



Living and Working  
Conditions in **BULGARIA**

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## 1. Information about Bulgaria

**Area** - 110 879 km<sup>2</sup> (108 489 km<sup>2</sup> of land and 2 390 km<sup>2</sup> of water)

**Population** - 7 204 687

**Capital** – Sofia

**Official language** – Bulgarian

**Currency** – Bulgarian lev

**Government type** – Parliamentary republic

**National Flag** 

**Religion** – The traditional religion is Eastern Orthodox /82.6%/. Other professed religions are Islam /12.2%/, Catholicism /1.7%/, Protestantism /1.6%]

**Independence Day** – 3 March /1878/

**Slogan** – „Union is strength”

**Neighboring countries** – the Black Sea to the east, Serbia and Macedonia to the west, Romania to the north, Greece and Turkey to the south

**The highest point** – Mussala peak /2 925 m/

**The lowest point** – the Black Sea /0 m/





## 2. Working in Bulgaria

### Work and residence permits

The citizens of the EU, the citizens of the countries - parties to the European Economic Area agreement and the citizens of the Swiss Confederation as well as the members of their families, enter and leave the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria with their identity cards or passports and can freely stay for a period of 3 months. After this period they have to register, in order to receive a certificate of temporary residence / for further reference see „Life in Bulgaria” section/.

The citizens of the European Union, the European Economic Area and the Swiss Confederation do not need a work permit in order to work in Bulgaria. To register and find work with the help of the local labour office /105 in total/, they need an address certificate for their stay in Bulgaria /it is issued by the respective municipality in the town/. They need the following documents to register with the labour office: an identity document, a document certifying completed education, a certificate of experience, a document certifying the right to practise a profession /if available/. The documents certifying education, qualification and the right to practise have to be legalized in the country where they have been issued.



## Finding a job in Bulgaria

Job seekers can check job vacancies in the EURES portal – [www.eures.europa.eu](http://www.eures.europa.eu), on the Internet page of the Employment Agency, under “Labour Market” [www.az.government.bg](http://www.az.government.bg) and the Bulgarian EURES micro site to the page of the Employment Agency – [www.az.government.bg/eures](http://www.az.government.bg/eures). Both sites provide information for job seekers about the upcoming job fairs so that they could visit them if they wish.

After arriving in Bulgaria, the citizens of the European Union, the European Economic Area and the Swiss Confederation can register and find a job with the help of the labour offices /see the aforementioned conditions/. Every person registered with the labour office gets information, consultation and mediation concerning jobs. You can get more information by telephone +359 2 980 87 19 /Information and Services Centre/ or on the Internet page of the Employment Agency: [www.az.government.bg](http://www.az.government.bg). On this page, though only in Bulgarian, you can find information about the registered private agencies which are also an alternative for finding a job /you can find lists of the legal private agencies in Bulgaria under “Private Agencies”/.

With the help of the Bulgarian EURES advisers, you can get information in English, German or French. According to the Bulgarian legislation the services of the labour offices are free for job seekers.

Different specialized sites are a very good means to find a job - [www.jobtiger.bg](http://www.jobtiger.bg), [www.jobs.bg](http://www.jobs.bg), [www.itjobs.bg](http://www.itjobs.bg), <http://mpyg.hit.bg/>

Another alternative for finding a job is through the national and regional press.



## Applying for a job

The first step when applying for a job is to prepare a good resume /CV/. It is advisable to use the European format which can be found on the EUROPASS page – <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu>. Usually the employers require a short cover letter along with the CV with information as to why the candidate is interested in the chosen position. When approving the initial document /a CV and a cover letter/, the employer will probably request additional information and documents. It is a good idea to prepare documents /translated and legalized/ certifying completed education and acquired qualifications, documents certifying your length of service in the profession you are applying for, as well as references from former employers.

You can apply for jobs published on the EURES portal by submitting the documents directly to the contact persons mentioned in the job ad.

If you are registered with the labour office and interested in a position advertised there, the labour mediator will provide you with a letter for submission to the employer.

## Qualifications and diploma recognition

The recognition of diplomas and professional qualifications is an important factor which facilitates the access and mobility of people within the labour market. The EU system for recognition of professional qualifications is valid for all citizens of the EU Member States, the EEA countries /Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein/ and Switzerland.

There are two types of recognition: for academic purposes and mutual recognition for professional purposes:

- The meaning of the so-called recognition for academic purposes is to provide access to further education and training (i.e. if a stage or a degree in education is completed, the academic recognition certifies the completed stage or degree and allows continuing the education to the next degree or stage), as well as to facilitate the access to practising a certain profession;
- The meaning of recognition for professional purposes is to provide access to practising a profession (i.e. recognition of professional competencies). The directives of the European Union and the Bulgarian legislation specify the options of the professional qualifications recognition procedure (acquired within the framework of the system of higher education - Directive 89/48 of the EEA and sector Directives for lawyers, architects, general practitioners, dentists, veterinarians, nurses and midwives; within the system of vocational training, which is not a part of the system of higher education /vocational technical schools, professional schools, etc./ - Directive 92/51 of the EEA).

Only the so called regulated professions have to go through an obligatory professional recognition procedure. An updated list of regulated professions in Bulgaria was approved by Decision № 619 of the Council of Ministers on 20.07.2009.

The web pages of the National Center for Information and Documentation / NACID / [www.nacid.bg](http://www.nacid.bg) and <http://regprof.nacid.bg/> provide information about the list of regulated professions in the Republic of Bulgaria, additional information about the academic recognition, the necessary documents and who can submit them, guidelines on how to complete documents from abroad, as well as documents to be sent to a foreign country, the forms to be completed by the applicant, deadlines and fees /e.g. the competent authority must decide on the recognition of professional qualifications within four months; the competent authority may also require a fee for the recognition procedure/; you can find a guide to professional qualifications recognition in Bulgaria, addresses of institutions to contact in other Member States and further useful information. Both web pages have been well developed and can be used in Bulgarian and English.

Applications for recognition of higher education acquired in foreign higher schools are to be submitted to the front office of NACID.

## Labour contracts and labour law

### *Signing and terminating a labour contract*

The legal labour relationships between the employer and the worker in the Republic of Bulgaria are settled by signing a labour contract. This is done in writing before the employee has assumed their duties and sets out a description of the workplace, the job title, the date of conclusion, the term of validity of the contract, the duration of annual and any additional paid leaves, the employee's wages and the length of the working day or week. Within three days from concluding an employment contract, the employer must notify the local Directorate of the National Revenue Agency (NRA) and give the worker/employee a copy of the labour contract signed by both parties, as well as a copy of the certified notification to the territorial division of the NRA.

The labour contract can be signed for an indefinite period of time or for a definite term /a fixed term labour contract/. The fixed-term labour contract becomes a contract for an indefinite period, if on expiry of the period the worker continues to work for 5 or more days without the employer's written objection. In most cases, the agreement provides for a trial period which can not be longer than 6 months.

In the event of any change in the labour relationships, the employer is obliged to notify the employee in writing not later than a month after the change becomes effective.

Employment can be terminated by the employer or worker with or without notice. In the event of terminating the labour relationships without notice, the termination is usually effected by the parties' mutual consent; when the labour contract has been signed for a specific kind of work it expires automatically on the completion of the work executed. Specific cases when the worker (the employee) or the employer can terminate the labour contract without notice are described in the Labour Code (LC). The worker (the employee) as well as the employer can terminate the labour contract with a written notice to the respective party. The period of notice is 30 days for an employment contract of indefinite duration, and three months for a fixed-term contract, but this period should not exceed the remainder of the fixed term. You can find more information about the labour relations in the Labour Code, published on the site of the Ministry of Labour and the Social Policy, in the Documents section - [www.mlsp.government.bg](http://www.mlsp.government.bg)

### *Remuneration*

There is an established minimum monthly and hourly wage in Bulgaria fixed on an annual basis by the Council of Ministers. As of 1 June 2012, the minimum monthly salary amounts to BGN 290. There is also a minimum insurance income base with regard to all core economic activities and qualifying groups of professions. The data for 2012 can be found on the website of the National Social Security Institute (NSSI) – [www.noi.bg](http://www.noi.bg).

Normally, wages are paid monthly but this can also be done on a weekly basis. An advance payment of a part of the monthly salary can also be made upon the request of employees. Men and women are entitled to equal pay for equivalent work. An increased wage is paid for night work, which is negotiated by the parties concerned, but cannot be lower than the amounts determined by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria. Overtime is also paid as agreed between the employee and the employer, but it cannot be less than extra 50% for overtime work during the weekdays, extra 75% for weekend work and extra 100% for work during public holidays in Bulgaria. The social security payments and the income tax are levied from the salary on a monthly basis and are allocated to the National Revenue Agency (NRA) by the employer. Self-employed persons are responsible for making their own social security and income tax payments.



### Working time

The working week in Bulgaria consists of 5 days with normal duration of the weekly working time of up to 40 hours. Normal working time during the day is up to 8 hours. For production reasons, the employer can extend the working time on certain working days, notifying the employees in writing, and offset that by shorter working time on other days, provided that the extended working days are not longer than 10 hours. The extension of the working time can not be done for more than 20 consecutive working days. The employer may also establish flexible working hours for some jobs due to the specific nature of the job. In such cases the employees may be required to perform their duties after the end of the normal working day. In Bulgaria, an employee and an employer may legally agree on part-time work.

For people doing night work, the normal duration of the weekly working time in a 5-day working week is up to 35 hours. The normal duration of the night working time in a 5-day working week is up to 7 hours. Night work is defined as work that is done from 10:00 pm to 06:00 am and from 08:00 pm to 06:00 am for underage workers and employees.

As part of their working time, the employee is entitled to one or more breaks which are not included in the working hours. Lunch break cannot be shorter than 30 minutes.

You can find more information about the working hours in the Labour Code published on the site of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in the Documents section [www.mlsp.government.bg](http://www.mlsp.government.bg)



### Annual leave

Every worker/employee is entitled to a paid annual leave, which is not shorter than 20 working days. A longer paid leave could be negotiated between the employee and the employer. However, first-time employees can use their paid annual leave after they have worked for at least 8 months which are counted for length of service. The worker/employee is entitled to unpaid leave, irrespective of the fact, whether they have or have not taken their paid annual leave and regardless of the length of service.

Public holidays in Bulgaria are non-working days. These are: 1st January (New Year), 3rd March (Liberation Day, the national holiday of the Republic of Bulgaria), 1st May (International Labour Day), 6th May (Day of the Army and Valour), 24th May (Day of the Bulgarian Alphabet and Culture), 6th September (Day of the Unification of Bulgaria), 22nd September (Independence Day), 24th December (Christmas Eve), 25th and 26th December (Nativity, Christmas) and two days at Easter (Sunday and Monday).

The worker/employee is entitled to take leave due to a general sickness, an occupational disease or accident, recuperative treatment, urgent medical examination or testing, quarantine and care of a sick family member. This leave has to be authorized by the health authorities. For the duration of temporary inability for work leave the employee/worker is paid monetary compensation.

The worker/employee is entitled to leave due to pregnancy and childbirth of up to 410 days for each child of which 45 days must be used before giving birth. When the mother and the father are married or live in one household, the father is entitled to 15-day leave at the birth of a child, effective from the date the child is released from the hospital. With the mother's (or the adoptive mother's) consent after the child turns 6 months the father (or the adoptive father) can take the leave instead of her for the rest of the 410 days.

After the maternity leave, the employee is entitled to parental leave for the time until a first, second or third child turns 2 and to six months for each subsequent child. With the mother's consent that leave may be taken by the father or by anyone of the mother's or the father's parents, provided that that parent is employed under a labour contract.

More information about the types of annual leave and their use can be found in the Labor Code published on the website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, under 'Documents' - [www.mlsp.government.bg](http://www.mlsp.government.bg)

### Self-employment

To be registered in Bulgaria, a trader (a physical or a legal person) must comply with the provisions of the applicable Bulgarian Commercial Law. Currently, all traders are registered by the National Registry Agency: [www.registryagency.bg](http://www.registryagency.bg)

Practicing a craft is production of goods or provision of services performed by a physical person who is entered in the Craftsmen Register and is not registered as a



sole trader. The Register is maintained by 25 regional craft chambers. For more information see [www.nzkgb.org](http://www.nzkgb.org)

Freelancers are: expert accountants, consultants, auditors, lawyers, notaries, private bailiffs, associated judges, court experts and prosecutors, licensed appraisers, representatives of industrial property, medical specialists, translators, architects, engineers, technical leaders, culture activists, education, art and science, insurance agents, other individuals who meet the following conditions:

- a) they practise a profession at their own expense;
- b) they are not registered as sole traders;
- c) they are self-insured as stipulated by the Social Insurance Code.

Those who practise the aforementioned freelance professions have to register with the National Revenue Agency (NRA): [www.nap.bg](http://www.nap.bg)

Part of the freelancers (architects and investment project design engineers, lawyers etc.), have to also register with the respective Chamber/Bar Association, in order to be fully entitled to practise their profession.

Agricultural producers and the tobacco producers are a specific category. They have to register with the appropriate local municipal forestry and agriculture office at the Regional Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry. The webpage of the municipal Agriculture and Forestry Directorates is: [www.mzgar.government.bg/Structure/ODZG/sites\\_odzg.htm](http://www.mzgar.government.bg/Structure/ODZG/sites_odzg.htm)



## Taxes and taxation

The conditions and rules of paying taxes by physical persons and the taxation of labour have been established by the Law for Taxes over Income of Physical Persons. Issues related to taxation are managed by the National Revenue Agency – [www.nap.bg](http://www.nap.bg)

Liable to taxes in Bulgaria are resident physical persons /persons who are permanent residents of Bulgaria or have been residing in the country for more than 183 days for each 12 month period, or whose center of life interests is located in Bulgaria/ and non-resident physical persons.

Resident physical persons are subject to taxation for incomes obtained from sources in Bulgaria or abroad; non-resident physical persons are subject to taxation for incomes obtained from sources in the Republic of Bulgaria. Incomes from working on the territory of Bulgaria or from a service provided in Bulgaria are taxed as ones obtained from a source in Bulgaria.

Since 2008, the so called flat tax of 10 % has been imposed on physical persons in Bulgaria, as in certain cases tax concessions can be used /e.g. the income of individuals whose capacity for work has been reduced by over 50 %; donations for health institutions, the Bulgarian Red Cross, children's institutions, cultural institutions and others; for young families, etc./. Tax concessions are obtained by submitting an annual income tax form. There is no minimum that is not taxable, but there are normatively recognized expenditures which are deducted when defining the tax base.

Sole traders' business activity incomes are taxed with an annual rate of 15 %. The amount which has been preliminarily deducted and/or submitted during the fiscal year for the respective tax is subtracted.

Subject to corporate income taxation in accordance with the Law for Corporate Income Taxation are: the profit of local juristic persons who are not traders, including the religious organizations; the profit from renting out real estate and movable property; the profit of the foreign juristic persons from business activities in the Republic of Bulgaria. By submitting an annual income tax form, persons doing business as traders under the Trade Law, including the sole traders, declare accrued and paid expenditure taxes in accordance with the Law for Corporate Income Taxation. The income tax form also serves to provide a financial report with an audit certification.

The tax rate of corporate income tax is 10 percent.

Income tax /labour income/ is deducted from the monthly salary and is remitted by the employer. Persons hired under legal labour relations do not have to submit any documents to the National Revenue Agency, if they only owe legal labour relations income tax. If the persons have income from sources other than their legal labour relations, they submit an annual income tax form to the National Revenue Agency.

## Social Security

### *Social Security in Bulgaria*

The public social security system in Bulgaria is administered by the National Social Security Institute and provides benefits, allowances /for temporary incapacity for work, disability, maternity leave, unemployment, death/ and pensions. In order to be entitled to such social rights, the employees and employers have to make payments according to a specific scheme into the 4 main social security funds:

- Pensions fund
- Disease and maternity leave fund
- Labour accident and occupational disease fund
- Unemployment fund

The workers and employees hired for more than five days or 40 hours in a calendar month have compulsory insurance covering general illness, maternity leave, disability, old age, labour accident, occupational disease and unemployment. The workers and employees hired by one or more employers for less than 5 working days (40 hours) during one calendar month have compulsory insurance covering disability, old age and occupational accident or disease. Compulsory insurance covering disability, old age and death must be made for: self-employed persons, craftsmen, sole traders, owners/partners in companies, PhD students, agricultural producers and employees working under supplementary/part-time employment contract.

Marine workers must be insured for disease and maternity leave, disability, old age, death, labour accident and occupational disease on the basis of a predetermined monthly insurance income for self-insured persons. The amount of the social security payments and the proportion in which they are divided between employer and employee are annually determined in the Social Security Code. The social security payments are deducted from the gross monthly salary for the respective month and are transferred by the employer when the salary is paid to the employee. The distribution of the social security payments among the public social security funds depends on the labour category and two periods – before and after 1960.

The amount of public social insurance contributions for individuals who have been covered for all insurance risks, born before 01.01.1960 and work under the conditions of labour category III is 22.3 percent. For individuals who work under the conditions of labour category I and II the amount of public social insurance contributions is 25.3 percent. The amount of public social insurance contributions for persons who are covered for all insurance risks, were born after 31.12.1959 and work under the conditions

of labour category III is 17.3 percent. For the individuals working under the conditions of labour category I and II the public social insurance is 20.3 percent plus the sum of the contribution for occupational accident and disease.

Sole traders or freelancers are self-insured, i.e. they pay their social insurance contributions personally. Since 2011, differentiated amounts of insurance income are introduced as follows:

- basis of BGN 420 for income up to BGN 5400
- basis of BGN 450 for income from BGN 5401 to 6500
- basis of BGN 500 for income from BGN 6501 to 7500
- basis of BGN 550 for income above BGN 7500 .

For further information: [www.nssi.bg](http://www.nssi.bg) – National Social Security Institute.

### *Compensations for temporary inability for work*

Persons covered by the social security system for temporary inability for work and labour readjustment after a long disease have the right to compensation instead of their regular remuneration for the period of their sick-leave, provided their length of service for insurance purposes is not less than 6 months. The requirement for the 6-month length of service does not apply to persons who are younger than 18 years of age. Persons covered for occupational accidents and diseases have the right to a monetary compensation for occupational accidents and diseases, as well as a compensation for labour readjustment irrespective of the duration of their length of service.





The monetary compensations for temporary inability for work and labour readjustment are calculated and paid to the insured persons by the National Social Security Institute and deposited in a bank account declared by the beneficiary. For the first day of sick leave the insurer /the employer/ pays to the insured person the average gross daily remuneration.

The daily monetary compensation for temporary inability for work due to general sickness is calculated at the rate of 80 percent and the compensation for temporary inability for work due to an occupational accident or disease is 90 percent of the average gross daily pay or the average daily contributory base; self-insured persons need to have deposited their social security contributions for the respective insurance risk for the period of six calendar months preceding the month when the inability for work occurred.



## *Maternity and family benefits*

Social security beneficiaries are entitled to maternity benefits, provided they have length of service of not less than twelve months. The daily amount paid by the National Social Security Institute amounts to 90 percent of the average daily wages of the employee for the period of 24 months before the month in which the temporary incapacity for work because of pregnancy and birth has arisen. When the mother and the father are married or live together, constituting one household, the father has the right to a 15-day leave upon the birth of the child. After the child turns 6 months the mother can assign the father the use of the rest of 410 due days of maternity leave

After the 410-day period, mothers are entitled to further parental leave until the child is two years old. During this period, the mother (or the adoptive mother) receives monthly benefits in amounts specified by the Law for the Social Security Budget /the minimum working remuneration established for the country/.

When the mother (or adoptive mother) is not insured and does not receive pregnancy, delivery and parental benefits, she is entitled to family allowances for pregnancy, delivery and looking after the child /monthly allowances for looking after a child of up to one year of age/. The following persons are entitled to family allowances: pregnant women who are citizens of Bulgaria; the families of Bulgarian citizens for the children they are raising in the country; the families in which one of the parents is a Bulgarian citizen in respect of the children with Bulgarian citizenship who are being raised in the country; pregnant women who are foreign citizens /citizens of countries outside the EEA/ and the families of foreign citizens who are permanent residents and are bringing up their children in the country. The right to family allowances is based on the income of each member of the family and is arranged by the Law for Family Child Benefits.

You can find more information in the Social Security Code - [www.nssi.bg](http://www.nssi.bg) - as well as in the Law for Family Child Benefits: [www.mlsp.government.bg](http://www.mlsp.government.bg)

## *Unemployment benefits*

In order to receive unemployment benefits in Bulgaria, you need to have worked / and to have been insured/ for at least 9 out of the last 15 months. In order to receive their benefits, individuals have to register as unemployed with the local labour office within 7 days from the date on which their employment contract was terminated, and not to have been granted any pension or early retirement pension. The length of service which is considered sufficient for insurance purposes according to the legislation of another Member State of the European Union or a country which has an agreement with the Republic of Bulgaria is recognized when the right to benefits is defined. The unemployment benefit rate amounts to 60 percent of the average monthly remuneration or income for which social security contributions have been made or accrued to





the Unemployment Fund for the last 24 months. The minimum and the maximum daily unemployment benefit amounts of the contributions are defined annually.

Persons whose working legal rights were terminated after 01.01.2009, receive benefits to the amount of 130 percent of the defined amount for the first half, and 70 percent for the second half of the period for which the amount is due. Monetary benefits are paid after the beneficiary fills out an application form and submits it to the territorial division of the National Insurance Institute – [www.nsi.bg](http://www.nsi.bg). The benefits are paid monthly for a period defined on the basis of the length of service. They are received for a minimum of 4 months and a maximum of 12 months. Unemployed persons, entitled to unemployment benefits after less than 3 years from the previous period when they were entitled to such benefits, receive the minimum benefit for 4 months.

### *Pensions*

The Bulgarian retirement insurance system includes three types of retirement insurance, known as three retirement insurance 'pillars': compulsory; compulsory supplementary and voluntary supplementary. According to the first pillar, the obligatory retirement contributions are spent on paying the retirement benefits to pensioners. As of 1st January, 2009 the length of service and old age retirement benefits are acquired as follows: men acquire the right when they become 63 years of age and have 37 years of insurance service/employment; women acquire the right when they become 60 years of age and have 34 years of insurance service. As of 2012, the required insurance/contributory service will be gradually increased by 4 months each year until 2020 – it is envisaged that men will need to have 40 years and women 37 years of insurance/contributory service. If men and women don't have the abovementioned years of insurance/contributory service, entitlement to pension is acquired with 15 years of contributory service, 12 of which should be actual length of service, and 65 years of age for both men and women.

According to the second pillar, which does not involve supplementary social security contributions, a part of the compulsory contributions are allocated to a separate pension fund and are paid when the person is entitled to retirement. This pillar covers people who were born after 31.12.1959 and expands the compulsory retirement insurance by providing the option for receiving more than one pension.

The third pillar ensures receiving a third pension by depositing voluntary contributions.

Besides pensions for length of service and old age, persons may receive a disability pension /for persons who have lost 50 and over 50 % of their ability for work/, inheritance pension /received by children, the surviving spouse and parents/, a military pension for disabled. Since 2011, the time during which one has acquired a semi-higher/higher education, can be considered as insurance/contributory service in case one has made social insurance contributions calculated according to the minimum insurance income for self-insured persons.



### *E-forms*

A system of standardized forms, designated as E-forms, is used for the purposes of information exchange between the competent institutions of Member States. They are unified for all countries and are monolingual, i.e. they are filled out in the official language of the Member State which issues them. There are 7 series of E-forms, starting with series 00 to series 600.

**Series E - 100** is used when determining the applicable legislation / E-101, 102, 103 for business trips, issued by the National Revenue Agency/ and for providing monetary compensations for sickness, maternity benefits and allowances for death /issued by the National Social Security Institute and the National Revenue Agency/;

**Series E - 200** is used for paying and calculating old age, disability, and inheritance pensions /issued by the National Revenue Agency/;

**Series E - 300** is used for defining and paying monetary unemployment benefits / issued by the National Revenue Agency/;

**Series E - 400** is used for granting family benefits /issued by the SAA/;

**Series E - 500** is used for giving information regarding the insurance periods, ascertainment of the personality, the insurance numbers, etc.;

**Series E - 600** is used for compensations not related to the paid insurance contributions.

If before leaving the country the person who is entitled to compensations does not manage to obtain the necessary forms, he/she will not be deprived of their right to compensations. In this case the competent authority will request these forms from the authority in the Member State of insurance which may delay the procedure of defining and paying the compensation.

**Health card** – When staying in a Member State the Bulgarian citizens who have a health insurance have the right to emergency medical care. In order to use this right, they need to have uninterrupted health insurance rights and to be holders of a valid European health insurance card /EHIC/. It is recommended that this card is issued before an upcoming short-term or long-term stay in another Member State when the stay is not for medical purposes. To obtain an EHIC, one needs to submit an application form to the distribution offices of the company which has been chosen for making and delivering the cards in the area of the person's current address. Information about the addresses of these companies can be found on [www.ezok.bg/locations.html](http://www.ezok.bg/locations.html) Each EHIC is personal and registered by name.





### 3. LIVING IN BULGARIA

#### Moving to Bulgaria

##### *A checklist before arriving to Bulgaria*

Before arriving in Bulgaria, the citizens of the EEA Member States should get a good understanding of the living and working conditions in the country. It is necessary that the visitor has found a place to live during their stay before they arrive. When settling down in Bulgaria, one should keep in mind that the country is not yet a part of the EEA and that the currency is the Bulgarian lev /1 lev = 1.95583 euro/. There are banks

and exchange offices in every city, and foreign currencies can easily be exchanged. If the foreigner is accompanied by a family in which there are students, it is necessary prior to departure to become familiar with the necessary documents for enrolling a child in a Bulgarian school and to obtain them from the respective authorities in the country they are coming from /for further reference see “Finding a School”/.

If the citizen of another Member State wishes to move to Bulgaria together with a pet, the animal needs to have an individual passport /a European form/ which designates a registration number /an electronic microchip/, distinctive features, the name and the address of the owner, as well as all vaccinations and delousing procedures that the pet has had.



### Registration procedures

Immediately after arriving and settling down in Bulgaria, citizens of other Member States are supposed to register their new address at a municipal office in the city, town or village where they have chosen to settle down. If staying in a hotel, this registration is done by the administrators of the hotel. For a period of up to 3 months the citizens of the EEA can stay in Bulgaria without any other ID document but their ID card or international passport. After this period they have to register with the National Police Security Service – [www.mvr.bg](http://www.mvr.bg) and to prove that they work /employed or self-employed/, are admitted to a school or have enough earnings to live in the country, so that they are not a burden on the social system in Bulgaria. The necessary documents for this registration are the following: an ID, documents certifying some of the aforementioned circumstances /eg. a contract/, a document of paid state tax - which ensures issuing of a certificate of temporary residence /for up to 5 years/. If the EEA citizens' residence in Bulgaria is uninterrupted for a period of 5 years, they are given a certificate of permanent residence.



If a citizen of the EU wishes to bring their own vehicle to Bulgaria, they need not change their driving license. In case the validity of the driving license has expired, or it has been stolen or lost, a new driving license can be issued in accordance with the national regulations. For further information: [www.kat.mvr.bg](http://www.kat.mvr.bg). In case the EU citizens stay and use their car for a period longer than 6 months, it is necessary to register the car with the local authorities, as well as to pay the registration tax.

### Accommodation

In Bulgaria, one can easily buy or rent fully furnished, partially furnished or unfurnished accommodation. Usually when an apartment is rented the tenant and the landlord sign a contract. The tenant pays the contracted rent in cash on a fixed date every month. The utilities (water supply, electricity and heating) are not included in the rent and are regularly paid by the tenant.

When buying property, both the buyer and the owner of the property have to present their ID documents, and the seller has to provide documents certifying the ownership of the property. The deal is done in front of a notary and is registered in the consignment of the estate.

When renting property, one should keep in mind that prices vary greatly, depending on the city, the location and the condition of the apartment. The average prices when buying property in big cities vary between BGN 990/sq.m. /in Plevnia/ and BGN 1745/sq.m. /in Sofia city/. In smaller cities the prices vary between BGN 618 and BGN 821/sq.m.

To find an apartment or a house, you can use the services of a real estate agency, local and regional press, as well as various websites, such as [www.bulgaria-property.imoti.net](http://www.bulgaria-property.imoti.net); [www.imotibg.com](http://www.imotibg.com); [www.imoti.bg](http://www.imoti.bg)

### Educational system. Finding a school

The Bulgarian educational system includes primary, secondary and higher education. Education is compulsory from 7 years of age /if parents consider it appropriate, the child can start school at 6 years of age/ to 16 years of age. Children up to 3 years of age may be enrolled in nursery schools, and from 3 to 6 years of age they can go to kindergartens /state-owned, municipal or private ones/.

The support money for the children in the state-owned and the municipal kindergartens is usually provided by the state or the municipal budget. Parents pay fees defined by the municipality. There are preparatory groups in the kindergartens or preparatory classes in the schools which are obligatory for the child to attend a year before they enter the 1st grade of school.

School education in terms of degree is primary and secondary and in terms of its contents is general and vocational. Primary education is carried out in two stages: primary /grades 1 to 4 including/ and junior high school stage /grades 5 to 8 includ-

ing/. A certificate for finished primary education is received after completing 8<sup>th</sup> grade. This certificate entitles the student to continue their education. Secondary education is acquired after successfully completed 12<sup>th</sup> grade and successfully taken state school-leaving examination. It is then certified by a diploma which entitles the student to continue their education. The knowledge and the skills of the students are evaluated according to a 6-point marking system.

A study course for acquiring higher education follows the successful completion of secondary education. Higher schools in Bulgaria are either state-owned or private. These are universities, specialized higher schools and independent colleges. Students are admitted to higher schools by an admittance exam which each student has to take. The tuition fees in the state owned higher schools are defined by the Council of Ministers and are paid in equal instalments.

School education in Bulgaria is free for students who are of compulsory school age and are children to parents who are citizens of the EU Member States, EEA countries and Switzerland working on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria.

For a student to be admitted to a Bulgarian school, the authorities need to recognise the completed stages of school education or education degrees, as well as the professional qualifications on the grounds of the documents issued by schools in a foreign country. In order to have their education or degrees recognised, the citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland need to submit their documents to the Regional Education Inspectorate /for recognition of the course of study from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade inclusive/ and to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science /for recognition of the course of study from 8<sup>th</sup> to the last high-school grade/.

The set of documents includes: an application form; a document for school education and professional qualification /if the document does not denote what rights it entitles for continuing the education, the holder should provide other documents that certify this right/; a transcript for the subjects studied and the number of classes if they are not listed in the document for completed education /these documents have to be translated in Bulgarian by a certified translator/; a state fee payment document. Only the originals of the documents are accepted. The committee that considers the documents takes a decision within two months after their submission.

After the documents for completed 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade issued by schools in other countries have been recognised, the holders need to take equivalency examinations in Bulgarian language and literature in order to continue their education in a Bulgarian school. The persons whose school education from 9<sup>th</sup> to the last high school grade has been recognised take equivalency examinations in Bulgarian language and literature, history and civilization and geography and economics covering the content related to Bulgaria, if these subjects are taught in the grades for which the applicant seeks recognition. More information can be found on the website of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science: [www.minedu.government.bg](http://www.minedu.government.bg)





## Health Care System

Healthcare in Bulgaria is organised and managed by the Ministry of Health ([www.mh.government.bg](http://www.mh.government.bg)). The National Health Insurance Fund manages the funding of health services.

Health insurance contributions are compulsory for persons who work under labour legal relations or are self-employed. These contributions are deducted from the monthly remuneration and are directly paid by the employer /for the persons who are hired under legal labour relations/ together with other due social security contribution. Self-employed persons deposit their health care insurance contributions themselves.

Insured citizens are entitled to use the services of medical specialists as well as hospitals and health establishments that have contracts with the National Health Insurance Fund.

Outpatient care (except emergency aid) is provided by private individuals or legal persons who have signed a framework contract with the NHIF. All health insured persons can choose their personal doctor /a general practitioner/ whom they visit when this is necessary. If the general practitioner is not qualified to treat a particular disease, they issue a referral for consultation or treatment to a relevant specialist working with the National Health Insurance Fund. For the visit to a GP or a specialist whom they have been referred to by the GP the patients only pay a consumer fee

amounting to 1 percent of the minimum salary fixed for the current year. Women over 60 years of age and men over 63 years of age pay BGN 1. Each day of hospital stay costs the patients 2 percent of the minimum salary fixed for the country, but for a total not exceeding 10 days per year. Children under 18 years of age, pregnant women, unemployed family members, military personnel and certain other categories of persons are exempted from payment of such fees.

The persons who do not have health insurance pay both the consumer's fee and the full cost of the medical service they receive.

There are many private specialised consulting rooms and clinics functioning in Bulgaria. For a health consultation and/or treatment there the patients pay for a check up and/or treatment, irrespective of whether they have health insurance or not. More information about health insurance and the conditions of using health services in Bulgaria can be found on the website of the Ministry of Health - [www.mh.government.bg](http://www.mh.government.bg) and on the website of the National Health Insurance Fund - [www.nhif.bg](http://www.nhif.bg)

## Transport

The transport system in Bulgaria is very well developed, including land, water and air transport. Water transport is accessible along the Black Sea coast /East Bulgaria/, the major ports being the cities of Varna and Burgas, as well as along the Danube / North Bulgaria/. The major airport is located in the capital city of Sofia - [www.sofia-airport.bg](http://www.sofia-airport.bg)

Larger urban communities have public transport networks; in addition to other kinds of public transport, Sofia has trams and an underground. Passengers in public transport, excluding children under 7 years of age, need a duly issued ticket, public transport card or other transport documents. Passengers with a valid transport document have the right to carrying a baggage piece not bigger than 60x40x40 cm. Transport cards or cards for longer periods are sold at special transport offices. These cards can sometimes be purchased from kiosks at public transport stops. Single trip tickets can normally be purchased from the driver of the vehicle.

Buses and trains are the usual means of transportation between inhabited places. The official timetable of the trains in Bulgaria can be found at <http://razpisanie.bdz.bg/site/search.jsp> More information about the intercity bus connections is available at [www.centralnaavtogara.bg/cbs/home.nsf](http://www.centralnaavtogara.bg/cbs/home.nsf)

Almost every town provides secure paid parking lots for private vehicles. Car rentals are also available in the cities. Rent-a-car booking offices are available in the arrivals hall of the Sofia Airport. Options for renting a car can be checked at [www.avis.bg](http://www.avis.bg), [www.budget.bg](http://www.budget.bg), [www.rentacarbulgaria.com](http://www.rentacarbulgaria.com)





## Cultural and social life

Like all other European countries, Bulgaria offers varied opportunities for cultural and social life. In their leisure time Bulgarians often go to restaurants and bars. The Bulgarian cuisine is delicious and is admired well beyond Bulgaria's borders. Bulgarian yogurt and wines are especially popular. Most of traditional Bulgarian dishes are related to myths, rituals or beliefs and this makes them exotic and unique.

Of course, if you live in Bulgaria, you can also devote your leisure time to reading or dancing or going to concerts or seeing a film, a play, an opera, a ballet performance or an art exhibition; you can also explore the countryside, watch sporting events, take up a sport or a hobby yourself. Throughout Bulgaria, there are 75 theatres, 4 552 public libraries, 2 838 local community centres, more than 230 museums; there is at least one cinema and a stadium in every town, as well as tennis courts and gyms.

You can tune into many radio stations and watch 3 National and more than 100 cable and satellite television channels throughout the country.

Bulgaria is rich in cultural heritage; several historic monuments are on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

With its varied and incredibly beautiful scenery the country offers great opportunities for tourism and recreation in some well-known mountain and seaside resorts. Sports such as golf, rock climbing, hang gliding, rowing, horseback riding, and others are becoming increasingly popular and accessible.

Smoking is not yet fully banned in public places, but there are separate smoking areas in restaurants and cafes.

## Private life

### Birth

Every newborn child is given a birth certificate in which the personal ID number is inscribed. The certificate is given at the place of birth and the parents' ID documents are required.

### Marriage

In Bulgaria, only civil marriage is recognised as lawful. It is executed on the consent of both spouses given in person before the appropriate public official. The minimum age for marriage is 18, but in exceptional cases, it can be brought down to 16, if allowed by the president of the local court. Would-be spouses must register in the City Hall 30 days before the requested date of marriage. The required documents include: identity papers, a statement of no impediments to the marriage, and medical certificates. Two witnesses must be present at the ceremony to testify to the spouses' consent.

### Death

Death is certified by a doctor who issues a death certificate. The police are notified if the circumstances of death are unclear, and an autopsy can be performed.





## 4. EURES network in Bulgaria

With the Employment Agency /EA/, Bulgaria has been a member of the EURES network since 01.01.2007. Currently in Bulgaria there are 9 trained EURES advisers qualified on the European level and supported by EURES assistants who work in each of the 105 local labour offices of the EA. The EURES assistants have been trained on the national level. The EURES manager and two assistants are based in an operating EURES unit in the central office of the EA. The EURES manager is supported by a financial expert and a communications expert who also work in the central office of the EA.

The EURES advisers work with the help of the line managers /the directors of the Regional Employment Agency Directorates/ who attend a national EURES meeting at least once a year.

On the EA's webpage there is a national EURES micro website where the job seekers and the employers can register in order to search for a job or employees. All available vacancies are published on the website and are sent to the advisers by their colleagues from other Member States; all upcoming EURES events in the country are published; news is published, as well.





### List of EURES advisers in Bulgaria with their respective geographical responsibilities:

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## 5. Important websites and telephone numbers in Bulgaria

[www.ec.europa.eu/eures](http://www.ec.europa.eu/eures) - European mobility portal EURES;  
[www.az.government.bg/eures](http://www.az.government.bg/eures) - Bulgarian EURES micro website at the Employment Agency webpage;  
[www.jobtiger.bg](http://www.jobtiger.bg), [www.jobs.bg](http://www.jobs.bg), [www.itjobs.bg](http://www.itjobs.bg), <http://mpyg.hit.bg/> - job search portals;  
[www.mlsp.government.bg](http://www.mlsp.government.bg) - Ministry of Labour and Social Policy;  
[www.nacid.bg](http://www.nacid.bg) - National Center for Information and Documents;  
<http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu> - Europass /job application forms/;  
[www.registryagency.bg](http://www.registryagency.bg) - National Registry Agency;  
[www.nzkgb.org](http://www.nzkgb.org) - Chamber of Carpenters;  
[www.nap.bg](http://www.nap.bg) - National Revenue Agency (NRA);  
[www.mzgar.government.bg/Structure/ODZG/sites\\_odzg.htm](http://www.mzgar.government.bg/Structure/ODZG/sites_odzg.htm) - Regional Agriculture and Forestry Directorate;  
[www.nssi.bg](http://www.nssi.bg) - National Social Security Institute;  
[www.ezok.bg/locations.html](http://www.ezok.bg/locations.html) - issuing a EHIC;  
[www.mvr.bg](http://www.mvr.bg) - Ministry of Interior, Security Police Main Directorate;

[www.bulgaria-property.imoti.net](http://www.bulgaria-property.imoti.net); [www.imotibg.com](http://www.imotibg.com); [www.imoti.bg](http://www.imoti.bg) - accommodation search portals;  
[www.minedu.government.bg](http://www.minedu.government.bg) - Ministry of Education, Youth and Science;  
[www.mh.government.bg](http://www.mh.government.bg) - Ministry of Health;  
[www.nhif.bg](http://www.nhif.bg) - National Health Insurance Fund;  
[www.sofia-airport.bg](http://www.sofia-airport.bg) - Sofia Airport;  
[http://razpisanie.bdz.bg/site/search.jsp](http://http://razpisanie.bdz.bg/site/search.jsp) - timetable of trains in Bulgaria;  
[www.centralnaavtogara.bg/cbs/home.nsf](http://www.centralnaavtogara.bg/cbs/home.nsf) - intercity bus connections;  
[www.avis.bg](http://www.avis.bg), [www.budget.bg](http://www.budget.bg), [www.rentacarbulgaria.com](http://www.rentacarbulgaria.com) - rent-a-car websites  
**Tel. 112** - Unified European emergency number  
**Tel. 150** - First aid  
**Tel. 165** - Car accidents  
**Tel. 160** - Fire brigade  
**Tel. 11 800** - Information by phone