

**Center for Documentation and Information
on Minorities in Europe - Southeast Europe (CEDIME-SE)**

MINORITIES IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Roma of Bulgaria

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MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS

State

Bulgaria

Name (in English, in the dominant language and -if different- in the minority language)

Gypsies/Roma/Rroma in English. Tsigani/Romi in Bulgarian.

Is there any form of recognition of the minority?

Roma organizations, associations or NGOs and special state programs aimed at the Roma exist; several of them are mentioned in this report later on. However, there is no official recognition by the Bulgarian state of a Roma minority as such.

Category(ies) (national, ethnic, linguistic or religious) ascribed by the minority and, if different, by the state:

In the Bulgarian Constitution the term minority is not used; instead minorities are referred to as "citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian" (BHC, 1999:6). Generally Roma consider themselves an ethnic minority.

Territory they inhabit

Roma are present throughout Bulgaria, in both rural and urban areas. Areas where Roma population constitutes more than 5% of the population are the districts of Vidin, Montana, Pazardzhik. Sliven, Stara Zagora, Dobrich, Turgovishte and Shumen.(BHC, 1999: 8)

Population

313,396 or 3.7 per cent of the Bulgarian population self-identify as "Roma by ethnicity" (Census of 1992); 577,000-600,000 Roma (estimates by specialists).

Name of the language spoken by the minority (in English, in the minority and -if different- in the dominant language)

Romani, Bulgarian, Turkish, Vlach in English.
Romanes, Dasikanes (or Gaoikanes), Xoraxanes by the minority
Tsiganski or Rromski, Balgarski, Turski, Vlashki in Bulgarian.

Is there any form of recognition of the language?

Yes. Attempts have been made to introduce Romani in public education in areas inhabited by the Roma, as well as to allow the local radios to broadcast in the Romani language.

Dominant language of the territory they inhabit

Bulgarian or Turkish depending on the location.

Occasional or daily use of the minority language

Daily (all three languages).

Access to education corresponding to the needs of the minority

No.

Religion(s) practiced

Islam (39.2 per cent), Orthodox Christianity (60.4 per cent). Evangelicals and other new for Bulgaria Christian religions have also recently found followers among the Roma population.

Is there any form of recognition of the religion(s)?

Only Orthodox Christianity and Islam are officially recognized.

Communities having the same characteristics in other territories/countries

Roma communities exist throughout the world.

Population of these communities in the other territories/countries

Estimates for the Roma populations in Southeast Europe based on (Liegeois, 1997, Courthiades 2000, European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) 1997, Minority Rights Group International (MRGI) 1997, MRG-Greece 2000):

- *Albania* – 90,000-100,000
- *Bosnia and Herzegovina* - 40,000-100,000
- *Croatia* - 18,000-40,000
- *Cyprus* - 500-1,000
- *Greece* - MRG-Greece approximates 350,000; official Greek, sources the number fluctuates between 150-200,000
- *Macedonia* - 220,000-260,000 including all the Roma refugees who came from Kosovo (their number has not yet been determined since it is constantly fluctuating).
- *Romania* - 1.800,000-2.000,000
- *Slovenia* - 8-10,000 including 5,000 Roma refugees from FRY.
- *Federal Republic of Yugoslavia* (FRY) - 450,000-500,000
- *Turkey* - 500,000

PRESENTATION

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. *Important historical developments*

Large number of Roma arrived in the present day Bulgaria during the 13th and the 14th century (Kenrick, 1993:47). They came from the East and moved Westward. According to “reasonably authenticated sources,” the Roma were first recorded to be present in the Rila Monastery, Bulgaria, in 1378. By the end of the 14th century, Roma had already established settlements in Bulgaria and throughout the Balkans (Eminov, 1997:115). Although some theories argue for a much earlier settlement of Roma groups in Bulgaria (8th-9th century), they are not convincing and are usually dismissed by specialists (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:75).

Although there is not enough information as to the exact role of the Roma in society and their religious affiliations before and during the Ottoman Empire, Roma specialists have reached certain conclusions that opened the way for further discussion and investigation. According to E. Marushiakova, the numbers of Roma in the Bulgarian lands increased with the Ottoman invasion in the Balkans (14th-15th century). They came mostly as accompanying population of the Ottoman army. The status of the Roma during the Ottoman period was very particular because they could not fit in either the Muslim or the non-Muslim groups. As the Roma were both Muslim and Christian they lived in a separate, ethnically determined group, while the rest of the population lived in religiously determined ones. Although the conversion to Islam of a large number of Roma brought them distinguishably better treatment, they still remained closer to the raya -the non-Muslim- rather than the Muslim population in the Empire. Privileges for the Muslim Roma, who were banned from socializing with Christian Roma, included decrease of some tax burdens (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:79).

As slavery was virtually non-existent in the Ottoman Empire, the Roma were not enslaved, but were sometimes sold as slaves to lands outside the Empire. Their situation within the Ottoman Empire was thus better than elsewhere in Europe, although they were still at the bottom of the society with little social mobility. They lived outside the city boundaries and engaged in crafts of which some still remain as their exclusive domain nowadays (Eminov, 1997:115). Some of them worked as: blacksmiths, tinkers, goldsmiths, shoemakers, tanners, butchers, janitors, servants, well-diggers, road sweepers, medicinal plants gatherers and even hangmen, although it is not clear how much the latter is a product of reality or stereotyping. (Marushiakova, et al., 1993: 78; Eminov, 1997:115).

The intensification of the Bulgarian national liberation struggle in the 19th century not only strengthened the national spirit of the Bulgarians, but also institutionalized prejudices against the Roma, especially against Muslim Roma (Crowe, 1996:8). The end of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Bulgarian nation state posed new problems to the Roma, despite both the Berlin Treaty of 1878 and the Bulgarian (*Turnovo*) Constitution contained clauses regarding the protection of ethnic and religious minorities.

The turn of the century saw the strengthening of Romas' desire to fit into the mainstream society. They began to give up their own identity in exchange for a place in the social structure (Crowe, 1996:13; Marushiakova, et al., 1993:84). The first Roma organization in Bulgaria was founded in 1901 with the aim to lead the Roma in their struggle for emancipation and integration into the Bulgarian society (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:84). Roma-organized activities intensified during the first decade of the 20th century in response to a discriminatory election law passed by the Bulgarian Parliament. The law was repealed only after the Roma had gathered enough international attention on the issue (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:86).

The policies of the Bulgarian government towards Roma changed constantly during the next decades. The economic troubles during and after the Balkan Wars and the First World War might have affected the Roma more than the Bulgarian population on average, but the worst consequence was the forced Christianization of Muslim Roma after the Second Balkan War (Crowe, 1996:15). Nevertheless, after the end of the First World War and the establishment of the Peasants' Party (BANU), government allowed Roma to demand the restoration of their rights and, more importantly, to benefit from the social reforms of the government (Crowe, 1996:16).

The 1923 coup and the subsequent legislation, however, put an end to the BANU rule and to the activism of the Roma organizations in the country. The following decade saw the gradual radicalization of the Bulgarian political life, as the country fell increasingly under Germany's influence. By the mid-1930s, the censuses showed that a quarter of the Gypsies in Bulgaria was linguistically assimilated to the society although the general political atmosphere was visibly unfavorable to them (Crowe, 1996:17). The 1934 coup again outlawed the Roma organizations that were re-established after 1929. From 1939 on, the Bulgarian press adhered to a distinctively anti-Roma bias (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:87; Kenrick, et al., 1998:99).

During the Second World War, as an ally of Germany, Bulgaria introduced restrictive laws against the Roma. They were denied access to the central parts of Sofia, forbidden to use public transportation and were given smaller food rations than the rest of the population. In some areas, they were forcibly converted to Christianity (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:87). Roma were forced to work for the state, and marriages between Bulgarians and Roma were outlawed in 1942 (Kenrick and Puxon, 1998:99). Although Bulgarian Roma, together with Bulgarian Jews, were put in camps in Bulgaria, neither of them were deported to concentration camps in Germany. According to the then German Ambassador to Bulgaria, "Bulgarians had grown up with Armenians, Greeks and Gypsies..." and "they had no innate prejudice against the Jews" (Kenrick and Puxon, 1998:100; Crowe, 1996:19). The Jews and Roma who lived in territories occupied by Bulgaria, however, were sent to concentration camps. Still, Roma death rate in Bulgaria during the war was one of the lowest in Europe (Crowe, 1996:19).

The early years (1944-1948) of socialist rule in Bulgaria had witnessed the initial renaissance of the Roma identity (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:88). In an attempt to win their faithful support and to incorporate them into "the building of new life," the governing Fatherland Front allowed them to establish a Roma cultural organization (1946), a Roma theater (1946), a Roma newspaper (1946), to send representation in the Communist Party local leadership and in the National Assembly (1946-1948), and to found a Roma school in Sofia (1948) (Crowe, 1996:20).

The adoption of a Constitution which largely borrowed from the Soviet one, the crush of all political opposition by the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP), and the war on religion, changed the government's policy towards the Roma (Crowe, 1996:21). In the early 1950s all local Roma organizations and cultural institutions were dissolved, the most prominent Roma leader and the member of the National Assembly was sent to a concentration camp. Around 5,000 Muslim Roma were forced to immigrate to Turkey during the first forced exodus of the Muslim population in 1950-1951 (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:89 and Crowe, 1996:21). The Roma specialist Marcel Courthiades explained that the communist regime tried to disintegrate the Roma communities in Bulgaria by scattering the Roma families among the Bulgarian families so that the use of the Romani language would weaken and they would participate less and less in inter-Roma social relations. However, this tactic, was not very effective. Precisely because the Roma have been able to conciliate integration with the majority. They were able to preserve the Romani community life in the Bulgarian society. This explained why the regime often sought to destroy many Roma communities first if it were to achieve successful complete assimilation of the Roma into the larger Bulgarian society (Courthiades 2000).

The easing of tension after Stalin's death stopped the expulsions and established assimilation as the *de facto* policy of the Bulgarian government towards Roma (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:89). In 1957, the only Roma newspaper started to publish solely in the Bulgarian language, while the 1956 census was the last one that mentioned the Roma as a minority in Bulgaria. After that, the Roma ethnicity ceased to exist for the Bulgarian authorities.

The BCP claimed that the stereotype of the Gypsy as "lazy, incapable of working, lacking culture" was a creation of the bourgeoisie. This had proclaimed the struggle of their "full integration in the construction of socialism and their transformation from beggars and robbers into conscientious and good constructors of socialism" (SCCBCP, 1959). The Communist government tried to counteract the Roma identification with the Turkish, rather than with the Bulgarian people, and to segregate Roma in terms of residence, occupation and education. The attempts to raise the living standards of the Roma population, however, were based on a firm denial of their own identity and way of life (Poulton, 1991:116). Subjected to this trend were the Roma minority names, marriage patterns and migration (Crowe, 1996:23).

In the late 1950s Muslim Roma, together with other non-Turkish Muslim minorities, were forced to change their names and to send their children to mixed schools (Crowe, 1996:23; Courthiades, 1986). The authorities had started to outlaw the nomadic way of life (an exclusively Roma practice) and to change the names of the Roma as early as 1954. Nomadic Roma were predominant in the Soviet Union but not in Bulgaria. However, since the Bulgarian laws were coined after the Soviet laws, it sought to outlaw a practice that was not common among the Roma of Bulgaria. The policy continued in various ways in the late 1950s. This resulted first in the creation of the Roma 'ghettos', and later, an attempt to bring Roma to the Bulgarian residential areas (Crowe, 1996:22; Courthiades, 2000). During Todor Zhivkov's era (General Secretary of the Communist Party from 1954 on), law forbade the use of the word 'ciganin', which was considered an insult. However, as in the case of Yugoslavia, it was done without, ever

replacing it by the term 'Rom'. Thus, this ambiguous law was not aimed at protecting the Roma, rather it made the stigma attached to the word 'ciganin' official (Courthiades, 2000).

The dual policy of assimilation and segregation continued throughout the late 1960s and, as the national question in Bulgaria was announced "solved" in the early 1970s, the government started carrying out virtually segregationist policies. The new directives of the BCP's Central Committee urged the incorporation of the Roma minority into the Bulgarian society through housing, education and cultural policies (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:91). The implementation of these policies was much harder, however, and many of them remained on paper only. The few Roma ghettos that were eliminated according to these policies were resurrected after a few years. The neighborhood schools, which were outlawed as ethnically- based, were subsequently reopened as schools for students with learning disabilities (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:91). According to the government, the segregated schools helped to eliminate the illiteracy and the school drop out problems among the Roma, since neighborhood schools seemed easier to attend by the Roma than the mixed ones (Crowe, 1996:26).

The last stage of the Communist party policy towards the Roma started in 1984 as part of the revival of the Bulgarian nation, in an attempt to create a unitary Bulgarian nation and to redefine the identity of the Muslim population. This process affected mostly the Bulgarian Turkish minority, but also had an effect on the 180,000 Roma who had Muslim names and/or spoke Turkish (Marushiakova, et al., 1993: 91). In fact, the name changing campaign was first implemented on the Roma, without any reaction from the other minority communities. Only when the state tried to implement the same policy on the Turkish minority, reactions started to mount. (Courthiades, 1986) Besides forcing the Muslims to change their names, the government closed down mosques and outlawed Muslim religious holidays. The consequent use of violence on both Muslims and Roma greatly destabilized the legitimacy of the BCP and allowed the oppressed minorities to enlist support from the international community. The policy was officially ended in late 1989 with the new decision of the National Assembly to allow Muslims to have Muslim names, and, subsequently, this was enshrined in the new Bulgarian Constitution of 1991. The segregation of and discrimination against the Roma minority, however, was far from over.

1.2 Economic and demographic data

Demographic data: The data on the number of Roma in Bulgaria differ according to different sources. As the official censuses done by the Bulgarian government between 1956 and 1992 did not include the ethnic category of Roma (as to signify their complete integration into the Bulgarian society), there is no official data on the number of Roma during that period. The Ministry of the Interior, however, has carried out some secret censuses (Marushiakova, et al., 1993: 2). Thus, the demographic data for the Roma over the last few decades give the following numbers:

1959 - 214, 167 (Ministry of the Interior).
1980 - 523, 519 (Ministry of the Interior).
1986 - 475, 000 (Puxon, 1987); 400,000 (AI, 1986).
1989 - 576, 927 (Ministry of the Interior).

1990 - over 1,000,000 (Poulton, 1991:116).
1992 - 313,396 by ethnicity, 310, 425 by language (official census).
1995 - 577-600,000 (as identified by the surrounding population, Tomova, I., 1995:13).
1997 - 700-800,000 (Marushiakova, et al., 1997:1).

Though the above data estimate that the Roma minority makes up only 3.7-10 per cent of the Bulgarian population, the Roma in Bulgaria represent one of the largest Roma minorities in the world (Helsinki Watch, 1991:13). The Roma of Bulgaria is one of the most homogeneous Roma communities, which has preserved the Romani language or as some incorrectly call it the Romanes language and culture. The discrepancies between the official and the unofficial numbers represent partly the tendency among a significant number of Roma in Bulgaria -and elsewhere- to hide their Roma identity whenever possible. (Courthiades, 2000)

Economic data: Roma are present throughout Bulgaria – distributed relatively equally in both rural and urban areas. Although some Roma specialists question the possibility of establishing precise data on the demographic break down of Roma populations, others have concluded that the percentage of Roma living in villages has decreased from 63 per cent in the late 1960s to 49.1 per cent in 1972 and 42 per cent in 1992. The large decrease during the early 1970s is not due to Roma migration but to the administrative transformation that turned villages into towns in Bulgaria. The small decrease over the last 25 years has demonstrated this trend (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:93).

The Roma's economic situation, which has never been good, deteriorated sharply after 1989 as a consequence of the general economic crisis in Bulgaria. Their unemployment rate skyrocketed to a level much higher than the country's average. Besides being less educated and less skilled, Roma suffered from the prejudices against them in the Bulgarian society. These factors often lead to the employment of Bulgarian instead of Roma, a phenomenon that becomes extremely prevalent in times of high unemployment among both Bulgarians and Roma. In 1994, 76 per cent of working-age Roma were unemployed with the number reaching even 90 per cent in some regions, while only about 10-20 per cent held steady jobs (Tomova, I., 1995:71-78).

Due to their dire economic situation, Roma's health is very poor as well. Recent research revealed an increase in the spread of Hepatitis B and C infection amongst Roma intravenous drug users. Expert warns of the enormous health and social costs for the Roma population if preventive measures against an epidemic, including HIV, are not urgently implemented (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 121).

1.3. Defense of identity and/or of language, and/or of religion

Due to the stipulation in the Bulgarian Constitution forbidding the establishment of parties on ethnic and religious basis, no real Roma political party has been active in the Bulgarian political scene. Instead, the major political parties have attempted to win the support of the Roma minority and some have even included Roma minority members as their representatives in the Parliament. Nevertheless, so far whenever Roma MPs were elected as candidates of mainstream parties, they were too afraid to confront Roma issues with the fear that they may lose their position. In most

instances Roma MPs are eventually evicted from non-Roma (gadzo) parties. However, as Roma have little to offer besides their votes, none of the parties has actually led a consistent and long-term policy towards the Roma minority (Marushiakova, et al., 1997:3; Courthiades, 2000).

Various NGOs for the protection of Roma rights, however, have been established. Some of them are staffed by non-Roma, some are exclusively Roma, and some are mixed. They are usually organized spontaneously, financed as “projects,” i.e. on a short-term basis, very few of them have managed to remain active for a long time. Although the non-government sector has been the most active party in the struggle for improvement of the Roma’s situation in Bulgaria, often it has also secluded itself to the majority of Roma and worked only for the benefit of their leaders (Marushiakova, et al., 1997: 15).

Following is a listing and description of the most prominent and/or widely respected Roma organizations:

The ***Roma Democratic Union/United Roma Organization*** was the first Roma organization established after 1989. It was founded in 1990 and had some 50,000 members by 1991. It has proclaimed itself as a non-party union of all Roma in Bulgaria. The alleviation of the housing and education problem, as well as the pursuit of the political and social advancements of Roma in Bulgaria have been among the goals set by the organization. Though it could not register as an ethnically based party according to the Bulgarian Constitution, it was allowed to function as a social and cultural organization. Its leaders, Manush Romanov or Veljko Kostov as well as others participated in mainstream Bulgarian politics as member of the Union of Democratic Forces and were elected members of Parliament. The organization, however, has been persistently suffering from a lack of united leadership and corruption. (Bugajski, 1995; Courthiades, 2000).

The ***Human Rights Project (HRP, Proekt prava na choveka)*** is often described as the most active NGO working for the protection of Roma rights in Bulgaria. Established in 1992, it was the first organization of its kind in Bulgaria and in Eastern and Central Europe. Their main goal is to monitor the respect of human rights of the Roma, to document instances of their violation, and to provide legal help to Roma who have been subjected to illegal actions. One of the cases the organization has dealt with, *Assenov vs. Bulgaria*, was the first case of a European Roma suing a state because of police maltreatment and was reviewed by the Council of Europe. Another major initiative of the organization was a campaign for equal participation of Roma in the public life of Bulgaria, which was endorsed by the government in April 1999. The HRP is financed by the Open Society Institute, the German Marshall Fund of the USA, the Bureau for Central and Eastern Europe of the Netherlands, Democracy Network, the Phare Program, and the Council of Europe (Popova, 1998).

The Open Society Foundation of Sofia also sponsors a ***Roma Program***, which finances projects in four main directions: business development with the aim to increase employment among Roma, education, sanitation of Roma ghettos, and culture (Popova, 1998).

Zhensko Druzhestvo Roma/Women’s Society Roma – Plovdiv helps feed children in the Stolipinovo Roma neighbourhood in the town of Plovdiv. ***Fondatsiya «Romsko***

Bjuro»/»Romsko Bureau» Foundation provides employment possibilities for unemployed Roma in Sofia. *Fondatsiya «Roma»/»Roma» Foundation* – located in the town of Lom provides economic and humanitarian support to the Roma population in the town (Popova, 1998; Kirilov, 1998a and 1998b).

2. ETHNIC OR NATIONAL IDENTITY

2.1. Describing identity

2.1.1. Cultural characteristic(s) differentiating it from the dominant group

Traditionally, Roma have been viewed as quite different from the majority population. Skin color, names, language, way of life, customs and traditions were all characteristics separating them from the rest of the population. However, most of these particularities are no longer common among the Roma. Most of them speak Bulgarian or Turkish and have, respectively, Bulgarian or Muslim names. The use of traditional costumes and names is relatively rare due to the prolonged restrictions over their use. The extent of the Roma's nomadic way of life, still exercised by some in the form of seasonal workers' trips, varies between groups and subgroups. (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:139). The memory of the nomad past, however, is still fairly strong, especially in the groups that settled only in the mid-1950s. The nomadic way of life is often accompanied with a separate set of values and customs of which most are still preserved among the Roma minority.

Big group celebrations of St. George's Day (May 6) transcend religious lines and are celebrated by Christian and Muslim Roma alike. Other big holidays include Vasil Day (January 14), Todor Day (late February), Easter, and various patron saints' days and craftsmen's days. The celebrations take place in family and neighborhood settings and often involve animal sacrifices, and three-day-long festivities (Marushiakova, et al., 1993: 173-175).

Despite all this, from an anthropological point of view some Roma do not differ from the surrounding populations. This is specifically true in the rural areas. In the region of Krumovgrad, for example, they do not differ from the Pomaks (a Slavic population of muslim denomination, speaking a language related to Bulgarian and living in both Greece and Bulgaria), while in villages surrounding Pleven, Haskovo and Razgrad, they share their anthropological characteristics with the Bulgarian ethnicity (Ivanov, et al., 1994:21).

2.1.2. Development of the minority's awareness of being different

As early as their arrival in the Bulgarian lands segregation was common for the Roma in the large cities while in the countryside people mixed without threatening each other's identity. The Ottoman Empire, the Bulgarian Kingdom, the People's Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Bulgaria all have implemented various policies towards the Roma, but none of them ever attempted to really integrate the Roma minority into the Bulgarian society. Though the extent of assimilation attempts varied with the different governments, Roma have always lived with the awareness of being different from the rest of the population. During the communist period attempts were made to assimilate the Roma with the Bulgarian communities living in the large

cities in order to weaken their identity. However, in the smaller cities and in the countryside this method was not successful. Although by the end of the 1980s most of them had Bulgarian names, spoke Bulgarian and were officially called, “Bulgarians of Gypsy origin”, they were never considered *de facto* part of Bulgarian society by either the authorities or -even more- by the rest of the population. They have always been marginalized. (Eminov, 1997:119)

2.1.3. Identifying this difference as ethnic or national

Roma in Bulgaria like in all traditional societies identify strongly with their community since individuality is expressed through community life. They consider their differences as ethnic. However, the younger generations of Bulgarian Roma activists, as elsewhere, more and more consider these differences also as national.

2.2. Historical development of an ethnic or a national identity

2.2.1. The minority’s resistance to or acceptance of assimilation

Roma all around the world try to incorporate many of their traditions while adapting to the societies they live in in order to maintain their specific identity. Due to the importance of community relations, they have preserved a very strong sense of identity at the group level, which has allowed them to develop their culture in the context of the new society they live in. As a result, they have accepted assimilative policies from the government with relative ease throughout history, and very often they view that as a step towards their eventual incorporation into the mainstream society. Forced Christianization and name changing campaigns have occurred repeatedly from the establishment of the Bulgarian state until the late 1980s. These steps towards assimilation have certainly not provided the Roma with equal rights, yet, at the same time they have not been able to estrange them from their own specific identity.

The Roma accepted the policies of assimilation in the early 1970s with relative ease mainly because these were aimed at bettering their education and economic situation. However, the fact that these policies were carried out at the expense of large-scale attacks on their identity and lifestyle had an impact on their attitude (EERC, 1997b:14). Moreover, with the fall of Zhivkov in 1989, together with the society’s increasingly negative attitudes towards them, Roma became more organized and assertive (Poulton, 1991:117).

2.2.2. The minority’s resistance to or acceptance of integration

The integration policies of the Bulgarian state always required the Roma to make major changes in their cultural characteristics to fit in the mainstream society. Certain Roma communities resisted by opting for marginalization, some simply adopted the government’s demand and others tried to resist by organizing at the domestic and the international level and to cast doubts on the policies of the Bulgarian state towards the Roma.

2.2.3. Awareness of having an ethnic or a national identity

Although the Roma left their homeland at different periods and under diverse conditions, undoubtedly they all have a common identity, which expresses itself in different ways and may be called ethnic or national. In the last ten years significant attempts have been made to investigate Roma identity in time and space. Roma arrived in the Bulgarian lands at different time periods. While some arrived as early as the 13th -14th century, others - as late as the 20th century. In addition, as some of them lived a nomadic way of life for a long time along group and subgroup lines, keeping each group's territory intact became a determinant of survival. Inter-group conflicts existed as well, and crimes of one group were often blamed on the others. These strained the relations between various Roma groups and bears similar intensity as the Roma's conflict with the non-Roma population. (Marushiakova, 1993:10). The resulting level of fragmentation in the Roma community is so high that conflicts among various Roma subgroups are sometimes stronger than those between Roma and other ethnic communities in the country (Zhelyazkova, 1994:13).

2.2.4. Level of homogeneity in the minority's identity

Bulgarian society tends to view Roma as a highly homogenous or compact group. In fact, the Roma community can be broken down into various groups and categories which most members of the Roma community adhere to more than one of them. Broad categories include religion, lifestyle and language, but these usually have numerous sub-categories like settled/nomadic way of life, group origin, demographic characteristics, professions, property status, pejorative names, kinship relations. For example, it is possible to differentiate between three types of Turkish Roma: Muslims who speak Turkish, Muslims who speak Romani, and Christians who speak Romani but identify as Turks due to the historic memory of having been Muslim in the past (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:96-97).

Many Roma researchers in Bulgaria have tried to divide the various groups, subgroups or categories to define more precisely their specific characteristics as well as providing statistical data concerning each one of them. Certainly the debate over the exactness of these findings and the research on the possible categorization of Roma groups and its significance continues.

An example of these efforts is the following where internal group demarcations divide Bulgarian Roma into three major groups:

1. **Bulgarian Roma** - 47.3 per cent; 21 sub-categories of Bulgarian Roma.
2. **Turkish Roma** - 46.3 per cent; 2/3 of these do not indicate any other subgroup, while the rest are dispersed into 18 sub-groups.
3. **Wallachian (Vlach) Roma** - 5.1 per cent; four subcategories (Tomova, I., 1995:22-24).

Marushiakova and Popov do a more complicated categorization. They classify the Roma in Bulgaria in the following levels (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:109-114):

Level 6:	Bulgarians		
Level 5:	Roma		
Level 4:	Jerlii	Kardarashi	Rudari (Vlach)

Level 3:	Dasikane and Horohane; Vlahorya		
Level 2:	Endogamous groups	lovari or kelderari, kalajdzii	ursari and majmunari, lingurari
Level 1	family and regional subgroups		

Level 6 represents the highest level of identity -the identification with the Bulgarian state and nation- which is weak but is observed among all Roma groups in Bulgaria. Level 5 represents the identification with the Roma ethnicity, which is strongest among the *Jerlii* and *Kardarashi*, but almost non-existent among the *Rudari*.

Level 5 reflects the major meta group differentiation among Bulgarian Roma. The so-called *Jerlii* are the settled Roma in the country, descendants of the first group of Roma who arrived in the Bulgarian lands and settled during the Ottoman rule. The *Jerlii* are split into two major groups on the fourth level - the *Dasikane* and *Horohane* Roma, whose major characteristics is their respective affiliation to the Christian and Muslim religions. Further on, the settled Roma spread out in various occupational and regional groups, some of which still lead a semi-nomadic way of life and keep strict endogamy (Level 2). Parallel to the two major groups there is a third one, which exists within the group of settled Roma - the Wallachian Roma. They are descendants of Roma who escaped from the Wallachian lands during the 15th-18th century, settled down during the 1920s and 1930s and came to live within the Christian-Muslim framework of the settled Roma. Their origin is still remembered but they often intermarry with *Dasikane* and *Horohane* Roma (those who are not from strictly endogamous groups).

The second meta group -the so-called *Kardarashi*- are the Christian nomadic groups which were forced to settle down during the 1950s. On the second level they are divided into *Lovari* and *Kelderari*, which in turn are divided into numerous groups and subgroups based on regional, family and other factors. Most of the *Kardarashi* groups and subgroups do not intermarry and live separately from each other. In exceptional cases, intermarriage and contacts are limited to the Roma from the *Kardarashi* meta group. The *Kalajdzii* (level 2) are another group that falls into the *Kardarashi* category based on its life style, group identity preservation, and values, but lives geographically distanced and speaks a different dialect.

The third meta group of Bulgarian Roma are the *Rudari*, also often called Vlach Roma. They are recently settled Christians who speak an ancient Romanian dialect and divide into *Lingurari*, *Ursari*, and *Majmunari* on the second level. The groups are endogamous and often practice a limited nomadic way of life as they can be found all throughout the country. (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:109-114)

The various subgroups of Roma have very limited knowledge of each other. Moreover, each of them sees themselves as the “only genuine Roma” who are “the noblest and the best, the strictest observers of tradition, speak the purest Romani, and have fairer skin than the rest” (Marushiakova, 1993: 7). The three meta groups also avoid contacts and interference in each other’s affairs. Exceptional intermarriages among meta groups, groups and subgroups appear but follow a strictly hierarchical mechanism - men from groups higher in the hierarchy can marry

women from groups below, but the reverse is impossible. The ranking of a group in the hierarchy is determined by factors such as the professions being practiced by the group members, and largely the group's ability to preserve its compactness, structure and traditions. It is interesting to note that the acceptance by the surrounding population also plays a role in the hierarchical status. For example, a group that is closer in terms of way of life, education, and even dress habit to the surrounding population is thought to be the better of the two equally rated groups within the Roma ethnicity. The Roma hierarchy is a phenomenon, which is still not researched enough mainly due to the lack of information and to the impossibility for the various Roma groups to agree on a certain hierarchy (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:121-127).

2.3. *Actual political and social conditions*

2.3.1. Relations with the state

Roma in Bulgaria face discrimination in all spheres of social life. Often enough the perpetrator of this is the state itself (the high unemployment rate and the dismal economic conditions, as well as the lack of proper education and the poor housing policy will be discussed in the appropriate sections). The most stringent problem of the state-Roma relation is the ill treatment and excessive use of force by the police against the Roma (BHC, 1998).

The high crime rate among the Roma population has been the biggest factor determining their relations with the state and the rest of society. According to statistics of the Ministry of the Interior, Roma carries out 31.7 per cent of all crime in Bulgaria. "Every third perpetrator of house breaking, every fourth perpetrator of rape or violent coercion of children is Roma," and these crimes are reportedly committed with extreme brutality (MFA, 1997:10-11). Nevertheless, it is important to add here that not all members of the Roma community are involved in such criminal activities. Yet, as it always occurs to minorities, the whole community is stigmatized. More importantly, like in all other communities, those who have managed to enrich themselves illegally usually manage to buy their way out, while poor Roma who steal a loaf of bread find themselves being imprisoned. (Courthiades, 2000)

High crime rate can be attributed to various factors. Poverty and poor economic conditions are the reasons most often given by the Roma themselves (Tomova, I., 1995:69). Job discrimination is part of the reason behind the Roma's poverty. Roma frequently find that, when they apply in person for a job that has been advertised, they are told that the position has been filled even though they had been told otherwise when they made telephone inquiries. For example, a non-Roma who works as a volunteer for a Roma NGO in Bulgaria was told that no positions were available when he called on behalf of the organization, but was offered a position when he applied himself (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 33).

Other explanations given by researchers include the general increase in crime in the Bulgarian society, the genetic determination of Roma, and the influence of the macro-society on them (Nikolov, 1998). Pick-pocketing, cattle rustling, and illegal alcohol brewing are not only exclusively Roma crimes, but also their main means of living. However, Roma usually only commit petty offenses. . Racketeering, automobile robberies, and drug smuggling, which are

rampant in the Bulgarian society, but are rarely, committed by Roma. (Nikolov, 1998). One can certainly argue that Roma crime is very often driven by the enormous pressure to survive. . Nevertheless, the effects of marginalization on a person's character must not be underestimated. Similarly, while in the past the kind of violence the Roma carried out was usually domestic, in recent years this has also changed, as have the kind of criminal activities they undertake. Unfortunately, in the past few years more and more Roma are involved in drug smuggling and other profitable criminal activities in both Bulgaria and in many other Balkan countries. (Courthiades, 2000)

As the Roma-perpetrated crimes are often presented in the media's crime sections, the image of the Roma as *the only* criminals is deep-rooted in the Bulgarian society (Kanev, 1997:13). The pejorative image of the Roma is still prominent despite the various attempts from the Bulgarian Roma organizations to end the ethnically related stereotyping. The negative portrayal of Roma by the society has largely contributed to the prejudiced attitude of both the society and the authorities towards the Roma.

The high crime rate among the Roma and the media-promoted image of Roma as criminals have condoned the abuse of Roma by the police and this is a common practice in Bulgaria. This trend was further strengthened by the limited access of the disadvantaged Roma minority to the protection and rights enforcement mechanisms (Danova, 1999). Apart from the media, many public officials have also expressed racist attitudes toward Roma in non-public settings while conducting official business. For example, in a recent meeting of representatives in Bulgaria's Ministry of Justice, one official stated that Roma are inferior to the rest of the people in Bulgaria. When addressing proposals to end school segregation, this same official reportedly stated that, due to the specific characteristics of the Roma, they are intolerable to others. Therefore, non-Roma would never agree to allow their children to attend school with Roma children (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 45).

Over the last few years, there have been numerous instances of police raids on Roma neighborhoods and brutality towards arrested Roma. In 1997, for example, there were at least two documented raids on Roma neighborhoods by the police. While in the first one -carried out in February in the town of Pazardzhik- the action was a retaliation for earlier protests and felonies carried out by the Roma population, the second one -carried out by drunk policemen in Sofia- had no specific and obvious reason (BHC, 1998). A number of other such incidents took place again in Sofia and in other cities which led to the dismissal of the minister of Internal Affairs. Roma, including women and children, were severely battered. Neither one of the raids was investigated despite strong efforts of the Human Rights Project (HRP) and the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC).

Excessive use of force over suspected and arrested Roma has also been documented. The incidents most often involve severe beating and the use of threats in order to extract confession from the arrested person (HRP, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, and 1998; BHC, 1996, 1997, and 1998; ERRC, 1997b: 27-32, 1998a, and 1998b). Roma are detained on remand far more often than non-Roma citizens, and are kept there for inordinately long periods (ERRC, 1997b: 37). Alleged instances of police abuse frequently go unpunished and sometimes are not even seriously

investigated. Shortcomings in this regard led the European Court of Human Rights in 1998 to fine the Government of Bulgaria in breach of the European Convention. Between 1992 and 1998, fourteen Roma men in Bulgaria reportedly died after last being seen alive in the custody of police or as a result of unlawful use of firearms by the Bulgarian police. A considerably larger number have endured physical abuse in police custody. Few of these cases have been effectively investigated and prosecuted (Max van der Stoel, 2000:41).

Roma are imprisoned more often than non-Roma due to two major factors: the regulations of the Bulgarian Penal Code which make imprisonment for repeated crimes (and Roma are usually recidivists) easier, and the xenophobic attitude of the courts. Minor crimes carried out by the Roma are punished more severely than the more serious crimes carried out by non-Roma (ERRC, 1997b:41). Physical abuse by prison guards and officials, unreasonably severe disciplinary punishment, overcrowding, malnutrition, poor heat, absence of water and electricity supply, insufficient medical services, and lack of adequate possibilities and encouragement for work and education while in prison, are the predicaments of the Roma once in the Bulgarian prisons (ERRC, 1997b:42-62). It could be said that maltreatment while in detention is among the most stringent problems concerning the Bulgarian Roma and, consequently, this issue has become a major concern of Roma and human rights organizations alike.

For a second time there was a favorable ruling for a Roma concerning maltreatment under detention. On 18 May 2000, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg found that the Bulgarian Government had violated European human rights standards in the case of *Velikova v. Bulgaria*. The case concerns the death in police custody of a 49-year-old Romani man named Slavcho Tsonchev on 25 September, 1994. In its ruling, the European Court held unanimously that Bulgaria had committed violations of Article 2 (right to life) and Article 13 (right to an effective remedy) of the European Convention on Human Rights. The European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), an international public interest law organization which monitors the situation of Roma in Europe and provides legal defence in instances of human rights abuse, provided the applicant, Ms Anya Velikova, with legal counsel throughout the proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights. (ERRC, Press Release European Court of Human Rights Finds Bulgaria in Breach of European Human Rights Standards in Police Abuse Case, 19 May 2000)

The Bulgarian authorities have done little to stop the practice of the guilty police officers, magistrates, or prison officials. The authorities have acknowledged the stringency of the Roma problems in the country, and have dealt with the issues on numerous occasions. However, neither the central, nor the local authorities had, by 1995, demonstrated the knowledge and willingness to treat the Roma issues seriously (Marushiakova, et al., 1997:4). In the recent years there has been increased efforts to a better Roma policy. In early 1997, for example, the Council of Ministers adopted a *Program for Resolution of the Problems of Roma in the Republic of Bulgaria*, preceded by a report on the situation of Roma in Bulgaria (MFA, 1997). In 1998, the government established a National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues, part of whose job was to draft a program, in coordination with Roma leaders, for the improvement of the opportunities available to Bulgarian Roma (Reuters, 1998). The results of this ambitious move are still to be seen.

At a National Roundtable on April 7, 1999 co-sponsored by the Human Rights Project (HRP) - a Bulgarian NGO that promotes the human rights of Roma - and the governmental National Council for Ethnic and Demographic Issues (NCEDI), representatives of the government and of the Roma community signed an agreement concerning a Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society. In many respects the challenge - transforming the broad principles of the Framework Program into government policy and practice - still lies ahead. Nonetheless, the roundtable process has already produced a model to encourage effective Roma participation which can be used in the development of national Roma policy (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 146).

The roundtable had been initiated by a nation-wide consultative process in the fall of 1998. Representatives of 75 Roma organizations signed the text of the HRP-drafted document, entitled "A Program for Equal Participation of Roma in Public Life of Bulgaria." In the summer and the fall of 1998, the government publicized its own agenda of integrating minorities, especially the Roma, into the state administration at both national and local levels. It also publicly embraced a newly established Roma organization that did not initially cooperate with the HRP initiative (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 146).

In late March 1999, the government for the first time indicated that it was prepared to accept the basic principles set forth in the document drafted by the coalition of Roma organizations. The Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society was signed by representatives of both the government and the Roma community at the April 7, 1999 Roundtable meeting. On 22 April 1999, the Bulgarian Council of Ministers voted to endorse the Framework subject to certain amendments. Since then, specialized Roma working groups have met with government interlocutors to discuss the details of the programs based upon the Framework undertakings (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 146).

Following the adoption of the Framework Program, two Roma experts were appointed to government positions - Yosif Nunev, a Roma education specialist, has been appointed as an expert on implementation of the Program on the NCEDI and Simeon Blagoev was appointed to a position in the Ministry of Culture (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 147).

2.3.2. Relations with the dominant ethnic/national group in society

Three major types of attitude towards Roma in Bulgaria have been witnessed - "traditional," "national" and "democratic" (Popov, 1993:21-22). The traditional one, which was formed during the Byzantine and the Ottoman periods, allowed the Roma, or rather, the various Roma groups, a place in the Bulgarian society. The Bulgarians traditionally distrusted and isolated the Gypsies, but tolerated them, and never showed open harmful hatred (Mutafchieva, 1994:60-61). This attitude was markedly different from the situation in most of the pre-19th century Central and Western Europe, where the Roma were subject to severe persecution (Popov, 1993:18).

The Bulgarian national revival in the 19th century, however, brought the "national" attitude towards the Roma. As they were predominantly Muslim at the time, they were placed in the "enemy" category and were seen as a threat to the Bulgarian nation. A massive massacre of

Gypsies occurred in Koprivshitsa during the April Uprising of 1876 (Popov, 1993:18). Campaigns for changing the religion and names of the Muslim Roma occurred sporadically from 1878 until 1989.

The post-1989 years saw attempts to establish a less discriminatory attitude towards the Roma, i.e. to treat them as different but equal members of the Bulgarian society. The increased crime rate in the 1990s, however, has brought back open hostility towards the Roma. In numerous instances this has resulted in xenophobic acts and mob violence (Mutafchieva, 1994:60-61; HRP, 1997). According to the International Centre for Minority Studies and Inter-cultural Relations (ICMSIR) survey, Roma are viewed by all Bulgarian Christians, Turks, and Bulgarian Muslims as a lazy, irresponsible, untrustworthy, and highly homogeneous group that has a strong inclination to criminal offenses. They believe that nobody else should mix with the Roma. (ICMSIR, 1994:117). Private violence against Roma is not unusual. On June 15, 1999, a 33-year-old Roma woman, Nadezda Dimitrova, was beaten to death by a group of teenage boys in Sofia, Bulgaria. Reportedly, the suspects came across a group of younger children provoking the victim, and so they joined to attack her. Three of the suspects hit and kicked her in the head repeatedly until she died. Three suspects have been arrested, one of whom has confessed (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 37).

2.3.3. Relations with other minorities if any

Relations between Roma and the other minorities in Bulgaria are not much different from the relationship between the Roma and the majority of Bulgarians. Limited cooperation has been established along religious lines between the Muslim Roma and the Turkish minority due to their Muslim bond. However, according to surveys, Roma are seen in an entirely negative light (e.g. as untrustworthy, lazy and crime-prone) by all other ethnic groups in the country (ICMSIR, 1994:181). Many Pomaks, for example, would prefer to marry their daughters to Bulgarian Christians rather than to Muslim Gypsies. "All ethnic groups put the Gypsies at the bottom of the scale of prestige of ethnic groups" (Iliev, 1997:55).

2.3.4. Relations between the regions inhabited by the minority and the central authorities

Roma in Bulgaria live in ghettos or mixed neighborhoods in cities where they can be a clear minority or the predominant population. However, due to discriminatory policy and the Roma's low educational and "cultural" level, even the "Roma towns" are usually governed by Bulgarians. Only recently the administration has started to integrate the Roma into the local governmental structures. Nevertheless, most Roma who could participate actively in local government lack the necessary training that provide them the confidence to promote the rights of their community. The UDF administration's plan to start bringing Roma into the local police, customs, and taxation authorities in the regions where Roma predominate was never realized, though it was much talked about (Rudnikova, 1998; Kanev, 1999). In addition, Roma have been employed as "minority relations" experts in the local governments. However, they are still far from having any meaningful form of self-government.

The socialist government had attempted to bring the Roma into mixed neighborhoods and settle them in mixed apartment buildings. After the fall of the socialist rule, the Roma started returning to their traditional form of settlement in the Roma neighborhoods. Built with hardly any planning, these Roma neighborhoods suffer from an extremely high degree of underdevelopment (Rudozemska, 1998; Rudnikova, 1998). Infrastructure, decent water and electricity supply, and most services are sometimes unavailable, which causes the appalling living conditions of the Roma. According to an official survey, Roma homes are on average inhabited by 6.9 persons (compared to 2.6 for a Bulgarian home), while only 34.7 per cent of those homes have main water supply and a sewerage system (in comparison to 66.1 per cent for the Bulgarians) (Official census, as cited in Tomova, I., 1995:68).

There have been no attempts to “develop” the regions inhabited by the Roma. This fact allows one to conclude that underdevelopment and abandonment of certain areas is because mainly Roma inhabits these areas. The actions that come closest are the attempts of various NGOs and humanitarian organizations to increase the hygiene and to provide for the basic needs of the Roma. Roma are often employed to do these developments work (Rudnikova, 1998; Kirilov, 1998a).

3. LANGUAGE

3. 1. Describing the language

3.1.1. Linguistic family

The Romani language is part of the Indic branch of the Indo-European Family (Comrie, 1996:43).

3.1.2. Dialects and unity; linguistic awareness

It is basically impossible to classify the numerous dialects of the Romani language. The classification presented here is the one used by Liegeois (1997:49-51). It uses the strata approach; i.e. it claims that there are three broad language strata that are then divided into dialects.

The first stratum of dialects was formed at the initial arrival of Roma on the European continent, encompassing the Balkans, and spreading out to the Northwest and Southwest. It has three main divisions: the Balkan group, the Carpathian (Central European) group, and the Polish/Baltic group, and a distant group of the “separated” languages of some Roma groups in France, Germany and Britain which have not preserved high integrity of the language. The second stratum was also originated in the Balkans and overlaps territorially with the first one, but it is limited to the Balkans including Turkey. The intermingling of the two has resulted in the formation of various dialects that differ from the first stratum dialects in some aspects of their phonology and morphology. The dialects of this stratum are limited geographically to the Balkans and Italy. The third stratum of dialects has spread to Russia, Sweden, France, and North and South America after originating in the Balkans and differs phonologically from the second stratum dialects. (Liegeois, 1997:49-51; Courthiades, 1995:86-91 and 1999:9-14). Differences exist inside the strata, and inside the groups themselves. As the dialects from the same stratum exchange words

and grammatical structures with the surrounding languages, members of the same stratum who live in different countries, as well as members of different strata from the same country, often find communications in a common Roma language impossible (Boretzky, 1995:69-71; Liegeois, 1997:51).

According to researchers in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Roma speak dialects from the three strata: the various subgroups of the *Jerlii* speak dialects from the Balkan group of the first stratum, the “Vlach” group speaks dialects of the second stratum, while a small group -which has been settled in a predominantly Turkish region for a long time- does not use Romani at all. The *Kardarashi*, who settled only in the late 1950s, use their own dialects from the third stratum. The third meta-group, the *Rudari* or Vlach Roma, had recently settled and do not speak Romani, but an ancient dialect of Romanian (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:109-114).

3.1.3. Instruments of knowledge: description of the language and norms (history of the written form and of its standardization)

The study of the Romani language has a relatively short history and issues of its standardization are still “in the process of resolution” (Friedman, 1995:177). Although the idea of a Romani alphabet is more than a century old, the first international Romani alphabet, or rather, a decision on how to use the alphabet in the various dialects, was adopted in 1990 (Liegeois, 1997:62). Only then could the standardization of the language begin on a proper written level. However, the dynamics of the various Roma dialects make the standardization of the Romani language as a whole virtually impossible (Liegeois, 1997:61).

3.2. The history of the language

3.2.1. Origins

Some Roma specialists argue that there were documents available from 1422 and from 1630 that testified the Indian origin of the Romani language. (Courthiades, 2000) According to other interpretations, the Romani language was a mystery to the Europeans when they first came in close contact with the Roma in the Middle Ages. The Roma’s nomadic way of life made them a great mystery to the local populations, and their language was one of those “mysteries” about them. It was not until the 18th century that the Indian origin of the Romani was discovered. Due to the extremely great number of language strata, dialects, sub-dialects and geographic divisions, some of its characteristics remain unknown to the linguists even today (Liegeois, 1997). It is interesting to note that the linguistic origins of their language have been used to determine the origin and migration of Roma themselves. The Roma is believed to have originated from the city of Kanauj of Northern India (Katzner,1995:107; Courthiades, 2000).

3.2.2. Evolution

The Romani language has evolved into various dialects. This has happened partly through its contacts with the surrounding languages (Compendium:1164). All of these dialects include partial lexical borrowing from both the regions their users inhabit at present, and the region they have

passed through during their nomadic periods. The dialects that belong to Roma groups who have stayed in a certain region long enough show signs of borrowings of grammatical structures from the surrounding language as well (Compendium:1165). After their arrival in a new country, the Romani speakers usually do not change significantly the Indian element of their language but they replace the previously borrowed words from another country with words of the new linguistic surrounding. (Courthiades, 2000)

3.2.3. Cultural production in the language (literature, oral tradition)

The Romani language has an ancient oral tradition, although its written form has only started developing this century. Roma have an enormous amount of folk tales and fables. In Bulgaria, Roma works are regularly published in the Roma newspapers, and the **Studii Romani** series. The latter is mainly dedicated to the publishing of Roma folklore and prints in Romani (refusing to use the new Europe-wide alphabet, it uses a simple transcription method), Bulgarian, and English (Marushiakova, et al., 1995:9).

While many Roma authors have published their works in Bulgarian, the first book of poems in Romani was published in 1996. Entitled **Mo Vogji/My Soul**, the book of poems by Mihail Petrov, is written in the Sofia *Jerlii* dialect (Petrov, 1996).

3.3. Actual sociolinguistic data

3.3.1. Territory in which the language is used

Romani is spoken by Roma throughout Bulgaria.

3.3.2. Number of persons using this language (in territory and among emigrants)

Romani is spoken by roughly three million people in Europe (37 per cent of the Roma population) (Liegeois, 1997:63). In Bulgaria, 90 per cent of the Roma population speak Romani, the highest percentage among the European countries, but only roughly 50 per cent of them speak Romani at home on a regular basis (Liegeois, 1997:63; Tomova, I., 1995:26).

3.4. Freedom of expression in the minority language

3.4.1. Level of acceptance or resistance to the minority's language

Since 1990 Roma have been free to use Romani at home and in minority communication. Programs for incorporating Romani into the school curriculum have been developed and Romani has been taught with various degrees of success in Roma neighborhood schools. Due to their ease to accept the surrounding language traditionally and the assimilation policies in the past, most Roma speak Bulgarian, Turkish or Vlach. Since these mainstream languages are considered to be more “prestigious”, Roma claim them as their “mother tongue” in various surveys (Tomova, I., 1995:26). The increasing school drop out rate, however, leaves more and more Roma children with almost no knowledge of written and even oral, Bulgarian.

3.4.2. Ways in which the state protects or impedes the use of the minority language

The state has declared on numerous occasions that the problems of education in Romani stem from the minority's unwillingness to be educated in Romani rather than from the inefficiency of the educational system. However, blame has often been put on the state for not providing good quality educational facilities and personnel to the Roma neighborhood schools, and for not providing for the training of Romani-speaking teachers (BHC, 1999:11).

An interesting regulation regarding language use is the prohibition of the use of any other language other than Bulgarian during visitation hours in prisons, and allowing the use of a translator at the expense of the imprisoned. As already discussed a significant number of Bulgarian Roma faces this problem. This is so since older Roma sometimes do not speak Bulgarian, while prisoners are rarely able to afford a translator, the communication possibilities for the Roma inmates are limited (ERRC, 1997:60).

4. RELIGION

4.1. Identifying a religious minority

Unlike popular belief, the Roma in Bulgaria and elsewhere are not "Godless" – they usually accept the religion of the country they live in (Marushiakova, 1994:117). When they live in bi-(or multi)-religious societies like Bulgaria they usually identify with the neighborhood they live in (Eminov, 1997:114). An additional factor for the religious assimilation is the importance Roma put on the social function of religion. Usually the majority religion is considered more "prestigious" and beneficial, so they accept it by rationality rather than by devotion.

As a result, the Roma are not identified as a religious minority due to the religious differences among the various groups. According to the 1992 census 39.2 per cent of the Roma identified themselves as Muslims and 60.4 per cent as Orthodox Christians. They demonstrate higher religiosity than the Bulgarian Christians do, with 64 per cent stating they believe in God/Allah (ICMSIR, 1994:188). The Muslim Roma have also been more fervent religiously ever since the Communist governments' attempts to 'Bulgarianize' and Christianize them which had increased their Muslim identification (Marushiakova, 1994:119). However, researchers of the Roma consider this census unreliable and usually treat the Roma in Bulgaria as roughly equally divided between Orthodox and Muslims (Kanev, 1999i) while a small group of Roma belongs to various Protestant churches. (Kanev, 1999ii: 3)

4.2. Religious freedom enjoyed

As Roma do not represent a compact religious minority, they do not appear to suffer from religious discrimination. Moreover, they usually practice their religions at home or in their neighborhoods and have no relations with the church structures (Marushiakova, et al., 1993:167). The various celebrations and traditions often transcend religious demarcations to involve groups

from various religions. The customs of the Turkish Roma in Northeastern Bulgaria, for example, are Muslim in general, but include some Christian holidays as well (Kyuchukov, 1994:129).

4.3. Relations with the dominant religious community and the other communities

There have been no special concerns regarding religious problems between Roma and other ethnic groups.

4.4. Ways in which the state protects or impedes minority religious activities

The issue does not seem to be of concern to the Roma minority at present as the religions they practice are recognized in the country. There is some concern over the state treatment of various Protestant churches, which have attracted a small number of the Roma population.

5. GENERAL LEGAL STATUS

5.1. Past

The Treaty of Berlin (1878), the Bulgarian Constitution (1879) and the Treaty of Neuilly (1919) were the documents that mostly defined the legal situation of the Bulgarian minorities in the pre-Communist period (Kanev, 1998:69-71). The Treaty of Berlin of 1878 reflected the spirit of the 19th century by putting most stress on the protection of religious minorities: it protected their equality before the law, freedom of confession, property, and representation in both Bulgarian and Eastern Rumelia (Kanev, 1998:70). Despite the stress on religion, there were also a few specific provisions for the protection of certain nationalities (Kanev, 1998:71). Similarly, the Bulgarian Constitution of 1879 protected the rights of religious minorities and established the freedom of confession and legal equality of all religions. The document, however, also allowed for the interference of the executive power in the affairs of the non-Orthodox churches (Kanev, 1998:71).

The treaty of Neuilly (1919) established a new basis for the protection of minorities by introducing race, language, and nationality as equal determinants of minorities (Kanev, 1998:70). The Treaty protected the freedom of confession, use of mother tongue, political organization, and the establishment of minority schools for all ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities in Bulgaria (Kanev, 1998:71).

1878-1939 remains, from both the legal and actual points of view, the most beneficial period to the minorities in terms of their freedom to practice their religions, speak their languages, have their own media and attend their own schools. (Kanev, 1998: 80) Exceptions did exist, however. The Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 witnessed massive conversion and name-changing campaigns aimed at the Pomaks. After The 1934 coup and the Second World War, rights of the minorities were seriously restricted. Later, open discrimination was made legal mainly aiming at the Jewish and the Roma minorities (Kanev, 1998:82-84).

The establishment of the Communist government began a period of mixed policy towards the Bulgarian minorities. From a legal point of view, it was the Constitutions of 1947 and 1971 that

established the status of the minorities, although they did not reflect the actual situation to a full extent (Kanev, 1998:86). The Constitution of 1947 established the equality before the law of all Bulgarian citizens, protection against discrimination and guaranteed the ethnic, religious and linguistic identity of the minorities, and their right to speak and study in their languages (Kanev, 1998:87; Courthiades, 1995:86-91 and 1999:9-14). The 1947 Constitution did, however, forbid the establishment of religion-based political parties (Kanev, 1998:87). The Constitution of 1971 also guaranteed protection against discrimination on racial, religious or ethnic bases, and the rights to free confession and political assembly. However, it introduced Bulgarian as compulsory language in all schools and allowed for only limited use and study of the minorities' mother tongues (Kanev, 1998:87).

The authorities tried to prove the Bulgarian ancestry of the Turkish minority, but this policy was seen as impossible to apply to the Roma (Marushiakova, et al., 1997:3). As a result, as far as the state authorities were concerned, Roma in Bulgaria ceased to exist. They were, as all other citizens of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, defended by the Constitution's provisions on the defense of human and civil rights. In reality, they were subjected to a strong assimilation policy and, together with most of the Bulgarians, were denied basic civil rights by the BCP government.

5.2. Present

The Constitution and other legislation in Bulgaria, as well as various international conventions that Bulgaria has signed and ratified, provide for the protection of human rights of all minorities, and the combating of racial discrimination instances and racist organizations (MFA, 1997:3). The Constitution deals with the general issues of human rights of the Bulgarian citizens. The Penal Code outlaws racial and national inequality, organizations aimed at promoting racial hatred (including participation in mob violence against national and racial groups), discrimination at the work place on the basis of race, and it specifies the penalties for individuals and organizations involved in such offenses (Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, Arts. 6 and 7; MFA, 1997: 3-4).

In addition, Bulgaria has signed various international conventions aimed at the protection from racial discrimination of ethnic, national, linguistic or religious minorities. Among these are: the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Convention against Torture And Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (MFA, 1997). This has allowed various NGOs to challenge some discriminatory policies carried out or left unpunished by the Bulgarian government (Kanev, 1998:108).

After a long and bitter political debate, the Bulgarian Parliament also ratified the *1995 Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities*. It is a separate document claiming that the ratification "by no means sanctions activities directed at harming the territorial integrity and sovereignty" of Bulgaria, or its "internal and international security" (RFE, 1999). Although Prime Minister Ivan Kostov called the ratification an end to "ethnic or religious

extremism” and to “nationalism as an antidote to democracy,” the Bulgarian Socialist Party opposed the ratification (RFE, 1999).

The Convention signed by the Bulgarian President in 1997 and ratified by the Parliament in 1999 caused a major controversy in Bulgarian politics due to the use of the word *minorities*. According to the Bulgarian Socialist Party the “Bulgarian realities, historical and contemporary, alike, provide unambiguous testimony to the fact that despite the differences in the ethnics, culture, language and religion on the Bulgarian territory, no national minorities have been shaped out” (Paris, 1999).

There is no doubt that at present minorities in Bulgaria are substantially freer to speak their languages, profess their religions, and manifest their identities than they were before 1989. However, this has been guaranteed on an individual rather than a collective basis. No collective rights have been introduced and the Constitution does not even mention the word “minority”(CSCE, 1993). In addition, there has been a big controversy over how the term minority is used in the Bulgarian society. Some have claimed that national minorities can only be ethnic groups that have a “mother country.” In this way Roma are left as an ethnic group, rather than a minority. Others have argued against the use of the term minority as a whole (Rudnikova, 1998).

Further, a very controversial article in the Constitution forbids the establishment of ethnic, religious or racial parties. The Chairman of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee classifies this provision as discriminatory and contradictory to international law (Kanev, 1998:102). At the same time, however, it reflects the deep-rooted feeling in the Bulgarian society on minority, and this attitude is difficult, if not impossible to amend.

Consequently, the right of the Roma to form political parties has been limited. The implication of this limitation becomes obvious when rarely any other political parties has encouraged the political participation of the Roma, or have taken into account their problems in any meaningful way.

In addition, implementing the legislation to protect minority rights has been extremely difficult (the problem of excessive use of force by the police over Roma has already been discussed in 2.3.1.). The economic problems facing the country have also contributed to the exacerbation of the ethnic tensions. The unstable political situation has not allowed for the passage of any non-controversial legislation over different aspects of minority rights such as mother tongue education and media. Roma thus, face discrimination when applying for work, receiving social benefits, receiving education, speaking their mother tongue, and having their own broadcast media (BHC, 1998; CSCE, 1993). The exacerbation of this discrimination has been demonstrated by various protests by Roma people. In the summer of 1998, for example, a Roma man set himself on fire in the town of Lom, after a two-week hunger strike of a group of 17 Roma over unpaid social benefits and discrimination by the authorities (RFE, 1998). Although an agreement with the authorities was reached in this case, many other instances of discrimination remain unresolved.

6. AVAILABILITY OF EDUCATION FOR THE MINORITY

6.1. Brief history of the education system in relation to the minority

The issues concerning Roma education have traditionally been -and still are- illiteracy, high drop out rate, the debate on whether education in Romani is allowed and are the Roma acquiring a good knowledge of Bulgarian. There are very few Roma in Bulgaria who receive higher education and hold high functions. The majority of Roma, are victims of the lack of appropriate mechanisms to address these problems. Therefore, the Bulgarian school system becomes another contributor to their exclusion from the Bulgarian society (Danova, 1999).

At the beginning of the century, the literacy rate among Bulgarian Roma was three per cent, while the one among Bulgarians was 47 per cent (Crowe, 1996:13). However, Roma literacy tripled in the period 1901-1925 mainly due to the policies of the Peasants' Party (BANU) government in the early 1920s.

It was not until the socialist rule that the first Roma school was opened in Sofia in 1948. However, this was only part of the four-year Communist 'flirt' with the Gypsies in Bulgaria, which ended in the early 1950s (Crowe, 1996:21). Afterwards, there was no more school instructed in Romani. As part of the ambiguous policies of the Bulgarian governments towards the Roma, many of their children were either schooled in mixed schools or segregated in neighborhood schools.

In both cases, Roma children did not receive proper education. The mixed schools did not offer special attention to the children's need of bilingual education. The Roma children's specific cultural and social characteristics like their skin color, their mother tongue and dressing made them suffer from the poor treatment from both teachers and students (Mihailova, 1993:27-29). Consequently, Roma children developed a negative attitude towards their schools, and this discouraged good work, encouraged absenteeism and petty criminality, which led to those children's institutionalization in special disciplinary schools. In addition, these children could not rely on the support of their family -- a handicap to them which the state school system never provided any compensation. (Courthiades, 2000)

At the same time, the neighborhood schools suffered from the lack of qualified teachers and the standard of education the schools offered remained low. It must be noted, however, that the early history of the neighborhood schools is often viewed positively. During the 1950s and the 1960s these schools' low, but consistent standard of teaching served a progressive role in improving the basic literacy of Roma adults and children alike (Nunev, 1998:17). Once these basic needs were fulfilled, however, the schools failed to evolve into more than literacy providers. Not only did they provide low level of education but they also kept Roma children separate from the Bulgarian ones, something that led to the vicious circle of segregation. Moreover, since Roma children were not given proper education, they were not accepted by the majority as equals (Nunev, 1998).

Roma children also received education in vocational high schools, which did not teach them "anything new," as most of them had a fairly good ability in their traditional crafts and vocations (Tomova, I., 1995:34, 57-63). This further prevented them from getting an education comparable to the one received by the Bulgarian youths.

After 1989, the neighborhood schools, though being criticized, were kept. As of 1998, there were around 100 of these schools in Bulgaria (Nunev, 1998:17). The Ministry of Education recommended to municipal authorities (who have a prerogative over education) to level the educational standards in the neighborhood schools to those of the general education system. They were asked to selectively introduce the study of Roma language into the curriculum, and to create special pre-school groups for helping Roma children learning Bulgarian. Romani is defined as a “mother tongue” by the Constitution, and thus can be studied up to four hours per week as an elective course in schools (Marushiakova, et al., 1997:4). Moreover, after 1997 Romani can be studied in Bulgarian schools (BHC, 1999:11). In recent years, some elements of multicultural education in the field of music, literature and history have also been introduced (Nunev, 1998:18).

However, these steps have not solved the education problem of the Roma children. The lack of a unified opinion on how to approach minority, and specifically Roma education, has been a major hindrance. In addition, the desire of the Roma themselves to have their children educated decreased considerably in the absence of strong state control to make them to do so. The economic crisis and the Roma’s traditional disrespect of education have contributed to this trend.

6.2. Availability of teaching material for the minority

There have been numerous efforts to provide Roma children and their teachers with textbooks and instruction materials in order to help the Roma children to overcome their major education obstacles. The materials include pre-school books for bilingual children, special primers for bilingual children, teachers’ manuals on the language education of Roma children, and teachers’ manuals on the education of minority children on the subject of customs and festivities of the Bulgarian macro-society. Nevertheless, as many of the Roma children do not attend pre-school institutions and kindergartens, they lack not only class room habits, but also a good knowledge of Bulgarian. Their desire to study is limited as their parents do not motivate them to do so at home. (Kyuchukov, 1997:5).

6.3. Official position

Different Bulgarian governments have recognized the need for better education of the Roma minority, and have adopted various policies to achieve that. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria, the teaching of the Roma language and culture has been allowed since 1992, and in 1994, a special decree extended this right for children from the first through the eighth grade. However, the state only provided municipal funding for minority education while it left the local authorities to implement the decree. Textbooks were published in three different Roma dialects, and the teachers were given appropriate materials for instruction (MFA, 1997:7). According to the government, the lack of qualified teachers to teach in the Roma language, and the lack of desire on behalf of the Roma to have their children study Romani, have prevented the wider spread of this initiative. By early 1997, only 500 students had expressed an interest in studying Romani and there were only 10 teachers qualified to do that (MFA, 1997:7). Since the beginning of the 1998/99 school year there has been no Romani language education available in Bulgarian schools (Kanev, 1999). Further, the official policies have failed to provide

for education *in* Romani, and most importantly, have proven unable to deal with the most stringent problem of Roma education - the high illiteracy and drop out rates.

Exclusion of Roma is manifested in every sphere of social life, but schooling has a more far-reaching and harmful effect than in other aspects. In Bulgaria, *de facto* segregation in schools exists even today. Even when Roma children are legally entitled to attend mixed schools, some school directors reportedly discourage Roma parents from enrolling their children. The schools often suggest to the Roma parents that their children should instead go to the neighboring school with predominantly Roma students, which as a rule offer inferior education. Roma mothers from the Stolipinovo neighborhood in the town of Plovdiv claim that the headmaster of one mixed school accepts only four or five Romani children out of every hundred students (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 70-72).

6.4. Activists' initiatives

Among the most active in the campaign for a better education of Roma children has been Hristo Kyuchukov, a linguist and an expert with the Ministry of Education. With the help of different foundations he has published most of the materials mentioned above. However, there has been some controversies over those textbooks (Nunev, 1998:25).

Programs of various organizations have targeted the high drop out rate of Roma children. Support has come, for example, from UNESCO in the form of the project "Let's Bring the Children Back to School." However, this project does not seem to have brought any significant results.

Recognizing the importance of learning Bulgarian by the young Roma children, two years ago the Roma Foundation, a civic organization based in Plovdiv, developed a summer preparatory class for six-year-old children in order to teach them the Bulgarian language. One notable feature of the Foundation's program is that its members continue to monitor the children's progress once they begin school, meanwhile helping Roma families to meet any financial costs from their children's education. A different, yet very positive model is the American University in Bulgaria, sponsored by the Open Society Foundation, Sofia, which for several years funded approximately 30 Roma students to attend a one-year program at the university, where they studied English, computer skills and so forth (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 92).

6.5. Present situation at different levels:

6.5.1. Nursery school and primary education

There are no special nurseries for Roma children and only about 12 per cent of them attend nursery school at all (Nunev, 1998:22). In 1994, the Ministry of Education established 180 preparatory pre-school groups to provide special preparation for Roma children to attend Bulgarian language education (MFA, 1997:7).

6.5.2 Secondary education

At present education in Bulgaria is compulsory until 16 years of age. The neighborhood schools for Roma children discussed above still continue to provide education to Roma children, as do the vocational schools. In recent years, the drop out and illiteracy rates among the Roma have increased considerably.

6.5.3 Higher education and Research

The St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University and the New Bulgarian University have instituted special courses in Roma culture and folklore (MFA, 1997:7). The introduction of the Roma language into the university system has not been considered. Special education programs are carried out by the Open Society Foundation's Roma Network, by the European Roma Rights Centre, and by other NGOs in the region.

7. COMMUNICATION AND AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA

7.1. Legal situation

The post-1989 legislation allows for a relatively broad freedom of the press in Bulgaria. Newspapers in Romani, or partly in Romani, are published freely. The issue of minority broadcast media is, however, a gray area in the media legislation in Bulgaria. In 1993-1994, the Interim Committee on Radio and Television allowed the functioning of a regional re-transmitter of Turkish programs in the region of Kardzhali (a heavily Turkish-populated region) but it did so as an easy way out of the requests for Turkish-language air time on the national level (Yordanova, 1996). The Turkish-dominated Turkish Movement of Rights and Freedoms (MRF) founded in 1990 has been asking for such airtime for a long time. The Bulgarian National Radio started some programs in Turkish in 1993, but this practice was terminated in 1994. Programming in Romani has not been considered (Yordanova, 1996).

The 1996 Law on Radio and Television put an end to any hopes for broadcasts in minority languages as it included a requirement that broadcasts can only be transmitted in Bulgarian. This raised havoc with the Turkish-dominated MRF in 1996 and caused some fear that this ban might trigger the further spread of Turkish television and radio channels in Bulgaria at the local and regional level. However, even the Constitutional Court did not find this article challenging. The amendments of the law introduced in 1997 did not address the issue of minority media, and though by limiting the law to the state radio and television, they indirectly opened the possibility for the creation of regional and local minority media. They did not alleviate the situation in any decisive way. The situation of the Roma community was even worse, since they do not have strong political representation (Hall, 1996).

It was not until July of 1998, that the Bulgarian Parliament added a provision allowing for the broadcast of programs in foreign languages aired for "Bulgarian citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian" (RFE, 1998b). However, the unfavorable economic situation of the Roma, and the lack of support from a mother country -in contrast to the case of the Turkish minority- is not likely to allow the creation of Roma broadcast channels in the near future. The broadcast media

problem, however, does not seem to trouble the Roma minority leaders as the Roma minority has more basic problems to address first.

7.2. Press

Roma newspapers have been quite popular in Bulgaria. The first Roma newspaper, *Education/Terbie* appeared in 1933 and had a circulation of 1,500 copies. It was published by the Muslim Roma in Bulgaria and had a bi-weekly edition. Its publication ended at the end of 1933 due to the political developments in the country (Tomova, M., 1998:68).

During the socialist period, the Roma minority had several newspapers: *Gypsy Voice/Romano Sesi* (1946-1949), *New Road/Nevo Drom* (1949-1950), *New Roma/Neve Roma* (1957) and *New Road/Nov Put* (original title in Bulgarian, 1959-1987). All publications followed the official Communist party and state line and reported no discrimination against Roma in Bulgaria, and avoided issues like the forced Christianization of Muslims, the forced assimilation of Roma, and the name changing campaign (Tomova, M., 1998:73-80).

In the years after 1989, Roma newspapers and publications mushroomed. *Roma*, published by the Democratic Union Roma (1990-1991), introduced the denomination "Roma" in Bulgarian society and put an end to the socialist-time term "Bulgarians of Gypsy origin" (Tomova, M., 1998:82).

Further publications have included: *Devlekano Sesi Romalen/God's Voice* of the Christian (Protestant) Roma, the independent biweekly *Tsiganite/The Gypsies*, the Sliven regional *O'Roma/The Roma*, *Amar Romane/Friend of the Roma*, an addition to the weekly published by the Sofia municipality *Stolitsa/The Capital*, *Romano Ilo/Gypsy Heart*, *Drom Dromendar/From Road to Road*, and *Obshtestvo i Rodina/Society and Motherland*.

However, due to various economic and political reasons, most of these have stopped coming out. At present, only one newspaper, *Drom Dromendar* is being published. There are, however, three magazines that are currently being published – *Dzipsi Ray/Gypsy Paradise*, *Gitan* and *Andral/Outside*. (Tomova, M., 1998:80-94, and Danova, 1999).

The Roma in Bulgaria are not deprived from having their own press. Unlike in the cases of other minorities, most of these publications are run and written by the minority itself. The problem, however, is that most of the minority members, except for the minority intelligentsia and leaders, do not read these newspapers because of lack of means and interest.

7.3. Radio

There are no exclusively Roma radio stations in Bulgaria. However, three local radio stations (Sliven, Stara Zagora and Sofia 2) broadcast programs for the Roma (Kanev, 1999). Kremena Budinova and Svetla Vasilyeva have a weekly three hour radio programme on "RT 7 DNI".

7.4. Television

There are no TV programs in Romani.

7.5. Internet

There are no Internet sites of Bulgarian Roma.

8. CONCLUSION

The Bulgarian Roma have lived in the territory of present day Bulgaria for centuries and have always been at the bottom of the society. Although they are seen as a unified group from the outside, Roma are heterogeneous in their identity. They are separated along various religious, professional, linguistic and family lines. Cooperation among them is not always present and often it is regulated by ancient and strict rules. This lack of unity that one can often observe among the Roma has affected negatively their ability to find a stable and respectable place in the Bulgarian society. The Roma have been subjected to social prejudice, various attempts of assimilation, and constant discrimination by various Bulgarian governments because they are less educated and poorer than the rest of the society. At the same time one can argue that all Bulgarian governments never proved sincerely interest in providing the necessary conditions in order to combat illiteracy and poverty amongst the Roma so that that they will cease being vulnerable to discrimination and prejudice.

Even today, Roma in Bulgaria are subjected to discrimination in all spheres of social life. Poverty, unemployment, appalling living conditions, high crime rate, maltreatment by the police and state authorities, illiteracy and school drop out rates are only some of the Roma's problems. Of course equally harmful for the Roma community are manifestations of corruption, egoism and unreliability especially among Roma leaders. The present situation is a result of the long tradition of both government polices and of the general negative attitudes towards the Roma in the Bulgarian society. These problems are intensified by the lack of solidarity among the Roma, especially Roma leaders of various groups and the resulting absence of strong unified actions.

The current political elites have shown desire to address the Roma minority problem in a better way. They have promised to consider the needs of the Roma people in the policy-, or programs-formulation procedure. Nevertheless, these promises in few cases have been realized with concrete implementations. Thus, for example, hardly anything has been done towards the implementation of *The Framework Programme for the Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society*, which was adopted with a decision of the Council of Ministers on 22 April 1999, following the signing of the an agreement between several dozen Roma organizations and the then deputy prime minister Mr. Vesselin Metodiev. The Framework Program was going to fight ethnic discrimination in education, health care, regional and urban planning, sports, etc. through the introduction of effective anti-discriminatory clauses. Similarly, no commissions have been formed which, as the Program stipulated, would investigate individual complaints against illegal discriminatory actions by police officers. Nothing has been done for the desegregation of Roma schools, although this issue was a focal point of the Framework Program. Also, nothing was

done on the study of Romani Language as the mother tongue, on creating conditions for training Romani language teachers or on counteracting shows of racism in the classroom. None of the stipulations of the Framework Program, whether they dealt with the legalization of housing in Roma neighborhoods, encouraging the employment of Roma by extending loans to companies which hire them, simplification of the procedure of land allocation to landless individuals and small landowners, developing training programs, protecting the ethnic specificity and culture of the Roma by introducing Roma themes in textbooks, restoring and supporting Roma communal cultural centers, revival of the Roma theater, support of Roma media, etc., were ever implemented. (Kanev, 2000:2-3) Therefore, when the government is unwilling, even when it has undertaken a commitment, to take responsible action for the integration of this minority into Bulgarian society, one can see why Bulgaria has still a long way to go before the Roma become citizens with equal rights and thus duties.

ADDRESSES

1. Cultural institutions and/or associations founded by the minority

- Independent Democratic Roma Union
5, 2nd St.
Kamenar
Tel: +359 52 463112
Contact: Asen Asenov Hristov
- Roma Youth Club
12, Malina St.
Plovdiv
Tel: +359 32 622322
Fax: +359 32 273678
E-mail: romafon@plovdiv.techno-linc.co
Contact: Stefan Yosifov Yugov
- Roma Women's Society
kv. Trakia, bl. 210, fl. 3, No.10
Plovdiv
Tel: +359 32 834633
Contact: Ekaterina Spasova Smolska
- Roma Bureau - Sofia Foundation
96, Alexander Stamboliiski Blvd., fl. 2
Sofia
Tel: +359 2 222105
Fax: +359 2 9201574
E-mail: rromabiuro@tt.m.bg
Contact: Rumyana Trayanova Asenova

- Roma Union for Social Democracy
16, Daika St.
Vidin
Fax: +359 94 26481
Contact: Milcho Rusinov
- Roma-93 Foundation
2, Petar Beron St., ZIP 5200
Pavlikeni
Tel: +359 610 2632
Fax: +359 610 2632
Contact: Sabi Kostadinov Atanasov
- ROM – Foundation in Lom
Contact: Niki Kirilov

2. Minority institutions and/or associations concerning education

- Advancement Roma Foundation
34, Buzludzha St.
Pazardzhik
Tel: +359 34 82907
Fax: + 359 34 82907
Contact: Plamen Stoyanov Tsankov
- Roma Women for Charity Foundation
9, Felix Kanis St.
Sliven
Tel: +359 44 78448
Contact: Tanya Boncheva Arshinkova

3. Political parties and/or associations founded by the minority

- Confederation and the Democratic Union of Roma
- Integrated Roma Union
5, Nikola Karev St.
Sliven
Tel: +359 44 23067
Fax: +359 44 36701
Contact: Petya Peeva Dimitrova

- Association of Roma Women and Children
12, Malina St.
Plovdiv
Tel: +359 32 622322
Fax: +359 32 273678
E-mail: romafon@plovdiv.techno-linc.co
Contact: Penka Karagyozyova
- Roma Foundation for Regional Development
12, Malina St.
Plovdiv
Tel: +359 32 268416
Fax: +359 32 273678
E-mail: romafon@plovdiv.techno-linc.co
Contact: Emine Restin

4. Minority media

Radio Stations

Newspapers

- Drom Dromendar
3, Nikola Karev St.
Sliven 8800
Tel/Fax: +359 44 230 67

Magazines

Television Stations

Internet Web Sites

Publishing Houses

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