

TRAINING OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

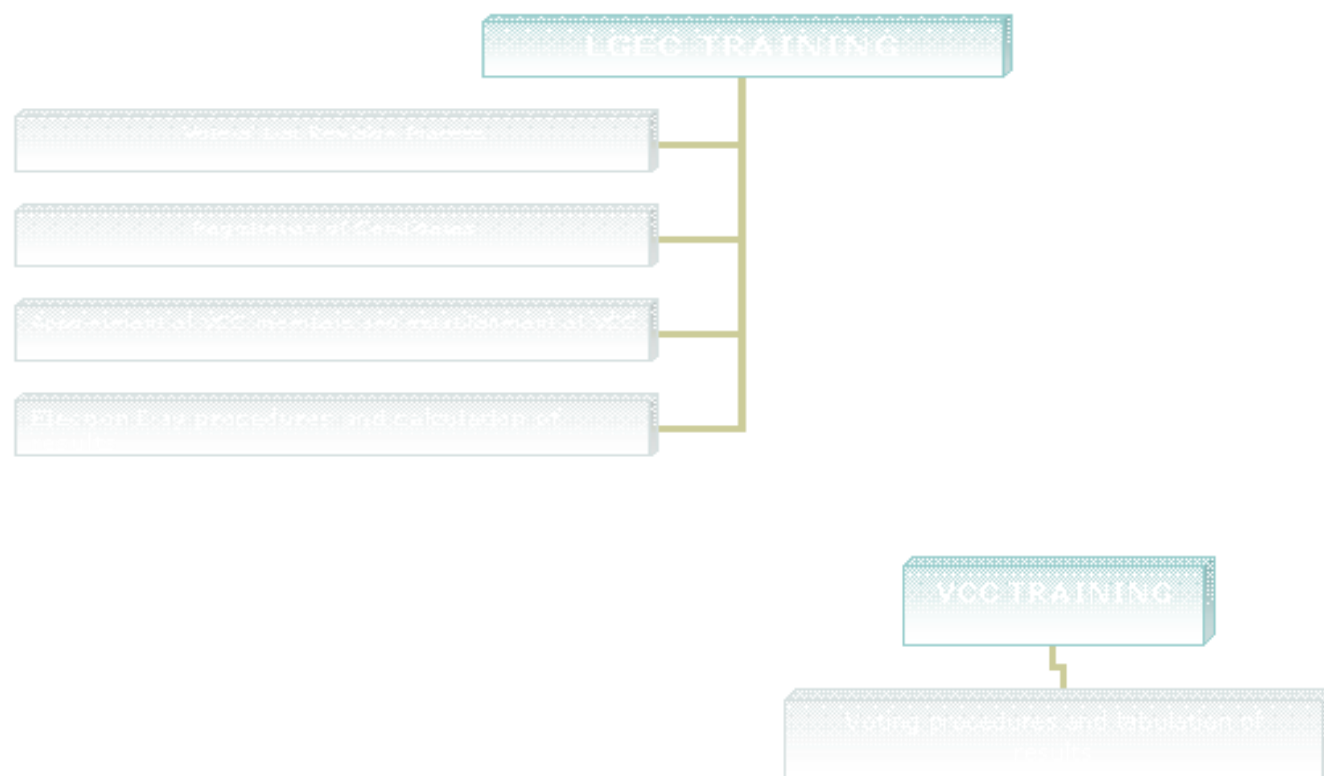
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Introduction

The Central Election Commission of Albania (CEC) and the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) cooperated for the organization of the training program for the members of the Local Government Election Commissions (LGEC) and Voting Center Commissions (VCC). The goal of this program was to familiarize the election commissioners with the new electoral code and make sure they are competent in their duties and responsibilities. The training program was based on the structure used for the parliamentary elections June 2001, with the appropriate adoptions due to the establishment of the new electoral code and circumstances.

Training Strategy

The training program was concept in two phases: training of the LGEC-s and training of the VCC on Election Day procedures and calculation of results.



Training of the local commissions would be conducted by a group of selected

trainers that would be trained by CEC and IFES in training techniques and elections procedures. A group of fifty trainers were selected as core trainers that would conduct training for LGEC and VCC and another group of fifty-eight new trainers would be hired in order to ensure training of VCC-s in five days before elections.

Based on the experience of the past training program and the fact that VCC members are appointed within the last ten days before election day, it was thought to decrease the number of days from 10 to five and increase the number of trainers, so a broad participation in ensured.

Training of LGEC was planed for four phases that were decided based on the duties of the LGEC and the legal timelines for each of them.

Training of VCC-s was focused on the voting procedures and tabulation of results.

Training of Trainers (TOT)

In the last Parliamentary Election of June 2001, a group of fifty trainers was recruited and trained by IFES and CEC and this was the group that conducted training for LGEC-s, ZEC-s and VCC-s. In addition this group was involved in the conduct of the national survey for local election officials organized by IFES in 2001. This group was the basic source of trainers for the new training program. Trainers were selected based on their performance during past activities and based on their disposition and demographic movements. A total of 24 trainers were selected and accepted the work. In these conditions, there were other 26 trainers meeting the required criteria had to be selected For this reason CEC and IFES contacted the Institute for Pedagogical Studies and published in addition a notification in the main newspapers on the country. From the large number of CV-s received the Training Working Group selected the best candidatures. A number of trainers were presented by the political parties' representative at the CEC. The possible candidates were invited in Tirana for a day when they were personally interviewed and fill the apposite questionnaires before the final selection was made.

Training of Trainers and training of LGEC-s was delayed because of the establishment of the new electoral code. Therefore TOT took place on August 14-15, 2003.

IFES had contacted a training agency Team 2000 and prepared the training program on training techniques. This program was based on basic knowledge trainers should have and issues and concerns presented by the old trainers during the past training programs. Training in training techniques was planed in two days for the fifty core trainers and one day for the new trainers to be hired for the VCC training. The training program included:

- Basic concept of training; difference between training and lection; components of a training program
- Time management
- Group dynamics; interactive communication
- Communication methods; barriers in communication; active and passive learning
- Communication in problematic situations; conflict resolution with difficult persons

In order to make give the trainers all the detailed information needed, the training program on election procedures was conducted by the CEC administration staff, the Voters' List Directory and the Election Commission Directory & Training Specialist.

TOT was organized before every training conducted in the field with local commissioners.

Training of Local Government Election Commissions (LGEC)

Training of LGEC was divided in four phases reflecting the duties and timelines established by the Electoral Code. The first training program was Training on Voters' List Revision Procedures. It was planed as a one day program with a morning and afternoon session, aiming to ensure training in small groups as well as good participation. Training was held in Local Government facilities or schools that made sure good training conditions. Training took place on August 19th, 2003 and covered:

- Cases when a revision can be requested
- Bodies that can request a revision
- Procedures for the revision of the lists
- Necessary documentation
- Legal timelines

Participation in the first training day was not satisfactory due to the nomination and appointment process that was not yet completed. Therefore CEDC and IFES decided to have another training day on the same topic. In both days the overall participation in country level was at about 75%.

Second training program was related to candidacy documentation and legal deadline for the registration of candidates. It took place on September 17th in the all country and the sessions were reduced in three hours instead of five as it as it was observed in the first program that there hour were enough for the program and on the other hand avoiding starting the afternoon session at 14:00 which caused non participation because of the not appropriate hours.

The third training program was dedicated to the appointment of the VCC

members and establishment of the voting centers.

The last training program for the LGEC was focused on

- Activities of the LGEC on Election Day;
- Calculation of Results in the respective unit; and
- Recount procedures

This program was conducted on October 4th in all the country.

Participation in these training programs in national level has been between 70-75%.

Training of Voting Center Commissions (VCC)

Based on the experience of the last Parliamentary Elections, appointment of the VCC members takes place in the last week before Election Day. Therefore, in order to avoid training on dates when the commissioners are not fully appointed, it was decided to organize training on the last five days before elections day October 8-10, 2003, increasing the number of trainers in 108. Training of VCC-s was planed as a three hours session that covered:

- Responsibility and Duties of the VCC
- Decision making
- Pre-election activity of the VCC
- Voting Procedures
- Counting procedures
- Tabulation of results
- Administration of election materials

Focus was made on the new counting procedures and especially on the evaluation of the ballot and regular and irregular, valid and invalid and contested ballot papers. In addition, it was aimed to give each commissioner the chance the fill out the tabulation of results.

Training took place in the LGEC offices or, when this was not suitable in other locations provided by the Local Government Organs or, rented locations. In many occasions trainer were asked to go in different communities, in order to facilitate the participation, because of traveling issues.

Participation has been at 65% in country level, where it was notices a disinterest in the large cities towards small cities and communes where in many case participation has been 95 -100%.

Training Manuals

There were three manuals that were printed in order to provide a complete package to the commissioners.

LGEC Manual on "Procedures for the Revision of the Voters' List"

LGEC Manual on "Procedures for the Calculation of Results in the Electoral Unit"

VCC Manual "For the Voting Center Commission"

The manual were distributed before the training program, in order to make sure the commissioners could use them during the practical part of the training program.

The manual were prepared to include the electoral code requirements as well as CEC instruction of different issues. Special attention was made to prepare the manual in a step by step manner in order to provide to the commissioners, especially to the VCC commissioners, a guide that can be used at any time it is needed.

Training Video

The training video was focused more on the new counting procedures and evaluation of ballot papers, as the most sensitive issue of the training program. The training video was used by the trainers during the training program as an assisting and illustration method and in addition was shown on the national TV station with a prior notification for the VCC commissioners on the date and time it was on.

Conclusions

Overall the training program was good as it was. However training needs to be more practical and detailed. This requires establishment of long term commission and a longer time in disposal in order to provide detailed information in small groups as well as practical training.

On the other hand, a major interest on the part of the commissioners is required.

It also requires training to be conducted by professionals in election procedures, so that all issues are covered and better explained.

At last commissioners should be free from the political influence in order to focus more on the legal requirements and procedures.