



IFES supports citizens' right to participate in free and fair elections. Our independent expertise strengthens electoral systems and builds local capacity to promote sustainable democracy.



IFES in North Macedonia

Overview

North Macedonia has made considerable democratic progress since its independence, as evidenced by its active and diverse civil society, legal system reforms and strengthened legislative branch. In supporting North Macedonia's ongoing democratic development, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) delivers targeted assistance to both state bodies and nongovernmental stakeholders to improve electoral practice and citizens' engagement. IFES is currently implementing two long-term projects and one short-term intervention. The first is the five-year "Support to Electoral Reforms in North Macedonia" program, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, which strengthens election institutions' conduct of fair and efficient election processes, helps political parties to formulate issue-focused platforms and empowers citizens to hold political parties and elected officials accountable. The second is the three-year "North Macedonia Electoral Support Activity" funded by the United States Agency for International Development, which provides long-term electoral technical support to election management bodies (EMBs) and facilitates discussion and increases key stakeholders' awareness of electoral issues. Lastly, IFES has been contracted by Chemonics International to facilitate a cybersecurity assistance project.

Support to Electoral Reforms in North Macedonia

Building upon its unique position and experience in conducting electoral assistance in the country and in partnership with the National Youth Council of Macedonia (NYCM), IFES focuses on further strengthening technical and human capacities and resources involved in all levels of electoral processes and making elections more credible, inclusive and representative. In designing and implementing activities, IFES and NYCM are working with a range of stakeholders – civil society organizations (CSOs), political parties, public authorities and citizens – to improve their knowledge and understanding of the electoral process and international good practices. While working toward project outcomes, IFES collaborates closely with the State Election Commission (SEC), lower levels of election administration – Municipal Election Commissions (MECs) and Electoral Boards – political parties, other public authorities and CSOs both at national and local levels.

Development of Sustainable Policies, Systems and Tools

To help election administrators become more effective and conduct better election processes, IFES will assist the SEC in enhancing existing election management systems and tools and introducing new ones. This will also include educational materials and methodologies to increase efficiency and reliability of election administration.

Support to Political Parties

IFES is working with a range of North Macedonian political parties in developing resources and capacities for adopting policy-based programs and engaging with local communities, including women, youth and other marginalized groups. Furthermore, by creating opportunities for structured dialogue and interaction between citizens and political parties and government officials, as well as increasing capacity to monitor their performance, the project will advance political accountability and inclusive election processes.

Civic Education and Engagement

Through the engagement of a number of stakeholders and local communities, IFES will contribute to the design and delivery of civic education programs responsive to citizens' needs and priorities. IFES and NYCM will also train and support a group of local community mobilizers to develop skills in political participation and community engagement, and create opportunities for greater interaction between elected officials, government representatives and constituents.

North Macedonia Electoral Support Activity

The Electoral Support Activity continues IFES' dedicated long-term electoral technical support to EMBs. Specifically, IFES provides technical assistance to the EMBs in administering electoral processes through customized training of election officials and provision of expertise in key areas of electoral reform. The primary focus has been to support election management and administration, especially for the country's 2018 referendums, 2019 presidential election and 2020 parliamentary elections. One key element of IFES programming is assisting the country's political finance oversight institution to streamline political finance regulation best practices and encouraging further reforms.

Voter Information Management System

This VIMS is a long-term, sustainable solution that will allow the SEC to manage the voter register and fulfill its obligations under the Electoral Code, as well as to synchronize data between the Ministry of Interior and the SEC's Voter Register, update voter information records, register new voters, track changes made to records for auditing purposes and generate accurate voters lists per electoral district, municipality or polling station. During elections, IFES also helps add photos and local languages to the voter lists.

Training and Capacity Building

To further enhance capacity, IFES supports all levels of EMBs by increasing knowledge and training abilities and improving training materials and delivery. For example, IFES assisted in updating and disseminating poll worker training materials ahead of the presidential, local and parliamentary elections. Further, IFES will improve electoral stakeholders' knowledge and expertise of international commitments and practices in election management and administration.

Institutional Development of SEC

To further SEC performance and effectiveness, IFES works with the SEC to assess relevant legal and institutional frameworks and realize its full potential and competency through desk research, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and analysis involving all levels of election administration, including SEC regional offices. The results serve as a basis for SEC to revise its structure and staffing needs to better respond to the electoral environment.

Innovation and Modernization of SEC

IFES assists the SEC in developing and updating innovative tools to foster more transparent and effective interaction between the SEC, political parties and voters, such as an out-of-country registration application, a tracking system for processing complaints and appeals and a mechanism for registering candidates. IFES also provides tailored support to the SEC in using existing tools and systems to implement electoral operations, including maintaining the voter lists and aligning them with the information and communication technology national strategy.

Monitoring and Analysis of Political Finance

To ensure that oversight bodies and electoral stakeholders fulfill their international commitments and practices, IFES works closely with key bodies such as the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, Ministry of Finance and CSOs to increase their capacity to monitor political party funding and spending and increase transparency and accountability in public spending.

Increasing Cybersecurity

Under this initiative, IFES is working to increase the SEC's cybersecurity. This includes an in-depth cybersecurity assessment, which will identify needs, gaps and key vulnerabilities in the SEC's cyber-integrity process and mechanisms designed to respond to cyberthreats. Following the assessment, IFES will deploy its innovative "Introduction to Electoral Technology and Cyber-Hygiene" course, which is a staple of its programming across Europe and Eurasia. This course will build capacity among SEC members, its Regional Offices and MECs to prevent cyber incidents and respond effectively to threats. In conjunction with this course, IFES will also deliver advanced cybersecurity training for information technology specialists, furthering institutional capacity in this field. This assistance will help strengthen the SEC's cyber preparedness for future elections, beginning with the 2020 parliamentary elections.

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