



TIRANA, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015

## PRESS RELEASE

### **IMPUNITY- PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF ALBANIAN CITIZENS**

The *“Impunity- Perceptions and experience of Albanian Citizens”* qualitative/quantitative study was conducted by IDRA between November 2014 and March 2015. The research was supported both, technically and financially by the Open Society Foundation in Albania (SOROS). The quantitative component of the study was based on a national survey with 1200 face-to-face interviews, 18 yrs old and above ( with a boost sample of 200 young from 18-24 years old). Whereas the qualitative component included 13 focus groups, as well as 6 in-depth interviews. This research study aims at exploring the public perception of the different factors (cultural, social, economic) as well as the role of different institutions influencing the existence of the phenomenon. It also introduces a set of measurable indicators of the phenomenon, based on findings from the national representative survey.

#### **Main Findings**

***Regardless of how active and involved they are, Albanian citizens claim to be generally interested over various social, political or economic developments in the country.*** When asked on how interested they are over various social, political and economic matters in the country, up to 64% of respondents claim to be “somewhat interested” (38%) or “very interested” (26%). The level of interest is almost the same between men and women, with a slightly higher “interest” tendency for men (67% vs.62%). Meanwhile the level of interest over these developments among younger citizens between the ages of 18-24 is relatively lower compared to interviewed citizens over 24 years old (59% vs. 65%).

***Economy tops the list of all problems currently faced by Albania, according to respondents. When asked to rank issues of concern, Economy, Unemployment and Poverty overshadow the other problems citizens face.*** Economy is seen as the main problem the country is being faced with, by 37% of respondents, followed by Unemployment mentioned by 34% of citizens. However, when asked to separately evaluate challenges, Corruption and Impunity are seen as the biggest challenges the country is being faced with, by 85% and 74% of respondents respectively.



**Media in Albania – both “heroic” and “frightened”. Media is widely considered as the most successful actor in investigating and reporting on abuses / violations by high officials, according to respondents, leaving behind institutions often with a functioning duty on doing so.** Up to 86% of respondents consider media as a successful actor in this regard, especially compared with 42% considering the State Police and only 17% considering the General Prosecutor’s Office on this matter. However about 62% of respondents claim that **Media is limited due to economic – political interests** or that Media with a criticism oriented attitude towards the government are often subject to continuous economic or political pressure (64%).

**Although corruption, breaking of the law and impunity are seen as big problems, very few citizens claim to have engaged in any activities to report these phenomena.** About 7 persons out of 10 asked, declare that Impunity is a very widespread phenomenon in Albania. The rest think it is “somewhat widespread”. Regardless of these big numbers, only about 10% of respondents declare to have taken part at some rally or demonstration against phenomena of this nature. Even less claim to have met any officials for these reasons, signed petitions or wrote about this on social media.

**There is not much willingness among citizens to report on corruption related activities.** Only about 36% of respondents claim to be “very likely” to report a manipulation with a tender at their work. Only about 40% would report the forgery of some documents by their supervisor and only 39% would report that a coworker has accepted a bribe in order to act in favor of a company/other person. Although scenarios were hypothetical and people asked could openly answer, these figures show hesitation from many citizens to report corruptive activities. In contrast, about 60% of them declare that they would report “a violent robbery of a person”, a scenario that represents criminal activity, but not with a corruption background.

**Impunity is seen by almost all interviewed citizens (96%) as quite a widespread phenomenon in Albania. However, there is a deep contrast between what citizens think on the possibilities that they might be punished for different violations, and what they think is more likely to happen to a public official for the same violations. According to citizens, the law is applied differently for them (ordinary citizens) compared to a person holding power.** When introduced to hypothetical scenarios involving different legal violations, respondents were asked to evaluate the likelihood of them being caught and punished for these violations<sup>1</sup>. The Personal Impunity Index reaches 62 points on a scale from 0 to 100, whereas the High Official Impunity Index reaches only 25 points on the same scale, for the same violations. Citizens’ perception clearly shows that according to them, the chances that a high official is caught and punished for violations of the law, are minimal. Focus Group participants also think that public officials use their influence on law enforcement agencies, so that investigations either do not start at all, or do not lead to any conclusions. It is interesting to note that scenarios where the corruptive transaction is more visible (“Bribe an employee in a public institution in order to get a service” and “Interfering with employment procedures in order to hire a relative/friend”) are the ones that scored the lowest on the scale of likelihood to be punished..



*In order to gauge the public perception on the level of punishment / impunity and in order to somehow evaluate the “public tolerance” on different legal violations, a set of possible scenarios were introduced to respondents. For each scenario, respondents were asked to evaluate the: i) need to punish parties involved in violations/scenarios and ii) “real” chance of punishment, or in other words how likely is it for punishment to occur.*

For the scenarios where corruptive transactions are introduced, citizens overwhelmingly think that the officials which take part in them are “corrupted and should be punished”. Findings show that in the case of the official accepting a bribe for a tender, 95% of the people interviewed think that this official is corrupted. Meanwhile, for the scenarios according to which a doctor or a professor accepts a bribe from a patient or student, respectively 88% and 94% of respondents think the doctor and the teacher are corrupted. However, citizen expectations that these people will actually be caught and punished are very low. In the case of the corrupted official, only 10% of the respondents think that he will “actually be punished”. Meanwhile, only 17% and 23% of the people interviewed respectively think that real chances exist for the doctor or the professor to be punished. The Impunity index derived from these scenarios reaches 38 points on a scale from 0 to 100, where 0= Accusation is completely ignored, 50= Investigation commences but leads nowhere and 100= The accused gets prosecuted and punished. With the exception of scenario nr. 5 “Professor accepts bribe” which scores 51 points (still at mid-scale) all other scenarios score less than 50 points. These findings show a deep lack of trust from citizens that such corruptive behavior (regardless of corruptive transaction background) can be punished. It’s also worth mentioning Scenario Nr. 8, where citizens are asked what they think happens if during a plenary session specific accusations of corruption, stealing, and trafficking are made public for a representative of the other side. The belief that an investigation commences and someone gets punished based on these accusations scores the lowest, with only 26 points on the scale of 100.

### Sample size and margin of error

Sample Size	Numri i intervistave	Periodha e terrenit	Margin of error
General Public, National Representative	1200 (18 yrs old +)	November-December 2014	± 3.2% 95% Confidence Interval
Qualitative Research	13 Focus Groups	November-December 2014	
In-Depth Interviews	6 Interviews	December-January	