

## **On Elections to the Local Councils of Deputies**

In compliance with Article 118 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus the local Councils of deputies shall be elected by citizens of the respective administrative and territorial units for the term of four years.

The local Councils of deputies of the current twenty seventh convocation were elected on 23 March 2014.

Elections of deputies of the new convocation are appointed no later than 4 months and held no later than 30 days prior to termination of their powers (30 days – till 20 February 2018).

According to Article 84 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus elections to the local Councils of deputies shall be appointed by the president of the Republic of Belarus.

In compliance with the administrative and territorial structure of the Republic of Belarus the local Councils of deputies of the following levels are subject to elections:

regional (6 Councils) and Minsk City Council;

Councils of deputies of the basic level (118 district and 10 cities (regional city) Councils);

Councils of deputies of the primary level (14 towns (district towns), 8 settlement, 1152 rural Councils).

Deputies of local Councils of deputies are elected in constituencies established in the following way:

40 to 60 – for elections to the regional, Minsk City Councils of deputies;

25 to 40 – for elections to the district, city (city of regional subordination) Councils of deputies;

15 to 25 – for elections to town (town of district subordination) Councils of deputies;

11 to 15 – for elections to settlement, rural Councils of deputies.

The number of constituencies for elections to each local Council of deputies, the average number of voter for each constituency shall be established by the respective local Council of deputies prior to appointment of elections. The average number of voters per constituency is determined on the basis of the number of voters residing in the respective territory when holding the last elections (as for these elections the determining figure shall be taken from the Parliamentary Elections, 2016).

After the elections have been appointed and territorial electoral commissions have been formed, these commissions will establish

constituencies with names and number for elections to each local Council of Deputies with marked borders of these constituencies and the number of voters residing in their territory.

Voters, except for residents of Minsk, will elect concurrently deputies of local Councils of deputies of different levels in their respective constituencies. A voter, for example, residing in a rural settlement will get three ballots for voting at the same time – for election of a deputy of the regional Council of deputies, for electing a deputy of the district Council of deputies and for electing a deputy of the rural Council of deputies.

The following electoral commissions will ensure organizing and holding of elections to the local Councils of deputies:

- the Central Commission of the Republic of Belarus on Elections and Holding Republican Referenda;
- territorial electoral commissions, including:
  - regional and Minsk City ones;
  - district ones;
  - city ones (in regional cities and district towns);
  - settlement and rural ones;
- constituency electoral commissions for elections to the regional Councils of deputies and territorial electoral commissions in districts of the city of Minsk enjoying powers of constituency electoral commissions for elections to Minsk City Council of Deputies;
- precinct electoral commissions.

Composition of the commissions is formed by local authorities. It shall include, as a rule, no less than one third of representatives of political parties and other public associations and may not include more than one third of state officials. Judges, prosecutors, heads of local executive and regulatory authorities may not be members of the electoral commissions.

In addition to political parties and other public associations, labor collectives of organizations and groups of citizens from 10 people are entitled to nominate candidates for members of the electoral commissions.

A citizen of the Republic of Belarus aged at least 18 may be a candidate for the office of a deputy to a local Council of deputies.

The Act provides the general requirements for nomination of a candidate to a local Council of deputies:

1. The candidate shall reside or work in the territory of the respective local Council of deputies, or work in an organization located in the area of another Council of deputies, but related to meeting the population needs and social development of the territory of his/ her Council.

2. The candidate may be nominated only in one electoral constituency for elections to the local Council of deputies of the respective territorial level.

3. The candidate shall have no criminal records right now.

The right to nominate candidates for the office of deputies in the local Councils belongs to the following:

- political parties (nominate a candidate from among members of the political party).
- labor collectives of organizations (a nominee should not be necessarily a member of the labor collective).
- constituency voters (they nominate a candidate by assigning an initiative group consisting of 3 to 10 people to collect signatures for the candidate).

When nominating a candidate for the deputy's office by voters, members of the initiative group are entitled to collect signatures in the form of picketing in any places not prohibited by the local executive and regulatory authorities.

For nomination of a candidate for the deputy's office in a local Council of deputies by collecting signatures it shall be necessary to exhibit support of:

- at least 150 voters – to the regional, Minsk City Council of deputies;
- at least 75 voters – to the district, city (cities of regional subordination) Councils of deputies;
- at least 20 voters – to the town (towns of district subordination), settlement, rural Councils of deputies.

Registration of candidates for the deputy's office to local Councils of deputies is carried out by the respective constituency and territorial electoral commissions.

After registration of candidates for the deputy's office to local Councils of deputies the period of electoral campaigning is to start. For the purpose of campaigns in their support the candidates for deputies to the local Councils of deputies are entitled to use mass media, produce and disseminate campaign printed materials, hold mass events by giving a notice (meetings, rallies, pickets), hold meetings with their electorate and carry out propaganda in other forms.

The authorized people will provide candidates for deputies to the local Councils of deputies with assistance in electoral campaigns. Any candidate can have up to five authorized representatives.

The constituency and territorial commissions at the expense of the budget funds will produce consolidated slogans with biography information of candidates to be placed in the areas of the electoral constituencies.

Information materials about candidates will be also produced and sent out to voters at the expense of the budget funds.

Candidates for deputies have the right to use premises provided on a gratuitous basis for meetings with voters. Candidates for deputies to the regional, Minsk City, district, city (regional city) Councils of deputies are entitled to free of charge broadcasting in the state radio company.

Candidates for deputies are entitled to establish their own electoral funds for their independent financing of additional electoral campaign activities in the following amounts:

candidates for deputies to the regional, Minsk City Councils of deputies – up to 30 base rates;

candidates for deputies to other Councils of deputies – up to 10 base rates.

Propaganda and campaigning is prohibited on the election day.

Within the period 15 days prior to the elections the precinct commissions will provide citizens with voters lists for the informing purpose. Voters have the right to require corrections in the lists, including by means of legal proceedings.

Early voting shall be organized five days prior to the elections for the voters, who will not be able to be present in their place of residence on the election day.

Voters, who will not be able to come to the voting premises on the election day due to health condition or other excuse, shall be ensured with voting at their residence (stay) location.

The election results will be made up by the territorial and constituency commissions based on count of votes by the precinct electoral commissions.

The legislation does not establish a threshold of voter turnout required as to deem the elections to the local Councils of deputies to have taken place. A candidate for deputies of the local Council of deputies shall deem to be elected if he/she has received the majority vote of the voters, who have taken part in the election. When having only one candidate for voting, the candidate shall deem to be elected if he/she has received more than a half of all votes of people, who have taken part in voting.

No later than five days after the elections the respective territorial commissions are obliged to inform voters about the results of elections to the respective Councils of deputies and to publish a list of the elected deputies.