



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 the Western Balkans

Overview

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems' (IFES) programming in the Western Balkans is diverse yet customized to each country's specific assistance needs. IFES provides traditional "core" support with innovative, cutting-edge programming for integral, democratic elections and citizen engagement. Addressing process threats, particularly disinformation and cybersecurity, has become a priority for IFES, as countries in the region increasingly face foreign and domestic interference. Working in politically evolving environments, IFES assists in reforming electoral legal frameworks, conducts training for election management bodies (EMBs) and helps develop professional judiciaries to strengthen election dispute resolution.

IFES also works to improve electoral integrity, strengthen and enforce political finance regulations and promote inclusivity in decision-making processes by emphasizing the equal rights of all citizens, prioritizing gender equality and inclusion of persons with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities and youth. The region continues to experience nationalist politics and is locked in an internal – and external – struggle to define geopolitical orientation. These realities make it imperative that IFES provides targeted, impactful assistance, allowing voters to access decision-making processes without malign influence from foreign or domestic actors.

Programs

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Global Elections and Political Transitions "Catalyzing Cross-Party Initiative" program provides targeted electoral assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) to encourage effective and inclusive election administration and management in line with international best practices. Through a Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) Elections and Political Transitions award, IFES is implementing innovative programming to address the needs of the Central Election Commission of BiH and other election stakeholders. In November 2017, IFES conducted an abuse of state resources (ASR) assessment that initiated discussions on improving anti-corruption policymaking among and within political parties. The ASR assessment report provided recommendations to strengthen the legal framework, emphasizing on the rights and responsibilities of civil servants, explicitly regulating the use of state funds and other resources, enhancing mandates of oversight and enforcement bodies and creating incentives for improved enforcement. In 2018, IFES led a follow-up visit to discuss the ASR recommendations with stakeholders ahead of the 2018 general elections.

In 2019, IFES completed an assessment of the voter registration process in BiH in response to the challenges in voter registration during the October 2018 elections, evaluating key challenges and constraints. The assessment report provided an outline of the status, issues and considerations related to voter registration, and presented a series of recommendations for consideration in the development of plans for improvements. IFES continues to deliver activities to improve the voter registration process, political finance regulations and the data integrity of the voter list.

IFES is implementing an additional project through 2023, "Supporting Political Pluralism and Good Governance Processes in BiH," that institutes a range of activities. IFES is reviewing the electoral legal framework to identify key areas of reform and is supporting the Central Election Commission to strengthen the integrity of the electoral process. Additionally, IFES will deploy its new, innovative programming on media and technology, including a strategy to combat disinformation in elections, address hate speech targeting marginalized groups and promote cybersecurity in the electoral process.



Kosovo

IFES provided support for genuine and democratic elections in Kosovo from 1998-2019, focusing on technical election assistance, political finance monitoring, public outreach, civil society work and civic education. When Kosovo declared independence in 2008, election management capabilities were transferred from international institutions to the Central Election Commission and the Election Complaints and Appeals Panel. The recently completed USAID Elections and Political Transitions “Strengthening Elections Administration Activity” supported institutions to efficiently and independently accomplish their roles and effectively conduct local and parliamentary elections, with special attention to inclusive, robust and credible electoral processes.

North Macedonia

IFES provides technical assistance to the State Election Commission (SEC) in administering electoral processes through targeted training of election officials and provision of expertise in key areas of the electoral reform process. IFES is currently implementing two complementary programs in North Macedonia. The five-year “Support to Electoral Reforms in North Macedonia” program, funded by the Swiss Development Agency, is designed to improve election institutions’ conduct of fair and efficient election processes, help political parties to formulate issue-focused platforms and empower citizens to hold political parties and elected officials accountable.

IFES’ USAID-funded three-year program, “North Macedonia Electoral Support Activity,” provides long-term technical support to EMBs. The primary focus is to support election management and administration, specifically for the country’s 2018 national referendum, the 2019 presidential election and 2020 local and national elections. One key element of this project is assisting the country’s political finance oversight institution to streamline political finance regulation best practices and encourage further reforms.

Serbia

Under the recently initiated USAID “Strengthening Political Process Accountability” project, IFES will implement a series of activities focused on the ASR, political financing and election dispute resolution targeting members of civil society and the media. In addition, IFES will engage election officials to enhance the integrity and transparency of the electoral processes in Serbia through monitoring, civic engagement and improvement of the overall electoral system. IFES will also assist in building the capacity for election management and administration including support to public communication and voter outreach, accessibility and other technical areas. IFES efforts are currently focused on upcoming parliamentary elections currently scheduled for spring 2020.

Combating Corruption in Southern Europe

The United States Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs has provided a three-year award to IFES for “Effective Combat Against Corruption: Supporting Stakeholders in Implementing Anti-Corruption Standards,” to help improve efforts in European partner countries to identify priority anti-corruption measures and assist in implementing reforms. This program encourages cross-border information exchange and knowledge building to support regional anti-corruption networks.

Stay connected through [www.Facebook.com/IFES1987](https://www.facebook.com/IFES1987) and Twitter [@IFES_Europe](https://twitter.com/IFES_Europe).