Recommendation of Hubert Mikel, Secretary General of the Austrian Centre for Ethnic Groups, to the thematic Session 3: Minority participation as a procedural and substantive right and process, at the Europe-Central Asia Regional Forum for the thematic work of the UN-Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Vienna May 3. 2022.

Referring to Art 2.3 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Minorities, there has been in recent years an increasing tendency in some member states to "nationalise" the participation of representatives of national minorities and to make it so ineffective. By increasing the financial incentive for good behaviour or withdrawing subsidies from government-critical organisations of the national minority; by excluding critical representatives and by including pro-government minority representatives in institutionalised bodies that serve the participation of national minorities; by founding minority organisations and formally recognising their representativeness by political parties and government offices in order to majoritise minority organisations that have been critical and active for many decades, etc. This is done through government and party influence on the so-called ethnic group advisory councils, the only institutionalised participation opportunity of the national minorities in Austria.

**Recommendation: Ensure that the representatives of the national minorities can participate effectively to represent the real interests of the national minorities in decisions concerning the minority, independently from government and party influence. The minority representation shall be responsible to the national minority and shall be decisively determined and composed by the minority group, e.g. through general and direct election of the minority representatives by all members of the minority who wish to vote.**