

## **SECTION I: IOM BULGARIA – OUR SERVICES**

### **COUNTER-TRAFFICKING**

IOM's counter-trafficking team provides professional assistance to victims of trafficking in persons using a comprehensive approach that respects the human rights and well-being of the victim. We also work in partnership with governmental agencies and other non-governmental organisations to strengthen the national capacity in counter-trafficking through institutional capacity development and partnerships.

#### **TARGET GROUPS**

The target groups of our work in against traffic in human beings includes:

- Bulgarian citizens, who have been identified as victims of trafficking in human beings outside the borders of Republic of Bulgaria. Bulgarian citizens identified as victims within the country could also be supported.
- Foreign citizens, who have been identified as victims of trafficking in human beings in the territory of Republic of Bulgaria.

#### **OUR SERVICES**

Services provided include, but are not limited to:

- Return assistance to the country of origin of the identified victims of human trafficking.
- Reintegration assistance for the victims of trafficking after their return to help them achieve sustainable reintegration.
- Counselling and information provision.
- Legal counselling.
- Psychological counselling.
- Need and risk assessment.
- Safe and secure transportation.
- Medical care.
- Humanitarian support package.
- Social assistance.
- Employment counselling.
- Vocational training and school insertion.
- Monitoring and follow-up of victims.
- Witness protection services: securing a safe environment and protection of witnesses on human trafficking cases.
- Other consultations and services according to the specific needs of the victims.

#### **COUNTER-TRAFFICKING HOTLINE**

IOM operates a counter-trafficking hotline (+359 (2) 93 94 777), which provides with information, consultations and assistance to victims of traffic in human beings, as well as vulnerable persons and potential victims of traffic.

#### **CONTACT OUR COUNTER-TRAFFICKING TEAM**

You can contact our counter-trafficking team via telephone at +359 (2) 93-94-713 and via e-mail at [iomsofia@iom.int](mailto:iomsofia@iom.int). The team is located at the IOM office at Tzar Asen № 77 str. Sofia 1463.

## ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURN AND REINTEGRATION (AVRR)

IOM Bulgaria's AVRR team regularly provides assistance for voluntary return and reintegration to migrants who decide to return in their countries of origin, as well as increases the awareness of the migrant groups of the programme for assisted voluntary return and reintegration.

### WHO MAY BENEFIT?

The target groups of our assisted voluntary return and reintegration programme include:

- Asylum seekers and migrants granted with international protection.
- Rejected asylum seekers.
- Irregular migrants.

### OUR SERVICES

- Individual consultations with migrants on the AVRR programme.
- Support for obtaining necessary travel documents.
- Providing flight ticket to the country of origin.
- Transport to Sofia Airport for departure and support at airport authorities.
- Medical help and/or examination for vulnerable persons before departure if necessary.
- Providing cash grant to every voluntary returnee amounting to 100 euro which could be increased to 150 euro in vulnerable cases.
- Providing in kind assistance for reintegration after return to the home country of up to EUR 1000 (EUR 2000 for vulnerable persons and EUR 2000 for families).
- Providing escort for unaccompanied migrant children or other vulnerable returnees by IOM officer to the country of origin.
- Transit assistance by IOM officer.
- Assistance upon arrival by IOM officer from IOM mission in the respective country of origin.
- Assistance for implementation of reintegration measures in the respective country of origin.

### CONTACT OUR AVRR TEAM

You can contact our AVRR team via telephone at +359 (2) 93-94-774 and via e-mail at [iomsofia@iom.int](mailto:iomsofia@iom.int). The AVRR office is located at Tzar Asen № 77 str. Sofia 1463.

## OUR MOBILE TEAMS AND TARGET GROUPS

IOM Bulgaria's mobile teams, each comprising a social worker, a psychologist and a legal counsellor, provide regular professional support and consultations to the following target groups:

- Applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection accommodated in the Registration and Reception Centres (RRCs) of the State Agency for Refugees (SAR) in Harmanli and Sofia.
- Migrants detained in the Special Homes for the Temporary Accommodation of Foreigners (SHTAF) managed by the Ministry of Interior's Migration Directorate in Busmantsi and Lyubimets.
- Migrants detained in the Kazichene Minimum Security Prison (MSP) managed by the Ministry of Justice's General Directorate for the Execution of Sentences (GDES).

### OUR SERVICES

Services provided include, but are not limited to:

- One-on-one legal, psychological and social consultations and case-specific follow-up support.

- Improving migrant access to healthcare by purchasing medicines for eligible migrants; transporting and accompanying vulnerable migrants to healthcare facilities; and providing logistical support and interpretation services to migrants and healthcare workers.
- Assisting eligible migrants in finding legal employment in Bulgaria.
- Cultural mediation and interpretation.
- Group information sessions and presentations on a variety of topics related to migrants’ legal rights and obligations; general health, wellbeing, nutrition and hygiene; Bulgarian culture, etc.
- Distribution of humanitarian aid (hygiene kits, clothing and footwear, children’s toys).
- Organisation of various sport, art and culinary initiatives.

## WE SPEAK YOUR LANGUAGE

Our mobile teams work with certified interpreters and translators from Arabic, Bulgarian, Dari, English, Farsi, French, Kurdish, Pashto, Russian, Turkish and Urdu.

## CONTACT US

Telephone, WhatsApp and Viber: +359 (0) 884 602 185; +359 (0) 884 605 184; +359 (0) 892 212 194.

Landline: +359 (0) 2 93 94 774.

E-mail: [iomsofia@iom.int](mailto:iomsofia@iom.int).

## LOCATIONS AND OFFICE HOURS

In the table below you can find our mobile teams’ weekly schedule in Sofia\*. In addition, our mobile teams visit Harmanli RRC for 2 to 3 days per week on a weekly or fortnightly basis, and schedule ad-hoc pre-arranged visits to Lyubimets SHTAF and Kazichene MSP depending on demand.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	
IOM central office	10:00-12:00 – Vrazhdebna RRC	10:00-12:00 – Voenna Rampa RRC	10:00-12:00 – Voenna Rampa RRC	10:00-14:00 – Busmantsi SHTAF	IOM central office
14:00-16:00 – Voenna Rampa RRC	14:00-16:00 – Ovcha Kupel RRC	14:00-16:00 – Ovcha Kupel RRC	14:00-16:00 – Ovcha Kupel RRC		

\*Our working hours may change from time to time depending on demand, availability and other external circumstances. We maintain mobile team presence in our central office at all times during working hours (09:00-18:00), and mobile team members are often on duty at external locations, such as hospitals and other medical facilities.

## SECTION II: PROCEDURE FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN BULGARIA

### HOW TO APPLY

Any foreigner can apply for international protection in Bulgaria:

- Before appropriate staff members of the State Agency for Refugees (SAR);
- Before Border Police staff upon arrival at the border;
- Before Migration Directorate staff while in detention in a Special Home for the Temporary Accommodation of Foreigners; or
- Before any other state institution.

In cases (2), (3) and (4) any state institution other than SAR is obligated to refer the application to SAR no later than 6 days after it was first submitted.

The application may be made in any language, orally or in writing.

You have a right to an interpreter at all stages of your procedure for protection.

You are entitled to enhanced procedural guarantees if you are a minor or a member of a vulnerable group.

## **AFTER YOU APPLY: REGISTRATION**

You will be formally registered as an applicant for international protection no later than 3 days after your application has been referred to or received by SAR.

You will have your photograph and fingerprints taken and will be issued a registration card, which you must carry with you at all times.

SAR officials will inquire about your names, nationality, place and date of birth, gender, marital status, family members, and other personal circumstances, and will inspect any ID or other documents you may have brought with you.

Your national ID documents will be collected and kept by SAR until the termination of your procedure.

## **YOUR INTERVIEW WITH SAR**

After your application has been registered, you will be scheduled a date for an interview with SAR. The time and date of your interview will be communicated to you in person.

Everything you share during your interview will remain confidential.

You have a right to an interpreter from your native language and can request an interviewer and an interpreter of the same gender as you. Your lawyer, if you have one, may also attend. In exceptional circumstances, a family member may be allowed to attend as well.

Your interview will be recorded in an audio or audiovisual recording and a protocol. The protocol will be read out to you, and you have the right to amend any mistakes, errors or ambiguities. You will then be asked to sign the protocol, along with your interviewer and the interpreter. You can refuse to sign it, but this would not prevent SAR from taking it into consideration when considering your case.

If deemed necessary, SAR may hold follow-up interview(s).

Your failure to attend the interview does not prevent SAR from making a decision on your application.

You are required to hand in any evidence you wish to be taken into consideration in support of your application. You may submit the evidence before, during or after your interview, but in any event before SAR issues its final determination on your application. If you fail to do so, the evidence will not be taken into consideration.

## **YOUR APPLICATION IS GRANTED**

SAR must issue a decision on your application within 6 months of your registration. In exceptional circumstances this period may be extended by a further 9 months at a time, up to a maximum of 21 months from the date of submission of the application for protection.

Upon considering your circumstances, supporting evidence and interview protocol, SAR may decide to either grant or reject your application for international protection.

There are two types of international protection: refugee status or subsidiary protection (also known as “humanitarian status”).

Refugee status is granted for a period of 5 years and gives you the same legal rights as Bulgarian citizens, with a few limited exceptions. You would be able to travel within the European Union (EU) for up to 3 months without a visa.

Subsidiary protection is granted for a period of 3 years and entitles you the same rights as foreigners with permanent residence in Bulgaria. You would be able to travel to other EU Member States upon obtaining an appropriate visa.

## **YOUR APPLICATION IS REJECTED**

If your application is rejected, you have the right to appeal twice: once before the Administrative Court, and a second time before the Supreme Administrative Court. Normally you have 14 calendar days from the date of service of a decision to lodge an appeal.

You have the right to apply for a lawyer to represent you free of charge at all stages of your appeal proceedings.

If your appeal is granted, your case will be sent back to SAR for re-consideration.

If your appeal is dismissed with no further right of appeal, your procedure for protection would be definitively terminated.

## **SUBSEQUENT APPLICATIONS**

You have the right to make as many subsequent/fresh applications for protection as you wish, but in order for them to be deemed admissible, you would need to present fresh evidence or new circumstances regarding your personal situation and/or your country of origin that were not considered in your previous procedure.

If your subsequent application is rejected as inadmissible, you can lodge an appeal before the Administrative Court within 7 days of the date of service. You do not have the right to make a further appeal to the Supreme Administrative Court.

## **WHEN YOUR PROCEDURE IS OVER**

If you do not have a pending procedure for international protection or appeal proceedings, you do not have the right to reside legally in Bulgaria and are at risk of being detained and/or returned to your country of origin.

Alternatively, you can choose to return voluntarily via IOM’s AVRR programme.

# **SECTION III: FINDING AND/OR REUNITING WITH FAMILY MEMBERS**

## **MISSING PERSONS**

You are free to submit a tracing request via the Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC). IOM's Mobile teams assist in filling the tracing request form and forwarding it to the BRC. You need to have prepared as much detailed information as possible (e.g. names of the missing person, mutual contacts, last known location, etc.)

## DUBLIN PROCEDURE

The member state through which you first entered the EU is responsible for examining your asylum application.

Another EU member state may be responsible if one of the following conditions is met:

- You are a minor and your mother/father, brother/sister or uncle/aunt/grandfather/grandmother are legally present in another EU member state (awaiting a first decision on their application for international protection or granted international protection), or
- Your wife/husband/child are legally present in another EU member state (awaiting a first decision on their application for international protection or granted international protection), or
- You are an adult and you are dependent on the assistance of your child, brother/sister, mother/father legally present in another EU Member State or they are dependent on your assistance in cases of pregnancy, a new-born child, serious illness, severe disability or old age.

It is important to mention you have family members during your interview with the Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees (SAR). That way the SAR will take it into regard and consider whether to start the procedure directly. In any case you must apply for the Dublin procedure within 3 months after your registration as an asylum-seeker. IOM's mobile teams provide assistance with the drafting of Dublin applications.

If the SAR considers that you meet one of the abovementioned conditions, SAR will contact the relevant member state within three (3) months, and that state must reply within two (2) months.

If the other member state agrees to take charge of your procedure, you will be transferred to that other member state within six (6) months.

## FAMILY REUNIFICATION IN BULGARIA

If you have been granted asylum in Bulgaria, you have the right to request to be reunified with your wife/husband/child, or with your mother/father/other adult responsible if you are a minor. The Bulgarian consulate in the country of residence of our family members will issue visas so that they can travel to Bulgaria. Once they arrive, they can apply for international protection as a mere formality.

## SECTION IV: YOUR RIGHTS

### HEALTHCARE

While your procedure for international protection is ongoing, you are medically insured. The Bulgarian Government pays your health insurance monthly instalments to the National Health Insurance Fund.

In principal, health insurance provides for visits to a general practitioner (GP) at/for a nominal fee and to a dentist under certain conditions (see below).

You have the right to enrol with a family doctor/GP. To find one and enrol yourself, you can ask social workers of the State Agency for Refugees or IOM to assist you.

You can visit your GP as necessary and have a medical consultation at a mandatory fee of 2,90 leva. If you need a consultation by a specialist (e.g. neurologist, ophthalmologist, etc.) or specialized medical care (e.g.

hospitalization), your GP can issue a medical referral free of charge. This means that you can make use of the relevant service you are referred to for free.

If you need to visit the dentist, your health insurance only covers a maximum of four (4) dental manipulations. The cost of any and all further dental assistance must be covered by you.

If your procedure is suspended, your health insurance will be suspended as well. If at some point it is resumed, it is unclear whether and, if so, when the Bulgarian Government will pay your health insurance instalments for the months while your procedure was suspended. So you may have to pay for it yourself.

If your procedure is terminated, your health insurance will be suspended as well. If at some point you are allowed a new (subsequent) procedure, it is unclear whether and, if so, when the Bulgarian Government will pay your health insurance instalments for the months while you are out of procedure. So you may have to pay for it yourself.

In case of emergency, you can call the national phone for emergencies: 112

## HOUSING

During your procedure for protection you and your family have the right to free food and accommodation at one of the Registration and Reception Centres (RRCs) of SAR in Sofia, Harmanli or Banya.

Alternatively, you can opt to make your own living arrangements and move in with relatives or friends or rent a private accommodation. However, if you first move in an RRC and then move out to an external address, you would lose the right to move back in the RRC.

Some organisations working with refugees and migrants may offer limited support towards seeking external accommodation and/or rent, but generally you would be expected to start fully covering your living expenses once you are granted protection.

## EDUCATION

If you are under 18 and have applied for or been granted international protection in Bulgaria, or are above 18 and have been granted international protection, you have the same right to primary and secondary education and vocational education and training as Bulgarian citizens.

If you are under 18, your access to the Bulgarian educational system cannot be delayed with more than 3 months from the date of submission of your application for protection.

## EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

While in procedure for international protection in Bulgaria, you can engage in legal employment 3 months after the date of registration of your application. You are automatically entitled to your right to work and do not need a work permit. However, before applying for jobs, you would first have to request a certificate from SAR confirming your right to work in the country, and may have to present it to potential employers upon request.

You would retain your right to work during your appeal proceedings and if you are later granted international protection (refugee status or subsidiary protection). However, you would lose the right to work if your procedure is terminated.

There are no limits on the types of employment you can engage in. You can work both part- or full-time under the same conditions as Bulgarian citizens.

Most organisations working with refugees and migrants, including IOM's mobile teams, may be able to help you with seeking work and contacting employers.

You can open a bank account in Bulgaria if you have a valid national passport.

As an applicant for international protection you are not entitled to any financial support or welfare benefits from the state other than shelter and food. If you are granted refugee status or subsidiary protection, you would have the same rights to welfare benefits as Bulgarian citizens or foreigners with permanent residency, respectively.