

**Association for Turkish Culture, Art and Interaction
TÜRSAKDER**

**2016 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
(Warsaw, September 26, 2016)**

WORKING SESSION 10: *Tolerance and non-discrimination I*

Human rights violations in the area of education and political discrimination in the electoral law of Turkish minority in the OSCE Region – Bulgaria

The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria is the basic law of the Republic where there is no definition of national minority or a minority. Turks of Bulgaria are not regarded as minority (they were national minority¹ from 1947 till 1971). Fast look to the official statistical information about residents in Bulgaria with Turkish origin, show us that in Bulgaria there are 600 000² Turks, which correspond to 8.8% of the total population.

In regard to education, education policy hinders the Turkish minority. The arithmetic is very glaring - from almost 100 000 mother tongue subject attendances in 1992 to less than 7,000 students in 77 schools in 2015/2016 educational year. The lack of interest in the subjects of mother tongue is because of the: lack of state educational requirements, lack of State Education Standard, lack of books (last one is published 24 years ago!!!), fear of the past – the Totalitarian regime, the insensitivity of the parents, “classroom teachers juggles”, losing connectivity with the roads because of technology, becoming users than producers and separation of the families as a result of economic migration. In Bulgaria there are no any state or private ethnic Turkish schools, kindergartens and nurseries. But we have Armenian, Russian, French, German, American, Italian, Spanish etc.

Unfortunately, still, the children talking to each other in Turkish during the break in the school are condemned and blamed for this. But it is not the same for the Armenian, Russian or other languages from the West. Also in most cases Turks are ashamed because of affiliation and their Turkish-Arabic names.

Education is the most important topics in fight for equality, representation in public institutions such as court, police, prosecutor's office, Foreign Ministry, State Agency National Security, etc.

Some specific cases

¹ Constitution of the People's Republic of Bulgaria on 12.06.1947

² Turkish ethnic group – 588 318, Census2011final

1. Subject Mother tongue is no longer protected by the law

After the changes in the law on pre-school and school education, which is effective from August 1, 2016, subject mother tongue is not among compulsory optional subjects, as until now. Already taught only as an optional subject and is placed among the subjects as choreography and religion. Here on the "mother tongue" is not viewed as a fundamental human right and cognition, but rather it is reduced to the level of "choreography" which in turn is just a vocational training. This subject is not valued, and there is no grade, it's studied outside the school program. This is a mockery because every malicious education minister can say stop learning the mother tongue. There is no law to stop him or her. Although the state has a huge obligation to provide this education, but runs away from it "as the devil runs away from incense."

2. Political discrimination in the electoral law. Freedom of expression in mother language:

The right to express freely the opinion and the right to obtain information or to access to information in own language is of great importance of the democracies. Despite recommendations of OSCE/ODIHR and Council of Europe to provide persons belonging to minorities with election materials in their mother language, in order to enhance the understanding of the processes for all communities, a ban on the use of languages other than Bulgarian in election campaigns continued. Also a ban on use of Turkish is in effect. During the last parliamentary elections (2014) 18 fines were imposed on the use of Turkish language as part of pre-election speech. Central Election Commission and some governors ruled fines for campaigning in a foreign language. Since when the mother tongue is foreign!?

Recommendations:

To OSCE/ODIHR:

1. OSCE to suggest specific measures to fully implementation of the Public Education Act for mother tongue studying.
2. OSCE to recommend abolition the ban of using mother language during political campaign.

To Bulgarian authorities:

1. Take measures to fully implement the Public Education Act for mother tongue studying and adopt new regulations for teaching mother tongue.
2. Make efforts to abolish the ban on use of mother language in the electoral law.