

Bulgaria

Ethnicity in Bulgaria

Power relations

1946–1957: At the beginning of the communist regime, policies towards ethnic minorities were relatively 'liberal'. Minorities regained rights to restore original names, publish newspapers and even establish schools. The Constitution of 1947 is the only Bulgarian constitution ever to directly mention "national minorities". Article 79 stated that "the national minorities have the right to study their mother tongue and develop their national culture." The Constitution guaranteed equal rights to all Bulgarian citizens regardless of their nationality, origin, denomination and property ^(342, 5). On the other hand, all groups were partly discriminated due to communist attitude towards religion. As Kosseva et al. state, "religion was an exceptionally important segment of the national identity on the Balkans, many churches and other places of worship were closed and through various forms of repression, people were diverted away from the religion" ^(343, 11).

³⁴² [Hajdinjak, 2008]

³⁴³ [Kosseva et al., 2009]

Political representation was limited to Communist party, however this can hardly be qualified as discrimination of any of the ethnic groups. The largest minority groups had significant voice in the communist party ^(344, 12).

³⁴⁴ [Kosseva et al., 2009]

1958–1989: In 1958, the Communist Party Politburo decided to limit minority rights and started a new assimilation policy. "The ultimate goal was to turn Bulgaria into a mono-national country, and to turn its people into an ideologically and ethnically homogeneous nation" ^(345, 12). Policy of discrimination of all ethnic groups - limited possibilities to participate, mandatory change of names, forced settlement of Roma and event deployment of army units in resisting villages - was the core mean to reach the goal of assimilation. The regime even denied the existence of other ethnic groups in Bulgaria.

³⁴⁵ [Kosseva et al., 2009]

1990–1991: The ruling elite still continued the policy of denial of ethnic identities. However, due to a lack of means of repression, ethnic nationalism flourished (³⁴⁶, 5). “(...)

³⁴⁶ [Rechel, 2008]

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he first democratic Constitution, adopted in 1991, did not include the term ‘minority’ nor its definition, it did specifically mention ‘citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian’ (article 36) and added that everyone had the right to ‘develop their own culture in accordance with their ethnic affiliation, which is endorsed and guaranteed by the law’ (article 54)” (³⁴⁷, 6). Even more, article 11 says that “there shall be no political parties on ethnic, racial or religious lines”. Thus, discrimination ended in 1990 but the Bulgarian majority still held a monopoly of political power.

³⁴⁷ [Hajdinjak, 2008]

1992–2009 (Turks): The Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) party was legalized in 1992. Although the party denies being a Turkish party, as ethnic parties are forbidden in the constitution, it is dominated by the Turkish minority. Other minorities (Pomaks and Muslim Roma) are also to some extent represented by MRF. MRF is the 3rd largest party in Bulgaria and played an important coalition-forming role in virtually all post-Communist governments (³⁴⁸, 1211). It was not until the second half of the year 2001, however, that the MRF participated in a coalition cabinet with the National Movement Simeon II.

³⁴⁸ [Rechel, 2008]

1992–2013 (Roma): The second largest minority group, the Roma, was unable to reach any significant representation on the national level. Because of large political fragmentation, none of the Roma parties has ever played a significant role in national coalition building. Although there is no direct limitation for Roma people to participate in politics, they are affected by an overall discriminatory environment (especially poor access to public goods, including education, etc...).

1999 and 2000–2013 (Macedonians): Macedonians are the only minority group with an explicitly ethnic party. The party OMO "Ilinden" was registered in 1999, but banned by the constitutional court as a separatist party in 2000 (³⁴⁹, 18; ³⁵⁰, 336). The party remains active while being still banned from political participation. The number of Macedonians is a contentious issue in Bulgaria. According to the census there were about 200'000 Macedonians living in Bulgaria in 1956 (³⁵¹, 18). The 2001 census was the first since 1965 to list Macedonians in the official results. But according to its results only about 5 000 Macedonians (0.06% of total population) live in Bulgaria (³⁵², 335). Experts of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee hold it to be the Macedonian population at about 20'000 (³⁵³, 4). This estimation has been used for coding. Discrimination seems to have continued since 2009; for example, it is reported that

³⁴⁹ [Hajdinjak, 2008]

³⁵⁰ [Rechel, 2008]

³⁵¹ [Hajdinjak, 2008]

³⁵² [Rechel, 2008]

³⁵³ [Hajdinjak, 2008]

the Census conducted in 2011 did not include the possibility to self-identify as Macedonian, which is interpreted as a denial of the existence of the ethnic group itself ⁽³⁵⁴⁾. A report to the UN Human Rights Council ⁽³⁵⁵⁾ highlighted the need for the country to recognize Macedonians as an ethnic group and grant the appropriate, constitutionally guaranteed rights.

2006-2009 (Bulgarians): There were no significant changes in the power structure after 2005 apart from the emergence of the “self-avowed (ultra-)nationalist organization, Ataka (Attack), as the fourth-largest political formation” ^(356, 25) in the parliament. Although Ataka remains out of power, its rising popularity could lead to some changes in the power configuration in the future.

³⁵⁶ [Kavalski, 2007]

2009-2013 (Bulgarians): Due to the victory of GERB in parliamentary elections in 2009 and the single-party government that was constituted thereafter, Bulgarians are coded as being dominant for this period.

2009-2013 (Turkish): After the elections in 2009, the MRF was excluded from government, which consisted of members of the party "Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria" (GERB) only. Therefore, the Turkish are coded as being powerless from 2010 to 2013.

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Political status of ethnic groups in Bulgaria

From 1946 until 1957

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Bulgarians	0.83	MONOPOLY
Turkish	0.1	IRRELEVANT
Roma	0.05	IRRELEVANT
Pomaks	0.017	IRRELEVANT
Macedonians	0.002	IRRELEVANT

From 1958 until 1989

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Bulgarians	0.83	MONOPOLY
Turkish	0.1	DISCRIMINATED
Roma	0.05	DISCRIMINATED
Pomaks	0.017	DISCRIMINATED
Macedonians	0.002	IRRELEVANT

From 1990 until 1998

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Bulgarians	0.83	MONOPOLY
Turkish	0.1	POWERLESS
Roma	0.05	POWERLESS
Pomaks	0.017	IRRELEVANT
Macedonians	0.002	IRRELEVANT



Figure 83: Political status of ethnic groups in Bulgaria during 1946-1957.



Figure 84: Political status of ethnic groups in Bulgaria during 1958-1989.



Figure 85: Political status of ethnic groups in Bulgaria during 1990-1998.

From 1999 until 1999

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Bulgarians	0.83	MONOPOLY
Turkish	0.1	POWERLESS
Roma	0.05	POWERLESS
Pomaks	0.017	IRRELEVANT
Macedonians	0.002	POWERLESS

From 2000 until 2001

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Bulgarians	0.83	MONOPOLY
Turkish	0.1	POWERLESS
Roma	0.05	POWERLESS
Pomaks	0.017	IRRELEVANT
Macedonians	0.002	DISCRIMINATED

From 2002 until 2009

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Bulgarians	0.83	SENIOR PARTNER
Turkish	0.1	JUNIOR PARTNER
Roma	0.05	POWERLESS
Pomaks	0.017	IRRELEVANT
Macedonians	0.002	DISCRIMINATED

From 2010 until 2013

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Bulgarians	0.83	DOMINANT
Turkish	0.1	POWERLESS
Roma	0.05	POWERLESS
Pomaks	0.017	IRRELEVANT
Macedonians	0.002	DISCRIMINATED



Figure 86: Political status of ethnic groups in Bulgaria during 1999-1999.



Figure 87: Political status of ethnic groups in Bulgaria during 2000-2001.



Figure 88: Political status of ethnic groups in Bulgaria during 2002-2009.



Figure 89: Political status of ethnic groups in Bulgaria during 2010-2013.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Bulgaria

From 1946 until 1957



Figure 90: Map of ethnic groups in Bulgaria during 2010-2013.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Bulgarians	110835	Statewide

Table 29: List of ethnic groups in Bulgaria during 1946-1957.

From 1958 until 1989



Figure 91: Map of ethnic groups in Bulgaria during 2010-2013.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Bulgarians	110 835	Statewide
■ Turkish	6 617	Regionally based
Roma		Dispersed
Pomaks		Dispersed

Table 30: List of ethnic groups in Bulgaria during 1958-1989.

From 1990 until 1998



Figure 92: Map of ethnic groups in Bulgaria during 2010-2013.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Bulgarians	110 835	Statewide
■ Turkish	6 617	Regionally based
Roma		Dispersed

Table 31: List of ethnic groups in Bulgaria during 1990-1998.

From 1999 until 2013



Figure 93: Map of ethnic groups in Bulgaria during 2010-2013.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Bulgarians	110 835	Statewide
■ Turkish	6617	Regionally based
Roma		Dispersed
Macedonians		Dispersed

Table 32: List of ethnic groups in Bulgaria during 1999-2013.