

The role of parliament in informing and raising awareness among young people on the EU integration process (*The case of Albania*)Elvin Gjevori¹, Besarta Vladi², Esmeralda Dida³, Irena Gjika⁴¹General Director, Parliamentary Institute; ²Research Director, Parliamentary Institute; ³Researcher, Parliamentary Institute; ⁴ Researcher, Parliamentary Institute
Parliament of Albania**Introduction**

The Republic of Albania has marked significant progress in the European path since 2006, when the country adopted the Stabilization and Association Agreement. As of 19 July 2022, the European Council has officially opened the accession negotiations with Albania. (Jano, 2022) Following that, negotiation structures of the government have taken precedence over other state institutions.

Although the accession negotiations to the European Union is principally a responsibility of the government of Albania, with the adoption of law no. 15/2015, "On the role of the Parliament in the process of integration of the Republic of Albania in the European Union", the role of the Albanian Parliament within the process has been intensified. In this view, the Albanian Parliament exercises supervisory competences with regard to the enforcement of body of laws and policies pertaining to the EU integration, delivers recommendations on the negotiation positions of Albania, monitors the criteria established during the negotiation process, and most importantly, *it is mandated to inform the citizens about the progress of the negotiations and membership process.* (Art. 3, law no. 15/2015)

A successful and democratic negotiation progress requires the involvement of non-state actors, including young people. (Gjipali, 2022) Young generations play a crucial role in shaping the future of society and serving as catalysts in bringing innovative changes in political systems. (United Nations, 2013) Inclusive participation of youngsters is not only a fundamental democratic right, it is especially essential for building stable societies which take into account the specific needs of young generations. Despite their importance, an outdated survey indicates that the influence of youth on the integration process remains low. (Shehu et al., 2013) Unfortunately, according to a recent survey conducted in the framework of this research paper, Albanian youngsters assess their knowledge about European integration process as rather low.

Discussion of the results*Level of information on EU integration process of Albania**Interested in getting informed through the Parliament**Sources of information**Engagement of the Albanian Parliament in informing and raising awareness to youngsters***Methodology**

The paper is based on primary data collected through structured survey targeting 98 Albanian youngsters from different municipalities, aged 15 to 18 years old. The results draw conclusions on the role of the Albanian Parliament in informing and raising awareness to youngsters on EU integration process of Albania, by especially making use of the perception of youngsters who participated in the survey and the practices of previous acceded countries to the European Union.

References

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Conclusions

Results suggest that the Parliament of Albania is expected to take a leading role in informing and raising awareness to young generations regarding the EU integration process of Albania. Moreover, the research revealed that the sense of being informed on the above issue through the Albanian Parliament is relatively high, with 78.5% of respondents displayed a high level of interest.

Additionally, taking into consideration the results of the survey, which suggest that the knowledge on the process of EU integration is infinitesimal, the Albanian Parliament holds the obligation to take active actions to intensify its work pertaining to informing and awareness rising towards the youngsters on the EU integration process of Albania. The survey also displays the main means by which can be used by the Albanian Parliament to establish communication channels and deliver the information. 35.3% of responses recommend the establishment of a structure/forum consisting of youngsters and members of the parliament, 26.5% of them suggest the use of social media to present the information and the work of the parliament in the EU integration process, 21.2% propose regular meetings with the MPs to get informed, while 16.8% mention the official website of the Albanian Parliament as the key intermediary to get informed.

Practices of previous acceding countries can be taken as successful approaches in this case. The research shows that countries do not apply any formal mechanisms in this regard, nonetheless, the approach taken by the Polish Senate and the Danish Parliament seem to be most relevant and effective towards informing and raising awareness to the youth on the EU integration process.

The Senate of the Republic of Poland has passed a resolution on the importance of European education. The resolution calls for intensifying existing activities and taking new initiatives especially to raise the knowledge about EU integration process. The adoption of a resolution shows the commitment of the Senate to channel the capacities towards informing and raising awareness of the youth on the topic. Whereas, the Danish Parliament (Folketinget) has established the EU Information Centre within the Parliament, which serves as an information point concerning the European Union, for all citizens, including the youth. Educational activities carried out by the Centre target students aged 15 to 19 years old and aim at informing and raising awareness to the youth regarding the EU membership process, EU accession criteria, EU enlargement process and integration. Such examples can serve as starting points for the Albanian Parliament to commence the process of information and awareness rising with the youth.