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Bulgaria government gives additional 2.5 million euro for pay for Orthodox Church priests



Bulgaria's Cabinet is allocating an additional five million leva (about 2.5 million euro) to the Religions Directorate to help pay the salaries of Bulgarian Orthodox Church clergy, Prime Minister Boiko Borissov said on January 30.

Borissov said that Bulgarian Orthodox Church head Patriarch Neofit had personally asked him for the money, and had asked that it be transferred as quickly as possible so that the salaries of priests could be paid.

The Bulgarian Orthodox Church is the majority denomination in the country, with about 86 per cent of Bulgarians stating adherence to it.

Bulgaria's Parliament amended the Religious Denominations Act in the country, including a provision for rules on state funding for denominations.

The version approved by Bulgaria's Parliament on December 21 envisages state subsidies for officially registered religious denominations on the basis of how many citizens declared themselves to be an adherent of that denomination in the most recent census, at 10 leva a person, and with denominations of more than one per cent of the population, of a total subsidy of up to 15 million leva (about 7.5 million euro).

The amendments were approved after considerable controversy about various of its provisions, including that on funding.

Among the denominations that had objections to the first-reading version was the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Meeting Patriarch Neofit in October 2018, Borissov pledged additional funding to enable pay rises for clergy of all religions, to put their pay on a par with that of teachers.

The Bulgarian Orthodox Church has a large shortage of clergy, a fact attributed in the main to their low pay.

(Source: sofiaglobe.com)