

INTEGRATION HANDBOOK

**A Starter Pack : Information for Newly Recognised Refugees
and Persons with Humanitarian Status**

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on receiving protection status in Bulgaria! This is a new beginning for you and your family.

The road to adapting to your new home may be long and sometimes challenging. Fortunately, many institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are ready to support you every step of the way to help ensure your journey is successful.

This handbook will guide you through your first steps after you receive your positive decision from the State Agency for Refugees (SAR). You will learn about your rights and obligations in Bulgaria with your new status, and where you can find support. It will also inform you about the many opportunities now available to you.

This guide is for adults (age 18 and older). If you are under 18 and arrived in Bulgaria without your parents or family, different procedures apply. Please contact your National Legal Aid Bureau representative immediately for support.



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PART 1:

GENERAL INFORMATION

Welcome to Protection in Bulgaria: What Your Status Means

International protection in Bulgaria includes two types of status: **Refugee Status** or **Humanitarian Status**. You have now been granted one of them.

By law, your rights are initially defined as follows:

- **Refugee Status:** you receive **the same rights as Bulgarian citizens**.
- **Humanitarian Status:** you receive **the rights of foreigners with a permanent residence permit in Bulgaria**.

In practice, both statuses give you **full and equal access** to almost all government systems and institutions. Whether you have Refugee or Humanitarian Status, you are fully entitled to:

Education: free and compulsory education for your children in state and municipal schools.

Employment: legal work without needing any additional permits.

Healthcare: access to a personal doctor and medical care once you pay your health insurance.

Family Reunification: the right to reunite in Bulgaria with your close family members (spouse and children under 18, or parents/adult children unable to care for themselves due to health reasons).

Social Support: eligibility for social assistance and social services.

Citizenship: the right to apply for Bulgarian citizenship after a certain period.

Key Practical Differences

In practice, the difference between the two statuses is only in two main aspects:

Aspect	Refugee Status	Humanitarian Status
Identity Document Duration	Five years (5)	Three years (3)
Citizenship Application Wait Time	Three years (3)	Five years (5)



IMPORTANT

Until you become a Bulgarian citizen, you are not allowed to:

- I. Vote in elections
- II. Join political parties
- III. Serve in the armed forces

PART 2:

REGISTRATION WITH A MUNICIPALITY AND IDENTITY DOCUMENTS

2.1 Population and Address Registration

Once you receive your positive status decision, you must act quickly. Within **14 days** of being served with the decision, you must:

- 1. Find accommodation** with a valid address.
- 2. Register with the municipality** where your new home is located.

This deadline is extremely important! Once you are registered, you will be issued a unique **Unified Civil Number (UCN)**. You will need this UCN to obtain your identity documents and to access **all national institutions and services**.

How to Register: Step-by-Step

Step 1: Secure Your Accommodation

- Find a Home:** locate a house or apartment where you and your family can be registered. (Refer to **Section III. Housing:** Tips on finding accommodation).
- Obtain Owner's Consent:** the property owner **must agree** to your registration. You will need to sign a **rental agreement (lease)** with the owner.

Step 2: Inform the State Agency for Refugees (SAR)

- Submit Your Documents:** go to the SAR centre where you are staying and submit your rental agreement (or other proof of address, if acceptable by SAR) to notify them of your new address.
- Get the Letter:** the SAR centre will then issue you an official letter **addressed to the Mayor** of the municipality where your new accommodation is located.

Step 3: Go to the Municipality

You must go to the municipal office where your accommodation is located. **You will need the following documents:**

Document Type	Required Document
Proof of Status	The official decision granting you a status.
SAR Documentation	The letter from the SAR centre addressed to the Mayor.
Identification	The SAR registration card (the blue card).
Proof of Address	The signed rental agreement with the property owner.
Proof of Address	A copy of the Deed of the Property (a document proving the ownership of the property).
Family List	A written list of all your family members (parents, spouse, children, siblings). <i>Names must exactly match those on the SAR registration card.</i>

Step 4: Complete the Registration

At the municipal office, the following will happen:

- An application will be given to you by the municipality staff. **You** will fill out **an application for entry in the population register**, including your permanent and current address.
- The Landlord** (or property owner) will complete a separate **Declaration of Consent** for you to register at his/her property.



Fees for Registration (As of 2025)

The fees for registration vary by municipality and may change slightly. You should be prepared to pay the following:

- **Registration in the population register and issuance of a UCN:** 7 BGN
- **Issuing a Certificate of Permanent and Current Address:** Approximately 2.50 BGN (for each) in Sofia as of 2025 to 4 BGN per certificate in the municipality of Harmanli.

Tip for Registration



Try to find a social worker or someone who speaks Bulgarian to accompany you when you register at the municipality. Some of the required paperwork is completed on the spot and is entirely in Bulgarian.

Completing Your Registration

1. **Processing Time:** once all documents are submitted and the municipality registers you, your unique **Unified Civil Number** (UCN) is usually generated **within seven days**.
2. **Pick-up:** after this period, you must return to the municipality to pick up your **Certificate of Registration** in the Population Register of your permanent address.

Note: This processing time may vary depending on the specific municipality and the type of registration service you choose.



IMPORTANT

Owner's Presence and Documentation

The property owner must be involved in your registration process:

- **Preferred Method:** the property owner must be present at the municipality to sign the Declaration of Consent.
- **Alternative:** if the owner cannot attend, her/he must sign a Declaration of Consent beforehand, which is **certified by a notary**. You must bring this certified declaration with you, along with the Deed to the property, provided by the Owner
- **Owner's Document:** the owner must bring a copy of the **Deed to the property**—the official document that proves the property is legally his/hers.

Understanding Addresses in Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, everyone registered in the population register has two addresses: a **Permanent Address** and a **Current Address**

Permanent Address: This is your official address for state correspondence. It is written on your identity documents and must always be in Bulgaria. It is used for all official correspondence with Bulgarian authorities.

Current Address: This is the address where you currently live. It can be changed without reissuing your identity documents. It can even be a foreign address if you temporarily move abroad.

When You First Register

When you first register your address, you will receive a certificate for both your permanent and current addresses, and they will most likely be the same.

Changing Your Address Later

If you subsequently change your address, you are legally **required to report to the municipality** where the new address is located within **30 days**. At this time, you will choose to change either your permanent address, your current address, or both.



IMPORTANT

If you cannot find a physical address where you can register immediately, the municipality where you intend to live will register you at a **Service Address**.

What is a Service Address?

- This is an address **designated by the municipality** where **you cannot physically live**.
- It serves for purely **administrative purposes** and allows you to proceed with issuing your identity documents.

How to Register at a Service Address

To use this option, you must follow the standard procedure with two key exceptions:

Standard Procedure	Official Address Exception
Documents Required	Same documents as the standard process, with the difference being that the letter from SAR should include that you need to be registered at a service address and the district, where you will be registered, should be indicated (if you live in a bigger city, i.e. Sofia).
Not Required	NO rental agreement (lease) is needed.
Not Required	NO property owner presence is required.

Note: Registering at a service address does not eliminate the need to find a place to move to, but it is a vital option if you are unable to use the address of your temporary accommodation for registration purposes.



2.2 Issuing Identity Documents

Once you have been entered into the **population register**, assigned a **Unified Civil Number (UCN)**, and completed your **address registration**, you must apply for your new identity documents.

Action Required: You must submit the application for these documents to the municipality **within 30 days** of your initial registration



IMPORTANT

The period stated on your documents does not refer to the duration of your status. Your status has no time limit. The period only reflects the validity of the document itself. After the expiry date, you simply need to renew the documents.

What Documents Are Issued?

The type and validity of your documents depend on the status you have been granted:

Status Granted	Documents Issued	Validity Period
Refugee Status	Refugee ID Card	5 years
	Refugee Travel Document (Passport)	5 years
Humanitarian Status	ID Card of a Foreigner with Humanitarian Status	3 years
	Passport of a Foreigner with Humanitarian Status	3 years

How to Apply for Identity Documents

Bulgarian identity documents are issued upon application to:

- **The Migration Directorate** in Sofia (Address: 91 Maria Luisa Blvd.)
- **A Regional Directorate of the Ministry of Interior (RDMI)** if you are outside Sofia. (For those in Harmanli, this is the RDMI in Haskovo, Address: 85 Bulgaria Blvd.)

The Application Process

Step 1: Submission and Payment (In-Person)

You must apply in person and submit the following documents:

- **ID Application Form:** provided to you on the spot and automatically generated by the system. You must check the pre-filled information carefully.
- **Decision:** the official decision granting you a status (Refugee or Humanitarian).
- **Certificate of Registration:** the certificate of registration in the population register at your permanent address (obtained from the municipality).
- **Passport:** Your passport from your country of origin (if you have one).
- **State Fee:** A fee is payable on the spot, the amount of which depends on the desired speed of issuance (see fees below).



State Fees (Applicable for 2025):

Document Type	Standard Order (30 days)
ID Card	30 BGN
Travel Document (Passport)	50 BGN

*For a **Quick Order** (10 working days), the fee is double (e.g. 60 BGN for an ID Card).

Step 2: Biometric Registration

After submitting your documents, you must undergo biometric registration (taking your photo and fingerprints).

Step 3: Document Collection

The finalised documents must be received in person or by a person with a notarised power of attorney from you.



- ID Cards are only issued to persons over **14** years of age.
- Travel Documents (Passports) are issued to **everyone**, regardless of age.
- Documents for Minors: for the issuance of official documents for minors, the presence of both the **parent** and the **child** is required.
- Loss, Theft, or Damage: if a Bulgarian identity document is lost, stolen, damaged, or destroyed, you must file a declaration with the nearest police station **within 3 days**. Failure to comply may result in fines.
- Change of Address: if you change your permanent address, you must apply for a new ID card **within 30 days**. Failure to comply may result in fines.

2.3 Travelling Abroad

If you hold refugee or humanitarian status and have an official Bulgarian travel document, **you can travel to the Schengen Area** without further restrictions.

*All European Union countries except Cyprus and Ireland

*Exceptions to the EU: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland



As with Bulgarian nationals, your status grants you the right to stay in other EU countries for a maximum of **90 days within any 180-day period**. Longer stays require special permission from local immigration authorities (e.g., for work, training, etc.).

For all other countries outside the EU and the Schengen Area, you must check the travel and visa requirements with their respective embassies before your travel.

2.4 Driving License

Obtaining a New Driving License (If you do not have one)

If you lack a driving license from your country of origin or another country, you must complete a driving course and pass a state test in Bulgaria.

Requirements to Apply for a Driving License:

- You must have been granted **Refugee or Humanitarian Status**.
- You must be at least **18 years old** (you can start the course at 17 years and 9 months).
- You must have a certificate recognising completion of **10th grade**.
- You must have **completed a driving course and passed a state test**.
- You must have completed a **one-day First Aid course** with the Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC).

Replacing an Existing Driving License

If you have a valid driving license from your country of origin:

- You are entitled to use it for **one year** after you have been granted refugee or humanitarian status. It is advisable to have a **legalised translation** of your license.
- After this one-year period, you must replace the license with a Bulgarian one.
- Since the replacement process takes time, you should begin the application a few months before the expiry date. The required documents and steps are the same as those listed in section 4.1.

How to Get a 10th Grade Completion Certificate

1. **Translate** your original diploma into Bulgarian. No official legalisation is required.
2. **Apply** to the Regional Education Office in your town. (In Sofia: 17 "Antim I" St., floor 4, room 401).
3. **Attach** the original diploma and the translation to your application.
4. **Pay a fee**. As of 2025, the fee is **50 BGN**.
5. The certificate is typically issued **within one month**.

How to Pass a Driving Course (Category B - Car License)

1. Driving courses are organized by private licensed companies. Search online for a credible company.
2. The basic **Category B** course lasts **1 to 3 months** (depending on intensity) and includes:
 - **40 hours** of theoretical training.
 - **31 hours** of practical training (driving).
3. **Course Prices (As of 2025)**: Prices vary between **800 and 1,000 BGN**. Most companies allow payment in several installments.
4. After the course, you take an official **state test**, which has a theoretical part (road regulations) and a practical part (driving). The test can only be taken in **Bulgarian or English**.

How to Take a First Aid Course

- **Requirement:** You must complete a one-day First Aid course organised by the Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC).
- **Application:** Apply online via the BRC website or in person.
- **Sofia Address:** 61 Dondukov Blvd.
- **Price (As of 2025): 90 BGN**.

How to Apply for a Driving License

1. Go to the **Traffic Police department** in your city. (In Sofia: 4 Lachezar Stanchev St.)
2. You need the following documents:
 - **Application:** provided and automatically generated on the spot. Check the pre-filled information carefully.
 - **Status Card:** Refugee or Humanitarian Status Card.
 - **Medical Certificate:** a document from your General Practitioner (GP) stating you are physically fit to drive.
 - **First Aid Certificate:** document from the Bulgarian Red Cross.
 - **Residency Declaration:** a declaration stating you live in Bulgaria (filled in on the spot).
 - **10th Grade Proof:** a copy of the proof that you have completed at least the 10th grade.
3. **Pay a fee**. The fee depends on the issuance speed:

Service Type	Time	Fee (2025)
Normal Service	30 days	25 BGN
Fast Service	10 days	50 BGN

2.5 Other Documents

Birth Certificate (for children born in Bulgaria)

- If your child is born in Bulgaria, they will receive a **birth certificate**.
- The medical facility is required to notify the municipality of your permanent address.
- You can collect the document from the municipality as early as **seven days after the birth**.
- The service is free and mandatory for every child born on Bulgarian territory.



IMPORTANT

Once you have the certificate, you must go to the **State Agency for Refugees (SAR)**—the center where you received your status—to apply for status for your child. **Both parents** must be present if they are in Bulgaria

Note: Birth Certificate

If you do not have a birth certificate, the State Agency for Refugees (SAR) can issue you a substitute document. You need to submit a written request to the SAR for this replacement.

Issuance Time: the certificate should be issued **within three working days**, but it is usually provided immediately on the spot.



Civil Marriage Certificate

Marriage in Bulgaria is a **secular** institution. Religious marriages have no legal value and do not change your marital status.

- Permitted only between **two persons**
- Must be entered into **voluntarily**
- Is strictly between **a man and a woman** (same-sex marriages are not allowed)
- Must be over **18 years of age**
- Persons aged **16-17** require permission from the District Court

Process to Get Married:

- Submit documents to the **municipality of your residence** at least **30 days** before the ceremony.
- You will need **medical certificates** for both partners, issued by your personal doctors.
- **Submission (In Sofia):** Documents must be submitted to the Sofia House for Joyful Rites (2A Krakra St.).
- **Fees** may apply depending on the service.
- The ceremony is held in the municipality or in special ceremonial halls (Sofia has six such halls). A **Civil Marriage Certificate** is issued to certify your marital status.

Substitute Documents (Issued by SAR)

The **State Agency for Refugees (SAR)** may issue substitute documents in place of documents originally issued in your country.

- **Purpose:** these are required to issue Bulgarian identity documents or access other services.
- **Format:** issued in the form of a certificate based on data established by the SAR through a declaration signed by you.
- **Common Replacements:** these usually replace birth and civil marriage certificates.
- **SAR DOES NOT ISSUE:** The Agency does not issue substitute documents for **educational and professional certificates or diplomas**.

Criminal Record Certificate

A criminal record certificate shows whether you have been convicted of a crime. You may need this for:

- Signing an **employment contract**.
- **Registering a company**.
- Applying for **Bulgarian citizenship**.

Where to Obtain the Document:

- Issued by the Criminal Records Bureau at the **District Court** where you are registered.
- **For Refugees in Sofia:** issued by the "**Central Criminal Records Bureau**" at the Ministry of Justice (5 Aksakov St.).
- **Office Hours:** open every working day between 9:00 AM and 5:30 PM.

Required Documents:

- **Application:** to be filled in on the spot.
- **ID:** your Refugee/Humanitarian Status ID.
- **Birth Certificate.**
- **Paid State Fee:** 5 BGN.

**PART 3:
ACCOMMODATION**

3. Accommodation

3.1 Mandatory Registration and Timeframe

Once you have received your **status decision**, you must immediately find accommodation and register your **address with the municipality where it is located within 14 days**. The State Refugee Agency (SAR) expects you to leave its reception centers within this same 14-day period.

3.2 Accommodation Options

A. Apartment for Rent (Fastest Option)

Renting an apartment is typically the quickest way to secure housing and fulfill the 14-day registration requirement.

Rental Contract Details:

- Duration and Renewal:** contracts usually last for **one year** and can be extended if both parties agree.
- Language:** it is highly recommended to have a **bilingual contract** (in Bulgarian and a language you understand).
- Family Names:** it is important that the names of **all family members** are included on the contract.
- Initial Costs:** when signing the contract, you typically must pay the first month's rent plus a **security deposit** equal to one to two month's rent. This deposit is returned when you leave the apartment, meaning you need sufficient funds for **two to three rent payments** upfront.
- Utility Bills:** remember that you must pay **separate monthly costs** for electricity, water, heating (if centralized), and building entrance fees. These costs can vary significantly, so always ask the landlord for an average monthly amount to cover all household bills.

How to Find Accommodation for Rent:

You can find suitable accommodation through specialized channels:

- Internet Sites with Ads:** Bulgarians commonly use classified websites to post and search for apartments nationwide. Listings typically include location, area, number of rooms, photos, monthly rent, and owner contact details. An in-person visit is usually arranged after initial contact.

Popular Sites: www.imot.bg, www.imoti.net, www.alo.bg

- Real Estate Agencies:** agencies can assist in finding a property that meets your specific needs. An agency representative will usually accompany you on property visits.

- Agency Fees:** ask in advance about the terms of the visit, as some agencies charge for viewings. The agency will only charge a **commission** if a rental agreement is signed. This commission is usually equal to **half or full amount of the monthly rent**, but this can vary, so confirm this upfront.

- NGOs:** some international and non-governmental organizations provide housing assistance through dedicated projects. Check for current support availability from the **International Organization for Migration (IOM)**, **Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC)**, and **Caritas Sofia**.



Tip: Visit the Compass Community Centres for further information. (Contact details can be found in Part 12: NGOs).

B. Social Services Accommodation (State-Funded Centres)

If you cannot immediately rent an apartment, it is possible to seek state-funded social services. However, you will usually need **identity documents** to be accommodated here.

- Initial Step:** Since state-funded centres generally **cannot** be used as a permanent address, you must first apply for a **service address designated by the municipality** (see Section 2, on *Population and Address Registration*). Once you have this official address, you can issue your identity documents and then apply for placement in a social service centre.

Types of Social Services Accommodation:

a. Temporary Accommodation Centres:

- Duration:** provide shelter for **three months** within one calendar year, with the possibility of extending the stay for a further three months.
- Location:** there are three such centers in Sofia (Zaharna Fabrika, Krasna Polyana, and Lyulin districts). The nearest centre in the Harmanli area is in **Dimitrovgrad**.
- Application:** apply to the **Social Assistance Directorate** in the municipality where you are registered. You must present your personal documents when applying.

b. Shelters:

- Purpose:** provide shelter only in **winter** (usually between December and March) and only **at night** (from 5 PM until 10 AM the next morning).

- Specialized Centres:** You may also be placed in other types of centers based on your individual situation (e.g., those that support women with young children, survivors of trafficking or violence, or people with disabilities). The staff at the **Social Assistance Directorate** will explain all available options.

PART 4:
FAMILY
REUNIFICATION

4. Family Reunification

Regardless of whether you receive **Refugee** or **Humanitarian status**, you have the right to family reunification in Bulgaria.

4.1 Eligible Family Members

- **Spouse** (or a person with whom you have a proven, stable, and long-lasting relationship).
- **Children** who are unmarried and under 18 years old.
- **Adult Children** (over 18) who are unmarried and cannot provide for themselves due to health reasons.
- **Parents** who cannot care for themselves due to old age or serious illness.

Note: *The cost of family reunification is borne by you (the applicant).*

4.2 Process for Family Reunification

Step 1: Application to the State Agency for Refugees (SAR)

You must apply for family reunification at the **SAR** centre where you were granted status.

Required Information & Documents:

- Your new **ID card number**, address, and contact telephone number.
- The names of **all people** you wish to reunite with.
- Copies of your relatives' **ID or travel documents**.

Documentation Requirement	Details
Proof of Family Ties	You must attach documents like a marriage certificate or birth certificate for children.
Proof of Dependency	To reunite with children over 18 or your parents, you must provide medical certificates or other documents proving they are dependent on your support and care.
Substitute Document (If no official documents)	<p>You can submit a notarized declaration listing the names, dates of birth, and addresses of your relatives.</p> <p>Warning: You are criminally liable for providing false information in these declarations.</p>



IMPORTANT

If you submit a family reunification application **more than six months** after being granted protection, you must submit the following additional documents:

- **Proof of Housing** (e.g., rental contract).
- **Health Insurance** for yourself (see section 10) and **medical insurance valid for at least three months** for your family members.
- **Proof of Stable and Regular Income** in an amount not less than the **minimum salary** in Bulgaria.



Tip: *get help from a lawyer when filing for family reunification.*
(See Part 12 on Non-Governmental Organizations for contacts).

Step 2: Interview

You will be called in for **an interview** to clarify names and other facts about your relatives.

Step 3: Decision

The SAR takes up to **three months** to decide on the family reunification application. You will be called to receive the official decision.

- Rejection:** If the SAR rejects your application, you can **appeal the decision** before an administrative court in the relevant city **within 14 days** of the date you were served the decision. You can also appeal the administrative court's ruling to the Supreme Administrative Court.
- Authorization:** If the SAR authorizes reunification, the national authorities will send information to the **Bulgarian embassy** in the country where your relatives are located, or the nearest operational Bulgarian embassy if none exists in their country.

Step 4: Visa Application by Family Members

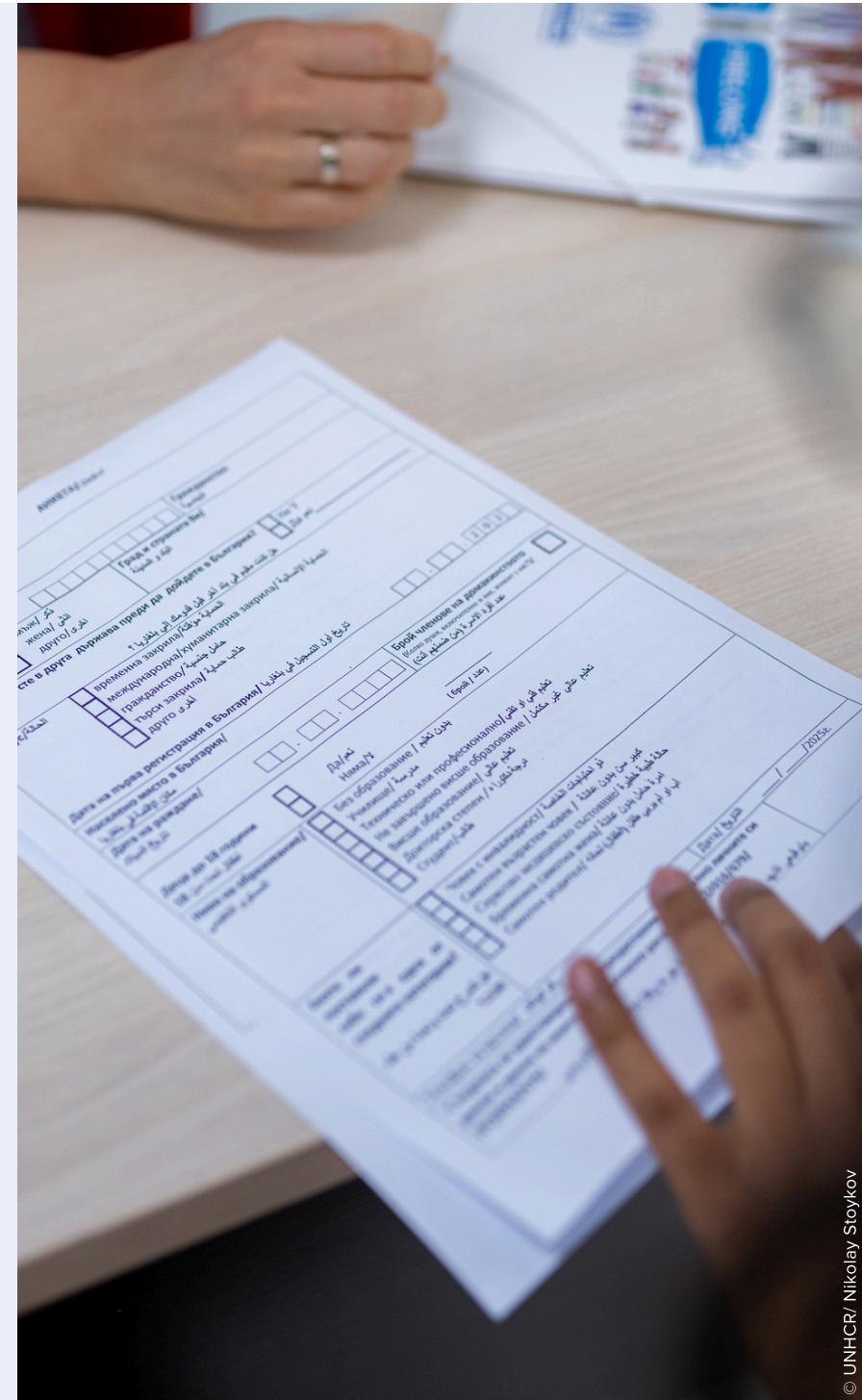
Your relatives must go to the designated Bulgarian embassy and apply for a **“D” type visa**. The visa procedure takes about one month.

Required Visa Documents:

- Application form (available online and at the embassy).
- A **valid international passport** where the visa will be affixed.
- Medical insurance** for the first few months in Bulgaria.
- A copy of the **family reunification decision** issued by the SAR.
- Visa fee paid.

Country	Bulgarian Embassy Location for Visa
Syria and Iraq	Beirut (Lebanon), and Ankara (Türkiye)
Afghanistan	Tehran (Iran), Delhi (India), or Islamabad (Pakistan)

Note: If your relatives do not have a valid international passport, the Bulgarian Embassy may issue them with travel documents (*laissez-passer*) that allow them to travel to Bulgaria. After arriving in Bulgaria, **your family members have the right to apply for international protection themselves**, just as you did.



Part: 5

EDUCATION



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5.1 Why Enroll Your Child in School?

Benefits for the Child:

- A dynamic daily routine and structure.
- The opportunity to create new friendships and have diverse experiences.
- Learning a new language (Bulgarian).
- A chance to participate in a variety of extracurricular cultural and sporting activities.

Benefits for the Parent: you will have more time for other activities.

Future Recognition: your child will be part of a European education system and receive a diploma recognised anywhere in the European Union.

! Education in Bulgaria is **compulsory** for children between 4 and 16 and is **free** in municipal and state schools.

! Parents **who do not enroll** their children in the education system are subject to **fines** and **are not entitled to the full amount of family benefits for children**.

5.2 General Information on the Education System

Education in Bulgaria is divided into several stages:

- **Pre-school education** (for children aged between 4 and 7 years), which takes place mainly in kindergartens.
- **School education**, which is divided into:
 - Basic (grades 1-4)
 - Middle school (grades 5-7): upon completion of seventh grade, children receive a diploma of primary education.
 - Upper secondary – first stage (grades 8-10)
 - Upper secondary – second stage (grades 11-12): upon completion of grade 12, children receive a secondary school diploma.
- **Higher education**, which takes place in higher education institutions (universities), where the degrees are:
 - Bachelor (duration 3 or 4 years)
 - Master (duration 1 or 2 years)
 - PhD (minimum duration 3 years)

Grading Scale

Regardless of the stage, the grading scale is as follows:

- 6 (excellent)
- 5 (very good)
- 4 (good)
- 3 (medium)
- 2 (weak)



- Education in kindergartens and schools is **secular** and in Bulgarian. Any discrimination is prohibited.
- The school year begins on **15 September** and, depending on the stage, runs until **24 May–30 June**.

5.3 Nurseries and Kindergartens

Different types of childcare facilities cater to the need of children.

- **Nurseries** are for children from ten months to three years old.
- **Kindergartens** are for children from three to seven years old.

At these facilities, they are cared for by health professionals, teachers, and caregivers; are provided with appropriate food, and follow a healthy regime of play, learning, feeding, and recreation (including afternoon naps).

Municipal nurseries and kindergartens are free, with parents paying small amounts for extra activities.

How to Enroll My Child in Nursery and Kindergarten?

Each municipality has its own enrolment procedure. In larger municipalities, this is usually done via an online platform.

- In **Sofia**: The application is done through the so-called **“Information System for Administrating Childcare Facilities, Preparatory Groups and First Grades at Schools”**—it is an internet platform at: www.kg.sofia.bg.
- The application usually takes place between **March and May** before the child starts attending the nursery/kindergarten from 15 September. It is possible to apply at any other time of the year, but the chance of vacancies being available then is small.



Required Documents (Vary by Municipality)

To enroll a child in nursery or kindergarten, parents must provide a few documents which differ in different municipalities. In Sofia the required documents are:

- Birth certificate of the child.
- A note from the employer that parents are legally employed (if such information is declared during the application process).

- A personal health card, issued by the general practitioner of the child.
- A document proving all obligatory vaccinations, issued by the general practitioner of the child. He/she must be vaccinated according to all the requirements of the **Bulgarian Immunization Calendar**. (For more information about vaccination, see Part 10: Health).
- A doctor's note confirming the child is healthy and has not had contact with contagious illnesses in the past three days.
- Negative test results for pathogenic intestinal bacteria and intestinal parasites.



Places in municipal nurseries and kindergartens in Sofia are limited. If you apply and your child is **not accepted**, you are entitled to **financial compensation**. Compensation is only paid if your child is enrolled in a private nursery/preschool licensed by the Ministry of Education. Applying for compensation in Sofia is done through the same platform. Seek assistance in the process from NGO staff (For contacts, see Part 12: NGOs).

5.4 Preschool Education

Pre-school education is **compulsory for children aged 4 or higher** and continues until they enter first grade (usually at age 7). It takes place in kindergartens (or schools that offer such classes or pre-school groups). About kindergarten applications—see the previous point.

Help with Enrolment

If your child is between 4 and 7 years old and is subject to compulsory pre-school education, but is not enrolled in kindergarten or school, you can apply to the municipality of your current address to get help in searching for available places. If no such places are available, you may enroll your child as a private student with a kindergarten.



When enrolling in **first grade**, it is necessary for the child to present **a certificate of completion of preschool education**, which is issued by the respective kindergarten or school where it was held.

5.5 Enrolment at School

The procedure for enrolling a child with refugee or humanitarian status in school is straightforward and depends on whether your child has a diploma for a prior completed education.

1 Option One: If the Child Does Not Have a Diploma

1. **Apply for enrolment** at the **Regional Education Department** in your regional city (Sofia or in the case of Harmanli—Haskovo).
2. The management must refer your child to a specific school according to your residence address and preferences **within 7 working days**.
3. The school to which your child is referred **must arrange an interview with your child** within 14 days to determine which grade your child should be enrolled in.
 - a. Children in grades **1 through 4** are enrolled in the grades that correspond to their age (i.e., children seven years old in first grade).
 - b. Children in grades **5 through 10** are enrolled in a grade at the discretion of the school based on the interview process. Note that it is not permitted to enroll the child in a grade that is **more than three years below** the grade corresponding to the child's age.
4. The child must be enrolled **within 10 working days** of the interview in a specific class by order of the school principal.



Enrolment of children in the first grade in Sofia is done through the “**Information System for Administrating Childcare Facilities, Preparatory Groups and First Grades at Schools**”—this is an Internet platform at: www.kg.sofia.bg. 

School enrolment is possible throughout the school year **except for the last 45 school days** before the end of the school year.

2 Option Two: If the Child Has a Diploma

1. If your child is between 1st and 6th grade (excluding 5th grade)

- **Step 1:** Translate your child's diploma through a sworn translator into Bulgarian.
 - The **Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC)** can help you translate the document. (For contacts, see Part 12: NGOs.)
 - The diploma **does not need to be legalized or apostilled**. The Bulgarian translation is sufficient.
- **Step 2:** Go to the **school of your choice**. Bring the original diploma and the translation. You will fill in an enrolment form on the spot.
 - The school may **refuse** to enroll your child if there are no free places. In such a case, look for another school or ask for help at the Regional Education Department.
- **Step 3:** The principal recognizes the diploma and issues **an enrolment order** within 10 days.

2. If your child is in 5th grade or between 7th and 12th grade

- **Step 1: Translate** your child's diploma through a sworn translator into Bulgarian.
- **Step 2:** Go to the **Regional Education Department** and apply for enrolment in the school of your choice and for your child's diploma to be recognised. Documents required:
 - An application form that you will complete on the spot.
 - Original diploma and translation into Bulgarian.
 - A reference note of the subjects studied with the number of hours and the grades given, if not included in the diploma.
 - You will also pay a recognition fee on the spot (as of 2025: **50 BGN**), if the child is **older than 16**.
- **Step 3:** The Regional Education Department will issue **a decision** on the recognition of the diploma **within one month**, as well as **an order** to enroll the child in the school according to your place of residence and preferences, and available places.
- **Step 4:** After enrolling in school, children in **7th grade** will have to pass an exam in **Bulgarian language**, and children from **8th to 12th grade** will have to pass **equivalency exams** in subjects they have not studied in the country where the diploma was issued.

5.6 Support for Children at School

Special Language Support

Children with refugee or humanitarian status are entitled to extra Bulgarian language classes at school. The number varies according to the educational stage (between 60 and 120 hours).

Application for Language Classes

It is necessary for the parent to write an application for the child's inclusion in such Bulgarian language training to the school principal. If you are not informed of this possibility, ask the school yourself.

Additional Support

- Additional hours in academic subjects, if there is a need.
- **Free textbooks:** all textbooks for children in grades 1 to 12 are distributed to students free of charge.
- Free breakfast, fruit, fresh milk.
- Participation in extracurricular sports and cultural activities.
- Health care.
- Psychological support, if needed.
- Specialized support for children who have any disabilities.



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5.7 Higher Education

General Information

You have two options for enrolling in a Bulgarian state university: as per the rules for **Bulgarian nationals** or as per **foreigners' rules**:

Option	Fees	Admissions & Language
Bulgarian Nationals' Rules	Lower (200 to 900 BGN per semester)	Difficult entrance exams, mainly conducted in Bulgarian. Education mainly in Bulgarian.
Foreigner's Rules	Higher (3,000 to 6,000 BGN per semester)	Admission by documents or after exams in English. Course is in English (or another language).

Scholarships are offered for high grades and/or meeting social criteria, but these vary from university to university.

Before Applying: Diploma Recognition

In order to study at a Bulgarian state university, you must have an original secondary school diploma.

- 1. **Applying under the Bulgarian citizens' procedure:** you must go through the procedure of **recognition of your secondary education diploma** at the **Regional Education Department** (Sofia or Haskovo).
 - Documents required: application form, original diploma and Bulgarian translation (no legalization), reference note of subjects and hours/grades.
 - You will pay a recognition fee (as of 2025, it is **50 BGN**).
 - You will receive a reply **within one month**.
- 2. **Applying under the rules for foreigners:** you only need to have your original diploma **translated by a sworn translator** and present it to the university during the application process.

How to Choose a University

Step 1: Check the websites of the public universities (38 as of 2025).

In Sofia the most prominent state universities are:

- Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
- University of National and World Economy
- Technical University, Sofia
- University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy

Other universities in different cities of the country are:

- Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski";
- Veliko Tarnovo University "St. Sv. Cyril and Methodius"
- Thracian University, Stara Zagora
- Southwest University "Neofit Rilski"
- Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar"
- Burgas Free University

There are also specialized academies related to arts:

- National Academy of Arts, Sofia
- The National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts, "Kristyo Sarafov", Sofia

You can compare their programmes and ratings in a special platform: www.rsvu.mon.bg.

Step 2: Look up what courses these universities offer.

Step 3: Check admission requirements under the terms for Bulgarian nationals. There are programmes you can enter with your diploma grades only and a foreign language exam (English, German, French, etc.).

Application campaigns usually start in **May/June** with the submission of application forms, followed by exams and enrolment.



Tip: Seek help from NGOs in the university selection and application process. (For contacts, see Part 12: NGOs.)



5.8 Adult Education

Even if you are **over the compulsory school age (over 16)**, you can continue your education regardless of your previous educational path.

You can study through flexible forms:

- **Evening schools** (where classes are held in the evenings after the working day).
 - **The Fifth evening school "Penyo Penev"** (located near the Women's Market on St. Cyril and Methodius St.) in Sofia has a lot of experience in educating refugees, with classes from 5th to 12th grade.
- **Independently**, sitting only for examinations.

How to Enroll?

- **If you have a diploma/certificate:** translate it and apply for admission to the school of your choice (grades 1 to 6) or to the Regional Education Department (grades 7 to 12).
- **If you do not have a diploma/certificate:** you must **validate your previous knowledge** in all subjects for the grade you are applying for (take an exam). The exams are in Bulgarian. For those who are not proficient in Bulgarian, you are allowed to enroll in a specific class and validate your previous knowledge until the end of the school year. Validation takes place at a school of your choice that organises such testing.

Literacy Courses

Some schools also organise adult literacy courses, which cover school material at an accelerated pace. These courses are organised periodically and are subject to funding availability. Check with the **Regional Education Department** in your regional city (Sofia or in the case of Harmanli – Haskovo) to find out if and where these courses are held.



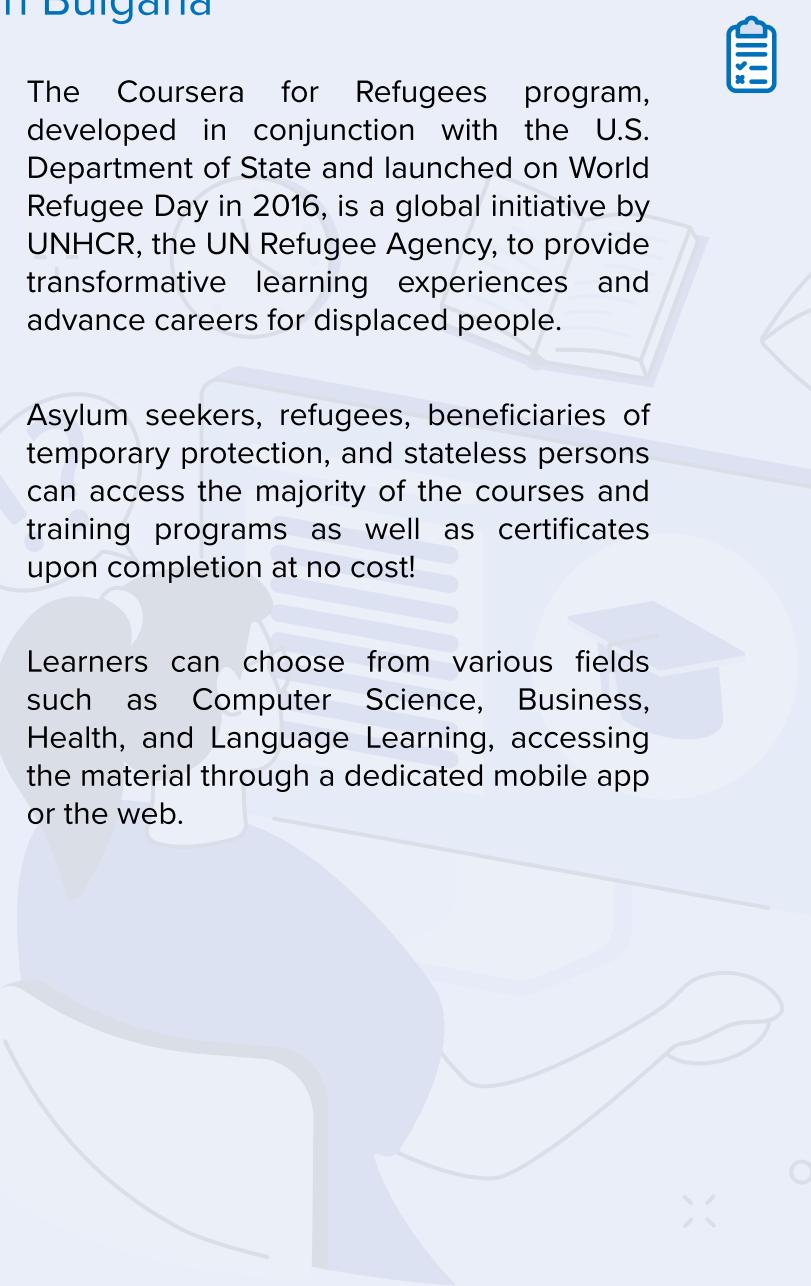
***Tip:** If you are over 16 and wish to continue your education, seek support from the NGO sector. (For contacts, see Part 12: NGOs.)*

Coursera for Refugees Programme in Bulgaria

The Coursera for Refugees program, developed in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State and launched on World Refugee Day in 2016, is a global initiative by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, to provide transformative learning experiences and advance careers for displaced people.

Asylum seekers, refugees, beneficiaries of temporary protection, and stateless persons can access the majority of the courses and training programs as well as certificates upon completion at no cost!

Learners can choose from various fields such as Computer Science, Business, Health, and Language Learning, accessing the material through a dedicated mobile app or the web.



How to Register and Enroll



Step 1: Register for the Program

- To register, scan the QR code below and complete the registration form.



Step 3: Set Up Your Account

- Once you receive the invitation email, click on the provided link. This will take you directly to the Coursera home page.
- To set up your account, click the "**SIGN UP**" button.
- You will be prompted to enter your full name, a valid email address, and a password.

Step 2: Receive Your Invitation

Within one week of registering, UNHCR will send you an individual invitation to join the program via email.

- Please do not share this invitation.
- If you do not receive the email, please check your spam or junk folder.

Step 4: Log In and Start Learning

- To get started, enter the email address and password you used during your registration.
- Then, click the blue "**LOG IN**" button.
- Once you have successfully logged in, you will be inside the Coursera for Refugee platform.
- From there, you can choose the course or courses you prefer.
- Click the "**GO TO COURSE**" button to start your learning journey

PART 6:
BULGARIAN
LANGUAGE
LEARNING

6. Bulgarian Language Learning

6.1 Training for Children

Children enrolled in Bulgarian schools have the right to **additional instruction in Bulgarian** (see Section 5: Education). Schools also organise various activities to support children. **Ask on the spot** what other options are available at your child's school.

Additional Support Centers (Sofia)

You can also contact the **Personal Development Support Centres** (often referred to as 'ЦПЛР' in Bulgarian). They organise **free extra activities** for students and may offer similar supportive activities.

There are two such centers in Sofia:

- **Sofia Centre for Arts, Culture and Education:** They have six branches. (Tel. 02 9360402).
- **National Palace of Children:** Located on 191 Alexander Stamboliyski Blvd.

NGO Educational Support

If your child is having difficulty learning the language, there are **NGOs that provide free educational support**. In Sofia, such an organization is the **Reach Out Foundation** (address: 5 Bacho Kiro St.). For their contacts and other organizations, see **Part 12: Non-governmental Organisations**.

6.2 Training for Adults

Free Courses

There is **no state institution** that currently provides free Bulgarian language courses for adults.

However:

- **Labour Office:** You can still contact the **Labour Office** at your current address to see if such an opportunity is currently available.
- **International & Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs):** There are international and non-governmental organisations that provide such support. As of 2025, these are the **International Organisation for Migration (IOM)** and the **Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC)**.
 - **Courses Available:** you can find courses for levels **A1, A2, B1, and B2**—both **face-to-face and online**.
 - **Enrolment:** to enroll, you need to go and request to be placed on the list, and you will be contacted when a suitable group starts.



IMPORTANT

The diplomas issued by the BRC upon completion of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) **B1 course are recognised** when applying for **Bulgarian citizenship**.



Tip: UNHCR Bulgaria offers free, dedicated language learning resources. These materials are specifically designed for refugees and include textbooks, audio files, and annexes with translations in languages like Arabic and Farsi, allowing you to begin learning the language immediately and at your own pace. You can access these vital resources directly on the UNHCR Bulgaria website here: <https://www.unhcr.org/bg/resources/learning-materials>. 

Paid Courses

Paid Bulgarian language courses are also organised at universities and private language schools.

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Language Teaching Department: offers Bulgarian language courses for foreigners for all levels and issues diplomas that are recognised by the official authorities when applying for Bulgarian citizenship.

- Email: office@deo.uni-sofia.bg
- Address: Sofia, 27 Kosta Lulchev St.
- Phone: +359 2 8723 481

Department of Bulgarian as a Foreign Language: also offers such training.

- Email: katedra.be.chujd@gmail.com
- Address: 15 Tsar Osvoboditel St., Rector's Office, Room 118
- Phone: +359 2 930 8573

New Bulgarian University (NBU)

NBU also offers training for levels **A1 and A2** in both individual and group forms.

- Address: Sofia, NBU, 21 Montevideo Str., Building 2, Office 108
- E-mail: uppo@nbu.bg
- Tel: +359 2 8110 110 (option 6), +359 2 8110 108



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PART 7:
RECOGNITION OF
UNIVERSITY DEGREES
AND PROFESSIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS

7. Recognition of University Degrees and Professional Qualifications

7.1 General Information on Recognition of University Diplomas

To have your university diploma officially recognised in Bulgaria, you generally need the original of the diploma itself and the academic transcript, which lists the subjects you have studied.

When is Recognition Needed?

The procedure for the official recognition of university diplomas issued abroad depends on its intended use:

Purpose	Institutions Responsible for Recognition
Continuing Higher Education	The university where you apply will itself recognise your diploma.
Starting Work	The National Centre for Information and Documentation (NACID). The address is 52 Dr. G.M. Dimitrov St. Sofia.



For most professions, having a recognised diploma is not a condition for starting work, but it could make it easier to get hired. You should check with your potential employer whether such recognition is necessary.

If you are a lawyer, architect, welder, engineer, doctor, nurse, pharmacist (and a few other rarer professions), the recognition procedure is more complicated and requires specific steps. Seek help from the non-governmental sector (For contacts see Part 12: Non-governmental organisations).

Alternative Procedure (If Original Diploma is Missing)

If you do not have the original of your diploma, you can make use of a special administrative procedure of the **National Centre for Information and Documentation (NACID)**. This procedure issues a **Recommendation for Recognition of Higher Education Obtained in Foreign Higher Education Institutions**. This recommendation cannot replace an official document, but it can be used with employers, for inclusion in vocational training, etc.

Official Recognition Procedure

Step 1: Translate Your Documents

- Translate your diploma and academic transcript into **Bulgarian**.
- This needs to be done by a **certified translator**.



***Tip:** The Bulgarian Red Cross can help you translate the document.*

Step 2: Submit Your Application

- Submit the translation along with the **original diploma and transcript to the university of your choice** or to the **National Centre for Information and Documentation (NACID)**.
- You will complete an application on the spot, as well as a declaration of personal data. (You can download these in advance from the NACID website: www.nacid.bg.)
- When submitting to NACID, you will also need your **identity card/passport**.

Step 3: Await Decision

- The legal procedure lasts **two months** from the submission of all required documents.

7.2 Validation and Recognition of Professional Qualifications



Validation of Professional Skills

Validation is a procedure that determines whether your skills in a particular occupation meet the state's educational requirements. The aim is to facilitate access to vocational training and the labour market.

- **Eligibility:** validation is possible for a range of professions included in an official list of professions adopted each year.
- **More Information:** you can find more information on the website of the **National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET)**: <https://www.navet.government.bg/eng>.
- **Where to Validate:** validation can take place in vocational schools, high schools, art schools, sports schools, vocational colleges, or vocational training centres that offer training in the relevant profession you will validate.

Tip: Seek help from the non-governmental sector to identify an institution to carry out the validation.



- **Educational Requirement:** applicants need to have at least a fourth-grade diploma or a certificate of successful completion of a literacy course. If you do not have such documents, you must first validate your level of education using the procedure described in **Part 5: Education**

Recognition of Professional Skills

Recognition of professional skills is the official acknowledgment of your right to practice a specific profession on the territory of Bulgaria.

- **Requirement:** this is **only required for regulated professions** such as lawyer, architect, welder, engineer, doctor, nurse, pharmacist (and a few other rarer professions).
- **Responsible Institution:** the **National Centre for Information and Documentation (NACID)** will inform you of the responsible institution for recognition, as this depends on the specific profession.

PART 8:

ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

8. Access to the Labour Market and Employment Opportunities

Once you are granted status (whether refugee or humanitarian), you are entitled to work under the **same conditions as Bulgarian nationals**, without the need for special permission.

- **Standard Working Hours:** 40 hours per week (8 hours, Monday to Friday), not including a lunch break.
- **Standard Annual Paid Leave:** 20 days.
- **Minimum Wage (as of 2025):** BGN 1,077 gross. If you work full-time (eight hours, five days a week), your salary cannot be lower. (You will receive BGN 835 net after all social security contributions).

8.1 Types of Employment Contracts

Contract Type	Key Features	Worker Protection & Flexibility
Employment Contract	Usually open-ended (may be fixed-term). Has fixed working hours and location.	Guarantees a set of social rights: fixed monthly salary, automatic payment of social and health insurance, paid annual leave, and unemployment benefit.
Civil Contract	Concluded for the performance of a specific task. Payment may be monthly or upon successful completion of the task. Working hours are not fixed.	Offers more limited protection (no annual leave, no health/social security contributions) but more flexibility (no fixed place or time).

8.2 Workers' Rights

- **Annual Leave (Paid Vacation):** you are entitled to paid annual leave if you have worked in Bulgaria for at least **eight months**. Other types of leave (e.g., parental, unpaid) are also available depending on your personal circumstances.
- **Contributions:** these funds are automatically deducted from your monthly salary (just over 13%) to support you in risky situations (sickness, disability, unemployment, retirement, etc.). An additional **10% is paid in tax** to the state.
- **Paid Sick Leave:** Employees with at least 6 months of work history are entitled to paid sick leave. (This requirement is waived for work-related accidents or employees under 18).
 1. **Payment:** Sick leave pays **70% of the average gross daily wage**. The first 2 days are covered by the employer, and the rest by the National Health Insurance Institute.
 2. **Procedure:** A medical certificate, signed and stamped by your personal doctor (GP) or other specialist, must be submitted to the employer upon return.

Employee Rights for Pregnant Women

- Protection: right to a safe work environment; no night shifts or work beyond legally allowed hours.
- Refusal: you may refuse tasks that could pose a risk to your health or your baby's health.

Maternity Leave

Women are entitled to **410 days of maternity leave**, starting 45 days before the due date. When the baby is 6 months old, the remaining leave can be transferred to the father.

- **Benefit (First Year):** if you have worked at least **12 months** in Bulgaria, you are entitled to monthly instalments equaling **90% of your gross salary**.
- **Benefit (Second Year):** for the second year, you are entitled to **780 BGN** per month (as per 2025).
- **Action:** follow up with your employers' accountant on the specific documents that need to be submitted during this period.

8.3 Employer Requirements

Bulgaria faces a serious shortage of workers in all sectors, and many companies are open to hiring employees from abroad.

Language

Most employers require basic knowledge of Bulgarian. Look for opportunities to enroll in at least a basic level course (for Bulgarian language courses see Section 7: Bulgarian Language).

Attitude

The main requirement from companies to their employees is punctuality, serious attitude, and motivation to develop new skills.

Qualifications

Companies demonstrate **flexibility** regarding educational degrees and certificates from your home country. Often, instead of requiring such documents, employers check your skills through practical tasks. Many employers also provide training in the first weeks after signing a contract.

8.4 Job Search

You can look for a job through different channels: Labour Bureaus, internet platforms, private recruitment agencies, and NGOs.

Labour Bureaus (Employment Agency)

The state provides support through the Labour Bureaus, which connect unemployed people with companies.

Registration: to register as unemployed, visit the relevant Labour Bureau in the municipality of your permanent or current address. Registration is **free and not compulsory**, but it is a prerequisite if you want to apply for different types of financial assistance or training opportunities provided by the Employment Agency (see Section 11: Social Assistance).

Process: the registration is done in person. The expert will prepare an individual employment plan, and you can receive job offers. You are entitled to be included in free vocational training and receive psychological support.

Schedule: you need to visit the Bureau on a schedule (indicated on your card) to confirm your unemployment status (usually once per month). If you are offered a suitable job, you must be ready to start within 14 days; otherwise, your registration is terminated (you can renew it after 6 months).



Tip: *Look for someone who speaks Bulgarian well to help you apply and discuss your background and preferences with the expert. If you have any educational or professional certificates, bring them.*



IMPORTANT

Program for Refugees

The Labour Bureaus have a special Employment and Training Programme for Refugees. Through this, the Bureau can pay part of your monthly salary for one year to a company that hires you. You may also be enrolled in a Bulgarian language course or vocational training. Don't forget to ask about it when you register!

Other Programs

The Labour Bureaus have other programs that support specific groups: young people up to 29, people with disabilities, and parents of children up to 5 years old. You may also find information about existing programmes at the website of the Employment Agency – az.government.bg.

Internet Platforms

Dedicated Platform: www.migrantlife.bg is an online platform specifically designed to support your job search. It is available in your mother tongue and enlists job opportunities.

Popular Bulgarian Sites (in Bulgarian): 

www.jobs.bg
www.karieri.bg
www.rabota.bg
www.zaplata.bg
www.jobtiger.bg
www.bg.jooble.org
www.ngobg.info

Application: you need to register, prepare your CV, choose a position, and apply (you may also need to write a cover letter).

Private Recruitment Agencies

Agency Name	Website 	Notes
Catro Bulgaria	www.catrobg.com	Experienced in working with refugees.
Manpower	www.manpower.bg	Popular, assists in finding a job for a fee.
Hermes	www.hr-hermes.com	Popular, assists in finding a job for a fee.
Adecco Bulgaria	www.adeccobulgaria.com	Popular, assists in finding a job for a fee.
Horizons	www.horizons.bg	Popular, assists in finding a job for a fee.
Synetica	www.synecticaconsult.com/bg/	Popular, assists in finding a job for a fee.



NGOs

Caritas Sofia and **Caritas Vitaniya** support refugees to access the labour market in Bulgaria and run a dedicated **Career Centre** for refugees where you can get help with:

- CV preparation and job interview tips.
- Specific job offers (the Centre maintains a network of employers experienced in hiring refugees).
- Regularly organized **job fairs**.
- Support for enrolling in vocational training, opening bank accounts, and starting your own business.

As of September 2025, such career centers are available in Sofia, Plovdiv, Burgas.

Location	Sofia	Plovdiv	Burgas
Address	227 Slivnitsa Blvd, Sofia	3 Stefan Verkovich Stre, fl.3, office 6	2 Ivan Vazov Blvd, Burgas
Telephone number	00359 886 317 176	00359 888 819 230	00359 882 594 041
Email	career.center@caritas-sofia.org	plovdiv.caritas@gmail.com	migration.burgas@caritas-sofia.org



UNHCR's funded partner Caritas regularly organizes job fairs, where opportunities & companies are presented. ©UNHCR/Silvia Desheva

You can get similar support in "**Compass**" **community centers** or at other NGOs. You may check for current support availability from the International Organization for Migration (**IOM**) (For all contacts, see section 12: NGOs).

8.5 Conclusion of an Employment contract

You need the following documents to conclude an employment contract:

- ID
- Educational diplomas and professional training certificates, if available
- A medical examination document from your personal doctor (GP) proving that your health allows you to take up the position (if requested)
- Criminal record, if requested (for the procedure for obtaining this, see Section 2: Registration with the municipality and personal documents, see Section 5)

The employer is obligated to inform the National Revenue Agency that you are employed within three days of signing the contract. **It is important that you get a signed copy of the contract.**

- **Future Feature (June 1, 2026):** every employee will be able to check their single electronic employment record on the National Revenue Agency website, where information on all their employment records and contracts will be available.

8.6 Opening a Bank Account

Most employers choose to pay monthly salaries via bank transfers. Once you have your personal documents, you are entitled to open a bank account. In practice, however, banks often refuse this service to refugees.



Tip: When you go to the bank, specifically request a **“Payment Account with Basic Features”** to be opened. The bank is required to respond to you in writing within 10 business days. You can appeal the decision with the help of an attorney in case of refusal. (For contacts of organizations that provide free legal assistance, see Part 12: Non-governmental organisations).

Bring your **employment contract and rental agreement** to the bank if you have them as these may increase the chance of success.

8.7 Unemployment Benefit

You can get unemployment benefit if you have accumulated work experience (had an employment contract) **of 12 months in the last 18 months**. The amount and duration depend on your previous salary and employment duration. By 2025, the minimum benefit is **18 BGN a day**, and the minimum duration is four months.

How to File for Compensation:

1. You must **register as unemployed** with the Labour Bureau (see Section 4).
2. Apply to the relevant territorial branch of the **National Social Insurance Institute** in your town. (For Sofia, the address is 62-64 Aleksandar Stamboliyski Blvd.)

During the period you receive unemployment benefits, the state will pay your health insurance, and your employment experience will continue to accumulate (which is important when you retire).

8.8 Pension

There are two types of pensions in Bulgaria:

Retirement Pension: received after a certain age and a minimum of **15 years of work** in Bulgaria.

Social Pension: you are entitled to a social pension if you are **over 70** and your family income is less than **BGN 764/390.63 Euro** per person (as of 2024). The amount of the social pension in 2025 is **BGN 333.41/170.51 Euro**.

How to get a Social Pension:

1. Apply at the territorial office of the **National Social Insurance Institute** in your city. (For Sofia, the address is 62-64 Aleksandar Stamboliyski Blvd.)
2. You will receive a reply **within 4 months** after submitting your application.

You can receive your pension by bank transfer or at a post office of your choice.

PENSION

PART 9:
SOCIAL
ASSISTANCE

9. Social Assistance

Once you are granted **refugee or humanitarian status**, you have the **same rights to social assistance and social services as Bulgarian nationals**. Assistance is provided through the territorial Social Assistance Directorates in all 28 regions of the country. There are several types of benefits: social assistance for people in difficulty, family allowances for children, and disability allowances.

9.1 Social Assistance for People in Financial Hardship

One-off Allowances (Given Once a Year)

For Identity Card: Covers the cost of issuing your identity card (does not cover a travel document). The 2025 amount is: varies (covers cost)

For Incident Needs: One-off help for unforeseen expenses due to an accident or other event. The 2025 amount is: Max. 1,914 BGN (€978.61)

Monthly Allowances

These benefits are paid each month to people in financial hardship.

- Amount:** determined by individual circumstances (income, household size, housing, health, age, savings, etc.).
- Maximum** (as of 2025): **315.81 BGN** (€161.47).

 To claim these benefits, you must have been registered as unemployed with the Labour Bureau for at **least three months**. This time limit **does not apply if you register with the Labour Bureaus within three months of receiving your refugee or humanitarian status**, so it is vital to register quickly.

Exemptions from the three-month rule include parents caring for children under three, disabled people, students, and pregnant women.

 To receive the full amount of these monthly benefits, your child must be enrolled in pre-school or school education in Bulgaria.

Targeted Heating Assistance

- Granted over **five months** during the winter season.
- Monthly Rate, as of 2025: **121.34 BGN (€62.04)**
- Applications are accepted between **1 July and 31 October**.

How to Apply for Social Assistance

Step	Action	IMPORTANT
Step 1: Application	Go to the Social Assistance Directorate in your municipality. Fill in the application form and enclose documents proving your income and a copy of your ID.	Other documents may be required.
Step 2: Social Enquiry	A social worker will visit your home within 20 days to check living conditions and clarify information.	The social worker will visit your officially registered current address . If you are not there, your application will be refused. Social interviews are in Bulgarian; find a translator if necessary.
Step 3: Decision	You will be informed of the decision on your application within 41 days of submission.	Appeal: If refused, you can appeal. Seek legal assistance immediately from the NGO sector (see Section 12: NGOs contacts).

9.2 Family Benefits for Children

One-off Allowances (Given Once)

Situation	Income Requirement	2025 Amount	Additional Requirements
During Pregnancy	Family income in the last year must be below 860 BGN (in 2025).	225 BGN.	None.
At Birth/Adoption	No income requirement; all are eligible.	1st child: 375 BGN ; 2nd: 900 BGN ; 3rd: 450 BGN ; 4th+: 300 BGN	None.
Enrolling in Grade	No income requirement. For children enrolling in 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, or 8th grade.	300 BGN (Paid in two installments: beginning of 1st and 2nd term).	Child must be enrolled in the Bulgarian education system.

IMPORTANT

The grant for enrolling in a grade will be refunded to the state if the child has more than five unexcused absences from school in one month.

Monthly Allowances (Child Benefits)

- Raising a Child** (up to 18/20 if studying): Family income in the last year must be **below 760 BGN** (in 2025). Amount as of 2025: 1 child: **50 BGN**; 2 children: **110 BGN**; 3 children: **165 BGN**; 4 children: **175 BGN (+20 BGN for each additional child)**.
- Child up to 1 Year:** Family income in the last year must be **below 760 BGN** (in 2025). Amount as of 2025: **200 BGN**.

How to Apply for Child Benefits



Step 1: Application

Go to the **Social Assistance Directorate** in your municipality. Fill in the form and attach **income documents** (if required) and a copy of your ID.

To avoid refusal, you can also submit your application by **post** or through the **online platform egov.bg**. (This requires a **PIN** from **NRA/NSII** or a qualified electronic signature.)



Step 2: Decision

You will receive a response **within 14 days** (may be extended for checks/documents).

Appeal: If refused, seek legal advice immediately (see Section 12) as refusals are often ruled unlawful by courts. Appeals must be lodged **within 14 days** of receiving the decision.

9.3 Disability Benefits

People with refugee/humanitarian status have the right to health, social, and financial support if their disability is **established under Bulgarian law** by Bulgarian authorities.

Procedure for Establishing Disability (TEMC)

Step	Action	IMPORTANT
Step 1: Preparation	<p>Your General Practitioner (GP) prepares your documents for the Territorial Expert Medical Commission (TEMC) - the body responsible for establishing disability in Bulgaria.</p> <p>If you do not have a personal doctor, this can be done by another doctor who treats you. (For the procedure for choosing a personal doctor, see Section 10: Health.)</p>	<p>The doctor will determine what test results, medical examinations and procedures should be included in the documentation. He or she can refer you for further examinations and tests before you go to the TEMC.</p> <p>You must pay for all required tests yourself.</p> <p>All medical records must be taken within the last year prior to the TEMC appointment.</p> <p>Health insurance is NOT required for TEMC.</p>
Step 2: Submission	<p>Submit documents to the Regional Medical Expertise Registry at your permanent or current address (Sofia address: 2 Dimitar Grekov Str.).</p>	<p>You must be registered for at least three months at the address where you file. For a child under 16, a substitute birth certificate can be issued by the State Agency for Refugees (see Section 2).</p>
Step 3: Assessment	<p>The TEMC will decide within three months. Assessment is usually based on documents only; a clinical exam is rare.</p>	<p>TEMC Decision Term: The decision is typically for one to three years, though some diseases qualify for a lifelong term. Your GP will let you know at the start of the procedure.</p>

When submitting the documents you will need to prepare:

- Application form (to be filled in on the spot);
- The referral from your GP;
- Any medical records you have prepared with your doctor;
- Birth certificate if you want to establish a disability of a child under 16 (if you do not have a birth certificate, the State Agency for Refugees will issue a substitute document. See *Section 2: Registration with the municipality and personal documents*).

You can also submit documents by post or online if you have a qualified electronic signature.

The decision of the TEMC will contain:

- Degree of disability in percentage;
- Need for help from others;
- Period of disability certification and date on which the disability certification expires and other information.



Benefits Available After TEMC Certification

Once you receive the official TEMC document, you can apply for the following benefits at the Social Assistance Directorate in your current municipality:

Monthly Financial Support (Adults 18+)

Disability Degree (TEMC)	2025 Monthly Amount
50% to 70.99%	44.66 BGN
71% to 90%	95.70 BGN
Over 90%	159.50 BGN
Over 90% + need for assistance	191.40 BGN

Monthly Financial Support (Children under 18/20 if studying)

Disability Degree (TEMC)	2025 Monthly Amount
50% to 70%	450 BGN
70% to 90%	570 BGN
90% and above	1.180 BGN



Targeted Benefits

You can get financial help for things like **buying a personal car, adapting your home, rehabilitation, or municipal housing rent**. Inquire about specific requirements at the Social Assistance Directorates.



Personal Assistant

If the TEMC decision states a need for assistance (or for any child with a disability), you can receive a "**personal assistant**."

- **Hours:** range from **15 to 168 per month**, determined by an individual assessment from social workers at the Social Assistant Directorate.
- **Application:** once referred, apply at the municipality where you live.
- **Choice:** you choose your assistant (relative, acquaintance you trust, etc.). The chosen person enters into an employment contract with the municipality.
- **2025 Salary:** a full-time assistant receives a salary of **1,526 BGN**.



Disability Pensions

If your disability rate is 50% or more, you can also receive a disability pension, provided you meet certain work experience requirements:

Age Group and Required Work Experience in Bulgaria

- **30 or over:** 5 years
- **25 to 30:** 3 years
- **20 to 25:** 1 year
- **Under 20 or blind by birth:** No work experience requirement



If you **do not** have the required work experience, you can still receive a **social disability pension**, but only if your TEMC-determined disability percentage is **71% or more**.

- **Application:** submit an application and a copy of the TEMC decision to the **National Social Insurance Institute (NSII)** office in your regional town. You need a copy of the TEMC decision.

9.4 Social Pension for People Over 70

You are entitled to a social pension regardless of your work experience in Bulgaria if you meet the following conditions:

- **Age:** 70 or over.
- **Income:** income per family member is **below 764 BGN** (for 2025).
- **Other Pensions:** you do not receive another pension.

Monthly Amount: 333.41 BGN (in 2025)

Application: submit an application to the **National Social Insurance Institute (NSII)** office in your regional city (Sofia address: 62-64 Aleksandar Stamboliyski Blvd.).

- **Decision:** you will receive a decision within **4 months**.
- **Appeal:** in case of refusal, you can appeal to the Director of the NSII office where you submitted your documents. **Seek legal assistance from legal aid from NGOs.**
- **Payment:** Pension can be received in a **bank account**, at a **post office**, or at **your personal address**

PART 10: **HEALTH**

10.1 Health Insurance Requirements and Coverage

In Bulgaria, the healthcare system is primarily based on **mandatory monthly health insurance** contributions. In return, you receive subsidized medical and dental care, laboratory tests, and medicines.

Asylum Seeker: Fully covered by the state.

After Gaining Status: You must begin paying contributions personally (unless you fall under a state-covered category). If you do not pay, you retain the right to care but at significantly higher prices.

Transfer of Health Insurance to Your New ID (Crucial First Step)

Once you receive your international protection status, your first task is to transfer the health insurance contributions already paid by the state during your asylum procedure to your new identification number.

Action	Responsibility
1. Bring a copy of your new identity document (for a refugee or foreigner with humanitarian status) to the asylum centre where your procedure took place	You
2. The State Agency for Refugees will issue a document confirming that your health insurance was paid during your asylum procedure. They will then send this document to the National Revenue Agency (NRA) office corresponding to your permanent address	State Agency for Refugees (SAR)
3. The NRA will link the paid health insurance to your new Unified Civil Number (UCN) , which you received when registering with your municipality.	NRA



IMPORTANT

You must transfer your insurance as soon as possible after receiving your personal documents. Failure to do so risks rendering you liable for the contributions already paid by the state if you require medical care.

Paying Health Insurance Contributions

The amount and method of payment depend on your employment status and age.

Employment Status	Contribution Details	Monthly Amount (as of 2025)	Payment Deadline
Employed	8% of your salary. The employer pays 60%, and the remaining 40% is automatically deducted from your salary.	Varies by salary	Automatically deducted
Unemployed (Self-Pay)	You must pay your contributions personally after filling out and submitting a specific declaration to the regional NRA office.	42.32 BGN	By the 25 th of the following month

Categories Covered by the State



The state covers the health insurance for the following groups:

- Children up to age 18 (or until they complete education or turn 22, if still in school).
- Full-time university students until age 26.
- Unemployed individuals registered as jobseekers with the Labour Bureau.
- Individuals receiving monthly social assistance or placed in social services.
- Spouses/parents/grandparents of a person with a disability of more than 50% who requires assistance.
- Pensioners receiving a pension in Bulgaria



Loss of Rights: If you fail to pay your monthly health insurance contributions for **more than three months within three years**, you lose the right to receive subsidized medical care. Your rights are restored only after all missing contributions are paid. You must not have any outstanding liabilities older than five years.

Restoring Health Insurance Rights

1. File **Form Seven** with the National Revenue Agency (NRA) office at your permanent or current address.
2. Pay the total outstanding amount. This can be done by **bank transfer** to an NRA account (they will provide the number) or directly at an **NRA office**.



10.2 Accessing Medical Services

General Practitioner (GP)

Your **General Practitioner (GP)**, or personal doctor, is your primary medical contact for overall health monitoring. If you pay your health insurance regularly, you will be able to choose one for you and all your family members. The GP is the first professional you go to if you need medical help (unless the situation is an emergency and requires calling an ambulance)

How to Register with a GP:

You may choose to stay with the doctor assigned by the SAR during your asylum procedure or choose a new one.

- **When to Change:** you can register with a new GP for the first time or change at any time of the year if you have recently changed your permanent and current address (which applies after gaining status). Otherwise, changes are only permitted in **June and December**.

- **Procedure:**

1. **Choose a GP:** it is advised to choose a doctor close to your home. (Parents/guardians choose for children under 18). If you cannot find a doctor, the **Regional Health Insurance Fund (RHIF)** in the city where you reside is obliged to help you. In Sofia it is located at 10 Enos Str., entrance B (there are also territorial divisions by neighborhood).

2. **Apply:** visit the chosen doctor's office or the RHIF office to fill out an application form.

3. **Receive Documents:** when you register, you should be issued a **Health Insurance Booklet**, which certifies your registration with a GP and dentist.

GP Service	Details
Consultation Fee (2025)	2.90 BGN per visit. Pensioners pay a reduced fee of 1 BGN
When Visits are FREE	For children, pregnant women, mothers in the first 45 days after childbirth, people receiving social or unemployment benefits, and people with malignant diseases
Key Functionalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treats minor conditions such as colds and flu • Prescribes medication • Carries out mandatory vaccinations (documents for completion required for school/kindergarten enrollment) • Provides necessary health documentation (sick leave note, health insurance book, documents for kindergarten and school enrollment, fit for work certificate, digital profile of each patient with a history of illnesses) • Supports chronically ill patients (prescription booklets for discounted medicine) • Prepares the paperwork and refers people with disabilities to the commission which certifies disability, the TEMC committee.
Referrals	<p>The GP issues a referral document for free examinations or consultation with a specialist doctor (for example, gynecologist, surgeon, orthopedic surgeon, etc.). Going to a specialist without a GP referral requires paying the full, unsubsidized fee.</p> <p>A medical referral issued by your GP for consultation or joint treatment can be used for up to 30 calendar days from the date of its issuance.</p>

Treatment in Hospital

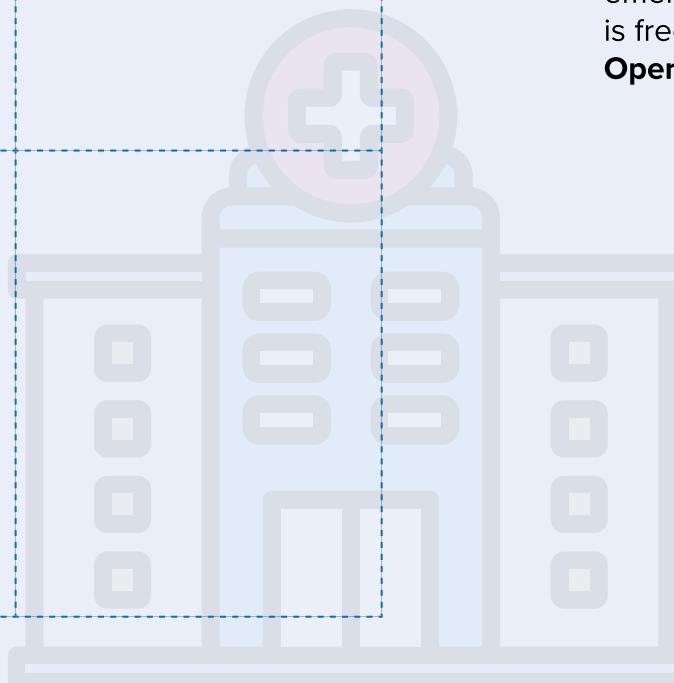
Condition	Fee/Cost	Note
Insured Patient	5.80 BGN per day for a hospital stay (as of 2025).	You may pay extra for optional services (better room, specific doctor, additional medication).
Uninsured & Pregnant	Entitled to a range of free tests and medical services related to childbirth.	
Uninsured & Indigent	If you have no income or personal assets, the Social Assistance Directorate can cover your hospital treatment costs. The hospital director must submit an application to the Directorate, which will conduct a social enquiry within seven days to approve the payment	



Emergency Assistance

You have the right to **free emergency medical care** in all life-threatening situations, **regardless of your health insurance status**.

Emergency Number: dial **112** for health emergencies, traffic accidents, or fires. The call is free and the number is uniform across Europe. **Operators speak Bulgarian and English.**



10.3 Medicines

- Medicines are sold in pharmacies and licensed drugstores.
- Most medicines (e.g., antibiotics) require a prescription from a doctor. Milder medicines (e.g., Paracetamol, Nurofen, Aspirin, Analgin) can be obtained without a prescription.

In general, patients pay for medicines. Chronically ill patients receive a **Prescription Booklet** from their GP, which allows them to get needed medicines from pharmacies free of charge or with a significant discount.

10.4 Dental Services

- Health-insured persons may choose a dentist of their choice who works with the National Health Insurance Fund.
- You are entitled to a **limited number of free procedures each year**, typically a comprehensive examination and three dental interventions (including treatment for tooth decay and tooth extraction).
- All other services are paid for by the patient.
- The patient pays an identical fee for each dental visit as for a GP visit (**2.90 BGN** by 2025).

10.5 Making an Appointment with a Specialist

Once you have a referral from your GP:

- Select a Facility:** choose any specialist or medical facility that works with the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) and confirms they accept GP referrals.
- Book the Appointment:** contact the clinic or hospital directly (by phone, online, or in person) to schedule your visit.
- Online Option:** you can also use the website www.superdoc.bg  to book an appointment (either with a free referral or a paid consultation).
 - Search by specialty, city, or doctor's name.
 - Select the reason for your visit (e.g. first-time, follow-up).
 - Choose a date and time.
 - Select the payment method (free with GP referral, paid, or private insurance).
 - Log in or register to confirm the booking.
 - Always bring all your documents and previous test results to the examination.**
- If you see a specialist after a referral from your GP, you also pay a **fee of 2.90 BGN**.

PART 11:

BULGARIAN CITIZENSHIP

Bulgarian Citizenship

This section outlines the requirements and procedures for applying for Bulgarian citizenship after being granted international protection status

11.1 Eligibility

Status	Eligibility Requirement
Refugee Status	Right to apply three (3) years after receiving the status.
Humanitarian Status	Right to apply five (5) years after receiving the status.

11.2 Required Documents

The following original documents must be prepared for the application. All documents must be in Bulgarian. If a document was issued by a foreign country, it must be translated and legalized.

Application Form

Can be downloaded from the internet or filled in on the spot (must be in Bulgarian).

Birth Certificate or Proof of Identity

If a birth certificate is unavailable, use your current ID card (Refugee/Humanitarian Status ID).

Criminal Record

Refer to the previous section "Registration with the municipality and personal documents" for details on how to obtain this.)

Document from the Prosecutor's Office

Certifies that no criminal proceedings have been initiated against you for an intentional offense of a general nature. **Obtained from the District Prosecutor's Office** and takes **4 working days**.

Proof of Financial Self-Support

If employed: a certificate from your employer confirming your employment contract, position, and salary, with a reference period going back at least six months.

If not working: a certificate from the **National Revenue Agency (NRA)** declaring your income for the previous year.

Proof of Bulgarian Language Proficiency

Option A (Certificate): A certificate of completed Bulgarian language course (UNHCR-funded, conducted by the Bulgarian Red Cross) at level B1. The diploma issued by BRC must be taken to the **Centre for Assessment in School and Pre-school Education** (125 Tsarigradsko Shose Blvd., Sofia, Bldg. 5, Fl. 2) or sent by post if you live outside Sofia.

Option B (Exam): If you have not completed a BRC course, you must take a Bulgarian language exam organized by the same Centre. The exam is a 20-question test lasting 1 hour. You must submit an application to take the exam, which is organized monthly according to a pre-announced schedule. If you fail, you can take it again after three months.

Option C (Diploma): A notarized copy of a diploma for education completed in Bulgaria (primary, secondary, or higher)

Medical Document

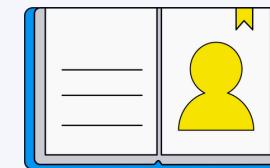
Issued by a medical advisory committee at your local medical institution, certifying:

- 1) you do not suffer from acute, contagious, or infectious diseases; AND
- 2) you do not suffer from mental illness.

Declaration Form

Can be downloaded from the internet or filled in on the spot.

Autobiography



Current Passport Size Photo

1 photo



Photocopy of Identity Card

Photocopy of your Refugee Card or Humanitarian Status Card.

Receipt for State Fee Payment

The fee is **1000 BGN**. Pay to the account of the Ministry of Justice: **BNB - Central Bank, IBAN - BG09 BNBG 9661 3000 1737 01, BIC: BNBG BGSD.**

11.3 Application Procedure

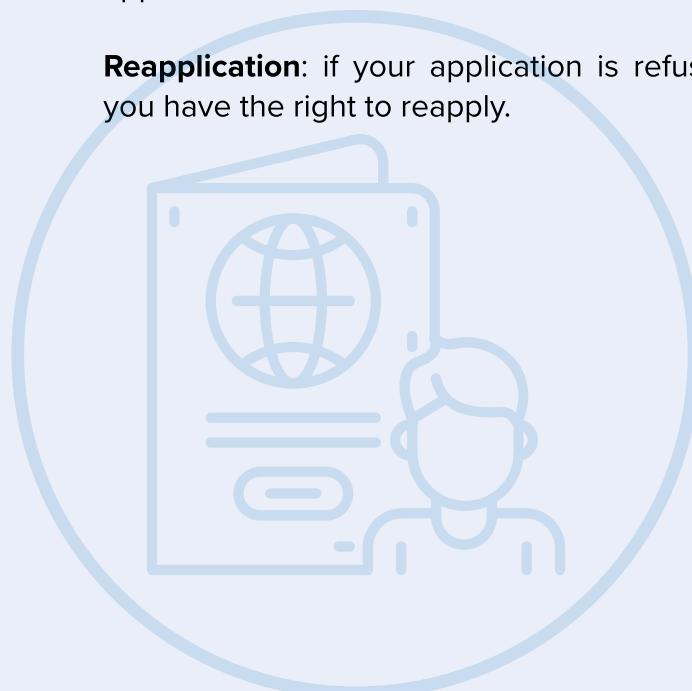
IMPORTANT

When applying for citizenship, you must not have any financial obligations to the state. This means you must have paid all outstanding health insurance contributions, taxes, and fines.

IMPORTANT

The **lack of any required document** may be grounds for the refusal of your citizenship application.

Reapplication: if your application is refused, you have the right to reapply.



Step	Action and Timeline
1	<p>Submission: submit your application and all required documents in person to the Ministry of Justice in Sofia, at 5 Aksakov Str.</p> <p>No appointment is necessary.</p>
2	<p>Interview: an interview will be scheduled and conducted by an official from the Ministry of Justice.</p>
3	<p>Recommendation: within 12 months, the Ministry of Justice must make a recommendation to the President: either to issue a decree granting you Bulgarian citizenship or to reject your application.</p>
4	<p>Presidential Decree: the President issues a decree granting you citizenship. There is no time limit within which this must happen.</p>

PART 12:

KEY SERVICES AND ORGANISATIONS: CONTACTS AND ADDRESSES

Information, advocacy for access to rights and referral to services

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Address. 77 Tsar Asen Str., Sofia
Tel: +359 2 939 47 74
Website: <http://www.iom.bg>
Facebook: www.facebook.com/IOMBulgaria
Email: iomsofia@iom.int

Information and Service Bureau for Third-Country Nationals

Address. 111 Hristo Botev Str., Sofia
Phone: + 359 879 651 046; +359 88 2 66 00 56
Opening hours: Monday – Friday, 10:00 – 17:30

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Address. 87 Knyaz Aleksandar Dondukov, Sofia
Phone: +359 2 96 96 208
Website: bulgaria@unicef.org

IOM's Migrant Resource Centres

Burgas

Address: 43 Stefan Stambolov Blvd, Office 3,
Burgas, 8001
Phone: +359 886 177 295

Varna

Address: Targovska street, pavilion 118, g.k.
Chaika,
Varna, 9010
Phone: +359 886 177 329

For more information and contacts:

<https://bulgaria.iom.int/contact-us> 

UNHCR Inquiry, Feedback and Complaint Form

If you want to ask questions, raise concern, provide feedback and suggestions, scan the QR Code below:



You can also write to us at: bulsoprt@unhcr.org.

For any complaint related to misconduct committed by UNHCR personnel, partners, and other parties with whom UNHCR has a contractual link, reach out to the Inspector General's Office (IGO) by confidential email: inspector@unhcr.org. Misconduct includes, but is not limited to, sexual misconduct, harassment, discrimination, abuse of authority and retaliation, unlawful acts, and fraud and corruption. Misconduct may also include assisting in, or contributing to, the commission of misconduct.

If you are thinking of reporting misconduct formally but are not quite sure, you can talk to us in confidence at bulsosea@unhcr.org.

For information about rights, obligations, and services available to refugees and asylum-seekers in Bulgaria, visit: <https://help.unhcr.org/bulgaria>.

To learn more about UNHCR Bulgaria, visit: <https://www.unhcr.org/bg/>.

Compass Protection and Inclusion Centres

These are centres where you can get individual social support, legal assistance, help with access to education and employment, and when available, Bulgarian language courses. Staff members of the *Bulgarian Red Cross*, *Caritas*, the *Foundation for Access to Rights (FAR)* and other NGOs work in these centres.

Plovdiv

Address. 47 Princess Maria Louisa Blvd
Phone: (+359) 882 977 523 (mobile, Viber, Telegram)
Opening hours: Monday - Friday, 09:00 - 17:00, Saturday, 10:00 -16:00

Varna

Address. 4A Luyben Karavelov Str.
Phone: (+359) 884 553 494
(<https://t.me/communitycentrevarna>)
Opening hours: Monday – Friday, 09:00 -12:00, 13:00-16:00

Dobrich

Address. 9A26, z.k Balik
Phone: (+359) 886 447 306 (mobile, Viber, Telegram)
Opening hours: Monday – Friday, 09:00 - 17:00

Harmanli

Address: 5 Baucher Str.
Phone: (+359) 887 290 487
Opening hours: Monday-Friday, 8:30-16:30

Legal Assistance

Bulgarian Helsinki Committee

Tel: (+359-2) 981 3318, +(359-2) 980 2049
Email: refunit@bghelsinki.org

Foundation for Access to Rights (FAR)

You can make an appointment for a consultation at the following numbers:

For Sofia: +359 882873238, or +359 884334283 (they have Viber and WhatsApp);
For Plovdiv: + 359, or +359 8799317294, or + 359 883550151 896961160, or +359 8799317294, or + 359 883550151
For Burgas: +359 886 554 777
For Varna: +359 876 699 260
For Dobrich: +359 884455869, +359 884451929
For Blagoevgrad: +359 87 6683589

Legal Aid Centre "Voice in Bulgaria"

Address. 5B Triaditsa Str., Floor 2, Office 226., Sofia
Tel: +359 887470742
Email: voiceinbulgaria@gmail.com
Consultations take place every Tuesday, you need to book an appointment by calling the number above.

Humanitarian assistance, accompaniment and translation

Council of Refugee Women in Bulgaria

Address. 37 Iskar Str., Sofia
For Arabic:
+359 876 114 161, +359 879 509 544, +359 879 605 265
+359 879 605 214
For Persian language:
+359 876 989 805
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/CRWBG>
Email: office@crw-bg.org

Bulgarian Red Cross (Headquarters)

Address. 76 James Bowsher Str., Sofia
Tel: +359 2 81 64 709

Mission Wings Foundation

Address. 205 Hristo Botev Str., Stara Zagora

Educational Support

Reachout Foundation

Address. 5 Bacho Kiro Str., Sofia
Request to join classes by phone:
+359888770297 or
by email: info@reachout.bg or
kristina@reachout.bg

Aid for employment and entrepreneurship
(in all Compass Centres)

Caritas Sofia - Career Centre

Address: 227 Slivnitsa Blvd.
(and in all Compass Centres)

Useful resources on the internet

WWW.REFUGEELIGHT.BG

Information in your language about all areas of life in Bulgaria. Online consultation with a lawyer.

WWW.REFUGEE.BG

Information in your language about all areas of life in Bulgaria

WWW.HELP.UNHCR.ORG/BULGARIA

Information in Bulgarian and English on procedures and existing support.

WWW.ASYLUM.BG

Information in your language about the procedures related to your refugee claim.

Key institutions

State Agency for Refugees (SAR) 
Address: 114B Maria Luiza Blvd, Sofia
Phone: 02/421 52 05 ; 02/421 52 06
Email: sar@saref.government.bg

Migration Directorate of the Ministry of Interior 
Address: 48 Maria Luisa Blvd., Sofia
Phone: 02 982 4808
Email: migration@mvr.bg

Link to websites:

Sofia Municipality 

Plovdiv Municipality 

Varna Municipality 

Burgas Municipality 

Harmanli Municipality 

Employment Agency 

Ministry of Education and Science 

Ministry of Health 

Ministry of Interior 

National Agency for Vocational Education and Training 

National Centre for Information and Documentation (NACID) 

National Revenue Agency (NRA) 

National Social Insurance Institute (NSII) 

Prosecutor's Office 

Regional Health Insurance Fund (RHIF) 

Social Assistance Directorate 

Territorial Expert Medical Commission (TEMC) 

INTEGRATION HANDBOOK

A Starter Pack : Information for Newly Recognised
Refugees and Persons with Humanitarian Status



Bulgaria

© 2025 United Nations
High Commissioner for Refugees

UNHCR Representation in Bulgaria
bulso@unhcr.org
Pozitano Square 2
1000 Sofia
www.unhcr.org/bg

Follow us on social media!

