# A STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR THE CENTRAL ELECTIONS COMMISSION OF ALBANIA

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**A strategic planning for the Central Election Commission of Albania, 2022–2026**

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## Foreword from the State Election Commissioner

The success of a strategic plan depends on many factors, but the key is the solid institutional commitment. Question marks are normal reactions when the work on a strategic plan begins and they are quite understandable because the strategy aims to change or fix a certain situation. But a genuine institutional commitment is a guarantee that the strategic plan will transform the institution and make it more capable of serving.

A bottom-up strategy is also crucial for a successful strategic plan. While we were invested in drafting the strategic plan of the Central Election Commission, we constantly tried not to leave this initiative as a theoretical exercise, and not be able to have a real impact on the activity of the institution. If the goals, actions, and activities derive from internal proposals and are further improved, the chances for a successful implementation and for a real continuation are much higher.

All the links involved in consolidating this strategy have been shown to be quite realistic. Strategic plans often compile lists of extremely interesting initiatives that can hardly be implemented, given the available financial resources or even other factors.

What we guarantee for the future as the Central Election Commission is that the latter will retain full ownership of the process, even beyond the drafting phase, and that there will be functional internal mechanisms to guide the implementation, follow-up, and final evaluation phase.

This strategy is a key tool for the Central Election Commission that will improve the way we achieve our institutional goals. After all, a strategy is not just a document. In fact, it is a list of tasks, objectives, and processes which, beyond the final result, consists of a series of activities and indicators, completely measurable and real.

Greetings,
**Ilirjan Celibashi**
State Election Commissioner

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## Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ASPA | Albanian School of Public Administration |
| CEAZ | Commission of Electoral Administration Zone |
| CEC | Central Elections Commission |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| DADSIT | Department of Data Administration and IT Systems |
| EA | Election Administration |
| HR | Human Resources |
| IT | Information and Technology |
| KQZ | Central Election Commission (in Albanian language) |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organisation |
| PS | Polling Station |
| NAS | National Accounting Standards |
| SWOT | Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats |
| ToRs | Terms of Reference |
| ToT | Training of Trainers |

## 1. Introduction to the Strategic Planning of the Albanian Central Elections Commission

After the parliamentary elections of April 2021, the Albanian Central Elections Commission (CEC), with the support of the Council of Europe, started the preparation of a strategic planning for the improvement of CEC tasks and for better delivery of elections.

The strategic planning intends to guide the CEC' efforts and improve the way of achieving its **institutional goals**. It is a rather a process than a document in the sense that, beyond the final outcome consisting in a set of activities and indicators, the strategic planning enhances a process that makes the entity think about itself.

The strategic planning was conducted in two steps and in close cooperation with the CEC staff involving all Directorates (Legal and Election Documentation Directorate, Communication Department, Spokesperson, Department of Data Administration and Information and Technology (IT) Systems, Directorate of Financial Control and Internal Audit, Budget and Finance Directorate, Directorate of Electoral Commissions and Materials, Directorate of Human Resources).

First, a kick-off meeting was organised gathering all the CEC Directorates together with the external consultant. The meeting intended to make everybody aware of what a strategic planning is, what expectations have to be reasonably foreseen and, in the end, to have all interest parties on board and aligned.

Second, two templates were distributed to all Directorates: An analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) providing for useful leads on areas to work on, initiatives to enhance capabilities and ways to address threats and a table where activities for the strategic planning had to be indicated. The table was divided into different parameters: goals, actions, activities and indicators. While actions reflect large areas covered by a given Directorate, every

action is broken down into different concrete activities and every activity is linked to specific indicators, which are key components of the strategic planning. Subsequently, meetings were held with all Directorates to complete the SWOT analysis and the table.

## 2. Strategic Planning process: main findings and recommendations

The CEC has nowadays a highly committed staff capable to undertake difficult tasks under stressful scenarios. Both the strategic planning, which is an activity that requires a certain introspection from every Directorate and the ability to establish new innovative avenues, and the dialogues with the relevant persons in charge reflected that a robust baseline exists for the further implementation of strategic planning activities, which always requires high professional standards.

There is however a structural deficit that goes beyond certain institutional efforts and the willingness of improvement coming from individuals and units, which in general are not able to overcome such more general barriers. Some key basic factors (e.g., lack of resources, delayed budget allocations, last-minute legal changes, changing leaderships, poor strategic management) prevent the CEC from delivering elections in a more efficient way. Having this in mind, the strategic planning does not discover unexpected issues. It rather reinforces the necessity to implement mid- and long-term activities capable to invert the current situation.

While the CEC is a single public entity and delivers elections as a global output, its units deal with very different topics, and they have therefore different needs. While some common concerns exist, the strategic planning combines both general and particular approaches for the different Directorates.

The strategic planning proposes specific actions to be undertaken over the next years and such initiatives are customised to the needs of the overall institution and the relevant units.

It combines two approaches:

- Findings and recommendations which could be used to lobby with external stakeholders in order to achieve a better understanding of the CEC needs. It is about the legal, political, administrative and of course economic barriers that CEC needs to overcome.
- Findings and recommendations should be used to improve CEC activities with its own internal means. Otherwise, a sort of chilling effect could be in place. No innovation will be launched just waiting for an optimal institutional context that will never happen. In this regard, the strategic planning includes activities that do rely upon legal changes or a political support, but it mainly envisages actions that the CEC itself could (and should) undertake in order to consolidate a higher layer of performance and efficiency.

Along the lines mentioned above, a systemic and formalised **evaluation** system would allow for better identifying main gaps and areas of improvement. Right now, the CEC is already conducting certain initiatives in this regard, such as the annual evaluation meetings where all Directorates review what has been carried out and discuss what could be done for further improvements. However, the process could be further formalised in the sense of indicators to be established, evaluations to be conducted and actions to be taken for improvement.

It is about to change the institutional culture what requires time, but it is worth highlighting that such evaluations and such new quality atmosphere is as important as the list of activities to be carried out. Actions, even good ones, with no concrete and general evaluations would not strengthen the institution.

A trend also exists according to which assessments mainly rely upon quantitative indicators (e.g., number of meetings) and not qualitative factors (i.e., substantial improvements). The strategic planning battles this low-key approach and, together with some figures, intends to propose indicators able to assess whether the core CEC objectives are duly achieved or not.

A **prioritisation** is needed together with a reasonable assessment

of human and economic resources.

**IT updates** would be beneficious for the whole institution. Firstly, certain new IT applications, such as biometric voter identification or an electronic voting system, have become mandatory as a result of a new electoral law. They are very demanding innovations in computer terms, but they also need important adjustments from other angles, such as voter education or inter-stakeholder cooperation. Moreover, these innovations are requested to an entity where other IT gaps already existed. Such new obligations are therefore technological burdens that make more challenging a scenario that needed already remarkable IT improvements.

Secondly, daily CEC tasks also need a comprehensive IT update. Efficiency rates of certain CEC activities are low mainly due to a workflow that still relies a lot on paper-based procedures and neglect advantages provided by IT applications. In general terms, CEC will benefit from an overarching internal IT structure that would speed up the processes, reduce overlaps and enhance cooperation between directorates. The CEC needs a modern IT asset management system. This is not again an easy task. It entails a broad institutional change management that goes from preliminary feasibility studies to the actual implementation of the different products. Institutional ownership, users' familiarity, reasonable time framework or inclusive changing process are important parameters and often causes of failures. Last but not least, such general IT management system should pay particular attention to specific modules per directorate (e.g., recruitment, budget, voter education), that is, the system should provide a general approach together with specific modules and altogether should work in a user-friendly and technically robust way.

As a conclusion, the CEC needs an overall IT strategy to be implemented over a reasonable timeframe, that is, on a short- and mid-term basis. The tables below make several references to IT innovations, not only in the table devoted in particular to the IT Directorate, what reflects the actual scope and importance of such tools.

Several times over the last years CEC paid attention to **training** issues and a continuous training centre was envisaged at some

point, but not realised. There is room for improvement in this regard. It would encompass both permanent and temporary staff, although the needs and the methodology to be used differ a lot for both cases.

Firstly, CEC staff needs a permanent training strategy intending to enhance internal capabilities on a consistent and efficient way. Beyond certain courses, a mid- and long-term approach would take into account the CEC's specific needs and would set up a comprehensive training programme. It is also important to increase the CEC's ownership and know how so that the entity itself could design, deliver and evaluate a whole programme. While the CEC may benefit from cooperation and partnership with other national and international stakeholders, it needs to retain the overall command of training activities. Moreover, the list of workshops should reflect both general and specific needs. While there are a couple of skills which all CEC staff could take advantage of, training activities should be set up in close cooperation with the relevant units and topics should be customised to such profiles.

Secondly, in case of temporary staff, a totally different approach would be recommended. Such people would be serving the CEC for a short time lapse and with very specific needs in terms of training. Therefore, a powerful and consistent training strategy should be established beforehand. Preparation activities for trainings related to specific elections should start well in advance with training of trainers, methodological reviews and similar initiatives. When an election is called, the engine should be ready to start working and all players should know what their exact role is. Moreover, an active roster would be very helpful. Together with talent scouting activities, the CEC could keep continuous contact with people that would be called for the election period. In this regard, a set of initiatives could attract the attention of different groups on a regular basis and an informal CEC community could be created, which would be an excellent source of candidates whenever needed.

The CEC's performance has been severely conditioned to political and legislative unexpected decisions and institutional **resilience** should be built to address this factor. On one hand, the CEC has no control over decisions that are taken by other institutions and

impact on its daily activity. Any strategic plan, even one flexible enough to consider different scenarios, will suffer if by-elections are called or last-minute legislation is approved with no time for a proper implementation. On the other hand, the CEC needs to find the way to process all these challenging factors thereby consolidating a resilient institution capable to minimise their negative consequences while maintaining a clear commitment on its own strategic planning. Shortly, the CEC needs to be confident on its own capabilities and reduce external noises.

The strategic planning builds upon this baseline. It identifies factors that interfere on CEC activities, such as regulations creating new tasks without extra human / economic resources or time. The strategic plan intends to anticipate such factors promoting an active CEC involvement in future legal modifications. While the CEC should not substitute the Parliament, it can conduct analysis and propose amendments that would intend to fit new legal procedures in the CEC institutional structure.

Secondly, the strategic planning does not accept such external factors as alibis that will justify CEC inaction or poor performance. There is a plethora of initiatives to undertake regardless the legal framework in place and when it is approved. Both macro and micro-management measures, such as the ones proposed by the strategic planning, would end in a more resilient CEC that would be less dependable of external variations.

The CEC needs to explore areas left open by the law and not only wait for the Parliament to create new legislation. CEC regulations should provide the architecture for new activities and not only pave the path to implement actions approved by external actors. Regardless obvious constraints that the legal framework poses, the CEC's margin of manoeuvre is much larger than what is normally perceived. Right now, a certain self-restraint exists because an assumption is made that the law is necessary for almost everything. The CEC institutional ownership is undermined by this wrong legal approach. While the rule of law obviously applies, the same principle admits and even encourages active administrations able to address social problems within, but not fully depending on, the legislative framework. This approach seems clear when CEC

is forced to react to unexpected demands and the CEC regulations appear to be the only feasible tool, but the same approach could apply in more general terms.

A common concern is shared by different directorates consisting in a lack of sufficient internal **coordination** between CEC units that reduces efficiency and creates procedural burdens. While the IT upgrade above mentioned will certainly address such gaps, it is to note that deeper causes exist, that is, broader modifications would be necessary to revert current bad practices. IT only would be incapable to solve all substantial pitfalls. That's why a structural initiative needs to be launched aiming at rationalising internal cooperation mechanisms. Updated and improved standard operational procedures are needed per unit and activity. The strategic planning mentions different specific areas where such enhanced coordination will have positive impacts, but in any case, the programme should go beyond particular areas and encompass the whole institution. It is the only way to redefine internal workflows. Such overarching approach is compatible with the attention to be paid to certain areas and the case studies to be promoted and presented as good practice.

The strategic planning pays also attention to the hardware, that is, the **material conditions** with which the CEC is performing its activities. Processes, know-how and human task forces are necessary, but they require a robust and easy-to-use framework to operate. In this regard, the document identifies certain gaps in terms of necessary equipment to be purchased. The strategic planning proposes a broader perspective when considering such material improvements. Unfortunately, on a comparative international approach it is not unusual that similar investments turn to be too easily wasted money. Besides the material finally purchased, the institution could not be capable to use it due to training or procedural gaps. That's why any CEC acquisition should be accompanied by an operational plan, that is, a sort of mini strategic programme aiming to ensure a proper implementation of new assets.

Finally, a concern exists on the perceived image of the institution and therefore consideration is given to disinformation that could damage the CEC independence and **credibility**. It is not a particular

feature of the Albanian CEC because the digital era always entails these challenging situations, but in any case, it is worth not neglecting it. Moreover, a proper implementation of the strategic planning would not be enough since such campaigns are launched regardless the actual performance of the institution. That's why a specific communication strategy is needed in this regard.

# 3. Strategic Planning for the Central Elections Commission's Directorates

## 1) LEGAL AND ELECTION DOCUMENTATION DIRECTORATE (to be confirmed)

| STRATEGIC PILLAR I | | STRATEGIC GOAL 1 | Increasing the public confidence at the integrity of political parties and candidates running in elections |
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| STRATEGIC ACTIONS | OBJECTIVES | STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES | INDICATORS |
| **I.1.1 Enhancing the capacity of legal department by adequate training** | A trained legal department will lead to effective implementation and responsive to new electoral reforms and challenges | Training on administrative investigation | Be able to determine the competence of the Commissioner in relation to the issue under review |
| | | | Have knowledge of evidence search tools |
| | | | Respect the deadlines for the completion of the administrative investigation |
| | | Training in legal drafting and legislative technique | Comments and corrections to legal provisions addressing ambiguity, inconvenience, and not practical terms for users |
| | | | Consistency and harmonisation of the bylaws enhanced |
| **I.1.2. Establishing a mechanism for periodic cooperation with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), political parties and academia for reviewing existing rules and recommending necessary law amendments** | Improved engagement with important stakeholder to develop an electoral legal framework based on international and national analysis and recommendations and best practices through a participatory process | Bylaws Coordination between Commissioner, Regulatory Commission, CSO | CEC regulation on drafting secondary legislation revised (e.g., deadlines, list of stakeholders established beforehand, procedures formalised) |
| | | | CEC website will improve public consultation features |
| | | Online platform for submission of bylaws from the commissioner to regulatory commission | Feasibility study and project design cost |
| | | | E-Act implementation |
| | | | Training |

| Strategic Action | Objectives | Strategic Activities | Indicators |
|---|---|---|---|
| **I.1.3 User – friendly and more accessible electoral registration** | Facilitating the process of registration of electoral subjects & candidates including online registration or improving and increasing accessibility for electoral registration | Establishing legal provision for the implementation of electronic submission of documents from political parties | Roundtables with stakeholders (CSOs / political parties) |
| | | | Informal agreement with the Code of Conduct regarding implementation of E-Register/Candidates |
| | | | Approved legal act and bylaws authorising CEC to implement the project |
| | | Deployment and implementation of E-Registration of candidates and political parties | Designing the Terms of Reference |
| | | | Production of the system |
| | | | Implementation of the system at least one year before the upcoming elections. |
| | | | Consultation with the political parties to evaluate the system and improve it further. |
| | | Training of end users (e.g., political parties, CEC staff, observers, administration of Commission of Electoral Administration Zone (CEAZ) | Training materials produced and reviewed |
| | | | Training of Trainers (ToT) conducted |
| | | | Final evaluation implemented and lessons learned applied |

| STRATEGIC PILLAR II | | STRATEGIC GOAL 2 | Introduction and implementation of new legal mechanisms in the electoral processes |
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| STRATEGIC ACTIONS | OBJECTIVES | STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES | INDICATORS |
| **I.1.1 Improve election law and organisational structure for establishing competent electoral administration for conducting free and fair election** | Increasing effectivity and impartiality of Electoral Administration | Provide suggestions to the electoral law reform commission from national and international experiences | Topics (e.g., appointment of polling staff, replacement of candidates) identified and comparative studies conducted |
| | | | Proposals for legal amendments drafted and discussed with stakeholders |
| | | | Evaluations completed on a regular basis and lessons learned applied |
| | | Integrated development of law in relation to elections and election management | Standard Operating Procedures approved for coordinating legal support to CEC units |
| | | | Unified legal terminology on elections promoted and consolidated among stakeholders |

## 2) COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

| STRATEGIC PILLAR I | | STRATEGIC GOAL 1 | |
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| STRATEGIC ACTIONS | OBJECTIVES | STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES | INDICATORS |
| Education programme for election period | Raising awareness on the significance of electoral process among voters | Preparation of activities | Priorities and general strategy discussed and agreed with other CEC Departments |
| | | | Performance criteria (e.g., timeframe broad enough, number and variety of events, attendance rates, target groups, geographical scope, social network & media visibility, turnout) established and evaluation procedures approved |
| | | Implementation of the programme | Event calendar approved and published |
| | | | Publicity and outreach enhanced with visibility activities |
| | | | Meetings, round tables and other events with target groups (e.g., women, elderly, first time voters, minorities, people with disabilities) |
| | | | Ex-post evaluation conducted with a specific report with recommendations. Assessment of outreach rates (e.g., 70% voters / targeted public reached out) |
| Education programme in nonelection period | Raising awareness on the significance of electoral process among all stakeholders | World Election Day | Enhanced publicity and outreach |
| | | | Roundtable / Civil society work in elections |
| | | | Youth competition |
| | | | Memorial book published |
| | | Preparation of activities | Priorities and general strategy discussed and agreed with other CEC Departments |
| | | | Performance criteria (e.g., number and variety of events, attendance rates, target groups, geographical scope, social network & media visibility) established and evaluation procedures approved. |
| | | Implementation of the programme | Event calendar approved and published |
| | | | Publicity and outreach enhanced with key activities |
| | | | Educative sessions, round tables and other events with target groups (e.g., women, elderly, schools, first time voters, minority, people with disabilities) |

| STRATEGIC ACTIONS | OBJECTIVES | STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES | INDICATORS |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Ex-post evaluation conducted with a specific report with recommendations. Assessment of outreach rates (e.g., 70% voters / targeted public reached out) |
| Drafting educational materials for election and nonelection period | Preparing educational products to be used during outreach activities | Drafting | Needs assessment conducted |
| | | | Comparative analysis with previous elections and other countries |
| | | Technical and content specifications | Handbook on Educational Material Guidelines |
| | | | Materials in a language understandable to all voters |
| | | | Materials in the language of minorities and in the language of signs for people with disabilities |
| | | | Ex-post evaluation on impact of educational material. Assessment of compliance with criteria set beforehand |

| STRATEGIC PILLAR II (Sector of Accreditation and international coordination) | | STRATEGIC GOAL 2 | Intensive interaction and productive partnership with all actors |
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| STRATEGIC ACTIONS | OBJECTIVES | STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES | INDICATORS |
| II.2.1 Empowerment of the regular communication with various Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs) (domestic and international) as well as media | NGOs and media are well informed on CEC and their activities are in conformity with the Electoral Code and secondary legislation | Outreach activities enhanced | Website enhanced with special sections for accreditations and media |
| | | | Quantitative indicators in terms of number of posts or number of visits or contents |
| | | | Consultation mechanism with stakeholders held on a regular basis |
| | | | Targeted outreach activities to be organised bilaterally with specific interlocutors |
| | | Accreditation process improved | Accreditation procedures established well in advanced and published |
| | | | Quantitative indicators (e.g., number of accredited /rejected observers / media) |
| | | | Survey with stakeholders conducted on a regular basis to identify gaps and areas of improvement |

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| **II.2.2 Strategic and extensive cooperation with international organisations** | Partners are well informed on CEC's activity as well as the compilation of potential projects for further support in the future | Information and communication channels improved | Systematic general information exchange (e.g., monthly newsletter) |
| | | | Meetings organised on a regular basis both general and bilaterally with targeted interlocutors |
| | | Implementation of co-operation projects enhanced | Multi stakeholder general evaluation conducted on a regular basis (e.g., annual) to identify priorities, avoid overlaps and determine priorities. Detailed written reports to be issued and distributed. |
| | | | Guidelines on projects' management to be agreed with stakeholders |
| | | Promotion of CECs in regional and international level | Needs assessment report on types of events / exchanges of good practices to be attended and priority topics to be addressed |
| | | | Guidelines established for the recruitment of staff to attend such events. |

## 3) SPOKESPERSON

| STRATEGIC PILLAR I | | STRATEGIC GOAL 1 | Creation of Media Centre |
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| **STRATEGIC ACTIONS** | **OBJECTIVES** | **STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES** | **INDICATORS** |
| **I.1.1 Increase presence in all social media outlets** | CEC accessibility in all media outlets | Receiving public attention in all forms and formats accessible to public at wide | Presence in all national TV / radio stations on a regular basis |
| | | | Daily presence in 70% social media/ portals |
| | | | Presence in media outlets targeting specific groups of voters (e.g., regional outlets, people with disabilities' magazine) |
| | | Creation of infrastructure to stream/ deliver CEC information to media / public in real time | Designing a multimedia platform for all medium outlets |
| | | | Brainstorming the platform with stakeholders to further improve it |
| | | | Build the infrastructure for multimedia room |
| | | Creation of interesting templates for materials/ statistics/messages | Working with graphic designer specialist for producing interesting graphics for different information. |
| | | | Testing phase of graphics with CEC units and surveys |
| | | | Ex-post evaluation carried out and lessons learned implemented |
| **I.1.2. Fighting disinformation** | Awareness raising of media on CEC activities and tasks in order to block disinformation during campaign/ elections | Strengthening coherence of knowledge and oversight | Spreading knowledge on electoral matters, including terminology, through info campaigns, including digital platforms |
| | | | Awareness raising activities with targeted groups |
| | | Building countermeasures for fighting disinformation | Sensitisation activities (e.g., workshop, round tables, awareness campaign) related to electoral misinformation |
| | | | Code of Good Practice on Disinformation |
| | | | Cooperation established with debunk civic initiatives on electoral matters |

## 4) DEPARTMENT OF DATA ADMINISTRATION AND IT SYSTEMS (DADSIT)

| STRATEGIC PILLAR I | | STRATEGIC GOAL | Indicate a general future achievement for the Department |
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| STRATEGIC ACTIONS | OBJECTIVES | STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES | INDICATORS |
| **I.1.1 Legal framework tailored to IT needs** | Awareness raising on the impact of the legal framework on IT implementations | Proposal for amendments to the articles of the "Electoral Code" and "Bylaws" in relation to the ambiguities or problems encountered for Information Technology in the last elections. | Needs assessment report on legal gaps an IT aspect |
| | | | Proposal of amendments drafted, discussed and agreed within CEC |
| | | | Follow up of legal changes and amendments. Relevant written reports issued and distributed with stakeholders. |
| **I.1.2 Quality control of equipment and services** | The performance of CEC equipment and services to be enhanced through functionality checks according to approved standards | Drafting a strategy for quality control | Standards per CEC equipment and service determined |
| | | | Quality operational planning with checks, timeline, distribution of tasks, targets |
| | | Exchange of information enhanced | Computer equipment of CEC staff |
| | | | Internal electronic communication network of the CEC administration in place |
| | | | Control of the functionality of the CEC database |
| | | | Staff training on quality control |
| | | Increase performance of equipment and services guaranteed | Quality controls implemented as scheduled |
| | | | Reports issued on a regular basis |
| | | | Evaluation conducted and lessons learned applied. |
| **I.1.3 Specific IT services** | New IT services launched and/or consolidated | Internal IT services | Document management system |
| | | | On-line recruitment applications |
| | | | Staff trained on a regular basis |
| | | CEC outreach | CEC Official Website resized |
| | | | CEC Meeting Room for broadcasting |
| | | e-Day services developed, improved and/or implemented | CEC Turnout application |
| | | | Electronic Biometric Identification Device (PEI) |
| | | | Electronic Voting and Counting equipment (PEVN) |

**5)** DIRECTORATE OF FINANCIAL CONTROL AND INTERNAL AUDIT

| STRATEGIC PILLAR I | | STRATEGIC GOAL 1 | Increasing transparency of political party finances to combat the phenomenon of undeclared money in the electoral process. |
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| STRATEGIC ACTIONS | OBJECTIVES | STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES | INDICATORS |
| **I.1.1 Digitisation of data for the monitoring and audit process.** | Creating a platform where the data obtained during the development of the monitoring process of the electoral subjects will be input in real time, as well as the data for the political parties auditing process. | Procurement | Terms of Reference (ToRs) discussed and determined |
| | | | Contract concluded and platform tested |
| | | | Platform launched |
| | | Platform requirements | User friendliness for the input users to be assessed (e.g., template harmonisation) |
| | | | Available for real time observations |
| | | | Open access to stakeholders as an improvement of current hard copies. |
| | | | Different users' privileges to be set up (e.g., political parties, auditors can use a specific part of the platform) |
| | | | Workload assessed in terms of auditors in place and actions to be taken |
| | | Staff | Increased number of monitors (i.e., from 64 to 120), 3 internal auditors and 20 external auditors |
| | | | Specific training activities conducted for all users of the platform |
| | | Transparency | Real time publication of inputs |
| | | | Posting the information within 24 hours from the monitors and auditors |

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| **I.1.2 Training structure** | Setting up on a regional basis a structure of trainers that will serve for the preparation of monitors and assistance in performing their duties, also training of political parties, stake holders, civil society and media. | Training targets | Political parties |
| | | | CEC officials |
| | | | Stakeholders (e.g., public institutions, media, NGO) |
| | | Methodology | Modules to be develop per training target |
| | | | Certification process in place for trainees |
| | | | Evaluation and crosschecking (in the areas with double monitoring) after the election process |
| | | ToT (Training of Trainers) | Criteria for recruitment of 30 trainers discussed and established |
| | | | Documentation and training modules developed |
| | | | ToT evaluation in place and improvement actions taken accordingly |
| STRATEGIC PILLAR II | | STRATEGIC GOAL 2 | Mapping internal audit universe |
| **II.1.1 Setting pillars and control mapping internal audit** | To provide the senior management with an objective source of information regarding the risk and controls, rules and regulation practices. | Audit strategy | Internal discussion for setting priorities and timeline |
| | | | Documentation developed with audit criteria, types of assessments and institutional consequences |
| | | Implementing audit plan | Identification of the high medium and low risk functions of the CEC |
| | | | Fulfilment of the audit plan and ex-post evaluation conducted |
| **II.1.3 Staff certification process** | Staff duly trained and certified according to audit plan needs | Basis for training | ToT conducted (i.e., recruitment of trainers, documentation and evaluation) |
| | | | Training syllabus developed |
| | | Training implemented | Training delivering on a regular basis |
| | | | Ex-post evaluation |

## 6) BUDGET & FINANCE DIRECTORATE

| STRATEGIC PILLAR I | | STRATEGIC GOAL 1 | Optimisation of Financial Management |
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| STRATEGIC ACTIONS | OBJECTIVES | STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES | INDICATORS |
| **I.1.1 Complete Budget Planning and Financing Cycle** | Accurate identification of budget request. Despite accurate budget planning, it is possible that not all required funds will be secured. Co-ordination of budget financing diversification | Increase of the cooperation between the directorates for a more accurate & complete planning during the phases of preparation of the Medium-Term Budget Plan (MTBP) as well as before the sign of the contracts so that no problems are going to identify at the time of contract implementation | Budget requests are in accordance with the aggregate requests from the directorates |
| | | | The requests from the directorates are in accordance with the legal obligations of the institution |
| | | | The available budget is sufficient for the settlement of all contractual obligations |
| | | Planning and Budgeting in accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Finance during the phases of preparation of the annual budget and Medium-Term Budget Plan | The planning is presented in the Albanian Financial Management Informacion System in accordance with the required Ministry of Finance' classifications and instructions |
| | | | The planning is in accordance with the budget ceilings |
| | | Tracking of financing activity according to budgets. Establishment and management of financial system for transaction accounting and reporting according to National Accounting Standards and instructions coincide with Ministry of Finance | Making payments in accordance with planning. |
| | | | Accounting recording of all financial activity |
| | | | Reconciliation of financial transaction data with the budget directorate. |
| | | | Budget diversification coordination applied if budgetary shortages exist |

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| **I.1.2 Implementation of technology for optimising the results of objectives** | Implementing the proper technology that ensures full control and online access to budgets, contracts and their amortisation, it will increase the flexibility for reallocation of funds within the legal framework | Design of an IT platform tailored to financial needs | Creating a financial model / system in accordance with the objectives and requirements of the Institution |
| | | | Development and launching of the IT software and relevant test for |
| | | Efficient implementation of the IT platform | Access at all times to the IT platform |
| | | | Reports issued according to legal requirements and internal quality management |
| | | | Population of the financial system / registering of all financial data according to national accounting standards and relevant instructions from Ministry of Finance |
| | | | Continuous training of staff in accordance with technology |
| **I.1.3. Awareness on legal updates that impact Budget & Finance Directory** | Avoiding illegal definitions in contracts related to financial terms, avoiding confusion during the process of performing financial obligations | Enhanced legal compliance monitoring | Terms of payments to be in accordance with financial legislation |
| | | | Providing consulting on financial terms prior to the sign of the contracts |
| | | Avoiding incorrect and timely forecasting of planning that leads to limited budget requests, insufficient to carry out all required activities | Correct submission of budget requests within the legal deadlines |
| | | | Continuous staff training to increase performance |

## 7) DIRECTORATE OF ELECTORAL COMMISIONS AND MATERIALS

| STRATEGIC PILLAR I | | STRATEGIC GOAL 1 | Retention and promotion of good trainers |
|---|---|---|---|
| STRATEGIC ACTIONS | OBJECTIVES | STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES | INDICATORS |
| **I.1.1 Creation of a continuous training centre / long term programme** | Consolidating training as a key professional reference for election administration | Create an Enabling Environment focused on long-term learning needs | Enhanced transparency and predictability with a mid- and long- term training calendar. |
| | | | Engagement of CEC staff and qualified personnel promoted with awareness raising activities. |
| | | Set Measurable Long-Term Learning Goals, and Reward Milestone Completion | Concrete indicators of attendance to be established on an annual basis. |
| | | | Rewarding system established ranging from formal certificates to training as precondition for certain activities |
| **I.1.2. Organisation of Training of Trainers (ToT) on a regular basis** | Improving trainers' skills and enhancing a community / network of local trainers | Seek Out Good Trainers to Foster Personalised Learning | Roster established with qualified trainers for ToTs and regular updating activities organised |
| | | | Needs assessment of trainers conducted and activities to be carried out after mapped |
| | | Building training modules covering election operations. | At least 6 training programmes to be produced with public access to stakeholders |
| | | | Practical skills (e.g., reflective practice, critical thinking) to be delivered and assessed with objective criteria established beforehand |
| **I.1.3. Training evaluation** | Improving in-house awareness on actual performance of own activities | Training assessment | Trainees and trainers evaluated based on objective criteria |
| | | | Feedback used to inform future trainings. Formal methodology to be established as a tracking and accountability system |
| | | Training impact | Short and mid-term individual assessments to measure how much knowledge and skills have changed from before to after training |
| | | | Regular workplace reports of business results vis-à-vis training activities. Measures to be assessed such as like productivity, quality, efficiency, and satisfaction ratings |

| STRATEGIC PILLAR I | | STRATEGIC GOAL 2 | Improved voter participation and access to polling stations and results |
|---|---|---|---|
| STRATEGIC ACTIONS | OBJECTIVES | STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES | INDICATORS |
| **II.1.1 Simplify voter experience at polling stations (PS)** | Increasing voter participation | Access to polling stations | Ramps provided or special polling stations created to all voting centres with people with disabilities |
| | | | Create online polling station database in cooperation with local governments |
| | | | Complaints from vulnerable groups are addressed 100% in the next 4 years |
| | | Voter authentication | Reliable online verification process for voters living out of the country |
| | | | Biometric ID in at least 98% of voters in the upcoming elections, reaching 100% in 4 years |
| | | | Paper based backup system in place for potential failures |
| **II.1.2 Increase Election Administration (EA) awareness in processing voters and deal with e-day issues** | Reducing number of issues at polling stations/ CEAZ | Communication enhanced with voters and EA | Helplines to be operational six months prior elections with helpdesk system capabilities |
| | | | Social media channels and KQZ application to deliver products, and receive real time information during the elections |
| | | | Increased number of denunciations administered on KQZ app or portal, investigated and handled. |
| | | Evaluation of outreach and e-Day communications needs | Pre-election needs assessment with direct involvement and direct feedback from users |
| | | | Post-election evaluation with recommendations for next electoral cycle, with direct involvement and direct feedback from users |

| STRATEGIC PILLAR I | | STRATEGIC GOAL 3 | Electoral operations and logistics are efficient and are made user friendly to both voters and electoral officers. |
|---|---|---|---|
| STRATEGIC ACTIONS | OBJECTIVES | STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES | INDICATORS |
| **III.1.1 Establishing long term planning and resilient election administration** | Increased resilience in delivering electoral services at local level | Reinforced CEC field presence | Long term local coordinators recruited to inspect polling stations conditions and CEAZ activities. |
| | | | Induction and mentoring programme for new CEAZ members |
| | | Infrastructures upgraded | New warehouse spaces are arranged along with equipment and transportation fleet to deliver election materials in CEAZ/ PS |
| | | | Polling station Management System Module in place with clear distribution of tasks and accountability |
| | | Nonpartisan members at polling station | Electoral Law is revised and allows the CEC to recruit nonpartisan members in the Polling stations. |
| | | | At least Secretary of PS assigned from the CEC |
| **III.1.2 Modernising electoral administration & voting procedures** | Establish automated document management system for CEC administration activities | Automated tracking and processing systems | e-Day Application in place to report PS progress and incidents |
| | | | Implementation of all key automated logistical activities in eight years |
| | | | Automated handling of II, III tier commissioners, replacements and monitor legal compliance |
| | | Election Risk Management | Election Risk Mitigation Register including public attitudes as well as experiences of election administrators and candidates |
| | | | Cooperation established with stakeholders and protocols approved on how to address election risks. |

**8)** Directory of Human Resources

| STRATEGIC PILLAR I | | STRATEGIC GOAL 1 | Retain, develop and reward CEC talent |
|---|---|---|---|
| STRATEGIC ACTIONS | OBJECTIVES | STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES | INDICATORS |
| I.1.1 Existing Staff | To have a staff that is fully prepared, ready and able to handle the electoral process / Strengthening of CEC's existing human capacity | Training for general issues | Two trainings per month delivered by Human Resources' (HR) staff |
| | | | Minimum attendance rate 80% and increased gender balance. Proactive tracking of absents. |
| | | | Evaluations made after every training |
| | | | Materials delivered beforehand and archived for public access |
| | | Specific training to be available to all employees of a particular department | According to a performance appraisal, each Department plans/submits in their yearly draft plan the needs for training of its staff. Minimum two trainings per year and Department. |
| | | | Minimum attendance rate 80% and increased gender balance. Proactive tracking of absents. |
| | | | Evaluations made after every training |
| | | | Materials delivered beforehand and archived for public access |
| | | | Cooperation enhances between departments to organised shared trainings on common concerns. |
| | | Training of Trainers (ToT) in cooperation with the Albanian School of Public Administration (ASPA) | ToT for eight CEC civil servants with two general training activities a month. Matters to be decided jointly with ASPA. |
| | | | ToTs for ten CEC civil servants on specific topics. Matters to be decided jointly with ASPA and the relevant directorates |
| | | | In cooperation with ASPA, Terms of Reference (ToRs) discussed and published for the recruitment of trainers. International level trainers to be considered if not available in ASPA network. |
| | | | Material from trainers archived and evaluation conducted |

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|---|---|---|---|
| **I.1.2 New Recruitments** | Recruit the best qualified talent in accordance with the tasks that need to be completed | Improve planning of talent recruitment | 1. Establishment of a mid-term planning of foreseen (e.g., part-time) / unexpected vacancies together with a revision of ToR per position. |
| | | | 2. Assessment of previous applications in order to identify gaps / areas of improvement |
| | | | Proactive outreach and talent scouting (e.g., universities, info dissemination) |
| | | More certain and efficient enrolment process | Enhancement of transparency with publication of all positions (e.g., criteria of selection to be anticipated, specific needs per position to be shared, scores shared with applicants) |
| | | | Reinforced welcome period to ensure a good involvement of new recruited people, part-time ones in particular |
| | | | Drafting the interview questions to show a general education and knowledge of applicants, without discrimination |
| | | Special focus on part time staff recruitment | Contractual procedures to be simplified |
| | | | On-line application to be enhanced (e.g., evaluation, improvement) |
| | | | Roster of part time staff to be enhanced and expanded with awareness / training activities organised on a regular basis |
| **I.1.3. Logistics** | Recruit the best qualified talent to help the CEC with its logistics needs year around activities and necessary upgrades during election time | Incentive Training for participation and retention of material | General issues' trainings are mandatory to all existing staff |
| | | | There will be one general training for the logistics employees during a period of two months |
| | | Archiving | Electronic database implemented |
| | | | Access to public information enhanced |
| | | Premises | Compliance with HR quality standards (e.g., square meters per person) to be assessed and actions adopted accordingly |