



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS FOR FREE ELECTIONS

Elections of members of Local Councils of the Republic of Belarus of the twenty-eighth convocation

Report on the results of monitoring the registration of nomination groups

Observation is carried out by the Belarusian Helsinki Committee and the Human Rights Center "Viasna" in the framework of the campaign "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections".¹

The observation campaign involves 29 long-term observers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- one of the ways to nominate candidates for local councils is the nomination by collecting signatures and the registration of nomination groups is the first step before the start of signature-collecting;
- according to the CEC, 17,542 nomination groups were registered, which is 99.9% of the total number of nominations. In the previous elections to the local councils of 2014, the registration percentage was 99.7%;
- the election commissions did not create significant obstacles to the registration of nomination groups, with almost all groups having been registered. It should be noted that the election authorities registered all the groups formed to nominate members of political parties.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

In accordance with Art. 60 of the Electoral Code, the right to nominate candidates for deputies of local councils belongs to political parties, labor collectives and citizens (through signature-collecting). Candidates for deputies of local councils may be nominated by citizens residing or working in the territory of the respective local council, as well as working in organizations located in the territory of another local council, but related to the provision of public needs and social development of the territory of the local council.

The nomination of candidates for local councils is carried out by a group of voters (nomination group) consisting of 3 to 10 people (Art. 65 of the Electoral Code).

According to Art. 65 of the Code, to register a nomination group, the person who intends to run should submit the following documentation to the corresponding district or territorial election commission:

a written application indicating the name, date of birth, position (occupation), place of work and residence, and party affiliation;

a copy of the passport proving the citizenship of the Republic of Belarus and the registration on the territory of the Republic of Belarus;

¹ Belarusian Helsinki Committee, <http://belhelcom.org>; HRC "Viasna", <http://spring96.org/>

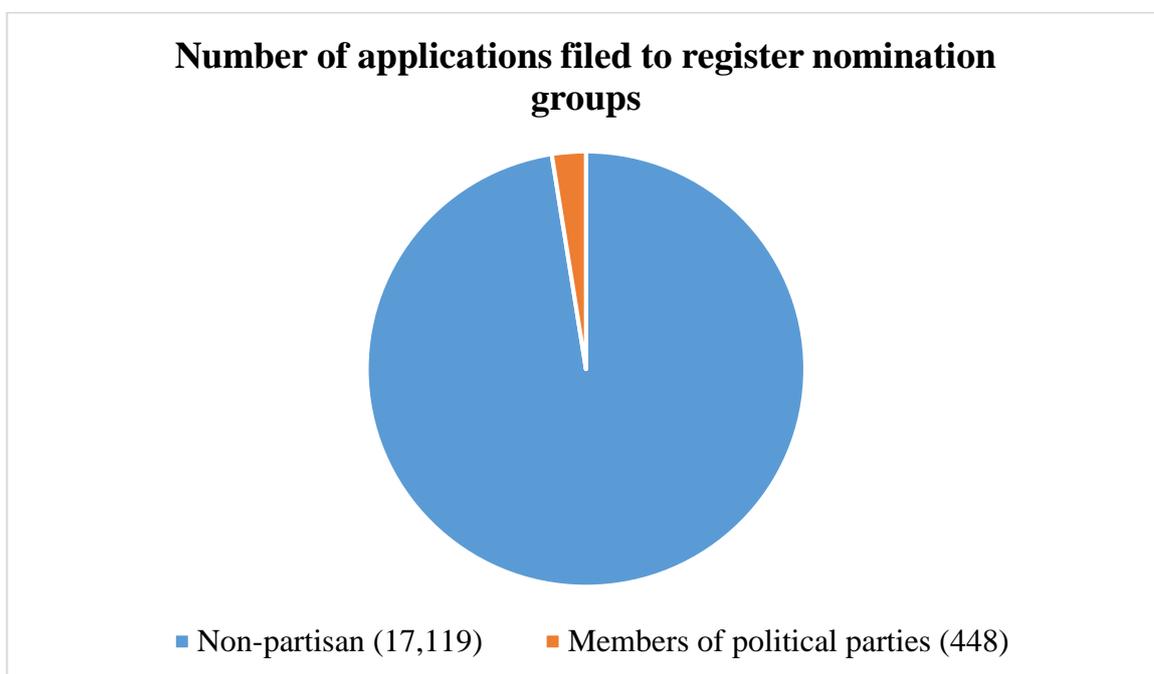
a list of members of the nomination group, including their names, date of birth, place of residence, passport series and number. The list also includes the name of the person proposed for nomination as a candidate. The list shall be submitted in printed form.

In accordance with the Electoral Schedule², the submission of documents should be completed no later than 14 December 2017. The registration of nomination groups, issuing certificates and signature sheets should be finalized within five days from the date of receipt the application.

SUBMISSION OF DOCUMENTS FOR THE REGISTRATION OF NOMINATION GROUPS

The submission of documents for the registration of nomination groups took place in accordance with the Schedule and ended on December 14.

According to the CEC³, the election commissions received 17,566 applications. Among those nominated as candidates by collecting signatures, 97.4% are non-partisan, and only 2.6% — members of 12 political parties. Compared with 2014, this year's elections showed an increase in the total number of applications (1,500) and the number of party members nominated as candidates (almost 2 times).

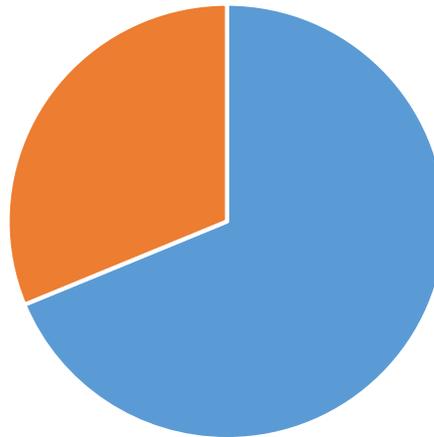


Of the political parties, the greatest activity was demonstrated by the Communist Party of Belarus — 41.5%, the Republican Party of Labor and Justice — 18.5%, and the United Civil Party — 9.4%.

² <http://www.rec.gov.by/sites/default/files/pdf/Elections-MS28-post32.pdf>

³ http://rec.gov.by/sites/default/files/pdf/Elections-MS28-elect_14-15.pdf

Number of applications filed by members of political parties



■ Pro-government (308) ■ Opposition (140)

Political parties use nomination by collecting signatures, since their nomination opportunities are limited by the need to have a registered local office. A significant motive for nomination by collecting signatures was the fact that the collection of signatures provides an additional opportunity to communicate with the voters and campaign for the potential candidate.

REGISTRATION OF NOMINATION GROUPS

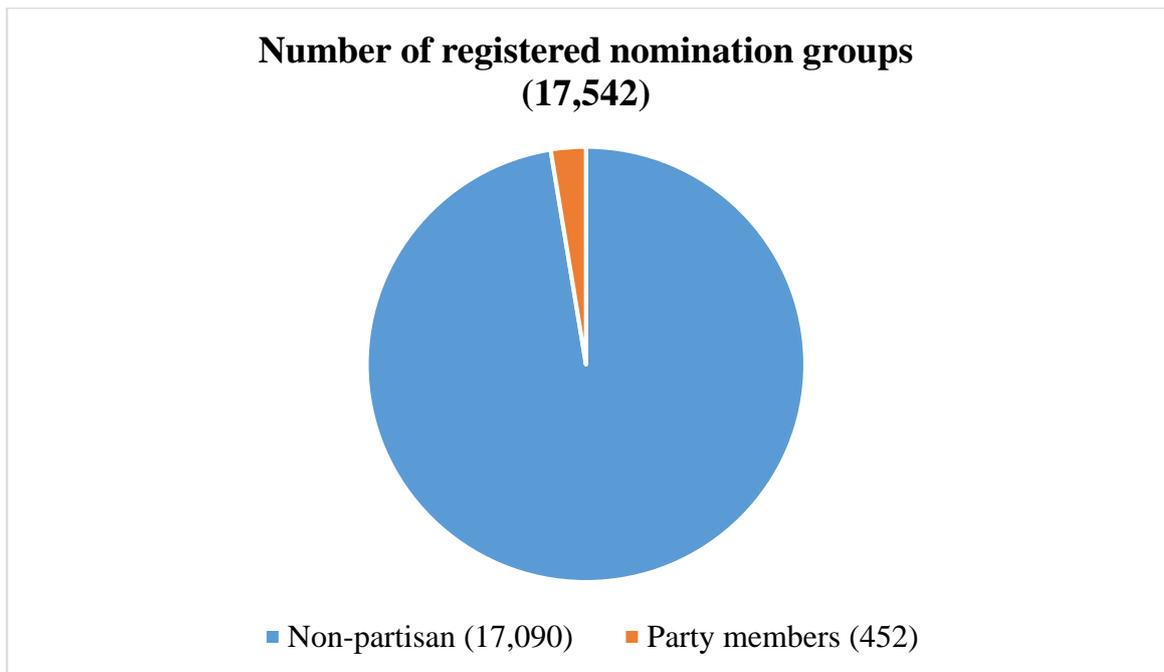
The registration of nomination groups and the issuance of certificates and signature sheets to members of these groups took place according to the Schedule. The CEC reports⁴ that 17,542 nomination groups were registered. As few as 16 nomination groups were denied registration, 7 applications were withdrawn and 1 application was not considered. It should be noted that all the nomination groups formed to nominate members of political parties have been registered; refusals of registration only affected non-party nominees.

Compared to the previous elections, the number of failures in the registration of nomination groups decreased by more than 2 times. This is due, among other things, to the fact that during the last local elections the election commissions made an active use of a newly adopted provision allowing the running of a candidate in only one electoral district. When a person submitted applications for the registration of their nomination groups in several districts, district election commissions ruled to refuse the registration of all of the person's nomination groups.

During the current elections, there were no cases of refusing to register a nomination group on the grounds of applying for registration in several districts.

Thus, 2.6% of the total number of registered nomination groups are those formed to nominate party members and 97.4% — non-partisan nominees.

⁴ http://rec.gov.by/sites/default/files/pdf/Elections-MS28-elect_18-19.pdf



Observers of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders For Free Elections” report that the election commissions in most cases did not create obstacles to the registration of nomination groups.

In several cases, the registration of nomination groups was denied because of the nominee’s criminal conviction. It was for this reason that the Rečyca district election commission refused to register two groups of *Tell the Truth* campaign. The Viciebsk city election commission refused to register a group formed to nominate Dzmitry Dycher, after it found an error in the submitted documents (the application indicated electoral number 48, while there are only 40 districts located in cities).

According to the observers, the registration of nomination groups was marked by several flaws, e.g. in the Orša district commission⁵. The commission registered a nomination group of Sviataslau Chernikau, head of the Radunskaje agricultural enterprise, who specified his party affiliation as the “Belaya Rus party”. After observers of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders For Free Elections” objected that there is no such party in the country, the commission agreed but did not change its decision, promising to look into the matter.

⁵ <http://elections2018.spring96.org/be/news/88620>