

## **Analysis of Albanian Legislation and Perceptions of Voters Relevant to the Right to Vote for National Minorities**

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### **Abstract**

Analysis of the legislation, perceptions and opinions of Albanian citizens, belonging to national minorities, for the right to vote, the value and opportunities offered in exercise of this fundamental human right are the subject of this paper. For the first time in the Albanian legislation this right is treated in the Constitution of Albania, 1950 and in the electoral law drafted in its implementation. During the period of dictatorship the political rights of national minorities did not differ from that of other citizens but, as for all other citizens they were only formal. The Constitution of Albania, 1998 stipulates that persons belonging to national minorities exercise their rights and freedoms in full equality before the law. As citizens of the Republic they have the right to vote and to stand for election. There is no discriminatory provision in the current Albanian legislation, just as there are no special, favorable provisions for voters belonging to these minorities. International observers of the OCSE / ODIHR elections from 2003 onwards have praised the efforts made in the Albanian legislation on the right to vote and its exercise by voters belonging to national minorities in Albania

The results of the analysis of the perceptions and opinions of voters belonging to national minorities on the right to vote, the conditions for exercising it and the opportunities they have to be represented, through

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voting, in local or central institutions are not enthusiastic. Voters belonging to national minorities emphasize the need to intervene both in bylaws and in improving the conditions that will make it better possible for them to exercise their right to vote

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## **Introduction**

Economic and social developments in the Balkan region during the period belonging to modern history but also before, have been accompanied by demographic movements, from one country to another, of populations belonging to different nationalities. The consequence of this movement is the significant presence of national minorities within the territory of various countries in this region, including Albania. These minorities, although in many cases have been subjected to social, psychological and economic abuse, as a rule have managed to coexist with the local population. Especially in Albanian lands, national minorities have felt less than in other Balkan lands, the change in ethnicity, nationality, by the Albanian people. Albanians have managed to coexist peacefully with them.

The analysis of the documents of the Albanian state, starting from the time of the declaration of independence, in November 1912, shows that in the Albanian legislation the rights of the national minorities have not been treated at all times, in accordance with the specific requirements and features of these minorities. In the period before and during the monarchy, the legislation did not state clearly, in any case, the rights of these citizens. In the Basic Statute of the Kingdom of Albania, which is a document with the dimensions of the basic act of the state, issues related to the rights and duties of national minorities are not addressed. In the provisions contained in this document, no definitions are made regarding the national affiliation of citizens. The Basic Statute of the Kingdom of Albania does not state that the rights or duties of citizens are not affected by their ethnicity. In all cases, the Statute uses only the notion "Citizen of the Kingdom of Albania". Under this Statute, the rights of a citizen of the Kingdom may be restricted only by law. In Art. 195 Title VI "Citizens' Rights" states that: "All citizens shall enjoy equal political and civil rights and shall be admitted to all civil and military service, except as provided by law".

The rights and duties related to the ethnicity of citizens in Albanian legislation was explicitly addressed, for the first time, in the

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Constitution of the Republic of Albania-July 1950<sup>1</sup>. In article 16 of this Constitution, which defines the political rights of citizens, the right to vote and the right to be elected for citizens of other nationalities, as a right equal to that of all other Albanian citizen, has sanctioned.<sup>2</sup> Pursuant to the Constitution, in law no. 2624, dated 17.03.1958: "On the Elections of the People's Assembly" the right to vote is recognized for all citizens who have reached the age of 18, regardless of sex, nationality, race, religion, culture, residence, social origin and property, with the exception of persons who, by a court decision, have been convicted of losing their electoral right or have been completely deprived of the capacity to carry out legal actions

The Constitution of the Socialist People's Republic of Albania, approved by law no. 5506, dated 28.12.1976, contains provisions which address the rights and duties of citizens by referring to their ethnicity, nationality.<sup>3</sup> The 1976 Constitution provides protection for national minorities and guarantees support for the development of culture and traditions, education and equal development opportunities<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Albania, Article 15

All citizens are equal regardless of nationality, race or religion. Any act that brings privileges, in favor of citizens or restricts their rights due to nationality, race or religion, is against the Constitution and carries penalties provided by law. It is against the Constitution and punishes by law any provocation to sow hatred and strife between nationalities, races and religions.

<sup>2</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Albania, Article 16

All citizens, regardless of sex, nationality, race, religion, degree of culture or residence, and who have reached the age of 18, have the right to vote and to be elected to all organs of state power.

<sup>3</sup> The Constitution of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania, approved by law no. 5506, dated 28.12.1976, Article 40 "All citizens are equal before the law. No restriction or privilege is recognized in the rights and duties of citizens on grounds of sex, race, nationality, education, social position or material status. "

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, Article 42

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Such a constitutional condition ranked Albania next to countries with developed democracies. Meanwhile, it is important to note that, as for other Albanian citizens, these constitutional rights for national minorities were only expressions written in the basic act of the state. The realization of these rights in conditions of the political system, the dictatorship of the proletariat<sup>5</sup>, was impossible. Throughout the period of the rule of the dictatorship of the proletariat they remained only fictitious rights.

Dunne, J. (1992) emphasizes that “A society’s efforts to ensure equal voting opportunity for minorities is the touchstone of its commitment to freedom and a true participatory form of governments”. The drafting of a supportive legal framework for the right to vote and for its exercise without discrimination by national minorities is a necessary condition for development of a democratic society. Despite this, as Sarina Vij (2020) points out, this is not enough: “Though current legislation has been implemented to ensure fair and impartial voting access, there is too much leeway given to state governments in the voting system’s execution. As a result, restrictions in the election system have resulted in systematic discrimination toward minority populations, making them ineligible to vote”.

Extensive economic and social exclusion affects a large number of Roma and Egyptian. Consequently their are communities particularly vulnerable to electoral malpractice. This phenomenon is further promoted by the lower education levels among Roma and Egyptian

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National minorities are provided with the protection and development of popular culture and traditions, the use of their mother language and its teaching in school, equal development in all areas of social life. Any national privilege or inequality and any action that violates the rights of national minorities is unconstitutional and punishable by law.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, Article 2

The Socialist People's Republic of Albania is a state of dictatorship of the proletariat, which expresses and protects the interests of all workers.

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minorities and by their unemployment that is substantially above the national unemployment average.

The purpose of the study is to identify the problems related to the right to vote and its exercise by national minorities in Albania.

The Comparative analyse of Albanian legislation on the right to vote for national minorities *and*

The analyse of the perceptions of the voters belonging to these minorities, regarding the right to participate in the elections and the conditions offered to them for the realization of this right treated in this study

### **Analyse of current Albanian legislation on the right to vote for national minorities**

The Constitution of the Republic of Albania, approved by referendum on November 28, 1998, stipulates that "Persons belonging to national minorities exercise their rights and freedoms in full equality before the law."<sup>6</sup> As citizens of the Republic they have the right to vote and to be elected

There is no discriminatory provision in the Albanian legislation, just as there are no special, favorable provisions for voters belonging to these minorities. The legislation allows the participation in the elections the political entities belonging to different national minorities, such as the Greek, Macedonian, Bosnian minorities, etc... For the national minorities, the Albanian electoral legislation does not provide dedicated mandates.

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<sup>6</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Albania. Approved by law no. 8417, dated 21.10.1998 of the People's Assembly Approved by referendum on 22.11.1998, as amended. Article 20

1. Persons belonging to national minorities shall exercise their rights and freedoms in full equality before the law

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In order to fulfill the obligations deriving from the International Conventions which have been ratified by the Parliament, an intensive legislative process is developed in Albania, which aims at the approximation of legislation with the requirements of these conventions, international documents and EU legislation. One of the important results achieved in this legislative process is law no. 96/2017 "On the protection of national minorities in the Republic of Albania". This law fully and correctly defines the notion of "national minority" which means: "A group of Albanian citizens residing in the territory of the Republic of Albania, who have early and stable ties with the Albanian state and who display distinctive cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious or traditional characteristics and are willing to express, preserve and develop together their distinct cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious or traditional identity". This is a definition fully consistent with the requirements of international conventions and documents dealing with issues of national minorities. According to this law in the Republic of Albania are recognized the Greek, Macedonian, Aromanian, Roma, Egyptian, Montenegrin, Bosnian, Serbian and Bulgarian minorities. Meanwhile, the law is open to address and respond to any group of citizens who may apply for the national minority status.<sup>7</sup> The law prohibits any discrimination against any

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<sup>7</sup> Law no. 96/2017 "On the protection of national minorities in the Republic of Albania"

#### Article 4 Recognition of national minorities

1. The formal recognition of national minorities in the Republic of Albania, except those provided in article 3, point 2, is done by law, in accordance with the criteria set out in point 1, article 3, and articles 6 and 7 of this law.

2. The request for formal recognition is submitted to the minister responsible for internal affairs by the group of citizens who claim to belong to a national minority.

3. The request is reviewed by an *ad hoc* commission, which is set up at the ministry responsible for internal affairs. The structure and functions of the commission, as well as the procedures for reviewing the application for recognition of a national minority, are determined by a decision of the Council of Ministers.

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person because of his / her belonging to a national minority (Article 8). Article 9 of this law recognizes the right of citizens belonging to national minorities to organize and be represented. Based on Law no. 8580, dated 17.02. 2000 "For Politic parties" amended, article 5, national minorities can be organized in political parties extending throughout the territory of Albania or in several units of territorial administrative division. Currently, Greek and Macedonian minorities are organized in political parties. The effect of these parties on increasing the representation of greek or macedonian minorities in elected bodies is moderate (Bernauera and Bochsler, 2011)

The current constitutional provisions and the law on the protection of national minorities are an effective legislative bed for national minorities to enjoy and exercise the right to vote, the right to be elected and to participate in central and local government.

### **Analysis of perceptions and opinions of voters belonging to national minorities on the right to vote and its exercise**

To judge regarding the perceptions and opinions of voters belonging to national minorities regarding the right to vote and its exercise, 366 voters belonging to different national minorities were interviewed. The questionnaire contained questions grouped in three sections:

- I. Turnout in the Parliamentary elections, June, 2017
- II. Opportunities for exercising the right to vote and
- III. Representation in elected bodies.

A total of 366 voters from the Greek, Macedonian, Roma, Egjiptian and Bosnian national minorities were interviewed. The sample structure according to national affiliation, gender, age and level of education are given in Tab. Nr. 1. The gender balance is the same as the balance in the entire population of Albania. About 71.3% of the interviewed voters

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4. Decisions of the *ad hoc* commission can be appealed to the competent court for resolving administrative disputes



belong to the age group younger than 36 years, who are, as a rule, more interested and active citizens in political developments. The sample is dominated by voters with lower and secondary education, respectively 41.8% and 43.3%, reflecting the fact that in the Roma and Egyptian national minorities, citizens with lower education predominate, respectively 75% and 62.3%.

Tab. No. 1 Sample structure according to demographic characteristics

	National minorities											
	Greek		Macedonian		Roma		Egyptian		Bosnian		Total	
	Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%
<b>Gender</b>												
-Male	73	57.5	22	52.4	30	41.6	40	42.1	16	53.3	181	49.4
-Female	54	42.5	20	47.6	42	58.4	55	57.9	14	46.7	185	50.6
<b>Age</b>												
18-25 year olds	31	24.4	11	26.2	26	36.1	37	38.9	10	33.3	115	31.4
26-35 year olds	52	41.0	21	50.0	29	40.3	32	33.7	12	40.0	146	39.9
>35 year olds	44	34.6	10	23.8	17	23.6	26	27.4	8	26.7	105	28.7
<b>Education</b>												
-Low	22	17.3	7	16.6	54	75.0	62	62.3	8	26.7	153	41.8
-Secondary	74	58.3	27	64.3	16	22.2	26	27.4	16	53.3	159	43.4
-High	31	24.4	8	19.1	2	2.8	7	10.3	6	20.0	54	14.8

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**Interview results**

**Turnout in Parliamentary Elections, June, 2017**

About 51.8% of the interviewees stated that they did not vote in the elections held for the Albanian Parliament, June 2017. The highest percentage of those who stated that they did not participate in the elections is among the Egyptian minority voters (63.2%) and Roma (63.9%). Bosniak, Macedonian and Greek minority voters declared the highest turnout. The low voter turnout of Roma and Egyptian minorities is an indicator of the need to identify and analyze the factors that cause this attitude of Roma and Egyptian minorities towards the right to vote.

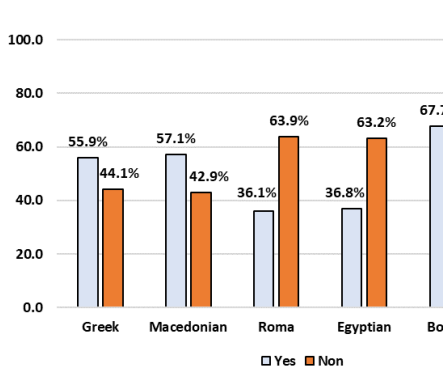


Fig.no. 1 Voter turnout - Albanian Parliament elections, 2017

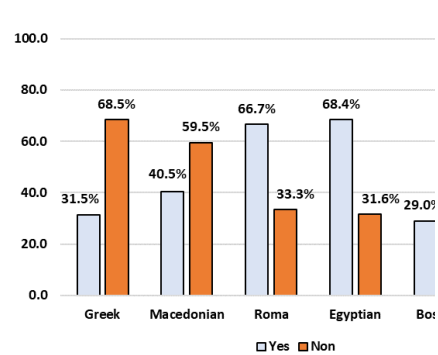


Fig. No. 2 Have you been pressured by political parties or their candidates to vote for them?

About 48.8% of respondents stated that they had been pressured by representatives of different parties to vote for the respective party. Among the voters who declared such a fact, the largest number was among the voters of the Roma and Egyptian minorities, respectively 66.7% and 68.4%. Also worrying is the fact that the voters of the Macedonian minority also state that they have come under pressure (40.5%) from political parties. The high percentage of voters who

declare pressure on them to vote in favor of a certain political party, highlights an important phenomenon for Albanian society. To the voters who belong to the national minorities in Albania, especially to the Roma and Egyptians, whose number of votes significantly affects the election result, the phenomenon of their intimidation is a phenomenon that society must address and look for ways to build instruments to reduce it as much as possible.

Respondents who stated that they was intimidated by parties / candidates to vote were asked:

You were offered money or goods for the vote or promises were made to you?

From the answers received, it resulted that about 51.8% was offered ALL / goods. The frequency of this answer was very high in the community of voters belonging to the Roma (93.3%) and Egyptian minorities (86.3%). Given the fact that the Roma and Egyptian communities are two national minorities that have social, cultural, tradition features and economic level and behavior, which distinguish them significantly from other national minorities, to fight this phenomenon instruments and methods must be used according to their characteristics.

From the answers of the interviewees it results that the behavior of the political parties towards the national minorities does not correspond to the commitments declared by the Albanian society and legislation. Although the political parties are very interested in the vote of the voters who belong to these minorities, in their programs and during the election campaign they pay almost no attention to their issues and problems. The voters of the Roma and Egyptian national minorities declare, in absolute majority, respectively 79.2% and 77.9%, that the political parties in the campaigns do not address their problems. Unsatisfactory is the address by political parties during the election campaign, of problems that concern other national minorities, as well. About 48.3% of the interviewees, voters from the Greek, Macedonian

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and Bosnian national minorities, declare that in the election campaign they did not hear by the representatives of political parties any or candidates problem that is specific and worrying for them.

Voters from national minorities have expressed, generally distrustful of political parties, About 73.0% of them said they do not believe or believe little that political parties, which in the campaign declare as their priority the interests of national minorities, will keep promise when they will be in power. The highest level of distrust is expressed by voters in the Roma and Egyptian communities, followed by voters belonging to the Greek community (Fig. No. 3).

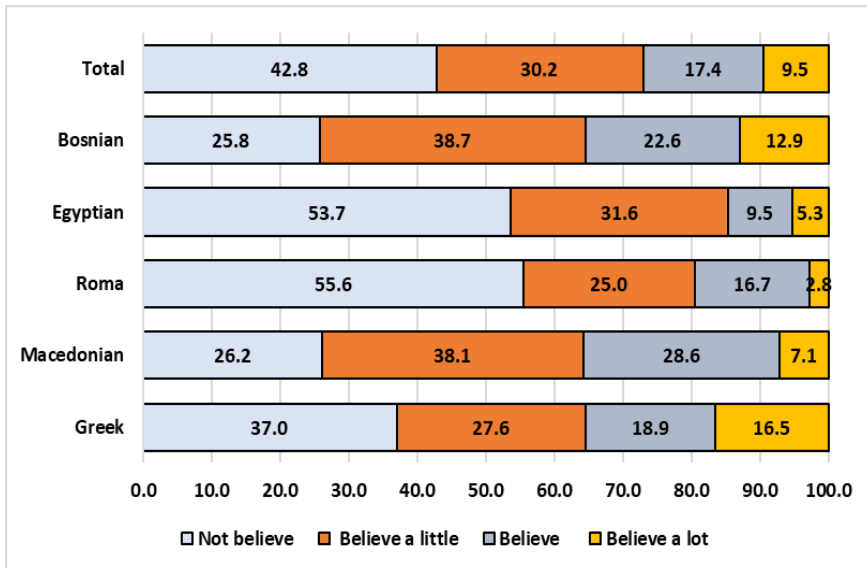


Fig. No. 3 Do you believe that the parties that in their program have as a priority the protection of the rights of your national minority, in practice work to meet the interests of your community?

The non-fulfillment of the requirement of the law which obliges the local government bodies, which are responsible for compiling the voter list, to inform the voters about the polling station where they will vote, is declared by a large number of interviewed voters.

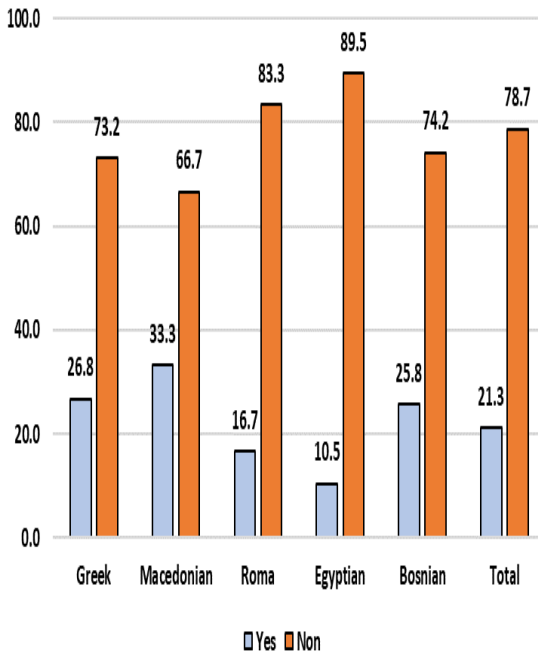


Fig.no. 4 Have you been notified by the local government about the polling station where you are registered?

About 78.7% of all respondents answered NO to the question whether they were notified of the number of the polling station where they would vote. This is very frequent, especially among Roma and Egyptian minority voters.

Non-implementation of this legal obligation by the local government, on the one hand and on the other

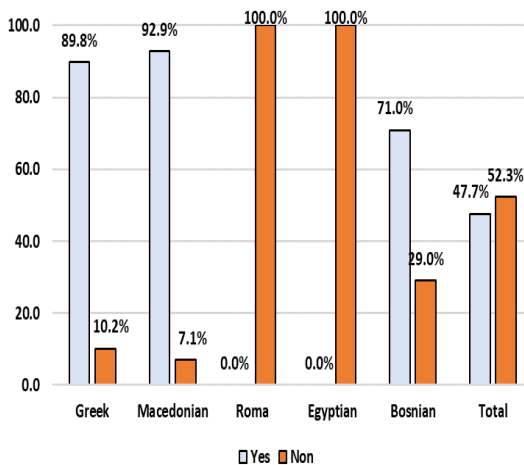
hand, the behavior of voters belonging to these two communities to their political rights, including the right to vote, highlights the need for local government commitment for the fulfillment of this legal obligation, perhaps more than for any other community of voters.

### **Analyse of perceptions related to opportunities to exercise the right to vote**

Among other factors, the difficulty of exercising the right to vote for citizens of national minority groups, especially the Roma and Egyptian minorities, is conditioned by their educational level. The phenomenon of illiteracy is present in these minorities and, consequently, the turnout is low. (US, Department of Justice, March 2020).

## Analysis of Albanian Legislation and Perceptions of Voters Relevant to the Right to Vote for National Minorities

One of the tasks of the electoral administration and institutions that are in charge of dealing with the problems of national minorities in the electoral process is to inform in the native language of the voters of these minorities about the electoral process and the procedures to be applied in the elections. In the Albanian legislation this duty is defined in Law no. 96/2017 "On the protection of national minorities in the Republic of Albania".<sup>8</sup> The assessment of the respondents regarding the fulfillment of this legal obligation by the election administration is given in Fig. No.5



Asked about the fulfillment or not of this legal obligation, about 52.3% of the respondents stated that they were not given such information in their native language. Such a fact was

<sup>8</sup> Law no. 96/2017 "On the protection of national minorities in the Republic of Albania"

4. In the units of local self-government where persons belonging to national minorities constitute over 20 percent of the total population of this unit, they have the right to receive information, in addition to the Albanian language, also in the minority language, on the development of the electoral process. The provision of information in the language of minorities for the conduct of the electoral process is regulated by acts approved by the Central Election Commission.

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Fig.no.5. Did you receive information about voting procedures in your mother language?

confirmed by all Roma and Egyptian voters interviewed.

While 89.8% of voters of Greek nationality, 92.9% of

Macedonian nationality and about 71.0% of Bosnian nationality stated that they were informed in their native language. Such a large differentiation between national minorities is an absolutely unacceptable fact.

To the question whether they had the opportunity to vote with a ballot paper written in their native language, all respondents answered NO. This is a fact that requires attention and commitment from the election administration, the CEC. As a signatory to the convention on political rights of human beings, including the rights of national minorities, the state must provide the most effective conditions for them to exercise their right to vote. One of these conditions is voting with ballot papers written in their native language. The importance of translating election materials into the native language is also expressed Sarina Vij (2020): “In communities that spoke little English, translated voting ballots were found to be responsible for increasing voter turnout by 11 points in the 2004 presidential election”

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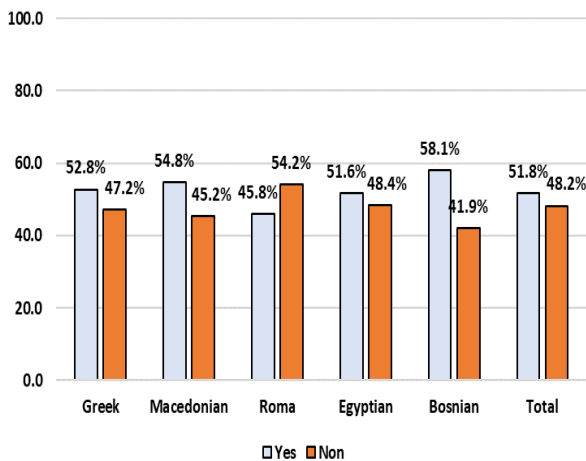


Fig. Nr. 6 Do you think that your participation in the election administration, granted by law, will create better conditions for you to exercise your right to vote?

About 51.8% of the respondents said that the participation in the election commissions of the representatives of the national minorities, would serve the best and most effective exercise of their right to vote. This opinion is expressed by almost all respondents belonging to different national minorities. This fact should be taken into

account by political parties, which have the right to nominate candidates for members of these commissions. Particularly in those constituencies units where national minority nationals make up 20% or more of the population, political parties need to be attentive to this request of the voters of these minorities.

One of the ways to respond to this request could be the provision in the Electoral Code of the obligation for political parties to nominate members of election commissions by voters belonging to national minorities.

### Political representation of national minorities

In European countries, the provision of a certain number of seats dedicated to representatives of national minorities is not the rule



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(Commission of Venice, 2000). Such a legal definition exists only in some countries as they are e.g. Croatia, Romania, Slovenia, Kosovo ect. Protsyk (2010) emphasizes that the special reserved seat provisions explain the success of demographically smaller minority groups in securing legislative representation. In European countries, the provision of a certain number of seats dedicated to representatives of national minorities is not the rule (Commission of Venice, 2000). The representation of national minorities in election bodies could be through electoral law and the possibilities it gives members of national minorities of being present as candidates (Benoît-Rohmer and Hardeman 1994; Protsyk, 2010). In most cases, the representation of minorities in an elected body is achieved through the application of the ordinary rules of electoral law, which treat people belonging to national minorities and others in the same way (Hajnal, et al. 2017). In countries with a proportional system when lists are not closed, a voter's choice may take account of whether or not the candidates belong to national minorities. Whether or not such freedom of choice is favourable or unfavourable to minorities this depends on many factors, including the numerical size of the minorities. This is also the case of Albania, where after the constitutional changes (October, 2020) parliamentary elections are held according to a regional proportional system with open lists. But according to the Electoral code the country is divided into 12 constituencies and, consequently, the number of voters belonging to national minorities in each constituency is small.

The opinions of the voters belonging to the national minorities on the value that may have, for their interests, the legal definition of a certain number of mandates dedicated to their representatives in the Parliament and in the Municipal Council, are given in Table no.7

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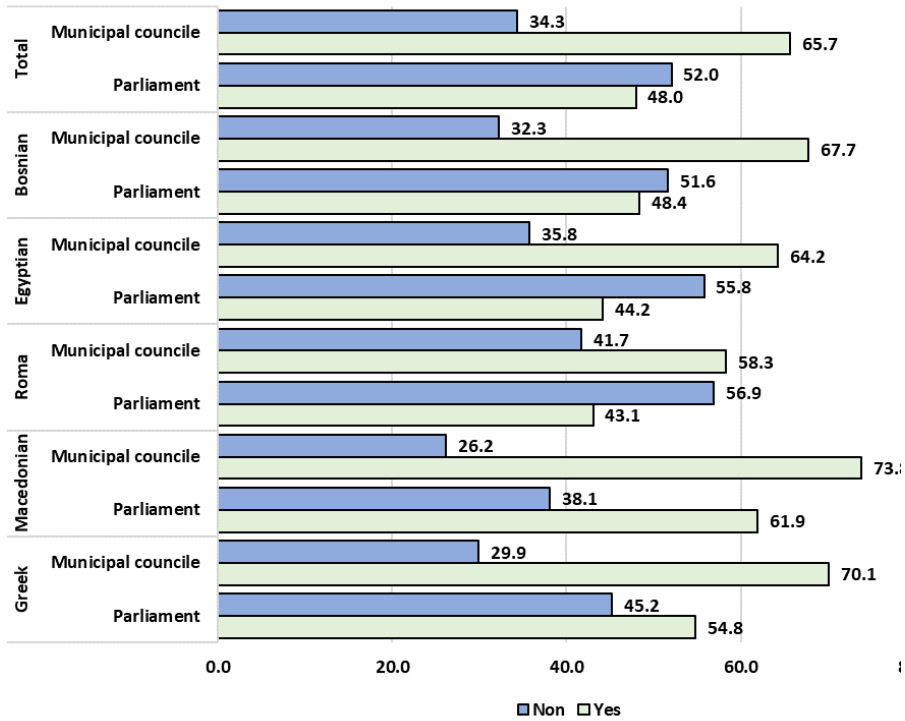


Fig. Nr. 7 Do you think it is effective that for national minorities the law should guarantee a certain number of mandates dedicated to their representatives in the Parliament or Municipal Councils?

The legal definition of a certain number of mandates in municipal councils is supported by about 65.7% of respondents. Among them, the Macedonian and Greek minority voters were the most numerous, about 70.1% and 73.8%, respectively. Less interested were the respondents from the Roma minority, about 58.3%. The support of the qualified majority, on average 2 in 3 interviewees, of the idea that for national minorities to have dedicated mandates, shows that the voters from these minorities do not feel represented in the Municipal Council. According to them, such a representation would make the right to vote have a greater positive effect on local government.

Contrary to the assessment for representation in municipal councils, the opinion of voters from national minorities to decide by law on a quota of representation for them in Parliament was expressed by about 48% of all respondents. Such representation is mostly supported by voters from the Macedonian national minorities (61.9%) and Greeks (54.8%) (Fig.no.8).

Trust to vote as the basic institution in a democratic society is very important. Lack of this trust is one of the main reasons for the emergence of phenomena such as vote buying, family voting, non-participation in voting, etc .. In Albania, these phenomena, as a rule are more common among voters belonging to the Roma and Egyptian national minorities.

To judge about the perceptions and opinions of voters belonging to national minorities, respondents were asked about their confidence in the vote and the value that their representation in elected local or central bodies may have.

About 71.4% of the respondents stated that they do not have or have little confidence that by voting they will be able to elect, in the assembly or in municipal councils, the candidates from whom they wish to be represented. Their distrust is an expression of the level of trust of citizens belonging to national minorities in elections and electoral processes. This is especially pronounced among the voters of the Roma and Egyptian communities. They say, in the majority, respectively about 58.3% and 59.9%, that they do not trust the votes. This is a pessimistic result that confirms the attitude of the voters who belong to these communities to the value and importance of voting turnout and secret ballot.

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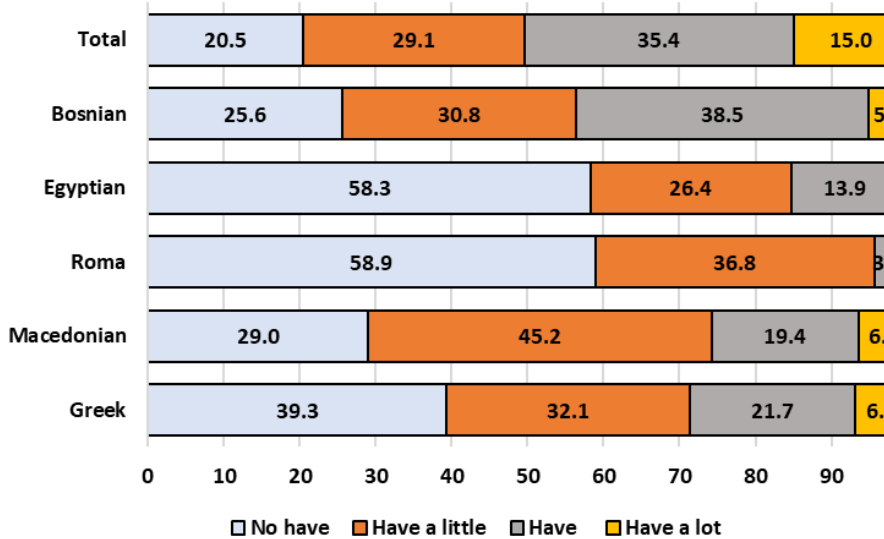


Fig.nr. 8 Do you trust the vote as a democratic instrument by which you can choose your representatives in central and local decision-making bodies?

### Evaluations of the OCSE / ODIHR International Observer Missions relevant to right of vote and its exercise by National Minorities in Albania

The assessments given in the final reports of the OSCE / ODIHR international observers who observed the various election processes are important information for judging the standards met by the Albanian legislation dealing with the right to vote for citizens belonging to national minorities and for the opportunities and conditions that have been created for these voters to exercise it.

The final report on the Local Government Elections, 12 October 2003 - 25 January 2004, states that: *“While there are several distinct groups of national minorities in Albania, their level of participation in the*

*electoral process has not been an issue of general contention. At these elections, no reports were received of direct discrimination against recognized minority groups or obstacles harming their participation” Further in the report it is written: “However, participation by national minorities as candidates or in the election administration was limited..... There was little evidence that political parties addressed issues of concern to minority communities and, despite assistance by the international community, voter education measures aimed at encouraging minority participation in the elections were inadequate”<sup>9</sup>.*

The above assessment shows that, regardless of the way in which the Albanian legislation reflected the standards and requirements provided in international legislation for the exercise of the right to vote by voters belonging to national minorities, in practice the exercise of this right was significantly deviate from these standards.

In the report on the parliamentary elections, 23 June 2013, international observers noted that: “*National minorities are guaranteed equal rights under the Constitution and their rights were generally respected. The CEC produced voter information material in minority languages, which was distributed to VCs in locations where Greeks, Vlachs, Montenegrins, Serbs, and ethnic Macedonians are concentrated*”<sup>10</sup>.

This assessment is a significant indicator of the progress that has been made in Albania, in the period 2000-2013, not only with the drafting of legislation but also in the efforts for its implementation.

According to international observers, the efforts of Albanian society to guarantee the right to vote for national minorities and minorities

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<sup>9</sup> Republic of Albania. Local government elections, 12 October 2003 - 25 January 2004. OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report. Warsaw 25 February 2004

<sup>10</sup> Republic of Albania. Parliamentary Elections, 23 June 2013. OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report. Warsaw, 10 October 2013.

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continue to be appreciated. The Election Report, June, 2017 states that: *“The Constitution provides for full political, civil, and social rights for national minorities and guarantees all citizens the right to vote and to stand for elections, regardless of ethnic background, race, religion, or language. In terms of the electoral process, Albanian society is widely considered to be well-integrated, and members of national minorities stood as candidates in both minority and mainstream parties. Campaigning in national minority languages is permitted<sup>11</sup>”*

### **Conclusions**

The right to vote for national minorities in Albanian legislation is addressed, for the first time, in the Constitution of Albania, adopted

The analysis of the perceptions and opinions of voters belonging to national minorities shows that:

- (i) Insufficient level of awareness of the value of the vote is the main factor for low turnout in the elections by the voters belonging to national minorities, especially Roma and Egyptians;
- (ii) Citizens belonging to the Roma and Egyptian national minorities are exposed, more than others, to the pressure exerted by political parties and candidates during the elections;
- (iii) the vote-buying phenomenon is more frequent in the Roma and Egyptian national minorities;
- (iv) national minority voters are not informed about the elections in their native language and do not vote by ballot paper written in that language;
- (v) vote trust like the basic institution of democracy is low among the voters who belong to the national minorities;

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<sup>11</sup> Republic of Albania Parliamentary Elections, 25 June 2017. OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report. Warsaw, 28 September 2017.

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(vi) Voters that belong to Roma and Egyptian communities do not feel represented in Parliament and municipal councils;

(vii) setting by law the quota of representation in the Parliament and in the municipal councils, for the communities of national minorities, is considered by them as a real opportunity to increase the level of their representation in the elected bodies

The OCSE / ODIHR International Observer Missions since 2003 have appreciated the efforts made in the Albanian legislation on the right to vote and its exercise by voters belonging to national minorities in Albania.

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