



# Support to Elections in the Western Balkans

- Enhancing the capacity of **election management bodies** to administer elections effectively, impartially and transparently;
- Increasing the accuracy of **voter lists and voter registration processes**, including through effective co-ordination with population registers and public scrutiny of voter lists;
- Improving the knowledge and capacity of **media regulation bodies** to monitor and regulate media conduct during elections, thereby contributing to a pluralistic and fair campaign environment.

## Focus

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is implementing the Support to Elections in the Western Balkans project to support institutions and civil society in their efforts to follow up on election observation recommendations in areas related to election management, voter registration and the role and work of the media during election campaigns.

## Activities

The three-year project began work in June 2017 and is funded by the European Union and the Austrian Development Agency. It will offer assistance to Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The project will also offer assistance in Kosovo.<sup>1</sup>

The activities will be based on the recommendations of prior ODIHR election observation missions. Elections in Kosovo are observed by the European Union and, in this case, the recommendations of the European Union will be used.

The project will involve three stages: (1) inception (2) follow-up support and (3) lessons learned.

## 1. Inception

Following a **multi-stakeholder launch event** in Warsaw, **consultation and planning visits** will be undertaken to meet with beneficiaries and to discuss with relevant institutions and experts how ODIHR can offer support tailored to local needs and conditions. At the same time, a **database of the electoral recommendations** linked to the project will be developed and published online.

<sup>1</sup> All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

“Our Office has a long history of supporting institutions and civil society in follow-up on electoral recommendations in an inclusive and timely manner. With this project, we hope to intensify this work and support our partners in the Western Balkans in their important efforts to further improve electoral legislation and practice”.

*Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir*

Director, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

## 2. Follow-up Support

The project will continue on a two-track approach. The first track will consist of **topical workshops**, preferably organized jointly with relevant institutions, which will provide in-depth expertise and comparative experience on each set of thematic recommendations. The second track will consist of **technical expertise visits**, which will provide more targeted support

on specific recommendations, through expert meetings with institutions and civil society.

In addition, **mid-term review visits** will be organized ahead of the next elections, to assess how recommendations have been implemented and to encourage more intensified efforts in implementing any outstanding recommendations.

## 3. Lessons Learned

The project will conclude with a **review process**, which will summarize the lessons learned, evaluate the success of different methods, identify good practices and propose recommendations for future follow-up efforts.

### Inclusive Reform and Partnership

Lasting reform must be inclusive and internally driven. This project will support existing reform mechanisms that involve civil society and other relevant stakeholders. Attention will also focus on engaging politically under-represented groups, including women, national minorities and persons with disabilities.

This project will work closely with international organizations to ensure activities are complementary to ongoing support. This will involve close co-operation and consultation with OSCE Field Operations, EU Delegations and endorsers of the United Nations Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation.

## Background

From the 1999 Istanbul Summit onwards, OSCE participating States committed to follow up on the electoral assessments and recommendations by ODIHR. They have also recognized the assistance that ODIHR can provide in developing and implementing electoral legislation. ODIHR has consistently supported the effective follow-up of recommendations, and the 2016 *Handbook on the Follow-up of Electoral Recommendations* outlines ODIHR's approach in this important area. The EU, recognizing the importance of democratic reforms for European integration aspirations in the region, has also noted the need to support the follow-up of ODIHR recommendations.

### Contact details

For more information about the project, please visit <http://www.osce.org/odihr/support-to-elections-in-western-balkans> or contact [wb-project@odihr.pl](mailto:wb-project@odihr.pl)

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