

THE PERCEPTION OF THE CONCEPT OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN ALBANIAN SOCIETY OF THE 21 –ST CENTURY

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PËRMBLEDHJE

Qëllimi të masi perceptimin real që ka qytetari shiptar me konceptin e integritimit europian dhe lidhjen që ka simbolika e integritimit europian me mentalitetin e shoqërisë shqiptare Metodologjia bazohet mbi realizimin e pyetsorit me 1050 persona. Aplikimi i pyetsorit u bazua mbi teknikën e zgjedhjes me kuotë Rezultatet tregojnë se 34.7 % e individëve e perceptojnë konceptin e integritimit europian në formën e një bashkimi të fuqishëm ekonomik. 7% e perceptojnë integritimin si utopik dhe jo praktik për funksionimin e shtetit. 12.3 % e shikojnë integritimin si element që do rrisi papunësinë. 35.4 % e simbolizojnë integritimin europian si simbolin e mirëqënies . 4.5 % e simbolizojnë integritimin europian si burim të konfliktit ndërshtetëror. . 17.4 % e simbolizojnë integritimin europian me fundin e papunësisë. Përfundimet tregojnë se shoqëria shqiptare ka tendencë lëvizëse drejt procesit të integritimit europian. Mentaliteti shiptar e konsideron integritimin europian si simbolin e paqes mirëqënuies dhe ruajtjes së vlerave universale të lirisë dhe të të drejtave të njeriut. Shoqëria shqiptare nuk e përvetësoi kurrë simbolikën e së keqes ndaj europës perendimore por e perceptoi kpmintetin europian si sinonim të progresit moral, shoqëror, e ekonomik.

SUMMARY

The objective is to measure the real perception that have the Albanian citizen with the concept of European integration and the connection that the symbolism of European integration has with mentality of Albanian society. The methodology is based on the realization of the questionnaire with 1050 persons. Results show that the 34.7% of individuals perceive the concept of European integration in the form of a powerful economic union. 7% perceive integration as a utopian and impractical for the operation of a state. 12.3% see integration as a factor that increases unemployment. 35.4% symbolizes being in European Union with the symbolism of welfare. 4.5% symbolize European integration as a source of interstate conflict. 17.4% symbolize European integration with the symbolism of the end of the unemployment. The results indicate that the Albanian society has a tendency towards European integration. Albanian mentality sees European integration as a symbol of peace and welfare and preserving the universal values of freedom and human right.

Key Words: Perception, European integration , welfare, mentality, Society

1. INTRODUCTION

Albanian society in the early 21st century is under an ongoing process of facing with the term European Integration, both on the social life, and in the economic and political life too. This term is

promoted in Albanian society since very early in the 90s', when the Albanian political course changed towards a democratic system, multi party and with a tendency pro western Europe. The time course of Albania after the 90s' reveals

clearly the way full of surprises and hardship that Albanian society has taken towards European integration. Post – Second World War years in Albanian history until the 90s made propaganda against the term European integration as a process that led to the loss of liberty and identity of the Albanian state. Those days propaganda equalled synonymous the European integration to an evil force. This negative propaganda to the term European integration did not have a real perception to the understanding that the classes in Albanian society of that time, had on this process. Regardless the repression and crush of human rights that the communist regime exercised to the free word of speech and thought, diverse social classes in Albanian society nonetheless preserved an idealistic perception for the term ‘European integration’ by viewing it as a positive process, different from negative stereotypes that Albanian politics chanted. The short spring of Albanian society liberalization, the early 70s’, testified for an existence of a different perception that the Albanian community had to the European integration, compared to political stands. Albanian society regardless the repression and poverty of that time, showed signs of a pro western mentality. Diverse social classes in Albanian population did not undergo a smooth path because of this fact. The harsh repression in Albanian culture, art and economy during the 70s’, aimed at cutting off every bridge of communication of Albanian society with western European culture and European integration. This repression led to an isolation of Albanian society, one of the harshest in the second half of 20th century in Europe. Official records of that time to the Albanian attitudes to the perspective for European integration, have manipulated and unreal figures. Each investigative attempt from Albanian institutions or organizations to measure the level of perception of Albanian society of those days to the European integration, would reveal unreal and fake results, as well as results that were far away from the historical truth in terms of Albanians sensitivity to European integration.

This unreal and repressive focus exercised on the Albanian society in order to mortify European integration process was about to change the course of movement in the early 90s. The changes to a real perception to a European integration in Albanian society are clearly shown in the slogans of ‘December, 90’ students who asked for change of the regime with the expression ‘We want Albania all similar to Europe’. Albanian society perceived the European integration process as a move to reach European standards and functioning of the state of law and right.

Democratic processes of Albanian government, which go back to days of students’ movement in December, 1990, initiated the phenomenon of immigration. This migrating tendency of the Albanian population after the 90s’, alongside to many negative elements which bared itself, could have positive elements too. Such positive elements stand for the perception that Albanian society had for being part of Europe and which gave them a sense of belonging to European continent. This perception towards European integration could be one of the many causes that motivated the movement of Albanians to west Europe. On the other hand, this realistic and positive perception towards European integration stands for the fake results and figures in the records of the past regime, saying that Albanians have feelings of hatred and consider west European society as an enemy. The status quo of a half of a century for the Albanian society to the term ‘European integration’ did undergo changes of over estimating opinion, which in most of the cases was perceived by different social classes of Albanian population as the greatest achievement of all goals one can reach under his perception of his way of living. The first decade of 21st century and its changes affected a lot on the development of reconceptualising the thought that Albanian society has on European integration. Placing the word European integration as the subject of political agenda in Albanian society through the reaching agreements, such as Association and Stability agreement, visa liberalizations, free movement of

people in European Union, and on the other side social integration of Albanian community in many countries in west Europe has had a great impact to a new concept of perception that Albanian society has to the process of European integration. Albanian society in the early beginning of this century has a real dimension of its movement European integration process and through its institutions and organizations is more able and conscious to investigate on the perception that Albanian community has towards political agenda of European integration.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study is focused on measuring in general the Albanian individual perception to the European integration process as the main objective of the Albanian political agenda in this decade. The investigation was made on a population composed of 1200 subjects and the representative sample was stratified to age groups and gender. Another element in defining the sample was the education level. The sample had as an objective the measuring of perception that Albanian society had to the European integration process. This perception to the European integration process was investigated in two directions. Firstly, it tended to measure in general the perception scale that the Albanian individual had to the European integration process, and secondly, to measure the perception that Albanian society has in general to the institution of European Union.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

European identity which the Albanian society tends to express through its conformism as a part of European continent is shown through the measure of the perception that Albanian society has itself to the institution of European Union. The fact how Albanian society perceives the organization of European Union tends to be measured through the perception scale that Albanian population has for this institution in some angles. This tendency views the functioning of the European Union in different angles. The measuring instrument requires that the subject

questioned expresses only for one of the alternatives about the way they perceive the functioning of the European Union. Statistical data analysis on the perception that Albanian society has about the functioning of the European Union is as follows:

as a powerful economic organism	29.2 %
as a decision making political organism for Europe	31.4 %
as cultural organism where the values of diverse cultures are expressed	6.1 %
as an organism that offers peace and stability	22.6 %
as a utopian organism	8.1 %
as an organism which makes the unemployment rise	2,6 %

Table 1. The perception of albanians society about the function of Europe Union

The data proves that one subject out of three asked in the questionnaire perceives European Union as a powerful economic organism and that is able to decide on the destiny of European continent. One similar approach of the same score as above agrees with the perception that the Albanian society has about the functioning of European Union as a powerful economic organism. They perceive economic force of European Union with the idea that this organism may give real help in the development of poor countries. Whereas one subject out of 5 asked perceives the functioning of European Union as an organism that offers peace and stability and symbolizes it with the synonym of peace. Only one subject out of 10 asked perceives negatively the functioning of European Union. They see the functioning of European Union as an organism which makes the unemployment rise or as a utopian organism where the values and national identity of the member countries are blurred and exhausted. The statistical data based on the measure of the perception that Albanian society about the functioning of European Union

expresses clearly its positive view to the way that European Union functions and is organized. About 90% of the Albanian society expresses its tendency to European trends by perceiving the functioning of European Union as an organism that offers peace and stability, wealth, strength and as an target where Albania nation should head for.

The measure of perception that the individual has for the process of European integration as one of the main priorities of Albanian politics, provides this data:

views European integration as a process that provides peace and tranquility	50.4 %
views European integration as a process that provides wealth	36.4 %
views European integration as a process that provides conflicts	2.6 %
views European integration as a process that provides unemployment	3.3 %
views European integration as a process that provides social risks	1.2 %
views European integration as a process that provides inequality	6.1 %

Table 2. The perception that the individual has for the process of European integration

The statistical analysis about the way that the Albanian citizen views the process of European integration reveals clearly a positive trend that the Albanian citizen has to the term European integration. The perception at positive trends that the Albanian citizen has to the term European integration is accomplished under the effect of some factors. These motivating factors arouse the desire of Albanian citizen to perceive the process of European integration as a positive phenomenon. One subject out of two asked how he/she perceives the process of integration, states that the process will provide peace and tranquility in his social and economic life. Albanian citizen coming out of a half century isolation and exhausted from the long transition in Albania post the 90s', full of events and

situations directly influencing on the social and economic life, perceives the process of European integration as the end point of their difficult life. Whereas one citizen out of three asked perceive the process of European integration as a symbol to their personal wealth achievement. The difficult economic life of the Albanian citizen and the fact of living during the end of 90s' at the lowest rates of income in European continent, have created a feeling of anxiety. This feeling has led to insecurity and fear to his future and his family. This feeling of anxiety pushes the Albanian citizen to perceive the process of European integration as a symbol of wealth achievement and the end of a century nightmare even nowadays. Only 1 from the 9 subjects asked perceive negatively the process of European integration. They synthesize this process as the process that will urge the rise of many negative factors to their social and economic life. They express that the key factors why they perceive negatively the process of European integration may be the increase of unemployment from the arrival of foreign labor force in the country, the rise of conflicts due to loss of national values, the risk generating for a different distribution of income etc.

The general tendency that this research points out that over 85 % of citizens asked perceive the process of integration as a positive process for the future of the Albanian society. The positive tendency that the Albanian society reflects to the process of European integration goes alongside with the positive trend that this society has for the functioning of European Union institutions. This fact reveals also the desire of the Albanian society to integrate in European society as a process of getting rid of all past barriers in the last century which have unfairly tended to maintain the albanian society far from the European integration.

4. CONCLUSIONS

1. Albanian society is in general a society that expresses clearly its tendency to European integration processes.

2. Albanian society perceives the European integration as an organism that expresses values and the highest standards for the protection of democratic freedoms and human rights.

3. Albanian society by expressing its movement to integration processes in the European society labels as a false and wrong belief the one that

goes against to the general principles of European integration.

4. Albanian society and its reactions to the European integration proves the century relations of Albanian nation to the European continent, part of which it is not only in terms of geography location, but also with its contribution in values and culture that it enjoys.