

**Research Mobility Center
Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”**



**Practical Guide
for
Foreign Researchers
in Bulgaria**

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Part 1: Bulgaria – general information

This chapter focuses on some basic facts for Republic of Bulgaria. It provides also an overview of the research system and the main institutions in the field.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Situation: Bulgaria is situated in the South - East part of Europe, and in the Eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula. It has a total surface of 110 912 km². In the North its border goes along the Danube, in the East it is bounded by the Black Sea, in the South its neighboring countries are Turkey and Greece, and in the West – Macedonia and Serbia.

Bulgaria is divided into 6 planning regions – North-West, North Central, North-East, South-East, South Central and South-East. Apart of them the country has 27 administrative regions. The capital of Bulgaria is Sofia.

Population: Bulgaria has 7 973 671 inhabitants, from which 5 500 695 live in towns.

Political system: Bulgaria is a Parliamentary Republic and the basic power in the country is the legislative one. The [National Assembly](#) (The Parliament) exercises the legislative power, as well as the right to parliamentary control, and has 4 years mandate. The Constitution provides a multi- party parliamentary system and free elections, in which all the citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria take part with the right to vote. After the elections, the largest parliamentary group constructs the government – the [Council of Ministers](#). The [President](#) is the Head of State and is elected with direct elections once in every five years, for not more that two mandates.

Climate: The climate in Northern Bulgaria is moderate continental, while the climate in Southern Bulgaria is intermediate continental tending to Mediterranean. The climate in the regions with an altitude of 1900-2000 m above sea level is mountainous and along the Black Sea coast it is maritime.

Currency: The currency unit in Bulgaria is the Bulgarian Lev (plural form leva /levs/) or BGN. 1 lev = 100 stotinki.

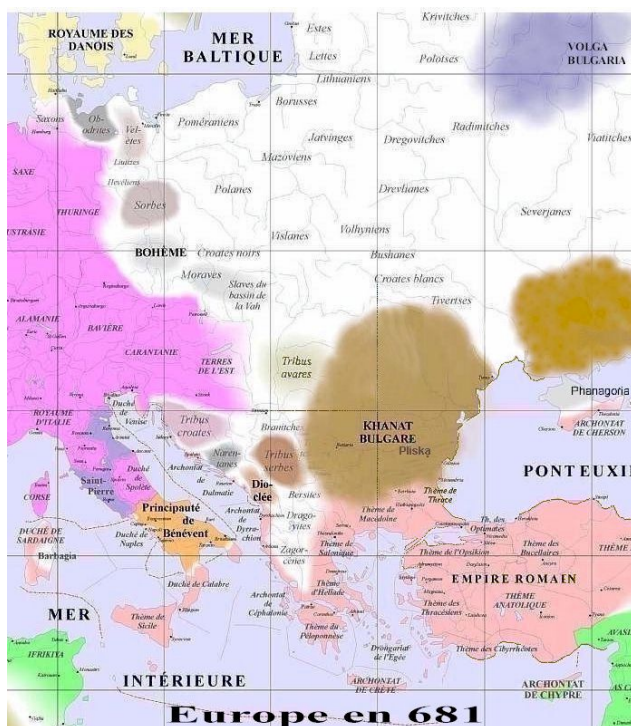
Public holidays: The following days are official public holidays:

- 1 January – New year
- 3 March – Day of Bulgarian Liberation from Osman slavery
- 1 May – Labour Day
- 6 May – St. George, Day of .the courage and the Bulgarian army
- 24 May – Day of Bulgarian education and culture and of the Cyrillic alphabet
- 6 September – Day of the unification of Bulgaria
- 22 September – Day of Bulgarian independence
- 1 November – Day of National Revival Leaders
- 24 December – Christmas eve
- 25 and 26 December – Christmas
- Easter – 2 days – Sunday and Monday determined by Bulgarian Church

BULGARIAN HISTORY

Bulgaria's name is derived from the old Bulgars, who originated in the steppe north of the Caspian Sea. In the latter part of the seventh century, one branch of the Bulgars moved up the Volga River, establishing the Kingdom of the Volga Bulgars; the other branch moved westward along the Black Sea settling near the mouth of the Danube. Although the name Bulgaria is not of Slavic origin, the Slavic people, who had entered the Balkan Peninsula earlier, absorbed the invading Bulgarian people and were, in large measure, the precursors of the present-day Bulgarians.

The history of Bulgaria separates into four periods: First Bulgarian Kingdom (681 – 1018 AD); Second Bulgarian Kingdom (1185 – 1396 AD); Third Bulgarian Kingdom (1878 – 1945), and newest Bulgarian history.



The First Bulgarian Kingdom

The Bulgarian State was founded in 681 by Khan Asparouh as a leader of a union of the Slavs and the Proto-Bulgarians in their struggle against Byzantium. The following period between the 8th and the 10th centuries brought the political rise and territorial expansion.

Boris I Mihail (852-889) converted the Bulgarians to Christianity and adopted the Slavonic script created by Constantine Cyril the Philosopher and his brother Methodius.

Simeon the Great (893-927) conquered new lands and expanded the territory of Bulgaria to the Black Sea, the Aegean and the Adriatic. Bulgaria became one of the most powerful states in Europe.

After exhaustive wars with Byzantium which ended with the defeat of the troops of Czar Samuil (997-1014) the Byzantine rule over Bulgaria was established.

The Second Bulgarian Kingdom

In 1187 the Second Bulgarian Kingdom with Turnovo as a capital was established. Petur II was pronounced Czar of the Bulgarians.

The power of Bulgaria was restored by czar Kaloyan (1197-1207) who inflicted a final defeat on the forces of the Latin emperor Baldwin I.

The ascension of Czar Ivan Asen II (1218-1241) on the throne is connected with a new strengthening of the state, with the expansion of its borders, and with economic and cultural development.

Czar Ivan-Alexandur (1331-1371) divided the country between his sons Ivan Sratsimir (1371-1396) and Ivan Shishman (1371-1393). The cultural life was on the upsurge again.

The Otoman Expansion

The attacks of the Ottoman Turks on the Balkan Peninsula in the 14th century led to the waning of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom taken over in 1396.

The 18th century witnessed the beginning of the Bulgarian National Revival and the formation of the Bulgarian nation. The period of the National Revival began with "The Slav-Bulgarian History" written in 1762 by Paisii of Hilendar. The ideology of national liberation was conceived, the independent Bulgarian church, education and culture were restored.

The Third Bulgarian Kingdom

As a result of the Russo-Turkish War of Liberation (1877-1878) the Bulgarian State was restored, but it included only a small part of the Bulgarian lands. The Bulgarian people reacted against the decision of the Berlin Congress with the Kresna-Razlog uprising (1878-1879), accomplishment of the unification of Eastern Rumelia and the Principality of Bulgaria (1885) and organized the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie uprising (1903). Prince Ferdinand Saxe-Coburg-Gotha proclaimed Bulgaria independent and himself the czar.

Bulgaria, together with Serbia and Greece, was victorious in the Balkan War (1912-1913) against Turkey for the liberation of Thrace and Macedonia, but in the Inter-Allies War (1913) it was defeated by its former allies who tore out territories inhabited by Bulgarians. Bulgaria's participation in the World War I on the side of the Central Powers ended with a national catastrophe, Czar Ferdinand abdicated in favor of his son Boris III (1918-1943).

The period between the two world wars started with a heavy crisis and with the rule of the Bulgarian Agrarian Union. The resistance of the left forces led to the September 1923 uprising guided by the Communist Party. During the next decade the influence of the monarchist circles increased which strengthened the personal power of Czar Boris III. At that time Bulgaria was oriented to Germany and it was forced to join the Axis in 1941. Bulgaria declared the so called "Symbolic war" on USA and Great Britain, but did not participate in the battles on the Eastern Front; the Bulgarian society saved the Jews living in the country from deportation. After the death of Czar Boris III a council of regents was formed and it ruled instead of the underage Simeon II. A National Committee of the Fatherland Front (organization created by the communists) was set up and a guerilla movement was organized.

Newest Bulgarian history

In 1944 the Fatherland Front took over the power. The presence of the Soviet Army in Bulgaria sped up the changes in the political life and the following events - the declaration of the Republic (1946) and the coming to power of the Bulgarian Communist Party; the political parties were dismantled, nationalization of industry and banks, cooperation of land were implemented.

In 1989 democratic changes began in Bulgaria - the political parties and the parliamentary functions were restored. The National Assembly adopted a new

Constitution which regulates the functions of the three main powers - legislative, executive and legal.

Religion

The **Eastern Orthodox Church** emerged as a result of disagreements between Greek speaking eastern churches and Latin speaking western churches over doctrine and ecclesiastical authority. During the Ottoman rule it was placed under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople. However, with the demise of the Ottoman Empire many independent churches emerged in eastern Europe. Remaining in communion they retain their independence.

The **Bulgarian Orthodox Church** as an autocephalous Eastern Orthodox Church was established in 865 when Boris I was baptized by Greek missionaries. In the centuries of Ottoman yoke it was the only link with other Eastern Orthodox peoples and with European Christianity in the resistance to the Islamic invasion. It became independent in 1870 by a decree of the sultan and thus won the international juridical recognition of the Bulgarian nation before its political one.

During the communist era the church's property was confiscated by the state. The constitution of 1991 guaranteed freedom of religion while recognising Eastern Orthodoxy as "the traditional religion in Bulgaria". 88.5% of the population of Bulgaria belong to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

The Bulgarian Orthodox Church has an extremely rich history of **icons** which depict Biblical scenes, local saints, the Virgin Mary or Jesus. The icon is of particular importance for the Orthodox Church since it is seen as the dwelling place of God's grace, creating in the faithful a sense of the presence of God. Thanks to this, even now Bulgarian artists continue to create icons with the clear sense, that they are an example of an exclusive spiritual and artistic phenomenon. The presence of the icon in our life helps us to overcome the psychological barriers of our material world.

ECONOMY

The economy of Bulgaria collapsed dramatically after 1989 with the loss of the market of the former communist states, to which the Bulgarian economy had been closely tied. The standard of living fell by about 40%. In addition, UN sanctions against Yugoslavia and Iraq had a very negative impact on the Bulgarian economy. Since 1997 the country began to recover with growing GDP, increasing foreign investments and macroeconomic stability. Important steps have been taken in privatisation, banking sector reforms and agricultural liberalization. The privatisation of agro-industrial enterprises gathered speed, and more than 68% of the assets in agriculture and more than 85% of the assets in the food industry in Bulgaria are now privately run. The trade and pricing policies are fully liberalized.

The main components of the reform program continue to be fast and transparent privatisation and restructuring of the state-owned enterprises, the financial and banking sector reform, the liberalization of agricultural and energy sectors, the adoption of the health insurance system, the pension system reform, and the administrative reforms in the public sector.

Chemical industry is a leading sector in Bulgarian industry. It provides a number of intermediary and final products for the domestic and export markets such as fertilizers, soda, plastics, PVC, polyamide and polyester fibers, paints, detergents, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics. They have a substantial share of Bulgarian export. Products of tobacco and food industry in Bulgaria accounted for 19 % of total industrial output, with an export share of 16.7 %. Tourism is the fastest growing sector in the Bulgarian economy with excellent opportunities for foreign investment with high return on investment ratios. Other sectors having strategic position in the Bulgarian economy are mechanical and electrical engineering, ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy, electronics industry and telecommunications.

On April 25th, 2005 it was signed the **Bulgaria-EU Accession Treaty** and it is set Bulgaria to join the EU in 2007.

RESEARCH LANDSCAPE

The [Ministry of Education and Science](#) (MES) is the governmental body responsible for research and development (R&D) and educational policies in Bulgaria. A National Council on Scientific Research, consisting of the Minister of Education and Science and members from the relevant ministries, higher education schools and employers' organizations, supports MES in implementing policies in the science and research areas. The National Council on Scientific Research coordinates the National Scientific Programmes approved with a government decision covering five areas – Genomics, Information Society, Nanotechnologies and New Materials, "Bulgarian society part of Europe" and Cosmic Research.

The [National Scientific Fund](#) is a body at MES functioning since 1990 with the objectives of promoting research in the fields in which Bulgarian excellence is internationally recognized and of strengthening interaction between the research community and the country's economic players.



RESEARCH POLICY

The National strategy for scientific research in the Republic of Bulgaria during the period 2005-2013 reflects the governmental aims as part of its liabilities for the strategic development of the country. The Strategy determines the middle term objectives (till 2013) for the development of the scientific research, and foresees measures in the area of scientific research, distributed in time and the related with them legal basis.

In order to ensure its effectiveness, as well as to contribute to reaching the objectives of the National Plan for Development, the Strategy for scientific research is based on the

approved vision for the development of Bulgaria. Based on the priorities of the National Plan for Development and taking into account the European trends in the area of scientific research, and the thematic priorities of the framework programmes of the EC, the Strategy determines the following priority areas for scientific research

1. National identity and cultural heritage
2. Information technologies
3. New materials and technologies
4. Agro- and medico biological research and technologies.

As a common priority is considered the development of the scientific infrastructure, and in particular the national academic network.

RESEARCH STATISTICS

Some statistical data on the development of Bulgarian science are provided in the National Strategy for scientific research:

- Regarding the expenses for research and development (R&D) as part of GDP, which are lower than 0,5% of GDP, Bulgaria is far below the EU-15 average 2%, as well as the EU-25 average – higher than 1,9%.
- The structure of the R&D expenses as well from the highly developed countries, where the private sector research is dominating while in Bulgaria around 70% of research is financed by the state, and less than 25% - by private sector.
- The number of researchers for 1000 employees in Bulgaria reaches 2.62%, which is far below the average level for Europe – around 5.7%.
- Bulgaria has approximately high proportion of women in research – 45.5%, actually one of the highest in Europe (after Latvia, Lithuania and Portugal).
- The data for sectoral distribution of researchers shows that their distribution in Bulgaria differs from most European countries. The proportion of researchers in enterprises (6.7%) is very low, and most researchers work in universities (53.1%) or in state institutions (40.2%).



In Bulgaria scientific research is carried out in a variety of public and private research organisations and universities. The most important ones are the institutes of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and of the National Centre for Agrarian Sciences.

The [Bulgarian Academy of Sciences](#) (BAS) is a national autonomous association for scientific research, which includes academic institutes, laboratories and other independent research entities. BAS unites the academicians and corresponding members from the country, recognized Professors scientists from scientific institutes in Bulgaria, as well as foreign members. The activities of BAS comprise:

- fundamental experiments and preparation of highly trained specialists independently and together with universities;
- investigation of history, language and

- literature of the Bulgarian people and their contribution to world culture;
- development of forecasts and long-term programs for social, economical, scientific, technical, ecological and cultural development of the country;
- publication of scientific works and scientific studies for the general public, etc.

The [National Centre of Agricultural Sciences](#) (NCAS) is a legal entity with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. It is an organization for fundamental strategic and applied research, extension service and subsidiary activities in the fields of agriculture and food industry. Its activities are carried out according to the state agricultural policy. The NCAS consists of one National AgroBioTech Park and six Regional AgroTech Parks with a total of 31 research institutes and other entities. The main priorities of NCAS are:

- Sustainable agriculture and development of rural areas
- Production of qualitative and safe food
- Environment protection and quality of life
- Research is carried out in the following directions:
- Breeding and biotechnological research in crop husbandry, preservation and management of plant genetic resources
- Breeding and biotechnological research in livestock husbandry, preservation and management of animal genetic resources
- Cryobiology and food technology
- Land reclamation and agricultural engineering
- Agricultural economics

There are two types of [universities](#) in Bulgaria, private and state-owned. The state-owned are established by a legislative act and receive an annual state subsidy, which ensures the necessary financial resources for the educational process and respective scientific activities. An important aspect of the Bulgarian university system is academic autonomy, which involves academic freedom, academic self-governance and independence.



The [Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"](#) is the first school of higher education in Bulgaria. Its history is an embodiment and a continuation of centuries of cultural and educational tradition in the country. Established at the end of 19th century, the Sofia University turns into an academic and scientific center on the Balkans which is a fully developed academic institution with European prestige. Today the Sofia University is the largest and most prestigious

educational and scientific center in the country with more than 10 faculties covering subjects like Mathematics, Informatics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Journalism and Mass Communication, Theology, Economics and Business Administration, and Pre-school and Primary School Education, etc.



Part 2: Visa and residency

This chapter provides an overview of the legal requirements for entering Bulgaria, and staying longer in the country.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTERING BULGARIA

Foreign nationals can enter the Republic of Bulgaria only if they have **valid documents**:

- A passport or other alternative document allowing them to travel abroad.
- An entry permit – either entry or transit visa.

For entering Bulgaria with a **vehicle** foreign nationals are obliged to present registration and ownership documents of the vehicle, entry permission as the case might be, obligatory insurance and a valid driving license.

Within 48 hours after their entry into the country all foreign nationals who are not staying in a hotel are obliged to register. They have to **register their address** in Bulgaria either at the services for administrative control of foreign nationals, or at the nearest district police station, depending on the address where they are staying. This registration includes: full name, date of birth, citizenship, as well as the number and series of their identity documents. Address changes also have to be reported within 48 hours.

Foreign nationals should respect the **Custom's Limitations** when entering Bulgaria:

- Foreign nationals may export and import Bulgarian banknotes and coins in circulation to the amount of up to BGN 10,000. Sums exceeding this amount may be imported and exported only with a permit by the Bulgarian National Bank, valid for a period of up to 90 days of its issuance date.
- Foreign nationals can import unlimited amounts of foreign currency, which is to be declared. They may export convertible (hard) currency in amounts that do not exceed the amount of the foreign currency they had imported and declared.
- Upon crossing the state borderline of the Republic of Bulgaria foreign nationals may import and export commodities that in type, quantities, and value are not of a commercial nature. These do not include objects the passenger carry for personal use and consumption objects.

OBTAINING A VISA

Bulgaria's visa policy is based on the Foreign Nationals in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the regulations for issuing visas. Bulgaria's diplomatic and consular offices are the only institutions having the authority to issue visas according to this Act.

Citizens of some countries traveling on regular passports are not required visas for a stay in Bulgaria not exceeding 30 days within 6 months from the date of first arrival but they should be able, upon request, to show evidence of a medical insurance, valid for Bulgaria, covering the duration of their stay. Citizens of most EU countries are not required visas for a stay in Bulgaria not exceeding 90 days. If planning to stay more than 30 (90) days,

or traveling on diplomatic or official passport, a visa is required and must be obtained in advance.

The Bulgarian Diplomatic or Consular Offices issue the following types of visas:

- Visa for airport transfer - the foreign national does not enter the country but only changes flights at the airport
- Transit visas - the foreign national should leave the country within 24 hours after the entry with such visa
- Short-term visa - it is for a single or multiple entries for no more than 90 days within a 6 months following the first entry.
- Long-term visa - it is issued to foreign nationals who like to reside for a long period or permanently in Bulgaria. The long-term visa is for a single entry, up to 90 days each. The visa is valid for no more than 6 months. This limitation is applied until obtaining a residence permit by the services for administrative control of foreign nationals.

Contact details of Bulgarian embassies abroad can be found on the web site of the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) under the topic MINISTRY.

OBTAINING A BULGARIAN RESIDENCE PERMIT

Foreign nationals that have an employment contract and a valid long-term visa can acquire a long-term residence permit for the time of the contract but for no more than one year. This permission can be prolonged every year.

For issuing a long-term residence permit is required that the foreign national has housing, sufficient financial incomes, obligatory social insurance and other insurances according to the Bulgarian legislation.

In most cases the following documents should be presented to the Office for administrative control of foreign nationals at the respective Regional Directorate of the Ministry of Interior:

- valid international traveling document;
- document for paid state taxes;
- copy of the pages of the international traveling document with the photo, the personal data, the entry visa and the stamp of the last entry into the country;
- proof of housing during the whole stay in the country;
- certified copy of the work permit.

In addition, according to the reasons for issuing a long-term residence permit, could be required also:

- certified copy of the document for tax registration;
- certified copy of the document for registration to the respective act;
- certified copy of the legal decision for entering into the Trade register;
- certified copy of the document for registration in the National Insurance Institute;
- documents demonstrating that allowance is ensured during the stay in the country.

LEGALIZATION OF DOCUMENTS

The Hague Convention Abolishing the Requirement of Legalization for Foreign Public Documents ("Hague Legalization Convention") is in force for Bulgaria as of April 30, 2001. If a document (power of attorney, affidavit, birth, death and marriage record, incorporation papers, deeds, patent application and other legal papers) issued by a state party of the Hague Legalization Convention needs to be used in Bulgaria, obtaining a special "apostille" certificate (and, in most cases, a translation of the document) is generally all that is required. The documents issued by the states-parties to the Hague Legalization Convention after receiving an 'apostille' do not need a legalization by the respective Bulgarian Diplomatic or Consular Office.

In all cases when 'apostille' is not provided the documents follow the traditional legalization procedure: The documents issued abroad need to be certified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the issuing state, after that legalized by the respective Bulgarian Diplomatic or Consular Office. If no legalization of the Bulgarian Embassy is ensured, a legalization could be made by the Diplomatic Office of the issuing state in Bulgaria.

A similar procedure is followed for the documents issued by the Bulgarian authorities.

Part 3: Working in Bulgaria

This chapter focuses on the main issues related to employment in Bulgaria, , and providers information for obtaining a work permit or finding a job in the country.

EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE

The relations between the company and the workers in Bulgaria are governed by the Labor Code. All Bulgarian citizens have a right to work. Management cannot make any restriction on the workforce made by race, sex or any other discriminating factor. The constitution and the Labor code prevent such discrimination. At a national level the labor relations are governed also by agreements between the trade unions, the government and representatives of the employers.

The main policy making body in the field of labour, professional qualification, health and safety at work, social security and social assistance is the Ministry of of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP). It implements the state policy through its specialized units, namely the Employment Agency, General Labour Inspectorate, Social Assistance Agency and their regional structures, and the Agency for Foreign Aid. MLSP also carries out the state supervision for compliance of the legislation in the field of employment relationships, health and safety at work, employment and professional qualification, payment of work, social security and social assistance; the implementation of and the compliance with the international agreements in the field of labour market, social policy and social security. The supervision comprises the giving of obligatory prescriptions by the respective supervisory bodies of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy for removal of stated violations of legislation and seeking the administrative-penal responsibility of the offenders.

The National Employment Agency (NEA) is an executive agency to the Minister of Labour and Social Policy for the implementation of the government policy on employment promotion. Finding employment allows the full use of every individual's capabilities and skills and defends its rights of dignifying existence and active social participation.



EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

Employment relationships are regulated by the Bulgarian Labor Law through employment contracts. The employment contracts between the employee (not under 16-years of age) and the employer are prepared in written form and should specify the place and nature of work and the salary to be paid. As a rule the employment contract is concluded for an indefinite period. Some fixed period employment contracts are exclusively specified in the Labor Code or may be concluded only for temporary, seasonal and short-term works and activities. The existence of indefinite period employment contracts as a rule aims to give employee stability and security. It may be concluded for a fixed or for an indefinite period.

The law provides an opportunity for transformation of the fixed term contract into one for an indefinite period, which is a suitable way for both parties to make the relationship more stable and effective. The parties may also choose a trial period of up to 6 months. Other types of employment contracts are those for example for 5 days work per month and the ones for additional work for the same or another employer.

The content of the contract must comply with the mandatory provisions of the labor law, concerning the special protection of the employee: working hours and rest, labor remuneration, holidays, safe and healthy conditions of work, social and cultural services, and conditions and requirements for termination of the contract. Of importance is the influence of collective agreements concluded between the employer and the trade union organization.

The monthly labor remuneration must not be less than the amount of the minimum labor salary in the country, defined by the Council of Ministers for the respective period of 1 month. Its payment may be done in advance or twice a month, or as agreed. Income taxes, due and voluntary social security contributions are deducted at source.

Together with employment relationship goes the obligation of the employer to provide social security and make contributions regularly at his expense for the employee.

Another way to use the labor force is through concluding a civil contract. The difference between the civil and the employment contract extends to the following: civil contract is the contract pursuant to which the two parties agree that one of them shall perform an activity that shall produce a result of the assigned activity, while the other shall pay a remuneration i.e. the subject of the contract is the result of the activity and the employer can not specify the working conditions, working time, leaves, etc. More important he/she could not exercise a control. The employer can only specify the particular time of the activity that should be done and set requirements to the produced result.

Termination of the contract is a significant point in labor regulation. The law provides three possibilities: general grounds, special grounds for termination with notice or without a notice. Notices should be in writing for a period from 30 days up to 3 months. Each of the parties may terminate the relationship without notice only in the cases listed by the law, so that parties can be protected from detrimental behavior. If notice periods are not observed, the regular party is entitled to a compensation to the extent of the gross labor remuneration or real damages caused.

There are special provisions about dismissal and protection against it in favor of some categories of workers. In some cases of terminating a contract, the employer is obliged to choose among employees.

The employer exercises disciplinary power and is still the strongest party at the labor-force market.

REMUNERATION AND NON FINANCIAL MEANS FOR MOTIVATION

The full remuneration and salary structure is set up according to the Labor code in Bulgaria. The total cost of employment consists of the basic salary plus the social security payments and a number of other smaller taxes. Salaries in the private sector are usually higher than in the State sector. It is not uncommon for workers and managers in

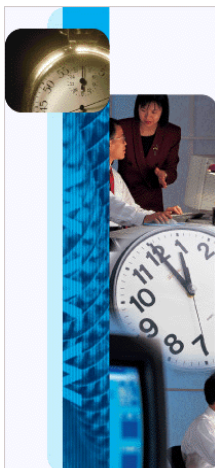
the private sector to be paid a higher salary than those of many senior government officials. There is a tendency for new companies coming to Bulgaria to pay what they consider a fair salary, lower than in their home country, but still higher than is normally found in Bulgaria. This problem is compounded when applicants for jobs state their present salary at a higher level than they actually are. For example they might say their salary is the net figure when in reality it is the gross or they might include overtime and bonuses as part of the basic salary. It is difficult for a new investor to be able to judge what the real situation is.

The Bulgarian International Business Association (BIBA) provides, every year, a very detailed set of salary tables for most of the industry sectors including consulting, retailing and manufacturing. These figures are averaged in most cases over 20 or 30 companies and give a good guide to the real salary figures. The BIBA salary survey also gives information on the levels of bonuses, provision of cars and telephones and other components of the full remuneration package. It should be remembered that any additions to the basic salary are taxable. One must be careful that these incentives are not included as part of the basic salary otherwise they will be included in calculating the Social Security taxes. If the incentives are given as extras to the basic salary then they are not counted for Social Security and the employee is liable for taxation. It should be noted that salaries outside Sofia are lower for all positions than those for workers in Sofia.

The most common form of incentives are:

- Free medical service
- Food vouchers
- Transport cards for the buses
- Clothing allowances
- Discount on company's product

The more senior managers frequently get a car, telephone or representation allowances and often club membership.



WORKING HOURS AND HOLIDAYS

The normal duration for a five-day work week is up to 40 hours, and 46 hours for a six-day work week. The general principle laid down in the Labor Code is that overtime work is prohibited. The code considers as overtime work, the work done by the order or with the knowledge of the employer, beyond the normal working hours. There is a governmental institution - Labor Inspectorate, which supervises the use of overtime. In enterprises where organization of work allows flexible working hours may be established. The period during which the employee must be at work in the enterprise, as well as the manner of accounting it, shall be specified by the employer. Outside the time of the compulsory presence, the employee may decide on when to begin the working day.

The employee is entitled to an annual paid leave after 8 months length of service. The duration of the basic annual paid leave shall be not less than 20 work days. During the maternity leave the insured woman is entitled to receive pecuniary indemnification from the National Security Institute in extend of 90 percent of the insurance income for a term

of 135 days, 45 of which before the childbirth. After this period the mother shall be paid monthly pecuniary indemnification in extent of the minimum monthly salary established for the country until the child reach 2 years of age. The same rules apply for adoption. There is also a leave for temporary disability during which compensation is paid by the funds of the National Insurance Institute.

EMPLOYING FOREIGN CITIZENS

Under the Foreign Nationals Act, **foreign citizens with permanent residence** in Bulgaria are allowed to work under the same conditions, which are valid for Bulgarian nationals.

The **main legal documents** arranging the employment of foreign citizens in Bulgaria are the following:

- Foreign Nationals in the Republic of Bulgaria Act;
- Employment Promotion Act;
- Regulation on terms and conditions for issuance, denial and suspension of work permits of foreign nationals in the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Regulation on terms and conditions for acceptance of detached foreign nationals in the Republic of Bulgaria in the framework of provision of services.

Foreign citizens have the right of employment on the territory of Republic of Bulgaria if:

- Are hired by employer in the accordance with the Labour Codex
- Are commissioned for a particular term by a foreign employer within the framework of offering services on Republic of Bulgaria territory
- Wish to be self-employed

Employment could be performed only after the issue of a Work Permit by the [National Employment Agency](#).

OBTAINING A BULGARIAN WORK PERMIT

Work Permit could be granted only to individuals possessing skills, specialized knowledge, which are required but could not be found on the national labour market. Work Permit is only issued upon an employer request – physical or legal entity, either registered in accordance to the Bulgarian legislation, or a party in international treaty as employer of the foreign physical and legal entity. The relevant application kit should be submitted in the LOD in accordance to the foreign employee's place of work.

The Work Permit is an official personal document for its holder and its possession gives the particular person the right of employment in Republic of Bulgaria for a pre-determined period of time in particular work placement, with a defined official position for an employer, which is physical or legal entity registered under Bulgarian law and has made the request for the work permit issue.

The Work Permit is issued for an up-to-one year term with the possibility of up to three years extension for executive personnel and more then three years for managerial level positions.

The Work Permit is a basis for the issue by the proper authorities of an entry clearance and residence permit with the same duration.

For obtaining a work permit, a number of documents should be presented in the territorial Labor Office Directorate by the employer of the foreign national.

Foreign nationals, who have obtained work permits, may work only for the employer determined in the work permit and only for the duration of time specified in the permit.

OTHER CONDITIONS FOR FOREIGN PERSONS

Foreign persons shall be secured according to the regulations for Bulgarian citizens. The insurance conditions should be settled in the employment contract. Foreign persons registered as exercising free lance profession and/or craft activity or working as sole traders, owners or partners in commercial companies are obligatory insured for disability due to general decease, for old age and death. The amount of the insurance contribution is 29% and is paid entirely by the insured person. The above mentioned persons on their choice can secure for all social risks without labor accident and professional decease and then the amount of the insurance installment is 32 %.

Disputes under contract with foreigners may be handled either by Bulgarian or other court, as agreed.

The labor law is well-organized and quite comprehensive for foreigners so there could be no problems in the legal aspect of employment relations.

FINDING A JOB

The [National Employment Agency](#) (NEA) offers the following services to those actively seeking employment:

- Information and Consultation
- Mediation for subsidized employment - Jobseekers receive information on available vacancies form the LODs' Information boards. Employers' names and addresses could not be found there. This information is published on the NEA website.
- Psychological support
- Career (professional) orientation – The consultation is provided in the form of information and advice, in regard to the conditions and possibilities on the labour market, the professional requirement and the clients' desires. Besides, career orientation, including self-orientation is conducted with the aid of specialized information materials and products.
- Enrollment in appropriate programs and employment measures
- Qualification and Motivation Training
- Mediation for Bulgarian citizens looking for employment abroad

The registration in Labour Office Directorates is a compulsory for the use of the services.

In Bulgaria are active also a number of job consulting companies, licensed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy.

Some of the on-line jobs bourses are working in both, Bulgarian and English:

- [Jobtiger](#) – established with the vision to be the most reliable partner for integrated Internet-based recruitment solutions in Bulgaria
- [Jobs.BG](#)



Part 4: Social insurance

This chapter provides basic information on the social insurance in Bulgaria and the main governmental bodies in the field.

SOCIAL INSURANCE SYSTEM

In the last decade the social insurance system in Bulgaria has undergone deep changes trying to respond to the new social, economical and political realities and to get closer to the best models of social security systems in the developed countries. The reform includes an establishment of new philosophy and principles of the insurance tri-pillars pension model, renewed legislation and normative order, institutional organization of the representatives of the new insurance relations. In 1999 is adopted the Law for the additional voluntary pension insurance, regulating the third pillar of the pension system which legalizes the activity of the private pension funds. The Code for the obligatory pension insurance as of year 2000 settles the pension insurance in the first and second pillars as well as all others insurances for the social risks disease, disability, old age, death and as of year 2002 – unemployment as well.

The [Ministry of Labor and Social Policy](#) is the governmental body responsible for development, coordination and implementation of the government policy related to public social security.

The [National Social Security Institute](#) is a public organization which, on the basis of the Code for the Obligatory Public Insurance, guarantees the citizens' right to pensions and benefits. The Institute provides for quality service and manages the funds of the state social security in an effective and transparent way. The Supervisory Board is highest management body of National Social Security Institute comprised by representatives of the State and the national representative organizations of workers and employers. The National Social Security Institute administers the mandatory insurance programs for disability, old age and survivors' benefits, sickness and maternity, work injuries and occupational diseases as well as collection, control and information services for all obligatory contributions.

OBLIGATORY PENSION INSURANCE

Public Social Security is obligatory for all employees employed by Bulgarian or foreign natural or corporate bodies within the country. They are secured for all risks. The employers must register at the local social security administration within 7 days from the day, they have employed anyone subject to compulsory insurance.

The [Code of social insurance](#) includes insurance for general illness, work accidents, professional diseases, maternity leave, old age and death, unemployment, as well as additional compulsory pension insurance. It stipulates that public social insurance shall be performed on the basis of the following principles:

- mandatory participation and comprehensiveness of the insurance;
- solidarity of the insured persons;
- equality of the insured persons;
- social dialogue in the management of the social insurance system;
- fund organization of insurance funds.

Compulsorily, all workers and employees are to be insured, no matter if they had labor or civil contracts. Workers and employees that work under civil contract are obliged only for insuring: disability, caused by general illness, for old age and for death. An exception of this obligation is possible only if the civil contract was for monthly payment under one minimum working salary.

OTHER PENSION INSURANCE OPPORTUNITIES

According to the Code of Social Insurance, supplementary social insurance shall be carried out through participation in universal and/or occupational pension funds, supplementary voluntary pension funds and supplementary voluntary social insurance funds for unemployment or professional training, which shall be established and managed by pension companies or supplementary voluntary social insurance companies for unemployment and/or professional training, licensed in accordance with the Code by the [Financial Supervision Commission](#).

TRANSFER OF PENSION RIGHTS

The transfer of pension rights is accomplished according to the bilateral agreements of the Republic of Bulgaria in the field of social insurance.

For the normative acts in force should be consulted the [National Social Security Institute](#).



Part 5: Health care

This chapter provides basic information on the health care system in Bulgaria and the main governmental bodies in the field.

HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

The health insurance system in Bulgaria and all relevant social relations were introduced in 1998, as the Bulgarian Parliament adopted the Health Insurance Act.

It is the legal basis for changing the Bulgarian healthcare system and for the introduction of both compulsory and voluntary health insurance in the country.

The health insurance in Bulgaria is a system for a social health protection of the people, that guaranties a package of health services and is carried out by the [National Health Insurance Fund](#). The voluntarily health insurance is a supplementary one and is carried out by Joint Stock Companies, registered under the Trade Act and licensed under the Health Insurance Act.

OBLIGATORY HEALTH INSURANCE

The Health Insurance Act established the [National Health Insurance Fund](#) (NHIF) as a public organization and set forth principles defining the relationship between NHIF and the health care providers. NHIF is responsible for the development, operation and management of the compulsory health insurance scheme in Bulgaria, with the support of its territorial divisions - the 28 [Regional Health Insurance Funds](#).

The contribution to the National Health Insurance Fund shall be paid by the employer on a monthly basis and shall be deducted from the gross remuneration and the financial aids for temporary disability. The employers are obliged on request to submit information for the insurable income on the ground of which the contribution shall be calculated to the [National Insurance Institute](#). The health insurance contribution is not a subject of taxation. Its exact amount in percentage on the ground of the gross remuneration shall be set out in the Law for the Annual Budget of the National Health Insurance Fund.

Pursuant to the National Framework Agreement, signed by the National Health Insurance Institute and the professional organizations of medical doctors and dentists, each person, who has health insurance, is entitled to a promotion and prevention package, in addition to the diagnostic, treatment and rehabilitation services. Besides the patient's rights, the Health Insurance Act stipulates the obligation of the persons, having health insurance, to respond to the invitation of general practitioners to go to this type of examinations.

OTHER HEALTH INSURANCE OPPORTUNITIES

The Health Insurance Law provides a framework for voluntary health insurance, which ensures the provision of health care services and goods beyond the scope of the compulsory health insurance. It is offered according to the principle of voluntary

participation by joint stock companies licensed according to the Health Insurance Law. The state supervision over the voluntary health insurance is carried out by the Financial Supervision Commission.

PATIENT'S RIGHTS UNDER THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

Pursuant to Appendix 12 to the National Framework Agreement, signed by the National Health Insurance Institute and the professional organizations of medical doctors and dentists, each person, who has health insurance, is entitled to a promotion and prevention package, in addition to the diagnostic, treatment and rehabilitation services. Besides the patient's rights, the Health Insurance Act stipulates the obligation of the persons, having health insurance, to respond to the invitation of general practitioners to go to this type of examinations. The sanction for non-appearance is the loss of insurance rights for a period of one month according to Administrative and punitive provisions of Health Insurance Act. This part of the general practitioners' activity is connected with the intention of the health reform - to shift the emphasis from diagnosis and treatment to prevention, for the purpose of ensuring fuller employment, from the point of view of both the employees and employers. On the other hand, in this way both the strategy of the World Health Organization and one of the main principles of the health reform are implemented - orientation towards improving the health of the healthy, and an early diagnosing and preventing diseases.



EMERGENCY

In several cities in Bulgaria are available Centers for Emergency Medical Assistance (CEMA). In case of emergency dial 150.

Addresses of other hospitals and medical centers can be obtained (only in Bulgarian) on <http://www.medicalbg.com/zdrav.php> .

PHARMACIES

Medicines can be obtained in licensed pharmacies. Certain medicines can be obtained only with a medical prescription. A list of pharmacies in the country is available (only in Bulgarian) on <http://www.medicalbg.com/aptekioptiki/apteki.php> . Normally, on the front door of the pharmacy is available the address of the nearest 24-hour open pharmacy.



Part 6: Accommodation and housing

This chapter provides general information and some practical advises by choosing accommodation in Bulgaria.

According to the length of the stay in Bulgaria foreign citizens can choose the most suitable accommodation for them – renting a flat or house, renting a room at an apartment-hotel or staying at a hotel.

RENTING A FLAT

The standard rental market – via owners or agencies is often the solution chosen for long stays, especially when adequate space has to be provided for the family.

Dealing directly with the owner: This saves you estate agency fees. It involves looking for your accommodation yourself, via classified advertisements in local dailies, specialist giveaways, the Internet and sometimes posted advertisements.

Dealing with agencies: These agencies act on behalf of the owner. They will show you accommodation and you pay their fee only if you opt one of the apartments presented. Note that you never have to pay money to an agency before signing the rental contract. Agency expenses are usually the equivalent of a month's rent and are payable at once.

RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION

A wide range of accommodation is available in different kinds of residences, with services varying according to need. This type of accommodation is generally best suited to short to medium-term stays, for people traveling alone.

The main features of apparthotels include one or two room apartments with capacity for 1 to 4 people, usually with Cable TV, fully equipped kitchenette and bathroom, telephone; some provide Cable Internet. Facilities are generally good. Often free transportation from the airport and/or Rent-a-car option is provided (usually included in the price). Prices are € 25 to € 60 per night and vary depending of stay and numbers of quests.

CHOOSING A HOTEL

Hotel accommodation is reasonable for short stays. In Bulgaria, in the tourist places are offered a variety of hotels categories ranging from the traditional to the more innovative. Most of the hotels offer cosines and comfort, minibar, satellite TV, telephone lines, Internet connection. In several cases the hotel can be booked on-line.

For finding a hotel in Bulgaria help the search engines on the following web sites:

<http://hotels.guide-bulgaria.com/>

<http://reservation.bulgariantour.com/>

<http://bulgaria-hotels.bulgariantour.com/>

UNIVERSITY RESIDENCE OPPORTUNITIES

Most of the universities and higher schools in Bulgaria have their own students residencies, used for providing temporary housing of students, post-graduate students and study fellows. According to an Ordinance of the Ministry of Education and Science the higher education establishments and BAS adopt their own rules for management and usage of students' residencies. The provision of places in students' residencies is provided in most cases after application to a Commission on social and housing issues at the respective high school.

Foreign students, post-graduate students and study fellows studying in Bulgaria according to a bilateral agreement or state order have the right for a place in students' residencies. The Commission on social and housing issues provides them housing on a basis of request of MES. Places in students' residencies are provided to paid foreign students only by availability of free places.

University residence halls are much cheaper than the hotel apartments, but usually they are occupied by students. Most are not modern buildings, rooms are furnished (bedding provided, kitchen nook, shower and toilet), but not all kinds of facilities are available, like TV, Internet, laundry or cleaning services. It is advisable to check with the host university. The average price is about 50 Euros per month.

PRACTICAL ADVISES

Contracts, guarantee and deposit

The lease or contract is compulsory and stipulates the rights and the obligations of both sides. It must be drawn up in duplicate: one copy for each side. The minimum length of the lease is agreed by both sides (usually 6 months or a year). The lease could be terminated at any time by giving the owner a one month notice. This must be done in written via registered letter indicating the date on which the apartment will be vacant. It is also a subject of the agreement between both sides, included in the contract.

In several cases is paid a one month deposit, which will be repaid by leaving.

Communal issues (electricity, water, phone, gas, warm energy)

Usually electricity, heating, water, telephone, etc. charges are not included in the rent. It should be clarified with the owner before signing the contract.

In Bulgaria the voltage is 220 volts AC (50 cycles). Plugs are of the round two-pin continental type, while lamp fittings are the screw type.

Electricity is billed according to the amount used. Bills arrive monthly by post. Central heating is paid monthly at a fixed amount. At the end of the year a reading is taken, and the customer is either credited or charged the balance due.

Water is billed monthly according to a base, specified by the owner as well as on the amount used. Periodically a reading is taken and the customer is either credited or charged the balance due.

In rented accommodations these are usually in the landlord's name. Payment can be made through a Bulgarian bank account, at your local post office, online or using a debit card.

Part 7: Banking and finance

For foreign researchers coming for a longer period in Bulgaria is useful to be aware of the banking and finance regulations. Therefore, a short overview is provided below.



BANKING SYSTEM IN BULGARIA

In Bulgaria, officially are registered 34 banking institutions, whereas 28 are Commercial Banks with international banking license, and 6 Foreign Commercial Bank Branches.

Almost all banks have a website in English, where customers can find more information about specific banking products and services offered as well applicable banking tariffs.

On the site of [Bulgarian National Bank](#) can be found useful information in English concerning the banking system, banking legislation, information about the Bulgarian notes and coins in use, officially registered financial institutions and banks, financial and banking statistics.

The usual banking hours in Bulgaria are Monday to Friday: 09.00-16.00.

Many Bulgarian banks have ATM enabling customers to draw local currency.

The following money draw limits are set for security reasons, applicable for all ATMs:

- one transaction limit BGN 200 (100EUR),
- daily limit BGN 400 (EUR 200)
- weekly limit BGN 3000 (EUR 1500).

To open a personal bank account in Bulgaria (in national or international currency) should be presented a valid passport or personal identification document, some funds to start the account with and application form, according to the specific requirements of the bank. All personal deposits in Bulgaria are secured against bank bankruptcy up to the amount of BGN 25 000, according to Bulgarian Legislation.

There are many different banks in Bulgaria; most of them have branches through the country. The most important ones are [Bulbank Ltd.](#), [HVB Bank Biochim](#), [DSK Bank, Plc](#), [First Investment Bank](#) .

CURRENCY AND CHANGE

The Bulgarian currency is the **Lev** (BGL) or in the plural form - Leva, divided into 100 stotinki. Banknotes of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 leva are in common circulation in Bulgaria. Bulgarian coins are minted in values of 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50 stotinki. The Bulgarian economy operates under the auspices of a Currency Board where 1,9558 BGN is equal to 1 EURO. Against the other currencies there are minor fluctuations depending on their varying exchange rates towards the Euro.

Visitors may **exchange** cash at banks and exchange bureaus. It is not recommendable to do it at the airport or at the hotel reception desks because they offer the lowest rates. In the exchange bureaus beware of their commission charges and misleading rate quotations. Avoid any people on the street who offer higher exchange rates - these are usually tricksters. Traveler's cheques can be changed at banks. Banks are generally open

Monday to Friday 09.00-16.00 and offer all services including money transfers and exchange. Many private exchange bureaus are open 24 hours. There are also many Western Union branches which provide direct transfer of money to travelers in need.



Credit cards are accepted in major hotels as well as in expensive luxurious shops, restaurants and rent-a-car offices. The most commonly accepted credit cards include, Visa, Master Card, Eurocard and in some places American Express and Diner Club. It is not advisable to rely on your credit card however, and you should always carry sufficient cash and especially when in the country. Most credit cards can also be used to withdraw cash from ATMs, which are widespread in Sofia and most cities.

PERSONAL TAXATION

Under Personal Income Tax Act tax liable persons are individuals - residents and non-residents, and corporates explicitly enumerated therein.

Residents, irrespective of their citizenship, are considered those persons:

- Who have their permanent domicile in Bulgaria;
- Who reside in the country for more than 183 days in a 365-day period.

Non-residents are considered those individuals who do not fit the above criteria for residents.

Residents are liable for their world-wide income. Non-residents are liable only for their income derived from Bulgarian sources. Foreign experts are taxed only on their Bulgarian-source income irrespective of the duration of their stay in the country.

Any income derived by an individual from the conduct of business on the territory of Bulgaria or under an employment contract or derived from rendering services is considered to be from a Bulgarian source. Incomes derived from the use of real estate and capital gains from the sale of real estate located in the country, as well as incomes from transactions with quotas/shares in local companies and incomes from securities transactions with securities issued by the Bulgarian state and municipalities are also incomes from a Bulgarian source.

The annual taxable base is the sum of all taxable incomes received during the calendar year, deducted by:

- incomes taxed with a final tax
- mandatory and voluntary national insurance, pension, health insurance, unemployment fund contributions, as well as the premiums paid in on account of

the persons under "Life" insurance contracts and "Life" insurance, if connected with an investment fund

- statutory deductions applicable only to non-employment contracts (e.g. 35% of the gross income for services contracts; 10% for management fees)
- relieves for donations not exceeding 10% of the taxable income after other statutory deductions have been made - not applicable to employment income;

There are no tax deductions related to personal allowances for spouses and dependants.

PROPERTY TAXATION

The purchased property is subject to a notary and a municipal tax. The notary tax is paid on the higher of the market price or the book value of the property. Rates vary and are typically less than 1%. In addition, 2% of the market value of the property is paid as a municipal tax. This money goes to the municipality in which the property is situated. You pay these taxes after you have signed the notary deed.

All property owners in Bulgaria pay an annual property tax. The current annual tax rate for a house is 0.15% of the capital value of the property. So, if a house costs 20,000 EUR on purchase, the annual Bulgarian property tax payable would be 30EUR.

In addition to this tax, owners also pay a waste-collection tax. The rate depends on the location and size of the dwelling. The amount of tax payable is usually about 30EUR per year for rural property and about 100EUR per year for apartments in city centers.

The non-tax costs of a property should also be taken into account. For an own apartment in Bulgaria must be paid also annual maintenance charges and management costs. These charges will vary according to the different types of property.

If the property is rented out, then the profits from the rent received will be taxed for the accounting year in question. If the owner lives in Bulgaria, the tax is assessed according to his/her tax status in Bulgaria. This status is based on a table with different tax rate bandings. Non-residents will be taxed on a flat rate of 15% on the taxable profit. At the same time, any additional tax payable in the home country should be considered.

COST OF LEAVING – SOME EXAMPLES

- Rent: 250-300 leva (€ 150)
- Average mostly cost of electricity and telephone: about 50 leva (€ 25)
- Public transport: 0.50 leva per 1 jump (€ 0,25); 1 lev (€ 0,50) for a Distance Taxi
- Eating: Average monthly food budget is 400 leva (€ 200). Lunch in a restaurant costs about 15 leva (€ 8) . A non alcoholic drink in café cost around 1 leva (€ 0,50).
- Going out: a cinema ticket costs around 6 leva (€ 3)



Part 8: Education in Bulgaria

This chapter focuses on the educational system in Bulgaria, and the legal requirements for recognition of educational stages and qualification obtained abroad.

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The Bulgarian educational system provides for the acquisition of the basic foundations and principles of human knowledge; the formation of universal human and national values, etc.

Restrictions and privileges based on race, nationality, gender, ethnical and social origin, religion and social status are not allowed. Education is secular and compulsory up to 16 years of age. It is free of charge at state and municipal schools.

According to the Public Education Act, school education is basic and secondary with respect to level of schooling, and general and vocational with respect to content and type of instruction.

The administration of school education is organised on four levels:

- national – [Ministry of Education and Science](#) (MES)
- regional – Regional inspectorates for education;
- municipal – municipal bodies for education;
- school level – school administration.

Vocational Education and Training Law rules both the initial vocational training, which is part of the streamline education and continuing vocational training, provided for people age over 16. The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) is a specialised body of the Council of Ministers, responsible for licensing and monitoring of vocational training centres and vocational guidance centres, as well developing of vocational education standards.

Education/training establishments for the training are state and municipal training centers, company training centres, vocational schools, and vocational colleges.

PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

The system of pre-primary education includes children from the age of 3 to the age of 6/7. Besides the state-funded sector, which is prevalent (more than 95%), the private sector is also developing. Pre-primary education includes day-care nursery schools, health-care nursery schools, specialized nursery schools, part-time nursery schools and preparatory groups for school (pre-school groups). Nursery school attendance is optional. They are open to all children who want to prepare for school against payment of a minimal fee, which is reduced considerably for low-income families.

Most of the nursery schools are separate institutions opened by the municipalities. They have a full-time work regime and are located in purpose-built premises. If there are too few children, groups are formed within schools where pre-school groups are also

organized. They work on a part-time basis and in shifts. Children in nursery schools are divided into three groups according to age – from 3 to 4 years; 4 to 5 years, and from 5 to 6 years. The age division is not obligatory and can in some circumstances be waived (according to the number of children in a group or the level of development of a given child). The children may be divided into mixed age groups. There are 12 to 22 children per group. State nursery schools are opened where at least four but no more than eight groups are formed.

GENERAL EDUCATION

General education provides for the acquisition of the general educational minimum and if possible, also provides for specialized training in compliance with the state educational requirements.

The school education in Bulgaria is compulsory from the age of 6/7 up to the age of 16. It comprises basic education (years 1 to 8) which is divided in two stages: primary education (grades 1 to 4) and lower secondary education (grades 5 to 8). It could be obtained at state, municipal and private schools. Basic education is free-of-charge with the exception of private schools.



PRIMARY EDUCATION

The basic aim of primary education is to form basic knowledge and abilities, which are the basis for the pupils' further education and development.

The work at primary school is organized into either half or full days, depending on whether the single or double shift system is used. In the full-day scheme, besides general instruction some other activities are also organized: extra/remedial classes, recreation and sports activities and others based on individual interests.

The curriculum for primary education which is compulsory for all pupils from grades 1 to 4 includes the following subjects: Bulgarian language and literature; mathematics; foreign language; mankind; man and society; nature; music; fine arts.

Teaching is organized in a five-day week. The academic year lasts from 15 September to 24 May for grade 1; and from 15 September to 31 May for grades 2 to 4.

LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION

Lower secondary education (progimnazialen etap/Прогимназиален етап) (years 5 to 8) lays the foundations for studying the basics of different sciences and at the end of this education pupils should have acquired such skills. There is a core curriculum which is compulsory for lower secondary education. It provides for studying the Bulgarian language and literature; mathematics; knowledge of the mother land; nature studies;

history; physics, chemistry; biology; geography; fine arts; music; work and technics (technical work); physical education.

The organization of the teaching process is based on a five-day week. The academic year lasts from 15 September to 15 June.

GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

Secondary education in Bulgaria is free-of-charge with the exception of private schools. Secondary schools are run by the state, the municipalities and also by private bodies.

At specialized secondary schools with intensive foreign language instruction, pupils pass a one-year course of intensive foreign language study. There is no specific adaptation period provided for pupils in other schools. At each secondary school pupils may choose a set of branches for more detailed study of a given subject (humanities, mathematics and physics, biology and chemistry, etc.).

The basic teaching methods used are the following: lectures, talks, presentations, work with different sources and texts, practical work, pupil research, project work, case-solving and simulation, etc. Textbooks, teaching aids and literature, anthologies, compilations, teaching software, etc. are used. The tendency is to offer pupils and schools the choice of several alternative textbooks and teaching aids which are issued on the basis of competitions organized by the MES.

The training process is organized on a five-day week basis. For all pupils the academic year begins on 15 September and ends on 24 May for grade 12, and 30 June for grades 9 to 11.

The pupils who have successfully completed their general secondary education receive a certificate of secondary education. Holders of secondary school diploma are entitled to continue their education on a higher educational level/university and non-university, without restriction as to the choice of a higher education establishment. The secondary school leaving qualification gives also access to the labour market.

VOCATIONAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

The vocational secondary education is regulated with the Law on Vocational Education and Training.

Vocational schools can be either state schools or private schools. Both types are regulated by the state. The state plays a leading role in planning, financing, organizing and monitoring the quality of education. In the transition to a market economy, the role of the social partners becomes apparent. The professional organizations state their requirements as regards staff training, they express their opinion regarding new professions and participate in the drafting of state requirements on the content of training and in improving the conditions for vocational training. A special system has been developed for employer participation in the assessment of the pupil's professional competence.

Secondary vocational education is provided in: vocational training schools and/or technical schools covering grades 8/9 to 12. There are also vocational training schools (from grade 6 or 7) offering 3-year training programs; vocational training schools (from

grade 9) offering up-to 4-year training programs and vocational training schools offering 2-year training programs after completed secondary education.

The studies are structured into three groups of subjects: compulsory (Bulgarian language and literature, a selected foreign language, history, geography, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, philosophy, physical education, theory and practical training); compulsory-elective (1 or 2 subjects from comprehensive or vocational instruction, optional, but compulsory for study within the framework of the established hours of study per week) and elective (subjects that feature/do not feature in the curriculum, which are optional and studied in addition to the compulsory hours). The relation between theoretical and practical vocational training depends on the specific characteristics of the occupation being studied.

For completing vocational secondary education are issued Certificate for secondary specialised education, as well as a certificate for professional qualification.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The **higher education** in Bulgaria is in compliance with the Bologna process. It is arranged by the Higher Education Act. The [National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency](#) was established to monitor and to assure the quality in the higher education sector.

The structure of higher education comprises the following degrees:

- First degree – at least a 4-years programme ending with a Bachelor's degree;
- Second degree – at least a 5-years programme or one year after the Bachelor's degree ending with a Master's degree;
- Third degree – at least a 3-years programme after covering the Master's degree or 4-years after covering the Bachelor's degree, ending with a Doctor's degree.

Holders of Diploma of Secondary Education are entitled to continue their education on a higher educational level, without restriction as to the choice of a higher education establishment. Admission to higher education institutions is based on successful entrance examinations. The type and number of these examinations are determined by the higher education institutions and are closely linked to its respective profile.

Fees for the students are determined annually. According to the Higher education Act the Council of Ministers is responsible for setting the so-called State quota of students. This means that the government determines the number of students to be accepted by the higher education institutions and sets the level of state subsidies in accordance with the number of students. Studies will be free of charge for students holding one of the places within the State quota. If the higher education institutions allocate additional study places, the extra students, known as private students, are charged tuition fees.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

The first private schools in Bulgaria were established in 1992. The order and conditions of establishment are defined and amended by the National Education Act – 1991 (last amendments 1998), Statute and special regulation of MEST for private schools. Private schools have a curriculum, whose compulsory part must meet the requirements of the state curriculum. Private schools have the right to supplement this with other curricula

e.g. intensive foreign language teaching, music, arts, ecology, management, trade and marketing.

Private schools as part of the education system are managed and controlled by MES, including awarding certificates upon completion of secondary education and vocational qualifications.

HOMOLOGATION AND ACCREDITATION OF DEGREES AND DIPLOMAS

The recognition of degrees and diplomas is accomplished by Expert Commission nominated by the Minister of Science and Education and it is based on the Ordinance Nr. 2 of 14 April 2003 of MES.

The Commission decides on the bases of the presentation of defined set of documents:

- Application form (template) with the personal data of the diploma/degree holder
- Original diploma (degree)
- Addendum to the diploma(degree) which presents the studied subjects, number of studied hours for each subject and the relative scores
- Certified translation of the document in Bulgarian language
- Document certified the last class finished in Bulgaria (if there is such) before the education abroad
- Document certifying that the tax is pad (through bank account):
 - 10 leva for document that certifies finished foreign school class and/or semester
 - 25 leva for document that certifies degree for accomplished elementary/secondary or high school or professional qualification.

On the bases of the above mentioned documents the Commission decides if any additional exams need to be taken in order the respective degree to be recognized in Bulgaria.

The commission shall announce its decision on each individual case of recognition within four months from the date of submission of the documents.

A Diploma for completed high education issued by a oversea school and meeting the general requirements for admission to higher education in the issuing country shall be also recognized as such in Bulgaria, unless there is a substantial difference in the general requirements for admission to higher education between the two countries.

Recognition of professional qualification obtained at an oversea school shall be only conducted in connection with the recognition of a completed grade or educational level.

CONTINUATION OF EDUCATION AT A BULGARIAN SCHOOL

The following principles are applied for further education in Bulgarian schools:

- Persons to whom the completion of a grade from 1 to 3 has been recognized based on documents issued by an oversea school, shall not be required to take catch-up examinations.
- Bulgarian citizens to whom the completion of a grade from 4 to 8 has been recognized based on documents issued by an oversea school shall be required to

- take a catch-up examination on Bulgarian Language and Literature for the last successfully completed grade.
- Persons to whom the completion of a grade from 9 to the last high school grade has been recognized based on documents issued by an overseas school shall be required to take catch-up examinations on Bulgarian Language and Literature, History and Civilization, and Geography and Economics, in the part related to Bulgarian history and geography, if these subjects are studied in the respective grade. They shall take also catch-up examinations on the curriculum subjects which they have not studied or have not been awarded marks on at the overseas school.
 - Bulgarian citizens to whom the completion of a grade from 4 to 8 has been recognized based on documents issued by an overseas school and who have studied Bulgarian Language and Literature, History and Civilization, and Geography and Economics (or the parts thereof related to Bulgarian history and geography) in classes at the embassies of the Republic of Bulgaria and who submit an original document for the completed study course issued according to the standard form approved by MES shall not be required to take catch-up examinations on these subjects.
 - If, in the document for completed grade at an overseas school, the mark on a particular subject when translated into the 6-level evaluation system is less than 3,00, but the student is admitted to the next grade, he or she shall take a catch-up examination of the subject at a Bulgarian school.
 - If a particular subject in the document for completion of a study course at an overseas school integrates the content of two or more subjects from the Bulgarian curriculum, then the mark on the subject shall be taken as the mark on any of the integrated subjects for the respective Bulgarian grade.

The catch-up examinations specified, shall be taken at a school appointed by the Head of the respective Regional Educational Inspectorate in compliance with the state educational requirements to the educational content of the compulsory course at the Bulgarian school according to the curriculum applicable by the moment of recognition. The conditions and procedure for holding the examinations shall be determined by the Director of the respective school of the school.

LANGUAGE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The Department of Language Learning at Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" (DLL) is the successor of the Institute for Foreign Students (IFS), recognized for its tradition and experience in the field of language instruction. Based on up-to-date scientific and practical research, the DLL has become one of the most prominent language training centers implementing the latest methods in the teaching of Bulgarian to foreign students, as well as offering a diversified foreign language training program.

A language department for teaching Bulgarian language to foreigners is established at Bourgas Prof. Assen Zlatarov University. The 9-months course starts at the beginning of October. The admission fee is determined every year by the Ministry of Education and Science. For enrolling the Department the foreigner must present a copy of his graduation diploma, translated in English, German or French and signed by a consulate.

Part 9: Public transportation

There is an extensive network of air, road and train services in Bulgaria. This section explains the transportation situation of Bulgaria and contains useful information and links to air-, rail-, bus- and rent-a-car companies.



HOW TO REACH BULGARIA

By plane: The national carrier Air Bulgaria, as well as many foreign airlines link the country to Europe, Africa, the Middle East and North America.

By train: The main European railway routes pass through Bulgaria. International trains link Sofia with many European capital cities and the domestic rail network ensures access to all large settlements.

By car: The country can be entered through any one of the many border checkpoints. Foreign driving licenses are valid on Bulgarian territory. Insurance is compulsory - it can either be taken out beforehand or on the Bulgarian border. The speed limit in the country is as follows: 60 km/h in populated areas, 80 km/h outside populated areas, 120 km/h on motorways. Petrol stations are located at every 30 to 50 km.

By water: There are sea and river connections via the Black sea and Danube. The majority are tourist cruises rather than regular boat links. Black Sea ports Bourgas and Varna offer an extremely good access to Ukraine, Russia and the countries of the Mediterranean basin.

AIRLINES

The [Sofia International Airport](#) is an air gate to Bulgaria. The airport provides daily connection from/to major European cities. Other destinations can be reached via Vienna and Munich airports. The airport is located on the northeast of the city. The Arrival Terminal houses a post office, bank and exchange counters, car rental agencies counters and a restaurant. In the Departure Terminal are located gift shops, newspaper kiosks, cafe bars and airline agencies counters.

[Bourgas Airport](#) is situated in a picturesque bay on the southern Bulgarian Black Sea coast, 10 km north-east of the town of Bourgas. The main tourist stream arriving in and departing from Airport Bourgas is transferred via buses of tourist operators. Unorganized passengers can use taxis for transport (to be found at the parking place in front of Passenger Departure Terminal), Rent a car (representative office located in Passenger Arrival Terminal) and city transportation bus line No.15 (bus stop located in front of the Passenger Departure building).

The [International Varna Airport](#) is situated on the northern Bulgarian Black Sea coast, 7.5 km west of the centre of Varna city. It operates flights to and from more than 20 destinations.



TRAINS

[Bulgarian State Railways National Company](#) provides the train connections between Bulgarian cities and villages. It is a state-owned company and is the single train company in Bulgaria.

An official time table of trains in Bulgaria is provided by [Bulgarian State Railways Ltd.](#) at http://razpisanie.bdz.bg/cgi-bin/ph_lat.pl.

Tickets can be bought some time before the train lives at the railway station or in advance at the railway station or in centers for complex transportation services and ticketing offices. Normally, the advanced sale is done up to five days before the departure. For holidays and the summer months is introduced a 20-days period for advance sale. There are one-way and return tickets, holiday tickets, group tickets, tickets with reserved places, etc. The different conditions for their sale are provided in the sales offices.

Examples of Prices of railway and bus fares in particular directions (2005)

Direction	Distance km		Bus fares	Railway transport fares (in Leva)		
	Road	Railway		Single		Return
				Fast 2 nd cl	Express 2 nd cl	Fast 2 nd cl
			Via Karlovo/Gorna Oryahovica	Via Karlovo/Gorna Oryahovica		
Sofia-Varna	470	514	18.50	14.80 /16.00	16.80/18.00	26.60
Sofia-Burgas	392	418	15.50	12.30	14.30	22.10
Sofia-Ruse	324	405	10.00	12.30	14.30	22.10
Sofia-Plovdiv	156	156	7.00	6.00	7.50	10.80
Sofia-Shumen	385	435	15.50	12.80	14,80	23.00
Sofia-Pleven	178	194	7.00	7.10	8.50	12.80

AUTOBUSES

Buses are not only the most popular public transport in Bulgaria. Buses are also the best way to travel within the country then busses in Bulgaria are fast and reliable. Interurban buses are commonly used transportation in Bulgaria. They connect big cities with small towns and villages in the country cites. Buses go to places where no other public transportation is available. Every city or town has a bus station where interurban busses arrive/depart. In big cities there are more then one such stations. Normally, in bus stations is available information for the interurban bus connections, the different bus companies and the respective time tables and prices.

It could be recommended to use the services of the bus companies BIOMET, ETAP and GROUP in Bulgaria, because they offer best comfort and quality of service.

More information on interurban connections is provided (in Bulgarian) on:

<http://www.centralnaavtogara.bg>

<http://www.bus.light-bg.com/>

<http://businfobg.com/>

http://bulgariantour.com/transportation/bus_operators.html

CITY TRANSPORTATION

In the cities of Bulgaria the public transportation is arranged normally with buses, in several cities also trolleys are available. Lines operate between 5 a.m. and 11 p.m. all year round. Tickets must be perforated on boarding the vehicle.

As a city of million inhabitants Sofia has a well developed public transport system. It consists of bus, trolley and tram transport. Moreover, on the territory of the city there is an underground as well as some rope-ways, operating in separated structures. The bus, trolley-bus and tram metropolitan transport shall be organized and managed by PUBLIC TRANSPORT COMPANY SOFIA, Ltd.

In the city transportation passengers shall be transported against a regularly issued ticket, pass or other transport document, after an established form, except for children under 7 years. A pass, issued for a specified line, shall be valid for all transport vehicles in the sections with coinciding route and common stops with the line indicated on the pass, without the underground, as well as upon a provisional organization of the city transport, along the substituting lines. A passenger, who is supplied with a travel document, shall be entitled to bring and carry hand luggage not exceeding 60x40x40 cm. Transport passes for a day or for a limited period is issued at special ticket offices in the city, in some cases also in kiosks at the transport stations. Single tickets could be normally obtained also from the driver.

RENTING A CAR

There are several local Rent-a-car agencies in Bulgaria but big towns, resorts and airports have subsidiaries of the big international rent-a-car companies. The following recommended car rental companies in Bulgaria could be contacted for further information about Rental rates, security deposit, terms and conditions for car rental in Bulgaria:

AVIS	+359 (2) 945 9224; 937 3319	http://www.avis.bg
Hertz	+359 (2) 945 9217	https://www.hertz.com/servlet/LoginServlet
SIXT	+359 (2) 945 9276	http://www.e-sixt.com
Budget	+359 (2) 937 3388	http://www.budget.bg
Tany Rent	+359 (2) 937 3329	http://www.tany.sof.bg

Other rent a car opportunities are given on:

http://bulgariantour.com/transportation/car_rentals.html

<http://www.rentacarbulgaria.com/>

TAXIS IN BULGARIA

Taxis wait at taxi ranks in front of hotels and can be hailed on the street. You can also order them by phone. On the street, tourists should stick to the yellow taxis that indicate the journey's cost on their meters.

Charges are ranging from 0.50Lv – 0.60Lv per km during the daytime to 0.55Lv – 0.70Lv per km at night. There is no additional charge for luggage in yellow taxis. A supplement is charged at night. It is customary to round up the amount owed as the tip. Charges are supposed to be metered, but some drivers demand an inflated fare from foreigners. A tip of 10-20% is common practice.



Taxi Companies in Sofia

Company Name	Phone
OK Supertrans	973 21 21
Taxi S Express	9 12 80
Radio CV Taxi	9 12 63
SOFIATaxi	974 47 47

COMING WITH A CAR IN BULGARIA

The registration and record of foreign vehicles, owned by foreign natural or legal persons is governed by the Ordinance¹ I-181 of 3.12.2002, issued by the Minister of Interior. It sets forth the procedure for registration of the vehicles owned by:

- diplomatic, consular, commercial and other foreign government representative offices and their officers, as well as representative offices of international organizations and consulates managed by their honorary consuls in the Republic of Bulgaria;
- foreigners, who are granted temporary stay permits in the Republic of Bulgaria for more than 3 months.

Vehicles owned by foreign natural or legal persons must be registered at Road Police within 14 days from the date of issue of the customs document of import or document of property acquisition in this country. At the registration of each vehicle, the units of the Ministry of Interior perform the necessary checks for:

- identification of the motor vehicle;
- verification of the submitted documents and owner's data;
- the origin of the motor vehicle.

Vehicles are registered by their identity number (VIN), type, make, model and other data indicated in the compliance (type approval) certificate or manufacturer's certificate, upon an initial technical inspection, provided they meet the requirements of the Road Traffic Act (RTA) and the Bulgarian State Standard.

DRIVING LICENSE VALIDITY

A driving license is issued by bodies of the Ministry of Interior to eligible persons under the conditions and procedure specified by the Law for Bulgarian identity documents. In the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria a driving license may serve as a person's identity document. However, foreigners who are holders of Bulgarian driving license must certify their identity by the travel document with which they have entered Bulgaria. The validity term of a motor vehicle driving license is 10 years; for persons with physical disabilities it is up to 5 years.

To a foreigner who is permitted a long stay in the Republic of Bulgaria and has obtained driving rights under the Road Traffic Act, a motor vehicle driving license is issued under the procedure of the Rules for issuing of Bulgarian identity documents.

Part 10: Communications and information channels

This chapter focuses on telecommunications, postal services and information channels, and provides general and practical information.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The Bulgarian telecommunications market was fully liberalized at the beginning of 2003. At present, a great number of telecommunications companies provide telecommunications services – fixed and mobile telephony, Internet, cable TV, broadcast radio and TV with regional and national coverage, etc. More information for the development of the market is provided in the Annual reports of the [Communications Regulation Commission](#).

[Bulgarian Telecommunications Company](#) (BTC) is the main telecommunications operator in Bulgaria. It has developed a telecommunications network covering the whole country and despite the liberalization of the market it is still the dominant operator for fixed telephony. For obtaining a

Mobile telephony is provided by three operators – [Mobitel EAD](#) with a trade name M-Tel, [Cosmo Bulgaria Mobile](#) with a trade name Globul and [BTC Mobile](#) with a trade name VivaTel.

The provision of the “Internet access” services in Bulgaria is carried out under a free of authorization and licensing regime. The services provided by the Internet Service Providers (ISPs include dial-up and non-switched Internet access as well as web hosting and design of web sites, as well as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). According to CRC, the biggest ISPs in the country are [Orbitel](#), [BTC NET](#), [Spectrum NET](#), [Telecom Partners Network](#), etc.

The Internet access by cable is very popular in Bulgaria. The building up of small district LAN networks, which provide Internet to several hundred users in the relevant district, is one trend of the Internet market. The services for Internet access through a LAN network are preferred by the users because of the fast speed access to local servers with films, music, software and other diversified information. At the same time the offers of LAN Internet providers do not offer sufficiently fast speed to the international Internet space.

A great part of the LAN networks offer unlimited monthly access to Internet at a rental charge of BGN 20-25 per month (including VAT) for residential users and about BGN 60 per month (including VAT) for business subscribers. These prices refer to services with non guaranteed speed – 256-512 KB/s to the Bulgarian space and about 16-32 KB/s to the international space.

In 2004 on the Bulgarian market was introduced the so called triple play service, which provides access to cable television, fixed voice telephone service and high-speed Internet through one cable. The price discounts for the triple package reach by some cable operators up to 25 % as compared with the standard prices of the included services.



POSTAL AND COURIER SERVICES

The Bulgarian postal communications are dominated by the main postal operator [Bulgarian Posts Ltd.](#) Subsequently, the postal codes of Bulgaria are a system of four-digit codes that identifies the individual post office or metropolitan area delivery station associated with every mailing address.

Bulgarian Posts Ltd. provides postal service for the country and abroad through its postal network throughout the whole country. Bulgarian Posts Ltd. ensures a variety of postal services – including sending a letter, a parcel, sending money, etc. The courier services offered from Bulgarian Posts Ltd. have the following trade marks:

- [Bulpost](#) – provides delivery of correspondence, documents or goods within the next working day in the 129 settlements in Bulgaria, included in Bulpost network. The maximum weight of a Bulpost parcel is up to 20 kg. The Bulpost parcels could be handled and as insured value parcels and cash on delivery for that a supplementary price is paid.
- [EMS](#) or "International speeded-up mail" – provides delivery of correspondence, documents and goods within 2 - 5 working days to 81 countries. The parcels could contain: documents with maximum weight up to 2 kg or goods with maximum weight up to 20 kg. The dimensions of the EMS items should not exceed 1.5 m length and the sum of the girth of 3 m, measured not along the length of the item.

International parcels intended for addressees abroad are handed in the post offices of Bulgarian Posts Ltd. The parcels should not exceed 1.50 m for any dimension, nor 3m for the sum of the length and the biggest girth, not measured along the parcel. The maximum weight of the parcels for abroad is 31.5 kg.

There are several licensed postal operators working in the country for national and international postal services. The most important international courier services providers are:

- [DHL Bulgaria](#)
- [IN TIME Courier](#)
- [TNT](#)
- [UPS](#)



TELEVISION AND RADIO

The regulation of the telecommunications activity of terrestrial broadcasting (radio and TV) is carried out by the [Communications Regulation Commission](#) (CRC), and of the program contents – by the [Council for Electronic Media](#) (CEM).

There is a great number of local radio stations, and only 2 operators working under licenses with national coverage – the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) and Darik Radio.

The Bulgarian National Radio broadcasts two 24-hour programs - "Horizont" and "Hristo Botev", which have 100% coverage achieved by territory and population.

Since 2004 there are three terrestrial TV broadcasters with national coverage – the Bulgarian National Television (BNT), BALKAN News Corporation (BTV) and New Television. All of them have programs transmitted also by satellite.

Bulgaria has a liberalized CaTV (Cable television networks) market with about 500 cable operators all over the country. CaTV networks have already been built up in all towns, as well as in 32 % of the villages in Bulgaria, and reach more than half of the population. Among the leading companies on the CaTV market (in number of subscribers) are CableTel, EurotourSAT, and Centrum Group.



ENGLISH LANGUAGE BULGARIAN MEDIA

Bulgarian news could be obtained by the following on-line information channels:

- [Dnevnik](#)
- [Focus English News](#)
- [Sofia News Agency](#)
- [Standart \(daily\)](#)
- [The Sofia Echo \(weekly\)](#)
- [Bulgarian News Agency](#)
- [Radio Bulgaria – the world service of the Bulgarian National Radio](#)

Part 11: Bulgarian Network of Research Mobility Centers

In its communication 'Towards a European Research Area' the European Commission pays particular attention to the need for more abundant and mobile of researchers in Europe. Mobility is considered as a specific tool for knowledge transfer at national and European level and for raising the attractiveness of Europe for scientific talents all over the world.

In this connection, the Commission, in close collaboration with the Member States, has launched a series of initiatives aimed at making the EU more attractive for researchers from all over the world, removing the obstacles to researcher mobility in Europe and promoting the scientific profession at European level:

- The **European network of mobility centers (ERA-MORE)** is designed to provide free and personalized assistance to European and overseas researchers before, during and after their periods abroad. By leveraging the resources and expertise of existing organizations in 33 countries, the centers will provide a high level of support on all matters relating to the professional and daily lives of researchers living in a foreign country.
- The **European portal for researcher's mobility** is designed to help researchers find jobs and provide comprehensive, up to date information about financial possibilities and legislation in force. It provides access through links to a selection of international, European, national, regional and sectoral web resources of interest to mobile researchers.

In all 33 countries members of the EU Sixth Framework RTD Program were set up research mobility centers and national portals.

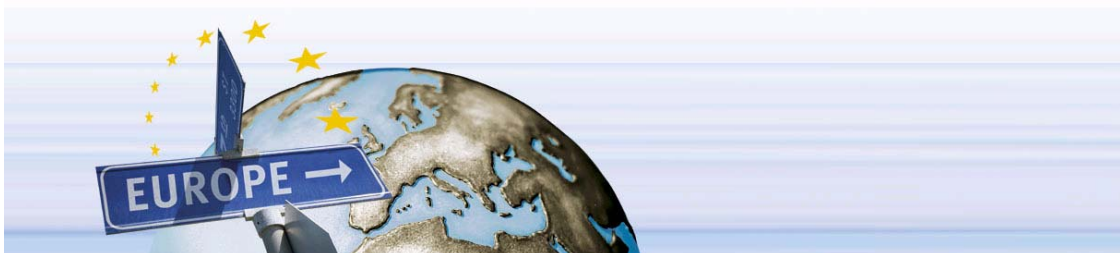
The **Bulgarian Research Mobility Portal** is a national extension of the European Portal. It provides access to practical information on administrative and legal issues related to the mobility from one country to another, as well as up-to-date information on cultural and family aspects /accommodation, schools, language courses, insurances, etc. /.

Bulgarian Research Mobility Portal

<http://www.eracareers-bg.net>

European Researchers' Mobility Portal

<http://europa.eu.int/eracareers>



The **Bulgarian Network of Research Mobility Centers** has been established under the FP6 BulRMCNet project. It comprises 3 different levels – central, regional and local institutional levels.

At the central level functions the bridgehead organization at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

The regional level comprises 4 regional Research Mobility Centers selected by the Ministry of Education and Science on the principle of an optimal geographic representation of scientific institutes and universities in the country. For this purpose Bulgaria is divided into 4 regions, and the Research Mobility Centers have been established at the University of Rouse “Angel Kantchev” for the North region, at Technical University – Varna – for the East, at the Department for Information and In-service Teacher Training of Trakia University – for the South Central and at the University for National and World Economy – for the West region.

The Research Mobility Centers at the University for National and World Economy has undertaken also the functions for a center for intersectorial mobility – between the academia and the industry in Bulgaria.

Research Mobility Centers in Bulgaria



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