

# **Impediments to the Development of Turkish Ethnic Minority Media in Bulgaria**

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## **Introduction**

Many recent studies have focused on ethnic minority groups. The rationale for this is that these constitute a phenomenon existing in almost every country due to the fact that all over the world there are thousands of different ethnic identities and at the same time less than two hundred states from which only 10 per cent are ethnically homogeneous. It is the wide spread of ethnic minorities that make them both an important and problematic area of research.

According to Riggins, every group that has common ancestry, culture, language and religion can be identified as ethnic.<sup>1</sup> Finding the ways for the preservation and further development of the above ethnic features, especially when situated in the competitive environment of the majority-minority relations in multiethnic states, has become a widely discussed topic nowadays. According to Helen Darbishire, the preservation of minorities' ethnic identity in significant part depends on their ability to express their ideas and opinions in the language, form and medium of expression of their own choice.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, Riggins refers to ethnic minority media as to a crucial tool for defining and preserving ethnic identities, allowing them to accomplish the above tasks.<sup>3</sup> Depending on their construction, ethnic minority media may also perform an integrative function through providing majority group with the opportunity to get acquainted with the problems and unique culture of their ethnic minority neighbors. The preservation and integration functions of ethnic minority media identify the important role they play in multiethnic societies and the necessity of establishing a favorable conditions for their further development.

Previous research in this field has been primarily focused on countries from Western democracies<sup>4</sup>, whereas few studies have been devoted to multiethnic societies from Eastern Europe, and especially the Balkans, where inter-ethnic relations in recent years have become a hot issue. Among the pioneers in this area is Slavko Splichal<sup>5</sup>, whose research, however, is limited to the democratization of mass media in the region and only touches tangentially upon the problem of ethnic minority media.

It is the purpose of this article to provide a broad overview of the development of the ethnic Turkish minority media in Bulgaria. The reason for selecting their group is that Bulgarian Turks represent the biggest ethnic minority in this country amounted to almost 10 per cent of the population. I will argue that ethnic Turkish media in

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<sup>1</sup> Riggins, Stephen Harold, ed. 1992. *Ethnic Minority Media. An International Prospective*. Communication and Human Values. London: Sage Publications, 1-23.

<sup>2</sup> Darbishire, Helen. 1999. Minorities and media freedom under international law. *Roma Rights* 4: 60-70.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.2

<sup>4</sup> S. Riggins, C. Husband

<sup>5</sup> Splichal, Slavko. 1994. *Media Beyond Socialism: Theory and Practise in East-Central Europe*. Edited by John A. Lent. International Communication and Popular Culture. Oxford: Westview Press.

Bulgaria represent an underdeveloped resource. On the one hand, they are underdeveloped due to the fact that there are just two electronic and several printed media that are supposed to serve the preservation of the ethnic origins of around 800 thousand Turks. On the other hand, they do represent a potential resource because the existing legislation in Bulgaria do not restrict ethnic communities from organizing their own media but on the contrary provide them with opportunity to create such. I will also show the danger of diminishing of ethnic Turkish media. On the basis of the analysis of the reasons for this I will provide suggestions to Bulgarian media policy makers for the fostering of the development of ethnic Turkish media.

This study is an excerpt of a broader research on Turkish ethnic minority media in Bulgaria. The first chapter presents an analysis of the legal framework within which ethnic minorities in Bulgaria are to preserve their identities and to develop own media. The second chapter offers the major conclusions drawn about the development of these media in Bulgaria, impediments to their progress and policy-oriented suggestions for overcoming them. It is based on comprehensive research on printed and electronic media of Bulgarian Turks.

As this is the first effort made so far for assessing the development of Turkish minority media in Bulgaria, my research is based on primary sources such as interviews with journalists, directly involved in making ethnic Turkish media, and media experts, engaged in their regulation. As a secondary source, I rely on the only research in the field, that is Ibrahim Yalamov's historical review of the ethnic Turkish press in Bulgaria.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Yalamov, Ibrahim. 1998. Турският Периодичен Печат в България (1878-1996). In *Периодният печат на малцинствата в България (1878-1997)*, ed. Mihail Ivanov. Sofia: Междуетническа инициатива за човешки права.

## **Bulgarian legislation and ethnic minorities' media freedom**

This chapter will examine the existing legislation in Bulgaria that touches upon the problem of granting ethnic minorities with free access to media. The analysis of the Bulgarian Constitution and the ratified by the Bulgarian Assembly Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities will clarify the broader legal framework within which ethnic minorities in Bulgaria are to preserve their identities and to develop their culture and own media. An evaluation of the Bulgarian Media Law will follow in order to show what are the specific provisions through which Bulgarian authorities promote ethnic minorities with access to media.

Clarification of the legal framework will provide a basis for evaluation of the Turkish minority media in Bulgaria and will show that they are underdeveloped. The major reason for this, however, is not rooted in the Bulgarian legislation but rather in some historic, economic and political peculiarities of the interethnic relations in Bulgaria which will be analyzed in the next chapter.

### *International law and minority access to media*

Freedom of expression and access to information are one of the fundamental and naturally given rights to every human person. Human identities depend in significant part on the ability of humans to express their ideas and opinions in a language and medium of their choice. In order to be really valuable, this right must be granted equally to all persons on a no discriminatory basis. The significance of the freedom of expression and access to information explains the number of provisions existing in the international law that are deliberately created to preclude their violation. The fundamental international covenants in this regard are the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966); the European Convention on Human Rights (1950). Provisions related to the protection of freedom of expression in all of them are identical and can be summarized by the following Articles:

Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference of authorities and regardless of frontiers.

(Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights)

The enjoyment of the rights [to freedom of expression and access to information] shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, color, language ... national or social origin, association with a national minority ... or other status

(Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights)

Another common feature of the above listed covenants is that they recognize and protect freedom of expression on individual basis rather than on collective grounds. From this perspective significant importance have the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Although these two covenants have different origins, they compliment each other in their effort to protect the right of minority groups to enjoy freedom of expression through receiving access to media. Provisions related to media in them stipulate that minority groups are the producers of their own media rather than being merely the objects of media and “having somebody else’s view of them reproduced and thrown back at them”.<sup>7</sup>

According to these documents, national governments should ensure that the legal, logistical and economic environment within which media are to operate is fruitful for the development of media freedom and multiculturalism. As every market has the need to be regulated, the media one does not constitute an exception. From this perspective, international law differentiates printed and electronic media. Whereas the former are free from any kind of restrictions, the latter are object of state regulation.

Overall, the rights to freedom of expression and media freedom are considered to be among the basic human freedoms and thus are protected by the international law. Whereas the international covenants tend to protect freedom of expression on individual basis, European practice goes a step further and grants this freedom also to groups of individuals (i.e. to minority groups). However, when evaluating the level of implementation of this right with respect to a particular minority, one must be aware that minorities’ access to media “is still in its infancy both in law and in practice.”<sup>8</sup>

### *Bulgarian Constitution and the European Framework Convention*

The idea that Bulgaria is a nation that consists of diverse ethnic, religious and language groups is enshrined in the Bulgarian Constitution. Although the term “minority” is not used in it, Bulgarian Supreme law consists of a number of provisions aimed at protecting the rights of minority groups.<sup>9</sup> Among them the most important is Article 6 which proclaims the principle of equality and non-discrimination that enables treatment of all citizens on equal footing. Another important provision in this regard is Article 5(4) which stipulates that the provisions of international covenants ratified by Bulgaria constitute and internal part of the Bulgarian legislation and have priority over the domestic law. All of the above examined international covenants, excluding European Charter for Regional and Minority languages, are ratified by Bulgaria, that is their provisions are part of the Bulgarian internal legislation.

As far as minority language and cultural rights are concerned, Art. 3 of the Bulgarian Constitution says that “Bulgarian should be the official language of the Republic”. However, Art. 36 stipulates that all citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian

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<sup>7</sup> Elin Haf Gruffydd Jones, in *Conference on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, Council of Europe Publishing 1998, p. 35. In Darbishire, Helen. 1999. Minorities and media freedom under international law. *Roma Rights* 4: 60-70, p.63.

<sup>8</sup> Helen Darbishire, *Minorities and Media Freedom*, p.68.

<sup>9</sup> Out of 40 members of the Council of Europe only 17 have the term ‘national minority’ used in their Constitution.

have "...the right to study and use their own language...".<sup>10</sup> In turn, articles 39, 40, 41 proclaim freedom of expression and information and freedom of any medium. It is noteworthy that although all these articles do promote freedom of expression, they make it in a broad and vague way without referring particularly to ethnic identities but to all Bulgarian citizens.

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was ratified by the Bulgarian Parliament two years ago. The closer examination of its provisions is necessary because this is the first international legal document that creates *positive* obligations on states to preserve ethnic minority identities through creation of favorable environment for the development of their culture, education in mother tongue and free access to media. The concrete positive obligations for the latter provide Art. 9 (3,4):

3. The Parties shall not hinder the creation and the use of printed media by persons belonging to national minorities. In the legal framework of sound radio and television broadcasting, they shall ensure ... that persons belonging to national minorities are granted the possibility of creating and using their own media.

4. In the framework of their legal systems, the Parties shall adopt adequate measures in order to facilitate access to media for persons belonging to national minorities and in order to promote tolerance and cultural pluralism.<sup>11</sup>

As these provisions are rather specific they can not be find in the Bulgarian Supreme law which alike other Constitutions sets the broader socio-economic and political grounds on which society is based. However, the discussed above Art 5(3) enables the implementation of the provisions of the Framework Convention in the Bulgarian internal legislation. That is how Art. 9(4) of the Convention has resulted in redrafting of some parts of the Bulgarian Media Law so that the access of minorities to media be guaranteed.

To sum up, in the past ten years Bulgarian governments have steadily embarked on democratization of the socio-economic and political life in Bulgaria a significant aspect of which is the restoration of ethnic minority rights, suppressed during the communist rule. Through the implementation of the ratified international covenants in the internal Bulgarian law, ethnic minorities have been guaranteed the right to receive and disseminate information on their mother tongue and to create their own media.

### *Bulgarian Media Law*

As far as the legal arrangement of mass media is concerned, alike other democratic countries, electronic media in Bulgaria is regulated by a special Media law whereas printed media are left unrestricted. My goal here will be to analyze Bulgarian Media bill from the perspective of minority access to media and to show its imperfections in this regard.

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<sup>10</sup> July 1991. Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria. *State Gazette* 56.

<sup>11</sup> Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Article 9, 2/3.

In 1998 Bulgarian legislators passed a new Media law - The Law on Radio and Television which was supposed to fulfill the expectations of the broad public for a democratic bill forged along the lines of the European practice. However, according to a number of NGOs, media experts and journalists, this has not happened.

Analyzing the new Media Law, Svetlana Bozilova points out that *de facto* it has preserved the control of the executive branch over the work of radio and television thus violating the fundamental democratic principle of separation of powers and jeopardizing the freedom of expression.<sup>12</sup> There are two major reasons that support this conclusion. Firstly, this piece of legislation has enabled the Council of Ministers to exert tight control over the licensing of broadcasters "... which unequivocally shows the desire of the state authorities to control the work of radio and television operators, thus limiting freedom of information".<sup>13</sup> Secondly, the very institutional arrangement of NCRT and elaborated procedures for the election of the Committee members, make its work subordinate to the executive power.

These considerations are indirectly related to the regulation of ethnic minority media. Reasoning underlying this is that any political party in power which decides to "play the nationalistic card" will be enabled by the legislation to restrict minorities' access to media. This can be done either through the appointed by the executive branch members of NCRT or through the complicated licensing procedures, controlled by the Council of Ministers. This is only a theoretical assumption that seeks to illustrate the drawbacks of the Bulgarian media law. However, it must be taken into account.

As far as free access of minorities to media is concerned, media law provides ethnic groups with corresponding to the European standards legal basis for establishing independent minority media.<sup>14</sup> In particular, Bulgarian media law consists of two provisions that defend the right of minority groups to access to information and own media. Article 49 obliges Bulgarian National Television and Radio to make programs for "Bulgarian citizens for whom the Bulgarian language is not native, including programs on their mother tongue".<sup>15</sup> Article 12 stipulates that "the programs of the radio and television operators are transmitted in the official language [i.e. Bulgarian]". They are broadcasted in another language in cases when they are: "designed for Bulgarian citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian".<sup>16</sup>

Although this piece of legislation promotes the supremacy of the Bulgarian language and sets the conditions when foreign languages are allowed to be used, "this is just a formal and declarative moment from which do not originate any legal consequences in terms of restricting ethnic minority groups from the use of their mother tongue".<sup>17</sup> Thus, it can be inferred that as a whole the Bulgarian Media law provides ethnic

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<sup>12</sup> Svetlana Bozilova, media expert and member in the National Council on Radio and Television (NCRT) interview by author, tape recording, April Sofia, 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Закон за Радиото и Телевизията Art. 49. *State Gazette* 1998.

<sup>16</sup> Закон за Радиото и Телевизията, член 12 (1,2). [In Bulgarian] (Translation of the author).

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Volev, Aleksander, media expert in the non-governmental organization "Access to Information Program". Sofia, 17 April, 2000.

minorities with the necessary legal conditions for organizing their own media or/and participating in the mainstream media, and broadcasting in their own languages.

To sum up, the Bulgarian media law contains some provisions that enable the executive branch to exert control over the 'independent' media operators thus violating the declared in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights fundamental individual right of freedom of expression and information. In respect to minority access to media, however, this piece of legislation sets all the necessary conditions for the promotion and development of ethnic minority media. Thus, one can conclude that Bulgarian legislators managed to fulfill their democratic 'obligations' to ethnic minority groups in terms of promoting them with favorable legal conditions for both receiving information on their mother tongue and creating and developing their own media.

### **Impediments to the development of the Turkish ethnic minority media in Bulgaria**

The conducted comprehensive research on the electronic and printed media of Bulgarian Turks<sup>18</sup> has identified that the producers of Turkish minority media in Bulgaria encounter similar problems. Generally, they are related to lack of funding and professional Turkish journalists. Although not stressed during the interviews with journalists and media experts engaged in minority media programming, the proximity of Turkey and the rise of nationalist feelings within Bulgarian society also play a deterring role. As the future of the development of ethnic minority media in Bulgaria heavily depends on the resolving of the above problems, I consider indispensable to examine in detail the reasons for their occurrence and to provide suggestions for overcoming them.

#### *Lack of professionals*

It is broadly believed that cultural intelligentsia, and especially journalists, are those members of every community who play a leading role in the process of articulation and realization of the public media interests. In this regard, I consider as one of the main reasons for the underdevelopment of the Turkish minority media in Bulgaria the absence of identifiable Turkish cultural intelligentsia<sup>19</sup>, who is to focus the cultural claims and needs of ethnic Turks and to work for the preservation of their identity through establishing and developing ethnic Turkish media. Below, I will revise the public role of the cultural elite and will indicate the reasons for its absence within the ethnic Turkish community in Bulgaria.

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<sup>18</sup> Results of it can be find in *Table 1. and Table 2.*

<sup>19</sup> I use the term *intelligentsia* as a synonym to *intellectuals*. The reason behind this is that these two concepts were almost not separated in Central and Eastern Europe. In Bozoki, Andras. 1999. Introduction. In *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe*, ed. Andras Bozoki:1-19. Budapest: Central European University Press.

The importance of cultural intelligentsia for the maintenance of the culture and identity of the ethnic group it originates from is broadly accepted and does not need any special proof. In *New Oxford Dictionary of English* 'intelligentsia' is defined as "a group of intellectuals or highly educated people, especially when regarded as possessing culture and political influence". Hroch identifies three subgroups within intelligentsia, one of which is the group of "lawyers, doctors..., artists, *journalists* and scientists" (emphasis added).<sup>20</sup> He further states that intelligentsia, including journalists, are the "strongest component in every [ethnic] group".<sup>21</sup> This argument is supported by Andras Bozoki who refers to the identified by Hroch group as to a "knowledge elite", whose primary task is to "maintain and invigorate their [ethnic] culture, language ... [and] identity".<sup>22</sup> On this basis, one can conclude that journalists and media specialist in general play a crucial role in preserving and developing their ethnic group identity through promoting and 'advertising' its features in media. The lack of such stratum within Turkish community in Bulgaria is one of the reasons for the underdevelopment of the Turkish minority media.

The shortage of media professionals among the ethnic Turkish group has its reasonable explanation in the "revival campaign" undertaken by the communist authorities in 1984-1989. As mentioned above, during this period Zhivkov's regime tried to assimilate the ethnic Turkish minority through the forceful change of Turkish names, restriction of the use of their mother tongue in public places, prohibition of the practice of Islam and teaching Turkish at schools. This severe violation of the individual human rights of the Turkish minority resulted in an outburst of anti-governmental demonstrations in the spring of 1989, organized by minority human rights activists and representatives of the Turkish intelligentsia. Around three hundred of them were caught by the police and expelled.<sup>23</sup> In order to solve the "Turkish problem" once and for all, state authorities went even further and embarked on expelling to Turkey all those who considered themselves Turks. In the resulting mass exodus (June-August 1989), over 350,000 Bulgarian Turks left the country.<sup>24</sup> Part of them were representatives of the Turkish cultural elite who could not bear anymore the oppressive policy of the Bulgarian authorities. In this respect, Ilona Tomova infers that "the most serious damage inflicted on the Turkish community and Bulgarian society as a whole, as a result of the assimilation campaign, was the loss of the Bulgarian Turkish intelligentsia, the majority of whom chose not to return to Bulgaria".<sup>25</sup>

The shortage of professional ethnic Turkish journalists was also underlined by the interviewed media specialists that are currently involved in making ethnic minority

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<sup>20</sup> Hroch, Miroslav. 1985. *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 14-17.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.129.

<sup>22</sup> Andras Bozoki, *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe*, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Many other Turkish intellectuals had already been sentenced for "anti-governmental activities". Kolarova, Romyana and Dimitar Dimitrov. 1996. The Roundtable talks in Bulgaria. In *The roundtable talks and the breakdown of communism*, ed. Jon Elster:178-213. London: The University of Chicago Press, p.180.

<sup>24</sup> Eminov, Ali. March, 2000. Turks and Tatars in Bulgaria and the Balkans. *Nationalities Papers* 28, no. 1, 142.

<sup>25</sup> Tomova, Ilona. 1996. Ethnic Minorities in Bulgaria. In *Ethnic Minority Rights in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Magda and Piotr Dutkiewicz Opalski. Ottawa: Canadian Human Rights Foundation, p. 103.

media in *Radio Bulgaria* and *Television 7 Days*. The lack of media specialists is mainly experienced in electronic media, which are considered to be more dependant on media know-how. In order to “fix” this problem, I suggest that Bulgarian authorities use the *training of minority journalists tool*, that is to develop training programs for minority journalists and media specialist so that to give Turkish minority media a chance to develop further, relying on their own ‘ethnic’ know-how.

### *Lack of funding*

The conducted comparative analysis of the printed and electronic Turkish media in Bulgaria indicated that the second major obstacle to their development is the lack of financial resources. This obstacle was emphasized by the interviewed Bulgarian journalists and media experts. The lower demand for minority programming, due to their limited audience and diversity of themes, make them depend heavily on subsidizing. As theory indicates, potential sponsors could be non-profit organizations, ethnic minority political or/and economic elite, and the state itself. Below, I will examine the obstacles to applying some of these to Turkish minority media.

Data from Table 1. and Table 2. shows that Turkish minority media are sponsored mainly by Bulgarian NGOs, engaged in minority issues. Although with significant influence in the Bulgarian Parliament, the ethnic Turkish political elite, in the face of the Turkish political party - Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), has not shown so far “any concern about the development and future of the Turkish [minority] media in Bulgaria”.<sup>26</sup> This is partially due to the fact that the activities of MRF enjoy broad media coverage in the mainstream Bulgarian media.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, media producers consider sponsorship from a Turkish political party undesirable because it “...will undermine the idea behind the development of ethnic Turkish media as a tool for the cultural and social integration of Bulgarian Turks. For this reason I am reluctant to receive money from MRF”.<sup>28</sup> Funding provided by Turkish politicians may also have an unfavorable public resonance which will prevent Bulgarian media from allocating time and resources for ethnic Turkish programming. There are two reasons behind this. On the one hand, it is broadly believed that in order to achieve their goals, public service media should not be in any kind of financial ‘relationship’ with political powers. On the other hand, public opinion in Bulgaria is still quite sensitive to the “Turkish problem” and has doubts about the activities of MRF.<sup>29</sup>

The low interest of the Turkish economic elite in sponsoring their own media has different origins. It is based on the lack of demand for minority media programming which makes them an unprofitable investment. “Turkish business elite do not differ from other businessmen. They are willing to support only these Turkish minority media that have large and diverse audience. These media must be also compatible to

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<sup>26</sup> In Svetoslava Tadarakova, interview by author, April Sofia, 2000.

<sup>27</sup> MRF is the firth political power in Bulgaria. It plays the important role of a counterweight in the Bulgarian parliament the debates from which are transmitted live by the Bulgarian National Television and Radio. Apart from this, Turkish politicians are among the usual guests in all television and radio political debates.

<sup>28</sup> In Svetoslava Tadarakova, interview by author, April Sofia, 2000

<sup>29</sup> Ivanov, Mihail and Ilona Tomova. 1994. Етнически групи и междуетнически отношения в България. In *Аспекти на етнокултурната ситуация в България*. София: Аксес, р.30.

the Turkish television and radio channels that everyone in Bulgaria can enjoy provided one has a satellite television”.<sup>30</sup> This statement poses the question of the relationship between funding and quality which forms a kind of vicious circle. On the one hand, it is obvious that deficiency of financial resources leads to making programs with lower quality. This in turn diminishes the demand for them, which respectively repels the investors.

This is particularly the case with the Turkish minority media in Bulgaria. Proximity of the kin-state Turkey enables Bulgarian Turks to enjoy Turkish TV and radio programs. A recent survey of the media preferences of ethnic Turks shows that they prefer Turkish electronic media to Bulgarian ones for the following principal reasons.<sup>31</sup> Firstly, the quality of Turkish programs is much higher than that of Bulgarian ones (including ethnic Turkish media). Secondly, Turkish media are more diverse than Bulgarian. Thirdly, Turkish media provide Bulgarian Turks with a better base for maintaining their culture and language. As Tables 3 and 4 in the Appendix indicate, programs that offer information about the current political and social life in Bulgaria are the only ones that attract ethnic Turks to Bulgarian media. In all the other cases Turkish media are preferred.

According to Riggins, a possible answer to the financial problems of ethnic minority media is a state sponsorship for their activities. This approach has been adopted in Moldavia where state authorities distribute a definite amount of money to a number of non-governmental organizations engaged in minority issues. In turn, some of these NGOs support the printed media of the Bulgarian minority living there. This solution is not applicable, however, to the Bulgarian case for economic reasons. The current economic difficulties that Bulgarian economy is experiencing, diminish the ability of the state to allocate money for the development of ethnic minority media. As Ilona Tomova points out:

... the severe economic crisis Bulgaria is experiencing is likely to complicate and slow down ... the process of creating the conditions for ethnic minorities' full participation in the social and cultural life of the country.... All ethnic organizations [that] are engaged in trying to solve the social problems of minorities ...suffer severe financial problems as their activities are only rarely subsidized by the state budget.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, a *regulative* approach has been adopted. The new Media law obligates the National Bulgarian Television and Radio to make programs for “Bulgarian citizens for whom the Bulgarian language is not native, including programs in their mother tongue”.<sup>33</sup> According to this law, they are supposed to allocate funding for minority programming either from their own budgets, or from the public fund “Radio and Television”.<sup>34</sup> As far as financing through the budgets of the national Bulgarian television and Radio is concerned, it is noteworthy that these are formed through

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<sup>30</sup> In Svetoslava Tadarakova, interview by author, April Sofia, 2000

<sup>31</sup> March-April, 1999. Практики на медийно певедение и нагласи сред българските турци. Sofia: Market Test.

<sup>32</sup> In Ilona Tomova, *Ethnic Minorities in Bulgaria*, pp. 107-108.

<sup>33</sup> Закон за Радиото и Телевизията Art. 49. *State Gazette*1998.

<sup>34</sup> The money for this fund is collected through taxation of households.

receiving subsidies from the state budget. In this respect, ethnic minority media depend on the good will of both the executive power and the political parties in the Parliament.

The second source of funding is the recently created public fund “Radio and Television”, which is supposed to be the financial backbone of the future public service media in Bulgaria. The mechanism for collecting money in this fund, however, is still not developed, which makes Bulgarian national media dependant on budget subsidies.

The dependence of minority programming exclusively on the will of political powers constitutes a problem because, as the Bulgarian experience shows, changes in the goals of politicians may affect directly the existence of ethnic minority media. This problem has the following three solutions. Firstly, there is a need of elaboration of a consistent national policy toward Bulgarian ethnic minorities and the development of their media. It should be followed regardless of the shifts in policies of the ruling political powers. Secondly, optimizing the mechanism for collecting money in the public fund “Radio and Television”. Thirdly, as the very allocation of money from this fund is done on the basis of discretion, the implementation of the so called “public hearings”, developed in the United States, will be beneficial. The principle of “public hearings” implies the active participation of the interested parties in the process of allocation money from the US public broadcasting fund.<sup>35</sup>

As far as sponsorship of ethnic minority media operating “outside” the national broadcasters is concerned, I consider appropriate the application of the Hungarian experience in the field. Hungarian media law has established a special “Broadcasting fund” which collects money from the so called “frequency hiring fees” imposed on commercial radio and TV programs. This money is allocated by the National Television and Radio Board<sup>36</sup> to ‘unprofitable’ media programs such as cultural programs, non-profit radio-stations, and ethnic minority programs. The major advantages of this approach are its flexibility and limitation of the financial burden on households.

### *The rise of nationalist feelings*

Last but not least, a potential obstacle to the development of the Turkish ethnic minority media in Bulgaria is the rise of nationalist feelings in this country. This phenomenon is part of a broader process which has emerged in Central and East European countries (CEE) after the onset of democratization in the region. There are a number of explanations for this in the literature. I consider important to mention those of them, which relate to the promotion and development of ethnic minority media.

Analyzing the CEE countries, Slavko Splichal concludes that whereas the rise of nationalism in the region played a favorable role for their democratization, its further evolution has been seen by the post-communist authorities as a serious threat to the states’ territorial integrity and sovereignty. Thus, in order to preclude the opportunity

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<sup>35</sup> Bissera Zankova, Bulgarian and European media law expert, interview by author, tape recording, 28 May Sofia, 2000.

<sup>36</sup> The official media-regulation and supervision body in Hungary.

of ethnic conflict outbreaks and dismantling of multiethnic states, their governors have embarked on internal centralization and national homogenization, which resulted in suppression of the development of multiculturalism and ethnic minority media:

In contrast to the global production of “placeless culture”, ... ,the media in postsocialist countries are still (or again) aimed at political and cultural, national homogenization.<sup>37</sup>

Jack Snyder and Karen Ballentine support Splichal’s claim but provide different interpretation for the revival of nationalism and restriction of the development of ethnic minority media in CEE. The authors maintain that democratization in the region has resulted in promotion of unrestricted freedom of public debate, which in turn caused the outburst of nationalism and “nationalist mythmaking”<sup>38</sup>, directed against the development of multiculturalism and peaceful interaction between different ethnic groups. The latter has slowed down the progress of ethnic minority media.<sup>39</sup>

I consider these statements too radical with respect to Bulgarian reality where state authorities have embarked on restoring the fundamental rights of ethnic minorities and creating conditions for their full participation in the social and cultural life of the country. Some of the justifications for this are the ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the elaboration of the new media law that promotes minorities with free access to media. The alarming level of intolerance within Bulgarian society toward ethnic minority groups, however, can not be denied. A survey on inter-ethnic relations carried out by a group of sociologists in 1992 has identified “...a high degree of alienation and even hostility among the Bulgarians toward ethnic Turkish minority”.<sup>40</sup> This tendency is supported by the figures in the following table:

Table 5. In favor of granting the following rights to minorities, (in %)

<b>Rights</b>	<b>Bulgarians</b>	<b>Turks</b>
To establish their own organizations in order to preserve and develop their culture	54.0	84.5
To publish books and other printed matter in their mother tongue	36.0	70.7
To study their mother tongue in state schools	14.6	77.6
To be represented in the Parliament	35.2	81.9
To be represented in local government	36.2	81.9
To have own political parties	13.9	73.3

*Source:* Agency for social analysis<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> In Splichal, *Media Beyond Socialism*, 119.

<sup>38</sup> “Nationalist mythmaking ... is the attempt to use dubious arguments to mobilise support for nationalist doctrines or to discredit opponents” in Jack Snyder, p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> Usually this myths tend to proclaim the cultural and historic superiority of the dominant identity and to overestimate the threat that other ethnic groups could pose on the nation.

<sup>40</sup> In Ilona Tomova, p.28.

<sup>41</sup> In Margarita Karamihova, *Ethnic Minorities in Bulgaria*, p. 110

The most plausible explanation for this phenomenon provides Ilona Tomova. She refers to the economic crisis and significant socio-political changes in post-communist Bulgaria as to the major reasons for strengthening of the ethnocentric attitudes and heightening of the ethnic tensions within Bulgarian society.<sup>42</sup> Although this process has not influenced yet the development of ethnic minority media, the creation of legal obstructions that will block the interference of the executive power in mass media matters is necessary. As I have underlined above, the Bulgarian media law contains significant imperfections in this regard, which necessitates its change. In particular, I consider indispensable the establishment of a really independent from political influence official media-regulation and supervision body<sup>43</sup>, which according to Bulgarian media experts is currently subordinate to the executive power. In so doing, any political force, which in order to gain or stay in power will decide to “play the nationalistic card”, will be unable to influence the existence and progress of ethnic minority media. This is of particular importance bearing in mind the identified tendency major political parties in Bulgaria to raise nationalistic slogans during election campaigns.<sup>44</sup>

To sum up, the investigation of the Turkish minority media in Bulgaria revealed that their producers encounter similar problems. Among the major obstacles to the progress of these media are the lack of funding and Turkish media professionals. The first problem can be solved through both the optimization of the mechanism for collecting money in the especially designed for this purpose public fund and introduction of the principle of “public hearings”. The overcoming of the second difficulty requires the involvement of the state in terms of providing Bulgarian Turks with access to media training programs. In a long-run these measures will increase the number and diversity of ethnic Turkish media in Bulgaria as well as improve their quality. The latter will pose Turkish minority programming in a more competitive position with respect to the media produced in Turkey.

The rise of nationalist feelings within Bulgarian society could also detain the development of ethnic minority media. A possible threat to the existence of these media are those political powers that might play the “nationalistic card” in the future. For this reason, redrafting of some parts of the Bulgarian Media law is necessary so that to restrict the executive power ability to interfere in the activities of public service media.

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<sup>42</sup> In Ilona Tomova, *Ethnic Minorities in Bulgaria*, p. 109.

<sup>43</sup> The National Council for Radio and Television (NCRT)

<sup>44</sup> In Alli Eminov, p.21. and Ilona Tomova, p. 28.

## Conclusion

In this paper I have undertaken the task of exploring the ethnic Turkish media in Bulgaria. My interest in the topic was drawn by the importance that ethnic minority media play in multiethnic societies. On the one hand, they preserve ethnic identities' features, and on the other, they may serve as a medium for cross-cultural communication, thus helping the social integration of ethnic minority groups. These issues are of particular relevance to Bulgaria as a country that enjoys a diversity of ethnic communities.

The rationale behind selecting ethnic Turkish media was that Bulgarian Turks represent the biggest ethnic minority group in Bulgaria. Through the implementation of the ratified international covenants in the Bulgarian legislation, the members of the ethnic Turkish population were given the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions in the language, form and medium of expression of their own choice. In other words, they were allowed to establish their own media. The research conducted, however, showed that ethnic Turkish media are underdeveloped in terms of the small number of the existing printed issues, and radio and television programs. Two major reasons for this have been identified: the lack of funding and the shortage of professional Turkish journalists. Whereas the first problem endangers the existence of ethnic Turkish media today, the latter may well represent an impediment to their development in the future. These alarming findings have led me to propose solutions for overcoming them.

In order to break out of the identified vicious circle (lack of funding - low quality of ethnic minority programs - lack of investment), there is a need of active state involvement in terms of establishing a public fund, which will provide ethnic minorities with financing for their programming. The elaboration of the precise mechanism for collecting money in the currently existing "Fund Radio and Television", is another possible solution to the financial difficulties of the ethnic Turkish minority media. As far as the lack of Turkish media professionals is concerned, state authorities should provide Turkish minority with access to media training programs. Although this will hardly compensate the lost of the Turkish intelligentsia, it will certainly help to educate a Turkish 'media' elite that will manage the Turkish minority media in the future.

As this paper represents an excerpt of a broader pioneer research in the field, I believe that the above findings will help the Bulgarian media policy makers in their efforts to foster the development of ethnic minority media in Bulgaria. In this regard, I consider as a limitation of the current research the fact that it focuses on only one of the existing ethnic minority groups in Bulgaria. Every other ethnic community in this country, however, may well offer potential for a separate future investigation.

Table 1. Printed Media of Ethnic Turks in Bulgaria (1990 - 2000)<sup>45</sup>

<b>Name:</b>	<i>Ъиъкъ Светлина</i> [Light] <i>Гювен Доверие</i> [Trust]	<i>Права и Свободи</i> <i>[Rights and Freedom]</i>	<i>Мюслиманлар</i> <i>[Muslim]</i>	<i>Заман</i> <i>[Time]</i>	<i>Юмит</i> <i>[Hope]</i>	<i>Чър-Чър</i> <i>[Grasshopper]</i>	<i>Филиз</i> [Youth]	<i>Балон</i> [Balloon]	<i>Кайнак</i>
<b>Period</b>	January 1991 - April 1996	February 1991- 1997 - 1998 -	April 1990 -	1992 -	June 1995 -	June 1992 - April 1996	April 1992 -	May 1994 -	February 2000 -
<b>Type</b>	weekly newspaper	weekly newspaper	monthly newspaper	daily newspaper	monthly magazine	monthly for children/teens	monthly newspaper for children	monthly magazine for children	magazine for culture and literature
<b>Feature(s)</b>		organ of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms; stopped in 1997 and published again in 1998	organ of the Chief Mufti of Bulgarian Muslims	translation from the Turkish original which aimed at fostering Bulgarian-Turkish relations	Partly translation from the Turkish original. Claims to be a pivot of the Turkish intelligence in Bulgaria.			The most popular issue for children during the '90s.	printed just one pilot issue
<b>Circulation</b>	4000 - 5000	10,000	1800 - 3800	8000	3000	not available	5000 - 6000	7500	1200
<b>Language</b>	Turkish and Bulgarian	Turkish and Bulgarian	Turkish and Bulgarian (equival)	Turkish and Bulgarian (1994)	Turkish	Turkish and Bulgarian	Turkish	Turkish	Turkish
<b>Chief Editor(s) Ethnic Origin</b>	Bulgarians and ethnic Turks	ethnic Turks	ethnic Turks	ethnic Turks	ethnic Turks	ethnic Turk	ethnic Turks	ethnic Turks	Ethnic Turks
<b>Main Topics</b>	“revival” campaign; politics; economics; culture (literature from Turkish and Bulgarian authors); social problems of Bulgarian Turks; human rights; Turkish grammar;	“revival” campaign; politics; social problems of Bulgarian Turks; human rights; Turkish culture; religion; humor;	Muslim religion and rituals; translation of foreign materials on religion topics; the development of Muslim communities in Bulgaria	Covers the religious, cultural, political, social and economic development of Balkan countries and Turkey;	Religion; history of Muslim culture and that of Bulgarian Turks; intercultural tolerance and dialogue; literature; education; page(s) for children;	Education; environment; arts; entertainment; literature; Turkish language	Education; Science-fiction; entertainment; humor; culture; literature; Turkish language	Literature, humor, entertainment, Science; Turkish literature and folklore; mother tongue and Grammar; business knowledge; Religion	culture and literature of Bulgarian Turks, Turkish language, Bulgarian literature
<b>Current Status</b>	stopped due to financial constraints	continues to be published as organ of MRF	continues to be published	continues to be published due to financial help from Turkey	continues to be published due to the Turkish NGO financial support	stopped due to financial constraints	continuos to be published due to the Bulgarian NGO financial support	continuos to be published due to the Bulgarian NGO financial support	just started to be published due to the Bulgarian NGO financial support

<sup>45</sup> Table includes data from Ibrahim Yalamov, *Турският Периодичен Печат в България*, pp. 40-51.

Table 2. Ethnic Turkish minority electronic media

<b>Program name:</b>	<b>Minority media format</b>	<b>Allocated time</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Leading editor(s)' ethnic origin</b>	<b>Financing</b>	<b>Main topics</b>	<b>Problems</b>	<b>Main goal(s)</b>
<b><i>RPETB</i></b> <sup>46</sup> [Radio Bulgaria]	part of majority media	1 hour per day	Literary Turkish	Turkish	1. State budget 2. Bulgarian NGO	social and economic problems of the group; ethnic culture	1. Lack of funding. 2. Lack of professionals.	1. integration of ethnic Turks. 2. Preservation of the ethnic identity of Turkish minority.
<b><i>White Dove</i></b> [TV 7 Days]	part of majority media	30 min. per week	Turkish and Bulgarian	Bulgarian and Turkish	Bulgarian NGOs.	Social and economic problems of the group; politics; ethnic culture; business; religion; humor;	1. Lack of funding 2. Lack of professional 3. Proximity of Turkey 4. Intolerance within the Bulgarian society	1. integration of ethnic Turks. 2. preservation of ethnic Turkish identity and culture 3. Allowing the majority to get acquainted with the culture and problems of Bulgarian Turks

<sup>46</sup> Radio-program for ethnic Turks in Bulgaria

Table 3. Reasons for watching Turkish and Bulgarian TV programs

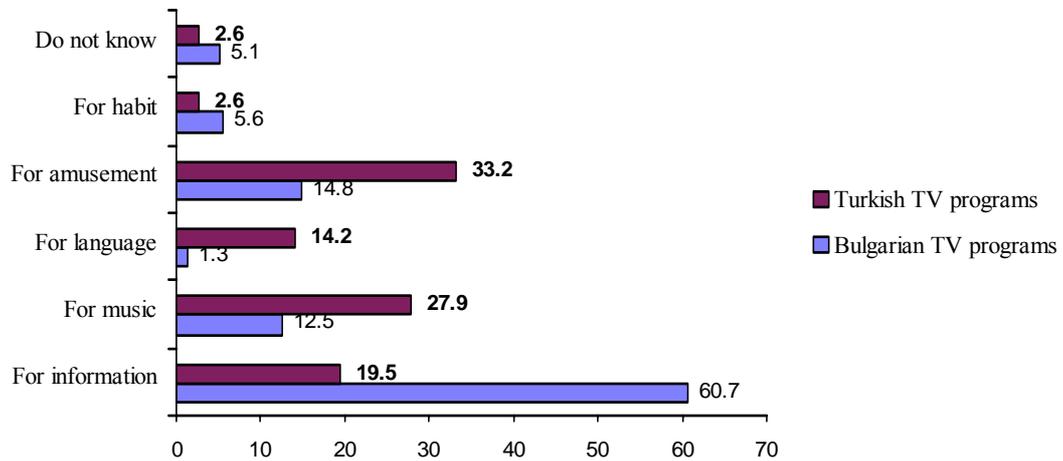
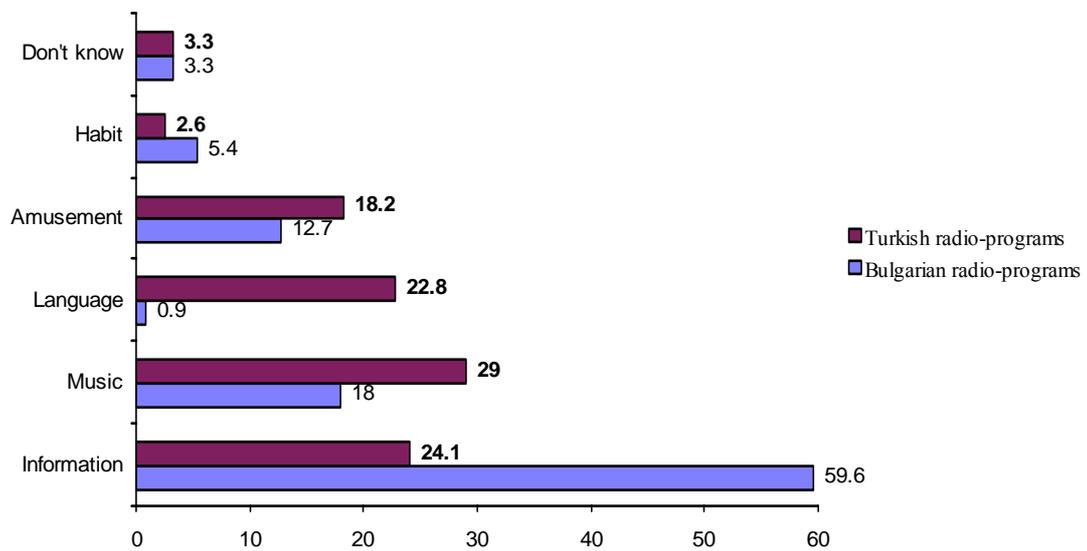


Table 4. Reasons for listening Turkish and Bulgarian radio programs



## **Interviews:**

- Ali, Ahmed, Program Director of “Radio-programs in Turkish language”, RadioBulgaria, interview by author, tape recording, Sofia, 15 April, 2000.
- Anguelska, Nadejda, Chief expert in National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues at the Council of Ministers, interview by author, tape recording, Sofia, 27 April, 2000.
- Belchev, Milen, Director of the department “Radio-programs in foreign languages”, radio Bulgaria, interview by author, tape recording, Sofia, 15,17 April, 2000
- Bozilova, Svetlana, media expert and member in the National Council on Radio and Television (NCRT), interview by author, tape recording, Sofia, 17 April, 2000.
- Ph.D. Galabov, Antonii, Bulgarian Academy of Science, Institute of Sociology, interview by author, tape recording, Sofia, 13 April, 2000.
- Professor Greakova, Maya, Head of the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sofia “St. Kliment Ohridski”, interview by author, Sofia, 27 April, 2000.
- Konstantinova, Rayna, Director of radio “Bulgaria”, interview by author, tape recording, Sofia, 15 April 2000.
- Morozova, Svetlana, executive director of the International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations (ICMSIR), interview by author, tape recording, Sofia, 18 April 2000
- Professor Popova, Znezana, The Faculty of Journalistic and Mass Communications, Department of Radio and Television, University of Sofia “St. Kliment Ohridski”, interview by author, Sofia, 22 April, 2000.
- Tadarakova, Svetoslava, chief editor of “The white dove”, Interview by author, tape recording, Sofia, 16 April, 2000.
- Volev, Aleksander, media expert in the non governmental organization “Access to Information Program”, interview by author, tape recording, Sofia, 17 April, 2000.
- Zankova, Bissera, Bulgarian and European media law expert, interview by author, tape recording, Budapest, 28 May, 2000.

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