

**COALITION FOR REFORMS, INTEGRATION AND CONSOLIDATED INSTITUTIONS  
(KRIIK ALBANIA)**  
*In cooperation with*  
**33 partner organizations**

## **ELECTIONS FOR THE ASSEMBLY OF ALBANIA**

**25 APRIL 2021**

# **STATEMENT OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS\***

*26 April 2021*

---

\*This Report is published in Albanian and in English.

The [Albanian version](#) is the only official document.

Prepared by: ©  **KRIIK** KOALICIONI PËR REFORMA, INTEGRIM DHE INSTITUCIONE TË KONSOLIDUARA  
COALITION FOR REFORMS, INTEGRATION AND CONSOLIDATED INSTITUTIONS

All rights reserved.

Parts of this material **can be freely used**. In that case, please cite the source.

A: Rr. "Ymer Kurti", Nd.4, H.2, Ap.3, Nj.Adm.5, Tirana, 1019 | Mailing Address: P.O.Box. 2396 Tirana, 1001,  
Albania;

T: + 355 4 2245078 | M: + 355 673890174; + 355 682039297 | E: info@kriik.al | W: www.kriik.al.

The Election Monitoring Action of KRIIK for the Elections for the Assembly of Albania of 25 April 2021 is financially supported by:

- the Government of the United Kingdom;
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation;
- the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany; and
- the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

---

*The opinions and views expressed in this Report and any other publication in the frame of this Monitoring Action are the sole responsibility of KRIIK and do not necessarily represent the official position or opinion of the donors.*

## **PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS**

The election process, which was finalized on Election Day, 25 April, was held in an extremely polarized and conflictual situation, both politically and institutionally. Vote buying, voter intimidation and other election crimes were the topic of the day during the campaign and grew in intensity as Election Day approached. The extremely polarized situation escalated to conflicts and physical violence amongst or between the supporters of election contestants, reaching to physical attacks, and even a loss of life, only four days before the Election Day.

KRIIK positively assess the fact that this harsh political rhetoric and the incidents that accompanied the last days of the campaign stopped and did not harm the image of election day.

The legal framework constitutes and provides the guarantees to conducting an electoral process with standards, as long as the main political and administrative will is constructive and law-abiding.

Many of the elements of the electoral legal framework changed before the 25 April election. There were two major interventions, one in July and one in October 2020. Even though the July 2020 legal changes had political consensus from the major parties, there was a lack of transparency and consultation with civil society and smaller parties.

The unilateral constitutional amendments of July 2020, and the subsequent legal amendments of October 2020, further violated the principles of public consultation and transparency, as well as the trust placed by the parties on the 5 June Agreement. Moreover, these interventions were not in line with good practices for democratic elections, as they constituted major changes to the electoral legal framework, less than a year before elections.

Public health institutions have been slow and passive in addressing the rules to be followed, regarding the holding of elections during the pandemic. Proper legal adjustment, to the extent that they can be called so, was made only 24 hours before the election day.

The 1% legal threshold at national level for the candidates proposed by the voters is estimated to constitute a barrier for the concrete possibility to be elected. In the meantime, it is considered logically excessive and inappropriate, as these candidates compete only in one constituency, while the result is required for all 12 constituencies.

The re-dimensioned CEC institution has manifested an overall responsibility and transparency in organizing, functioning and decision-making, as well as a positive cooperative approach with media, civil society and political stakeholders.

The CEC administered the technical aspects of the election mostly efficiently and with an increased transparency. KRIIK, however, notes that all three governing bodies of the CEC, reflected in continuity a behavior that is not that of a single institution, but of three bodies functionally separated from each other.

The Regulatory Commission has been favorably assessed for making unanimous and consensual decisions by all members, despite certain cases when during their discussions, partisan political approaches have been noted. This also led to this body waiving the obligation of approving the ballot paper.

The Complaints and Sanctions Commission's (CSC) decision-making is considered to be a narrow reading of the law, and on a distant approach from being part of the CEC governing bodies, whereby the Electoral Code has given the competence to place sanctions for any violations to the electoral law. Its decision-making dampened and undid all the changes and the efficiency of the instrument created to prevent and sanction the abusive use of state resources.

The behavior of the CSC and of the Regulatory was found to be politically influenced, which was clearly seen in the views expressed by the members of these commissions regarding issues whereof the position of political parties was divided.

The CEC efforts to implement the use of technology in these elections, which involves the electronic identification of voters nationwide, video monitoring of all polling stations, as well as the pilot project of electronic voting and counting in Tirana, despite the anomalies observed during the election day with the functioning of the PEI devices, are positively assessed.

Commissions of Election Administration Zones are estimated to have had a generally positive performance and to have managed the election process in a generally efficient manner, despite the difficulties arising in some of them due to the lack of infrastructure and necessary materials.

The change of CEAZ and VCC members throughout the election process, as well as their proper training is a concern.

The process of establishing the polling station commissions and ballot counting teams was carried out beyond the legal deadlines, due to delays caused by political parties and their failure to file the proposals for members of these commissions.

The voter list compilation process was not properly transparent, whilst even during these elections the process of notifying voters in writing suffered from failure to implement the legal criteria and provisions, marking some problems related to their publication and information of citizens.

With regards to the right of Albanian voters who permanently reside outside the territory of the Republic of Albania, attempts to make it possible failed, which constitutes a missed opportunity as well as a violation of the political parties' commitments in compliance with the 5 June 2020 Agreement.

The number of supporting signatures that should be presented by non-parliamentary parties and independent candidates is in line with good election practices. However, the collection of supporting signatures seemed to be a barrier to the candidacy of independent candidates. Out of eight initiative committees registered at CEC, only five were able to collect the required signatures, three of which used resources of an existing organizational structure.

Even though it was easily foreseeable that the 25 April elections would be held during a pandemic, the political parties did not regard this as an issue at any point during their talks in the Political Council, as far as it is known and made public. The Albanian state failed to satisfy its obligation to guarantee all its citizens the right to vote, an undeniable and unalienable right that International Conventions ratified by the Albanian state, as well as the Albanian Constitution recognize to its citizens.

The forced self-quarantine of citizens who could come from Greece or Northern Macedonia, was another restriction and violation of the right to vote, and cannot be justified in any way with the arguments provided by the Technical Committee.

The legal framework stipulates that the election campaign starts 30 days before the voting day and political parties are obliged to act according to the rules set by the Electoral Code. This did not stop, however, the electoral subjects from launching their campaign much earlier than required by law. The gap created by the law - by not defining accurately the term “election campaign” - leaves room for electoral subjects to start their campaign early de facto, with all its attributes.

The two main parties officially launched their campaign on March 25, again in violation of legal provisions, and in violation of the order of the Ministry of Health prohibiting gatherings and rallies of more than 10 people was disregarded.

The campaign was also accompanied by harsh rhetoric, denigrating language against the opponent, accusations and counter-accusations about vote buying, in line with the behavior of election contestants during the early election campaign. This type of political discourse without content during the election campaign diverted the attention from the main concrete plans and programs of the competing political parties in this process, which on the other hand were absent and were not formally made public.

The President was also involved in the election campaign with harsh rhetoric, and was openly engaged in a campaign against the current majority and Prime Minister Rama personally, while positioning himself as an election opponent and not as an official above the parties.

The state police took no position nor penalized political parties contesting the election about violation of restriction measures to fight the pandemic. In the meantime, the behavior was completely different towards two independent candidates, who were fined for violation of the rules against rallies, thus violating the principle of equality in the race of election opponents.

The establishment of the so-called Vote Protection Structure by the Democratic Party is also considered a concerning phenomenon. It is unclear what the composition of this “structure” is and what its leadership is. Thus, it is considered a pre-state structure, utterly unhealthy for compliance with the law, institutional behavior and the establishment and functioning of the rule of law.

The harsh political rhetoric that preceded and followed the incidents occurred, and the failure of the political parties to step away from violent acts or individuals, even, on the contrary, justifying or denying the connection with these individuals, is considered to be extremely problematic as a behavior and approach.

Heavy participation of public administration officials has been noted in election campaign events, often accompanied by high-level local officials. In addition to the fact that they have been present in these electoral activities during the official working hours, some of them have been engaged in events as speakers or protagonists, which constitute a violation of the legal electoral framework or the status of public servant.

Participation of minors in electoral events, accompanied by family members as part of the audience or holding campaign symbols was present also in this campaign. Although less evident than in previous election campaigns, it remains a concerning phenomenon, which must be fully addressed and prevented.

The legal framework does not provide for the obligation of electoral subjects to make their funding transparent during the election process, and especially during the election campaign. No electoral subject and no candidate answered KRIIK's call for transparency and voluntary declaration of expenditures.

Election campaign monitoring reports publication by CEC monitors has been almost inexistent overall, and completely absent during the campaign, which has led to reduced transparency about a mechanism that was not effective since its inception. It can be concluded that the mechanism, which aims to increase transparency over election campaign activities, failed to achieve its primary function, transparency towards electors. This is of particular concern given that parties have no legal obligation to report before the election day. In fact, they declare their financing, and their financing are audited months after the certification of the results.

It would seem that the election campaign resulted in political actors attacking the media less. There were, however, sporadic cases when the media was labeled as a power captured by politics, or even cases of attacks on journalists or the media itself.

The Audiovisual Media Authority did not set any deadlines for compensating the missing airtime to be covered in some media in favor of an electoral subject. Failure to set a clear deadline for compensation within the official deadline of closing the election campaign, and the figures carried forward even after the campaign's closure, show a setback in the functioning of the media supervisory mechanism, and make the principles on which it has been build, invalid.

The voting process on election day ran smoothly and generally, it was well managed on the procedural aspect, except for some issues, mainly with the Electronic Identification Device in a number of voting centers.

The sporadic incidents that occurred, as far as it was informed and addressed, are not deemed to have affected the integrity of the voting process. The illegal influence and various forms of voter intimidation near the polling station premises remain of great concern, in line with the indications for organized voting structures, as reported in KRIIK interim reports as well as in the media.

## **ELECTION DAY AND INITIATION OF BALLOT COUNTING**

### **Voting process**

The voting process on the election day ran smoothly and generally, it was well managed on the procedural aspect, except for some issues, mainly with the Electronic Identification Device in some voting centers. The sporadic incidents that occurred, as far as it was informed and addressed, are not deemed to have affected the integrity of the voting process. The illegal influence and various forms of voter intimidation near the voting center premises remain of great concern, in line with the indications for organized voting structures, as reported in KRIIK interim reports as well as in the media.

### *Opening of voting centers*

The process of opening voting centers was characterized by delays beyond the legal deadline, mainly due to difficulties encountered to activate the voter electronic identification devices (PEI). The voting process started on time (at 7:00) only in 66.3% of voting centers. Most of the voting centers that were opened late had a delay of less than half an hour (25.5% of the total opened between 7:00 and 7:30) and 8.2% opened with a delay of more than half an hour. Almost in half of the voting centers that opened late (48.2%), there were voters waiting in line to vote at the moment of the VC opening.

All the voting center commissioners (seven commissioners) were present in the majority of VCs (76.9%).

In most cases, KRIIK observers assessed that the voting centers were organized as to guarantee the secrecy of the vote. The observers found that the secrecy of the vote was not guaranteed by the voting center organization only in two voting centers. In two other voting centers, observers deemed that the organization of the VC premises did not guarantee the free movement of voters.

Ballot boxes were closed in the presence of all VC members present and observers at all voting centers.

In two of the voting centers, the voting process started with no camera or the voter electronic identification device, as the operators did not show up (in one case there was a missing camera and in the other PEI).

The voting center opening procedures were assessed as very good in 66.3% of voting centers, good in 27.7% of voting centers and as problematic in 6.1% of them.

### ***Voting process***

The voting process was well administered from a procedural point of view in most voting centers. Meanwhile, the increased presence of individuals near VCs was considered problematic in 6% of them. This presence was particularly problematic in some VCs<sup>1</sup>.

The presence of unauthorized persons inside the voting centers also represented a problem. This phenomenon was observed in 7% of voting centers. In most cases, unauthorized persons were identified as representatives of political forces. In 4.5% of the voting centers, there were some persons making active propaganda in their vicinity, in open violation of the legal framework.

It turned out that 87.2% of the voting centers were operated with the full presence of all commission members (7 members), while in 12.8% of them there were absent members. All commissions, however, were operated with more than half of the committee members present.

During the day, the organization of the voting center premises was found to be more problematic than it was judged during the VC opening. More specifically, in 10.1% of voting centers, the voting booth could not be easily seen from all observers and commission members and in 4.8% it was difficult to see the ballot box when voters were inside the VC.

Explanatory posters with which all voting centers were provided by CEC (posters explaining the voting procedures and posters with the names of candidates for political subjects) were not published in all voting centers, which made citizens not to have all the proper information. Specifically, in 7% of voting centers there were no posters with voting procedures and in 6.5% there were no posters with the names of candidates. Also, voter lists were not published in 7% of voting centers.

Women were found to make up a very low number of voting center commissioners. In 72.6% of voting centers men outnumbered women commissioners. In 19.9% there were no female commission members and 52.7% of voting centers had one or two female commission members.

From a procedural point of view, in most cases the procedures were strictly followed by the voting center commissions. Violations were identified in a small number of voting centers, such as failure to check voters on both hands if they were previously marked (5 VCs), sporadic cases of allowing voters to vote without showing any identification document (3 VCs), cases when voters voted without being marked with the special ink (5 VCs), and others. Another concern was the fact that voters were allowed to use their mobile phones inside the voting centers (8% of VCs) or even in the voting booth (5.1%).

Acknowledgement and implementation of procedures by members of voting center commissions was assessed as very good in 70.2% of voting centers, as good in 26.8% of them and as problematic in 3% of them.

---

<sup>1</sup> In Durrës area, the former marsh area (ish Kënetë).



---

Family voting continues to be a major problem and was identified in 24.2% of voting centers. Meanwhile, even more concerning is the fact that voters were observed photographing the vote or attempting to photograph it in 2.4% of voting centers.

Acknowledgement of procedures by voters was assessed as very good in 54.2% of voting centers, as good in 32.1% of them, as problematic in 12.5% and very problematic in 1.2%.

Moreover, the violation of legal procedures for accompanying and assisting voters who seek assistance during voting, which undermines the secrecy of the vote, remains of great concern. Specifically, in 8.9% of voting centers, persons who assisted a voter were allowed to do so without completing the relevant statement under which they declare that they have not accompanied any other voters, that they will respect the will of the voter being assisted and that they will not infringe on the secrecy of his vote. Even more concerning is the fact that in 2.4% of the voting centers individuals were observed assisting more than one voter during the voting, and in 2% VCC members were observed assisting the voters.

In 23.2% of voting centers there were voters who could not vote for various reasons. In 69.2% of cases the reason was that they did not have their name on the list and had to go to another voting center (which indicates a low level of voter information) and in 21.8% the reason was that they did not have an identification document. Observers reported that in a voting center, a voter with an expired ID card was not allowed to vote, contrary to the Decision of the Council of Ministers, under which the expiration date of expired ID cards was extended until the end of April.

Failure of PEI operation led to disruptions in several voting centers. Therefore, in some cases, the manual voter identification procedure was applied. In 19.6% of the voting centers there were various problems with the functioning of the PEI.

In 46.4% of voting centers, observers assessed the access for persons with locomotor disabilities as difficult (VCs were either inadequate for access or were partially adequate), which is a major barrier to ensuring that the citizens exercise their right to vote. In 94.6% of cases, blind persons who appeared to vote at the voting center were assisted by other persons and Braille ballots were used only in 5.4% of the cases. Even when such were used, voters were assisted in most cases by third parties, failing to vote independently.

In a significant number of voting centers, the electronic identification device failed to identify the voter fingerprint and voters voted by signing the voter list (8.9% of voting centers).

The presence of propaganda materials inside the voting center was a problem observed in several voting centers, generally in the form of voters who showed up at the VC wearing uniforms with election symbols or slogans<sup>2</sup>.

Obstruction of independent observers, in various forms, from observing the process, in open violation of the legal framework was another great concern for KRIIK during the election day. Generally, the commissioners were the main obstruction by not allowing observers to observe, showing that they

---

<sup>2</sup> Even Prime Minister Rama voted with a hat with the number 12 that belonged to the SP on the ballot. It was the same hat he used during the election campaign.

had no information about the observers' rights. This phenomenon was observed in 2.7% of the voting centers.

### ***Procedures for closing the voting centers***

The voting centers were generally closed in accordance with the procedures, with minor deviations in sporadic cases, which are deemed not to have compromised the process integrity.

81% of voting centers closed on time, while closing delays were less than half an hour in almost all other VCs, with the exception of 6 VCs that closed between 19:30 and 20:00. There were no cases when the voters arrived after 19:00 and were not allowed to vote.

Election materials were sealed according to procedures and in the presence of commissioners and observers in all voting centers.

Voting center closure procedures were rated as very good in 75% of voting centers, good in 24% of them and as problematic in less than 1%. In the latter case, observers deemed that the problems arose from negligence and were not intentional.

### ***Delivery of election materials at the BCC***

Political representation by receiving teams of voting materials was implemented in 100% of cases. In 98.8% of BCCs, observers deemed that the space for receiving ballot papers was sufficient. Observers at the CEAZ reported that the receipt in all BCCs took place according to the established procedures and in accordance with the Electoral Code. Procedures for managing and storing irregular boxes were also implemented accordingly.

A major problem observed in the procedures for receiving election materials was that the observers were not allowed to observe the process closely. This phenomenon is repeated in almost every election and in a significant number of the ballot counting centers.

### ***Initiation of the counting process***

The counting process started in the last hours of Sunday evening and has finished in at least 13 EAZs by 13:00 on April 26<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> CEAZ No.92 Konispol Municipality, CEAZ No.88 Himara Municipality, CEAZ No.9 Tropoja Municipality, CEAZ No. 67 Poliçan Municipality, CEAZ No. 92 Konispol Municipality, CEAZ No. 8 Fushe Arrës Municipality, CEAZ No. 71 Pustec Municipality, CEAZ No. 78 Memaliaj Municipality, CEAZ No. 7 Puka Municipality, CEAZ No. 77 Këlcyra Municipality, CEAZ No. 76 Përmet Municipality, CEAZ No. 78 Memaliaj Municipality, CEAZ No. 75 Kolonja Municipality.

Despite the fact that the counting process was expected to continue without interruption, where the counting teams would be replaced after counting several voting centers, in order to avoid abusive blocking of the process, there were again interruptions of the counting process in these elections. The argument for these interruptions was that the commissioners were tired. The counting process was interrupted with various intervals in at least 28 CEAZs<sup>4</sup>. In addition to the fatigue argument, the counting process was interrupted for technical problems as well<sup>5</sup>.

KRIIK observers were not allowed to enter some of the Ballot Counting Centers even though the process of delivering the election materials had been completed. This phenomenon, observed from time to time in every election process as per CEAZs will, is very disturbing as it shows at least failure to observe the legal framework or ignorance by the CEAZs. Even more concerning is the fact that in some CEAZs observers of election subjects were not admitted as well<sup>6</sup>.

In the premises of the Ballot Counting Centers, there were a large number of political parties'<sup>7</sup> observers, and in some cases the CEAZ requested the intervention of the commission and the police.

In some BCCs<sup>8</sup> there were verbal conflicts between observers of political parties and members of the BCTs, and the intervention of the relevant CEAZ<sup>9</sup> has been requested to resolve the situation.

---

<sup>4</sup> CEAZ No.25 Shijak Municipality, CEAZ No.63 Dimal Municipality, CEAZ No.77 Këlcyra Municipality, CEAZ No.78 Memaliaj Municipality, CEAZ No.79 Tepelena Municipality, CEAZ No.80 Gjirokaštër Municipality, CEAZ No.81 Libohova Municipality, CEAZ No.82 Dropull Municipality, CEAZ No.26 Vorë Municipality, CEAZ No.29, No.30, No.33, No.31, No.34, No.39, No.41 Tirana, CEAZ No.13 Lezha Municipality (the process has restarted), CEAZ No.15 Kurbin Municipality, CEAZ No.69 Pogradec Municipality, CEAZ No.89 Delvina Municipality, CEAZ No.90 Saranda Municipality, CEAZ No.64 Kuçova Municipality, CEAZ No.61 Roskovec Municipality, CEAZ No.55 Lushnje Municipality, CEAZ No.15 Kurbin Municipality, CEAZ No.57 Fier Municipality, CEAZ No.27 Kamëz Municipality, CEAZ No.21 and No.24 Durrës Municipality.

<sup>5</sup> CEAZ No.7 Puka Municipality, CEAZ No.84 Vlora Municipality,

<sup>6</sup> Failure to allow independent observers, including the KRIIK observer, as well as the observer of the political subject "New Democracy Alliance" in CEAZ No.34 Tirana Municipality, led to a verbal conflict between the police and these observers. The counting process in this CEAZ started 45 minutes before the observers entered the hall. Also, observers of the independent candidate Elton Debreshi were not allowed to enter the CEAZ in Diber and Bulqiza, which was also reported in the media.

<sup>7</sup> CEAZ No.70 Maliq Municipality, CEAZ No.63 Ura Vajgurore Municipality.

<sup>8</sup> DP has required CEAZ No.36 Tiranë Municipality to count again the ballots, CEAZ No.22 DP observers had a verbal conflict with the members of the Ballot Counting Teams at CEAZ No. 22 Durrës Municipality.

<sup>9</sup> At CEAZ No.65 Berat Municipality the candidate of the ABEOK coalition had a verbal conflict with the members of BCTs and the situation was resolved only after the intervention of the CEAZ. CEAZ no.70 Maliq Municipality the result of VC no. 3775 was contested claiming that the number of ballots did not comply with the number of voters. This problem was referred to the CEC. In CEAZ 73, the commissioners were conflicted with the claim that a ballot box had extra votes in favor of SP. The problem was referred to the CEAZ which decided to declare invalid the 6 extra ballots found in the respective ballot box.