

Political Institutions Interactive Assessment

Multilateral and Bilateral Programmes
Georgia 2005



In partnership with the ODIHR and the CIPDD

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1. Executive summary

The enhancement of democratic political institutions is crucial for the sustainability of democracy. A concise identification and analysis of the current situation of a country's political institutions is part of its democratization process. Political parties are central among those institutions.

Since 2004, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has increasingly concentrated on the central role played by political parties in ensuring effective democratic governance, in particular in countries undergoing democratic reforms. It was keen to identify an effective non-partisan approach towards strengthening democratic practices within political parties in the OSCE region.

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD) has developed this approach as a standardized Political Institutions Interactive Assessment tool. Its main function is to give structure to the interactive process between the different actors, and in which process political parties themselves produce the picture and diagnosis of their own organizations. The process provides the analytical basis upon which future co-operation and technical assistance programmes can be built. The assessment ends with a conference where a final report is presented and the way forward is discussed with all the stakeholders, to ensure local ownership of the following processes.

The assessment is conducted in three different phases.

First, it focuses on the identification of the three main local stakeholders: the academics responsible for conducting the assessment; the political people who will represent the selected political parties during the assessment; and the independent people who will give advice about the issues to study and the way to look at the results. The development of local research capacity in the country concerned is the main target in this phase. This is done by designing a methodology for the research and analysis in co-operation with the two active actors in the assessment process, the local Assessment Team and the Political Parties Representatives Group. Both groups are trained by the IMD and experts from various universities in the Netherlands.

The second phase starts with a multiparty conference that is devoted to the relation between political parties and the State. Then, a number of interactive workshops are organized in various parts of the country, involving a variety of representatives from political parties and civil society. Extra attention is given to relatively unrepresented parts of the population such as young people and women.

These activities produce the information to be used for further elaboration during the third phase of the programme. At the end of this phase, a publication, which includes an analysis and recommendations, is presented and discussed during a national conference.

An independent Advisory Group, composed of experts from civil society and economic, academic, political and cultural sectors, is consulted about the objectives and methods of the research project. The Advisory Group also monitors the whole assessment project and gives advice to the assessment team about its proceedings.

2. Introduction

This brochure explains the organizational structure and the methodology for the assessment process developed by the IMD for its programmes, in particular for the Multilateral and Bilateral Programmes: The Political Institutions Interactive Assessment.

Before starting a country programme, the IMD identifies the demand for, and the possible local ownership of, a potential programme, and maps existing activities undertaken by other international organizations, to design a programme with respect to content and organizational needs.

The IMD is an institute based on inter-party co-operation in the Netherlands with the mandate to support political parties in young or emerging democracies while also helping to consolidate multiparty democracies. As such, the IMD works in principle with all legally registered political parties (and political groupings) in partner countries, including both governing and opposition parties. The IMD favours systems of multiparty democracy but is impartial in supporting political parties.

3. Organizational structure

The organizational structure of the Political Institutions Interactive Assessment incorporates a number of both internationally and nationally based partner organizations. The organizational bodies that are formed for each assessment are also reviewed in this chapter.

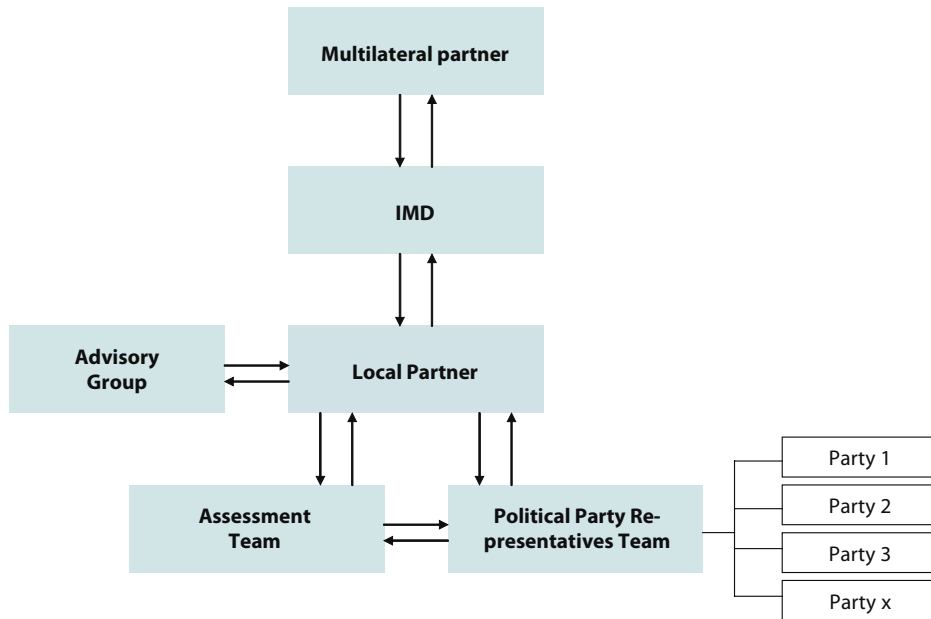


Figure 1: Political Assessment Framework – Organizational Structure

The IMD

The IMD in The Hague is directly responsible for the management of each assessment project. The IMD appoints a general manager and a policy officer to a country. The manager reports directly to the multilateral partner, and the local partner reports to the IMD. The IMD is responsible for the content of the project, the methodology development and the planning of training sessions, workshops and conferences.

Some organizational tools that are used by the IMD to streamline and manage the communication incorporate detailed *working plans* for the Assessment Team, *terms of reference* for each of the organizational bodies, an *interactive methodology* for the assessment process itself, and a proposed *table of contents* for the final report.

Multilateral and bilateral partners

The first step in the development of the organizational structure is the identification of the multilateral and/or bilateral partner(s). Preferably, these partners are non-political, internationally-based organizations such as the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) or other regional organizations, but also bilateral agencies or diplomatic representations. A contract between the (donor) partner(s) and the IMD defines

the working regulations for each assessment. The IMD is responsible for the execution and management of the project.

The ODIHR has a strong case for playing an active role in strengthening democratic practices in political parties because of:

- its extensive experience and high political profile at the crucial intersection between government and civil society. Political parties are one of the most important interfaces between the two;
- its credibility and neutrality (political but non-partisan) as an authoritative inter-governmental organization that can provide an umbrella for political parties in the form of a cross-spectrum, multiparty democratization programme;
- its capacity to mobilize all relevant expertise; and
- mandates that cover the areas necessary for effective political party work (democratic governance, legislative transparency, equal participation of women and men, elections, freedom of association and peaceful assembly, etc.).

The ODIHR contacted the IMD in 2004, recognizing that the change in leadership in Georgia had opened an important window of opportunity for strengthening democratic practices in the country. In order to answer to Georgia's aspiration of becoming a full member of the community of European democracies, it needs to develop new political institutions or modernize its existing ones. It also needs a strong and socially embedded democratic political culture.

Local partner

The IMD collaborates with independent local partner organizations to enhance local ownership of the programme. Working with these independent partners is essential in politically sensitive environments. The local partner can be a think tank, a regional institute, or an NGO in the field of development and democracy assistance. In the case of Georgia, this partner is the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD).

Assessment Team

The Assessment Team is responsible for the research activities in the country concerned. The team will also organize and coordinate the workshops and the multiparty conferences (see methodology). In addition, the Assessment Team produces and presents the final analysis 'Political Institutions: Analysis and Recommendations' at the end of this project.

The team operates under the co-ordination of a local project coordinator. The team ideally consists of three academics, not affiliated to any political party. Before any initial assessment activities take place, the team presents a working plan to the IMD Project Manager.

The team conducts the assessment in close coordination with a group of representatives from participating political parties. Both the Assessment Team and the Political Party Representatives Team first receive a training session in the Netherlands. The aim of this training session is to incorporate country specific issues into the IMD's Framework for Democratic Party Building. That framework constitutes the methodological basis of the political assessment. In addition, the training session is meant to create a shared strategy for the actual research activities themselves.

Political Party Representatives Team

In order to create a clear picture of the political party system from within, political parties are invited to participate in the Assessment Team. In addition, ownership is ensured by working directly with the parties. Only that way can a sustainable follow-up be guaranteed upon the delivery of the final report. Parties are selected on the basis of clearly defined criteria: the party must either be represented in parliament, have received more than x % of the votes in the last election and in that sense be a relevant political faction, represent an important group of the population or regional part of the country, etc.

Each of the parties then appoints a representative to the Political Party Representatives Team that will collaborate with the Assessment Team.

The representative should be a political operator within the party, with considerable expertise and knowledge of the structures and procedures of the party. He or she must have enough time available for the operational side of the assessment activities. He or she must also be able and willing to work with representatives from other parties. Finally, the representative must be proficient in English.

The Political Party Representatives Team meets regularly with the Assessment Team to discuss issues and cross-party activities (such as the training session and the multiparty conferences). Each party representative will also collaborate bilaterally with the Assessment Team with regard to 1) the identification of issues of particular relevance for his or her party to assess; 2) the identification of the party's branches throughout the country where the workshops will take place; and 3) co-operation in the organization of those workshops.

Advisory Group

Each political assessment is monitored by an independent Advisory Group. Its meetings are technically chaired by the coordinator of the Assessment Team. Each Advisory Group consists of eight to ten representatives of different sectors of society (lawyers, journalists, specialists in territorial conflict, women's rights activists, academics in political science, representatives of think tanks, etc.). The Advisory Group meets about four times a year. The role of the Advisory Group is to advise the Assessment Team in its research process. It has no influence on the content of the assessment itself. The information that is discussed during the meetings will be treated confidentially.

4. Methodology

Each political party assessment is carried out in an interactive way. The research is done by both the Assessment Team and the Political Party Representatives Team. This way, it is ensured that the political landscape is assessed *from within* the party organizations.

Due to the interactive character of the assessment, the number of stakeholders involved, the nature of the research (both quantitative and qualitative), and the level of detail, the duration of each assessment is set to one year. This year is divided in three phases of four months each.

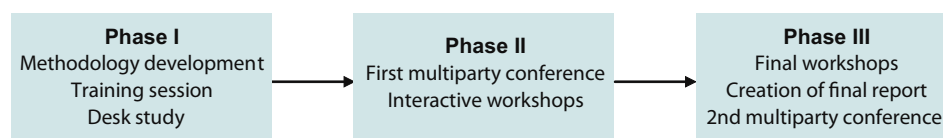


Figure 2: Phases of the Political Assessment

A framework for democratic party building

The basis for the content of the assessment is the IMD's handbook 'A Framework for Democratic Party Building'. The handbook detailed theories about and experience with the institutional development of political parties gathered by IMD with from academics and practitioners from Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia, which has evolved into tentative guidelines for putting these criteria into practice.

The key indicators that determine the degree of institutional development of political parties divide into three categories:

Institutional Party Development	Party-Party System Nexus	Party-Civil Society Relationship
Organizational strength	Legal framework	Institutional linkages
Internal democracy	Level of fragmentation	Confidence-building
Electing capacity	Level of polarization	Professional mass media
Political identity	Democratic practices	Civic education
Internal unity	Level of volatility	Collaborative exchanges
Women's participation		

Training session

In Phase I of the assessment, both the Assessment Team and the Political Party Representatives Team are requested to participate in a two-day training session. The aim of the session is threefold: 1) to address issues specific to the country or region, together with a number of guest speakers, 2) to adapt the IMD framework to the country specific situation, and 3) to engage in team building, since the Assessment Team and the Political Party Representatives Team have to do the research together.

Questionnaire and issues

The content of the training session and the resulting debates on the country's specific political situation are incorporated in the framework for democratic party building. Subsequently, qualitative and quantitative research questions are derived from this framework. This is done by the Assessment Team, in co-operation with the IMD.

Next to the creation of the country-specific questionnaire, the Assessment Team also prepares a list of topics for discussion for the workshops and multiparty conferences. This is done in co-operation with the Political Party Representatives Group.

Desk study

One important part of the assessment is the analytical desk study that is carried out *before* and *during* the assessment.

First of all, the Assessment Team is asked to collect all (academic) analysis documents regarding political institutions such as parties, parliament, government and the state in the country concerned over the last two decades.

A selection of the most relevant official papers by or about these political institutions is then made. That means official regulations (electoral law; laws on political parties; the respective articles in the constitution about the political system and the relation between the legislative and executive powers; the independence of the judiciary and state bodies such as the electoral council; structure and organization of the state and the relationship between the capital and the regions) and documents by political parties and their representatives in parliament/government about these regulations.

Finally, all documents regarding international support to political institutions are collected and identified.

The issue of international policy intervention and how to address and measure it occupies a central place. It is one of the issues that receives constant attention throughout all parts of the assessment. Similar attention is paid to women's participation in politics.

Interactive workshops

The workshops are the core element of the interactive assessment procedure. Four workshops are organized for each participating party (see Annex II for the workshop format). Each workshop is dedicated to the following issues:

1. Political identity; strategy and policy development;
2. Organizational strength; financial issues;
3. Internal democracy; membership;
4. Parties and society; elections.

Each workshop involves (local) party leaders, members, and representatives from the constituencies. The individual agenda of each meeting will be drafted by the political party representatives and the Assessment Team. After the workshop, the Assessment Team reviews the data and interviews representatives of the political parties in order to make a qualitative analysis of the party's specific issues.

Multiparty conferences

In addition to the workshops, two multiparty conferences are organized during each political assessment. The first conference is dedicated to issues that affect all parties in the country, such as the relationship between political parties and the state, or women's participation in politics. The conference is presided over by an independent chairperson. Academics and politicians from both the Netherlands or other countries and the country concerned will be asked to present papers and discuss the topics mentioned with the participating political parties.

The second multiparty conference is organized at the end of the assessment project. Its main aim is to be a platform for the public presentation of the final report. In addition, the agenda can contain country-specific issues as a basis for the debate.

Final report

At the end of the assessment, the final report is presented to the public and the media during the second multiparty conference. The final report contains a broad analysis of the political landscape, a description of each of the participating parties, a number of practical recommendations for the enhancement of the democratic system in general, as well as party-specific recommendations. The report also reflects the focus on international policy interventions.

Generally speaking, the report's structure is based on these three questions:

1. What are the key functions of political parties in the country concerned?
2. How can the political party system facilitate the best possible performance of those functions?
3. What is the optimum leverage of activities and support by international democracy-assisting or donor organizations?

Since the political parties are an integral part of the Assessment Team, political momentum is created both during the process of the assessment as well as at the official presentation of the report.

The follow-up

The interactive assessment is clearly meant to provide all stakeholders with an intelligent and useful analysis of the situation of political institutions in a specific country. Its quality is defined by the operational conclusions and recommendations in order to improve the political situation as part of the more holistic strategy to enhance a sustainable democratic architecture.

In general, the follow-up consists of a multiannual **Interactive Operational Programme**, lasting at least three years. The programme is tailor-made, demand driven and based on practical activities to strengthen the internal organization of political parties, as well as proposals for institutional reforms.

As is the case during the assessment phase, the operational programme is carried out by a coalition of local stakeholders and relevant international partners committed to the development of democracy. The IMD is an active facilitator in this process.

Annex I: Outline of a final report

Introduction

About the multilateral partner

About the IMD

About the local partner

Chapter 1. Democratic transition and political institutions

- 1.1 The State
- 1.2 Internal stability and territorial integrity
- 1.3 International policy intervention
- 1.4 The system and its political institutions

Chapter 2. The institutional development of political parties

- 2.1 The society
- 2.2 The political party–party system nexus
- 2.3 Political identity; strategy and policy development
- 2.4 Organizational strength; finances
- 2.5 Internal democracy; membership
- 2.6 Parties and society; elections
- 2.7 External relations and support

Chapter 3. A framework for democratic party building

- 3.1 What are the key functions of political parties in the country?
- 3.2 How can the political party system facilitate the best possible performance of those functions?
- 3.2 What should the optimum international involvement be?

Annexes for files of political parties, tables, etc.

Annex II: Workshop format

Each of the four workshops of the interactive assessment is a half-day event. The workshop consists of a short presentation by the Political Party Representative and the Assessment Team of the issues to be discussed, followed by a question and answer session with the participants. The aim is to get a detailed picture of the situation in the party concerning those specific issues.

Opening

The workshop is opened by the Political Party Representative, the head of the Assessment Team and – if present – an IMD representative. The first workshop or constituency workshop will always be attended by an IMD delegation. First, the general structure and purpose of the Political Assessment project is presented: Who are we and why are we doing this? Then the issues and the proceedings of the workshop are explained. As this must be very clear to the participants, this part will last at least thirty minutes.

Next, a short introduction to the issues, lasting about twenty minutes, is delivered by a guest speaker with practical experience in the subject. The speaker addresses the importance of the issues and raises a number of questions related to the specific issues.

Question and answer session

The questionnaire forms the basis for the interactive part of the workshop (this questionnaire has been prepared by the Assessment Team, the Political Party Representatives Team and the IMD, and is based on the IMD framework for democratic party building). The questions are posed by the Assessment Team. The interaction with the participants is moderated by the head of the Assessment Team.

Participants

The selection of participants is crucial for the outcome of the workshop. During the first (constituency) workshop, mostly general and strategic issues will be addressed. Therefore, participants from the party should possess a medium- or high-ranking position within the party. Both central and local leaders can participate, depending on their position as key decision makers. In general, the participants are members of the national executive and are in charge of the party organization, programmatic development of the party and campaigning matters.

In the case of the other workshops, the participants are selected according to the issues to be discussed. These participants are also representative for the rank and file.

For each workshop, a maximum of twenty participants are selected by the Political Party Representative. His or her responsibility is to inform them in advance about the purpose and content of each workshop.

Facilitators' reports

The facilitators for the questionnaire session (both the Assessment Team and – if present – an IMD representative) will write down the main findings.

Evaluation

Following each workshop series, the Assessment Team and the Political Party Representatives Team will meet to review and discuss the workshop findings.

About the authors

About the IMD

In line with the Dutch Government's development co-operation policy and in response to requests for support from foreign political parties and groups, seven Dutch political parties decided in 2000 to establish a new joint organization, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD). The founding members were the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA), Liberal Party (VVD), Christian Democratic Party (CDA), Democratic Party (D66), Green Party (GroenLinks), Christian Union (ChristenUnie) and Reformed Party (SGP). The Institute was formally inaugurated as a foundation on 18 April 2000.

The IMD is an Institute of political parties for political parties. The mandate of IMD is to support the process of democratization in young democracies by providing support to political parties as the core pillars of a multiparty democracy. The IMD works in a strictly non-partisan and inclusive manner.

Through this approach the Institute endeavours to contribute to a properly functioning, sustainable and pluralistic party political system. It also supports the activities of groups which, through their principles and objectives, have a relevant role to play in a multiparty democracy even though they do not fall within a formal party structure.

Wiebe de Jager

Mr Wiebe de Jager (The Netherlands, 1976) is an engineer by training and is a master of science in Business Administration. As Information Manager at the IMD, Mr De Jager is responsible for all internal communication and administration systems, the IMD's website, the editing of publications and media relations. From January 2005, he also became responsible for the new IMD multilateral programme in Georgia as Programme Officer Georgia.

Álvaro Pinto Scholtbach

Mr Pinto Scholtbach (Chile, 1961) is a political scientist by training and has worked as a journalist, was staff co-ordinator of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Labour Party (PvdA) in parliament, and was until December 2003 International Secretary and Vice-chair of the PvdA. He was one of the co-founders of the IMD and an IMD Board Member until mid-2004. Since then, he is the Multilateral and Bilateral Programmes director.

