



Discussion: Electoral Behavior of Ethnic Minorities

On February 26, 2018, the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association and the Public Movement Multinational Georgia held a presentation of the interim results of their joint study **The Electoral Behavior of Ethnic Minorities in Georgia**. The study is being carried out in the framework of the project **Promoting More Competitive, Fair, and Inclusive Electoral Environment for the 2016-2018 Electoral Cycle in Georgia**, which is implemented with the financial support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The project aims to promote inclusive, competitive, and transparent electoral processes in Georgia.

To achieve this goal, as part of the study, the research team is going to study and analyze the Georgian legislation (including policy documents), the views and

strategies of qualified political subjects in Georgia, the attitudes of Georgia's ethnic minorities, and their perception of the political processes that are underway in the country. The study is being carried out in stages during the cycle of the election years of 2016-2018.

At the time of the local self-government elections of 2017, we identified the following main findings and challenges:

- **ethnic minorities' low awareness of political parties;**
- **low trust towards political parties;**
- **passive positioning of parties in the target regions;**
- **parties' use of wrongful social constructs in their work;**
- **parties' inadequate perception of the context in the target regions;**
- **factors that determine support for political forces:**
 - -personalities of candidates;
 - -local influences of candidates;
 - -personal qualities of leaders.
 - -indifferent attitude of the local society to the political process;
 - - in individual cases, risks related to the emergence of new centers of power that ensue from the existing political landscape.

On the basis of these findings, we have developed a package of targeted recommendations for the main actors related to the electoral process. Below we give an outline of this package:

The Central Election Commission should carry out a complex policy designed to increase the electoral involvement of ethnic minorities;

The Electoral Systems Development, Reforms and Training Center should activate its work in the target regions by means of supporting local civil society organizations, professional empowerment of the election administration and prioritizing vulnerable groups;

Central authorities: Relevant institutions of the central authorities should take

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complex steps within their competence oriented to increasing the political and social involvement of ethnic minorities, considering the context in the target regions;

Local authorities should implement the principles of Governance A in practice, communicate more actively with the local society, and abandon the malpractice of using social influences;

The Media should pursue an information policy designed to increase the public interest in political processes;

Civil society organizations should intensify activities oriented to the target regions and to the vulnerable groups living there.