
**PLANNING AND LEGAL PRINCIPLES IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE - TERRITORIAL
DIVISION OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

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Abstract: Since the adoption by the Second National Assembly (1880) of the first Bulgarian Law on the Administrative Division on the territory of the Principality of Bulgaria, approved by Decree No 317 of June 26, 1880, by Prince Alexander I Battenberg for the formation of districts and districts to this day numerous historical-demographic processes that completely reshape the administrative-territorial division of the Republic of Bulgaria. In 1886, the Urban Municipalities Act and the Rural Municipalities Act were drafted, the focus of these normative acts being entirely directed at the administrative-territorial division of the country.

In 2015 was adopted under number 265 and the newest municipality of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Municipality of Sarnitsa with a population of 4950 people. The municipality consists of 3 settlements - the town of Sarnitsa (administrative center), the village of Pobit kamak and the village of Medeni Polyani. The creation of new municipalities and the development of small and large ones is related to trends such as natural and mechanical population growth, macro and micro climate of the region and economically strong neighboring municipalities and district centers.

The Republic of Bulgaria adopts the NUTS classification prepared by the National Statistical Institute and EUROSTAT in 2000 and applies from the date of accession Regulation 1059/2003 of the European Commission on the NUTS classification.

A new administrative division of the Republic of Bulgaria is in the process of development in connection with the complicated migration processes and the EU requirements for the absorption of the EU funds. This was made clear by the statements of the Regional Minister Lilyana Pavlova (2016) during a forum on Operational Program "Regions in Growth" in Burgas.

After 2023 there will be circumstances for changing the administrative division of the Republic of Bulgaria in line with the new European requirements for the number of the population in one area. This in turn will lead to a merger of areas and a change in the economic picture and socio-cultural aspect of the territory.

Keywords: NUTS classification, new administrative division, EU funds, population growth

Since the adoption by the Second National Assembly (1880) of the first Bulgarian Law on the Administrative Division on the territory of the Principality of Bulgaria, approved by Decree No 317 of June 26, 1880, by Prince Alexander I Battenberg for the formation of districts and districts to this day numerous historical-demographic processes that completely reshape the administrative-territorial division of the Republic of Bulgaria. In 1886, the Urban Municipalities Act and the Rural Municipalities Act were drafted, the focus of these normative acts being entirely directed at the administrative-territorial division of the country.

In the 1900s, Bulgaria was divided into 22 counties, 85 districts and 1,893 municipalities, taking into account the strong balance of the city-village population³⁴⁴.

In the 1960s, new administrative and territorial divisions were introduced, related to the redesign of the existing administrative centers, the elimination of the districts and the introduction of 30 administrative and economic districts with the task to plan and implement a new local policy. In the 1980s, the regulatory framework for the administrative and territorial division of the Republic of Bulgaria was repeatedly amended and impressed, as it implied that in 1987 eight regions were introduced: Sofia, Plovdiv, Haskovo, Bourgas, Varna, Razgrad, Lovech and Mihaylovgrad.

The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria (1991) in Article 135 (2) mentions the text governing the administrative-territorial division and the self-government bodies, as well as the Law on Local Self-Government and Local Administration the meaning of which mayoralties, municipalities and districts remain as administrative units of government.

Article 3 (2) of the Law on the Administrative and Territorial Structure of the Republic of Bulgaria (1995) introduces a new system of settlement of settlements in two types: cities and villages. Settlements such as mining settlements, stations, neighborhoods and cottages are differentiated within the population, such as cities and villages.

³⁴⁴ Atanasov, A. Bulgaria 20 vek: Almanah. S.,1999 g. – str.189

In 1996, a new Law on the Administrative and Territorial Structure of the Republic of Bulgaria was adopted, which regulates the establishment of administrative-territorial and territorial units in the Republic of Bulgaria and the implementation of administrative and territorial changes. According to the current regulatory framework, administrative-territorial units are divided into districts and municipalities³⁴⁵.

The formation of municipalities on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria is related to the presence of a population of over 6000 people in total in the settlements, which will be included in the municipality. In order to form a region, the physico-geographic distinction of the territory and the presence of a city - a traditional cultural and economic center with social and technical infrastructure and transport accessibility to it from the settlements of the region, must be taken into account. The area is a logically next administrative unit that resembles the territory of the capital and in the cities with a population of more than 300 000 people, as well as the cities with a population of more than 100 000, according to a decision of the municipal council of the respective city.

In the Bulgarian legislation it is assumed that the Territory of the settlement is the settlement territory defined by its construction boundaries and the outlying territory determined by the boundaries of the land and the name of the settlement is determined by a decree of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria³⁴⁶.

The existing today 28 regions (Blagoevgrad region, Burgas region, Varna region, Veliko Tarnovo district, Vratsa district, Gabrovo district, Dobrich district, Kardjali district, Kyustendil region, Lovech district, Montana district, Pazardjik district, Pernik district, Plevan district, Plovdiv district, Razgrad District, Rousse District, Silistra District, Sliven District, Smolyan District, Sofia District, Sofia City, Stara Zagora District, Targovishte District, Haskovo District, Shoumen District, Yambol District) were formed with Presidential Decree №1 from 5.01.1999 to validate borders, administrative centers of districts and municipalities included in them (prom. SG. 2 of 08/01/1999), and they form new economic and social centers that shape the overall contemporary image of the Republic of Bulgaria (see Figure 1).

Fig. 1: Administrative - territorial division of the Republic of Bulgaria by districts³⁴⁷



In the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, the area is defined as an administrative-territorial unit for the purpose of conducting regional policy, implementing state government on the ground and ensuring correspondence between national and local interests³⁴⁸.

An administrative center and municipalities are included in the area, which constitute and validate the boundaries of the territory and their geological and historical specifics.

³⁴⁵ Chl.2 of Zakona za administrativno-teritorialnoto ustroystvo na Republika Bulgaria.

³⁴⁶ Chl.18 of Zakona za administrativno-teritorialnoto ustroystvo na Republika Bulgaria.

³⁴⁷ Prebroyavane po oblasti i obshtini. (NSI) <http://censusresults.nsi.bg/Census/> - izpolzvano na 10.02.2018 g.

³⁴⁸ Chl.142 of Konstitutsiyata na Republika Bulgaria

The territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, apart from the existing 28 districts, is divided into 265 municipalities. The term "municipality" is introduced into the legal environment and, by its very nature, covers one or several settlements, using some self-government. The municipalities are characterized by a given territory and a permanent population, which forms the socio-economic aspect of the settlement. It is accepted that the municipality bears the name of the settlement, which is its administrative center. In the Republic of Bulgaria, 265 municipalities have been established, and the Sofia Municipality, because of its size, is an administrative-territorial unit, which has the status of an area.

The municipalities can accept relatively independent parts: settlements (managed by mayoralties) and urban areas. Town Hall is created by a decision of the municipal council after consultation with residents in one or more settlements, which must be more than 250 people.

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The Republic of Bulgaria adopts the NUTS classification prepared by the National Statistical Institute and EUROSTAT in 2000 and applies from the date of accession Regulation 1059/2003 of the European Commission on the NUTS classification. The Republic of Bulgaria has determined the number and scope of units corresponding to the NUTS classification as follows:

- NUTS 2 - planning regions;
- NUTS 3 - Areas;
- LAU 1 (Local administrative units) - municipalities;
- LAU 2 (Local administrative units) - settlements.

By Decree of the Council of Ministers No 145 of 27 May 2000, six planning regions were created in accordance with the NUTS 2 classification as follows:

- North-West Planning Region with the town of Vidin;
- North-Central Planning Region with the city of Rousse;
- Northeastern planning region with center Varna;
- South-eastern planning region with center of Bourgas;
- South-central planning region with the city of Plovdiv;
- South-West Planning Region with Sofia city center.

The mentioned planning regions are approved and regulated in the same way in the Regional Development Act (promulgated in State Gazette No 14 / 20.02.2004)³⁴⁹.

Upon the adoption of the new EUROSTAT system, the country agreed to divide into 2 territorial statistical units at NUTS 1 levels³⁵⁰:

- North Bulgaria covering the existing 3 NUTS 2 planning regions: Northeast Planning Region, North Central Planning Region, Northwest Planning Region;
- Southern Bulgaria, covering the existing 3 planning regions: at NUTS 2 level: Southeastern Planning Region, South Central Planning Region, Southwest Planning Region.

Pursuant to Art. 9, item 9, Art. 7, para. 1, items 6 and 15 and Art. 10 of the Statistics Act concerning Commission Regulation (EC) No 31/2011 of 17 January 2011 amending the Annexes to Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common classification of territorial units a statistical classification of the territorial units for statistical purposes in Bulgaria is defined as follows:

NUTS 1	Code	NUTS 2	Code	NUTS 3	Code
Northern and Eastern Bulgaria	BG3	Severozapaden (Northwestern)	BG31	Vidin Province	BG311
				Montana Province	BG312
				Vratsa Province	BG313
				Pleven Province	BG314

³⁴⁹Further information according to the Common Position of the European Union on Chapter 21 "Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments" (CONF-BG 80/01) - p.2

³⁵⁰ Again there - p.2

				Lovech Province	BG315
		Severen tsentralen (Northern Central)	BG32	Veliko Tarnovo Province	BG321
				Gabrovo Province	BG322
				Ruse Province	BG323
				Razgrad Province	BG324
				Silistra Province	BG325
		Severoiztochen (Northeastern)	BG33	Varna Province	BG331
				Dobrich Province	BG332
				Shumen Province	BG333
				Targovishte Province	BG334
		Yugoiztochen (Southeastern)	BG34	Burgas Province	BG341
				Sliven Province	BG342
				Yambol Province	BG343
				Stara Zagora Province	BG344
South-Western and South-Central Bulgaria	BG4	Yugozapaden (Southwestern)	BG41	Sofia City	BG411
				Sofia Province	BG412
				Blagoevgrad Province	BG413
				Pernik Province	BG414
				Kyustendil Province	BG415
		Yuzhen tsentralen (Southern Central)	BG42	Plovdiv Province	BG421
				Haskovo Province	BG422
				Pazardzhik Province	BG423
				Smolyan Province	BG424
				Kardzhali Province	BG425

NUTS are "regulatory regions" that reflect political will, their boundaries being defined under conditions of population decline, which is considered to correspond to the economically optimal spending of the resources needed to achieve their tasks. They are uniquely defined, recognized in the country and in the EU, relatively stable in terms of their territorial scope, a territory in which certain levels of government exercise their powers (powers)³⁵¹.

The NUTS system is built and based on the population by including the following thresholds: NUTS 1 from 3 to 7 million, NUTS 2 from 800 000 to 3 000 000 and NUTS 3 from 150 000 to 800 000. Under Regulation No 1059/2003, the size of non-administrative units in a single Member State at a given NUTS level must be within the population thresholds and individual non-administrative units may deviate from these thresholds due to certain geographical, demographic, cultural - historical, cultural or economic prerequisites and circumstances.

A characteristic feature of the administrative and territorial reforms carried out in the Republic of Bulgaria is that they have not been carried out in a chaotic way but have been adapted to the specific tasks of each stage of development of the various phenomena and processes in the national territory.

In Art. 26. of the Law on Administrative-Territorial Structure of the Republic of Bulgaria is the change of the boundaries of the district may be done only on the borders of existing municipalities and shall be approved by a decree of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria upon proposal of the Council of Ministers.

Until now, there has only been one change in the regional boundaries and this is the separation of Knezha Municipality from Vratsa District and its accession to the Pleven region. The change was carried out in an order involving all interested persons and institutions from the territory of the municipality in both areas and according to the principles of democratic, consultative and civic-oriented local self-government. In this sense, its order of conduct does not differ in principle from the provisions of the ABART on other ATPs. Consequently, although the regional administration is a deconcentrated structure of the central executive, its relationship with citizens and local development processes is relatively strong. This implies the need for a broad consultative process in the conduct of ATPs at the district level and the order of their execution should not be different from the established procedures in ZADARB³⁵².

³⁵¹ Botev, Y. Planirane na regionalното razvitie v Bulgaria. 2014 g. – str.2

³⁵² Analiz i otsenka na efektivnostta i ratsionalnostta na izvarshvanite administrativno-teritorialni promeni v Bulgaria. S.,2010 – 18 str.

Changes of administrative centers of areas and district names have not been made. A new administrative division of the Republic of Bulgaria is in the process of development in connection with the complicated migration processes and the EU requirements for the absorption of the EU funds. This was made clear by the statements of the Regional Minister Lilyana Pavlova (2016) during a forum on Operational Program "Regions in Growth" in Burgas.

Ljiljana Pavlova states that "Bulgaria is a relatively small country, and the number of municipalities and districts compared to the Central European countries has always been the subject of analysis." The comment is made in a direct context to the European regulation on population numbers and type of services to be provided on the territory of a given area. For the implementation of the current programming period until 2020, the Republic of Bulgaria will meet the requirements, but will then need to be revised as it is likely that we will not respond to the regulation because of population size and migration to large cities.

Currently, Bulgaria divides into 28 districts and "Redrawing" their number will be needed for the preparation of the next programming period. According to Ljiljana Pavlova, Brekitt also plays a part in this decision and "after 2020 Sofia will form a separate region". The current 6 investment planning regions - Northwest, Southwest, North and South Central, as well as the Northeast and South East will be reviewed. These prospects also take into account the current Growth Regions program, which empowers municipalities. It first delegates the right and responsibility to be intermediaries and to identify the projects for which they will receive financial means. At the start of the investment program of the respective municipality will be planned a specific investment, as a result of which the projects are selected and their implementation is monitored. This right is given to 39 large cities, with about 1.5 billion levs, or half of the Growth Regions program by 2020, to be distributed by the municipalities.

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- [6] <http://censusresults.nsi.bg>