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Information Note on the Congress' Fact-finding Mission to Albania (24 to 26 February 2016)

Monitoring Committee
Rapporteur¹ : Jos WIENEN, Netherlands (L, EPP-CCE)

Introduction

Pursuant to the Congress' Rules and Procedures adopted at the 29th Session, a Fact-finding Mission to Albania was carried out from 24 to 26 February 2016, in the framework of the Congress' post-electoral dialogue with the authorities and its mechanism to assess the situation of local and regional democracy in member states.

Further to the information provided in a letter of 27 October 2014 by the then Chair of the Albanian delegation to the Congress and at that time Mayor of the city of Tirana, Lulzim BASHA, also Head of the Democratic Party of Albania, to Congress' President Jean-Claude FRECON, in respect of possible consequences of the redrawing of the electoral borders and the decentralisation reform, the relevant bodies decided to organise a Fact-finding Mission after the local elections, which were held on 21 June 2015.

Headed by Jos WIENEN (Netherlands, EPP-CCE), Thematic Spokesperson on observation of local and regional elections, the Fact-finding delegation was composed of the President of the Local Chamber, Anders KNAPE (Sweden, EPP-CCE), Vice-President Barbara TOCE (Italy, SOC) and Stewart DICKSON (United Kingdom, ILDG), Rapporteur of the 2015 local elections, as well as members of the Congress' Secretariat including the acting Director Jean-Philippe BOZOULS. The delegation was also accompanied by the Congress' expert on electoral matters, Christina BINDER.

During its visit in Tirana, the delegation notably met with Bledar CUCI, Minister of State for Local Government Issues, Erion VELIAJ, Mayor of Tirana and Head of the Albanian delegation to the Congress, representatives of the Parliamentary opposition, Presidents of associations of local and regional authorities, as well as representatives of the Central Electoral Commission and domestic NGOs. The detailed programme can be found in the appendix.

1. L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions
EPP/CCE: European People's Party Group in the Congress
SOC: Socialist Group
ILDG: Independent Liberal and Democratic Group
ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists Group
NR: Members not belonging to a political group of the Congress

The meetings focused, in particular, on latest developments and challenges with regard to the implementation of the local government reform in Albania, further to the adoption of the Law on “Organisation and Functioning of Local Governance” which was enacted on 31 January 2016. The delegation also raised issues relating to the practical management of the newly formed Municipalities and implications for the political representation, further to recent changes of electoral boundaries. The Congress’ recommendations further to the observation of the 2015 local elections were also discussed by the delegation and its interlocutors.

The delegation wishes to thank all the interlocutors for their availability and readiness for an open dialogue with the Congress. The Congress wishes to convey special thanks to Mr Olsi DEKOVI, Head ad interim of the Council of Europe Office in Albania, and his staff for the support provided to this mission.

1. The situation of local and regional democracy in Albania in the context of the new territorial division and the current implementation of the decentralisation reform

1.1 The new legal framework

The legal framework related to local and regional democracy has been completely overhauled in the months preceding the delegation’s visit to Tirana. In this context, a choice has been made by the Albanian authorities to reform firstly the administrative-territorial structure of the country, the so-called “map”, before adopting concrete pieces of legislation on decentralisation. In principle, there has been a consensus between the political forces on the need of such a decentralisation reform. However, the method adopted created a fierce political debate, particularly crystallising around the new territorial division of the country.

First of all, Law no. 115/2014 on “the Administrative-territorial Division of Local Government Units in the Republic of Albania” was adopted on 31 July 2014 in a much polarised political environment. One of the major changes introduced by this Law was the downsizing of the number of Local Government Units (LGU) from 373 “*urban municipalities*” and “*communes*” to 61 new Municipalities, “*communes*” having been abolished. The Law was challenged by the Democratic Party to the Constitutional Court on the ground of a lack of consultation with local communities. The Constitutional Court eventually ruled in favour of the constitutionality of the Law but the controversy over the lack of consultation remained vivid in the statements of the opposition.²

The latest changes in the legal framework were introduced on 17 December 2015, through Law no. 139/2015 on “Organisation and Functioning of Local Governance”, which clearly puts the newly formed “Municipalities” at the core of local self-government. The Law defines the functions of Local Government Units, broadening significantly the scope of their competencies³. It also defines precisely the relations between the local authorities and the central Government as well as the status of local and regional elected officials.

However, the legal framework still misses an important piece of legislation related to local finance and local taxes and respective draft laws were under preparation at the time the delegation visited Tirana. Such laws are supposed to contain provisions in favour of local revenues, in addition to central Government’s transfers, and in particular provisions on tax collection and access to loans and credits.

2 In particular Lulzim BASHA, Head of the Democratic Party and former Mayor of Tirana, when he met the Congress’ delegation on 25 February 2016 in Tirana.

3 These new competencies include water supply and sewage, irrigation and drainage, local road infrastructure, forests and fire protection and pre-university education.

1.2. Financial and human resources

The proportion of resources allocated to local authorities has been raised from 2.2% of the GDP in 2015 to 3.2% in 2016, which is the largest budget ever allocated to local self-government in Albania. However, due to the delegation of new competencies and the new administrative-territorial structure, the 2016 budget does not correspond to a net increase of local authorities' resources. A system of equalisation of resources has been announced by the Government and is supposed to be based on the revenues collected through small business' taxes.⁴ However, the effectiveness of such equalisation process has been called into question.⁵

Competitive grants to finance specific projects at local level are attributed through the "Regional Development Fund" and cover a large number of competencies held by the local and regional authorities. However, according to Congress' interlocutors, a substantial part of these funds remain, de facto, central Government-controlled.⁶ In this context, the transparency of grants awarding process is a matter of concern because the "Regional Development Fund" is essentially managed by the central Government and thus suspected of political favouritism. Moreover, the criteria for grant awarding also include the number of potential beneficiaries of a project, which would automatically favour larger Municipalities.

Workforce reduction at local level apparently has been wide-spread after the 2015 local elections because the available resources do not allow for employing an adequate number of civil servants. Such cuts in civil servants' employment raise serious doubts as to whether Municipalities will be able to provide high level services to the citizens and achieve goals set by the central authorities in this respect. This potential problem is reinforced by a long-lasting habit of politically motivated employment which creates a high turnover of staff in case of a change in the municipal majority further to elections.

1.3. Current state of reform implementation

Despite current efforts to provide support to the newly elected representatives through the "Territorial Reform Implementation Agency", the implementation process at local level seems to be slow and at times cumbersome. Trainings have been organised both for local elected representatives and civil servants and some 8,000 other civil servants have been transferred from the central to the local level.⁷ However, confusion about competencies and financial resources still seem to be wide-spread among local elected officials, threatening the smooth and timely implementation of the reform.

The new administrative-territorial structure is also challenging related to the large size of the 61 newly established Municipalities. In particular, the amalgamation of both rural and urban territories that used to be administered separately creates concern with respect to the management of the rural territories. Such territories are now often further away from the decision-making centres because of the redrawing of administrative-territorial boundaries, thus preventing a real integration of all communities and the implementation of relevant services.

Practical management of the newly created LGUs during the transitional period proves to be complicated because some of the laws and by-laws related to crucial aspects of decentralisation, notably on fiscal decentralisation and on property taxes, are still under preparation or revision. In addition, there are budgetary uncertainties since the central authorities only released projection figures for the years 2016 to 2018 with regard to unconditional transfers and the allocation of resources related to the new competencies. Common problems of financial transition are also being

4 National crosscutting strategy for decentralisation and local governance (2015-2020), Council of Ministers – Minister of State for Local issues, Republic of Albania

5 According to Congress' interlocutors met on 25 February 2016 in Tirana.

6 According to Congress' interlocutors met on 25 February 2016 in Tirana, about 44% of the total funds allocated to the local and regional authorities by the central Government are actually distributed by the Regional Development Fund through conditional and competitive grants.

7 According to the Minister of State for Local Government Issues the Congress delegation met on 25 February 2016 in Tirana.

faced by the newly elected representatives such as unpaid bills and unknown debts of previous entities (“*communes*”) having been amalgamated through the new territorial division.

On-going reform discussions include also a possible reduction of the number of Regions (“*qarks*”) from currently 12 to 4, and their potential suppression raises concerns among regional elected officials, in particular with regard to the situation of rural and peripheral areas. In the critical transitional period, the overall set of competencies of the Regions is unclear, in particular regarding new delegated competences and the relations to the central Government in this respect. The coexistence of 4 governmental agencies in charge of regional development (which do not coincide with the existing Regions) is also an issue.

2. Further steps of democratisation at the grassroots’ level

2.1. Electoral reform

In order to take into account both the lessons learnt from the 2015 local elections and the new reality of local and regional authorities, a new bi-partisan Ad-hoc Parliamentary Committee for Election Reform has been established in January 2016. The amended Electoral Code should be adopted by the end of 2016 in order to be implemented for the 2017 Parliamentary elections. However, the Committee did not meet or agree on a work plan and priorities by the time the Congress’ delegation met its co-Chair in Tirana.⁸

The local elections organised on 21 June 2015 were the first to be held within the new administrative-territorial structure of the country and were monitored by a Congress’ election observation mission. The Congress’ delegation concluded that Election Day took place in an overall calm and orderly manner which constituted an important step towards normalisation, in terms of European standards. However, the high degree of politicisation of electoral bodies and inconsistencies, in particular related to the registration procedures, as well as irregularities prior to Election Day, undermined the electoral process as a whole.⁹

The co-Chair of the Ad-hoc Parliamentary Committee for Election Reform assured the delegation that both Congress’ and OSCE/ODIHR recommendations presented further to the 21 June 2015 local elections will be taken into consideration during the reform process and that the Council of Europe Venice Commission experts will be consulted. One of the main objectives of the electoral reform was to strengthen integrity and public confidence in the electoral process, in particular through de-politicisation of election administration bodies.

The Central Electoral Commission (CEC) of Albania is taking part in the electoral reform through the preparation of draft amendments to be submitted to the Ad-hoc Committee.¹⁰ However, the CEC does not seem to be considered as a key player in designing the reform which is unfortunate given the experience of CEC representatives in this field. *Vis-à-vis* the Congress’ delegation the CEC representative also acknowledged the importance of the role of (approximately 1 million) Albanians still included on voters’ lists (and thus entitled to vote in local elections if on E-Day in the country), despite living *de facto* since long time abroad. However, the CEC representative called into question possibilities to implement the Congress’ Recommendation on voters residing *de facto* abroad¹¹ due to specificities of the Albanian mind-set. Moreover, the quality of the registration system of residents in Albania was described as poor by the Congress’ interlocutors.

8 The Congress’ delegation met Bashkim FINO (Socialist Party), co-Chair of the Ad-hoc Parliamentary Committee for Election Reform and Alfred PEZA, member of the Committee (Socialist Party) in Tirana on 25 February 2016.

9 Document CPL/2015(29)2FINAL “Observation of local elections in Albania (21 June 2015)”, adopted on 21 October 2015.

10 According to Mr. Denar BIBA, member of the Central Electoral Commission, the Congress delegation met on 26 February 2016 in Tirana.

11 Congress’ Recommendation 369 (2015) on “Electoral lists and voters residing *de facto* abroad” adopted on 25 March 2015:

“7. The Congress recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite the Governments of member states to ensure that:
b. the right of other persons to so participate,³ in accordance with the respective constitutional order and international legal obligations, is implemented with the necessary safeguards, so that effective electoral management, the integrity and transparency of electoral processes and the prevention of fraud or manipulation during local and regional elections are guaranteed.”

2.2. Drawing of electoral borders

The allegations of gerrymandering and malapportionment of mandates brought forward by the opposition prior to the 2015 local elections refer to a possible breach of the principle of equality in voting power as one component of the principle of equal suffrage. Equal suffrage means that the vote of one elector should be equal to the other and that the drawing of electoral boundaries and the method of allocating the votes should not create discrimination.¹²

International standards and best practices in electoral matters require that seats are evenly distributed between the constituencies and this applies also, with certain reservations, to local and regional elections.¹³ It entails a balanced distribution of seats among constituencies on one of the following criteria: population, number of resident nationals (including minors), number of registered voters, and possibly the number of people actually voting. Also a combination of these criteria may be envisaged. In addition, geographical and administrative factors, possibly even historical boundaries, may be taken into consideration.

Also, certain standards and best practices apply to the drawing of the boundaries of electoral constituencies. Redistricting should be done impartially.¹⁴ It has to be transparent and allow for public information and participation.¹⁵

Furthermore, majority (or plurality) systems seem to be more susceptible to gerrymandering which consists in favouring one party by means of an artificial delimitation of constituencies. Although Albania uses a proportional electoral system, the opposition claimed that in several places an artificial delimitation of constituencies occurred in the course of the redrawing of the electoral borders and that these new boundaries were decided unilaterally by the Government, without proper consultation of

12 According to the General Comment on Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) of the Human Rights Committee (HRC): "The principle of one person, one vote, must apply and within the framework of each State's electoral system, the vote of one elector should be equal to the vote of another. The drawing of electoral boundaries and the method of allocating the votes should not distort the distribution of voters or discriminate against any group and should not exclude or restrict unreasonably the right of citizens to choose their representatives freely". General Comment No. 25: The right to participate in public affairs, voting rights and the right of equal access to public service (Art 25, 12 July 1996, para. 21). See also HRC, *Mátyus v. Slovakia* No 923/2000, where the HRC applied according criteria to the context of the 1998 municipal elections in a Slovakian town and found a violation of Article 25 CCPR. According to the applicant, who was one of the candidates, the number of representatives in each district was not proportional to the number of inhabitants. In the voting district where he was a candidate, one representative corresponded to 1,400 residents whereas in another voting district this ratio was only one per 200 residents. The Government of Slovakia even acknowledged that there was an error in the setting up of electoral districts, and the Constitutional Court of Slovakia had found that this was incompatible with the equality of election rights under the Slovakian Constitution. In light of these facts, the HRC concluded that the right of the applicant to be elected by equal suffrage had been violated. (See for further reference also M. Nowak, *UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. CCPR Commentary*, 2nd rev. edition, 2005, 582). In respect of recent amendments to the Election Code of Georgia, the Constitutional Court, in a judgement of 28 May 2015, found that paragraphs 1 and 2 of Article 110 of the Election Code contradict Articles 14 and paragraph 1 of Article 28 of the Georgian Constitution and thus violate the principle of equal suffrage.

13 According to the Venice Commission's Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters (adopted at its 52nd Session, October 2002); see more generally Art. 25 CCPR; see also Art. 3 of Protocol 1 to the ECHR. In view of the latter's reference to "legislature", it applies only exceptionally to local and regional elections, namely when a body has sufficient competences that are typical for a legislative body, in particular the competence to enact laws. For further reference see C. Grabenwarter, *European Convention on Human Rights, Commentary*, P1-3, para 4 (p. 402). See also the Existing Commitments for Democratic Elections in OSCE Participating States, which establish under the heading of "Equality: Constituencies and Districting": "3.2. The delineation of constituencies in which elections are conducted must preserve the equality of voting rights by providing approximately the same ratio of voters to elected representatives for each district. Existing administrative divisions or other relevant factors (including of a historical, demographic, or geographical nature) may be reflected in election districts, provided the design of the districts is consistent with the equality of voting and fair representation for different groups in society." (OSCE/ODIHR, Existing Commitments for Democratic Elections in OSCE Participating States, 2003, 3.2. (p. 14).)

14 According to the Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters: "2.2. ...vii. When constituency boundaries are redefined – which they must be in a single-member system – it must be done: impartially; without detriment to national minorities; ..."

15 The Existing Commitments for Democratic Elections in OSCE Participating States require respectively that "3.3. When necessary, redrawing of election districts shall occur according to a predictable timetable through a method prescribed by law and should reflect reliable census or voter registration figures. Redistricting should also be performed well in advance of elections, be based on transparent proposals, and allow for public information and participation." OSCE/ODIHR, Existing Commitments for Democratic Elections in OSCE Participating States, 2003, 3.3. (p. 14).

the opposition. According to the opposition, also, the boundaries of electoral districts were drawn in a politically biased way, in support of political alliances.¹⁶

Accusations of gerrymandering have been consistently rejected by the Government and Congress' interlocutors maintained their rejection of these accusations during the meetings in Tirana. Still, certain electoral district boundaries seem somehow strangely distorted (notably in Tirana and Shkodra Municipalities); without apparent empirical reason for the "malformation" of the respective electoral districts.

The new Law on "Organisation and Functioning of Local Governance" contains provisions on territorial reorganisation of an existing administrative-territorial division which require taking into account the opinion of the population that lives in the respective local government unit. Municipal and regional councils as well as their respective heads are also required written opinions on foreseen changes of boundaries. The new Law therewith, positively, incorporates certain procedural safeguards for an inclusive process of drawing future boundaries of electoral districts.

2.3. Consultative Council of Local Authorities

According to the Minister of State for Local Government Issues, the Consultative Council of Local Authorities provided by the Law on "Organisation and Functioning of Local Governance" will be set up by April 2016. A specific by-law still needs to be adopted for all associations of local self-government to participate in such Council.

Regarding the potential merge of the two existing national associations of local authorities, discussions are on-going and particularly encouraged by international donors. The ground for this division being political, a possible merger on technical grounds needs to be further negotiated. The participation of the bi-partisan Association of Regional Authorities in the Consultative Council is also essential to bring the discussion with the central Government to the next level.

2.4. Fight against corruption and political patronage at local and regional level

Corruption remains a major concern in Albania and raises questions with regard to the new competences and financial resources at local level further to the decentralisation reform. An anti-corruption policy package containing specific provisions regarding the local level is currently under preparation.¹⁷ The package is aimed at tackling corruption at the lower level, especially through investigation on suspected local elected officials and protection of citizens who report corruption practices.

The 2015 local elections were characterised, as it is well known during electoral periods in Albania, by political patronage which relates to the principle of rewarding electoral support in the form of offering job opportunities in public administrations or state-affiliated businesses. This usually results in a high turnover of staff and weakens the expertise at disposal at local level, thus negatively impacting the provision of services to citizens. Initiatives have been taken in some places to select local civil servants on their own competencies and not on their political affiliation but there is also room for improvement in this respect.

3. Conclusions

The situation after the 2015 local elections and the implementation of the decentralisation reform in Albania were at the centre of the Fact-finding Mission carried out by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities from 24 to 26 February 2016, in the framework of its post-electoral dialogue and monitoring of the situation of local and regional democracy in Council of Europe member countries.

With regard to the current state of reform implementation the Congress delegation welcomed, notably, the adoption of Law 139/2015 on the "Organisation and Functioning of Local Government" and heard that further laws and by-laws, in particular with regard fiscal decentralisation, were under preparation or revision. At the same time, the delegation received reports on considerable transitional problems in

¹⁶ Reference especially to Shkodra Municipality – to shift the electoral balance in favour of the ruling majority; and Tirana Municipality – to reduce chances of the opposition to win (see Albania. Local Government under Attack, Part C, annex of the letter addressed by Lulzim BASHA to Congress' President Jean-Claude FRECON in October 2014).

¹⁷ According to the Minister of State for Local Government Issues the Congress delegation met on 25 February 2016 in Tirana.

the newly formed Municipalities – mainly due to a lack of information about the new competences, considerable workforce reduction, budgetary uncertainties and inherited financial burdens at local level.

In respect of the electoral reform to be undertaken by Albania, the delegation was informed that an Ad-hoc Parliamentary Committee was to implement recommendations, notably resulting from the reports by OSCE/ODIHR and the Congress, further to the observation of the local elections held on 21 June 2015. This would include, in particular, measures to strengthen integrity and public confidence in the electoral process, in particular through de-politicisation of election administration bodies. However, with regard to the issue of approximately 1 million voters who remain on the electoral lists despite residing *de facto* abroad, the Congress regrets that its recommendation 369(2015) has not been addressed by the Albanian authorities so far, while, at the same time, the quality of the Albanian registration system of residents has been described as poor.

Concerning the redrawing of the electoral borders, the opposition maintained vis-à-vis the delegation its accusations of gerrymandering and malapportionment of mandates and brought to its attention certain electoral district boundaries which seem to be strangely distorted, without apparent empirical reason for this “malformation”. Also, against the background of the decision of the Constitutional Court on the constitutionality of the respective Law, the controversy between Government and opposition over the lack of consultation related to the new territorial division remained an issue during the Congress’ Fact-finding mission. However, the new Law on the “Organisation and Functioning of Local Government” incorporates certain procedural safeguards for an inclusive process of the drawing of future territorial boundaries. The number of councillors elected at municipal and regional level is also determined according to the size of the local population, to avoid any problem with regard to malapportionment of mandates. These procedural safeguards are thus welcome by the delegation.

In conclusion, in the context of the envisaged electoral reform, the Congress’ delegation encourages the Albanian authorities to ensure an inclusive process involving all relevant stakeholders in order to achieve tangible progress and political consensus on this reform. This is of particular relevance in respect of de-politicisation of the whole electoral administration, the right for independent candidates to stand on an equal basis in elections and the question of voter registration at local level, in the light of the Congress’ Recommendation on Electoral lists and Voters residing *de facto* abroad.

Based on the findings of the present report, further to Resolution 388(2015) the delegation recommends the Congress’ Monitoring Committee to assess, in the framework of its forthcoming monitoring visit, the implementation of the administrative-territorial reform in Albania further to the finalisation of the technical amalgamation process currently under way in the newly formed Municipalities. This Monitoring mission should be organised after the next general elections to be held in 2017.

APPENDIX

**CONGRESS' FACT-FINDING MISSION to ALBANIA
24-26 February 2016**

DELEGATION AND PROGRAMME

Congress' Thematic Spokesperson on observation of local and regional election and Head of Delegation:

Mr Jos WIENEN, EPP-CCE, L, Netherlands (1st Vice-President of the Congress' Monitoring Committee, Chair of the Council for Democratic Elections/Venice Commission)

Congress' Vice-Presidents:

Mr Anders KNAPE, EPP-CCE, L, Sweden (President of the Local Chamber)

Ms Barbara TOCE, SOC, L, Italy

Congress' Rapporteur on the observation of the 2015 local elections:

Mr Stewart DICKSON, ILDG, R, United Kingdom

Secretariat:

Mr Jean-Philippe BOZOULS, Director a.i. of the Congress

Ms Renate ZIKMUND, Deputy Head of Department of Statutory Activities

Ms Martine ROUDOLFF, Assistant

Ms Ségolène TAVEL, Assistant

Expert:

Ms Christina BINDER, Congress' Expert on observation of local and regional elections and international law

Advisor:

Ms Eleonore PARK-EDSTRÖM, Senior Advisor to Mr Anders KNAPE

Wednesday, 24 February 2016

Arrival of the Congress' Delegation in Tirana (various times)

Evening briefing for the Delegation

Time and venue: Rogner Hotel Tirana

19:00 Briefing Mr Olsi DEKOVI, Head of the CoE office in Tirana – Rogner cafeteria

Thursday, 25 February 2016

- 07:45 – 08:45** Breakfast briefing for the delegation
- 09:00 – 10:00** **Minister of State for Local Government Issues, Mr Bledi CUCI**
Venue: Council of Ministers Building
- 11:00 – 12:00** **Mr Gjergj BOJAXHI, New Albanian Party**
Venue: CoE office
- 12:15 – 13:15** **President of the Association for Local Autonomy in Albania (ALAA) and Mayor of Tirana, Mr Erjon VELIAJ**
Venue: Tirana Municipality
- 13:15 – 14:30** Lunch
- 14:45 – 15:45** **Chairman of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Local Government, Chairman of the ad-hoc Committee for Electoral Reform, Mr Bashkim FINO, and Member of the Sub-Committee on Local Government, Mr Alfred PEZA**
Venue: Assembly
- 16:00 – 16:50** **President of the Association of Albanian Municipalities, Mrs Voltana ADEMI**
Venue: CoE office
- 17:00 – 17:50** **Head of the Democratic Party, Mr Lulzim BASHA**
Venue: Democratic Party Headquarters
- 18:00 – 19:00** **Domestic NGOs**
Venue: CoE office
1. Alba Dakoli WILSON, Foundation for Local Autonomy and Governance (FLAG)
 2. Mirela ARQIMANDRITI, Coalition for Free and Fair Elections and for Sustainable Democracy

Friday, 26 February 2016

08:45 – 09:45 **President of the Albanian Association of Regions, Mr Aldrin DALIPI**
Venue: CoE office

10:00 – 11:00 **Member of the Central Electoral Commission of Albania, Mr. Denar BIBA**
Venue: CEC premises

Departure of the Congress' Delegation in Tirana (various times)