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Access to electoral process: minorities of Romania

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Content

- National minorities in Romania: participation of national minorities in the electoral process
- Recent BRIDGE training undertaken by the Permanent Electoral Authority (PEA)



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National minorities in Romania

- National minorities represent "those ethnic groups that are represented in the Council of National Minorities"



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National minorities in Romania based on the 2002 Census:

Ethnics	Number of persons	Percent out of population
Hungarians (incl. Szeklers)	1.431.807 (of which 532 Szeklers)	6,6%
Roma	535.140	2,46%
Ukrainians	61.098	0,3%
Germans	59.764 1 (of which 1.420 Transylvanian Saxons and 2995 Swabians)	0,3%
Russians/Lipovans	35.791 (of which 6721 Russians)	0,2%
Turks	32.098	0,15%
Crimean Tatars	23.935	0,11%
Serbs	22.561	0,10%
Slovaks	17.226	0,1%
Bulgarians	8.025	
Croats/Krašovani	6.807	
Greeks	6.472	
Jews	5.785	
Czechs	3.941	
Poles	3.559	
Italians	3.288	
Chinese	2.243	
Armenians	1.780	
Csángó	1,266	



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- Romanian citizens have the right to vote and to be elected regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, political opinion, property or social origin.

- **ARTICLE 62 of the Romanian Constitution**

(1) The Chamber of Deputies and the Senate shall be elected by universal, equal, direct, secret and free suffrage, in accordance with the electoral law.

(2) Organizations of citizens belonging to national minorities, which fail to obtain the number of votes for representation in Parliament have the right to one Deputy seat each, under the terms of the electoral law. Citizens of a national minority are entitled to be represented by one organization only.



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(3) The number of Deputies and Senators shall be established by the electoral law, in proportion to the population of Romania.

➤ **The right to candidate**

- Citizens' organizations, legally constituted, belonging to national minorities, that have not won in the election at least a deputy or senator mandate, have the right to a deputy mandate if they obtained a total number of votes equal to at least 10% of the average number of valid votes cast in the country for deputy election, according to Romanian Constitution.



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- 18 national minorities have deputies in the Romanian Parliament.
- The Hungarian party, namely the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania, has :

According to last elections of 2008:

- 22 deputy seats (last elections 2008)
- 9 senator seats (last elections 2008)

According to last local elections of 2012:

- 2 seats for the County Council Presidents;
- 203 seats for mayors;
- 2261 seats for local councilors;
- 88 seats for county councilors.



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- Currently, Romania's ethnic communities are represented in the Romanian Parliament by several associations and political parties:

Romania's ethnic communities associations and political parties
▪ Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)
▪ Party of the Roma
▪ Union of Armenians of Romania
▪ Turkish Democratic Union of Romania
▪ Union of Poles of Romania "Dom Polski"
▪ Association of Italians of Romania RO.AS.IT
▪ Democratic Union of Turco-Islamic Tatars of Romania
▪ Union of Ukrainians of Romania
▪ Association of Macedonians of Romania
▪ Cultural Union of Rusyns of Romania
▪ Democratic Forum of Germans in Romania
▪ Union of Serbs of Romania
▪ Lipovan Russian Community of Romania
▪ Association League of Albanians of Romania
▪ Democratic Union of Slovaks and Czechs in Romania
▪ Bulgarian Union of the Banat
▪ Union of Croatians of Romania
▪ Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania
▪ Greek Union of Romania



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Roma minority in Romania

- The threshold settled for 5% has been an obstacle for establishing a parliamentary group of the Roma. For the November 2008 elections for the Parliament of Romania several Roma activists ran in elections representing other political parties. The result was devastating. None of the candidates won a mandate.
- Due to these conditions it seems that the only organization that maintain its ethnical dimension, mainly during the elections, is the Party of the Roma, whose candidate obtained a new mandate of deputy in the Romanian Parliament. He is also the chairman of the Commission for human rights, religion, and problems of the national minorities from the Chamber of Deputies.



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Roma minority in Romania

- The main challenge for the evaluation of the Roma participation within the political parties is the lack of data
- Nor the Government nor the political parties, not even the civil society are following the number of Roma elected in the local administration and the efficiency of the efforts to support the Roma communities.
- Collecting the ethnical data remains a controversial subject throughout the Roma whose rejection is mainly due to their past.



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Roma minority in Romania

- The general experience of the Roma population with the authorities that tried to determine their number and residences was not a positive one. This lack of data represents a barrier in itself that prevent the parties – and the Romas – from measuring efficiently the improvement of the Roma's participation in the political process.
- According to the last census of 2011 (provisional results) the Roma population reach **approx. 619.000** persons (3,2 %), but in fact the statistics show that many of them refuse to identify themselves as such so they are certainly many more.
- According to the NDI survey, the position of a party towards the minorities' rights is more important for the Roma electors than if their ethnicity is explicitly represented, suggesting that the parties with a strong position towards the minorities rights have a real chance to win their votes.



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Roma minority in Romania

- The same survey revealed that 34% of the Roma and 65% of those that are not Roma consider that the problems of minorities are best represented by the dominating parties. Young Romas from the urban area are more likely to prefer the parties with national interest rather than the ethnical ones.
- Even though the Party of the Roma won the elections for two mandates of Mayor and obtained 202 local counselors in 2008, several communities with majoritarian Roma population do not have a majoritarian representation in the City Hall.

NDI = National Democrat Institute for International Affairs



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Recent BRIDGE training in Romania concerning access issues:

- From 26-30 March 2012, BRIDGE made its first appearance in Bucharest.
- The BRIDGE workshop on **Electoral Management Design (EMD) & Access to Electoral Processes (Access)** targeted personnel from election management bodies and UNDP staff in country offices from the Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (ECIS) region.
- 26 participants from the region [including: Albania; Armenia; Georgia; Kyrgyzstan; Moldova; Montenegro; Romania; Serbia; Ukraine].



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- The workshop was jointly organized by UNDPs Bratislava Regional Centre; Bureau for Development Policy; UNDP Romania; and the Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania.
- There was a mixture of two modules: EMD (types of EMB models, structure, roles, etc.) and Access (barriers and strategies to address barriers, disabilities, women, ethnic groups, etc.) as the modules relevant to the needs and interests of the target group.

This workshop was the first time that:

- 1. Access to Electoral Systems module was run (for 50% of the workshop)
- 2. The two modules: *Access to Electoral Systems* and *Election Management Design* were combined/customized into one cohesive module.



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- **Forthcoming trainings:**
- Bridge Module
“Gender and Elections” Bucharest October 2012 – in Romanian language



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Thank you!

