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ELECTIONS FOR THE ASSEMBLY OF ALBANIA

25 APRIL 2021

INTERIM MONITORING REPORT - II

26 March – 23 April 2021

Tirana, on 24 April 2021!

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

ELECTIONS FOR THE ASSEMBLY OF ALBANIA

25 APRIL 2021

INTERIM MONITORING
REPORT – II*

26 March – 23 April 2021

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

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COALITION FOR REFORMS, INTEGRATION AND CONSOLIDATED INSTITUTIONS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The 25 April elections are being 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 extreme polarization escalated to conflict and physical violence amongst or between the supporters of election contestants, and even a loss of life only four days before election day.
- The effects of this harsh political rhetoric are of high concern and the incidents of the last few campaign days could lead to voter withdrawal, especially those that are not decided supporters of any contestant.
- The legal framework for elections was completed during the reporting period with secondary legislation detailing the election process or affecting it directly. KRIIK deems the normative act adopted by the Regulatory Committee on detailing rules for financial reporting and revenue and expenses control and verification by election contestants, as a positive development.
- Public health bodies have been slow and passive in addressing the rules that should be followed when organizing elections amidst a pandemic. The restrictions on movements of citizens during the night and the gathering to less than ten persons remain in force and could potentially be used to restrict the rights of commissioners, observers and other election stakeholders on election day or during the counting process. Public authorities took no measures to publicly clarify whether there will be exemptions from the rules during election day or during the counting process for individuals engaged in the electoral process.
- The compulsory self-isolation for citizens traveling from Greece or Northern Macedonia is a violation of the suffrage rights and cannot, in any way, be justified with the argument provided by the Technical Committee when making the decision in question.
- The election process has been, generally, efficiently administered, during the period covered in the report, with issues which are deemed to have not harmed the process.
- The CEC managed the technical aspects of the election process mostly efficiently and with increased transparency. However, KRIIK notes that all three CEC leadership bodies again reflected behavior not reflective of one institution, but of three bodies functionally separated from each other.
- The behavior of the Regulatory and the Complaints and Sanctions Committee (KAS) commissioners was politically influenced, and this was frequently noted in the positions taken by the members of these committees on issues regarding which political parties had differing positions.
- The replacement of Commission of Election Administration Zone (CEAZ) members in this phase of the election process is concerning. Furthermore, in some cases the overwhelming majority of the CEAZ members have been replaced by individuals that have not undergone the training process. KRIIK observers have found that in a number of CEAZs, commissioner do not have adequate information regarding their duties.
- The establishment of Polling Station Commissions and Ballot Counting Teams process was completed after the legal deadlines had lapsed, because of delays caused by political parties and their failure to submit proposals for members in these commissions.
- The harsh rhetoric, denigrating language directed at opponents, accusations and counter accusations for vote buying, were prominent features of the campaign, in line with the behavior of contestants the campaign behavior of the election contestants during the premature campaign. This debate without content during this election campaign did nothing but detract attention from

the concrete plans and platforms of the political parties running in this process, which were lacking.

- The President of the country was also involved in the election campaign with harsh rhetoric, and was openly engaged in campaign against the current majority and Prime Minister Rama personally, while positioning himself as an election contestant and not as an official above the parties.
- The state police took no stance nor penalized any of the political parties contesting the election for violations of restriction measures in the context of the pandemic. In the meantime, their behavior was completely different towards two independent candidates, who were fined for violation of gathering rules, 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 how it is led and managed. 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 preceding the incidents that occurred and the failure of the political parties to distance themselves from violence perpetrators, on the contrary, justifying their actions or denying connections with these individuals, are considered as highly concerning.
- Heavy participation of public administration officials has been noted in campaign events, often accompanied by high level local officials. In addition to the fact of being present in these campaign events during official business hours, some of them were engaged as speakers and protagonists in these events, which is a clear violation of the election legislation and the public civil servant status.
- Another concern is the participation of minors in campaign events, accompanied by family members as part of the audience or wearing party and campaign symbols.
- The publication of campaign monitoring reports 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 at improving transparency of campaign activities failed in completing its primary function, transparency for the electors, which is especially problematic when considering that parties have no legal obligation to report before election day.
- Facebook pages that have generated paid content, even though they are not directly affiliated with any political forces, have been identified, which constitutes third party campaigning and potentially amounts to hidden campaign spending by election contestants.
- During the campaign, political actors softened to some extent the attacks towards media. However, there were sporadic cases of the media being mentioned as a power captured by politics, and even cases of attacks against individual journalists or media outlets.
- The Audiovisual Media Authority did not determine timeframes for the compensation of the missed airtime that some media could have in relation to any election contestant. Failure to clearly determine a compensation deadline within the actual election campaign, and having these amounts carry over beyond the campaign, show an impasse in the media oversight mechanism.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Coalition for Reforms, Integration and Consolidated Institutions (KRIIK Albania) has constantly monitored almost all the institutional, legal and political processes preceding the Albanian Parliamentary Elections of 25 April 2021, as well as the election process, starting from the enactment of the election date by the President of the Republic.

KRIIK's stances and opinions on these developments were regularly made public by means of Public Stances or Statements, Open Letters¹, and opinions or suggestions sent to lawmakers, the Central Election Commission, or even directly expressed in meetings with political and institutional stakeholders.

In order to enhance the integrity of elections in Albania, KRIIK's primary objective remains providing critical and constructive opinions by highlighting the strong and weak points, as well as providing recommendations for future improvements.

This Second Interim Report summarizes the observations of the election campaign period (from March 26 to April 23, 2021). Therefore, this Report should be read in conjunction with [the First Interim Report](#), which covered the period from the enactment of election date to 25 March 2021. The interim monitoring reports were announced at a [Press Conference](#) on 11 March 2021, where KRIIK disclosed four principal concerning issues about the election process.

In addition to the constant monitoring of the political and institutional elements, KRIIK's observation were also focused on the technical elements, the conduct and decision-making processes of the Central Election Commission, the implementation of the law by the CEC administration and its conduct; the fulfilment of legal obligations by the Commissions of Election Administration Zones, the other institutions and stakeholders involved in the election process or that have a role therein; the pre-election campaign; the conduct of the contestants and institutions, as well as the usage of state resources for electoral profit; etc.

KRIIK hired 22 long-term observers across the country, who are observing the key elements of the process, starting from the end of February and will continue to monitor the process until the end. During the election day and the vote counting process, KRIIK will hire 800 short-term observers to observe the work of the Commissions of the Election Administration Zones in all CEAZs of the country before and during the election day, and during the vote counting process; the opening process, the ballot casting and closing of the polls in 360 randomly selected polling stations across

¹The Action for Observation of the Albanian Parliamentary Elections of 25 April 2021 was published and launched on the National Conference "*The Costs of Democracy II - Money in Politics and Electoral Integrity*".

the country², the situation in the vicinity of the polling stations and the voting process in 800 polling stations with mobile observers.

KRIIK assesses the election process by using the internationally recognized standards for the democratic elections, as well as the Albanian legal framework.

The Observation Action for the Albanian Parliamentary Elections of 25 April 2021 is an on-going process carried out in cooperation with 33 partner organizations operating throughout the country: Ionian Environment, Media, and Information Agency - Saranda; Going for the Future - Korça; New Era - Fier; Civil Forum Selenica – Selenica; Woman Forum - Elbasan; Women in Petrochemical Industry in Development Focus - Kuçova; Women in Development – Korça; Integration Local Action Group - Dibra; Puka Youth Movement for Democracy - Puka; Movement for Tourism Development- Ksamil; Association for Environmental Protection and Tourism Development - Has; Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (MEDPAK) - Librazhd; Flower Initiative - Saranda; National Platform for Women – Fier; Rome Gateway for Integration - Kruja; Association of Women in Hand Embroidery - Korça; Me, the Woman - Pogradec; Women's Counselling and Social Services Centre – Kukës; Center for Advising Persons with Disabilities - Shkodra; Social Center for People in Need - Fushë Arrëz; Civil Society Development Center - Durrës; Hand to Hand Against Nation Apathy – Lezha; Vlora Youth Centre- Vlora; Association for Protection of the Rights of the Rural and Urban Women - Berat; Alpine Association - Tropoja; Association of Young Environmental Experts - Bulqiza; Association for Women and Children – Tirana; “Rreze Shprese” Association - Vau i Dejës; Independent Trade Union of Typographers - Tirana; The Youth of Ura Vajgurore - Ura Vajgurore; Together for Roma Integration – Fier; Youth for Social Changes - Vora and Consulting and Development Partners - Shkodra.

KRIIK wants to thank all the local and central institutions that cooperated and exchanged information with KRIIK; the election administration, starting with the Central Election Commission, and the other bodies and interlocutors that assisted in the information gathering process.

KRIIK is also thanking the financial supporters of this Observation Action, without the support of which such large-scale observation action would not have been possible.

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² The observation of 360 randomly selected polling stations enabled us to generalize the findings with a $\pm 5\%$ margin of error and a 95% confidence interval.

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II. POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The elections of 25 April will be held in an extremely polarized and conflictual situation both at political and institutional level.

Besides the harsh political rhetoric and accusations among the contestants, the situation aggravated by the atypical involvement of the President of the Republic in the election contest. By taking a clear stance throughout the campaign against the ruling majority, he turned the institution of the President into a de facto candidate contesting the elections.

The vote buying, intimidation of electors and other election crimes were the orders of the day during the pre- election campaign period, and also during the election campaign, thus increasing the intensity with the approaching of the election day. The excessive polarization of the situation escalated into conflicts and physical violence between or against supporters of some contestants, aggravating the situation with the loss of one life and injury of some others, just a few days before the election day.

Such aggravated situation has the potential to and seems to make the electors uncertain, an uncertainty that is expressed in several ways starting with the lack of public health security; lack of personal data security, in particular after the publication of personal data of 900.000 citizens from Tirana; the institutional conduct, the law enforcement, the absence of well-functioning institutions and the misuse of resources; the non-acceptable conduct of the top government officials and political leaders, or even the heated debates that were likely to end in violence during the election day.

It is concerning how the harsh political rhetoric and serious incidents accompanying the last days of the campaign may affect the elector's reluctance, in particular, among those who are undecided supporters of any of the contestants, by pushing them not to cast their votes.

The political parties, their leaders, and also the institutions that stand above the parties, should guarantee that the citizens are not pushed to take emotional decisions as a consequence of the harsh language. To the contrary, they should invite the citizens to be free and unbiased to exercise their right to vote.

III. SECONDARY LEGISLATION GOVERNING THE ELECTION PROCESS

During the reporting period, the legal framework on elections was supplemented with secondary legislation detailing the election process or having a direct impact thereon.

The normative act adopted by the Regulatory Commission is particularly important, among others, for it detailed the rules of contestants' financial reporting contestants, as well as the control and auditing of their incomes and expenses³. The decision was accompanied with a detailed Guideline instructing the contestants how to do financial reporting.

KRIIK values both acts as positive development for they enforce and define in details the rules to be followed by the contestants when reporting their financial accounts, and also how the authenticity of self-reports will be verified after the election process.

The public health institutions (Ministry of Health and Ad Hoc Technical Committee of Experts) have been very slow in laying down the rules to be followed during the election amid a pandemic.

The Technical Committee of Experts met twice during the election campaign period. At both meetings, the Committee upheld the restrictions on movement of citizens from 22:00 to 06:00. While none of its decisions provides for some exemptions concerning the movement of commissioners or observers engaged in the election process⁴.

Additionally, the Order of the Ministry of Health restricting the gatherings of more than 10 persons seems to remain into force also on the election day, during the voting process and the vote counting process. However, such Order is objectively impossible⁵ to be applied, because it is unlikely that less than 10 people be present at a polling station.

The election process seems to be organized in violation of the rules set by the Public Health Protection Authorities. These authorities did not take any measure to inform the public or the election administration whether there will be any exemption from the rules during the election day or the vote counting process.

The protocol approved by the Public Health Institute, published on 20 April (while its approval dates 13 April), is the only act issued by Health Authorities concerning the election process during

³CEC Decision No. 13 [*“On setting the rules for financial reporting of contestants, auditing and verification of their funding and expenses during the election campaign”*](#).

⁴Since the commissioners or the observers should be at the polling stations at their opening at 6:00 and, it is highly unlikely that the closing of polling stations and delivery of election materials is completed before 10:00 p.m., so, all the individuals involved in the management or observation of the election process will be in violation of the established rules. The fact that the institutions have not made any public address concerning the persons involved in the process remains a major concern.

⁵ It is unlikely that less than 10 people be at the same time inside a Ballot Station or a Vote Counting Location.

the pandemic. The protocol provides some guidelines for a smooth election process, but it is unrealistic *per se* and disregards some basic elements of the election process⁶.

At its meeting of 19 April 2021, the Technical Committee of Experts imposed mandatory self-isolation for 14 days for all individuals entering Albania from Greece or North Macedonia⁷.

This decision was not based on the increased risk, because of the increasing number of persons infected in these countries⁸, but on the risk that could come from persons entering the country and are expected to be in high numbers on the Orthodox Easter, on 2 May 2021.

This Technical Committee's decision violates the right to vote and it is not justified by the argument provided. It would have been more reasonable if the entry into force of this decision was postponed after the election day.

The opinion of the Prime Minister Rama on this issue is concerning. When asked on a TV show about this decision, he suggested that Albanian citizens who have the obligation to self-isolate could, in fact, violate this decision on the election day⁹.

The Socialist Movement for Integration appealed this decision to the Administrative Court. The latter declared its lack of jurisdiction on 23 April, a decision that was appealed to the Administrative Court of Appeal on the same day.

⁶ e.g., the protocol lays down some requirements for the polling stations premises. These requirements were definitively set on 15 March, i.e., 40 days before the election date.

⁷[**TECHNICAL COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS: BACK TO SCHOOL FOR HIGH SCHOOLS, 2-WEEK QUARANTINE FOR PERSONS COMING FROM NORTH MACEDONIA AND GREECE, 19 APRIL 2021.**](#)

⁸ The number of infected persons is decreasing in both Greece and North Macedonia, from 6 April. See: <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus#coronavirus-country-profiles>.

⁹During [an interview for Real Story on](#) 21 April 2021, the Prime Minister Edi Rama suggested that Albanian citizens coming from these two states can enter Albania to vote and can violate the decision. He said: “*Who really cares about and is coming as a real patriot, since SMI said it, can come to Albania to vote. So, the theory that we were impeded by the quarantine and that quarantine was put in place for us is not true.*”

IV. ELECTION MANAGEMENT

During this period, the election management bodies- both at the Central Election Commission and the Commissions of Election Administration Zones- has continued their work. In general, the election management has been efficient during the period covered by this report, except for some issues that are considered trivial and not threatening the process.

IV.1. CENTRAL ELECTION COMMISSION

The Central Election Commission is composed of the State Election Commissioner (the Commissioner), the Regulatory Commission (Regulatory) and the Complaints and Sanctions Commission (CAS). During the election period, CEC managed the process, established the electoral infrastructure and adopted the secondary legislation.

The CEC achieved to manage efficiently the technical aspects of election process and ensuring an increased transparency.

KRIIK noted that the three CEC's governing bodies displayed once again a conduct that is not typical for a single institution, but for three functionally separated bodies.

The conduct of the Regulatory and CAS Commissioners was noted to be politically biased. This was frequently observed in the opinions that the members of these commissions expressed on matters for which the political parties were divided.

In many cases, the members of the Regulatory Commission resisted to such political pressure, which is shown by the fact that they approved in unison all the legal acts, but the decision on the ballot paper. The bitter clash between the respective political parties about this matter made this body to waive of its legal obligation foreseen in the Election Code, and unexpectedly declare the lack of competence to deal with this matter.

Such influence was prevalent in CAS in quite all the matters addressed. CAS was eventually pushed to make politically biased, incorrect and extra-legal decisions. This is particularly evident in the discussion about the usage of state resources and the approval of the ballot paper.

In general the CEC's activity in terms of monitoring the usage of state resources, was noted to be critical, despite the inefficiency and undoing of the mechanism set up as a result of CAS decision, the media conduct and media's unbalanced coverage of the contestants' campaign, or even the monitoring of the overall election campaign, although the State Election Commissioner publicly draw attention to these issues.

IV.1.1 State Election Commissioner (Commissioner)

During the period covered by this report, the State Election Commissioner held 16 public hearings, approving 101 decisions and three instructions.

In general, the decision-making of the Commissioner was regularly published on the CEC website, including not only the decisions but also their preliminary materials.

After assuming office, the Commissioner constantly held consultative meetings with the civil society stakeholders. He kept an open institutional approach with other stakeholders, including the political ones.

Such collaborative approach is well-appreciated, in general, for it helped involving the organizations working in the field of election and media observation.

The Commissioner's public declarations are considered positive in terms of transparency and public information on the process's progress. He also called the attention of political parties and other stakeholders to duly observe the law and the stakeholders' duties in the election process.

The work progress of CEC administration in coping with the many problems is considered positive as well. It managed to address a series of organizational, technical and logistical issues while trying to put in operation the biometric identification of voters, the CCTV monitoring of polling stations, the electronic vote counting pilot project, etc.

One of the most important decisions of the Commissioner was the decision on the ballot paper, which was taken after the Regulatory Commission declared its lack of competence¹⁰. Although such decision was belated, it is worth stressing that the Commissioner's effort and determination to reach a consensus from the political parties before approving this decision¹¹ and, subsequently, his fair and just decision was taken in full compliance with the spirit of the Constitution and the Election Code.

The Commissioner after reviewing the complaints filed by various persons, denouncing mainly the violations noted in Decision No. 9 of the Regulatory Commission, on preventing the use of state resources for electoral purposes, came up with a decision-making. All his decisions did not impose any sanction against the defendants. Only in one case, a fine was imposed. These cases were later on heard in non-public hearings, following the formal procedure.

¹⁰ Decision No. 12 of the Regulatory Commission of 31 March 2021 "[*declaring the lack of competence of the Regulatory Commission to review the draft decision approving the content of the ballot paper for the Albanian Parliamentary Elections of 25 April 2021*](#)".

¹¹To take this decision for such an important part of the process, the Commissioner took into consideration also the outcome of a survey conducted through the CEC's social media.

Among the innovations introduced by the legal amendments to the Election Code is also the monitoring of institutional activity. The administrative staff and the Commissioner were noted to maintain a passive approach concerning the institutions' reporting through the interface created for this purpose. Contrary to the legal provision, no measure was taken to improve the reporting process. The problems observed were not only related to the failure of institutions to report on due time, according to the detailed legal time limits¹², but also the non-reporting of activities by the respective institutions.

The situation remained unchanged. Notwithstanding the necessity to observe the spirit of Election Code and the Regulatory Commission decision was obvious, two of the Commission's members continued the same behavior.

The Audiovisual Media Authority is in charge of implementing the Law on Monitoring the Media Conduct during the election campaign. This monitoring includes also reporting the findings to and making proposals for sanctions to the Central Election Commission. In this regard and for this election campaign, AMA filed daily and weekly media monitoring reports, where it has identified some violations committed by some media operators.

This report found out that the Commissioner reviewed only two of AMA's weekly reports and he came up with one reprimand, ordered some media operators to compensate, and imposed fines against some local media operator for failing to submit the registered programs. The rest of daily media monitoring reports are published on the CEC's website.

By merely publishing the daily reports after receiving them and failing to make an earlier review thereof, made the regulatory framework inefficient, because it simply repeated itself as in the previous election processes. The short period of election campaign, the failure to review earlier and more frequently the reports made it objectively impossible to compensate the discriminated contestants with air time, and consequently brought a biased and unequal media coverage of the campaign among contesting candidates.

IV.1.2. Regulatory Commission (the Regulatory)

During the period covered by this report, the Regulatory Commission held six public hearings and approved eight decisions. Throughout this period, an increased tension in communication between the members of the Commission was observed, which was in line with the increasing political polarization. In addition, the members of Regulatory Commission seemed to be aligned with the political positions of the parties that had elected them. Notwithstanding the above, the decision-

¹² Decision No. 9 of 24.12.2020, "... *The time, date, topic, the most important guests, honorary guests and speakers should be reported to the platform no later than 5 days from the date of event.*"

making continued to be unanimous, also because of the legal obligation to take decisions by qualified majority, i.e., with at least 4 votes.

Two members of the Regulatory, proposed by the parliamentary opposition, often called public attention to some problems. During the CEC meetings, the Commissioner was asked to interact with various institutions in order to respond and address the problems raised. However, the Commissioner gave no feedback at any of the public hearings.

Likewise, the Regulatory kept the same conduct when declaring its lack of competence to consider the draft decision approving the ballot paper content. This declaration was made with the argument that the Election Code has not expressly provided for the competence to adopt the ballot paper, but it was up to the discretion of the Central Election Commission. This stance was considered to have reflected the strong political disagreement on this matter.

The Law vests the power to approve the safety elements of ballot paper on the Regulatory Commission. Based on this provision, the Regulatory Commission passed Decision No. 6 of 26 February 2021, “*Approving the technical elements of the ballot paper for the Albanian Parliamentary Elections of 25 April 2021*”. So, such behavior of the Regulatory is ambiguous because, on one hand it considered its power to decide on the technical elements of the ballot paper, while on the other hand it said that the approval of the ballot paper template was not its competence.

The approval of the CEAZs and BCTs Guideline was another matter accompanied by debate during the meeting held to discuss these draft acts. The fact that the administrative staff had proposed two draft acts, where the second was considered to have the same content as the first one, but with a few technical differences, sparked off debate. The whole situation ended with the Commissioner's taking a decision to postpone the approval of the two draft acts proposed by the administrative staff for a later moment.

IV.1.3. Commission of Appeals and Sanctions (CAS)

During this reporting period, CAS received and reviewed 8 complaints. Among the CAS decisions appealed before the Electoral College, the latter affirmed three of them. The other appealed decisions are still under review.

Considering the CAS decision-making procedure, in most of the times, it has decided by a simple majority. The fact that CAS decision-making seems to be strongly politically biased is increasingly concerning. In some cases, it is considered as beyond the limits of the law and contrary to the spirit of the Constitution and the law. This is particularly apparent in its stances regarding the usage of state resources and the approval of the contents of the ballot paper with numbers.

CAS took decisions by unanimity only in the case when the main political parties were not involved or seemed disinterested in the matter under discussion.

IV.2. COMMISSIONS OF ELECTION ADMINISTRATION ZONES

During the period covered by this report, the CEAZs' work was mainly focused on the training of Polling Station Commissions and Ballot Counting Teams.

Throughout this reporting period, some CEAZ members were dismissed and new were appointed. At least 68 CEAZ members, secretaries and chairmen were changed.

In some cases, the situation was more concerning, because in some CEAZs their members were entirely changed¹³ by appointing new persons who lacked adequate training. According to KRIIK observers, in some CEAZs, a lack of adequate training among the Commission members was noted, particularly about their duties.

The training process of Polling Station Commissions and Ballot Counting Teams was completed after the expiry of the legal deadline, due to some delays caused by the political parties and their failure to submit proposals for members of these commissions.

The double employment of CEAZs¹⁴ members, who continue to be part of the public administration is still a concern. They were not temporarily suspended. For these reasons, the committees were impossible to convene during the morning or before the end of official working hours. Therefore, this caused difficulties in meeting the legal obligations of the CEAZs.

In addition, some of the CEAZs members were often noted to be intensively involved in the election campaigns of the respective parties. Although the law does not prohibit such conduct, their active and frequent involvement in the election campaign leaves no time available to dedicate to the duties as CEAZ Commissioner, and also promotes further political partisanship in the performance of legal duties as a CEAZ member.

IV.2.1. Establishing Polling Station Commissions (PSC)

The members of the PSCs are proposed by the political parties and appointed by decision of the Commissions of Election Administration Zones. The PSC composition reflects the same political affiliation as the CEAZs.

¹³ CEAZ NO. 26, No 27, No. 36, No. 11, No. 83, no. 84.

¹⁴ CEAZ 18 Bulqiza

Given the Social Democratic Party did not propose the members for 56 CEAZs¹⁵, the Polling Station Commissions are composed of the members proposed by the SP substituting the SDP. Such organization is made in accordance with the legal framework.

The legal time limit set in the Election Code concerning the proposal and appointment of the PSCs members is by 26 March and 5 April 2021, respectively. This time limit was not met for a significant number of CEAZs and by all political parties entitled by law to propose the commissioners of the Polling Stations.

Besides the failure of political parties to meet the deadline, the frequent replacement of the proposed PSCs members hampered progress in this regard. Up to one day before this report was published, the creation of Polling Station Commissions was pending.

By the date of this report, the long-term observers reported that the Polling Station Commissions were not set up in three¹⁶ CEAZs, while were partially set up in two¹⁷ CEAZs. This information was collected by KRIIK observers having conversations with CEAZs members. The latter refused to provide the observers with relevant copies of CEAZs' decisions. In some cases, this situation was caused because the CEAZs members lacked information on the legal framework¹⁸, while in some others, it was a result of the huge workload over these days.

None of the contestant observed the deadline for submitting proposals for members of the PSCs¹⁹. As in the previous election processes, the replacement of²⁰ the proposed and appointed members to the CEC was observed.

Some of the CEAZs members also confirmed that this phenomenon, taking into consideration the previous experiences, was likely to take place up to 24 hours before the election date. So they will try to find incorrect forms observe formally the legal deadline set by law²¹.

¹⁵ See CRICI ['s First Interim Report](#) on the Albanian Parliamentary Elections of 25 April 2021.

¹⁶ CEAZ 21, Durrës because the SP, DP and SMI did not bring their proposals for PSC members. The DP has not presented its proposals for members of the Polling Station Committees to CEAZ 24, Durrës.

The PSD has not presented its proposals for members of the Polling Station Committees to CEAZ 81, Libohova.

¹⁷ CEAZ 76 Përmet, CEAZ 78 Memaliaj.

¹⁸ CEAZ No. 5 Shkodra Municipality, CEAZ No. 1 Malësi e Madhe Municipality, CEAZ No. 28 Kamza Municipality.

¹⁹ The SP has not presented within the time limit set by the Election Code its proposal for members of PSCs in the CEAZ No. 10 in Has, CEAZ No. 11 in Kukes, CEAZ No. 13 in Lezha, CEAZ No. 25 in Shijak, CEAZ No. 61 in Roskovec, CEAZ No. 65 in Berat, CEAZ No. 78 in Memaliaj.

The DP has not presented within the time limit its proposal for members of PSCs in CEAZ No. 10 in Has, CEAZ No.

11 in Kukës, CEAZ No. 13 in Lezha, CEAZ No. 17 in Klos, CEAZ No. 25 in Shijak, CEAZ No. 78 in Memaliaj.

The SMI has not presented within the time limit its proposal for members of PSCs in CEAZ No. 10 in Has, CEAZ No.

11 in Kukës, CEAZ No. 13 in Lezha, CEAZ No. 15 in Kurbin, CEAZ No. 25 in Shijak, CEAZ No. 78 in Memaliaj.

The SDP has not presented within the time limit its proposal for members of PSCs in CEAZs No. 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 25, 26, 32, 39, 4, 5, 73 and 82.

²⁰ CEAZ 17 in Klos, CEAZ 26 in Vora, CEAZ 75 in Kolonja, CEAZ 79 in Tepelena, CEAZ 87 in Selenica, CEAZ 62 in Mallakastër.

²¹The CEAZs members are aware of this phenomenon. In CEAZ No. 58 in Fier Municipality, the decision appointing its members was signed and dated, but the real names of the CEAZ members are not filled in. It is to be decide at the

The change of the polling stations' addresses after the final list of electors was prepared is a concerning problem. The location of the polling station is set at the same address as the last elections, unless it is impossible for objective reasons. The location of the polling station cannot be changed in the last 40 days before the election date, unless the change is authorized by CEC on grounds of force majeure.

During this period, the CEC decided to change the address of 106 polling stations, mainly because the polling station premises were small, infrastructure problems caused post-earthquake, the failure to reconstruct the building on due time, or the depreciation of the premises making them inappropriate for a polling station.

The observers reported to have noted in some municipalities²² the problem of polling stations that do not meet the criteria or standards.

This problem was caused because of the Mayors failure to meet their legal obligations and that have not properly carried out the verification and control of premises and subsequently propose other premises suitable for polling stations.

In this election process, the participation of PSCs members in training was noted to be low. This raises doubts on the process management by the polling stations and particularly of the new elements of the process, such as the biometric identification of electors, CCTV camera monitoring of the polling stations and the pandemic.

IV.2.2. Establishing Ballot Counting Teams (BCT)

The members of Ballot Counting Teams (BCT) are selected according to the definitions of Article 95 of the Election Code²³.

By Decision No. 193 of 31 March 2021, the Commissioner selected the political parties entitled to propose the BCTs' members²⁴. According to this decision, the Justice, Integration and Unity Party (JIUP), as part of the DP-Alliance for Chance (AfC) electoral coalition, was not allowed to propose the fourth member of the BCTs, because its rights, as contestant, were fulfilled by the leading party of the PD-AfC coalition (i.e., the Democratic Party). The JIUP appealed this decision before CAS

last moment. This effort was made to meet the deadline, but violating the elements of the decision (signing a decision with no content). CEAZ No. 56 in Divjaka and CEAZ No. 60 in Patos decided in agreement not to make public their decisions until the final candidacies were appointed by the political parties.

²² Përmet Municipality, Mallakastër Municipality, Shkodra Municipality, Kamza Municipality, Tirana Municipality.

²³ [Election Code](#), Article 95 "Setting up of Vote Counting Groups".

²⁴ [Decision No. 193 of 31 March 2021](#) "The political party having the parliamentary majority, entitled to propose the third member of the Vote Counting Groups for the parliamentary elections of 25.04.2021 is the Socialist Party of Albania. The political party of the parliamentary opposition entitled to propose the fourth member of the Vote Counting Groups for the parliamentary elections of 25.04.2021 is the Socialist Movement for Integration Party.

and the Election College, which both affirmed the Commissioner's decision. In conclusion, the BCTs members will be proposed as follows: two from the Socialist Party, one from the Democratic Party and one from the Socialist Movement for Integration.

The number of BCTs to count the votes in the Electoral Administration Zone is set by decision of the CEAZ. The technical criteria for setting the number of Ballot Counting Teams for each Vote Counting Location, and the separation of duties among the counting team members are detailed in a decision of the Regulatory Commission.

The BCTs' working guideline was approved at the Public Meeting of the Regulatory Commission of 20 April 2021.

Although the Election Code provides a 10-day time limit before the election day for the creation of the Ballot Counting Teams (BCT), in many cases, they are not yet created²⁵, while in some CEAZs, they are partially created²⁶. In some other CEAZs, the²⁷ BCTs were set up after the expiration of the time limit²⁸.

V. ELECTION CAMPAIGN

V.1. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

The election campaign was highly polarized. With the approaching of election day, the situation aggravated with incidents resulting in a loss and several injured, including a police officer among them.

The harsh rhetoric, the denigrating language towards the opponent, the accusations and counter-accusations of vote buying were the most striking features of this campaign²⁹. All was in line with the conduct of contestants during the pre-election campaign launched months ago.

Such trivial debate during this election campaign did nothing but set the focus aside from the concrete plans and programs of the political parties contesting the elections.

²⁵The SP and DP have not presented their proposals for members of the Vote Counting Groups for the CEAZs No. 21 and no. 22 in Durrës. For CEAZ no. 68 in Skrapar, the Vote Counting Groups are not created yet. The DP and SMI have not presented their proposals for members of the Vote Counting Groups for CEAZs no. 21, 22 and 24 in Durrës and No. 82 in Dropull.

²⁶ CEAZ 33, 39, 40 in Tirana, CEAZ 90 in Saranda.

²⁷ CEAZ 60 in Patos, CEAZ 66 in Berat, CEAZ 67 in Poliçan, CEAZ 81 in Libohova.

²⁸ Election Code of the Republic of Albania, Article 95, paragraph 1 *“To count the votes in EAZ, the Vote Counting Groups are set up 10 days before the election day”*.

²⁹The rhetoric of the Head of Government, Rama, was even harsh. In his public appearances, he repeatedly pegged his opponents, as he did in the pre-election period. The opposition leader Lulzim Basha was more reformed in his own language, avoiding any personal peg.

The country's President, Mr. Ilir Meta, was also involved in the election campaign with a harsh rhetoric. He engaged in the campaign openly against the current ruling majority, and personally against the Prime Minister Rama. The President positioned himself as an election contestant rather than a neutral personality³⁰.

The organization of gatherings and rallies in open and closed areas was banned under an order of the Ministry of Health because of the pandemic. However, this decision motivated a reshaping of the election campaign organization³¹.

The campaign started with door-to-door meetings and virtual events, while mass rallies were limited, at the beginning. However, as the Election Day approached, mass gathering events were organized in breach of the restrictive measures³², even inside closed premises³³.

The violation of the restrictive measures was one of the arguments used by the majority at the start of the campaign, accusing the opposition for being irresponsible and increasing the number of infected persons³⁴.

The state police did not respond and took no sanction against the political parties contesting the election for violating the restrictive rules. However, quite the opposite approach was noted against the two independent election contestants. They were fined for violating the Ministry's Order on Rallies, thus violating³⁵ the principle of equality between candidates contesting the elections³⁶.

³⁰In a statement to the media in Vlora on 10 April 2021, Ilir Meta said “... *The Prime Minister-in-Office has a psychiatric record, from the communist time, as I told you a few days ago and I will tell you in Vlora. On 25 April the Albanian citizens should ask him to show the medical record...*”

³¹ Mass gathering in closed or open areas is prohibited.

³²While the Socialist Party and the Socialist Movement for Integration made efforts to observe the necessary distances between the participants, through a particular scenography, the events of the Democratic Party were organized in a more traditional form and did not comply with any standard and restriction to prevent the spread of Covid-19 (e.g. [Electionrally in Durrës & Malësi e Madhe! Basha was enthusiastically welcome by the citizens. Their calling - Oh hero! Albania loves you](#)). They could have consequences up to the loss of life due to the virus. The failure of the DP to comply with the anti-covid measures were noted also at the meetings in Pogradec, Korça, Elbasan, Klos, Mat, Bulqiza, Dibra, and by the SMI in Lezha and Fier.

³³The FRD's meeting in Dibra Municipality was organized in a closed premise where more than 200 people were present, without complying with the anti-covid measures. The SP's meeting in Tirana Municipality was organized in closed premise with the presence of more than 15 persons. In Elbasan Municipality, this party organized a meeting where more than 70 persons were present, while in Fier Municipality 35 persons were present. The SMI and DP's events in Fier were held in closed premises with the presence of more than 10 persons.

³⁴ Prime Minister Rama's response on *Twitter* 30 March 2020: “Oh Lula (flower), I am worried about your people that you are using for your shameful and irresponsible gatherings, gathering blind people with cars and trumpets, so that the virus can celebrate while your bridegroom promises to do the impossible! Unfortunately, a kept promise! “ The Prime Minister would constantly make comparisons through [photomontages](#) between the Socialist and Democratic Party events, highlighting, according to him, the huge difference between these political forces, in terms of pandemic management.

³⁵ On 12 April 2021, the Administrative Offence Review Commission decided to impose an ALL 5 million-fine to Mr. Iljaz Shehu, the candidate contesting for this district from the Self-Determination Movement, for violation of the Ministry's order to gather more than 10 persons in open premises. On 26.03.2021, the Administrative Offence Review

The absence of electoral platforms proposed by the main political parties characterized this election campaign. The priorities were expressed in public events and media interviews, but there was a total absence of real programs papers presented in writing³⁷.

Although some of the other contestants published more concrete programs³⁸, the media, the parties themselves, or the experts in the respective fields paid no attention to making an analysis to these programs. The public was not informed in detail about the specific programs or action plans. So, with the election day approaching, the citizens had no absolute information on one of the key elements guiding the vote³⁹.

The main topics of the election campaign were employment, economic crisis, justice reform, foreign investments in the country, emigration of the population, management of the pandemic, the immunization campaign, and the reconstruction process after the earthquake of 26 November 2020.

The majority did not offer the citizens a “balance sheet” of the eight-year ruling, but its campaign was focused on the investments to be made in the upcoming four-year period⁴⁰.

The debates between the contestants in elections were absent, except for a few events organized by the civil society organizations, in some municipalities in the country.

Some journalists during their TV shows hinted that this was a decision coming from within the political parties. Although the Prime Minister Rama publicly denied such a decision, some sporadic statements by the representatives of the Socialist Party hinted that this was a decision made by the

Commission decided to impose an ALL 5 million-fine to Mr. Elton Debreshi, an independent candidate contesting in Dibra County, for violation of the Ministry's order to gather more than 10 persons in open premises.

³⁶The unilateral implementation of the law was promoted by the Prime Minister with his public statements. e.g. the Prime Minister Rama, [during an interview in the Opinion TV Klan show](#) on 25 March 2021, while commenting on the opening the DP campaign said: “- I do not know what the police will do in this case, but I did not say them to fine or not ... but I hope the police will do nothing in this case, because they are good in making the victim. And then, the police will be blamed by the media nightclubs.

³⁷ The Socialist Party declared to have no election program. However, its idea on the future four years of government was based on an action plan, which was not published in any of its official websites (see: [Prime Minister Rama's interview of 2 April 2021](#): “...We have no program... But we have action plans for the period 2021-2025....And this is clear. We're not saying we're going to lower tax, because we have zero tax, and we say that tax will remain zero. The action plan covers all sectors.”

- The Democratic Party has published on the shqipëriafiton.al website the “[ALBANIA WINS PROGRAM](#)”, which presents the main pillars and steps to be taken in different sectors for the economic and social development of the country, if this coalition wins the general elections.

- The Socialist Movement for Integration has published on its official website an electronic copy of and several illustrative videos of its program called “[Electoral Priorities 2021](#)”.

³⁸ The programs of the Movement for Change Party, Democratic Obedience and “Hashtag” Initiative are published on their official websites.

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⁴⁰[Edi Rama at a meeting with residents in Bylis on 3 April 2021](#) “...We are asking for a third mandate, but we are not coming from two mandates. We come from one mandate and a war that has not ended yet. This war would have kneeled everyone, but not our government. A devastating earthquake and thereafter another shocking earthquake for the entire world...”

party⁴¹. The leader of the opposition, Basha, urged the Prime Minister Rama to face a public debate, an invitation that was refused several times by Rama⁴².

Some media providers and political parties, in particular those of the opposition, filed with Special Prosecution Office (SPAK) a series of denunciations of attempts to buy votes in cash or in kind⁴³, while a significant number of cases were made public by the media.

SPAK opened criminal proceedings for 91 cases. The judicial police under the direction of special prosecutors are conducting the respective investigations⁴⁴.

The issues of voter intimidation and vote buying were the most debated topics of this election campaign. The statements of the main political actors and also the media coverage created tension before the beginning of the campaign.

Another concerning issue was the statement of the Prime Minister Rama inferring the suspension of the immunization process, should the opposition come to power⁴⁵.

Involving such an important process for the safety and health of citizens in the political debate, for vote orientation or even vote intimidation, does not serve to a normal election process. To the contrary, it effects on the perception of citizens on their safety and future, particularly, when such statements come from a top-government official.

The Prime Minister Rama made similar threatening statements for the purpose of vote guiding, when he addressed to the nurses and teachers, during a live communication on his official *Facebook page*⁴⁶.

⁴¹ Damian Gjijnuri, in a meeting with residents of Vlora, discussed the invitation of the President Meta for a public debate: “*I am here for the people. If the President declares that he is the leader of the opposition in this district, I will even violate the rule set by my party and face him in debate, because our priority is to meet with the people*”.

⁴² The Prime Minister Edi Rama said he was skeptical about this decision, because he did not understand who was the true leader of the opposition, even after the public invitation he received from the President Ilir Meta for a media debate.

⁴³ [In a reporting to TPZ.al on 14 April 2021](#) , SMI of Vlora accused the representatives of the SP administration for vote buying and collecting citizens' identity cards in Shkallnur, Romanat, Maskuri, Bozanxhi, and Arapaj. [A statement of the Police Directorate on 10 April 2021](#) “*Puka – They were drafting lists with identity card data, promising money to the citizens in exchange for votes. The middleman is put to jail*”.

[Statement of Dibra County Police: 2 citizens were caught red-handed for the offenses of “Active Corruption in Elections” committed in cooperation and the “Use of public office for political or electoral activities.](#)

⁴⁴ [Statistical data of the Special Prosecution Office, up to 22.04.2021](#) “

- 55 criminal reports from political parties (DP – 50; SMI – 3; SP – 1; FRD – 1)
- 10 referrals from the Judicial Police.
- 4 criminal proceedings before the Judicial District Prosecution Offices
- 4 criminal reports from citizens.
- 18 cases referred from the institution of the President of the Republic.

⁴⁵ Edi Rama in a meeting with the residents of Shkodra on 31 March 2021 “... *If these people (PD) come into power, will the vaccination continue? Forget it! They do not know. Tell me about a health center? They do not know. Incompetence and indifference have come together. The only thing they know is raising 2 fingers and saying Rama leave...*”

The creation of the so-called Vote Protection Structure by the Democratic Party is also a concerning phenomenon. It is unknown how this undefined “*structure*” is composed, or who leads it. This structure was responsible for stopping several people accused by the DP of engaging in illegal vote-buying activities, including the incident that resulted in a loss and several injured in Elbasan on 21 April. This method of conduct is considered as pre-state mechanism. This form of law enforcement is unhealthy for the institutional construction and functioning of the rule of law.

The publication of a database, which, according to the media that published it, contained data from a so-called patronage system, set up by the Socialist Party, and that leaked from the offices of the SP, stirred widespread debate among the public⁴⁷. Senior officials of the SP expressed contradictory opinions in relation to this database. At first, they denied categorically its existence and then they denied that it was a database of a SP inferring its existence, while they continued to defend the patronage system⁴⁸ and considered it a normal phenomenon.

The data contained in the database, from many elements seem to be data that have come out from a state institution that has access to it, which constitutes abuse of state function as well as a flagrant violation of law and violation of data security of the citizens. The National Agency for Information Society (NAIS), the state agency that administers the e-Albania system from where the data of this

⁴⁶ Prime Minister Edi Rama on a [live communication](#) on 6 April 2021 with the representatives of the Socialist Party, regarding employment in the administration, declared: “Now the teachers and nurses have been employed on the base of meritocracy, but they must defend this thing, because if a vote goes to an unknown direction, you may go to an unknown direction as well.”

⁴⁷ According to [lapsi.al](#), this database, the source of which was kept secret, was managed by those called “patronageists”, persons who were in charge of monitoring the political preferences of the citizens of Tirana. The main element of this publication, for which SPAK started the investigation, was the source of this data which was presented in this database, which shall be confidential and protected by the state. The Socialist Party was accused that it had received the source of these data precisely from E-Albania and the testimonies of the citizens who appeared in these lists ensured that these data could have come out only from this digital platform. According to the webportal [Lapsi.al](#), the patronageists, who were aware of the sensitive personal data of the citizens, used these data to intimidate them by directing their vote to the socialist party, or threatened them not to go to the election polls, if the vote was not for the party in power.

(Report of [Lapsi.al](#) “It is detailed the source of [Lapsi.al](#) /How do the Political Leaders of the Socialist Party use the program which containing data on 3.5 million Albanians)

⁴⁸ The leader of the Socialist Party denied in his public appearances that that format of the published database belonged to the Socialist Party, but he did not distance himself at all from the existence of such a database, which was used by the Socialist Party. Moreover, the term “patronageist” became part of his political rhetoric and jokes during his speeches, by supporting these people who were part of this party structures. Edi Rama in a meeting held with the residents in Tirana, on 18 April 2021 said “Let them say whatever they want to, because they is what they usually do, patronage is the first grade of the great political school and those who are ambitious to go to higher grades, start on patronage ground. My message to those who deal with patronageists, starting with Ilir Meta, where is the camera? You are not a patch on Patronageists! Remember: Patronageists know who you are, do not even think that you are able to hide your thoughts from our patronageists. We know who you are and on April 25 you will see how well we know you”.

There were harsh reactions to this issue from the Democratic Party and the head of the state Ilir Meta, who described this as a crime that endangered the personal data of citizens.

database are supposed to have come out, denied the accusations that the data had come out of this platform⁴⁹.

It is considered quite a concern the minimization and the address of the problem by senior state officials and exponents of the majority simply in terms of party image protection, and not at all in terms of state approach, responsible for ensuring law enforcement, immediate ban on the further use of these data, and therefore the investigation and identification of relevant institutional responsibilities.

The tension of political rhetoric, with the approach of the election date, it was also translated into a tense situation in the field.

Incidents were reported in the media involving representatives of political parties in some regions, thus creating a tense climate as well as conflicts of an electoral nature⁵⁰. The event that occurred in Kavaja, which resulted in the injury of the Democratic Party secretary, at the electoral offices of this citizen, was immediately referred to as political goals⁵¹. The harsh reaction of the leader of the Democratic Party, Lulzim Basha, who went to the scene and considered it as an assassination attempt against the Democratic Party⁵², gave this event a strong political nature. On the other hand, Prime Minister Rama, through a post on social media, condemned the act and called for the non-politicization of the situation⁵³.

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⁵⁰ On April 18, 2021, the car of the chairman of the group section of the Democratic Party in Shelqet, in the Municipality of Vau i Dejes , Ariston Drin was set on fire ([Report of A2 CNN on 18.04.2021](#)).

On April 21, 2021, it was reported that a member of the SMI in Polican, Luan Tare Pitikoja, a member of the SMI, was hit with hard objects, claiming that the attack was political. ([Report of A2 on 21.04.2021](#)).

⁵¹[Statement of the State Police, on 20 April 2021](#) “Today around 19:00, in the neighborhood no. 4, in Kavaja, citizen N.J., is suspected that as a result of a conflict over trival motives, entered the premises of an electoral office of a political entity and wounded in the leg with firearm of the type pistol the citizen B.O., 27 years old, who currently is at the hospital of Durres, under the care of doctors.

⁵²[Lulzim Basha in a statement addressed to the media immediately after the event in Kavaja](#) “Tonight Kavaja faced a serious event, an assassination attempt against the Democratic Party, against the Alliance for Change by a Prime Minister who knows that on Sunday he is going to lose, Kavaja wins and Albania wins ... They want to intimidate the Democratic Party, they want us to shutup, we are not afraid, they will get the deserved answer by voting on Sunday in Kavaja and throughout Albania”

⁵³[Edi Rama in a post on Twitter](#): “The injury occurred in Kavaja is intolerable! The perpetrator should be handcuffed as soon as possible! The politicization of this event is as bad as the event itself! Lulezim Basha must join me in the support of justice without inciting tension, while Ilir Meta must stop the idiotic campaign of tension!”

The event had further developments through the dissemination on social media of the reaction of the escaped author on this event, in which he explained that the reasons for the conflict had had no political grounds, but it had been just an occasional conflict. However, this did not avoid the political debate. The media distributed videos showing Mr. Basha organizing an electoral activity in the premises owned by the author of the event, but all this brought Rama's reaction.

Edi Rama in a post on Twitter: “It is quite clear that the event of Kavaja has no political motive! The author has nothing to do with the Socialist Party, on the contrary, he is a militant of the Democratic Party! Democratic Party has no responsibility for the event, but for the scandalous politicization! Lulezim, be a man, separate from Ilir and Sali, stop being a puppet of wicked scrupulous persons!”

Allegations of vote-buying and conflicts between the structures of the main parties caused a serious event in Elbasan which resulted in the loss of one life and the injury of four other people⁵⁴. The event, which was entirely politically motivated, created a tense situation in the country, while neither side distanced itself from the event, but accused each-other of causing it⁵⁵.

Moreover, the tension further aggravated when the MP candidate in the region of Dibra, threatened that every person who would touch a vote would end up as a victim, just like the one in the event in Elbasan⁵⁶. Despite the apology given by the MP candidate⁵⁷, a criminal proceedings for “calls for taking on the arms”⁵⁸ was initiated against him by the police, and he is on pretrial release.

V.2. USE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES FOR ELECTORAL BENEFIT

In the electoral meetings that were held, it was noticed a considerable presence of senior officials of public administration, who were also accompanied by senior local officials⁵⁹. In addition to the fact that they were present in these electoral activities during the official working hours⁶⁰, some of them

⁵⁴[Statement of the State Police, dated 22 April 2021](#) for the murder of one person, in the city of Elbasan and the wounding of four others, due to clashes between representatives of vote protection structures and criminal representatives, accused by the Democratic Party as affiliated with the Socialist Party.

⁵⁵ The political leader of the Democratic Party in Elbasan, Gazment Bardhi in a statement for the media made on 21 April 2021 “... *The political conflict is provoked by the Socialist Party, which produces tension every single moment, in the attempt to keep power at all costs, and not to leave the citizens to vote freely. What happened today is direct responsibility of Taulant Balla. Engaging organized crime exponents in elections and inciting them to commit electoral crimes is his own responsibility.*”

Edi Rama in a post on Twitter on 21 April “*The despair of the losers should not and will not make us lose either the peace, nor the patience, nor the belief that 25 April will bring the unification of Albanians to bring Albania to the deserved peak and the meaningful punishment of the forces that want to be again the snake around our feet!*”

⁵⁶ The political leader of the Democratic Party Xhelal Mziu in Dibra, [during a meeting with citizens](#) said that the Democratic Party stated “*We have established ready groups from today on wards and every suspicious person who moves in your neighborhoods, it is needed just with a phone call and he will end up just the same as the one in Elbasan*”.

⁵⁷ In his statement, the candidate for deputy Xhelal Mziu expressed his regret for the hasty statement “*With the utmost sincerity, I express my apology and my regret for my unnecessary comment that was made yesterday, due to the strong emotions of the moment.*”

⁵⁸[Statement of the Police of Dibra on 23 April 2021](#) “From the Judicial Police Officers at the Local Police Directorate of Dibra, criminal proceedings have started and the investigative materials have been referred to the Prosecution Office of the Judicial District of Dibra, for the criminal offense “Calls to take up arms or take the command unlawfully”, in charge of citizen XH. M., MP candidate of the political subject Democratic Party in the region of Dibra.

⁵⁹ Senior local officials who have been present at electoral meetings have been identified in the municipality of Kamza, the municipality of Tirana, the municipality of Vau i Dejes, the municipality of Fushe-Arrez, Kruja, the municipality of Durrës, the municipality of Fier, the municipality of Korca, the municipality of Elbasan, the municipality of Kuksi, the Municipality of Vora, the Municipality of Lushnja, the Municipality of Vlora and the Municipality of Kurbin.

⁶⁰Senior local officials in the Municipalities of Vora, Kruja, Tirana, Vlora and Bulqiza.

were engaged in the events as speakers and protagonists, which is a violation of the electoral legal framework⁶¹ or violation of the status of public servant.

Public administration employees at the local level have submitted allegations to KRIIK observers in which they claim to have been subject of pressure to engage in the campaign, in the form of active participation or to secure electors for the ruling political force. Such allegations also include blackmail or intimidation for dismissal or non-benefit of social services.

In addition, another concern observed is the participation of minors in the electoral events, accompanied by family members as part of the audience⁶² or wearing party or campaign symbols⁶³.

The majority used the promotion of a number of public works for the purposes of the campaign, such as the airport of Kuksi, the project for the construction of the port of Durres, Vlora and Saranda, the promotion of works in the Big Ring Road of the capital, the works of Arbri Street and the promotion of the regional hospital of Fier, and others⁶⁴, all in violation of the election law.

In addition to the election campaign, the country was also vaccinated against the Covid-19 virus during this period. The vaccination campaign was used massively in function of the electoral campaign, not being divided in nature as an institutional campaign, as an obligation of health institutions and that of the government of the Albanian state to vaccinate and ensure the health of the population.

It has been ascertained that in the period March 26 - April 13, the Prime Minister conducted a series of electoral activities, during official hours, which are reported to the CEC as “Informative meetings”, “Conversations with citizens”, “Meetings with businesses”, “Inspections”, etc., and not as electoral meetings⁶⁵. Subsequently, from April 14, such activities were reported to the CEC as electoral meetings, which were held during the official hours⁶⁶.

⁶¹Decision no. 9, dated 24.12.2020 of the Regulatory Commission on “*Rules for reporting public activities of public institutions, agencies and/ or state enterprises, categories of prohibited activities, as well as monitoring the activity, behavior and use of human, financial and logistical resources of state administration before the elections*”.

⁶² The participation of minors as part of the audience was evidenced in the electoral meetings held in the municipalities of Fier, Kamza, Kruja, Roskovec, Elbasan, Kukes, Durres, Kuçova, Lezha, Dibra, Gjirokastra, Saranda, Delvina, Vora, Laç, Mirdita, Tirana.

⁶³ Municipality of Elbasan, Tirana, Vlora, Dibra, Tirana, Gjirokastra, Patos, Roskovec, Lezha, Kamza, Vora.

⁶⁴ A series of activities have been observed where ministers inspect or promote investments or works during the election campaign period and in which there is the presence of election symbols and election calls. For example:

[Minister of Health and Social Welfare](#)-Promotion

[Minister of Infrastructure and Transport](#) - Promotion

[Minister of Culture](#) - Promotion.

⁶⁵ Electoral activities of the Prime Minister, during official hours, which are reported to the CEC as “*Informative meetings*”, “*Conversations with citizens*”, “*Meetings with businesses*”, “*Inspections*”: (Time period 26 March - 13 April):

In the same period of time, the ministers also conducted a series of electoral activities, which were reported to the CEC as “Informative meetings”, “Conversations with citizens”, “Meetings with Businesses”, “Inspections” and not as electoral meetings⁶⁷.

From the monitoring of the activities of the municipalities, it results that the mayors have conducted electoral activities during the official schedule, throughout the entire period of the electoral campaign, but they have not reported these activities at all to the CEC⁶⁸.

[Dated 03.04.2021](#)-Electoral meeting in the region of Fieri;

[Dated 06.04.2021](#)-Electoral meeting in Korça;

[Dated 08.04.2021](#)-Electoral meeting in Dropull;

[Dated 09.04.2021](#)-Electoral meeting in Saranda;

[Dated 10.04.2021](#)-Electoral meeting in Vlora;

[Dated 12.04.2021](#)-Electoral meeting in the region of Elbasan;

[Dated 12.04.2021](#)-Electoral meeting in the region of Elbasan;

[Dated 13.04.2021](#)-Electoral meeting in the region of Elbasan;

[Dated 13.04.2021](#)-Electoral meeting in Tirana;

⁶⁶ Electoral activities of the Prime Minister, during official hours, which were reported to the CEC as “*Electoral Meetings*” (period 14 April - 23 April):

[Dated 14.04.2021](#)-- Electoral meeting in Tirana;

[Dated 15.04.2021](#)- Electoral meeting in Tirana;

[Dated 16.04.2021](#)- Electoral meeting in Tirana;

[Dated 07.04.2021](#)- Electoral meeting in Durrës;

[Dated 19.04.2021](#)- Electoral meeting in Peqin;

[Dated 20.04.2021](#)- Electoral meeting in Tirana;

[Dated 21.04.2021](#)- Electoral meeting in Fushë-Kruja;

[Dated 21.04.2021](#)- Electoral meeting in Tirana.

⁶⁷ Electoral activities of ministers, reported to the CEC as “*Informative meetings*”, “*Conversations with citizens*”, “*Meetings with businesses*”, “*Inspections*”:

[Minister of Defense, Niko Peleshi](#) - Electoral meeting in Pogradec;

[Minister of Tourism and Environment, Blendi Klosi](#)- Electoral meeting in Skrapar;

[Minister of Finance and Economy, Anila Denaj](#) - Electoral meeting in Durres.

⁶⁸ Electoral activities of mayors, during official hours, which were not reported to the CEC:

[Mayor of Tirana, Erion Veliaj](#)- Electoral meeting in Tirana;

[Mayor of Devoll, Eduard Duro](#)- Electoral meeting in Bilisht;

[Mayor of Dropull, Dhimitraq Toli](#)- - Electoral meeting in Dropull;

[Mayor of Berat, Ervin Demo](#)- Electoral meeting in Berat;

[Mayor of Saranda, Ardian Gurma](#) – Electoral meeting in Saranda;

[Mayor of Kolonja, Erion Isai](#) – Electoral meeting in Kolonja;

[Mayor of Kuksi, Safet Gjici](#) – Electoral meeting in Kukes;

[Mayor of Belsh, Arif Tafani](#) – Electoral meeting in Belsh;

[Mayor of Cerrik, Andi Salla](#) - Electoral meeting in Cerrik;

[Mayor of Elbasan, Gledian Llatja](#)- Electoral meeting in Elbasan;

[Mayor of Kamza, Rakip Suli](#)- Electoral meeting in Kamza;

[Mayor of Gjirokastra, Flamur Golemi](#)- Electoral meeting in Gjirokastra;

[Mayor of Librazhd, Kastriot Gurra](#)- Electoral meeting in Librazhd;

[Mayor of Lezha, Pjerin Ndreu](#)- Electoral meeting in Lezha;

[Mayor of Dibra, Dionis Imeraj](#)- Electoral meeting in Peshkopi;

[Mayor of Fier, Armando Subashi](#) - Electoral meeting in Fier;

[Mayor of Kavaja, Redjan Krali](#) - Electoral meeting in Kavaja;

[Mayor of Lushnja Fatos Tushe](#) - Electoral meeting in Lushnja;

[Mayor of Peqin, Lorenc Tosku](#) - Electoral meeting in Peqin;

[Mayor of Prrenjas, Nuri Belba](#)- Electoral meeting in Elbasan;

In the portal of denunciations of the Central Election Commission, for the period covered by this report, were filed 23 denunciations, 12 of which were filed by citizens, 10 by institutions⁶⁹ and political entities⁷⁰ and one by the President of the Republic. It is worth mentioning that 10 denunciations by citizen denouncers were submitted to the CEC by the institution of the President of the Republic.

The object of the denunciations consists of appointments/ dismissals / transfers of employees, propaganda materials, use of public resources and non-fulfillment of obligations.

Regarding the above-mentioned denunciations, the SEC has reached 23 decisions. In only one case was imposed an administrative sanction⁷¹ on the Mayor of Vora, which consisted of a fine, a decision which is not yet a final one as it has been appealed to the Electoral College. In 19 cases it resulted in the completion of the administrative investigation and in 3 cases it resulted in ordering the relevant institutions to take the necessary measures.

VI. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Starting from early March, the CEC engaged 64 election campaign monitors with the aim of increasing transparency and independent evaluation of campaign activities.

In contrast to 2017 and 2019, the monitors of the campaign activities are not intended to generate independent campaign costs, but only to monitor the activities, including the activities of state institutions.

This mechanism is important during the pre-election period in order to increase the transparency for electors, while the findings of the monitors will also serve as additional information to record the accuracy of reporting of the campaign expenditures by the electoral contestants themselves. 64 monitoring experts are responsible for covering all 12 counties of the country.

[Mayor of Rrogozhina, Edison Memolla](#)- Electoral meeting in Rrogozhina;

[Mayor of Shijak, Elton Arbana](#)- Electoral meeting in Shijak;

[Mayor of Vora, Gentian Picari](#) - Electoral meeting in Vora.

⁶⁹ Museum Center of Durrsi, the municipality of Roskovec.

⁷⁰ 1 denunciation by SMI and 6 denunciations by the Democratic Party.

⁷¹[Decision No. 234 dated 14 April 2021](#).

The publication of monitoring reports on the CEC website has generally been non-existent and completely missing during the election campaign, which has led to reduced transparency on a mechanism that has been inefficient since its inception⁷².

Currently, it can be concluded that the mechanism which aims to increase transparency on the election campaign activities failed to achieve its primary function, which is transparency to electors. It remains to be seen whether the findings of the monitors will be able to be used efficiently by the CEC administration in verifying the reports of electoral contestants.

The legal framework does not oblige electoral contestants to make public their revenues and expenditures before the election day, and none of the contestants provided transparency on the voluntary bases in this regard, although KRIIK requested this through a Press Conference held on 11 March 2021.

Currently, the only expenditure of the election campaign that can be made transparent independently is the cost of advertising on Facebook, thanks to the transparency mechanism built by the social network itself in relation to political advertising⁷³.

During the calendar period that coincides with a part of the election campaign and a few days before it⁷⁴, were spent in total about 20.5 million ALL on political advertisements on Facebook⁷⁵. Out of the total, 54% (about ALL 11.2 million) were spent on advertising on behalf of the Socialist Party and 32% (about ALL 6.6 million) on behalf of the Democratic Party. All other electoral contestants spent much smaller amounts⁷⁶.

The advertisements are generated from the official websites of the candidates, the official websites of the party as well as from the websites of the party branches in the regions.

Most advertising expenditures targeted electors in the region of Tirana (47% of total expenditures were made targeting electors in this region), followed from Elbasan and Shkodra⁷⁷.

⁷² A total of 96 monitoring reports are published on the CEC website, covering the period from 1 to 20 March 2021. Out of the total, 63 are the first reports and only 33 ones are second monitoring reports.

⁷³ See [The library of Facebook political advertising for Albania](#).

⁷⁴ The Facebook advertisement library does not allow accurate detailing of dates, but there are some predefined alternatives that limit the time period of advertisements that can be viewed. Specifically for this report are used the data from 21 March to 19 April 2021, which are the dates closest to the election period allowed by the Facebook library system.

⁷⁵ Only advertisers who have spent at least 100 US \$ on advertising during the above-mentioned period are included in the calculation, as expenditures below this amount are not specified accurately, but according to the rank (less than 100 US \$) which makes it impossible to clarify the exact amount spent.

⁷⁶ Socialist Movement for Integration, 5.89%; Democratic Conviction, 3.25%; Social-Democratic Party, 1.91%; Hashtag Initiative, 1.76%; Movement for Change, 0.46%; Independent candidate in the region of Dibra, Elton Debreshi, 0.06%.

⁷⁷ Elbasan, 9%; Shkodra, 8%; Durrsi, 8%; Fieri 7%; Vlora, 5%; Korça, 5%; Berat, 3%; Dibra, 3%; Lezha, 2%; Gjirokastra, 1% and Kuksi, 1%.

A major concern is the generation of third-party advertisements, which are Facebook pages not affiliated directly with any of the political parties and they most likely will not be reported as part of the expenditures of an electoral contestant at the end of election campaign.

The shadow campaign continues to be a very disturbing phenomenon and one of the ways to hide the expenditure of the election campaign. The data taken from Facebook is an illustration of this phenomenon for which KRIIK has continuously raised its concern.

In this elections are identified eight Facebook pages which have generated paid advertisements, despite the fact that they are not directly affiliated with any political force. Six pages of which have generated advertisements for the Socialist Party⁷⁸, one for the Democratic Party⁷⁹ and one for the Democratic Conviction⁸⁰. Almost all of these pages, with the exception of one, have been newly created, which is an indication of inauthentic structures of Facebook presence.

A particular concern is the phenomenon of the shadow campaign in the case of the six pages that support the Socialist Party, which in total have spent 34% on advertising in favor of this party on Facebook.

VII. MEDIA

Throughout the election campaign, audio-visual media have a legal obligation⁸¹ to be balanced in their coverage of the campaign and the activity of electoral contestants. Other media, such as print

⁷⁸- [Socialistët\(Socialists\)](#), a page created in January 2021.

[Untold Stories of Albania](#), a page created in January 2019 that did not have a political nature from January to May 2019. From May 2019, this page was inactive and it was re-activated in mid-December 2020 by starting to post denigrating advertisements against the opposition.

[Punë \(work\)](#), a page created in September 2020.

[Ligj dhe Rend \(Law and Order\)](#), a page created in November 2020.

[Te jesh grua \(To be a woman\)](#), a page created in November 2020.

[Pakëz drite \(A little light\)](#), a page created in September 2020.

⁷⁹[Demokratët e Tiranës \(Democrats of Tirana\)](#), a page created a few days before the election campaign started, on 19 March 2021.

⁸⁰[Egnatia News](#), a page created in November 2020. This page belongs to an online media (egnatianews.com), a digital portal which was created in November 2020.

⁸¹[Electoral Code](#), Article 80, Electoral campaign of electoral contestants on public radio and television (amended by Law no. 74/2012, dated 19.7.2012),

Article 81, News broadcasts of public radio and television (amended by Law no. 74/2012, dated 19.07.2012),

Article 82, Free of charge airtime for the CEC,

Article 83, Broadcasting schedule.

Article 84 Election campaign on private radio and television broadcasters (amended by Law no. 74/2012, dated 19.07.2012, letter “d” of point 2 added, acronym and deadline amended in point 10 by Law no. 101/2020, dated 23.7.2020), Article 84/1 Election campaign coverage in the local elections (added by Law no. 74/2012, dated 19.07.2012),

and online, do not have this obligation, however their content must comply with the Code of Ethics for Journalism⁸².

Traditional and online media were very active in covering the election campaign in the country, by presenting the electoral activities and presentations of candidates who run in these elections.

The transmission of filmed materials still remains a concern in the media, especially the audio-visual ones, which are submitted and prepared by the electoral headquarters of political parties. This technique of political parties, but also the inability of the media to follow these activities closely, diluted the critical approach and the filter that the media itself should impose on the messages which are processed into propaganda materials. It should be stressed that the delicate relationship between the media and politics and especially the connection between them becomes more visible during the election campaigns.

During the campaign, political actors softened to some extent the attacks towards media. However, there were sporadic cases of mentioning the media as a power seized by politics or even cases of attacks on journalists or the media⁸³.

Meanwhile, the decision of the Special Anti-Corruption Court, which forced the digital portal Lapsi.al to hand over the servers due to the publication of the investigative news, regarding the database used by the Socialist Party with personal data of 910 thousand citizens of Tirana, was a case of open intervention of institutions on media freedom. The leaders of this digital portal called this blocking request as a decision directed by government structures⁸⁴. The issue of protection of the source of information, and freedom of expression of the media, were the two basic principles that gave the right to the digital portal “Lapsi.al” at the Strasbourg Court not to hand over the servers in which are stored the materials of the informative portal⁸⁵.

Article 85 Election campaign monitoring in the media (first sentence of point 1 amended and point 5 repealed by Law no. 74/2012, dated 19.07.2012, amended by Law no. 101/2020, dated 23.7.2020)

⁸² The latest code of ethics was drafted in 2018 by the Albanian Media Institute (AMI) with the support of the Project on Reinforcing Judicial Expertise on Freedom of Expression and the Media in South-East Europe (JUFREX) - a joint initiative led by European Union and the Council of Europe ([see Journalist Code of Ethics](#)).

⁸³ Supporters of the Mayor Erion Veliaj did not allow the journalist of Ora News to ask him some questions during a meeting with the residents of Kavaja, by forcibly removing him and violating the camera crew. [Report from Ora News on 14 April 2021 “Unprecedented / Veliaj supporters in Kavaja exert violence on the journalist and camera crew of Ora News](#) It remains worrying the fact that political officials do not distance themselves from violence. At the same time, the images published in the media showed the constant concern of the media, which regards the journalists which are banned from the electoral activities. Prohibiting them from exercising their constitutional right to information and the provision of information does not help the relationship of politics with the media at all by forcing it not to fulfill its mission.

⁸⁴ [Report from Lapsi.al Armand Shkullaku](#) “We cannot work in our editorial office. We again did not allow the judicial police officers to enter our offices. We told them: if they want to enter our offices, they can go and enter by force. We refuse to hand over materials, because we call this a violation of freedom of expression. We asked for a two-day period to consult with our lawyers. The judge's decision seems excessive to us, because it seems more motivated by an order from above than by a real investigation from below. We believe that in this case the prosecution office is being used for a different purpose from which it was created, as well as the Special Court.”

⁸⁵ [Report from Lapsi.al](#) “Court of Strasbourg defends Lapsi.al. SPAK has no right to seize it.”

VII.1. Audio-visual media

The Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA) presented through daily and weekly reports the qualitative and quantitative measurements of the coverage of the election campaign in these media⁸⁶.

Based on the technical monitoring capacity, AMA monitored the program contents of 36 AMS. Out of the total of 27 channels (23 TVs and 4 Radios) 18 channels were under permanent monitoring by AMA, while 9 contestants were included according to the selection determined by the CEC. In these reports, it was monitored the broadcast time of each electoral contestant and political actor in news broadcasts, live broadcasts, programs with political content, the placement order of candidates and the gender ratio of media coverage of candidates.

In these reports it was generally noticed non-compliance with a number of legal obligations by the AMS by not balancing the media coverage of the election campaign of electoral contestants, such as, imbalance of airtime for electoral contestants, exceeding the allowed space for broadcasting political advertisements, non-submission of materials required by the AMA, or the transmission of news broadcasts in one media taken by another media.

In its daily reports AMA called on television to comply with their obligations, whereas in its weekly reports it suggested to the CEC to take administrative measures for repeated violations. It is a matter of concern that AMA, in both the first and the second weekly report, did not set a deadline for the compensation of the missing airtime that some media could have had towards an electoral contestant. As such, it was noted that the difference between the broadcast of election materials for one party or another, increased in the main news broadcast, and not the other way around. Failure to set this deadline resulted in the media not taking immediate steps to correct this airtime; first, by not respecting the obligations set out in the Electoral Code, and at the same time by transmitting one-sided quantitative information about a party, or some of them.

In the three weekly reports published by AMA for the period March 26-April 19, 2021 in relation to this monitoring, it was noted that the airtime given to the ruling Socialist Party in news broadcasts, political shows and live broadcasts is higher than that given to the Democratic Party on 19 monitored channels. While in 6 of them, the airtime was in favor of the Democratic Party.

It is noted that there is an imbalance in the reporting of news editions on Albanian Public Radio and Television, which has a primary legal obligation to be balanced⁸⁷.

⁸⁶[CEC- Media Monitoring Reports 2021](#)

⁸⁷ From March 26 to April 11, 2021, RTSH 1 owed the Democratic Party 31 minutes of compensation, SMI 34 minutes and SDP 40 minutes. While in the third weekly report this public channel owes the DP 31 minutes, the SMI 92 minutes, while the SDP 106 minutes. Even after the approval by the CEC of the suggestions from AMA for attention and compensation of the airtime, in RTSH 1 the figures of the third weekly report show that such an initiative by the public television was not respected

In the report of the second week, it is noticed that the main televisions in the country, private national, which cover a large part of audience of the country, have devoted more television time to the Socialist Party in their news broadcasts than the Democratic Party. While the coverage for the SMI and SD parties remains under the airtime defined by the Electoral Code. In this report, it is noticed that all televisions have not given the defined space to any of these parties⁸⁸.

The request made by the CEC at the meeting on the approval of the second weekly report was not only not implemented by these televisions, but it is also noticed that the difference in airtime versus one party has doubled⁸⁹.

One of the indicators monitored by AMA was political advertisements, which are in the same line with the coverage of electoral contestants in news broadcasts. According to Article 84 of the Electoral Code, political advertisements must clearly identify the ordering contestants.

The total airtime of political advertisements during the campaign by each television or radio station may not exceed 90 minutes for each party registered for election. However, according to AMA indicators, in the second weekly report, 11 televisions have exceeded the time of political advertisements provided for the entire duration of the campaign - 9 for the contestant Socialist Party, 6 for the contestant Democratic Party, while one of the televisions has exceeded the spaces for the three main parties SP, DP, and SMI.

While in its third weekly report, 14 operators are found to have committed this violation. Among them, one television exceeded the time of political advertisements for five parties participating in the elections⁹⁰ while nine television channels exceeded the airtime for advertisements only for the two main parties SP and DP⁹¹.

Four televisions broadcast advertisements in favor of only one main party⁹². Based on the AMA reports, it is observed that some of the local televisions have exceeded the airtime for only one electoral contestant⁹³.

⁸⁸[Report on monitoring period, for compensation of airtime in news broadcasts 26 march-3 april](#) Top Channel- DP-7 min., SMI-20 min., SDP-20 min.

⁸⁹[Report on monitoring period, for compensation of airtime in news broadcasts 12 April- 19 April](#) Top Channel- DP-49 min., SMI-82 min., SDP-84 min.

TV Klan- DP-213 min., SMI-237 min., SDP-250 min.

Vizion Plus- DP-76 min., SMI-113 min., SDP-147 min

[Report on monitoring period, for compensation of airtime in news broadcasts 4 April- 11 April](#) Top Channel- DP-38 min., SMI-53 min., SDP-54 min.

TV Klan- DP-148 min., SMI-147 min., SDP-147 min.

Vizion Plus- DP-53 min., SMI-74 min., SDP-91 min.

⁹⁰ Report TV has exceeded broadcast time of 90 minutes specified by CEC for parliamentary parties, and 10 for non-parliamentary ones, DP, SP, Hashtag Initiative, Democratic Conviction and Movement for Change.

⁹¹ TV Klan, Top Channel, Vizion Plus, Klan Plus, Klan News, News 24, Abc News, RTV Ora, Euro News Balkans

⁹² Exceeding airtime for Socialist Party: Report TV, Top News

Exceeding airtime for Democratic Party: Shijak TV, Fax News, Syri TV.

⁹³ Weekly Report of Media Monitoring 26 March-3 April 2021, TV Alepo broadcast 283.6 minutes in favour of Democratic Conviction

Even after the CEC drew their attention, repeated violations regarding the broadcasting of political advertisements outside the times specified in the code have occurred; broadcasting them without an identification logo, or broadcasting them within news broadcasts.

Regarding the coverage of the candidates of these contestants on all televisions monitored by AMA, the leaders of the main parties, Prime Minister Rama and the leader of the Democratic Party, Lulzim Basha, have occupied the largest space. The coverage figures for the leaders correspond to the same as those of the representation of their political contestants in the news broadcasts on these televisions.

What is noticed in these reports, is the limited space that has been given to new political contestants, whether these are electoral contestants or candidates for MP.

The same concern appears in gender representation, about which a good part of the monitored televisions did not respect the balanced gender representation. A narrow difference in this respect is seen only in some TVs, such as the national private and public TV stations being monitored⁹⁴.

In its decision-making, the CEC, as the body that imposes administrative measures on violations observed by the AMA, in its review of only the first two weekly reports, imposed only an administrative fine⁹⁵, while the other decisions were counseling and warning.

Repeated violations, even after the CEC decision-making, failure to set a clear deadline for compensation of airtime to electoral contestants, within the official deadline for the end of the election campaign, and the transfer of these figures after its end, indicate a difficulty in the operation of this monitoring model which requires the CEC to take and play a more pro-active role and guarantee media equality towards electoral contestants, as the law predicts.

The purpose of monitoring, the effective implementation of the envisaged mechanism, coupled with the envisaged sanctions, is the guarantee that electors will be presented with balanced information, so that they can make an informed choice. As such, the decision-making and correction of any violation by the media service providers should correspond to this period, in which the citizen should be informed, at least in a balanced way, for which the law has established the institution of the AMA and the CEC as the guarantors.

Weekly Report of Media Monitoring 4 April-11 April, One TV Vlora broadcast 479 minutes in favour of Socialist Party, while TV 6+1 broadcast 193 minutes for DP, 206 for SP and 195 minutes for MC

⁹⁴ Televisions that respected gender equality representation, according to the third weekly report for the period March 26-April 19: RTSH 1, TV Klan, TV Klan +, Top Channel, Scan, A2, MCN TV, TV Lobi, TV RE.AL and TV Channel 1

⁹⁵ In [decision No.257](#) on April 21, 2021, the CEC decided to take the administrative measure, in the amount of 5000 (five thousand) ALL, as they did not deposit records for the period 4.4.2021 - 11.4.2021, for audiovisual media service providers (AMS), as follows: - TV Channel 1 - TV Kopliku - TV Antena Nord - TV Klaudiana - TV Skampa - TV Jug - TV Gold - TV Glob - TV Puka - TV AdriaMed

VII.2. Print Media

The print media, unlike the audiovisual media, is not regulated by any special law, and there are also no provisions in the Electoral Code for a balanced coverage of election campaigns. However, its reporting must first adhere to the principles of the Constitution, and the National Convention on Human Rights on Freedom of Expression⁹⁶ as well as the Code of Ethics for Journalism.

Despite the fact that this media is not obliged by law to be balanced, it must guarantee accurate information for the citizen. Its editorial line cannot interfere with the objectivity of the information conveyed, especially during an election campaign, where the sensitivity of the public is even greater.

KRIIK continued the monitoring of ten newspapers⁹⁷, from March 27 to April 23 and the quantitative monitoring consisted of measuring approximately the percentage of the space occupied in the pages of newspapers, named by the editorial board as “Politics”, political parties and their representatives⁹⁸.

In this area, only the news dedicated to the coverage of electoral activities, or interviews of political representatives in which only the elections were discussed were taken for measurement. The purpose of this monitoring was to identify the space occupied by the coverage of the elections in the election campaign. Also, the front page headlines of each newspaper were counted, and how many of them were devoted to election reporting. The purpose of this monitoring was to understand the climate that prevails in the print media and how present the election campaign was on the front page of these newspapers, as a direct reflection of its editorial policy.

Out of ten monitored newspapers, it was noticed that only 30% of them were balanced in covering the electoral activity of the two main parties, while 40% of them have a difference of 20% in the space occupied by one of the two main parties in the country. The third largest party in the country, the SMI, occupies a majority or equal space on political pages, compared to the DP and SP, in 30% of newspapers. While in 70% of them it occupies a space of less than 5% of politics pages.

As for the other opposition parties participating in the elections, they are very little represented on the pages of print media policy.

In total, small parties do not occupy more than 5% of the coverage of electoral activities in any of the newspapers. Even in 40% of them, the space occupied by the coverage of the activity or statements of President Meta regarding the elections, is greater or equal to the smaller parties.

⁹⁶[National Convention of Human Rights: Right of speech Article 10](#)

⁹⁷ 1.Panorama 2.Fjala (Independent daily newspaper) 3.Dita (Daily info-analytical) 4.Our time (Independent daily) 5.Albanian newspaper 6.Mapo newspaper (Independent daily) 7.Today 8.Topic (Daily newspaper) 9. Telegraph (Independent daily) 10.Standard (Daily newspaper)

⁹⁸ in the absence of a “Political” page title, the pages labeled “Current events” were monitored. In the newspaper Fjala the pages labeled “Main” were also included

The front page of these newspapers, as the main indicator of their editorial line, also takes on a special importance during this period and was part of the monitoring. Placing headlines in these newspapers takes on a more special importance because of the space devoted to their reading in the morning shows on television, potentially increasing the number of readers of only the front page of these newspapers.

Throughout the observation, it was noted that the balance in the selection of titles related to the election campaign does not necessarily coincide with the balance within the political pages of the newspaper.

50% of newspapers have a balanced headline on the front page regarding the main political forces, but in 20% of them it does not correspond to balanced content, inside the political pages. During this monitoring it was noticed that in the front pages of the newspaper, the main headlines in 60% of the newspapers were directly related to the election campaign. In 50% of the ten newspapers monitored, the headlines were a support of a political force, or had negative remarks against the opposing political force.

VII.3 Online Media

During this election campaign, online media became a very important information window for a large part of society.

The diversity of information and the ease of its dissemination to a larger audience, gave this media special attention. Information on election campaign activities was very present on these informative portals.

Not being obliged to use the election propaganda materials of political parties, part of the news of the portals came from posts on social networks. Free and without legal restrictions to be balanced, politically motivated or not, these media became the most critical part of the election campaign.

The competition of these portals for the number of clicks, but also the uncertainties in their financing, casting doubts about the links with political entities, often make the information in them a controversial source. The same can be said about the accuracy or use of information, or statements for political purposes during this election campaign, sending the public in the wrong direction⁹⁹.

⁹⁹ Following the broadcast of an interview in a television studio, US Ambassador Yuri Kim responded through a [post on Twitter](#) stating that she had ascertained some untrue headlines and recommending the media to listen to her interview once again in order to understand.

VII.3.1 Social Media

As was observed in the early election campaign, it seems that the main battles in this election campaign were fought on social networks. The main leaders adhered to the tradition created before the campaign with live communications with citizens, posts of their electoral activities, photomontages, videos and political advertisements. The battle of likes and followers in the live broadcasts of the leaders, became headlines in the Albanian portals¹⁰⁰.

The ease to react, and to spread the reaction massively and rapidly through these media, makes them serve qualitatively the electoral headquarters of political parties and their leaders. Important communications were selected to be made from social networks, while this mode of communication was used by almost all key actors.

Social networks, although considered personal, were used for public purposes, not only by party leaders, but also by every MP candidate in this election. Promotion of infrastructure works, posting photos in which children appear next to MP candidates were some of the violations observed in this campaign.

The obligation that Facebook imposed on publishing the costs of political advertising posts, caused the expenses incurred by the registered sites to be considered and become part of the expenditure report for the electoral campaign of the parties and the candidates for members of parliament.

VIII. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

The administrative review of complaints on election issues is regulated in Section 10 of the Electoral Code. As for the court review, the procedural regulation is carried out in Part 11 of the Electoral Code. These two parts of the electoral framework underwent relatively significant amendments during the reform process of 2020. Among the main changes is the explicit recognition of the right to appeal by third parties in the electoral process¹⁰¹.

¹⁰⁰ [Report.tv report of 14 April 2021 "Live at the same time, interest of citizens for Prime minister Rama 15-times higher than for DP leader Basha"](#)

¹⁰¹ Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania, Article 124/1, The administrative complaint of third parties.

VIII.1. Central Election Commission

During the election campaign period, eight complaints were filed with the CEC, of which 1 was rejected to be taken under review¹⁰², 4 were dropped, 1 was accepted and for two of them there is still no published decision-making.

The object of Complaint No. 7¹⁰³ was the decision of the Commissioner to determine the public fund for electoral contestants. In addition to the general regulation, in these elections the legislator had provided a specific formula¹⁰⁴ on public funding to be allocated to support these contestants. It is viewed that this regulation¹⁰⁵, was rightly interpreted by CAS in its decision thus rejecting the deposited complaint.

What needs to be mentioned is that the specific regulation that the legislator has decided for these elections on the allocation of public funds is too complex¹⁰⁶. Furthermore, it is considered to be based on an invisible principle, on the suspicion of favoring a specific contestant, and far from the general regulation set out in Article 88.

The object of Complaint No. 8¹⁰⁷, 9¹⁰⁸ and 10¹⁰⁹, was the approval of the format and content of the ballot paper. These three complaints joined in the review, had more specifically the object of identifying the candidates on the ballot, the orientation of the ballot paper and the logo of an electoral contestant.

¹⁰² ComplaintNo.13,filed on19/04/2021,complainant Alliance for Theater; Central Election Commission, Decision no. 22, dated 19/04/2021.

¹⁰³ Complaint no. 7, filed on 25/03/2021, complainant Popular Union Coalition ; Central Election Commission, Decision no. 13, dated 30/03/2021.

¹⁰⁴ Article 88 of the Electoral Code provides for the norm regulation for the allocation of public pre-election funds for election contestants. With transitional provision 180, of the July 2020 amendments, the legislator provided for a specific formula exception to the general rule.

¹⁰⁵ More specifically, the legislator had foreseen two circumstances when the electoral contestant would be considered a beneficiary of the public fund. According to this formula, the first beneficiary parties were those that participated in the 2015 elections, in the 2017 elections, and achieved in one of these elections more than 1%. Also included were those parties that participated in the 2019 elections, and received more than 1% of the votes.

¹⁰⁶ Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania, Article 180, Transitional provision for budget financing, (...) “1. *The implementation of Article 88 of this law for the financing of the election campaign for the first general elections after its entry into force is done by performing calculations based on the result of the national elections for the local elections of 2015 and for the general elections of 2017. 2. For each party figures that reflect the highest number of votes that the party has received in one of these two elections are included in the calculations, when that number is not less than 1 percent of the valid votes in the respective elections. The calculation also includes the result of the electoral contestants, who did not participate in those elections, but who participated in the following elections and who meet the condition set out in Article 88 of this law for the limit of 1 percent of valid votes won.*”

¹⁰⁷ Complaint no. 8, filed on 01/04/03/2021, complainant Socialist Party; Commission of Appeals and Sanctions, Decision no. 20, dated 19/04/2021.

¹⁰⁸ Complaint no. 9, filed on 01/04/03/2021, complainant Democratic Conviction Party; Commission of Appeals and Sanctions, Decision no. 20, dated 19/04/2021.

¹⁰⁹ Complaint no. 10, filed on 01/04/03/2021, complainant Democratic Party; Commission of Appeals and Sanctions, Decision No.20, dated 19/04/2021.

Although the Regulatory Commission initially approved the technical specifications of the ballot paper¹¹⁰, with a second decision it expressed lack of competence in approving the ballot paper template itself¹¹¹. A decision of the Regulatory Commission that was based on an incorrect legislative technique by the legislator in the legal regulation carried out¹¹². However, it is viewed that in the full reading of the Electoral Code, the approval of the ballot paper template was charged to the Regulatory Commission.

As a result, after the session of the Regulatory Commission, the ballot paper template was approved by the Commissioner¹¹³. According to this decision-making, the ballot paper template had a horizontal orientation (landscape) and the listing of candidates was done including the naming of candidates. However, in reviewing the submitted complaints, CAS rejected this decision of the Commissioner, determining the vertical orientation of the paper (portrait) and the numerical listing of candidates.

This decision-making was based on two interpretive arguments in the spirit of the Electoral Code, entirely in the complete and inappropriate discretion of the majority of CAS members. First, by arguing that the ballot paper should be easily composed to be marked by electors, thus the vertical-oriented template was easier. As for the identification of candidates, it was argued that the Code requires that the ballot paper serve the identification of candidates and not provide information for them¹¹⁴.

By ignoring the spirit and letter of the constitutional changes, the reform process, the Electoral Code, on the connection and direct voting of the citizen with the name of the candidate, the incompleteness of other informative elements for a preferential voting system, and exaggerated discretion considering even the technical elements of the voting method, this argument clearly identified a partisan approach and behavior of three of the CAS members in line with the socialist majority alternative to the ballot paper.

¹¹⁰ Regulatory Commission, Decision no. 6, dated 26/02/2021, “On the approval of the technical specifications of the ballot paper for the Parliamentary elections of Albania of April 25, 2021”.

¹¹¹ Regulatory Commission, Decision no. 12, dated 31/03/2021, “On the declaration of incompetence of the Regulatory Commission for the review of the draft decision” On the approval of the content of the ballot papers for the Parliamentary elections of Albania of April 25, 2021”

¹¹² The Electoral code of the Republic of Albania, Article 98, Content of the Ballot papers, point 2, (...) “*The ballot Papers are produced in blocks without stubs. The serial number of the ballot papers’ block is noted on the document that accompanies the enwrapped block, in accordance with the CEC specifications.*”

¹¹³ State Commissioner, Decision No. 198, dated 01/04/2021, “*On the approval of the content of the ballot paper for the Parliamentary elections of Albania of April 25 2021*”.

¹¹⁴ Commission of Appeals and Sanctions, Decision no. 20, dated 19/04/2021, (...) “It is clear that an Electoral Code that aims to identify candidates by numbers and not by names, provides for the manner of informing voters about this way of identification, guaranteeing that even the most uninformed voter about the process and the candidates, to have the opportunity to be informed in the polling station about the process and the candidates, to have the opportunity to be informed to the Voting Center about the possibilities for selection. Our electoral code has no provision regarding informing voters at the polling station to identify which number belongs to a particular candidate.”

The object of Complaint No. 11¹¹⁵ was determining the political party with the right to select the fourth member of the Ballot Counting Team¹¹⁶. The Claimant The Party for Justice, Integration and Unity appealed the decision of the State Commissioner, who designated the Socialist Movement for Integration Party as the contestant with the right to select the fourth member of the BCT. CAS decided to rejected the request leaving in force the decision of the Commissioner. In justifying its decision-making, CAS put forward three arguments, for which some criticism is presented.

First, CAS argued that the PJIU, as part of the electoral contestant 'Coalition for Change', transferred the rights and obligations set out in the Electoral Code to the leading coalition party. An accepted reasoning that finds relative support in Article 65 of the Electoral Code, which states that "all rights and obligations set forth by this law for electoral contestants are fulfilled by the leading coalition party"¹¹⁷. In this regard, CAS argued that the PJIU did not have the rights as part of the electoral coalition.

It is estimated that regarding the legislative technique the verb "fulfills" is not the most accurate in the regulation made¹¹⁸. It is also considered that in terms of the formulation of the phrase, without recognizing the will of the legislator, the provision does not mean the removal of any right such as that of representation in the electoral administration body. This is because the spirit of building balance in the electoral administration body is directly related to party representation, in addition to any affiliation it may have.

Secondly, in the argumentation made, CAS called for reasoning the decision-making of the Electoral College in the electoral process of 2019, in the definition it made of the electoral contestant¹¹⁹. In summary, in the reasoning of the decision in question, it was argued that if the political contestants "because they have not submitted a list of candidates, do not have the quality of an electoral contestant". Thus, according to CAS, even PJIU could not be considered an electoral contestant because it had not submitted its own multi-name lists.

¹¹⁵ Complaint no. 11, filed on 02/04/2021, complainant Party for Justice, Integration and Unity; Commission of Appeals and Sanctions, Decision no. 20, dated 05/04/2021.

¹¹⁶ Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania, Article 95, Establishment of Ballot Counting Teams, point 2, (...) "Ballot counting teams are composed of four members, where in any case one member is appointed upon the proposal of the party, to which the chair of the CEAZ belongs, one member is appointed on the proposal of the political party to which the deputy chair belongs, whereas the third member is proposed by the parties of the ruling majority and the fourth member is appointed on the proposal of the opposition parties that have the right to propose members of the BCT for the respective EAZs, according to the procedure provided in Article 96 of this Code."

¹¹⁷ Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania, Article 65, point 3, (...) "At the moment of registration, the coalition must declare the leading political party of the coalition. For the needs of the implementation of this law, all the rights and obligations that this law defines for the electoral contestants are fulfilled by the leading party of the coalition. The relations between the member parties of the coalition and the mutual obligations between them are regulated in the coalition agreement, which is part of the documentation submitted by the coalition to the CEC".

¹¹⁸ It is argued that in legal terms, "rights" are passed on or transferred, and "obligations" are enforced or fulfilled. The found phrase "fulfillment of obligations and rights" is not the most accurate one.

¹¹⁹ Electoral College, Tirana Court of Appeal, Decision no. 10, claimant Democratic Party, Socialist Movement for Integration, dated 06/06/2019

The reservation expressed in this regard is that it first refers to a body of the College before the Electoral Reform and to an electoral process where the decision-making of the College received strong criticism. Also the established approach of that College body and referred to by CAS, is assessed as incomplete. The electoral legal framework does not link the definition of an electoral contestant with the attribute of proposing multi-name lists. At the very least, following this formalist approach, this would be inconsistent in the case of the candidates themselves in the multi-name lists or of the candidates proposed by the citizens.

Third, CAS argued that the PJIU had no legitimate interest in its request to be represented at the BCT. Because according to CAS the contestant competed only in 5 electoral zones out of 12, it was argued that PJIU lacked interest in being represented in the election administration. It is considered that this argument used by CAS is completely unsupported in the electoral legal framework.

The Complaint No. 12¹²⁰ and Complaint No. 14¹²¹, although accepted for review by CAS, there is still no decision on the complaint.

VIII.2. Electoral College

Four complaints were filed with the Electoral College during the election campaign period, all of which were rejected.

The object of appeal No. 4¹²² was the non-registration of an electoral contestant by the State Commissioner, which was rejected by the Electoral College. Following the CAS decision-making, it is estimated that the Electoral College also used a fair reasoning.

The object of appeal No. 5¹²³ was the template of the ballot paper approved by the Commissioner and subsequently amended by the Commission for Appeals and Penalties. The Electoral College joined in the arguments given by the CAS, but placed the emphasis on an argument again not substantially legal. The College argued that it essentially supported the CAS decision-making because the template proposed by the Commissioner would require a longer production time, which itself exceeded the date when the elections are expected to take place¹²⁴.

¹²⁰ Complaint no. 12, filed on 15/04/2021, complainant Party for Justice, Integration and Unity.

¹²¹ Complaint no. 14, filed on 16/04/2021, complainant Gentian Picari, Mayor of Vora; Central Election Commission

¹²² Appeal No. 4, filed on 23/03/2021, the complainant Coalition Alliance; Electoral College, Decision No.4, dated 31/03/2021.

¹²³ Appeal No. 5, filed on 02/04/2021, the complainant Coalition Popular Union Alliance; Electoral College, Decision no. 5, dated 08/04/2021.

¹²⁴ Electoral College, Administrative Court of Appeal Tirana, Decision no. 5, dated 04/04/2021, (...) *“This practically put the College in front of the responsibility for the fate of the elections of April 25, because if the ballot paper approved by the Commissioner was accepted, the production company would need at least 2 weeks to secure the paper in the new dimensions, and then start printing and transporting it to Albania.”*

This decision of the College equated a principled discussion and a principled right with a rational technical argument, which is not the role and mission of the Electoral College.

The object of appeal No. 6¹²⁵ was determining the pre-election public fund for electoral contestants. The Electoral College with its decision-making left in effect the decision of the State Commissioner and the CAS.

The object of appeal No. 7¹²⁶ was the decision of the Commissioner not to register the National Alliance Party. The College also rejected the lawsuit because the complainant had not previously filed a complaint with the CAS. Thus, according to the Electoral College, by not attending the administrative review, the contestant had lost the right to administrative review.

The legal basis for this decision-making process was the Code of Civil Procedures¹²⁷, and not the Electoral Code. It is viewed that the argument of the College selects a parallel legal framework thus avoiding specific regulation of the Electoral Code. The latter clearly states that the decision to refuse registration as an electoral contestant is appealed to the Electoral College¹²⁸.

IX. OBSERVERS

The Central Election Commission has accredited a large number of non-political observers consisting of Albanian and foreign actors for the Parliamentary Elections of 25 April 25, 2021.

A total of 201 Albanian long-term observers and 1.740 short-term observers; 47 foreign long-term observers and 213 short-term observers as well as 1.102 media representatives were accredited for these elections.

The Electoral Code stipulates that the observers of the political parties or the observers of the candidates supported by electors shall be registered / accredited by CEAZs.

¹²⁵ Appeal No. 6, filed on 03/04/2021, the complainant Alliance for Change; Electoral College, Decision no. 6, dated 03/04/2021.

¹²⁶ Appeal No. 7, filed on 06/04/2021, the complainant National Alliance Party; Electoral College, Decision no. 7, dated 12/04/2021.

¹²⁷ According to the organization, the argumentation of the Electoral College with reference to the Code of Civil Procedure was wrong.

¹²⁸ The Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania, Article 145, The right to appeal to court, point 1, (...) “Electoral subjects have the right to appeal to the Electoral College of the Court of Appeals in Tirana against CEC decisions which affect their legal interests, by the deadline established in Article 152 of this Code. Individuals or political parties whose request to be registered as an electoral subject have been rejected also have the right to appeal according to this Article”.

Regarding the observers of political contestants, 19¹²⁹ CEAZs did not accredit party observers as the latter did not respect the legal deadlines.

129 CEAZ 17 Klos, CEAZ 21, 22, 24 Durres, CEAZ25 Shijak, CEAZ 33, 34 Tirana, CEAZ 52 Librazhd, CEAZ 60 Patos, CEAZ 62 Mallakstra, CEAZ 65 and 68 Berat, CEAZ 73,74Korça,CEAZ 75Kolonja,CEAZ 76Permet, CEAZ 78 Memaliaj, CEAZ 81 Libohova, CEAZ 87 Selenica.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Political Parties, their leaders and the institutions that stand above the parties, should be the guarantors so that the citizens free themselves from incitement of emotional decision-making as a result of the harshness of language, and they shall call on their electors for free and uninfluenced exercise of their right to vote.

The election administration at all levels should be maximally committed to guarantee the smooth progress of the election process on election day, not only in its procedural elements, but also in an efficient cooperation with the State Police to secure the perimeter around polling stations, in order to avoid voter intimidation that may occur in the vicinity of polling stations.

Election contestants should avoid giving propaganda messages during election silence and on election day, until the polls are closed, in order to ensure that electors be able to go to the polls free from unnecessary and illegal influence.

Election contestants should avoid the increased and unnecessary presence of their militants or supporters on election day, so that citizens can vote freely from the influence of their will.

State police should be committed to ensuring the security of the electoral process and a peaceful environment for citizens, not only by identifying and detaining individuals who may attempt to influence the will of the electorate, but also by trying to stay away from polling stations and be as little visible to citizens as long as their presence is not necessary.

Political parties should avoid replacing commissioners at all levels, for the electoral process to be administered efficiently, transparently, and professionally.

Public officials should avoid the presence in the vicinity of polling stations or in the media and avoid giving messages of an institutional nature which may be perceived by electors as propaganda messages.

The media should maintain a correct and impartial approach during the remaining period until the closing of polling stations, report professionally and focus on objective news reporting, avoiding editorial stances in support of any political party. Media should boycott any message given by election contestants or public officials that may contain elements of electoral propaganda.

ABOUT KRIIK

About the organization

The Coalition for Reforms, Integration and Consolidated Institutions (KRIIK Albania) is a nonprofit and nongovernmental organization, established in October 1997 by a group of students. The organization is headquartered in Tirana and it operates across the country through its local representatives and/or partner organizations. KRIIK was registered in December 1997 as an organization with membership. The highest decision-making body of the organization is the General Assembly of the Members, which elects steering bodies and supervises their work, and approves important statutory, strategic, and political documents.

The fundamental values at the core of the work of KRIIK include voluntary civic engagement; impartiality and independence; integrity; consistency in fulfilling its mission in a professional and dedicated manner; objectiveness in assessing facts and arguments; respect for human and opinions diversity; and transparency in activities and environmental protection.

KRIIK envisages a society where rule of law is respected; fundamental human rights and values, civil rights, political rights, and conscience rights of individuals are respected without compromise; where the sense of community and meaningful involvement of citizens in policymaking is a core value; and elected representatives and other public officials are primarily interested in the well-being of the citizens.

KRIIK works for the protection and guarantee of human rights and freedoms, as well as the full dimension of human security, through strengthening the rule of law, democratic governance, promotion of civic activism and engagement, and promotion of full transparency and accountability of public and political institutions.

Engagement for electoral integrity

KRIIK has engaged in election observation since its establishment, by working with voluntary activists in elections observation actions of other organizations. Since 2000, KRIIK has partaken in joint observation actions with several local organizations.

Since 2005, KRIIK has been a founding member and then one of the leading organizations of the Coalition of Domestic Observers (CDO), the largest group of local organizations observing elections in Albania. In the framework of or in cooperation with the CDO, KRIIK has observed all general, parliamentary, or local elections in Albania during 2005 - 2017, as well as most partial election processes during this period. In 2019, KRIIK observed the Elections for the Local Government Bodies, in cooperation with nine local organizations experienced in election observation, which used their resources to the benefit of observation action, as well as their activists as long-term observers.

In cooperation with the Elections to Conduct Agency (ECA), KRIIK carried out a parallel vote counting at the national level for the first time during the Elections for the Assembly of Albania of 2009.

As part of the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations, a network of leading election observation organizations in Southeastern and Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and Central

Asia, since 2009 KRIIK has contributed to strengthening electoral integrity in several countries of the region, by deploying its activists as observers in international observation missions, at all levels (core team, including head of mission; long-term; and short-term observers). KRIIK has been part of the Secretariat of ENEMO Secretariat since 2015.

In addition to election observation, KRIIK has also undertaken a series of initiatives aiming at strengthening electoral integrity in Albanian and continuously (not only during electoral periods) monitors every political or institutional development that may affect electoral integrity.

ACRONYMS

NDAP	New Democracy Alliance Party	DNFP	Democratic National Front Party
UETCA	Union, Emigration, Time and Conservatives Alliance	LDUP	Liberal Democratic Union Party
AMA	Audiovisual Media Authority	PUAPP	People's Union of Albanian Pensioners Party
OP	Ombudsperson	DP	Democratic Party
GDCS	General Directorate of Civil Status	DP - AC	Democratic Party - Alliance for Change Coalition
NDSP	New Democratic Spirit Party	PJIU	Party for Justice Integration and Unity
VCT	Vote Counting Team	CDPA	Christian Democratic Party of Albania
IECD	Institution for the Execution of Criminal Decisions	AEP	Albanian Emigration Party
CSC	Complaints and Sanctions Commission	CDP	Christian Democratic Party
SSAI	Supreme State Audit	NCPA	National Conservative Party Albania
Commissioner	State Electoral Commissioner	ADMP	Albanian Democratic Movement Party
PSC	Polling Station Commission	LMP	Legality Movement Party
CEC	Central Election Commission	MCP	Movement for Change Party
EC	Electoral College	NMP	New Movement Party
CEAZ	Commission of Election Administration Zones	TAP	Time for Albania Party
SMI	Socialist Movement for Integration	ARP	Albanian Republican Party
MND	Movement for National Development	SP	Socialist Party of Albania
MoI	Ministry of Interior	SDP	Social Democratic Party
LGU	Local Government Unit	PS	Polling Station
HIP	Hashtag Initiative Party	PS	Polling Station
ODHIR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights	NRCS	National Register of Civil Status
AEP	Agrarian Environmentalist Party	Regulator	Regulatory Commission
DAP	Democratic Affiliation Party	DCM	Decision of Council of Ministers
UHRP	Union for Human Rights Party	BCC	Ballot Counting Center
ADUP	Albanian Democratic Union Party	EAZ	Election Administration Zone
NFP	National Front Party	CSO	Civil Status Office
		REO	Regional Electoral Office