



ERIAS

FIRST STEPS IN BULGARIA

useful information for migrants, refugees, third-country nationals

ERIAS - European Refugees Integration Action Scheme

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)



This project was funded by
the European Union's Asylum,
Migration and Integration Fund



БЪЛГАРСКА ТЪРГОВЕНО-ПРОМИШЛЕНА ПАЛАТА
BULGARIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY



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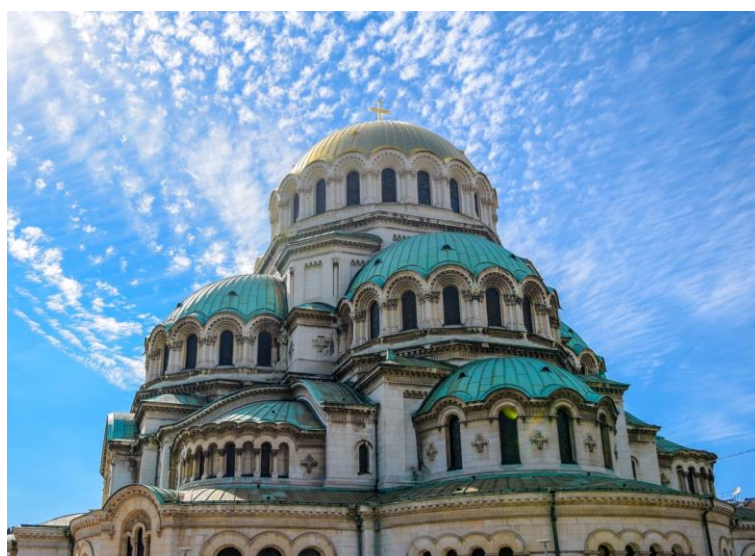
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First Steps in Bulgaria

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1. Bulgaria at a glance

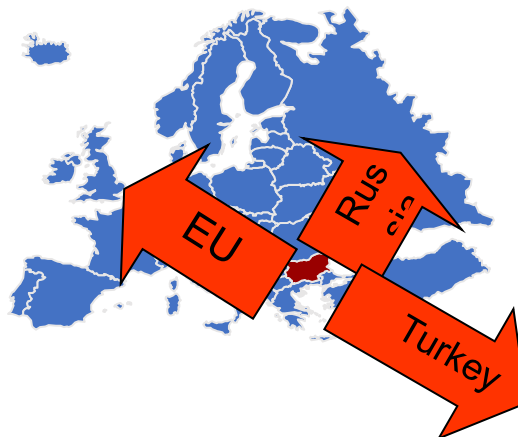
Bulgaria: Background Information	
Population:	6 951 482 (men 3 369 646 / women 3 581 836)
Workforce:	4 156 198
Urban population:	74 %
Capital city:	Sofia
Time zone:	EET (UTC+2)
Summer (DST):	EEST (UTC+3)
Area:	110 910 sq. km. / 42 822 sq. miles
Terrestrial:	108 489 sq. km.
Aquatic:	2 390 sq. km.
Climate:	Moderate continental and Mediterranean
Languages:	
Official language:	85.2 %
Bulgarian	
Turkish	9.1 %
Other foreign languages	English, German, French, Spanish, Russian
Religions:	
Christian Orthodox	76 %
Islam	10 %
Other	14 %
Currency:	Bulgarian Lev (BGN), exchange rate fixed to the euro at 1.95583
Corporate tax:	10%
Personal income tax	10%
VAT rate:	20%
Form of State:	Parliamentary Republic
Bulgarian Parliament:	The National Assembly, composed of 240 MPs
Executive:	Council of Ministers (headed by the Prime Minister)
EU Member since 2007	
NATO Member since 2004	
WTO Member since 1996	

Source: INVESTBULGARIA AGENCY

Institution	Contact details
Ministry of Economy	8 Slavyanska Street Tel. (operator): +359 2 9407001 Fax: +359 2 987 2190; +359 2 981 9970 e-docs@mi.government.bg https://www.mi.government.bg

1.1 Borders and Visa Regime

Since 1 January 2007 Bulgaria applies the Common Visa Policy of the European Union subject to the terms of the EU Accession Treaty. Due to its geographic location Bulgaria is required to protect the external borders of the EU (the borders of Bulgaria with Serbia, Turkey and Northern Macedonia). Our country is not a member of the Schengen Area (SA) which means that the visas issued by Bulgaria do not entitle their holders to enter the SA.



EU citizens are exempt from visas so they need only a valid ID card or passport to enter and leave the territory of Bulgaria. Most third-country nationals are required to present a valid international travel document and an entry visa, if necessary.

There are three types of Bulgarian entry visas:

- Visa A (for airport transit);
- Visa C (for short stay for the purpose of transit or a planned stay limited to three months);
- Visa D (for long-term stay/residence if more than three months)

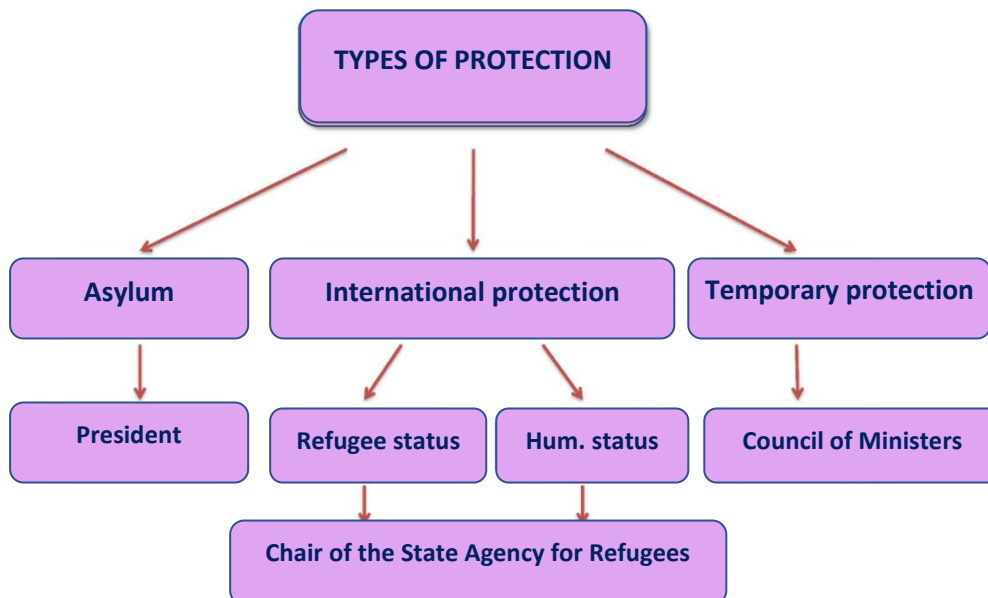


Institution	Contact details
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria	<p>2 Alexander Zhendov Street, Sofia 1113, Bulgaria Tel.: + 359 2 948 2999 HOT LINE: +359 2 948 24 04</p> <p>Consular Affairs Directorate: every weekday from 9.00 am to 5:30 pm Visas: + 359 2 948 3016 General consular information (except visas): + 359 2 948 2005 Legalization/verification of documents: + 359 2 807 64 23; https://www.mfa.bg/en/services-travel/consular-services/travel-bulgaria/visa-bulgaria</p>

2. The protection granted by the Republic of Bulgaria to foreign nationals



The protection granted by the Republic of Bulgaria to foreign nationals includes asylum and international protection.



Source: *State Agency for Refugees*

Any person, regardless of his or her nationality, is entitled to seek asylum (international protection) in Bulgaria if that person is persecuted or his/her life and safety is at risk.

2.1. Asylum

The right to asylum in the Republic of Bulgaria is established in the Bulgarian Constitution and further detailed in the Law on Asylum and Refugees. The Constitution determines the President's powers to grant asylum. Article 37(2) of the Constitution states that '[t]he Republic of Bulgaria shall grant asylum to foreigners persecuted for their opinions or activity in the defence of internationally recognized rights and freedoms.'

2.2. International protection

International protection is granted pursuant to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951) and its 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of

Refugees as well as under other international treaties relating to the protection of human rights that have been ratified by Bulgaria, and the Law on Asylum and Refugees. International protection includes refugee status and humanitarian status granted by a decision of the Chair of the State Agency for Refugees (SAR) with the Council of Ministers.

2.2.1. Refugee status

This type of protection is afforded to foreign nationals who – due to well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of their race, religion, nationality, political beliefs or appurtenance to a particular social group – are outside their country of origin and for these reasons cannot or do not wish to benefit from the protection of that country or return to it.

2.2.2. Humanitarian status

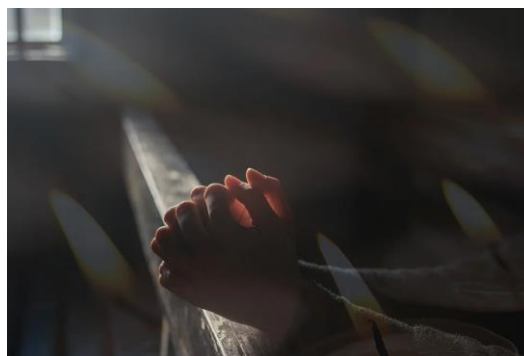
Humanitarian status is granted to foreign nationals who are not eligible for refugee status but have nevertheless been forced to leave or remain outside their country of origin if in that country the foreign national faces a genuine threat of severe violence such as death penalty or execution, torture or other forms of inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Humanitarian status is also granted in the case of war where the civilian population of certain countries faces severe and direct threats to their life or security due to violence resulting from a domestic or international armed conflict.

Therefore, a foreign national must meet the statutory requirements and grounds in order to obtain refugee or humanitarian status in Bulgaria. A foreign national to whom refugee or humanitarian status is granted is a person benefiting from international protection.

2.2.3. Phases of the procedure for granting international protection

The application process:

- Filing an application to the State Agency for Refugees (SAR)
- Registration by the SAR
- Interview with SAR officers
- Taking a decision on the application for protection



Under the general rules, within six months from the opening of the procedure the SAR Chair will take a decision by which the applicant is either granted or refused refugee or humanitarian status in the Republic of Bulgaria. The administrative authority may extend that period by nine months if the application is associated with factual or substantive-law complexities or if large numbers of foreign nationals seek international protection at the same time, making it difficult for the authorities to take a decision within the regular six-month period. The foreign nationals concerned will be notified of such extension with in person or by a written communication with acknowledgement of receipt. The maximum time for deciding an application for international protection is 21 months from the date on which the application is filed.

2.2.4. Refusing an application for granting

In case the application for protection is refused, the SAR Chair will send a letter to the applicant inviting him/her to receive a copy of the negative decision. The applicant is entitled to contest the SAR refusal at courts of laws within 7 or 14 days. The specific time-limit will be written in

the decision and depends on the type of the procedure for granting international protection: fast-track (7 days) or regular procedure (14 days).

In order to contest the decision, it is important for the applicant to seek qualified legal assistance. The complaint must be filed to the SAR, whereupon – not later than three days after receiving the complaint – the Agency will forward it to the Administrative Court. The decision of the Administrative Court can be appealed before the Supreme Administrative Court.

If the final decision of the court is in favour of the SAR, the person concerned will not have the rights of a protection seeker anymore. In that case the person concerned will be treated as an illegally residing migrant and should be detained for the purpose of return.

If an application for protection is refused, the unsuccessful applicant may resort to the Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) or seek precautionary measures under the Law on Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria.

In the existence of circumstances which prevent the foreign national to leave Bulgaria or enter another country, and provided that there no immediate arrangements for the removal of the foreign national from Bulgaria, the authority which has issued to order for the imposition of the coercive administrative measures or the Director of the Migration Service will, on the basis of an assessment of the specific circumstances and of the risk of hiding away, order the execution of one or more of the following precautionary measures:

1. The foreign national will be ordered to appear each week at the police department in his/her place of residence;
2. The foreign national will be required to deposit a certain amount cash in the form guarantee;
3. The foreign national will be ordered to surrender a valid passport or another international travel document, and will receive it back at the time of his/her return or expulsion.



2.2.5. The Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme

The target groups of the Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme (VRRP) include:

- Migrants who have been granted asylum or international protection, provided that the conditions in their country of origin are appropriate for them to join the VRRP;
- Migrants whose asylum applications have been refused; and
- Irregular migrants.

Procedure for joining the VRRP:

- Initial contact with the International Organization for Migration (IOM);
- Consultation;
- Obtaining a travel document;
- Purchasing of air tickets;
- Travel.

Institution	Contact details
IOM Bulgaria	Head Office 77 Czar Assen Street, Sofia 1463 Tel.: +359 (2) 93 94 774; Email: iomsofia@iom.int Mobile Teams GSM, WhatsApp and Viber: +359 884 602 185; +359 884 605 184; +359 892 212 194 Landline: +359 (2) 93 94 774 https://www.iom.bg
Voluntary Return and Reintegration Team	Tel.: +359 (2) 93-94-774 Email: iomsofia@iom.int

2.2.6. Reunification of refugees with members of their families

Under Bulgarian law the competent authorities can, provided that certain conditions are met, allow the holder of refugee/humanitarian status reunite with the following family members:

- Spouse;
- Children under 18 years of age provided that they are not in marriage;
- Children above 18 years of age who are unable to sustain themselves due to serious health conditions;
- The parents of each spouse if they are unable to live alone due to old age or serious disease.

An unaccompanied child under 18 years of age that has been granted international protection can also reunite with its parents in Bulgaria. If the parents are unknown or deceased, the child can reunite with another adult member of the family.

The family reunification process:

- The first step is to apply for international protection in Bulgaria
- After the requested international protection is granted, the second step is to submit a family reunification application to the State Agency for Refugees (SAR)

The family reunification application is to be accompanied at least with the following information:

- Full names of the family members;
- Documents which confirm the existence of familial relations, such as birth certificate, marriage certificate, copies of passports (if available);
- SAR decision for granting protection.

2.2.7. Finding a missing family member

The Restoring Family Links programme of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) offers assistance for finding or contacting a family member.

Institution	Contact details
ICRC Programme for Restoring Family Links	https://www.icrc.org/en/what-we-do/restoring-family-links 76 James Boucher Blvd.

	Sofia 1407 Tel.: + 359888668058/+ 359884007363 Email: tracing@redcross.bg
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Institution	Contact details
State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers	114B Knyaginya Maria Louisa Blvd. Sofia 1233 Tel.: 02/80 80 923; tel. 02/80 80 924; tel. 02/80 80 925; fax 02/95 59 476 e-mail: sar@saref.government.bg https://www.aref.government.bg/bg

Once a person is registered as a protection seeker, he or she will acquire the following **rights**:

- **Right to** free accommodation
- **Right to** lawyer and legal assistance
- **Right to** work in Bulgaria
- **Right to** medical care
- **Right to** enroll his or her children in Bulgarian schools



3. Accommodation



While waiting for a final decision on their applications for international protection, applicants are entitled to free accommodation at a Reception Center for as long as the procedure lasts.

The State Agency for Refugees manages the following refugee centers in Bulgaria:

Center	Address and contacts
Registration and Reception Center in Sofia	<p>21A Montevideo Blvd., Ovcha Kupel district, Sofia 1618 Plamen Penov, Director, tel.: 02/80 80 986 e-mail: Plamen.Penov@saref.government.bg</p> <p>Ivan Penkov, Head of International Protection Unit, Vrazhdebna district, tel.: 0889929088 e-mail: Ivan.Penkov@saref.government.bg</p> <p>Eleonora Yordanova, Head of International Protection Unit, Ovcha Kupel district, tel.: 02 90 42 363; 0889 940 673 e-mail: Eleonora.Yordanova@saref.government.bg</p> <p>Atanas Mladenov, Head of International Protection Unit, Voenna Rampa district, tel.: 02/8080 981; 0879 444 562 Atanas.Mladenov@saref.government.bg</p>

Registration and Reception Center in the village of Banya	17 Mineralni Bani district, village of Banya 8914, municipality of Nova Zagora Director: Dimitar Zahariev, tel.: 0886 437 020 e-mail: Dimitar.Zahariev@saref.government.bg
Registration and Reception Center in Harmanli	23 Druzhiba residential district, Harmanli 6450 Director: Slavcho Yanev, tel. 0879 444 673 e-mail: Slavcho.Yanev@saref.government.bg
Transit Center in the village of Pastrogor	Pastrogor 6519, municipality of Svilengrad, Haskovo district Spasimir Oetrov, Director, tel.: 037705/215 e-mail: Spasimir.Petrov@saref.government.bg

The Registration and Reception Centers (RRCs) are responsible for the registration and accommodation of foreign nationals who have applied for international protection. The RRCs coordinate the mandatory medical examinations of the foreign nationals, arrange for certification documents, organize the provision of meals, etc.

The Transit Centers are territorial divisions of the SAR and responsible for the registration, accommodation and medical examination. Transit Centers also carry out the procedure for determining the State which is competent to examine the application for international protection as well as the procedure for granting international protection.

After the application for international protection is granted, the foreign national concerned is required to appear, with 14 days of receiving the decision by which such protection is granted, at the municipal administration at the place where he or she intends to settle in order to be included in the register of the local population.

One option for the accommodation of newly recognized refugees or holders of humanitarian status is renting an apartment or house. For this purpose they should find a home, sign a rent contract with the property owner and pay the rent fee for the first month as well as a deposit in the amount of the monthly rent. (It is possible to agree other terms with the property owner.)

Finding a home to rent		
Websites which publish adverts for apartments/houses to rent	Real Estate Agencies	NGOs
www.alo.bg www.imot.bg www.imoti.net www.imoti.info www.address.bg	Yavlena (www.yavlena.com) Mirela (www.mirela.bg) Era (www.era.bg) Avista (www.avista.bg) Address (www.address.imot.bg)	Caritas Bulgaria Bulgarian Red Cross Social workers at Integration Centers

Another obligation of the holder of refugee/humanitarian status is to register the address at which he or she resides. According to Article 92(2) of the Civil Registration Act, <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134673409> the following documents must be submitted for this purpose: rent contract with the property owner and written consent by the property owner in predetermined format. The



service is free of charge and is completed within seven days after filing an application to the municipal administration at the person's place of residence. The registration procedure is carried out by the Single System for Civil Registration and Administrative Services for the Population (ESGRAON) at the relevant municipality or mayoralty.

4. Work in Bulgaria



Recognized refugees and holders of humanitarian status are entitled to work in Bulgaria at the same conditions as those applicable for Bulgarian nationals, meaning that they do not need an explicit work permit.

Protection seekers are entitled to work for three months after the filing of their applications for protection, as provided for in Article 29(3) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees. The State Agency

for Refugees will issue an explicit certificate confirming that the holder is entitled to work during the application procedure.

Following the most recent amendments (of 1 June 2021) to the Labor Migration and Labour Mobility Act, **third-country nationals** benefit from a simplified procedure for obtaining a single Work and Stay in Bulgaria permit. At present the permit is granted by the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior (MoI), while the Employment Agency only gives a written opinion on the application. The MoI will issue the work permit after receiving a positive opinion from the Employment Agency. Work permits are granted to third-country nationals who seek a residence permit for the purpose of working in Bulgaria. These are persons employed under employment contracts by employers established in the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Details about the required documents and the application procedure are available at <https://migrantlife.bg/bg/articles/razresheni%D0%B5-za-prebivavane-i-rabota>.

Blue Card of the European Union – EU Blue Cards are granted only to highly skilled foreigners. In order to be eligible for an EU Blue Card, you should hold an university diploma earned after at least three years of university studies, your gross wage has to exceed the average wage for Bulgaria by at least 1.5 times and the term of your employment contract should be least 12 months. You will also need Visa D or a permit for long-term residence in Bulgaria.

4.1. Job seeking channels

Job seeking channels include the government's Labour Offices, websites, private recruitment agencies and non-government organizations (NGOs) .



Job seeking channels		
	Address	Outline
Labour Offices	Employment Agency 3 Dondukov Blvd., Sofia 1000, Bulgaria Tel.: 980 87 19 Fax: 986 78 02 Email: az@az.government.bg List of Employment Offices: https://www.az.government.bg/bg/contacts/offices/	<p>If you are a job seeker you need to appear in person at the Labour Office of your place of permanent or current residence and register there as an unemployed individual. Showing your educational and vocational certificates translated in Bulgarian is recommended.</p> <p>After the registration an individual employment action plan will be developed in order to attract appropriate job offers.</p> <p>The registration also makes you eligible for joining vocational training programmes at no costs for you.</p>
Web-based platforms	www.jobs.bg www.karieri.bg www.rabota.bg www.zaplata.bg www.jobtiger.bg www.alo.bg www.bg.jooble.org www.carriersinbulgaria.eu www.glassdor.com www.ngobg.info	<p>You need to register, write a CV, select the job/position you prefer and apply. Potential employers will reach you at the contact details provided in your CV.</p>
Private recruitment agencies	Manpower (www.manpower.bg) Easy Consult (www.easyconsultbg.com) Hermes (www.hr-hermes.com) Adecco Bulgaria (www.adeccobulgaria.com) Horizons (www.horizons.bg)	<p>Private employment agencies will help you, for a certain fee, find a job and select an employer.</p>

	Synectica (www.synecticaconsult.com/bg/)	
Non-government organizations	<p>Caritas Sofia Sta. Anna Center for the integration of refugees and migrants 1 Struma Street Tel.: +35928696335 https://www.caritas-sofia.org</p> <p>Refugee and Migrant Service of the Bulgarian Red Cross https://www.redcross.bg/activities/activities8/rms1</p>	<p>The Refugee Career Center operated by Caritas Sofia can help you draw up a CV, prepare for a job interview and receive offers for jobs of interest.</p> <p>The Bulgarian Red Cross can also help you draw up a CV and liaise with potential employers.</p>

4.2. Concluding a work contract

There are two types of work contracts in Bulgaria: employment agreements and service contracts. An employment agreement is permanent (not limited by a term of time), while a service contract is concluded for the performance of a specific task.

The following documents are required for the conclusion of a work contract:

- Identity card;
- Diplomas of completed education and/or vocational training certificates;
- A medical examination certificate issued by a general practitioner and confirming that the health of the prospective employee is appropriate for the intended job;
- Certificate of criminal clearance, if required for the particular position.

4.3. Bank account



Employees' wages are often paid on a monthly basis by bank remittances to their bank accounts. Therefore, you will need to open a bank account. Holders of refugee/humanitarian status can open a bank account by presenting their ID card, while protection seekers should produce a valid national passport. In case the bank refuses to open a bank account for you, please ask them to provide the refusal in written form and seek legal assistance on how to contest the refusal.

4.4. Starting a business in Bulgaria

Starting a business involves many steps – from registering the business and designing a business model to actual management of the business, building a client base and so on. It is therefore recommendable for potential entrepreneurs to receive appropriate training or advice.

Refugees who wish to start their own business are referred to the Labour Offices at which they can receive training



and advice. At the Labour Offices they can also apply for a subsidy which will cover the start-up costs as shown in their business project. The maximum amount of the subsidy is BGN 4000.00 (Article 4(91) of the Employment Promotion Act).

The Integration Centers help refugees that have already started their own business find appropriate workers who have completed vocational training courses at the State Agency for Refugees.

5. Education in Bulgaria

5.1 Access to preschool education



Optional preschool education takes place at kindergartens while mandatory preschool education is the responsibility of kindergartens or schools.

Young children who seek or have obtained protection can be enrolled at kindergartens or schools in the same manner as their Bulgarian peers. Children can join preschool education at any time of the year. In respect of municipal kindergartens, the rules for enrollment, disenrollment and transfer are set out in ordinances issued by the municipal councils or in the Statutes of the schools at which preschool education takes place. The conditions for enrolling children in kindergartens or schools are determined by each municipality and can be found on the municipality's website.

5.2 Access to school education

Holders of refugee/humanitarian status who are in school age enjoy the same access to the education system as their Bulgarian peers. Young people in school age receive free of charge education at state-owned or municipal schools in Bulgaria at the same conditions as Bulgarian schoolchildren.



In order to enroll a child in a certain grade (class) at a state-owned or municipal school, a parent (or the representative of an unaccompanied underage protection seeker) should lodge an application to the Director of the local Regional Directorate for Education. Within 7 working days the Director will refer the unaccompanied foreign child – seeker or holder of international protection status – to a certain school on basis of the child's place of residence and the preference expressed

by the parent/representative. Foreign children who seek or hold international protection status can join a school at any time of the school year, but not later than 30 school days before the end of the second semester.

The enrolled children are assigned to grades 1–4 on the basis of their age. Children above that age are assigned to higher or lower grades on the basis of an interview conducted by a panel of teachers, however they cannot be assigned to a grade which is more than three grades lower than their age implies.



At state-owned and municipal schools, schoolchildren who seek or hold an international protection status can benefit from additional, free of charge modules in Bulgarian language. For this purpose they have to be in mandatory-school age and submit an application to the principal of their school. Support may also be available in other subjects depending on the school's resources.

Institutions	Contact details
Ministry of Education and Science	Tel.: 02 9217 799 Fax: 02 988 24 85 2A Knyaz Dondukov Blvd., Sofia 1000 Tel.: 02 9217 760 e-mail: priemna@mon.bg Office hours: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm
Regional Directorates for Education	https://www.ruobg.com/selectruo

6. Bulgarian citizenship and social benefits

6.1. Who can apply to become a Bulgarian citizen?

- Refugees – not earlier than 3 years after receiving the refugee status;
- Persons granted humanitarian protection – not earlier than 5 years after receiving the humanitarian status;
- Stateless persons – not earlier than 5 years of the date of their permit for permanent or long-term residence in Bulgaria.



Institution	Contact details
Ministry of Justice	Bulgarian Citizenship Directorate 5 Axakov Street, Sofia Email: bgcitizen@justice.government.bg Weekdays: 9:00 am to 11:00 am and 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm

6.2. Social benefits in Bulgaria

Holders of refugee, humanitarian or asylum status in Bulgaria can apply for social benefits. There are various types of social benefits depending on the person's income, age, family status, etc.:

- Monthly social allowance;
- Dedicated subsidy (for heating);
- Ad-hoc allowance (e.g. for obtaining an identity card or for meeting other necessities).



Institution	Contact details
Social Assistance Agency	2 Triaditza Str, Sofia 1501 Tel. (Administrative Services unit): (02) 935 05 18 – List of the regional/local branches: https://asp.government.bg/bg/kontakti/teritorialni-strukturi

7. Transport and travel in Bulgaria

7.1. Travel document



Holders of refugee or humanitarian status need a travel document in order to travel outside Bulgaria. Applications for travel documents are to be submitted either to the Migration Directorate or to the relevant Regional Directorate of the Ministry of Interior. The following documents must be presented together with the application: the decision by which refugee or humanitarian status is granted, documents showing the registered address of the

applicant and evidence of payment of the application fee. Police will crosscheck the information received for foreign nationals with the data held by the State Agency for Refugees.

The travel document enables refugees and foreign nationals who hold refugee status travel to EU Member States and stay there for a period not longer than 3 months. Holders of humanitarian status should check the conditions for visiting EU Member States with the relevant embassies. In most cases they will need a visa.



Institutions	Contact details
Ministry of Interior	29 Shesti Septemvri Str., Sofia 1000 Tel. (operator): 02 9825 000 www.mvr.bg
Regional Directorates of the MoI	https://www.mvr.bg/en/ministry/structure/regional-directorates-of-interior

7.2. Travel restrictions

In accordance with the Bulgarian requirements, each protection seeker is assigned to one of the four geographic zones of the country (linked to the accommodation centers) and cannot leave that zone without a permission from the State Agency for Refugees. Exceptions are allowed for persons who need to travel in order to appear at a court or an administrative authority, or are in need of specialized medical care.

7.3. Obtaining a driving license

Refugees or holders of humanitarian status who do not possess a driving license issued by their country of origin must complete a driving course and take an official State exam (in Bulgarian or English language). Those who pass successfully the exam can request a driving license by filing an application to the Traffic Police Department of the Ministry of Interior.

The application must be accompanied with the following documents:

- ID card/passport;
- Medical certificate;
- Copy a certificate of training in first medical aid at the Bulgarian Red Cross;
- Declaration that the applicant does not have a valid driving license;
- Copy of evidence showing that the applicant has completed at least basic education (grade 8 or 10);
- Proof of payment of the required fees.



If you have a valid driving license from your country of origin, you can use it for one year after receiving refugee or humanitarian status. After that period you will need to take the driving license exam which consists of two parts – theoretical questions and practical driving test.

Institution	Contact details
List of licensed driving schools	https://rta.government.bg/index.php?page=scategories&scategory=teoria
Ministry of Interior Sofia Police Department	4 Lachezar Stanchev Str. 02/9825655 02/9822545 02/9823126 https://www.mvr.bg/opp

7.4. Transport



Bus and/or train services are available to most cities, towns and villages in Bulgaria.

The most convenient and cost-efficient way to move around Sofia is by using the public transportation system which consists of bus lines, tram/trolley lines and metro. A single-trip ticket costs BGN 1.60 and can be purchased from the vehicle driver or at the offices of the Urban Mobility Center.

Institution	Contact details
Bulgarian State Railways – Passenger Transport	3 Ivan Vazov Str., Sofia 1080 Tel./Fax: 02 987 88 69 E-mail: bdz_passengers@bdz.bg https://www.bdz.bg/bg
Intercity buses – timetables	https://avtogari.info/avtogari.php

Urban Mobility Center – Sofia

84 Knyaginya Maria Louisa Blvd., Sofia

Email: office@sofiatraffic.bg

Urban Mobility Call Center: 0700 13 233

<https://www.sofiatraffic.bg/bg/common>

8. Money

Official tender in Bulgaria is the Bulgarian Lev (BGN). Can be recognized by the Bulgarian abbreviation 'ЛВ.' (lv.)

Bulgaria expects to join the Eurozone soon but the euro is not legal tender yet. The exchange rate is 1 EUR = 1.95583 BGN



Bulgarian Lev notes are offered in denominations of 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 BGN.

The Bulgarian Cents are known as „стотинки“ (stotinka, meaning “one-hundredth” and are minted in coins of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50. There are also coins worth BGN 1 and BGN 2.



2020 г.
2009 г.
1999 г.



2005 г.



2020 г.
2008 г.
1999 г.



2019 г.
2006 г.
1999 г.



2020 г.



2019 г.

1 стотинка



2000 г.
1999 г.

10 стотинки



1999 г.

2 стотинки



2000 г.
1999 г.

20 стотинки



1999 г.

5 стотинки



2000 г.
1999 г.

50 стотинки



2007 г.
2005 г.
2004 г.
1999 г.

1 лев



2002 г.

2 лева

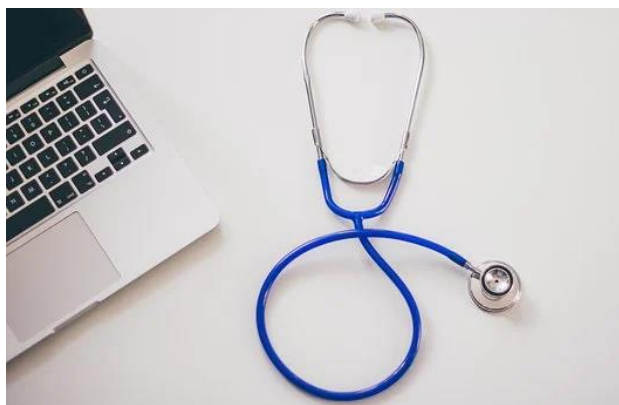


2018 г.
2015 г.

9. Health system and COVID-19

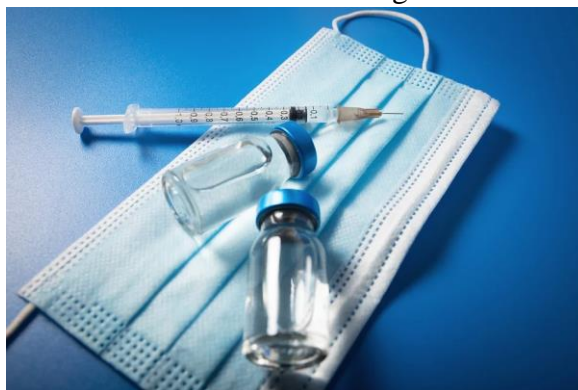
The State Agency for Refugees pays the public health insurance contributions for protection seekers during the application process. After obtaining refugee or humanitarian status the holders are required to pay their monthly contributions to the public health insurance system. Failure to pay three consecutive monthly contributions leads to suspension of the right to free healthcare. That right however can be regained by paying the outstanding contributions for past periods (up to 5 years back).

Those who pay their contributions to the public health insurance system are entitled to choose a general practitioner (GP), known in Bulgaria as ‘family doctor’. GPs monitor the overall health status of their patients, conduct regular medical examinations, treat some non-severe diseases (such as influenza or other respiratory disorders), prescribe medicines and/or refer patients to other medical professionals.



Since the outbreak of the pandemic Bulgaria has been applying various anti-COVID measures. Everyone is advised to observe safe physical distance and maintain good personal hygiene. Those who are infected or have been in contact with an infected person must call their GP or the 24/7 hotline of the Ministry of Health – 02 807 87 57. If you need urgent medical assistance call 112 and describe your symptoms.

Refugees can be vaccinated against COVID-19 at the same conditions as Bulgarian nationals. Vaccination of eligible persons is recommended and can be carried out by general practitioners upon request and provision of informed consent, or through registration in the National Online Health Information System (<https://his.bg>). Other vaccination channels are the so-called ‘green corridors’ at some public locations or the vaccination programme for protection seekers which is implemented at the Registration and Reception Centers of the State Agency for Refugees (SAR).



Institution	Contact details
<i>To check your health insurance status:</i> National Revenue Agency	https://inetdec.nra.bg/index.html Tel.: 0700 18 700 General information: infocenter@nra.bg
<i>To select a GP ('family doctor'):</i> National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF)	https://services.nhif.bg/references/lists/opl.xhtml 1 Krichim Str., Sofia 1407 International and EU matters: euro-rights@nhif.bg Information for the general public: 0800 14 800
EMERGENCY MEDICAL AID	Tel. 112
REFUGEE AND MIGRANT SERVICE OF THE BULGARIAN RED CROSS COVID-19 hotline	The line is open from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm and is available in the following languages: ARABIC 0884 964 031

	0885 473 377 0885 896 146 PERSIAN 0882 355 966 0884 623 526 TURKISH 0884 623 526 ENGLISH AND FRENCH 0886 637 928
Single COVID-19 Information Portal	https://coronavirus.bg/
Hotline of the Ministry of Health:	+359 2 9301 152 , +359 2 9301 253 goreshtalinia@mh.government.bg

10. The Bulgarian Alphabet

The Bulgarian alphabet (**българска азбука**) is used for the written rendition of the literary Bulgarian language. It is based on the Cyrillic script and consists of the following 30 letters:

Bulgarian alphabet	ISO 9	Official transliteration	IPA*	Name of Letter	English equivalent
А а	A a	A a	/a/ or /ɐ/	а	a as in "palm"
Б б	B b	B b	/b/ or /p/	бъ	b as in "bug"
В в	V v	V v	/v/ or /f/	въ	v as in "vet"
Г г	G g	G g	/g/ or /k/	гъ	g as in "good"
Д д	D d	D d	/d/ or /t/	дъ	d as in "dog"
Е е	E e	E e	/ɛ/	е	e as in "best"
Ж ж	Ž ž	Zh zh	/ʒ/ or /ʃ/	жъ	s as in "treasure"
З з	Z z	Z z	/z/ or /s/	зъ	z as in "zoo"
И и	I i	I i	/i/	и	i as in "machine"
Й й	J j	Y y	/j/	и кратко	y as in "yes" or "yoyo"
К к	K k	K k	/k/ or /g/	къ	k as in "make"
Л л	L l	L l	/l/ or /ʎ/	лъ	l as in "call" or "lend"
М м	M m	M m	/m/	мъ	m as in "man"
Н н	N n	N n	/n/	нъ	n as in "normal"
О о	O o	O o	/ɔ/ or /o/	о	o as in "order"
П п	P p	P p	/p/	пъ	p as in "pet"
Р р	R r	R r	/r/	ръ	r as in "restaurant"
С с	S s	S s	/s/ or /z/	съ	s as in "sound"
Т т	T t	T t	/t/ or /d/	тъ	t as in "top"
У у	U u	U u	/u/ or /o/	у	oo as in "tool"
Ф ф	F f	F f	/f/	фъ	f as in "food"
Х х	H h	H h	/x/	хъ	ch as in Scottish "loch"
Ц ц	C c	Ts ts	/ts/	цъ	ts as in "fits"
Ч ч	Č č	Ch ch	/tʃ/	чъ	ch as in "chip"
Ш ш	Š š	Sh sh	/ʃ/	шъ	sh as in "shot"
Щ щ	Št št ¹	Sht sht	/ʃt/	щъ	sht as in "shtick"
Ъ ъ	Ǻ ǻ ¹	A a	/ɤ/ or /ɐ/	ер голям	u as in "turn"
Ь ь	˙ 1	Y y	/j/ or not pronounced	ер малък	soft sign: y as in canyon
Ю ю	Ju ju ¹	Yu yu	/ju/, /jo/, /u/ or /o/	ю	u as in "menu"
Я я	Ja ja ¹	Ya ya	/ja/, /je/, /a/ or /ɐ/	я	ya as in "yarn"

Source: <http://bulgaria123.weebly.com/language--culture.html>

11. Glossary of the most commonly used words and expressions

Hello!; Hi! <i>(informal)</i>	Здравей/те!; Здравсти! (неофициално)
Goodbye!; Bye! <i>(informal)</i>	Довиждане!; Чао! (неофициално)
Good morning! <i>(used before noon)</i>	Добро утро! (използва се до обед)
Good afternoon! <i>(used between noon and 6 p.m.)</i>	Добър ден! (използва между обед и 6 следобед.)
Good evening! <i>(used after 6 p.m.)</i>	Добър вечер! (използва се след 6 следобед.)
Good night!	Лека нощ!
Have a nice day!	Приятен ден!
Have a good weekend!	Приятен уикенд!
See you soon!	Ще се видим скоро!/ До скоро!
See you later!	Ще се видим по-късно!
Please!	Моля!
Excuse me!	Извинете ме!
Thank you!; Thanks! <i>(informal)</i>	Благодаря ти!; Благодаря!/ Мерси!
Sorry!	Съжалявам!
No problem!	Няма проблем!
Don't worry about it!	Не се притеснявай/те за това!
You're welcome!	Пак заповядай/те!

12. National holidays and non-working days

Date	Official name
1 January	New Year
3 March	Day of the Liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule
April/May	Easter

2022: 24 April; 2023: 16 April	
1 May	Day of labour and international solidarity of workers
6 May	Feast of St. George, Day of Valor and Day of the Bulgarian Armed Forces
24 May	Bulgarian Enlightenment and Culture, and Slavic Script Day
6 September	Bulgarian Reunification Day
22 September	Bulgarian Independence Day
1 November	Day of the Bulgarian Enlighteners (still a working day)
24 December	Christmas Eve
25 and 26 December	Birth of Christ (Christmas)

13. Culture and traditions



The Bulgarian nation has shaped its everyday living traditions and culture in the course of millennia. Being at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, the lands of Bulgaria have been populated since very ancient times. Thracians, Illyrians and Greeks are those from whom Slavs and ancient Bulgarians inherited superb Antique culture. All peoples that have lived on these lands – Thracians, Romans, Slavs and Bulgarians – have left their footprint in the world's treasury of cultural values.

It is not a coincidence that the first European civilization emerged here. Famous across the world is the treasures found at the Necropolis of Varna – the most ancient processed gold ever found in the world, the Thracian tombs and sanctuaries at Kazanlak, Sveshtari, Starosel, Alexandrovo, Perperikon, Tatul, etc. as well as the many gold treasures that are highly appreciated in the entire world, including the treasures of Panagyurishte, Valchi Tran, Rogozen, etc. The remnants of Thracian, Hellenic and Roman culture are countless.



Bulgarian traditions are enrooted in the distant past and are closely interwoven in history and Christianity. The most prominent customs include *nestinari* (fire dancers), *kukeri* (masked dancers), *lada* (maiden rituals related to matrimony), *lazarice* (rituals performed by young girls on the Feast of St. Lazarus), etc. *Nestinari* is a very ancient Bulgarian tradition where barefooted performers dance on burning coals. *Kukeri* performances are special rituals carried out only by men dressed in self-made masks and costumes.



Bulgarians cherish the traditions related to the most important moments in one's life – holy baptism, wedding and funeral. The feasts of the various saints are also highly respected, the most prominent being *Ivanovden* (St. John), *Gergyovden* (St. George) and *Dimitrovden* (St. Demetrius).

The holidays which most dearest to the Bulgarian heart are of course Christmas and Easter – these are times when the whole family meets and several generations celebrate together united by the feeling of appurtenance to a Bulgarian family.



Institution	Contact details
Ministry of Tourism	1 Saborna Str., Sofia Tel.: 02/9046809 Fax: 02/4470 899 https://www.tourism.government.bg
Official tourist portal of Bulgaria	https://bulgariatravel.org
Ministry of Culture	17 Alexander Stamboliisky Blvd., Sofia Tel. 94 00 900 Fax: 981 81 45 http://mc.government.bg

14. Useful contacts



14.1. Legal assistance

Institution	Contact details
Foundation for Access to Rights	E-mail: office@farbg.eu http://www.farbg.eu/index.php/bg/contact
Bulgarian Helsinki Committee	1 Uzundzhovska Str., Sofia 1000 Tel.: 02 981 3318 02 980 2049 E-mail: refunit@bghelsinki.org https://www.bghelsinki.org
Voice in Bulgaria – Center for Legal Assistance	Office 226, floor 2, Triaditza Str., Sofia T/F: +359 2 9810779 E: voiceinbulgaria https://www.centerforlegalaid.com
International Organization for Migration	77 Czar Assen Street, Sofia 1463 Tel.: +359 (2) 93 94 774; E-mail: iomsofia@iom.int Mobile teams GSM, WhatsApp and Viber: +359 884 602 185; +359 884 605 184; +359 892 212 194 Landline: +359 (2) 93 94 774 https://www.iom.bg/bg/

14.2. Violence/Trafficking of human beings

If you have been a victim of violence/trafficking of human beings

Institution	Contact details
If you need protection and/or are experiencing violence: National helpline for survivors of violence (operated by Animus Association Foundation)	Tel.: +35980018676
If you are a victim of trafficking of human beings: National human trafficking resources line (operated by A21 Bulgaria)	Tel.: +35980020100 https://080020100.bg/index.php

14.3. Other organizations

Organization	Contact details
UNHCR Office in Bulgaria	2 Pozitano Str., Sofia Tel.: +359 2 980 24 53 Website: www.unhcr.org/bg/ Facebook: www.facebook.com/UNHCRBulgaria E-mail: bulso@unhcr.org
Caritas Sofia	Apt. 47, entrance B (third), block 55, Ilinden residential district, Sofia E-mail: info@caritas-sofia.org Tel.: +359-2-920-08-25 https://www.caritas-sofia.org
Multi Kulti Collectives	5 Chernomen Str., Sofia Tel.: +359 89 823 9850 Website: www.multikulti.bg/ Facebook: www.facebook.com/multikulti.bg E-mail: info@multikulti.bg
Bulgarian Council on Refugees and Migrants	76 James Baucher Blvd., Sofia Tel.: +359 2 427 17 43 Website: www.bcrm-bg.org Facebook: www.facebook.com/Bulrefcouncil E-mail: bgrc@bulrefcouncil.org
Council of Refugee Women in Bulgaria	95 Exarch Josef Str., Sofia Tel.: +359 878 136 321 Website: www.crw-bg.org Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/pg/CRWBG E-mail: office@crw-bg.org



References:

1. State Agency for Refugee with the Council of Ministers
<https://www.aref.government.bg/index.php/bg/node/29>
2. Law on Foreigners in Bulgaria
https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/law_on_foreigners_in_bulgaria_bg_1.pdf
3. Foundation for Access to Rights (FAR) and web-based platform:
<https://migrantlife.bg/>
4. Useful advice for protection/asylum seekers in Bulgaria: http://refugees.farbg.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/as_BG_Brochure1_WEB.pdf
5. Handbook on the procedure for filing an application for asylum or international protection in Bulgaria
<https://asylum.bg/bg/bg-1>
6. Brochure of the Bulgarian Council on Refugees and Migrants and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Bulgaria
<https://refugee.bg/bg/>
7. National tourist portal
<https://bulgariatravel.org>



ERIAS

Information about the ERIAS Project

ERIAS - European Refugees Integration Action Scheme

www.erias.org

The general objective of the project is to foster the successful integration of third-country nationals in the labour market using the ERIAS approach (comprehensiveness and multi-stakeholder), providing business support organisations and businesses with innovative ways and tools, informing stakeholders about the European Partnership for Integration and its objectives. The expected impact of the Action is a major awareness among business support organisations and businesses about Third-Country Nationals skills potential, and the positive contribution they can make to the economy, leading on the medium and long term to higher TCN employment rates. The benefits of a multi-stakeholder approach in the field of TCN labour market integration will have been demonstrated through concrete and realistic actions on the ground.

The project is financed by: the European Commission

Partners: trade unions, employers` organizations, non-governmental organizations from Greece, Belgium, Italy, Bulgaria, Spain, France.

Duration: 36 months

ERIAS is the European Chambers response to the labour market integration question of Third Country Nationals (TCN), including refugees. ERIAS proposes a methodology for the integration of TCN in the labour market based on the principles of comprehensiveness (from skills assessment to employment) and multi-stakeholder approach. Partners from Spain, Italy, Greece and Bulgaria test the ERIAS approach on the ground, offering integration pathways to TCN while considering the employment needs of enterprises. The French partner contributes with the creation of an Integration Check List for enterprises that will help to overcome potential integration hurdles by offering information and guidance. The project provides the development of a vademecum of positive integration examples, as a concrete step for changing mindsets when addressing the integration question. The 14 project partners reach out to their respective networks at European, national and regional level to well over 1500 stakeholders who are informed about and/or associated to the activities. Over 350 TCN benefit from 4 skills assessments, 25 trainings, 3 counselling and guidance activities, putting them on the employment path. On the enterprise side, over 500 enterprises are informed and invited to contribute to the activities, via 8 workshops, 2 surveys, some 40 meetings, 1 matchmaking session with a great number of individual contacts. The major outcomes are new multi-stakeholder alliances, tailored training services for TCN and practical tools for enterprises that will help the latter in smoothly integrating TCN in the workforce. The expected impact will be a major awareness of the benefits of the rapid labour market integration of TCN, a shift in mindsets (from foe to friend) with business organisations and businesses across Europe.

Partners: France, Spain, Italy, Greece, Belgium, Bulgaria

Partners from Bulgaria: Bulgarian CCI, Haskovo CCI, Stara Zagora CCI



This project was funded by
the European Union's Asylum,
Migration and Integration Fund



ERIAS

Contacts:

Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
9 Iskar Str., Sofia 1058
Tel.: +359 2 8117 4000
E-mail: bcci@bcci.bg;
www.bcci.bg



Project partners:



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