Information provision - Bulgaria

Overview

Content updated and validated on: 10/06/2026

Relevant EU legislation

Bulgaria is bound by EU legislation and has transposed relevant provisions through the Law on Asylum and Refugees | ЗАКОН ЗА УБЕЖИЩЕТО И БЕЖАНЦИТЕ (1 December 2002).

National legislation

1 December 2022: Law on Asylum and Refugees | ЗАКОН ЗА УБЕЖИЩЕТО И БЕЖАНЦИТЕ

Competent authority and other stakeholders

Reception	Competent authority
Reception	State Agency for Refugees, Civil society organisations
Registration of application	Border police, State Agency for Refugees, Civil society organisations
Lodging of application	State Agency for Refugees
Dublin procedure	State Agency for Refugees
Assessment of application	State Agency for Refugees
Communication of first instance decision	State Agency for Refugees
Content of protection	State Agency for Refugees, Civil society organisations
Appeal procedure	Administrative courts

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Reception	Competent authority
Communication of second instance decision	Administrative courts
Resettlement	State Agency for Refugees, UNHCR

Provision of information in the asylum procedure

Access to procedure

At the border or in transit zones, information on the right to make an application is provided by border police in writing in the form of a leaflet which is available in several languages (such as Arabic, Farsi, Dari, Urdu, Pashto, Kurdish, English and French). Information is also provided by UNHCR or civil society organisations on information boards. To a certain extent, foreigners can access advice and counselling at the border or in transit zones provided by civil society organisations, for example the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee. When there are signs that a foreigner who is at a border checkpoint, including transit zone, or detained in a place of detention or in a special home for temporary accommodation of foreigners of Migration Directorate with the Ministry of Interior wishes to apply for international protection, the officials of the relevant authority are obliged to provide the foreigner with information on this possibility. For this purpose, interpretation is provided to facilitate access to the procedure as provided under Article 58(6) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees.

If in detention, information is provided to foreigners in the form of brochures and boards (in English, French, Arabic, Pashtun and Farsi), and include information on the rights and obligations, organisations that provide social and legal assistance and procedures that will follow.

The Operational Plan 2023-2026 agreed by the EUAA and Bulgaria provides that the latter receives support in registration workflows, procedures and tools, including information provision in the context of registration.

An applicant is informed in writing in a language understood by them about the procedure, next steps, rights and obligations, and consequences of non-compliance with their obligations or for a refusal to cooperate with competent authorities. The applicant also receives information about organisations which

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provide legal assistance. This information may also be provided orally as stipulated under Article 58(8) of Law on Asylum and Refugees.

The Internal rules for conducting the procedure for granting international protection provide under Article 16 the obligation, immediately before registration, to provide the foreigner with a copy of the instructions on their rights and obligations as applicants for international protection in the Bulgaria in a language he/she understands (according to a model). In cases in which the applicant is illiterate or blind, the registration officer must read the instructions to him with the help of an interpreter. Subsequently, the foreigner, the registrar and the translator must sign and write the name and surname of the copy in Bulgarian. This document must be kept in the personal case of the applicant. If the third country-national is a minor, a social worker or a social expert must also be present at the registration.

Links to information provided in the national context:

- **Authority/agency:** State Agency for Refugees
  Title: Information on: Dublin, stages of the asylum procedure – rights and obligations, types of protection and general information for beneficiaries of international protection
  Type: website
  Hyperlink: Информация за лица търсещи и получили закрила | Information for persons seeking and beneficiaries of protection
- **Authority/Agency**: UNHCR
  Title: Platform in several languages with information for asylum seekers
  Type: website
  Hyperlink: https://asylum.bg/
- **Authority/Agency**: Foundation for Access to Rights
  Title: Free Information Database
  Type: website
  Hyperlink: https://refugeelight.bg/
- **Authority/Agency**: Voice in Bulgaria – Center for Legal Aid
  Title: Information about rights
  Type: website
  Hyperlink: https://centerforlegalaid.com/our-services/

Dublin procedure

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The Dublin Unit of the State Agency for Refugees is responsible for providing information on the Dublin procedure. Information is provided before and during the Dublin interview. Article 67a (4) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees provides that the applicant shall be informed of the initiated proceedings under the Dublin III Regulation and the consequences of it.

The information is provided both orally and in writing, and covers information related to the Dublin procedure, as well as general information about the asylum procedure and the applicant's rights and obligations. The applicant must sign a declaration that he/she was provided with information on his/her rights as an asylum seeker. The applicant is also provided with the common information leaflet in their language, and they must also sign a copy of the leaflet which is kept in their file.

First instance determination

Information provision (before the personal interview)

According to Article 58 (8) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees the applicant must be informed in writing, in a language that s/he understands, and no later than 15 days from the submission of the application, of the procedure which it will be followed, of his rights and obligations, of the consequences for not-complying with his obligations or for the refusal to cooperate with the State Agency for Refugees officials, as well as for the consequences of the tacit or explicit withdrawal of his application. The applicant is also informed about the organisations providing legal and social assistance to foreigners. Where circumstances so require, this information may be provided orally.

The Internal rules for conducting the procedure for granting international protection provide under Article 16 the obligation, immediately before registration, for the foreigner to be provided with a copy of the instructions on his/her rights and obligations as an applicant for protection in the Bulgaria in a language he/she understands (according to a model). In cases where the applicant is illiterate or blind, the registrar must read the instructions to him with the help of an interpreter. Subsequently, the foreigner, the registrar and the translator must sign and write the name and surname of the copy in Bulgarian. This document must be kept in the personal case of the foreigner. If the foreigner is a minor, a social worker or a social expert must also be present at the registration.

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The applicant shall be duly informed that the data gathered during the registration and the interviews is confidential and will be used only for the purpose of the procedure. Article 63 b of the Law on Asylum and Refugees specifically provides that the interview must be conducted by guaranteeing confidentiality.

Notification of the decision:

According to Article 76 of the Law on Refugees and Asylum, the decision shall be presented personally to the third country national or to his legal representative or lawyer within 14 days from its issuance. If the decision is not communicated personally, the announcement shall be done by return mail and in case of failure to appear within 7 days from the receipt of the notification by return mail, the decision shall be considered presented. The content of the decision, including the rights and obligations, shall be presented to the applicant in a language he understands. The presentation of the decision shall be certified by the signature of the person and of the translator/interpreter and of the SAR official. In case of refusal to sign, it shall be certified by the signature of two witnesses. If the notification is being returned for impossibility of delivery, the decision shall be considered presented. The applicant has the right to study his/her file after the decision is considered as served.

Articles 107 -115 of Internal rules for conducting the procedure for granting international protection provide details on procedure for notification of decisions to applicants.

Legal assistance and representation

According to Article 58 (8) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees, asylum applicants must be informed in writing, within 15 days from the submission of their application, about their rights and obligations. This information must include details about organisations providing legal and social assistance, and it may also be provided verbally.

According to Article 23 (1) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees, applicants for international protection or beneficiaries of international protection have the right to receive assistance from the UNHCR and other governmental or non-governmental organisations at any stage of the proceedings and after the granting of international protection.

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The Law on Asylum and Refugees does not mention information about legal aid funded from the state budget or the procedure before the National Legal Aid Bureau for legal assistance during the first-instance procedure, but it stipulates under Article 23 (2) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees that the State has an obligation to ensure conditions for foreigners seeking international protection in Bulgaria to obtain legal assistance.

Legal and procedural information can be provided also by the National Legal Aid Bureau, through the National legal aid hotline, served by lawyers from the Sofia Bar Association, registered in the National Legal Aid Register and the 12 Regional counselling centres with Bar Councils.

Resettlement and humanitarian admissions

Information is currently not available.

Content of protection

Beneficiaries of international protection must be notified of the rights and obligations arising from the status granted to them, in a language they understand as stipulated under Article 31 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees.

Provision of information in reception

Reception conditions

According to Article 58(6) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees, the State Agency for Refugees under the Council of Ministers has an obligation to provide information in a language comprehensible to the asylum applicant within 15 days from filing their application. The information must cover the terms and procedures and rights and obligations of asylum applicants during procedures, as well as legal and social assistance. Information on reception conditions is provided in writing and orally by an officer of the State Agency for Refugees when the applicant registers the application and by a staff member upon arrival at the reception centre (a brochure is available in different languages). In addition, there are information boards and posters displayed in reception facilities. Animated video information is available at the reception centres to

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provide introductory information on the rights and obligations during the determination procedure. The animated videos are available in Arabic, Pashto, Dari and Kurdish Kurmanji.

The web platform asylum.bg provides legal and practical information on the determination procedure and it is also available in audio format to ensure access for illiterate asylum applicants.

Civil society organisations who have signed cooperation agreements with the asylum administration offer counselling activities. For example, the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee has held specific sessions with newly accommodated applicants with the aim to brief them on the internal rules at the reception centres and their rights and obligations during the procedure, this occasion being also used to carry out an initial identification of their health or social needs and potential vulnerabilities.

In detention

For asylum detention, according to Article 45a of the Law on Asylum and Refugees, the asylum detention decision must be taken by the Chairman of the State Agency for Refugees or an officer appointed by him/her and the decision must be reasoned and taken after assessing whether the foreigner belongs to a vulnerable group. The decision is issued in writing and contains the factual and legal grounds for the accommodation, the procedure and deadline for an appeal, as well as the possibility of receiving free legal assistance and representation. While notifying the decision to the applicant, there is always an interpreter. The grounds for detention are listed in the decision itself. The applicant verifies that s/he understood the translation and the grounds for detention.

Article 45e (1) item 5 the Law on Asylum and Refugees stipulates that detained applicants have the right to receive information about the internal rules of the relevant center, as well as about their rights and obligations. This information must be provided in a language understandable to them.

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