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Electoral Dispute Management and Substantive Political Liberty: A Comparative Study of Albania and Kosovo

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between electoral dispute management and substantive political liberty in Albania and Kosovo by developing and applying the Electoral Dispute Management Performance Index (EDMPI). While scholarship on electoral integrity often emphasizes administration and monitoring, it has paid limited attention to institutions that adjudicate electoral disputes and their impact on political freedoms. The EDMPI assesses key dimensions, independence, procedural fairness, accessibility, transparency, timeliness, and enforceability, to evaluate the capacity of dispute resolution bodies to protect citizens' political rights. Using structured qualitative coding of legal frameworks, observation reports, and institutional decisions, the study finds that, although formal compliance with international standards is high, differences in institutional independence, transparency, and public trust shape the extent to which electoral processes safeguard substantive political liberty.

Keywords

Electoral Dispute Management; Political Liberty; Institutional Performance; Electoral Integrity; Rule of Law; Albania; Kosovo

INTRODUCTION

The legitimacy of elections depends not only on voting but also on how disputes that arise before, during, and after elections are handled. Electoral complaint mechanisms serve as essential guarantees of justice and legal certainty for both political actors and citizens. Albania and Kosovo, two emerging democracies in Southeastern Europe, present distinct models of complaint resolution: Albania employs a combined administrative and judicial system, while Kosovo relies on the Electoral Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP), a specialized, centralized body.

International and domestic observers of elections in both countries have assessed the advantages and shortcomings of these complaint systems. Their reports consistently emphasize the need for reforms and recommend specific areas for review. To support the development of effective electoral complaint systems in Albania and Kosovo, this study employs a comparative analysis of the two systems. It assesses the alignment of national legislative solutions with EU standards, using the Electoral Dispute Management Performance Index (EDMPI) as a quantitative, empirical tool.

This paper addresses a central question in electoral governance: how effectively do electoral dispute resolution institutions safeguard electoral integrity and democratic accountability in emerging democracies? It argues that the credibility of elections depends not only on the conduct of voting but also on the effectiveness, independence, and transparency of

institutions responsible for resolving disputes. By comparing Albania and Kosovo, the study demonstrates that differences in institutional design and perceived independence critically shape the effectiveness of dispute resolution mechanisms in protecting electoral rights, upholding the rule of law, and ensuring substantive political liberty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of electoral integrity has increasingly emphasized the importance of institutional mechanisms that safeguard electoral rights throughout the electoral cycle (Norris, 2014). Among these mechanisms, electoral dispute-resolution bodies play a central role, providing formal channels for challenging and remedying electoral violations. By ensuring that electoral rules are enforced and grievances adjudicated, these institutions enhance the credibility of electoral processes and sustain public confidence in democratic competition (Birch 2011). Their effectiveness, however, depends not only on formal legal frameworks but also on how key institutional principles, such as independence, fairness, and transparency, are defined, operationalized, and perceived.

These concepts are not self-evident and have been widely debated in democratic theory. Institutional independence, for example, extends beyond the absence of formal political control. As O'Donnell (2004) argues, independence must be understood as a multidimensional concept encompassing autonomy from political parties, insulation from executive influence, and protection from economic or societal pressures. In the context of electoral dispute resolution, independence refers to the capacity of adjudicating bodies to render decisions free from partisan interference while remaining accountable to constitutional and legal norms. This dual requirement, autonomy combined with accountability, positions such institutions as key components of horizontal accountability within democratic systems.

The concept of fairness is similarly complex. From a procedural perspective, fairness implies the impartial and consistent application of legal rules, ensuring equal treatment of all electoral actors. From a substantive perspective, fairness is linked to the broader goal of ensuring that electoral outcomes reflect voters' genuine preferences (Rawls 1971; Dahl 1971). Electoral dispute resolution bodies operate at the intersection of these dimensions: they must guarantee due process while also contributing to the legitimacy of electoral outcomes. Weaknesses in either dimension, procedural inconsistency or perceived bias, can undermine trust in both the dispute mechanism and the electoral process itself.

Transparency constitutes another foundational principle of institutional credibility. Transparent procedures enable stakeholders to observe how decisions are made and to evaluate whether legal standards are applied consistently. In democratic governance, transparency is closely linked to accountability, as it requires institutions to justify their actions and remain open to scrutiny (Przeworski 2010). International standards reinforce this connection. The Council of Europe (2020) emphasizes that electoral complaint systems should be transparent, accessible, and understandable, with decisions made publicly available to ensure accountability, while balancing the need for confidentiality during deliberation. In practice, transparency involves not only open hearings but also systematic publication of decisions, clear legal reasoning, and accessible documentation.

Beyond these core principles, the literature highlights an important debate regarding the relative importance of formal institutional design versus informal political dynamics. Institutional approaches stress the role of legal frameworks, organizational structures, and procedural rules in shaping outcomes. From this perspective, the effectiveness of electoral dispute resolution systems depends on clearly defined mandates, independent appointment procedures, and enforceable decisions. As Kadagidze and Tskhakaia (2019) note, the prevention and resolution of electoral disputes through transparent and timely legal mechanisms is essential for democratic consolidation.

However, alternative perspectives emphasize the role of informal institutions, including political culture, elite bargaining, and patronage networks (Helmke & Levitsky 2006). In transitional democracies, formal rules may coexist with informal practices that undermine institutional autonomy or shape the implementation of legal provisions. This tension is particularly relevant in the Western Balkans, where external actors have often driven institutional reforms but operate within entrenched political dynamics. As a result, the formal existence of independent dispute resolution bodies does not necessarily guarantee their effective functioning in practice.

Recent empirical research further highlights the importance of electoral dispute mechanisms for both institutional performance and public perceptions. Högstöm and Jerhov (2023) demonstrate that electoral complaints serve not only a corrective function, addressing specific violations, but also a diagnostic function by revealing systemic weaknesses in electoral administration. Similarly, Schnaudt (2024) shows that public evaluations of electoral integrity are closely linked to perceptions of the effectiveness of compliance and enforcement mechanisms, suggesting that credible dispute-resolution processes directly influence trust in elections.

In the regional context, existing scholarship provides important but limited insights. Kume (2022) examines the alignment of Albania's electoral dispute framework with international standards, while Sqapi and Mile (2022) highlight how party patronage and state capture can undermine institutional effectiveness. Studies on Kosovo remain comparatively scarce. Brancati (2014) demonstrates that electoral monitoring can enhance citizens' perceptions of electoral integrity, while Matias (2021) explores electoral system reforms and their implications for dispute resolution. Reports by international organizations, including ENEMO (2011) and the European Union Election Observation Mission (2025), provide valuable empirical assessments of electoral processes, including complaint mechanisms, but are not designed as systematic comparative analyses.

Within the broader Western Balkan context, countries such as North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia exhibit similar challenges, including politicized appointments, limited institutional autonomy, and uneven transparency practices. However, variation across cases suggests that institutional design and implementation can produce different outcomes even within similar regional conditions. Situating Albania and Kosovo within this regional pattern clarifies that their divergence is not inevitable but reflects specific institutional choices and political dynamics.

A critical perspective within the literature also questions the universality of international electoral standards. Organizations such as OSCE/ODIHR, the Venice Commission, and International IDEA provide widely used benchmarks for assessing electoral processes. While these frameworks promote democratic norms, some scholars argue that they reflect the

assumptions of liberal democratic models developed in Western contexts (Carothers 2002). This critique highlights the need to interpret empirical findings with sensitivity to local political and institutional contexts.

The relationship between electoral dispute management and substantive political liberty provides an important theoretical anchor for this study. Substantive political liberty refers to citizens' effective ability to exercise political rights, including voting, contesting elections, and challenging irregularities. These rights depend not only on formal guarantees but also on the existence of institutions capable of enforcing them (O'Donnell 2004). Electoral dispute resolution bodies contribute to this process by providing legal remedies for violations, thereby reinforcing the rule of law and democratic accountability. Where such mechanisms are weak, inaccessible, or perceived as biased, the effective exercise of political rights may be constrained.

Building on this literature, the present study contributes in several ways. First, it addresses a gap in comparative research by focusing specifically on electoral dispute management institutions, which have received less systematic attention than other components of electoral governance. Second, it introduces the Electoral Dispute Management Perceptions Index (EDMPI). This composite framework operationalizes key institutional dimensions, independence, fairness, transparency, effectiveness, non-political influence, timeliness, and public trust, through a structured coding approach. Third, it provides new empirical insights into the Western Balkan region by comparing Albania and Kosovo, highlighting both shared challenges and divergent institutional trajectories.

Finally, by linking institutional performance to broader debates on the rule of law and democratic legitimacy, the study bridges normative and empirical approaches to electoral governance. It demonstrates that effective electoral dispute resolution is not merely a technical requirement but a central component of democratic systems, shaping both the enforcement of electoral rules and the credibility of political competition.

METHODOLOGY

Methods

This study employs a comparative mixed-methods design, combining doctrinal legal analysis with an original quantitative perception-based tool, the Electoral Dispute Management Perceptions Index (EDMPI), to assess and compare the performance of electoral dispute resolution mechanisms in Albania and Kosovo. This approach allows for both a detailed examination of legal frameworks and an empirical evaluation of how institutions are perceived to function in practice.

Conceptual Research Model

The conceptual research model (see Figure 1) illustrates the theoretical mechanism linking the Electoral Dispute Management Perceptions Index (EDMPI) to broader democratic outcomes. Effective electoral dispute resolution institutions reinforce the rule-of-law framework governing elections. This institutional robustness enhances electoral integrity by ensuring that violations of electoral rights are addressed through impartial and timely adjudication. In turn,

credible and well-functioning electoral processes enable citizens and political actors to exercise their political rights effectively, thereby supporting substantive political liberty.

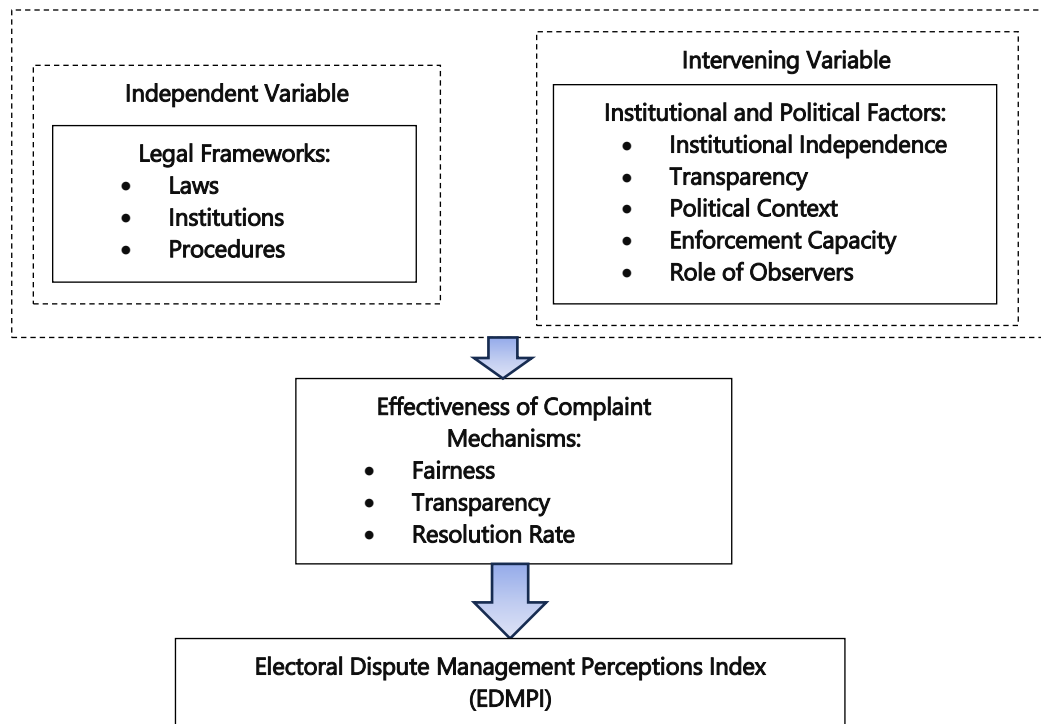


Figure 1: Conceptual Research Model (Source: Authors' depiction)

Document Analysis and Comparative Approach

The study follows a structured comparative approach:

1. Legal and Institutional Review – Examination of constitutional provisions, electoral codes, and administrative procedures regulating electoral complaints in Albania and Kosovo.
2. Institutional Competencies – Analysis of the roles and functions of the Complaints and Sanctions Commission (CSC) in Albania and the Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP) in Kosovo.
3. Comparative Assessment – Identification of convergences and divergences in electoral dispute resolution practices between Albania and Kosovo based on the analysis of complaints during the most recent elections.

Empirical Contextualization

Findings are triangulated by cross-checking multiple sources, including reports from international observation missions (OSCE/ODIHR, EU Election Observation Mission, ENEMO), domestic NGOs, and investigative journalism. This process evaluates how legal provisions function in practice and the extent to which formal rules translate into effective institutional performance.

The Electoral Dispute Management Perceptions Index (EDMPI)

The Electoral Dispute Management Perceptions Index (EDMPI) is designed to measure the institutional dimensions that protect political freedom to vote and be elected. The index evaluates key aspects of electoral dispute mechanisms, including independence, impartiality, accessibility, transparency, effectiveness, non-political influence, timeliness, and public trust. Each indicator is scored on a standardized 0–100 scale, with higher scores reflecting stronger alignment with internationally recognized democratic standards for electoral dispute resolution. High EDMPI performance indicates that electoral actors have credible institutional channels to defend their political rights and contest alleged irregularities. Conversely, weak dispute resolution systems may allow electoral violations to persist without remedy, undermining citizens' ability to exercise political freedoms. From this perspective, the quality of electoral dispute management directly impacts the realization of substantive political liberty (Diamond & Morlino 2005).

The scoring process relies on documentary analysis of multiple evidence sources, including election observation reports, legal and regulatory frameworks governing electoral dispute procedures, judicial decisions on electoral complaints, and reports from international organizations and domestic monitoring groups. In particular, the analysis draws extensively on reports produced by the OSCE and its election-monitoring body, ODIHR, which provide systematic assessments of electoral administration and dispute-resolution processes.

The value of EDMPI is calculated as the average of the values of seven indicators: I1-Independence of Institutions, I2 - Fairness of Decisions, I3-Transparency of the Process, I4-Effectiveness of the Appeal Mechanism, I5-Non-Political Influence, I6-Timeliness of Resolution and I7-Impact on Public Trust. Each indicator I_j is measured on a 0-100 scale.

The EDMPI value for the country is calculated as the weighted mean of its seven indicators:

$$EDMPI = \sum_{i=1}^7 w_i \left[\sum_{j=1}^{n_j} I_{ij} / n_{ij} \right]$$

With: $\sum_{i=1}^7 w_i = 1$

Unless otherwise specified, equal weights ($w_i=1/7$) are applied. The decision to apply equal weighting is theoretically grounded in the multidimensional understanding of electoral integrity. Contemporary scholarship conceptualizes electoral integrity as a system of interdependent institutional guarantees, in which legal independence, impartial decision-making, accessibility of complaint mechanisms, transparency, procedural timeliness, and enforceability collectively sustain trust in electoral processes (Norris 2014; Birch 2011). Because these elements function as mutually reinforcing safeguards, privileging one indicator over another would risk imposing a normative hierarchy not supported by the theoretical framework.

Moreover, equal weighting is frequently employed in composite governance indices when there is no strong theoretical or empirical basis for assigning differential importance to specific indicators (OECD 2008; Nardo et al. 2005). Using equal weights, therefore, enhances methodological transparency, cross-country comparability, and replicability, particularly in

exploratory comparative research such as this study of electoral integrity in Western Balkan “flawed democracies.”

The equal-weighting approach is also consistent with the study’s conceptual structure. The seven indicators capture complementary aspects of electoral dispute management within the broader dimensions of electoral integrity, contestability, participation, deliberation, and adjudication. Each indicator represents a necessary institutional condition for effective electoral dispute resolution. Weakness in any single component, such as institutional independence, access to remedies, or timely adjudication, can undermine the overall credibility of the electoral process. Consequently, the analytical framework treats these indicators as equally essential elements of a coherent institutional system.

To evaluate the robustness of the results, a basic sensitivity check was conducted using alternative weighting assumptions. The analysis indicates that modest variations in indicator weights do not substantially alter the overall comparative pattern observed between the two cases (Appendix C).

Higher scores on EDMPI indicate stronger alignment with democratic standards of electoral dispute resolution and rule-of-law-based electoral governance.

Data, Coding, and Scoring Procedure

The primary data used in this study were collected through monitoring of the complaints process during the Parliamentary elections in Albania (May 11, 2025) and the General elections in Kosovo (February 8, 2025).

In line with the requirements of the conceptual model, the comparative analysis relies on the following data sources:

1. Constitutional and electoral legislation of Albania and Kosovo (Electoral Code of Albania, Law No. 10/019; Law on General Elections of Kosovo, No. 08/L-228).
2. Decisions of electoral dispute bodies, namely the Appeals and Sanctions Commission (ASC, Albania) and the Electoral Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP, Kosovo).
3. Reports of international observer missions, including OSCE/ODIHR, EU Election Observation Mission, and ENEMO (2011–2025).
4. Domestic observer reports and academic studies addressing electoral complaints and dispute resolution processes.

To ensure transparency and replicability, the operationalization of the Electoral Dispute Management Perceptions Index (EDMPI) is documented in detail in Appendix A, which presents the formal coding framework, indicator definitions, and scale anchors. Illustrative examples of coded entries, documentary evidence, and corresponding scores for Albania and Kosovo are provided in Appendix B.

The coding process followed a structured qualitative assessment of documentary evidence. Each indicator was evaluated based on data from the sources listed above. Component scores presented in the empirical tables reflect the aggregation of coded assessments across these sources.

Coding was conducted between July and September 2024. The authors performed initial coding and subsequently reviewed it by an independent researcher familiar with electoral

governance studies. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion and re-examination of the underlying evidence to ensure accuracy.

All indicators were coded using a five-level qualitative scale, very low, low, moderate, high, very high, which was subsequently transformed into numerical values ranging from 0 to 100 for index calculation:

- 0–25: Poor performance
- 26–50: Moderate performance
- 51–75: Good performance
- 76–100: Very good performance

This standardized coding and scoring procedure allows for systematic, comparable, and empirically grounded assessment of the institutional performance of electoral dispute resolution mechanisms in Albania and Kosovo.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Electoral dispute management institutions constitute a core element of the rule-of-law architecture underpinning democratic governance. The rule of law requires that political authority be exercised in accordance with publicly known rules and that individuals have access to effective mechanisms to challenge violations of their rights (O'Donnell 2004). In electoral contexts, this implies the existence of impartial bodies capable of reviewing complaints, enforcing legal provisions, and providing remedies for electoral irregularities.

The Electoral Dispute Management Performance Index (EDMPI) operationalizes these principles by capturing key institutional dimensions that shape the effectiveness of electoral adjudication. These dimensions include institutional independence, fairness of decisions, transparency of procedures, effectiveness of appeal mechanisms, and insulation from political influence, timeliness, and impact on public trust. Together, they reflect the capacity of dispute-resolution systems to serve as credible mechanisms of accountability.

The link between EDMPI performance and political liberty can be conceptualized as a causal chain. First, independent and transparent institutions strengthen horizontal accountability by constraining potential abuses by political actors. Second, effective accountability mechanisms enhance electoral integrity by ensuring that violations can be detected, challenged, and corrected. Third, credible electoral processes enable the realization of substantive political liberty, understood as citizens' effective ability to participate in political competition and have their preferences reflected in outcomes (Dahl 1971).

At the same time, this relationship is conditional rather than deterministic. Institutional design alone does not guarantee effective performance; outcomes are also shaped by political context, including levels of polarization, elite compliance with legal rulings, and administrative capacity. Trade-offs may also emerge, particularly between the speed of adjudication and the depth or quality of legal reasoning. Accordingly, EDMPI scores should be interpreted as indicative of institutional capacity, rather than as definitive measures of democratic quality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Albania, the right to file electoral appeals, the procedures and deadlines for their submission, the administrative and judicial review mechanisms, the bodies responsible for handling appeals, and the rights and obligations of both the appellant and the respondent are regulated by Law No. 10019 of December 29, 2008, as amended, the Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania. The Electoral Code designates the Central Election Commission (CEC) as the central administrative authority with full powers in electoral matters. These powers include issuing administrative acts and adopting regulatory acts under which the Appeals and Sanctions Commission (ASC) reviews electoral appeals. Decisions of the ASC are binding on the CEC but may be appealed to the Electoral College of the Court of Appeal, Tirana (ECCA). The ECCA hears and adjudicates appeals against CEC decisions, including those concerning the partial or full invalidation of elections. Decisions of the ECCA are final.

In Kosovo, the Law on General Elections (Law No. 08/L-228, as amended) establishes the rules, procedures, and mechanisms for electoral complaints. The Electoral Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP) is the authority responsible for handling electoral complaints. The law authorizes ECAP to review complaints, issue administrative decisions, and order appropriate follow-up measures. It also specifies the deadlines for submitting and reviewing complaints. A complainant has the right to appeal an ECAP decision before the competent court.

The Electoral Dispute Management Perceptions Index (EDMPI)

For the parliamentary elections in Albania (May 11, 2025) and the general elections in Kosovo (February 8–9, 2025), the component items of the EDMPI indicators were evaluated to calculate the overall index scores. These evaluations provide empirical assessments of the performance of electoral dispute-resolution mechanisms in both countries.

Indicator: Independence of Institutions

The results for the component items of this indicator are summarized in Table 1. This analysis assesses the extent to which electoral dispute bodies in Albania and Kosovo operate independently from political influence, maintain impartiality in decision-making, and are insulated from external pressures that could compromise their adjudicatory functions.

One of the most significant areas of variation between Albania and Kosovo concerns the perceived independence of electoral dispute-resolution institutions, particularly the procedures used to appoint their members. In Albania, reliance on political party agreements to appoint members of the Appeals and Sanctions Commission (ASC) embeds partisan influence in the body's composition, thereby constraining its perceived neutrality.

Table 1: Evaluation of the Component Items of Institutional Independence (Source: Authors' compilation)

Component Items	Scores	
	ASC Albania	ECAP Kosovo
Method of Appointment of Members	20.0	67.5
Mandate and Security of Function	62.5	75.0
Budgetary Autonomy	27.5	57.5
Legal Framework for Protection	52.5	77.5

In contrast, Kosovo's model, which draws appointments from professional magistrates, creates a more legally grounded institutional profile, reinforcing trust in impartiality.

A similar structural contrast is evident in budgetary autonomy. The ASC in Albania operates under the general budget of the Central Election Commission (CEC), which limits its operational flexibility and constrains independent strategic and procedural decision-making. Kosovo's Electoral Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP), by contrast, benefits from a dedicated budget, allowing it to manage resources independently and strengthen its institutional autonomy.

Both countries show convergence in areas such as mandate security and legal protection, where the frameworks are relatively robust.

It is important to note that the data captured in this study reflect perceptions of institutional independence rather than direct causal mechanisms. While observation reports and legal analyses frequently highlight potential risks associated with politically negotiated appointments, the present data do not allow for a definitive causal link between appointment procedures and institutional outcomes. Differences in scores may also reflect broader contextual factors, including levels of political polarization, historical trust in public institutions, or the intensity of electoral competition during specific electoral cycles.

Nevertheless, the comparative evidence suggests that institutional arrangements perceived as providing stronger safeguards against political influence are associated with higher levels of perceived neutrality. This finding aligns with broader scholarship on democratic governance, which emphasizes the critical role of institutional autonomy in maintaining the credibility and legitimacy of adjudicating bodies.

Indicator: Fairness of Decisions

The assessment of the Fairness of Decisions indicator within the Electoral Dispute Management Perceptions Index (EDMPI) reveals clear differences between Albania's Appeals and Sanctions Commission (ASC) and Kosovo's Electoral Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP). These differences reflect variations in both the technical quality of adjudication and stakeholder perceptions of impartiality and procedural consistency (see Table 2).

Table 2: Evaluation of Component Items of Decision Fairness (Source: Authors' compilation)

Component Items	Scores	
	ASC Albania	ECAP Kosovo
Basis of Law and Evidence	55.0	82.5
Legal Consistency	42.5	57.5
Respect for International Standards	60.0	75.5
Reasoning of Decisions	47.5	70.0
Opportunity for Parties to Be Heard	60.0	72.5
Citizens' Perception	30.0	50.0
Political Parties' Perception	25.0	57.5

Overall, Kosovo scores higher across most components of the Fairness of Decisions indicator, particularly in legal reasoning, evidentiary assessment, and perceived procedural fairness. While these results suggest comparatively stronger performance of ECAP, the scores should be interpreted as approximate, given their derivation from structured qualitative evaluation. In this context, only larger differences, roughly above ten points, should be considered substantively meaningful.

The first set of components, based on law and evidence, legal consistency, and reasoning of decisions, captures the technical and jurisprudential dimensions of adjudication. Albania's scores (42.5–55.0) indicate that ASC operates within a formal legal framework but faces challenges in ensuring consistent interpretation and clear articulation of reasoning. Such variability can affect the predictability of outcomes, a key element of procedural fairness. Kosovo's higher scores (57.5–82.5) suggest a stronger perceived alignment between legal provisions, evidentiary evaluation, and the justification of decisions. Nevertheless, part of this difference may reflect variations in documentation practices or the nature of available evidence, rather than purely substantive distinctions.

A similar pattern is observed in the component measuring respect for international standards, where Kosovo again performs better (75.5 compared to Albania's 60.0). This indicates that ECAP procedures are more frequently perceived as consistent with established norms governing electoral dispute resolution.

Procedural safeguards, particularly the opportunity for parties to be heard, show more moderate variation. Both institutions receive relatively solid scores (Albania: 60.0; Kosovo: 72.5), suggesting that formal guarantees of participation exist in both systems. Differences here are likely linked to implementation practices or procedural quality, rather than major legal divergences.

The largest gaps appear in perception-based indicators. Albania records low scores in citizens' perception (30.0) and political parties' perception (25.0), while Kosovo performs moderately higher (50.0 and 57.5). These results highlight significant differences in stakeholder confidence. However, such perceptions are shaped not only by institutional performance but also by broader contextual factors, including political polarization and historical trust in public institutions.

Taken together, the findings suggest that fairness in electoral adjudication depends on both the technical quality of decision-making and the degree of public confidence in institutions. While Kosovo's ECAP is generally perceived as stronger across these dimensions, the results should be interpreted cautiously, recognizing the influence of contextual and perceptual factors beyond institutional design alone.

Indicator: Transparency of the Process

The evaluation of the Transparency of the Process indicator highlights differences in how Albania's Appeals and Sanctions Commission (ASC) and Kosovo's Electoral Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP) ensure the visibility and accessibility of their adjudicatory procedures (see Table 3). Transparency in electoral dispute resolution extends beyond holding open hearings; it also encompasses the availability, clarity, and accessibility of information that enables stakeholders to understand how decisions are reached, justified, and applied in practice.

Table 3: Evaluation of Component Items of Process Transparency (Source: Authors' compilation)

Component Items	Scores	
	ASC Albania	ECAP Kosovo
Publication of Decisions	45.0	77.5
Timelines	60.0	67.5
Consistency of Decisions	22.5	70.0
Quality of Legal Reasoning	27.5	80.0
Appealability	77.5	75.0
Extent of Correction by Courts	55.0	72.5
Public Access to Hearings	62.5	30.0
Public Reporting	52.5	72.5
Accessibility of Documents	52.5	65.0
Publication of Decisions	27.5	72.5

Across several core components, such as publication of decisions, consistency of decisions, quality of legal reasoning, and public reporting, Kosovo records higher scores than Albania. These results suggest that ECAP is generally perceived as providing broader and more systematic access to information regarding electoral dispute adjudication.

The most pronounced divergence appears in the publication of decisions, where Kosovo's scores (72.5–77.5) indicate relatively consistent practices in making decisions publicly available. In contrast, Albania's lower scores (27.5–45.0) point to limited or inconsistent publication practices. The availability of decisions is a central element of transparency, as it enables political actors, observers, and the public to scrutinize institutional reasoning and assess whether legal standards are applied consistently.

Substantial differences are also evident in the components measuring decision consistency and legal reasoning quality. Kosovo achieves relatively high scores (70.0 and 80.0),

suggesting that ECAP decisions are more often perceived as structured around identifiable legal arguments and applied consistently. Albania's lower scores (22.5 and 27.5) indicate challenges in presenting clearly articulated reasoning or maintaining consistency across cases. However, these findings should be interpreted with caution, as they may partly reflect differences in documentation practices, reporting formats, or the level of detail in publicly available decisions, rather than purely substantive differences in adjudication.

Other components, such as timelines, public reporting, document accessibility, and the extent of correction by courts, show more moderate differences. Kosovo performs somewhat better across these indicators, suggesting relatively stronger practices in information management and communication with stakeholders. Albania's intermediate scores, including timelines (60.0) and document accessibility (52.5), indicate partial alignment with procedural transparency standards, though they may also reflect uneven implementation or administrative capacity constraints.

An important exception emerges in the component public access to hearings, where Albania scores higher (62.5) than Kosovo (30.0). This result suggests that ASC hearings may be more procedurally accessible to observers. However, this dimension represents only one aspect of transparency and does not compensate for lower performance in areas related to publication and decision clarity. Effective transparency requires not only open proceedings but also clear and accessible documentation that explains institutional outcomes.

The component of appealability of decisions shows similarly high scores in both systems (Albania: 77.5; Kosovo: 75.0). Given the small difference, this should not be interpreted as substantively meaningful. Rather, it indicates that both systems formally provide mechanisms for challenging decisions, thereby constituting an important safeguard within electoral dispute-resolution frameworks.

The findings suggest that Kosovo's ECAP is generally perceived as operating with higher procedural transparency, particularly in the publication and justification of decisions. At the same time, transparency varies across components in both systems, reflecting differences not only in institutional design but also in administrative capacity, documentation practices, and broader political context. Strengthening publication practices, improving legal reasoning, and enhancing access to institutional documentation could further reinforce the credibility and accountability of electoral dispute management in both countries.

Indicator: Effectiveness of the Appeal Mechanism

Table 4 presents the component scores for Albania's Appeals and Sanctions Commission (ASC) and Kosovo's Electoral Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP). This indicator assesses the capacity of electoral dispute-resolution bodies to process complaints efficiently, implement decisions, and ensure meaningful remedies for violations of electoral rights. Effectiveness reflects both the procedural functionality of the institution and its ability to translate adjudicatory outcomes into practical enforcement, thereby contributing to electoral integrity and public confidence in the system.

Table 4: Evaluation of Component Items of Appeal Mechanism Effectiveness (Source: Authors' compilation)

Component Items	Scores	
	ASC Albania	ECAP Kosovo
Clarity of the Legal Framework	52.5	80.0
Levels of Appeal	50.0	75.0
Competencies of Institutions	42.5	80.0
Timelines	67.5	45.0
Effectiveness of the Decision	35.0	65.0
Consistency of Decisions	42.5	60.0
Legal Reasoning	45.0	75.0
Trustworthiness of Political Actors	17.5	50.0
Citizens' Perception	30.0	62.5
Assessment by Monitors	55.0	77.5

Across several components, including clarity of the legal framework, institutional competencies, legal reasoning, and perception-based indicators, Kosovo records higher scores than Albania. These results suggest that ECAP is generally perceived as operating within a more clearly defined institutional and legal framework for the adjudication of electoral appeals.

In particular, the component related to the clarity of the legal framework shows a substantial difference between the two systems (Kosovo: 80.0; Albania: 52.5). A clearly articulated legal mandate helps stakeholders understand procedural rules, institutional competencies, and available remedies, thereby contributing to more predictable dispute-resolution processes. Albania's lower score may indicate that relevant provisions are fragmented or less clearly articulated in the available legal and procedural documentation.

Similarly, components related to levels of appeal and institutional competencies display notable differences. Kosovo's higher scores (75.0 and 80.0, respectively) suggest that ECAP is perceived as possessing clear institutional authority and well-defined appellate procedures. Albania records lower scores in these areas (50.0 and 42.5), reflecting perceptions that the appellate framework is less structured or that competencies are distributed across institutions, thereby reducing clarity. These differences, however, should not be interpreted as direct evidence of institutional incapacity; they may also reflect variations in legal drafting, procedural documentation, or reporting practices in observation reports.

An interesting contrast appears in the timelines component, where Albania scores higher (67.5) than Kosovo (45.0). This suggests that Albania's appeal procedures may operate within tighter procedural deadlines or resolve cases more rapidly. At the same time, the effectiveness of an appellate system depends not only on speed but also on the clarity, authority, and consistency of decisions. Kosovo's lower score in this dimension may reflect longer procedural timelines associated with more extensive legal review or differences in case complexity during the observed electoral cycle.

Other components related to the effectiveness, consistency, and legal reasoning of decisions show larger differences in favor of Kosovo. ECAP records higher scores across these

dimensions (60.0–75.0), suggesting that its decisions are perceived as more consistently grounded in identifiable legal reasoning and applied more uniformly across cases. Albania's lower scores (35.0–45.0) may indicate that publicly available decisions provide less detailed legal justification or exhibit greater variation in the interpretation of legal provisions. These patterns should be interpreted cautiously, as differences may also reflect the types and complexities of the disputes examined or variations in documentation practices.

The indicator also includes several perception-based components, such as the trustworthiness of political actors, citizens' perceptions, and election monitors' assessments. In these areas, Kosovo records substantially higher scores than Albania, suggesting differing levels of stakeholder confidence in the appellate process's credibility. It is important to note, however, that a wide range of contextual factors beyond institutional design, including political polarization, historical trust in public institutions, and the broader electoral environment, shape perception-based indicators.

From a broader institutional perspective, effective electoral appeal mechanisms constitute a critical component of the rule-of-law architecture that underpins democratic governance and safeguards substantive political liberty. Appellate procedures provide legal avenues for electoral actors to challenge decisions and seek remedies when electoral rights are perceived to be violated. When appeal mechanisms operate with clear legal mandates, consistent reasoning, and accessible procedures, they strengthen the protection of political rights and reinforce horizontal accountability within the electoral system. Conversely, when stakeholders perceive appellate institutions as lacking clarity, authority, or consistency, the willingness of actors to rely on legal remedies may decline, potentially shifting disputes into political or extra-institutional arenas.

Taken together, the comparative results suggest that Kosovo's ECAP is generally perceived as operating within a more structured and credible appellate framework across several EDMPI dimensions. At the same time, Albania demonstrates relatively stronger performance in procedural timelines, suggesting that its dispute resolution processes may operate more quickly in certain respects. These findings underscore that the effectiveness of appeal mechanisms is multidimensional, encompassing not only the speed of procedures but also the clarity of legal mandates, the consistency of decisions, and stakeholder confidence.

The analysis highlights that strengthening electoral appeal mechanisms requires attention to both institutional design and procedural practice, including clearer legal frameworks, consistent legal reasoning, accessible documentation, and transparent communication with stakeholders. Improvements in these areas may enhance the credibility of dispute resolution systems and reinforce the broader role of electoral justice institutions in safeguarding democratic processes.

Indicator: Non-Political Influence

Table 5 presents the component scores for the Non-Political Influence indicator for Albania's Appeals and Sanctions Commission (ASC) and Kosovo's Electoral Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP). This indicator assesses the extent to which electoral dispute-resolution institutions are shielded from political interference through a combination of legal safeguards, institutional design, and stakeholder perceptions.

Non-political influence is a critical dimension of institutional credibility, as it shapes both the actual independence of decision-making and the perceived impartiality of electoral adjudication. High scores on this indicator indicate that institutions can operate autonomously, free from partisan pressure or undue influence from political elites. In contrast, low scores may signal vulnerabilities that could undermine trust in electoral dispute resolution and, by extension, the broader electoral process.

Table 5: Evaluation of Component Items of Non-Political Influence (Source: Authors' compilation)

Component Items	Scores	
	ASC Albania	ECAP Kosovo
Legal Guarantees for Independence	52.5	80.0
Method of Appointing Members	12.5	70.0
Mandate and Security of Tenure	57.5	75.0
Lack of Political Pressure	25.0	65.0
Financial and Institutional Autonomy	57.5	77.5
Legal Justification of Decisions	45.0	65.0
Citizens' Perception	35.5	65.0
Perception of Political Parties	27.5	65.0
Assessment by Monitors	37.5	67.5

Across nearly all components, Kosovo records higher scores than Albania, particularly in appointment procedures, formal guarantees of independence, and perception-based evaluations of institutional neutrality. The most pronounced difference appears in member appointment procedures, where Albania scores very low (12.5) compared to Kosovo (70.0). This gap reflects fundamental differences in institutional design: in Albania, appointments involve political actors to a considerable extent, whereas in Kosovo they rely primarily on judicial institutions. While the EDMPI data capture these relationships indirectly rather than establishing direct causality, such structural arrangements are likely to influence perceptions of independence.

Other institutional components, including legal guarantees for independence, tenure security, and financial and operational autonomy, also show consistently higher scores for Kosovo. ECAP's results (75.0–80.0) suggest strong formal safeguards against external interference. Albania's more moderate scores (approximately 52.5–57.5) indicate that legal protections exist but may be perceived as less robust or inconsistently implemented. Importantly, formal safeguards alone do not determine institutional performance, as effectiveness also depends on administrative capacity, institutional culture, and broader political context.

The component "lack of political pressure" further illustrates differences in perceived independence. Kosovo's score of 65.0 indicates lower perceived interference, while Albania's score of 25.0 suggests stronger stakeholder concerns about political influence. These scores

reflect perceptions rather than direct measures, and may be shaped by contextual factors such as political polarization or historical trust in institutions.

A similar pattern emerges in citizens', political parties', and election observers' perceptions, where Kosovo consistently outperforms Albania. Higher ECAP scores indicate greater confidence in institutional independence, whereas lower ASC scores reflect greater skepticism about neutrality. These findings highlight that stakeholder trust is critical, complementing formal safeguards in shaping perceived autonomy.

From a broader perspective, insulation from political influence is a core element of the rule-of-law framework governing electoral processes. Electoral dispute-resolution bodies serve as mechanisms of horizontal accountability, ensuring that electoral rules are applied through legal procedures rather than through political bargaining. When institutions are perceived as independent, they strengthen confidence in electoral outcomes and enhance democratic legitimacy.

The findings suggest that Kosovo's ECAP is generally perceived as operating within a more insulated and credible institutional framework, while Albania combines formal safeguards with lower stakeholder confidence in independence. This contrast underscores the importance of both institutional design and public trust in shaping perceptions of non-politicized electoral dispute resolution.

Indicator: Timeliness of Resolution of Complaints

Table 6 presents the comparative scores for Albania's ASC and Kosovo's ECAP. In contrast to several other indicators examined in this study, Albania scores somewhat higher on certain procedural-timeline components. The most notable difference is in the component on deadlines set by law, where Albania scores higher (80.0) than Kosovo (45.0). This suggests that Albania's legal framework establishes relatively clear and detailed procedural deadlines for resolving electoral complaints. However, the presence of formal deadlines does not necessarily ensure faster or more efficient implementation in practice.

Table 6: Evaluation of Component Items of Complaint Resolution Timeliness (Source: Authors' compilation)

Component Items	Scores	
	ASC Albania	ECAP Kosovo
Deadlines Set by Law	80.0	45.0
Compliance with Legal Deadlines	57.5	55.0
Assessment by Domestic Observers	67.5	40.0
Assessment by International Observers	72.5	52.5
Opinion by Political Parties	57.5	50.0

When examining compliance with legal deadlines, the two countries display relatively similar scores (57.5 for Albania and 55.0 for Kosovo). Because this difference is small, it should not be interpreted as substantively meaningful. Instead, the results suggest that both systems

generally attempt to operate within the timelines established by law, although their institutional structures and procedural practices may differ.

Perception-based indicators, including assessments by domestic and international observers and political parties, generally show somewhat higher ratings for Albania. Observers and political actors appear to perceive Albania's dispute resolution procedures as operating within relatively predictable timelines. However, these perceptions may also reflect differences in the structure of the dispute resolution process. For example, systems that rely more on administrative procedures may process cases more rapidly. In contrast, systems that incorporate greater judicial review may require additional time to examine legal arguments and evidence.

These findings suggest that procedural speed and substantive review can involve institutional trade-offs. Electoral dispute systems designed to provide extensive legal scrutiny may require longer timelines, while more streamlined procedures may resolve cases more rapidly but with less extensive legal examination. The EDMPI data do not allow definitive conclusions regarding which model is more effective overall, but they highlight the importance of balancing efficiency with procedural thoroughness.

From the perspective of electoral governance and rule-of-law theory, timely resolution of complaints is essential because unresolved disputes can delay the certification of election results and generate political uncertainty. At the same time, the credibility of dispute resolution depends not only on speed but also on the quality and legitimacy of decisions. Effective systems must therefore ensure that complaints are resolved within reasonable timeframes while maintaining adequate procedural safeguards.

Taken together, the results indicate that Albania's system may operate with relatively clearer procedural timelines, while Kosovo's dispute resolution framework may involve more complex or extended procedures. These differences illustrate the multidimensional nature of electoral dispute management, where procedural efficiency, legal scrutiny, and institutional credibility interact to shape overall performance.

Indicator: Impact on Public Trust

Table 7 presents the comparative results for Albania's ASC and Kosovo's ECAP. Across several components, Kosovo records higher scores than Albania, particularly in indicators related to respect for legal procedures, transparency of communication, and citizen perceptions. For example, Kosovo's score for respect for legal procedures (77.5) exceeds Albania's (55.0), suggesting that ECAP's adjudicatory practices are perceived as more closely aligned with procedural norms. Similarly, the component on transparency of communication shows a difference in favor of Kosovo (77.5 compared with Albania's 65.0), indicating that ECAP may provide more systematic or accessible communication regarding its decisions and procedures. Transparent communication is widely recognized as a key factor in enhancing public understanding of electoral dispute-resolution processes and strengthening substantive political liberty.

Table 7: Evaluation of Component Items of Impact on Public Trust (Source: Authors' compilation)

Component Items	Scores	
	ASC Albania	ECAP Kosovo
Respect for Legal Procedures	55.0	77.5
Consistency of Decisions	45.0	55.0
Speed of Complaint Processing	70.0	55.0
Implementation of Decisions	77.5	50.0
Transparency of Communication	65.0	77.5
Citizens' Perception	30.0	67.5

The most pronounced difference appears in the citizen perception component, where Kosovo records a substantially higher score (67.5) compared with Albania (30.0). This suggests that public confidence in the fairness and credibility of electoral dispute adjudication may be stronger in Kosovo. However, perception-based indicators should be interpreted cautiously, as they may reflect broader societal attitudes toward public institutions, levels of political polarization, or recent political events. As such, these results capture stakeholder confidence rather than direct measures of institutional performance.

In contrast, Albania records higher scores in speed of complaint processing (70.0) and implementation of decisions (77.5), compared with Kosovo's scores of 55.0 and 50.0, respectively. These findings suggest that Albania's dispute-resolution procedures may operate more quickly and that institutional decisions may be implemented more efficiently. Nevertheless, procedural speed alone does not necessarily translate into higher levels of public trust, which depends more heavily on perceptions of independence, fairness, and transparency.

The component on decision consistency shows more moderate differences between the two countries (Kosovo: 55.0; Albania: 45.0). Given this limited difference, it should not be interpreted as a strong divergence in institutional practice. Instead, the results indicate that both systems may face challenges in maintaining consistent decision-making across cases, an important factor in reinforcing predictability and legal certainty.

From a broader theoretical perspective, the relationship between electoral dispute resolution and public trust is closely tied to the legitimacy of democratic institutions and the rule of law. Dispute-resolution bodies provide mechanisms for addressing electoral grievances within a legal framework, reducing the likelihood that conflicts will escalate into political crises. When stakeholders perceive these institutions as transparent, impartial, and procedurally fair, they are more likely to accept electoral outcomes, even when disputes arise.

Taken together, the comparative findings suggest that Kosovo's ECAP is generally perceived as contributing more positively to public confidence in electoral dispute resolution, particularly regarding procedural credibility and communication with stakeholders. At the same time, Albania demonstrates relatively stronger performance in certain administrative aspects, such as procedural speed and implementation of decisions. These results highlight that public trust in electoral dispute mechanisms is multidimensional, shaped not only by procedural efficiency but also by perceptions of fairness, transparency, and institutional independence.

The analysis indicates that strengthening public confidence in electoral dispute resolution requires attention to both institutional practices and the broader political environment in which these institutions operate. Improvements in transparency, clarity of legal reasoning, and communication with stakeholders may reinforce the legitimacy of electoral adjudication processes and contribute to greater trust in electoral outcomes.

Comparative Performance of the EDMPI: Albania and Kosovo

The comparison presented in Table 8 highlights a clear divergence between the two countries in the institutional dimensions of electoral dispute management. Kosovo demonstrates stronger performance across indicators of institutional independence, transparency, and procedural fairness. In contrast, Albania performs better in operational aspects, such as timeliness and the enforcement of decisions.

This pattern reinforces the broader findings of the study: while Albania's electoral dispute-resolution system excels in procedural efficiency, Kosovo's framework appears more effective at fostering institutional credibility and public trust.

Table 8: Electoral Dispute Management Performance Index (EDMPI) Scores (Source: Authors' compilation)

Dimension	Albania	Kosovo
Institutional Independence	40.6	69.4
Procedural Fairness	49.2	68.0
Transparency	50.0	67.5
Effectiveness	43.7	67.0
Non-Political Influence	38.9	70.0
Timeliness	67.0	48.5
Impact on Public Trust	57.0	63.7
EDMPI Overall Score	49.5	64.7

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the effectiveness of electoral dispute resolution mechanisms is fundamentally linked to the protection of substantive political liberty. Using the Electoral Dispute Management Performance Index (EDMPI), the analysis reveals a clear divergence between Kosovo and Albania that reflects broader institutional and democratic dynamics.

Kosovo performs strongly across indicators of independence, fairness, transparency, and resistance to political influence. These qualities are more than procedural achievements; they function as concrete safeguards of citizens' political freedoms. Transparent adjudication, impartial appointment processes, and consistent legal reasoning protect individuals from arbitrary decision-making, ensure that electoral rights are meaningfully enforced, and reinforce democratic legitimacy through accessible and impartial justice.

In contrast, Albania's Supreme Court (ASC) is perceived as more vulnerable to political influence, with lower scores on independence, fairness, and transparency. Although Albania demonstrates relatively strong procedural speed, this advantage cannot compensate for structural weaknesses that undermine the impartial enforcement of electoral rights. Politicized dispute resolution erodes predictability, legal certainty, and public trust, thereby weakening both the procedural and substantive dimensions of democracy.

The findings underscore that electoral dispute management is central to safeguarding substantive political liberty. Institutions that combine independence, transparency, and procedural rigor strengthen public trust, protect political rights, and contribute to democratic consolidation. Strengthening electoral justice in both countries through depoliticized appointment processes, enhanced transparency, and consistent legal reasoning remains essential to preserving political freedoms and reinforcing the rule of law.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, the analysis focuses primarily on a single electoral cycle in each country. While this allows for an in-depth examination of institutional practices within a specific context, it does not capture potential variations in performance across multiple elections over time.

Second, elements of the EDMPI incorporate perception-based assessments drawn from election observation reports and qualitative institutional evaluations. Although these sources provide valuable expert insights, perception-based measures may reflect interpretive judgments rather than purely objective assessments.

Third, the study relies extensively on secondary sources, including legal texts, election observation reports, and institutional publications. Such materials may contain inherent biases related to institutional perspectives, reporting priorities, or observer interpretations.

Finally, the numerical scores generated by the EDMPI should be understood as approximate indicators of institutional performance rather than precise quantitative measures. The index is primarily designed as a structured, comparative analytical tool to facilitate the systematic evaluation of electoral dispute-resolution institutions, not as an exact measure of democratic quality.

Future research could strengthen the robustness of this framework by applying the EDMPI to multiple electoral cycles and extending the analysis to additional cases across the Western Balkans.

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Andon Kume: conceptualization, methodology, investigation, validation, writing – original draft.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

EDMPI Coding Framework

Code	Indicator	Conceptual Definition	Coding Question (0–100 Scale)	Scale Anchors / Interpretation	Typical Data Sources
I1	Independence of Institutions	Autonomy of the bodies responsible for adjudicating electoral complaints in the appointment, budget, and decision-making.	To what extent are these bodies free from political or partisan control?	0–25 - Politically dependent; 26–50 - Partial autonomy; 51–75 - Professional independence with minor influence; 76–100 - Fully independent judicial body.	Electoral Code, ASC/ECAP statutes, OSCE/ODIHR & EU EOM reports.
I2	Fairness of Decisions	Consistency and legal reasoning in adjudicative decisions.	Are complaint decisions impartial and legally reasoned?	0–25 - Arbitrary/partisan; 26–50 - Mixed; 51–75 - Mostly fair; 76–100 - Fully impartial and coherent.	ASC/ECAP rulings, observer evaluations.
I3	Transparency of the Process	Openness of proceedings and public access to information.	Are complaint procedures and decisions accessible to the public?	0–25 - Opaque; 26–50 - Partial disclosure; 51–75 - Regular publication; 76–100 - Full publication and open hearings.	Official websites, observation reports.
I4	Effectiveness of the Appeal Mechanism	Capacity of the mechanism to provide timely, enforceable remedies.	How effective is the mechanism in implementing corrective actions?	0–25 - Symbolic; 26–50 - Occasional remedies; 51–75 - Generally effective; 76–100 - Fully effective and enforced.	CEC/ECAP decisions, court rulings, observer data.
I5	Non-Political Influence	Degree of external (party/state) interference.	What is the perceived level of political pressure on decisions?	0–25 - High pressure; 26–50 - Moderate; 51–75 - Low; 76–100 - None.	V-Dem, PEI, survey data, OSCE/ODIHR reports.
I6	Timeliness of Resolution	Compliance with statutory deadlines.	Are complaints resolved within the prescribed timeframe?	0–25 - Chronic delays; 26–50 - Frequent delays; 51–75 - Mostly on time; 76–100 - Fully timely.	Electoral laws, observer timelines.
I7	Impact on Public Trust	Effect of complaint processes on citizen and party confidence in elections.	To what extent does the process enhance public trust in electoral integrity?	0–25 - Erodes trust; 26–50 - Neutral; 51–75 - Builds trust; 76–100 - Strongly reinforces trust.	PEI, domestic surveys, media analysis.

Appendix B

Illustrative Coding Entries and Documentary Evidence Used in Calculating EDMPI Values: Albania

Indicator Code	Score (0–100)	Evidence Summary / Quotation	Source Type	Citation
I1 Independence of Institutions	40.6	The appointment of the members of the Appeals and Sanctions Commission (ASC) continues to be the outcome of political negotiations between the two largest parties.	International observation report	OSCE/ODIHR Final Report, 2025, p. 18
I2 Fairness of Decisions	46.6	ASC decisions on parliamentary complaints were frequently dismissed on procedural grounds, without substantive reasoning.	Official decisions	ASC Decision 11/2025; ASC Decision 15/2025
I3 Transparency of Process	48.3	Hearings are not open to the public; decisions are limited to publication on the CEC website.	Observation report / CEC portal	OSCE/ODIHR 2025; CEC Albania Portal (2025)
I4 Effectiveness of Mechanism	41.8	Remedies rarely altered election outcomes; few sanctions were implemented.	Observation report	EU EOM Final Report, 2025, p. 24
I5 Non-Political Influence	46.2	“Perceptions of political pressure on ASC members remain high.”	Academic analysis	Kume & Lirëza (2022, p. 37)
I6 Timeliness of Resolution	67.0	Complaints are generally reviewed within 48 hours as required by law.	Legal framework/observer confirmation	Electoral Code Art. 145; OSCE/ODIHR 2025
I7 Impact on Public Trust	57.1	52% of surveyed voters expressed low confidence in electoral justice.	Survey/perception index	PEI 2025; V-Dem 2024

Illustrative Coding of Indicator Items

Indicator	Country	Evidence	Rationale	Score	Coder
Method of Appointment of Members	Albania (ASC)	Electoral Code of Albania	Members are appointed through a politically negotiated parliamentary process with limited safeguards for independence.	20.0	Authors
Method of Appointment of Members	Kosovo (ECAP)	Law on General Elections in Kosovo;	The appointment process includes judicial representation and clearer legal criteria, ensuring greater institutional independence.	67.5	The authors, together with an external independent researcher with expertise in electoral processes

Appendix C

Sensitivity Analysis of Indicator Weighting

The EDMPI index assigns equal weights to all indicators to avoid subjective prioritization among institutional dimensions. However, because different aspects of electoral dispute management may vary in their relative importance, a sensitivity analysis was conducted to assess whether alternative weighting assumptions would significantly alter the comparative findings.

Two alternative weighting scenarios were tested. In the first scenario, greater weight was assigned to indicators associated with institutional integrity (independence and procedural fairness). In the second scenario, greater emphasis was placed on operational performance indicators (timeliness and enforcement capacity). The purpose of this exercise was to evaluate the robustness of the overall comparison between Albania and Kosovo.

Sensitivity Analysis of EDMPI Scores Under Alternative Weighting Schemes

Country	Equal Weights	Integrity-Weighted Model	Efficiency-Weighted Model
Albania	49.5	47.8	51.1
Kosovo	64.7	66.1	62.5

The sensitivity analysis demonstrates that the overall ranking between the two countries remains stable under different weighting scenarios. Kosovo consistently outperforms Albania across all weighting models. Although the magnitude of the difference varies slightly depending on the weighting structure, the relative performance gap remains substantively unchanged.

These findings suggest that the EDMPI's comparative conclusions are robust to reasonable variations in indicator weighting, thereby reinforcing confidence in the index's validity.