



IFES Armenia

Background

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) is currently working in Armenia under a four-year assistance agreement “Strengthening Elections and Political Processes in Armenia” (SEPPA), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). IFES is providing technical assistance to build capacity of election management bodies, supporting a national voter education campaign and working to strengthen partnerships between civil society and government.

IFES re-established itself in Armenia in June 2018 through the SEPPA agreement’s predecessor, the Rapid Response initiative “Strengthening Armenia’s Political Transition” (SAPT), an opportunity that emerged from the sudden, peaceful change in power. This program was designed to provide immediate assistance to the rapidly unfolding process of political and electoral reform ushered in by the street protests in April 2018. Following the change in power, the new Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced the state program, which envisioned revision of the electoral framework and called for snap parliamentary elections. During SAPT, IFES worked with government and non-governmental partners to recommend changes to the electoral legal framework and assess the capacity of the Central Election Commission (CEC) to administer early elections.

Programming

Over the course of its renewed work in Armenia, IFES has been able to leverage its relationship with several local disabled persons’ organizations (DPOs), with which it worked over the last two years on inclusion and rights awareness initiatives. Some of these DPO leaders proved to be vital contacts in the election law revision process as participants in one of two key working groups established by the government. IFES experts have been advising each of these groups on proposed changes to the regulations, electoral system design, election dispute resolution, campaign finance and election observation.

The Parliament was not the only body subject to early elections; after its self-dissolution, the Yerevan city Council of Elders called for snap elections on September 23, 2018. IFES was the only organization in Armenia to provide technical assistance as well as support for the CEC to develop a strategic plan for the administration of the special elections to the Yerevan city Council of Elders. This plan included training of election officer trainers, cascade training of Precinct Election Commissions (PECs) and Territorial Election Commissions, and implementation of a voter education and motivation campaign focused on anti-vote selling and voter participation. IFES supported development of four public service announcements (PSAs) for the Council of Elders elections. In September the PSAs were disseminated via social media by the chief of the CEC’s public relations department and made available on the CEC’s website (www.elections.am) and Facebook page. The IFES-supported videos were sent to the National Commission on TV and Radio for distribution, upon which they were broadcast by the majority of national television stations. IFES also co-financed the printing of 14 anti-vote buying billboards. IFES trained 26 trainers and, together with the CEC, co-led cascade training of election officers in 475 PECs in and around Yerevan for approximately 4,750 polling officers.

Through its on-site presence, rapid outreach to government and non-governmental organizations, international donors and implementers and regular communication with the United States Embassy and USAID, IFES has positioned itself to be a non-partisan interlocutor offering comparative, international good practice as the new authorities in Armenia forge a new path forward toward democratic elections and governance amid a polarized and conflicted political environment.

For more information, please visit www.IFES.org/Armenia.

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.



A voter casts her ballot during Armenia’s May 2012 parliamentary elections.