



**MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK**

# **2001 NATIONWIDE SURVEY OF ZONE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION OFFICIALS**

## **Findings from the IFES Survey**

**Prepared For  
The Central Election Commission, Albania**

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## **Introduction**

The aim of this report is to present key findings from the first nationwide survey of local election officials, held in November and December 2001 in Albania. During this period, both local government and zone election officials were interviewed, with the objective of seeking their views on a range of topics relating to election administration and their experiences during the parliamentary elections in 2001. This report has been produced for the Central Election Commission, following an extensive analysis of the results and the extraction of key findings by the International Foundation for Election Systems. The survey findings highlight various improvements as identified by the election officials and potential focus areas for the Central Election Commission, local election commissions and political parties, leading up to the local government elections in 2003.

This report contains three sections. Part one contains a brief overview of the election officials survey project, the structure of the questionnaire and the classification system used for grouping responses in this report. Part two of this report highlights key findings based on data collated and analyzed by IFES. For easy reference, findings are presented both as percentages and totals, in one of seven topic areas. In part 3 of this report, IFES offers comments and observations in a number of areas in the context of future requirements for the improvements of the democratic electoral process in Albania.

## **PART ONE: ELECTION OFFICIALS SURVEY PROJECT**

The June 2001 election for the National Assembly of Albania was the second nation-wide election in Albania in nine months. Both elections were conducted on the basis of a new Electoral Code (approved by the National Assembly on May 8, 2000), administered by a Central Election Commission formalized with the passage of the Electoral Code in May 2000, and a new national voter list compiled in mid 2000 and revised in the spring of 2001. In addition, with the conclusion of the national elections in 2001 the CEC had, for the first time, a nation-wide compliment of local election officials (LGECs for municipalities and communes and ZECs for the electoral zones of the National Assembly). In recognition of these events IFES approached the CEC with the idea of a survey of local election officials to determine their views on the conduct of the elections. With the agreement and co-operation of the CEC, IFES proceeded to design and conduct the survey and in doing so, identified several objectives:

- Obtain the views of local officials on problems and issues in respect of the administration of elections
- Determine the perception of fairness of the elections in June 2001
- Ascertain interest in the formation of an Association of Local Election Officials
- Provide information and advice to the CEC
- Identify areas of improvement in election administration from the perspective of local officials
- Assist the CEC to determine priorities in preparation for local government elections in 2003
- Maintain a communication link between the CEC and local officials

In November and December 2001, 2,972 interviews were undertaken using a structured questionnaire and responses were received from 2,446 local government and 624 zone election officials. The questionnaire contained 144 questions and covered topics relating to demographic information, the role of election commissioners in the election process, LGECs and ZECs serving on election commissions in 2001, CEC relations and general social and political activities.

Most of the questions in the survey had a limited number of possible answers and these were listed in the questionnaire to facilitate data analysis; however, there were some questions which allowed the election official to express their opinion freely. A few questions listed a response of "Don't Know" for election officials who had no direct experience of a particular topic and "No Answer" for those who were unwilling to provide an opinion.

For analytical purposes, responses were assigned to different classification groups, the results of which are presented in this report. By comparing responses, it has been possible to detect similarities and disparities in quantitative and qualitative results throughout the country. Responses are shown by LGEC and ZEC, prefecture, population density in districts and controversial and non-controversial zones. Four population density groups were created based on the following criteria. Given the large population in Tirana respondents were assigned to one group and separately from urban areas containing more than 10,000 residents, semi-urban areas with 3,000 to 9,999 residents and rural areas with a population of less than 3,000. Zones in the group identified as controversial are 1, 8, 9, 14, 33, 38, 49, 60, 86 and 98. These zones were separated to compare responses of officials about problems and the level of improvements required in the electoral process.

For the first time in Albania, over 80% of LGEC & ZEC election officials were able to express their opinions directly to the CEC about many aspects of the electoral process. Overall election officials were keen to be interviewed and to suggest improvements though a few officials did mention that they had difficulty recalling events as five months had elapsed since the parliamentary elections.

## **PART TWO: Findings of the Survey of Election Officials - Albania**

### **1. BACKGROUND OF LOCAL ELECTION OFFICIALS IN ALBANIA**

#### **A. Demographic Information**

- There were a total of 2,972 questionnaires completed during the survey. This represents approximately 80% (3,070) of all officials appointed (3,880) to a Zone Election Commission (ZEC - 800) or a Local Government Election Commission (LGEC – 3,080) for the 2001 national elections. The same questionnaire was used for all election officials, however, separate sections were included to target specific questions at LGECs or ZECs.
- Of those surveyed, 21% (624) were members of a ZEC and 82% (2,446) were members of a LGEC in 2001. Ninety six respondents (3.2%) of election officials interviewed were a member of both an LGEC and ZEC. Two percent of the respondents stated that they were members of a VCC for the 2001 elections. Of this 2% all but one respondent stated that they had also been a member of a LGEC for the parliamentary elections.

**Figure 1: Number of LGECs & ZECs Contacted and Number of Election Officials Interviewed**

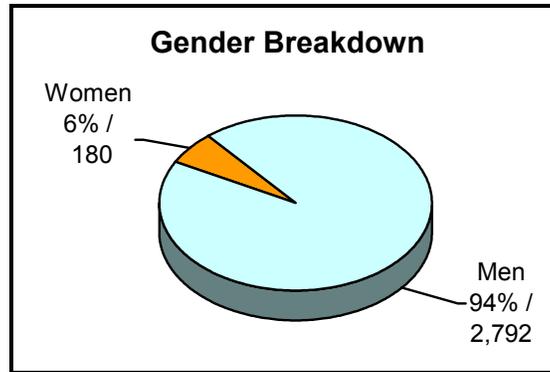
<b>Prefecture</b>	<b>Number of LGECs Contacted</b>	<b>Number of LGEC Officials Interviewed</b>	<b>Prefecture</b>	<b>Number of ZEC Contacted</b>	<b>Number of ZEC Officials Interviewed</b>
BERAT	25	198	BERAT	7	55
DIBER	35	219	DIBER	5	34
DURRES	15	80	DURRES	8	38
ELBASAN	50	376	ELBASAN	11	84
FIER	39	248	FIER	12	78
GJIROKASTER	31	192	GJIROKASTER	4	26
KORCE	35	224	KORCE	9	45
KUKES	27	191	KUKES	3	21
LEZHE	21	199	LEZHE	5	38
SHKODER	32	226	SHKODER	8	56
TIRANE	34	189	TIRANE	19	112
VLORE	23	104	VLORE	7	37
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>2,446</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>624</b>

#### **ORGANIC NUMBER OF COMMISSIONS AND ELECTION OFFICIALS**

<b>Number of LGECs</b>	<b>Number of LGEC Officials</b>	<b>Number of ZECs</b>	<b>Number of ZEC Officials</b>
<b>385</b>	<b>3,080</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>800</b>

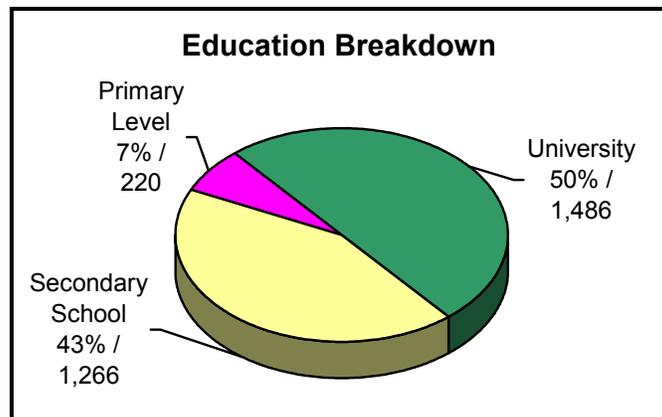
- The survey reveals that the overwhelming majority of election officials in Albania are men (94% / 2,792 men compared to 6% / 180 women). There is a higher than average percentage of female election officials in Tirana (15% / 39), Vlore (8% / 11), Elbasan (7% / 32), Gjirokaster (7% / 15), Durres (7% / 8), and Korce (7% / 17) prefectures. Diber and Kukës prefectures have a very low percentage of female election officials (both 2%, 5 in Diber, 4 in Kukës).

**Figure 2: Proportion of Gender Representation on LGECs and ZECs**



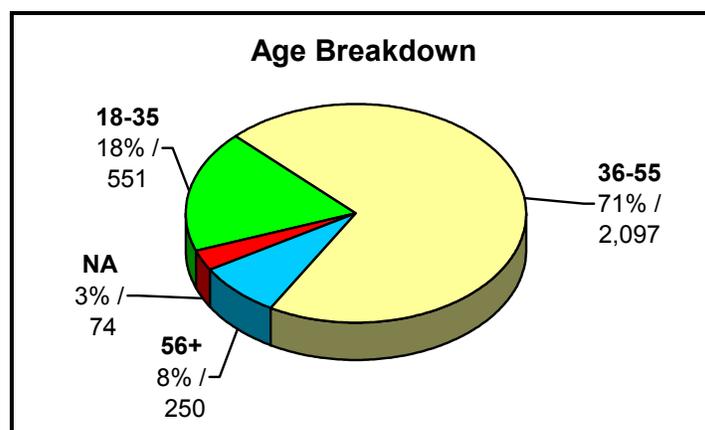
- The Electoral Code of Albania states that ZEC members must have a university degree while members of LGECs shall, as a rule, have a university degree (articles 32 and 38). This requirement was not attained by the parties nominating commission members to the Central Election Commission (CEC) or by the CEC when appointments were made. Half of the survey respondents (50% / 1,486) have a university-level education while 43% (1,266) are secondary school graduates and 7% (220) have primary-level education. The level of education goes down in semi-urban and rural areas. In Tirana, 85% (66) of commissioners have a university degree, compared to 66% (140) of commissioners in other urban centers, 49% (390) in semi-urban areas and 32% (440) in rural areas.
- At the ZEC level, 85% (530) of commissioners have a university degree while 14% (89) have secondary school degrees.
- By contrast, at the LGEC level 42% (1,036) have university degrees, 49% (1,192) are secondary school graduates, and 9% (218) have primary-level education.
- Secretaries to ZECs are required to be lawyers and secretaries of LGECs are also the secretary of the municipality or commune. By reviewing the secretaries only it was found that 71% (264) had a university degree and when the total sample was controlled to remove secretaries it was found that the number of members with a university degree dropped to 38% (806) for LGECs.

**Figure 3: Education Level of Election Officials on LGECs & ZECs**



- Most members of local commissions were between the ages of 36 to 55 (71% / 2,097). Eight percent (250) were between the age of 56 and 72; 17% (509) were between the ages of 26 to 35; and 1% (42) between the ages of 18 to 25.

**Figure 4: Age of Election Officials on LGECs & ZECs**



#### B. Political Party Representation on Commissions

- Pursuant to articles 32 and 38 of the Electoral Code LGECs and ZECs are composed of seven members plus a secretary. Each commission member is nominated by one of the seven largest parties represented in the National Assembly. Secretaries for the ZEC are appointed by the CEC upon the proposal of the ZEC and they must be a jurist. Secretaries of municipalities and communes are automatically the secretary of the LGEC for the respective municipality or commune. Secretaries are not nominated by political parties, however, municipal and commune secretaries are political appointments made directly by the central government. The table below shows the number of local commissioners appointed by the CEC based on party nominations and the columns on the right identify the number of commissioners indicating party membership and the percentage of those commissioners who declared party membership in the party that nominated them. The table does not include commission secretaries. Overall there is a fairly even distribution of party representation on local commissions.

**Figure 5: Political Parties Nominating Commissioners & Party Membership**

Political Parties	% / Total Commissioners Nominated By Political Parties	Commissioners Indicating Membership of Political Party	% of Commissioners Declaring Membership In Party Which Nominated Them
Agrarian (PA)	5.1% / 132	111	84%
Democratic Alliance (PAD)	12.5% / 324	215	66%
Human Rights (PBDNJ)	9.4% / 245	180	73%
Christian Democrats (PDK)	2.5% / 65	54	83%
National Front (PBK)	3.9% / 101	82	81%
Democratic Party of Albania (PDSH)	16.0% / 416	469	113%
Legality Movement (PLL)	4.1% / 108	45	42%
Republican Party (PR)	13.1% / 341	249	73%
Socialist Party (PS)	16.6% / 431	399	92%
Social Democrats (PSD)	14.1% / 367	310	84%
Others	2.4% / 62	57	92%

- In all (including secretaries) 16.7% (497) of those surveyed stated that they were not a member of any political party. When secretaries were eliminated the percentage of non-party members decreased to 15.6 % (406). In virtually every case all but one political party (PDSH) nominated a number of non party members to represent them at the commission level.
- As indicated in the table above, commissioners declaring a membership in the PDSH (469) exceeds the number of commissioners appointed (416) by the CEC to represent that party. On further examination of the data it was found that smaller parties (PDK, PLL and PR who were in coalition with the PDSH for the election) appointed 80 members of the PDSH to represent them on local commissions. This pattern does not occur as frequently for PS members. In all, smaller parties allied to the PS appointed 20 PS members to represent them on the commissions.

## **2. KNOWLEDGE OF DUTIES AND ROLES AS ELECTION COMMISSIONER**

### A. Experience as Election Commissioner

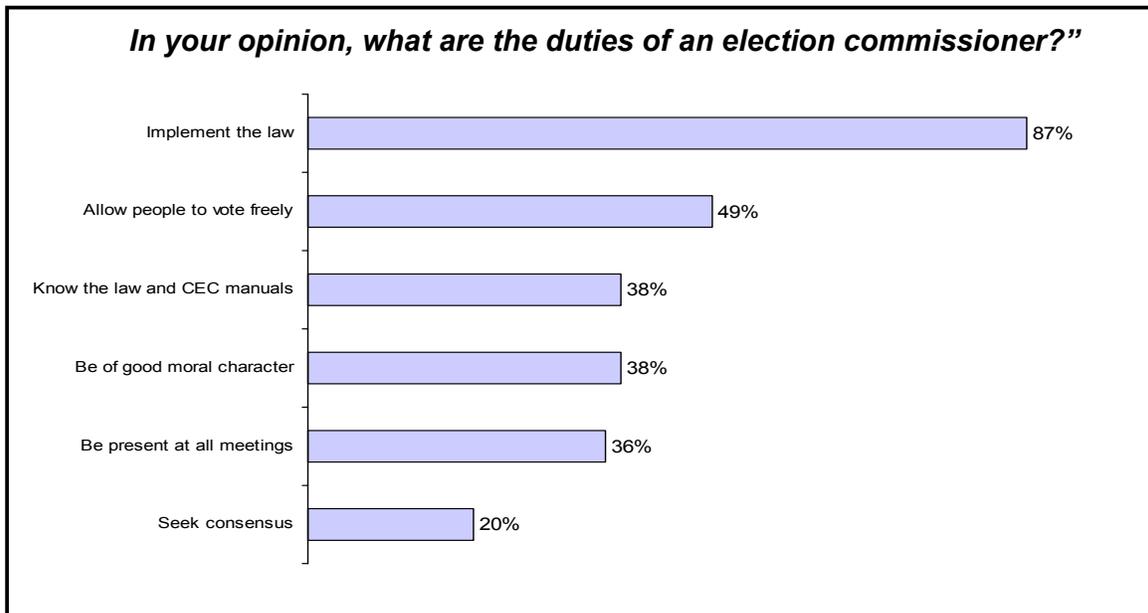
- Most of the election officials surveyed had previous electoral experience in Albania. Fifty-four percent (1,613) of the officials worked during the 2000 local election, 33% (985) during the 1997 parliamentary election, and 27% (791) during the 1996 local election. In total, 17% (497) of the officials worked in all four elections, 16% (470) in three elections, and 32% (958) in two previous elections. For thirty-five percent of respondents, the 2001 parliamentary election was their first experience as an election official. Of all officials interviewed, only 61 stated that they had experience working at all three levels of election commissions (zone, municipal/commune and voting center). Sixty-five respondents stated that they had experience at all three positions on a commission: chair, deputy chair and member.

### B. Roles & Responsibilities of Election Commissioners

- The large majority of election officials surveyed were informed about different administrative aspects of their work. Ninety-nine percent (2,998) of respondents stated that they were informed of their roles and responsibilities as a commissioner. Ninety-six percent (2,847) of respondents were informed of the hours they were expected to work. Eighty-nine percent (2,631) were informed of the facilities provided for their commission. Almost one-quarter of the respondents stated that they were not informed about the remuneration they were to receive. Seventy-six percent (2,266) said they were informed and 24% (703) said that they were 'not informed'. This is by far the highest lack of knowledge about administrative matters indicated by election officials.
- More than 9 out of 10 respondents (93% / 2,751) indicated that they were informed about the reasons for which an election commissioner could be disciplined. When asked to list the reasons why an election commissioner could be terminated, almost all the respondents listed violations of the law (96% / 2,858). Other frequently-cited reasons for termination were: lack of discipline (54% / 1,614), at the request of the political parties (46% / 1,387), poor attendance (30% / 895) and insufficient education (24% / 718).

- Election commissioners were asked to list their main duties as election commissioners. The most frequently cited response was to implement the law (87% / 2,590), followed by: allow people to vote freely (49% / 1,464), know the law and CEC manuals (38% / 1,141), be of good moral character (38% / 1,134), and be present at all meetings (36% / 1,076). According to election officials, their most important duties are to make sure the law on elections is implemented and that the voters have a chance to vote freely. These ‘idealistic’ duties surpass the more mundane duties such as being present for all meetings.

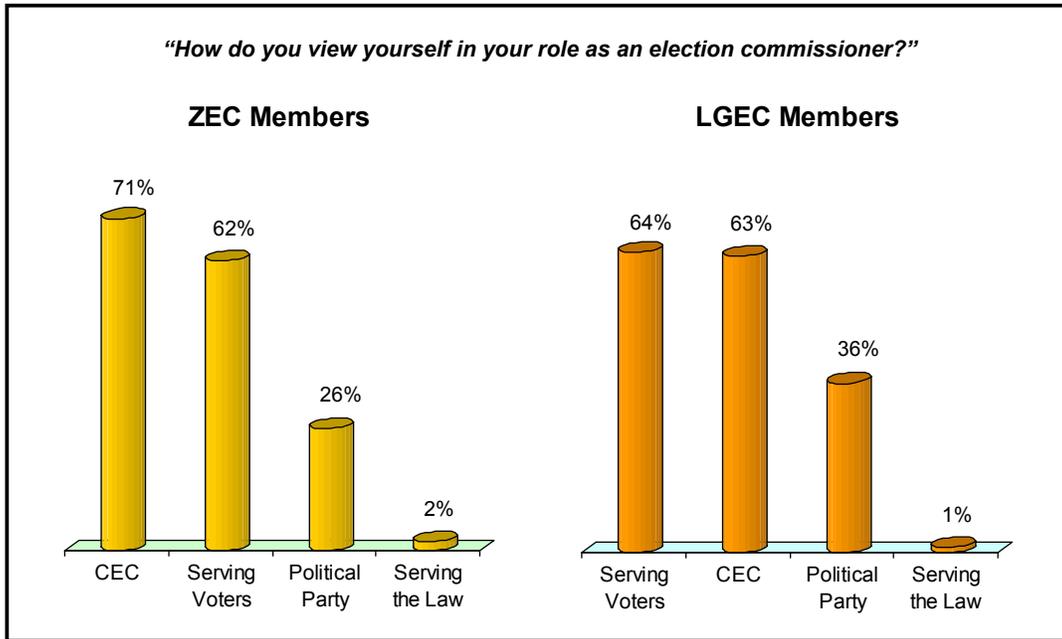
**Figure 6: Main Duties Identified by LGEC & ZEC Election Officials**



### C. Primary Allegiance of Election Commissioners

- The survey tried to determine how election officials see themselves in their roles. Respondents were asked whether they viewed themselves primarily as representatives of the political parties that nominated them, as employees of the CEC, or as persons serving the voters. Respondents could choose more than one of these categories. The majority of election commissioners primarily see themselves as civic actors. Sixty-four percent of respondents identified themselves as both serving the voters (1,888) and as employees of the CEC (1,905). A smaller percentage (34% / 1,002) saw themselves as representatives of the political party they represented. If secretaries are excluded from the analysis, LGEC members are most likely to say that they serve the voters (64% / 1,564) while ZEC members are most likely to say that they serve the CEC (71% / 442). Chairs and secretaries of LGECs are more likely to identify themselves as employees of the CEC than deputy chairs and members, who are more likely to identify themselves as representatives of political parties. A similar pattern is observed for those who worked on the ZEC.

**Figure 7: Primary Allegiance of LGEC & ZEC Commissioners**



**D. Penalties and Disciplinary Actions**

- Respondents were asked what sort of sanction should fall upon an election official who does not implement the decisions and instructions provided by the CEC. More than three-quarters of the respondents agreed that dismissal of the commissioner could be one sanction (77% / 2,287). A majority of the respondents (63% / 1,874) also identified fines as a possible penalty. Election officials from Gjirokaster (82% / 173), Korce (75% / 196), Kukes (72% / 150), and Berat (71% / 177) were most likely to mention fines as a punishment. Nineteen percent (551) of the respondents were willing to accept imprisonment as a punishment for the election official. The greater the number of elections an official has worked, the more likely he/she was to call for imprisonment. Only 3% (101) felt that the election official should get away with the relatively light sanction or a warning.

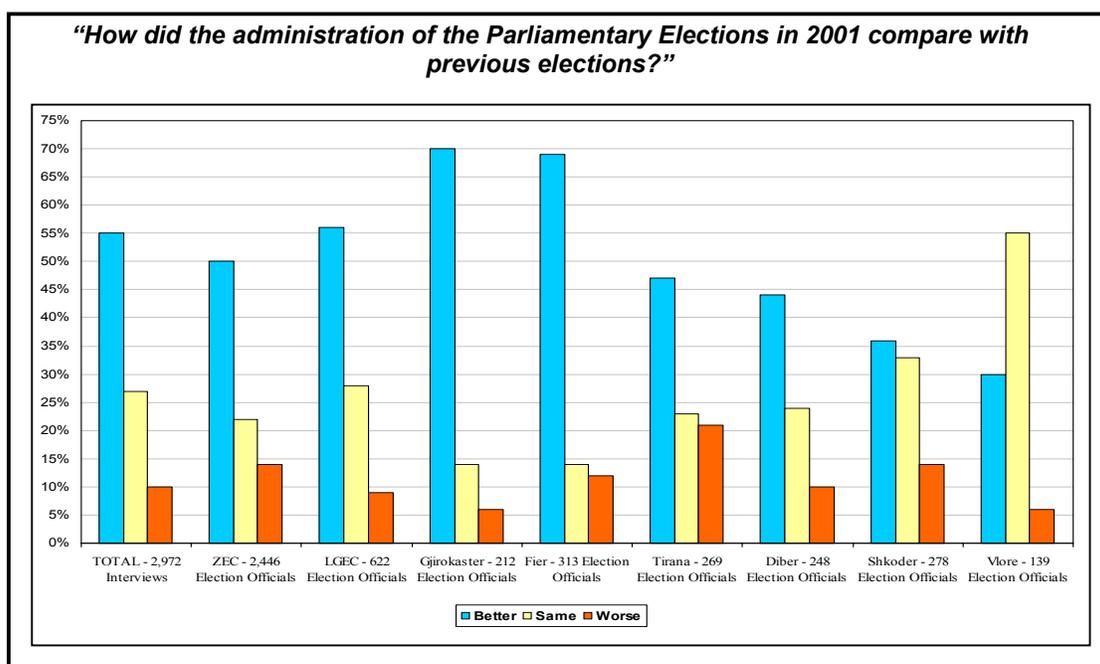
**3. ELECTION COMMISSION PERFORMANCE DURING 2001 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS**

**A. Comparison of 2001 Election to Previous Elections**

- Respondents were asked to compare the administration of the 2001 parliamentary election with previous elections in Albania. Slightly more than half (55% / 1,625) felt the 2001 elections were better-administered than previous elections, 27% (790) felt the level of administration was the same as before, and 10% (283) felt the administration of this election was worse than that of previous elections. ZEC officials were more critical of this election than LGEC officials. Fifty-six percent (1,373) of LGEC officials felt this election was better-administered compared to 50% (310) of ZEC officials who had the same opinion. On the other hand, 9% (208) of LGEC officials thought that this election was more poorly administered compared to 14% (87) of ZEC officials.

- The percentage of officials who rate the 2001 parliamentary election positively goes up with the level of experience of the election official. Of those for whom the 2001 election was their first election as election commissioner, 49% (515) felt this election was better administered than previous elections. Fifty-four percent (518) of those for whom this was their second election felt that this election was better administered. The percentage who felt the election was better administered is significantly higher for third-time (58% / 273) and fourth-time (64% / 319) officials.
- There were significant variations by location for the data on this question. Election officials in Gjirokaster (149) and Fier (217) prefectures were most likely to feel that the 2001 elections were better administered than previous elections (70% each). On the other hand, less than half the officials in Vlore (30% / 41), Shkoder (36% / 101), Diber (44% / 110), and Tirana (46% / 126) prefectures rated these elections positively. As might be expected, ZEC officials in zones where there were controversies after the election are slightly less positive about this election than officials from zones where there were no controversies 45% (33) vs. 51% (277) better administered.

**Figure 8: 2001 Election Compared to Previous Elections**



## B. Availability of Facilities and Equipment

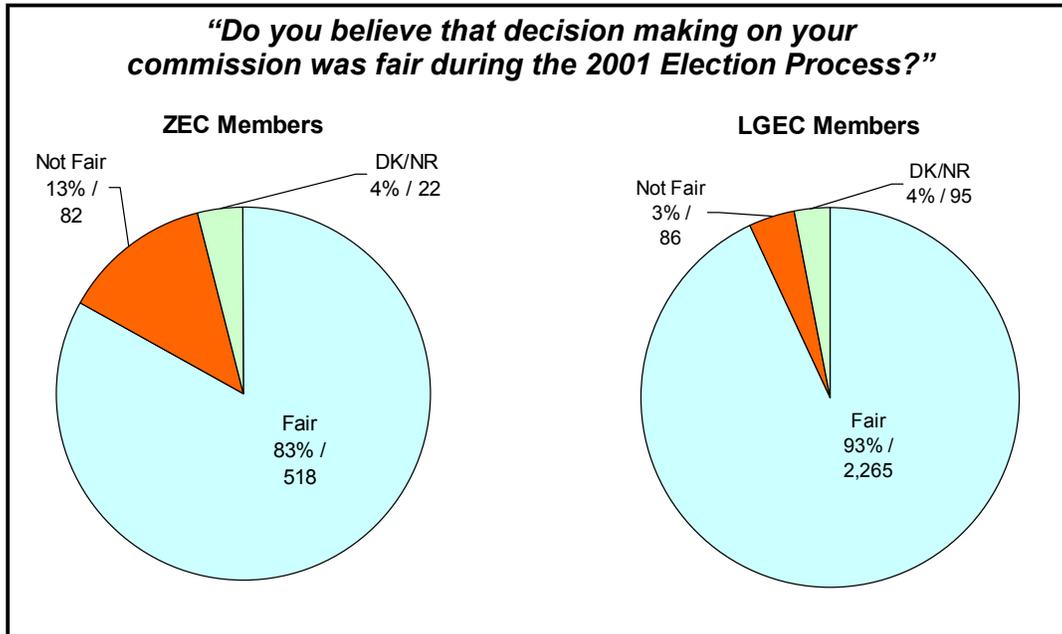
- Although almost all election officials reported having office space for their work during the 2001 parliamentary election (99% / 3,041), and a majority reported having access to a telephone (69% / 1,670 LGEC, 94% / 583 ZEC), there were also many election officials who did not have access to basic communications and technical equipment. Generally, ZEC officials were more likely to have had access to equipment than LGEC officials. Twenty percent (127) of ZEC officials had access to a fax machine while only eight percent (184) of LGEC officials had fax machines. In the case of photocopiers, 27% (169) of ZEC officials had access while 18% (441) of LGEC officials had access. And, 16% (102) of ZEC officials had access to a computer compared to 8% (196) of LGEC officials.

- Availability of equipment is also influenced by location. With the exception of office space, rural and semi-urban locations are less likely to have access to telephones, fax machines, computers and printers than urban locations. Curiously, a similar percentage of officials from Tirana reported that they lacked the above-mentioned equipment (except telephones) as officials from rural and semi-urban locations.

### C. Relationships between Election Commissioners and Decision Making

- The vast majority of commissioners on both the ZECs and LGECs felt that relations between commissioners in their election commission were 'very good' or 'good' (97% / 2,383 LGEC, 89% / 553 ZEC). Among ZEC officials, those in zones where there were controversies after the election were more likely to say that the relations were 'not good' than ZEC officials in other zones. The major reasons given for the bad relationships included: the other commissioner was from a different party; violations of the election code; and, other commissioners blocking the process.
- The differences between LGECs and ZECs on this question are replicated when commissioners were asked about the relationship between their election commission and local authorities. In this case, 96% (2,355) of LGEC commissioners and 88% (549) of ZEC commissioners felt the relationship was good or very good. ZEC commissioners in Tirana and rural areas are more likely to say that relations with local authorities were bad (26% / 6 and 17% / 1 respectively) than ZEC commissioners in urban areas other than Tirana and semi-urban areas (6% / 2 and 9% / 3, respectively).
- Those who felt that the relationship with local authorities were not good were more likely to say that decision-making on their commission was not fair (29% / 20 of LGEC commissioners, 41% / 28 of ZEC commissioners) than those who felt that the relationship with local authorities was good (5% / 52 LGEC, 12% / 43 ZEC).
- ZEC officials were asked about the relationships between their election commissions and Voting Center Commissions (VCCs) in their zone. Ninety-five percent (590) of ZEC officials felt this relationship was either 'very good' or 'good'.
- There is a difference between ZEC and LGEC officials when asked whether they believed that decision-making was fair on their commission during the 2001 election process. While 93% (2,265) of LGEC officials felt that decision-making was fair on their commission (3% / 86 no), a lesser percentage of ZEC officials, 83% (518), felt this way (13% / 82 no). Among ZEC officials, those from Durres (8), Diber (7), Fier (16) (each 21%), Gjirokaster (5), and Tirana (21) (each 19%) were more likely than average to say that decision-making in their ZEC was not fair.

**Figure 9: Fairness of Decision-Making on Commissions**



- Perceptions that decision-making in a particular election was not fair also seems to filter up to the CEC level. Those on the ZEC level who felt that decision making was not fair in their election commission are also much more likely than other respondents to say that CEC inspectors and supervisors were partisan in their decision-making during the 2001 election.

#### D. Voter & Other Complaints

- More than three-quarters of both LGEC (76% / 1,857) and ZEC (81% / 501) officials reported that their election commission received complaints from voters during the parliamentary election. Most of the complaints listed related to the voters list, such as names missing from the list or being listed in the wrong polling station, spelling errors in name, duplicate names, and the names of deceased persons appearing on the lists. LGEC officials mostly reported these problems with the voters list as well as some problems with civil registry offices being closed. Besides listing complaints about the voter list (71% / 527), ZEC officials also listed complaints on a myriad of other issues: problems with the police or courts (7% / 56), location of voting centers (3% / 22), undue pressure on voters (3% / 25), and voters who were not familiar with the proper voting procedures (2% / 14).
- At the LGEC level, a significantly higher percentage of officials in Tirana and other urban locations reported problems with voter complaints than officials in semi-urban and rural locations. At the ZEC level, officials from Lezhe (35) and Vlore (34) prefectures (each 92%) were the most likely to report problems with voter complaints. ZEC officials in Korçe (89% / 40) and Diber (88% / 30) also reported higher than average problems. LGEC officials who complained that the time allotted for voter registration was too short were the most likely to report instances of voter complaints (86% / 359), compared to those who received complaints and felt that that time allotted was adequate (74% / 1440) or too long (67% / 47).

- LGEC officials were asked whether they thought voters had adequate time for the voter registration/revision process. Seventeen percent (418) of LGEC officials felt that the time for registration was too short, 79% (1,943) felt it was adequate, and 3% (70) felt it was too long. Officials in Tirana prefecture were especially critical of the time allotted for registration, with 34% (65) thinking it was too short.
- When ZEC officials were asked whether the VCCs passed on complaints to their commission, a majority (54% / 334) replied that they did with 42% (262) stating that they did not. The most commonly-cited complaint was the presence of mistakes on the voter's lists (47% / 157). Problems or conflict among commissioners was also frequently cited (28% / 95). Problems with the logistics (23% / 78), the table of results (14% / 47), and police interference along with general pressure and interference (17% / 57) were also cited.

#### E. Irregularities during the Election

- Members of ZECs were asked if they believed that parties profited from illegal votes (this was not asked in the context of the specific zone commission of which the respondent was a member or secretary). Later, respondents were asked if they believed the results in their zone were manipulated and finally to indicate if they believed the election in their zone was fair.
- Overall, 84% (520) of ZEC officials throughout Albania feel that the election in their zone was fair compared to 15% (90) who believe it was not. Even though the greater majority of ZEC officials believe the election was fair, there are some important regional differences. Officials in Gjirokaster (35% / 9) were the most likely to say that elections in their zone were not fair. ZEC officials in Diber (29% / 10), Durres (24% / 9), and Fier (23% / 18) were more likely than average to say that elections in their zone were not fair. The relationship between illegal votes, manipulation of results and overall fairness of the elections is dealt with in the following points. The greatest concerns were expressed by ZEC officials from the prefectures of Gjirokaster, Durres, Diber, Fier and Tirana.
- At the ZEC level 51% (319) respondents disagreed with the statement that, "political parties profited from illegal votes during the last parliamentary elections". Thirty-four percent (209) agreed with this statement and 11% (68) didn't know enough to answer. As stated above this question refers to the elections in general, not to the specific zone of the respondent. However, responses to this question appear to be related to the opinion of ZEC officials as to the fairness of the election in their zone. Thirty-eight percent (79) of ZEC officials who reported that parties benefited from illegal votes during the 2001 election also reported that the election in their zone was unfair (this represents 13% / 79 of all ZEC members surveyed). By comparison only 1% (3) of those who reported that parties did not profit from illegal votes during the 2001 election held the view that the election in their zone was unfair. Additionally, half of ZEC officials who reported that parties benefited from illegal votes during the 2001 election felt that results were manipulated in their zone (this represents 17% / 104) of all ZEC members surveyed.

- There is little difference in perception on this question between zones that had a tremendous amount of controversy after the election and those that did not. Fifty percent (13) of ZEC officials in Gjirokaster believed that there was profiting from illegal votes during the 2001 election. ZEC officials in Shkoder (45% / 25), Kukes (43% / 9), Durres (42% / 16), and Tirana (40% / 44) also had a higher than average percentage of officials who said that parties benefited from illegal votes during the 2001 election. Officials in Gjirokaster (39% / 10), Tirana (29% / 32), and Durres (26% / 10) had the highest percentage of ZEC officials saying that results were manipulated in their zone. Finally, officials in Gjirokaster (35% / 9) and Durres (24% / 9) had among the highest percentage saying that elections in their zone were unfair.
- Those who felt that parties profited from illegal votes in general were asked what steps should be taken to deal with this issue in the future. The most frequently mentioned change was to count all ballots at one central location in the electoral zone. Other frequently mentioned responses were the secure transportation of ballots, stronger penalties for illegal voting, reduction of political party influence in the election process, and the presence of media and international observers at the counting.
- Later in the survey officials were asked whether there was manipulation of the results in their zone. The responses to the question demonstrated dramatically different views among officials. Overall, 71% (441) of ZEC officials felt that results were not manipulated in their zone while 20% (121) felt they were. ZEC officials in the Prefecture of Gjirokaster were the most suspicious with 39% (10) stating that they suspected manipulation of results. Officials in the Prefectures of Tirana (29% / 32), Diber (27% / 9), Durres (26% / 10), and Fier (26% / 20) were also more likely than average to suspect results manipulation in their zone. As in the case of perceptions of illegal votes, attitudes on this question have a significant relationship with perceptions toward the fairness of the election in their zone. Sixty-three percent (76) of those ZEC officials who suspected results manipulation in their zone (or 12% / 76 of all ZEC respondents) believed that on the whole, the election in their zone was not fair. This compares to 7% (45) of officials who believed that decision-making was fair but also suspected manipulation of the results in their zone.

#### F. Role of Political Parties

- When commissioners who thought these elections suffered from worse organization than previous (9.5% / 283) were asked the primary reason for this opinion, 45% (126) mentioned political party intervention. A similar percentage (45% / 1,332) of all LGEC and ZEC election officials, feel that elections in Albania could be improved in the future through greater cooperation between political parties during the election process. On this same question 13% (384) feel that elections could be improved if political parties represented citizens better.
- Respondents to the survey were also asked how elections could be made more transparent in Albania. Echoing responses when asked about ways to improve elections in Albania, 29% (843) of commissioners responded that elections could be made more transparent with better cooperation between political parties. A few (7% / 184) went even further and said that commissioners should not be appointed by political parties.
- Only 2% (66) of LGEC commissioners and 0.5% (15) of ZEC commissioners would like to see political parties made responsible for the training of election commissioners for future elections.

- Forty four percent (1,310) of respondents reported that they consulted their parties about the electoral process. Most of the contacts dealt with issues related to the voters lists (35% / 463), creation of election commissions (20% / 263), questions about application of the law (10% / 127), information about the election process (8% / 104), advice (7% / 88), and logistical issues (4% / 51).
- There was a positive attribution made to political parties in the survey. Eighty-four percent (2,482) of all respondents felt that political parties understood the rights and obligations of their nominees to election commissions.

#### G. Role of Police

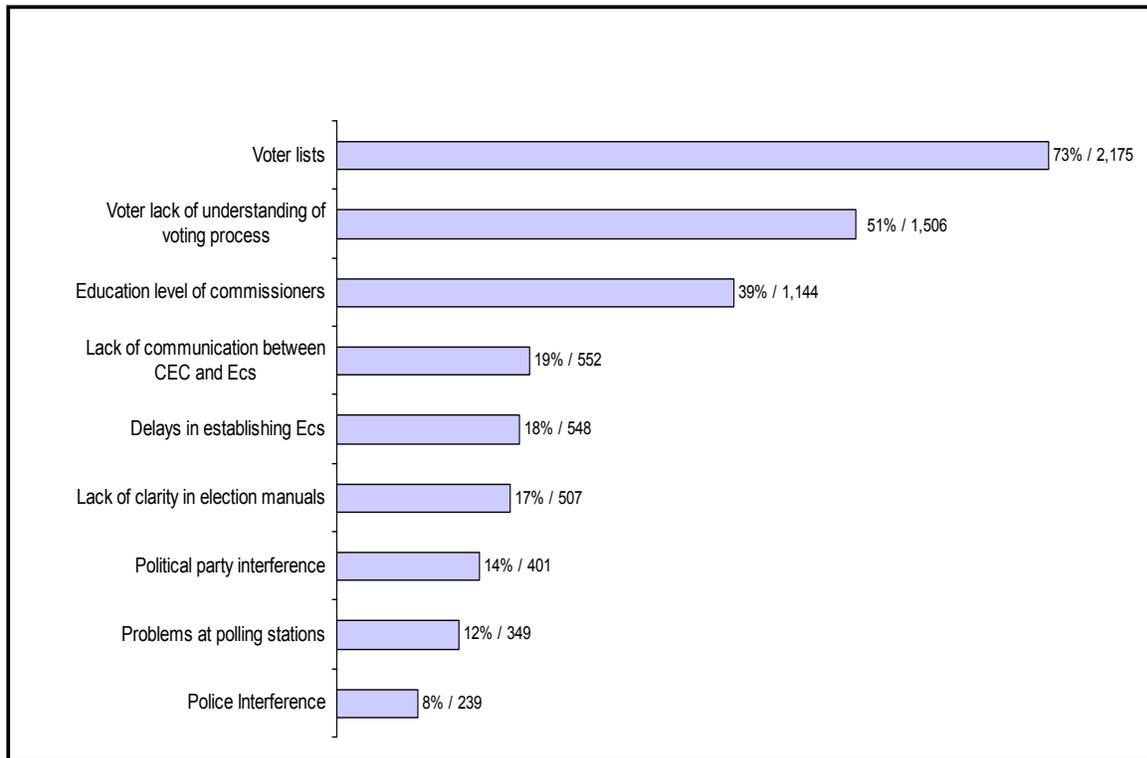
- ZEC officials were asked about their election commission's relationship with the police. Overall, 72% (450) felt the relationship was good and 14% (88) felt the relationship was bad.
- In other questions on the survey some concerns about police behavior were expressed. When all officials were asked to list the biggest problems they observed during the 2001 parliamentary election, a significant number (10% / 284) cited police interference as one of these problems. Police pressure on election commissions was cited as a reason by 47% (134) of those who thought that the parliamentary elections were organized worse than previous elections.
- But an interesting corollary to this finding is that 38% (614) gave 'no police interference' as a reason for the elections being organized better than previous elections.

### **4. PROBLEMS IN ELECTION ADMINISTRATION DURING 2001 ELECTIONS**

#### A. Areas of Greatest Problems

- Election officials were asked to list the three biggest problems they encountered during the 2001 election. A majority of election officials listed problems with the voter lists (73% / 2,175) and a lack of understanding of the voting process by voters (51% / 1,506). The level of education of election commissioners was mentioned by 39% (1,144). Other prominent problems listed were the lack of communications between the CEC and election commissions (19% / 552), delays in establishing election commissions (18% / 548), lack of clarity in the election manuals provided to officials (17% / 507), party interference in the electoral process (14% / 401), people creating problems at the polling stations (12% / 349), and police interference in the electoral process (8% / 239). Problems with the voter lists were most likely to be mentioned by officials from Tirana, while party interference was most often mentioned by officials from Tirana and other urban areas. Lack of voter understanding of procedures and the lack of communication was most often mentioned by semi-urban and rural officials.

**Figure 10: Biggest Problems During the 2001 Election Process**



### B. Voters Lists

- Members of both LGECs and ZECs reported problems with missing voters on the preliminary voters list in their commissions. Ninety-one percent (2,233) of LGEC officials and ninety-two percent (569) of ZEC officials reported that there were voters missing from the preliminary list in their election commission. When asked for the percentage of voters missing from the list, a majority in both cases said between 1 and 5 percent of voters were missing (81% / 1,805) of LGEC, 68% (389) of ZEC. A further 19% (105) of ZEC officials and 14% (319) of LGEC officials said that between 6 and 10 percent of voters were missing. Officials from Tirana and other urban areas generally cited greater problems with the voter lists than officials from semi-urban and rural locations.
- The problems with the voter lists reflect back to the problems cited by LGEC members of spelling errors in people's names on the list (63% / 1,170), names being in the wrong place (39% / 738), and duplicate names on the voter lists (30% / 573).

### C. Tabulation of Results

- ZEC officials were asked about the ease or difficulty of tabulating election results. Seventy-seven percent (343) felt that it was easy to tabulate the results, and 23% (141) felt the tabulation was difficult. Experienced officials (3 or 4 elections) were not significantly different from less experienced officials in their responses to this question. Responses to this question closely correlate to responses on a question asking officials how easy it was to use the CEC forms. Those who found the forms easy to use generally found the tabulation process to be easy as well. On the other hand, those who found CEC forms difficult to use generally found the tabulation process difficult as well. Those who found the process difficult were asked how it could be improved. Simplifying the tables and using computers were the two main responses.

### D. Possible Solutions

- All election officials were asked to look at a list of possible areas of improvement in the electoral process and to identify those areas that required improvement. The most frequently cited area was the need for long-term training of election officials (84% / 2,488). This was followed by a majority of respondents saying that CEC management of elections in Albania needed to improve (60% / 1,779). Co-operation with political parties was also mentioned (45% / 1,332), as well as criteria for membership in an LGEC or ZEC (51% / 1,521). Interestingly, many respondents felt that political parties needed to improve their representation of citizens (13% / 384). A smaller number volunteered answers such as improvement to the voter list, changes to the electoral code, relations between the CEC and the courts, specify duties for the police, remuneration and working conditions of local commissioners.
- Respondents were asked how the transparency of the electoral process could be improved in future elections. Changes to the electoral code (55% / 1,622) and preparing voter lists well in advance of elections (38% / 1,122) were the two most frequently cited improvements. Information was also a key concern as many officials felt that more information should be made available during the election campaigns (25% / 754) and that there should be a greater use of the media for education purposes (24% / 703). Many respondents also said that there should be more cooperation among political parties in the future (28% / 843). The independence of election commissions was sought by many respondents (27% / 794). Finally, the presence of more international observers was frequently mentioned (17% / 500). Volunteered responses included the elimination of political interference, training of commission members, planning and organization of the election and increasing voter participation.

## **5. TRAINING & PREPARATION**

### A. Use & Utility of Election Code and Manuals

- Almost all election officials at both the LGEC (98% / 2,392) and ZEC (99% / 618) levels reported reading the election code with regard to their duties as election commissioners. These commissioners were then asked what their duties as election commissioners were. Over ninety percent of both LGEC and ZEC officials identified implementation of the law as one of their chief duties (91% / 2,187 and 95% / 588, respectively). Two other responses identified by many commissioners were to be honest (51% / 1,214 LGEC, 60% / 373 ZEC) and to be present at meetings (51% / 1,226 LGEC, 46% / 282 ZEC). Other popular responses included promoting harmony within the commission (21% / 497 LGEC, 23% / 141 ZEC) and maintaining good relations with the local government (14% / 329 LGEC). Promoting harmony was most often mentioned by election officials in Vlore and Fier.

- Commissioners at both the LGEC and ZEC level were provided manuals to aid them in familiarizing themselves with their roles and responsibilities. Most commissioners found the manuals to be easy to use (LGEC: 88% / 2,160 easy, 11% / 278 difficult; ZEC: 92% / 574 easy, 8% / 48 difficult), and almost all commissioners responded that they used the manuals in the performance of their duties (99% / 2,422 LGEC, 100% / 622 ZEC).

#### B. Use of Training

- Both LGEC and ZEC officials were asked extensive questions in the survey about training provided for them prior to the 2001 parliamentary election. Seventy-nine percent (1,921) of LGEC officials and eighty-five percent (527) of ZEC officials reported receiving training for the 2001 elections. Both ZEC and LGEC officials in Tirana were more likely than other prefectures not to have received training.

#### C. Attitudes towards Training

- The officials who attended the training were asked to agree or disagree with the following statements related to the training:
  - The training program was necessary in 2001
  - The training program was well organized in 2001
  - The trainer could answer our questions in 2001
  - The CEC should be present at training events
  - Manuals are a good help for the commissioners
  - Manuals are the only form of training needed
  - The commissioners should receive training before every election
  - Only commissioners with training should hold an elections official position

#### **LGEC**

- LGEC officials were overwhelmingly positive about the training they received. Nearly all LGEC officials who went through the training program in 2001 agreed that it was necessary (99.6% / 1,913); 92% (1,773) felt the training was well organized; and 95% (1,830) agreed that the trainers could answer the questions of the trainees.
- The CEC was seen to be indispensable to the training as 96% (1,846) felt that the CEC should be present at all training events.
- Ninety-nine percent (1,895) agreed that manuals are a good help for commissioners, but half disagreed that manuals should be the only form of training. Forty-six percent (892) agreed that manuals should be the only form of training. The greater the election experience a respondent possessed, the more likely they were to disagree that manuals should be the only form of training.
- Ninety-nine percent (1,914) agreed that commissioners should receive training before every election, and 97% (1,866) agreed that it should be mandatory for all election commissioners.

- LGEC officials who received training were asked for ways in which the training could be improved in the future. More time, smaller groups, and increased quality of instruction were the most popular responses. Improving logistics was also frequently mentioned, specifically the need for training materials to be handed out before the beginning of training. Election observations abroad were mentioned as one way to improve training.
- LGEC officials who did not receive training were asked to agree or disagree with the following statements:

The CEC should be present at training events  
 Manuals are a good help for the commissioners  
 Manuals are the only form of training needed  
 The commissioners should receive training before every election  
 Only commissioners with training should hold an elections official position

Responses did not differ significantly from those respondents who had gone through the training except for two items. A greater percentage of these officials disagreed with the statement that manuals should be the only form of training 60% (313) compared to 50% (968) and with the statement that training should be mandatory for election commissioners 12% (63) compared to 3% (49).

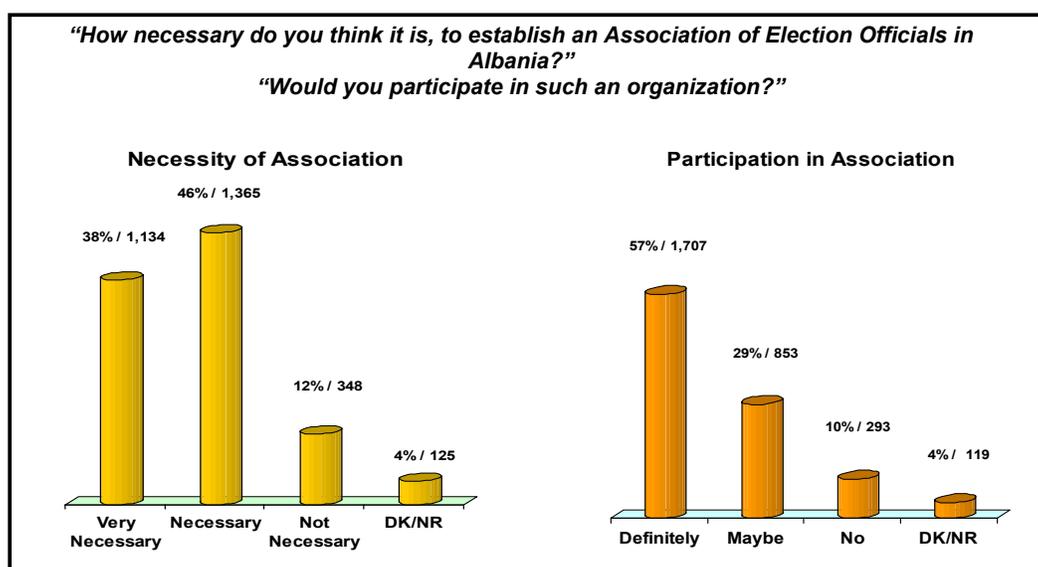
## **ZEC**

- ZEC officials somewhat mirrored their LGEC counterparts in their assessment of the training program. Of those ZEC commissioners who attended training, nearly a hundred percent felt the training was necessary (99.9% / 526), 80% (422) felt it was well organized, and 90% (473) felt the trainers could answer all questions.
- Ninety-three percent (492) of ZEC officials also felt that CEC officials should be present at training.
- Ninety-eight percent (517) felt that the manuals were helpful, but a majority (61% / 324) did not agree that manuals should be the only form of training.
- Nearly all agreed that training should be mandatory and held before every election (97% / 510 and 99% / 525, respectively).
- ZEC officials who attended the training replicated the views of LGEC officials respecting ways in which training can be improved. They also mentioned more time spent on training, smaller groups for training, increased quality of instruction, improving logistics and handing out manuals before the sessions.
- Those ZEC officials who did not attend the training were asked questions similar to LGEC officials who did not attend the training. More than 90% (87) of these ZEC officials agreed the CEC officials should be present, that mandatory training should be conducted before every election and that the manuals are helpful. This group was the most likely to disagree with the statement that manuals should be the only training method (73% / 69).

#### D. Election Associations

- Election officials on the survey were asked whether it was necessary that an association of election officials be founded in Albania. Eighty-four percent (2,499) of respondents stated that it was necessary to set up such an association, while 12% (348) indicated that it was not necessary. There were very minor differences between different groups of election officials on this question. Officials in Tirana and other urban centers were slightly less likely to say that an association is necessary than officials in semi-urban and rural locations. Officials in less sparsely-populated areas might value these associations more due to their relative remoteness when compared to officials in Tirana and other large urban areas. Officials in Vlore, Durres, Kukës, and Shkoder prefectures were the most likely to feel that these associations are not necessary.
- Fifty-seven percent (1,707) of all respondents stated that they would definitely participate in an association of election officials. An additional 29% (853) said they would consider participation. ZEC commissioners were more likely to say that they would definitely participate than LGEC commissioners (63% / 392 vs. 57% / 1,384). Mirroring opinions on the necessity of an association, commissioners in Vlore and Durres were the most likely to say that they would not participate. Curiously, officials in semi-urban and rural areas who had been most likely to voice the necessity of an election association were not as likely as officials in Tirana to say that they would participate in such an association.

**Figure 11: Necessity and Participation in an Association of Election Officials**



#### E. Effective Media for Election Officials and Voters

- Election officials were asked about the most effective ways for educating voters about the voting process. Radio and TV programs were considered to be by far the most effective method with 64% (1,890) of respondents mentioning these tools. Other methods thought to be effective were: CEC notices in newspapers (33% / 974), town hall meetings (32% / 948), mail notices (26% / 770), CEC press conferences (24% / 722), Posters (24% / 722), leaflets/brochures (22% / 649), magazine/newspaper articles (10% / 291), and banners (5% / 143).

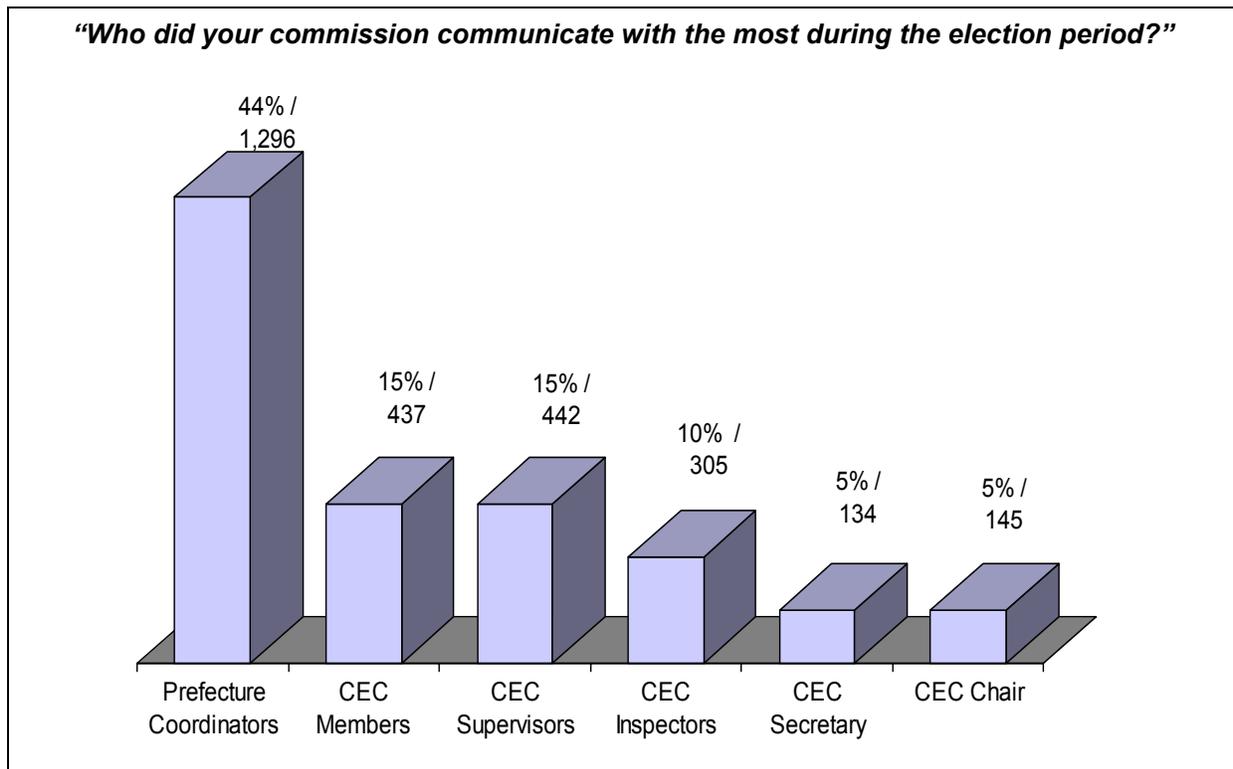
## 6. EVALUATION OF CENTRAL ELECTION COMMISSION

On the whole, the CEC and its staff were viewed as being highly competent and fair in their duties during the 2001 parliamentary elections. Documents and instructions distributed by the CEC before the election and during the election period were thought to be easy to understand.

### A. Communication with CEC

- Election officials reported a distinct difference between the pattern of communications between the CEC and members of ZECs and LGECs during the 2001 parliamentary election. Members of the ZEC were much more likely to contact center-level officials such as the CEC Chair, CEC Members, and CEC Inspectors than LGEC members. On the other hand, LGEC members were more than twice as likely to contact prefecture coordinators as ZEC officials. It should be noted that prefecture coordinators are not employees of the CEC. Geographic location also makes a difference in which official is contacted. Not surprisingly, election officials in Tirana were much more likely to contact center-level officials while election officials in other parts of the country were much more likely to contact prefecture coordinators. Overall, 44% (1,296) of election officials primarily had contact with prefecture coordinators, 15% with CEC members (437) and supervisors (442), 10% with CEC inspectors, and 5% each with the CEC chair (145) and the CEC secretary (134).

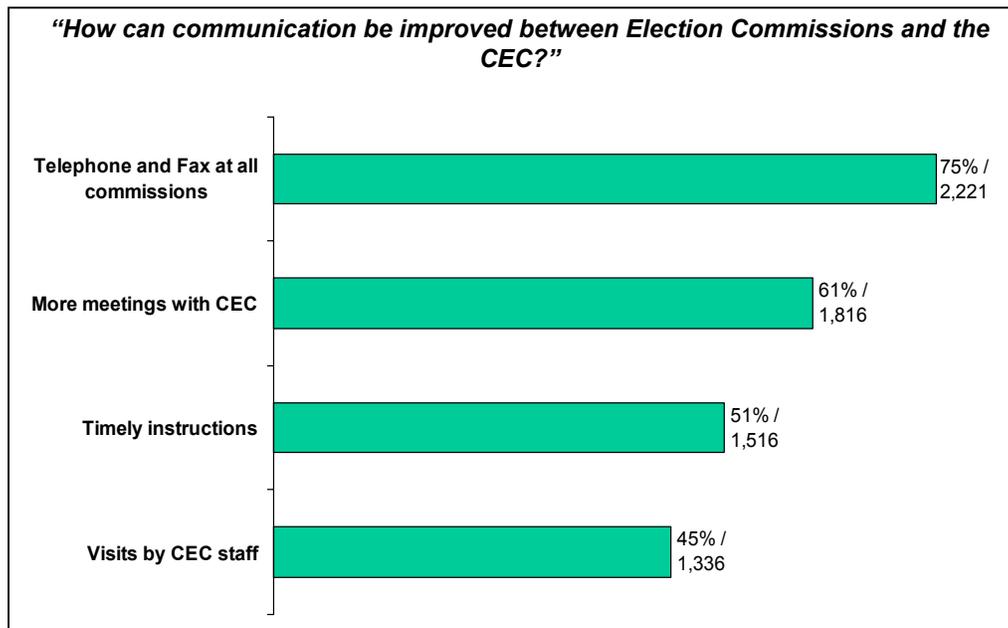
**Figure 12: CEC Officials (Representatives) Most Frequently Contacted During 2001 Election Process**



## B. Assistance provided by CEC

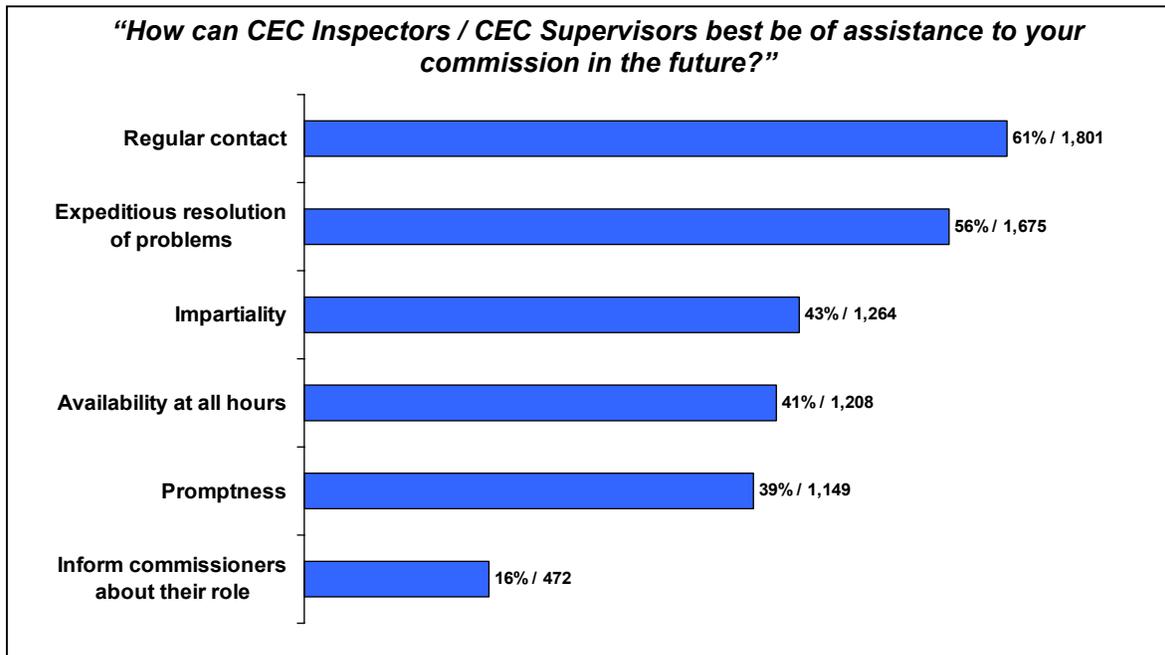
- Generally, CEC officials received high ratings on the assistance they provided to election officials during the 2001 parliamentary election. The percentage of respondents who said that the level of assistance provided was 'good' or 'very good' was high in each case: CEC Chair (69% / 2,047); CEC Inspectors (65% / 1,948); CEC Supervisors (72% / 2,149) and Prefecture Coordinators (88% / 2,613). The higher rating for the prefecture coordinators can be explained by the fact that almost all respondents approached received some sort of assistance from these officials, whereas between 15 and 20 percent of respondents did not receive assistance from other officials. This is also reflective of the fact that prefecture coordinators were more of an on-the-ground presence than the other officials.
- There are some regional differences with the level of contact with inspectors and supervisors. Officials in Durres, Lezhe, and Fier prefectures were much more likely to say that CEC inspectors and supervisors did not provide them with any assistance than officials in other parts of the country. On the other hand, officials in Gjirokaster and Shkoder were much more likely to say that they did receive assistance from inspectors and supervisors. LGEC officials were twice as likely as ZEC officials to say that they did not receive assistance from CEC inspectors.
- Even though most respondents rated the performance of CEC officials highly, they still provided suggestions that can help improve communications between CEC officials and local election officials and ways in which CEC officials can be of assistance in the future. The different ways mentioned in which communication can be improved were: telephone and fax equipment at the respondent's particular election commission (75% / 2,221); more meetings with CEC (61% / 1,816); timely instructions (51% / 1,516); and more visits by CEC staff (45% / 1,336). The lack of telephone and fax equipment was a frequent lament for election officials in Albania.

**Figure 13: Ways to Improve Communication Between CEC and Election Commissions**



- As for ways in which CEC officials could be of assistance in the future, the different suggestions were: regular contact (61% / 1,801); expeditious resolution of problems (56% / 1,675); impartiality (43% / 1,264); availability at all hours (41% / 1,208); promptness (39% / 1,149); and informing election commissions on their role (16% / 472). Commissioners nominated by opposition parties were more likely to mention the need for CEC impartiality than other respondents.

**Figure 14: Ways in Which the CEC Can be of Assistance in the Future**



- There was little concern among the election officials that a CEC Inspector or Supervisor was partisan in their decision-making or assistance during the 2001 elections. Speaking of inspectors, 84% (2,487) felt that the inspectors did not display partisanship, 4% (139) felt that they did, and 12% (346) gave no response. For supervisors, 85% (2,514) felt that they did not display partisanship, 4% (118) felt they did, and 11% (340) gave no response. The percentage of officials who gave no response was significantly higher for respondents from Tirana prefecture than the other regions. In addition, respondents from Tirana were more likely to say that there was partisanship than not. One can make a fair assumption that many respondents who would ordinarily have said that there was partisanship chose not to give an answer to this question. However, the fact that more than 80% in each case stated that there was no partisanship speaks to the integrity of CEC officials during the last election.

**C. Availability and Understanding of CEC documents**

- More than 9 in 10 respondents said that they were familiar with the range of CEC decisions and instructions related to the electoral process. Very few (8% / 222) said that they were not familiar with all the documents. Officials from Kukës (28% / 59) and Shkodër (14% / 37) stood out in reporting that they were not familiar with the CEC documents. Officials from rural areas were twice as likely as officials from urban areas to say that they were not familiar with the range of CEC decisions and instructions.

- Respondents were asked to assess the ease of understanding some CEC documents. Close to 90% felt the documents were easy or very easy to understand: Electoral Code (89% / 2,654); CEC decisions (92% / 2,744); CEC instructions (92% / 2,729); LGEC & ZEC manuals (93% / 2,759); and CEC forms (89% / 2,643).
- Election officials were also asked whether they thought these documents were obligatory to apply. In the case of the Electoral Code (99% / 2,933), CEC decisions (95% / 2,813), and CEC forms (95% / 2,811), officials thought these document were obligatory to apply. Fewer (78% / 2,325) felt that CEC instructions were obligatory to apply and 20% (591) regarded them as optional to apply.
- Both LGEC and ZEC officials who did not receive training were more likely to think that the various documents were difficult to understand than officials who had received training. Officials who did receive training were also more likely to think that the documents were obligatory to apply. The value of training for all officials is strongly asserted by this data. In the case of CEC instructions and manuals, younger respondents were more likely to think that these documents were optional than older respondents.
- Respondent were asked how often their election commission received CEC instructions and decisions on time for implementation. Most respondents (82% / 2,425) felt that they 'often' or 'always' received these materials in time for implementation. Sixteen percent (477) felt that their election commission only 'sometimes' received the materials in time for implementation and 2% (66) that they 'never' did. The greater the number of elections worked by an election official, the more critical they were of the timeliness of receiving these documents for implementation.
- Finally, respondents were asked whether they were exposed to CEC educational programs in the media during the election period. The responses to these questions were not encouraging. Only 50% (1,499) of respondents received CEC official notices during the electoral process and 52% (1,530) saw CEC TV interviews. The percentages decrease from this point: CEC press conferences (45% / 1,332), posters (41% / 1,208), videos (36% / 1,078), leaflets/brochures (28% / 834), newspaper articles (23% / 695), pens with the 811 number (15% / 449), banners (8% / 251), manuals (2% / 50), and the CEC web site (1% / 35).

## **7. DEMOCRACY**

### A. Understanding of the term "Free & Fair Elections"

- Election officials were asked what they thought the term, "free and fair elections," meant. Freedom and transparency were the two overriding themes in the responses given. The most-mentioned response was the freedom to vote (56% / 1,665). Transparency in the election process (41% / 1,211) was also frequently mentioned. Other oft-mentioned responses were impartiality in elections (34% / 1,000), no pressure on voters (33% / 986), people are treated equally (23% / 697), and cooperation between political parties (9% / 277). The last, while not technically a requirement for free and fair elections, is important in the Albanian context. Generally, election officials demonstrate an understanding of internationally accepted standards for free and fair elections such as transparency, equality of competition, and freedom to exercise one's vote.

## B. Meaning of Living in a Democracy

- Democracy is generally understood as a system of governance that allows the 'people' to share in directing the activities of the state and a system that places emphasis on freedom of actions, equality, and the rule of law. Elections are, of course, the most demonstrable way through which citizens direct the activities of the state. So it was of interest to the CEC and IFES to find out what election officials in Albania thought democracy meant. Seventy-two percent (2,154) of the respondents mentioned the "rule of law" as being one meaning of democracy. A majority also mentioned that "dignity is respected" (54% / 1,590) in a democracy and that a democracy means to "live free" (54% / 1,593). These definitions highlight the idealistic imagery of democracy among election officials in Albania. But there is also an instrumental logic to the responses. Many of the officials felt that democracy connoted "economic opportunity" (32% / 962), "a sure future" (29% / 848), and "freedom to work" (27% / 810). So beyond the idealistic notions of democracy, Albanian election officials also see democracy as a means to economic opportunity.

## **PART THREE: IFES COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS**

### **1. DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF ELECTION COMMISSIONS**

The survey findings indicate that election commission membership does not reflect the demographic profile of Albania. In addition the education requirements for membership on local commissions as found in the electoral code have not been adhered to.

- Representation of women is appalling low. Gender equality is not a requirement of the law; however, a greater determination by political parties to appoint women to achieve gender equality when nominating commissioners should be pursued. The CEC may wish to establish targets for the parties to increase the number of women participating on local commissions.
- Political parties nominate members to local commissions. In addition to failing to nominate women to these positions, it would appear that they have been extremely lax in following the criteria established in the electoral code requiring commission members to have a university degree. In addition, the CEC needs to be more rigorous in enforcing the educational requirements found in the electoral code. It is recognized, however, that when the political parties do not nominate commission members until the very last minute they make it difficult, if not impossible, for the CEC to review nominations in depth and make appointments in the time period required under the electoral code. Consequently, while the parties must be cognizant of and compliant with the provisions of the electoral code, the CEC should consider administrative procedures for appointments which would give the CEC more time to review nominations and to inform parties of the unacceptability of a person nominated for a commission position.
- During the period between elections the CEC has an opportunity to correct this area of non compliance with the electoral code or to consider changes to the code if it is clear that this provision cannot be complied with. A review of administrative procedures could include the development of ways to also enhance the representation of women on local commissions.
- The survey data indicates that only 18% of the commissioners are between the ages of 18 and 35. As a means of encouraging greater participation in the political and electoral process by younger men and women the CEC could encourage political parties to target this age group in nominating individuals for membership on local election commissions.

### **2. POLITICAL PARTY REPRESENTATION AND PERCEPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES BY LOCAL OFFICIALS**

- The local election administration structure in Albania is reliant on commissions composed of representatives of political parties. This procedure has both strengths and weakness. Because political parties nominate members to commissions and frequently nominate party 'militants' to represent party interests, the CEC is presented with a number of difficulties at the local level. The problem of party appointments is identified by respondents to the survey. When asked to list their primary responsibilities a large majority of local officials cited: implement the law, allowing people to vote freely; know the law and CEC manuals, and to be of good moral character. However, when asked to whom they owe primary allegiance as a commission member only 64% of LGEC members identified the CEC and voters while 71% of ZEC members did so. Virtually 34% of all respondents identified their primary allegiance as to their party. Deputy Chair and members were most likely to identify the party as their primary allegiance.
- The logic of the electoral code is that while local commissioners are nominated by a party they are appointed by the CEC to serve the public at large with fairness and equality under the

direction of the CEC. In essence local commission members are employees of the CEC and by definition are not members of the commission to serve the interests of their political party. The fact that virtually one-third of respondents indicated that their primary allegiance was to the party they represented and the reality that parties frequently (and successfully) seek to have their nominees replaced prior to and during the election period emphasizes the problem faced by the CEC in this regard. It is important that the CEC develop ways to reduce the party influence of commission members and strengthen the understanding of local commission members that they are to place party considerations aside when they are appointed to a commission. It is also important that the CEC clarify the grounds on which they would entertain a request by a party to change its nominee on a local commission.

- The appointment of party representatives to local commissions (article 33 and 39 of the code) should enable commission members to 'shake off' their perception of primary allegiance to the party and to concentrate on working on a commission in the concept of the wider good of the community. However, this procedure is not followed either because parties feel that their nominee on the local commission is sufficient, or they do not have people to nominate as a representative. (This is also true for the VCC; however, VCC's were not included in this survey.) Clearly there is more work to do with political parties and individual commission members in this area. In addition some modifications to the electoral code related to party representatives to local commissions may also be necessary.
- The data from this survey shows that some of the concerns about political parties negatively affecting the performance of commissions may be valid. Besides conflict among political parties during the election process, the other major concern in this area is the allegiance of election commissioners. When asked how they primarily saw themselves in their role as election commissioner, more than a third of election commissioners (34%) identified themselves as representatives of the political party that appointed them. Combining this with the fact that 39% of respondents felt that commissioners on their commission felt pressure from the political party that appointed them results in at least a moderate expectation that partisan rather than public interests dictated the actions of many commissioners during the 2001 election. These issues can be addressed by training and education programs with local commissioners but will also have to be subject of further dialogue between the CEC and political parties.

### **3. PERFORMANCE DURING THE 2001 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS**

- Survey respondents had strong and varied views regarding the administration of the election. Fifty-five percent thought the elections were better administered than before. However, only 50% of ZEC officials thought this (although the percentage goes up with those respondents who had been a member of a zone commission in previous elections). The high percentage of LGEC members who thought the elections were better administered were most likely comparing 2000 and 2001 elections in the context of the voter list. Opinions also varied by prefecture with Gjirokaster and Fier giving the highest approval and Vlore, Shkoder, Diber and Tirana giving the lowest approval. At the same time the CEC received high ratings from local officials for the assistance provided by the Chair, inspectors, supervisors and this high rating was extended to prefecture co-ordinators. The perception that the elections were not better administered than before was most strongly held in urban areas and where there were a number of controversies with the voter list and after election day. Consequently, there needs to be a concerted effort by the CEC to target these areas and to deal with the specific issues raised by commissioners to improve the administration of future elections. Specifically, initiatives in the areas of further cleaning of the voter list, mapping, training, civic education and co-operation with and between the political parties on matters related to the electoral process are required in the prefectures of Tirana, Durres, Vlore, Shkoder, and Diber.

- A large majority of LGEC and ZEC members believed that the relationship between commissioners was 'very good' or 'good' and a nearly equal number stated that decision-making within their commission was fair. However, 15% of ZEC members felt that decisions in their commissions were not fair. ZEC members in the prefectures of Durres, Diber, Fier, Gjirokaster and Tirana were most likely to express an opinion of unfairness in decision-making. While 15% of ZEC members said that decision-making in their commission was unfair 20% stated that the results in their zone were manipulated. When asked the general question of whether parties profited from illegal votes (note this was a question of perception, not related to a specific zone) 34% of the ZEC members said yes. The view that the results were manipulated and that parties profited from illegal votes is most strongly held in Shkoder, Kukes, Durres and Tirana. Again, there is a need for the CEC to pay special attention to these prefectures to ensure that future elections are held in an environment of fairness and transparency. The special attention given to these prefectures should include ways of improving the voter list, developing a stronger sense of local officials working for the CEC as opposed to political parties, obtaining stronger co-operation from political parties on election administration issues, training and civic education.

### Complaints

- Not surprisingly the most cited complaint dealt with the voter list. Most common was concern about missing names/persons in the wrong polling unit; errors in information on the list and the court procedures for allowing persons not on the list to vote. Issues and concerns related to the voter list need to be a high priority of the CEC leading up to the local elections in 2003. Concentration should be given to revision of polling unit boundaries in urban centers, mapping of polling units and revision in urban areas. Specifically the 11 cities of Albania should be treated as the priority focus of the CEC in dealing with improving the accuracy of the list.

### Problems in Election Administration

- The most common problem identified was the voter list. Other issues dealt primarily with the need for civic education, delay in establishing commissions and the need for further training of election officials and the interference of political parties. Some of these issues have been referred to above as areas of required action by the CEC. In addition, it is important for the CEC to continue extensive civic education programs to education voters (and potential voters), continue to improve training materials and conduct training activities, and finally, to work with the political parties to ensure local commissions are fully functioning well before the election period. In this regard the CEC may wish to consider a decision regarding deadlines for party nominations to commissions and restricting the ability of parties to substitute commission members. In addition, it is important that the CEC establish procedures to limit the ability of political parties to interfere with the electoral process at the level of local commissions.
- Eight percent of the respondents cited problems with the police. This is a low response when considered in the context of media reports following the election. Nevertheless, it is important that the role of police on election day at polling stations or in other activities related to election administration be totally under the direction of instructions from the CEC and transparent to all participants – political parties, media and the public. The CEC should take a pro-active position on this and with the Ministry of Public Order develop clear guidelines of police activity and the authority of the CEC on election day.

### Training and an Association of Election Officials

- Respondents have emphasized the need for continued training. A large majority hold the opinion that training should be mandatory. The CEC may wish to consider a regulation to the effect that members who do not attend training will be dismissed.
- A large majority of the respondents were favorable to the concept of the formation of an Association of Election Officials. The formation of the association is currently underway, however, it will require continued support for it to exist. Support will likely require start-up assistance (staff, financial and moral) now and in the future. In addition, the viability of an Association and its value to the CEC would be enhanced through continuing consultation and collaboration with Association on a variety of matters such as training, civic education, reform of the electoral process and drafting of instructions as well as legal reforms.

### Civic Education and use of the Media to Provide Information to Local Commissions

- Given the extensive showing of videos on television stations around the country and the use of media announcements by the CEC to provide timely information to local commissions, a surprisingly low number of respondents reported seeing them. There could be many reasons for this including hours of work and lack of knowledge regarding when the programs would be shown. The use of the media to contact local commissioners will likely be required in the future. However, it is equally important that the CEC ensures that local commissions have access to fax machines and telephone service to receive information from the CEC as necessary.

### Central Election Commission

- Overall the CEC has received high marks from local officials for their assistance and co-operation during the 2001 parliamentary election. There is, however, room for considerable improvement. Continued concentration by the CEC members to be in regular contact with local officials, participate in training sessions and extensive use of knowledgeable field inspectors and supervisors is required. As an independent state institution the CEC should reduce its reliance in the use of Prefecture co-ordinators. The role these people currently play could easily be done by the inspectors (between elections) and supervisors (during elections). The CEC needs to plan for proper infrastructure needs to enable this to occur (communication equipment, transportation and in some cases local offices during an election period). In this regard the CEC should target those prefectures where most problems and complaints were cited by local officials in the immediate period.

**Appendix 1 - Election Officials Questionnaire**





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