

**PROTOCOL GUIDE**

**Republic of Bulgaria**

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

**State Protocol Directorate**

*Sofia, 2024*

Dear colleagues,

Welcome to the Republic of Bulgaria!

I believe that your stay in our country will be fruitful for the development of the relations between our countries and will be pleasant for you too.

I assure you that the Protocol Service of the Republic of Bulgaria, in the person of the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is making every effort to provide all of you, the representatives of the diplomatic corps accredited in the country, with the necessary conditions for peaceful and successful work.

Sincerely,

Director of State Protocol

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I. OBJECTIVES OF THE GUIDE

This guide provides information on the protocol service in the Republic of Bulgaria, facilities, privileges and immunities of diplomatic and consular missions, and of the representations of international organizations accredited in our country. The guide is structured in separate sections covering the main topics and the most frequently asked questions regarding protocol practices in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The present guide is purely informative. The dynamic environment we are living in is likely to lead to changes in some of the activities described that may be of a temporary or more long-term nature. We wish you success!

II. STATE PROTOCOL (STRUCTURE)

Protocol activity in the Republic of Bulgaria is regulated by the **State Protocol Act** (Promulgated in State Gazette No 32 of 18 April 2000, amended in State Gazette No 35 of 12 May 2009, amended in State Gazette No 39 of 26 May 2009, amended and supplemented in State Gazette No. 61 of 11 August 2015) and the **Rules Implementing State Protocol Act** (Adopted by Decree of the Council of Ministers No 172 of 10 July 2009, promulgated in State Gazette No 57 of 24 July 2009, amended in State Gazette No 27 of 5 April 2016).

Protocol activities include:

* the organisation of the activities and the bodies which carry out the State protocol;
* the diplomatic ceremonial;
* the diplomatic protocol servicing.

**The State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria** is entrusted with the implementation of the state protocol. The Directorate coordinates, provides agreement and assists in the implementation of the activities of a protocol nature of the President of the Republic, the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers, as well as other bodies of the executive branch in significant events with international participation.

The State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides information on all protocol matters to foreign diplomatic and consular representations and representations of international organisations in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The State Protocol Directorate has two departments: *State Ceremonial* and *Diplomatic Protocol*.

1. State Ceremonial

The state ceremonial includes the organization of:

* visits and official meetings in the Republic of Bulgaria of heads of state, chairpersons of parliaments, heads of government and foreign ministers;
* visits abroad of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria, the President of the National Assembly, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs;
* official ceremonies with the participation of the President of the Republic, the President of the National Assembly and the Prime Minister.
* conduction of official ceremonies – welcoming foreign ambassadors on their initial arrival in the country and seeing them off on their final departure, presenting the letters of credence of newly appointed ambassadors and other heads of diplomatic missions, signing of official documents and organising official receptions with the participation of the diplomatic corps.

2. Diplomatic Protocol

The Diplomatic Protocol covers the official diplomatic correspondence of the President of the Republic, the President of the National Assembly, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Official diplomatic correspondence includes the drafting and sending of documents of a protocol nature, such as:

* congratulations on national holidays, inaugurations and new appointments of foreign dignitaries;
* official messages on various occasions; condolence telegrams and letters;
* letters of thanks and telegrams in response to letters and telegrams of congratulations or condolences received;
* notes to the diplomatic and consular representations and to the representations of international organizations accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The Diplomatic Protocol ensures the observance and control of diplomatic privileges and immunities, and facilitates relations between foreign diplomatic and consular representations and the bodies of state power in the Republic of Bulgaria.

3. Protocol services in other departments

The services responsible for protocol activities in the Administration of the President, the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers shall carry out their activities in cooperation with the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by:

* sending to the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the programmes for official meetings, visits and ceremonies involving the President of the Republic, the President of the National Assembly, the Prime Minister or in cases where the diplomatic corps is invited, and promptly notifying them of any changes thereto;
* if necessary, assistance shall be provided by the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The State Protocol Directorate directs and is in charge of for the overall coordination of the protocol activities of other state and local authorities.

III. BEFORE ARRIVAL IN THE COUNTRY

1. Prior consent to the appointment of a head of a diplomatic representation (agrément)

According to Article 4 of the *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations*, the sending country should make sure that the receiving country has given its consent ***(agrément)*** to the person it intends to accredit as a head of its representation in the receiving country.

The request for an *agrément* shall be sent to the respective diplomatic or consular representation of the Republic of Bulgaria abroad or to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria by the respective diplomatic or consular representation of the sending country in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The request should be accompanied by **a curriculum vitae** of the person for whom an agrément is requested.

The sending country shall be notified of the giving of a consent *(agrément) by a note* through a diplomatic or consular representation of the Republic of Bulgaria abroad or from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria to the respective foreign diplomatic or consular representation in the country, or if there is no such, directly to the foreign policy department of the sending country.

2. Interim heads (en pied/en titre)

Where the sending State has decided to send a Head of a Diplomatic Representation at the level of a an interim head, he/she **shall be notified to** the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State Protocol Directorate.

The interim head may take up his/her functions after the submission of the **letters** whereby he/she is appointed by the sending country to carry out functions as an interim head of the representation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria.

3. Interim heads (ad interim)

If the head of a diplomatic representation is unable to carry out his/her functions, or if the post of a ‘head of representation’ is vacant, the functions of the head of a diplomatic representation shall be carried out by an acting head of mission. The name of the interim head of the diplomatic representation **shall be communicated to** the State Protocol Directorate by a note from the head of the representation or, if he/she is unable to do so, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the sending country.

The person designated as an interim head of the representation may not notify another member of the staff of the representation to act as an interim head. This can only be done by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the sending country.

4. Prior consent to the appointment

of a head of consular representation

Whenever a head of a consular representation is appointed, the sending country must notify the Republic of Bulgaria and obtain its permission as a host country, in accordance with the provisions of Article 12 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

The head of the consular representation shall obtain from the sending country a **consular patent** or a similar document or notification issued in accordance with the procedure of Article 11 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. The patent or similar document or notification shall be sent in advance to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria by diplomatic or other appropriate means.

A **curriculum vitae** of the person designated to act as Head of Consulate shall be attached to the notification of appointment.

The Republic of Bulgaria shall authorise and admit the head of the consular representation to perform the functions with an **exequatur** issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The sending country shall be notified of the given authorisation by diplomatic or other appropriate means.

The Republic of Bulgaria admits the possibility for the heads of consulates to temporarily perform their functions until the issuance of an exequatur.

With regard to the appointment of a temporary head of a consulate, ensuring the performance of his/her functions and the granting of the corresponding privileges and immunities, the Republic of Bulgaria shall apply without distinction the provisions of Article 15 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

5. Prior consent to the appointment

of honorary (not regularly appointed) consular officials

Honorary (not regularly appointed) consular officials of other countries in the Republic of Bulgaria shall be appointed on request of the sending country from among Bulgarian citizens and citizens of other countries **with the consent** of the Republic of Bulgaria. Any consent to appointment may be withdrawn at any time.

The same procedure shall also be followed for requesting and authorising the opening or establishment of a consular representation headed by an honorary (not regularly appointed) consular official.

The request for appointment shall be sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria through the relevant diplomatic or consular representation of the Republic of Bulgaria abroad or, if there is no such representation in the given country, through the relevant foreign diplomatic or consular representation accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria or through another appropriate channel. The request is to be accompanied by a curriculum vitae of the person.

The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria shall adopt a resolution to grant and withdraw consent to the appointment of honorary (not regularly appointed) consular officials .

The sending country shall be notified of the consent given through the relevant diplomatic or consular representation of the Republic of Bulgaria abroad or by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria to the relevant foreign diplomatic or consular representation accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria or by any other appropriate means.

The sending country shall provide a *consular patent* or a similar document to any honorary (not regularly appointed) consular official appointed by it and agreed to by the Republic of Bulgaria in the above manner. On the basis of the consular patent, the State Protocol Directorate issues a consular *exequatur.*

Honorary consular officials of other countries shall be admitted to perform their functions on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria in accordance with the provisions of Articles 10 to 14 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

6. Prior approval of appointment

of military, naval, air force and police attachés

In accordance with Article 7 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, the Bulgarian country makes in its practice use of the right to grant prior approval of the appointment of military, naval and air attachés accredited in the country. The request, *made by a note and accompanied by a detailed curriculum vitae* of the person proposed for appointment, shall be sent by official channels to the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the relevant Bulgarian diplomatic or consular representation in the sending country, respectively, if there is no such representation, through its diplomatic or consular representation in the Republic of Bulgaria, or through another appropriate channel if the sending country has no representation in the country.

Normally, the approval procedure takes about one month from receipt of the request in the State Protocol Directorate. The sending country shall be notified of the given approval by official means, in the manner specified above for sending the request.

Police attachés of foreign countries in the Republic of Bulgaria shall be accredited in the same manner.

7. Notification of members of diplomatic,

administrative and technical and support staff of representations

The State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria shall be notified in writing of the arrival of members of the diplomatic, administrative and technical and support staff by **a note verbale** from the foreign representation concerned. The note shall state the **names, post and/or diplomatic rank of the official, the date of arrival, the period of appointment (term of office) and the names of the official instead of whom the official is arriving.** In the event that a newly coming staff member comes to a new post, this must be stated in the note, with a brief description of the functions he/she will perform.

Foreign representations shall notify the arrival of family members of diplomatic, administrative and technical and support staff in the same manner.

8. Visas

Before arriving in Bulgaria, the members of the diplomatic, administrative and technical and support staff of the foreign missions, for whom there is a visa requirement, must obtain a long-term residence visa of a ‘D’ type from the diplomatic and consular representations of the Republic of Bulgaria abroad.

More information on the procedure and the documents for applying for and obtaining a visa, as well as application forms can be found [here](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/uslugi-patuvania/konsulski-uslugi/patuvane-bulgaria/viza-bulgaria) or on the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (section *‘Services and Travel’ — ‘Consular Services’ —‘Travel to Bulgaria’)*.

9. Transit passage

When transiting through the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, the members of diplomatic, administrative and technical and support staff of foreign diplomatic and consular representations, as well as their family members, shall enjoy the privileges and immunities provided for in Article 40 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, respectively in Article 54 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

10. Diplomatic Corps

The State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shall compile and maintains a directory of the diplomatic corps in the Republic of Bulgaria, which shall include:

* Seniority of Heads of Mission;
* The diplomatic and consular representations accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria (including the missions without headquarters in the country), with indicated contact details – postal address, e-mail, telephone, etc.;
* Members of the diplomatic staff of the missions – names and ranks;
* Honorary consulates of foreign countries headed by honorary consular officials with contact details;
* Representations of international organizations accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria with contact details;
* Information on national holidays of accredited countries and other useful information.

The State Protocol Directorate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs draws attention to the fact that in order to maintain the guide it is necessary for each diplomatic and consular representation and the representations of international organizations accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria to submit up-to-date information about their staff by sending a note verbale.

IV. UPON ARRIVAL IN THE COUNTRY

А. State Ceremonial

1. Welcoming a newly appointed

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

The State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs **shall be notified** of the arrival of a newly appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary at the latest **one week** before the scheduled date of arrival. The notification shall be made by a note verbale addressed by the diplomatic representation of the foreign country concerned accredited to the Republic of Bulgaria.

Upon initial arrival on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Ambassador and the members of his/her family accompanying him/her are entitled to pass through the VIP – Sofia Airport Government Lounge. The Ambassador shall be received at the Sofia Airport by the Head of the Diplomatic Protocol Department of the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or by another official of the Directorate *(see ‘*[*Rules for use of the VIP Lounge*](#IV_В_11)*’).* Upon arrival of the newly appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary days off and on non-working days or outside the working hours on weekdays, a representative of the State Protocol Directorate shall not be present at the airport for the reception.

2. Letters of Credence Ceremony

The State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shall organize the ceremony of presenting letters of credence to the President of the Republic of Bulgaria by an ambassador of a foreign country, in coordination with the Presidential Administration and in compliance with the following protocol practice:

* Before the official ceremony of presenting the originals of the letters of credence to the President of the Republic, the newly appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary shall hold a protocol meeting with the Director of the State Protocol Directorate in the building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
* After the protocol meeting with the Director of the State Protocol Directorate and before the presenting of the originals, the newly appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary shall hand over copies of his/her letters of credence to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
* On the day of the ceremony, an official from the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shall accompany the Ambassador from his/her residence or the hotel where he/she is staying in a motorcade of a protocol and an official vehicles to the building of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria;
* The Director of the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shall welcome the Ambassador in front of the building, introduce the newly appointed Ambassador to the President and accompany him/her during the ceremony.
* For the ceremony of presentation of letters of credence by an ambassador of a foreign country, military honours shall be provided by the National Guard unit under the President of the Republic of Bulgaria.
* After the ceremony with the President, the newly received Ambassador shall lay flowers at the Monument to the Unknown Warrior.

The Ambassador's spouse and three other diplomats from the Embassy may attend the ceremony.

Detailed instructions and a diagram of the ceremony can be found in the appendices of this guide.

3. Official ceremonies with the participation of representatives of the diplomatic corps

Formal ceremonies shall be held on:

* the National Holiday of the Republic of Bulgaria — 3 March;
* on other public holidays, upon celebration of historical events and personalities;
* at the initiative of the state authorities.

During the conduction of the ceremonies, the heads of foreign diplomatic and consular representations and representations of international organizations accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria shall take a separate place from the President of the Republic and the Bulgarian officials.

The venue shall be indicated by staff of the State Protocol Directorate or by representatives of other protocol services, depending on the event.

4. Visits

The State Protocol Directorate shall:

* organise the visits of foreign ministers of foreign affairs to the Republic of Bulgaria. Coordinate and provide assistance in visits at a Prime Ministerial level. Provide assistance, as necessary, for visits at the level of the President of the Parliament and Head of State;
* organise the visits abroad of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria. Where necessary, coordinate and assist in the organisation of visits abroad of the Prime Minister, the President of the Parliament and the President of the Republic of Bulgaria.

5. Organisation of protocol and other official

and working meetings, talks and events

The State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shall assist in the organization of **protocol meetings and talks** of the heads of diplomatic and consular representations, representations of international organizations and other foreign missions in the Republic of Bulgaria with the President, the President of the National Assembly, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria. Requests for meetings and talks shall be made by note verbale to the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The protocol meetings of the heads of foreign diplomatic and consular representations and of representations of international organisations with other ministries and departments, as well as with the local government and the judicial branch, shall be organised by the respective diplomatic or consular representation or representation of an international organisation **without the participation** of the State Protocol Directorate.

The State Protocol Directorate shall promptly inform the relevant Bulgarian officials of the requests received and shall transmit their reply to the heads of the foreign missions that requested the meeting or conversation.

6. Signing official documents

The official document signing ceremony shall include:

* announcement of the signed documents in Bulgarian and in a foreign language;
* signing;
* exchange of documents between the signatories;
* brief words of welcome and congratulations between the signatories.

Table flags shall be provided for the official document signing ceremony and placed on the signing table. Where there are two signatories, they shall be seated according to the principle of hospitality, according to which the guest shall be seated on the right, and where there are more than one, according to the order of protocol adopted for the event.

B. Diplomatic Protocol

1. Personal documents (status)

The State Protocol Directorate shall **register and issue cards** to the staff members of diplomatic and consular representations accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria and to their family members permanently living with them, as well as to the staff of the representations of international organizations accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria with diplomatic status, in the presence of signed agreements for the granting privileges and immunities.

2. Types of cards

After registration, the following types of cards shall be issued to the staff members of a diplomatic or consular representation or of a representation of an international organization accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria and to their family members:

* card of a member of the diplomatic staff of a diplomatic representation or of a representation of an international organisation accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria (**‘diplomatic card’**);
* card of a consular officer in a consular representation (‘**consular card’**);
* card of a member of the administrative and technical staff of a diplomatic or consular representation or of a representation of an international organisation accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria **(‘card of administrative and technical staff’**);
* card of a member of the support staff of a diplomatic or consular representation or of a representation of an international organisation accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria (**‘support staff card’**).

The family members of the diplomatic and consular representations and of the representations of international organizations accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria who reside with them shall be subject to registration in the same procedure and shall be issued **cards of the same type as the holder** — a member of the staff of the representations.

Family members, unless otherwise provided for in a bilateral or multilateral international treaty, shall be persons who live with the holder in the same household and are:

* **a spouse** or a registered partner with whom the person cohabits;
* **descendants,** including only of the person referred to in paragraph 1, who have not attained the age of 21, are not married and are not gainfully employed;
* **descendants** from 21 to 26 years of age, including only of the person referred to in paragraph 1, who are not married and are enrolled on a full-time basis in a Bulgarian higher education institution*. Remark:* Cards of this category of persons shall be issued each year upon presentation of a document from the educational institution certifying that they are regularly enrolled as students in the respective academic year;
* **descendants** over the age of 21, including only of the person referred to in paragraph 1, who have no income of their own, are objectively unable to provide for their own support and serious health reasons require the holder to care for them personally. *Remark:* In order to issue a card to this category of persons, it is necessary to present a certifying document — a medical certificate;
* **Ascendants** of the holder or of the person referred to in paragraph 1 who are dependent and serious health reasons require the holder to take personal care of them – under the conditions of reciprocity. In such cases it is necessary to take the following steps:
* to certify in the note used to apply the relationship with the holder;
* to declare that the ascendant is dependent on the holder and has a home secured or to provide a document that the ascendant's state of health requires the holder to take personal care of the ascendant;
* a certificate that reciprocal treatment is possible under the laws and rules of the sending country.

***Remark:***

From 1 January 2017, children aged up to 14 years of age shall be issued the same type of card as the holder — a member of the staff of the representations.

For children of accredited staff members of a diplomatic or consular representation or of a representation of an international organization accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria who are **newly born** on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, the procedure for registration and issuance of a card shall be applied in the same manner as for the holder, with no obligations to hold a long-term residence **visa** and to present the evidence referred to in Article 24, Paragraph 2 of the Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria Act. For newborn children, a **birth certificate** and a national identity document — **passport** — must be presented.

The registration and application for cards of all members of the staff of a diplomatic or consular representation, or of a representation of an international organization accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria, and of their family members shall be carried out by:

* submission of a **request with a note** to the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stating the name, rank and position of the holder, date of arrival, end date of functions, in whose place the holder arrives, unless it is a newly created position, and names, capacity and relationship of the family members accompanying him/her.
* a completed and signed **form**, in two original copies for each person. The form for the issue of a card to a child under 14 years of age shall be signed by the parent holding the office. The form can be downloaded from [here](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari) or found on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (section ‘News’ — ‘Forms’);
* two **photographs** as required by the form;
* a **national identity document** (passport, passport substituting document, identity card). As regards children who do not have a separate document, a copy of the personal page and the page of the parent's passport where they are registered shall be attached);
* a **copy of a national identity document** (two in total, one for each form);
* a copy of the **birth certificate** (for children born in the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria to the office holder).

The cards of the staff members of diplomatic and consular representations and of representations of international organizations having their headquarters in the Republic of Bulgaria and of their family members shall be issued with validity for the **period of accreditation**, but not more than 5 years, and shall **certify the immunities and privileges granted within the meaning of the international law, as well as the right to multiple entry and residence on the territory of the country,** unless otherwise provided for in an international treaty in force for the Republic of Bulgaria, or the conditions of reciprocity require otherwise.

The cards shall be issued within **30 working days** from receipt of the request as telephone inquiries about the readiness of the requested documents shall be possible after the expiration of the quoted period. After their expiry date, new cards shall be issued in accordance with the above procedure. It is desirable to indicate in the request note the period for which the reissue of the type of card concerned is requested.

All cards issued (both to the holder and to his/her family members) shall be returned to the State Protocol Directorate at least 15 days prior to their expiration date. Cards shall also be subject to mandatory return upon the holder's permanent departure from the country, regardless of their validity period, as well as upon death or when the person is declared undesirable.

Cards shall be returned to the State Protocol Directorate with a note verbale and a completed **return form**, a template of which can be downloaded from [here](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari) or found on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (section ‘Topical Information’ — ‘Forms’).

It shall be mandatory to fill in all the fields in the forms correctly and to provide a photo of the person, which is current at the moment of reissuing the ID card.

***Remark:***

In the event of a request for extension of a card due to the extension of the term of office of the staff members of the representations and their family members up to **3 months**, a new card shall not be issued, and the State Protocol Directorate will continue the previously established practice of certifying the right of residence by affixing a stamp and seal in the passport of the person concerned. Continuation of the right of residence under the above procedure of the same person shall be admissible **once!**

Requests in such cases should be made by a note stating the exact date until which the appointment is to be continued and of the final departure of the staff member and his/her family members. The original passports of the employee and his/her family members shall be attached to the note for stamping.

The State Protocol Directorate would like to draw attention to the need for the documents issued to be returned to the Directorate before the final departure of the members of the diplomatic, administrative and technical and support staff of the missions.

The Directorate reserves the right not to issue cards to newly-arrived staff members of diplomatic and consular representations and representations of international organisations with headquarters in the Republic of Bulgaria, and to their family members, if the cards of their predecessors who have permanently left have not been returned in advance, and if the rank and position held by the diplomat or official are not accurately indicated.

3. Other registrations

The State Protocol Directorate shall **register, without issuing a card**, persons temporarily replacing the regular staff in diplomatic and consular representations and in the representations of international organizations with headquarters in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as other short-term seconded (up to 3 months) staff in the representations. In order to make registration, a request is required to be made by a note, which is to be accompanied by the same set of documents listed above for the issue/reissue of a card.

The State Protocol Directorate **shall not register guests** of staff in the representations.

The State Protocol Directorate registers and issues cards to honorary (not regularly appointed) consular officials in the Republic of Bulgaria (identification cards). The card is issued upon presentation of the following documents:

* a note verbale from the relevant diplomatic representation (embassy) of the sending country, accredited to the Republic of Bulgaria, where the issuance of a card is requested;
* an enclosed copy of a consular patent;
* an enclosed copy of a consular exequatur;
* a copy of an ID card.

A card application form can be downloaded from [here](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari) or found on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (section ‘Topical Information’ — ‘Protocol Guide’ — Forms’).

***Remark:***

When reissuing a card to an honorary (not regularly appointed) consular official, please submit the required documents to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at least 30 days prior to the expiration of the old card. The cards are subject to mandatory return to the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs upon expiry of their validity period, as well as upon discontinuation of the position held as an honorary (not regularly appointed) consular official.

4. Forms

The form for issuing a card to a foreigner accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria, a form for returning an identity card, as well as others can be found on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (section ‘Topical Information’ — ‘Protocol Guide’ — ‘[Forms](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari)’).

**C. Privileges and immunities**

The privileges, immunities and facilities under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations shall be granted by the Republic of Bulgaria to all diplomatic and consular representations of foreign countries accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria and to the representations of international (governmental) organizations in the Republic of Bulgaria with which agreements have been concluded for the granting of privileges and immunities.

Following the principles of the VCDR, the State Protocol Directorate reminds you that when contacting the Bulgarian administration on issues related to the issuance of residence cards by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, passes for access to the security areas of the Sofia Airport, registration of motor vehicles, clearance of customs declarations, etc., the honourable representations are requested to adhere to the procedures outlined herein and to observe subordination in their official communication with Bulgarian institutions, in accordance with Article 41, Subparagraph 2 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR) ‘All official business with the receiving State entrusted to the mission by the sending State shall be conducted with or through the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the receiving State or such other ministry as may be agreed.’

1. Refund of

value added tax and excise duty

The refund of value added tax (VAT) is carried out in accordance with the procedure of Ordinance No H-14 on the refund of value added tax and excise duty to diplomatic representations, consulates, representations of intergovernmental organisations and their staff members.

The following persons are entitled to a refund of value added tax:

1. **Diplomatic representations** of foreign states and diplomatic representations of the Republic of Bulgaria abroad established in accordance with the procedure of Article 2 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations;

2. **Consulates** of foreign states and the consulates of the Republic of Bulgaria abroad, which are established in accordance with the procedure of Article 2 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations;

3. **Representations of intergovernmental organizations**, which are established on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria by virtue of an international treaty entered into by the Republic of Bulgaria with the respective organization and the permanent representations of the Republic of Bulgaria to international organizations abroad;

4. **Members of the diplomatic staff** as defined in Article 1, point (d) of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations;

5. **Consular officials** as defined in Article 1, point (d) of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations;

6. **The members of the staff of the representations** of the intergovernmental organisations referred to in point 3, treated equally as those referred to in point 4;

7. **Members of the administrative and technical staff**, as defined in Article 1, point (f) of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and Article 1, point (e) of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. Refund in these cases shall be made within the limits of the goods listed below in a separate line, subject to the principle of reciprocity.

The provisions for the refund of value added tax and excise duty **shall not apply to** the persons referred to in items 4, 5, 6 and 7 who are:

* Bulgarian citizens;
* persons with permanent residence in the Republic of Bulgaria;
* persons with dual citizenship, one of which is Bulgarian;
* honorary consular officials.

**Diplomatic representations, consulates and representations of intergovernmental organisations** shall be entitled to refund of value added tax and excise duty on **goods and services** purchased and used by them and necessary for their activities as follows:

1. cars and motorcycles (excluding repairs and spare parts for them); the number of cars may not exceed the total number of diplomatic staff, subject to change on the principle of reciprocity, at the discretion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

2. furniture and goods for furniture and equipment, sanitary and hygienic materials;

3. household appliances of the following types only: refrigeration and heating equipment, kitchen stoves, washing machines and dishwashers, kitchen hoods, coffee machines, water coolers, vacuum cleaners and air conditioning equipment;

4. building materials and services necessary for the construction and maintenance of the buildings and adjacent grounds (gardens) or the rent for such of the representation or consulate of the residence of the head thereof, and for the purchase of the buildings and adjacent grounds (gardens) for a representation or consulate or for a residence of the head thereof;

5. audio and visual equipment, office equipment and office machinery, security equipment and security services, consumables and stationery, telephone and telecommunications equipment, repair and maintenance of the equipment;

6. telephone services, electricity and heat, water, fuels for local heating installations, subscriptions to Bulgarian periodicals and internet services;

7. hotel services for the temporary accommodation of newly arrived diplomats – for night stays only, but for no more than 20 nights;

8. liquid fuels: up to 300 litres of petrol or 250 litres of diesel fuel per calendar month for each official vehicle referred to in paragraph 1 with registration ‘C’ or ‘CC’.

**Members of the diplomatic staff, consular officials, members of the staff of intergovernmental organisations having diplomatic status and members of the administrative and technical staff** **of representations** shall be entitled to refund of the value added tax and excise duty on **goods and services** purchased and used by them, as follows:

1. for cars and motorcycles, excluding repairs, additional equipment and spare parts for them – **one vehicle** for private use for **single persons** and **two vehicles for married persons;**

2. furniture to furnish once a single dwelling purchased within up to 12 months from the date of taking office;

3. household appliances of the following types only: refrigerator, kitchen stove, freezer, washing machine and dishwasher, extractor hood, audio and visual equipment, air conditioning equipment, computer configurations for the needs of a household;

4. telephone services, electricity, heat and water;

5. **repairs to a home** when it its occupant changes or once **every three years**;

6. liquid fuels – only for the first registered private vehicle up to 200 litres of petrol or 150 litres of diesel fuel per calendar month for a car with registration ‘C’ or ‘CC’;

7. telephone and telecommunication equipment, repair and maintenance of the equipment — but no more than 2 pieces of equipment for single persons and 4 pieces for married persons.

**No tax refund shall be made** to diplomatic representations, consulates and representations of intergovernmental organisations and to members of their staff as referred to above in respect of the goods referred to in items 1, 2 and 3 of the preceding two paragraphs if they have **imported such goods without payment of customs duties, taxes and charges within 36 months of the date of importation.**

**No tax shall be refunded** either for the goods referred to in items 1 and 3 of the same two paragraphs, which have been purchased in the territory of the country for the purpose of **replacing goods of the same type before 36 months have elapsed since the refund.**

Value added tax and excise duty paid by diplomatic representations, consulates and representations of intergovernmental organisations (**for official use**) shall be refunded on the basis of **a request from the head** of the representationor consulate under a form [(*Annex 4*),](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari) filed to the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The value added tax and the excise duty paid by the staff members of diplomatic representations, consulates and representations of intergovernmental organisations (**for personal use**) shall be refunded on the basis of a claim submitted under a form [(*Annex 5*),](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari) **certified by the head** of the diplomatic representations, consulate or international organisation.

Requests for reimbursement shall be **accompanied by the following documents**:

* the tax invoices (original or certified copies thereof) for the purchases made and an inventory thereof; where a refund of excise duty is also claimed, certified copies of the tax invoices for the purchases of excise goods made and an **inventory** thereof shall be additionally attached;
* the request for VAT and excise duty refund and the accompanying list of invoices for goods and services purchased must be submitted to the State Protocol Directorate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in two identical copies;
* the value added tax refund claim, the inventory thereto and the certified invoices attached thereto for goods and services purchased shall be submitted in a set separate from the excise duty refund claim, the inventory and the certified invoices for excise goods purchased, accompanied by a single note verbale;
* a list of vehicles shall also be attached, providing information on brand, registration number, ownership (vehicles owned by the embassy shall be described separately from those used for the personal needs by its staff);
* in the case of purchased building materials and services necessary for the construction and maintenance of the buildings and adjacent grounds (gardens) or the rent for such of the representation or consulate or of the residence of the head thereof, and for the purchase of the buildings and the adjacent grounds (gardens) for the representation or consulate or for a residence of the head thereof, and for the repair of a dwelling when its user changes or once every three years, a copy of the contract for the provided service shall be attached to the invoices for the construction-and-assembly works carried out;
* in the cases of car purchases, a copy of the **car registration certificate** shall also be attached to the invoice for the purchase of the car.

Requests for reimbursement, together with the documents referred to in Paragraph 3, shall be submitted to the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as follows:

* for purchases made from 1 November to 31 January — from 1 to 28 February;
* for purchases made from 1 February to 30 April — from 1 to 31 May;
* for purchases made from 1 May to 31 July — from 1 to 31 August;
* for purchases made from 1 August to 30 October — from 1 to 30 November.

If the person making the claim **is not entitled** to a refund of tax or excise duty or is claiming a refund for goods and services other than those mentioned above, the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shall notify him/her and **return** his/her documents.

**No refund of** value added **tax** **shall be made** where:

* the tax on the invoice **is not indicated on a separate line**;
* the invoice was issued by a person **not registered** under the Value Added Tax Act;
* the value of the goods or services is **less than BGN 50** per invoice (excluding services for: telephone services, electricity and heat, water, fuels for local heating installations, subscriptions to Bulgarian periodicals and internet services used by diplomatic and consular representations and representations of international organisations and members of their staff);

**No excise duty shall be refunded** on invoices, in which the excise duty is not shown on a separate line.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) shall send the received **requests** with a right to refund within **30 days from the expiry of the above-mentioned three-month periods** to the competent revenue authority (the territorial director of the Sofia Territorial Revenue Directorate or a revenue authority authorized by him/her).

The competent revenue authority shall carry out a verification and refund the **tax** within 30 days of receipt of the request. The act of refund shall be sent to the representation/consulate, and in cases of refusal, where refund is refused – to the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well.

The amounts subject to refund shall be remitted into the **bank account** specified in the request.

Where a refund of **excise duty** is also claimed, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shall forward the received claims with a right to refund within 30 days from the expiry of the above mentioned three-month periods to the competent **customs authority** (the Head of the Sofia Customs or a customs authority authorised by him/her).

The competent customs authority shall carry out a verification which establishes beyond reasonable doubt that the excise duty claimed has been paid.

The competent customs authority shall, within **30 days of receipt of the request** for refund, take a reasoned decision granting or refusing the request for reimbursement in whole or in part.

Where the request for refund is granted in whole or in part, the competent customs authority shall order the refund of the excise duty by means of the refund decision.

Amounts of excise duty to be refunded shall be paid by means of a payment order to the bank account specified in the request **within 14 days of the entry into force of the decision to refund the excise duty.**

Excise duty reimbursement decisions shall be sent to the representation/consulate and, in cases where reimbursement is refused – to the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs too.

*Remark:*

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| * Foreign diplomatic representations, consulates and representations of intergovernmental organisations shall be entitled to reimbursement of the value added tax paid by them for goods and services purchased in the territory of the country, paid for with **gratuitously received funds** originating from the sending country, when the same are used for making gratuitous deliveries of goods and services to recipients specified in Article 8, Paragraph 1 of Ordinance No H-14 on the refund of value added tax and excise duty to diplomatic representations, consulates, representations of intergovernmental organisations and their staff members.
* In accordance with the procedure of the Ordinance, value added tax and excise duty shall be refunded to honorary consulates headed by honorary consular officials where this is provided for in a ratified, promulgated and legally effective bilateral international agreement between the Republic of Bulgaria and the sending state.
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The full text of the Ordinance and templates of the relevant VAT and excise duty refund claim forms can be found on the website of the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik) (section ‘Topical Information’ — ‘Protocol Guide’ — ‘[Forms](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari)’).

2. Exemption from the obligation to pay tax for supplies with place of execution in another European Union Member State of the persons referred to in Article 109, Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Rules Implementing the Value Added Tax Act or for supplies with place of execution on the territory of the country, for which the recipients are institutions of the European Union, for which the host country is the Republic of Bulgaria

Diplomatic and consular representations and representations of international organisations may enjoy (as authorised institutions/persons) the exemption from an obligation to pay value added tax under Article 151 of Council Directive 2006/112/EC of 28 November 2006 on the common system of value added tax.

* Where the Republic of Bulgaria is a receiving country, for exemption from the obligation to pay tax, when the supplies have a place of execution in another Member State, the persons referred to in Article 109, Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Rules Implementing the Value Added Tax Act shall submit for confirmation a Certificate under a form — Annex II to Article 51 of Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/432.
* Where the Republic of Bulgaria is a receiving country, for exemption from the obligation to pay tax, when the supplies have a place of execution on the territory of the country, the persons referred to in Article 109, Paragraph 2 of the Rules Implementing the Value Added Tax Act shall submit for confirmation a Certificate under a form — Annex II to Article 51 of Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/432.

The certificate shall be forwarded to the State Protocol Directorate in 3 copies with the contract attached, as well as the order form, pro forma invoice, quotation or another document related to the supply, for certification by a note verbale.

The form of the VAT and/or excise duty exemption certificate in accordance with the model in Annex II to Article 51 of Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/432 shall comply with the following requirements:

* to be white with dimensions 210 mm x 297 mm with a maximum variation in length of -5 mm or +8 mm;
* be in Bulgarian or English.

The State Protocol Directorate shall send for confirmation the Certificate to the Sofia territorial directorate of the National Revenue Agency, in two copies — one for the person under Article 109, Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Rules Implementing the VAT Act and one for the National Revenue Agency.

Exemption from an obligation to pay tax for supplies with place of execution in the territory of the country, for which the recipients are institutions of the European Union, for which the host country is the Republic of Bulgaria, shall apply to taxable supplies of goods and services with place of execution in the territory of the country, provided that the amount of the tax bases and the tax under the invoice exceeds the value of BGN 400.

 Pursuant to Article 151(1) of Council Directive 2006/112/EC of 28 November 2006 on the common system of value added tax, exemptions are in accordance with the limits laid down by the host Member State, i.e. the limits provided for in Ordinance H-14 above.

3. Protocol on the privileges and immunities

of the European Union

As a European Union Member State, the Republic of Bulgaria provides the privileges, immunities and facilities provided for in the Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the European Union (Protocol (No 7)) (Applicable only to the *European Community, the European Atomic Energy Community, the European Central Bank, the European Investment Bank or to bodies set up by the Communities*, subject to the limits and conditions of this Protocol and the agreements implementing it or the Headquarters Agreements, and in particular provided that this does not entail a disruption of competition.)

The text of Protocol No 7 can be found on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (section ‘Topical Information’ — ‘Protocol Guide’ — ‘[Legal acts](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/normativni-aktove)’).

4. Customs clearance of goods

The conditions and procedure for the customs clearance of goods are regulated in *Ordinance 14 of 15 September 1999* on the customs clearance of goods imported and exported by diplomatic representations, consulates, representations of international organizations and by their staff.

The provisions of the aforementioned Regulation shall apply to the import and export of goods for:

**1.** *official use* by the following persons established in the customs territory of the Republic of Bulgaria by virtue of international agreements entered into by the Republic of Bulgaria:

(a) diplomatic representations;

(b) consulates;

(c) representations of international organisations and permanent foreign delegations to international organisations;

**2.** *personal and private use* by the following staff members of the persons referred to in item 1 and their family members who are registered in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as:

(a) *diplomatic agents* (heads of representations and members of the diplomatic staff);

(b) *consuls* (heads of consulates and staff consular officials);

(c) staff of international organisations and permanent foreign delegations, *equivalent to the heads of diplomatic representations or to the members of the diplomatic staff* under the relevant international agreement;

(d) *members of the administrative and technical staff* of diplomatic representations;

(e) *consular officers;*

(f) staff of international organisations and permanent foreign delegations, *equivalent to the administrative and technical staff* of diplomatic representations under the relevant international agreement.

*Remark:*

The provisions of this Ordinance shall also apply to consulates headed by honorary consular officials ***only in the cases explicitly provided for in it,*** as well as when this is necessary for the performance of a ratified, promulgated and legally effective bilateral ***international agreement*** between the Republic of Bulgaria and the sending State.

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| The conditions and procedure for the customs clearance of goods are regulated in *Ordinance 14 of 15 September 1999* on the customs clearance of goods imported and exported by diplomatic representations, consulates, representations of international organizations and by their staff.The provisions of the aforementioned Regulation shall apply to the import and export of goods for:**1.** *official use* by the following persons established in the customs territory of the Republic of Bulgaria by virtue of international agreements entered into by the Republic of Bulgaria:(a) diplomatic representations;(b) consulates;(c) representations of international organisations and permanent foreign delegations to international organisations;**2.** *personal and private use* by the following staff members of the persons referred to in item 1 and their family members who are registered in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as:(a) *diplomatic agents* (heads of representations and members of the diplomatic staff);(b) *consuls* (heads of consulates and staff consular officials);(c) staff of international organisations and permanent foreign delegations, *equivalent to the heads of diplomatic representations or to the members of the diplomatic staff* under the relevant international agreement;(d) *members of the administrative and technical staff* of diplomatic representations;(e) *consular officers;*(f) staff of international organisations and permanent foreign delegations, *equivalent to the administrative and technical staff* of diplomatic representations under the relevant international agreement.*Remark:*The provisions of this Ordinance shall also apply to consulates headed by honorary consular officials ***only in the cases explicitly provided for in it,*** as well as when this is necessary for the performance of a ratified, promulgated and legally effective bilateral ***international agreement*** between the Republic of Bulgaria and the sending State.The provisions of this Ordinance **shall not apply** to the persons referred to in item 2 above who are:- Bulgarian citizens;- persons with permanent residence in the Republic of Bulgaria;- persons with dual citizenship — Bulgarian and foreign;- honorary consular officials.The provisions of this Ordinance **shall not apply** to foreign representations established in the customs territory of the Republic of Bulgaria for the purpose of carrying out *administrative, commercial or cultural activities,* such as tourist offices, cultural centres, transport representative offices, centres for the exploration of commercial markets, as well as to persons from their staff and members of their families, where they are not treated equally as the persons referred to in item 2 above, and the general provisions of the customs legislation shall apply to them.Exemption from customs duties, value added tax, excise duties and taxes, except for the fees for actually rendered services, **shall be allowed** for the import of goods by the persons referred to in the preceding paragraph only in cases where this is provided for in international agreements, to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a party and which have been dully ratified and promulgated.Goods imported or exported by the persons referred to hereinabove shall not be subject to the formalities applied in connection with trade policy measures, but shall be subject to the **prohibitions and restrictions** laid down in the laws and regulations of the Republic of Bulgaria, as a receiving country.**Personal baggage** of diplomatic agents, of the staff of international organisations and of permanent foreign delegations, treated equally as heads of diplomatic representations and of members of diplomatic staff, as well as of members of their families, shall be exempt from customs inspection unless there are reasonable grounds for believing that it contains articles other than those for personal and private use or for furniture, or articles subject to the prohibitions or restrictions laid down in the laws and regulations of the Republic of Bulgaria as a receiving country.Where a customs inspection is necessary, it shall be carried out only in the presence of those persons or their authorised representative.The above provision shall also apply to the personal baggage of heads of consulates, staff consular officials and of members of their families travelling with them.Goods admitted for importation without payment of customs duties, value added tax, excise duties and fees, or without payment of customs duties, may not be the subject of a **loan, pledge, lease or transfer** , with or without a payment for the benefit to third parties, except for the persons referred to in point 1 and point 2, **for a period of up to 3 years from the date of acceptance of the customs import declaration.** These actions can only be carried out after customs authorization, issued on the basis of a previously submitted opinionof the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, confirming whether or not the persons involved in the relevant transaction have the status of persons referred to in item 1 and item 2 hereinabove.In the event that goods admitted for importation without payment of customs duties, value added tax, excise duties and fees or without payment of customs duties are lent, pledged, hired out or transferred with or without payment for the benefit of third parties, other than the persons referred to in item 1 and item 2 hereinabove, before the expiry of the three-year period above, they shall become liable to **an import duty obligation and an obligation to pay the other government receivables due.**Import customs duties shall be fixed in accordance with the **rates of customs duty** in force on the date of issue of the customs authorities’ authorisation for the lending, pledging, letting on lease or transfer, or as at the date on which these acts are carried out without the authorisation of the customs authorities, depending on the type of goods and on the basis of the customs value ascertained or recognised as at that date by the customs authorities.***Remark:*** **‘**Request-declaration for import of goods by diplomatic representations, consulates, representations of international organisations and their staff members’ forms can be purchased at:211 Slivnitsa Blvd., 1202 Sofia*EXEMPTION FROM CUSTOMS DUTIES, TAXES, EXCISE DUTIES AND FEESCases of exemption from all government receivables due***Goods imported in reasonable quantities for official use** by the persons referred to in item 1, points (a), (b) and (c) above shall be exempt from customs duties, value added tax, excise duties and fees, with the exception of fees for services actually rendered. **Foodstuffs, non-alcoholic beverages, beer, wines, spirits and tobacco products imported by the persons referred to in item 1, points (a), (b) and (c) above, in reasonable quantities and intended for official receptions** given on the occasion of a national holiday or of official visits at the level of Head of State, Head of Government, President of Parliament or Minister for Foreign Affairs, shall be exempt from customs duties, value added tax, excise duties and fees, except for charges for services actually rendered.Exempt from customs duties, value added tax, excise duties and fees, with the exception of charges for services actually rendered, shall be **goods for personal and private use imported by the persons referred to in item 2** above for *their initial furnishing on taking up office.* Exemption shall also be granted where the goods are imported as unaccompanied baggage **within six months** of the persons’ initial arrival.Except as provided in the preceding paragraph, the persons referred to in **item 2, points (a), (b) and (c)** **above** may import, without payment of customs duties, value added tax, excise duties and fees, except for fees for services actually rendered, goods for **personal and private use during the period in which they hold office too**, whether or not the period referred to in the preceding paragraph has expired.In the case of exemption from all government receivables due, the exemption shall be granted by the head of the customs office clearing the import in the following procedure:- for documents, printed matter, books, publications, any kind of information media with or without a record, flags, insignia, seals, coats of arms and the like — after submission of **forms 1 and 3 of the request-declaration** (an information statement form can be found on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (section ‘Topical Information’ — ‘Protocol Guide’ — ‘[Forms](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari)’), signed by the head of the representation, organisation or delegation or by their authorised representative;- as regards goods other than those referred to in the preceding paragraph — after submission to the customs office clearing the import of forms 1 and 3 of the request–declaration (an information statement form can be found on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (section ‘Topical Information’ — ‘Protocol Guide’ — ‘[Forms](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari)’), signed by the head of the representation, organisation or delegation or by a person designated by him/her, for **whose signature a specimen has been submitted** to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and containing **a positive opinion of** the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; forms 1, 2 and 3 of the request shall be submitted in advance to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which shall, after certification, retain form 2 of the request–declaration and return forms 1 and 3 to the person; the request-declaration shall be a form for a written declaration under the customs provisions of the Republic of Bulgaria. Subject to the directions in the preceding paragraph, the following articles intended exclusively **for the official use of a consulate headed by an honorary consular official** shall be exempt from customs duties, value added tax, excise duties and taxes, except for charges for services actually rendered:coats of arms, flags, insignia, official printed matter, office furniture and equipment and similar items supplied to the consulate by or at the request of the sending State.*Remark:*The request-declaration forms shall be printed on carbonless paper **chemically treated** for that purpose and shall be obtained from the customs authority clearing the import.The forms annexed to this guide **are for information purposes only!***Specific cases of exemption***Cars and motorcycles**, including spare parts for such vehicles, shall be exempt from customs duties, value added tax, excise duties and fees, except for charges for services actually rendered, when imported by the persons referred to in item 1 above and subject to the following conditions:- the maximum number of cars and motorcycles intended for official use by persons may not exceed the total number of members of the diplomatic staff in the diplomatic representation, consulate, international organisation or delegation concerned. The number of vehicles may be changed on a reciprocity basis at the discretion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;The maximum number of passenger cars and motorcycles per person **referred to in paragraph 2, points (a), (b) and (c) above** shall be, as follows:- two pieces for persons residing in the Republic of Bulgaria together with their family members;- one for persons without a family.- the maximum number of cars and motorcycles referred to in Paragraph 1 for the persons **referred to in item 2, points (d), (e) and (f), above**, shall be one, regardless of their marital status.The above limits shall also include passenger cars and motorcycles purchased by the persons **referred to in item 2, points (a) and (b) above** in the customs territory of the Republic of Bulgaria for which they **have been refunded the value added tax**.The exemption for the goods referred to in the preceding paragraph shall be made in accordance with the following procedure: - submission to the customs office clearing the import of [**forms 1 and 3**](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari) of the request-declaration, signed by the head of the representation, organisation or delegation or by a person designated by him/her, for whose signature a specimen has been submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and containing a positive opinion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; forms 1, 2 and 3 of the request shall be submitted in advance to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which shall, after validation, retain Form 2 of the request-declaration and return Forms 1 and 3 to the person,- the request–declaration shall serve as a **customs import document** for the purposes of Article 9, Subparagraph 4 of Ordinance No I-181 of 2002 on the registration and reporting of motor vehicles owned by foreign natural persons and legal entities issued by the Minister of the Interior.The following shall be exempt from customs duties, value added tax, excise duties and fees, except for charges for services actually rendered: **tobacco products, beer, wines and spirits** imported by the persons referred to in **item 1, points (a), (b) and (c) above** for entertainment purposes within **annual limits** in accordance with [Annex 1](#Пр_1) to this guide, as determined by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and agreed with the Ministry of Finance.The exemption of the goods referred to in the preceding paragraph shall be effected on presentation to the customs office clearing the import on [forms 1 and 3](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari) of the application form, signed by the head of the representation, organisation or delegation or by a person designated by him/her, for whose signature a specimen has been submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the customs declaration (Single Administrative Document — SAD). Forms 1, 2 and 3 of the application shall be submitted in advance to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which shall retain Form 2 after certification and return Forms 1 and 3 to the person.The import of tobacco products, **wines, beer and spirits** carried out by the persons referred to in **item 2, points (a), (b), (c), (d), (e) and (f) above** shall be exempt from **customs duties** in accordance with the provisions of Articles 692 and 695 of the Rules Implementing the Customs Act, from **value added tax** in accordance with Article 59, Subparagraph 9 of the Value Added Tax Act and from **excise duty** in accordance with Article 21, Paragraph 1, Subparagraph 4of the Excise Duties and Tax Warehouses Act **within the quantitative limits for duty-free import** set out in Annex 64 to Articles 692 and 695 of the Rules.*Remark:***The request-declaration forms shall be printed on carbonless paper chemically treated for that purpose and shall be obtained by the customs authority clearing the import.**The [**Annexes**](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari) **to this Guide shall be for information purposes only!**The full text of Ordinance 14 of 15 September 1999 on the customs clearance of goods imported and exported by diplomatic representations , consulates, representations of international organisations and by members of their staff can be found in the annexes to this Guide*(Annex No... to the Guide*).5. Exemption from payment of excise duty on importation or introduction of excise goods intended for diplomatic and consular representations and representations of international organisations and members of their staff and excise goods intended for the institutions of the European CommunityThe diplomatic and consular representations and the representations of international organizations and European Union institutions may enjoy the opportunities for exemption from payment of excise duty when importing or introducing excise goods from another Member State, as well as when removing excise goods from a tax warehouse on the territory of the country.The exemption from excise duty payment shall be based on an excise duty exemption certificate under a form — Annex II to Article 51 of Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/432 of 15 March 2022 amending Implementing Regulation (EU) No 282/2011 as regards the VAT and/or excise duty exemption certificate (OJ L 88 of 16 March 2022) upon:* introduction of excise goods under a duty suspension arrangement from the territory of another Member State intended for use in the territory of the country;
* removal of excise goods under a duty suspension arrangement from a tax warehouse intended for use in the territory of the country.

The issue, circulation, receipt and storage of the copies of the Excise Exemption Certificate shall be carried out in accordance with the explanatory notes thereto. When excise goods are imported, the exemption from excise duty payment shall be made, as follows:1. in accordance with the procedure of Ordinance No 14 of 1999 on customs clearance of goods imported and exported by diplomatic representations, consulates, representations of international organizations and members of their staff — for the persons referred to in Article 21, Paragraph 1, Subparagraph 1 of the Act (diplomatic and consular representations and representations of international organisations and members of their staff);2. in accordance with the procedure of Article 4a, Paragraph 2 of the Rules Implementing the Excise Duties and Tax Warehouses Act — for the European Union institutions based on an excise duty exemption certificate under a form — Annex II to Article 51 of Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/432 of 15 March 2022 amending Implementing Regulation (EU) No 282/2011 as regards the VAT and/or excise duty exemption certificate (OJ L 88 of 16 March 2022) upon:* introduction of excise goods under a duty suspension arrangement from the territory of another Member State intended for use in the territory of the country;
* removal of excise goods under a duty suspension arrangement from a tax warehouse intended for use in the territory of the country.

Before the goods are dispatched from another Member State or removed from a tax warehouse in the territory of the country, the Certificate shall be sent to the State Protocol Directorate in 3 copies for certification by a note verbale. The State Protocol Directorate shall send the Certificate to a customs office designated by an order of the Director of the Customs Agency.6. Diplomatic MailThe conditions and procedures for the import and export of **diplomatic mail** are regulated in Chapter Three of **Ordinance 14 of 15 September 1999** on the customs clearance of goods imported and exported by diplomatic representations, consulates, representations of international organizations and by members of their staff.Diplomatic mail shall be any correspondence sent or received by diplomatic representations or consulates in connection with their official activities and processed in accordance with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.Diplomatic mail can be sent as:* courier;
* cargo mail or
* Via the commander of a civil aircraft.

The quantity and type of diplomatic mail **may be limited on a reciprocity basis.**Diplomatic **courier mail** shall be accompanied by a diplomatic courier. A diplomatic courier shall be required to possess a **diplomatic passport** issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the country concerned and a **courier’s papers** indicating his/her authority and status, the numbers and quantity of the parcels he/she accompanies, and the address to which the mail is to be delivered.The courier's papers shall be presented to the customs authorities for the release of the diplomatic mail. The courier’s papers shall be considered regular if signed and stamped with the stamp of the sender bearing coat of arms.Diplomatic mail may also be entrusted to the **commander of a civil aircraft.** The commander of the aircraft shall be given an **official document** stating his/her authority, the marks and quantity of parcels he/she is carrying, and the address to which the mail is to be delivered. The commander of a civil aircraft carrying diplomatic mail shall not be considered a diplomatic courier. Diplomatic mail shall be handed over or received immediately and without hindrance by the commander of the aircraft to a **diplomatic agent** of the representation in accordance with a procedure laid down by the competent authorities.Diplomatic mail may be sent **as a postal, rail, air or other consignment without being accompanied by a diplomatic courier** or **accompanied by a courier passing in transit through the Republic of Bulgaria.** Diplomatic mail shall be admitted by the customs authorities without detention, on presentation of a written communication certified by a signature and stamp. The written communication shall be certified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria and shall **replace** the request — declaration.In the case of transit passing of diplomatic mail, no endorsement of the courier's papers by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria or by the diplomatic (consular) representation of the Republic of Bulgaria abroad shall be required.Diplomatic mail shall **not be subject** to detention and customs inspection. All packages comprising diplomatic mail must bear **visible external signs** indicating their nature (labels reading ‘diplomatic mail’, consignment numbers corresponding to the numbers on the courier's papers, address, and wax seals or lead seals) and **contain only diplomatic documents and items intended for official use**.If the above conditions are met, the customs office shall authorise the release of the diplomatic mail for both import and export **with priority and without physical inspection**.The customs authorities may require a customs inspection where there are **serious grounds** for believing that the diplomatic mail contain anything other than diplomatic documents and articles intended for official use.The customs authorities may request that the diplomatic mail be **opened** in their presence by an authorised representative of the sending country. If the authorities of the sending country refuse to comply with this request, the mail **shall be returned** unopened to the place of dispatch.The diplomatic mail **shall be admitted** **for import or export without payment of customs duties, taxes, excise duties and fees**, with the exception of fees for services actually rendered, provided that the requirements of Ordinance 14 of 15 September 1999 on the customs clearance of goods imported and exported by diplomatic representations, consulates, representations of international organisations and by members of their staff are complied with.If it is found that the requirements of the above ordinance have not been complied with, the diplomatic mail shall be treated as **ordinary mail and shall be admitted for import or export under the general procedure for releasing of postal parcels**. In such cases, at the request of the diplomatic courier or the appropriate representation of the sending country, the diplomatic mail may remain under customs control pending the determination of the manner of its customs clearance.***IMPORTANT!***The State Protocol Directorate shall lodge, through the reception desk of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, every working day between 10:00 and 11:00, the customs declarations for the receipt and dispatch of diplomatic mail to the Diplomatic Store at the Sofia Airport, which shall be signed in *two original* copies by an authorised diplomat in accordance with the specimen sent to the State Protocol Directorate and shall contain the necessary requisites: bill of lading number, quantity of parcels and weight of each parcel. Documents processed during the day shall be received on the next working day *after 10:30.* |

7. Registration of motor vehicles (MV)

Foreign diplomatic representations, consular representations and representations of international organizations accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria shall be entitled to register in special series their and their employees’ motor vehicles (MVs) under the conditions and in accordance with the procedure set out in *Ordinance No I-181 of 3 December 2002 on the Registration and Reporting of Motor Vehicles Owned by Foreign Natural Persons and Legal Entities* (Promulgated in State Gazette No 116 of 2002; amended and supplemented in No 93 of 2006, amended and supplemented in State Gazette 30 of 15 April 2016).

Representations shall have the right to register in special series of registration plate numbers **official motor vehicles**, the number of which does not exceed the number of members of the diplomatic staff (for embassies), staff consular officials (for consulates) or representatives of an international organization with a diplomatic status (for international organizations).

The number of motor vehicles may be changed on a reciprocity basis at the discretion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Persons entitled to registration may register in the relevant special series **one motor vehicle of their own for personal use**. If the person has a spouse or registered partner registered with the State Protocol Directorate with whom the person is living in a conjugal relationship (in accordance with Article 23a, Paragraph 3, Subparagraph 1 of the ZChRB[[1]](#footnote-1)), registration of **an additional motor vehicle for personal use** shall also be admitted.

The text of **the ordinance** and the registration **form** can be found on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (section ‘Topical Information’ — ‘Protocol Guide’ —‘[Forms](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari)’ and ‘[Legal acts](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/normativni-aktove)’).

For a **motor vehicle registration** the owner shall submit:

* motor vehicle identification;
* written application for registration (note verbale);
* a letter (form) from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stating the ownership, brand and model of the vehicle, the VIN and engine number, the type and markings of the number plates and the period of registration (form — [Annex 12](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari)); 4 pieces shall be sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
* a customs document of import or document of acquisition of ownership in the country (contract of sale) ;
* document evidencing a third party liability insurance;
* a copy of the card issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (*in accordance with the procedure specified in the ‘Personal Documents (Status)’ section of this Guide*) — in case of registration of a private vehicle;
* the plates with the Bulgarian registration number, if any.

Motor vehicles owned by foreign natural persons or legal entities shall only be registered with the Traffic Police Department — Capital Directorate of Interior, at the following address: Sofia, housing estate of Iztok, 4 Lachezar Stanchev str. within **14 days from the issue of the import customs document or from the acquisition of ownership in the country.**

Motor vehicles shall be registered by identification number (VIN), type, brand, model and other data specified in the certificate of conformity (of type approval) or by the manufacturer after an **initial technical inspection** is made, if they meet the requirements of the Road Traffic Act and the Bulgarian State Standard.

The inspection shall be carried out in accordance with Chapter 4 of *Ordinance No I-45 of 2000 on the registration, reporting, entry into service and withdrawal from service of motor vehicles and trailers towed by them* and shall cover the completeness and serviceability of the aggregates, systems and mechanisms relating to road safety, the emission of harmful gases from motor vehicles and the serviceability of their silencing devices.

Motor vehicles shall be registered for a period specified in the registration letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The owner of the registered vehicle shall be issued a **registration document** in accordance with Article 141 of the Road Traffic Act and **registration number plates .** The registration document(registration certificate – Part I and II) shall contain the details of the motor vehicle and the owner, as well as the period for which it is issued.

In the case of an extension of registration periods, the **change in registration** shall be made within 14 days and the owner shall submit:

* motor vehicle identification;
* written application for re-registration (note verbale);
* a form from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, indicating the ownership, brand and model of the motor vehicle, the VIN and engine number, the type and markings of the number plates and the period of registration (a form can be downloaded from the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: section ‘Topical Information’ —‘Protocol Guide’ — ‘[Forms](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari)’);
* the registration certificate — Part I and II;
* document evidencing a third party liability insurance;
* a copy of the card issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (*in accordance with the procedure specified in the ‘Personal Documents (Status)’ section of this Guide*) — in case of registration of a private vehicle;
* the number plates.

A change in the registration shall also be made in case of a change in the details of the motor vehicle or a change of the owner, within 14 days of its occurrence. A change of registration is not necessary in the case of a change in the owner’s address.

In case of transfer of ownership of a motor vehicle registered in accordance with the procedure of Ordinance No I-181 of 3 December 2002 on the registration and reporting of motor vehicles owned by foreign natural persons and legal entities, the same procedure shall be followed as for initial registration.

Motor vehicles registered in accordance with the procedure of *Ordinance No I-181 of 3 December 2002 on the registration and reporting of motor vehicles* owned by foreign natural persons and legal entities shall be equipped with license plates bearing the following distinguishing features:

* **letter designations ‘C’, ‘CC’, ‘CT’ on a red background with white letters and numbers**; a white stripe shall be placed in the upper right-hand corner of the number plates of vehicles serving the heads of diplomatic missions;
* **letter designations ‘XX’ or ‘XH’ on a blue background with white letters and numbers**.

Depending on their letter designations, license plates shall be given:

1. ‘C’ — for vehicles of diplomatic and international representations and their employees who have a diplomatic status and hold a personal diplomatic card issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

2. ‘СС’ — for motor vehicles of consular representations and their employees, property of consulates of other countries in the Republic of Bulgaria, which have the status of consular officials, as well as property of consulates, headed by honorary consular officials and having a personal consular card issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

3. ‘CT’ — for motor vehicles of administrative and technical staff in diplomatic and consular representations, holding an identity card issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

4. ‘XX’ or ‘XH’ — for vehicles of foreign natural persons who are allowed to stay in the country for more than 3 months, holding an identity card issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The license plates shall be made available to the owners for use against **payment of their value** and any fees due. The license plates shall be fixed in the factory designated places in such a way as to prevent their unauthorised removal. In the event of **loss or theft of a license plate(s)** bearing a registration number, the plate(s) shall be put on a search list and the number shall not be used for registration purposes until the expiration of the year of validity marked on the plate(s). The vehicle shall be registered with a new registration number in accordance with the established procedure. In the event of occurrence of a **damage to the plates** , the manufacture of new plates with the same registration number shall be permitted.

A **lost or damaged registration document** shall be replaced by a **duplicate** after the submission of a written application under a form and a declaration by the owner.

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| Detailed rules on the termination of registration, reporting data on motor vehicles, return of license plates, obtaining plates with transit registration numbers, validity of plates, etc. can be found in Ordinance No I-181 of 3 December 2002 on the registration and reporting of motor vehicles owned by foreign natural persons and legal entities. |

8. Recognition and replacement of

a driving licence

The recognition in the Republic of Bulgaria of driving licences issued by other countries, as well as their replacement with Bulgarian licences, is regulated in the following legal instruments: the Road Traffic Act (ZDvP), the Bulgarian Personal Documents Act (ZBLD), the Rules on the Issuance of Bulgarian Personal Documents (PIBLD), Ordinance I-157/2002 on the conditions and procedure for the issuance of driving licenses, the report of drivers and their discipline and other regulations.

Pursuant to Article 161 of the Road Traffic Act, a driving licence issued in another country shall be valid on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria for the category of motor vehicles driven for which it was issued in the following cases:

(a) the State in which it is issued is a Contracting Party to the *Convention on Road Traffic* and the licence meets the requirements of Annex 6 to the Convention;

(b) the State, in which it is issued, is a Contracting Party to the *Agreement between the Parties to the North Atlantic Treaty on the Status of their Forces* under the terms of Article IV, point (a) thereof;

(c) the certificate is accompanied by a legalized translation into Bulgarian;

(d) the licence is international and meets the requirements of Annex No.7 to the Convention on Road Traffic;

(e) the licence is issued by a European Union Member State or by another State party to the Agreement on the European Economic Area or by the Swiss Confederation.

Pursuant to Article 162 of the Road Traffic Act, foreigners who are long-term residents of the Republic of Bulgaria, including members of the staff of diplomatic and consular representations and of representations of international organisations in the Republic of Bulgaria and their family members, may drive motor vehicles on the territory of the country with a licence that has not been issued by a European Union Member State or by another State party to the Agreement on the European Economic Area or by the Swiss Confederation **within up to one year** from the date of issue of a residence document (not applicable to the cases referred to in Article 161, Paragraph 2 of the Road Traffic Act). A foreign national driving licence issued by a country which is not a member of the European Union, or by another country party to the Agreement on the European Economic Area, or by the Swiss Confederation, shall be replaced by a Bulgarian driving licence **without passing a test** if the country, in which it was issued, is a Contracting Party to the Convention on Road Traffic and the licence meets the requirements of Annex 6 to the Convention.

Where a foreign national driving licence does not meet the requirements referred to in the preceding paragraph, a Bulgarian driving licence shall be issued **after successful passing of an** **examination.**

A driving licence under [article 161, Subparagraph 5](https://web6.ciela.net/Document/DocumentHighlighted?dbId=0&documentId=2134649345&searchedText=Закон%20за%20движение%20по%20пътищата&edition=2147483647&iconId=1&stateObject=%7b%22kind%22:%22getSearchResults%22,%22page%22:1,%22navigateTo%22:%22/AllProducts%22,%22sortAsc%22:%22asc%22%7d)of the Road Traffic Act of a person who has established his/her habitual residence in the Republic of Bulgaria, including the members of the staff of the diplomatic and consular representations and the representations of international organisations in the Republic of Bulgaria and their family members, may be replaced at his/her request by an equivalent Bulgarian driving licence without passing an examination.

Replacement with a Bulgarian driving licence shall be made after presentation of a foreign national licence. **The replaced licence shall be returned to the State in which it was issued, the reasons for the replacement being stated.**

In the case of a lost or stolen driving licence as referred to in Article 161, Subparagraph 5, a person who has established his/her habitual residence in the Republic of Bulgaria, including the members of the staff of diplomatic and consular representations and representations of international organisations in the Republic of Bulgaria, and their family members shall be issued a Bulgarian licence on the basis of **evidence of the acquired legal capacity from the competent authorities of the State which issued the lost or stolen licence.** The State which issued the lost or stolen licence shall be notified of the circumstances of the issue of the Bulgarian licence.

*Remark:*

* A single person may hold only one driving licence issued by a European Union Member State.
* A driving licence shall be replaced on expiry of its validity period, on replacement of an old licence with a new one and on change of the driver’s details.
* A duplicate driving licence shall be issued in the event of damage, destruction, loss or theft.

The issuance of a Bulgarian driving license *is within the competence of the Ministry of the Interior* and its relevant structures which are entrusted with such functions.

In order to issue a Bulgarian driving licence on the basis of a foreign driving licence submitted for replacement, which meets the above requirements, it is necessary to file an *application form* to the Traffic Police units of the Regional Directorates of the Ministry of the Interior at the person’s address.

The rules for the submission of applications for the issue and replacement of driving licences, application forms, the relevant deadlines and the required documents to be attached to the applications are regulated in Chapter Four of the *Rules on the Issuance of Bulgarian Personal Documents* and *Ordinance I-157/2002 on the conditions and procedure for the issuance of driving licences, the report of drivers and their discipline* (Articles 12—13 and 17).

According to the *Tariff No 4 for the fees collected in the system of the Ministry of the Interior under the State Fees Act*, these are, as follows:

* for an ordinary service — up to 30 days; fee per person up to 58 years of age — BGN 25;
* for a fast service — up to 10 days; the fee shall be payable in a double amount;
* for the issue or replacement of a penalty points record to the driving licence a fee of BGN 2 shall be charged.

The State Protocol Directorate highlights to the Honourable Diplomatic Missions in the Republic of Bulgaria that the motor vehicles of the missions, their staff members and, respectively, their family members, registered with the special series of license plates (mentioned in Section II, chapter 7) **are not exempt from liability for violations of road traffic rules and are subject to a penalty — a fine.**

The Directorate shall have no power to intervene with the competent police authorities for the recovery of fines paid or for the annulment of statements of committed traffic offences.

We would like to remind you that the honourable diplomatic missions and the members of their staff or their family members **are not exempted from the payment of vignette fees** when driving along the republican road network in the Republic of Bulgaria, which are considered to be fees collected for a specific type of service – use of the road. Vignette fees can be purchased from any petrol station in the country, as well as from the website <https://vinetki.bg/> . A check of the validity of the vignette sticker can be made at URL <https://check.bgtoll.bg/#/>

**The State Protocol Directorate calls upon the representatives of the diplomatic corps to adhere to the road traffic rules in accordance with the provisions of Article 41 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.** The road traffic rulesin the Republic of Bulgaria, the requirements for drivers and the road vehicles themselves are regulated in detail in the *Road Traffic Act.*

9. Parking arrangements

The regime of *free parking* of vehicles serving diplomatic representations is defined in the *Ordinance on the Organization of the Traffic on the Territory of the Capital (Sofia) Municipality*(NODTSO — Article 112 and Article 113). Pursuant to Article 112, the right to free parking of vehicles serving diplomatic representations is granted only to ‘diplomatic road vehicles (DRVs)’. Free parking of diplomatic vehicles in streets, boulevards, squares and parking lots owned by the municipality, on relation and with respect to servicing diplomatic representations shall be carried out in specially designated areas designated by road signs and road markings and with the following limitations in their number:

* **up to 6** transverse **parking places** or up to **up to 3** longitudinal **parking places** shall be allowed in front of embassy buildings;
* **up to 3** transverse **parking places** or **up to 2** longitudinal **parking places** shall be allowed in front of consulate buildings.
* **up to 2** transverse **parking places** or **up to 1** longitudinal **parking place** shall be permitted in front of residences, cultural institutions and commercial departments.

The terms and conditions for the designation and use of parking places for road vehicles serving diplomatic representations shall be determined by an order of the Mayor of the Capital (Sofia) Municipality. In case of need for additional places beyond those allowed for free parking, they should be paid for in accordance with Article 63 of the Ordinance on the Organization of the Traffic on the Territory of the Capital (Sofia) Municipality — as a ‘**officiary subscription’.**

*Remark:*

Honorary (not regularly appointed) consular officials may use places in front of the consular buildings in accordance with the arrangements set out in Article 63 of the Ordinance on the Organization of the Traffic on the Territory of the Capital (Sofia) Municipality (‘Officiary Subscription’).

According to the established protocol practice, diplomatic and consular representations, which are entitled to use free parking places by virtue of the Ordinance on the Organization of the Traffic on the Territory of the Capital (Sofia) Municipality, shall declare this wish *by a note verbale addressed to the State Protocol Directorate* of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The mission's request shall be considered at a session of the Standing Committee on Transport, Traffic Organization and Safety of Capital (Sofia) Municipality. Following a resolution on the part of the Commission, the diplomatic or consular representation shall receive, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an approved scheme for signalling the number of parking spaces ***which are due to them***.

According to Order of the Mayor of the Capital (Sofia) Municipality No РД-09-1274/28 July 2005, the signalization with road signs and horizontal road markings of a parking place for a diplomatic vehicle shall be carried out **at the expense** of the diplomatic representation.

In case unauthorized parking of motor vehicles within the scope of the prohibition sign in front of a diplomatic or consular representation is found, reports can be submitted to the ‘Urban Mobility Centre’ / Sofia, 84 Knyaginya Maria Luiza Blvd.; e-mail: office@sofiatraffic.bg /.

**The State Protocol Directorate calls upon the representatives of the diplomatic corps to adhere to the parking regulations and pay the fines imposed, in accordance with the provisions of Article 41 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.**

10. Access to security areas

of civil airports for public use

The procedure and conditions for access of employees of diplomatic and consular representations and representations of international organisations accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria to the security areas of civil airports shall be determined by the General Directorate of Civil Aviation Administration (DG CAA) at the Ministry of Transport, Information Technologies and Communications.

A request for access shall be made by *note verbale* to the State Protocol Directorate, accompanied by a completed [*form*](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari) *under a template*. The form is to be filled in for each person for whom access is requested, and the names are to be filled in both in Cyrillic and Latin (as written in the passport). The form shall be signed by the applicant as well as by an authorised person in accordance with a specimen sent in advance to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Upon verification of the status of the person for whom access has been requested, the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shall send the request for issuance of an access pass to the security areas of the Sofia Airport to the DG CAA.

After obtaining permission to issue a pass, the applicant should appear in person for the issuance of a pass at the DG CAA (Terminal 1 of the Sofia Airport), and must present a payment slip/order for a fee paid in advance by bank to an account specified by the DG CAA.

The number of passes issued to each diplomatic representation shall depend on the number of diplomatic staff in the mission concerned. Passes for access to the security areas of the Sofia Airport shall not be issued to persons having no diplomatic rank /administrative and technical staff, as well as to persons with Bulgarian citizenship.

The minimum time required for the procedure for issuing a pass shall be **60 (sixty) working days** from the receipt of the documents at the DG CAA.

The State Protocol Directorate reminds that access passes issued are named and personal and are not transferable. They are subject to mandatory return after expiry of the validity period and in case of final departure of their holder or in case of damage.

If a pass is stolen or lost, the State Protocol Directorate is to be immediately notified. A pass that is not returned or lost shall be paid for at ***triple the amount*** and no new pass shall be issued before the payment is made.

A request form can be found on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (section ‘Topical information’ — ‘Protocol Guide’ — ‘[Forms](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari)’).

Holders of a pass for access to the security areas of the Sofia Airport must cooperate with the representatives of the security services in legitimizing and clarifying the identity of the pass holder.

11. Rules for use of the VIP lounge

at civil airports

The Sofia Airport has two VIP lounges — VIP A and VIP B.

Ambassadors and their accompanying family members pass **through VIP A — Government Lounge** of the Sofia Airport upon their initial arrival on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria; their final departure from the country; as well as in cases of welcoming and seeing off official delegations. For this purpose, the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shall be notified in advance by a note verbale (at least one week in advance), which shall include the following information:

* the names and titles of the travellers (family members, respectively);
* date and time of arrival or departure;
* flight number and flight start, respectively, end point;
* the names and titles of the welcoming persons;
* data about the vehicles entering the airport territory – model, brand and registration number, drivers’ names.

The Sofia Airport’s **VIP B** is free for use by passengers travelling on private business or unofficial delegations against payment of the appropriate fee by the diplomatic mission. In such cases, the embassies send requests for use of VIP B to the Sofia Airport authorities on telephone number +359 2 937 2192.

The airports in the cities of Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas have VIP lounges, which can be used by embassies subject to a prior request sent to the respective airport authorities.

The note verbale requesting use of the VIP lounges of civil airports shall be made at least **7 (seven) days** prior to the date of use. Where the time limit is not met, the possibility to use and the sequencing shall be determined by the airport authorities concerned.

In connection with the reorganization of the security measures at the Sofia Airport, the State Protocol Directorate kindly requests the honourable diplomatic and consular representations and the representations of international organizations accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria to bear in mind the following information:

* The VIP-A — Government Lounge and the apron in front of it have been designated as a critical part of the restricted area of the Sofia Airport for the time during which passengers for civil aviation flights are served at VIP-A. The VIP-A area changes its status to a critical part of the restricted area and becomes a demarcated area when there are official events of the National Service for Protection and passengers using government aircraft are served.
* The change was introduced in order to ensure security measures in civil aviation and to meet the security standards in pursuance of Regulation (EC) No 300/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2008 on common rules in the field of civil aviation security and Commission Regulation (EU) 2015/1998 of 5 November 2015 laying down detailed measures for the implementation of the common basic standards on aviation security.
* For the time that VIP-A is part of a critical restricted area part, departing passengers carrying hand luggage only will enter the building through door #37 after **passing through a security screening**. Departing groups of passengers and luggage shall enter the building through door #31 in the basement of the building, **after passing a security screening.**
* The categories of passengers exempted **from security screening** under the National Civil Aviation Security Programme shall be Heads of State and Government as follows: **the President and Vice President of the Republic of Bulgaria, the President of the National Assembly and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as guests residing in the country with a rank corresponding to the aforementioned.**

12. Security and safety measures

The security of foreign diplomatic missions on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria shall be carried out in the spirit of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The competent authority for its implementation shall be the relevant structures of the Ministry of Interior (MoI), as the protection of the missions can be carried out by means of periodic round-the-clock patrols by the relevant district police station at the Capital Directorate of Interior and/or mobile police groups at the Gendarmerie Directorate of the Ministry of Interior. During mobile police patrols, officers engaged in guarding foreign missions shall periodically stop and inspect the area in which the mission is located. The principle of reciprocity shall also be taken into account and due consideration shall be given to the degree of threat to the specific mission and, if necessary, a fixed post may be established by the Gendarmerie Directorate.

Upon receipt of specific signals and data on threats, protests, demonstrations and other similar events directed against the security of missions and their personnel, the Ministry of Interior is ready to respond and to take appropriate additional security measures.

If additional security is desired, diplomatic representations could enter into a contract with a private company that holds, in accordance with the Private Security Activity Act, a licence to carry out private security activity issued by the Director of the Security Police General Directorate or by persons authorised by him/her.

12.1. Change of address or method of securing
of diplomatic missions

In case of a change in an address or sending of a request for a change in the method of security, the diplomatic mission must notify the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by note verbale in a timely manner. The State Protocol Directorate shall forward the information or request to the competent authority for necessary action to be taken to ensure the security of the mission after coordination.

*Remark:*

In the event of a change in the address of the mission or residence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should be notified in good time.

12.2. Provision of security measures

when conducting events of a protocol nature

When diplomatic missions organise receptions or other events involving the presence of many people, the State Protocol Directorate should be notified by a note verbale at least one **week before the event** in order to inform the competent authority to take security measures. The note must specify the date, time slot and address of the venue, as well as the necessary measures to ensure its security.

12.3. Provision of security measures
when conducting elections

The Republic of Bulgaria has established a practice of a permitting regime when **elections are held and polling stations are opened** by foreign countries on its territory.

A request for consent to hold election and to open a polling station/s shall be made by a note verbale from the diplomatic representation of the country concerned, sent not later than **30 (thirty) days** before the date of the elections to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The note shall state the date, the beginning and the end of the polling day, additional dates (if the election will be held on more than one day), the address of the polling station and the estimated number of voters.

The Republic of Bulgaria shall grant consent to the conduction of elections in polling stations only on the **territory of the diplomatic and consular representations** of the requesting foreign state concerned. **Exceptionally, and under conditions of reciprocity**, consent shall be given to the formation of polling stations outside the buildings of diplomatic or consular representations and the conduction of elections only in special cases, subject to the above requirements.

The State Protocol Directorate shall notify the competent authorities to take appropriate action to ensure the security of polling stations and the preservation of public order on the election day.

13. Permits for ships and aircraft

Requests for the passage and berthing of ships and other vessels of foreign states in Bulgarian ports and for the overflight of the airspace and landing on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria of foreign aircraft shall be addressed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or through the diplomatic or consular representations of the foreign state concerned by a note verbale to the Consular Relations Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria.

14. Possession and carrying of weapons

Firearms activities are regulated by the Weapons, Ammunition, Explosives and Pyrotechnic Products Act (ZOBVVPI). Pursuant to Article 78, Paragraph 3, employees of foreign diplomatic representations who are nationals of the sending state may acquire and/or carry and use short-barrel firearms and ammunition for the same **for official purposes**, subject to the principle of reciprocity, after issuance of a permit by the Director of the General Directorate National Police (GDNP) of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) or by an official authorized by him/her. A permit shall be obtained after submission of the following documents:

1. a *note* from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the sending State to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria requesting the issue of an authorisation for each employee;
2. a *copy and translation into Bulgarian of the document*issued by the competent authority of the sending country – certified by a Bulgarian diplomatic representation — *certifying the right of the diplomatic official**to possess and carry the specified type of firearms* and ammunition for it;
3. a *certificate* from a Bulgarian diplomatic representation issued to the employee in case of imminent *import or transportation* on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria of firearms and ammunition in his/her possession.

Subject to the above requirements, the embassy should submit an **application for individual permits** to carry and use firearms to the General Directorate National Police of the Ministry of Interior, accompanied by a receipt for a fee paid. The permit issued has a period of validity of five years. The documents provided with the application must contain the officer's details as set out in the identity document and the details of the weapon assigned. The documents must also be accompanied by two 2x2.5 cm photos.

A form of the above application can be obtained at the reception desk of the GDNP or on the website of the Ministry of Interior at: [www.mvr.bg](http://www.mvr.bg) — category ‘Useful for you’/Forms and documents (Appendices) to the Weapons, Ammunition, Explosives and Pyrotechnic Products Act (Annex 9 (link: <http://www.mvr.bg/Polezno_e_da_znaete/obrazci_zobvvpi.htm>). An application form can also be found on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (section ‘Topical Information’ — ‘Protocol Guide’ — ‘[Forms](https://www.mfa.bg/bg/aktualno/protokolen-spravochnik/formuliari)’).

The required fees shall be paid to the account of the GDNP with IBAN: BG69BNBG96613100154401 and BIC of the Bulgarian National Bank: BNBGBGSD. More information on the accounts of the Ministry of Interior can be found on the website of the Ministry

V. OTHER MATTERS

1. Employment relationships of local persons/staff

employed in foreign diplomatic missions in the Republic of Bulgaria

The Bulgarian labour legislation does not contain special norms concerning workers and employees working in the diplomatic representations of foreign countries in the Republic of Bulgaria, as the regime of conclusion, performance and termination of the employment relationship with them is the general one, regulated in the Labour Code and the regulations implementing it.

According to Article 96 of the Private International Law Code, a labour contract is governed by the law chosen by the parties. The choice of applicable law must not deprive the employee or worker of the protection afforded by the mandatory rules of the law that would apply if there were no choice of applicable law (i.e. the Bulgarian law). Where there is no choice of applicable law, the labour contract shall be governed by the law of the country in which the worker or employee habitually performs his or her work (i.e. the employment law of the Republic of Bulgaria), even if he or she is temporarily sent to another country.

The social insurance of private domestic workers shall be in accordance with the terms and conditions of Article 33 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and Article 48 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, respectively. In the event that the cited provisions of the conventions are not applicable, the employer shall be *bound* to insurethe worker or employee for the insured risks regulated in the Social Insurance Code, as well as to provide a health insurance in the amounts established in the Health Insurance Act.

The taxation of persons employed in diplomatic and consular representations and in the representations of international organizations in the Republic of Bulgaria as supporting staff shall be carried out in accordance with the provisions of Article 37 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and Article 49 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. Where they are not applicable, the provisions of the Bulgarian tax law shall apply.

After amendments to the Personal Income Tax Act, effective from 1 January 2016, a diplomatic representation of another country, which has chosen to determine, withhold and pay tax on income from employment relationships concluded with local natural persons in connection with the functions performed by it in the Republic of Bulgaria, is considered an ‘employer’ within the meaning of this Act (§1, Subparagraph 27 of the Additional Provisions). In order to make the choice, the representation must by 31 December of the preceding year notify the competent territorial directorate of the National Revenue Agency that it wishes to withhold and pay tax in accordance with the procedure of this Act for local staff. The choice shall apply to an indefinite number of tax years without interruption and may be terminated if the diplomatic representation notifies the competent territorial directorate of the National Revenue Agency thereof in writing by 30 November of the preceding year.

Within the meaning of the Personal Income Tax Act, employment relationships are those referred to in § 1, Subparagraph 26 of the Additional Provisions.

The procedure for the establishment of the employment relationship is laid down in Articles 61—76 of the Labour Code (KT). The employment contract shall be entered into in writing and shall contain specific mandatory requisites, as it may be either fixed-term or open-ended. The main obligations of the parties in the performance of the contract are regulated in Articles 124—129 of the Labour Code. The provision of Article 247 of the Labour Code defines the basic parameter of the payment. Issues related to social insurance in the Republic of Bulgaria are regulated in the Social Insurance Code.

The grounds for termination of employment relationships are regulated in detail in Articles 325—340 of the Labour Code, which include general grounds for termination, termination by the worker or employee with prior notice, termination by the employer (with and without a prior notice).

Along with the Labour Code, there are other legal instruments regulating in detail individual issues of labour law, e.g. the Health and Safety at Work Act, the Act on the Establishment of Labour and Insured Period of Service by Judicial Procedure, Ordinance No 4 of 11 May 1993 on the Documents Needed to Enter into a Labour Contract, Ordinance No 5 of 29 December 2002 on the Content and Procedure for Sending the Notice under Article 62, paragraph 5 of the Labour Code, Ordinance on the Salary Structure and Organization , Ordinance on Working Hours, Breaks and Leaves, etc., which are also generally applicable to the employment relationships with local persons employed in foreign diplomatic missions in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Local persons employed in foreign diplomatic and consular representations and in the representations of international organisations in the Republic of Bulgaria **shall not be issued cards as** mission **staff** when they are:

- citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria;

- have a valid permanent residence permit in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The honourable diplomatic and consular missions and representations of international organizations in the Republic of Bulgaria are requested to submit by the 30th day of January of each year **a list of the local staff they employ** to the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

2. Accommodation

Members of the diplomatic corps have the opportunity to rent housing on the open market. A large number of real estate companies operate in the capital and other cities. The rental price depends on the location, the term of the contract, additional services, etc.

The representatives of the diplomatic corps can take advantage of the services of the ADIS real estate company, the principal of which is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. More information can be found on: <http://www.adis.bg>

VI. ON DEPARTURE

1. Notifications

Diplomatic and consular representations and representations of international organizations in the Republic of Bulgaria should notify the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by a note verbale of the completion of the appointment/term of office, as well as of the termination of the functions and the finaldeparture of the members of thediplomatic, administrative and technical and support staff, if possible **in advance,** as well as of the final departure of the persons belonging to their family/household, respectively, when they have lost their capacity of a family/household member.

Please note that all documents issued by the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs **are subject to return** before departure from the country.

Diplomatic and consular representations and representations of international organizations in the Republic of Bulgaria shall notify the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by a note verbale of the ***temporary absence of the head of*** the diplomatic or consular representation or the representation of an international organization in the Republic of Bulgaria, as the note must indicate the date of departure and the date of return to the receiving country, as well as details of the staff member who will replace the head of the representations during the period of his/her absence.

The Embassy of the sending State shall inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by a note verbale of the ***Ambassador’s final departure*** from the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria. Notification shall be made through the State Protocol Directorate **no later than one month** before the intended date of departure. On the day of final departure, the Ambassador shall be seen off by the Head of the Diplomatic Protocol Department in the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or by his/her deputy. On final departure, the Ambassador and the members of his/her family accompanying him are allowed to pass through the Sofia Airport Government Lounge. *(see. ‘*[*Rules for the use of the VIP Lounge*](#IV_В_11)*’)*

The State Protocol Directorate reminds that before the departure of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, it is necessary to designate an interim Head of Mission by a note verbale.

2. Farewell meetings

The State Protocol Directorate shall organise the protocol meetings of the departing head of diplomatic representation with the President of the Republic, the President of the National Assembly, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Ministers and the Minister of Foreign Affairs on their request and by mutual agreement.

The State Protocol Directorate shall organise a farewell lunch or dinner given by the Minister for Foreign Affairs or his/her deputy on the occasion of the final departure of a head of a diplomatic representation.

3. Seeing off

In case of final departure from the country of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of a representation accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria and in case of passing through the Sofia Airport VIP Lounge, the State Protocol Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs **shall be notified at the latest** **one week** before the scheduled date of departure. Notification shall be made by a note verbale addressed by the diplomatic representation, stating the date and time of departure, flight number, accompanying persons and car number. *(see. ‘*[*Rules for the use of the VIP Lounge*](#IV_В_11)*’)*

VII. ANNEXES

### *Annex 1:*

ANNUAL IMPORT LIMITS FOR:

1. Alcoholic beverages by volume of an alcoholic strength exceeding 22% vol. and capacity 0.75 l:
2. Head of a diplomatic representation, consulate or international organisation — 150 pieces.
3. Diplomatic official —120 pieces.
4. Administrative Technical Officer — 60 pieces.

Remark: The calculation basis assumed in this case is: ‘number of bottles with capacity of 0.75 litres and alcoholic strength 43% vol.’ In the event of deviation from these parameters, the quantities imported shall be recalculated by multiplying the content in litres by the alcoholic strength degree and divided by 0.75 litres multiplied by 43%.

1. Alcoholic beverages by volume of an alcoholic strength less than 22% vol. and capacity 0.75 l:
2. Head of a diplomatic representation, consulate or international organisation — 300 pieces.
3. Diplomatic official —200 pieces.
4. Administrative Technical Officer —100 pieces.
5. Tobacco products:
6. Cigarettes:
7. Head of a diplomatic representation, consulate or international organisation — 15,000 pieces.
8. Diplomatic official —10,000 pieces.
9. Administrative Technical Officer — 5,000 pieces.

B. Cigars:

1. Head of a diplomatic representation, consulate or international organisation — 150 pieces.
2. Diplomatic official —120 pieces.
3. Administrative Technical Officer — 100 pieces.
4. Cigarillo:
5. Head of a diplomatic representation, consulate or international organisation — 200 pieces.
6. Diplomatic official —50 pieces.
7. Administrative Technical Officer — 120 pieces.

D. Pipe Tobacco:

1. Head of a diplomatic representation, consulate or international organisation — 1500 grams.
2. Diplomatic official —1200 grams.
3. Administrative Technical Officer — 1000 grams.

### *Annex 2:*

DIAGRAMME

**OF THE CEREMONY IN FRONT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA FOR THE RECEPTION OF AMBASSADORS EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY FOR PRESENTING LETTERS OF CREDENCE**

SUBWAY

A GUARD OF HONOUR

GPDO

FONTAIN

 Lege Street

GARDEN

\*GPDO

Representative Brass Band of the National Guard Unit

1. Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria Act [↑](#footnote-ref-1)