

RESEARCH STUDY REPORT

PERCEPTIONS AND STATEMENTS OF ALBANIAN ELECTORATE OVER QUALITY OF ALBANIAN PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS

Tirana, 2020

The report was prepared by:

Enxhi Nasto

The author shall be solely responsible for the facts and views expressed in this study and his/her interpretation and other opinions do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation

Contents

Gratitude	5
I. Executive overview	7
I.1. Main purpose of the research	8
I.2. Methodology of research	8
I.3. Research ethic and confidentiality	
I.4. Interest level of electorate in attending Parliaments plenary sessions	9
II. Research findings of the study.	17
II.1. More reasons why Albanian electorate isn't a regular viewer of Parliamentary plenary sessions	17
II.2. Logical chart of topics	20
II.3. Pyramid's hierarchy of the five priority problems of the study	21
III. Conclusions and results of the research study	22
IV. Recommendations for the Parliament's improvement	24
V. Closing remarks	26

This study was conducted in the framework of the election of the new Parliament to be conducted on April 25, 2021, where Albanians expect a radical change and improvement of the image of this institution. Perceptions and attitudes expressed by the electoral body of the country is the true mirror in which is reflected the entire performance of the work of the legislative representatives of the Assembly.

This published study can serve as a reference for further research, as it presents in-depth information on the attitudes of public opinion towards individuals who have a parliamentary status.

This study does not contain any political position expressed on political parties, but on how MPs have represented their electorate so far and how much they have managed to justify the votes won by Albanians.

Gratitude:

Deep gratitude and thanks to my colleagues, friends, individuals unknown to me who were stimulated by the idea and pure purpose of this research, who enabled the distribution of the questionnaire and lobbied for its completion to generate as many results as possible that approximated reality. I thank my family for the emotional support and for every achievement of mine in the professional aspect.

I. Executive overview

Media coverage on Parliament's plenary sessions, has provided transparency for the parliamentary activities that can reach all Albanian citizens, in such way that they can be informed properly for any activities related to their legislative representatives. The opportunity of attending full plenary sessions comes from its citation in the first article in section 43 of the Internal Regulation, which states the form and functions of Albanian Parliament. Today, in one dedicated television station of the Albanian Public Radio and Television, from whom other private audio/visual media receive signal in transmitting all activities for the Parliament, groups of interest, social society organisations, and many other, its possible knowing and being aware of draft law plenary discussions that effects the public from their approval and legitimacy. In some plenary sessions (except from this year, due to the pandemic restrictions) it seems that specific interest groups and citizens can attend discussions over the daily agenda live from the Parliaments Hall.

I.1. Main purpose of the research

The purpose that leads the research was testing the public viewpoint over the actual image of albanian deputies. The research has been rational purpose oriented, because of the need

to understand the post electoral perception of the electorate toward albanian deputies, aside from being a “fan voter” for the party, because this was not the intention of the population sampling according to the matter of the research study. Findings from this electoral poll aims at Parliaments public image improvement in a continuous way, in order to push deputies in taking more responsibility toward their electorate, and above all to be more professional and ethical in preservation of electorate interests.

I.2. Methodology of research

The method used is mixed, thereby a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The research instrument generated is a questionnaire that is organised in open and closed questions. There aren't questions with tendencies in putting participants of the research study in any difficult circumstances. In each and every closed question is already set a choice, that in the research language it is known as “grey choice”, in order to achieve a sense of relax in answering the questions. The questionnaire is closed with an open question in which all participants may express their arguments. The questionnaire has been uploaded online in the researcher's social network, and it has been massively shared especially for its positive reaction.

I.3. Research ethic and confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality preservation has been a major objective. There are four demographic data definitions for participants in the online questionnaire such as *gender, education, age and city*. In this case, the researcher hasn't required specific

data for the simple reason of dodging unnecessary risks for participants anonymity. The researcher hasn't displayed any political persuasion in questions formulation and it also hasn't showed any interest in asking citizens about it. It demonstrates the high level of respect for research ethic.

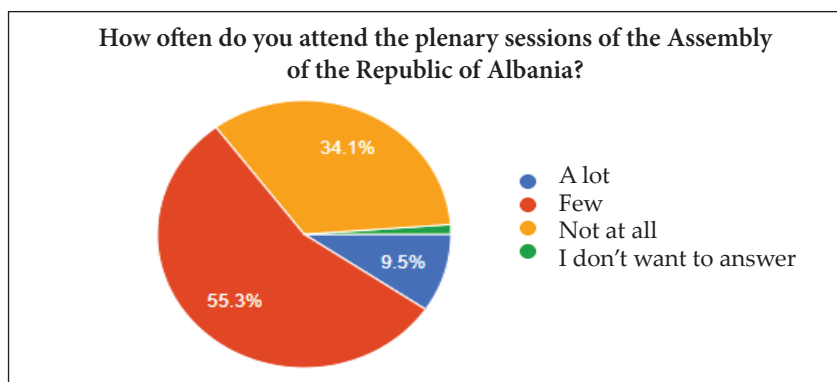
I.4. Interest level of electorate in attending Parliaments plenary sessions.

This is one of the most important research questions that had lead all the research activity. The avalanche sampling has come at 1200 participants that have chosen to answer in their own will. **54.9%** of the participants have high education and **39%** of them have a post graduate degree. The education element is a very important demographic feature of this case study and points out that elite society involvement has been the crucial focus of sampling. Most active age groups in filling the questionnaire were from 25 – 29 years old and from 30 – 34 years old, which shows us that the youth have been more interested in expressing their perception and individual stand toward the performance of parliamentary groups in the Parliament. From gender viewpoint, **51.6%** have been *male* participants and **48.4%** *female* participants.

It should be noticed that there is a “contradictory” relationship between Parliament members and the electorate itself, because through these last, the men and women are part of the “temple of democracy”, as has been defined by Dr. Ylli Bufi in one of his editions. Also in the name of it, decision makers have the fate of the nation in their hands, and they also have a legal, professional and moral responsibility toward them who gave their deputy status. In each and every government, especially in totalitarian ones, the represented creates a symbiotic bond with its legislative representative, making it powerful by two inherent reasons:

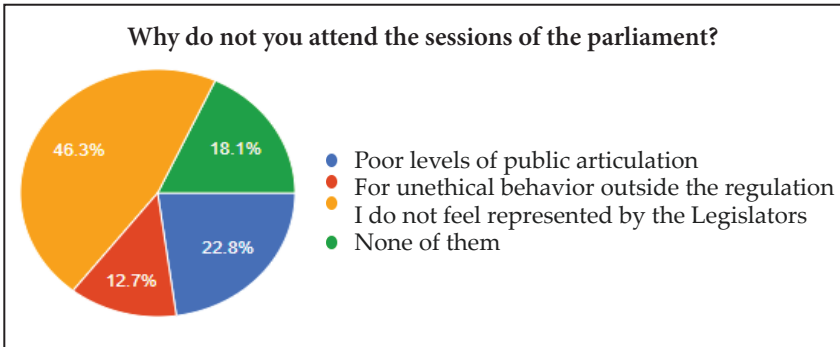
firstly, because it has obtained a majority of electorate through obtaining their mindset thus generating a majority of votes; and *secondly*, because of its political longevity, derived from the fact that it has been a part of parliamentary groups in different legislations one after the other, and as a result has reinforced its status in the nation. History has proved that the individuals with the longest political longevity have been transformed in irreplaceable personalities of the Albanian culture. Is it the right time for a radical change of this mindset that kept this political generation in a 30 years rein?

- *It is found a low level of frequency of the plenary session's attendance from the participants.*



55.3% of the participants attend a *few* level of Parliament's affairs, 34.1% has expressed that they attend *none* of them and a little percentage of 9.5% states that they attend *very much*. According to this, we can see that electorate as a public is very passive in following parliamentary sessions systematically. This passivity can derive from institutional image threat. When a parliament gains few attendance, this means that it is losing its reliability.

Reliability is an element linked directly with public opinion. It was Abraham Lincoln from the very first politicians that was interested and honor public opinion. He clearly said that “Sympathy of the public is everything, owning it you will not fail, but not having it, nothing will succeed”.



In the next question, there are submitted some alternatives as main reasons for lack of interest toward following Parliaments affairs, and it has result in **46.3%** of them in “*not being represented by lawmakers*”, showing a reduction of the trust curve toward them. Of course that when we speak about the lack of respect for the Code of Conduct of a deputy, for the lack of transparency in its activities outside of the Parliament, for the frequent ethical conflict with whom personal interest clash against national interest; the way of spending parliamentary benefits; the misuse of information in the podium where it is discussed for actual problems of the albanian folk, artificial boost of numbers in some specific cases, then albanian people will know how it feels to be underrepresented.

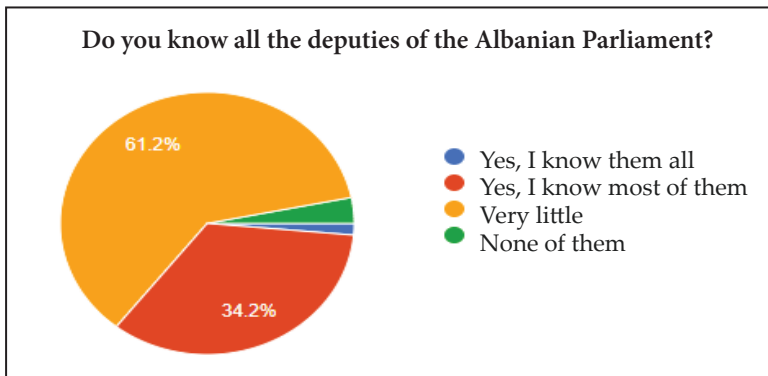
The rest of participants has a **22.8%** of the total attendance in the alternative *“low level of public speech”*. A degraded public speech is when none of the tactics proposed by the greatest public speaker of all times, Ronald Reagan, is taken into consideration. Albanian folk approach this mindset because of the following reasons:

- In some cases, there are some long speeches that doesn't respect the designated time in the parliamentary rules. Multiple notices made by the Head of Parliament for the interruption of the speech are very disturbing for the audience.
- In some cases, it is pointed out that the speech is not as energizing as it should be. A public speech should have more than a logical structure. It should contain rhythm and also parts that can inspire people. A tale, a surprise, a humorous joke when nobody expects it, all of these are done for the purpose of keeping the audience relaxed, involved, hooked on.
- In most of the public speeches, there is no evidence of interesting facts beside of general accusations between each other on a personal level. The audience need reliable information about nation's public life and it is not interested in informations and facts about the private lives of each deputy.

Meanwhile, **12.7%** of participants have expressed that they don't keep up with plenary sessions for the reason of *“non ethical conduct”*. It seems that the mindset of the Albanian people refers to the principle of respect toward the political adversary, which has been derailed from the track in the parliamentary environment. When the audience notes that in the majority of non ethical manifestations such as boot throwing, egg shooting, offensive slang, molotov bottle throwing etc., it gives them a meaningful

reason to change the TV station and to non consider Parliament as the pinnacle of public debate or as a forum where important matter of talk is discussed and treated with responsibility and professionalism, such as government incentives and public matter.

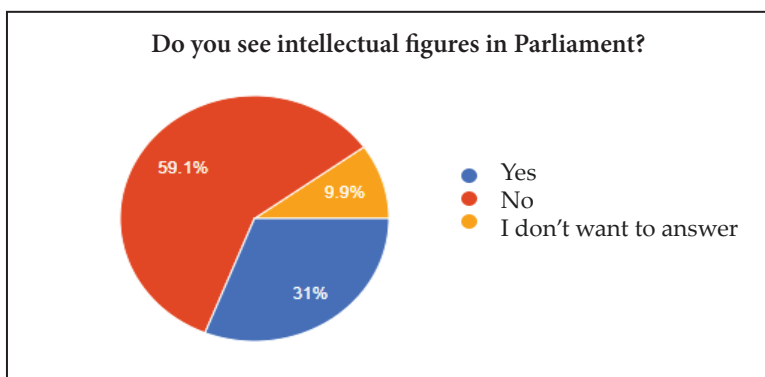
- *Knowing scale of Parliament deputies from electorate*



1197 Albanians have chosen to answer this question that had the purpose of testing the recognition of all individuals that are part of the parliamentary groups and also deputies who has had an independent candidature. Results show that **61.2%** know them *“little to none”*. Lesser knowledge about lawmakers, of them who are politically recruited thanks to the people’s vote, derives from two relevant facts:

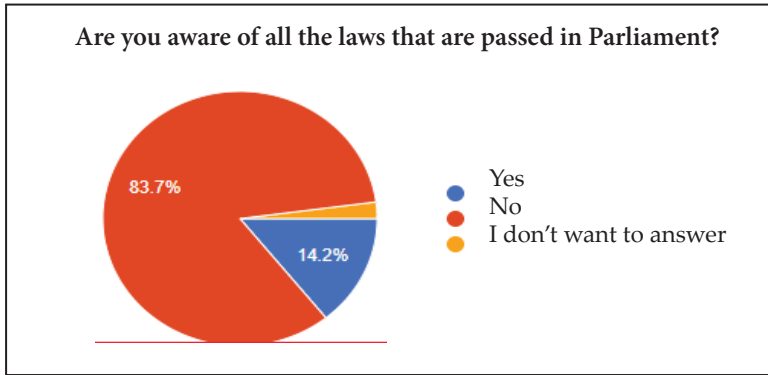
- The electorate never voted for the “candidate”. They have voted for the “prime”, thus for the political leader of the party. This electorate doesn’t know all of them, because they haven’t categorized them as individuals. In contrary, they voted through political brand.

- Not everyone of the legislative representants are very active in public speech, mostly in the plenary sessions, thus making Albanian electorate under represented, or in the worst case scenario, being represented in the Parliament just by a few political individuals.
- *Do Albanian people have achieved to perceive an intellectual persona in the Albanian Parliament?*



1194 Albanians has chosen to respond the next question, by resulting in a **59.1%** ratio of those who don't see a proper representant with positive credentials. Therefore this is a strong signal for the leaders of political parties, giving them an approach by evading proposals about individuals who cannot justify the trust of their leaders. Instead **31%** of them are able to recognize intellectual figures that aren't mandated just for the reason of being loyal to the party, but for being able to respect the parliamentary political discipline in a continuous manner. **9.9%** of them have refused to answer this question.

- *Being briefed on approved laws in the Parliament.*



1195 from the total of the participants decided to answer this question, resulting in 83.7% of the participants that are not aware about all laws that pass through for discussion, for whom takes place a legislative process which ends mostly in consent. This explains the lack of dialogue between the elected and the elector, but above all, deflecting of attention in a plenary sessions on a personal and offensive level, with use of inappropriate offensive slang beyond the parliament's agenda. Media coverage in their news editions, is mostly oriented in covering jokes and offensive words and not giving the real news the right time and space, such as approved laws and the way that these laws affect day by day living. Laws known by citizens is part of a very important process in conforming the right social behavior. This record shows that participants that are part of a group with higher education, aren't always updated with the latest official laws published. A minority of 14.2% are those who are the most informed about every approved law by the Parliament. *Dr. Ylli Bufi (2010, fq. 607) brings to attention the case of a small country such as Luxembourg,*

where every year has its own annual report of the Deputies Forum, which is distributed in every center of the nation. The annual report written by each and every deputy for its electorate, based on its own official activity at the end of every session, is used to describe the core of political and moral responsibilities toward the electorate, and not just for informative purposes. The lack of transparency has a major influence in the fact that Albanian people doesn't recognize all deputies, but the most important is that it goes beyond in lacking knowledge about approved laws and how do they affect their lives.

II. Research findings of the study

II.1. More reasons why Albanian electorate isn't a regular viewer of Parliamentary plenary sessions.

From the data analysis it is found that the participants feel very under represented by deputies because they are perceived as individuals addicted to their chairmen of the party in which they thrive, and for them it is very important to keep a good “indoors” communication than with their electorate, whom are also part of the national electorate organism.

Participant no.571/ time 00:01 AM: *“Low level. Even though they are chosen to represent us, they are chosen by the leader of the party to be in the list, which makes them look more nominated than chosen by the people’s vote. Their relationship is more with the leader of the party than the electorate”.*

Participant no.241/time 10:50 AM: *“Lowest level of conduct possible from all deputies, even from moral point and also from educational and professionalism point. How can I feel represented from a deputy that doesn't know how to spell out the word corporate?”*

Participant no.971/ time 14:46 PM: *“I feel ashamed of deputies that represent us, without any exception”.*

Participant no.986/ time 10:39 AM: *“Their low level of culture and integrity toward the prime of the government, that makes fun of ordinary citizens in each and every plenary session, feels like they offend my intelligence and make me feel very off. So, the best way is to avoid every plenary session.”*

Participant no.365/ time 13:44 PM: *“They have made tons of wealth that came not only from their job as a state official, and they are also very uneducated with no ability to talk at all, but unfortunately they call all the big decisions for our country”.*

Participant no.772/ time 09:26 AM: *“Inappropriate slang. Non ethical conduct. Political discuss and not for public interest”.*

Participant no.749/ time 17:08 PM: *“The Parliament is a theatrical show!”.*

Participant no.203/ time 12:07 PM: *“I see very often debates that are mislead from the context. Messing around with each other in a personal level often degenerates in a very ridiculous way and it is sad when it comes from they who suppose to be our leaders with the mission to lead our country”.*

Participant no.742/ time 10:33 AM: *“Going of topic it is often and it happens for political or personal vendetta. Little to none is discussed about laws”.*

Participant no.805/ time 23:11 PM: *“Lack of preparation in general from deputies part. This has brought less professional discussions in the plenary discussions for the law making process”.*

Participant no.959/time 14:06 PM: *“Low level of arguments; bad level of communication; negative expressions, insults, yelling tones and a very bad example in debating”.*

Participant no.697/ time 17:26 PM: *“Nonsense debate that in the end doesn’t solve any of the problems introduced in the beginning of the session. They don’t go after the core, but they keep yelling accusations with no prove at all.”*

Participant no.410/time 17:27 PM: *“I have been following them with over 10 years and in nowadays I no longer keep up with it anymore, because in these last 10 years I see only lies and comic shows...my love for politics is turned into disappointment; I no longer see news just for this reason”.*

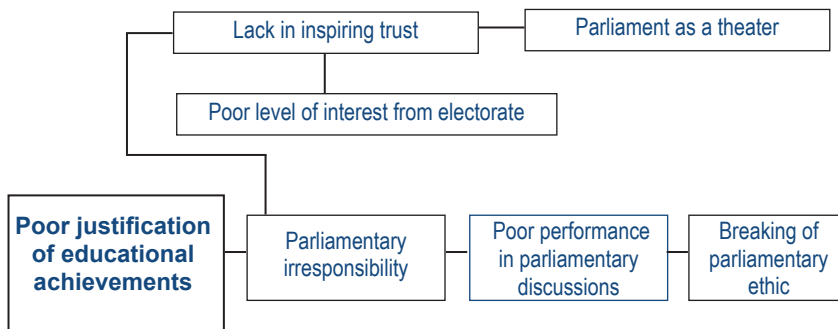
Participant no.273/time 23:29 PM: *“The main reason I don’t follow plenary sessions is that all the political parties are corrupt, and they seem as interested for the folk but in the reality they are all hype. Their non ethical behavior in the plenary sessions makes you think that you are seeing adult jokes. (Sorry for my expression)”*

Participant no.983/ time 10:15 AM: *“I don’t follow plenary sessions for the simple reason that parliamentary sessions don’t seek to address people’s problems, but instead they tend to fight each other. Beyond that, they are destroying middle class and poor people instead of doing justice”.*

Participant no.937/time 17:44 PM: *“These bad politicians haven’t done much for the people even in the past, in the present, and they also will not do anything good in the future either; why should we follow them when they make fun of people”.*

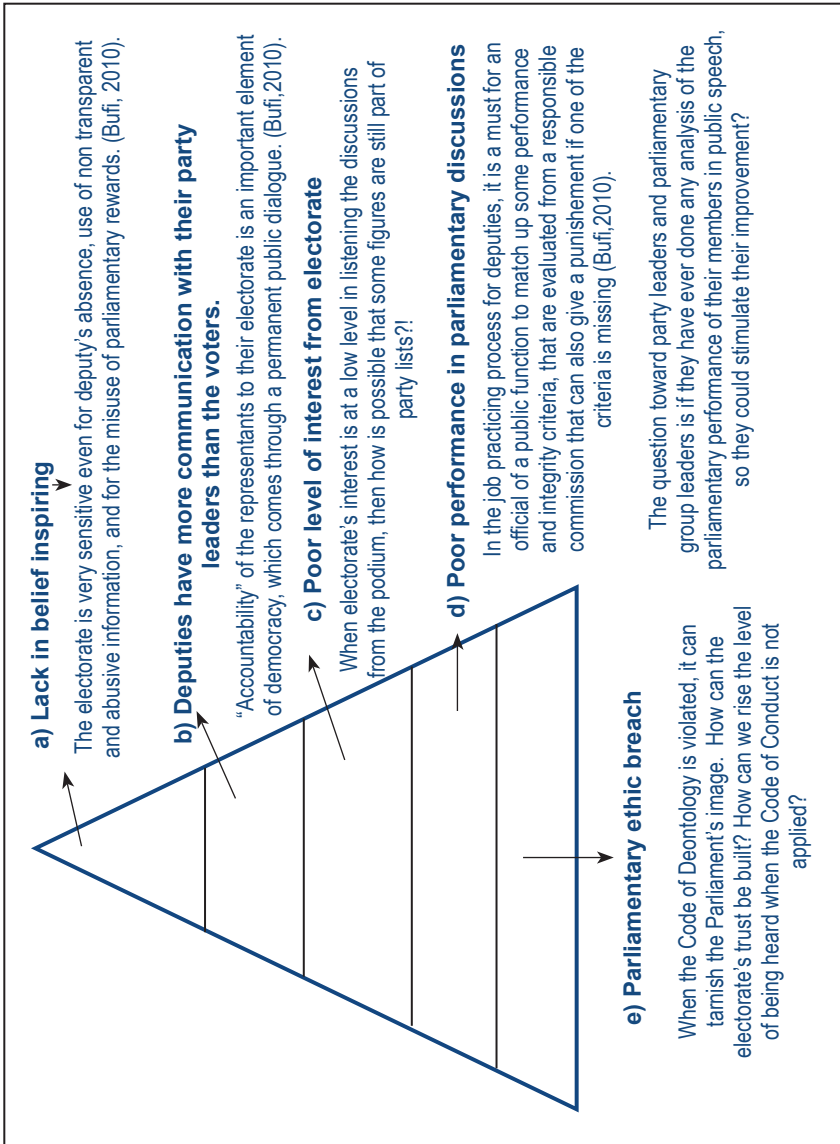
Participant no.101/ time 13:18: *“There is a huge lack of parliamentary culture and responsibility”.*

II.2. Logical chart of topics



This chart's content has a conceptual link between other seven main topics obtained through the process of data gathering and analyzing. The participants of the study think that educational achievements are not well justified by the majority of political representants beyond their political conformity or approach. Indicators of this fact are parliamentary irresponsibility, poor performance and ethical breach. All these three concepts are layed in parallel lines with each other. Parliamentary irresponsibility provokes a distinct lack of belief inspiring. Poor image credentials of the members of the Parliament, as part of the temple of democracy, is perceived by the citizens as a theatrical piece that comes with a distinct fall of the electorate interests.

II.3. Pyramid's hierarchy of the five priority problems of the study.



III. Conclusions and results of the research study

- 1) Personal aspect that is linked to appearance, the use of an inadequate code of communication, and also the lack of coherency with expressing contradictory statements in public speech, are some of the factors that have a negative impact on the image of a state official.
- 2) Public opinion critics have gone further some times in assaulting even the dressing style of some deputies in the past legislations. There have been real cases, for example the case of a female official, which discussed in the podium wearing a low-necked dress, or the case of a male official that was trying to speak a couple of words wearing in the meantime a cowboy hat. The lack of respect toward the dress code and the ethic of communication has been striking the image not only on a personal level, but also in an institutional one.
- 3) Some of the legislative representants have a hard time in generating inspiring, argumentative and convincing speeches. This has had a negative impact on the majority of Albanian electorate, giving them the impression that the Parliament has a serious lack of intellectual personalities.
- 4) Deputies have a closer relationship with their party leaders than they have with their electorate; as a result,

III. Conclusions and results of the research study

Albanian voters are not well informed about the deputy's activities in the legislature in which they poses an active parliamentary status.

- 5) Albanian voters are very unsatisfied with the poor political culture that has been demonstrated through the past years and that continues to be very present in the actual Parliament. Poor level of trust in present political figures has given them the impression of a comedy play in which the curtain is opened and closed every Thursday.
- 6) 83.7% of the participants aren't familiar with every law in their country. This has an impact on creating a considerable gap in the awareness of the population about respecting the law and law enforcement.
- 7) Closed electoral lists causes a lack of political transparency. Albanian voters don't have the right of knowing each and every candidate that runs to be deputy, that can give them the opportunity to choose before giving them the vote or not. What happens next? It happens that 61.2% of Albanian people doesn't know all of the deputies that approve the laws of the country; they only recognize the party and the leader whom they have voted for, and not all the members of the party.

IV. Recommendations for the Parliament's improvement

1. In the process of electoral lists making, political leaders must have to their attention the elitary theory of politics, because it is thought that it should be over the average level of political culture of the ordinary population. Electoral lists must have nominations of well educated individuals with exceptional academic achievements and not only that; with the right expertise in the professional field of study in which he/she has graduated; noble decision makers for the governed population; and a good public speaker as well.
2. The transparency of the election process begins since the opening of the electoral lists, therefore it is recommended that the electoral lists must be opened. Voters has the right to be familiar with the nominated names from the leaders of political parties.
3. Deputies must deliver monthly reports to their electorate for each and every done activity for the public matter of the country.
4. Parliamentarians that have distinguished problems in public speech, must be trained in special sessions to improve their public communication skills. Regardless of

IV. Recommendations for the Parliament's improvement

age or someone's experience, public speech is a skill that can be trained in case that it isn't a natural talent.

5. As an apartate of political recruitment, it is suggested that the Parliament must have an evaluation system that measures the performance of each and every deputy of all parliamentary groups by the end of each year. A display of this caliber would help to distinguish some legislative representants that could serve as blueprint for all newcomers that tend to have a career in politics.
6. The continuous financial transparency of every deputy is a necessary must to increase the belief in Albanian folk that must not be neglected.

V. Closing remarks

It would be very fine for Albanian people if they saw in the political arena of the country some new faces that can be a comeback to old classic roles. To find between them a *Hero* such as *Charles de Gaulle*; an *ordinary man* such as *Jimmy Carter*; a *charming leader* such as *J.F. Kennedy*, who knew the art of seduction; or a *beloved father* for the people such as *Conrad Adenauer*. It is not easy to represent and to be represented. Choosing someone is a responsibility as well as it is to govern those who delegate power to be governed. The time has come for legislators, executives and judges of this nation to be conscious about the burdain of their duty; the time has come for citizens to be conscious about the freedom of voting, keeping it clean from every dirty hand that tends to corrupt it. Albanian people should start to give the proper significance to their vote because it is the only way that natural democratic change can use to arrive.