

UDC: 616.98:578.834]:324(496.5)''2021''  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22182/spm.7842022.7>  
Review article

Serbian Political Thought  
No. 4/2022, Year XXIX,  
Vol. 78  
pp. 109-122

***Dorina Bërdufi\****

*Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durrës, Albania*

***Andon Kume***

*Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durrës, Albania*

***Olta Qejvani***

*Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durrës, Albania*

## **PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN ALBANIA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CIRCUMSTANCES THROUGH POLITICAL AND LEGAL LENSES**

### **Abstract**

As one of the Balkan post-communist countries, Albania faces different hindering factors in the process of constituting election's democracy. In the parliamentary election of April 2021, Albania was challenged by an additional extraordinary obstacle, of holding parliamentary election during the Covid-19 pandemic circumstances. The Covid-19 pandemic restrictions imposed new realities to the electoral process, specifically in: development of electoral campaign, voting process, diaspora voting, voters with Covid-19, voting process in the penitentiary system and the new electoral reform placed in 2020. Therefore, through a mixed political and legal detailed analyses method of the above-mentioned factors, this paper's aim is to respond to the research question of what the impact of Covid-19 restrictions in Albanian Parliamentary election of April 2021 is. Research data are mostly based on primary data, such as the political agreement, the legal acts of State Commissioner, Regulatory Commission, sanctions and appeals decisions and other related documents. We strongly stand that the new reality must

\* E-mail: [berdufidorina@gmail.com](mailto:berdufidorina@gmail.com)

not break in the fundamental principles of electoral process and related political actors' rights.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, parliamentary election, election restrictions, election standards, Albania

## INTRODUCTION

In order to have free and fair elections, an election system that includes the election administration, aims to create the appropriate environment for voters to exercise their right to vote with no limitations. The most fundamental principle defining credible elections is that they must reflect the free expression of the will of the people and in order to achieve this, elections should be transparent, inclusive, and accountable, and there must be equitable opportunities to compete in the elections (USAID 2021). Election administration and electoral management are crucial factors in the outcome of the electoral process. It should be evident by now that there is no unique way to conduct free and fair elections and democracies have developed substantially different rules for the electoral game. One might have thought issues pertaining to the administration of elections to be sorted out, yet most of them are anything but resolved (Massicotte et al. 2004, 158-162).

Holding an election in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic is an exceptionally difficult task (Pyrzyńska & Skoczylas 2020, 240) and studies show that late legislation changes of electoral process in adapting to the pandemic situation would undermine the administrative capacity of electoral officials to deliver the election while taking the risk to experiment in the middle of a perfect storm (James 2021, 67). COVID-outbreak affected mostly all areas of public and private life all over the world and it has had a significant impact on our democracies including elections (CoE 2022). The current COVID-19 pandemic constitutes an unpredictable external shock with consequences for the development of democracy, and particularly electoral politics, in the world (Santana *et al.* 2020, 2). The literature of electoral effects studies for countries which held election during the Covid-19 pandemic is still at its first steps. Hence the author's effort to base the analyses mainly on the primary data of election management and process.

Elections are one of the main indicators in mapping the political regime of a country. Although Albania has a record of competitive elections, the political regime in Albania is still identified as a hybrid

regime with highly polarized parties often organized around leading personalities (Freedom House 2022). General elections were held on April 25, 2021, following the cross-party agreement of June 5, 2020, that led to a wide-ranging electoral reform that took place in ‘specific’ circumstances during Covid-19 pandemics and the very delicate electoral processes were tackled from different Covid-19 restrictions. In normal elections, countries like Albania do have some instances of questionable levels in implementation of a fully democratic electoral process (OSCE 2017, 2013) and this task became more challenging in a pandemic situation where it was difficult to fully adhere to the highest law framework concerning the safety standards for voters and people involved in a free and fair election process. During the COVID-19 situation the administration had to enforce election procedures and protocols that can have an effect on the voters’ behavior and on the macro level to the democratic institutions per se. Similarly to other countries that held election during the pandemic period, the new settings brought difficulties in the preservation of democratic election spirit and principle. Each of the segments of these parliamentary elections were re-dimensioned, re-modelled and sometimes missed out or substituted due to the Covid-19 restrictions. The OSCE/ODIHR final assessment highlighted many concerns, but stated that elections were generally well organized, and that the new electoral administration gained the trust of most stakeholders.

Apart from the hybrid regime issues, the electoral bodies of Albania weren’t prepared for the situation of dealing with this extreme attack and pandemic virus. More specifically this paper is focused on exploring and analyzing three main points of parliamentary election regarding the CEC decision making, what occurred during elections day and also the results of the process. From the perspective of the researchers, this new and real situation needs a special attention of being treated in the field of research in order to identify the problems and offering at the same time the prompt solutions in this regard. The basic aim must always stand for saving the core of democratic principles even in different conditions that tackle voting processes or other related dimensions.

## **OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

The authors focus on the independent variable of the Covid-19 pandemic as a cause of changing the election organization process in Albania. The methodology is organized in order to reach out the following objectives: exploration and narrative analysis. This in specific stands for monitoring the activity of CEC (Central Election Commission) and other

related bodies in Albania during parliamentary elections and narrative interpretations through statistical information got during parliamentary elections. Therefore, through a mixed political and legal detailed analyses method of the above-mentioned factors, this paper aim is to respond the research question of what the impact of Covid-19 restrictions in Albanian Parliamentary organization election of April 2021 is, as well as formal conditions for free and fair elections. Research data are mostly based on primary data, such as the political agreement, the legal acts of State Commissioner, Regulatory Commission, sanctions and appeals decisions and other related documents.

### **THE COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS IN ALBANIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS THROUGH CEC DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

Albanian Parliamentary Elections were held immediately after the electoral reform was finalized into legal and political coordinates. The Electoral Code changed and was amended in most of its parts (Electoral Code of Republic of Albania 2021). The Electoral Code still charged CEC to decide on further legal acts for the detailed regulations according to the elections in our country. What is somehow interesting is the fact that the Electoral Code did not provide specific regulations under different circumstances or emergency situations like Covid (IFES 2021, 5; Komisioni Qëndror i Zgjedhjeve/Central Electoral Commission [KQZ] 2022). The provision of some specific regulations for specific situations in the Electoral Code would have probably ‘saved’ the principles of electoral rights under the circumstance of emergency situations and would have been helpful for conducting elections in Albania. We also evaluate and bring into attention that this phenomenon is not experienced only by Albanian election, but it impacted also to other countries that held elections in the Covid-19 pandemics framework (Czech Republic, Romania, France etc.). The reality of the elections held in 2020 and beyond clearly demonstrated that the legal and policy framework was not ready showing institutional framework unprepared and disorientated on managing and properly dealing with Covid-19 pandemics restrictions and guaranteeing electoral rights into the main principles and content.

Due to the changes of the electoral reform, the elections were organized in a decentralized dimension: Commissioner, Regulatory Commission, Appealing and Sanctions Commission (KAS) and Electoral College (an ad hoc court responsible only for election complaints in the judicial context). Analysing the decision-making of all these election

bodies, none of them had treated or paid a special focus and attention of proper management of electoral process in the framework of Covid-19 pandemics restrictions. Going through this decision making, there are reflected only 'shadows' provisions in this regard as following:

1. *Commissioner*: Up to the end of the electoral process, the Commissioner took 479 decisions, 232 orders and 15 instructions. (KQZ 2022). Among all this large number of decisions, there is only one instruction of the Commissioner that speaks in a vague and general perspective for Covid-19 pandemics during electoral processes (State Election Commission, CEC, and Instruction No. 11. April 24, 2021 [KQZ 2022]): Reading out this provision, there is not any specific provision or regulation of persons hospitalized or isolated because of Covid-19. There are only general templates of declarations of voting centres members and writing again some general provisions presented from the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in Albania for Covid-19 measures. We consider that during this single instruction, the Commissioner had many opportunities to go from a general instruction to a very detailed one, including also the possibilities and procedures on how people isolated because of Covid-19 could vote.

2. *Regulatory Commission*: For 2021 elections, Regulatory Commission took 21 decisions (KQZ 2022). The role of the Regulatory Commission, in the frame of the electoral reform was to set up all the detailed issues in regard to the elections procedure till the beginning of the electoral campaign, election day and for the results. Analysing these decisions, no specific provision for the right of isolated people because of Covid-19 was provided. Even Regulatory Commission decision making was in the same line with the Commissioner, providing just general rules of keeping the distance, avoiding crowded spaces in polling stations, equipment of face masks etc. in order to fulfil the decisions framework set up from the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in Albania. We evaluate that the decision-making of the Regulatory Commission did not bring anything new on this regard, just repeating the conditions set up from the Ministry of Health and Social Protection does not accomplish its role in order on how to guarantee the right to vote for the people isolated because of Covid-19.

3. *KAS (Commission of Appeal and Sanctions)*: This structure, even being considered as an added value of the new electoral reform, in 120 decisions (KQZ 2022) taken, there is no case where Covid-19 treatment is appealed or treated. The nature of the cases treated

from this Commission concerns the legal identity of candidates, elections results etc. This does not mean that the Albanian reality has not faced problems related to electoral vote of people isolated or hospitalized because of Covid-19. One of the main issues that have addressed in no complaint to this structure is the absence of the provisions on the Electoral Code and secondary legislation.

4. *Electoral College*: no decision related to Covid-19 restrictions and measures. We bring into attention of this research the same argument as in KAS decision making and attitude in 2021 elections.

Among this general panorama, we have also identified some specific cases that need to be treated with a special analysis dimension. In this regard, one of the problems of election administration in terms of anti-Covid measures in the April 25 elections has been the failure to take appropriate measures in time from the legislative aspect (decisions, instructions, etc.) by the Election Regulatory Commission, as the competent body for organizing and administering election procedures. This commission one month before the general elections, in decision no. 11, dated 25.03.21 “On the manner of establishment, organization, functioning of the polling station commission and the conduct of elections in the polling station” (Komisioneri Shtetëror i Zgjedhjeve, Komisioni Qendror i Zgjedhjeve 2021), has not provided in any of the provisions of this decision the guaranteeing and respecting of the anti-Covid-19 measures. The guideline in this framework of the implementation of anti-covid measures was approved only one day before the general elections, on 24.04.2021 “On the implementation of anti-covid measures during the voting day for the elections for the Parliament” (KQZ 2022). This very tight deadline did not create a good and safe basis in the preparation and treatment of persons/election staff that stayed in the polling stations, related to the framework rules in taking and respecting the measures to limit the spread of Covid-19. The non-adoption of specific rules in the context of Covid-19, consequently led to frequent cases of ceding compliance with the general rules of Covid-19 approved by the Ministry of Health, and consequently created potential spaces for the spread of the virus in polling stations. Here we must take into consideration the large number of people standing in a polling station in the parliamentary elections in Albania: seven commissioners and observers from various actors such as international organizations, civil society, political parties, etc.) (KQZ 2022, 80).

In addition to the above, one aspect to be evaluated in the CEC as the main body of election administration, is the adaptation that this institution made to its functional infrastructure in terms of Covid-19

restrictions. The CEC organized its online meetings, activities which increased the level of transparency towards voters, the public, the media, other national and international institutions, as well as civil society. Open access to the decision-making process of the CEC is a positive factor in terms of increasing the credibility of the above-mentioned actors to the activity of the CEC.

## **COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS IMPACT DURING ELECTION DAY**

The elections held in specific settings such as Covid-19 pandemics need to be analysed even from the perspective of the right to vote of citizens under Covid circumstances. The category of the people which had an impact from Covid-19 (positive and in sometime a negative one) in the election results can be defined as following: people with Covid-19 hospitalized, people with Covid-19 isolated at home, people with Covid-19 in diaspora community.

Concerning the first group of the hospitalised ones, in the day of elections, according to the database of Ministry of Health 149 persons were hospitalized due to Covid-19 (ENEMO 2021). The decision making of CEC and other elected bodies did not determine any specific rules and procedures for the hospitalized people to vote. Due to the legislation in force people with Covid-19 were supposed to be isolated and avoid the contacts, so it means that there was not any possibility for them to vote. The manuals for voting centre produced by Regulatory Commission and the individual acts from Commissioner did not provide any specific regulation in this regard. Even though, this number cannot play a significant role on the elections results, it is moreover a matter of principles. It would be helpful that in the manuals of voting procedures the Regulatory Commission provided specific rules in order to facilitate the opportunities to these categories. It is the same logic with the possibilities that the manuals of voting procedures provide for other categories that cannot be present at the voting centre for valid reasons. The examples provided from Venice Commission and other countries do not validate the vote with the physical presence and polling station. The international standards aim to secure the whole process. According to the general standards and principles set up from Venice Commission, the electronic or mail vote could be an alternative solution that would be offered to these categories. Along to the above, the second group of home isolated citizens, according to Covid-19 mechanism, the average of the infection line was 1:5. Hence, more or less 149 people that were

hospitalized because of Covid could have infected 750 people (more or less), and consequently impeding this number of people to vote on April, 25. We assess that this category has not been carefully considered during different monitoring processes.

Furthermore, with respect to the third group of the diaspora voters, we stand by the viewpoint that also in this case the electoral bodies did not commit much regarding this. The diaspora does not have the right to vote from the countries where they live. Also, in the Covid-19 travel restrictions situation and also the state borders restrictions increased the probability of the Albanian people to travel and vote in Albania. The regulations did not provide any specific provisions for electronic vote, vote by mail or other alternatives respecting the scope of elections and right to vote.

We understand that this situation has produced a strange and somehow unexpected situation to be solved and managed properly, but on the other hand taking into consideration other countries that implemented Venice recommendations into the Covid-19 and elections environment, we think that the following alternatives could have been used to solve the problem:

1. Electronic vote as a possibility to address the will of these categories being accompanied with the valid reasons why this category cannot vote.
2. Sending vote by post with all the adequate alternatives to save the people's right and on the other side of the medal guaranteeing the main principles of the election process.
3. Creating 'movable polling stations' respecting all the Covid-19 restrictions and measures in order to make possible for the people with Covid or those in isolation to vote, express their will if they wanted to. This dimension could have been organized in collaboration terms between CEC structures and Ministry of Health and Social Protection.

## **ELECTION PROCESS RESULTS UNDER THE PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS**

“Electoral democracy depends on voter participation, but new or fragile democracies often suffer from low levels of formal political engagement” (De Kadt 2019, 2). The April 25 election, under conditions of the pandemic restrictions, conditioned an artificial abstention of a percentage of voters who otherwise could have voted. Given that according to the Albanian Electoral Code, the voter can only vote in



person at the polling station, the lack of other voting procedures such as “by mail or mobile ballot box was not provided” (IDEA 2022), limited persons who have been hospitalized, self-isolated (Bota Sot 2021) after having contracted Covid-19, Albanian citizens living abroad as well as prisoners who have contracted Covid-19. The lack of political will to include these groups in the voting process, in addition to the artificial reduction of the number of participants in the elections, from the point of view of political analysis doesn’t bring very positive general perception of democratic elections in Albania by political actors involved in the administration of elections, such as the CEC, the current government, political parties, etc.

The April parliamentary election campaign took place in extraordinary conditions compared to previous election campaigns, hampering the normal operation of a political party election campaign. In most cases, the political parties respected the restrictions of the anti-Covid measures of the decisions of the Technical Experts Committee<sup>1</sup> regarding the restriction of meetings of larger numbers of people than ten, physical distancing, wearing masks, etc. However there have been cases of non-compliance. These conditions also limit the visibility of the campaign of political parties and candidates to the electorate, thus affecting restrictions on the disclosure of the political platform of candidates and political parties to the electorate, and consequently creating a greater barrier for voters to be informed and therefore free right to choose under complete political information was reduced. On the other hand, it has often been observed that political parties and candidates were not prevented from respecting these restrictions by the relevant authorities, such as the state police and as a result the health of voters was endangered. In the context of participation in elections, this factor may also be an element which has indirectly reduced voter turnout on the election day, given the fact that in these large number of people gatherings there might have been outbreaks of the virus, consequently, persons affected by Covid during these meetings would not go to the polls on the election day.

Another factor of hindering the participation in election of the voters is the awareness campaign carried out by the CEC. Since Downs’ (1957) seminal work on why people vote, electoral participation is linked with different factors such as psychological, economical, personal, etc. along with the list of factors in the pandemic period another crucial factor could be brought into attention of the voter in order to influence in its decision to vote or abstain. This campaign did not guarantee the non-

---

1 This Commission is formed to take measures and follow the dynamics of the situation in the world and to take measures and how to intervene in Albania (Gegvataj 2020).

dissemination of the virus, especially in the polling stations, influencing the voters not to trust that the restrictive measures against the spread of Covid-19 would be respected in the polling stations. “Only a brief and hardly accessible video was prepared for voters and published on the CEC website a few days before the Election Day. In the video, it was claimed that the measures would be respected in all voting centres, the premises would be disinfected and equipped with a disinfectant. Voters were asked to keep their distance and wear protective masks” (ENEMO 2021, 19). In addition, the rules of anti-Covid-19 measures were often not observed in the polling stations, which was noticed in a large number of voters waiting in line to vote, non-observance of social distance between them, high number of persons inside the centre of voting, etc., are factors that have in some way violated the integrity of elections in Albania. As Santana, Rama and Bértoa (Santana *et al.* 2020, 20) state in their research “when faced with the choice of exercising their civic (democratic) duty and avoiding a personal (health) risk, voters will tend to opt for the latter”. Consequently, the CEC truncated legal measures, decisions or instructions and not guaranteeing the voters for their health and safety against not getting the virus in the polling station on election day, as well as during the election campaign, could be a factor which has led to a decrease in the number of voters in the elections of April 25, 2021, in Albania.

The elections held in the above-mentioned situation reflected a relatively low turnout where the country voter election participation was lower than half of the actual registered number of voters in Albania, 46.33%. The highest level of participation happened in the capital city of Tirana 53.24% (which constitutes also the main electoral division comparing to the 12 electoral regions). And the lowest level of election participation was in the Vlora region 33.56%, which is the fifth largest region, inferring thus the low level of citizens’ participation in the core base engagement of democracy.

Unlike previous parliamentary election campaigns, the content of the electoral platform of the running political parties had in its content the new element of the pandemic management. The discourse, especially of the ruling party, the Socialist Party, stressed in its content platform the success in the Covid-19 vaccination program against Covid, the good administration of the pandemic by the government and health institutions in the country, the reconstruction process after the 2019 earthquake and other development aspects such as economic, employment, juridical reform, etc. The Democratic Party and the Socialist Movement for Integration, on the other hand, in their public discourse emphasize their

criticism of the government pandemic management, the authoritarian management of the country and politics of the prime minister, by centralizing the power in his hands and leading therefore to the abuse of public resource. Moreover, in the pandemic situation the campaign of the political parties had a considerable shift towards the online campaign (IDEA 2022), compared to previous elections. However, as Kume states in DW “this campaign has innovations its form, but not its content”, concerning “the behaviour of political entities in election in relation to the voter.” “The campaign is characterized by a lack of ideas, objectives for good governance and an excess of statements” (DW 2021). Social media platforms became a good ground of influencing the electorate, especially the young age group of voters who mostly use the social media. The main political parties raised their visibility through the online campaign, and on the other hand this platform, granted them the ground to campaign even if they did not offer a concrete political platform in the 2021 parliamentary election.

The low turnout and the adaptation of the election campaign to the pandemic restrictions favoured the Socialist Party, which won a third term in office for the first time in the history of pluralism in Albania. According to the Central Election Commission the 2021 election results are: Social democratic Party (PSD) 2.25%, three parliament seats, Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI) 6.81%, 4 parliament seats, Democratic Party “Alliance for Change” (PD-AN) 39.43%, 59 parliament seats and Socialist Party of Albania (PS) 48.67%, 74 parliament seats. (KQZ 2022).

## CONCLUSION

The parliamentary election of April 2021 in Albania apart from the democratic developing concerns challenged an additional obstacle of being held during Covid-19 pandemic circumstances. In these circumstances several parts of the parliamentary elections were re-dimensioned, re-modelled and sometimes missed out or substituted due to the Covid-19 restrictions. The article deals with the impact on the organization of elections in Albania, as well as formal conditions for free and fair elections. The analyses identified several problematics of election organization and implementation in the Covid-19 pandemic conditions. In terms of the Covid-19 legislative measures such as decision, instructions, etc., there were fallacies from the Election Regulatory Commission management body. Although, on the other hand CEC did manage to make some adaptation to its functional infrastructure such as online meetings.

Considering the decision making of CEC and other elected bodies they did not determine any specific rules and procedures for groups of voters such as the hospitalized people to vote, the isolated at home from the virus and the diaspora community. Furthermore, the April parliamentary election campaign took place in extraordinary conditions compared to previous election campaigns, hampering the normal operation of a political party election campaign, condition that per se limited the campaign visibility, and a somehow disenchantment of the candidates from the voters. Therefore, considering the circumstances of the live contact margins, the political parties and candidates shifted a considerable part of their campaign towards the online social media.

In conclusion, based on the research and monitoring analyses of 2021 Albanian Parliamentary elections, the authors believe that the election process could have been better managed in order to provide and guarantee properly the citizens' rights for elections. First, the Electoral Code could have provided some basic principles and details in regard of Covid-19 pandemics restrictions during electoral process. This was an alternative to be implemented, because the new electoral reform came into force during 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic was present and faced a real obstacle and issue to be dealt with in the frame of elections. Second, CEC decision making could have been more detailed and open minded for providing details of people hospitalized or isolated because of having covid. Movable polling stations could have been an alternative and on the other side electronic or vote by post could have been also a choice.

## REFERENCES

- Bota Sot. 2021. *Shqipëri, të izoluarit me COVID-19 nuk do të votojnë në zgjedhje*. Last accessed 02.04.22, <https://www.botasot.info/shqiperia/1561297/shqiperi-te-izoluarit-me-covid-19nuk-do-te-votojne-ne-zgjedhje/>
- Council of Europe [CoE]. 2022. *Elections during COVID-19*. Last accessed 03.03.2022, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/electoral-assistance/Covid-19-response>
- De Kadt, D. 2019. *Bringing the polls to the people: How electoral access encourages turnout but exacerbates political inequality*. MIT Political Science Department Research Paper No. 2017-4. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2922125>
- Downs, A. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper.
- Electoral Code of Republic of Albania. 2021. Tirana. Last accessed

- 21.01.2022, <https://kqz.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Electoral-Code-of-Albania-english-2.pdf>
- European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations [ENEMO]. 2021. *Final report international observation mission to Albania parliamentary elections 2021*, authors: Gianluca Passarelli, Pierre Peytier Kristina Kostelac Elene Nizharadze, editors: Gianluca Passarelli Pierre Peytier. Podgorica, Montenegro. Last accessed 22.03.2022, <http://enemo.eu/uploads/file-manager/eportENEMOIEOMtoAlbaniaParliamentaryElections20211.pdf>
- Freedom House. 2022. *Freedom in the World 2021-Albania*. Last accessed 11.01.2022 <https://freedomhouse.org/country/albania/freedom-world/2021>
- Gegvataj, A. 2020. ATA, Komiteti Teknik me ekspertët më të mirë të shëndetësisë”/ Rakacolli: U ngrit që në 31 janar”. Last accessed 11.01.2022, <http://ata.gov.al/2020/05/07/komiteti-teknik-me-ekspertet-me-te-mire-te-shendetesise-rakacolli-u-ngrit-qe-ne-31-janar>
- IDEA. 2022. *Global overview of COVID-19: Impact on elections, Featured Cases of Risk Mitigation Measures during COVID-19 - GLOBAL*. Last accessed 03.03.2022, <https://www.idea.int/news-media/multimedia-reports/global-overview-Covid-19-impact-elections>
- International Foundation for Electoral Systems [IFES]. 2021. *Elections in Albania 2021 Parliamentary Elections*. Last accessed 03.04.2022, [https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes\\_faqs\\_elections\\_in\\_albania\\_2021\\_parliamentary\\_elections\\_april\\_2021.pdf](https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes_faqs_elections_in_albania_2021_parliamentary_elections_april_2021.pdf)
- Komisioni Qëndror i Zgjedhjeve/Central Electoral Commission [KQZ]. 2022. Last accessed 04.04.2022, [www.kqz.al](http://www.kqz.al).
- Kume K. in DW. 2021. *Zgjedhjet në Shqipëri: Fushata risi në formë, jo në përmbajtje*. Last accessed on 01.04.2022, <https://www.dw.com/sq/zgjedhjet-n%C3%AB-shqip%C3%ABri-fushata-risi-n%C3%AB-form%C3%AB-jo-n%C3%AB-p%C3%ABrmbajtje/a-57207531>
- Massicotte, L., Blais, A., & Yoshinaka, A. 2004. *Conclusion: Patterns and Future Directions*. In *Establishing the Rules of the Game: Election Laws in Democracies* (pp. 158–162). University of Toronto Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/9781442674639.12>
- OSCE/ODIHR. 2013. *Republic of Albania parliamentary elections 23 June 2013 OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report*, Warsaw 10 October 2013

- OSCE/ODIHR. 2017. *Republic of Albania parliamentary elections 25 June 2017 OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report*, Warsaw 28 September 2017
- Pyrzyńska, A. & Skoczylas, D. 2020. Elections during COVID-19 Pandemic in the Light of Democratic Values and International Standards of Human Rights Protection, *European Research Studies Journal* Volume XXIII, Special Issue 2, 2020
- Santana, A., Rama, J. & Bértoa, F. C. 2020. *The Coronavirus Pandemic and Voter Turnout: Addressing the Impact of Covid-19 on Electoral Participation*. SocArXiv. <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/3d4ny>
- James, S. T. 2021. New development: Running elections during a pandemic, *Public Money & Management*, 41:1, 65-68, DOI: 10.1080/09540962.2020.1783084
- USAID. 2021. *Supporting Free and Fair Elections*. Last accessed 01.06.2022. <https://www.usaid.gov/democracy/supporting-free-and-fair-elections>.

---

\* The manuscript was received on April 17, 2022, and the paper was accepted for publishing on October 10, 2022.