



Local Government Elections in Tatev, Tumanyan and Dilijan on February 14, 2016

Report on monitoring mission conducted by Civic Engagement in Local Government (CELoG) consortium

Executive Summary

Local government (LG) elections in Tatev, Tumanyan and Dilijan on February 14, 2016 were conducted for the first time after community consolidation.

The elections became an opportunity to monitor the application of the elections, as a primary participatory tool of the population, which is one of the major missions of CELoG project. The monitoring also allowed to analyze the attitude of the population towards local elections and local authorities after the consolidation of communities.

In this respect it was extremely important to ensure that the elections are free and fair. To contribute to this aim, CELoG consortium has organized three monitoring missions in three communities to observe the process of elections and evaluate the quality of the electoral process, the level of participation and to alert on violations and problems in case of their identification.

Overall the elections can be evaluated as free and fair, there were minor issues related to posting the sample bulletins in visible areas in polling stations, sealing the electoral boxes as requested by the electoral legislation, in some polling stations location of electoral booths was not in accordance with the requirements of the electoral code.

Organization of the mission

Ninety-two people were involved in the monitoring process (44 in Dilijan, 24 in Tatev, 21 in Tumanyan, 3 in Yerevan). CELoG consortium has recruited and trained monitoring participants from both CELoG consortium member organizations and EPF's InfoTun network.

The structure of the monitoring mission was the following:

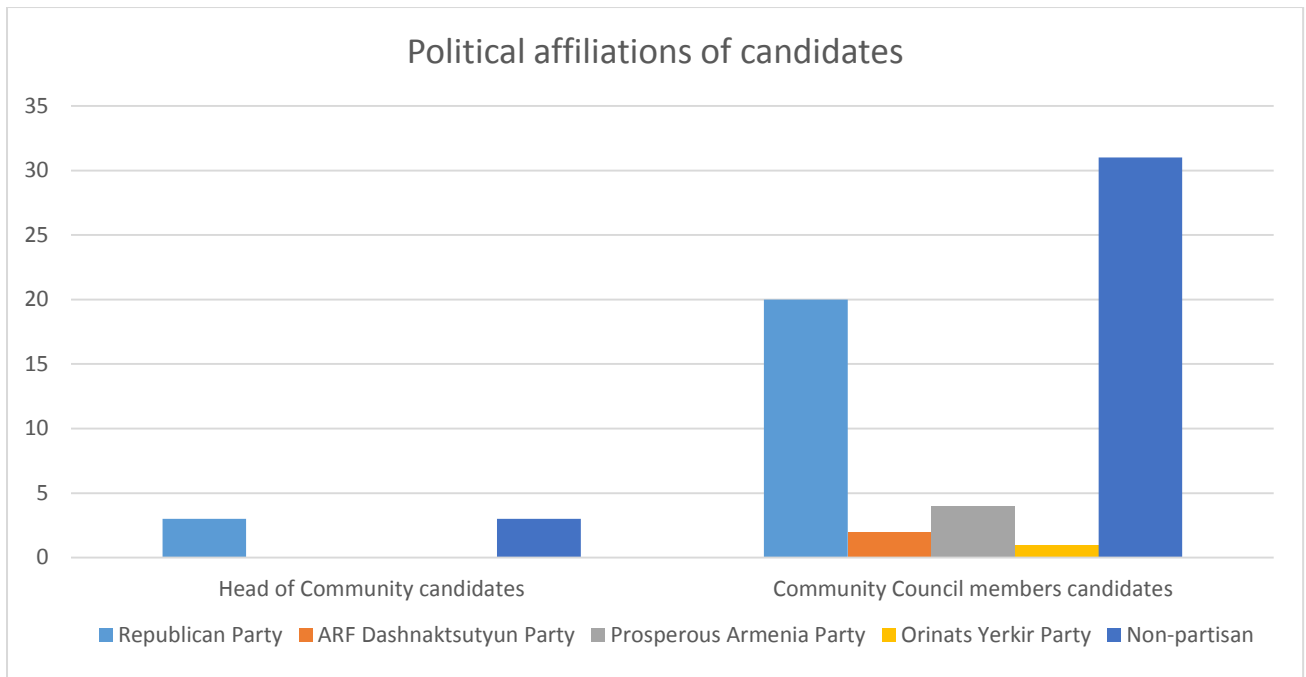
- Two monitoring participants in each electoral station
- Two mobile groups in each community
- One information center in each community
- One general information center in CFOA office in Yerevan

This structure allowed CELoG to have representatives in all polling stations throughout the election process including the vote counting, responding to any extraordinary situation in a short period of time, and collecting data on participation on a simultaneous basis. CELoG monitoring mission also coordinated its activities with Media for Informed Citizen Engagement (MICE) project, which on its part organized visit of journalists to each of the three communities during the elections.

General remarks

There were both positive and negative tendencies during the observations. Among positive observations it can be stated that there were no major violations during the day of the elections and the vote counting process. Another positive impression was the fact that the perception of importance of the community council members among the population of smaller settlements has increased. The population of the smaller settlements came to understanding that the community council members are the only representatives of their settlements in LGs. In this respect in smaller settlements there was a tendency to consolidate around particular candidates to ensure their representation in community councils. Finally, the positive effect of the CELoG monitoring mission was the somewhat shocking effect on representatives of local electoral commissions, since there are few cases that non-community organizations implement monitoring of local elections (Transparency International Anti-corruption Center has started observing local elections in 2013 in some of the communities) and made them act more in accordance with the regulations, such as not allowing more than 15 voters at the same time in the electoral station, or informing police about crowding of big number of people in front of the electoral station as observed in several cases in Dilijan community.

Among drawbacks the lack of political competition should be mentioned. Apart from representatives of ruling parties there were many non-partisan candidates and a few representatives of ARF Dashnaktsutyun, Orinats Yerkir or Prosperous Armenia party among community council member candidates. The chart below illustrates the division of candidates according to their political affiliations.



In the future this factor may particularly challenge the political pluralism, if and when local councils begin to form on proportional election basis, according to amended Constitution. Another drawback was the absence of women among community head candidates and limited number of women candidates for community council members of which only one was elected in Tumanyan community.

Elections in Tatev Community

Three candidates for mayor and 12 community council candidates were nominated in Tatev community. To monitor the elections in 8 polling stations of the community CELoG has mobilized a group of 24 people including CFOA staff and Goris InfoTun. Prior to Election Day Goris InfoTun has organized a briefing for its participants as well as has organized a debate for candidates for the position of the head of the community. This debate was first in its kind in LG elections in Syunik region and a good precedent for other communities in future.

All members of CELoG monitoring mission were acting as representatives of media outlets involved in the project: Asparez Daily, Asparez online and Community-CELoG newspaper.

Overall the elections were free and fair, however, there were several issues that need further improvement. One of the most common issues was the big number of voters who requested assistance due to problems with eyesight. Moreover, these were not necessarily older people but also middle-aged people who did not bring optical eyeglasses.

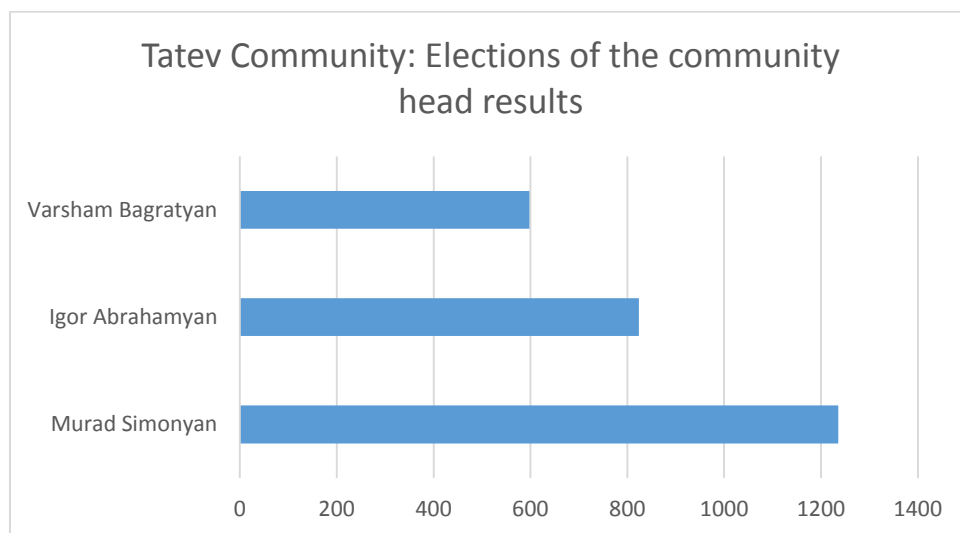
CELoG representatives were present throughout the whole duration of elections and during the vote counting process.

Below is the Table illustrating participation per polling station:

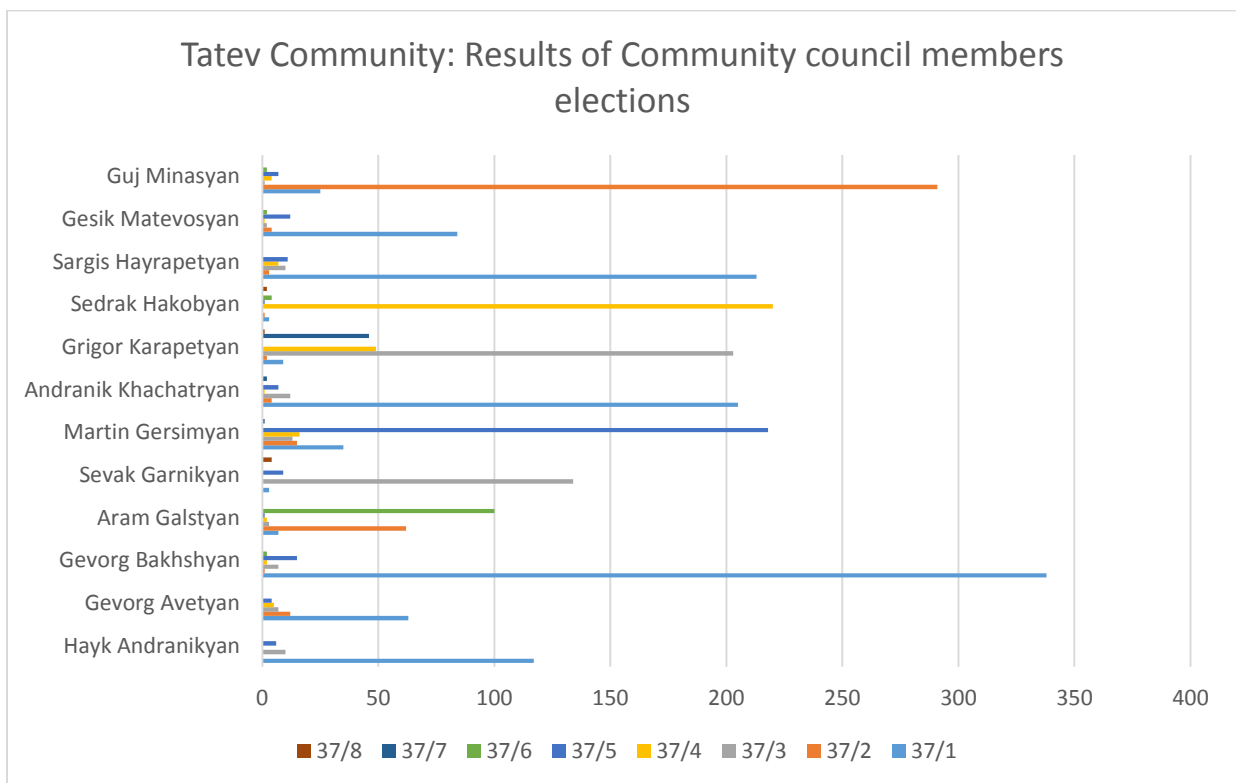
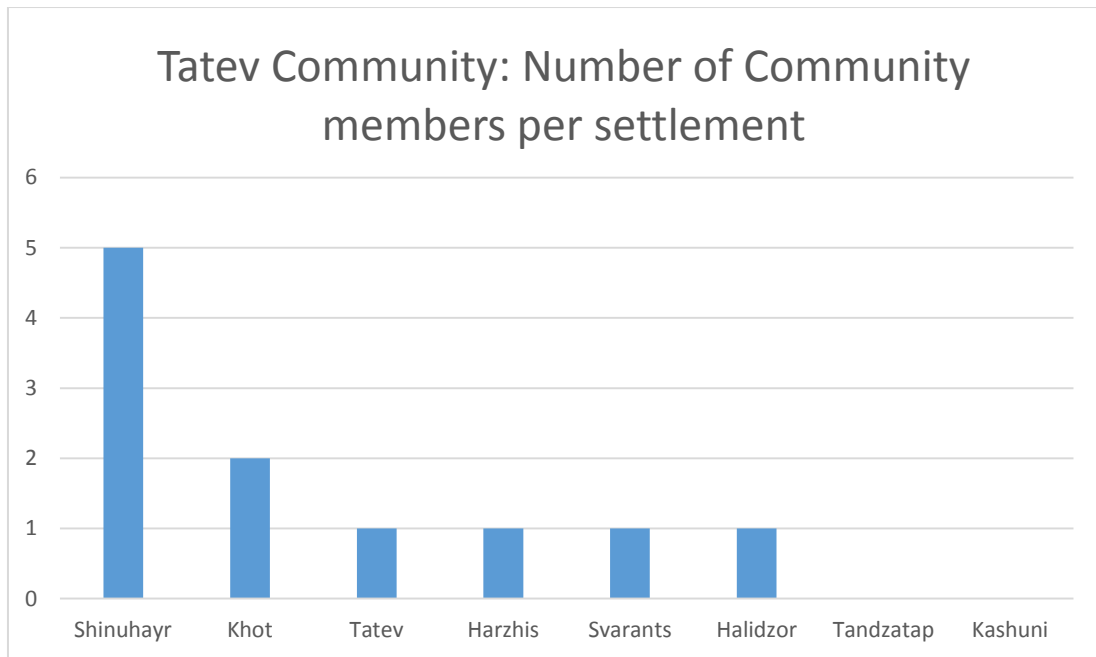
Settlement	Polling station	# of people with voting right	# of actual voters	% of participants (voter turnout)
Shinuhayr	37/1	1771	1130	63.81
Tatev	37/2	653	401	61.41
Khot	37/3	652	414	63.50
Harzhis	37/4	569	313	55.01
Halidzor	37/5	444	300	67.57
Svarants	37/6	221	114	51.58
Tandzatap	37/7	69	50	72.46
Qashuni	37/8	16	7	43.75
Total		4395	2729	62.09

The former head of village Tatev Mr. Murad Simonyan has collected 1236 votes and became the new head of community (mayor), which compared to two other elections is a specific case, since the representative of a smaller settlement won the elections.

Below is the chart illustrating the results of elections of community head in Tatev.



Another important factor worth mentioning is the fact that the representation of community council membership by settlement is largely in favor (5 out of 11 members of community council) of Shinuhayr community illustrated in the chart below.



Elections in Tumanyan Community

One candidate for mayor and 14 community council candidates were nominated for elections in Tumanyan community. CELoG monitoring mission led by Yerevan Press Club consisted

of 21 participants from YPC, Gyumri InfoTun, Vanadzor Infotun and conducted monitoring in 7 polling stations.

Prior to the Election Day Vanadzor InfoTun hosted all members of the monitoring mission where all organizational issues were discussed. Since all participants had past experience in electoral observation, there was no need for additional training.

During the Election Day CELoG activists were present throughout the electoral process including the vote count.

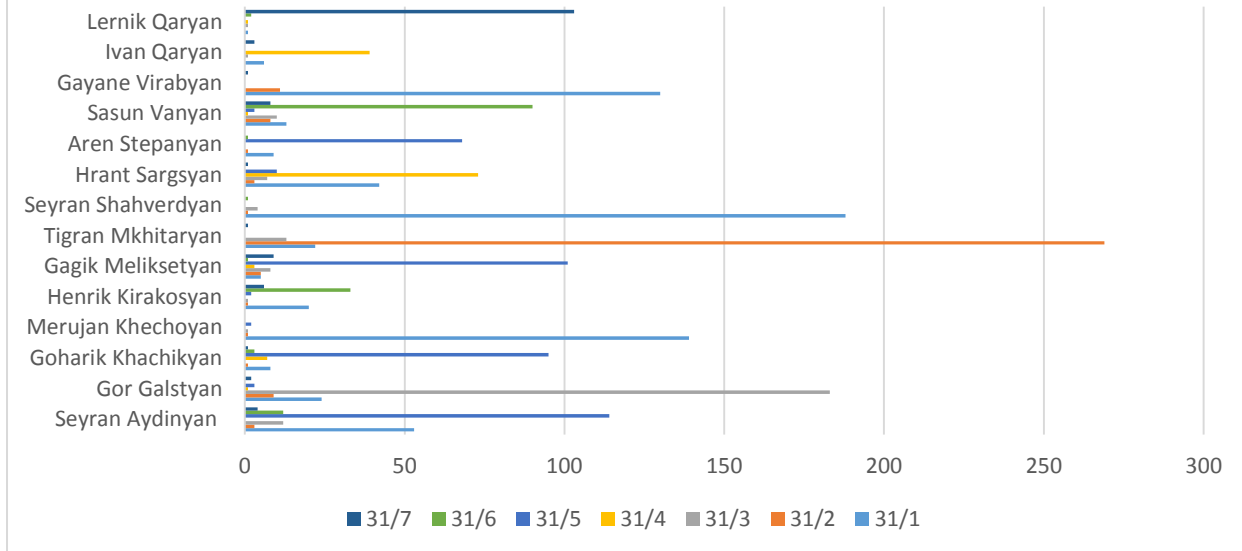
Despite the fact that overall elections were in line with the requirements of the electoral code there were several issues such as directing voters, crowding of people in front of polling stations. The major negative fact related to the elections in Tumanyan community was the lack of competition, the only candidate for the position of the mayor was Levon Zavaryan the acting head of the town of Tumanyan, who was elected with 1678 (81.2%) votes. It is also worth mentioning that although the overall voter turnout was quite high (56.3%) the least active was Tumanyan (45.6%) which is the biggest settlement of the community.

Below is the Table illustrating participation per polling station:

Settlement	Polling station	# of people with voting right	# of actual voters	% of participants (voter turnout)
Tumanyan	31/1	1524	695	45.60
Karinj	31/2	482	325	67.43
Marts	31/3	384	254	66.15
Ahnidzor	31/4	184	128	69.57
Lorut	31/5	707	402	56.86
Shamut	31/6	237	149	62.87
Atan	31/7	207	141	68.12
Total		3725	2094	56.21

It is also worth mentioning that all settlements apart from the smallest Atan settlement obtained representatives in the community council.

Tumanyan Community: Results of Community council members elections



Elections in Dilijan Community

Two candidates for the mayor and 32 candidates for local community council were running in the elections of Dilijan community. The total number of electoral precincts in Dilijan community was 19: 11 in Dilijan, 1 in Teghut, 2 in Haghatsrin, 2 in Gosh, 1 in Aghavnavanq, 1 in Khachardzan and 1 in Hovq. The total number of monitoring participants was 44 of which 38 were equally distributed among 19 electoral precincts. There were two monitoring participants in each electoral precinct. The additional two groups with 3 monitoring participants were following the local election process as mobile monitoring groups. The monitoring participants were the members of Infotuns: 30 from Ijevan Infotun, 4 from Armavir Infotun and 2 from Ararat Infotun. The rest of the 8 monitoring participants were from EPF staff. All of them were representing Asparez Daily or Asparez Online.

Before the Election Day all the monitoring participants participated in a training organized by EPF in Ijevan Infotun. All necessary documents and manual of monitoring participants were distributed to the participants. On February 14, from the very beginning of the elections, the mobile monitoring groups were touring in all electoral precincts of Dilijan community. During the visits several omissions were identified by the monitoring participants, which they presented to the chairpersons of the electoral commissions in the electoral precincts. After the end of the elections in Dilijan community, the monitoring participants were following the counting of ballots papers and the itinerant monitoring groups were recording the results

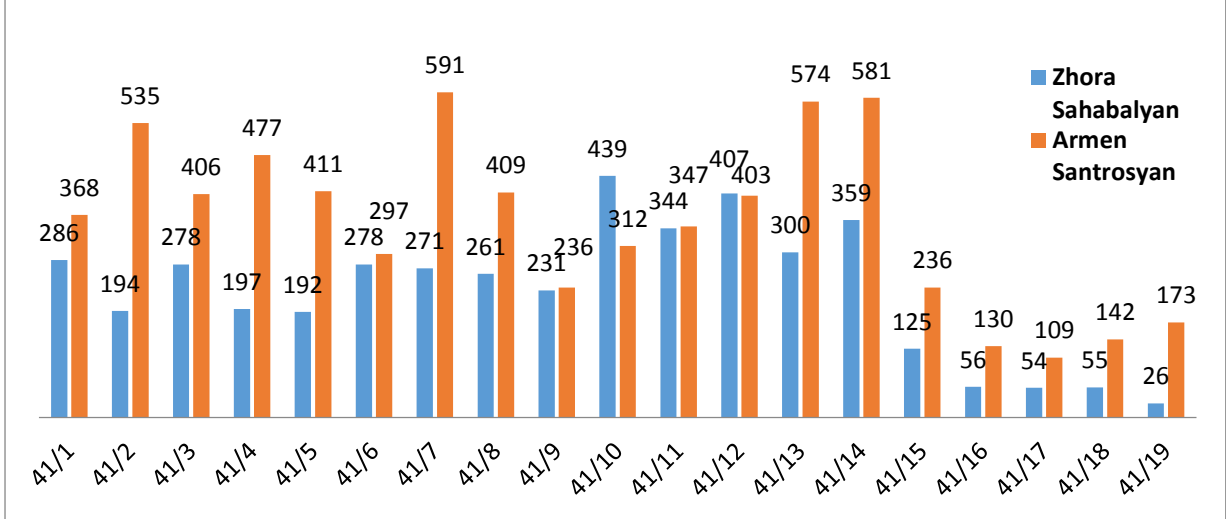
provided by the monitoring participants. Based on the initial results the EPF staff created infographics and shared the results with Consortium members and via the Social Media.

Below is the Table illustrating participation per polling station:

Settlement	Polling station	# of people with voting right	# of actual voters	% of participants (voter turnout)
Dilijan	41/1	1371	675	49.23
	41/2	1183	765	64.67
	41/3	1286	700	54.43
	41/4	1320	702	53.18
	41/5	1292	634	49.07
	41/6	1146	605	52.79
	41/7	1773	919	51.83
	41/8	1327	698	52.60
	41/9	990	547	55.25
	41/10	1536	790	51.43
	41/11	1478	732	49.53
Teghut	41/12	1145	840	73.36
Haghartsin	41/13	1402	905	64.55
	41/14	1566	995	63.54
Gosh	41/15	553	369	66.73
	41/16	269	187	69.52
Khachardzan	41/17	185	171	92.43
Aghavnavanq	41/18	373	202	54.16
Hovk	41/19	313	209	66.77
Total		20508	11645	56.78

The results for the elections of the head of the community are illustrated in the following chart.

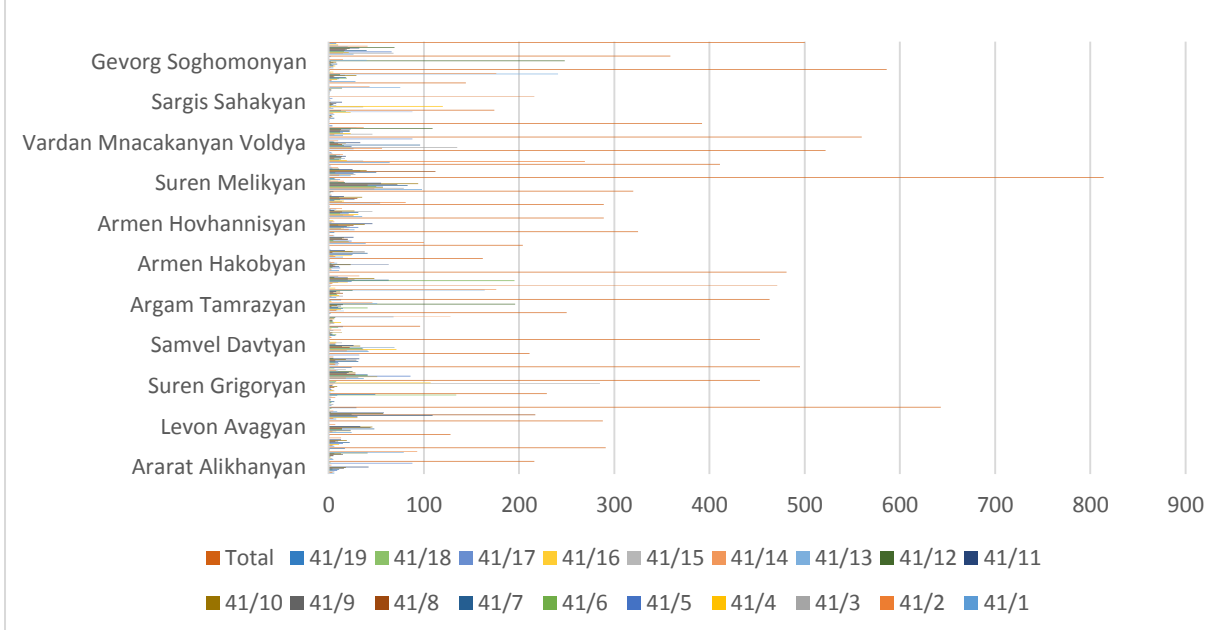
Elections of the Mayor (Dilijan), February 14, 2016



As it can be seen the winning candidate Armen Santrosyan has lost only in two precincts 41/10 and 41/13.

The results of community council elections are described in the chart below.

Dilijan Community: Results of Community council members elections



Summary and Conclusions

Despite the fact that LG elections monitored by CELoG consortium in Tumanyan, Tatev and Dilijan communities can be evaluated as mainly free and fair, there is still significant range for improvement in terms of both organization of the electoral process and increasing the role of local elections in perceptions of the population. It is desirable to strengthen the importance of local elections for constituents and make them more competitive.

Below are several conclusions made after monitoring LG elections in Tatev, Tumanyan and Dilijan communities.

- As compared to national elections where ballot stuffing, multiple voting and other violations are periodically being reported by observers, these LG elections can be perceived as mainly free and fair.
- The monitoring mission observed lack of political competition during the local elections, in all three communities the overwhelming majority of candidates were either non-partisan or representing the ruling party.
- There is a tendency of electorate consolidation in smaller settlements aimed at ensuring their representation in community councils, which can benefit small localities in case their representatives work effectively.
- The level of voter turnout in smaller settlements was much higher than in larger ones.
- The participation of women in politics on local level was extremely low.
- CELoG consortium was able to rapidly mobilize and coordinate young people at the local level to take part in monitoring. This illustrates significant potential and capacity for civil society that can be effectively used for monitoring or observing electoral processes.
- Involvement of non-community based organizations in electoral observation process can be an effective tool for ensuring transparency of the local elections.