

# The European Dimension of the Political Representation of Minorities

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**Abstract:** The political integration of ethnic minorities is one of the most challenging tasks facing the countries of post-communist Europe. The roads to political representation in the mainstream political process are numerous and diverse. The EU accession of the Central and East-European countries has expanded the scope of the political participation of minorities by adding an electoral process at the regional level: the Elections for Members of the European Parliament. This paper focuses on the European elections as a form of political representation of ethnic minorities. It studies the ways in which EU-level electoral processes affect the scope and quality of minority representation on the example of the electoral behavior of ethnopolitical parties in Bulgaria and Romania in the 2007 Elections for European Parliament.

Ethnic minority participation in the political process is regarded as one of the indicators of the level of minority rights in contemporary democracies. Representation can take various and diverse forms: minorities can be given a right to self-government or they can participate in the government process by having representatives in the legislative institutions at both national and regional level or provide “experts” in various consultative bodies to the government. Having legislative representation can be achieved in several ways – minority representatives can be elected through non-minority specific parties; or they try to form their own parties and achieve representation along ethnic lines.<sup>1</sup>

European integration has impacted the political representation of ethnic minorities in candidate states in two major ways. First, in line with its foundational principles of equality, nondiscrimination, and human rights, the EU has made minority protection in the candidate states one of the conditions for membership. This has had a significant impact on the consolidation of a framework of institutional rules in the countries in Eastern Europe throughout their accession process, even though their original introduction was not influenced by the EU in any substantial way. In addition, the elections for European Parliament (EP) have provided an additional arena in which minority parties can participate, gain visibility, and affect policy making.

This paper investigates this latter recent dimension of EU-level influences on the scope and quality of ethnic political representation by focusing on the electoral behavior of ethnic parties in the EP elections. The study of minority electoral mobilization and political participation in the European elections is an important, although largely unexplored, research area. The EP elections have been broadly discussed as a typical example of second-order elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980). While they create no direct consequences for the distribution of power in the national government, these elections serve as important pointers for the potential repositioning within the party system, the extent of voter discontent with the governing parties, and the programmatic outlook of individual political parties along the left-right divide. The European elections are usually characterized by lower voter turnout rates, and ambiguous political mobilization. Most of these trends, long established in the EU-level electoral process in Western Europe, were validated in the 2004/2007 EU elections in the new East-European member states.

The principal objective of this paper is to develop an understanding about the ways in which the electoral process at the EU level may affect the programmatic outlook, electoral behavior, and capacity of representation of the principal ethnopolitical parties in Bulgaria and Romania, the party of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria—Movement for Rights and Freedoms, MRF—and the party of the Hungarian minority in Romania—Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania, UDMR—in the 2007 elections for Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). The paper thus proceeds from a basic most-dissimilar cases research design. It builds upon the

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<sup>1</sup> In Horowitz’ classic definition, an ethnically based party is a party that “derives its support overwhelmingly from an identifiable ethnic group (or cluster of ethnic groups) and serves the interests of that group” (Horowitz 2000, 291). An ethnic party does not have to be the exclusive party of that minority as minorities might split their political support among more than one political party. It is the group’s cohesion and division that determines how many parties emerge (Horowitz 2000, 293). However, for all ethnic parties, ethnicity becomes the principal source of support and they would try to find other sources of support only when they can do that at extremely low cost. Because of this, transforming an originally ethnic party into a multi-ethnic one becomes extremely difficult (Horowitz 2000, 293).

comparison between two quite different forms of domestic minority-relevant electoral arrangements, represented by Bulgaria and Romania, and examines how the electoral behavior of ethnic minority parties and the political participation of minorities might differ or converge when the common context, the European elections, is introduced. The main argument of the paper is that regardless of the prevalent national models of minority representation, EU-level political processes tend to produce over-representation of ethnic minority parties. In this regard, the minority parties support the existing propositions in the party theory literature that second-order elections benefit small parties. However, in addition, and in contrast to the trends in Western Europe, success in the EP elections provides parties with an extra layer of legitimacy, due to the higher legitimacy of the EU overall and the (perceived) political relevance of the EP level political process.

### **The theory and practice of minority representation**

The visibility of ethnic political parties is determined by the opportunities and constraints created by constitutional and electoral arrangements (Sasse 2004, Vachudova 2008, Vermeersch 2004). These rules provide incentives, encouragement, guarantees, or alternatively, restrict or ban ethnic minority parties (de Witte 2004). Electoral rules relate to ethnopolitical parties in two ways, first through their influence on *small* parties in general (since minority parties are generally smaller and often regionally bound) and, second, through the specific arrangements relevant to the political representation of *minorities*.

The first and more general influence is long established in the literature on parties and electoral systems. PR electoral systems tend to be more beneficial to smaller parties as they preserve higher levels of proportionality. In contrast, SMD electoral arrangements are highly disproportional and prevent smaller parties from gaining the legislative seats that their support usually dictates.<sup>2</sup> Several features that distinguish electoral systems within the PR family are likely to influence the chances for success of ethnic parties. The level of electoral threshold is probably the most important one. Similarly, when substantially raised thresholds apply to coalitions, minority parties are hurt especially as the vote is limited by the size of the minority

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<sup>2</sup> According to Duverger's original formulation, the relationship is pretty straightforward. In plurality SMD systems, only one candidate can win in each district; as a result, any third party suffers from extreme under-representation because of both elite and voters strategies. This disadvantageous seat-vote ratio prevents the party from gaining the representation that it deserves, and the exposure, government participation, public funding or any other benefits associated with winning. It is thus, in the longer run, discouraged from running and forced to either join one of the two dominant parties, or disband (Duverger 1955, 225-6). In contrast, proportional representation preserves the proportionality of votes and seats and thus, provides little or no reward for fusing and no punishment for splitting (Duverger 1953, 248-254). Although specifics of the PR system result in certain differences, and "full proportional representation exists nowhere" PR systems tend to have a 'multiplicative effect' on the number of parties (Duverger 1958, 253). An enormous amount of work has been done since to test, qualify, and revise the Duverger's formulae (Rae 1971, Grofman and Lijphart 1986, Cox 1997, Lijphart 1991, 1994; Shvetsova and Ordershook 1994). Some of it has directly related to issue of political representation of minorities, probably best represented by Lijphart's theory of consociational democracy (Lijphart 1999). As proportional representation "lowers the hurdles for smaller parties" ethnic parties are more likely to gain representation in PR systems, this providing for peaceful resolution of ethnic issues and, ultimately for a higher support for the political system by the members of the minority (Lijphart 1999, Norris 2004, ?).<sup>2</sup> Ishiyama (2000) similarly points to a relationship between institutional choice, such as proportional representation and presidentialism, and minority representation, but also points out that there is no conclusive evidence on the validity of institutional remedies for resolving ethnic conflict (Ishiyama 2000, 51).

(Juberias 2000, 35).<sup>3</sup> In addition, electoral legislation can hurt ethnic parties not because they are small, but because their support is regionally bound. Electoral regulations can require parties that want to participate in elections to field candidates in a large portion of the country while party laws might limit public funding to parties with certain number of candidates as well (Roper 2003, Ikstens et al 2002).

To get around these size-related problems of minority parties, electoral arrangements can provide for special treatment of parties of ethnic groups (Snyder 2000). Whether these provisions exist in a given country reflects its general commitment to one of the two fundamental constitutional principles of ensuring political pluralism: liberal democratic and consociational model. The liberal-democratic model emphasizes individual, rather than group rights. Key in it is intragroup competition which promotes the integration of ethnic minorities based on individual autonomy and crosscutting cleavages. Such regimes do not provide grounds for specific group representation and in general treat ethnic or minority parties as threats to political stability. Donald Horowitz has made a strong argument against ethnic parties by maintaining that ethnic parties tend to divide a divided society even further. As they often represent strictly group interests, they are unable to concern themselves with issues of national importance and their behavior is dangerous for the good government of the country (Horowitz 2000, 294). Other authors have similarly argued that because ethnic parties make their political appeal specifically on ethnicity, their emergence ‘often has a centrifugal effect on politics’ (Reilly 2003). The resulting fragmentation of the party system has a detrimental effect on the stability of democracy and government in such situations. Reilly argues that states can make concerted efforts to encourage the initial development of multiethnic parties through their electoral and party legislation (Reilly 2003).

Consociational models of representation include provisions for segmented autonomy, minority veto, and bloc representation and, research has argued, are associated with lower levels of ethnic tensions and conflict while majoritarian models tend to exclude blocks. These arrangements reflect a more lenient view on the role ethnic minority parties play in the political system. In contrast, other authors have argued that ethnic parties pose challenges to democratic government only in deeply divided societies. Stroschein, for example, argues that ethnic parties “domesticate” ethnic issues into institutional forms, thus allowing them to be resolved in parliament rather than through violence. Ethnic parties, she maintains, usually play by the rules and have obtained some of their demands through the democratic process. Conflicts between these and other parties are routinized and the political process allows the parties to “find a way to bargain over heated issues and negotiate alternatives” (Stroschein 2001, 61). Others have similarly attributed the preservation of ethnic peace in various settings to the representation of ethnic parties in Parliament (Petkova 2002, 52).<sup>4</sup> Consociational systems provide a more direct

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<sup>3</sup> Most of the Eastern European countries discussed here use proportional representation with thresholds of 4-5 % for individual parties. Romania, Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic have thresholds of between 7 and 11 % for political coalitions. Hungary is the only country with a mixed electoral system, with a 5% threshold in its PR part. Given the size of minorities in these countries, their representation in the political process is often challenged by these thresholds. This is probably why most of the countries in the region have had to incorporate special provisions for ethnic minorities in the electoral systems.

<sup>4</sup> Will Kymlicka has gone even further to maintain that national mobilization by sub-national groups is a legitimate part of democratic politics. Although concerned with broader issues than just ethnic political parties, Kymlicka’s

method to ensure minority representation in the national legislature by guaranteeing seats to minority parties or minorities as political groups.

At the level of the party system, such conceptions about the representation of minorities have produced a continuum of responses in terms of party development and electoral coalitions situated between the two extremes: positive discrimination expressed as granting minorities special privileges and negative discrimination expressed as banning their parties. Both extremes have been criticized by various democratic theorists. The former for not allowing a basic right to all of its citizens and the latter – for violating the equality of representation as one of the basic principles of democracy. However, as the evidence of Bulgaria and Romania suggests, the institutional set-ups may have little consequence for the actual performance of ethnic parties.<sup>5</sup>

### **Comparing Bulgaria and Romania: Two extreme policy options**

Bulgaria and Romania are an appropriate set of countries for a comparative study because they have relatively comparable ethnic make-ups and similar history of inter-ethnic relations. In addition, their experiences with democratic transition have been relatively alike. The legal and institutional frameworks of these countries, however, treat ethnic parties in several quite different ways. Bulgaria has banned ethnic parties while Romania provides the most extreme form of positive discrimination by providing guaranteed seats to minorities, subject to some limitations (Bugajski 1994, Kostelecký 2002).

Demographic data on the ethnic situation in Bulgaria indicate that the majority group constitutes about 84 % of the total population. The largest minority are the Turks, who make up about 9% of the total population, and are concentrated in three of the nine administrative regions of the country.<sup>6</sup> The ethnic situation in Romania is roughly similar. Romanians constitute about 89% of the population in the country. There are two large minorities and several smaller ones.

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argument for the introduction of various group-rights based solutions to the problems of ethnicity in the post-communist world, is based on the idea that politics is, and in some ways even should, be ethnically based. Kymlicka has argued that even secessionist parties need to be de-stigmatized as they are a legitimate expression of nation-building of minorities, something that a liberal-democratic nation-state needs to allow (Kymlicka 2001 and 2002).<sup>5</sup> In addition, institutional factors are not the only source affecting minority party behavior. Other environmental factors - economic, socio-cultural, and international - have been found to affect the quality of minority representation. Studies of nationalism link minority politics to nationalism and modernization. According to Ishiyama and Breuning (1998, 9), the source of political conflict along ethnic lines is resource allocation, often intertwined with class divisions. In other cases, the structure of group relations evolves in parallel to, that is, separate from other divisions placing in the center of political conflict issues of autonomy and self-government. In societies with a dominant ethnic group, higher inequality, and authoritarian past, ethnic minority parties are more likely to make extremist political demands. Conversely, the more representation is based on individual competition, and the more diverse the composition of ethnopolitical parties, the more moderate and inclusive their agenda is (Ishiyama and Breuning 1998,15-16).

<sup>6</sup> The second largest minority are the Roma (Gypsies) who constitute about 4.6% of the population according to official statistics, although Roma experts provide almost twice as big estimates of their number (CEDIME 1999). The Roma live in all areas of the country. The Russian, Armenian and Vlach minority each makes up less than 1% of the population of Bulgaria, and Macedonians, Greeks, Ukrainians, Jews, and Romanians, each constitute less than .1 % of the total population.

The Hungarian minority, 6.6% of total population, is the largest one and is concentrated in several regions, similar to the Turks in Bulgaria (Alionescu 2003).<sup>7</sup>

The two countries thus have clear dominant majorities, a single, substantial and concentrated minority (Turks in Bulgaria and Hungarians in Romania), a substantial but scattered second minority (Roma) and a multitude of smaller ethnic groups with which this paper is only marginally concerned. The two minorities of interest have established their own political parties, despite the different institutional and political contexts. In many ways, these arrangements reflect the two sides in the debate on the desirability of ethnic parties for democratic politics.

Bulgaria has instituted the most restrictive form of institutional arrangements for ethnic parties by banning the existence of parties based on ethnic, racial and religious allegiance, thus obviously making any other electoral arrangements for minorities impossible. It thus departs from the conventional consociational model, prevalent elsewhere in Eastern Europe, which grants ethnic minority parties bloc representation and segmented autonomy. Romanian legislation guarantees one seat to a legally constituted party of each and any minority (subject to certain restrictions), which is the most extreme form of positive discrimination in the whole region (Johnson 2002).

The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria forbids the existence of ethnic political parties in article 11 (4) although it posits the principle of political pluralism, freedom of expression and political association:

“There shall be no political parties on ethnic, racial, or religious lines, nor parties which seek the violent usurpation of state power.” (Bulgarian Constitution 1991)

This restriction is in line with the general spirit of the Bulgarian constitution which avoids the mention of the word minority and does not provide for any collective rights (Vassilev 2001, 43). In general, Bulgarian political actors seem fearful of the association of the word *national minority* with *secession* and generally refuse to use word in public discourse, calling national minorities “minority groups” (CEDIME 1999 and 2001). Despite allegations by minority rights advocates that the constitutional ban of ethnic parties is discriminatory and violates international laws, there has been no discussion of amending the constitution in any relevant way (BHC, various years). The electoral system in Bulgaria is Proportional Representation with a 4% national threshold which treats political parties and coalitions identically. Public funding of political parties is provided for parliamentary parties only (Smilov 1999, IDEA 2004).

In contrast, Romania not only allows ethnic parties, but has introduced special provisions to guarantee that they have a seat in Parliament. The electoral system used in Romania at the

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<sup>7</sup> The Roma of Romania are the most numerous Roma minority in Eastern Europe, but given the size of the total population of Romania, constitute only 2.5% of it, which makes them a smaller proportion than the Roma in Bulgaria. However, just as in the case of the Bulgarian Roma, experts estimate their population to be much bigger than official data -- around 1.8 million or 7.9 per cent of total population (CEDIME 2001). Like Roma in Bulgaria and elsewhere, the Romanian Roma are scattered throughout the country. Germans, Ukrainians, Russians, Turks, Tatars and Serbs are minorities that make up less than 1% but more than .1 % of the population, and the smaller groups of Slovenes Slovaks, Bulgarians, Jews, Czechs, Poles, Greeks and Armenians constitute less than 0.1 of a percent each.

time of the 2007 European elections (under whose rules UDMR established its presence in the party system) was Proportional Representation. Under the PR system, parties or political formations must obtain at least 5% of the national popular vote to gain parliamentary representation. In the case of political alliances, 3% of the validly expressed votes throughout the country is added to the 5% threshold for the second member party; and an extra 1% is added for each other member of the alliance, beginning with the third one, up to a maximum electoral threshold of 10% (Law for the Election of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate in Romania, 1992).<sup>8</sup>

Most importantly, Romania provides the strongest system of positive discrimination as it does not limit the number of minorities that can get representation (Juberias 2000, 44-49). Legally constituted organizations of citizens belonging to a national minority, which have not obtained at least one Deputy seat through the general rules of the elections, have the right to a seat in Parliament. The only stipulation is that they must have obtained, at national level, at least 5% of the average number of the validly expressed votes needed for the elections of one Deputy according to the general rules of elections (Law for the Election of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, 1992). Through that system about fifteen minorities have, on average, gained representation in Parliament (Juberias 2000, 44-49).

### **Ethnic representation in Bulgaria and Romania**

The presence of a constitutional ban on ethnic parties has not prevented the existence of ethnic parties in Bulgarian politics. *De facto* ethnic parties have managed to maintain a stable position in the political process by not openly registering as ethnic political entities. The Turkish-dominated Movement of Right and Freedoms (MRF) was founded officially in early 1990. Although it does not have an openly stated ethnic platform and included ethnic Bulgarians in both its membership and its leadership, it represents the interests of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria and its support is concentrated heavily in the regions populated by the minority. It gained a consistent share of the vote throughout the 1990s and has been present in all legislatures (Kumanov 1999: 134). Its support was considered instrumental for the changes of governments during 1991-1994. Since 2001 the MRF has been an official coalition partner in the Bulgarian government (Harper 2003, 339; Spirova 2006). Its standing input into the political process has been coterminous with the moderation of its programmatic positions reflected in the lack of autonomy demands (Warhola and Boteva 2003, Zhelyazkova 2001). As such, it fulfills only a minimalist minority-related agenda (Brusis 2003). At the same time, MRF derives more than 85% of its vote share from ethnic minority voters.

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<sup>8</sup> Since 2008, the electoral system was changed to include a majoritarian component through directly contested single-member district mandates.

**Table . Political Parties in Bulgaria, percentage of the popular vote  
(1990, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2001, and 2005 general elections)**

<b>Party</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2005</b>
Coalition for Bulgaria/BSP and Coalition	47.2	33.1	43.5	22.5	17.1	31.0
Union of Democratic Forces /ODS	36.2	34.4	24.2	53.2	18.2	8.4
Bulgarian Agrarian National Union	8.0	3.9	6.5	-	-	
<b>Movement for Rights &amp; Freedoms/as ONS in 1997</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>14.1</b>
Bulgarian Business Block	-	1.3	4.7	5.0	0.0	--
Euroleft	-	-	-	5.6	1.0	--
National Movement Simeon the Second	-	-	-	-	42.7	19.9
Attack Party	-	-	-	-	-	8.1
Bulgarian People's Union						5.7
Democrats for Strong Bulgaria						7.1

**Source:** Richard Rose and Neil Munro, *Elections and Parties in New European Democracies*, available at the CSPP website, <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/cspp/>

The ability of the MRF to function freely in Bulgarian politics was challenged at numerous occasions in the early 1990s, including in the Constitutional Court (Rechel 2007, Vassilev 2002), but by the late 1990s, MRF's participation in the political process despite constitutional provisions has been established beyond contestation (Vassilev 2001). The MRF has been able to function well in Bulgarian political life despite the constitutional ban and the absence of special electoral treatment of ethnic parties in Bulgaria. The MRF has a very high extent of encapsulation of its voters – measured as the ratio of its members to its voters; it is second only to the BSP in Bulgaria and way above any averages for non-ex communist parties in the region (van Biezen 2003). About 45% of the whole Turkish majority (including non-voters) voted for the MRF in 2001.

The MRF thus has not been hurt by the constitutional or the electoral arrangements in Bulgaria. The 4 % threshold has only once come close to posing a threat to the MRF; in the 1994 elections the party got a little over 5 % of the vote. As a result, the MRF formed a coalition with some other, non-ethnic parties in 1997 (ONS), although the MRF contributed most of the support for the coalition in the elections. The coalition did not last long and in the 2001 elections the MRF formed a new coalition with one liberal and one Roma party.

However, as its deputy chairman indicated, the MRF realizes that it cannot expand its vote any more than it already has unless it reaches outside the Turkish minority (Dal 2003). Consequently, since 2001 then MRF has been making a conscious effort to transform itself into a liberal party: it has tried to include more ethnic Bulgarian in its leadership, and has joined the Liberal International. However, as Horowitz suggests, achieving this has proven extremely

challenging because most Bulgarians do not associate the MRF with liberal values but with a strong commitment to defending the interests of the Turkish minority.

The MRF itself and numerous commentators and analysts have praised the Bulgarian “ethnic model” as represented by the incorporation of the MRF in mainstream democratic politics, the moderation of the MRF policy positions over time, and its law-abiding behavior (Vassilev 2001, Tatarli 2003, Petkova 2002). The MRF itself has been recognized as having had a leadership role in instituting and maintaining this model (Eminov 1999) and thus contributing to the preservation of ethnic peace in the country, and ensuring respect of the civil and political rights of the Turkish minority, and for their relatively good economic well being.<sup>9</sup>

The study of program documentation, its possible evolution, the status of the inclusive nature, the adoption of European norms which researchers have claimed is the core of the peaceful ethnic model have not been studied. Little interview data is available at the level of local campaigns. Many of the MRF campaign strategies and tactics in processes of government formation (see Eminov 1999) remain poorly understood due to the lack of adequate work with sources beyond the party’s programmatic documentation.

Similar to the MRF in Bulgaria, the party of the ethnic Hungarians in Romania, the Hungarian Democratic Union (UDMR/RMDSZ) has had a substantial role in Romanian political life. As ethnic parties are not banned in Romania it has never had any problems with displaying its ethnic basis. It has also managed to preserve itself as the exclusive party of the Hungarian minority. Election results are provided in Table 6.

**Table2. Political Parties in Romania, percentage of the popular vote (1990, 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004 elections)**

Party	1990	1992	1996	2000	2004
National Salvation Front/ Democratic National Salvation Front/PSDR	66.3	27.7	21.5	36.6	36.6
<b>Hungarian Democratic Union</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>6.2</b>
National Liberal Party –Campeanu	6.4	2.6	-	1.4	
Democratic Convention of Romania	-	20.0	30.2	5.0	
Democratic Party – NSF	-	10.2	-	7.0	
Romanian National Unity Party	-	7.7	4.4	1.4	
Greater Romania Party	-	3.9	4.5	19.5	12.9
Social Democratic Union	-	-	12.9	-	
National Liberal Party	-	-	1.6	6.9	

<sup>9</sup> However, the Bulgarian “ethnic model” has excluded any other minority and has produced a most pronounced contrast in the case of the Roma minority. Roma parties have been unable to secure a stable place in Bulgarian politics. In the 2001 elections the MRF formed an electoral coalition with Evroroma, an important Roma organization in Bulgaria. “MRF placed a number of Romani representatives on its ticket, all of them, however, at unelectably low positions. As a result, the MRF failed to ensure the election of a single Romani candidate in the 2001 elections”(Illiev 2001). By 2003, the MRF discarded any possibility for future cooperation with the Roma party (Dal 2003). On the political participation of the Roma minority, see Spirova and Budd (2008).

Justice and Truth Party	-	-	-	-	31.3
Others	7.2	10.5	10.7	8.8	

**Source:** Richard Rose and Neil Munro, *Elections and Parties in New European Democracies*, available at the CSPP website, <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/cspp/>

The UDMR has gained representation in all post-1989 Parliaments at a level that roughly corresponds to the Hungarian proportion of the population. In addition it has remained in many ways the only stable party in Romanian politics, besides the communist successor party in Romania. In addition, it was part of the governing coalitions from 1996 until 2000, a fact that many saw as a major step towards achieving ethnic harmony in Romania.

As illustrated by Table 7, the UDMR support is also very highly encapsulated. Its membership to electorate ratio was about 65% in 1996, a level that is much higher than the MRF and any other party in the region as well. A large proportion of the Hungarian minority also voted for them, an important fact given how close the proportion of Hungarians in Romania is to the electoral threshold of the electoral system (Stroschein 2001).

Overall, the UDMR has benefited from the provisions of Romania's PR system (as it could be hurt by a potential SMD system) but not from the positive discrimination system that exists for other minorities in the Romanian system. It can be argued that given the nature of the minority and the experience of the MRF in Bulgaria, the UDMR would have done equally well under a typical PR system with no ethnic element.

In fact, the demands of the UDMR have at times reached much more extreme levels than the ones of the MRF. It threatened to leave from the government coalitions in 1997 and 1998 "if demands for state funded Hungarian university were not met" and has repeatedly called for some degree of autonomy for Hungarian-majority regions (Stroschein 2001, 61). This trend has been exacerbated with the internal split in the UDMR in 2003 whereby its radical wing advanced the issues of territorial autonomy for Transylvania. In contrast to the MRF, the UDMR has obviously not made any efforts to escape its ethnic nature. The higher degree of radicalization along ethnic lines might be attributed to the acceptance of ethnicity as a legitimate political cleavage in Romania's general legislation.

Overall, the principal ethnic minority parties in both countries have been able to gain much more visibility in political life. While the systems of institutional rules differ widely, in both countries the scope and quality of representation in national electoral processes and in government formation has tended to produce over-representation. Due to their embeddedness in minorities whose share in the percentage composition of the electorate is above the threshold, institutional rules have not been an independent source of influence.

### **The European dimension of minority electoral politics**

The impact of the EU level processes and institutions on ethnic party development in post communist Europe is a relatively recent research area is certainly not clear-cut. The EU framework is conventionally linked to minority protection, although the actual regime of minority rights is broader and embedded in the pan-European Council of Europe rather than the

EU (Lynch 1996, Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2006). The influence of the European Union (EU) on party politics has been studied from a number of perspectives as well.

The EU integration process is widely credited with establishing the normative framework of minority rights protection although the assessment of the practical implementation of EU-level rules in concrete cases has varied. Synthetic and case study analyses conclude that the criteria for EU membership and the enlargement process have led to adoption of norms and policies at the national level with a view of eliminating discrimination and providing for the inclusion of ethnic minorities in the policy process (Grzymala-Busse and Innes 2003, Nancheva 2007). Conversely, research comparing the EU's impact on the quality of minority protection during the post-accession stage to EU influences on the domestic political systems during the East-European enlargement has found that the EU has had only limited continued relevance as a source of minority protection due to the lack of mechanisms of monitoring member behavior outside equality and antidiscrimination policies (Brusis 2003). Despite such observations, most studies view the EU as an agent of change in the area of minority protection and minority rights, especially effective where ethnic minority parties are part of the governing coalition (Toggenburg 2004, Vachudova 2005).

Propositions on the Europeanization of party politics borrow from Mair's (2000) study and examine the format and mechanics of the party system to discern any direct European effects (Mair 2000). Ladrech (2002) takes the argument a bit further to explore the potential party-level effects of the Europeanization process and looks for both direct and indirect effects. Both, however, look at similar phenomena including the organization, ideology, and coalition potential of individual parties, and their relations in the system. Findings show wide variation: that party politics have been "impervious" to change (Mair 2000: 28) or that the EU has had an impact on national level party politics (Aspinwall 2002, Marks and Steenbergen 2004).

The influence of EU integration on party politics in the East remains poorly understood. The literature acknowledges that the EU's influences on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe were more pronounced and more effective prior to accession and that membership has reduced the scope of EU influences over standards of minority protection as conditionality no longer applies (Brusis 2003). The impact of European integration may be identified along two dimensions: structural and process effects. As a source of structural influence, European integration changes the very nature of political parties. The transfer of competences toward the EU institutions erodes their influence as parties in the national government or governing coalitions and ability to initiate policy change. As a result, opposition populist parties and rhetoric has entered electoral politics and party programs, causing more nuanced positions on Europe on behalf of the mainstream parties (Dutceac 2004, Elchinova 2001, Luther and Müller-Rommel 2005). Such arguments refer to the structural influences of European integration.

The core process-related proposition that links between European integration to party politics pertains to the electoral process and the ways in which parties communicate their policy position to attract voter support. European issues tend to shift the coalition of voters originally based on cleavage divisions (including the center-periphery and urban-rural cleavage) into less ideological groups including cross-sections of society. As parties converge towards the center (Kitschelt 1995), political space opens up at the fringes for radical parties. This has been confirmed in Bulgaria, where the ultranationalist Ataka (Attack) Party has denied the political existence of minorities and has claimed that MRF is unconstitutional. At the same time, the trend

has been disproved in Romania where despite the visibility of minority politics, the influence of the radical right has declined and is currently below the electoral threshold.

In addition to the impact that the EU might have had on the ideology and coalition potential of minority parties in Bulgaria and Romania, the introduction of an extra arena of political competition, that of the EP elections, has added a new process-based dimension of this relationship (Marsh et al. 2007). In a domestic context, their relevance was that of second-order elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980). Although European elections have no direct effect on the composition of the national government, they are a useful measure of change in the electoral market: an important indicator of the rebalancing of party strengths and thus the results of subsequent elections (van der Eijk and van Egmond 2007), and a test for the popularity of individual parties (Auers 2005). As typical second-order elections, European elections are also almost invariably “disappointing,” because the parties fail to campaign, and certainly the public fails to be interested, in European issues” (Norris 1997, 110).

### **The MRF and the UDMR in the 2007 European elections**

What is the evidence of EU-related influences in the 2007 European elections in Bulgaria and Romania?

Empirical research on minority participation provides no definite conclusions as to which model—the consociational one with guaranteed minority representation or the liberal-democratic one based on individual rights and intraethnic competition—provides better conditions for minority representation and participation. Consociational models proceed from the hypothesized positive effects of the guaranteed opportunities for voting for ethnic minority representatives among the ethnic minority electorate. Such effects are measured both as increase in voter turnout rates, an indicator of descriptive representation, and higher levels of political trust, efficacy, and increased visibility of policy agendas that enhance minority interests reflecting improved substantive representation (Banducci et al. 2004: 538). The measures of descriptive and substantive representation are derived from demand-side variables which take voters as the unit of observation. The liberal democratic model, however, is not fully amenable to demand-based analyses as intragroup differences within the cohort of ethnic voters cannot be established based on voter preferences alone as there is no guarantee that ethnic minority candidates will compete and/or be elected as minority representatives.<sup>10</sup> Looking for potential sources of minority representation in the case of Bulgaria and Romania involves the comparative examination of the liberal democratic and the consociational model. The appropriate strategy is to follow an actor-centered approach which studies supply-side sources of evidence and examines indicators of empowerment reflected in the political behaviour of ethnic minority parties. This approach permits to analyze prospective gains or losses in party legitimacy depending on the scope and quality of representation of minority voices (Cain 1992, 273 quoted in Banducci et al. 2004, 538).

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<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the system of proportional rules in the EU elections does not permit to compare minority voters in districts represented by minority candidates versus minority voters in districts represented by nonminority politicians, which is the conventional approach to SMD voting.

In line with the ethnic minority empowerment thesis, we would expect the European elections to be associated with higher visibility of ethnic parties in political and electoral space measured as increased vote share, enhanced capacity to build coalitions and compete, as well as improved organizational capabilities, a measure of positive party development. Such hypotheses require analysis of measures of both descriptive and substantive representation emerging as a result of the 2007 European elections. A focus on party-level effects also permits to test the validity of the second-order proposition with regard to ethnopolitical parties, which are typically small and predominantly radical parties (due the presence of a more or less exclusive group-oriented agenda). In the cases examined here, the minority parties are also parties associated with the respective governing coalitions. Such attributes yield contradictory expectations with regard to their electoral outcomes. According to the second-order proposition, we would expect UDMR and MRF to outperform the established mainstream parties. As members of the governing coalitions, we would expect them to receive less votes than in parliamentary elections, due to predominantly critical voter evaluations of the governing coalitions.<sup>11</sup> The results of ethnopolitical voting in the 2007 EP election for is provided in Table 3:

**Table 3. Ethnopolitical parties at the 2007 EP elections in Bulgaria and Romania**

Party	Votes	Vote share	EP group	National Election 2004-05	National Vote share
Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)	282,929	5.6	2 (EPP-ED)	628,125	6.2
Ladislau (László) Tökés, Independent	176,533	3.4	1(Ind.)		
Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF)	392,650	20.3	4 (ALDE)	467,400	12.8

Sources: Bulgaria, Central Electoral Commission (<http://www.cikep2007.org/index.php?resh=266> and <http://www.is-bg.net/cik2005/index.php>) and Romania, Biroul Electoral Central ([http://www.bec2007pe.ro/documente/REZULT\\_27\\_11\\_2007\\_ORA13.pdf](http://www.bec2007pe.ro/documente/REZULT_27_11_2007_ORA13.pdf) and <http://www.bec2004.ro>).

Contrary to the minority empowerment thesis, the descriptive representation of minorities in the 2007 European elections, measured as aggregate number of votes, declined in both countries. The number of votes cast for ethnopolitical organizations, UDMR (including independent candidate Tökés)<sup>12</sup> and MRF was considerably lower than in the preceding national election cycle. Combined electoral support for candidates representing the ethnic Hungarian minority in Romania declined by more than 160,000 votes from the 2004 election, resulting in the loss of one seat for UDMR.<sup>13</sup> MRF lost 74,750 votes, partly attributed to the residency requirement as MRF traditionally relies on the support of ethnic-Turk Bulgarian immigrants residing in Turkey. However, in comparison with the mainstream parties, the electoral participation of ethnic

<sup>11</sup> On protest voting in the 2007 European elections, see Stefanova (2008, 569).

<sup>12</sup> László Tökés, a Calvinist bishop with the Reformed Church in Romania, is a symbol of the 1989 revolution, a former honorary president of UDMR, and founder of the National Council of Hungarians in Transylvania (CNMT, EMNT in Hungarian), a splinter organization from UDMR created in 2003. Tökés ran as an Independent candidate in the European elections – and thus as an alternative to UDMR – with the backing of Fidesz (Hungarian Civic Alliance), then principal opposition party in Hungary. Tökés was formally a UDMR member at the time of the elections.

<sup>13</sup> Prior to the 2007 elections, UDMR held 3 EP seats, having obtained 6.2% of the vote in the 2004 parliamentary elections.

minorities in both countries largely exceeded the national voter turnout rate, as well as voting for the parties from the governing coalition relative to prior elections.<sup>14</sup> Ethnic minorities thus attained higher levels of descriptive representation than the mainstream electorate.

Descriptive representation, measured as higher vote share relative to the previous national election cycle, was the principal dimension of empowerment for MRF at the European elections. Against the background of low voter turnout it received 20.19% of the vote, ranking third according to vote share. Just 1.5 percentage points separated the three leading political parties, GERB (21.7%), BSP (21.4%), and MRF (20.3%).

Improved descriptive representation by itself may not be regarded as an adequate measure of empowerment in the Romanian case. Relative to the preceding general elections, UDMR in fact lost one seat (which was transferred to independent candidate Tökés. Relative changes in terms of vote share and seats do not reveal the nature of opportunities which the European elections created for ethnic minority parties. Several alternative measures provide an assessment of the quality of minority empowerment through the elections. First, the elections emerged as an important arena for the advancement of minority-related platforms and updated programmatic outlook of the ethnic minority parties. Second, the elections enhanced the ability of ethnic parties to compete, form coalitions, and gain visibility within the party system. Such indicators of empowerment represent important aspects of the enhanced legitimacy of ethnic minority parties – for their electorate, the party system, and the policy making process.

#### *Programmatic outlook and electoral platforms*

Analysis of the possible effects which the European elections may have had on the ideological outlook of ethnopolitical parties proceeds from several conflicting propositions on the impact of the European agenda on political conflict at the national level (Beiber and Wolff 2007, Marks and Steenbergen 2004). In both countries, the elections demonstrated that European issues were subsumed under the national political agenda and thus followed the left-right ideological divide of the party system. According to such premises, the European elections should make no difference for the ideological positioning of political parties. At the same time, integration theory posits the nontrivial effects of European integration on party competition in the direction of increasing political pluralism.

Haas (1968) has argued that European integration tends to fragment domestic functional interests. With the deepening of the integration process, cross-cutting functional and political interests produce a new cleavage in domestic political space, that is separate from the left-right cleavage and accounts for emerging new constellations of voter preferences and party-electorate linkages (Mattila and Rasunio 2006, 428). In fact, the low connectedness between the two dimensions creates problems for political parties which tend to downplay the European agenda and orient their European electoral campaign along domestic issues even in the European elections (Mattila and Raunio 2006, 428).

The elections in Bulgaria and Romania do not provide consistent evidence that ethnic minority parties sought to advance particular minority agendas, as important as the reference to

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<sup>14</sup> Compared to the 2005 parliamentary elections, electoral support for the other parties members of the governing coalition, BSP and NMSII, declined considerably – by 714,000 and 603,000 votes respectively. See Stefanova (2008, 569).

the values and norms of European integration in that regard was in the election campaign. The two models display variation in the extent to which the ethnic parties prioritized minority demands relative to national interest concerns or strategic calculations of securing parliamentary status.

The European elections offered no specific new set of issues, different from the established foundations of political conflict at the national level. The European electoral agenda is characterized by indeterminacy, as parties and candidates offer policy positions for which they cannot be held directly accountable. Where the elections made a difference, was in the enhanced opportunities they created for the ethnopolitical parties relative to the mainstream parties, to pursue their already established programmatic goals and to formulate an electoral platform that advanced their core values and interests. The programmatic relevance of the European elections for minority parties stands in contrast to their relative utility for the mainstream parties. Despite references to European issues in the electoral platforms of all parties competing in the elections, the electoral campaign of the mainstream parties validated the second-order election proposition as those campaigns tended to view European issues through the lens of the national political agenda (Marks and Steenbergen 2004, Spirova 2008, 931). By contrast, the ethnopolitical parties in both counties used the elections to reformulate and streamline their programmatic outlook which demonstrated that they regarded the European elections as an additional opportunity to pursue minority-related agendas. In the case of Romania, the elections were conducive to the radicalization of political conflict and marked the beginning of a long-term restructuring of the political representation of the ethnic Hungarian minority.

The electoral platform of UDMR was based on an explicit reference to the foundational principles of diversity and free expression of cultures and identities in the EU. The party strategically sought to reposition itself as a moderately conservative party. Its primary objective was to secure the representation of ethnic Hungarian community in the EP. A related UDMR objective was to ensure the representation of all minorities in Romania<sup>15</sup> which marked an added perspective to its long-established claim to monopoly in the political representation of the Hungarian minority.

Key campaign issues were the increased autonomy and recovery of territory lost in 1918, and the need for ethnic Hungarians to reacquire assets (material and decision-making rights) taken away from them.<sup>16</sup> The repeated reference to territorial and asset claims marked the radicalization of the electoral campaign, especially if considered against the evidence of the lack of comparable UDMR policy initiatives in its capacity of a coalition partner in all governments since 1996.

Similarly, the European elections were an opportunity for MRF to pursue a more definitive ideological identification as a liberal centrist formation. In contrast to UDMR, that strategy moved the party further away from a minority-specific policy outlook. By the time of the elections, responding to rising criticism at home that it was an ethnic party, MRF had joined

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> See Marco Bela statement at the launch of UDMR election campaign, [http://www.divers.ro/focus\\_en?wid=37645&func=viewSubmission&sid=7946](http://www.divers.ro/focus_en?wid=37645&func=viewSubmission&sid=7946). UDMR has not pursued the autonomy issues consistently, but the latter has emerged as a main campaign issue in the 2007 European elections. See Istvan Pataky, "Campaigning with the Bolyai," *Magyar Nemzet* (online), in Hungarian, June 22, 2007, English translation BBC Monitoring Europe, June 22, 2007.

the Liberal International and the political grouping of the Liberals (ALDE) in the EP. In the 2007 campaign MRF advanced a multiethnic party list comprised predominantly of experts and built its electoral platform around the concept of the unique Bulgarian ethnic model which it sought to promote and develop further through European parliamentary politics. MRF campaigned on the parallel between the European values and principles of diversity, equality, rule of law, and non-discrimination and the objective of integration of ethnic minorities in domestic politics. The pursuit of national goals in line with European objectives remained the core of MRF's programmatic outlook in the election. The party followed the principles of the domestic liberal democratic model emphasizing individual rights. Its electoral platform made no reference to demands and policies explicitly addressing the ethnic Turk community. The European dimension was subsumed under domestic ideological categories such as the center-periphery cleavage in the context of EU regional policy, and explicitly mentioned only the Roma community as a common European issue.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast to such explicit emphasis on ideological centrism and liberal approaches emphasizing individual rights, cultural diversity, and economic prosperity, the European elections emerged as an instance of ideological pluralisation within ethnic minority representation in Romania. As second-order elections, the latter presented political actors with an opportunity to test the ground towards diversification of voting choice for the ethnic Hungarian electorate. An important contender to UDMR's one-party model of minority representation emerged in the 2007 EP elections, a development related to their second-order relevance.<sup>18</sup> Having failed to negotiate a compromise with UDMR, former Honorary President László Tökés ran as Independent. An alternative party structure comprising UDMR members discontent with the leadership joined the Hungarian Civic Union (CMP, MPP in Hungarian), later registered as a political party. Both Tökés and CMP advanced an alternative approach to autonomy in Transylvania, considered more radical but also more directly based on a bottom-up, grassroots model. Tökés ran on a campaign that sought to promote regime change for the ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania, urged UDMR to decline its monopoly and to open up the process of subsidy allocation, thus increasing the pluralism of public life in Transylvania. Its centrepiece was the territorial autonomy of Szeklerland.<sup>19</sup>

The fact that more than 40% of the ethnic Hungarian electorate voted for Tökés contrary to forecasts that he would not meet the threshold but instead would provoke a split within the ethnic Hungarian electorate reflects the emergence of meaningful ethnic minority-based electoral competition. The electoral outcome suggests that ethnopolitical competition, even under a consociational model, is a valid process. It demonstrates that ethnicity is not the only political identity for minority voters and that ethnic minorities are not homogeneous. Sustained

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<sup>17</sup> See MRF's 2007 election manifesto "Program Declaration" (online), <http://www.dps.bg/cgi-bin/e-cms/vis/vis.pl?s=001&p=0225&g=>.

<sup>18</sup> There have been prior attempts to enhance intraethnic competition by creating alternative political organizations for the representation of ethnic Hungarians in Romania. The Independent Hungarian Party was formed in 1990 and participated in three elections (although under a different name) but has not challenged the monopoly of UDMR.

<sup>19</sup> The Szeklers' Land is comprised of three counties, Covasna, Harghita, and Mures with majority ethnic Hungarian population. In 2007, the National Szeklers' Council (CNS) initiated an unofficial referendum on Szekler's territorial autonomy. CNS was a major source of electoral support for Tökés; by contrast, UDMR performed less well in Szeklerland. The results of the unofficial referendum have been declared inconsequential for the policy process. See "Romania: Ethnic Hungarians to Ask for Autonomy Referendum," *Rompress News Agency* (in English), November 28, 2007, reported in BBC Monitoring Europe, November 28, 2007.

consociational models of minority representation therefore tend to freeze rather than simply guarantee and/or enhance minority representation.

### *Coalition politics*

Beyond ideological positioning, the 2007 European elections were an important marker of the coalition-building capacity of ethnic minority parties. In Romania, the elections marked the beginning of a period of unsettled relations between the political organizations representing the ethnic Hungarian minority which oscillated between conflict, competition, negotiations, unity, and strategic calculations. Most importantly, the Romanian case illustrates the opportunities and limitations of intraparty competition and coalition-building in the case of minority parties.

The elections reflected also the new relevance of minority politics in the kin state, as Hungarian political parties emerged more divided in their support for the party-level representation of the ethnic Hungarian minority in Romania. The Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) stepped up its support for UDMR while recognizing that the latter no longer was the only political force representing the Hungarian minority. Fidesz, on the other hand, supported independent candidate Tökés. Fidesz Chairman Viktor Orbán accompanied Tökés in important public appearances and encouraged higher voter turnout among the Hungarian minority.

Although the competition between UDMR and Tökés ultimately produced a positive outcome, led to the increased fragmentation of the political process and enhanced salience of the divisions among the ethnic Hungarian community resulting in decline in the aggregate seat share (despite positive change in the vote share).<sup>20</sup>

The mechanism of national party affiliation with the ideological political groupings of the EP was instrumental to coalition formation, including at the regional level, although it also reflected policy divisions among the Romanian parties. While MRF's acceptance as a member of ALDE and of UDMR in EPP-ED was unproblematic, MEP László Tökés had to remain independent due to the governing Romanian Democratic Party, winner of the 2007 European elections, whose representatives voted against Tökés' admission in EPP-ED (which would have been his logical identification in view of UDMR's membership).

There is also evidence of new institutional ties emerging among ethnic minority political organizations leading to the opposite process of coalition-building and compromise. In April 2008 UDMR signed a strategic partnership agreement with Tökés within the EPP-ED group.<sup>21</sup> The two sides further shared the view of minority autonomy as a factor of European stability. In a longer-term perspective, in March, 2009 UDMR (represented by Chairman Bela) and László Tökés (as EMNT Chairman) signed a cooperation agreement to participate through a joint list in the 2009 European elections in Transylvania. Such electoral coalitions represent a more diversified, alliance-based model of party politics. In forming the 2009 electoral coalition, the

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<sup>20</sup> UMRD recognized that its failure to gain representation would have political consequences for the party itself, based on the emergent intragroup competition among political parties representing the Hungarian minority, such as EMTN and the Hungarian Civic Platform (forerunner to HCP).

<sup>21</sup> See text of the agreement, officially published at the Hungarian Delegation of UDMR at the European Parliament at <http://www.TökésLászló.ro/en/doc/43.html>.

principal minority political organizations, ENMT and UDMR, based their cooperation on a single-issue campaign, not ideological proximity. That issue was the autonomy of Szeklerland:

“Mr. President Basescu pronounced against the territorial autonomy of Szeklers. This proves how difficult is it and only the full solidarity of Hungarians and joining together all our efforts we can reach a result on the autonomy issue. This is the idea driving us to the agreements and I am satisfied.”<sup>22</sup>

Such alliances were supported by the Hungarian Civic Alliance in Hungary, which had supported the 2007 Tökés campaign and endorsed his views on Hungarian autonomy in Szeklerland.<sup>23</sup> How the voter base of the UDMR and Tökés and the EMNT differs according to socio-demographic characteristics is a question for further research. The process of initial pluralization of the Hungarian political organizations, their internal competition, and subsequent coalition-building contributed to the replacement of the model of “monopolistic unity” with a model of “pluralistic unity” which also gave the issue of ethnic Hungarian autonomy in Transylvania more visibility at the EU level.

Similarly, MRF’s strengthened ideological coherence in the European elections was conducive to its coalition-building efforts in the 2007 local elections and especially, at the national level, with the liberal-centrist formation, the National Movement Simeon the Second (NMSII) for common candidate lists in the 2009 EP elections. Beyond ideological identification, MRF used the European elections to strengthen its position as an important power broker in Bulgarian politics. By pursuing an inclusive electoral platform it sought to demonstrate its relevance as a national party. The European elections were important to its consolidation as a political actor but not as a vehicle of advancing specific ethnic minority politics. MRF labelled this approach non-traditional.<sup>24</sup>

In the wake of the elections, UDMR developed a model of “internal coalitions” among the ethnic Hungarian political parties, rather than electoral coalitions which follow different electoral rules resisting competition. Such approaches suggest that the pluralisation of ethnic minority representation under the consociational model is not inevitable. Similarly, pluralisation did not take place under the liberal democratic model although the MRF voter base expanded to include members of the Roma community.

## Conclusion

The electoral behavior of ethnopolitical parties in the 2007 EP elections provides evidence of convergence in the patterns of political competition despite the overwhelmingly different policy preferences of such parties; notably, with regard to the issue of autonomy and self-government of ethnic minorities. As the European elections in Romania’s case demonstrated the evolution of

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<sup>22</sup> László Tökés statement at [http://www.divers.ro/focus\\_en?wid=37645&func=viewSubmission&sid=9688](http://www.divers.ro/focus_en?wid=37645&func=viewSubmission&sid=9688). The UCM, whose voter based supports Tökés, remained outside the agreement, having originally failed to

<sup>23</sup> Ethnic Hungarian representation in Romania is an issue of divisions among the Hungarian party elite and an important element of partisan politics. SZMT supports UDMR and Fidesz support for Tökés in the European elections strengthened SZMT support for UDMR

<sup>24</sup> See MRF “Program Declaration.”

intra-ethnic political competition at the level of elites, such developments created opportunities for the diversification of voter preferences within the ethnic minority electorate.

In addition, what we observe in the Romanian case is converging party motives to use the European elections as an opportunity to advance minority policies but not because there is common notion of minority politics inspired by the EU-level electoral process or European norms in general. Similarly to Haas' observation (Haas 1968, 155) there is no coherent coalition based on EU-inspired values with regard to ethnic minorities, but convergence of motives how to use the common ground of the European elections for individual agendas.

The elections showed that in the Bulgarian case, empowerment occurred through the mechanical effects of the European electoral process, the second-order proposition on the performance of small parties, and the descriptive elements of representation, the representation by numbers. By contrast, UDMR maintained its position as a typical ethnic minority party. It sought to broaden its outlook as a party of all minorities although that campaign message may not be validated through the electoral outcome.

The results of the elections suggest that the European dimension of voting provided an added source of legitimacy for the ethnic minority parties, although in different ways. MRF maintained its centrist programmatic outlook in the wake of the elections, and especially in the local elections which took place in October 2007. MRF emerged as a result of the European elections strengthened, more inclusive in terms of party candidates and electoral base (having reached also to the Roma community), and unchallenged as a liberal center within the party system.<sup>25</sup> By contrast, UDMR was forced to abandon its monopoly over the representation of ethnic Hungarians and open up a process of coalition politics, rather than focus on its policy platform and links with voters.

The two campaigns demonstrated also two fundamentally different approaches to minority representation and minority-relevant policy agendas: integration of minorities through nondiscrimination, multiethnic competition, and individual rights versus radicalization of claims to territorial autonomy. In a broader context, the European elections in Bulgaria and Romania fulfilled Reif and Schmitt's (1980) predictions for second-order elections: a lower turnout rate than in national-level elections, losses for the principal parties in government (with the notable exception of MRF in Bulgaria), and electoral success for newer and smaller parties.

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<sup>25</sup> The other liberal formation, National Movement Simeon the Second (later renamed as National Movement for Stability and Progress) gained only 6% of the vote and 1 seat.

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