Recommendatory policy document – Improving political participation of representatives of ethnic minorities

2019

Summary

The present policy document is based on the study of participation of ethnic minority representatives in the political life of Georgia which was implemented in 2018-2019 by the Institute of Social Studies and Analysis with the support of the Open Society Foundation. Its goal was to assess the situation in terms of integration and inclusion of ethnic minorities in political life. No previous studies have been conducted in Georgia with the noted focus. It should be noted that the study mostly focuses on the position of the ethnic minority representatives who live in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities[1]. Accordingly, the noted study is an important source of evidence in terms of strengthening and improving political and civic participation of ethnic minorities at the state level.

Introduction

Sources of the recommendations presented in this document are of two main types: on the one hand, these are proposals of ethnic minority representatives presented in the process of the study, and on the other hand, these are also best practices in similar international policies. One more source of recommendations comes from the opinions expressed by experts, political parties, as well as representatives of local and central governments and nongovernmental organizations participating in the discussion held at the working meeting organized by the Institute of Social Studies and Analysis with the goal to present the study outcomes in March, 2019.

The proposals presented in the policy document have a chance to be represented in the form of specific political initiatives and governmental programs/projects. In addition, nongovernmental sector, donor organizations and business sector are the addressees of a part of the recommendations presented in the policy document. Overall, implementation of the recommendations presented here will support further strengthening of indicators of social integration in the multinational society of Georgia.

The study outcomes are utilized in several directions: on the one hand, they provide an opportunity to reveal specific problems which, according to the opinion of ethnic minority representatives, remain unresolved, despite the attempts from the side of the public sector and present an opportunity to implement response from the side of the state considering the positions of target groups as much as possible; whereas, on the other hand, these data provide an opportunity to identify future policy actions based on specific evidence.
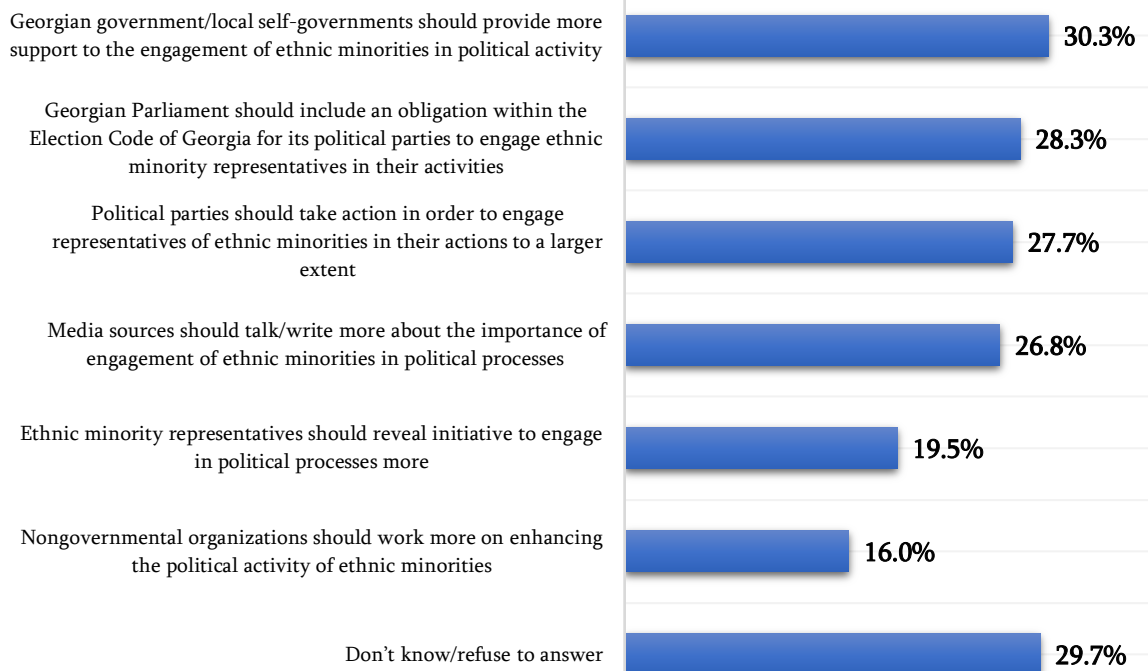
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[1] The data gathered within the frames of the study are based on the mass survey on the political participation of ethnic minorities conducted in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti, Tbilisi and Batumi. It has to be noted that representatives of small-sized ethnic groups were surveyed in urban settlements (20.7% of the study participants); they consider themselves as part of Russian-language, Kurd/Yazidi or Roma communities. 20.5% of respondents belong to the Armenian community, 20.2% - to the Azeri community, 20.1% - to the Kist community, and 18.6% - to the Ossetian community. These groups are densely populated in the Southern part of the country – in Samtskhe-Javakheeti and Kvemo Kartli regions, as well as in the Eastern part of the country – in Kakheti region.

Problems related to the political and civic participation of ethnic minority representatives

The list of the problems which require response according to ethnic minority representatives can be divided into four types of problems: strategic, institutional, program/project related and operational problems. Discussion on problems and a list of specific recommendations to solve these problems are provided in the policy document following this very structure.

1. **Response at the strategic level includes better representation of the issues related to ethnic minorities within the public policy agenda, as well as more intense discussion of these topics.** The above-noted was actively stressed during the presentation of the study outcomes from the side of ethnic minority representatives and is actively revealed in the positions expressed by the respondents as well. This request is expressed at national, regional and local levels. Among the recommendations which, according to the opinions of ethnic minority representatives, will support enhancement of participation of ethnic minority representatives in political processes, we have to take into consideration the level of support expressed towards the alternatives of statements offered to ethnic minorities within the study process. The following two main statements were supported in the Armenian and Azeri communities: 1. The government of Georgia / local self-governments should provide more support to enhance the level of inclusion of ethnic minorities in political activity (43.6% and 47%); and 2. Political parties should actively enhance the engagement of ethnic minority representatives in their activities (45% and 44.5%). Higher percentage of Kist respondents share the opinion that in order to enhance the level of political participation, it is necessary for the Parliament of Georgia to include an obligation in the Election Code of Georgia for political parties to engage ethnic minority representatives in their activities (59.9%). 40.8% of the respondents in the Ossetian community share the opinion that the political participation of ethnic minorities will be enhanced by the media talking/writing more actively about the importance of the engagement of ethnic minorities in political processes (ISSA, 2019, diagram # 43).

In your opinion, what can support enhancement of the participation of ethnic minorities in political processes? (N=1314)

Response	Percentage
Georgian government/local self-governments should provide more support to the engagement of ethnic minorities in political activity	30.3%
Georgian Parliament should include an obligation within the Election Code of Georgia for its political parties to engage ethnic minority representatives in their activities	28.3%
Political parties should take action in order to engage representatives of ethnic minorities in their actions to a larger extent	27.7%
Media sources should talk/write more about the importance of engagement of ethnic minorities in political processes	26.8%
Ethnic minority representatives should reveal initiative to engage in political processes more	19.5%
Nongovernmental organizations should work more on enhancing the political activity of ethnic minorities	16.0%
Don't know/refuse to answer	29.7%

It has to be noted that the specific ways based on which each of the above-noted aspects can be achieved also have to be clearly understood in order for these aspects to have more chances to be practically realized and not remain as mere statements. Considering that the law of Georgia on Political Associations of Citizens prohibits creation of a party based on a region or territory, the focus has to be made on raising the level of interest of active parties to include the topics related to ethnic minorities in their agenda and to increase the number of their representatives in their party lists in the existing conditions (a similar recommendation addresses naming candidates by majoritarian lists). In this direction, effective use may be made of a mechanism used to encourage representation based on gender such as doubling of state funding for the political subjects who include ethnic minority representatives within their lists. The best inclusion mechanism will be naming ethnic minority representatives within each group of ten members on the party lists in order to avoid formal implementation of the obligation and the practice of placing ethnic minority representatives at the end of the list (which has happened numerous times in our country when such obligations have not been specified).

Among the recommendations expressed at the working meeting held in March, 2019 with the goal of presenting the outcomes of the study by the Institute of Social Studies and Analysis,

expression of relevant respect towards ethnic and religious holidays of ethnic minorities and the necessity to celebrate them (not only by the congratulations from the President, the Prime Minister or the public sector official representatives, but also by their recognition as official holidays) are named.

2. **Among the problems named at the institutional level, expansion of the institutional framework of political and civic participation is urgent.** The institutional mechanisms focused on protecting interests and ensuring support to ethnic minorities require expansion in numbers and functions. Such mechanisms include the Council of Ethnic Minorities at the Public Defender's Office or the permanent group working on the issues related to ethnic minorities at the Central Election Commission which includes representatives of nongovernmental organizations working in this direction along with representatives of the Election Administration. For example, numbers of ethnic minority representatives need to substantially increase in the district election commissions in the municipalities with the highest numbers of ethnic minorities. Despite a number of attempts such as the inclusion of Azeri, Armenian, Ossetian and Russian ethnic group representatives in the work of the district election commissions in regions by the Central Election Commission, work in this direction has to be further strengthened. Similarly, agenda in this direction includes increase in the number of ethnic minority representatives in the public sector administration field as well (at the national and especially, at the regional and local self-government levels). The practice of advocacy by ethnic minority activists and associations has to be substantially improved at the institutional level. Despite a number of initiatives including advocacy of ethnic minority groups, the existing practice of advocacy requires more intensive support. Such initiatives include creation of the "Equality and Solidarity Network" planned by EMC within one of its projects; this network will unite representatives from various political parties, state agencies, the academia and activist groups and will try to support reconsideration of challenges faced by religious and ethnic minorities via a new perspective, as well as implementation of subsequent social changes.

3. **Response at the program and project levels** is related to the problems important to ethnic minorities and named in the process of the study as the most urgent ones. Unemployment and poverty named by ethnic minorities as the 2 most acute problems are in line with the list of the main problems identified by the population of Georgia. As per the 2017 survey by Caucasus Barometer, the most important problems named by the population in the country are unemployment (76.6%) and poverty (43.3%) (Caucasus Barometer, 2017). However, as revealed by the study, even though both problems are important in ethnic minority groups as well, poverty is considered as a more acute problem by 52.5 percent compared to unemployment which is considered as a less acute problem (67.4%) if compared to the general national data. The study outcomes show that the problem of unemployment is considered as more acute by men (73.9%) compared to women (61.4%). Within ethnic groups, the issue of employment was revealed to be an important problem in Kist (85.9%), Armenian-language (84.7%) and Azeri-

language (80%) communities; whereas the problem of poverty is almost equally revealed in all ethnic groups (this problem is especially acute in Azeri (65.3%) and Ossetian groups (61.2%)). The study shows the importance and urgency of the problem related to the knowledge of the state language, especially, in the Azeri community. This problem was especially emphasized by ethnically Azeri (43.5%) and Armenian (20.2%) respondents. Other acute problems also have to be noted within ethnic groups: for the Azeri community, in addition to the noted problems, access to healthcare (18.8%) and the issue related to legalizing the ownership of plots of lands (16.7%) are also problematic; in the Kist community, important problems are related to the low level of inclusion in the social and political life of the country (19.4%), violation of the rights of the representatives of their ethnic group (18.5%), as well as problems related to legalization of ownership of plots of land (18.3%); the following problems were revealed in the Ossetian community: the issue of legalizing the ownership of plots of land (22.1%) and access to healthcare (19.5%). The main problems revealed by the representatives of small-sized ethnic groups living in urban settlements are unemployment (42.5%) and poverty (42.1%). This list provides an opportunity to the state to plan the management of the existing problems on the territories populated by ethnic minorities in a much more targeted manner. In addition, in general, along with the low general national levels of trust towards state institutions, the following factor has to be considered: in total, 43.1% of the respondents agree ("fully agree" or "mainly agree") with the statement that the central government of Georgia is interested in the needs and problems of various ethnic minorities; while the following are the relevant percentages within ethnic groups: 63.2% of the Ossetian respondents, 44.4% of the Armenian and Kist respondents, 38.8% of representatives of small-sized urban ethnic groups and 30.9% of Azeri respondents (ISSA, 2019, diagram #27). Accordingly, responding to the needs of ethnic minorities requires amendment within the priorities of the government of Georgia.

4. **Response at the operational level** is mainly related to the necessity to eliminate gaps in the current programs and within the frames of the implementation of projects. For example, enrolment of university entrants representing ethnic minorities into a one-year preparatory course in the state language at Georgian higher educational institutions with the goal to continue further 4-year education requires the implementation of the program in a more integrated rather than isolated environment. As the ethnic minority representatives participating in the discussion held in March, 2019 by the Institute of Social Studies and Analysis note, these programs, in most cases, with some exceptions, such as Ilia State University, are implemented in spaces (separate buildings which are isolated from the main university space) where ethnic minority representative Armenian and Azeri university entrants have no opportunity to communicate with other students. At the same meeting, ethnic minority representatives underlined the fact that when being educated in this environment, conflicts sometimes occur among them which would be much more manageable in case they were integrated with other students. In addition, active discussion is ongoing on expanding the

composition of the target groups of the 1+4 program which implies offering a similar motivating opportunity to all ethnic minority representatives living in Georgia. Representatives of ethnic minorities participating in the discussion held in march, 2019 by the Institute of Social Studies and Analysis underlined the need to implement changes at the operational level in regards to the state internship program when they talked about the frustration of young representatives of ethnic minorities participating in the program and few opportunities to get employed at public agencies and local self-governments based on their participation in the internship program. Considering the focus made by ethnic minorities on the topic of legalizing the ownership of plots of land, the above list should include improvement of the effectiveness of the work of the commission on recognizing the ownership rights over land plots owned by physical persons and private law legal entities, especially, in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities.

Overall, *the study conducted by the Institute of Social Studies and Analysis with the support from the Open Society Foundation confirmed that the sense of cultural-political identity with Georgia and the Georgian society is high among ethnic minorities[2]. However, this sense of identity is somewhat lower among young generation despite the fact that the level of knowledge of Georgian language is the highest among respondents in the age range of 18-24 (20.19 on the relevant index out of the average score of 25). The sense of cultural-political identity with Georgia and the Georgian society is the lowest in the Azeri community (*average - 3.49, whereas the average assessment score is 4.01 for the following statement: "I have a sense of being a full-fledged member of the Georgian society") *most actively naming the lack of knowledge of Georgian language as a problem faced compared to other ethnic minority representatives. Ethnic minority groups share the image of Georgia as a state with hybrid democracy. As for political participation, majority of ethnic minority groups declare that they support political inclusion. However, approximately a third of them agree with the opinion that politics is the business of the elite (and not "average" citizens). Beyond what is declared, only approximately a fourth of the respondents regard themselves as politically active citizens. The reasons for the low level of activism are named to be the following: lack of interest towards politics, being busy with domestic obligations and not being fluent in Georgian language.*

Accordingly, with the goal to increase the opportunities for political and civic participation of ethnic minority representatives, it becomes obvious which target group should be prioritized by the state, especially, at the first stage of managing problems.

Recommendations to improve the opportunities for political and civic participation of ethnic minority representatives

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[2] The statements presented in the study conducted by ISSA were evaluated on a 5-point scale in which 1 stood for „totally disagree", 3 – "agree as much as disagree" and 5 – "totally agree". An average indicator of more than 3 points assigned in the evaluation process is regarded as positive evaluation, while an average indicator of less than 3 points – as negative evaluation.

An integrated approach is needed which would support enhancement of the opportunities for political and civic participation of ethnic minorities and therefore, would positively affect the establishment of a more participatory model in the decision-making process. Considering this goal, the activities to be implemented are presented as per the recommendation packages.

> Recommendation package 1:
> *The goal of this package is to enhance the activities of donor organizations and various analytical centers including academic field representatives with the goal to encourage political participation of ethnic minorities. It is necessary for all interested actors to coordinate their efforts in order to overcome cultural challenges in terms of civic participation among ethnic minorities, as well as the nihilistic attitude towards civic engagement in the public.*

Supporting civic participation: Offering systems of funding through grants, as well as consultations and trainings to state and non-state sector representatives, activists and citizens in general should be regarded as a supporting mechanism for political and civic participation of ethnic minorities in Georgia. We think that implementation of such a system will support elimination of a nihilistic approach towards civic participation in the public. The noted part of recommendations focus on the principle according to which people learn how to participate based on their experience and this eventually strengthens the civic culture.

- **Offering grants**: Donor organizations should support funding of the grant proposals which include political and civic participation of ethnic minorities in public/societal processes through civic engagement. Considering the noted, the sphere of interest of donor organizations should include supporting activities which focus on conducting educational campaigns and covering the needed consultation costs. With the goal to encourage activities needed for political and civic participation of ethnic minorities, it is also necessary to develop the relevant grant proposals and award grants via grant competitions. Funding via grants should be focused on supporting the projects and activities which will enhance the interaction and cooperation between town municipalities and ethnic minority representatives. Despite the fact that there are currently several institutional mechanisms in Georgia offered by the public sector for the socio-economic and cultural integration of the so-called small-sized and vulnerable ethnic minority representatives, more focus needs to be made on ethnic minorities via offering targeted program assistance systems and working to further enhance their effectiveness.
- **Providing consultation**: It is necessary to support the activities focused on political and civic participation of ethnic minorities with relevant consultation services as well provided by nongovernmental organizations, analytical centers and university representatives with the support from donor organizations. Covering costs of consultation services would be an

important contribution in the expansion of the opportunities for the political and civic participation of ethnic minorities.

- **Conducting trainings:** In terms of the development and enhancement of the skills of political and civic participation among ethnic minorities, it is necessary to offer trainings and workshops to the local government, as well as nongovernmental sector representatives, ethnic minority representatives and citizens in general. The noted is, first of all, targeted at the upper and mid-level public sector representatives, heads of various town services, elected officials in towns, as well as leaders of the nongovernmental sector represented by ethnic minorities. Offering trainings on civic participation aims at providing relevant information on the inclusive decision-making model. Such trainings are especially necessary and important for the governmental agencies/representatives. Such trainings would substantially support enhancement of civic participation in Georgia. Considering the critical attitude from the youth from ethnic minorities revealed at the working meeting organized in March, 2019 by the Institute of Social Studies and Analysis with the goal to present the study outcomes, it is important to further elaborate the state internship program currently offered to ethnic minority representatives. This includes detailed planning and elaboration of the content and methodology of the internship program in order to ensure that the knowledge and experience gained provide more opportunities for employment to the participants of the program after the program completion. In addition, the noted includes formalization of employment opportunities in the public sector – at least, in the self-government bodies - for the successful participants from ethnic minorities.

Recommendation package 2
The goal of this package is to provide recommendations with the goal to link the real practice of civic participation of ethnic minorities to the existing legal framework. The presented recommendation package serves the purpose of improving the current institutional environment for civic participation and supporting the engagement of external actors in the decision-making process. A large part of the recommendations include problem solving mechanisms at the level of institutional interventions from the government.

- **Establishing the institutional unit for civic engagement in governmental agencies and the relevant evaluation tools:** Governmental agencies at both national and local levels should offer establishment of an administrative unit responsible for civic engagement to external actors with the goal to provide institutional support to civic participation (this unit may take a form of a department, agency unit or service). Considering the best practice of "good governance", local

self-governments should establish "governmental initiatives for an improved town" which, along with the implementation of proactive support systems of civic participation, include permanent evaluation of governmental agencies (based on the indicators of civic engagement) (Saha, 2009). Participation of ethnic minority representatives will become one of the most important components in this evaluation. At the same time, it is important to reach an agreement on an adequate evaluation system which can also be conducted on the basis of co-participation from ethnic minority representatives and they may have an opportunity to offer specific criteria and evaluation indicators.

- **Expanding opportunities to engage ethnic minority representatives in the process of monitoring and evaluation of the State Strategy on Civic Equality and Integration and the 2015-2020 Action Plan:** Despite the fact that the present policy document focuses on the topic of political and civic participation of ethnic minorities, practical realization of the noted recommendation will support a far more effective and efficient implementation of the obligations based on strategies and action plans developed with the goal to solve all types of problems related to minorities. It also has to be considered that at the first stage, it may be necessary to jointly review specific indicators measuring the targets of outcomes in the action plan (immediate, intermediate and final outcomes are included here), as well as add new indicators; additionally, it may be necessary to undertake the quality control of the implementation process by a separate, independent group made up of minority representatives with the goal to monitor the above-noted indicators. Such a model based on participation is currently at work in the process of monitoring and evaluation of the State Strategy on Civic Equality and Integration and the 2015-2020 Action Plan via an ethnic minority council at the Public Defender's Office and this institution is equipped with monitoring and evaluation functions. However, the static composition of the council and the fact that it is not sufficiently representative (as there are several nongovernmental organizations in the council) lead to a number of problems for critical analysis and assessment. Accordingly, expansion of opportunities for the engagement of minority representatives in the composition of the council (expansion in terms of both numbers, as well as geographical coverage and gender representation) will be useful for the implementation of the process of monitoring over the National Strategy on Tolerance and Civic Integration. In addition, it is important to offer relevant trainings on advocacy and monitoring to the organizations of ethnic minorities so that they are able to independently monitor and evaluate strategic and action plans. This would be used as one of the most important mechanisms for quality control of the implementation of the initiatives and proposals indicated in the state documents.

- **'Implementing comprehensive community planning standards":** A system of " comprehensive community planning standards" is an important modern mechanism in town planning which creates a guideline to manage the process of town planning and sustainable development considering the participation of the public, including ethnic minority representatives, in this

process (AADNC, 2004). The public at large, instead of small interested groups, is assigned a defining role in this rather innovative approach to public planning. "Community planning comprehensive standards" provide an opportunity to the local community to define the way it views the public space. Such an approach makes this process more inclusive by increasing the participation of citizens in the planning, implementation and assessment of specific governmental programs and projects. The activities implemented within the frames of these standards are the best guarantee for the public itself and in this case, for ethnic minority group representatives themselves to become responsible for further developing the public space. In a broader sense, each member of the society, despite age, gender, ethnicity and other differing characteristics, can identify and propose public needs and priorities, as well as participate in their management; the most important aspect is that they can present their own and unique perspectives on development. It has to be noted that implementation of this process using photo materials, electronic games and other innovative methods may support elimination of the language barrier. Despite the fact that currently there are consultation councils composed of ethnic minorities at the Offices of the State Rtsmunebulis (Authorized Representatives) in Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti responsible for working on the issues of integration at the local level, their effectiveness is quite low as per the opinions of various experts (Sordia, G., Svanishvili, A. Losaberidze, D. etc.). That is why, with the goal to maximally consider community planning and local public interests, it is necessary to ensure much more effective work of this institution with the focus on getting acquainted with the best foreign practices, conducting visits on spot, as well as increasing the sensitivity and support towards these issues from the side of the Governor's Office.

- **Within the "Open Governance Partnership" (OGP) initiative, implementing the recommendations provided by the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) at the local level:** The list of recommendations includes implementation of a system of electronic petitions and consultation platforms at the level of the local self-governments (OGP, 2014). Through this system, representatives of governmental agencies create more opportunities for participation for interested groups including ethnic minorities in the decision-making process, as they provide these groups with guarantees for presenting their initiatives and including these initiatives in the governmental agenda in case the needed number of electronic signatures is gathered.[3] This initiative of the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information is focused on decisions at the national level, but in order to provide further support to public participation, it becomes necessary to implement and support the initiative at the level of local self-governments. Similarly, a system of public consultation platforms should also be implemented at the level of local self-governments which ensures

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[3] The minimum of 10,000 electronic signatures previously recommended by the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information is currently lowered to 5,000 electronic signature.

cooperation based on partnership between governmental and nongovernmental sector representatives.

- **Ensuring access to information proactively:** This recommendation has been proposed by the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) and is actively implemented at the central government level in Georgia (OGP, 2014). It is necessary to implement this recommendation at the level of self-governments as well. At the same time, the quality assurance standards used by local self-governments should include specific indicators for evaluating the practice of sharing information proactively which create guarantees for their protection. In case these recommendations are implemented, the problems which exist today in terms of the interaction of the government and external actors would be eliminated as these problems often arise from the lack of information. In case the international donor organizations have readiness to support open and transparent governance, the chance for implementing such a recommendation is quite realistic. The issue of adequately choosing and actively using communication channels with ethnic minorities also has to be underlined. Namely, it has to be noted that in the process of the study, trust towards media sources was positively assessed by respondents and one of the mechanisms for solving the problems faced by ethnic minorities was named to be placing the issue of ethnic minorities on the media agenda. Ethnic minority representatives, as well as representatives of various international and local nongovernmental organizations participating in the discussion held in March, 2019 by the Institute of Social Studies and Analysis noted that the level of trust towards media is especially high in the densely populated regions. Considering the noted, support from the local regional media was defined as one of the effective mechanisms in terms of increasing the access to Georgian information field, as well as the sense of cultural-political identity towards Georgian society among ethnic minorities.

- **Changing negative attitudes towards public participation:** With the goal to improve the institutional environment of civic participation and engage external actors in the decision-making process, it is necessary to change the existing negative attitudes towards public participation among ethnic minorities and to inform representatives from governmental circles on the privileges of an external "eye" (somebody evaluating from outside). Namely, it is necessary to understand that the proposals from external actors may provide an important resource to solve the existing societal/public problems; the local community representatives may have more information and accordingly, proposals on how to optimally solve problematic issues; societal/public engagement ensures joint responsibility over the decisions made and prevents conflicts in the discussion of various topics; societal/public engagement supports a higher level of legitimacy of the decisions made in the public eye and the noted decreases chances of a civic protest; through public participation, external actors, including activists and average citizens, feel that their positions are important and valuable. Understanding these privileges would significantly support strengthening the opportunities for public participation

in Georgia. However, effective implementation of the recommendation also depends on the elimination and weakening of the hampering factors currently facing ethnic minorities which, according to the respondents, hinder their active engagement in political activities (for example, attendance at local self-government meetings, membership in a political party, participation in demonstrations, participation in election campaigns, etc.). The following factors were identified as the main hampering factors for political participation: lack of interest towards politics (42.7%), active engagement in domestic work (28.3%) and lack of fluency in Georgian language (26.2%). Distribution of these hampering factors according to ethnic minority groups is interesting as well: the percentage for the factor related to "the lack of interest towards politics" is especially high in small-sized urban ethnic groups (56%); whereas the barrier related to the lack of knowledge of Georgian language for political participation is named by the significant majority of the respondents from the Azeri community (66.9%). In addition, lack of information on the planned activities is a hampering factor for 42.3% of the respondents in the Azeri community. As for traditions and religious beliefs as barriers to political participation, these factors are less important in almost all ethnic groups except for the Kist community where religious beliefs were named as barriers by 16.9% and traditions – by 13%. In terms of gender, it is interesting that both groups reveal almost identical trends in regards to barriers to political participation (ISSA, 2019, diagram #42). Accordingly, considering these hampering factors in terms of political activity of ethnic minorities, as well as responding to these factors should become a target for central and local governments, as well as international donor organizations.

- **Focusing on mechanisms for solving public/societal problems rather than politicizing the issue:** With the goal of improving the institutional environment for civic participation and supporting the engagement of external actors in the decision-making process, it is important for the government itself (both central and local governments) to prevent viewing those involved in the discussion of the topic as political opponents, as the noted, in case of ethnic minority representatives, is mostly associated with the risk of separatism. The recommended vision would create more perspectives for becoming acquainted with and sharing the positions of external stakeholders. For the government, the important aspect should be the alternative proposals offered from the side of ethnic minority representatives to solve a public problem rather than the discussion over which political group any specific actor is associated with. The responsibility for changing the process of discussing problems into an apolitical process of policy oriented change lies with the government, as per the Western experience. At the same time, shifting the focus on solving public problems would support and significantly encourage external actors to build more cooperation with the government which would make the process more constructive. Finally, this would increase the opportunities for political and civic participation of ethnic minority representatives and would make the decision-making process more inclusive. It also has to be considered that the noted will not only encourage external

actors, but will also increase the level of trust of minorities towards the government given that the government is already interested in solving the problem despite the political opinions of a person/external actor or opponent.

- **Actively using electronic technologies for electronic participation in case of a dual language service provision:** This recommendation includes usage of technologies such as geographic information and computer mediation systems with the goal to increase opportunities for political and civic participation of ethnic minorities. Average citizens, as well as any interested actors should be provided more opportunities for two-way communication in the electronic space and this should become a standard for the work conducted by the government, especially, at the local level. Transfer to a system of electronic engagement would significantly ease the implementation of the process of public engagement and at the same time, it would significantly lower the costs related to direct participation. If such systems are offered by the government, they would significantly encourage public engagement of external players including activists and average citizens. Usage of electronic communications for civic participation would provide citizens with more opportunities to express their positions. In terms of finding financial resources related to the implementation of mechanisms for citizen-focused electronic participation, provision of electronic services and electronic administration, it is necessary for the government to actively use the supporting mechanisms of "good governance" which are offered by the United Nations and the World Bank to the interested states.[4] However, in this regard, the very first requirement provided to the government by numerous international and local nongovernmental organizations (for example, EMC) is the implementation of the positive obligation assumed by Georgia since 2006 through the European Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities. As per this obligation, in the administrative units densely or traditionally populated by ethnic minorities, governmental structures should maximally ensure usage of the language of a specific ethnic minority in the communication between an administrative body and an ethnic minority representative, including communication in the electronic systems. In this regard, sharing the good experience of providing a translator in the general court system in densely populated regions is especially important.

Recommendation package 3

The goal of the noted package is to offer recommendations on public policy decisions with the goal to increase the influence of civic activists from ethnic minorities. Large part of the recommendations look at the mechanisms for solving the problems related to civic participation from below – i.e. from the

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[4] Broad, R.. (2007). 'Knowledge Management': A Case Study of the World Bank's Research Department. *Development in Practice*, *17*(4/5), 700–708. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/25548272

- **Using more evidence in the process of implementing a policy advocacy campaign:** It is important to implement proven practice of OSCE/ODIHR in Georgia as a preventive mechanism and in the form of online platforms. These platforms would serve as a space for documenting cases of discrimination, violation of rights or usage of hate language. This recommendation also underlines the importance of proposals based on evidence within advocacy campaigns. In terms of strengthening opportunities for political and civic participation and engagement of ethnic minorities, vital importance is accorded to discussions based on arguments and expert knowledge. This would eliminate an opportunity for the government to exclude ethnic minorities in public policy decisions and would turn public discussions into a process which is focused on the work to be conducted and is apolitical in nature. Political discourse would take place in the direction of the discussion on solving specific public problems and the process would be less politicized. In this regard, it is important to actively use all internal and external resources to gather relevant evidence. With the goal to present proven evidence, ethnic minority representatives should use local and international study results and consider best practices in solving problems. It is especially important to base their advocacy campaigns on specific policy documents which will describe the arguments supporting their positions with more precision. In this regard, special focus should be made on the best practices presented in the present policy document in the form of an annex.

- **Diversifying structure, strategy and argumentation from the side of actors involved in the policy advocacy process:** There is a widespread opinion according to which the more diverse the composition of the policy advocacy group and the more comprehensive its advocacy strategy, the more the opportunities for successful completion of the policy advocacy process (Sabatier, Jenkins-Smith, 1993). This is why the groups involved in the policy advocacy process should actively work to increase the diversity of the composition of the actors participating in a campaign, as well as the strategy utilized, and should use all the possible internal and external resources to ensure more credibility of their arguments. Interchanging and simultaneously using advocacy campaign strategies such as media campaigns, provision of recommendations, lobbying and civic activism would greatly support advocacy groups representing ethnic minorities in achieving desired changes.

- **Coherently planning the process of policy advocacy:** Responses from the study participants prove that they need development of their capacities for policy advocacy. Moreover, they have a serious lack of information and relevant knowledge and skills in this field. For example, 83.6% of the study participants have not taken part in any activity/activities organized by the local

self-government. 7.2% of the respondents do not remember if they participated in the following activities, while very few have indeed participated: budget planning (0.7%), development of the municipality development strategy (1.3%), planning of various activities to be conducted in the town/municipality (2.4%) or definition of priorities for the town/village (3.6%) ((ISSA, 2019, diagram N60). With this goal, it is desired for ethnic minority representatives to use various guidelines to plan advocacy campaigns. For example, the document - "Policy Advocacy Guidelines in Countries in the Process of Transformation" (2012) provides detailed instructions on how a policy advocacy campaign should be carried out. This document also outlines barriers which should be overcome by advocacy groups in this process. Such guidelines would be a great source of support to external actors engaged in policy advocacy to more effectively manage the advocacy process, as they are currently mostly engaged in spontaneously planned campaigns. A well planned and predesigned campaign will significantly increase the opportunities for influencing public policy decisions from the side of civic activists.

Below there are the best practices based on the international experience in terms of political and civic integration of ethnic minority representatives. In case these best practices are actively used, Georgia has an opportunity to enhance the indicators for the integration of ethnic minorities much more effectively and efficiently. It is important that the recommendations of a consultation committee on the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities are actively supported in terms of integration of ethnic minorities and that these recommendations are considered when defining budgetary priorities.

Annex # 1 – international experience related to the political and civic integration of ethnic minority representatives – the best practices

Mechanisms for supporting political and civic inclusion of ethnic minorities	Definition
Quotas in the Parliamentary body	Quotas are actively used with the goal to ensure political representation of minorities, including ethnic minorities and are considered as a mechanism for balancing provision of equal opportunities and political power. Studies show that an increased representation at both national and local legislative bodies has a positive effect on the distribution of budgetary priorities with the goal to solve the socio-economic problems facing ethnic minorities. Quotas are used in the following countries: Belgium, Romania, Croatia and Slovenia. In the past, quotas were used in Palestine, Zimbabwe and other countries.
Practice of forming parties based on ethnicity	In a number of countries, formation of political parties takes place based on ethnicity. Despite the fact that political parties not based on ethnicity are distinguished as per their focus on problems of ethnic minorities, in this case, we include non-dominant ethnic groups functioning in the form of political parties. This practice is used in

	countries, such as: India, Burma, Pakistan, Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Finland, Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, etc.
Majoritarian election system – with the goal to ensure election of ethnic minority representatives in the legislative body	In comparison with the systems of ensuring political representation of ethnic minorities such as alternative voting, quotas for ethnic minorities and mixed election systems, this mechanism is considered as much more effective and is used to enhance the political representation of ethnic minorities. However, this mechanism recognizes political activity of ethnic minority representatives as a condition for using the mechanism. The mechanism is used in countries such as: New Zealand, United States, Belgium, Libya, Russia, Slovenia, Zimbabwe, etc.
Alternative voting system	This is a voting rule which is based on naming several candidates by voters as per their preferences and used without holding a second round of elections to identify a candidate with the absolute majority of votes by eliminating the least preferred candidates. This system was considered as a guarantee for the political representation of ethnic minorities in ethnically bipolar and conflicted societies. However, this system is more rarely considered as an effective mechanism based on the observation of the existing practice. The system is used in countries, such as: Fiji, Republic of Southern Africa, and Bosnia and Herzegovina in post-conflict period.
Party recruitment of ethnic minorities in ethnically non-dominant parties	There are different forms for implementing this mechanism and they depend on the attitudes towards ethnic minorities which may include active representation of ethnic minority representatives as well as their problems in the party agenda at the level of recruitment.
Representation of ethnic minorities in public sector administration and ensuring access to public services	Ethnic representation within public administration at both national and local levels is linked with provision of public services through them. In addition, it is important for ethnic minorities to have full opportunities to use public services. In the European Union, this is ensured by engaging all groups, including ethnic minorities, in the process of improving public sector services.
Consultation and advisory councils at the local level and implementation of participatory practices	As per the experience of the European Union, this is considered as an effective mechanism for engaging ethnic minorities at the local level and as an effective means to articulate and solve their problems. An important stress was made on the fact that a significant value in the decision-making process is recognized to be the participation of ethnic minority representatives and the consideration of their positions - declared to be the basis for improving the services provided by the public sector.
Implementation of the policy of "positive discrimination"	These are sectoral policy courses within public policy which focus on privileged societal goods and benefits for ethnic minority representatives and which are implemented in the form of various programs and projects. Despite the fact that there are contradictory assessments of these courses, their effectiveness is actively revealed in terms of solving the problems of poverty, healthcare, unemployment, etc. In this regard, especially active usage is made of programs focused on access to education for ethnic minority representatives. It is also significant to underline interventions focused on economic and social development. The positive discrimination policy is not restricted by fields and therefore, includes responses to all the specific problems which are important for the representatives of a specific group to solve. Greece, Bulgaria and Romania actively work to enhance access to healthcare for ethnic minority representatives. Germany, Netherlands and Denmark are focused on meeting the specific needs of women in ethnic minorities. Bulgaria, Romania, Czech Republic and

	Hungary mainly focus on ensuring access to education and alleviating living conditions in the Roma minority groups.
Being guided by the principles of an inclusive labor market	This includes, first of all, fighting against ethnically segregated labor market with the goal to ensure protection of the labor rights of ethnic minorities. Active steps in terms of integrating ethnic minorities on the labor market are made through targeted programs and include creation of motivating factors to implement investment projects to ensure workplaces in densely populated regions. This aspect also includes transfer of the relevant knowledge and qualification to ethnic minorities in order to better meet the labor market demands. It is important to note that the European Union actively implements the policy of promoting and implementing privileges of an ethnically diverse work environment through campaigns such as: "Diversity Against Discrimination"; the German analog is known by the following name: "Diversity for More Opportunities".
Fighting against stereotypes	Ensuring the protection of the rights of ethnic minority representatives includes active work to fight against the stereotypes existing in regards to ethnic minorities and to implement relevant campaigns. This work becomes especially important and urgent along with the inflow of new waves of emigrants into the European Union. With the goal to fight against stereotypes, special importance is placed on establishing antidiscriminative narrative as well which is implemented via active partnership with both printed and electronic media.
Fighting against language barriers	Reducing language barriers is one of the most important goals considering the best practice in the European Union as well as worldwide. In this regard, special attention is paid to interventions from the public sector such as integration of teachers with the knowledge of languages of ethnic minorities in the school system and improving the level of knowledge of the state language among teachers from ethnic minorities. Joint teaching by integrating teachers with and without the knowledge of the language of a specific ethnic minority is actively discussed. At the same level, attention is paid to the development of intercultural skills at schools and focus is made on the elimination of language and cultural barriers among children from ethnic minorities at pre-school educational institutions before they transfer to the formal educational stage. This includes active implementation of the so-called "second chance" programs used in adult education.
Partnership with civic society representatives in response to the challenges faced by ethnic minority representatives	The European Union recognizes the necessity to join forces to fight against the problems of ethnic minorities and underlines the need for a partnership-based relationship with the civic society representatives in the process of assessing the needs of ethnic minority representatives, as well as searching for mechanisms for managing the problems they face. Special focus is made on cooperation with professional associations, business organizations, higher educational institutions and other stakeholders, especially, nongovernmental organizations focused on issues related to ethnic minorities and ethnic minorities themselves.

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Useful links:

1. Handbook on Integration for Policy-Makers and Practitioners (European Commission, 2010)

2. https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/saarchevno-sistemebi-saertashoriso-gamotsdileba - This guiding document developed by EMC reviews international standards in regards to the rights of ethnic minorities. The document was published in Georgian, Azeri and Russian languages for lawyers, students, public servants and community activists interested in the noted topic.