

EUROPEANIZATION OF BULGARIA

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This document will summarize the process of entering in European Union of Republic of Bulgaria.

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A. What's the Europeanization?

As a word, Europeanization can be explained to become “European”. But, firstly we need to learn where the borders of Europe are? Who can be European?

When we start to research the borders of Europe, we can see that the borders have been changed every political term in Europe.¹ For instance, sometimes the borders have reached to Poland, Yugoslavia, and Romania but today the borders include these countries, also Turkey. Because we could not say who can be European, I will explain the integration process of Bulgaria to European Union.

B. Short History of Bulgaria in Europe

In June 1990 the first free elections realized. In July 1991, the new constitution was adopted. The reform package introduced in 1997 designed economic growth, increased living standards. After 2001 economic, political and geopolitical conditions improved well². Then, Bulgaria became a member of NATO in 2004.

- 1993 EU Association Agreement (EUAA)
- 1995 Submit for EU membership
- 1997 Published first Commission Report
- 2000 Opening of Accession process
- 2004 Conclusion of Accession Negotiations
- 2005 Accession Treaty was signed
- 2007 Become a Member of EU

¹ Bahcesehir University, EU Affairs Department, The course; Europeanization Of Public Policies In EU Candidate Country , Selcen ÖNER (2011)

² Bulgaria Library of Congress Country Study, Government and politics - overview, p. 16

C. European Union - Bulgaria Relations

Bulgaria submitted its application for EU membership in December 1995. In 1997 the Commission published its Opinion on Bulgaria's Application for Membership of the European Union. The Commission presented its first regular report on Bulgaria's progress towards accession in November 1998. The second report, released in 1999, recommended to open formal negotiations.

Following the Helsinki European Council's decision in December 1999, accession negotiations were opened in February 2000 and Bulgaria provisionally closed all remaining chapters on 15 June 2004 on the occasion of a meeting of the Accession Conference at Ministerial level in Luxembourg. The Brussels European Council of 17 December 2004 confirmed the conclusion of accession negotiations with Bulgaria and accordingly looked forward to welcoming it as a member from January 2007.

The European Parliament gave its support to Bulgaria's EU membership on 13 April 2005. The vote was 534 in favour and 88 against, with 69 abstentions.³

The Accession Treaty was signed in Luxembourg on 25 April 2005. Depending on further progress in complying with the membership criteria, the objective is EU membership from 1 January 2007.

D. Enlargement Strategy Paper of EU 2005⁴

If we analyze the Strategy Paper, can see that Enlargement is described as a most powerful policy tools of EU. Also, the enlargement strategy aims to transform Central and Eastern Europe from communist regime to modern democracies.

European Commission approaches to candidate countries with three principles are consolidation, conditionality and communication. And, the Commission explained these three principles in the Paper.

³ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/bulgaria/eu_bulgaria_relations_en.htm

⁴ http://eur-lex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexplus!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=en&numdoc=505DC0561

Also, the Strategy Paper directed to Treaty of European Union to define the Enlargement Policy. In Treaty of EU, Article 49 says “which states that any European State which respects the EU’s fundamental democratic principles may apply to become a member of the Union. The EU has set political and economic criteria for membership, as well as criteria related to the obligations of membership and the administrative capacity to implement and enforce the EU’s laws and policies.”

The Commission needs to check the political and economic criteria of candidate countries. Because of this, the Commission prepares regular/progress report to check the development of candidate countries in every year.

E. First Regular Report of Bulgaria 1998⁵

The first analysis prepared in 1998 by the European Commission to describe the relations between Bulgaria and the European Union, to analyze the situation of democracy, rule of law, human rights, protection of minorities, also to show the economic condition of Bulgaria.

The prepared regular report presented to European Council and then some of the reforms accelerated in Bulgaria. There are some important titles to point;

i. Political Criteria

Most important sentence in the Report is that “The political situation has been stable since the coming into office of the Government of Prime Minister Kostov in May 1997.” This shows that the political situation was not like the European Union wants before the May 1997. But, in those days there was positive process.

ii. Democracy and the Rule of Law

According to Report, The Parliament and Executive were appropriate. However, The Judiciary system has been needed some reform especially⁶ in its proper functioning including

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/key_documents/1998/bulgaria_en.pdf

⁶ The Regular Report of Bulgaria 1998, Pages 8-9

its capacity, and needed to improve the status of judges and prosecutors, change the investigation procedures, strengthen the judiciary against possible corruption, fill vacancies, speed up and make more transparent and efficient the handling of cases in order to reduce the number of outstanding cases, increase opportunities for legal aid, reduce pre-trial detention time to international standards, enforce rulings effectively and restore public confidence in the Judiciary.

If you examine the Progress Report of Turkey 2011, you could find similar deficiencies in the Judiciary of Turkey.

iii. Human Rights and protection of Minorities

In the concerned evaluation part of the Regular Report it was written that “Developments confirm that Bulgaria fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria.” On the other hand, the European Commission criticized the Bulgaria because It has not signed Protocol n°6 to the European Convention for Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms concerning the abolition of the death penalty.

Moreover, the other important situation was pointed that Roma community still continues to be discriminated against in all spheres of social life and they are seriously underrepresented in decision making bodies, partly due to discrimination and lack of opportunity, but also due to divisions among their representatives.

However, the Commission reported in the Regular Report that the Turkish minority continues to be fully integrated and represented in political life. And it added that no particular complaints as regards their educational or language rights were reported.

iv. Economic Development

When we look the main economic trends of Bulgaria in 1990s, it can be seen that there were some fluctuations⁷ on growth rate, inflation rate etc. Although the Commission was written on the Regular Report that Bulgaria has recently made progress in the creation of a market economy; it would still face serious difficulties in coping with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union in the medium term.

⁷ <http://www.cepsr.com/clanek.php?ID=209>

F. People in Bulgaria

According to 2011 results of number of population in Bulgaria is listed there. Total population of Bulgaria is 7,364,570 and the highest majority of these amount are Bulgarian citizens which has 84.6 percent .Another part of population contains some minority groups that Turkish has 8.8 percent and Roma 4.9 percent population and other minority groups such as Russians, Armenians, Vlachs, Macedonians, Greeks, Ukrainians, Jews, Tatars , Gagauz...

The Bulgarians are generally Slavonic people and Eastern Orthodox Christians and they speak Bulgarian language in their daily life. Also Romanian, Turkish and Macedonian languages are other languages which are using by minorities. Also Bulgaria a country which has different religions .For instance; there are 160.000 Muslims who are speaking Slav languages .Other important example is that 40,000 Jews emigrated to Israel after 1945.

i. Minorities Rights during the EU Process

After 1989 there are some reconstructions for the minority groups in Bulgaria. Especially when Bulgaria joined to Council of Europe at 1991, there were many achievements to enlarging of minority rights in Bulgaria. Turkish minorities are the most successful groups who benefited in high participation. Bulgarian citizens had a chance to going to European Court of Human Rights before the membership of EU. It is also so significant improvement for minority groups in Bulgaria.

⁸Since its democratization Bulgaria has passed significant legislation on minority rights. In 1997 the government established a consultative body on minority issues, the National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Questions. Many minority groups are represented on the council, but Macedonians are not. After years of delay, in 1999 the government came to an agreement with Roma representatives on a Framework Programme for Equal Integration of Roma. After lagging implementation, more specific action plans and programmes were adopted in 2003 and 2004. Roma NGOs in particular have taken advantage of an anti-discrimination law passed in 2003, which allows civil society organizations to file public-interest lawsuits.

⁸ <http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=2426&tmp>

Bulgaria allows education in minority languages, but inadequate government resources have restricted its availability. Turkish, Armenian, Hebrew, Greek and Romanian are offered as elective courses at the primary and secondary level. By law, public broadcasting is to be available in languages other than Bulgarian, but in practice, such public television and radio programming is only available to a limited extent in Turkish.

Bulgaria ratified the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in May 1999.⁹

Even Bulgarian government has given equal public broadcasting opportunities for other minority groups but they did not achieve. Only Turkish minority group has television and radio programming because of they have enough economic infrastructure to establish a public broadcasting.

Moreover there are two universities in Bulgaria which has Romanian Language and History Department. They opened after ratification of Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection National Minorities.

ii. Political Structure of Bulgaria

Bulgaria has been under influence of Soviet Union till 1989. After 1989 there were democratic changes which was going successful by free and fair elections. Even there were some minority rights in Bulgaria during the Soviet Union, Minority rights enlarged with democratic changes after 1989. Minority groups had an opportunity to teaching and learning their mother languages in 1991.

There are many political parties in Bulgaria and the most successfully and efficient are in today in National Assembly of Bulgarian Republic includes 240 seats. A citizen for European Development of Bulgaria is the most effortful and powerful political party in Bulgaria. They have 116 seats in National Assembly of Bulgaria.

1) Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (116 seats)

This party is so close to central right ideologies. They include and support neo-liberalism, conservatism and populism ideas and projects. The head of part is Mr Boyko Borisov and his

⁹ <http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=2426&tmpl>

group aims to fighting crime, corruption and preserving family and achieving energy independent. They joined to European People's Party in European Parliament. Because of they can do their projects and aims easier in this group. Another reason to joining to this group their ideas remains also EPP's ideas.

2) Coalition of Bulgaria (40 seats)

This coalition group contains some small left parties to have an effectual role in Bulgarian parliament. There are seven political parties and they are Bulgarian Socialist Party, Party of Social Democrats, Agrarian Union, Communist Party of Bulgaria, Movement of Social Humanism, Rome Party, New Zora. They have 40 seats in National Assembly of Bulgaria. Rome Party founded at 2005 and they are representing of Romanian minority rights and benefits. They were a movement until 2005.

3) Movement for Rights and Freedoms (38 seats)

This electoral party founded at 1990. They are representing especially Turkish minorities and they are combating to minority discrimination not only for Turkish also it includes all minorities and they gave many reform packages to larging minority rights. Movement for Rights and Freedoms is the third powerful political party in Bulgaria. They created to government three times by coalition. They are supporting more liberalization of Bulgaria and they joined to European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party in European Parliament group. The head of this party is Ahmet Doğan. This political party has more success than other minority parties. They have also 38 seats and they are supporting of Turkey's membership for EU and they gave many conferences and platforms that show importance of Turkey for European Union in Brussels.

4) Other Parties that in National Assembly of Bulgaria

National Union Attack has 21 seats and Blue Coalition has 15 seats. There is another party which is outside of assembly. It is called Macedonian party. It founded in 1999 and it banned in 2000 because of their ideas and propogandas could be a risk for the separation and discrimination for other minorities. After 2005 their limitations on political elections were

cancelled and they had a new opportunity to compete again thanks to European Union Commission. Now they are not in the parliament and not sufficient in there.

G. External Relations of Bulgaria

Even Bulgaria were under efficient of Soviet Union, It became a member of United Nation in 1955. Bulgaria did not play an effectual role in world politic system untill 1989. When they changed their government structure from communism to liberalism, their voice began to hear by other important actors after 1989. For instance They joined to Council of Europe as an one of the most important and successful institution which has significance on European politics.

Moreover in 1996, They began new process for their economies by joining to World Trade Organization and in the world economy system many countries ratified to Bulgaria as an economic actor. After two years Bulgaria signed to be a part of CEFTA means Central European Free Trade Agreement. Also they did many agreements with Turkey, Macedonia, Croatia, Lithuania, Estonia, Israel, Albania and Latvia to reduction of tariffs and quotas. As we see there, Bulgaria improved its bilateral relations with some countries which are not a part of EU.

Another one of the most important achievement of Bulgaria is being a non permanent member of United Nation Security Council between 2002 and 2003. One year later Bulgaria became a member of NATO which has important role for European Security and Defense Policy in 2007 Bulgaria joined to European Union but they did not integrated very well because of nowadays they have some minority problems and economical challenges. Today when we observed to Bulgaria, There have been widespread protests against especially Roma minority groups. After the death of Bulgarian man in Roma distinction in Bulgaria after this issue there is huge fury against to Roma minorities and it effected also other minorities in Bulgaria. People are complaining that a relative of Roma leader Kiril Rashkov is not being held accountable for the man's death because he has political protection. The accused man is also under investigation for large-scale tax evasion.

One protester in Plovdiv, the country's second largest city said "The incident has lit a fuse and the man's death should not be in vain. The politicians should pay attention and do something because it's a serious problem."

In the capital, Sofia, right-wing political party ATAKA held a demonstration, demand tough action from the government and even calling for the death penalty to be reinstated.

People living in the southern village of Katunitsa turned out for the funeral of 19-year-old Angel Petrov who is believed to have been run over by a bus being driven by the Roma leader's family member.¹⁰

Even there are some conflicts in population, in 2009 Bulgarian diplomat Irina Bokova appointed as a Director General for UNESCO.

In Conclusion, İlker and Hasan thinks that there can be some barriers to development of countries but If brotherhood and respect increase in society ,We can see for Bulgaria in the future as one of the most important actor in world system.

¹⁰ <http://www.euronews.net/2011/09/27/roma-shops-burnt-after-death-of-bulgarian-man/>