

## Field monitoring - Albania

**In Albania**, the Central Electoral Commission appoints field monitors who are tasked with the monitoring of electoral subjects' compliance with campaign finance obligations during the election campaign. According to the Electoral Code (article 92/4), "the monitoring shall be limited to easily verifiable observation that electoral subjects comply with obligations concerning election campaign (articles 78 and 79 of the Electoral Code), including compliance with the prohibitions and limitations of certain forms of campaign and misuse of State resources (articles 91 and 92 of the Electoral Code)."

To carry out their tasks, campaign monitors have at their disposal checklists and reporting templates developed by the CEC. Campaign monitors must submit to the CEC incident reports when they observe breaches/ violations of campaign finance regulations and interim reports every 10 days.

Campaign monitors are allocated to regions on a geographical basis and monitor campaign activities and compliance with the prohibitions and limitations of certain forms of campaign and misuse of State resources. For the 2021 parliamentary elections, the CEC appointed and deployed 64 campaign monitors. The CEC developed reporting templates to help campaign monitors observe campaign activities and detect misuse/ abuse of state resources and held training sessions to get the recruited monitors acquainted with the new legal framework (that no longer includes the costing of observed activities), the monitoring tools and the scope of their work.

The monitoring of the 2021 parliamentary election campaign did not start until rather late into the final part of the campaign, i.e. end of March due to the restructuring of the CEC and COVID 19 restrictions. The general findings of the monitoring process were that the absence of centralized information regarding the location of electoral subjects' electoral offices and of up-to-date information regarding the agenda of electoral subjects' campaign activities complicated and hindered the monitoring of campaign activities. The monitoring of the abuse/ misuse of state resources was also assessed as particularly challenging and difficult to report due to the complexity of the tasks. Indeed, the Electoral Code not only prohibits the abuse/ misuse of state resources by electoral subjects, but also obliges public institutions to report to the electoral commission all activities of a public character that they plan to conduct in the four months prior to the election date until election day.

Campaign monitors had to fill out and file with the CEC incident reports in instances where they were observing campaign finance violations/ irregularities and interim reports every 10 days. The consensus among campaign monitors was that the filling out of the reporting templates by hand was cumbersome and time-consuming, and so was the reading of these reports by the CEC political finance unit at times.

The findings and conclusions of the campaign monitor's reports are then taken into account by the CEC appointed auditors during the audit phase of election campaign finance reports and by the CEC itself during the review process of the audited campaign finance reports.