

**ROMA REPRESENTATIONS
IN THE DISTRICT OF RAZGRAD**

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***Abstract.** Pilot survey results concerning the Roma representations in the district of Razgrad are presented and discussed in the paper. The survey was conducted in late 2012 and the results show that for the last few years ethnic relations in the district of Razgrad have normalised and eased. The proportion of those who perceive as a problem the percentage of the minorities in Bulgaria has decreased since the early 1990s. First signs of a transition from traditional to modern forms of racisms (e.g. the latent racism) were detected in the study.*

Key words: Roma representations, social distances, stereotypes, prejudices

In 2012, a team of researchers from the Institute for Population and Human Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences conducted a survey on the representations towards the Roma (i.e. descriptions, attributions, stereotypes, prejudices and social distances) in the district of Razgrad, north-eastern Bulgaria. Not only tens of questions concerning ethnic prejudices, social distances, etc. were explored but also the survey was aimed at detecting changes in the interethnic relations in the district for the first time after the Republic of Bulgaria joined the European Union in 2007. In this train of thought, we consider very productive for both laymen and professionals who would like to get as much as possible from our paper to rationalise the presented below results as a consequence of the complex interaction of values of a number of generations, each of which has accumulated its own historical experience, cultural specifics and more or less a unique perspective.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

In November 2012, a quantitative survey on representations towards the Roma was conducted in the district of Razgrad. Within a week, using a preliminary structured sample, based on social-demographic data for the district of Razgrad from the 2011 Census, the IPHS project team selected and interviewed respondents who represented different social and ethnic groups in the district of Razgrad.

A research team from the Department of Demography at the Institute for Population and Human Studies carried out the survey thanks to the logistic support of Integro Association. A detailed questionnaire containing predominantly five-level rating scales was designed; the major purpose of the questionnaire was to measure various aspects concerning the representations towards the Roma. Ten out of the seventy conducted interviews were pilot. All interviews were included in the statistical description and analysis as after the pilot results analysis was completed no significant modification were made in the questionnaire.

The good knowledge¹ about the structure of the population aged 18 and over (a dynamic population of approximately 100 thousand people) made it possible to reduce the sampling error to 7% in spite of the limited number respondents (for some items in the questionnaire the sampling error varies up to 11.7%).

Given the above, the presented survey results below should be referred to as comparatively conditional and they, respectively, suggest a number of reservations when it comes to interpretation. It is not by accident that we do not focus on particular numbers; the representativeness of the calculated numbers does not correspond to the highest research standards. The descriptions at hand should sound more like well-grounded hypotheses. Data were processed and analysed using the application package STATA, version 9.2. In addition to the one, two and multidimensional distributions, we have also employed an analytical method to calculate tetrachoric correlation coefficient for binary variables (Edwards and Edwards 1984).

ARE ETHNIC RELATIONS IN THE DISTRICT OF RAZGRAD BEING PROBLEMATISED?

The district of Razgrad can be described as a territory of rich ethnic diversity. It is one of the few Bulgarian districts in which ethnic Bulgarians are a minority. The largest ethnic group in the area are the Bulgarian Turks. Roma people are the third largest ethnic community (after the Turks and the Bulgarians). According to experts' estimates, more than three fourths of the Roma are more likely to identify themselves as Turks or Millet, Bulgarians or Wallachians than as Roma or Gypsies.

In the early 1990s, after the fall of Todor Zhivkov's regime, attempts for restoration of the abused rights of Bulgarian Turks were used for political mobilisation of people by the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and few newly-formed nationalistic organisations; as a result the so called "*Republic of Razgrad*" was founded. The local political elite, supported by a majority of ethnic Bulgarians, declared that they did not accept the changes which were being imposed: Muslims' right to restore their Muslim names, Muslims' right to speak their mother tongue outside their homes, their religious rights, the right to learn their mother tongue in public schools, the restoration of work rights to all released from work Bulgarian Turks who had filed requests

¹ The IPHS-BAS research team has conducted a number of fieldwork studies on the territory of the district of Razgrad.