

From: 5.1.2.e <5.1.2.e@odihr.pl>
Date: Thursday, October 23, 2025, 4:36 PM
To: "5.1.2.e@senado.es" <5.1.2.e@senado.es>
CC: "5.1.2.e@5.1.2.e" <5.1.2.e@5.1.2.e.dk>
"postbus@eerstekamer.nl" <'postbus@eerstekamer.nl'>
"5.1.2.e@riksdagen.se" <5.1.2.e@riksdagen.se>
Subject: ODIHR EOM final report - Albania

Attachments:

- ALB Parliamentary 2025 Final Report_23.10.2025.pdf
- 2025 10 23 Letter to OSCE PA_ALB_ final report (002).pdf

You don't often get email from 5.1.2.e@odihr.pl. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Madam, dear Sir,

Please find enclosed, for your information, the ODIHR Election Observation Mission final report in connection with the 2025 parliamentary elections in Albania.

Kind regards,



5.1.2.e
Senior Documents Management Assistant
OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
ODIHR | Miodowa 10 | 00-251 Warsaw
Office: +512e 512e 5.1.2.e 512e 512e | Mobile: +512e 5.1.2.e 5.1.2.e 5.1.2.e
[Website](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Twitter/X](#) | [Facebook](#)

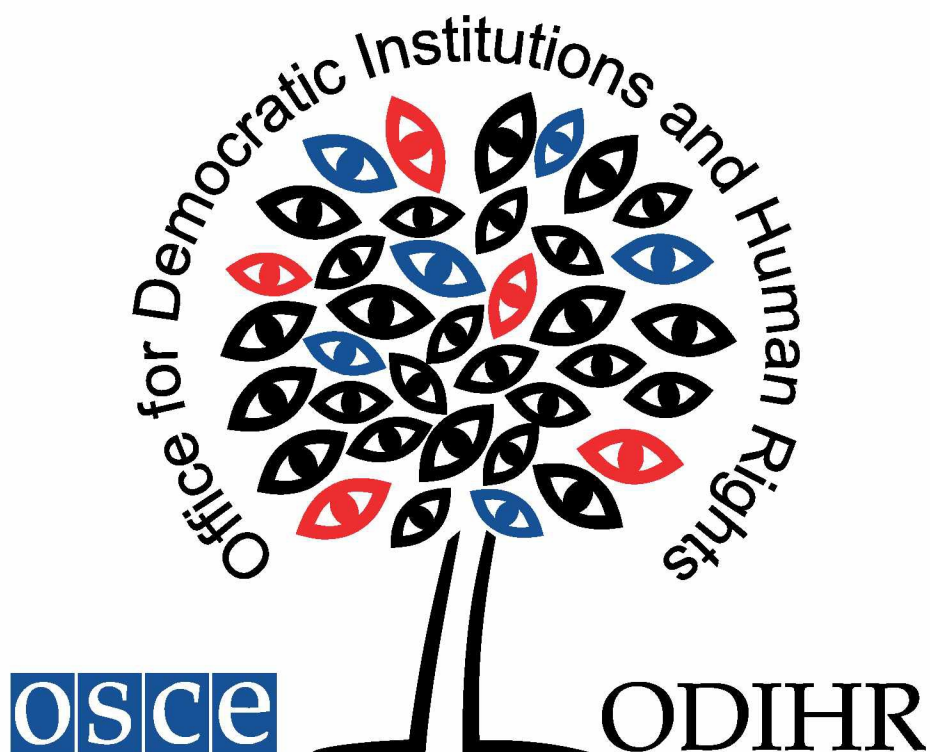


Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 11 MAY 2025

ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report



Warsaw
23 October 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
II.	INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	5
III.	BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT	6
IV.	LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM.....	7
V.	ELECTION ADMINISTRATION.....	9
VI.	THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE ELECTION.....	12
VII.	VOTER REGISTRATION	14
VIII.	CANDIDATE REGISTRATION	15
IX.	ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN.....	16
X.	CAMPAIGN FINANCE.....	20
XI.	MEDIA	22
A.	MEDIA ENVIRONMENT	22
B.	LEGAL FRAMEWORK	23
C.	MEDIA MONITORING FINDINGS	24
XII.	ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION	25
XIII.	PARTICIPATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES	26
XIV.	ELECTION OBSERVATION.....	27
XV.	ELECTION DAY.....	27
A.	OPENING, VOTING AND CLOSING.....	28
B.	COUNTING AND RESULTS.....	29
XVI.	RECOMMENDATIONS	31
A.	PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS.....	32
B.	OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS.....	33
	ANNEX I: FINAL ELECTION RESULTS	35
	ANNEX II: LIST OF OBSERVERS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION.....	36
	ABOUT ODIHR	45

REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS
11 May 2025

ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report¹

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following an invitation to observe the 11 May 2025 parliamentary elections and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) established an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 2 April. The mission, headed by Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, consisted of a 12-member core team based in Tirana and 26 long-term observers (LTOs) who were deployed on 10 April throughout the country. The ODIHR EOM remained in Albania until 22 May to follow post-election developments. For election day, the ODIHR EOM was joined by delegations from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the European Parliament (EP) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM).

In its statement of preliminary findings and conclusions issued on 12 May 2025, the IEOM concluded that the elections “were competitive and professionally conducted but took place in a highly polarized environment and contestants did not enjoy a level playing field. Still, candidates were generally able to campaign freely although some reported facing intimidation. The electoral administration managed the process in an inclusive and transparent manner. The out-of-country voting, introduced for the first time for these elections, was well managed, despite the late political agreement and adoption of this measure and some organizational issues. The ruling party benefitted from widespread use of administrative resources during the campaign, creating an undue advantage of incumbency. There were also numerous allegations of pressure on voters, especially public employees. Further, the electoral legislation and its narrow interpretation by the election administration did not prevent abusive practices. Concentration of media ownership undermining the plurality of news sources, along with self-censorship among journalists and the two largest parties dominating the news coverage, limited voters’ opportunity to make an informed choice. The active use of online social networks by the contestants amplified the strong confrontational discourse and no authority was designated to detect harmful manipulative content. The new coordination mechanism among institutions to investigate and prosecute electoral crimes is a welcome development, but follow-through is necessary to address persistent concerns of electoral malpractice. Election day was generally calm and well organized but there was a frequent lack of adherence to procedures, and it was marked by a number of incidents of intimidation and inducement of voters and some procedural and transparency shortcomings in the vote count.”

The legal framework provides an adequate basis for the conduct of democratic elections, despite the need for comprehensive electoral reform with inclusive public consultations. Noted shortcomings and ambiguities reduce the clarity of the legal framework and create uncertainty in its implementation in both letter and spirit. While some ODIHR recommendations have been addressed, the majority of long-standing recommendations, including those related to the composition of lower-level election commissions, interim reporting on campaign finance, and provisions to provide a conducive media environment, including by removing criminal liability for defamation, remain unaddressed, indicating a lack of political will for comprehensive reforms.

The parliament is elected through a modified electoral system combining closed and preferential lists which was introduced ahead of these elections. Some smaller parties argued the system favours the two

¹ The English version of this report is the only official document. An unofficial translation is available in Albanian.

largest parties, and it limits the impact of preferential voting, enabling the party leaders to retain significant control over parliamentary representation, in part due to the lack of internal party democracy. Several smaller parties brought these arguments to the Constitutional Court, but the Court did not find the system to be unconstitutional.

Overall, technical preparations for the elections were conducted efficiently, transparently, according to established deadlines and in an inclusive manner by the Central Election Commission (CEC). Still, several stakeholders perceived some CEC members as politicized. While the introduction of out-of-country voting (OCV) marked a landmark electoral development, its organization proved highly challenging, particularly given the time constraints caused by parliament's delayed approval. Issues with ballot delivery were noted, which led to some problems also during the count. However, the process was generally well managed. Lower-level commissions managed the process efficiently and transparently, despite disruptions caused by the late replacement of members nominated by political parties, especially for voting centres in the days leading up to the election, allegedly due to intimidation in some instances. The CEC made an effort to improve accessibility at voting centres for persons with disabilities, but on election day observers reported accessibility problems in many places.

Electronic voting was conducted in two districts and biometric identification was used in all voting centres. In line with good electoral practice, the CEC reduced its dependency on the provider of the biometric and electronic voting equipment and the use of technology was properly documented and managed in a transparent and sustainable manner. However, the use of technology, notably in regard to electronic voting devices, deviated from the documented process and the Electoral Code. Political parties and media had full access to observe the demonstration of functionality of the identification and electronic voting devices, but the CEC did not publish any information about the security tests. ODIHR EOM interlocutors generally expressed confidence in the technology, but a few concerns were expressed, indicating a lack of trust among some, including the opposition.

The voter register included 3.7 million voters, including 245,935 registered abroad to vote by post. Electoral subjects were eligible to request the full copy of the voter list which enhanced the transparency of the voter registration process, despite concerns it may raise regarding data privacy. Voters were given sufficient opportunity to review their information in the voter list both in person and online. For voting abroad, despite the CEC's extensive voter information campaign and decision to accept expired Albanian biometric IDs, some 41,000 applications were rejected, due to a lack of appropriate proof of residence in the host country. Overall, the voter registration process was transparent, the voter lists were considered inclusive and generally accurate, and the extension of voting rights to out-of-country voters marked a step toward broader electoral participation.

The CEC registered eight parties and three coalitions and approved a total of 2,046 candidates in an inclusive process. Sixteen nominees were rejected during candidate verification due to criminal records, none of which were contested, and parties were able to replace them. The requirement for electoral subjects to submit full lists of candidates for both open and closed lists and for all districts in the country impacted the capacity of smaller parties to contest.

The campaign was generally calm but was nevertheless characterized by a confrontational and polarizing discourse, particularly online and notably between the two main political parties and their leaders. Voters had a choice between political alternatives and contestants generally enjoyed campaign freedoms, but the playing field was uneven with the ruling party benefitting from the widespread use of administrative resources and institutional leverage, blurring the line between state and party. Allegations of pressure on public employees, cases of intimidation of opposition supporters and the misuse of patronage networks were noted, which is inconsistent with international standards. Other issues of

concern included reports of vote-buying, attempts to unduly influence vulnerable voters, and alleged influence of criminal elements on the elections in some areas of the country.

Campaigning on social networks was not regulated, and no authority was designated to monitor it. Despite most political parties signing a Code of Conduct on Digital Campaigns, several contestants disseminated divisive or manipulative content, while third-party accounts reportedly used coordinated inauthentic behaviour on the online platforms to amplify attacks against the opposition. Contestants actively used Facebook and Instagram. The government's ban on TikTok as of 6 March 2025 limited some candidates' campaign opportunities. Although the CEC identified violations in public institutions' posts, it discontinued investigations in a few cases, and its overall monitoring efforts remained limited in scope and effectiveness.

Women's political participation has grown in recent years, yet their advancement remains constrained by entrenched structural barriers, particularly weak internal party democracy and limited access to funding. A total of 38.5 per cent of registered candidates were women, which met the 30 per cent gender quota requirement, but indicated a need for increased political will to further promote the participation of women. The number of women elected to the new parliament was the same as the previous parliament, with 36 per cent of elected members being female. Three of the 12 CEC members and 31 per cent of Commissions of Electoral Administration Zone members were female, with few in leadership roles.

Key ODIHR recommendations on campaign finance remain unaddressed and shortcomings in the regulatory framework impacted the transparency of campaign finance and the equality of opportunities for parties and candidates. The absence of specific regulation for loans, online campaigning, and third-party expenditures, and ambiguities regarding the exclusion of candidate spending from party limits, allows for circumvention of the rules. Although required by law, none of the contestants published a database of donations or loans, and the lack of legal instruments to enforce compliance with the legal provision meant the CEC was unable to address the problem. The absence of interim reporting and concerns over the effectiveness of auditing further reduced transparency and accountability in campaign financing.

The media environment remained highly constrained, with the independence, diversity, and integrity of news content undermined by non-transparent financing, concentrated ownership, interference in editorial autonomy, and political influence. There is a lack of independent reporting, undermining the media's oversight role and a lack of critical journalism and robust information. The majority of media outlets are perceived to be aligned with the ruling party. Although the Constitution protects freedom of expression, defamation remains criminalised and journalists continue to face defamation cases. The appointment procedures for both the public broadcaster and the audiovisual regulator lack safeguards for *de facto* independence. The Electoral Code does not provide for equitable news campaign coverage of non-parliamentary parties. On TV monitored by the ODIHR EOM, the Socialist Party (SP) and the Democratic Party (DP) dominated the news coverage. Unattributed campaign coverage was prevalent, but no measures were taken to address it.

The Complaints and Sanctions Commission (CSC) dealt with its cases in a transparent and inclusive manner. However, the CSC applied a narrow interpretation of the rules on the use of administrative resources, with such practices often going unsanctioned. Narrow statutory criteria for who may appeal a decision limits access to an effective remedy. The Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) played a positive role in investigating electoral corruption, and the new coordination mechanism between SPAK, the CEC, and the General Prosecutor's Office was seen as having a possible deterrent effect. However, some ODIHR EOM interlocutors questioned the effectiveness of efforts against politically connected organized crime.

The legal framework provides for full rights for political participation of national minorities and campaigning in minority languages is permitted. Some minority political parties maintained that the electoral system, including the requirement to stand in all electoral districts, was a barrier for smaller parties. The CEC produced election materials and voter education in the languages of national minorities, but these were limited and not observed to be widely distributed.

Under the Electoral Code, election observers have the right to follow the process at all levels, and electoral subjects are also allowed to nominate observers. However, a lack of funding for local civil society, notably from international donors, limited their capacity to undertake a comprehensive observation of these elections, reducing the level of scrutiny of the election process.

Election day was calm in most areas and transparent, but with a lack of adherence to procedures observed in many voting centres. While voting was assessed positively in 95 per cent of observations, there was a fairly high number of negative assessments, notably regarding procedural shortcomings and some pressure on voters. Among the more serious irregularities that were observed there were incidents of intimidation and party observers and affiliates interfering in the process, inducements and allegations of vote buying. Further, the secrecy of the vote was frequently compromised due to the layout of polling stations, overcrowding, and interference. More than half of the polling stations observed were not adequately accessible for persons with disabilities to vote independently. Electronic voting generally proceeded without hindrance, although many voters appeared unfamiliar with the process, and some electoral officials lacked clarity on their roles.

The counting proceeded in an orderly manner in many places, although some procedural shortcomings were noted as was a chaotic atmosphere in some locations. The count suffered delays in some places due to the late arrival of counting teams or last-minute changes to members of counting teams appointed by political parties. There were also delays in completion of the counting of OCV ballots due to disputes over ballots from Greece. The envisaged electronic transmission of results from e-voting centres was cancelled, and a manual transmission was conducted at the district level instead. Following a series of challenges against the results the CEC undertook several recounts.

This report offers recommendations to support efforts to further enhance the integrity of elections in Albania and bring them closer in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. Priority recommendations include: undertaking comprehensive reform of the electoral legal framework through an inclusive and consultative process; ensuring stability of election administration by depoliticizing nomination procedures for the lower-level election administration; enhancing voter awareness of procedures for e-voting; ensuring a level playing field by preventing the misuse of office and state resources; and, clearly defining which pre-election activities constitute campaign expenses. ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.

II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Following an invitation to observe the 11 May 2025 parliamentary elections and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) established an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 2 April. The mission, headed by Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, consisted of a 12-member core team based in Tirana and 26 long-term observers (LTOs) who were deployed on 10 April throughout the country. The ODIHR EOM remained in Albania until 22 May to follow post-election developments.

For election day, the ODIHR EOM was joined by delegations from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the European Parliament (EP) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM). Farah Karimi (MP) was appointed by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office as Special Co-ordinator and Leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission. Björn Söder (MP) was the Head of the OSCE PA delegation. Simone Billi (MP) led the PACE delegation and Michael Gahler (MEP) was the head of the EP delegation. Each of the institutions involved in this IEOM has endorsed the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation. On election day, the IEOM consisted of a total of 318 observers from 47 countries, including 188 observers deployed by ODIHR, a 96-member delegation from the OSCE PA, a 22-member delegation from the PACE and a 12-member delegation from the EP.

The ODIHR EOM assessed the compliance of the electoral process with OSCE commitments, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections, as well as domestic legislation. This final report follows a Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions which was released at a press conference in Tirana on 12 May.²

The mission wishes to thank the authorities of Albania for their invitation to observe the elections, and the Central Election Commission (CEC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their assistance. The mission also expresses its appreciation to other state institutions, the judiciary, political parties, media, civil society organisations, international community representatives and other interlocutors for their cooperation.

III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Albania is a parliamentary republic, with legislative powers vested in the 140-member parliament elected for four-year terms. The government is led by the prime minister and has broad executive powers. The president is the head of state and is elected by parliament for a five-year term. On 5 December 2024, President Bajram Begaj called the parliamentary elections for 11 May.

The parliamentary elections took place in a highly polarized political environment. The EU accession process featured prominently in the political discourse, with the ruling Socialist Party (SP) campaigning on a 2030 membership target and highlighting negotiation milestones. Opposition parties criticised the use of EU integration rhetoric as a distraction from domestic issues such as the standard of living, corruption, and democratic backsliding. The introduction of out-of-country voting (OCV) for the first time in these elections was generally seen as an important milestone.

The political landscape is dominated by the SP, led by Prime Minister Edi Rama, and the main opposition Democratic Party (DP), led by Sali Berisha. The SP has won three consecutive parliamentary elections since 2013 and further consolidated power in the 2023 local elections.³ Internal conflicts within the DP led to a legal dispute over official party representation, which was resolved in June 2024. Several factions split from DP, and three splinter parties were formed in 2024.⁴

² See the previous [ODIHR election-related reports on Albania](#).

³ In the 2021 parliamentary elections, SP won 74 seats; the alliance led by the Democratic Party "Alliance for Change" (DP) gained 59 seats; the Socialist Movement for Integration 4 seats; and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) 3 seats. In the 2023 local elections, the SP won 52 mayoral contests, the DP-led Together we Win Coalition 7, and the Greek Ethnic Minority for the Future Party 1.

⁴ Three parties were established as spin-offs from DP: Euroatlantic Coalition, formed by the former DP leader, Lulzim Basha; the Opportunity Party, led by Agron Shehaj; and the Right 1912 party – by Enkelejd Alibeaj.

In October 2024, former President Ilir Meta, leader of the Freedom Party (FP) was arrested on allegations of corruption. The following month, house arrest measures against Sali Berisha – which had been in place since December 2023 – were revoked, although he awaits trial on corruption charges.⁵ Several DP-led protests took place in late 2024 and early 2025, driven by concerns over the perceived erosion of democratic institutions, allegations of government corruption and the misuse of state resources. In addition, DP called for a caretaker government to oversee the parliamentary elections. The protests were also a response to several opposition-related high-profile arrests and investigations, which some saw as politically motivated. In February, Erion Veliaj, the mayor of Tirana and a prominent member of SP, was also arrested on corruption charges.

Albania has a substantial legal framework to support women's participation in political life, and several new laws have been adopted that include a gender dimension.⁶ Women's participation in politics and in decision-making has increased in recent years. In the outgoing parliament, women held 50 out of 140 seats (36 per cent), and half of the ministerial posts. However, persistent gender stereotypes and a lack of internal party mechanisms to support women's participation in the political process still act as a barrier to women's advancement. In the new parliament the number of women elected was again 50.

IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Parliamentary elections are primarily regulated by the 1998 Constitution and the 2008 Electoral Code, complemented by a set of regulations issued by the CEC.⁷ Albania is party to major international legal instruments related to democratic elections.⁸

The legal framework provides an adequate basis for conducting democratic elections, but a number of shortcomings and ambiguities undermine legal clarity and create uncertainty in implementation.⁹ The Electoral Code was amended significantly in July 2024 and February 2025, introducing changes to the electoral system, campaign finance rules, and for the first time – OCV, as required by a Constitutional Court ruling.¹⁰ Additionally, legal provisions declared unconstitutional in 2021 were subsequently

⁵ In 2023, the Special Anti-Corruption prosecutors (SPAK) charged Sali Berisha with corruption linked to his time as prime minister (2005–2013).

⁶ Including the Law for Protection from Discrimination; the Law on Measures Against Violence in Family Relations; the Law on Social Care Services in the Republic of Albania; the Code of Employment; Law on Social Assistance in the Republic of Albania; Law for Promoting Employment. In 2024, the government launched consultations regarding the revision of the 2008 Law on Gender Equality.

⁷ Other relevant laws include the 2000 Law on Political Parties, the 2001 Law on Demonstrations, the 2013 Law on Audio-Visual Media, the 2015 Law on Decriminalization, the 2008 Law on Gender Equality and the 2024 Law on Personal Data Protection.

⁸ Including the [1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#), [1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#), [1979 Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW\)](#), [2003 UN Convention Against Corruption](#), [2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#), [1950 European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms \(ECHR\)](#), [1995 Framework Convention on National Minorities](#), [2004 UN Convention against Corruption \(UNCAC\)](#). In 2023 Albania signed the [Second Additional Protocol to the Cybercrime Convention](#). Albania is a member of the Council of Europe's European Commission for Democracy through Law (5.1.2.e Commission) and Group of States against Corruption (GRECO).

⁹ For instance, it is unclear what timeframe applies for regulations prohibiting the use of administrative resources for electoral purposes and there are no provisions regulating online campaigning.

¹⁰ On 9 December 2022, the Court determined that the absence of legislation enabling Albanian citizens residing abroad to vote constituted a violation of their constitutional rights and obligated the parliament to establish provisions facilitating out-of-county voting within a year.

repealed.¹¹ Notably, close to the election day the electoral system was amended following an agreement between the SP and DP without an inclusive public consultation, contrary to international good practice.¹²

Some ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations were addressed, including revising the nationwide threshold for independent candidates and removing the possibility for political party leaders to compete in several electoral districts. However, many long-standing recommendations remain unaddressed, including on the composition of lower-level election commissions, suffrage rights of persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, criminal liability for defamation, independent media coverage during electoral campaigns, interim campaign finance reporting, and the extension of campaign finance regulations to third parties. This raises concerns about the persistent lack of political will to address longstanding deficiencies in the electoral legal framework and underscores the need for comprehensive reform through an inclusive and consultative process.

To address outstanding ODIHR recommendations as well as various ambiguities and inconsistencies, the electoral legal framework should be comprehensively reformed through an inclusive consultative process well before the next elections, in line with international standards and good practice.

The parliament is elected through a proportional system from twelve multi-member electoral districts corresponding to administrative regions. The allocation of seats per district is based on the number of citizens, aiming to ensure the equality of the vote. Minor deviations persist despite the legal obligation and the efforts to make the number of voters required to elect a candidate as close as possible in all districts.¹³ Under the new electoral system, each party or coalition presents one closed and one preferential list per district and for all districts.¹⁴ Each closed list must contain a number of candidates equal to one-third of the number of seats in the district (rounded to the closest number), and a preferential list exactly the same number of candidates as there are seats in the district. The gender quota provides that one in every three candidates in both the closed and the preferential lists shall belong to the less represented gender. The gender quota shall also be respected in the final distribution of mandates in the preferential list.

A party or coalition must pass a one per cent nationwide threshold to qualify for seat allocation in any of the districts, and the total number of seats per party in each district is determined proportionally to the number of valid votes received.¹⁵ For each party, seats won in a district are first assigned to candidates on the closed list (until it is exhausted), and any remaining seats are distributed to candidates

¹¹ The Constitutional Court ruled in 2021 that the criteria for allocating parliamentary mandates were unconstitutional, specifically the threshold required for re-ordering preferential list candidates and the one per cent national threshold imposed on independent candidates.

¹² Section II.2.b of the [2002 Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) recommends that “The fundamental elements of electoral law, in particular the electoral system proper, membership of electoral commissions and the drawing of constituency boundaries, should not be open to amendment less than one year before an election, or should be written in the constitution or at a level higher than ordinary law.” Paragraph 25 of the 2023 ODIHR [Guidelines](#) on Democratic Lawmaking which prescribes that “All interested parties and stakeholders should have the opportunity to access the lawmaking process, be informed about it and be able meaningfully to participate and contribute.” See also Section II.A.5.IV of the Venice Commission’s Rule of Law [Checklist](#) related to the public access to draft legislation.

¹³ Currently, Kukës is the only district that deviates by more than 10 per cent from the national average, however due to a small size of this district (with only 3 seats elected), transferring another mandate to this district would introduce an even larger deviation.

¹⁴ The closed lists are ordered by the party, and the preferential lists are in alphabetical order, and each voter can select one candidate.

¹⁵ Mandates are allocated by ranking quotients derived from dividing each electoral subject's votes by successive divisors (1, 2, 3, etc.) up to the total number of seats in the district. Contestants win as many seats as the number of their quotients that rank within the available seats. For independent candidates, votes are divided only by one.

from the preferential lists, based on the number of preferential votes they receive. Several small parties challenged the new system in the Constitutional Court, arguing it benefits the two dominant parties, undermines the real possibility for the open list candidates to win a seat and fails to respect the constitutionally imposed preferential voting requirements. While the Constitutional Court found the system constitutional, as the law does not violate the requirement related to candidate lists, it could still result in substantial control or influence of party leaders over parliamentary representation, in part due to a lack of internal party democracy, as most mandates are inevitably allocated to closed lists candidates regardless of the number of votes received by candidates on the open lists.¹⁶

V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The elections were administered by the CEC, 93 Commissions of Electoral Administration Zones (CEAZs) and 5,225 Voting Centre Commissions (VCCs). Counting was conducted regionally by Ballot Counting Teams (BCTs) in 93 Ballot Counting Centres (BCCs), one in each zone, plus one for OCV ballot counting. The CEC comprises the State Election Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner, the Regulatory Commission (RC), and the Complaints and Sanctions Commission (CSC).¹⁷ CEC members are elected by the parliament with no less than three-fifths of the votes. Only three out of 12 CEC members are women.

Overall, the CEC administered the elections transparently and met legal deadlines. CEC sessions were announced in a timely manner, open to stakeholders, including political parties, who regularly participated, and were livestreamed. The CEC was responsive to stakeholders, including collaborating with civil society organizations and political parties and sharing draft regulations with them for their review. In general, the CEC acted inclusively and enjoyed a high level of confidence among its stakeholders.

However, the CEC faced technical challenges in the overall management of the elections. Several regulations were amended up to a week before election day, including an instruction manual on vote counting procedures and processing and counting of postal ballots from abroad. Consequently, some key information was not disseminated to polling officials, parties, and other stakeholders in a timely manner.¹⁸ Some stakeholders perceived certain CEC members politicized in their decision-making and there were instances where the delineation of competencies between the Commissioner and Regulator appeared blurred.¹⁹

The CEAZs were responsible for organizing the elections in their respective areas, appointing the members of the VCCs and BCTs, and staff for tabulating results.²⁰ CEAZs and lower-level election officials are nominated by political parties, despite previous ODIHR and Venice Commission

¹⁶ The Court rejected the complaint, stating that the system was in compliance with Article 64.3 of the Constitution, according to which “the law on elections guarantees that no less than two-thirds of the multi-name list should be subject to preferential voting and ensures gender representation.”

¹⁷ The Commissioner has broad executive authority and represents the CEC. The Deputy Commissioner has a specific function to oversee the use of voter ID technology. The Regulator adopts sub-legal acts while the CSC examines complaints against decisions of the Commissioner and CEAZs, rules on the invalidity of voting and election results, and may impose sanctions at the Commissioner’s request.

¹⁸ Section II, paragraph B, point 3 of the [2024 Venice Commission Revised Interpretative Declaration on the Stability of Electoral Law](#) states that “In the electoral field, legal certainty means that the confidence in democratic elections in line with international standards should not be undermined by late amendments to primary or secondary legislation, including from electoral bodies.”

¹⁹ According to the Regulator, the Commissioner had exceeded his authority in several key areas including: IT system audits; procedures for approving annual financial audits of political parties; implementing e-voting pilot programs; and creating regulations governing the collection and administration of preliminary election results.

²⁰ According to the CEC, 18 special VCs were established, 16 in correctional facilities, and two in care homes.

recommendations to allow for non-partisan appointment of election commissioners.²¹ CEAZs were comprised of 57 per cent experienced members who served in previous elections, while 251 members were serving for the first time. The CEAZs met the legally required 30 per cent quota for the under-represented gender, with women comprising 31 per cent of members; however, women had limited presence in leadership roles which underscored the minimal nature of this compliance.²²

To ensure greater participation of women, the CEC should ensure that lower-level election commissions are gender balanced, including in the appointment of women in leadership positions.

Overall, the CEAZs acted professionally and held regular public meetings. Prior to election day the CEAZs faced several challenges in finalizing the composition of VCCs in remote areas and in hiring staff, mostly due to insufficient nominations by the DP, SDP and FP.²³ Last-minute replacements of CEAZ members by some political parties were disruptive but did not impact overall preparations.²⁴ Political parties recalled or replaced over 231 CEAZ members out of 744 (31 per cent).²⁵

The day before the election, approximately 22 per cent of VCCs remained incomplete. On election day, 20 per cent of VCCs comprised fewer than 7 members as required by law, instead having between 4 and 6 members. The CEC informed the ODIHR EOM that approximately 1,828 (35 per cent) of all VCC members were replaced; 200 replacements (9 per cent) occurred one day prior to election day.²⁶ In most instances, parties replaced their members at their discretion; however, the DP informed the ODIHR EOM that some of their members were changed following alleged threats.²⁷

To ensure the stability of the election administration, consideration should be given to depoliticising the nomination procedure of lower-level election administration and limiting arbitrary, last-minute replacements of commission members to ensure adequate and timely training for all members.

To enhance coordination in addressing potential violations around voting centres (VCs), CEAZs appointed two members of each VCC as security coordinators, one member from the largest party in parliament and another from the second largest party. They monitored the external area of the voting centres, including entrances, courtyards, and the perimeter up to 150 meters, to identify unauthorized gatherings or persons directing voters.

Each BCT comprised four members appointed from both the ruling party/coalition and the main opposition. The CEAZ faced challenges in the appointment of the BCTs: half of the CEAZs reported late or incomplete appointments and 30 per cent of the second shift members were not appointed. Counting was undertaken in two stages, first the ballots from all VCs for closed lists were counted and packed, then ballots from all VCs for preferential seats were counted.

The CEC trained 36,000 election staff through a cascade training program.²⁸ While the trainers were generally well prepared, the sessions observed by the ODIHR EOM lacked a standardised methodology and, in some cases, sufficient materials. On several occasions, the training sessions were poorly attended.

²¹ Of the 741 CEAZ members: 279 were from the DP, 279 from the SP, 93 from the SDP, and 90 from the FP.

²² Women comprised about 26 per cent of all CEAZ Chairs, Deputy Chairs and Secretaries.

²³ In cases where parties cannot propose sufficient VCC staff, the CEC appoints them from a recruitment pool. On 7 May, the CEC informed the ODIHR EOM that only 80 per cent of VCCs were fully constituted.

²⁴ Many replacement members served in previous elections as VCC or BCT members.

²⁵ The DP had 81 replacements, the SP and the SDP each had 58 replacements, and the FP had 34 replacements.

²⁶ Section II.3.1.f of the [2002 5.1.2.e](#) of Good Practice in Electoral Matters recommends that “the bodies appointing members of electoral commissions must not be free to dismiss them at will”.

²⁷ For example, DP informed the ODIHR EOM that 20 VCC staff in Unit 8 in Tirana have withdrawn due to pressure.

²⁸ Four master trainers and 76 regional trainers used a mix of lecture style and interactive sessions.

To strengthen the capacity and professionalism of lower-level election commissions, the CEC should develop a standardized cascade training curriculum including easy-to-understand manuals and information sheets.

Positively, the CEC conducted a comprehensive information campaign to raise awareness about voter registration, prevent electoral crimes such as vote buying, clarify prohibited practices including the misuse of public resources, and explain election day procedures including marking the ballot and using e-voting machines. The campaign targeted youth and women voters, as well as persons with disabilities and national minorities. The CEC developed eight information spots broadcast on social networks, TV and radio and translated some electoral information into minority languages and subtitled video spots. In addition, the CEC used accessible formats such as sign language interpretation for TV spots and provided some voter information and materials in Braille. Concerns were raised about insufficient education on the new electoral system and ballot marking procedures, potentially impacting some voters' ability to cast their votes correctly and independently. At times, some election information was not readily available to the public on the CEC's website due to an on-going substantial update.

According to the CEC, there are approximately 26,000 registered voters with disabilities. By law, voters in the country must vote in person at voting centres, as there are no provisions for homebound voting or other special voting arrangements. Persons with disabilities, unable to vote independently, could request assistance from a family member or another voter in the voting centre. To improve accessibility of polling sites, the CEC instructed CEAZs to install ramps, provide signage, and barrier-free access, and trained CEAZ and VCC staff on assisting voters with disabilities. Despite these efforts, on election day observers reported that many voting centres still lacked adequate access for persons with disabilities (see *Election Day*).

When determining the location of voting centres, election authorities and municipalities should take proactive measures to ensure accessibility to and within the voting centres for persons with disabilities.

For the first time, OCV was conducted through postal voting, widely regarded as a landmark electoral development. There was an adequate regulatory framework for OCV, although some aspects such as the counting procedures were adopted late.²⁹ Voters received ballots for the electoral district of their last registered address in Albania and their completed ballots had to be received by the CEC by 7 p.m. on 11 May to be counted at the designated BCC.³⁰ The OCV processing centre in Tirana was accessible to observers and its operations were livestreamed.

²⁹ Electoral law amendments related to the counting and evaluation of postal ballots were introduced in February 2025, three months before elections. Subsequently, the CEC adopted several regulations related to out-of-country voting with some delays (two regulations were adopted in March 2025).

³⁰ By law, ballots with an entry stamp or tracking information confirming arrival in Albania by the deadline would be counted. Diaspora voters could submit queries if they did not receive their ballots.

VI. THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE ELECTION

Biometric voter identification was implemented in all voting centres and functioned mostly as foreseen.³¹ When fingerprint scanning failed, election officials used paper-based backups. Most voters cast paper ballots, while the phased introduction of electronic voting (e-voting) and vote counting continued on a limited scale.

The Electoral Code requires technology pilots to cover no less than 10 per cent of voters. However, on 25 April 2025, in contravention of the law, the CEC Regulatory Commission authorised e-voting pilots in two electoral zones covering 1.4 per cent of registered voters.³² This was a result of a political stalemate on the issue and a request from the DP to limit the exercise.³³ The late decision, made only a few weeks before election day, created uncertainty for the affected electoral zones during the immediate pre-election period. Consequently, the vendor was contracted to support the CEC only shortly before the elections. These events highlight the need for greater institutional resilience against political pressure and more uniform procedures for implementation of technologies in elections.

If the scaling-up of electronic voting is considered in the future, then the use of voting technologies should be managed in a comprehensive, transparent and integrated manner.

Each VC with e-voting was equipped with two touchscreen devices that produced a printed receipt, for each vote. Voters could view their receipt through a transparent window before it was deposited into a sealed ballot box.³⁴ After VCs closed, each machine was supposed to tally the votes, transfer the results electronically and print a tally report. A total of 10 percent of all ballot boxes, including those from electronic voting, are subject to manual recount.

The e-vote device closing process at VCs, including the printing and transmission of e-vote tallies, was halted following a request from the DP, based on concerns that the results might be published prematurely. Instead, the voting devices and ballot boxes were transported to CEAZs where tallying began in the morning of 12 May; however, results were not transmitted and published within the envisaged timeframe. This decision signalled a continued lack of political trust in the system, raised questions about accountability and due process, and undermined confidence in election technology.

To safeguard integrity and enhance public trust, decisions regarding the use of technology in elections should adhere to the existing regulatory framework, and should not be made in response to political pressure.

The CEC managed biometric identification, electronic voting pilots, and its various election information systems through private contractors and CEC staff, with little reliance on government IT services.³⁵ Compared to previous elections, and in line with good electoral practice, the CEC was less dependent

³¹ Each VC has one offline device containing the voter lists from all VCs. Voters are identified by scanning a biometric ID, or the passport or ID card data is compared with the data on the device. A paper receipt with voter's information and photo is printed, and a fingerprint is scanned in lieu of a signature.

³² The 2025 pilot covered 75 VCCs with 51,505 registered voters, (31 VCs with 22,290 registered voters in Tirana, and 44 VCs with 29,215 voters in Vorë).

³³ DP representative singled out the two EAZs at the [session of the Regulatory Commission](#) on 28 April. In October 2024, during consultation with the CEC their [objections](#) underlined that issues from the 2021 and 2023 were not insufficiently addressed, and there was limited time available to do so. The CEC [stated](#) in 2024 that the DP remains sceptical and must agree before expansion. In 2023, the DP Chairperson had [denounced](#) the pilot as "a monstrous, digitally cooked manipulation."

³⁴ Voters had the option of leaving the ballot blank and could re-vote once (in which case the first vote is printed as an invalid ballot). Paper ballots were available as a contingency but not used in parallel.

³⁵ The CEC provides technology management and logistics, offers tech support, recruits and trains the device operators, and manages its own infrastructure.

on the equipment vendor who in previous elections configured the device and provided full technical support. Technical requirements were aligned with the law, and the use of technology was documented and managed in a sustainable manner.³⁶

Elections are considered critical information infrastructure by law.³⁷ Notably, the CEC has undergone information security management system certification.³⁸ The National Cyber Security Authority supported the CEC with additional security testing, technical assessments and recommendations for improvement; in 2025, the special focus was on securing OCV registration platforms and the personal data of diaspora voters. While several Albanian institutions have been a target of politically motivated cyberattacks in recent years, ODIHR EOM interlocutors did not report concern over election-related foreign cyber interference and no cybersecurity incidents were reported to have impacted the elections.

Election day operations lacked uniformity in setting-up and operating of electronic ID and e-voting devices. Some e-identification devices and e-voting machines malfunctioned, causing disruptions. Procedures varied notably on election day, with some VCC members and a few device operators demonstrating unfamiliarity with their responsibilities. While the CEC operated professionally, it is short-staffed and challenges persisted at the district and voting centre level regarding the capacity of technical operators.

The CEC organized a series of technology demonstrations on the streets to try to increase voter awareness on e-voting, but those observed by the ODIHR EOM were not particularly proactive.³⁹ On election day, voters often could not operate e-voting devices independently and frequently required verbal assistance from device operators. Older and less technology-literate voters were particularly struggling. The lack of proactive, targeted and tailored voter education for those unfamiliar with smart devices undermines universal suffrage and trust in the process, as voting systems are not easily understood and used by all voters.⁴⁰

Voter education efforts on e-voting should intensify to enhance voter awareness of the procedures and ensure all voters are able to vote independently.

A random three per cent sample of e-ID and electronic voting devices were subject to public usability testing demonstrations, which political parties, observers and the media were able to participate in, contributing to the transparency. ODIHR EOM interlocutors generally expressed confidence in the technology, but some concerns were expressed regarding a lack of trust, mainly by the opposition.⁴¹

While the Electoral Code does not require independent audit or certification, the CEC made efforts to align with international standards by considering previous ODIHR recommendations on election technology. In addition to conducting internal tests, an independent contractor performed security tests of the CEC servers, website and the biometric and electronic voting devices, in line with previous ODIHR recommendations. However, the CEC's transparency regarding these security tests was limited.

³⁶ The political parties and the public have access to documents detailing the technology used, procurement and management processes.

³⁷ The [obligations](#) under the 2024 [Cybersecurity Law](#) designating independent institutions as [critical information infrastructure](#) focus on reporting to the National Cyber Security Authority.

³⁸ ISO27001 certification is based on independent audit of information security controls, documents and processes. It does not include technical assessment or testing.

³⁹ The CEC held voter awareness demonstration for two weeks in five locations across the e-voting area.

⁴⁰ According to the [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)5\[1\]](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on standards for e-voting (Appendix I) “[t]he voter interface of an e-voting system shall be easy to understand and use by all voters.”

⁴¹ During the functional testing of voter verification devices on 28 April, political activist Altin Goxhaj [questioned](#) their trustworthiness.

Apart from information on the public tender, the CEC did not publish additional details about the security tests. While it is understandable that sensitive security information, cannot be disclosed, the CEC also did not communicate the scope, methodology, or summary of the results of such tests, which could have enhanced public and stakeholder confidence.

VII. VOTER REGISTRATION

Albanian citizens aged 18 years or older on election day are eligible to vote. Citizens whose legal incapacity is declared by a court decision cannot vote, at odds with international obligations prohibiting discrimination based on disability.⁴² Citizens serving a prison sentence for committing certain crimes may not vote.⁴³

To comply with international standards and to ensure universal suffrage and equal treatment before the law, all restrictions to the right to vote based on intellectual or psychosocial disability should be removed, including those based on individual assessment by court.

Voter registration for in-country voting is passive, based on the civil registry. Voter lists are extracted from the National Civil Status Register and maintained by the General Directorate of Civil Status within the Ministry of Interior (MoI). Overall, the voter registration process was transparent, and electoral stakeholders had confidence in the inclusivity and general accuracy of the voter lists. Voters over 100 years of age are automatically removed from voter lists and must confirm their status for inclusion, which may place an undue burden on these voters.⁴⁴ Beyond this, voters can only be removed from the national register in case of death or at their own request.

Electoral subjects are eligible to request a full copy of the voter list which enhanced the transparency of the voter registration process, despite concerns it may raise regarding data privacy.⁴⁵ Voters were given sufficient opportunity to review their information in the voter list, both in person and online, until a day before election day.⁴⁶ As required by law, the CEC appointed two auditors to assess the accuracy of both the in-country and out-of-country voter lists. The auditors reviewed voter allocation to voting centres monthly, starting six months before election day, and reported that the process was successfully handled. The CEC published the final voter lists on 2 April with 3,713,761 registered voters, including those residing abroad.⁴⁷

⁴² Articles 12 and 29 of the 2006 [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD) requires States Parties to “guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others”. According to the UN CRPD Committee’s 2014 General Comment No.1, “person’s decision-making ability cannot be a justification for any exclusion of persons with disabilities from exercising their political rights, including the right to vote, the right to stand for election”. In Paragraph 9.4 of its 2013 Communication No. 4/2011, the Committee states: “an exclusion of the right to vote on the basis of a perceived or actual psychosocial or intellectual disability, including a restriction pursuant to an individualized assessment, constitutes discrimination on the basis of disability”.

⁴³ In line with Article 45 of the Constitution, the Law on Decriminalization denies voting rights for those serving a prison sentence for committing crimes listed in more than 80 articles of the Criminal Code (ranging from election related offences to severe crimes).

⁴⁴ The GDSC identified 181 such voters.

⁴⁵ Paragraph 4.1.3. of the 2024 Council of Europe [Guidelines](#) on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data “Consistent with the principle of data minimisation, data processed in voter registers and voters lists should be limited to that necessary for the registration and authentication of voters”.

⁴⁶ For any corrections and inclusions to the voters list, a voter must apply at the latest 24 hours before election day to the district court, which must decide no later than 6 hours before the closing of the polls.

⁴⁷ The 2023 census by the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), stated the number of residents of Albania had decreased to 2.4 million from 2.8 in 2011.

Eligible voters with official residence permits abroad could register for OCV. Following an extensive voter information campaign for diaspora, the CEC conducted voter registration from 11 January to 4 March. Voters had to upload their Albanian biometric IDs (issued after 2009), residence permit issued by an authority in the host country with a proof of address (e.g. utility bill or a bank statement if not included in permits).⁴⁸ Initially, the CEC required valid Albanian IDs but amended their decision to provide for those with expired biometric documents to register.⁴⁹ The final OCV voter list was published on 11 March with 245,935 voters from 85 countries.⁵⁰ Some 41,000 applicants were rejected mainly for lacking official residence permits or proof of their address in the host country.

By law, eligible voters must present a valid biometric passport or identity card to vote. However, according to the MoI, 360,808 citizens, some of whom reside in-country, have expired identification documents.⁵¹ On 7 May, four days before election day, the Council of Ministers extended the validity of expired identification documents until 31 May, enabling affected persons to vote.

VIII. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Any eligible voter has the right to stand for elections, except those serving a prison sentence based on a final court decision for certain crimes. This right may also be restricted for citizens convicted under a non-final court decision in certain jurisdictions, as well as for individuals subject to an international arrest warrant or those deported from specific states.⁵² Additionally, the Constitution outlines categories of officials whose positions are deemed incompatible with the right to stand.⁵³

The CEC registered eight political parties and three coalitions by the 12 March deadline.⁵⁴ Of these, only the Albanian National Alliance Party, was led by a woman. Parties and coalitions were required to submit two types of candidate lists: a closed list with a pre-determined order and a separate list for preferential voting, ordered alphabetically. Candidates could not appear in multiple electoral zones or on both types of lists simultaneously. In line with a prior ODIHR recommendation, the possibility for party leaders to compete in several electoral districts was revoked. Some smaller and minority parties informed the ODIHR EOM that they had difficulties in identifying a sufficient number of candidates in all districts. While failing to submit enough candidates in any district could result in registration denial, all eleven electoral subjects met the legal requirements and were registered. Overall, ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised no concerns over the registration process.

⁴⁸ The voters' last residence in Albania, according to which the voters are allocated to electoral districts is taken from the national population register.

⁴⁹ The CEC received numerous queries from voters abroad regarding expired Albanian biometric IDs prompting the government to issue a regulation on 5 February to allow the use of expired IDs.

⁵⁰ The largest groups of out-of-country registered voters were in Italy, with 91,223 (37.1 per cent), and Greece, 68,386 (27.8 per cent). In addition, there were large number of voters registered in Germany 25,499 (10.4 per cent), the United States 20,653 (8.4 per cent) and the United Kingdom 17,227 (7 per cent).

⁵¹ According to the MoI, as of 11 May, 262,848 Albanians had no identification and 550,633 had expired passports.

⁵² The Law on Decriminalization refers to deportation from an EU Member State, Australia, Canada and the United States. In addition, citizens convicted for certain crimes or deported, even in the absence of a final court decision, from an EU Member State, Australia, Canada and the United States are barred to stand for election, as those under an international search warrant.

⁵³ President of the Republic, judges, prosecutors, military, police, national security officers, diplomats, mayors, prefects, chairs and election commission members, and high state administration officials determined by law.

⁵⁴ Coalition "Democratic Party – Alliance for a Great Albania" (PD–ASHM), Party "Lëvizja Bashkë" (Movement Together, "Lëvizja Atdheu" (Homeland Movement), Party "Euro-Atlantic Coalition" (KEA), Socialist Party of Albania, Coalition "Albania Becomes – Adriatik Lapaj Initiative", Party "Albanian National Alliance", Party "New Democracy Alliance", Coalition "Right-Wing for Development", Party "Mundësia" (The Opportunity), Social Democratic Party.

The CEC verified candidates in line with the Electoral Code and the Law on Decriminalization.⁵⁵ Electoral subjects could remove and replace candidates before the CEC finalized the candidate lists. During registration, 16 candidates were disqualified based on their self-declaration forms, and affected parties resubmitted new candidates.⁵⁶ By the 25 March deadline, the CEC registered 2,046 candidates, of which 787 (38.47 per cent) were women.

IX. ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

The official campaign period commenced on 11 April and continued until 24 hours before election day.⁵⁷ The campaign was overall low-key, with a focus on small in-person events, door-to-door outreach, and on social networks. SP and DP organized large events, along with a limited number of rallies by smaller parties. Campaign posters were permitted in designated public spaces; however, contestants often did not use these. Some mayors failed to designate such spaces. SP, DP, and the Albania Becomes Initiative campaigned extensively abroad, especially prior to the official campaign period, while smaller parties mostly focused on social network outreach for the diaspora. The SP framed the elections as decisive in securing the path to EU membership, and emphasised past achievements in infrastructural and economic development. DP promised pension increases, a subsistence wage, tax cuts, and educational reform. Smaller parties appealed with claims of providing an alternative to the prevailing political duopoly, strengthening democratic institutions, fighting corruption, and improving the living standards, education, and healthcare.

The ODIHR EOM observed 88 campaign events, of which 69 featured women speakers. A total of 67 of these events were accessible to persons with disabilities, but none included sign-language interpretation. The campaign tone was often confrontational, with personal attacks between the two main parties and their leaders.⁵⁸ The SP aimed to discredit the opposition, while the DP accused the government of corruption, mismanagement, and links to organized criminal groups. Several contestants used discriminatory language, including offensive terms for persons with disabilities when referring to rivals or voters. In some instances, sexist language was used against women candidates, men, and the LGBTIQI community.

While contestants campaigned freely and voters had a choice among political alternatives, the playing field was uneven, with the ruling party benefiting from the use of administrative resources and institutional leverage. The law prohibits the use of state resources for campaigns, but allows campaigners to perform their official duties during the campaign. Shortly before and during the

⁵⁵ Each candidate must submit a self-declaration form among other documents supporting their candidacy. The CEC verification process is conducted in co-operation with General Directorate of Prisons (Criminal Records Office) and Civil Registry Office. Procedures are regulated by the Law on Decriminalization, an Assembly by-law, as well as the Commissioner's guidelines.

⁵⁶ Sixteen candidates had committed criminal offenses that constituted a legal impediment to candidacy under the legislation, based on the information provided by the General Directorate of Prisons. Five of the candidates were from the New Democracy Alliance, four from the Albanian National Alliance, two from the Homeland Movement and the Right for Development each, and one from the Social Democratic Party, the Opportunity Party, and the Democratic Party each.

⁵⁷ Campaign silence was generally observed, however, several contestants, including Mr. Berisha, continued posting campaign related content on their social network accounts, while Mr. Rama gave interviews and posted content related to the cycling event Giro d'Italia. On 10 May, the CEC called on political contestants to respect the campaign silence, including on social networks.

⁵⁸ Mr. Rama repeatedly referred to his opponent Mr. Berisha as a 'swamp owl', and other opposition leaders as 'swamp creatures'. Mr. Berisha, in turn, referred to Mr. Rama as 'Antichrist', a 'monster' and to the government as 'narco-dictatorship'. Agron Shehaj, the leader of Opportunity Party accused Adriatik Lapaj, the leader of Albania Becomes Movement, of benefiting from insider deals in his capacity as a lawyer. In response to these allegations, according to media reports, Mr. Lapaj [filed](#) a defamation lawsuit.

campaign period, ministers and the prime minister engaged in official events, held inspections of facilities, promoted and launched investment and infrastructural projects, overall contributing to the ruling party's advantage, and at times explicitly campaigning.⁵⁹ In addition, several large-scale events during the campaign period were used to enhance the public image of the ruling party.⁶⁰

To remove any ambiguities in the legislation regarding campaigning, the use of administrative resources for electoral purposes should be prohibited from the call of the elections until election day.

The law prohibits proposing or adopting legislation granting benefits to specific segments of the population within four months of election day. While this prohibition was formally respected, some policies approved before this period resulted in benefits being distributed to certain groups of voters during the electoral period, including a special bonus for pensioners.⁶¹ On 9 May, the Council of Ministers implemented a December 2024 law, waiving the fines imposed between 2015 to 2024 for certain unauthorized constructions, non-compliance with COVID-19 restrictions, and for agricultural and livestock producers, with the apparent purpose of influencing voters.

Furthermore, in the four months period prior to election day, public institutions and state entities must report any public activities to the CEC at least five days in advance. The CEC may prohibit certain events as constituting a potential misuse of state resources, which cannot then be reported in media. Of the 4,522 official events registered during this period, the CEC prohibited only 18, raising doubts about its capacity to review all submissions and its narrow interpretation of the law. Although many of these activities formally complied with legal provisions, their volume created campaign opportunities for the incumbent, particularly through local level institutions in regions where senior government officials served as SP political coordinators.⁶² The wide use of such public activities for electoral purposes further reinforced the ruling party's undue advantage, and blurred the line between the state and party, contrary to paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.⁶³

The CEC deployed 96 individuals to monitor compliance with campaign regulations and published the reports online. Monitors did not track campaign expenditures, and the scope of the reported violations

⁵⁹ For example, on 18 April, the Minister of Health and Social Protection [promoted](#) the government's investment Lezhë Regional Hospital; on 19 April, the prime minister, deputy prime minister, and the minister of Infrastructure and Energy [presented](#) the new gasification project in the city of Korçë. On 28 April, the Minister of Interior [presented](#) a new project for the production of military vehicles. The Prime Minister also [toured](#) the newly renovated Municipal Hospital of Mirditë on 18 April, the Psychiatric Hospital in Vlorë on [27 April](#), the construction site of a new school in Tirana on [28 April](#), presented the construction of a new high-tech facility in Shkozë on [28 April](#), and promoted the investments in Gjirokastër on [3 May](#). On 9 May, the prime minister inaugurated the Vlora International Airport, using it as a campaign message on the same day at a campaign event.

⁶⁰ Such events included the March Tourism Fair in Berlin – attended by ministers and the Prime Minister and widely reported – and the Albanian segment of the Giro d'Italia cycling event, scheduled for 9-11 May, coinciding with the electoral silence and election day.

⁶¹ A 9 January [Decision](#) of the Council of Ministers provided pensioners a spring bonus along with their monthly pension. Distribution of ALL 10,000 (approximately EUR 100) or ALL 5,000 (EUR 50), depending on the level of pension, started on 1 March. On 9 January, the Council of Ministers approved a zero interest loans for civil servants and other public administration employees, and on 10 January, state aid scheme in the form of grants for micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises. Municipal projects budgeted for in 2024 and initiated immediately prior to or during the elections included: road works in Durrës, Himarë, and Librazhd; invitation to tenders in Himarë, Mat, Roskovec, and Shkoder; and subsidies in Lezhë, Klos, and Tirana. In the 7 May decision, the Council of Ministers approved the establishment of a new technological and economic development zone in Shijak, authorized its land allocation, and designated the zone's developer.

⁶² The highest number of events were registered in municipalities in Fier region, where the Deputy Prime Minister is SP' political leader. High numbers of instances were also registered in Lezhë, led by the Minister of Justice and Gjirokastër, led by the Minister of Tourism. Opposition-led municipalities registered few or no such events.

⁶³ In paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document, the OSCE participating States committed to "a clear separation between the State and political parties"

was limited.⁶⁴ The CEC can investigate election-related administrative offences *ex officio* or through complaints filed online by any interested party. Of the 166 complaints received, a significant portion was about the use of public resources, road paving, prohibited public-private partnerships, social assistance, subsidies, and public procurement tenders, made in connection with heads of public institutions, mayors, and ministers. In most decisions issued by 9 May on these matters, the CEC found no violations since the budgets were allocated before the four-month restriction period; in 37 cases, it declined to investigate. Overall, the CEC reached a decision only on 118 of the complaints by election day. The lack of an expedite procedure addressing complaints raises concerns about the efficiency of the current system for investigating and deciding upon election-related administrative offences by the CEC.

To ensure a level playing field, authorities should take measures to prevent misuse of office and state resources. Proportional dissuasive sanctions should be imposed swiftly against such violations.

The ODIHR EOM received widespread reports alleging pressure on municipal employees by their superiors to support or participate in the SP's campaign.⁶⁵ While the SP organised several campaign events targeting women, concerns were raised that some attendees were instructed by their public sector employers to attend.⁶⁶ Many ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised concerns about the influence of patronage networks across the country, alleging that promises of future public employment, administrative favours, social benefits, and permits were used as a leverage to secure votes. Further, ODIHR EOM also received allegations of voters fearing reprisals for attending events of opposition parties, and instances of intimidation of opposition and some ruling party candidates.⁶⁷ Several interlocutors stated that vulnerable communities were particularly exposed to pressure from the public authorities to vote for the SP. Such practices are inconsistent with international standards that require voters to be free from undue influence or coercion.⁶⁸

Several allegations of vote-buying were noted during the campaign, and investigations were initiated in 37 cases.⁶⁹ A number of ODIHR EOM interlocutors alleged links between political parties and organized crime in some areas, with organized crime groups intimidating and threatening voters and, at times, candidates.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ From 11 January to 8 May, CEC monitors submitted 1,739 reports, including 150 violation reports, the majority of which were related to the location of electoral offices and campaign materials, as well as campaign materials lacking proper labelling.

⁶⁵ Allegations and first-hand reports of municipal employees pressured by their superiors to attend campaign events by SP were made in Durrës, Fier, Has, Korçë, Peshkopi, Shkodër, Tirana, and Vlorë. Allegations of pressure on municipal employees to take part in the SP campaign, or support it, including financially, were made in Devoll, Elbasan, Gjirokastrë, Korçë, Lezhë, Pukë, Shkodër, and Tropojë. Allegations of pressure on public sector employees to relay information about their family or friends living abroad were made in Dibër, Durrës, Elbasan, Fier, Korçë, Lezhë, Shkodër, and Tirana. On 7 May at the DP closing rally in Elbasan, party officials informed the ODIHR EOM that participants had been bussed from the neighbouring municipalities of Cërrik and Belsh.

⁶⁶ In 16 events held by the SP for women, observed by the ODIHR EOM, the majority of attendees were public sector employees. In four of these events, some attendees informed the ODIHR EOM they had been instructed to attend by their employer.

⁶⁷ First-hand reports of threats were made in Berat, Durrës, and Fier. Allegations of voters refraining from attending opposition party events for fear of retribution were made across the country, and with particularly concrete and elaborated accounts in Durrës, Elbasan, Gjirokastrë, Lezhë, Korçë, Kukës, and Tirana. Further, allegations of voters being intimidated by the police were reported in Fier. On 4 May, family members of an SP candidate were allegedly threatened in Lezhë.

⁶⁸ See paragraph 19 of the 1996 [General Comment 25](#) to Article 25 of the ICCPR, which states that “[p]ersons entitled to vote must be free to vote for any candidate [...] and to support or to oppose government, without undue influence or coercion of any kind which may distort or inhibit the free expression of the elector’s will.”

⁶⁹ Specific allegations of vote buying were made in Elbasan, Korçë, Mirditë, Shkodër, and Tirana.

⁷⁰ Such allegations were made to the ODIHR EOM in Durrës, Elbasan, Tirana and Vorë, where the alleged perpetrator was reported to be linked to an organized criminal group.

To help protect the free expression of the will of electors, law enforcement bodies should make all efforts to identify and investigate all allegations of electoral violations, in a thorough, timely and transparent manner. Voters should be systematically informed about applicable mechanisms for reporting violations, including protection for whistle-blowers and safeguards against repercussions.

Campaigning on social networks is not expressly regulated, and no regulatory authority is designated by law to monitor campaign activities on social networks or detect disinformation, manipulative content and inauthentic behaviour.⁷¹ However, the CEC set up a special unit to monitor the social network accounts of 150 public institutions during the campaign and received training on detecting election-related misinformation.⁷² From 11 April to 9 May, the CEC found 10 posts by public institutions potentially violating its regulations and referred them for administrative investigation. The CEC chose not to investigate complaints regarding posts by public institutions supporting the SP campaign. The CEC made some effort to coordinate with Meta but this did not result in a mechanism for the CEC to flag potentially manipulative content or to request content to be removed.⁷³ The overall scope and effectiveness of CEC's monitoring of the online campaign remained limited.

Following inclusive consultation with relevant stakeholders, campaign activities and political advertising on social networks, including their financing, should be regulated while respecting the right of the freedom of expression.

During the electoral period, the ODIHR EOM followed the campaign activities of 23 accounts of political parties, coalitions and key candidates on Facebook and Instagram. Contestants actively engaged across these platforms, focusing on video messages, sharing content from campaign events, and promoting campaign promises.

The accounts of DP, SP, and Sali Berisha were the most active. Although most political parties, including DP and SP, signed a voluntary Code of Conduct on Digital Campaigns prior to the campaign period, several contestants shared divisive, discriminatory, and manipulative content.⁷⁴ The campaign on social networks often included animated videos, memes, and AI-generated content.

Some civil society organizations monitored the campaign on social networks, including the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network and the Coalition for Reforms, Integration and Consolidated Institutions, which monitored paid political advertisements on social networks. The monitoring showed instances of coordinated inauthentic behaviour used to artificially amplify the engagement, especially of the third-party accounts that disseminated attack ads against the opposition.⁷⁵

⁷¹ See section II.3 of the Explanatory Report of the 2024 Venice Commission's [Interpretative Declaration](#) on the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters as concerns digital technologies and artificial intelligence.

⁷² Before elections, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) held a training for the CEC regarding methods to monitor hate speech, disinformation, and spending on social networks. In addition, CEC stated that it monitored Facebook accounts of 77 contestants for paid political advertisements.

⁷³ On 16 April, the CEC met with Meta representatives regarding elections. The ODIHR EOM reached out to Meta to discuss its activities regarding the upcoming elections but it did not receive a response.

⁷⁴ For example, Prime Minister Edi Rama shared a post from an 18 April meeting with pensioners in Gjirokastër, where he said: "half of the men in the country are retarded". In a post from a 22 April meeting with pensioners in Gjirokastër, Mr. Rama said: "If you are choosing between the EU and the swamp, and you choose the swamp, that means you're not well — politically, you're autistic." On 14 April, Deputy Prime-minister Belinda Balluku posted in reference to DP: "They steal, kill, slander, and curse"; on 23 April, Mr. Berisha stated in reference to Rama's allies: "Your kind will be declared terrorists...there will be no place for you on Earth"; on 24 April, Mr. Berisha accused Mr. Rama and Ms. Balluku of orchestrating a "mafia-driven land grab". Mr. Rama frequently used AI-generated videos when targeting Mr. Berisha.

⁷⁵ See 5 May [article](#) on the BIRN report.

Despite the government's ban on the social network platform TikTok, contestants reportedly used it actively for campaigning, especially the Together Movement and its leader, as well as Mr. Berisha.⁷⁶

Only 1 of the 11 electoral contestants had a woman as leader. Women candidates campaigned across the country, but had limited visibility in the media. Several parties had messages regarding the importance of women's economic empowerment, but there were no significant policy debates regarding issues of particular importance to women. Long-standing systemic obstacles, including weak internal party democracy and limited access to financing continue to hinder women's advancement in politics.

To increase women's political participation, public funding could be linked to concrete inclusivity measures. Political parties should consider steps to reform internal party mechanisms to increase women's representation within party structures, including access to funds.

The accessibility of the campaign for persons with disabilities remained limited and sign-language interpretation was not provided at campaign rallies. Some parties demonstrated inclusive practices by including candidates with disabilities on their lists. Political platforms varied in their approach to disability rights and social inclusion, ranging from comprehensive proposals for enhanced social inclusion, pension increases, and job initiatives, to general advocacy for vulnerable groups without specific details.

X. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Campaign finance is primarily regulated by the Electoral Code and the Law on Political Parties. Despite some recent changes, no comprehensive reforms have been enacted since 2020. The current framework lacks effectiveness, undermining campaign finance transparency and the equality of opportunities for parties and contestants.

Political parties may finance campaigns from public and private funds, including their own funds, bank loans and donations from citizens and domestic legal entities.⁷⁷ The ODIHR recommendation on extending public funding for independent candidates was not implemented. On 21 March, well before the start of the campaign, the CEC distributed ALL 131,201,816 (approx. EUR 1.3 million) of public funding among the eleven electoral subjects in proportion to the past election results. In 2025, the self-financing ceiling was raised from ALL 1 million to ALL 3 million (approx. EUR 30,000). Donations, including in-kind, are capped at ALL 1 million (approx. EUR 10,000) per donation, without a limit on the aggregate amount. Only contributions above ALL 50,000 (approx. EUR 500) must be made through a designated bank account. Loans are neither capped nor specifically regulated, for example, in terms of repayment obligations. Although required by law, none of the contestants published a database of the donations, loans, or credits obtained, further undermining transparency. Furthermore, the CEC did not require them to take any action as the CEC is not provided with the legal instruments to enforce compliance with this legal provision.

The regulated period covers political party and coalition expenditures from the official announcement of elections until the end of the campaign, including those incurred before the official campaign period. However, the law lacks clear guidelines on what type of pre-electoral activities constitute campaign

⁷⁶ See an [article](#) by the data analytics company Pikasa.

⁷⁷ Political parties with parliamentary representation receive funds annually from the state budget. Parties that secured at least one per cent of votes in the previous parliamentary elections are eligible for public funding for the electoral campaign, allocated proportionally based on their share of the vote.

expenses and are subject to oversight and potential sanctions, falling short of international good practice.⁷⁸

In line with good practice, the law should clearly define which pre-electoral activities constitute campaign expenses, ensuring they are subject to appropriate reporting, oversight and potential sanctions.

The current spending ceiling for a party or a coalition is ALL 326,456,950 (approx. EUR 3.3 million).⁷⁹ The 2025 legal amendments excluded candidate expenditure from party spending limits, without setting a separate ceiling for candidates. This legal ambiguity may allow for parties and coalitions to circumvent spending limits, impacting transparency and accountability and allowing for a disproportionate advantage to the largest parties.⁸⁰

To ensure a level playing field, the legal framework should also include a reasonable ceiling on campaign expenses for candidates running on party or coalition lists.

The campaign expenditure for online activities should, be included in the overall spending limit and reported, as the law requires reporting all campaign spending. However, online campaigning, paid political advertising on social network platforms, and third-party spending are unregulated, enabling unchecked use of funds in the campaign.⁸¹ These loopholes create pathways for the potential use of illicit and untraceable funds and circumvention of applicable rules.

To enhance transparency, authorities should consider regulating online and third-party campaigning, and define relevant conditions for third-party campaigning and adequate reporting and sanctioning mechanisms.

Contestants are required to submit campaign finance reports to the CEC through an electronic Financial Reporting Platform within 60 days from the official announcement of the results. A previous ODIHR recommendation on introducing interim financial reporting before election day was not implemented. The lack of interim reporting limits transparency and deprives voters of timely information and runs counter to international good practice in campaign finance oversight.⁸² Several parties noted that they had received training and support from the CEC regarding reporting requirements. Although the

⁷⁸ Paragraph 262 of the 2020 [ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) “Legislation should provide clear guidelines regarding which activities are not allowable during the pre-election campaign, and income and expenditures used for such activities during this time should be subject to proper review and sanction.”

⁷⁹ For these elections, campaign spending limits were increased from a maximum of three times to a maximum of five times the highest amount received by an electoral subject from public funds.

⁸⁰ Paragraph 19 of the [ICCPR General Comment No.25](#) states that “reasonable limitations on campaign expenditure may be justified where this is necessary to ensure that the free choice of voters is not undermined, or the democratic process distorted by the disproportionate expenditure on behalf of any candidate or party”. Paragraph 248 of the 2020 [ODIHR and the Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) states that “It is reasonable for a state to determine the criteria for electoral spending and a maximum spending limit for participants in elections.”

⁸¹ According to Meta Ad Library, from 9 April until 8 May, contestants spent a total of up to ALL 21,410,830 (EUR 217,870) on political ads. Of these, DP spent ALL 2,746,960 (EUR 27,950), the Unity for Human Rights Party ALL 1,173,220 (EUR 11,940), Albania Becomes Movement ALL 490,050 (EUR 4,990). Among candidates, Agron Shehaj, Opportunity Party’s leader, had the highest spending with ALL 1,909,780 (EUR 19,430), Belind Këlliçi of DP with ALL 763,100 (EUR 7,770), and Vullnet Sinaj of SP with ALL 748,960 (EUR 7,620).

⁸² Article 7.3 of the [UNCAC](#) provides that states take measures “to enhance transparency in the funding of candidatures for elected public office”. Paragraph 247 of the [2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission Joint Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) states that “Voters must have relevant information on the financial support given to political parties, as this influences decision making and is a means of holding parties accountable”. See also Paragraph 261 which states that “It is good practice to require the following reports: [...] Reports providing oversight bodies and the public with preliminary information on campaign incomes and expenses of parties and candidates several days before election day”

reporting forms and the online reporting platform have undergone technical improvements, several ODIHR EOM interlocutors continued to express concerns about difficulties in searching for and comparing data.

Within five days of the announcement of the results, the CEC appointed auditors to review campaign finance reports. Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed concerns about the auditor's capacity to detect illegal funding or undeclared expenses, including online, due also to their limited mandate.

To strengthen transparency and accountability, the CEC should be granted additional financial and human resources, along with an enhanced mandate, to enable a meaningful audit of campaign finance reports, including the power to investigate donation sources.

XI. MEDIA

A. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

The independence, diversity and integrity of news available to voters are eroded by the dependence of most media on non-transparent financing by political and business interests, often reliant on government contracts. Concentration in media ownership further undermines the plurality of news sources, contrary to international standards.⁸³ According to some ODIHR EOM interlocutors, the ownership of some major advertising sales houses by political interests hampers a fair distribution of advertising revenues, while a lack of reliable audience measurement prevents a transparent and accountable allocation of public advertising.⁸⁴ The vast majority of media outlets are perceived to be affiliated with the ruling SP.⁸⁵

State authorities, in order to fulfil their positive obligations under international law, should promote an independent and diverse media environment that is free from political and corporate influence. Comprehensive media-ownership regulation should be adopted and its effective implementation reinforced. Furthermore, measures should be introduced to safeguard editorial autonomy against influence by business and political interests.

The Public Broadcaster Albanian Radio-Television (RTSH) is not considered to enjoy a wide audience, and the bi-partisan appointment procedure of both the RTSH and the Audio-visual Media Authority (AMA) management does not provide for their *de facto* independence.⁸⁶

⁸³ According to the European University Institute [2024 Media Pluralism Monitor](#), the top four owners in the broadcast market control 72 per cent of revenues and 87 per cent of the audience share. Paragraph 40 of the [UN Human Rights Committee \(UNHRC\) General Comment No. 34](#) stipulates that the states parties should take appropriate action “to prevent undue media dominance or concentration by privately controlled media groups in monopolistic situations that may be harmful to a diversity of sources and views.”

⁸⁴ See also [assessment](#) by the Chairperson of the Association of Albanian Journalists.

⁸⁵ According to [Balkan Investigative Reporting Network \(BIRN\)](#), among the 10 largest TV stations (based on financial statements) *TV Klan* and *Top Channel* occupy 64 per cent of the market. The only TV station among the 10, perceived to be aligned with the DP, *Syri TV*, in 2023, “accounted for 1.7% of the total television market revenue, or 113 million lekë. The declared revenue fell by 22% compared to 2022.”

⁸⁶ On 6 September 2024, the RTSH Director resigned following concerns [raised](#) about the positions he held with the SP in the past. On 17 February 2025, the Parliament [dismissed](#) the RTSH Steering Council for irregularities in the selection of a new RTSH Director. A new Steering Council was appointed on 17 March, which eventually [elected](#) a new Director on 25 April 2025. As part of the EU accession negotiations, Albania has committed, in its “Rule of Law Roadmap”, to amend the legal framework to “ensure that the regulator has a pluralistic composition, is composed of qualified individuals, represents the media community and enjoys autonomy from government”. The “[Open Dialogue on Freedom of Expression](#)”, launched by the EU and CoE on 31 January 2025, is expected by stakeholders to provide specific recommendations for legal amendments.

Legislative changes should ensure effective depoliticization and genuine institutional independence of both the Public Broadcaster and the Audio-visual Media Authority in line with international good practice. These changes should include broad public consultation with independent media and civil society representatives.

Widespread interference by media owners in editorial autonomy, along with self-censorship among journalists, negatively affect the information made available to the public. In addition, journalists face repeated verbal and, at times, physical assaults by public officials.⁸⁷ Furthermore, journalists report shrinking access to government representatives, including the prime minister, with a declining number of press conferences, and journalists at times being prevented from attending events, contrary to international standards.⁸⁸ Editorial news coverage is often replaced by material prepared by government bodies, undermining editorial integrity. The Media and Information Agency (MIA), under the prime minister's office, centralizes and filters information issued about the government and public institutions.⁸⁹ Several civil society-founded and donor-funded media outlets provide investigative and public interest journalism, but are affected by recent cuts in international funding.⁹⁰ On election and post-election day, ODIHR EOM LTOs and civil society organisations reported a number of cases of intimidation and obstruction of journalists work.⁹¹

B. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Overall, the Constitution and legislation provide protection for freedom of expression. However, despite previous ODIHR recommendations, defamation remains a criminal offence. Journalists have faced numerous civil and criminal defamation cases in recent years, including strategic litigation against public participation (SLAPP) cases.⁹²

Defamation should be fully decriminalized and civil defamation provisions brought in line with international standards on freedom of expression.

On 22 April 2025, the Constitutional Court annulled previous decisions allowing the seizure of phones and computers from a journalist reporting on an organized crime case under the Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) investigation. The Court deemed the protection of journalists' sources an integral part of media freedom and therefore of freedom of expression and ruled the seizure as a disproportionate interference in the applicant's right as well as the public's right to information. Previously, the UN Human Rights Committee had ordered an interim measure, halting further processing of the seized material until a final decision.⁹³

⁸⁷ The European Centre for Press & Media Freedom [reported](#) 45 incidents against media freedom in 2024. On 27 March 2024, the Committee to Protect Journalists [called upon](#) public officials, including prime minister Edi Rama, to stop abusive language and intimidating behaviour towards journalists. On 26 March 2025, [safejournalists.net reported](#) a recent physical assault on a journalist by a Tirana official.

⁸⁸ Paragraph 13 of the [UNHRC General Comment 34](#) states that “[t]he free communication of information and ideas about public and political issues between citizens, candidates and elected representatives is essential. This implies a free press and other media able to comment on public issues without censorship or restraint and to inform public opinion.”

⁸⁹ In October 2021, just before the launch of the MIA, six international media NGOs [urged](#) to cancel its establishment as it could “be used to further solidify control over the flow of public information”.

⁹⁰ According to Center for Quality Journalism, six projects funded by the US State Department were either suspended or terminated. Among them were the Investigative Network Albania (INA) which funded and published investigations and the “31 minutes” investigative TV program, broadcast on all major TVs.

⁹¹ See [safejournalists.net](#)

⁹² A Safejournalists.net [study](#) reported a total of 8 criminal and 65 civil defamation cases in 2023.

⁹³ See [Respublika.org](#)

The 2023 Broadcasting Code requires objective and impartial news coverage. However, the Electoral Code does not provide for equitable news coverage for non-parliamentary parties, contrary to OSCE commitments, further disadvantaging them in an already unfavourable media environment.⁹⁴

The rules in the Electoral Code for the allocation of airtime in editorial coverage should be amended to reduce the advantage given to the largest parliamentary parties and ensure a more equitable allocation of airtime for all contestants.

On 6 March, the Council of Ministers temporarily banned access to TikTok, a broad restriction incompatible with international standards.⁹⁵ According to some ODIHR EOM interlocutors, the ban had an additional detrimental impact on the ability of all contestants, including non-parliamentary parties, to campaign on an equal footing.

C. MEDIA MONITORING FINDINGS [ACCESS DETAILED INFORMATION](#)

According to most ODIHR EOM interlocutors, the footage of the electoral campaign in TV news was provided by the political parties themselves instead by journalists. The TV stations monitored by the ODIHR EOM failed to mark footages prepared by political parties, as required by the Electoral Code, and the CEC took no measures to address this practice.⁹⁶ In addition, several interlocutors reported that some interviews with candidates, broadcast in current events programs, were paid for, in violation of the law. Both party-produced footage in news and paid for coverage of candidates, *de facto* equates to political advertising and disadvantages contestants with less financial means.

Footage prepared by political parties or government authorities should be appropriately labelled as political advertising and therefore banned from news and other editorial programs. Effective measures to address violations should be in place and should be enforced in a timely manner.

ODIHR EOM monitoring revealed that the two largest parties dominated the news coverage.⁹⁷ On RTSH, A2 CNN, Top Channel and TV Klan, the SP received, 45, 46, 48 and 57 per cent respectively, while the DP - AMAC got 41, 48, 45 and 43 per cent.⁹⁸ On average, 83 per cent of this news coverage was presented in a neutral or positive tone. None of the other contestants received more than 5 per cent of coverage on any of the monitored TV stations. Although several discussion programs were regularly broadcast, they did not bring together prominent candidates or party leaders from different parties. RTSH followed its legal obligation to provide free airtime to contestants. Paid political advertising on

⁹⁴ Parties winning over 20 per cent of seats in the previous parliamentary elections are supposed to receive twice as much coverage in news than other parliamentary parties. Coverage of non-parliamentary parties is at the discretion of the broadcasters but may not exceed the coverage provided to parliamentary parties with less than 20 per cent of seats. Paragraph 7.8 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) requires the participating States to “Provide that no legal or administrative obstacle stands in the way of unimpeded access to the media on a non-discriminatory basis for all political groupings and individuals wishing to participate in the electoral process”.

⁹⁵ Paragraph 43 of the [UN Human Rights Committee \(UNHRC\) General Comment No. 34](#) stipulates that any restriction on websites, blogs, or other online communication platforms must be narrowly tailored and content-specific. Broad or generic bans, “blanket bans”, on the operation of such systems, including internet service providers or search engines, are incompatible with international standards on freedom of expression. Three civil society organizations challenged this decision to the Constitutional Court on 25 March.

⁹⁶ The AMA sent daily and weekly monitoring reports to the CEC, in line with the law. However, the monitoring did not assess the tone of the coverage. By election day, the CEC took 20 decisions, mostly on violations of paid advertising and public opinion polls provisions. The CEC received the monitoring report covering the period 1 – 10 May only on 19 May, one week after the elections.

⁹⁷ From 8 April to 9 May, the ODIHR EOM conducted a quantitative and qualitative monitoring of four TV stations and three online news media: RTSH, TV Klan, Top Channel and A2 CNN, as well as *panorama.al*, *lapsi.al* and *reporter.al*.

⁹⁸ The figures exclude coverage of political actors in their institutional capacity. Current events and discussion programs displayed more imbalance.

TV was only purchased by the two dominant parties. The monitored online media outlets displayed stronger bias (see Media Monitoring Annex). Ultimately, the constrained media environment and the failure to implement legal requirements in good faith deprived voters of independent, diverse, and robust information about the electoral contest.

XII. ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The legal framework for resolving election disputes includes administrative procedures followed by the opportunity for judicial appeal. Observers may only appeal the denial of their accreditation, while voters can only challenge their exclusion from the voter list through the district courts. Only political parties, not individual candidates on the list, can challenge the election results. A previous ODIHR recommendation to broaden access to effective remedies in electoral disputes was not implemented. This narrow approach to legal standing is at odds with OSCE commitment and good practice.⁹⁹

The CSC examines appeals against CEC and CEAZ decisions, including those challenging election results, and must adjudicate within 10 days. The CSC also imposes sanctions upon requests from the CEC. Complaints and appeals against all other decisions of the CEC can be brought to the Electoral College of the Court of Appeals of Tirana (Electoral College), whose decisions are final. As of 20 May, the CSC reviewed 20 complaints against CEC decisions, mostly concerning alleged pre-campaign irregularities. It accepted 12 appeals, overturned five CEC decisions and imposed four administrative fines of ALL 3,000 to public institutions for not complying with their obligations to report the activities and negligence of CEAZ members.¹⁰⁰ The remaining complaints were rejected. The process was transparent, with public sessions and participation of the parties involved. Although the CSC's decisions were generally well-reasoned, they reflected a narrow interpretation of the rules on the use of administrative resources in a campaign, limiting their application strictly to the official campaign period,¹⁰¹ at odds with good electoral practice.¹⁰² As of 20 May, the Electoral College had adjudicated and dismissed four appeals.¹⁰³ The sessions were public and decisions were published on its website with reasoning, albeit with a delay.

As of 7 July 2025, 22 complaints regarding the election results had been filed with the CSC. Ten were dismissed during the preliminary examination stage, while 12 were admitted for examination on the

⁹⁹ Paragraph 5.10 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) commits participating States to provide everyone with “effective means of redress against administrative decisions, so as to guarantee respect for fundamental rights and ensure legal integrity”. Section II.3.3.f of the [Venice Commission’s Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) recommends: “All candidates and all voters registered in the constituency concerned must be entitled to appeal. A reasonable quorum may be imposed for appeals by voters on the results of elections”.

¹⁰⁰ After 11 May, the SP filed a complaint against the Commissioner’s decision to temporarily separate the OCV envelopes coming from Greece. CSC accepted the appeal and declared the decision invalid considering that the Commissioner overstepped its competencies and that there are no legal provisions for such a procedure. The Electoral College dismissed the appeal since in the meantime the CEC had already complied with CSC decision and ordered the recount of OCV ballots from Greece.

¹⁰¹ Article 91.1 of the Electoral Code provides that “Except in cases provided for by law, resources of public bodies or entities at central or local level, or any other type of entity where the state owns capital or quotas and/or appoints the majority of the supervisory body or the administrative body of the entity, may not be used or placed in support of candidates, political parties or coalitions in elections, regardless of the source of capital or ownership.” This article does not provide an explicit period for the applicability of the provision and the CSC interpreted it to apply only during the one-month official campaign period.

¹⁰² Article 13 of the 2016 ODIHR and the Venice Commission [Joint guidelines for preventing and responding to the misuse of administrative resources during electoral processes](#), stipulates a broader definition of the electoral process that “covers the multifaceted ways in which administrative resources may be misused during the entire electoral process, not only the official electoral campaign period.”

¹⁰³ These were regarding political party registration, ballot design, and the use of electronic voting and counting devices, OCV ballots from Greece.

substance. In four cases concerning Dibër, Tiranë, Durrës, and Fier, recounts were ordered by the CSC. The recount in Fier resulted in changes to the results. In the other three cases, the recounts had no impact on the results. All other complaints were dismissed due to lack of supporting evidence.¹⁰⁴

The Criminal Code defines 15 election-related criminal offences, most under the General Prosecutor's competence. As of 20 May, criminal proceedings were initiated in 34 out of 87 cases of alleged electoral crimes, including misuse of public office for electoral purposes, violation of the secrecy of the vote, and obstruction or intimidation of voters.¹⁰⁵ Four detention orders were issued in Elbasan while seven individuals were apprehended in the act of committing criminal offences.¹⁰⁶

SPAK has jurisdiction over cases of electoral corruption and crimes involving high-level public officials or organized crime. For the first time, SPAK established a nationwide investigative task force and launched an online platform for reporting electoral offences.¹⁰⁷ By 11 May, SPAK initiated 40 criminal proceedings from 189 reports, mostly concerning allegations of corruption. Notably, SPAK initiated nine proceedings *ex officio*. Cooperation between SPAK, the CEC, and the General Prosecutor's Office based on an inter-institutional protocol facilitated information sharing on electoral crimes, prioritization of the investigations and was in general positively assessed by ODIHR EOM interlocutors. SPAK was generally perceived as a trusted institution with a possible deterrent effect. However, some interlocutors raised concerns about the effectiveness of the police in handling election-related offences, particularly those involving organised criminal networks.

XIII. PARTICIPATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

The Albanian Constitution provides for full political, civil and social rights for minorities, and the Electoral Code guarantees voting and candidacy rights to all citizens regardless of ethnic background, race, religion or language. There are nine recognized national minorities in Albania, and according to the 2023 census, some 2.5 per cent of the population identify as belonging to a national minority.¹⁰⁸

Minorities were generally able to participate freely both as voters and as candidates, running with both the main national parties and with three national minority parties.¹⁰⁹ Issues related to national minorities or ethnicity were not prominent in the campaign and the national minority candidates often campaigned on issues affecting the general population. A few candidates from the Greek minority framed the issue of property rights as disproportionately affecting their community.

No restrictions on the use of minority languages during the campaign were observed. The CEC produced election materials in the languages of officially recognized national minorities. While most ODIHR EOM interlocutors did not come across actual use or distribution of these materials, they also confirmed

¹⁰⁴ In one case involving the request for the annulment of the electoral process in Dibër region, the annulment was rejected, but changes were made to the summary table reflecting vote count adjustments among the DP candidates.

¹⁰⁵ Five proceedings were registered at the Prosecutor's Office in Fier, eight in Elbasan, four in Tirana, three each in Gjirokastrë and Lezhë, two in Shkodër, Dibër, Saranda, Korçë and one each in Durrës, Vlorë and Kukës.

¹⁰⁶ Four in Tirana, one in Elbasan, Lezhë, and Fier.

¹⁰⁷ Of the 189 criminal reports registered between January to 11 May, 65 were submitted by citizens through the SPAK's online platform, with the remainder from police, DP, and the General Prosecutor.

¹⁰⁸ The [Law on Protection of National Minorities](#), in force since 2017, recognizes the Aromanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Egyptian, Greek, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Roma, and Serb national minorities.

¹⁰⁹ The Unity for Human Rights Party and Party for Europeanism and Integration of Albania were part of the DP-led coalition. The Macedonian Alliance for European Integration had an electoral agreement with SP, and its leader was included as part of the SP list.

that most individuals belonging to national minorities speak Albanian, and that language did not appear as a barrier to participation.¹¹⁰

No national minority party won a seat in parliament in these elections. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors argued that the current electoral system, with a requirement to stand in all districts, was a barrier for the national minority parties seeking parliamentary representation. Further, the system of closed/open lists – which prioritises individuals on parties’ closed lists over candidates receiving preferences in the open lists – makes it unlikely for national minority candidates running with one of the larger national parties to receive sufficient preferences to make it to parliament.

According to some interlocutors, voter education initiatives benefitting the Roma communities had increased since previous elections.¹¹¹ Nonetheless, Roma community members in some parts of the country remained unfamiliar with electoral procedures and received no specific voter education.¹¹² The ODIHR EOM noted that Roma voters in some areas were unclear about the exact locations of their voting centres, due in part to insufficient official communication.¹¹³ Attempts to buy votes from the Roma and Egyptian communities remained a considerable problem.¹¹⁴ While such malpractices targeted vulnerable populations in general, they affected specific national minorities to a larger extent.

XIV. ELECTION OBSERVATION

The Electoral Code provides for citizen and international observation at all levels of the election administration. In an inclusive manner, a total 3,814 observers from 47 national and 30 international organizations were accredited by the CEC.¹¹⁵ Civil society organizations informed the ODIHR EOM that a lack of funding, notably from international donors, reduced their capacity to conduct a comprehensive observation and deploy an adequate number of observers for election day. For instance, citizen observers were not present in 89.5 per cent of VCs observed during opening of polling. Parliamentary parties and coalitions could appoint permanent representatives to the CEC. Electoral subjects could appoint one observer to each CEAZ and VCC, and for each BCT, including for OCV.

XV. ELECTION DAY

Election day was generally calm and transparent but lacked procedural adherence in many locations during opening and voting, with some reports of voter intimidation and inducements. Overall, observers had sufficient access to observe the entire process. The large number of late changes of political party-nominated members of VCCs, even on the eve of elections, had a negative impact on the adherence to voting procedures and effectively reduced the transparency of the composition of VCCs. At 8 pm on election day, the CEC announced a voter turnout of 42.3 per cent.

¹¹⁰ The CEC informed the ODIHR EOM that posters in Macedonian were displayed alongside those in Albanian at VCs in Pustec, and in Greek at VCs in Dropull and Finiq. Voter education videos, broadcast on social networks and voter information leaflets were translated in eight minority languages and delivered to the State Committee for National Minorities, to be distributed in the respective regions by their own representatives.

¹¹¹ This was reported to the ODIHR EOM in Fier and Vlore.

¹¹² For example, as reported in Tirana. However, the CEC collaborated with the OSCE Presence in Albania to hold outreach meetings with members of the Roma and Egyptian minorities in several municipalities.

¹¹³ This was reported to the ODIHR EOM in Tirana.

¹¹⁴ This was reported to the ODIHR EOM in Fier, Korçë, Tirana and Vlore.

¹¹⁵ Based on figures provided by the CEC, it registered 2,879 domestic observers and 935 international observers,

A. OPENING, VOTING AND CLOSING

The IEOM observed opening in 127 voting centres, assessing the process negatively in nearly one-third of the observations. The large number of negative assessments was mainly due to late opening and several procedures not being adhered to. In the vast majority of the voting centres observed, voting started late, with 28 of them more than 30 minutes delayed, often due to technical issues or missing materials. In 26 cases, VCC members were unfamiliar with opening procedures, and in 17, the ballot box was not shown to be empty to those present. In 9 observations, the setup procedures for the biometric identification device were not followed. In 12 VCCs, unauthorised persons were directing or interfering in the work of the commission. In electronic voting centres, IEOM observers reported a failure by VCC members to follow the procedures in many instances.

The voting process was assessed positively in most cases. However, in 4.6 per cent of the 1,343 observations, a fairly high number, the process was assessed negatively, largely due to procedural shortcomings and some pressure on voters. Party observers were present in 79 per cent of the voting centres observed, although citizen observers were only found in 8 per cent.¹¹⁶ The lack of citizen observers in many places lessened the level of scrutiny of the process. Women comprised 30 per cent of VCC members and headed 25.5 per cent of observed voting centres.

IEOM observers reported that in 23 per cent of voting centres observed, voters could not always be identified by the voter identification devices, and in 24 per cent of the voting centres voters were not always checked for traces of ink. Some biometric identification device malfunctions caused interruptions, while in 23 per cent of voting centres observed, some voters' fingerprints could not be properly read. The layout of voting centres was assessed as inadequate for polling in 5 per cent of observations, compromising secrecy of the vote, which was not always respected in 12 per cent of voting centres observed. The secrecy of the vote was also compromised by the interference of party observers or VCC members. Group voting, mostly family voting, was observed in 11 per cent of voting centres and proxy voting, often for family members, in 3 per cent. Voters' understanding of voting procedures was negatively assessed in 13 per cent of observations, indicating a need for greater voter education on new voting procedures following the introduction of preferential lists.

Several significant violations and incidents were observed throughout the day. The IEOM noted tension or intimidation in 4 per cent of voting centres observed, often involving party observers or affiliates standing in the voting centre entrances and interacting with voters or interfering in the work of VCCs. Unauthorised persons, including party activists, were present in 2 per cent and were interfering in some instances. In 2.4 per cent of voting centres observed, there were indications of voters being induced to vote for a particular candidate, including allegations of vote buying. In 3 per cent of voting centres, observers reported unauthorised persons tracking who had voted. After polls closed, the CEC reported referring five incidents to the prosecutor's office, two in Tirana and one each in Elbasan, Korçë and Berat.

The CEC should take steps to prevent intimidation and undue influence on voters at voting centres, by strengthening the training and mandate of the voting centre security coordinators to ensure they are politically independent and empowered to act effectively on election day.

With regards to electronic voting, IEOM observers noted that while it generally proceeded without major problems, some concerns were evident. Many voters appeared unfamiliar with the voting device and some did not manage to vote within the three-minute time limit. Some VCC members and technology operators lacked adequate training on relevant procedures or clarity on their respective roles.

¹¹⁶ Following reports of some falsified accreditations, the CEC Regulatory Commission revoked all party observer accreditations for Vorë District on election day.

In several places observed, voters requiring assistance were mostly helped by the operators, but without using available visual materials that had been posted. The operators had been trained not to “cross the invisible line of secrecy” and observers reported they took great care to avoid stepping to the voters’ side of the screen, even when requested to do so.

There was a lack of adequate accessibility for persons with disabilities in 50 per cent of voting centres observed. The large number of voting centres, inaccessible for independent voting, clearly demonstrated a greater need for efforts to ensure accessibility for all voters. Additionally, the layout inside the voting centres was observed to be not suitable for persons with disabilities in 24 per cent of places visited. This, combined with the absence of a voting method for homebound voters, hospitalized or those with mobility issues, may have negatively impacted their participation.

The close of voting was assessed positively by IEOM observers in 86 of 88 reports. VCCs followed the closing procedures in most instances, although some unrest was reported in four cases. IEOM observers reported very positively on the receipt of materials at Ballot Counting Centres, although there was some overcrowding.

The transmission of e-vote tallies from machines directly to the CEC at the close of polling was cancelled due to a request from DP to avoid publication of early results. Instead, the voting devices containing their electronic ballot boxes were delivered to the relevant CEAZs in Tirana and Vorë, where the pilots were conducted, for tallying to start on the morning of 12 May. This process suffered delays and caused public confusion.

B. COUNTING AND RESULTS

IEOM observers followed counting in 66 of the 93 BCCs. Observers negatively assessed the process in 8 cases. General problems were largely linked to some tension (9 cases), overcrowding (7 cases), a lack of full access to the process (12 cases) and some interference by party observers (6 cases).¹¹⁷ There were 12 ballot boxes which were identified by the CEC as irregular and were not included in the count until final inspection.¹¹⁸ IEOM observers negatively assessed the individual ballot box counts in 8 cases, mostly due to observed procedural and transparency shortcomings, such as unused ballots not being counted first, and ballots not being shown to the camera installed for that purpose in the prescribed manner.

Overall, the counting process proceeded orderly, but in many counting centres, IEOM observers noted a chaotic atmosphere and contestation of some ballots in various locations. IEOM observers also reported delays in numerous areas which occurred due to the late arrivals of counters, last-minute training of BCTs, and late appointment of many BCT members.¹¹⁹ In Diber and Elbasan, IEOM observers reported that CEC officials were conducting training of counting centre members at midnight before vote counting began, indicating inadequate preparation due to the late replacement of party-nominated members. According to the CEC, in 30 per cent of large BCTs, political parties continued to change counting team members up to the announcement of results for closed lists, impacting the speed of the counting process. Copies of the results protocols were not given to party observers in 19 cases, limiting transparency.

¹¹⁷ In Durrës, IEOM observers reported instances of unauthorized persons with handwritten accreditations in BCTs.

¹¹⁸ Article 115.3 of the Electoral Code defines what is considered as an irregular ballot box which is assessed during the delivery to the BCC; criteria include missing security seals or an unorthodox box.

¹¹⁹ Counting was delayed in Durrës, Tirana and Vlore. Overcrowding occurred in Lezhe and Durrës. Durrës and Vlore reported a lack of counting staff.

To strengthen the capacity and professionalism of Ballot Counting Teams, the CEC should undertake specific training sessions on the counting procedures, develop a standardized training curriculum including easy-to-understand manuals and information sheets on the counting process.

In most instances the IEOM observed that counting was transparent and procedures were followed. Every counting table was organized with a camera and screens for observers to view the counting process. The process was well attended by party observers. However, IEOM observers noted that some handwritten protocols did not match digitally tabulated results, and there were delays in sharing copies of the protocols with the party observers and in one instance counting was briefly suspended, leading to the CEC revoking accreditation of domestic and party observers for that CEAZ.¹²⁰

By 16 May, the CEC had counted 147,024 (75 per cent) ballots, but 52,368 ballots from Greece were separated and were not counted at the time. The DP filed several requests to the CEC to separate ballots from Greece.¹²¹ They alleged improper delivery of OCV ballots (i.e. collection of ballots by one person on behalf of multiple individuals) or non-delivery.¹²² On 11 May, the CEC decided to separate the ballots from Greece but allowed counting from other countries to continue. On 12 May, the SP formally requested CSC to annul this decision. On 13 May, the CSC overturned the decision, allowing the ballots to be included in the count. On 14 May, the DP appealed this decision to the Electoral College, seeking to reinstate the original ruling, but this was dismissed. On 16 May, the CEC issued a final decision allowing the ballots from Greece to be counted. The following day counting resumed and counting of OCV was completed on 21 May. Of the 202,187 OCV ballots received by the CEC, 1,973 ballots (1 per cent) deemed invalid.

According to the law, voting results for both lists should be aggregated within 48 hours from the arrival of the materials at the CEAZs. None of the CEAZs met this requirement. Based on preliminary results, a total of 1,665,501 ballots were cast, of which 1,607,593 (96.52 per cent) were valid and 57,530 (3.45 per cent) invalid.¹²³

The post-election environment remained calm. Before the final results were published, the Prime Minister Edi Rama announced victory on 14 May, based on conclusive preliminary results. The DP organized a protest against the elections on 16 May, claiming the process was flawed, and on 20 May requested the CEC to withhold certification of electoral results until a full, independent audit of out-of-country voting process was conducted, citing procedural violations. Some leaders of smaller parties criticized the electoral system as limiting the ability of smaller parties to secure mandates proportionate to the number of votes received.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ In CEAZ Tirana 43, the count was briefly suspended for several hours due to a fight between SP party observer and secretary of the CEAZ. See Commissioner [decision](#) 1112 of 11 May, 2025.

¹²¹ The coalition "Democratic Party – Alliance for a Great Albania" submitted several requests to the CEC concerning the separation of envelopes received from Greece: 1) On 8 May under protocol no. 4026 "Request for the separate sorting of all Diaspora envelopes received from Greece."; On 9 May under protocol no. 4137 "Urgent request regarding ballot envelopes received outside the legal procedure from the diaspora at the CEC."; On 10 May under protocol no. 4208 "Urgency for taking measures regarding the mass of ballots received from Greece and those administered at the CEC by persons not authorized by law."; and on 11 May under protocol no. 4292 "Repeated request for the separation of electoral envelopes originating from Greece."

¹²² The CEC's contract with DHL states that ballots must be delivered to the individual voter.

¹²³ A total of 781 ballots were contested, of which 762 were in-country and 19 OCV.

¹²⁴ For instance, based on preliminary results, the Together Movement received 1.5 per cent of votes and 0.7 per cent of seats compared to the Albania Becomes Coalition which also received 0.7 per cent of seats but received 4 per cent of the votes. The Opportunity Party received 1.4 per cent of seats from 3 per cent of the votes, and the SDP also got 3 per cent of the votes but received 2 per cent of the seats.

The CEC published preliminary results on its website by region, municipality, administrative unit and VC. However, only results from the region and municipality were displayed. Preliminary results for in-country closed list began to be posted starting on 12 May and concluded on 18 May.

The CEC finalised the counting and tabulation processes across all 12 districts on 26 May. Shortly after, several electoral subjects filed formal complaints challenging the accuracy and integrity of vote counting procedures in various districts. In response to these appeals, the CSC, supported in some cases by the Electoral College decisions, ordered full or partial recounts of ballots in Tirana, Dibër, Durrës and Fier regions. The CEC commenced recounting on 17 June.

In Tirana District, a full recount was ordered across all 18 CEAZs. While several discrepancies were identified in the vote totals – both among candidates from the same party and across different electoral subjects – these variations proved insufficient to affect the distribution of parliamentary mandates.¹²⁵ Partial recounts were ordered in Dibër, Durrës and Fier districts. In Dibër, a partial recount, conducted following an appeal by the Coalition "Democratic Party – Alliance for a Great Albania", resulted in minor numerical adjustments to individual candidate totals.¹²⁶ In Durrës, a partial recount and inspection of electoral materials were initiated following multiple appeals. A total of 174 ballot boxes were examined, revealing a range of procedural irregularities.¹²⁷ In Fier, a partial recount and inspection was undertaken following an appeal by the coalition "Albania Becomes Initiative".¹²⁸ Most notably, the recount led to a shift between candidates from within the SP list: candidate Maldrita Bardho initially gained a mandate by a margin of ten votes, replacing Zegjine Çaushi. However, Bardho subsequently withdrew, effectively reinstating Çaushi's mandate. Additionally, the Commission initiated verification procedures for 94 ballot boxes from Gramsh and Peqin CEAZs (Elbasan region), revealing isolated discrepancies insufficient to alter electoral outcomes in these electoral zones.¹²⁹

On 28 August, 2025, the Regulatory Commission certified the final results of the May 11 parliamentary elections, approving the distribution of votes, mandates, and candidate lists for all electoral zones. The decision was adopted by a vote of three in favour and two against, following debates among commission members and party representatives.

XVI. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations as contained throughout the text are offered with a view to further enhance the conduct of elections in Albania and to support efforts to bring them fully in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. These recommendations should be read in conjunction with past ODIHR recommendations that have not yet

¹²⁵ A nine-day recount of 1,207 ballot boxes from the Tirana region revealed minor technical errors and vote adjustments, including the DP losing 612 votes and the SP losing 381, while 1,041 ballots were declared invalid.

¹²⁶ Most notably a deduction of 49 votes for Përparim Spahiu and an addition of 17 votes for Xhemal Gjunkshi. However, the modifications did not alter the overall allocation of mandates, and both the CSC and the Electoral College dismissed further legal challenges.

¹²⁷ These included mismatched security seals, missing documentation, inconsistencies in unused ballot counts, and a number of ballots bearing identifiers from incorrect voting centres.

¹²⁸ The inspection of ballot boxes and respective materials revealed discrepancies in ballot documentation, including the presence of ballots from one voting centre found in a box belonging to another, as well as mismatches in the number of unused ballots reported.

¹²⁹ These included approximately 15 ballots bearing single stamps or lacking stamps entirely, minor disparities of 1-2 ballots between the number of votes cast and the number of voters, and inconsistencies between unused ballot compared to official records.

been addressed. ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities of Albania to further improve the electoral process and to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.¹³⁰

A. PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To address outstanding ODIHR recommendations as well as various ambiguities and inconsistencies, the electoral legal framework should be comprehensively reformed through an inclusive consultative process well before the next elections, in line with international standards and good practice.
2. To ensure the stability of the election administration, consideration should be given to depoliticising the nomination procedure of lower-level election administration, also limiting arbitrary and last-minute replacements of commission members to ensure adequate and timely training for all members.
3. To strengthen the capacity and professionalism of Ballot Counting Teams, the CEC should undertake specific training sessions on the counting procedures, develop a standardized training curriculum including easy-to-understand manuals and information sheets on the counting process.
4. Voter education efforts on e-voting should be intensified with a focus on enhancing voter awareness of the procedures for e-voting and ensuring that all voters are able to vote independently.
5. To remove any ambiguities in the legislation regarding campaigning, the use of administrative resources for electoral purposes should be prohibited from the call of the elections until election day.
6. To ensure a level playing field, authorities should take measures to prevent misuse of office and state resources. Proportional dissuasive sanctions should be imposed swiftly against such violations.
7. In line with good practice, the law should clearly define which pre-electoral activities constitute campaign expenses, ensuring they are subject to appropriate reporting, oversight and potential sanctions.
8. Footage prepared by political parties or government authorities should be appropriately labelled as political advertising and therefore banned from news and other editorial programs. Effective measures to address violations should be in place and should be enforced in a timely manner.

¹³⁰ In paragraph 25 of the [1999 OSCE Istanbul Document](#), OSCE participating States committed themselves “to follow up promptly the ODIHR’s election assessment and recommendations”. The follow-up of prior recommendations is assessed by the ODIHR EOM as follows: 5 and 20 from the [final report on the 2019 local elections](#), 6, 8, 12, 13, 15 and 23 from the [final report on the 2021 parliamentary elections](#) and 15, 25 and 27 from the [final report on the 2023 local elections](#) are fully implemented. The recommendations 6 and 8 from the final report on the 2019 local elections, 7, 9 and 21 from the final report on the 2021 parliamentary elections and 9, 11 and 24 from the final report on the 2023 local elections are mostly implemented. The recommendations 1-4, 7, 12, 13 and 18 from the final report on the 2019 local elections, 1-3, 10 and 16 from the final report on the 2021 parliamentary elections and 1-4, 10, 12, 13, 16, 20 and 26 from the final report on the 2023 local elections are partially implemented. See also the ODIHR [electoral recommendations database](#).

B. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Election Administration

9. To strengthen the capacity and professionalism of lower-level election commissions, the CEC should develop a standardized cascade training curriculum including easy-to-understand manuals and information sheets.
10. When determining the location of voting centres, election authorities and municipalities should take proactive measures to ensure accessibility to and within the voting centres for persons with disabilities.
11. To ensure greater participation of women, the CEC should ensure that lower-level election commissions are gender balanced, including in the appointment of women in leadership positions.

The Use of Technology in Elections

12. To safeguard integrity and enhance public trust, decisions regarding the use of technology in elections should adhere to the existing regulatory framework, and should not be made in response to political pressure.
13. If the scaling-up of electronic voting is considered in the future, then the use of voting technologies should be managed in a comprehensive, transparent and integrated manner.

Voter Registration

14. To comply with international standards and to ensure universal suffrage and equal treatment before the law, all restrictions to the right to vote based on intellectual or psychosocial disability should be removed, including those based on individual assessment by court.

Electoral Campaign

15. Following inclusive consultation with relevant stakeholders, campaign activities and political advertising on social networks, including their financing, should be regulated while respecting the right of the freedom of expression.
16. To help protect the free expression of the will of electors, law enforcement bodies should make all efforts to identify and investigate all allegations of electoral violations, in a thorough, timely and transparent manner. Voters should be systematically informed about applicable mechanisms for reporting violations, including protection for whistle-blowers and safeguards against repercussions.
17. To increase women's political participation, public funding could be linked to concrete inclusivity measures. Political parties should consider steps to reform internal party mechanisms to increase women's representation within party structures, including access to funds

Campaign Finance

18. To ensure a level playing field, the legal framework should also include a reasonable ceiling on campaign expenses for candidates running on party or coalition lists.
19. To enhance transparency, authorities should consider regulating online and third-party campaigning, including by the entities affiliated with political parties, and define relevant conditions for third-party campaigning and adequate reporting and sanctioning mechanisms.
20. To strengthen transparency and accountability, the CEC should be granted additional financial and human resources, along with an enhanced mandate, to enable a meaningful audit of campaign finance reports, including the power to investigate donation sources.

Media

21. State authorities, in order to fulfil their positive obligations under international law, should promote an independent and diverse media environment that is free from political and corporate influence. Comprehensive media-ownership regulation should be adopted and its effective implementation reinforced. Furthermore, measures should be introduced to safeguard editorial autonomy against influence by business and political interests.
22. Legislative changes should ensure effective depoliticization and genuine institutional independence of both the Public Broadcaster and the Audio-visual Media Authority in line with international good practice. These changes should include broad public consultation with independent media and civil society representatives.
23. Defamation should be fully decriminalized and civil defamation provisions brought in line with international standards on freedom of expression.
24. The rules in the Electoral Code for the allocation of airtime in editorial coverage should be amended to reduce the advantage given to the largest parliamentary parties and ensure a more equitable allocation of airtime for all contestants.

Election Day

25. The CEC should take steps to prevent intimidation and undue influence on voters at voting centres, by strengthening the training and mandate of the voting centre security coordinators to ensure they are politically independent and empowered to act effectively on election day.

ANNEX I: FINAL ELECTION RESULTS¹³¹

Electoral Subject	Votes (In-Country)	OCV	Total	Percentage	Seats
Democratic Party – Alliance for a Great Albania Coalition	482,279	47,075	529,354	32.93	50
Together Movement	20,270	4,346	24,616	1.53	1
Homeland Movement	1,989	266	2,255	0.14	0
Euro-Atlantic Coalition Party	19,562	1,301	20,863	1.30	0
Socialist Party of Albania	733,922	122,255	856,177	53.27	83
Albania Becomes Initiative Coalition	49,464	14,800	64,264	4.00	1
Albania National Alliance Party	2,722	1,065	3,787	0.24	0
New Democracy Alliance Party	1,035	92	1,127	0.07	0
Right for Development Coalition	5,527	492	6,019	0.37	0
Opportunity Party	43,070	5,925	48,995	3.05	2
Social Democratic Party	47,561	2,329	49,890	3.10	3

	In-country	OCV	Total
Total number of voters on voter list	3,467,962	245,935	3,713,897
Total number of women voters on voter list	1,736,183	102,558	1,838,741
Total number of voters who voted	1,463,314	202,187	1,665,501
Number of invalid votes	55,557	1,973	57,530
Number of valid votes	1,407,647	199,946	1,607,593

¹³¹ Preliminary Results from the [CEC website](#).

ANNEX II: LIST OF OBSERVERS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

5.1.2.e

Netherlands
Sweden
Armenia
Austria
Austria
Austria
Austria
Belgium
Belgium
Bosnia And Herzegovina
Bosnia And Herzegovina
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Czech Republic
Czech Republic
Czech Republic
Czech Republic
Czech Republic
Denmark
Denmark

Denmark

5.1.2.e

Denmark
Estonia
Estonia
Finland
Finland
Germany
Germany
Greece
Greece
Greece
Greece
Greece
Greece
Iceland
Italy
Italy
Italy
Italy
Italy
Italy

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

Italy

Italy

Italy

Latvia

Latvia

Luxembourg

Luxembourg

Luxembourg

Malta

Netherlands

Netherlands

North Macedonia

North Macedonia

North Macedonia

Norway

Norway

Poland

Poland

Poland

Poland

Poland

Romania

Romania

Romania

Romania

Russian Federation

Russian Federation

San Marino

Serbia

Serbia

Slovenia

Spain

Sweden

Sweden

Sweden

Sweden

Sweden

Sweden

Sweden

Sweden

Türkiye

Türkiye

Türkiye

Türkiye

Ukraine

Ukraine

Ukraine

Ukraine

Ukraine

5.5.2.a.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

United Kingdom
United States
United States
United States

Italy
Andorra
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria

France

France

France

Germany

Germany

Germany

Italy

Italy

Netherlands

Norway

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

Norway

Poland

Poland

Romania

Romania

Slovenia

Spain

Spain

Sweden

United Kingdom

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

Germany
Austria
Croatia
Croatia
Czech Republic
Czech Republic
Italy

Italy

Italy

Italy

Luxembourg

Poland

5.1.2.e

Romania

5.1.2.e

Mission

5.1.2.e

Italy

5.1.2.e

Canada

5.1.2.e

UK

5.1.2.e

Hungary

5.1.2.e

Romania

5.1.2.e

UK

5.1.2.e

Germany

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

Poland

5.1.2.e

Croatia

5.1.2.e

Turkmenistan

5.1.2.e

Poland

5.1.2.e

Bosnia and
Herzegovina

5.1.2.e

Greece

Estonia

Italy

UK

USA

Sweden

Netherlands

Armenia

Serbia

ODIHR EOM Long-term Observers

5.1.2.e

Denmark

5.1.2.e

UK

5.1.2.e

Ireland

5.1.2.e

UK

5.1.2.e

Finland

5.1.2.e

Finland

5.1.2.e

Norway

5.1.2.e

Norway

5.1.2.e

Romania

5.1.2.e

Sweden

5.1.2.e

UK

5.1.2.e

Switzerland

5.1.2.e

France

Iceland

Italy

Austria

Sweden

5.1.2.e	Austria
5.1.2.e	Switzerland
5.1.2.e	Czech Republic
5.1.2.e	Czech Republic
5.1.2.e	France
5.1.2.e	Germany
5.1.2.e	Italy
5.1.2.e	Iceland
5.1.2.e	UK

ODIHR EOM Short-term Observers

5.1.2.e	Armenia
	Armenia
	Armenia
5.1.2.e	Austria
5.1.2.e	Austria
5.1.2.e	Austria
5.1.2.e	Austria
5.1.2.e	Belgium
5.1.2.e	Belgium
5.1.2.e	Belgium
5.1.2.e	Belgium
5.1.2.e	Bosnia and Herzegovina
5.1.2.e	Bosnia and Herzegovina
	Canada
5.1.2.e	Canada
5.1.2.e	Czech Republic
5.1.2.e	Czech Republic
5.1.2.e	Czech Republic
5.1.2.e	Czech Republic
5.1.2.e	Czech Republic
5.1.2.e	Czech Republic
5.1.2.e	Czech Republic
5.1.2.e	Denmark
5.1.2.e	Denmark
	Denmark
	Denmark
5.1.2.e	Denmark
5.1.2.e	Denmark
5.1.2.e	Denmark
5.1.2.e	Denmark
	Estonia
	Estonia
	Finland

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

512e

512e

5130

5120

5130

[illegible]

ABOUT ODIHR

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is OSCE's principal institution to assist participating States "to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to abide by the rule of law, to promote principles of democracy and (...) to build, strengthen and protect democratic institutions, as well as promote tolerance throughout society" (1992 Helsinki Summit Document). This is referred to as the OSCE human dimension.

ODIHR, based in Warsaw (Poland) was created as the Office for Free Elections at the 1990 Paris Summit and started operating in May 1991. One year later, the name of the Office was changed to reflect an expanded mandate to include human rights and democratization. Today it employs over 150 staff.

ODIHR is the lead agency in Europe in the field of **election observation**. Every year, it co-ordinates and organizes the deployment of thousands of observers to assess whether elections in the OSCE region are conducted in line with OSCE commitments, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections and with national legislation. Its unique methodology provides an in-depth insight into the electoral process in its entirety. Through assistance projects, ODIHR helps participating States to improve their electoral framework.

The Office's **democratization** activities include: rule of law, legislative support, democratic governance, migration and freedom of movement, and gender equality. ODIHR implements a number of targeted assistance programmes annually, seeking to develop democratic structures.

ODIHR also assists participating States' in fulfilling their obligations to promote and protect **human rights and fundamental freedoms** consistent with OSCE human dimension commitments. This is achieved by working with a variety of partners to foster collaboration, build capacity and provide expertise in thematic areas, including human rights in the fight against terrorism, enhancing the human rights protection of trafficked people, human rights education and training, human rights monitoring and reporting, and women's human rights and security.

Within the field of **tolerance** and **non-discrimination**, ODIHR provides support to the participating States in strengthening their response to hate crimes and incidents of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance. ODIHR's activities related to tolerance and non-discrimination are focused on the following areas: legislation; law enforcement training; monitoring, reporting on, and following up on responses to hate-motivated crimes and incidents; as well as educational activities to promote tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding.

ODIHR provides advice to participating States on their policies on **Roma and Sinti**. It promotes capacity-building and networking among Roma and Sinti communities, and encourages the participation of Roma and Sinti representatives in policy-making bodies.

All ODIHR activities are carried out in close co-ordination and co-operation with OSCE participating States, OSCE institutions and field operations, as well as with other international organizations.

More information is available on the ODIHR website (www.osce.org/odihr).

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

The Director

Warsaw, 23 October 2025

5.1.2.e MP
President
OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Dear President,

Please find attached, for your information, a copy of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Election Observation Mission final report in connection with the 2025 parliamentary elections in the Republic of Albania.

Yours sincerely,

5.1.2.e

5.1.2.e

cc: 5.1.2.e MP
Special Co-ordinator and Leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission for the 2025 parliamentary elections in the Republic of Albania
5.1.2.e MP
Head of the OSCE PA delegation to the 2025 parliamentary elections in the Republic of Albania
5.1.2.e Secretary-General of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly