



# Consultative and advisory bodies for minorities: a European overview

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**Advisory and Deliberative Structures – Models and Their  
Effectiveness**

**ECMI Eastern Partnership Programme, Kyiv, November 30, 2015**

# Outline

1. Theoretical background: the notion of political participation
2. The international standards concerning the political participation of minorities and consultative mechanisms
3. Mechanisms for consultation
  - Structure and scope
  - Establishment and composition
  - Agenda-setting
  - Transparency and openness
  - Efficiency and consistency
4. Conclusions

# The traditional model of democracy and divided societies

- **Open and free market of opinions and interests**
- The public should have a say about decisions affecting their lives
- Majoritarian will derives from individual preferences: decisions made in an **aggregation process**
- Political majority:
  - determination of political agenda, reflecting to a specific concept of public interest
  - Dominance of public good, decisions, resources, norms, discourses
  - **Political inequality** for minorities
- Principle of „one man, one vote“, majoritarian rule is not appropriate
- **Solution:** regulated competition of social interests and power-sharing arrangements

(Lindblom 1993; Palermo-Woelk 2003; Rossell 1993; Wheatley 1999, 2002; Young<sub>3</sub> 2000)

# The context of political participation

- Traditional representative structures tend to be complemented by **participatory- consultative mechanisms**
- **Theories of democracy:**
  - Participation is good and desirable
  - Increases stability, legitimacy, and citizens' capacity and loyalty
  - Better decisions, greater equality and justice
- **Debate:** disadvantageous situation increases or decreases political activity
  - Correlation with the socio-economic status (**SES model**)
- **Political opportunity structure** (H. Kitschelt): configuration of minority features, historical background, institutional arrangements, political rules for social mobilization etc.

# The effective participation of minorities in public life

- A new approach in minority protection?
  - International organizations have been preferring the usage of term '**effective participation**' since the mid-1990s
- Closely associated with '**deliberative democracy**'
  - Full, free and equal participation of those involved
  - Mutually accepted proposals
  - Consensus-seeking
- '**Good governance**': inclusion and participation
- **Democratic concept**
  - Recognizes and justifies minority claims
  - Recognizes possible internal divisions
- Lack of widely accepted, precise, scientific **definition**
  - Not only representing interests and influencing decisions

# The effective participation of minorities in public life: interpretations

- **W. Kymlicka - levels:**
  1. Right to vote and be elected
  2. Certain extent of representation in the parliament
  3. Minorities shall have ***effect*** on the decisions – shall be excluded from the majoritarian principle, minority interests shall be accommodated
- **M. Weller - aspects:**
  1. Equal chances at the elections and full representation in decision-making
  2. Own decision-making in relevant issues (autonomy)
  3. The internal democracy of minorities + to create the own decision-making processes freely, independently

# The continuum of participation

Increasing impact on the decision



Inform

Consult

Involve

Collaborate

Empower

Source: Creighton 2005; The IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum

[http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/Foundations\\_Course/IAP2\\_P2\\_Spectrum.pdf](http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/Foundations_Course/IAP2_P2_Spectrum.pdf)

# Main dimensions of political participation

- Different situations require different levels of participation
- Strong-weak dimension:
  - From the opportunity to give opinion to veto rights
  - Frequency of consultations
  - Composition of the body (elected/appointed)
- Presence-influence dimension:
  - the degree of minority representation
  - e. g. 1 representative in a body with 50 members can hardly have any effect
- Direct-indirect dimension:
  - e. g. whether the body deals only with minority issues; one policy area or horizontally
- **Q**: the extent to which decisions reflect the input of minority participation

(Henrard 2005; McLaverty 2010)



# The minority claim to representation

- Either **underrepresented** or not represented in political processes, it does not reflect social heterogeneity
- Representative shall share the same characteristic features with the constituents (**„mirror-“, descriptive or „presence“-representation**)
  - Arguments: systemic discrimination and self-governance
  - Majority does not want to understand and represent others' interests
  - **Problems:** they may rather be selected by drawing lots?
  - It tells nothing about what the representative does
  - Internal divisions, different features, presupposes common interests and opinions
- **Different interpretations of the term 'representation'**

# The main questions of minority representation

- **Which groups shall be represented?**
  - Unlimited escalation of demands
- **How many mandates shall they have?**
  - Proportionally or threshold
- **How can they be accountable?**
- Representation is a process of: **authorization, representation, and accountability** (usually the weakest)
  - Will less number of MPs support minority initiations?
  - Representation may be passive and only position-oriented („lazy” politics)
  - With few number of mandates and in opposition – is this the effective participation? (see *OSCE Warsaw Guidelines*)
- Representation as a ‘**window-dressing**’ institution

(Kymlicka 1995)

# The international standards concerning political participation of minorities and consultative mechanisms: the UN

- **Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities**
  - Adopted by General Assembly resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992
- Art. 2.
  - (2): *Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life.*
  - (3) *Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in decisions on the national and, where appropriate, regional level concerning the minority to which they belong or the regions in which they live, in a manner not incompatible with national legislation.*

# The international standards: the Council of Europe

- Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995)
- Art. 15.
  - *„The Parties shall create the conditions necessary for the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs, in particular those affecting them.”*

# CoE Framework Convention

## Explanatory Note

- This article requires Parties to create the conditions necessary for the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs, in particular those affecting them. It aims above all to encourage real equality between persons belonging to national minorities and those forming part of the majority. In order to create the necessary conditions for such participation by persons belonging to national minorities, Parties could promote - in the framework of their constitutional systems - inter alia the following measures:
  - **consultation** with these persons, by means of appropriate procedures and, in particular, through their representative institutions, when Parties are contemplating legislation or administrative measures likely to affect them directly;
  - **involving** these persons in the preparation, implementation and assessment of national and regional development plans and programmes likely to affect them directly;
  - **undertaking studies**, in conjunction with these persons, to assess the possible impact on them of projected development activities;
  - effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities **in the decision-making processes and elected bodies both at national and local levels**;
  - **decentralised or local forms of government.**

# Central European Initiative Instrument for the protection of minority rights (1994)

- Art. 20.
  - *„States shall guarantee the right of persons belonging to national minorities to participate without discrimination in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the society of the State of which they are citizens and shall promote the conditions for exercising those rights.“*
- Art. 22.
  - *„In accordance with the policies of the States concerned, States will respect the right of persons belonging to national minorities to **effective participation in public affairs**, in particular in the decision-making process on matters affecting them. Therefore, States note the efforts undertaken to protect and create conditions for the promotion of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of certain national minorities by adopting appropriate measures corresponding to the specific circumstances of such minorities as foreseen in the CSCE documents.“*

# The international standards: the CSCE/OSCE

- Document of the Copenhagen Meeting on the Human Dimension (1990)
- Par. 33.
  - *„The participating States will protect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities on their territory and create conditions for the promotion of that identity. They will take the necessary measures to that effect after **due consultations**, including contacts with organisations or associations of such minorities, in accordance with the decision-making procedures of each State. Any such measures will be in conformity with the principles of equality and non-discriminations with respect to the other citizens participating State concerned.”*
- Par. 35.
  - *„The participating States will respect the right of persons belonging to national minorities to **effective participation in public affairs**, including participation in the affairs relating to the protection and promotion of the identity of such minorities.”*

# The Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life (1999)

- Max van der Stoep OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities
- Two main parts (4 subtitles, 24 recommendations):
  - Participation in decision-making (having voice, **representation**): interests, views about the political system in general
  - Self-governance in local and own minority issues (**autonomy**): issues related to the minorities



# The Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life (1999)

- 12) States should establish advisory or consultative bodies within appropriate institutional frameworks to serve as channels for dialogue between governmental authorities and national minorities. Such bodies might also include special purpose committees for addressing such issues as housing, land, education, language, and culture. The composition of such bodies should reflect their purpose and contribute to more effective communication and advancement of minority interests.
- 13) These bodies should be able to raise issues with decision makers, prepare recommendations, formulate legislative and other proposals, monitor developments and provide views on proposed governmental decisions that may directly or indirectly affect minorities. Governmental authorities should consult these bodies regularly regarding minority-related legislation and administrative measures in order to contribute to the satisfaction of minority concerns and to the building of confidence. The effective functioning of these bodies will require that they have adequate resources.

# Advisory and consultative bodies: introductory notes

- **Advisory bodies** to the governments, compositions vary by countries
- The degree of **minority representation** + are they elected or picked by the government
- **Competences:** addressing full range of minority issues or specialized to one; focus on special topics
- Generally recommendations, consultations, monitoring, and even decisions on certain issues
- **Contact** between the minorities and government, parliament-minority, or among three actors
- Regular consultations with minority NGOs
- Provision of adequate resources, effective functioning of these bodies

# Mechanisms for consultation

- **Co-decision mechanisms**
  - Councils either must be heard before decisions or
  - Councils have decision-making powers, attached to parliaments and governments
- **Consultation mechanisms**
  - Self-organizing councils articulate and represent interests
  - Councils organized around a governmental office, mixed membership
  - Councils led by officials, like contact offices
- **Co-ordination mechanisms**, like inter-ministerial working groups, expert bodies, round tables
- **Self-governance mechanism**: individual minority representation bodies with decision-making powers – non-territorial autonomy

# The structure of consultative and advisory bodies

- Lack of special, direct, institutionalized consultative mechanism (*Azerbaijan, Sweden*)
- Scope, structures and rules of consultation to be clearly defined
- **Clear legal status:** entrenchment in legislation (*Romania, Ukraine*)
- **Government** (*Albania, Austria, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Moldova, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine*)
  - Changes in governmental structures, need for fixed contact points (*Estonia, Finland, Italy, Norway, Sweden*)
  - Inter-ministerial working groups (*Macedonia*)
- **President** (*Armenia, Azerbaijan (until 1997), Estonia, Kosovo, Ukraine*)
- **Parliament** (*Bosnia, Slovenia*)
- Part of a **broader consultative body/bodies** (*Lithuania, Ukraine*)

# The structure and scope of consultative and advisory bodies

- **Specific focus on certain minorities** (Roma/Traveller):
  - *see Bosnia, Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Spain*
- **Limited scope** (culture, allocation of funds, etc.):
  - *Austria, Estonia, Kosovo, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia*
- **Regional/local consultative bodies:**
  - *Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Switzerland*
- **No access to other decision-making bodies/levels** (*Austria*)

# The establishment of consultative and advisory bodies

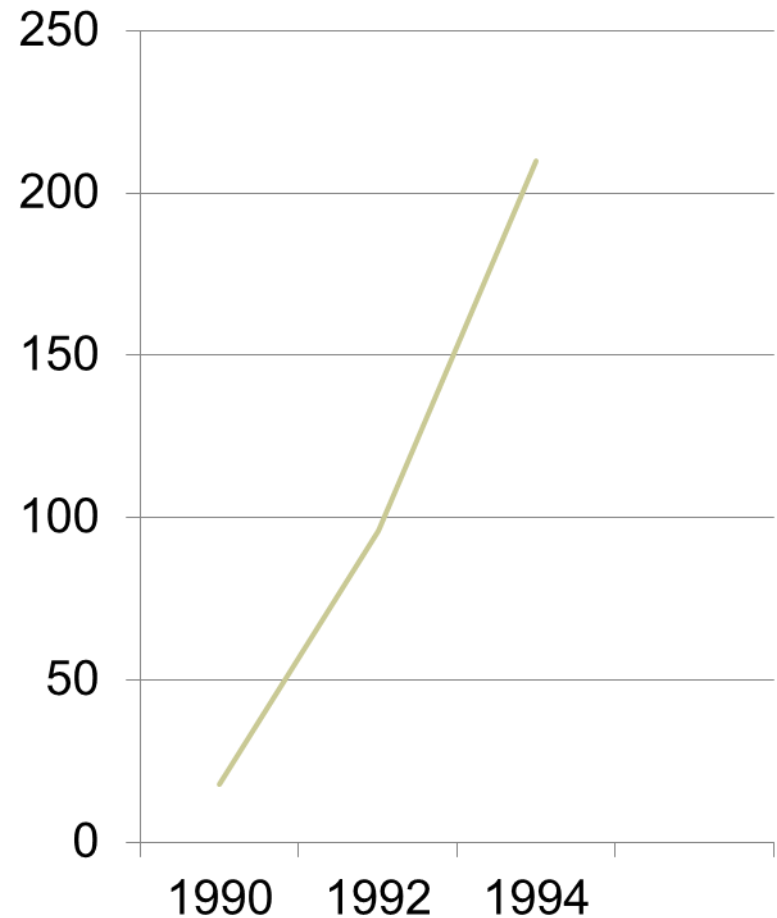
- **Open or fixed membership**
- Varying practices: **election or appointment**
  - Appointment in a transparent and mutually accepted procedure (*Albania, Austria, Bosnia, Czech Republic, Kosovo, Russia*)
  - Lengthy procedure (*Poland*)
- Typically proportion of **both governmental and minority members** (*Bosnia, Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, Poland, Spain*)
- **Majority of cases:** minority bodies nominate representatives which are then appointed
- Or government alone selects and appoints representatives (*Albania*)

# The composition of consultative and advisory bodies

- **Exclusively minority members**
  - NGOs (*Bulgaria, Kosovo*)
  - Minority parliamentary members (*Croatia, Cyprus*)
  - Elected minority councils (*Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Serbia, Slovenia, Saami parliaments*)
- Including **migrant communities**, too (*Finland, Moldova*)
- **Inclusiveness and representativeness:**
  - Which groups and minority representative organizations are consulted/represented (*Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Moldova, Russia*)
  - Issue of divided communities (*Germany*)
  - Issue of larger or smaller communities (*Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia*)

# Inclusiveness and representativeness: the first attempts of collaboration in Hungary

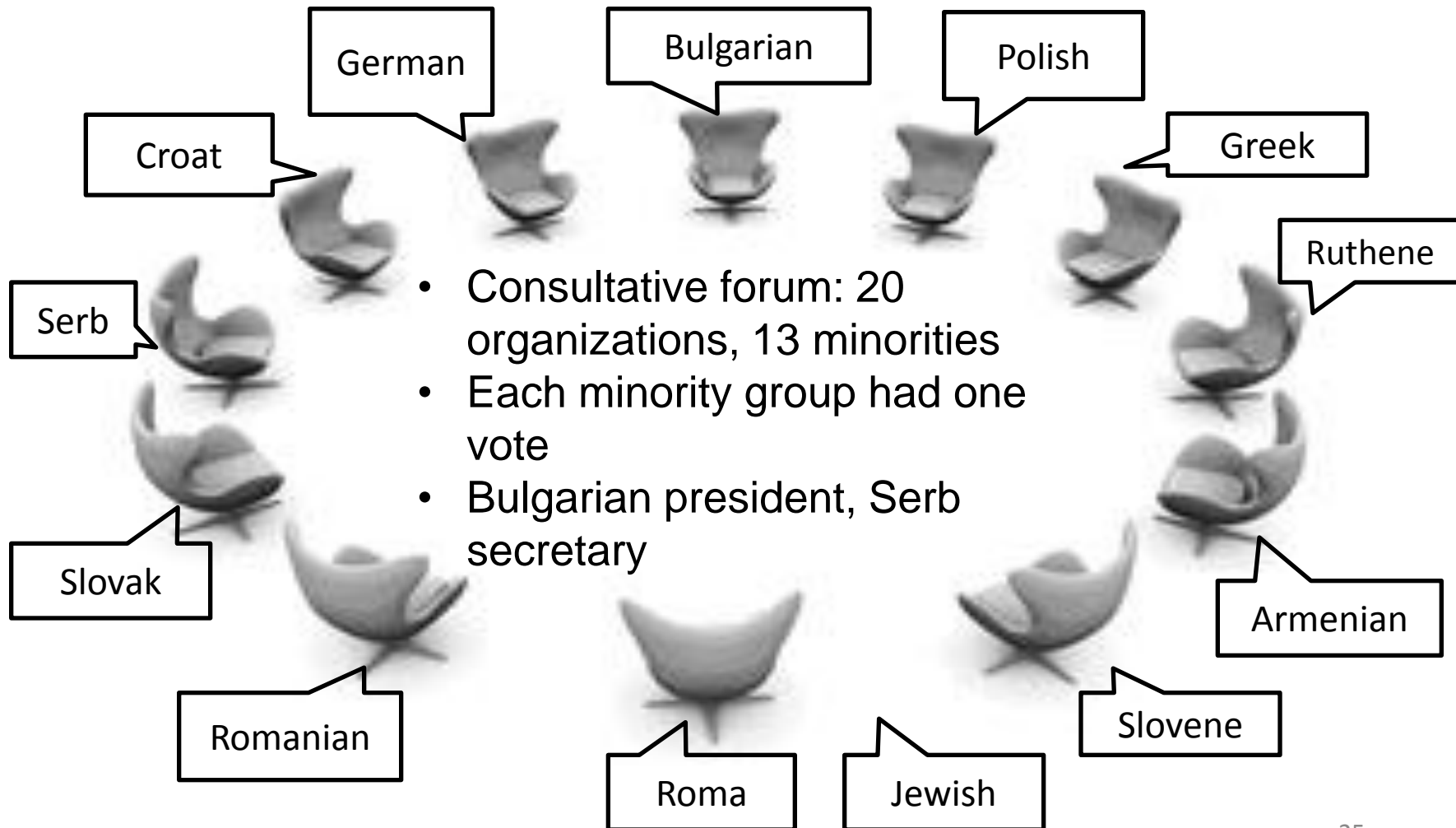
- **The Union of National Minorities of Hungary (1990)**
  - 4 historical alliances (Roma, Romanian, Slovak, Southern Slav)
  - 5 „alternative” associations (Croat, Serb, Slovak)
- Decisions taken by simple majority



The number of registered Roma associations, 1990-94 24



# The Roundtable of National and Ethnic Minorities in Hungary, 1991-1995



# Agenda-setting in consultative and advisory bodies

- Agenda = result of consultation and consensus among the members
- Right to determine their own agenda (*Lithuania*)
- Purely advisory functions (*Cyprus, Ireland, Poland*)
- Pro- or reactive role? (see *Spain*)
- Minority members' right to own opinions, proposals (*Poland*)
- Right of individual members
- Working groups, subgroups (on certain policy fields or minority groups, see *Poland*)

# Transparency and openness

- Sharing the burden and responsibility in relation to relevant decisions leads to the need of **publicity** in order to transmit those decisions
- The involvement of parliament broadens legitimacy and openness to society
- Provisions for ensuring transparency (**contact with media, press releases, dissemination of information**)

# Efficiency and consistency of activities

- Ordinarily, bodies determine their own **working procedures** or specified in governmental decrees
- **Institutionalized and regular dialogue** (*Finland, Ukraine*)
- Fixed number of annual meetings with infrastructure (*Kosovo*)
  - Rare and ad hoc meetings (*Azerbaijan, Russia*)
- Too many **members** (*Bosnia*), fluctuation of members (*Bulgaria*)
- **Annual reports** to the government (*Czech Republic*)
- **Adequate resources**: infrastructure costs, funding for projects and activities, financing for minority organizations (*Armenia, Bulgaria, Portugal*)
- **Limited impact** (*Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Finland, Kosovo, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Ukraine*)

# Conclusions

- Recurrent theme in the Advisory Committee's opinions on the implementation of FCNM
- Consultation is particularly important if minorities are not directly represented or as a complementary mechanism
- Complex systems: multi-layered and multi-dimensional mechanisms are needed: national, regional and local levels
- Covering key areas
- Including all minorities but also focus on particular groups, Roma
- Regularly consulted, raise issues, prepare recommendations, and monitor and report implementation
- Capacity-building, coordination of interests, contribution to transparency

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