



# Analysis on the Local Elections Campaign

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## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 1.1. The Election Process

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 2017, the Republic of Kosovo is holding local elections. Around 1.9 million registered voters<sup>1</sup> will have the opportunity to elect mayors and municipal assembly members in 38 municipalities. According to the Central Election Commission, a total of 91 political entities have been certified to run in 2017 local elections, including: 35 political parties, 30 civic initiatives, 1 coalition and 25 independent candidates<sup>2</sup>. The campaign period began on 21<sup>st</sup> of September 2017 and it will end on Friday, 20 October 2017. Possible run-offs are scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> of November 2017. For municipal assembly members, voting process is conducted through an open-list-proportional system, where voters elect their preferred political party and then one preferred candidate from that party. Seats will be allocated based on the proportional formula based on the percentage of votes that the party received. Mayoral races are based on simple majority system. Election commission will open 2,505 polling stations at 899 polling centers across Kosovo<sup>3</sup>, including northern municipalities with majority of Kosovo Serb voters.

### 1.2. Running Candidates for Local Elections

204 candidates will compete in mayoral races and 7,080 candidates will compete for 901 in 38 municipalities. Unfortunately, only 8 out of the 204 mayoral candidates are women.

### 1.3. Management of Election

According to the Law on Local Elections, each municipality is considered a single electoral constituency, while mayors are elected on a separate ballot. Municipal assembly members are elected based on an open party list, with a 30 percent gender quota.

*At polling station, voters will receive two different ballots*

*Table 1.4.1*

<b>Ballot</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>Municipal Assembly</i>	For the municipal assembly, voters can choose a political entity, as well as a vote for one candidate coming from that political entity's list. In cases when the voter marks more than one candidate, the vote is counted only for the leader of that political party's list.
<i>Municipal Mayor</i>	Voters should vote a single candidate for municipal mayor. If a candidate receives 50 percent plus one vote of the total votes, then the candidate is elected as a mayor. Nonetheless, if all the candidates receive less than 50 percent plus one of the total votes, a second round will take place.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.kqz-ks.org/Uploads/Documents/1762-2017%20Vendim%20per%20certifikimin%20e%20listes%20perfundimetarete%20votuesve\\_2017-09-22\\_1\\_eaylgbihig.PDF](http://www.kqz-ks.org/Uploads/Documents/1762-2017%20Vendim%20per%20certifikimin%20e%20listes%20perfundimetarete%20votuesve_2017-09-22_1_eaylgbihig.PDF)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.kqz-ks.org/sq/lajme/Details/343>

<sup>3</sup> [http://kqz-ks.org/Uploads/Documents/1762-2017%20Vendim%20per%20certifikimin%20e%20listes%20perfundimetarete%20votuesve\\_2017-09-22\\_1\\_eaylgbihig.PDF](http://kqz-ks.org/Uploads/Documents/1762-2017%20Vendim%20per%20certifikimin%20e%20listes%20perfundimetarete%20votuesve_2017-09-22_1_eaylgbihig.PDF)

## 1.4. Observation on Election Day

Accreditation of individuals for observation of elections in the name of any organization had to be submitted to the Central Election Commission by 9 October, 2017. A total of 32,509 observers have been accredited for local elections<sup>4</sup>, categorized as follows:

Table 1.4.1

Observers	Number of Observers	Description of the duty
<b>Political Entities</b>	28,059	Political entities will observe the election process on behalf of their own political parties; they usually stay at the polling stations until the voting process is completed.
<b>International Institutions (Foreign Election Commission Representatives)</b>	12	International Institutions observe the overall reflection of the voting process.
<b>Embassies</b>	37	Representatives from Embassies observe the voting process in various municipalities and transmit messages for a fair and democratic process.
<b>International NGOs (includes EU EOM)</b>	151	International NGOs are specialized observers that have experience and independence in the process of monitoring, as well as develop reports on the process.
<b>Local NGOs</b>	3,782	Representatives of Local NGOs observe and develop periodic reports within the election process. They display the process flow and issues that may encounter within the process.
<b>Media (Local and International)</b>	468	Local and International Media observe the voting process and inform the public through live-stream videos and news.

## 2. GENERAL ANALYSIS

### 2.1. Reflection on the Election Process

KLGI Institute evaluates that the election campaign is conducted in adherence with international standards<sup>5</sup> for free, fair and democratic elections. Local elections are of significant importance considering that the citizens directly elect their mayors and municipal assembly members. The proportional, open list election system encourages participation, allows voters to elect directly their representatives, and enhances internal party democracy. For one month,

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2017\\_ifes\\_kosovo\\_local\\_election\\_faqs\\_final.pdf](http://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2017_ifes_kosovo_local_election_faqs_final.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.osce.org/odihr/16935?download=true>

political parties and candidates have used the opportunity to present their programs and vision to the citizens of Kosovo.

2017 local elections are the second local election with the participation of the majority of Kosovo Serb voters in the northern municipalities. The campaign in the northern municipalities was also peaceful and without any incidents.

This election campaign has witnessed a dynamic public discourse and intense series of candidate debates. Parties and key candidates have engaged in extensive door-to-door campaign strategies, as well as public meetings with party supporters. Comparing to the local elections in 2013, the 2017 local elections witnessed more seasoned parties and candidates in implementing new campaign strategies and tactics. Social media outreach, town hall meetings and door-to-door visits mark an improvement compared to previous elections where parties and candidates lacked a focused discussion on municipality priorities and policies.

Compared to the previous local elections, the political parties have respected better the Code of Conduct. Several parties were penalized for using under-age children in their promotional materials and campaign events.

*Results reflect this situation:*

*Table 2.1.1.*

<i>Governance Election Level/Year</i>	<i>Penalties</i>
<i>Local Elections 2013</i>	190,550 €
<i>National Election 2017</i>	352,000 €
<b><i>LOCAL ELECTIONS 2017</i></b>	<b>APPROX. 153,000 €<sup>6</sup></b>

## **2.2. Analysis of the Promises by Mayor Candidates**

Mayoral candidates have presented more realistic programs that were much more in line with local and financial capacities compared to the previous elections at the local level. Nonetheless, KLG Institute assesses that presentations in debates has not provided opportunities and has not unveiled a clear transformative overview.

There are five key issues that came out as priorities across Kosovo:

- High unemployment rates.
- Non-qualitative education and fragmented health services;
- Lack of running drinking water, environment protection, cleanliness, and waste collection;
- Citizens' overwhelming dissatisfaction with the local authorities' performance on providing public and administrative services;
- Lack of space for youth, culture and sport.

The unemployment rates are a direct reflection of the lack of substantial economic development, meaningful welfare programs, effective social care and employment programs. However, the candidates for the municipal assembly continue to lack proper information on the municipal competencies and authorities. Mayoral candidates also lacked proper information on Mayors responsibilities.

<sup>6</sup> The estimated value may vary until the 22nd of October

The chart below shows examples of candidates' promises that do not correspond with the current legal framework:

Table 2.2.1

Promises that do not comply with the municipal competencies/promises that cannot be exercised by municipalities themselves	Promises that exceed financial opportunities or risk financial sustainability
Developing programs in the field of education (competence of the Ministry of Education)	Additional costs for staff that increase the number on service contracts and payments for interns for a period of 1 year
Water supply and network extension (common competence with regional enterprises and Ministry of Economic Development)	Taking responsibilities for maternity payments
Establishment of new public enterprises in municipalities (competence of municipalities and Ministry of Economic Development)	Taking responsibilities for meal payments for school students
Building free economic and business zones (competence of municipalities, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Economic Development and Ministry of Agriculture)	Taking responsibility for burial costs and cemetery maintenance
Business Taxes that are not foreseen by the current Law on Local Level Finances	Reduction on property tax
Presenting large capital investments without considering the budget and funds	The enormous increase in the category of subsidies

### 2.3. Language during the Election

In general, the language of local candidates has been cautious. This has resulted in the reduction of tensions and incidents that may harm the overall process. Seventeen (17) incidents have been reported to the Kosovo Police, as of now there are four (4) penalized acts<sup>7</sup>. Even though the language has been cautious, there have been some accusations between the candidates and charges were pressed for defamation.

### 2.4. Debates and Representation during the Election

Television and electronic media have presented a clear and an almost correct reflection. Every candidate has had the opportunity to present their programs and be confronted with other candidates. These debates were mainly conducted by national TV programs, such as:

- **KLAN Kosova:** “Magazina Lokale (Local Magazine)”, “Analiza Lokale (The Local Analysis)” and “Info Lokale (Local Information)”;
- **Kohavizion:** “Koha Lokale (Local Time)” and “Interaktiv (Interactive)”;
- **RTK:** “Zgjedhjet Lokale (Local Elections)”;
- **RTV 21:** “Debat Përnime/Jeta në Kosovë (Real Debates)”;

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.koha.net/zgjedhjet-lokale-2017/51840/kqz-per-diten-e-zgjedhjeve-jane-angazhuar-86-prokurore/>

- **RTV Dukagjini:** “Debat Plus (Plus Debate)” and “Debat D (D Debate);
- **Tribuna Channel:** “Fakt Plus (Fact Plus)” and “Tribuna Zgjedhore (Election Tribuna)”;
- **TV Programs in Serb Majority Municipalities**
  - **RTK 2**
  - **TV Most**
  - **TV Gracanica**
  - **RTV Puls**

### 3. FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

- Proper voter education on the voting process remains a vital concern. There were more than 50,000 invalid votes cast<sup>8</sup> in the last Parliamentary election;
- There is still lack of good practices, models, knowledge and space on the presentation of municipal assembly candidates, taking here into consideration the large number of these candidates;
- Many candidates have promised to improve health and education sectors. However, the further politicization of these important sectors remains a concern. The risk is for the winning candidates to reward their voters and loyal supporters through replacing current staff and administration;
- The candidates for municipal assembly have not presented clear strategies on how will they fulfill their electoral promises (e.g. How will women candidates enhance gender equality? How will the youth candidates address the promotion of youth interest? How will the businessmen candidates advance economic policies? How will the syndicalist candidates protect labor rights?);
- The 30-day election campaign is long and has resulted in voter apathy and voter fatigues. Many of the candidates have begun to campaign even before the official start date of the campaign period;
- Mayoral candidates are not fully connected to the municipality that they run for and a number of them do not reside in the municipalities that they are running for. In addition, mayoral candidates, in general, lack proper information on the responsibilities and duties of the mayors and municipal assemblies. Many of the mayoral candidates come from the central level, thirteen (13) from the Parliament of Kosovo;
- The leader of the political party list is privileged and does not compete fairly with other candidates. In many cases, the leader of the political party favors particular candidates in the same party list.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://rezultatet.kqz-ks.org/Results.aspx?RaceID=1&UnitID=1&IsPS=0&Turnout=0&LangID=2>

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

*KLGI Institute recommends:*

- There must be a meaningful and strategic campaign to encourage women to run for public office;
- The Central Election Commission should engage in effective voter education campaign and inform voters on the importance of their vote and exact voting procedures;
- Campaign should shorten to at least three weeks, to prevent voter fatigue;
- Political parties should empower youth to run for election and promote transformative leadership model;
- The legal framework needs to regulate if and how candidates that hold elected positions at the national level can run for local levels;
- Legal framework should prevent that a winning party could replace public servants on party basis. Currently, the local elections are putting undue pressure and concerns on especially teachers and health professionals;
- Political contestants, in particular the political parties should show determination and make powerful calls for a free, democratic and peaceful election process.



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