Forms of protection - Bulgaria

Overview

Content updated and validated on: 27/08/2025

Relevant EU legislation

Bulgaria is bound by the recast Qualification Directive (Standards Qualification Regulation) and has transposed its provisions through the Law on Asylum and Refugee (LAR) | ЗАКОН ЗА УБЕЖИЩЕТО И БЕЖАНЦИТЕ.

National legislation

The Law on Asylum and Refugee (LAR) | ЗАКОН ЗА УБЕЖИЩЕТО И БЕЖАНЦИТЕ regulates under Chapter III, Rights and obligations of foreigners granted protection, the Law on Bulgarian personal documents, as amended by SG No. 67 of 4 August 2023 | ЗАКОН ЗА БЪЛГАРСКИТЕ ЛИЧНИ ДОКУМЕНТИ and the Civil Registration Act, as amended and supplemented by SG 80/19 September 2023.

Refugee status	The Law on Asylum and Refugee (LAR) | ЗАКОН ЗА УБЕЖИЩЕТО И БЕЖАНЦИТЕ, Article 2 (3) LAR and Article 8
Subsidiary protection	The Law on Asylum and Refugee (LAR) | ЗАКОН ЗА УБЕЖИЩЕТО И БЕЖАНЦИТЕ, Article 2 (3) LAR and Article 9
Temporary protection	The Law on Asylum and Refugee (LAR) | ЗАКОН ЗА УБЕЖИЩЕТО И БЕЖАНЦИТЕ, Article 1a (3) and Article 2 (2) LAR

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

National forms of protection	Asylum can be granted directly by the President of Bulgaria in accordance with his powers under the Constitution, as well as state interests or if special circumstances are present. This is pursuant to Article 2 (1) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees (LAR). There are no other national forms of protection. Bulgarian legislation does not provide for granting national protection status based on humanitarian grounds, i.e. health or family reasons.

Competent authority and stakeholders

Refugee status	State Agency for Refugees under the Council of Ministers Authorities of the Ministry of Interior for issuing the documents as provided by Article 59 (1) 1 of the Law on Bulgarian personal documents
Subsidiary protection	State Agency for Refugees under the Council of Ministers Authorities of the Ministry of Interior for issuing the documents as provided by Article 59 (1) 2 of the Law on Bulgarian personal documents
Temporary protection	State Agency for Refugees under the Council of Ministers
National forms of protection	President of Republic of Bulgaria for asylum granted according to the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria – and Article 2 (1) of the LAR / bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs as provided by Article 59 (1) 1 of the Law on Bulgarian personal documents

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

Renewal and withdrawal of international protection and national forms of protection

Refugee status

Legal provisions relating to review, renewal and withdrawal of refugee status: Article 59(1) item 2 of the Law on Bulgarian Identity Documents.

Length of the first and subsequent residence permits: 5 years for refugee status

Review of the status: the same as withdrawal of status (see below)

Renewal of the status: The State Agency for Refugees (SAR), as determining authority, is the only responsible for the coordination of the renewal/withdrawal of international protection. The decision is taken/endorsed by a senior officer, in consultation with the case officer. National security services might also be involved in the process.

There is no procedure for renewal of protection in Bulgaria as such. Refugee and subsidiary protection (humanitarian) statuses are indefinitely and are not limited in duration, but the duration of validity of residence permits differs: 5 years for refugee status holder and 3 years for subsidiary protection status holder. After either residence permit validity expires, the residence permit for international protection is renewed automatically if conditions in the country of origin remain unchanged - and unless there is an essential change of the third-country national's personal situation that leads to the elimination of the need for international protection. A request for renewal of the residence permit must be submitted in person, within 30 days – pursuant to Article 63a (2)(3) of the Law on Bulgarian Identity Documents.

Withdrawal of the status: The State Agency for Refugees (SAR), as determining authority, is the only responsible for the coordination of the renewal/withdrawal of international protection. The decision is taken/endorsed by a senior officer, in consultation with the case officer. National security services might also be involved in the process.

There is no review that takes place for beneficiaries from a certain country of origin and there is no systematic review of all decisions to grant international

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

protection in order to trigger withdrawal.

However, the Article 42(5) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees provides for cessation or revocation of international protection if the third country national concerned fails, within 30 days, to request the renewal of their expired Bulgarian identity documents or to replace them in case they were lost, stolen or destroyed.

Although there is no systematic review of protection status in practice, cessation procedures are initiated by the SAR when the Ministry of the Interior provides information indicating that status holders have either returned to their country of origin, obtained residence or citizenship in a third country, or have not renewed their Bulgarian identification documents for a period exceeding 3 years.

Article 78 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees provides that the proceedings for withdrawal or termination of granted international protection must be initiated when there is new data which provide grounds for reconsideration of the granted refugee status or humanitarian status.

The foreigner must be notified by letter with acknowledgment of receipt of the initiated proceedings, the reasons for this and the date and place of an interview, during which he shall present his objections to the withdrawal or termination of international protection. The notification contains information for the foreigner on the fact that if s/he is unable to personally attend the interview, s/he may send a written objection within the time limit set by the administrative authority and to the specified address. During the interview, there are discussions concerning the pertinent reasons that trigged the procedure for withdrawal. It is also possible to submit a written statement, until a final decision enters into force. Applicants are allowed to submit new elements while their international protection status is being reconsidered. Legal aid is provided to the same extent as for being granted asylum.

The procedure for withdrawal is following the same rules for organising the personal interview as for the regular procedure, specifically Articles 63 and 63a of the Law on Asylum and Refugees apply.

the Chairperson of the State Agency for Refugees shall take a decision by which he withdraws or terminates the international protection must take a decision within three months from the initiation of the proceedings. The Chairperson of the State Agency for Refugees must issue a decision even without the objections of the foreigner, when they are not made for reasons beyond his control – see

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

Article 78 (5) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees.

In case the new data, giving grounds for withdrawal or termination of international protection, contain serious grounds to assume that the foreigner was or is complicit in terrorism, the Chairman of the State Agency for Refugees must decide within one month from the initiation of the proceedings - see Article 78 (6) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees.

Where he finds no grounds for withdrawal or termination of international protection, the Chairperson of the State Agency for Refugees shall terminate the proceedings.

The person is also notified that an appeal can be lodged against a decision to withdraw status. An appeal is possible based on Article 84 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees, within 14 days from the notification of the decision (Articles 84(4) and 78(5), Law on Asylum and Refugees. The appeal has automatic suspensive effect as mentioned under Article 84(5) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees). Procedural safeguards with regard to legal assistance and interpretation are the same as for the regular procedure.

The time limit for deciding on appeal is 1 month from the initiation of the case, which is within 3 days from the receipt of the appeal, see Article 85(1) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees. A cassation appeal is possible and may be lodged before the Supreme Administrative Court - Articles 84(4) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees.

Grounds for withdrawal of the status:

End or revocation: According to Article 17 (3) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees, refugee status shall be revoked when it is established in relation to the foreigner that there is a ground under Art. 12, para. 1 (exclusion grounds) or Art. 13, para. 1, items 6 and 7 (presents himself with a false identity or uses a false, forged document or a document with false content, which he continues to claim to be genuine during the proceedings; or has provided intentionally, orally or in writing, provides false or conceals material information regarding his/her case).

Article 4 (4) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees provides that the principle of non-refoulement enshrined in Article 4 (3) does not apply to a foreigner who has received protection, but for whom there are grounds to believe that he poses a danger to national security or who, once convicted with a final judgment for a serious crime, poses a danger to society.

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

Cessation : According to Article 17(1) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees, international protection may be ceased if the protection holder:

1. (a) Can no longer refuse to avail him or herself of the protection of his or her country of origin, as the circumstances that had given rise to fears of persecution have ceased to exist and the transformation in said circumstances is substantial enough and of a non-temporary nature;
2. (b) Voluntarily avails him or herself of the protection of his or her country of origin;
3. (c) Voluntarily re-acquires citizenship after having lost it, or acquires new citizenship in another country;
4. (d) Acquires Bulgarian citizenship;
5. (e) Voluntarily settles in the country where he or she was previously persecuted;
6. (f) Has been granted asylum by the President;
7. (g) Explicitly declares that he or she no longer wishes to enjoy the international protection granted in Bulgaria; or
8. (h) Has deceased.

Article 42(5) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees provides that the status of a beneficiary of international protection can cease or be withdrawn when the person concerned does not submit an application for the issuance of new identity documents under para. 1 and 2 in the cases and within the period under Art. 63a, para. 2 of the Law on Bulgarian Personal Documents (within 30 days), unless the third country national provides evidence that s/he had objective reasons for not fulfilling his obligation.

Following this legislative amendment, some EU countries decided to suspend transfers of beneficiaries of international protection in Bulgaria due to uncertainty of the validity of the status.

Consequences of the withdrawal of the status: Article 19 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees provides that the withdrawal or termination of protection or the termination of proceedings in respect of a foreigner shall not revoke, terminate or amend the status of the other members of his family, unless the relevant grounds are established in respect of them as well.

Subsidiary protection status

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

Legal provisions relating to review, renewal and withdrawal of subsidiary protection: Article 59(1) item 3 of the Law on Bulgarian Identity Documents.

Length of the first and subsequent residence permits: 3 years for subsidiary protection holders

Review of the status: same as withdrawal

Renewal of the status: The State Agency for Refugees (SAR), as determining authority, is the only responsible for the coordination of the renewal/withdrawal of international protection. The decision is taken/endorsed by a senior officer, in consultation with the case officer. National security services might also be involved in the process.

There is no procedure for renewal of protection in Bulgaria as such. Refugee and subsidiary protection (humanitarian) statuses are indefinitely and are not limited in duration, but the duration of validity of residence permits differs: 5 years for refugee status holder and 3 years for subsidiary protection status holder. After either residence permit validity expires, the residence permit for international protection is renewed automatically if conditions in the country of origin remain unchanged - and unless there is an essential change of the third-country national's personal situation that leads to the elimination of the need for international protection. A request for renewal of the residence permit must be submitted in person, within 30 days – pursuant to Article 63a (2)(3) of the Law on Bulgarian Identity Documents.

Withdrawal of the status: Same as for refugee status

Grounds for the withdrawal of the status: Same as for refugee status, plus – Article 17 (4) of the LAR provides that a humanitarian status shall be revoked when the existence of grounds under Art. 12, para. 2 (exclusion grounds) or Art. 13, para. 1, items 6 and 7 (presents himself with a false identity or uses a false, forged document or a document with false content, which he continues to claim to be genuine during the proceedings; or has provided intentionally, orally or in writing, provides false or conceals material information regarding his/her case) is established with respect to the foreigner.

Consequences of the withdrawal of the status:

Article 19 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees provides that the withdrawal or termination of protection or the termination of proceedings in respect of a

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

foreigner shall not revoke, terminate or amend the status of the other members of his family, unless the relevant grounds are established in respect of them as well.

National forms of protection

Legal provisions relating to the review, renewal and withdrawal of national forms of protection

Bulgaria has no national forms of protection

Length of the first and subsequent residence permits: N/a

Review of the status: N/a

Renewal of the status: N/a

Withdrawal of the status: N/a

Grounds for the withdrawal of the status: N/a

Consequences of the withdrawal of the status: N/a

Content of protection

Overview

Section III of Chapter 4 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees provides for the rights and obligations of beneficiaries of international protection in Bulgaria. According to Article 32 the Law on Asylum and Refugees:

- Beneficiaries of international protection have the right to reside in Bulgaria for the period of validity of the Bulgarian personal documents issued to them.
- Foreigners granted refugee status shall have the rights and obligations of a Bulgarian citizen, with the exception of: 1. the right to participate in elections for state and local bodies, in national and local referendums, as well as to participate in the establishment and membership of political parties; 2. to hold positions for which Bulgarian citizenship is required by law; 3. to be a military serviceman; 4. other restrictions expressly provided

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

for by law.
- Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status have the rights and obligations of a foreigner with a permanent residence permit in Bulgaria.
- Foreigners granted protection may participate in programs and projects containing integration measures, under the conditions and in accordance with the procedure provided for therein.

Provision of information on the 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 – see Article 31 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees.

Residence permits

Refugees:

Authorities of the Ministry of Interior are competent and responsible for issuing resident permits. The length of first and subsequent residence permit is 5 years pursuant to Article 59 (1) points 1,2 of the Law on Bulgarian Personal Documents, as amended in 2023, art. 59 (1) points 1,2.

A refugee card is issued to a foreigner granted refugee status – Article 40 (1) item 3 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees. Article 44 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees provides for the data that the card must contain.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Authorities of the Ministry of Interior are competent and responsible for issuing resident permits. The length of first and subsequent residence permits is 3 years – see Article 59 (1) item 3 of the Law on Bulgarian Personal Documents.

A card of a foreigner with humanitarian status is issued to a person granted humanitarian status – Article 40 (1) item 4 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees. Article 44 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees provides for the data that the card must contain.

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

Travel documents

Refugees:

Article 40 (1) items 5, 6 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees provides that the following documents shall be issued to the foreigner who received protection:

- certificate for travel abroad of a foreigner, granted asylum.
- certificate for travel abroad of a refugee.

Authorities of the Ministry of Interior are competent and responsible for issuing travel documents. The validity period of the travel document is the same as for the residence card. Article 59 (1) items 5 and 6 of the Law on Bulgarian personal documents provides that the refugee travel certificate and the certificate for travel abroad of a foreigner granted asylum are issued by the authorities of the Ministry of Interior to a foreigner granted refugee status with a validity period of up to 5 years, but not longer than the validity period of the refugee card.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Article 40 (1) items 4, 7 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees provides that the following documents shall be issued to the foreigner who received protection:

- card of a foreigner with humanitarian status;
- certificate for travel abroad of a foreigner with humanitarian status;

Authority responsible for delivering the travel document: the bodies of the Ministry of Interior

The validity period of the travel document is the same as for the residence card. Article 59 (1) 7 of the Law on Bulgarian personal documents provides that the certificate for travel abroad of a foreigner with humanitarian status - issued by the bodies of the Ministry of Interior to a foreigner with humanitarian status with a validity period of up to three years, but not longer than the validity period of the card of a foreigner with humanitarian status;

Freedom of movement

The Law on Asylum and Refugees stipulates under Article 42 that:

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

- The refugee card/card of a beneficiary of subsidiary protection certifies the identity of the person and the right of the holder to reside on the territory of Bulgaria for the period of its validity.
- The certificate for travel abroad of a foreigner granted asylum or of a refugee entitles its holder to leave and enter Bulgaria within the term of its validity under the conditions and according to the procedure for Bulgarian citizens, insofar as the country to which he is travelling does not provide for other requirements.
- The certificate for travel abroad of a foreigner with humanitarian status entitles its holder to leave and enter Bulgaria within the term of its validity under the conditions and according to the procedure for foreigners permanently residing in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Access to employment and employment-related education

Refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Beneficiaries of international protection have unrestricted access to the labour market.

The Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy extended its refugee employment and training programme for 2021-2022. The language component of the programme started in December 2021, providing Bulgarian language training for 180 academic hours at levels A1, A2 and B1.

Refugees and persons with humanitarian status are entitled to participate in the Employment and Training Programme for Refugees of the Employment Agency, which includes Bulgarian language courses for employment purposes, since October 2022. To participate, a person must have obtained the status within the last 2 years before the start of the training. The application process takes place at the Labour Offices of the permanent or current address. The two integration centres of the Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC) and Caritas Sofia offer free Bulgarian language courses to beneficiaries of protection.

In February 2024, the Foundation for Access to Rights, jointly with UNHCR, launched a platform to connect refugees with employers. The organisation mentioned that during the last years, Bulgaria welcomed a large number of refugees, especially from Ukraine, the Middle East and Afghanistan. As of

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

December 2023, 67,769 Ukrainians were registered for temporary protection and more than 22,000 people had applied for asylum in 2023, mostly Syrian and Afghan. In November 2024, the Foundation on Access to Rights held an info session within the project "Access to Employment of Refugees and Migrants", financed by the Bulgarian Fund for Women. Within the framework of the project, PHAR will work to increase the knowledge and awareness of job seekers and workers regarding their own labour and insurance rights and to increase the awareness of employers in the country regarding the opportunities and requirements for employing refugees and migrants.

Access to education

Refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Article 26 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees provides that minors and unaccompanied foreigners seeking or having received international protection must have the right to primary and secondary education, including vocational education and vocational training, under the conditions and according to the procedure for Bulgarian citizens. Their access cannot be postponed for more than three months counting from the date of submission of the application for international protection.

Beneficiaries of international protection must have the right to access primary and secondary education, including vocational education and vocational training, under the conditions and according to the procedure for Bulgarian citizens.

The Minister of Education and Science, in coordination with the Chairman of the State Agency for Refugees determines the conditions and procedure for exercising the right to education of persons granted international protection in state and municipal schools.

In 2021, the civil society organisations Zaedno v chas (Teach for Bulgaria) and EducArt International Association published material to support children whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian to learn the Bulgarian alphabet.

According to Council of Europe ECRI Report on Bulgaria, October 2022, on education, according to the Pre-school and School Education Act (PSEA), children of the obligatory preschool and school age, residing in the country, including foreign nationals and those seeking or granted international protection, shall be provided with free training and additional teaching, if necessary, in the

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

Bulgarian language. The training is conducted individually or in groups in classes additional to the school curriculum for 12 months. Pupils seeking or receiving international protection who have gaps or difficulties in mastering the educational content, are provided with further training in the Bulgarian language and in other subjects in accordance with the Ordinance on inclusive education.

Access to procedures for recognition of qualifications and validation of skills

Refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

According to Article 26 (5) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees: persons who have been granted international protection, who cannot present documents certifying their qualification, and wish to exercise regulated profession in the Republic of Bulgaria, may gain access to practice such a profession in accordance with the Law on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications.

On recognition of qualifications and validation of skills, the EMN Ad-hoc query on 2022.36 the recognition of diplomas of third country nationals provides an overview on the authorities and procedure for recognition of diplomas and qualifications.

Social security and social assistance

Refugees:

Social assistance is at the same level as for nationals pursuant to Article 32 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees.

In 2021, an administrative court in Bulgaria underlined that beneficiaries of international protection must have the same access to social assistance, including family allowances, as Bulgarian nationals and referred back the case for re-consideration to the Social Assistance Directorate, which originally refused to grant the allowance.

In October 2024, the Foundation for Access to Rights informs about the legal clinic on Socio-Economic Inclusion of Refugees, which run between 20 June to 10 September 2024, with support from UNHCR. Students participated in weekly

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

meetings led by experts in the field of refugee law and staff of the Access to Rights Foundation – PHAR. The topics covered were the content of international and temporary protection, social assistance, access to education, unaccompanied children, right to health care, right to work, discrimination, labor exploitation, acquisition of Bulgarian citizenship and others.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Social assistance is at the same level as for nationals pursuant to Article 32 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees.

Healthcare

Refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Health care is at the same level as for nationals pursuant to Article 32 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees.

Those who are beneficiaries of temporary protection or are in the process of being granting international protection can submit a written application to the director of the relevant Regional Health Insurance Fund, at address The Regional Health Insurance Fund will help you find a personal doctor in time. The sample application is available here. Contacts of the Regional Health Insurance Fund – HHIF are available here.

Access to accommodation

Refugees:

There is no specific accommodation offered for beneficiaries of international protection, except for unaccompanied minors.

Article 33 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees specifies that unaccompanied minors or minors, beneficiaries of international protection, must be accommodated until they reach the age of majority in:

1. family of relatives or close friends, foster family, social or integrated health and social service for residential care under the terms and conditions of the Child Protection Act ;

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

2. other places of accommodation with special conditions for minors and minors.

Access to integration measures

Refugees:

There is no standalone integration programme. Article 32 (5) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees stipulates that foreigners granted protection may participate in programs and projects containing integration measures, under the conditions and in accordance with the procedure provided for therein.

Since 2013 when was adopted and applied first National Programme for the Integration of Refugees (NPIR), no other programme was adopted. However, in 2021 the Vitosha and Oborishte Districts (Sofia municipality) committed to provide an integration support to 12 refugee families in 2021 with support also from UNHCR.

The National Strategy on Migration was adopted in Bulgaria for the period 2021-2025, including a chapter on integration, which mentions that policies are implemented with AMIF funding but no specific areas for improvement are listed. As an initiative from non-state actors, the Multi Kulti Collective, the Bulgarian Council on Refugees and Migrants and UNHCR Bulgaria started to develop the country's first Refugee Integration Manifesto, which is planned to be used as an advocacy document to shape the integration of beneficiaries of international protection at national and local levels.

The State Agency for Refugees and the Bulgarian Council for Refugees and Migrants (BSBM) organised a working forum on the topic: "Social adaptation, inclusion and integration of persons granted international protection in Bulgaria" in August 2023. The State Agency for Refugees also participated in an academic forum on social and educational inclusion of refugees.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection: Same as for refugees

Family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

Refugees:

Article 34 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees regulates the family reunification in Bulgaria. A foreigner who has been granted refugee or subsidiary protection has the right to reunite with his family in the territory of Bulgaria. It should be noted that the family reunification system of refugees is extended also to the beneficiaries of subsidiary protection.

According to the SAR quarterly report 2023, the Quality Assurance Directorate of SAR under the Council of Ministers proposed a law to amend and supplement the Law on Asylum and Refugees, due to a significant increase in the number of applications for family reunification. The proposal is intended to counter the risk of negative decisions when the applicants cannot prove unequivocally their applications (evidence on financial means and on family relationship).

Family members eligible to join a refugee or person with subsidiary protection are:

- the husband, the wife or the individual with whom the alien has an evidenced stable long-term relationship and their unmarried underage children;
- adult unmarried children who are unable to provide for themselves due to serious health conditions;
- the parents of either of the spouses who are unable to take care of themselves due to old age or a serious health condition, and who have to share the household of their children.
- the parents or another adult member of the family who is responsible, by law or custom, for the underage unmarried alien who has been granted international protection.

According to Article 34 (4) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees, permission is granted for the unification of an unaccompanied minor or under the legal age alien who has been granted international protection with parents or with another adult member of his/her family or with a person responsible for him/her by law or custom, where his/her parents are deceased or missing.

The procedure includes registration and an interview in order to establish the existence of a family relationship, if documents to prove it are unavailable, expired or not original. Article 34 (5) the Law on Asylum and Refugees provides that, when the foreigner cannot present official documents proving the marriage

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

or kinship, they must be established by a declaration signed by him or in another manner.

By order of the Chairperson of the SAR under the Council of Ministers of 1 May 2023 it was decided that both the submission of an application for family reunification and the subsequent registration of the family members who have arrived in Bulgaria should be carried out only in the registration and reception center where the decision to grant international protection to the requesting applicant was issued. The change is intended to have a temporary application.

The decision on the application for family reunification must be notified to the applicant pursuant to the regular procedure under Article 76 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees. Also, the Bulgarian diplomatic or consular missions must issue visas for family members shall be issued after the permission under paras 2 and 4 of Article 34 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees

The State Agency for Refugees must facilitate the reunification of separated families by assisting foreigners in issuing travel documents, visas and in their admission to the territory of the country.

Also, the State Agency for Refugees, in cooperation with the UNHCR, the Bulgarian Red Cross and other organizations, shall take action to search for family member whose whereabouts are unknown. The search shall be carried out under conditions of confidentiality, when this is required by the circumstances.

According to Article 34 (3) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees, the Chairperson of the State Agency for Refugees can refuse the application for family reunification if exclusion grounds of Article 12 (1-3), apply to any of the family members, namely:

- there are serious grounds to suppose that he has committed an act which, according to the Bulgarian laws and the international treaties to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a party, is defined as a war crime or as a crime against peace and humanity;
- there are no serious grounds to assume that the family member has committed a serious non-political crime outside the territory of Bulgaria;
- there are serious grounds to presume that he / she performs, incites, assists, participates in training or preparation for performing actions, contrary to the goals and principles of the UN, regulated in the Preamble and in Art. 1 and 2 of the UN Charter, as well as in its resolutions on measures to combat international terrorism.

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

The same exclusion from the family reunification applies in relation to another spouse - in the case of polygamy, when the foreigner already has a spouse in the Republic of Bulgaria – see Article 34 (3) item 2 of the Law on Asylum and Refuges.

If a family member applies for international protection after arrival, the procedure includes registration and an interview in order to establish the existence of a family relationship, if documents to prove it are unavailable, expired or not original.

The Internal rules for conducting the procedure for granting international protection provide details of the procedure for family reunification, under Articles 133 – 140.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Same as for refugees

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.