



შენვითარებისა და დემოკრატიის ცენტრი
CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY

ELECTORAL SYSTEM REFORM 2020

According to the Association Agreement between Georgia and the European Union and the Association Implementation Agenda 2017-2020, one of the commitments for the Georgian Government was to ensure the democratic conduct of elections and the elimination of the shortcomings in electoral administration identified by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Due to this process, the need for electoral reform was on the agenda again.

The Parliament of Georgia started working on the electoral law reform in 2019. The first working meeting organized by the Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia was held on June 13, 2019, which was attended by the representatives of local and international organizations, political parties, and government bodies. The meeting defined a format of cooperation and started an active working discussion with the involvement of key stakeholders working on the election issues to discuss the recommendations prepared by the OSCE/ODIHR and local observer organizations.

During 2019 - 2020, 8 meetings of the working group were held in the above-mentioned format, and due to the epidemiological situation in the country, four of them were online. These working meetings were quite representative and fruitful, which, in the opinion of our organization, **DESERVES A POSITIVE ASSESSMENT.**

The Center for Development and Democracy (CDD) has been actively involved in the electoral reform process. Our organization made recommendations on the following key issues:

- Reviewing the rules of appointment for the election administration;
- Adopting norms regulating hate speech;
- Reviewing the grounds for dismissing the application/complaints without prejudice;
- Adopting clear regulation of pre-election campaign (agitation) rules and introduction of "Silence Day";
- Introducing a pre-registration mechanism for the category of voters who live at an address other than the place of their registration and do not want to change the registration address;
- Reducing the age limit for exercising passive voting rights;
- Ensuring the equal distribution of airtime;
- Adopting clear regulation of activities for the second round of elections;
- Reducing the terms for reviewing administrative complaints;
- Reviewing the grounds for the invalidity of the ballot paper.

At the same time, with the spread of Novel Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) infection (COVID-19), **CDD HAS DEVELOPED SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS** for a number of election measures to prevent the spread of the infection.

After reviewing the recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR and local observers, the Working Group on Electoral Reform initiated a draft amendment to the Organic Law of **GEORGIA ON THE ELECTION CODE** of Georgia on June 24, 2020.

Discussions on the draft law were held in an accelerated manner. During the committee hearings, the content of certain provisions in the bill was clarified, and a number of issues were added, including the welcome introduction of mandatory temporary quotas to increase the representation of women and the adoption of prevention measures for the spread of infection (COVID-19) caused by the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2).

On July 2, 2020, on the III reading, the Parliament of Georgia adopted amendments to the Organic Law of Georgia "Election Code of Georgia." It is welcome that some of the recommendations prepared by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), as well as by local observer organizations, including CDD, were taken into consideration in the working group format, which was later reflected in the Election Code of Georgia.

At the same time, it is noteworthy that the political actors of the country, with the involvement of international facilitators, concluded the negotiations by consensus and agreed on important issues for the country, such as: changing the electoral system; Funding of political parties; Introduction of a gender quota; Prevention of the use of administrative resources; Conducting election campaign on equal terms; Prohibition of voter will control in the vicinity of the polling station, etc. In our opinion, the agreement on these issues was a precondition for stabilizing the political process, promoting political pluralism, and improving the electoral environment.

Center for Development and Democracy (CDD) assesses the changes in the electoral system as a clear positive, as these changes will contribute to a more fair, competitive, and equitable environment for elections.

