

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association

**ICHANGE.GOV.GE**

**CAMPAIGN FOR RAISING PUBLIC  
AWARENESS AND  
EDUCATION**

**Final Research Report and  
Recommendations**

**2018**



# **“CAMPAIGN FOR RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION OF ICHANGE.GOV.GE ELECTRONIC PLATFORM”**

Final report

Version: 1.0

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## INTRODUCTION

This document is a research report commissioned by Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), which was conducted within the framework of the USAID funded project "Campaign for Raising Public Awareness and Education of IChange Electronic Platform". The document reflects the results of the three rounds of the research. The first round of the study aimed at identifying specific factors hindering or facilitating the application of the platform. The key objective of the second round of the research was to evaluate and assess the promotion materials developed for the platform *ichange.gov.ge* and the third round was dedicated to assessment by users of the website created for the e-petition platform.

The results obtained through all three rounds of the study will be used by Georgian Young Lawyers' Association to develop the mechanisms for the use of the electronic platform, to promote relevant issues for e-petitions and to plan activities with the view to fostering civil engagement.

The report has been prepared by the "ACT"- the Analysis and Consulting Team.

The document consists of the subparagraphs covering the key findings, research design, research methodology and results.

### 1. GEORGIAN CONTEXT

The official governmental electronic platform for open public petitions *ichange.gov.ge* was developed by the Administration of the Government of Georgia within the commitment undertaken according to the Second Action Plan of Open Government Partnership (OGP) in May 2017 (Decree N245, May 18, 2017).

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) aims to secure commitments from government to promote transparency and openness, ensure accountability to society and involve citizens in decision making process, which the Georgian government has recognized as the value of strategic importance. The development of the electronic platform *ichange.gov.ge*<sup>1</sup> has been perceived as a step made towards raising public confidence, empowering citizens and ensuring the government's efficiency and transparency of their decisions and activities and facilitating the interaction of the Georgian government and public, which will enable citizens to use a form of civic engagement such as initiating and signing an e-petition. Through the platform, citizens have the opportunity to request the government in an online petition to address those issues the solution of which falls into the competence of the government.

All adult citizens of Georgia are eligible to initiate and sign an electronic petition and send it to the Government of Georgia. In order to initiate and sign an e-petition, a citizen shall register free of charge on the *ichange.gov.ge* platform, where protection of the confidentiality of personal information is guaranteed.

Within 30 days after publishing, the petition shall collect 10,000 signatures. Then, the petition is sent to the Commission of Experts for consideration. The Government is obligated to respond to the author of a successful e-petition within three months after the registered petition collects 10,000 signatures.<sup>2</sup>

### 2. KEY FINDINGS

One of the main discourses in the first round of the research revealed that in civil activism are mainly involved: (1) *representatives of the civil society who know how to make issues relevant, are experienced and promoting civil activism is their job and responsibility*, and (2) *active citizens who usually come in small groups "wishing to change something", but these groups are not often replenished*. The above discourse has been identified in the survey of Citizens and Officials.

The similar discourse was observed in the second round of the research. In particular, the results of the focus group discussions conducted with Opinion Leaders have shown that *the platform will less likely succeed in attracting a wide range of citizens and the main users of the platform will be representatives of NGOs*. The latter can mobilize a large number of signatures as they are experienced in working in this direction and they should take responsibility for selecting the issues for e-petition.

It is noteworthy that according to an online survey, the employed in NGOs most likely see themselves in the future not only as interested in e-petition news (44%), but as authors of e-petitions (35%) as well.

It is notable that according to the results of the qualitative research, there were many critical remarks regarding the procedure for registering in the platform. Namely, several issues have been highlighted: (1) *Personal information requested*

<sup>1</sup> <http://ichange.gov.ge/Home/About>

<sup>2</sup> <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2510377>

for the registration is too detailed; (2) Some of the fields requested for the registration are not clear; (3) The website has technical issues.

Opinion Leaders had special complaints about collecting ten thousand signatures for an e-petition. The necessity of mobilizing this number of supporters and setting a one-month deadline was considered “unfair”. The assessment given to the time frames and the number of signatures strengthened the doubts of the discussants that the platform would be less efficient and if any e-petition could register and collect the required number of supporters, the issues would tend to be less serious and important.

Apart from resolving the issues related to reducing the number of e-petition signatures and the problems regarding the registration procedure, the focus group participants outlined several significant factors for more efficient performance of the electronic platform, in particular, to raise awareness of a larger public of the electronic platform and the State to take responsibility to explain the reasons for non-publication of an e-petition on the platform. As the focus group discussions have revealed, it is necessary that a petitioner could receive to his/her e-mail address a detailed explanation of the reason for non-publication of his/her petition rather than a mere notification thereupon. For example, it would be good to notify a petitioner that a particular issue concerns not the government, but a city council, which will add more clarity to the government’s response and less likely raise doubts.

The third round of the research has showed that participants of the online survey deemed it necessary *to decrease the number of signatures for e-petitions (29%), raise public awareness of the platform (24%), and that the administration of the platform must inform petitioners of the reasons for non-publication of an e-petition on the platform (14%).*

In this regard it should be noted that the online survey participants consider equally important to decrease the number of signatures necessary for an e-petition and to disseminate information about the platform. However, in the first round of the study, both Citizens and Officials believed that collecting 10,000 signatures for an e-petition would not be easy, but not unattainable. The first round considered the lack of public awareness of the e-platform as a serious obstacle.

It should be noted that according to the results of the IRI survey conducted in April 2018, only 9% of the respondents heard about the platform *ichange.gov.ge*.<sup>3</sup> However, in this regard it is noteworthy that, in general, public awareness of the forms of self/local governance is low in the country. According to the findings of the study carried out by the UNDP in 2017, only approximately 14% of the respondents heard about the form of self-governance, such as drawing up or signing an e-petition.<sup>4</sup>

As for the sources of information, according to the IRI survey results, the main source of information for the majority of citizens is television (90%). Only 22% and 11% prefer Georgian Internet websites and social networks, respectively. Nevertheless, four out of ten participants of the online survey of the third round learned about the platform *ichange.gov.ge* through social networks (40%) and considered it an efficient channel for communicating to the public the general information about the platform in general (83%), and in the first place (60%). As for the television, it was considered as an effective channel of communication in the first place by 23% of the respondents.

It should also be noted that the lack of access to the Internet and computer illiteracy was not considered a barrier for the application of the platform by 27% of the online survey participants, and 26% partially agreed with the opinion. In this regard, it is noteworthy that according to the IRI survey results, 45% of the respondents have access to the Internet on a daily basis, and most of them access the Internet from home (92%).<sup>5</sup> Bearing this in mind, we can say that the lack of access to the Internet is not an issue, but the main problem is the low public awareness of the forms of citizen participation in self-governance. It is also noteworthy that according to the results of the CRRC survey of 2017, 56% of the respondents see the government as a parent, which means that the government rather than the citizen is perceived as the major responsible actor for caring about the country.<sup>6</sup>

The factor which prevents initiation / signing of an e-petition, as an instrument, is not due to only the fact that citizens are not aware of this mechanism, but that many people do not have computer skills or cannot access the Internet. Another hindering factor is that the majority does not believe that activity of the citizens similar to them will have any impact on decisions rendered by their municipalities. According to the IRI survey results, more respondents believe that their activity cannot affect processes (48%) than the opposite (31%).<sup>7</sup>

It is also worth noting that the category in which, as online survey participants think, e-petitions will most likely receive

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2018-5-29\\_georgia\\_poll\\_presentation.pdf](http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2018-5-29_georgia_poll_presentation.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.ge.undp.org/content/dam/georgia/docs/publications/DG/UNDP\\_GE\\_DG\\_citizen\\_views\\_public\\_services\\_2017\\_geo.pdf](http://www.ge.undp.org/content/dam/georgia/docs/publications/DG/UNDP_GE_DG_citizen_views_public_services_2017_geo.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2018-5-29\\_georgia\\_poll\\_presentation.pdf](http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2018-5-29_georgia_poll_presentation.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2017ge/GOVTR0L-withoutdkra/>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2018-5-29\\_georgia\\_poll\\_presentation.pdf](http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2018-5-29_georgia_poll_presentation.pdf)

most signatures, concerns social issues (43%). This assumption is based on the results of the IRI survey, according to which the majority of the respondents consider social issues (unemployment - 40%) as the most serious problem facing the country.

Based on the above, the following conclusions can be made:

- The platform is used mainly by representatives of NGOs, active citizens who have their civil position and other interested persons who believe that participation in the country's governance is their responsibility and who are also confident that their involvement therein can actually influence the processes;
- Most signatures are likely to be gathered around e-petitions on social issues;
- Information about the platform and e-petitions should be mainly disseminated through the Internet and the primary communication channel must be social networks, in the first place Facebook (according to the results of the IRI survey, the most popular social network among users is Facebook - 86%);
- Users of the e-platform should be informed about the reasons for rejecting their petitions, as well as the government's response to their petitions.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

With the view to identifying the peculiarities of the work of the platform *ichange.gov.ge* and increasing the efficacy of its performance, the research was conducted in three rounds. The first two rounds of the survey were dedicated to qualitative research, and the third was an online survey. The following subparagraphs provide the methodology of all three rounds.

#### 3.1. The First Round

The first round of the study conducted in the fall of 2017 aimed at identifying the factors which prevent and enhance the performance of the platform *ichange.gov.ge*. The specific objectives of the research were as follows:

- To identify important events taking place in the country;
- To identify issues, including those which could be used as the basis of e-petitions;
- To identify the factors preventing and promoting civil involvement;
- To identify the forms of civil engagement exploited by citizens

In addition, the first round of the study tested the logo and slogan created for the electronic platform. In particular, within the scope of this component of the study, information was obtained about the existing logo of the platform, its compliance with the platform and the advantages and disadvantages of the existing logo and the proposed new ones.

For the first round of the survey, two target groups (*population (hereinafter the "Citizens") and the "Officials"*) and 7 locations (*Tbilisi, Batumi, Kutaisi, Zugdidi, Gori, Rustavi, Telavi*) were determined. Focus group discussions were held for surveying the Citizens (2 per location, 14 in total), and in-depth interviews with the Officials (2 per location, 14 in total). For focus discussions, the target groups were presented in two sub-groups, the so-called Mixed Group and Vulnerable Group.

**Composition of the Mixed Group:** Students and young people; NGOs; Professional unions; Business associations; Media; Teachers (mainly teachers of civic education).

**Vulnerable Groups:** Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs); Persons with Disabilities (Disability); Ethnic and religious minorities; Eco-migrants.

Focus group discussions with the Mixed Group were conducted in every location. As for the Vulnerable Group, the composition of the group did not envisage invitation of respondents from different vulnerable groups for discussions due to their totally different needs. Discussions were planned to be conducted with specific vulnerable groups in different locations. In particular, the conflict line regions (Zugdidi and Gori) were selected for the *IDPs*; for *Ethnic and religious minorities* were selected the locations settled mostly by minorities (Batumi and Rustavi); for *People with disabilities (PWDs)* were selected the regions where the number of PWDs and their share percentage in relation to the number of the residents is the highest (Tbilisi and Kutaisi)<sup>8</sup>; for the *Eco-migrants* Kakheti region (Telavi) was chosen, where eco-migrants from various regions of Georgia (Zemo Adjara, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti) are living.

<sup>8</sup> <https://idfi.ge/ge/statistics-of-persons-with-disabilities>

The main focus of the research was to study the groups of Citizens in parallel with the Officials. The main objective of the survey component was to determine what factors are perceived as important, challenging and promoting or hindering civil engagement by those who are directly involved in decision making processes and to what extent their opinions coincide with the Citizens', and whether there is a similarity between the views, anticipations and attitudes of decision makers and citizens.

In total 14 in-depth interviews (2 per location) were conducted; for the interviews, respondents were selected from the local self-government (representative and executive) authorities.

Table 1. The First Round Design

First Round- Design of Qualitative Research		
<b>Technique</b>	Face-to face interview	Focus group
<b>Target Group</b>	Local government officials	<u>Mixed Group</u> . Composition: NGOs, Media, Teachers, Professional unions, Students and Young people; <u>Vulnerable Group</u> . Composition: IDPs, PWDs (persons with disabilities), Ethnic and religious minorities, Eco-migrants
<b>Selection size</b>	14	14
<b>Scope of Research</b>	Tbilisi, Batumi, Kutaisi, Zugdidi, Gori, Rustavi, Telavi	<u>Mixed Group</u> : Tbilisi, Batumi, Kutaisi, Zugdidi, Gori, Rustavi, Telavi ; <u>Vulnerable Group</u> : IDPs – Gori, Zugdidi; PWDs – Tbilisi, Kutaisi; Ethnic and religious minorities – Batumi, Rustavi; Eco-migrants - Telavi;
<b>Method of selection</b>	Target	Target
<b>Length of interviews/ discussions</b>	35-45 minutes	2 - 2.5 hours

### 3.2. The Second Round

The main objective of the second round of the survey conducted in January 2018 was to evaluate the electronic platform *ichange.gov.ge* and the material developed for its further promotion. The specific tasks of the survey were as follows:

- To evaluate the website;
- To test the Promo Video, Video Manual and the Poster;
- To identify the issues that may be used for initiation of e-petitions;
- To evaluate the platform *ichange.gov.ge*.

In the second round, Opinion Leaders and 3 locations (*Tbilisi, Telavi, Zugdidi*) were determined as a target group of the research. Focus group discussions were held for surveying the Opinion Leaders (2 per location, 6 in total). The focus group discussions were conducted in the capital city, Zugdidi in West Georgia, and Telavi in East Georgia. The target group was presented as a mixed group. Representatives of the following groups were included in the mixed composition: *Students, Media, Non-Governmental Sector, Public sector, Civil Activists*.

Table 2. The Second Round Design

Second Round- Design of Qualitative Research	
<b>Technique</b>	Focus group
<b>Target Group</b>	Students, Media, NGOs, Public Sector, Civil Activists
<b>Selection size</b>	6
<b>Scope of the Research</b>	Tbilisi, Zugdidi, Telavi
<b>Method of selection</b>	Target
<b>Length of discussions</b>	1,5-2 hours

### 3.3. The Third Round

The main objective of the third round of the research was to ask users to provide the evaluation of the platform *ichange.gov.ge*. The specific tasks of the research were as follows:

- To assess the procedure for registering on the website;
- To identify an effective communication channel for receiving and disseminating information about the platform;
- To identify the categories which could guarantee the highest number of signatures for e-petitions;



- To identify specific ideas about features/issues to be changed / improved on the platform *ichange.gov.ge*.

The target group of the online survey conducted in April-May 2018 was the users of the website *ichange.gov.ge*. An online questionnaire was embedded as a pop-up banner into the website, and 320 randomly selected respondents of the website were offered to participate in the online survey. Of these, 29 respondents refused to take part in the study, and 51 gave up filling out the online questionnaire. As for the number of the interviews held, it was 240, and the average length of the questionnaire was 9.7 minutes.

Table 3. The Third Round Design

Third Round - Design of Online Survey	
<b>Technique</b>	Online survey
<b>Target group</b>	Users of the website <i>lchange.gov.ge</i>
<b>Selection size</b>	240
<b>Method of selection</b>	Random
<b>Length of questionnaire completion</b>	8-10 minutes

## 4. FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

### 4.1. Overview of the First and Second Round Results

The main findings of the **first round** of the study refer to important events and issues, the platform, civil involvement and possible issues of petition.

**Important events.** The most important events of the last one year in the country named by the Citizens (the focus group participants) were *local self-government elections, visa liberalization, creeping occupation, cyanide case, Kashia's case, Paviashvili's case, and constitutional amendments*. Among the important events pointed out by the Officials were *the local self-government elections, visa liberalization and the amendments introduced to the law on self-governance*. It is noteworthy that the latter (uniting of the city and the village) was named by the Officials as an important event, whereas the Citizens referred to it as a problem. However, it should be noted that the amendments introduced to the law on local self-governance were less positively assessed in the narratives of the Officials.

The Officials consider the *local self-government elections* named as the top among the most important events as a "step towards the democracy", while the attitude of the Citizens to the event is contradictory. According to one of the discourses, the elections were peaceful, which is a positive phenomenon, the reason for which can be a "mature citizen" as well as a "tired citizen" who "drifts along". According to another discourse, the low level of voter turnout indicated the low civic culture and public unawareness of the importance of the local elections.

**Problems.** Among the issues named by both the Citizens and Officials which the government must primarily address are related to *employment, education, low civic consciousness and creeping occupation*. Solving the problems related to road infrastructure was also important for both groups. However, the problems such as *migration, lack of knowledge of Georgian language by citizens of Georgia, lack of professionalism (first of all in the public sector) and nepotism* were named by focus groups as the issues to be addressed primarily. The failure of the government to have a specific "narrative", the vision for the country's development was mentioned as a serious problem by the participants of the focus groups.

**Civil involvement.** The Citizens, as well as the Officials indicated the low civic involvement in the country, and named *nihilism and low civic education* among the main reasons. It is noteworthy that the lack of confidence of citizens into the government and the government ignoring citizens' interests were named by the Officials as the important factors impeding civil engagement. The Citizens emphasized also the *fear* mainly related to the "loss of workplace" as a serious barrier to civic engagement.

As for the forms of civil involvement, the Officials most frequently mentioned submission of an application to the local authorities, attending sessions of city councils and taking part in budget discussions. The examples of civil involvement most often pointed out by the Citizens were related to cleaning and greening activities, as well as solving specific issues (installation of traffic lights, arranging crossings, etc.) based on submitted applications.

Both the Citizens and Officials noted that mainly representatives of the civic sector and active citizens are mostly active and stirring. With regard to representatives of the NGOs, it was noted that they know how to push forward the issues, have relevant experience and promotion of civic activism is their duty and responsibility. As for active citizens, it was mentioned that they are small groups of people who "wish to change something" and who are not often replenished with new members.

Both the Citizens and Officials considered important to promote civic education for enhancement of civil engagement, for which the school and non-governmental sector were considered as the main actors. The Officials also pointed out less efficiency of the government and significant activity of the civil sector in terms of promoting the civic engagement.

**Assessment of the Platform.** The Citizens as well as the Officials have positively evaluated the importance of the portal and believe that *this is another way for involving citizens in the process of the country's governance*. Both groups (Citizens / Officials) expressed less skepticism to collecting 10,000 signatures for consideration of an e-petition and named the lack of public awareness of the platform itself as the major obstacle for efficient operation of the platform.

Both the Citizens and the Officials were most skeptical about possible use of the platform by persons employed in public institutions. In this regard, the fact that the platform is governmental was mentioned as the main obstacle.

The importance of the platform was once again emphasized by both groups (Citizens / Officials), who noted that *by initiating an e-petition, a particular issue will be put forward* and the number of signatures will inform the government and society about current important issues.

It is noteworthy that both the Citizens and the Officials considered important to demonstrate specific positive results to a wider society as a necessary step to increase the efficiency of the platform and various forms of civic engagement, including e-petitions. According to the survey participants, informing citizens of successful examples will convince the public about the real importance of civil integration and the ability of its particular forms.

The main findings of the **Second Round** of the study are directly related to the website, possible petition issues and the platform.

**About the website.** According to the results of the study, the colors have been appropriately selected for the website and positively influence the attitude of users. However, the effective use of the website is prevented by the registration procedure as *the requested personal information is too detailed; some of the fields are not clear and the website has technical issues*.

For the efficient performance of the website, the survey participants considered that the website should have:

- A detailed instruction for drawing up an e- petition;
- A link to newsletters;
- Information about possible outcomes of an e-petition;
- The option to show subcategories;
- The option to filter the categories according to topics;
- Linguistic support and integration of the website's address into the Georgian domain;
- Options for people with disabilities.

**Possible e-petition topics.** The second round of the survey identified the following important topics / issues appropriate for initiation of e-petitions on the platform and for gathering signatures:

- Drug policy;
- To change the rules of registration of first graders in schools;
- To develop an independent investigative mechanism;
- To reduce income tax;
- To set up a labor inspection;
- To develop an integrated environment for people with disabilities;
- Road safety;
- To align the pension age;
- To amend the rule of issuing of a construction permit;
- To increase the budget of education (a resource officer to every school; a psychologist to every school; raising awareness and trainings for parents);
- Healthcare issues (to offer services for children with autistic spectrum and people with mental health problems, outpatients clinic in every village);
- Environmental issues.

**About the platform *ichange.gov.ge*.** As the results of the second round of the study have shown, the platform is positively evaluated, but the discussion participants have questions about the potential performance of the platform and have observed several obstacles on the way to achieving this goal. Namely, (1) *the governmental nature of the platform*; (2) *necessity to collect 10 000 signatures for an e-petition*; (3) *time frames* - to define one month period for collecting the

required minimum of signatures, and three-month period for the Government to review an e-petition.

For the efficient functioning of the platform, the survey participants considered important the following:

- Appropriate response of the government to e-petitions (not to limit themselves simply to “formulaic answers”);
- To provide detailed information to the author of an e-petition indicating the reasons for rejection of the petition;
- To promote the platform via Facebook page and the Public Broadcaster;
- To arrange trainings on drawing up e-petitions.

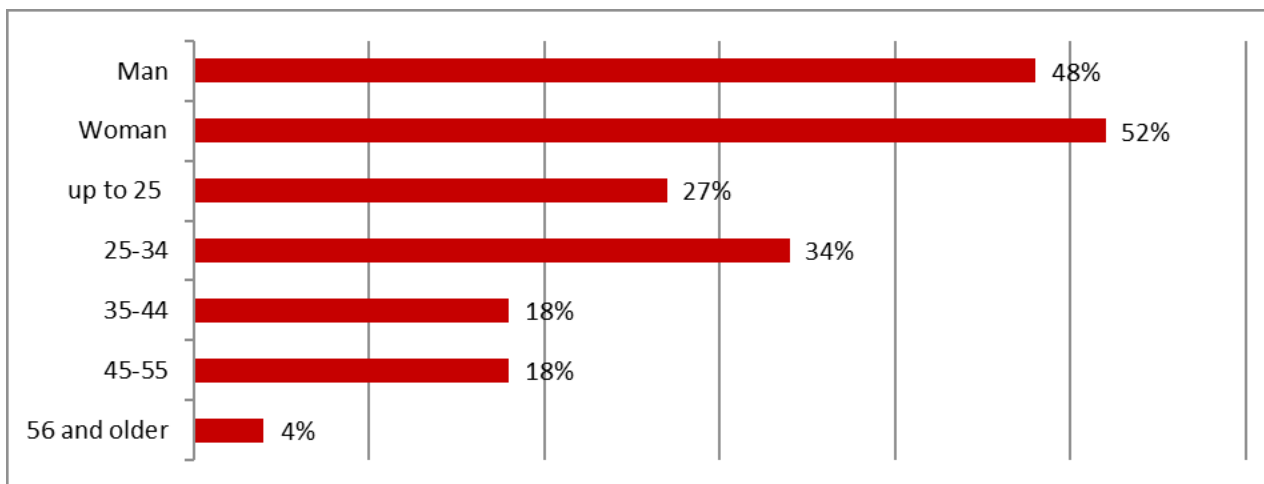
Notwithstanding many doubts and questions in connection to the launch of the platform, whose main users the survey participants deem non-governmental organizations, it has been still positively evaluated due to a number of reasons: (1) The platform supports and promotes the development of democratic processes and strengthens civil activism in the country. (2) It is the best way to identify actual issues. (3) An alternative to *manifest.ge* has emerged and citizens have an additional scope for the civil activity. (4) It facilitates the identification and actualization of relevant issues.

## 4.2. Results of the Third Round of the Survey

### 4.2.1. Demographic profile of the Survey participants

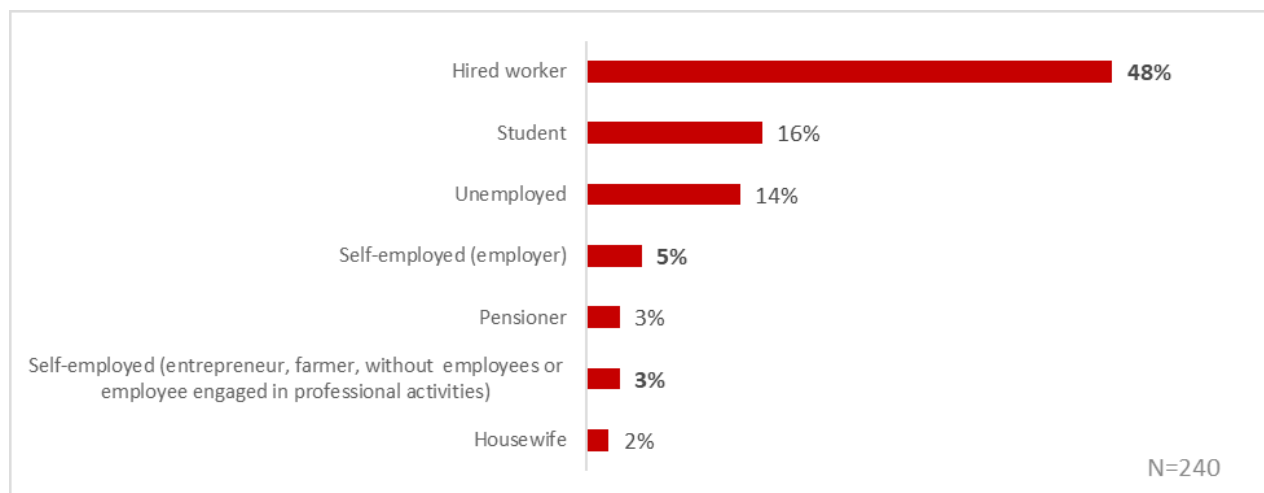
The results of the online survey have shown that 52% of women and 48% of men participated in the survey. Most of them are young people of 25-34 (34%) and 25 years old (27%). The total number of the respondents in 35-55 age category was 36%, and the number of 56 and older respondents – was only 4%.

Chart 1. The gender and age of the respondents (N= 240)



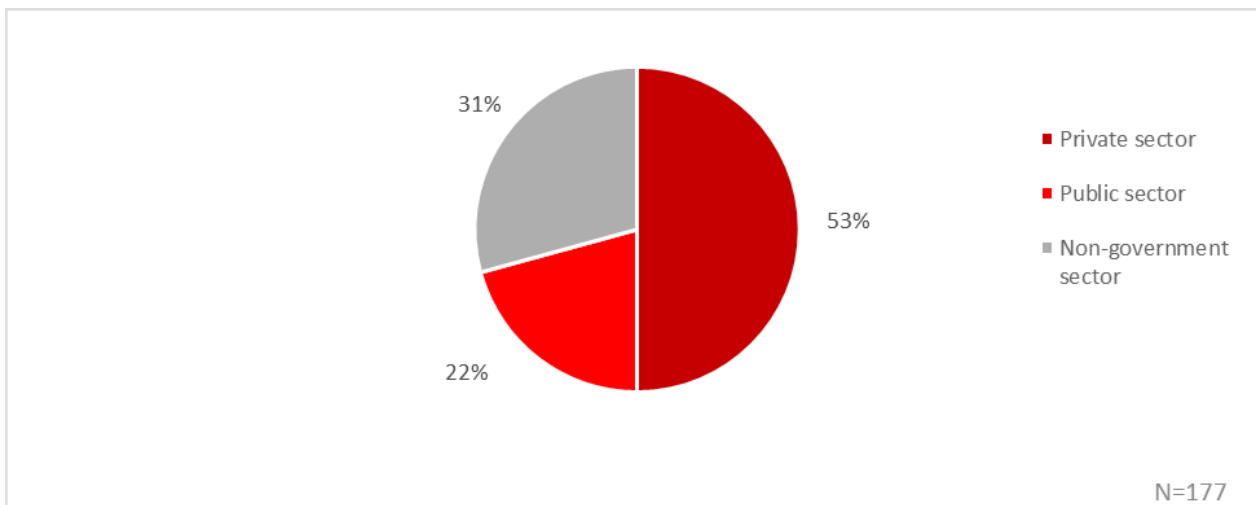
As for the employment status of the online survey participants, the total number of employed respondents accounts to 56%, the largest share of which is employed (48%). As for the unemployed, their number is 14%.

Chart 2. Employment status of the respondents



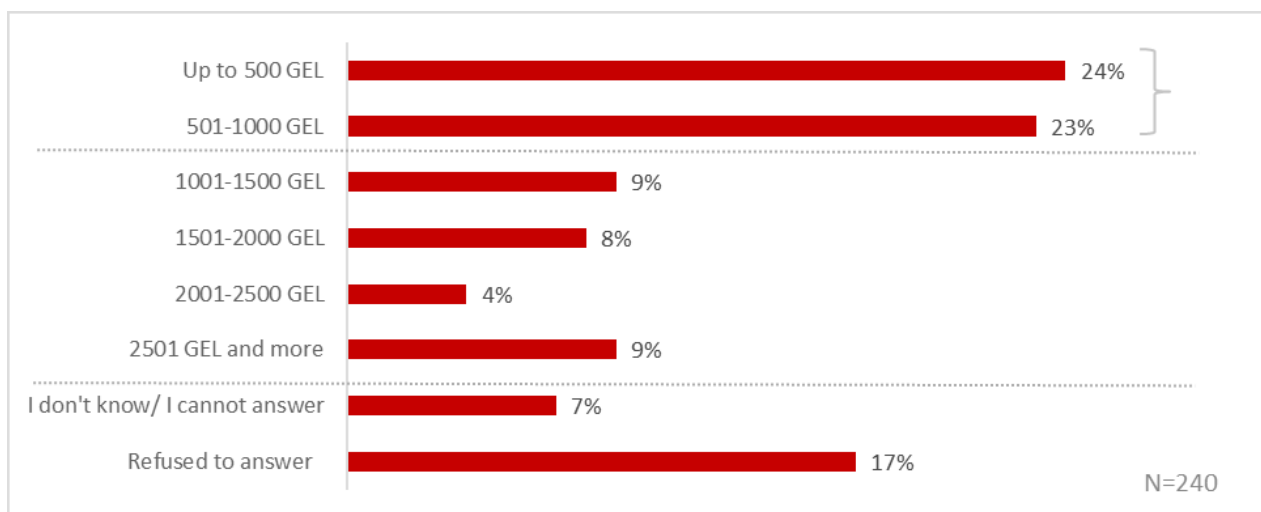
The majority of the employed respondents of the survey are employed in the private sector (53%), three out of ten (31%) in the non-governmental sector and two out of ten (22%) respondents work in the public sector.

Chart 3. Sectors of Employment



The income of the majority of the survey respondents is up to 1000 GEL (47%). The income of 21% of the respondents varies from 1001 to 2500 GEL. According to 9% of the survey participants, their average monthly income is more than 2501 GEL. 24% of the survey respondents refused to disclose the information about their income and to answer the question.

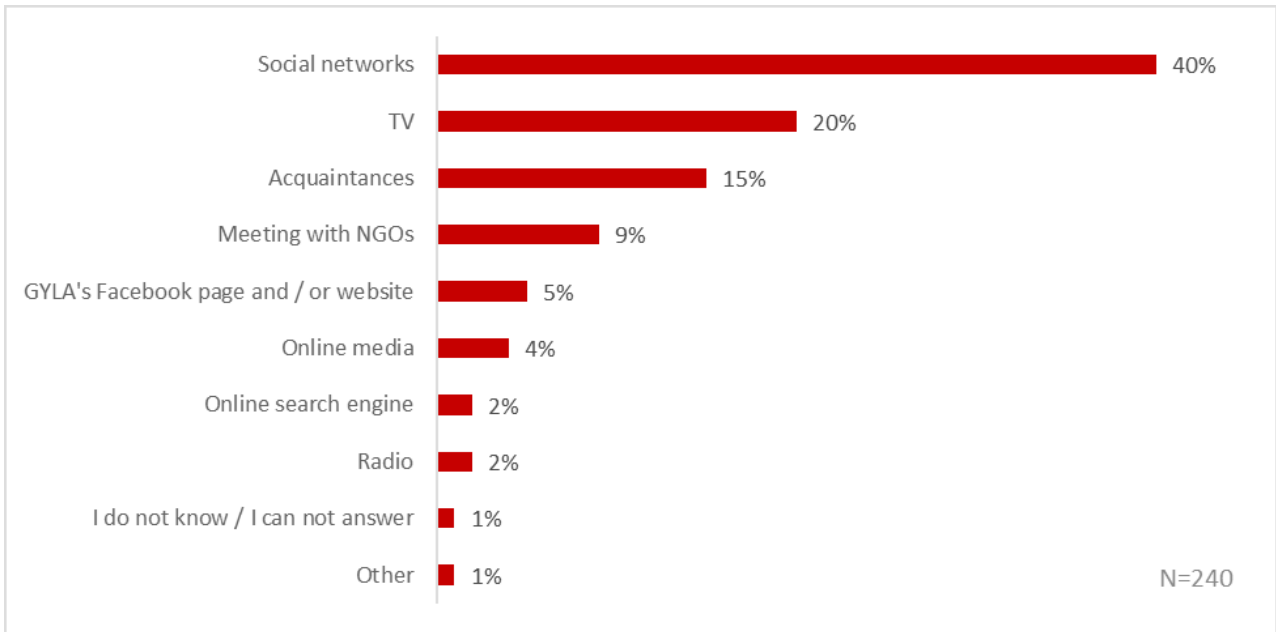
Chart 4. Average monthly income of the respondents from all sources



#### 4.2.2. About the Platform

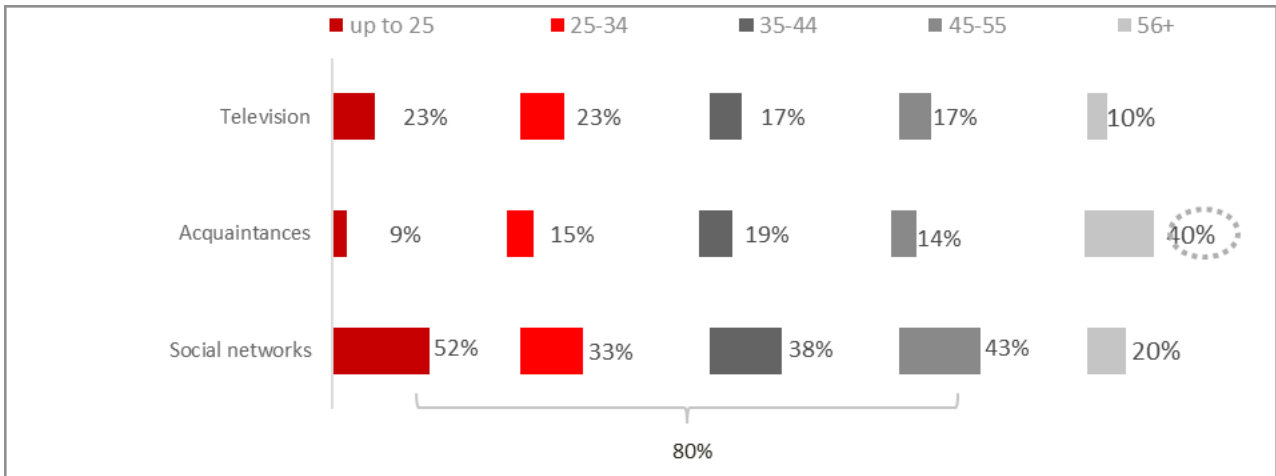
According to the online survey results, four out of ten survey participants learned about the platform *ichange.gov.ge* from social networks (40%), about 20% of the survey participants learned about the platform from television, and 15% - from their acquaintances. 9% of the respondents received information about the platform directly from the meetings with NGOs. The majority of the latter were the respondents (64%) employed in the NGO sector.

Chart 5. The source of initial information on the platform *ichange.gov.ge*



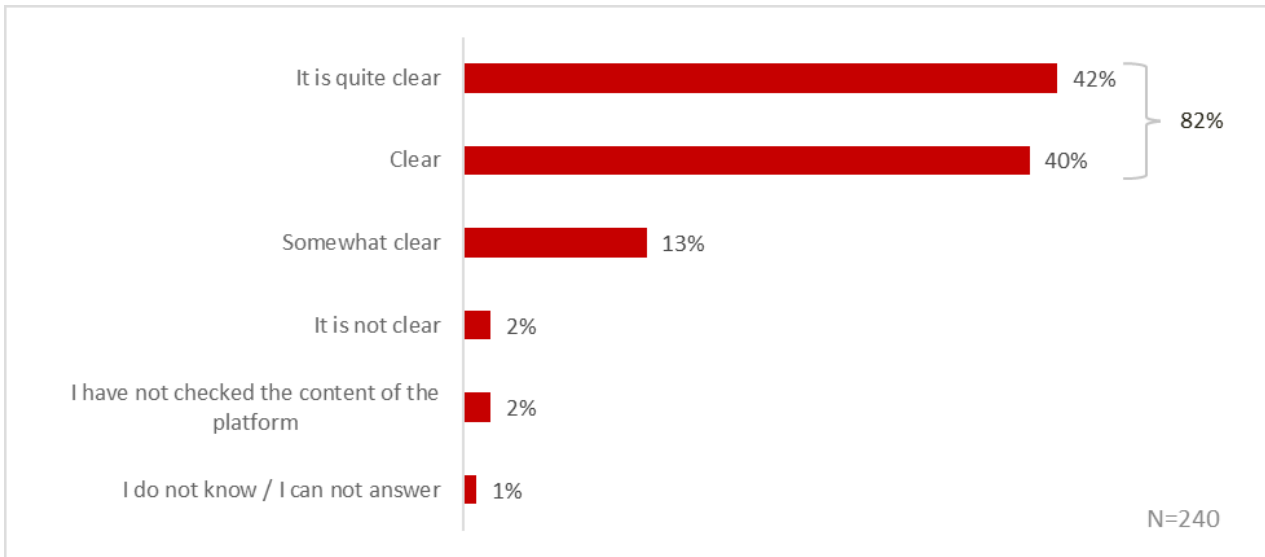
It should be noted that in all age categories, except for “56+”, the majority of the survey participants (80%) learned about the platform from social networks. Among them, the largest share is taken by young people under the age of 25 (52%). The majority of the respondents in “56+” age category (40%) learned about the platform from their friends and acquaintances. As for the television, the fewest number of the respondent who received information on the platform through this communication channel was in the “56+” age category (10%). The largest number of the respondents who learned about the platform through the television was the age group of 35 (46%) compared with other categories.

Chart 6. The source of initial information on the platform according to age categories



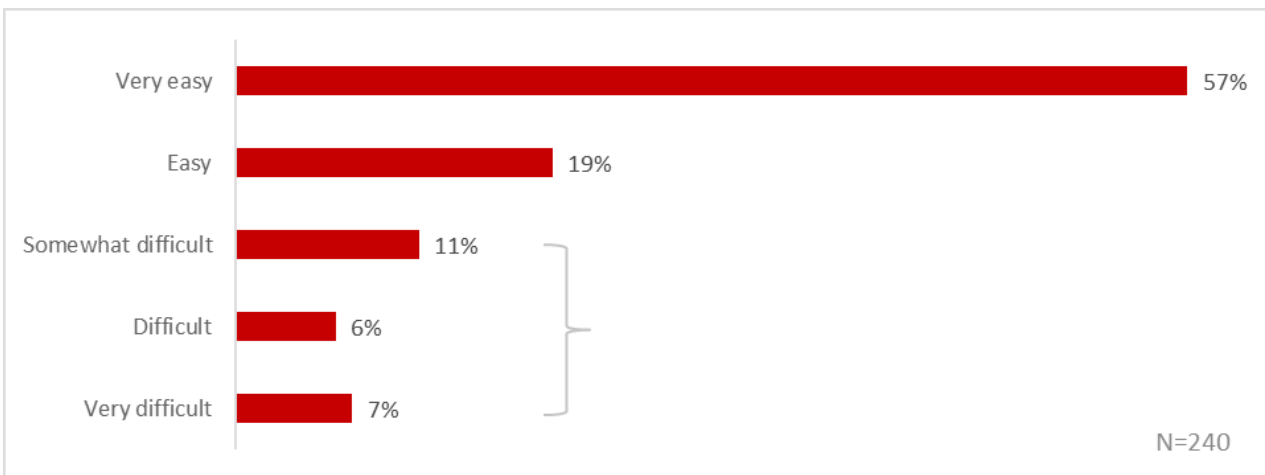
According to the online survey results, for the majority of the respondents (82%), the content of the platform was *clear* or *completely clear*. The number of the respondents for whom the content of the platform *ichange.gov.ge* was *somewhat clear* amounted for 15%.

Chart 7. To what extent is the content of the platform clear to you?



Most of the survey participants evaluated the procedure for registration in the platform as *very easy* (57%), and the registration procedure was *very difficult* for only 7% of the respondents.

Chart 8. Simplicity of the registration procedure on the platform



As for the 24% of the respondents who found the registration procedure on the platform *somewhat difficult, difficult or very difficult*, the main challenge during the registration was the *abundance of the personal information requested* (28%). *Technical issues of the website* made the platform difficult for 21% of the respondents and for 17% the problem was again technical, in particular *indication of a user name and e-mail address in the same field*. However, hereby it is noteworthy that 13 respondents (24%) out of 58 who found the registration procedure challenging could hardly provide a specific reason thereof. Consequently, we can say that for the majority of the respondents (48%) the challenges associated with the registration procedure were of technical nature.

Chart 9. The reasons making the registration challenging



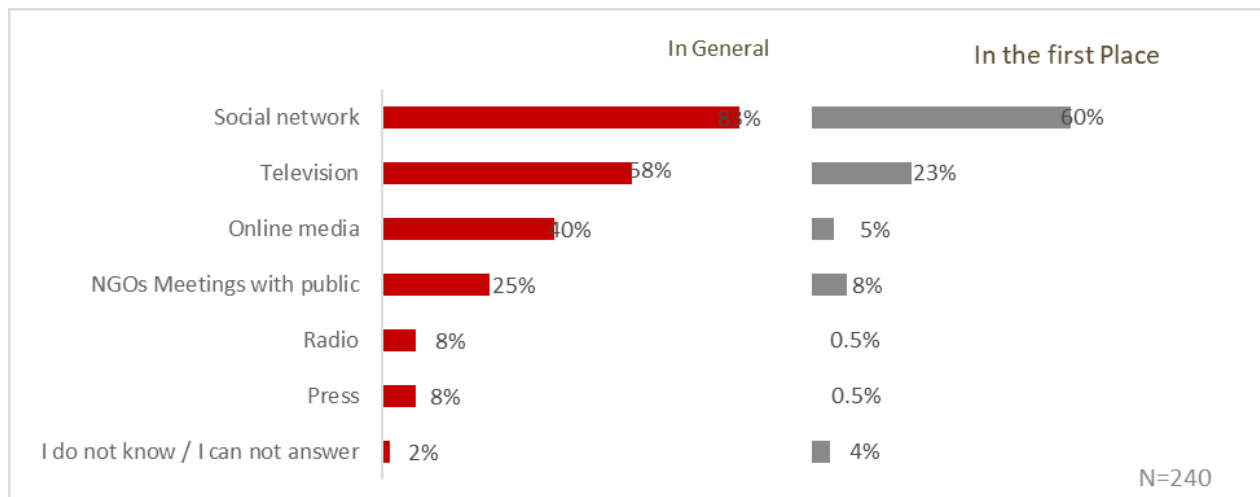
In general, the majority of the survey participants are interested in the issues related to *education* (61%), *social affairs* (58%) and *regional development* (58%). However, the category of *social issues* (17%) is of primary interest. As regards the category around which, to the belief of the survey participants, the highest number of signatures will be accumulated is the category of *social issues*, since six out of ten (62%) participants think that the petitions within the category will gather the most number of signatures. The majority of the respondents (43%) of the survey indicated potential consolidation of the largest number of signatures around social issues in the first place.

Table 4. The categories interesting to research participants/ categories which may collect the highest number of signatures for e-petitions

	The news of which category are you personally interested in?		Which category can receive the highest number of e-petition signatures in your opinion?	
	<i>In general</i>	<i>In the first place</i>	<i>In general</i>	<i>In the first place</i>
Regional development	<b>58%</b>	15%	30%	13%
Science	30%	2%	3%	-
Social issues	<b>58%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>43%</b>
Education	<b>61%</b>	12%	19%	2%
Power engineering	14%	-	2%	-
Foreign Policy	29%	3%	9%	1%
Safety	40%	6%	14%	3%
Finances	28%	2%	10%	3%
Economics	42%	10%	20%	1%
Sport	13%	1%	3%	4%
Innovations	33%	4%	4%	1%
Healthcare	35%	5%	25%	5%
Environmental issues	55%	12%	24%	5%
Culture	38%	4%	10%	2%
I do not know / I can not answer	4%	8%	11%	20%

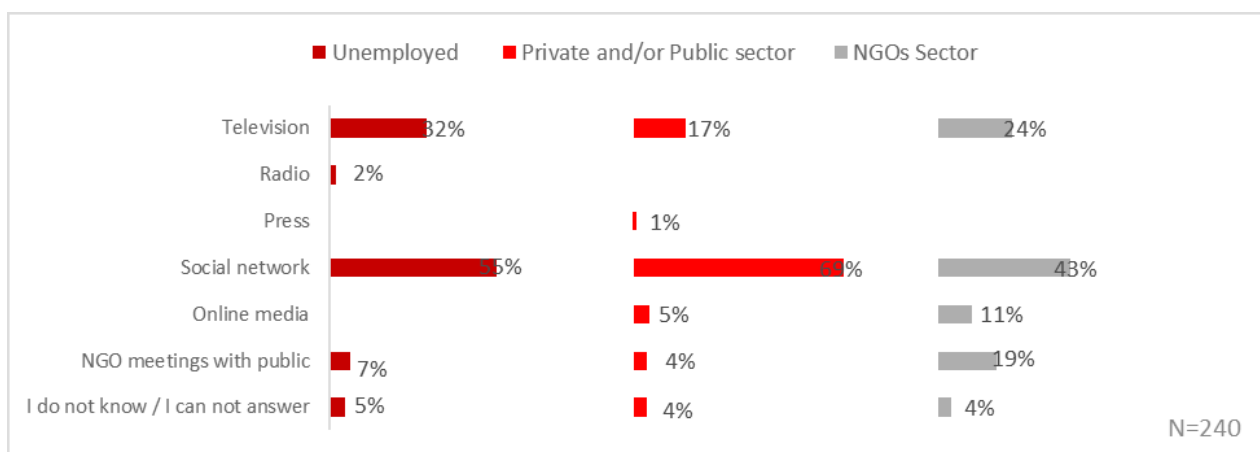
The majority of the research participants consider *social network* as an effective channel for communicating the information to public about the platform *ichange.gov.ge* in general (83%) as well as in the first place (60%). It is also noteworthy that television (58%), online media (40%) and non-governmental meetings with citizens (25%) are also considered as effective sources for dissemination of information. However, social network has been mentioned as the most effective source by six respondents out of ten (60%) in the first place, and TV only by two (23%) respondents.

Chart 10. The most efficient channel for disseminating information about the platform



It is noteworthy that most supporters of the social networks, of the most efficient communication channel for disseminating of the information about the platform, have been identified among *private and / or public sector employees* (69%). In fact, this category deems television as the least efficient communication channel (17%). Five out of ten *unemployed* consider social networks as the most effective communication channel (55%), and television is an effective channel (32%) for three out of ten respondents. As for the *employed in the NGOs sector*, most of them consider social networks (43%) and television (24%) as the most effective communication channels. It is noteworthy that 19% of the NGOs employed regard meetings with NGOs as an effective means of communication, but only 7% of the *unemployed* and just 4% of *private and / or public sector workers* share this opinion.

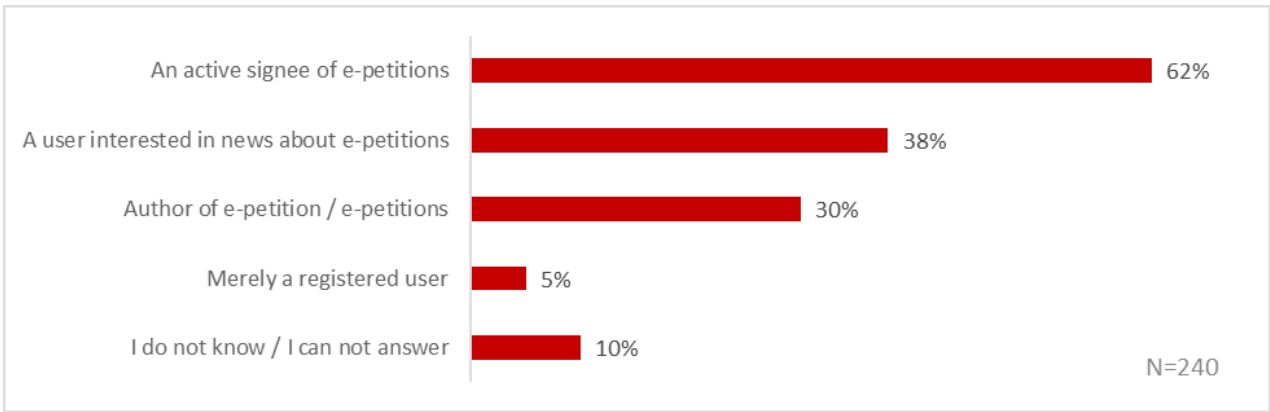
Chart 11. The most efficient channel for disseminating information about the platform according to employment sectors



The results have shown that the majority of the online survey participants perceive themselves as *active signatories of e-petitions* (62%). 38% of the respondents consider themselves as *interested in e-petition innovations in the future*, and 30% say *they see themselves as petitioners*. Only 5% of the online survey respondents see themselves merely as registered users.

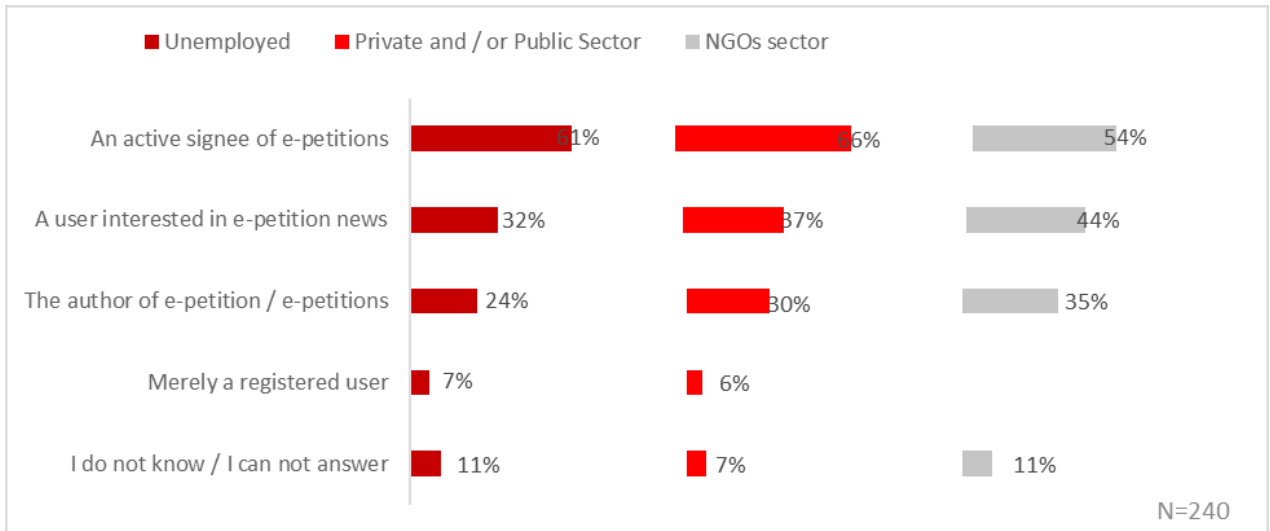


Chart 12. The respondents see themselves as the platform users in the following roles



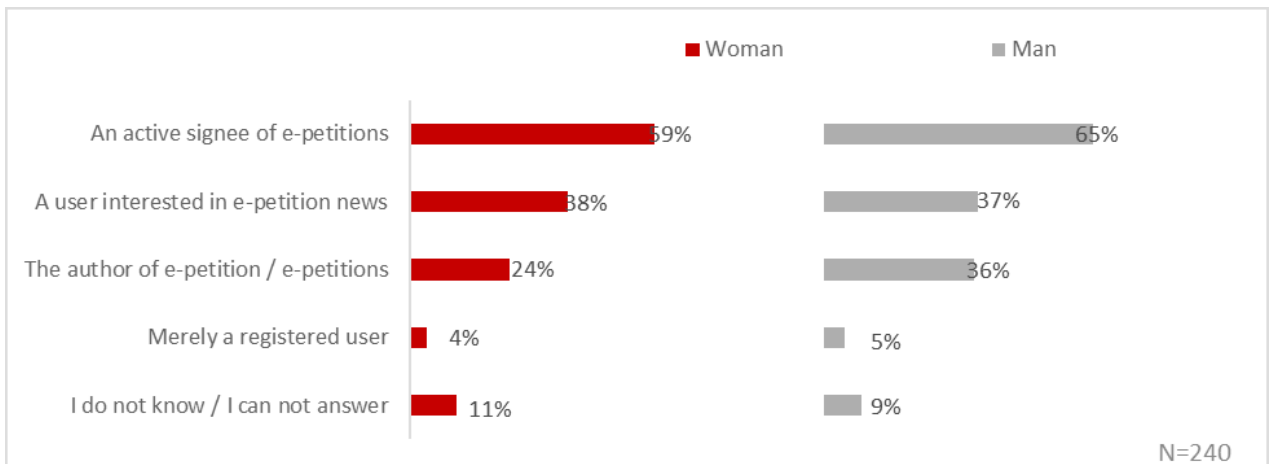
It is noteworthy that mostly employed in the NGOs sector (35%) see themselves as the authors of e-petitions in the future. The number of people employed in private and / or public sector who see themselves as petitioners is slightly smaller and accounts for 30%. With regards to the unemployed, 24% of the participants in the study see themselves as the authors of petitions, and the employed in the NGO sector (44%) perceive themselves as interested in petition innovations.

Chart 13. The status of potential users of the platform according to the employment sectors



Besides the employment sectors, it is also notable that male participants of the online survey more likely see themselves as the authors of e-petition / e-petitions (36%) compared to female participants (24%). Moreover, mostly men (65%) compared to women (59%) see themselves as active signees of e-petitions. News about e-petitions is equally interesting to both female and male respondents (38% and 37% respectively).

Chart 14. The status of potential users of the platform according to gender



Within the framework of the online survey, the respondents were offered to evaluate several statements and to identify whether they agreed with the specific opinions. As the results have shown, the majority of the survey participants believe *that the public does not have sufficient information about the platform, which will prevent efficient work of the platform* (67%). The fact that the public is not aware of the issues which fall into the competence of the government (62%) has also been considered as a challenge, as it can pose a risk to the efficient work of the platform.

A greater part of the survey participants believes that *the registration procedure and requested personal information will create fewer obstacles for citizens to register* (48%) than on the opposite (31%). However, the fact that *not everyone has the computer skills and possibility to work online* (46%) has been considered as an issue as well.

51% of the respondents believe *that collecting 10 000 signatures for an e-petition within a month period is unrealistic*. 64% believe that *maintaining the confidentiality of personal information of petitioners will increase the number of signatures*.

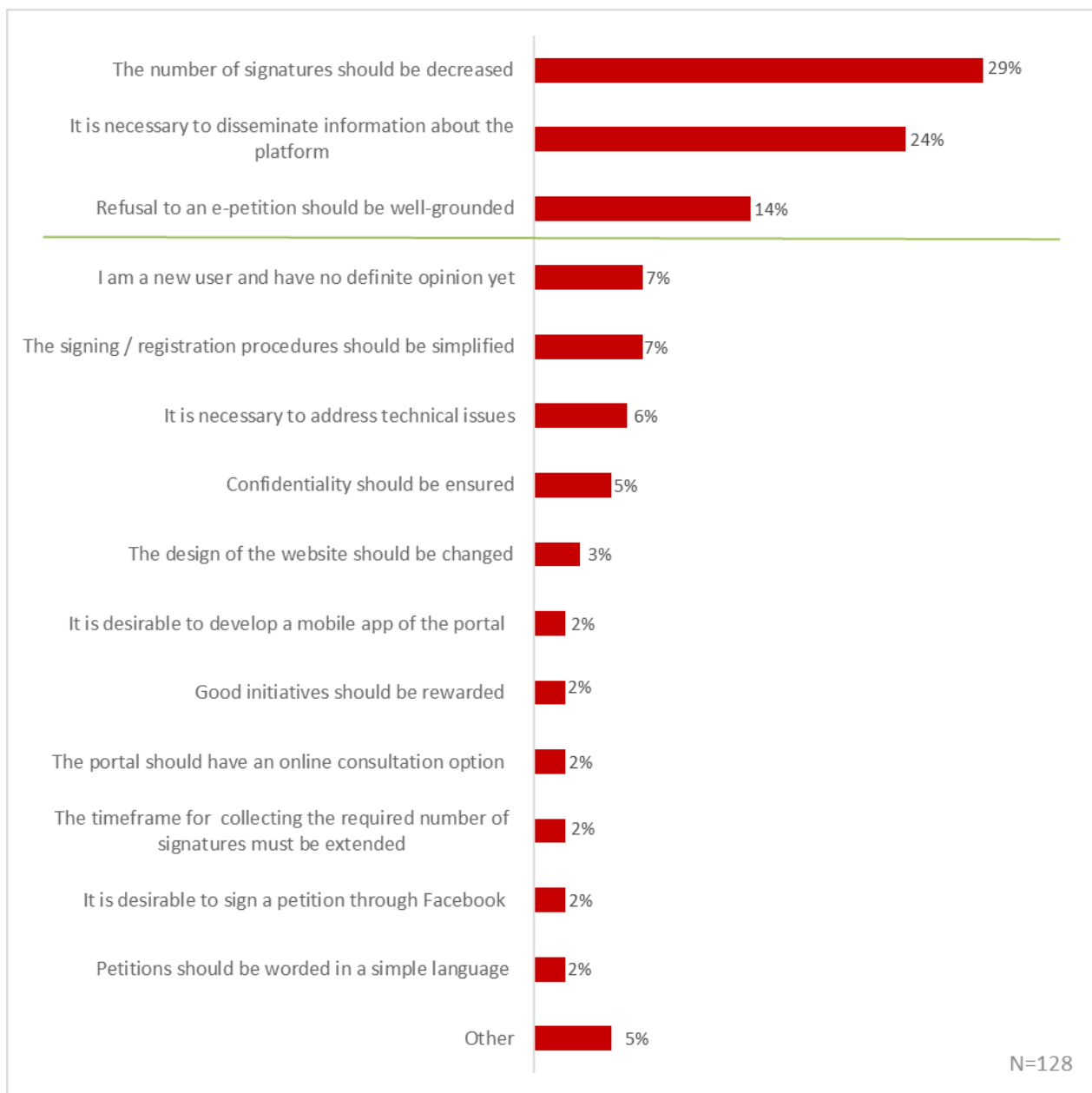
Although the research participants deem the registration procedure problematic and they are not optimistic about the computer skills and abilities necessary to work online, 80% of them believe that *signing an online petition is convenient* (e.g. saves time) and *facilitates the process of collecting signatures*.

Table 5. Evaluation of statements

	I disagree	More or less Agree	I agree
The public does not have sufficient information about the platform, which may prevent its efficient performance	16%	18%	<b>67%</b>
The public does not have sufficient information on the issues which fall into the scope of the government's competence, which may negatively affect the efficiency of the platform	19%	20%	<b>62%</b>
The registration procedure and the requested personal information may prevent citizens from registering on the platform	<b>48%</b>	20%	31%
Not everyone has skills and possibilities to work online (e.g. access to the Internet, computer illiteracy), which will hinder the performance of the platform	27%	26%	<b>46%</b>
Collecting 10 000 signatures for an e-petition in 1 month period is unrealistic	34%	15%	<b>51%</b>
Anonymity of petition signees will increase the number of signatures	20%	17%	<b>64%</b>
Signing an e-petition online is easy (e.g. saves time), which will ensure signatures for e-petitions	10%	10%	<b>80%</b>

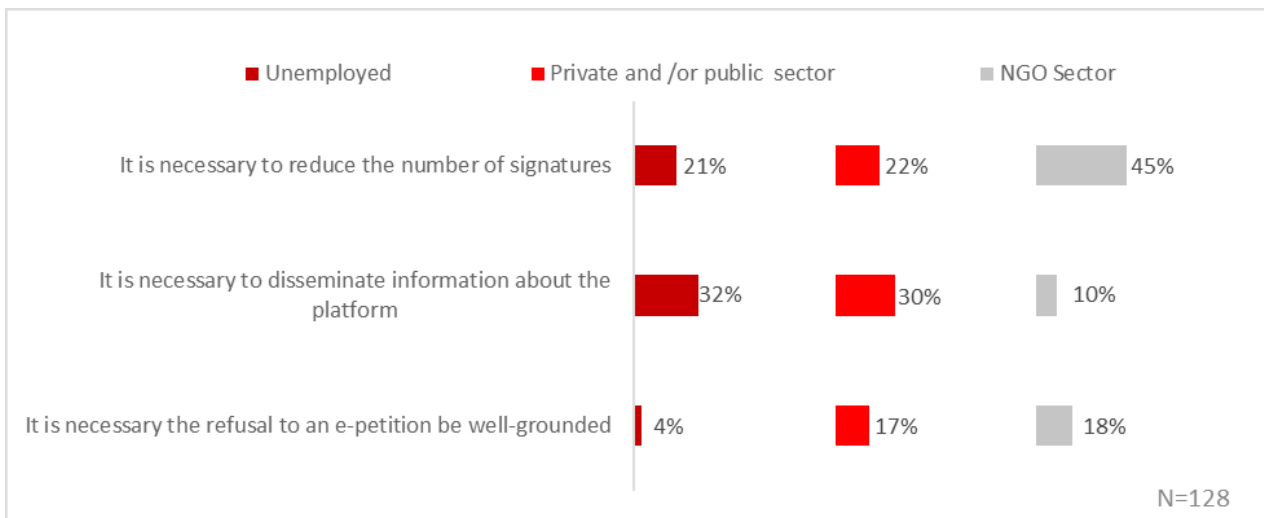
The online research participants also had the opportunity to propose their initiatives / ideas to improve the work of the platform. As it turned out, the vast majority of the respondents who have shared their own initiatives / opinions have found the following three things particularly important. Namely, (1) *the number of signatures required for an e-petition should be decreased* (29%); (2) *It is important to disseminate information about the platform* (24%); (3) *It is necessary that the platform administration should explain to petitioners the reasons for non-publication of their petitions on the platform* (14%).

Chart 15. Ideas for improvement of the platform performance



It is noteworthy that the most common idea regarding the improvement of the platform among *the unemployed and private and/or public sector employees* (32% -30%) is the necessity to disseminate the information about the platform. For the employed in the NGOs sector, the most important issue is the necessity to mobilize 10 000 signatures for consideration of an e-petition (45%). It is also noteworthy that well-grounded refusal to posting e-petitions is almost insignificant for unemployed respondents (4%).

Chart 16. Ideas for improvement of the platform according to the employment status



#### 4.2.3. Overview of the Third Round Results

- The majority of the online survey participants are younger than 35 (61%).
- More than half of the research participants are employed (56%). Most of them are employed in the private sector (53%). 31% of the employed represent the NGOs sector.
- The average monthly income of the majority of the respondents is up to 1000 GEL (47%).
- The majority of the survey participants learned about *ichange.gov.ge* from social networks (40%).
- 9% of the survey participants learned about the platform at the meeting with NGOs. It is noteworthy that the majority of the above number is employed in the NGOs sector.
- The smallest number of the respondent who learned about the platform though social networks is “56+” age category. It is noteworthy that in this category there is the largest rate of the respondents who learned about the platform from acquaintances (40%), and most of the respondents who received information about the platform through television is the age category of 35 (46%).
- For the majority of the research participants the content of *ichange.gov.ge* is comprehensible or quite comprehensible (82%). The procedure for registration on the portal is simple or very simple for the majority (57%).
- The difficulty which the majority of the respondents experienced (24%) when registering on the portal was related to a range of technical problems of the platform (48%). For 28% of the respondents too much personal information requested for registration in the platform was a problem.
- Most of the survey participants, first of all, is interested in social issues (17%) and believes that the category of social issues will attract the highest number of signatures (43%).
- The most effective communication channel for disseminating information about the platform considered by the majority of the survey participants is the social networks in general (83%) and in the first place (60%).
- The majority of the survey participants see themselves as active signatories of e-petitions in the future (62%). The employed by NGOs (35%) and men (36%) most often see themselves as e-petitioners.
- According to the online survey participants, the public does not have sufficient information about the platform, which prevents its efficient performance (67%). Another challenge is public unawareness of the issues which the government is entitled to address (62%).
- The survey participants think that the registration procedure and the requested personal information will less likely create a barrier for citizens in the process of registration (48%), but 46% consider an obstacle the fact that not everyone has computer skills and possibility to work online.
- 51% of the respondents think that collecting 10 000 signatures necessary for consideration of an e-petition within one month period is unrealistic, but 80% still believe that online signing of petitions is convenient (e.g. saves time) and will mobilize signatures.

- Three things that should be changed / improved for the effective work of the platform are as follows: (1) the number of signatures required for signing a petition should be decreased (29%); (2) It is important to disseminate information about the platform (24%); (3) It is necessary that the administration of the platform should explain to petitioners the reasons for non-publication of e-petitions on the platform (14%).
- Most frequently people employed in the NGOs sector indicate the need to reduce the number of signatures for an e-petition (45%). Dissemination of information about the platform is most important for the unemployed (32%) and employed in public and / or private sectors (30%).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the shortcomings identified during the trainings and meetings within the framework of the campaign, GYLA has developed the following recommendations for improvement of the efficiency of the platform *ichange-gov.ge*:

- The number of signatures required for signing an e-petition should be decreased. It is important to review the necessity of accumulating 10,000 signatures for consideration of an e-petition. The number of signatures should be reasonable so that citizens could develop the feeling that the platform is actually oriented towards the promotion of the mechanism for civic integration and the government is ready to consider different civil initiatives. The necessity of reducing the number of signatures for e-petitions was mentioned at all meetings and trainings organized by GYLA and the results of all three rounds of the research conducted by ACT have proved the same.
- In order to facilitate the registration procedure, it is desirable to reduce the number of the fields required for registration. In case of linking the platform to the Public Registry website, it should be sufficient to indicate personal information such as first name, last name, personal number and e-mail.
- The website should be transformed and become mobile-friendly.
- It is necessary to eradicate technical issues on the website. In particular, currently, e-mail and username are identical for the registration, but when logging in, the username pops up in the field. The website users often apply to the administration to address the issue. The above problems were also identified during the survey.
- The profile of an authorized user should be well visible on the platform.
- The website technical support tab should be modified and entitled "Frequently Asked Questions". At this point, the website support link does not perform its duty as it does not enable a user to ask questions. For this purpose, a new tab -"Contact" should be added.
- The platform should be added the tab "Contact" through which users will have an opportunity to ask questions. The link may integrate online consultation and email sections or both.
- According to the Decree №557 of the Government of Georgia of 2014, if an e-petition fails to meet the established criteria, the e-petition initiator shall be informed of the answer thereupon within two days. However, the implementation of this practice has not been identified yet. Petitioners are not furnished with any response on the reasons for refusal to registration or publication of their petitions. It is of special importance that initiators of e-petitions should be notified about the refusal to their petition registration, and the reasons thereof.
- Moreover, petitioners should be notified by e-mail about the posting of their e-petitions. As the authors of e-petitions noted, they learn about the publication of their e-petitions after a few days from the posting, and the wasted time negatively affects the progress of campaigns.
- It is desirable that each user registered on the platform should be able not only subscribe to newsletters, but also select desired categories and receive relevant news via e-mail. Addition of an appropriate option will make the process of mobilizing signatures more efficient and ensure the significance of the platform among already registered users.
- For raising public awareness of the platform and e-petitions, it is important that they should be shared and active campaigns conducted through the *ichange.gov.ge* Facebook page.
- It is important to activate the work with specific target groups and involve relevant NGOs in the process.
- It is necessary to ensure the involvement of the government administration in the campaign, so that the public could become confident that the platform has not been created simply because of some obligations, but the government actually promotes the civil involvement.