



Intelektualet e rinj, Shprese (IRSH)

YOUNG INTELLECTUALS, HOPE



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Published March 2025

TABLE OF CONTENT:

<i>The organization.....</i>	<i>page 3</i>
<i>Executive Summary.....</i>	<i>page 4</i>
<i>Range of activity and contributions.....</i>	<i>page 5</i>
<i>1.Promoting Citizens Engagement in the local decision-making processes.....</i>	<i>page 6</i>
<i>2.Promoting European Youth Cooperation and engagement, intercultural understanding and solidarity and contribute to the reconciliation process in the Western Balkans.....</i>	<i>page 8</i>
<i>3. Youth engagement for a better society</i>	<i>page 10</i>

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

Citizens participation focusing on youth 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 2024 IRSH joined forces with their partners and especially POP network active in all over Albania to monitor the progress of the social contract. The results has been presented through open forums with citizens and elected officials to face the challenges. Two conferences has been organized one regarding the status of the local democracy in Albania and another one to present the findings of a national research study about the consultation processes at local level and citizens engagement.

IRSH through its initiatives encourage youth participation by organizing trainings and workshops in high schools to foster the youth voice. Legal Literacy clubs established in high schools promoted the students mobility to get engaged on topics which is important to get youth involvement.

The European Project EUCAREs finalized its activities by making succesfull presentations on its local conference organized in Shkodra and its International Conference organized in Sarajevo Bosnia and Herzegovina. Through the project were successfully organized:

Think Tanks involving 176 young people, representatives of local authorities, educational institutions and stakeholders;

International Training Course for 24 youth workers on using storytelling to help youth understand trauma and explore resilient community building;

Local storytelling workshops for 105 young people with production of a storytelling catalogue;

Final round table conferences and a storytelling exhibition encouraging networking and dialogue.

Range of Activity:

Our work during 2024 focused into:

- 1. Promoting Citizens Engagement in the local decision-making processes***
- 2. Promoting European Youth Cooperation and engagement, intercultural understanding and solidarity and contribute to the reconciliation process in the Western Balkans***
- 3. Youth engagement for a better society***

Cooperation:

During 2024 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 Program
Olof Palme Center
National Endowment for Democracy
Anna Lindh Foundation
Albanian Ministry of Economy and Culture
Agency for the Support of Civil Society
Terres Des Hommes

ACHIEVEMENTS:

1.Promoting Citizens Engagement in the local 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 this year, 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. As result of the monitoring work done through field visits, request for information's, meeting with local officials IRSH published the report of the monitoring of the social contract. This report has been published on 16 April 2024 in a public meeting. In that meeting participated citizens, public officials and media representatives.

Further to IRSH efforts at local level IRSH as part of the POP network contributed in the organization of the National Conference organized in 5 Marsh 2024, in Tirana, titled "European Integration and Civic Engagement for Local Democracy" with the participation of Albanian civil society municipality representatives from Albania.

Representatives of IRSH were part of important discussions to draft the new Social Plan of the Municipality of Shkodra. This plan represents an essential instrument for the creation of an integrated system of social interventions and services, supporting our community with well-structured policies and projects.

The Social Plan aims to assess the needs of citizens, plan and implement activities and services effectively, as well as continuously monitor to improve the quality of life in Shkodra city.

On 15 November 2024, IRSH organized the presentation of the study report "Transparency and Accountability at the Local Level - Evaluation of Public Consultation Processes in the Municipality of Shkodra".

Representatives from the Municipality, the Municipal Council and local organizations participated in the meeting, discussing the findings, methodology and recommendations of the report.

Unified procedures for citizen participation as a transparent and direct process between the municipal administration, members of the UN and citizens for consultation, exchange of opinions on policies, legislation and norms regulating local self-government were the main points of discussion at this meeting.

Furthermore to the efforts for engaging citizens to decision making processes, National Conference "Transparency and Accountability at the Local Level - Evaluation of Public Consultation Processes" organized on 19 November 2024, in Tirana, gathered together representatives of civil society, media, local government and diplomatic bodies supporting the development of the democracy at local level.

In order to make a final evaluation of the work done and to precise the follow up steps, IRSH hosted the local workshop for evaluation of Local Democracy. In that event organized on 13 December in Shkodra city was invited representatives of the POP network, experts of the local democracy and representatives of the local government who actively discussed the challenges and actions who are necessary to follow-up to strengthen results achieved and ensure citizens participation

Links of these meetings:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1AStKoFDz2/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1W4i7VfjDn/>

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

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16Y8Bm7oNW/>

https://popnetwork.al/raport-studimor_transparenca-dhe-pergjegjesia-ne-bashkine-shkoder-vleresimi-i-proceseve-te-konsultimit-

publik/?fbclid=IwY2xjawJnkjBleHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHsDxSHJyqzP8Qe4JC8oq7DKsA_Rkmpu7nJb0oZl9cHP50wXllWvxx7WuEWGH_aem_gm18lBfYLMRZj4FTJjgLGg

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15QCYUU3mi/>

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

2. 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.

During the year 2023, project partners continued their work to consolidate the results achieved and implement project activities. Each partner was in charge to select on of the story telling techniques to contrinute on the narratives for reconciliation and trauma healing.

IRSH implemented the technique of the story telling using the legend of Castle Rozafa. Storytelling does not always need a safe and dedicated space, but it can also be performed during other events. In these frameworks, events serve as a platform for community members to connect and enhance their sense of community-belonging. Inclusivity and diversity are the leitmotiv of this technique, accompanied by open mic formats and intimate setting. The background can vary, but facilitators and hosts must be differentiated and interactive elements are to be included. Moreover, story circles are an asset in this framework.

Community storytelling, when performed during events, can play a significant role in strengthening communities, promoting understanding and celebrating diverse voices making up communities’ narratives. The open mic format, in this case, can be an option. The loose structure and the absence of specific timeframes leaves space for spontaneity, playfulness and collective construction of meaning. Either the setting is intimate or public, community storytelling plays a fundamental role for the sense of unity, belonging and similarity that keep a community together.

Through the project the below activities was successfully organized:

1. Think Tanks involving 176 young people, representatives of local authorities, educational institutions and stakeholders;
2. International Training Course for 24 youth workers on using storytelling to help youth understand trauma and explore resilient community building;
3. Local storytelling workshops for 105 young people with production of a storytelling catalogue;
4. Final round table conferences and a storytelling exhibition encouraging networking and dialogue.

A conference has been organized within the framework of the EU CARES project, as the final closing of activities to present the results of the project regarding the treatment of collective trauma in young people. Special guests

at this event were Ms. Edita Shoshi, General Director of Social and Youth Services, and Ms. Sara Smaja, Director of Culture at the Municipality of Shkoder, who once again expressed the support of the Municipality of Shkoder for young people through cultural activities and social services.

The final International Conference gathering all partners, stakeholders and youth who participated in project activities was organized on 7 November 2024, in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Each partner presented the implemented story telling techniques implemented successfully by them. Youth participants shared their lessons learned through their participation into project activities. Through this cooperation results include measured improvements in youth workers and young people's emotional, creative and social skills, like active participation and conflict resolution, raised awareness on human rights, reconciliation and collective trauma and shaping European collective identity with open transnational and intergenerational dialogues.

Links of these meetings:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1ABeQdjXp8/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1LFRjcQ6TU/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/167i3azuRi/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/19HMvHvrdF/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/12F5pRd8WAx/>

<https://eucareyouth.eu/>

3. Youth engagement for a better society

During the period September – December 2024 IRSH implemented the project “Hear My Voice” who aimed to build knowledge and empower youth to become agents of change by actively participating in youth led initiatives at community level that focus on rule of law, democracy, human rights, environment in Shkodra municipality. To establish a dialogue development empowering youth to undertake initiatives at community level that focus on gender & diversity, gender roles and social norms constituted the first specific objective of the project. The second specific objective of this project was to strengthen the capacities of CSO’s and youth led CSOs in Shkodra municipality to design best practices and create good models towards enhancing youth role as agents of change in local communities.

Through project activities Legal Literacy Clubs (LLC) has been established on high schools of Shkodra as a tool for youth led initiatives at community level. LLC has been conceived as open youth forums of discussion among high school students which will help them to create a critical thinking and build together their youth led initiatives regarding topic related to gender & diversity, gender roles, rules of law, democracy, and social norms.

To equip the youngsters with the necessary knowledge’s four (4) info sessions with young people, 20 participants each has been organized. The info sessions presented models of the organization of the LLC and promoted

Four (4) trainings has been organized each training gathering 15 representatives from CSOs, Public authorities like schools, social services at municipality of Shkodra, police directory, staff of probation institutions etc. During these trainings has been discussed topics like: “Juvenile justice code in Albania”, “Communication and Dialogue”, “Working toward Negotiation and Compromise” , “Philosophy of restorative practices in school”, “How to facilitate a restorative conversation” etc. Through interactive methods and simplified templates participants was equipped with knowledge enabling them to put theory into practice. Awareness activities for youth participation has been organized to sensibilise public authorities and young people regarding safety at schools. A online petition has been distributed among youth in high schools to demand for more security in public spaces and education institutions. Another important project developed during September-December 2024 was the project titled “Build the future”. The overall objective of this project was to promote citizen participation in the Municipality of Shkoder in local decision-making through structured dialogue mechanisms. Sensitivity to citizen priorities and their inclusion as part of local decision-making constitutes the first specific objective of the project. Strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations and the media and enabling them to promote citizen participation and transparency in local decision-making constitutes the second specific objective of the project.

In the frame of this project, 4 civil forums was organised in the Municipality of Shkoder and the surrounding administrative units (Administrative Units of Rrethina, Postribe and Ana Malit). A total of about 120 representatives of the community, local administration, educational and health institutions, local media, civil society organizations, representatives of youth representative structures, etc. participated in these civil forums. In addition four trainings

has been organized to build the capacity of civil society organizations and the media, focusing on the implementation of the law for information and public consultations

Links of these meetings:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/19DhNK9HKf/>

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

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1Bcg5CHy4j/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/17gG1DPkQZ/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1ErwxM7C1w/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/168jhvtJZL/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1YtHSUpY84/>