

# Study on the active political participation of national minority youth in Council of Europe member states



STEERING COMMITTEE  
ON ANTI-DISCRIMINATION,  
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (CDADI)

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1. Background

**T**he possibility for everyone – including national minority youth – to take part in, influence and shape public life is a precondition for democracy. Active political participation of national minority youth does not only cover the right to regular and fair elections, the right to vote, and the right to stand for public office without discrimination; here, *active political participation* means also that national minority youth should have the right, the opportunity, the space, the means, and where necessary the support to participate in and influence public decisions affecting their lives taken at European, national, regional and local levels. National minority youth is entitled to protection that ensures the exercise of their right to participation and, in case of violation, to have access to effective remedies.

The Council of Europe Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) is mandated with steering the Council of Europe's intergovernmental work to promote equality for all and build more inclusive societies, offering effective protection from discrimination and hate and where diversity is respected. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has tasked the CDADI to *"carry out a study and identify good practices in member States on the active political participation of national minority youth, as a means to further protect persons belonging to national minorities and cultural diversity and promote interaction between all members of society"*.<sup>1</sup> The study provides an opportunity for the governments to explore the gaps in this field and, by building on the good practices of member states, to better support effective political participation of national minority youth.

The challenge – and defining feature – of this study is to encompass two different fields of research: participation of youth and of national minorities. To this end, the approach taken here will cover the largest possible area and

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1. Terms of Reference of the CDADI, Specific Task iii, <https://rm.coe.int/tor-cdadi-2020-2021-en/16809e29a5>.

explore the state of the political participation of national minority youth, through the angles of youth, or of national minorities, and a combination of both, as the case may be. Where relevant, this approach includes participation of young people under the age of 18 who may be considered children in national contexts.

## 1.2. Methodology and framework of the study

In accordance with its Terms of Reference, the CDADI appointed a Working Group to support the drafting of this study. The Working Group adopted two questionnaires: one was addressed to the member states, the other was distributed to civil society organisations promoting participation of national minority youth. Both questionnaires sought to take stock of the situation, determine trends, and identify good practices as well as obstacles and challenges concerning the active political participation of youth belonging to national minorities. Member states were invited, when relevant, to also provide information applicable to youth specifically, or to persons belonging to national minorities specifically. Overall, 33 member states<sup>2</sup> and some 80 civil society organisations submitted contribution to this study.

In addition, representatives of civil society organisations who submitted replies to the questionnaire were invited to focus groups, in which responses to the questionnaire were discussed in greater depth. The first group consisted of representatives of minority organisations that also engage with young people either by involving them in their own organisation or by projects particularly targeting them. Two focus groups were organised for minority youth organizations: one for international and transnational organisations, and another one for minority youth councils and grassroots organisations. The fourth focus group involved representatives of youth councils exploring the approach of mainstream youth organisations towards equal opportunities for participation, especially of persons belonging to national minorities, and diversity. These discussions provided an invaluable insight into the reality of participation of minority youth “on the ground”, particularly because most of the participants were themselves young people belonging to national minorities.

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2. As of 10 May 2021, the following member states replied to the questionnaire or provided information: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

Information already available at the Council of Europe and other international organisations also served as a basis of analysis of the current practice of the member states in this field.

The framework of the study incorporates the approach of the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, and the Committee of Ministers Recommendation on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18 (see Chapter 2). It is based on the principle that the meaningful participation of national minority youth can only take place when they have the right, the space, the opportunity, the means, the support to participate and the protection of the right to participate, and when states take measures to create these conditions. Each of them focuses on a different support measure, but they are closely interrelated, and they all have to be fulfilled to ensure that national minority children and youth are able to participate fully in the activities or decisions that interest and, crucially, affect them.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.3. Key definitions and concepts

The key definitions and concepts used in the study are in line with the flexible approach agreed on by the CDADI Working Group for the purpose of the questionnaires. The use of terms of **youth**, **national minority** and **political participation** were set the following way.

Certain countries give youth the right to vote from the age of 16 or 17, while the minimum age to stand as a candidate varies between 18 and more than 25 years of age. Accordingly, states were invited to refer to the meaning of the term in their national legal framework or in the national context of reference but also encouraged to report any relevant information concerning **youth or young persons** in accordance with the Council of Europe practice (from 13 to 30 years of age).<sup>4</sup> Several states did so, which enabled the CDADI to collect comprehensive information.

Similarly, the term **national minorities** or **persons belonging to national minorities** refers to the meaning used in the national legal framework or national context of reference, where it exists. States Parties to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Framework

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3. Based on the Manual on the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life 'Have your Say!' pp. 37.

4. See EU – Council of Europe Youth Partnership, Glossary on youth, Definition of Young people.



Convention)<sup>5</sup> may have already notified their understanding of the terms “national minority/ies” upon ratification of this instrument, or have a working understanding or definition of ‘national minority’ which they use *de facto* in their national context. Whichever the case may be, these states have a well-established practice of reporting under this instrument. In the same spirit, the terms used in the questionnaire, insofar as they are the subject of a corresponding provision in the Framework Convention, were understood to the extent possible to conform to the latter provisions. Some states, who either have not signed or ratified the Framework Convention, or which have made reservations at the time of signature or declare to have no national minorities on their territory for the purposes of the Framework Convention, submitted information about diversity in more general terms, including information on measures taken regarding the participation of youth belonging to immigrant communities, or of a migration background. Where relevant, such information has been included in the present study without prejudice as to the scope of the Framework Convention in that state.

It was also understood that, for the purpose of the study, the characterisation of participation as **political** refers to any decision related to public life and taken at any level by any institution, including within self-governance structures. The terms “self-governing bodies” referred to the meaning in their national legal framework, where relevant.

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5. See list of ratifications: [https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/157/signatures?p\\_auth=aFpizM58](https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/157/signatures?p_auth=aFpizM58).

## 2. Review of policy instruments of the Council of Europe

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**B**earing in mind its core values, the Council of Europe conceives of participation as it concerns people's ability to take part in and influence decisions that impact their life. This chapter takes stock of the Council of Europe's work in the field of participation of young people – above and below the age of 18 – gender balance in political and public decision-making, and participation of persons belonging to national minorities, including Roma participation. Relevant instruments of other international and intergovernmental organisations are not included in this review, however, it has to be acknowledged that they all together constitute the international human rights framework of the right to participation of national minority youth.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.1. Child participation

The Council of Europe has been engaging in developing standards and policies promoting the participation of children in decision-making over the last two decades. Participation of all children is one of the priority areas of **the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021)**<sup>7</sup> with reference to Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights on the

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6. See, among others, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the EU strategy on the rights of the child, the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027, the EU Roma strategic framework on equality, inclusion and participation, the Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life and the Hague Recommendations regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.
  7. The Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021).

right to freedom of expression and Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the right to be heard. Besides setting child participation as a permanent priority, the Committee of Ministers set the framework of involvement of children in any decision-making procedures by adopting the **Recommendation on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18 (CM/Rec(2012)2)**. According to the Recommendation, child participation means that children, any person under the age of 18 years, individually or in groups, have the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to freely express their views, to be heard and to contribute to decision making on matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.<sup>8</sup> If participation is to be effective, meaningful and sustainable, it needs to be understood as a process and not a one-off event and requires ongoing commitment in terms of time and resources.

The right of children and young people to participate applies without discrimination on any grounds such as “race”;<sup>9</sup> colour, language, religion, citizenship, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation. Particular efforts should be made to enable participation of children and young people with fewer opportunities, including those who are vulnerable or affected by discrimination, and certain provisions for children with special needs should also be made.

The Recommendation requires member states to protect and promote children’s right to participation while also creating the space for it. In order to be able to participate meaningfully, children and young people should be provided with all relevant information and offered adequate support for self-advocacy appropriate to their age and circumstances. Children and young people who exercise their right to freely express their views must be protected from harm, including intimidation, reprisals, victimisation and violation of their right to privacy. Children and young people should always be fully informed of the scope of their participation, including the limitations on their involvement, the expected and actual outcomes of their participation and how their views were ultimately considered. The *Child Participation*

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8. Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18, Section I.

9. Since all human beings belong to the same species, ECRI, the Council of Europe’s monitoring body specialised in the fight against racism and discrimination, rejects theories based on the existence of different “races”. However, ECRI has considered that the use of the term “race” as a ground for discrimination ensures that those persons who are generally and erroneously perceived as belonging to “another race” are not excluded from the protection provided for by law (see in particular ECRI’s General Policy Recommendation No. 7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination, revised on 7 December 2017).

*Assessment Tool*, developed by the Council of Europe's Children's Rights Division, provides specific indicators to measure progress in implementing the Recommendation on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.2. Youth participation

Since 1972, the Council of Europe has become the driving force behind youth policy development and youth work in Europe, while involving young people directly in their work through its pioneering co-management system. In particular, the Council of Europe engages in setting and promoting standards to address the challenges faced by young people such as access to human and social rights, learning, inclusion and social cohesion, citizenship and participation, safety, health and well-being. It guides member states in the development of their national youth policies by means of a body of recommendations and other texts based on the values of democracy, human rights and rule of law, that ensure a minimum level of standards in youth policy in Europe.

The **Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030** (adopted 22 January 2020) recalls that the Organisation should aim at enabling young people across Europe to actively uphold, defend, promote and benefit from the Council of Europe's core values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law by broadening youth participation. This should include the meaningful participation of young people in decision-making, based on a broad social and political consensus in support of inclusion, participatory governance and accountability.

In the preamble to **the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life**<sup>11</sup> (adopted 21 May 2003), the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities defines youth participation and active citizenship, stating that it is "(...) about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society." The Charter presents concrete ideas and instruments that can be used by young people, youth organisations, local authorities, and other groups and institutions involved in participation work.

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10. [Child Participation Assessment Tool](#) (2016) and the [Implementation Guide for the Child Participation Assessment Tool](#) (2016).

11. Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, Recommendation 128(2003) on the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, 21 May 2003.

The Charter consists of three parts relating to different aspects of youth participation at a local level: sectoral policies, instruments for youth participation and institutional participation by young people in local and regional affairs. The Council of Europe's Youth Department developed a manual named "Have your Say" that explains the provisions of the Charter and provide guidance on how to use it.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, the following youth policy instruments are relevant for the scope of the study:

- ▶ Recommendation on the participation of young people in local and regional life (Rec(2004)13);
- ▶ Recommendation on the role of national youth councils in youth policy development (Rec(2006)1);
- ▶ Recommendation on citizenship and participation of young people in public life (Rec(2006)14);
- ▶ Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (CM/Rec(2010)7).

### **2.3. Gender balance in political and public decision-making**

Gender equality is central to the protection of human rights, the functioning of democracy, respect for the rule of law, and social well-being. The Council of Europe's work in the fields of human rights and gender equality has resulted in comprehensive legal standards and policy guidance aimed at achieving the advancement and empowerment of women and the effective realisation of gender equality in the member states and beyond. Participation of women from under-represented or disadvantaged groups, especially young women, has been in the focus of several activities of the Council of Europe with particular emphasis on combating stereotypes, access to public decision-making and participation in political party structures.

The overall goal of the **Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018–2023** is to achieve the effective realisation of gender equality and to empower women and men in the Council of Europe member States, by supporting the implementation of existing instruments and strengthening the Council of Europe acquis in the field of gender equality, under the guidance of the Gender Equality Commission (GEC). The Strategy sets out six key goals, including

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12. Have your say! – Manual on the revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional life (2008).

“achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making”. In practice this means, in line with the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, that the representation of women and men in any governing body involved in political or public life should not fall below 40%.<sup>13</sup> Specific measures to encourage participation of women at public decision-making procedures include arrangements which may facilitate reconciling active political involvement with family and work life and the introduction of compulsory or recommended quota systems for the minimum number of same-sex candidates who can appear on an electoral list and/or a quota of seats reserved for women.<sup>14</sup>

The **Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life** proposes several measures to ensure equal opportunities and enhance the participation of girls and young women in public and political life at regional and local level. Among others, girls and young women should receive education and training regarding participation in public affairs that empower them to perform top-level responsibilities based on women’s quotas, moreover, public authorities should fund public services providing assistance to girls and young women.<sup>15</sup> In order to provide technical assistance to member states to this end, the Division on elections and civil society of the Council of Europe has recently published a “Toolkit on the Participation of young women and girls from disadvantaged groups in political and public decision-making processes at local level”.<sup>16</sup>

## 2.4. Participation of persons belonging to national minorities

The most significant instrument of the Council Europe protecting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities is the **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities** (Framework Convention). Article 15 of the Framework Convention stipulates that State 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

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13. Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making. Appendix.

14. Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of citizens in local public life.

15. Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, Recommendation 128(2003) on the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, 21 May 2003, para. 25.

16. Toolkit on the Participation of young women and girls from disadvantaged groups in political and public decision-making processes at local level, Council of Europe, 2020.

affairs, in particular those affecting them". While Article 15 is a central provision devoted to the right to effective participation, participation makes it possible that the concerns of persons belonging to minorities regarding full and effective equality, and regarding their right to preservation and development of their specific identity, are heard and effectively taken into account.

The Advisory Committee, set up to monitor the implementation of the Framework Convention, emphasised that "effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities is also crucial for enhancing social cohesion, as keeping national minorities on the periphery of society can lead to social exclusion and tensions among groups. Marginalising persons belonging to national minorities in socio-economic life also has implications for the country as a whole, with the risk of losing their contribution and additional input to society."<sup>17</sup> Through its opinions, which it adopts on each State Party every five years, the Advisory Committee has also developed extensive jurisprudence on Article 15, examining participation not only within minority councils, but also in the wider political context.<sup>18</sup> The Advisory Committee also adopted a Thematic Commentary on participation, to provide a useful tool for State authorities and decision-makers, public officials, organisations of minorities, non-governmental organisations, academics and other stakeholders involved in national minority protection.

The **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages** is designed to protect and promote regional and minority languages and to enable speakers to use them both in private and public life. It therefore obliges the States Parties to actively promote the use of these languages in education, courts, administration, media, culture, economic and social life, and cross-border cooperation. It requires states to take into consideration the views of speakers of such languages, and further to consider setting up consultative mechanisms for these purposes. It also contains key standards which create the conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to participate. For example, it requires the authorities to provide appropriate forms of teaching of and in the minority languages, and for local, regional and national authorities to allow communication between them and regional or minority language speakers, to publish information in such languages, and furthermore to allow debates in these languages in local, regional or national

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17. Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Thematic Commentary on the Effective Participation of Persons Belonging to National Minorities in Cultural, Social and Economic Life and in Public Affairs, 2008, para. 9.

18. This jurisprudence can be consulted via the Hudoc database: [www.hudoc.fcnm.coe.int](http://www.hudoc.fcnm.coe.int).

assemblies. Lastly, it also requires that states encourage the participation of speakers in cultural activities and in media regulators.<sup>19</sup>

## 2.5. Roma participation

The Council of Europe's **Strategic Action Plan on Roma<sup>20</sup> and Traveller Inclusion** (2020-2025) translates the strategic objectives of the Council of Europe regarding the protection and promotion of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law into a policy framework for the social and intercultural inclusion of Roma and Travellers in Europe. It also provides a flexible and adaptable framework to country-specific conditions, serving as a roadmap and practical tool for designing, implementing, and adjusting programmes and actions. The objectives of the Strategic Action Plan are to promote and protect the human rights of Roma and Travellers, combat antigypsyism and discrimination, and foster inclusion in society. The promotion of participation of Roma women and youth is included in the Strategic Action Plan on Roma and Traveller Inclusion as a cross-cutting issue.

Roma youth participation has been a political priority of several sectors of the Council of Europe, including the Roma and Travellers Team, for number of years. During this period, extraordinary results have been achieved in relation to capacity-building of Roma youth organisations and individuals, raised awareness of the importance to support Roma youth participation, enabling the building of alliances among Roma and non-Roma youth, and most importantly, enabling Roma youth to actively participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of initiatives (educational and political) within the Council of Europe.

The **Roma Youth Action Plan**, also developed by the youth sector with the Roma and Travellers Team, is the Council of Europe's response to challenges faced by Roma young people in Europe, particularly in relation to their empowerment, participation in policy-making processes and structures at European level, and realities of discrimination. The Action Plan was developed based on the outcomes of the first Roma Youth Conference in 2011,

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19. See website of the Language Charter.

20. The term "Roma and Travellers" is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term "Gens du voyage", as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.



and complements the Council of Europe Strasbourg Declaration on Roma by associating Roma youth in its implementation. The Roma Youth Action Plan strives to demonstrate that, given the right, means, space, opportunity and support to participate in and influence decisions, Roma young people will take an active role in changing their environment, affirming their identity and fighting for human rights. As far as youth participation is concerned, it makes a strong statement: in order to tackle the wishes, needs and aspirations of Roma youth, their voice needs to be listened to, and they need to be involved in all steps of the process. A recent study commissioned by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe found the added value of creating a new intergovernmental “instrument specifically setting guidelines in the area of Roma youth participation and prepared through a process where young Roma are actively involved and consulted”.<sup>21</sup>

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21. Dr Margareta Matache, *Roma Youth Participation and Inclusion in Standards, Policies, and Programmes in Europe*, Council of Europe, 2021. pp.71.

# 3. Analysis of political participation of national minority youth in Council of Europe member States

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**T**his chapter analyses the information collected through the questionnaires, focus group discussions and desk research by following the six-pillar framework: effective and meaningful participation of national minority youth can only take place when young persons belonging to national minorities have the right, the space, the opportunity, the means, the support and the protection to participate. The good practices included herein are examples of state measures taken to create the conditions of participation of national minority youth in political and public decision-making. This approach is completed with the assessment of the role of the Council of Europe in this regard.

## 3.1. Right to participate

The Council of Europe instruments – in line with standards of the United Nations – recognise children and young people as rights-holders and active agents in the exercise of their rights, and furthermore stipulates participation in relevant decision-making procedures as a fundamental right.<sup>22</sup> The Framework Convention provides for the protection and promotion of the right to effective participation in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs. Participation needs to be understood as a principle, not only as a right, since it is the key to the full enjoyment of other rights<sup>23</sup> protected by the European Convention on Human Rights, such as the right to be

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22. Handbook on European law relating to the rights of the child, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and Council of Europe, 2015, pp. 17-18.

23. Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18, Preamble.

protected against all forms of discrimination, the right to be protected from hate speech as part of the right to respect for private life, the freedom of expression, the freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the freedom of assembly and association and the right to information.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, the right to effective participation guarantees the persons belonging to national minorities the right to preservation and development of their culture and essential elements of their identity.<sup>25</sup> While all these instruments protect the rights of individual persons, they affirm that the right to participation has a collective dimension and can be enjoyed in community with others from the same group (children, young people and national minorities).<sup>26</sup>

Consequently, this means from the perspective of a young person belonging to a national minority, be they above or below 18, that they have the right to take part in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs as well as to participate in decision-making about issues affecting their lives. They should not be discriminated against, neither based on their age nor their affiliation to minority groups, and participatory mechanisms should be designed to be inclusive while taking into account intersectionality. This means that the voice of young people belonging to minorities is heard and given due weight; moreover, they should be properly informed about the outcomes of these participatory mechanisms and how their views were considered.

### 3.1.1. Legal framework in the member states

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Incorporating the core values of the Council of Europe and the relevant provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, political participation is declared as a constitutional right in all member states. Hence, general legislation on political participation including the right to vote, the right to be elected, the right to take part in referenda, the right to establish and join political parties and occupy public positions is in place. The conditions to exercise political rights such as citizenship or residency differs from country to country and from local to regional or national level within a single country, but bearing in mind the scope of the study, provisions related to age warrant special attention. In Europe, the minimum age for voting at parliamentary elections is 18 with the exception of **Austria** (16), **Greece** (17) and **Malta**

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24. For further information on the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights see the Thematic Factsheets.

25. Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Thematic Commentary on the Effective Participation of Persons Belonging to National Minorities in Cultural, Social and Economic Life and in Public Affairs, 2008, para. 15.

26. *Ibid.* para. 6.

(16).<sup>27</sup> Young people from the age of 16 can cast a ballot at local elections in **Estonia, Germany** (some federal states) and **Switzerland** (in one canton), at local referendum (Flanders) and at the elections for the European Parliament in **Belgium** (which has not ratified the Framework Convention).<sup>28</sup> This allows youth under the age of 18 to practise their political rights and influence decisions relating to the concerns of society in general.

With regards to the codification of *youth participation*, good practices of legislative measures have been identified. However, in general, laws on youth do not go further than stipulating the prohibition of discrimination and providing for equal opportunities. In **Albania**, the Law on Youth aims to create the conditions necessary for youth activism in terms of participation and support. The law sets out the principles for supporting youth activities as the following: promotion of equality and the prohibition of discrimination; equal opportunities and guaranteeing youth participation in policy-making and decision-making processes; and other areas that encourage youth development.

In **Finland**, children and young people's right to participate in decision-making concerning them, as well as the authorities' obligation to discern children's views on matters of concern to them, have been included in the legislation. The Constitution lays down provisions on the right of individuals to participate in and influence the development of society and their living conditions and contains an explicit provision on the right of children to influence matters pertaining to themselves to a degree corresponding to their level of development. In addition, provisions on children and young people's right and opportunities to participate and exert influence are laid down in the Local Government Act and in the Youth Act. Aside from the provisions of the Youth Act, the local and central government authorities shall offer and organise opportunities for young people to be involved and exert an influence in the processing of issues related to local, regional and nationwide youth work and policies, or otherwise ensure that they are consulted in said contexts. Additionally, young people shall be consulted in matters that affect them. As a horizontal principle, discrimination is prohibited on the basis of the Constitution, the Non-Discrimination Act, the Act on Equality between Women and Men, the Criminal Code, and several individual specific acts.

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27. See Parline - global data on national parliaments, Minimum age for voting in parliamentary elections, Inter-Parliamentary Union.

28. For further information see [Mapping minimum age requirements concerning the rights of the child in the EU](#) | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (europa.eu).

Most member states of the Council of Europe have constitutional provisions or laws on the *participation of national minorities* in social, economic, cultural and public life. These provisions both ensure the participation of national minorities on an equal basis with others and provide for specific arrangements to guarantee representation in elected bodies – such as exemption from threshold requirements, reserved seats or veto rights. For example, in **Hungary**, national minorities are represented by a minority Member of Parliament (with a preferential quota of 25% of the number of votes that are normally required for parliamentary membership) or by their advocates (who did not pass the preferential quota but first on the list of candidates of a minority's national-level self-government). They also play an important role in the legislation process via the Parliamentary Committee of Nationalities. In **Denmark**, at the local and regional level in South Jutland, the party representing the German minority is guaranteed representation (without the right to cast votes) should they fail to win a seat. The Constitution of **Montenegro** guarantees the right to authentic representation of national minorities in the Parliament and in the assemblies of the local self-governments in which they represent a significant share in the population, and the right to proportionate representation in public services, state authorities and local self-government bodies. In **Romania**, organisations of citizens belonging to national minorities can register candidates to participate in parliamentary, presidential and local elections. According to the Constitution, “the organisations of citizens belonging to a national minority which failed to obtain the required number of votes to be represented in Parliament are entitled to one deputy seat each, under the Electoral Law”. For some states, such as the **Russian Federation**<sup>29</sup> and **Hungary**, it is relevant to mention legislative provisions on cultural autonomy as an opportunity for young people to get involved in national minority structures.

While laws on youth participation provide for equal opportunities and prohibit discrimination, promotion of the *involvement of children and youth as part of national minority participation* is not common. Nevertheless, one example can be found in **Sweden**, where the Act on national minorities

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29. The Russian Federation is a federal country and certain constituent entities thereof are formed on the basis of ethnicity (Buryatia, Dagestan, Jewish Autonomous Oblast, Kalmykia, Komi, Tatarstan, Tuva, Udmurtia, Sakha (Yakutia) and others), regardless the fact that most of their residents do not belong to the respective ethnicity. The constituent entities are empowered to establish independently their own regional authority systems, in accordance with domestic federal laws and fundamental principles of government. The Russian Federation, having such a minority dimension, thereby differs from other Council of Europe member States, including federal states. Thus, regional practices related to youth and minorities have been included in the study.

and minority languages stipulates a responsibility to consult minorities in all matters that may concern them. Recently, a strengthened responsibility to promote the participation of children and youth was introduced in legislation. This entails that public authorities shall promote minority child and youth participation in matters that concern them, and to make necessary adaptations as regards to the form of the dialogue to better suit the needs of children and youth. In **Finland**, the Act on the Sámi Parliament lays down that the authorities are obligated to negotiate with the Sámi Parliament in all far-reaching and important measures which may directly specifically affect the status of the Sámi as an indigenous people. This covers also issues relevant for Sámi youth. The Sámi Parliament decide themselves who represents them in the negotiations, for example, a representative from the Sámi Youth Council.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.1.2. Policy documents on participation of national minority youth

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The questionnaire sent to member states explored that state policies on participation of national minority youth can be covered either by child/youth or inclusion and integration policy, or in some cases, policies promoting democracy and political participation in general.

In most cases, *child strategies* or *youth policies* aim at promoting the participation of young people in various fields of life including democratic processes and decision-making without discrimination on any grounds or with a clause on the provision of equal opportunities (**Albania, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Romania, Slovak Republic, Sweden**). For example, the **Estonian** Youth Field Development Plan emphasises that measures targeting youth must acknowledge the diversity that exists within ‘youth’ as a category – for example gender, ethnicity, culture, health, place of residence, socioeconomic situation, etc.

The federal Youth Strategy in **Germany** involves numerous participation formats, which are open to all young people in the country without exclusion. Consequently, events and measures launched by the Youth Strategy do not specifically deal with the situation of national minority youth. However, anti-discrimination and minority protection are highlighted within the activity sphere “Diversity and Participation” as part of the comprehensive Youth Strategy.

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30. The Sámi as an indigenous people have linguistic and cultural self-government in their native region. However, also the Sámi are entitled to protection under FCNM.

Participation is a main objective of the youth policy of **Luxembourg** (which has not ratified the Framework Convention), as the policy aims at enabling young people to take part in society and to have a voice in the policy-making process. According to the authorities, a major challenge of youth policy in Luxembourg is to increase the political participation of young people with a migrant background and/or low socioeconomic status, both in elections and concerning other youth-specific participation.<sup>31</sup>

With regard to *national minority perspectives in youth policies*, the **Armenian** government approved the concept of state youth policy, which stipulates active participation of national minorities in public rallies and their involvement in political life. One of the objectives of the National Programme for Youth of **Slovenia** 2013-2022 is to ensure accessibility to quality cultural activities and participation of youth in culture. This objective incorporates accessibility of culture for youth of “autochthonous national communities”, Roma communities, other minority and vulnerable groups with their active and creative participation for development of their culture. The **Greek** “Youth ‘17-’27: Strategic Framework for the Empowerment of Youth” aims to reinforce the participation of young people in democratic life with a specific focus on promoting the participation of young people with fewer opportunities (e.g. young immigrants, young Roma, young people living below the poverty line, etc.) and young people under-represented in political life and civil society organisations, also taking gender into account. In the **Netherlands** and the **Slovak Republic**, special attention is dedicated to young people belonging to minorities and their participation during the development of future youth strategies.

An example of a minority community setting its own youth policy can be found in **Belgium**. The Government of the German-speaking Community prepares and submits an interdisciplinary strategic plan on youth for the five-year term of the Parliament of the German-speaking Community for approval. The strategic plan is developed based on a report assessing the situation of young people from the German speaking community prepared in consultation with youth workers and the Youth Council of the German-speaking Community and evaluated at the end of each term. For the period of 2016-2020, one of the main objectives of the strategic plan was to increase the knowledge and involvement of young people in politics by the promotion of democracy projects, training of youth workers, teachers and parents

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31. Source: <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/luxembourg/5-participation>.

as well as the development of approaches for political participation in the German-speaking Community.

Youth policy can be focus area of a general strategy of a minority community or a specific region, too. In **Hungary**, the Assembly of the National Minority Self-government of Romanians in Hungary adopted its Strategic and Development Plan at its session of September 2020, with a particular point on the more focused involvement in the public life of national minorities in Hungary by youth belonging to the Romanian community in Hungary. In **Finland**, one of the main objectives of the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme is to build confidence among youth and to strengthen non-discrimination and security. To this end, targeted measures aimed at creating equal opportunities for Roma youth are part of an extensive project implemented by the Ministry of Justice as part of Finland's National Roma Policy Programme, which has a youth dimension. In the **Russian Federation** laws on youth policy have been adopted by the overwhelming majority of its 85 regional authorities, for example, the Law on Youth (Komi Republic, Ryazan and Chelyabinsk oblasts, and Moscow), Law on Youth and State Youth Policy (Republic of Tatarstan, Kaluga and Leningrad oblasts), and Law on Youth and Youth Policy (Arkhangelsk oblast and St. Petersburg).

Concerning *policies for inclusion and integration*, the National Roma Inclusion Strategy of **Croatia** and **Hungary** also incorporates a youth perspective. The development plan "Integrating **Estonia** 2020" served as the basis for integration policy in 2014–2020. One target was to promote the active participation of students with a native language different from Estonian in youth work, and to increase their close contacts with Estonian-speaking peers. Furthermore, **Georgia** also aims to give a special focus to empowerment of youth and improvement of educational opportunities in the civic integration strategy of the next period.

One example of *policies promoting democracy and participation* is the **Swedish** Government's Strategy for a strong democracy adopted in June 2018. One of its objectives is to create a vibrant democracy that is sustainable, characterised by inclusion and by equal opportunities to exert influence. Importantly, the strategy focuses on the inclusion and equal terms of participation in democracy for all individuals and groups in society. Similarly, one of the main objectives of the National Democracy Programme of **Finland** is to develop democracy and human rights education and to promote young people's participation. Within the framework of this programme, consultation and participation of children in decision-making processes will be developed and new methods to promote children and young people's



participation will be tested in various settings, and with a special focus on children and young people in vulnerable situations.

### 3.2. Space for participation

The effective and meaningful participation of persons belonging to national minorities in all spheres of life can be considered as one of the indicators of the level of pluralism and democracy of a society.<sup>32</sup> Even though recent studies found that voting turnout, membership of political parties, interest in politics are declining among young people,<sup>33</sup> there has been an increase in unconventional forms of participation such as discussing politics and signing petitions, not to mention new and innovative ways of participation enhanced by information and communication technology.<sup>34</sup> The Eurobarometer survey on the Future of Europe also confirmed that young people's political participation is in transformation: "younger respondents are more likely to favour joining a demonstration (23% of those aged 15-24 vs. 10% of those aged 55 or over), going on strike (17% vs. 9%) and taking part in online debates (18% vs. 6%), while older respondents are more likely to say that voting in elections is the best way of citizens getting their voice heard (71% of those aged 55 or over vs. 60% of those aged 15-24)".<sup>35</sup>

National minority youth can be involved in public affairs through various arrangements, such as representation in mainstream elected bodies and public administration at all levels, consultative mechanisms or cultural autonomy arrangements. Engagement in and with civil society organisations can be considered as the first step or opportunity for meaningful participation for national minority youth, among others by taking part in the advocacy processes, presenting their ideas, needs and demands to the decision makers and consulting the management of the organisations.<sup>36</sup> Examples of new and innovative participation are limited in the study, further research

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32. Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Thematic Commentary on the Effective Participation of Persons Belonging to National Minorities in Cultural, Social and Economic Life and in Public Affairs, 2008, para. 8.

33. Youth Political Participation, Literature review, Marina Galstyan, Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, 2019, pp. 11.

34. New and innovative forms of youth participation in decision-making processes, Anne Crowley and Dan Moxon, Council of Europe, 2018, pp.15-21.

35. Special Eurobarometer 500, Report, Future of Europe, Fieldwork: October-November 2020. pp.29.

36. Compendium "The future of young people's political participation: questions, challenges and opportunities", Laden Yurttagüler, Ramon Martinez, Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, 2019, pp.19.

might identify more good practices in this field. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that due to the lack of disaggregated data on persons belonging to national minorities, or age, only few member states could provide information on political participation of minority young people in conventional mechanisms.

### **3.2.1. National minority youth representation in national parliaments, local councils and political parties**

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In Europe, the number of young people under 30 are highest in the national parliaments of **Norway** (13,61%), **Serbia** (12,8%), **Armenia** (12,12%), **San Marino** (11,67%) and **Belgium** (10%).<sup>37</sup> Among the regions, Europe has the highest number of young people in national parliaments: 3,72% of the parliamentarians (occupying 12431 seats) are under 30, compared to the global average of 2,63%. While male members of parliament outnumber their female counterparts in every age group, the proportion of women is higher among younger age groups, particularly between the ages of 21-30.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, information concerning representation of minority youth in *national parliaments* is limited and based on solely contributions from the member states. Currently there are four MPs in the **Armenian** Parliament representing national minorities, although none of them is under 30. In **Belgium**, the Parliament of the German-speaking Minority has three members who are below 30. In the **Republic of Moldova**, the one member of the National Parliament below 30 is from a minority background.

Some member states submitted information regarding minority youth representation in *local government*. In **Croatia**, several municipalities in which national minorities constitute a majority of the population have good examples of youth involvement. For example, in Kneževi Vinogradi municipality the local authorities support both national minority youth in the youth and the national minority aspects, and encourage them to form associations. Minority youth participate in local structures, both general in nature, such as municipal council and youth council, as well as minority structures, such as national minority councils. As is also the case in Vukovar, the local youth council consists of both members of political parties and other youth activists, and minorities are represented in both. Furthermore, young members of the Hungarian national minority participate in the work of municipal/county

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37. Parline - global data on national parliaments, Data on age: by country as of May 2021, Inter-Parliamentary Union.

38. Youth participation in national parliaments, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021. pp. 21.

councils as members and vice-presidents of councils in Osijek-Baranja County.

Another example of minority youth participation at *local level* is provided in the **Netherlands**, where a young Frisian (born in 1998) became the youngest member of the local council of Súdwest-Fryslân (Southwest Friesland) in 2017. In March 2021, he was elected a member of Parliament.

Mainstream *political parties* in many member states may often have a youth department or section but minority political parties also have such a department. The German Minority in **Denmark** is primarily politically represented through Slesvgsk Parti (Schleswian Party) that has its own youth party Junge Spitzen, who work closely with Slesvgsk Parti and has among its goals and ambition to strengthen the sense of community for youth belonging to the German minority. In the **Netherlands**, the Frisian National Party (FNP) has its own youth committee, the FNPjongeren that represents the members of FNP under 30. Similarly, Hungarian minority political parties have youth organisations in **Romania**, **Slovak Republic** and **Serbia**. The Swedish Youth of Finland (Svensk Ungdom, SU) is the youth wing of the Swedish People's Party of **Finland** (Svenska Folkpartiet, SFP).

### 3.2.2. National minority youth representation in elected bodies of national minorities

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National minority and in particular indigenous peoples' self-government structures can also provide meaningful opportunities for young people to participate and influence decisions within and outside of the structure. In **Finland**, as a part of the Sámi Parliament, there is a permanent Sámi Youth Council. The Council prepares those statements, initiatives and other comments which concern Sámi youth and their living conditions. Other functions of the Council are to advance the language and the cultural rights of the Sámi youth and strengthen their Sámi identity. Both members and the deputies of the Council must be between age of 18 and 28, five expert members must be between 15 and 17 when chosen. The Chair and the Vice Chair do not have to be members of the Sámi Parliament. Members and deputy members of the Youth Council may be nominated to speak at meetings of the Sámi Parliament, and they also have the right to attend and speak at meetings of the Board of the Sámi Parliament in statements, initiatives and other comments prepared by the Youth Council.

### 3.2.3. National minority youth engagement with civil society organisations

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#### A. Youth councils, youth parliaments and youth organisations

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe called upon member states to recognise that national youth councils can and do actively contribute to the development of public youth policy and to support their development and consider them as partners of public authorities in youth policy development.<sup>39</sup> Youth organisations, particularly youth councils, should be available and accessible platforms for young people from minority background to get engaged in public decision-making processes at any level. The focus group with representatives of national youth councils and youth organisations identified that minority youth participation is seen as a form of engaging young people from various minorities in participation in their community and society. Participants emphasised the principle of inclusivity: minority youth must feel included in mainstream processes and minority youth voices must be also heard. However, in a separate focus group, representatives of national minority youth organisations mentioned that although national youth councils are open for minority youth organisations, it is still not common practice to have them as members. Nevertheless, youth organisations acknowledged that the introduction of specific empowerment measures is often needed to ensure that young people belonging to minorities can participate on an equal basis with others.

Umbrella organisations, such as *national youth councils*, can include national minority youth organisations among their members. The National Youth Council of the **Russian Federation**,<sup>40</sup> representing the interests of the Russian youth at federal, regional, international level, unites over 50 youth organisations all over the country, such as the German Youth Union, the All Russian Inter-ethnic Youth Union and the Azerbaijani Youth Union in Russia. These national minority youth organisations also delegate a member to the board of the National Youth Council that represents minority interests at the highest level within the organisation. Besides, all member organisations are involved in the development of the strategic plan that identifies the priorities, tasks and main direction of work for the coming years.

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39. Recommendation Rec(2006)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the role of national youth councils in youth policy development.

40. <http://youthrussia.ru/en/news/about-us>.

The inclusion of national minority youth in setting priorities is also important for the National Youth Council of **Romania**<sup>41</sup> that has over 600 member organisations including two Hungarian youth organisations. In addition, it also cooperates with Roma youth organisations. The main aim of the organisation is to make the voice of youth heard by being the intermediary between the young people and the authorities and effectively advocate for youth policies. In 2020, during the Youth Summit of Romania, the participants – including young people belonging to minorities – adopted the Youth Resolution setting the direction of national youth policy for the next 7 years. This is an example of encouraging minority youth to take part in mainstream decision-making.

The **Finnish** National Youth Council Allianssi, an advocacy organisation in the field of youth work, has more than 130 member organisations including several minority organisations, such as the Finnish Somalia Network, the Finnish-Swedish Youth Association, the Karelian Youth League and Romano Missio. It has organised Youth Elections in schools since the 1990s in connection with the parliamentary, municipal, presidential and European elections. During the past few years, Allianssi has also organised, in collaboration with schools and educational institutions, an annual Policy Week for young people and a national thematic week focusing on civic participation. Another example from **Finland** is the Union of Local Youth Councils (Nuva ry), an NGO that acts as an advocacy, service and co-operation organisation for Finnish local youth councils and other similar youth advocacy groups. Nuva ry promote the role of youth councils and improve young people's opportunities to participate.

The **Estonian** National Youth Council is an umbrella organisation established in 2002 and unites 53 youth organisations throughout Estonia. Its objectives are to promote cooperation between youth associations and active participation of young people in society and to work for recognition and participation of young people and to create a better working environment for youth organisations. It organises national youth participation cafes every year across Estonia, including an event in Russian - upon the initiative of local youth - in the region with the highest density of Russian-speaking youth. In 2001, the Federal Youth Representation Act of **Austria** established the Federal Youth Representation ("Bundes-Jugendvertretung"). The measures in this Act are intended to ensure that the concerns of youth are represented to policymakers at the federal level. All of the six recognised national minorities in Austria (Croatian, Czech, Hungarian, Slovak, Slovenian, Roma)

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41. [www.ctr.ro](http://www.ctr.ro).

have the right to appoint one member of the plenary of the Federal Youth Representation.<sup>42</sup>

Youth councils may also work on municipal level with support from the state, the local government or civil society organisations (such as National Youth Councils). Since 2015, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of the **Republic of Moldova** has run a national program for assistance for the consolidation and development of the district/municipal youth councils where young people are encouraged to create youth councils and participate in the local decision making process. The annual action plan of the National Network of Youth Councils, prepared in agreement with the Ministry, involves the priority to expand the program to areas where minorities represent a significant proportion of the local population and to encourage them to found local youth councils. At the time being, there are local councils in 73% of raions of Moldova, including where minorities are well represented. Furthermore, the mandatory internal regulations of the Youth Councils states that the council works to create a non-discriminatory environment and ensures that young people from national minorities can freely engage in the youth councils.<sup>43</sup>

In **Lithuania**, a number of young people from national minorities are usually elected to the municipal youth council. For example, in Vilnius, Švenčionys or in other municipalities with a substantial number of people from national minorities, youth councils have members from national minorities. Youth councils have a general power to gather information about youth, suggest programmes or projects to be implemented or suggest topics of youth projects to be financed in their municipality. For several years, the Klaipėda city's youth council has suggested topics on including and integrating national minorities into the society and city's activities as one of the topics for youth projects that can be financed by the municipality.

Similarly to youth councils, *youth parliaments* may also be a platform for minority youth participation as they replicate parliamentary procedures and debates. The Youth Parliament of **Luxembourg**, established by the Law on Youth, is a platform where any resident or student attending school in Luxembourg between the age of 14 and 24 is given the opportunity to discuss and debate topics of interest of young people or which affect their

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42. More information about the Federal Youth Representation: [https://bjv.at/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/bjv-imagebroschuere-engl\\_2auflage\\_web.pdf](https://bjv.at/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/bjv-imagebroschuere-engl_2auflage_web.pdf).

43. [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/ordin\\_nr.t303\\_din\\_31.10.2016\\_cu\\_privire\\_la\\_aprobarea\\_regulamentului\\_de\\_functionare\\_a\\_consiliilor\\_de\\_tineret.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/ordin_nr.t303_din_31.10.2016_cu_privire_la_aprobarea_regulamentului_de_functionare_a_consiliilor_de_tineret.pdf).

lives directly or indirectly.<sup>44</sup> The Youth Parliament has a Committee on Equal Chances and Integration. The **UK Youth Parliament**, implemented by the British Youth Council, provides opportunities for 11-18-year olds to use their voice to bring about social change through meaningful representation and campaigning. The Make Your Mark youth ballot identifies the main issues facing youth in the **United Kingdom** by surveying young people from 11-18, and over the past three years, around one third of the young people who voted through the youth ballot were from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic communities.<sup>45</sup> Members of all **Russian Youth Parliaments** (of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, legislative authorities of 82 constituent entities of the Russian Federation, and 1,900 municipalities) are young people between the age of 18 (in some cases 16) and 30 (in some cases 35) also representing national minorities, as the **Russian Federation** is a federal country and certain constituent entities thereof are formed on the basis of ethnicity.<sup>46</sup>

Besides national youth councils or youth parliaments, *grassroots youth organisations* can involve national minority youth in their work. The NGO Umbrella, based in **Georgia**, promotes opportunities for young people from minorities, and recently they attempted to improve their limited impact on local level. Following capacity building within the organisation and careful planning, in 2019, they set up three youth centres in regions inhabited by minorities. These centres are open for majority and minorities alike and therefore also serve as a platform for intercultural learning. Democracy is the main principle of operation: young people discuss matters concerning them and take decisions themselves. The organisation also promotes the participation of minority youth in international youth networks and facilitates dialogue with local authorities.

## B. National Minority organisations

National minority organisations also submitted replies to the civil society questionnaire and nominated representatives to take part in the focus group discussions. Although, they do not target primarily or only young people with their activities, national minority organisations can engage with and prioritise young people. This engagement can be project-based, mainstream in all activities or even within the structure of the organisation. The participants of the focus group emphasised that national minority youth

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44. <https://www.jugendparlament.lu/>.

45. <https://www.byc.org.uk/uk/uk-youth-parliament/make-your-mark>.

46. See Footnote 27.

participation means that young people have the right to get involved in all processes, institutions and policies affecting their life, be it minority, youth or general issues.

Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre<sup>47</sup> is an **Irish** non-governmental organisation comprised of Travellers, Roma and members of the majority population working in partnership at national, regional, local, and international levels. Over the past thirty years, Pavee Point has an established track record using a collective community development approach to addressing Traveller issues and promoting Traveller rights. Besides the youth-focused projects, they involve young people throughout all programmes of the organisation with the aim to equip young people with leadership skills and ensure their full and meaningful participation. At national level, Pavee Point takes part in the sub-committees of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy that includes actions on Traveller and Roma youth and Traveller and Roma education.

The Union of Roma Associations in **Croatia** “KALI SARA”<sup>48</sup> comprises 500 persons, 20 minority councils and 30 other Roma organisations and cooperates with the Croatian government, enabling them to coordinate activities throughout the country. The organisation focuses on the promotion of education for Roma people including participation both in formal and non-formal education and chooses its priorities based on the needs of Roma young people with whom they are in constant communication. By emphasising the importance of role models, they work closely with their founder and first president, Veljko Kajtazi who is representing the twelve minorities of Croatia at the Parliament. The organisation attempts to maximize its local impact by training Roma young people who are familiar with local issues on within the framework of the course “Roma active citizenship in local communities”.

The **Finnish** Roma Association<sup>49</sup> has been running a multiannual programme that aims to develop the participation and the inclusion of the Roma youth in Finland. As a part of the programme, the network of Roma young people was established in 2019. The aim of the network is to promote the participation of the young Roma and to make their voice heard in society and their community. The Federation of Roma Associations in Catalonia<sup>50</sup> (FAGIC, **Spain**), with 96 member organisations, aims to promote and defend rights of Roma people in Catalonia and fight against discrimination and antigypsyism.

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47. [www.paveepoint.ie](http://www.paveepoint.ie).

48. <http://kalisara.hr/>.

49. <http://romanomissio.fi/roma-in-society/>.

50. <http://www.fagic.org>.



Considering that young people represent more than 50% of the Roma population, FAGIC decided to launch an informal advisory group consisting of young people to be consulted on youth-related decisions and issues and support the organisation in setting their priorities. The advisory group currently has 6-7 members who usually join from other local projects of the organisation. Gender balance is a challenge to keep within the group, but they already identified and involved Roma girls and women. The organisation carries out other youth-focused projects but they consider the advisory youth group as pivotal in providing a safe space for Roma youth to discuss decisions affecting them particularly while empowering them to participate in public life and society in general.

## **C. National minority youth organisations**

The state replies given to the questionnaire included references to the work of national minority youth organisations, and many more were identified through the questionnaire to civil society organisations and several representatives – young and belonging to national minorities themselves – took part in the focus groups discussions. The special feature of these organisations is that they are composed of young people belonging to national minorities and they work for young people belonging to national minorities. Even though, from an external point of view it might seem that they engage with minority policies and youth policies, separately, in reality, their goals, priorities and activities are organised around the needs and interests of national minority youth as rights-holders, a target group and beneficiaries. Participants in the focus groups were asked for a percentage of their working time spent on minority and on youth issues, and all stated that, most of the time, they manage to keep a good balance. Nevertheless, minority youth organisations aim for double mainstreaming: to introduce a youth perspective in minority policies and structures as well as a minority perspective in youth policies and structures. Furthermore, organisations working with young Roma people emphasised that national minority youth participation should be equally accessible for all minorities.

### **National minority youth organisations at community, local, regional or national level**

*National minority youth organisations at community, local, regional or national level* contribute to the effective participation of young people belonging to national minorities. However, several minority youth participants in the focus group discussions shared their experience of tokenistic participation

when they were invited to take part in a decision-making process but, ultimately, their voices were not listened to and their ideas were not taken into consideration. They also found it challenging to deal with the misconception that being minority youth is a “full-time job” and they are expected to be available at all times, even though they also study or work. Capacity-building on the side of the authorities is as important as on the side of national minority youth to ensure meaningful and effective participation.

The Pawk e.V. – Serbske młodžinske towarstwo / Sorbischer Jugendverein is the first youth association in **Germany** to become a member of the umbrella organisation of the Sorbs, Domowina. Pawk is the Sorbian term for spider and represents one objective of the association: networking between young people – both Sorbian, German and others. The club is a contact point for the whole Sorbian youth, for which it creates both leisure and learning programs. Pawk promotes the Sorbian language in its projects, advises young people, gives them the opportunity to try out voluntary work and represents their interests at local, regional and European level.

DM+ Društvo mladih Slovencev v Italiji is a youth organisation of young Slovenes in **Italy**. It offers young people the tools, competencies and motivation to work independently in their environment. In this way youth can be empowered and encouraged to be not only active members of society, but also more conscious and critical readers, listeners, viewers and voters.

Youth Organisation of Serbs in **Croatia** (OmReza) is a volunteer youth initiative that brings together young Serbs from Croatia, helping them to resolve education and employment issues, promoting the programs of Serbian organisations and carrying out activities involving young people. The network is a service of the Serb community, which, with the help of youth, promotes the activities of Serbian institutions in Croatia. In parallel to tackling the problems faced by young Serbs in Croatia, the organisation promotes political activism too.

The Association GiuRu (**Switzerland**) connects youngsters between the ages of 16-30 from different parts of the Romansh-speaking territories and gives them the opportunity to identify, speak up and write in/with their first language. It is financially supported by the Lia Rumantscha, the umbrella association of Romansh organisations, which itself receives funds from national and regional authorities for the promotion of Romansh language and culture.

The Suoma Sámi Nuorat – Finnish Sámi Youth<sup>51</sup> is a Sámi youth advocacy organization in **Finland**. The aim of the association’s activities is to strengthen the

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51. <https://ssn.fi/en/>.

identity of young Sámi people and increase their knowledge of Sámi culture. The association aims to increase contact between Sámi youth, improve the status of the Sámi language and raise the profile of Sámi culture. The main activities of the association are various training sessions, projects, events and political lobbying in matters concerning the Sámi youth. Citysáminuorat, the youth association of City-Sámit (Helsinki Sámi Association), promotes the realisation of the linguistic and cultural rights and to increase cohesion of the Sámi living in southern Finland.

## National minority youth councils

*National minority youth councils* operating as civil society organisations exist in several member states – distinct from the minority youth councils which form part of minority self-government structures. The Vlach Youth Council in **Albania** focuses on promoting and preserving Vlach culture and language. Since 2008, they have been working on cultural projects to promote the Vlach language, music, dances and traditions among youth, and they have been organising and participating in forums, workshops, seminars and youth exchanges. The recognition procedure of the Vlach/Aromanian minority finished two years ago in Albania but the process allowed minority youth to make its voice heard. The organisation participated in the stakeholder meetings with the Albanian government and OSCE intending to compile minority laws and policies in Albania and took part in a discussion on the official name of the minority. The proposal of the organisation was accepted by the government and eventually incorporated in the law.

The Youth Forum of Vojvodina is one of the largest and oldest civil youth organisations in the Autonomous province of Vojvodina, **Serbia**, working on community building and for preserving the identity and culture of Hungarians in Serbia. It is a non-profit organisation which promotes the values of non-formal education through events, training sessions and workshops for students and young adults. The organisation is supported financially by the Hungarian government, the Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, and different Hungarian stakeholders and companies in the region. They have extensive partnerships with other similar Hungarian-language minority organisations throughout the Carpathian Basin and organise the Summer University of Vojvodina every July.

The Council of German-speaking Youth (Rat der deutschsprachigen Jugend - RDJ) represents the link between youth and politics in **Belgium**. Through their members (youth institutions and interested young people) they get to know the realities of the East Belgian young people and transfer this information to the decision-makers at communal, national or European level.

They use expert opinions and statements as a method for dissemination, and at the same time, they enable young people to participate by organising events, projects and dialogues. The RDJ must be consulted on all youth-related issues on which the government or parliament is voting. This follows a two-way approach: the government or parliament can ask for an opinion; or the organisation has the right to submit an opinion to the government or parliament of its own initiative.

Youth Assembly of the Peoples of Tatarstan, one of the constituent entities of the **Russian Federation**, specialises in preserving national and cultural diversity of the Republic among young people, as well as searching for new forms of traditional national heritage. Such initiatives are common across the regions of the country. The organisation brings together youth movements and unions of 30 peoples and ethnic groups and has 20 branches at the local level.

**International or national networks and umbrella organisations of national minority youth** National minority youth organisations also take part in *international or national networks and umbrella organisations*. The Youth of European Nationalities (YEN)<sup>52</sup> is the largest network of youth organisations of autochthonous, national, and linguistic minorities in Europe. Under the slogan “Minority Rights are Human Rights”, YEN represents the interests of young members of national, ethnic and linguistic minorities with focus on the preservation and development of the culture, language and rights of minorities. YEN is run and led by young people for young people, and it sees itself as a self-determined and self-organised youth organisation, whose activity is carried out and determined by youth. YEN is a member of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), a full member of the European Youth Forum and has a consultant status in the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. On the level of Council of Europe, YEN has a representative in the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), through which they advocate for the representation of national minority groups in the CCJ itself, but also mainstreams national minority youth issues in other bodies of the Council of Europe.

The Phiren Amenca International Network<sup>53</sup> is a network of Roma and non-Roma volunteers and voluntary service organisations who are engaged to challenge stereotypes, racism and antigypsyism through volunteering, dialogue and non-formal education. With Roma and non-Roma together, it creates equal opportunities for all young people and especially for young

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52. [www.yeni.org](http://www.yeni.org).

53. <https://phirenamenca.eu/>.

Roma, through ensuring equal access to voluntary service and promoting Roma youth participation at all levels. For the last two years, the organisation focused on the promotion and support of Roma youth participation both in Roma and youth structures at European and national level, they delegated a member to the CCJ and became a candidate member of the European Youth Forum. Moreover, the organisation strengthens the capacity of young Roma through non-formal education to stand up for their rights and to get involved in decisions affecting them and their communities and creates a space for dialogue between young Roma and decision-makers.

The Croatian Academic Association (Hrvatski akademski klub – HAK) is the biggest youth organisation of the Burgenland Croat minority based in Vienna, **Austria**. It aims to preserve and develop the Burgenland Croatian language and culture, raise awareness among the majority of the minority's existence and needs, and furthermore, connect the minority's youth across the borders of **Austria, Slovak Republic** and **Hungary** while including young people from the majority as well. The Association can nominate members to the Austrian Advisory Council for Burgenland Croatians and therefore influence its decisions including on the distribution of state funding for national minorities.

The Hungarian Youth Conference from **Romania** is the largest minority youth organisation in the region, with a total of 382 member-organisations, which together are responsible for the implementation of professional, cultural, sport and youth programs. It organises national, regional and local events as a response to the needs of its members. As a partner organisation to the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, youth advocacy is also included in their activity. In several counties they supported youth to gain seats in local and county governments.

Deutscher Jugendverband für Nordschleswig is the youth umbrella organisation of the German minority in **Denmark**. It has 20 member organisations situated throughout the 4 municipalities in the southern part of Denmark, called Sønderjylland/Nordschleswig. The organisation is built on promoting youth matters of the German minority and supports young leaders in their member organisations. While it is funded by the German minority, the democratic structure of the minority allows them to influence decisions of the board of the German minority association.

National minority youth organisations, including national minority youth councils, are an attractive platform for participation and engagement because minority young people can discuss freely between themselves (also in their minority language). Being member of minority and/or youth

umbrella associations can represent an opportunity to mainstream the concerns of national minority youth, but also present unique challenges in effectively advocating a dual perspective on a European or international level.

### 3.3. Opportunities for and obstacles to participation

According to the ‘Right, Space, Opportunities, Means, Support’ framework, national minority youth need to be provided with the opportunity to be able to participate actively at all levels, and in mainstream, youth and minority structures. Furthermore, structures, decision-making processes and systems need to be youth-friendly, especially minority-youth-friendly. This chapter will explore how states can ensure that opportunities are ‘minority youth friendly’ by discussing obstacles faced by young people belonging to national minorities – based on the focus group discussions with representatives of minority youth from across Europe.

#### 3.3.1. Opportunities

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Through conventional mechanisms, such as voting or standing as a candidate, national minority youth can influence political decisions at national, regional or local levels (as explained in Chapter 3.2.1.). With regard to issues affecting them in particular, as national minority and/or youth, opportunities can be provided in many different forms. This part will explore some of these forms and look at the requirements.

*Opportunities for minority participation in youth structures and events focusing on youth participation* have been identified in the member states. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport of the **United Kingdom** has a Youth Steering Group, which convenes twenty-eight representative young people from across England, oversees the development and implementation of policies affecting young people and changing the way senior officials and ministers make decisions that impact their lives. This group is representative of young people from a range of socio-economic and minority ethnic backgrounds. In June 2020, the Minister for Civil Society met with members of the Youth Steering Group and representatives from the #YoungAndBlack campaign, launched by UK Youth and the Diana Award to discuss the experiences of young Black people in Britain and the key challenges they face today.

In **Italy**, the National Office against Racial Discrimination (UNAR) has organised every year since 2016 a three-day seminar school dedicated to Roma and Sinti young people, in collaboration with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, with the aim of promoting capacity building, political participation and active citizenship. Over the years, a network of activists has

been set up involving about 50 young Roma and Sinti people. Furthermore, the Italian National Youth Agency, a government body supervised by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and by the European Commission, permanently promotes a series of national projects that involve the establishment of associations or informal groups among young people, offering young people from 13 to 30 years opportunities in terms of mobility, training, education, volunteering and exchange. It manages the first ANG inRadio institutional radio network for under 30s, present in 13 regions, with 44 broadcasting centres and 600 active young people.

UNICEF **Bulgaria** in partnership with the **Bulgarian** State Agency for Child Protection conducted a National consultation with children in relation to updating the National Strategy for the Child 2008-2018 during the period of March–May 2015. In addition to an online survey launched within the framework of the “My Voice Matters” campaign, consultations were held with children in vulnerable situation including Roma children who also participated at the National Children’s Forum aimed at finalizing the children’s recommendations and proposals.<sup>54</sup>

The objectives of the National Youth Strategy of **Hungary** relate to the support of Hungarian youth abroad - in co-operation with the relevant ministries – and is to co-ordinate the system of cooperation with Hungarian youth across borders. Part of this, the ‘Hungarian Youth Conference’ serves as the forum of Hungarian youth and youth organisations in Hungary and over its borders, where their representatives can think together, learn and debate over their plans, problems and where they can implement their common vision by cooperation.

In 2019, the Department for Interethnic Relations of the Government of **Romania**, in partnership with the Romanian Youth Council and the Hungarian Youth Conference from Romania, organised the event “The Forum for Youth belonging to the organisations of national minorities”. The dialogue held during the event between the young participants focused on the need for participation and active involvement of young people at local level, as well as on ethnic identity; cultural values and the importance of interethnic dialogue were also promoted. The conclusion of the debates was that the young people are ambassadors of change and can represent the path to a constructive dialogue in between majority and national minorities. The Ministry of Youth and Sports of **Ukraine**, together with units for youth and sports of regional and Kyiv city state administrations, youth NGOs, partner institutions and organisations, supports Ukrainian and international events on

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54. My voice matters, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Bulgaria, 2015.

youth issues aimed at creating favourable conditions for development and self-realisation of Ukrainian youth, including youth from national minorities.

It is equally important to provide *opportunities for young people to participate in minority structures, events and projects*. Since 2017, with the purpose of improving participation of ethnic minority representatives in decision-making processes, Public Advisory Councils are operating at local governments in Kakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions of **Georgia**. This format of communication requires the active involvement of ethnic minority representatives, including youth, in local decision-making process. Council meetings are regularly held with active involvement of ethnic minority representatives considering their needs and interests. The **Slovak Republic** is planning to create a youth dimension of the Committee on National Minorities and Ethnic Groups within the scope of a new Action Plan for national minorities for 2021–2025.

In **Azerbaijan**, Baku International Multiculturalism Centre (BIMC) was established on 15 May 2014 by Presidential decree. One of its main goals is to preserve ethnic-cultural diversity in Azerbaijan. National minority youth actively participate in the work of BIMC. Their involvement helps to preserve as well as develop their ethnic-cultural values. Furthermore, the BIMC provides financial support to national minority youth to study their culture.

The consultative committees established at the Federal Ministry of the Interior of **Germany** on issues concerning national minorities support them in maintaining communication with the Federal Government and the German *Bundestag*. According to their statutes, the committees are composed as follows: representatives of national minorities, members of the German *Bundestag* from all parties and representatives of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and other federal ministries, as well as of all 16 federal *Länder*. Minority associations shape the agenda of each committee's yearly meeting and youth delegates of minority associations are also encouraged to participate in these meetings. It is the aim of the authorities to formalise youth participation in this forum.

In 2020, in the **Russian Federation**, the Ministry for Youth Affairs of the Republic of Tatarstan held a Republican Forum of Young Civil Servants. As a follow-up to the Forum, mechanisms for better use of professional, scientific, creative, and organisational potential of young employees of Tatarstan's ministries and agencies have been identified with a view to enhancing the appeal and prestige of the civil service, as well as building effective inter-institutional dialogue among young civil servants. Work with the forum participants will continue, with a view to the establishment of youth councils in the Republic's ministries and agencies. In 2021, the Federal Agency for Youth



Affairs organised a Training Workshop for the Cossack Youth of the Siberian Federal District with the aim of intensifying and increasing the activity of the Cossack Youth leaders in the constituent entities (regions) of the Siberian Federal District in accordance with the “Strategy of the State Policy of the Russian Federation regarding the Russian Cossacks until 2030”.<sup>55</sup>

### 3.3.2. Obstacles

Thanks to the fruitful focus group discussions with representatives of civil society organisations – many of whom were young people belonging to national minorities – the study is able to identify several obstacles to national minority youth participation at individual and organisational level. Participants spoke of the need to engage and empower youth to become active and not passive; this relies on the granting of equal opportunities and knowing how to make the most of such opportunities. As such, the main obstacles identified from the focus groups were *the legal framework, lack of awareness of rights and opportunities, and a lack of capacities among youth to engage in these processes*. Opportunities can be effectively used if all these obstacles are eliminated or – if possible – avoided from the outset.<sup>56</sup>

Representatives of national minority and minority youth organisations raised the issue that *young people in general are not taken seriously by decision-makers and authorities*. Thus, national minority young people face the same challenge – in both youth and minority structures. Contrary to this, representatives of mainstream youth councils had positive experiences in advocacy, because they are umbrella organisations uniting dozens or hundreds of youth organisations. However, *generational fragmentation* forms an obstacle, where the older and younger generations do not feel they share the same aims and goals, leading to a lack of cooperation within the community.<sup>57</sup> Representatives also raised the issue of potentially low levels of self-confidence belief in their own legitimacy among young people in general, and in particular young people belonging to national minorities, as well as

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55. <https://myrosmol.ru/measures/view/60616>.

56. For more information on obstacles faced by young people in political participation, see also Compendium “The future of young people’s political participation: questions, challenges and opportunities”, Laden Yurttagüler, Ramon Martinez, Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, 2019, pp.26.-31 and the Visions of the future – selection of participants’ hopes and expectations, Symposium “The future of young people’s political participation: questions, challenges and opportunities”, Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, 18-20 September 2019.

57. See also Youth Political Participation, Literature review, Marina Galstyan, Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, 2019, pp. 11.

their lack of trust in political/institutional mechanisms at national, international and local levels.<sup>58</sup> All these issues together create narratives that blame young people for failing to participate in political life and society. Willingness on the part of the authorities and youth to listen to each other is a vital precondition for participation.

As regards the obstacles faced particularly by national minority youth, it was mentioned that *recognition of national minorities by authorities* is an important precondition for national minority youth to access their rights. Its absence could hamper participation in many ways; it can leave them without access to funds, and without a stake in society. In a similar way, many member states mentioned that citizenship is an important legal precondition for national minority youth to participate in democratic processes, in particular as it constitutes a precondition for access to many rights. *Lack of citizenship or statelessness* may for example prevent the exercise of voting rights at local, regional, national, and sometimes European levels. It may also prevent national minority youth from joining or forming political parties, joining the civil service, and accessing political, social and economic rights. It may moreover prevent international travel to attend meetings and events abroad.

Even in case of recognised minorities, *access to continuous funding and consequently, lack of human and technical resources* were raised as an issue. In addition, low membership and disinterest from youth themselves is a challenge, and it can be difficult to motivate youth to get involved and tackle the problems they face. The youth representatives in the focus groups discussions also mentioned that *party-political divides within national minority communities* may hinder participation.

Moreover, the intersection of being both young and a minority may mean that minority youth are at a particular disadvantage. The effects of gender inequality were also noted as a particular disadvantage for young women belonging to national minority youth. The *structural intersectional discrimination* which may affect national minority youth is further amplified for young women belonging to national minorities.

According to certain national minority youth organisations, a significant barrier may be the lack of *access to information about opportunities for participation* and in particular a *lack of information about opportunities to engage in minority languages*. The fact that it is challenging to reach out to young people after they finish school and move elsewhere was also raised. *National*

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58. See also Compendium "The future of young people's political participation: questions, challenges and opportunities", Laden Yurttagüler, Ramon Martinez, Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, 2019, pp.23.

*minority representation in the media* was also raised as an important democratic right – mainstream and minority media both have a role to play in tackling stereotypes, diversifying the media landscape and nurturing acceptance, empathy and respect which are all preconditions for effective political participation.

*Geographic distance* may pose a particular problem for the participation of some minorities, and support ought to be given to facilitate such participation, where possible. *Geographic fragmentation of minority groups* raises logistical issues as to how they organise together and exchange between themselves. *Geographic isolation of national minority groups* from others may lead to them feeling disenfranchised – it is important to organise regular exchanges with all minorities in a state party to counter this.

Roma young people face yet greater challenges in political participation. *Prejudice, stigma, discrimination, specifically antigypsyism* were raised as serious structural barriers to participation. In general, Roma young people are not present in public sphere, and this limits their opportunities to combat their marginalisation and discrimination.<sup>59</sup> According to the participants of the discussions, if children studied in unlawfully ethnically segregated schools, they would think separation is the norm in all spheres of life and they will carry a level of distrust towards mainstream structures. It was acknowledged by Roma organisations that they need to prioritise activities combating discrimination and intolerance to promote participation of Roma young people. Irrespective of their minority status, most Roma young people struggle with poverty and social exclusion which creates further obstacles to their participation e.g. lack of access to quality education. While mainstream youth organisations reported that they find it difficult to involve Roma young people in their activities, Roma organisations explained that, to ensure equal participation of Roma young people, affirmative action needs to be put in place. This can mean simple and practical measures, for example, organising the meeting of young Roma in their own neighbourhood, instead of expecting them to travel to other places. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) called upon the member states to ensure adequate political representation enabling Roma to have their voices heard in order to combat antigypsyism and discrimination against Roma.<sup>60</sup> Recent research of the Fundamental Rights Agency shows “that participatory processes that

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59. Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025), 5.2. Supporting democratic participation and promoting public trust and accountability, pp. 17.

60. ECRI General Policy Recommendation N°13 revised on combating antigypsyism and discrimination against Roma - adopted on 24 June 2011 and amended on 1 December 2020.

empower local citizens to engage in decision-making processes can be an important tool in social inclusion processes”.<sup>61</sup>

Intersectionality and multiple discrimination are major obstacles for the political participation of young Roma and Traveller women. They face sexism both from within and outside their community, racism and antigypsyism and often a traditional and patriarchal mindset from their family. At the same time, very often, women and young people are the engines of changes in Roma and Traveller communities and are guiding lights and “allies” in the modernization process that would require special support from the side of authorities. Capacity building initiatives through customised training sessions are essential to support those young women who wish to get involved in political and public life. Their leadership skills and self-confidence need to be sharpened and they need to be supported before, during and after elections to achieve real and influential political participation. Political parties are the gatekeepers to political participation and should reflect on their party’s structure and address gender and generational biases in the functioning, recruitment and selection practices in order to become inclusive, including by adopting strong political party quotas.

### **3.4. Means for participation**

To be able to actively participate in political life, young people should be provided with all relevant information appropriate to their age, needs and circumstances via education or other awareness-raising activities.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, education can be a means to tackle low and declining trust in political institutions by making young people understand how the system works and how they can get involved in democratic processes.<sup>63</sup> In case of young people belonging to national minorities, in addition to information on child and youth participation, minority rights and opportunities to get involved in the decision-making structures of national minorities need to be covered too. Participants in the focus groups explained the importance of education for minority rights and participation at school, before young people are given the right and expected to practice their political rights.

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61. Working with Roma: Participation and empowerment of local communities, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018, pp. 53.

62. Recommendation Rec(2006)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on citizenship and participation of young people in public life, Recommendation on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18 (CM/Rec(2012)2).

63. Youth Political Participation, Literature review, Marina Galstyan, Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, 2019, pp. 7.

The Council of Europe recognised the essential role of education and developed its own approach regarding “education for democratic citizenship” and “human rights education”. The European Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (see chapter 2.2) defines education for democratic citizenship as all kinds of education, training, awareness-raising and other activities which aim to empower the learners to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life. Human rights education is similar in terms of methods but differs in focus and scope: it aims to empower learners to contribute to the building and defence of a universal culture of human rights in society with a view to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Education for democratic citizenship and human rights education are closely interrelated and mutually supportive.<sup>64</sup>

With regard to the framework of education, the Committee of Ministers advises governments to develop schools as vital common arenas for young people’s participation and learning about democratic learning processes<sup>65</sup>, and to make the rights of children and young people, including the right to participate, a component of school curricula (see chapter 2.2).<sup>66</sup> Similarly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities “encourages local and regional authorities to integrate into the practice of local and regional democracy the work undertaken by the Council of Europe on education for democratic citizenship in the context of formal and nonformal education”.<sup>67</sup> Article 12 of the Framework Convention requires state parties “to take measures in the fields of education and research to foster knowledge of the culture, history, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority”. Furthermore, Article 6(1) of the Framework Convention states that “the Parties shall encourage a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue and take effective measures to promote mutual respect and understanding and co-operation among all persons living on their territory, irrespective of those persons’ ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity, in particular in the fields of education, culture and the media.” Article 14 of the Framework Convention requires states to facilitate education in minority languages, and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages provides more extensive standards (see chapter 2.3).

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64. See the website <https://www.coe.int/en/web/edc/what-is-edc/hre>.

65. Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of citizens in local public life.

66. Recommendation on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18.

67. Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life.

The chapter includes good practices from the field of both formal and non-formal education, in accordance with the approach of the Council of Europe. Formal education is understood as a structured education system that runs from primary school to university and comprises an assessment of the learners' acquired learning or competences based on a curriculum which can be more or less closed to adaptation to individual needs and preferences. Non-formal education refers to planned, structured programmes and processes of personal and social education for young people designed to improve a range of skills and competences, outside the formal educational curriculum.<sup>68</sup>

### 3.4.1. Formal education

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Thanks to the successful work of the education sector of the Council of Europe in this field, national curricula of the member states generally include - at least as an elective subject - education for democratic citizenship and human rights with the aim to foster active public participation of children and young people. In some countries, these subjects also cover information regarding national minorities and minority rights in order to educate the majority, while in some cases minority education addresses topics such as opportunities to participate in democratic processes and decision-making on various levels including minority structures.

*National curricula including information about national minorities and their structures* contributes to a climate in which national minorities feel accepted and more likely to avail themselves of opportunities to participate. In **Albania**, curricula and textbooks include information of a general nature related to the existence of national minorities, the distinctive elements of their culture, traditions, customs and national language as well as the rights enjoyed by these minorities. According to information provided by the government, the representatives of national minorities from time to time have requested a wider reflection of this knowledge in the official school textbooks, as well as in the curriculum. In **Armenia**, within the framework of the subjects "Social Sciences" and "Basics of Law", students are taught about human and civil rights, freedoms and responsibilities as well as national minorities, while the course "Me and My Homeland" makes students acquainted with the traditions, culture, national holidays and beliefs of national minorities in Armenia. In **Croatia**, the Civic Education interdisciplinary topic contains information on national minorities. As part of the topic of human rights, contents related to national minorities are discussed within the framework of history,

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68. Compass – Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People, Council of Europe, 2020. pp. 30-31.

geography, Catechism, ethics and within the cross-topical subject of Personal and Social Development.

In **Norway**, as part of the curriculum of social studies, children in 4<sup>th</sup> grade (age 9) learn about the indigenous status of Sámi in Norway, their cultural and social life in the past and present. Moreover, they also have conversations about identity, diversity and community and reflect on how it can be experienced not to be a part of the community. At 7<sup>th</sup> grade (age 12), students explore the main features of the history of the Sámi and the national minorities in Norway and their rights as well as familiarising themselves with key events that have led to democracy in Norway today and compare how individuals have the right to influence in different forms of government. 10<sup>th</sup> grade (age 15) students learn about the impact of human and indigenous peoples' rights and other international agreements and co-operation on national politics, human life, and equality, including gender equality. At the same time, the frameworks for kindergarten, primary and secondary teacher education contain elements on understanding of Sámi culture as a part of Norwegian culture and emphasise the status and rights of indigenous peoples.

Teaching about significant historical events of minorities at mainstream schools is also important. In **Norway**, the Norwegianisation of the Sami and the national minorities as well as the injustices they have been exposed to are discussed while giving space to students to reflect on the consequences it has had on the individual and social level. The Ministry of Education of **Hungary** reported that the topic of the Roma Holocaust is included in the history curriculum and partially in courses on literature, social sciences, art and ethics. In this context, implementation of **Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)2 of the Committee of Ministers on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials**<sup>69</sup> would be a useful tool to ensure deeper understanding, dialogue and respect, conditions for political participation of national minority youth along with the educational resources developed by the youth sector of the Council of Europe.<sup>70</sup>

A good example of *educating children about minority rights and opportunities for minorities to participate in democratic processes in minority education* is provided by the NGO Sydslesvigs danske Ungdomsforeninger<sup>71</sup>, which is the youth association of the Danish minority in **Germany**. It is a cultural

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69. Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)2 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials.

70. See Right to Remember - A Handbook for Education with Young People on the Roma Genocide, Council of Europe, 2017.

71. <https://www.sdu.de/>.

organisation that creates a space for minority youth to learn about their culture and language, organises youth work at local level and cooperates closely with minority educational institutions. The organisation supported the introduction of an elective subject (at 7-10<sup>th</sup> grades) on the history, culture and identity of the Danish minority at minority schools that also focuses on the individual stories of the students and development of their social skills. In **Romania**, education for democratic citizenship and human rights is present at primary and secondary education, either taught as distinct school subjects (e.g. civic education, social education) or as specific topics within other school subjects (e.g. history, languages). For example, at the level of high school education, history covers relevant topics of human rights, such as ethnic and religious diversity, national minorities in Romania, Romania's constitution, public institutions and civic rights. The national curriculum applies to all students, including those belonging to national minorities studying in their minority language. In the **Russian Federation**, national curriculum includes disciplines teaching about history of constituent entities of Russia, and minority groups residing therein. The Law on Cultural Autonomy enshrines the right of "ethnic groups" to choose the language of education and to obtain basic general education based on the national curriculum in their "mother tongue".

### **3.4.2. Non-formal education and other awareness-raising activities**

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National minority youth can learn about human rights, active citizenship, democracy and opportunities to participate in political life outside of the formal education system, especially after finishing compulsory education. This was raised during the focus group discussions as a prerequisite for minority youth participation, along with the need to produce such information in minority languages (see chapter 3.3.2).

*General campaigns aimed at promoting the participation of young people, particularly first-time voters, in parliamentary or municipal elections are common; in some member states national minority youth are a specific focus. In **Croatia**, as part of the implementation of the project "My vote is important too", the State Election Commission educates young voters belonging to national minorities on the manner in which they can exercise their right to vote – where belonging to a national minority is one of the preconditions for exercising the right to vote. As part of the training sessions held in 2019 and early 2020, the State Election Commission educated young voters on how*



to exercise the right to vote of members of national minorities in national minorities' electoral district and at local level.<sup>72</sup>

In **Finland**, “Kaikkien vaalit – Our Election” was a campaign consisting of various election panels organised all around the country before the municipal elections in March 2017, and will also be implemented in 2021. It was coordinated by the Moniheli – a network of more than 100 multicultural, immigrant and other associations supporting integration in Finland – and supported by the Ministry of Justice and the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations. A similar series of panel discussions was organised during the parliamentary elections in 2015.

The **Romanian** Government, through the Department for Interethnic Relations, organised the civic education program “I am a minority, so I count!” with the aim of increasing the involvement of national minority youth in the electoral process. In 2015, 2017 (Timișoara) and 2018 (Brașov and Constanța), the program was organised for high school students from multi-ethnic areas in Romania and aimed at familiarising youth reaching voting age with the electoral process. The main goal of the activities carried out within the program was to raise awareness of the importance of the involvement of national minority youth in the election of their representatives. Furthermore, it also aimed to encourage the active participation of young citizens belonging to national minorities in the democratic life of Romania and increase their trust in democratic processes.

The **Swiss** Federation of Youth Parliaments promotes active public participation of young people through projects with financial support from the federal government of Switzerland. For example, the website of [easyvote.ch](http://easyvote.ch) disseminates information about political participation, federal and cantonal elections. It also shares articles explaining the topics covered by the upcoming elections as well as the results of previous ones.<sup>73</sup> In general, all the organisation's materials are available in the three official national languages of French, German, Italian, as well as sometimes in Romansh. The Dialogue Foundation, in cooperation with the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, runs the Campus Democracy<sup>74</sup> online platform aiming to educate young people about citizenship and political participation. The site is also available in the three official national languages.

In **Ukraine**, the “Grow UP” Girls' Leadership Academy was implemented by the NGO Women's Rights Protection League “Harmony of Equals” with the support of the Council of Europe with the goal to develop leadership skills

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72. <https://www.izbori.hr/site/UserDocslmages/1698>.

73. [www.easyvote.ch](http://www.easyvote.ch).

74. <https://campusdemokratie.ch/fr/campus-pour-la-democratie/>.

among young women and girls from disadvantaged groups and improve their knowledge in the fields of electoral and legislative processes and their project management skills. The “GrowUP” Girls’ Leadership Academy consisted of a three-day intensive training course for 15 girls from disadvantaged groups including representatives of national minorities led by politicians, political strategists, local councillors, PR and communication experts, and Council of Europe experts on gender issues in particular.<sup>75</sup> Several good examples of *extra-curricular activities with the purpose of educating national minority youth about opportunities to engage in public life* were identified by this study. The **Estonian** National Youth Council has carried out the Youth Participation Academy, which focussed on Russian-speaking youth, developed the participants’ leadership skills and encouraged them to be active in local youth associations. A political-cultural event for the youth of national minority organisations called “Junge Lüüd” was organised in **Germany** in 2019. At this occasion, young people and young adults from the four national minorities and the Low German-speaking group presented projects in which they deal with their culture and language. They spoke with politicians and discussed their demands to protect and promote regional and minority languages.<sup>76</sup>

In 2020, the Department for National Minorities of **Lithuania** cooperated with NGOs and the British Council in Lithuania to organise training for young people called “Stronger in Diversity”. Forty young people participated in this training, covering such topics as youth participation in politics, finding their role in society, learning about national minorities in Lithuania. In 2017-2018, the Office of the State Minister of **Georgia** for Reconciliation and Civic Equality cooperated with the NGO “Center for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism” within a project aimed at engaging ethnic minority young people in political processes. The program selected 20 young persons from the regions compactly populated by ethnic minority representatives for training and subsequently for internships at political parties. In **Armenia**, within the framework of the UNESCO participation program, the public organization “Sustainable Development Initiative” implemented three programs for the period of 2014-2019 to promote the equality of women and men in different spheres, as well as to increase the importance of the role of education among Yazidi girls and women, to widen their participation in various spheres of public life.

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75. Toolkit on the Participation of young women and girls from disadvantaged groups in political and public decision-making processes at local level, Council of Europe, 2020, pp.83.

76. <https://www.minderheitensekretariat.de/aktuelles>.

Institutions under the Ministry of Education and youth of **Albania** such as the National Youth Agency or the Regional Youth Centers under the auspices of self governmental units , have continuously developed training sessions, workshops, and campaigns aiming to raise young peoples' awareness of opportunities for involvement in decision-making and policy-making. These activities have been developed in cooperation with a number of organisations that extend their activity in the field of youth and/or national minorities. The involvement and engagement of young people in awareness-raising campaigns has been a goal, as well as their engagement in peaceful marches with social, economic, or political themes, in undertaking legal initiatives and other activities to raise the political awareness of young people in general and of national minority youth in particular.

In the **Russian Federation**, there are different federal and regional programmes and platforms ensuring broad political participation of youth including persons belonging to national minorities, for example the Russian Youth automated information system,<sup>77</sup> Union of Youth Election Commissions of the Russian Federation, The Voice of the Generation programme, All-Russian Contest for the best State youth policy worker, All-Russian and district meetings on the implementation of State youth policy. In several member states, particular attention is dedicated to the training of Roma young people. In **Finland**, an educational program called Roma Youth Academy was organised in 2019 with the aim to get young Roma to work as active agents in the field of Roma policy. The Union of Roma Associations in **Croatia** "KALI SARA" organised the First Congress of young Roma in 2020 with the aim to educate Roma youth on issues that are of primary importance in their daily lives such as the inclusion in political activities with special emphasis on active participation in the next census. In **Hungary**, Roma Special Colleges promote the graduation of Roma youth and strengthen their social role, active citizenship and community activities by providing housing, mentorship, a scholarship scheme and community events. A private initiative supporting Roma political participation in **Romania**, carried out by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, has been active since 2007 with numerous success cases of Roma young politicians being trained and supported to run and win the local, county and national elections. Some of them are self-identified Roma, being well known MPs or state secretaries within various ministries promoted by mainstream political parties. The **Slovak** Youth Institute launched the program called Education of Roma leaders in the field of youth and training of trainers for youth work from marginalised communities.

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77. <https://myrosmol.ru/>.

Dissemination of information also happens through media including traditional channels and information and communication technology – including through minority languages. The Department for National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of **Lithuania** disseminates information about national minorities through media. **Estonia's** national youth information portal teeviit.ee provides youth information in Russian about different topics including political participation. In **Georgia**, an awareness raising campaign is carried out on regular basis for minorities in their native languages by minority young people. The campaign covers information on human rights, civic integration policy, education, social benefits and services, women's rights, domestic violence as well as European integration and other issues. Similarly, the Ministry of Justice of **Finland** provides information about the general elections in different languages on the election's website. Furthermore, in connection with the municipal elections in 2021, the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations, which operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice, provides multilingual materials and training for key persons and CSOs of immigrant minority communities about the elections.

### 3.5. Support for participation

#### 3.5.1. Social support and professional training

Political participation is a process between young people and decision-makers, public authorities and institutions at local, regional, national level. All these actors need to acquire the competences and learn the skills necessary to ensure the meaningful and active political participation of national minority youth.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, young people need social support that can come from different sources but those offering such support need to have the skills, the training and the expertise to work with national minority youth. In line with this approach, the questionnaire addressed to member states sought examples of capacity-building programmes or activities targeting professionals working with or encouraging political participation of youth, national minorities, or national minority youth, but very limited information was received from member states.

The University of Helsinki, in **Finland**, has carried out projects to develop pre-service teacher training (2018 - 2021). The projects have produced a pilot course in democracy and human rights education for all Finnish teacher

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78. Compendium "The future of young people's political participation: questions, challenges and opportunities", Laden Yurttagüler, Ramon Martinez, Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, 2019, pp. 40.

education institutions, compiled democracy and human rights education materials for teachers, and coordinated networking activities between universities and polytechnics in support of democracy and human rights education.<sup>79</sup>

In **Lithuania**, every year the Youth Affairs Department under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania organises trainings for youth and for people working with young people on the topic of “Education on anti-discrimination, tolerance and respect for others”. Such training aims to teach anti-discriminatory and respectful communication, help to learn how to reject prejudices and to foster amicable relationships with people from national minorities.

In the **Russian Federation**, in the Republic of Tatarstan, the Corporate University focuses on continuous professional development of youth policy experts. The project covers various groups that work with young people – from representatives of public authorities to informal educational tutors – and covers the following topics: youth work organisation, a long-term training course for heads of youth policy bodies and youth centres of Tatarstan; a training course for young informal education tutors, project management online course, an online course on fundraising and an online course on legal and regulatory framework of state youth policy.

As a part of the its strategy for Roma inclusion, the **Swedish** Government has commissioned the Agency for Youth and Civil Society to facilitate Roma engagement in civil society, and the involvement of Roma organisations in work for Roma inclusion and in society in general. The Agency organised youth meeting with 16 participants between the ages of 13-25 where, among others, the topics of antigypsyism and human rights were discussed. The Agency is furthermore responsible for encouraging participation of Roma girls and women.

### **3.5.2. Financial support**

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The availability of and access to financial resources are essential to enable effective participation of national minority youth. To this end, member states allocate public resources either through open calls for youth or minority civil society organisations or targeted funding covering the operational costs of specific organisations. Structural, targeted funds are also needed to ensure the accessibility of financial resources.

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79. <https://www.helsinki.fi/en/projects/human-rights-democracy-values-and-dialogue-in-education>.

Although minority youth organisations can access public resources by submitting proposals for *open calls dedicated to youth organisations*, positive measures designed to prevent or compensate for disadvantages suffered by national minorities can ensure that they are awarded funding. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of **Republic of Moldova** runs an annual grants program for NGOs that implement programs focused on youth. In order to ensure that the program is an inclusive one, one compulsory requirement is that NGOs that benefit from financing shall include as direct beneficiaries a minimum of 15% of young people from minority groups, not in education, employment or training, or youth in a vulnerable social situation. In **Sweden**, youth organisations representing various national minorities are granted funds on a yearly basis in order to create better conditions for children and youth to participate in society. In **Poland**, the Minister of National Education grants funding for the implementation of educational projects (seminars, workshops, educational publications, youth meetings, competitions for schools) specifically targeting national minority children.

Several member states have *grant schemes specifically dedicated to minority organisations* in place, which are open for minority youth organisations on an equal basis, but *funding allocated to support minority civil society organisations can also target youth projects* specifically. In **Croatia**, through the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities, significant financial resources were allocated to umbrella associations of national minorities in the past five years. Umbrella associations also use some of these funds to finance activities related to youth political participation. Moreover, every school year, the Ministry of Science and Education announces a tender for the award of grants to projects of associations in the field of non-institutional education of children and youth. Priority areas include, among others, the promotion of social inclusion and the preservation of national and local identity: education for human rights, responsibility and active citizenship, and education on the rights and identity of national minorities, interculturalism and multiculturalism.

Some member states provide *specific funding* for minority and minority youth organisations. **Denmark** funds a political secretariat for the German Minority and a consultative body, the Contact Committee for the German Minority. **Germany** provides financial support for youth activities of the Minority Secretariat each year as well as the yearly Easter and Fall Seminar of the Youth of European Nationalities. In **Belgium**, the Youth Council of the German-speaking Community is publicly financed. The Ministry of Education and Research of **Estonia** has allocated funding for the Estonian National Youth Council for carrying out strategic partnership measures including projects engaging Russian-speaking

youth in local decision-making. The Ministry of Education and Culture of **Finland** regularly allocates funding for the activities of the Sámi Youth Council and for the youth project of the Finnish Roma Association.

### **3.6. Protection of national minority youth participating in political life**

Prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination were raised as serious structural obstacles to minority youth participation (see chapter 3.3.2). Nevertheless, those national minority young people who participate in public debates, assemblies, political parties, civil society organisations or any other way actively take part in political life are more exposed to hate speech, hate crime, harassment and privacy infringements. Such threats or attacks can have a silencing effect and a long-term impact on both the professional and private life of young persons belonging to national minorities, and endanger the cohesion of a democratic society, the protection of human rights and the rule of law.<sup>80</sup> The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe called on national parliaments and invited political parties to introduce internal measures – such as a code of conduct comprising disciplinary measures – to prevent and sanction hate speech, incitement and recourse to violence by their members.<sup>81</sup> According to the state replies to the questionnaire, member states and national institutions implement measures to prevent or tackle discrimination in political participation of youth belonging to national minorities, along with civil society organisations and academia, although this information was very limited.

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe considers that effective, pluralist and independent national human rights institutions (NHRIs) are among the pillars of respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law and constitute an important link between government and civil society, insofar as they help bridge the potential protection gap between the rights of individuals and the responsibilities of the State.<sup>82</sup> NHRIs, in accordance with the Paris Principles of the United Nations, can monitor the situation of minority youth, prepare and disseminate reports in that regard; moreover, some of them are mandated to handle complaints of human rights violations.

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80. ECRI General Policy Recommendation N°15 on Combating Hate Speech - adopted on 8 December 2015.

81. Promoting diversity and equality in politics, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Resolution 2222 (2018)1.

82. Recommendation CM/Rec(2021)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the development and strengthening of effective, pluralist and independent national human rights institutions.

National human rights institutions can dedicate special attention to children and young people as well as to minority issues while promoting and supporting participation of these groups. Every year, the **Finnish** Ombudsman for Children listens to different groups of children and young people (“the Young Advisers”). In the hearings, children and young people talk about their everyday lives. The groups represent a wide variety of children and young people, e.g. Sámi, Roma, immigrant children and young people. The information on their experiences is used in the opinions or initiatives of the Ombudsman for Children, among other things.<sup>83</sup> In 2017, the Deputy Commissioner for Fundamental Rights of **Hungary** responsible for the protection of national minorities living in Hungary supported the NGO Hope for Children Hungary to implement consultations with the participation of minority children on several occasions. For example, Hungarian Roma children expressed their opinion on the draft Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment,<sup>84</sup> furthermore, they contributed to development of child-friendly materials for the Dosta! campaign of the Council of Europe.<sup>85</sup> The Deputy Commissioner hosted the events closing these child consultations where the child participants shared the outcomes of the discussions with decision-makers and other stakeholders.

Furthermore, independent equality bodies like the National Council for Combating Discrimination in **Romania** can play an important role in combating discrimination and intolerance and providing assistance to victims of discrimination. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) issued the revised General Policy Recommendation N°2 that draws on best practices and contains standards to help States to further strengthen their equality bodies.<sup>86</sup> Accordingly, the equality bodies should be assigned with competence to build a continuous dialogue with groups experiencing discrimination and intolerance and increase their knowledge about the rights and remedies established under the equal treatment legislation, their capacity to exercise these rights and their trust in the equality bodies.

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83. <https://lapsiasia.fi/en/hearings-of-the-children>.

84. It's Our World: Children's views on how to protect their rights in the digital environment Report on child consultations, available at 1680765dff (coe.int).

85. Child Friendly DOSTA! Campaign Material - Comprehensive Report on the Child Consultations, available at <https://rm.coe.int/international-report-dosta-child-consultations-27-1-2020-final-version/16809cc8ec>.

86. ECRI General Policy Recommendation N°2 revised on Equality Bodies to combat racism and intolerance at national level - adopted on 13 June 1997 and revised on 7 December 2017.



The last few years, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention observed some progress and some backlash as well with regard to the functioning of national anti-discrimination bodies. In some countries the legislative framework has been strengthened, while in other countries these bodies are still struggling with institutional or financial independence and lack sufficient resources to reach out to persons belonging to national minorities.<sup>87</sup>

Participation of minority youth in public decision-making procedures is a human right, therefore, in case of violation, the right-holders should have access to effective remedies at domestic level. The questionnaire addressed to member states sought decisions taken by judicial or quasi-judicial bodies related to discrimination in political participation of youth belonging to national minorities, but no such information was received from the member states.

### **3.7. Role of the Council of Europe**

Member states and civil society organisations alike were asked what action the Council of Europe could take to support states' promotion of the active political participation of national minority youth.

Several member states took the opportunity to provide feedback about their experience regarding the cooperation with the Council of Europe in this field. They found the cooperation – including the provision of expertise, preparation of publication and occasional co-funding - extremely useful and beneficial, particularly with regard to Roma and youth. One example is the Roma Political Schools established by the Council of Europe in 2018, providing training and mentoring to Roma citizens – mainly young Roma - with the aim of bringing them closer to local, national and European decision-making bodies and becoming more influential in the public sphere including Roma who intend to stand for election at local, national or European level.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, the EU-Council of Europe joint programmes implemented at local level on good governance and empowerment (ROMED, ROMACT, ROMACTED), targeting both authorities and citizens have a large potential to reinforce the engagement of young people in their local participatory structures.<sup>89</sup> According to the member states, opportunities for meetings, mutual learning and best practice exchange created by the Council of Europe have significantly contributed to capacity building and broadening the horizons of the participants. States and civil society organisations highlighted the

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87. Twelfth activity report, Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, pp. 13.

88. For further information see <https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/roma-political-schools>

89. For further information see <https://coe-romact.org/>.

important role of participating in the Council of Europe monitoring visits for NGOs, contributing to an ongoing dialogue with national minority youth.

The proposal for future actions included support and technical expertise for national institutions dealing with youth and minority issues in the form of capacity building seminars and training as well as by evaluating national policy documents. The need for the development of educational programmes, awareness-raising materials and campaigns, events and projects promoting intercultural dialogue – with the participation of minority youth – was also raised. States moreover recommended preparing surveys aimed at identification of interests and needs of youth and supporting concrete projects working with minority youth through training and grants. Representatives of member states and minority youth civil society organisations both suggested that the Committee of Ministers develop a set of recommendations on the promotion of the participation of national minority youth in democratic processes and in civil society organisations.

Participation of children, young people and minorities is also an internal priority for the Council of Europe. In its Recommendation on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18 (CM/Rec(2012)2), the Committee of Ministers instructed “the Secretary General to encourage the participation of children and young people in the Organisation’s standard-setting, co-operation and evaluation activities”. The Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030 aims at “broadening youth participation, so that young people participate meaningfully in decision-making, on the basis of a broad social and political consensus in support of inclusion, participatory governance and accountability”, among others, by youth mainstreaming and cross-departmental co-operation inside the Council of Europe. The Roma Youth Action plan set as priority “participation and consultation of Roma youth and Roma youth organisations, from the local to the European level, including their involvement in policy advocacy”.

In practice, several good examples of minority youth participation can be found within the management structure of the youth sector and standard-setting and monitoring work of the Council of Europe. In relation to the co-management system of the organisation, it is important to note that the Youth of European Nationalities and the Phiren Amenca International Network are members of the Advisory Council on Youth that advises the Committee of Ministers on all questions relating to youth. The Council of Europe Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM), which oversees the implementation of the Council of Europe’s Strategic Action Plan on Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025), at its first meeting in February 2020 appointed a Rapporteur on Roma Youth in order to ensure that youth

issues are properly taken into account in the Committee's work, and to promote the Committee's Rom and Traveller-related work amongst youth organisations (double mainstreaming). The Council of Europe Advisory Council on Youth is represented as an observer in the meetings of the ADI-ROM. Minority children were directly involved in standard-setting procedures related to mainstream children's rights topics such as the rights of the child in the digital environment.<sup>90</sup> The Advisory Committee, while monitoring the implementation of the Framework Convention, engages with minority youth organisations and meets national minority children and young people during their country visits, for example by visiting schools and meeting with national minority youth organisations.

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90. Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment.

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

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**T**his study aims to identify good practices in member states on the active political participation of national minority youth, and to provide an opportunity for states to explore the gaps in this field and, by building on the good practices of member states, to better support effective political participation of national minority youth. Meaningful participation of youth belonging to national minorities can take place when they have the right, the space, the opportunity, the means, the support and the protection to participate, and when states take measures to create these conditions. Based on the good practices provided by the member states and civil society organisations, the following conclusions and recommendations can be drawn.

Member states are invited to consider the following recommendations, which build on the good practices identified by the study. The recommendations may be adapted to fit best into the national contexts of the member states. *with an approach taking into account gender equality, intersectionality and multiple discrimination. National minority youth should actively participate in the implementation of these recommendations...*

### **The right to participate:**

Most member states of the Council of Europe have constitutional provisions or laws on youth participation and the participation of national minorities in social, economic, cultural and public life. However, in general, laws on youth do not go beyond stipulating the prohibition of discrimination and provision of equal opportunities, while the active promotion of the involvement of children and youth as part of national minority participation is not common.

State policies promoting participation of national minority youth can be covered either by child/youth strategies or by policies for the inclusion and integration of national minorities. In some cases, the issue is covered by policies that promote democracy and political participation in general. Child or

youth strategies aim at promoting the participation of young people without discrimination on any grounds or with a clause on the provision of equal opportunities. Although the introduction of a minority perspective in state youth policy is rare, some member states plan to involve minority youth in the development of future youth policy instruments. Moreover, national minority communities may develop their own strategy to promote the participation of young people in public decision-making procedures. A small number of inclusion and integration policies with a youth dimension and of strategies promoting democracy and participation in an inclusive way and with a focus on vulnerable groups have been identified as good examples.

*Recommendation 1: Member states should ensure the right to active political participation of national minority youth, and consider enshrining this in law, for example in legislation on the rights of children and young people or on legislation on the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, where such legislations exists. National minority youth should effectively participate in the drafting and amendment of such legislation.*

*Recommendation 2: National minority youth perspectives should be included in both youth policies and integration and inclusion policies for national minorities. National minority youth should participate in the planning, implementation and evaluation of such policies.*

*Recommendation 3: National minority organisations, institutions and councils should consider developing their own strategy promoting participation of young people. National minority youth should participate in the planning, implementation and evaluation of such a strategy.*

## **The space for participation:**

National minorities may be involved in public affairs in different ways, such as representation in elected bodies and public administration at all levels, consultative mechanisms or cultural autonomy arrangements. The responses of the member states show that national minority youth is present in elected bodies at different levels and in political parties, particularly in minority structures if dedicated space is provided for them. Engagement in and with civil society organisations can be considered as the first step or opportunity for national minority youth to influence decisions affecting their lives, among others by taking part in the advocacy processes, presenting their ideas, needs and demands to the decision makers and consulting the management of the organisations. National minority youth organisations,

including national minority youth councils, are an attractive platform for participation and engagement because minority young people can discuss freely between themselves issues of common interest (also in their minority language).

Recommendation 4: Member states should further support the effective and meaningful participation of national minority youth in mainstream, youth and minority political and public life at all levels.

Recommendation 5: National parliaments, local governments and political parties should provide space for the participation of minority youth, including through encouraging a wide diversity of membership and mainstreaming national minority youth perspectives in their work.

Recommendation 6: The elected bodies of national minorities and other national minority structures of self-governance should provide space for youth to participate in their organisation and advocacy activities.

Recommendation 7: Member states should further support national minority youth to participate in civil society organisations operating in both the youth and the minority fields; at the same time, member states should encourage such civil society organisations to involve national minority youth in their activities.

Recommendation 8: Member states should ensure the effective and meaningful participation of national minority youth organisations in youth and minority policy.

## **The opportunities and obstacles of participation:**

In general, national minority youth have the opportunity to participate in political decisions at national, regional or local levels through conventional mechanisms such as voting or standing as a candidate at elections. With regard to issues affecting them in particular, as national minority and/or youth, opportunities can be provided in many forms, such as ensuring the involvement of national minority youth in youth participation platforms and mainstreaming youth participation in national minority structures.

National minority youth face multiple obstacles to participation at individual and organisational level: young people in general may often not be taken seriously, and may distrust public institutions; moreover, their organisations may not have access to continuous and sustainable funding or lack human and technical resources. As regards the obstacles faced particularly by national minority youth, these include: lack of recognition of national

minorities by authorities; low numerical membership and disinterest from national minority youth; the discrimination resulting from the intersection of being both young and member of a national minority, as well as gender-based discrimination; and political divides among persons belonging to national minorities. According to certain national minority youth organisations, a significant barrier may be the lack of access to information about opportunities for participation and in particular a lack of information about opportunities to engage in minority languages. Democracy and human rights education at schools and representation in the media are also of pivotal importance. Geographic distance, fragmentation and isolation may pose a particular problem for the participation of some national minorities. Roma young people, and especially young Roma women, face even more, specific challenges in public participation such as prejudice, stigma, discrimination and antigypsyism and irrespective of their minority status, they may often be confronted with poverty and social exclusion.

Recommendation 9: Member states should support national minority participation in youth structures, events and projects, and youth participation in national minority structures, events and projects.

Recommendation 10: Member states should take further efforts to identify, prevent and remove obstacles to national minority youth participation in their national contexts, especially in building trust among national minority youth in political institutions, ensuring access to information in minority languages and combating discrimination, in order to ensure that national minority youth may access all opportunities available for active political participation.

Recommendation 11: Further efforts to identify and research and assess the main obstacles to active political participation facing national minority youth should be carried out at European level and in the member states, with the active participation of national minority youth.

## **The means for participation:**

To be able to actively participate in political life, minority young people should be provided with all relevant information appropriate to their age, needs and circumstances through formal and non-formal education or other awareness-raising activities. National school curricula of the member states include information on democracy, human rights, child and youth participation, and in some cases on the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, and opportunities to get involved in the decision-making structures

of national minorities. This study has identified good practices on educating children about minority rights and opportunities for national minorities to participate in democratic processes in minority education. General campaigns aimed at promoting participation of young people, particularly first-time voters, in parliamentary or municipal elections are common and in some member states address minority youth specifically.

**Recommendation 12:** National minority youth should be provided with relevant information for their participation in political life in a form that is appropriate to their age, needs and circumstances through formal education – including minority schools and education in minority languages –, non-formal education and further awareness-raising activities. This information should be made available in the languages spoken by national minority youth.

**Recommendation 13:** Member states are encouraged to include information about national minorities' history, culture, traditions and language, as well as their rights, in national education curricula and, implement Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials.

## **The support for participation:**

All relevant actors need to acquire the competences and learn the skills necessary to ensure the meaningful and active political participation of national minority youth. Social support can come from different sources but those offering such support need to have the skills, training and expertise to work with national minority youth. Moreover, the availability of and access to financial resources are essential to enable effective participation of national minority youth. To this end, many member states allocate public resources either through open calls for youth or minority civil society organisations or targeted funding covering the operational costs of particular organisations.

**Recommendation 14:** Member states should pursue capacity-building activities targeting teachers, youth workers, youth policy experts, decision-makers and public authorities and other professionals working with or encouraging political participation national minority youth.

**Recommendation 15:** Member states should continue to provide national minority youth and their organisations with adequate and sustainable



human and financial resources. Positive measures should be considered in funding, and could include the prioritisation of national minority youth projects in the youth field, and of youth projects in the national minority field.

### **Protection of the right to participate:**

National minority young people actively participating in political life are more exposed to hate speech, hate crime, harassment and privacy infringements. Such threat or attack can have a silencing effect and a long-term impact on both the professional and private life of young persons belonging to national minorities, and endanger the cohesion of a democratic society, the protection of human rights and the rule of law. According to the state replies to the questionnaire, member states and national institutions implement measures to prevent or tackle discrimination in political participation of youth belonging to national minorities, along with civil society organisations and academia, although this information was very limited.

The role of national human rights institutions and independent equality bodies is crucial in monitoring the situation of minority youth and handling complaints of alleged human rights violations related to the right to participation. National human rights institutions can dedicate special attention to children and young people as well as to minority issues while promoting and supporting participation of these groups.

Even though no examples of violations of the right to participation of national minority youth has been identified by the study, national authorities, national human rights institutions, civil society organisations and academia in the member states take measures to prevent such violations.

**Recommendation 16:** Member states should continue to remain attentive to the prevention of discrimination against national minority youth, in particular as it relates to the right to participation, and strengthen institutions that combat discrimination, promote equality and protect national minority youth against violations of their rights.

### **The role of the Council of Europe:**

Member states and civil society organisations agreed that the Council of Europe plays a pivotal role in the promotion of child and youth participation and the protection of the rights of national minorities. In addition to the provision of technical support and expertise, the Council of Europe is expected

to set the standards for member states to promote and ensure active political participation of national minority youth. The Council of Europe also leads by example by setting as an internal priority the participation national minority youth.

Recommendation 17: The Council of Europe should develop a set of recommendations on promoting the active political participation of national minority youth with the meaningful participation of national minority youth.

Recommendation 18: The Council of Europe should develop its existing tools and measures, and elaborate further such measures, to promote national minority youth participation.

Recommendation 19: The Council of Europe should ensure the participation of national minority youth in their standard-setting, monitoring and cooperation activities.



# Appendix 1 – Questionnaire to States

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## Study on political participation of national minority youth in Council of Europe member States

**Questionnaire to the CDADI delegations (Deadline: 17 December 2020 19 February 2021)**

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The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has tasked the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) to “carry out a study and identify good practices in member States on the active political participation of national minority youth, as a means to further protect persons belonging to national minorities and cultural diversity and promote interaction between all members of society”. Against this background, the aim of the present questionnaire is to take stock of the situation, identify trends, and identify good practices as well as obstacles and challenges concerning the active political participation of youth belonging to national minorities. The questionnaire will serve as a basis of analysis of the current practice of the member states in this field.

When answering this questionnaire, please ensure, where relevant, that the national minority(ies) or language(s) concerned is/are specified when referring to a given policy, measure, good practice, example, obstacle or challenge. Please keep also in mind that, for each question, the primary objective is to collect information on the political participation of youth belonging to national minorities. It is likely however that only limited information exists combining both the youth dimension and the national minority dimension. States are therefore invited, each time they consider it relevant, to provide also information applicable to youth specifically, or to persons belonging to national minorities specifically.

States are not expected to answer all the questions, nor to answer them comprehensively. States are expected to answer questions for which they consider that the information they submit could provide an added value to the study. If the information requested is not available in your country, please proceed to the next question, or briefly explain if you consider it could constitute an added value to the study. Further guidance, in particular regarding to key terms related to the scope of the questionnaire such as “youth” and “national minorities”, can be found in the Appendix to this questionnaire. For any further questions, please contact the Secretariat at [cdadi.minorities@coe.int](mailto:cdadi.minorities@coe.int).

## **1. Right to participate – legislative and policy framework related to the political participation of youth belonging to national minorities at national, regional or local level**

### **1.1 Relevant legislation related to political participation.**

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Where relevant, please insert stable hyperlinks through public information websites, preferably in English or French, or copy-paste relevant extracts. Please make sure, where possible, that legislation referred to under this section clearly indicates minimum age requirements to vote and to stand as a candidate for local, national and self-governance elections, or to participate in youth councils (if the legislation does not contain such a provision, please explain briefly).

### **1.2 Policy documents (e.g. strategy or action plan) on political participation.**

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Please indicate when national minority-related measures have a youth dimension, or when youth-related measures have a national minority dimension. Please indicate also which national agency(ies), institution(s) or mechanism(s), is/are in charge of their implementation (including, where relevant, coordination between several ministries).

### **1.3 Legal and practical obstacles to political participation.**

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Please indicate any possible challenges to the right of persons belonging to national minorities to participate in political life.

## **2. Opportunity to participate – general issues and issues of concern for national minority youth**

Good practices of national minority youth political participation in general (i.e. in relation to issues not affecting only them) or on issues affecting them in particular (as national minority(ies) and/or as youth).

Please specify examples of cases where national minority youth had or took the opportunity to influence public decisions at national, regional or local levels (either on general issues or on issues affecting them in particular).

## **3. Space for participation - conventional and other forms of participation**

3.1 Good practices of conventional (such as elections, referendum and joining or establishing political parties) and other, including alternative, forms of political participation (such as, *inter alia*, consultative mechanisms, co-management, initiatives, counter-initiatives, demonstrations) involving youth belonging to national minorities, at any level.

3.2 Good practices of youth councils mainstreaming diversity and participation for all.

Please indicate whether such councils have specific policies and whether and to what extent youth belonging to national minorities participate in such councils. When youth councils do not cover young persons under 18, please consider reporting on children's councils too.

3.3 Good practices of youth councils' being involved in public decision-making related to national minority issues.

When youth councils do not cover young persons under 18, please consider reporting on children's councils too.

3.4 Good practices of mainstream political parties engaging with national minorities and/or youth.

3.5 Good practices of political parties and self-governing bodies based primarily on national minority affiliation engaging with youth.

The two above questions may be transmitted to parliamentary political parties, and to parties and self-governing bodies based primarily on national minority affiliation, where relevant. Each State shall collect

answers from parties and bodies concerned and shall integrate them into its set of replies. If, for reasons specific to a national context, a State wishes to derogate from this integrated approach, it may – on a unilateral basis – authorise relevant parties and bodies to send their replies directly to [cdadi.minorities@coe.int](mailto:cdadi.minorities@coe.int). States opting for this procedure should inform the parties and bodies concerned that their replies will be distributed to all CDADI members and participants and may be published together with the study.

#### **4. Means to participate – the right to education and information**

Under this section, please make sure you indicate the language concerned, where relevant.

4.1 Does the national curriculum include education for democratic citizenship and human rights? Does the national curriculum cover information regarding opportunities, for youth, for national minorities, or for youth belonging to national minorities to participate in political life?

In the absence of relevant examples in the national curriculum, please specify for regional or local levels, where relevant.

4.2 Examples of educational/training programmes promoting political participation of youth belonging to national minorities.

4.3 Examples of public awareness-raising programmes or activities targeting youth and promoting active political participation of persons belonging to national minorities.

Please report here state funded and state implemented/coordinated activities (civil society initiatives partly or fully funded by public funds should be reported under question 5.3). Please specify also whether each example is disseminated via traditional media or new forms of media.

#### **5. Support to participate**

5.1 Examples of capacity-building programmes or activities targeting professionals working with or encouraging political participation of youth, national minorities, or youth belonging to national minorities.

5.2 Public resources allocated to ensure active political participation of youth, national minorities or youth belonging to national minorities.

When these resources are related to a policy, a measure, a good practice or an example indicated in this questionnaire, please specify so.

5.3 Public resources allocated to civil society initiatives supporting political participation of youth, national minorities, or youth belonging to national minorities.

## 6. Anti-discrimination – access to remedies

6.1 Decisions taken by judicial or quasi-judicial bodies related to discrimination in political participation of youth belonging to national minorities.

Please list in particular extracts of, summaries of, or links through, relevant decision(s) within judiciary, equality bodies, National Human Rights Institutions and other complaint mechanisms, if such data exists or is available.

6.2 Measures taken to prevent or tackle discrimination in political participation of youth belonging to national minorities.

Please list measures taken by the authorities, at any level. Please report also measures taken by other bodies such as, inter alia, the national equality bodies, the National Human Rights Institutions, and other complaint mechanisms to ensure that such mechanisms are known, accessible and used where relevant by youth belonging to national minorities.

## 7. Data collection and research

7.1 Number and gender of national minority representatives in national Parliament under the age of 30.

Federal states are invited to provide data related to decentralised parliamentary structures, if available.

7.2 Number and gender of young people under the age of 30 involved in national minorities' self-governing bodies, if any.

Please provide data, if available.

7.3 State or academic research/studies related to political participation of persons belonging to national minorities.



Please indicate whether it contains a specific component on youth.

## 8. Role of the Council of Europe

Please indicate what you think the Council of Europe could do to support its member states to promote active political participation of youth belonging to national minorities.

### Appendix – Scope of the questionnaire

1. Youth should be able to influence and shape public decisions and actions. Fostering active citizenship and respect for human rights, as precondition of active political participation, should start at a young age.
2. Active political participation of youth belonging to national minorities does not only cover the right to regular and fair elections, the right to vote, and the right to stand for public office without discrimination. For the purpose of the study, it is understood that 'active political participation' relies on the principle that everyone should have the right, the opportunity, the space, the means, and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions taken on national, regional and local levels. The structure of the questionnaire follows this thematic order.
3. The challenge of the questionnaire is to encompass two different fields of research: youth and political participation of persons belonging to national minorities. Accordingly, each question intends to cover the largest possible scope and to understand the state of youth national minority political participation, through the angles of youth, or of persons belonging to national minorities, or a combination of both, as the case may be.

### Terminology

4. CDADI delegations agree to use a **flexible approach** for the purpose of the questionnaire with the possibility for States to clarify the meaning of the term 'youth' and 'national minorities' within their respective replies.
5. With regard to the term 'youth', you are invited to refer to the meaning of the term in your national legal framework. If such term is not defined in your national legal framework, please refer to the term(s) most commonly used in the national context of reference and briefly explain them. Certain countries provide youth the right to vote from the age of 16 or 17, while the minimum age to stand as a candidate varies between 18 and more than 25

years of age. You are therefore encouraged, if your national legal framework allows, to report any relevant information concerning ‘youth’ or ‘young persons’ in accordance with the Council of Europe practice (from 13 to 30 years of age), in order for the CDADI to collect as much information as possible on youth under the age of 18, which constitute an important dimension of this study.

6. With regard to the terms ‘**national minorities**’, you are also invited to refer to the meaning of the terms in your national legal framework, or – if such terms are not defined in your national legal framework, to refer to the terms most commonly used in the national context of reference. Please note that States Parties to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities have already notified, where relevant, their understanding of the terms “national minority/ies” upon ratification of this instrument and have a well-established practice of reporting under this instrument. They are invited to follow the same approach when filling in this questionnaire. In the same spirit, the terms used in this questionnaire, in so far as they are the subject of a corresponding provision in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, shall be understood to the extent possible so as to conform to the latter provisions. The terms “**self-governing bodies**” should refer to their meaning in your national legal framework, where relevant.

7. It is also understood that, for the purpose of this questionnaire, the characterisation of a participation as ‘political’ refers to any participation related to a decision related to public life and taken at any level by any institution, including within self-governance structures. Therefore, when answering the questionnaire, you are invited to use “political” participation unless there is a justification to refer to “electoral” participation particularly.



# Appendix 2 – Questionnaire to civil society organisations

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## Study on political participation of national minority youth in Council of Europe member States

### Questionnaire to organisations involved in the youth sector (Deadline: 29 January 2021)

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The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has tasked the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CD-ADI) to “carry out a study and identify good practices in member States on the active political participation of national minority youth, as a means to further protect persons belonging to national minorities and cultural diversity and promote interaction between all members of society”. Against this background, the aim of the present questionnaire is to take stock of the situation, identify trends and good practices as well as obstacles and challenges concerning the active political participation of youth belonging to national minorities.

Active political participation of youth belonging to national minorities does not only cover the right to regular and fair elections, the right to vote, and the right to stand for public office without discrimination. For the purpose of the study, it is understood that ‘active political participation’ relies on the principle that everyone should have the right, the opportunity, the space, the means, and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions taken on national, regional and local levels.

With regard to the terms “youth” and “national minorities”, you are invited to refer to the meaning of the terms in your national legal framework, or – if such terms are not defined in your national legal framework, to refer to the terms most commonly used in your national context. It is also

understood that, for the purpose of this questionnaire, the characterisation of “participation” as ‘political’ refers to any instance of participation linked to a decision related to public life and taken at any level by any institution, including within self-governance structures.

By completing this questionnaire, you agree in principle to the publication of your contribution by the Council of Europe. In any case, your contribution will be accessible to CD-ADI members.

This questionnaire is open to all organisations involved in the youth sector, whether they are youth organisations, minority organisations with a youth branch, or minority organisations with a number of young members. It must be answered in English or French.

For any further questions, please contact the Secretariat at [cdadi.minorities@coe.int](mailto:cdadi.minorities@coe.int).

## Your organisation

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1. 1 Please shortly describe your organisation.

Please indicate its name, the number of members and in which member State(s) of the Council of Europe your organisation is established.

1.2. What are its main goals?

Please describe its main goals and indicate also whether your organisation is a youth organisation or not, and whether its membership is based primarily on affiliation with a particular national minority or not.

## Right and opportunities to participate

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2. How does your organisation promote the rights of youth belonging to national minorities to participate in decisions that affect them?

Please describe how it has enabled youth belonging to national minorities to influence decisions that affect them in particular.

## Obstacles to participation

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3. In your opinion, what constitute the main obstacles to the political participation of youth belonging to national minorities?

Please explain why and indicate whether these obstacles concern persons or organisations.

## Means and support to participation

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4. Do you feel that your organisation has the necessary means and support to promote political participation of youth belonging to national minorities?

If so, please give concrete examples. If not, please explain what support your organisation would need to further promote the political participation of youth belonging to national minorities.

**[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)**

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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