

## IN THIS ISSUE:

- “Democracy and politics in Albania: seeking true qualitative representation” AIIS presents survey results at the eve of the general elections. Read more about it on “Highlight”, pages 1-2.
- AIIS hosts the European Forum on Democracy and Human Rights: Contribution of Council of Europe throughout the years. Read more about it on “Our Events” page 3
- AIIS co-hosts with the Embassy of Poland to Albania a seminar on the historical aspects of Polish-Albanian relations. Read more about it on page 4
- Fellowship Program of the Joint Centre for Albania-Serbia Relations brings a Serbian Researcher to AIIS and sends an AIIS team member to our partner organization in Belgrade. Read more about it on “Other activities and contributions”, page 5

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# AIIS Newsletter

July 2017

## Highlight

## Democracy and politics in Albania: seeking true qualitative representation

At the eve of general elections in Albania, AIIS Deputy Director, Alba Çela, presented the findings of the nationwide survey conducted earlier this year during the month of February. Based on 1200 face-to-face interviews, the survey results covered a wide array of topics and brought to light the Albanian society's main concerns. The survey showed the respondents, three quarters of whom said they would vote in the upcoming elections, are practical and pragmatic about their concerns with basic needs such as employment, poverty, education and health topping the list. Asked about the biggest problem Albanians currently face, about a third of respondents rated the economic crisis as the top concern, said Alba Çela, the AIIS deputy director introducing the survey findings.

One out of five respondents said lack of rule of law and corruption were the second and third top issues concerning Albanians. The two long-standing issues are directly related to the justice reform Albania is on the verge of implementing after a unanimous vote in mid-2016 in



a bid to overhaul the highly perceived corrupt judiciary, a key issue Albania needs to tackle in order to strengthen rule of law, launch EU accession negotiations and improve the business climate.

When it comes to personal issues, low income, unemployment and poverty were three top three concerns for Albanians, who already have a high migration rate

and rank among the top globally for willingness to migrate.

The perceived quality of education and healthcare remains poor, especially for the more sensitive health sector with about two-thirds of surveyed people rating its service quality as 'low' and 'very low.'

When it comes to problems of

*(Continued on page 2)*

# Democracy and politics in Albania: seeking true qualitative representation

(Continued from page 1)

democracy, Albanians rate political conflict and lack of free and fair elections as the main issues.

Other issues concerning Albanians include the pronounced economic inequality, lack of rotation among the political elite and communist past.

About half of respondents say creating new job opportunities and combating poverty should be the top priorities of the new government out of the June 25 general elections.

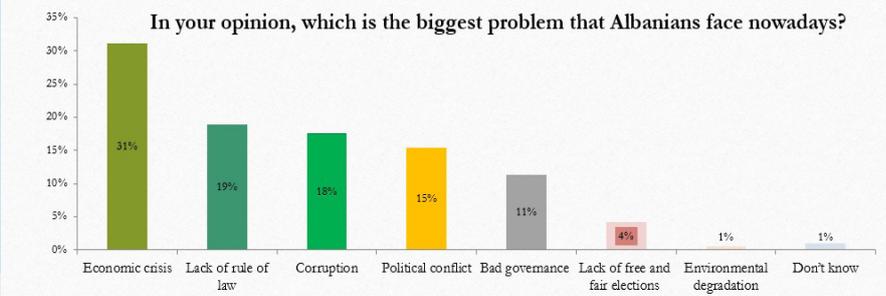
About half think women's representation in political parties should increase to 50 percent, up from a current 30 percent target.

Ryan Roberts, the U.S. embassy's Public Affairs Officer in Tirana, said the findings contribute to the substantive discussion and raise awareness about democracy and elections in the country.

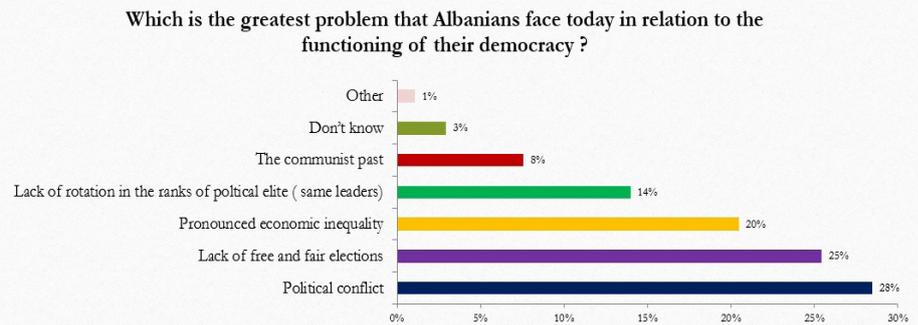
AIS head Albert Rakipi said the survey focused on real issues preoccupying citizens on the verge of elections.

This event was part of the AIS project, financially supported by the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program of the US Embassy in Tirana. Opinions, findings, conclusions and recommendations expressed are of the author, and do not necessarily represent those of the State Department.

## Problems

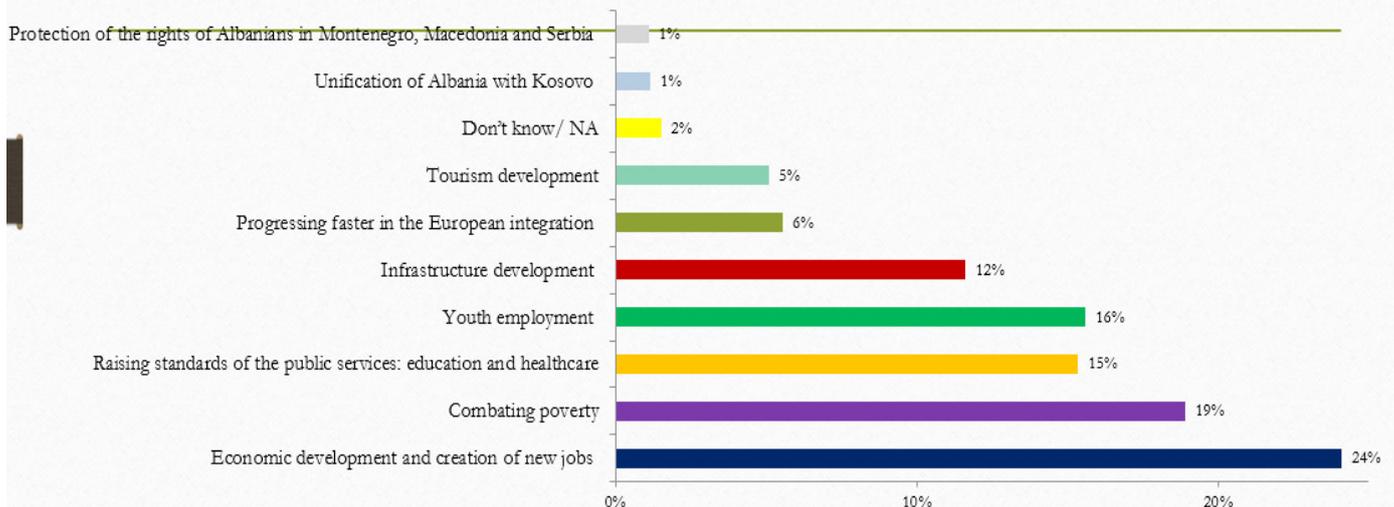


## Problems of democracy



## Priorities of the new executive

What do you think should be the priorities of the new government (after elections)



# Democracy and Human Rights

## Contribution of Council of Europe throughout the years



On May 18th, the Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS) and the Office of the Council of Europe in Tirana, in collaboration with the Faculty of Law of the University of Tirana hosted the European Forum on “Democracy and Human Rights: Contribution of Council of Europe throughout the years”. The keynote speaker to this event was Mr. Claus Neukirch, Head of Council of Europe Office, Tirana.

During his speech in front of Law students of the University of Tirana, Mr. Neukirch stressed the assistance from the Council of Europe is essential for Albania’s path towards EU integration. Through several projects implemented in diverse areas, the CoE gives a great contribution and expertise to Albania’s efforts for creating a functioning democracy.

Mr. Neukirch said that the key project that the Council of Europe is implementing in Albania is about the strengthening of the local democracy in the country. He said that this is especially necessary because the political scene in Albania is so polarized that there are two different organizations representing the local power, one with the mayors of the Socialist Party and one with those elected from the Democratic Party.

He said that the work and support of the Council of Europe in Tirana is broad and in diverse areas. He mentioned the expertise that the Council of Europe is providing concerning

media freedom, the strengthening of human rights in the prison system, technical expertise concerning the justice reform and a project that aims at fighting extremism in the schools. “A lot of things begin at school,” he said, mentioning the fact that learning about tolerance and respect at school is essential to fight extremism in a society. He said that the areas where the Council of Europe works in Albania are crucial for the advancement of the country.

Mr. Neukirch said that the work of the

Council of Europe is focused on creating an integrated society, where every group and every person feels part of the society and for this it is important that the focus should not be only on the national minorities inside a state but also on other minorities.

“We need comprehensive anti-discriminatory laws,” he said, describing CoE as Europe’s leading organization for human rights. “The Council of Europe helps educate people to look critically,” he said, especially concerning populism and terrorist violence in Europe.



## OUR EVENTS:

Polish Professor Tadeusz Czekalski from the Jagellonian University of Krakow and the Albanian professor Gjergj Sinani, made two presentations on the historical aspects of Polish-Albanian relations, which go back to centuries, but were not much known to the Albanian public. The presentation of Professor Gjergj Sinani was focused on the similarities between the two peoples, Albanians and Poles, especially their desire and wars for freedom. "This spirit of freedom," he said, "will continue to give life to the deeds of our two nations". He cited Nietzsche saying that only those people who have suffered from the lack of freedom can understand each other. The Polish people have always chosen freedom and not despotic peace, he said. "The communist period and Albania's closing from the outside world was the most tragic part of the Albanian-Polish relations", said professor Sinani. He gave the case of a Polish geologist, Stanislav Zuber, who died in Albanian communist prisons.

The Polish professor Czekalski said that after the Second World War and until 1949, Albania was represented in Poland by Yugoslavia. In the decade after 1949 and until the beginning of the 60s, after Albania's brake with the Soviet Union, the relations between the two countries were good and a lot of attempts and activities were made with the purpose of better knowing each other.

# Historical aspects of Polish-Albanian Relations



## OTHER ACTIVITIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

### AIIS Chairman Rakipi meets with election observation mission



The Initiative for Dialogue and Democracy (SILBA) and the European Dialogue and Democracy Association (EDDA) organized a short-term election observation mission in Tirana for the parliamentary elections of June 25th. During their mission, their main task was to observe the polling stations on Election Day and note irregularities. Based on a comprehensive election observation methodology, SILBA have completed since 2003 42 EOM in 14 countries. In order to get familiar in the countries they conduct their observation

missions, they visit different organizations to discuss about topics that concern the political situation with regards to the election. Within this context, the election observation mission of SILBA and EDDA met on June 22nd with AIIS Chairman Albert Rakipi, PhD with whom they discussed about the political parties - what brings them together, what sets them apart, what are their strengths and weaknesses; how the European integration fits on their agenda, the international relations and development of the region.

## Fellowship Program of the Joint Centre for Albania-Serbia Relations



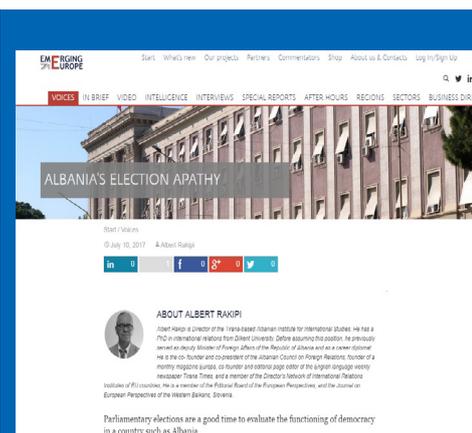
Ledion Krisafi holds a Ph.D in Political Sciences and International Relations from the European University of Tirana with the thesis: Albania's relations with Yugoslavia, 1945-1948. He has a Bachelor degree in Journalism and a Master of Science degree in European Journalism and Communication Sciences from the University of Tirana. He has published several articles in academic journals and has participated in national and international academic conferences. For his academic work he has done extensive research in archives in Albania and Serbia. His main research interests are Albania's foreign relations with other Balkan countries and Eastern Europe and the history of the international relations of the Balkan and Eastern European countries. He has published a monograph about the relations between Albania and Yugoslavia in the years 1945-1948 (Tiranë, Naimi, 2017). This was his second fellowship at the European Movement in Serbia. During this second fellowship he was involved in the preparations of the Belgrade Security Forum, which will be held on October 2017.

*In the context of the Joint Centre for Albania-Serbia Relations, the Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS) and the Forum for International Relations of the European Movement in Serbia (EMinS) respectively host one Serbian and one Albanian researcher for a period of one to three months to immerse them in a living and working environment in each other's culture for long term cooperation and challenging of prejudice. This also forms a key community of direct stakeholders that share knowledge and partner networks in each other's countries. From May to July 2017, Aleksandar Pavlović joined the AIIS team as part of the fellowship program, whereas Ledion Krisafi, AIIS researcher, joined the EMinS team in July 2017.*



Aleksandar Pavlović is a full-time researcher at the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory of the University of Belgrade, and a part-time lecturer at the university "Union - Nikola Tesla" in Belgrade. He obtained his BA and MA from the Faculty of Philology of the University of Belgrade, and got his PhD in Southeast European Studies from the University of Nottingham. Prior to his fellowship with the AIIS, he was a visiting fellow at the Centre for Southeast European Studies in Graz (2015) and New

Europe College in Bucharest (2016). He previously worked as a teaching assistant at the University of Nottingham and editor at Radio 3 of the Serbian Broadcasting Corporation, and was also a coordinator of the project "Figuring out the Enemy: Re-imagining Serbian-Albanian Relations". His main areas of interest are Balkan oral tradition, Serbian-Albanian relations, gender and traditional Balkan society, literature and culture. He published a number of scholarly articles and newspaper and blog contributions, one book, *Epika i politika* (Epics and Politics, Beograd: XX vek, 2014), and co-edited a volume *Figura neprijatelja: preosmišljavanje srpsko-albanski hodnosa* (Beograd: IFDT/Beton, 2015; Albanian edition: *Figura e armikut: ripërfytyrimi i marrëdhënieve shqiptaro-serbe*, Prishtina: Qendra Multimedia, 2016), which will soon be published in English by Routledge.



Emerging Europe publishes "Albania's election apathy" an article by Albert Rakipi on the recent parliamentary elections in Albania. The article is an in-depth analysis of the state of democracy in Albania, the electoral process and the emerging concerns coming from it: both political and economic. Having supported investment promotion agencies, governments and businesses in

their strategy and communication-related efforts in the CEE region, Emerging Europe was created in 2013 as a stand-alone online publication born out of a passion for the region and a will to contribute to its development. To read the article online, visit: <http://emerging-europe.com/voices/voices-politics/albanias-election-apaty/#more-21283>

# AIIS New Publications

## The struggle with Rome - Bernd J. Fischer

The significance of the Albanian-Italian relationship can hardly be overstated. Tied together by geography in general and proximity in particular, the fates of both states remain intertwined. The Straits of Otranto, which separate Albania and southern Italy by some seventy kilometers, have always served more as a bridge than a barrier, providing escape, an economic link, a cultural span, and a convenient invasion route.

Once he had transformed Albania into a monarchy and proclaimed himself King Zog I in 1928, Italian guarantees to protect the status quo became not only superfluous but irksome. The continually increasing Italian presence in Albania had triggered renewed xenophobia. Zog was caught between growing anti-Italian sentiment and a need for further Italian aid. These circumstances brought on the struggle with Rome of the 1930s, which is discussed in the book.

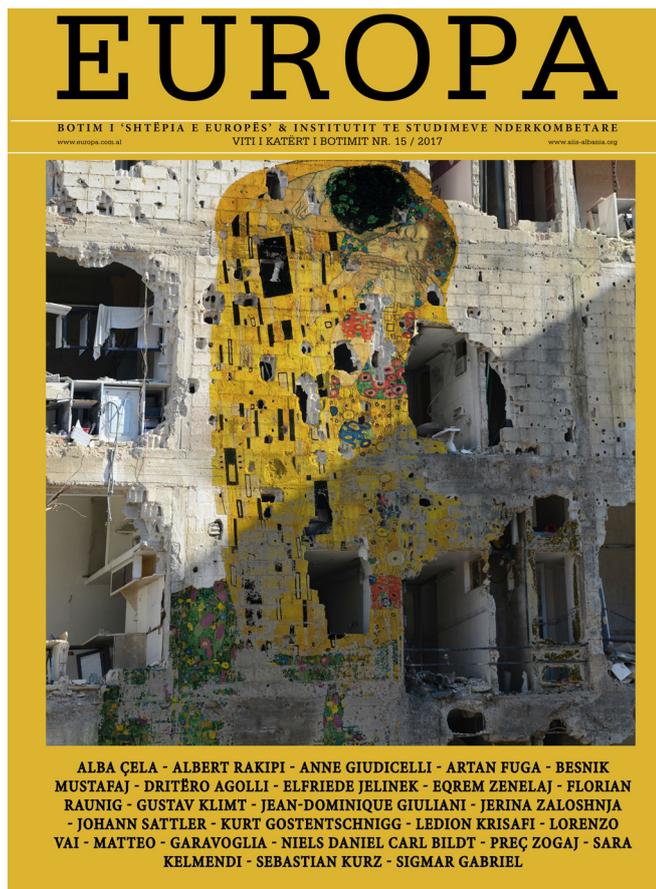
Bernd J. Fischer

### THE STRUGGLE WITH ROME

Albanian-Italian relations 1925-1938

AIIS

## Our magazine *Europa* latest issue:



Featuring a superimposed picture of Gustav Klimt's painting "The Kiss" against the walls of a war-torn Syria building on its front cover, the *Europa* magazine, an Albanian language publication of the Albanian Institute for International Studies, has launched its latest issue with a special section dedicated to Austria, Albania's traditional ally since more than a century.

Speaking at a the magazine's launching ceremony, the Austrian Ambassador to Albania Johann Sattler recalled how Austria-Albanian diplomatic relations date back to the 18th century, when Albania was still under Ottoman rule, with the opening of a consulate in Durrës in 1751.

On its fifteenth issue, the *Europa* magazine, offering a critical approach to developments in Albania, the region and the EU, also launched its [europa.com.al](http://europa.com.al) new website.

Now in its fourth year of publication, the *Europa* magazine offers a critical approach to political, economic developments in Albania and the region, with a special focus on literature and arts and dedicating special sections to Albania's partners.

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