



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova - Republic of Kosovo
Komisioni Qendror i Zgjedhjeve
Centralna Izborna Komisija
Central Election Commission



**CENTRAL ELECTION COMMISSION
SECRETARIAT**

**DRAFT - PUBLIC INFORMATION STRATEGY FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS
2021**

Pristina March 2021

Përmbajtja

Intro.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
The purpose of the Strategy	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Strategy Objectives	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Local Election Trends of 2009, 2013 and 2017	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Principles of the Strategy	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Access to the Public Information	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Target Groups	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Public Information Products	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Communication Tools.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Electoral Process Periods.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Second Round of Mayoral Elections	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Cooperation with Stakeholders	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Management Structure and Ways of Implementation	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Budget for the Implementation of the Strategy.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Intro

The Central Election Commission (CEC) is a permanent body that prepares, supervises, directs and verifies all activities related to the election process, referendums and announces their results.¹

In order to fulfill these constitutional and legal principles, the CEC, and the CEC Secretariat, undertake voter education activities in order to increase voter capacity for voting procedures and procedures for the protection of electoral rights.²

The Public Information Strategy for Local Elections 2021 is a document which summarizes all activities for each of the periods of the electoral process including cooperation with various institutions to send the necessary messages to each voter and stakeholders through various tools of communication to achieve a successful electoral process.

The drafting of this strategy is based on the experience of previous years and the recommendations have been arising from the analysis and reports of various researches on the past electoral processes and the need for information and education for all citizens with the right to vote, despite of age, gender, place of residence and nationality.

The strategy aims to inform citizens with the right to vote, to use their right to vote, the manner, time and place of voting, as well as the identification of target groups, cooperation with stakeholders, forwarding supporting information to the media, political entities and observers throughout the election process.

This Strategy makes the CEC be perceived as a competent and transparent institution in respecting the constitutional, legal and international principles in the administration of free and democratic elections.

¹ Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 139

² Law on General Elections in the Republic of Kosovo, Article 2

The purpose of the Strategy

The overall goal of the public information campaign is to inform voters about the electoral process, the functioning of the process and their rights under the Constitution of Kosovo and the Law on General Elections and the Law on Local Elections.

The campaign will also be designed and implemented to support the specific responsibilities and activities of the CEC, set out in the Law on General Elections and the Law on Local Elections (such as the voting service period, confirmation and opposition of the list). voters, voters with special needs and circumstances, voting procedures, voting outside Kosovo).

This strategy is prepared for the CEC to fulfill its obligations to inform voters during all periods of the electoral process.

In addition to informing voters, the CEC is also responsible for informing other election stakeholders such as political entities, civil society organizations and the media related to election activities comprehensively and in a timely manner.

The Public Information Strategy for the Local Elections 2021, focuses on two important needs:

- Preserving and enhancing the image of the CEC; and
- Providing accurate and timely information to voters and stakeholders regarding the election process and procedures.

The implementation of the Public Information Campaign should be coordinated in content and in time with all election activities as defined by the operational plan.

Strategy Objectives

The objectives of the strategy for the Local Elections 2021 are as follows:

- Informing voters and stakeholders about the election process;
- Informing and educating voters about the importance of voting;
- Increasing voter turnout in elections;
- Reducing the number of invalid ballots paper;
- Raising voters' awareness of the importance of participating in elections; and
- Informing voters about the ways of denouncing vote abuse.

Local Election Trends of 2009, 2013 and 2017

The following table shows that the trend of participation in the elections has changed from the elections to the next elections where in 2013 there was a higher turnout than in the elections of 2009 and 2017, which had almost the same turnout.

Elections	No. of registered voters	No. of voters who have voted	% of participation
Local Elections 2009	1,565,547	684,510	43.72%
Local Elections 2013	1,792,913	837,709	46.72%
Local Elections 2017	1,901,428	833,955	43.86%

Invalid ballots paper for the Municipal Assembly Elections in 2009, 2013 and 2017

As can be seen in the chart below, for the municipal assembly elections, the number of invalid ballots paper compared to 2009 has increased by 0.71% in the 2013 elections, while in the 2017 elections there was an increase of 0.12% compared to 2013. From the data of invalid ballots in these three pairs of elections, there is a need for the Local Elections of 2021, voter information to focus with particular emphasis on how to fill in the ballots in order to reduce invalid ballots paper.

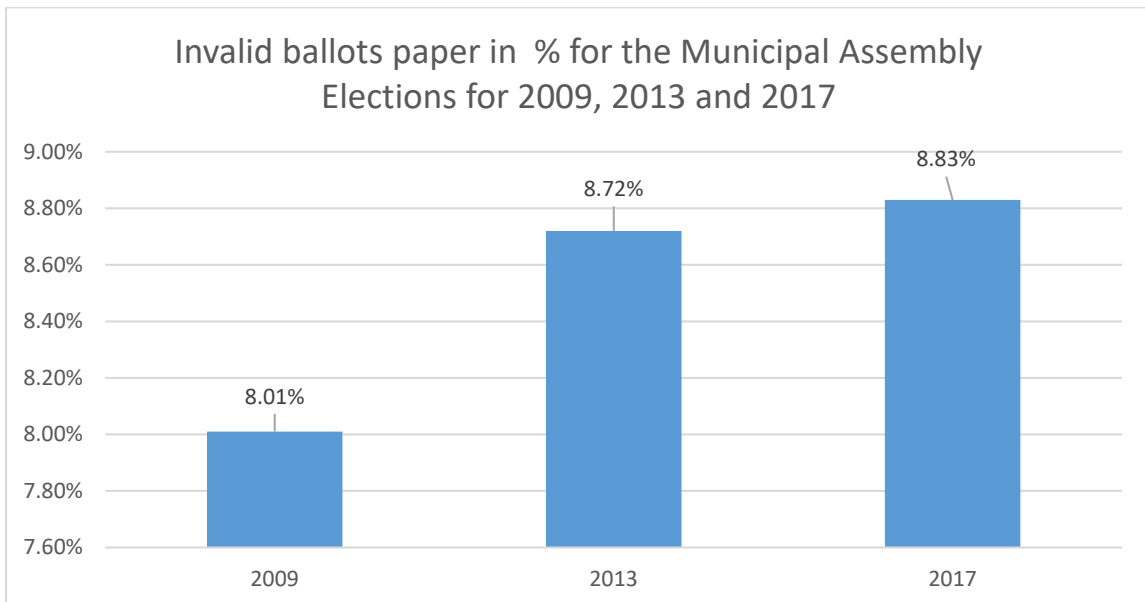


Figure no. 1. The table shows% of the number of invalid ballots for the 2009, 2013 and 2017 Municipal Assembly Elections

Invalid Ballots for the Mayoral Elections in 2009, 2013 and 2017

As is shown in the graph below for mayoral elections, the number of invalid ballots paper compared to 2009 had an increase of 0.29% in the 2013 elections, while in the 2017 elections there was a decrease of 0.22% of them compared to 2013 elections.

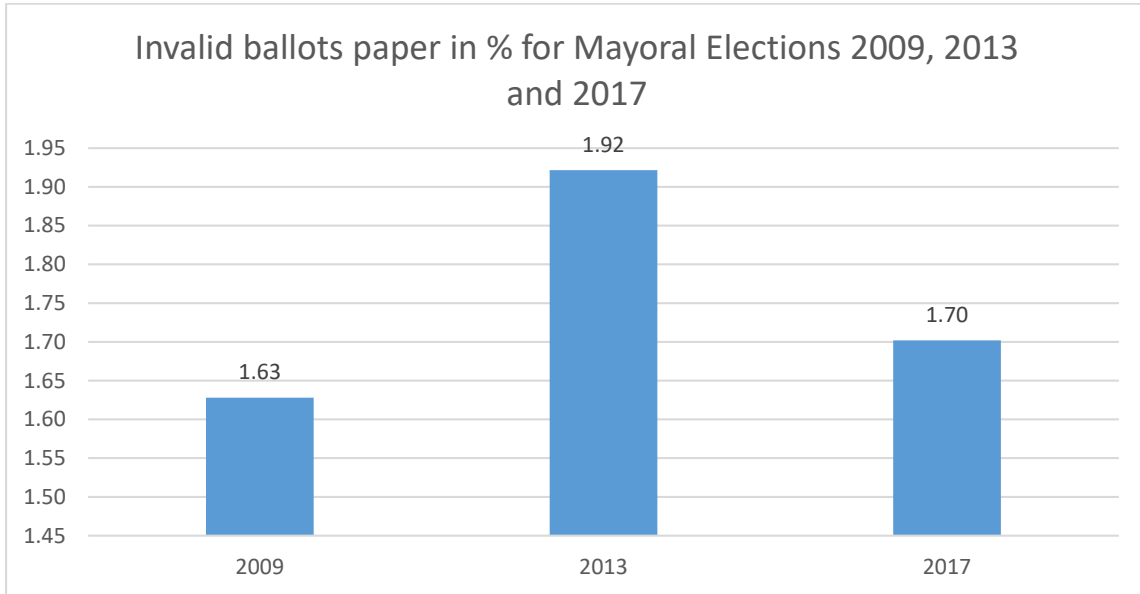


Figure no. 2. The table shows % of the number of invalid ballots for the Mayoral Elections 2009, 2013 and 2017

Principles of the Strategy

This strategy is based on five basic principles, as follows:

- **The principle of inclusiveness**

The principle of inclusion aims at informing all citizens with the right to vote, despite of age, gender, place of residence and nationality. This is intended to be achieved through all kinds of tools of communication and information. It is also required to engage all contacts with the general public and relevant institutions. All this will be achieved based on the experience from previous years and the recommendations from the analysis and various research reports on past electoral processes.

- **The principle of simplicity of materials**

All materials, audio, visual audio and printed materials, should have simple content, in order to be understood as easily as possible by all. The design of the material will be part of the visual identity to be more easily identified through language, the use of slogans and logos.

For all TV and radio spot productions, there will be only one sound.

- **Flexibility and continuous evolution**

Constantly, the developments - the flows and the effects of the campaign should be monitored, reviewed and analyzed, which should be adapted to the concrete circumstances.

There should be no gaps between distribution and the operational need for information.

- **The principle of impartiality**

Procesi i informimit publik, duhet të jetë i pa-anshëm dhe pa ndikime politike apo partiake.

The content of the public information materials is intended to inform and motivate the voters who participate in the elections, and does not favor any political entity running in the elections.

- **The principle of coordination**

A comprehensive approach requires good coordination and interaction of the CECS, between departments and institutions inside and outside the country.

Access to the Public Information

The Public Information Campaign will be designed and implemented to support the activities of the CEC, as defined by law. The campaign will also emphasize the electoral process, voter rights, the importance of participation, and the role of the CEC, as a state institution with a constitutional mandate.

All electronic and printed materials, both in terms of content and design, will be easily identifiable by all categories of voters. The content of the slogan and other advertising materials, whether in print or electronic media, should be easily identifiable and acceptable to all age groups of voters.

Target Groups

The strategy aims to include all citizens with the right to vote without any distinction. During the implementation of voter information periods, special attention will be paid to specific categories and groups of society, aiming to be a comprehensive campaign and information to reach every voter.

The public information campaign will focus on the following target groups:

- All voters;
- Youth;
- Women;
- First-time voters;
- Voters outside Kosovo;
- Voters at an advanced age
- Voters with special needs and circumstances; and
- Voters from non-majority communities.

- **All voters**

The aim is to inform all voters (regardless of age, gender, place of residence - inside and outside Kosovo, as well as nationality), about the entire electoral process: on voting rights, the importance of voting, the manner of voting, time and place of voting and information others. This will be achieved through the use of all available means of communication.

- **Youth**

As is well known, the majority of voters are mostly young. This category of society should be more informed about the importance of voting, and be ready to elect their representatives through participation in elections.

- **Women**

Since half of the population is female, increasing their turnout plays a large role in the overall election results. In addition to general information, motivational messages will be prepared for women to participate in elections, not only for them to vote, but also to be part of the process, part of election management bodies and observers. Public information products will be distributed through various associations that protect and represent their interests.

- **First-time voters**

First-time voters are inexperienced in voting, so special information will be provided, direct meetings will be held and postcards will be distributed to their personal addresses. There will be motivational messages for their participation in the elections, which will be disseminated through the means of communication that we use the most.

- **Voters outside Kosovo**

For Voters who temporarily live abroad Kosovo, despite of their place of residence, we will inform them about the voting procedures by mail. Information will be provided on how to apply as a voter outside Kosovo, meeting the criteria and how to send their vote at the appropriate time and address. The information will be provided through official communication channels through embassies, consulates and various migrant associations, means of communication that may be accessible to them and through their e-mail addresses that we have available.

- **Voters with special needs and circumstances**

These categories of voters need special information, depending on their abilities and the conditions and circumstances in which they live. It is important to make sure that these voters are aware of their voting opportunities, regardless of their abilities and circumstances. This can be done through media campaigns and cooperation with various associations representing the interests of these voters or those mechanisms that support their issues, to enable them to provide advice and assistance with the opportunity to vote.

- **Voters at an advanced age**

This category of voters needs information through traditional tools of information such as television and radio. Therefore, for their information, all the information of the electoral process will be broadcast on television and radio.

- **Voters from non-majority communities**

The Public Information Strategy will cover all areas of non-majority communities living in Kosovo through the media that are broadcast in their places of residence. All products will be made in their own language.

Public Information Products

To achieve the information of each category of voters, different types of products will be used, to inform all citizens about the electoral process and this will be done in their language.

- **The sound of elections**

An election sound will be composed and performed which is intended to be representative of the CEC mission and will be used for all election processes. The sound should have an original rhythm and melody and that shows the meaning and mission of the election. The sound of the elections will be approved by the Central Election Commission.

With the sound of the elections, all videos and radio spots will be realized.

- **Logo and Slogan of the Public Information Campaign**

The logo and slogan will give the campaign a common and identifying look. The logo of the CEC will be used as the logo of the public information campaign, as it is easily recognized by voters and stakeholders. The slogan should be identified with the elections being organized. The CEC logo will be close to the Election slogan which will be approved by the Central Election Commission. All products made for the election process will contain the logo and slogan of the public information campaign.

- **Video animations**

For all periods of the election process, video animations will be made which are considered more attractive and easier to understand for voters.

- **Video spots**

Given the number of invalid ballots paper for the last elections, the CEC has assessed the need for additional information and education on how to fill in the ballots in order to reduce the number of invalid ballots.

The realization of the video spot "How to fill in the ballot paper" with the CEC Chairwoman, for the Early Elections for the Assembly of Kosovo 2019, is estimated to make the campaign look more serious ³, more credible and at the same time more

³ <https://www.kqz-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Analiz%C3%AB-e-Efektivitetit-t%C3%AB-Fushat%C3%ABs-s%C3%AB-Informimit-Publik.pdf>

accurate in transmitting information. Therefore video spot on how to fill out the ballots. will be carried out with the CEC Chairperson.

It is preferred that the videos be made by the CEC members themselves.

- **Video messages**

During the public information campaign, a video message will be sent to all voters to exercise their right to vote. The message will be conveyed by the CEC Chairperson. Sign language will be used in all video animations, video spots and video messages.

- **Radio spots**

There will be radio spots with information for each period of the election process.

- **Postcards for first-time voters**

The public information strategy has a special focus on informing the category of voters voting for the first time. Therefore, postcards will be distributed to these voters at their personal addresses to inform and encourage them to vote.

- **Posters**

Posters will be placed in all polling stations, with the content of information on how to vote, the necessary identification documents, opening and closing hours of polling stations, what is prohibited in the polling station, assistance to voters with special needs, and informing voters about ways to report vote abuse.

Communication Tools

For the dissemination of messages and information for the periods of the electoral process, in order to achieve full coverage for all categories of voters and in their languages, will be used a large number of tools of communication like in the following:

- **Televisions**

The main tools of communication with voters will be televisions. Therefore, all public information products, for all periods of the election process will be broadcast through Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK), on two national televisions, a local television station with coverage in the four northern municipalities, where all voters will be informed equally. Video animations and video spots will be broadcast in the most watched terms, while for the way of filling in the ballots in the days as close as possible to the elections, there will be more frequent broadcasts.

- **Radios**

Radios will be used as a tool of communication with voters to disseminate information about all periods of the electoral process. The realized radio spots will be broadcast on national radios and on a local radio with coverage in the four northern municipalities.

- **CEC website**

All the necessary materials for all election periods will be posted on the CEC website. Public information materials that will be provided to voters and stakeholders as a whole, in order to be able to download materials of electoral interest to them from the website. Placed materials will include: textual, visual and audio materials.

- **Social networks**

Social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube) are a powerful tools of communication, in disseminating information, which every day more and more are finding use among citizens of all ages. Through their use, the CEC will inform voters and stakeholders in a regular and real-time manner about the electoral process. To reach the highest possible coverage, all information products will be sponsored on social networks. Informative materials in the form of videos, photos and texts with various information will be published on social networks.

- **News Portals**

Seven different news portals will be used, where information on all periods of the election process will be published. Among the portals will be www.rtklive.com as well as two portals of non-majority communities.

- **Participation in television and radio programs**

The CEC Chairperson, the CECS Chief Executive Officer or the CEC spokesperson will participate in various television and radio programs to inform voters about the electoral process.

- **Participation in local television and radio programs**

In order to inform every voter, the CEC Spokesperson and the Municipal Election Officers will participate in various local television and radio programs, through which the aim is to inform the voters about all the activities of the electoral process periods.

- **Press conference**

The CEC will organize a press conference for each period of the election process. On the day of the beginning of each period, press conferences will be held where the public will be informed about all activities undertaken within certain periods.

- **Communication through free of charge "open telephone line" and "e-mail"**

The CEC, throughout the election process, will answer all possible questions from voters and stakeholders via toll-free telephone and e-mail. Will be also distributed relevant information via e-mail to all voters who apply to vote by mail.

- **Direct meetings with voters for the first time**

Meetings with young voters will be organized by Senior Municipal Election Officers in their municipality, to explain the mission of the Central Election Commission and the importance of their participation in local elections, how to fill out ballots and the possibility of inclusion in the electoral process.

The target group will be the students of the last grades of high school. (Optional depending on the situation with COVID - 19).

In addition, the strategy includes the cooperation and encouragement of various organizations representing the youth to organize special events, to encourage young voters to participate in the elections.

Electoral Process Periods

This strategy includes all relevant information messages for all periods of the electoral process, as defined by the Law on General Elections and the Law on Local Elections:

Certification of Political Entities and Accreditation of Observers

In this election period, political entities are informed about the deadlines for certification of political entities and candidates, as well as the accreditation of observers.

Political entities, candidates and observers will be comprehensively and timely informed about the election process in general.

Voting Center Replacement Service

Voters in this period are informed that:

- Who has the right to vote;
- Where to vote;
- How to change the Voting Center; and
- For registration deadlines.

Registration of People with Special Needs and Circumstances for Voting

During this period, voters in this category are informed about:

Registration as a voter with special voting needs and circumstances;

- Manner of registration;
- Necessary documents for registration; AND
- Deadlines for registration.

Confirmation and Opposition of the Voters List

Voters in this period are informed about:

Publication of the voter list;

- Verification of inclusion in the voter list;
- Ability to correct any omissions or inaccuracies; AND
- Deadlines for confirmation and objection.

Completion of the Ballot Paper

During this period, voters are informed about:

- Valid identification documents;
- How to fill in the ballots paper; AND
- Opening and closing hours of polling stations.

Registration for Voting Outside Kosovo

Voters in this period are informed about:

- Registration application to vote by mail;
- The place where the form can be found;
- Fulfilling the obligations for voting by mail;
- Addresses for submitting the application; AND
- Deadlines for applying to register for voting by mail.

Voting Outside Kosovo

Voters residing outside Kosovo in this period will be informed about:

- Voting procedures;
- The place where the ballots paper can be found;
- Completion of ballots paper;
- Copy of the identification document that should be in the ballot box;
- Who can submit ballots paper by mail for whom;
- Addresses for submitting the ballot paper package; AND
- Deadline for receipt of ballots.

Other necessary information for this election process

Public information will not be limited to the information provided for each period of the election process, but also other necessary information, as follows:

Information about protective measures COVID – 19

If the pandemic continues to be present, even until the time of the local elections 2021, the following information will be realized:

Voters are informed about:

- The way of voting with protection measures from COVID -19; AND
- The manner of voting for voters infected with COVID-19 and those in self-isolation.

Information on assisting voters with special needs and ways of reporting

Voters can be informed about:

- The possibility of assisting voters with special needs; AND
- Ways of denouncing vote abuse.

To distribute this information will be realized: announcements video animations, video spots, radio spots, leaflets, posters, postcards and various messages.

Messages, in addition to broadcasting on television, radio, websites and social networks of the CEC, news portals, live meetings will be distributed through stakeholders and other mechanisms, in order to reach as many voters as possible.

Second Round of Mayoral Elections

Voting Internally

Internal voters will be informed about:

- The second round of elections and in which municipalities there will be;
- Valid identification documents;
- Completion of the ballot; and
- Opening and closing hours of polling stations.

Voting Outside Kosovo

Voters residing outside Kosovo will be informed of:

- The second round of elections and in which municipalities there will be;
- Voting procedures;
- The place where the ballots paper can be found;
- Completion of the ballot paper;
- Copy of the identification document that must be in the ballot box;
- Who can submit the ballot paper by mail?
- Addresses for submitting the ballot papers package; and
- Deadline for receipt of the ballot paper.

Cooperation with Stakeholders

The CEC will cooperate with all stakeholders. In addition to providing regular and on-demand information, the CEC will meet with stakeholders to receive their ideas and suggestions for improving the process and manner of informing voters. This will be done through various papers and forms of communication.

CEC cooperation with Civil Society Organizations

Civil society organizations have an important role to play in promoting participation in elections.

The CEC welcomes and cooperates with all CSOs, which carry out activities for informing and educating voters with special emphasis on young voters, women, voters with special needs and circumstances, as well as voters from non-majority communities. , to provide voters with the information they need to exercise their right to vote. Cooperation will be aimed at least through the following organizations: KDI, D4D, Democracy Plus, YIHR, INPO, VoRAE, Ngo Aktiv, Germin, Kosovo Women's Network, Handikos association, Association of the Blind, Association of the Deaf, association Dawn Syndrome , etc.

Cooperation of the CEC with the Institutions

Voter information and education will be assisted and welcomed through the cooperation of: Media, Mayors, Office for Gender Equality, Ministry of Education, Universities, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora, Embassies and Consulates, ECAP, Airport of Pristina Adem Jashari, Emigrants Associations and Clubs, Independent Media Commission and Political Entities.

Management Structure and Ways of Implementation

The CEC will appoint a supervisory board for the review and approval of public information products, which will report to the CEC on a regular basis on the progress of the implementation of the Public Information Strategy.

For the implementation of this strategy there will be cooperation with a number of different actors: different institutions, CSOs that deal with certain categories of citizens, as well as some activities and products will be realized through the economic operator. This Strategy will be implemented in direct cooperation with the Supervisory Council of Public Information, the Division for Voter Information and Education, the Contract Manager, the Commission for verification of quantities of IP products, the Senior Municipal Election Officers, the Economic Operator and Stakeholders.

All activities for the periods of the electoral process will be carried out according to the Operational Plan for the Local Elections 2021, which will be approved by the CEC.

Budget for the Implementation of the Strategy

The budget for the implementation of the activities foreseen in this strategy will be provided from the general budget of the state of the Republic of Kosovo, and from various donations according to the willingness of donors to finance any activity of this strategy.