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Elections in Albania

June 23 Parliamentary and Local By-Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Europe and Asia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Disclosure:
These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Albanian elections authorities, to the best of our knowledge as of June 17, 2013. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is Election Day?

Elections will be held on June 23, 2013.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

Eligible citizens will cast their vote for members of Parliament. In a few regions, citizens will also participate in local government by-elections.

Who can vote?

Every Albanian citizen 18 or older on Election Day has the right to vote. Convicts serving a prison sentence will also be able to vote.¹

Citizens declared mentally incompetent by court do not have the right to vote.

How many registered voters are there?

The final number of registered voters announced by the Ministry of Interior on May 13, 2013, was 3,270,936.²

What is the structure of the government in Albania?

Albania is a parliamentary republic. The President is the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, and is elected by Parliament for five years, with the right to be re-elected only once. Current President Bujar Nishani was elected in July 2012.

Parliament can hold up to five rounds of voting to elect the President; a candidate needs to receive no less than three-fifths of votes to be elected in the first, second or third rounds of vote. A candidate needs more than 50 percent to be elected in the fourth and fifth rounds. Parliament dissolves if a President is not elected in the fifth round, and parliamentary elections are then held within 45 days. The new Parliament then elects the President by a simple majority.

The President appoints the Prime Minister, who is elected by the majority winning party or coalition. The President can dissolve Parliament if it fails to elect a Prime Minister. The Prime Minister, who is head of the Council of Ministers, can also propose the appointment and dismissal of ministers, who must be approved by the President.

Currently, the government is headed by the center-right Democratic Party (PD), with PD leader Sali Berisha serving as Prime Minister.³

¹ Constitution of the Republic of Albania

² Ministry of Interior Press Release: *Njoftim mbi gjenerimin e Listës përfundimtare të zgjedhësve për zgjedhjet e përgjithshme të 23 qershorit 2013* (Notice of generating the final voter list for general elections of June 23, 2013). Dt.13.05.2013 <http://moi.gov.al/?p=4290>

³ Constitution of the Republic of Albania

Are there reserved seats for women? What is the gender balance within the candidate list?

There are no reserved seats for women, but there is a gender quota for parliamentary and local elections. For each of the 12 multi-member electoral zones, at least 30 percent and one of the first three names of the multi-name candidate list must belong to a candidate of the opposite gender.

Sanctions for non-compliance are established in the Electoral Code. The Central Election Commission (CEC) imposes these sanctions to each electoral zone where a violation occurred. Failure by an electoral subject⁴ to comply with the obligations of the composition of the candidate list is punishable with a fine of ALL 1,000,000 (approximately \$9,000 USD) in the case of parliamentary elections, and ALL 50,000 (approximately \$450 USD) for local government elections. Electoral subjects are not however compelled to correct their lists.

When an electoral subject fails to make one of the first three names a member of the opposite gender, the CEC may replace one of the names with another candidate of the opposite gender from further down the list, if available.⁵

The gender balance within the multi-name candidate list for the 2013 parliamentary elections is 60 percent men and 40 percent women.⁶

What is the election management body? What are its powers?

Election management is covered by three different bodies: the Central Election Commission (CEC), commissions of electoral administration zone (CEAZs) and voting center commissions (VCCs).

The CEC is a permanent body that prepares, supervises, leads and verifies all elements of elections and referendums and announces results. The CEC is composed of seven members and 55 staff.⁷ Most decisions are made by a simple majority, but some – such as validation of election results and the use of new technology – must be made by a quorum of five members.

CEC responsibilities include: issuing decisions and instructions on elections; making decisions on electoral practices; directing pre-electoral and electoral processes; approving boundaries of electoral administration zones (EAZs); registering electoral subjects; declaring election results; invalidating elections, if necessary; overseeing electoral campaign financing; imposing administrative sanctions and filing criminal charges for offences related to elections; and supervising the compilation of voter lists.

⁴ “Electoral subjects” include political parties, coalitions and candidates proposed by the voters, as well as candidates for mayor of local government bodies.

⁵ Electoral Code

⁶ Central Election Commission, http://cec.org.al/images/stories/zgjedhje-per-kuvend/2013/listat_shumeemerore/perqindja_gjini_subjekte.pdf

⁷ Central Election Commission, <http://cec.org.al/images/stories/lidhja%201%20-organigrama.pdf>

There are 89 CEAZs throughout Albania, covering all districts and each of the 12 electoral zones. All are composed of seven members and one Secretary. There are 5,508 VCCs, all composed of six members and one Secretary.

CEAZs and VCCs are not permanent bodies. CEAZs are established no later than 90 days before Election Day. VCCs are established no later than 30 days prior to an election. In the case of partial or early elections, VCCs are established no later than 20 days beforehand.

CEAZs are responsible for the administration and conduct of elections within an administrative zone. A CEAZ registers information or claims from voters and verifies them; administers the budget allocated by the CEC; ensures the timely distribution of voting materials; prepares and approves election results for each electoral subject in the EAZ; registers voters and candidates; and declares winners of local government elections. The CEAZs also appoint counting teams, which count ballots at their respective ballot counting center.

The VCC is responsible for the conduct of elections within the voting center. This commission is not responsible for counting ballots.

What is a polling place? What is a voting center?

A polling place refers to the basic unit of territory established by the Central Election Commission for the purpose of voting. It is also referred to as a voting center (VC).

There are 5,508 established VCs for this election. A VC may have no less than 200 and no more than 1,000 registered voters. VCs in Tirana, where the Electronic Voter Verification and Registration System pilot project is planned for the 2013 elections, may not have more than 700 registered voters.

Prisons, places of pre-trial detention, hospitals and other healthcare institutions that accept patients for more than three days constitute special polling units. A VC in such institutions may be established when there are more than 15 voters.

How many polling places are set up on Election Day?

The Central Election Commission declared on May 28, 2013, there will be 5,508 voting centers in Albania.⁸

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

Out-of-country voting is not allowed in this election.

⁸ Central Election Commission, press release. May 28, 2013
http://cec.org.al/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=464%3Anjoftim-per-shtyp-28052013&catid=51%3Adeklarata-2010&Itemid=158&lang=sq

How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots?

A voter with physical disability who is unable to perform voting procedures alone may request the assistance of a family member or another voter who is on the voter list for the same voting center (VC). The voter may not be assisted by any of the seven members of the VC. Before marking the ballot paper, a person who assists another voter makes a statement that is recorded in the VC Meeting Records Book. This statement ensures he or she will vote as instructed, will not influence the voter's decision, will not make the vote public and has not voted on behalf of any other voter. The ballot paper must be marked inside the voting booth.

To ensure polling stations are accessible, voters with disabilities have the right to submit official documentation that proves the type and category of disability. With this documentation, VCs that have registered voters with disabilities can be designated and organized in such a way to guarantee access for all voters. Mayors of local governments can further appoint support personnel or equipment to guarantee this access.

In case of voters with visual impairments, mayors notify the CEC of the number of blind voters and their respective VCs. The CEC supplies the commissions of these VCs with special voting devices that allow blind voters to read or understand the ballot paper and vote independently.

What technology will be used?

Two election technology pilot projects will be introduced in Albania during the 2013 parliamentary elections: an electronic counting system for counting and evaluating ballots in the Fier Region, and an electronic verification system for verifying and recording voters in the Tirana Region.

A final decision on the use of technology is still pending for this election. Decisions for the use of technology need to be approved by a minimum of five members. Presently, the Central Election Commission is only operating with four members.

What are the responsibilities of the Media Monitoring Board, and what role will media play in the election?

The Central Election Commission (CEC) establishes the Media Monitoring Board (MMB) 40 days prior to start of the election campaign. The MMB monitors the implementation of Electoral Code provisions on the electoral campaign by public and private radio and television broadcasters.

The CEC broadcasts its meetings live on its official website. During the campaign period, the public Radio and Television Bureau provides two hours of free airtime to the CEC, and 90 minutes of free airtime for voter information each year.

Where is voting, counting and tabulation held?

The voting process takes place in voting centers (VC). After closing, ballot boxes are transported from there to their respective ballot counting center (BCC), with one center set up by each of the 89

commissions of electoral administration zone (CEAZ). CEAZ members will be at BCCs to receive election material and supervise the counting process.

For the official counting process, each CEAZ sets up four-member counting teams. These teams include one person from the main parliamentary majority party, one from the main parliamentary opposition party, one from a second parliamentary majority party and one from a second parliamentary opposition party.

Tabulation of results for each electoral administration zone (EAZ) starts at each BCC. After counting, the counting team completes a table of results and submits it to the CEAZ. A copy of the table of results is sent electronically to the Central Election Commission (CEC), which publishes the official preliminary results for each voting center.

The CEC tabulates results of electoral zones based on aggregate tables prepared by each CEAZ.

Who may observe on Election Day? How do they get accreditation?

Political parties or candidates who are registered with the Central Election Commission (CEC) as electoral subjects have the right to appoint one observer. Coalitions of parties may appoint up to three.

Albanian and foreign nongovernmental organizations; international organizations specialized or engaged in the area of good governance and democratization; representatives of foreign countries; and the media have the right to send observers to the elections.

The accreditation of observers is done through review of individual data on each observer. Requests from Albanian observers for accreditation are submitted to the CEC no later than 15 days before the election. Requests from foreign observers are submitted to the CEC no later than 72 hours before the election.

When will official results be announced?

The final election results are declared by the Central Election Commission no later than five days from the declaration of results from each electoral administration zone, after the procedures on appeals have been completed.

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

Any political party or candidate is entitled to file a complaint with the Central Election Commission (CEC) against a commission of electoral administration zone (CEAZ) decision within three days of any CEAZ decision. Local government election results, as declared by the CEAZ, may be appealed to the CEC no later than five days from the declaration. Finally, CEC approval of the aggregate table of results for an electoral administration zone may be appealed no later than five days from the announcement of the results.

A complainant may seek the amendment or invalidation of results in one or more voting center. The CEC must decide on complaints against election results within 10 days, and within two days for any other complaint.

Voters have the right to appeal to the Electoral College of the Court of Appeals in Tirana against CEC decisions that affect their legal interests. Individuals or political parties whose request to be registered as an electoral subject have been rejected also have the right to appeal. Electoral subjects have the right to appeal to the Electoral College against the CEC if they fail to make a decision by the legal deadline.

An appeal against all CEC decisions must be made within five days of a decision.

The Electoral College adjudicates and decides on an appeal within 10 days from the filing of the court complaint. The Electoral College consists of eight judges selected by a drawing of lots conducted by the High Council of Justice. The decision of the Electoral College is final and cannot be appealed.

How will Election Day security be ensured?

To ensure security across voting centers (VCs), voting center commissions (VCCs) will request assistance from police and commissions of electoral administration zone to restore order, should an incident occur.

No armed persons are allowed to stay within the premises of a VC, apart from State Police employees called by the VCC, or prison police within a prison or detention center in which a special VC has been established.

When voting materials are delivered to a ballot counting center, sensitive material is accompanied by a police officer. The accompanying officer must wear the uniform of the State Police, the number assigned by the Central Election Commission and his or her surname in a visible place at all times.

Resources

- Constitution of the Republic of Albania ([English](#), [Albanian](#))
- [Central Election Commission Website](#)
- Electoral Code ([English](#))
- [Central Election Commission Decision Press Release, May 28, 2013](#)
- [Voter Education Material](#)
- [Ballot Models for 2013 Elections](#)
- [Parties and Candidates](#)