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**ACQUISITION OF CITIZENSHIP
IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA:
CONSTITUTIONAL AND
INTERNATIONAL LEGAL ASPECTS**

A U T H O R ' S A B S T R A C T

of a dissertation submitted for the award of the
educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

Higher Education Area: 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences

Professional Field: 3.6 Law

Doctoral Programme: "Constitutional Law"

Scientific Supervisor: Prof. D.Sc. Veselin Tsankov

Plovdiv

2026

The doctoral candidate is a full-time doctoral student in the doctoral programme “Constitutional Law” within Professional Field 3.6 Law, Higher Education Area 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, enrolled by Order RD 21-1499 of 18 July 2024 of the Rector of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”, effective as of 1 August 2024. By decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Law, Minutes No. 141 of 2 June 2026, doctoral candidate Todor Ivanov Rogoshev was released from doctoral studies with the right to defend. The dissertation entitled “Acquisition of Citizenship in the Republic of Bulgaria: Constitutional and International Legal Aspects” was discussed and admitted to public defence before an academic jury by the Departmental Council of the Department of Public Law at the Faculty of Law of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” at a meeting held on 23 June 2026, Protocol No. 5.

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The open final session for the defence of the dissertation will be held on 6 October 2026. The defence materials are available at the Faculty of Law of Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” and on the website of the University.

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I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation has a total volume of 390 standard printed pages of 1,800 characters each. It consists of an introduction, five chapters, a conclusion and a bibliography. The exposition is based on an analysis of domestic, international and European legal sources, relevant case law, doctrinal research and practical observations on the functioning of proceedings related to Bulgarian citizenship.

The subject matter of the dissertation is the acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship, examined in its constitutional and international legal aspects. The research is not limited to a description of the current legal framework, but seeks to identify the place of the acquisition of citizenship within the broader system of public law. In this sense, citizenship is examined as a legal status, a legal relationship and an institution through which the lasting legal bond between the individual and the State is established.

The main focus is placed on the modes of acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship, the substantive legal prerequisites, the proceedings before the competent State authorities and the legal consequences of acquisition. Related proceedings are also addressed, including the establishment, loss and restoration of Bulgarian citizenship, insofar as they are necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the institution.

1. Relevance and Significance of the Research

The relevance of the research is determined by the importance of citizenship as one of the fundamental institutions of constitutional and international law. Citizenship is the legal bond through which a person is included in the political and legal community of the State. It is not merely a formal affiliation, but a basis for the exercise of a number of rights, the assumption of certain obligations and participation

in constitutional life. For this reason, issues of citizenship are of particular importance not only at the national but also at the international level.

In contemporary conditions, citizenship has significance that goes beyond the limits of domestic law. The mobility of persons, migration processes, dual citizenship, statelessness and the interaction between national legal systems place the institution in a broader legal context. The State retains the power to determine which persons are its citizens and under what conditions its citizenship is acquired, but that power must be exercised in accordance with the Constitution, international law and European Union law.

The specific subject matter of the dissertation — the acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship — is of particular relevance. In legal theory, citizenship is often examined primarily in its substantive meaning as affiliation, status or legal bond. Its acquisition, however, raises independent questions concerning prerequisites, proceedings, competent authorities, the nature of acts, the possibility of review and the protection of the persons participating in these proceedings. These questions are of marked importance in relation to the significance of the independence of the process.

The issues also have a clear practical dimension. Citizenship proceedings affect the legal status of specific persons and may be decisive for their access to political rights, permanent residence, professional development, participation in public life or protection against statelessness. The acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship also entails the acquisition of citizenship of the European Union, which gives the national legal framework additional significance. This is the particular effect of acquiring Bulgarian citizenship — its significance is not only national, but also European.

A number of issues requiring scholarly research emerge in the current legal framework and its practical application: the content and proof of Bulgarian descent, the scope of privileged naturalisation, the relationship between State discretion and

the rights of individuals, the absence of review over certain acts and the need for clearer alignment of the proceedings with the Constitution, international law and European Union law.

2. Literature Review

In Bulgarian legal literature, questions of citizenship have been the subject of independent research, but the topic cannot be regarded as exhausted. The development of law after the 1991 Constitution, the membership of the Republic of Bulgaria in the European Union and the accumulation of new international and national practice require a reconsideration of a number of issues.

Among the principal works in Bulgarian doctrine, reference should be made to Prof. Velko Valkanov's study devoted to Bulgarian citizenship and to Prof. D.Sc. Veselin Tsankov's work "Bulgarian Citizenship: Substantive and Procedural Aspects". The first is important for the theoretical foundations of the institution, while the second is important for the analysis of the proceedings and the practical functioning of the legal framework.

In more recent literature, mention should be made of Prof. Georgi Bliznashki's work "Bulgarian Citizenship", as well as the general courses in constitutional law, including the works of Prof. Emilia Drumeva and Prof. Stoychev. In these works, citizenship is examined in connection with the State, the legal status of citizens and fundamental rights.

In the international legal literature, the works of Paul Weis, Alice Edwards and Laura van Waas, James Crawford, Malcolm Shaw and Gleider Hernández are of significance. They examine citizenship and nationality as institutions of international law, with an emphasis on the genuine link between the person and the State,

statelessness, diplomatic protection and the limits on the freedom of States in regulating citizenship.

The present dissertation builds on these studies, but places the current Bulgarian legal framework and the practice of its application at the centre of the analysis. It therefore focuses on a less extensively researched part of the subject — the acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship as a proceeding, as a substantive legal institution and as a question of compliance with the Constitution, international law and European Union law.

3. Object and Subject Matter of the Research

The object of the research is citizenship as an institution of constitutional and international law. It encompasses the set of legal norms, principles and social relations through which the affiliation of individuals to the State and the consequences of that affiliation are regulated.

Citizenship is examined as a lasting legal bond between the individual and the State. In domestic law, it is a prerequisite for the exercise of certain rights and the assumption of obligations; in international law, it is a basis for recognising the person's affiliation to the State, including in the context of diplomatic protection; and in European Union law, it is a prerequisite for the emergence of citizenship of the Union.

The subject matter of the research is the acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship as a specific manifestation of this institution. It is examined through the substantive legal prerequisites, procedural mechanisms, competent authorities, the nature of the acts and the practical application of the current legal framework, including with regard to its compliance with the Constitution, international law and European Union law.

The subject matter includes the modes of acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship by descent, by place of birth and by naturalisation. Particular attention is paid to naturalisation, since it most clearly reveals the questions concerning the scope of State discretion, the guarantees for individuals and the review of the activity of the authorities.

4. Aim and Objectives of the Research

The main aim of the dissertation is to carry out a comprehensive and critical analysis of the substantive and procedural aspects of the acquisition of citizenship in the Republic of Bulgaria in the light of constitutional law, international law and European Union law.

In order to achieve this aim, the research successively clarifies the content and legal nature of citizenship, examines it as a status, a legal relationship and an institution connected with the system of fundamental rights, and distinguishes it from related concepts such as nationality, national belonging, ethnicity, descent and affiliation to the State.

A further objective is the analysis of the sources of law governing citizenship — domestic legal acts, international treaties and acts of European Union law. Through this analysis, the place of the Bulgarian legal framework in a broader legal context and the limitations imposed on the State in regulating the acquisition of citizenship are established.

The dissertation examines the separate modes of acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship — by descent, by place of birth and by naturalisation. Particular attention is paid to general and privileged naturalisation, including the acquisition of citizenship by persons of Bulgarian descent and in exceptional cases.

An independent objective is the analysis of the proceedings related to citizenship: the role of the competent authorities, the stages of the procedures, the nature of the acts, administrative discretion, the possibilities for review and the guarantees for persons whose rights and legitimate interests may be affected.

The final objective is to assess the compliance of the current legal framework and practice with the Constitution, international law and European Union law and, on that basis, to formulate reasoned conclusions and proposals *de lege ferenda*.

5. Research Methodology

Several mutually complementary methods of scholarly research have been used in order to achieve the stated aims and objectives. The legal-dogmatic method is of primary importance; through it, the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Citizenship Act, the applicable secondary legislation, international treaties, acts of European Union law and the relevant case law have been analysed.

The doctrinal method has been used in the analysis of Bulgarian and foreign scholarly works devoted to citizenship, nationality, statelessness, State sovereignty, human rights and European Union law. The historical method makes it possible to trace the development of the legal framework on citizenship in Bulgaria and the connection between the current regime and earlier constitutional and legislative solutions.

The comparative-law method has been applied to a limited and functional extent — insofar as comparison with other legal systems and with the international legal framework assists the assessment of the Bulgarian regime. The sociological-axiological method has been used in the analysis of the relationship between positive

law and values such as the rule of law, justice, legal certainty, the protection of fundamental rights and the prevention of arbitrariness.

An empirical approach has also been used within the dissertation. Field research was conducted in institutions that participate in proceedings related to Bulgarian citizenship. This makes it possible to compare the normative analysis with the practical organisation of the procedures, actual difficulties and interinstitutional interaction. In processing and systematising part of the material, contemporary technological tools of an auxiliary character have also been used, without replacing the author's independent judgment.

The empirical approach is qualitative, not statistical. Its purpose is not to derive quantitative dependencies, but to enable verification of the manner in which the normative framework functions in practice. The field research in the institutions participating in citizenship proceedings is used as a means of comparing the prescriptions of the law with the actual movement of administrative procedures.

This approach is important primarily for the analysis of questionnaires, interviews, citizenship certificates, the proof of Bulgarian descent and interinstitutional coordination. It makes it possible to identify practical problems that are not always visible in a purely textual analysis of the law, but that are relevant to legal certainty, predictability and the protection of individuals. At the same time, the field research has an auxiliary function and does not replace independent legal analysis.

6. Scope and Limitations of the Research

The dissertation is devoted above all to the acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship. This determines both its scope and the necessary limitations. Citizenship is a broad institution that includes numerous issues — acquisition, establishment, loss, restoration, rights and obligations of citizens, international legal consequences and links with other branches of law. Their comprehensive examination would go beyond the subject matter of the present dissertation.

The principal focus is placed on the modes of acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship and on the proceedings through which such acquisition is realised. Acquisition by descent, by place of birth and by naturalisation are examined, with greater attention being paid to naturalisation because of its factual and legal complexity.

Proceedings for the establishment, loss and restoration of Bulgarian citizenship are examined only insofar as they are necessary for a systematic understanding of the institution and for the analysis of acquisition. Comparative-law material is likewise used to a limited extent — where it assists the analysis of Bulgarian law or makes it possible to identify certain problems more clearly.

Thus, the research retains a clearly defined subject matter, while placing the acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship in its real legal context — at the intersection of the Constitution, domestic legislation, international law and European Union law.

7. Scientific Novelty, Theoretical and Practical Significance of the Research

The scientific novelty of the dissertation lies primarily in treating the acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship as an independent subject of comprehensive legal research. In Bulgarian literature, citizenship is traditionally examined as an element of the legal status of the person or as part of the general exposition of constitutional law. The present dissertation shifts the focus to the acquisition of citizenship itself — to the grounds, prerequisites, proceedings, acts and guarantees for the persons participating in them.

The novelty of the research is also manifested in the combination of several legal perspectives. The acquisition of citizenship is analysed simultaneously as a matter of constitutional law, international law, administrative law and European Union law. In this regard, the distinction between citizenship and nationality has been further developed, as has the significance of the genuine link between the person and the State in assessing the different modes of acquisition of citizenship.

The theoretical significance of the dissertation is connected with the examination of citizenship as a multidimensional public-law institution — a legal status, a legal relationship and an institution connected with the system of fundamental rights. This approach makes it possible to place the acquisition of citizenship in the context of the rule of law, legal certainty, protection against arbitrariness, prevention of statelessness and protection of children.

The practical significance of the research is manifested in the analysis of the current citizenship proceedings. The competent authorities, the stages of the proceedings, the importance of reports and opinions, the proof of Bulgarian descent, the interviews and questionnaires, and the certification of citizenship are examined.

This makes it possible to identify specific practical difficulties and to propose solutions that may be used by the legislature, the administration and the courts.

The applied-scientific value of the dissertation is also expressed in the proposals *de lege ferenda* that have been made. They are aimed not at mechanically expanding the possibilities for acquiring Bulgarian citizenship, but at constructing a clearer, more predictable and more defensible legal framework, consistent both with the State interest and with the basic principles of the rule of law.

II. CONTENTS OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Introduction

The introduction to the dissertation outlines the relevance of the topic, the subject matter, the object, the aim, the objectives, and the methodology of the research. It substantiates the need for an independent study of the acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship, insofar as the proceedings, prerequisites and consequences of its acquisition raise specific constitutional, international legal and practical questions.

The introductory part also reviews the state of the scholarly literature on the topic, identifying the main Bulgarian and foreign studies on citizenship, nationality and statelessness. The scientific novelty and the theoretical and practical significance of the dissertation are indicated.

2. Chapter One: General Issues of Citizenship

Chapter One is devoted to the general characteristics of citizenship. It examines the concept, significance and historical development of citizenship as a legal institution. The exposition traces the transition from older forms of personal dependence, including subjecthood, to the modern understanding of citizenship.

Citizenship is examined as a complex public-law institution in three main manifestations — legal status, legal relationship and human right. As a status, it determines the person's affiliation to the State and the person's place in its legal order. As a legal relationship, it expresses a lasting bond between the individual and the State, from which rights and obligations arise. As a human right, citizenship is linked to the right of every person to have a citizenship and to protection against arbitrary deprivation of it.

Central to the chapter is the distinction between citizenship and related concepts — nationality, ethnic group, ethnic affiliation, national belonging, Bulgarian, citizen and Bulgarian citizen. This distinction is important both for the conceptual apparatus of the dissertation and for the analysis of the acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship, especially by persons of Bulgarian descent.

Special attention is paid to the relationship between citizenship and nationality. Citizenship is examined as a domestic-law category that determines the legal status of the person within the State. Nationality, by contrast, has international legal significance and includes both the legal bond and the genuine link between the person and the State. This distinction is important when assessing whether a domestic-law citizenship reaches the level of nationality in the sense of international law.

3. Chapter Two: Sources of Law Regulating Matters of Citizenship

Chapter Two examines the sources of law that regulate citizenship. The research covers the domestic legal framework of the Republic of Bulgaria, with an emphasis on the Constitution, the Bulgarian Citizenship Act and secondary legislation, as well as the international and European legal acts.

In the part concerning the international legal framework, the main instruments related to citizenship and statelessness are analysed: the 1930 Hague Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Convention on Nationality. Instruments related to non-discrimination, family status and the protection of vulnerable groups are also examined.

A separate place is given to European Union law. The significance of the Maastricht Treaty and citizenship of the Union is analysed. It is emphasised that citizenship of the European Union derives from citizenship of a Member State, which means that national rules on the acquisition of citizenship also produce consequences beyond the domestic legal order.

The chapter also contains a historical overview of the Bulgarian legal framework — from the Tarnovo Constitution and the legislation on subjecthood, through the legal framework during the period of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, to the developments following the 1991 Constitution. The historical analysis shows the change in the understanding of the bond between the person and the State and identifies certain legislative solutions that have lost their place in the current legal framework.

At the end of the chapter, the principles applicable to the regulation of citizenship are examined — legal certainty, equality, non-discrimination, avoidance of statelessness, the existence of a genuine link between the person and the State, and the protection of children. These principles are relevant both to the creation of the legal framework and to its interpretation and application.

4. Chapter Three: Significance and Practical Application of the Institution of Citizenship

Chapter Three is devoted to the significance and practical application of citizenship. After the clarification of the concept and the sources of the legal framework, this chapter examines the consequences of citizenship in different legal contexts.

First, citizenship is analysed in connection with the State and the population as a state-forming element. Through citizenship, the circle of persons who belong to the State and participate in its political and legal community is delineated. From this, its significance for popular sovereignty, political representation and the functioning of public authority is derived.

The significance of citizenship in the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria and in legislation is examined. The provisions in which citizenship is a condition for the exercise of rights, for holding offices or for the emergence of obligations are analysed. A distinction is drawn between rights that belong to all persons and rights connected with the status of “Bulgarian citizen”.

Attention is also paid to the international legal significance of citizenship, including in determining the affiliation of the person to the State, diplomatic protection, multiple citizenship and statelessness. The chapter also examines the significance of citizenship in European Union law, where the acquisition of citizenship of a Member State leads to the emergence of citizenship of the Union.

A separate part examines the citizenship and nationality of legal persons and certain special objects — ships, aircraft, space objects and State property. These institutions are related and borderline in relation to citizenship, but they do not constitute citizenship in the strict sense. The final part of the chapter examines multiple citizenship, stateless persons, foreigners, refugees, persons enjoying special protection and children.

5. Chapter Four: Acquisition of Citizenship and Other Related Proceedings

Chapter Four is the central part of the dissertation. It examines the modes of acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship and the proceedings through which they are realised. The analysis covers acquisition by birth and by naturalisation, with the main focus placed on naturalisation because of its legal and practical complexity.

First, the modes of acquisition of citizenship by birth are examined. In acquisition by descent, the significance of the parental bond and the principle of *jus sanguinis* are analysed. In acquisition by place of birth, the limited application of the principle of *jus soli* in Bulgarian law is examined, aimed primarily at preventing statelessness. In these modes, citizenship arises by operation of law, while administrative actions have declaratory significance.

Other modes of acquisition of citizenship *ex lege* are also examined, including acquisition through adoption, upon establishment of descent and in other hypotheses expressly provided for by law. They show the cases in which the law links the occurrence of a particular legal fact to the acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship.

The main part of the chapter is devoted to the acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship by naturalisation. Naturalisation is analysed as a mode that requires an expression of will by the person, verification of the statutory prerequisites, participation of competent authorities and an act with constitutive effect. It is in naturalisation that questions of administrative discretion, proof, transparency and the possibility of protection arise most clearly.

In relation to general naturalisation, the prerequisites provided for in the Bulgarian Citizenship Act are examined: majority, long-term residence, absence of conviction and criminal proceedings, income or occupation, command of the Bulgarian language and release from previous citizenship in the cases provided for by

law. Each requirement is analysed in view of its function in establishing the genuine link between the person and the Bulgarian State.

Special attention is paid to privileged naturalisation, including that of persons of Bulgarian descent. The content of the concept “Bulgarian descent”, its proof and the role of the competent authorities are examined. Official documents, kinship, self-identification, language and the opinions of the authorities participating in the proceedings are analysed. The question of the constitutional requirement of a “facilitated procedure” and whether it entails relaxation of the substantive legal conditions under Article 15 of the Bulgarian Citizenship Act is also raised.

The chapter also examines judicial review of acts related to naturalisation, as well as the related proceedings for establishing, losing and restoring Bulgarian citizenship. These questions are analysed in view of their systemic connection with acquisition and with the overall regime of citizenship.

6. Chapter Five: International Legal Standards and Their Application in the Legal Framework of the Republic of Bulgaria on the Acquisition of Bulgarian Citizenship

Chapter Five has a critical and evaluative character. It examines the current Bulgarian legal framework on the acquisition of citizenship through the prism of international law, human rights and European Union law. The aim is to establish whether the national legal framework is aligned with the requirements arising from supranational and international law.

First, the risk of divergence between citizenship in domestic law and nationality in international law is examined. In this regard, the standards aimed at establishing a

genuine link between the person and the State are analysed. The problem is examined both in general naturalisation and in privileged naturalisation.

The chapter examines the application of the European Convention on Human Rights. Although the Convention does not recognise an autonomous right to acquire citizenship, State acts in this area may affect rights protected by it. The right to private and family life, protection against arbitrariness and the requirement of effective remedies are of particular significance.

The European Convention on Nationality, its basic provisions and the reservations of the Republic of Bulgaria are analysed separately. The question of the admissibility of the reservations and their impact on reasoning, transparency and review in citizenship proceedings is raised.

The final part of the chapter examines the application of rules on citizenship in connection with the rights of the child. The analysis is carried out in the context of the “Baby Sara” case, which raises questions concerning the protection of children, the prevention of statelessness and the best interests of the child. This example shows that the formal application of citizenship rules may lead to results that must also be assessed in the light of the Constitution, international law and European Union law.

III. CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

The conclusion of the dissertation summarises the results of the research and assesses the fulfilment of the stated aim and objectives. The main finding is that the acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship cannot be examined solely as a matter falling within the exclusive competence of the State. It is an institution located at the intersection of constitutional law, international law, administrative law and European Union law.

The dissertation clarifies citizenship as a lasting bond between the individual and the State, manifested as a legal status, a legal relationship and an institution connected with the system of fundamental rights. A significant result is also the distinction between citizenship and nationality, with nationality being examined in the sense of international law through the recognition of the bond between the person and the State and through the requirement of a genuine link.

The research shows that the Bulgarian legal framework builds a developed and complex system of modes of acquisition of citizenship. Acquisition by birth follows the logic of citizenship by operation of law, whereas naturalisation presupposes an expression of will by the person, an administrative procedure and an act with constitutive effect. It is in naturalisation that the problems related to State discretion, proof, transparency of the proceedings and protection of individuals arise most clearly.

Naturalisation of persons of Bulgarian descent is of special significance. The concept of “Bulgarian descent” is central to this hypothesis, but it raises questions concerning its content, proof and practical application. Here, the legal concept of citizenship meets broader categories such as descent, identity, language, national belonging and affiliation.

The dissertation establishes that the current legal framework contains procedural weaknesses related to the reasoning, transparency and review of certain acts and actions. These problems also arise in proceedings for establishing and certifying citizenship, including with regard to the form and security features of the certification documents issued. In addition, interviews and questionnaires do not always examine the person's real link with the State to a sufficient extent.

The State retains broad competence to determine the conditions for the acquisition of citizenship, but that competence is not unlimited. It must be exercised in accordance with the Constitution, international law and European Union law, especially where refusal, delay or the formal application of the rules may affect the right to private and family life, the interests of children or lead to statelessness.

The dissertation is relevant both to the development of scientific knowledge in the field of citizenship and to the practical application of the legal framework. Its results may be used by the legislature, administrative authorities, courts and practising lawyers, as well as as a basis for further research on citizenship proceedings, comparative-law models of naturalisation, statelessness and the protection of children.

IV. PROPOSALS *DE LEGE FERENDA*

On the basis of the analysis carried out, specific proposals *de lege ferenda* have been formulated, aimed at overcoming the identified problems in the legal framework of Bulgarian citizenship and its acquisition. They cover legislative amendments, changes in secondary legislation and guidelines for administrative and judicial practice.

First, it is proposed that the Republic of Bulgaria withdraw its reservations to the European Convention on Nationality with regard to the provisions relating to the reasoning and review of acts in citizenship proceedings.

The maintenance of these reservations is increasingly difficult to justify in view of the development of international legal standards, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the need for effective protection.

Second, it is proposed that the Bulgarian Citizenship Act be amended so as to introduce administrative or judicial review at least over some acts and intermediate actions in proceedings for naturalisation and establishment of citizenship.

Direct appeal against presidential decrees is not an appropriate solution, since it would affect the constitutional regime of presidential non-liability. Review should therefore be sought at the preceding stages of the proceedings — before the Minister of Justice or the Citizenship Council.

In this regard, the proposal of Prof. Veselin Tsankov is examined, according to which the proposal of the Minister of Justice to the President should be formulated as a decision. In this way, the act of the Minister would acquire the character of an administrative act and would be subject to administrative-procedural review, without affecting the presidential decree. The dissertation, however, also takes into account a

disadvantage of this model — the Minister acts on the basis of the opinion of the Citizenship Council and would therefore bear responsibility for an act whose factual and expert basis is not entirely the result of the Minister's independent assessment.

As an alternative and more precise approach, the introduction of a possibility to challenge the report or opinion of the Citizenship Council is proposed. Although formally it is an opinion of an auxiliary interinstitutional body, this act is of substantial importance for the final development of the proceedings. It is therefore justified to provide a mechanism for review of its legality, reasoning and conformity with the evidence collected. Such review is not foreign to the Bulgarian legal system, insofar as mechanisms are known for challenging expert opinions or intermediate acts where they have decisive significance for the legal position of persons.

Third, the proposals concerning review are connected with a reconsideration of the relaxed substantive legal conditions in privileged naturalisation.

The aim is not mechanical facilitation of access to Bulgarian citizenship, but a balance between clearer criteria and effective review of their application. In this sense, it is proposed that the removal of the relaxations concerning residence and command of the Bulgarian language in the naturalisation of persons of Bulgarian descent be discussed.

This proposal is based on the distinction between a “facilitated procedure” and “relaxed conditions”. Article 25(2) of the Constitution provides for a facilitated procedure for the acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship by persons of Bulgarian descent, but this does not necessarily entail derogation from substantive legal prerequisites. It is therefore necessary to reconsider Article 15 of the Bulgarian Citizenship Act so that the facilitated procedure does not weaken the requirement of a genuine link between the person and the Bulgarian State.

Fourth, legislative clarification of the concept of “descent” in the Bulgarian Citizenship Act is proposed.

In the current legal framework, it is used in different senses — in citizenship by descent and in the acquisition of citizenship by persons of Bulgarian descent. This creates a risk of conflating different legal categories. Possible solutions include removing the term “descent” from Article 8 of the Bulgarian Citizenship Act and adhering to the constitutional wording of Article 25, or using the concept of “national belonging” for the purposes of Article 15 of the Bulgarian Citizenship Act, following the model of earlier statutes.

Fifth, a clearer distinction between the concepts of “citizenship” and “nationality” is proposed in legislation and in official translations of international treaties.

This would reduce the risk of terminological confusion and would allow more precise coordination between the domestic and international legal frameworks.

Sixth, it is proposed that questionnaires and interviews in naturalisation proceedings be improved.

They should provide a fuller basis for assessing the candidate’s genuine link with the Bulgarian State and should cover linguistic, family, cultural, social, educational and professional ties with Bulgaria. In order to prevent them from becoming a formality, their periodic updating is proposed.

Seventh, it is proposed that a standard be adopted for the form and security features of Bulgarian citizenship certificates issued by the Ministry of Justice.

In view of the evidentiary significance of these documents, it is necessary to introduce minimum technical requirements, including a wet seal, watermarks, specific paper, distinctive features, a unique identification number or the possibility of electronic verification of authenticity.

Eighth, a change is proposed in law-enforcement and judicial practice concerning the citizenship of children.

Although the current legal framework requires consideration of the best interests of the child, practice shows that this principle is not always applied as a priority. Therefore, the competent authorities and courts should apply it as a guiding principle through a specific and reasoned assessment in each case, especially where there is a risk that the child may remain stateless or in prolonged legal uncertainty.

V. STATEMENT OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND APPLIED-SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION

The following scientific and applied-scientific contributions may be identified in the dissertation:

A. Scientific Contributions

1. The research has an interdisciplinary character, as it builds upon the traditional constitutional-law framework and covers administrative-law, international-law and European-law aspects of the acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship.

2. The distinction between citizenship and nationality has been further developed, and its significance for the relationship between domestic law and international law has been substantiated.

3. Citizenship is examined as a multidimensional public-law institution — legal status, legal relationship and element of the system of human rights.

4. The sources and principles of the law regulating citizenship have been systematised, showing the interaction between the Constitution, the Bulgarian Citizenship Act, secondary legislation, international law and European Union law.

5. The privileged naturalisation of persons of Bulgarian descent has been examined, including the concept of “Bulgarian descent”, its connection with the concepts of descent, national belonging, ethnicity and identity, and the constitutional requirement of a “facilitated procedure” under Article 25(2) of the Constitution.

B. Applied-Scientific Contributions

1. The proceedings for acquisition, establishment, loss and restoration of Bulgarian citizenship have been analysed with regard to procedural guarantees, the role of the competent authorities and the possibilities for review of acts and intermediate actions.

2. Possible models for introducing administrative or judicial review in citizenship proceedings have been identified.

3. Practical conclusions have been drawn regarding the need for more effective examination of the genuine link between the candidate and the Bulgarian State through improvement and periodic updating of questionnaires and interviews.

4. The need for a more reliable regulation of the form and security features of Bulgarian citizenship certificates issued by the Ministry of Justice has been substantiated.

5. The application of citizenship rules in the context of the rights of the child, the prevention of statelessness and the so-called “Baby Sara” case has been examined.

C. De lege ferenda Contribution

As a result of the research carried out, specific proposals *de lege ferenda* have been formulated, aimed at improving the current normative framework and the practice of its application in the field of Bulgarian citizenship. The proposals are based on the comparative-law analysis performed, the study of judicial and administrative practice, and the identified gaps, contradictions and practical difficulties in the application of the Bulgarian Citizenship Act.

The proposals are aimed at the withdrawal of the reservations of the Republic of Bulgaria to the European Convention on Nationality, the introduction of more effective review in citizenship proceedings, the reconsideration of relaxed conditions in privileged naturalisation, the clarification of terminology, the improvement of interviews and questionnaires, the strengthening of the protection of citizenship certificates and the more consistent application of the principle of the best interests of the child.

Taken together, the proposals made aim to contribute to improving the quality, efficiency and predictability of the legal framework, strengthening legal certainty and achieving fuller harmonisation with contemporary European and international legal requirements in the field of citizenship.

VI. PUBLICATIONS ON THE TOPIC OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Rogoshev, T. Constitutionality of Naturalisation under a Facilitated Procedure for Persons of Bulgarian Descent. – *Pravna Misal*, 2025, No. 4, forthcoming.

The article examines the compliance of the current legal framework on the privileged naturalisation of persons of Bulgarian descent with Article 25 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria. The main emphasis is placed on the distinction between the concepts of “procedure” and “conditions” for the acquisition of citizenship and on the question whether the constitutional requirement of a “facilitated procedure” also implies relaxation of the substantive legal prerequisites for naturalisation.

2. Rogoshev, T. The Role of Citizenship in the Exercise of Fundamental Rights of Natural Persons. – In: Proceedings of the Scientific Conference “Knowledge, Science, Innovation, Technology”, 2025, No. 1, pp. 529–540.

The article examines citizenship as a legal bond and legal relationship through which the natural person exercises certain rights and assumes obligations vis-à-vis the State. It examines the significance of citizenship for the emergence and exercise of fundamental rights, as well as its role as a procedural prerequisite for the protection of rights, including in the context of diplomatic protection.

3. Rogoshev, T. Citizenship as a Human Right. – In: Proceedings of the Scientific Conference “Knowledge, Science, Innovation, Technology”, 2025, No. 1, pp. 517–528.

The article examines citizenship through the prism of human rights. It analyses the initial recognition of the right to nationality in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the subsequent absence of an autonomous regulation of this right in the main international treaties and the contemporary tendency for citizenship to be

protected indirectly through other rights, especially through the right to private and family life in the case law of the European Court of Human Rights.