

Introduction: Distribution of Financial Support to Organizations Representing National Minorities

Andreea Cârstocea*

European Centre for Minority Issues

The four articles included in this Special Issue of the Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe are based on presentations given at the expert workshop on the Distribution of Financial Support to Organizations Representing National Minorities, organized by the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) in Flensburg, Germany between 5-6 December 2013.

The workshop examined a set of issues related to the funding of national minority organizations (in the broader meaning of the term), such as minority parties, minority councils, minority associations, etc. The focus of the workshop was on the issue of funding as directed by states to minority organizations, thus enabling the participation of these ethnic groups to political and public life. The participation of national minorities to political and public life is to a great extent determined by the activity of ‘representative’ organizations, and funding is of fundamental importance for them to be able to function adequately. The amounts and manner of distribution of financial support, its uses, and the mechanisms in place to oversee the legality and transparency of its use are all important components in this process.

Given the centrality of the issue of funding for the participation of national minorities to public life, there is surprisingly little empirical research, policy analysis, or academic literature on the topic. One should however note the 2009 contribution of the Council of Europe Committee of Experts on Issues Relating to the Protection of National Minorities (DH-MIN), which drafted a questionnaire requesting information from member states on a range of topics related to the distribution, use, and auditing of this type of financial support. In 2010, following the receipt of answers from 23 member states, a compilation of these answers

was drafted and made public; however, with the DH-MIN discontinuing its activity in 2010, the analysis of the contents was not carried out. The DH-MIN initiative was meant to fill a gap in the knowledge and understanding of the mechanisms underlying the distribution of financial support to minority organizations in Europe.

In this context, the workshop organized by ECMI aimed to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and understanding of the issue of funding of minority organizations, by identifying areas in need of further research and initiating the creation of a framework that will allow for future comprehensive recommendations to governments in this respect.

The first article included in this special issue is based on the key-note speech given by the author, Detlev Rein, who refers to his experience as chairman of the DH-MIN during its efforts to collect information concerning the funding of minority organizations, and builds on the example of Germany and its practices in offering financial support to the various types of minority organizations on its territory. In the case of the funding of projects proposed by minority organizations, the author emphasizes the importance of understanding the various implications of a fair distribution of funds among the various minority groups, as well as the rationale of funding such projects, e.g. understanding how priorities are set and how minority needs can be best met. Concerning political participation, Rein stresses the importance of analyzing available funding by first looking into the types and roles of organizations existing in any state, such as private law associations of minorities; special associations, bodies and committees where minority questions are dealt with; and minority parties or associations running for seats in local, regional or national parliaments. In the absence of a clear methodological approach, an analysis of the funding available for political participation would not be meaningful. Finally, focusing on minority funding from an international perspective, Rein outlines the main aspects of the international legal framework concerning transnational funding for national minorities, reflecting also on their importance and applicability.

The next article in this special issue analyses the relationship between minority empowerment and the funding schemes available to minority organizations using the example of the state of Schleswig-Holstein, on the border between Germany and Denmark. Here Sonja Wolf argues that the funding scheme currently in place provides the organizations of the Danish minority with the possibility to provide constant and reliable services to the community, as well as the freedom to decide how to operate in the best interest of their community. The Danish minority in Schleswig-Holstein can thus participate in and contribute

to public life in the region, formulate and develop a group identity, and nurture the minority's own culture and language. In this sense the funding available does contribute to the empowerment process of the community. Wolf argues that this funding scheme is shaped by the following four central elements that were identified to have an impact on the work of the organizations with, in, and for the minority: the stability of funds and institutionalization of procedures; the transparency of the funding scheme as well as of the use of funds; the administrative burden; and the funding channels. While conceding that her case study is limited and that the results do not allow for a generalization, Wolf argues that her enquiry opens up a number of questions that could inspire and inform future research on the subject, including research on other types of funding schemes used by states to support their minorities, on the elements that play a crucial role in these funding schemes, on measuring the impact of various elements of funding schemes, and very importantly on how data collection on funding schemes can best be carried out.

In the third article, Nurcan Özgür Baklacioğlu investigates the contemporary institutional and discursive novelties and challenges on the agenda of Turkey's policy towards its kin minorities, as well as its institutional and discursive transition from an ethnic nationalist kin policy in the Balkans towards a transnational economic and religious strategy prioritizing 'Turks abroad' in the EU. Özgür Baklacioğlu argues that since the 1990s, Turkey's kin policy has undergone four important changes: Turkey's policy definition of kin minority gained a predominantly religious and geopolitical content; while the Turks abroad were primarily seen as a political and economic diaspora, the kin minorities in the Balkans served as a cultural ground for Turkey's neo-Ottomanist policy of fighting radical Islamic movements in the region; the rise of the Diyanet (the Religious Affairs Directorate) as a chief actor in both kin and Turks abroad policies; and the application of the policies towards the "EuroTurks" policy to the kin minority policies in the Balkans. By analysing the policies and the funding made available for the Turkish minorities abroad, Özgür Baklacioğlu concludes that the strengthened role of the Diyanet as one of the main actors in Turkey's kin policy in the Balkans and Europe is a contemporary novelty, which in the author's view can be potentially controversial among both Muslim and non-Muslim populations in the region.

Szabolcs Pogonyi takes up the case of Hungary and also applies a transnational perspective on funding and policy towards kin minorities abroad, arguing that Hungarian diaspora engagement policies were designed by the Orbán government in order to strengthen the government's nationalist image within the homeland constituency. After reviewing the

main theoretical approaches to the study of diaspora engagement, Pogonyi focuses on the Orbán government's diaspora politics, in particular on the issue of non-resident citizenship. Pogonyi's main argument is that the introduction of the non-resident citizenship and the creation of new diaspora institutions were not motivated by geopolitical or economic purposes, but by a desire to strengthen the Orbán government's nationalist image within the country, in the context of the rise of the radical populist Jobbik party as a challenger to Fidesz. Through the inclusion of transborder and diaspora Hungarians into the citizenship of the country, Pogonyi argues that the Orbán government could then claim that it restored the unity of the Hungarian nation and, at least symbolically, undid the border changes of the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty. Thus the author points towards the new diaspora policies and institutions (such as birthright travel programs and language courses) as means through which Hungarians abroad could become 'folklorized' and 'diasporized', rather than mobilized. Pogonyi concludes that in Hungary, the Orbán government chose to utilize the diaspora as a symbolic resource, underscoring the nationalist government's claim that it strives to maintain the Hungarian ethnocultural heritage throughout its diasporas.

The articles included in this Special Issue represent just part of the contributions made during the 2013 workshop on the Distribution of Financial Support to Organizations Representing National Minorities. They hopefully provide a basis for further research and scientific enquiry; as demonstrated during the workshop, there is a pressing need for developing research methodologies, for collecting data, and carrying out both empirical and theoretical research on the topic of funding of national minority organizations. In this respect, it is hoped the articles selected for publication here represent a good starting point for advancing knowledge on this very important topic.