



EUROPEAN KARATE FEDERATION
BULGARIAN NATIONAL KARATE FEDERATION



Welcome Добре дошли
Willkommen
Hoşgeldiniz Καλωσόρισμα
Bienvenu Bienvenida
Добро пожаловать



2017

**EUROPEAN
CHAMPIONSHIPS**

SOFIA, BULGARIA

17-19 FEBRUARY 2017

44th CADETS, JUNIORS, 9th U21

Official Bulletin

1



Mr. Antonio Espinós

President Of European Karate Federation

The European Karate community feels extremely satisfied to visit Sofia and Bulgaria for these 44th European Junior & Cadet and 9th U21 Championships.

We also take this opportunity to recognize the work developed by the Bulgarian Karate Federation during so many years. It is also a good example on how National Federation can work with efficiency and make an outstanding contribution to the European Karate. It has always been a pleasure to work with the Bulgarian Federation, who also has always made things easy inside a positive atmosphere of support and collaboration.

The celebration of this event in Sofia is something well deserved by the Bulgarian Karate Federation and we are fully confident that these 44th European Junior & Cadet and 9th U21 Championships are going to be a new success of our sport in the European Continent, a new success of the European Karate Federation thanks to the significant contribution of the Bulgarian Karate Federation.



Mr. Alexey Petrov

President Of Bulgarian National Karate Federation

I am honoured to invite the karatekas from the European countries to participate in the 44th European Championship for Cadets and Juniors, and the 9th Championship for Men and Women under 21, which will be held in Sofia from 17th to 19th February 2017.

This year, it will be the fourth time that Sofia has hosted an event of such magnitude and importance. That is why the organization of such an event is both a great honour and a responsibility. We hope that all the participants will experience the traditional Bulgarian hospitality. As President of the Bulgarian National Karate Federation, I have to emphasize the long way the sport of Karate has gone along. We gathered invaluable experience as organizers of the Balkan Championship in 2014, the 24th European Championship in 1997, the 1st World Karate Championship for adolescents in 1999, and the European Championship for men and women in 2001. Karate was first recognized as and included in the Olympic sports on 3rd August 2016, and Bulgaria was proud to take part with a representative in the Olympic Games in Baku in 2015. I profoundly believe that Karate will take its prestigious place among the Olympic sports, and we will have the chance to demonstrate the power of the World Karate Federation and the worldwide popularity of karate.

The Bulgarian Karate Federation has been working hard to establish the philosophy and spirit of karate, to promote and develop it as a mass sport. That is why the forthcoming European Championships is more than a competition – it is an event of friendship, respect and tolerance.

As a sport, karate constitutes a challenge to the human spirit, to the will and strength of the human body; it requires courage and respect to the opponent, and embodies the wisdom acquired along the way. Karate speaks in all languages and unites people and generations, regardless of their race, sex and religion.

I wish all participants health, strength, courage, respect and dignity, and numerous sports triumphs.

Please, accept my most sincere wishes for success.

May the best win!


Official Bulletin 1

Content

Bulgarian National Karate Federation	5
Contacts.....	6
Arena Armeec Sofia	7
Transportation and Transfers.....	9
Visa Policy and customs.....	11
Insurance	13
Registration	13
Press accreditation	13
Training facilities	13
Catering	13
Booking and Payments (accommodation, transfers).....	14
Accommodation.....	15
Hotel presentations	16
Competition Technical Information.....	20
Event Registration schedule	21
Categories.....	22
Competition schedule	23
EKF Approved Items	26
Terms of responsibility	27
Bulgaria	28
History and Culture.....	29
Tourism.....	33
Sofia.....	35
Frequently Asked Questions.....	37



Bulgarian National Karate Federation

In 1992 the Bulgarian National Karate Federation was founded. It incorporated the WKF recognized styles Wado Ryu, Goju Ryu, Shito Ryu and Shotokan. After 1998 the Kyokushin karate clubs became members of the federation as well. The Bulgarian National Karate Federation has 84 membering clubs and is one of the largest in numbers in the country today. There is almost no city in the country without a functioning karate club which mainly young people who are striving to seep in the secrets of karate. Today the people practicing karate in Bulgaria are more than 20 000.

Bulgarian karatekas have a constant presence on the international tatami. Our masters along with the Kyokushin ones' form a long list of European and World champions.

The referee panel of BNFK is comprised of Balkan, European and World category judges.

Bulgaria is the only country on the Balkans where karate is an official degree course in the National Sports Academy. The karate course was introduced in the curriculum in 1992. The students accepted to study karate annually who complete the full course of education acquire a bachelor or masters degree.



Contacts

Bulgarian National Karate Federation

Sofia, 75 Vasil Levski Blvd.
e-mail: office@bnfk.bg

Competition web site: www.euro2017.bnfk.bg

Accommodation

e-mail: accommodation.euro2017@bnfk.bg

Transportation

e-mail: transport.euro2017@bnfk.bg

Official Guest and Protocol

e-mail: officials.euro2017@bnfk.bg

Technical Support

e-mail: technical.euro2017@bnfk.bg

Volunteers

e-mail: volunteers.euro2017@bnfk.bg



1 Asen Jordanov Blvd, 1113 Sofia, Bulgaria
www.arenaarmeesofia.com

Arena Armeec Sofia has 12 373 seats, 2256 of which are placed on the long telescopic stands, 1248 on the short telescopic stands and 206 VIP seats placed in a separate zone accessible from level 2. After accessing level 1 all the elevators can be used to reach level 3, where 60 seats for disabled persons are provided. There are also 12 WCs for disabled persons placed on all levels.

There are 96 seats specially equipped for journalists.
 The Dimensions of the hall depend on whether the telescopic stands are folded or unfolded.

Folded telescopic stands:
 width-53,20 m; length-77,20 m

Unfolded telescopic stands
 width-32,80 m; length-56,80 m

The media cube has 4 displays with dimensions 520/380 cm. The pixel step is 10 mm and the transmission signal is – MPEG 2 Standart 16/9.

There are also two identical digital scoreboards.

The hall is equipped with 11 elevators, 16 refreshment areas, 9 cloakrooms, 30 entrances and 202 toilets for spectators. There are 2 TIR gateways with maxim 4.5 meters clearance in sector D0. There are 2 electrical switchboards prepared for supporting concert or other events in sector D0. There are 4 TV decks prepared for supporting TV coverage of the events, placed in the four sectors of the hall.

The warm up hall is situated on Level -1 with dimensions:
 Width - 22,10 m, Length - 30,00 m, Height - 3,20 m

The VIP boxes are situated on level 2 in sectors A2, B2 and C2 with total capacity of 206 seats. Some of the VIP boxes can be arranged as offices if needed. Most of them have their own sink and some are equipped with WC. The access to the VIP boxes is organized with separate elevators and staircases.





Arena Armeec Sofia



There are 16 refreshment areas, situated on Levels 0, 1, 3, offering snacks and refreshing drinks.

Doping control room

The doping control zone is situated on the level -1 and has 2 rooms for doping tests as well as waiting areas in front of them.

Offices

Offices designed for serving the different types of events are situated on levels:

Level -1 - 6 rooms, one of which can be used as a meeting

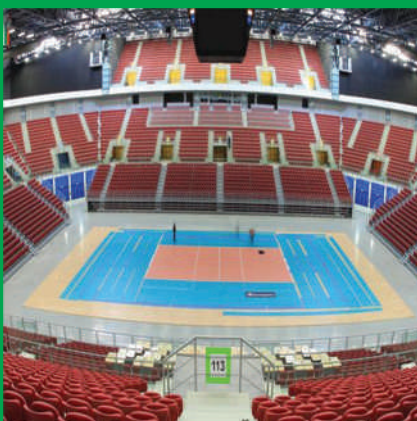
Level 2 – 4 rooms for representative purposes with view to the hall, each of them with a possibility to be used as a VIP box.

The Training hall is designed to function as a supplementary sports facility while big sports events are taking place in the main hall. It can also function as a fully independent facility.

There are 2 dressing rooms in the Training hall, every one of them equipped with individual lockers, benches, 4 sinks, 2 WCs and 4 showers.



There are 887 parking lots, 614 of them placed in a central exterior parking, 231 placed in near streets and 42 dimensioned for disabled persons. There are also 8 bus lots and 8 parking lots for TIRs and other heavy machines. The inner transportation street reaches all the entrances of the hall and has a length of 923 m. Two ramps give the access to the level -1 of the hall, where a 97 car parking lots for VIPs and administration is placed.





Transportation and Transfers

The transportation will be arranged according to the number of participants in your delegation. In case you require any extra service, please contact the organizers. Transportation will be organized by taxi, mini bus or bus, depending on the number of participants on each arrival. Depending on the number of persons in each delegation a bus or taxi or other vehicle will be used. Transportation to the hotels will be only offered from Sofia airports.

Price List:

Service	Price (return ticket)	Note
Luxury Taxi Up to 4 persons	40.00 EUR per person	
Minibus for 20 person	10.00 EUR per person	At least 15 persons
Bus for 50 person	10.00 EUR per person	At least 30 persons

For delegations that had made all bookings through Bulgarian National Karate Federation:

Transportation will be also offered from the hotel to the sport venue Arena ARMEEC and vice versa free of charge.

For payment form: see attached files.



Transportation and Transfers

Zapryanov Travel Ltd.

Cars



Mini Bus



Bus





Visa Policy and customs

Since 1 January 2007, the Republic of Bulgaria has been a member of the EU and so enforces the General Visa Policy of the European Union, in keeping with the conditions of the Accession Treaty.

At present, Bulgaria issues only national visas, which do not give visitors the right to enter the Schengen area. Visas are issued by the diplomatic and consular representatives of the Republic of Bulgaria, or by representatives of another member state of the European Union with which Bulgaria has an agreement for the presentation and acceptance of applications for visas and the issuance of visas.

Available visa types are as follows:

Airport transit (visa type "A");

Short-term stay (visa type "C");

Long-term stay (visa type "D").

A fee is charged for the issuance of visas, according to the Fee Tariff No 3.

Visitors can find further information on the application procedures and required documents for the issuance of visas, as well as the address of consular offices, on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - www.mfa.bg

List of EKF member countries that need Visa to enter Bulgaria

Armenia
Azerbaijan
Belarus

Georgia
Kosovo
Russian Federation

Serbia
Turkey
Ukraine

Holders of biometric passports from list of countries below are exempt from the visa obligation. Holders of non-biometric passports still require a visa in which case the visa facilitation agreements apply.

Albania
Bosnia & Herzegovina

FYR Of Macedonia
Montenegro

Republic Of Moldova



Insurance

It is compulsory that all participants and members of the delegations have their own medical and personal trip insurance. The Bulgarian National Karate Federation and European Karate Federation as well as the Organizing Committee assume no liability or responsibility for the lack of insurance from participants and members of the delegations. The heads of the delegations have to sign the enclosed terms of responsibility and return it by 22nd of December 2016 the latest.

Delegations lacking insurance policies could sign them at the Registration Desk. Preferential prices will be provided by **LEV INS Insurance Company** official partner of Bulgarian National Karate Federation





Registration

Each participating country is requested to provide 2 national flags and a carrier with the national anthem.

Registration will be arranged in HQ Ramada Sofia Hotel on Thursday 16 February from 09:00 to 15:00 hours.

Press accreditation

Press accreditation can only be given to persons who apply for such in advance. All press accreditation will be given by EKF. Please contact with e-mail: press@wkf.net

Training facilities

The organizers will provide the National Federations, which turn in the relevant application on time, with a place for training. The application must be received before **December 28th, 2016**.

Transportation to the training area will only be available from the official hotels.

For application form: see attached files.

Catering

A catering service will be provided by Bulgarian karate federation at the Sports Hall for a price of 15 Euros per person per day. Please fill in the booking form until **December 22nd, 2016** the latest.



Booking and Payments

Accommodation, Transfers

Delegations are requested to send a precise reservation, specifying the number of rooms with names to e-mail: accommodation.euro2017@bnfk.bg

Reservation and payment details will be done through Bulgarian Karate Federation. A deposit of 30% of the amount due is obligatory in order to obtain a fully confirmed reservation and full settlement needs to be done no later than the 10th January 2017. The Bulgarian Karate Federation will then issue and send you an invoice. **The deadline for booking accommodation is 22nd December 2016.**

Note: From the 23rd December 2016 until the 10th January 2017, a 10% increase will be imposed on the above prices. However, after 10th January 2017, the Bulgarian Karate Federation cannot guarantee the availability of any rooms. For delegations that have paid and then cancelled within 20 days prior to the event, 25% of the reservation cost will be withheld as cancellation fee and if a cancellation is made 7 days before the service ordered is due, the participants will be charged 100% of the service ordered fee. Reservation and payment details will be done through Bulgarian Karate Federation.

3. Bank details

Account Name:	BULGARIAN NATIONAL KARATE FEDERATION
IBAN:	BG54UBBS78201070011712
BIC/SWIFT:	UBBSBGSF
Bank Name:	United Bulgarian Bank



Accommodation

The reservations for accommodation will be handled by the Bulgarian National Karate Federation.

The Deadline For Booking Accommodation Is 22nd Of December, 2016.

Price List (per 1 person, include Bed & Brekfast, HB available on demand):

Hotel / Category	Single Room (BB)	Double Room (BB)	Meal (HB)
Ramada Sofia Hotel ***** HQ	60 EUR	50 EUR	+15 EUR
Park Hotel Moskva ***	47 EUR	30 EUR	+15 EUR
Hotel Hemus ***	45 EUR	30 EUR	+15 EUR
Legends Hotel ***	55 EUR	50 EUR	+15 EUR

Notes & Clarifications

1. The Headquarter Hotel of the event will be Ramada Sofia Hotel.
2. All prices will be in euro.
3. Accommodation is provided on a bed and breakfast basis.
4. The allocation of the rooms in the hotels will be on a first to come - first to serve basis.
5. Accommodation reservations should be accompanied with the reservation form.
6. Hotel Bookings to be made through accommodation.euro2017@bnfk.bg
7. Transportation Bookings to be made through transport.euro2017@bnfk.bg

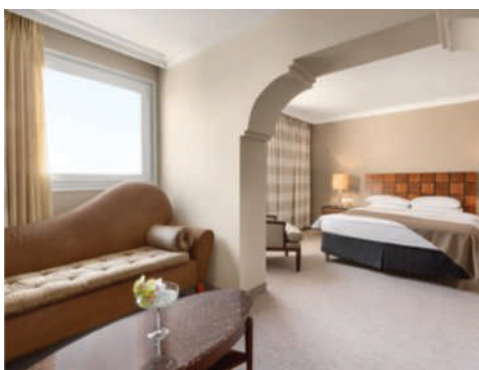
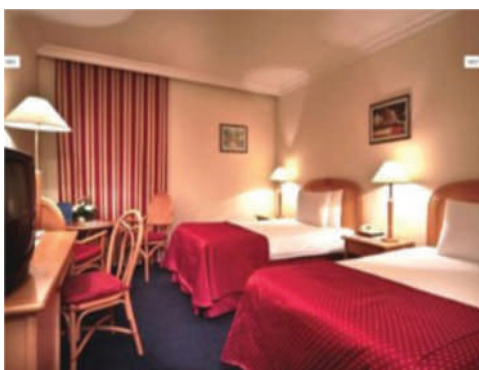
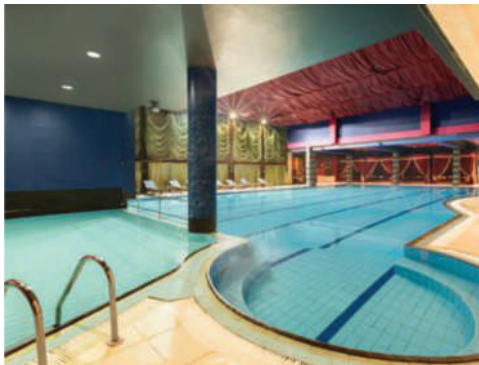
For booking form: see attached files.

Note: From the 23rd of December 2016 until the 10th of January 2017, a 10% increase will be imposed on the above prices. However, after the 10th of January 2017, the Bulgarian Karate Federation cannot guarantee the availability of any rooms.



HQ Ramada Sofia Hotel ****

www.ramada.com/hotels/bulgaria/sofia/ramada-sofia/hotel-overview



Ramada Sofia hotel for a business trip, relaxing vacation, or grand event in Sofia. Walk to the city centre in less than 15 minutes, or take the subway nearby, just one stop. We are also just 12 kilometers from Sofia International Airport, offering 24-hour shuttle service for a nominal charge.

Onsite at our hotel, enjoy leisure amenities like indoor pool, spa with massage treatments, fitness centre and casino. We are pleased to provide free indoor and outdoor parking options, as well as free Wi-Fi Internet access in your guest room and all common areas.

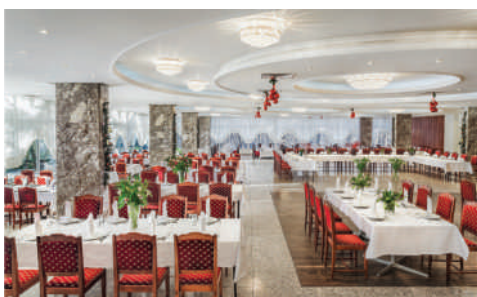
DINING OPTIONS

Enjoy our lavish yet affordable breakfast buffet each morning during your visit to Sofia. Our two onsite restaurants serve breakfast, lunch and dinner, 24 hours per day and seven days per week. Savor a cocktail in our lobby bar, or a meal in privacy with room service.



Park Hotel Moskva ***

www.parkhotelmoskva.net



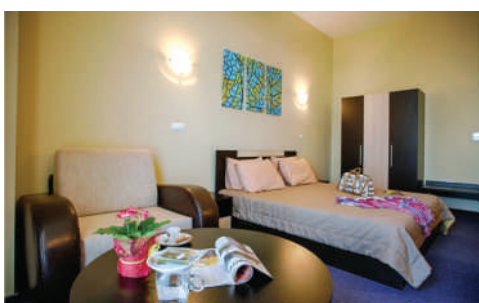
Very close to, and still aside from the bustling city center, Park Hotel Moskva is located in the diplomatic district, next to the most beautiful area of greenery in Sofia – the Borisova Garden. The hotel offers quiet and peaceful place for business meetings and conference events, as well as for a comfortable stay and complete rest in the quietness and the pure fresh air coming from the forested park.

The unique spectacular panoramic view over the entire city from all guest rooms and from the Panorama restaurant on the 19th floor will add a lovely final touch to the pleasant experience that awaits you here.



Hotel Hemus ***

www.hemushotels.com



Hemus Hotel Sofia is situated in the broad center of Sofia and provides for its guests the services required for the category of a standard three-star hotel.

Hotel Services:

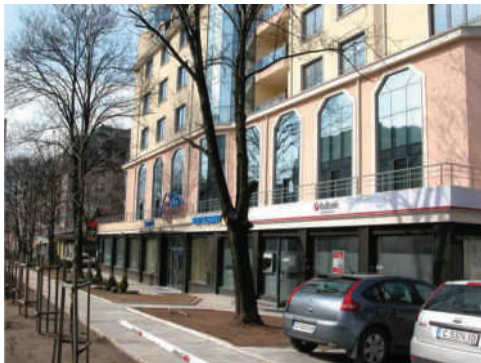
- High-speed free wireless internet in all the rooms and public areas
- Air conditioning with an option for individual control of the temperature
- Laundry and dry cleaning service
- Hairdresser and beauty salon
- Room service
- Banking branch

Hemus Hotel offers to its guests an underground secure parking garage with remote controlled access. There are 21 parking spaces.



Legends Hotel ***

www.hotel-legends.bg



The Legends business hotel is situated in the central part of the city of Sofia at the 54-56 Cherni vrah Blvd. and is 5 minutes by car to The National Palace of Culture, City Centre Sofia and the trade centre of the Vitosha boulevard.

The Legends Business Hotel is 5 min. walking distance to the Marinela Hotel Sofia (HQ) and the new Business Centre Hill Tower. Vitosha Mountain, with its excellent skiing facilities and tourist spots is only 10 km away from the Hotel. The Legends business hotel is fifteen minutes travel by car to the Sofia airport.



EUROPEAN KARATE FEDERATION
BULGARIAN NATIONAL KARATE FEDERATION



Competition Technical Information



2017

**EUROPEAN
CHAMPIONSHIPS**

SOFIA, BULGARIA

17-19 FEBRUARY 2017

44th CADETS, JUNIORS, 9th U21



Event Registration schedule

Standard Time Zone: GMT/UTC + 02:00 hour.

All events in the following table will be held in the **HQ Ramada Sofia Hotel**.

Thursday 16 February		
09:00-15:00	Registration for delegations *	Halls Europe 1, Europe 2
15:00-16:30	Referee commission meeting	Hall Safir
16:30-17:30	License renewal examination	Hall Mercan
16:30-18:00	Open draw for coaches	Halls Europe 1, Europe 2
17:00-18:00	Medical commission meeting	Hall Safir
18:30-19:30	Referees, judges & coaches meeting	Hall Opal
19:00-20:00	Technical commission meeting	Hall Safir
Friday 17 February		
09:00- 11:00	Executive committee meeting	Hall Mercan

** There will be a fast lane for the NFs having made online registration, with no changes and having paid by bank transfer. For any issues with the online registration, please contact office@sportdata.org*





Categories

Under 21 (age 18/19/20)	Cadets (age 14/15)	Juniors (age 16/17)
Individual Kata	Individual Kata	Individual Kata
Female	Female	Female
Male	Male	Male
Male Individual Kumite	Male Individual Kumite	Male Individual Kumite
-60 kg	-52 kg	-55 kg
-67 kg	-57 kg	-61 kg
-75 kg	-63 kg	-68 kg
-84 kg	-70 kg	-76 kg
+84 kg	+70 kg	+76 kg
Female Individual Kumite	Female Individual Kumite	Female Individual Kumite
-50 kg	-47 kg	-48 kg
-55 kg	-54 kg	-53 kg
-61 kg	+54 kg	-59 kg
-68 kg		+59 kg
+68 kg		
Team Kata *		Team Kata **
Female		Female
Male		Male

* The Kata Team Under 21 category is a new category and includes competitors aged 18, 19 and 20 years only.

** The Kata Team Junior category is for competitors age 14 / 15 / 16 / 17





Competition schedule

17 February 2017 (Friday)

Weigh-in	
09:00-09:30	Cadet male (all categories)
10:00-10:30	Cadet female (all categories)
Kata individual	
09:00	Cadet male/female
	Junior male/female
	Under 21 male/female
11:00	Repechages (kata individual)
Cadet kumite eliminations	
13:00	Male (-52/-57/-63 kg)
14:00	Female (-47/-54/+54 kg)
15:00	Male (-70/+70 kg)
16:00	Repechages (cadet kumite male & female)
Finals	
17:30	Kata individual cadet male/female & junior male
17:45	Medals award
18:00	Kata individual junior female & -21 male/female
18:15	Medals award
18:30	Male (-52/-57/-63 kg)
18:45	Medals award
19:00	Female (-47/-54/+54 kg)
19:15	Medals award
19:30	Male (-70/+70 kg)
19:40	Medals award





Competition schedule

18 February 2017 (Saturday)

Weigh-in	
09:00-09:30	Junior male (all categories)
10:00-10:30	Junior female (all categories)
11:00-12:00	-21 female (all categories)
13:00-14:00	-21 male (all categories)
Kata Team	
09:00-10:15	Junior male/female
	Under 21 male/female NEW CATEGORY
Junior kumite eliminations	
10:15	Male (-55/-61/-68 kg)
11:30	Female (-48/-53/-59 kg)
12:45	Female (+59 kg) & male (-76/+76 kg)
13:45	Repechages (Junior kumite male & female)
16:00	Opening Ceremony
Finals	
17:00	Male (-55/-61/-68 kg)
17:15	Medals award
17:30	Female (-48/-53/-59 kg)
17:45	Medals award
18:00	Female (+59 kg) & male (-76/+76 kg)
18:15	Medals award
18:30	Kata team junior male/female
19:00	Medals award
19:15	Kata team U21 male/female
19:45	Medals award





Competition schedule

19 February 2017 (Sunday)

Kumite U21 eliminations	
09:00	Female (-50/-55/-61 kg)
10:15	Male (-60/-67/-75 kg)
11:45	Female (-68/+68 kg) & male (-84 kg)
13:00	Male (+84 kg)
13:00	Repechages (U21 kumite male/female)
Finals	
14:30	Female (-50/-55/-61 kg)
14:50	Medals award
15:05	Male (-60/-67/-75 kg)
15:25	Medals award
15:40	Female (-68/+68 kg)
15:50	Male (-84/+84 kg)
16:05	Medals award
16:30	Closing ceremony
20:00	Farewell-Party

Note: In the bouts for finals, all coaches must be dressed with suit and tie (male and female).





EKF and WKF Approved Items

Only EKF and WKF Approved Trademarks for sports items will be permitted.



OOO "KALININGRADSKIY SPORT"

Musorgskogo str. 10, bldg. 16A
236022 - Kaliningrad,
RUSSIAN FEDERATION
Phones: 007 911 4672969 / 007 911 4997553
Fax: 007 08439 23337
e-mail: best_sport@mail.ru
www.best-sport.ru



DRAGON BLEU SAS

VENUM Official distributor
7 Rue du sagittaire BP20158
94533 RUNGIS
Tel : 0141733239
Fax : 0149790629
e-mail : contact.euro@venumfight.com
www.dragonbleu.fr





Terms of responsibility

To be filled in, signed and sent back together with the booking confirmation of the hotel by 4th January 2017 (by regular mail or email) latest.

I, _____ the undersigned, as the Head of Delegation of my country, duly enrolled to participate in the 44rd European Junior & Cadet and 9th U21 Championships, which will be held at Sofia, Bulgaria, from 17 – 19 February 2017, with acknowledge of the Statues, the Organizing Rules and the Norms of the European Karate Federation, pledge myself to faithfully accomplish the regulations of this before mentioned entity. And I take any and all administrative, civil and criminal responsibilities of whatever happens to our athletes, coaches and other members of our delegation participating in this Championship, before, during and after the competition, such as physical injuries, personal expenses, or monetary debts and casual material damages to the hotels, venue, means of transportation etc. Furthermore, I exempt from any legal, civil or criminal responsibilities the organizers of this Championships, the European Karate Federation and the Bulgarian Karate Federation, its directors, as well as any person, company, or entity related to the event (sponsors, public and private entities).

I authorize the organizers of the event to use images, photos and the names of our competitors and other members of our delegation, since it is considered necessary, for the sport activities and publications of karate, related to the event, without any monetary or other compensation.

Country/Nation: _____
 Last name, First name: _____
 Passport number: _____
 Date of expiry: _____
 Federation position: _____
 Address: _____
 Phone number: _____
 Email: _____

Date _____
 Place _____

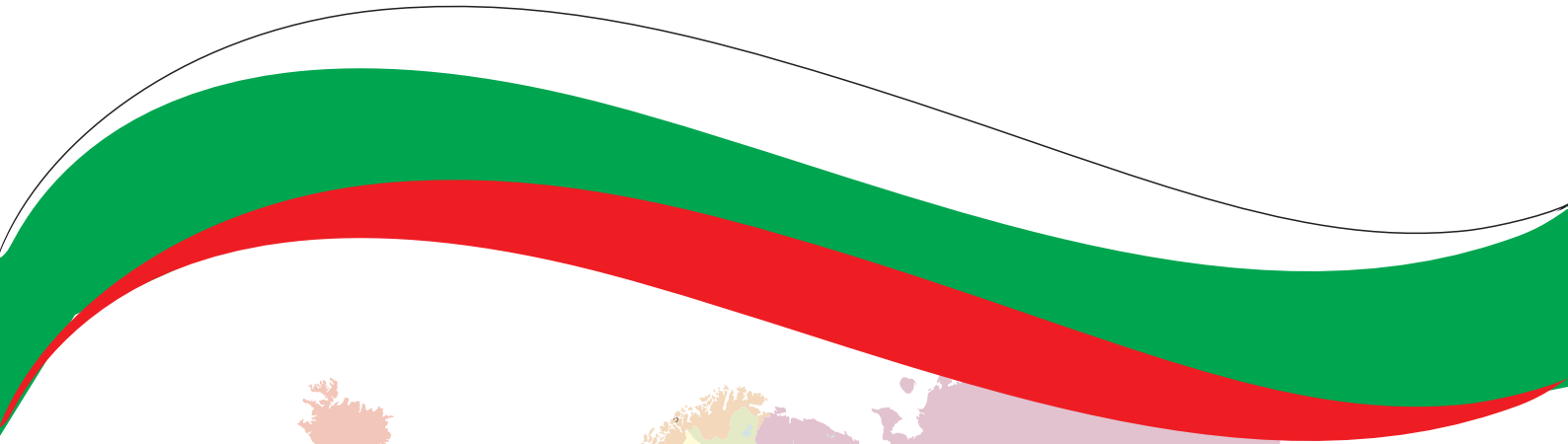
Signature & Stamp _____

Note: To fill form: see attached files.





BULGARIA





Treasure of Panagyurishte

History and Culture

BULGARIA
 founded
681 AD



The territory of Bulgaria has been inhabited since antiquity, as the country's many ancient settlements and burial mounds attest. Present-day Bulgaria was a cradle of some of the earliest civilizations in Europe – the oldest gold ornament ever discovered, unearthed in the Chalcolite necropolis near Varna, is evidence of that. From the age of Ancient Thrace we have inherited valuable cultural monuments, including tombs (such as the Kazanlak tomb, the Aleksandrovska tomb, and the Sveshtarska tomb); treasures (the Panagyursko, Rogozensko, and Valchitransko treasures, among others); and sanctuaries and temples (at Perperikon, Starosel, Kozi Gramadi, Begliktash, and elsewhere).

The cultural interaction between the Thracians and the Hellenistic civilization were particularly dynamic. Many cities and towns heavily influenced by Greek culture were established between 6th-2nd century BC in Thrace, Misia and along the shores of the Black Sea. In the middle of the 1st century AD, all Bulgarian lands became a part of the Roman Empire. Many architectural and archaeological monuments have been preserved from this period, such as the Ancient Theater and the Roman Stadium in Plovdiv, and remains of the Roman cities Ulpia Escus, Nove, Nikopolis ad Istrum, Nikopolis ad Nestum, Augusta Trayana, and Abritus.



The Roman theatre of Plovdiv

History and Culture

After the dissolution of the Roman Empire, the present Bulgarian lands came under the control of the East Roman Empire, later called Byzantium by historians. In the second half of the 7th century, the proto-Bulgarians settled in what is now Northeast Bulgaria. They united with the Slavs to form the Bulgarian state, recognized by Byzantium in 681. The head of the state was the leader of proto-Bulgarians Khan Asparuh, and the city of Pliska was declared the state's capital.

In 864, during the reign of Tzar Boris I (852-889), Bulgarians adopted Christianity as its official religion, which makes Bulgaria one of the oldest Christian states in Europe.

At the end of the 9th century, the brothers Cyril and Methodius created and disseminated the Slavic alphabet (Cyrillic).

Bulgaria's first constitution was adopted in 1879, and was one of the most democratic constitutions of its time.

The democratic changes in Bulgaria started at the end of 1989, when multi-party elections were held and a new constitution was adopted. At this time Bulgaria began its transition to democratic development and a market economy. Since 1991, Bulgaria has been a member of the Council of Europe, and in 2004 Bulgaria became a member of NATO. In 1995, it filed an application to join the European Union, with negotiations commencing in 1999. On 25 April 2005, the Accession Treaty granting the Republic of Bulgaria the right to join the European Union was signed in Luxemburg. On 1 January 2007, after fulfilling all membership criteria, Bulgaria became of full-fl in Luxemburg was signed edged member of the European Union.





History and Culture



Lifestyles and cultures in what is now Bulgaria have developed over thousands of years. The country is located at the crossroad between Europe and Asia, and the lands of Bulgaria have been populated since antiquity. The Slavs and proto-Bulgarians were greatly influenced by the cultures of the Thracians, Illyrians and Greeks, and all peoples who resided on these lands – Thracians, Romans, Slavs, and Bulgarians – have contributed to the world's cultural heritage. It is no accident that the earliest European civilization grew up here. Some of the most famous treasures in the world were discovered at the Varna necropolis, including the world's oldest golden ornaments; There are Thracian tombs and sanctuaries in Kazanlak, Sveshtari, Starosel, Aleksandrovo, Perperikon, and Tatul. A large number of other golden artifacts have been found, in the Panagyurishte, Valchitran, Rogozen, and elsewhere. The remains of the Thracian, Hellenistic and Roman culture are many and varied. In the dozens of Thracian tombs that have been discovered, there are unique remains attesting to the high material and spiritual culture of antiquity. Entire city complexes had been found – Augusta Trayana, Trimontium, Nikopolis ad Istrum, Pautalia, Akre, Mesemvria, Apolonia, Serdika and many others. The traditions, festivals, customs, and rituals preserved by Bulgarians through the ages are evidence of the country's profound spirituality and its dynamic lifestyle and culture.

The Rose is the symbol of Bulgaria. Rose picking, one of the oldest and traditional customs of Bulgarians, has become primarily a tourist attraction.



History and Culture

There are a number of architectural reserves in the country that preserve the unique Bulgarian architecture from the age of the Revival (18th – 19th centuries) – Koprivshtitsa, Tryavna, Bozhentsi, Zheravna, Bansko, and Melnik, among others. In some of the ethnographic complexes, such as Etara, Zlatograd, and Old Dobrich, tourists can appreciate first-hand Bulgarian customs and handicrafts, since residents continue to make articles according to old techniques passed down from generation to generation.

During the Bulgarian Revival, the monasteries served as centers of artistic and educational activity. There are still many working monasteries in the country – Rila Monastery, Bachkovo Monastery, Troyan Monastery, Zemen Monastery, Glozhene Monastery, Kilifarevo Monastery, Shipchenski Monastery, and others. Our country is also famous for its well-established national traditions of icon painting and wood carving. The best known icons and carvings are from Samokov, Tryavna and Bansko.

Bulgaria's museums preserve valuable collections of domestic, cultural and military articles; statues, burial steles and monuments; masks, mosaics, and small statuettes of ancient gods; and many other precious exhibits.

Bulgarians have developed their culture and enriched it over the millennia, and they preserve it and continue to develop it to the present day. In more recent times, Bulgarians have also had reason to take pride in their literature, arts, music, and architecture. A proof of ongoing involvement is Bulgaria's rich cultural calendar of national and international festivals for young and old alike, as well as other gatherings, cultural events, and expositions.





Bulgarian Black Sea

Tourism

SUMMER TOURISM

The Bulgarian Black Sea coast is a wonderful place for a summer holiday. Cape Emine is the place where the Balkan Mountains meet the sea, and this place conditionally divides the Black Sea coast into a northern and southern part. The coastline is 378 km long, with 209 beaches that have a total area of 16 square kilometers. Many are wide, while others are small and nestled in picturesque marine bays. The beaches and the sea offer excellent conditions for various water sports such as surfing, water skiing, diving, underwater exploration, and fishing, whether from the surface or underwater. In 2011, the beaches at Albena, Bunite (Varna), Dyuni, Elenite, Pomorie (east beach), Harmanite (Sozopol), St. Vlas (central beach and Venid beach), Sunny Beach (north and south beach) and Sunny Day beach were all recognized for their excellence.





Bansko Ski Resort

Tourism

WINTER TOURISM

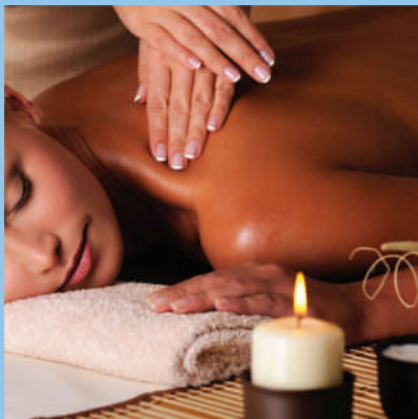
About 30% of Bulgaria is mountainous. The country's mountains are exceptionally diverse in relief and offer abundant options for relaxation, along with sports and entertainment for tourists, since conditions are exceptionally conducive for tourism in both winter and summer. The ski season in the medium high and the alpine resorts last about 130 days each year, while during the summer months enthusiasts may hike in centuries-old forests. The numerous hotels and the recreation centers provide accommodations for a wide variety of tastes and preferences.

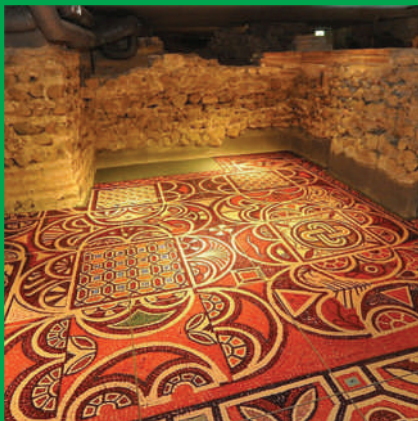
There are well-marked hiking routes through Bulgaria's mountains, such as the southern traverses of the Kom - Emine European trail E-3, the European trail E-4, from Vitosha through Verila, Rila, and Pirin, and the European hiking route E-8, from Rila to the Rhodopes

The mountains in Bulgaria are hospitable all year long, but it must be remembered added that in order to enjoy their beauty visitors need to come well prepared, which includes obtaining information about the routes they plan to use and the meteorological conditions. Visitors should also act responsibly, so as to preserve the pristine beauty of Bulgaria's majestic mountains.

Bulgaria is also a great place for many other types of tourism:

- SPA & WELLNESS
- Cultural Tourism
- Congress/ Business Tourism
- Ecological Tourism
- Rural Tourism
- Sport Tourism
- Camping Tourism





Sofia is Bulgaria's capital and its largest city. Founded thousands of years ago, today the city continues to develop as the country's cultural and economic center. At present, the city has a population of 1,250,000.

Sofia is located in the western part of the country, on The Sofia Plain and on the lower slopes of Mount Vitoshka. The city's average altitude is 550 meters above sea level, the climate is moderate and continental, characterized by cold winters and relatively cool summers. The average temperature in January is 1 degree below zero Centigrade, and the average July temperature is 20 degrees Centigrade.

The city is located at a strategic crossroads. The route from Western Europe to Istanbul passes through Sofia via Beograd and Skopje, then through Plovdiv to Turkey. Sofia also connects The Near East and The Middle East, lying between the banks of The Danube and the shores of The White Sea on the one hand, and between The Black Sea and The Adriatic on the other.

Sofia has been settled for many millennia. In honor of its hot springs, in the 8th century BCE the Thracian tribes settled here gave the city its first name – Serdika or Serdopolis. In the 1st century BCE, Serdika was captured by the Romans, who transformed it into a Roman city. During the reign of Emperor Marcus Ulpius Trajan (reign 98-117 CE), the city took his name, Ulpia Serdika, and became the administrative center of the region. Serdika was the favorite city of Constantine the Great (reign 306-337), who said “Serdika is my Rome.” In roughly 175, massive fortified walls, with four watchtowers were built to protect the city, and a second outer fortified wall was added during the 5th-6th centuries. The city's flourished for a second time under Justinian the Great (reign 527-565).



At the beginning of the 9th century, the Bulgarian Khan Krum (reign 803-814) invaded Serdika. The city became an inseparable part of The First Bulgarian Empire (7th - 9th centuries) under Khan Omurtag (reign 814-831). At this time the city was renamed Sredets (The Center), because of its central strategic location. From 1018-1094, Sredets was under Byzantine rule, but still remained an important strategic, economic, and cultural center. During the time of The Second Bulgarian Empire (1185-1393), Sredets took on the appearance of a large Medieval city – its narrow, crowded streets witnessed the construction of more and more small churches and monasteries, which later became Sofia's Holy Mountain. The city gained its present name at the end of the 14th century, in honor of the city's major symbol, The Saint Sofia Basilica.

Sofia preserves many valuable monuments to its long and storied past. Visitors exploring the city's streets can see remnants of The Eastern Gate from the days when Sofia was Serdika and Sredets, dating from the 2nd - 4th centuries AD. These remains are exhibited in the underpass connecting the Presidential Palace and The Ministerial Council, surrounded by shops selling traditional Bulgarian souvenirs and rosewater.

Sofia is also home to Bulgaria's most prestigious and largest educational institutions – universities, colleges, and middle schools that offer solidly-grounded, up-to-date instruction in such disciplines as Architecture, Medicine, The Humanities, Engineering, Music and Choreography, and Fine Arts.

The city's annual celebration is observed on September 17, in honor of the martyrdom of Saint Sofia and her three daughters Vyara (Faith), Nadezhda (Hope), and Lyubov (Love).



Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is the use of credit cards wide spread?

In large stores, hotels, and catering and entertainment establishments, the following credit cards are generally accepted: Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Diners Club. In smaller stores, hotels, and catering and entertainment establishments, it is necessary to pay in cash.

2. What currency is used for daily transactions in the country?

At present, only lev (BGN) is accepted. The official currency of the country is the lev, which is equal to 100 stotinki). Fixed currency rate: 1 EUR = 1.95583 BGN

3. What is the best way to exchange currency?

All banks and licensed exchange offices are suitable for exchanging currency.

4. Where are the international airports in the country?

There are international airports in Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas. Direct charter flights are available to the Black Sea airports in Varna and Burgas during the summer season.

5. Which are the mobile operators in the country?

Vivacom, Mtel and Telenor. They cover the entire territory of the country. They maintain 2G, 3G, 4G networks.

6. What are the speed limits for motor vehicles in Bulgaria?

50 km/h in populated areas; 90 km/h outside populated areas; 140 km/h on limited access highways.

7. What is the country's emergency telephone number?

In the event of a medical emergency, call the toll-free telephone number **112**. This is also the number to call for any other emergency. The number can also be reached outside the range of your mobile network. The **112** operators also speak languages other than Bulgarian.

8. Bulgaria is located in which time zone?

Bulgaria is located in the Eastern European Time Zone, which is GMT (Greenwich Mean Time) +2 hours.

9. What is the electric voltage in the country?

220V, 50 Hz.

10. Can I rent a car in Bulgaria?

Visitors can hire motor vehicles from one of the international rent-a-car companies such as Hertz, Budget, Eurocar, and others. Also, many hotels now offer this service through licensed Bulgarian car rental companies.

11. What is the climate in Bulgaria?

The climate in the country is temperate continental, with Mediterranean influence in the southern parts. The Black Sea influences the climate in the eastern part of the country. There are about 2,000 sunny hours from May to October. During the winter, the mountains are particularly suitable for winter sports.

12. Which season is best for visiting the country?

The most appropriate time for a visit depends on the reason for your trip. The most suitable months for skiing are December, January, February and March. If you are interested in visiting the Black Sea beaches – June, July, August and September. If you are a hiker or camper, the most appropriate times are the late spring, the beginning of summer and early autumn. Any time of year is a good time to visit one of Bulgaria's many spa resorts.

13. Which are the largest sea resorts?

Sunny Beach, Golden Sands, Albena, Dyuni, Elenite, MMC Primorsko, St. Konstantin and St. Helena and the cities of Varna and Burgas.

14. Which are the country's best-known mountain resorts?

Bansko, Borovets, Pamporovo, Chepelare and Vitosha.



Frequently Asked Questions

15. Healthcare Services

Interested parties may obtain more information about healthcare and the conditions for using healthcare services paid by public funds in Bulgaria by visiting the site of the Ministry of Health (www.mh.government.bg) and the site of the National Health Insurance Fund (www.nhif.bg/).

Medical care for foreigners who are residents of the EU, EEA and Switzerland (Austria, Belgium, Great Britain, Germany, Greece, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Czech Republic, Sweden, Iceland, Norway, Lichtenstein, Switzerland).

Citizens of any of the above member states who are visiting or residing in Bulgaria have the right to avail themselves of their health insurance. When obtaining medical care, they need only visit a medical facility or diagnostic laboratories that has concluded a contract with the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF), or any of the state or municipal medical institutions (see the file entitled Healthcare Establishments Register) that are supported by the Ministry of Health. Tourists in Bulgaria can inquire with staff at hotels to gain information about medical care and treatment, and it is the obligation of hotels to provide a list of the addresses of medical facilities and doctors who contracts with the NHIF. (Please note that the healthcare specialists working at hotels often do NOT work with the NHIF, and their services are generally expensive.)

16. What is the weather like in february?

The weather averages in Sofia for february are as follows:

Monthly Temperature	1 °C
Daily Low/High Temperature	-3 °C / 4 °C
Monthly Sunshine Hours	3 hrs
Rainfall	40 mm
Monthly Rainfall Days	7 days