



Intelektualet e rinj, Shprese (IRSH)

YOUNG INTELLECTUALS, HOPE



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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THE ORGANIZATION

Mission:

"Young Intellectuals, Hope" works for development of civil society in Albania as well as promoting peace and stability in the Balkans.

Vision:

- a) Improving the human rights state especially in the Northern part of Albania, mainly promoting women rights, children rights, minorities rights and of other unprotected and unsupported classes.
- b) Helping in the creation of an intellectual stratum and of a network within Albania and abroad in service for building a civil society.
- c) Contributing in the drafting and implementation of a strategy for the development of Shkoder city in particular and the North Albania in general.
- d) Promoting the cultural, artistically and sporting life approaching the youngster between them in a local, national and international level.
- e) Improving the role and the influence of the youth in society upholding and supporting their initiatives.

History:

During 1990-1994, Albania is involved in a number of democratic processes and at the same time changing the political system of governance. But ordinary people and especially intellectuals were not participating actively in developments that have involved our society. So with the purpose to promote the Albanian civil society was founded **"IRSH"** in 1994. It was an initiative of the students and professors of the University "Luigi Gurakuqi" Shkoder. In order to be more realistic, students decided to include in the name of organization the word "HOPE" which has a general understanding for these students:

"HOPE" to be the best intellectuals

"HOPE" to change the Albanian reality

"HOPE" to promote civil society in Albania.

Executive Summary

Youth participation is one of the permanent objectives of IRSH organization. Monitoring of the Local Government decisions and their engagement to solve citizens and specifically youth priorities remain in the focus of the IRSH activities.

During the 2023 Albania held local elections for city town councils and mayors. The main problems and priorities resulted from citizens meetings were as below:

- 1. Strengthening community representation mechanisms*
- 2. Promoting gender equality through financial support and assistance*
- 3. Social assistance and legal support for victims of domestic violence*
- 4. Encouraging youth entrepreneurship through programs that offer grants and fiscal incentives*
- 5. Accessible and safe public transportation for all citizens of Shkodra.*
- 6. Well-functioning of heating systems in school infrastructures*
- 7. Improving road infrastructure and increasing access to rural areas*

The main priorities listed above has been drafted in social contract which has been signed with Mayour candidates for Municipality of Shkodra. The candidate of the Socialist Party Mr.Benet Beci got the majority of the votes being elected as Mayour of Shkodra Municipality with whom IRSH will continue the monitoring of the progress of the signed social contract to ensure the implementation of citizens priorities.

During 2023, IRSH started the implementation of a two year European Project EUCAREs aiming to empower youth workers and increase their competences to foster youth participation and engagement, intercultural understanding and solidarity and contribute to the reconciliation process in the Western Balkans through storytelling by engaging young people from different regions in meaningful dialogue in order to increase mutual understanding and heal collective trauma and encouraging new synergies between youth organizations and relevant policymakers to share expertise and agree on common steps towards reconciliation and collective trauma healing processes.

Range of Activity:

Our work during 2023 focused into:

- 1. Promoting Citizens Engagement in the local decision-making processes***
- 2. Participation and monitoring of local governance decision making processes***
- 3. Promoting European Youth Cooperation and engagement, intercultural understanding and solidarity and contribute to the reconciliation process in the Western Balkans***
- 4. Promoting Mediterranean Day***

Cooperation:

During 2023 IRSH has cooperated with different actors at local, national and international level as:

Municipality of Shkoder
City Town Council of Shkodra
The regional network of the Olaf Palme organizations
Human Dimension Association
Light Steps Association
National Endowment for Democracy
Out of the Box (Belgium),
Perpetum Mobile, Sarajevo Meets the
Culture (Bosnia and Herzegovina),
CESIE (Italy),
IDEA LAB (Poland),
NVO Prima (Montenegro),
Centrifuge (Serbia)

Donors:

For the achievement of its goals IRSH during 2023 has been supported by:

European Commission Erasmus Plus
Olof Palme Center
National Endowment for Democracy
Anna Lindh Foundation

ACHIEVEMENTS:

1. Promoting Citizens Engagement in the local decision-making processes

Association “Young Intellectuals, Hope” (IRSH) has been very active in the promotion of citizens engagement in the local decision-making processes. During the year 2023, Albania organized local elections on 14 May 2023 for the local government and city town councils. During the period January-April 2023 four meetings with groups of interest have been organized. Through these meetings we have gathered young people discussing their priorities which had to be placed in the social contract which will be a strategic document to be signed by the candidate mayors of Shkodra municipality. Young people through these meetings demanded more attention in the local decision-making agenda and the Youth Council as advisory board next to the mayor to be constituted. A special attention has been paid to first-time voters. Through the workshops organized it was stressed the importance of the vote and their active participation. Young people from secondary schools addressed their concerns regarding the conditions in the schools, heating systems are missing quite often. As well the hygiene sanitary conditions do not meet the required standards and in some cases, students have difficulties accessing toilets at schools. There is a huge need for a more cleaned environment and the sensibilization must be both citizens and local officials. Young people request to have more recreational spaces and sportive corners which would allow them to spend their free time in a proper way.

Women as a permanent priority in the IRSH agenda have been gathered through activities we organized with our partner NGOs working on women's right. They pointed out more support toward victims of domestic violence. Divorced women requires more support and assistance to face challenges of their life. They request to improve the lighting system in urban and rural areas which often become an important barrier for women integration and participation in the active life.

Citizens from rural areas have been invited as well in our activities to express their concerns and priorities for the social contract. They request more attention in rural areas and periphery areas. The transport urban is lacking and they need more facilities to be connected. They were asking to build the road to Dukagjini Alps which still remain an area very beautiful from the nature but quite isolated and people who left from there.

Links of these meetings:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1BH7UcpPya/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18fGYomgfA/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15iV5wSrbo/>

The Social Contract with six main priorities identified by different groups of citizens has been drafted and presented through citizens forums to the candidates for Mayor of Shkodra Municipality who will be voted in the local elections of 14 May 2023.

The first forum was held on 25 April 2025, with the representative candidate of Democratic Party Mr.Bardh Spahia, mayor in duty, in the premises of Golden Palace Hotel in Shkodra gathering about 70 citizens with different backgrounds.

The second meeting was organized on 27 April 2025, with the representative candidate of Socialist Party Mr.Benet Beci, in the premises of Rozafa Hotel in Shkodra gathering about 65 citizens with different backgrounds.

Both meetings have been broadcast live by disseminating it among POP network in all over Albania. At the end of these meetings the Mayor Candidates after expressed their full support to include in the local agenda citizens priorities signed the Social Contract with the representative of the association “Young Intellectuals, Hoper” Mr.Saimir Beqiraga

Links of these meetings:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16Le9qMbbH/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18yy3nWqAc/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18wN4aQ15B/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16T1j99fyZ/>

2. Participation and monitoring of local governance decision making processes

The Association "Young Intellectuals, Hope" continues with the implementation of activities according to the working plan, thus fulfilling the main objectives of the project.

During the year 2023, IRSH's work is mainly focused on monitoring the work of the Shkoder Municipal Council. As well as the activity of Shkoder Municipality in the function and fulfillment of citizens' needs.

The Municipality of Shkoder has developed various activities in the social field, assistance to residents affected by floods, awareness-raising areas for the environment, persons with limited abilities, as well as intervention in the school infrastructure to improve sports facilities and guarantee of heating in the pre-university education system.

IRSH has monitored the work of these institutions through the approved decisions, their reflection in the media as well as direct contacts with citizens and beneficiaries of these services.

On 12 May 2023 representative of IRSH and partner organization's realized the presentation of the priorities of the social contract.

During the year IRSH has been monitoring the implementation of the social contract organizing meetings with local officials and sending requests for information.

The work of the City Town Council and the process of consultations has been as well in the focus of the activities performed by IRSH during 2023.

Links of the activities:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1BgUwF9fvD/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1DcirqSKPV/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1ESSgy153o/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1B1AhATsEs/>

3. Promoting European Youth Cooperation and engagement, intercultural understanding and solidarity and contribute to the reconciliation process in the Western Balkans

Since December 2022, association IRSH as partner organisation of the consortium of organisations, Out of the Box (Belgium), Perpetum Mobile, Sarajevo Meets the Culture (Bosnia and Herzegovina), CESIE (Italy), IDEA LAB (Poland), NVO Prima (Montenegro), Centrifuge (Serbia) started the implementation of the ERASMUS-YOUTH-2022-CB, Project no: 101093735, titled “EU-CARES” contributing to European Collective narratives for Reconciliation and trauma healing through youth engagement and Storytelling.

The project responds to the collective and trans-generational trauma faced by the Western Balkan population and aims at supporting their reconciliation process among the youngest generations. As Western Balkan countries are still recovering from a legacy of war crimes, human rights violations and ethnic divisions and as the war in Ukraine renews past trauma, young people across the region are still living in a general state of distrust, worsened by pervasive nationalistic narratives. EU-CARES will foster their active participation into the path for reconciliation, encouraging constructive dialogue, critical thinking and the creation of new narratives.

The overall goal of the project is to Empower youth workers and increase their competences to foster youth participation and engagement, intercultural understanding and solidarity and contribute to the reconciliation process in the Western Balkans through storytelling by engaging young people from different regions in meaningful dialogue in order to increase mutual understanding and heal collective trauma and encouraging new synergies between youth organizations and relevant policymakers to share expertise and agree on common steps towards reconciliation and collective trauma healing processes.

In the frame of EUCARES project IRSH has organized a Think Tank with the participation of Public Institutions, Partner Organizations, Teachers, Youth Workers and Youngsters of Shkodra City.

During this activity we had the opportunity to discuss narratives and perspectives dealing with collective trauma through storytelling. The participants actively debated, compared and shared together different perspectives of collective trauma in the Balkans, prejudices, stereotypes, cultural and ethnic divisions leading to collective trauma.

Links of the activities:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1FPJxS3wtX/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1ALcMKDbgQ/>

4. Promoting Mediterranean Day

November 28th is the Day of the Mediterranean, a day to acknowledge our shared identity and common heritage. To honor this day, the Anna Lindh Foundation selects a number of organisations each year to host community-based musical performances simultaneously across the 42 Mediterranean countries. IRSH was excited to be a part of it and organize the event in the Municipality of Shkoder for the second year in row.

Mediterranean Day came to Shkoder through the sounds of the musical band with different abilities "The door". "Sounds of Solidarity" spread throughout this concert as a heartfelt expression of unity and a genuine effort to connect people through the universal language of music. Our music takes away our pain and sorrow, spreading the sounds of solidarity.

Thanks for the cooperation, Shkoder Municipality and Anna Lindh Foundation for the support through financing of European Union

Link of the activity

<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1FMeMtcifW/>

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=895605038748104>

<https://www.rtsh-shkodra.live/dita-e-mesdheut-festohet-me-muzike-banda-frymore-me-aftesi-ndryshe-performoi-pjese-te-njohura-instrumentale/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTZIIpkiM_M