

## Minorities in Transition: A Force Forward Rather than Backward

### Objectives

The project's central purpose was to explore the role that national minorities had played in the process of democratic transition in South, Central and Eastern Europe and to identify best practices developed in the target countries to support minorities in realizing their interests. By collecting data and experiences, the ICDT ultimately aimed to analyze the role minorities played, the challenges they faced, the potential pitfalls and drawbacks of transition from a minority point of view. We intended to offer recommendations on how to make minorities involved in the transition, and make them a force which pushes the process forward.

### Key Activities

The project had two phases. The first one consisted of Regional Preparatory Workshops in Central Europe, in Eastern Europe (including the Baltic States) and in South Eastern Europe. The participants were policy makers, NGOs, international and local experts and researchers from the target region.

The final international conference held in Budapest on 24 May 2007, entitled "Minorities in a New Europe" served to review and discuss the results of the three workshops. Focus was on comparing and contrasting the roles different minorities played in the process of democratic transition on a cross-regional basis. The conference gathered policy-level decision-makers, minority leaders, researchers, NGO leaders, experts and media representatives in Budapest. The goal of the conference was to compare regional similarities and differences of minorities and discuss common challenges and opportunities in the light of the European Integration Process. During the conference a drafting committee was formulated from the regional experts in order to finalize the drafting of the Recommendations. The final document was commented by several well know experts – such as former OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Max van der Stoel, the former Polish Foreign Minister Adam Daniel Rotfeld and Maria-Amor Estebanez who is a Legal Officer at the Legal Service – and is aiming to address legal, institutional, policy issues regarding minorities in an enlarged and enlarging Europe. Findings of the project will be summarized in a study book and at an international conference in Brussels due to take place in the middle of January 2008. The event is organized within the framework of the European Policy Dialogue (EPD) initiated by the European Policy Centre and the King Baudouin Foundation.

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