

**Culture and Identity in a Migration Society:  
The German-Bulgarian Heritage**

*A case study by Carolin Martinov*

**1. Bulgarians in Germany**

Migration is no exception in Germany: one in four people has a migration background. A total of 319.271 people with Bulgarian roots live in Germany - this means that by far the largest Bulgarian diaspora in Europe is located in Germany (cf. statis-ta: 2019). Many of them are already living in Germany in the second, third or fourth generation. For them, it may sometimes be difficult to answer questions about their identity unambiguously in terms of their origin and culture: The longer the actual act of immigration goes back, the more the idea and cultivation of the culture in which their own ancestors grew up becomes blurred and the more hybridized it becomes with the culture of the current place of life. Nevertheless, the traditions of the culture of origin are also cultivated in Germany: Clubs and cultural associations are the nodal points for this memory, they maintain cultural programs and mutual exchange. Furthermore, festivals contribute to an opening up of migrant associations in and with the German population as a whole and contribute to a vivid cultural exchange.

**2. Associations and institutions of Bulgarian cultural heritage**

Cultural associations or institutions of the Eastern European and Bulgarian culture of remembrance can be found throughout Germany - even in Baden-Württemberg. In this region for example, the Bulgarian Forum *Martenitsa* in Stuttgart or the Southeast European Bulgarian Cultural Institute in Ellwangen try to keep the immaterial Bulgarian cultural heritage alive and at the same time to convey today's Bulgarian culture in Germany. Single museums, among them for example the *Donauschwäbisches Zentralmuseum* (DZ) in Ulm, are sensitizing people to the material culture of remembrance from the Danube region and Bulgaria as well as to the transcultural spaces in Eastern Europe.

These actors are interested in making visible the interfaces of a Bulgarian heritage and offering dialogue on intercultural perspectives. The aim is both to make the different cultures visible in a migration society, to present traditions and works of art from these cultures and to enable communication on concepts such as identity and community in a migration society. For this reason, the addressees of German-Bulgarian cultural work are not only people with a Bulgarian migration background, but also Germans without a migration background. It's about knowledge, communication and exchange.

### 3. Research Question

My case study first presents the causes of Bulgarian migration to Germany and then the various forms of memory culture of Bulgarian communities in its institutionalized form today. For this purpose, I will draw on the institutions mentioned above. In a first step, I will analyze documents and information issued by them to describe their mission and programs in order to determine the goals of their cultural mediation. In doing so, I would like to determine to what extent the common history and heritage of Bulgarian migration is understood as a common (European) or a separate (Bulgarian) heritage. Thus, it will be investigated whether the material and immaterial heritage is understood as a shared or even as a contradictory heritage. In a second step I will conduct interviews with representatives and members of the institutions in order to gain insight into their individual perception of heritage.

### 3. References

Donauschwäbisches Zentralmuseum Ulm (<https://www.dzm-museum.de/>)

Honorarkonsulat Bulgarien: Bulgarische Organisationen in Baden Württemberg (<http://www.honorarkonsul-bulgarien.de/de/bulgarische-organisationen-in-baden-wuerttemberg>)

Bulgarisches Kulturforum "Martenitsa", Stuttgart (<http://www.martenitsa.de/>)

Schaller, Helmut / Sigrun Comati / Raiko Krauß (Hrsg.) (2015): Bulgarien Jahrbuch 2013, München.

Südosteuropäisch-Bulgarisches Kulturinstitut in Ellwangen (<http://www.bulgarisches-kulturinstitut.de>)

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