

the country and thus contributed to their cultural and economic progress. Bulgarian authorities also gave them freedom of ethnic and religious self-declaring. In the 1960s and the early 1970s, the Bulgarian state began to reevaluate its previous policy, by starting to gradually restrict the rights of the ethnic minority groups and by pursuing progressive deletion of ethnic differences. Up till then, a presumption existed, according to which the ethnic groups in the country would unite into a single nation by equalizing the economic, political, social, spiritual and psychological indicators of the various ethnic communities. Since the beginning of the 1980s, a new idea was launched – the idea of homogenization of the Bulgarian nation, by carefully organized „revival process” starting namely with the Bulgarian Roma. Up till then, emigration abroad was restricted, thus contributing to the increase of the Roma population in the country. A certain part of the Muslim Roma were involved in the so-called “Big excursion” (politically triggered emigration of Turks and other Muslims to Turkey), but an accurate assessment of the number of the Roma who left the country is impossible to make.

The third period started after 10th November 1989. Despite the political changes in Bulgaria, the problems of the Roma population were not resolved completely. The adopted Constitution in 1991, in which the most important legal foundations were embedded, provides full civil and political rights for all citizens, regardless of their ethnic consciousness. In the years following 1989, a number of measures aimed at overcoming discrimination and respecting the rights of the ethnic groups in the country, were taken:

- synchronization of the domestic legislation with the European standards in the field of human rights and protection of minorities;
- political, socio-economic and cultural integration of minorities into Bulgarian society;
- developing of an adequate institutional mechanism, which covers all levels of different types of authorities, with clearly defined responsibilities and powers;
- consistent and effective implementation of the Framework Convention For Protection Of National Minorities (Report submitted by Bulgaria,... 2003, in bulgarian).

The development of the state after 1989 poses new issues of the situation of the Roma ethnic group in the country, which need to be solved.

The decline of living standards in the country, the deterioration of the living conditions and the unequal status of the ethnic groups on the labor market, together with the ethnic discrimination of the unemployed, as well as the unfavorable educational structure of the Roma, additionally aggravate the differences between ethnic communities in the country and destroy the stereotypes of behavior and their relationships, sharpening the ethnic tensions.

Over the past two decades, and especially after 1989, birth rates among all ethnic communities decreased, as a result of severe economic crisis and the sense of insecurity caused by the social changes in the country. Nevertheless, the decrease of birth rates of the Roma is the smallest (table 13). The level of education, the material and cultural needs, the satisfaction of certain aspirations for education