

**Local politics and intra-ethnic party competition:  
Multi-party systems among ethnic minorities in Central and Eastern Europe**

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**Abstract**

Research for many years has seen monopolies of ethnic minority political parties as helpful to the peaceful settlement of ethnic conflicts. According to the dominant view, competition among ethnic minority parties would radicalise them and fuel ethnic conflict. New evidence shows that intra-ethnic party competition among ethnic minorities can be good for intra-ethnic conciliation.

This paper discusses factors that create and allow intra-ethnic party competition in Central and Eastern European parliaments with specific focus on the importance of electoral systems and the ethnic structure of sub-national units (such as regions or municipalities). Methodologically, the tests are based on a Boolean Algebra approach (Qualitative Comparative Analysis QCA). While QCA usually works with a small number of cases, the dataset analysed considers 111 minorities (units of analysis) out of 18 democracies in Central and Eastern Europe.

**Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

The inclusion of ethnic groups into democratic representation has proven to be important for the quality of democracy and for peace building. However, do they need own political parties to be represented, and how should their party system be structured? Recently democratised countries in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>2</sup> are giving new salience to the question of ethnic minority integration. Many countries of the region have a rich variety of ethnic groups and many of them have struggled with the integration of those minorities, sometimes resulting in the alienation of ethnic groups, war, ethnic cleansing, or even genocide.

While the question of whether ethnic minority groups should be integrated into state institutions through own parties has drawn substantial attention from the academic community (e.g. Horowitz 1985; Lijphart 1994a; Norris 2005; Doorenspleet 2005; Reilly 2001). Several studies focus even on ethnic parties in Central and Eastern Europe more specifically (Toplak 2001; Friedman 2005; Kostecky 2002; for electoral systems and ethnic minorities: Bochsler 2006), but the form of competition between ethnic minority parties has only rarely been focused on.

Nevertheless, the question if there is a monopoly of one single ethnic minority party aiming to represent its whole ethnic group, as opposed to an intra-ethnic bi-party or multi-party system, seems to be important for the quality of the democratic representation and it may have implications for the

<sup>1</sup> Ana Haro merits special thanks for her helpful comments, Michael Gailing for his revision, and the Swiss National Research Foundation for supporting this research with a grant.

<sup>2</sup> Defined here as all post-communist countries in Europe, including the de facto autonomous entities of Kosovo and – at the time the investigation refers to – Montenegro.

potential of peace-building.

Previous studies show intra-ethnic party monopolies as helpful to the peaceful settlement of ethnic conflicts. They have argued that intra-ethnic party competition would radicalise the parties' position regarding the ethnic cleavage, and this radicalisation would fuel the inter-ethnic conflict (Mitchell 1995). New evidence from Northern Ireland (Mitchell et al. 2001; Mitchell et al. 2006) and India (Chandra 2005), show that competition can indeed function with conciliation; a phenomenon that may suggest competition being a means to conciliation.

This paper provides a comparative analysis of 18 post-communist democracies in Central and Eastern Europe and discusses the configurations of variables that enable a competitive party system among ethnic minorities. It focuses both on the character of the ethnic minority population and the electoral system, the institution that set the conditions under which political parties compete. From this consideration a model is derived that shows that there are necessary conditions in regards to both electoral systems and the ethnic minority structure that determine the character of the ethnic minority parties.

A database including 111 ethnic minorities from 18 countries in Central and Eastern Europe, and for each of them the outcome of the latest national parliamentary elections by 2005, allows broad scale testing on this model by way of the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) method (Ragin 1987, 2000) that is based on Boolean Algebra. Despite the large number of cases (that is not very common for this method), four conjunctive configurations (paths) can be identified that allow plurality among ethnic minority parties.

In the following section of this paper, the importance of monopolies with respect to competition among ethnic minority parties on conciliation is discussed. Afterwards, a comprehensive model is developed that shows under which conditions (territorial structure of the ethnic minority; electoral systems) one might expect the emergence of several ethnic minority parties. Tests are carried out by using a path model and the QCA approach.

### **Party monopolies versus bi-party systems**

The form of intra-group party competition of ethnic minorities has so far got the attention only of few scholars (Mitchell 1995; Mitchell et al. 2001; Mitchell et al. 2006; Chandra 2005). The question if monopolies of unified ethnic minority parties or intra-ethnic party competition is better for democracy and the settling of conflicts appears to be disputed.

- *Outbidding process*: In democracies where ethnicity is a dominant determinant of voting behaviour, the ethnic appeal appears as the easiest way of mobilizing voters. When one ethnic group starts to vote for own ethnic parties, then the stakes are high that other ethnic groups might feel threatened and adopt themselves an ethnically based voting behaviour. In an atmosphere of ethnic

tensions, ethnically defined parties gain even more support, what leads to a self-intensifying process. The parties with the best chances to get elected are the ones with the most radical claims regarding the ethnic issue, and “there is no premium on moderation” (Mitchell 1995: 773, cf. Horowitz 1985: 291, 357-8; Mitchell 1995: 779-80). As long as a party has the monopoly of support among an ethnic group, there is no need for radicalisation. In this logic, intra-ethnic party competition contributes to the deterioration of inter-ethnic coexistence.<sup>3</sup>

- *When hawks convert into doves*: In recent years, some scholars defend a view that abandons the outbidding logic. They doubt if ethnic minority parties competing in bi-party systems necessarily need to radical appeals to win voters, and instead discuss ways of ethnic party competition without outbidding. Recent studies on the peace process in Northern Ireland have taught us that inter-ethnic agreements can change the political landscape of each of the ethnic parties in conflict, and moderate radical political parties if they are included into a framework of conciliation and political power. The incentives of guaranteed political power is a way to moderate radical competitors (Mitchell et al. 2001; Mitchell et al. 2006). This might be an argument for institutional frameworks allowing the participation of several parties among ethnic minorities.

- *Crosscutting alliances*: A different view (Chandra 2005) proposes the promotion of cleavage systems where ethnic majorities are not permanent majorities in a polity. If all the political decisions go along ethnic lines, minorities will always be the losers. This is why other than ethnic conflict lines in a country, such as economic or confessional cleavages, help for ethnic conciliation and stability. They facilitate coalitions that crosscut ethnic lines. For instance, labour parties from both the ethnic minority and majority might agree on punctual or permanent alliances. The politicisation of such crosscutting cleavages depends, however, on the existence of potential political players that might form crosscutting alliances, and thus on party competition beyond only the ethnic cleavage, yet with a party plurality among each ethnic group. Consequently, party competition in each ethnic group appears to be a more universal way of creating conditions where crosscutting alliances can thrive (see as well Horowitz 1985: 359f.). Thus, within the scope of crosscutting cleavages, intra-ethnic party competition does well for democracy and may be a key element of this theory for its potential to stimulate conciliation.

Besides the ethnic conflict related aspects, there is a genuine political problem of lacking accountability in party systems where one party has a de-facto monopoly of representing an important group. In systems where the ethnic dimension dominates the electoral behaviour, the lack of intra-ethnic party competition produces a lack of political control, because there is no alternative to the monopolist. This might lead to bad governance and disappointment with politics.

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<sup>3</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina serves as a good example for such a development, cf. NIOD 2002; Caspersen 2006: 52 et seq.; ICG 1996: 2-3.

## **A model for plurality of ethnic minority parties**

Which conditions create a bi-party or multiparty system among ethnic minorities? In this paper, a two-level model is suggested, including both political mechanisms at the local or regional level and electoral laws at the national level.

### *A game on two levels: National representation and local institutions*

Previous research on political issues and party systems (Lijphart 1984: 147 et seq.; Taagepera/Shugart 1989: 92 et seq.) indirectly suggests that party plurality amongst ethnic minorities is impossible. Those studies are aimed at the calculation of the number of parties based on the number of salient issue dimensions that are present in a democracy with the number of parties being the number of issues plus one. If all political conflicts in a democracy regard the same relevant issue dimension such as the socio-economic dimension of capital-labour there will still be two parties, one for each pole of the conflict. For each additional dimension – for instance the cultural one, the urban/rural, or post-materialist division – one additional party will appear. A newly upcoming issue will rarely split more than one party.

A salient ethnic cleavage is such an issue dimension and according to this theory it would add exactly one additional party to the system; a party representing ethnic minority interests. Minorities might believe that such a united party can better represent their interests than if they split and have intra-ethnic conflicts. And these voters that belong to an ethnic minority, but for whom an ideological or economic issue is more important than ethnicity, might still vote for the non-ethnic party that is representing their interest best. So where does the plurality come from?

If focusing solely on the national level of politics, this logic might have certain plausibility for the ethnic issue too. But the view neglects the important role local and regional politics play for the representation and integration of ethnic minorities. In fact, for concentrated ethnic groups, decentralisation of power towards lower state levels is an important means of giving them more autonomy. It not only entitles ethnic minorities the power to rule with respect to their own concerns (as far as political competences are devolved to the local or regional authority), but also gives them their own institutions (local and regional parliaments and governments) from which they can organise themselves.

Local political representations might shape the party system particularly along the lines of ethnic minorities when they are a majority of the population at the local level, giving minorities their own institutions and organisational autonomy at the local or regional level and it drives intra-ethnic political plurality. If the ethnic minorities organise their own political sphere at a local or regional level then they are divided among cleavages in the same way as the majority population is.

Minorities and their parties might be divided on economic interests, ideological issues, or differences about what kind of ethnic minority rights will be claimed. Or, simply, if a monopolist party exists, a political entrepreneur might propose an electoral alternative and might have success with it. This might create a multi-party system at the local/regional level.

In certain situations, however, when the minority group has no local majority, there are strong incentives to stand together. (Horowitz, 1985: 352 et seq., discusses similar aspects, although at the national level). This does not mean all citizens think the same way on all relevant issues, but instead indicates that the ethnic issue is the most important one. Thus, citizens support the ethnic minority party or they otherwise join one of the non-ethnically defined parties.

Those sub-national party systems shape the party system at the national level and vice-versa. If ethnic minority politics are pluralist at the sub-national level then they too will be so at the national level provided that the national electoral system allows it. However, there might be a spill-over from the national level to the sub-national level, and if the national electoral system requires the ethnic minority representatives to unify then it gets more difficult for them to compete against each other in municipal or regional elections. Thus, it is plausible that local party competition is shaped by the national party system and the electoral law for national elections in particularly strong centralised states.

### *The electoral system hurdle to take*

Electoral laws are channelling institutions for the party system. Electoral system design can make it easier or more difficult for new or small political parties to gain seats in parliament. Likewise the electoral system can limit the chances of ethnic minority parties or, the converse, give ethnic minorities advantageous conditions to access parliaments with their own parties. It is no accident that scholars that study the integration of ethnic groups into politics recognise electoral systems as an important institution that set out how minorities are to be dealt with (Lijphart 1994b; Horowitz 1985; Reilly 2001). Many speak of “electoral engineering”, the design of electoral institutions in order to have a desired outcome. While ethnic identities and conflicts are perceived as fluid, raised or calmed by political actors (the predominant constructivist view of ethnic identities), electoral systems are understood as a means of channelling the structure of ethnic conflicts towards a desirable result (Chandra 2005: 346).

Today we have a broad knowledge about how parties can affect the conflict situation in ethnically heterogeneous societies through either a spiral of hatred and separation or by behaving in a conciliatory way. However many aspects of the electoral system’s impact on ethnic party systems still remain understudied.

Common electoral system theory distinguishes *proportional representation* (PR) from *plurality or majority vote*. PR allows the emergence of a large number of parties whereas plurality or majority electoral systems concentrate the electoral race on two (or a very small number of) competitors. In this case, the largest party usually wins the electoral district which means that the competition is focused on both top-runners and leads to a two-party system (Duverger 1951; Cox 1997). PR with small constituencies appears at the local/regional level and acts as a threshold against small parties. While smaller districts (for instance, with 3-5 mandates) limit the number of competitors, large districts (with 10 or more mandates) allow small parties to be successful (Taagepera/Shugart 1989). Electoral success is thus linked to the type of the electoral system and the size of the political party. In the case of ethnic parties, size is determined by the number of potential voters that is almost equal to the share of the ethnic group in the population.

Many studies of electoral system effects end at the one-dimensional distinction between restrictive and permissive laws. Other mechanisms are considered irrelevant or rather, “complicated features” (in the words of Benoit 2002: 11), so that they are left aside. However, when focusing on ethnic minorities, we must think of one element that is rarely considered in studies on the impact of electoral systems on party systems, territorial distribution of the population and of party voters. Some ethnic groups live very concentrated in a small part of the territory while others live spread throughout the country. Especially minorities that belong to the titular nation of a neighbouring state often are concentrated along state borders. Further, we can observe that when choosing a new residence (or return to a place where they have been expelled from), many citizens would rather chose to live in a place where they are locally in the majority. These, and other processes lead to population structures, where minorities often are concentrated on small areas, or even locally form the majority of the population. Arithmetically speaking, geographically concentrated ethnic minorities have a considerably higher share of population in their “homelands” than at the countrywide average.

If an electoral system is organised in districts, the territorial distribution of voters makes an important difference to a party’s chances to get elected. While small parties do not usually get elected in small electoral districts, parties of territorially concentrated minorities do not have to mind such electoral systems. Their potential voters are all concentrated in a small stronghold where the parties are strong enough win the elections (Bochsler 2006).

That is where some arithmetic about electoral systems needs to be introduced.

Suppose an ethnic minority counts a share  $p$  of the countrywide population and the members of this ethnic group live spread throughout the country. Thus, in each electoral district, the share of the ethnic minority is approximately  $p$ . In order to allow intra-ethnic plurality, the ethnic group has to win at least two seats in an (average) electoral district. In PR systems, the share of seats a party

wins is similar to its vote share, but if the district counts  $m$  seats then a party with a vote share  $p$  wins  $m \cdot p$  seats. In order to win 2 seats in a district with  $m$  seats, an ethnic minority thus needs to have a population share of  $p=2/m$  (if all the members of the minority vote for ethnic minority parties). Consequently, it is thus necessary that the product of the minority group share and the size of electoral district is 2 or larger in order to allow a plurality of ethnic minority parties ( $m \cdot p \geq 2$ ).

The formula changes slightly if the ethnic minority lives concentrated in a small territory. (In order to make things simpler, we assume that almost all the members of the minority live in the same electoral district.) Then, to win 2 seats in this district, the minority still needs a local population share of  $p_L \geq 2/m$ . But in a country with  $d$  electoral districts, the national population share would be  $d$  times smaller than the local population share ( $p = p_L/d$ ), which means that the minority needs a population share that is  $d$  times smaller than that for a non-concentrated minority [ $p \geq 2/(m \cdot d)$ ]. The product of the average number of seats in a district  $m$  and the number of districts  $d$  is nothing more than the number of seats in the national parliament  $s$ , ( $m \cdot d = s$ ), and so we can simplify and derive the condition  $m \cdot s \geq 2$  for the existence of several ethnic minority parties in a country where ethnic minorities are concentrated.

For non-PR systems, things are more complicated, but the formulas remain similar. However, they do not have to worry us since all of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe currently elect their national parliaments at least partly by PR (cf. table 1 below).

Some countries, however, apply *national legal thresholds* in their electoral laws, allowing only parties with a vote share above a defined percentage (often 5% of the national vote) representation in parliament. As a consequence, only the national vote share counts to decide over the party's success, whereas the territorial distribution of voters does not make any difference. This puts small ethnic groups into trouble if they want to get representation and usually it rules out intra-ethnic party competition completely. An example for the impossibility of the formation of ethnic minority parties is Moldova where the Gagauz minority (4.4% of the country's population), living in an autonomous region in Southern Moldova, can not form its own party because the national electoral law puts up a national 6% threshold. The case of impossible plurality is Romania whereby the Hungarian minority (8.5%) is represented with its own party that comfortably passes the 5% threshold. The ethnic Hungarians can however not split into two competitors, because they do not outnumber the double threshold, and thus they remain united in kinds of party politics despite political differences in the community.

Among a larger ethnic minority (for instance 10-15% of the population) it would theoretically be possible to organise several parties that pass a threshold of about 5%. But we also have to consider that usually the second party is smaller than the largest one (especially when the party is about to originate), and thus it is likely that the second party fails even if the overall population share of the

minority is more than double the threshold. Further, some of the voters might continue to vote for mainstream parties (parties of the ethnic majority or non-ethnically defined parties) or for minor parties that fail to pass threshold. In the end, it is implausible to have plurality among ethnic minorities when a national threshold applies unless, perhaps, for very large minorities (in “threshold countries” in Central and Eastern Europe there are no such empirical cases).

In some cases the actors (parties and voters) try to outsmart the legislator. In the 1994 elections in Slovakia, three ethnic Hungarian parties formed a coalition to pass jointly the 5% threshold (IRI 1999: 35). And in Serbia’s 2003 elections, parties from the Bosniak minority formed a coalition with a mainstream Serb-dominated party and together they won enough votes to pass the threshold: The coalition resulted in two Bosniaks gaining seats in Parliament. (In the same election, other minority parties failed with a similar strategy.) It might be possible too that one large ethnic minority party passes the threshold and another gets elected in a coalition. And, if reading the countries’ electoral laws more exactly, many clauses may be found that explain why such alliances are very difficult to establish. In some countries, open party lists (preference votes for single candidates from the lists) impede in practice minority candidates from joint lists to be elected (Friedman 2005: 384-5). And often, as seen in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia, legislation rules out the back door for minority parties through the application of higher thresholds for multiparty alliances.

Furthermore, when discussing ethnic minorities and electoral systems, we must consider that some countries apply *special electoral rules for minorities* that positively discriminate in favour of them. Some countries, such as Poland, exempt parties of ethnic minorities from legal thresholds. Other legislations (Croatia, Slovenia, Kosovo) provide special, non-territorial electoral districts for their minorities. Montenegro forms a special constituency for Ulcinj, the municipality where ethnic Albanians are in a vast majority and where the national 3% threshold does not apply. Many of these special electoral rules, while facilitating minority party representation, actually limit them to a single party. Romania allows each minority to be represented by just one party (and one seat) and in other cases the non-territorial districts count only one seat. A plurality of ethnic minority parties is plausible if those districts count more than two seats and if PR rules are applied. Actually, such special ethnic minority multi-seat districts with PR are a particularly strong means of promoting plurality among ethnic minority parties. In a “protected area” (and with PR), it is much easier for a second competitor to appear on the political sphere and gain a substantial part of the vote relative to minority parties having to compete against mainstream parties in a common district.

Besides these cases of *positive discrimination*, there are also some instances with an opposite approach. Some countries, Albania and Bulgaria, simply do not allow any form of ethnically based



organisation of political parties (although legislation is enforced for all minority parties). (For an overview over such rules in Central and Eastern Europe, see Cesid 2002 and Jovanović 2004.)

Country/Province	Electoral system	Special rules for ethnic minorities
Albania	Mixed system, 100 single member districts and 1 countrywide PR district with 40 mandates (compensatory rule).	Ethnically defined parties prohibited; the ethnic Greek "Human Rights Party" is tolerated.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	PR with 2 large districts (21 mandates average).	Quota guarantee that candidates of all ethnic groups are elected, however no special protection of ethnic minority parties.
Bulgaria	PR with a 4% national threshold.	Ethnically defined parties prohibited; the ethnic Turkish minority party is tolerated.
Croatia	PR with 10 districts (15,2 mandates average).	3 Serbian deputies are elected in an ethnic multi-member district by plurality rule; 5 special districts for other minority groups elect 1 deputy each.
Czech Republic	PR with a 5% national threshold, 14 districts (at average 14 mandates).	-
Estonia	PR with 11 districts (at average 9 mandates), 5% national threshold (or 3 direct district mandates).	-
Hungary	Mixed system, with 176 single-member districts, 20 PR districts (at average 8 mandates) with a 5% national threshold. 58 compensatory PR mandates in a nationwide constituency.	-
Kosovo	PR, nationwide constituency with 100 mandates.	20 seats for ethnic minority in special PR districts for each minority.
Latvia	PR, 5 districts (20 seats at average), 5% national threshold.	-
Lithuania	Mixed system; 71 single-member districts (plurality rule), countrywide PR constituency with 70 mandates and 5% threshold.	-
Macedonia	PR in 6 districts (20 mandates each)	-
Moldova	PR in a countrywide district with a 6% threshold.	
Montenegro	PR with a countrywide district with a 3% threshold.	The predominately Albanian municipality of Ulcinj votes in a 2-seat district according PR without threshold requirement.
Poland	PR with 5% national threshold, 41 districts (11 mandates at average).	Ethnic minorities are excluded from the threshold.
Romania	PR with 5% national threshold, 42 districts (8 mandates at average).	The largest parties of 18 ethnic minorities win each special ethnic minority seat; only 1 party per minority.
Serbia	PR with a nationwide constituency and a 5% threshold.	- (From 2007 on, the threshold for ethnic minority parties counts only 0.4%.)
Slovakia	PR with a nationwide constituency and a 5% threshold.	-
Slovenia	PR with 11 districts (8 mandates each); 4% national threshold only for the remaining seats that are accorded at the national level.	2 special districts for national minorities; Alternative Vote.

Table 1: Electoral systems in Central and Eastern Europe, latest elections by 2005. (Sources see appendix A.)

Based on this discussion of electoral systems, we might thus formulate necessary conditions for the creation of plurality amongst ethnic minority parties.

We may expect that a plurality of ethnic minority parties at the national level will happen if the national electoral system allows the representation of several ethnic minority parties in parliament and if several ethnic minority parties exist at the sub-national level. This is the case if the ethnic minority counts a majority of votes at the local level. *Overall, in order to have intra-ethnic party*

*plurality at the national level, we need an electoral system that allows it, and the relevant ethnic minorities need to be a majority in at least one of the sub-national entities of the country.*

The discussion of electoral systems shows that there is not just one electoral system that would allow the representation of several ethnic minority parties, but instead it depends upon both the electoral system and the population structure of the ethnic minority. This makes us think of a path model with four different possible paths that lead to the discussed outcome.

### *Hypotheses*

Plurality amongst ethnic minority parties may exist if one of the following conditions applies (cf. figure 1 below):

1. The ethnic minority is a majority locally, the electoral system does not include any national legal threshold, and the share of the minority at the national population equals at least the share of two seats in an (average) electoral district.

2. The ethnic minority is a majority locally, it is concentrated in a small region of the country, the electoral system does not include any national legal threshold, and the minority population counts for at least the equivalent of two seats in parliament.

3. The ethnic minority is a majority locally and the minority population counts for at least the equivalent of two seats in parliament. For the national elections a countrywide national threshold is applied, but several ethnic minority parties build up a coalition with mainstream parties in order to pass the electoral threshold.

4. The ethnic minority votes in a special non-territorial constituency with a PR electoral system and the minority population counts for at least the equivalent of two seats in parliament.

### **Ethnic bi-partism in Central and Eastern European countries**

Ethnic parties have gained importance in many political systems in Central and Eastern Europe, but the conditions for their development vary vastly. After democratisation in the 1990s, many of the countries of the region struggled with ethnic conflicts. This is what makes the region a particularly important case for the investigation of the links between ethnicity and the party system.

The test of the hypotheses was carried out based on the author's novel database on elections, parties and ethnic minorities in Central and Eastern Europe. For this study, each ethnic minority in each of the investigated countries was coded as a single case. After excluding Belarus, Russia and Ukraine,<sup>4</sup> the database counts 111 units of analysis (ethnic groups in the 18 countries or provinces).

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<sup>4</sup> Due to the lack of democracy in the case of Belarus, and due to the inflation of independent candidates in the parliaments in Russia and Ukraine, making it impossible to identify ethnic affiliations.

Serbia, Montenegro, and Kosovo are each counted as individual entity because there were no more common elections to parliament from 1996/97 on.

According to this model, four causal paths exist that all lead to a positive outcome, each consisting of conjunctive terms with up to four variables. Hence, it is a typical example of “multiple conjunctive causality” (Ragin 1987). In addition, some independent variables in the conjunctive terms are theoretically and empirically interdependent on each other (see below) implying high levels of collinearity and making analyses by regression models problematic.

The method, which Ragin proposes for the identification of multiple conjunctive paths, is a systematic investigation of the causal paths and a simplification of the multiple causal explanations using Boolean algebra. By the means of this method (“Qualitative Comparative Analysis”, short QCA), one or several conditions or combinations of conditions may be identified that explain the outcome for the investigated cases.

When choosing QCA to carry out an analysis, we also have to evaluate the advantages of fuzzy-set, a development of QCA. This method would allow a progress from the binary logic of QCA to a multi-value logic and thus permit a more precise operationalisation. Furthermore, the large number of cases is unusual for the QCA method and might indicate difficulties due to similar cases (same independent variables) with different outcomes (contradictory cases). However, several reasons let us favour QCA as a promising method for the problem under study. The dataset comprises only few positive outcomes (existence of several ethnic minority parties), and this might limit the number of contradictory cases. Moreover, the model does not lose information if the variables are kept binary since most of the variables are binary by nature and/or there is a clear theory-based cut-off-point. Some other variables might possibly be interval-scaled, such as the variables on territorial concentration of the minority groups, but no systematic data is available to measure them exactly in a numeric way.

### *Variables in the model*

In the QCA notation, every variable is identified with a letter or a combination of letters. Variables usually are binary and capital letters symbolise the presence of a phenomenon, while lower-case letters stand for the absence of it. To explain the notation, we use two variables as examples: “CONC” symbolises that an ethnic minority lives concentrated on a small geographic territory whereas “conc” means that it does not and that it lives spread throughout the country. “THRESHOLD” stands for electoral systems with legal national thresholds whereas “thresholds” are for those without. Table 2 lists all the variables and how they are dichotomised.

Name	Description and importance	Categories
<b>Dependent variable / outcome</b>		
BIPARTY	Measures whether several political parties representing the same ethnic minority exist in the national parliament.	Existence of several parties: 1; other cases: 0. (Where the parliament consists of two houses, the lower house is taken into account, being the more important house and always directly elected by the people; latest parliamentary election before end 2005.)
Explanatory variables regarding the <i>electoral law</i>		
THRESHOLD	Electoral laws that provide national electoral thresholds.	Coded 1 if a threshold of at least 3% of the nationwide votes applies; in mixed electoral systems, the PR threshold is relevant. Where all ethnic minority parties (means not only 1 per ethnicity) are exempted of the threshold (as in Poland), or where minorities vote mostly in territorial districts that are exempted of the threshold (Albanians in Montenegro), the variable is coded 0.
SPECIAL	Ethnic minorities that elect their parliamentary representatives in special, non-territorial constituencies, by PR.	Coded 1 for those ethnic minorities that vote in special ethnic districts by PR.
Explanatory variables regarding the <i>ethnic minority population</i>		
CONC	Regional concentration of the minority group.	Coded positive if the larger part of the ethnic minority group lives in a small part of the country. Exact basic data is missing for most of the countries; this is why a more exact indicator cannot be constructed. Existing databases on ethnic minorities contain information only on a small part of the cases under study (cf. Gurr et al. 2005). Instead, the latest available census data and alternative sources are used (cf. appendix A).
MAJORITY	Minority group forms a majority at the local or regional level.	If at least in one municipality or region, the minority group counts more than 50% of the population, the variable is coded 1.
Interactive explanatory variables regarding the <i>ethnic minority size</i> and the <i>electoral system</i>		
PARLIA_S (seats in parliament)	Number of seats in parliament in relation to the (countrywide) population share of the minority group.	Coded positively if the population share of the minority corresponds to two or more seats* in parliament.  * Indicator: Total number of seats in parliament times population share of the minority. (In the cases of Estonia and Latvia, countries where large parts of the ethnic minorities have no citizenship and voting rights, the share of the ethnic minorities among the voters instead of among the population is used.)
DISTRICT_S (seats in district)	Number of seats in an average electoral district in relation to the (countrywide) population share of the minority group.	Coded positively if the minority population share equals two or more seats* in an average district.  * Indicator: Total number of seats in parliament times population share of the minority, divided by the number of electoral districts.
COALITION	At least two parties of the ethnic minority group join a coalition with non-ethnic/ethnic majority parties.	Coded 1 if at least 2 parties join such a coalitions, negative otherwise.

Table 2: Operationalisation of the variables, notation, and dichotomisation. (Sources, see appendix A.)

### *Formalisation of the hypotheses*

Boolean algebra uses both signs + (addition) and \* (multiplication) in order to show how different variables (conditions) are linked. The addition sign (+) stands for the logical “or”, while the multiplication sign (\*) means a logical “and”. The notation “CONC + threshold” thus means that a minority lives concentrated or that no national legal threshold applies – at least one of both conditions applies. The notation “CONC \* threshold” however would mean that both conditions apply, or, that an ethnic group lives concentrated and that no national legal threshold applies.

This notation allows us to formulate the hypotheses (formulated above in sentences) in formal terms:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{BIPARTY} = & \text{MAJORITY} * ( \text{DISTRICT\_S} * \text{threshold} \\ & + \text{CONC} * \text{PARLIA\_S} * \text{threshold} \\ & + \text{PARLIA\_S} * \text{THRESHOLD} * \text{COALITION} ) \\ & + \text{SPECIAL} * \text{PARLIA\_S} \end{aligned}$$

### **Empirical analysis**

As a first step, the empirical cases analysed are classified according to the independent variables. Altogether, we count 25 groups of cases that each represents a combination of the independent variables. 7 of these groups of cases are coded positively; they lead to a positive outcome for all the investigated cases (existence of several ethnic minority party). The remaining 18 groups are coded negatively (no or only one ethnic minority party). Despite the large number of case, there are no contradictory configurations (cf. table 3).

CONC	THRESHOLD	SPECIAL	MAJORITY	PARLIA_S	DISTRICT_S	COALITION	BIPARTY	CASES
no	no	no	yes	>2	>2	no	yes	BiH-BO, BiH-SE
yes	no	no	yes	>2	>2	no	yes	BiH-HR, MA-AL
yes	yes	no	yes	>2	>2	yes	yes	SE-BO
yes	no	no	yes	>2	smaller	no	yes	CG-AL
yes	no	yes	yes	>2	>2	no	yes	KO-SE
yes	no	yes	no	>2	smaller	no	yes	KO-BO
no	no	yes	no	>2	smaller	no	yes	KO-RO
yes	no	no	yes	smaller	smaller	no	no	SLO-HU
no	no	no	yes	>2	smaller	no	no	MA-TU, MA-RO
yes	yes	no	yes	>2	>2	no	no	MD-GA, SK-HU, SE-AL, SE-HU, CG-BO
yes	yes	no	yes	smaller	smaller	no	no	MD-BG, SE-BG
yes	yes	no	yes	>2	smaller	no	no	RO-HU, SE-SK
no	yes	no	yes	>2	smaller	no	no	BG-TU, ES-RU
no	yes	no	yes	>2	>2	no	no	LV-RU, CG-SE
yes	no	no	no	>2	smaller	no	no	AL-GR
no	no	no	no	>2	smaller	no	no	AL-RO, AL-VL, MA-SE, SLO-HR
yes	no	no	no	smaller	smaller	no	no	AL-MA, AL-SLA, MA-BO, SLO-SE, SLO-BO, SLO-YU, SLO-IT, PL-GE, PL-BE
no	yes	no	no	>2	smaller	no	no	BG-VL, BG-RO, BG-SLA, ES-UK, HU-GE, HU-SK, LV-PO, RO-RO
yes	yes	no	no	>2	smaller	no	no	BG-MA, HR-SE, CZ-MO, CZ-SK, HU-RO, HU-JE, HU-SLA, LI-BE, RO-GE, CG-MU
no	yes	no	no	smaller	smaller	no	no	HR-MU, HR-SLO, HR-RO, CZ-GE, CZ-RO, CZ-HU, CZ-UK, ES-BE, ES-FI, LV-LI, SK-CZ, SK-GE, SK-PO, SE-MA, SE-GE, SE-RU, SE-SLO, CG-RO
yes	yes	no	no	smaller	smaller	no	no	HR-HU, CZ-PO, CZ-SI, LV-BE, LV-UK, LI-UK, RO-UK, RO-TU, RO-SE, RO-TA, RO-SK, SK-RT, SE-BC, SE-VL, SE-GO, SE-MO, SE-RM, SE-RT, SE-UK, SE-CZ, CG-HR
yes	yes	no	no	>2	>2	no	no	LI-RU, LI-PO, SE-HR
no	no	no	no	smaller	smaller	no	no	MA-VL, SLO-RO, PL-UK
no	yes	no	no	>2	>2	no	no	MD-RU, MD-UK, MD-RO, SK-RO, SE-CG, SE-YU, SE-RO
yes	no	yes	no	smaller	smaller	no	no	KO-TU, KO-GO

Table 3: QCA "Truth Table", variables determining the electoral success of ethnic minority parties ("BIPARTY"). 111 ethnic minority groups are arranged in 25 groups. All of the cases in one of these groups have identical configurations of independent variables. (For the abbreviations of the cases, see appendix B.)

The results can be slightly simplified by building groups of categories where the representation of ethnic minority parties is possible. The analysis with the use of Boolean algebra identifies four "paths" which describe configurations with plurality among ethnic minority parties.

$$\begin{aligned}
\text{BIPARTY} = & \text{MAJORITY} * \text{DISTRICT\_S} * \text{threshold} * \text{special} * \text{PARLIA\_S} * \text{coalition} \\
& + \text{MAJORITY} * \text{CONC} * \text{PARLIA\_S} * \text{threshold} * \text{coalition} * (\text{special} + \text{DISTRICT\_S}) \\
& + \text{MAJORITY} * \text{PARLIA\_S} * \text{THRESHOLD} * \text{COALITION} * \text{CONC} * \text{special} * \text{DISTRICT\_S} \\
& + \text{majority} * \text{SPECIAL} * \text{PARLIA\_S} * \text{threshold} * \text{coalition} * \text{district\_s}
\end{aligned}$$

The model is confirmed if the observed reality is conforming to the hypotheses. At the first view, the empirical configurations that stand for a positive outcome identified by the QCA analysis are

much more complex than the hypotheses. This is a problem of *limited diversity*. There would be 128 ( $2^7$ ) configurations of the independent variables, but many of them are theoretically impossible (DISTRICT\_S \* parlia\_s; SPECIAL\*THRESHOLD) or not plausible (threshold\*COALITION; conc\*MAJORITY\*parlia\_s), and others simply do not exist in the region under study. This is why many of the 128 fields in the matrix remain empty, the outcome unknown. The empirical test involves only the existing cases and accordingly the positive outcome is limited to a smaller range of configurations than theoretically expected. This is why the formulas characterizing the observed outcome include more conditions than the hypotheses. They are, however, a mere subset of the hypothesised terms, (the latter are marked with bold letters) and an analysis of the negative outcome group shows that there are no cases within the hypothesised positive group that lead to a negative outcome. Thus, we find cases that confirm each of the four hypothesised paths and in the used sample, the hypothesised paths are necessary and sufficient conditions for a plurality among ethnic minority parties.

There is actually a way, how to deal with limited diversity in QCA, coding the not observed in such a way that the formula is simplified. Whereas this might appear helpful for exploratory research, it may be problematic in the case of hypothesis-lead research. In the present example, the QCA-based software *Tosmana* includes logical cases in such a way that hypotheses would not only be violated, but theoretically non-plausible and empirically inexistent configurations of independent variables would also be accepted. This is why *logical cases* are not considered in the finding of the result and why non-parsimonious terms must be accepted.

#### *A path model explaining plurality among ethnic minority parties*

From the results of the theoretical and empirical analysis we can draw a path model that shows the ways of how to achieve plurality among ethnic minority parties (figure 1). Each of the four paths identified by the hypotheses and confirmed by the QCA analysis ends with a positive outcome (marked with “+”). One up to three empirical cases correspond to each hypothesised path. The four other paths lead to a negative outcome (marked with “-”). According to this analysis, two main reasons explain negative outcomes (most frequent negative outcomes). In 86 out of 111 cases, we do not have a plurality of ethnic minority parties because there is no local or regional entity where the minority group would count as a majority of the population and elections are not held in special, non-territorial constituencies with PR. In thirteen cases, national legal thresholds appear as a key factor for the lack of several ethnic minority parties. Only strategic coalitions would allow them to pass, but the legislation either impedes such coalitions or parties fail to form them. The process chart shows that all the 111 cases (shown with small letters next to the outcomes) fit within one of the paths and have the expected outcome.

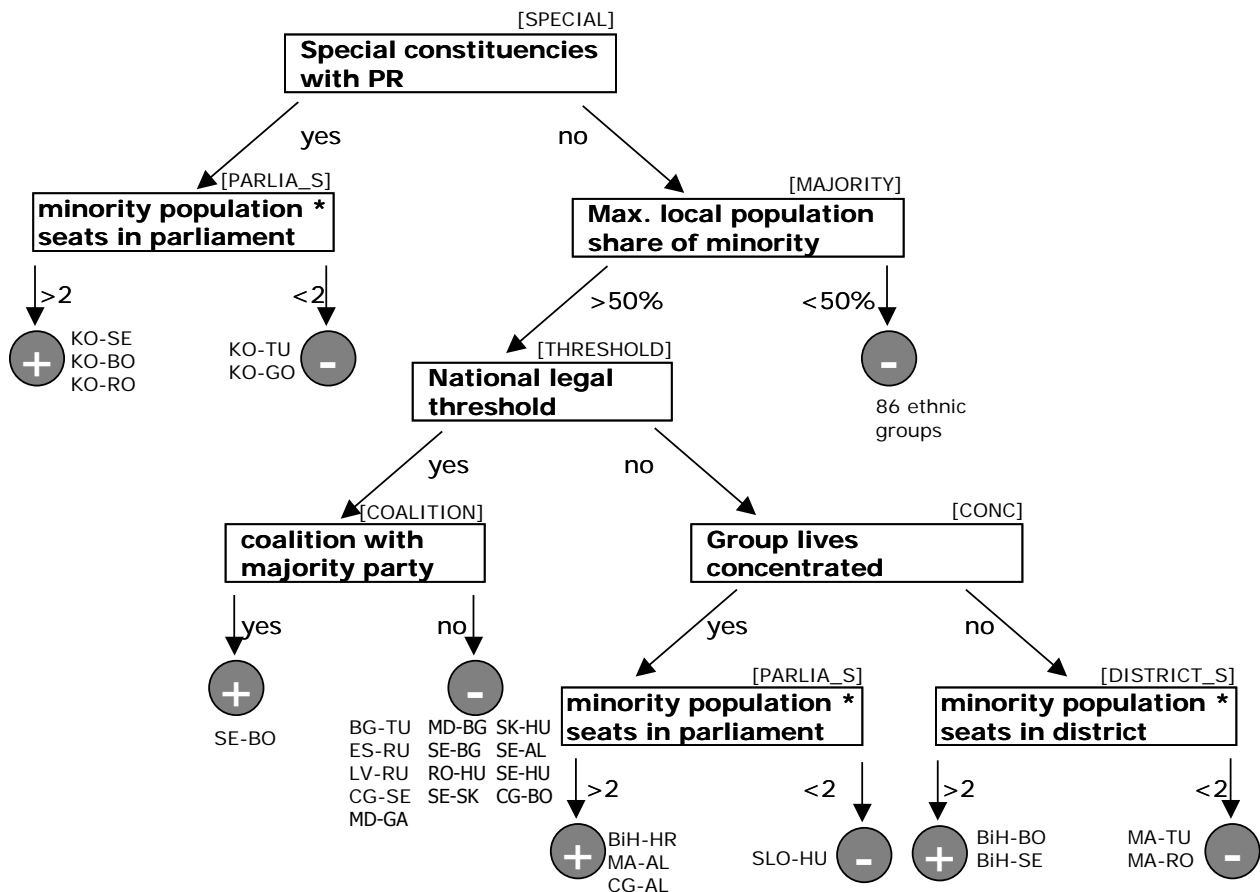


Figure 1: Path model explaining plurality among ethnic minority parties in Central and Eastern Europe and empirical cases. (The variable names of the QCA analysis are stated in angle brackets. For the abbreviations of the cases, see appendix B.)

### Discussing the results by territorial configuration of ethnic minority groups

The results reveal that plurality among ethnic minority parties is a phenomenon that is not linked to a single electoral system. Instead, depending on the structure of the ethnic minority group, electoral systems might have different consequences. Generally, the rather trivial condition demonstrates that in order to be represented by two or more own political parties, an ethnic minority must weigh the population share of two or more mandates in parliament. Furthermore:

- Minority groups that do not have a municipality or region where they are a majority locally will probably not have intra-ethnic party competition unless the electoral systems provides for a special non-territorial minority district with PR, like that of Kosovo.

- Territorially concentrated minority groups, that are a majority locally, are represented by a plurality of parties if the electoral system does not have any national legal threshold. In the electoral districts where they live they have sufficient votes to guarantee a plurality of political parties. Otherwise, if a national threshold applies, minority parties can still try to join an electoral alliance



with parties of other ethnic groups or mainstream parties. However, this is a very rare case of success and electoral laws in many countries limit the possibility of alliances to avoid thresholds.

- Territorially non-concentrated minority groups must be much larger in order to gain representation in parliament. In order to gain access with a plurality of parties, their population share needs to count for at least the equivalent of two seats in an average district. Small countrywide minorities might be represented only when the number of seats per district is very high, or if there is just a single nationwide electoral constituency. Still, if the electoral system provides for national legal thresholds then there is only the way of electoral alliances in order to gain representation with a plurality of parties.

### *Top-down or bottom-up? Party systems in a multi-level setting*

The variable of the local majority proves to be a key variable for intra-ethnic party competition. The approach that was used in this paper was focused on *ethnic party politics bottom-up*. The existence of plurality at the local level is crucial in regards to the shape of the ethnic minority party systems at the national level. Or, more precisely, intra-ethnic party competition at the national level requires that minority groups have their own “homeland” where they hold a (local) majority (we might simplify things and speak of an absolute majority, although the boundary might in reality be less clear-cut). At this local level political plurality grows, and it might be transposed to the national level provided that the national electoral system allows it.

Although the territorial structure of the population is a given variable (at least when politics abstain from massive human rights violations such as ethnic cleansing), the institutional division of a country is a politically decided variable. One measure that is applied to conciliate inter-ethnic conflicts is the change of municipal borders in order to create new units where the ethnic minority is in the majority (as for instance with the 2001 Ohrid agreement in Macedonia), and to transfer political power to sub-national entities to give more autonomy to concentrated minority groups.

However, the approach might be used as well in the opposite direction by focusing on *ethnic party politics top-down*. It will here, in the sense of a more comprehensive view of the model discussed in this paper, be brought to attention shortly, and might be subject to further research. If the electoral law at the national level makes political plurality among ethnic minorities impossible then this might affect the local level too since organisational party structures get lost and parties that run national elections jointly might have difficulties competing locally against each other. An example that conveys this relationship is Slovakia’s Hungarian minority: Vladimir Mečiar’s government in Slovakia introduced a clause into the national electoral law in 1998 preventing ethnic minority parties from forming coalitions (as they did in previous elections) and forcing Hungarian minority parties to merge into a unified party if they wanted to pass the threshold (IRI 1999: 9;

Friedman 2005: 383). Consequently, party plurality disappeared at the municipal level too (as aggregate results of the 2002 local elections suggest). *Ethnic party politics top-down* means local politics in municipalities or regions dominated by ethnic minorities does not automatically create an intra-ethnic multi-party system at the local level. Instead, the national party system affects party systems at the local level. If the national electoral system blocks intra-ethnic party competition, possibly other forms of electoral alternatives will emerge at the local level, such as civic group or independent candidates. Alternatively, intra-ethnic plurality at the local/regional level of politics can be created through local committees of mainstream parties that put up ethnic minority candidates in places where the minority is in the majority position. For a more accurate study of the phenomenon, however, detailed data on local or regional elections would be necessary. Unfortunately, it is not yet available for many of the countries under study.

### **Conclusions: Local politics and national electoral systems shaping ethnic party competition**

Party monopolies or competition among parties of the ethnic minorities: The question of how plurality among ethnic minority parties is created and what its consequences are is an aspect with practical relevance of multi-ethnic societies.

*Institutional engineering* is a discipline where lawmakers design political institutions with a certain purpose like that of the promotion of inter-ethnic conciliation. It requires, however, a precise understanding of political mechanisms in multi-ethnic societies. The analysis shows the causes of party monopolies or competitive party systems with regard to both electoral systems and the structure of the ethnic minority.

In Central and Eastern European countries, only for nine out of 111 ethnic minority groups were the adequate conditions present for the development of bi-party or multi-party systems among ethnic minorities. Multi-party systems among ethnic minorities rely on characteristics of the national electoral system in as much as the structure of ethnic groups at the local level. Yet, they show that politics is a game on several stages with different levels of government (central state and its electoral system, regional and local units, their population structure and party systems), each having an impact on one another.

Both the ethnic structure of the sub-national entities and national electoral rules have an important impact on ethnic party systems at the national level. Which of these allow intra-ethnic party competition among ethnic minorities?

Researchers often view electoral systems as a simple dimension of proportionality versus majority/plurality systems in order to determine their impacts. When tests of such simple linear influences were applied to Central and Eastern European countries they often lead to the conclusion

that electoral systems did not matter in this region or came to surprising or contradictory results (Golder 2002: 24; Moraski/Loewenberg 1999; Moser 2001).

The results of this study suggest rather that in ethnically divided societies, electoral system impacts are more complex, and we have to consider more than just a duality of PR versus majority/plurality systems. The path model (cf. figure 1 above) shows that not only the size of the ethnic minority group, but also its territorial concentration matters. Small, but concentrated minorities might get access to the national parliament much easier as long as the electoral system does not provide a national legal threshold. Such national legal thresholds often appear harmless, requiring just 4%-6% of the national vote share to succeed. However, for many minority parties, these thresholds are the reason why there is no way to win national elections.

Overall, the study reveals complex interactions between different aspects of electoral laws and the characteristics of the ethnic minority population structure. For the purpose of institutional engineering, this signifies more than a copy-paste of successful electoral laws. Instead, more comprehensive solutions are required and are to be adapted to the characteristics of the society and may include the redrawing of local administrative borders and the devolution of power to municipalities.

## Appendix A: Sources of the database

**General** : Alesina et al. (2003) and Gurr et al. (2005) for population data; Jovanović (2004) and Shvetsova (1999) for information on electoral systems.

### Country-specific sources:

- **Albania**

Center for Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe – Southeast Europe (CEDIME-SE), Minorities In Southeast Europe, Roma of Albania. Author: Maria Koinova; <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/pdf/cedime-se-albania-roma.doc>

Census: [www.instat.gov.al](http://www.instat.gov.al) (for information on the concentration of Greeks, Serbs and Macedonians).

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Central Electoral Commission; <http://www.cec.org.al/2004/Zgjedhejekuvendfiles/rezultatet2005/mainKandidat.html>

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Central Electoral Commission ([www.izbori.ba](http://www.izbori.ba))

- **Bulgaria**

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- **Czech Republic**

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- **Estonia**

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National Electoral Committee; <http://www.vvk.ee>.

- **Hungary**

Statistical Office [http://www.nepszamlalas2001.hu/eng/volumes/18/tables/load3\\_13.html](http://www.nepszamlalas2001.hu/eng/volumes/18/tables/load3_13.html)

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- **Latvia**

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- **Lithuania**

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- **Slovak Republic**

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- **Slovenia**

Homepage of the Electoral Commission: <http://volitve.gov.si/>

Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, Census 2002, <http://www.stat.si/popis2002/>

## Appendix B: Abbreviations for the ethnic groups

AL-GR	Albania, Greeks	MA-BO	Macedonia (Former Yug Rep), Bosniak
AL-MA	Albania, Macedonians	MA-RO	Macedonia (Former Yug Rep), Roma
AL-RO	Albania, Roma	MA-SE	Macedonia (Former Yug Rep), Serb
AL-SLA	Albania, South Slavs	MA-TU	Macedonia (Former Yug Rep), Turkish
AL-VL	Albania, Vlachs	MA-VL	Macedonia (Former Yug Rep), Vlachs
BG-MA	Bulgaria, Macedonians	MD-BG	Moldova, Bulgarian
BG-RO	Bulgaria, Roma	MD-GA	Moldova, Gagauz
BG-SLA	Bulgaria, Slav-speaking minorities	MD-RO	Moldova, Romanian
BG-TU	Bulgaria, Turks	MD-RU	Moldova, Russian
BG-VL	Bulgaria, Vlachs	MD-UK	Moldova, Ukrainian
BiH-BO	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosniak	PL-BE	Poland, Belarussians
BiH-HR	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croat	PL-GE	Poland, Germans
BiH-SE	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serb	PL-UK	Poland, Ukrainians
CG-AL	Montenegro, Albanians	RO-GE	Romania, Germans
CG-BO	Montenegro, Bosniaks	RO-HU	Romania, Hungarians
CG-HR	Montenegro, Croats	RO-RO	Romania, Roma
CG-MU	Montenegro, Muslims	RO-SE	Romania, Serbs
CG-RO	Montenegro, Roma	RO-SK	Romania, Slovaks
CG-SE	Montenegro, Serbs	RO-TA	Romania, Tartars
CZ-GE	Czech Republic, German	RO-TU	Romania, Turks
CZ-HU	Czech Republic, Hungarians	RO-UK	Romania, Ukrainians
CZ-MO	Czech Republic, Moravian	SE-AL	Romania, Albanians
CZ-PO	Czech Republic, Polish	SE-BC	Serbia, Bunjevci
CZ-RO	Czech Republic, Gypsy	SE-BG	Serbia, Bulgarians
CZ-SI	Czech Republic, Silesian	SE-BO	Serbia, Bosniaks
CZ-SK	Czech Republic, Slovak	SE-CG	Serbia, Montenegrins
CZ-UK	Czech Republic, Ukrainian	SE-CZ	Serbia, Czechs
ES-BE	Estonia, Belarussian	SE-GE	Serbia, Germans
ES-FI	Estonia, Finnish	SE-GO	Serbia, Goranci
ES-RU	Estonia, Russian	SE-HR	Serbia, Croats
ES-UK	Estonia, Ukrainian	SE-HU	Serbia, Hungarians
HR-HU	Croatia, Hungarians	SE-MA	Serbia, Macedonians
HR-MU	Croatia, Muslim	SE-MO	Serbia, Moslems
HR-RO	Croatia, Roma	SE-RM	Serbia, Romanians
HR-SE	Croatia, Serb	SE-RO	Serbia, Romanies
HR-SLO	Croatia, Slovene	SE-RT	Serbia, Ruthenians
HU-GE	Hungary, German	SE-RU	Serbia, Russians
HU-JE	Hungary, Jewish	SE-SK	Serbia, Slovaks
HU-RO	Hungary, Romany	SE-SLO	Serbia, Slovenes
HU-SK	Hungary, Slovak	SE-UK	Serbia, Ukraines
HU-SLA	Hungary, Southern Slav	SE-VL	Serbia, Vlachs
KO-BO	Kosovo, Bosniaks	SE-YU	Serbia, Yugoslavs
KO-GO	Kosovo, Gorani	SK-CZ	Slovak Republic, Czech
KO-RO	Kosovo, Roma	SK-GE	Slovak Republic, German
KO-SE	Kosovo, Serbs	SK-HU	Slovak Republic, Hungarian
KO-TU	Kosovo, Turks	SK-PO	Slovak Republic, Polish
LI-BE	Lithuania, Belarussian	SK-RO	Slovak Republic, Roma
LI-PO	Lithuania, Polish	SK-RT	Slovak Republic, Ruthenian
LI-RU	Lithuania, Russian	SLO-BO	Slovenia, Bosniak
LI-UK	Lithuania, Ukrainian	SLO-HR	Slovenia, Croat
LV-BE	Latvia, Belarussian	SLO-HU	Slovenia, Hungarian
LV-LI	Latvia, Lithuanian	SLO-IT	Slovenia, Italians
LV-PO	Latvia, Polish	SLO-RO	Slovenia, Roma
LV-RU	Latvia, Russian	SLO-SE	Slovenia, Serb
LV-UK	Latvia, Ukrainian	SLO-YU	Slovenia, Yugoslav
MA-AL	Macedonia (Former Yug Rep), Albanian		

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