

**Priority question for written answer P-001412/2022  
to the Commission**

Rule 138

**Angel Dzhambazki (ECR)**

Subject: Census in the Republic of North Macedonia

A census of the population of North Macedonia was carried out between 5– 30 September 2021.

It took six months to aggregate the data collected in such a short period, yet the results are a huge misrepresentation. The only ethnic community that has increased severalfold is the Bulgarian community. In comparison – the number of Bulgarians recorded in the 2001 census was 1 417. That growth, however, is not backed up by a pattern of high birth rates. At the same time, the population of all of the other communities has been falling.

There is yet another notable trend that demonstrates the distortion of reality. According to the census, there is a significant imbalance in the number of men and women, but only in the Bulgarian community, where men exceed women by 35%.

According to data provided by the Bulgarian State, more than 100 000 citizens of North Macedonia have obtained Bulgarian citizenship on the basis of their proven Bulgarian origin.

In the context of heightened pressure to begin the negotiation process, I believe that this misrepresentation essentially supports our assertion regarding the discrimination and terror exerted for more than 70 years. It is clear that in a country that has applied to join the EU, declaring oneself to be Bulgarian is a problem.

I therefore ask the Commission:

1. Was the North Macedonian census procedure observed by independent European representatives?
2. When does it intend to deal with the issue of the rights of the Bulgarian community in North Macedonia?