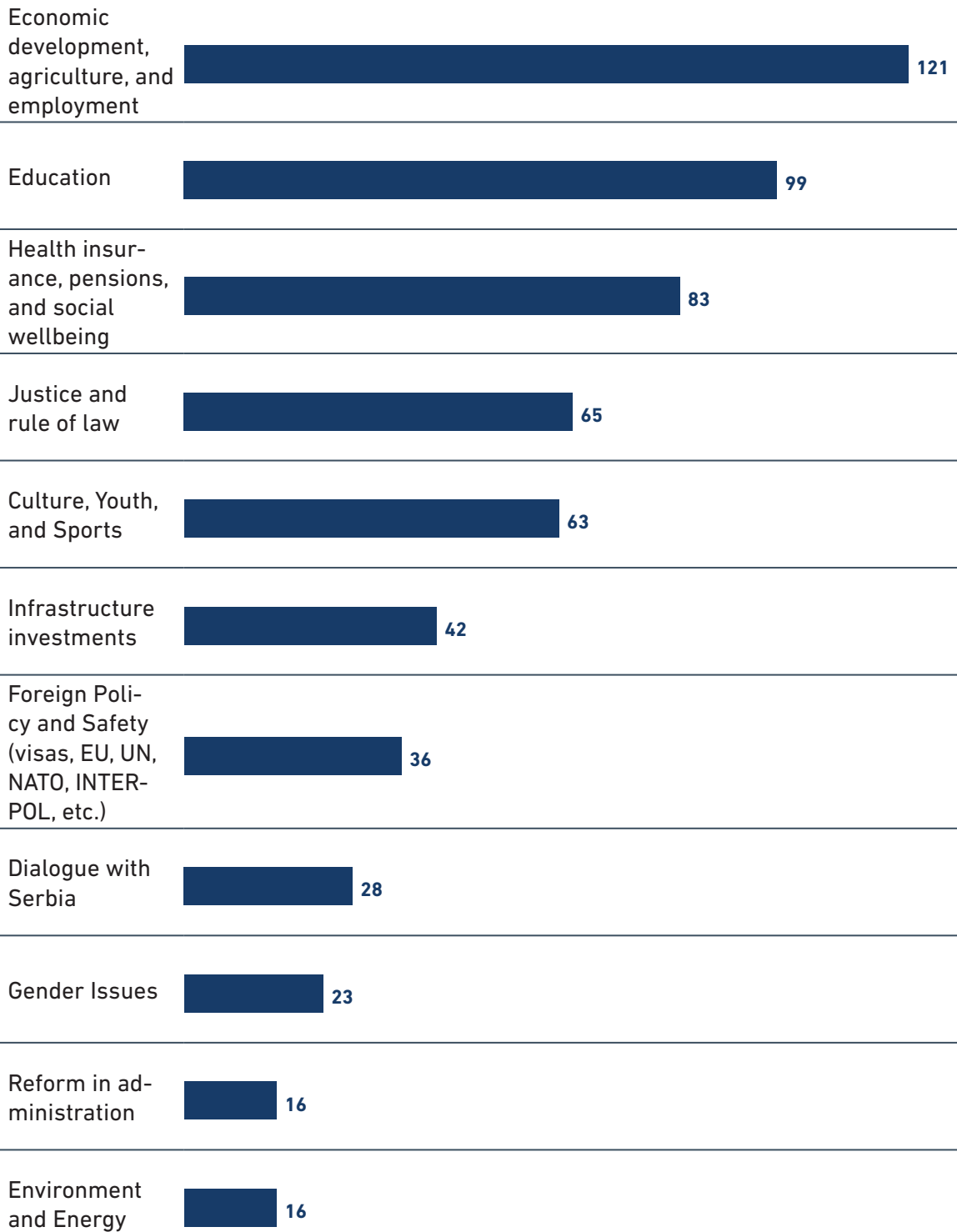
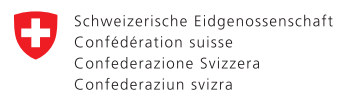


FIGURE 13: Topics discussed during the election campaign

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the election campaign monitoring, DiA has come up with some recommendations which aim to improve the conduct of election campaign, compliance with applicable legal provisions, and create more favorable conditions for marginalized groups:

- Political entities should report their election activities as defined by law, under normal conditions 72 hours before the event, or in case of early elections, like the ones February 14, at least 24 hours before the event.
- Political entities should publish their political programs in a timely manner, so that they are accessible to all citizens.
- Political entities should make public all their expenses during the election campaign.
- Ruling political entities must comply with applicable laws related to the use of public resources (such as official vehicles) in election campaign, which is strictly prohibited and creates a disadvantage for other competing entities.
- Political entities in the country are required to create more favorable conditions and more space for women participants and speakers during the election campaign.
- Persons with disabilities should be provided with adequate physical infrastructure for access to every activity organized by political entities during the election campaign.
- Candidates of political entities should stop attacks and insults on personal, ethnic, religious and other grounds against their political rivals. Hate speech is punishable by law and exacerbates the general atmosphere of election campaign and at the same time may incite violence and hatred.
- Although these elections were held at a time when the country was still facing COVID-19 pandemic and the likelihood of such a situation recurring is small, nevertheless, political entities have public and legal responsibilities and must adhere to all measures in force and should take the public health of citizens seriously.
- Decisions taken by the government just before the elections should also take into consideration citizens living abroad in order to avoid contradictory and discriminatory decisions.



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