

Introduction – 2015 Anniversary Issue of the Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe

Andreea Cârstocea*

European Centre for Minority Issues

2015 marked 15 years since the Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe (JEMIE) was established as the flagship academic publication of the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI). Coincidentally, 2016 also marks an important anniversary, namely 20 years since ECMI was founded on 4 December 1996, in Flensburg, on the German-Danish border.

As such, we thought it fitting that the closing 2015 Issue of our Journal should be an anniversary one, looking back at these 15 years of publication history and remembering some of the topics and articles published here, while at the same time reflecting on some of the subjects and topics that could potentially be tackled in the journal in the future.

Over the 15 years that passed since JEMIE was launched, the main focus of the journal remained constant: publishing articles, commentaries and book reviews addressing minority issues from a broad range of perspectives, such as ethnopolitics, democratization, conflict management, good governance, participation, minority rights, etc. Concretely, the topics approached in our Special Issues ranged from Europeanization and minority rights to minority language policies, non-territorial autonomy, minority participation in public life, new media, freedom of expression, and many others; these topics were discussed in connection to events and developments across Europe, understood in the broadest sense. Occasionally, JEMIE published special issues dedicated to specific minority groups (e.g. the Roma), or to particular institutions dealing with minority issues (e.g. the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities). The articles published in our General Issues covered additional ground in their selected subject matter, diverse approaches and geographical scope.

* Senior Research Associate, Editor of the Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe.

It must be said that pursuing these topics and publishing such a wide range of articles could not have been possible without the invaluable contribution of JEMIE's previous editors, and of course without the help of the Advisory and Editorial board. (Lists of previous editors and current Advisory and Editorial boards can be consulted here: <http://www.ecmi.de/publications/jemie/>).

As to the future of JEMIE, it will continue to pursue its focus on minority issues, reflecting – as it has been doing for the past 15 years – on academic, legal, socio-economic, or political developments in the field. Among other things, the impact of the refugee crisis on the situation of national minorities, as well as its potential impact on the definition of national minorities and the protections afforded to national minorities, migrants, and refugees will probably constitute important research topics in the near future. In addition to the commitment to publish high-quality articles in the field, we will also seek to improve our visibility and impact factor, by including JEMIE in the major research databases.

These being said, our readers are invited to enjoy in the following a selection of articles published over time in JEMIE. Selecting these articles from the almost 200 that were published over the last 15 years was no easy task; deciding on which articles and topics should be included here meant reflecting on what topics were of most interest to our readership, and which articles provided the most original and relevant analyses. In the end, we chose to use the number of quotations the articles generated – while being aware this is a far from perfect criterion – as a guide to our most popular articles. Obviously, using the number of quotations as a criterion brings with it its own problems: for one, articles published in the earlier years of JEMIE will have had more time to generate quotations and therefore appear higher on our impact-generating list of articles. It is however a good indicator of the interest they generated through their choice of topic and approach, and of course of the quality of the analysis they provided.

After arranging the articles according to the number of quotations received, it was particularly interesting to see that all addressed (directly or indirectly) the same issue, namely minority rights in the context of the European Union enlargement. This demonstrates on the one hand a high interest in the rights of national minorities in Eastern Europe, and, on the other, in the role of the European Union in the process of developing adequate systems of minority protection in these countries. It is important to emphasize that the articles re-published in this Anniversary Issue do not reflect current concerns, but the political situation

and the developments in the field at the time of writing; although one could say many of the arguments presented in these articles are still highly relevant today.

This Anniversary Issue will have as a starting point Will Kymlicka's article 'Multiculturalism and Minority Rights: West and East', first published in 2002. Kymlicka's discussion of western models of multiculturalism and minority rights and of the factors which might make their adoption difficult in Eastern Europe sets a fitting theoretical framework for the subsequent articles. The next article, 'Monitoring the Monitors: EU Enlargement Conditionality and Minority Protection in the CEECs', by James Hughes and Gwendolyn Sasse, also focuses on the difficulties of transferring western norms of minority protection by concentrating on the problematic linkage between EU membership conditionality and compliance by candidate countries on matters related to the protection of national minorities.

The next three articles are also concerned with the issue of EU enlargement and its impact on minority protection, by focusing on specific case studies. Thus Martin Brusis, in his 2003 article 'The European Union and Interethnic Power-sharing Arrangements in Accession Countries', concentrates on elements of consociational power-sharing in Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia, and argues that the EU played an important role in the emergence of these power-sharing arrangements due to its adoption of a security approach to minority protection policy, and prioritizing consensual settlement of disputes over the enforcement of universalist norms. David J. Smith, in his article 'Minority Rights, Multiculturalism and EU Enlargement: the Case of Estonia', examines the process of EU enlargement and its impact upon ethnopolitics in contemporary Estonia, analysing how Estonia was able to reconcile its so-called 'ethnic democracy' with the EU Copenhagen criteria requiring the 'respect for and protection of minorities'. Finally, Peter Vermeersch, in his article 'EU Enlargement and Minority Rights Policies in Central Europe: Explaining Policy Shifts in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland', assesses the impact of both domestic and international factors on the development of policies towards national minorities in these three Central European countries.

That European enlargement and minority rights in the accession countries constituted such central interests for our readers is probably no surprise, given the political and socio-economic importance of the EU expansion in these years. Obviously, we cannot be certain of what topics will take centre stage in the following years; what we can however is promise to continue to publish high-quality articles reflecting current developments related to minority issues, thus continuing to offer a platform for academic debate in this field.