

Bulgaria's government approves additional 20.7M leva subsidy for Orthodox church, Muslims



Bulgarian Prime Minister Boiko Borissov's Cabinet approved on April 24 an additional 20.7 million leva (about 10.5 million euro) in state subsidies for religious denominations, with 15 million leva going to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and 5.7 million leva for the country's Muslim minority.

A statement after the Cabinet meeting said that the money would be made available through restructuring of spending and transfers in the national Budget for 2019.

The statement said that amendments to the Religious Denominations Act were adopted in 2018 and 2019, which introduced a new line of state funding for registered religious denominations in the country.

The amendments defined criteria by which the state subsidies for registered religious denominations should be approved annually with the state Budget.

Because the 2019 Budget Act was approved before the Religious Denominations Act amendments, the latter provided for the approval of the subsidies in the course of this year, the statement said.

Speaking before the Cabinet meeting, Borissov said that the money in question

was that promised to the Holy Synod – the governing body of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church – and to the office of the Chief Mufti, spiritual leader of Bulgaria’s Muslims.

“So today, Great Wednesday (a reference to the fact that it is Holy Week for Orthodox Christians), as we undertook the commitment to the Holy Synod, the priests can get their salaries, as the law requires,” Borissov said.

The amendments to the Religious Denominations Act in 2019 provided for the postponement of the payment of debts to the state, in the form of arrears taxes and social security payments, by religious denominations. These arrears were blocking payments for salaries for Muslim clergy in particular.

— Source: [The Sofia Globe](#)