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BULGARIAN LANGUAGE SUNDAY SCHOOLS IN THE UK FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND THE HOST COUNTRY

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Abstract. This paper gives an insight into the development of the Bulgarian Language Sunday Schools in the UK as promoters of the mother tongue and culture. The focus is on their features and benefits. In particular, the most important issues related to these Bulgarian organisations (such as the increase of the number of the schools and the reason behind this, their connections with mainstream schools and some of their problems) are discussed. At the same time, it is acknowledged that most of these issues need further in-depth studies.

*Keywords***:** Bulgarian Language Sunday Schools; United Kingdom

Introduction

The topic of Sunday Language schools, also referred to as supplementary schools, falls within the interdisciplinary studies and it is a subject of sociology, ethnology, psychology, theories of education and language education. Thus, in various studies these schools are discussed through the sociolinguistic's view or linguistic ethnography. One of the most researched issues is students' identity and its changes. There is also a persistent and growing interest amongst researchers in bilingual education. These schools attract media attention as well.

The studies about the supplementary language schools in the UK can be divided into two general parts - theoretical[1)] and empirical. A large number of the latter are focusing on one or more national communities. The researchers are investigating mainly the benefits that the minority ethnic children have from this supplementary education including "provision of social networks; space to negotiate identities; transmission and celebration of aspects of their 'culture' and 'space'".[2)] Another benefit of this additional education is helping "pupils to make successful transitions from school to further and higher education and employment".[3)]

In Bulgaria, the research related to the Bulgarian Language Sunday Schools in the UK is partly covered by a broader topic on Bulgarian schools abroad as institutions for "maintaining contact with the Bulgarian language, traditions and

religion"[4] or they fall into the general theme of the Bulgarian emigration and its organisations.[5] In the UK, the most detailed study to date, related to the Bulgarian supplementary schools in London is Antonia Tereshchenko and Louise Archer's paper for Kings College in London.[6]

Bulgarian schools can also be subject of research as part of some ongoing common projects for Eastern European immigration. For instance, such is the project "Here to stay?"[7], that has a main focus on identity, citizenship and belonging among settled Eastern European migrant children and young people in the UK.

In the beginning of the article, the concepts, perspective and practices for teaching a mother tongue in the UK are summarised. Then, the quantitative information about the number of the Bulgarian schools in the country, their increase year-on-year and the context of their creation and purposes are presented. This information is changing constantly, therefore the paper is aiming to show the trends rather than provide fully accurate details. In following section, the focus is on the interaction between Bulgarian language Sunday schools and the mainstream schools in the UK. In addition, important questions regarding the identity of the pupils and how they feel about their learning are discussed. At the end, the effort in recent years for seeking accreditation and recognition of the pupil's language knowledge by the UK educational system, for example, creating the opportunity to take a language exam/ GCSE and A-level/, is also discussed.

Perspective and terminology

It might be expected from a Bulgarian researcher to put an emphasis on the Bulgarian community, how the Bulgarian Language Sunday Schools are developing as part of the educational organisations of the Bulgarians abroad and the state policy of Bulgaria towards them. However, here the topic is explored in a much wider social context of other complementary schools in the UK and the interaction between country of origin and the host country. The processes are also discussed from an insider's position as I am currently a teacher in one of the biggest Bulgarian schools in London and a head teacher in a small provincial school. A significant part of the analysis is based on unstructured interviews with students and personal observations.

A brief account of the terminology used to describe the mother tongue schools is provided below. In Bulgaria as in the UK, there is no commonly accepted name for the schools that are providing an education in a mother language. For the Bulgarian teachers abroad and other participants in the process, they are simply "Bulgarian Schools Abroad". This is reflected even in the name of their own world-wide organisation, which is now well recognised in its attempts to incorporate as many of these schools as possible, and is referred to as the Association of Bulgarian Schools Abroad. On the other hand, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education in his official documents has adopted the name "Bulgarian Sunday Schools".

In the UK, the name "supplementary schools" is widely used, but in the public arena they are also known as "complementary"; "community"; "cultural"; "mother tongue" language schools or "heritage language schools".

In this article the concept "Bulgarian Language Sunday Schools in the UK" is adopted as a description for the supplementary schools that provide education in Bulgarian language and literature, history and geography of Bulgaria, regardless that some schools are operating during the week or on Saturdays. Sometimes, the term Bulgarian Sunday schools, or simply Bulgarian schools in the UK is employed.

In the UK, there is a strong tradition in providing opportunities for creating and operating the mother tongue schools. More than several thousands supplementary schools with various purposes, origin and context exist, and they are creating "a powerful network of grassroots organisations, purpose driven and responsive to the needs of their community".[8)] A positive phenomenon in the UK is the very strong voluntary based educational support for children from parents and other groups of the community.[9)] The largest organization that supports the supplementary schools in the UK is the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education (NRCSE). Its mission is to guide these schools providing information and creating a community. In their words, it is a "national strategic and support organisation for community-led supplementary schools and the wider supplementary education sector across England."[10)]

The British educational system does not organize nor fund mother tongue training. Immigrant children receive extra support in English. In the schools, pupils are taught several modern languages. There are GCSEs and A-levels exams in 21 languages. Bulgarian and other "small" European languages are not included. More than 20 years ago there was A-level examination in Bulgarian language along with other languages. Now, from all Eastern European languages the children can have GCSEs and A-level exams only in Russian and Polish. Mother tongue classes are organized by the immigrant communities themselves mostly on voluntary principles and they fall into the broad group of supplementary schools. There is no regulation for these schools.

Development of the network of Bulgarian schools in the UK – quantitative exploration

During the last few years, the Bulgarians in the UK have created a good network of schools in their mother tongue. This network is very well organized and it incorporates the large Bulgarian community in the UK. To reach this state, we do not have to go back a long way in history.

The first school – the Bulgarian school at the Embassy of Republic of Bulgaria in London[11)] – was established in 1987 and for a long time it was the only one in the whole country. In 2009, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science established a national program "Mother tongue and culture abroad"[12)]. The Ministry started giving small grants and subsidies for Bulgarian language schools abroad

through this program. In the same year, the start-up of new Bulgarian schools in London and in the UK began. The Bulgarian government adopted more advanced mechanisms for financial support in 2011 through the Governmental Decision 334 from 8 December 2011, which boosts further the development of the schools[13]. So the process of setting up the network of Bulgarian schools in the country can be clearly situated in 2009. Since then, in a relatively short period, there have been considerable changes.

The first chart below will show the short-term increasing trends only of the Bulgarian Sunday schools in the UK that are subsidised by the Ministry of education and science through the financial mechanism of Governmental Decision 334 from 2011. These schools are incorporated in the List of the Bulgarian Sunday Schools Abroad[14].

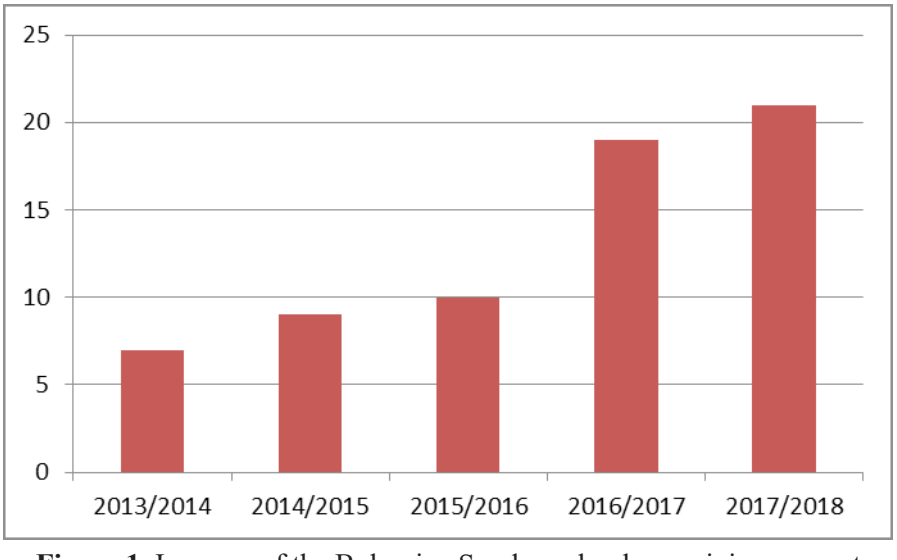

Figure 1. Increase of the Bulgarian Sunday schools, receiving support by the Ministry of the Education through Governmental decision 334 from 8 December 2011.

Although the data for the 2017 – 2018 school year does not include schools' branches, the trend in increasing the number of schools throughout the years is clearly seen. The information becomes even more interesting, when – in order to have a bigger picture - we add to the funded schools their branches and also the unfunded schools with their own branches. The available information used to make the table below is provided by the Association of the Bulgarian Schools Abroad and it is based further on personal research on the Internet.

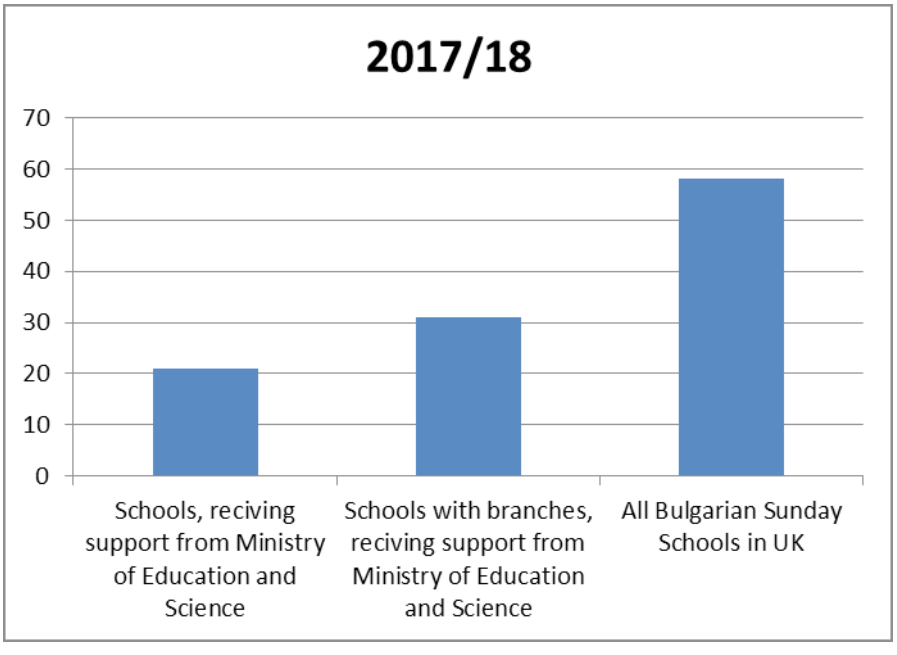

Figure 2. Numbers of all Bulgarian Language Sunday Schools for the school year 2017 – 2018

We can conclude that, currently, more than 55 Bulgarian schools together with their branches are in operation, whether they receive subsidies from Bulgaria or not. Almost half of the schools are not receiving support and one reason for that could be that they don't meet the Ministry's conditions for inclusion in the List of the Bulgarian Sunday schools abroad.

The territorial distribution of these schools is an indicator of the concentration of the Bulgarians in the country. It is not reflected in the map below but, only in London, there are more than 20 Bulgarian Sunday schools, along with their branches.

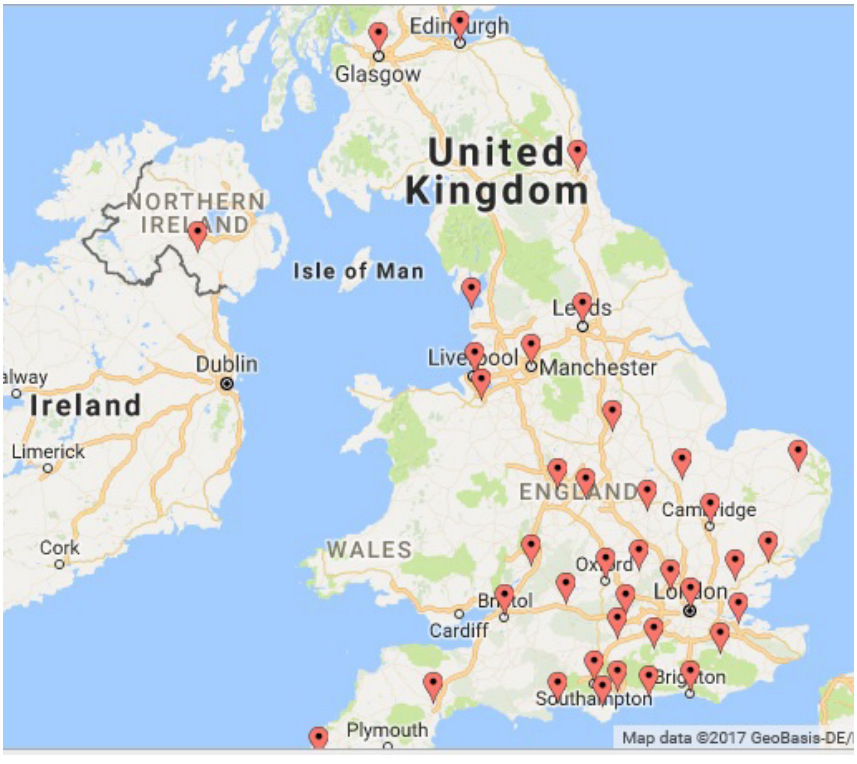

Figure 3. Map of the locations of the Bulgarian schools in the UK as of October 2017

The map shows that the Bulgarian Sunday schools are concentrated in the south of England, where even in small cities such as Aylesbury, Swindon, Basingstoke, Bognor Regis, and Truro have established and operating schools. In the North of England, the network of schools is not so well developed, and even in large cities like Sheffield[15], for example, there are no schools. All in all, there are 38 locations in the UK in which there is evidence that a Bulgarian school is operating.

For better understanding of the data and for some context and comparison, here is some short information about other Eastern European communities and their schools. The Polish community is currently the largest in the UK (more than 1 million) and it has a very good established system of Sunday schools. They are organised under the umbrella of the Polish Educational Society, which is a charitable organization supporting Polish education in the UK. At present, 130 Polish Language Schools work with this association[16]. A full data map of the Polish Sunday schools is published on

its website.[17] Some of the schools are really big, for example, the school in Cambridge has 200 pupils, and the one in Petersborough – 500 students[18].

From the available information, we can summarize that there are some similarities but also big differences between the Bulgarian and the Polish case. Similarities are found in the funding and commitment of the countries of origin. Like the Bulgarian state, „the Polish government part-funds these schools so that returning expat children can slot into their year in a Polish school without too much trouble"[19]. The cited Guardian article describes the organization, peculiarities, and problems of Polish schools, including the motivation and the sense of belonging and identification of young people of Polish descent. They are very similar to the problems of the Bulgarian schools. In addition to the larger number of the Polish community, a significant difference is that the Polish students are able to have Polish Language examinations at GCSE and A-level.

On the other hand, according to the Romanian Embassy in London, the Romanian community in the UK, which is also considerably bigger than the Bulgarian one (it is estimated that 328,400 citizens of Romania and Bulgaria were resident in the UK between 2014 and 2016, of which 78% were Romanian citizens /256,800/ and 22% were Bulgarian citizens /71,700/)[20], has organised only 6 Sunday schools[21]. That means that they don't have a developed network of schools in the UK. There are 9 Sunday schools mentioned on the website of the Romanian Cultural Institute (excluding the Romanian language courses to the Westminster University and UCL).[22] The number of the Rumanian schools is surprisingly low. At the end of 2015, there was a project for establishment of the Institute for Romanian Education Abroad, under the subordination of the Ministry of Education and Research, which through the collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could establish the organization of such teaching units with teaching Romanian language.[23] The project is not implemented. Meanwhile, there are several ways through which Romania is supporting the development of the schools on a project base by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs[24] and the Ministry for Romanians Everywhere[25].

Another interesting fact about the Romanian schools (unlike the Bulgarian ones in the UK) is that some of them are part of the Romanian churches. This practice is valid for some of the Bulgarian Sunday schools in countries like Greece and the USA. The network of Romanian churches in the UK is much better developed. The statistics for all Romanian churches is 48 on the embassy's website[26] and 36 on the Cultural Institute's website[27]. The church parishes are registered as charities and as such they can reclaim an extra 25% in tax on every eligible donation made by a UK taxpayer. Comparing the number of schools and churches and respectively the number of Bulgarian and Romanian schools, it seems that the two neighbouring countries follow different policies to consolidate the community and preserve their culture and traditions[28].

Another example that can be used for comparison is the Hungarian network of Sunday schools. On the website of the Cultural Institute of Hungary in London it can be found information for only 14 Sunday schools[29)], much less than those of the Bulgarian community.

The provided statistics justify the assumption that the Bulgarian schools in the UK have created a good network. The number of the schools has grown considerably over the last 3 – 4 years. It seems that for Bulgarians, the provision of good education to their children continues to be a priority similar to previous historical periods. Until now the changed situation and the less favorable environment after the EU-Referendum and the beginning of the Brexit process have not yet influenced the enthusiasm of the Bulgarian community.

What are the main reasons behind the development of the Bulgarian Sunday schools in the UK? It can be assumed that the number of institutions created in migration is determined by the size of the community itself or its "needs" – whether material, adaptive, or for consolidation, etc.[30)] In the case of Bulgarian Sunday schools in the UK, there is a combination of factors and causes that have led to the observed increase in their number.

Probably the most important reason is the growth of the Bulgarian diaspora in the country. According to researcher Mila Maeva from the Bulgarian Academy of Science, the UK historically is not the traditionally desired destination for Bulgarian emigrants after the Second World War, but the migration numbers steadily increase since 1989, and especially after 2007 when Bulgaria joined the EU. The migration increased even further after 1.01.2014 when the Bulgarian immigrants to the UK received full access to the labor market. Heterogeneity and diversity were among the main features of the Bulgarian community until a few years ago together with the lack of willingness to build their own immigrant structures. Their dispersal in different parts of the country also makes the communication between them very difficult[31)]. However, the situation has changed positively during the recent years, perhaps under the influence of newly arrived Bulgarians.

Different statistics exist on the number of Bulgarians in the UK. The most important source is Office of National Statistics. In its last report, it stated that, in 2016, there were 413,000 Romanian and Bulgarian citizens resident in the UK but the majority (79%) of these were Romanian.[32)]

The statistics of the issued National Insurance Numbers, generally required by any adult overseas national looking to work or claim benefits/tax credits in the UK is often used as important indicator for growing the number of newly arrived people in the UK. The document, shown below, is issued by the Department for Work and Pensions[33)] and shows that for one year until June 2017, 43 thousand National Insurance Numbers were issued to Bulgarian citizens and this is the biggest increase observed for all EU citizens.

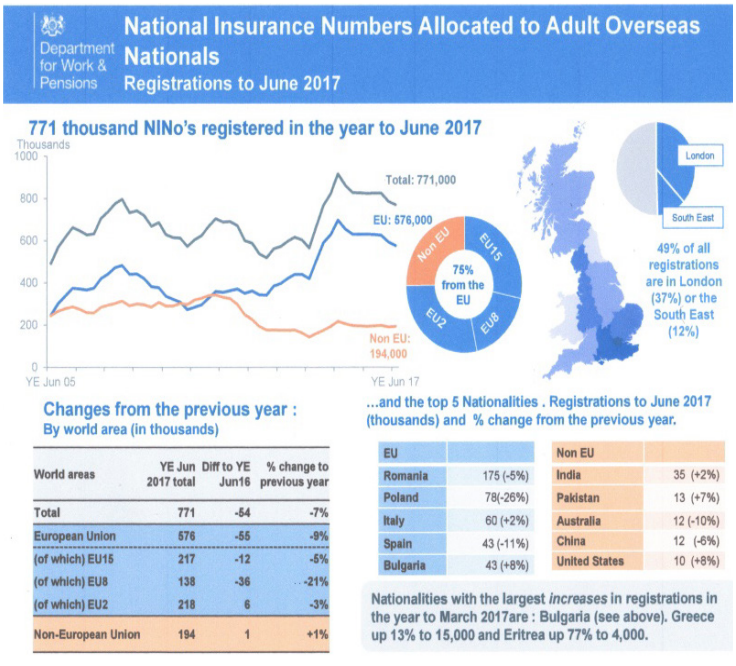

Figure 4. Information about the number of allocated NIN of Bulgarian citizens

Another main driving force for the development of the Bulgarian schools in the UK can be considered to be the increased activities of the Bulgarians in the UK in general. It is related to the willingness of the Bulgarian immigrants to organise in some way after they settled down. One additional factor that played role in development of the educational and cultural institutions is the political activism of the Bulgarians abroad and the chance to get together and unite in order to organise polling stations during the Bulgarian elections. This is important for places outside London as in many of them, where in recent years the community managed to gain the right to open a polling station, later it was followed by the establishment of a school and other Bulgarian cultural activity groups.

Another factor for this development may be the entrepreneurial spirit and motivation of some of the organizers of the schools. If we look at the motivations to start a school, it is possible to confirm the conclusion that they started as initiatives by individuals, in order to give their own children an opportunity for education in Bulgarian language[34], but schools are gradually expanding. Some school managers, using their experience, have found 2, 3 to 5 and more branches to one organization. Most of the schools are LTD companies or CIC (Community Interest Companies); very small numbers of them are charities and there is one school at the Bulgarian Embassy in London.

Undoubtedly, social networks, especially Facebook, play an important role in the consolidation of Bulgarian communities. A lot of Bulgarians in the UK created

local online groups, and as a result, information about plans to open a school in any area can reach quickly the relevant and interested people.

Last but not least, the policy of the Bulgarian state can be recognised as an important factor. My assessment is that without the financial support of the two above mentioned financial supporting mechanisms – the national programme "Mother tongue and culture abroad" and Governmental decision 334 (2011), which give stability, security and direction to the supported schools, the current situation would not be possible. The financial support provided by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education only through the mentioned Governmental decision 334 increased for all Bulgarian Sunday schools abroad from BGN 4 826 064 in 2013/2014 to BGN 7 544 665 in 2017/2018 school year.

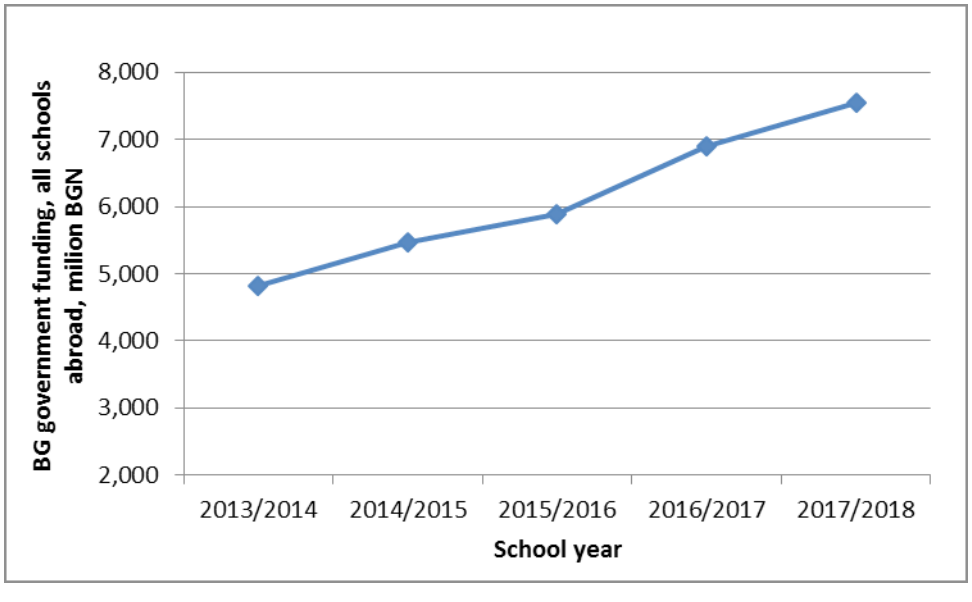

Figure 5. Bulgarian government funding for all Bulgarian schools abroad included in the List of Bulgarian Sunday schools

The funds are provided for schools' permanent needs – rental of premises and purchase of textbooks, as well as payment for teachers. This means that the additional fees paid by the parents, are not very high and, in this way, the education in Bulgarian language can be accessible also for families with financial difficulties.

The creation and management of a Sunday school is connected with a number of difficulties and requires a lot of effort, so the support of the Bulgarian state is very important. In this regard, all newly created schools receive methodological support and advice from the Association of the Bulgarian Schools abroad.[35)] The

Association is organising annual educational conferences and forums in Bulgaria and in other countries, together with the Ministry of Education and Science, the State Agency for Bulgarians Abroad, the Patriarchate of Bulgaria, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Plovdiv University "St. Paisii Hilendarski", and others.

Bulgarian Sunday Schools - purpose and relationship with mainstream schools in the UK

The motivation and goals of the Bulgarian Language Sunday schools are crucial for understanding their development. This section provides more details on how the schools recognise their role in society. It deals with important questions such as "are they confined only in their own grassroots community?", or "are they open to the wider society and other participants in the educational scene?".

All schools that are receiving financial support from the Bulgarian state follow the official school programs of the Ministry of Education, adapted for them, with specified hours of learning and they use approved and adapted textbooks. In all Bulgarian Sunday schools, the children learn Bulgarian language and literature, history and geography of Bulgaria. In addition, many of the schools have extra classes and teach Bulgarian folk dances, art and music. At the end of each year, the pupils receive certificates that are recognized in Bulgaria, and they can continue their education in the same class if and when they return to Bulgaria. This structured approach in the learning process is one of the reasons for some pupils to describe their school as "over-demanding and monotonous, although it lasted only four hours on Saturdays" according to one research of Bulgarian complementary schools.[36)]

The schools which are not funded by the Bulgarian government are free to liaise with parents regarding the curriculum and, often, offer more relaxed program. Nevertheless, the main focus of all schools is on preserving the language and cultural knowledge and traditions. Bulgarian language is recognised as the main 'guard' against the loss of identity. It is acknowledged that the British system and environment are affecting the children's identities, and hence, the Bulgarian community's desire to preserve the mother tongue. One of the main aims of the Bulgarian schools is to provide an environment, where children make friends, know and feel positive about their origin. According to the parents, the schools should offer not only formal training on Bulgarian language and literature, history and geography, but also should create opportunities for children to communicate in their native language. The parents highly appreciate all kind of celebrations, as for instance, the national holidays.

Having shown that the focus of the Bulgarian Sunday schools is on language, the next issue to be addressed here is about the links between the Bulgarian schools and the English schools and educational institutions. Are there ways of linking and combining the mainstream and Sunday schools? Many reports conclude that there are many benefits from the cooperation between them, even the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education reports that mainstream schools

are starting to relate successfully with the complementary schools[37]. It has been recognised, that the Sunday schools play an important role in helping the pupils to improve their attainment. It is even recommended that mainstream schools use supplementary school practitioners as advisers on how to engage with students who are under-performing or newly arrived in the country. They could also ask "supplementary school teachers to develop and implement strategies in how to have more meaningful engagement with parents...".[38] But a number of researchers point out that there is a little evidence of possible overlap between mainstream and complementary sectors despite calls to work together[39].

However, with respect to possible mutual benefits, there is some progress in recent years. The mainstream schools, if they have pupils of Bulgarian descent, are starting to turn to the Bulgarian Sunday schools for literature and advice regarding better adaptation of the pupils. In 2017, for instance, representatives of the Bulgarian Embassy and two head teachers of Bulgarian Sunday Schools (Mrs Snejina Metcheva and Mrs. Milena Vezenkova) held several meetings with secondary school students of Bulgarian descent. The initiative for these meetings came from the English secondary schools and the main request by them was „to come to school and speak with the parents of our Bulgarian children about the importance of school/education and regular attendance"[40].

The most common practice of partnership between the mainstream and the complementary schools is when mainstream schools provide rented premises for the second. Still, Bulgarian schools rarely take part in English projects. A notable exception is the *Vasil Levski* Bulgarian school of Mrs. Milena Vezenkova[41]. Another good example is the *St Ivan Rilski* Bulgarian School in Cambridge. This school takes part in the research for the community language education network: CRiCLE-Net (a project of the Department of Education in the University of Cambridge). The aim of this project is to promote multilingualism and social cohesion in the local community and the wider society[42].

What the young people think about their Bulgarian schools?

This question will be discussed (even if briefly), because the sense of belonging of the students in the Bulgarian Sunday schools is affected by their simultaneous education in two different educational systems – the British and the Bulgarian. Bulgarian parents, with the help of the Bulgarian schools, try to preserve the Bulgarian identity of their children, and to familiarise them with the Bulgarian language, culture and traditions. The schools enable them to feel more connected with Bulgaria as well. The claim that „like mainstream schools, complementary schools also play their part in developing student identities… Our understanding of identity is one of shifting positions constituted by context and participation. We view identities as dynamic and multiple rather than unitary and fixed"[43] is evidenced in the practices of the Bulgarian Sunday schools. Even the children from the first generation of migrants who have spent more time in England and have

had more restricted contacts with other Bulgarians, become bilingual quickly. The practice shows that a few years in English schools are enough for the Bulgarian children to become fully integrated in the British system. The number of years they spend in the British educational system is of great importance for their identity, as well as for their knowledge and motivation to use Bulgarian language and to feel Bulgarian. The fact is that many of the youngest pupils born in the UK who attend Bulgarian Sunday schools, have English as a main language, and some of them have an accent in Bulgarian or speak little or incorrect Bulgarian.

In order to shed light on the children's sense of belonging and on their motivation for attending Bulgarian schools, several written surveys with students were conducted. To the question "Why do I attend a Bulgarian school?" answers of the students in year 3 are varied: "I go to the Bulgarian school because my mom says I need it"; "I want to know how to read and write"; "I go because I have to learn and not to forget the Bulgarian language"; "Because it is important to have a Bulgarian education|; "There I learn new things".

Students in year 5 and 6 answered the question about their identity and how they feel. Some of them are seeing themselves as Bulgarian and British, so there are answers like "I feel 60 per cent British and 40 per cent Bulgarian"; "50 per cent to 50 per cent"; but some say that they feel Bulgarian. There are also answers such as "I feel more English because I lived most of my life in England. Being born Bulgarian does not mean I want to continue being a Bulgarian. I want to have a choice". Most of the students said that they preferred to use English in their communication with their Bulgarian classmates.

Some of the opinions show that the motivation of one part of the students is low and they need incentives and some obvious benefits in order to continue their education for longer in the Bulgarian Sunday schools. It is important to bring out and to show the benefits of knowing many languages and especially of bilingualism. Both the UK mainstream schools and the Bulgarian institutions and media can support this. However, it is sometimes difficult to convince children in areas covered by the Bulgarian Sunday schools to being attending. An important task for schools is to attract new parents and new students because still a large part of the Bulgarian children do not attend a Bulgarian school or leave after one or two years. The reasons are numerous: lack of time, some sort of inconvenience e.g. clashes with other activities, unwillingness of the children to be burdened in their free time, resistance by the children and reluctance to attend a Bulgarian school. The parents sometimes decide against sending their children to Bulgarian School due to the fact that they speak Bulgarian well enough, or the opposite – their children have limited knowledge of Bulgarian and cannot keep up with the pace and the demands of the structured learning.

It will be reasonable to speculate that a major reason why Bulgarian children in the UK do not feel motivated to attend Sunday schools is the lack of some formal benefit for knowing a rarely used minority language. It is usually impossible to

acquire a qualification in these languages. This will be discussed in the next part of the article focusing on the efforts made so far to promote the introduction of GCSE and A-level in Bulgarian.

Recent efforts to introduce GCSE and A-level in Bulgarian

As it was mentioned earlier, of all the spoken languages across Eastern Europe, only Polish and Russian are available for external assessment at GCSE and A-level in the UK. It is clear that "the community languages that get accredited at national examinations are often perceived to have more weight and attract a large number of learners"[44]. However, it is natural for other "small" community languages to seek recognition. During the last few years, an ongoing process of downgrading the possible qualifications of the community languages in England and restricting the list of eligible languages has been witnessed.

The Bulgarian students are asking constantly if it is possible to register for GCSEs in Bulgarian. To answer their request and concern, a group of teachers from the Bulgarian Sunday schools in the UK[45], started a campaign for rising the language status and accreditation in 2015. A petition[46] addressed to the Secretary of State for Education asking for consideration of the possibilities for introducing a Bulgarian GCSE and to re-introduce the A-level qualifications (as such qualification existed 20 years ago) was initiated. The aim was to provide a formal recognition of the additional language skills of young Bulgarians in the same way this is offered to other language communities, like the Polish, Portuguese, Turkish and many others. On our behalf Rt Hon Andrew Smith, then MP for East Oxford, wrote a letter to the Secretary of State for Education. The answer was not positive and was stressed out that "all qualifications are developed by awarding organizations and the process is regulated by Ofqual."[47] Bulgarian Ambassador in London contacted one of the awarding organizations – AQA, but the answer was again not encouraging: "very low numbers of students are entering these qualifications, coupled with varying student ability year-on-year, present real challenges to making valid award… We unfortunately do not believe that we are at this time in a position to develop a sustainable GCSE or A-level in Bulgarian."[48]

At the same time the Association of Bulgarian School Abroad has prepared and submitted a petition49) to the European Parliament with the proposal to be introduced end-of-school exams in all of the official languages of the European Union. According to the petition, such a proposal would guarantee equality among all the official languages and greater mobility for families with children in secondary school.

For students from the Bulgarian Language Sunday schools in UK the only consolation is the possibility to certify language competencies in Bulgarian language under the common European linguistic framework. Among other European, the Bulgarian organization which offers exams in the European Language Framework A2, B1, B2 and C1 is Department of Language Teaching of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Conclusion

The development of Bulgarian Sunday schools in the UK can be seen as an example of building a successful immigrant community with a good network of local organisations. This is a very positive step for the integration and building of close connection between Bulgarians in the UK. It is recognised that these schools are very successful in promoting a sense of identity and belonging to Bulgaria. There, the children are educated in love and pride in bilingualism and belonging to two countries – Bulgaria and the United Kingdom. Thus, the development of the schools has benefits for both countries and the work of organisers, managers, teachers and volunteers can only be praised.

Some of the main problems include: lack of motivation among some members of the Bulgarian community and students; lack of textbooks for children for teaching Bulgarian as a second language (this problem was not discussed above but it exist); still limited dialogue between these schools and mainstream schools, and the absence of certification of students' ability and knowledge in Bulgarian language.

It can also be concluded that it is important to continue exploring the possible introduction of language qualification exams because that will encourage more students to value their home languages and try to master them. At this moment, due to the difficult Brexit negotiations, there is a noticeable increase of uncertainty, and the possibilities for recognition of the Bulgarian language and other small languages seem to be limited.

The help from Snejina Metcheva, Teodora Petranova, Dr Dimitrina Spencer, Filka Ananieva and Dr Krassimir Kirov is gratefully acknowledged.

NOTES

1. See for example: Myers, K. and Grosvenor, I. 'Exploring supplementary education: margins, theories and methods', History of Education, 40, 4 (2011): 501 – 521. (http://eprints.bham.ac.uk/1022/1/Exploring_supplementary_education.pdf)
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НЕДЕЛНИТЕ УЧИЛИЩА ПО БЪЛГАРСКИ ЕЗИК ВЪВ ВЕЛИКОБРИТАНИЯ ОТ ГЛЕДНА ТОЧКА НА СТРАНАТА НА ПРОИЗХОД И НА ПРИЕМАЩАТА СТРАНА

Резюме. Статията дава представа за развитието на неделните училища по български език във Великобритания като популяризатори на майчиния език и култура. Фокусът е върху техните характеристики и предимства. Обсъждат се най-важните въпроси, свързани с тези български организации (увеличаване на броя на училищата и причината за това, връзките им с основните училища, някои от срещаните проблеми). Посочва се, че са необходими допълнителни задълбочени проучвания по повечето от тези въпроси.

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