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- Participation of national minorities in decision-making of amalgamated territorial communities (ATCs)

The impact of decentralization reform on national minorities

- **General assessment of the decentralization reform (DR)**
 - Overall positive (all categories of respondents).
 - More nuanced opinions among representatives of NGOs and umbrella organizations (UOs).
- **Access to information, awareness about DR & consultations**
 - Low quality (or even lack) of information; unstable legal framework.
 - Credibility gap, public scepticism, disinformation (Zakarpattia, Odesa).
 - Lack of consultation with minority organisations (Chernivtsi).

The impact of decentralization reform on national minorities

- **Minority issues in public debates during the amalgamation process**
 - Relevance of “ethnic factor” among
 - Divergent opinions among NGOs & UOs => both minority-related and context-related factors.
 - Significant differences between Odesa, Zakarpattya and Chernivtsi.
Odesa: “ethnic card” and “us vs them” narrow southern part; mainly technical & administrative criteria in the rest of the oblast.
Zakarpattya: “risk of separatism”; prejudice based on technical & administrative criteria + the position of minority communities.
Chernivtsi: no harsh debates on minority issues; focus on opportunities, economic development => ATCs based on mainly technical & administrative criteria.

The impact of decentralization reform on national minorities

- **Positive aspects, hopes and expectations**
 - Decisions closer to community; policies tailored to local needs; financial autonomy; improvement of infrastructure and services; decision-making on minority education, cross-border cooperation etc.
 - Positive aspects reported mainly by representatives of small and/or geographically dispersed national minorities.
- **Negative aspects, fears and concerns**
 - closure/downgrading of minority schools, impact on the use of minority languages in public sphere, loss of cultural identity, less influence on decision-making; lower representation of minorities at ATC level etc.
 - Most respondents mentioned some of these negative aspects, challenges or risks.

The impact of decentralization reform on national minorities

- **Tentative picture of ethnic composition of the established ATCs**
 - **Chernivtsi:** 52 ATCs; 16 of these ATCs have over 50% minority population.
 - **Zakarpattya:** 64 ATCs; no clear information on their ethnic structure; according to respondents most newly established ATC are polyethnic; at least 2 ATCs have over 50% minority population.
 - **Odesa:** 91 ATCs; no clear information on their ethnic structure; 7 districts and 1 one oblast status city in the southern part have over 50% minority population; 2 ATCs in this area have a significant minority population.

The impact of decentralization reform on national minorities

- **Use of minority languages in public sphere in the context of DR**
 - Divergent opinions among representatives of NGOs and UOs => different needs and expectations of national minorities.
 - Decentralisation and language policy reforms have different goals but an intertwined effect on national minorities.
 - Lack of awareness in the 3 oblasts about the intertwined impact on the use of minority languages; most respondents did not see changes.
 - Changes regarding the use of minority languages in public sphere => legal framework and language policy; what role for local authorities?

The impact of decentralization reform on national minorities

- **Education for national minorities in the context of DR**
 - Divergent opinions among representatives of NGOs and UOs => different needs and expectations of national minorities.
 - Decentralisation and education system reforms have different goals but an intertwined effect on national minorities.
 - High level of awareness about education-related issues in the 3 oblasts.
 - Teaching *in* or *of* minority languages in schools of ATCs => legal framework on education + request from local population + proactive role of local authorities

Participation of national minorities in decision-making of ATCs

- **Effective participation of national minorities** => *representation of, consultation with and influence of national minorities in decision-making.*
 - Without updated and reliable statistical and electoral data, it is hardly possible to assess the level of minority representation.
 - Divergent opinions regarding the impact of DR on representation but shared criticism of new electoral rules.
 - Lack of awareness and information regarding the impact of DR on minority representation; potential negative impact

Participation of national minorities in decision-making of ATCs

- Lack of awareness regarding how to translate representation into influence on the decision-making process.
- Most respondents noted a low level of activity and effectiveness of existing consultative bodies; but increasing interest in the 3 oblasts in engaging with new consultative and participatory mechanisms.
- Little or no information is available about participation of women, youth and other vulnerable groups.
- Need to enhance the capacities of local civil society and support civic projects and cross-community activities.

Thank you for your attention!

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