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Integration of Ethnic Minorities in Georgia: Barriers to Political Participation

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Executive Summary

The political integration of ethnic minorities is a complex process, and as Georgia remains a transitional democracy it still has a long way to go. Quality political participation of Azerbaijani and Armenian minorities at the national level remains a challenge. In Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions ethnic minorities have negligible impact on political decisions. Particularly, older generations of ethnic minorities, the majority of whom do not speak Georgian, are not informed about Georgia's domestic or foreign policy priorities, and are subject to the unequal treatment. To counteract this, the Government of Georgia should work in a more coordinated manner with the EU delegation and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure that policies which are designed to strengthen politically disenfranchised groups, do in fact respond to their needs.

The arguments in this policy paper are based on existing literature and official documents, as well as expert interviews and focus group discussions held in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions. The work covers recommendations formulated in response to the challenges described in the research for the Government of Georgia, political parties, the EU delegation and NGOs.

Key Words: ethnic minorities, political participation, integration, representation, Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti.

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Introduction

Proper political integration of ethnic minorities is one of the primary preconditions for Georgia's successful European integration. Despite this, the political integration of these groups remains a challenge. Increasing Azerbaijani and Armenian ethnic minorities' political participation is especially problematic. The majority of ethnic minorities in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions are completely ignored by local political elites. In best-case scenarios, communication with these populations are established prior to elections, with the goal of political instrumentalization; however their voices at the national level are virtually ignored (Akhaltshikhe, Mixed, 2020, May 22; Marneuli, Mixed, 2020, February 29). Effective instruments which would ensure the participation of ethnic minorities in political processes have not been outlined in either the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration for 2015-2020 or in the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, adopted under the framework of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement. It is important to determine what factors are hindering the political participation of ethnic minorities at the local and national levels. Additionally, to what extent do structural factors contribute to political participation and what can be done to increase ethnic minority political participation?

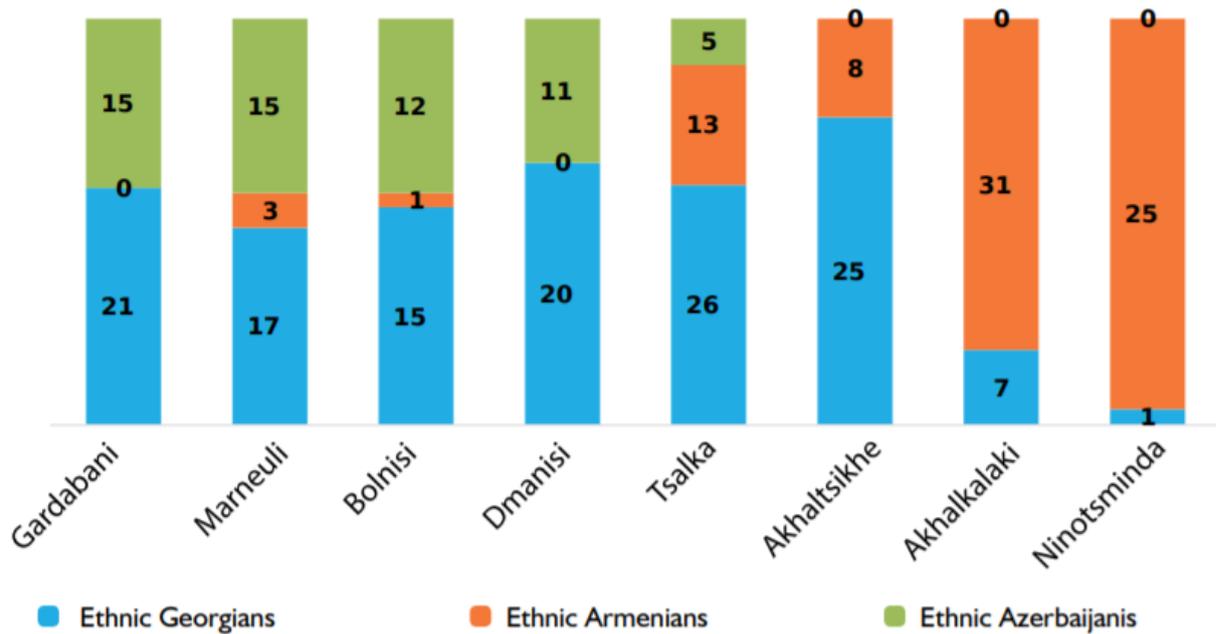
While discussing political participation in dense settlements of ethnic minorities in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe Javakheti regions, this work considers direct (substantive) and indirect political participation. In terms of direct participation, this work is based on the classical definition of political participation, which includes "those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take" (Verba and Nie, 1972). We may define the indirect political participation of ethnic minorities using a wider definition of political participation which implies influencing the activities of elected officials and taking part in achieving specific political objectives, instead of exerting influence through elections (McCloskey, 1968). This work is methodically based on 12 expert interviews and six focus group discussions involving Armenian and Azerbaijani speaking ethnic minorities in Samtskhe Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions. This work also uses the information from youth summits held in these regions which were focused on youth political participation. ⁱ

Political representation of ethnic minorities

According to the 2014 census, approximately 13.2% of the Georgian population are ethnic minorities. Ethnic Azerbaijanis living mainly in Kvemo Kartli region make up 6.2% of the population; while ethnic Armenians living primarily in Samtskhe-Javakheti comprise the remaining and 4.5% (Bujiashvili and Sordia, 2018). To achieve integration and peaceful co-existence with ethnic minorities, it is important to guarantee their civil and political participation equally to that of ethnic Georgians. In order to ensure that ethnic minorities are given equal opportunities and their opinions are heard, it is important that they are actively represented in local government, state institutions and Parliament. According to the results of the 2017 local self-government elections, ethnic minorities are represented in 21 out of 64 local councils (sakrebulo) by total of 165 individuals (Kakhishvili, 2017). However, it needs to be

noted that the representation of ethnic minorities is insignificant in all municipalities with ethnic minority settlements (Gardabani, Bolnisi, Dmanisi, Tsalka, Akhaltiskhe) except for local councils of three municipalities (Marneuli, Akhalkalaki, Ninotsminda) (see Chart 1).

Chart 1: Representation of ethnic minorities in local councils, Centre for Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism, Kakhishvili, 2017, Available at: http://csem.ge/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Competing-for-Votes-of-Ethnic-Minorities_Geo.pdf



According to the findings of the representatives of the Information Centre of NATO and the EU, in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti region, representation of ethnic minorities is less of a problem at the municipal level, since they take "senior" positions at local levels which ensure significant influence over political decisions. On the other hand, "access to senior positions does not impact political participation."ⁱⁱⁱ Influencing political decisions and supporting citizens' democratic participation in political processes is one of the priorities of the EU. To increase the political representation of ethnic minorities, the EU is allocating significant financial resources to support local initiatives of civil society organizations aimed at increasing political and civil participation. However, more effective measures need to be taken in these areas not just by the EU delegation and NGOs, but by local political elites.

Chart 2: Percentage of ethnic minorities in Georgia between 1990 and 2020 and their representation in the Parliament of Georgia, OSGF 2019, Available at: <https://osgf.ge/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Analytical-Report-ISSA-GEO.pdf>



Despite ethnic minorities holding 7.3% of the seats in the 2016-2020 Parliament, their role in decision-making processes at the national level is nominal and ⁱⁱⁱnone of the minority representatives hold the chair or deputy chair of any committees.

According to the representative of the Public Defender's office, ethnic discrimination extends even into Parliament, citing the example of one MP scolding the representative of ethnic minority community who did not speak Georgian and was accompanied by an interpreter suggesting that if they she could not speak Georgian, they should not speak at all^{iv}. Similar cases not only impede the integration process but suppress ethnic minorities' motivation to engage in politics more actively. Moreover, such expressions go against the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination adopted under the framework of Visa Liberalization action plan between the EU and Georgia (Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, 2014).

No representatives of ethnic minorities hold decision-making positions in the ministries or other agencies^v, and, "it has been decades since ethnic minorities were represented in the local council of Tbilisi"^{vi}, at the time when ethnic minorities make up 10% of Tbilisi's population. According to research, even when ethnic minorities hold certain political positions, they do not benefit from equal rights in the team when fulfilling their functions^{vii}. Therefore, the root of the problem may be found at a much lower level; specifically, a lack of political engagement

at the local level, coupled with a lack of transparent and effective governance, makes it impossible to ensure strong positioning for ethnic minorities at the national level.

Ineffective state policy for supporting political participation of ethnic minorities

In parallel with the analysis of political participation of ethnic minorities in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti region, it is important to discuss state programs, strategies and initiatives that are being implemented in these regions to stimulate ethnic minorities' political participation and integration at the national level. The integration of ethnic minorities is the responsibility of State Ministry of Reconciliation and Civic Equality, which cooperates with local self-governing entities as well as with the Council of National Minorities of the Public Defender of Georgia^{viii} and a number of NGOs. The first out of four major areas of the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration for 2015-2020 concerns ensuring "equal and full-fledged participation in civic and political life" with one of the major areas including "encouraging ethnic minorities to participate in the political decision-making process". Considering the fact that the Strategy is in effect until 2020, all the components of the document should already be implemented and the assessment of the action plan published. Therefore, it is interesting to see which programs have been executed. The EU delegation is also interested in the quality of the strategy implemented, since successful execution of state strategies and action plans determines the prospect of Georgia's European integration. The fact that the European delegation receives updates on ethnic minority-related issues from the Public Defender's office is also worthy of attention. The European delegation requested an update on the progress of the implementation from relevant state agencies, yet the requested information was not easily available.^{ix} This illustrates the need to strengthen the monitoring of the execution of state strategies and action plans aimed at ensuring equality and integration of ethnic minorities. Further critical assessments are needed from local and international partners to guarantee inclusive governance

Internship program for ethnic minorities

Three important programs implemented by the State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality of Georgia have been identified as supporting political and civic engagement. The first initiative provides internship opportunities for students participating in the 4+1 education program explicitly dedicated to ethnic minorities. It completed the pilot project in 2017 and was fully implemented in 2018. By May 2020, 294 ethnic minority representatives had participated in three to six-month long internships at 20 different state agencies, including local self-governing entities. As the respondent noted, this program supports minority youth to enhance knowledge and skills as well as build a career. From the standpoint of government officials, this program is very popular among ethnic minorities and is assessed positively.^x For the Council of National Minorities of the Public Defender of Georgia, counting the internship program as a Government's active measure to support political participation of ethnic Azerbaijani and Armenian minorities is unconvincing and only partially effective, since this program only targets a very specific segment of students. Around 80% of the students cannot

benefit from this opportunity^{xi}, since they have not participated in the 4+1 program, do not know Georgian language, or do not fall in the specific age group. During the research, only a number of ethnic minority youth focus group and youth summit participants had taken part in the 4+1 program, and none of the participants had mentioned the internship program, which was named as one of the successful projects by the Government (Marneuli, Mixed, February 29, 2020; Akhaltiskhe, Mixed, May 22, 2020). If the internship program covered a wider group of youth, the results will be more visible and tangible.

Public Advisory Councils

The second initiative identified as a success case is the establishment of public advisory councils under the governors' administrations in densely populated settlements of ethnic minorities. The council is staffed with the representatives of local self-governments, regional administrations, local NGOs and ethnic minorities. Per the assessment of government officials a, "Similar advisory format supports the increase and improvement of their [ethnic minorities'] participation in the decision-making process at the local level. ^{xii}" Non-governmental sectors of Samtskhe-Javakheti region questions the objective functioning of the council, since according to the widespread opinion, the council members are mostly relatives of public officials. ^{xiii} According to the assessment of the representative of the Public Defender's office, council and townhall meetings are mostly viewed as formalities in the region, since "they know that every decision will be made in accordance to the wishes of one specific group, or more specifically, one specific group of 'men'." ^{xiv} Local authorities have alternative views on the quality of work done by the advisory councils and think that local authorities are regularly meeting with the population for consultations. One of them specifies that it happens twice a year – in Spring and in Fall and voices their slogan "not from election to election, but between the elections." ^{xv} This fact demonstrates that there are different perceptions on effective formats of political engagement or consultations. From the standpoint of local representatives of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli NGO sector, the views of civil society and local authorities concerning political engagement are not in line with each other and to certain extent, there is a problem of communication between them. Local self-government favors passive form of communication with the population. ^{xvi} This demonstrates that there is a room for improvement in terms of local governments' preferred form of communication with people, as well as its intensity and quality.

Information Campaigns

The third important measure currently being implemented by the State Ministry of Reconciliation and Civic Equality is providing information to ethnic minorities in the Azerbaijani and Armenian languages. The official position of the Ministry is that ethnic minorities "should not have trouble accessing information because of the language barrier." ^{xvii} Yet, language barriers and access to information is named as one of the biggest and most complex challenges to ethnic minorities. The Ministry is holding information campaigns on state programs, state services and on European and Euro Atlantic integration in cooperation with the Information Center on NATO and EU. However, the primary challenge for local

ethnic minorities seems to be access to that information. According to the population in question, local governments invite city hall staff and teachers during the meetings to make it look like their opinions matter, but, in reality, "the information is not passed down to the population" (Marneuli, Mixed, 7 participants, February 29, 2020). The research findings demonstrate that the majority of ethnic minorities do not have information on basic issues and ongoing events in the country, as was revealed during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. In this context, it is hard to talk about how ethnic minorities should equally and freely benefit from state programs as well as from the opportunities provided by the Association Agreement.

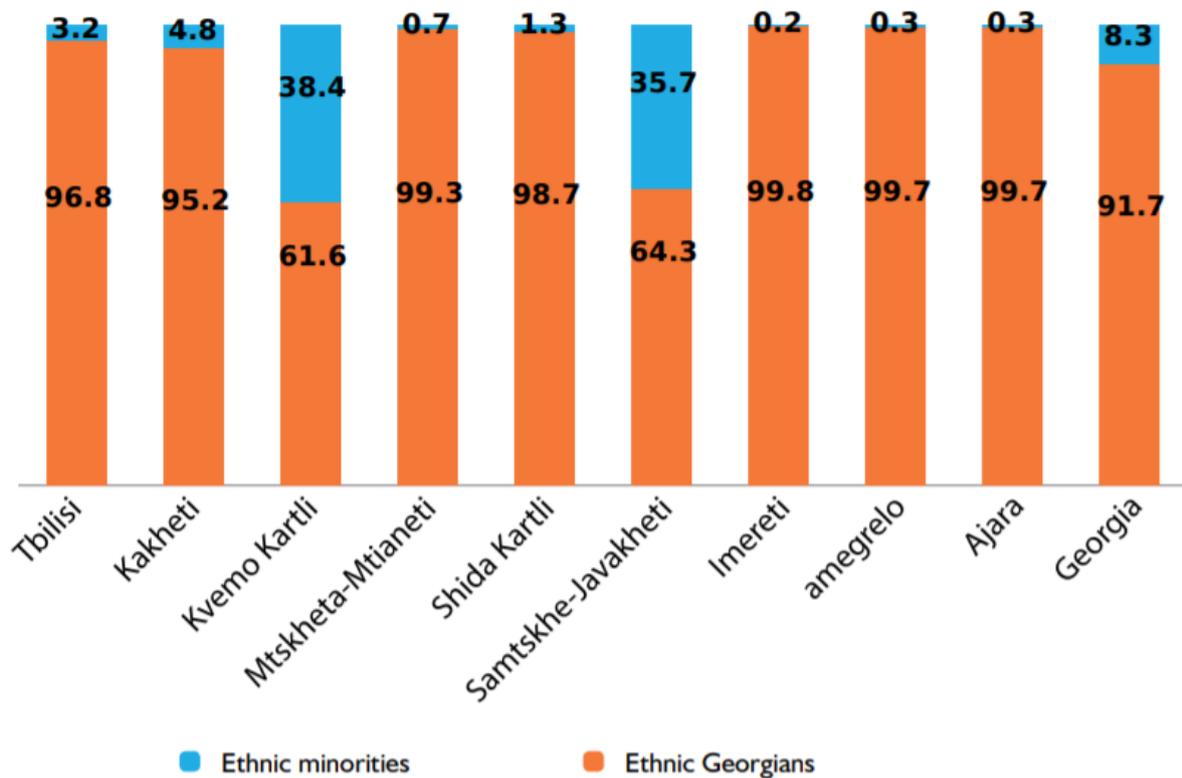
The findings of the research also demonstrate that sometimes even local government officials do not have sufficient information on state programs and other benefits. Moreover, sometimes they learn about these programs from journalists and do not have a comprehensive knowledge of applicable laws (Akhalkalaki, women, 9 participants, March 6, 2020). The same opinion was voiced by the focus group participants in Marneuli (Marneuli, Mixed, 7 participants, 20 February, 2020). Some focus group participants named the distance from the center as a reason behind the problem of access to information (Ninotsminda, Men, March 17, 2020), which points towards the gap between the center and the periphery.

The role of [political] parties in increasing political engagement of ethnic minorities

Ethnic minorities are underrepresented in Georgia's political parties. According to the section 1.4. of the 2015-2020 strategy, the state should encourage parties to include ethnic minorities in party lists. A similar initiative is the internship program implemented by the government for the youth in political parties. The Ministry, Public Defender's office and Georgia's international partners agree that active engagement of ethnic minorities in political parties is the responsibility of political parties themselves. Moreover, the government's objective is not simply an increase in the number of ethnic minorities in the legislative bodies of the government, but it is important to ensure "quality engagement and improvement of existing practices."^{xviii} Georgian political parties do not put much effort in engaging ethnic minorities in political processes, which is demonstrated by the fact that there is no, or just a symbolic representation of ethnic minorities in party lists. During the 2016 parliamentary elections of 850 majoritarian candidates only 34 were ethnic minorities. As for the proportional list of the party, there were only 12 MP candidates (Amirkhaniani, 2017). During the 2017 local government elections, only 399 out of 4796 majoritarian candidates were ethnic minorities (Kakhishvili, 2017). During local government elections the percentage of ethnic minority majoritarian candidates was 38.4% in Kvemo Kartli and 35.7% in Samtskhe-Javakheti (See Chart 3).

Chart 3. Proportion of Majoritarian Candidates by Ethnicity According to Regions during 2017 local self-government elections, Kakhishvili 2017. Available at: http://csem.ge/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Competing-for-Votes-of-Ethnic-Minorities_Eng.pdf

Chart 2: Proportion of Majoritarian Candidates by Ethnicity According to Regions



It is evident that Georgian political parties do not spend resources on attracting ethnic minorities into party politics.^{xix} It may be due to the lack of party resources; the influence of post-Soviet mentality;^{xx} or that some people may be under the influence of stereotypical attitudes, such as discussing ethnic minorities through the prism of security and cultural alienation. In the view of part of the respondents, parties excuse themselves by citing the lack of professional candidates,^{xxi} yet nothing is done for their preparation and development. There is also a belief that high representation of ethnic minorities in local governments and city councils is because there is a high concentration of ethnic minorities in some of the municipalities, and not because it is stimulated by either the state or political parties. It is also worth noting that over the years, there has been a tendency that ethnic minorities support ruling parties, saying "we are where the government and the state is."^{xxii} The fact that ethnic minorities practically equate the government and the state is also problematic. There is a possibility that similar deep-rooted attitudes are precisely the reason why opposition parties do not try to put sufficient effort and resources in the places that are densely populated with ethnic minorities during pre-election campaigns. On the other hand, parties have sufficient time to change these stereotypical attitudes before the pre-election campaign and win the

hearts of ethnic minority voters. Yet, the fact remains that they do not or cannot spend time, financial or human resources on it. The focus group participants named the buy-off of voters or manipulation with various social services as one of the reasons behind ethnic minorities' stable support for the government. According to their representatives, when local governments try to research the needs, they present the voters a choice and for instance, ask if they prefer solving the water problem or the problem of external lightening, which in fact is just a formality (Marneuli, Mixed, 7 participants, February 29, 2020). The population may have more acute needs, but those are not considered. What is more, sometimes populations are being denied social services if they do not agree on the suggestions of local governments (Marneuli, Mixed, February 29, 2020). Some of the participants highlighted pressure on civil servants and teachers including being forced to attend events organized by the local governments by threat of termination. The participants also mentioned the mobilization of acquaintances during elections, driving them to polling stations, and demanding a vote for a specific political actor (Akhalkalaki, Women, 9 participants, March 6, 2020), which points at fallacious electoral policy. Every focus group revealed that the discontent towards the government is growing among ethnic Armenian and Azerbaijani populations. In 2017, only 17% of ethnic minorities assessed the government negatively, while in 2019 this indicator had increased to 39% (Caucasus Research Resource Center, National Democratic Institute, Georgia 2017-2019). It needs to be noted that youth with higher education and knowledge of Georgian language, who have an access to the information on domestic political dynamic, are especially critical regarding political processes.

What does the population of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli do to solve local problems?

The media and civil society organizations are two major actors which locals turn to in order to voice their problems and advocate to the government (Kvemo Kartli, Youth Summit of 18-35-year old individuals, July 5, 2020). For the majority of focus group participants Georgia's close cooperation with the EU is the precondition for their proper participation in the decision-making process. It is important to note that the majority considers the EU to be a guarantor of equality, democracy, good governance and development. However, participants note that elderly and middle-aged populations have lost motivation, they are skeptical towards bottom-up activism or initiatives because they consider them to have negligible outcomes, while some prefer to be politically passive out of fear of the police. The youth are especially active and there are groups which volunteer to help older generations by translating for them so they can receive state services. A number of initiatives were named during the focus group discussions that gathered up to 5000 signatures via online petitions (Gardabani, Women, 4 participants, June 22, 2020); thanks to self-mobilization, community centers have been established in multiple villages in Kvemo Kartli which were active in spreading information during the COVID-19 quarantine and providing financial support to families. Some of the activists organize events for environmental protection and social demands while others attend local council meetings (Akhaltiskhe, Mixed, 6 participants, May 22, 2020). It is evident that youth with higher education and the knowledge of the Georgian language have real potential to increase the quality of political participation for ethnic minorities. However middle-aged

and elderly populations remain in an information vacuum, because they do not know the official language, they mostly rely on the goodwill of the youth to support them when receiving state services or voicing problems.

Barriers to political participation as seen by the ethnic minorities

One of the visible factors preventing civil and political integration of ethnic minorities is inequality between the center and the periphery. Historic hostility between ethnic Georgians and ethnic minorities as well as the lack of cultural and emotional bonds between ethnic minorities and the rest of Georgian society has damaged the prospect of integration. At the national level, participation cannot be increased if the problems are not solved locally and the political participation of ethnic minorities is not ensured. Members of the ethnic minority communities discuss the barriers and the reasons that prevent their direct participation in political processes at the local level. Every focus group participant named the language barrier as the primary challenge for all of their activities, starting with receiving state services (Akhalkalaki, Women, 9 participants, March 6, 2020) and ending with voicing ethnic minority interests and worries at the national level. From their standpoint, without knowing the official language, positioning is it is hard not only at the national level, but it is also hard to ensure effective political participation at the regional level. To a certain extent, this derives from the fact that decisions are mostly made in the center, pointing at the problem of decentralization. Political engagement without knowing the Georgian language is only possible in villages with majority ethnic minority settlements (Dmanisi, Men, 4 participants, June 22, 2020). Language barrier remains to be a challenge due to a number of circumstances, including the lack of good Georgian language specialists and insufficient financial resources in these regards (Samtskhe-Javakheti, Youth Summit, July 4, 2020). Ethnic minority representatives consider it essential to regularly monitor the quality of teaching Georgian language by teachers from Tbilisi (Marneuli, Mixed, 7 participants, February 29, 2020). The second problem linked to the language barrier relates to access to information. The issue is especially problematic with regards to political participation, as there are cases of misled voters or uninformed voting (Akhalkalaki, Women, 9 participants, March 6, 2020); as well as the problem of quality communication between constituents and political parties. Even the youth who speak Georgian do not have information on the opportunities of engaging with political parties (Samtskhe-Javakheti, Youth Summit, July 4, 2020). Due to the lack of information on free services, the population is regularly lied to, paying additional fees for services which should be provided and is especially true in the healthcare sector (Akhalkalaki, Women, 9 participants, March 9, 2020; Ninotsminda, Men, 10 participants, March 15, 2020). Nepotism, unskilled staff in civil service positions, and inequality are the primary challenges for the local population (*ibid*). It is important to note that similar cases are precisely the cause of mistrust and nihilism in the society towards the government, as well as towards the opposition parties.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The political integration of ethnic minorities remains a challenge in Georgia. Existing state programs and initiatives are not sufficient for the comprehensive implementation of the state strategy and action plan and for increasing the quality of political participation by ethnic minorities. The research findings demonstrate that the role of ethnic minorities in the decision-making process is merely a formality. Ethnic minorities are politically active in the villages of Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti, where they represent majority, while at regional and national levels, their political representation and quality of engagement is nominal. Negligible measures are implemented on the part of political parties to strengthen ethnic minorities politically and communication with them is weak. The major barrier to political participation for ethnic Armenian and Azerbaijani citizens is a lack of information and a lack of knowledge of the Georgian language, which aggravates inequality and seclusion. It will be important for Georgia to consider the best practices of European states in terms of ethnic minority integration; the EU delegation and other international partners can contribute significantly in that regard.

Recommendations to the Government of Georgia

- **The Georgian government should increase the number of qualified teachers of Georgian language** in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions where there are dense populations of ethnic minorities. Georgian language courses should be created and improved not only for youth, but also for middle-aged and elderly populations to ensure that the youth as well as elderly generations have equal opportunities;
- **In parallel to teaching the official language, the government should implement an active information campaign in regions with ethnic minority populations in Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani languages** to raise awareness about their rights to political participation, opportunities and other forms of civic involvement. **During the implementation of information campaigns, the central government should monitor the quality of information delivered by local governments.** This recommendation is based on the communication with the population, which demonstrated that the awareness on state programs and the opportunities for their political involvement is low. Moreover, it was evidenced that sometimes even local government representatives do not have a comprehensive knowledge of state programs, the possibilities for political participation, and relevant laws/regulations;
- In order to make the voices of ethnic minorities living in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti region heard at the national level, **it is important that face-to-face meetings with central government representatives are organized.** These recommendations are based on the discontent voiced by the focus group participants on the quality of local governments' communication and consultations with the population and doubt that the central government is aware of their concerns.

Recommendations for political parties

- **It is important that political parties take the responsibility of translating election programs into Armenian and Azerbaijani languages**, so that if they desire, ethnic minorities can read the promises in the language they understand as as to make an informed decision;
- **It is desirable that political parties work on the informal education programs with experts** on political, justice and civic matters. It will be the basis for the training program for young ethnic minority party members or potential party members to raise their political awareness and encourage political participation. As the ethnic minorities from focus group discussions and youth summits noted, parties often bring the issue of the lack of skilled candidates as an excuse, yet nothing is done to prepare and develop them. Therefore, if the critical discourse strengthens as a result of this program, the level of ethnic minorities' political participation may increase, and their electoral behavior may be altered;
- It will be a step forward if **political parties formulate their vision and complex action plan through active communication with ethnic minorities to contribute to national integration of ethnic minorities and their political participation**. Documenting these efforts will highlight parties' approach towards ethnic minority integration and will better inform voters on their vision.

Recommendations for the EU delegation and local NGOs

- **Call for grants announced by the public, business or non-governmental organizations that are in Georgian, should preferably be translated in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages as well**, until the problem of knowing the official language is overcome. This responsibility may be borne by the civil sector in agreement with the EU delegation to ensure timely translation of the announcements and the support of civil and political activities of ethnic minorities;
- In order to improve communication between political parties and ethnic minorities, the NGO sector, in cooperation with the EU delegation, should **coordinate meetings between party leaders and representatives of ethnic minorities twice a year and organize debates** in Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani languages;
- It would be effective if, with the initiative of the EU delegation, NGOs working on ethnic minority issues established a **ethnic minorities-related special common fast response agency**, responsible for timely registering the delays caused by the lack of information and later voicing these issues among the EU delegation, in the Parliament or in local municipal agencies.

ⁱ Youth Summits were held in ten regions of Georgia by the Georgian Institute of Politics and German organisation POLIS180 with the financial support of Federal Foreign Office of Germany. Young ethnic minority representatives were also participating in the events.

ⁱⁱ Information Center on NATO and EU, personal communication, 2020, May 22;

Information Center on NATO and EU, personal communication, 2020, May 19;

ⁱⁱⁱ Centre for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism, personal communication, 2020, May 21;

^{iv} Public Defender's Office, personal communication, 2020, May 19.

^v Council of National Minorities of the Public Defender of Georgia, personal communication, 2020, May 19.

^{vi} Council of National Minorities of the Public Defender of Georgia, personal communication, 2020, May 19.

^{vii} Council of National Minorities of the Public Defender of Georgia, personal communication, 2020, May 19.

^{viii} Council of National Minorities of the Public Defender of Georgia has been functioning since 2005.

^{ix} The EU delegation in Georgia, personal communication, 2020, May 19.

^x State Ministry of Reconciliation and Civic Equality, personal communication, 2020, May 20.

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^{xiii} Javakheti, local non-governmental organization, personal communication, 2020, June 21.

^{xiv} Public Defender's office, personal communication, 2020, May 19.

^{xv} Javakheti local government, personal communication, 2020, June 24.

^{xvi} Javakheti local NGO, personal communication, 2020, June 21;

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^{xvii} State Ministry of Reconciliation and Civic Equality, personal communication, 2020, May 20.

^{xviii} *Ibid*

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