

PUBLIC STANCE

The Electoral Reform, far from the aspirations and expectations for a real, thorough and inclusive reform

Since the 2012 Electoral Reform, after several prolonged and failed attempts, there were expectations for an integral and inclusive electoral reform from the Assembly of Albania and the political leadership. A reform that would not be simply an improvement of the legal framework, but a thorough and complete process that would establish the path for the return of confidence of citizens in democracy and the rule of law.

Attempts to reform, as per the commitments of political stakeholders and appeals of domestic stakeholders and strategic partners of the country, were de facto followed by a periodicity of political crisis that lasted several years. During the last of these crisis, which has set some precedents of a transitional democracy in crisis, among the most dramatic elements can be mentioned the functioning of the Assembly with a reduced number of MPs and the passing local governance control on the hands of a single political party.

In a situation of total lack of political dialogue, further exacerbated by the lack of time vis a vis the upcoming parliamentary elections, the Political Council was found as a solution to address, to the extent possible, electoral issues.

This model resulted to be disappointing, with respect to expectations, both regarding its functioning and the topics discussed.

However, even more concerning is the fact that this model seems to trend toward failure, as the **discourse of the political leadership remains focused on the narrow agendas of the two main political parties**, threatening to undo even the minimal possible contribution.

The Coalition for Reforms, Integration, and Consolidated Institutions (KRIIK Albania), as a civic actor that has contributed in continuity with its opinions and expertise throughout the current and previous reform processes, and with a wide experience in observing in continuity several electoral processes, under the present circumstances, believes that although the expectations from the activity of the Political Council are minimal at this stage, **it's activity must conclude in a legal text, to the extent this text is reached under political consensus.**

At a minimum, the activity of the Political Council, **should mark the first successful step in establishing the political dialogue and return of institutional dialogue**, which is the only path towards solving deadlocks and problems in a democracy.

This small positive step, after several backwards steps, must ultimately aim to an integral and thorough electoral reform for many emergent issues. Moreover, this objective must receive as soon as possible **support from a clear expression of political commitment by the leadership of the political parties that it will continue to be followed as primary task for the new legislature of the Assembly, being elected in the next elections.**

Under the same rationale, KRIIK calls upon the parties that, beyond the progress of the Political Council, in the spirit and in continuity of the dialogue, to continue the exchange of opinions and discussions for future potential changes.

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KRIIK believes that, the starting point for a successful electoral reform that would aim to return the confidence of citizens, **remains the reformation of the Central Election Commission and transparency of political finance.**

While other matters are also crucial, they are preconditioned by the above.

It seems clear that the fulfillment of the standards in the next electoral process will, again, depend on political will, and not on an institutional-legal mechanism above the parties, that serves as a guarantee.

Thus, as co-authors and co-responsible for the next electoral process, KRIIK calls in advance on the political leadership to show maturity in the pre-electoral and electoral period, aiming to avoid all the negative and anti-legal precedents that have marked elections thus far.

Especially, in absence of the relevant legal framework, **KRIIK calls on the parties and other political stakeholders to provide full transparency on political finance**, starting immediately and **continuing with a genuine post-electoral audit.**

It is deemed that the good functioning of these two mechanisms, beyond the status quo, could help restore the trust of citizens in the electoral process, as well as the political and institutional processes related to it.

Transparency of political finance, detailed, and provided timely and in advance, is the best way for political stakeholders to make known to the Albanian citizens **the interests that tie politicians and on what basis are built electoral offers.**

Full transparency would also reflect the sincerity of their will and their commitment to the destiny of the country.

Trust in democracy and institutions cannot be earned through calls or, even worse, empty rhetoric, but by demonstrating full financial transparency of political parties, as well as other political actions, as well as **full transparency of the activity of electoral institutions and other involved stakeholders.**

To conclude, calling that the political agreement not be the seal for the certification of the electoral result and with it of electoral crime, **KRIIK calls upon and appeals for the engagement of the political leadership to undertake a post-electoral audit, immediately after the next elections.**

Bringing into attention the fact that the audit of the electoral process has been a matter of debate at the conclusion of each electoral process, the parties have now all the needed time available to start discussing on the technicalities of performing such audit after the next electoral process.

A thorough audit process will, furthermore, serve to **understand better the needs and depth of intervention for the electoral reform that is expected from the next legislature**, immediately after the next parliamentary elections.

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Tirana, on 31 May 2020!

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