

# **SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICIES DURING ARMENIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS**

research results

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*Assessment of social and economic development pathways of the Republic of Armenia according to programmes of political parties and alliances participating in the 2018 snap parliamentary elections.*

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## Abbreviations

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<b>RA</b>	Republic of Armenia
<b>NA</b>	National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia
<b>RPA</b>	Republican Party of Armenia
<b>CSDSP</b>	Citizen's Decision - Social-Democratic Party
<b>ARF</b>	Armenian Revolutionary Federation Party
<b>MSA</b>	My Step Alliance
<b>BAP</b>	Bright Armenia Party
<b>CDRP</b>	Christian-Democratic Rebirth Party
<b>NPP</b>	National Progress Party
<b>WPA</b>	We Party Alliance
<b>OYP</b>	Orinats Yerkir Party
<b>STPAP</b>	Sasna Tsrer Pan-Armenian Party
<b>PAP</b>	Prosperous Armenia Party
<b>CEC</b>	Central Electoral Commission

## Executive Summary

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*Snap parliamentary elections were held in Armenia on December 9th, 2018. 11 parties and electoral alliances participated in this election, representing different pre-electoral programmes and visions concerning the development of the Republic of Armenia (RA).*

*This study was commissioned by the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation – Armenia to assess and highlight social and economic development pathways of the RA according to programmes and related campaign materials used by political parties and alliances in the 2018 snap parliamentary elections.*

# Methodology

This study was conducted using quantitative and qualitative research methods derived from the political and social sciences.

*Quantitative research methods* were used to capture the social and economic development pathways and solutions presented in the pre-electoral programmes of political parties and alliances participating in the elections. A content analysis was conducted. Text segments from pre-electoral programmes were analysed for character count and number of pages<sup>1</sup> dedicated to social and economic content. A comparative analysis of different parties and electoral alliances was conducted.

*Qualitative research methods* were used to highlight, analyse and summarise political statements on social and economic matters in pre-electoral programmes. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to:

- Observe assemblies/rallies.
- Analyse the content of pre-electoral programmes, slogans and video statements.
- Determine the “political compasses” of parties and alliances in the political arena.

“Political compasses” (matrixes describing the political orientations of parties and alliances) were determined according to social and economic development pathways and solutions suggested in pre-electoral programmes ([Annex 1](#)).

## Main Research Directions

- Assessment of pre-electoral programmes of political parties and alliances
- Observation of assemblies; political rallies organized by parties and alliances were observed both in Yerevan and in the

provinces (known as *marzer* - administrative divisions - in Armenia). Principal sources of information<sup>2</sup> were analysed. Observations at the assemblies focused on:

- a) speeches by political leaders
- b) the three main questions political candidates were asked during the assemblies and their corresponding answers. To examine these questions and answers, both primary and secondary<sup>3</sup> sources of information were analysed.

- Analysis of slogans used by participating political parties and electoral alliances.
- Assessment of electronic video statements / political advertising by political parties and alliances (for each party or alliance, at least two video statements were analysed).
- Determining “political compasses” for political parties and alliances according to the content of pre-electoral programmes.

## Operationalisation of Research Terms

In accordance with the requirements of this study, the following terms are taken to refer to the social sector:

- Employment and unemployment,
- Labour law/legislation,
- Pension scheme/system,
- Health system,
- Housing security.

And the following terms are taken to refer to the economic sector:

- Development of the future Armenian economy (e.g. industry and mining, tax and banking, agriculture, energy infrastructure and other sectors of the economy)
- Foreign economic relations with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the

1. In this study, one page is equivalent to 1800 characters.

2. Video recordings of assemblies were analysed.

3. The observation results of pre-electoral political rallies provided by the “Independent Observer” public alliance were analysed as a secondary source of information. In total, the “Independent Observer” has monitored 169 pre-electoral political rallies/assemblies.

## Objects of Investigation<sup>4</sup>

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1. Republican Party of Armenia
2. Citizen's Decision - Social-Democratic Party
3. Armenian Revolutionary Federation Party
4. My Step Alliance
5. Bright Armenia Party
6. Christian-Democratic Rebirth Party
7. National Progress Party
8. We Party Alliance
9. Orinats Yerkir Party
10. Sasna Tsrer Pan-Armenian Party
11. Prosperous Armenia Party

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4. The order of names of parties and alliances is based on the random sampling of the CEC of the RA.

## Social and economic policies of political parties and alliances during the Armenian parliamentary elections

### Quantitative overview

The results of the quantitative observation of pre-electoral programmes of political parties and alliances participating in the parliamentary elections in December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018 show that in these programmes, greater attention is paid to the economic sector than the social (see Table 1).

Party/ Alliance	Overall volume of pre-electoral programme		Social sector			Economic sector		
	Pages	Characters	Pages	Characters	Percentage of characters in overall programme	Page	Character	Percentage of characters in overall programme
<b>RPA</b>	4.7	8453.0	0.5	967	11%	0.6	1126	13%
<b>CSDSP</b>	42.2	76007	6.0	10720	14%	7.1	12826	17%
<b>ARF</b>	10.1	18143	0.8	1515	8%	2.7	4804	26%
<b>MSA</b>	51.4	92603	4.4	7932	9%	11.0	19868	21%
<b>BAP</b>	28.3	50868	2.2	3909	8%	6.4	11439	22%
<b>CDRP</b>	12.0	21526	0.1	262	1%	1.4	2526	12%
<b>NPP</b>	13.3	23971	0.7	1248	5%	1.0	1880	8%
<b>WPA</b>	28.0	50381	1.9	3461	7%	6.9	12460	25%
<b>OYP</b>	7.7	13863	1.3	2336	17%	2.5	4582	33%
<b>STPAP</b>	5.8	10440	0.2	399	4%	2.2	3953	38%
<b>PAP</b>	6.7	12021	1.0	1807	15%	4.0	7217	60%
<b>Total</b>	<b>210.2</b>	<b>378276.0</b>	<b>19.2</b>	<b>34556</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>45.9</b>	<b>82681</b>	<b>22%</b>

**Table 1** shows that the My Step Alliance (51.4 pages or 92603 characters), the Citizen's Decision - Social-Democratic Party (42.2 pages or 76007 characters) and the Bright Armenia Party (28.3 pages or 50868 characters) provided voters with the largest volume of pre-electoral programmes, and the Republican Party of Armenia (4.7 pages or 8453 characters) the smallest.



Space dedicated to social and economic matters in proportion to the size of the overall programmes shows that the Christian-Democratic Rebirth Party (1%), the Sasna Tsrer Pan-Armenian Party (4%) and the National Progress Party (5%) paid the least attention to social issues. The Orinats Yerkir Party (17%), Prosperous Armenia Party (15%) and Citizen’s Decision - Social-Democratic Party (14%) considered social issues the most often.

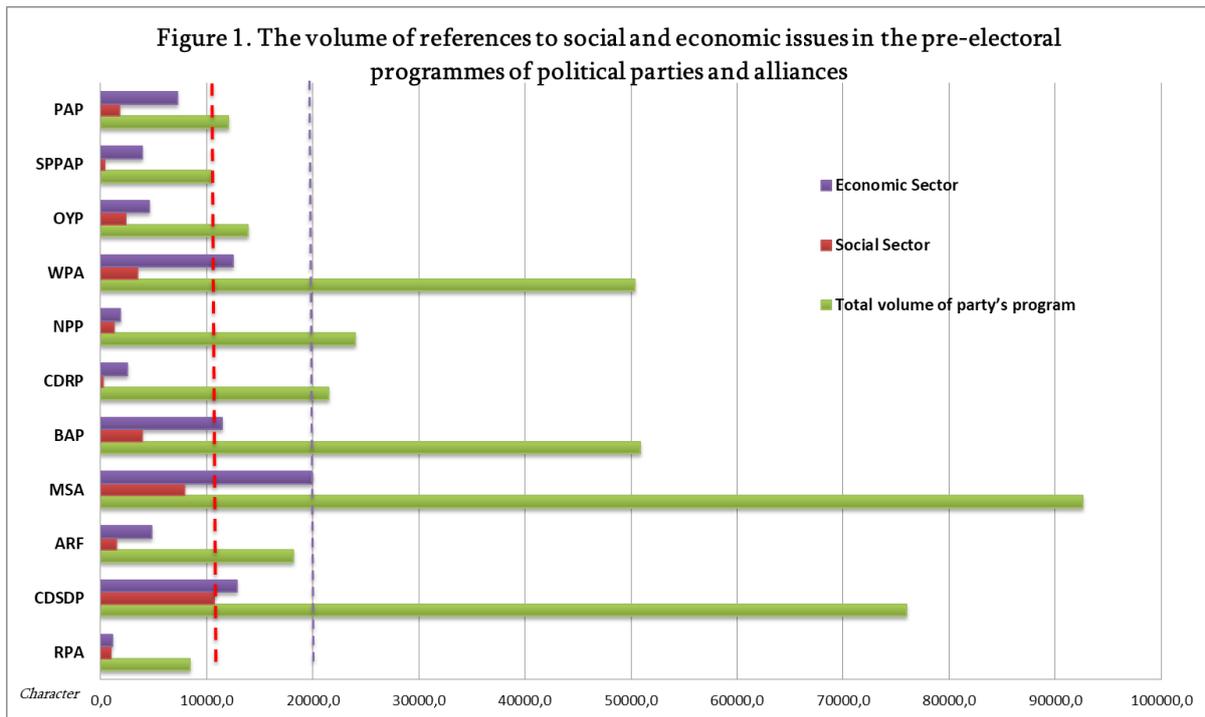
The National Progress Party (8%), the Christian-Democratic Rebirth Party (12%) and the Republican Party of Armenia (13%) paid the least attention to economic issues, whereas the Prosperous Armenia Party (60%) raised these issues the most relevant.

Table 1 shows that social issues were mentioned especially frequently by the Citizen’s

Decision - Social-Democratic Party (10720 characters) and the My Step Alliance (7932 characters). These issues were mentioned least often by the Christian-Democratic Rebirth Party (262 characters) and the Sasna Tsrer Pan-Armenian Party (399 characters).

Social issues were most prominent among the My Step Alliance (19868 characters), the Citizen’s Decision - Social-Democratic Party (12826 characters) and the We Party Alliance (12460 characters) - and least relevant for the Republican Party of Armenia (1126 characters).

A comparison of the volume of references to social and economic issues in pre-electoral programmes of political parties and alliances is presented in Figure 1 below.



In summary, social and economic issues in pre-electoral programmes were most often mentioned by the My Step Alliance (27800 characters), the Citizen’s Decision - Social-Democratic Party (23546 characters), the We Party Alliance (15921 characters) and the Bright Armenia Party (15348 characters).

## Social and economic issues and suggested solutions in the pre-electoral programmes of political parties and alliances

### Republican Party of Armenia

The total volume of the RPA's pre-electoral programme consists of 4.7 pages and 8453 characters. Of these, 0.5 pages or 967 characters were allocated to social issues and 0.6 pages or 1126 characters to economic issues.

According to its pre-electoral programme, the RPA is a party with a national conservative ideology. Its pre-electoral slogan is "If you are concerned about [...] vote for Republican", which does not refer to the ideology of the party. The aim of this slogan is most probably to contradict the MSA and to position itself as an oppositional party.

#### Social Sector

In its pre-electoral programme, the Republican Party of Armenia addresses the following social aspects: employment (142 characters), health issues (320 characters) and the pension scheme (505 characters), and does not address issues related to labour legislation or housing security.

The RPA mentions that it will promote the creation of high-paid jobs, continue training the labour force, and thus create new opportunities for employees. The policy of continuous labour force training is most probably aimed at preventing unemployment in the country.

While addressing health issues, the party highlights these as a priority for human capital and sees the development of this sector through the optimisation of costs in this system. The RPA emphasizing the need to discuss the concept of compulsory insurance move to next line in the future. In the best case, it suggests extending the insurance model used for public servants to other sectors.

While addressing the social security system, the RPA asserts that the current model will

guarantee a decent quality of life in old age. By doing so, the party tries to highlight the success it has achieved in the past. Notably, the RPA addresses the armed forces, and especially the officers in its pre-electoral programme, mentioning that there is a need to strengthen this sector's social guarantees.

#### Economic Sector

The RPA's programme dedicates 1126 characters to the economy. The party's platform emphasises its efforts during the previous legislative period that secured easy access to appropriate markets, a stable and developing energy infrastructure, and tangible prerequisites for intensive agriculture for the RA.

The pre-electoral programme of the RPA emphasizing that economic growth should aim to provide the conditions for the self-realisation of every individual through employment and entrepreneurship.

To achieve this, one of the preconditions (but not the only one) is freedom from all kinds of monopolies. As a second precondition, the RPA mentions consistent progress the development of infrastructure and institutions. Further, the party notes that these should be seen as continuous processes, which require clearly defined economic priorities.

To build a competitive economy, the party prioritises the promotion of exports, the increase of labour efficiency through the implementation of modern technologies and the encouragement of small and medium-sized entrepreneurship.

Relations with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the European Union (EU) and Iran are considered foreign policy issues rather than economic issues, and there is no reference to these issues in the RPA's pre-electoral program.



However, it should be mentioned that the party considers a possible exit from the EAEU irresponsible and emphasizing that after returning to power, they will support the same policy as the previous government. Regarding the EU and Iran, the party emphasizing the fact that a framework agreement with the EU exists and that the country (presently) has good neighbourly relations with Iran.

Analysis of the RPA's pre-electoral video statements shows that there is no serious reference to social or economic issues, other than the fact that the party slogan beginning "I'm concerned about [...]" also appears in a socially-oriented variant. In these videos, the health sector is presented from the perspective of the party's achievements, highlighting its efforts to guarantee the health of Armenian citizens. Overall, the RPA's two video statements are largely oriented towards contradicting the "My Step" party.

The RPA's public meetings were mostly held in a closed format, not involving the general public, so it was not possible to analyse these.

### **Citizen's Decision - Social-Democratic Party**

The volume of the pre-electoral programme of the CSDSP consists of 42.4 pages or 76007 characters, of which 6 pages or 10720 characters are allocated to the social sector and 7.1 pages or 12826 characters to the economic sector.

According to the party's name and its pre-electoral programme, social democracy is the ideological basis of the CSDSP. The pre-electoral slogan of the CSDSP is "The Future is Yours", which is related to the party's political ideology as well as its pre-electoral programme.

### **Social Sector**

Regarding social issues, the CSDSP's pre-electoral programme dedicates 950 characters to employment, 1649 to labour legislation, 5293 to the health system, 2547 to pension schemes, and 281 to housing security. The pre-electoral program of the CSDSP covers all of the social aspects highlighted in this study.

Regarding the employment issue, the CSDSP therefore emphasizing that the state is responsible for implementing effective policies for job creation, and sees the issue of employment in total as a state competence. It suggests the partial de-commercialisation of the market economy as one potential solution. Further, it suggests different projects and capacity building to prepare the youth for various employment opportunities.

The CSDSP is the only party participating in the 2018 parliamentary elections that explicitly discusses solutions in the area of labour law. The party gives an essential role to labour unions by providing them the possibility to get involved in the development of labour legislation on issues such as the minimum wage, the basket of goods for the consumer price index and similar procedures. Moreover, it is suggested that each year labour unions should present their requirements per sector regarding the minimum wage and other working conditions. The CSDSP also suggests implementing structural legislative changes for unions of employers and workers by implementing an essential part of social politics through the power of collective contract signing. The party also foresees other functions to be delegated to labour unions such as acting as a controlling authority for resolving labour disputes and regulating the conditions of labour relations. At the same time, the party's pre-electoral program does not neglect the role of employer unions as representatives of trilateral social cooperation. According to the party's vision, the state is to fulfil the role of arbitrator in relations between employers and labour unions.



The CDSDP proposes encouraging informal employees and the self-employed to formalise their job status, which in their opinion will allow these employees to become taxpayers and make use of services provided by the state including pensions, the national health service, specialised training and higher education.

In the health sector, the CDSDP suggests the implementation of compulsory health insurance, in which the state should play an essential role. Moreover, it is proposed that a state insurance authority should be established by involving private insurance companies. Such state health insurance should be overarching and obligatory. Initially, the state health insurance should cover health issues that are excluded from private insurance protection and are considered more vulnerable in terms of social security. The party suggests implementing the first stage of this overarching, obligatory state insurance in the field of oncology by covering all costs from the insurance fund. In its pre-electoral program, the party also suggests approaches for controlling insurance funds and for their effective implementation. Further, the party emphasizing that the development of the health sector should be carried out in stages, leading to modernisation. Diagnostic and therapeutic procedures should be developed for all diseases and syndromes, involving specialised medical associations and chairs of the Yerevan State Medical University.

The party also proposes early detection examinations (screening studies) throughout the country as an important approach to increasing the effectiveness of early detection and the treatment of cancer.

The CDSDP considers tobacco addiction an illness and suggests combating smoking, instead of smokers.

The CDSDP also suggests that all specialists in the health sector should be required to pass qualification exams. The party targets the phenomenon of corruption in the health

sector and proposes that the state should exercise a monitoring function with regard to the price of laboratory and instrumental diagnostic examination.

The CDSDP also discusses the pension system. Moving the informal and self-employed workforces into the formal sector is the only way to make them beneficiaries of the pension system. This will allow them to become taxpayers and to use guarantees provided by the state. In this context, the party suggests developing optimal taxation mechanisms for women in rural areas engaged only in agriculture, giving them the opportunity to make use of childcare allowances and high pensions.

The CDSDP suggests including unpaid work in the calculation of working experience. In particular, the period spent taking care of a child with disabilities or elderly persons should be fully calculated as working experience.

Regarding the pension system, the CDSDP highlights some areas of interrelation between the social and cultural sectors. Firstly, the party's pre-electoral program highlights the role of employees in the cultural sector and suggests that the gratitude of society towards notable artists should be expressed through pension increases rather than titles, medals or other ceremonial distinctions. Secondly, the party emphasizing ensuring the participation of retired persons in cultural life.

The CDSDP also targets housing security issues for certain social groups, such as military officers. The pre-electoral program emphasizing that solving these important issues would thereby increase the social security of these groups.

## Economic Sector

In the CDSDP's pre-electoral program, 12862 characters are dedicated to the economy.

The program foresees the abolition of



monopolies and the creation of equal rules, as well as the development of the primary, secondary, tertiary and in the long term quaternary (referring to advanced technologies) sectors of the economy. In doing so, the party intends to transform the economy by shifting it from mining and agriculture to industry, services and advanced technology. Parallel to these economic developments, there should be a withdrawal from the metal mining industry. Metal mines should be explored only in exceptional cases where required by development and this exploration should be fully under state management and control.

In its pre-electoral program, the party states that it seeks to reduce the burden of public debt, decrease current expenditures and increase the fiscal space through responsible and effective fiscal policy.

Regarding tax policy, the CDSDP suggests implementing multifunctional and flexible tax zoning and targeting strategies to ensure the balanced development of regions that are less economically competitive, as well as the inclusion of economically neglected communities in free market conditions. An individual taxation approach is proposed for implementation, according to which citizens will be taxed at different rates, depending on their social circumstances.

The CDSDP considers the agricultural sector from the perspective of food security. Its pre-electoral program emphasizes that imports of agricultural products should be minimized, replaced with locally produced high quality goods.

The pre-electoral program also presents suggestions for the energy industry, such as the improvement of energy efficiency, the creation of a sufficient production and transmission system by natural growth of energy consumption, the re-equipment of the power distribution system, the wide application of renewable energy, etc. The party also prioritises the involvement of highly qualified spe-

cialists as well as education issues related to the energy economy.

As part of the economy, the CDSDP highlights the development of military industry.

The party's pre-electoral program also considers the question of recognition for compensation regarding illegal enrichment and right of ownership of assets acquired through illegal enrichment.

It is worth mentioning that in its pre-electoral program, the CDSDP makes no reference to the EAEU, the EU or Iran, neither in the economic nor in the foreign policy areas.

The analysis of five CDSDP pre-electoral video statements shows the main cornerstones of the party's pre-election program presented in four of these videos, on the topics of the constitution, environmental protection, health and the economy. In a separate video, the party presents its vision for a prosperous state by emphasising that in a social state, the citizen should both determine the state's policy and be guided by the pre-electoral programs and ideologies of political parties and alliances for voting. The main message of this video is that if a citizen neglects to participate in voting, he or she will be faced with a parliament very unsuited to his or her needs, becoming a "policy consumer".

For this study, four meetings of the CDSDP with voters were analysed. During one of these meetings, which took place in the village of Lichk<sup>5</sup> in Gegharkunik Province, CDSDP representatives promised to address labour and health issues by highlighting the issue of medical insurance. Moreover, the party representatives noted that people should be informed about their right to receive social protection by the state in return for paying taxes. During this meeting, they also discussed tax exemptions for businesses in remote locations, which, according to the CDSDP's representatives, should lead to dispersal of the business concentrated

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5. <https://www.facebook.com/sdcdp/videos/1568395306629085>



in the capital. They also presented their stance on maternity allowance as well as a calculation of the work experience gained by young mothers and others caring for children. In addition, the need for the development of labour unions was discussed.

During the pre-electoral meetings in Yerevan, the CSDP representatives presented essential cornerstones of their program by explaining social and economic issues in a simple manner. During the meeting with the party representatives in Yeghegnadzor, the capital of Vayots Dzor Province, questions were raised about the mining industry. Here is a quotation from a CSDP representative on the subject: “We will never allow new mines to be opened until the damages caused by previous mines have been compensated”. During the same meeting, one of the questions referred to women’s issues, in response to which the CSDP candidate presented the stance that farming as well as childcare should be calculated as working experience.

By evaluating the answers to questions raised during pre-electoral meetings and assemblies, it is clear that the CSDP representatives addressed these questions in accordance with the cornerstones of the party’s pre-electoral program.

### **Armenian Revolutionary Federation Party**

The total volume of the ARF’s pre-electoral program consists of 10.1 pages or 18143 characters, of which 0.8 pages or 1515 characters are allocated to the social sector and 2.7 pages or 4808 characters to the economic sector.

According to the pre-electoral program, the ARF is a political party guided by national-democratic-socialist-revolutionary ideologies. The pre-electoral slogan of the ARF is “Faithful to Land and Armenians” which is linked to its pre-electoral program and the nationalistic component of its ideology.

### **Social Sector**

In its pre-electoral program, the ARF targets all of the social issues important to this research. It dedicates 653 characters to employment, 415 to labour legislation, 171 to the health system, 132 to pension schemes, and 144 to housing security.

For employment security, the ARF plans to make the public services sector attractive through dignified remuneration. Furthermore, the party proposes that for citizens in difficult life conditions, the state should provide better opportunities for entering the labour market by implementing active policies.

In the ARF’s program, special attention is given to the protection of workers’ rights. The party suggests creating opportunities for citizens to exercise their right to have dignified jobs. According to party’s program, employment should ensure not only existence but a dignified life for citizens, and employees should be able to exercise their right to recreation, education, health services and cultural and spiritual values.

Regarding health issues, the ARF suggests creating a health insurance system that will allow all citizens to receive treatment and eliminate cases of non-treatment due to insufficient financial resources.

In its pre-electoral program, the ARF proposes a guarantee of the well-being of elderly people. The party finds intolerable that there is poverty among senior citizens who have earned their living through honest work.

The ARF targets demographic problems as well, and asserts that demographic disasters can be prevented by solving the problem of housing security.

The difficulty of establishing a family can also be solved if a contribution is made to the housing security of young families.



## Economic Sector

In the ARF's pre-electoral program, suggestions regarding the economic sector comprise 4804 characters. To guarantee economic development, the party suggests that the state adopt a regulatory function, and in special cases the role of the engine of economic development. Through effective interventions the state should prevent market failures, monopolies and abuses of dominating positions. In its pre-electoral program, the ARF emphasizing the need for state policies directed towards the elimination and reduction of over-exploitation, the complex management of natural resources and the fair distribution of wealth derived from the use of natural resources among all members of society.

Further, the state should encourage entrepreneurs by ensuring fair conditions for competition and clear rules for doing business. The state should cooperate with the private sector, collaboratively share business risk and lead in those areas where the risk is greater, profitability is less or private funding is lacking. The ARF points out that even the most liberal and conservative political movements around the world aim to support businesses in their own countries. Therefore the party suggests implementing a protectionist national business strategy. To do so, it proposes substantially reforming the public administration system. In its pre-electoral program, the party suggests reviewing tariffs for services provided by natural monopolies.

The ARF proposes implementing progressive taxation policy, emphasizing the principle of "a higher rate on the wealthy than on the poor". The party asserts that it is possible to eliminate income polarisation and social injustice. In its pre-electoral program, the party argues against the application of a single income tax rate because it asserts that this cannot mitigate social inequality. The principle of progressive taxation should also be applied to property and land taxes.

The party emphasizing in its program that the development of the agricultural sector is a precondition for rural development. For rural and agricultural development, the party suggests providing targeted assistance directly to farmers instead to intermediary organisations. To promote agricultural development, it is important to promote the creation of farm co-operatives, voluntary land consolidation and the reduction of unused agricultural land. At the same time, it is emphasised that the state, communities and actors in the private sector should invest in the development of agricultural infrastructure.

The ARF's program also focuses on the issues of small and medium-sized enterprises by emphasizing the present need for state support. According to the party's program, unreasonable and draconian conditions offered by banking and credit organisations impede the development of these enterprises. To promote business development, the ARF proposes that the state should establish joint venture companies with these enterprises, and provide them with venture financing, loans and other privileges. For business development, the ARF also suggests reducing the burden of inspection. Particular attention is paid to the current and future needs of the economy while formulating a state educational program.

In its pre-electoral program, the ARF makes no reference to the EAEU, the EU or Iran.

Observing the pre-electoral video statements of the ARF, it is clear that they reflect the party's nationalistic ideology, the core of which refers to agriculture as "the land that needs to be cultivated" and to employment issues as "the Armenian who must have a job". This emphasizing that the cultivating and working nature of the Armenian people is of the highest value.



Analysis of the first pre-electoral public assembly (November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018) of A. Rustamyan shows that he touched upon the issue of employment by emphasising employees' professional qualities, not the role of personal relationships.

He also presented the ARF's negative positions on liberal economic policy as well as economic monopolies in the country. During the pre-electoral meeting on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018, in the village of Jrvezh in Kotayk Province, a question for the ARF representatives referred to their vision of the country's economic development. The response was: "Dashnaktsutyun believes that at the moment, the state's participation in the economy is very weak; we believe that the role of the state should be strengthened and its share should be increased". During these meetings, questions related to the social sector were also asked. All answers reflect the main approaches of the ARF summed up in its pre-election program.

### **"My Step" Party Alliance**

The total volume of the MSA's pre-electoral program consists of 51.4 pages or 92603 characters, of which 4.4 pages or 7932 characters are allocated to the social sector and 11 pages or 19868 characters to the economic sector.

According to the contents of the MSA's pre-election program, it is most plausibly classified as having an ideology of social-liberalism, but there are also principles in the program that are most typical of neo-socialism and/or social-democratic ideologies. The pre-election slogan of the MSA is "Happy Individual, Solidary Society, Strong State", which is consistent with the content of the pre-election program.

#### **Social Sector**

In its pre-electoral program, the MSA tar-

gets all important social issues relevant to this research. It dedicates 2244 characters to employment, 397 to labour legislation, 4228 to the health system, 782 to pension schemes and 281 to housing security.

In its pre-electoral program, the MSA suggests solving employment problems through the development of an effective employment policy. For this purpose, the MSA intends to analyse both trends in the domestic labour market and the development of employment policy in other countries. Moreover, economic policy will be based on employment expansion and investment to encourage employment. An active labour market policy will be the priority of the MSA.

All programs developed will be aimed at getting permanent and sustainable jobs and reintegration into the labour market. Therefore, reforms will also be carried out in the State Employment Agency. Corresponding package programs to address employment issues should be developed by 2023.

Young people, women, and low-skilled workers facing unemployment due to structural changes in the labour market will be particular targets of policy in this sector. The focus here will be on the development of skills and abilities, job-search assistance and the creation of new employment opportunities. As an important step in reforming the unemployment benefit system, the MSA has envisaged making some components of employment policies mandatory for unemployed beneficiaries.

The labour concept of the MSA is wider and broader. It aims to create a constant and effective connection between education and the labour market. Therefore, the MSA plans to implement professional orientation modules and corresponding groups in secondary school and a two-week professional internship in the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade for high school students, as well as provide comprehensive information about the demands



of the labour market, career development opportunities and salaries for final grade school students to ensure that students can make informed decisions. When speaking about labour legislation, in MSA's pre-electoral program highlights the importance of implementing measures to protect labour rights. It also states that the cornerstone of the MSA's economic policy is the creation of dignified employment opportunities for Armenian citizens by expanding the competitive advantages of the Armenian economy.

In its pre-electoral program, the MSA also presents its vision for the health system. According to the program, one of the key goals of MSA policy is to improve the quality and accessibility of services provided by the health system, especially in the context of primary healthcare. Special attention will be paid to the improvement of maternal and child health, reproductive health and adolescent health. The health policy plans of the MSA foresee implementation of a compulsory health insurance scheme. In addition, the efforts of the MSA should be directed towards the reduction of corruption and unofficial procedures as well as the improvement of competitiveness in the health sector by introducing an objective system of budget allocation and spending. In the field of healthcare, the MSA will be guided by the principles of equality, social justice and solidarity.

Some of the mechanisms for improving primary healthcare services are a salary increase for healthcare workers, their continued vocational education, re-equipment of medical organisations and the expansion of early detection examinations (screening studies). The implementation of these mechanisms will improve the prevention and early detection of diseases, leading to a reduction in the incidence of premature death and disability due to a number of diseases.

With regard to the provinces, the MSA intends to develop and implement programs for the balanced distribution of regional healthcare

infrastructure and developing the potential of qualified professionals.

In its pre-election program, the MSA also mentions that it will implement healthy lifestyle campaigns and develop measures to reduce risk-factors contributing to the occurrence of common non-infectious diseases among the population.

In the health sector, the MSA intends to give priority to international standards and guidelines. The alliance also plans to introduce effective control systems for drug quality, safety and efficiency, as well as for delivery and distribution. It considers appropriate the full implementation of an e-Health system will ensure the accessibility of citizens' medical data via online accounts. Moreover, this system will enable the targeted, effective and transparent allocation of funds.

The MSA plans to increase public health spending in the state budget over the next three years by 2% of GDP, and over the next five years by 3% of GDP. According to the alliance, the increase in health financing should be combined with the targeted use of financial resources.

By 2023, the MSA plans to increase pensions by making savings in the state system and finding new sources of revenue. The MSA envisages the implementation of reforms to the mandatory funded pension system and to the legislative regulation of investment in mandatory pension fund assets.

The MSA also plans to implement reforms to the provision of unemployment allowances by making some components of employment policy mandatory for unemployed beneficiaries.

The alliance plans to develop affordable housing schemes for young families, to mitigate negative demographic trends.



## Economic Sector

The MSA's pre-electoral program dedicates 19868 characters to the economy.

In the short term, the alliance plans to reduce administrative burdens, eliminate barriers to doing business, simplify tax and customs policies, invest in infrastructure and boost exports. The state should play a role in economic development by consistently developing competitiveness and eliminating obstacles to growth and development.

The program highlights the importance of creating necessary and sufficient conditions for the promotion of competitiveness throughout all sectors of the economy, ensuring balanced territorial development through continuous improvement of value-generating infrastructure, the improvement of public policy through the continuous dialogue with the private sector, and the introduction of effective institutions to address market failures.

According to the MSA, as priorities for economic reform, special attention will be given to high-tech industry, processing and light manufacturing, high-value agriculture and tourism. To ensure economic development, the following steps should be taken: eliminate all bureaucratic restrictions on starting, developing and dissolving a business; promote the commercialisation of intellectual achievements by improving legislation on intellectual property rights; establish a fair, understandable and predictable environment for entrepreneurs and investors by improving taxation legislation; and raise the country's competitiveness and investment attractiveness. To create a favourable investment climate, a reduction in the existing rates of profit tax, income tax and dividend tax is envisaged. Specifically, the current 20% profit tax will be reduced to 18%, the dividends of residents and non-residents will be taxed at a combined rate of 5%, and an income tax flat rate will be set at 23% by 2019, which will gradually decrease to 20% by 2023.

According to the MSA's pre-election program, it is necessary to create competitive and efficient agriculture based on innovative technologies and a scientific base. This will be accomplished by implementing a newly developed water resource management strategy and state support programs for the modernisation of irrigation systems. Furthermore, the party plans to: expand the scope of arable land and the use of irrigated land; create economic and legal opportunities for the cultivation of unused farmland; increase the targeting of subsidisation mechanisms; and promote the development of cooperative agriculture by ensuring minimum prerequisites for the establishment of cooperatives. Educational-research and industrial clusters will be created to promote a deeper cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture and the centres of the agrarian sector with educational, scientific, scientific-industrial and consulting functions.

The alliance also plans to promote the use of agro-food system equipment and new technologies, as well as food security systems. The pre-electoral program also envisages introducing an agricultural insurance system. Concrete actions should be undertaken to promote the implementation of anti-hail protection systems as well as state support programs for domestic seed breeding and seed production, intensive agriculture and livestock breeding. The pre-electoral program also aims at promoting non-agricultural activities in rural communities and the development of agro-tourism.

The MSA's pre-electoral program also addresses tourism development as a separate sector of the economy. The party plans to develop and adopt a new law on tourism with corresponding sub-legislative and legal acts that will contribute to the creation of a favourable business and investment environment in this area. In order to increase the flow of tourists to Armenia, active marketing activities with the use of modern tools are envisaged. It also plans to diversify and make



Armenia more accessible by air and land routes.

In its pre-electoral program, the MSA also targets the IT sector as a separate segment of the economy. It plans to promote the development of competitive brands of high-tech products and ensure the proper presentation of high-demand products in international markets. Further, it plans to promote the introduction and application of advanced technologies in industry, agriculture, education, healthcare and other sectors. Based on existing infrastructures, the alliance also intends to develop the effective operation of modern technology centres in the Armenian provinces and to undertake measures to create new centres under the concept of the “IT Village”. The promotion of access to the Armenian market for high-tech IT and ICT companies is also planned. In this regard, the pre-electoral program envisages legislative reforms and improvements to the corresponding legal framework.

With respect to foreign affairs, including economic relations with Iran, the MSA plans to develop and implement a plan for the introduction of new energy trade mechanisms. In the context of strengthening relations with Iran, the alliance highlights the importance of implementing economically effective projects aimed at the development of infrastructure to enhance energy independence and security.

In the MSA’s pre-electoral program, relations with the countries of the EAEU, the EU and Iran are considered foreign policy issues, and there are no references to economic factors in the relationships with these countries.

However, the MSA intends to develop mutually beneficial cooperation and to deepen bilateral relations with the countries of the Eurasian region within the framework of the EAEU, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

With regard to the EU, the MSA intends to take steps towards the best possible implementation of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between EU and Armenia (CEPA), as well as to deepen cooperation with the EU member states and other European countries. It also intends to ensure that Armenian citizens have free access to the EU.

Two pre-electoral video statements by the MSA were analysed in this study, but these statements make no direct references to the issues analysed in the study. The content of the first video statement is a call for revolution at the individual level and the second is a message to build a new Armenia.

The analysis of three of the MSA’s pre-electoral assemblies shows that during these meetings, the issues targeted in this study were reflected in both the speeches and the questions and answers. During the pre-election meeting in Yerevan on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018, N. Pashinyan touched upon the issue of monopolies in economic policy with the example of gas stations, noting that in the gas stations of “well-known people”, turnover doubled following tax inspections. He also mentioned that since June, gas prices have dropped for socially vulnerable consumers. During the same meeting, he also noted that the issue of renegotiating the price of gas should be discussed within the framework of the EAEU session. During the rally in the town of Masis<sup>6</sup> in the Province of Ararat on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018, N. Pashinyan spoke about agriculture by presenting approaches from the MSA’s pre-election program.

During a pre-electoral meeting in the town of Ashtarak in the Province of Aragatsotn on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018, one of the participants raised a question about unemployment - the MSA representative replied: “new employment opportunities will be created and this issue will be finally solved” without providing any further details.

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6. <https://www.facebook.com/nikol.pashinyan/videos/1987996231502728/>



## Bright Armenia Party

The BAP's pre-electoral program consists of 28.3 pages and 50868 characters, of which 2.2 pages or 3909 characters are allocated to the social sector and 6.4 pages or 1149 characters to the economic sector.

The content of the pre-election program makes clear that the BAP's ideology is based on liberalism.

The pre-electoral slogan of the BAP is "Bright Armenia" which relates to the name of the party as well as to the pre-election program.

### Social Sector

In the pre-electoral program of the BAP, 689 characters are dedicated to employment, 66 to labour legislation, 2268 to the health system, 7833 to pension schemes and 153 to housing security. Therefore, the party addressed all social aspects highlighted in this study.

The BAP allocates a special section called "Job market development" to the issue of employment. According to the BAP, by solving the unemployment problem, the population will change (increase). For concrete steps, the BAP mentions an increase in labour market flexibility, the elimination of informal employment, an increase in the quality of the workforce based on vocational education, the promotion of professional mobility, a strengthening of the link between the labour market and unemployed citizens, development and the application of a labour market and education interconnection concept, the provision of adult continued education, etc.

The BAP also targets issues related to the protection of workers' rights by introducing the role of labour mediator and business advocacy institutes. According to the party's vision for healthcare, it should be of high quality, effective, accessible and transparent. The BAP suggests free medical care only on the basis of the principle of social justice, at the

same time emphasizing that the state should assist any person in need of urgent medical care.

The BAP's pre-electoral program outlines the following goals in the field of healthcare: a high quality of medical services, accessibility, disease monitoring and early prevention, the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, increased targeting of public health expenditure, implementation of an e-Health system, market and competitive pricing of health services, gradual implementation of a compulsory health insurance system, targeted development of the laboratory system, efficient and transparent mechanisms of budget allocation, modernisation of regional hospitals, the provision of new services by the healthcare system, capacity building for the system, the export of medical services, the introduction of service groups for understaffed professions and qualitative development programs in Armenia, and the introduction of strategies for fighting cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, thyroid diseases and malignant neoplasms.

In order to achieve these goals, the party proposes the following steps: increase the quality, availability and scope of polyclinic services; regulate the treatments of different diseases into three categories (state-funded, partly state-funded, and paid by the individual), revising price lists to prevent incremental payments from being higher than the minimum wage (which can often be triple currently); make certain medical interventions and remedies completely free, including the transfusion of blood and blood substitutes, CT scans with urgent indications, stenting of cardiac vessels, and endovascular surgery of the cerebral vessels; implement mechanisms for monitoring the targeted expenditure of state funds at state-owned hospitals; provide free childcare services to any healthcare facility in Armenia, without the prior referral of polyclinics; encourage the employment of doctors in the provinces; regulate and manage drug supply; coordinate adequate salaries, pricing and transparent finance; and



encourage investments in modern technologies for understaffed specialised medical institutions.

Regarding pension schemes, the BAP suggests substantial improvements to the current accumulative pension system. To create platforms for the development of financial markets and long-term pension savings strategies, it is necessary to take steps to direct accumulated funds to the real sector of the Armenian economy. At the same time, parallel to the increase of pensions, it is necessary to implement a compulsory health insurance scheme for pensioners, as well as reduce pension polarisation.

With regard to family allowances, the party proposes the provision on benefits to children, introducing children's cards, free access to kindergartens, educational institutions, etc. The BAP proposes the introduction of a mechanism to encourage beneficiaries of state aid to work, through the provision of temporary privileges in the form of return on income taxes.

The party also proposes adopting a law for multi-member large families, which will regulate the issue of measurable privileges.

Regarding the issue of housing construction, the BAP mentions the families left homeless after the 1988 earthquake. The party suggests prioritising their housing problems.

## Economic Sector

The BAP dedicates 11439 characters to the economy. In its pre-election program, the BAP presents general concepts for economic development that refer to tax and customs policy, the banking system, the innovation environment, industry, agriculture, the energy system, IT, communications and transport, tourism, etc. Thus, the BAP foresees the socio-economic development of Armenia through the implementation of a strategic program that will ensure the sustainable long-

term development of the country, based on structural and institutional reforms. According to the party, the citizens of the Republic of Armenia should be at the centre of all reforms, and therefore economic development should focus on individuals as the drivers of economic growth. The BAP considers it necessary to ensure the innovative development and qualitative progress of the economy. It proposes the establishment of an advocacy institute for business interests. The state should play the role of ensuring an equal and competitive environment.

In regard to the banking system, the party considers it necessary to develop a new plan for control over the Central Bank (CBA) and to implement new tools. Moreover, the party suggests suspending the management of the Central Depository from the CBA and creating a new authorised independent authority. According to the party's pre-electoral program, it is necessary to set a maximum amount for expired penalties for crediting, bank branches should be accessible in the cross-border regions of Armenia, the PayPal system should be implemented in Armenia, etc.

According to the BAP, the tax and customs system should be productive and have the capacity to reduce the informal economy as well as improve the business environment. In this regard, it is important to ensure the stability of tax revenues. Hence, the party proposes a gradual shift from punitive policy to establishing partnerships with the taxpayer. The party also recommends revising real estate taxation mechanisms and provisions as well as enlarging the scope of double taxation agreements. The BAP highlights the importance of initiating programs to harmonise approaches between the State Revenue Committee of Armenia, which implements policy in this sector, and the Ministry of Finance, as well as programs for fostering their collaboration.

The BAP's pre-electoral program proposes the redistribution of the tax burden to large businesses, setting tax breaks of 3 years for



microenterprises and tax exemptions. The party suggests a clear fixing of the revenue tax rate at 115 million Drams, setting a common rate of income tax on profit tax, introducing a luxury tax, fixing the minimum wage to the average price of the consumer basket and revising the property tax base.

In general, the BAP suggests reducing the number of taxes. The party proposes giving tax privileges to sectoral groups rather than individual economic entities.

With regard to customs clearance, the party proposes switching completely to electronic customs clearance and eliminating import control prices. It considers a revision of the existing liability for customs and tax offenses necessary.

The BAP suggests the mandatory declaration of income and property for public servants, their family members and affiliated persons, as well as monitoring mechanisms by the tax inspectorate.

To regulate the innovation environment, the party considers necessary the implementation of state instruments that promote private investment and create venture funds.

According to the BAP, to stimulate industry, the necessary minimal steps are the creation of a communication platform between science and industry, the establishment of cooperative relationships with the industrial centres of the EAEU and the EU, an increase in processing industry in the overall structure of industry, etc. The party also stresses the idea of creating "Investor Support Houses".

With regard to the development of agriculture, the BAP highlights the importance of increasing agricultural productivity, developing high-quality agriculture, improving the food security situation, introducing modern technologies, import substitution, state support for agricultural machinery leasing, subsidising interest rates for implementing modern

technologies, state support for anti-hail systems, providing assistance to the entities that process agricultural products, increasing the competitiveness of wine production and quality, state support for agricultural credits, gradual introduction of agricultural insurance, creating a national map for crop rotation, community land mapping and imaging from space.

For the modernisation of the energy system, the party emphasizing the importance of Armenia's energy independence and security. It therefore considers necessary an increase in alternative energy sources, the ensuring of energy efficiency and sustainable development of the energy sector, the continued development of nuclear energy and the introduction of modern methods for energy efficiency as well as new technologies.

With regard to the information technology sector, the BAP highlights the importance of providing IT security, cyber security and increased personal data protection, developing the quality of professional skills in this sector, developing and implementing an ICT development strategy, forming of an Armenian brand, raising competitiveness, creating new technology centres in the provinces, promoting cooperation between science and the private sector, building and continuing development of institutional and scientific capacities for promoting the adoption of world-renowned technologies, promoting the commercialisation of scientific results, using local competitive IT products, and improving the quality, speed and accessibility of ICT services.

In the transport sector, the pre-election program emphasizing the need for significantly improving the quality and safety of roads, continuously developing transport infrastructure, increasing the competitiveness of the transport industry, ensuring access to transportation and services, increasing the volume of freight transportation, promoting private investments, continuously developing the road management system, creating a national



railway system, involving a private operator in the overall railway system, introducing electronic management and a unified ticket system, increasing transport safety, implementing technical inspection of vehicles and the operation of gas tanks, developing railway transport infrastructure, developing alternative toll roads, organising affordable air transportation, involving budget airlines, expanding the range of flight destinations, developing small-scale aviation, acquiring a helicopter park for agricultural agrochemistry and tourism purposes, applying a 10% VAT rate for passenger transport companies that make a commitment to modernise their vehicles, building partnerships with low-cost companies, and increasing the number of electric vehicles.

For the development of the tourism sector, the party suggests the following kinds of reforms: improvement of tourist infrastructure and road infrastructure density, state support for the promotion of ecological, rural lifestyle tourism, introduction of tourist crossroads, improvement of territories near water basins and organisation of tourism-related water sports, increase of tourism-related translation services, introduction of a seasonal timetable for electric railways to Gyumri and Sevan, development of health-related tourism and creation of tourist infrastructure in communities.

In its pre-election program, the party targets economic cooperation with the EAEU and the EU, highlighting this particularly in terms of industrial development. In addition to the economic section, in the foreign policy section of the pre-election program, there is a reference to Armenia's future cooperation with the EAEU and the EU.

With regard to Iran, the BAP addresses relations in its pre-electoral program in sections related to foreign policy and culture. The party proposes taking all measures to strengthen comprehensive and close relationships with Iran, which will be based on the continu-

ous strengthening and development of mutual trust and partnership in all spheres. In the cultural section, it is mentioned that a Meghri-Iran-Artsakh cultural hub should be formed.

Two BAP pre-electoral video advertisement statements were analysed. These videos do not refer directly to the issues related to this study. The key message of these clips is to build a new, bright Armenia together.

With regard to pre-electoral assemblies, rallies and meetings, in some of the nine observed rallies, BAP representatives were asked about the return of bank deposits<sup>7</sup>, unemployment<sup>8</sup> and the minimum wage<sup>9</sup>.

The response to the bank deposit repayment issue was that the current government's approach is wrong, and that these mistakes should be corrected later. Regarding the unemployment issue, the party's representatives responded that they plan to create jobs and will do everything to reduce the number of people unemployed.

Referring to the question about the minimum wage, the party representative's response was "Nothing will be achieved by merely raising the threshold, since the employer will deceive the state. There is a need to promote professions that are in demand." During one of the meetings<sup>10</sup> in the provinces, E. Marukyan touched upon the issues of agriculture, the problems of consumption of local agricultural products as well as water and anti-hail protection issues. In essence, the speeches and the answers to the questions during the meetings were mostly derived from the approaches presented in the BAP's pre-electoral program.

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7. November 29th, 2018, Hrazdan town in Kotayk Province.

8. November 30th, 2018, Ashtarak town in Aragatsotn Province.

9. December 4th, 2018, Yerevan city.

10. November 30th, 2018. Talin town in Aragatsotn Province: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAn00ML-F6c>



## Christian-Democratic Rebirth Party

The pre-electoral program of the CDRP consists of 12 pages and 21526 characters, of which 0.1 page or 262 characters are allocated to the social sector and 1.4 pages or 2526 characters to the economic sector.

Based on the content of the CDRP's pre-electoral program, the ideology of the party is national-social-protectionism and/or ordoliberalism.

The pre-election slogan of the CDRP is "Alternative - Yes, Opposition - No".

### Social Sector

The CDRP does not address all of the issues researched in this study in its pre-election program. It dedicates 58 characters to employment, 204 to labour legislation, and none to the health system, pension schemes or housing security.

With regard to the issue of employment, the party emphasizing that it is necessary to provide job opportunities to all people who are able and willing to work.

In its pre-electoral program, the party addresses labour legislation issues indirectly, noting that it aims to provide minimal living conditions for all employees. The party considers it necessary to develop a legislative system that will ensure equal and joint responsibility and rights for employers and employees.

### Economic Sector

In the CDRP's pre-electoral program, 2526 characters are dedicated to the economy. The economic part of its pre-election program is built on the principles of the ideology of ordoliberalism.

The CDRP states that the social and economic system of Armenia should be given a "social market economy" orientation, and it believes that the economy is essentially a

social sphere. Accordingly, the nature of economic relations should be such that socially sustainable development assumes the social responsibility of all subjects.

The party suggests creating a legislative system that will ensure equal and joint responsibility and rights for employers and employees alike. This will in turn lead to the creation of a new social order aimed at the fair distribution of revenue and will overcome social polarisation. The CDRP assumes that it is necessary to prevent the formation of oligopolies and to protect small and medium-sized businesses. It also mentions that the development of industry should be stimulated.

In its pre-election program the CDRP does not refer to relations with the EAEU, the EU or Iran.

One of the main messages of the CDRP's pre-election video statement is the alleviation of poverty.

The pre-election meetings and assemblies of the CDRP were not accessible to the general public and so could not be recorded.

## National Progress Party

The pre-electoral program of the NPP consists of 13.3 pages and 23971 characters, of which 0.7 pages or 1248 characters were allocated to the social sector and 1 page or 1880 characters to the economic sector.

Based on the content of the NPP's pre-electoral program, the ideology of the party is nationalistic-socialism.

The pre-election slogan of the NPP is "New Situation, New Solutions".

### Social Sector

The NPP does not address all of the issues researched in this study in its pre-electoral program. It dedicates 292 characters to



to employment, 73 to labour legislation, 67 to the health system and 816 to pension schemes, but none to housing security.

The party sees the solution to the unemployment issue in urban planning beyond Yerevan, through construction of industrial centres, cultural and educational centres, shopping centres and other necessary infrastructure in the provinces.

With regard to labour rights, the party proposes improvement of labour legislation.

In terms of healthcare, the party only addresses the problem of free medical care for children under the age of 18.

Regarding the pension system, the NPP proposes serious pension reforms. It suggests replacing the mandatory pension system with a fully voluntary system and providing tax privileges for citizens who make their own contributions.

The party also plans to offer a family mortgage loan of up to 3% for 20-30 years in the case of a third child, as well as to increase the birth allowance for each child. In essence, these proposals aim to promote demographic growth.

## Economic Sector

The suggestions for the economy in the pre-electoral program of the NPP consist of 1880 characters. The party proposes a reduction in taxes and the tax burden several times. This should be especially relevant for the middle-class as well as small and medium-sized businesses. The NPP suggests applying an income tax rate scale, which will reduce the tax burden for those who generate an income of up to AMD 250,000 per month. Income tax and profit tax scales should be as close as possible or ideally identical, and SMEs should cover businesses with up to 30 million AMD annual turnover. In contrast, the party proposes an increase in the tax burden for the

mining industry. With regard to tax law violations, the NPP suggests tightening financial responsibility and criminal accountability for affected entities.

A tightening of both legislative and licensing requirements for the mining industry is also proposed. Thus, according to the party, the volume of mining will be limited and its financial attractiveness will be decreased.

The NPP considers the military industry, power generation through solar and wind energy, electricity production, information and advanced technologies, pharmaceutical production, light manufacturing, agriculture and tourism to be the dominant branches of the economy. The party also offers tax exemptions and incentives for the establishment of solar and wind power stations. As an option, it also suggests exemptions from the customs duty for importing electric cars.

The NPP considers it important to hold a referendum on the issue of Armenia's membership of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the EAEU, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and other inter-governmental and supranational structures. This is proposed in the pre-electoral program's referendum section. There is no other reference to the EAEU. Regarding Armenia's relations with the EU and other countries, the party emphasizing the need to establish sovereign, dignified, balanced and mutually beneficial relations.

With regard to Iran, the party emphasizing that Armenia should build special, good-neighbourly and strategic relations with Iran, especially in the field of energy imports and power processing as well as foreign trade. These relations should be protected as much as possible from the influence of geopolitical rivalries.

In the first sections of all four pre-electoral video



statements observed for this study, the NPP mocks the BAP, ARF, PAP and RPA parties. In the second section, the party outlines its plans for the pension system and the tax system, and states the social and economic cornerstones of its pre-electoral program.

The pre-election meetings and assemblies of the CDRP were not accessible to the general public and could not be recorded or observed during this survey.

## We Party Alliance

The WPA's pre-electoral program consists of 28 pages or 50381 characters, of which 1.9 pages or 3461 characters are allocated to the social sector and 6.9 pages or 12460 characters to the economic sector.

Based on the WPA's pre-electoral program, the alliance's political ideology consists of elements of liberalism.

The WPA's political slogan is "Armenia First".

### Social Sector

The pre-electoral program of the WPA does not address all of the issues researched in this study. It dedicates 475 characters to employment, none to labour legislation, 1996 to the health system, 990 to pension schemes, and none to housing security.

In the WPA's pre-election program, the issue of creating new jobs is addressed several times. This should be achieved by promoting the creation of processing plants, encouraging the creativity and potential of young people and making targeted investments and effective and justified use of natural and internal resources.

Regarding the health sector, the alliance suggests toughening environmental legislation, and creating civil and state controlling mechanisms for ensuring a healthy social environ-

ment for all. The program proposes creating the appropriate conditions and opportunities for school children, young people and society to have a healthy lifestyle, including safe food, sports and personal fulfilment.

The WPA proposes proclaiming Armenia a country free from negative external impacts on human health and, accordingly, making the protection of the population from environmental, nutritional, domestic, radiological and other types of harm one of the state policy directions.

The alliance also suggests implementing an effective system of compulsory life and health insurance, expanding the range and beneficiaries of free medical and co-funded services provided by the state, and extending the age up to which treatment is free from 7 years to 10 years. The WPA also considers it important to proclaim preventive medicine as Armenia's public health policy.

The alliance suggests increasing pensions and the minimum wage by at least 25%. This should be done through the reduction of monopolies and the informal economy. Regarding the cumulative pension system, it proposes replacing this mandatory component with voluntary ones. The WPA also plans a poverty reduction policy. According to its plan, from 2019-2021, the Poverty Index should decrease from the current 30% to at least 15%, and the proportion of extremely poor people should be lower than 2%.

In its pre-election program, the WPA suggests increasing the one-time childbirth allowance, setting it at 1.5 million for the first child, 2 million for the second child, 2.5 million for the third and fourth children, and 3.5 million for the fifth child and subsequent children. It also proposes extending maternity leave time by 100%, as well as providing a similar possibility for fathers.



## Economic Sector

In the WPA's pre-electoral program, suggestions related to the economic sector consist of 12460 characters.

In its pre-election program, the alliance emphasizing the priorities of a competitive economic policy. For this purpose, it offers a number of suggestions, including changing the tax structure so as to promote small and medium-sized businesses, substantially reducing administrative burdens, establishing processing activities and creating new job opportunities. To promote the development of different sectors of the economy and stimulate innovations, it suggests exempting imported goods from VAT.

To ensure the proportional development of rural areas, 10% of the profit tax paid by economic entities operating in the administrative territory of a community should be allocated to the community budget (with the aim of further increasing these), which in turn will diminish the concentration of business in the capital. The alliance considers it necessary to set strict prices for goods essential to a basic livelihood. The WPA also aims to solve the problem of excessive sales and the over-concentration of sales networks, and to finish the construction of interstate and intercommunity roads within three years.

The WPA suggests promoting IT development by extending the sector's tax benefits. It presents a policy of export promotion, tax exemptions and product subsidisation, which should also focus on the production and export of pharmaceuticals, innovative and advanced technology products, military equipment, non-traditional energy and agricultural products, and on the creation of innovation centres and laboratories in Armenia and Artsakh.

The pre-electoral program also includes steps such as creating legal and institutional prerequisites for the development of smaller-scale

aviation in Armenia, directing diaspora capital to Armenia, developing and implementing sustainable water use and management concepts, encouraging and promoting sustainable organic agriculture programs, improving land quality and management, developing farming businesses, creating wholesale markets with state involvement, developing the processing segment of agriculture, developing effective mechanisms for the protection and compensation of farming entities from natural disasters through the introduction of agricultural insurance schemes, promoting the provision of loans with sufficient interest rates to farming households, providing agricultural machinery to farmers, actively involving farmers and peasants in the development of state agriculture policy, accounting for their needs and expectations, and developing agro-tourism. It also proposes developing the military industry.

The pre-electoral program emphasizing the need for the full utilisation of renewable energy opportunities by developing hydropower, wind power and solar energy potential.

The WPA considers the EAEU to be the most ineffective structure for Armenia and the biggest failure in Armenia's foreign policy, since membership in this union has done more to damage than to benefit Armenia. For this reason, the alliance suggests reviewing relations with the EAEU and moving step-by-step towards full EU membership. Moreover, concerning EU-Armenia relations, the party proposes signing the "European Aviation Area Agreement" with the EU and joining the European Energy Community as a full member.

The WPA also addresses the issue of Armenia's membership in the European Union separately, noting that European integration is a priority for Armenia's foreign policy. Regarding relations with Iran, the alliance notes that for Armenia, Iran is not only a reliable neighbour, friend and provider of communication with the world, but also a military, trade and economic partner.



One pre-electoral video statement by the WPA was analysed mainly concerns the alliance's name "WE" and contains no references to the issues surveyed in this study.

At one of the WPA's rallies<sup>11</sup>, the following issues were addressed: possibilities for increasing employment, the introduction of compulsory health insurance, pension increases, fighting monopolies, and mining opportunities (in particular the need to exploit Amoulsar, which they consider to be ecologically harmless). Similar issues were also discussed during another meeting<sup>12</sup>, including how to solve the employment problem, the introduction of compulsory health insurance, and general issues related to the economy, mining, and agriculture. Therefore, during these meetings, the WPA representatives introduced the main cornerstones of their pre-electoral program.

### "Orinats Yerkir" Party

The OYP's pre-electoral program consists of 7.7 pages and 13863 characters, of which 1.3 pages or 2336 characters are allocated to the social sector and 2.5 pages or 4582 characters to the economic sector.

Based on the content of its pre-electoral program, the political ideology of the party is liberalism.

The OYP's pre-election slogan is "Legitimacy, Justice and Security."

#### Social Sector

Except for labour legislation, which it does not mention, the OYP's pre-electoral program addresses all of the issues relevant to this study, dedicating 399 characters to employment, 462 to the health system, 665 to pension schemes, and 810 to housing security.

The OYP proposes the implementation of a systemic policy for unemployment reduction

and regular trainings for the unemployed, applying a demand-driven approach depending on labour markets. In areas where the unemployment rate is higher, the party suggests setting up financial support mechanisms for job-creating businesses. The party also addresses the employment problems of persons with disabilities by proposing the establishment of a special government authority to deal particularly with this issue.

The party proposes the implementation of a health insurance system and steps to reduce the number of associated abuses and corruption risks. It also suggests a continuous increase in salaries, the indexing of doctors and healthcare workers, and the provision of state funding for the treatment of deadly diseases.

The party proposes allowing pension holders to reclaim money accumulated in their pension funds for the purposes of investment in their education, acquiring a mortgage on a home, or if a family member becomes ill or dies. Moreover, the OYP suggests increasing pensions to the level of the minimum consumer basket of goods. With regard to self-employed persons in the agricultural sector, the party suggests considering their work professional experience, resulting in annual pension indexing and an increase in their pensions. Also, the party considers important the indexing and increasing of the pensions of more than 200.000 persons with disabilities.

In addition, the OYP suggests raising and indexing the minimum wage each year.

Referring to the issue of housing security, the OYP suggests withdrawing advance payments for mortgages, ensuring at least 20-30-year lending mechanisms for young families, with low interest rates and state subsidies. It also suggests addressing this issue through community and social housing construction and through targeted programs for socially-vulnerable groups.

11. December 4th, 2018, Yerevan city: <https://www.facebook.com/MenqDashingq/videos/267079783970526/>

12. December 6th, 2018, Artashat town in Ararat Province: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PjQlBjVnn4>



## Economic Sector

The suggestions in the OYP's pre-electoral program regarding the economic sector consist of 4582 characters.

The party proposes shifting from wild oligarchic capitalism to a people's harmonious social economy. According to the program, it is necessary to strengthen the fight against corruption and theft from the treasury, to return money withdrawn illegally from the country and to implement real mechanisms for the fight against illegal enrichment.

The party proposes to develop a new strategy for the development of the banking system, a sharp reduction in lending rates, and state-subsidised loans for the agricultural sector. It also suggests eliminating so-called blacklists of citizens and radically revising bank penalties through cooperation between the state and the banks.

In agriculture, the party proposes the implementation of an insurance system and the provision of state support to rural enterprises by implementing a family business development system approach.

The party also suggests creating, modernising or restarting 20 large industrial enterprises, consistently developing communication technologies, developing the military industry and defining civilised tax and customs privileges in these areas.

With regard to small and medium-sized businesses, the OYP suggests promoting consistent development through low-interest loans for production and the agricultural sector.

The OYP proposes the continuous simplification of tax and customs-related administrative processes, the full implementation of an electronic system, the elimination of price controls, sharp and consistent reductions in various types of monitoring and inspections, consistent support for entrepreneurship, the

implementation of fixed payments for small and medium-sized businesses, and tax privileges for enterprises in cross-border regions and disaster zones.

With regard to casinos, betting, gambling and games of chance, the OYP suggests continuously reducing this sector by increasing state taxes, strengthening controls and toughening legislation, especially for the involvement of adolescents.

The OYP proposes tax privileges and tax exemption for newly established enterprises in the regions affected by the 1988 earthquake and in cross-border areas. To create an attractive investment climate, the party suggests implementing tax exemptions (up to three years) for newly created enterprises, with the introduction of a civilised tax exemption system. It also suggests providing tax incentives to companies established by persons with disabilities or employing persons with disabilities.

Regarding the mining sector, the party proposes the strengthening of state control over the use of minerals and natural resources.

The party proposes the development and implementation of a policy of transforming the country into a global manufacturer of alternative energy sources through the implementation of modern technologies for the use of waste, wind, sun, kinetic and other alternative sources of energy, as well as through scientific research.

With regard to the EAEU, the OYP proposes the implementation of strategic programs in the region and the further development of existing relations. It also suggests consistently strengthening Armenia's position in the EAEU and launching Armenian-Russian joint military and dual-use industrial enterprises in Armenian territory. On the subject of EU-Armenia relations, the party states that it is necessary to ensure progress in the partnership between the EU and Armenia.



The party suggests developing an Iran-Armenia-Georgia-Russia energy system, as well as comprehensive relations with Iran and continuous cooperation within the framework of regional development.

The party proposes that the state should take active steps to attract financial resources from international financial institutions in order to build an Iran-Armenia-Georgia oil pipeline, an Iran-Armenia-Georgia gas pipeline, an Armenia-Iran water pipeline, an Iran-Armenia railroad, and a modern petrochemical plant in Armenia.

Observation of four pre-electoral video statements by the OYP shows that the party addresses housing security issues in two of these video clips, and the issues of free childbirth and free medical care for children in another.

While conducting this study, it was possible to observe one pre-electoral rally<sup>13</sup> of the OYP, during which the party's representatives spoke about their program's provisions and promised to return bank deposits to family members, spouses and heirs.

## Sasna Tsrer Pan-Armenian Party

The pre-electoral program of the STPAP consists of 5.8 pages or 10440 characters, of which 0.2 pages or 399 characters are allocated to the social sector and 2.2 pages or 3953 characters to the economic sector.

Based on the content of the STPAP's pre-electoral program, the political ideology of the party is social-national revolution. The STPAP's pre-electoral slogan is "It's Time".

### Social Sector

Except for employment, which it does not mention, the pre-electoral program of the STPAP addresses all of the issues considered in this study, dedicating 59 characters to

labour legislation, 153 to the health system, 95 to pension schemes, and 92 to housing security.

The party proposes reviving professional labour unions.

The party suggests eliminating the public healthcare system and introducing a single joint electronic payment system combined with other social assistance methods.

It proposes a gradual harmonisation of the minimum wage and pension with the price of the minimum consumer basket of goods. Further, it notes that social aid and allowance payment systems should be eliminated, and a single electronic payment system should be introduced instead.

With regard to the issue of housing security, the party proposes the implementation of a social housing project with the free right of use of apartments.

### Economic Sector

The suggestions in the STPAP's pre-electoral program regarding the economic sector consist of 3953 characters. The party proposes promoting the development of knowledge-based industry by initiating strategic programs and practical measures to complete economic value chains through the development of the defence industry and mining production.

The STPAP suggests taking the first steps towards involvement in the developments of the 4th Industrial Revolution, including: creation of electronic commerce (e-commerce) platforms with the support of the state and the involvement of diaspora Armenians; creation of crypto-economy (blockchain economy) platforms with the support of the state; establishment of platforms for biotechnology, media-technologies, robotics and artificial intelligence technology; expansion of existing capacities and the development of Armenia

13. Yerevan city, December 3rd, 2018.



into a regional technology transfer centre; taking steps to align the education system with the standards of the 4th Industrial Revolution; and harmonising legislation with the requirements of the 4th Industrial Revolution. In this context, the party proposes the establishment of a National Investment Fund (NIF). It also suggests inviting owners of well-known Armenian trademarks from all over the world to organise their business with privileged tax terms under their trademarks in Armenia.

The party proposes the extension of state-sponsored innovation development grant programs and the establishment of a Pan-Armenian Investment Development Bank (PAIDB). It also suggests adopting a new law on procurement by completely changing the criteria for winning public procurement processes and starting the process of establishing national control over strategic infrastructure and facilities.

In the field of energy, it proposes the development wind and solar power plants on a large scale.

The party proposes the establishment of a budget national airline with state involvement.

It also suggests carrying out real-time monitoring and mapping of mines. Further, it considers necessary an analysis of the legitimacy of the licenses issued for the exploitation of existing mines in the Armenia.

For the development of the agricultural sector, the party proposes: establishing a mechanism for delivering and processing agricultural products with state support; optimising the use of agricultural land; implementing a unified anti-hail protection electronic management system; introducing an optimised water utilisation program; and supporting and subsidising farming households.

For the development of the tourism sector, the party proposes the establishment of adventure, hiking and cultural tourism centres in

Armenia, including in Artsakh, through targeted investment programs.

The party also proposes programs for the resettlement of liberated and border territories, the promotion of economic, educational and cultural institutions, new forms of organisation of life, the testing and implementation of new models, and other related issues.

In order to promote investment and strategic programs, the party proposes the implementation of a stimulating taxation policy.

The party also proposes tax privileges in the IT field. And for small and medium-sized businesses, it suggests considering a two-year tax exemption system.

With regard to non-performing loans, the party proposes beginning cooperation with commercial banks and credit organisations for the remission of outstanding loans and penalties.

The party also proposes a reduction in tariffs for gas and electricity.

In the STPAP's pre-electoral program, there are no references to the EAEU or the EU. With respect to Armenia-Iran relations, the party proposes the construction of a large-capacity Iran-Armenia gas pipeline.

To present its pre-electoral program, the STPAP produced 7 video statements. In addition, the party also had 7 video clips presenting the biographies of party leaders to voters.

The observations of two pre-electoral STPAP rallies, which took place in Yerevan<sup>14</sup> and in the town of Eghvard<sup>15</sup> in Kotayk Province, show that during these meetings, the speakers presented their program and addressed the issues raised. One of the questions was about the future of Armenia, which was answered in accordance with the STPAP's pre-electoral program. Another question concerned the resolution of the conflict in Karabakh.

14. Malatia-Sebastia District, December 2nd, 2018.

15. December 1st, 2018.



## Prosperous Armenia Party

The PAP's pre-electoral program consists of 6.7 pages or 12021 characters, of which 1 page or 1807 characters are allocated to the social sector and 4 pages or 7217 characters to the economic sector.

Based on its pre-electoral program, the political ideology of the party is social democracy.

The pre-election slogan of the PAP is "Our Word is Action."

### Social Sector

Except for labour legislation, which it does not mention, the PAP's pre-electoral program addresses all of the issues investigated in this study, dedicating 294 characters to employment, 323 to the health system, 510 to pension schemes, and 680 to housing security.

In its pre-election program, the party notes that by implementing an economic revolution, it will contribute to attracting unprecedented large investments, which will in turn lead to the creation of new jobs. The PAP proposes job creation in the regions affected by the 1988 earthquake over the next five years through the development of light manufacturing enterprises. The investments provided for the creation of these enterprises should be released from taxes.

The PAP emphasizes that all citizens should have access to quality healthcare services and considers it necessary to review the regulations of state provision in this area, including providing medical certificates to socially vulnerable groups, military servicemen and other beneficiaries as defined by law. The party proposes the full certification of the state healthcare system.

The party proposes changing the amount awarded for labour pensions so as to guarantee minimum living conditions. It also suggests periodically indexing salaries and pen-

sions so as to keep them in line with inflation.

The PAP proposes that mothers of several children and large families who are beneficiaries of state programs be included in the framework of special state care. Accordingly, it considers necessary increasing allowances for the birth of the first and second children, and strongly increasing the amount provided for the birth of the third and subsequent children.

With regard to the issue of housing security, the PAP asserts that no citizen living in the regions affected by the 1988 earthquake should be living in a temporary shelter by the end of the next two years.

The party also emphasizes that the state should implement a social housing construction program. At the same time, the beneficiaries of newly-built buildings should be provided renovated apartments with an approximate price of 180 thousand Drams per square metre, or 20-22 US Dollars per 60 square metres. It also suggests that beneficiaries should be able to make their monthly payments within 10 years without any prepayment.

### Economic Sector

The PAP's electoral program dedicates 7217 characters to the economy. The PAP states that small and medium-sized businesses should not be regarded as objects of taxation, because they have a social orientation. For this reason, the party suggests that within the next five years, the state should exempt from taxation businesses with a turnover of up to 30 million AMD. The party proposes limiting the threshold for taxable turnover to 58.35 million AMD by 2019, as is envisioned by the present tax code, and increasing it to 150 million AMD starting from the January 1<sup>st</sup> 2020.

The party also notes that within the next three years, the turnover tax system should be subject to a system of complete documentation.



The party purposes that equal competitive conditions and fair rules for business must be provided. The elimination of illegal monopolies on imports must be followed by the liberalisation of trade networks, ensuring equal opportunities and fair conditions for the sale of imported goods.

The PAP proposes thoroughly revising legislation on the protection of economic competition by introducing a new anti-monopoly law.

The party proposes the development of an investment security system and the implementation of a new policy aimed at promoting and attracting investments. As a result, the state authorities will be responsible for each unit of investment, regardless of its size. The PAP considers necessary the creation of economic courts to effectively guarantee investments.

With regard to tax legislation, the party states that it is necessary to swiftly adopt a new tax code that defines clear, understandable rules over a long period of time. The party plans to reduce the number of existing taxes, implement more substantial administrative procedures for taxation, implement tariffs for customs clearance, and settle tariffs for citizens importing goods for consumption on a large scale. Continuing its suggestions for taxation, the party proposes decreasing the operating income tax, based on a progressive taxation scale.

The PAP believes that investments for purchasing technologically advanced equipment should generally be exempt from taxes.

The party also considers it necessary to implement an economic and technological revolution, which is feasible if the government establishes stable and guaranteed long-term rules.

The party proposes developing industrial and technological “smart” cities within the framework of the RA’s Law on Industrial Policy and

under special tax procedures.

The PAP discusses enterprises that have been privatised under the terms of their investment obligations, but have not yet been executed, and whose owners have not fulfilled the obligations laid down in the contract with the state. The party states that these enterprises should be returned to the state in accordance with the law and released to new investors.

The party notes that based on long-term experience and proven results, it is necessary to outline new directions for the development of the economic, industrial, agro-industrial, urban and service sectors, by prioritising highly productive and digital technologies, electronic management, intensive gardens, drip irrigation systems, modern machinery and tractor stations, new agricultural cooperatives and high quality digital services.

The PAP suggests that the state should provide comprehensive assistance to individuals and companies involved in agricultural production by promoting the marketing of agricultural products, exploring new markets, decreasing seasonal pressure on existing transport routes and providing credit resources (3-4%).

The party proposes reforming the credit relations system, as well as postponing, suspending and in some cases revoking interest rates and penalties.

The PAP suggests that in the field of procurement from the state budget, priority should be given to local producers. The party considers it necessary for large-scale credit resources with 0.5-1% interest rates to flow into the real sector of the economy by 2-3%. The Central Bank of Armenia (CBA) should implement a consistent monetary policy by constantly defining an effective refinancing rate and taking into account anticipated risks.

The PAP suggests that the state implement a clear policy to support the export of fruit,



vegetables and meat products from Armenia, including to the Arab countries. To accomplish this, the party considers it necessary to establish operating logistics systems and refrigerating and packaging systems at Zvartnots Airport, which will enable the export of agricultural products by cargo planes.

The party proposes setting the irrigation water fee of each hectare of land per year at 1,000 AMD for the next five years, starting from March 1st 2019.

The party also proposes a substantial reduction in existing gas and electricity tariffs.

The PAP suggests implementing a comprehensive tourism development program in Armenia by creating favourable conditions for the development of hotels and other infrastructure services.

The party also proposes the development of a military-industrial system, allocating 5% of the annual state budget to this sector.

The party believes that the diversification of financial intermediaries in Armenia is an effective measure, especially the involvement of new and large-scale financing from EAEU countries as well as legitimate and mutually beneficial schemes from foreign financial markets.

The PAP is in favour of developing and deepening Armenian-Russian strategic relations. The party states that it will continue to take an active role in the work of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the EAEU and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), adding that at the same time, it will continue constructive participation in the European integration process.

There is no reference in the PAP's pre-election program to Iran-Armenia relations.

The party made four pre-electoral video statements, one featuring the PAP's leader G.

Tsarukyan. In the first part of his speech, he glorifies the ideology of paternalism. In the second part, he presents the party's main program ideas: modernisation of the country and a dignified life for citizens. The remaining three video statements present the party's main policies on social and economic issues.

One of the PAP's pre-electoral rallies was held in Yerevan<sup>16</sup>, during which issues relating to housing security, high interest rates offered by banks, the tax system, the role of science in economic development and the transport system were addressed.

Another pre-electoral meeting was held in the town of Abovyan<sup>17</sup> in Kotayk Province, involving the discussion of issues related to the development of agriculture, small and medium-sized businesses, tax reforms, healthcare, increases to pensions, housing schemes, credit, and science as a basis for economic development. Thus, the rallies and assemblies presented the party's pre-election program.

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16. December 6th, 2018: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVH6mnT4tj8>

17. November 27th, 2018 - Abovyan town in Kotayk Province: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n073jrSnhkl>



## **Annex 1. Political orientations of parties and alliances participating in the parliamentary elections to the NA of the RA on December 9th, 2018**

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This section aims to assess the positions of political parties and alliances participating in the snap parliamentary elections to the NA of the RA on December 9th, 2018, based on the approaches presented in their pre-electoral programs regarding social and economic issues and the role of the state in implementing these programs.

The information gathered and reviewed here does not give a clear idea of the ideological-political orientation of each party or alliance. This is also clear from the eclectic culture of Armenian politics. Nevertheless, it is clear that the policies of political organisations are responsive to social and economic issues, as well as to cultural, administrative, religious and other issues.

At the same time, assessment of the pre-electoral programmes was hampered by the use of varying vocabularies (word combinations, terminologies, non-professional and/or academic use of phrases) and the populist style of speeches. In response to this difficulty, a two-point system was used to evaluate each issue: (1) the issue is addressed; (2) the issue is addressed and a proposal is developed. The disadvantage of such a system is that it masks the differences between programs, which could be important for political debate.

### Categorisation of issues

#### *Social issues*

- Employment and unemployment
- Labour law/legislation
- Pension scheme/system
- Health system
- Housing security

#### *Economic issues*

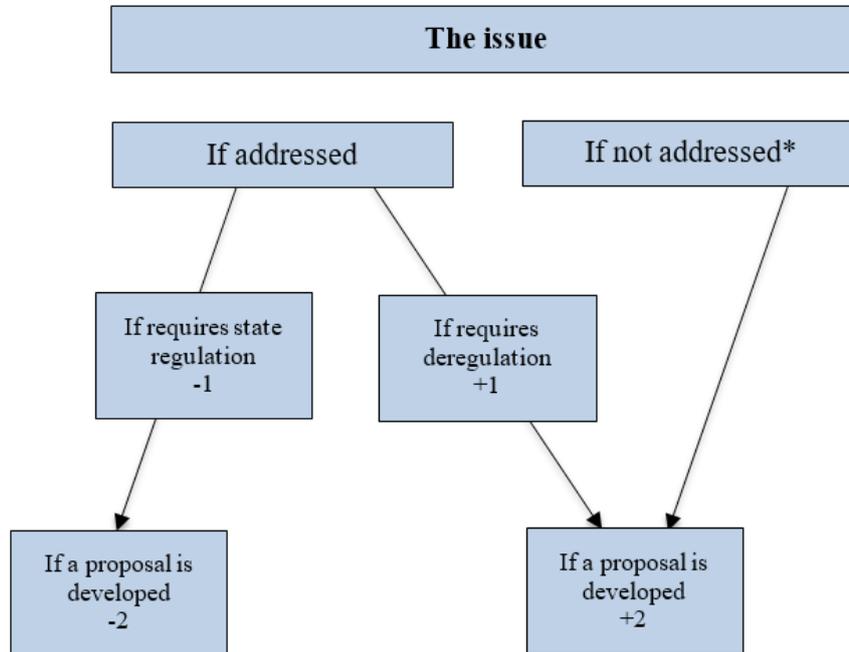
- Industry and mining sector
- Taxation
- Banking sector
- Agriculture, self-employment, small and medium-sized entrepreneurship
- Energy infrastructure and other sectors of the economy

Again, in order to take into account the eclectic nature of the parties and alliances and their rejection of rigid political ideologies, this study applies an assessment criterion that quantifies orientation towards state intervention and regulation, which is the central issue for the majority of ideologies and political models.

The importance of this issue is clear from the trends in mainstream politics over the last few decades: There have been important debates on the application of a strict economic policy, provision of a basic income, the relative merits of free market policies versus the protectionism practised by economic giants, and so on.



The structure of this assessment system for each issue is presented in Figure 2.



\*if the issue was not addressed, it was considered equal to solving this through deregulation

The sum of the scores given for responses to 5 questions per unit were plotted, with the score for social issues on the X axis (-10; 10) and for economic issues on the Y axis (-10; 10). The effect of this summary is to weight each issue as equally important, neglecting any special profile of importance for the given society and context.

Figure 3 shows that some political parties and alliances are close to zero on both axes, indicating an aim for compromise and combination between different approaches without a specific political ideology.

Based on their pre-electoral programs, five of the observed parties and alliances<sup>18</sup> consider state intervention in social issues to be important. Four of them<sup>19</sup> also emphasizing the need for state intervention in economic issues. This tendency shows that in Armenian

politics, there is a concept of a large, strong state is opposed to the global trend of deregulation in similar countries. In a sense, this tendency could be termed quasi social-democratic, but it would be more accurate to say that a thoughtful social-democratic policy may have great potential in Armenian politics.

It is worth mentioning also that the policies of the RPA and CDRP are conservative in the cultural realm, but liberal on social and economic issues. This phenomenon is interesting, but requires a deeper analysis that takes into account the cultural policies of these parties.

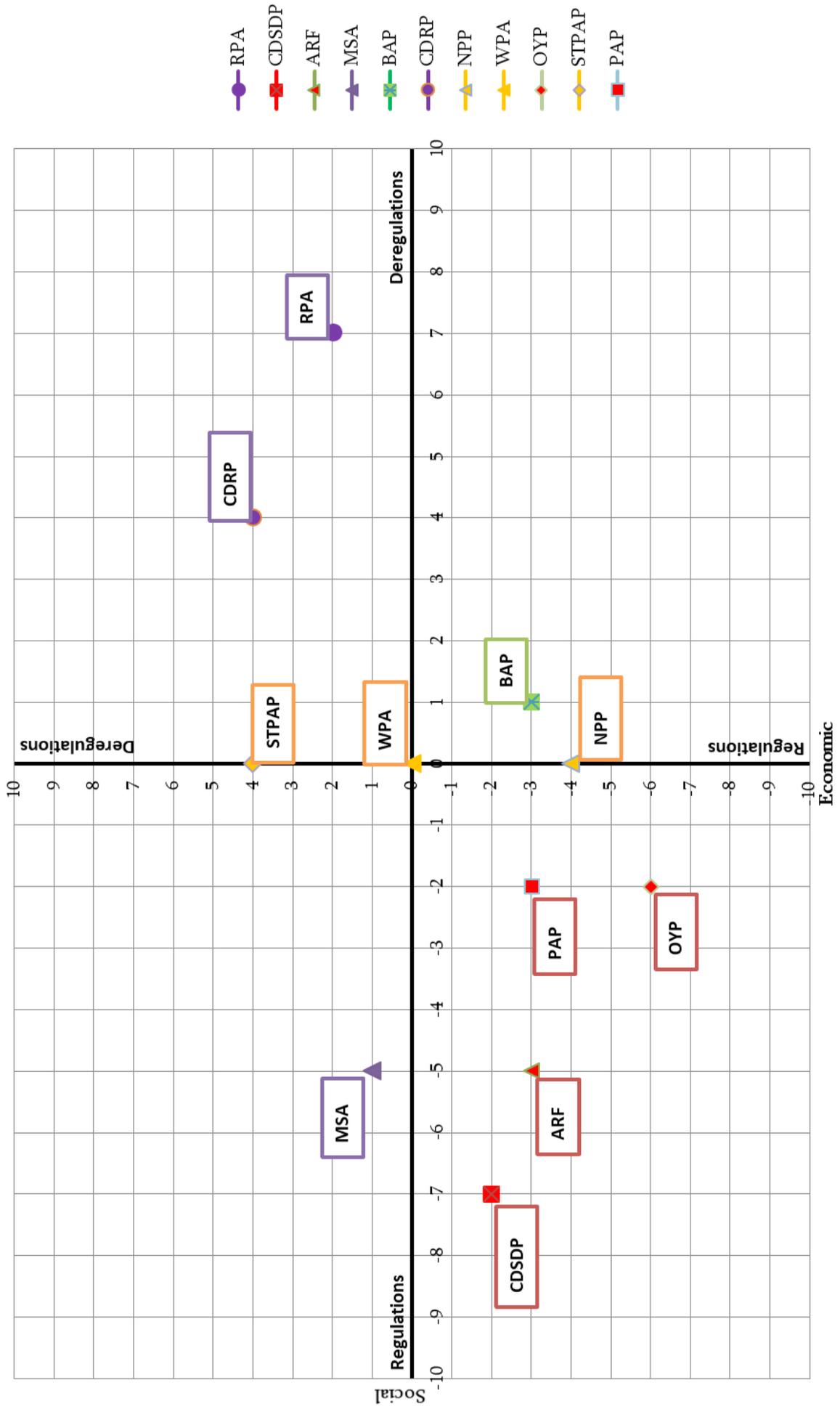
It is also interesting to see that the policies of the ruling party<sup>20</sup> are populist on the social level, but more responsive to global trends on the economic level.

18. CSDSP, ARF, PAP, OYP, MSA

19. CSDSP, ARF, PAP, OYP

20. My Step Alliance

Figure 3: Political position of parties and alliances in the political field participating in the parliamentary elections of the NA of the RA on December 9th, 2018, according to the content of their pre-electoral programmes



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