

The dynamic nature of interethnic attitudes in Bulgaria: a social psychological perspective 2013-2016

**SNSF MEYS
Bulgarian - Swiss research
programme**

RESEARCH TEAM

- consists of junior and senior scholars from the Institute of Social Sciences-University of Lausanne (UNIL) and IPHS-Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS)

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Research problem

- The *general aim* of this project is to deepen the understanding of social psychological processes underlying interethnic attitudes and prejudice of both the Bulgarian majority and of the two major ethnic minorities (Roma and Turks) in contemporary Bulgaria.
- We study their views on new minorities, that is, different immigrant group (such as Russians and Arabs)

We are interested in:

- Prejudice dimensions, stereotype contents and their historical roots
- Antecedents of interethnic attitudes: intergroup contact, ethnic and national identification
- Relationships between ethnic and national identification
- Perceived discrimination and collective victimhood among the two minorities

Impact of research

- In Bulgaria (BG)
 - Understand regional disparities within BG
 - Training of junior scholars in BG
 - Dissemination to policy makers and NGOs working on minority questions
- Scientific impact
 - Joint study of majority and minorities
 - Theories developed in Western Europe and US → contextualisation and refinement for BG context
 - Mixed methods

Methods

Three sources of data are used.

- Study 1 – employs existing secondary social survey data (e.g., International Social Survey Programme - ISSP, Eurobarometer, European Social Survey - ESS).

Methods: Study 2

- Study 2 is a cross-sectional survey ($N \approx 1200$) across three regions in Bulgaria with differing proportions of Roma and Turkish minorities (i.e., Kardzhali, Montana, Stara Zagora). This sampling design provides the opportunity to investigate the effects of three region-based intergroup contexts on interethnic attitudes. Questionnaires are administered in face-to-face structured interviews among the Bulgarian majority and the Roma and Turkish minorities.

Study 2- related activities

- The development of the survey questionnaire required quite a long time, as its 3 versions (for the 3 studied ethnic groups) were revised many times, after continuous discussions between the two teams, incl. experts from Bulgaria, Switzerland and other countries. Now, it is being finalized, after two pretests.
- The negotiations with the agencies required longer time than scheduled, still the fieldwork will start in early June (right after the interviewers' trainings in the 3 cities).

Methods: Study 3

- Study 3 - semi-directive interviews among both majority and minority groups are conducted in parallel to the survey. The interviews assess rhetoric repertoires, everyday discourse on dimensions of prejudice, prevalent stereotypes about ethnic groups, etc. The interviewing will start in early June 2014 in Stara Zagora.

Timetable

- The project runs from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2016;
- 23-27 April 2013 - a *kick-off meeting* was held in Sofia - defining the tasks, getting to know each other, presenting some project-related Bulgarian research;
- 14-16 October 2013 - a *second meeting* - discussing the advancements on the survey questionnaire development, and secondary data analysis; informal exchanges between PhDs students; sightseeing, incl. a visit to a Roma neighborhood; visiting some cultural events;

Both meetings were held in Sofia (initially one was planned in Lausanne) as it made more sense that the Swiss team travels to Bulgaria so that all the Bulgarian members could participate;

- 16-20 June 2014 – a *third meeting* is planned – discussion and monitoring of progress of the fieldwork (incl. survey and semi-structured interviews) in Stara Zagora.

Open Discussion

- A number of specialists on interethnic relations in Bulgaria and survey methodology were consulted during the Swiss team's visits to Bulgaria: Professor Ilona Tomova, Dr. Ergyul Tair, Dr. Zornitsa Ganeva, Dr. Alexey Pamporov, Dr. Lilia Dimova and Dr. Ekaterina Markova.

Dissemination of project results

- July 4-7 2014 – oral presentation accepted at the 37th ISPP Annual Scientific Meeting in Rome (IT) Visintin, E. P., Green, E. G. T., Bakalova, D., Zografova, Y. (2014). Support for multiculturalism in contemporary Bulgaria: The beneficial effects of national identity and ethnic minorities' presence.
- July 9-12 2014 – poster accepted at the 17th EASP General Meeting in Amsterdam (NL) Visintin, E. P., Green, E. G. T., Bakalova, D., & Zografova, Y. (2014). Support for multiculturalism in contemporary Bulgaria: The beneficial effects of national identity and minority presence.
- Zografova and Andreev presented a secondary data analysis (relevant to Study 1) on Eurobarometer data on the issue of discrimination against vulnerable groups (such as Roma, etc.) at a national forum

Collaboration & Communication

- The Bulgarian team on the project has been highly involved in all stages of preparation of the survey questionnaire for the three ethnic groups (ethnic Bulgarians, Bulgarian Turks and Roma, Study 2); in the search for indicators for secondary data analysis from ISSP, ESS and Eurobarometer (Study 1); and in the development of the semi-structured interview (Study 3).
- The PIs - E. Green and Y. Zografova, and the members of both teams keep daily online contact (by e-mail and skype) to discuss in details ongoing project issues -development of models and methods, sampling and methodology, negotiation and pre-fieldwork coordination with the survey agency, preparation of guidelines and trainings for interviewers); the PhD dissertations; project website updates etc.

Lessons learnt in the 1st project year:Challenges

- The most difficult (i.e. time-consuming) issue has turned out to be the need of translation of Bulgarian literature sources in English and the need of repeated two-way translations (EN to BG; BG to EN) of all reviews, notes, comments, and changes made in the process of development of the questionnaires and the interview.

The aim was to achieve

- Agreement on terminology between the teams and max. possible both semantic and structural correspondence of the questionnaires content in both languages;
- "It is quite a jungle to balance between societally relevant questions, that are understandable for a wide range of groups, are not offensive, not too long, and that tap theory driven social psychological concepts."E.Green

Lessons learnt in the 1st project year: Strengths

The most positive project developments (incl. milestones):

- We have designed high-quality research methods; and developed them in international collaboration;
- We have build excellent team and interpersonal relations of trust in and between our teams;
- The PhD students' dissertations are advancing and they have been highly involved in all stages of the project implementation
- We have been widening our international network of contacts through involvement of experts on behalf of both partners and of scholars from third countries.

Lessons learnt in the 1st project year: Opportunities

- Our methods and the mixed-method approach premise a mine of data and multifaceted analyses of interethnic attitudes in the country.
- Dissemination of project results at national and international forums and Swiss-Bulgarian co-authorship of papers submitted to international journals.
- The foundations of further collaborations and development of future research projects have been laid.

Thank You for Your attention!

<http://www3.unil.ch/wpmu/interethnicbulgaria/>