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## **PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS IN LOCAL PUBLIC LIFE**

Local and regional authorities in Europe, No. 72



# **PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS IN LOCAL PUBLIC LIFE**

Report by the Steering Committee on Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR)  
prepared with the collaboration of Professor Gerry Stoker

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## **I. THE CHANGING BACKGROUND TO CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

### **A. Participation and democracy**

The debate on the participation of citizens in the public life of their communities is primarily based on the postulate that such participation is a desirable feature of democracy. In particular, a low level of participation in the democratic process is commonly considered as a worrying sign and as a factor which affects the functioning of local democracy. This point is worth examining in detail.

#### **1. *The different angles from which to analyse the relationship between participation and democracy***

Just how desirable is participation? What form of participation should be encouraged? Modern thinking on democracy provides various different replies to these two questions. The problem can be considered from at least four different angles.

##### *The realistic angle*

According to one very widespread opinion, the purpose of politics is to express and defend interests. From this angle, participation is aimed at pursuing these objectives and securing optimum results at minimum cost. This being the case, those participating must have a certain amount of self-confidence and efficiency. They might also be expected to effect “rational” calculations in order to evaluate their contribution.

Such an instrumental approach to participation promotes a realistic grasp of the issues at stake. Citizens participate in public life when a problem arises that concerns them, if they believe their intervention will have some effect. Participation would tend to be an activity in which only a limited percentage of the population is intensively involved. The majority only intervenes selectively. A low level of interest and a realistic appraisal of the constraints of power deter many citizens from playing a more active role. The important thing is therefore to put mechanisms in place and secure the requisite capacities to convince a sufficient number of citizens that it would be useful for them to participate when major problems arose.

##### *The participatory angle*

One conception diametrically opposed to that of the realists is that democracy is a process that necessitates maximum citizen participation. Two main modes of thought underlie this perspective. The first is community-oriented, positing that contributing to political life is not subject to utilitarian calculation but rather to concern for the welfare of the community to which the citizen belongs. The second emphasises the value of participation as an educational experience. By co-operating in political action individuals gain in self-fulfilment, competence and confidence. Moreover, this activity improves their grasp of their fellow-citizens’ interests and aspirations.

This participatory perspective sets particular store by local public life. This political level is easily accessible, and its proximity makes it an ideal base for participation. It provides a forum for exploring collective interests and introducing citizens to the world of politics in a manner conducive to learning and personal development.

Such arguments may sound slightly paternalistic, but they concentrate on participation as a means of self-fulfilment and expression of collective concerns.

### *The politics of presence*

This is based on the demand by excluded groups for involvement in decision-making processes. They do not merely want their views to be taken into account, but to ensure that they are represented by individuals who share their experience and identity.

The argument is that the presence of these groups presents a multifaceted challenge to the existing structures that give rise to exclusion and marginalisation. First of all, there is the symbolic value of members of the excluded group sitting down at the table around which the decisions are being considered. Representativeness must not only exist but also be seen to exist. From this angle, participation has an expressive aspect enabling citizens to actively express their feelings and identities.

Nevertheless, the politics of presence, as perceived, for instance, by feminist movements or some organisations of disabled persons, is based on the theory that the direct presence of representatives of the group influences the decision-making process. They argue that it opens this process up and creates the conditions for more energetic defence of the interests in question. Moreover, it allegedly facilitates change by giving previously excluded categories the time and opportunity to construct their political preferences and express their concerns.

### *Deliberative democracy*

One of the aspects of the debate on participation, which is currently more conspicuous than, say, thirty years ago, is the policy of deliberation. Supporters of this thesis criticise the arguments in favour of the utilitarian approach and the policy of maintaining a presence for being excessively centred on personal interest. Unlike the partisans of direct or participatory democracy, the supporters of deliberative democracy do not see maximum participation as being an advantage in itself.

Although they are still in favour of broad participation, they disapprove of structures reflecting a utilitarian conception of politics, reduced to a conflict of interests in which the government is expected to strike a balance between rival demands. They consider rather that political institutions should be so designed that citizens can establish interrelations through deliberations or lines of argument, rather than simply as negotiators in search of exchange.

The main argument advanced by advocates of this thesis is that politics must involve reasoning and open debate and reflection on other people's opinions. While most of them do not necessarily believe in the simplistic identification of solutions in the "general interest", they all hold that deliberation brings out new positions and bases for agreement. They consider that "deliberatively" structured participation leads to novel solutions and improves the decision-making processes.

## 2. *The reasons for participation*

There are obviously many reasons prompting citizens to participate. They either concentrate on the utilitarian, expressive or deliberative aspect of participation, or else simply regard it as a civic duty. For the public bodies it provides the requisite legitimacy, as well as the wherewithal for effective decision-making. Lastly, it helps ensure active support from the citizens in attaining specific objectives.

In instrumental terms, participation can be considered as a way for individuals to achieve their goals. People will contribute to action if they find the issue sufficiently interesting and worthwhile. However, most citizens remain inert. Some consider that such apathy stems from a very low level of interest, while others think it reflects inadequate political power.

Others again are in favour of participation for its own sake, holding that it expresses the concern of the community to which the citizen belongs and provides him or her with an opportunity to learn the art of citizenship. It might seem difficult in the modern world to support this conventional, even romantic, idea of participation.

Those who advocate a policy of maintaining a presence hold that participation by excluded groups is important in symbolical and utilitarian terms. It demonstrates the inclusion of the group and its interests and provides a more suitable environment in which to work on their behalf. It is not absolutely vital for all the members of the group to become involved in political activity, but a presence in the forum where decisions are taken by representatives with whom they can identify and who have shared their experience facilitates the expression of their collective interests.

The supporters of a mode of participation structured in such a way as to facilitate wide-ranging debate take a different view of matters. They consider that participation has no value *per se*, their basic aim being to set up a deliberative structure in which citizens can exchange views, review their understanding of the issues at stake and identify joint solutions. This involves securing the participation of a limited range of persons in order to encourage discussions and help cater for the general interest.

Discussion of possible options in the field of reform depends on the *raison d'être* of participation and the value ascribed to it. All states probably have a mixture of all these motivations, possibly with the realistic or utilitarian point of view predominating. That being the case, the challenge is to create systems of local democracy in which citizens have the option of participating but which are still legitimate and efficient even if the latter decide not to take this opportunity. The crucial points are openness on the part of the institutions and awareness on the part of the citizens that they can influence a decision if they feel the need to do so.

Furthermore, many states are hoping that their local democracy systems will signal an increased capacity for participation, reflected in the presence of various social and economic groups and/or the ability to conduct a more deliberative policy that is more intensively centred on reflection, consolidating multiple interests in seeking a common vision and partnerships for collective action.

## **B. The major issues surrounding the development of local democracy: differences and similarities in the emerging trends**

The state of local democracy undoubtedly varies in the different Council of Europe countries. Nevertheless, they must all face the question of developing local democracy, because, like any other form of democracy, it is not immutable: it develops in accordance with a living process. Solutions that are deemed appropriate at one point in time must be constantly checked and if necessary challenged in the light of social changes and the citizens' needs and expectations.

Not only are all the European countries currently considering the development of local democracy, but also, above and beyond their differences, they share several concerns vis-à-vis, firstly, the actual capacity of local communities to take on their assigned role, and secondly, the quality of the relations between citizens and their local councillors and the extent of citizen participation in the political process at the local level.

The following paragraphs mention major problems which emerge from the replies of twenty-five countries (see Appendix I for a more comprehensive summary of these replies). Of course these problems are not necessarily shared by (or do not have the same repercussions) in all the countries in question.

### ***1. Local authorities' capacity and leeway for action***

#### *Basic shortcomings in the local administrative infrastructure*

The questions and problems arising in this connection cover the principal aspects of local self-government:

- the territorial organisation of states (setting up of self-governing authorities at the intermediate level and their relationship to local authorities, status of the larger cities, over- and undersized municipalities);
- the role of the local authorities and the scope of their powers (constitutional basis for self-government, limited decentralisation, lack of freedom of action for local communities, reorganisation of responsibilities in power-sharing areas);
- financial autonomy (tax decentralisation, system of state contributions, system of financial equalisation, room to manoeuvre in setting income levels, matching resources with specific and delegated functions);

- the relations between central and local authorities (the reality, or the perception by local authorities or others, that central government may constrain the ability of local authorities to implement local policies too tightly);
- the internal organisation of local authorities (relations between the council and executive, setting up of administrative districts);
- other more specific matters (e.g. instability of the legal and economic framework, a dearth of qualified staff in local government departments and the need to reinforce the legal protection of local authorities).

Broadly speaking, we can see that some central and eastern European countries have not yet completed the decentralisation process on which they resolutely embarked; the legislative and statutory framework for local self-government is currently changing in these countries.

For example, the case of Poland could be mentioned: a recent government reform widened and reinforced the legislative, institutional, organisational and financial basis of local democracy with a view to improving the possibilities for citizen participation. This was an important step forward in the process of decentralising the whole administration of the country and introduced a new distribution of responsibilities, powers and public funds among the different local and central government levels.

The role and functions of local authorities, their relations with the central authorities and margin of manoeuvre (in the financial and other fields) are also on the agenda in some western European countries.

For instance, in Iceland, Sweden and Greece, major reforms have taken place, reducing the number of local authorities. This may have an impact on citizen participation: while the new local self-governing units are more powerful and probably more efficient, there are fewer elected representatives and they are more remote from the citizens.

In Finland, neither the municipal structure nor the numbers of municipalities have changed much, but the municipalities' autonomous decision-making powers have been increased at the same time as the normative guidance of the central government has been considerably decreased. This is challenging to the functionality of local democracy, because the municipal councils decide upon two thirds of the country's public economy.

*Uncertainty about the role and margin of manoeuvre of local authorities in a global society*

In several countries there is a feeling of uncertainty about the leeway available to local democracy in a world which expects high standards of service, and in a globalised economic and social environment. Underlying this is a whole series of factors exerting pressure on the local democracy environment, including:

- public demands for standards of service consistent with those laid down by the national authorities (this factor is mentioned, for instance, by Norway and the United Kingdom);
- the complexity of the problems to be resolved, preventing small municipalities from providing services of an appropriate standard (this concern is mentioned by many countries in southern, central and eastern Europe);
- the widespread feeling that the sphere of action for local self-government is threatened by the forces of globalisation.

**2. *Defective relations between local authorities and their citizens and in democratic participation***

*Declining public interest in and a general feeling of apathy about politics, reflected in lower turnouts at elections and problems in recruiting candidates for election*

Several states refer to negative trends in democratic participation. The main problem has been a lower voter turnout or consistently low turnout (in some cases even falling below 50 per cent); parties have also been finding it difficult to attract active members and candidates.

The concern about participation in elections is particularly serious in the Nordic countries, against the backdrop of traditionally fairly high turnouts. However, in these countries turnouts are still high. This concern is also conspicuous in the political environment of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, although participation in local public life has always been a little less intensive in these two countries. A number of southern European countries (for example Portugal and Greece) and some of the central European democracies also mention this point.

More generally, citizens show little interest in local political life (less than in national political issues), and under-use the instruments at their disposal to influence political and administrative choices at the local level.

Proper civic conduct must be instilled through education and training from a very early age. The new democracies in central and eastern Europe in particular need civic education courses to promote the new values. Quite a few countries have already begun to tackle this need, but such efforts should be made more general and intensified.

This process should be geared to alerting citizens, especially the young, to the machinery of social and political life and the consequences of the choices they will be called on to make. Citizens must clearly understand the facilities and means at their disposal for influencing local policies, and should learn to play their role by implementing their rights and shouldering their responsibilities.

*Obstacles to public involvement in direct forms of participation*

A wide variety of states (for example Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Sweden and the United Kingdom) refer to the difficulty (and in any case the necessity) of increasing public involvement through direct forms of consultation. There are several sides to the problem which may however not be relevant for all the countries mentioned above.

- direct consultations are not frequent; local elected representatives may give the impression that they want to keep exclusive decision-making rights and it could be desirable that they make more effort to involve the public;
- the public is not really motivated or is not convinced that its participation could make a real difference;
- it is difficult to ensure the efficiency of consultations and prevent them from merely giving an even wider platform to groups that are already powerful;
- consultation is more powerful where its result is binding and citizens can really take the final decision; however, in many cases the significance of the referendums (and even more of the popular initiatives) is lessened by the fact that the outcome remains in the hands of the local deliberative (or executive) bodies.

*Weaknesses in the institutions of local representative democracy that decrease the effectiveness, openness and accountability of the system*

A number of countries are concerned, in a variety of ways, that local councillors, in the eyes of the electorate, are not providing the desired political impetus or fail to identify themselves sufficiently with their community and that their resulting low profile has a negative influence on their political accountability.

In Belgium, it has been noted that local office holders do not devote sufficient time to administering their community. In the United Kingdom, local councillors are often overburdened by detail and have insufficient time for dealing with strategic issues. In Sweden, the concern is that the local councils' function as a forum for political debate is diminished, important issues often being decided outside them. In "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", although citizens in the majority show considerable political interest and involvement, they consider that politicians are particularly dependent on the position of their parties and preoccupied by their personal interests. Therefore, they are sceptical as to the commitment of politicians in solving their social problems and do not expect much from them.

Further problems include a lack of information and openness (Lithuania), lack of general awareness of local government and its functioning (Malta), the complexity of the decision-making process and its distance from the citizens (Portugal), and the lack of a political will to involve citizens more closely and frequently in decision-making (Spain).

In order to cope with these phenomena, some states take initiatives in reforming the local electoral system or changing the status of elected representatives.

For example, in Belgium, rules on multiple office holding and the status of the local office holders have recently been modified; the aims being to facilitate holding political office at local level and allow office holders to devote the necessary time to administrating their municipality.

In the United Kingdom, the government is currently pursuing legislation to underpin a radical programme of democratic renewal that should give new impetus to local political life.

In Malta, new legislation has been enacted to ensure that citizens living within small towns, villages or hamlets (sub-localities) forming part of a municipality and constituted of a population of at least 10 per cent of the total population will have a strong voice in the council of the locality. Among other things, the council must hold annual sub-locality meetings during which the respective citizens may voice their opinion on their council performance in relation to the sub-locality.

*The realisation that citizen participation is not only a general problem but also has specific dimensions corresponding to the varying potential for contributions from the various socio-economic groups*

Women, young people, ethnic minorities, the elderly and disabled people are quoted in virtually all countries as examples of groups less likely to participate, particularly in cases of more formal and “representative” institutions of local democracy.

### **3. *General trends that are shaping participation***

The experience of citizen participation in its various forms differs from country to country as the appendices to this document show. However there are a number of general trends that to a greater or lesser extent affect all member states of the Council of Europe. These trends suggest that all countries should keep the quality of local citizen participation in their country under review and develop appropriate programmes to meet challenges as they become pressing. The general trends that are shaping participation in all countries are the following.

*The impact of new information and communication technologies*

These technologies provide opportunities for the rapid exchange of information and expertise among citizens. They also offer new opportunities to express a voice to vote for or more broadly interact with governmental decision-making. Technology does not determine politics but it does present new challenges and opportunities.



*The impact of the global age on the local political system*

While a pattern of global interconnections has been present for a long time there is little doubt that there has been an intensification of both the internationalisation of domestic affairs and of the scope of decision-making in international arenas. Economic and environmental issues are, for example, two areas where domestic and international dimensions are more strongly connected than in the past. The rise of international level decision-making expressed through law, regulation and conventions with an impact at the local level is evident in many policy areas.

This process of globalisation has implications for the politics of nation states but also squeezes the space for local politics, and ultimately questions the value of local participation by citizens. If the “real” decisions and influences are elsewhere what is the point of local politics? Or to put the argument the other way round – if legitimate government relies on the consent of those affected by a decision how in a more globalised, interconnected world can that consent be obtained within the traditional boundaries of political systems? The geographical horizons of politics have expanded. It may be that citizens can think “global and act local” but at the very least the rise of the global society suggests some rethinking is needed about the purpose and style of local politics.

*The impact of changing patterns of employment and economic growth*

Modern economies demand a more educated workforce, greater participation by women in the workplace and for many a greater intensity of work. Alongside increased demands for the involvement in the economy of some is the experience of economic and social exclusion for others. These changes affect the propensity to participate in politics in various ways. More educated citizens are generally better equipped to participate. Gender barriers to involvement in politics are beginning to break down as part of wider changes in society.

Yet the intensity of demands made at work create for many little time for or interest in politics. For the highest “achievers” and the “successful” politics with a focus on the welfare state may be seen less relevant given their capacity to provide for themselves through the private sector. For the economically and socially excluded disenchantment, apathy and a sense of hopelessness can keep them away from formal politics.

## II. THE DIMENSIONS OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The expression “participation by citizens” covers an extremely complex and multifaceted reality, with different connotations for different individuals. It is therefore vital that we agree on the meaning and scope of the term in the context of this survey.

The flowchart that appears at the end of this chapter outlines the various dimensions of participation by citizens in local public life. The ensuing paragraphs will endeavour to define them more clearly and flesh out their content.

### A. Participation in the political process of the community

The various forms of participation in the life of the local community can be broken down into two major categories depending on whether the corresponding activities are “political” in the narrow sense of the word,<sup>1</sup> that is to say whether or not these activities relate to the organisation of local government and the exercise of the corresponding powers.

Citizen participation in the political process at local level is the main subject of this survey. It comprises three different aspects:

- participation in elections or the exercise of electoral rights as the bases of the system of representative democracy and its functioning;
- direct participation in the decision-making process or the different forms of direct democracy;
- activity within political parties, which form a kind of bridge between the first two aspects and, in practice, condition both the functioning of the system of representation and direct democratic participation.

However important, this third aspect cannot be covered properly by the present survey. Analysis of the other two aspects requires consideration of the relationship between the representative and the direct types of democracy.

### B. The participation of citizens in the political process through the exercise of electoral rights

Electoral rights comprise the right to vote (active electorate) and the right to stand for election (passive electorate).

Where participation in the local political process is concerned, the exercise of the right to vote facilitates the representation of electors within their community’s official bodies.

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<sup>1</sup> The original (broad) meaning of “political” is anything to do with the *polis* (the city), i.e. the community and its social organisation.

The direct expression of the electors' will (voting) is reflected in the balance of power among the various political components of the deliberative body (local assembly or council) and in the make-up of the local executive (or indeed in the identity of its head). Reciprocally, exercise of the right to stand for election reflects the right of those elected to represent those who voted for them, for the duration of their mandate.

The limits on electoral rights, the procedure for exercising them and the circumstances under which these rights may not be exercised have a consequent impact on representation and the functioning of the representative democracy system. This is clear proof of the importance of local electoral systems and their ability to translate the result of voting, as the expression of the people's sovereign will, into effective and appropriate representation of the various social and political groups making up the community.

### **C. Direct participation by citizens or groups of citizens in the decision-making process**

In all democratic systems direct democracy reinforces representative democracy. The very same view has already been expressed by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in 1981,<sup>1</sup> which considered it: "necessary to strengthen representative democracy at the local level by bringing decision-making as close as possible to the citizens and involving citizens more directly in the management of the affairs of their community while safeguarding efficiency in the conduct of local affairs".

In this report, the term "direct participation" refers to involvement of citizens – voters and consumers – in the decision-making process, alongside or instead of their elected representatives, whether in the instigation of regulatory measures, discussion of proposed action or the taking of decisions at local level.

In other words, above and beyond the right to elect their local representatives in community bodies, it means empowering citizens, albeit to varying degrees depending on the case, to help find solutions to their community's problems and giving them a direct say in the important decisions which the community must take. This explains the occasional use of such expressions as "participatory democracy".

This involvement takes tangible form in a number of mechanisms and procedures that allow citizens to be associated either in the usual regulatory activity of elected bodies (local councils in particular), or in the actual administration of local public services.

This summary should not make the reader lose sight of the interaction between the two sets of mechanisms; policy decisions and administrative decisions are themselves closely interrelated: the impact on the regulatory activities of deliberating bodies automatically influences the administration of the public services. Equally, introducing a particular emphasis into running a given service may have policy implications which go beyond the sphere of ordinary administration and may thus require regulatory activity.

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1 Recommendation No. R (81) 18 concerning participation at municipal level.

Direct participation can take place at different levels in the decision-making process. Three main levels may be distinguished here: consideration of the issues to be dealt with and instigation of regulatory measures, the taking of decisions and the implementation of decisions. Each phase may involve types of participation that differ in nature, scope and impact:

- informative and consultative participation;
- decision-making participation;
- participation in implementation.

The instruments of direct participation form part of a wider framework which also includes the right of association and the right of appeal (administrative and judicial).

The possibility that all citizens have to challenge decisions affecting their legitimate rights and interests is beyond the scope of this report<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that when the right of appeal is granted in the public interest and an *actio popularis* is available, citizens or their most representative associations have a powerful weapon not only for obtaining review of decisions but also for influencing the activities of local government.

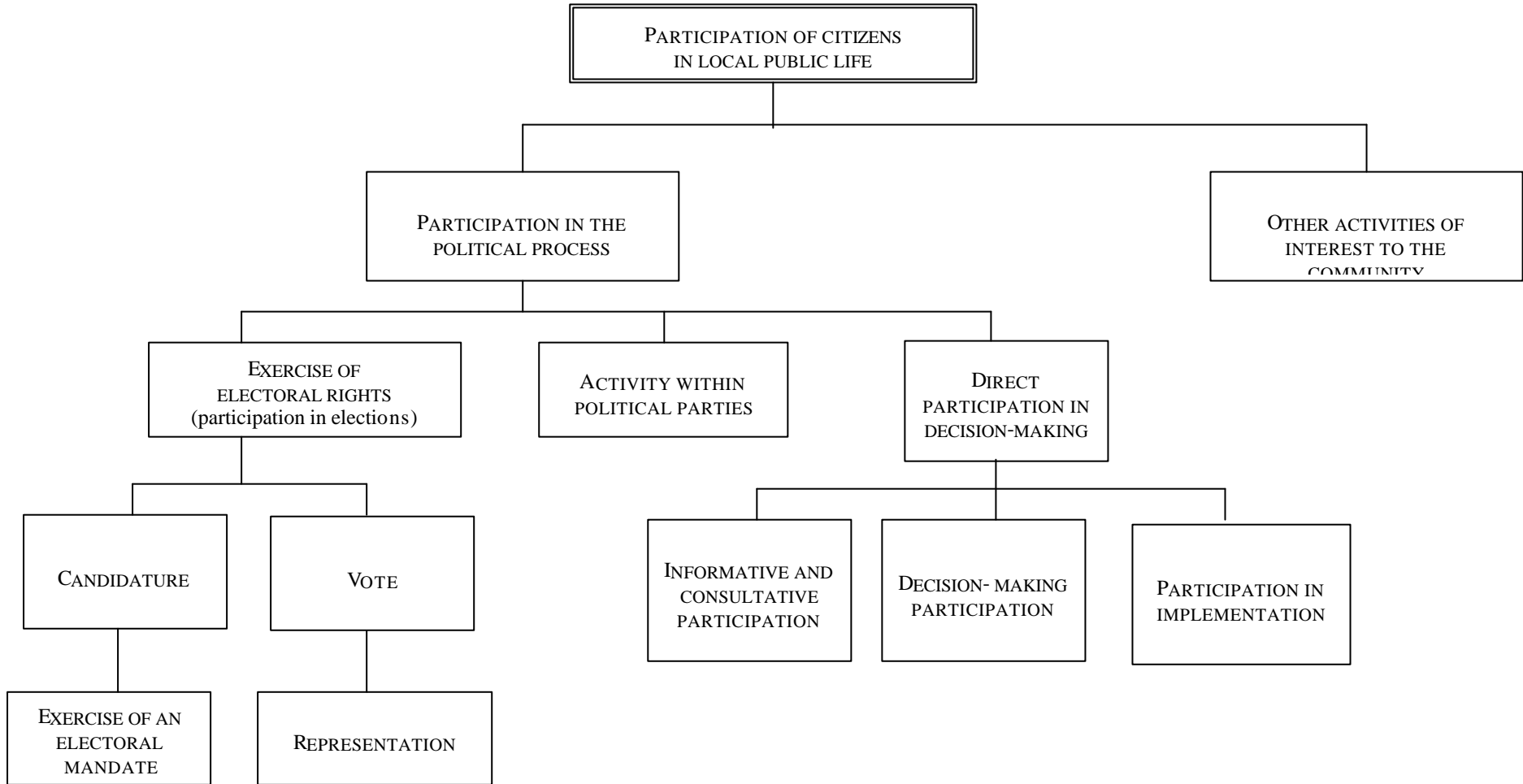
#### **D. Other activities of interest to the community**

Many activities of interest to the community are not directly related to the organisation of local government and the exercise of the corresponding powers. For example, voluntary associations operating in the social field play a major role in organising forms of civil solidarity which are, in fact, the only option for some members of the community. Certain associations and individuals implement activities to promote the community's artistic, theatrical, crafts and other traditions, or to foster a regional language. Other associations or groups deal with young people, facilitating leisure activities, encounters and exchanges. All in all, there is an enormous range of religious and secular social, cultural, sports and other associations.

The participation of citizens in all these community activities, particularly those run by voluntary associations, helps weave the community's social fabric and strengthen cohesion among its members. The issue of the right of association is beyond the scope of this report, but we will deal with the role of associations as catalysts and stimuli for public opinion. In fact, it should be noted that voluntary sector activities spill over into the field of citizen participation in the community's political process.

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<sup>1</sup> In this connection, see the CDLR report *Supervision and auditing of local authorities' action*, study series "Local and Regional Authorities in Europe", No. 66.



### III. CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION THROUGH THE EXERCISE OF ELECTORAL RIGHTS

Strengthening local self-government goes necessarily hand in hand with strengthening representative democracy. However, the system of representative democracy at local level seems to be encountering difficulties in several countries. As already indicated, low voter turnout is a problem shared by a number of Council of Europe member states.

The various local electoral systems play a crucial role in this respect, and it is clear that democratic participation also depends on electoral machinery being understood and accepted by citizens. Reference should be made here to the comparative analysis of local electoral systems,<sup>1</sup> which the CDLR has just completed.

In the report, the CDLR noted that a low turnout (but also a large number of blank ballots) can indicate popular dissatisfaction, which could imply *inter alia* that a system's legitimacy and results are questionable. In isolation, such an occurrence could be seen as a disappointment and protest signal to politicians rather than as a complaint against the electoral system; but if low turnouts become the rule rather than the exception, the option of modifying the system will have to be seriously considered as one means of stimulating interest and increasing voter participation.

The idea of democratic participation through the machinery of representative democracy does not only involve the issue of citizens actually exercising their right to vote in elections. It is also closely linked to the ability of the electoral system to ensure that the various social and political groups in a given community are effectively and adequately represented in that community's elected bodies.

When examining the relationships between electoral systems and democratic participation, it is therefore necessary to consider not only the factors that may influence voter turnout (positively or less so) but also the factors that may affect the representation of the various categories and groups in society.

It should be noted that most of these factors can actually influence both turnout and representation (at least indirectly); in addition, it is difficult to isolate the impact of each element, as the various elements interact.

#### A. Factors which influence voter turnout

In analysing the impact of the various components of a given electoral system on voter turnout, a distinction must be drawn between the effects on participation by the whole electorate and those on participation by specific categories of individuals.

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<sup>1</sup> Report on *Electoral systems and voting procedures at local level*, No. 68, published in the study series "Local and Regional Authorities in Europe".

We might usefully begin by specifying that when speaking of voter participation, it may be insufficient merely to consult statistics on turnout: if no other references are used, this may lead to hasty, or even erroneous conclusions. It is possible (and is often the case) that measures to encourage participation are reflected in a statistical decrease in turnout (rate of electoral participation), taken as the percentage of voters as compared with the total electorate.

The rate of electoral participation and its development over time are extremely useful indicators for the attitude and mood of the citizens, but they must be read in context if they are to be properly interpreted.

### ***1. Factors affecting participation by the whole electorate***

#### *Formalities for inclusion in electoral registers*

In order to understand how provisions regarding entries in electoral registers can impinge on participation, we might compare the case of automatic inclusion in the electoral register when the person concerned fulfils the conditions for holding electoral rights (especially the age condition) with the case of compulsory application for inclusion in the register.

The former case favours the participation in elections of all those holding the right to vote. More broadly, we might say that the more the procedure and formalities for inclusion in the electoral registers are simple and easily complied with by those concerned, the more the system encourages participation.

Nevertheless, the positive impact of these provisions on the number of electors registered does not necessarily have a knock-on effect on rates of participation. It may appear that an increase in the number of voters (absolute figure) corresponds to a decrease in the overall turnout rate (ie the percentage of voters out of the electors registered). In fact, the more motivated electors will in any case take the necessary steps to carry out the formalities for inclusion in the registers properly and punctually.

Therefore, there is no particular cause for concern when turnout decreases for the above reason.

#### *Compulsory voting*

The basic idea here is that citizens should have not only the right but also the duty to vote, in order to help appoint the members of the bodies called upon to govern the community.

From the purely statistical angle, it is obvious that the overall turnout (percentage of voters as compared with the total electorate) is boosted by a legal obligation to vote. Compulsory voting in local elections eliminates the problem of low turnouts, and also prevents the risk of a very low turnout casting doubt on the legitimacy of the elected bodies *vis-à-vis* a community which has largely abstained (“legitimacy” should not be confused with the “lawfulness” of these bodies and their activities, because such lawfulness is acquired inasmuch as the elections were properly run, even if the representatives are only elected by a small percentage of the electorate in question).

Nevertheless, the tendency in European democracies has been to abolish compulsory voting, as for instance in Italy and the Netherlands. Only four of the countries surveyed still have this obligation, viz Belgium, Cyprus, Greece and Luxembourg. Furthermore, some political circles in Belgium are reportedly challenging compulsory voting.

Without wishing to enter the debate on the advisability of maintaining or (re)introducing compulsory voting (a debate which must address all the circumstances peculiar to the different countries and can therefore only proceed on a case-by-case basis), it is generally doubtful whether such a measure is effective from the angle of citizen participation.

Fluctuating turnouts at election are major indicators for elected representatives: for example, such data can help them gauge the effectiveness of measures to increase interest in elections, or show the electorate's attitude to present or future reforms and permit early identification of voter dissatisfaction.

On close inspection, the fact of maintaining an extremely high voter turnout in a manner which is basically artificial, only serves to obscure possible problems and certainly does nothing to solve them.

Moreover, participation cannot be reduced to the act of voting; the really important thing is full awareness on the elector's part of why he or she is voting and of the meaning of this act.

#### *Provisions enabling the whole electorate to exercise their right to vote*

Most states covered by this survey mentioned that they had adopted provisions to facilitate the exercise of the right to vote (see Appendix IV). Such provisions have a positive effect on participation. Many of them are aimed at specific categories of electors (these provisions will be considered below), but some concern the whole electorate.

We might begin with provisions on the functioning of polling stations: their number, location (or indeed accessibility) and opening times are all factors that influence voter turnout.

In Norway, the "advance voting" system enables electors to cast their vote as early as two months before the official election date.

An interesting trend is towards the introduction of a voting procedure dispensing with the need for citizens to go to the polling station.

In Spain, for instance, electors unable to get to the polling station on election day and those residing abroad can vote by correspondence. In Switzerland voting by correspondence (which was initially reserved for soldiers and ill and absent persons) has been extended to all citizens. Voting by correspondence is well known in Scandinavia (accounting for some 40 per cent of the votes cast in Finland and Sweden). This facility is also available in a number of other countries.



Another facility (available in some countries, at least where voters are unable to go to the polling station owing to unforeseen circumstances) is voting by proxy (Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom).

New information technologies will no doubt revolutionise voting procedures in the near future. In a number of countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands, electors can already use computerised voting, which simplifies and expedites both voting and the final counting of votes.

In the United Kingdom, recent legislation was enabled which promoted the piloting of electoral procedures, which include postal elections, electronic voting, voting on different days of the week and in different venues and early voting. Such pilots were first used in local elections in May 2000. Legislation permits more general implementation of such initiatives in local and government elections.

## **2. *Factors affecting the participation of specific categories of persons***

### *The conditions for the enjoyment of the right to vote*

There are two particularly important conditions: age and nationality.

Where the age condition is concerned, the situation in Council of Europe countries is presented in Appendix III. Individuals generally join the electorate at the age of 18 years of age. Liechtenstein citizens acquire the right to vote at 20 years of age.

The fact that the minimum age for voting is now generally 18 shows the importance attached to the participation of young people in the political process. Nevertheless, the question is whether this minimum age should not be lowered even further. In fact, some German *Länder* have already lowered the voting age to 16. In Norway the possibility of bringing it down from 18 to 17 or 16 is being considered.

The gradual lowering of voting age has occurred in all electoral systems and has been considered not only appropriate but also necessary.

At this stage it is difficult to assess all the effects of a further lowering of voting age on the functioning of electoral systems and participation. Nevertheless, enlarging the electorate to younger people would give a greater hearing to an extremely dynamic section of the population and probably induce politicians to pay more attention to young people's expectations in taking decisions affecting the community's future.

In most of the Council of Europe member states, the right to vote is granted only to nationals. For the fifteen member states of the European Union, European legislation rules that every citizen of the Community residing in a member state of which s/he is not a national shall have the right to participate in municipal elections in this state, under the same conditions as its nationals, subject to detailed arrangements which may provide for derogations where warranted by problems specific to that member state.

All European Community member states have already modified their electoral legislation in order to comply with this requirement. Besides this case, there are only a few countries that allow foreigners to participate in local elections. Rules applicable in these countries are presented in Appendix V. Granting foreigners the right to vote is a tricky matter, even where such a right is restricted to local elections. Nevertheless, none of the states that have recognised this right would appear to have encountered any major problems, and this right has in fact improved the integration of foreign citizens in their local host communities.

Furthermore, there may be a connection between the exclusion of foreigners from political life and the problems with participation encountered by members of national minorities from the same origin.

It would be worth considering carefully if, for the right to vote at least, any requirement of nationality, in addition to that of residence, may be less stringent, subject to provisions which may request a minimum period of residence.

On this issue, *Participation of foreigners in public life at local level*<sup>1</sup> recommends granting foreigners the right to vote in and stand for local elections, subject to the same conditions applied to citizens and provided they have been lawfully and regularly resident in the host country during the five years preceding the election (individual states being free to fix a shorter period).

### *Provisions facilitating the exercise of the right to vote for specific categories of persons*

In addition to the aforementioned provisions, which benefit the whole electorate, others are specially aimed at offsetting the difficulties encountered by specific persons or categories of person in exercising their right to vote.

The most important examples include provisions aimed at persons with disabilities that prevent them from getting about. There are several types of provision for such persons, including assistance by a trustworthy person or the possibility of voting at home, or even the duty for the electoral committee to organise a prior vote for those unable to go to the polling station on the day of the elections. These facilities are available in addition to measures aimed at facilitating access by such persons to polling stations. Similar provision is often made for the elderly.

This category also comprises specific provisions for illiterate electors; in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” illiterate electors have the right to obtain help from the electoral committee at the polling stations), and facilities for opening special polling stations in army barracks, hospitals and prisons.

Lastly, employers in the Netherlands are expressly asked to allow their employees to go and vote during working hours if they cannot do so at any other time.

### **3. *Possible impact of other factors on participation***

The question arises as to whether and in what circumstances the principles of representation (proportional or majority system) and the use of correcting mechanisms (electoral thresholds, bonus seats for specific majorities, minimum number of seats to be allocated on a proportional basis) actually has an impact on voter turnout.

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1 Council of Europe Convention, Strasbourg 1993 (ETS 144) ISBN 92-871-2084-6.

Comparative analysis of the statistics provided by the countries covered by the study does not really allow definitive conclusions to be drawn in this respect. Nevertheless, it might be interesting to consider whether a change of system in a given country has produced a significant impact. Similarly, in countries that use different systems depending on the size of the communities concerned, it would be worthwhile considering whether significant differences exist between these groups of communities.

Germany, where different *Länder* use different electoral systems, points out that such differences do not greatly influence the behaviour of citizens *vis-à-vis* their participation in public life. There is no significant difference in turnout at local elections between *Länder* using different systems; had there been such a difference, it might indicate that electors preferred such-and-such an electoral system. On the other hand, there is a high rate of participation when local elections are held at the same time as regional and national elections.

In Italy, the rate of abstention seems unconnected with the type of consultation, although direct mayoral elections have been welcomed by the whole population. It is reported that one measure liable to increase voter motivation might be the current tendency to hold different types of elections (European, provincial and municipal) simultaneously. However, in Ireland, where local and European elections and national referendums were held in 1999 simultaneously, the electoral turnout was less than in 1991-92. In “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, it seems that changes in 1996 to the electoral system fostered participation in the local elections held in the autumn of that year.

In the United Kingdom, turnout does not seem to vary significantly between elections for renewing the whole or only a third of the municipal council. Officials consider that some amendments (annual elections, direct mayoral elections) might increase public interest.

In some countries, the size of the constituency or community apparently influences participation. In Bulgaria and Poland for instance, a greater number of citizens abstain from voting in the larger municipalities. Similarly, the turnout is higher in the small municipalities in Hungary and Spain.

However, the opposite is the case in other countries. In Greece it is considered that merging small municipalities to former larger ones has created stronger municipalities, which prompts increased participation. By the same token, there is a larger turnout in the big municipalities in Iceland than in those with smaller populations.

The relation between the size of the community and participation in elections is only one aspect of the question concerning the impact of the size on the participation in general. To this regard, the experiences which consist in decentralising the management of towns over a certain dimension, namely establishing self-governing authorities (urban districts) within the wider municipal authority, should be considered.

A local neighbourhood self-government system, covering more limited areas within the municipalities, where local population can decide on some issues of direct relevance for them, may help in combining the advantages resulting from stronger municipalities and a local management closer to citizens.

## **B. Factors influencing the functioning of the system of representation**

As in the case of our analysis of the impact of the various components of a given electoral system on turnout at elections, we must draw a distinction here between factors influencing the whole system of representation and those which affect the representation of specific categories of persons.

Furthermore, the word “representation” covers a variety of aspects:

- firstly, the extent to which the composition of the elected bodies respects the balance of power between the various political parties or groupings; this aspect refers us back to the system’s principle of representation (proportional or majority representation) and the factors (electoral, corrective and other formulae) for translating votes into seats;
- secondly, the extent to which the various categories of citizens are present in the composition of the elected bodies; this aspect is closely linked to the conditions for eligibility and the existence of such factors as quotas or reserved seats, but also with the methods for selecting candidates and provisions on submission of candidatures;
- lastly, the extent to which the electors’ votes can help ascertain the identity of candidates in the running who will be elected; this aspect mainly concerns the possibility of casting personal votes in addition to list votes.

The first of these aspects lies beyond the scope of this survey. It was analysed by the CDLR in its report on *Electoral systems and voting procedures at local level*,<sup>1</sup> to which the reader might refer. Consequently, the ensuing paragraphs will not mention the majority and proportional principles of representation, or go into the various means of securing election results in keeping with one or the other, even though these factors have a definite influence on the system of representation.

### ***1. Factors influencing the whole system of representation***

#### *Forms of lists and the possibility for electors to cast preference votes*

There are three forms of lists reflecting the degree of freedom for electors to choose not only among the political parties or groups but also among the individual candidates:

- closed and blocked lists: electors can only vote for the whole list and cannot change the order of candidates listed;
- closed non-blocked lists: electors can choose among the candidates whose names appear on the same list;
- open lists (i.e. lists which are neither closed nor blocked): electors can vote for a variety of candidates included in different lists.

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<sup>1</sup> “Local and regional authorities in Europe” series, No. 68.

The table reproduced in Appendix II shows the form of list provided for by the various local electoral systems in the states covered by this survey.

Where the list is not blocked, the various electoral systems of the European states provide for an enormous range of possibilities. For instance, electors have the following options: they may change the order of candidates on the list, cast a number of personal votes for various candidates of their choice or else concentrate them on one single candidate, strike out the name(s) of one or more candidates, cast negative votes, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Where the list is open, electors can put together their ideal list by mixing candidatures presented by the various political forces, regardless of any divisions between these forces.

Where the functioning of the system of representation is concerned, freedom of choice between the candidates makes it easier for electors to identify with their elected representatives. We might also say that the latter are all the more representative of the citizens in that the seats were allotted in accordance with their personal votes.

### *The possibility of presenting independent lists and individual candidatures*

The situation in this respect in the European states surveyed is more homogeneous. Political parties are invariably entitled to present their lists, but they very seldom have a monopoly on putting forward candidates. Candidatures are strictly regulated only in a very few countries.

In Cyprus, for instance, only parties obtaining at least 3 per cent of the vote at the previous national elections can put forward candidates for municipal elections. By the same token, in Lithuania and Portugal, only political parties can put forward lists for local elections.

In all the other countries, individual candidates or lists independent of the political parties can be put forward (see Appendix II).

A further consideration is the minimum number of signatures needed to put forward a candidate or a list. The higher this number, the more difficult it is for groups of citizens who consider themselves under-represented in the system of political parties to ensure that they have one or more candidates.

Of course, the minimum number of signatures should not be unreasonably low either. After all, it is pointless to have large numbers of candidates with no serious chance of being elected.

## **2. *Factors influencing the representation of specific categories***

### *Conditions for eligibility*

As in the case of the conditions for enjoyment of the right to vote, the age and nationality conditions are the most important.

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<sup>1</sup> See the examples presented in section 4.3 of the report on *Electoral systems and voting procedures at local level*.

The minimum age for standing for election has been generally falling, in line with the lowering of voting age. Moreover, in most European countries eligibility is acquired at the same time as the right to vote, i.e. usually at 18 years of age. The highest age is 25 (see Appendix III).

Despite this fact, young people are still largely under-represented in elected bodies. This would suggest that the problem stems from sociological factors rather than the legal provisions.

Where the nationality condition is concerned, when foreigners have the right to vote they can generally stand for election to local councils. However, it is seldom possible for foreigners to run for mayor (or even for a post in the local executive).

### *Reserved seats and quotas*

The allotment of a specific number of reserved seats on elective bodies (in accordance with pre-established criteria) is a measure aimed at guaranteeing minimum representation for specific groups. Probably the best known example is the allotment of reserved seats to minority parties in majority or mainly majority systems.

Nevertheless, this measure can also serve other purposes such as improving the geographical representation of the various areas of a major city or the representation of women, a minority or another specific group in the local bodies.

Quotas have the same aim, but operate differently. They may involve drawing up lists, in which case a minimum number of candidates from under-represented groups has to be included in the lists. This measure is most commonly used to promote fairer representation of women.

Where electoral legislation provides for compulsory quotas, it restricts the freedom of parties and groups to select candidates. Furthermore, in some cases the political parties themselves fix the quotas.

However, the efficacy of this measure depends on the form taken by the lists and whether or not the electors can cast preference votes. For instance, if the lists are not blocked, in which case it is for the electors to choose among candidates from a list using their individual votes, the results are liable to be rather meaningless.

Quotas can also be applied to seats in the municipal bodies. This measure was adopted in Finland in order to guarantee balanced representation of women, and has proved extremely effective.

#### IV. INSTRUMENTS OF DIRECT PARTICIPATION

As stated before, direct participation refers to a number of mechanisms and procedures that allow citizens to be associated either in the regulatory activity or in the actual administration of local public services.

The importance of direct participation for the functioning of democratic systems is widely and strongly recognised.

Resolution 1121 (1997) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe states from the very beginning that: “a truly living democracy depends on the active contribution of all citizens. Their participation in political life and their co-operation within political institutions are thus a decisive factor for the smooth functioning of democratic institutions”.

This also applies well when it comes to local public life. In this respect, Recommendation No R (96) 2 of the Committee of Ministers on referendums and popular initiatives at local level recalls that: “... the right of citizens to have their say in major decisions on long-term or virtually irreversible commitments involving a majority of citizens is one of the democratic principles common to all member states of the Council of Europe”. Then, it adds that: “... this right can be most directly exercised at local level and that the management of important local affairs should involve more effective citizen participation while losing none of its efficiency”.

On the same line, according to guideline No. 14 in appendix to the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states No. R (97) 7 on local public services and the rights of their users: “local authorities should encourage the participation of users or their representatives in the management of local public services by means which are in conformity with the nature of the service and the circumstances”.<sup>1</sup>

Direct participation can take place at three different levels in the decision-making process: consideration of the issues to be dealt with and instigation of regulatory measures, the taking of decisions and the implementation of decisions. Each phase may involve types of participation that differ in nature, scope and impact:

- informative and consultative participation;
- decision-making participation;
- participation in implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> It is also stated that: “formal participation in the decision-making process can be usefully introduced, especially in what are clearly ‘community’ services, such as social, cultural and educational services, for example, through: *ad hoc* joint committees, representatives of residents on council committees or on the boards of directors, annual meetings between representatives of service and their users, with an agenda drawn up by mutual consent, etc.”.

## **A. Informative and consultative participation**

### ***1. Access to information***

It is fair to say that the right to be informed is a pre-condition of any form of participation. It is not possible to contribute to local life effectively without having sufficient information. It is no accident that certain states have referred to lack of openness and inadequacy of the information available to citizens as two of the main problems facing the development of local democracy.

Citizens' right to be properly informed was in fact seen as definitely relevant both to popular participation in regulatory activity at local level and to citizens' involvement in the administration of local public services.

Access to information is an integral part of participation machinery. For example, referendums and popular initiatives aimed at obtaining referendums or legislation are generally based on information campaigns, just as elections are preceded by an electoral campaign. When local council meetings are public and the agenda and meeting documents are available, this enables citizens to take the floor, where there is provision for this; where the public is consulted on urban planning matters, access to and dissemination of information are a basic and indispensable prerequisite.

Access to information is also provided by allowing citizens (under certain conditions) to consult public documents kept by the authorities, and by giving municipalities the opportunity to report on their activities using a variety of methods.

In some countries, the importance given to this right has prompted not only provisions concerning specific procedures, but also more general rules and laws on access to documents and the obligation on local authorities to inform citizens.

Spain is one example. There the law laying the foundations of the local system (LRBRL) stipulates that local authorities must provide as comprehensive information as possible on their activities and that citizens have the right to request copies of agreements concluded by the local authorities and to consult the archives or registers in the manner laid down by law. Particular importance is attached to participation through information and consultation in town planning and spatial development. Local regulations which have been preliminarily approved shall be shown publicly for thirty days so as to give all interested parties the possibility of presenting claims or suggestions to which the plenary assembly must reply when finally adopting the regulations.

Norway also adopted legislation in 1992 stipulating that local authorities must encourage maximum dissemination of information on their activities and provide for public access to their management methods.

In Belgium, the law of 12 November 1997, concerning the publicity of municipal and provincial administration, provides for measures of active and passive publicity to the benefit of citizens in order to give them more possibilities of intervening and participating in the decision-making process.



In Bulgaria, the law on local self-government and administration provides for publication of any decisions taken and requires municipal councillors to inform their electors of decisions and then listen to their questions and submit them as requests to the municipal council, which must answer them at the following sitting.

In “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” the Local Government Act provides that the mayors shall publish acts and decisions of the local councils in the official gazettes of the local government units. Thus, all the 123 municipalities publish their official municipal gazettes. The sessions of the municipal councils are open to public, and local TV stations broadcast some of them. The mass media has a special function in disseminating information on the local government system. Both public and private local broadcasting companies have the duty to inform the citizens on the local issues and problems, including those concerning the functioning of the local authorities. There is also a special private magazine on local government, called “123” providing information on local events and more in general on local government in the country. In 1998, citizens initiated a third of the lawsuits before the Constitutional Court concerning local government issues and this shows the level of public awareness on these issues.

In 1995, Denmark adopted provisions requiring local authorities to issue biennial declarations of their objectives *vis-à-vis* development of local services for the coming years, including the content and scope of proposed public services. Municipal councils must also report on operations carried out by non-municipal enterprises on contract. In order to provide citizens with information to improve their understanding of the concept of equality between women and men in the labour context, municipalities and counties are required to report on any action they have taken in this field *vis-à-vis* their employees.

Since 1998 in Ireland, general legislation on freedom of information has applied to all aspects of local government, an innovation on top of the previous specific consultative requirements on, for example, environmental and physical planning issues.

Since 1985 in the United Kingdom, all agendas and papers to be discussed at council meetings have been made available to the public before the meeting; they remain open for inspection, along with the record of the meeting, for six years after the meeting. Background papers are also available for four years after the meeting. These arrangements will change under current proposals for a separate executive to be created within councils. The executive and, for the first time, officers will be required to publish papers in advance only in respect of decisions which are of significant local interest or cost; all papers will continue to be available after decisions are taken. The executive will be questioned and held to account in public meetings of overview and scrutiny committees.

## **2. *Dialogue between local authorities and citizens***

While citizens need to be properly informed in order to be able to play an effective part in the decision-making process, they themselves are also a necessary source of information for local authorities. Local authorities’ ability to engage in dialogue with their citizens is a crucial factor in the proper management of local affairs. Various arrangements may be used to bring about such dialogue.

This set of arrangements includes: consultative local referendums (or popular consultations),<sup>1</sup> popular initiatives,<sup>2</sup> public assemblies or meetings of citizens (provided for by the statutes or convened by the local authorities, sometimes at the initiative of local electors);<sup>3</sup> the right to speak at council meetings; the right of petition (individual or group) and, more generally, the

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1 In several cases statistical data on use of the referendum are not available or non-existent. Apparently, the instrument is little used. In Spain, participation through residents' associations is more common than direct consultation of the municipal electorate; since the 1985 entry into force of the LRBRL, up to February 1998 the central authorities have received only sixty-six applications for permission to hold municipal referendums. In Luxembourg, there have been two referendums and two consultation exercises since their introduction by the Municipal Act of 1988. In the Netherlands, consultative referendums were rare before 1990, since then, the use of this instrument has been on the increase. In Finland, municipal referendums have been organised in twenty-six of 453 municipalities during the years 1991-1999, three of them based on an initiative from the local residents. Only in one case the decision of the local council differed from the results of a consultative referendum. In Iceland, the local authorities rarely give voters the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, in particular through referendums. In Norway as well, referendums are uncommon. In Sweden, only about 7 per cent of municipalities have held referendums.

There may be a number of reasons for this: it may only be bodies of the local authority that can instigate one; a local authority may have limited scope for embarking on new projects because of restricted powers and/or lack of financial resources available; low degree of community interest in local affairs and/or lack of information; a combination of these.

Switzerland is a case apart, as not only is the system of municipal organisation with a deliberative assembly open to all citizens used by the majority of municipalities, but also – where a local parliament exists – the referendum instrument, and also the right of popular initiatives, are very largely recognised and used.

In addition to the information given in Appendix VII, reference can be made – in particular with regard to Switzerland – to the CDLR report *Local referendums, No.52*, in the series “Local and Regional Authorities in Europe”.

2 It would appear that provision for this device is made only in a minority of states, that its use is restricted and that it probably has less real impact on the decision-making process than the referendum does. Concerning action taken in response to popular initiatives, information is available in only a few cases:

- in Bulgaria, many questions, notably in connection with changing the boundaries of or creating municipalities and mayoralties, have been settled through direct citizen participation in local democracy;
- in Finland, there have been three referendums on inhabitants' initiatives between 1991 and 1998;
- in Sweden, there have been sixty popular initiatives since the rule on popular initiatives was incorporated into the Local Government Act (1 July 1994) one of which has been granted; however, no assembly has yet decided to hold the requested referendum;
- in Switzerland, in the canton of Fribourg, the right to popular initiatives was introduced at the beginning of the 1990s; to date, only four initiatives have been presented:
  - two in 1990 (the General Council of the town of Fribourg agreed to two initiatives and there were no popular consultations),
  - two in 1999 (one of which is pending and the other which has been refused by the General Council).

In the town of Zurich, thirty-six initiatives have been presented between January 1986 and July 1999.

In the town of Neuchâtel, the right to popular initiatives has existed since the cantonal law on political rights of 17 October 1984 entered into force. This law establishes that “15 per cent of the municipal electorate may request the adoption, modification or abrogation of municipal regulations, of a decision of the general council (apart from those of nominations) or of any project of interest to the municipality. The initiative may have the form of a proposal drafted in general terms or the form of an exhaustive draft project”. In 1999, three initiatives were launched. The number of signatures required has not been achieved for two of them. The third one has been accepted by the general council of the town.

3 As an example, in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” a meeting of citizens can be convened, for the entire municipality or for a part of it, by the mayor on his/her own initiative or upon the request of at least 10 per cent of the concerned electorate. The meeting of the citizens may adopt, by a majority vote, general guidelines regarding the works of the municipal bodies. The latter are obliged to take into consideration these guidelines by adopting the appropriate decisions or acts within the following ninety days.

possibility of submitting proposals or applications to local bodies; and mandatory public enquiries in certain areas (typically, urban planning and development); children's or youth councils, which have become fairly prominent in a number of countries as an instrument for participation and school or democracy for young citizens.

Consultative participation is more profound than information participation and has a more interactive nature. It exists between the municipal organisation and the inhabitants, for example, in co-operative planning and city forums. Other approaches of this kind are the citizens' juries, citizens' panels and planning cells. One important aspect in them is "deliberation": a public discussion of public issues, which can foster a habit of citizenship.

In general, these mechanisms are governed by legislation or regulations. There are also less formal means of exerting influence, such as direct approaches to local representatives, lobbying through associations and action within political parties. The local authorities themselves sometimes conduct surveys and opinion polls or hold public hearings.

In some countries, such as the Netherlands, new technologies are beginning to be used, for example in distance consultations of the community on the Internet. In Finland, more than 90 per cent of municipalities have their own home pages on Internet; over half of them include feedback channels. About 10 per cent of municipalities have created debate forums in their home pages. All Finnish municipalities, together with the Finnish Broadcasting Corporation, are providing a so-called "election machine" service on Internet, with the purpose of increasing participation and voting in local elections in October 2000. In the nationwide participation project, the Youth Council of the City of Espoo has created on Internet an "idea factory", where the ideas will be moderated into motions, opinions or letters, which will be returned on to the virtual forum for a vote. Where the proposal ends up as a simple majority, it will proceed on to the signature page for final approval. As soon as the original idea has gone all the way through argumentation and voting to final approvals, the completed motion, letter or opinion will be sent to municipalities, decision-makers or the media. Thus citizens have a variety of ways of making their views known on the main questions of interest to the community.

One step further still: the Internet could also serve as means of an interactive council meeting, which, however, none of the member countries reported to have experimented on. Tele-democracy and digital arenas provide new technological means for exercising citizens' democratic rights, the scope of which is most likely going to enlarge in the future.

## **B. Decision-making participation**

### ***1. Decision-making referendum***

The first instrument that springs to mind in discussing decision-making participation is the decision-making referendum. This instrument exists at the local level in several countries (see Appendix VII).

It would appear that in general, and subject to a few restrictions which are specifically laid down, any matter for which the municipality has jurisdiction, as well as questions specifically provided for by law, may be put to decision-making referendum (but this also applies to consultative referendum).

This instrument is widely used in Switzerland, sometimes called “the country of direct democracy” (although the word “semi-direct” would be more appropriate); in this country, almost any issue on the political agenda can be put into a referendum, which in general is decision-making.

One area where a referendum is most often required is that of creating, merging or abolishing local authorities or altering their boundaries. The subjects excluded mainly have to do with the budget and local finances, but there are also highly political matters among them (such as election or dismissal of the mayor by the town council).

A further common feature is the need for a sufficiently high voter turnout for the referendum to be valid. The minimum participation is often 51 per cent of the electorate. Some countries set a legal minimum below this threshold, while in others the percentage is established in the municipal statutes and can therefore vary from one municipality to the next.

## **2. *Assemblies of citizens with decision-making powers***

In some countries assemblies of citizens do not only have a consultative role, but can also take binding decisions.

In Bulgaria, for instance, the general assembly (convened by the mayor *proprio motu*, on a council decision or at the request of one quarter of the electors), may take decisions on an absolute majority. Such decisions are valid provided at least one third of the electorate takes part. The mayor must either act to implement the assembly’s decision or submit a proposed decision or decree to the council. Nevertheless, if the mayor considers that the assembly’s decision is not in the interests of the community, he/she may suspend its enforcement. In such cases he/she must bring the matter before the council to enable the latter to reach a final decision on the requisite action.

In some cases the general assembly of citizens is an expression of a direct local democracy system rather than a decision-making mechanism used as an alternative to council decisions. This is the case, for example, of Spain (in municipalities with under one hundred inhabitants and those which have traditionally used or more recently opted for the so-called “open council” system) and Portugal (in parishes with a population of under two hundred).

## **3. *Participation of citizens/users to bodies with decision-making powers***

Here, user boards seem to be the most typical case, where the boards have been delegated decision rights. In the other cases, they may be a mean of informative and consultative participation, or of executive participation. They will be discussed further later in the text.

It should be remembered that delegation of decision-making power to a body independent from the local authorities normally requires explicit legal authority to do so. This is the case for example in Denmark and in the Netherlands, where local authorities, however, are free to establish committees having just a consultative character.

In Ireland, a new approach seeks to involve direct participation alongside councillors by the social partners (trade unions, voluntary associations, etc.) in committees, with a view to helping formulate local policies.

Similarly, in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, the local council committees include both local councillors and external experts.

In Slovenia a municipality shall establish a council for the protection of consumers of public goods as a mandatory body for consumer protection. This is a committee of the citizens who participate in the decision-making process of the municipal council, when it decides on matters pertaining to commercial (municipal services, road maintenance, gas pipelines, public transport, etc.) and social

public services (schools, kindergartens, old-age homes, etc.) The body submits comments and proposals with regard to the performance of local commercial companies.

### **C. Participation in implementation**

The quality and efficiency of public services are vitally important, and the debate on measures to promote democratic participation also incorporates this aspect.

Citizens, in some countries at least, now seem to attach greater importance to the role their local authorities play as service providers than to the role they play as forums for political expression. The emphasis is placed on management and the ability effectively to meet needs and expectations in spite of the prevailing financial constraints. Citizens therefore wish to have a better understanding of the management processes and to be involved in them more closely.

Participation in implementation is especially linked to the participation of citizens in providing local public services. Citizens and/or their associations may take direct control over certain community functions, like for example care of the environment, (part of the) services provided for the elderly, help and guidance for children with difficulties at school, etc. They often involve voluntary work in their service production. The municipal organisation can strengthen the preconditions for this kind of participation, for example by supporting financially the inhabitants' own projects, or by purchasing services from them.

One example: the community foundation of the town of Prešov in the Slovak Republic offers the citizens financial support to implement projects in the areas of environment, culture, health and social work, education, sports and democracy, as well as the promotion of an ethnically and religiously tolerant environment. Grants can be sought by individuals and groups alike, as well as by third sector and other non-profit organisations operating on the town's territory.

User boards give the citizens a more direct influence on local public services based on their role as users. They have influence on several major public service areas at local level, but they seem to be most widespread for the social services and the area of education. In some member countries user boards are obligatory according to legislation in several fields. Sometimes local government voluntarily establishes them.

In Denmark, user boards are required by legislation for example in the following areas: public day nursery units, primary schools and grammar schools; general, voluntary education (for adults as well as for the young) and for vocational training centres. A council for policy concerning the elderly and a board of appeal regarding public domestic services for the elderly also exist on a legislative basis. For each area the tasks of the user boards are described in the corresponding legislation.

In the Danish model in most of the user boards the user representatives make up the majority and staff representatives are present. The user boards are normally connected to the management of one single institution. The definition of the user group varies. In some areas, the primary users are directly involved, for example the elderly in the municipality, who receive public domestic services and the students at grammar schools. However, often the user boards involve the “secondary” users, for example the parents of children cared for in day nursery or taught at school.

In June 1998 the Danish Ministry of the Interior published a survey of user board experiences. The survey included both a user opinion poll and experiences from the other major stakeholders, i.e. mayors, institution managers and user board chairmen.

In general, the survey showed a positive perception of the democratic function of the user boards. The users widely agreed, that user boards improve the democratic influence, that they enhance the communication with the local government politicians, that users feel represented by the user boards, and that the user boards are up to date with respect to the users’ needs and wishes.

The survey implied that in reality the user boards are often more focused on the role of an advocate for more resources to the institution, rather than on internal tasks of the institution. In accordance with this, the survey indicated some expenditure pressure on local government, and to some extent this pressure also resulted in higher grants.

In spite of this, the mayors, institution managers and user board chairmen were in general satisfied with the user boards. Only a few significant problems and conflicts between the user boards and local governments arose. Furthermore, institution managers reported that the user boards have strengthened rather than weakened the daily management of the institution.

Therefore, it can be agreed on that participation of citizens in the management of local public services often represents a valuable resource in kind, and serves to develop community spirit and to strengthen solidarity between various groups of citizens. It deserves to be promoted and facilitated by all possible means. Local residents are naturally qualified to also deal directly with matters affecting them and their fellow-citizens;<sup>1</sup> there can be no doubt about it.

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1 See “Guidelines for local public services in Europe”, Appendix to Recommendation No. R (97) 7.

## V. THE ROLE OF ASSOCIATIONS

What is it that associations in their variety and diversity offer local democracy? Associations exist for a range of reasons. Their dominant purpose is often nothing to do with the formal world of politics, although in many instances associations become involved in lobbying or the delivery of welfare or other publicly funded services. Associations exist, however, primarily to represent the views and interest of their members. They succeed if they serve members well. Their independence needs to be respected. Their strength and unique contribution comes because of their distance from formal government institutions and bureaucracies. Associations need no other rationale or justification than the opportunity they provide for like-minded citizens to band together for their mutual benefit. It is a fundamental human right to have the choice to belong or not to belong to an association.

Associations have been seen as making a fundamental contribution to the quality of democratic politics in modern society. A thriving civil society is seen as a check on state activities and a basis from which political mobilisation and representation can emerge. From Tocqueville to contemporary writers such as Putnam associations and more broadly an active civil society are seen as a guarantor of good democratic governance.

What from a democratic perspective do associations potentially contribute to decision-making? It is helpful to think about three broad types of democratic function performed by associations.

First, associations provide a forum for people to learn the skills of co-operation and a sense of solidarity and public-spiritedness. People learn how to organise, speak, listen and work together. They gain a sense of collective commitment and responsibility. They achieve a sense of responsibility for shared problems and a capacity to think through collective solutions. In short, associations play a training role: basic political skills are imparted and the ethos of a democratic approach to solving societal problems is encouraged.

Second, associations provide a forum for the construction and maintenance of “voice”. associations help people to understand, clarify and express their collective interests and concerns. This role of “interest articulation” is vital to democratic politics. Given the complexity and scale of modern government neither elections nor opportunities for direct participation between elections can ensure that government understands all the particular and specialist needs and concerns of diverse groups. Associations play a major role in ensuring that the input side of the political system has the capacity to cope with the extraordinary variety and complexity of the outputs produced by modern government. The responsiveness and effectiveness of democratic governance is enhanced by the presence of associations giving voice to the diversity of interests and circumstances that citizens are confronted with in their daily lives.

Third a dense network of associations delivers a third function for a democratic system: it helps in the search for solutions and it can ensure that decisions are implemented effectively. Associations can identify, even test, solutions to the problems. They provide a dynamic source of ideas and experimentation. Associations may become part of the solution. In fact, associations partly take over the role of political parties and deal with problems that have been neglected in political circles.

Through the ability to reach those that the formal arms of government find it more difficult to form a positive relationship with and through their broad capacity to encourage and support implementation associations provide a vital function in democratic governance.

The role of associations is especially strongly linked with the perspectives on participation that emphasise the value of the politics of presence and deliberation. The active involvement of associations in decision-making can ensure the representation of marginalised groups and achieve the virtue of presence in that policies are worked out with rather than for a politically excluded constituency. Associations may also create the environment for a politics of deliberation if political fora enable them to engage in debate with others and step beyond the simple advocacy of their own interests.

There are a number of qualifications to be considered in assessing the contribution of associations to local democracy:

- there is a danger that inequalities in civil society will through associations be simply transmitted to the political domain. Associations with the most resources tend to be the best organised and develop the loudest voice. Unless deliberate efforts are made to encourage the excluded and disorganised associations may promote in the world of politics the advantages already held by some groups and interests in the world of civil society;
- associations themselves can be challenged about the degree to which they are representative of the interests for which they claim to speak. The democratic procedures and qualities of some associations may not be ideal. Associations may not provide an airing for the voice of the excluded but rather that of the self-appointed leader;
- associations vary so much in scale and capacity that it is vital to recognise that the contribution they make to good democratic governance needs to be judged on the merits of each case rather than assumed as a general quality of the sector. A large-scale, well-funded social care voluntary association employing dozens of people makes a different contribution to that of a neighbourhood-based pre-school playgroup. The former cannot claim to be a bottom-up grass roots organisation but may claim a special connection with a particular user group and an ability to help develop and implement effective policies in its area of expertise. The latter does represent the grass roots in its particular circle but it has a limited capacity in terms of some of the broader or more demanding functions of democratic governance.



Citizens' organisations and citizens' voluntary networks may have a great influence in deepening municipal democracy. Citizens' organisations can function as channels for their members' views concerning the development of the municipality, as well as offer possibilities for decision-makers, municipal office holders and municipal inhabitants to enhance equal dialogue.

Member states with high costs of welfare services sometimes turn over responsibility of those services and programmes to alternative producers, either private entrepreneurs or voluntary non-profit associations. Services and programmes operated by the latter are most often found in the recreational or social sector. Most municipalities in Sweden report positive results, when citizens' associations take over such activities from them.<sup>1</sup> In over 50 per cent of the Finnish municipalities the inhabitants' associations or village committees take care of some of the municipality's tasks.

The situation is naturally different in countries such as, for example, Hungary, where the parliament enacted a new and unified regulation on associations in 1989, ensuring freedom of choice concerning their aims and facilitating their establishment and operation. Nevertheless, local authorities in Hungary are also developing co-operation with the civic sphere. They may, for example, offer professional and administrative assistance to the establishment and operation of civic organisations, or provide cash or in-kind assistance and support to the implementation of their objectives.

The model of citizens' local participation in Spain gives considerable importance to citizens' associations representing their general or sectoral interests and channelling their participation. In a sociological – but not judicial – sense these associations have almost been integrated into the Spanish system of local self-government. The local authorities hold a municipal register of associations, which comprises the number, the objectives and representation of these, and which may be consulted when working out who can participate in consultative municipal bodies or in those associated with the management of decentralised municipal services. In big cities having *conseils de circonscription*, territorial organs with both executive and consultative functions, these generally include representatives of citizens' associations. The contacts of local elected representatives with the associations are frequent and intensive.

The Spanish associations representing citizens' interests, however, complain that, in practice, local authorities regard participation as a concession on their part rather than a civil right; and that their regulations on participation are aimed at controlling, not encouraging it; more often than not, they say, participation is confined to providing what is frequently incomplete and insufficient information.

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1 Häggroth-Kronvall-Riberdahl-Rudebeck, 1996, 71.

In the United Kingdom local authorities and representatives from the voluntary sector in their area are being encouraged to draw up local compacts which set out to codify appropriate behaviour on both sides of the local authority – voluntary sector relationship. The aim is to create a stable framework for the development of associational activity and an appropriate environment for voluntary organisations to contribute to local democracy and service provision.

As well as stimulating associational activities a strategic approach to this arena of local participation might encompass the establishment of a forum for exchange between and with associations.

Several local authorities have experimented with the establishment of a civic assembly or forum to bring together the variety of civic associations in their community to share understandings and identify common problems. The Scottish Parliament and the new arrangements for the government of Greater London are both to be accompanied by civic assemblies that will allow associations to debate issues of shared concern.

The plans for a civic forum in London, for example, suggest the inclusion of representatives from all the key bodies of civic society. It would meet two or three times a year as a whole body, with other work being conducted on an ongoing basis through smaller scale working parties. The aim would be to identify key issues and come to a consensus about the way forward. Differences are confronted and debated and issues can be put on the map to be taken forward in the formal political system. It might be possible, for example, to arrange an annual exchange with leading figures from the formal political world such as the mayor or leading assembly members.

## **VI. EXPLAINING PARTICIPATION AND NON-INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL PUBLIC LIFE**

### **A. The degree of participation and representation in the decision-making process**

The lack of involvement in local public life observed among certain groups or categories of people is typified by:

- i. low participation (or non-participation) in elections, referendums and other forms of expression of the popular will at local level, in community life (including politics) and in local public activities;
- ii. insufficient participation (or non-participation) in local bodies and hence in the local decision-making process.

A low level of participation in the democratic process is a worrying sign and affects the functioning of local democracy. It may be the result of various obstacles: legal, economic, sociological, cultural, etc. The cumulative effect of these barriers can effectively deprive the groups or categories concerned of any real possibility of becoming integrated into local public life. Even when these obstacles are surmountable, moreover, their very presence can have a de-motivating effect on the people concerned and generate feelings of apathy or rejection. The problem of lack of involvement is thus liable to intensify if these obstacles are not removed.

The level of representation cannot be analysed in the same way. While there is doubtless a link between participation and representation, it would be a mistake to assume that just because a particular group is under-represented in the decision-making process, that group has little contact with local public life. One often finds that groups, which are under-represented in the decision-making organs of local government, are no less active than other groups. Under-representation does not necessarily stem from lack of interest or commitment, therefore, but has to do with the functioning of the electoral machinery, including the rules and procedures adopted by political parties and groups for selecting candidates.

Studies on civic participation normally focus on electoral participation. The available data thus tends to concern turnout at elections or referendums. By contrast, information about other forms of participation in the political process, and in local public life in general, tends to be fairly crude and hard to come by. Data on representation are relatively easy to collect, yet only a few countries have supplied statistics on the breakdown by category of local elected representatives, based on sex, age or socio-professional category.

Overall, it appears from the information gathered that not only are certain negative trends gaining ground in several countries as regards civic participation in the democratic process in general, but certain sections of the population are universally under-represented in the decision-making process, albeit to varying degrees, while others hardly participate at all in local public life.

According to the analysis of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in its Resolution 1121 (1997); “The causes of this phenomenon are many: the contrast between the complexity of political terminology and the simplification and dramatisation of media presentations of the issues at stake; the fact that information can be communicated instantly while politicians are assumed to be slow in reaching decisions; the fact that people do not understand the complexity of the problem and expect quick, apt solutions; the discrepancy between election promises and their implementation.”

## **B. Typical cases of lack of involvement: analysis of the causes**

### **1. *The gender factor***

Women seem to be no less involved than men in local public life. Even without precise data, for example, there is no reason to suppose that women are any less active than men in NGOs and interest groups. In the countries that supplied information in this area, moreover, women seem to be just as involved as men in the various political activities such as demonstrations, petitions and initiatives. The same goes for participation in elections and referendums.

We do not have any information about the extent of women’s involvement in political parties. Certain observations made by a few states would seem to suggest that female membership of these parties is relatively low. The percentage of women is lower still in terms of candidates for elective office and reaches its lowest point in the statistics for the number of women actually elected, including at local level.

The fact is that in local and regional government in all European countries – even in Scandinavia, where women tend to be better represented in politics – women are significantly less represented than men in elected bodies.

Most balanced is the situation in Sweden, where women comprise 41.3 per cent of local elected representatives.

In Norway, once the initial barrier of election has been crossed, the level of female representation improves in certain committees appointed by elected bodies (women account for 32.7 per cent of local elected representatives, 35.9 per cent of members of local executive committees and 41.5 per cent of members of regional executive committees).

In Iceland, 28.2 per cent of local elected representatives are women. Fifteen of the total 124 municipalities have no women councillors, and women are in the majority on only eight councils.

Some countries use quotas for elective public office and even where the quotas have no legal basis; they are often applied by political parties as an unofficial rule.<sup>1</sup> However, the outcome of these measures is not always conclusive.

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1 Women in politics in the Council of Europe member states, Strasbourg 1998.

In Belgium, a law aimed at promoting a balanced participation of men and women on electoral lists was enforced in 1994. This law, which established that the number of candidates of one gender on a list could not exceed two thirds of the total, will be applied to the municipal elections of October 2000.

In Finland, where the Act of Equality between Women and Men introduced the quotas in 1995, all elective municipal offices except the municipal council must have at least 40 per cent of female members. The following figures illustrate the change that was brought about by this act:

<b>Women in municipal elective offices in Finland</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1997</b>
	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Women as chair in municipal councils	15.6	20.1
Women in municipal boards	24.5	45.0
Women as chair in municipal boards	11.0	15.0
Women in municipal committees	35.0	47.0
– general administration	28.0	44.0
– social affairs and health care	55.0	51.0
– education and culture	46.0	49.0
– municipal engineering and planning	19.0	44.0
– business	17.0	44.0

Denmark has adopted measures to encourage access to politics for women, including an annual schedule of municipal council meetings enabling women to reconcile political and family life more easily, and granting a supplementary allowance to municipal councillors with children under the age of 10, so that more parents, especially mothers, can take part in political life. This money is intended for child-care expenses arising out of political work.

The tables in Appendix XI give data on participation of women in political life in the member countries. More accurate statistics on the participation of women in standard-setting political activities was provided by a number of countries. They show that the number of seats women hold in the city or town councils and in the executive boards increases with the number of inhabitants.

In Swiss cities and towns the share of female councillors varies from 25 per cent in towns with under 10 000 inhabitants to 34 per cent in those having 100 000 or more inhabitants. The same kind of relationship can be found in regard with the executive boards: in the total of five big cities the share of women in these is over 34 per cent, in medium-sized towns (10 000 to 50 000 inhabitants) it is around 20 per cent, and in small towns only a little more than 13 per cent.

It may further be observed that in Bulgaria, in Spain and possibly elsewhere too, female local elected representatives tend to be better educated than their male counterparts.

While the percentage of female councillors is often higher than that of female national representatives (but has not, though, reached parity in any country), the percentage of women mayors or members of the executive bodies of local and regional assemblies is much lower, in almost all the countries, than the number of women present in these assemblies would presuppose.<sup>1</sup> Campaigns targeting the role of women in local and regional decision-making, and especially encouraging young girls and women to get involved in local public life, could therefore be useful. Setting up municipal councils for children ensuring a balanced representation of girls and boys would be good training for local citizenship.

All in all, available data shows that under-representation of women is very much bound up with the perception of their role by society (and by some women themselves).

The consequences are:

- obstacles in organising everyday life (insufficient child-care structures, working hours that take no account of the requirements of family life, etc); in practice, this prevents women from becoming really involved in political, and particularly political party life;
- the fact that women are to some extent overlooked in selection of political party officials and candidates for electoral lists, and election of local managers.

The vicious circle closes when people end up believing that political commitment is primarily a matter for men.<sup>2</sup>

The best results have been obtained wherever civil society has managed to eliminate its preconceptions about the role of women (and of men). This has enabled them to identify and implement strategies and measures geared to giving women a genuine choice in accordance with their interests.

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1 Resolution of CEMR's Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities prepared for the European Summit for Equal Opportunities, Paris, 1999.

2 We should mention the observations and concerns expressed at the seminar on the prospects for equal opportunities in the enlarged Europe organised by the CEMR in Sofia in March 1998, at the invitation of the National Association of Municipalities of the Republic of Bulgaria and with the support of the European Commission's Women's Information Unit (DG X):

- the political situation of women in central and eastern Europe is not very different from that in the European Union, but it might be jeopardised by the problems linked to economic transition;
- women are the most vulnerable section of the population because they are too taken up with their day-to-day difficulties to become genuinely involved in politics and thus improve their representation. Education, which must now be paid for, is a major issue in women's access to democratic life.

## 2. *The “age” factor*

A close look at the age structure of local elected representatives reveals the following:

*i. The age bracket which is best represented is 40-50 years.*

In all the countries that supplied statistics on this subject, over a third of local elected representatives belong to this bracket (corresponding to roughly 18 per cent of the adult population). Local elected representatives who fall into this category account for 34.1 per cent of the total in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, 35.8 per cent in Bulgaria, 44.6 per cent in Lithuania, 40 per cent in Slovenia and 44.4 per cent in Poland. It is also worth noting that in Spain,<sup>1</sup> 57.5 per cent of municipal councillors and 65 per cent of mayors are aged between 30 and 49; in Bulgaria, municipal councillors within this bracket represent 61 per cent and in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” more than three quarters of the total.

*ii. Young people under the age of 30.*

Approximately 22 per cent of the adult population in countries where the minimum age at which a person may be elected is 18) are distinctly under-represented. In Lithuania, for instance, they account for just 2 per cent of local elected representatives; in Denmark 3 per cent; in Bulgaria, in Iceland and in Finland less than 5 per cent. In Spain, the under-30s account for 19 per cent of councillors but only 4.8 per cent of mayors. In Belgium, only one mayor is under the age of 30 and only twenty-five (i.e. 4.2 per cent) mayors are under 40.

There are no data available concerning young people’s involvement in NGOs; certain references in a few replies would seem to suggest that young people are less represented in these associations than other adults. Youth participation in “street” political activities (demonstrations, petitions, initiatives) is at least equal to that of other age groups; young people, however, show a lower turnout at local elections and referendums. In Norway, for example, in the 1995 local elections, 33 per cent of voters in the age group between 18 and 21 used their vote, and 45 per cent of those aged between 22 and 29, compared with the national average of 63 per cent. Also in Finland the voting percentage of young people in municipal elections is below average and the share of those under 30 of the elected representatives is less than 5 per cent.

There are several possible explanations for these statistics:

- the increasing concern by young people about their future in a European society where the scourge of unemployment continues unabated;
- increased mobility on the part of young people (they are now much more likely to travel around to study or find a job than they were not so long ago), which makes it more difficult for them to identify with a given community and its problems;
- their interest in issues and problems that transcend and cannot be solved at the local level;
- instruments of participation that preclude the full expression of their viewpoints and expectations;
- lack of openness on the part of political parties, whose structures and hierarchies might well be becoming rather hidebound.

*iii. The elderly are also under-represented.*

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<sup>1</sup> Figures concerning the age and socio-operational categories of local elected representatives in Spain that appear in this chapter refer to the situation after the elections held in 1995. In Appendix XII, provisional figures are given for the situation after the elections held in 1999.

Some countries report difficulties in ensuring the necessary infrastructure to make it possible for the elderly to use their right to vote. This may partly account for their under-representation.

Long distances, difficult access to a voting locality, lack of possibility for distant, postal or home voting, may all contribute to cut off the influence of the elderly people in local politics.

### **3. *The “socio-operational category” factor***

On the basis of the information supplied by the national delegations, there are three observations to be made.

*i. The standard of education of local elected representatives improves with the size of the municipality.*

In Spain, for example, 64 per cent of councillors in municipalities with fewer than 5 000 inhabitants and 21 per cent in municipalities with over 20 000 inhabitants have only primary education, while 14.4 per cent and 36 per cent respectively are educated to university level. The difference in the percentage of mayors who have received only primary education in small and large municipalities is even greater, the proportions being 55.3 per cent and 2.6 per cent respectively.

*ii. Categories with a high social profile are well represented.*

In Spain, for example, 22.8 per cent of elected representatives in municipalities with fewer than 5 000 inhabitants are farmers. At the same time, 23 per cent of Spanish mayors are owners of SMEs (fewer than five employees). These figures are considerably higher than the percentage of the electorate who belong to these categories in relation to the total electorate and can be attributed to their high social standing in the municipalities concerned. In some countries, intellectuals are also very well represented among local elected representatives. This is particularly true of certain central and eastern European countries such as Hungary and the Czech Republic, where intellectuals have been at the forefront of the changes that have occurred in the past ten years.

*iii. Public servants are over-represented.*

In Spain, for example, “public sector professionals” account for 36.8 per cent of mayors in municipalities with more than 20 000 inhabitants. In Norway, public servants account for 33 per cent of municipal council and 44 per cent of county council members, while their share of the whole population is not more than 18 per cent. The situation is similar in many other countries, too.

This might be partly due to the fact that public sector employees have more time (or indeed opportunities for adapting working hours to their requirements) and facilities (linked to their contracts and job security) to act as local councillor than persons working in the private sector. However, one powerful factor is undoubtedly their closer acquaintance with political circles, the working of local administration and the problems facing local elected representatives.

### **4. *Other factors which influence participation and/or representation***

*i. The available data show that ethnic and cultural minorities tend to be under-represented in the elected organs of local government. In the Netherlands, for example, where minorities make up approximately 10 per cent<sup>1</sup> of the population, they hold just 0.6 per cent of municipal council seats.*

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<sup>1</sup> Minorities include also foreigners without Dutch nationality, who have the right to vote and stand in local elections, if they live in the municipality concerned.



*ii. As regards immigrants, their involvement in public affairs seems to increase with the length of their residence in the country concerned.*

This was the result of a study made in Norway concerning foreigners with both western and non-western background. For the whole group the election turnout increases together with the length of their stay in Norway. Moreover, their level of activity as to participation in direct political action like making contact with politicians, signing appeals or participating in demonstrations, was almost the same as that of the Norwegians in 1995.<sup>1</sup>

*iii. Social marginalisation very often goes hand in hand with isolation from the political process.*

In some countries, integration mechanisms have been introduced which are also designed to make it easier for certain categories of socially excluded persons to exercise their voting rights.

*iv. In a few countries, disabled people still encounter obstacles to participation in local public life.*

The necessary measures to enable them to actually exercise their electoral rights are in some cases inadequate or even non-existent. We have no available data on their level of representation, but there is every reason to suppose that it is virtually, if not completely non-existent.

The table in Appendix XII provides an outline of the information supplied by the states concerning the participation and representation of the various categories and social groups.

Concerning any of the groups under-represented it is likely that the so-called “democratic deficit” is bigger on the higher levels of administration than on the lower ones. If members of a minority group are not elected, they cannot possibly become members of executive boards or hold the chair either (as these are usually appointed/elected among the councillors).

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<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, after granting the right to vote to foreigners resident in the country for three years or more in 1983, Norway has seen the overall turnout of foreign citizens in local elections to decline from 46 per cent in 1983 to 39 per cent in 1995.

The typical groups experiencing under-representation are partly overlapping. For example unemployed women are likely to be rare members of the municipal bodies. This may be a problem, as unemployment among women is higher than ever (12,3 per cent in the European Union countries)<sup>1</sup> even officially, not to mention “hidden” unemployment, which does not show in the statistics.

In the Netherlands, special measures have been undertaken in order to foster the participation of women from the ethnic minorities in local public life and in 1998 the number of women councillors from ethnic and cultural minorities have almost quadrupled in comparison to 1994 elections.

There are no quick solutions concerning any one of the under-represented groups. An easy attempt, the result of which is far from certain, is the encouragement of minority group members to take part in elections and to vote for members of the same or another minority group. This can take place by directed information, which is easily accessible (e.g. in public libraries, schools, the Internet) or by any other measures found effective. Usually this kind of “solidarity” does not work, especially between different groups of minor representation.

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1 The European Parliament, September 1998.

## APPENDIX I

**Summary of national replies on current issues concerning local democracy and democratic participation**

COUNTRY	CURRENT ISSUES
<b>Belgium</b>	<p>Article 8 of the Constitution, which reserved political – including electoral – rights to Belgian citizens, has been modified. The law on the transposition of Directive 94/80/EC of the Council of the European Union of 19 December 1994 (exercise of the right to vote or stand in municipal elections by citizens of the Union residing in a member state of which they do not have the nationality) has been adopted. EU citizens will be able to vote in municipal elections in October 2000. The right to vote in municipal elections could be extended, by a law voted by a simple majority, to other foreign residents, but not before the municipal elections in October 2006.</p> <p>The principle of local popular consultation is now enshrined in the Constitution (new Article 41.2).</p> <p>The financial and social status of local representatives (remuneration, allowances, attendance fees, pensions, social security, etc.) and regulations on leave for holding a local political office have been improved. The system of multiple office holding has been revised. The objective was to draw up a legal framework to facilitate holding political office at municipal level and allow office holders to devote the necessary time to administering their municipality.</p>
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<p>Achieving greater financial autonomy. Today, local tax rates are set by law; local taxes are collected by the state tax authorities.</p> <p>Transfer of state property to the local authorities. Implementation of the 1996 Act on Municipal Property showed that there were a number of weaknesses. The was amended in 1999. The changes concern, among other things: the definition of the extent and content of municipal property; adjustments to the competition procedure (in parallel to the procedure for public procurement) concerning tenancy of municipal property (the local council can now decide on a longer duration of the tenancy); improvements in regulations on expropriation and permissions; a more effective operation of municipal enterprises, and so on. All these changes aim at improving management of municipal property and increasing the financial autonomy of local authorities.</p> <p>In the area of shared powers, the balance between the rights and responsibilities of the various ministries and the local authorities must be improved.</p> <p>Other problems result from having a large number of supervisory bodies whose activities often go beyond reviewing legality.</p>
<b>Croatia</b>	<p>Review of local authorities' powers and of local authority finances</p> <p>Territorial reform (increase in the number of municipalities and granting of town status to some municipalities).</p> <p>The country has new local units which have insufficient resources and therefore find it impossible to sustain reconstruction. Financial equalisation among the various local units is also facing difficulties. Local elections have been very complicated.</p>
<b>Czech Republic</b>	<p>The government approved a new draft law on municipalities and other draft laws concerning a substantial reform of public administration. The main issue is creating new self-government at regional (<i>kraje</i>) level, i.e. a significant decentralisation of the country. If approved by parliament, the reform laws will be in force from 1 January 2001.</p> <p>The draft law on municipalities provides for new forms of citizen participation in local public life, such as the right of petition concerning the budgetary procedures or decisions in the field of own competencies and the possibility of giving opinions on the management of municipal property.</p>

COUNTRY	CURRENT ISSUES
<b>Denmark</b>	<p>Municipalities and counties have been given responsibility for more and more tasks. Citizens focus more on the function of local authorities as producers of services than on their role of democratic arenas. User participation opportunities have increased and citizens are involved in the running of local public services.</p> <p>Number of candidates in local elections has fallen by almost 25% in fifteen years.</p> <p>Participation in local elections declined until 1993, but increased again (above 70%) in the two last elections (in 1993 and 1997).</p>
<b>Estonia</b>	<p>Citizens are too rarely involved in the municipal decision-making and remain relatively passive, even if the councils ask for their opinion.</p> <p>Citizens' lack of interest in politics; their participation in local elections is modest.</p> <p>There is insufficient information on political parties, their programmes and local government activities.</p> <p>The system of local government has changed three times in seven years. The present system comprises a single tier of government, with the possibility of voluntary participation.</p> <p>A committee of experts has drawn up a report which indicates a need for more forms of direct democracy and an extension of municipalities' competencies.</p>
<b>Finland</b>	<p>Municipalities are currently taking care of nearly two thirds of public services. Even though most municipal responsibilities are mandatory, municipal self-government has been constantly increased. The participation of citizens in local public life is strongly secured in the Constitution, in the Local Government Act as well as in special legislation concerning, among other things, the environment, community planning and building regulations.</p> <p>Despite the strong legislative basis, there are many problems concerning citizens' participation and their possibility to influence the political process. Citizens' interest in representative democracy is declining: voter turnouts in municipal elections show a downward tendency and respect for public institutions and political parties is diminishing.</p> <p>Based on the government's programme, the Ministry of the Interior introduced in February 1997 a <i>participation project</i> in order to increase citizens' possibilities of participation and their influence on common affairs. The project also focuses on the need to improve the relationship between the system of representative democracy and citizens' direct participation.</p>
<b>Germany</b>	<p>Since citizens feel they are no longer represented locally, their participation in public life at local level is declining and they are apathetic about activities run for the community.</p> <p>Facing a reduction in resources, municipal authorities complain of the fact that they are being given new responsibilities with no assurance of the necessary funding.</p> <p>It is difficult to find citizens willing to volunteer their services to local political life.</p>
<b>Greece</b>	<p>Strengthen the first level local authorities and the European dimension of local government.</p> <p>Guarantee transparency and decrease political and democratic deficit.</p> <p>Deal with the problem of abstention (including the introduction of new possibilities for exercising the right of vote).</p> <p>Ensure access to any information concerning local government.</p> <p>Modernise local public services and assess their performance in order to make them more efficient.</p>
<b>Hungary</b>	<p>The relationship between local self-government and local civic organisations: the organisations display low interest in public life; local representative bodies themselves are often not willing to involve others in decision-making.</p>
<b>Iceland</b>	<p>Evolutionary phase in local democracy: changes over the past ten years (the merger of local government areas and the transfer of additional responsibilities) influence the basis of local authorities' operation and structure.</p> <p>As a result of the merger, the distance between the people and their representatives has increased and the democratic process has become more complex.</p> <p>The increase in the number and complexity of tasks handled by local authorities calls for greater professionalism.</p>
COUNTRY	CURRENT ISSUES

<b>Ireland</b>	<p>Under-representation of some groups on councils e.g. young people and women.</p> <p>Declining turnout at local elections: only about 51% at June 1999 local elections.</p> <p>Constitutional recognition for local government: national referendum in June 1999.</p> <p>Need for local government to engage with various new participative structures developed outside of local authorities and which promote rural development, social inclusion and micro industry.</p> <p>A role for local government in seeking a more co-ordinated approach by the various public agencies operating at local level.</p>
<b>Italy</b>	<p>The development of local democracy is, no doubt, related to the achievement of the most complete decentralisation of the administration, on the basis of the principles of subsidiarity and proximity of public institutions to the citizen. The effective implementation of these principles involves the entire (central and peripheral) administrative machinery, the subject of Law No. 59 of 1997 currently being carried out.</p>
<b>Latvia</b>	<p>The basic principles of local government are not stated in the constitution.</p> <p>The residents' will to participate actively in local authorities' activities has declined.</p> <p>Political parties are mostly concentrated in Riga and other large cities.</p>
<b>Lithuania</b>	<p>The size of municipalities, which are quite large.</p> <p>Society is not drawn into the management and decision-making of a municipality; on the one hand, they are not active and show little interest in getting involved in local public life; on the other hand, there are not so many legal instruments for them to exert influence upon local politicians. The recent legislative reforms aim at encouraging the activity of citizens and the accountability of local representatives, and therefore at improving local democracy. The local electoral system was amended in October 1999. In addition, the new Law on Petition (adopted on 7 July 1999 and in force since 1 October 1999) enables citizens to submit a petition to the local authorities on important matters.</p> <p>Local authorities do not actively perform their function to inform citizens and their transparency should be improved; citizens have poor knowledge of such crucial issues as the powers, obligations, rights and activity of municipalities.</p> <p>Local authorities demand an expansion of their rights. A new law on local self-government is to be prepared, to better define the functions of local authorities.</p>
<b>Luxembourg</b>	<p>There are no particular problems concerning the development of local democracy.</p>
<b>Malta</b>	<p>Lack of co-operation from certain government departments/public authorities; local authorities are statutorily obliged to refer to the respective central agencies all complaints raised by citizens in respect of competencies still retained by central government. But an intensification and further devolution of central powers are underway and a computerised complaint handling system will be implemented to deal effectively with referred complaints.</p> <p>Lack of proper consultation by certain central authorities; the law being amended to oblige all central agencies to consult local authorities on matters affecting a locality or its citizens;</p> <p>Lack of general awareness of local government administration (particularly by the public).</p> <p>Unacceptance of local councils by long-established local organisations (local councils were established only a few years ago).</p>
<b>Netherlands</b>	<p>What tasks lend themselves to action at local level?</p> <p>How to increase public interest and involvement in local politics? The electoral turnout declines, membership of political parties is low and there are problems in finding candidates.</p> <p>The internal organisation of local government (relationship between the council and its executive body).</p>

COUNTRY	CURRENT ISSUES
<b>Norway</b>	<p>Negative trend concerning the number of citizens participating in traditional established political arenas at local level: the proportion of inhabitants participating in local elections is falling; the political parties at local level tend to experience problems with recruiting new active members; the turnovers in local elected bodies are high.</p> <p>The framework for the activities of local authorities leaves little room for locally based politics and priorities; the state regulates the activities at local level too stringently (through laws, regulations and earmarked grants).</p> <p>Quality and equality in the service production of the welfare state; for the state, there is pressure in the direction of a strict standardisation and regulation of the service production at local level.</p> <p>Accordance between local authorities' tasks and resources; local authorities tend to claim that the state imposes new tasks and responsibilities on them without satisfactory financial compensation.</p>
<b>Poland</b>	<p>The 1998 reform of public administration enlarges and strengthens the legislative, institutional, organisational and financial basis of local self-government, especially through the creation of district administration bodies at two intermediate levels, the <i>poviats</i> and the voivodeships.</p> <p>The reform is increasing the possibilities for direct citizen participation in local democracy, and introducing a new division of powers, tasks and financial resources between the three tiers of self-government and state administration. The reform is an important step in the decentralisation process of the whole system of public administration.</p> <p>There is no doubt that the reform will make a significant contribution to the development of democracy and to the decentralisation, devolution and smoother operation of the entire public administration system.</p>
<b>Portugal</b>	<p>Political decision-making remote from the people.</p> <p>Complexity of the decision-making process.</p>
<b>Russian Federation</b>	<p>Consolidation of the institution of local self-government is today one of the most important subjects in Russian politics. The responsibilities given to local self-government bodies are beyond what they would be able to do according to the experience they developed. Nevertheless, local self-government presupposes a high level of "social justice", the improvement of which requires a more complicated process than the adoption of regulations.</p>
<b>San Marino</b>	<p>At present, there are no major or urgent problems affecting the development of local democracy: the new modalities according to which the <i>giunte di castello</i> (local councils) are constituted and vested with administrative functions allow greater and more active participation on the part of the population in local issues.</p>
<b>Slovak Republic</b>	<p>Lack of funds for operation of municipalities and towns.</p> <p>Unstable legal and economic environment.</p> <p>The representatives of municipalities and towns claim that there is an inadequate delegation of the powers of state administration to local self-government.</p> <p>The small size of a large number of low-populated municipalities hinders these local self-government entities from thoroughly exercising their functions.</p>
<b>Slovenia</b>	<p>The basic regulations on local self-government are still subject to modifications and must be completed. The Law on Local Self-Government is under revision; significant changes to the relations between municipal councils and mayors are envisaged, as well as new provisions on citizens' assemblies, local referendums and citizens' initiatives, which will enable a greater use of such instruments in practice.</p> <p>Other laws are under preparation. They relate to: the creation of regions as the second level of local self-government; the regional development (including the definition of criteria for municipalities with special status); the budgetary principles and financial balancing of municipalities.</p>

COUNTRY	CURRENT ISSUES
<b>Spain</b>	<p>Too few powers at local level and local authorities have too small an institutional role; local authority associations and the main political groups agree that local government should play a more important part than hitherto. Local authorities should have wider powers, their financial independence should be guaranteed and their institutional position improved.</p> <p>The term “local pact” denotes a process, which has been implemented and is aimed at achieving greater local autonomy. All political groups have been involved in the negotiations with a view to agreeing measures, in particular legislative ones, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– give local government more scope for action by extending its powers and strengthening its representation on various bodies;</li> <li>– give local government more legal protection against potential interferences by the state or the autonomous communities. Henceforth municipal councils are free to appeal directly to the Constitutional Court against legislation thought to be contrary to the principle of local self-government ;</li> <li>– improve the machinery for exerting influence on governance (increased responsibilities for the executive and greater supervisory powers for the council).</li> </ul> <p>Local pacts have yet to be introduced in every autonomous community.</p> <p>Inadequate implementation by local authorities of the measures promoting popular participation. Associations representing citizens’ interests complain that local authorities see participation in practice as a concession on their part rather than as a right of the people, and that the regulations they introduce in this respect would appear to be aimed more at holding participatory initiatives in check rather than allowing them to develop. For the most part, reportedly, participation is reduced to providing information, itself often unsuitable and incomplete.</p>
<b>Sweden</b>	<p>Municipal renewal is a major issue. The key words are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– strengthening the political leadership at local level;</li> <li>– democratic renewal both in the meaning of citizens taking more interest in political processes as well as opening up for user and citizen participation;</li> <li>– giving citizens even more of best value in municipal service delivery.</li> </ul> <p>The need for a municipal renewal results, among other things, from the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the assemblies’ function as a debate-forum has diminished (important issues have very often been agreed upon in the political parties, committees, standing committees, or in the executive committee);</li> <li>– there is a significant turnover among elected representatives;</li> <li>– the citizens’ willingness to become members of political parties, or to participate actively in party work and to accept elected positions has stagnated.</li> </ul>
<b>Switzerland</b>	<p>Certain cantons want to diminish the number of their municipalities, which are often too small to be administered effectively and economically.</p> <p>The phenomenon of urbanisation and development of agglomerations implies a redistribution of public funds and the reorganisation of local authorities within urban zones.</p> <p>The importance of agriculture in the national economy is decreasing. As a consequence, many small rural municipalities lose their substance and will disappear in the medium term (fusion, absorption)</p> <p>The increasing mobility of the population harms the traditional local identity.</p> <p>In the social field, the role of municipalities is increasingly difficult. Among the many problems that they will have to tackle are the integration of foreigners with different religious and cultural backgrounds, demands by groups of young people for suitable sports, cultural and “alternative” facilities, the war against drugs and the containment of extremist and fundamentalist movements. Effective solutions also need to be found to the isolation of older people, the disabled and the sick.</p> <p>The extensive use of direct democracy at the three levels (state, cantons and municipalities) can contribute to an overloaded political agenda and provoke a certain weariness on the part of citizens where voting is concerned.</p>
COUNTRY	CURRENT ISSUES
<b>FYROM</b>	1. Local government competencies are wide as far as local infrastructure is concerned, but

	<p>too narrow to meet the requirements of the local population in fields such as education, health, social security and culture. As a consequence, local authorities and citizens are less active and involved in local affairs, because they know that central authorities will make all basic decisions concerning the above-mentioned fields.</p> <p>2. There was no empirical research preceding the territorial reform of 1996, in order to identify the financial and personnel capabilities of the new established municipalities (their number was increased from thirty-four to 123). Very small municipalities were established (some of them with under 1 000 inhabitants) that, in practice, are not able to fulfil their tasks and cannot ensure normal local development.</p> <p>3. Local government financing is the most complicated and acute problem for the time being. There are three main aspects to be considered.</p> <p>First, according to the Local Government Act of 1995, a share of the tax on sale of goods and services should be among the local revenues. However, a subsequent law dealing with local revenues has not been passed yet and the Budget Act of 1993 still regulates the matter. As the tax on sales does not exist in the Budget Act, local revenues are in practice very limited.</p> <p>Second, after the territorial reform of 1996, the status of assets or properties of newly established municipalities had not been regulated and there is no evidence of what they really possess.</p> <p>Third, local taxes and fees (apart from the construction land utilisation fee) are collected by local departments of the Ministry of Finance, which are not directly motivated and, in practice, fail to identify all taxpayers, producing a shortage in local revenues. Besides, local authorities depend on reports that, according to them, are never on time.</p> <p>Summing up, because of financial restrictions, central allocation of funds and central control, most of the local government units must reduce their activities to local infrastructure only.</p> <p>4. Some public services covering many settlements (like public transport, water supply, etc.) were previously regulated and organised from one municipal centre. Today, the problem is how municipalities can co-ordinate the delivery of these services, since this issue is not clearly regulated in the existing Law on Communal Activities.</p> <p>5. Members of local administrative staff are not trained to adapt themselves to new social changes.</p> <p>6. The Association of Local Government Units is inactive and lacks necessary assistance.</p> <p>7. Local government reforms are in progress (revision of the existing Local Government Act and preparation of a new local government financing act)</p>
<b>Turkey</b>	<p>It is widely agreed that there are certain problems regarding local and regional authorities: over-centralised structure of the machinery of state; excessive practice of administrative trusteeship of central government over local authorities; insufficient financial resources of local and regional authorities (special provincial administrations, municipalities and villages); lack of personnel (especially qualified).</p> <p>A reform proposal, which is currently in progress, consists of provisions which should lead to a more effective functioning of local and regional authorities.</p>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<p>The turnout at local elections is consistently low – around 40%. Occasionally, by-elections can attract extremely low turnout and too many councillors are elected unopposed.</p> <p>Local councillors are often overburdened by detail, and therefore unable to concentrate on strategic issues.</p> <p>There is a need to involve communities more fully and more frequently in the decisions affecting them. The government is currently pursuing legislation to underpin a radical programme of democratic renewal advocating the encouragement of effective political accountability by modernising electoral arrangements, promoting public participation, consulting communities and also adopting new executive structures for decision taking.</p>



## APPENDIX II

## Electoral systems for the election of municipal councils in the member states

PR: Proportional representation

?: Open lists

P: Parties

M: Majority system

?: Closed lists

G: Groups

VO: Voting is obligatory

?: Blocked lists

I: Independents

COUNTRY	TERM	REPRESENTATION	LISTS	CANDIDACY			TURNOUT <sup>1</sup>	YEAR
				P	G	I		
Austria	5-6	PR	?	v	v	v		
Belgium	6	PR	?	v	v	v	VO	
Bulgaria	4	PR	?	v	v	v	54.2	1999
Croatia	4	M/PR <sup>2</sup>	?	v	v	v		
Cyprus	5	PR	?	v			VO	
Czech Republic	4	PR	?	v	v	v	62.3	1998
Denmark	4	PR	?	v	v	v	70.1-71.4	1997
Estonia	3	PR	?	v	v	v		
Finland	4	PR	?:	v	v	v	61.3	1996
France	6	M <sup>3</sup>	?/? <sup>4</sup>	v	v	v		
Germany	4/6 <sup>5</sup>	M/PR <sup>6</sup>	?	v	v		65-70	
Greece	4	M/PR		v	v	v	VO	2000
Hungary	4	M/PR <sup>7</sup>	?	v	v	v	45.6	1998
Iceland	4	PR	<sup>8</sup>	v	v	v	82-85	1998
Ireland	5	PR		v	v	v	51	1999

1 Where several figures appear, they indicate turnouts in municipalities of different size (no average figure was given). Sometimes they may also be related to different levels of local authorities (municipalities or counties).

2 Seventy-five per cent for proportional representation and 25 per cent for the majority system.

3 In municipalities with more than 3 500 inhabitants, the absolute majority rule also applied but the winning list will only get 50 per cent of the seats, the remaining 50 per cent are distributed proportionally between the lists that gained at least 5 per cent of the votes cast.

4 In municipalities up to 3 500 inhabitants, open lists; in the others, blocked lists.

5 Depending on the *Länder*' legislation.

6 Depending on the *Länder*. Some have opted for proportional representation, some for a majority system (with proportional compensation).

7 The majority system applies in municipalities with under 10 000 inhabitants and the proportional system in the others.

8 The first type of local election consists of proportional voting for lists of candidates; in the second type, all inhabitants (except those legally exempted) are potential candidates.

COUNTRY	TERM	REPRESENTATION	LISTS	CANDIDACY			TURNOUT <sup>1</sup>	YEAR
				P	G	I		
Italy	4	M/Combined <sup>2</sup>	?	v	v			
Latvia	3	PR	?	v	v	v	56.8	1997
Lithuania	3	PR	?	v			54.2	2000
Luxembourg	6	M/PR <sup>3</sup>					VO	
Malta	3	PR	?	v	v	v	68.5	1999
Netherlands	4	PR	?	v	v		59.5	1998
Norway	4	PR	?	v	v	v	63	1995
Poland	4	PR	?	v	v	v	45.5	1998
Portugal	4	PR	?	v			60.1	1997
Romania	4	PR	?	v	v	v		
Russian Fed.		M/Combined <sup>4</sup>		v	v	v	50-80	1995
San Marino		M/Combined <sup>5</sup>	?	v	v	v	87.1	1994
Slovak Republic	4	M	?	v	v	v	53.9	1998
Slovenia	4	M/PR <sup>6</sup>		v	v	v		
Spain	4	M/PR <sup>7</sup>	?/? <sup>8</sup>	v	v		63.6	1999
Sweden	4	PR	?	v	v	v	85	1994
Switzerland	4	M/PR <sup>9</sup>	? <sup>10</sup>	v	v	v	41	1997
FYROM	4	PR	?	v	v	v	60.17	1996
Turkey	5	PR	?	v	v	v	90.3-92.2	1994
UK (not N.Ireland)	4	M		v	v	v		

1 Where several figures appear, they indicate turnouts in municipalities of different sizes (no average figure was given). Sometimes they may also be related to different levels of local authorities (municipalities or counties).

2 In municipalities up to 15 000 inhabitants, majority system; combined system with a majority dominant character for the others.

3 In municipalities containing a section of 3 000 inhabitants at least and in municipalities with at least 3 500 inhabitants, proportional representation; majority system for the others.

4 In certain municipalities, majority system; combined system in others, a part of the representatives being elected by proportional representation.

5 Combined system with a majority dominant character (the election of councillors being tied up to the *Capitano di Castello's* one, who is elected at the relative majority and who detains in all cases the majority at the council).

6 In municipalities with fewer than twelve members in the municipal council, majority system; proportional representation for the others.

7 In municipalities up to 250 inhabitants, majority system; in others, proportional representation.

8 In municipalities which do not apply the "open council" system and with less than 250 inhabitants, open lists; in others, closed and blocked lists.

9 Depending on the canton's legislation. Most of them opted for a proportional system but some use the majority system.

10 The electors have the possibility of voting for a list that they do not modify, a list they modify or a list on which they enter the names of the candidates they have chosen.

## APPENDIX III

## Age required to take part in local elections

COUNTRY	RIGHT TO VOTE (AGE)	ELIGIBILITY TO STAND (AGE)	COUNTRY	RIGHT TO VOTE (AGE)	ELIGIBILITY TO STAND (AGE)
Albania	18	18	Lithuania	18	21
Andorra	18	18	Luxembourg	18	18
Austria	18	18	Malta	18	18
Belgium	18	18	Moldova	18	21
Bulgaria	18	18	Netherlands	18	18
Croatia	18	18	Norway	18	18
Cyprus	18	25	Poland	18	18
Czech Republic	18	18	Portugal	18	18
Denmark	18	18	Romania	18	23
Estonia	18	18	Russian Federation	18	21
Finland	18	18	San Marino	18	18
France	18	18	Slovak Republic	18	18 (25 pour les maires)
Georgia	18	21	Slovenia	18	18
Germany	16, 18	18	Spain	18	18
Greece	18	21	Sweden	18	18
Hungary	18	18	Switzerland	18	
Iceland	18	18	FYROM	18	18
Ireland	18	18	Turkey	18	25
Italy	18	18	Ukraine	18	21
Latvia	18	18	United Kingdom	18	21
Liechtenstein	20	20			



## APPENDIX IV

## Provisions facilitating the exercise of voting rights

COUNTRIES	ASSISTANCE BY A RELIABLE PERSON	HOME BALLOT	EARLY BALLOT	POSTAL BALLOT	PROXY BALLOT	VOTING IN HOSPITALS, NURSING HOMES, PRISONS	OTHER SPECIAL PROVISIONS
Austria	?						
Belgium					?		?
Bulgaria	?					?	
Croatia		?					
Czech Republic	?	?				?	?
Denmark		?	?			?	
Finland	?	?	?	?		?	
Germany	?			?		?	
Greece	?						
Hungary	?	?				?	
Iceland	?	?	?			?	
Ireland	?	?		?		?	
Italy	?					?	
Latvia		?	?			?	
Lithuania	?			?		?	
Luxembourg				?			
Malta							?
Netherlands					?		?
Norway	?	?	?	?		?	
Poland	?					?	
Portugal	?		?				
Romania		?					
Russian Federation		?	?			?	
Slovakia	?	?					
Slovenia	?	?	?	?		?	
Spain				?			
Sweden		?		?	?	?	
Switzerland				?			
FYROM	?	?	?			?	?
Turkey			?	?		?	
United Kingdom	?	?(pilots)	?(pilots)	?	?	?(pilots)	?(pilots)



## APPENDIX V

**Participation of foreigners in local elections**

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>FOREIGN RESIDENTS WITH VOTING RIGHTS</b>
<b>Denmark</b>	Any foreigner residing in the country for at least the last three years; citizens from Norway and Iceland residing in the country have the same electoral rights as citizens of the European Community.
<b>Estonia</b>	Any foreigner residing in the local authority for at least the last five years.
<b>Finland</b>	Any foreigner residing in the country for at least the last two years; citizens from Norway and Iceland residing in the country have the same electoral rights as citizens of the European Community.
<b>Hungary</b>	Any foreigner residing in the country.
<b>Ireland</b>	Any person resident in the state.
<b>Iceland</b>	Citizens from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden residing in the country for at least the last three years.
<b>Malta</b>	Resident citizens of the United Kingdom.
<b>Norway</b>	Any foreigner residing in the country for at least the last three years. Citizens from Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Iceland are entitled to vote provided they are residents in the country on 31 March in the year of election.
<b>Netherlands</b>	Any foreigner residing in the country for at least the last five years.
<b>Portugal</b>	Any foreigner residing in the country for at least the last three years (two years if Portuguese is the official language of their country of origin) subject to reciprocity.
<b>Spain</b>	Resident citizens of Norway.
<b>Sweden</b>	Any foreigner residing in the country for at least the last three years; citizens from Norway and Iceland residing in the country have the same electoral rights as citizens of the European Community.
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Resident citizens of Commonwealth countries and British Dependent Territories.

NB: All European Union member states have adopted the legal provisions required for implementing Directive No. 94/80/EC





## APPENDIX VI

## Evolution, reforms and general assessment of the electoral systems

COUNTRY	EVOLUTION AND REFORMS	ASSESSMENT AND REMARKS
<b>Belgium</b>	<p>Electoral legislation was modified in 1999 to allow European Union citizens to participate in municipal elections.</p> <p>A system of quotas for men/women (two thirds/one third) on the electoral lists (adopted in 1994) entered into force for the general elections of 13 June 1999 and will apply for municipal elections in October 2000.</p> <p>Computerised voting is bound to become general.</p> <p>Certain political circles are discussing whether non-compulsory voting should be introduced. This would imply modifying Article 62 of the Constitution. As an alternative, sanctions on those who fail to vote could be abolished.</p> <p>Other proposals concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the direct election of burgomasters; as an alternative, the municipal council would be obliged to present to the crown as candidates those burgomasters elected with the highest number of votes on their respective lists;</li> <li>– the total or partial abolishment of the devolving effect of the vote for the list (to re-establish, at least partially, the equality between all the candidates on a given list);</li> <li>– the use of the Niemeyer system instead of Imperiali (to reduce distortions between proportional representation and electoral results);</li> <li>– the establishment of cross-party voting.</li> </ul>	<p>Citizens accept and understand the electoral system. However, complaints are heard that there are too many elections and too many electoral lists in Brussels (the bilingual nature of the capital means duplication of everything).</p>
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<p>The 1995 law on local elections was amended in July 1999. Changes relate, in particular, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the abolishment of the election of the town councils (in the large cities)</li> <li>– the election of district mayors and the mayors of municipalities with less than 500 inhabitants by the municipal council</li> <li>– the improvement of electoral procedures and election organisation,</li> <li>– validity of voting forms and the setting up of definitive electoral documents</li> <li>– the second ballot has been limited to the two mayoral candidates having received the greatest number of votes in the first round (before, three candidates went on to the second round)</li> <li>– the introduction of new rules which offer a greater possibility to contest electoral results before the competent commissions or tribunals.</li> </ul>	<p>Following changes in the Law on Local Elections (also in Laws on Self-Government and Local Administration, and on Administrative and Territorial Organisation), the number of local elected representatives following October 1999 elections corresponds better to the size of local populations (this number decreased to 30%). More than 8% of elected councillors were independent candidates. In addition, out of the total of 262 elected mayors, forty had been proposed by various initiative committees also supported by local coalitions.</p> <p>The level of participation in the October 1999 elections was 54.2% (against 55.4% in local elections of 1995 and 58.8% for election of the National Assembly in 1997). Citizen participation has particularly decreased in large cities.</p>

COUNTRY	EVOLUTION AND REFORMS	ASSESSMENT AND REMARKS
<b>Croatia</b>	Development in favour of the proportional system: in 1993 one half and in 1995 one third of the members were elected according to the majority system. Today the law provides for a mixed electoral system for local elections: one quarter of the members of a representative body is elected according to a majority system and three quarters according to a proportional system.	
<b>Czech Republic</b>	The legislation on elections is being evaluated with a view to preparing substantial reforms to the voting system, mainly to achieve greater transparency and better control of the electoral results by the political parties and other relevant subjects.	
<b>Denmark</b>	Regarding the right to vote in local elections, electoral law was amended in 1995: the requirement of a three-year residence was cancelled as far as citizens of the EU, Norway and Iceland resident in Denmark are concerned. Additionally, local representatives now have the right to time off for their political duties and, correspondingly, protection against the threat of dismissal.	The system is generally accepted. Its details are fine-tuned from time to time. No current considerations or requests for change.
<b>Estonia</b>	Electoral law has changed in line with the system of local government (three changes in seven years).	Turnout in local elections remains poor.
<b>Finland</b>	The new Electoral Law requires at least one general polling station for voting in advance in every municipality. Voting in advance abroad is now also possible for municipal elections.	Participation of citizens in own communities strongly supported by the Constitution and legislation. Inhabitants regard municipal autonomy and democracy as basic values. Despite these elements, interest in representative democracy has lessened together with respect for public institutions.
<b>Germany</b>	The system of direct mayoral election has recently been extended to all <i>Länder</i> . In certain cases, there are plans to increase voters' influence on their representatives by introducing direct district council elections. Some regions have lowered the voting age for local elections to 16.	Electoral systems are felt to have proved their worth. The different types of system do not greatly affect voting patterns, with turnout similar across the board.
<b>Greece</b>		Since smaller municipalities were merged, the opportunity of taking part in a stronger unit of local public life has given added impetus to increased participation.

COUNTRY	EVOLUTION AND REFORMS	ASSESSMENT AND REMARKS
<b>Hungary</b>	No fundamental reforms since 1990; some improvements in 1994 and 1997: expansion of direct election of mayors to all types of settlement; introduction of the direct election of the assemblies to the county level and to the capital; integration of the rules of procedure of various election types.	As to the county election system, local self-governmental associations refer to the geographical representation of local communities not prevailing sufficiently in county representative bodies, since mandates are acquired from party lists. In their opinion the county self-government should also represent regional interests and be changed into a composite system, in which some representatives would acquire their mandates from the one-seat districts (comprising the self-governmental local communities), while others would acquire them from the party lists. They also would let the electors directly elect the chairman of the county assembly. Nevertheless, for the central government, general experiences indicate that the system has justified its existence and does not require substantial changes.
<b>Iceland</b>	No major reforms, but merge of municipalities in the last years and since then, statistics show increase in participation of women.	Participation in local democracy is high. There is a greater level of involvement in the larger local government areas than in the areas with fewer inhabitants.
<b>Ireland</b>	Review of the electoral system by an all-party parliamentary committee is ongoing, the purpose of which is to initiate an informal debate on the system of election, appropriate to modern circumstances. Postal voting was introduced. Local electoral areas were revised.	The equitable distribution of seats under proportional representation means that the electoral system is widely accepted by the public.
<b>Italy</b>	Since the Law No. 81 of 1993, the mayors and the chairmen of the provinces are directly elected. Law No. 120 of 30 April 1999 has modified the local electoral system by introducing corrective measures towards a majority representation, to facilitate the establishment of local executives.	Although turnout is declining, it has never reached danger level for local elections. Citizens understand and well accept the new local electoral system. It is felt that the declining turnout registered during the last few years results from factors such as: an increasing number of old people within the electorate; an increasing number of electors living abroad, as a consequence of the Law on Citizenship of 1992 that provides for the automatic inclusion in electoral registers; finally, the reduction of the opening times of the polling stations to only one day.

COUNTRY	EVOLUTION AND REFORMS	ASSESSMENT AND REMARKS
<b>Latvia</b>	Until 1997 electors could vote for candidates from a number of lists. Now they can vote for one list only. Proposals for substituting the proportional election system by the majority, or at least a mixed system, are being made from time to time.	In both local and parliamentary elections the electors vote more for the personality of the candidates and less for the programmes of the parties or electors' associations. Turnout is declining.
<b>Lithuania</b>	The law on local electoral systems was amended in 1999. Lists were previously blocked. Today, personal voting is possible: electors may vote for the list but also for one to three individual candidates from the same list.	
<b>Luxembourg</b>	Changes since 23 March 1999: – lowering of eligibility to stand in local election from 21 to 18 years of age. – postal voting time has been increased.	Since voting is compulsory, it is unaffected by the local election system in use.
<b>Malta</b>	Legislation introduced in 1993. No major reforms are being contemplated. Legislation published in May 2000 will disqualify members of parliament and introduce directly elected local authority chairs from next local election in 2004.	
<b>Norway</b>	A commission appointed by the government, whose mandate is to discuss and propose how to organise future elections, has been established. Postal voting was introduced in 1997 at national level and was implemented for the first time at the September 1999 local elections. The law of 1992 under the terms of which local authorities must promote active circulation of information regarding their activities. A project with direct election of the mayor was tested out in twenty municipalities in the local elections, September 1999.	No widespread negative attitude towards the electoral system. However, there is a certain passivity and a low degree of interest of citizens. Political activity and general political interest at local level should be improved, e.g. through practical voting arrangements.
<b>Netherlands</b>		Turnout is declining, and it is difficult to find candidates for local elections.
<b>Poland</b>	The 1998 reform created new local authorities and reapportioned tasks, powers and public resources between them and the state.	
<b>Portugal</b>		Reduced media interest means that turnout is lower at local than at national level.
<b>Russian Federation</b>		Current legislation guarantees a good level of voter participation in local elections.

COUNTRY	EVOLUTION AND REFORMS	ASSESSMENT AND REMARKS
<b>San Marino</b>		Membership in a political party is no longer a precondition for candidacy. This has made the population more aware and more actively involved in the social and administrative life.
<b>Slovak Republic</b>	The desire for European Union membership will mean important changes at local level, especially as regards the legislation on local elections, because it will be necessary to allow for freedom of movement and freedom of establishment and give non-citizens the right to vote in local elections.	The citizens accept the majority electoral system as this system does not require special knowledge of various election methods and the results are known shortly after polling stations close.
<b>Slovenia</b>	Amendments in 1998, giving the possibility to municipalities to carry out deconcentration of municipal tasks in establishing narrower municipal zones or consultative boards, in order to bring decision-making closer to the citizens.	
<b>Spain</b>		Participation is considered satisfactory, with smaller municipalities showing a higher turnout. Citizens are acquainted with the different systems proposed, and there is no general criticism worthy of note.
<b>Sweden</b>	The possibility of casting a personal vote, which was previously restricted to certain municipalities, was extended in 1998 to the whole country.	The electoral system is understood and accepted by the citizens.
<b>Switzerland</b>	In 1994 the postal vote in national elections was extended to the whole country. Certain cantons are considering giving foreigners the right to vote.	The high frequency of elections is contributing to voter fatigue.

COUNTRY	EVOLUTION AND REFORMS	ASSESSMENT AND REMARKS
<b>FYROM</b>	<p>The Constitution enacted in 1991 recognises local government, political pluralism and democratic elections as fundamental constitutional values.</p> <p>The Local Government Act of 1995 introduced forms of direct democracy, the compulsory local referendum in case of changes of municipal boundaries, and other mechanisms of participation.</p> <p>The Law on Local Elections of 1996 introduced a proportional system for the election of councillors (d'Hondt formula; no electoral threshold) and a majority system for the election of the mayors (double-ballot; candidates who obtain at least 10% of votes may participate in the second round).</p> <p>The Law on Voting Districts aimed at eliminating <i>gerrymandering</i>: the size of the various constituencies may differ by 10% at the most.</p> <p>A specific Law on Referendum (dealing both with national and local referendums) was passed in 1998 in order to work out in detail the provisions stipulated in the Local Government Act.</p>	<p>All the relevant political parties were included in the preparation of the Law on Local Elections. This law underwent the procedure of public debate and was well understood and accepted both by political actors and citizens. In 1996, the electoral turnout was good (although it was higher for national elections of 1998).</p> <p>Parties with ethnic and religious background gained political representation in the local councils in spite of their size, since the law does not impose an election threshold. However, some of the ethnic or religious groups did not manage to have their representatives on the councils, for other reasons. For instance, many of the Serbs do not belong to the ethnic Serb parties; Roma are divided into two parties, and this weakens their position.</p> <p>Problems of balanced representation also exist for the women, young people and the elderly (see Appendix XII). Young people are less represented partially due to a political culture favouring life experience rather than enthusiasm.</p> <p>Concerning women's representation, the establishment of a quota system is not unanimously considered the solution. The predominant idea is that non-blocked or open lists of candidates would constitute a more democratic instrument to improve women's representation. Women's lobby groups within the parties should also put pressure on the practical implementation of parties' commitments for gender equality.</p>
<b>Turkey</b>	A local government reform proposes a two-round system for the election of mayors.	The system is generally accepted by the citizens. Participation in the elections is reasonably high.
<b>United Kingdom</b>	The electoral system is not unified. Election of either the whole council or one third of it in each of three out of four years. Annual elections are being proposed. Various options of making it easier to vote are being piloted as well. Legislation is currently being pursued on new forms of local governance, including giving local people the possibility to decide in a referendum to have a directly elected mayor to lead their community.	It is only a marginal factor in turnout, whether whole council elections or elections by thirds are held. Annual elections would allow communities a more frequent democratic input into councils, improving accountability and encouraging a regular debate on local issues.

## APPENDIX VII

## Summary of the national information concerning local referendums

COUNTRY	INSTIGATION	STATUS OF RESULTS	SPECIFIC PROVISIONS CONCERNING PURPOSE, VALIDITY ETC
<b>Belgium</b>	<p>A given number of inhabitants, according to the municipal population, namely:</p> <p>20% if there are under 15 000 inhabitants;</p> <p>3 000 inhabitants, where the population is between 15 000 et 29 999 inhabitants;</p> <p>10% if there are 30 000 inhabitants or more.</p> <p>– municipal council.</p>	Consultative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– participation in the popular consultation (and right of initiative) has been extended to all inhabitants of the municipality aged 16 or more, regardless of nationality;</li> <li>– participation is not compulsory; the minimum turnout required for counting votes has been lowered to the number of inhabitants required for initiating popular consultation;</li> <li>– staffing questions and questions relating to municipal accounts, budgets, taxes or salaries and to the establishment and residence of foreigners in the municipality, may not be the subject of a referendum;</li> <li>– minimum period of six months between two referendums; maximum of six referendums during the term of office of the local council (six years);</li> <li>– no referendum may be held in the sixteen months prior to the election of town councils or during the forty days preceding election to the Federal Chambers, community and regional councils or the European Parliament; in addition, the consultation must be held on a Sunday.</li> </ul>
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– one quarter of local electorate;</li> <li>– a qualified majority of council members;</li> <li>– the mayor and the governor of the region.</li> </ul>	Decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– all questions of local concern within the competencies of local authorities and all questions specifically provided for by law may be put to a local referendum;</li> <li>– questions relating to the creation or abolition of a local authority or the alteration of its boundaries must in all cases be submitted to a local referendum;</li> <li>– questions concerning the municipal budget, local taxes and certain local problems governed by special provisions may not be the subject of a local referendum;</li> <li>– a further referendum on the same question may not be held until two years have elapsed;</li> <li>– a local referendum is considered valid if more than half of the electors participate;</li> <li>– the validity of the referendum's results may be challenged (before the regional court, within seven days) by one quarter either of the electors or of the council members, by the mayor or by the governors of the region;</li> <li>– the result of a local referendum must be published within two weeks; the municipal council must take the appropriate implementation measures; the mayor is responsible for implementation.</li> </ul>
<b>Croatia</b>	The local council.	Decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a referendum may be carried on issues falling within the local authority's scope of competence, other issues foreseen in a law or statute, as well as issues of local significance.</li> </ul>

COUNTRY	INSTIGATION	STATUS OF RESULTS	SPECIFIC PROVISIONS CONCERNING PURPOSE, VALIDITY ETC
<b>Czech Republic</b>	From 6 to 30% of the local electors, depending on the number of inhabitants.	Decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a local referendum may be carried on matters falling into own, exclusive competencies of municipalities, if it is not excluded by law; the most common topics of referendum are amalgamation, splitting, change of the name of municipality etc.;</li> <li>– a referendum may not be held on the municipal budget, local fees and charges, election or removal of the mayor or other bodies elected by the municipal council.</li> </ul>
<b>Denmark</b>	The council.	Consultative	A local referendum may be carried on any matter within the competencies of municipal or county councils.
<b>Estonia</b>	There is no regulation on local referendums.		
<b>Finland</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 5% of the local electorate;</li> <li>– the council.</li> </ul>	Consultative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a local referendum may be carried on any matter within the competencies of the municipality;</li> <li>– the referendum may concern the whole municipality or some part of it.</li> </ul>
<b>Germany</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the council;</li> <li>– a given percentage of citizens, as laid down in law.</li> </ul>	Decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the law or the municipal statutes determine the topics which can be a matter of referendum (only important municipal affairs which fall within the area of local self-administration);</li> <li>– a referendum is deemed to be passed if the minimum percentage of electors stated by law is obtained;</li> <li>– a referendum has the effect of a final council resolution and can only be amended by a new referendum within, in general, one year.</li> </ul>
<b>Greece</b>	Legislation does not provide for local referendums.		
<b>Hungary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 25% of the members of the representative body;</li> <li>– the committee of the representative body;</li> <li>– the executive body of a local social organisation;</li> <li>– a given number of local electors (this number is established by the local authorities, but may not be less than 10% and not more than 25% of the electorate).</li> </ul>	Decision-making or consultative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a local referendum is valid only where more than a half of the electors have voted;</li> <li>– a referendum must be held on: the establishment of a municipal union or of a joint authority and its termination; the establishment of a new community; the other issues determined by a local government by-law;</li> <li>– a referendum may be held on any issue within the competencies of the local authority and for confirming a local government by-law;</li> <li>– a referendum cannot be held on decisions concerning the budget, local taxes and their rates, the organisation, operation and staff of the representative body or its dissolution;</li> <li>– a new referendum on the same issue cannot be held within a year.</li> </ul>



COUNTRY	INSTIGATION	STATUS OF RESULTS	SPECIFIC PROVISIONS CONCERNING PURPOSE, VALIDITY ETC
<b>Iceland</b>	– the municipal council; – a given percentage of the electorate according to provisions made by specific acts.	Decision-making or consultative	– a referendum may be held in a municipality or part of it; – a referendum must be held for deciding on amalgamation.
<b>Ireland</b>			There is limited legal requirement for local referendums; changes in street and place names require a local referendum.
<b>Italy</b>		Consultative	The law on local self-government (n° 142/1990) stipulates that the municipal statutes can provide for consultative referendums in the fields under the exclusive responsibility of the municipalities. Within this limit, local referendums (as with other instruments of participation at local level) are regulated by municipal authorities.
<b>Latvia</b>	There is no regulation on local referendums.		
<b>Lithuania</b>	There is no regulation on local referendums.		
<b>Luxembourg</b>	– the municipal council; – 20% (in municipalities over 3 000 inhabitants) or 25% (in the other municipalities) of the electorate.		
<b>Malta</b>	10% of the local electorate.	Decision-making	A referendum may be held to abrogate any bye-laws made by local councils.
<b>Netherlands</b>	The local council.	Consultative	
<b>Norway</b>	The local council.	Consultative	A commission appointed by the government, shall make a report on the Norwegian electoral system and propose changes in the Election Act. A part of the commission's mandate is to make a statement on what status local referendums should have and if appropriate set provisions concerning local referendums.
<b>Poland</b>	– the local council; – 10% of the local electorate.	Decision-making	– a referendum may be held on any important issue concerning the local community; – the referendum is valid only where at least 30% of local electorate participates; – a referendum must be held for adoption of certain decisions (e.g. dismissal of the local council before its term of office or establishing voluntary self-imposed taxes); – the referendum concerning dismissal of the local council can only be initiated by the local electors.

COUNTRY	INSTIGATION	STATUS OF RESULTS	SPECIFIC PROVISIONS CONCERNING PURPOSE, VALIDITY ETC
<b>Portugal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– national deputies;</li> <li>– the local council or executive;</li> <li>– 300 electors or 20% of the electorate (the lowest figure) if the number of electors is under 3 750;</li> <li>5 000 electors or 8% of the electorate (the lowest figure) in all other cases.</li> </ul>	Decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a referendum is only valid if more than 50% of the electorate takes part;</li> <li>– a referendum may be held on issues of local interest within the competence of the local authority;</li> <li>– questions that must be regulated by an act of parliament, those regulated by law set by another legal text enacted at national level binding local authorities and those related to the budget, taxation and local finance are excluded;</li> <li>– a referendum cannot take place during local, national or European elections.</li> </ul>
<b>Russian Federation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the local council (most frequently);</li> <li>– a given number of local electors (percentage determined by municipal statutes, but not less than ten persons).</li> </ul>	Decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– legislation on local referendums has now been adopted in sixty-five regions of the Russian Federation, and referendums are often held;</li> <li>– the referendum is valid only where at least 5% of the local electorate participate;</li> <li>– the decision taken by referendum can be abolished or modified only by another referendum, but not until two years have elapsed since its adoption.</li> </ul>
<b>San Marino</b>	There is no regulation on local referendums.		
<b>Slovak Republic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the local council;</li> <li>– 20% of the local electorate.</li> </ul>	Decision-making or consultative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a (decision-making) local referendum must be held in the case of a proposal for merging, dividing or cancelling a municipality (in the case of a petition concerning a municipality division, 20% of the electorate of a part of a municipality that is the subject of such separation will be enough);</li> <li>– the local council may call for a local referendum before deciding on a major issue;</li> <li>– the proposal to introduce or remove a local tax or fee can be decided on in a local referendum (which is decision-making if requested by the citizens);</li> <li>– if a local tax or fee has been voted out, the local authority may only decide to re-introduce it one year after the date of the local referendum.</li> </ul>
<b>Slovenia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the National Assembly (territorial changes);</li> <li>– the local council.</li> </ul>	Decision-making (binding for the actual council)	The local council may, following a proposal or a request by the electors, call a referendum on an issue of special importance for the local community, or on the municipality's general acts, except on the budget, closing balance and general acts prescribing municipal taxes and other duties (but a referendum on citizens' self-imposed contributions can be held).

COUNTRY	INSTIGATION	STATUS OF RESULTS	SPECIFIC PROVISIONS CONCERNING PURPOSE, VALIDITY ETC
<b>Spain</b>	The mayor, with the prior approval of an absolute majority of the local council and with authorisation from the government.	Consultative	<p>– questions which fall within the competencies of the municipality or local questions of special importance to the population’s interests, with the exception of questions relating to local finances, may be the subject of a referendum</p> <p>– in the case of some municipalities a referendum is compulsory for the municipality to be able to join another entity (Castilla-Leon, the Basque country, etc.).</p>
<b>Sweden</b>	<p>– the local council;</p> <p>– 5% of local electorate.</p>	Consultative	
<b>Switzerland</b>	<p>Depending on the legal framework established by the canton:</p> <p>– the local parliament (council);</p> <p>– the assembly of citizens;</p> <p>– a given percentage of the local electorate (between 5 and 20%).</p>	Decision-making or consultative	<p>The rules vary according to cantonal legislation. There are four different kinds of referendum, which are decision-making, apart from the last one:</p> <p><u>compulsory referendum</u> (which usually concerns the modifications of regulations on municipal organisation, certain expenditure, rate of taxation or introduction of special taxes, municipal general regulations, the creation of the municipal parliament instead of the municipal assembly or territorial modifications; some municipalities can restrict the issues, which are to be dealt with by a compulsory referendum, or have the possibility to choose between the compulsory and the optional referendum; only in five cantons is there no compulsory referendum;</p> <p><u>optional referendum</u> cantons where compulsory referendums operate usually consider optional referendums an alternative for general matters; certain issues may be excluded, such as the budget, public accounts and decisions or by-laws of an urgent nature. Cantons with no provisions for compulsory referendum specify the issues on which an optional referendum can be held. Those cantons where there is no obligatory referendum specify the issues on which the optional referendum may be held;</p> <p><u>extraordinary referendum</u> in several cantons, municipal parliaments and the government can choose to call a popular vote or optional referendum on any parliamentary or government decision. Extraordinary referendums must be requested by the majority or by a given minority of the members of the municipal parliament or assembly;</p> <p><u>consultative referendum</u> (only some municipalities may hold a consultative referendum).</p>
<b>FYROM</b>	<p>– the local council, or;</p> <p>– 20% of the local electorate;</p> <p>(as determined by the statute).</p>	Decision-making	<p>– a referendum may be carried on issues falling within the local authority’s scope of competence;</p> <p>– the referendum is valid only if more than 50% of local electorate participate;</p> <p>– a local referendum is required to change the municipal boundaries;</p> <p>– it is possible to revoke the mayor upon the request of at least one fifth of the voters, if the majority of voters accept the proposal.</p>

COUNTRY	INSTIGATION	STATUS OF RESULTS	SPECIFIC PROVISIONS CONCERNING PURPOSE, VALIDITY ETC
<b>Turkey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– absolute majority of the local electorate;</li> <li>– the local council;</li> <li>– provincial governor.</li> </ul>	Consultative	<p>A local referendum is held in cases of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– establishment of a new municipality;</li> <li>– separation of parts of a municipality;</li> <li>– amalgamation of local units;</li> </ul> <p>(the agreement of the absolute majority of the electors of the considered areas being requested).</p>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– proposals from a local authority for an elected mayor;</li> <li>– petition signed by 5% of the local electorate for an elected mayor;</li> <li>– central government requirement for referendum on executive arrangements</li> </ul>	Decision-making	

## APPENDIX VIII

## Summary of the information received from the member states concerning popular initiatives

COUNTRY	INITIATIVE	SPECIFIC PROVISIONS CONCERNING PURPOSE, VALIDITY ETC.
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a popular initiative has to be requested by at least 100 local electors (in the case of mayoralties of fewer than 200 inhabitants, at least one fifth of electorate);</li> <li>– a popular initiative is only valid if it is signed by at least one quarter of the electorate of the municipality concerned.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a popular initiative may cover questions of local interest; it must contain a clearly worded request addressed to the council; it usually results in consultation of the population or in a general assembly;</li> <li>– a popular initiative is compulsory in order to create a new municipality, local council or local authority, or in order to dissolve a local council or authority;</li> <li>– the chair of the municipal council must inform the council members of lodging of a popular initiative and must convene the council to consider it within one month. The council then debates and takes a decision on the issue.</li> </ul>
<b>Croatia</b>	Proposals shall be supported by signatures of at least 10% of the electorate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– citizens have the right to make proposals for the adoption of a particular decision or solution on a specific issue within the local authority's scope of operation;</li> <li>– the representative body must discuss these proposals and give an answer to the persons who made the proposals within three months from the receipt thereof.</li> </ul>
<b>Czech Republic</b>	(In the field of environment impact assessment) 500 persons over 18 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the term “popular initiative” is employed in the Act on Environment Impact Assessment; thereby, the popular initiative is defined as “a group of at least 500 physical persons over 18 years, supporting public standpoint concerning respective discussed documentation in written form”;</li> <li>– popular initiative proves its legitimacy by a list of signatures of promoting citizens; chosen representative acts on their behalf; they can constitute a citizen association, which will participate in the administrative procedure.</li> </ul>
<b>Denmark</b>		There is no regulation on popular initiatives.
<b>Estonia</b>	Initiatives must be proposed by at least 1% of residents with the right to vote (a minimum of five residents).	Local government is conducted by democratically elected legislative and executive bodies and, where local issues are concerned, by means of polls, referendums and popular initiatives. Citizens have the right to request the adoption, amendment or repeal of municipal decisions, and such requests must be considered within a period of three months.

COUNTRY	INITIATIVE	SPECIFIC PROVISIONS CONCERNING PURPOSE, VALIDITY ETC .
<b>Finland</b>	Each resident of a municipality has the right to take the initiative in municipal affairs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– persons submitting initiatives shall be informed of actions taken as a result of an initiative;</li> <li>– municipal administration has to inform the council at least once a year of all the initiatives made in matters within its competence, and of the measures taken in reply;</li> <li>– any initiative subscribed by at least 2% of the electorate shall be considered by the council within six months.</li> </ul>
<b>Germany</b>	In some <i>Länder</i> each resident of a municipality has the right to take the initiative in municipal affairs; in others a minimum number of residents must subscribe it.	The initiative has to be considered by the council within three months. The initiatives could deal with all matters of the municipality.
<b>Greece</b>	There is no regulation on popular initiatives.	
<b>Hungary</b>	The minimum number of electors needed to put forward a popular initiative may not be less than 5% and not more than 10% of local electors (the figure is established by municipal decree enacted by the local council).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– any issue within the responsibilities of the representative body may be submitted to this body through a popular initiative;</li> <li>– the representative body is obliged to discuss every issue proposed by the number of electors it has defined.</li> </ul>
<b>Iceland</b>	There is no regulation on popular initiatives.	
<b>Ireland</b>	There is no regulation on popular initiatives.	
<b>Latvia</b>	There is no regulation on popular initiatives.	
<b>Lithuania</b>	There is no regulation on popular initiatives.	
<b>Malta</b>	Initiatives must be proposed by at least 30% of the local electorate.	Amendments to the law permit citizens to request local councils to appoint committees to draw up reports on the needs of a given area and provide the necessary funds.
<b>Netherlands</b>	There is no regulation on popular initiatives.	
<b>Norway</b>	There is no regulation on popular initiatives.	
<b>Portugal</b>	<p>This initiative is presented to the council by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 300 electors or 20% of the electorate (the lowest figure) if the number of electors is under 3 750;</li> <li>– 5 000 electors or 8% of the electorate (the lowest figure) in all other cases.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– popular initiatives can deal with questions of local interest that are within the competence of the local authority;</li> <li>– questions that must be regulated by an act of parliament, those regulated by law set by another legal text enacted at national level binding local authorities and those related to the budget, taxation and local finance are excluded.</li> </ul>
<b>San Marino</b>	There is no regulation on popular initiatives.	

COUNTRY	INITIATIVE	SPECIFIC PROVISIONS CONCERNING PURPOSE, VALIDITY ETC .
<b>Slovak Republic</b>	The proposals must be supported by at least 500 persons over 18 years, of whom at least 250 are permanently residing in the municipality concerned.	Only in the environmental impact assessment process; proved through a signature of a joint standpoint to proposed activity to be assessed.
<b>Slovenia</b>	The number of electors supporting the proposals may not be less than 5% of local electorate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– local electors may request the issuing or cancellation of a general act or of another decision within the remit of the municipal council or other municipal bodies;</li> <li>– the body to whom such an initiative is addressed must decide on the matter within the deadline defined by municipal statute or no later than within three months.</li> </ul>
<b>Spain</b>	There are no provisions for popular initiatives.	
<b>Sweden</b>	The number of electors supporting the proposals may not be less than 5% of local electorate.	The local electorate may make a written request for a referendum on a specific issue; the assembly then decides whether or not to comply. The electorate may also make use of a popular initiative to question an elected assembly on any issue falling within its jurisdiction.
<b>Switzerland</b>	Initiatives must be proposed by 10 to 20% of the electorate, depending on cantonal legislation. In some cities the quorum is lower (e.g. 4 000 electors in the city of Geneva).	As with referendums, it is not possible to describe all the local procedures laid down in cantonal constitutions and legislation. Where its scope is not specified, the right of initiative relates to all local matters; alternatively, it may apply only to a limited list of issues. In the canton of Bern, for example, a local initiative may call for the adoption, amendment or repeal of a regulation or decision falling within the jurisdiction of the electorate or the municipal parliament. The local organisational statutes may make other issues subject to the right of initiative or reduce the number of signatures required. The initiative is put to the electorate if it concerns an issue subject to a compulsory vote or if it is rejected by the local authority. The Constitution of the canton of Valais gives municipalities the possibility of introducing a popular initiative.
<b>FYROM</b>	Initiatives must be proposed by at least 10% of the local electorate.	The citizens have the right to propose to their local council to adopt a given act. If it is supported by at least 10% of the voters, the proposal must be discussed by the council within the term determined by the statute of the local government unit, or within ninety days at the latest.
<b>Turkey</b>	The electors supporting the proposals may not be less than 10% of local electorate.	
<b>United Kingdom</b>	There is no regulation on popular initiatives.	





## APPENDIX IX

## Summary of information on other formal procedures for participation in regulatory and standard-setting activities

COUNTRY	ASSEMBLIES OF CITIZENS / ELECTORS	PARTICIPATION IN COUNCIL MEETINGS	EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL	RIGHT OF PETITION	RIGHT OF PROPOSAL
<b>Belgium</b>				x	
<b>Bulgaria</b>	General assembly of citizens			x	x
<b>Croatia</b>	General assembly of citizens; municipal committees				x
<b>Czech Republic</b>		x		x	x
<b>Denmark</b>		x (in many municipalities also possibility of asking question before the actual meeting of the council)			x (in public meetings arranged by the council)
<b>Estonia</b>		x		x	x
<b>Finland</b>		x		x	x
<b>Germany</b>	Assembly of citizens convened by the council, the mayor, or by a given percentage of citizens. Statutory meeting of citizens (once a year)			x	
<b>Greece</b>	General assembly of citizens in communities with a population of up to 10 000 inhabitants (where district councils do not exist)	x		x	

COUNTRY	ASSEMBLIES OF CITIZENS / ELECTORS	PARTICIPATION IN COUNCIL MEETINGS	EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL	RIGHT OF PETITION	RIGHT OF PROPOSAL
<b>Hungary</b>	Village assemblies	x (possibility of asking questions and expressing opinions at one special meeting per year)			x
<b>Iceland</b>	General assembly of citizens	x (with the possibility of taking the floor)			
<b>Ireland</b>		x (social partners represented on policy committees)			
<b>Italy</b>		x		x	x
<b>Latvia</b>		x		x	
<b>Lithuania</b>	Public meetings with the council at least once a year	x (with the possibility of taking the floor)		x	x
<b>Luxembourg</b>		x			
<b>Malta</b>	Statutory meeting of citizens (once a year)	x		x	x
<b>Netherlands</b>				x	
<b>Norway</b>		x			
<b>Poland</b>		x		x	x

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>ASSEMBLIES OF CITIZENS / ELECTORS</b>	<b>PARTICIPATION IN COUNCIL MEETINGS</b>	<b>EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL</b>	<b>RIGHT OF PETITION</b>	<b>RIGHT OF PROPOSAL</b>
<b>Portugal</b>	x (in the smallest parishes with no more than 200 electors)	x (with the possibility of participating in the debate)	x	x	x
<b>Russian Federation</b>	x			x	x
<b>San Marino</b>					
<b>Slovak Republic</b>	Local assembly of citizens convened by the local council	x (with the possibility of participating in the debate)	x	x	x
<b>Slovenia</b>	Assembly of citizens convened by the mayor, the council, or 5% of the population concerned				
<b>Spain</b>	Open council (as a rule in municipalities having fewer than 100 inhabitants)	x (with the possibility of participating in the debate, where applicable)		x	
<b>Sweden</b>		x (with the possibility of asking questions)		x	
<b>Switzerland</b>	x	x	x	x	x
<b>FYROM</b>	Public meetings of citizens	x			x
<b>Turkey</b>	x	x	x	x	
<b>United Kingdom</b>	x	x	x	x	



## APPENDIX X

**Summary of information on formal procedures for participation in regulatory and standard-setting activities peculiar to certain member states**

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>SPECIFIC PROCEDURES</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	Consultation on town planning.
<b>Bulgaria</b>	Public consultation; e.g. municipal borders are established following a consultation of public opinion .
<b>Croatia</b>	A community committee is established, if at least 10% of voters registered in a settlement or in part of a settlement opt for it .
<b>Czech Republic</b>	Meetings and debates on certain subjects .
<b>Denmark</b>	Informative public meetings arranged on the council's decision. Council shall inform the inhabitants about main issues and options in future planning activities; it shall also foster public debate on proposed local/county authority plans before decision-making.
<b>Estonia</b>	The inhabitants may be involved in activities of the council's commissions. Development plans and draft budgets must be made available for amendment.
<b>Finland</b>	The municipal council may nominate local residents as members of various boards. Regulation concerning information on a pending matter. Since 1 January 2000, the new Act on Land Use and Building ensures increased public participation in the entire planning process from the very beginning. Participation and assessment procedures are compulsory for all planning matters. Opportunity to lodge a written objection in matters of planning and building as well as in environmental issues. Environmental assessment procedure: publication of assessment report. Notice of a pending application for land use extraction permit. Nature conservation: all concerned shall have the opportunity to state their case.
<b>Germany</b>	Competent citizens may be consulted on individual matters or appointed as permanent advisors to local council consultative or executive committees. Consultative committees as part of local self-government. Local authorities can choose to appoint or hold elections for consultative committees, which are called to advise on major specific issues or groups of people. The statutes of some municipalities provide for a consultative council of foreigners, where these exceed a certain percentage of the population; this council is able to present its observations to the local council. Similar councils exist for the elderly, young people etc.
<b>Greece</b>	Any autonomous section of the municipality with more than 151 inhabitants may participate in municipal administration with a deputy. Every municipal or communal council may divide its territory into several districts whose councils are elected.
<b>Hungary</b>	A representative body of a local authority may establish self-government for part of a district. Public hearings take place at least once a year. Sessions of the representative bodies are often broadcast.
<b>Iceland</b>	Consultation on town planning. Informative public meetings arranged following council decision. Municipal councils nominate local residents as members of various boards. Opportunity to lodge a written objection in matters of planning and building as well as in environmental issues. Public administration documents are public.

COUNTRY	SPECIFIC PROCEDURES
<b>Ireland</b>	Public display of draft plans and projects concerning land use, planning, waste disposal, water quality management, etc. with provision for written and oral submissions to local authorities by individuals and groups, in some cases with provision for appeal of the local authority decision to independent statutory agency. Informal public meetings and seminars with the local authority taking a proactive role. Several new initiatives enhancing citizens' participation have emerged recently outside the system of elected local government.
<b>Latvia</b>	Surveys of the opinion of inhabitants concerning structures of local authorities.
<b>Lithuania</b>	The residents may submit petitions to the local authorities. Any given local authority may establish a "committee of petitions".
<b>Luxembourg</b>	<i>Ad hoc</i> consultation meetings; the result is communicated to the municipal council.
<b>Malta</b>	Committees/sub-committees of the council. Public consultation meetings.
<b>Netherlands</b>	Municipalities can establish district councils whose members are elected directly by the population. Municipal councils may create commissions, the members of which are not necessarily councillors.
<b>Norway</b>	Public meetings and municipal hearings. Children's and youth councils. Documents of the public administration are public. In planning and building, authorities shall actively inform the public about their plans; those affected shall be allowed to participate in the process.
<b>Poland</b>	Municipal council can include citizens in its commissions (half of the members). Consultation in some issues defined by legislation, also in affairs important to the community, e.g. projects introduced by the council. The local council can decide on the types of consultation.
<b>Portugal</b>	Citizens and their associations have the right to participate in a decision-making process affecting them. Publication of local government decisions. Public enquiry on town planning. Citizens have the right to be informed within reasonable time of the action taken as a result of a petition, a proposal, etc.
<b>Russian Federation</b>	Possibility of organising territorial self-government committees; these are functioning successfully in several federal states and regions. In fifteen regions law provides a possibility of calling back local elected representatives and municipal elective office holders before their mandates expire; not often used.
<b>San Marino</b>	Local councils are allowed to submit draft bills on any subject to be put on the agenda of the national parliament within ninety days of their presentation .
<b>Slovak Republic</b>	A petition of 20% of the local electorate may call for the election of a new mayor. Consultative council commissions made up of councillors and citizens elected by the council.
<b>Slovenia</b>	The municipality may create districts with elected bodies; for villages or areas which do not have them, it may establish village/area boards or committees of consultative nature (with the right to make proposals).

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>SPECIFIC PROCEDURES</b>
<b>Spain</b>	<p>Possibility of a popular consultation in questions falling within the competencies of a local authority and having special importance to the interests of the inhabitants, except in matters of local finances.</p> <p>Local authorities may also establish territorial organs of decentralised management and determine their organisation, functions and competencies in accordance with the inhabitants' demands.</p> <p>Sectoral councils with a consultative role.</p>
<b>Sweden</b>	<p>A council may open local government committee meetings to the general public.</p> <p>Municipal councils may appoint local residents to various committees.</p> <p>All documents must be made public.</p> <p>Information on building and development, public hearings and consideration of proposals.</p> <p>Objections can be stated in writing to building and development plans and where environmental issues are concerned.</p> <p>Nature conservation: all those concerned must have the chance to comment.</p> <p>Parents have the majority of places on primary school committees.</p> <p>Pupils have the majority of places on secondary school committees.</p> <p>Public meetings; relocated municipal councils .</p> <p>Committees shall work to promote consultations with the users of their services and may place the management of a council department in the hands of its staff or clients.</p> <p>District committees (also called neighbourhood councils or borough committees) are allowed.</p>
<b>Switzerland</b>	<p>Consultation procedure.</p> <p>Participation on special committees.</p>
<b>FYROM</b>	<p>The Local Government Act provides that in municipalities where a majority or a considerable number of inhabitants belong to ethnic minorities, inter-ethnic commissions are to be established, where all the concerned ethnic groups are proportionally represented. This act also provide for the existence of the local neighbourhood (sub-municipal) self-government, where the local population can decide on certain issues of direct relevance to them.</p> <p>A meeting of citizens can be convened, for the entire municipality or for a part of it, by the mayor on his/her own initiative or upon the request of at least 10% of the concerned electorate. The meeting of the citizens may adopt, by a majority vote, general guidelines regarding the works of the municipal bodies. The latter are obliged to take into consideration these guidelines by adopting the appropriate decisions or acts within the following ninety days.</p> <p>The local council committees include both councillors and external experts.</p>
<b>Turkey</b>	<p>Citizens and NGOs may participate in meetings of local councils without the right to vote.</p>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<p>Certain municipalities have created consultative committees to include citizens in decision-making.</p>





## APPENDIX XI

## Statistics on women's participation in political life

1. *Women in the parliamentary assemblies of the Council of Europe member states*

COUNTRIES	YEAR OF THE NATIONAL ELECTION	LOWER CHAMBER		UPPER CHAMBER	
		PERCENTAGE MEN	PERCENTAGE WOMEN	PERCENTAGE MEN	PERCENTAGE WOMEN
Albania	1997	93.55	6.45	*	*
Andorra	1997	92.8	7.14	*	*
Austria	1995	73.7	26.3	81.25	18.75
Belgium	1999	77.4	22.6	71.9	28.1
Bulgaria	1997	89.17	10.83	*	*
Croatia	1995	92.13	7.87	95.59	4.41
Cyprus	1996	94.64	5.36	*	*
Czech Republic	1998	85	15	88.9	11.1
Denmark	1998	62.57	37.43	*	*
Estonia	1999	82.18	17.82	*	*
Finland	2000	63	37	*	*
France	1993-95	89.08	10.92	94.39	5.61
Germany	1998	69.06	30.94	81.16	18.84
Greece	1997	93.67	6.33	*	*
Hungary	1998	91	9	*	*
Iceland	1999	65.1	34.9	*	*
Ireland	1997	87.95	12.05	81.67	18.33
Italy	1995	89	11	92	8
Latvia	1998	83	17	*	*
Liechtenstein	1997	96	4	*	*
Lithuania	1997	82.48	17.52	*	*
Luxembourg	1999	85.8	14.2	*	*
Malta	1998	90.70	9.30	*	*
Moldova	1998	91.09	8.91	*	*
Netherlands	1995-98	67.3	32.7	77.33	22.67
Norway	1997	63.64	36.36	*	*
Poland	1997	86.96	13.04	89	11
Portugal	1999	82.6	17.4	*	*
Romania	1996	92.68	7.29	98.6	1.40
Russian Federation	1999	92.45	7.55	99.44	0.56
San Marino	1998	88.33	13.33	*	*
Slovak Republic	1998	89.3	10.7	*	*
Slovenia	1996	92.22	7.78	*	*
Sweden	1998	57.3	42.7	*	*
Switzerland	1995	79	21	82.61	17.39
Spain	1996	75.43	21.55	86.77	13.23
FYROM	1998	92.5	7.5	*	*
Turkey	1999	95.1	4.9	*	*
Ukraine	1998	92.22	7.78	*	*
United Kingdom	1997	81.64	18.36	93.11	6.89

\* No Upper Chamber.

## 2. *Women within the governments of the Council of Europe member states*

COUNTRIES	YEAR	MEMBERS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT		
		TOTAL	NO. OF WOMEN	PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN
Albania	1998	18	2	11.1
Andorra	1999	13	3	23
Austria	1998	16	4	25
Belgium	1999	18	3	16.6
Bulgaria	2000	15	3	20
Croatia	1998	24	2	8.3
Cyprus	1999	12	-	0
Czech Republic	1998	19	-	0
Denmark	1998	20	7	35
Estonia	1999	15	2	13.3
Finland	1999	18	7	38.9
France	1998	29	9	31
Germany	1999	17	4	23.4
Greece	1998	41	3	0.7
Hungary	1998	18	1	5.6
Ireland	1998	15	2	13.3
Iceland	1999	12	4	33.3
Italy*	1998	56	12	21.4
Latvia	1998	23	1	4.3
Liechtenstein	1998	5	1	20
Lithuania	1998	15	1	6.7
Luxembourg	1999	12	4	33.3
Malta	1998	13	1	7.7
Moldova	1999	22	1	4.5
Norway	1999	19	8	42.1
Netherlands	1998	32	7	21.9
Poland	1998	22	2	9.1
Portugal	1999	64	6	9.4
Romania	1999	19	1	5.3
Russian Federation	2000	29	1	3.4
San Marino	1998	12	-	0
Slovak Republic	1998	20	2	10
Slovenia	1998	15	-	0
Spain	1998	15	4	26.7
Sweden	1999	20	10	50.0
Switzerland	1998	7	2	28.6
FYROM	1998	22	4	18.2
Turkey	1999	25	2	22.2
Ukraine	1999	32	1	3.1
United Kingdom	1998	22	5	22.7

\* These figures concern only the ministers.

### 3. *Women and men in the municipal councils of the Council of Europe member states*

COUNTRIES	ELECTION YEAR	PERCENTAGE OF MEN	PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN
Albania		89	11
Belgium	1999	76.9	23.1
Bulgaria	1999	79.1	20.9
Croatia	1997		
Cyprus		83	17
Czech Republic	1998		
Denmark	1997	72.1	27.9
Estonia	1996	73.3	26.7
Finland	1996	68.3	31.7
France	1995	78.3	21.7
Germany*	1991-92-93	77.6	22.4
Greece	1994	96.4	3.6
Hungary	1998	76	24
Iceland	1998	71.8	28.2
Ireland	1999	84	16
Italy	1995	78.5	21.5
Latvia	1997	61.3	38.7
Liechtenstein		81.7	18.3
Lithuania	2000	82.4	17.6
Luxembourg	1999	85.1	14.9
Malta	1999	82.7	17.3
Netherlands	1998	77.8	22.2
Norway	1995	67.3	32.7
Poland	1998	84.15	15.85
Portugal	1993	88.9	11.1
Russian Federation	1999-2000	69.9	30.1
San Marino	1999		
Slovak Republic**	1998	82.9	17.1
Slovenia	1998	87.8 (95.4)**	12.2 (4.6)**
Spain	1999	76	24
Sweden	1998	58.4	41.6
Switzerland		60	40
FYROM	1996	93.9	6.1
Turkey	1998		
Ukraine	1998		
United Kingdom***			
Total of the European Union member countries (15)		73.8	26.2

For each member state the latest data available.

\* These figures only apply to municipalities of more than 20 000 inhabitants.

\*\* Figures applying only for women elected mayors.

\*\*\* The figures for the United Kingdom are difficult to analyse due to a municipal system that is not uniform.



## APPENDIX XII

## Summary of replies received from the member states concerning the participation and representation of various categories and social groups

COUNTRY	SEX	AGE	OCCUPATION	SENSITIVE OR MARGINAL GROUPS												
<b>Belgium</b>	Women are still under-represented in local elective office despite the introduction of a statutory system of quotas (two thirds/one third). The proportion of female local elected representatives (councillors, aldermen and mayors) is 20.45%. (5.9% of mayors, 15.1% of aldermen and 23.1% of councillors).	Young people play little part in local public life. There is only one mayor (out of 589) under the age of 30. Mayors under the age of 40 account for 4.2% of the total.		Foreigners who have permission to reside in Belgium can participate in local public life. There are administrative mechanisms to register homeless electors enabling them to exercise their electoral rights.												
<b>Bulgaria</b>	Women are severely under-represented in local councils (20.9% of the elections in October 1999). Only twelve women are mayors of municipalities (out of a total of 262).	Share by age of elected representatives <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>&lt; 30</td> <td>4.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>30-39</td> <td>25.2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>40-49</td> <td>35.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>50-59</td> <td>24.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>&gt; 59</td> <td>10.3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age	Percentage	< 30	4.6	30-39	25.2	40-49	35.8	50-59	24.1	> 59	10.3	60% of local councillors have received a higher education, 37.7% secondary or intermediate level education and 2.8% only a basic education.  In municipal councils, women are better educated than men, statistically speaking (70.5% have received higher education, against 62.4% for men).	Ethnic minorities tend to be under-represented.
Age	Percentage															
< 30	4.6															
30-39	25.2															
40-49	35.8															
50-59	24.1															
> 59	10.3															
<b>Croatia</b>	Women are under-represented in local (and national) politics.  The government has drawn up a programme and appointed a commission to promote equality between the sexes.															
<b>Czech Republic</b>	18% of local elected representatives are women. 5.9% of mayors are women.	The average age of local elected representatives is 42 years.	Intellectuals are over-represented. Almost half of the elected representatives have university education and are involved in political parties.	The Roma community is under-represented.												

COUNTRY	SEX	AGE	OCCUPATION	SENSITIVE OR MARGINAL GROUPS
<b>Denmark</b>	28% of local elected representatives are women.	Young people and the elderly are under-represented. 3% of the elected representatives at local level are under 30 (23% of the population), and 11% are more than 60 years old (26% of the population).	Public employees and self-employed citizens are over-represented.	In order to obtain a better age and sex distribution special compensation has been introduced for council members with children under 10 years of age.
<b>Estonia</b>	No information			
<b>Finland</b>	31.7% of local elected representatives are women. Women are under-represented in municipal councils, but not in municipal elective offices. The majority of Finns (91% of women and 82% of men) want more women to be involved in politics in order to make the political expertise more comprehensive.	Under 5% of elected representatives are young people (under 30s)	Persons with weaker socio-economical resources are under-represented.	The long-term unemployed citizens hardly take part at all in political life.
<b>Germany</b>	Women are under-represented.	Young people are under-represented.	Pensioners and civil servants are over-represented. Self-employed and entrepreneurs are under-represented.	
<b>Greece</b>		Participation among the elderly is low.		Greece has neither the necessary legal framework nor the necessary infrastructures to enable people with impaired mobility to exercise their voting rights, e.g. access to polling stations. Postal voting is not permitted.
<b>Hungary</b>		Young people and, in some cases, the elderly are under-represented in local representative bodies.	Intellectuals and entrepreneurs are over-represented in municipal councils.	The unemployed, the homeless, large and fragmented families have hardly any representation among local elected representatives.

COUNTRY	SEX	AGE	OCCUPATION	SENSITIVE OR MARGINAL GROUPS
<b>Iceland</b>	<p>28.2% of local elected representatives are women (in 1978, the proportion was just 6%). The proportion of women increases with the size of the municipality (following the 1998 elections, women accounted for approximately 35% of elected representatives in large municipalities and about 23% in small municipalities).</p> <p>Many political parties have adopted rules to ensure a proper balance between men and women on their lists of candidates.</p> <p>The way electoral lists are compiled for local elections may contribute to the reduction in the number of women elected (women seldom occupy the top positions on the lists).</p> <p>Central government has recently appointed a committee to promote greater participation of women in political life both at central and local level.</p>	<p>The average age for local representatives is 44.2 years. The percentage of those elected under 30 years of age is 4.5% and 5.7% for those over 60 years of age.</p>		
<b>Ireland</b>	<p>Women councillors represent about 16% of the total. It is central government policy to aim at 40%+ female representation on public bodies.</p>	<p>The young are seriously under-represented.</p>		<p>A once-off retirement gratuity for councillors applied prior to the 1999 elections to help widen opportunities for young and women candidates.</p> <p>Foreign residents in Ireland can vote at local elections and become councillors.</p>
<b>Latvia</b>				<p>Only citizens have the right to vote, but foreigners can also participate in local public life by other means.</p>





COUNTRY	SEX	AGE	OCCUPATION	SENSITIVE OR MARGINAL GROUPS																								
<b>Norway</b>	<p>Women participate in elections in the same proportions as men. In other political activities, men are very slightly more active, except when it comes to petitions, where there are 3% more female signatures. Women, however, are under-represented in municipal councils: following the 1995 elections, 32.7% of local elected representatives are women. Women nevertheless account for 35.9% of members of municipal executive committees and 41.5% of members of regional executive committees.</p> <p>The Local Government Act contains provisions concerning the balance between women and men in standing committees: for committees with more than four members, each gender must have a minimum representation rate of 40%.</p>	<p>Young people are less involved in local public life: only 33% of electors between the ages of 18 and 21 turned out at the 1995 elections (compared with 45% of age 22 to 29 and 64% of age 30 to 39).</p> <p>Contrary to general views, young people nevertheless seem to be as involved as other age groups in other forms of participation (demonstrations, signing appeals or other forms of political activity).</p> <p>Youth organisations, political or otherwise, receive financial assistance from both local and central government.</p> <p>In 17% of municipalities, there are children's and/or youth councils.</p>	<p>Public servants are heavily over-represented in local elective offices. The private sector is seriously under-represented, even though there is no significant difference between the two categories in terms of voter turnout.</p>	<p>Since 1983, foreigners who have been resident in Norway for more than three years have been entitled to vote in local elections.</p> <p>In 1995, 39% of foreigners who had the right to vote exercised this right (compared with 67% of Norwegians). In 1983, the figure was 46%.</p> <p>Surveys show, however, that foreigners are just as involved as Norwegians in other, single-issue political activities. They are less active in NGOs.</p> <p>At central government level, a committee responsible for contact between immigrants and the Norwegian authorities (KIM) acts as a government advisory body and discussion forum.</p> <p>At local level, several municipalities have set up advisory committees on which immigrants are represented.</p>																								
<b>Poland</b>	<p>Women represent 15.68% of the local and regional elected representatives, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 15.85% of municipal councillors (the representation increases with the size of the municipalities, up to 29.41% in the capital city);</li> <li>– 14.87% of <i>poviat</i> councillors;</li> <li>– 18.87% of voivodeship councillors.</li> </ul>	<p>Share by age et gender of elected representatives (municipalities, <i>poviats</i> and voivodeships):</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="862 1085 1285 1319"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age</th> <th>F</th> <th>M</th> <th>F/M</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>&lt;30</td> <td>2.66</td> <td>3.85</td> <td>3.80</td> </tr> <tr> <td>30-39</td> <td>22.55</td> <td>22.55</td> <td>22.55</td> </tr> <tr> <td>40-49</td> <td>45.39</td> <td>42.74</td> <td>43.40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>50-59</td> <td>24.61</td> <td>22.52</td> <td>22.86</td> </tr> <tr> <td>&gt;60</td> <td>4.79</td> <td>8.34</td> <td>7.39</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age	F	M	F/M	<30	2.66	3.85	3.80	30-39	22.55	22.55	22.55	40-49	45.39	42.74	43.40	50-59	24.61	22.52	22.86	>60	4.79	8.34	7.39		
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<b>Russian Federation</b>	30.8% of local elected representatives and 20.26% of the heads of municipal bodies are women.	<u>Local elected representation</u> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age</th> <th>Share</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>&lt;30</td> <td>7.59%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>30-50</td> <td>69.76%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>+50</td> <td>22.65%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <u>Head of local bodies</u> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age</th> <th>Share</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>&lt;30</td> <td>2.81%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>30-50</td> <td>77.55%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>&gt;50</td> <td>19.64%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age	Share	<30	7.59%	30-50	69.76%	+50	22.65%	Age	Share	<30	2.81%	30-50	77.55%	>50	19.64%	Entrepreneurs and directors of enterprises and organisations are under-represented.  Education of local elected representatives: higher=45.15%; higher in legal field=1.46%; others=53.39%.  Education of the heads of municipal bodies; higher=55.30%; higher in legal field=2.45%; others=42.25%.																													
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<b>San Marino</b>	No instances of under-representation																																															
<b>Slovak Republic</b>	17.1% of mayors are women.  Some political parties have declared their intention of encouraging women to participate and stand for election.			The Roma are under-represented.																																												

COUNTRY	SEX	AGE	OCCUPATION	SENSITIVE OR MARGINAL GROUPS
<b>Slovenia</b>	Women are under-represented. Only nine mayors (out of 192) are women.	Young people are under-represented. Only 1% of mayors are under the age of 30; 61% of mayors are between 30 and 50 years. (40% are between 41 and 50); 30% are between 51 and 60; 7% are over 60 and only one over 70 years.	65% of mayors have received higher education, 27% secondary level education and 8% only a basic education.	The Local Elections Act ensures that the Hungarian and Italian ethnic communities have at least one representative elected to the municipal council. The same rule applies to the Roma community, which shall have at least one representative in the areas where Roma community lives. Only members of this community are allowed to vote when electing their councillors.
<b>Spain</b>	After the elections of 1999, according to a first estimation, women are 24% of local elected representatives. This is a considerable increase in relation to the elections of 1995 (13.5%). More than 10% of mayors are women (against 7% in 1995).		After the elections of 1999, according to a first estimation, representation of farmers and (to a lesser extent) civil servants decreased in relation to 1995, while that of technicians and managers increased. Women councillors have a higher level of education than men.	
<b>Sweden</b>	4% of local councillors and 47% of regional councillors are women. These figures have greatly improved in recent years. Women are best represented in large towns and cities.	Young people under the age of 30 account for 6% of local elected representatives and 2% of regional elected representatives.		8% of Swedes are immigrants. Their turnout at elections has been declining steadily since 1976 (when it was 60%). Immigrants account for 4.4% of local elected representatives and 4.5% of regional elected representatives.
<b>Switzerland</b>	Women are under-represented. The figures have improved in recent years. In 1997 women accounted for 23% of the members of the canton parliaments.	Young people of low professional status are under-represented.	Civil servants are over-represented.	Particularly people with low educational background participate less than those having a higher professional or educational status. Also the participation of foreigners is limited.

COUNTRY	SEX	AGE	OCCUPATION	SENSITIVE OR MARGINAL GROUPS
<b>FYROM</b>	At the last local elections (1996), women represented only 9.7% of the candidates and accounted only for 6.1% of the elected councillors. No woman was elected as mayor. In contrast to this, women are much more represented in NGOs: there are forty women's organisations in the country.	Only 3.8% of the councillors elected in 1996 were 60 years old or over, where this category account for 11.8% of the total population.  The shares of councillors aged of 30-39 and of 40-49 were respectively of 41% and 34.1%, where these categories represented respectively around 12% and 13% of the total population.	Better education is in positive correlation with representation in the local political bodies.	
<b>Turkey</b>	Women are under-represented at both local and national level despite equality laws and regulations and the quota system operated by some political parties. However, in recent elections the number of female representatives almost doubled.	Although young people's participation in political life starts with the vote at the age of 18, they are under-represented in local government.		Low income groups tend to play a less influential role. Foreigners can neither vote nor stand for election, but they can participate in local public life in other ways.
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Women are under-represented.	Young people are under-represented.	Those in employment are under-represented.	Ethnic minorities are under-represented.