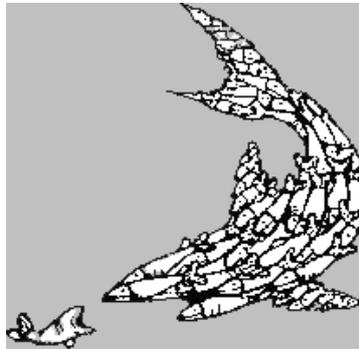


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**FRIEDRICH
EBERT 
STIFTUNG**



INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR MINORITY STUDIES
AND INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS (IMIR)

**MODEL FOR MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
MINORITY RIGHTS ON LOCAL LEVEL:**

**MINORITY RIGHTS PROTECTION AND INTER-ETHNIC
RELATIONS IN MUNICIPALITIES WITH DIVERSE
POPULATION**

Sofia, December 2006

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In the spring of 2006 IMIR's team conducted a research in Ardino municipality as part of an international project prepared and financed by Friedrich Ebert Foundation. The objective was to examine the relationships between different communities, while focusing on the minority rights protection in a municipality with a reversed demographic proportion – the national minority in this case is the local majority.

According to the official web site of Ardino municipality, the number of local residents is 15 171 people (2003), of which 68.2% are Turks, 16.9% are Bulgarians and 14.9% are others. The towns and villages in the municipality have diverse ethnic balance: some, like Ardino and Byal Izvor, have a mixed population (Turks, Bulgarian Muslims and Bulgarian Christians¹ in Ardino, and in Byal Izvor, in addition to these three groups, there also Roma); others have a homogeneous Turkish population (for example Borovica, Suhovo) or a homogeneous Muslim Bulgarian population (for example Zhaltusha and Padina). The overwhelming majority of the people in the municipality are Muslims. Some Orthodox Christians live in Ardino and several families in the village of Padina have converted to Evangelism. Thus, the Bulgarian Christians, whose number is no more than several hundred people, and the Roma, who are about 20 – 30 people², form the smallest community in the Ardino municipality.

Apart from the demographic picture, the political situation in the municipality is another important factor determining to a great extent the inter-ethnic relations. On the last local elections in 2003 the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) received 76,3 % of the votes, the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) – 5,6%, the National Movement for Rights and Freedoms (NMRF) – 4%, the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) – 8,7 %, the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union – National Union (BANU) – 1,5% and the National Movement Simeon the Second (NMSS) – 3,8%. These results clearly show the essential role of MRF, since most of the municipal councilors are from this party with one BSP representative (a Christian Bulgarian) and two UDF representatives being the only exception. The mayor's positions in the municipality are divided in the same manner.³

81 interviews were conducted with people from Ardino town, from 8 villages (Byal Izvor, Zhaltusha, Padina, Suhovo, Borovica, Lenishte, Yabalkovec, Garvane), and from one hamlet – Chubrika. 50 more questionnaires answered by members of the municipal administration were analyzed. In the final stage of the project, a focus-group involving representatives of the civil society was organized. During the fieldwork, additional number of informal interviews with town and village dwellers, and with representatives of the public administration, were also made.

¹ Terms Bulgarian Christians and Bulgarian Muslims are used in the literature for formal distinction between the two religious groups. In practice, however, the religious element among most Bulgarian Christians has only a relative value and to a large extent has lost its meaning. A similar process, albeit in a weaker form, can be observed also among some Bulgarian Muslims. In this sense, a reference to religion should not be taken literally, but only as an orientation for the cultural environment to which an individual belongs.

² The municipality is in a certain sense unique because it has no Roma community. Few Roma families, living in Byal izvor, belong to a sub-group of Agupti. They usually do not want to be considered as Roma and prefer to self-identify as Turks. One of our respondents was a resident of Byal izvor, who identified himself as a Roma. IMIR's team decided to respect his right to self-identification in this report, although he is not considered to be of Roma origin by the other residents of the village.

³ There are 53 settlements in Ardino municipality, under the administrative jurisdiction of 21 village mayors. The mayor of Ardino municipality and 16 village mayors are from the MRF, two village mayors belong to UDF, two to BSP and one village mayor is independent.

I. Introduction

There is no legal definition of the term “minority” in the Republic of Bulgaria. The Bulgarian constitution demonstrates that the state adopts the concept of civic nation. All ethnic, religious, linguistic and other communities in the state are regarded as part of the “big family” of the Bulgarian nation.

According to the last official census in 2001 the country population is 7 928 901 people.

Ethnic groups:

Bulgarians	Turks	Roma	Russians	Armenians	Vlachs	
6 655 210	746 664	370 908*	15 595	10 832	10 566	
Macedonians	Karakachans	Greeks	Ukrainians	Tatars	Jews	Romanians
5 071	4 107	3 408	2 489	1 803	1 363	1 088
Gagauz	Cherkez	Arabs	Albanians	Others	Undecided	No answer
540	367	328	278	18 792	62 108	24 807

* According to expert estimates, the real number of Roma is between 600 and 800 thousand. The reason for the difference is that a large number of Roma self-identifies as Bulgarians or Turks, and some as Vlachs.

Linguistic groups:

Bulgarian language	Turkish language	Roma language	Other	No answer
6 697 158	762 516	327 882	71 084	70 261

Religious groups:

Eastern Orthodox	Muslims	Catholics	Protestants	Armenian-Gregorian	Jews	Others	Undecided	No answer
6 552 751	966 978	43 811	42 308	6 500	653	7 784	283 309	24 807

The first Bulgarian Constitution (1879) mentions that in Bulgaria there are also “Christians of other than the Orthodox denomination, as well as people of different religion”. According to the Constitution of 1947, there are “national minorities” in Bulgaria, while the Constitution of 1971 speaks of “citizens of other than Bulgarian origin”. The Constitution of Democratic Bulgaria, adopted in 1991, mentions “citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian” (article 36) and adds that everyone has the right to “develop their own culture in accordance with their ethnic affiliation, which is endorsed and guaranteed by the law” (article 54). So the current Constitution does not use the term “minority”. Nevertheless, many laws, acts and court orders contain texts referring to groups other than the majority. In 1992 The Constitutional Court stated that “the Bulgarian Constitution acknowledges the existence of religious, language and ethnic differences, and respectively, of bearers of such differences”. Bulgaria has ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, both of which contain articles mentioning national, ethnic, religious and language minorities. Under the Constitution, these international conventions are part of the Bulgarian legislation and even have a priority over it.

In 1999 the Bulgarian parliament passed a bill ratifying the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, in which it declares its commitment to “the policy of tolerance towards people from the minorities and their complete integration in the Bulgarian

society”. The program of Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha’s government included a section called “Integration of Minorities”. Therefore in the Bulgarian legislation there are certain examples of indirect admitting of the existence of minorities, although there is no direct assertion of their existence and no clear concept of their nature, which may lead to many problems. As an illustration to this, the Constitution cites 12 features (including race, nationality, ethnicity, religion) on the grounds of which discrimination is forbidden. These features, though, do not include language. Thus the lack of opportunities to study one’s own mother tongue is not a case of discrimination according to the Bulgarian Constitution.

In the beginning of 2004 Bulgaria passed The Law on the Protection against Discrimination, which to a great extent drew the country to the European standards in this sphere. The law enlists more features on the grounds of which discrimination is forbidden, and adds the phrase that discrimination is not allowed on the basis of “any other features”. The law also provides special measures for the minority’s benefit, for example protection of their distinctive culture and identity, the right to maintain and develop their culture, the right to practice their religion and use their language. The law obliges the ministers of education and culture and the local authorities to take the necessary measures to avoid racial segregation in schools and other educational institutions. The central and local authorities must also implement a policy resulting in the minorities’ participation in governance and decision-making.

The principle of equal treatment of all the citizens regardless of their race or ethnicity is established in many other Bulgarian laws, like the Labor Code, the Employment Promotion Act, the Law for Protection, Rehabilitation and Social Integration of People with Disabilities, the Civil Servants Act, the Criminal Code, and others. The same principle was fortified by a great number of the Constitutional Court’s rulings.

II. Ardino municipality – profile and characteristics

Ardino municipality is situated in the south-western part of Kardzhali district. The population of the municipality is ethnically mixed. The Turkish ethnic group is by far the largest (68.2%). The percentage of this ethnic community is higher than the average percentage for Kardzhali district (about 61.6%) and several times higher than the average for the country (9.4%). The religious structure of the population is in a great measure homogeneous since 96% of the municipality residents are Muslims and only 4% - Christians. About 24% of the Muslims are ethnic Bulgarians.

The ethnic diversity in Ardino municipality is an example of the already established model of tolerance between the different ethnic groups. At the same time, it is also a resource for the future development of the municipality, since every ethnic community has preserved its distinctive features. Despite the high percentage of the Turkish ethnic group, the relations between the different communities and religions are harmonious and there are no tensions or risk of conflicts.

With respect to the social issues, Ardino municipality experiences a lot of problems, being an “underdeveloped rural and mountainous region”. The share of people who believe that they “are impoverished” or “hardly make both ends meet” is steadily above 70%. Only two out of ten people think they live in normal circumstances. The average annual payment in Ardino municipality is 2,139 BGL, which is lower than the average payment in Kardzhali district (2,520 BGL) and the one in the country as a whole (2,880 BGL). The highest salaries are in the mining industry as well as in the financing sector; the lowest ones are in agriculture, timber and hunting enterprises. In 2003 the level of unemployment in Ardino municipality was 24.6%, which was significantly higher than the average for the country. This level of unemployment put Ardino municipality on the first place in Kardzhali district and on the 87th place in Bulgaria. According to the latest data, in 2005 the unemployment rates dropped to 18.6% and at the end of 2005 there were 1,219 registered unemployed people. In regard to the GDP per capita, Ardino is on the 223rd place in the country.

Almost 54% of the unemployed people in the municipality are women, and the majority of them are without a special education and profession (about 85%). These data confirms the lower levels of education and professional qualification among the women in Ardino municipality, which is something “traditional” in the regions with ethnically mixed population. A big portion of the unemployed women (19.6%) are aged between 45 and 49, which impedes their professional realization and limits the opportunities for re-qualification and additional education.

In general, the majority of the unemployed people in Ardino municipality are between 40 and 49 years old. The tendency of having more and more unemployed people without any speciality or profession has been growing constantly for the last 12 years. In 2001, for example, they formed 78.8% of all unemployed.

The constant decrease of the population due to the falling birth rate and the negative migration tendency is another serious problem for the municipality. The number of the people living in small villages is on a constant decrease at the expense of the number of the people living in the municipality centre and some bigger villages. A lot of people also choose to move to other regions in the country or abroad. If the current tendencies persist, there is a real risk of a demographic collapse and depopulation of the small villages.

During the 2003/2004 school year, on the territory of the municipality, there were 3 secondary schools, 6 primary schools, 1 elementary school, and a Municipality Children Centre. In comparison to the rest of the country, the educational structure in Ardino municipality is worse, since there is a lower percentage of people with university or college education and a higher percentage of illiterate people. There are differences between the educational structures of the different ethnic groups with the Bulgarian Christians having the highest level of education. As the young people in the municipality are well-motivated to advance their education and qualifications, we expect improvement of the general educational structure of the population, which in its turn will bring about improvement of the social-economic situation.

The cultural activities in the municipality take place in 17 cultural community centers, which have libraries, amateur art and folk groups, etc. The municipality provides the financing of these centers (for example, buying folk costumes, musical instruments, sound systems, etc) and it also provides the centers' buildings. Every year the municipality council outlines an annual plan of the cultural and sports events in the municipality. There are already traditional events, such as the annual festival of amateur arts, the Ardino's days of culture, "Miss Ardino" competition, folklore and literature evenings, etc. One of the main objectives of the municipality is taking urgent measures to preserve the movable and immovable cultural monuments on the territory of the municipality. Unfortunately, as a whole, the rich cultural and historical heritage of the region is still not being used effectively to boost the development of tourism.

The Plan for Development of Ardino Municipality offers this vision for its future development: "Ardino municipality should be a sustainable, self-governing community, whose economy is based on its own recourses, with a modern infrastructure and high-quality living environment". With regard to achieving this goal, certain priorities are specified: improving the existing infrastructure and building new one; improving the living standard; taking better care of the environment; development of tourism; dealing with the current unemployment through creating conditions favoring the development of small and middle business enterprises; opening of new jobs; taking the necessary steps to develop organic farming and alternative forms of tourism; curbing the negative migration tendencies, as well as other measures aiming at the general advance of the municipality.

The municipal administration has hired a consultant for development and introduction of the system for quality government. Mayor Aydan Serkan has signed a declaration in the name of the municipal administration, demonstrating its willingness to improve the work of the administration for better fulfilment of the citizens' needs and expectations regarding the administrative services, management of the municipal property and transparency of administration work. The municipality received a Certificate for successful development and introduction of the System for Quality Government, based on the international standard ISO 9001:2000.

III. Public opinion poll

Profile of the respondents:

Gender division:

Men	Women
50	31

Ethno-religious division:

Turks	Bulgarian Muslims	Bulgarian Christians	Roma
43	23	14	1

Age groups:

15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84
6	13	16	21	11	7	7

Education level:

Elementary	Primary	Secondary	Higher
8	14	46	13

General

1. Which ethnic and/or religious communities live in your municipality?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
1.Turks; 2.Pomaks; 3.Bulgarians	2	2	8		12	14.81
1.Turks; 2.Bulgarians; 3.Pomaks	3	2	4		9	11.11
1.Bulgarians; 2.Turks; 3.Pomaks	6	1	1		8	9.88
Turks			6		6	7.41
1.Muslims; 2.Christians	1	1	2		4	4.94
Pomaks		4			4	4.94
1.Turks; 2.Pomaks			3		3	3.70
1.Pomaks; 2.Turks; 3.Bulgarians		2			2	2.47
1.Turks; 2. Bulgarian-Mohammedans; 3. Bulgarian Christians		1	1		2	2.47
1.Bulgarians; 2.Turks; Bulgarian Muslims belong to Bulgarian group		1	1		2	2.47
1.Turks; 2.Pomaks; 3.Bulgarians; 4.Gypsies			1	1	2	2.47
1.Bulgarians; 2. Turks			2		2	2.47
1.Christians; 2.Muslims			2		2	2.47
1.Bulgarians; 2.Pomaks	1				1	1.23
1.Muslims; 2. Bulgarian-Mohammedans; 3.Protestants			1		1	1.23
1. Turks; 2. Pomaks; 3.Agupti; 4.Bulgarians			1		1	1.23
1.Bulgarians; 2.Pomaks; 3.Turks			1		1	1.23
1.Christians; 2.Pomaks			1		1	1.23
1.Bulgarians; 2.Turks; 3.Bulgarian-Mohammedans;			1		1	1.23

1.Bulgarians; 2.Bulgarian-Mohammedans;		1			1	1.23
1.Turks; 2. Bulgarian-Mohammedans; 3.Christians	1				1	1.23
1. Bulgarian-Mohammedans; 2. Turks; 3.Christians		1			1	1.23
1. Bulgarian Christians; 2. Bulgarian-Mohammedans; 3. Turks		1			1	1.23
1.Pomaks; 2. Few Protestant families		1			1	1.23
Muslims		1			1	1.23
No answer		4	7		11	13.58

Respondents in most of the cases placed their own group on the first place when listing ethnic communities in the municipality. Dividing the population according to ethnicity was much more common than according to religion.

Most common answer among Bulgarian Christians was “Bulgarians, Turks, Pomaks,” followed by “Turks, Bulgarians, Pomaks.” All but one of them placed Pomaks on the third place in the order. One single respondent defined the population in religious terms: “Muslims and Christians.”

Answers of Turks and Bulgarian Muslims were very diverse. Although both groups preferred to put their own community on the first place, or even stated that they were the only community in the municipality (although they most likely had in mind the situation in their villages), all possible combinations occurred in the answers. The most common answer was “Turks, Pomaks, Bulgarians.” Some respondents defined communities in religious terms: “Christians and Muslims.” Bulgarian Muslims were referred to as Pomaks, Bulgarian Muslims or Bulgarian-Mohammedans. In Byal izvor, Agupti / Gypsies were also mentioned. The sole Roma respondent named the following groups: “Turks, Pomaks, Bulgarians, Gypsies.”

2. How would you evaluate relations between various communities on a scale from 1 (excellent) to 5 (very bad)?

Bulgarian Christians:

	Bulgarian Christians/ Turks	Bulgarian Christians/ Bulgarian Muslims	Turks/Bulgarian Muslims
Excellent	4 (28.57%)	2 (14.28%)	2 (14.28%)
Good	2 (14.28%)	5 (35.71%)	3 (21.43%)
Medium	5 (35.71%)	2 (14.28%)	4 (28.57%)
Bad	1 (7.14%)		1 (7.14%)
Very bad			
No answer	2 (14.29%)	5 (35.71%)	4 (28.57%)

Bulgarian Muslims:

	Bulgarian Muslims/ Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims/ Turks	Turks/Bulgarian Christians
Excellent	14 (60.87%)	12 (52.17%)	5 (21.74%)
Good	2 (8.69%)	3 (13.04%)	1 (4.35%)
Medium			3 (13.04%)
Bad			
Very bad			
No answer	7 (30.43%)	8 (%)	14 (60.87%)

Turks:

	Turks/Bulgarian Christians	Turks/Bulgarian Muslims	Bulgarian Christians/Bulgarian Muslims
Excellent	21 (48.84%)	11 (25.58%)	9 (20.93%)
Good	12 (27.91%)	16 (37.21%)	3 (6.98%)
Medium	3 (6.98%)	6 (13.95%)	1 (2.32%)
Bad		1 (2.32%)	1 (2.32%)
Very bad			
No answer	7 (16.28%)	9 (20.93%)	29 (%)

Roma respondent:

Turks / Bulgarian Christians: Good

Turks / Bulgarian Muslims: Medium

Turks / Roma: Very bad

Bulgarian Christians / Bulgarian Muslims: Medium

Bulgarian Muslims / Roma: Very bad

Bulgarian Christians / Roma: Very bad

It is interesting to note that the majority of the Bulgarian Christians evaluate their relations with Turks as medium, while Turks think that they get on with Bulgarian Christians very well. One of respondents explained that most Bulgarian Christians living in Ardino are well educated people, who came to the town from other places – doctors, teachers, members of state administration. Another explanation for the difference is also the fact that Bulgarians feel that they are a minority in the town, while Turks as a governing majority feel more secure and self-confident. The same trend can be observed regarding the relations between Bulgarian Christians and Bulgarian Muslims. Relations among various groups have been described as bad only in few individual cases. These answers were given in Ardino town, where the population is most diverse and there is a greater possibility for appearance of conflict situations.

3. How do you get along with people from other communities?

Bulgarian Christians:

	with Turks	with Bulgarian Muslims	with Roma
Excellent	6 (42.86%)	5 (35.71%)	
Good	6 (42.86%)	7 (50.0%)	1 (7.14%)
Medium	2 (14.29%)	2 (14.29%)	
Bad			1 (7.14%)
Very bad			
No answer			12 (85.71%)

Bulgarian Muslims:

	with Turks	with Bulgarian Christians	with Roma
Excellent	12 (52.17%)	16 (69.56%)	4 (17.39%)
Good	6 (26.09%)	4 (17.39%)	
Medium	2 (8.69%)		
Bad			2 (8.69%)
Very bad			
No answer	3 (13.04%)	3 (13.04%)	17 (73.91%)

Turks:

	with Bulgarian Christians	with Bulgarian Muslims	with Roma
Excellent	24 (55.81%)	20 (46.51%)	2 (4.65%)
Good	13 (30.23%)	13 (30.23%)	4 (9.30%)
Medium	1 (2.32%)	1 (2.32%)	2 (4.65%)
Bad		2 (4.65%)	
Very bad			
No answer	5 (11.63%)	7 (16.28%)	35 (81.39%)

Roma respondent:

with Bulgarian Christians: Excellent

with Turks: Excellent

with Roma: Excellent

with Bulgarian Muslims: Very bad

Total:

	with Bulgarian Christians	with Bulgarian Muslims	with Turks	with Roma
Excellent	41 (61.19%)	25 (43.10%)	19 (50%)	7 (8.64%)
Good	17 (25.37%)	20 (34.48%)	12 (31.58%)	5 (6.17%)
Medium	1 (1.49%)	3 (5.17%)	4 (10.53%)	2 (2.47%)
Bad		2 (3.45%)		3 (3.70%)
Very bad		1 (1.72%)		
No answer	8 (11.94%)	7 (12.07%)	3 (7.89%)	64 (79.01%)
Total	67	58	38	81

Results show that personal relations are evaluated higher than inter-group relations, difference being in one or even two point-marks. In general, however, the same tendency as in the previous question can be observed also here – Bulgarian Christians tend to evaluate their relations with persons from other groups less favorable than vice versa. Most respondents did not evaluate their relations with Roma because there was no Roma community in the municipality (with the exception of the small group of Agupti in Byal Izvor village).

4. What do you think about the other ethnic communities? What are their main characteristics?

Bulgarian Christians:

	Characteristics
Turks	Hard-working (6); united (3); honest (3); good (2); peace-loving (1); traditionalist (1); faithful friends (1); wonderful (1); understanding (1); ambitious (1); helpful (1); people you can count on (1)
Bulgarian Muslims	Hard-working (8); united (2); responsive (1); honest (1); envious (1); double-faced (1); people who have suffered much (1)
Bulgarian Christians	Divided (3); hard-working (3); lazy (3); envious (2); honest (1); good (1); pitiful (1); desperate (1); less willing to help (1); dishonest (1);
Roma	“There are no Roma here. Roma are there where life is good and where there is train.” (1)

Bulgarian Muslims:

	Characteristics
Turks	Hard-working (4); good (2); honest (2); good friends (2); hospitable (1); “they isolate us and speak only Turkish” (1); “they think they are better than us, they are arrogant” (1).
Bulgarian Muslims	Very hard-working (6); honest (2); open-hearted (1); envious (1); with the most difficult life (1).
Bulgarian Christians	Good (4); wonderful people (1); excellent (1); respected (1); friends (1); correct (1); same as us (1); not very hard working (1); not so good (1); arrogant (1).
Roma	Good people (1); rejected by everyone else (1); lazy (1).

Several respondents noted that all people are good, hard-working and hospitable.

Turks:

	Characteristics
Turks	Hard-working (18); good (5); hospitable (4); honest (4); religious (1); modest (1); well-meaning (1); kind (1); respectful of other religions (1); intelligent (1); “they don’t complain” (1); truthful (1); united (1); having good neighbourly relations (1); loving their land (1); “not as united as before” (1).
Bulgarian Muslims	Very hard-working (9); good (6); honest (2); double-faced (2); religious (1); intelligent (1); good neighbours (1); dishonest (1); divided (1); greedy and without character (1); underdeveloped (1); mean (1); “pretend to know everything” (1).
Bulgarian Christians	Good (13); same as Turks (4); hard working (2); honest (2); intelligent (1); friends (1); more open than Turks (1); hospitable (1); well ordered (1); tolerant (1); exact (1); correct (1); good-natured (1); non-envious (1); lazy (1); “they don’t respect their country” (1); “some are nationalists” (1).
Roma	Good (1); thieves (1); lazy (1); liars (1); cunning (1); hardworking (1).

The Roma respondent described Turks as “nice people, hard-working,” but also as “not good friends and envious.” Bulgarian Christians are for him “the nicest people, friends,” but also sees them as “lazy.” He views Bulgarian Muslims as “bad people, good for tobacco growing only.” Gypsies are for him the “nicest people – they eat, drink, have fun, but are also lazy.”

The answers to this question deeply reflect a number of stereotypes and prejudices through which separate communities evaluate themselves and others. Self-evaluations are as a rule the most positive, while the majority of negative characteristics is associated with other groups. Each community has therefore placed itself on the highest place in the ethnic hierarchy. The only exception is a very notable negative self-reflection among many Bulgarian Christians, which is a result of the fact that they feel dissatisfied and without perspective due to the limited social, economic and governing resources they now have in the region. Many respondents from all these groups noted that we should not divide people according to ethnicity, because there were good and bad people everywhere, and that all people in the region were the same, “we are all good people.”

5. Which communities are minorities in your municipality?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
Bulgarians	12	4	20		36	32.73
There are no minorities		8	10		18	16.36
Bulgarian Muslims / Pomaks	3	6	5	1	15	13.64
Turks		1	4		5	4.55
Roma	1		4		5	4.55
Christians		1	3		4	3.64
“Turks are not minority in the municipality, but in the state they are”	1				1	0.90
Protestants in the village Padina		1			1	0.90
Don't know	1	5	8		14	12.73
No answer		8	3		11	10.0

Note: more than one answer could be given

The majority of the respondents named Bulgarian Christians as minority in the municipality, with Bulgarian Muslims in the second place. A very popular answer was also that there were no minorities in the municipality. However, as the next questions will show, this is quickly forgotten when the issue of minority rights is raised, as all groups tend to speak about their own group as a minority (in the case of the Bulgarian Christians as a local and in the case of Turks as a national minority). Certain hesitation can be felt among Bulgarian Muslims – a significant majority of respondents from this group did not decide to name their own group as a minority in the municipality. A most likely reason for this is their apparent unwillingness to be perceived as a minority – a term, which is alien to their vocabulary and probably, carries a pejorative connotation.

6. Why do you think that a given ethnic group that lives in your municipality is a minority?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
Language	9	9	11	1	30	24.59
Religion	6	9	11	1	27	22.13
Size of the group	3	4	17		24	19.67
Culture	5	7	10	1	23	18.85
Customs and tradition	3		6		9	7.38
Don't know			1		1	0.82
No answer	1	1	6		8	6.56

Note: more than one answer could be given

Results show that for both Muslim and Bulgarian Christians language is the main minority marker, while for Turks it is the size of the group. Respondents who gave more than one answer usually combined language and religion.

7. Do you believe the minority rights are respected in your municipality?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
Fully respected	5	10	22		37	45.68
Partially respected	4	3	4	1	12	14.81
“We are not a minority, but we are oppressed by our own people from the MRF.”			7		7	8.64
Depends on the ethnic community	2	2			4	4.94
Depends on the political affiliation		1			1	1.23
Not respected at all	2	1	1		4	4.94
There are no minorities in our municipality		1			1	1.23
Don't know	1	1	6		8	9.88
No answer		4	3		7	8.64

The most common opinion among all three groups is that minority rights are fully or partially respected. This belief is most categorically expressed by the Turkish community. Only a few respondents stated that the rights were not respected. Despite the fact that Turks are a majority and that they possess almost complete administrative power in the municipality, several Turkish respondents expressed their dissatisfaction over bad governance. In this sense, the absolute power of a single political party can be identified as one of the most visible precondition for potential minority rights violation. And if Bulgarians see such situation as natural due to the ethnic composition of the municipality, a part of the Turkish community finds this situation to be very painful, because “it comes from our own people.” It is obvious that most respondents have their own perception about what minority rights include, and which is different from the official perception or from EU standards, and they link minority rights issues with questions of bad governance and low democratic standards.

Legal framework and existing mechanisms

8. Which services are provided by your municipality in regard to minority rights protection and promotion?

Bulgarian Christians:

1. Good information (1)
2. Administrative services (1)
3. Repair of the church in Ardino (1)
4. No services (6)
5. Don't know (6)

Bulgarian Muslims:

1. “We receive everything the law guarantees us.” (1)
2. No services (8)
3. No answer (3)
4. Don’t know (11)

Turks:

1. Social assistance and care for municipal infrastructure (3)
2. Repair of the churches and mosques (2)
3. Turkish language section in the local newspaper (2)
4. “Municipality protects our religious and all other rights.” (2)
5. Excellent administrative services (1)
6. “They provide services only for their relatives.” (1)
7. “There is no need for such services because we are all equal under the law.” (3)
8. No services (13)
9. Don’t know (16)

The Roma respondent believes that the municipality provides no special services for protection of minority rights.

The most important finding from this group of answers is that two thirds (67.9%) of the respondents believe either that the municipality provides no special minority rights related services, or they are not aware of such services. The majority of other people, who did list certain services, to a large extent confused other services provided by the municipality (mostly social ones) with minority services, and most of their answers could therefore also be counted towards “no services” / “don’t know” group.

9. To what extent are these possibilities used by minorities?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
Frequently	2		3		5	6.17
Not very frequently	6	1	4	1	12	14.81
Insufficiently	1	1	4		6	7.40
Used only be certain people			1		1	1.23
“If you know a person in the municipality, you use the possibilities.”		1			1	1.23
Not used at all		1			1	1.23
Don’t know	5	14	23		42	51.85
No answer		5	8		13	16.05

Again, around two thirds of respondents stated that they did not know or gave no answer.

10. Did the situation change during the last several years in regard to minority rights?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
It changed to better	3	3*	18		24	29.63
It remained the same	3	3	6		12	14.81
It changed to worse	6	11**	10	1	28	34.57
Don't know	2	2	6		10	12.34
No answer		4	3		7	8.64

* One respondent noted that a comparison was made with a period 15 years ago.

** Seven respondents explained that they have social-economic situation in mind (loss of employment, poverty).

Two smaller communities shared a pessimistic view, while the majority of Turks believed that the situation changed for the better. It should be noted, however, that most respondents answered this question having in mind above all their social-economic situation, and not the concrete situation regarding the minority rights. When explaining why the situation got worse, they gave the following reasons: impoverishment, unemployment, closure of mines. Appearance of inter-ethnic tensions and rising nationalism (here respondents commented the “Ataka” party) are above all a result of the high unemployment and low social status.

11. Do you know any cases when minority rights of certain citizens were violated?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
Yes	7*	7**	2		16	19.75
“We are not a minority, but they violate our rights”			8		8	9.88
No	6	10	22	1	39	48.15
Don't know	1	2	8		11	13.58
No answer		4	3		7	8.64

* Examples given: unjustified lay-offs; non-transparent bids and tenders; administration staff used Turkish language when speaking to Bulgarians

** Most respondents again referred to social-economic issues (example: “My pension is only 25 EUR. Aren't my rights violated then?”)

Results show that Bulgarian Christians are the only community where significant number of people believes that minority rights are being violated. However, most of the examples they provided have social-economic character, which can only sometimes be interpreted as a deliberate act of ethnic discrimination. In some cases, the reason is clearly a personal conflict. A large group of respondents of Turkish community from village Borovica complained that although they were not a minority, their rights were violated by the village mayor.

12. In what minority-related cases would you ask for help?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
Employment	7*	9	12		28	30.77
Access to information	5		6		11	12.09

Legal help	3	3	5		11	12.09
Documents issuing	2	1	11		14	15.38
Social benefits		1	2		3	3.30
Health care			1		1	1.10
Would not ask for help	2		3		5	5.49
Don't know	1	6	6	1	14	15.38
No answer	1	3			4	4.39

Note: more than one answer could be given

* Some respondents complained that they did not get a job because they were not Turks.

All three groups perceive employment as the main problem for which people would seek assistance. Answers given by Bulgarian respondents show that they often link employment problems with ethnicity, feeling that Turks are given advantage over them in finding employment due to the fact that the dominant political force in the municipality is the MRF, which is widely seen as “Turkish” party.

13. Do you perceive the public administration as helpful in regard to minority rights?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
Very helpful	3	2	10		15	18.52
Sometimes helpful	5	4	11	1	21	25.92
Not very helpful			4		4	4.94
Not helpful at all	6	4	4		14	17.28
Don't know		9	5		14	17.28
No answer		4	9		13	16.05

Bulgarian Christians and Bulgarian Muslims give a predominantly negative evaluation about the administration work, while most Turks see its performance regarding minority rights in a positive light, although they also have certain critical remarks, mostly linked to cases of nepotism and favoritism, and bad governance.

14. Do you have any recommendations for the municipal administration in regard to minority rights?

Most respondents had difficulties with coming up with concrete recommendations.

For Bulgarian Christians, the most important thing is that the administration treats all the people as equal, regardless of their ethnicity, and that it helps those who are in difficult situation. Some said that the administration should not become “completely Turkish” and that quota principle should be introduced.

Bulgarian Muslims stressed that the municipality should do more to increase the employment possibilities of the population so “people will be able to remain in their villages.” Two respondents stated that even if they had recommendations, nobody would listen to them.

Most Turks recommended that administration should be closer to the minority, and that they should be more united and work for the benefit of all. More attention should be also given to employment policy and health care. Administration should communicate with people more

often, but not only in pre-election periods. Administrative services also need to be improved. Many respondents demanded that the administration did more to fight corruption and to prevent cases of electoral fraud (for example older people are tricked into voting for a certain party).

15. What would you do when you have information that someone's minority rights are being violated?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
Report to the police	3	3	5	1	12	13.48
Report to an international organization	3		7		10	11.23
Report to the municipal organs	2	7	23		32	35.96
Report to the village mayor		6			6	6.74
Report to the court			1		1	1.12
Report to the media			1		1	1.12
Report to the appropriate state official		1	1		2	2.24
Depends on the situation			1		1	1.12
I would do nothing	7	2	3		12	13.48
Don't know	1	2	3		6	6.74
No answer		2	4		6	6.74

Note: more than one answer could be given

16. Which international organizations can be helpful for minority rights implementations?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
EU	8	5	10	1	24	20.69
Helsinki Committee	7	11	16	1	35	30.17
NATO	5	2	5	1	13	11.20
OSCE	4	1	2	1	8	6.89
UNHCR	2	1	2		5	4.31
Amnesty International			1		1	0.86
International Court			1		1	0.86
Council of Europe			1		1	0.86
Would not turn to any of them		4			4	3.45
Don't know	4		9		13	11.20
No answer		4	7		11	9.48

Note: more than one answer could be given

Respondents from all groups relatively easily identify the names of EU and the Helsinki Committee, which are consequently the most popular answers. Yet, they seem to have little knowledge about the mechanisms for protection of minority rights and how they could actually ask for assistance in concrete cases of rights violation.

17. Have you ever turned to any of them?

Only one Christian Bulgarian (she contacted an international organization to notify them about a case of animal rights violation) and three Turks have ever contacted such organizations (one Turk added that he contacted the Helsinki Committee, but his problems were financial and not related to minority rights or ethnic issues).

18. Who would you contact if your rights were violated?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
The Court	9	2	1		12	12.90
The Police	2	4	10	1	17	18.28
The municipal organs	2	3	17		22	23.66
An international organization	1	1	1		3	3.22
Informal community leaders	1	1	9		11	11.83
The village mayor		7	2		9	9.68
An appropriate state official			2		2	2.15
No one		2	2		4	4.30
The family			1		1	1.07
Depends on the situation			1		1	1.07
Don't know		3	5		8	8.60
No answer			3		3	3.22

Note: more than one answer could be given

These answers show that trust in the municipal administration is highest among the Turks, while Bulgarians prefer the judicial system as an arbiter. This shows very clearly to how big extent the citizens' trust in the administration depends on its ethnic composition.

19. Have you ever turned to the municipal administration for protection of your rights?

Three Bulgarian Christians, two Bulgarian Muslims, 8 Turks and 1 Roma have turned to the administration for protection of their rights, but after additional explanations provided by respondents, it became clear that most of these cases have nothing to do with minority rights. Namely, the reasons given were the following: assistance for rebuilding the wall, which has collapsed; assistance for finding employment; assistance for finding accommodation; request for child allowance; information on elections.

20. If not, why not?

Bulgarian Christians explain that they do not turn to municipality authorities in connection with protection of their rights because they do not trust them or because they are ineffective. Bulgarian Muslims fear that there is no one there who would listen to them. A few Turkish respondents also said that the administration was inefficient.

21. Does discrimination exist concerning employment of minority members?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
Yes	7	5	9		21	25.93
Depends on the minority	3	3	2	1	9	11.11
No	4	9	18		31	38.27
Don't know		6	11		17	20.99
No answer			3		3	3.70

The difference in opinion between Bulgarian Christians and other two groups can be explained with different employment strategies. Bulgarian Christians are more prone to seek employment in state and municipal administration, however such possibilities are limited. Since Turks dominate in the administration, many Bulgarians believe Turks are given unjustified advantage over them.

22. Are there any cases of discrimination by the municipality towards the minority members?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
Yes	6*	3	3		12	14.81
Depends on the minority	3	3			6	7.41
No	4	7	23	1	35	43.21
Don't know	1	6	13		20	24.69
No answer		4	4		8	9.88

* Mostly cases of finding employment

23. Do you think that you are treated equally compared to other citizens?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
Yes	6	10	28	1	45	55.55
No	5	5	5		15	18.52
Don't know	2	3	8		13	16.05
No answer	1	5	2		8	9.88

24. Does discrimination exist concerning education for members of minorities?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
Yes		3	2		5	6.17
Depends on the minority	2		1		3	3.70
No	12	15	34	1	62	76.54
Don't know		3	3		6	7.41

No answer		2	3		5	6.17
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25. Are there any measures for integration of the minorities by the local government?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
Yes	2	1	14		17	20.99
There are some measures, but they are insufficient			1		1	1.23
Depends on the minority	1				1	1.23
Such measures are not needed	1		1		2	2.47
No	5	5	12	1	23	28.39
Don't know	4	12	10		26	32.10
No answer	1	5	5		11	13.58

* Examples: cultural events, joint celebration of holidays, newspaper, folklore groups of various ethnic groups.

26. Do local media promote tolerance and cultural pluralism?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
Yes	4	6	15		25	30.86
Rarely	1	2	1		4	4.94
No	4	2	4	1	11	13.58
Don't know	5	10	17		32	39.50
No answer		3	6		9	11.11

27. Did local media report on cases when the municipal administration did something to protect / to violate the minority rights?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
Very often	5	1	4		10	12.35
Rarely		3	11	1	15	18.52
Only when they protect rights	1				1	1.23
Never	6	1	3		10	12.35
“There are no such problems”			2		2	2.47
Don't know	2	14	18		34	41.98
No answer		4	5		9	11.11

The answers lead to the conclusion that local media do not pay much attention to these issues. There are two reasons for this: 1) the lack of serious problems concerning minority rights violations in the municipality; 2) the tradition or “strategy,” developed decades ago, to deal delicately with issues of inter-ethnic relations in ethnically diverse areas. Another reason for a large number of “don't know” answers is that a large number of respondents do not read the local newspaper regularly.

28. How do the local media present the situation regarding the minority rights?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
Objectively	5	2	11		18	22.22
Not very objectively	2	3	2	1	8	9.88
They are biased	5	1	5		11	13.58
Positively			1		1	1.23
“There are no such problems”			3		3	3.70
Don’t know	2	13	16		31	38.27
No answer		4	5		9	11.11

29. Which media are the most important for minority rights protection?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
TV	14	20	25	1	60	56.07
Radio	2	8	7		17	15.89
Newspapers	1	6	6	1	14	13.08
Internet		4	4		8	7.48
Don’t know			8		8	7.48

Note: more than one answer could be given

30. Do you think that the minority rights would be better implemented if the minority representation in the municipality council is better / broader?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Total	%
Yes	11	12	13	1	37	45.68
No	2	5	18		25	30.86
Don’t know	1	4	8		13	16.05
No answer		2	4		6	7.41

A significant number of respondents had difficulties understanding the point of this question and stated that representation should be a result of elections, which is a democratic way, unlike the quota principle. A few Turkish respondents noted that the situation simply could not be any better, since 18 out of 21 municipal councilors were of Turkish origin, again forgetting who was actually a minority in the municipality.

Suggestions

31. Do you have any recommendations for the municipal administration?

Most respondents had difficulties in coming up with concrete recommendations.

Bulgarian Christians:

- Four respondents were very critical, stating that “nothing can be improved with this administration” and that things can change “only after 20 years.”
- Five stated that they had “no recommendations.”
- Four selected “Don’t know” option.
- Only one respondent had concrete recommendations: the administration should continue its cooperation with the NGO sector and trust it more.

Recommendations of Bulgarian Muslims:

- the municipality should provide more information to the citizens;
- administration should work more objectively on the problems;
- to provide more jobs;
- more objectivity in the employment policy of the municipal administration

Recommendations of Turks:

- administration should do more to help those who are socially weak;
- equal access to employment and health care;
- better communication with the administration;
- administration should provide more information;
- a special department for citizens’ complaints should be opened in the municipality;
- administration should work more efficiently;
- administration staff should treat everyone nicely;
- administration should not make divisions among people (political, ethnic, rich/poor);
- higher transparency in the work of the administration;
- administration should keep its promises and not deceive people;
- administration should not visit us only before the elections;
- more investments;
- create more jobs;
- to make our town and villages more beautiful;
- some complained that even if they made recommendations, nobody would pay attention to them.

32. What chances and concrete possibilities do you see for further integration of minorities?

Most people responded with “I don’t know.”

Bulgarian Christians distanced themselves from this issue, saying that they “will take care of their own problems.” The majority of younger respondents expressed their intention to leave the region and seek employment either in the interior of the country or abroad. The only

concrete recommendation was that trainings should be organized, which would provide people with better chances for finding employment.

Bulgarian Muslims expressed their hope that Bulgaria's accession to the EU would improve the situation. They recommended that steps be taken to create more jobs in the region and to provide more information on employment possibilities to the citizens.

Turks believed that the state should assist the mountain regions. Other recommendations were that the young should be given better education possibilities; that children should have more possibilities to practise various sports. Other stated that "we are fully integrated" and that "we have no minority problems." Still others explained the lack of concrete recommendations by saying that even "if something is done here, it will be only on paper" and "everyone must attend to himself."

33. What would you suggest in order to improve the situation in the field of minority rights?

The most common answer is again "I don't know."

Bulgarian Christians suggested that those in power should listen to ordinary people more often. Some stated that the situation regarding minority rights is well developed and needs no improvement.

Bulgarian Muslims again stated that more jobs should be provided and that more attention should be paid to ordinary people. There was also a suggestion that the municipal administration should be appointed "from outside."

Turks gave the following recommendations:

- better possibilities for studying one's mother tongue;
- better Bulgarian language education in the Turkish populated villages;
- free profession of religion;
- better conditions for employment;
- law should be equally strict with everyone;
- understanding should prevail over nationalism;
- instead of stressing the minority rights, human rights should be strictly respected;
- administration should communicate more with the people;
- improvements should be made in local health care and infrastructure.

The three ethno-religious groups living on the territory of Ardino municipality are aware of the characteristics that bring them together or draw them apart. There is a certain ambiguity in the Bulgarian Muslims' attitudes, since they are aware of their middle position. They are seen as a border group also by the Bulgarian Christians and the Turks. The younger and middle-aged generations are more willing to demonstrate a Bulgarian identity. The elderly (both Bulgarian Muslims and Turks) would like to see their group identity well-preserved; often they oppose the so-called "mixed" marriages, which are a growing tendency. **The younger people often declare that "youngsters do not make a difference between Bulgarians, Pomaks and Turks", that "there are no minorities here, we are the same", or that "we have never been divided, the state policy was trying to divide us".**

These two tendencies – the first one is capsulation in one's own group and the second one is opening towards the other groups – display the complex and ambivalent processes taking place inside the different communities. We can also observe the transformation of previous ethno-cultural groups into new social-professional structures. This phenomenon is more typical of the brain-workers (doctors, teachers, businessmen), although, driven by common sense and pragmatism, many others insist on "not dividing the people". Another factor influencing these changes has been the high labor mobility in the recent years, including working abroad, which faces people with new and very different realities.

The research confirmed that there were no preconditions for serious ethnic or religious conflicts in this municipality. The potential risks of ethnic tensions related to possible discrimination of minorities have diminished and receded into the background. Their place has been taken by more pressing problems of the day, such as failures to observe the democratic rules of government, social and economic issues, etc. As one of the respondents has put it: "nobody can make us get into a fight, especially after we witnessed what happened in Yugoslavia".

However, there are certain tensions and the reasons behind them are predominantly social. One of the most serious issues is the high level of unemployment and a lot of people are forced to search employment outside the municipality or even abroad. The Turkish emigrants go mainly to Turkey and Western Europe. The Bulgarian Muslims move to bigger towns, rent agricultural land in the plains or move to Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece. **Under these circumstances, it is not difficult to construe a refusal to be given a job in the municipality or public administration as minority discrimination.** The belief that "it is impossible to get a job unless you are a close relative of some influential politician or a MRF functionary" is quite common.

The political changes at the end of 20th century led to swift changes in the administrative composition of Ardino municipality – from predominantly Bulgarian at the beginning of the nineties it has turned into predominantly Turkish. This transition can be explained by the large number of retirements and the substitution of the administrative personnel with younger people. **The Bulgarians themselves admit that their children "are escaping" to bigger towns in search of professional realization and very few are still living in Ardino. "Naturally, when there are no Bulgarians left, the jobs will be taken by Turks".** At the same time, some of the interviewees think that the attempt to substitute the administration with MRF members is an intentional policy.

It is worrying that many Bulgarians do not regard the local administration as theirs and try to distance themselves from it. They feel marginalized and not in their power to influence the social processes. As one of the young interviewees put it, "we are the minority here, our opinion is a drop in the ocean, and you cannot row against the tide". Frustrated by the lack of perspectives, the Bulgarian youngsters draw attention to the fact that

most of their peers have already gone abroad or to the big cities while “we are still here, but that’s for now – we are also planning to leave, there’s nothing for us here”.

Representatives of the three researched groups share the opinion that the administration does not communicate enough with the public. It is certainly necessary to diversify the forms of communication, which will give the citizens the feeling that they really participate in the policy-making processes. Another often mentioned problem is the lack of information. The people in the villages complain that they do not receive enough information about the EU programs and funding. They also believe that there are no clear mechanisms of controlling the work of the local administration. **The respondents suggest the creation of a special department at the municipality, which will be responsible for the public relations and dealing with people’s questions and problems.** This better publicity will diminish the worries that the administration treats people differently (according to their ethnicity, party affiliation or family connections) when it comes to getting jobs, obtaining contracts or approving projects.

The results presented in this study outline the main tendencies in the relationships between the different ethnic and religious communities and may help in formulating the regional policy for a better integration of minorities. **It is obvious that there is a need to amend some of the methods of the local governance. The great number of concrete demands and recommendations that have been recorded during the study can be used by the municipality authorities as an incentive to optimize their work for the benefit of all people.**

IV. Administrative self-evaluation

Profile of the respondents:

Gender division:

Men	Women
26	24

Ethno-religious division:

Turks	Bulgarian Muslims	Bulgarian Christians
32	15	3

Age groups:

15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
1	14	18	13	4

Education level:

Secondary	Higher
23	27

General

1. Which ethnic and religious minorities live in your municipality?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
1.Turks; 2.Bulgarians; 3.Pomaks	1	2	7	10	20
1. Bulgarians; 2. Turks; 3. Pomaks		3	6	9	18
1. Turks; 2. Pomaks; 3. Bulgarians	1	1	3	5	10
1.Bulgarians; 2.Turks; 3.Bulgarian-Mohammedans		1	4	5	10
1.Muslims; 2.Christians; 3.Bulgarian-Mohammedans		2	3	5	10
1.Christians; 2.Muslims; 3.Bulgarian-Mohammedans		2	2	4	8
1.Pomaks; 2.Bulgarians; 3.Turks		2		2	4
1.Bulgarians; 2.Turks; 3.Pomaks; 4.Roma			2	2	4
1.Turks; 2.Bulgarian Muslims; 3.Bulgarian Christians	1			1	2
1.Turks; 2.Bulgarians; 3.Bulgarian-Mohammedans			1	1	2
1.Turks; 2.Bulgarians; 3.Pomaks; 4.Roma; 5.Christians; 6.Muslims			1	1	2
1.Pomaks; 2.Turks; 3.Bulgarians		1		1	2
1.Muslims; 2.Christians; 3.Pomaks			1	1	2
1.Muslims; 2.Christians			1	1	2
1.Christians; 2.Muslims			1	1	2
1.Muslims		1		1	2

In most of the cases, respondents divided the population according to the ethnicity, while the others preferred ethno-religious division, describing Turks as “Muslims” and Pomaks as “Bulgarian-Mohammedans.” Similarly to the citizen opinion poll, the administration staff also in almost all cases listed all groups living in the area, without paying attention to the fact that some groups are not minorities.

2. How do you get along with people from other communities?

Bulgarian Christians:

	with Bulgarian Christians	with Bulgarian Muslims	with Turks	With Roma
Excellent	3	3	3	1
Good				1
Medium				
Bad				1
Very bad				
No answer				

Bulgarian Muslims:

	with Bulgarian Christians	with Bulgarian Muslims	with Turks	with Roma
Excellent	10	10	10	1
Good	5	5	5	1
Medium				
Bad				
Very bad				1
No answer				12

Turks:

	with Bulgarian Christians	with Bulgarian Muslims	with Turks	with Roma
Excellent	22	18	24	5
Good	10	10	5	2
Medium		4		2
Bad				2
Very bad				
No answer			3	21

Total:

	with Bulgarian Christians	with Bulgarian Muslims	with Turks	with Roma
Excellent	35 (70%)	31 (62%)	37 (74%)	7 (14%)
Good	15 (30%)	15 (30%)	10 (20%)	4 (8%)
Medium		4 (8%)		2 (4%)
Bad				3 (6%)
Very bad				1 (2%)
No answer			3 (6%)	33 (66%)
Total	50	50	50	50

Results show that in general, the administration evaluates their relations with representatives of other ethno-religious groups with higher marks than the ordinary citizens.

3. Do you believe the minorities need special rights for their protection?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Yes		4	13	17	34
Only in certain fields	1	3	16	20	40
No	2	8	3	13	26

Legal framework and existing mechanisms

4. Which services are provided by your municipality in regards to minority rights protection and promotion?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Access to information	3	4	12	19	27.14
Documents issuing / translating	3	3	12	18	25.71
Legal assistance	2	2	7	11	15.71
Administrative services		6	4	10	14.29
Social benefits		1	1	2	2.86
Equal rights and treatment			2	2	2.86
Assistance for finding employment			1	1	1.43
Cultural events			1	1	1.43
No such services		1	4	5	7.14
Don't know		4	7	11	15.71

Note: It was possible to give more than one answer

A striking difference in the answers of citizens and administration on this question shows that citizens are either not aware of the services provided by the municipality, or view the services listed by the administration as regular obligations, which are not specifically linked with the minority rights.

5. To what extent are these possibilities used by minorities?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Frequently	2	7	8	17	34
Not very frequently		2	9	11	22
Insufficiently	1	1	3	5	10
Don't know		3	12	15	30
No answer		2		2	4

In general, administration believes that minorities use the services at their disposal, although there is some hesitation over how frequently this happens. This answer is again quite different from the citizens' opinion, which is much more reserved.

6. Did the situation change during the last several years in regard to minority rights?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
It changed to better	3	8	22	33	66
It remained the same		6	8	14	28
It changed to worse		1	1	2	4
Don't know			1	1	2

According to the administration, the situation has categorically changed for the better in the recent years. Citizens were again much more pessimistic in their evaluation, although it must again be noted that in large majority of cases, they were not evaluating the situation regarding the minority rights, but the general social-economic situation.

7. In which cases members of the minority community ask for help regarding minority rights?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Documents issuing	2	7	21	30	30.61
Access to information	2	4	22	28	28.57
Legal help	1	3	18	22	22.45
Employment discrimination	1	2	8	11	11.22
Translation and legalization of documents	1		2	3	3.06
Don't know		3	1	4	4.08

Note: It was possible to give more than one answer

According to respondents, the minorities most often seek information and help in issuing of various documents. It is interesting to note that a large number of Turks turned to the administration for legal aid. Employment, which is the most important problem for citizens, is not very prominent in the questionnaires of the administration.

8. What chances and concrete possibilities do you see for further integration of minorities?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Organization of joint cultural activities	3	14	24	41	50.62
Facultative multicultural education in schools	3	5	24	32	39.51
Joint celebration of holidays			2	2	2.47
Respect of traditions of other groups			1	1	1.23
Active participation in social-economic life			1	1	1.23
Organization of seminars			1	1	1.23
“Everyone is integrated”			1	1	1.23
Don't know			2	2	2.47

Note: It was possible to give more than one answer

Employees from all groups view education and culture as the most important fields, which can contribute to further integration of minorities.

9. What services beyond the minimum existing legal obligations does your municipality/department offer?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Documents issuing	2	3	13	18	26.47
Giving consultations and advise		3	7	10	14.70
Providing access to information		2	7	9	13.23
Organization of joint cultural activities			3	3	4.41
Administrative services		2		2	2.94
Helping to fill up various forms		1		1	1.47
Kind and effective service		1		1	1.47
Creating conditions for equal opportunities	1			1	1.47
Facultative multicultural education in schools			1	1	1.47
No such services		1	1	2	2.94
No answer		1	1	2	2.94
Don't know		5	13	18	26.47

Note: It was possible to give more than one answer

10. How much do you utilize documents on minority rights in your daily work?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Very often		7	1	8	16
Only in certain cases	1	1	8	10	20
Rarely	1	4	15	20	40
Never	1	3	7	11	22
Don't know			1	1	2

11. Would you find it useful if trainings for minority rights were provided?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Yes	1	11	26	38	76
No	2	3	1	6	12
Don't know		1	5	6	12

12. Do you have problems or do you encounter interference from the central government concerning minority rights?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Very often			1	1	2
Sometimes		4	9	13	26
Rarely	2	5	3	10	20
Never	1	6	16	23	46
Don't know			3	3	6

13. Have there been any cases of discrimination by the municipality towards the members of minorities recently?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Yes		2		2	4
No	3	12	28	43	86
Don't know		1	4	5	10

Unlike the administration, which overwhelmingly believes there were no cases of discrimination, citizens believe that such cases have occurred.

14. If any discrimination did occur, in which fields did this happen?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Employment		2	3	5	10
Education		1	2	3	6
Religion		1	1	2	4
Language				0	0
Don't know	1	5	4	10	20
No answer	2	6	22	30	60

15. Has any member of the municipal public administration been sanctioned for violation of minority rights?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Yes				0	0
No	3	12	28	43	86
Don't know		3	4	7	14

16. In your municipality, do members of minorities have the right to use their mother tongue at school?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	
Yes	3	12	32	47	94
No		2		2	4
Don't know		1		1	2

17. Has the municipality taken additional measures to prevent dropping out of school of minority members?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Yes	1	7	16*	24	48
No		6	6	12	24
Don't know	2	2	10	14	28

*Examples: preservation of small-sized classes in village schools; financial assistance for families with many children; free meals for the pupils; organized transport of village children to schools; social benefits for poor families; conversations with the parents of children, who do not go to schools.

18. Which possibilities for minority participation/ integration do exist in the responsibility of your department?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Providing access to information	1	4	7	12	17.65
Documents issuing	1	2	6	9	13.23
Administrative services for citizens		1	4	5	7.35
Organization of joint cultural activities		1	4	5	7.35
Creating conditions for equal opportunities	1		2	3	4.41
Giving consultations and advice		2	1	3	4.41
Translation for those who do not speak Bulgarian		1	2	3	4.41
Mediation in disputes		2		2	2.94
Celebration of religious holidays and festivities			1	1	1.47
Learning of mother tongue		1		1	1.47
Organization of seminars		1		1	1.47
Legal aid			1	1	1.47
No such services		1	3	4	5.88
No answer	1	1	3	5	7.35
Don't know		4	9	13	19.12

Note: It was possible to give more than one answer

19. In which areas has the local government worked for minority integration?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Education	3	7	23	33	29.73
Culture	1	8	21	30	27.03
Social assistance	1		8	9	8.11
Religion	1	1	6	8	7.21
Extra-curriculum activities at schools			5	5	4.50
Employment	1	1	2	4	3.60
Sport			4	4	3.60
Language		1	2	3	2.70
Media			2	2	1.80
Administrative services			1	1	0.90
Political life			1	1	0.90
Holidays and festivities			2	2	1.80
All areas		1	1	2	1.80
Don't know		5	2	7	6.31

Note: It was possible to give more than one answer

20. Do minority members exercise the possibility for integration and participation?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Yes	1	8	20	29	58
Sometimes	2	4	9	15	30
No		1	2	3	6
No answer		1		1	2
Don't know		1	1	2	4

21. What are the mechanisms for providing information to the public in your municipality?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Local radio	2	3	13	18	15.38
Municipal newspaper	2	6	26	34	29.06
Media in general		3	3	6	5.13
Oral information	1	1	4	6	5.13
Information panel in the municipal building	1	7	16	24	20.51
Information panel in the town's center	1	3	11	15	12.82
Web-site of the municipality			1	1	0.85
Open access to the municipal council sessions			1	1	0.85
NGOs			1	1	0.85
Village mayors			3	3	2.56
No such mechanisms			1	1	0.85
“Various mechanisms”		1		1	0.85
Don't know		3	3	6	5.13

Note: It was possible to give more than one answer

22. Have there been cases when minority representatives were denied access to information?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Yes			1	1	2
Very few cases		2	1	3	6
No	3	12	28	43	86
Don't know		1	2	3	6

23. Do representatives of minorities use their right to access to information?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Yes	3	11	26	40	80
No		2	3	5	10
Don't know		2	3	5	10

24. What mechanisms exist in your municipality for representation of minority members in the municipal council?

Bulgarian Christians answered that such mechanisms are provided by law and that all minorities are represented in the municipal council.

Bulgarian Muslims share this opinion. Two respondents added that elections were the mechanism for representation. Two other respondents stated that there were no official mechanisms, while one added that minorities did not have enough representation in the municipal council.

Turks answered that all minorities were represented in the municipal council (11 respondents). In seven questionnaires, the elections were cited as the mechanism for representation. Five respondents said that there was no such mechanism.

Note: According to Bulgarian legislation, the sufficient electoral result is the only mechanism for securing representation in the municipal council. There is no quota principle for minority representatives.

25. Do minority members have the right to address the municipality in their mother tongue?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Yes	2	13	25	40	80
No	1		6	7	14
Don't know		2	1	3	6

26. In what fields do the members of minorities exercise their rights?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Employment			2	2	1.64
Religion	2	4	18	24	19.67
Culture		3	13	16	13.11
Education	1	6	18	25	20.49
Learning of mother tongue	1		7	8	6.56

Use of minority language		3	9	12	9.84
Participation in government		1		1	0.82
Administrative and social services			2	2	1.64
Politics		1	1	2	1.64
Media in minority language		1	6	7	5.74
Folklore events	1	1		2	1.64
Holidays and festivities			1	1	0.82
Traditions and customs	1		2	3	2.46
All fields		4	1	5	4.10
No answer			1	1	0.82
Don't know	1	5	5	11	9.01

Note: It was possible to give more than one answer

27. Is legislation on inscriptions / topography on minority languages implemented on local level?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Yes		1	2	3	6
No	2	9	26	37	74
Don't know	1	3	4	8	16
No answer		2		2	4

Note: There is no legislation in Bulgaria, which would sanction the use of minority languages for inscriptions / topography.

Suggestions

28. Is the distribution of competencies between local, regional and national level sufficiently defined?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Yes	1	6	13	20	40
Not yet	1	6	15	22	44
No	1	2	4	7	14
Don't know		1		1	2

29. If not, then in which areas it is not sufficiently defined?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Jurisdiction of municipalities		1	4	5	9.09
Lack of special minority legislation			4	4	7.27
Infrastructure	1	1		2	3.63
Coordination between citizens, employees and management		2		2	3.63
Administrative services			2	2	3.63
Social services / aid	1			1	1.82
Health care			1	1	1.82
Social policy			1	1	1.82
Property regulation			1	1	1.82
Education			1	1	1.82
Protection of environment			1	1	1.82
All fields			1	1	1.82
No answer	2	8	16	26	47.27
Don't know		3	4	7	12.73

30. Do you have any suggestions for resolving the problem concerning competencies?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Special legislation for the work of administration with minority representatives			3	3	6
Larger jurisdiction of municipalities, backed by necessary funding	1		1	2	4
Administration management should treat ordinary employees and citizens better		2		2	4
Financing of local infrastructure projects		1		1	2
Health care, education and social policy to be under the jurisdiction of the central government, other fields - under the jurisdiction of municipalities			1	1	2
No suggestions		1	1	2	4
No answer	2	6	15	23	46
Don't know		5	11	16	32

Note: It was possible to give more than one answer

31. Which steps would you propose to improve the knowledge about minority rights on local level?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Training on minority rights for minority members		6	18	24	30
Strict implementation of existing anti-discrimination laws	1	4	19	24	30
Training on minority rights for the public administration	2	3	12	17	21.25
Seminars or workshops organized by the municipality		3	8	11	13.75
Better education among minority communities	1			1	1.25
No answer		1		1	1.25
Don't know		1	1	2	2.50

Note: It was possible to give more than one answer

32. What chances and concrete possibilities do you see for further integration of minorities?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Organization of joint cultural activities	3	12	27	42	56.0
Facultative multicultural education in schools		5	20	25	33.33
Active participation in social and political life			1	1	1.33
Increased minority participation in state institutions			1	1	1.33
Organization of workshops for minorities			1	1	1.33
Joint celebrations of holidays and festivities		1	1	2	2.66
No answer		1	1	2	2.66
Don't know		1		1	1.33

Note: It was possible to give more than one answer

33. What concrete measures do you suggest in order to prevent discrimination of minority members?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Anti-discrimination legislation	2	8	27	37	61.67
Training the public administration	1	6	9	16	26.67
Better education of minorities	1			1	1.67

Political representation of minorities			1	1	1.67
No answer		1	1	2	3.33
Don't know		2	1	3	5.0

Note: It was possible to give more than one answer

34. How do you think the situation regarding the education of minorities could be improved?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Equal opportunities for children from all minority groups	3	5	21	29	40.28
Special projects for improving the education of minorities		7	16	23	31.94
Improvement of overall situation of minorities		5	10	15	20.83
Scholarships for minority children		1	1	2	2.78
Free meals and textbooks for children from poor families	1			1	1.39
No answer		1		1	1.39
Don't know		1		1	1.39

Note: It was possible to give more than one answer

35. Are there any concrete measures that you would undertake to improve the integration of minorities on local level?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Encouraging minority representatives to get better knowledge of official languages	3	8	27	38	54.29
Organizing public events to promote culture and other values of minority groups	2	11	14	27	38.57
Mixed classes in schools	1			1	1.43
Programs for increasing employment possibilities			1	1	1.43
Scholarships for minority children			1	1	1.43
Don't know		2		2	2.86

Note: It was possible to give more than one answer

36. What measures do you suggest for improving the access to information for members of minority communities?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Better communication of administration with citizens	2	7	18	27	28.42
Through local media	1	5	19	25	26.31
Normative measures	1	3	16	20	21.05
Policy of open municipality	1	5	11	17	17.89
Special bulletin dealing with minority issues	1	1	3	5	5.26
Don't know		1		1	1.05

Note: It was possible to give more than one answer

37. How do you think the representation of ethnic minorities should be improved?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Reserved seats in the Municipal Council		2		2	3.45
Proportional employment policy in the administration	1	5	9	15	25.86
Local "minority issue" offices	2	3	6	11	18.97
Advisory council consisted of minority members	1	8	17	26	44.83
Don't know		1	3	4	6.90

Note: It was possible to give more than one answer

38. Are there any concrete measures that the municipality can offer to improve the use of mother tongue of member of minorities?

	Bulgarian Christians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Total	%
Better implementation of existing laws	2	4	13	19	35.18
Additional by-laws and regulations	1	4	10	15	27.78
No need for special measure in the municipality		1		1	1.85
Better knowledge of official language is more important			1	1	1.85
Programs and scholarships for minority children from poor families			1	1	1.85
Don't know		6	11	17	31.48

Note: It was possible to give more than one answer

In the second part of this report we presented the opinions of representatives of the local administration on the question of minority rights protection. Keeping in mind the official position one is holding is a factor that cannot be avoided when filling in such questionnaires. This factor explains why there are differences between the answers to the same questions given by the local officials or the local citizens. **An illustration to this is the more positive assessment of the inter-ethnic relations, given in the officials' questionnaires, as well as the very positive response to the question whether and to what extent the people take advantage of the municipality initiatives to protect the minority rights. The overall assessment of the situation in the last several years is also different – more often than not the citizens express negative opinions, while the officials give positive answers.** We can also find a different interpretation of the problem of possible discrimination in the municipality. The citizens' questionnaires contain more remarks in this respect, as well as concrete examples of violation of minority rights. **Of course, there are critical remarks in the officials' answers as well, but it must be noted that they are fewer. What is more, they are made by the younger municipality officials and mostly by those with a higher education.**

The opinions of both the citizens and the officials shared in the interviews create the impression that there are no ethnic tensions in the municipality. When there are critical opinions, they concern mostly the employment policy, which is regarded by many respondents from different ethnic and religious groups as ethnically or politically biased.

There is something common between the questionnaires of the municipality officials and the citizens – they agree on the main spheres of minorities' integration, defined in broad terms as “education and culture”. Respondents pointed out that people already took advantage of different rights:

- **usage and education in one's mother tongue,**
- **free professing of one's religion,**
- **free access to information.**

The question of what exactly the municipality is doing in order to protect minority rights needs further clarification and publicity and the municipality administration should use a variety of communication channels to reach the people (local newspaper, local radio stations, notice boards, etc.).

In both the citizens' and officials' questionnaires there are a lot of suggestions how to optimize the work of the local administration. Some of the important suggestions are as follows:

- **strict application of the already existing laws concerning the civil rights and liberties;**
- **organization of training on minority rights issues for the people from the minorities and the representatives of the local administration;**
- **organizing of joint cultural events;**
- **more transparency and publicity regarding the work of the municipality and its policies;**
- **establishing of Consultative Council involving representatives of all ethno-religious groups;**
- **objective and transparent employment policy;**
- **better access to information for citizens;**
- **improvement of communication between citizens and the administration;**
- **creating a special department in the municipality dealing with complaints and publishing relevant information in the local newspaper.**

The Focus group, involving several distinguished representatives of the civil society in Ardino municipality, which was organized after the completion and distribution of the draft report, was very useful in the preparation of the final report. The focus group helped the researchers hear a variety of opinions regarding the findings of the fieldwork. The focus group in general evaluated the draft report as an accurate reflection of the processes and attitudes among the population and stressed its objectivity. The participants confirmed the findings of the report that the most problematic issues in the municipality were the hardships of the economic transitions and the bad state of the infrastructure. They stressed that the inter-ethnic problems and tensions, which characterized the beginning of the transition period in Bulgaria, were no longer present.

One of the more problematic fields, according to the focus group, is the insufficient and inefficient information policy of the municipality. A good example for this is that the municipality has organized and implemented a number of activities (trainings, cultural and sport events, etc), which remained unknown for the general public, as shown by the fact that respondents in the public opinion poll recommended that municipality should organize such activities.

The Focus group repeated the concern expressed by some respondents in the public opinion poll that some of the questions, asked in the course of the project, were in fact creating preconditions for division of people in the municipality, while some other questions were difficult for understanding for some common people from the villages. Participants also noted that the possible answers, provided to certain questions in both the public opinion poll and the administrative self-evaluation, were directing respondents towards certain previously made conclusions and did not give them a real possibility to make their own suggestions/recommendations.

In the course of the research, a number of recommendations for the municipal administration were made. If these recommendations are carefully considered and implemented, they will not only contribute to the creation of a better climate of mutual trust and understanding among the different ethno-religious groups, but will also stimulate a better and more efficient dialogue between the municipality administration and the citizens.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION

Based on the results of the fieldwork conducted in Ardino municipality, IMIR makes the following recommendations to the administration of Ardino municipality:

1. Implementation of information campaign among the citizens, aimed at better understanding of and familiarity with the issue of minority rights, as well as at explaining which rights and obligations citizens have according to the Bulgarian legislation and the existing international and EU standards.
2. Improvement of the quality of administrative services, provided to the citizens by the municipal administration and the village mayors. The administration should also increase its capacity for providing the citizens with the necessary methodical and judicial assistance for understanding and utilizing the national and international legal texts, dealing with minority rights.
3. Organization of trainings and seminars on minority rights issues for the employees of the municipal administration.
4. The investment policy of the municipality should be to the largest possible extent formed and shaped through organization of public discussions and through active involvement of the local NGOs and other civil society organizations to ensure maximum transparency and public support, and to actively engage the local population in an effort to improve the unfavorable social-economic situation in the municipality.
5. Consolidation of the tradition of tolerance and coexistence among different ethnic and religious groups through organization of a series of folklore, cultural and sport events and through joint celebrations of religious and other festivities.
6. Better information service of the citizens through improvement and diversification of the program of the local radio and municipal newspaper "Ardinski glas."
7. Introduction of problems and topics related to minority rights in an appropriate way in classes of class teachers in municipal elementary and secondary schools.
8. Formation of the Advisory Council on Minority Rights, including representatives of all ethno-religious communities living in the municipality.
9. Better and more active dialogue of the administration with the citizens, especially the ones belonging to smaller communities, in order to increase their trust in the administration and reassure them that the administration is not favoring the largest ethnic group in the municipality, especially regarding its employment and investment policies.