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**Institute of Ethnology**  
Slovak Academy of Sciences

**Increased voice of Roma women. Do quota systems lead to higher representation of Roma women in elected bodies?**

**“Women and Political Representation:  
The Case of Roma and Traveller Women”**

25 – 26 September 2017



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## **Increased voice of Roma women. Do quota systems lead to higher representation of Roma women in elected bodies?**

### **Three positions / perspectives of my approach**

#### **1) Council of Europe : 2014 - 2018**

Member of Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

#### **2) Academic**

Ethnologists / social anthropologists with long record of focusing on Romani studies

#### **3) Activist : NDI : 2006 - 2017**

Managing program for supporting Political participation of Roma in Slovakia



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### The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

Political representation of national minorities is explicitly discussed mostly in following documents of the FCNM:



Thematic Commentary nr. 2: (adopted on 27 February 2008)  
on the **Effective Participation of Persons belonging to National Minorities in Cultural, Social and Economic Life and in Public Affairs**

#### Article 15 of the Framework Convention

*The Parties shall create the conditions necessary for the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs, in particular those affecting them.*

The degree of 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.



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### Thematic Commentary nr. 2: Effective Participation of Persons belonging to National Minorities in Cultural, Social and Economic Life and in Public Affairs

Executive summary, PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS, p. 6:  
*Particular attention should be paid to the balanced representation of women and men belonging to national minorities.*

### Participation of persons belonging to national minorities in legislative process:

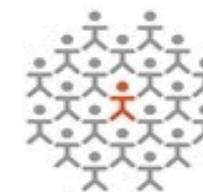
ii. Design of electoral systems at national, regional and local levels:

*Electoral provisions aimed at promoting a balanced presence of women in elected bodies can be designed to have a positive impact on the participation of women belonging to national minorities in public affairs. (page 25)*

- Administrative and constituency boundaries
- Reserved seats system
- Parliamentary practice ‘Veto’ rights
- ‘Veto’ rights



Framework Convention for the  
Protection of National Minorities  
FCNM



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### Reserved seats system

The provision of reserved seats ... is one of the ways in which the representation of persons belonging to national minorities can be ensured in elected bodies.

#### A) Designed for one group

#### B) Shared between various national minorities

- Minorities concerned should agree on a common strategy and shared goals to be reached through the representation in the electoral body at stake.
- Elected representatives should take care to represent the concerns of all persons belonging to national minorities in the constituency.
- A rotation of the representatives of the different national minorities may help create the sense of a shared seat.

### TO HAVE EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IT IS IMPORTANT:

- the minority representatives elected should be effectively involved in decision-making processes.
- they should have a real possibility to influence decisions taken by the elected body, including those not strictly related to national minorities.
- they should have speaking and voting rights in the elected body and their role should not be limited to a mere observer status.





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### Some examples from state parties

more details and examples in Compilation of Opinions article by article (article 15)

#### reserved seats in national parliaments:

**Croatia** (8 mandates **shared** for all minorities)

**Kosovo** (all minorities) 20 seats

**Romania** - 18 seats designed for every minority

#### reserved seats in local/municipal councils:

**Croatia** (5-15%) - the right to one seat, if more than 15% also one seat in executive body (usually Deputy Mayor)

**Bosnia and Hercegovina** - reserved seats where NM have more than 3% of population

**Slovenia** - 20 municipalities where Roma are eligible to vote one local councillor (only “autochthonous” Roma)





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### Representation of the Roma (Romani women) Reserved seats / quotas:

#### national parliaments:

**Croatia** (1 Roma MP, man)

**Kosovo** (4 Roma/Ashkali/Egyptians MPs, 4 man - 0 woman)

**Romania** - (1 Roma MP / man) (1 Roma man elected on mainstream party list)

#### local/municipal councils:

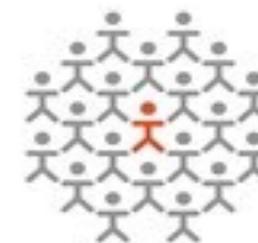
**Croatia** - 12 Roma elected - 2 Deputy Mayors — unknown gender

**Bosnia and Hercegovina** - 14 Roma elected — 13 men and 1 woman

**Slovenia** - 20 municipalities where eligible — 15 men and 5 woman



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### Representation of the Roma (Romani women) no special quotas

national parliaments:

I am not aware of a Romani women elected to national parliaments.

local/municipal councils: example of Slovakia



Elected Roma in local elections	2002	2006	2010	2014
nr. of municipalities where Roma were elected	55	95	190	210
elected Roma councilors - TOTAL	158	250	410	505
elected Roma - <b>WOMEN</b>	x	11 (4.4%)	20 (4.8%)	38 (7.5%)
elected Roma mayors	11	19	29	35
elected Roma mayors - women	0	0	1	1



## Increased voice of Roma women. Do quota systems lead to higher representation of Roma women in elected bodies?

**However: Roma women have great potential in various local community engagement activities**

**Program of Roma health mediators in Slovakia:**

179 local Roma health care assistants: 30 men vs. 149 women... **84 % are Roman women**

**Field social work programme:**

220 field social workers: 28 men vs. 192 women ..... **87% are women**

205 assistants to field social workers: 26 men vs. 179 women..... **87% are women**

Many Roma women are active in municipal community centres, many women run maternity clubs and day-care centres, voluntarily educational activities with children

Experience from many Roma communities and various support programs indicate that Roma women have very strong potential in local community engagement

= in many Roma communities the voice of Roma women is strong enough to stipulate small changes on local level, mobilise community members etc...



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**However: Roma women have great potential in various local community engagement activities**



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**CONCLUSION = QUESTION**

**How to develop this potential into greater political capital of Roma women?**

