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Institutionalization of Ethnic Communities in Azerbaijan



The Russian community is the most institutionalized ethnic community in Azerbaijan, according to the research of Ilham Abbasov, a CRRC 2007 Fellow. This is due to the quite diverse nature of this community, some support from the kin state, and the demand for the social communication space among mostly urban Russian speaking actors.

The Lezgins, Talysh and Avar, the other ethnic communities studied by the fellow, do not have a particular demand for such space due to great ethnic, linguistic and cultural similarities with Azerbaijanis. This is the reason why they lack interest in ethnic organizations. These communities are closely integrated into Azerbaijani society, in general do not make distinctions between themselves and other people in Azerbaijan, and do not experience discrimination. Local (town/village) rather than national identity is important for these minority groups.

Another reason for weak institutionalization of ethnic minorities is the lack of financial means. The majority of ethnic community members are neither ready to participate in ethnic organizations, nor willing to support them financially, thus limiting alternative resources for the institutional development of such organizations. As a result of the aforementioned reasons and as well as the tight state control over ethnic institutions, the number of ethnic organizations is not expected to increase.