



Strasbourg, 8 October 2010

Study no. 497/2008

CDL-DEM(2010)002*
Engl. Only

EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW
(VENICE COMMISSION)

COMMENTS

**ON THE DRAFT REPORT
ON THE ROLE OF THE OPPOSITION
IN A DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENT**

by

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I have these comments on the excellent study on the Role of the Opposition.

In para 22. The phrase that the opposition has “no competence” in the taking of majority decisions can be misleading. The opposition can sometimes very usefully add its adherence, or can in the case of some division within a “majority” in Parliament, determine decisions. The text can do without this sentence.

In para 26. Though it has been repeated time and again that Proportional Representation increases the possibilities of a multiplicity of parties in Parliament, this is not always so, and in fact certain models of Proportional Representation, through the mechanism of the single transferable vote, actually whittle down the number of parties. This has happened in my country.

The Leader of the Opposition: in many countries following the Westminster model. The member who enjoys the trust of the greatest number of non-government supporting deputies is appointed formally as Leader of the Opposition and acquires certain privileges in the House. The Speaker or President usually calls upon him to speak on behalf of the Opposition and “catches the Speaker’s eye” before other opposition and government “private” members. The position of Leader of the Opposition is important because he/she becomes in fact the shadow and alternative Prime Minister.

The Shadow Government is not formally recognized by most Constitutions, but it is a very useful grouping.

My very personal opinion [and experience] is that the best Cabinets are those formed in opposition. The shadow Cabinet experience provides *rodage* and trains members whilst still out of office into the practice of collective responsibility and collegiate decision making.