



# Good Governance in Multiethnic Communities

Conditions, instruments, best practices,  
ways to achieve and measure good governance  
at the local level



King Baudouin  
Foundation



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2007

A joint publication of the Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center  
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# Executive Summary

Endorsing participation in public life, providing equal access to public goods and services provided by the state, and practices of good governance in multiethnic communities are becoming more and more frequently part of the public agenda in Southeast Europe. There is however no overview of good practices at the regional level, nor discussions about what are the most relevant aspects, and what could be the standards of good governance in multiethnic communities.

These questions were the focus of a regional conference entitled “Good Governance in Multiethnic Communities”, which aimed to share good practices from the region and to identify common standards and principles for local good governance in multiethnic communities. The conference was held in Cluj Napoca, on March 9-10, 2006, hosted by the Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center, as part of the “Minority Rights in Practice in Southeast Europe” programme of the King Baudouin Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Open Society Foundation.

On the basis of the material presented at the conference, the Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center has put together the present publication as an instrument to promote a common understanding of the concept of good governance, as well as a guide to apply good governance in multiethnic communities.

The first chapter is an endeavour to define good governance in the context of the multiethnic communities. The definition is encompassed by eight principles: accountability, responsiveness, transparency, rule of law, equity and inclusiveness, consensus-seeking, participation, efficiency and effectiveness.

Before discussing how good governance can be attained, a series of preconditions must first be met. The second chapter emphasizes that without security, talking about practices of good governance is superfluous. Furthermore, recognition of diversity is the basis for accommodating it, just as decentralization represents the sine qua non for any debate about local good governance. If recognition of diversity and decentralization give the frame for action, then the capacity to take action comes as another important precondition.

A series of case studies are presented and discussed in the third chapter with the purpose of illustrating the concept and its application in the Southeast European context.

The last chapter includes a series of recommendations designed to help practitioners improve the quality of local governance in relation to ethno cultural minorities. Questions and indicators will guide the reader step-by-step and principle-by-principle in an evaluation of the current status, and in steps to be taken in the desired direction.

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# 1. Foreword

In the former communist Europe, the concept of good governance has added value to the efforts to improve the conditions of marginalized groups in the transition process. The fall of communist regimes resulted in conflicts over the roles of minorities and majorities, and over the rules governing the society. In this context, various programmes were implemented and resources invested to improve the capacity of the central and local governments to accommodate diversity – mainly ethnic minorities, but also gender, as well as religious and sexual minorities. Endorsing participation in public life, providing equal access to public goods and services provided by the state, and practices of good governance in multiethnic communities are included more and more frequently on the public agenda. Although there are references to visibly increasing frequency of good governance in multiethnic communities, there is no overview (of the types) of good practices at the regional level, nor discussions about what are the most relevant aspects, and what could be the standards of good governance in multiethnic communities.

These questions were the focus of a regional conference entitled *Good Governance in Multiethnic Communities*, which aimed to share good practices from the region and to identify common standards and principles for local good governance in multiethnic communities. The conference was held in Cluj Napoca, on March 9-10, 2006, hosted by the Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center,

as part of the “Minority Rights in Practice in Southeast Europe” programme of the King Baudouin Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Open Society Foundations.

Using the papers presented at the conference, the discussions and the recommendations of the participants, the Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center has put together the present publication as an instrument to promote a common understanding of the concept of good governance, as well as a guide to apply good governance in multiethnic communities. Thus, the publication is addressed mainly to practitioners, local public administrations and civic organisations in search of ways to improve the quality of local governance in relation with ethnocultural minorities.

The first chapter is an endeavour to define good governance in the context of the multiethnic communities. The history of the concept and its use worldwide show us that although there is not one definition, the concept has developed several meanings, mainly in terms of principles to be followed in order to attain good governance. The definition on which the editors and the authors of the case studies have agreed on, and which guided the discussions and recommendations of the conference, is encompassed by eight principles: accountability, responsiveness, transparency, rule of law, equity and inclusiveness, consensus-seeking, participation, efficiency and effectiveness. Before discussing how good governance can be attained, a series of preconditions must first be

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met. The second chapter presents those elements that make any effort to reach good governance redundant. The chapter emphasizes that without security – understood in terms of chances of survival, chances of self-affirmation, chances of participation – talking about practices of good governance is superfluous, as the fundamental right to life is not ensured. Furthermore, recognition of diversity is the basis for accommodating it, just as decentralization represents the sine qua non for any debate about local good governance. If recognition of diversity and decentralization give the frame for action, then the will and capacity to take action comes as an important precondition.

A series of case studies are presented and discussed in the third chapter with the purpose of illustrating the concept and its application in practice in the Southeast European context.

The last chapter includes a series of recommendations designed to help practitioners improve the quality of local governance in relation to ethno cultural minorities. Questions and indicators will guide the reader step-by-step and principle-by-principle in an evaluation of the current status, and in steps to be taken in the desired direction.

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