



*Guidebook
with personal
experiences of Bulgaria*

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Introduction

Dear Reader,

My name is Judit Vas, I am a Hungarian EVS volunteer in Bulgaria. In the next few pages I would like to give you some information about EVS, what it is, how to apply; and I would like to share with you my personal experiences of Bulgaria, volunteering, living abroad.

Before I applied to become an EVS volunteer I had participated in some youth exchanges, and international trainings within the Youth in Action Program of the European Commission in different countries around Europe. During a youth exchange in the middle of Bulgaria in 2010 I felt that I have to spend more time here in the best country all over the world, so I asked the coordinator of the youth exchange how I could come back. This is how I first learned about the EVS program. I contacted Útilapu, an accredited organization in Hungary that became my sending organization for the project.

Útilapu was founded in 1993 by a group of young people, who took part in some international camps abroad and thought that this opportunity would be very good for the Hungarian youngsters too. Útilapu Hálózati is a partner organization of volunteer exchange and peace network Service Civil International (SCI). You can find them here: www.utilapu.org

My hosting organization is CVS-Bulgaria, they organized the youth exchange in which I took part. They applied for an EVS project about promoting volunteering and I became volunteer in this project. CVS-Bulgaria is also part of SCI, with a branch status since 2004. CVS-Bulgaria was founded by Bulgarian volunteers who participated in short-term projects abroad and then decided to organize



similar camps in Bulgaria. CVS-Bulgaria promotes the development of societal values and encourages responsible behavior towards peace, social justice and nature protection culture. This is achieved by organizing volunteer initiatives and educational programs. You can find them here: www.cvs-bg.org

Creating this guidebook is a part of my EVS project, and I hope it will help you get some useful information that will encourage you to become a volunteer too.

Enjoy!



What is EVS

The European Voluntary Service (EVS) is the best choice for you if you would like to experience the best months of your life abroad participating in voluntary activities. During the service you will be involved in an enjoyable non-formal learning process where you can learn about another country, culture, language and this is the best way to develop your skills, to get new friends and do something for others.

EVS is part of the Youth in Action Program established by the European Commission for the period 2007-2013. It gives a special chance to European youth (and not only) to have an unforgettable experience through an unpaid and full-time voluntary service in a foreign country. This program develops solidarity, understanding, tolerance, peace and promotes active citizenship among young people.

EVS projects can take place in the EU Program Countries (*Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Iceland, Turkey, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Liechtenstein, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom*), in the Neighboring Partner Countries (*Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Kosovo, Lebanon, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Russian Federation, Serbia, Syria, Tunisia, Ukraine*) or in other Partner Countries of the World. In general, EVS is mainly aimed at the Program Countries, but youngsters from the Neighboring Partner Countries can also participate in EVS projects. In addition, young people from Europe can go on EVS projects in other continents, for example South America, Asia or Africa. However, these projects must be submitted to the Executive Agency in Brussels and their review takes longer time. An important condition is that all EVS projects must involve at least one EU Member state.

You can choose from various fields of EVS projects such as art, culture, activities with children or elderly people, environment, sports, media, etc. according to your interests and wishes. You will do your service in another country than the country where you live. The project must be in the non-profit field, it's not a paid job, study period or a tourist activity abroad, but it's a full-time volunteer service because you have to work 30-35 hours a week. Your work has to be for the benefit of your hosting organization and/or the local community. With your work and active citizenship you help build tolerance, solidarity, peace, understanding between different people and nations.

If you want to apply for an EVS project, you have to be between 18 and 30 years of age (for volunteers with fewer opportunities the lower age limit is 16), and you have to be a European citizen. You can take part in an individual or group project depending on the



activities. The projects can last between 2 weeks and 12 months and they involve a sending organization, a hosting organization and a volunteer / volunteers. Sometimes there is a coordination organization as well. ¹

The EVS projects have 3 main parts:

1. **Preparation:** In this part you are at home in your country and you prepare yourself for the service. First you have to find a sending organization and choose an activity that you want to do and a country where you want to go. There are many sending organizations in each country and usually the staff is nice and helpful so you can do it. The sending organization will prepare you for the project. They will organize a pre-departure training for you where you will get information about the Youth in Action Program, about EVS, about your service. They will help you with the paper work, with the application, with your insurance. They will follow your life and your activities during your whole project, and if you need any help, you can turn to them. If you have already found the place where you want to go, you should write an e-mail and make contact with the hosting organization. The sending organization will help you with this. You can look for projects in the EVS database:

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei_en.cfm

2. **EVS activities:** In this part you are in a foreign country and you do your service. If you have applied for a project, and the host organization has accepted you, you should pack your luggage, go and start the activities. If you want to read stories from ex-EVS volunteers, you can find some here: www.myevs.net
3. **Evaluation:** After you finish your EVS activities, you will have a final evaluation with the sending organization in your home country. Here you can start thinking about some follow-up projects and future activities that may complement your project and ensure its sustainability.

What you should do before you get started?

- You should visit your sending organization and meet the staff because they will help you if you have any problem.
- You have to sign the MSH International insurance because during your EVS you have the right to insurance.
- You should talk with your hosting organization.
- You should visit your doctor and dentist , which will give you a few joyful minutes.



¹ You can get more information here: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/european-voluntary-service_en.htm and www.salto-youth.net



- You should check your passport.
- And then you have to say “goodbye” to your country, family and friends.

After you arrive you will be so happy and excited and say “hello” to your new home. During the project you will have a supervisor, a person to support and guide you in work-related issues, and a mentor, a person who will be your friend and help you socialize in the new environment. You will meet them many times and they will help you in everything.

I know from my own experience that you will not remember anything from your first day in the new country. You will meet a lot of people, you will visit some bureau, you will totally not know where you are, and all streets will look the same to you, and you won't understand the people in the street because they will speak another language; but don't worry, if you have a coordinator that is half as good as mine everything will be all right.

It is a good idea to check out the place you are going before leaving. If you have access to internet, you can get a lot of information about the country, the city, the culture.

What you have to pay during the EVS project

You don't have to pay anything for your EVS service. The European Commission funds the projects through the Youth in Action Program. The only thing you might have to pay is a small part (maximum 10%) of your travel costs. It is possible that you have to prepay some costs (maybe you have to buy your ticket to the project) but this money will be reimbursed to you by the hosting organization upon arrival. The hosting organization takes the responsibility to provide you with all kinds of support, including guidance, counseling, mentoring, training, seminars, language course, accommodation, and pocket money, money for food and accommodation, holidays. So you'll have everything.

During the whole period you have to keep all bills, invoices, receipts (depending on the country). It's very important because when the hosting organization prepares the financial report for the project they have to provide all these documents to the National Agency. So when you buy your ticket or anything else you have to ask for an invoice, otherwise you cannot have your money back!



Application procedure

How to apply:

1. Find a sending organization and get to know them. You will work with them during your whole service and after it. They will give you all of the help you need before leaving and after you come back. If you have any problems abroad and you cannot solve them with the help of your host organization, they will support you.
2. Write your Europass CV in English, or in some other languages, you can find it here: <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/documents/curriculum-vitae/templates-instructions>
3. Write your motivation letter, you can talk about your personal motivation, your goals, and your life, why you apply for this particular project. If you apply for more than one project, don't forget to write a separate motivation letter for each project. For this you can find some useful tips here: <http://blog.youthnetworks.eu/2010/03/how-to-write-an-evs-motivation-letter/>
4. Look for a hosting project or a hosting organization. There are a hundreds of opportunities for you. Think about your interests and motivation and choose the best project/organization for you. Here is the list of all projects and all accredited organizations: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei_en.cfm
5. Send your CV and motivation letter to the place or places where you want to go, and keep your fingers crossed!
6. If you have been selected as a volunteer in the concrete project, the hosting organization will contact with you and your sending organization.
7. Then one of the organizations (hosting, coordinating or sending) will submit a project proposal to their National Agency to fund the project activities.
8. When the project is approved, funding is provided and you are prepared, you can pack your luggage and go.

Sometimes it takes a long time to find the perfect project for you. And don't forget that there are so many applicants. So if a hosting organization doesn't approve you, it doesn't mean that you are not good enough for them, maybe there were many other people interested in the same project. Don't lose your motivation and don't give up. Be patient – if you really want, you can achieve your goals!

Every year there are several deadlines for submitting EVS grant applications. So be aware that even if you apply now it doesn't mean that you can start your project tomorrow.



For projects submitted to a National Agency

Projects starting between

1 May - 31 October

1 August - 31 January

1 January - 30 June

Application deadline

1 February

1 May

1 October

For projects submitted to the Executive Agency

Projects starting between

1 August - 31 December

1 December - 30 April

1 March - 31 July

Application deadline

1 February

1 June

1 September

Types of EVS projects

By length:

- Short-term EVS: it is from 2 weeks up to 2 months. If you have only a few months that you want to spend abroad you can choose a short-term project.
- Long-term EVS: it is for a period of between 6 and 12 months.

In both types of projects your sending organization will organize a pre-departure training for you to prepare you for your project. After you have arrived to the place of your service the National Agency of your host country will organize on-arrival training, where you will get all of the information you need about the Youth in Action Program, about the host country, the rules, the habits, and you will meet other EVS volunteers. After you have finished your project your sending organization will organize the evaluation of the EVS project.

In addition to the pre-departure training, on-arrival training and evaluation, if you go on a long-term project, you will also take part in a mid-term training/evaluation in the middle of your project. Here you will have the chance to get together with other long-term EVS



volunteers, to share your experiences and get to know other projects. If you have any problems in your project, you can discuss them with representatives of the National Agency.

By number of participants:

- Individual: one EVS volunteer in the project
- In group: at least 10 EVS volunteers in the project

By type of the activity:

There are so many types of the activities that you can do, depending on your interest and motivation. For example:

- Culture
- Youth
- Sport
- Social care
- Cultural heritage
- Arts
- Civil protection
- Environment
- Animals
- Many more...

Why EVS?

Your EVS project can be the best part of your life. If you ask why, there could be many different answers because everybody is different. But here are some of the reasons why an EVS project is an unforgettable experience:



- You get the chance to meet other young people
- Be part of an international community
- Travel to different parts of Europe, and not only
- Try to do something different from what you have done before
- See different points of view
- Live abroad
- Change your life
- Have a volunteer experience without having to pay
- Have insurance
- Get new opportunities
- Face great challenge
- Get orientation for your future
- Help people
- Do good things
- Get to know a different culture
- Work not for money but for experience
- Get new energy, new ideas
- Meet different people with different backgrounds
- Learn a new language, improve your language skills
- Make new friends
- Open yourself
- Become more tolerant
- Travel
- Learn new things, acquire new skills
- Learn how to teach others, how to share ideas
- Work with youth
- Support the local communities



Rights and Responsibilities of an EVS Volunteer

Fundamental Rights

- The participant's dignity must be respected.
- The participant has the right to respect for his or her physical and mental integrity.
- The participant shall not be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- The participant has the right to protection of personal data concerning him or her.
- The participant has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
- The participant shall not be discriminated against on any grounds such as gender, race, color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, sexual orientation.
- The participant has the right not to participate in activities likely to harm his/her safety, health or physical, mental, moral or social well-being.

Rights during the EVS project

- The volunteer has the right to an explanation concerning the grant received by the organization and the use of this grant for the benefit of the volunteer's project.
- The volunteer has the right to language training.
- The volunteer has the right to adequate training to enable him/her to carry out the agreed tasks and a right to attend the on-arrival and mid-term seminars offered by the National Agency.
- The volunteer should have adequate supervision related to his/her tasks, by the local host organization in the project.
- The volunteer must be assigned a mentor by the local host organization, and should have frequent contact with him/her.
- The volunteer is entitled to support from his/her tutor and the National Agency in the event of unforeseen circumstances.
- The volunteer should expect his/her sending organisation to stay in contact with him/her for the duration of the project.
- The volunteer should not be coerced into participating in activities against his/her convictions which were not previously agreed.
- The volunteer has the right to receive pocket money from his/her host organisation on a weekly or monthly basis corresponding to the monthly rate set by the European Commission for each participating country in the EVS.
- All local travel costs related to the EVS project are covered by the host organisation.
- The volunteer has the right to free board and lodging.



- The volunteer is entitled to two consecutive whole days off per week and two days holiday per month of service (to be taken within the EVS period, with prior agreement of the host organization); during this time off, the volunteer is entitled to receive his/her pocket money and all other allowances offered by the program. His/her accommodation should remain available to him/her throughout this period.
- It is possible for the volunteer to end his/her project for a good reason, after having consulted his/her host organization, sending organization and the National Agency.

Rights after the EVS project

- The volunteer is entitled to receive support from his/her sending organization upon completion of his/her project.
- Following the completion of his/her EVS, the volunteer is entitled to a certificate (Youthpass) attesting the skills and experience that the volunteer has acquired during this period.

Responsibilities Prior to Departure

- The volunteer must read and sign the tri-parties activity agreement.
- The volunteer must attend a pre-departure training course, organized by the sending organization.
- The volunteer must inform his/her sending and host organization of the exact dates of his/her arrival at and departure from the host organization.
- The volunteer has the responsibility to inform his/her compatibility / suitability for certain EVS projects.
- The volunteer has the responsibility to provide accurate information to the sending organization about health related issues - this information shall be used for matching the volunteer to a suitable project and to ensure his/her well-being.

Responsibilities during the EVS project

- The volunteer is expected to respect the organizational policy of the host organization.
- The volunteer must respect the health and safety regulations of the host organization / country.
- The volunteer must not act in any way that could put others or him/her at the risk of being injured.
- The volunteer has the responsibility to fulfill the terms of the tri-parties agreement and is expected to remain in the project for the agreed duration unless there is good reason for the volunteer to leave the project.



- The volunteer is expected to be reliable, including notifying the appropriate persons (supervisor, mentor, NA) of his/her intention to withdraw from the EVS.
- The volunteer should keep his/her mentor informed about his/her whereabouts during the EVS period.
- The volunteer has responsibility towards the host organization and should show willingness to adapt to his/her surroundings and to carry out the agreed tasks. While the volunteer will be involved in interesting activities, some of the tasks could be routine but important to the running of the organization.
- The volunteer has the responsibility to seek guidance when necessary. If the volunteer has a problem s/he should discuss it with his/her mentor as the host organization can only act when it is aware of a problem.
- The volunteer is expected to meet regularly with his/her mentor.
- The volunteer should report serious difficulties to the National Agency.
- The volunteer must attend all the activities foreseen by the program and the events organized by the National Agency (on-arrival, mid-term meetings), in order to learn, share his/her difficulties and to exchange his/her experiences.

Responsibilities after the EVS project

- The volunteer must respect the agreement with the sending organization about reporting and returning experience to the sending organization.
- The volunteer must complete a final report at the end of the EVS project.
- The volunteer must contact the sending organization on his/her return or at the end of the EVS project.



Useful links

The European Commission Youth Portal:

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm

EVS stories:

<http://www.myevs.net/>

The European database of EVS accredited organisations:

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei_en.cfm

Youth in Action Program Guide:

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/youth-in-action-programme/previous-programme-guides_en.htm

EVS vacancies and projects in Europe:

<http://www.youthnetworks.eu>

Practical online tools for youth work and training:

<http://www.salto-youth.net/>

Hungarian National Agency:

<http://www.mobilitas.hu/>

Bulgarian National Agency²:

<http://www.youthbg.info/>

² search for your national agency if this is not applicable





Why Bulgaria?

Bulgaria, officially the **Republic of Bulgaria** (Република България) is a country in [Southeast Europe](#). Bulgaria borders five other countries: [Romania](#) to the north (mostly along the [Danube](#)), [Serbia](#) and the [Republic of Macedonia](#) to the west, and [Greece](#) and [Turkey](#) to the south. The [Black Sea](#) defines the extent of the country to the east.

With a territory of 110,994 square kilometers (42,855 sq mi), Bulgaria ranks as the [15th-largest country](#) in Europe. Several mountainous areas define the landscape, most notably [Stara Planina](#) (*the Balkan mountain*) and [Rhodope](#) mountain ranges, as well as the [Rila](#) range, which includes the highest [peak](#) in the entire [Balkans](#). In contrast, the [Danubian plain](#) in the north and the [Upper Thracian Plain](#) in the south represent Bulgaria's lowest and most fertile regions. The 378-kilometer (235 mi) Black Sea coastline covers the entire eastern bound of the country.

The emergence of the unified Bulgarian ethnicity and state dates back to the 7th century AD. All Bulgarian political entities that subsequently emerged preserved the traditions (in ethnic name, language and alphabet) of the [First Bulgarian Empire](#) (681–1018), which at times covered most of the [Balkans](#) and became a cultural hub for the [Slavs](#) in the [Middle Ages](#). With the decline of the [Second Bulgarian Empire](#) (1185–1396), Bulgarian territories came under [Ottoman](#) rule for nearly five centuries. The [Russo-Turkish War](#) of 1877–1878 led to the establishment of a [Third Bulgarian state](#) as a [principality](#) in 1878, which gained its full sovereignty in 1908. In 1945, after World War II, it became a [communist state](#) and was a part of the [Eastern Bloc](#) until the [political changes in Eastern Europe](#) in 1989/1990, when the [Communist Party](#) allowed multi-party elections. Bulgarian politics undertook a transition to [democracy](#) and elements of [free-market capitalism](#) were introduced.

The Bulgarian government functions as a [parliamentary](#) democracy within a [unitary constitutional republic](#). Its government is a member of the [European Union](#), [NATO](#), the [United Nations](#), the [Council of Europe](#), the [World Trade Organization](#) and is a founding state of the [OSCE](#) and the [Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization](#). Bulgaria has a high [Human Development Index](#) of 0.743, ranking 58th in the world in 2010.



History



A branch of the Slavs merged with the local Proto-Bulgarians, a Central Asian tribe, in the late 7th century to form the first Bulgarian state in the Balkans. In succeeding centuries, Bulgarian and the Byzantine Empires dominated South-East Europe, but by the end of the 14th century the region was overrun by the Ottoman Turks. Bulgaria regained its independence in 1878 largely due to the intervention of Russia and Romania, who clipped the wings of the declining Ottoman Empire in Bulgaria and elsewhere, and installed a minor German prince as a ruler of the newly independent country. The country's iconic heroes were all freedom fighters to a man: whether Rakovsky



(Раковски), who mixed revolution and literature, Vassil Levski (Васил Левски) - the Apostle of Freedom, or Hristo Botev (Христо Ботев), poet and fighter. After a series of bloody and brutal Balkan wars, Bulgaria had the further misfortune to be occupied by the losing side in both World Wars, and fell within the Soviet sphere of influence and became a People's Republic in 1946. Communist domination was brought to a swift, but for many people illusory end in 1989; though Bulgaria went on to hold its first multi-party election since World War II, essentially socialist policies were pursued until hyperinflation and economic meltdown drove the old guard out of power in 1997. Today, reforms and democratization have brought Bulgaria into the NATO fold, with EU accession celebrated in 2007. During Communist times, the Black Sea was a favorite destination for travellers behind the Iron Curtain. Now, increasing numbers of western Europeans travel throughout the country and many have bought vacation houses near the Black Sea or in picturesque villages. During the 2008 global financial crisis, Bulgaria was badly affected by the downturn, where the country entered a recession of 5%, and unemployment lingering near the double digits. Even though it is among one of the 50 richest countries in the world, Bulgaria remains as the poorest member of the European Union. The Issues facing the country are a weak judiciary system, a moderate level of corruption in the local government, large budget deficit, a poor road infrastructure, and a high unemployment rate. The unemployment has continually lingered near the double digits, an issue the country faces. Another serious problem is the sight of over-development in the country.

Language

The Bulgarian language is related to Serbian, Russian and other Eastern European languages, but contains many international words. Bulgarians use the Cyrillic alphabet which can make the task of getting around the country somewhat difficult if you aren't familiar with this alphabet as most signs are written in it. However, getting acquainted with the alphabet isn't very difficult and may save you a lot of trouble, especially as many common words are homophones of English or French words.

Also, as Bulgarian education emphasizes foreign language studies, especially English language, it wouldn't be a problem to talk and find information in English in bigger cities.



THE BULGARIAN ALPHABET					
Аа	a (as in cat)	Кк	k (as in kick)	Фф	f (as in foot)
Бб	b (as in bus)	Лл	l (as in love)	Хх	h (like 'ch' in Bach)
Вв	v (as in very)	Мм	m (as in marry)	Чч	ts (as in puts)
Гг	g (as in good)	Нн	n (as in no)	Цц	ch (as in check)
Дд	d (as in dog)	Оо	o (as in hot)	Шш	sh (as in shut)
Ее	e (as in egg)	Пп	p (as in pot)	Щщ	sht (like 'shed' in pushed)
Жж	zh (like 's' in leisure)	Рр	r (as in red)	Ъъ	a (like 'u' in but)
Зз	z (as in zoo)	Сс	s (as in sit)	Ьь	(consonant softening sound)
Ии	i (as in instant)	Тт	t (as in tree)	Юю	yu (like you)
Йй	y (as in young)	Уу	u (as in yule)	Яя	ya (as in yank)

Bulgarian is a South Slavic language, thus closer to [Serbo-Croatian](#) and [Slovenian](#) than to [Russian](#) or [Polish](#) but still retaining similarities to all. Native speakers numbering over 9.5 million people, it is the national language of Republic of [Bulgaria](#) and spoken by Bulgarian minorities in Serbia and the Western Balkans, and [Moldova](#), and language still in use by many immigrants of Bulgarian origin in [Argentina](#), [Canada](#), [Germany](#), [Netherlands](#), the [United Kingdom](#), and the [United States of America](#).

Linguists do not agree as to whether [Macedonian](#) is a dialect of Bulgarian. Generally Serbians disagree, while Bulgarians say that it is. The spoken languages are mutually intelligible for the most part, but their Cyrillic alphabets have diverged somewhat, with Macedonian's writing system resembling Serbo-Croatian's.

Most Bulgarian verbs carry inflection suffixes while some modal verbs use different words (typical example, the verb "съм" / "to be"). There are fewer verb tenses than in English with present, past, past continuous and future being the most commonly used, but the Slavic imperfective and perfective 'aspects' are present.



Nouns have three genders, and pronouns have genders. Adjectives must agree with the noun they modify and the first adjective takes the definite article if present. Those familiar with other Balto-Slavic languages will be surprised to discover that the noun cases are missing (except for a few vocatives) and replaced by prepositions and definite articles as post-positions like Romanian and Turkish. Unlike other Slavic languages, the infinitive has fallen out of use (which always ended in -ти). You may say "искам говорити" (I want to speak) over "искам да говоря" and be understood, but the locals may think you sound archaic or speak another Slavic language.

Bulgarian phrases

Hello.

Здравейте. (zdra-VEY-te)

Hello. (*informal, to close friend*)

Здравей. (zdra-VEY)

Hi. (*informal, to close friend*)

Здрасти. (ZDRAS-ti)

How are you?

Как сте? (КАК ste?)

How are you? (*informal*)

Как си? (КАК si?)

Fine, thank you.

Добре, благодаря. (doh-BRE, bla-go-da-RYA)

How do they call you? (*informal*)

Как се казваш? (kak se KAZ-vash?)

My name is ____ .

Казвам се ____ . (kahz-VAM se ____ .)

Nice to meet you.

Приятно ми е да се запознаем. (pryat-NO mi e da se za-POZ-naem)

Please.

Моля. (mo-LYA)

Thank you.

Благодаря. (bla-go-da-rya)



You're welcome.

Моля. (mo-LYA)

Yes.

Да. (da)

No.

Не. (ne)

Excuse me. (*getting attention*)

Извинете. (iz-vi-NE-te)

Excuse me. (*begging pardon or formal*)

Моля да ме извините. (MO-lya da me iz-vi-NI-te)

I'm sorry.

Съжалявам. (su-zha-LYA-vam)

Goodbye

Довиждане. (do-VIZH-da-ne)

Goodbye (*informal*)

Чао / Ciao (Italian). (chao)

I can't speak *Bulgarian* [well].

Аз не говоря български [добре]. (az ne govorya balgarski [dobre])

Do you speak English? (*polite*)

Говорите ли английски? (govorite li angliiski?)

Do you speak English? (*informal*)

Говориш ли английски? (govorish li angliiski?)

Is there someone here who speaks English?

Има ли някой, който говори английски? (ima li niakoi, koyto govori angliiski?)

Help!

Помощ! (pomosht!)

Look out!

Внимавай! (vnimavai!)

Watch out!

Пази се! (pazi se!)



Good morning.

Добро утро. (dobro utro or dobroutro)

Good evening.

Добър вечер. (dobar vecher)

Good night (*to sleep*)

Лека нощ. (leka nosh)

I don't understand.

Не разбирам. (ne razbiram)

Where is the toilet?

Къде е тоалетната? (kade e toaletnata?)

Go away!

Махай се! (mahay se!).

Don't touch me!

Не ме pipай! (ne me pipay)

I'll call the police.

Ще извикам полиция. (shte izvikam politsia)

Police!

Полиция! (politsia!)

Stop! Thief!

Спри! Крадец! (spri kradets!)

I need your help.

Имам нужда от помощ. (imam nuzhda ot pomosh)

It's an emergency!

Спешен случай! (speshen sluchay!)

I'm lost.

Загубих се. (zagubih se)

I lost my bag.

Изгубих си чантата. (izgubih si chantata)

I lost my wallet.

Изгубих си портфейла. (izgubih si portfeyla)

I'm sick.



Аз съм болен/болна. (az some bolen/ bolna) [male/female speaker]

I've been injured. [bleeding or other externally visible]

Ранен/а съм. (ranen/a sam) [male/female]

I've been injured. [broken bone or less visible, internal]

Контузен/а съм (kontuzen/a sam) [male/female]

I need a doctor.

Имам нужда от лекар. (imam nuzhda ot lekar)

Can I use your phone, please?

Извинете, мога ли да ползвам телефона ви? (izvinete, moga li da polzvam telefona vi?/).

Where's the bus/trolley stop?

Къде е спирката на автобуса/трамвая? (ku-DE e SPER-ka-ta na af-to-BUS-a/Tram-VAYA?)

Which bus/trolley goes to ...?

Кой автобус/трамвай отива до ...? (KOY af-to-BUS/Tram-VAY o-TI-va do ...?)

Does this bus/trolley go to ...?

Този автобус/трамвай отива ли до ...? (TO-zi af-to-BUS/Ttram-VAY o-TI-va li do ...?)

Which line takes me to ...?

С коя линия ще стигна до ...? (s ko-YA LI-ni-ya shte STE -stigna do ...?)

What's the next station?

Коя е следващата станция (ko-YA e SLED-va-shta-ta STAN-tsi-ya?)

Is this the right platform for ...?

Това ли е перонът за ...? (to-VA li e pe-RO-nut za ...?)

Taxi!

Такси! (tak-SI)

Can you take me/us to ____?

Ще може ли до ____? (shte MO-zhe li do ____?)

How much does it cost to get to ____?

Колко струва до ____? (KOL-ko STRU-va do ____?)

Is there a driver here?

Има ли някой да кара такси? (I-ma li NYA-koy da KA-ra tak-SI?)



Holidays



Честита Баба Марта!

Baba Marta (Баба Марта) (Grandma Marta), March 1. A very old Bulgarian holiday. People give each martenitsa (мартеница), a type of white-red yarn, as a symbol of health. Note that this is not a public holiday.

March 3 (Трети март). The day Bulgaria celebrates its liberation from 500 years of Ottoman domination (1393-1878).

April 20 - 20 April 1876 is the first day of the greatest uprising of the Bulgarian people against the Ottoman rule. Note that this is not a public holiday.

Gergiovdan (Гергьовден), May 6. St. George and official holiday of the Bulgarian Army.

Ss. Cyril and Methodius Day (Ден на Кирил и Методий), May 24. The day of St. Cyril (827-869), and St. Methodius (826-884), brothers who created the Cyrillic alphabet. A beautiful holiday - with lots of flowers, music and joy.

Assumption Day (Голяма Богородица), August 15. There are big celebrations, especially in the main monasteries, with icons being paraded by the monks. Note that this is not a public holiday.

Reunification Day (Ден на съединението), September 6. The day that the two parts of Bulgaria, the independent North and East Rumelia (autonomous region within the Ottoman Empire), were reunited.



Money



The Bulgarian main currency unit is the **lev** (лев, abbreviated "лв", plural: leva), comprised of one hundred **stotinki**. The lev is pegged to the euro at 1.95583 lev for one euro. 1 lev is roughly US\$ 0.64 and UK£ 0.41.

Shopkeepers and other businesses in Bulgaria will usually not accept foreign money though many will accept the euro. Bulgaria remains a largely cash economy in the rural areas but in major cities credit cards are generally accepted in bigger shops.

In most cities there are many money exchange offices which are marked with signs that say "(EX)CHANGE". Most are legitimate, but some may rip you off. It is much safer to exchange your money at a bank. Banks apply little or no commissions, and generally offer good rates. Higher commissions may be applied to traveler's checks. Old, dirty or very worn bank notes may be refused. *Never* exchange money out on the street. Beware of people on the street who offer high rates of exchange or who may ask you to make some change for them.

Over the past years the ATM network in Bulgaria has grown considerably, making it relatively easy to obtain cash from the numerous ATMs in Sofia, as well as in all other major cities and resorts. The national credit/debit card circuit BORICA, to which all ATMs in the country are hooked up, accepts VISA/Plus, Visa Electron, MasterCard/Cirrus, Maestro, American Express, Diners Club, and a number of other cards.

Food

Bulgarian cuisine is a representative of the cuisine of Southeastern Europe with some Turkish and Greek influences, but it has some unique elements. The relatively warm climate and diverse geography produce excellent growth conditions for a variety of vegetables, herbs and fruits, Bulgarian cuisine are particularly diverse.

Famous for its rich salads required at every meal, Bulgarian cuisine is also noted for the diversity and quality of dairy products and the variety of wines and local alcoholic drinks such as rakia, mastika and menta. Bulgarian cuisine features also a variety of hot and cold soups, an example of a cold soup being tarator. There are many different Bulgarian pastries as well such as banitsa.



Certain entries, salads, soups and dishes go well with alcoholic beverages and the alcohol of choice for some is Bulgarian wine.

Restaurants serving international cuisine have also made a presence in the country, offering various options such as Chinese, French, Italian, and international contemporary.

Popular local dishes



The most popular Bulgarian salad is the **shopska salad**, which is a mix of tomatoes, cucumbers, onion, raw or roasted peppers (preferably roasted), and sirene. Traditionally it is dressed only with salt, sunflower or olive oil and vinaigrette. Other popular salads are the snow white salad, the shepherd salad and the lyutenitsa.

As a main course you can have **moussaka** (a rich oven-baked dish of potatoes, minced meat and white sauce), **gyuvetch**, **sarmi** (rolls with vine or cabbage leaves), **drob sarma** (lamb liver and lung with rice), **kavarma** (minced meat with tomatoes), **mish-mash** (fried peppers, onion and eggs).

Another thing not to be missed when travelling Bulgaria is the Lutenitsa, which is a red pepper, aubergine and tomato puree, normally eaten on bread. If you can't find it homemade, go for one of the varieties with chunks in it.

Traditional milk products

There are only two native kinds of cheese: the yellow-colored **kashkaval** (Кашкавал) - more or less akin to the Dutch Gouda - and the more popular white **sirene** (Сирене) - a kind of Feta cheese, similar to Greek Feta in taste. Originally made from sheep milk, it is available from cow or goat milk, or mixed.

The native Bulgarian **kiselo mlyako** (yoghurt) contains *Lactobacillus Bulgaricus*, a bacterium which serves as the basis for active culture "plain" yoghurts in other countries. Normally made from cow or sheep milk, it can also be prepared from buffalo milk, with a remarkably stronger taste.



Being a staple, and quite favourite around the country, Bulgarian yoghurt also is an ingredient to many dishes, the most famous one being **tarator** (Таратор), a cold soup made from yoghurt, water, cucumbers, garlic, dill and walnuts . A drink called **ayran** - a yoghurt-water mixture with salt- is also very popular.

Fast food

Traditional bakeries prepare different kinds of pastry products. Banitsa and mekitsa are the favorites. Pizza, dyuner (döner), sandwich or hamburgers are also very easy to be found at the streets. There are also many local and international fast-food chains. Also one of the best and cheapest fast food options in Bulgaria, are the kebabche and kufte, spicy meat sausage and meatballs. In general street pizza is very tasty in Bulgaria aswell.

Stay safe

Bulgaria is generally a safe country, and people are quite friendly. You should however behave according to common sense when you are outside of the main tourist areas, i.e. don't show too openly that you have money, don't dress too much like a tourist, watch your things, don't walk around the suburbs (esp. those of Sofia) at night, avoid dark streets at night. Stepping in a hole is a much greater danger in Bulgaria than getting robbed.

Emergency phone numbers

The pan-European standard number 112 for all emergency calls is working everywhere in Bulgaria since September 2008. If, for some reason, you can not connect to 112, dial *166* for police, *150* for ambulance and *160* for the fire department.

Respect

Bulgarians are incredibly friendly and very interested in talking to foreigners. Bulgarians tend to be far more open than some other Eastern Europeans and engaging in dialogue with these people is much advised and worthwhile. In smaller cities, especially in the Rhodopes, people may invite you for lunch or even to sleep over. Often it is a pleasant gesture to give someone a Dobar Den when walking past a quiet stall or past a person. Kak sté (hows it going{talking to more than one person}[Kak si is usually singular]) will usually suffice for the younger generation.



As a rule of thumb for most countries worldwide, you should avoid topics involving politics and foreign relations, and on some occasions football (soccer) as well. If you are pulled in to such a conversation, try to stay neutral. Remember that your own knowledge of local situations is unlikely to be as good as a Bulgarians!

With a certain number of people, Macedonia can be a sensitive subject to talk about, but feel free to ask your questions, provided you do not discuss it with those more likely to take offence (i.e. nationalist skinheads). Some Bulgarians feel that Macedonia belongs to Bulgaria, but unless you know the subject and the people you are talking with, just asking questions is the best option.

Most of the Bulgarian people do not feel anger or resentment towards Russians (unlike a number of people from other former Eastern Bloc countries), and Bulgarians tend to have a much better perception of Russians, however caution may sometimes be needed in discussing issues regarding Turkey. Likewise, discrimination against Turks are widespread.

Bulgarians don't really do chit chat so trying to make conversation with someone at a till in a shop will probably result in odd looks (either from not understanding or not wanting to engage) or they will just ignore you. Likewise Bulgarians are quite impatient and will often honk their car horn at you if you walk in front of a car, especially in winter in the mountains as they try to keep a grip on the road.



My life as a volunteer in Bulgaria



My first impression was that I was so small and Sofia was so big. I had never seen as many blocks of flat in my life before. Sofia is 100 times bigger than my hometown, with a lot of people.

In my first day I met my nice coordinator, and we went to my flat, to the office of CVS-Bulgaria, to some other places. We met a lot of people, and many cute Bulgarian stray dogs and pigeons. For me every street was the same. It was a rainy, windy, gray day.

In Bulgaria it is good, if you can read the Cyrillic letters. Because if you want to use the public transport, you should know which is your direction. It's not a problem if you can't understand, but if you can read it, it can help you a lot.

But it was more difficult in the shops where the Cyrillic letters made me crazy. I could hardly find what I wanted to buy. For example, I saw several types of similar things like yogurt, sour cream, kefir and I didn't know which one was which. So learning foreign languages is very important.

The orientation is not too easy in a new place where you don't know anything, but you can find some help if you go with open eyes. For me the biggest help was a red rooster. It helped me find the office where I had to work. (Thank you red rooster, I like you.)

The traffic in Bulgaria is a little bit strange for me. If the light is green, it doesn't mean that you can cross the road safely. Drivers follow their own rules, and if they want to go, they will go. So take care of yourself when you want to cross the road.

There aren't big supermarkets as in my town, so it was something new for me. In the center there are a lot of small shops but a little bit further from the center you can find bigger shops.

In my country it is very impolite if you eat in the street. But here in Sofia most people eat in the street, in parks, in stations. And there are a lot of stray dogs and pigeons in the streets that want to get some food from you.

Bulgarian people are so kind if you try to talk with them in Bulgarian. The old ladies in my neighborhood are really kind. I told them a few sentences in Bulgarian when they tried to talk to me in Bulgarian (Good morning; I'm Hungarian; I can't speak in Bulgarian) and after that they were speaking slowly but also in Bulgarian, and they always smiled and touched me.



In the street most Bulgarian youngsters can speak some English so I think everybody can live here without knowing any Bulgarian. The only problem is in the shops, buses and trams, because the drivers don't speak English and you can't ask them which stop is yours. So if you want to go somewhere, you should first check your way on the map (www.bgMaps.com) or ask somebody.

For me the best part of the EVS experience was that I met a lot of people. Not only Bulgarians but some people from Germany, France, the USA, Turkey, Latvia, Lithuania, the UK. Everybody is so different but if you spend a lot of time with different people you will see that we are generally the same, we just have different living conditions and different opportunities.

For me as a Hungarian life in Bulgaria was so different from life at home. I am from a small agricultural town. We get up with the sun and go to sleep with the sun. Here in Sofia life starts at 10 or 12 o'clock, and in the evening at 22 o'clock the streets are still full of people.

Here I tried some Bulgarian food but I have to admit that some of it was not good for my Hungarian stomach. They use a special spice (чубрица) in every kind of meat which was totally uneatable for me. Here you can find a lot of tasty fruit and vegetables in market places. Bulgarian people drink yogurt with salt and water, it's also so strange for me, but they like it.



Of course in Bulgaria I faced a new language and it wasn't so easy in the first few weeks. I couldn't understand anything and it was a little bit frustrating that a lot of people were talking around me and I felt like on a new planet. But later I realized that it was good because during our lives we hear a lot of unimportant things and here I could learn from meta-communication. I realized that if somebody is deaf they can still understand a lot of things only from signs, movements, and physiognomy. Somehow sometimes I felt that I was deaf and my vision was my most important sense. But naturally after a few months I could understand some words and it was easier. I could help people if they asked me about the shop, the metro station or the time was, and it was a good feeling. I could explain to the shop assistant what I needed, I could buy my monthly public transport card, I could ask for an invoice – these are all simple things but they are not so easy without basic language skills.

The most difficult part is feeling homesick. As an EVS volunteer I left my home, my family, my friends, my whole life. And sometimes here I really miss them. Sometimes in the morning I can hear the voice of my little brother when he is running into my room to hug me. Sometimes I can feel the perfume of my grandma. Sometimes I can see the smile of my mother. That's hard. So I just try not to think about them a lot otherwise I would be sad. I just try to think about the great year when I am abroad, when I spend my time with friends; I have a new adventure and a new chance. But for me it is important to keep in contact with my friends from Hungary, with my family. Usually 2-3 times a week I talk with my family on Skype. Thanks to Facebook I am in contact with my friends every day, and I get e-mails from my ex-colleagues. For me these things are important because after this year I have to continue my life, maybe not from where I left, but I have to continue and I will need them.

In my life here my supervisor is my biggest support. She is not only a supervisor or a coordinator; she is much more than that. Of course we work together and she helps me a lot. But for me she is not only a supervisor or workmate with whom I spend my days, I like her because she has a special personality. I knew her before I came here, and I knew that everything would be all right if I worked together with her. She is always with me if I need help; she always listens to me if I need somebody to talk to. I can call her any time if I need somebody. She was with me when I was sick; she helped me when I needed help. I am lucky because I have the best supervisor and I wish to everybody a supervisor like her.

The second most important person for me is my mentor. She is amazing. From very first moment I felt I would like her because she was so nice and she hugged me. Here I really miss this thing. In my family we hug each other many times a day, but here I have only a few friends whom I can hug or who hug me. So she is the best mentor ever. Normally in a family there is somebody who asks you "How are you?" "How was your day?" but here she is the only one who does the same. Usually we are writing on skype and it's always a good feeling because I can feel that I am not alone. Here I have a sister who takes care of me and this is a very good feeling. If we meet I don't



feel that she is my mentor because she also shares her life with me as I share my life with her. I just feel that she is my friend who is so close to me. So for me my mentor is also as important as my supervisor.

So my EVS project is an amazing year when I learn a lot, I can try new activities, I make new friends, I learn a new language and culture. And here I found out that your home is not a place, is not a house with your relatives. The real home is inside of you and if you can find it inside, you can find your home anywhere. The world is so big so we should find our home in as many places as we can. I started it, now it's your turn, be an EVS volunteer and start your path, I promise you that it will be unforgettable!

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