

# The (Im)possibility of Roma Integration: Demographic Specifics

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# ABSTRACT

All manner of things have been said and written about the Roma and their integration in Bulgaria over the last 30 years. In general, the oscillation between extreme denial and xenophobia and the utter neglect of problems and ignoring of risks is as unproductive and short-sighted as it is dangerous for the future of the state.

If we regard ourselves as a mature and responsible society that thinks about its future and that of our children, it is high time we faced up to the realities and problems and sought ways to solve them. These actions must be expeditious, because demography is characterised by the so-called. "delayed effect", i.e. measures that are taken today will yield results in 15-20 years, but if they are not taken today, in 15-20 years it may be hopelessly late.

The Roma are here, among us. They live and will live on this earth; they will increase in number, and we must start looking for solutions to the problems associated with them. This must be done with determination and courage, but also with understanding, tolerance and awareness of the importance and criticality of the situation.

The focus of this analysis is the Roma people with their variety, cultural diversity, identity, demographic models of behavior and value system, alien to the European culture. The goals we set ourselves are to reveal the origin, resettlement of the Roma in Bulgaria and Europe, their complex social stratification, the stereotypes and prejudices related to them, but also those that they have towards other ethnic groups in the country. In order to understand the behaviour of a single person and, even more so, that of a whole group of people, it is absolutely necessary to understand what motivates their actions. This security is related to their origin, and to their complexes and attitudes, which have formed over their long history. Among the questions to which we want to find an answer is how this ethnic group left its native India around the 4<sup>th</sup> century, is scattered around the world, and has not lost its original identity and behaviour, typical of the Indian subcontinent. This is without doubt the most stable ethnic group in all of human history.

One of the things about the Roma people that it is high time to realize is their complex social, not ethnic, stratification. In Bulgaria, when we talk about them, we continue to group them together under the common umbrella term "Gypsies" or the ethnonym "Roma". In fact, their social stratification is very complex - by origin, family / clan, group to which they belong, occupation, etc. Some of them are strictly endogamous and do not allow marriage even with people from another Roma group.

Another thing it is necessary for us to realize is that ghettoisation only exacerbates the problems. Ghettos, in addition to setting an absurd precedent of a "state within state", guided by their own rules and codes of honour, reproduce the model of the poor, lazy, anti-social Roma and reinforce their social isolation and rejection by the rest of society. Thus, even if some Roma want to move in another, positive direction and try to integrate, they are doomed to failure, because of the rules and models of behaviour in the ghetto.

An important part of our analysis is the matter of the number, territorial distribution and demographic trends among the Roma in Bulgaria. It is extremely difficult to specify their number, due to the widespread phenomenon of "preferred" ethnic self-awareness among Roma. Very often, if they are Christians and live on the territory of the Bulgarian ethnic group, they self-identify as Bulgarians and even more often, if they are Muslims, they self-identify as Turks. This is a phenomenon that is characteristic of Roma around the world. Therefore, there is no way to specify their number worldwide. It is estimated that they number in the range of 18-20 million people, making them the second largest ethnic group (after the Kurds), which does not have and has never had its own state. Their demographic trends are also important in order to make an objective assessment of their condition, and thence an accurate and detailed forecast of their development up to the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It is precisely the demographic forecast for the number, educational and age structure of the Roma in Bulgaria until 2050 that is among the most important goals of the present analysis, as it will give us the

opportunity to look at the problem in development and especially clarity regarding where to focus our efforts as a state and society. Any integration policy related to the Roma must be based on current demographic trends and forecasts for their development. Because if the forecast comes true that their number by the middle of the century will be about 1,000,000 - 1,200,000 people, or 21-22% of the population of the country, given their level of educational development at present, this would mean a huge burden on social systems, for business and for everyone working in the country.

Among the most serious problems that we have addressed in the analysis is precisely the educational level of the Roma community. According to the latest data, 0.5% of them have higher education and 9% have secondary education, which means that over 90% have lower than secondary education. This is disgraceful and unacceptable for a developed EU member state. The low level of education instantly means that they are marginalized, makes their integration impossible, and condemns them to poverty and hopelessness, given the dynamics of life and the rapid development of technology. In the digital age, people without education are doomed to total exclusion from all spheres of work and social life. And we should not forget that the Roma with their young age structure can be a substantial resource on the labour market in our country, especially with the current acute shortage not only of highly skilled, but also of medium and low skilled labour. However, an uneducated population cannot be a reserve on the labour market in a modern, developed country, as even the activities demanding the very lowest

qualifications require at least basic language and computer literacy.

The analysis also looks into the state's abdication of the pressing problems with the Roma people and how this can have very serious consequences for ethnic peace and social stability in the country.

Since, however, only a description and analysis of the problems is not a solution to a given critical situation, we regard as an important element of our study to be the analysis of Roma integration policies and successful models for this that have been implemented in Europe and Bulgaria. Among the goals we set is an understanding of why and how such models work in some places and how they can be adapted to others with a similar ethno-demographic picture. We are definitely facing a very complex and difficult task in resolving Roma issues in the country, but if we ignore them, we will not achieve anything, apart from deepening the negative trends and occurrences. We categorically believe that there are opportunities for integration of the Roma people and this is by dint of a proper understanding of the nature of the Roma ethnic group, work with them at grass roots level, according to the specific features and needs of their individual social groups, deghettoisation, no matter how difficult it is, and definitely education. This is because, if in a Roma family a grandfather, son and grandson have never studied and worked, there is no way we can expect this to happen in the next generation. Quite the contrary, if in a Roma family a grandfather, daughter and granddaughter are educated and have achieved realisation on the labour market, it is most logical for this to continue with the coming generations.

## 1

# INTRODUCTION

The Roma are an original and extremely interesting ethnic group, whose roots can be found in the Indian subcontinent. According to indirect data, it is believed that around the 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> century they were expelled from there, probably during the invasions of the Huns, and never returned. Of course, Roma ethnic groups still inhabit India today, but the bulk of the diaspora is scattered around the world. They entered Europe in the Middle Ages in three waves - through Spain, through Egypt, whence comes their popular ethnonym of gypsy, and through the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan Peninsula. They probably settled in our lands around the 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, i.e. with the penetration of the Ottoman Empire into South-eastern Europe.

It is difficult to determine their exact number due to their so-called “preferred” ethnic identity, which very often makes them self-identify according to the ethnic group in which they live or according to their religious affiliation, although they themselves are quite indifferent as regards religion. Most ethnologists estimate that their total number in the world today is in the region of 18-20 million people, most of whom live in Russia, Romania, Turkey, Bulgaria, Serbia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Spain and other countries.

A specific characteristic of theirs is that they take some of the customs, culture, language and religion of the ethnic group in whose territory they live, but always retain their identity, cultural practices and most of all the value system that is characteristic of the Indian subcontinent and quite foreign to Europe. The language they use – Romani - has numerous dialects and variations, but lacks a single literary version, so they are in reality bilingual, using the language of the ethnic group whose territory they inhabit. They often make a purely mechanical mix between the two languages.

The Roma people are also characterised by demographic patterns of behaviour typical of South Asia. These include early marriages and births, highly patriarchal conservatism, the subordinate role of women, and large families. They definitely have a much higher fertility rate than all European ethnic groups, but also a much lower life expectancy.

It is also very important to mention that, regardless of the country in which the Roma people live, and regardless of its economic development and form of government, the problems with them are just the same. They can be equally identified in Finland, Spain, Bulgaria and Turkey. This, in turn, makes it possible for successful integration models in one country to be applied in others, with some adaptation.

A very important issue, which is crucial for their successful integration, is an understanding of their complex social stratification, which is not ethnic or linguistic, but is related to origin, clan belonging, craft and social status. This is because there are Roma groups that are not only willing to integrate, but also have a strong desire to do so, and must be supported by the state and society, but there are also those for whom the idea of integration is completely alien. Therefore, it is imperative to use a differentiated approach and active work directly at grass roots level with experts who know the ethnopsychology and behaviour of individual Roma groups.

Over recent years, there has been talk of quite successful integration models and policies that have been implemented in different parts of Spain, Finland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary, which shows that, although it is difficult, Roma integration is possible. It is a question of understanding why and how some models work and how they can be applied in other places where there lives a compact Roma population.

## 2

## ORIGIN, DISPLACEMENT, SOCIAL STRATIFICATION, ATTITUDES AND STEREOTYPES OF THE ROMA PEOPLE IN BULGARIA

The origins of the Roma people are shrouded in so many mysteries, unproven hypotheses and confusing assumptions that it fully illustrates their specificity and mysticism as an ethnic group. Although they appeared in Europe as long ago as the Middle Ages, to this day no strict scientific theory as to their origin can be established. Of course, this is normal to a certain extent, as they are a nomadic people, who have traversed the paths of almost all continents from antiquity to the present day, and secondly, because their Romani language is not written, which also contributes to the lack of clarity on the issue. For this reason, much of the information about them has been lost over the centuries, and the lost part has been replaced by oral traditions, legends, myths and tales, about which it is not known to what extent they rely on truth and fact.

On the other hand, however, it is strange that it is not possible to clarify the origin of such a large nation and with a significant place in the history of the world, even with the modern way of gathering and processing information.

We will rely on the official version, which is closest to the theory concept, namely that in 1763 a student of theology at Charles University in Prague, Istvan Valij, in his linguistic research, happened to find a very great similarity between the Romani way of speaking of Hungarian gypsies, with which he was familiar, and the language of students from Southwest India. He made a comparative analysis between a thousand words and came to the conclusion, based on this indirect linguistic evidence, that gypsies originated in the Indian subcontinent. Based on his research, the linguist H. M. G. Grellmann formulated his work "Gypsies. A historical experience of the way of life, condition, customs and destiny of this people in Europe together with their origin" and shows the direct connection between Sanskrit and Romani, which marks the beginning of the idea of their origin being from India. Subsequently, the information was added that they probably left northwestern India under the pressure of the Huns in the period 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> century and from there gradually spread throughout the world due to their nomadic lifestyle.

What is strange about this case is that the accepted most reliable theory of the origin of the Roma is based on a happenstance study by a student in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Among the hypotheses about the origin of the Roma, which have serious supporters based on Roma legends and myths, two are worth noting. The first is that they are associated with the Jews and, according to one of their myths, they come from Hagar, the concubine of Abraham (Ibrahim in Arabic), who gave birth to his first-born son Ishmael, which explains the Muslim religion of some Roma people. Some medieval European researchers also support this hypothesis.

Much more common, however, is the hypothesis of their Egyptian origin. In medieval Europe, the Roma themselves had long claimed to be Christians expelled from Egypt. The charters issued in defense of the gypsies by Pope Martin V, Emperor Sigismund and other European rulers are viewed as proof of this. Terminologically, this version is confirmed by the ethnonym "Gypsies", by which this ethnic group are very well known, and with the names "Gyupti" and "Gyuptsi" used in Southwestern Bulgaria and Northern Macedonia, i.e. people who came from Egypt.

Among the "homelands" of gypsies represented in different historical times and studies are the Middle East (in general), Ethiopia (Abyssinia), Assyria, Nubia, Chaldea, Iran and others.

We must emphasise that there are just as many hypotheses about the arrival of the Roma people in Europe, and in particular on the Balkan Peninsula and in Bulgaria, and that they are sometimes quite contradictory and lacking in clear evidence.

From the numerous hypotheses on the subject, we can deduce three directions as to how they came to Europe, for which there is the most evidence, both direct and indirect. The first stream is that of the people who speak the Ben dialect Dom, who moved from India to the northwest and settled in the lands of Syria and Palestine, and from there separate groups continued to Egypt and North Africa. The second stream

is composed of a group of speakers of the Phen dialect Lom, which headed north, settling in the lands of the Caucasus. The third, in fact the main flow of Roma migration, is also from the Phen group, but which is a dialect of Roma, and moved in the direction of the west, to Asia Minor and the Balkans, and from there to Central and Western Europe.<sup>1</sup>

As far as dating is concerned, the matter is once again complex and ambiguous, but we can point to the period 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> century as an orientation regarding the emergence of Roma people in Europe. The first historical records of their presence on the Balkan Peninsula, within Byzantium, date back to that time. Most gypsy scholars accept “The Life of St. George of Mount Athos”, dated approximately around 1100, as the first certain mention of gypsies in Byzantium. There is much more and reliable information about the entry of the Roma in the Balkans in parallel with the advent of the Ottoman Empire. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century there was information about the existence of a Gypsy sanjak with the administrative centre of Kirkkilisa (Lozengrad), which covers the regions of Stara Zagora, Yambol, Komotini, Keshan, Corlu and Visa. Definitely the presence of Roma people in fertile Thrace was large-scale and tangible in the period of the Ottoman Empire, and this can be explained by the flat terrain and the established infrastructure that supported their nomadic lifestyle.

However, if we are to adhere to scientifically proven facts, then we must rely on medieval feudal charters and laws that specifically mention the Roma and have an accurate date. These are in chronological order: the island of Crete (1322), the island of Corfu (1346), the city of Dubrovnik (1362), the city of Zagreb (1373), Bohemia (1378), the city of Ljubljana (1387), Lower Saxony (1407), Transylvania (1416), Westphalia and the cities of the Hanseatic League (1417), Leipzig, Frankfurt am Main, Zurich and Bern (1418), Antwerp (1419), the Netherlands (1420), Turin (1421), Bologna and Rome (1422), Zaragoza (1425), Poland (1428), Barcelona (1447), Andalusia (1462), England (1480), Vilnius (1501), Edinburgh and Denmark (1505) and others. (Pamporov, A., 2006). We can summarise that in the early Middle Ages in Byzantium, and a little later in the Ottoman Empire, the Roma people entered the Balkans, and over the next few centuries, due to their typical nomadic life, gradually settled throughout the whole of Europe.

Let us describe in a few words the existing evidence for the appearance and presence of the Roma people in the Bulgarian lands. The first reliable evidence dates from the period of the Ottoman Empire, in the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The first mention of

gypsies in what are now Bulgarian lands from this period is in 1430 in the tax register of the Nikopol Sanjak, where there is reference to 431 Coptic, i.e. “Egyptian” or “Gypsy” households (Marushiakova & Popov 2000). At the same time, there was significant immigration of Roma into the Plovdiv region. If in 1490 in Filibe there were 38 households out of 907 (or 3.3%), and in 1516 there were 175 out of 1000-1100 (15.9 / 17.5%), then in 1516 there were 283 Roma households (about 25%). Usually the research also presents data for Pleven, where the number of households was 11 in 1516, 36 in 1550 and 44 in 1579, respectively, but if in the first period this was due to immigration, in the second probably it was a matter of natural growth (Pamporov, 2006).

We can talk about more accurate national and regional statistics regarding the Roma community in Bulgaria only after the Liberation. Of course, with regard to these statistics, we must be careful and bear in mind several subjective factors that distort it. First of all, we have the “preferred” ethnic self-consciousness of the Roma, which is a specific phenomenon of theirs. It is expressed in the fact that often, if they profess Christianity and live on the territory of ethnic Bulgarians, they self-identify as Bulgarians and even more often, if they are Muslims, they self-identify as Turks. This phenomenon occurs in every place in the world where they live. The Roma are the most stable ethnic group over time, because they always assimilate the language and some of the cultural and everyday features of the ethnic group whose territory they inhabit, and at the same time they always preserve their characteristic way of life, customs, culture and reproductive behaviour. Therefore, not only in Bulgaria, but all over the world, it is difficult to determine the exact number of Roma people. It is estimated that there are about 18-20 million people worldwide, and they number approximately 12 million people in Europe. According to official data in Bulgaria (2011 census) Gypsies number 325,433 or 4.7% of the country’s population, but according to experts (Ilieva, Tomova, Pamporov, etc.), there are actually between 700 and 800,000 people, or over 10% of the population of the country. According to these unconfirmed data, about 5% of the Roma people in Europe live in Bulgaria.

Another reason for the “distortion” of the information on ethnicity in censuses is related to the complicated hierarchical structure of the ethnic self-consciousness of Gypsies.

Marushiakova (1992) identifies two reasons for these phenomena of self-identification among Roma people. The first reason is what occurs in some Roma people who have largely lost their previous group characteristics (i.e. the weaker the group and the less complete the set of typical features of the Roma group is, the more strongly represented preferred self-awareness becomes). The second reason is the

1 Ivanova E., Krastev, V., [http://www.chambersz.org/tehnitari/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1&Itemid=2](http://www.chambersz.org/tehnitari/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1&Itemid=2)



attitude of the macro-society and its institutions towards the Roma people. They are universally rejected, both at an institutional and at an everyday level, and when confronted with such an attitude of the macro-society, they seek public recognition in the face of another ethnic community, which may be the largest in the country or be recognised by the macro-society. This is the main reason why we observe the public declaration of Roma such as Turks, Bulgarians, Romanians and others. In searching for a new ethnic identity, the Roma "emphasise their desire to integrate and equalise with the surrounding population, thus trying to avoid applying to them negative stereotypes related to the Roma population." (Marushiakova, 1992)

According to Tomova's study (1995), various processes of ethnic identification take place among the different Roma groups in Bulgaria. According to her, 2/3 of the respondents without hesitation declared their affiliation with the Roma community. Among the remaining 1/3 there was a preference for foreign ethnic identity - most Roma Muslims presented themselves as Turks (which was typical of Pazardzhik, Plovdiv, Haskovo, Targovishte, Dobrich and Razgrad), while some Roma Christians self-identified as Bulgarians and very few as Romanians. According to Tomova (1995), a significant proportion of the Roma families dispersed in the large apartment complexes of Lyulin, Mladost, Obelya and other Sofia residential complexes deemed themselves to be Bulgarians, as well as some of the Roma Christians in villages, especially when they were not divided into neighbourhoods, they had been settled for a long time and were well integrated into rural life. It is also of interest to note what part of the Roma ethnic community was defined as Bulgarian Roma (Dasikane Roma) and what part - as Turkish Roma (Horohane Roma). According to Tomova (1995), 47.3% determined themselves to be in the group of Bulgarian Roma, and 3/4 of them did not indicate another name for their group. The others most often stated the name of the group's traditional or modern crafts or a specific nickname given to them by other groups. 46.2% of the respondents defined themselves as "Turkish Roma", with 2/3 of them not indicating another specific subgroup. 5.1% of the respondents identified themselves as Wallachian Roma.

The life of the Roma in Bulgaria has always been accompanied by many stereotypes, myths and prejudices, which are naturally due to their way of life, which is strange to Europeans, and their behaviour and thinking, which are much more inherent in the Indian subcontinent.

The first and most basic level of social organisation of the Roma community is the **family**, which can be very large and include several generations. The **family or clan** is the centre of Roma life, associated with the devotion of relatives.

Stereotypes about Roma people can be divided into two groups: **positive and negative**. In any case, both groups are directly linked to their way of life, and to the way they are perceived by other ethnic groups in Europe.

Among **the positive stereotypes** are: musical, freedom-loving, skillful, resourceful, and loyal to their own. Musicality is literally inherent in Roma people. It is no coincidence that both in the world and in Bulgaria we can mention many famous Roma musicians (Django Reinhardt, Muharem Serbezovski, Hari Stoyka, Esma Redjepova, Neno Iliev, Ibro Lolov Ivo Papazov-Ibryama, etc.). Being freedom-loving is innate in all nomadic peoples, and it is logically combined with dexterity and ingenuity, so that one can survive in this way of life. Loyalty to their own is a specific phenomenon of theirs, which is due to two factors: first, that the family - the clan - is the most important thing in their value system, they simply have no sense of state or belonging to a larger community (including Roma); and secondly, any group that is a minority and persecuted somewhere is encapsulated so that it can be preserved.

Among **the negative stereotypes** certain ideas stand out: thieves, lazy, dirty, wild, aggressive, vindictive, malicious. Here it is difficult to separate those which are due to their nomadic way of life and ethnopsychology, which is foreign to Europe, from other factors without falling into discriminatory explanations.

There is, however, a stereotype that is very popular in Bulgaria, and this is their image of a victim, which is superimposed as a result of their so-called "**learned helplessness**". We can often hear Roma people complaining that the state is not doing anything for them. This provokes the feeling in other ethnic groups, mostly Bulgarians, that the Roma community are discriminated against, because even the poorest of citizens are obliged to pay for their consumables. Here, however, it should be clearly stated that this generalisation cannot be made for all Roma in the country, as is often done, because there are many of them who conscientiously perform their duties as citizens of the republic, and secondly, such examples directly lead to the conclusion that where these occurrences happen there is no statehood.

Among the other features of the Roma, which certainly seem strange to Europeans, are the buying or negotiating of brides, the very young age for marriage, 13-16 years for girls and 15-18 for boys, automatically for the birth of children, recognition the rule of the "meshereh" for settling relations within the Roma community and many others. Meshereh is something like a form of self-regulation for the Roma community. It is a council of elders who gather and arbitrate on various cases, which are most often related to everyday problems.



All these discrepancies with the way of life and perceptions of “normality” of other ethnic groups in Europe and Bulgaria makes the Roma people implicitly believe that there is no ethnic group that has those strengths and virtues with which it can penetrate into the depths of the Roma soul.

When we talk about the integration of the Roma and their relations with other European ethnic groups, we should not overlook the fact that over the centuries they have been one of the most persecuted communities in the old continent, along with the Jews. They were subjected to forced expulsions and persecutions in Europe throughout the Middle Ages, examples of the case in point being Lucerne - 1472, Paris - 1539 and Dijon - 1659. There were also such measures in Portugal, where they were deported to the colonies in Africa and South America, as well as in Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden, and in Frankfurt am Main in 1722 an order was issued for the forcible removal of children from their parents in order for them to be sent to special orphanages. The parents were branded and banished (Pamporov, 2006). In those years, the absolute peak of the persecution of the Roma was the Holy Inquisition and the witch hunt - in the period of the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century - when thousands of Roma were burned at the stake in Europe because they were engaged in divination, ventriloquism, circus art and more.

The most brutal persecution of them was during the Nazi regime in Germany and the Holocaust. According to different estimates, between 200,000 and 800,000 Roma people were sent to concentration camps during World War II, almost all of whom ended their lives there, and there was a special Roma unit in the Auschwitz concentration camp, where between 100,000 and 300,000 Roma died. Here it is vital to mention a fact that is not very well-known in Bulgaria, but which is of great importance for our national self-confidence, namely, along with nearly 50,000 Jews, Bulgaria saved tens of thousands of Roma from death camps.

Undoubtedly, however, what is most difficult to understand in Europe and in our country is the exceptionally complex stratification of the Roma by clans, occupation, social groups, feeling of belonging amongst other factors. According to sociological research, the most generalised and monolithic classification of Roma in Bulgaria is that of A. Pamporov (2006), in which he examines the following Roma subgroups: Dasikane Roma (gypsy-speaking Christians or Bulgarian Roma), Horohane Roma (Turkish Roma and Muslims), Calderashi, Kalaijes (boilermakers or Serbian gypsies) and Ludari (miners, identified as Romanian-speaking Roma or Wallachs). Dasikane and Horohane Roma are also united under the name of Yerlii or settled gypsies. In turn, miners, according to their craft, are divided into Ursari (bears and

monkeys) and Lingurari (diggers). However, this classification is very schematic and does not express the full stratification of the Roma in Bulgaria, as noted by A. Pamporov: “In practice, in each municipality and even in each settlement there are different distinctions between subgroups and in fact there are over 100 subgroups. In addition, there are many border subgroups and even border communities.” According to the craft or origin, the following names of Roma subgroups can be found in literature: Bakurdzhii (coppersmiths), Burgudzhii, Gadzhali, Demirdzhii, Dzhazvedzhii, Dzhuravtsi, Durvari (woodcutters), Dyulgeri (carpenters), Koshnichari (basket makers), Balamo, Tsutsumani, Burinari, Drundari (trumpeters), Mehterii, Feredzhelii, Dzhankeshi, Dudulani, Charale, Agup-ti, Yurukchii and many others. All this goes to show us how complicated it is to understand the Roma ethnic group and how only working in the field with people who know it from the inside can give positive results in terms of integration.

Conclusion 1: The origin of the Roma people is still not fully understood, but most evidence, mostly linguistic, is that they originated in the Indian subcontinent, whence they gradually migrated to other parts of the world, such as Europe and Bulgaria, where their presence in large numbers began in the Middle Ages.

Conclusion 2: It is precisely their Indian origin and ethnopsychology, typical for that part of the world, that makes their integration into the European and Bulgarian value system so difficult. They are a nomadic people with traditional occupations, such as tinsmithing, divination, circus art and bear-handling, and since the Middle Ages it has been difficult to fit into the models of European societies. They are further alienated from Europeans by their traditional early marriages, as a result of which girls drop out of the education system, their cheerful, free-spirited way of life, the situation of the meshereh (their “judicial” body) above the laws of the state, and so on.

Conclusion 3: It is very difficult to determine the exact number of Roma people, both in Europe and in Bulgaria, due to their so-called “preferred” ethnic identity - very often they identify themselves according to the ethnic group in whose territory they live or according to their religious inclination.

Conclusion 4: Their “difference” from all other European ethnic groups has been the reason for much persecution in Europe. The absolute peak of persecution and violence against the Roma people was during the Nazi regime and the Holocaust, when, according to various estimates, between 200,000 and 800,000 Roma died in concentration camps on the continent. Bulgaria was one of the very few countries that managed to save its Roma community from the death camps.

Conclusion 5: One of the biggest problems with Roma integration is the fact that other ethnic groups and the countries in which they live perceive them as a homogeneous group. In reality, it is a matter of extreme complexity how the Roma people are stratified into subgroups, metagroups, etc., according to the family and clan to which they belong, traditional crafts, places of origin, social

group, etc. Among the most famous groups in Bulgaria are Kalderash, Kalaidzhii (tinsmiths), Ludari (Boyash), Dasikane Roma, Horohane Roma and others. There are some of them for whom the very idea of integration seems absurd, but there are also those amongst whom, with a little help from the state or local government, integration is absolutely achievable.

## 3

## NUMBER, TERRITORIAL DISTRIBUTION AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROCESSES OF THE ROMA PEOPLE IN BULGARIA

Since the census in 1900 self-determination has been deemed a fundamental principle as a major feature in determining the affiliation of an ethnic, religious, etc. community in our country, enshrined both in the new Bulgarian Constitution and also in the documents of international law. According to this, in purely legal terms, neither the state nor society can deny the right to individual choice. However, quite rightly, a number of scholars also add the clarification that in cases of preferred ethnic identity (as in the case with the Roma people) it is necessary for the respective preferred ethnic community to accept and recognise these Roma as part of it. In certain cases this condition is absent - Bulgarians, Turks and Romanians do not recognise these Roma groups as part of their own ethnic communities.

### 3.1 TRENDS IN CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF ROMA POPULATION IN BULGARIA. DEMOGRAPHIC PROCESSES

In Bulgaria there live different ethnic and religious communities, each one with its own characteristic peculiarities and traditions. One of these ethnic communities is the Roma people. The problems associated with this ethnic community encompass many aspects and it is very difficult to solve them. The situation in Bulgaria is complicated by the fact that it ranks among the countries with the highest absolute number and relative proportion of Roma community, on one hand, and on the other - their aggravated socio-economic situation, inherited from the past. The main problem in assessing the situation of the Roma ethnic group not only in Bulgaria but also in the other European countries is the lack of data. One of the reasons for this lies in the peculiarities of the Roma ethnic group, which is not homogeneous. The Roma people are a specific ethnic community that has no analogue with other ethnic groups in Europe. They are divided into many different and sometimes even opposing groups, subgroups and metagroups with their own ethnic and cultural appearance. Historical, political and economic factors have created great differences among the Roma not only in Europe but also in Bulgaria. These differences increase

even more, bearing in mind the differences in linguistic and cultural characteristics. Difficulties often arise in identifying members of the Roma ethnic group, which is characterised by weak processes of ethnic consolidation and an insignificant sense of common self-awareness. However, the general attitude of the society towards the Roma, expressed in discrimination, strengthens their feeling that they belong to the same community. It would hardly be wrong to say that the unifying element in the Roma ethnic group is the attitude of the macro-society towards it, thus forming a separate social category that has common problems to solve. These are related to poverty, marginalisation, exclusion from the labour market, segregation in the education system, difficult access to social services, extreme forms of spatial segregation, exclusion from the right to exercise a position of active citizenship, intolerance, discrimination, prejudice, negative stereotypes, etc. The term "European or transnational minority" largely sums up their essence.

The formation of the population on a given territory is influenced by two main groups of factors: natural reproduction and mechanical movement (migration).

The present demographic condition of the population is a result of the long-term action of many factors and influences related to the specific features of the historical, economic and cultural development of the individual ethnic communities in the country.

The course of demographic indicators has fluctuated with varying intensity over the last few decades. Immediately after the Second World War up to the beginning of the 1950s, the highest birth rates (over 40‰) were recorded among the Roma. Compared to the Bulgarian population, the birth rates were more than double among the Roma population. In their demographic development, Roma and Turks showed similarities that persisted until the end of the 1980s, except in the years immediately after World War II. After that, birth rates were reported to be lower than in the Turkish population. From the beginning of the 50s, there was a gradual decline in the birth rate of the Roma population. During this period, the policy was aimed at the so-

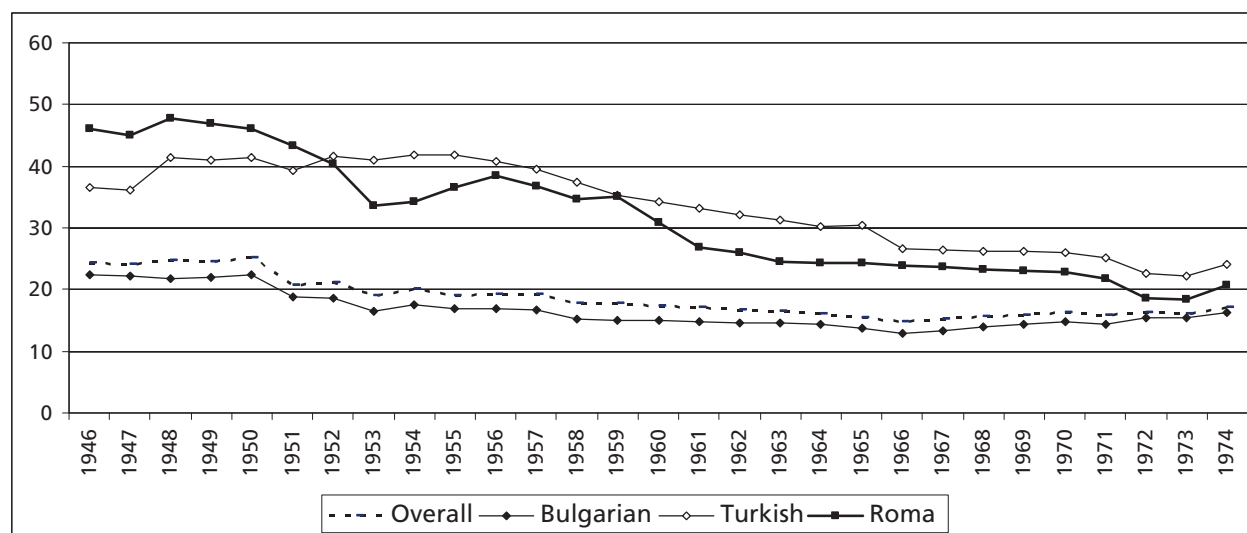


cial and economic development of areas with mixed ethnic composition, raising the educational level of the Roma population, reducing the level of infant mortality, as a result of which the natural desire of parents to replace the deceased child was eliminated, the processes of urbanisation and the related changes in the conditions and way of life were in-

tensified, and a great number of the activities in agricultural production were mechanised, with this contributing to the great loss of the economic functions of the family, etc. Regardless of the current factors, the decrease in the birth rate among this population has happened slowly and continued for a long time (Ilieva, 2013).

Figure 1

Birth rate of the three main ethnic communities in Bulgaria (1946-1974) (Ilieva, 2013)



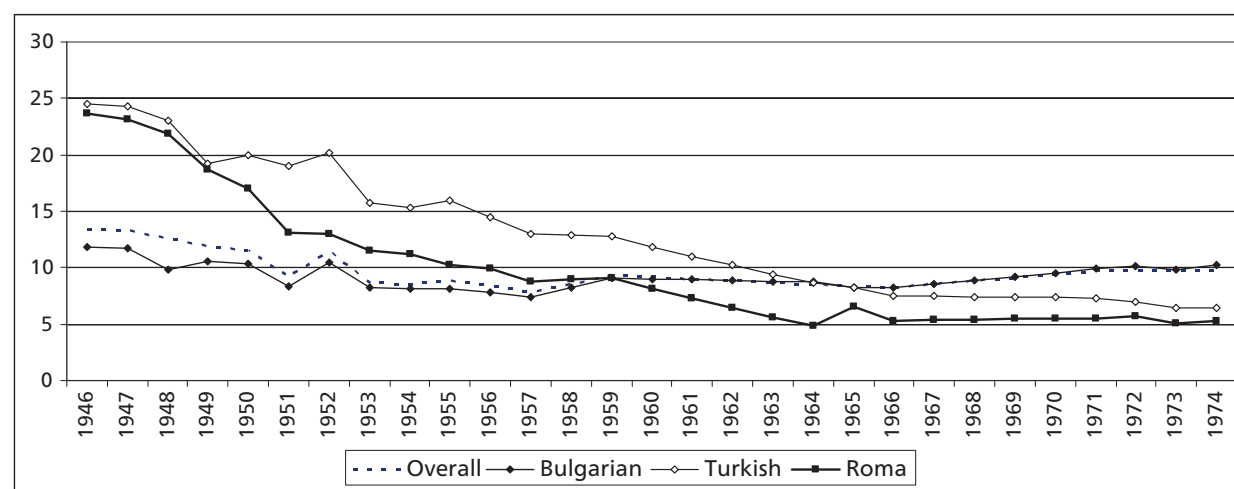
Source: Own calculations based on information from the Central State Agency "Archives" – Sofia, Fund 210, op.34, a.e. 5; op.12, a.e.46; op.26, a.e. 5; op.5, a.e.17; op.5, a.e. 61; op.10, a.e. 34; op.12, a.e.46; op.6, a.e.16; op.5, a.e. 61; op.8, a.e. 30; op. 42, a.e. 31; op.10, a.e.34; op.14, a.e. 59; op. 19, a.e.6; op.5, a.e.44; op.6, a.e. 16; op.3, a.e.4; op.44, a.e.8; op.41, a.e. 61; op.43, a.e. 8; op.42, a.e. 29; op.23, a.e. 5; op.5, a.e. 63; op.44, a.e. 7; op.37, a.e. 28; op.3, a.e.47; op.8, a.e.31; op. 10, a.e.35; op.14, a.e. 60; op. 19, a.e. 7; op. 5, a.e.20; , op.3, a.e.4a; op.3, a.e.46; op. 23, a.e.6.

The deterioration in living standards as a result of the economic downturn immediately after the Second World War was one of the reasons for the high mortality rates among Roma people in the years immediately

following the war, when values above 25‰ were recorded. In the following years, there was a rapid decline in mortality, and over a period of ten years (1946-1956) this decline was more than ten points (Ilieva, 2013).

Figure 2

Mortality rate of the three main ethnic communities in Bulgaria (1946-1974) (Ilieva, 2013)



Source: Own calculations based on information from the Central State Agency "Archives" – Sofia, Fund 210, op.10, a.e. 36; op.12, a.e. 43; op.8, a.e. 30; op.2, a.e.48; op. 5, a.e. 65; op. 6, a.e. 17; op.6, a.e. 17; op.8, a.e. 32; op.10, a.e. 36; op.12, a.e.43; op.14, a.e.61; op.23, a.e. 7; op.5, a.e. 23; op.3, a.e. 5; op.19, a.e. 8; op.6, a.e. 15; op. 6, a.e. 18; op.6, a.e. 18; op. 8, a.e. 33; op.8, a.e.33; op.10, a.e. 37; op.12, a.e.44; op.14, a.e. 62; op.23, a.e. 7; op. 19, a.e. 9; op.5, a.e. 70; op.5, a.e.32; op.3, a.e. 54; op.36, a.e. 7; op.44, a.e. 15; op.42, a.e. 36; op.42, a.e. 35; op.37, a.e. 29; op.43, a.e. 13.

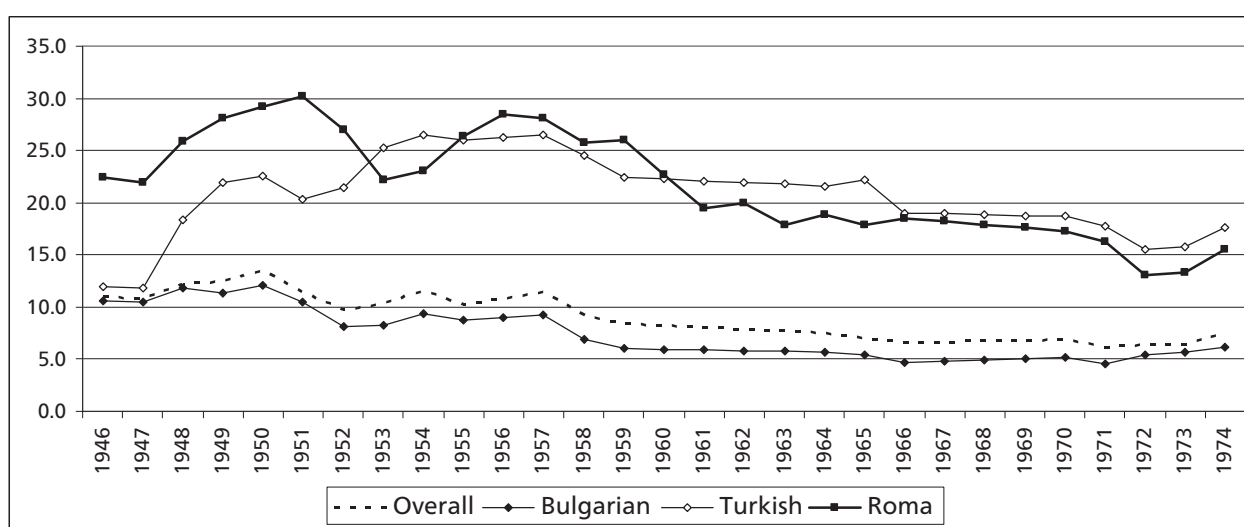
After the Second World War, the values of **natural population growth** were about 22-23‰ and were the result of high birth rates and high mortality. In the following years, in connection with the sharp decline

in mortality, there was a rise in the natural population growth rate of Roma people - over 25‰, and these values were maintained until the end of the 50s. In the early 1960s, due to the rapidly declining

birth rates, natural growth rates decreased by nearly five points, and this trend, although to a lesser extent, continued until the late 1970s. During this period, due to the significantly higher natural growth compared to that of the Bulgarian population, the so-called demographic problem began to materialise. Those in power began to speak openly about this in the mid-1970s, and it was cited as one of the reasons for the “revival process”, which began “experimentally” with the Bulgarian Roma population who professed the Muslim religion, and with Bulgarian Muslims. The main reason for this problem was

the deepening differences in natural reproduction between the Bulgarian ethnic group, on one hand, and the Roma and Turkish ones, on the other. Differences in natural population growth were determined stemming from approximately twice the birth rate and half the mortality rate among Roma compared to those among Bulgarians. The reason for this was the increase in mortality among the Bulgarian population as early as the early 60s, which was a result of its aging, as well as the trend of decreasing mortality among Roma in connection with improving their hygiene and habits. (Fig. 3) (Ilieva, 2013)

Figure 3  
Natural population growth rate of the three main ethnic communities in Bulgaria (1946-1974) (Ilieva, 2013)



Source: Own calculations based on information from the Central State Agency "Archives" – Sofia, Fund 210, op.10, a.e. 36; op.12, a.e. 43; op.8, a.e. 30; op.2, a.e. 48; op.5, a.e. 65; op.6, a.e. 17; op.6, a.e. 17; op.8, a.e. 32; op.10, a.e. 36; op.12, a.e. 43; op.14, a.e. 61; op.23, a.e. 7; op.5, a.e. 23; op.3, a.e. 5; op.19, a.e. 8; op.6, a.e. 15; op.6, a.e. 18; op.6, a.e. 18; op.8, a.e. 33; op.8, a.e. 33; op.10, a.e. 37; op.12, a.e. 44; op.14, a.e. 62; op.23, a.e. 7; op.19, a.e. 9; op.5, a.e. 70; op.5, a.e. 32; op.5, a.e. 54; op.36, a.e. 7; op.44, a.e. 15; op.42, a.e. 36; op.42, a.e. 35; op.37, a.e. 29; op.43, a.e. 13; op.34, a.e. 5; op.12, a.e. 46; op.26, a.e. 5; op.5, a.e. 17; op.5, a.e. 61; op.10, a.e. 34; op.12, a.e. 46; op.6, a.e. 16; op.5, a.e. 61; op.8, a.e. 30; op.42, a.e. 31; op.10, a.e. 34; op.14, a.e. 59; op.19, a.e. 6; op.5, a.e. 44; op.6, a.e. 16; op.3, a.e. 4; op.44, a.e. 8; op.41, a.e. 61; op.43, a.e. 8; op.42, a.e. 29; op.23, a.e. 5; op.5, a.e. 63; op.44, a.e. 7; op.37, a.e. 28; op.5, a.e. 47; op.8, a.e. 31; op.10, a.e. 35; op.14, a.e. 60; op.19, a.e. 7; op.5, a.e. 20; op.3, a.e. 4a; op.3, a.e. 46; op.23, a.e. 6.

In the last two decades, and especially after 1989, the birth rate has been declining among all ethnic communities as a result of the severe economic crisis and the feeling of insecurity caused by various social changes. However, the decline in the birth rate among the Roma is the smallest. The educational level, material and cultural needs, the satisfaction of certain aspirations regarding upbringing, raising children and their evaluation of values determine the maintenance of a high birth rate and natural growth in the Roma population. Presently, the course of demographic processes is particularly strongly influenced by the intensity of socio-economic factors. Bearing in mind the results of the 1992 and 2001 censuses, the conclusion can be drawn that this is the only ethnic group in the country that shows an increase in its number, despite the significant discrepancy between official statistics and scientific and empirical demographic surveys, which show an even greater growth of the Roma population in the country. Surveys conducted during these censuses in 1992 and 2001 show a profound closedness of the Roma ethnic group and

low motivation of its members to emigrate during this period, and if this does happen, in most cases it is not accompanied by a permanent change of residence. Therefore, the main factor influencing the increase in the number of Roma is the high natural growth. Based on the official census data, a natural increase of the Roma population of about 18.7‰ for the period 1992-2001 can be calculated, but if we assume that the mortality is around 8‰, then the birth rates can be estimated at about 26‰.

These figures are also confirmed by Tomova's research (2005). Assigned by the Council of Ministers, the NSI prepared a report on the birth rate in large ethnic communities using data from the 2001 census based on the ethnic self-determination of women in labour. Data from this reference, which is unpublished in the official editions of the National Statistical Institute, are presented in Table 1, and as can be seen from them, the birth rate in the Roma community is the highest - in practice, as it was among Turks and Bulgarian Muslims in the early 70s of the twentieth century (Ilieva, 2013).

Table 1

**Birth rate, infant mortality, mortality and natural population growth (‰) by ethnic groups as of 01.03.2001**

Demographic indicators	Total	Bulgarians	Turks	Roma
birth rate (by ethnicity of the mother) - per 1000 people	8.5	6.9	13.0	26.7
total fertility rate (2001-2003)	1.22	1.03	1.62	2.81
infant mortality (per child under 1 year) - per 1000	13.4	9.9	17.8	25.0
mortality per 1000 population	14.2	15.0	10.3	7.3
natural population growth - per 1000	-5.7	-8.1	2.7	19.4

Source: NSI (unpublished data), Tomova (2005)

After 2002, systematic efforts began to provide 100% of Roma children with primary education (grades 1-4) and to keep them in school as long as possible (Tomova, 2009). All these measures taken led to a reduction in the birth rate - and especially the adolescent or early birth rate in the community. The early birth rate (per 1,000 girls under 18) decreased from 690‰ to 508‰ between 1992 and 2001 and the exceptionally early birth rate (per 1,000 girls under 15) among the Roma community was halved from 70.1‰ to 35.6‰. Although the decline in the birth rate in the Roma community has been particularly pronounced over the last 15 years, the much more favourable age structure found is a very important factor in maintaining, even increasing, the proportion of Roma women at an early age. In 2011, nearly 39.1% of Roma in Bulgaria were under the age of 20, compared to 22.4% among the Turkish ethnic group and 15.5% among Bulgarians. The more favourable age structure of the Roma will predetermine the higher birth rate in the group in the medium and long term, indeed with an even greater reduction in the number of children in their households.

The Roma are the community with the highest child mortality - 25.0 per thousand new-born or 2.6 times higher than among ethnic Bulgarians. The main reasons are widespread and deep poverty, poor hygiene, and early and frequent births of mothers. The Roma are the community with the highest rate of premature mortality and the shortest life expectancy (Tomova, Pamporov, Milenkova, 2009).

**External migration** is another major factor that affects the number and structure of the population.

In the emigration process, among the Bulgarian Roma after 1989, two periods can be clearly distinguished: until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, characterised by reduced emigration mobility, and the first decade of the new century - with increased emigration as a result of Bulgaria's entry into the so-called Schengen White List (April 2001) and the country's accession to the EU (January 2007). Some additional reasons for the increase in emigration are the socio-economic problems that accompanied the transition period and proved to be crucial.

According to Pamporov (2008), until 2001 the Roma were the least mobile ethnic community in the country. The assertion of Tomova (2011) is similar: "Despite the stereotype of the Roma as the most mobile population, in the period 1993-2001 they emerged as the most stationary group in the country." Tomova gives poverty as one of the reasons for this behaviour - the impossibility to accumulate funds even for transport to a neighbouring country, as only in the border areas with Serbia and Greece some Roma carry out short-term or pendulum-style emigration.

According to the EUREQUAL Inequality Survey (2008), 20% of Bulgarian Turks and 8% of ethnic Bulgarians and Roma in the sample worked abroad at different times in recent years. At least 22% of Turks, 14% of Bulgarians and 12% of Roma relied on the financial support of their relatives working abroad or on the currency of their own seasonal or temporary work abroad. The data from this study are very close to those from the study of the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research - Rostock, Germany, and the Institute of Sociology at BAS "Generation and Gender Research" (GGS), conducted in 2004 and 2007, which was representative for Roma, Turks and Bulgarians. The data from the study "Health status and access of Roma to health care" of the Open Society Institute from 2007 show that after 2004 representatives of 18% of Roma households worked abroad for a different period of time - most often two people per family.

The increased emigration of the Roma population is also confirmed by the data indicating how many of them worked abroad. Before January 1<sup>st</sup> 2002, 1.5% of respondents worked abroad; between January 1<sup>st</sup> 2002 and January 1<sup>st</sup> 2007, this proportion increased to 3.0%, but the largest increase was after Bulgaria's accession to the European Union (January 1<sup>st</sup> 2007) - 9.9%. The relative proportion (16.5%) of interviewees who indicated that another member of the household also worked outside Bulgaria after 1989 is also significant, as here again there was an increase after 2007 (Angelov et al., 2011).

The majority of the periods abroad of the Roma people interviewed were short-term, which illustrates the temporary and circular character of Roma migration. However, the data illustrate that economic



factors motivate attitudes to migration - increased unemployment in Bulgaria and poverty make the Roma people interviewed seek opportunities for their survival abroad, probably through their relatives in other countries.

The number of Roma population according to official statistics is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

**Total number of the three main ethnic communities in Bulgaria by way of self-determination (1900-2001)**

Years	Total	Bulgarian	Turkish	Roma	Bulgarian	Turkish	Roma
1900	3 744 303	2 888 219	531 240	89 549	77,2	14,2	2.4
1905	4 035 575	3 203 810	488 010	99 004	79,4	12,1	2.4
1910	4 337 513	3 518 756	465 641	122 296	81,1	10,7	2.8
1920	4 846 971	4 036 056	520 339	98 451	83,3	10,7	2.03
1926	5 478 741	4 557 706	577 552	134 844	83,2	10,5	2.5
1934	6 077 939	5 204 217	591 193	149 385	85,6	9,7	2.5
1946	7 029 349	5 903 580	675 500	170 011	83,4	9,6	2.4
1956	7 613 709	6 506 541	656 025	197 865	85,5	8,6	2.6
1965	8 227 966	7 231 243	780 928	148 874	87,9	9,4	1.8
1975	8 727 771	7 930 024	730 728	18 323	90,1	8,4	0.2
1992	8 487 317	7 271 185	800 052	313 396	85,7	9,4	3.7
2001	7 928 901	6 655 210	746 664	370 908	83,9	9,4	4.6
2011	7 364 570	5 664 624	588 318	325 343	84,8	8,8	4,9

Source: NSI Final Results of the 2011 Census, <http://www.nsi.bg/census2011/pagebg2.php?p2=175&sp2=190>.

A look at the literature shows that, according to expert estimates, the number of Roma varies widely. Among the estimates that give the highest percentage of Roma is that of the Council of Europe, according to which the Roma people account for 10.33% of the Bulgarian population. According to Marushiakova and Popov, 1993, in the early 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the number of Roma was determined as 800,000 people, but unfortunately the estimate was made without specifying a specific methodology. In 1994 Liegeois estimated the number of Roma in Bulgaria as between 700,000 and 800,000 (Liegeois, 1994). He did not say how he came to such an assessment either, but it is to be expected that he was influenced by Bulgarian publications. Significantly more moderate and closer to the data of the Ministry of Interior from 1989 is Tomova's estimate of 577,000 to 600,000 people (Tomova, 1995). Pamporov (2007) estimates their number in 2007 as varying in the range of 638,162 to 815,313 people.

Over the whole of the post-liberation period, the Roma are the only ethnic group in the country that has been steadily increasing in number (with the exception of the last census, although in reality it is continuing to grow).

Based on the official censuses, and also on unpublished data on the natural and mechanical movement of ethnic communities in Bulgaria (available for use in the Central State Administration - Sofia after 1989), an attempt was made to estimate the real number of Bulgarian Roma. These observations were registered by ethnicity from 1946 to 1974, after which they were

terminated for political reasons. The last census, which is believed to show the most accurate number of Roma in Bulgaria, was in 1956, the results of which reported 197,000 people who declared themselves as Roma. Taking into account the data on the natural reproduction and emigration of the Roma population, which after 1946 were also collected by ethnicity (CSA - Sofia), it was established that the number of Roma population in this census reduced by about 25,000. The data were then classified and could be found mainly in the archives of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party. For example, in 1959, 214,167 gypsies were registered in the country. In 1965, according to official data, there was a decrease in the number of Roma population, which does not correspond to the actual situation. At that time, despite the decline in birth rates that was observed, natural growth remained high due to the rapid decline in mortality. Considering the archival data on the absolute growth of the number of Roma people, it can be estimated that the Roma population in the mid-1960s numbered approximately 260,000 people. In the next census in 1975, the data were classified. Initially, there were questions about the ethnicity of individuals, which, however, were subsequently dropped for political reasons. Based on data from archival sources (CSA - Sofia) we can summarise that the number of Roma in the mid-70s was about 350,000 people. According to unpublished data, there were reported to be 373,000 people (Marushiakova, Popov, 1993). Bearing in mind that by the mid-1970s the Roma were in the second stage of the demographic transition and the birth rate re-

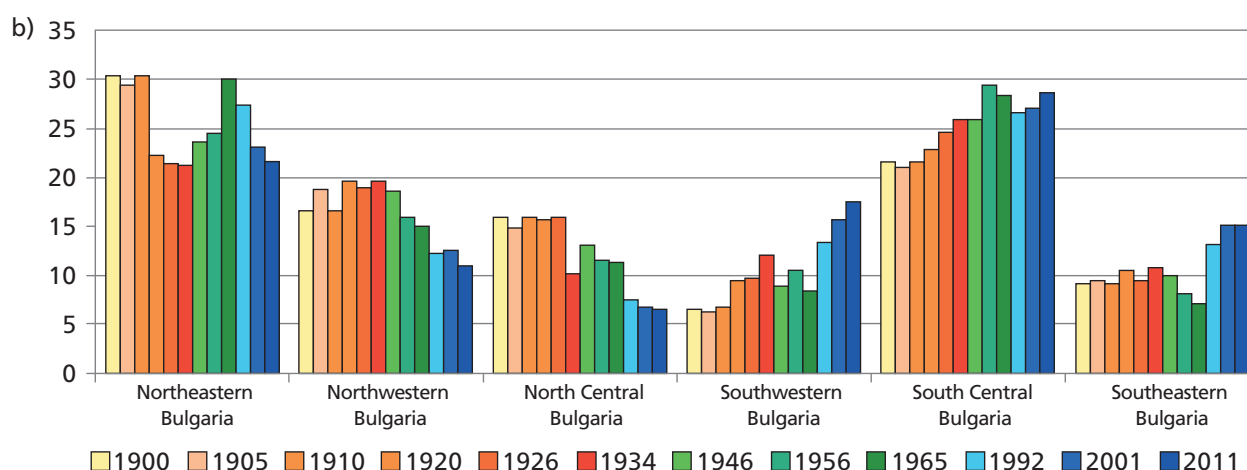
mained high (around 26‰ right up until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with a mortality rate of around 8-9‰), it can be estimated that their number by 1989 reached about 463,000 people and 489,000 people in 1992 (according to the official census in the same year, this number was 313,000 people). The National Statistical Institute calculates that, based on the declared ethnic identity, the natural increase in the Roma population in the period between the last two censuses (1992 and 2001) was 18.4‰ and it was 19.4‰ only in the period 2001-2003. Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a decrease in the birth rate among Roma by several points has been observed, while maintaining low mortality rates. In determining the number of Roma until 2015, the increased emigration mobility of the Roma population after Bulgaria's accession to the European Union in 2007 was taken into account. Thus, according to our estimates, by 2011 the number of Roma reached 665,000 people (against 325,000 (according to the official census) and 720,000 people in 2015. The last year is considered as a starting point in making the forecast of the Roma population in the second variant (according to expert estimates) (Ilieva, 2013).

### 3.2 TERRITORIAL LOCATION OF THE ROMA PEOPLE IN BULGARIA

Unlike the Turkish ethnic group, the Roma live scattered among the rest of the population and do not form areas with a high density of settlement. Each specific Roma group is economically connected to its foreign ethnic environment, and contacts between

individual Roma groups are often completely absent. Therefore, within the Roma ethnic community as a whole, the integration process is weak (Marushiakova, Popov, 1993). One of the reasons why the Roma live throughout the territory not only in our country is the specific nature of their professions and crafts, through which they earn their living, but which do not enable the sustenance large groups of Roma, forcing them to divide into relatively small units. It is precisely these connections that have contributed to the transformation and formation of their ethnic self-consciousness, which makes it difficult to determine their actual number. During the last censuses, the Roma population was registered in almost half of the settlements in Bulgaria. Two districts with a higher concentration of Roma population can be distinguished - Northeastern and South Central Bulgaria, where half of the population of this group is reported. The lowest concentration is reported in Southwestern, North Central and Southeastern Bulgaria, where in each of these parts of the country the number of Roma does not exceed 15% of their total number. Since the beginning of the 90s, there has been a tendency of increase in the concentration of Roma in Southwestern Bulgaria (mostly due to the growing number of Roma in the capital Sofia), as well as in South Central and Southeastern Bulgaria, while in the three northern regions of the country a decrease in the Roma population can be observed. This decrease is most significant in Northwestern Bulgaria, which goes in unison with the depopulation processes typical for this part of the country (Fig. 4) (Ilieva, 2013).

Figure 4  
Concentration of Roma (%) in different parts of the country for the period 1887-2011



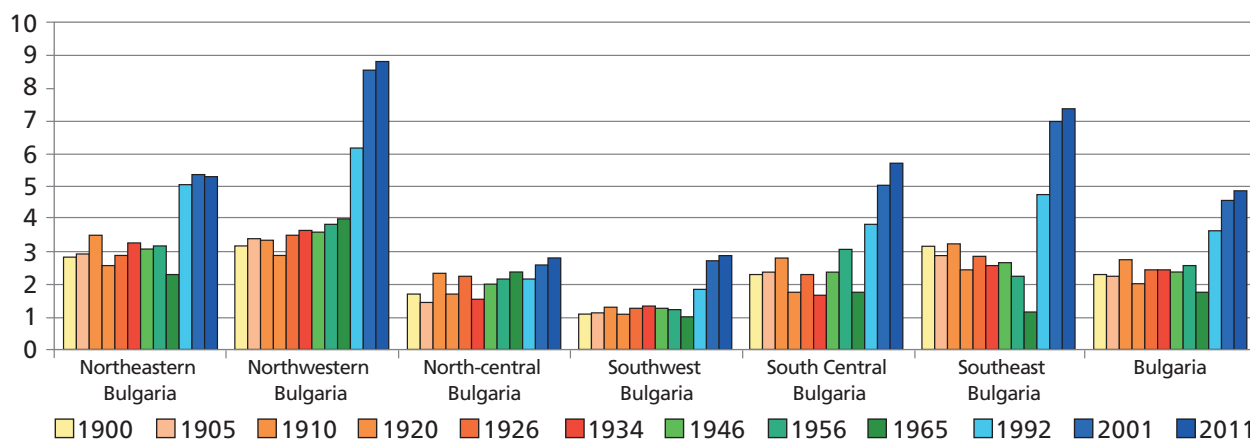
Until the beginning of the 1990s, there were no significant deviations from the national average proportion of the Roma population in different parts of the country. Since the beginning of the 1990s, along with the increase in the relative proportion, there has been an increase in the differences in the different parts of the country, especially in recent

years. The most significant increase in the relative proportion of Roma can be observed in Northwestern Bulgaria, where despite the decrease in the concentration of the Roma population, the increase in the relative proportion of Roma is due to extreme depopulation processes among the ethnic Bulgarian population in this part of the country.

A significant increase in the relative proportion of Roma is also observed in Southeastern, South Central and Northeastern Bulgaria. North Central

and Southwestern Bulgaria stand out with the lowest relative proportion of Roma and the smallest changes in their values (Fig. 5).

Figure 5  
Concentration of Roma (%) in different parts of the country for the period 1887-2011



If the relative proportion of Roma is monitored at a lower territorial level (municipalities), significant differences can be found. Throughout the period under review, the territories of the Western and Eastern Rhodopes, the Kraisheto, the Central Balkan Mountains with the adjacent Fore-Balkans, the Central Danube Plain and Southwestern Bulgaria have the lowest relative proportion of Roma population. By the end of the period under review (the 2011 census) there was an increase in the relative proportion of the Roma population in all parts of the country. The trend of increasing the number of Roma in the territories mentioned continues.

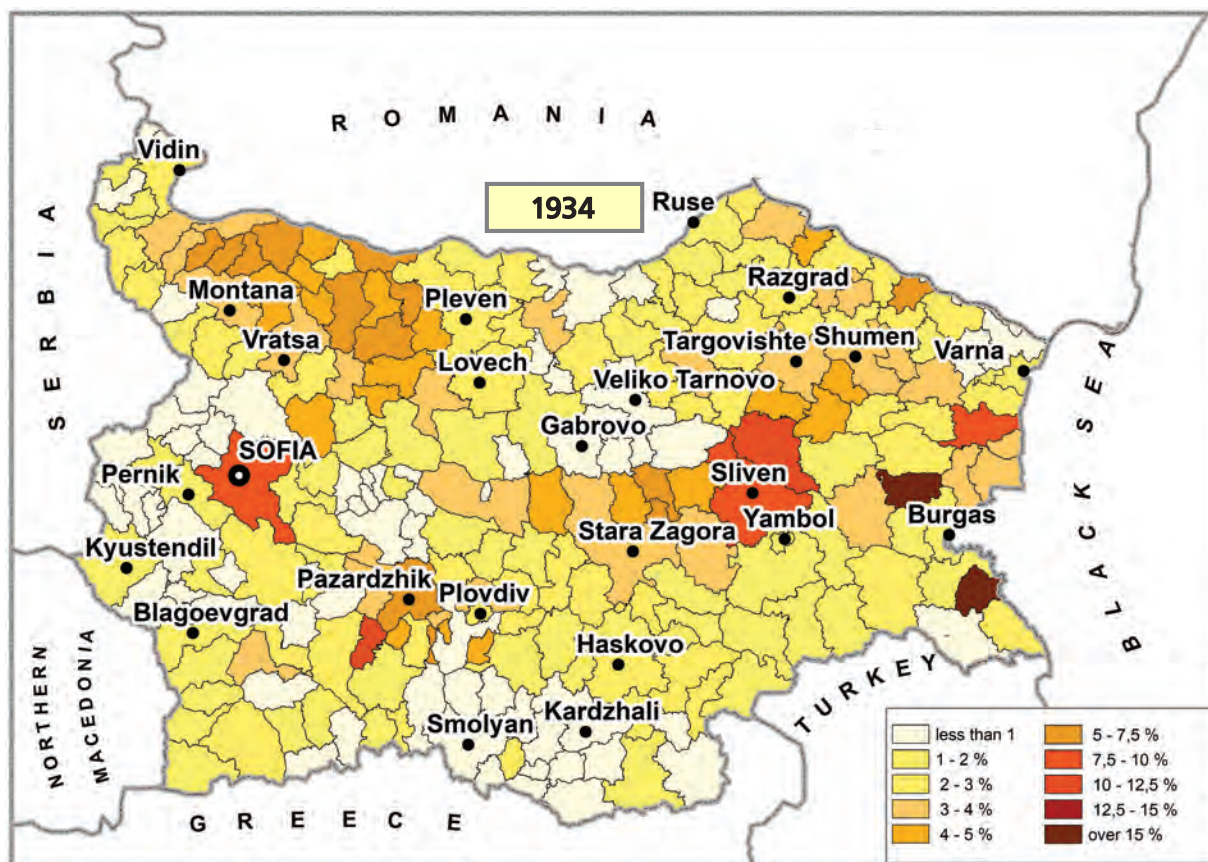
The highest values (over 15% of Roma) and the largest increase (from 10 municipalities in 1992 to 40 in 2011) are the municipalities in South Dobrudzha (Kaynardzha, Dobrich, Nikola Kozlevo and Kavarna), Northwestern Bulgaria (Belogradchik, Chuprene, Ruzhintsi, Lom, Vulchedrum, Yakimovo, Lom, Brusartsi, Medkovets, Berkovitsa and Varshets), Central Trans-Balkan valleys (Tvarditsa, Maglizh, Gurkovo and Nikolaevo), Eastern Danube Plain (Varbinovo and Varbitsovo) the municipalities of the Sakaro-Strandzha district (Straldzha and Sredets), Praveshko (Pravets, Yablanitsa and Lukovit), and separate municipalities such as Trun, Lyubimets, Simeonovgrad, Brezovo, Vetovo, Borovo, Provadia, Perushtitsa, Krichim, Rakitovo, Lesichovo and Ihtiman (Ilieva, 2013).



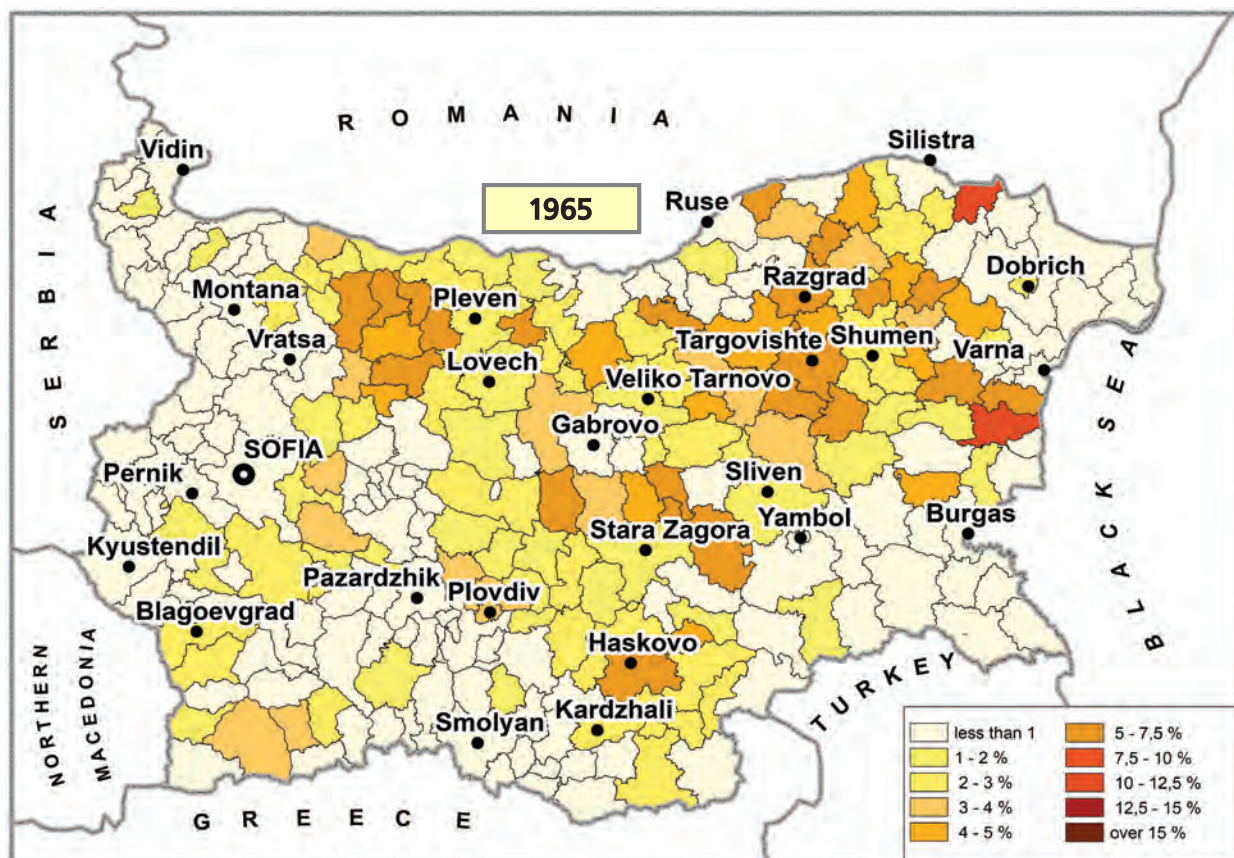
Figure 6

Relative proportion (%) of the Roma ethnic group in Bulgaria (by municipalities):

a)

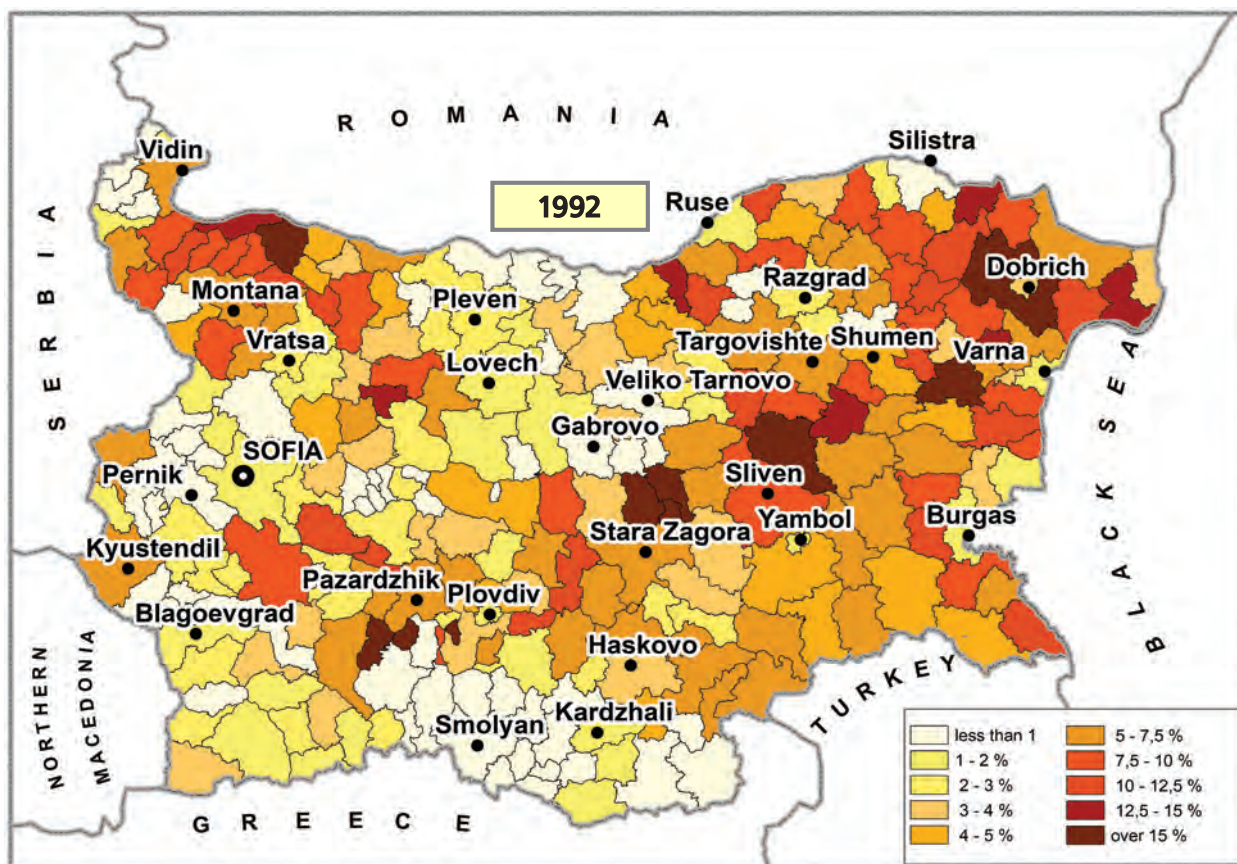


b)

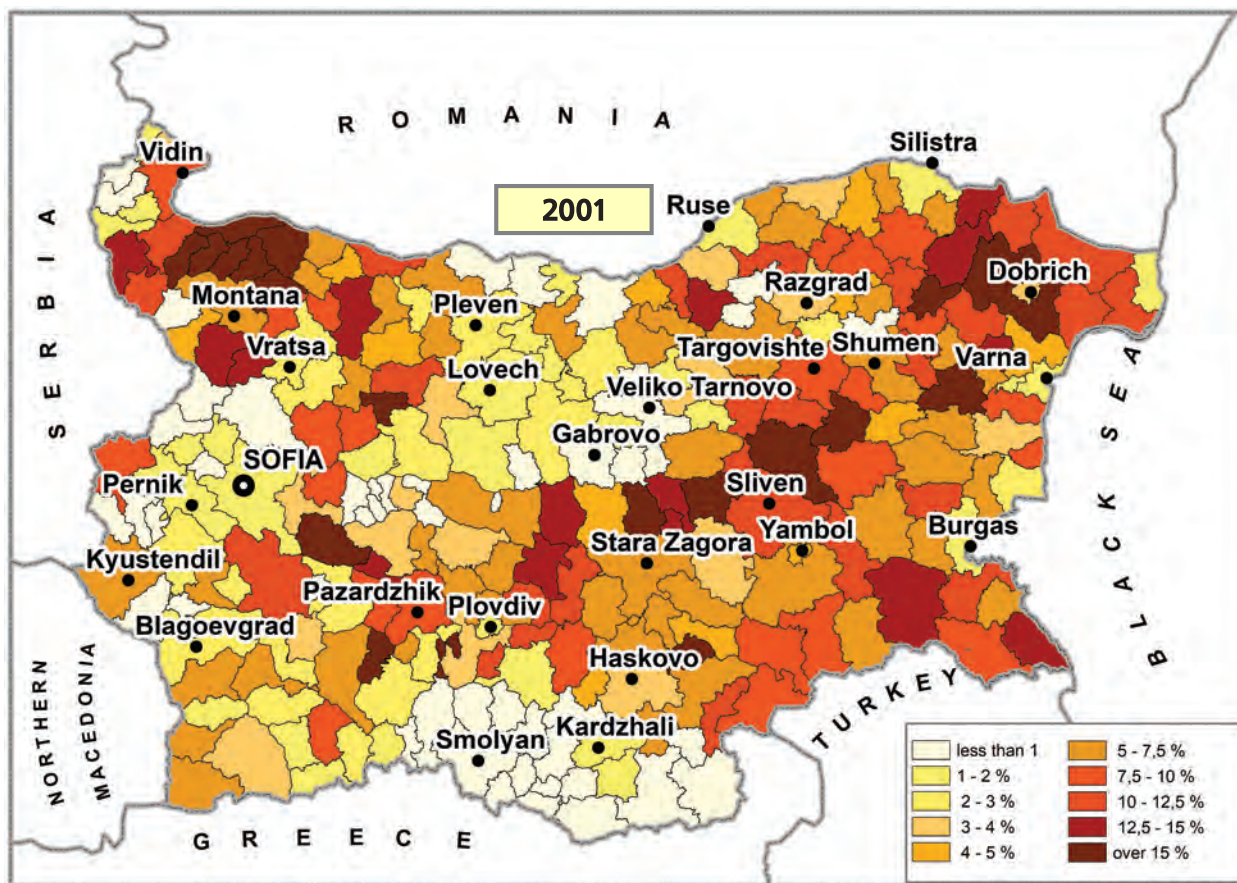




c)



d)

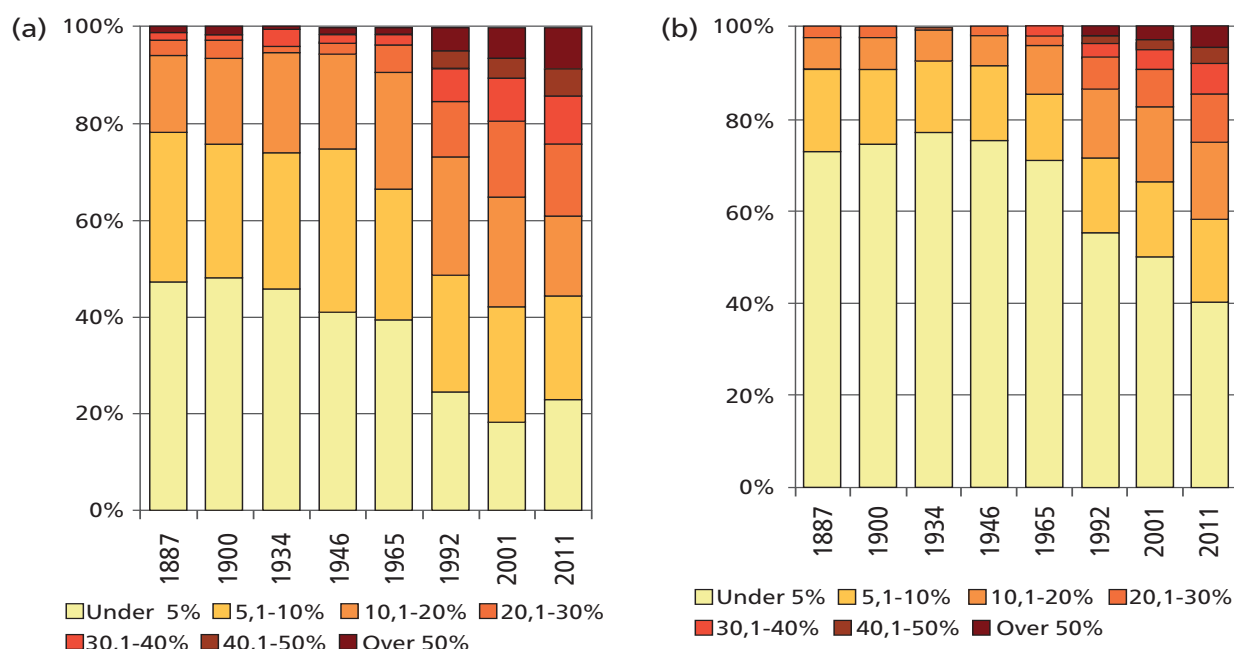


Regarding the structure of settlements according to the proportion of Roma, two periods can be outlined: Up to the early 1990s - a period when settlements with a low relative proportion of Roma (less than 10% of

the total population) represented a significant proportion (over 85%) of Roma settlements, where 65% of all Roma lived. (Fig. 7 a, b); These settlements were evenly distributed throughout the territory (Ilieva, 2013).

Figure 7

**Distribution of settlements with different relative proportion of the Roma population in Bulgaria (a); Distribution of the Roma ethnic group in the settlements with different relative proportion of Roma in Bulgaria (b) (Ilieva, 2013)**



Up to the beginning of the 1990s, the settlements with a relatively significant proportion of Roma (10-30% of the total population) were concentrated mostly in Northeastern Bulgaria and in particular in Ludogorie, the Eastern Balkan Mountains and the Fore-Balkan region, where about 70 % of all settlements in this group were located. Other areas of distribution of the

settlements of the same group (until 1989) were the Pazardzhik-Plovdiv field and the region of the Eastern Trans-Balkan valleys. Since the early 1990s, the number of settlements in this category has increased, as well as their territorial expansion - in Northwestern Bulgaria, the Central Trans-Balkan Basins and the Maritsa River Valley east of Plovdiv (Fig. 8) (Ilieva, 2013).

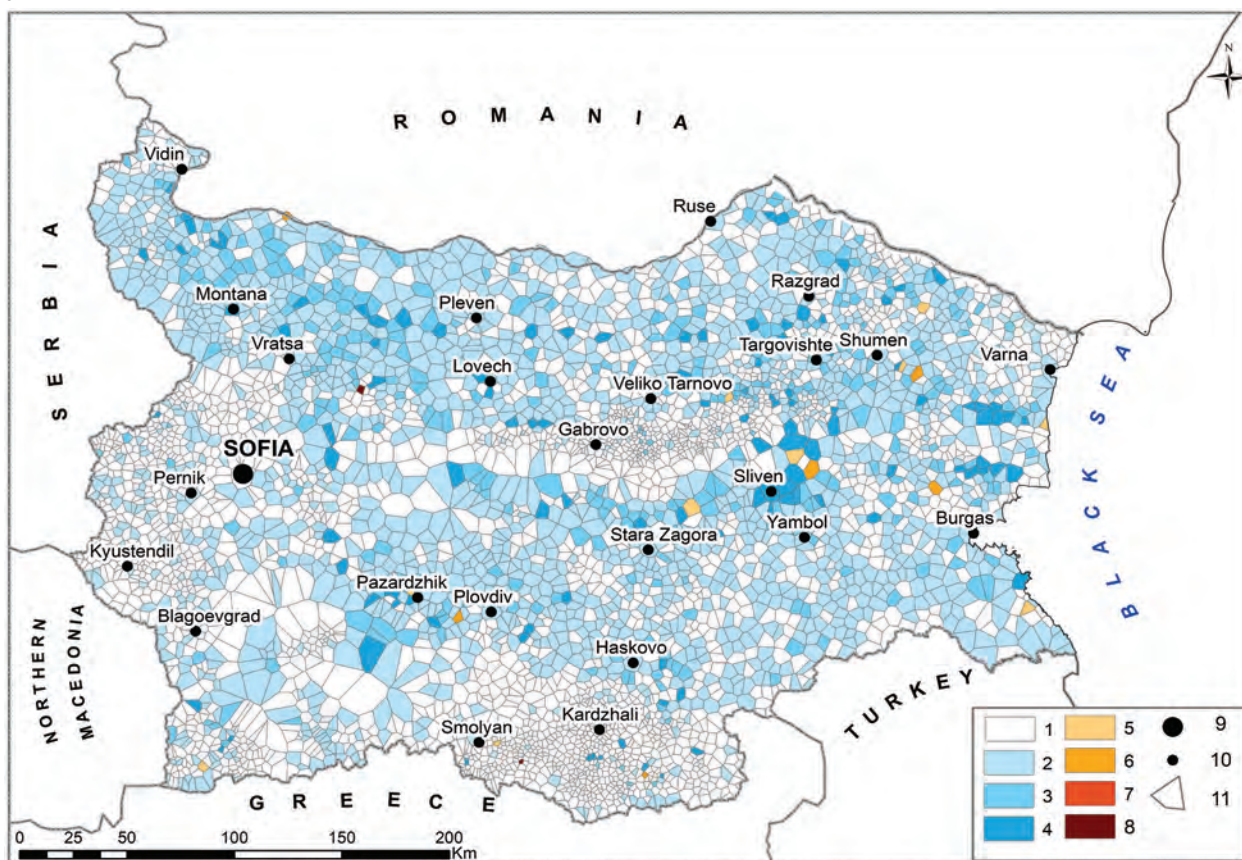


Figure 8

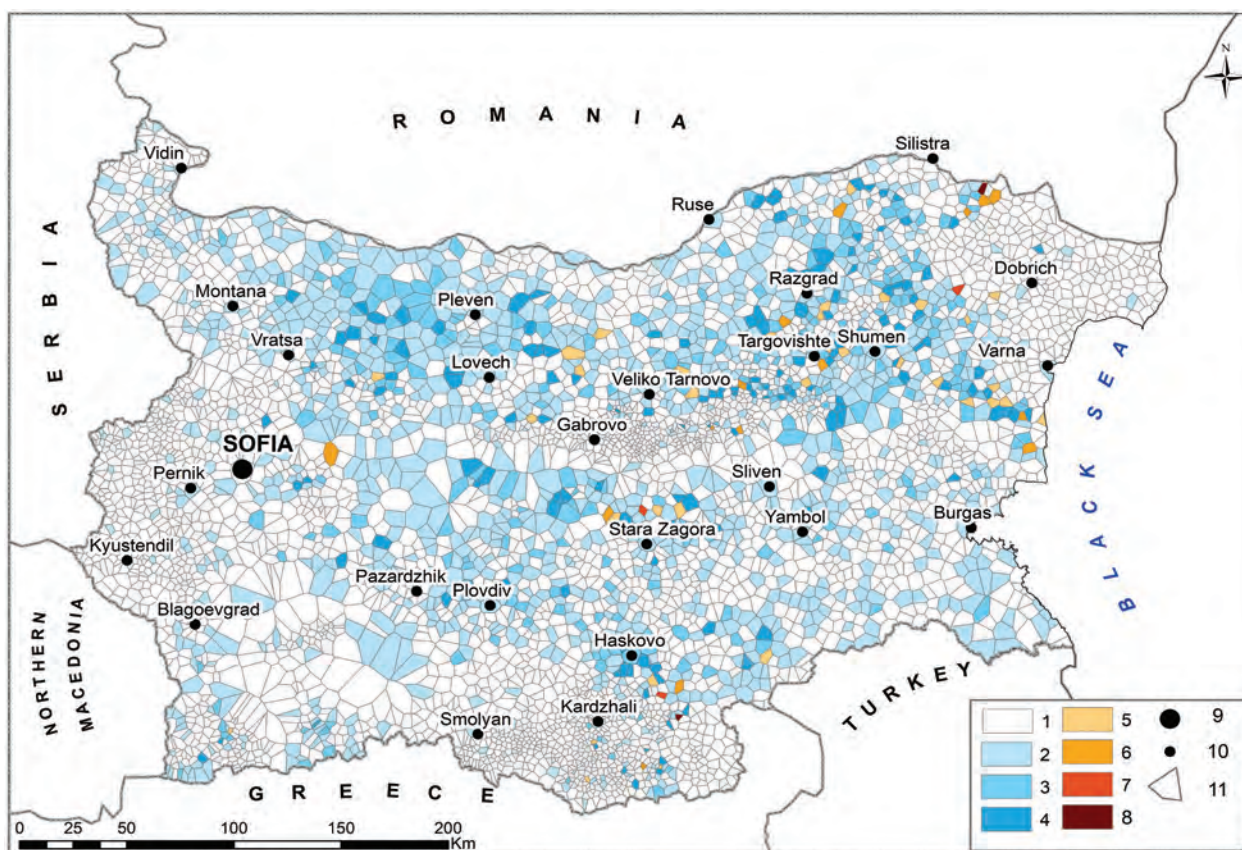
Relative proportion (%) of the Roma ethnic group in Bulgaria (by settlements): a) 1934; b) 1965; c) 1992; d) 2011

(1-0%; 2 - up to 5%; 3 - from 5 to 10%; 4 - from 10 to 20%; 5 - from 20 to 30%; 6 - from 30 to 40%; 7 - from 40 to 50%; 8 - over 50%, 9 - capital, 10 - regional centre, 11 - border of the Voronoi diagram (by settlements))

a

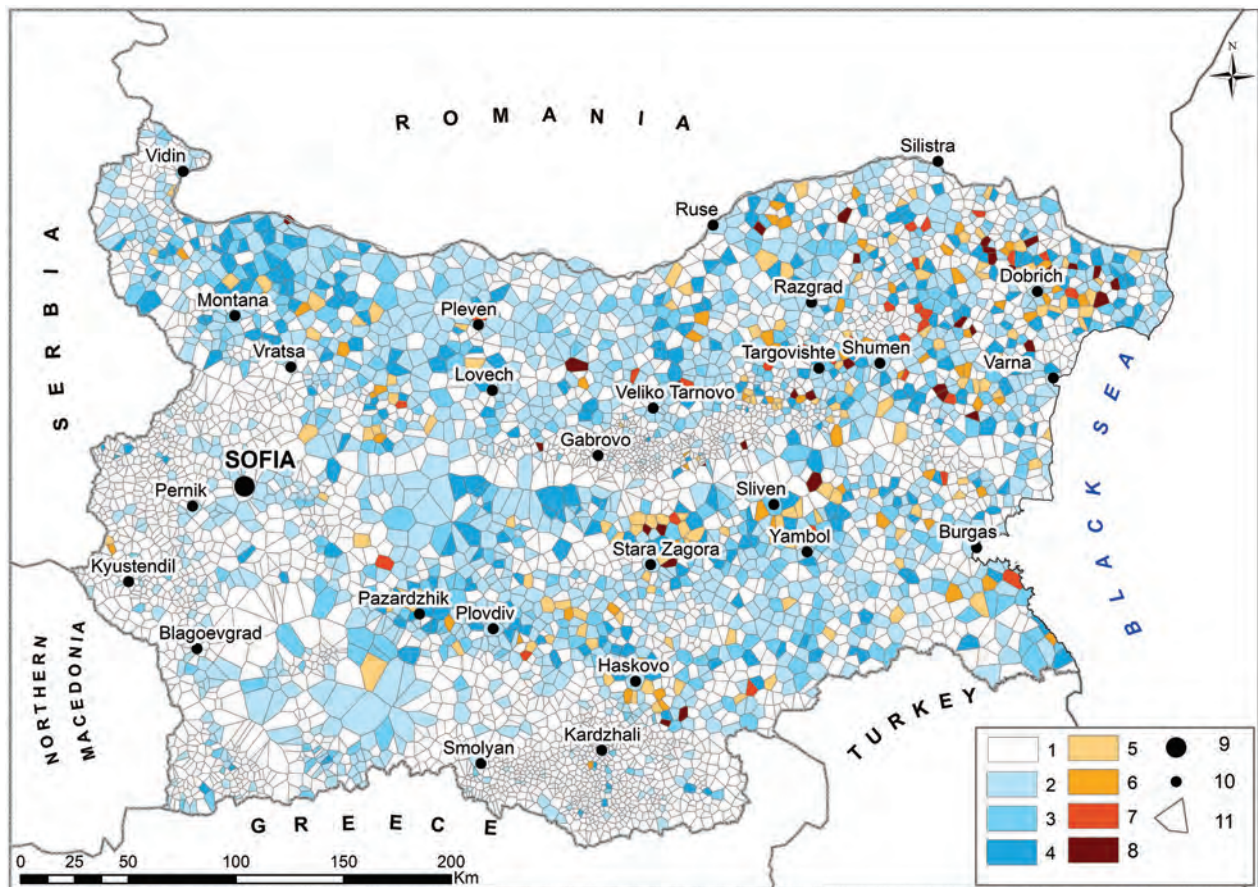


b

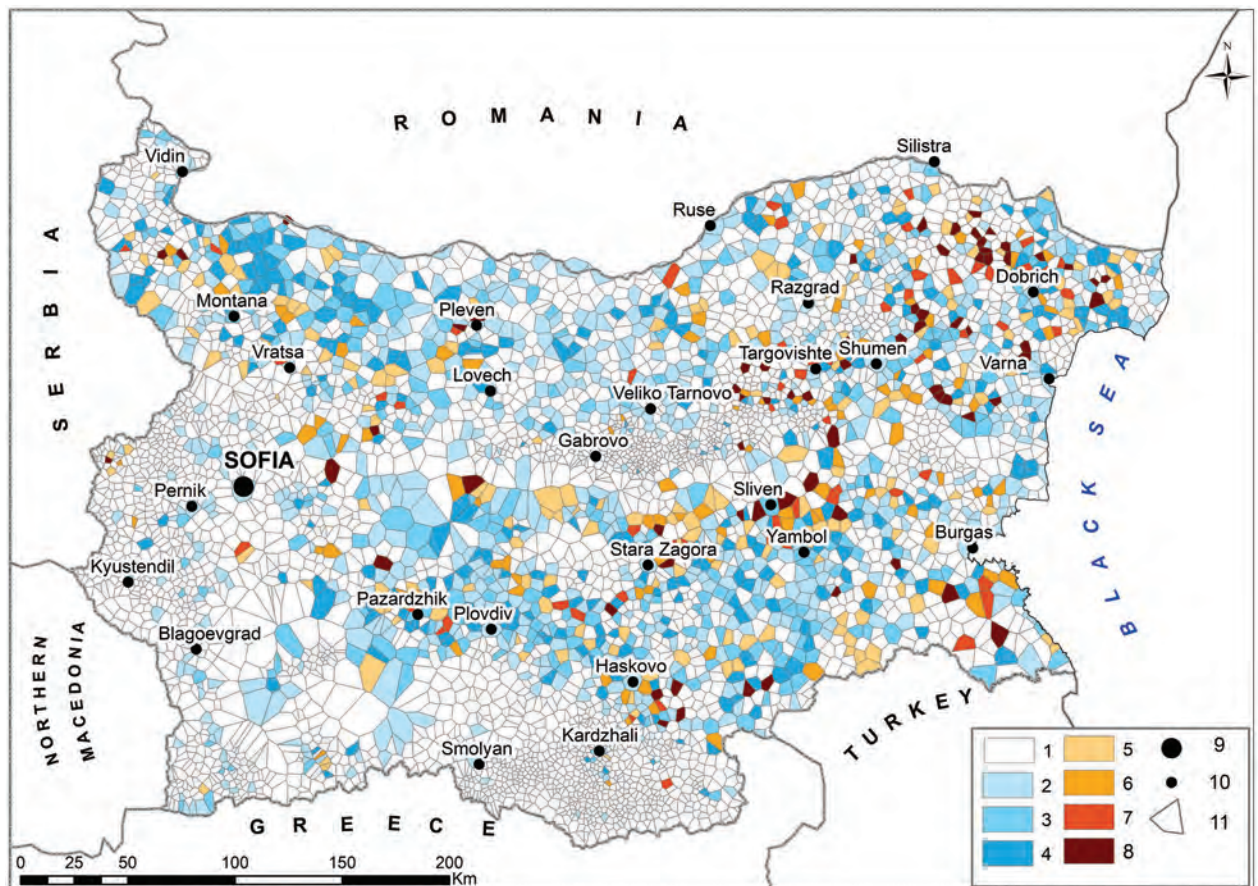




C



d



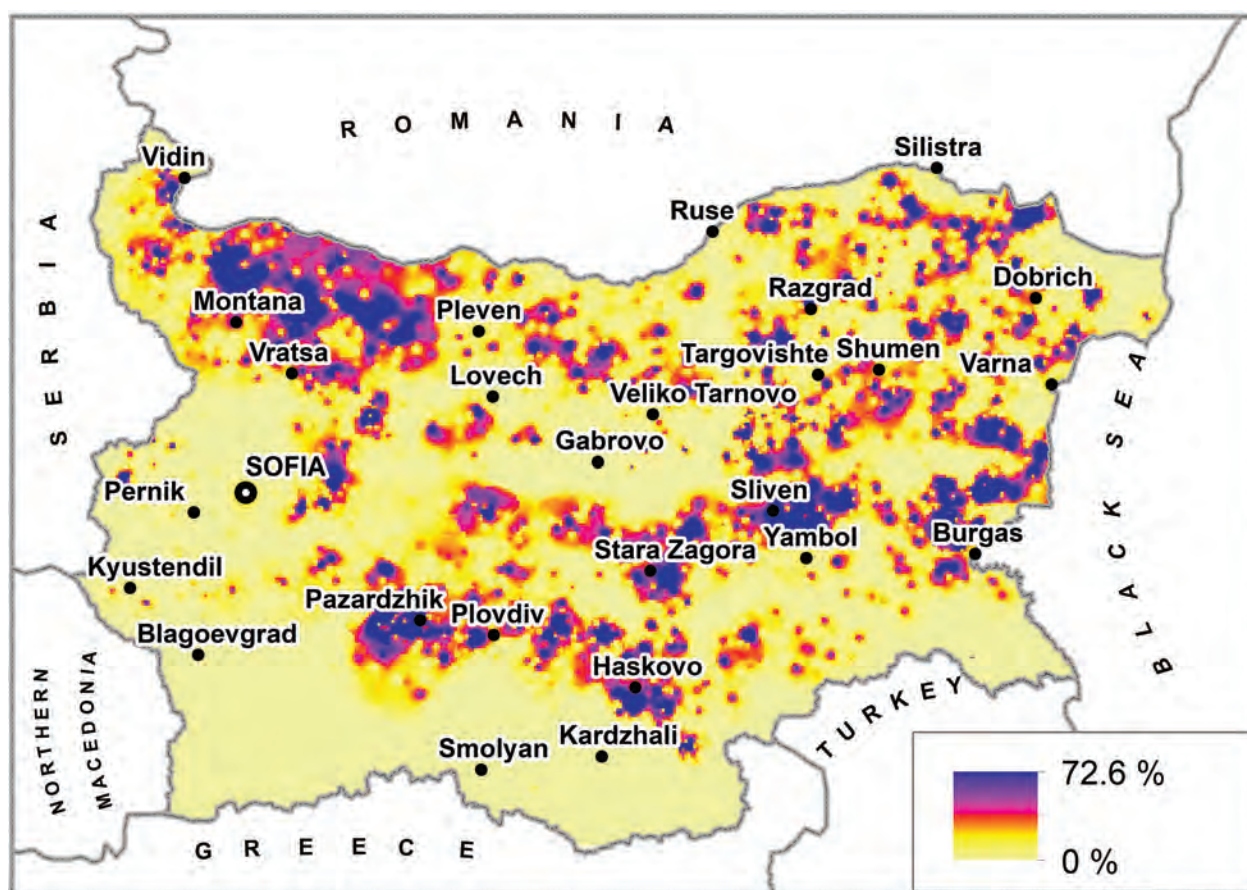


### 3.3 FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF AREAS WITH A HIGH CONCENTRATION OF ROMA POPULATION

The 1990s emerged as the beginning of the formation of areas with a high concentration of Roma population (AHCRP). Until then, separate “islands” with a higher concentration of Roma people, which occupied a small area, did not form a compact territory, changed their location and did not have a permanent character, emerged during the separate censuses. The main reasons for the emergence of such areas since the early 90s of the twentieth century were:

- the change in the ethnic structure of the settlements and the significant growth of the group
- settlements with a high relative proportion of Roma population in them;
- an increase in the spatial dislocation of the Roma population;
- reduction of the Turkish ethnic group, especially in the areas with compact settlement of Bulgarian Turks as a result of emigration processes;
- the high rates of decrease of the Bulgarian population in the villages as a result of the very old age structure and continuing migration to cities;
- the differences in the indicators of natural reproduction between the main ethnic communities in the country (Ilieva, 2013).

Figure 9  
Areas with a high concentration of Roma population



In 1992, four AHCRPs were formed, named depending on their geographical location - Northwestern, Northeastern, Marishki and Trans-Balkan areas, which occupied a total of 11.7% of the area of the country. In 2001, another area near Burgas emerged, occupying less than 1% of the territory of the country. The remaining AHCRPs underwent territorial expansion in 2001 and their area reached 16.1% of the territory of Bulgaria. Up to the last census (2011), this increase continued at a slower pace, with the

areas occupying 20.2% of the state territory (Fig. 9). More than half of the Roma in Bulgaria are concentrated in the areas formed, and during the last three censuses these values have shown a gradual increase (1992 - 56.1%, 2001 - 76.6%, and in 2011 - 83%).

**Conclusion 1:** After 1989, the birth rate in Bulgaria decreased in all ethnic communities, but the slightest decrease was observed among the Roma. They are also the only group that has increased in num-

ber over the years and has consistently high positive natural growth. Based on the official data from the 2001 census, about 18.7‰ natural increase of the Roma population for the period 1992-2001 can be calculated, but if we assume that mortality is of the order of 8‰, then birth rates can be estimated at about 26‰, which is significantly higher than other ethnic communities in the country. After 2002, due to the measures taken by the state, the birth rate among Roma decreased, but they still retain a relatively young age structure.

**Conclusion 2:** Regarding mechanical movement up to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Roma people could be distinguished by very low emigration mobility, which also affected their number in the country. Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, a clear increase in emigration among Gypsies has been observed as a result of Bulgaria's entry into the so-called the Schengen White List (April 2001) and the country's accession to the EU (January 2007). Additional reasons for the increase in emigration are the socio-economic problems that have accompanied the transition period and have proved to be crucial for their behaviour.

**Conclusion 3:** It is exceptionally difficult to determine the exact number of the Roma ethnic group in Bulgaria, due to the "preferred ethnic identity" that has already been mentioned. Despite this, we can confidently say that the Roma are the only ethnic group in the country that has been steadily increasing in number since the Liberation. An additional difficulty is created by the ban during the socialist period on providing demographic data on ethnic grounds, with the last accurate data available being in the census of 1956. According to data of the last census in 2011, the number of Roma was 325,433 people, or 4.7% of the population of the country but, according to our expert assessment, the real number of them in 2015 was 720,000 people, or about 10% of the population of Bulgaria.

**Conclusion 4:** In the spatial distribution of the Roma on the territory of Bulgaria several areas with a high concentration of Roma population (AHCRPs) stand out. In 1992, the Northwestern, Northeastern, Marishki and Trans-Balkan areas emerged as such, and in 2001 the Burgas area was added to them. More than half of the Roma in Bulgaria are concentrated in the areas formed, and during the last three censuses these values showed a gradual increase (1992 - 56.1%, 2001 - 76.6%, and in 2011 - 83%).



## 4

## DEMOGRAPHIC FORECAST OF THE ROMA POPULATION

Another aim of the present study is to make a prediction as to the number, and the relative proportion of the Roma population, as well as their distribution by specific age groups for 2020 and 2050.

The implementation of the aims set implies the application of an interdisciplinary approach, including expertise in the field of the demographic, ethnocultural, socio-economic specifics of the Roma and Bulgarian ethnic communities.

In the preparation of the demographic forecast, the method of age movement (or the method of cohort components) of the population was used. It has a conceptual advantage, as it groups the population by age cohorts (age groups every five years) and the characteristics (coefficients) of the main factors for each group are calculated separately. A breakdown according to the age of the population makes it possible to assess the future demographic potential by specific age groups for the needs of the individual functional systems (up to 6 years; from 7 to 16 years, 17-24 years, 25-64 years; over 65 years.). These advantages make it most suitable when choosing the method of prediction rather than other methods (method of extrapolation, symptomatic analysis, regression analysis, etc.) It is rated as one of the most accurate forecasting methods and is most often used to forecast the population up to 50 years, which makes it suitable for the preparation of a demographic forecast according to a given time range.

The technology of forecasting the population by the method of cohort components for each period studied goes through the following stages:

### 1) Identification of the main elements:

- The number of the population distributed by age groups with an interval of five years;
- Assessment of the level of survival of the different age groups for the past (known) period. This ratio is the opposite of the mortality rate and represents the probability that people in one group (e.g. 0 to 4 years) will survive to the next age group, taking into account changes in natural population growth / decrease.
- Calculation of the number of women of childbearing age;
- Determination of fertility rates. The aim of this step is to determine the number of people in the first age group (0 to 4 years) during the forecast period. The coefficient is calculated as the ratio of the number of births and the number of women of childbearing age per 1000 people.

### 2) Projecting the population for all age groups except for the first group.

### 3) Calculation of the number of births in the first age group from 0-4 years based on the fertility rate and the number of women of childbearing age.

### 4) Correction of the number of births in the age group of 0-4 years with the corresponding probability of survival.

### 5) Final summative projection of the population and age groups of the population of Bulgaria and the Bulgarian and Roma ethnic community based on the results of points 2, 3 and 4.

For initial data the age structure of the population by ethnicity for the last two censuses in 2001 and 2011 is used, as well as data from current demographic statistics on natural (births, deaths, natural growth) and mechanical (populated, displaced, mechanical growth) movement and trends in their change over the past 15 years. In developing the demographic forecast, the general levels of births, deaths and natural growth, along with the number of women of childbearing age, respectively the age-related fertility rate, as well as different levels of emigration mobility are incorporated. In the different variants of the forecast, different numerical variants of the expected future development of the natural and mechanical growth, both for the population as a whole and for the separate ethnic communities are incorporated. They are hypothetical in nature and take into account the current dynamics of births, deaths, the number of women of childbearing age and the fertility rate, as well as settlements and emigration. The probability of dying and the probability of survival.

ing until the following year are taken from the mortality tables developed by the National Statistical Institute.

Three variants of population forecast (number, age structure, estimated number of the specific age contingents of the population (up to 6 years; from 7 to 16 years; 17-24 years; 25-64 years; over 65 years), as well as by standard age groups (five-year age intervals) are proposed over the period (between 2020 and 2050, at intervals of five years).

In the development of the individual variants of the demographic forecast, both the current trends in demographic development and the expected impact of factors that are different in their nature are taken into account. This is the sense in which there are differences in the numerical values of the different variants of the demographic forecast for the total population of the Roma. The demographic forecast scenarios developed are:

**First scenario** (using the hypothesis of convergence). This variant is perceived as realistic and it is assumed that the values of birth rate and fertility rate will maintain their values hitherto, taking into account the preservation of patriarchal traditions of life and related values of the Roma family, traditional marital behaviour, maintaining the average age for birth of the first child, high percentage of families having many children, preservation of the current educational structure of the Roma people, etc.

**Second scenario** (relative acceleration), optimistic. This scenario is the least likely, and is one in which birth rates and fertility rates are expected to increase.

**Third scenario** (relative deceleration), pessimistic. In this variant, the development of the population is forecast under hypotheses of unfavourable socio-economic processes in the country. In this scenario of forecast, a decrease in fertility and fertility rates is envisaged. The Roma people would show a decrease in unwanted pregnancies and births, early marriages and fertility, a shrinking of the active fertile period in women, changes in the ideals of the Roma for a larger number of children in the family, a change in the model of a family with many children, strengthening of the processes of planning of children in the family, strengthening of the processes of integration, a break with the tradition of civil marriage and transition to family cohabitation without civil marriage, raising the age of marriage, overcoming the isolation and subordinate role of women in traditional households, changes in cultural stereotypes, long-term shifting of births to older ages, etc.

The formulation of the demographic forecast in all three scenarios is in line with the trends in the expected development of the population, set in the demographic forecasts for the country, developed by the National Statistical Institute.

All the scenarios of the forecast results are developed in two variants:

- In the first variant the data from the last census of Bulgaria in 2011 are used for the initial number of Roma, when 325,343 Roma people were recorded.
- The second variant is based on the actual number of Roma population in 2015, calculated on the basis of trends in the development of demographic processes in the Roma population in recent decades, considering the expert estimate, according to which the number of Roma in 2015 was approximately 720,000 (Ilieva, N., 2013).

According to the scenarios developed, the following quantitative indicators for natural reproduction of the forecast were determined:

When developing the individual variants of the demographic forecast, the following values of individual components were adopted:

– **Total birth rate:**

Realistic variant:

- Bulgarians – 7.5-8‰
- Roma - 20-21‰
- Total population – 9.5-10‰

Optimistic variant:

- Bulgarians - 11-12‰
- Roma - 22-23‰
- Total population - 12-13‰

Pessimistic variant:

- Bulgarians – 6.5-7‰
- Roma - 14-16‰
- Total population – 7.5-8‰

– **Fertility rate:**

Realistic variant:

- Bulgarians - 35‰
- Roma - 80‰
- Total population - 40‰

Optimistic variant:

- Bulgarians - 55‰
- Roma - 90‰
- Total population - 53‰

Pessimistic variant:

- Bulgarians - 30‰
- Roma - 60‰
- Total population - 35‰

- **Total mortality:** it is assumed that the mortality rate will not change significantly in the coming years and will remain at levels typical of the last decade.

- **Average life expectancy:** maintaining its values in all three variants at 74.7 years (including 71.1 for men and 78.28 for women).

The hypothesis of no migration is of course unlikely, so the next step in making the forecast is to set different levels of **emigration mobility** in the three scenarios of the forecast (realistic, optimistic and pessimistic). The forecast of the level of migration in the coming years should take into account the expected potential intentions of the individual ethnic communities in this regard, on the one hand, and the expectations for the future socio-economic development of the country, on the other. This is due to the fact that the level and the direction of migration processes are complexly determined by economic, social, political, environmental and other factors. The information necessary for this purpose can be obtained from relevant sociological research on the labour and territorial mobility of individual ethnic communities. In determining the values of migration growth, some parameters stated in the "Updated National Strategy for Demographic Development of the Population in Bulgaria (2012-2030)" were taken into account, according to which "Emigration will continue to develop, but in more limited dimensions." When calculating the coefficient of external migration in the second scenario, the projected average values of emigrants, which amounts to 7,000 people per year, or the coefficient of mechanical growth are taken into account: -0.9‰. In determining the changes in the age structure as a result of the emigration processes, the structure of the emigrants by age is taken into account (The Updated National Strategy for De-

mographic Development of the Population in Bulgaria (2012-2030), according to which the youngest emigrants, under 20, account for 15%, from 20 to 39 years - 48%, from 40-59 years - 31%, and over 60 years - 6%.

## 4.1 RESULTS OF THE FORECAST

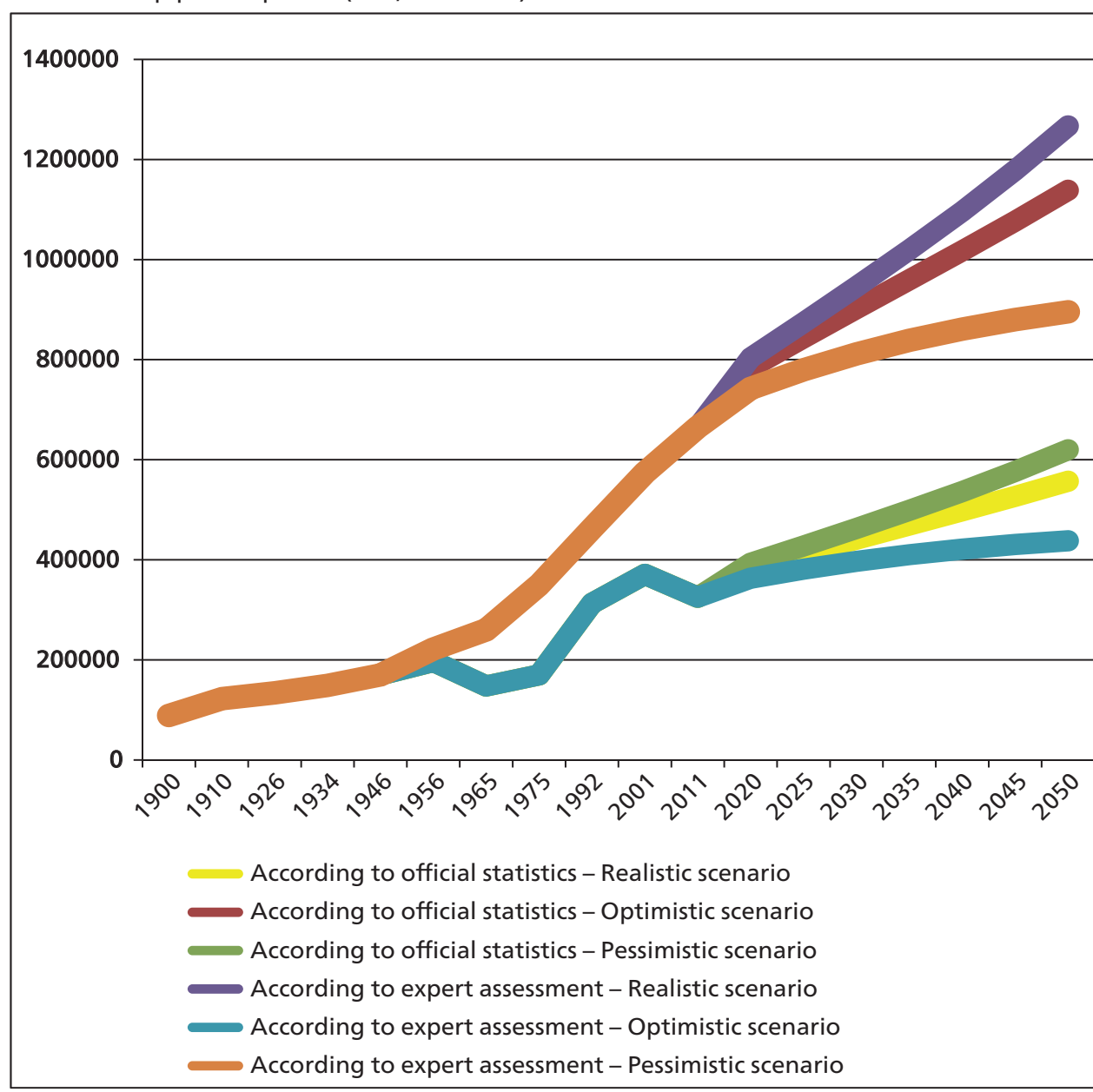
The decrease in the population of Bulgaria is expected to be one of the main characteristics of its future demographic development. With the Roma population the opposite trend is emerging. The intensity of these changes is presented in the specific versions of the forecast, which show different trends in the dynamics of the Roma population and the circumstances in which this development may unfold. The Roma population is expected to increase between 2,400 and 7,500 per year, depending on the scenario used, if the results are based on official statistics, and between 5,000 and 15,400 per year, based on expert judgment.

According to the different scenarios of forecast, the number of Roma population in Bulgaria will continue to grow until 2050. If we take as a baseline the number of Roma population according to official statistics, estimates show that this will reach between 363,000 people and 393,000 people in 2020 and it will increase to 438,000 people according to the pessimistic forecast, 556,000 people according to the realistic forecast, and 619,000 people according to the optimistic forecast in 2050.

Table 3  
Number and relative proportion of the Roma population up to 2050. (Ilieva, Kazakov 2019)

Scenario according to official statistics						
Years	Variant I		Variant II		Variant III	
	Roma	%	Roma	%	Roma	%
2020	383582	5,7	393245	5,7	363290	5,5
2025	412707	6,5	427610	6,4	381410	6,1
2030	441231	7,3	462669	7,1	396974	6,7
2035	469507	8,2	498837	8,0	410238	7,4
2040	497702	9,3	536349	8,8	421274	8,2
2045	526766	10,4	576515	9,8	430595	9,0
2050	556939	11,7	619897	10,8	438094	9,8
Scenario according to expert judgment						
Years	Variant I		Variant II		Variant III	
	Roma	%	Roma	%	Roma	%
2020	784041	11,7	803791	11,6	742564,3075	11,20254903
2025	843572	13,2	874034	13,0	779600,8338	12,44810866
2030	901875	15,0	945693	14,6	811414,4884	13,79433847
2035	959671	16,8	1019622	16,3	838525,0989	15,2162222
2040	1017300	18,9	1096296	18,0	861082,3068	16,727754
2045	1076708	21,3	1178395	20,0	880135,3785	18,34711475
2050	1138382	23,9	1267067	22,0	895462,82	20,11505524

Figure 10  
Number of Roma population up to 2050 (Ilieva, Kazakov 2019)

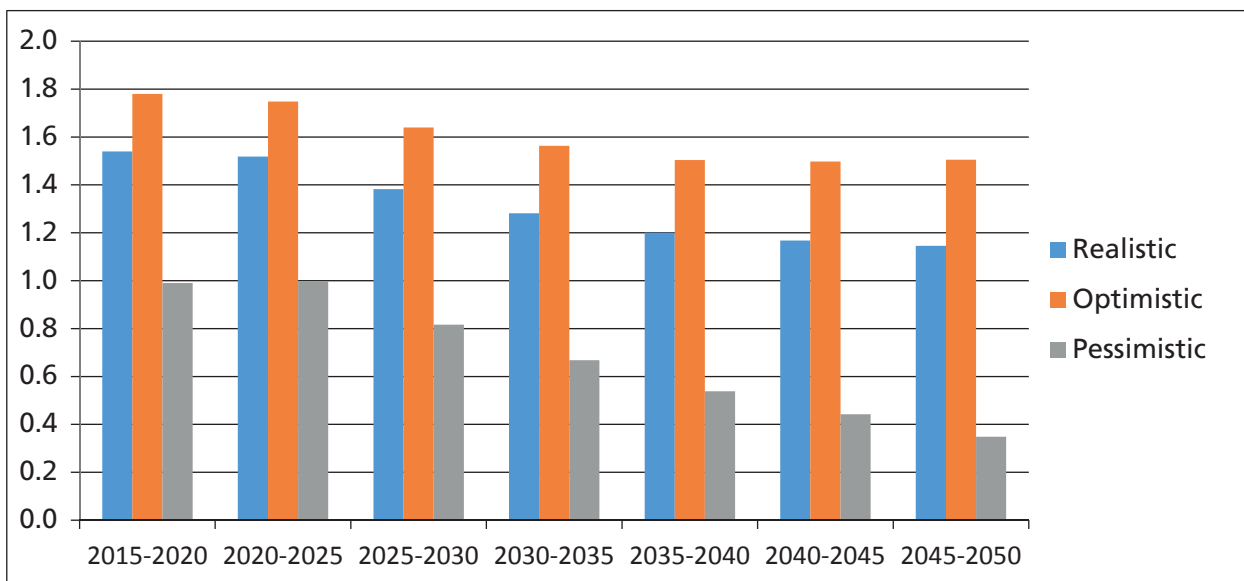


According to expert estimates, in 2016 the Roma in Bulgaria numbered approximately 720,000 people. Depending on the perceived levels of fertility and mortality, in 2020 their number will be somewhere between 742,000 and 803,000 people. By 2050 the number of the Roma population is expected to increase, regardless of the outlined scenarios, with

their number reaching 895,000 people according to the pessimistic scenario, 1,138,000 according to the realistic scenario, and 1,267,000 people according to the optimistic scenario (Fig. 10.). According to the different scenarios, the Roma population will grow between 5% and 12% by 2020, and between 20.3% and 54.6% over the next thirty years (2020-2050).



Figure 11  
Average rate of increase of the Roma population in Bulgaria (2015-2050)

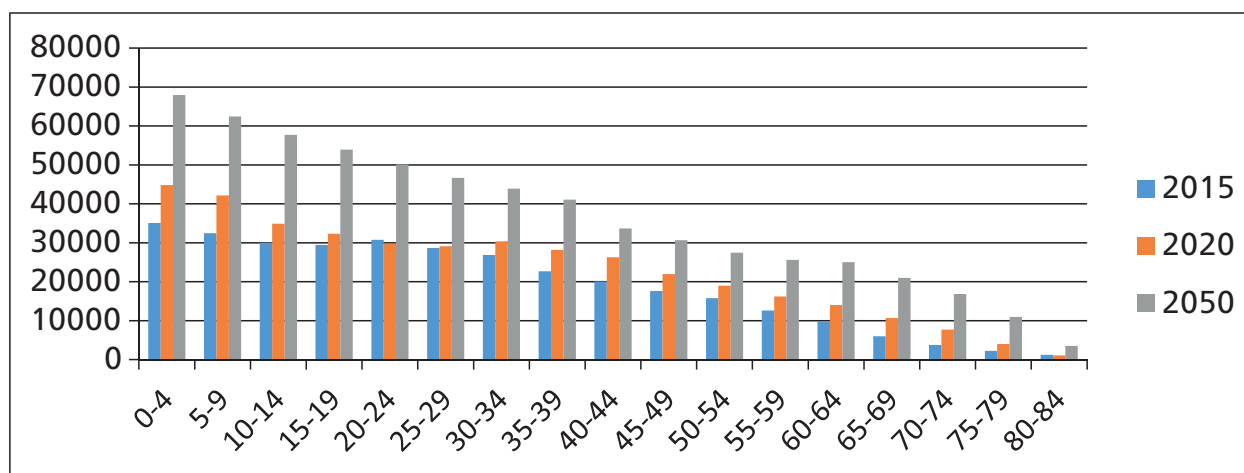


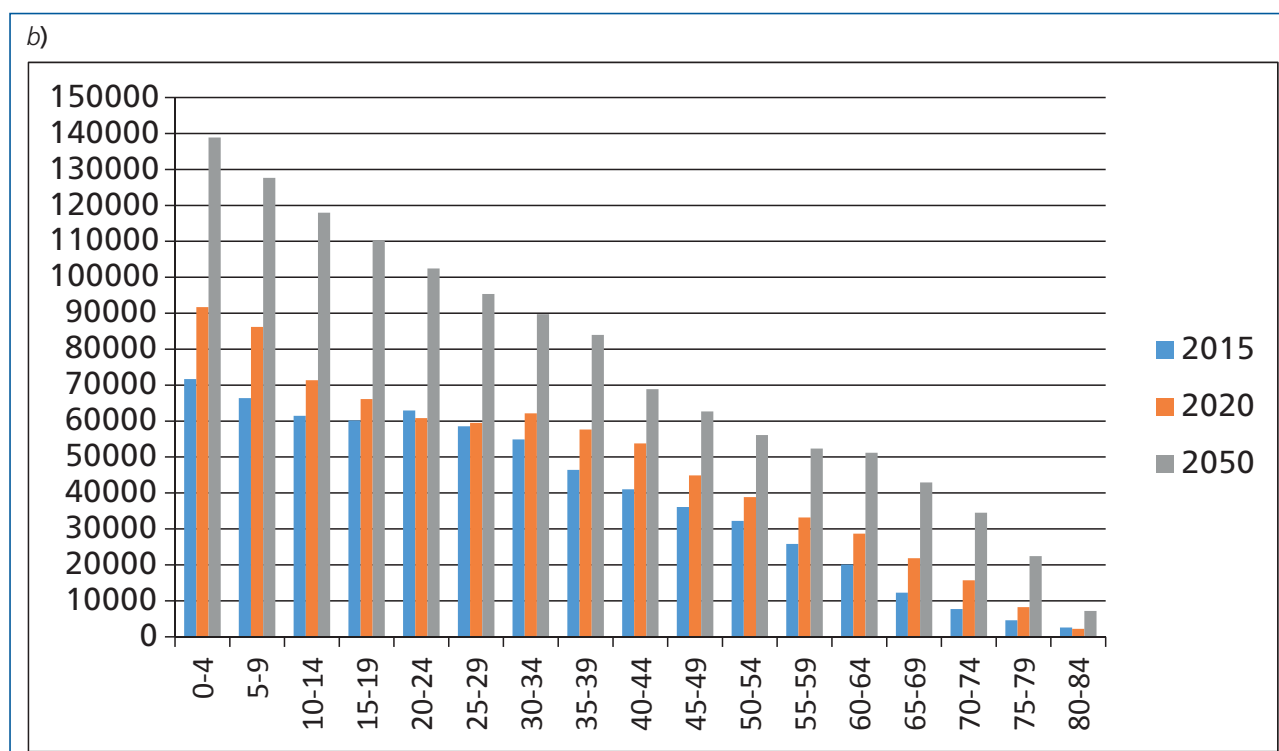
The differences in the demographic development in the past and in the forecast values of the demographic indicators of the Roma and Bulgarian population lead to significant changes in the ethnic structure of the population in the country. The Roma population is expected to become the largest ethnic community in the country and to overtake the Turkish ethnic group in absolute numbers and relative proportion. Up to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the relative proportion of Roma had increased from 2.4% in 1900 to 4.9% according to official statistics and to 9.8% according to expert estimates in 2011. The upward

trend will continue and, at the end of the period of forecast, will reach between 9.8% and 11.7% according to official statistics, and between 20.1% and 23.9% according to expert estimates.

The intensity of demographic indicators is reflected not only in the number of Roma population, but also in its distribution in different age groups. The estimated number of the Roma population in the different age groups between 2015 and 2050 is shown in Figure 12. The analysis shows an increase in the number of Roma in all age groups in all periods, regardless of the variant used.

Figure 12  
Number of Roma population by age groups 2015-2050 a) according to official statistics; b) according to expert assessment  
a)





The ethnic composition is expected to change not only in the formation of the general population, but also with regard to the different age groups. This change is not uniform and is not evenly distributed in all age groups. The largest increase, not only in the number, but also in the relative proportion in the ethnic structure of the population is observed in the lowest age groups, which is due to the increasing differences in birth rates between the Bulgarian and Roma population in the country in recent decades, and which are expected to continue in the decades to come. So, for example, if at the beginning of the forecast period about 10.7% were Roma children according to official statistics and about 31% of the mothers of those born self-identified as Roma (endogamy is very pronounced in the Roma population - mixed marriages are very rarely registered, and they are not accepted either by Roma families or by Bulgarian or Turkish families), by 2050 this proportion will have doubled and reached 18-19% and 58-62%, respectively (Ilieva, Kazakov 2019).

At the beginning of the forecast period, the **population under working age** (from 0 to 14 years) accounted for 29.5% and numbered 97,000 people according to the official census and 199,000 people according to expert estimates. Depending on the scenario used and the set values of the fertility rate, the population under working age should increase by 37% according to the realistic version of the forecast, and by 54.3% according to the optimistic scenario. The pessimistic scenario shows an insignificant increase of 1%. At the end of the period under review in 2050, it is expected to number between 99,000 people and 188,000 people according to official statistics and between 191,000 people and 315,000 people according to

expert estimates, accounting for between 21% and 30% of the total number of the Roma population. According to the different scenarios of the forecast, the Roma population will form about ¼ of the total number of this age group in the country according to the official censuses, and about half, according to expert assessment. For comparison, the population under working age in 2050 in the country will be between 10% and 18% of the total population, depending on the forecast parameters used.

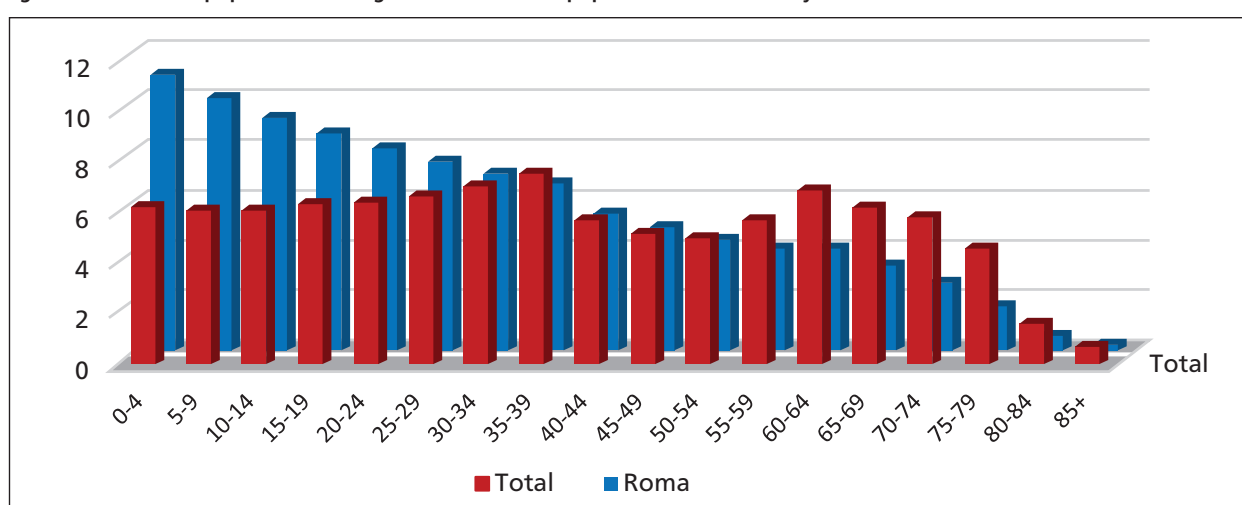
According to the initial data of the forecast, the number of the **Roma population able to work** (from 15 to 64 years old) numbered 220,000 people according to the official census and 438,000 people according to the expert estimate, and made up 65% of the Roma population. The number of Roma people capable of working is projected to increase by 41.1% according to the realistic scenario, by 52.9% according to the optimistic scenario and by 17.4% according to the pessimistic scenario. In 2050 it should reach between 290,000 people and 378,000 people according to official statistics and between 593,000 people and 772,000 people according to the expert estimate. In 2050, the relative proportion of the Roma population should decrease by three points according to the realistic option, and by four points according to the optimistic option, and it is projected to increase by one point according to the pessimistic option. In 2050 the Roma population will form about 10-11% of the working age population in the country according to official statistics, and between 20 and 24% according to the expert estimate. For comparison, the proportion of the working population in 2050 is expected to represent about 61% of the population in the country.

At the beginning of the forecast period, the Roma population above working age (65+) numbered 13,000 people according to official statistics and 27,000 people according to the expert estimate and accounted for 4.1% of the Roma population. The population over 65 years of age shows the same relative values of growth, as in 2050 this age group will be formed by a population born before the forecast period. Its number is projected to show an increase of 128%, and in 2050 will number 53,000 people according to official statistics and 109,000 people according to the expert estimate. The relative proportion of the Roma population above working age

is expected to be between 8.7% and 12.3%. The increase in the relative proportion of the population above working age is a result of the increase in life expectancy and the entry into this category of generations born before 1985, where the total natural growth rate exceeded 25 per mille. The Roma population, compared to other age categories, forms an insignificant share in this age category and is 4.9% according to official statistics and 10.1% according to the expert estimate. For comparison, the population above working age in Bulgaria is projected to be between 18% and 24% of the population of the country in 2050.

Figure 13

Age structure of the population of Bulgaria and the Roma population in the country in 2050



This whole forecast portrays a demographic picture that is worrying for the development of Bulgaria, not so much because of the change in population dynamics or ethnic structure, but because of the relationship of these changes with the educational structure of the population of Bulgaria. This is because, according to official data in 2011, only 0.5% of the Roma in the country have higher education and 9% have secondary education, which means that over 90% have lower than secondary education. According to the expert estimate, in 2050 the number of the Roma population with higher education will be between 1.9 and 7.5%, and between 13.2 and 39.4% will have secondary education, which means that in the most pessimistic scenario (fundamental) about 15% of the Roma will be with higher and secondary education, and a staggering 85% with lower than secondary education, while in the most optimistic (integrational) scenario about 47% of the Roma will be with higher and secondary education, and over 50% with lower than secondary level. Our contention is that this educational status is the biggest obstacle to the successful integration of Roma in Bulgaria.

**Conclusion 1:** The demographic forecast uses the method of age movement (or the method of cohort

components) of the population, which is one of the most precise methods of forecasting and is most often used to forecast the population up to a 50-year period, which makes it suitable for preparing the demographic forecast according to the time range set in our study.

**Conclusion 2:** Our demographic forecast has been developed in three scenarios: realistic, pessimistic and optimistic. These scenarios have been developed in two variants. In the first one the initial number of Roma takes into account the data from the last census of Bulgaria in 2011, when 325,343 Roma were reported, and the second variant is the actual number of Roma population in 2015, calculated based on the trends in the development of our demographic processes in recent decades, and according to the expert estimate the number of Roma in 2015 was approximately 720,000 people. According to the first variant, by 2050 the Roma will be between 9% and 10.4% of the population of the country, and according to the second one between 20.1% and 23.9%.

**Conclusion 3:** If things develop according to the forecast, it will mean a serious change in the ethnic structure of the population of Bulgaria, as the Roma

population will become the largest ethnic group in the country and will overtake that of the Turks in absolute numbers and relative proportion.

**Conclusion 4:** According to our forecast, in 2050 the Roma population will number  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the population of

Bulgaria who are under working age according to official statistics and half of this age group according to the expert estimate. Moreover, in 2050 the Roma population will form about 10-11% of the working age population in the country according to official statistics and between 20 and 24% according to the expert estimate.



## 5

## POLICIES AND SUCCESSFUL MODELS FOR ROMA INTEGRATION IN EUROPE AND BULGARIA

Based on the analysis made so far, the conclusion can be drawn that the integration of the Roma in Europe and Bulgaria is a difficult process that requires active work and responsible behaviour, both on the part of politicians and of the whole of society. The demographic forecast for Bulgaria shows what their relative proportion in the country in 2050 will be. It is a matter of national responsibility, but also of national security, to seek successful policies and models for their integration. There is even a small number of them, both in Europe and in Bulgaria. It is one of the goals of this study to analyse them and understand why they are successful and especially how they can be applied in other places with such an ethnic composition of the population.

Before we look at successful models, let us summarise what we believe to be the main obstacles to successful Roma integration:

1. **The ethnopsychology of the Roma**, typical for the Indian subcontinent, but difficult to fit into the European value system.
2. **The perception of the Roma as a homogeneous group** and the lack of understanding of their **complex social stratification**.
3. **Ghettoisation**, which propagates the negative patterns of behaviour of the Roma people and reinforces their social rejection and segregation.
4. **The low level of education** and lack of grasp of the Bulgarian language, which also exacerbates their isolation and difficult integration into models of social life.
5. The existing **prejudices and fears**, both on the part of the other ethnic groups towards the Roma and from them towards everyone else.
6. **The emphasis** in the media and the public space only **on the negative aspects** of Roma life and negative examples associated with them.

7. The open **reluctance of separate Roma groups** to make any effort whatsoever to integrate into society, together with their playing **“learned helplessness”** and the obligation of the state to take care of them.

On the whole, we can say that the successful examples of Roma integration are due to the inclusion of Roma children **in the education system**, thus gradually turning the wheel of education, employment and integration, perceived as valuable by the Roma people themselves.

The successful integration models we have analysed in the study are from Hungary, Spain and Bulgaria.

**Hungary** is a country with a significant Roma minority, which according to official figures (the 2011 census) numbers 315,583 people, but the real number is between 700,000 and 900,000 people, or nearly 10% of the population of the country. In Hungary, three major Roma groups can be distinguished: **Romangro**, with Hungarian as their first language, **Roma** whose first language is Romani, and **Boyash**, who speak an archaic Banat dialect of Romanian.

One of the most successful examples of Roma integration is from the town of Pécs in Southwestern Hungary. The successful model here is educational and includes two schools. One is the Peczabolch Primary School, where about 20% of the children educated are Boyash. The Boyash themselves were administratively relocated to the city in the 1950s and 1960s from various ghettos in the country. The school is proud of the fact that the Roma are already 20% of those who have completed the last grade, i.e. their achievements are equal to those of ethnic Hungarians. This is neither fictitious nor achieved by lowering standards, much less solely by monocultural assimilation. The method used is teaching Boyash and other Romani languages, as well as becoming acquainted with the specifics of Romani culture, and this does not happen in isolated Roma classes, but in all classes and groups in the school, i.e. here we have a typical example of **multicultural and multilingual education**.

In the afternoons there are free classes only in the Boyash language, which are conducted by a Boyash social worker. The idea is that by using their mother tongue, children are more motivated to learn and also more easily understand the material, but they are also obliged to have a good grasp of the official Hungarian language. In addition to this, extracurricular activities in theatrical art, folklore (Boyash and Hungarian), gardening and cooking are organised, in which both Hungarian and Boyash are used. The school library is one of the best stocked with books in the country, and at the same time has registered a record number of visits and borrowings of books in recent years. Every Thursday, a doctor conducts talks with students regarding their health and their sexual and hygienic culture.

Another school in Pécs that has been very successful in terms of Roma education is Gandhi, which serves as a preparatory school for admission to college. The ethnic composition is mainly Boyash Roma, although there are representatives of other Roma groups as well as ethnic Hungarians. The language of the lessons is Hungarian, although Boyash and Romani classes are also compulsory. The school places a very strong emphasis on the study of Boyash and Roma culture, as well as the humanities and social sciences, and is considered exemplary for the Hungarian Roma. Another innovation in the school is the construction of a dormitory at the high school, in which children who do not have financial means or come from other settlements live in completely normal conditions for no charge. The idea of the Hungarian government is to build such a system of dormitories in the whole of Hungary with the help of the Gandhi Foundation. The large-scale goal, however, is to form a **Roma intelligentsia** that will become a locomotive of Roma integration, i.e. the key to success here is education, and in a multicultural environment and direction.

Another very important factor in the success of integration in Hungary is the Roma National Academy "Kalyi Jag", where **parents and children study together** mathematics, history, languages and computer literacy. The Academy supports the development of the Roma identity by emphasising the Roma traditions, culture, language and art forms. Here the idea is for children to be educated and to encourage their parents to get an education. Usually until lunchtime there are classes in which parents and children are together, and in the afternoons there are free classes in other subjects.

We can show another very successful example from Hungary and we can provisionally call it: **"When the country is in place."** Laszlo Bogdan has been mayor of the village of Cherdi, in southwestern Hungary since 2006. The village has an almost 100% Roma population, and Bogdan himself is of such an ethnic origin. When he took office, the village had 430 Roma

residents and very high levels of unemployment, illiteracy and crime, as well as other distinguishing features of places like this such as poor hygiene and disease. After two terms in office, we see a village with well-maintained houses and yards, working residents and an accelerated reduction in crime.

How has Laszlo Bogdan achieved this? There are several steps and they come one after the other. First of all, a drastic reduction in social benefits and the elimination of the effect of "learned helplessness". Furthermore, Bogdan believes that good and bad examples are very important. He takes parents and children first to prisons, where there are many Roma people to see the conditions there and what awaits them if they follow the criminal path, and then he takes them to a university to see what other future they might have. Through national programs he has ensured over 100 new jobs in agriculture. The municipality encourages and financially supports the construction of bathrooms in Roma homes. It also provides work for parents with the active participation of children in the educational process. It has also set up a municipal police force, including Roma leaders, to guard the agricultural produce. In the village of Cherdi, people say that a miracle happened in the two terms of the mayor, but Bogdan himself answers them: "What kind of miracle is there in Roma people working and living normally in a developed, modern European country?"

What conclusions can we draw from the Hungarian experience? First of all, integration necessarily goes through education, secondly - multicultural learning, against which there is serious public resistance in Bulgaria, gives real results, i.e. knowledge of the specifics, language and culture of other people is a way to normal, mutual coexistence, thirdly, it is extremely important to form a Roma intelligentsia that is an example for the growing Roma youngsters and to work to increase the percentage of Roma who are educated, working and living in society and, fourthly, the state and local government must take responsibility for the conditions in which Roma people live, for the prevention of anti-social behaviour among them, and for increasing employment among them, and to this end we work very closely with the Roma community itself and especially with its leaders.

**Spain** is also a country with a large Roma minority, which according to various estimates numbers between 750,000 people and over 1 million people (Spain having a population of about 47 million people), who, according to official records, settled in these lands around the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Up to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the problems with the Roma minority are analogous to all other countries in Europe - ghettos, low levels of education, crime, social isolation, etc.

In 2000, Spain launched a large-scale operation of the national programme **Acceder**, which has an an-

nual budget of several million euros, and whose main goal is the effective inclusion of Roma on the labour market, which is one of the main steps towards their integration. The **Acceder** programme operates in 14 regions of Spain with 62 Employment Services.

The **Acceder** programme is a joint initiative of the Spanish state structures and the FSG Foundation (Fundación Secretariado Gitano), which has been operating for more than 30 years (it was officially registered in 1982), and its main goal is to improve the life and living conditions of the Roma community in Spain, employment and levels of education, as well as supporting their social inclusion in Spanish society.

The **Acceder** programme works in three specific areas: **inclusion of Roma people on the labour market**, through a number of programmes, training and retraining courses and contracts with employers to hire Roma people trained by them; **increasing the proportion of Roma children covered by the education system**, whilst in both areas, gender equality is very important, as according to a conservative Roma tradition, girls get married at the age of 13-15, immediately drop out of the education system, and consequently do not reach the labour market at all. The third direction is with an emphasis on the **Roma identity and culture**, the perception of the Spanish society through the positive elements in it, i.e. the aim is through media and advertising campaigns, including in social networks, to achieve a **real multi-cultural environment**, in which the different ethnic groups know each other, and thus understand one another and appreciate each other's strong qualities.

Financing for the programme is mainly from the European Social Fund, plus Spanish government services, and the foundation's own funds and resources.

**Acceder** has been assessed in works of analysis as one of the most effective employment initiatives, with the greatest impact on the inclusion of the Roma community in social and labour circles. What are the real facts and results of the programme?

For the period **2000-2007**, the programme budget was **62,700,000 euros**, for the period **2008-2015** it was **63,324,339 euros**, and for **2016-2019** it was **37,814,164 euros**. A total of **98,864** participants were covered by the programme for the period 2000-2017, **68% of whom were of Roma origin**, **6,525** training and qualification courses were conducted, a total of **74,792** employment contracts were concluded, and **47%** of them were employment contracts with Roma people under the age of 35. **1,190 projects** for self-employed Roma were implemented. Work was found for a total of over **27,630 Roma people** in the period of the programme, **53%** of whom were women, and **2,102** agreements were signed with companies in Spain, with a total of over **19,000** companies participating in the programme.

In 2017 alone, **16,831** participants were enrolled into the program, **5,374** employment contracts were signed, **4,676** people were trained and work was found for **3,422** people. Of the employers who have hired people under the programme, **42%** are in the field of trade, **24%** in the field of healthcare, **21%** in the service sector, and **4%** in the fishing industry.

Among the educational successes of **Acceder** is the fact that almost all Roma children attend primary school, and literacy among Roma people has increased to **85%**. Under the terms of the programme, every adult Roma person who sends their child to primary school has access to financial assistance, as well as the opportunity to obtain a loan or buy their own home at preferential prices. Also, a large part of the ethnic group already has access to health services. If a member of the Roma community loses their job, they turn to the programme, which includes them in its manifold retraining courses, and then undertakes to seek a new job for them. It is believed that over these 17 years of the programme, the social and living conditions of the Roma community have significantly improved, the percentage of people living in ghettos has decreased, and over **50%** of them live in what is legally their own housing.

Why and how were the successes of the programme achieved? The framework is simple: European and national funding, education, a proactive Roma employment policy, increased welfare, improved living conditions, gradual integration into society. It sounds easy, but in fact it is a series of slow and difficult steps until the whole wheel turns. How does it work in reality? Firstly, we have a foundation that has been working in this direction for almost forty years, in it there are both Roma and Spaniards, and for them the work is both a mission and a business; secondly, the government, regardless of party affiliation, works consistently, realising that Roma people can be just as much a major problem if they remain in this unenviable socio-economic situation as they can be a resource if they are educated and qualified, which is very valuable with the drastic aging of the Spanish population (average life expectancy **82.8** years) and the emerging shortage of labour; thirdly - the gradual reversal of the negative attitude of the Roma people towards integration, and the Spanish society towards the Roma community; and fourthly - constant work on education and qualification of the Roma people and constant promotion of this resource of labour to Spanish employers. Once again we see that there are no magical and easy solutions, there is awareness of the problem, formulating and implementing measures, active work and results after 10-15 years.

Despite the feeling of failure of integration policies in **Bulgaria**, we also have several positive examples from recent years. The village of Dolni Tsibar in northwestern Bulgaria has become known as the "Roma Cam-

bridge", as almost all young people of Roma origin complete secondary education there, and over 10% have a university degree. We have other similar positive examples from Kavarna, from Kuklen, and without exception in these places the success is due to the application of the **multicultural approach** in education and a serious, responsible attitude regarding the issue by the local authorities.

The last and most interesting example is from the town of Straldzha, in the region of Yambol, where the ratio of Bulgarians to Roma is now almost 50% to 50%, with a population of 6,372 people (2015). Of course, there are serious problems, as there are in other places with a compact Roma population in our country. However, the local government decided to undertake serious measures to address these problems. One of the most serious problems - the theft of agricultural products during the summer and autumn - has been tackled through the creation of a municipal guard, which includes Roma people. Undoubtedly, however, what distinguishes the city in terms of its integration policy and something that is a shining example is the success of the inclusion of Roma children in the education system.

During the 2017-2018 academic year in the school "St. Cyril and St. Methodius", in which 100% Roma students are educated, at the suggestion of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the **"Icelandic model"** was applied to deal with aggression and dropping out of the learning process.

What is the "Icelandic model" and how can it be applied exactly in Roma neighborhoods, given that there is no Roma minority in Iceland? In the early 1990s, it was found that in Iceland there was a major problem with alcohol and drug use among students, as well as school aggression - something that is characteristic of developed European societies, with the difference that in Iceland they are deeper due to purely climatic and psychological reasons - the long polar night, and the cold, windy, gloomy climate. A large percentage of young people find a solution in alcohol and drugs, and there are very high levels of aggression among them. The government invited American psychologist Harvey Milkman, who, along with local psychologist Gudberg Jonsson and researcher Inga Dora Sigfusdottir, took on the difficult task of finding a cure for these serious problems. The main question the three asked themselves was whether it was possible to offer young people a healthy and useful alternative to alcohol, drugs and unwarranted aggression. And the idea was for all this to be preventive, not to look for solutions when the problems were irreversible.

**Project Self-Discovery** was created, with a \$1.2 million state subsidy for Milkman's team to offer natural alternatives to drugs and alcohol and to direct young people's energy in a positive direction.

What Milkman's team offered was the organisation of youth activities in dance, music, rap, painting, theatre, various other arts, martial arts and sports that were free and accessible for all. The idea was for each child to find what he or she was best at. Trained specialist psychologists started to work in schools and special centres to help children communicate with each other, understand adults and adapt to the modern world and way of life.

The project started with students filling in questionnaires related to alcohol and drug use, free time, the relationship between each other as peers and the relationship with their parents. The answers are frightening. Over 50% of young people feel lonely, misunderstood, alienated from everything and mostly lacking belief in anything. Without idols and role models. And all this naturally pushes them to alcohol, drugs and aggression. One of the main conclusions of Milkman's team was that this could be changed by encouraging the participation of young people in team sports, and in various extracurricular activities related to science and the arts.

In order to understand whether the project was moving in the right direction, serious monitoring was introduced, by having the young people complete similar questionnaires at the end of each school year and analysing whether the child had found the right sport or art for themselves or should be redirected according to their interests and abilities. In Iceland, as a result of all this, a national programme was developed, called "Youth in Iceland". It was expressed in the investment of significant funds by the state in sports halls and playgrounds, dance halls, playgrounds and mini stadiums, where young people could play sports or do art, but always in a group, i.e. on a team basis. This strengthened their empathy and the feeling that they were part of a community that they could rely on in difficult times, but which also had to be able to rely on them. Feelings of solidarity and responsibility also developed. Families on a low income are provided with financial assistance from the state so that their children can attend these clubs and take part in the activities. In practice, it covers almost 100% of the young population of Iceland. The results are more than impressive, in just 15 years (one demographic generation), between 1997 and 2012 the percentage of young people aged 15 and 16 who say they spend almost every weekend with their families jumped from 23% to 46%. And the percentage of those who do organised sports at least 4 times a week increased from 24% to 42%. At the same time, in this age group, the use of alcohol, smoking cigarettes or cannabis, as well as aggression was drastically reduced.

In 2006, the **Youth in Europe** movement was created. Its main goal is to transfer the successful "Icelandic model" to other places in Europe. So far, it has been applied in Budapest, Bucharest, Kaunas, Austria and the Scandinavian Peninsula.



In the 2017-2018 academic year, the mayor's office in Straldzha decided to apply the "Icelandic model" in the Roma school "St. Cyril and St. Methodius" as part of its large-scale integration policy. Up to this year, the huge problem at school had been the absence of children and their mass truancy after the first and second lesson. Just as the "broken window" method worked well in New York, so here they did something seemingly small, but important - they renovated the school fence to make it harder for students to play truant. After that, the municipal administration hired six Roma mediators to support the educational process and monitor order in the Roma neighbourhood. Their role is to gather the children from the houses in the morning and take them to the school, and also to patrol the corridors of the school and the yard all day and to be vigilant, so that they do not run away.

The most important part of the model is the involvement of children in sports and various arts, for which the municipality pays. The material and technical facilities of the school are being built, and are high-quality and modern, and, in order for this to be attractive for the kids, coaches and instructors are hired. In this way, 100% of the students are involved in extracurricular activities. These activities are football and boxing for the boys, volleyball and cheerleading for the girls, plus playing wind and percussion musical instruments for the boys and folk dancing for the girls. Something else which is very important for the success of the project are the motivated coaches and instructors and the offer of

this type of activities, to which the Roma community have a natural affinity. The only condition for the children to be admitted to these activities financed by the municipality is that they have attended the classes from the first to the last hour. If they were to play truant or did not come to school, they would not be allowed. Children also receive breakfast and lunch, which is an additional incentive to stay in school all day. All this costs the municipality about **BGN 10,000** a year.

And the result is truly astounding: the attendance of Roma children at school increased by **40%** in just **one year**, as the school's principal, Nedka Parusheva, announces with great joy and satisfaction. And you have to see the joy in the eyes and desire of Roma children when they play football or do folk dances, or see those who play wind and percussion instruments to understand how effective this model is. (Bardarov, Tsvetkov, 2018)

In the next school year 2018/2019, the model was expanded, adding new sports and arts activities, and the success was even greater. The most important thing in this case is that the local Roma community realise the meaning and significance of this model, support it and are happy to follow its successes, which will ensure a completely different future for their children.

What does the Straldzha experience show us? It shows us that there are no impossible things, as long as we think and work in the right direction, with the heart and with desire, and when the state is in place.

Figure 14  
The fruits of the “Icelandic model” in Straldzha



**Conclusion 1:** All the successful models presented show that the integration of Roma people is possible when the state and local authorities work purposefully in the right direction, think positively and, most of all, the Roma community are engaged in the process of integration.

**Conclusion 2:** All the successful models rely on education as the first step for integration. The Hungarian experience includes, in addition to children’s education, adult education, even family models, parents and children together, and above all multicultural and multilingual education. Addressing the issue of education is also a step towards increasing the employment of Roma people, and hence their well-being, sense of social significance and inclusion in normal public life.

**Conclusion 3:** The experience of the integration policy applied in Spain is perhaps most relevant for Bulgaria, through simultaneously involving the state, NGOs that are familiar with and include Roma people,

and employers who are already experiencing an acute shortage of labour in a progressive demographic crisis. A great deal of effort is needed - to educate young Roma people, so that they can find normal realisation on the labour market at a later stage, to convince employers that by investing in Roma integration they are investing in their own prosperity, and to convince the public that, bearing in mind the demographic picture that Bulgaria will have in 2050, the process of Roma integration is of vital importance for everybody.

**Conclusion 4:** The successful implementation of the “Icelandic model” in the municipality of Straldzha clearly shows that the integration of Roma people in our country is possible. In this model there are several points of reference: firstly, the involvement of the Roma community itself, through the appointment of Roma individuals in the municipal protection of agricultural land and mediators to support the educational process for children; secondly - the involvement of children in activities that are inherent in

and cherished for the Roma community, but under on condition that they attend classes from the first to the last lesson; thirdly - an active awareness campaign among parents themselves that the school can provide a much better future for their children; and

fourthly - building modern material and technical facilities, which are attractive for the children themselves. The investment in this of only BGN 10,000 per year brings a huge return - 40% higher school attendance of Roma children.

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