

Review of Handbook of Direct Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989¹

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Рецензия на Наръчник за пряка демокрация в Централна и Източна Европа след 1989

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In the modern world, democracy is a dominant form of rule. Different societies are implementing both indirect and direct democracy. Various factors define the level of realization of one of the two. The dominant form of government is a representative democracy. Switzerland is an excellent example of higher usage of direct democracy with its federal, cantonal, and municipal referendums. Nowadays, the issue of direct democracy deserves special attention. In this context, the Handbook of Direct Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 accentuates the implementation of direct democracy in 21 European countries.

The authors underline that they are aware that all attempts to define the geopolitical boundaries of Central and Eastern Europe are imperfect. In light of this, they are investigating in their book the topic of direct democracy in Albania (the Republic of Albania), Belarus (the Republic of Belarus), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria (the Republic of Bulgaria), Croatia (the Republic of Croatia), Czechia (the Czech Republic), Estonia (the Republic of Estonia), Hungary, Kosovo, Latvia (the Republic of Latvia), Lithuania (the Republic of Lithuania), Macedonia (the Republic of Macedonia), Moldova (the Republic of Moldova), Montenegro, Poland (the Republic of Poland), Romania, Russia (the Russian Federation), Serbia (the Republic of Serbia), Slovakia (the Slovak Republic), Slovenia (the Republic of Slovenia) and Ukraine.

The book includes materials from the research work of the international team of research scholars from Poland (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University – Lublin; University of Białystok; Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań; Pedagogical University in Cracow), Bulgaria (South-West University, Neofit Rilski” – Blagoevgrad), Romania (Bucharest University) and Ukraine (dual citizenship: Polish and Ukrainian). The handbook is very well structured. The issue of direct democracy is presented in alphabetical order - according to the state's name. This makes it easy for the reader to find the needed information quickly. The first country that is examined is Albania, and the last one is Ukraine.

The authors (Prof. Maria Marczevska-Rytko; prof. Elżbieta Kuźelewska; prof. Valentina Marinescu; prof. Magdalena Musiał-Karg; prof. Dobrinka St. Peicheva; prof. Andrzej Piasecki; prof. Wojciech Ziętara; dr Marta Drabczuk; dr Dorota Maj; dr Marcin Pomarański) of the book adopt the year 1989 as the starting date and 1991 for the former Soviet Union countries. The aim of the handbook is the holistic and interdisciplinary political analysis of direct democracy in the Central and Eastern European countries after 1989, in particular:

- the diagnosis of the state of democratic processes taking place in this area;
- the synthesis and analysis of direct democracy institutions used there;
- the research and comparative study of implementations of solutions characteristic of direct democracy in the area investigated on a national and local scale.

The articles are divided into four main parts: determinants, formal-legal dimension, practical dimension, and conclusion.

The first part analyzes the internal and external conditions that determine the form of direct democracy in a particular country. This analysis includes historical conditions that determine the democratic tradition of the country and the events that have influenced it; cultural-civilizational conditions related to the religious structure of the country, its ethnic structure, or membership of specific culture (Western, Eastern); socio-political conditions that define the social and political system framework for the functioning of the institutions of direct democracy; international conditions that define obligations of the country towards specific supranational structures in respect of direct democracy issues.

The second part presents an analysis of the country's formal-legal dimension of direct democracy. It focuses on examining legal acts (Constitution and laws) that determine the legislative reality of the country, particularly those regulating the functioning of the institutions of direct democracy.

The third part stresses the practical dimension of direct democratic institutions in the country. The analysis of this dimension is significantly crucial for the further development of direct democracy.

Each article ends with the main conclusions.

The authors concluded that:

- direct democracy functions in the Central and Eastern European countries both in the formal-legal and practical dimensions at the national and local levels;
- the use of instruments of direct democracy in the process of exercising power is an indicator of the political awareness of the Central and Eastern European societies;
- the process of accession of the Central and Eastern European countries to the European Union had an impact on the development of direct democracy in these countries (in the formal-legal and practical aspects).

The book *Handbook of Direct Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989* allows one to understand the state of direct democracy in the investigated countries. The

handbook has its place and importance in creating and shaping civil society, raising the motivation of the citizen's participation in the decision-making processes, and stimulating the broader use of the forms of direct democracy. Furthermore, it provides a possibility to understand the similarities and differences in implementing direct democracy in Central and Eastern Europe.

Handbook of Direct Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 is suitable for professionals and non-professionals in the political and social sciences, law, history, etc. The book has undeniable contributions to the field of political science.

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