



**ALBANIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE
KOMITETI SHQIPTAR I HELSINKIT**

**FINAL REPORT ON THE
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS OF
JUNE 23, 2013**

PREPARED BY THE ALBANIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE

TIRANA, JULY 31, 2013



Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

- Methodology and reach of the monitoring
- Target of monitoring
- Ways and tools to collect data
- Capacities and reliability of monitors

2. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE PRE-ELECTORAL PROCESS

- Decreeing of the parliamentary elections and the establishment and functioning of the CEC
- Allocation of electoral zones and mandates
- Extracts of electoral components
- Written notification of citizens in their residences
- Final voter list
- Sensitization of voters
- Establishment and functioning of the CEC
- Assignment of VCs' location and members of their commissions
- Voting centers in special institutions
- Creating the conditions for access by persons with disabilities to VCs
- Electoral campaign
- Situation of public order and calm in the pre-election period

3. VOTING PROCESS

- Preparations for the voting process
- Progress of the voting process

4. COMPLETION OF VOTING AND VOTE COUNT

5. TRANSPARENCY OF THE VOTING PROCESS

6. CONCLUSIONS

7. ANNEXES

- *Report of findings by ADRF (not yet translated in English)*

Abbreviations

AHC	-	Albanian Helsinki Committee, non-profit organization
CEC	-	Central Election Commission
CEAZ	-	Commission for Electoral Administration of Zones
VCC	-	Voting Center Commission
VC	-	Voting Center
VCG	-	Vote Counting Group
EU	-	European Union
CRD	-	Civil Rights Defenders
ADRF	-	Albanian Disabilities Rights Foundation, non-profit organization
EC	-	Electoral Code
GDCR	-	General Directory of Civil Registry
IEPD	-	Institutions for the Execution of Penal Decisions

1. INTRODUCTION

The Albanian Helsinki Committee (AHC), since 1996, has been monitoring continually parliamentary and local elections because the protection of and respect for the right to vote, one of the fundamental rights of citizens, has been and remains an important part of its mission.

Elections are an important moment in the country's democratic development. During the transition years, although there have been positive developments from one election to the other, still, the level of democratic standards achieved in these electoral processes has not been satisfactory and there has always been criticism regarding the non-fulfillment of standards in this regard.

The June 23, 2013, elections took place in a charged political situation, due to the aggravated relations between the majority and opposition political parties, which was clearly manifested during the latest legislature of the Assembly of Albania, whereby many laws requiring a qualified majority were not approved, and through the grave language that politicians used toward one another at different forums or in front of the broad public. On the other hand, our country repeatedly was rejected the [EU](#) candidate country status while the 12 key issues outlined by the [EU](#) for fulfillment, for over three years, still remained tasks to be carried out, together with the recently set task regarding the conduct of free and fair elections, in accordance with democratic standards. In recent times, free and fair elections have been considered by international partners an important test for Albania's aspirations toward accession to the European Union.

According to the Constitution and the [EC](#) in force, our electoral system for members of the Assembly is a regional proportional one. 12 multi-name electoral zones have been established and the voting in these zones will elect 140 MPs from the multi-name lists of electoral subjects, presented, verified, and accepted by the [CEC](#).

There is a complete legal framework in place for the realization of elections; however, it should be noted that the [EC](#) underwent numerous changes, which affect about 60% of its norms. These amendments were compiled by a bi-partisan parliamentary committee. In the end, the amendments were approved in the Assembly on 19.07.2012 with a qualified majority of votes. It is worth mentioning that in spite of the numerous amendments to the [EC](#), some of the recommendations by OSCE/ODIHR and the domestic civil society, reflected in their reports regarding the electoral processes of 2009 and 2011, were not taken into consideration. With regard to the amendments and content of the [EC](#), there were numerous criticisms by smaller, majority and opposition, parties, which feel penalized by the nature of the electoral system that the Constitution and the [EC](#) have sanctioned. Meanwhile, a series of improvements have taken place in domestic legislation toward citizen equality and protection against discrimination, which create more protective conditions for the exercise of the right to vote free from discrimination. In this context, of special importance for guaranteeing the right to vote for persons with disabilities is ratification by the Albanian state, in December 2012, of the Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which establishes new requirements regarding the participation of voters of this category in elections.

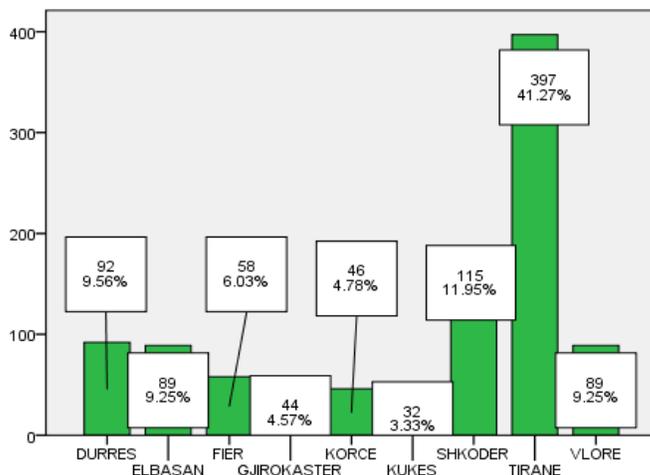
66 political parties and two independent candidates were registered in these elections as electoral subjects; the elections were administered by an electoral administration of three levels, including the [CEC](#), as the highest state body for the administration of elections; 89 [CEAZs](#); 5,508 [VCCs](#); and the vote counting groups ([VCG](#)). AHC monitored the preparation for and conduct of the parliamentary elections of June 23, 2013, with support from the U.S. Embassy Tirana's Small Democracy

Commission Grants Program, the SOROS Foundation, and the Swedish organization [CRD](#).¹ It collaborated closely in this monitoring with [ADRF](#), a partner organization specializing in the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities.

- *Methodology and reach of the monitoring*

The monitoring conducted by AHC includes the pre-election period, the voting day, and the vote counting process. For this purpose, we requested accreditation from the [CEC](#) and received its special approval for 172 observers, long-term and short-term, of which 20 observers were suggested by the [ADRF](#) partner organization, and 10 by the Gender Alliance for Development Center. Immediately upon accreditation, we carried out the successful training of all monitors. Afterwards, they were equipped with the necessary manuals and documentation to help them carry out the monitoring. In terms of time, the monitoring covered the period January-June 2013.

Through the organization staff, our district correspondents, and with help from our long-term observers, we carried out partial monitoring regarding the most important aspects of the pre-election period, starting immediately after the decreeing of the election date by the President of the Republic. Monitoring on election day, June 23, 2013, was carried out in **962 VCs** (17.62% of the national total), spread in 9 districts, or 75% of all of the country's districts, namely in **Tiranë, Durrës, Gjirokastrër, Fier, Elbasan, Shkodër, Vlorë, Korçë and Kukës**. We also monitored **6 VCs located in special institutions**, prisons and pre-trial detention facilities. Of the total of **VCs** monitored, 41.27% were in the district of Tirana; 9.56% in the district of Durrës; 9.25% in the district of Elbasan, 6.03% in the district of Fier; 4.57% in the district of Gjirokastrër, 4.78% in the district of Korçë; 3.33% in the district of Kukës; 11.95% in the district of Shkodër, and 9.25% in the district of Vlorë. In terms of their location, 91% of the **VCs** were located in the territories of municipalities, or otherwise referred to as urban areas and 9% of them in the territory of communes, otherwise rural areas. As may be seen, the selected districts are spread around the country, north to south and east to west. They are generally the most important districts and the largest part of the country's population live in them.



With regard to the vote counting process, the issuance of results, and the review of complaints, we monitored in 44% of the country's **CEAZs**, or 40 of the country's 89 **CEAZs**. We monitored precisely, in the District of Shkodër – **CEAZs** no. 3, 5, and 7; in the District of Kukës – **CEAZ** no.

¹ Swedish non-profit organization, a partner and donor of AHC

11; in the District of Durrës – [CEAZs](#) no. 20, 21, 23, 24, and 25; in the District of Tirana – [CEAZs](#) no. 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39 and 40; in the District of Elbasan – [CEAZs](#) no. 59 and 60; in the District of Korçë – [CEAZs](#) no. 70, 71 and 72; in the District of Gjirokastrë – [CEAZs](#) no. 78 and 79; and in the District of Vlorë – [CEAZs](#) no. 81, 82, 84, 85 and 86. For monitoring the vote counting process, we engaged 50 observers who conducted partial monitoring, in terms of time, due to the prolongation of these processes, beyond deadlines envisioned by the [EC](#) and due to the financial impossibility to continue the monitoring.

The voting process was monitored specifically with regard to enabling the right to vote for voters with disabilities. To that end, we observed 387 [VCs](#) through 163 observers who were accredited and received special training and who were collaborators of [ADRF](#) and AHC. It is worth mentioning that 37% of the observers were persons with disabilities or members of their families. These [VCs](#) were monitored to look at the enabling of the right to vote for voters with disabilities. The monitored [VCs](#) belonged to four cities, namely Tirana, where 231 [VCs](#) or 59% of all monitored [VCs](#) were observed; Elbasan, where 52 [VCs](#) or 13.45% of the total were monitored; Shkodër where 74 [VCs](#) or 19.1% of the total were monitored; and Durrës where 30 [VCs](#) or 7.8% of the total were monitored.

- *Target of monitoring*

The target of the monitoring was some of the most important issues related to the pre-electoral process; process of voting on election day; and the vote counting process. Part of our monitoring, in a more detailed fashion, were issues such as: establishment of bodies administering the electoral process, such as the [CEC](#), [CEAZs](#), and [VCCs](#) and their functioning; the processing and publication of extracts of electoral components and the final voter list; respect for deadlines established by law with regard to the voter lists and their publication; correction of names and cleaning up duplicates of names in the extracts and the voter lists; posting of extracts and voter lists in public, visible, and accessible places for voters; written notification of voters in their places of residence; sensitization of voters to take part in the voting and education of voters about how to vote; exercise of the right to complain about irregularities in the voter lists; delivery of electoral materials in the [VCCs](#); conduct of the voting process on June 23, 2013; enabling the exercise of the right to vote for voters, even through court decisions; enabling the exercise of the right to vote for voters with disabilities; administration of the process by [VCCs](#); access for observers of electoral subjects and independent observers, domestic and foreign; order and calm in [VC](#) premises and around them; role of the police in maintaining order and calm and its cooperation with [VCCs](#); conclusion of voting and accompanying of ballot boxes and electoral materials to the vote counting location; vote counting and drafting of relevant documentation.

In the course of our observation and monitoring, the main attention was focused on respect for the right to vote of citizens that enjoy it by law, keeping in mind not only the fact that this is one of the fundamental rights of citizens, sanctioned in the Constitution, but also that in a democratic country, through exercising the right to vote, citizens exercise directly their sovereignty and generate state power bodies.

- *Ways and tools to collect data*

Information provided in this report is the result of findings encountered directly in the field by our accredited observers, facts obtained directly through conversations with responsible persons, and the observation of official data publicized by relevant authorities. For the collection of this information, we organized visits of working teams in the 9 afore-mentioned districts, based on pre-determined themes that were made available to AHC correspondents in the districts and long-term observers to

have as a guide in their monitoring activity. AHC has followed attentively the coverage of the pre-election and election situation by the print and broadcast media. The report, in some cases, includes all-accepted media information or verified in the field by our staff or collaborators.

For the collection of information with regard to access provided to voters with disabilities during the electoral process, we used a specific questionnaire of 13 close-ended questions. The questionnaire was prepared by the staff of the partner organization [ADRF](#), an organization specializing in the protection of rights of members of this community.

- *Capacities and reliability of monitors*

AHC staff, correspondents, and short-term and long-term observers, aside from their many years of experience in monitoring elections, have undergone also professional training in order to become better aware of democratic and constitutional standards related to the standards for free and fair elections, provisions of the Electoral Code, [CEC](#) Instructions in force, as well the organization's objectives for this monitoring. Short-term and long-term observers were kept in contact by AHC staff throughout their activity; they were given, time after time, instructions necessary for following issues encountered in the field. The final report and the conclusions were processed based on materials submitted by the groups of monitors, a specialized working group at AHC, under the leadership of the organization's Executive Director.

2. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE PRE-ELECTORAL PROCESS

Copenhagen Standards emphasize that state parties should ensure that the domestic law and political system enable the conduct of electoral campaigns in a correct and free environment, whereby no administrative measures, or violence, or intimidation will keep parties or candidates from freely expressing their views and positions, nor shall they keep voters from knowing and discussing or from giving their vote without fear of persecution. These standards were our point of reference both during the monitoring in the field and during the drafting of this report as they are the parameters referring to the way a state and democratic society function, especially as pertains to the conduct of free and fair elections. They represent the foundation of authority and legitimacy of any governance emerging from the electoral process.

- *Decreeing of the parliamentary elections and the establishment and functioning of the [CEC](#)*

The President of the Republic, in compliance with the Constitution and the Electoral Code, by decree no. 7841, dated 03.12.2012, established that the elections for the new Assembly of Albania would be held on June 23, 2013. Meanwhile, on 19.07.2012, the Assembly had approved by a qualified majority vote important amendments in the [EC](#). Conclusively we may say that a complete legal framework existed for the conduct of elections, but the numerous amendments to the [EC](#) (about 60% of its provisions) were not accompanied by the proper time available to specialists and members of the electoral administration bodies to study and properly understand this important law.

Based on monitoring of meetings of the Assembly of Albania, of meetings of the [CEC](#), and information covered in the media on this topic, we found that the [CEC](#) was constituted and began its activity in accordance with provisions of the Electoral Code in force. However, OSCE/ODIHR recommendations on this body were not taken into consideration with regard to its depoliticization and that of the election administration in general. As a result, in these elections too, we found that the [CEC](#), in the course of its activity, gain manifested a polarization of members' positions who

often aligned their positions with those of the parties that had proposed them to assume those functions. The role of the [CEC](#) in the electoral process is important as it is the highest state permanent body, charged with the administration of elections. Biased and non-consensual decision making, in some cases, undermined the trust of the public and of electoral subjects in its activity. This seriously and irreparably harmed some important phases of the electoral process, such as the allocation of mandates for electoral zones, the review of complaints, the certification of elections, and the allocation of mandates according to election results, etc.

[CEC](#) members, although proposed by political parties of the parliamentary majority and minority, are ultimately elected by the Assembly and then take an oath in front of this body. AHC is of the opinion that as the [EC](#) stipulates, [CEC](#) members are obliged to act independently in discharging their duties, only abiding by the law. In this context, we have publicly expressed our opinion that the mandate of the [CEC](#) member proposed by the LSI party and appointed by the Assembly in a regular fashion should not have been interrupted. After that, three other [CEC](#) members presented their resignation, thus reducing the number of the members of this body to 4 compared to 7 envisioned by the law. The one-sided replacement of a [CEC](#) member and the resignation by three other members, as well as failure to find political and legal consensus for their replacement, caused an abnormal situation for this important body, making it legally impossible to take decisions that require a qualified quorum and majority of no less than 5 members or no less than 5 votes. The [CEC](#) continued to function with 4 members until the conclusion of the electoral process because the Assembly of Albania did not fill the vacancies.

This was accompanied by harmful consequences regarding the conduct of elections and the achievement of democratic standards in this electoral process.

AHC is of the opinion that the [CEC](#) cannot be a political and bipartisan body as some senior political officials of the Assembly, the Government, or representatives of the political class have said as that would make its decision making impossible, as actually happened in reality during this electoral process.

The institutional blocking of the [CEC](#) is particularly harmful and represents a negative precedent, in the conditions when the approval of important normative acts, in breach of the law, decisions were approved by 4 votes. Here we refer particularly to decisions with regard to the use of technology for voter identification in the District of Tirana and technology for the electronic counting and tabulation of votes in the District of Fier, decisions related the review of complaints about the electoral process, as well as decision no. 503, dated 03.06.2013 *“On reporting the electoral campaign in private radio and television stations based on materials made available by electoral subjects,”* etc. In the course of its activity, this body manifested in some cases one-sided and politicized positions, for instance in the context of approving the number of electoral zones and the allocation of mandates for each of them. The political alignment of [CEC](#) members made it impossible to take decisions and, as a result, the first two issues were resolved respectively by the Electoral College and the Assembly of Albania. With regard to the decision *“On reporting the electoral campaign in private radio and television stations based on materials made available by electoral subjects,”* it has been criticized as unlawful by both international observers and domestic ones, including the AHC. The [CEC](#) also took other decisions that are not founded on the law and on democratic election standards. As such, we may mention decision no. 271, dated 25.04.2013, decision no. 426, dated 17.05.2013, decision no. 445, dated 20.05.2013, decision no. 446, dated 20.05.2013, decision no. 529, dated 8.6.2013, etc., which according to the law, should have been taken by 5 votes in favor. We think it is wrong that in some cases issues were resolved politically, sidestepping legal provisions. This is in contravention of the principle of the rule of law.

AHC is of the opinion that the completion of the [CEC](#) with 7 members was an indispensability for the normal conduct of the activity of this body as well as for increasing voters' trust regarding the conduct of the electoral process, its conduct in accordance with the law and democratic standards.

- *Allocation of electoral zones and mandates*

The proposal for the allocation of seats for each electoral zone is one of the competencies of the [CEC](#), sanctioned by article 21/5 of the Electoral Code. This process, which should have been completed no later than 6 months before the end of the Assembly's mandate, was accompanied by numerous debates as the [CEC](#) failed to take a decision by a qualified majority of votes, as prescribed by law. The Assembly took this issue under review and allocated seats for each electoral zone based on updated population statistics, preserving the same seat allocation scheme as the one used in the 2009 elections.

In the publication, "*Code of Good Practices on Electoral Issues*," approved by the Venice Commission, in 2002, it is said among others that ***the vote of every vote shall have the same value and power in determining election results***. For these reasons, and others, the allocation of seats for every electoral zone is necessarily linked with the number of citizens specifically in that area so any demographic change occurring during the period between the two elections should be taken into consideration. On the other hand, our Electoral Code also stipulates² that: "***The number of seats for every electoral zone shall be determined in rapport with the number of citizens in each electoral zone***" whereas article 76, item 3, explicitly sanctions, "***...The number of seats for every electoral zone is not reviewed in the case of early elections***," thus implying that the review of the allocation of seats is compulsory for all other cases.

AHC has expressed its opinion about this issue through a press statement, emphasizing that the allocation of the number of seats for every electoral zone is a process that, aside from the above, is also related with the principle of the equality of the vote. Article 45 of the Constitution sanctions that, "***The vote is personal, equal, free, and secret***." By equal vote we understand the equal opportunity of citizens to exercise their right to vote, as well as the same value or weight of each vote given by the voters in determining election results.

At the same time, through its statement, AHC drew the attention of Assembly members so that in their decision on the allocation of seats they would allow no discriminatory treatment for political, ethnic, linguistic, religious, disability, sexual orientation reasons of groups of citizens that make up the population of the electoral zones, or other limitations that come in contradiction of legal and convention engagements undertaken in the context of protection against discrimination.

- *Extracts of electoral components*

The preparation and publication of voter lists is very important for the electoral process and voters in particular. In this process, the extracts of electoral components are important documents because they are the official basis for the verification of inclusion of voters in the final voter lists and guarantee them the opportunity to exercise their right to vote. On the other hand, irregularities found in the extracts may be easily corrected through an administrative complaint, which is easy for citizens, compared to a judicial petition, which requires longer and more formal procedures.

² See article 75 of the Electoral Code

Article 51 of the [EC](#) envisions the obligation of civil registry office, upon approval by the chairperson of the local government unit, to print and publish the extracts of electoral components. Publication should have been done no later than 30 days from election date (*January 3, 2013*) and would have to be repeated periodically every 30 days, until the announcement of the final voter lists. The publication, according to the above provision should be done: “...*in premises of civil registry offices or in premises near them assuring free access for the public.*” Given that the [EC](#) envisions that voter lists are announced no later than May 19, 2013, the extracts of electoral components should have been published 4 other times, on February 3, March 3, April 3, and May 3, 2013.

Based on AHC observations in the field,³ it results that the publication of extracts³ began late or their publication was not done according to the manner envisioned by the [EC](#), especially in Tiranë, Gjirokastër, Korçë, Elbasan and Shkodër. The situation was problematic in some monitored communes, such as Pustec Commune (Korçë district), Baltëz village (Fier district), Qendër Commune (Vlorë district), etc., where even a long time after the legal deadline, although representatives of local institutions declared to us that the extracts had been published, observation in the field and communication with inhabitants showed this was not true. As a result, we found that voters, massively, had no information about the extracts of electoral components, which was also noticed through the scarce administrative districts that they submitted for making the necessary corrections.

With regard to the obligation of civil registry offices for the periodical monthly publication of extracts, until the final announcement of voter lists, AHC found that in general, publication was done once or twice, unlike what the [EC](#) stipulates. Officials responsible in civil registry offices, in the majority of monitored districts, declared they had had deficiencies or insufficiency of necessary logistical tools for the printing of extracts, such as ink, letter, and printers. In order to meet these needs, in some cases, such as in Elbasan, civil registry offices had received assistance from local government units, which had made available to them material and technical resources, or had allocated special funds from their budgets for the purchase of necessary logistical means.

Civil registry offices declared to us that, in fact, extracts were prepared by the General Directory of Civil Registry ([GDRC](#)) and were sent to them only for publication. According to them, the extracts of electoral components had been generated late by the [GDRC](#) and not as many times as required by law. This was easily verified by AHC observers as extracts had on them the printing date.

The way of posting extracts, in some cases, left to be desired. Citizens did not have free access to schools where they were posted, or posting was done in premises that were not often visited by voting inhabitants, while we did not find extracts posted near civil registry offices, as established by article 51 of the [EC](#). In many cases, posting was done at such a distance that it was not possible to consult freely by citizens. As a special positive case on this issue, we may mention the Vlorë Municipality, which had posted the list with the extracts on an internet web page so voters could consult it online. Based on the above, AHC is of the opinion that the [EC](#) should be improved in the future also in terms of the procedure for the drafting and publication of extracts of electoral components, envisioning sanctions for subjects charged with this task if they fail to comply with the law.

One of the inaccuracies encountered with regard to the extracts of electoral components was the duplication of a considerable number of voters' names. The print or broadcast media also reported

³ For this purpose, we conducted observation missions in the districts of Tiranë, Durrës, Shkodër, Kukës, Elbasan, Fier, Vlorë, Korçë and Gjirokastër.

with regard to this concern, however duplications were encountered by AHC observers themselves, especially in Shkodër, Fier, Vlorë, Korçë, Gjirokastrë, and Durrës.

This concern was a topic of discussion at the [CEC](#), but unfortunately the meeting was presented for review audit materials that presented the situation in opposing ways, thus leading to the handling of the issue in a very partisan manner. Afterwards, during the process, most of the cases of duplications were cleaned up by the relevant public administration bodies. Nevertheless, AHC expresses concern about the lack of an accurate, incontestable documentation about the number and names of citizens with a right to vote in the country as we find that part of these duplications are carried over from previous elections. On the other hand, we are of the opinion that work to clean them up should continue without interruption instead of only during electoral periods.

Another issue referred by civil registry offices and local government units in the districts of Elbasan, Korçë, Vlorë, Shkodër, Durrës, Gjirokastrë etc., had to do with the lack of specification of the residence code for a large number of voters. This phenomenon was carried over in the contents of the final voter lists when they were made public.

- ***Written notification of citizens in their residences***

Article 52 of the [EC](#) envisions that within 60 days from the publication of the extracts of electoral components (*i.e. by March 3, 2013*), the chairperson of the local government unit shall notify in writing every voter who lives in the territory of his jurisdiction and shall notify him/her of the inclusion in the extract of electoral components as well as of the [VC](#) he/she should vote in. Expenses for such notification, according to this article, are to be borne by the ministry covering the civil registry services (*i.e. Ministry of Interior*). Furthermore, the law envisions that the relevant funds are disseminated to local government units in the amount appropriate for the number of voters of each local government unit.

Based on the monitoring and meetings with representatives of local government units, it resulted that in almost all districts, notification of voters was not carried out by the deadline envisioned by the law and, in no case, did these bodies receive from the Ministry of Interior the necessary funds for realizing such notification. However, we found that the notification of citizens was carried out in some local government units, which used for this purpose their own funds; yet, this legal obligation was fulfilled beyond the deadline and the procedure envisioned by law. Local government bodies that fulfilled this legal obligation informed us that in order to conduct notification, sometimes they used their own staff and other times other persons, unpaid, such as persons receiving social welfare from local governments, or volunteers who, in no case, were able to prove and document the work done, as required by the [EC](#).

- ***Final voter list***

The final voter list was announced late as well. Based on our observation in 9 districts of the country, it resulted that the final voter lists were announced several days late, concretely after May 21, 2013. However, it should be underscored that the list was made public by the [CEC](#) and the Ministry of Interior electronically by the legal deadline.

Making public the final voter lists is an important legal obligation. According to the contents of article 56 of the [EC](#), it results that the civil registry office submits to the [CEAZ](#), in three copies, the final voter lists no later than 35 days before election day. The [CEAZ](#) publicizes the list near the

respective voting center, in a freely accessible location for voters and sends the [VCC](#) its copy of the list for use during the voting.

Delays in the announcement of final voter lists appeared to have occurred for a number of reasons, such as: failure of civil registry offices to submit the lists by the legal deadline to the pertinent [CEAZs](#), as was the case in some [CEAZs](#) in Tirana; or because of the non-functioning of some [CEAZs](#) because the number of their members was not complete, as was the case in [CEAZs](#) in Fier; or due to the distance between the [CEAZ](#) and voting centers, as was the case in [CEAZs](#) in Kukës, etc. Most of the final lists were posted in protected and accessible locations for citizens; however, there were cases when the final voter lists were posted in high places, making it difficult for voters to read freely, or were posted within public premises, mainly educational institutions, which were closed during the afternoon and could not be accessed by the public. This was encountered in the districts of Korçë, Vlorë, Kukës, Fier, Tiranë, Durrës etc.

A problem referred by the Sarandë Municipality had to do with inaccuracies of names of voting center locations in the final voter lists, which contained the old names of sites where Voting Centers were established; this caused confusion among [CEAZ](#) members and voters, as well as delays in the publication of pertinent final voter lists.⁴

The problem of an inaccurate [VC](#) address was encountered for many voters included in the final voter list, especially in those cases when the [VCs](#) were located in private premises. Often, in these cases, the column with the [VC](#) address included the owner's name instead of the site's address. This confused relevant voters on voting day.

In order to assist voters who for different reasons could not find their names on the voter lists, AHC prepared a sample questionnaire that was disseminated for free and helped voters address the court to request the exercise of the right to vote. However, greater accuracy of the voter lists is an issue to be taken well into consideration for the next elections as the inclusion of voters in this list, with an accurate name and address, is one of the important legal prerequisites that conditions the exercise of the right to vote.

- Sensitization of voters

During this pre-election period, AHC and its partner organization [ADRF](#) carried out activities to sensitize and educate voters about participation in elections and the way to vote, with special emphasis on the Roma community, persons with disabilities, national minorities, and first time voters. On the other hand, we found that the [CEC](#) did not discharge its duties to the extent and in the way it should for voters' legal education, as prescribed in article 21, item 9, of the Electoral Code. This body limited itself only to approving a strategy for this purpose and the publication of a publicity ad a few days before the elections.

Based on meetings with citizens and representatives of local government units, AHC noticed that voters' interest to become familiar with the extracts of lists and the final voter lists was low. This phenomenon is the result of the general pre-election situation, which was characterized by some kind of chaos and numerous delays in meeting legal deadlines. We would like to point out that there is a negative tradition, according to which citizens begin showing interest in inclusion in the voter lists only in the last days before the elections. Therefore, there is a greater need for educational and informative activities during the preparatory phase of the elections. AHC and its partner organization

⁴ See the official list of the CEC on the location of VCs

[ADRF](#) carried out activities to sensitize and educate voters in the 9 districts included in their initiatives. Aside from direct meetings with voters, we also used talks on local and national TV stations as well as the print media. [ADRF](#) produced and had a sensitizing TV ad for voters with various disabilities broadcast.

In these elections, informative and sensitizing activities in favor of voters were covered mainly by NPOs, whose projects were funded by the U.S. Embassy in Tirana, the SOROS Foundation, and the Swedish organization [CRD](#).

Based on information obtained from local government units, it results that due to citizens' indifference, requests for changing electoral components were scarce; however, the local government units and civil registry offices were engaged upon their own initiative to continuously clean up the extracts of electoral components from name duplications, removal of dead persons, and making voters' addresses more accurate.

- *Establishment and functioning of the [CEC](#)*

The establishment and proper functioning of election administration bodies of all levels is an important element for the conduct of elections. Based on our monitoring, it resulted that the [CEAZs](#) were established and were constituted, overall, by the end of March 2013. However, due to the change in the makeup of coalitions of electoral subjects and their continued demands, for motives that remain unclear, the [CEC](#) carried on with the replacement of [CEAZ](#) members, up to the last day before the elections, in some cases without relying on a clear legal foundation, or a legitimized request by electoral subjects requesting the change. Such replacements were carried out in the [CEAZs](#) of the districts of Tiranë, Korçë, Lezhë, Elbasan, Fier, Kukës, Vlorë, Durrës and Shkodër.

Of the 31 monitored [CEAZs](#), 14⁵ of them declared that they were functioning in an orderly fashion and holding periodical meetings. In 6 [CEAZs](#),⁶ it was impossible to contact the members because of their continued absence from the premises where they were to discharge their duties. Although our observers went regularly to the offices of these [CEAZs](#) on June 4-5, we were informed from other sources⁷ that for a number of days, the offices were not visited by their members, although these bodies should meet on a daily basis, as required by law. As a result, the training of [CEAZ](#) members was carried out beyond the deadline established in the [EC](#). No training was conducted for [CEAZ](#) members appointed in the last days before the elections.

AHC is of the opinion that the training of [CEAZ](#) members and other electoral structures is very important, especially since the legal framework for the conduct and administration of elections underwent many changes, which, as mentioned above, affect about 60% of the Code contents. As a result, we have noted that the functioning of [CEAZs](#) in some cases has left to be desired and the members of these bodies did not possess sufficient information about their competences and duties they should discharge. In some [CEAZs](#), during our meetings with their members, we were told of their concern that they were not equipped in a timely manner by the [CEC](#) with the voter lists and addresses of voting centers. In [CEAZs](#) in Tirana and Vlorë, they complained that office equipment had not arrived on time; in Fier, we were told about lack of accurate information about the premises

⁵ CEAZs 5, 6, 7, 11, 24, 28, 33, 35, 36, 38, 39, 50, 51, 60, 71, 78, 79 and 82.

⁶ CEAZs 32 and 37 in Tiranë and 83, 84, 85, 86 in Vlorë

⁷ By contacting persons responsible for guarding the premises where the CEAZ offices were located.

where the [CEAZ](#) was to be located as the office for them was decided late, thus obstructing the orderly conduct of the activity of the [CEAZs](#).

- *Assignment of VCs' location and members of their commissions*

The Electoral Code⁸ establishes that chairpersons of local government units determine and announce the location of the [VC](#) functioning within their territorial jurisdiction, no later than 30 days upon the decreeing of the election date and that within 10 days, they should notify the [CEC](#), which updates the general map of voting centers. With regard to the assignment of the location of [VCs](#), the [EC](#) saw many changes, establishing that the number of voters for every voting center should be no less than 200 and no more than 1,000 voters. This legal amendment led to the increase of the number of [VCs](#) in the country, taking the total number up to 5,508, but at the same time also facilitated the voting process and avoided long queues. The lack of proper public premises for this number of [VCs](#) led to an increase of proposals at the [CEC](#) to put them in private premises. As a result, the [CEC](#) approved that about 500 [VCs](#) (about 10% of their total) would be established in private premises. Part of these decisions were taken late and as a result, the districts of Durrës, Fier, and Vlorë saw delays in the publication of the voter lists, which also had to include the relevant address of the voting center for each voter. The placement of [VCs](#) in private premises, by [CEC](#) decision, was an aspect that became controversial in some cases. The Electoral College cancelled [CEC](#) decisions, considering them in contravention with the law, that had assigned some [VCs](#) in private premises.

During meetings with representatives of prefectures and local government units, especially in communes, we were told of some difficulties created for citizens in exercising their right to vote due to the legal obligation to dissolve [VCs](#) that have less than 200 voters and the transfer of the voting location of voters of these communes to the nearest voting center.⁹ This concern was presented to us in the commune of Pustec, in Korçë district, commune of Gracen, in Elbasan district, and commune of Stëblevë, in the Librazhd district. The chairpersons of local government units, or prefecture representatives, expressed concern about the possibility of citizens of these communes taking part in the elections due to the distance of the [VCs](#) where their names had been transferred. They suggested that the Electoral Code should be more flexible regarding the minimal number of voters, which conditions the establishment of [VCs](#), especially for mountainous rural areas, where often, inhabited centers are very far from one another and the transfer to another [VC](#) forces voters to spend a lot of time in order to vote.

In spite of the above, we were informed that in some cases, the local government had taken measures to ensure the transport of voters through vehicles paid for by the commune, from their village to the other village where they would vote in the other [VC](#). They considered this assistance for the elderly voters and those with health problems, to help them exercise their right to vote, but on the other hand, it may be considered also as a circumstance that creates conditions for pressure on voters, in conditions when local government officials are political figures. AHC also noticed that in these cases, different practices were followed for establishing voting centers. Thus, in the districts of Kukës and Gjirokastër, we found cases when voting centers with less than 200 voters had not been dissolved, but a small number of voters from some other nearby center had been transferred, with their consent, to reach the minimal number of 200 voters. On the other hand, the chairman of the

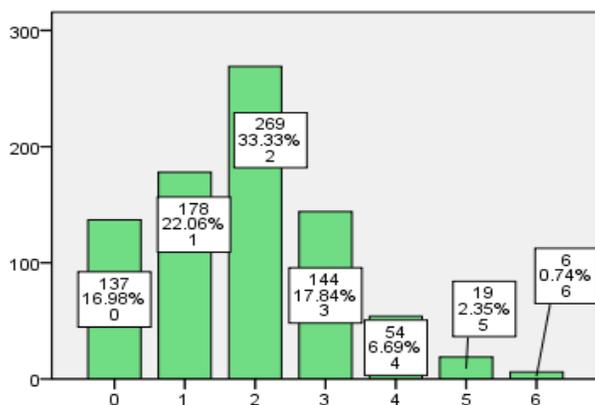
⁸ Article 62, EC

⁹ Article 62, item 7 of the Electoral Code envisions that, "...As a rule, the new voting center shall not be farther than 5 km from the voting center being dissolved in the rural areas. If it is not possible to meet both of the above criteria, the criterion of the minimal number of voters takes precedence. The number of the dissolved voting center shall be suspended and this suspension shall not affect the existing name of other voting centers. The CEC shall determine by normative act the criteria and procedures for the unification of voting centers, in accordance with this item."

Pustec commune told us that he had not been allowed by the General Directory of Civil Registry to apply such a rule for a village of his commune.

According to article 36 of the Electoral Code, by June 3, [CEAZs](#) had to appoint respective members and secretaries of the Voting Center Commissions. However, this process as not carried out on time.¹⁰ According to contacted [CEAZ](#) members, the reason as lack of knowledge about the law by the political parties, which should propose to the [CEC](#) their candidates as well as their negligence to respect deadlines prescribed by law for this process. In [CEAZ](#) 35, it was alleged that the political parties kept the names of commissioners' secret in order to avoid potential pressure on them by opponent electoral subjects.

Seen from a gender equality standpoint, although article 36 of the [EC](#) excludes this criterion from rules for the establishment of [VCCs](#), it resulted that out of the 807 monitored [VCs](#), there was no female member in 16.98% of them; there as 1 female member in 22.06% of them; 33.33% of them had 2 female members; 17.84% of them had 3 female members; 6.69% of them had 4 female members; 2.35% of them had 5 female members and 0.74% of them had 6 female members. Only 25.56% of the monitored [VCs](#) had a female [VCC](#) Chairperson. Figures show that the gender quota to have 30% females as implemented and surpassed, with regard to members in the electoral administration and was approached regarding [VCC](#) chairpersons, which, according to Ia, have 5 members, 1 chairperson, and 1 secretary. This shows that the parliamentary committee that drafted amendments to the [EC](#) and the Assembly that approved them manifested greater conservatism than the basic political party structures that proposed members and chairpersons of the [VCCs](#).



- *Voting centers in special institutions*

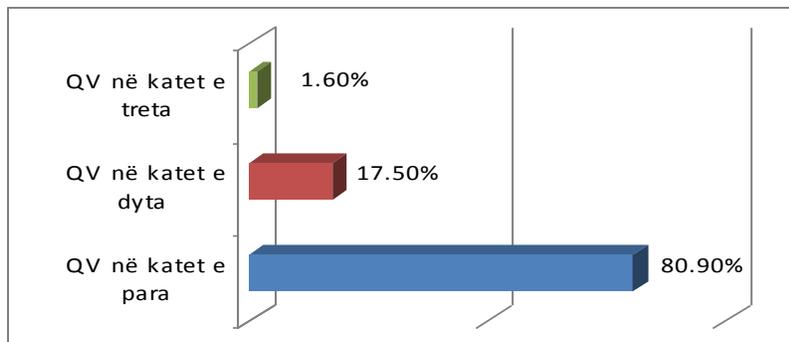
AHC had in the focus of its monitoring also the establishment of voting centers in regional hospitals, which, according to article 2, item 2 of the Electoral Code represent special institutions. Based on meetings with representatives of the Regional Hospitals in the cities of Durrës, Kukës, Shkodër, Elbasan, Fier, Korçë, Vlorë, and Gjirokastër, it resulted that none of these health institutions were planning to establish [VCs](#) to enable ill voters, spending more than three days in the hospital, including voting day, to exercise their right to vote. Some of the regional hospitals told us that the average number of patients hospitalized for over three days in hospital was continuously over 15. Although these figures match criteria established by article 62, item 2, of the [EC](#) and the [CEC](#)

¹⁰ Based on monitoring conducted by AHC during June 3-4, 2013, it resulted that in 12 [CEAZs](#),¹⁰ the [VCCs](#) were established by the legal deadline established in the Electoral Code. In 12 other [CEAZs](#),¹⁰ it results that they were not established yet. In [CEAZ](#) 51, it results that the establishment of the [CEAZs](#) as carried out partially, while we were not able to obtain information on whether [VCCs](#) were established in [CEAZ](#) 79.

instruction for the establishment of [VCs](#) in special institutions, the relevant [CEAZs](#) did not ask the [CEC](#), according to article 43 of the [EC](#), to establish a special [VCC](#) at these institutions. On the other hand, aside from the indifference of the [CEAZs](#) and the [CEC](#), it appears that the [EC](#) contains a legislative vacuum as it does not envision how the names of voters are to be transferred when these get sick and are hospitalized after the publication of the final voter list. The same problem applies for voters in institutions for serving prison sentences and pre-trial detention, but as explained in this report, these institutions solved the problem by asking the courts to enable voting at [VCs](#) established in these institutions for voters who had begun serving prison sentences or had been remanded in jail, after the publication of the final voter list. Nevertheless, in order to enable hospitalized voters to exercise their right to vote, officials in these hospitals told us that on voting day, patients would be given permission to go to vote in their [VCs](#), according to their place of residence. AHC is of the opinion that this practice does not enable the possibility to vote for all citizens who are ill, are being treated in health institutions, especially those who due to their illness cannot move, or those whose place of residence is very far from the hospital center. With regard to this issue, we note that the [EC](#) has shortcomings as it does not envision special provisions to regulate procedures for drafting the voter list in special institutions such as hospitals; therefore, the law should be improved also in this regard in the future.

- *Creating the conditions for access by persons with disabilities to VCs*

The focus of pre-election monitoring also included the appropriateness of sites of voting centers to enable the proper access for persons with disabilities on voting day.¹¹ Based on our monitoring, AHC observers and [ADRF](#) observers in particular, we found that with regard to the appropriate location of voting centers, for the category of voters with disabilities, it resulted that 80.9% or 313 [VCs](#) were located on ground floors of buildings; 17.5% or 68 [VCs](#) were located on second floors, and 1.6% were located on third floors.



With regard to data in this graphic, we would like to clarify that the largest number of voting centers located on the ground floor was in Tirana, which had 56.2% of the observed centers. This district also had the highest percentage of voting centers located on second floors, with 72.1% of the cases, while we found that 6 voting centers in Tirana were located on the third floors of buildings. The district of Shkodër resulted to have 45.9% of the voting centers with adjusted entrances. In some other [CEAZs](#), we found that measures had been taken for persons with disabilities to vote in the voting centers that were located on the ground floors of buildings, thus transferring them on the voter

¹¹ According to the Electoral Code, within the period for the review of voter lists, voters with physical disabilities have the right to ask the head of the local government unit, who prepares the voter list of the relevant voting center, for their registration as voters who cannot vote on their own. In any case, when there are voters registered according to this procedure, the assignment of the voting center and its arrangement shall be done in such a way as to guarantee free entrance for this category of voters. If this is impossible, in accordance with and with CEC spending, heads of local government units shall assign assisting personnel or equipment to enable free access.

list for this purpose, such as in the district of Kukës, Durrës, etc. This had been made possible thanks to an instruction by the [CEC](#) to identify in advance all persons with disabilities who lived within the jurisdiction of the relevant local government units. However, only 15.5% of voters with disabilities had been identified in advance by local government units that had them on their voter lists. Ultimately, it may be said that even in these elections, the number of voting centers established in buildings with unadjusted entrances for voters with disabilities was very high. The number reached 62.3%, or 241 [VCs](#) of the 387 [VCs](#) that were monitored in total.

We are of the opinion that electoral legislation should be improved and made more precise with regard to guaranteeing voters with disabilities the exercise of their right to vote. This legislation should be also aligned with the UN convention that addresses the rights of these individuals and which the Republic of Albania has ratified recently.

- *Electoral campaign*

Although not officially, the electoral campaign began 5-6 months ahead of the legally established deadline. It was accompanied by problems. During the pre-election period, criminality saw a rise; public order and calm during the electoral campaign was not at the proper level; meanwhile, there were also incidents between militants, activists, representatives of local government bodies, candidates, or leaders of parties participating in the race as electoral subjects. Respect for the law and for the standards of the rule of law saw a visible decline during the pre-election period.

On the eve of the June 23, 2013 elections, there was a great engagement by the political forces. They prepared and applied detailed propaganda programs, which sought to present the parties' programs for the country's developments and the successes they had achieved through the years. Part of the campaign had been built on the basis of denigrating elements toward their political opponents, including even banal offenses that party leaders addressed, during rallies or talks in the media, to their opponent counterparts. This caused indignation among part of the population, which talked about this both in front of the media and in meetings with our monitors.

According to information provided by the media, as well as information that AHC received from different citizens, it appears that the electoral administration and educational institutions, including minor students, were involved in campaign activities that were held within official hours or during school hours, especially in the case of inaugurations ceremonies for different infrastructure works. Public investment was used for election purposes by parties of the parliamentary majority coalition.

Article 88 of the Electoral Code prohibits the use of public resources in support of electoral subjects. We think that electoral subjects, especially the governing majority, should have kept better in mind the fact that OSCE/ODIHR has continuously articulated criticism for the use of inaugurations for electoral purposes, which is in contravention of paragraph 5 of the 1990 Copenhagen Document. There was also information about pressure on state administration employees to go out in rallies or to vote in favor of parties of the majority. Such behavior violates freedom of vote, harm election standards, but also is penally punishable.

AHC was informed during awareness meetings, held with the Roma minority in the districts of Durrës, Elbasan, Shkodër, Fier, Korçë, and Gjirokastër, that this minority was a victim of abusive and corruptive practices, pursued by different political forces, which sought to buy their votes.

The Copenhagen Standards and domestic legislation establish that electoral propaganda should not only be legal, but also such as not to infringe upon human rights and always at the service of the proper and accurate informing of voters. AHC regrettably found that the electoral campaign was

accompanied by aggressive tones and that there were incidents. Hate speech is another characteristic of this campaign. All of these had a negative impact on the environment surrounding voters at a time when they should be forming their positions regarding the exercise of their right to vote.

- ***Situation of public order and calm in the pre-election period***

From meetings with representatives of District Police Directorates, AHC was informed that police forces had received relevant instructions, ahead of the June 23 elections, about the role of police in maintaining public order and calm, in the context of this electoral process. They had drafted concrete plans, matching the situation in the districts they were operating and had trained all police staff for this purpose. However, as mentioned above, the situation of criminality in the pre-electoral period had worsened. During the pre-election period, as well as on election day, serious events happened that involved in some cases the electoral subjects or candidates for MPs. Based on these public facts, AHC is of the opinion that police forces should have worked more toward preventing these events as well as to increase their discovery and combating force against crime, in order to guarantee a calm and safe situation for voters and all citizens.

3. VOTING PROCESS

Based on monitoring reports on voting day and reports of partial monitoring of the vote counting process, below are some results:

- ***PREPARATIONS FOR THE VOTING PROCESS***

The Copenhagen Criteria establish that with regard to electoral administration bodies and electoral procedures, state parties shall guarantee correct electoral procedures that enable respect for free, fair, and secret vote.

A. Training of members of Voting Center Commissions ([VCC](#))

The replacement of [VCC](#) members, upon request by respective political parties, continued up to election day. Nevertheless, the majority of [VCC](#) members were trained properly by the [CEC](#), except for members involved in the process only days before the elections or on voting day. Political parties that were at the same time electoral subjects also conducted training of [VCC](#) members. However, it was noticed that in some cases, [VCC](#) members did not have the proper knowledge in order to give a legal solution to problems encountered during the voting process and there were also cases when they asked for assistance from accredited observers who were in the [VCs](#) to monitor.

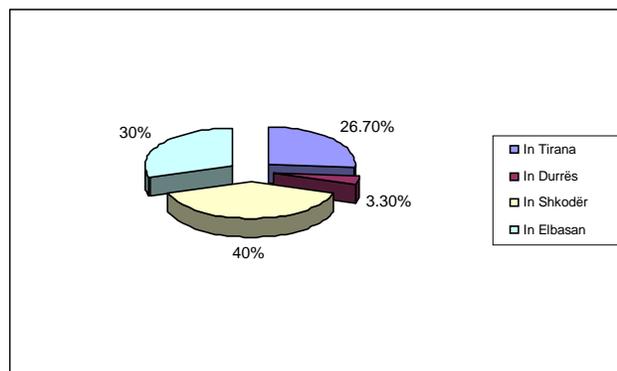
B. Premises where VCs were located and assistance for voters with disabilities

The monitoring showed that in most [VCs](#), the premises were normal, in keeping with the needs for exercising the right to vote, with ample room and the arrangement of rooms was done according to the scheme approved by the [CEC](#). Nevertheless, we noticed in some [VCs](#) that the room arrangement was done inappropriately, or there were cases when the premises were too small, such as [VCs](#) no. 2013/1, 2013/3, 1911/1 etc. As a result, there was confusion during voting in these [VCs](#). In some cases, this also led to a violation of the secrecy of the vote as [VC](#) commissioners, due to lack of space, were placed too close to the voting booth and could look over. The limited space in some cases was an obstacle for observers, domestic and foreign, to carry out their duties properly, such as in [VCs](#) no 2013/1, 2013/3, 1911/1.

The physical conditions of [VCs](#) are directly linked with the real opportunity for exercising the right to vote by voters with disabilities. Above we addressed the situation of the inappropriateness of premises where [VCs](#) were located to enable access for voters with disabilities. This situation shows that there was indifference by relevant bodies in this regard even in these elections. Figures show that local government bodies do not have the necessary sensibility to assign voting centers in premises that are appropriate for this category of voters and that the [CEC](#), as the highest election administration body, did not oversee this situation well.

Citizens with disabilities enjoy equally the right to elect and be elected. This is clearly sanctioned by the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, the Electoral Code, the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons, as well as the National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities. The Electoral Code has undergone continued improvements in this regard.¹² In spite of these improvements, the electoral right for voters with disabilities remains violated because, even in cases when measures have been taken for the suitability of entrance to the [VC](#), in fact, it is only the opportunity for these voters to enter that has been improved, but not their opportunity to vote. There is still a need for legal improvements in order for persons with disabilities to be given the necessary assistance to move from their residence to the relevant [VC](#) as, due to their disability, they may not be able to cover the distance from their residence to the relevant [VC](#) without assistance.

It is worth mentioning that only in 60 [VCs](#), or 15.5% of all monitored centers, the local governments had identified in advance voters with disabilities who were voters on the relevant voter lists, as required by the law and the [CEC](#) instructions. Among these, Tirana and Durrës had the lowest percentage of [VCs](#) where voters with disabilities had been identified in advance on the lists, respectively 26.7 % and 3.3 % of the monitored total, versus 40% in Shkodër and 30% in Elbasan (see table below). Preliminary identification of this category of voters is a piece of information that helps take proper measures to assist them ahead of voting day.



C. Delivery of electoral materials

Based on preliminary monitoring that AHC conducted on June 22, 2013, in 35 [CEAZs](#),¹³ located in the 9 districts of the country covered by the monitoring, we noticed that electoral materials were not delivered by the legal deadline, from the [CEAZs](#) to the pertinent [VCs](#). According to the Electoral Code, the delivery and acceptance of electoral materials should have been carried out no later than

¹² From 2002 onward, electoral legislation has made qualitative changes in voting opportunities for voters with disabilities, moving from the voting manner only through an escort (EC – 2002) to the alternative foreseeing the direct participation in voting for voters with mobility and sight disabilities, facilitating means and services (Electoral Code – 2003).

¹³ 55 % of the monitored CEAZs.

15 hours ahead of the start of the voting (i.e. no later than 16:00 of June 22). In fact in Fier, in [CEAZ](#) no. 60, we found that the process of the delivery of electoral materials to the relevant [VCs](#) had been suspended as both main political forces had requested that members of the voting center commissions be replaced first. Delays were encountered namely in [CEAZs](#) no. 23, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 48, 49, 50, 51, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85 and 86. There were also cases when the materials arrived at the [VCCs](#) had inaccuracies or deficiencies, mixing of box covers, of voting materials and ballots, or other problems with security codes. These problems were encountered in Korçë – [VC](#) 3660, in Tirana – [VCs](#) 1493, 1416, 1711/1, 1947/2, 1948, 1890 etc., but fortunately they were resolved on time, according to the law, by the [CEAZs](#) or the [CEC](#), during the voting day and did not become a reason for obstructing the voting process. We wish to draw attention to the fact that we also found that about 79% of the [VCs](#), or 305, were not equipped by the [CEC](#) with voting booths adapted for disabled voters (mainly for users of wheelchairs), which indicates incomplete preparatory measures, which would have enabled voters with disabilities to have personal and secret voting. In this regard, Elbasan appeared the best with 48.1% of the [VCs](#) equipped with adapted voting booths, versus Tirana with 16.5% of the [VCs](#). The [CEC](#) failed to fulfill the legal obligation to enable blind persons to use special ballots, as expressly envisioned by article 108/6 of the [EC](#).

D. Respect for electoral silence

According to the Electoral Code, 24 hours ahead of the voting day should be electoral silence, but it was noticed that in spite of that, in some cases, the silence was broken. One day before the voting but also on voting day, voters were sent text messages that called on them to vote in favor of some electoral subjects. At some voting centers, approximately 20 to 150 meters, there were propaganda materials such as flags¹⁴ and posters, which promoted certain electoral subjects, while we noticed inside some [VCs](#) that some [VC](#) commission members carried propaganda items such as bracelets, pens, necklaces, watches, shirts with signs or symbols of electoral subjects. In 14.63% of the monitored [VCs](#) we found propaganda materials posted in smaller distances than allowed. These violations were found in Tirana – [VC](#) 1991, in Novoselë of Vlorë – [VC](#) 4406.¹⁵

E. Complaints to the court to enable exercising the right to vote

During verifications carried out in the Courts of the 9 judicial districts covered by our monitoring, it resulted that the number of petitions by citizens to the courts to enable their exercise of the right to vote was very low. These 9 courts received a total of 349 petitions. Of this total, 240 requests dealing with enabling the right to vote were addressed to the Tiranë Judicial District Court, which upon review, issued 240 judicial decisions; in 219 cases, the petition was accepted; in 8 cases it was rejected; and in 13 it was suspended. Verifications indicated that most of the petitions were addressed to the court by persons serving imprisonment sentences, or pre-trial detainees in [IEPDs](#) or in Pre-Trial Detention Institutions. Namely, 86 petitions were addressed to the court from [IEPD](#) no. 313 and 46 from [IEPD](#) no. 302 in Tirana. In the other districts, petitions to the courts were very scarce; namely, the Kukës Court received 1 request; the Fier Court received 3 requests; the Shkodër Court received 10 requests; the Elbasan Court received 50 requests, dominated by requests from PTI Elbasan and Peqin; the Korçë Court received 27 requests, all from [IEPD](#) Korçë; and the Vlorë Court had received 19 requests, all from PTI Vlorë. The courts respected legal deadlines for accepting requests and reviewing them and issued reasoned decisions, which were accepted by [VCCs](#), thus granting citizens the right to exercise the right to vote when the court so ruled through a relevant decision.

¹⁴ In Tirana, VC 1944/3, Shkodër VC 0217.

¹⁵ Our observers made written remarks.

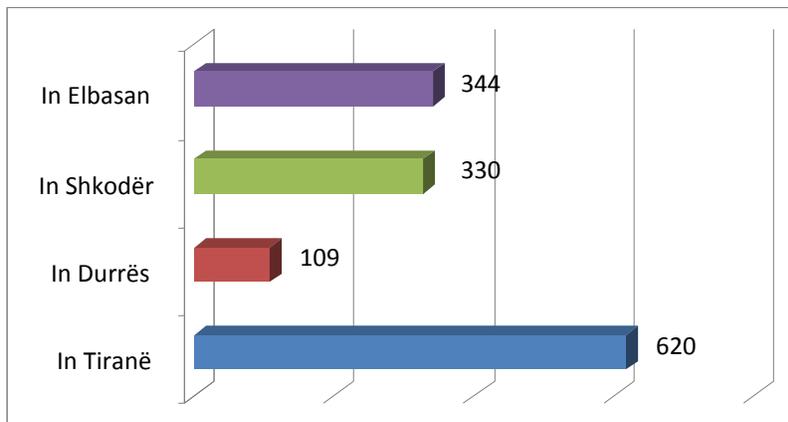
- *PROGRESS OF THE VOTING PROCESS*

With regard to the conduct of the voting process, the Copenhagen democratic standards establish that elections should be free and fair and should guarantee free and secret voting. The legal process should guarantee general voting in equal conditions for adult citizens; votes should be counted and reported fairly and official results should be made public without legitimate delays.

A. Participation of citizens in elections for members of the Assembly of Albania.

Voter turnout in this voting process marked an increase. According to [CEC](#) declarations, over 53.50% of voters participated in the elections.¹⁶ The district of Lezhë marked the highest voter participation in voting with 57,93% of the voters, followed by the district of Fier with 55,83% of voters, and the district of Vlorë had the lowest voter turnout with 39,33% of voters. In these indicators and figures, we should keep in mind the fact that our country has a large emigration of the population, outside the country's borders, who are included in the voter lists but have little possibility for effective participation in elections, given that there are no other opportunities to exercise their right to vote, except for showing up personally at the respective voting center.

Referring to statistics obtained from INSTAT, there are about 134,000 persons with disabilities in voting age, which means that 97% of their total, or 6.05% of the country's population. During the monitoring process, in the 387 monitored voting centers, we found that a total of 1,403 disabled persons participated in the voting; of these, 620 persons voted in Tirana, 109 persons voted in Durrës, 330 persons voted in Shkodër, and 344 persons voted in Elbasan.



Among these citizens who participated in the voting, 519 had mobility disabilities; 379 had sight disabilities; 262 had hearing disabilities, and 243 had intellectual disabilities. Persons with disabilities in Albania are becoming increasingly aware that their participation in electoral processes is a way that impacts the acceleration of their integration; through the mechanism of the vote, they influence policymakers in drafting policies and laws that have a real role in improving the quality of life for them and their family members.

B. Conduct of the voting

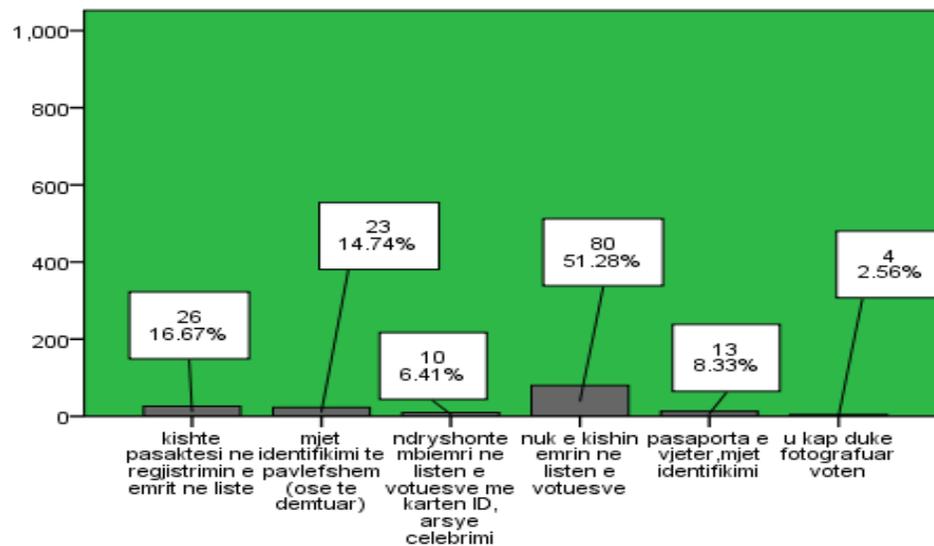
The voting process began with delays in almost 70% of the monitored voting centers; these delays lasted even for over 1 hour. The delays were caused mostly by the lack of commission members (mainly those of the Republican Party and the SMI), or their late arrival at the pertinent [VC](#) location,

¹⁶ This data was taken from the official page of the CEC on July 31, 2013.

as well as due to the late conduct of procedures for opening the voting. In 83.93% of the monitored VCs, members were present in the respective VCs at 06:00, according to the law, and they arrived late in only 16.07% of them. In some cases, delays were caused also due to VC irregularities. In 2.42% of the monitored VCs, the situation of the VC was not orderly at the time the voting should begin and as a result, the preparation of the VC caused delays. Delays were most often encountered in the districts of Tiranë,¹⁷ Gjirokastër,¹⁸ Kukës,¹⁹ Vlorë,²⁰ and Shkodër. Voting began late by more than 1 hour in some voting centers of the district of Vlorë, such as in the Armen commune, Novoselë commune – VCs no. 4398, 4406, 4454, 4504/1; in the district of Gjirokastër – VC no. 4235; in the district of Elbasan – VC no. 2339, 2708, etc.

During the voting day, the influx of voters appearing to vote was not problematic, but this was also due to the reduced number of voters voting in a certain VC. In only 40.20% of the monitored VCs, there were lines of voters at certain moments during the day.

No major problems or serious irregularities were encountered with regard to voter lists; however, there were difficulties, especially in Tirana, for finding the VC to vote in, as they were divided by fractions and there were no sufficient directing signs to clearly direct voters. However, in some sporadic cases, some persons did not find their names on the lists and therefore were not allowed to vote. In the 962 monitored centers, few voters were denied the right to vote. Of these 156 voters, whom we found were not allowed to vote, it appeared that obstacles were: in 16.67% or 26 persons were not able to vote as there were irregularities in the registration of their names in the voter lists; in 14.74% or 23 persons were not able to vote because they had invalid identification document; in



6.41% or 10 persons were not able to vote as the name of the voter on the voter list did not match the one written on the person's identification card; in 51.28% or 80 persons were not allowed to vote because their name was not on the voter list.

C. Family

Voting

In these elections too, we encountered a wider spread of family voting compared to previous elections. Namely, this phenomenon was encountered in Vlorë,²¹ in Tiranë,²² Korçë,²³ Shkodër

¹⁷ VC 1489/2, 13921, 1492, 1439, 1799/1, 1910, 1869/2, 1490, 1895/2, 1906, 1425, 1789, 1730/2, 1703/2, 1888/3, 2003, 1853, 1481/1, 1683/1, 1684, 1748, 1992, 1493/1, 1528, 1991/1, 1925/1, 2984/1, 3005/1, 30231, 2995/1, 2994/1, 1489/2, 1910, 1885, 1835, 1890, 1425, 1789, 1392/1, 1703/2, 188/3, 1804/2, 1410, 1885, 1947/2, 1948,

¹⁸ VC 4252, 4251

¹⁹ VC 0652,0651,

²⁰ VC 4499, 4499/1, 4500, 45001, 4504, 4428, 44281, 4454, 4473, 4419, 4419/1, 4420,

²¹ VC 45041, 4398

²² VC 1703/1, 1983/1, 1876/1, 1703, 1876, 4504, 2376, 2041/1, 2041/2, 2042/3

²³ VC 3647, 3647, 3664/1, 3700/1, 3673, 3658, 3678

(Koplik), in Gjirokaštër, etc., appearing even in districts that did not have that problem before. Our monitors have made numerous written remarks in this regard, but commission members rarely reacted. This indicates that more work should be done in the future for their training on this aspect and to enforce accountability for allowing this phenomenon. In the district of Tirana, there were cases when voting was interrupted due to numerous voting of family voting; in the district of Gjirokaštër, we found that family voting was applied in the [VCs](#) where the Roma community was voting, with the justification that voters did not know how to read. In 16.48% of the monitored [VCs](#), or in 146 [VCs](#), there was family voting; in 14.11% of the monitored [VCs](#), this phenomenon was rare, while in 2.14% of the monitored [VCs](#), this happened often.

D. Respect for special procedures for voters with disabilities

With regard to voting by disabled persons, in many cases, provisions envisioned in article 108 of the Electoral Code were not respected. In this regard, we noticed a number of problems, such as: non-declaration in the protocol book of persons who helped disabled voters; cases of assistance by commission members in the voting booth; in some cases, such as in [VC](#) 1994/3, it wasn't allowed for other persons to help disabled voters as prescribed by law. In one flagrant case, in [VC](#) 1869/1, there was a person with mental disabilities who received assistance from another voter who voted without asking the voter. Violations in this regard were noticed also in Korçë, Tiranë, Elbasan, etc. It was also noticed that 86% of persons with hearing disabilities did not have mediation by an interpreter of sign language, which would provide them the possibility for complementary information during the voting and this created insecurity regarding the free and complete expression of their will during voting.

The [CEC](#) approved Decision no. 9, dated 10.01.2013, establishing the standard for voting booths, which had to be special for disabled persons. Nevertheless, in 78.8% or in 305 [VCs](#), of the 387 monitored ones, we noticed there was no adjustment of voting booths for voters who used wheelchairs. The city of Elbasan appeared better in this regard, with 48.1% of the voting centers equipped with adjusted voting booths, versus Tirana, which had 16.5%. The lack of these special voting booths in voting centers showed the lack of attention and failure to take concrete measures to implement the above decision of the [CEC](#). With regard to blind voters, although the [CEC](#) Chairwoman had publicly declared that all measures would be undertaken for the production of ballots adjusted for this category of voters, as sanctioned by article 108/6 of the [EC](#), in fact, this promise and the legal instruction did not become reality.

With regard to the way of voting by disabled voters, it resulted that 65.1% of voters with physical disabilities, 14.2% of voters with hearing disabilities; 75.7% of voters with intellectual disabilities, and 86% of voters with hearing disabilities voted themselves, without assistance from other persons. Among voters with hearing disabilities, who voted in the monitored [VCs](#), only 14% of them voted in the presence of the interpreter of sign language, thus leading the rest to not be sure about the validity of their vote as they received no instructions about how to vote. Assistance for disabled voters was offered, to a large extent, in the district of Shkodër, in 56.8% of the cases; more assistance was given for voters with hearing disabilities in the district of Durrës, in 90.0% of the cases.

With regard to the position taken up by commission members toward disabled voters, it resulted that in the 387 [VCs](#) observed in the districts of Tiranë, Durrës, Shkodër, and Elbasan, they held a positive attitude toward disabled voters. More concretely, the commission members' attitude was deemed as normal in 48.6% of the cases and welcoming in 37% of the cases. This behavior was more evident in Tiranë and Durrës, where there was a normal and positive attitude toward disabled voters; in

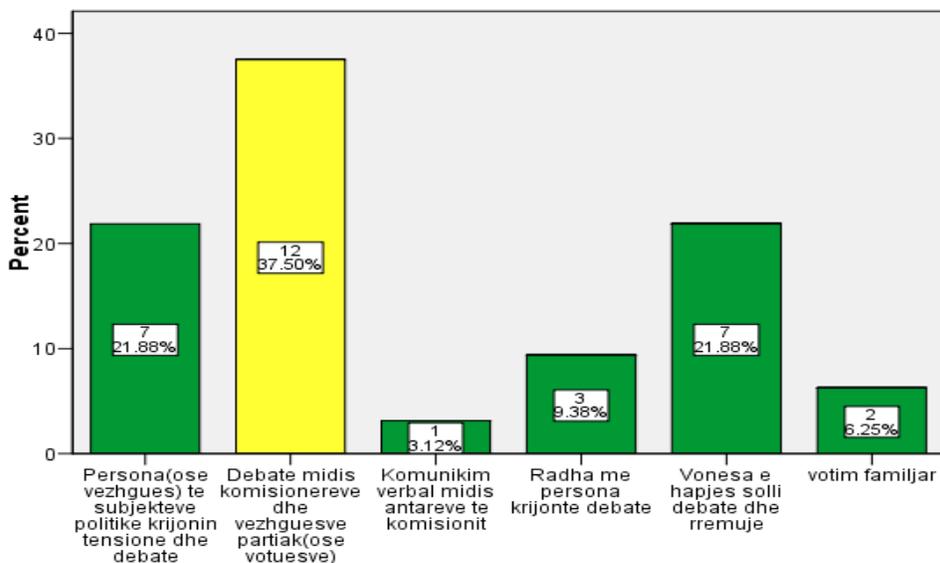
Elbasan and in Shkodër, there was, at a small percentage, even insulting and indifferent attitudes, respectively in 3.8% and 2.7% of the cases.

E. Calm and regularity of the voting process and the role of police.

In most [VCs](#), voting proceeded calmly and without long lines of persons waiting to vote. However, these elections saw also some grave incidents, in the vicinity of [VCs](#) or inside them, such as the case of the killing of an LSI supporter and the wounding of the DP candidate for MP in Laç; the assault on the SP commission member in Kamëz; the wounding of three SP supporters in Laprakë of Tiranë, etc. In premises outside [VCs](#), we also found large numbers of persons carrying out duties on behalf of electoral subjects; they worsened circulation and increased tension in the vicinity of [VCs](#) and, in some cases, also pressured voters to vote for the party they represented. There was also pressure on voters by the DP candidate for MP in [VC](#) no. 3673 in Korçë, and by Kamëz Municipality Mayor in [VC](#) no. 1573, etc. However, pressure on voters did not appear to be a disturbing phenomenon.

F. Use of pressure inside [VCs](#)

There were also cases of pressure on voters, commission members, media, and monitors. In some cases, observers of electoral subjects oriented voters about procedures to be followed by them in order to vote; in some other cases, they intervened to show voters how to fold the ballot, or how to fill it out.²⁴ We also noticed that some observers of electoral subjects and militants of electoral subjects used pressure on voters inside [VCs](#), such as in [VC](#) 1803/1, 1960/2, 2041/1, and 4497/2. Nevertheless, cases were sporadic and statistically, it resulted that there was pressure on voters in only 0.56% of the cases and there was pressure on members of the [VCCs](#) in 1.01% of the cases. There were even sporadic cases of an influx of voters and confusion inside the voting center, or even cases of conflicts, such as in Elbasan,²⁵ Tiranë,²⁶ Vlorë (4504, 45041), Prison no. 302, in Gjirokastrë (4265), etc. Tensions inside [VCs](#) appeared to have occurred due to causes noted in the following table.



²⁴ The case occurred in VC 1711/1.

²⁵ VC 356, 2356/1, 2357, 2335/1, 2339/1, 2339, 2327, 2305, 2306

²⁶ VC 1982/2, 1803, 1757/1, 1853, 18291, 1682/1, 1682/2, 1854/2,

G. Functioning of the [VCC](#).

In the majority of [VCs](#) that we monitored, the functioning of the relevant commissions was orderly and in compliance with the law. Monitoring results showed a high level of awareness among election commissions to welcome and orient disabled voters. However, we noticed some problems. For instance, in 9.43% of the monitored [VCs](#), the Commission did not take a decision to open the voting, as required by law, or in 1.29% of the monitored [VCs](#), commission members did not verify in all cases whether names of voters on IDs match those on the voter list. However, with regard to the order of work to enable voters to vote, which was the same as in previous elections, it appeared that all [VCs](#) respected them and carried them out as prescribed by law. Thus, the monitored [VCs](#), in 97.20% of the cases, voters were asked to show their identification document; this legal requirement was neglected in only 0.54% of the cases. In general, commission members verified voter identity through the personal document, finding the name on the voter list, and comparing the identity with that marked on personal documents, signing by voters on the voter list by the voter, verification of marking of the finger with ink, and the marking of voter's thumb according to legal procedures. In some sporadic cases, verification of ink marking was not done regularly, such as in Shkodër ([VC](#) in Migjeni Theater), or marking with ink being done after the voter had voted (Aliban commune, Vlorë, [VC](#) 4400). For more information, please consult statistics and graphics attached to this report.

We also noticed sporadic cases of the suspension of the voting process, due to the lack of materials, due to errors by the commission in following voting procedures, debates among commission members, unmotivated interruptions, etc., such as in Korçë [VC](#) 3660, Tiranë [VC](#) 1493/1, 1416, 1928/1, 1839, in Shkodër [VC](#) 295, etc.

4. COMPLETION OF VOTING AND VOTE COUNT

- PROCEDURES TO CONCLUDE VOTING

In most of the voting centers, the conclusion of the voting process was done at 19:00, normally and peacefully, thus respecting the legal deadline and procedure. In some [VCs](#), voting was concluded late due to voters waiting in line who were outside the [VC](#) at 19:00 and, according to specifications in the Electoral Code, they were allowed to vote. Delays affected [VCs](#) 1977, 2569/1, 1714, 1966, 1418/1, etc.

The transport of boxes of electoral materials was done in an orderly fashion, in compliance with the law. Commission members accompanied materials together, in the presence of a police officer. There were few cases of delayed transport of materials, but there were no claims about violations of the boxes of electoral materials being transported.

- BALLOT COUNTING

A. Establishment of ballot counting groups

AHC monitored the process of the vote count in some aspects. Based on our monitoring, it resulted that proposals by political parties for members of the vote counting groups ([VCGs](#)) arrived late in the relevant [CEAZs](#) and, as a result, these groups were not created according to legal deadlines in all cases. There were shortcomings in terms of verification of documentation that political parties had to complete for the proposed members. The official training of [VCGs](#) was expected to take place in the late night hours of June 22, 2013, but effectively, in all monitored cases, it was done on June 23, upon completion of the voting process.

B. Respect for legal deadlines and requirements for the conduct of the vote count.

The process of the vote count was not carried out within the 48-hour time frame established by law. Except for [CEAZs](#) no. 21, 81, 82, 84, 85 and 86, counting was completed beyond the deadline prescribed by the Electoral Code for the issuance of election results (22:00 of June 24) in all the rest of the [CEAZs](#). Reasons for the delays or failure to start counting included: non-arrival of electoral materials from [VCs](#) on time; failure to constitute vote counting groups on time in some [CEAZs](#); conduct of training of vote counting group members in the early morning hours; lack of organization of work and the installation of equipment in vote counting locations, etc. In [CEAZs](#) 32 and 49, in the early hours of June 24, it a decision was taken to interrupt the counting and resume at 10:00 for reasons that remain unclear. AHC deems that all of these encountered issues have been highlighted in past elections too; therefore, greater attention should be devoted to this process in the future, taking measures for better preparation of election administration bodies in this regard. However, we may say that in this regard, visible improvements were made as in most [CEAZs](#), the vote count was completed within 4-5 days, although it generally began late. There were also delays in officially accepting ballot boxes and boxes of other voting materials due to the prolongation of procedures of this process. This led, as a result, to most of the monitored [CEAZs](#) not being prepared in the early hours of June 24 to start the counting process. It results that this process had not begun by the legal deadline in [CEAZs](#) 21, 26, 29, 33, 38, 39, while counting began in the late morning hours of June 24 in [CEAZs](#) no. 20, 24, 25, 32, 36, 40, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85 and 86. In all monitored [CEAZs](#), there were frequent interruptions, which were justified with counting group members being tired.

It is worth mentioning that in 7 [CEAZs](#), unauthorized persons were present in the counting premises, precisely in [CEAZs](#) 21, 27, 33, 34, 38, 78, 79, 81, 82, 84, 85 and 86. In most cases, these persons were ousted by [CEAZ](#) members and in some cases, police intervention was used for this purpose. Another aspect we noticed was the impossibility of identifying all unauthorized persons in all monitored [CEAZs](#), due to their failure to keep badges in visible places.

The progress of the counting process was normal and took place in a generally calm environment. It is positive that, in comparison to past elections, there were no long unmotivated delays. Another positive aspect was the calm and maturity demonstrated by vote counting groups in discharging their duties as well as their consensus in decision making, while complying with the law. [CEAZ](#) members demonstrated understanding in resolving issues and overcoming various obstacles encountered during the voting process. Nevertheless, the opening and verification of some boxes of voting materials, during the process to review complaints by electoral subjects, also featured inaccuracies in reflecting the number of votes in pertinent documentation, which, in any case, did not affect the electoral result.

With regard to contestations and controversies, as pertains to procedures during the vote count, these were mostly noticed in 30 [CEAZs](#): 3, 5, 21, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38,

39, 40, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 59, 60, 78, 79 and 80. Contestations and controversies mainly came from observers of electoral subjects and had to do with aspects related to the validity of ballots, their fast movement through the transparency monitor, or the wrong positioning of ballots in the monitor. In general, contestations were taken into consideration by [CEAZ](#) members and they were not reflected in process-verbals only in 3 [CEAZs](#) with the justification that they were insignificant.

In 6 [CEAZs](#), AHC observers found that there were interferences with the [VCGs](#) and [CEAZ](#) members, namely in [CEAZs](#) no. 21, 29, 30, 32 and 38. Interventions came often from observers of electoral subjects who, in many cases, contested the validity of the ballot, but making their reservations known not in ways prescribed by law. During the voting process, in some [CEAZs](#), we encountered incidents such as those in [CEAZs](#) no. 21, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 38, 48, 78 and 81, which appeared in the form of heated debates between observers of electoral subjects and [CEAZ](#) members, as well as among observers of electoral subjects and [VCG](#) members. It is worth mentioning that in some cases, it took assistance from police bodies to calm the situation, such as in [CEAZs](#) no. 34,²⁷ [CEAZ](#) no. 38,²⁸ and [CEAZ](#) no 33.²⁹

5. TRANSPARENCY OF THE VOTING PROCESS

With regard to transparency of the electoral process, the Copenhagen criteria specify that state parties deem that the presence of observers, whether foreign or domestic, may improve the electoral process of the country where the elections are being held. They enable that no legal or administrative obstacle can limit the access of the mass media, on a non-discriminatory basis, in all political groups and individuals who think of participating in the electoral process.

Access of civil society observers in the country's [VCs](#) was generally good. The [CEC](#) accredited over 9,000 observers, foreign and domestic, a very large number in comparison to previous elections. However, there were some problems; for instance, some observers were not allowed by [VC](#) commissions to attend procedures for the opening of voting, or were ousted when the voting was suspended, as in Tirana [VC](#) 1797, 1410/2, 1410, in Librazhd [VC](#) 2706, in Vlorë [VC](#) 4473, etc. The obstruction of observers was done without providing any legitimate reason although observers had been accredited by the [CEC](#) in an orderly fashion. Most problematic in this regard were [CEAZs](#) no. 32, 36 and 84. In figures, the situation indicates that in 99.19% of the monitored [VCs](#), observers had full access and in 0.81% of the cases, they were not allowed to freely enter the voting center.

AHC observers encountered obstacles in monitoring this process and, in some cases, were not allowed to enter the vote counting premises, with the justification that the [CEC](#) accreditation badge

²⁷ When an unauthorized person entered the vote counting area, he threatened and hit one of the VCG members. Upon decision by the CEAZ, police forces intervened and restored order in the CEAZ.

²⁸ In this CEAZ, observers were ousted by police forces for a few hours and were not allowed to monitor the process. In CEAZ 48, the counting process was interrupted upon request by the brother of the DP candidate who was a member of the CEAZ.

²⁹ There were constant problems, such as disagreements between commission members and members of the vote counting groups, as well as between police forces and some of the MPs present there. Outside the premises of this CEAZ, an armed civilian was noticed who created an environment of fear and insecurity for all those present while at the time, there was no police officer present in these premises.

was not sufficient and they would also need an authorization by [CEAZ](#) members. Obstacles were encountered in [CEAZs](#) no. 32, 36, 38, 59 and 84. AHC had continued contact with the Central Election Commission and, thanks to its interventions, in some cases, it became possible for AHC observers to enter these [CEAZs](#).

In 17 [CEAZs](#) (*No. 3, 24, 25, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 59, 60, 80, 81, and 84*), access of AHC observers was limited to monitor the orderliness of counting procedures. The reasons for such limitation varied: unsuitability of the premises where vote counting groups were located, which were small and did not match the needs of the counting process and monitoring by observers; lack of air; noise or visibility problems due to reactions by observers of electoral subjects; problems regarding counting logistics, namely defects in monitors showing ballots, distance of monitors from the place where observers stayed, lack of chairs for observers, problems with audio systems in tables of the counting groups, etc.

Access of the media in the voting and counting processes was good. They informed public opinion extensively about the development of all phases of the electoral process, although we noticed some kind of pre-determined approach of the media toward electoral subjects in the race. On their part, the media provided wide reporting to the election process, including the electoral campaign, the voting day, and the vote count. Besides space to analyze the process through known analysts, they also offered room to civil society representatives who monitored this electoral process, giving them the opportunity to talk about their findings. The [CEC](#) instruction for coverage of electoral campaign events through footage prepared by the electoral subjects harmed the editorial independence of the media, as well as the citizens' right to be informed; citizens have the right to become familiar with developments in the country in as objective a manner as possible. There were also incidents, such as the one involving the cameraman and reporters of Top Channel who were violated and had their equipment broken.

With regard to deficiencies in transparency of the electoral process, the [CEC](#) has direct responsibility. The official website of this body was not operational throughout the electoral process, i.e. immediately upon the constitution of the [CEC](#) and the decreeing of the election date by the President of the Republic. Normative acts, especially Instructions were not reflected immediately and sometimes, they were not publicized fully. Instructions by the Ministry of Interior regarding the compilation of extracts of electoral components and the voter lists were not made public on the official website of the MoI or that of the [CEC](#). Transparency of the electoral process was not carried out to the proper extent by the [CEC](#), particularly during the voting day and the vote counting process.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings reflected in this report of the monitoring of the June 23, 2013 parliamentary elections, the Albanian Helsinki Committee has reached the following conclusions:

1. In the elections held on June 23, 2013, there were tangible improvements in terms of the quality of the voter lists, in terms of respect for voting and vote counting procedures, and we noticed that positive steps were taken toward the proper acceptance and evaluation of the diversity of disabled voters in the electoral process.
2. Contestations in these elections were relatively less, due to better and more responsible activity by the [CEAZs](#), [VCCs](#), and the vote counting groups.
3. Improvements were made also in the discharge of functions by the state police, during the voting process, the accompaniment of electoral materials to the vote counting locations, as well as during the counting. However, these forces should have worked better in terms of

preserving public order and calm during the period for the preparation of elections in order to prevent and combat manifested criminality.

4. Special credit in this electoral process should go to voters who calmly and voluntarily exercised their right to vote. Their turnout in the voting is considered satisfactory in the conditions when a high percentage of the country's voters is in emigration.
5. Electoral subjects, especially the governing majority, should have kept better in mind the fact that OSCE/ODIHR has constantly articulated criticism for the use of inaugurations for electoral purposes, or the use of the public administration and school students in electoral events, which is in contravention of paragraph 5 of the Copenhagen Document of 1990.
6. The [CEC](#), although it handled a large volume of work, was not always at the proper level of discharging its duties and, in some cases, in terms of taking decisions, it became subject to political influences. The [CEC](#) activity was weakened, limited, and further politicized especially after the departure, through resignation, of three members and its reduction to 4 members.
7. Irregularities or the most noticeable failures to fulfill standards were encountered in terms of voter education and awareness, in terms of respect for the norms of conducting an electoral campaign by electoral subjects, as well as in the [CEC](#) activity. Nevertheless, these irregularities were not such as to make the June 23, 2013 elections unacceptable.
8. Keeping in mind developments during the pre-election period, the shortcomings and violations of the law encountered during the voting process, the vote count, we are of the opinion that greater efforts should be made not only toward more rigorous enforcement of the law, but also toward more political will in this regard, especially by the country's two largest parties.
9. It remains an important duty of the Assembly of Albania to further improve the Electoral Code, to look at the possibility of depoliticizing electoral administration bodies, and to improve their activity toward exercising the competences assigned by law, especially in the vote counting process and the issuance of results.

Acknowledgements

AHC staff and our wonderful monitors carried out their duties successfully and correctly and for this, we thank them sincerely. Thanks also go to our donors, the U.S. Embassy in Albania, Swedish organization [CRD](#), and the Open Society Foundation (SOROS), which made this monitoring possible with their financial support. We thank the organization [ADRF](#) for the sincere and professional cooperation as well as all central and local government institutions that received us and gave us the requested information or were open to our remarks and suggestions. We also thank election administration bodies of all the districts we monitored for their understanding.

8. ANNEXES

- *Report of findings by [ADRF](#) (not yet translated in English)*