

**“Electoral Integrity in Albania”**

– tabled by the Democratic Party of Albania (DPA)

*Adopted by the EPP Congress of 30 April 2025 in Valencia, Spain*

Considering the strong will and European aspirations of the Albanian people and of our Albanian member party within the EPP;

Having regard to the OSCE/ODIHR Final Report on Local Elections in Albania (2023) and on Parliamentary Elections (2021);

Referencing Transparency International’s 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index, the 2024 World Justice Project Index and the US Department of State 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Albania;

Welcoming the European Council’s decision to open negotiations for Clusters with Albania, contingent upon the implementation of necessary democratic reforms;

As Albania approaches the 11 May 2025 Parliamentary Elections, the European People’s Party (EPP) expresses its concern over the current political situation. The reports mentioned above have highlighted serious violations, including misuse of state resources, vote-buying, violation of secrecy and the freedom of the vote, and media bias. Most recent observations and the sources above converge on the following conclusions: that elections in Albania are undermined by manipulation and abuse of power, that political pluralism is repressed through institutional pressure, and that rule of law is not sustained due to judicial capture and impunity.

Over 100 formal complaints have been officially filed with the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) by the main opposition party, the Democratic Party of Albania (DPA), documenting alleged systemic and deliberate violations<sup>1</sup>, including the following:

- Vote-buying through cash incentives and cannabis cultivation;
- Electoral employment and procurement practices favoring Socialist supporters;
- Abuse of public offices and media;
- Illegal appointment of the mayor of Tirana following the arrest of Erion Veliaj, without a democratic process, to control municipal resources for the 2025 campaign;
- Threats and prosecutions against opposition candidates.

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<sup>1</sup> The Democratic Party of Albania submitted a public platform (<https://pd.al/krimizgjedhor/doc/>) documenting hundreds of alleged violations.

**The EPP expresses concern over:**

**1. Continued abuse of state power**

The EPP notes with concern the continued use of public resources during electoral periods in Albania. There are credible reports of tenders, subsidies and inaugurations taking place within the four-month pre-election period, contrary to Article 91 of the Electoral Code and CEC Decision No. 9/2020. Public officials, including ministers and mayors, have engaged in activities which risk blurring the line between governance and campaigning. Following the arrest of the mayor of Tirana, the appointment of an acting mayor occurred without formal legal procedure or council approval, raising concerns over local autonomy and compliance with the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The EPP encourages Albanian institutions, including SPAK, to uphold legal standards and ensure equal conditions for all political actors.

**2. On the implementation of OSCE/ODIHR recommendations**

The EPP is concerned by the continued lack of progress in implementing key OSCE/ODIHR recommendations on electoral reform. Institutions remain vulnerable to political influence, undermining impartial oversight and fair electoral competition. Access to media is unequal, with public broadcasters and affiliated outlets favoring the ruling party and limiting opposition coverage. Electoral violations often go unpunished, creating a culture of impunity for fraud and manipulation.

**3. Electoral manipulation and intimidation**

The EPP notes reports of public administration being used for political purposes during elections. Employment schemes, propaganda efforts and pressure on civil servants to engage in partisan activities undermine the neutrality of the state. Vote-buying and intimidation, including efforts to suppress voter turnout, have been documented, with formal complaints submitted to the CEC and prosecutors. Concerns remain over the alleged links between political actors and criminal networks, especially in key appointments across law enforcement and the judiciary.

**4. Suppression of opposition and media freedom**

The EPP is concerned by ongoing legal actions and pressure against opposition leaders, members of parliament and mayors. Media pluralism is under strain, with a growing concentration of media ownership and editorial control favoring the government. The decision to restrict access to TikTok ahead of elections raises questions over freedom of expression and digital rights. These developments restrict democratic space and limit citizens' ability to engage in open political debate.

**EPP call to action:**

The EPP calls on the European Union, OSCE, Council of Europe and international democratic institutions to demand that the Albanian authorities:

- Cease any kind of alleged misuse of state power, vote-buying, voter intimidation and electoral manipulation.
- Relevant prosecutorial offices should thoroughly, and in a timely fashion, investigate prior to elections all allegations of election-related crimes; should bring perpetrators to justice; and should establish a solid track record of investigations and punishments.
- Ensure equal access to media for all political actors and uphold independent electoral oversight.

The EPP further calls on the European institutions, OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe to:

- Deploy additional long-term observers to high-risk municipalities;
- Publicly document and denounce electoral abuse in final reports;
- Support institutional mechanisms that sanction systemic misuse of public funds;
- Apply conditionality mechanisms within the EU accession process, if violations persist.

Albania's obligations under the OSCE Copenhagen Document (1990), the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the Venice Commission's guidelines on the misuse of administrative resources during elections must all be met.

The EPP will closely monitor developments in Albania, advocating for Albania's EU aspirations; will continue to support democratic forces in Albania; and will collaborate with international partners to ensure electoral processes in Albania adhere to democratic European principles providing a framework for free and fair elections.