

International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations (IMIR)
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RITU Project

**Racial and ethnic minorities, immigration and the role of trade
unions in combating discrimination and xenophobia, in
encouraging participation and in securing social inclusion and
citizenship**

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1. Specificity of Race and Racism

Bulgaria is a special case in the context of RITU Project. Although it generally follows the West European model of development, the Bulgarian case has characteristic features of its own:

- The Bulgarian national state appeared in the end of the 19th century.
- Bulgaria is a late comer, whose belated industrialisation and modernization followed that of West Europe with a lag of several decades.
- Since the very beginning, Bulgaria has had a significant number of autochthonous minorities and a long history of co-existence with them. The attitude to the ‘other’ means an attitude to these minorities.
- In the period of 1944-1989 Bulgaria was ruled by a communist regime with its own strategy of economic, political and social development.
- Despite the constant influx of people, it is not until the end of the 20th - the beginning of 21st century that the first immigrants in the European sense of the term came into Bulgaria. It is an interesting fact that the Bulgarian society, social sciences and media prefer to look upon the new comers as ‘the new minorities’.
- Bulgaria is a European country of average level of development, it is in a process of EU accession negotiations, and in a period of transition its economy is marked by high unemployment rates and low standard of living.

Bulgaria gained its independence in 1878 when it was cut from the multinational Ottoman Empire. For five centuries, within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire, the Bulgarians lived side by side with various peoples speaking different languages and professing different religions. As late as 1876, the Abdul Hamid Constitution proclaimed the Islam a state religion. In the Empire the communities were organised on a religious principle (the *Millet* system) with no account of ethnicity; while equality was out of the question (Bulgarians were *rayah*), and yet there existed religious autonomy and tolerance, much more strongly expressed than in the Western-Christian world of that time. Practically there were not any conflicts on ethnic basis. Complex processes of mutual penetration of different ethnicity and religions were taking place. Without crossing the boundaries, a whole system of peaceful co-existence was established. The co-existence, however, did not mean tolerance. Modern nationalisms blew up this pre-modern world. In the last century of the Empire the building up of the Bulgarian and of the other Balkan nations and national states began with differentiating “us” from the “others” in terms of ethnicity, religion and language. In the period of the National Revival (18th-19th century) Bulgarians determined themselves as speaking Bulgarian language and professing Christian Orthodox.

In general, Bulgarians, who have been living for hundreds of years in a contact zone of different civilisations, cultures, religions under the power of two cosmopolitan empires, consider themselves tolerant with regard to religion and nationality and claim that they do not feel xenophobic. The habit of co-existence with different ethnic and religious communities have made them tolerant, which was combined with feeble religiousness, lack of fanaticism and a kind of condescending attitude and curiosity to the “otherness”. At the same time Bulgarians have a “catastrophic” social consciousness formed in the course of centuries under foreign rule, and a kind of immanent pessimism that results in a defensive line of conduct to the “other”. On the one hand, this leads to a sense of menace due to their small

number, and, on the other - to reticence and feeling of being privileged in combination with negative attitudes to the other communities¹.

Building up their state, Bulgarians perceived the others in the following triad: non-Bulgarian, non-Christian, non-Orthodox. This determined their negative stereotypes of Catholics, Jews, Turks and Pomaks, which were quite prominent in the second half of the 19th c. They felt closer to Greeks and Gagaouz, who belonged to another church institution but the negation remained.

During the Bulgarian Revival, the image of the Turk found a counterpart in the image of the enemy striving to strengthen his own identity. For this purpose, the focus was on the brutality and outrage. After the Liberation (1878) this image which had been transformed into an image of the subject, became more nuanced and directly related to the Bulgarian foreign policy and its task – liberation of the nation that had remained under Ottoman rule in Macedonia and the Adrianople (Edirne) region of Thrace. Actually, it was the school with its manner of teaching native history and the Bulgarian literature that helped for the creation of this image. During the Cold War period new characteristic features were added to the image of the Turk as an enemy - Turkey is a NATO member state, a “fifth column”, an instrument of foreign policies and propaganda. Since the 1970s it was implied that some Bulgarian territories might be cut off in favour of Turkey /following the Cyprus model/ or to carry out Islamic propaganda. The stereotype underwent some changes in the period of 1984 -1990. Some Bulgarians preserved it but without the strong negativity since the renaming of Turks evoked compassion and tolerance on the part of the intelligentsia and urban population. Others accepted this event as a cause for mistrust deepened by the frustration from the Turkish emigrant wave /summer of 1989/ which in those hard times deprived whole regions of labour force.

The contemporary sociological surveys confirm these observations. Bulgarians tend to strongly dramatise the cultural differences with Turks and in critical situations their stereotype of deep fear, animosity and suspicion gets activated. When the “others” are characterised, they are described as united, skilful, diligent, clever but at the same time hostile, suspicious, cruel, likely to get into conflicts. Only in regions with mixed population, there exist ambivalent opinions based on personal experience in communication².

Until the middle of the 19th century the Bulgarian-Roma co-existence went on quite smoothly. The attitudes to Roma varied from good neighbourly economic relations to reticence, suspicion, and even complete rejection. Yet, they were not chased as in Catholic West Europe or enslaved as in Vallachia. The negative attitude is an outcome of the modern society. In the beginning, they were not considered dangerous not having a state of their own. That is why the attitude of indifference and negligence without mass repression has remained. The inability of Roma to adapt to changes burdens their image with the stereotyped features of nomads, parasites /after the beginning of the industrial age/, natural criminals /no one takes into account the fact that this is their way of living/, Bohemian revellers /because of their own holidays/, uncivilised liars /from the view-point of the European Christian culture/.

¹ Mutafchieva, V. The Image of the Other. – In: Relations of Compatibility and Incompatibility between Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria. Sofia 1994, pp.23,25; Mitev, P.-E. Relations of Compatibility and Incompatibility in the Everyday Life between Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria – Ibidem, p.180.

² Mutafchieva V., Op.cit., pp. 18-21, 26, 30, 32-35; Mitev, P.-E. Op.cit, p. 175; Tomova, I. Measuring the Stereotypes and Prejudices with Bulgarians /through the Kaz and Brailly test/. – In: Aspects of the Ethnocultural Situation in Bulgaria. Sofia 1994, pp.294-296; Fotev, G. Neighborhood of the Religious Communities in Bulgaria. Sofia 2000, p. 109.

The tolerance to Roma imposed by the totalitarian regime after the World War II (Roma themselves say that no one dared to insult them) was transformed after its fall in 1989 into complete mistrust, ostracism, extreme hatred and negativism /some foreign authors directly speak of racism/. Their sharp marginalization during the period of transition contributes to that.

According to the surveys of 1990s, Roma are depicted as thieves, bruisers, speculators, liars, frauds, criminals, dirty, ignorant, primitive. It is interesting that only in that respect the negative stereotypes created by Bulgarians, Turks and Jews coincide to a great extent /respectively 85%, 81% 70%/, which is valid for the whole Eastern Europe. Because of these significant social boundaries many Roma are forced to avoid self-identification and “be Turks” or “be Bulgarians” to survive or hopefully stay employed³.

The image of Pomaks (population living in the Western Rhodope and in the northern parts of the Balkan Range who after the Islamic processes in the 15th –17th century, accepted the Muslim religion but preserved the Bulgarian language) is also overburdened with prejudices. Bulgarian population considers them religious fanatics that cannot be trusted or relied upon, while Turkish population does not accept their different language. In the long run this religious group has lived in isolation, matrimonial relations with representatives of this group are also non-acceptable or they are constantly forced by Bulgarians to reject its religion and specific culture.

Ethnic Minorities. After the establishment of the Bulgarian National State in 1878, several ethnic groups remained on its territory. According to their different identity they can be called ethnic minorities, even though no such term existed in the Bulgarian Constitution and Law, neither were they granted such a status. The 1879 Constitution declared equality before law for all Bulgarian subjects but it did not contain a special clause against discrimination. It guaranteed freedom of religions and minorities were considered mainly from a religious point of view.

Table 1.

Number and percentage of Bulgaria’s minority population 1881-1934

Minorities	1881	%	1900	%	1905	%	1910	%	1920	%	1926	%	1934	%
Turks	527284	26,3	531084	14,2	488010	12,1	465988	10,7	542904	11,2	577552		618268	10,2
Pomaks		0,9	20637	0,6	19373	0,5	21143	0,5						
Roma	37600	1,9	89549	2,4	99004	2,5	121573	2,8	61555	1,3	81996		80532	1,3
Greeks	11551	0,6	69020	1,8	67214	1,7	47935	1,1	46759	1			9601	0,1
Jews	14020	0,7	33661	0,9	37663	0,9	40118	0,9	41927	0,9	41563		48398	0,5
Armenians	3837	0,2	14581	0,4	14178	0,4	12919	0,3	10848	0,2	27322	0,5	23476	0,4
Tartars	12376	0,6	18884	0,5	17942	0,4	18170	0,4						

³ Tomova, I. The Gypsies in the Transition Period. Sofia 1995, p.17-18, 71, 81; Tomova, I. Measuring....., pp.296-297; Kanev, K. Ethnic Identity, Interethnic Attitudes and Religiosity Among the Bulgarian Jews. – In: The Jews in Bulgarian Lands. Sofia 2000, p.75; Mutafchieva, V. Op.cit, pp.46-54; Mitev, P.-E. Op.cit,p.181; Kligman, G. On the Social Structure of the "Otherness" in the post-socialist societies – In: Poverty during Post-Communist Period. Sofia 2002,c.79-101; Ladani, J. Szeleny, I. Social Structure of the Roma Ethnos in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary during the Transition Period to Market Economy – Ibidem, pp.112-113.

Vallachs	49046	2,4	71063	1,9	75778	1,9	79748	1,8	57312		69080			
Total	2007919		3744283		4035575		4337513		4846971					

Sources: Georgiev, V. Trifonov, St. History of Bulgarians in Documents, vol.1, Sofia 1995, pp.133-134; Statistic Annual of Bulgarian Kingdom, vol.1, 1909 p.42; vol.4, 1912, Sofia 1915, p.46; vol.15-16, 1923-1924, S. 1925, p. A70; vol. 27, 1935, Sofia 1935; vol.30, Sofia 1938, p. 25,29; Büchschütz, U. Minority Policy in Bulgaria. The Policy of the Bulgarian Communist Party towards Jews, Roma, Pomaks and Turks 1944-1989. IMIR, Sofia, 2000, p.222. Data given for 1934 refer to mother tongue and religion that is why it is not full showing some deviations.

The variations in the figures are due mainly to two reasons: territorial changes of the State or external migrations. Several bilateral agreements were in force, in line with the practice of population exchange typical of the Balkan states. The Turkish population almost incessantly emigrated in the direction to the Ottoman empire and the Republic of Turkey. In the period of 1878-1912, 350 000 Muslims left the country. In the years after 1927 almost the whole Greek minority left the country. The Romanian population living in Southern Dobrudzha was exchanged for the Bulgarian population in Northern Dobrudza pursuant to Crayova Agreement between Bulgaria and Romania /1940/.

All presented ethnic groups are indigenous from the 19th century point of view. Having settled at the end of the 14th c. – beginning of 15th century, the Turks lived in compact groups in north-eastern Bulgaria and the Rhodope Mountains; they were scattered in the regions of Haskovo, Burgas and Plovdiv; they dealt with agriculture and trade. Roma came into the Ottoman empire after the 15th century. They either inhabited the villages of Dobrudzha, Deliorman and Thrace, or moved among big cities. Although some Jewish groups had inhabited Bulgarian lands since ancient times, in the period of the 15th – 18th century Spaniards from Spain and Ashkenazi from Germany chose to settle in the big urban trade-centres along the Danube River, and in the west and south Bulgaria. The Greeks along the Black Sea coast also dealt with trade and crafts and had lived there since the time of the Great Colonisation.

It is worth mentioning that after the liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman rule (1878) minorities have always self-identified their ethnic or religious belonging and this has never been a state assignation. This explains why the official figures given by the census on the number of the Roma population differ significantly from the ones made by experts.

Migrants. The issue of migrants is different. Bulgaria was established as national state, but not within the boundaries of the whole Bulgarian national territory. This was a pre-requisite for a constant influx of immigrants from the Bulgarian diaspora – from northern Dobrudzha, Macedonia and Western outlying parts after the Congress of Berlin and Kresna-Razlog uprising (1878-1879), from Macedonia after the attempts of liberation of the local population (1895, 1902, 1903), from western and eastern Thrace, south Dobrudzha, Macedonia after the wars (1913, 1918). Historical documents state that 0,5 million refugees arrived in their homeland.

At the same time, however, non-Bulgarian migrants were restricted in number. After the Bulgarian Liberation (1878) small group of Russians and Czechs arrived whose representatives occupied for some period the positions of military men, high state or court officials.

Armenians were the first large non-Bulgarian immigrant community. They arrived from the Ottoman empire in two immigrant waves. After the genocide in the autumn of 1896, about 2000 people came into the country via Istanbul, Bourgas and Varna, and from the direction of Macedonia. In 1922 about 25 000 arrived, and the

Armenian community approximately reached the number of 35 000⁴. In both cases the governments supported the refugees – settled them in the Armenian colonies, helped them find a job and cope with their daily necessities. The new-comers were mainly urban population (92,7%), craftsmen (19,3%, 1926), occupied in the trade and wage labour (59,7%,1926). In the beginning the immigrants worked whatever they found – in the construction, at harbours and homes, but later over 20 % went to the factories.⁵ Those who came after the World War I and did not re-emigrate, remained without Bulgarian citizenship having only the so called Nansen Passports under the patronage of the League of Nations, the Supreme Commissariat for Refugees.⁶

In the period 1920–1923 a large group of *Russians Whiteguards* immigrated to Bulgaria, leaving the Bolshevik Russia. According to the available data their number was about 36 000 people (1922) - some of them belonged to the Wrangle army, others were civilians of various strata and professions. Parts of these re-emigrated to the central and west Europe, and those who stayed started seeking for a gap in the Bulgarian labour market. Like Armenians, the Russians Whiteguards did not have Bulgarian citizenship but only Nansen passports, which made it difficult to find a job under the new acts for protection of the national labour force (1925) that envisaged a special regime for the foreign workers. Later, some more regulations against them were adopted, i.e. Ordinance issued by the Labour Department about tobacco workers (1940-1941) reading that foreigners working in this branch shall be fired; Law on the Bulgarian Citizenship (1942) which broke the Convention on the refugees' international status and the equal treatment of the Nansen passports holders; Law on the internal commerce (1942) which deprived the Nansen passport holders of their right to labour and unemployment security.⁷

Consequently, several models can be observed. The majority of the Armenian and Russian immigrants remained unemployed - e.g. 38 318 people (1933). Others applied for Bulgarian citizenship, despite the lack of support on the part of the authorities, especially after 1928. A third group consisting of whiteguard immigrants united in order to defend their professional interests – unions of physicians, jurists, agronomists and veterinarians were established, as well as a Russian All-Labour Union (1931) and a Federation of the Russian Labour Unions in Bulgaria uniting 7 associations with 1 469 members (1935).⁸

2. Historical Evolution

2.1. Mid-nineteen century - WW1

Three main periods, each of different length and characteristic features, can be distinguished in the minority policy of the Bulgarian state since its establishment until the end of the World War II.

⁴ Vassileva, B. Migration Processes in Bulgaria after the WWII. Sofia 1991, p.155; Ovanjan, S. V. Armenian-Bulgarian Historical Relations and Armenian Colonies in Bulgaria during the Second Half of the 19th Century. Sofia 1972, p.323; Revjakina, L. A New Document about the Armenian Community in Bulgaria. – Historical Review (Sofia), 1999, №3-4,189-190.

⁵ Ovanjan, S. V. Op.cit, pp.323,325,327,345-347; Revjakina, L. Op.cit, pp.190-192

⁶ Vassileva, B. Op.cit, pp.132-133.

⁷ Daskalov, D. The White Russian Emigration in Bulgaria. Sofia 1997, p.141; Memishev, Y. The Participation of the Bulgarian Turks in the Struggle against Capitalism and Fascism. Sofia 1977, p.117.

⁸ Daskalov, D. Op.cit, pp. 75-78.

The first (1878-1887) formed the model of the Bulgarian minority policy which copied that of the neighbouring Balkan states. It was marked by the desire for establishing a National State without minorities. For this purpose the larger minority groups /Turks, Greeks/ had been subjected to a constant administrative, religious and economic pressure. It cannot be said that within this period the Bulgarian State stuck with the model of ethnic and confessional tolerance⁹.

The second period, 1880s – the Balkan Wars (1912), is characterised by smoothing the confrontations of the first decades and institutional regulation of the life of minority groups. Schools and national study centres of Turks, Jews, Armenians, Greeks functioned freely; a number of newspapers and magazines were issued; their religious cults were subsidised, it was possible to send students abroad; they were not deprived of private property. At the same time, however, the policy of exile and creeping assimilation had not been neglected. Once again the target groups were the large minorities. The way they were treated was bound not only with the foreign relations of Bulgaria with the Ottoman Empire and Greece but also with the development of the Bulgarian National Question – the way the Empire treated the Bulgarians in its European provinces, the confrontation between the Bulgarian revolutionary movement in Macedonia and the Greek armed propaganda there. That is why, the 1906 outrage against Greeks in Plovdiv, Stanimaka (Assenovgrad), Varna, Kavakli (Topolovgrad) and the Black Sea region, which resulted in breaking into shops, burning down houses, victims and mass emigration, was not accidental. During this period, Roma were deprived of suffrage because of their unsettled way of life and because they did not have permanent residence¹⁰.

The third period of the Balkan Wars and the World War I (1912-1918), marks a turn –back to confrontation, since Bulgaria's motivation to participate in the three wars was its unsettled National Question. The enhanced anti-Turk attitudes and strong religious propaganda led to the first serious attempt of assimilation of Pomaks (Bulgarian Muslims) in Western Rhodope region who were forcibly converted to Christianity during 1912-1913. In 1914 the Bulgarian Muslims were allowed to profess their traditional religion and in 1916 fifteen Turks were elected into the Parliament. Nevertheless, a significant number of people of both communities began to emigrate.¹¹

2.2. 1918-1945 Nationalism and anti-Semitism

In the period *between the two World Wars* Bulgaria had a moderate minority policy compared to countries like Greece and Turkey that practised policies of total deportation of their minorities or like Yugoslavia and Romania that preferred assimilationist approach. This policy was prompted by Bulgaria's status of a "punished" country within the Versailles system and by the foreign policy of a peaceful revision relying on the good will of the victorious states and the neighbouring Balkan countries. At that time Bulgaria signed emigration agreements with Greece and Turkey. Thus, Bulgarian authorities could feel much more at ease

⁹ Nazarska, G. *The Bulgarian State and its Minorities 1879-1885*. Sofia 1999, pp.232-236.

¹⁰ Stoyanov, V. *The Turkish Population in Bulgaria between the Poles of the Ethnic Policy*. Sofia 1998, pp. 69-77; Kurtev, N. *Bulgarian Communist Party and the National Minorities 1919-1944*. – Annual of Sofia University, Ideological Departments, vol. LIX, 1965, pp. 139-140,141-150.

¹¹ Eldarov, Sv. *The Last Crusade March. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the Conversion of the Bulgarian-Muslims in 1912-1913*. – Bulgarian Historical Library (Sofia), 2000, №2, pp. 18-37; Stoyanov, V. *Op.cit*, p.77.

with the minorities on the Bulgarian territory. After decades of migration (1878-1912 - 350 000 people, 1928-1929 – 23 564 people, 1936-1939 –60 220 people) the percentage of Turkish population significantly decreased. That is why in the periods of 1920-1923 and 1931 –1934 Turks were granted greater legal concessions, including the possibility of establishing Pan-Turkic organisations. Jews had their own synagogues, clubs, hospitals and media. They were well integrated into the army and administration, as well as into the economic and cultural life; they even had their own minister. At the same time the cultural rights of the Turks had constantly been reduced. Attacks against Jews and Jewish property in Sofia (1931-1934) and against Roma throughout the country conducted by right wing and fascist organisations did not evoke any reaction on the part of the authorities. There was a new assimilation campaign initiated by the “Rodina” organisations in the Rhodope region (1937) and directed against the Pomaks in order to force them to use Bulgarian names, clothes and culture. The latter was encouraged by the authorities.¹²

Amidst the wars a great number of rightist organizations emerged in Bulgaria which had pro-fascist and later - pro-Nazi ideas. Quite extreme in its xenophobia was the 'Bulgarian Defense' Union: it did not accept non-Bulgarians as its members and insisted on passing a Law that would provide for limiting the foreign capitals, personal taxes for foreigners, and jobs for Bulgarians only.¹³ Similar ideas were spread by the National-Socialist Bulgarian Worker's Party (1932), which was a duplicate of the Nazi one in Germany but its strength was insignificant. It defended the idea that only 'pure-blooded' Bulgarians should live in this country as Bulgarian subjects.¹⁴ Though some of these organizations put to trouble the Jews and Roma only and their members were appointed in some of the expert, non-party cabinets of tsar Boris III during his authoritarian regime (1935-1943), these quite open xenophobic and racial ideas did not become state policy until 1941.

During WW II Bulgaria joined the Axis (1941). That is why Bulgaria was forced to adopt a statute similar to the Nazi Neurnberg anti-Semitic laws, called the Nation Defense Act (NDA, December 1940-January 1941). This was the beginning of the so-called Jewish Question. Never before had the Bulgarian society and authorities faced this issue, in spite of some sporadic outbursts of anti-Semitism in the past. The NDA affected 48 000 Jews engaged primarily in trade, free enterprise, insurance, free lance professions, who also were an integral part of the workers and craftsmen strata. NDA restricted the Jewish election rights, freedom of education, residence, private property, association. It introduced new family names, bank account suspensions, property tax, and prohibition of mixed marriages. The Jews were also restricted in their freedom to choose occupation since NDA envisaged a prohibition for them to work as chemists, accountants, civil, municipal and public servants. 1% - quotas¹⁵ were introduced in trade, industry and free-lance professions. NDA caused unprecedented waves of protests by all social strata, and a large spectrum of professional organisations, political formations, and individuals, as well as many influential institutions. It must be emphasised that this phenomenon occurred at times when the civil society was very restricted. And still the wave of protests was joined by

¹² Stoyanov, V. Op.cit, pp. 78-86; Barouh, N. The Ransom. Sofia 1991, pp.38,43,45,46,50-53; Kurtev, N. Op.cit, pp.151,157; Bar-Zoar, M. Beyond Hitler's Hold. Sofia 1999, pp.19,23

¹³ Georgiev, V. Masonry in Bulgaria. Sofia 1986, p.280; Velichkova, G. Propaganda of Fascism in Bulgaria 1922-1934. Sofia 2002, pp.150-151,199,206.

¹⁴ Georgiev, V. Op.cit, pp.297-298.

¹⁵ Barouh, N. Op.cit, pp.57-60; Bar- Zoar, M. Op.cit, pp.41-42; Vassileva, B. Jews in Bulgaria 1944-1952. Sofia 1992, p. 6.

workers, craftsmen, young people, MPs, writers, physicians, lawyers, Orthodox clergy, the illegal Communist Party and the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, Mason lodge representatives. This pressure forced tsar Boris III to stop the implementation of the Agreement with Germany to deport 8 000 Jews to the concentration camps in Poland (March – May 1943) and to resettle them in the country organising them in labour camps to support the construction industry (1943 – 1944). Thus, Bulgaria became the only European country except the then occupied Denmark to demonstrate tolerance towards minorities during WWII. In practice the anti-Semitic measures became void as early as 1943 when the combat situation changed and the Tsar died. Officially, they were abolished in 1944.¹⁶

2.3 Post World War II

Statistical data in the following table demonstrates several tendencies:

Table 2

Number and percentage of Bulgaria's minority population 1946-1965

	1946	%	1956	%	1965	%
Turks	675500	9,6	656025	8,6	780928	9,5
Roma	170011	2,4	197865	2,6	148874	1,8
Armenians	21637	0,3	21654	0,3	20282	0,3
Jews	44209	0,6	6027	0,1	5108	0,1
Macedonians			187789	2,5	9632	0,1
Greeks			7437	0,1	8241	0,1
Vallachs			4236	0,1	763	0,01
Tartar			5993	0,1	6430	0,1
Total	7029349		7613709		8227866	

Sources: Büchschütz, U. Büchschütz, U. Minority Policy in Bulgaria. The Policy of the Bulgarian Communist Party towards Jews, Roma, Pomaks and Turks 1944-1989. IMIR, Sofia, 2000, p.222; Statistic Annual of Republic of Bulgaria . Sofia 1994, p.51. (in %).

The first peculiarity is the appearance of a Macedonian minority - the result of the policy of the ruling Bulgarian Communist Party oriented to the formation of Macedonian nation with its cultural autonomy as a stage before the unification of the Bulgarian region of Pirin Macedonia with the Republic of Macedonia of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The policy was initiated in 1946 by the USSR and later suspended in 1948 again by it¹⁷. Setting up the State of Israel, as well as the embarrassment caused by the Jewish purges in the USSR, provoked mass emigration of the Jewish minority between 10.1948 and 05.1949. Thus, the number of the Jewish population dropped to 6431 people 20% of whom were workers in the mid 1950s¹⁸

A third noticeable tendency are the constant fluctuations in the number of the Turkish minority. This is mainly due to emigration urged both by the governmental policy with regard to the minorities, and by the foreign relations of the country with

¹⁶ Bar-Zoar, M. Op.cit, pp.62-85,107-131,143-152

¹⁷ Panayotov, L. Paleshutki, K. Michev, D. The Macedonian Question and the Bulgarian-Yugoslav Relations. Sofia 1991, pp. 98-118; Angelov, V. Chronicle of a National Treason. Blagoevgrad 1999.

¹⁸ Vassileva, B. Jews..., pp.22,117-118,123-125,142,147

neighbouring Turkey. The flow of refugees had its peaks in 1949 – 1951 – 155 523 people; 1970 – 1973 – 36 401 people; 1977 – 1978 – 72 743 people; 1989 – 150 000 – 218 000 people. At the same time, the growth of population made up for the consequences of emigration. For example, in the region of Kurdzhali, in 1959 – 1964, it was 25.3 ‰ against 8.6 ‰¹⁹.

The fourth tendency shows a great increase of the Roma minority, which, off the record, numbers 576 927 people. This is due to the specific governmental policy, the measures adopted for its settling (Ordinance issued by the Council of Ministers of 1958) and its higher standard of living in comparison with the previous period.

The main objective of the communist totalitarian regime over the period under review was to get the minorities affiliated with its policy and power and involved in the reforms. In an effort to achieve the objective, offices were set up consecutively to the Secretariat of the Bulgarian Communist Party to deal with the Turkish population and the national minorities. The classical rule “divide and rule” was applied to all foreign groups. According to researchers this policy had three periods:

The first period, 1944 – 1958, is known for the attitude of tolerance towards the Turks and the Pomaks. The Constitution of 1947 guaranteed them the status of “national minority”. The Constitution provided for equality of all citizens before the law; privileges based on nationality, origin, faith and income were forbidden; freedom of religions was guaranteed; it contained also a number of labour, social and economic rights which (in accordance with the communist policy) were put to the fore before the civil and political ones. In the field of education, they had a cultural autonomy, which was mainly in the form of nationalisation and generous financial support for schools, training in the mother tongue, granting scholarships and special quotas for Turkish students to continue their education in higher institutions, establishment of Turkish theatres, issue of Turkish newspapers, and broadcasting of Turkish radio programmes. An exception is the re-settling period (1950–1951), which was a result of the policy of cold war, the difficulties with the Turks’ collectivisation and the start of the propaganda concerning the Bulgarian origin of the Pomaks in this country and against their identification as Turks.

The second stage covered the period 1958–1962 when the accelerated industrialisation and recently finalised village co-operation had to be reinforced by the Turkish and Roma population. Thus, the Turkish cultural independence was gradually destroyed, and attention was focused on the Roma, Pomaks and Tartars. The Roma were deprived of their nomadic life and closed in ghettos in the big towns, provided with jobs in the co-operative farms and isolated in specially segregated schools. Over the period 1964 – 1974, to avoid their identification as Turks and further emigration, they were forced together with the Pomaks to change their Muslim names. The traditional policy of exile was applied to the Turks, and in the beginning of the 1970s an assimilation campaign was taken up following the Cyprus precedent and the booming Islam fundamentalism. Initially, the term “minority” was deleted in the Constitution (1971) and was replaced by “common nation”. An individual approach was accepted again giving the right the 'non-Bulgarians' to study their mother tongue. The clause for the development of one's own culture dropped. The Constitution banned the 'privileges' but it added the 'limitations'. New elements were included as sex, race and education. Instead of 'faith' they use 'religion', and 'property status' was replaced by 'social and material status'. The labour, economic and social rights were guaranteed by the Constitution. However, in 1975 nationality was not indicated in the

¹⁹ Büchschütz, U. Op.cit, pp.236, 238-239.

identity cards any more. Further on, in 1981, the celebration of the 1300 anniversary of the establishment of Bulgaria was held in the spirit of nationalism, and the end of 1984 marked the beginning of the third stage of overt assimilation through mass and forced change of names of the Bulgarian Turks first in the Rhodopes, and in 1985 in north-eastern Bulgaria. This resulted not only in extreme confrontation, but also in casualties, and consequently to the formation of an illegal Turkish terrorist organisation, and a huge flow of emigrants to Turkey from May until September 1989. Those events facilitated the speedy collapse of the internal totalitarian regime as they caused severe economic difficulties and accelerated the appearance of the Bulgarian dissidents.²⁰

2.4. Post-break up of communist countries 1989-2003

Demographic trends and migrations. The last census data reveals several demographic trends concerning minorities in Bulgaria. The number of the Turkish minority is significantly decreasing, which is mainly a result of migration. At the beginning of the 1990s, the emigration was mainly to Turkey, about which data is still controversial. Generally, figures are as follows: 1990 – 71 195 people, 1991 – 32 614., 1992 – 23 490 people, 1992 – 2001 – 53 388 people. For the Rhodopes, the figure is 109 525 people.²¹

Table 3

Number and percentage of Bulgaria's minority population 1992-2001

Population	1992	%	2001	%
Turks	800052	9.4	746664	9.5
Roma	313396	3.4	370908	4.6
Russians	17139	0.2	15595	0.2
Armenians	13677	0.2	10832	0.1
Jews	3461	0.04	1363	0.02
Macedonians			5071	0.1
Greeks	4930	0.1	3408	0.04
Vallachs	7650	0.1	10556	0.1
Tartars	4515	0.1		

Sources: Statistic Annual of Republic of Bulgaria. Sofia, 1994, p.51; www.nsi.bg. Blanks appear where no information is available.

As early as the end of the 1990s, the contemporary ethnologists tried to identify the causes and directions of the obvious migration. According to them, in 1991 – 1992, it was entirely directed to Turkey, where most families had relatives-immigrants, and their motivation implied more political and religious reasons – fear of a return of the Bulgarian Socialist Party to power and a new renaming campaign.

1992 was the time of short stay migrations, the so-called “suitcase trading”, to the Turkish border, urged by a rising desire for emancipation and common

²⁰ Büchsenschütz, U. Op.cit, pp.193-200.

²¹ Ibidem, p.239; Tomova, I. Social changes and Ethno-Religious Relations. - In: Fotev, G. Neighbourhood..., p.209.

countrywide euphoria for migration. The time of real economic emigration, however, came later in 1993 – 1995, induced by devaluation of the lev, vanishing of the personal savings, delayed agrarian reform, closure of a great number of public enterprises, and tobacco buy-up crisis. Main destinations then became Germany, Holland, Denmark, and Sweden. Internal migration was resumed to cities with construction sites. Another boom of the Turkish emigration was registered in 1996 – 1997, which was undoubtedly driven by the economic conditions²².

An updated report of the National Statistics Institute shows that over the last years the Turks constitute some 12% of the emigrating Bulgarian citizens, in particular, 13% of the permanent emigrants, 12% of the migrants for employment purposes and 10% of the short-term migrants. Against the number of the minority, the percentage of migration with it appears to be the highest, mostly men of elementary education and up to the age of 40. Main destinations were Germany, Spain, Canada, the USA for a long stay, and Greece, Spain and the UK for a short stay. According to information in the press, whole areas of the Eastern Rhodopes are running out of young and male population of relatively high education and qualifications. More than 10 000 men are working abroad on construction sites in the big cities of Holland. Real colonies of relatives and fellow-countrymen have been formed by the illegal workers in greenhouses, restaurants, car wash facilities, who are regularly expelled by the Dutch authorities²³. Migration is mainly explained by lack of employment, availability of relatives in Turkey, rather than problems with employers. This is a continuation of a labour stereotype of the men in the Rhodopes from the 1960-1980s, provoked by the new conditions of crisis²⁴.

Demographic data shows a tangible increase of the number and percentage of the Roma population. Researchers consider that censuses do not even show real figures, as there is information of changed self-identification of the Roma due to the current state of affairs in the country. The main reason for this “boom” is the high birth rate with this population. Thus, in 1999 most Roma families (31.2 %) had 2 children at the average value of 15.4% for the country; families of 3 children represented 12.7 % against 1.5 %, and families of 4 or more children were 9.6 % against 0.8 %²⁵.

The same tendency of migration is noticed with the Roma population. In the beginning of the 1990s, the Roma population left in most cases the border areas, the Black Sea region, as well as the Shumen and Razgrad municipalities. Latest data shows that the Roma constitute 6 % of all emigrants, 2 % of the permanent emigrants, 8 % represent the emigrants for employment purposes, and 4 % are the short-stay emigrants. The age and education factors, as well as the destinations coincide with those of the Turks. In addition to the above-listed countries, lots of Roma sought employment in France, Sweden and Finland in 2002–2003²⁶.

What is characteristic for the immigration state in Bulgaria during the past years, when still in a political and economic transition, is that it intensively produced emigrants (its own population including the minorities) and, at the same time, because of its low standard of living and high unemployment rates, it turned into a country

²² Georgiva, Ts. The Motivation for Emigration of the Bulgarian Turks. – Between Adaptation....., pp.48-49,51,56-59,60.

²³ The Contemporary Development of the Migration Policy in Bulgaria. Report of the National Statistical Institute. 2002. – archives of the ISTUR, p.25; 'Sega' newspaper, № 92,22.04.2003.

²⁴ Karamihova, M. The Emigration Attitudes in the Rhodopes. Sofia 2002. – Archive of IMIR, p.13.

²⁵ Noncheva, T. Social Profile of the Ethnic Groups in Bulgaria. Center for Study of Democracy. Sofia 2000. – www.csd.bg/news/Club2EthnicB-speech.htm

²⁶ Contemporary Development..., p.25; Tomova, I. The Gypsies...p.75.

which did not attract immigrants from neighbouring countries or from the 'third world'.

Constitutional regulation. After the collapse of the communist regime (10.11.1989), Bulgaria undertook a hard transition from totalitarianism to democracy. During this period the attitude to minorities underwent fundamental changes as a general rule, and particularly to some of them. In the pre-election platforms in 1990, the new parties declared that they would defend the minorities' rights, consolidate the ethnic identity, the right of mother tongue and free choice of name. These principles and all guarantees for civil rights and liberties were incorporated into the text of the new Constitution (12.07.1991).

The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria (CRB) adopted in 1991 proclaims the principle of equality and non-discrimination. It reads: "All persons are born free and equal in dignity and rights. All citizens shall be equal before the law. There shall be no privileges or restriction of rights on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic self-identity, sex, origin, religion, education, opinion, political affiliation, personal, social or property status."

This Article looks perfectly in compliance with the existing international standards but in 1992 the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Bulgaria issued a Decision that raised some questions. At first place the Court declared that the characteristics enumerated in the second section were the only ones on which discrimination was prohibited. Obviously that created conflict between CRB and the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR). From minorities' point of view this is not such a great problem since the Article enumerates most of their basic characteristics. The Court however analyzed the issue of privileges and decided that they were inadmissible on the grounds enumerated in Art.6. This created some concerns that special measures undertaken with view to improve the situation of minorities might meet the objection that they are in contradiction with the Constitution. On the other hand, the Constitution itself allows for privileges in some of its provisions when the privileges are "necessary for society and socially justified"²⁷.

It is worth making a short historical review on the Bulgarian constitutional development with regard to the equality principle. In 1879 the recently liberated country adopted its first Constitution of the Principality of Bulgaria (the so-called Turnovo Constitution). The latter declared equality for all Bulgarian subjects and did not include explicit prohibition of discrimination. The first socialist Constitution of 1947 that repealed the Turnovo one, announced equality for all citizens and prohibited privileges on the ground of nationality, origin, belief and property status. Separate provision emphasized the equality between men and women in all the spheres of society. The third Constitution that was enacted in 1971 and stayed in force until the adoption of the now-in-force one, prohibited not only privileges but restrictions as well.

The next important issue is the constitutional regulation of the rights of the persons belonging to minorities. At first place, it should be noted that CRB and therefore the whole legal system does not use the term "minority". The Constitutional Court had to make two very delicate decisions from a political point of view when it had to decide whether the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF whose electorate is predominantly Turkish) and the Macedonian "OMO-Ilinden-PIRIN"

²⁷ Decision No14/10.11. 1992 on Constitutional Case No 14/91.

organization²⁸ were constitutional. In both cases the Court avoided to use the term minority. In other words Bulgaria is reluctant to expressly recognize the minorities in its legal system.

On the other hand the Legislator could not and did not neglect the existence of ethnic, religious, cultural and other differences in the state. CRB contains a number of provisions related to the rights and interests of the persons belonging to minorities. Thus for example it envisages that citizens whose mother language is not Bulgarian have the right to study and use their own language along with the compulsory study of the Bulgarian language and they have the right to develop their own culture in accordance with their ethnic affiliation. Further, freedom of religion is guaranteed and “believers from different denominations” are mentioned. At the same time the Constitution prohibits the foundation of parties on ethnic, racial or religious ground. In the above mentioned Decision on the constitutionality of the MRF the Constitutional Court interpreted this provision narrowly with regard of the cases it covers and at the same time liberally with view of the political programs, the internal rules and the membership structure of MRF. As a result MRF was found constitutional. What is more, the Court stated that Bulgarian Constitution recognizes the existence of ethnic, linguistic, religious differences. The Court went even further in 1998 when it decided that the Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities is in compliance with CRB, and concluded that the term “national minority” is actually recognized by Bulgarian Law since it is included in ECHR which is ratified by the state. It is true that in 2000 the same Court declared “OMO-Iinden – PIRIN” unconstitutional organization claiming that its activities were directed against the territorial integrity of the State. All this comes to say that although CRB and the ordinary legislation of Bulgaria enacted by the Parliament do not use the term “national (or ethnic, linguistic, religious, etc.) minority” as black letter law, both of them keep in mind, at least to some extent, the interests of these groups and therefore recognize their existence.

State and Party Policy. In the first years the attention was focused on the Turkish minority, which was allowed to retrieve their names through administrative channels rather than through the court (March, 1990) and to establish a Turkish and Muslim party called the Movement for Rights and Freedoms. Further on, it was integrated into the political life and represented on a national and local level, as well as in the public administration.

By the end of 1990s, the Roma rose as a priority. To that end, the government of the United Democratic Forces adopted the Framework Programme for equal integration of the Roma into the Bulgarian society. The Program highlighted a set of measures – programs for qualification and employment, a special state fund for credit disbursement to employers of Roma, establishment of the category “vulnerable ethnic minorities” in the Employment Promotion Act, land settlement, preparation of a law against discrimination, establishment of a national minorities agency, inclusion of the Roma into programs for health education and into the schemes of the public electronic media, special measures of education for the Roma women.

Another document is the programme of the new government of the National Movement of Simeon II “People are Bulgaria’s treasure” (2001). It briefly but still so vaguely presents the short- and long-term priorities, most of which merely repeat the previous government’s priorities. Those claiming originality – the strategy for

²⁸ Decision No 4/21.04.1992 on Constitutional Case, No 1/91; Decision No 1/29.02.2000 on Constitutional case, № 3/99.

development of underdeveloped areas inhabited by minorities, and the monitoring of the Roma framework programme – still have not been implemented.

Bulgaria has ratified a number of international treaties concerning the rights of the individuals belonging to minorities such as the UN Covenant in Civil and Political Rights, ECHR, The Framework Convention on National Minorities (9.10 1997, 18. 02. 1999). It should be mentioned that due to the delay on the part of Bulgaria to submit its report on the application of the latter the CE consultative committee still has not expressed its opinion with regard to Bulgaria. Since March 2000 Bulgaria has been negotiating its integration in EU which makes even more pressing the need to harmonise its domestic legislation with the European one.

It is hardly a coincidence that in the latest regular report of the European Commission on the progress of Bulgaria, it is stated that the framework programme is not being implemented and that the Roma are still suffering social inequality due to lack of any relevant amendments to the law, no access to health services or representation in local administrative authorities. It is also pointed that there are no conditions for social and economic integration of the ethnic Turks²⁹.

Legislation. The most important statute concerning the labour relations is the **Labour Code (LC)** in force since 1986. Although adopted during the totalitarian rule and under a Constitution that was later repealed this Act is still in force. This is possibly due to large-scale amendments that changed fundamentally its content and principles and brought it, at least to some extent, in correspondence with the new economic, social and political conditions in this country. Still, it is to be regretted that the so-called “Labour Constitution” of Bulgaria contains a small number of provisions related to individuals belonging to minorities. The most important one reads: ‘In the exercise of labour rights and duties no direct or indirect discrimination, privileges or restrictions shall be allowed on grounds of ethnicity, origin, sex, race, skin colour, age, political and religious convictions, affiliation to trade union and other public organisations and movements, family, social and property status and disability.’ Since the adoption of the LC this provision was amended twice and that led to prohibiting discrimination, privileges and restrictions on the grounds enumerated therein. The amendment in 2001 expressly prohibited not only direct but indirect discrimination as well³⁰.

At the same time the wording of the provision raises some doubts in the part where it states that the envisaged prohibition is applied only “in the exercise of labour rights and duties...”. Such formulation may lead to the conclusion that the protection starts only after labour relation is established i.e. after a given person starts to work under the corresponding labour contract. In other words there is no obstacle for the employer to refuse to hire a person because of his/her ethnic affiliation. In such cases

²⁹ UDF Pre-Election Program. 1990, p10-11; Framework program. – www.bghelsinki.org; Government Program. – www.government.bg; Commission of the European Communities. Regular Report. Brussels 2002, p.42.

³⁰ §7 of the concluding and transitional provisions LC reads: "Indirect" discrimination shall be such where decisions seemingly admissible by law decisions are applied in the implementation of labour rights and duties, but are applied in a manner, which in view of the criteria under Article 8, paragraph (3), actually and as a matter of fact render some employees in a more disadvantaged or a more privileged position compared to other. The differences or preferences based on qualification requirements for performing certain work, as well as such for the purpose of special protection of some employees (underage, pregnant women and mothers of young children, disabled persons, persons transferred to more appropriate jobs, etc.), set by normative acts, shall not be deemed discrimination.

the individuals belonging to minorities may rely on the protection of the CRB that guarantees the right to work. Still it is doubtful to what extent Bulgarian Courts are inclined to apply the constitutional provisions in their practice despite the fact that CRB itself declares that its provisions are directly applicable.

It is difficult to find other texts in LC related to the interests of the minorities. On the contrary, there are provisions that contain “hidden” discrimination. A good example is Art.154, which enumerates the official holidays in Bulgaria. This provision has gone through numerous amendments since 1986 but always the holidays envisaged were either secular or typical for the dominating Christian religion. Still, in 1992 two new sections were included. The first one introduced an obligation for the employer to grant to individuals belonging to denomination different from the Christian Orthodox one, part of their paid leave or unpaid leave (as the worker prefers), on the days of the respective religious holidays.

The Labour Code is a typical example of the approach of the Bulgarian Law towards minorities. The attitude towards these communities is characterised by a protection granted mainly by the equality and non-discrimination provisions i.e. through formally declared equality whose factual realisation remains questionable. Rules containing special rights for individuals belonging to groups in disadvantaged position are rare and usually minorities are not among them. Thus, for example, there is a rule titled “Special Protection for Some Groups of Employees”. This special protection is granted to juveniles, women and persons with partial incapacity to work but not to individuals belonging to minorities.

As far as the legal possibilities for the trade unions to carry out activities aimed at the integration of the minorities are concerned, one may mention the envisaged in LC **social dialogue and tripartite cooperation institutions** and also the explicitly declared right of the workers to associate in order to protect their interests. Further, the trade unions have the right to visit enterprises, demand from the employer explanations and provision of the required information and documents; obtain information directly from the employees on all issues concerning compliance with the labour legislation. There is no doubt that if the trade unions have the good will and the necessary expert knowledge, they may contribute to the improvement of the situation of workers belonging to minorities even based on the small number of provisions in CRB, LC and on some other pieces of legislation.

Two other statutes that are important for the trade unions are the **Collective Labour Disputes Settlement Act (CLDSA)** of 1990 and the **Healthy and Safe Conditions of Work Act (HSCWA)** of 1997. Both of them have general approach with no specific provisions concerning minorities. It is worth mentioning that only the HSCWA envisages the creation of regional councils and councils according to the existing industrial branches that will deal with the working conditions. Since trade unions are participants in these councils and since some of the minorities are concentrated in certain regions and occupations, this creates conditions for more adequate approach to their problems.

Another important statute is the **Civil Servants Act (CSA)** of 1999. According to this Act state officials have the right to associate in order to protect their interests. Since their number is significant as compared to the existing labour force, the CSA is of importance for the relation *trade unions – minorities*. CSA contains a provision that is similar to the LC. The corresponding Article does not allow in state office any discrimination, privileges or restrictions based on race, nationality, ethnic affiliation,

sex, origin, religion, convictions, membership in political, trade union or other organisations or movements, personal, social or property status.

As far as the grounds on which discrimination is prohibited LC and CSA are almost identical. Of course there are some slight differences. Thus for example CSA does not mention “skin color” but includes “Ethnic affiliation”. In practice CSA repeats the wording of the corresponding constitutional provision apart from the omission of the term “education” and the inclusion of membership in political trade union or other organizations or movements. There are two more important differences between the anti-discrimination provisions of LC and CSA. On the one hand the latter does not differentiate direct and indirect discrimination. On the other, it is submitted that it refers to relations existing before a given individual starts working as a civil servant. Therefore the CSA is a special Act with regard to LC and the provisions of the latter should be applied whenever CSA does not envisage special rules, as is the case with discrimination during the existence of the relationship. As a whole it may be concluded that civil servants and applicants thereof are better protected than individuals working under ordinary labour contract. On the other hand the specific requirements for qualifications, ranks, working experience etc. without doubt seriously restrict the possibilities for representatives of minorities to occupy such type of positions.

Employment Promotion Act (EPA) of 2002 also contains an anti-discrimination provision with definitions for “indirect” and “direct” discrimination. Another interesting provision grants protection against discrimination for the individual before he/she is hired. When announcing free job positions the employers are not allowed to introduce conditions based on gender, age, nationality, ethnic affiliation and health status.

An important moment is the possibility for the trade unions to participate in the bodies dealing with the issue of employment promotion as for example the National Council for Employment Promotion and the Employment Commissions within the Regional Councils established at tripartite principle. The trade unions through their participation in such bodies may act in favour of minorities integration in the labour market, especially in the regions with ethnically mixed population. Such activities may meet some obstacles since EPA itself does not create ground for it. It is true that the statute speaks about “groups in disadvantaged positions” and about “groups at risk”, but it does not mention minorities. Minority members may fall under the application of these provisions only if the terms “other groups” or “individuals living in or endangered to find themselves in social isolation and poverty” are interpreted in their favour.

Representatives of the trade unions take part in the development of the annual Employment National Plan which is elaborated in conformity with the four 'pillars' of the European Employment Strategy. Special programmes are included in this Plan targeted to combat discrimination and social exclusion through access to employment. Roma population has been integrated on the labour market through the program 'From Social Benefits to Employment'. Thus, in 2003 more than 80,000 long-term unemployed have been involved in social activities, the prevailing part of them being minority representatives.

Minorities whose members are not Bulgarian citizens. The most important statute is the **Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (FRBA)** of 1998. It was adopted to replace the old Foreigners' Stay in the People's Republic of Bulgaria Act of 1972. FRBA was seriously amended in order to harmonize the Bulgarian legislation with the existing European standards. To clarify the significance of the

provisions to be analysed it should be noted that according to FRBA “foreigner” is every person who is not Bulgarian citizen, or a person without citizenship who is not considered citizen of any country in compliance with its legislation and who has an official document certifying this quality. At second place it is important to know that there are three possible regimes for foreigners to stay in Bulgaria: short term stay (up to 90 days); long term stay with permitted term up to one year; permanent stay with permitted unlimited term.

With regard to the possibility for foreigners to work in the country, FRBA envisages the following: Those with permanent stay permits are under the regime applicable for the Bulgarian citizens. Foreigners falling under the other two regimes of stay may work as well but only after receiving a permission by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and they are able to work only for the employer and for the term determined in the permission for work (Art.33 FRBA). It deserves mentioning that the very expression of will by a foreigner to work after receiving permission by MLSP serves as a ground for that person to receive a long-term stay permit. Finally, it should be added that foreigners working in Bulgaria have all rights and obligations that Bulgarian citizens have except if the internal legislation or an international treaty do not explicitly provide otherwise.

The latest regular report of the European Commission rates high the new law on employment and also the regulations of 04.2002 which repeals the regime which permits families of foreign workers access to the labour market. Thus, it is considered, that Bulgaria is making progress in ensuring free movement of people. The process of European integration, which was initiated in 1998 and expected to be finalised in 2007, is a well-grounded reason for the Bulgarian authorities to strive toward pursuing a policy of tolerance and non-discrimination of foreigners based on guaranteeing all individual rights and liberties regardless of race, nationality, ethnic group, religion, skin colour.

Another important statute is the **Asylum and Refugees Act (ARA)** that entered into force in the end of 2002. It repealed the Refugees Act of 1999 once again in order to bring Bulgarian Law closer to the global and European standards. ARA created more systematic and better-organized regulations on the issues of refugees, asylum, humanitarian and temporary protection.

According to the Asylum and Refugees Act, individuals that are granted asylum or have refugee status have equal rights on the labour market as all Bulgarian citizens. The restrictions refer to some political and civil rights as it is probably in the other European countries, i.e. they may not participate in national and local elections, and in national or local referenda; they may not establish or become members of political parties; they may not occupy positions where the Law explicitly requires Bulgarian citizenship; they may not serve in the Bulgarian Armed Forces. ARA envisages that other statutes may introduce further restrictions. Individuals granted humanitarian protection have the same status as foreigners with permanent stay permit. In other words they have all possibilities to work and use trade union protection.³¹ This is confirmed by Art.70 of EPA. According to its provisions foreigners with permanent residence permit, as well as those who are granted the right to asylum, or refugee or humanitarian status, do not need preliminary permission by the Employment Agency in order to start to work. Foreigners who are granted temporary protection have the right to work as well but only under the conditions

³¹ It should be notified that the revoked Refugees Act envisaged that during the procedure for granting refugee status the corresponding applicant could work with the help of the Refugees Agency. There is no such a provision in ARA.

specified by the Council of Minister in the same document that has granted the right to temporary protection. It should be mentioned that the State Agency on Refugees has the task to assist foreigners to adapt to the specific conditions in Bulgaria; to organize training in Bulgarian language and classes for professional qualification; to assist the integration of foreigners who are granted protection; to create on its own or to participate in the preparation of draft legislative bills or international treaties related to the protection of the foreigners; to develop programs for the integration of foreigners looking for protection in the Bulgarian society. It looks as though there is no obstacle for the trade unions to offer at least advisory services in such kind of activities.

Finally, some examples for restrictions on foreigners with regard to employment may be presented. Foreigners are prohibited to work as state officers (State Officials Act) or in the Judicial System (Judicial System Act and the Supreme Administrative Court Act) and in the system of the law enforcing agencies (Ministry of Interior Act).

From 1994 until the end of 2001, 2205 work permits were issued to foreigners – mostly citizens of the USA (332), Turkey (169), Ukraine (165), Russia (152), Greece (135), Yugoslavia (125), and least of the Netherlands (19), and Belgium (31). By mid 2002, 4758 foreigners were granted work permit³². The majority of them are employed by foreign investing companies or qualified consultants, teachers in high and higher educational institutions.

The Greeks and Turks are predominantly entrepreneurs, traders and owners of companies, and the wars in Yugoslavia and the Caucasus generated a number of migrants. The statistics, however, does not take into consideration permanent residents (from 1998 to the mid 2002 they numbered 2397), persons having the right of sanctuary and status of refugees – mainly Arabs from the Near East who have entered the country for purposes of education or as political emigrants of the 1960s or 1980s, Chinese and refugees from Afghanistan, who do not need work permits. The statistics does not account for illegal residents, either, who are employed by private foreign companies and could hardly be subjects of the law, the tax authorities or most unlikely the trade unions.

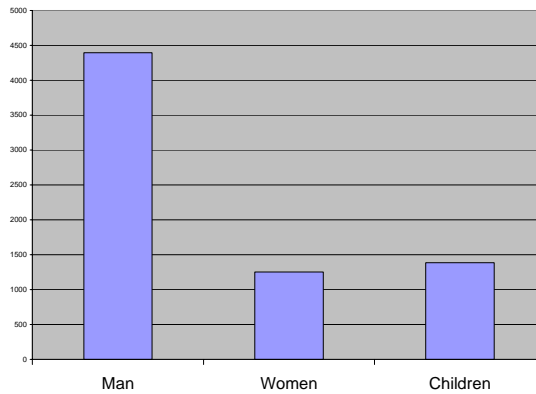
As regards refugees all practical measures the government has delegated to the Refugee's Agency, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the employment offices and the regional employment authorities. They work in close co-operation with the representation of the UN Supreme Commissariat of Refugees in Sofia, the Refugees' Migration Office to the Bulgarian Red Cross and a number of non-governmental organisations. Their joint efforts have the following dimensions. Initially, all foreigners are included in a programme for social consultation and integration, which also provides them with a financial benefit, assistance in the process of registration at the labour market, or enrolment of children with schools or training courses. The second step is a programme for labour and social integration, which provides consultations to migrants on employment contract conclusion or entrepreneurship development.

Since 2001, an Integration Refugees' Centre has been functioning in an effort to provide language and professional qualifications. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, on the other hand, has a number of projects aiming at groups vulnerable at the labour market, incl. refugees³³.

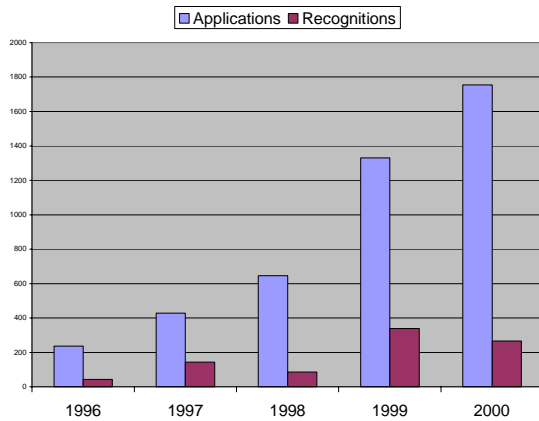
³² Contemporary Development..., pp.12,21-22.

³³ Ibidem, pp .4,10-12,15-17,19-20; Commission of European Communities. Regular Report. Brussels, 2002, pp.69-70.

Refugees during the period 1994 - 2001



Comparison of the Refugee Applications and Recognitions (AR statistical data)



Source: National Report Bulgaria.
http://www.pace-project.info/html/bulgarian_report.htm

According to different estimates, which remain rather approximate, the number of legal immigrants is about 108 000, e.g. naturalized - 3 600, permanently residing - 40,000. Long-term temporary residing - 64,400. The formal registration of asylum-seekers and refugees in Bulgaria started in 1991. The number of persons who submitted applications for refugee status during the period 1994 - June 2001 is 7 029 from 66 countries out of which 4 394 are men (62.51%), 252 are women (17.81%) and 1 383 (19.68%) are children..

The illegal residents in Bulgaria vary between 30 and 50 thousand people. The number of illegal residents is most probably higher than that of legally resident foreigners in the country. (http://www.pace-project.info/html/bulgarian_report.htm).

Family Unification. It is accepted that FRBA is in correspondence with the European recommendations in that sphere. According to its provisions a person may acquire a long stay permit if she/he has married a Bulgarian citizen or a foreigner permanently residing in the country and if the marriage has lasted for more than two years the permission may be for permanent stay. Long-stay permit may be acquired by the financially ensured parents of foreigners with permanent stay in the country; and the members of the family of a foreigner who has received a permission for long stay in Bulgaria.

Permanent stay permit may be granted to small or below age children of Bulgarian citizen or of a foreigner with permanent stay in the country if the children are not married; and to parents of Bulgarian citizens when they provide the due legally established support, and in the cases of acknowledgement or adoption - upon expiration of 3 years from the acknowledgement or adoption.

At the end it should be added that generally FRBA does not allow a permission for stay granted on certain ground to be extended on another except in special cases. It is expressly envisaged that marriage with Bulgarian citizen represents a special case. Of course there are provisions against sham marriages.

According to ARA individuals with the right to asylum or refugee status have the right to unite with the members of their family, if they sign a declaration that for the other family members there are no grounds for refusal of refugee or humanitarian status. As far as individuals granted humanitarian protection are concerned they are under the rules applying to foreigners with permanent stay permit (as it was mentioned above). The members of the family of the foreigner have the same rights and obligations as s/he.

Acquisition of Bulgarian Citizenship. Traditionally Bulgarian Constitutions regulate citizenship applying the principle of the right of the blood (*jus sanguinis*), and not the one determining the origin according to the place of birth (so called right of the soil or *jus soli*). The second is applied only as supplement to the first one. Thus, according to Art. 25 CRB Bulgarian citizen is everyone born by parents at least one of whom has Bulgarian citizenship. A person born on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria may acquire Bulgarian citizenship only if s/he does not acquire other citizenship by virtue of origin. The possibility for naturalisation is envisaged as well with facilitated procedure for persons of Bulgarian origin.

The corresponding provision in the Turnovo Constitution (1879), although worded differently, in fact had the same meaning as the contemporary constitutional text. According to Art. 54 an individual born on the territory of the country becomes a Bulgarian subject if s/he did not acquire other citizenship. Therefore *jus sanguinis* was preferred which is confirmed by the second sentence of the same provision according to which individuals born outside the territory of the Principality by Bulgarian parents were subjects of the state.

Both socialist Constitutions (1947 and 1971) did not pay much attention to the issue of citizenship. The first one de facto did not contain any provision, while the second simply declared that the matter was to be regulated by the ordinary legislation (Art.34).

Nowadays the issue is regulated by the Bulgarian Citizenship Act (BCA) of 1998. Its provisions on acquisition of citizenship by origin and place of birth are in full compliance with those of CRB but naturally more detailed. According to BCA a child born on the territory of the country by foreign parents may acquire Bulgarian citizenship only in case that the country of origin of the parents adheres to the principle of *jus soli*.

The next issue is the naturalization. In order a person to acquire Bulgarian citizenship s/he must meet the following requirements:

- To have reached legal age of majority;
- To have been permanent resident of the country for at least five years;
- Not to have been sentenced for intentionally committed crime prosecuted ex officio by the state and not to be suspect or accused in a criminal procedure related to this type of crimes;

- To have income or occupation that allows him/her sufficient resources for maintenance;
- To master Bulgarian language;
- To have been freed by his/her former citizenship or to lose it at the moment of the acquisition of Bulgarian one.

There are certain categories of persons that are treated more favourably with regard to the above-enumerated requirements. Thus, individuals with the right to asylum or refugee status may become Bulgarian citizens in three years after the corresponding right/status has been granted to them and they do not have to lose their former citizenship. The same applies to foreigners permanently residing in Bulgaria that do not have any citizenship. It deserves mentioning that individuals born on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria who have acquired permanent residence permit before attaining majority may acquire Bulgarian citizenship after three years of permanent stay. Still they have to lose their former citizenship.

If the now in force BCA is compared with the former Bulgarian Citizenship Act of 1968, the following conclusions may be reached. As far as the acquisition of citizenship by origin and by birth are concerned the differences are rather formal than in the substance of the provisions. At the same time, the approach to the naturalization issue shows some serious changes. The repealed BCA (as it looked after the last amendments in it, introduced in 1989) looked more liberal than the now in force. The only requirement for the naturalization of a foreigner was five year permanent stay in the country. Several moments should be emphasized. First, the old statute did not require a person to attain majority in order to acquire citizenship. It is true that both Acts rule that children follow the citizenship of the parents but under the now in force regulations a child may not acquire citizenship if s/he does not have parents but is under legal guardianship. Second, the requirement for loss of former citizenship excludes the possibility for a person to have dual citizenship that existed under the old BCA. Finally it is arguable to what extent is necessary the requirement for the applicant to master Bulgarian language.

As a matter of fact, a review for example of the Bulgarian Nationality Act of 1903, may lead to the conclusion that its provisions on naturalization were even more liberal. Thus, for instance, individual born on the territory of the country by foreign parents, who at the time of the attainment of legal majority had residence on the territory of the state, could become ex officio subject of the state, provided s/he did not expressly object to that. Further, every individual born on the territory of the country had the right, after obtaining majority and until 22 years of age, to become Bulgarian subject, provided she/he de facto started to live in the country within one year.

3. Islam in present day Bulgaria

Amidst the rising concerns about Muslim-Christian relations in present-day and future Europe it is often forgotten that Islam is not entirely alien and that Europe has its own autochthonous Muslim population, inhabiting its southeastern part. About 1,2 million people or 12 % of the total population of Bulgaria confess Islam. Ethnically, the Bulgarian Muslims are Turks, Pomaks, Roma and Tartars.

The Muslim population of the Balkans is part of the legacy of the five-century Ottoman rule of the Balkans, which started with the Ottoman conquest of the Peninsula in the 14th –15th century and lasted virtually to the end of the WW1. The present day Muslim population of the Balkan states is the result of two important processes which lasted for centuries: colonisation, i.e. the invasion and settlement of

Turkish colonists from Asia Minor and Islamization, i.e. the conversion (voluntary or forcible) of local population to Islam. The correlation between the two processes as well as between the voluntary and forcible Islamization is a disputable and highly controversial issue.

3.1. The peculiarities of Balkan Islam.

Islam in the Balkans is syncretic and rather different from its pure classical forms.³⁴ With the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans Islam gradually built up specific religious forms which made it not so alien and hostile to the local Christian population. The advancing Islam met and interacted both with the pagan layers of pre-Christian beliefs and the Christian dogmas, ideas and cults. This *mass Islam* deviated from the official doctrine of the Muslim theologians. Islam as a monotheistic religion allows the worship of only one god – Allah. The dogma “*lia illiah illiallah*” [*there is no other God than Allah*] is the ultimate, irrefutable evidence of the absolute monotheism of Islam. In the Balkans, however, under the influence of the ancient polytheistic traditions a cult to the saints took form in contrast to the official doctrine. Mass Islam did not reject the ideas and customs of the local population, but adapted them to itself by a new interpretation. In such a way it absorbed and preserved the remains of the religious beliefs of the conquered peoples. A peculiar assimilation of alien religious views took place. This process led to the emergence of common Christian and Muslim saints.

Later, with the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, the mutual influence of the religious beliefs continued. Elements of the Christian civilisation were being adopted by the Muslim society in Asia Minor and the Balkan, while at the same time the locals mastered the components of Islamic culture. Islam’s adaptation to the local customs of the autochthonous population gave birth to various local forms of Islam. This, as well as the Christian-pagan image of the local population, facilitated the interaction of Islam and Christianity in the Balkans.

Sunni, as official Islam, was introduced in the Balkans mainly by the higher classes, the administration and the clergymen. Because of that, its main centres were the cities. For the spread of Islam among the local population a greater role was played by the Muslim orders, while rituals and ritual systems were closer to the local beliefs. Although the Sufi orders varied considerably, they were united by their quality to influence religious life emotionally, rather than legally-dogmatically. They performed interesting mystic rituals, which were attractive both to the lower and higher social strata. The *Sufi-dervish* orders, for example, were among the most fervent supporters of the saints. This brought them closer to the local Christian population.

Thus, when Islam and Christianity met in the Balkans instead of a civilizational clash, what actually happened was a contact between the representatives of the two religions in the common sacred places, where they learnt about each other and influenced each other. The inherited pagan ritual of making sacrifices and

³⁴ See on Balkan Islam: Norris, H.T. Islam in the Balkans, Religion and Society between Europe and the Arab world. London: Hurst, 1993; Bougarel, X. et N. Clayer (eds.). Le Nouvel Islam balkanique. Les musulmans, acteurs du post-communisme 1990-2000. Maisonneuve et Larose, Paris, 2001. The Faith of the Muslim Communities in the Balkans, vol. 2 Muslim Culture in Bulgaria, S. IMIR, 1998; A.Zhelyazkova. The Spread of Islam in the West-Balkan Lands under Ottoman Rule XV-XIX c. S., 1990, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

presents to the saints brought closer people on the basis of every day life and detached them from the strict dogmas and bans of the two official doctrines – the Muslim and the Christian. In the folk religions of the Balkans the Muslim and the Christian saints belonged to the same category of religious phenomena. For this reason, the Christians often visited (and still visit) Muslim sacred places, or used the specific help of their spiritual leaders. The opposite was also true - Muslims often sought spiritual satisfaction in the Christian ritual places and sanctuaries.

Centers of Muslim religious propaganda and spiritual communication between Muslims and Christians are scattered all over the territory of the Balkans. Initially they were devoted to some Christian saint and after the coming of the conquerors – to popular Muslim sectarian saints. On certain dates population of different ethnic and religious belonging gathered together at the sacred places, where they indulged to common rituals, usually inherited from the pagan period. The common saint holidays and consecrated grounds revived some Balkan pagan rituals and customs, but they acquired certain oriental features due to the domination of the Muslim religion.

A basic specifics of the Muslim communities in the Balkans is the fact that they consisted not only of the new-comers, but also of Islamized locals, which left a strong imprint on the character of Balkan Islam.

3.2. The identity of present day Bulgarian/Balkan Muslims.

There are three basic characteristics, which determine the identity of Muslims in the present day Balkans: First, this is the tradition of the century-old system of contacts and co-habitation between the Muslims and Christians. Second comes the definitely mild and syncretic form of Muslim confession, including a number of tolerant and preaching non-violence orders, like the very popular in the Balkan lands Order of the *bektashi*. Third, *today* we can add the pronounced secularism of the Balkan Muslims.

The Bulgarian Muslims or the Bosnian Muslims categorically identify themselves as *European Muslims*; they are very far from the religious fanaticism and servitude to old, pre-modern dogmas and rituals. This, of course, is also the result of decades of militant atheism imposed by the communist regimes³⁵.

A study on the adaptation to Turkey of the Bulgarian Turks, who were forced to leave Bulgaria in 1989, is emblematic in this sense.³⁶ The immigrants from Bulgaria brought with themselves a pronouncedly secular way of life, upon which Islam was only a thin patina. “Their” Islam had been very important in Bulgaria as the basic identification mark of a minority. It had served as a barrier against the assimilation efforts of the authorities and against the danger of de-personalization in the natural processes of integration. In the new cultural environment of Turkey, without knowing well the Koranic rules, the Bulgarian Muslims were happy with their newly acquired freedom to fulfill without restraint and fear all every day rituals, inherited from their parents. Very soon however the differences between the two levels of religiousness became visible. The newly arrived Bulgarian Muslims, even those deeply believing and respecting Islam, did not find it necessary to interrupt their

³⁵ Zhelyazkova, A. Islamization in the Balkans as a Historiographical Problem: the South-east-European perspective. - In: The Ottoman and the Balkans. Adanir, F. and S. Farouqi (eds.), Brill. Leiden-Boston-Koln 2002. pp. 223-267.

³⁶ Between Adaptation and Nostalgia. The Bulgarian Turks in Turkey. Edited by Antonina Zhelyazkova. IMIR, Sofia, 1998, pp. 11-45

work or other occupations five times a day for prayers; they did not consider it a sin not to go to the mosque everyday but only on Friday and even then not regularly, but on holidays. They felt embarrassed when their colleagues at their work place interrupted work for the noon prayer, or left their jobs on Fridays, they found all this “obsolete, not modern, oriental, silly, ineffective.” The study found particularly striking differences in the position of women and the relation within the family. Much to the amazement of the locals, the new comers from Bulgaria, women and young girls of professions and high self-esteem rushed to pursuing their careers and better education.

The Bulgarians, as the great part of the Balkan Muslims are moderate or indifferent to the Islamic doctrine and adhere mostly to the ritual side of religion. Religion in most of the cases plays an important role as a mark of their ethnic or cultural identity. The huge majority of the Muslim population of Bulgaria (and of the Balkans) identify themselves with the modern cherished world of Europe and a secular, modernising Turkey, rather than with the native places of the Islamic civilisation, where Islam is close to its sources, where *shariat* dominates and various degrees of fundamentalist forms of religion exist.

In sum, Balkan Muslims exhibit a remarkably flexible identity, or to be more exact – multiple identities. It can be asserted that practically always the political and economic interests of Balkan Muslims have a priority over their religious feelings. When the materialisation of these interests requires some kind of an ideology in order to mobilise or motivate the human resources, it is much easier to achieve this through the mechanisms of nationalism than by some kind of religious fundamentalism, which is generically alien to the numerous ethnic and religious groups populating the Peninsula.

In Bulgaria *Islamophobia* is virtually non-existent. *Turkophobia* is a different thing. As it will be shown further in the text, it is mostly a political construct upon ‘folkloric historical memories, instrumentalized for political reasons from the period of the Bulgarian national revival to the present day threat of Turkish NATO tanks. Bulgarian nationalists often use “Islamic fundamentalism” as a bogeyman, even though Muslims living in Bulgaria have traditionally repudiated religious extremism in all its forms. Consequently, “the Turkish threat” is usually projected outside the country - it is Turkey, and not the Bulgarian Turks, that is singled out as the menace to the Bulgarian nation. Over the last decade, when bilateral relations with Turkey have become friendly and even cordial, and as new and more palpable threats sprang up in the Balkan region, the appeal of such negative attitudes sharply decreased.

Today Muslims in the Balkans are among the staunchest supporters and friends of the U.S. and the West. Anti-Western or anti-Americanism in the Balkans should be sought and found among those in Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and elsewhere, who are not happy with the way that the U.S. had handled the Yugoslav crises as well as all those frustrated with the long and painful transition. On three occasions the U.S. and the West provided massive military and humanitarian intervention on behalf of Muslims in distress: the 1995 Western intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina which stopped the war, the 1999 bombing of Serbia prevented the expulsion from Kosovo of two million ethnic Albanians and in 2001 the West brokered a difficult truce and agreement between the Macedonians and the Albanians. Two months after September 11 the International Crisis Group in a somewhat hasty report “Bin Laden and the Balkans” came to the conclusion that given the large U.S. military built up in the region of the Balkans, as well as the presence of former *mujahidin* in Bosnia and of thousands of Muslim former military and paramilitary

fighters in Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia the potential for terrorist threat was significant. Further with the details, however, the report is less categorical.

3.3. The Bulgarian Ethnic Model

Far from being an ethnic-religious idyll, Bulgaria has historically developed modes of acceptance and appreciation of the others, which remain embedded in the social fabric and constitute an organic part of the culture of toleration that has evolved in the ethnically mixed regions. This model has functioned more or less successfully. Each of the numerous ethnic and religious communities in Bulgaria is able to maintain its own integrity, which is accepted by the others as necessarily different. The positive element in accepting ethnic and religious diversity stems from the centuries-long experience of cohabitation and is linked to generally stable informal relations among the different communities. "Otherness" is accepted calmly and without prejudice, as something known, as a familiar strangeness, which blends into everyday experiences and is therefore not perceived as threatening.³⁷

The other side of the Bulgarian ethnic model is the activity of the political organisation of Bulgarian Turks, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms. Established in 1990, the movement consolidated its presence on the national political scene and became the main motor for the gradual and steady integration of the Bulgarian Muslims in the political, economic and social life of the country. For the first time after Bulgarian independence in 1878, in the course of the decade of the 1990s the Muslims were finally accepted as an indivisible part of the Bulgarian nation, without any serious resistance on the part of the Bulgarian majority.

MRF's success in the parliamentary elections, as well as in the local elections, set before them new and important responsibilities and eased the tension in the ethnically mixed regions. All sociological surveys starting from 1992 until today show a sharp decrease of the negative stereotypes toward Turks and Pomaks. The fact that they are represented in public life by an independent political organisation finally legitimised them in the eyes of Bulgarian society. They are accepted as an integral part of the nation and full-fledged members of the political community. Since June 2001 the "Turkish party" is in the ruling coalition with the National Movement Simeon II; it is largely represented in local level; it disposes of two ministerial positions, plus several district governors and a great number of vice ministers.

These findings are corroborated by anthropological research in the mixed regions. The level of religious tolerance in these regions is very high. Neither Christians nor Muslims seem convinced that their own religion should dominate public life to the exclusion of all others. To the question "How do you accept the people of different faith?" the majority of respondents flatly answered: "People are all the same." As for exceptions to this general goodwill, some intolerance is manifested by 3-5 percent of the Muslims and by 8-10 percent of the Christians³⁸.

³⁷ Zhelyazkova, A. Bulgaria's Muslim Minorities. - In: Bulgaria in Transition. Politics, Economics, Society and Culture after Communism. Bell, J. (ed.). Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1998, pp.165-189; The Bulgarian Ethnic Model. - East European Constitutional Review, vol.10, 2001, № 4, pp. 62-66.

³⁸ See the survey of opinions on ethnoreligious issues held by Christian and Muslim clergymen and by the representatives of local executive power. - In: Aspects of Ethno-Cultural Situation . Access, 2000, Sofia, pp. 11-50; See also the fieldwork archives of the International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations (IMIR) in Sofia.

3.4. Racism in Bulgaria

Social sciences in Bulgaria still cannot decide whether there is racism in the country in the sense the term is used in this project.

Probably, the different cultural and historical experiences and the fact that the post-communist societies lived in relatively closed and isolated world and at the same time were ideologically indoctrinated on the issues of class solidarity with all nations and races in the world, prevented the humanitarian sciences to define a term different from discrimination.

Very small number of experts, mainly specialists in International Law, working on the harmonisation of the Bulgarian legislation with the European standards, have wider understanding for the term “racism”. They try to bring to the public knowledge the texts of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, ratified by Bulgarian Parliament in 1995. Still, most of the specialists in social sciences are not well acquainted with Art. 1 and 2 of the Convention and view them as inapplicable in the Bulgarian conditions.

Only non-governmental organization working in the sphere of human rights as the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC) for instance, include in their annual reports on human rights violations in Bulgaria the term *racism*. Still they use it in a very narrow context obviously unable to apply the philosophy and the scope of the term in its post-modern, objective meaning. In those cases, where some of the small number of NGO experts, working in the sphere of human rights and minority issues, are acquainted with the international instruments, they are usually unable to explain them in comprehensible manner to the public.

In one of the issues of the BHC bulletin “Obektiv” the young African Anthoan Makitu, practising in the organization, raises the question of racial and ethnic discrimination in Bulgaria. The author argues that there is discrimination in spheres as employment, housing, services etc. and that the anti-discrimination measures are not very effective. The author concedes that the Constitution and the ordinary legislation reflect the principles of equality and non-discrimination that are closely related to the human rights, but at the same time points out that the institutional structure that should apply them is not well developed. After elaborating his position, the author comes to the conclusion that cases of violence and manifestations of rejection in Bulgaria are rather xenophobic than racist in their nature, that they are sporadic and the main participants are “skinheads”, nationalistic groups and desperate young people, who cannot find realisation and are afraid of the possibility to become victims of the changes in the society. The report was an attempt to prove the existence of racism in Bulgaria but in fact the author did not manage to go further than the well-known in the country criticism against the social isolation and the usual police abuses.

UNDP early warning monthly reports (EWR) during 2002 and until July 2003 (and even in the previous years) have shown interethnic balance in Bulgaria and absence of extreme manifestations of intolerance, as well as absence of risk or fears in the society with regard to extremist or racist groups actions.

Members of ethnic and religious minorities, as well as the immigrants (whose number is small in Bulgaria) i.e. the ones that are the potential victims of intolerant attitude and denial of access for participation, show almost no fear of xenophobic or racist attitude. Those who are afraid are usually under 1%.

Politicians, journalists and scientists adhere to specific terms when they develop policies, discuss or research different groups in disadvantaged situation. The introduction to the new UNDP/ILO report on the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe

for 2002 introduced unified terminology for research of the development possibilities for Roma in five post-communist countries. The term *racism* was excluded as unacceptable, not commonly recognised and burdened with different content both by the societies as a whole and by the members of the disadvantaged and marginalized communities.

There is an ongoing scientific and social discussion in Bulgaria on the marginalization and exclusion of certain groups of the population and their possibilities for social realisation and participation. More than two years the draft anti-discrimination bill has been discussed on political, legislative and expert level. The task is further impeded by the will of the people engaged in that activity to meet the EU standards on the one hand and the inability of the experts to reconsider, bring up to date and apply the modern and wider content of the terms related to racism. Social sciences and their analyses and prognoses get easier access to the Bulgarian society and the marginalized groups if they use terms as “disintegration”, “segregation”, “assimilation”, “social exclusion”, “marginalization”, “denial of access for participation and representation”, “discrimination”.

Probably it is useful to take a look at the Bulgarian history in the years before WWII. This way, it can be demonstrated that the rejection of racism and anti-Semitism was cultivated in the Bulgarian society for decades under different political regimes, and not only during the communist rule when the solidarity with other races was combined with repressions against minorities in the state. In 1937 a book was published in Sofia. It contained the opinions of some of the most influential persons in the country on questions as: “What do you think about the racism as theory and practice?”; “How would you explain the anti-Semitism?”; “What is your opinion about Jews in general and about the Jews in Bulgaria?”. The questionnaire was answered by 4 former Prime ministers; 11 former ministers; bank presidents; MPs; 40 of the most prominent scholars at that time; writers; painters; journalists and actors. All of them, with no hesitation, explicitly denied racism and anti-Semitism and gave their personal assessment of the interracial relations in Bulgaria stating that the greatest moral values within the Bulgarian society were the principles of democracy and tolerance.

Having in mind that for decades Bulgarian nation has been deliberately educated to reject racism and anti-Semitism, therefore, one may think that the Bulgarian science and society are unable to recognize and determine these phenomena as existing in the everyday life. Probably this hypothesis will be proved (or rejected) by the RITU research, which will help to clarify the scientific and social debate.

As far as trade unions are concerned, for the last 10- 15 years they had a lot of other problems to struggle with: chaos on the labour market; unclear and hard to be controlled by the Legislature and the Executive practices of employment; closing of many industrial branches; high levels of unemployment in all strata, including young and highly educated and qualified persons. Almost everyday new employers appear (both local and foreign) that offer bad work conditions and low remuneration. They do not allow the trade unions to inspect their premises or to establish branches in the enterprises. Actually, one of the greatest challenges before the trade unions is to infiltrate exactly in this type of enterprises since many of their employees are individuals belonging to minorities, because the higher levels of unemployment among these groups, force their members to accept worse working conditions.

On the other hand, trade unions continue their traditions not to differentiate their members on ethnic or racial ground. On the contrary, the will to attract new members destroy all prejudices or negative stereotypes. For example “Podkrepa”

controls the municipal sanitary services where more of the employees are Roma. On its turn the Confederation of the Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB) is influential in the mining and tobacco industries with ethnically mixed trade union membership.

Employers are inclined to discriminate applicants for free job positions. Thus, Roma are often rejected because of their low qualification and discipline. In other cases, as it is in the construction, employers prefer Turks and Pomaks because they concede to lower wages and work well. Actually this will be one of the targets of the research.

It is obvious that Bulgaria displays some specific characteristics with regard to mass understanding of racism (especially as a term); the attitude towards the “others” or the “foreign ones”; and the activity of the trade unions. There are two objective reasons for that situation:

1. In Bulgaria there exists a century long tradition of co-existence among individuals belonging to different ethnoses or religions. For long historic periods they had worked, rested and educated their children together.
2. Bulgaria is still a country that does not attract many immigrants. They are small in number and cannot compete with the local population in order to create tensions, fears and as a consequence xenophobic or racist attitudes.

It is suggested, as a preliminary hypothesis that this research will find in Bulgaria forms of racial discrimination against some of the ethnic minorities in the country, falling under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. At the same time it is probable that together with the discrimination in the labour field, the research will find no racist or discriminatory approach in the policy of the Bulgarian trade unions.

4. Workplace Discriminations

4.1. Historical approach and factors

Until the WWII not all minority members were active participants in the labour market or employees. Turks, Pomaks and Tartars lived in locations distant from the leading industrial centres. They were engaged mainly in stockbreeding and agriculture and were late to reach the tobacco processing factories in the regions of Plovdiv and Haskovo. Greeks and most of the Jews were oriented towards trade, private enterprise and intellectual work. The main influx of minority workers in the factories in Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Gabrovo, Sliven, were the poorer Armenians, Jews, Roma and Turks. They became part of the working class and the trade union movement.

According to a survey conducted in 1921 the number of workers had increased up to 55 717 – 80% Bulgarians, 8.9% Russians (White Guard Russians) and 5.2% (2898) Turks. The number of Turks employed in the industry increased significantly during the third decade of 20th century. Still 90% of them were engaged in the agriculture but 40 459 persons were working in the industry – 4 942 as craftsmen and 16 389 in the tobacco, construction industries and transport.³⁹

During the first years the leading branch where minority workers were best represented is the **textile industry** – Armenians in Rousse, Plovdiv and Sofia, Roma and Turks in Sliven. There were 260 (30%) Turkish males and 100 (11%) Turkish females in the Sliven textile factories, while the Gypsies represented 56% of the

³⁹ Berov, L. The Situation of the Working Class in Bulgaria during Capitalism. Sofia 1966, p.34; Memishev, Y. Op.cit, pp. 97-98.

employed women. In 1897 30% of the Sliven fabric factories personnel were Roma and Turks. Many Gypsies earned income as wool washers. In the year of 1905 there were 6% Roma and 3% Turks in a Sliven textile factory. Six years later the socialist press wrote about Roma as basic labour force in the Varna cotton factory and for a lot of Armenians in the headcloth industry in Rousse and Plovdiv.⁴⁰

Workers in all textile factories had similar problems. Those in Sliven protested against unpaid labour and lower than the negotiated salaries. The ones working in the workshops in Rousse and Plovdiv even complained of corporal punishments. Everywhere salaries were low and the remuneration decreased by 15 % in the beginning of the century as a result of the use of low paid labour of women and children (thus for example some of the individuals working in Sliven were no more than 10-12 years old Roma). There were many accidents during the work process. Employers belonging to the minorities themselves practised these abnormal working conditions, e.g. the carpet factories of the Armenians Bedrosyan and Cinchyan (Panagurishte), of the Jews Aroyo (Sliven) and Simone (Kustendil)⁴¹ According to the sources/evidences there are no facts for different treatment of the workers on the base of ethnic or racial origin.

The second branch that started slowly to attract ethnic minority members and especially the Turks was the **tobacco industry**. Bad work conditions in this sphere resembled those in the textile industry: no clean air, no water and heating, low payment (max. 1 lev), 14 hours working day. There were factories owned by minority members as well. For instance the Turk Tahir Mehmedov in Rousse practised the same abuses as all other employers: juvenile labour, 9.5 hours working day, minimum daily payment⁴².

Bulgaria became an industrialised country relatively late and as a result the number of the enterprises was small and there was a shortage of labour force. Therefore employers rejected jobs on ethnicity or religion. Data shows that there were no legal obstacles for employment of non-Bulgarians at least until the 1940s. The only reason minority members did not occupy better paid positions in the factories, or highly qualified positions was their low level of education.

During this period the laws excluded all minority schools from the state educational system. They were included in the group of the private schools maintained by their own religious communities. Having in mind that these communities received almost no state funds and that many of them were dominated by conservative groups supporting the religious education, and that the emphasis was on education in mother language, it becomes clear why a significant part of the minority members were illiterate even in their mother language, why they did not have proper command of Bulgarian language and why it was almost impossible for them to continue their education on a level higher than the primary one.

⁴⁰ Lambrev, K. The Status of the Working Class in Bulgaria from the Liberation to the Beginning of the 20th century. 1878-1904. Sofia. 1954, p.52; Narod (People), vol. 1, №2, 22.11.1897; Rabotnishko delo (Workers' Affair), vol. 3, №4, 20.02.1905; Rabotnicheski vestnik (Workers' Newspaper), № 137, 25.04.1911; №5, 17.11.1911.

⁴¹ Lambrev, K. Op.cit., pp.94, 96; Textilzi... pp.45, 116, 131, 166; Rabotnichesko delo, 3, No 5-6; 15.03.1905.

⁴² Rabotnicheski vestnik (Workers' Newspaper), vol.5, №23, 14.02.1902.

Table 4*Percentage of Literacy in Bulgaria 1900-1934*

	1900	1905	1920	1934
Bulgarians	27,7	32,3	49,9	61,1
Turks	4,4	3,9	8,7	14,5
Jews	47,8	53,7	68,9	72,1
Armenians	53,6	54,3	63,9	
Greeks	33,3	35,2	40,9	
Roma		2,3	6	8,6
Tartars		7,6		

Source: Chankov, Zh. *Literacy of Bulgarian Population - School Review (Sofia)*, 1926, pp.150-173.

After WWII Bulgaria started to build economy, based on the Soviet Union model. The aim was fast modernization by means of forced industrialization and collectivization of the agriculture. These two processes caused huge internal migration, including the minorities.

During 1949 – 1952 the priority was given to the development of heavy industry and energetics. This process inevitably affected Turks and Pomaks (Bulgarian Muslims) since most of the efforts were concentrated in Northeastern Bulgaria and the Rhodope region leading to urbanization and increased rate of unemployment⁴³.

The second parallel economic process was the collectivization of the agriculture. It was completed in 1953 – 1954 after many stoppages and difficulties, accompanied by resistance and violence⁴⁴. These changes caused internal migrations during 1949 – 1954 of young and deprived of their land Turks who moved from Omurtag, Razgrad, Shumen, the Rhodope and Haskovo regions to the construction sites in Rousse and Dimitrovgrad. At the same time the mining enterprises in the Rhodope Mountains became new national centers attracting more than 2000 persons from Haskovo and 1000 from Kardzhali regions. The force used during the collectivization process, especially in the regions of Peshtera and Provadia, caused the migration of many Turks during the period of 1950 – 1951.

The creation of cooperatives in the regions inhabited by compact groups of Turks started in 1949 and was characterized by many problems. Only 5-6% of the poorest individuals were enrolled in the new farms. The government used force to enhance the process (1951) but still it was completed quite late – in 1956. In 1958 in pursuing of a Decree of the Council of Ministers many Roma families had to settle down in the State Agricultural Farms which were often located in villages deserted by Turks⁴⁵.

In order to implement its own strategy towards minorities and to achieve the desired industrialization, the totalitarian regime was constantly engaged with the economic problems of the regions with mixed population and those of the specific

⁴³ Marcheva, I. *Bulgarian Industrial Policy 1944-1958*. – Pages from the Bulgarian History. Sofia 1993, vol.2, pp.118-123.

⁴⁴ Kalinova, E. Baeva, I. *Bulgarian Transitions 1939-2002*. Sofia 2002, c.103-105; Mitev, V. *Setting up and Development of the Stalin Model of Socialism in Bulgaria 1948-1953*. – Pages from ..., pp.65-66.

⁴⁵ Genov, D., Tairov, T. Marinov, V. *The Gypsy Population in the People's Republic of Bulgaria on the Way to Socialism*. Sofia 1968, pp.29-30.

minority groups. There are series of Decrees and Decisions of *Politburo* of the Communist Party dealing with improvement of the way of life in the Rhodopes, Pirin and Strandza (1948), liquidation of the underdevelopment of Dobrudja region, construction of industrial enterprises in regions with Turkish population, improvement of work conditions in the Regions of Shumen, Haskovo, Rousse and Varna (1951), settlement, employment and qualification of the Roma population (project 1952, 1958), development of the regions of Smolian, Kardzhali, Razgrad and Blagoevgrad (1959-1960, 1962, 1964, 1968), allocation of labour resources for the industry of Kardzhali, Razgrad, Silistra, Targovishte and Shumen Regions (1970), construction of 30 machines, electromechanical, and chemical enterprises and of 40 workshops in Pomak regions (1970), relocation of 61 production units in 7 regions with the aim to balance the social-economic situation (1971 – 1972), Stranja-Sakar region development program (1981, 1986)⁴⁶.

Due to these detailed regulations and to the five-year development plans in the Rhodope region and Northeastern Bulgaria there appeared not only new factories but also new industrial branches. Right after the war the priority in the Rhodopes was the **mining industry**. Until 1967 1.5 billion leva were invested in the region. It became one of the main mining centers in Europe with more than 25 000 workers, most of them local inhabitants. During the 70s more than 1 500 Turks were working in the lead and zinc producing factory in Kardzhali and more than 1 600 in the mines⁴⁷.

Another important branch where a lot of minority members were employed in the Rhodope region was the **energy industry**. It consisted of waterpower installations in Batak (1946-1959), the “Dospat – Devin – Krichim” (1962-1982) and “Belmeken – Sestrimo” water cascades, as well as the “Arda” cascade whose construction started in 1949. For more than 40 years local people worked in these sites as construction workers, administrative, supporting and security personnel. For example 600 Turks worked on “Studen kladenetz” site during the period of 1949 – 1954⁴⁸.

Forestry and light industries made also good progress. During the 1960s- 70s textile and knitwear industries were relocated from Sofia, Plovdiv and Gabrovo to the Kardzhali region thus employing 40 000 local inhabitants, women prevailing. The 1970-80s were characterized by the creation of small factories and workshops working in the sphere of food-processing, tailor, knitwear, rubber industries and the production of tiles, threads and souvenirs⁴⁹. Tobacco enterprises in Kardzhali, Ardino and Haskovo have more than 2 300 Turkish employees. There was mass influx of labour force in the factories in Dimitrovgrad, in the “Marbas” mines and in the “Maritza – Iztok” site⁵⁰.

An intensive construction of industrial sites in Northeastern Bulgaria employed local Turkish and Roma population. Weaving, leather, furniture-producing, chemical and machinery enterprises were established in Silistra region (51 in 1975). More than 50 factories for glass, porcelain, antibiotics and ore processing were built in the Razgrad region. New ceramics, porcelain, glass, truck producing car parts factories in

⁴⁶ Memishev, Y. All together, pp.86, 88; Beitullov, M. Life of Turkish Population in the People's Republic of Bulgaria. Sofia 1975, p.31; Trifinov, St. Muslims in the Bulgarian State Policy 1944-1989. – Pages..., p.219; Central State Record Office (Sofia), collection 1B/27/20, pp.1-3.

⁴⁷ Monov, Ts. The Rhodopi Region - Renovated and Prospering. Sofia 1985, pp.109-112; Memishev, Y. Op.cit, p.88.

⁴⁸ Monov, Ts. Op.cit, pp. 89-103.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, pp.123, 125, 128, 129, 131, 134-135, 138.

⁵⁰ Memishev, Y. Op.cit, p.88.

Shumen region, as well as pig-breeding, poultry-breeding, calf-breeding and sheep-breeding farms in Targovishte region were in a great demand of labour.⁵¹

More than 5 000 Roma worked in the biggest enterprises of the region as the cement and soda producing factory in Devnia, the glass factory in Beloslav and the hemp factory in Dalgopol. Until 1952 many of them were not included in the production process but later sources showed that many of them worked together with Bulgarians and Turks in “Pernik” mines (850 persons), Bourgass mines, “Neftohim – Bourgass”, the non-ferrous metal processing plant in Plovdiv, the gypsum processing plant – Radnevo, the electric appliances plant – Sofia, the wood-processing plant – Velingrad, the textile factories in Sliven (6 000 persons, in 1952), etc.⁵²

As a whole the employment among the Turkish population was 23% (1944), and 49.2% (1965) or 60 000 people (1944), 50 000 (1958) and 100 000 (1970).⁵³ Viewed sociologically the figures are as follows:

Table 5

Bulgarian Turks' Employment 1956-1975

Social groups, Turks	1956	1965	1975	1975, total
Workers	14,6	26,2	64,4	64,2
Co-operated farmers	35,3	68,1	29	6,7
Not co-operated farmers	45,8	1,6	0,8	
Co-operated craftsmen	0,4	1,2	0,7	
Civil servants	2,1	2,2	4,9	26,7

Sources: Büchschütz, U. Minority Policy in Bulgaria. The Policy of the Bulgarian Communist Party towards Jews, Roma, Pomaks and Turks 1944-1989. IMIR, Sofia, 2000, p. 235; Memishev, Y. All Together for the Socialist Construction of the Motherland. Sofia 1984, p.167.

The data on Roma was different in 1965. 40.8% of them were employed, 40.5% were workers, 54% co-operated farmers, 0.3% not-co-operated farmers, 1.35 co-operated craftsmen, 3% not co-operated craftsmen.⁵⁴

If the number of the employed Turks is analysed in terms of regions it is evident that there was great increase in the employment in the Kardzhali Region - 36 times (1944-1976) and Razgrad Region – 20 times. There was a rise of employment in Shumen (28 000) and Kardzhali (18 379) regions⁵⁵.

After WWII the four branches attracting most of the minority labour force were mining, textile, tobacco and construction industries. All of them needed predominantly unqualified workers (60.2% in 1945, 81% being illiterate) due to low level of technical equipment, hard working conditions and widespread use of manual labour. Bulgarians dominated during 1940s while minority participation was only 8.7% for the Turks, 7.5% for the Roma and 1% for the Jews. Ethnic majority gradually lost interest in the mining and tobacco industries, especially in the region of the Rhodope Mountains. Local Turks and Pomaks were satisfied with their high

⁵¹ Beitullov, M. Op.cit, pp.33-34, 36, 38-39, 42-43

⁵² Genov, D. Tairov, T. etc. Op.cit, pp.32-33; Central State Archive, collection 1B/27/20,pp.1-3.

⁵³ Genov, D. The Fraternal Friendship....., p.29; Tahirov, Sh. Bulgarian and Turks on the way to socialism. Sofia 1979, p.82.

⁵⁴ Büchschütz, U. Op.cit, p.224.

⁵⁵ Tahirov, Sh. Op.cit, p.83.

salaries and did not try to find work in other industries or to acquire higher qualification.⁵⁶

Minorities were in a disadvantaged position due to a number of intermingled factors. Bulgaria and Turkey were on different sides during the cold war. The totalitarian regime having its own minority policy and imposing a state-controlled economy had its effect on the inter-political framework. Geographic situation had an influence as well. Muslim population was isolated in the Rhodope Mountain area, near the border having bad communication with the rest of the country. Still the basic factor was the policy aimed at accelerated modernisation that led to unbalanced development of whole regions, inhabited by ethnic minorities. Another important reason was the bad education. Minorities either did not have the ability or the motivation to study properly (Turks) or they were segregated by the rest of the population (Roma).

Table 6

Education of the Bulgarian Turks and Roma

Education	Turks,1956	Turks ,1965	Turks ,1975	Roma1978
Illiterate	36,2			11,1
Elementary	33,5	36	33,9	31,4
Primary	7,7	18	30,9	41
Secondary	0,7	1,7	4,7	4,1
Higher	0,08	0,3	0,6	0,6

Sources: Büchschütz, U. Minority Policy in Bulgaria. The Policy of the Bulgarian Communist Party towards Jews, Roma, Pomaks and Turks 1944-1989. IMIR, Sofia, 2000, pp.232-233; Memishev, Y. All Together for the Socialist Construction of the Motherland. Sofia 1984, p.189; Tomova, I. The Gypsies in the Transition Period. Sofia 2000, p.61.

To better understand the problem with the minority education one should consider the following facts. In 1973 40.3% of the Turkish women in Kardzhali Region had primary education, 2.9% had secondary and 0.1% higher. During the 1970s in Razgrad region 3980 Turks had education above the primary 266 of them worked in the health care system, 175 were economists, 152 - agronomists. There were 1280 individuals with secondary education in the industry. 438 were in the sphere of services, 252 in the administration and 120 in the management.⁵⁷

The disintegration of the state economy model affected severely this mode of employment and the way of life of minorities as a whole.

Turks. During the communist rule Turkish population managed to preserve its traditional place and way of living despite the internal migrations and the policy aimed at fast economic development. Turks lived mainly outside the towns and were concentrated mainly in the Rhodope region – a border, highland, isolated area, with hard to cultivate land. They worked on it manually, without using modern irrigation and fertilising methods. The area's industry was developed in an unbalanced way – huge mining and metallurgy enterprises that did not have enough resources and modern equipment. The other region with compact Turkish population, the

⁵⁶ Georgiev, V. General Workers' Trade Union in Bulgaria 1944-1947. S. 1967, pp.11-17,27-28,33; Petkov, K. Fotev, G. The Ethnic....., p.35.

⁵⁷ Tahirov, Sh. Op.cit, pp.97, 99.

Northeastern Bulgaria experienced the same problems: huge agricultural co-operatives and animal farms, enormous chemical, machinery and light industry plants.

The transfer to market economy was much slower than the political changes and severely affected the Turkish minority. The whole economic structure that needed mass labour force with no or low qualification fell apart. After 1991 the tobacco industry suffered state funding restrictions, liberalisation of prices and shrinking of the market. Many mining facilities were closed. State owned enterprises that still exist are in deep crisis. They cannot use their full capacity, the level of the production is low, the remuneration is minimum, the municipal authorities refuse to support them and the slow process of privatisation turns hopes for foreign investments into a dream. Restitution of forest lands (58% of all existing) hampered the development of the forestry industry. Privatisation of the agricultural land led to the destruction of the mass co-operative farms. Large chemical and machinery enterprises lost their markets and gradually closed down.⁵⁸ All this changed the market conditions for the Turkish minority. Losing their employment they were forced to elaborate their own strategy of survival. Basically it is an autarchy approach: lower consumption, late marriage, smaller number of children, a closed, self-sufficient family economy. Still, the philosophical view is optimistic. Lack of employment is not considered as a tragedy. Only few of the people rely on social welfare (3.9%), on relatives (4.2%) or on their own financial reserves (4.2%). Most of the Turks are actively struggling for survival. Only 4.1% have chosen the way of free enterprise and that is why most of them do not use the possibility to receive compensation by the employment agencies. Some turn to agricultural work, continuing the tradition of raising tobacco, fruits and vegetables (7.3%).

In north-eastern Bulgaria Turks possess less land than the Bulgarians after the restitution in Bulgaria (e.g. the ratio is 6 to 13 decares in Targovishte region in favour of the Bulgarians), while in the Rhodope region there is almost no free land and some of the Turks (2,9%) take the land under lease. The problem is that the producers become dependent on the state monopoly company “Bulgartabak”, which does not pay regular salaries or imposes low prices. Thus unemployment does not decrease but becomes “hidden”, because tobacco producers are not allowed to register as unemployed and therefore are deprived of medical care and state children support.

That is why males of the young and middle generation migrate as they used to do decades ago. They either move to the capital or to the bigger cities (33.3%) or emigrate temporary abroad (24%). The other alternative is work in transport, trade or wood-processing. Women usually work as seamstresses in workshops opened by Turkish or Greek entrepreneurs although they work extra-time, they are low paid and do not receive any social security. The final result is that the “survival strategy” leads to a decreased standard of living greater than the average for the country far from the “good life” idea.⁵⁹

Roma. The totalitarian regime settled down this community in different places of the country after 1958 though it is a heterogeneous community. Roma are best represented numerically in the regions of Montana (9.1%), Dobrich (7.4%), Sliven

⁵⁸ Tomova, I. Social Change ..., pp. 209,224-227; Ribarova, E. Tomev, L. Labour Relations in the Period of Privatization and Restructuring of Economy in the Ethnic Regions. Sofia 1994. – Archive of the Institute of Social and Trade Union Researches (ISTUR) pp.35-36,40.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, pp.42-45,49-50; Tomova I. Social Change....., pp.218,227-228,230; Ribarova, E. Labour Relations in the Ethnic Regions – 1995. Basic conclusions and results. Sofia 1995. – Archive of ISTUR pp. 7, 4-17; Hristoskov, Y. Ethnic Relations in the Period of Economic Crisis – Aspects..., pp.63-64; for the municipality of Ruen see www.tolerantnost.com/municipalities/ruen/analysis

(7.3%), Plovdiv (27 826), Stara Zagora (26 902), Burgas (22 104). That is also true for the ghettos in “Stolipinovo” in Plovdiv (23 000), “Nadezhda” in Sliven (12 000) and “Fakulteta” in Sofia.⁶⁰

The economic transition affected significantly Roma way of life, too. After the co-operative farms fell apart it became clear that only 8.5% of them owned land. Most of those in Northeastern Bulgaria gave up the leased land while the small number of owners preferred not to cultivate it but build motels and restaurants. When fired due to their low qualification Roma do not choose re-training courses but instead they claim that they are discriminated or unfairly fired. Their “survival strategy” is predominantly passive. They rely mainly on social welfare (45.8%), relatives’ support and lease of property (6.6%). Practical actions have low priority. They consist mainly of reestablishment of old crafts as tinkering, basket making, working as blacksmith, bear training or turning to “ancient professions” as pick-pocketing or mendacity. In most cases they use 'modern' methods for their survival being part of the “grey market” economy and Mafia groups in the cities – they steal ferrous and non-ferrous metals and electric transition lines and deal with stolen car parts and drugs. Roma conduct also a number of illegal activities as prostitution, drug dealing, gambling, blood sales. The only legal activities they exercise are street cleaning, collection of herbs, mushrooms, snails and fruits either paid by the state programmes for temporary employment or on their own initiative. In rare cases some of them rent land to cultivate it (2.5%). The result of this “survival strategy” is unlocking of a number of destructive processes as alcoholism, broken family relations, rejection of education, health problems, criminality and civil unrest when the state tries to collect some of its financial claims (the first and the last one took place in “Stolipinovo” in 1990 and 2002), or, to put it in other words, marginalization of more than 20% of the Roma.⁶¹

The two ethnic minorities that have suffered most severely by the transition period i.e. Turks and Roma, view the long-lasting and permanent unemployment as a discriminatory measure that is in total contrast with the full employment, the high incomes and privileges they used to enjoy during the communist era. Roma even accuse the government that it does nothing to find them jobs. All these factors may cause a serious ethnic conflict.⁶²

Table 7

Unemployment Data 1992-2001

Unemployment	1992	1994	1997	1998
Turks	25,50%	28,50%	29,30%	30-47,5%
Roma	39,10%	45,80%	49,70%	
Bulgarians	14,40%	15,70%	12,30%	

Unemployment	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
For the country, numbers	536704	466500	527100	693500	669600
For the country, per cents	13,7	12,2	14,1	16,3	19,9
Long term unemployment	23,4	35,2	31,7	37,1	49,3
Long term unemployed individuals, per cents	60,4	61,5	60	58,7	63,1
For women	13,5	11,8	14,1	15,9	18,9

⁶⁰ Data from the 2001 census – www.nsi.bg

⁶¹ Tomova, I. The Gypsies... p.29, 31,72-74; Tomova, I. The Social Change..., p.233; Kertikov, K. Europeanization or “Gypsyization” of Bulgaria? – Balkani’21, 2002, №1.

⁶² Tomova, I. The Social Change..., pp.231, 233.

Source: *Employment Service. The Labour Market. Sofia 1999; National Employment Service. The Labour Market, Sofia 2000, Employment Agency. The Labour Market. Sofia 2002; Sindi Ttrud, 2002, №4; Tomova, I. Social changes and Ethno-Religious Relations. - In: Fotev, G. Neighbourhood...., pp.231-232; Commission of the European Communities. Regular Report on the Progress of Bulgaria during the Period of Accession. Brussels. 2002, p.209 Sources: National*

When viewed by regions, the statistics is not looking better. Those regions and municipalities that have compact population of Turks, Pomaks and Roma are characterized by high and long-term unemployment up to twice bigger than the average for the country.

According to the National Employment Agency reports the highest levels of dismissed employees are from industries traditionally occupied by minority members – mining and ore processing, metallurgy, textile and knitwear, tailoring, machinery building, metal processing, food processing, chemistry. Most of the unemployed are people with low qualification. The municipalities with highest number of unskilled and unemployed persons are those with predominantly Turkish population.⁶³

The basic factors that cause the disadvantaged status of minorities on the labour market have undergone some changes.

Education. According to the last empirical sociological survey the received data is as follows:

Table 8

Minority Education

	Turks '92	Turks/ Pomaks '99	Turks'00	Roma'92	Roma '92*	Roma'99	Roma'00	Pomaks'00	Average'99	average'00
Illiterates	2,3			8,5	16					
Uncompleted elementary		11,8	3,5			18,7	5,6		3,1	1,2
Elementary	16	14	11	36,7	36	37,8	37	14,3	8,8	7,2
Primary	55	49,2	37,6	46,2	40	37,9	50	23,8	25,2	22,4
Secondary	24,6	20,8	43,9	7,8	8,5	5,5	7,4	52,3	47,6	42,4
Higher- Bachelor		4,3	2,3			0,1		4,8	15,3	8,9
Higher - Master	2		1,7	0,9	0,3			4,8		17,9

Sources: *Tomova, I. The Gypsies in the Transition Period. Sofia 1995, p.59-60; Noncheva, T. Social Profile of the Ethnic Groups in Bulgaria. Center for Study of Democracy. Sofia 2000. – www.csd.bg/news/Club2EthnicB-speech.htm.; Fotev, G. Neighborhood of the Religious Communities in Bulgaria. Sofia 2000, p. 117.* is for Tomova's data given for villages and ghettos. "Average" means the average values for all over Bulgaria*

See also *The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Original Human Development Report, UNDP, Bratislava, 2002.*

According to other data, concerning the age-education relation, the percentage of Turks and Pomaks (aged 18-29) having secondary education is 57% and 66% correspondingly, while that of the Bulgarians is 72%. As far as college and higher education is concerned the percentage is as follows: 18% and 15%, against Bulgarians – 19%.⁶⁴

⁶³ National Employment Service.1998, p.18-20; 1999, p.26; Employment Agency. 2000, p.34.

⁶⁴ Tomova, I. The Social Change....., p. 243.

This data is subject to discussion as it reflects the temporary situation, but still it can be a useful clue for the basic educational problems of the ethnic minorities. It is obvious that the minority education fails to meet the average standard on almost every level. There is a huge gap between the low-educated and highly educated members of the minorities. The basic part of them has a low level of literacy. The educational structure of the Bulgarians is more favourable; they are much more competitive on the labour market and with a higher possibility to find a job and be appointed on managerial positions.

The minority problems in the field of education and hence their chances for employment have accumulated for decades. They are the result of problems existing for decades if not centuries and of lack of educational motivation caused by economic shortages, infrastructural realities and migration attitudes. It is easier to explain the Roma situation. They start going to school late and leave it at the age of 12-13 because of early marriage and/or lack of financial resources. Parents explain the fact that only half of the children subject to mandatory education do go to school (6-16 years old) in a different way - the need to help with the housework, or the fact that education is not a value, and if educated the Roma person will have problems to find a job because of his/her ethnic identity, are also quoted as motives. The parents themselves prefer to send their children to schools for handicapped children in order to use social welfare benefits, as well as free food and textbooks. When asked why they experience such high level of unemployment, Roma answer in a way, indicative of their mentality: 65.7% accuse the Government, 36,6% point out the ethnic discrimination, 5,5% accuse their own bad luck, and only 15,8% mention their bad education. According to data of 2001, 85% of the Roma households do not have a single member with secondary or higher education. These figures place Bulgaria between Hungary and Romania.⁶⁵

Statistical data proves that the Rhodope region is industrialized but at the same time it shows that minority members have low qualification, ethnic groups are separated according to their qualification, lack of motivation to improve it, which is especially true for the Turks. According to the survey, Pomaks and Turks are *bona fides* workers but of low or average efficiency. The number of these considered as initiative workers is 13,9% Turks and 16,5 Pomaks.⁶⁶

Poverty as a social criterion, may be considered as one of the factors causing inequality on the labour market, although the phenomenon itself is a consequence of the unemployment.

According to a survey conducted in 1999, there is a huge economic gap among Roma. Only 5% are rich, while the rest of them are poor. This situation may be explained by early marriages /80% of Roma get married before the age of 18/, high birth rate, low education, economically unfavourable starting point. A World Bank survey announces 84,3% rate of poverty, while the depth of poverty is 46,6% /i.e. diverting of incomes of the poor from the accepted level of poverty/. Roma have the lowest income among all ethnic groups in the country/62,4% have an income not exceeding 45 Euro/, half of them rely on social welfare, that is to say to live under the threshold of the physical survival. A social survey conducted in 2000 shows the same

⁶⁵ Tomova, I. The Gypsies ..., p.61, 73; Tomova, I. The Social Change ..., p.242; Mitev, P. -E. Dynamics of Poverty. – In: Poverty in the Post-Communist Period. Sofia 2002, p.40.

The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Original Human Development Report, UNDP, Bratislava, 2002.

⁶⁶ Dobrijanov, V. etc. Mode of Life of the Rhodope Population. Sofia 1992, pp.27-34,53,56.

results. Bulgarian Roma live in a disastrous absolute and chronic misery and that makes them an ethnic underclass /i.e. a group pushed into extreme economic exclusion characterised by material insufficiency and unstable participation in the labour market whose situation is further complicated by the social marginalization/. According to the authors of the survey there is a direct relation between ethnic belonging and poverty anticipation.⁶⁷

As far as Turks and Pomaks are concerned, the World Bank survey points to 40% rate of poverty /31,7% for Bulgarians/ and 12,8% depth of poverty /8,5% correspondingly/. These figures show a relative poverty that is the smaller obstacle on the labour market as compared to the Roma starting positions.⁶⁸

Ethnic stereotypes. The constant increase of social distances has transformed in ostracism against the Roma. A 2000 survey conducted in six countries of Central and Eastern Europe suggests that the unemployment among Roma is caused not only by lower education but also by ethnic prejudices. Those Roma that identify themselves as part of the ethnic majority are better accepted /from financial and property point of view/ than Roma standing on their own ethnic identity.⁶⁹

4.2. Ethnic Minorities on the Workplace

Turks and Pomaks (Bulgarian Muslims). Surveys on employment and labour activity in the municipalities of Aitos, Karnobat, Dalgopol and Ruen (1994-1995) inhabited by Turks, Pomaks, Roma and Bulgarians represent an interesting picture of labour relationships. According to the conducted researches Turks and Pomaks are not influenced by the ethnic affiliation of their employer, 96,4 – 97,5% of them will have no problems to work for a Bulgarian employer. In this aspect they demonstrate higher tolerance than Bulgarians in a similar situation. At the same time their attitude is quite different, if the potential employer belongs to the Roma ethnos, in such cases only 18,2-34,2% will concede to sign a labour contract.

Turkish and Pomak employers are more inclined than Bulgarian to hire workers with other ethnic affiliation. Yet, Turks would hardly agree to be managers of Pomaks (Bulgarian Muslims) and Roma. The survey reveals that the most attractive candidates for 'another' employer are the Bulgarians, then come the Pomaks (65,5-74,6%), the third – the Turks (52,8-71,5%).⁷⁰

Turk and Pomak employees are not inclined to participate in labour conflicts /one third/ and especially in strikes (only 1/5). Even if a strike becomes effective, they would prefer not to participate, despite the fact that they support the aim of the action. The research reveals the lack of conflicts with employers on a personal base. Turks and Pomaks estimate their bosses as responding to their interests, while the latter define them as loyal but passive. This means that the relations between them are fair enough. Moreover, there is a very small number of Turks demonstrating dissatisfaction with the possibilities of professional career as compared to Bulgarians (17,9 vs. 57,7%). Generally speaking, Turks stay on their position until they become redundant. If asked directly (1995), they do not state drastic violations of their labour

⁶⁷ Noncheva, T. Op.cit; Domanski, H. Social Determinants of Poverty in the Post-Communist Societies. – In: Poverty..., pp.58,63

⁶⁸ Noncheva, T. Op.cit.

⁶⁹ Mitev, P. -E. Dynamics of Poverty. – In: Poverty, p.41.

⁷⁰ Ribarova, E. Tomev, L. Op.cit, pp. 67-69.

and trade union rights as well as prejudiced attitude based on their ethnic belonging.⁷¹ At the same time in 1999, Turks interviewed in Razgrad and Varna regions spoke about unfair selection in the health-care system, insisting on equal criteria for appointment on high and prestigious positions.⁷²

The research (1995) of the employees' relations in ethnically mixed regions reveals that the most-preferred colleagues are ethnic Bulgarians (up to 96,6%) and there is a high level of suspicion towards Roma (up to 38,3%). In this aspect Turks and Pomaks are more tolerant than Bulgarians, although they are not very inclined to work in Bulgarian language environment. It is worth mentioning that Turks prefer to have Bulgarians as fellow-employees and not members of their own group or minority. Only the unemployed Turks are ready to agree to work with Roma. Both in mixed and Bulgarian municipalities all employees state that they are satisfied with the communication with their colleagues. In 1999 Turks from Razgrad and Varna regions declared that the ethnic belonging was not a decisive criterion with regard to the contacts on the workplace and that Bulgarians were definitely reliable. Respondents either do not remember the conflicts with their colleagues or define them as insignificant.⁷³

Roma. Their relations with the employers are quite different. Roma believe that they are discriminated when applying for a job, while Bulgarians have a priority when applying for a certain job. Most of them claim that they conceal their identity not to lose their job. They explain that during the working process many are insulted, they are offered the most difficult work, never consulted with and never promoted. Another part of the Roma complain that they were the first to become redundant as compared to Bulgarians, and when they consulted the labour offices, the only employment offers they received were perceived as degrading by the Bulgarian majority.⁷⁴

5. Trade union responses

5.1. Establishing professional unions in Bulgaria. Period of pluralism and decentralization the end of the 19th century - 1934

As in most countries, professional unions in Bulgaria were established with the development of Bulgarian industry and industrial relations. The right to associate is guaranteed by article 83 of the Turnovo Constitution (1879). However, no government laws existed until 1933-1934. First were the two trade unions for employees in the tailoring industry (Plovdiv, 1895 and 1899). It is interesting to note that in a document of one of the earliest organizations, the Sofia Worker's Association 'Bratstvo' (Brotherhood), a proclamation was made towards all workers of the nation, regardless of their ethnicity and nationality. It stated: 'Capital means the same thing to Jews, Turks, and Bulgarians...it is not particular to a specific business. This is why hired

⁷¹ Ibidem, pp.72, 74,80; Ribarova, E. Labour Relations in the Regions with Ethnic Population – 1995. Sofia 1995. – ISTUR, pp. 6-7, 10.

⁷² Krasteva, I. Iliev, I. Stoyanova, V. Survey on the Interethnic Relations between Bulgarians and Turks Living in the Settlements of the North-eastern Bulgaria. Varna 2002, p.27.

⁷³ Ribarova, E. Tomev, L.Op.cit. , pp.65-67,73; Ribarova, E. Op.cit, p.6; Krasteva, I. Op.cit, p.27.

⁷⁴ Poverty..., pp.86-87, 94,97; Destroying Ethnic Identity. The Gypsies of Bulgaria. 1991, p.41.

workers must put aside the personal feelings and prejudices that divide them, let them all together sign the appeal'⁷⁵

Since 1904, labour organizations were united in two head offices and their activity was directed by the established Social Democratic Parties – the Main Labour Union (established in Plovdiv, 1904) was coordinated by the Bulgarian Social Democrat Labour Party (BSDLP, radical socialists), and the Independent Common Labour Union (established in Sofia, 08.1904) was coordinated by BSDLP, moderate socialists.⁷⁶ The two unions held similar ideas as to what their main functions should be in accordance with the principle of syndicalism.⁷⁷ What divided them was the socialists' moderate position on “neutrality” of unions, i.e. non-involvement of the trade union in party conflicts and using strikes as a method of achieving political goals, not of improving specific working conditions.

General Trade Union, GTU (1904 – 1924). The general idea of the union was that of a class struggle. It was founded by Y. Nisimov, a Jewish representative of the General Workers' Association in N. Zagora and St. Shahbazyan, an Armenian from the Trade Workers' Association in Plovdiv.⁷⁸ Based on membership data from the period of 1905 to 1914 it becomes apparent that the number of trade union members was the highest in 1910 and 1911, and the number of non-Bulgarians varied between 8% (1905) to 14.7% (1914), being the highest in 1907 (18.4%). *GTU* structures were extremely active in regions with a higher percentage of Turkish population – for example, members in the Haskovo branch were 99 in 1910 and 1403 in 1919.⁷⁹

GTU had strong positions among textile workers. The Textile Association was founded in June 1904 in Sliven. Later it became the Sliven Textile Trade union with 275 members, 81 of who were foreigners. In 1905 members grew to 400 due to under-qualified Turkish workers (who organized a protest against management of “H. D. Tatev” factory because of low wages) joining the union. The Central Union of Bulgarian Textile Workers was established in Sliven, January 1908. Its Sliven branch had 207 non-Bulgarian members (45.5%), mostly men with primary education⁸⁰.

There are several different sources of information regarding participation of Armenian, Jewish and Roma minority groups in the Textile workers union. However, union documentation does not include any information about specific ethnic demands and issues – only professional.

There was a mass and equal participation of minority groups in textile workers' strikes. In 1896 in Sliven, 800 factory workers organized protest demanding higher wages and less working hours. One third of the strike committee was of Roma origin. Armenian workers employed by “Knyaz Boris” Cotton Factory in Varna took the lead in a protest in 1902. Another strike took place in 1904 at Tatev factory (Sliven), this

⁷⁵ Sotsialist (Socialist), vol.1, №19, 6.12.18

⁷⁶ Yanulov, I. Development of the Workers' Trade unions in Bulgaria and their Legal Basis. – Annual of the State Higher School for Finance and Administrative Sciences, 1945/46, vol. 5, pp.20, 22,28; Georgiev, St. The Crash of the Bulgarian Trade union Reformism 1900-1920. Sofia 1980, p.47.

⁷⁷ Yanulov, I. Op.cit, pp.17, 19.

⁷⁸ The Workers' Movement in Bulgaria. Papers. vol. 3, Sofia 1955, pp.504-512.

⁷⁹ Mladenov, D. Development and Achievements of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement in Bulgaria 1904-1974. Numerical data. Sofia 1976, pp. 34,36,37-40.

⁸⁰ Rabotnicheski vestnik (Workers' Newspaper), vol. 7, № 45,17.06.1904; Rabotnishko delo (Workers' Affair), vol. 3, № 4, 20.02.1905; Textile Workers. Organization and Fights of Textile Workers in Bulgaria 1878-1944. Plovdiv 1970, pp.59,62-63

time organized by workers of Turkish and Roma origin.⁸¹ These are just several examples of the many protests, organized by the *GTU* – in Sliven, Kazanluk, Karlovo (6 in 1914 and 8 in 1922).⁸²

The trade union movement also included tobacco workers of minority groups. Several associations with Turkish members existed before the establishment of the Tobacco Worker's Union as a sub-division of the *GTU* in July 1908. At this time several articles in Turkish were published in “Tobacco Worker” newspaper, and a number of Turkish editions came out in print.⁸³

After World War I the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) drew many Turkish tobacco workers into its party structures. Youths from Sliven, Shumen, Haskovo and Razgrad joined the BCYU (Bulgarian Communist Youth Union, 1919-1922), and Turkish women became involved in female communist groups in St. Zagora, Yambol, Sliven, Shumen, Haskovo and Kurdzhali. Against this background the GSLU raised the issue of increasing the number of male and female Turkish members in professional unions for tobacco workers, shoe makers, tailors and craftsmen at its 11th Congress (05.1919). This initiative was developed further at the Third National Convention of the Tobacco Worker's Union (Plovdiv, 1919), where the decision for an active campaign targeted towards Turkish workers was taken in the presence of Turkish delegates, as well as to publish the “Tobacco worker” newspaper in Turkish under the name “Zia”. Turkish citizens were to be united under the slogan “Protection of ethnic rights.”⁸⁴ Turkish trade unionists were involved in union leadership.⁸⁵ 1922 was a year of unrest, with Turkish tobacco workers leading and participating in strikes throughout Kardzhali, Ardino, Dzhebel, and Haskovo. In Haskovo, Turks made up 80% of protest committees; the strike in Plovdiv was led by the Armenian Agopyan.⁸⁶

Jewish publishers were especially active during this period, and the Jewish Labour Association was founded in 1902 based on ethnic principles but under the leadership of BWSDP (Bulgarian Worker's Social-Democratic Party), with demands for “a better life”⁸⁷. Names of minority representatives, among which Jews, Turks, and Armenians, were included in the *GTU* leadership lists.⁸⁸

The Turkish Teacher's Union was established as a branch of the *GTU* in 1920. It was intended to be a part of the Teachers' communist organization, even though it was officially an independent organization created to unite teachers without

⁸¹ *Osvobozhdenie* [Liberation], 2, No 41, 6.06.1896; *Rabotnicheski vestnik*, 5, No 40, 13.06.1902; No 137, 25.04.1911; *Textilzi...*, p.62.

⁸² Mladenov, D. *Op.cit*, pp.100-109; *History of the Trade Union Movement in Bulgaria*. Sofia 1973, pp.183,252.

⁸³ Genov, D. *The Fraternal Friendship between the Bulgarian and Turkish Population in the People's Republic of Bulgaria*. Sofia 1961, p.19; Isusov, M. *The Revolutionary Trade Union Movement in Bulgaria 1903-1912*. Sofia 1962, p.30.

⁸⁴ Memishev, Y. *Op.cit*, pp.33-34, 39,42,46-47; Kurtev, N. *Op.cit*, p.169.

⁸⁵ Memishev, Y. *Op.cit*, pp. 29,30,35.

⁸⁶ Mladenov, D. *Op.cit*, pp .48,100-109; *History of the Trade Union.....*, p.129; *Rabotnicheski vestnik* (Workers' Newspaper), vol. 7, №28,19.02.1904; Memishev, Y. *Op.cit*, pp. 51-54.

⁸⁷ *Bulgarski pechatar* (Bulgarian Printer) , №15, 16.08.1903; *Rabotnicheski vestnik* (Workers' Newspaper), vol.5, № 46, 25.07.1902; *Rabotnicheska borba* (Workers' Fight) , vol. 1, №34, 2.12.1903.

⁸⁸ *The Workers' Movement...*, vol.2, p.359; Nakov, A. *Development and Activity of the Worker's Tailor Union in Bulgaria 1893-1912*. – *Trade Union Annals*, 1962, №1, p.105; Memishev, Y. *Op.cit*, p.36; Kurtev, N. *Op.cit*, p.169; *The Workers' Trade Union Movement in the Varna Region*. Sofia 1985, p. 66; *Rabotnicheski vestnik* (Workers' Newspaper), vol. 7, №24, 22.01.1904.

differentiating on the basis of politics, nationality and religion. Soon its activity was restricted by school inspectorates⁸⁹

Independent Unions, ITU (1925-1934). IWTUs were established in 1925, after the State Defense Act banned the BCP and GTU activity in April 1924. These unions were a legal formation of BCP and were directed by the Moscow Prointern. Initially the union included 8 associations with 3000 members, and in 1936 they increased to 13 with 1280 members, among who a significant percentage of minorities (5.8% non-Bulgarians in 1927 and 4.6% in 1931), and many of its structures were established in regions with a high percentage of Turkish residents. Other communist structures like the Independent Professional Labour Associations and the Revolutionary Professional Union opposition also attracted minorities, mainly in the tobacco, leather, shoemaking and textile industry and the credit system.⁹⁰

The Independent Textile Trade Union (a branch of ITU) was founded in November, 1926. It provoked the large-scale strike in Sliven in 1929, which lasted 54 days. Four Roma took part in the committee. In response to mass Roma participation, ultra-conservatives Bulgarian National Union “Kubrat” and Union for Defence of Bulgaria undertook a massive counterattack. Moreover, the 1934 strike against “Andonov and Mihaylov” factory in Sliven became known for the participation of 860 Roma.⁹¹

The Independent Tobacco Worker's Union was founded in August 1925. It had branches in Sofia, Haskovo, Plovdiv and Stanimaka. This union was far more developed in comparison to the textile union. Associations in Kardzhali, Ardino, and Haskovo had 809 registered Turkish, Armenian and Jewish members in 1926 and 1750 in 1931.⁹²

Right after the 1925 outrage, ITU circulated a document in Turkish, which included demands for higher wages, a 9 hour work day and measures against unemployment and poverty. Kardzhali was determined as the highest-risk region. The document pointed out: “As long as we’re working, they do not care what religion we practice and which God we worship. They just exploit us, with no exception. By dividing us on the basis of nationality and faith they [employers] make it easier to conquer us. They separate us into Greeks, Bulgarians, Turks and Armenians, and turn us against each other...because it is easier to defeat us that way...instead of arguing amongst ourselves we must help each other and try to make a living.”⁹³

During the period of the Great Depression (1929-1933) the leather, metal, ceramics, textile and tobacco industry dropped most sharply. Over 2500 factories were closed, unemployment rates reached 200 000, and tobacco prices were cut in half. Labour conditions did not improve until 1935, at which point there were 3000 unemployed citizens in the region of Kardzhali. These are the prerequisites for the large-scale strike of the tobacco industry, which affected factories and store houses in Haskovo, Plovdiv, Stanimaka and the entire Rhodope region in 1929. More than 300 local Turks and Pomaks took part in the strike alongside with Bulgarians. The

⁸⁹ Memishev, Y. Op.cit, pp.36-38.

⁹⁰ Mladenov, D. Op.cit, pp.124-128, 157-158.

⁹¹ Mladenov, D. Op.cit, pp.134, 145,172; Textile Workers...., p.201; Genov, D. Tairov, T. Marinov, V. The Gypsy Population in the People’s Republic of Bulgaria on the Way to Socialism. Sofia 1968, pp.18-19.

⁹² Mladenov, D. Op.cit, pp.131, 141; Memishev, Y. Op.cit, pp.90, 135.

⁹³ Central State Record Office, collection 166B/1/92,p.1-2.

minority groups were represented in all strike committees. Similar approaches were used in 1933 when the region in question was on strike once again.⁹⁴

Unions coordinated by BWSDP (moderate socialists) and BWSDP (united). Unlike GTU, the Independent General Trade Union (1904-1908) proclaimed the objective of independent labour neutrality. In 1908, ICLU formed a coalition with the “Proletarii” Union, which was in alliance with BWSDP (moderate socialists). This led to the establishment of the United General Trade Union.

5.2. Stage of monopolistic and state-controlled trade unions 1934-1944

State-organized trade unionism was a part of the reforms that commenced after the May 19th 1934 military coup-d’etat. The authoritarian regime implemented the Italian, German and Portuguese experience. In the previous decades there were precedents – the closure of the civil servants trade union (1907) and GTU (1924) - within the context of Bulgarian conditions it was a novelty to implement a thoroughly unknown system of trade union administration.⁹⁵

Within ten years the authoritarian government created a solid normative base for official trade unions, i.e. regulations and laws for professional organizations of civil servants, workers’ trade unions, individual and collective contracts, settling labour conflicts, and government control of associations and partnerships.⁹⁶ It was for the first time that a prerequisite for membership in the official trade unions was introduced – the Bulgarian citizenship, which automatically excluded those in possession of Nansen passports immigrants of Armenian and Russian origin. Moreover, the partnerships had to support the national spirit, which, in accordance with the ideas of the Political Circle “Zveno”, meant an implicit, intolerant attitude towards minorities.⁹⁷

According to the organizational documents of the newly authorized state BWU (Bulgarian Worker's Union, 1935), its general ideology was the understanding of the national character of the proletariat issue within the framework of nationalism. Xenophobic views restricted foreign citizens’ participation in the labour market. However, racist ideology was not supported.⁹⁸

The outlawed BWP (communists) took certain counter-measures against official authorities by creating action committees and preparing strikes. It raised the slogan of a united front in the beginning of 1936, aimed to include all ethnic groups on the territory of Bulgaria. The early war period was marked by an increasing restriction of trade union activity and labour rights, i.e. the Civil Mobilization Act (04.1940) and two documents of explicitly segregation character. The regulation for accommodating tobacco industry workers within the Labour Directorate (1940-1941) placed all Turkish, Roma, Armenian and Jewish workers in 3rd category labour which diminished not only their salaries but also included them in a 4-5% ethnic quota.

⁹⁴ Dobrev, T. On the Strike Struggles of the Plovdiv Tobacco Workers 1929-1934. – In: From the History of the Worker's Movement in the Plovdiv Region. Sofia 1974, p.76; Memishev, Y. Op.cit, pp. 90-92,105,115; Central State Record Office, collection 166B/2/22,p.1.

⁹⁵ Yanulov, I. Op.cit, pp.38-41; Georgiev, V. The Middle Class and Petty-bourgeois Parties in Bulgaria 1934-1939. Sofia 1971, p.84.

⁹⁶ State Gazette, №96, 30.07.1934; №134, 13.09.1934; №7, 11.01.1935; №200, 5.09.1936; №214, 22.09.1936; №74, 8.04.1938.

⁹⁷ Yanulov, I. Op.cit, pp.44-48; Zlatinchev, J. Struggle for Labour Legislation in Bulgaria 1878-1944. Sofia 1961, p.293.

⁹⁸ Pekov, A. Op.cit, pp.80-81.

Despite the protests in the cities of Plovdiv and Ruse the regulation was not abolished. At this time, the Nation Defence Law was passed, as well as the rules of its application (1941). Hence Jews were deprived of labour rights and the right to participate in professional organization (trade unions).⁹⁹

5.3. The Period of Quasi-Pluralism 1944-1948

The new Fatherland Front's government promised to abolish the authoritarian regime restrictions. On 16.09.1944 a decision was made by the Central Committee of BWP (communists) to form a coalition between the existing labour unions, analogous to the GTU, under the name of "General Worker's Trade Union" (GWTU). The organization's main objective was to fully support "the people's government". It was officially "a non-party, but not apolitical organization" and was headed by a member of CC of BWP (com.). Soviet political practice was used as a starting point.¹⁰⁰

Until the end of the transition period GWTU continued to concentrate its efforts on atypical activities – politics, culture, and health – instead on legal and labour issues. This is explained by the BWP's gradual quest for totalitarian power. The political cataclysms within the country in the wake of the Peace Treaty of Paris (1947), the elimination of the multi-party system, and the establishment of standard and official organizations (youth and women's) in support of the totalitarian regime transformed the GWTU into that type of organization.¹⁰¹

5.4. State-controlled trade unions 1948-1989

Even though altering their official titles and insignia throughout the course of years – (General Trade Union, 1948-1951; Central Council of Trade Unions (1951-1957); Central Council of Bulgarian Trade Unions 1957; Bulgarian Trade Unions, BTU), the principles of mass participation, communist party loyalty, obligatory membership and centralized control remained always the same. These were transforming the organization not only into an analogue of the Soviet trade unions, but also into a transmission belt of the BCP policy and the totalitarian state ideas. This irrelevance became clear due to the priority of the production-economic functions (an assistant, rather than an opponent or partner of the executives), while the basic protective functions of trade unionism were lowered to their minimum. All centralized decisions came directly from the BCP without the slightest hint of concern towards the Trade Unions. The BTU never put into practice the collective bargaining system.¹⁰²

Actually, the BTU were to concentrate their efforts on a couple of substantial tasks – providing the employees' participation in the five-year plan, the "workers' control" movements, "the socialist competition" movements, the "communist labour" movements (of 1961), "rationalization and innovation" movement, 'scientific and technical progress' movement, etc. The second task was connected to their function to take part in the plants and factories control, labour safety, labour codes development, economic councils, etc. The third was an educational task – to organize trade union

⁹⁹ State Gazette, №16, 23.01.1941; №36, 17.02.1941; History of the Trade Unions..., pp.522-523; Memishev, Y. Op.cit, pp.117, 138-141.

¹⁰⁰ Mladenov, D. Op.cit, pp.202-204; Georgiev, V. General Worker's Trade Union. pp.35-49; Daskalova, N. Trade Unions under Socialism – Depersonalization of their Historical Natur. – In: The Bulgarian Syndical..., p. 9.

¹⁰¹ Ibidem, p. 208; Georgiev, V. Op.cit, pp.88-89, 99, 100

¹⁰² Daskalova, N. Op.cit, pp.86-87, 89-91.

schools, qualification courses and spread economic knowledge. Last, but not least, they had to provide for the recreation of their members within the system of recreational centers and sanatoria.

Though having 4 million members, finance independence and scientific structures and regardless of the specific alterations in their goals and objectives, (principles of delegation, the right of trade union organizations to autonomy) the influence of and confidence in trade unions had practically fallen off. Months before the fall of the communist regime in the spring of 1989 the chairman of BTU proposed a project - "Guidelines to further reorganization" – to be approved by the Central Committee of BCP. The proposal was for unions to be independent, on voluntary basis and oriented towards labour, living standard and social security. At the same time the BCP retained its leadership and BTU - the monopoly. In this sense, the idea of reorganization was close to the "perestroika" phraseology of the late 1980s in the Soviet Union and Zhivkov's regime in Bulgaria, and remained far behind the revolutionary change of the Polish "Solidarity" type.¹⁰³

An analysis made in the end of 1980 showed that trade unions enjoyed low public authority and were rarely contacted as regards employment issues, which was explained as "Nothing depends on us". Most of the employees were their members because membership was obligatory (28%), because it was a mass practice (14%), or because this was the way to get recreation cards (6%). They were dissatisfied as the trade union structures would not protect their direct interest and 10% declared that under different circumstances they would never become members of a trade union of that kind.¹⁰⁴

Minority issues in BTU policy and practice. Within the totalitarian state BTU were often assigned the execution of the decisions of other government and party bodies. Among these decisions were the ones regarding the labour relations of ethnic minorities. Thus, in 1951 the United Front National Council proposed to the Secretariat of the BCP Central Committee to require from the GWTU to promote within the administrative and trade union hierarchy "the worthy blue-collar workers and honest gypsies".

Since the archives of the state-controlled organizations are not yet accessible for scientific research, the below listed observations are general, coming from published sources. There is certain data that a number of Turkish women from the tobacco industry at the store-houses in Ardino region took part in the socialist competition in the early 1950s and were even decorated with medals. The 25 Turkish women working at the Haskovo tobacco factories took active part in the "excellent-work [udarnichestvo]" movement. Similar competitions as "Communist labour movement", "Leader of the 5th five-year plan", etc, were the essence of the trade-union activity among the Turks, who worked in the cooperative farms growing tobacco, wheat and maize in the Rhodope region and Northeast Bulgaria in the 1960s and 1970s. As members of the miners' trade union (230,232 people in 1971) a number of Turks and Pomaks at GORUBSO, Kardzhali region, took part in the competition for achieving labour results higher than planned (1948) and the "*stakhanovite*" movement. The Turkish women and Roma, who worked as weavers and seamstresses, made no exception. They were among the initiators of the multi-machine movement at "Dunavska Koprina" – Rousse /1950/, in Gabrovo and Silistra /1951/. They were

¹⁰³ Mihaylova, T. The Bulgarian Trade Unions during the 1980s – Crisis and Attempts for a Change – In: The Bulgarian Syndical ..., pp. 136-139, 141-142; Ibidem, №13, pp.261-273; №16, p.286.

¹⁰⁴ Mihaylova, T. Op.cit, pp.147-148.

among the top-workers and socialist labour heroes in the competitions for plan fulfillment in the cotton, linen and wool factories in Rousse, Provadia, Varna, Shumen, Silistra.¹⁰⁵

Scarce, yet indicative, is the data for the minorities' participation in the managing structures of BTU. There is sufficient published evidence that a number of Armenians were elected in the region of Pazardjik throughout the entire 50-year period.¹⁰⁶

Some Turkish workers have complained that they were treated as “second-hand” people, that “the dirtiest work” was given to them, that nobody protected their interests, but all looked down on them with suspicion as if they were potential emigrants. However, according to a Turk from Razgrad, who worked for 20 years in a metal processing cooperative together with 15 Bulgarians, there was no segregation and the relationship was “fraternal”. The same is stated by an emigrant in Bursa, an ex-miner – his boss never made any difference in terms of ethnicity, he was respected and they often exchanged family visits. The evidence for changes at work, however, were more drastic after the completion of the process of renaming of the Bulgarian Turks in 1984-1986. In a factory in Asenovgrad further to a director's order, all documents /hospitalization lists, business trips forms, orders/ were accepted and issued with Bulgarian names only, Turkish language was forbidden at work, and those who would not obey, had to leave. In a number of plants the Turks who returned from the so called “great excursion” /the mass emigration in the summer of 1989/ were not accepted back to work.¹⁰⁷ Along the same lines were the complaints of Roma workers addressed to the Department of work affairs with the Turkish population in 1959-1961. They asserted that they had been fired for the only reason that they would not change their Muslim names or because of their ethnicity: “Wherever we go (to look for a job), they send us away empty-handed, they abuse us and consider us second-hand”. Such signals did not lead to any reactions on the part of the direct chiefs, nor did they receive any official response, although there were a few cases, in which Roma were treated as equal-right citizens¹⁰⁸.

The described situations of working environment relations and problems between employees and employers were to a certain extent due to the particular role of the BTU, which were irrelevant and useless within the totalitarian state. Obviously, they did not stand for the interests of their members, even less so for those belonging to an ethnic minority. In accordance with the communist tradition and the essence of the trade-union idea, these minorities did not enjoy any special policy, there were not any program documents, or separate structures. This total neglect of minorities' problems, especially of the Roma who are just entering the labour market and learning how to work, has created the prerequisites for grave labour conflicts in the years to come.

5.5. Reinstating pluralism and free trade unions 1989-2003

¹⁰⁵ Mihaylova, T. *Op.cit*, pp.147-148.

¹⁰⁶ The Revolutionary Trade Union Movement in the Pazardzhik Municipality. Sofia 1986, pp.293, 295, 296, 299.

¹⁰⁷ Dimitrova, D. Bulgarian Turks Immigrants in the Republic of Turkey in 1989 – In: *Between the Adaptation and Nostalgia*. Sofia 1998, pp.104, 121; Genov, D, *The Fraternal ...*, p.33; Poulton, H. *The Balkans. Minorities and States in Conflict*. London. 1993, pp. 137-138; Petkov, K. Fotev, G. *Op.cit*, pp. 34, 93.

¹⁰⁸ Central State Record Office, collection 1B/28/6, p.1; collection 1B/28/24, p.1.

Trade unions societal role. After the democratic changes in the Central and East European countries (CEEC) in 1989 the first organizations that marked rapid change and became the main driving force of the process were the trade unions. This process was quite prominent in Bulgaria. The Labour Confederation of 'Podkrepa' (Support) was established before the changes as a semi-legal opposition organization. Its initial purpose was to protect employees' civil rights and especially the rights of the Turkish minority. Nowadays the Confederation is the second largest trade union structure in the country. As early as the summer of 1989 it established ties of solidarity with international trade union organizations and head offices abroad.

The seminars organized by the Confederation in cooperation with a number of international head offices as well as the constant exchange of information contribute to the transformation of "Podkrepa" Labour Confederation into a trade union organization of modern type. "Podkrepa" is a voluntary union built on the principles of free confederating of trade union organizations established respectively at regional and national professional level. Members of the Confederation are citizens united for protection of their professional and social interests.

"Podkrepa" Labour Confederation is independent of the state and administrative bodies, employers, political parties, public and religious organizations and associations; its purposes and activities are directed to protection of the rights, dignity, professional and social interests of the members of the organizations within the Confederation, and above all, protection against national, ethnical or religious discrimination on grounds of racial belonging.

The trade union solidarity and spirit of "Podkrepa", as well as the avoidance of controversies between regional unions and federations require a strict adherence to the established basic social functions, as provided by the Internal Rules of the Confederation.

The regional trade unions of "Podkrepa" /established in 34 places throughout the country/ grant trade union protection to all group and individual members of the Confederation in the regions and represent their interests at all levels; support the national federations and national trade unions at national level; provide organizational and methodological assistance to all trade union structures in the regions; build up new sections and municipal unions with the purpose of attracting new members; prepare and organize courses on trade union training; render methodological assistance with signing Collective Labour Contracts; participate in the system of social cooperation at regional and municipal levels; organize, conduct and coordinate strike activities on the territory of their regions in cooperation with the respective professional organizations; help with the establishing of regional trade unions by professions; prepare and organize qualification courses for the activists in the regions; have control, financial and organizational functions with regard to their structures; establish advisory trade union centers; organize and participate in activities oriented to the active participation of the population; using all lawful means, take part in the working out and implementation of programs and projects funded from national and international sources.

As regards the organizational plan, an important principle is the decentralization of the strike funds to the branch structures, as provided by the Internal Rules of the Confederation. The operation with the strike funds realizes the principle of trade union solidarity. The strike funds are absolutely independent of the state bodies, which must be regulated in the legislation. The strike funds must be

secret, and their utilization must be in accordance with the purposes they are meant for.

In its activities “Podkrepa” Labour Confederation sticks to the values of democracy and market economy, which includes creation of real political, socio-economic and cultural preconditions for the full integration of the minority ethnic groups in society and at all levels of the labour market, as well as organization of modern industrial relations.

In the end of 1989 the trade unions existing up to that moment undertook radical reorganization in the direction of organizational and political independence, making the protection of employees’ interests their main objective. In February 1990 the Extraordinary Congress of the Bulgarian Trade Unions developed into a Constituent Congress of the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB). CITUB has made a great progress; managed to transform itself, strengthen its positions and win recognition as the biggest trade union organization in this country with special place and role in the social environment. Nowadays it has about 400 000 members, united in nearly 7000 organizations that are members of 35 branch federations.

In reality the establishment of trade union pluralism in Bulgaria contributed to the recognition of the key place of the trade unions in the process of reforms, especially in the years of preparation and initiation of the tripartite cooperation and collective bargaining. The policy of support of the reforms at acceptable social price and the new consensual culture of the labour relations based on social dialogue also strengthened their prestige and made possible for them to play a leading role in the constituting of the new system of social partnership.

Nowadays the trade union spectrum is divided between two trade unions recognised as representative at national level – the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria and Podkrepa Labour Confederation. Several small trade unions also exist but they are not recognised as representative at national level¹⁰⁹. **At national level** the social partnership finds expression through the activities of the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation¹¹⁰ which has different commissions on the separate issues. It includes representatives of the Government and representatives of the recognized as representative at national level organizations of employees and employers.

The system of collective bargaining has been organized at three levels:

- 1.** At branch/sector level, Branch Council for Social Cooperation has been operating; it includes representatives of the respective representative branch/sector employer and trade union organizations.

¹⁰⁹ According to the data of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in 1998 CITUB had 607 883 members, Podkrepa [Support]– 154 894, Promyana [Change] – 7 802, OSSOB (Community of Bulgarian Free Trade unions)– 4011, ADS (Association of the Democratic Trade unions)– 2098, GCBSB (General Central of the Branch Trade unions in Bulgaria)– 357, NPS (Independent Trade Union)– 118, Edinstvo [Unity] – 113. On this basis with Decision № 17/18.01.1999 of the Council of Ministers only CITUB and Podkrepa Confederation are granted the status of representative organizations at national level, while the status of representativeness of the other 5 organizations was repealed. New census of the trade union members and employer organization members is expected in 2003 with the purpose of determining their status.

¹¹⁰ The Labour Code regulates the social partnership and defines the criteria for recognition of the organizations of employers and employees as representative at national level.

2. At municipal level, councils for social cooperation have been set up. Representatives of the municipal authorities participate in the negotiations on the budget activities (education, healthcare, culture, administration).
3. At enterprise/company level, the existing trade union organization(s) and the employers participate in the negotiations.

Policy and activities of the trade unions. As regards the role of the trade unions in the overcoming discrimination and racism directed against the ethnic minorities and immigrants and their re-integration, it should be noted that trade union practices are the following:

1. Joint policy at national level oriented to the problems of labour market, incomes, standard of living, social protection etc. valid for all Bulgarian citizens, and prospects for the trade unions to influence the formation of the national policy, legislation and practices via the mechanisms of social partnership.
2. Specific influence only in respect to the working representatives of these groups, and in special cases to the unemployed, by the means of trade union activities and the specific mechanisms for trade union protection at different levels – collective bargaining, labour conflicts settlement, industrial actions including strikes as a last means, litigation etc.
3. Specific policy directed to these groups.
4. Network of non-governmental organizations fighting against discrimination and social disintegration.

At national level both CITUB and Podkrepa, being representative trade unions, play important role and can influence the regulating of labour and security policy relations, issues related to the standard of living, providing equality and protection of the rights in these spheres through active participation in national bodies built on a tripartite principle. The participation of the trade unions in these bodies makes it possible for them to influence the development and improvement of the social policy and practices even with respect to the representatives of the ethnic minorities and immigrants in the country as a part of the employees whose interests trade unions are to protect.

As members of the European Confederation of the Trade Unions (ECTU) and the International Confederation of the Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), CITUB and Podkrepa support and implement all activities of their policy on prevention and abolishing of discrimination in the labour process. Another important element in the policy of the trade unions against discrimination is their activity directed to the establishing and observing the basic labour standards of the International Labour Organization.

The Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria has its own policy with regard to the minority rights protection, social integration of the representatives of the ethnic minorities, which is a part of the common confederation policy.

The CITUB Statutes provides the following: “CITUB shall allow no discrimination or privileges for its members on grounds of political and religious affiliations, sex, race, ethnicity or any other reason”. CITUB grants free membership for the representatives of the separate racial and ethnic groups ensuring equal rights for its members. This means that CITUB accepts that any representative of any ethnic group in the country, as well as any foreigner having a recognised refugee or immigrant status and working in a given enterprise can become a member of the Confederation. Consequently, they will be subject to all rules valid for Bulgarian citizens. They have the right to be granted and are granted the same protection with

regard to the working conditions and payment, health and safe conditions of work and additional services provided by the trade unions for their members. The collective contracts signed by the trade unions at different levels are equally valid for all their members.

There are no special structures based on ethnic principle within the Confederation. Neither is there any statistics on the ethnic belonging of the members because of this same principle of free membership and equal opportunities for all CITUB members, regardless of their sex, race, ethnic affiliations etc. The number of trade union organizations and members in the ethnically mixed regions can be an indirect indicator of CITUB membership.

In February 2003 CITUB adopted an Organizing Strategy 2003-2004 and a National Recruitment Action Plan 2003. These documents pay special attention to the organizing in the ethnically mixed regions. Two organizers and a coordinator on the recruitment in the ethnically mixed regions, who are ethnic Turks, have been appointed. The regions of Haskovo, Dimitrovgrad, Kardzhali in the South-East Bulgaria are of priority in terms of organizing. According to the censuses of 2001, 61.6% of the population of Kardzhali self-identify as belonging to the Turkish ethnic group, 0.8% - to Roma, and 34.1% - to Bulgarian. In Haskovo 80.9% are Bulgarians, 11.3% - Turks, 6.2% - Roma. In these regions 96274 are employed under labour contracts, the CITUB members are 15 724, or the trade union density is 16.3%. In Northeast Bulgaria, the regions of Razgrad, Targovishte, Shoumen the employed under labour contracts are 98 085, the CITUB members are 22 671, i.e. the trade union density is 23.11%. As to the ethnic composition the situation is the following: Razgrad – 47.2% Turks, 0.8% Roma, 44.0 % Bulgarians; Shoumen – 60.2% Bulgarians, 29.1% Turks, 8.1% Roma.

This policy is an expression of CITUB's concern with the social inclusion and protection of the representatives of different ethnicities. In the priority branches/sectors, as defined in the Strategy, such as tailoring, tobacco growing, trade and services, municipal markets, there is a significant number of representatives of ethnic minorities among the employed.

Data shows that in the course of execution of the National Recruitment Plan the organisers in these regions have already made a contribution to building of new organisations. Thus, an organisation has been established in the municipal administration of Rouen, which is mainly of Turkish population. A new organisation has also been established in Shoumen, Kaludlevo Mine, which initially had 30 members, and now it numbers 150 members of 260 employed. Within the framework of this policy, the CITUB national coordinator on the ethnic issues has been working on the establishment of a Professional Training Center, now in a process of registration, in Rouen where the population is mainly Turkish and the unemployment-rate is one of the highest in the country.

CITUB's influence on the working conditions and in this context on the prevention of discrimination is strengthened by the fact that the Confederation has 31 Regional Coordination Councils in all former districts of the country and 168 Municipal Coordination Councils. The Legislation provides an opportunity for collective bargaining at these levels as well. In fact, they are the mediators not only between employers and employees, but also between employees and representatives of the local authorities. This means a wide network has been operating covering almost every place in Bulgaria, which gives a chance to every employed individual or team to express opinion and have their interests protected or represented. CITUB took

part in the establishment (2000) of regional and municipal employment councils. CITUB representatives take part in their activities directed to looking for variants of protection at the work place at local level, alternative occupation, opening of new working places.

CITUB works on various bilateral and multilateral projects together with international and local trade union and other organizations, oriented to the regions with ethnically mixed population and the immigrants in Bulgaria.

Several examples can be cited. In the context of international projects under Phare Program some ideas of opening workplaces in ethnically mixed regions were put into practice but the project itself remained unfinished as a result of the insufficient organization on the part of the European partners working on the project. A regional program on the occupation in the region of Samuil, with compact Turkish population, was worked out. Especially fruitful is the cooperation with FGTB – Belgium. With its support in 1994, 1996 and 1997 seminars on the issues of unemployment, occupation, integration of the ethnic minorities in the ethnically mixed regions were held. In 1995 and 1997 minority trade unionists and representatives of the local authorities attended seminars in Belgium dedicated to the issues of minorities' integration and regional economic policy and labour market. The cooperation with FGTB – Belgium went on in 2000 and 2001. Two seminars were organized: “Stable Development of the Region” – held in Kardzhali and “Minorities Integration” – in Shoumen. Representatives of 8 Roma organizations also attended these seminars.

The CITUB Institute of Social and Trade Union Research (ISTUR), with the support of FGTB – Belgium carried out two empirical sociological surveys on: “Employment Relations in the Period of Privatization and Restructuring of the Economy in the Ethnically Mixed Regions”, 1994 and 1995.

Different ISSR projects, though not representative in terms of ethnic belonging indicator, show that workplace discrimination has not become a serious problem yet, or at least it has not been recognised as such. The reasons can be different, but probably one of the main reasons is that the limited demand of the labour market makes people accept whatever they are offered, under whatever conditions, although they are aware that their rights are violated and that they are discriminated. A survey on the “*Stress at Workplace under Conditions of Transition*” carried out in 2002 in three public sectors – education, health services and state/regional administration, funded by the International Labour Organization, showed that over 70% of the interviewed did not report workplace discrimination. The rest state the following reasons for discrimination:

- Age - 9.3%
- Education level - 7.5%
- Political affiliations – 6.8%
- Trade union membership – 4.7%
- Gender – 4.6%

Because of these characteristics, the interviewed believe that they have been discriminated in terms of payment (12.2%), promotion (10.3%), and qualification improvement (5.7%). Although only 8% mention the existence of gender discrimination at work place, 60.9% highlight it as a stress-causing factor. This data reveals that no cases of discrimination on grounds of ethnicity were mentioned. To a great extent, this is due to the fact that the number of ethnic minorities' representatives is lower in the investigated sectors.

CITUB's Regional and Coordination Council experts and chairpersons are also involved in advisory activities in the regions, related to issues of collective bargaining, collective labour disputes settlement, industrial acts, individual rights violation, discrimination, etc.

CITUB also provides litigation and consultations on the Labour Law, which are free of charge for its members, and of minimum payment for non-members, through the Labour Law Advisory Offices to the Regional Coordination Councils and the CITUB Confidential Trade Union Legal Service.

Attention should be paid to the fact that the protection in cases of discrimination in the workplace is hard to be provided, even through legal means, since no special rules for legal proceedings related to discrimination in the workplace exist.

The obstacles come from the fact that the cases of discrimination are hard to prove, as it is the determining of sanctions in such cases.

The court practice is not encouraging as to judges' flexibility in relation to claims based on Art.8, Sec.3 of the Labour Code, which provides: "In the exercise of labour rights and duties no direct or indirect discrimination, privileges or restrictions shall be allowed on grounds of ethnicity, origin, sex, race, skin colour, age, political and religious convictions, affiliation to trade union and other public organisations and movements, family, social and property status and disability".

Training of trade unionists from all regions on labour and social legislation and basic lines of trade union activities and protection has been conducted in the structures of CITUB. Averagely, 13 000 trade unionists – chairpersons and experts of the CITUB member-federations, chairpersons and experts of the Regional Coordination Councils, municipal coordinators, chairpersons of base organizations, including from regions with ethnically mixed population - are trained a year. CITUB participates in the Network of Correspondents on Violation of Labour and Trade Union Rights with ICFTU through which international assistance can be requested in case of proved discrimination and rude violations of employees' rights.

A Campaign for Protection of the Fundamental Rights in the Workplace was launched in 1998 in support of the International Labour Organization Declaration on the fundamental principles and rights in the sphere of labour, adopted by the International Labour Conference held in June 1998. One of the main priorities of the campaign is the elimination of direct and indirect discrimination in the actual realization of labour and trade union rights in the enterprises. In the last 5 years in the framework of the campaign a large number of enterprises were visited and inspected following signals of malpractice and acts of discrimination; meeting with employees, employers and trade unionists were held. The ascertained malpractice and respective sanctions were given publicity in the regions and at national level through the press and electronic media whose representatives participated in those inspections.

Within the campaign CITUB stands not only for the interests of every CITUB member and a group of workers who have chosen the membership in its structures, but also for the interests of all employees, even when there is not a trade union organization in a given enterprise.

The campaign shows that the violation of some basic rights in the workplace is a large-scale practice. A number of cases were also identified showing discrimination in payment to different groups of workers, discrimination due to membership in trade unions or participation in trade unions bodies, and discrimination upon release from employment. Cases of serious violation of human rights were also noticed, incl. physical violence and degrading of human dignity, particularly in companies of light

industry (tailoring) and factories owned by Turkish and Greek entrepreneurs in the border areas where ethnic population is prevailing. Such employers take advantage of the hard social status of families without income or job alternatives, and impose conditions of exploitation and inhumane labour environment similar to slavery.

As a result of the campaign, a number of enterprises were issued prescriptions or penalty acts, or the working conditions were improved, whereas other factories were closed down by the Inspectorate of Hygiene and Epidemiology. Illegally released workers were re-employed. In some companies, agreements were signed with the employers and trade union organizations were set up (as per information from the Regional Coordination Council, 203 new trade union organizations were established of more than 3500 members.)

At its Vth Congress in December 2001, CITUB confirmed its readiness to combat violation of rights of wage labour and discrimination at the workplace. A special *Resolution* was adopted *for protection and realization of labour and trade union rights*.

CITUB is trying to protect not only the rights and interests of hired workers who are its members, but also to expand its functions and influence over the civil society by establishing partnerships and networks with non-governmental organizations. One of CITUB's main objectives is to produce social mechanisms of influence and alternative social services, which will work independently of governmental authorities for combating social exclusion and integrating vulnerable social groups, among which are also the representatives of ethnic minorities, refugees and immigrants.

One of the specific social initiatives of CITUB, in this context, is interaction with the NGO's working with the ethnic groups.

Since the beginning of 2000, CITUB has been actively developing its cooperation with Roma. Represented by the Social Protection of Roma in Bulgaria Foundation and Rominterne – Right of Life, experts from this ethnic group were partners with other non-governmental organizations in several projects:

- Proposals related to the Framework Programme for integration of Roma into Bulgarian society;
- Ensuring employment for Roma by way of land settlement and cleaning of tanks and reservoirs;
- Social assistance to Roma in a hard social state;

The aim of this collaboration between CITUB and the non-governmental organizations is to mobilize the population, make it realize and take to heart Roma' current problems; to provoke interest and stimulate searching for reserves of social assistance and employment of jobless Roma people on behalf of the government and the local administration; to form in the Roma abilities and skills to initiate small- or middle-sized business; to change Roma' predisposition to finding a way out of their isolation from society.

By initiative of CITUB, a Youths' Forum of XXI century was initiated which, as a non-profit association, will organise various forms of training and seminars, the majority of which are related to intercultural and interethnic communication, ethnic tolerance and expansion of the scope of influence of ethnic minority representatives at the labour market.

Through its Women Commission and through the activity of the Public Women's Parliament of 21st century, which was established in 1999 upon initiative of CITUB by over 40 non-governmental organizations, scientific researchers and

culture activists, CITUB has been developing the practice of gender approach application. A considerable part of all functions of the Public Women's Parliament are related to expanding the interethnic communication of women, combating discrimination and social exclusion.

Representatives of ethnic minorities are involved at different levels of the system as experts, chairpersons of municipal coordination councils of CITUB, organisers, etc.

Immigrants, labour market and trade unions

It is only when individuals are granted asylum or have refugee status that the Trade Unions may express their interests and protect their rights in case they are employed by companies where trade unions are represented.

Available data shows that the representatives of these societies, who are involved in the official economy, are only few. Currently, trade unions can hardly access workers in small- or middle-sized enterprises or companies in the sphere of grey economy, where a great part of the foreign residents in Bulgaria are employed due to the severe conditions on the labour market.

Regardless of the equal rights granted by way of legislation to refugees of official status, the latter, in fact, do not have firm positions on the labour market and, therefore, need assistance and support through special programs of labour and social integration. According to data from the Refugees' Agency, most of them have professions, which are out of demand on the Bulgarian labour market.

Employment for representatives of this society is difficult due to the shrinking labour market and high rate of unemployment which varies between 17 and 18%, whereas restructuring of the economy and implementation of new technologies impose higher requirements for professional and qualification level of wage labour. Foreigners also suffer some other problems relating to language, lack of support from relatives and friends, lack of professional experience in Bulgaria, employers' preference to hire people of longer experience and awareness of the situation, and difficulty in producing certificates of education and qualifications.

For those reasons, notwithstanding the effective legislative guarantees of equal rights, refugees may be considered a marginal group on the labour market and must be supported and encouraged through social programs of labour and social integration. This is where trade unions could possibly be of help in the future, also through implementation of the CITUB's project on Promoting Lifelong Learning amongst refugee / new immigrant communities in Europe (PACE). This project started on 01 October 2001 and will officially end on 30 September 2003. The Objectives of the PACE Project are targeted towards the learning needs of refugee and new immigrant communities to secure their fuller participation in Civil Society and more effective access to, and progress within, the Labour Market. The partners are: Workers Educational Association England and Scotland (WEA); Deutsche Angestellten-Akademie (DAA) Germany; Culture et Liberte France; Uniao Geral de Trabalhadores (UGT) Portugal; Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria; National Confederation of Hungarian Trade Unions (MSZOSZ). Direct beneficiaries will be community / voluntary organisations, their programme managers, trainers / teachers, involved in the organisation and delivery of adult education for refugee and new immigrant communities. Indirect beneficiaries will

include refugee and new immigrant communities through improved quality in education provision.

The expected outputs will be:

- a) Report on the learning needs of refugee and new immigrant communities.
- b) Training the trainers course manual - tested and translated into partner languages.
- c) Six national training the trainers courses.
- d) Network Development feasibility Study.
- e) Project Evaluation, Dissemination, Interim and Final Reports.

(Web site: www.pace-project.info)

In addition to providing protection of labour rights via specific trade union mechanisms, trade unions may also render assistance to representatives of this society in several aspect:

- provision of specific information on: working place and conditions of labour; content of labour agreement and collective labour agreements; labour legislation
- assistance in establishing contacts with employers and authorities
- assistance in training and re-qualification in order to improve their positions on the labour market

The Bulgarian trade unions, as the largest non-governmental organizations, as organizations for protection and representation of interests with established positions in enterprises and closest to people of wage labour, with their full scope of activities, mechanisms and ability to establish partnerships and networks in the civil society may contribute to preventing of discrimination and social exclusion, development of ethnic tolerance and equality in the labour market and in the society.