



Opportunities and Challenges to Migrant Political Participation in Europe

Migrants' Consultative Mechanisms in the EU



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*“We are existing, our voices should be taken into account.”**

Migrants’ Consultative Mechanisms in the EU

Millions of people with migrant background living in the EU don’t have the right to vote.

Also, informal ways of political participation are exclusive and discriminatory.



*Algerian woman (March 16th, 2022). Personal interview. France.



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Research: Migrants' Consultative Mechanisms in the EU

International research in Austria, Bulgaria, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania

Literature review on migration policies and consultative mechanisms

Interviews and focus group discussions with TCNs, members of associations and NGOs, representatives of municipalities



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3 main topics today:

- I. Main arguments for a migrants consultative body
- II. Success factors of migrants' consultative mechanisms
- III. Alternative, creative forms of political participation



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I. Main arguments for a migrants consultative body

- Democracy
- Equality
- social cohesion
- Responsibility of city/region/state for all citizens
- EU Law
- Human Rights | UN framework



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Democracy – equality – social cohesion

- Democracy deficit:
 - e.g. Austria 17 % not allowed to vote
- Studies on inequality and well-being:
 - Inequality has negative effects on psychosocial well-being, health, rates of violence, stress level, relationships of ALL citizens (Stiglitz, Wilkinson,...)



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Democracy – equality – social cohesion

“The participation of immigrants (...) especially at the local level, **supports their integration** (...) and **enhances their sense of belonging**.

Wherever possible, immigrants **should become involved in all facets of the democratic process**. Ways of stimulating this participation and **generating mutual understanding** could be reached by **structured dialogue** between immigrant groups and governments.

When unequal forms of membership and levels of engagement persist for longer than is either reasonable or necessary, **divisions or differences** can become deeply rooted. This requires urgent attention by all Member States (FRA 2017).”



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Responsibility of a (city) government for all citizens

“We as the city government are not only responsible for those who can vote in elections, but also for those who can’t.”

Robert Krotzer, Integration Councilor of the City of Graz. (November 14th, 2022). Migrant Voices Heard Study Visit in Graz. Austria.



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KINDLING A BETTER WORLD



EU Law

Council of Europe's 1992 Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level

...one the most relevant documents concerning the political participation of TCNs and consultative bodies

The Convention promotes

- the freedom of speech, assembly, association and the right to be involved in local public inquiries, planning procedures and consultation procedures
- **the obligation to encourage and facilitate local consultative bodies of foreign residents**
- and the right to vote at the local level after a maximum of five years' residence



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EU Law

European Urban Charter (1992)

- calls **“local authorities to ensure effective participation by immigrants in local, political life”**
- and “local machinery to ensure adequate access by immigrant communities to public enquiry and public consultation procedures”

European Urban Charter II (2008)

- demands **“the right to vote and to stand in elections for urban local assemblies (...) for migrants, who contribute in many different ways to the life of the community”**



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EU Law

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

→ specifically addresses migrant consultative bodies in **Resolution 141 (CoE 2002)**

→ *“democratic principles make it necessary not to exclude from local public life foreign residents who are lawfully and permanently settled in the territories of European states, irrespective of their country of origin*

→ *there can be no genuine local democracy without the full participation of all the locality’s inhabitants”.*



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Human Rights | UN framework

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (OHCHR 1966/1976)

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (OHCHR 1990/2003)

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (OHCHR 1965/1969)

European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR 1950/1953)

→ **guarantee all migrants, including undocumented migrants, access to civic and political rights, including the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association, as well as trade union membership.**

→ BUT, these international standards also allow states to impose restrictions on electoral rights

- e.g. Article 25 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights restricts the right to vote and stand for elections of citizens;



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II. Success factors of migrants' consultative mechanisms (1)

- Financial stability and resources
- Mandate and rights | objectives and by-laws
- Legal foundation and institutionalization
- Representation and equality | diversity of members
- Communication with migrant communities



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II. Success factors of migrants' consultative mechanisms (2)

- active board members | regular meetings
- Elections
- Alliance with other migrant councils on EU level
- Alliance with other stakeholders and other boards
- Commitment on highest level | allies from a variety of parties
- Intercultural awareness on all levels



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III. Alternative, creative forms of political participation

- Consultation on specific issues | meetings with stakeholders and policy makers
- Petitions, demonstrations, marches,...
- **“Power sharing”**
- Art and culture, street art, music, radio shows, poetry slams,...
- Safe spaces
- **Best practice: Migrants’ City Tour**
- community activities
- Online participation
- **Inclusive Events: multilingualism, welcome children,...**
- Financial support for migrant-led associations



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