

REGIONAL ESSAYS

ProgWeB 2022 IV generation



PROG  **WeB**
Progressive
Politics in
Western Balkan



REGIONAL ESSAYS PROGWEB 2022 IV GENERATION



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ESSAY 1

QUOTAS AS A MECHANISM FOR INCREASED POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT OF YOUTH IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Summary

This paper analyses the political representation of youth in the Western Balkans and their participation in political parties, elections, intra-party quota systems, and whether the political parties find quotas as a best solution for increasing political participation of youth and their political credibility. The literature review of other countries that use youth quotas as inclusion-instruments to ensure a wider perspective on how youth political representation should look and where should it derive from is also presented. Balkan countries did not institutionalize quota systems in their public institutions or introduced it as a criterion for the creation of election lists. However, most parties voluntarily include representatives of their youth wing organizations in their election lists. Nevertheless, there are very few successful outcomes of such practice where young candidates got elected and represented youth interests in high level institutions such as the Parliament. This comparative report shows that countries that

used youth quotas faced similar problems, as the young candidates who got elected as the result of the implemented quota system often did not have proper political influence and they were influenced by their more experienced fellow party members.

Aside from quotas, one of the final recommendations of this research is that political parties should introduce mechanisms of informal education that will provide knowledge and experience to young candidates so that they can handle better the situations that are likely to occur within the party and during election campaigns.

Introduction

Politics is considered to be an environment where all social groups protect their common interests and pursue innovative ideas to build a better society for themselves. However, politics cannot be reviewed as a separate dimension built parallel to the society as it is merely its reflection. Thus, although it is expected that all social groups are equally represented and included in politics, democracy does not always provide the best mechanisms in this regard. Liberal democracies built on the foundation of the free market and capitalism often split societies into different groups based on gender, economic status, race, etc. This diversity reflects on the distribution of political power as well, as having less money means having difficulties in organizing electoral campaign, hence less political power. As a result, some social groups are discriminated and remain underrepresented as they are seen as incapable or inadequate to be entitled to have “a seat at the table”.

Subsequently, it became necessary to introduce a mechanism that secures the least participation of marginalized members of the communities within politics and nowadays most countries implement quota systems. There is an ongoing debate and uncertainty on whether quotas resolve the problem of discrimination and social injustice or help

maintain the status quo. Nevertheless, the pros and cons of this discussion will not be reviewed in this paper.

Quotas are introduced in politics to facilitate a fair environment for all competing sides and to establish a progressive environment based on the principle that equality in politics is ensured.

Previous research on youth quotas indicates that this practice is not only highly debated, but under-researched as well. Although gender quotas are thoroughly examined in many studies, substantial research on youth quotas is currently lacking. Some ageing societies view quota systems as a tool for greater youth inclusion in politics and decision-making bodies. Despite this, none of the western democracies have officially adopted youth quotas on the national level. Political parties implement this system voluntarily to ensure a certain number of persons of defined age is included in their electoral lists. Out of eight countries that have adopted youth quotas legislatives on their national level, seven are in Africa. In fact, Philippines were the first country to officially introduce youth quotas to its national electoral party-lists in 1986. The other eight countries that followed them are Uganda (1995), Rwanda (2003), Kenya (2010), Morocco (2011), Tunisia (2014), Egypt (2014) and Gabon (2015). It is also important to say that all countries that adopted youth quotas have previously

adopted gender quotas, as well, mostly in the midst of their political transitions.

Needless to say, the majority of the abovementioned countries have high youth rates in their population. Some researchers believe that sometimes hybrid regimes introduce youth quotas in order to further legitimize their power, so they ceded some of the power to achieve that goal. In all these cases, youth quotas were adopted at the time of political turmoil and crisis, which further enabled the hybridization of authoritarian regimes. To this day, Tunisia is the only democracy that has adopted youth quotas in parliament.

Therefore, the focus of this research is on Tunisia and their adoption of youth quotas. The Arab Spring incited in Tunisia through the self-immolation of a protestant Mohamed Bouazizi in 2010 and Tunisia's transition to democracy began through revolution soon after this event. Their first democratic step was to organize the elections for which the Tunisians had to compile an interim electoral code. The feminist movements secured a voice in the commission nominated to monitor this task and one of their first achievements was the adoption of gender parity principle within the interim electoral code. In 2011, the Islamist party Ennahdha won the elections and formed a government with two smaller parties. The first constitution draft addressed the women's rights in a conservative way, and this led to series of

protests organized by feminist movements. With the help from some western democracies and international organizations, the parity paragraph was finally adopted in 2014.

Initiative for youth quota lacked the international support and youth was a marginalized group in Tunisian politics as they did not participate in the political debate in any way. Institutionalizing youth political involvement in the Constitution was vaguer than the regulations concerning women. Political elite presented youth as a group in need of education, guidance and employment, rather than of political involvement. In addition, youth missed to request an electoral youth quota during the constitution writing process. The youth associations did not seek guaranteed representation of youth in the political processes of Tunisia, though they emphasized the importance of ensuring participation of young candidates in the elections. In this way, youth organizations and NGOs adopted the view of political elites, and focused on the issues of youth employment and the improvement of their socio-economic situation, claiming that essential life standards, such as steady income, employment, and social status must be provided first. With the adoption of the Constitution, a new electoral code had to be prepared and youth quota system was seriously taken into consideration this time. Political participation of youth was discussed in 5 inner-commission debates with mostly middle-aged deputies

from government parties who favored the idea of adopting youth quotas and ensuring greater youth political representation in general.

As a result, the quota system was officially adopted and it now guarantees the presence of at least one candidate under the age of 35 within the first four positions on electoral lists. The quota system enforces financial sanctions which deprive political parties up to 50% of their state funding should they not comply with the youth quota system.

Current situation and identification of problem

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Similar to most Western Balkans countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina has not adopted any regulating law regarding youth quotas in politics. Some parties voluntarily regulate this issue through their statutes, or by having reserved seats for youth wing representatives in their election lists. On the other hand, some political parties include youth only when they dominate on the political scene in order to gain votes for the party. It is interesting to note that that despite the high

numbers of young voters, the percentage of young political representatives remains low, namely:

General parliament election 2018 in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

Voters younger than 30: 17,27%; Elected youth : 4,83 %.

Local elections 2020 in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

Voters younger than 30 - 16,52%; Elected youth - 12,81 %.

Serbia

According to the available data from 2019, there was over 1,141,000 young people who are between 15-30 years old in Serbia, who made almost 1/6 of the population. After the 2020 Parliamentary elections, 28 MPs of the National Assembly were under 30 years of age. This means that the young members represented 11.2% of this legislative body. During the same elections, out of 3419 candidates there were 580 young candidates below the age of 30 who were nominated as MPs, or 16,96% (similar percentage of youth in overall country's population). The young candidates were usually positioned in the second halves of candidate lists. However, there was also a list comprised mostly of young candidates presented by a citizen group "1 of 5 million", were 77 out of 98 young MP candidates, or 78,57%, were introduced.

When it comes to number of young representatives in the National Assembly, there was 28 young MPs elected in 2008, which was the highest number of young representatives elected to this level of governance. After 2008, the number of young MP candidates declined.

In the past 15 years, only 2 appointed ministers of the Government were under the age of 30. Namely, Nikola Selaković was appointed Minister of Justice at 29 years of age in 2012 and Lazar Krtić became a Minister of Finance at the age of 29 in 2013.

The same study reports that the 65% of young survey participants affirmatively responded to question whether the quotas for the young should be introduced in the government institutions to ensure the participation of the young in decision-making processes.

The analyses of the statutes of the leading political parties in Serbia indicate that they rarely mention the quotas as a means to increase the youth political participation within these parties. Further review of publicly available documents provided by these political parties confirmed these results. The exception is DS (Democratic Party) whose rule book states that among every 20 MP candidates on the electoral list, there must be at least one young MP candidate and one MP candidate belonging to an ethnic minority.

North Macedonia

Two out of 120 MPs (1,66%) were below the age of 30 during the 2016-2020 mandate in North Macedonia (WFD, 2019). There are no official quota systems adopted to support young candidates nor there is official data on the minimal percentage of youth on the electoral lists. However, the political parties have established a tradition to reserve a seat for the president of their youth political wing.

Kosovo

Even though the number of young MPs in Kosovo is higher (6) than in the other countries in the region, there is no legal regulation (FES,2016) in the form of quotas for youth involvement. The practice of ensuring a seat for the party's youth representative is present here as well. This could be interpreted that youth inclusion in decision making and political entities does not come as an internalized value on society (or political parties) but rather as a milestone to be finished in order to collect young votes under slogans such as "Youth is the future" . A similar situation occurs in the governing institutions as well, the difference is that in the government officials are appointed to their positions and not elected. As a result, young people are usually engaged with some kind of job or responsibility (with no real political power) only for the leader to rehabilitate and reward the structures

within the party. Thus, there is no young ministers in Kosovo's government, and the usual positions filled by young people are assistants and secretaries.

Albania

Albania's data for youth participation in elections is better, and even though there is no legal regulation requiring youth inclusion on electoral list, the main Albanian parties actually have high participation of young people in their lists.

Albania's last government elections were in 2021. This research focuses on the three main political parties in Albania: The Socialist Party of Albania, the Democratic Party of Albania and Socialist Movement for Integration, and they had their lists as it continues:

The Socialist Party of Albania - 50% of the list is represented by women and 30% is represented by young candidates, under the age of 30.

The Democratic Party of Albania - 50% of the list is represented by women and 30% is represented by young candidates, under the age of 30.

The Socialist Movement for Integration - 50% of the list is represented by women and 30% is represented by young candidates, under the age of 30.

Currently, there are only two MPs under the age of 30, one from Socialist Party and one from the Democratic Party.

When it comes to the statutes of the political parties and the youth representation on their election lists, The Democratic Party of Albania and The Socialist Movement for Integration require a participation of 30% of young representatives in every level. The Socialist Party of Albania is in the process of redesigning their statute and its final version is currently not available. Considering these practices, they have been applying the formula of composing the list with 50% of women and 30% of young representatives for years now.

Recommendations and desired outcomes

- The political parties must support the political participation of youth and ensure that they gain proper political experience instead of holding political positions with no real impact.
- Political activism must be internalized as a value important for our societies. The ultimate goal of the political involvement of the organizations should aim for a social advancements rather than personal gains.

- Youth quotas set by the political parties can guarantee youth representation in case there is a chance the better positioned candidates can pass. – non-preferred

Political parties and other political subjects should promote youth participation in politics more intensively. Such promotion is absolutely necessary for the healthy development of the society and youth should be given an opportunity to acquire decision making and organizational skills in due time of their personal and political development.

Youth quotas introduced by the political parties offer the solution for greater involvement of youth in the political landscape, but this practice is not sufficient if youth representation in decision making and governing bodies lacks. If not implemented properly, it can have zero effect on youth representation and give away a different notion. For example, a political party may boast with high number of young candidates on its electoral list, but if young candidates are placed low on the lists, it is very likely that none of them can get elected. Also, very often youth wings of political parties do not operate autonomously and can suffer serious political consequences should they act against the will of high-profile politicians from their parties. For this reason, this is ranked as a non-preferred solution, however, it can be taken into consideration in the search for the desired outcome.

Reserved seats (African model) - non-preferred

Having reserved seats for the youth in electoral lists is also a non-preferred recommendation. Such measure has not produced a notable effect in the past when it comes to youth representation in national assemblies and parliaments. It ensured that a certain number of candidates of the defined age are placed high on the electoral list. In this way, there are usually up to five reserved seats for the young candidates in electoral lists. Another reason why this is a non-preferred option is that if the number of reserved seats increases, it may be reviewed as discriminatory. Unlike sex, ethnicity or race, age changes with time and some might feel disadvantaged if young people are favored by having guaranteed seats.

Preferred option

- **Law amendments that regulate representation of youth within government cabinet;**
- **Amendments to the election laws that combine youth representation in parliaments with the percentage of youth in general population;**
- **Representation of youth in boards and main bodies of the political parties.**

The listed recommendations could be implemented, however, they could result in having just a cosmetic effect. That is why

a more comprehensive and substantial approach to this issue is required. The public should not see politics as a lucrative opportunity, but as a mean that is used for the overall improvement of their respective communities. This approach could be more appealing to young people to join politics as now, most young people in the Balkans see politics as a kind of dishonest work. If good politicians are publicly visible from their young age, then victims to tokenism and quota systems can be avoided. The best MP's are always welcome, but there is no way the quality of young MPs is ensured if quota system is applied, unless some additional mechanisms are put into place that help educate and empower young candidates.

Besides quotas, a more holistic approach towards creating a better environment for youth engagement in politics is creating mechanisms that actually help young activists become better at what they do. Different forums of informal education can be of help, as youth would have opportunity to learn more about campaigning, PR and marketing, political theory, philosophy and politics in general. Therefore, instead of providing secure seats on the lists for young candidates, the parties should facilitate the infrastructure that would enable them to become better activist and politicians. As a result, young candidates would compete with their fellow candidates on equal terms and actually earn their seats.

Finally, the parties should organize political academies intended for educating their young members. The academy curriculum should be carefully created and it should address the current needs of the party members. The young party members could gain knowledge and experience on elections and campaigning in this way. If done properly, this academy can have significant impact on young politicians, by helping them gain the necessary skills on how to advance their political career.

Conclusion

Youth involvement in politics must be reviewed as a natural process that derives as a value of a civilized, well informed and emancipated society. Otherwise, it makes no significant impact or whatsoever on the general politics of a country. Youth involvement in politics impacts the political practices in the Western Balkans, and lack of their engagement is the reproduction of an old political system that the Balkan countries have already abolished. Therefore, education and raising awareness on this issue is a priority before quotas. In the example of North Macedonia and Kosovo it is noted ensuring a place on the electoral lists does not guarantee that political power to young politicians. Their political involvement is artificial and it is implemented only

to improve the overall image of the party toward the public opinion.

The main recommendation of this research is to invite parties and politicians to work towards the emancipation and education rather than quotas. The inclusion of youth in political lists fulfils the form but young politicians have very little or no impact in politics. Based on the researched data, the biggest problem of young politicians continues to be lack of knowledge on fund-raising, campaign management, public speech, etc. Creating mechanisms that tackle these challenges could create more opportunities for young people that will eventually encourage them to join politics, get elected and improve their political careers.

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ESSAY 2

THE ROLE OF YOUTH WINGS OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LIBERAL POLITICAL PARTIES IN POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OF THE YOUTH WITH EMPHASIS ON MARGINALIZED GROUPS

Summary

ProgWeB is a one-year regional project aiming to educate young liberals and social democrats, as well as NGO activists from the Western Balkan countries.¹ The youth from the Western Balkans has recognized that the biggest challenge they are facing in their counties is apathy among the youth. To analyze the reason behind such opinion, a group consisting of representatives from Albania –Fjona Kurteshi, Bosnia and Herzegovina – Lamija Džomba and Ahmed Kosovac, Kosovo – Fjolla Muçaj, Montenegro – Marija Čvorović, North Macedonia – Filip Talevski and Serbia – Aleksandra Božić decided to examine in which manner

¹<https://bdf.ba/progweb/>

marginalized groups such as youth, women, national minorities, and LGBTI+ are being treated and included in decision-making processes. This regional essay is prepared through desktop research and comparative analysis of the relevant data from the respective countries, while the recommendations are based on the analysis of the best practices. In addition, the recommendations presented in this document propose creating mechanisms that will enable the sufficient presence of national minorities, LGBTI persons, women, and youth. In fact, one of the proposed mechanisms is creation of advisory committees which deal with specific issues of the marginalized groups and consider relevant policies to help them overcome the challenges these groups are facing. Moreover, all political parties must restrain from incitement to any racial, ethnic, or religious group. These commitments must be sincere and rather focused on the implementation of existing policies that are not necessarily inadequate.

Introduction

Participation is an essential civil right of a democratic society. European institutions and organizations constantly emphasize the importance of youth participation and they aim to foster young people's active citizenship, enhance their integration and inclusion and strengthen their contribution to the development of democracy.² The active participation of young people in decision-making processes at local, regional, and national levels is essential to building a more democratic, inclusive, and prosperous society.

Political inclusion of youth is more than voting or standing for election, although these elements are as important as a contribution to decision-making. It is not only about having the right to participate but it is also about having the space, opportunity, skills and necessary support to participate and influence on the decisions and to engage in activities that contribute to building a better society. The right of young people to express their views in matters that affect them is enshrined in a fundamental right and added to this, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified international treaty in history, protects the rights of underage children as well.

²<https://www.trainerslibrary.org/youth-participation-in-decision-making-process/>

Having in mind the important role youth have for the development of the society, modern growth, and impact on political parties, it is necessary to consider the question of youth engagement and motivation to take part in politics of the Western Balkan countries. The mechanisms that political parties use to approach young people and to help them identify themselves with the program or ideology that parties are promoting and standing for are often discussed. Under the very challenging global circumstances (Covid-19, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and also the currently difficult socio-economic situation), the political parties are dealing with the demanding international issues side-by-side with the ongoing complex national matters.

Firstly, the general overview of youth participation in the Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) is presented, followed by the description of the problem, the quota system, and possible solutions.

Overview of youth participation within the political parties

Depending on a country, young people are considered to be in a range of 15-35 years old and usually persons between 18 to 30 years of age can be politically active within the youth branch. When it comes to the percentage of young people in Western Balkan countries, it ranges from 17.7% (Serbia) to 63% (Kosovo). Except for Kosovo³, the average percentage of young adults in all Western Balkan countries is approximately 20%.⁴ To better understand the current situation in the Western Balkans, the existing legislation and strategic grounds which give the framework and insight for future improvement in this field will be examined. More precisely, the Law on Youth is adopted in all Western Balkan countries except Albania, which does not have any legal regulations related to the youth or their position in the society at the moment.

³ Population and housing census, ASK

⁴ Youth Policies in the Western Balkans and the EU, 2020

Problem description

Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia's liberal parties have separate youth forums or youth organizations that stand for the interests of their young members and represent them on the political scene. In addition, the social-democratic parties of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, and North Macedonia have similar youth organizations. On the other hand, Serbian political parties have slightly different strategies for integrating youth into their lines, and they usually implement them through youth branches. Lately, some parties in Serbia have also launched their youth forums.

The primary aim of youth forums is to promote the involvement of young people in political parties. Also, members of these forums represent the socio-political interests of young people in political processes not only within political parties, but at the national level as well. Considering the low participation of youth in politics, the role of these youth forums unfortunately remains very symbolic in the Balkans. In addition, only the basic information about the youth forums and their activities is available on the official websites of the political parties. The parties' official social media pages, including Facebook, provide more information on their activities, though they also are not regularly updated.

A quota system for the political participation of youth - the most common policy practice

Except for Montenegro and North Macedonia, liberal and social democratic parties of Albania, Serbia and Kosovo did not adopt quotas for youth representation within the parties. In the Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro, 20% of young members should be represented in all bodies and at all levels of the party, while in the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia, 1/3 of young members must be in every body of the party including a 50 % gender quota.

The inclusion of marginalized groups – special agenda

Liberal and social democratic political parties of Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina do not have any special agenda tackling marginalized groups and their inclusion in the work of the parties. Nevertheless, some of their activities in cooperation with NGO-s promote the inclusion of marginalized groups in politics and explicitly within the political parties. An example for such program is Youth Initiative for Human Rights within the Transitional justice program, with the offices open in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro. However, this cooperation is only tackling general issues regarding the political inclusion of marginalized groups as it often misses the precise emphasis on youth coming from

marginalized groups in the society. Therefore, accurate data on the involvement of youth coming from marginalized groups in the youth forums or the political parties does not exist or it is not publicly available.

Preferred Solution and Policy Recommendations

Youth engagement in political parties through youth forums or other similar mechanisms is very important since forums play an important role in a party's policy development, especially on issues that are of direct interest to the youth population. In order to function properly and achieve their goals, youth forums should have stable funding from their respective political parties and be regularly invited to the political educational seminars and trainings. It is also important that youth forums have statutory autonomy within the party. They must be inclusive for young women and minorities, as diversity and inclusion is what they stand for. Based on research findings of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights⁵ and previous analyses, below are the necessary policy

⁵ B. Vierda et al. Human Rights Handbook for Young Political Leaders, 2018, Youth Initiative for Human Rights

recommendations the political parties should take into consideration:

- Political parties should ensure the presence of issues relevant to national minorities, LGBTI persons, women's rights, and youth rights.
- Political parties should prepare a variety of measures to support the participation of marginalized groups; for example, creating advisory committees for minorities and relevant minority and recruitment programs, as well as creating provisions requiring national minorities, LGBTI persons, women's rights, and youth membership on internal party committees and candidates' lists (quota system).
- Political parties should create the framework for political participation designed to facilitate the inclusion of national minorities, LGBTI persons, women and youth in the public debate as well as to promote their political participation.
- Political parties must restrain from any incitement to racial, ethnic, religious hatred or hatred-based individual's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Political parties must promote dialogue and tolerance, including sensitization campaigns among fellow politicians to promote and address all topics relevant to marginalized groups.

- Political parties must remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of national minorities, LGBTI persons, women or youth.

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