

**Question for written answer E-001543/2022
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Angel Dzhambazki (ECR)

Subject: Scandalous statements denying the existence of citizens identifying as ethnic Bulgarians in the Republic of North Macedonia and suggestions that they are a statistical error

The results of the population census in the Republic of North Macedonia were presented on 30 March 2022. The census was a blatant misrepresentation of the Bulgarian community by the State Statistical Office, which stated that there 3 504 members of that community.

Jovan Donev, a former Ambassador to the United Kingdom and currently a lecturer at Skopje University, described this as a 'statistical error'. He argued that these people's rights were insignificant and that their inclusion in the Constitution was completely unnecessary. All of this was aired by the AlphaTV channel.

Our two countries have a common history, which underlies the philosophy of the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Cooperation between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia. Various censuses since the start of last century have shown that Bulgarians have been in the majority in the region of present-day North Macedonia, and now all of a sudden they are a 'statistical error'. Looking back at history, we have to remember that many Bulgarians participated in the creation of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, in the composition of the Anti-Fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia. So why are the media spreading propaganda that the inclusion of the Bulgarian community in the preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia is so terrible?

In view of this:

1. What actions will the Commission take to put an end to anti-Bulgarian propaganda in the media?
2. How will the Commission protect Bulgarians in North Macedonia against marginalisation?