

POP 2020 NEWSLETTER

No. 1 (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL CONTRACT AT LOCAL LEVEL

DURRËS, FIER, KAMËZ, KUKËS, POGRADEC,
PUKË, SHKODËR, TIRANË, VLORË

**POP
2019**

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POLITIKE**

IN THIS EDITION YOU WILL READ:

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- II. Monitoring Municipalities and Municipal Councils
- III. Monitoring reports during COVID-19
- IV. Other news from POP network
- V. Way forward during July – December 2020

I. WHAT IS POP?

POP Network "Juxtaposing Political Offers" aims at promoting public debate and information among citizens, and orient platforms towards their needs and priorities. Through its activities, the project aims to strengthen Albanian democracy by promoting transparency and accountability.

Citizens often believe that politicians approach them only during elections, when they need their vote, and rarely keep the promises made to their constituents. They also have little knowledge of the duties and responsibilities of local government, making accountability to this institution more difficult. Often, the interests and needs of citizens are overshadowed by the decision-making policy process, which focuses less on the content of representative democracy and more on personal and political interests and power.

Juxtaposing Political Offers - POP, is an initiative of the network of Albanian civil society organizations supported by the Olof Palme International Center as part of the Swedish-funded program "Civil Society, Civic Participation, Accountability and Social Change" and National Endowment for Democracy.

The members of POP Network are: Gender Alliance for Development Center-Tirana; Association for Integration of Informal Areas- Kamez; Youth For Integration, Activation and Awareness -Pogradec; Civil Society Development Center- Durrës; Youth Center "New Epoch"– Fier; Young Intellectuals, Hope – Shkoder; Youth Movement for Democracy Center – Puke; Center for Youth Progress – Kukes; Vlora Youth Center

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Mbështetur nga:

POP FOCUS

- Continue its monitoring work, enhancing accountability among mayors and their respective councils;
- Lobby and advocate to fulfill the priorities of social contracts for each municipality;
- Continue and deepen the POP methodology for lobbying and advocacy in order to strengthen the relationship between the network CSOs and political parties, as well as enhance the reputation of CSOs in the public;
- Engage and organize the community to raise its voice and hold the local government accountable.

PRIMARY TARGET GROUPS

- Citizens of Tirana, Kamza, Durres, Fier, Vlora, Shkodra, Kukës, Puka, and Pogradec.
- Mayors, Municipal Councils, and their political parties.
- Civil Society Organizations in all municipalities as network allies.

II. MONITORING MUNICIPALITIES AND MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

During 2019, the partner organizations of the POP network implemented the Juxtaposing Political Offers - 2019 (POP 2019) Project by signing Social Contracts with community priorities in the municipalities where the network operates.

This year's initiative, following the first phase of POP, aimed at lobbying and advocating for meeting the priorities of citizens reflected in these social contracts for the municipalities of Tirana, Kamza, Durres, Fier, Vlora, Shkodra, Kukës, Puka, and Pogradec, as well as for ensuring community involvement in decision-making.

During the first months of this year, i.e. January - February, members of the POP network organized meetings with various local government officials, lobbying, advocating and monitoring the activities of municipalities and municipal councils with regards to fulfilling the promises signed in the respective Social Contracts in 2019, whereby the respective officials committed themselves to involve such priorities in their 4-years program.



Given the situation created by COVID-19, the members of POP network adapted their activities from March to May to follow up the response of the central and local government, as well as the problems faced by the communities the organizations represent.

III. MONITORING REPORTS DURING COVID-19 MARCH– APRIL – MAY

As of March 9th, and onwards, POP network has kept the public informed about the decisions of the Municipal Councils by periodically publishing every decision approved by the respective councilors.

The work of the Municipal Councils and municipalities was monitored partly through participation in the face-to-face meetings of the municipal council (when applicable), and partly by obtaining the decisions of the Municipal Council. Every meeting organized online was followed and all the relevant documentation and information was collected electronically from various municipal directorates.

The monitoring was focused mainly on how the COVID-19 pandemic situation was being managed. In the meantime, semi-structured interviews were conducted with community members in various areas and municipalities, gathering information regarding assistance, aid or other measures and benefits offered to citizens during the pandemic close-down in March and April 2020.

In May, nine reports were compiled and distributed digitally to the public, and sent to the respective municipalities, moving to a second phase, that of confronting findings and presenting recommendations, based on the work of municipalities and findings from interviews with the community. These confrontations took place mostly online, due to the social distancing rules.



Klikoni për të lexuar
Raportet

IV. OTHER NEWS FROM POP NETWORK

POP network reacts to the pollution of Gjanica River in Fier

A massive increase of hydrocarbons was identified in April 2020 in Gjanica River flowing through the city. Although works by Fier Municipality for the rehabilitation of the largest part of the river are still ongoing, the polluted water, turned into a large flow of oil hydrocarbons, is filling even the lungs of the citizens with the heavy odor of pollution along all the inhabited areas, where it flows. The river is also polluted by chemicals and sewage discharged from private businesses, such as textile factories and industrial plants spread along the entire length of the river. With such large pollution, Gjanica River joins Semani River and flows into the sea. This is not the first time the pollution of Gjanica River becomes a concern and raised as such by civil society organizations, young people, and citizens in general, for the fatal consequences it brings to the life and health of citizens of Fier Region. Therefore, POP Network made an official reaction by addressing Mr. Klosi, Minister of Tourism and Environment, and informed also the Prime Minister of Albania about the concerns encountered; the Prefect of Fier Region; the National Environment Agency; the Mayor of Fier; the Mayor of Mallakstra, and Fier Regional Directorate of Environment. The issue is being followed up and monitored by civil society organizations, which are part of POP network.

Hearing Session at the Albanian Parliament

In the context of monitoring municipalities during the pandemic times, a hearing session was held at the parliament on 16 June 2020 between the Committee for Labor, Social Affairs, and Health and the Civil Society Development Center of Durrës (CSDC). The Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Enver Roshi, commended the initiative of POP Network and was informed in detail about the monitoring report for the Municipality of Durrës. Furthermore, the young activists shared their findings with the Committee on the transparency of institutions and spoke about other issues observed. The Members of Parliament for Durrës Region, especially the Deputy Chairperson of the Committee, Ms. Klodiana Spahiu, Mr. Roland Xhelili, and Ms. Edlira Bode praised the organization for its findings and recommendations, and urged all the local organizations and local government units to address the recommendations and find solutions to mitigate the consequences of the earthquake and the pandemic. The Committee expressed its readiness to hold a meeting with the civil society organizations in the city of Durrës to follow up on the issues brought up during the hearing.



Hearing Session at the Albanian Parliament



3.6.2020

Meeting with Vloraa Municipality



9.6.2020

Meeting with Durres Municipality



22.6.2020

Meeting with Kamez Municipality



4.6.2020

Meeting with Puka Municipality



27.5.2020

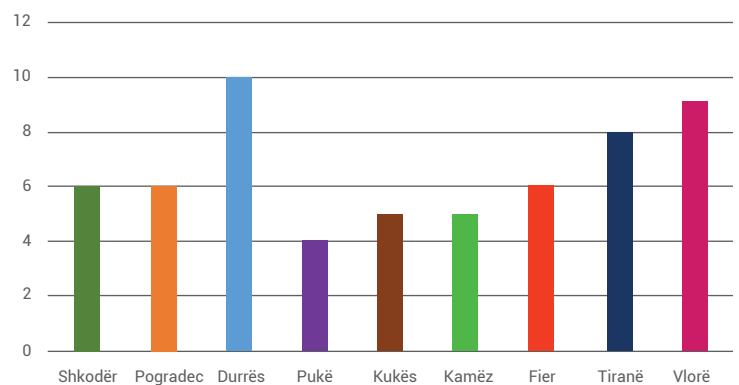
Meeting with Tirana Municipality

New website (www.popnetwork.al)

POP network launches a new website this year dedicated to the general public, in terms of the activities of organizations, monitoring and lobbying as well as the advocacy work for the fulfillment of Social Contracts with the priorities of the community. The site is interactive and user friendly and is available for the public in two languages, Albanian and English. The website also features an archive of the activities of POP, from 2013 onwards.

**Monitoring of Municipal Councils
January - June 2020**

During the first 6 months of the year, the members of POP network have monitored about 60 meetings of the Municipal Councils in Durrës, Fier, Kamëz, Kukës, Puka, Pogradec, Tirana, Shkodra, and Vlora. All the adopted decisions have been transcribed and studied and lobbying has continued through physical meetings or virtual meetings using online platforms. The main objective of all this monitoring work remains that the priorities of the community should be the priority of every municipality, despite the unusual situation we are all going through.

Monitoring**Protest in defense of women and girls in Kamza**

The POP network raised its voice in the municipality of Kamza against the Culture of Non-response and Sexual Violence against women and girls. Due to the measures taken by the Albanian Government regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the protest took place online. Citizens of this municipality joined the initiative by distributing awareness-raising messages to women, girls and the community at large. In support of Kamza, all organizations of the POP network in Tirana, Durrës, Kukës, Puka, Fier, Pogradec, Shkodra and Vlora joined with awareness-raising messages for the communities of these municipalities.



V. WAY FORWARD DURING JULY-DECEMBER 2020

The POP network during the second period of the year will continue to:

- Monitor the work of the Municipalities and the Decisions of the Municipal Council related to the priorities of the Social Contract of the community.
- Organize round tables (on site or online), in the respective municipalities with the participation of decision makers and the community in a confrontation regarding the fulfillment of priorities for the period August 2019 - July 2020;
- Compile the 9 respective Reports and share them with the public, municipalities and media;
- Organize press conferences, online or on site (depending on the progress of the pandemic), to keep the general public informed about the POP initiative and the work of the municipalities being monitored.

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