

Appeal for a Comprehensive Electoral Reform

Tirana, 21.01.2016. The Coalition for Free Elections and Fair Elections and for Sustainable Democracy (CFFE) is actively monitoring the latest actions to start the electoral reform in Albania.

CFFE welcomes and congratulates the decision of the Parliament for the establishment of the ad-hoc commission for the electoral reform. Despite the commission's bipartisan nature, in agreement with other domestic and international actors, we expect the commission to function impartially in order for it to draft a reform that goes beyond the specific interests of both parties. Consequently, we invite the two major parties to play a constructive role along the entire process.

CFFE urges the intensification of efforts to start as soon as possible with the work on the electoral reform in order to avoid the adjustment of the reform to the specific needs of the parties for the general elections 2017. So far, every electoral process in Albania has been preceded by either formal or substantial changes in the Electoral Code, thus reducing citizens' trust in the sustainability and fairness of the electoral rules in place. The changes that will be proposed by this reform should be approved and enforced, in accordance with international standards, a year prior to the next elections differently from happened with the last changes in the Electoral Code, which entered into force on 1 April 2015 less than 3 months prior to the elections of 21 June 2015 .

CFFE invites the ad-hoc commission on the electoral reform, political parties and all stakeholders that are interested in the reform's progress to consult the OSCE/ODIHR's reports, Venice Commission's recommendations, the CFFE's final reports on the 2013 general elections and the 2015 local elections and their respective recommendations as well as other civil society organizations suggestions regarding to the electoral law.

In drafting the reform, CFFE invites the ad-hoc commission to take into consideration this list of topics, which is not exhaustive but highlights some of the most pressing issues faced during the electoral processes in Albania:



- To depoliticize the electoral administrative structures, starting from CEC, as a way to increase the efficiency, independence, impartiality and the quality of their work prior, during and after the election day;
- To further regulate the pre-election period, the electoral campaign, the rights and obligations of the parties, as well as to emphasize the penalties for violations;
- To increase the legal measures regarding the electoral campaign financing, transparency of funding sources of political parties and the monitor of the use of public funds in this context;
- To guarantee the right to vote for those categories that so far have been indirectly deprived of this right, such as: persons with disabilities, the Roma and Egyptian community, Albanian emigrants living abroad as well as foreigners resident in Albania who meet certain conditions;
- To increase the participation of women as voters and representatives by improving the legal qualifications on gender quotas and by sanctioning by law the participation of women in electoral administration structures;
- To reflect on the currently used method for the vote counting process, which constitute one of the biggest obstacles in issuing election results in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Code and within a suitable timeframe, in order to avoid prolonging the process beyond any reasonable standards.

The Coalition for Free and Fair Elections and for Sustainable Democracy (CFFE) is an independent, non-partisan organization established to promote civic participation for sustainable democracy and monitoring of the electoral process. CFFE focuses on issues that influence the upholding of human rights, gender equality and the rights of people with disability. CFFE consists of 30 partner organizations and hundreds of Albanian citizens who volunteer their time to CFFE's efforts and actions since 2013.

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