

STATEMENT

”The Electoral Reform serving the Aim of Free and Fair Elections”

Tiranë, 24.05.2016. The Coalition for Free and Fair Elections and for Sustainable Democracy (CFFE) continues to actively monitor the latest developments on the electoral reform in Albania.

The meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee on Electoral Reform have been conducted, so far without the participation of local civil society organizations. Moreover, although the initial three-month period for the completion of the work of the Committee is coming to an end, there has been no discussion yet on the modalities of public consultations and open meetings that were foreseen in the Decision for the creation of the Ad Hoc Committee on Electoral Reform.

The Committee does not have a page to display its work for all interested stakeholders that are following the process of the electoral reform. The only available information in the page of the Albanian Parliament, regards the composition of the Committee.¹ This page lacks any information on the work plan, work conduct and records of meetings as well as on studies or proposals from other actors and interested stakeholders.

CFFE calls on the Committee to urgently approve adequate rules for the participation of other actors in the process, including CEC, based on a clear, transparent and non-bureaucratic working methodology, which comprises accountability mechanisms. The electoral reform cannot be considered only as a narrow interest of the political parties anymore. Instead, this reform is of broad public interest. The very fate and level of democracy in Albania depend on it. As a result, the request of civil society organizations for participation and inclusiveness is not only legitimate but represents a duty to be fulfilled by the Committee. CFFE welcomes the orientation of the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Electoral Reform by the recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR report, but thinks that the Committee should also take into consideration the recommendations coming from local civil society organizations which have actively monitored electoral processes in Albania.

Based on media reporting, CFFE has taken note that the representatives of the opposition in the Committee have presented their platform for the electoral reform. The Committee has not yet made this document available to the public. CFFE also notes that the representatives of the majority have not yet reacted to this platform and neither have they proposed a similar document from their side. CFFE notes that in its last meeting, the Committee has discussed in length about the use of technology in the upcoming elections, which is being considered for application throughout the whole voting and counting processes. The use of technology is being considered as the solution to the problems regarding the election administration procedures, such as the reduction of conflictuality among parties as well as the elimination of bad electoral practices.

CFFE welcomes the attempts to modernize the process through the use of technology. Nevertheless, CFFE would like to publicly express its serious doubt that the overrating of the use of technology in the voting and counting processes threatens to leave unresolved the acute

¹ <https://www.parlament.al/atribut/komisionet/komisione-te-posacme/komisioni-per-reformen-zgjedhore/>



problems caused to elections by the extreme politicization of the electoral administration and the toleration of bad, manipulative and illegal practices that have been noted in the past. When successful, technology brings revolution, but nevertheless it can neither be considered an electoral reform nor represent the solution to all electoral problems in Albania, especially when it is expected to be used and/or controlled by the politicized structures of the electoral commissions.

In introducing and debating on technology, political parties have clear party positions. While asking for the discussion on the use of technology to be led by the general public interest, CFFE poses some question to the Committee for public clarification:

1. What is the eventual impact that technology is expected to have on voters electoral behavior?
2. How are voters going to be convinced that the use of technology will not affect their vote's secrecy?
3. To what extent is independent voting guaranteed if voters do not know how to use technology and will ask assistance in executing their vote? How is family voting going to be avoided?
4. What is the probability that the losing political forces will not use the justification that technology was manipulated?
5. Has there been any analysis on the advantages and disadvantages of the use of technology in other countries that have invested public money for innovation in electoral processes?

Furthermore, CFFE asks the Committee to discuss the new technology in public meetings and to inform the public of the legal, organizational and administrative measures that are to be adopted should the use of technology in the next elections fail.

The public opinion and civil society ask from the Committee assurance that the next elections will be free and fair, despite the use of technology in voting.

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. For more information please visit www.kzln.org.al and/or contact by e-mail: kzln@kzln.org.al

