

REPORT (2008)

EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITIES - BULGARIA

1. Background/history of minorities in schools

Before 1989 Bulgaria, like the other former Soviet-bloc countries, was a country with limited migration. After 1989 the country became part of the European and the world migration system and now is under increasing migration pressure. Regulation and control of the processes of migration is one of the priorities of the Bulgarian government. The main goal is to increase the security of Bulgarian citizens and to combat trafficking and illegal migration. The new migration policy of Bulgaria is aimed at achieving an optimal balance between the freedom of movement of people and the control of illegal immigration while respecting the fundamental human rights and freedoms as guaranteed in international treaties and European Union standards. In 2004 Bulgaria completed its negotiations for EU membership, which is came into force in January 2007. We are now still in the process of introducing European legislation in the field of migration. It has been developing very dynamically over recent years, and Bulgaria is making a serious effort to follow these developments and the national assembly adopted new laws and regulations that are in compliance with EU.

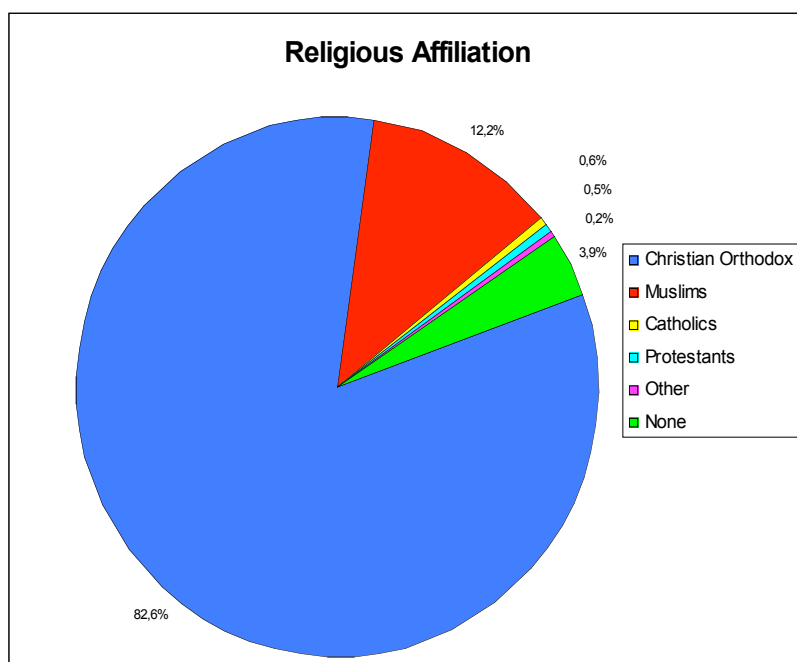
Source:

http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/mediterranean_quarterly/v015/15.4poptodorova.html

According to the Ministry of Interior the number of long and permanent living foreigners in Bulgaria is 50 756. Most of them are concentrated in big cities that can provide more job and business development opportunities. In Sofia they are 33.6 %. Europeans (mostly from EU-countries and especially from the new 10 Member States from 2004) are 69.8%, followed by people from Asia (13.9%), from North and South America (1.2%) and Africa (1%). A lot of people from neighbor states have received Bulgarian citizenship.

Most of the immigrants in Bulgaria have a high school diploma (54%), 37.1% have a University degree (Bachelor or Master), 2.1% have a higher than that degree and aprx. the same percentage have completed only elementary school.

In Bulgarian schools there are a lot of children belonging to different minorities. These are such as Turkish, Armenian, Russian and other Ex-Sowjet-countries, Greeks, Roma, Jews etc. Nowadays there are also schools dedicated especially to those children. We don't have special schools established by the government though we have such where there are programs for minority children. These are the so called Armenian school, Russian school, Balkan school and also some other schools with a various ethnic background. Still most of them are located in the big cities.



Source:

<http://www.dialogue-education.org/materials/Muslim%20minorities-Bulgaria.doc>

In accordance with the new Bulgarian Constitution of 1991, minorities in Bulgaria are directly protected by the international instruments concerning them. This unique framework establishes the precedence of international law over Bulgarian national law and is contained in Article 5, paragraph 4 of the Constitution.

International norms serve as a guideline for the development of Bulgarian legislation which regulates the rights of persons, belonging to different linguistic, religious or ethnic groups. They represent the lower limit, i.e. the minimum standard below which Bulgarian law cannot go. At the same time, however, the Bulgarian legislative bodies have the sovereign right to grant civil rights to the Bulgarians, whose extent exceeds the minimum requirements of international standards.

Bulgaria is a party to all important international, universal and regional instruments with a bearing on the regulation of the rights of minorities. They include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1965, the Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1946, the Convention against Discrimination in Education of 1960, the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950 and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

The Bulgarian Constitution, like those of many other European states, follows the doctrine of the so-called one-nation state. The interpretative reading of the Constitution warrants the conclusion that Bulgaria is a one-nation and unitary state. It should be underscored that this is recognized by all political forces in the country, including the representatives of the minorities. The constitutionally enshrined unity and integrity of the Bulgarian nation can,

consequently, be regarded as an expression of the sovereign will of the Bulgarian people through which it expresses its self-determination.

Source:

http://www.cecl.gr/RigasNetwork/databank/REPORTS/r9/BU_9_Konstantinov.html

In Bulgaria, a special attention should be paid to Turkish and Roma minorities.

In historical and geographical terms Bulgaria is the natural bridge between the Christian and Islamic cultures, which have coexisted on its territory for centuries. However, due to the nature of the political events of today and the influence of the mass media the public in Bulgaria perceive the Muslim world in the light of religio-political conflicts, turbulence and violence. In this context it is important to realize that the population of Bulgaria continues to be ethnically and religiously mixed, for apart from the Christian Bulgarians there are considerable Muslim communities, such as those of the Turks, the Pomaks and the Roma.

The long relationships between Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria have bred a mutual understanding and co-existence which are the qualities underlying the term of komshuluk, specific of the Bulgarian lands, i.e. good, neighbourly, difference respecting co-existence. And whenever disputes between the followers of the two religions arose they were settled in such a manner that it eventually established the lasting principle of tolerance in Bulgarian society.

However, there are some stereotypes might pose a threat to the established and stable model of co-existence between the mainstream society and „the others” in Bulgaria, and should not remain unchanged when one bears in mind the intention to establish an open society in Bulgaria, and the global tendencies of an open, international dialogue.

Therefore, an innovative educational methodology of approaches to Islam and Muslims is in a process of elaboration in order to deal more adequately with the issues related to this subject, and which has as its starting point the educational and social needs of Bulgaria. Particularly the development of new forms of communication and learning between Muslim and non-Muslim citizens under the umbrella of adult education is needed.

2. Recent immigration

After Bulgaria has joined the European Union the Bulgarian government is facing a significant wave of Macedonian immigrants. For those who can prove a Bulgarian background the procedure for Bulgarian citizenship is much easier and with less obstacles. With the free movement of people within the European Union Bulgaria is expecting also workers from other countries especially from Central and Eastern Europe.

3. Number of minorities in schools

In schools we have mostly the following minorities: Roma, Turks, Jews, Armenians, from other ex-Sowjet-countries. Currently, owing to the efforts of various non-governmental organisations, nearly 2,500 Roma children have been enrolled and study in integrated schools. The prevalent number of ethnic minorities in our schools belong to Turkish and Roma people. Among them 16.0% Turks and 6.0% Roma children have high school degree.

4. Provisions in schools

As mentioned above the government has not financed and established special schools for minorities. But some ethnic groups are very strong and they have influenced some positive processes in this direction. Schools are free to provide special programmes according to the needs of pupils with minority background. This refers to bigger ethnic groups such as Jews, Turks, Armenians and Russians.

The Bulgarian educational system is constructed in such a way so it can form as basic social values the respect towards the rights and freedom of each individual and not to allow discrimination. It should be engaged in the establishment of modern conditions in the Bulgarian schools for understanding among different ethnic and religious groups by systematically putting efforts to overcome the prejudices and the discrimination on ethical and religious principle. According to the statistics of NGOs in Bulgaria there are approx. 300 mixed schools and 106 Roma schools where 100% of the students are Roma

5. Allocation of resources

The BG Ministry of Education and Science provides the largest financial support to the education sector, which includes the national minorities' education as well. There is a scheme according to which the finances are allocated and it depends on the number of students in a school, the kind of the school – general or vocational, etc. The number of teachers in a school is connected to the number of the students, resp. the classes/grades in the school.

6. Curriculum

Education in Bulgaria is obligatory for children between the ages of 6 and 16. It is divided into four levels: preschool – one year before entering school; primary – 1st through 4th grade, basic – 5th through 8th grade, and secondary – 9th through 12th grade. Curricula, distribution of classes, students assessment, qualification of teachers, textbooks are based on state educational standards which are prepared for every subject and every grade. The compulsory preschool year can be implemented in kindergarten or in school. The Bulgarian school network is as follows – a total of 3,680 schools, including 466 elementary schools, grades 1-4, 1,940 basic schools, grades 1-8, and 580 comprehensive schools, grades 1-12, plus approx. 500 vocational schools and 200 schools for children with special needs. Most of the schools are financed out of municipal budgets.

The Bulgarian education system is centralized. Most of the school curriculum is determined through acts adopted at the national level. The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) determines the national priorities in education and oversees the fulfillment of the criteria set up by the laws and the other acts. The municipal authorities in 262 municipalities administer open and close schools, control the budgets of the educational institutions and manage school property.

7. Bilingual education

Bilingual education in Bulgaria has existed for half a century and is based on two key elements:

- an intensive class enabling students to reach in one school year a sufficiently advanced level in a foreign language for it to be used as the language of instruction with effect from the second class of the bilingual upper secondary school;

- teaching of non-language disciplines for two or three years.

Underlying the teaching of non-language disciplines in a foreign language are economic and utilitarian considerations (employment and mobility), as well as aims that are political and philosophical in nature (multilingualism and a sound intercultural approach) or concerned with educational or cognitive aspects (motivation through early practical use of a particular language, the benefits of learning it, and easier acquisition of subject knowledge).

Students are recruited on the basis of a competitive examination in the mother tongue and mathematics. The first year in bilingual secondary schools when students are aged 15 is spent in a preparatory class offering

intensive tuition in the foreign language selected: this corresponds to 21 lessons a week on the first modern language, or around 700 hours in a school year. In this preparatory year, students acquire the knowledge and basic skills enabling them to learn school subjects in the foreign language during the next stage. The foreign language covers around two-thirds of the total teaching timetable, the rest of which is devoted to the mother tongue, mathematics, physical education, music and plastic arts.

http://www.eurydice.org/ressources/eurydice/pdf/070DN/070_BG_EN.pdf

8. Action plans

- ✓ Ministry of Education and Science: Strategy for educational integration for children and students of ethnic minorities – it is an integral part of the national project for reforming the educational system and for providing education of quality for all children in Republic of Bulgaria. It is based on:
 - International pact on civil and political rights
 - International convention against all forms of racial discrimination
 - Convention for fight against discrimination in education
 - Framework convention for protection of the national minorities
 - Declaration on the rights of people belonging to national or ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities
 - Law on protection against discrimination
 - Framework programme for equal integration of Roma people in the Bulgarian society
 - World programme of UNESCO and UN “Education for all”
 - The aims and objectives of the “Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015”

The priorities of the Strategy are:

- Full integration of Roma children and students through desegregation of kinder gardens and schools in the Roma living areas and establishment of conditions for equal access to qualitative education outside them;
- Optimization of the school network in municipalities in small towns.

The objectives of the Strategy is detailed in the National action plan on the realisation of the Strategy for educational integration for children and students of ethnic minorities (2004/2005 – 2008/2009 school year)

Strategic objective Nr.4 is “Transforming the cultural diversity into a source and a factor of mutual understanding and spiritual development of children and creation of atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance.”

The Direction “Educational environment and educational integration” has the following tasks:

1. to organize and support the realization of the state policy for the development of educational integration of children and students with special educational needs for children and students deprived from parent care;
2. to support the process of European integration and to develop strategies and programs for the implementation of the European requirements in the are of European integration of children and students from ethnic minorities through the provision of equal educational opportunities for them;
3. to support the process of European integration and to develop strategies for the implementation of the European requirements in the area of integration of immigrant children and students.

- ✓ National program for development of preschool and school education and preparation (2006-2015) – Equal access to education does not mean equal care for all children but differentiated approach towards their different needs.
- ✓ National Refugee Integration Program (2005-2007) - http://www.unhcr.bg/pubs/2004_05/ch_03_en.pdf
- ✓ Adoption of the Discrimination Protection Act in September – This act fully transposes anti-discrimination directives 43/2000 and 78/2000 of the European Commission and creates a comprehensive legal framework, which provides for an adequate administrative and judicial mechanism for fighting discrimination.
- ✓ In September 2002 the Ministry of Education and Science issued an Instruction, with which it declared its intent to gradually integrate Roma children in schools outside segregated neighbourhoods.¹² The Instruction requires municipal authorities to develop their own programs for the desegregation of Roma schools. Subsequently, the Ministry of Education and Science and other government institutions reiterated their commitment to this policy in several documents, although no actual steps to desegregate Roma schools were taken on behalf of the State.
- ✓ In the summer of 2002, with the support of the World Bank, several non-governmental organizations began organizing in different Bulgarian towns pre-school training programs for Roma children who would be enrolled in first grade. In the beginning of the school year 2003/2004 the Government began supporting financially the one-year preparatory pre-school training. This measure is expected to help minority children learn Bulgarian language better. The Ministry of Education and Science has no information on the number of minority children who have been newly enrolled in preparatory classes at kindergartens or schools.
- ✓ In 1999 the Bulgarian Government adopted a Framework Programme for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society, which provides for a series of anti-discrimination measures, targeted, among others, to desegregating Roma education and improving the social status of Roma in Bulgarian society. Since 2002 the Ministry of Education and Science and other government institutions have adopted several official documents in support of Roma school desegregation.⁵⁹ In June 2003 an Advisory Council on the Schooling of Ethnic Minority Children and Students was established at the Ministry of Education and Science, one of the key

goals of the new body being “to desegregate pre-schools and schools in Roma neighbourhoods and to integrate the children and students enrolled in them into mainstream education.”⁶⁰ At the end of 2003 the Government adopted an Action Plan for Implementing the Framework Programme. Until now, however, desegregation has not become the target of any actual government policy. In the beginning of the school year 2000/2001, a Roma nongovernmental organisation, the Drom Association, started implementing a project for desegregation of the Roma School in Vidin.⁶¹ In the years that followed similar initiatives were launched in several other Bulgarian towns.

- ✓ There are different European educational programs and initiatives adopted and developed.
- ✓ Transposition of Directive 77/486/EEC – education for the children of immigrants which provides them teaching in mother tongue and culture, as well as additional classes in Bulgarian language as an official language in the country of temporary residence. The aim is integration of these children into the educational system of the hosting country by establishing of conditions for education in the native language.
- ✓ Strategy for integration of minority communities in Sliven Municipality (2007-2013) – in 2005 in Bulgaria the program Decade of Roma inclusion officially started. It was followed by concrete actions on behalf of state and local authorities.
 - ❖ Increasing the educational level of children and students in ethnic minorities
 - better inclusion in preparatory classes of children who do not speak Bulgarian and have no school preparation
 - introducing the position of teacher assistant from the ethnos in the preparatory classes
 - development of a program for desegregation of segregated schools
 - attracting parents to the school life through the establishment of social councils, boards of trustees to the schools and their inclusion in joint actions – trips, concerts, sport meetings, etc.
 - development and realization of projects related to the Strategy for educational integration of children and students in ethnic minorities
 - integration of children and students from on ethnical principle separated kindergartens and schools through: moving the children outside of the Roma living areas and providing the necessary transportation; full integration and adaptation of the children from different ethnic groups in multiethnic working conditions.
 - School psychologists and pedagogical councilors for the enhancement the mutual adaptation of the children from ethnic minorities to the new educational system
 - Special activities in the kinder gardens and schools for building up positive attitude to the educational integration of the children from ethnic minorities.
 - Seminars for parents so that they can overcome negative stereotypes and build up tolerant relations
 - Programs for intensive learning of Bulgarian language at earliest age among representatives of minorities
 - Providing conditions for learning of mother tongue for representatives of all minorities
 - Training for teachers for working with children in multiethnic environment

- Actions for getting to know different ethno-cultures – dinners, fests, days of different ethnos, etc.
- ✓ NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR THE INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA 2005 – 2007 – aiming at ensuring the respect and guarantees for human rights on the basis of shared democratic values, such as equality, solidarity, non-discrimination, respect for cultural and ethnic diversity. It contains several type of measures for a better integration of this isolated group of the Bulgarian society. (<http://aref.government.bg/docs/NatProgIntegRef.doc>)
- ✓ A Direction (“Direction on ethnic and demographic issues”) was established and it support the work of the Council of Ministers of Republic Bulgaria in the ethnic integration of minorities.
- ✓ The new Operative Program “Human Resource Development” has a separate chapter “Areas of action in relation to the Roma community”
- ✓ The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is very active on the matters of Roma integration. The policies are addressed to encouragement of employment and decreasing the risk of financial aids dependence. Increased is the number of Roma people included in the National program for liquidation of illiteracy and qualification of Roma people
- ✓ Framework Programme for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society (<http://www.ncedi.government.bg/en/RPRIRBGO-English.htm>)
- ✓ Government Programme for Integration of Minorities (на това обаче линкът препраща към страницата на МС – програмите - <http://www.government.bg/English/Government/Program/>)
- ✓

9. Teacher training

Qualification of teachers is provided by three Teacher Training Institutes. Teachers’ qualification is divided into five levels. In-service training is not obligatory and the attainment of a higher qualification level depends on the will of the respective headmaster and the ability of the teacher to spare financial resources for a qualification course.

As a rule, teachers specializing in Content and Language Integrated Learning type provision are university graduates whose degree covers two areas of specialization, as in the case of teachers of French and history, or English and geography, etc. They are often former students at bilingual secondary schools. Teachers of non-language disciplines acquire their qualifications at teacher education institutes in Bulgaria and via the cultural services of foreign embassies. For example, the linguistic and educational cooperation services of the French Institute in Sofia, the British Council Bulgaria, the Goethe-Institute Sofia and the education Consejería of the Spanish embassy in Sofia have for some years all paid special attention to the teaching of non-language disciplines by means of foreign languages within bilingual secondary schools. The aim of this cooperation has been to provide non-language disciplines teachers with appropriate language and methodological training, but it may also involve making the curriculum for certain subjects more compatible with patterns of provision in the partner countries.

For example, in 2004, initial training placements for teaching non-language disciplines by means of foreign languages were arranged for Bulgarian teachers/tutors, as well as for their counterparts from other countries in the region, and for associate member or observer countries in the International Teachers Organization, such as Albania, Macedonia, Moldavia and Romania. The training provided consisted of the following:

- Conferences and presentations on bilingual education in Europe, on the initial training projects of embassy cultural services and on bilingual education systems of countries in the region (Albania, Macedonia, Moldavia and Romania).
- Theoretical training and its practical applications, provided within workshops. The main purpose of this was to establish a regional website on bilingual education, in order to circulate detailed information on teaching non-language disciplines. Since 2002, the emphasis has been on the training of trainers. Thus the group of teachers responsible for devising brochures and handbooks, which consisted of some 30 teachers, was transformed into a group providing tutorial support for seven disciplines, namely chemistry, physics, biology, history, geography, philosophy and mathematics. By setting up this group it was possible to meet the demand for initial training.

Members of the group meet regularly and work under the auspices of the foreign cultural centers, surveying needs and specific problems. To upgrade their own training they take part, both in Bulgaria and abroad, in seminars, symposia, international meetings chaired by foreign experts and classroom observation. As a result of such practical experience, these teacher trainers become fully equipped to put into practice the fresh approaches advocated in non-language disciplines handbooks and brochures. They thus train their colleagues how to use them and assist schools in the recruitment of new teachers for non-language disciplines.

The in-service training of non-language disciplines teachers takes place during day-long sessions open to all teachers of non-language disciplines in Bulgaria. The content of this provision is as follows:

- The first part is concerned with making the most of the brochures and handbooks, the simulation of teaching sessions, and subject-related terminology. The work is organised by subject, in workshops supervised by the teacher trainers themselves led by a foreign expert in ‘training engineering’.
- The second part focuses on theoretical discussion and the preparation of reasoned arguments in support of foreign language teaching of non-language disciplines, and also appraises bilingual education in Bulgaria. It is supervised by an expert consultant in bilingual education. Attention should further be drawn to the establishment of a non-language disciplines resource persons network and courses in ‘training engineering’. The aim of these initiatives is to stimulate thought and discussion among teachers regarding their practices and to provide basic groundwork for new teachers, particularly of science subjects.

Non-language disciplines teachers are able to go on foreign placements, in most cases supported by grants from the countries concerned. Non-language disciplines teachers are not tested before appointment to their posts. They are chosen by a panel on the basis of documents testifying to their level of proficiency in the foreign language concerned. Their basic salary is 6 % higher than that of other teachers (regulation of the Ministry of Education and Science published in the Official Journal, No. 70 / 2004).

Source:

http://www.eurydice.org/ressources/eurydice/pdf/070DN/070_BG_EN.pdf

10. New initiatives

Improvement of the education level of children and students from the ethnic minorities

1.1. Better inclusion in the pre-school classes of children not knowing Bulgarian language and their readiness for school;

- 1.2. Establishment of the position "support-teacher" from the ethnic minorities in the preparatory class; Development of special programs for the potential drop-out students (just over 100 Roma teaching assistants have been appointed to work as classroom facilitators throughout the country);
- 1.3. Working out of a program for desegregation of the "segregated schools";
- 1.4. Effective integration and adaptation of the children from different ethnoses in multiethnic work conditions;
- 1.5. Specialised activities of the school psychologists and pedagogic advisors addressed towards enhancing the mutual adaptation of the children from ethnic minorities to the new education environment;
- 1.6. Conducting of activities for development of positive attitudes towards the educational integration of children from the ethnic minorities;
- 1.7. Initiatives addressed towards proper and intensive study from early childhood of Bulgarian language by representatives of the ethnic minorities;
- 1.8. Establishment of proper conditions for study of their mother language by representatives of the ethnic minorities;
- 1.9. Organization of training courses and other qualification activities for teachers on how to work in multiethnic environment. Development of positive attitudes in parents from multiethnic minorities towards the school system.; etc.
- 1.10. Some recommendations could be found in the Open Society Institute/Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma - Summary report – 2007
http://www.soros.org/initiatives/roma/articles_publications/publications/equal_20070329/summary_20070329.pdf
- 1.11. Republic of Bulgaria/Ministry of Education and Science – National Report – Contribution of Republic of Bulgaria to the 2008 Joint Interim Report of the Council and of the European Commission on the Progress in Implementation of the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme (Sofia-April 2007)
http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/natreport07/bg_en.pdf

11. Examples of best practice

Families where at least one of the parents is a foreigner usually have some difficulties to teach their children in both "mother languages". So they enroll them in schools like School Nr.76 (known as the Armenian school) or School Nr.18 that offer opportunities for learning in many foreign languages. They choose these schools because there are no expensive tutorial fees and

also they want their children to communicate with Bulgarians. This provides the opportunity for a better social integration.

A very good practice is the possibility for children to learn Arabic language at school (in the Armenian school). At the beginning there were only 13 children, now they are 70. This is the result of a good will and initiatives on behalf of separate persons and communities and not of a special policy for integrated education. The diversity in Bulgarian schools should be encouraged through qualification courses for teachers – in multicultural education, pluralistic text books that reflect the specifications of different communities in the country and encourage students to share and to express without any fears their cultural diversity.

Education system in Bulgaria

