



INFORMATION FOR OBSERVERS

INTRODUCTION

Election observation is a long-standing practice in our country, not only by international organizations but also by domestic non-profit organizations. The aim of election observation is to assess whether the elections are in accordance with international election standards. This information aims to briefly present some of the main aspects of the electoral process in accomplishing your mission.

1. STATE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Albania is a parliamentary republic. Governance is based on a system of free, equal, general and periodic elections.

The Assembly of Albania

Assembly is composed of 140 deputies, elected according to a system of proportional elections with regional competition and national threshold. Parliamentary elections are held every 4 years.

The President of the Republic of Albania

The President of the Republic is the Head of State and represents the unity of the people. The President of the Republic may not exercise other competencies, besides those introduced in the Constitution or granted by laws issued in compliance with it.

Council of Ministers

Based on Article 95 of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania the Council of Ministers consists of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers and Deputy ministers.

2. ELECTION SYSTEM FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES

Both mayors and the municipality councils shall be elected by a direct vote by the voters with a domicile in the territory of the municipality. The members of the municipal councils shall be elected based on the multi-name lists submitted by the political parties, coalitions or of candidacies proposed by the voters.

The candidate who obtains the largest number of valid votes from the voters who have voted in the respective local government unit shall be elected as mayor.

3. INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PREPARATION AND MANAGEMENT OF ELECTIONS

Central Election Commission (CEC)

The Central Election Commission shall be the institution responsible for organising and managing elections and referendums. It manages and supervises the activity of the election administration, monitors the activity of electoral subjects, state bodies and institutions, and media concerning the elections, and administratively settles requests or complaints related to the electoral process.

- **State Election Commissioner**

Exercises executive powers and manages the administration of the CEC.

Manages and supervises, directly or through the CEC administration, the activity of the election administration in elections and referenda.

Manages the training and qualification process for the election administration.

- **Regulatory Commission**

The Regulatory Commission (Regulatory) is composed of 5 members, one of whom exercises the duty of the chair. The Regulatory Commission (the Regulator) is the body competent for the approval of acts of a normative nature about elections and of setting election rules. The Regulator operates part-time and conducts its activity in open public meetings convened by the Commissioner.

- **Appeals and Sanctions Commission**

It is a collegial body, consisting of 5 members. The Complaints and Sanctions Commission (CSC) is the competent body to administratively examine and resolve complaints against acts of the Commissioner and CEAZ decisions, and imposes disciplinary measures/administrative sanctions, upon the Commissioner's request.

- **Deputy State Election Commissioner**

The Deputy State Election Commissioner is elected by the Assembly for a 4-year term with the duty to supervise the implementation of electronic identification technology, recruitment and training of election officials. The Deputy Commissioner is responsible for determining the applicability and leads efforts for the implementation of the voter electronic identification project.

- **CEC Administration**

In performing and accomplishing the tasks that derive from the Election Code, the CEC administration is composed of civil servants. General Secretary is the highest civil servant in the CEC's administration.

The Central Election Commission's office is located in Tirana. Its address is: Str. "Ibrahim Rugova", Nr.4, Tirana, Albania,

Website: www.kqz.org.al , e-mail: info@kqz.org.al

- **Election Administration**

Commissions of Electoral Administration Zones (CEAZ)

CEAZ is responsible for the administration of elections in the electoral administration zone. There are 92 EAZs throughout Albania and 92 Commissions of Electoral Administration Zones (CEAZ) have been established respectively.

CEAZ duties are defined in the Electoral Code (*Article 33 of the Electoral Code*). The CEAZ accomplishes its tasks in an impartial, professional and transparent way, in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Code and other acts issued by the Central Election Commission.

The CEAZ is composed of 7 members and the secretary, who are appointed by the proposals of the parliamentary parties.

Voting Center Commissions (VCC)

The VCC is a collegial body composed of 7 members, with one of the members exercising the duty of secretary. VCC members and the secretary are appointed only for the election period.

Proposals for the VCC members and secretary shall be made no later than 30 days prior to the election date. The CEAZ shall appoint the VCC members and secretary no later than 20 days prior to the election date.

In those VCCs where the seventh member belongs to the main party of the parliamentary majority, a member of the VCC representing the main party of the parliamentary majority shall be appointed as chair. In the rest of the VCCs, one of the members representing the main party of the parliamentary opposition shall be appointed as chair. The VCC secretary shall be of the opposite political affiliation to that of the VCC chair

Ballot Counting Centers (BCC)

No later than 40 days from the election date, the CEC designates the Ballot Counting Centre by decision. For counting the votes at the EAZ level, Ballot Counting Teams shall be established by CEAZ decision 10 days prior to the election date. There shall be two Counting Teams per each counting table.

The Ballot Counting Team (BCT) releases the results for each voting centre it counts. Ballot Counting Teams shall be composed of four members, one of the members as the first counter, one member as the secretary and two others are members.

Ballot Counting Team works with no less than two members. A Ballot Counting Team shall count no less than 5 voting centres and no more than 10 voting centres.

4. PREPARATION OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

A. Electoral subjects

"Electoral subjects" are political parties, coalitions and candidates proposed by voters, as well as candidates for mayors of local government bodies.

48 political parties, 2 coalitions and 1 initiating committee are registered for the elections for local government bodies.

The process of submission of documents and registration of multi-name lists of candidates for mayor and municipal councils is administered by the Commissions of Electoral Administration Zones for the 50 municipalities that have only 1 CEAZ. For the other 11 municipalities that have more than 1 CEAZ, the administration is done by the CEC.

Allocation of mandates for each electoral zone

The mandates of the local councils are allocated by the CEC based on the proportional system, according to procedures provided for in Article 162 of the Electoral Code.

Further details about the number of mandates for municipal councils, for the elections for local government bodies can be found in the link <https://kqz.gov.al/numri-i-mandateve/>

B. The campaign of Voters' education

Voters' education, information and awareness is one of our most important objectives, and concrete steps have been taken to achieve them. We have had increased attention to first-time voters, women, national minorities and people with disabilities.

After the decree of the date of the elections, the CEC started preparations for the local elections, by firstly approving the three programs of education, information, and awareness of voters.

- **Voters' education program**

<https://kqz.gov.al/ep-content/uploads/2022/12/Vendim-nr.-220-date-7.12.2022-Per-miratimin-e-programit-te-edukimit-informimit-dhe-ndergjegjesimit-te-zgjedhesve.pdf>

- **Program for voters of national minorities**

<https://kqz.gov.al/ep-content/uploads/2022/12/Vendim-nr.-222-date-07.12.2022-Per-edukimin-informimin-dhe-ndergjegjesimin-e-pakicave-kombetare.pdf>

- **Voter education program, persons with disabilities (PWD)**

<https://kqz.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Vendim-nr.-221-date-07.12.2022-Per-edukimin-informimin-dhe-ndergjegjesimin-e-PAK.pdf>

C. Election Logistics

In order to improve the election materials used during the voting process, the CEC has approved several decisions as below:

- the ballot box specimen.
- the specimen of the following stamps: CEAZ, VCC and VCC chairman stamp.
- the booth sample especially the booth for people with disabilities.
- stamps with the security codes (in these elections, their colour has changed)
- records for additional stamp, in case of damage /if the VCC stamp is out of use.
- templates to be used for different records.

D. The process of compiling the voters list

Each civil status office is responsible for preparing the voter lists of the voting centers in the areas under its jurisdiction.

Not later than 30 days from the decree of the elections, the ministry responsible for the civil status service and the CEC publish on the respective official websites the extract of voters nationwide. This list is published online on the CEC website since November 24, 2022.

The CEC supervises the process of compilation of the lists by requesting information from the General Directorate of Civil Status and local government units and no later than 30 days from the decree of the elections, appoints by decision of the State Election Commissioner and the State Deputy Election Commissioner, two technical audits for the verification of transactions in the NCSR database. The technical audits present to the CEC every month an audit report on the findings and recommendations, which are forwarded to the General Directorate of Civil Status to be taken into account in the process of voter list compilation.

The list of voters is sent to the CEAZ, printed by the head of the local government unit (municipality), in three formats, no later than 35 days before the election date, as follows:

1. voter list divided by voting centers. This list is published by CEAZ near each voting center in a public place with free access, no later than 35 days before the date of the elections;
2. voter list divided by voting centers (this list is submitted to the relevant VCC together with other voting materials from the CEAZ to be used by the VCC on the day of the elections). This format also contains the space for marking the number of the identification document, as well as the space for the voter's signature;
3. list of voters at the electoral zone level. This format is maintained by the CEAZ and serves to inform voters in any case;

E. Ballot papers

For the elections for local government bodies on MAY 14, 2023, voters will vote with two ballot papers and two ballot boxes will be used, one for the mayor of the local government unit and one for the municipal council. The ranking of electoral subjects and candidates for mayor of local government units on the ballot paper is done by drawing of lots.

F. Election financing and election campaigns

The Central Election Commission supervises the financing of the election campaign, in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Code (Part VII, Chapter I). The Central Election Commission determines the value of the fund that is distributed to the political parties participating in the elections, approved by the State Budget; through AMA monitors the activity of political parties for the election campaign on radio and television; through election campaign monitors, monitors activities of a public nature and the activities of political parties; approves reporting rules and formats; appoints accounting experts approved by lottery, selected to control funds received and spent for election campaigns; monitors the fulfillment by the electoral subjects of the obligations related to the financing of the election campaign and other obligations according to the Electoral Code; organizes the training of financiers of electoral subjects, the training of monitors and legal auditors and the training of NGO representatives who observe and monitor aspects of campaign financing.

5. VOTING PROCESS

Procedures for opening of the Voting Center

Voting starts at 7:00 a.m.

The VCC, under the direction of the chairman and the secretary as well as in the presence of the observers, one hour prior to the opening of the voting performs the tasks defined in the Electoral Code.

At the end of this procedure, the members of the VCC, in the presence of the observers, take the decision on starting the voting and sign it.

Procedures during voting

The persons who are allowed to stay in the voting center during the voting procedures are:

- the members and secretary of the VCC,
- voters, who are carrying out voting procedures until their completion,
- Albanian and foreign accredited observers.

The procedures that are carried out when the voter enters the voting center are as follows:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzDAH5C10>

<https://kqz.gov.al/si-duhet-te-votoj/>

The voter, who for physical reasons is unable to carry out the voting procedures him/herself, may request the assistance of a family member or another voter, who is on the voter list of that voting center. Both voters must be present at the voting center when this procedure is carried out.

Procedures for closing of the Voting Centers

Voting centers close at 19:00 P.M.

The decision for the closing of the voting centers and the exact time of closing are recorded in the VCC Meeting Records Book. Afterwards, only VVC members and secretary as well

as accredited domestic and foreign observers and accredited media representatives may remain in the voting center.

Electronic Identification

Legal amendments introduced to the Constitution and Electoral code in July 2020, added new responsibilities to the CEC to implement Electronic Voting Identification System for 100% of voting centers in the country.

The electronic identification of voters was implemented for the first time in parliamentary elections of April 25th, 2021.

In the elections for local government bodies of May 14, 2023, voters will be identified and will deposit their fingerprints as evidence of voting, which then will be analyzed by ABIS (Automated Biometric Identity System). The Electronic Identification of Voters will take place in 100% of voting centers.

Electronic Voting

Voters in the municipalities of Elbasan, Kamëz and Vora will vote through the Electronic Voting and Counting Device (PEVN) in the local elections of May 14, 2023.

In order to have prior knowledge on the use of PEVN as well as the relevant process of electronic voting by voters, the Central Election Commission will place these devices in some public premises of Elbasan, Kamëz and Vorë Municipalities to simulate the voting process.

Electronic voting takes place on local devices that are not connected to the Internet, while the voter identification process is procedurally and technologically separated from the voting process to guarantee the secrecy of the vote.

6. COURT APPEAL OF DECISIONS OF CENTRAL ELECTION COMMISSION

The Central Election Commission consists of 3 decision-making bodies.

Decisions of the Regulatory Commission are appealed to the Electoral Judicial College within 5 (five) days from the announcement.

The decisions of the State Election Commissioner are appealed by the parties to the Appeals and Sanctions Commission within 3 (three) days from the announcement. The appeal deadline is 5 (five) days for the decisions of the State Election Commissioner related to the approval of the Aggregate Table of the Results of the Electoral Zone.

The decisions of the Appeals and Sanctions Commission are appealed to the Electoral Judicial College.

Decisions of the CEAZs are appealed to the Appeals and Sanctions Commission within 3 (three) days from the announcement. The deadline for appeal is 5 (five) days on decisions of the CEAZs related to the approval of the Aggregate Table of the Results of the Electoral Zone.

The Electoral College judges and decides on court complaints within 10 days from the filing of the claim.

7. DECLARATION OF THE FINAL ELECTION RESULTS

Release of the Aggregate Table of the Election Results from the CEAZ

The Aggregate Table of the Election Results for the Election Administration Zone is released by the CEAZ not later than 22:00 on day following the Election Day.

For the local elections, the CEAZ approves by decision the Aggregate Table of Results of the Municipality.

In cases where the territory of the municipality is not covered by a single CEAZ, each CEAZ approves by decision the Aggregate Table of Results for that part of the territory of the municipality.

A copy of the Aggregate Table of Results and the tables of results for each voting center is immediately sent to the CEC.

Tabulation of the results by CEC

The CEC verifies and tabulates the election results for the electoral zone for the local government unit, whose territory is divided into two or more EAZs, based on the tables of results released by each EAZ of the respective electoral zone. For this purpose, the CEC fills in the Aggregate Table of Results for the Electoral Zone and approves it by a decision no later than 48 hours after the arrival of all tables of the Electoral Zone.

The Regulatory Commission examines and approves the final result of the elections at national level.

