

PART TWO

THE PRACTICE:

*STRUCTURES, POLICIES AND MULTI-ETHNIC
DYNAMICS*

EMERGING MULTI-ETHNIC POLICIES IN BULGARIA: A CENTRAL – LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

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EMERGING MULTI-ETHNIC POLICIES IN BULGARIA: A CENTRAL – LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This paper presents the diversity of minority ethnic communities in Bulgaria in the context of their cultural identity, problems, political participation and civil mobilisation. The text is concerned with their treatment by the state, in terms of relevant legislation and policy, and with social attitudes toward them in the post-communist period. This analysis also includes a review of the territorial and administrative division of Bulgaria as the backbone of the central-regional-local relationship in policy implementation. Regional development is being explored as the possible political vehicle for solving the socio-economic problems of minorities by reducing the disproportion between and within the various regions, and improving the quality of life and the expansion of human capabilities. Local services are analysed with reference to the democratic and decentralised management strategies applicable for the integration of minorities in the various areas of local social life: preservation of cultural identity and introducing intercultural dialogue in education, learning the mother tongue, media, employment, social assistance and urban amelioration. Minority representation in municipal councils is also analysed. This paper attempts to find an appropriate balance between the positive developments in the building, preservation and development of minority rights in Bulgaria, and the negative aspects of this process, by looking at what has been left out of the public discourse.

1. Introduction

Most public authorities at the national, regional and local levels face a challenge of managing heterogeneous ethnic communities.¹ Such regional and local communities are typical for the entire territory of Bulgaria.

Events of ten years ago signalled a change in the official Bulgarian policy towards ethnic minorities. Even as its economy contracted, Bulgaria made considerable progress.

¹ ‘...there is no mono-ethnic society’, as George Schöpflin states, viewing ‘ethnicity as the basic (although not the only one) constructive matrix into which people and societies exist’. George Schöpflin (1998) ‘Citizenship, Ethnicity and Cultural Reproduction’, Sofia: *Etnoreporter*, No. 1, p. 37.

Local legislation and practices were brought in compliance with international standards and with European regulations enforcing respect for human rights. New opportunities during democratisation and the transition to a market economy encouraged minorities to promote their culture and reinforce their identity; this simultaneously created various problems for these groups. In parallel with the lower socio-economic status of some vulnerable minority communities, differences in language, religion and culture act as a divide among ethnic groups in the civil sphere, preconditioning discriminatory stereotypes and cases of intolerance. A climate of neighbourly relations between the various ethnic communities has not yet crystallised into tolerant civil co-existence, regardless of the positive developments in this respect.

In a multi-ethnic democracy, bringing the various issues to the current agenda and solving them is a process conducted in the daily work of the regional and local authorities; decentralisation logically demands that they administer the policies for minority rights. The implementation of an effective regional and local management of multi-ethnic communities is both a challenge and responsibility for public authorities. Ethnic tolerance must be preserved as a component of the democratic processes occurring in Bulgaria, where 'democracy has to have respect for ethnicity and ethnicity has to comply with democracy'.²

2. Ethnic Diversity in Bulgaria

Bulgaria is a European, post-communist country situated on the Balkan Peninsula. Its historical past, geo-strategic situation and cultural legacy shape it as 'the border line' between Christian and Muslim civilisations. There is a diverse multitude of ethno-cultural and religious minorities in the country.³ Each group has its specific demographic features and a type of territorial localisation and habitation. The process of economic restructuring during the last ten years has had an aggravating impact on the gradual drop in the socio-economic status of the largest minority/religious groups: Turks, Roma and Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks). This economic feature of the post-communist society in Bulgaria is often expressed as ethnic intolerance impeding a coherent ethno-cultural society. This tension is exacerbated by the lack of sufficient public information on the situation of the various minority groups living within Bulgarian territory.

The latest census in the country, dated December 1992, presents statistical data on the ethnic composition of the population: 85.7% of a total of almost 8.5 million identify themselves as ethnic Bulgarians. Of the remaining 14.3%, the largest groups are Pomaks and Roma.⁴ The representatives of the smaller ethnic groups represent a total of 1.3% (94,000

² Ibid., p. 39.

³ See the comprehensive Table 1 in the Annex. For more details, see: Anna Krasteva (ed.) (1998) CDMR.

⁴ According to unofficial data of the Ministry of Interior and local authorities, the share of the Roma can amount to 6.5%, while other expert assessments point to a figure of 10% of the entire Bulgarian population. See: Ilona Tomova (1995) *The Gypsies in the Transition Period*, Sofia: ICMSIR, p. 27; Martin Emerson (1999) 'Roma Education in Eastern and Central Europe: Some Personal Reflections', *European Journal of Intercultural Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 202.

people). These are mainly Russians, Armenians, Jews, Macedonians, Wallachians, Greeks, Karakachans, Gagaus, Tatars, Cherkes and other Slavs.

The demographic and socio-economic features of the ethnic communities in Bulgaria vary.⁵ They are mutually dependent on cultural factors, territorial distribution (compact/dispersed), housing (urban/rural) and local socio-economic effects of structural reform, etc.

The majority Christian community (86%) and the minority Muslim group (13%) are ethnically heterogeneous.⁶ Notably, the Pomaks are a substantial religious community who adhere to the Muslim religion and speak Bulgarian. According to experts' estimates, they amount to about 200,000. They live mainly in the rural regions of the Rhodope and Pirin mountains in southern Bulgaria, though a small number live in northeastern Bulgaria. During the last several years this religious community has faced multidirectional and complex processes in establishing its identity.⁷

Economic depression, underdevelopment and establishment of competitive conditions has so far doomed the representatives of the largest minority groups to unemployment. This is exacerbated by the poor education and qualifications, especially for the Roma, among which unemployment rates can reach about 80-90%.⁸ Bearing that the unemployment problem in Bulgaria is mainly attributed to the so-called 'skills gap', young and poorly educated individuals, especially the ones belonging to ethnic minorities, are exposed to the highest risk of unemployment.⁹

The deterioration of the socio-economic parameters of vulnerable minority groups (the Roma being the most prominent among these) condemns minorities to poverty and sends them to the bottom of the social stratification scheme.¹⁰ All this influences the character

⁵ See Table 2 in the Appendix.

⁶ For a more comprehensive analysis of the relations between the major religious communities in Bulgaria, see: *Interrelations of Compatibility and Incompatibility between the Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria* (1994) and (1997) Sofia: ICMSIR.

⁷ B. Panajotova, K. Bozeva (1994) 'The Religious Community of the Bulgarian Muslims', in: *Minority Groups in Bulgaria in a Human Rights Context*, Sofia: CDMR, pp. 27-32; Tsvetana Georgieva (1998) 'The Pomaks: the Bulgarian Muslims', in: Anna Krasteva (ed.) *Societies and Identities in Bulgaria*, Sofia: Petekston, pp. 286-308; Ilona Tomova (2000) 'Social Change and Ethnoreligious Relations', in: Georgi Fotev (ed.) *Neighbour Relations of Religious Communities in Bulgaria*, Sofia: Institute of Sociology at BAS, pp. 184-185.

⁸ ECRI (2000) *State Reports, The Second Report from Bulgaria*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe, p. 18. The reasons for the low educational level of the Roma community are complex and comprise cultural, economic, social, discriminatory and other aspects. Poverty, which is the preventive factor for school attendance by Roma children is reinforced by the low value education for parents. The poor proficiency of Roma children in Bulgarian and discrimination in the classrooms demotivate potential students. Early marriages are another reason for dropping out. The lack of any educational policy adequate to the peculiarities of Roma culture also discourages school attendance by the Roma.

⁹ The World Bank (1999) *Bulgaria: Poverty during the Transition, Report No. 18411*, Sofia: World Bank Mission in Bulgaria, pp. 4-5; UNDP (1999) *National Report on Human Development in Bulgaria. Part I. Regional Differences: A Burden or a Chance*, Sofia: UNDP, p. 43.

¹⁰ 'There is a distinct "bottom" in Bulgarian society. It is formed mainly by the older social groups, the ethnic minorities, the unemployed and the inhabitants of the villages and small towns, where

and the quality of life of minorities, their opportunities, and their individual and group strategies for dealing with these problems.

Urbanised minority populations include Jewish, Armenian, Russian and Greek communities. Broader opportunities for development and self-fulfillment in Bulgaria's economic, public, cultural and scientific life are available within urban centres. A high level of education and qualification facilitates their equal and full participation in Bulgarian society. As a whole, they can be said to be well integrated.

Bulgarian Turks and Muslims live mainly in villages and this limits their equal access to social benefits and services. Their young representatives often migrate to urban areas, where they have better chances of finding employment. The emigration of Bulgarian Turks to the Republic of Turkey has advanced at varying rates. At present, however, emigrants are primarily motivated by economic concerns (greater employment opportunities elsewhere), unlike the 'Great Trip' of the 1980s, which was forced upon minorities by the government and threatened the ethno-cultural identity of such minority groups.

Generally, the Turkish and Pomak ethnic communities enjoy functional integration in Bulgarian society. They participate in the political, economic, public, cultural and intellectual life of the country. They also maintain good relations with the majority.

The Roma are often beneficiaries of social support, thus engendering a culture of passive assistance. The long-term high unemployment rate among the Roma is a crime-generating factor that contributes to their further marginalisation. Relative to other groups, the Roma are more frequently physically, economically, socially and psychologically ghettoised, and are the object of effective desocialisation and discrimination practices.

The hardships of the structural economic reform process have resulted in the reinforcement of prejudices against ethno-cultural 'others' and the intensification of ethnocentrism. Regardless of this economic tension, regulatory, institutional and civil initiatives have been undertaken in order to facilitate the harmonisation of ethnic relations.

In conclusion, it can be said that:

- About one-seventh (15%) of the Bulgarian population belongs to minority communities. The largest minority groups are Bulgarian Turks, Roma and the Pomaks (there is debate as to whether this is a religious or ethnic minority). Smaller ethnic groups constitute about 1.3% of the population of the country.
- The demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the minority communities vary. Housing, territory and employment are traditionally predetermined and heavily influence their way and quality of life, their survival strategies and individual opportunities.
- The typical feature of the post-communist situation in Bulgaria is that the transition to a market economy has resulted in a drop in the socio-economic status of vulnerable minority groups, which applies mainly to the Roma.
- In general, all minority groups are well integrated into Bulgarian society, except for the Roma.

unemployment is highest. In terms of education, this group encompasses the more poorly educated people, but qualified workers are steadily making their way into it.' A. Raichev, K. Kolev, A. Bundjolvov, L. Dimova (2000) *Social Stratification in Bulgaria*, Sofia: Fridrich Ebert Foundation, Social-Democratic Institute, LIK, p. 29.

3. The Legal, Political and Civic Status of Minorities

The democratic 'revolution' of 1989 marked the beginning of processes, which made necessary the search for legislative, political and civil solutions to new and urgent ethnic minority issues. Promoting the issues and implementing measures to improve inter-ethnic relations in the country has been one of the most dynamic areas of democratic development in Bulgaria for the last ten years.

3.1. *The political agenda and minority rights discourse*

Bulgaria could not afford to seclude itself from human rights discourse as most post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe began their transition to democratic rule. Meanwhile, the inflammation of nationalist conflict in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which resulted in armed conflict along Bulgaria's border, forced Bulgaria's politicians and public to explore flexible political solutions and civil strategies in inter-ethnic relations.

The policy of integrating the country into European institutional structures calls for a decisive improvement of Bulgaria's human rights instruments, mechanisms and practices. Negotiations for equal membership are expected to increase the range and effective enforcement of minority integration measures and improvement of the status quo of vulnerable minority groups, especially the Roma.

Ethno-cultural awareness and civil mobilisation among minority representatives is also a catalyst for the political effort for the re-establishment of ethnic and religious rights. The gradual legislative, political and civil empowerment of minorities has pushed minority rights issues higher on the agenda of social discourse. A further positive development in recent years has been the tendency of public authorities to address nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) on minority issues.

3.2. *International legal instruments*

In the past ten years, distinct processes have been put into place that provide for legislatively enforced respect for human rights, regardless of the ethnic identity of citizens. These processes are in line with Bulgaria's commitments in the field of international human rights protection.

By signing and ratifying a number of international human rights documents, Bulgaria has become a party to nearly all important UN instruments and to 29 legislative documents of the Council of Europe on human rights.¹¹ This considerable effort made by the

¹¹ Here are some of the instruments ratified by Bulgaria: The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the First Optional Protocol to it; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the First Additional Protocol and

state since 1990 has provided a larger scale of international, regional, legislative standards for civil, political, economic, social and cultural minority rights. The opportunity now exists for individuals to appeal to international human rights institutions.¹²

An important step in the settling of multi-ethnic relations was Bulgaria's ratification of the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities. The Convention was signed by the Bulgarian head of state on 9 October 1997. It was not ratified by Parliament until 18 February 1999. In the interim, various political positions on ethnicity converged. The major issue in the political debate was the question of whether to ratify the Convention 'with' or 'without' an accompanying declaration, and (in the former case) what its content should be. The Consultative Council on National Security at the President's Office decided to ratify the Convention with an accompanying Declaration. Policy in the Balkans demands intensive harmonisation of minority rights with the principles of security, territorial integrity, the sovereignty of the state and the prevention of separatist aspirations. Therefore, political forces agreed to draft an accompanying Declaration to Article 21 of the Framework Convention, which was perceived as a protective mechanism.¹³

Bulgaria's ratification of the Convention is an expression of a more civilised attitude toward minorities and their rights and freedoms, and demonstrates efforts to harmonise Bulgarian laws with European ones. The provisions of this document constitute a serious resource for the actual implementation of minority rights in the country by setting forth mechanisms for the harmonisation of the relations between the majority, minorities and the state. Unfortunately, neither the minorities nor the regional and local authorities have made sufficient use of the opportunities presented by the Convention. The reason for this is insufficient information in public sphere: limited dissemination of the texts of the Convention and the accompanying Declaration, inadequate clarification of the actual subject and meaning of the Convention, and the long and veering political debate, which was poorly covered by the media. Public administrators should read this document and should attempt to translate its legal clauses into practical actions in accordance with the specific ethnic, economic and social conditions of the country, region, city, municipality or village in question.

Protocol No. 6 to it, Declarations to Articles 25 and 46 of the Convention; the European Social Charter—Revised, etc.

¹² There are cases of sanctions by the Court of Europe for violations of the human rights of minority representatives. See: Annual Report for 1998 (1998) Sofia: Human Rights Project (NGO); or 'Human Rights—Enforceable or Only Guaranteed' (2000) *Pari*, No. 4, February.

¹³ The text of the accompanying declaration says: 'The ratification and the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities shall in no way justify any activities aimed against the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of the integral Bulgarian state, its domestic and international security'. The Convention was ratified by the votes of two-thirds of the MPs. The final congratulation words of the prime minister before the Parliament sound emblematic: 'This Parliament said "yes" to patriotism and "no" to nationalism. In this Parliament there is a European majority of two-thirds'. See: 'The Framework Convention: The Way to Consensus' (1999) *Ethnoreporter*, No. 1, pp. 19-27.

3.3. *National legal framework*

In the past ten years, a number of legislative acts or amendments and revisions to existing laws have been passed, which influence (directly or indirectly) the problems of ethnic communities and inter-ethnic relations, and reinforce the rights guaranteed by the Bulgarian Constitution.

3.3.1. *Constitutional provisions*

The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, which was voted on 12 July 1991, guarantees individual human rights, equality and nondiscrimination on the basis of sex, origin, religion, education, convictions, political affiliation, personal or social status or property standing (Article 6). Specific rights are democratically provided to citizens, regardless of their ethnic, religious and linguistic belonging: prohibition of organisations inspiring racial hatred; the right to study one's mother tongue and to develop one's ethnic culture; freedom of religion; etc. The Bulgarian Constitution does not make any explicit reference to the term 'national minority'. Statutory provisions (Article 11, paragraph 4) prohibits political parties established on the basis of ethnic, racial or religious affiliation. This regulation is found to be discriminatory because it restricts the right to association; it is criticised by both Bulgarian and international human rights monitors.¹⁴

3.3.2. *Other legal texts*

Nonpenal regulations and the provisions of civil and administrative law¹⁵ guarantee national and racial equality, nondiscrimination and anti-xenophobia. The tendency of including anti-discriminatory provisions in revising the existing legislation and passing new laws seems to be a lasting one. Also, progress is being made with respect to the registration and profession of minority religions. The question remains, however, as to whether the rights provided for by the legislation are actually being implemented. In this respect, there is still some inconsistency between the formulated and the implemented rights for minorities, especially for the groups which are in a more disadvantageous position. Negative stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes are indeed difficult to overcome (especially for the Roma community).

¹⁴ K. Kanev (1998) 'Legislation and Policy to the Ethnic and religious Communities in Bulgaria', in: Anna Krasteva (ed.) *Societies and Identities in Bulgaria*, Sofia: Petekston, p. 102.

¹⁵ Penal Code, Art. 162, 163, 164, 416, 417, 418; the Acts on: the Ministry of Interior; Public Assemblies and Demonstrations; Bulgarian Radio and Television; Education; Higher Education; Vocational Education; Social Benefits; Public Officials, etc.

3.4. *Institutions*

The elimination of discrimination and the integration of minorities is a process that cannot be conducted only by virtue of decrees, legislative acts and orders. The governmental policy on solving minority problems must be implemented through the establishment of special institutions.

3.4.1. *Specialised bodies*

In Bulgaria, there are neither anti-discriminatory laws nor specialised state bodies for the prevention of discrimination and the encouragement of equal opportunities for all social groups. Their establishment, however, is essential due to the special character of inter-ethnic relations and the social and economic problems stemming from them. By the adoption of the Framework Programme for the Equal Integration of the Roma in Bulgarian Society in 1999, the government expressed their intention to set up a remedial institution and settle its legislative framework. Roma and non-Roma civil organisations are in the process of drafting an anti-discriminatory legislative act.

During the last two years, the Centre for Social Practices (an NGO), through financing from European programmes, has established a social facilitator, i.e. local ombudsman, in four municipalities. The Centre for the Development of Democracy (another NGO) is drafting a legislative act on the establishment of national and local parliamentary ombudsmen.

The issues concerning specialised institutions and laws to protect human rights are already on the agenda and their political solution is pending.

3.4.2. *Consultative bodies*

Public institutions at the national level are establishing specialised units and/or hiring minority representatives who correspond between the policy of the state and the interests of the various ethno-religious groups. Such agencies exist in the Parliament, the Office of the President and various ministries. For example, minority experts in the ministries function in the practical implementation of specific sector measures outlined in the Programme for the Integration of the Roma in Bulgarian Society.

During the years of the democratic transition, several consultative bodies have been set up within the Council of Ministers,¹⁶ but their progress in dealing with issues related to issues of minority religious groups has been inadequate.¹⁷ At the end of 1997, a National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues (NCEDI) was established at the Council of Ministers. It performs an interdepartmental, consultative and co-ordinating function. Its membership includes representatives of ministries, other governmental institutions and

¹⁶ See: Bibliography, Position I.3, Council of Ministers Documents.

¹⁷ These consultative bodies are the result of the efforts of several governments to institutionalise inter-ethnic relations in accordance with their traditional political approaches to the issue. The consultative body, which was established in 1994 did not meet even once. By its philosophy and work, the consultative body which was established in 1995 by the socialist government expresses its perception of minority issues in terms of their social and not their ethnic aspect. None of them has been a force for change.

minority NGOs. The major functions of the NCEDI include: (1) the encouragement of tolerance and understanding among Bulgarian citizens belonging to various ethnic and religious groups; (2) the adoption of specific measures for the implementation of Bulgaria's obligations under relevant international treaties and conventions; (3) the improvement of communication between these groups and similar communities in other countries. This body is responsible for dialogue between the government and the civil sector, and assists the development and implementation of the national policy on ethnic and demographic issues and migration. The NCEDI does not investigate individual claims: it has no powers to appeal before the court and its recommendations are not legally binding.

Within Bulgaria's 28 *regional administrations*, a number of experts on ethnic issues who belong to minority groups themselves have been appointed, many of them from the Roma community. Regional Councils on Ethnic and Demographic Issues are being established—comprised of the deconcentrated authorities of centralised power, regional administration, municipal institutions and the civil sector. Each of the regional councils drafts and adopts its own Working Rules and its own programme for the integration of ethnic minorities in the respective region. It will be necessary to draft a legislative act that regulates the competence of these experts on ethnic issues. At present, their precise role is often not clear.

At the local level, in some municipalities with a mixed population, experts on ethnic issues are being appointed in the municipal administration. In a number of cities where there are compact Roma communities, Roma deputy mayors are being appointed by mayors for the respective quarters. The major function of these officers is to consult with and inform the authorities on the problems of the community in order to co-ordinate the policy of the municipality with the interests of minorities. Most often, however, they have no actual power and cannot make decisions independent of the municipal councils and mayors.

3.5. Programmes

To date, no general government programme has been announced for the integrated development of all minority communities in Bulgaria. The political commitment of the government to the improvement of the situation and the elimination of discrimination against the Roma, who are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged community, was rendered operational by the adoption of the Framework Programme for the Equal Integration of the Roma in Bulgarian Society.

*Case Study 1. The Framework Programme for the Equal Integration
of the Roma in Bulgarian Society*¹⁸

The issue: Inequality and discriminatory attitudes towards the Roma can be observed, which is a precondition for the problems of the Roma community in terms of the socio-economic and

¹⁸ Sources: NGO Human Rights Project Bulletin (1998) No. 10, Special Issue; 'An interview with R. Rusinov' (1999) *Why not?* Sofia: CEGA, No. 10, pp. 8-14; 'Fifteen months and a half...' (1999) Sofia: *Etnoreporter*, No. 2, pp. 36-38.

cultural-educational plane. The successful integration of the Roma into society calls for the application of an overall strategy of state mechanisms and measures for the attainment of the emancipation of the group.

The actors involved: 1) National, regional and local Roma and non-Roma NGOs; 2) National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues at the Council of Ministers (NCEDI); 3) Regional authorities.

The issue proceedings: At the beginning of 1998, the Human Rights Project (a Roma NGO), together with other national Roma organisations in Bulgaria, started to draft the matrix of a programme. The text was vastly debated by both Roma and non-Roma organisations. The government offered their own project. The major issue in the debate between the government and the NGOs was discrimination. Specific measures have been listed to combat this phenomenon. The programme became a compromise between the government project and the document suggested by the Roma.

The strategy addressed: Strategies of advocacy and lobbying have been applied. The initiative of the Roma NGOs was supported by the Roma community, non-Roma civil organisations and representatives of the international community. Two round tables have been organised which have been widely covered and publicised by the media. Deliberately cautious tactics were applied in the advance of the talks on the convergence of positions and the finalising of texts. The programme was composed on the principles of observing the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. It was rendered in compliance with the recommendations of the European intergovernmental institutions related to the protection of national minorities.

Result: On 22 April 1999 the Council of Ministers adopted the Framework Programme and placed the solving of the Roma issue on the state agenda. The government document contains the major principles of a general state strategy for the enactment of the actual equal enjoyment of the rights by the Roma in the following ten years. The development of a system of measures (which should be appropriate for their specific ethnic and cultural characteristics) is envisaged for the solving of the problems of the Roma and their sustainable integration. Guarantees are being established for the equal representation of the Roma at all levels of public administration.

Unfortunately, this document is still void of specific content. The concrete commitments of the ministries have not yet been voiced, nor have the envisaged expert councils been formed. 'It is also necessary to allocate the required budget funding for the implementation of this programme'.¹⁹ The society as a whole is not familiar with the Framework Programme. Through this programme, however, the Roma community has made an important step towards its social and political participation in public life.

3.6. *Political position*

'The basic meaning of the political approach is quite simple: integration will take place on the basis of active participation in political life'.²⁰ through the implementation of the individual right of suffrage and the group right of association into political parties.

¹⁹ Regular Report of the European Commission (1999).

²⁰ Deian Kyuranov (1998) 'Integration Today: An Attempt at Systematic Theses', Sofia: *Etnoreporter*, No. 4, p. 13.

Regardless of the prohibitive constitutional provision, a political minority organisation was established in January 1990: the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF)—consisting mainly of Bulgarian Turks. The party was registered for the very first democratic elections for the Great National Assembly in June 1990. In April 1992 the Constitutional Court did not vote with a majority on the petition for proclaiming the organisation unconstitutional. The MRF managed to survive the obstructions of nationalistic circles and to overcome serious after effects of the ‘revival process’.²¹ It has been represented in Parliament since 1990. In spite of the decreasing number of Turkish MPs in a succession of Bulgarian parliaments,²² the MRF has preserved its role as an important parliamentary participant and performs a balancing function in times of political crisis.

The process of political legitimisation has been completely different in the case of the Roma. The emergent Roma civil organisations have been unable to transcend the established two-pole political model and have gravitated toward one pole or the other—the Socialist Party or the Union of Democratic Forces. In the first years of the post-1989 transition, the registration application of the Democratic Roma Union was rejected on the basis of prohibitive provisions of the Constitution. At the end of 1998, about 100 Roma representatives founded a Roma political party named *Svobodna Bulgaria* (Free Bulgaria).²³ In 1999 it took part in local elections.

In February 1999 the Macedonian ethnic minority also registered their political party, OMO Ilinden–PIRIN,²⁴ which also took part in local elections. A year after its registration the Constitutional Court proclaimed it as unconstitutional, providing arguments related to the threat to national sovereignty and territorial integrity. The members of the party have voiced their intention to file a petition to the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg.

The remaining minority communities in the country have no representative political organisations. They adhere to the large national political forces and participate in Parliament through the lists of the political parties represented there.

The ethnic minority communities share a motivation and will to form political parties and participate in power. The majority is reluctant to support the rights of minority communities to political representation and to occupy key government positions at various levels: national, regional and local.²⁵ This tendency has remained constant throughout

²¹ The ‘revival process’, which took place during 1984–1985, was the culmination of the central government’s assimilationist policy toward the Turkish minority. The process included the forceful renaming of Turks. Further, Turks were forbidden to speak Turkish in public places and were prevented from performing religious rituals. Turks were branded as ‘separatists’, and the previously existing trust between the Turkish and Bulgarian communities was replaced by mutual suspicion and alienation.

²² See Table 5 in the Annex.

²³ P. Kostov (1999) *Drom Dromendar*, No. 6, November.

²⁴ The complete name of the party is the Ilinden United Macedonian Organisation: A Party for Economic Development and Integration of the Population (PIRIN).

²⁵ See Table 3 in the Annex. ‘Even the rights which have been accepted as a principle and implemented for years are regarded with strong reservation and resistance: such as the right to learn one’s mother tongue at school, the right to representation in local authorities and the National Assembly, the right to radio programmes, the right to publish and distribute books and other edi-

Bulgaria's post-communist transition, reflecting the historic negative attitudes of mistrust and fear that have been generated in a series of social traumas in inter-ethnic relations.²⁶ In recent years, civil organisations have worked to assist in breaking through this ethnic 'encapsulation'.

3.7. *Civil mobilisation*

The right to freedom of association of citizens in NGOs is constitutionally and legally guaranteed. The social attitudes of the majority do not impede the civil association of minorities aimed at the preservation and the development of their culture. There is a broad inter-ethnic consensus on these issues.²⁷

The beginning of the democratic transition has marked the registration of numerous cultural organisations of the Turks, Armenians, Karakachans, Wallachians and Macedonians that are all aimed at the development and the preservation of their specific cultures. These organisations are in the process of promoting cultural activities such as: folklore groups, newspaper publications and mother-tongue education. The Roma community is currently forming a number of national, regional and local organisations for the protection of their rights and the development of Roma culture.

In addition to those civil organisations founded and staffed by minority representatives, a number of human rights organisations which work toward the attainment of ethnic harmony in Bulgarian society have minority representatives among their staff.

The most recent legislative changes have encouraged the dialogue between public authorities and the civil sector by regulating the right to consultative participation of NGOs in the work of various public bodies at the three levels of governance—national, regional and local.

NGOs have played an important role in the monitoring and advocacy of human and minority rights. They have made particular efforts in raising awareness, sensitising and informing both the wider public and the specialised public administration about the rights of persons belonging to various minorities. Their activities contribute to the mobilisation of the civil resources of ethnic communities and their more active representation on the public scene.

tions and other mother-tongue materials, etc. Less than half of the respondents (which were interviewed in 1997 during the second part of the research on the Relations of Compatibility and Incompatibility between the Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria) state their support for all these rights, which are already established in post-totalitarian practices'. See: Ilona Tomova (2000) 'Social Change and Ethnoreligious Relations', in: Georgi Fotev (ed.) *Neighbour Relations of Religious Communities in Bulgaria*. Sofia: Institute of Sociology at BAS, p. 207. See also: *Interrelations of Compatibility and Incompatibility between the Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria* (1994) and (1997). Sofia: ICMSIR; Peter-Emil Mitev (1999) 'From Neighbourhood to Fellow Citizenship', *Etnoreporter* No. 1, Sofia: IEIHR, pp. 15-17; M. Jecheva (1998) 'Will Integration Be Able to Fight the Accumulated Effect of the Disadvantaged Position', Sofia: *Etnoreporter*, No. 4, pp. 4-6.

²⁶ See the above mentioned positions and also: Anna Krasteva (ed.) (1998) *Societies and Identities in Bulgaria*, Sofia: Petekston; J. Georgiev, I. Tomova, K. Kanev, M. Grekova (1993) *The Ethnocultural Situation in Bulgaria*, Sofia: ICMSIR.

²⁷ See Table 3 in the Annex.

In summary, it can be said that:

- The placement and the undertaking of legislative, political, institutional and civil measures towards solving inter-ethnic issues in Bulgaria has been one of the most dynamic aspects of democratic development during the last ten years, which has been stimulated by the democratic changes in Bulgaria of 1989, international events and the process of the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union.
- The question of adopting anti-discriminatory legislation and setting up a specialised administrative body for the prevention of discrimination as well as the establishment of national and local ombudsman is on the agenda.
- The National Council on the Ethnic and Demographic Issues (NCEDI) at the Council of Ministers currently functions as a consultative body. Regional councils on ethnic and demographic issues are being established, and minority-member experts are being appointed. The municipal administration of diversely populated regions also employ such experts to mediate the convergence of local policy and the interests of local communities.
- No comprehensive government programme exists for the integrated development of all minority communities in Bulgaria. Efforts have been made, however, for the integration of the Roma population. The Framework Programme for the Equal Integration of the Roma in Bulgarian Society is a programme unique to Bulgaria, and includes a document indicating the commitment of the cabinet.

4. Regional and Local Dimensions

Democratic Bulgaria is a parliamentary republic with local self-governance. The decentralisation of state power to the local level is constitutionally established. The state acknowledges the right to self-governance of the administrative-territorial units. However, state power preserves its authority and supervising position with respect to the protection of the law and common national interests. A reasonable balance in the proportion between the authorities of the central state and the self-governing territorial administration is a prerequisite for a successful and effective management policy towards the development of multi-cultural communities.²⁸

²⁸ On the territorial and administrative structure and local government, see: 'Public Administration and the Democratic Process' (1998) Sofia: *Parliamentary Democracy*, Special Issue; M. Stefanova (1998) 'The Model of Local Government in Bulgaria', Sofia: *Parliamentary Democracy*, No. 8, pp. 22-37; E. Kandeve (1998) 'Reforms in the Public Administration and the Modern State', Sofia: *Parliamentary Democracy*, No. 8, pp. 4-21; E. Kandeve (1997) 'Bureaucracy and the Rights of the Person: the Defence of the Rights of Citizens—a Necessary Element of the Administrative Reform', in: Emil Konstantinov (ed.) (1997) *The Civil Society and the Rights of the Person*, Sofia: Fridrich Ebert Foundation, The Institute for Political and Legal Research, pp. 109-120.

4.1. *The territorial-administrative framework*

The Constitution sets forth a two-tier administrative and territorial division of the 111,000 square-kilometre territory and the 8.5 million inhabitants of Bulgaria. The major territorial structures and the key levels of local government are 28 districts and 262 municipalities.

The administrative district or region (*oblast*) is a governmental level of locally deconcentrated state power. The governance of the district is carried out by the district governor, deputy governors and district administration. The district governor is appointed by the prime minister for an unspecified term. The major functions of the district are related to the conduct of effective regional policy, the local implementation of state governance and the maintenance of accord between national and local interests. The district governor exercises control over the legitimacy of the acts and the actions of local authorities and the locally deconcentrated units of state power within the district. The administrative districts (*oblasts*) are subdivided into municipalities. An average of 32 municipalities are included in the territory of each district (except for the capital).

The municipality (*obshtina*) is a major unit which enacts local governance. It exists and functions both as an administrative and territorial unit and as a legal entity. The municipality consists of one or more neighbouring settlements whose lands constitute its territory. On average, municipalities are comprised of 21 settlements. As a legal entity, the municipality is entitled to property ownership (both public and private), which it uses in the interest of its territorial community. It has an independent municipal budget, which is funded by permanent sources provided for by law.

The municipality has competencies and exerts public power according to the regulations of the relevant legislation. As a public, legal and juridical entity, the municipality is authorised—by the Constitution (Chapter 7, 'Local Government and Local Administration') and legislation—to perform public services within the established local boundaries, acting, at the same time, as a constituent in the specific relations with the central state power and as a special dependent on the central state power (control over the legitimacy of acts and actions).

The local authorities in Bulgaria are the municipal council and the mayor. They are elected directly by residents of a municipality for a four-year term of office.

The municipal council (*Obshtinski savet*) is the legislative authority of local self-government. It consists of municipal councilors proportionally elected from the election lists of political parties or independent candidates. The membership of the municipal councils varies in number in proportion with the population of the municipality (from 11 to 61 members). The municipal council is a body of general competencies. It determines the development policy for the municipality and the implementation of the public services and activities provided for by the law.

The mayor (*kmet*) is the executive authority of local self-government, which is elected on the majority principle. The mayor functions in a double capacity. As a representative of local executive power he/she manages the administrative activities of the municipality, organises the performance of all the decisions of the municipal council and has representative authorities. As a representative of the authority of the state within the municipality and as a state administrative body, the mayor organises the fulfillment of tasks gen-

erated by legislation, acts of the president of the Republic and the Council of Ministers. The mayor may also perform functions assigned to him/her by the central bodies of the state.

The mayoralty (*kmetstvo*) is the smallest unit of local self-government in the Republic of Bulgaria. It is the constituent administrative-territorial unit of the municipality. Any town, village or rural territory belonging to a municipality may be defined as a mayoralty. Under the present legislation a mayoralty of above 500 inhabitants is a valid constituency for the election of a mayor. Mayoralties have no financial independence.

In 1998 the government adopted a Strategy for the Establishment of a Modern Administrative System of the Republic of Bulgaria. The document takes into account the important role of public administration at the national and local level as an instrument for the implementation of state policy, the enhancement of government, the regulation of social processes, the provision of administrative servicing, permanent communication with citizens and their organisations in a civil society environment, and the compliance of Bulgarian legislation with that of the EU.²⁹

4.2. Regional policy opportunities

Analysis since 1990 points to a number of problems in regional development. Environmental conditions, inherited socio-economic and territorial structures, past policies and the dynamics of development during the transition period have resulted in significant disparities among Bulgaria's regions in economic development, employment, income and quality of life.³⁰ Those regions with concentrated minority populations have lagged behind in their development. These regions are characterised by higher unemployment rates, less developed infrastructure, lower investments and incomes, and greater dependence on government subsidies than the national average. For example, unemployment is extremely high in regions with the following compact minority populations: Kurdjali (66%), Razgrad (53%), Turgovishte (40%), Silistra (38%) and Shumen (37%).³¹ According to the values of the Human Development Index,³² the districts most densely populated by Roma communities—Montana, Sliven and Dobrich—are ranked 19TH, 28TH and 22ND respectively.³³

²⁹ Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 36/9.02.1998 on the Adoption of a Strategy for the Establishment of a Modern Administrative System of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Declaration of the Government on the Strategy.

³⁰ *National Regional Development Plan for 2000-2006* (1999) *State Gazette*, No. 106, p. 2.

³¹ See Table 4 in the Annex.

³² The Human Development Index (HDI) measures the achievement of three basic dimensions of human development—a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living. Since 1990, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has monitored, compared and ranked HDI values nearly all countries in the world. Bulgaria's HDI ranked 60 out of 147 countries evaluated in 2000.

³³ See Table 4 in the Annex. See also: UNDP (1999) *National Report on Human Development in Bulgaria*. It must be mentioned that the correlation between the values of the Human Development Index at the district level is not straightforward due to the more complex nature of the

In response to these disparities, the central government developed and began to implement a regional development policy³⁴ with the objective of achieving sustainable and balanced development by directing resources and developing infrastructure and economic activities in certain regions. Four types of regions have been targeted for impact: (1) regions for growth, (2) regions for development, (3) regions for transfrontier co-operation and development, and (4) regions with particular problems and priorities (including declining industrial regions, underdeveloped rural regions and mountainous regions). The criteria used in defining these categories were established by a team made up of both Bulgarian and EU development experts. This policy programme is important with respect to minority integration issues, because the last two types of regions are highly populated by minority groups.

In terms of regional development, the major policy objective of the current government is to reduce the number of the municipalities and regions which have reached critical levels of poverty, unemployment, population decline, environmental problems, and social and ethnic tensions.³⁵ Favourable conditions for such developments are: the reform of the territorial and administrative division of the country, the formation of 28 districts, the adoption of the Regional Development Act³⁶ and the reform of public administration.³⁷ Transparency has been introduced into the process of regional and municipality planning and forecasting, and greater opportunities are being created for civil participation.³⁸ Additionally, citizens now have wider access to public services.

It is important to stress that the implementation of regional policy in Bulgaria has been a two-way process: bottom-up as well as top-down mechanisms exist for the drafting of regional development plans. For instance, every year, each of the 262 municipalities develops its own municipal development strategy. On the basis of these strategies, each of the 28 districts (regions) designs a District Plan for Development. Using these district plans, the National Plan for Regional Development is put together. Local-level planning initiatives are thus taken into consideration at higher levels of government. In light of this process, it is especially important that minority communities be active within their municipalities in order that issues of concern to them are included in these development plans.

relation and the averaging of the values of the individual components of the Index.

³⁴ This policy is laid out in the Regional Development Act—a legislative document that regulates the planning, management and provision of resources for regional development.

³⁵ *National Regional Development Plan for 2000-2006* (1999) *State Gazette*, No. 106, p. 2.

³⁶ *Regional Development Act* (1999) *State Gazette*, No. 26.

³⁷ During the last two years new legislation and subsidiary acts were adopted, as well as revisions were made in the existing legislative basis, which shall provide for a modern public administration in Bulgaria: the Public Administration Act, the Public Official Act; the Public Procurement Act; the Local Finance Act. Revisions: the Act on the Territorial and Administrative Division of the Country; the Act on the Local Self-Government and Local Administration, etc.

³⁸ 'It is the administrative reform which, through specific measures, could bring the state and the civil society closer or make the relations between them less controversial'. E. Kandeveva (1997) 'Bureaucracy and the Rights of the Person: the Defence of the Rights of Citizens—a Necessary Element of the Administrative Reform', in: Emil Konstantinov (ed.) *The Civil Society and the Rights of the Person*, Sofia: Fridrich Ebert Foundation, Institute for Political and Legal Research, p. 113.

4.3. Regional differences and municipal budgets

The regional administrative-territorial tier in Bulgaria acts as a kind of intermediary between the central and local government. The sphere of the relations between central and local authority is backed by guarantees for the respect of citizens' right to self-government and for the provision of opportunities for local authorities to exercise their rights and perform their duties. In practice, however, regardless of the process of reforms geared toward increased autonomy and distinct decentralisation in terms of organisation and finance, local government structures in Bulgaria do not yet have the financial independence necessary to perform their functions without the financial support of the state.

Within the structure of the municipal budgets, more than one-third of the incomes column is composed of state transfers in the form of general or specifically allocated subsidies, whereas about half of the funds are procured from taxes shared with the state. Own and raised funds in the municipal budgets have little relative weight. Municipal councils have no powers to levy additional taxes on local citizens except for those provided for by the law. Two-thirds of the municipalities in Bulgaria depend on state budget subsidies above 50%, and 17% of them have a dependency higher than 80%. The 44 municipalities in question are mainly small mountainous ones, economically underdeveloped, with a high rate of migration and with a population of ethnic and religious minorities. The generalised data at the district level confirm the highest dependency of municipal budgets on centralised subsidies for the districts with compact minority populations like Kurdjali, Silistra, Montana, Targovishte, Razgrad, Shumen and Sliven.³⁹ The reason for this is the limited own revenues generated within the municipal budgets.

People residing in these regions are of unequal standing in terms of their access to opportunities for equal development. Local authorities are restricted in their attempts to launch their own decentralised initiatives due to their drastic dependence on the financial abilities of the state.

About 90% of the municipalities' funds are spent on current expenses: teachers and physicians' salaries, medicines and medicinal products, heating, social services, repairs, etc. Municipalities allocate most of their funds for education, health care and social support. The means for building new facilities are meagre.

Budgets are inadequate for the range of multiple services which municipal authorities are expected to provide to the population. The most frequent practices search for opportunities to raise some of the necessary funding from external sources: international programmes, co-financing of activities by civil organisations and formation of specialised funds.

4.4. Minority representation

Minority representatives have an increasing opportunity to participate in the local government authorities of Bulgaria.

³⁹ See Table 4 in the Annex. See also: UNDP (1999) *National Report on Human Development in Bulgaria*, p. 72..

From the very first democratic elections held in 1991 until the most recent elections in 1999, the Bulgarian Turks, represented by the MRF, have enjoyed significant representation in local government authorities in those municipalities traditionally populated by compact Bulgarian Turk communities. Roma representation at the local level is sporadic. The Roma, like all the other ethnic groups, participate in local authorities as representatives of the dominant political forces in the country.

The results of the latest local elections show the political and the ethnic patchwork of the public vote. In some places voters have supported mayoral candidates and municipal councilors appointed as independent nominees by local and regional coalitions. These 1999 elections were the first in which the Roma and the Macedonian communities had their first participation as politically legitimate forces through their parties, Free Bulgaria and OMO Ilinden–PIRIN, and won mandates as municipal councilors and mayors.⁴⁰ The result of the elections was significantly wider multi-ethnic representation in local authorities: municipal councils and mayors.

The latest legislative revisions of local self-government increase the dependency of mayors on municipal council decisions. These decisions, however, will be less and less entrusted to one-party and mono-ethnic majorities, and the groups promoted by civil society will have a greater influence on local policy.

4.5. *Local management practices*

This wider ethnic representation in local self-government bodies has already begun to yield practical results in the management of multi-ethnic communities.

Case Study 2. Local Government Measures against Discrimination

Case study: Local government measures against minority discrimination and solving minority issues in the municipality of Pazardjik.⁴¹

The issue: There are overt discriminatory practices against minority groups (which consist of about 20,000 Roma and Turks) in the town of Pazardjik (the municipal centre). Some public posted signs reading, 'We don't serve food to minorities'. In addition to this humiliation, the Roma population has grievous socio-economic problems.

The actors involved: 1) The Municipal Council; 2) The Mayor; 3) Municipal administration; 4) Representatives of the ethnic quarter in the town: municipal councilors from Svobodna (Free) Bulgaria Roma party and other political forces.

The issue proceedings: Between two mayoral polls in October 1999, an agreement was signed for joint government, whereas the Roma party undertook to support the mayoral candidate from the United Democratic Forces (UDF) Coalition, and UDF committed to attending to the problems of minorities. At the third session of the newly elected municipal council where five

⁴⁰ Central Commission for Local Elections (1999) *Bulletin on the Results of the Local Elections Held on 16 October 1999 and on 23 October 1999, Vol. I, General Results*, Sofia: CCLE.

⁴¹ Sources: I. Bedrov (2000) 'Discrimination in Establishments Is a Disturbance of Social Order', Sofia: *Etnoreporter*, No. 1, p. 14.

minority representatives were sitting, the Ordinance on Observing the Order in Public Food Establishments was revised unanimously. Revisions set forth fines to be imposed on those owners of public food establishments who selected their customers on ethnic grounds. Any attempts to violate the provision for a second time would result in the invalidation of their license for commercial activity. For the first time ever in the history of the municipality a Human Rights Unit was established which is managed by the head of the Mayor's Office in municipal administration.

The strategy addressed: The political agreement signed for the purpose of winning the local mayor elections has turned into a working strategy for the multi-ethnic government of the municipality. Legislative measures are being taken at the local level to prevent discrimination against minorities, which constitute 80% of the citizens coming to the Mayor's Office to complain about various issues. The recruitment of Roma and Turks as police officers is pending, together with the elimination of segregation in municipal schools and kindergartens. In co-operation with the National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues at the Council of Ministers and the Shelter for Everyone Foundation, municipal authorities are developing a programme on building housing facilities for poor minority people. The project is currently raising funds. The construction design plans have been drawn. It is necessary to draw the urban plan for the quarter. The building of the houses will be carried out by the programme, whereas the municipality is committed to building the infrastructure.

The results: Open discriminatory practices against minorities at public places have been restricted. The representation of minorities in the public services is about to grow. Overall work is being done for solving the socio-economic matters, housing and ameliorating the quarter populated mainly by minority groups.

Municipal authorities in Bulgaria have applied various approaches for the expansion of civil participation in domestic legislation and government.

In some municipalities, the drafting of the internal rules of the municipal council is debated together with civil organisations. The exercise of civil control over the work of municipal administration, the mayor and the municipal council is being regulated.

Often, before sessions of the municipal council, public discussions are held on various issues and are covered by local radio and TV stations, thus providing the opportunity for direct participation. Thus public consensus is attained even before any decisions are taken by commissions on the municipal council.

Another approach widely used by the municipalities is the involvement of civil organisations' representatives in the work of municipal commissions.

In many places, public councils for the various areas of municipal administration (mainly unemployment, social care, health care and education) have been established and function successfully. They have consultative functions and their members are volunteers within the council. They consist of representatives of the municipal services, NGOs, other organisations and institutions affected by the relevant issues and representatives of informal communities. Those public councils which have minorities among their members function as intermediaries between the minority population and specialised municipal services.

NGOs participate in the formulation of local development strategies. Thus municipalities with diverse ethnic populations apply a model whereby professionals, regardless of their ethnic belonging or creed, may work together for the sustainable development of the municipality and the region.

The latest local elections have illustrated that a government model is needed that provides for the broader participation of the civil sector in decision-making processes for the development of the country. The development of such a model is already underway.

4.6. *Local public services*

The Local Government and Local Administration Act⁴² (which stipulates the competencies of local authorities) complies with the European Local Government Charter to which Bulgaria is a party. It empowers the local authorities elected by the citizens to solve, within their competencies, issues in all areas of life for the territory of the municipality. Local authorities are obliged to provide services related to: education, health care, culture, amelioration, communal activities, social support, social and housing facilities, environmental protection, rational utilisation of natural resources, and development of sports, recreation and tourism.

4.6.1. *Education and intercultural dialogue at school*

In Bulgaria, rights to the development of ethnic cultures, education, the study of one's mother tongue and access to the media are all guaranteed by the Constitution. In practice, however, the attitude often persists that the protection of minority rights represents a threat to national interests and national security.

Education is a very sensitive aspect of inter-ethnic relations. Schools are a socialising and cultural institution that do not merely transfer knowledge but also play a crucial role in shaping attitudes about one's 'own' and 'other' ethnic groups. The Bulgarian government does not make use of a clear-cut, well-defined guiding philosophy in developing policies related to multi-cultural and intercultural education.

The education system in Bulgaria is deconcentrated rather than decentralised. The state determines the school curriculum. Between 2% and 10% of the local public school curriculum may be devoted to programmes of their choice, but these programmes must be offered as electives. In 1999 an Act regulating school curricula, minimum-level education and levels of education was adopted. In May 2000 the Ministry of Education and Science issued an Instruction on State Educational Requirements. Together, these two documents determine the content of the public school curriculum and the obligatory skills and knowledge that students must acquire by the end of each level of education. According to these new laws, which will come into force beginning in the 2001-2002 school year, the school curriculum is less tightly controlled by the central government. From that point on, between 12% and 40% of the school curriculum (depending on the level of education) can be determined by the school itself.

This nascent decentralisation process allows for the development of special programmes for intercultural dialogue and leaves open the possibility of greater co-operation between the four major players in the education system: teachers, parents, public authorities (state and local) and students.

⁴² The Act is published in *State Gazette* (1991) No. 77.

Three types of schools exist in Bulgaria: state, municipal and private schools. State school teachers are paid through the state budget, and municipal school teachers are paid through the municipal budgets. In practice, however, a substantial part of the municipal budget is in reality a state subsidy. As such, a significant part (and often the entirety) of municipal school teachers' salaries come from the state budget. The local government is at present responsible only for building maintenance and not for pedagogical issues. The responsibilities of the local government are merely to ensure that the necessary requirements for the functioning of the school are met, and to ensure that children below the minimum legal drop-out age are enrolled in school.

Appropriate policy decision-making for the schools and the supervision of the results will require the more active participation of parents and civil organisations. The introduction of multi- and inter-ethnic education sensitive to the specific needs of various ethnic groups, the use of adequate pedagogical strategies, flexible teaching programmes and diverse educational forms are all necessary conditions for the improvement of minority education, and represent a challenge which local public authorities must face.

Case Study 3. A Pilot Programme for Tolerance

Case study: A trial for intercultural dialogue in a school in the city of Shumen.⁴³

The issue: Children from various ethno-cultural/religious groups experience difficulties in communication due to their mutual unfamiliarity.

The actors involved: 1) Local authorities; 2) The Department of Philosophy at the University of Sofia; 3) The University of Shumen; 4) The Minerva Foundation.

The issue proceedings: Through the financial support of PHARE, a project has been implemented entitled, 'The Enhancement of the Communication Methods between Minority Ethnocultural Communities and Civil Society in Bulgaria'. The project activities are focused in the municipal school of Shumen, which is the centre of a municipality with a large population of Muslim Turks and Roma. Under the supervision of specially trained teachers, students were expected to compare the major moral edicts of the Bible and the Koran and the proverbs of the various ethnic groups: Bulgarians, Turks, Roma and Armenians.

The strategy addressed: Through the use of research, comparative and analytical techniques, proximity is sought between the value systems of the various ethnic and religious groups, as they are reflected by the proverbs and sayings and the major scriptures of Christianity and Islam.

The results: By increasing knowledge of various ethnic cultures and religions and, also, by discovering the similarities and the differences between them, trainees are expected to gain a better mutual acquaintance and understanding.

4.6.2. Mother-tongue education

Mother-tongue education, which was introduced in 1992, was supported neither by a sufficient number of books and classes nor with qualified teachers for bilingual children. These deficiencies serve as major impediments to the effective implementation of permissive provisions on education.

⁴³ D. Boicheva (1999) 'On the Virtues and Vices As They Look from the Perspective of Various Religions', Sofia: *Etnoreporter*. No. 6, p. 26.

The intensified public debate on human rights, closely related to the process of Bulgaria's integration into European institutions, and the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, have given new status to issues related to mother-tongue education, particularly following the adoption of the Act on the Degree of Education, General Education Minimum Requirements and the Educational Plan in 1999. On the volition of students, mother tongue will be studied at primary and secondary schools within the regular curricular classes allocated electives. The status of the teachers has been changed and there will be no need for their annual re-appointment. This implies that municipal authorities will need to allot the necessary organisational, financial and facility resources in order to provision mother-tongue education at school.

Case Study 4. Hebrew in Sofia

Case study: A successful model of mother-tongue education (Hebrew) implemented in a school in Sofia (Hebrew and English Language Elementary School) which is also attended by Bulgarian children.⁴⁴

The issue: Mother-tongue education in a school with broad Jewish attendance aimed at the preservation of the cultural identity of the ethnic group.

The actors involved: 1) The Ministry of Education and Science, 2) Local authorities; 3) The School Supervisory Board, the School Board and the teaching staff; 4) The Jewish Shalom Organisation in Bulgaria; 5) The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, New York, USA.

The issue proceedings: The state school is of mixed attendance, with both Jewish and Bulgarian pupils. From the 1998 school year, two curricula are being implemented in the school. In the first one, Hebrew is taught as a mother tongue twice per week as an optional choice. More than one-third of the attendees study Hebrew as their mother tongue. Some Bulgarians also attend this programme. The groups are formed after determining the language proficiency of the children. In the second curriculum, Hebrew is taught as the first foreign language within the regular classes of the school (from the first year onwards). From the third year on the study of the second foreign language (English) is introduced. Books in Hebrew have been approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. The curriculum in Hebrew is uniform for a total of fifteen schools from CEE, that participate in an educational network under the auspices of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation. The curriculum, the know-how, the preparation of teachers and the various teaching tools such as audio and video recordings, newspapers, magazines, etc., were provided by the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, New York, USA. Mother-tongue classes are aided by computers where pupils have access to the Internet.

The strategy addressed: The collaboration between the various international, national, local and civil institutions and organisations provide for all necessary means for mother-tongue education. This hones the interest of Bulgarian children who wish to share in the classes of Hebrew groups and thus gain an acquaintance with the language and the culture of the other ethnic group.

The results: The children from the Jewish community in Sofia are able to preserve and develop their ethnic culture through the study of their mother tongue, the Jewish cycle of life and Jewish Festivals. In parallel, the participation of Bulgarian pupils in the Hebrew classes helps to break down social barriers between the different ethnic groups at the school. Steps are being taken for the transformation of the elementary school into a secondary school.

⁴⁴ *Etnoreporter* (1998) No. 1.

Regardless of the permissive provision, the system still lacks a coherent philosophy of education about and in the mother tongue. But the impediments enumerated above are not fully resolved. Adequate solutions will be sought by the innovative approach of local authority representatives and the teachers in each municipality and each individual school. The partnership of NGOs working in this area is already yielding positive results for the solving of these issues at a local level.

4.6.3. Preventing drop-outs

In combination with various government strategies, the partnership referred to above is useful for solving another serious educational problem: minority children dropping out of school. According to the 1999 National Human Development Report, during the 1998-1999 school year, the official number of school drop-outs was 36,000. Other organisations and NGOs have estimated that the number of school-age children not attending school is closer to 120,000. These are mainly Roma children. Some of them never attend school, while others are unable to pass to a higher grade.

This problem has thus far been addressed by public authorities through various management strategies. Administrative sanctions (such as fines) for the parents refusing to send their children to school are ineffective, especially with poor Roma families.

The attempt to attract Roma children to school by providing humanitarian aid is unsustainable. Once food supplies cease, non-attendance returns to its previous rates. A more successful approach would be to motivate the parents and the children by persuading them that education will give them better opportunities in their lives. This is a slow process, but, in addition to parent-teacher-child work, it is important for the campaign to be reinforced by interesting activities relevant to the everyday life, culture and character of the child.

Municipal decisions in the area of education acknowledge the fact that Bulgarian is not the mother tongue for the majority of Turkish and Roma students. In some schools children attend the 'preparatory classes' provided for by law. In the course of one year during nursery school or their first year of primary school, children are trained in the official Bulgarian language. The attendance rates in such classes for Roma children are still low. In some of the municipalities, ethnic NGO collaborators assist local school authorities by visiting families' homes and trying to convince parents of the benefits of this preliminary education for their children.

Another method is the appointment of assistant Roma teachers as mediators between minority children, their parents and majority teachers. Where this approach has been used the results have been very promising.

The provision of adequate education corresponding to labour market demands, mother-tongue education and the introduction of intercultural dialogue into the curricula of Bulgarian schools are landmarks in the preservation of various cultural identities and the development of the intercultural experience.

4.6.4. Access to the media and intercultural dialogue

In theory, the media should play a crucial role in the development and the encouragement of different ethnic cultures, and of mutual understanding between the majority and minority communities. In practice, however, there is no intercultural dialogue in the media and minority access to the media is limited.

Events are presented and interpreted exclusively from the viewpoint of the ethnic majority. Therefore, the state and local authorities need to implement policies that will ensure the participation of minorities in the media and promote inter-ethnic dialogue rather than the monolithic representation of individual ethnic communities. This participation has to account both for programmes addressing minorities and for the involvement of journalists of diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Examples of programmes by and on minorities exist at a local level. They are supported by local radio stations, cable televisions and NGOs.

Case Study 5. Neighbourhood TV

Case study: Neighbourhood TV programme produced by Trakia Public Television, Plovdiv.⁴⁵

The issue: Plovdiv is the second largest city of Bulgaria and it is typical for its multi-ethnic population. There is a large Roma ghetto in the city. Ethnic groups live in mutual ignorance and mistrust of one another. No media programmes have been launched for or by minorities.

The actors involved: 1) Local authorities, 2) Trakia Public Television, Plovdiv; 3) The Media with A Human Face Association, 4) Local NGOs working for the inter-ethnic relations in the region.

The issue proceedings: *Neighbourhood* is the first programme in Bulgaria that has made an attempt to address both multi-ethnic needs and the Bulgarian model of inter-ethnic tolerance. The TV programme is financed by the Open Society Foundation (Sofia) and the King Baudoin Foundation (Belgium). The Media with a Human Face Association managed to assemble a good multi-ethnic team of moderators, cameramen and consultants representing Balkan minorities. Very soon, the 20-minute regional programme became so popular that other cable televisions decided to broadcast it as well. It presents the customs and the traditions of the various ethnic communities, their problems and their standpoint on public issues since 1997.

The strategy addressed: Representatives from the different ethnic groups on the team exchange their ideas and views for the TV programme. Thus, through their co-operative work, they present a crystallised formula for mutual acquaintance via electronic media. The programme acted as an impetus for outsiders to speak and show their ways of life, their customs, beliefs and history, thus bridging the differences between minorities and attaining better understanding between the communities.

The results: Minority representatives are provided with an opportunity to access the media. Intercultural dialogue was started on a local TV programme in order to foster the acquaintance and understanding between citizens. The *Neighbourhood* programme in Plovdiv was chosen to represent Bulgaria in a publication of the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance entitled *Examples of Good Practice Against Racism in the Media*, which was released in April 2000.

Some of the local radio stations have been broadcasting in Turkish since 1990. The National Radio has transmitted such programmes since 1993. There is a programme for minorities on national television. Private TV channels have also allocated time to minority issues. A Turkish-language programme has recently been launched in regions with compact minority populations.

⁴⁵ E. Tododrov, M. Velikova (1999) 'A TV Programme Standing on its Own (for Now)', Sofia: *Etnoreporter*, No. 5, pp. 51-52.

Nine newspapers have been published in Turkish during the transition period. Some of them have closed down due to funding problems. The Armenian and the Jewish communities each have an independent press. In the case of the Roma, eleven periodicals were designed for publication after 1989. Some of them barely managed to release one or two issues. Nonetheless, for the past six years, the local media space has included the Roma publication, *Drom Dromendar*, released in Sliven (a city with a high Roma population).

Aided by sponsors, NGOs active in some neighbourhoods with compact minority populations have been able to publish information bulletins or newspapers. They publicise the activities of NGOs among the local community and provide information on the initiatives of municipal authorities which address minority problems.

4.6.5. *Employment and unemployment*

The problems related to the education and qualification of vulnerable minority groups are directly related to the high rates of unemployment among them. There is a definite discriminatory attitude against the Roma in the labour market.

Local unemployment offices are the major vehicles for a number of national programmes aimed at the enhancement of employment opportunities for minority representatives. Among these programmes are: Beautiful Bulgaria; From Social Benefits to Employment; Attaining Literacy, Qualification and Employment; etc. Effective partnership routines are established between local unemployment offices and minority NGOs for the participation of minority representatives in the programmes.⁴⁶ Such programmes, however, are not very productive because minority members gain only temporary employment at low salaries that are inadequate to support their families.

A number of municipalities have created and dispatched Public Councils on Unemployment which function on the basis of the 'tripartite' principle (they include representatives of the deconcentrated state and municipal offices, employers' organisations and employees' organisations) and involve minority representatives as their members. According to the varying potential of local economies, the councils have been exploring possibilities for the creation of new jobs. One of the measures that could prove effective is the elaboration of programmes for qualification training and employment that take into account local labour market demand and the specific labour patterns of some Roma groups (especially in regions dominated by seasonal employment).

4.6.6. *Social assistance*

Vulnerable minority groups (especially the Roma) are the major beneficiaries of social support services. In a large number of municipalities, the meagre budgets and the allocation of funds to other priorities is the main reason for the irregular payment of monthly benefits. As they are the primary source for the survival of the Roma, overdue payments sometimes generate social tension.

⁴⁶ An example in this respect is the unemployment office servicing the minority neighbourhood of Stolipinovo in Plovdiv. A minority representative from the neighbourhood is employed in the office. Active minority NGOs contributed to the work of the commission responsible to elect this candidate.

Municipal Social Care Offices often rely on the effective assistance of local minority NGOs. In many cases, they participate in Community Councils (which are legislatively provided for by the Rules for Social Assistance). They exercise civil control over the apportioning of the various types of social benefits. Some NGOs have set up their own social offices to mediate in the servicing of the Roma population by the municipality. Legal provisions allow NGOs to be licensed and exercise a specific range of social activities. Holders of such licenses may apply for finances before the National Social Assistance Fund (in order to perform the services).

Case Study 6. A Community Council Improves Social Services for Roma

Case study: Intermediary functions of a Roma community council in social activities in the municipality of Karlovo.

The issue: The municipality of Karlovo (with the town of Karlovo as its centre) is populated by a large Roma community. Its major source of income is social benefits. Municipal social services find it hard to function accordingly due to the poor proficiency of the Roma in Bulgarian.

The actors involved: 1) Local authorities and municipal services; 2) The V. Levski Human Rights Centre, Karlovo (NGO); 3) The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

The issue proceedings: In 1999 the V. Levski Human Rights Centre, Karlovo, obtained a license from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy for carrying out three types of social activities conducted respectively through: The Social Service Office, the Club of the Disabled and the Public Charitable Kitchen. The financing of these activities was supported jointly by the municipal budget and the Social Assistance Fund. In January 2000, by the decision of the Municipal Council, a Roma Community Council was established to exercise civil control over the allotment of social aid and to mediate between the Municipal Social Care Service and the local Roma community. The seven Roma on the council are responsible for a community of 5,000. Such councils are about to be established in the villages near Karlovo where the Roma population is numerous.

The strategy addressed: The national and local authorities and NGOs are joining their efforts to enhance the social services for the population in the municipality.

The results: The Roma community made a step towards its social participation in the public life of the municipality. The services for the minority population are improved.

4.6.7. Housing and public amenities

Housing, public amenities and communal activities constitute a major part of the responsibilities and services provided by local authorities. Multiple investments are necessary in order to improve the technical and social infrastructure, which is in extremely poor condition in the Roma neighbourhoods in a number of towns and villages.

In many towns and villages Roma quarters or parts of them are outside the planning regulations. As such, their status is uncertain and the effective construction and regulation plans for the respective settlement cannot be applied. Public services and public community spaces (parks etc.) are almost nonexistent. These areas are characterised by illegally erected structures, an extreme density of habitation, and appalling sanitary, environmental and technical conditions. Housing facilities are mainly generally ramshackle or make-shift structures.

Local authorities are exploiting an expanding co-operation scheme with NGOs for the improvement of these quarters. Most often, NGOs provide the architectural designs for housing facilities and try to raise funds for their construction. Local authorities have assumed the commitment to improve technical facilities.

In summary:

- Policies implemented in the fields of regional and local development are aimed at decreasing the existing disparities between regions and municipalities. The administrative-territorial units with compact minority populations most frequently experience hardships in their development.
- Regional and local authorities and the NGOs are collaborating to provide a range of services to their communities. The limitations in the financial decentralisation of municipalities are decreasing the opportunities for specific initiatives addressing minority issues.
- Minorities are represented in municipal councils. Municipal authorities apply more flexible solutions and innovative practices for the involvement of citizens' groups in the management and solving of the specific problems of multi-ethnic communities.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In the past ten years, the democratic development of Bulgaria and the adoption of measures for the harmonisation of inter-ethnic relations has resulted in the preservation of the Bulgarian pattern of ethnic co-habitation. The issue of inter-ethnic co-operation is more widely voiced in the public sphere than it was ten years ago. Progress has been made in the rendering of national legislation and practices in compliance with international standards for the protection of human and minority rights. There is a growing understanding that targeted measures must be adopted to address the problems of the most vulnerable minority group—the Roma. A government consultative body on ethnic issues has been established which has divisions at the regional level. A persistent tendency is the creation of partnerships between public authorities at all government levels and NGOs. The transition to a market economy affected most unfavourably the socio-economic status of Roma, Turks and Bulgarian Muslims. Uneven development during the transition has resulted in increased ethnocentrism and the manifestation of open discriminatory attitudes, particularly against the Roma community.

The obvious progress that has been made in the field of inter-ethnic relations must be complemented by the adoption of further democratic measures for the preservation of ethnicity and the future integration of minorities:

- The current information on the status quo of the various ethnic groups living in Bulgaria must be made available to the public.
- Criminal accusations made on the basis of race or ethnicity must be explicitly included in the provisions of the Penal Code as an aggravating circumstance.
- It is important to establish an extra-judiciary institution (an ombudsman) to which victims may appeal to resolve problems of discrimination at national and local levels.

- An approach of 'positive action' must be applied to equalise the opportunities of minorities with those for the majority under the conditions of competition and democracy. This is a different approach from 'positive discrimination', which can intensify negative stereotypes and the humiliation of minorities.
- Minorities and their organisations must become active participants in the public sphere by putting forth their problems and decision-making processes for addressing them. This will help in the establishment of programmes for integrated and sustainable development to respond to the specific nature and needs of the local community. The active stand of minorities in the public administrative government at all levels (national, regional, and local) is a prerequisite for the successful implementation of such programmes.

The growing responsibility of public authorities for the democratic and effective management of multi-cultural communities requires more than just a traditional proficiency in the major principles of public administration:

- Political dedication and mutual co-operation between authorities is needed to solve problems at all government levels and to ensure the provision of adequate services to the population.
- It is necessary to know and understand the cultural peculiarities of the various ethnic communities that exist together. Administrative decisions should be made within the broader context of respect for the cultures of all ethnic groups.
- Improvement is needed in the organisational systems, procedures and practices of all levels of public administration in order to ensure that they are as flexible, open, accessible, accountable and democratic as possible in their interactions with minority groups and individuals.
- It is important to establish a clear division of roles, prerogatives, and responsibilities among the various actors involved in community development. This should have a positive impact on efficiency, equity, and economic, political and civil participation at the local level.
- It is of key importance that governors and other public administrators possess the conflict-management and mediation skills necessary to act as 'honest brokers' in the case of inter-ethnic conflicts of interest. These skills should be acquired by students of public administration and by acting public administrators. This requires:
 - a) The inclusion of special courses on ethnic conflict management/resolution within the curricula of public administration schools;
 - b) The inclusion of specific training courses for acting public administrators that focus on issues of multi-ethnic community management;
 - c) The compilation of a database of 'good practices' in managing multi-ethnic communities that should be easily accessible for public administrators;
 - d) The encouragement of networking among public administrators in order to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences on these issues.

The major requirements of the modern world place a challenge before the public authorities in the management of multi-ethnic communities:

- The world is a multi-cultural place and this calls for the implementation of a managerial policy which combines multi-ethnicity and inter-ethnicity. Therefore, representatives of authority need to be ethnically sensitive in order to be aware of the differences on the intercultural plane. This approach will lead to proactive practices of inter-ethnic collaboration, partnership and co-operation for the joint improvement of each individual local community. The diversity of cultures and languages must not split the community but enrich it.
- The processes of globalisation and localisation are deepening. They can be experienced even at a local level where people act locally even when they think 'globally'. Public authorities must skillfully combine the strategies for global macrodevelopment of the community and individual strategies for human development, which are enacted at a personal level and depend on local conditions for their successful operation.

Further Reading

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ANNEX

Table A.1. *The Largest Ethnic Minorities in Bulgaria and their Main Characteristics:*

Ethnic Group	Number in thousands and % of total	Character of distribution (compact/dispersed)	Type of distribution (city/village)	Religion	Region(s)
Turks	800.0 9.43%	Dispersed, but regionally concentrated	Predominantly rural. The ratio: rural to urban population is 68% to 32%	Muslim 98.8%	Southeast: the Rhodope mountain: Kirdzhali, Haskovo; Northeast: (Deliormana): Razgrad, Burgas, Silistra, Targovishte, Varna, Shumen
Roma	313.0 3.69%	Dispersed on the territory of the country but residence in compact homogeneous communities 'Roma areas' or 'Roma neighbourhoods'	Urban 52% and rural 48%	Christians (60.4%) Muslims (39.2%)	Cities: regional centres and towns (Sofia, Plovdiv, Sliven, Pazardjik, Lom, Stara Zagora, Vidin, Montana, Burgas, Varna; Rural population in the regions of Lom, Sliven, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, etc.)
Russians	17.0 0.20%	Predominantly dispersed	urban	Russian Orthodox	Cities and towns (Sofia, Shumen, Varna, Plovdiv, etc.)
Armenians	13.7 0.16%	dispersed	Urban 99%	Christians	Cities and towns (Plovdiv, Sofia, Varna, Russe, Shumen, etc.)
Macedonians	10.8 0.13%	Predominantly compact, regionally concentrated	Rural and Urban	Christians	Southwest part (the region of Pirin mountain)
Karakachans	5.0 0.06%	Predominantly compact	Rural and urban	Christians	Villages and towns close to the mountain pastures (the region of the Balkan mountain range—Stara Planina—Berkovitz, Montana, Sliven, Tvarditza, Nikolaevo, Peshtera, Samokov, etc.)

Ethnic Group	Number in thousands and % of total	Character of distribution (compact/dispersed)	Type of distribution (city/village)	Religion	Region(s)
Wallachians	5.0 0.06%	Predominantly compact	Rural and urban	Christians	Northwest region near the northern border: the Danube river (the regions of Vidin, Kula, Oriahovo, Lom, Nikopol, Svishtov, etc.) and in the inner parts of the country—in the regions of Peshtera, Dupnitsa
Greeks	4.9 0.05%	Dispersed but regionally concentrated	urban	Christians	Black sea coast towns: Varna, Burgas, Tzarevo, Pomorie, Ahtopol, Sozopol, Nesebar, etc.; in towns of central southern part: Assenovgrad, Topolovgrad, Plovdiv, etc.
Tatars	4.4 0.05%	compact	Predominantly rural	Muslim	Rural population in Dobrudza region and Ludogorie region
Jews	3.5 0.04%	Dispersed and compact in the capital	Urban—95%	Judaism	Cities and towns: (approximately one-half live in Sofia) Plovdiv, Russe, Shumen, Varna, Burgas, Kyustendil, etc.
Gagaus	1.5 0.02 %	Predominantly compact	Predominantly rural	Christians	Northeast part: the regions of Balchik, Varna, Shumen, etc.

Table A.2. *Some Demographic and Socio-economic Characteristics of the Major Ethnic Groups in Bulgaria (in %)*

Characteristics	Bulgarians	Bulgarian Turks	Roma	Other
Age group				
0 – 29 years	36.3	51.4	66.0	38.7
30 – 59 years	40.5	37.0	28.9	44.1
60 years and over	22.2	11.6	5.1	17.2
Economically active age				
Under economically active age	18.2	27.5	40.7	14.4
In economically active age	55.4	58.0	53.0	62.4
Above economically active age	26.4	14.5	6.3	23.2
Education				
University/College	20.2	2.0	0.9	
Secondary /11/12 grades/	54.0	24.6	7.8	
Elementary /8 grades/	22.6	55.0	46.2	
Primary /4 grades/	3.0	16.0	36.7	
Illiterate	0.2	2.3	8.5	
Unemployment				
Ethnic group average	14,43	25,04	39.13	20.66
Unemployment men	13,79	24.99	40.73	19.59
Unemployment women	15,08	25.09	37.52	21.72
Poverty level (1996)				
Ethnic group average	10.4	24.5	65.1	
Adults without children	14.7	41.6	76.5	
Adults with children	18.9	30.1	63.3	
Retired	15.0	34.8	71.4	

Sources: National Statistical Institute, Sofia (1994) *Results of the 1992 Population Census, Vol. I Demographic Characteristics*; The World Bank Report (1999) *Bulgaria, Poverty During the Transition*.

Table A.3. Minorities' Rights: Actual Recognition, Real Fulfillment and Public Opinion.
Answers of Christian Bulgarians (in %)

Rights	Actual recognition	Real fulfillment	Positive answers 1994	Positive answers 1997
To establish organisations and associations for preserving and developing their own culture	Yes	Yes	63	67
To publish books and other publications in their native language	Yes	Yes	42	52
To study their mother tongue in state schools	Yes	Yes	21	29
Education in mother tongue at school	No	No	7	9
Representation in Parliament	Yes	Yes	50	50
Representation in local authorities	Yes	Yes	49	47
Public mother-tongue signs (companies, advertisements, road signs, etc.)	Not forbidden	Yes (private)	7	12
To form their own political parties	No	No	23	25
Territorial autonomy	No	No	1.5	3
To have their own TV-channels	Not forbidden	No	–	18
To have broadcasts in their own language on national TV	Not forbidden	No	–	20
To have their own newspapers	Yes	Yes	–	45

Source: Peter-Emil Mitev (1999) 'From Neighbourhood to Fellow Citizenship', *Etnoreporter*, No. 1, Sofia: IEIHR, pp. 15-17. This data comes from the surveys presented in: *Interrelations of Compatibility and Incompatibility between the Christians and the Muslims in Bulgaria* (1994) and (1997) Sofia: IMIR.

Table A.4. Regional (Oblasti) Distribution of the Major Ethnic Groups in Bulgaria and Some Other Characteristics of Regional Scope

District (Oblast)	Total number	Bulgarians	Bulgarian Turks	Roma	Other	No answer	% of minority ethnic groups (1992)	% of Roma population (1992)	Number of school drop-outs (1998/1999)	% of registered unemployed (as of 31 Dec. 1999)	% of nonqualified registered unemployed (as of 31 1998)	% of central subsidy in municipal budgets expenditure 1998	Value of human development index 1999
Country Total	8,487,317	7,271,185	800,052	313,396	94,203	8,481	14.2	4.8	36155	15.97	62.35	38	0.600
Sofia city	1,190,126	1,146,509	4,432	13,902	19,600	5,683	3.2	2.8	2,991	4.20	35.78	24	0.682
Blagoevgrad	351,637	296,636	35,975	8,209	10,769	48	15.6	5.4	1,007	15.29	56.68	49	0.654
Bourgas	440,372	361,159	58,201	16,120	4,308	584	17.9	4.6	1,657	14.34	70.26	28	0.716
Varna	462,970	404,246	33,461	17,077	8,122	64	12.7	5.4	2,132	15.38	59.28	26	0.603
Tarnovo	318,251	286,878	20,824	7,236	3,208	105	9.8	3.3	1,262	18.23	56.82	41	0.638
Vidin	151,636	142,645	295	7,965	731	-	5.9	5.7	716	23.48	57.09	59	0.572
Vratza	270,679	255,763	1,379	11,927	1,548	62	5.5	5.0	1,172	23.29	59.71	30	0.596
Gabrovo	161,967	148,538	9,629	1,585	2,089	146	8.2	2.3	607	9.67	50.21	39	0.700
Kardzali	213,806	72,445	138,249	1,899	851	362	65.9	1.3	1,454	15.07	75.07	65	0.613
Kyustendil	181,347	174,111	358	6,057	786	35	4.0	3.8	918	13.79	59.86	40	0.504
Lovetch	190,262	175,143	7,796	6,384	930	7	7.9	3.8	944	18.41	61.63	45	0.607
Montana	208,198	187,567	322	19,079	1,230	-	9.9	9.8	1,052	24.14	58.82	63	0.536
Pazardzjik	326,123	279,284	22,999	21,810	2,014	16	14.3	7.3	1,668	26.01	65.04	43	0.469
Pernik	163,307	160,224	169	2,142	657	115	1.8	1.7	533	12.51	56.33	43	0.648

Pleven	348,614	322,189	14,900	7,111	2,406	8	7.0	2.7	1631	19.52	58.32	39	0.625
Plovdiv	734,495	657,968	46,774	21,239	8,551	63	10.4	4.0	3,357	13.71	63.30	43	0.611
Razgrad	167,410	78,749	79,490	7,464	1,549	158	52.9	5.4	958	26.01	74.90	54	0.514
Rousse	288,702	236,960	35,230	11,934	4,426	152	17.9	5.7	1,350	18.82	59.12	39	0.554
Silistra	161,063	99,702	52,812	6,519	2,030	-	38.1	5.3	829	20.63	64.49	64	0.503
Sliven	234,785	192,740	19,419	18,183	4,262	181	17.8	9.6	1,146	19.69	72.46	51	0.416
Smolian	159,752	147,894	10,708	514	545	91	7.4	0.7	231	25.74	56.00	62	0.599
Sofia	289,962	276,035	1,032	11,664	1,231	-	4.8	4.4	985	13.11	67.42	37	0.511
Stara Zagora	397,339	350,771	18,845	24,143	3,580	-	11.7	7.0	1,977	14.78	69.37	20	0.665
Dobritch	232,780	177,339	33,939	18,449	3,035	18	23.8	9.2	1,663	19.60	64.30	41	0.514
Targovishte	151,339	90,284	50,931	9,474	650	-	40.3	6.7	664	29.69	69.82	59	0.532
Haskovo	295,503	246,658	32,583	14,014	1,687	561	16.3	5.3	1,492	15.79	62.27	44	0.508
Shoumen	220,320	138,633	64,704	14,727	2,234	22	37.1	7.7	1,152	21.83	73.05	53	0.575
Yambol	176,552	164,115	4,594	6,669	1,174	-	7.0	4.4	607	21.52	58.95	46	0.550

Sources: National Statistical Institute, Sofia (1994) *Results of the 1992 Population Census, Vol. I Demographic Characteristics*, Sofia; National Labour Office; National Centre for Territorial Development; Ministry of Education and Science; Ministry of Finance; UNDP Report on Human Development (1999) Bulgaria.

* % of State subsidy in total expenditure in municipality budgets—district level generalised data, 1998