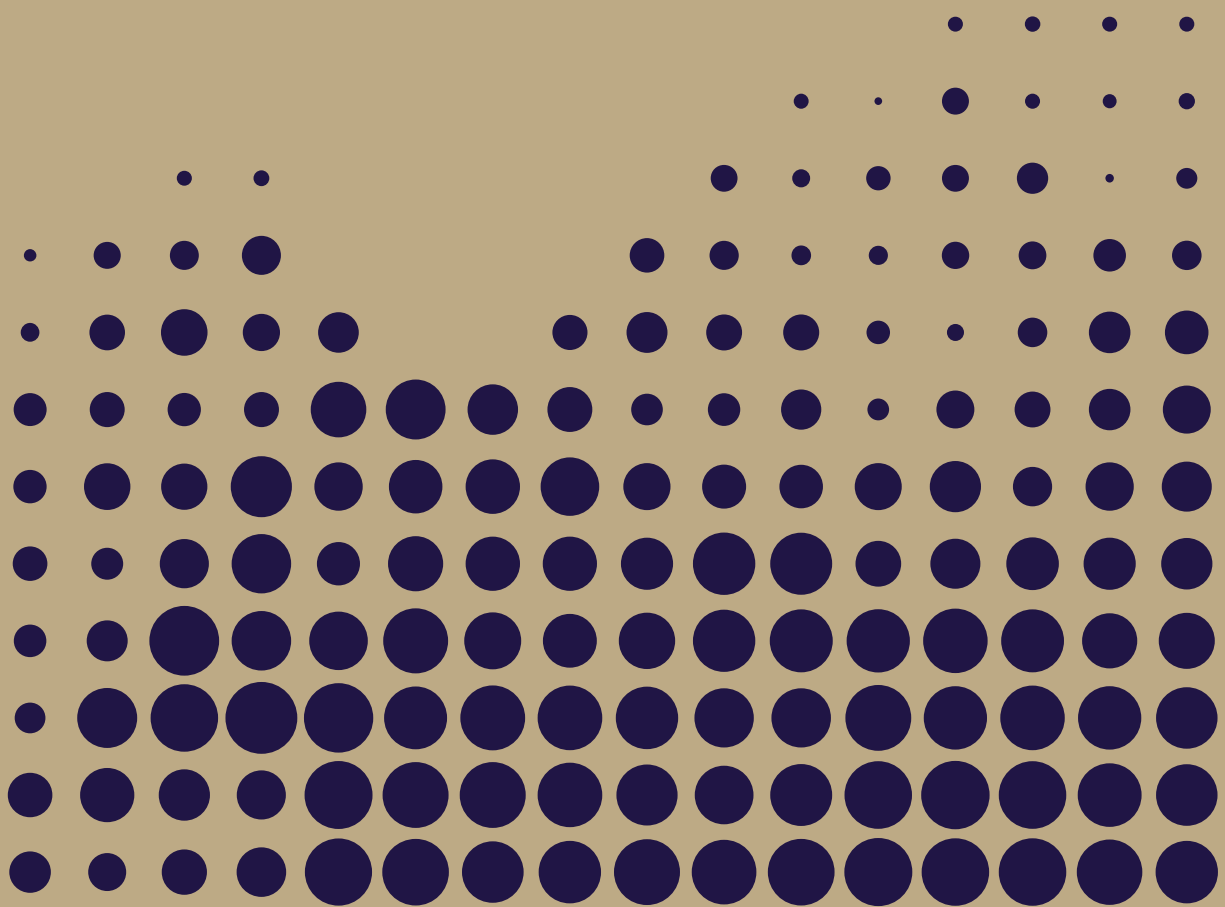


SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND ASSESSMENT FOR:

POLITICAL PARTY TRANSPARENCY INDEX IN NORTH MACEDONIA





**SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF
THE SECOND ASSESSMENT FOR:**

**POLITICAL PARTY
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IN NORTH MACEDONIA**

Skopje, December 2024



Project: Democracy Works

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Executive summary

PPTI 2024- Challenges in Election Times and Party Fractures

2024 was full of challenges for political parties in North Macedonia. The parliamentary elections themselves were a strong enough external shock that led to various internal restructuring of political parties. Usually, when there is such turmoil, the first victim is the **intra-party democracy**. Leadership, i.e., the need for strong leadership, is strengthening, and this is a global but also a Macedonian trend. In such tribulations, parties instinctively recognize that efficiency is more critical than intra-party democracy. Still, often, immediately afterward, that drive for efficiency and authoritarian practices creates the opposite effect, especially in case of electoral failure.

That is why the progress of political parties, **as measured by the Political Parties Transparency Index (PPTI)** in 2024, is non-linear. This means that parties resort to changes in their work (especially in intra-party democracy) that correspond to the moment and the leader/leadership without seeing the long-term perspective. Such an approach gives the wrong signals to the membership and the general public. Smaller and relatively new political parties have the luxury of experimenting with statutory solutions and introducing new or revoking existing procedures. However, older and more established parties must show stability and predictability to maintain their importance.

In many respects, parties simulate democratic practices in order to show openness and inclusiveness. Still, such mimicry is easily readable by members and the public, and this, in the long run, leads to a decrease in support and a general disinterest in entering the politics of quality staff.

On the other hand, the **percentage of women inclusion** in senior party positions is on the rise. In addition to increased percentage representation, parties seem to be developing a clear awareness of the need for greater involvement of women in political processes, although the road is long to full equality or equal “access” to politics. However, the percentages don’t say it all. The representation of women in leadership party functions at the local level is devastating. It is the local level that is the main filter through which party personnel are selected. The culture of gender-based discrimination is dominant in almost all parties in North Macedonia, and it is practiced on a daily basis. Some of these things cannot be accurately measured with a tool such as PPTI, but people who actively engage in party politics know that it is a “public secret.”

The situation is relatively stable regarding **financing political parties**, and political parties generally comply with the legal provisions in this area. That trend should stay the same in the future. However, parties as organizations claiming to win power are often associated with business interests, clientelist practices, “trade with influence,” and even criminal acts. In a word, finance is an essential segment of the work of political parties. Therefore, parties must be susceptible to this topic and strive to publish financial practices and data meeting at least their minimum legal obligations. By doing so, they will



gain confidence in the membership and the general public and, thus, in the political process.. The parties in North Macedonia have little interest in financial responsibility and transparency, which is an excellent challenge for the future, mainly because in finance, there are many grey zones that our society needs to discuss and should discuss.

Availability to the public is probably the least developed segment among political parties in North Macedonia. Parties here must embrace digitization and innovation related to artificial intelligence (AI) and benefit from the world's best experiences that enable effective, meaningful, and democratic communication of parties with the internal and external public. The field of work in this segment is huge. The technology is easily available and relatively inexpensive. There needs to be more will, awareness, and internal capacity among the parties.

PPTI is designed to be an annual reminder and a possible roadmap for parties to see where they can improve in their work. The index measures the progress of the parties, but even more contributes to the parties entering a kind of competition with them. The results of several parties that, in 2024, really worked to improve themselves are evident, and they are an asset that will mean not only to them but also to the public. In this Report for 2024, for the first time, we also make comparative analyses of individual parties, where the goal is not ranking but measuring the individual progress of the respective political party. Conditionally speaking, smaller parties show greater flexibility and receptiveness to improve and promote their party work, while larger parties are slower in accepting change. Also, intra-party turmoil and crises affect larger parties more thoroughly, thus setting back the intra-democratic processes than smaller parties that find ways to recover faster.

INTRODUCTION

Starting in 2019, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) Regional Office for the Western Balkans worked to develop a comprehensive Political Party Transparency Index. Together with a group of regional experts, the WFD continued its work in 2020 to develop the Political Party Transparency Index (hereinafter: PPTI). In 2021, the PPTI index was applied for the first time in partnership with 23 political parties from the countries of the Western Balkans region. As a result of the applied methodology, the Annual Report on the State of Transparency of Political Parties in the Western Balkans for 2021 was also prepared¹.

The last PPTI survey, the results of which we show in this Report, was conducted from June to November 2024. This survey covered eight political parties from North Macedonia: Alternativa, Alliance of Albanians (Zijadin Sela's wing and Arben Taravari's wing), Besa, VMRO-DPMNE, Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), New Social Democratic Party (NSDP) and Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM). An additional two new political parties/movements (ZNAM and the Democratic Movement) were involved in the research and mentoring events organized by the WFD, although this year, the measurement of these two parties was left out because the indicators being measured required a longer-term approach.

The motivation to conduct a series of studies to measure the transparency of political parties is primarily derived from the widespread negative perception of political parties in the region and the country. The level of trust in political parties across the Western Balkans is steadily decreasing. Political parties are also the least trusted institutions of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia, together with the judiciary and the prosecution office.² This alarming data is constantly being dragged through public opinion polls in the country. Since political parties are among the most critical stakeholders in a democratic society, working to improve their legitimacy, greater transparency, and better voter representation seems like a sensible roadmap for improving their work.

In developed democratic societies, parties tend to be more open to the public and their members and more accountable under the laws governing their activities. While there is no single model in European Union countries for how political parties should behave, standards and practices

¹ <https://www.wfd.org/what-we-do/resources/annual-report-state-transparency-political-parties-western-balkans-2021>

² <https://idsccs.org.mk/mk/2023/05/31/%d0%bf%d0%be%d0%b3%d0%bb%d0%b5%d0%b4-%d0%bd%d0%b0-%d1%81%d0%be%d0%b1%d1%80%d0%b0%d0%bd%d0%b8%d0%b5-%d0%bf%d0%b5%d1%80%d1%86%d0%b5-d-0%bf%d1%86%d0%b8%d0%b8%d1%82%d0%b5-%d0%bd%d0%b0-%d0%b3%d1%80%d0%b0-2/>
<https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Corruption%20Poll%20NDI%20MK%20December%202021%20D0%BC%D0%BA.pptx.pdf>
<https://www.iri.org/resources/national-survey-of-north-macedonia-april-may-2023/>



accompanied by strong legislation make political parties more transparent and accountable.³ Political parties rarely show readiness and impetus for reforms from within. However, the significant degree of citizens' disillusionment with political processes, political apathy, and the search for populist solutions to piled-up social problems underscores the need for political parties to open up and be more transparent and accountable.

This PPTI research attempts to help establish better and more elaborated democratic practices of political parties in the Republic of North Macedonia. The index is conceived as a constantly evolving tool that can serve political parties to improve their practices in certain areas of their work in order to better represent themselves to citizens/voters, establish more efficient and, at the same time, more democratic models in their work, and explore ways and methods to improve their performance during elections.

This Report, as well as the results of the survey, represent an overview of the situation of the political parties in the Republic of North Macedonia at the time of conducting the survey. The research results are not carved in stone because the parties are living organisms constantly evolving. However, the research and the Report will allow the informed and less informed public to see, compare, measure, and analyze the level of democratic development in the political parties in the country. It could be a valuable tool for comparing political parties and their practices and be some roadmap and inspiration for party members, their party leadership, and those dealing with transparency and communications issues.

In the long term, PPTI could become an open platform available to the general public. It can be a valuable resource for journalists, researchers, and others interested. Such "democratization" of information about political parties and their practices, together with a comparative regional perspective, can make political parties more accountable to citizens and authorities and foster regional cooperation and the exchange of experiences between political parties in Western Balkan countries.

³ https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/2337_partynorms_engpdf_07082008.pdf
[https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2020\)032-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2020)032-e)
https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/assets/uploads/helpdesk/Political_party_accountability.pdf
<https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/code-conduct-political-parties-campaigning-democratic-elections>

ON THE POLITICAL PARTIES TRANSPARENCY INDEX (PPTI)

The Political Party Transparency Index (PPTI) is a tool developed by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) in collaboration with the Forum for Reasonable Policies (FRP), based on international practices and comparative experiences. The index includes numerous questions and indicators on the transparency of political parties in communication with the public, financial transparency, and the level of intra-party democracy. This research, conducted in 2024, represents some continuity with three previous PPTI surveys. The first survey was conducted in 2019/2020. It was conducted as a test phase of the Index. In contrast, the second survey, conducted in 2021, covered 23 political parties from the Western Balkan countries, five of which were from the Republic of North Macedonia. In 2023, the first comprehensive survey was conducted only for the Republic of North Macedonia, covering eight political parties and an increased number of indicators (82) versus 67 indicators for the previous two surveys. The comparison of this Report for 2024 with last year's and with those previously provides a specific overview of the evolution of party life in the Republic of North Macedonia. Some of these comparative analyses are also shown in this R.



ABOUT INDICATORS

PPTI is divided into three large groups of indicators that comprise three main pillars that cover most political party transparency issues:

- A) Internal Party Democracy (IPD);
- B) Financial responsibility and transparency;
- C) Public information or availability to the public.

The WFD considers: participation (who participates in making important decisions, such as the election of the party leader, candidates for MPs, and local party leaders); representation (the extent to which women, minorities, residents of the periphery, young and elderly citizens are represented in party structures and on electoral lists) and competition (internal competitive elections, competition at the central and local level, regularity of convening official bodies of political parties, etc.).

Financial responsibility and transparency are publicly available information about monetary donations, contributions, grants, state grants, etc. They also include the availability of the party budget, expenditures, and revenues (organization and geographical distribution), fulfillment of obligations to the relevant state bodies (State Election Commission, State Audit Office), as well as compliance with the relevant laws on party financing and party campaigns.

Availability to the public includes transparency of information (whether it is possible to obtain information about the party, such as its statute, website information, response to members' questions and openness to the public, the ease with which such information can be obtained, etc.); public presence (social media, other internet tools, discussion forums, interaction between parties and citizens/voters through online policy-making platforms, etc.).

The Political Parties Transparency Index contains 82 indicators distributed in the three pillars. In PPTI, the three dimensions of transparency of political parties do not have equal weight in the final score. The intra-party democracy aspect weighs 40 percent, and the dimensions of financial transparency and availability to the public weigh 30 percent each in order to reach 100 percent of the total result. It should also be noted that scoring in PPTI is designed so that it is almost impossible for a party to reach maximum points in all pillars, as some of the indicators are related to or taken from the practices of political parties in the world's most developed democracies. Setting the limit higher may be a welcome incentive further to improve the work of political parties in the country.

HOW WAS THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED?

The survey was conducted between June and November 2024. The period for measuring political parties referred to the last five years to cover at least one full round of parliamentary elections and at least one round of important intra-party elections.

Most of the indicators were measured through a desk analysis of available party documents (statute, financial statements, program, etc.). The other indicators were collected and evaluated by analyzing party websites and the availability of information on the work of political parties. Local researchers then conducted the analyses and interviews with party representatives appointed by the political parties, as well as other relevant stakeholders in the parties. The interviews aimed to determine possible inconsistencies in the award of points and improve the methodological indications in the research

We have divided the indicators (82 in total) into the three pillars of transparency (Internal party democracy, financial transparency, availability to the public). Each indicator has a different number of points and a gradation from minimum to maximum points. In some indicators, the number of points by which a particular political party is evaluated varies depending on the relevance of the specific indicator. For example, the indicator of the representation of women in party bodies has greater “weight” than the indicator that determines whether the biographies of party leaders are published on party websites.

Once the completion of the indicators in all pillars is completed, a summary preliminary Report is made and, together with the survey results, presented to each party separately. In order to minimize the subjectivity in the award of points per indicator, during the presentation of the results, the political parties are provided with a double verification process in which the parties can decide on the indicators.



PPTI REPORT ON POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

The goal of PPTI is to be able to monitor the progress or regression of political parties over a certain period through periodic iterations of measurement, most often on an annual basis. This Report describes for the first time the individual performance of the political parties that are part of the PPTI, making a comparison between the measurement in 2023 and the current one from 2024. A period of one year is both a sufficient and insufficient period to determine the parties' progress in terms of meeting the PPTI indicators. As it emerges from the Report, various external and internal factors influence parties' performance. In 2023/2024, such factors were the outcome of the parliamentary elections and certain party restructuring depending on the election result, the divisions and factionalism of certain political parties that de facto slowed down progress and/or led to the birth of new political subjects, and the relatively long period of transition from the old to the new leadership.

The context in which the parties operated in the past year also depends on the possibility of reliably measuring their performance. Thus, we can divide the political parties that are part of PPTI into two groups:

- a) political parties that can be measured and useful data can be extracted from the measurement, and
- b) political parties where reliable measurement is not possible for various reasons.

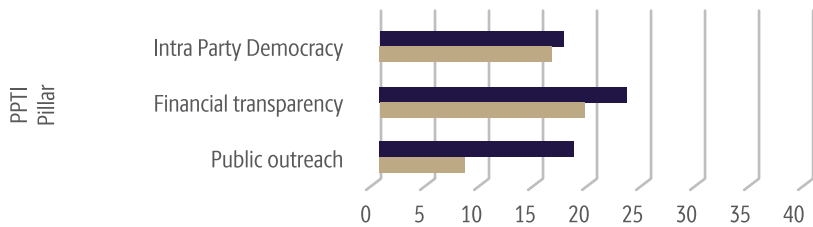
The overview below describes the individual performance of political parties and the comparative perspective of the two measurements in 2023 and 2024.

ALTERNATIVA

In 2024, Alternativa made visible progress in several segments, especially in financial transparency, where a high level of compliance with legal standards and improved availability of financial information was observed. In the area of intra-party democracy, the party is committed to strengthening the branches' autonomy and improving party life. Still, challenges remain related to gender equality and the development of horizontal structures. In the segment of availability to the public, performance has visibly improved, but with room for further adjustments, especially in terms of language versions, as well as adjustments for people with disabilities.

The graph below visually represents the results of the measurement of Alternativa by pillars for 2023 and 2024

Points of Alternativa by PPTI pillars by year



	PPTI Pillar		
	Public outreach	Financial transparency	Intra Party Democracy
■ Year 2024	18	23	17
■ Year 2023	8	19	16



Intra-party democracy

The party has a modern statute that allows autonomy of party branches and sub-regions, contributing to members' free action.

This year, members have been more involved in discussions on party policies at various levels, which is a positive step forward. However, horizontal structures, in particular the Youth Forum and the Women's Forum, are still underdeveloped. The representation of women in party bodies remains low, below 30% in all structures, indicating the need for further efforts to achieve gender equality. Introducing intra-party quotas to increase gender and youth inclusion could significantly improve internal party life.

Also, the initiatives to create and strengthen the Party's Political Academy are still in their initial stages and should be more integrated into the party's policy-making process. Strengthening intra-party election initiatives at various levels within the party as well as using online e-democracy tools, can contribute to the further development of party democratic practices.

Financial transparency

In 2024, Alternativa made significant progress in the financial transparency segment, demonstrating high compliance with legal financial reporting obligations. The party regularly publishes financial statements and continues the trend of timely submission to relevant institutions. A specific benefit is updating the detailed financial statements and the donation register every six months, giving the public a clear insight into the financial operations of the party.

Although this segment is well developed, some data is still missing on the website, such as the declarations of higher party officials and audit reports from the State Audit Office. Additionally, the party has yet to announce the process for collecting membership fees, and it is unclear whether those funds are a significant funding source.

Availability to the public

Alternativa's performance in the public availability segment has made visible positive progress, especially since the opening of the new party website, which addresses most of the PPTI's suggestions from the previous Report for 2023.

The website is well organized and regularly updated with news and program information, with thorough data on the structure and functioning of the party. The page also contains key information, such as biographies and contact details of party officials, which significantly increases transparency and openness.

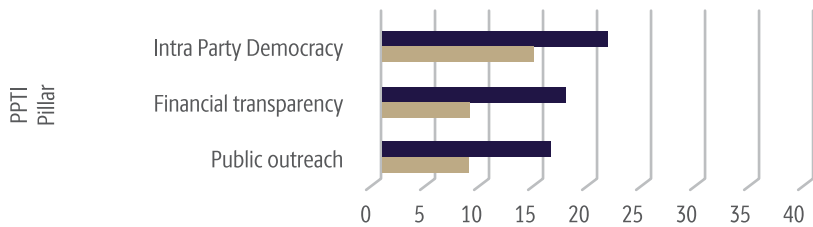
The party performs relatively well on social media. In addition, there is an option to use other languages on the website, which are nonetheless not functional.

BESA

Compared to the previous measurement in 2023, in which Besa's results were modest, this time, the party shows progress in all three segments of the Transparency Index. However, the room for further improvement is still significant. The Besa Statute was adopted in 2015 and is similar in form and content to the center-right parties in advanced democracies. The implementation of the statutory provisions is ongoing, especially with regard to internal communication within the party, democratic intra-party procedures, the establishment of regional structures for the establishment of branches, as well as the inclusion of the youth organization and the Women's Forum.

The graph below visually represents the results of the measurement of Besa by pillars for 2023 and 2024

Points of BESA by PPTI pillars by year



	PPTI Pillar		
	Public outreach	Financial transparency	Intra Party Democracy
■ Year 2024	16	17	21
■ Year 2023	8	8	14



Intra-party democracy

Besa shows some progress in the inclusiveness of party members (especially young people) in party issues. The party statute provides space for intra-party communication, free action of members within the general policy of the party, as well as a relatively developed vertical party structure (local council, municipal council). The party has established its committees of experts, and the members of these committees and information about their work are available to the public on the party's website.

The party has a strong base in the Youth Forum and improved gender balance in party structures, but Besa should show continued progress in this segment. The representation of women in the party structures of Besa is still at an unsatisfactory level (below 30% in the executive and central body of the party), which also coincides with the less developed women's section (Women's Forum) within the party.

Welcoming is the statutory provision that the party's top officials, starting with the president, are entitled to only one re-election. On the other hand, Besa's statute is not available to the public, nor can it be found on the party's website.

Financial transparency

Although Besa shows remarkable progress compared to the previous measurement in 2023 (when the party website was also dysfunctional), financial transparency still needs to be improved. In this section, it is extremely difficult to provide basic information about the financial performance of the party. However, the financial statements are regularly and timely submitted to the competent institutions, and the party has not been sanctioned for financial inconsistencies so far. On the other hand, in 2024, Besa's financial statements are available on the party's website as of 2017, but the data are relatively scarce. In the area of collecting funds from the membership, transparency is weaker, i.e., it cannot be determined whether the party is collecting funds from the membership at all. The State Audit Office has a positive opinion (without remarks) on Besa's financial operations.

Suppose the party wants to demonstrate greater financial transparency. In that case, it should publish more financial data than is legally required (detailed party annual budget, internal independent audit, clear identification of donors, etc.).

Availability to the public

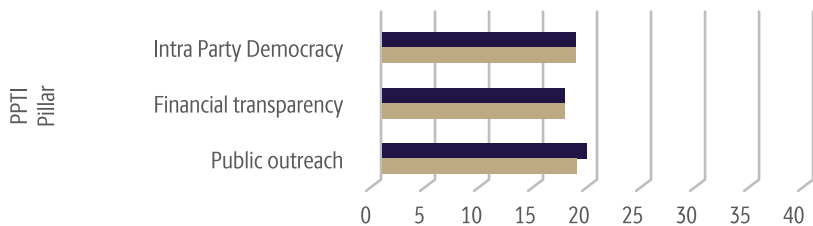
In this segment, Besa shows a performance improvement, primarily due to the regular updating of the website. However, Besa's website contains little information about party bodies and modest information about the party's program goals. There are contact details and biography of the party president, but not for other leadership members. On the other hand, the information module on the page is more functional and navigation is improved. The party is relatively well represented on social media Facebook and Instagram. The Besa website does not have the option to read English or Macedonian. The Albanian and Macedonian versions of Wikipedia contain very little information and, some of the data is outdated. There is not enough data on the work of these two party bodies in the Internet section for the Youth and Women's Forums.

VMRO-DPMNE

VMRO-DPMNE has shown modest progress in several areas, especially in increasing transparency and promoting communication with the public. In contrast, areas where further improvement is needed remain, such as the democratization of intra-party procedures and even greater inclusion of young people and women in party structures.

The graph below visually represents the results of the measurement of VMRO-DPMNE by pillars for 2023 and 2024

Points of VMRO-DPMNE by PPTI pillars by year



	PPTI Pillar		
	Public outreach	Financial transparency	Intra Party Democracy
■ Year 2024	19	17	18
■ Year 2023	18	17	18



Intra-party democracy

In 2024, VMRO-DPMNE shows improvements in the segment of intra-party democracy, continuing efforts to strengthen internal party life and democratize procedures.

The party has introduced several changes to increase members' participation, especially young people and women, in decision-making. The representation of women in party bodies reaches about 35%, which shows a positive trend towards gender equality compared to the previous measurement. Also, youth structures are active and have a significant role in party activities, thus encouraging generational shifts and new perspectives in political action.

Horizontal party structures, such as the Youth Union, the Women's Union, and other specialized organizations, play a key role in engaging membership. They are encouraged to contribute to formulating party policies and programs, allowing for greater integration and involvement in the decision-making process. The party also continues the activities of the Patriotic Institute and expert commissions, which participate in the creation of party strategies and policy documents.

However, despite remarkable progress, the centralization of party decisions remains a significant challenge. The party president and the executive committee have a dominant role in the decision-making processes, which limits the autonomy of local branches and can reduce the pluralism of views. Municipal committees, meanwhile, have limited powers, which can reduce local initiative and prevent greater participation of members at the municipal level.

Regarding statutory provisions, the party has established strict rules for disciplinary measures and a code of ethical behavior, which is an essential instrument for maintaining discipline and order in the party.

In addition, the promotion of mechanisms for the inclusion of disadvantaged groups, such as persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and other socially vulnerable categories, would contribute to further strengthening the democratic character of the party.

Financial transparency

In 2024, VMRO-DPMNE continues to improve its financial transparency system, reflected in the regular publication of financial statements and the greater visibility of information related to party donations and funding.

Annual Reports and financial documents of election campaigns are available on the website, with detailed data on monetary donations and donors. This allows the public and the media to have an insight into the financial operations of the party, which is an important step towards greater financial accountability.

The party undertakes initiatives to improve further financial practices, including the publication of detailed financial information on the website, as well as the update of the donation register every six months. However, while these steps increase transparency, there are areas where VMRO-DPMNE can do even more, such as publishing audit reports from independent audit bodies, which would provide additional certainty and confidence in party finances.

Also, the procedures for collecting membership fees and using internal funds are not fully reviewed. Although the membership fee is a statutory obligation, there is no clear information on how much funds are collected from this category and how they are distributed. Suppose the party wants to increase transparency in this segment. In that case, it is necessary to introduce a system for regularly publishing information related to collecting membership fees and other internal financial mechanisms.

Availability to the public

In 2024, VMRO-DPMNE continues to achieve tangible results in the public's availability segment, mainly thanks to an active and modern communication strategy that includes diversified information channels. The party's website is regularly updated and rich in information, which provides transparent insight into party activities, program positions, and the ideological platform. The party is present on social networks, such as Facebook, Instagram, Tik-Tok, X (Twitter), and YouTube, through which it actively communicates with its membership, supporters, and the general public.

One of the main areas for improvement is the introduction of multilingual versions of the website, especially in English and Albanian, which would increase the availability to the general public, including foreign partners and minority communities in the country. Additionally, the publication of biographies and contact information of executive committee members would allow greater transparency and availability to senior party officials.

The website is structured in a way that makes it easy to search and navigate through the different sections, but there is a lack of specialized sections dedicated to horizontal structures (such as the youth and women's union). These sections could contain more information about their activities, projects and contributions within the party, which would enhance the transparency and visibility of their work. With the possible introduction of tools and functionalities that would allow access by persons with disabilities to the website, greater inclusiveness would be achieved.



Democratic Union for Integration (DUI)

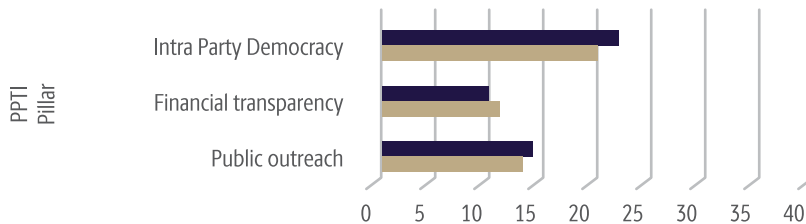
Having survived the political scene for a long time, DUI has established and developed internal and external procedures. DUI has an energetic intra-party life, with relatively active, albeit insufficiently institutionalized, horizontal structures (young people, women, and veterans).

Compared to the previous survey in 2023, in 2024, DUI shows relative progress in the pillar of intra-party democracy, almost identical results in financial transparency, and little progress in availability to the public. The most courageous democratic step of DUI in the past period was the direct election of local structures on the principle of one member—one vote.

There is room for progress in each of the three pillars that are part of this research.

The graph below visually represents the results of the measurement of DUI by pillars for 2023 and 2024

Points of DUI by PPTI pillars by year



	PPTI Pillar		
	Public outreach	Financial transparency	Intra Party Democracy
■ Year 2024	14	10	22
■ Year 2023	13	11	20

Intra-party democracy

Compared to previous PPTI surveys, DUI shows an improved score in the pillar of intra-party democracy. The improved performance of DUI is partly due to the reorganization of the party and the possibility of direct elections for the party branches.

As for the representation of women in party structures, their representation varies between 20% and 30%, a percentage below the standard of parties in developed democracies. Additionally, out of ten DUI MPs in the current parliamentary composition, only three are women. However, after the introduction of the Equal Opportunities Committee, which replaced the Women's Forum, the need to impose topics such as youth representation, gender equality, and geographical inclusiveness was emphasized.

DUI has a good track record in expanding the party base/members who have the opportunity to discuss and vote on party issues and program issues, at different levels within the party. The introduction of intra-party direct elections (one man-one vote) for party branch presidents represents a key step forward of the party that allows for a larger and more visible intra-party democracy. DUI has a strong and active youth, and although the structure of the youth organization is not adequately institutionalized, it still has an impact on policy-making at all levels. The relatively small number of presidency members leaves room for the interpretation that the party is too centralized.

The party expert committees of the DUI (which nominally exist) should have a more visible role in the creation of general party policies, as well as represent a resource base for the creation and promotion of future policies, as well as for the recruitment of potential party officials. The party statute is available on the website only in Albanian. The statute of DUI cannot be found in Macedonian.

Financial transparency

DUI has developed procedures for financial operations and regularly submits reports to the competent state bodies. So far, the party has not been sanctioned for inaccurate or non-transparent financial operations. All financial reports, as well as the reports from the last parliamentary and local elections, are published on the website of DUI. Also, the Internet section on public information is comprehensive and well-developed. Beyond this publicly available information, the party website does not provide additional information that could improve transparency in the area of funding and sources of funding. The detailed financial statements of the party refer to the period up to 2022. For the last two years, these data have been insufficiently elaborated. In the part of the party's research/analytical center, there are no financial reports on the activities or information about the activities of this center.

Party reports show the identities of donors, as well as an overview of individual donations. The financial statements also show the monetary donations, as well as the identity of the donors.

Suppose the party wants to demonstrate greater financial transparency. In that case, it should publish more financial data than is legally required (detailed party annual budget, internal independent audit, clear identification of donors, etc.).



Availability to the public

In the Pillar availability to the public, DUI shows variable performance. A qualitative step forward is the party communication strategy and diversification of communication channels (website, FB, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, etc.). However, despite being well structured and aesthetically sound, the DUI website does not contain sufficient data about the party. There is no information about party officials, MPs or mayors, except for those in the President's office. There are also direct links to other horizontal party structures (Youth, Equal Opportunities Committee, veterans, etc.).

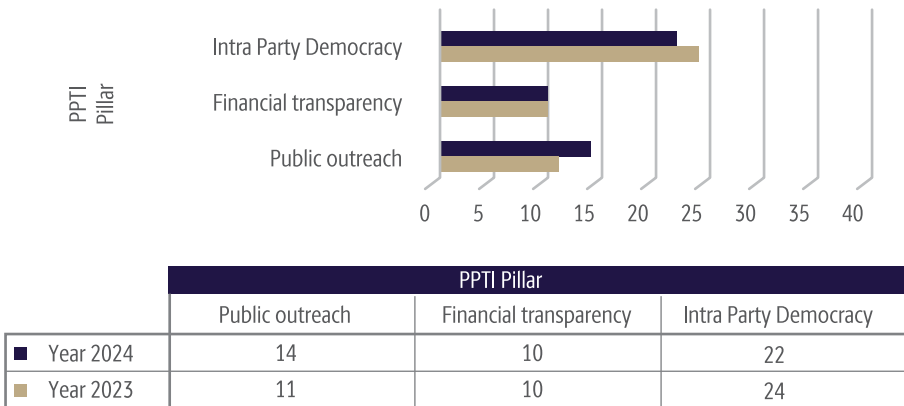
The amount of data on the website needs to be increased; some positions are entirely empty and unfilled (although they exist), so the possibility of easy navigation remains unused. The opportunity to read in English and Macedonian is welcome, but these links do not work (although in previous years, there was a solid amount of data and information). DUI shows relatively modest performance in this pillar, although many possible corrections and additions are relatively quickly feasible.

Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP)

In both PPTI surveys (2023 and 2024), the LDP shows good achievements in the three pillars of intra-party democracy, financial transparency, and public relations. Attempts to sharpen the ideological picture continue to take place during this period. In 2022, a woman was elected party chairwoman through the senior party bodies for the first time in the party. A new Statute of the LDP is also adopted in 2022. It is characteristic of the LDP that it has extremely developed and active structures of young people and women. The party in this year 2024 is relatively well performing in the established internal and external communication with the membership. However, the public witnessed certain party turmoil and stratification after the electoral defeat in the parliamentary elections.

The graph below visually represents the results of the measurement of LDP by pillars for 2023 and 2024

Points of LDP by PPTI pillars by year





Intra-party democracy

The strengths of the LDP in the pillar of intra-party democracy is the significant gender balance in the party structures. The independent functioning, organization, and operation of the LiDem youth organization and the organization of women are also essential to highlight. The gender-sensitive vocabulary in the new statute is a good refreshment that encourages a different narrative on the Macedonian political scene. The Code of Ethical Conduct for Party Members has been developed but has yet to be adopted by the Central Board. The party expert commissions, referred to as councils in the LDP, are established and available on the website. The Liberal Democratic Party provides space for marginalized communities (persons with disabilities, and the LGBT community). In the long term, the LDP could focus on organizing direct intra-party elections for senior party positions at the local and central levels and electing a president with multiple male or female candidates.

Financial transparency

In 2024, the practice of sharing regular annual financial statements remains. The LDP has not been sanctioned so far for financial inconsistencies. A transparency section has been set up on the website containing a public information person's annual financial statements and contact details. Promotion in this part of 2023 was achieved in the section for placing the statements of high party officials on the website. In 2023, there is no data on public information, while now there is a section on the website relating to transparency containing detailed contact details of a person for public information. However, the financial statements remain without a clear showing of the donors. Thus, these data in the financial Report for 2023 are contained in the generic item "Income from membership fees, gifts and donations and income from other sources."

Availability to the public

The party website has room for significant improvements in terms of design, viewability, and availability of information. Within this pillar, the LDP in 2024 achieved significant indicators that were set as a challenge in 2023. On the home page of the website, there is a space where anyone interested could make a comment or suggestion about the LDP program platform, which is a significant step forward in using e-tools for democracy. The shortage of executive board members' biographies noted in 2023 has been partially overcome, but the section on central board members has not been updated. On the website, the biographies of certain members of the executive board and vice presidents are placed in a clear and orderly manner. The website sets out the rules for young people and women's work. The organizational structure of the women's forum is clearly set out without detailed information, but the organizational structure for young people still needs to be improved. The website features the search module, which was also missing in 2023. E-mail addresses have also been set up as a contact with the party president and the secretary general. However, the website requires more insightful navigation and improved and more functional design. There is no option to read in other languages, English and/or Albanian.

New Social Democratic Party (NSDP)

In 2024, the NSDP will achieve specific improvements in appropriate indicators that are important for promoting the performance contained in the three pillars.

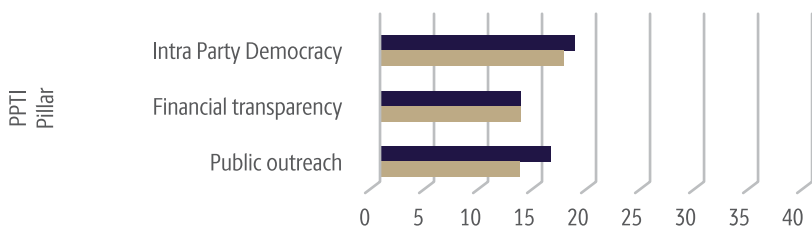
In general, the assessment of the indicators from this survey and the appropriate scoring indicates the need for continuous work on the indicators and their improvement in the direction of sustainability and development of intra-party democracy, financial transparency, and public relations.

NSDP has well-established and developed internal and external procedures and interactive communication with the membership that should be continuously maintained and progressed. The party has active horizontal structures of young people and women with specially adopted statutory documents and organizational structure.

As a relatively small party of social democratic importance, the NSDP makes attempts to sharpen its own ideological image by offering authentic social democratic policies and a developed work program. The party's special focus is creating public policies related to labor and social rights.

The graph below visually represents the results of the measurement of NSDP by pillars for 2023 and 2024

Points of NSDP by PPTI pillars by year



	PPTI Pillar		
	Public outreach	Financial transparency	Intra Party Democracy
■ Year 2024	16	13	18
■ Year 2023	13	13	17



Intra-party democracy

Advantages of the NSDP in the functioning of the party organization refer to the limitation of the term of office of each president to two terms, the possibility of creating informal “factions,” and the relatively good representation of women in the party. These are significant steps towards establishing higher democratic standards in the Republic of North Macedonia and the region.

The recommendations contained in last year’s Report are largely accepted and developed by the NSDP during 2024. The Code of Ethics shall be elaborated for the elected and appointed persons in the party bodies. The expert commissions that in 2023 were not available to the public on the website in 2024 are published on the website, which increases the visibility of the areas they are aimed at in creating public policies and values. The good percentage representation of women in party structures in 2024 continues to be a continuous value that the NSDP cultivates. The Central Board increases the dynamics of meetings, which, in the Report in 2023, was once every three months (quarterly); in 2024, the meetings occur once every two months.

The challenge for the NSDP is to establish regular interactive communication with all horizontal and vertical party structures through the use of innovative online tools (e-voting, online surveys) of e-democracy. This recommendation is a multifaceted benefit for both intra-party democracy and public relations.

Financial transparency

In the second pillar, financial transparency, NSDP scores good results due to the visible and clear placement of party financial statements on the website, which has been regularly published since 2015. The legal obligation to publish financial data about the party is fulfilled, and the NSDP is never sanctioned for financial omissions.

In 2024, financial transparency will be promoted by setting up asset statements for the President, all Vice Presidents, the Secretary-General, and organizational secretaries, as well as the Secretary for International Cooperation, which is a recommendation of the PPTI in 2023. In terms of greater transparency on membership fees, the achievement of this goal has not been achieved because it is difficult to raise funds for membership fees in general. A separate bank account for the organization of women and youth or enabling a modality for greater financial independence is still a challenge that the NSDP will be directed to achieve. The reports from the State Audit Office are summarized in the transparency section on the NSDP website.

Availability to the public

This pillar also shows high performance in 2023, and 2024, it is further promoted. Although the NSDP is a party with limited resources, the website is well designed and full of information and visibility. In cooperation with the association “Inklusiva from Kumanovo,” access is provided through a special font on the NSDP website for persons with disabilities. The “Transparency” section continues to be regularly and comprehensively updated. A website or a separate section in English and Albanian has not been achieved as an objective due to limited resources. The press center of the website this year retains a high level of visibility and updates with new information.

According to the recommendations of the Report in 2023, the NSDP achieved a greater presence on social networks, not only on Facebook but also on a relevant Instagram page. Additionally, the website has a search module that was missing in 2023, and this allows for greater visibility and availability of information. The upgraded indicators from 2023 also include publishing the email addresses of all executive board members. In 2023, there was no published party organogram; now, in 2024, the party organogram is available on the party website. In 2024, the website in the section of the Executive Board members is enriched with individual biographies for each member.



SDSM – Social Democratic Union of Macedonia

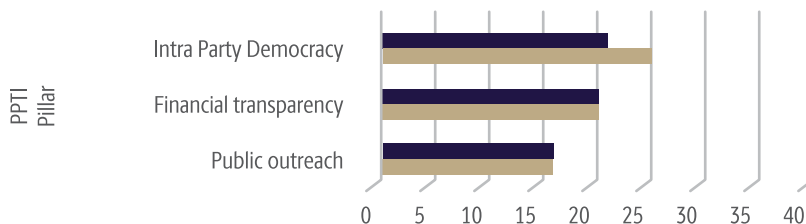
SDSM has established and developed internal and external procedures and an energetic intra-party life with active horizontal structures (young people, women, and expert committees). In 2021, the party adopted a new statute, in form and content similar to the social democratic parties of the EU member states, which includes more advanced provisions on party activity. Also, SDSM is the first political party in North Macedonia to introduce direct intra-party elections to elect a president (one person - one vote).

However, the relatively long period of transition from the previous to the current leadership in 2024 (without elected party bodies or retired party officials), which also coincided with the period of measurement of PPTI, de facto set back SDSM's performance in the area of intra-party democracy.

There is room for progress in this research's three pillars, while good new practices and party acts (Code of Ethics, increased financial transparency, direct intra-party elections, etc.) should pass the test of time.

The graph below visually represents the results of the measurement of SDSM by pillars for 2023 and 2024

Points of SDUM by PPTI pillars by year



	PPTI Pillar		
	Public outreach	Financial transparency	Intra Party Democracy
■ Year 2024	16	20	21
■ Year 2023	16	20	25

Intra-party democracy

Compared to the previous PPTI survey in 2023, 2024, SDSM shows a relative decline in the pillar of intra-party democracy. This is primarily due to the transition period of the new leadership, a multi-month period of unelected party bodies, reduced frequency of party meetings, elections of new leadership in the youth organization SDMM, as well as the relatively restrictive nature of the new statute in terms of the autonomy of municipal organizations.

In November 2024, the long-awaited congress of SDSM was held at which the executive and central bodies of the party were elected, and an Open Call for self-candidate of presidents of municipal organizations and of the President of the City of Skopje was also announced. In the coming period, SDSM is expected to stabilize its own horizontal and vertical structures.

The intra-party direct elections, now in its third iteration, point to the established positive practice of intra-party democracy. Although some candidates partially contested the elections, they still took place and gave the impression of an intra-party democracy.

On the other hand, SDSM's statute is relatively restrictive in terms of allowing broader autonomy of the party's vertical structures (primarily municipal organizations) since the party president has the right to appoint and dismiss presidents of municipal organizations.

As for the representation of women in party structures, their representation is traditionally high, with over 45% in party structures. As for the SDSM parliamentary group, the current parliamentary composition shows a decline in the representation of women MPs (out of 15 MPs, only 5 are women).

In 2021, SDSM adopted a Code of Ethical Conduct. It is a positive example of party organization and is rarely present in documents from other parties in the country and the region. The Code should also be revived in the future as a key party document for (self) regulation of relations within the party.

The party's expert committees are well developed and have an active role in the creation of party policies.

The SDSM Analytical Center is in operation and is expected to contribute to better party policy-making.

Financial transparency

Regarding financial transparency and availability to the public, the measurement results in 2024 remain almost identical to those in 2023. DUI has developed procedures for financial operations and regularly submits Reports to the competent state bodies. All financial Reports, as well as the Reports from the last parliamentary and local elections, are published on the SDSM website. Also, the Internet section on public information is comprehensive and well-developed. Although it stands as a statutory obligation, the collection of membership fees is not sufficiently published.

It is desirable for the party to publish the asset declarations of the highest party officials on its website, especially since there are new leadership and members of the leadership who have never



held executive functions. The party had not published the financial statements on the website before 2021.

Availability to the public

In the public availability pillar, SDSM shows good results identical to the measurement conducted in 2023. This is primarily due to the comprehensive party communication strategy and diversification of communication channels (FB, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) as an official website rich with information and news.

It is to be welcomed that the SDSM website is full of programmatic and ideological positions of the party, both current and from the time of the previous leaderships.

Greater and more visible access to senior party officials (contact email address, telephone, etc.) could further improve communication with the membership and the media.

The Public Information Section is also well-separated, viewable, has a large amount of information and access to public information.

There is an Albanian-language version of the website, which is a great qualitative step, while no information is available in English.

Publication of the expert committees' members and their biographies would further contribute to greater visibility of party activities.

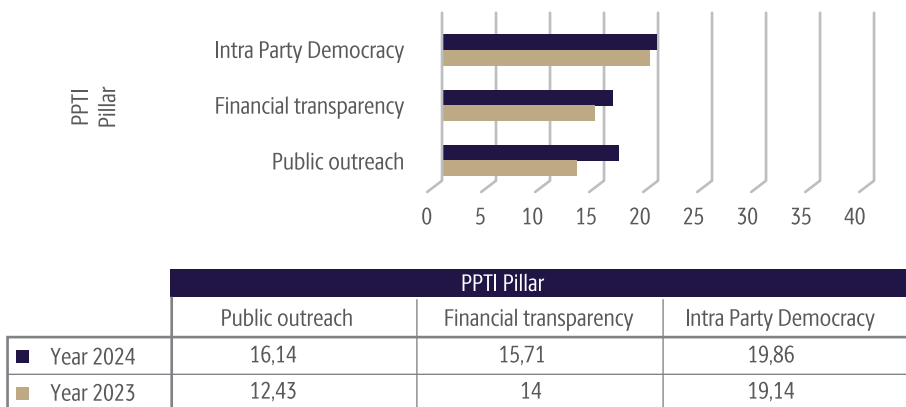
Despite the party's initial efforts, there is still no possibility of access for persons with disabilities on the SDSM website.

Summary performance of “measurable” political parties

Although the purpose of PPTI is to monitor the individual performance of political parties over a certain period, through periodic iterations of measurement, most often on an annual basis, the data on political parties that can be measured also gives us the opportunity to assess their collective performance.

The graph below visually represents the average of the results from the measurement of the so-called measurable political parties by pillars for 2023 and 2024. What can be observed is that, in summary, political parties generally reach up to half of the total number of points at the pillar level. This means that parties have a great opportunity and space to continue improving in order to reach a certain advanced level of performance on each of the pillars. It is visible that in summary, political parties have made the greatest progress in terms of public outreach, and the smallest, almost imperceptible, in terms of intra-party democracy. The graph below visually represents the overall average of the results from the measurement of the so-called measurable political parties for 2023 and 2024. Both at the pillar level and in general, this year, compared to the previous one, a modest improvement in the summary performance of political parties is noticeable. Both at the pillar level and in the overall index level, political parties generally reach up to half of the total number of points.

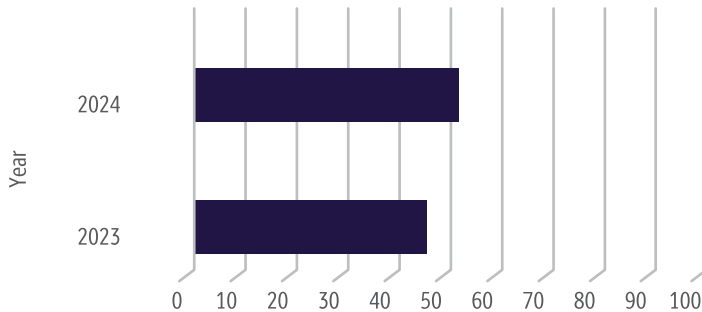
Average points by PPTI pillars by year for 7 political parties





The graph below visually presents the overall average of the results of the measurement of the so-called measurable political parties for 2023 and 2024. Both at the pillar level and in general, this year, compared to the previous one, a modest improvement in the summary performance of political parties is noticeable. Both at the pillar level and in the overall index level, political parties generally reach up to half of the total number of points.

Total average points by year for 7 political parties



	Year	
	2023	2024
■ PPTI Weighted Score	45,57	52,14

ALLIANCE FOR ALBANIANS (AA)

Methodological limitations

For objective reasons, the traditional measurement within the PPTI for the Alliance for Albanians (AA) is left out in this Report. As it is known, the Alliance of Albanians went through a turbulent period in 2024 (division into two wings, one of Zijadin Sela and the other of Arben Taravari), and pending the outcome of the trial, most of the indicators that PPTI contains were not suitable for reliable measurement. However, this Report notes certain essential aspects of the political party's transparency. In order to respect the circumstance, PPTI will present the situation in both wings of AA, but it must be emphasized that due to the pretensions of both wings to refer to the same statute and the same past until a few months ago, the distinction of their activities and actions from a formal aspect is extremely difficult.

PPTI treats the two wings of this party as two subjects of the same political entity until the legal resolution of their mutual relations. Consequently, the assessments presented in this Report take into account the formal and practical situation after the division of the Alliance for Albanians, with the best intention that the democratization process in both wings should continue to be supported independently of the internal division.

Intra-party democracy

The Alliance for Albanians has a modern party statute. In form and content, it is similar to the statutes of center-right parties in European democracies and offers an opportunity for broader internal democracy. However, the implementation of statutory provisions, primarily related to internal communication within the party and intra-party democratic procedures, remains to pass the test of time. The epilogue of the current internal division will certainly be a lesson in building intra-party democracy.

In this section, AA remains one of the few parties that, in its statute, legitimizes the existence of factions. The recent events that resulted in internal division certainly challenge this statutory point. Still, such an opportunity opens the way for developing intra-party democracy in the long run. The level of tolerance towards party colleagues from the other wing, towards whom a negative attitude is rarely expressed, but even when it is done, a dose of attention is noticeable, is a good illustration of the political culture that has been built in this party.

It is worth mentioning that the party statute (adopted in December 2022 and is still accepted by both wings) allows a wide range of intra-party communication, free action of members within the general policy of the party, as well as developed vertical party structures (branch, sub-branch, Council of Skopje branches, polling station councils, etc.). But at the same time, it must be emphasized that as a result of the division, all these relations within the party are going through a reorganization process.



However, given the emerging circumstances, i.e., the division of the party in the process of judicial resolution, and even more given the fact that both wings represented by Zijadin Sela, i.e., by Arben Taravari, are governed by the same statute, the same channels of public communication, i.e., the same website, but also a bank account, the assessment according to the indicators of the Political Party Transparency Index (PPTI), is extremely complex.

An additional element that aggravates this situation is the fact that during the implementation of this project to strengthen transparency and intra-party democracy, the party's website was closed, making the presentation of indicators related to party functioning reflected on the website invalid. This prevents the verification of data on publicly available information pertaining to party activities and intra-party democracy, financial operations, as well as the availability of information to the general public.

a) Alliance for Albanians (Zijadin Sela's wing)

Based on the data collected before these latest developments, it can be concluded that the wing of Zijadin Sela has retained the internal functioning model of the party and is even trying to make positive steps in the context of the parameters of the Transparency Index. The increased activity is primarily due to the fact that during this year, there were presidential and parliamentary elections, but these changes are still on a small scale. However, out of a total of 57 points in 2023, when the party was united, the analysis of Sela's wing shows that it now has 64 points (out of a total of 139 or an average of 46.06%) or 46 points in the total index for the intra-party democracy component.

b) Alliance for Albanians (Arben Taravari's wing)

Based on the data collected before these latest developments, it can be concluded that similar to Zijadin Sela's wing, Arben Taravari's wing has maintained the model of the internal functioning of the party and is even trying to make positive strides in the context of the parameters of the Transparency Index. Participation in the Government certainly influenced the increased activity of their most prominent staff. Similarly to the wing of Zijadin Sela, out of 57 points in 2023, when the party was the only one, the wing of Taravari registered 66 points out of 139, or an average of 47.48%. The total index for the intra-party democracy component is 47 points (one point more than the wing of Sela due to the more significant activity of the expert teams, probably due to the engagement in the Government).

Specific remarks in the section on intra-party democracy for the two wings of AA:

- ✎ Although the party status of its members remains to be cleared after the end of the trial, the autonomy of the local party bodies is preserved, and work is being done to consolidate the party base.
- ✎ The ability of local branches to influence the policies of the central leadership seems to be at a solid level, and this is especially true for Youth Forums that are aware of the need for greater autonomy and greater gender balance.

- Women's sections (Assembly of Women) within both wings are relatively inactive. Still there is a certain increase in the dynamics of certain members of this section who can bring positive changes. Gender balance also remains an open issue, and it is at an unsatisfactory level.
- The representation of women in AA party structures and parliament is unsatisfactory (out of 4 MPs on the Sela wing, only one is a woman, and out of 5 MPs on the Taravari wing, only one is a woman).
- Both wings prioritize an AA academy composed of experts, intellectuals, and academics, but the fate of this body will remain uncertain until the trial concludes.
- Participation of the Taravari wing in Government has opened up space for greater engagement of young party members. It remains to be seen how this will develop in the future.

Financial transparency

As for the pillar of Financial transparency, it can be considered that the wing of Arben Taravari, which owns the party bank account, has greater responsibility for financial operations, yet the financial operations of both wings can be assessed mainly for the period while the party was undivided because, shortly afterward, the website was closed, making it impossible to monitor publicly available information. However, the practices that have been applied in AA can be considered to apply to both wings for the reason that prior to the division, staff from both wings was guided by the same principles. The only difference is in the point that refers to the financial Report on the past presidential and parliamentary elections in which the Sela wing no longer had its account. In contrast, the joint period's other points can be considered shared. This is confirmed by the separate conversations with the two wings of AA, which show almost identical results.

In sum, both wings have a relatively high level of understanding of the importance of transparency in the financial functioning of the party and that those practices will continue to be upgraded after the legitimacy dispute over the party is resolved. Thus, Taravari's wing scores 38 out of 79 points, averaging 48.10% or 48 index points weighting of this criterion in relation to the entire index. At the same time, the wing of Zijadin Sela scores 36 out of 79 points, on average 45.57% or 46 index points weight this criterion in relation to the entire index.

While this Report is being prepared, the AA website is closed. Yet, it can be said that AA's financial operations are well structured and abound with data, reports, and other documents of public interest.



Availability to the public

After the split between two AA wings, the website was available on the Sela wing, but while this research was going on, the website was closed due to unpaid bills to the provider. However, at the time of monitoring this website, i.e., before its closure, serious deficiencies were identified as a consequence of external factors (computer viruses or perhaps external malignant intervention).

In the public relations/availability pillar, AA exhibits comparatively modest performance. This is primarily due to the outdated website, which has not yet made progress despite previous remarks by researchers. This is also reflected in the assessment, which is even lower than the previous one in this cycle. However, the evaluation is also questionable, given that the site is out of function.

While it was functional, in addition to Albanian, it had materials in Macedonian and English, although these parts were poorly filled and often dysfunctional. Hence, the scoring in this column shall be taken conditionally, especially since the page is closed. Out of a total possible 99 points, availability to the public was rated with 21 points (average 21.21%), i.e., 21 points for the total weight index for this criteria.

It is important to note that both wings mainly communicate through social media, but that part is also not properly organized.

Since it is to be expected that both wings of the party will open their websites in due time, the indicators that are part of this assessment instrument in order to promote the transparency of political parties can serve as an excellent guide for creating a transparent and easily understandable website.

ZNAM and the Democratic Movement

An additional two political parties were initially envisaged for inclusion in the Political Party Transparency Index (PPTI) for 2024. These are the movement ZNAM - For our Macedonia (President Maksim Dimitrievski) and the Democratic Movement (President Izet Mexhti). Taking an initial scan of the situation and the current organizational setup of these two parties, the team of researchers decided to leave these parties out of this year's PPTI measurement.

Namely, both parties were founded in October 2023. Therefore, only one year of existence on the political scene proved insufficient to measure their transparency and intra-party action effectively. Both parties are still developing their own horizontal and vertical structures. Women's and youth sections still need to be completed, and there is insufficient coverage with municipal organizations and developed internal procedures. Financial transparency, on the other hand, is a tool that requires greater regularity in measurement (more years of existence of the political party, more election cycles, etc.) From that aspect, it would have been uneconomic for these two parties to be measured. In terms of availability to the public, both parties show signs that it is fundamentally important to them. Both parties have well-placed websites, although they are still scarce with information, and time will tell to which extent they will want and will have the capacity to build on these foundations.

However, both ZNAM and the Democratic Movement were offered to get acquainted with PPTI, study the indicators, and possibly use them as a manual or roadmap for making a transparent and accountable political party. Both parties were part of the mentoring process the other parties underwent in 2024.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In developed democracies, parties strive for greater openness to the public and their members and tremendous respect for the laws governing their activities. While there is no uniform model in the European Union for how political parties should behave, standards and practices accompanied by strong legislation make political parties more transparent and accountable. Political parties rarely show readiness and impetus for reforms from within. However, the significant level of citizens' disappointment and cynicism regarding political processes underscores the need for political parties to open up and be more transparent and accountable to their members and the general public.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, the comfort in the action of political parties faces a double challenge, external and internal. The external challenge lies in the ambition of the country and the declarative commitments of all political parties that the Republic of North Macedonia should be part of the EU, thus committing themselves to respect certain democratic standards, of which transparency and accountability are the most important for political parties. The internal challenge is related to the widespread disillusionment of citizens with the way political parties function, which in turn results in cynicism, abstention from voting and anti-systemic behavior (protests, support for radical parties, civil unrest, etc.). Because of these challenges, political parties are somehow obliged to change themselves. And they are changing, albeit at an uneven pace. Some of these changes may seem purely cosmetic, but some parties are making significant changes in order to strengthen their legitimacy. This is a process that should continue and be constantly upgraded, to the point of establishing those standards and practices that reflect the democratic norms necessary for a developed democratic society.

During 2024, the WFD organized three intensive mentoring events arising from PPTI indicators as well as from the needs of political parties to improve their practices in the field of intra-party democracy, greater representation of women in politics, and the use of digital tools and AI technology in the day-to-day operations of the parties. These mentoring events were attended by representatives of all political parties involved in the research, and they had the opportunity to advance their knowledge and practices and to implement them appropriately in the parties. The result of these mentoring events is already visible in the current research, and the improvement in some indicators testifies to the fact that most of the parties have taken this task seriously. The WFD will continue to enable such or similar activities in the future in order to improve the work of the political parties in North Macedonia.

Based on the above observations and supported by the data extracted from the PPTI, we can provide more recommendations:

- Aspects of intra-party democracy seem vital to the parties' success, given that links between party officials, party members, voters, and citizens primarily stem from these practices. More and better developed horizontal structures, improved vertical communication in the parties, improved intra-party procedures for the election of the highest party officials, and broad consultation with the membership generally make the party dynamic and discuss the coming challenges, able to survive in difficult times and, finally, choose better and more accountable leadership.
- The representation of women in party structures in 2024 remains a worrying trend, although there are some improvements among some parties. This is particularly relevant at the level of local party structures. The parties show little sensitivity in the election of municipal leaders, and this is further often reflected in the election of candidates for mayors. The introduction of party quotas for women and young people, as well as, above all, increased awareness of this problem, can somewhat mitigate the situation of this plan. A worrying trend of underrepresentation of women in top positions at the local level deprives parties of huge potential and capacity to improve party work, and even greater electoral success. The established quotas on the electoral lists compensate for this imbalance. Still, it is insufficient because it is largely not reflected in the parties' structures, and the parties often play this principle.
- Political parties must raise low awareness of integrating persons with disabilities into party structures and/or electoral lists.
- The wave of democratization of political parties (direct elections for the party president, high standards of autonomy of party structures, accountability to members and the public, etc.) is becoming a European standard. Political parties should slowly and carefully consider this issue, taking into account the potential pitfalls and huge benefits voters recognize. Some initial efforts in this field by certain political parties provide an instructive example that can be followed.
- Better ideological profiling, with clearly stated and applied ideological principles, is a matter of choice for each party. However, firmer ideological positions often mean an improvement in party activism and an increased life expectancy of the party, even at the cost of losing a certain number of (indeterminate) voters at the expense of strengthening the party base.
- Financial transparency and constant improvement in this area mean better internal financial practices of political parties, more control from the bottom-up of the party leadership (party members, central committee, etc.), and finally, a better public image of the parties.
- In the long run, these transparency practices always pay off. At the same time, greater public scrutiny over party finances can ultimately mean increased public confidence and better electoral outcomes for the parties themselves.
- Additional training sessions are needed for the financial transparency of parties and how to show it to the public most effectively. Financial statements of political parties are too simplified



and poor in data, meeting only the required legal minimum. Parties do not find a way or need to go beyond the basic requirements, and in advanced transparency, they can be much better if they commit to the public.

- Small additions and updates can significantly improve the picture of political parties' financial transparency. Publication of the asset declarations of the highest officials (although they are available in the SCPC), publication of the party's organogram, greater visibility of membership fees, dismantling of per-diem items, salaries for employees, as well as a detailed and clear display of the party's donations and debts are just some of the recommendations for greater transparency.
- Enabling practices and developing models for greater financial independence of horizontal party structures (primarily for women's and youth organizations) is an additional incentive and a step toward general party transparency.
- Regarding public relations, new and innovative ways of accessing the wider range of potential voters, along with standard conservative approaches (door-to-door campaigns, Go Out to Vote (GOTV), town-hall meetings, etc.), mean a constant enhancement of the perception of political parties and more attractive offers for voters.
- By informing and addressing the public, parties have various activities that can significantly improve their image. Perfectly functional and daily/weekly updated websites are the necessary first step.
- Parties can benefit greatly if they introduce internal digital communication channels: online surveys, electronic voting, daily communication with membership and branches on issues of interest to the membership, consultation with voters and party members, etc.
- Parties in the Republic of North Macedonia should use digital tools much more to communicate with the external public. Digital democracy (e-democracy) allows for a much more developed party life. It gives greater legitimacy to party leaderships through the use of e-voting, intra-party referendum on certain program issues, ad hoc consultations with membership, etc.

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