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## **The European Protection of the Minorities and Bulgaria – Contemporary Aspects**

(Summary)

The development of the international legal protection of the minorities and Bulgaria's attitude to these problems with an accent on its European aspects and the period of the current history after the changes in 1989 are analysed in the article. Attention centres upon the discussions at the Conference/Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Council of Europe, as well as upon their results. The general tendency in the context of European integration is to pay ever greater attention to the international law regulation of the protection of persons belonging to the minorities - a fact which finds its most realistic expression in the Framework Convention for the Protection of the National Minorities. The problem rests not so much in the absence of international instruments than in their difficult acceptance and application by the states. Bulgaria's position has been formed under the impact of the accumulated negative on a historical scale in connection with the contradictory extremes in the minorities policy, the fears for national security in the Balkan environment after the end of the "cold war", the new recognition and observance of the polyethnic character of the one-national state, and the interest that has appeared in the Bulgarians abroad. If up to 1989 Bulgaria was categorically in the "company" of states that opposed the expansion of the protection of the minorities, in the early 90s her position began to turn to the centre between the poles of the extreme opponents and the extreme adherents to such an expansion. It was proceeded from the view that there are in Bulgaria ethnic, religious and

language groups and that the governments commit themselves strictly to respect the rights of the individuals belonging to them, in compliance with the international requirements. With her present or past, positive or negative experience in this sphere, Bulgaria has what to contribute to and receive from a United Europe.