

Law

on the Bulgarian National Bank

(Adopted by the 38th National Assembly on 5 June 1997; published in the *Darjaven Vestnik*, issue 46 of 10 June 1997; amended, issues 49 and 153 of 1998; issues 20 and 54 of 1999; issue 109 of 2001; issue 45 of 2002; issues 10 and 39 of 2005; issues 37 and 59 of 2006: in force on the date of entry into force of the Treaty of Accession of the Republic of Bulgaria to the European Union; issue 108 of 2006; issues 52 and 59 of 2007; amended, issues 24, 42 and 44 of 2009)

Chapter One

General Provisions

Article 1. (1) The Bulgarian National Bank is the central bank of the Republic of Bulgaria. It is a legal entity.

(2) The Bulgarian National Bank shall report its activities before the National Assembly.

Article 2. (amended; *Darjaven Vestnik*, issue 10 of 2005) (1) The primary objective of the Bulgarian National Bank shall be to maintain price stability through ensuring the stability of the national currency and implementing monetary policy as provided for by this Law.

(2) The Bulgarian National Bank shall act in accordance with the principle of the open market economy with free competition, favouring an efficient allocation of resources. From the date of accession of the Republic of Bulgaria to the European Union and without prejudice to the primary objective of price stability, the Bulgarian National Bank shall support the general economic policies in the European Community with a view to contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the European Community as laid down in Article 2 of the Treaty establishing the European Community.

(3) Without prejudice to the objectives under paras. 1 and 2, the Bulgarian National Bank shall support the policy of sustainable and non-inflationary growth.

(4) The Bulgarian National Bank shall assist in establishing and functioning of efficient payment systems and shall oversee them.

(5) The Bulgarian National Bank shall have the exclusive right to issue banknotes and coins in this country.

(6) The Bulgarian National Bank shall regulate and supervise other banks' activities in this country for the purpose of ensuring the stability of the banking system and protecting depositors' interests.

Article 3. (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) In the formulation of the general outlines of the monetary policy, the Bulgarian National Bank and the Council of Ministers shall inform each other.

Article 4. (1) In connection with the performance of its functions, the Bulgarian National Bank may demand from banks to submit any documents and information, and may also carry out the requisite examinations.

(2) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 45 of 2002) The Bulgarian National Bank shall not disclose or pass to third parties any information obtained which is of confidential bank or commercial nature for banks and the other participants in the money turnover and credit relations, except in the cases provided for by the Law on Protection of Classified Information.

Article 5. The Bulgarian National Bank may participate organizationally and financially in international organizations aiming at the development of international cooperation in the sphere of foreign exchange, monetary and credit policy, as well as take part on its own behalf in the activity carried out by such organizations when in the interest of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Article 6. (1) The headquarters of the Bulgarian National Bank shall be in the city of Sofia. The Bank may have branches in this country and representative offices in the country and abroad.

(2) The Bulgarian National Bank shall have a seal bearing its name and the state coat-of-arms.

Chapter Two

Statutory Fund and Reserves

Article 7. The statutory fund of the Bulgarian National Bank shall be BGN 20 million.

Article 8. (1) To cover uncollectable and doubtful receivables, the Bulgarian National Bank shall allocate provisions in the amount specified by the Governing Council which shall be an item of the accounting expenses and an adjustment for the balance sheet assets.

(2) The Reserve Fund shall be formed out through deductions in the amount of 25 per cent of the annual excess of the Bank's revenue over expenditure. The resources of this Fund shall be used for covering the Bank's losses.

(3) Upon deduction of the amount for the Reserve Fund, the necessary amounts for special funds, set up under a decision of the Governing Council, shall be allotted from the annual excess of the Bank's revenue over expenditure.

(4) The account of the state budget shall be credited annually with the remainder of the annual excess of the Bank's revenue over expenditure within four months after the end of the fiscal year.

Article 9. (1) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) Where the Bank's balance sheet indicates that the amount of its assets is less than the amount of its

liabilities and statutory fund, the Minister of Finance shall replenish the statutory fund of the Bank to the amount necessary to cover the deficit.

(2) The procedure under para. 1 for covering the balance sheet deficit shall be applied only in the cases when the resources of the Reserve Fund and on the Bank's Special Reserve Account under Article 36, para. 1 have been exhausted.

Chapter Three

Structure and Management

Article 10. The management of the Bulgarian National Bank shall be carried out by the Governing Council, the Governor and the three Deputy Governors elected to directly manage the basic departments referred to in Article 19.

Article 11. (1) The Governing Council shall consist of seven members: the Governor of the Bank, the three Deputy Governors, and three other members.

(2) Members of the Governing Council shall be only Bulgarian citizens.

(3) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) Members of the Governing Council shall be elected and appointed only persons of the highest integrity and prominent qualifications in economics, finance or banking.

(4) (new; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) Member of the Governing Council shall not be a person:

1. sentenced to imprisonment for a premeditated crime;
2. adjudicated in bankruptcy in a capacity as a sole proprietor or general partner in a commercial company;
3. who has been a member of a managing or supervisory body of a company or cooperative in the last two years prior to adjudicating the said company or cooperative in insolvency;
4. (new; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 42 of 2009) who is a sole proprietor, partner with unlimited liability in a trade company, governor, trade proxy, trade representative, procurator, trade agent, liquidator, or assignee in bankruptcy, member of a management or controlling body of a trade company or a cooperative, with the exception of companies where the Bulgarian National Bank participates;
5. (new; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 42 of 2009) who is a spouse or cohabitant, relative in a direct line, in a lateral line to the fourth degree inclusive, or by marriage to the second degree inclusive, of any member of the Governing Council.

Article 12. (1) The Governor of the Bulgarian National Bank shall be elected by the National Assembly.

(2) The National Assembly shall elect the Deputy Governors – heads of the basic departments under Article 19 – on a proposal by the Governor.

(3) The other three members of the Governing Council shall be appointed by the President of the Republic.

(4) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) The term of office of the

members of the Governing Council shall be six years. Election/appointment of a new member of the Governing Council shall be made not earlier than three months and not later than two months before the end of the term of office of the current member. If the election/appointment is not made until the end of the term of office, the member of the Governing Council whose term of office has expired shall continue to perform his duties until the new election/appointment.

(5) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 54 of 1999, issue 10 of 2005) The Governor and the Deputy Governors shall not engage in any activity, other than teaching, or as members of the bodies in companies where the Bulgarian National Bank participates or in international organizations related to Bulgarian National Bank activities. They may perform a non-remunerative activity following a unanimous decision of the Governing Council insofar as there is no conflict of interest.

(6) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) The other three members of the Governing Council shall not engage in any other remunerative activity at the Bulgarian National Bank, work for banks, insurance companies, other financial institutions or in the executive, as well as perform any other activity which may create a conflict of interest.

(7) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) When a member of the Governing Council resigns, the duties of this member shall cease after a period of three months if a new member of the Governing Council is not elected/appointed within this period.

(8) (new; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) Relationships between the Bulgarian National Bank and the Governor and Deputy Governors shall be regulated by managing contracts according to rules determined by the Governing Council.

(9) (new; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 42 of 2009) The Governor, Deputy Governors and the other members of the Governing Council shall submit to the authority which has elected/appointed them declarations under Article 12, items 1, 2 and 3 of the Law on Prevention and Disclosure of Conflict of Interests. The declaration under Article 12, item 4 of the Law on Prevention and Disclosure of Conflict of Interests shall be submitted to the Governing Council under the procedure of Article 17, paragraph 4.

Article 13. (1) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005, issue 59 of 2006) At entering into office, the Governor, the Deputy Governors and the other three members of the Governing Council shall be sworn in to abide by law, to contribute to the performance of the functions entrusted to the Bank, as well as to keep professional, bank, commercial and another secrecy protected by law even after their duties have ceased.

(2) The Governor and the Deputy Governors shall swear an oath to the National Assembly, and the other three members of the Governing Council to the President.

Article 14. (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) (1) The competent authority under Article 12 may relieve from office a member of the Governing Council only if he no longer fulfils the conditions required for the performance of his duties under Article 11, para. 4, if he is in practical inability to perform his duties for more than six months, or if he has been guilty of serious misconduct.

(2) Where the duties of a member of the Governing Council cease before the expiry of the term of office, another person shall be elected/appointed for the outstanding period of the term of office.

(3) From the date of accession of the Republic of Bulgaria to the European Union a decision to relieve from office the Governor of the Bulgarian National Bank may be referred to the Court of Justice by the Governor concerned, or by the Governing Council of the European Central Bank.

Article 15. (1) The Governing Council shall hold sessions at least once a month. It shall be convened by the Governor of the Bank or at the request of no less than three of its members by a written notice.

(2) The sessions of the Governing Council shall be presided by the Governor of the Bank; should the Governor be absent, by a Deputy Governor appointed by him.

Article 16. The Governing Council shall:

1. consider and adopt major guidelines for its activity;
2. adopt legislative acts concerning the Bank's activity;
3. (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 59 of 2006) fix interest rates, fees and commissions related to the Bank's operations;
4. fix the percentage of the minimum reserves to be held by banks and approve the conditions and requirements for their fulfilment;
5. set rules and requirements regulating bank activities;
6. adopt rules of procedure for this Bank's activities;
7. pass upon the introduction and discontinuance of particular activities of the Bank;
8. open and close down branches and representative offices of the Bank;
9. take decisions for issuing new banknotes and coins, and set the time limits after which the banknotes and coins cease to be legal tender and within which banknotes and coins called in have to be exchanged;
10. regularly consider reports on the activities of the Bank's basic departments;
11. define the way and competences for the charge-off of uncollectable receivables of the Bulgarian National Bank as a loss;
12. adopt decisions for participation of the Bulgarian National Bank in international organizations and in initiatives and activities undertaken by such organizations;
13. approve the annual budget, the annual balance sheet and the report under Article 51 as presented by the Governor;

14. (new; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) be responsible for establishing and maintaining an efficient internal control system at the Bulgarian National Bank and its subsidiaries adequate to the inherent risks to its activities;

15. (former item 14; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005; amended, issue 59 of 2006) grant, refuse to grant, and withdraw licenses of banks and electronic money institutions pursuant to the procedures and terms of the Law on Credit Institutions;

16. (new; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 59 of 2006) place banks and electronic money institutions under special supervision pursuant to the procedures and terms of the Law on Credit Institutions.

Article 17. (1) The Governing Council may hold a session if more than one half of its members are present.

(2) Decisions of the Governing Council shall be adopted by a majority of the members present but shall require the affirmative vote of no less than four votes.

(3) Abstention from voting shall not be permitted except in the cases under para. 4.

(4) Members of the Governing Council shall not participate in the deliberation and shall abstain from decision-making on issues in which they or members of their families may have interest. They must notify the Governing Council in advance of any such interests.

Article 18. (1) The Governor of the Bulgarian National Bank shall organize, direct and supervise the activities of the Bank, other than those mandated by this or another law exclusively to the Deputy Governors, and shall represent the Bank at home and abroad. He may delegate some of his competences to other officials.

(2) The Governor may establish consultative councils in support of his functions.

Article 19. (1) Three basic departments shall be established at the Bulgarian National Bank – an Issue Department, a Banking Department and a Banking Supervision Department – each department being directly headed by a Deputy Governor designated by the National Assembly.

(2) Other departments and offices may also be established by a decision of the Governing Council.

(3) Within the competencies vested to them by law or by a regulation adopted by the Governing Council, the Deputy Governors shall organize, direct and be responsible for the activities of the headed departments.

(4) On a motion by a Deputy Governor, the Governing Council shall designate an alternate deputy governor to exercise his powers when he is absent.

Article 20. (1) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) The main function of the Issue Department shall be to maintain full foreign exchange cover of the total amount of monetary liabilities of the Bulgarian National Bank, by taking actions needed for the efficient management of the Bank's gross international reserves.

(2) In case any systemic risk for the stability of the banking system arises, the Banking Department shall perform the lender of last resort function under the terms and procedure set forth by this Law and by the regulations as adopted by the Governing Council.

(3) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 59 of 2006) Supervision over the banking system shall be exercised by the Deputy Governor heading the Banking Supervision Department, in accordance with the rules provided for by law and the regulations for its enactment. In exercising his supervisory powers, he shall apply, separately and at his own discretion, the actions and penalties as provided for by law.

Article 21. The Governing Council shall define in the Rules of Procedure the structure, specific functions and responsibilities of the departments and offices at the Bank, as well as the rules regulating the relationships between them and competence of the managing officials.

Article 22. (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) (1) The internal audit of the Bulgarian National Bank shall be exercised by a Chief Auditor, appointed by the Governing Council of the Bank upon approval by the President of the National Audit Office.

(2) The Chief Auditor shall examine the quality of the internal control systems, assist the management of the Bank in improving these systems and risk management by:

1. examining the operation of these systems, their reliability and completeness of information;

2. examining the adequacy of the existing systems for safeguard of the Bank's assets and if necessary – their existence;

3. examining the compliance of conduct of the Bank's operations with law and other legislative acts and regulatory acts issued by the Bank's governing bodies;

4. assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the operations in the Bank's assets and, if necessary, making recommendations to the Governing Council;

5. examining the lawfulness and assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the operations executed in the Bank's subsidiaries.

(3) The Chief Auditor shall perform other examinations on request by the Governing Council.

(4) The Chief Auditor shall coordinate his activities with the external auditor of the Bulgarian National Bank.

(5) The objectives, powers, responsibilities, the audit plan and activity report of the Bulgarian National Bank internal audit shall be approved by the Governing Council.

Article 23. (1) (repealed; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005, new; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 59 of 2006) Official secrecy shall be the information related to the preparation for production of Bulgarian banknotes and coins; the technical param-

eters of the censors for reading the security features of Bulgarian banknotes and coins; physical protection systems and information security management systems of the bank and its subsidiaries; information related to transportation and protection of values, as well as other facts and circumstances, the unauthorised access to which might adversely affect the interest of the state or another interest protected by law, specified by the Bulgarian National Bank's Governor pursuant to Article 26, para. 3 of the Law on Protection of Classified Information.

(2) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 45 of 2002; issue 10 of 2005; issue 59 of 2006) The employees of the Bulgarian National Bank shall observe secrecy concerning negotiations, deals contracted, the amount of assets on customers' deposits and their operations, the information received by the Bank, as well as any circumstances concerning the Bank's and its customers' activities which constitute professional, bank, commercial or another secrecy protected by law even after termination of their labour contract.

(3) The remuneration of the Bank's employees shall be determined by the Governing Council, but it shall not be less than the average remuneration for employees with similar functions in other banks in the country.

Chapter Four

Monetary Unit, Banknotes and Coins

Article 24. The monetary unit of the Republic of Bulgaria shall be the lev (BGN), divisible into stotinkas 100.

Article 25. (1) The Bulgarian National Bank shall have the exclusive right to issue banknotes and mint coins.

(2) The banknotes and coins issued by the Bank shall be legal tender and obligatorily and without any restrictions accepted as payment at their full face value.

(3) The Bulgarian National Bank shall ensure the printing of banknotes and the minting of coins, as well as the preservation and destruction of banknotes and coins uncirculated or withdrawn from circulation.

(4) The banknotes and coins put into circulation by the Bank shall have face value, coverage, form and design as determined by the Governing Council.

(5) Before putting into circulation a new banknote or coin, the Bank shall publish its exact description in the Darjaven Vestnik and in other mass media.

(6) (new; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) The Governing Council may set a price different from the face value where banknotes and coins are sold.

Article 26. After informing the public through announcements in the Darjaven Vestnik and mass media, the Bulgarian National Bank may withdraw from circulation issued banknotes and coins which shall be redeemable at their face value. Upon the expiry of the deadline set by the Bank, such banknotes and coins shall be considered out of circulation and shall cease to be legal tender.

Article 27. (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005; issue 59 of 2006) (1) The terms and procedure under which the Bulgarian National Bank and banks redeem or exchange Bulgarian banknotes and coins at partial value or face value shall be determined by the Bulgarian National Bank.

(2) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 59 of 2006) The Bulgarian National Bank, banks, financial houses, exchange bureaus and service suppliers shall be required to retain for verification upon issuing a written document all Bulgarian or foreign banknotes and coins which have come under their control in whatever way and which are suspected of being non-genuine or having been counterfeited. The Bulgarian National Bank is the competent authority for conducting such verification and completing an expert assessment.

(3) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 59 of 2006) The entities under para. 2, as well as competent government bodies within three working days shall submit to the Bulgarian National Bank for conducting of an expert assessment the retained Bulgarian or foreign banknotes and coins, which are suspected of being non-genuine or having been counterfeited.

(4) The Bulgarian National Bank shall retain banknotes or coins and shall not redeem or return them where as a result of the expert assessment under para. 2 it has been established that these banknotes or coins are non-genuine or counterfeited.

(5) (new; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 59 of 2006) Banks and service suppliers shall sort out Bulgarian banknotes and coins which are unfit for circulation. They may not provide to customers such banknotes and coins.

(6) (new; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 59 of 2006) Banks and service suppliers shall submit to the BNB the Bulgarian banknotes and coins which are unfit for circulation.

(7) (new; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 59 of 2006) Reproduction of Bulgarian banknotes and coins shall take place only after the BNB's written consent.

(8) (former para. 5; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 59 of 2006) The Bulgarian National Bank shall issue an ordinance on enactment of this Article.

Chapter Five

Monetary Functions and Operations of the Bank

Article 28. (1) The aggregate amount of monetary liabilities of the Bulgarian National Bank shall not exceed the lev equivalent of the gross international reserves, and the lev equivalent shall be determined on the basis of the official exchange rate of the lev against the Deutschemark pursuant to Article 29.

(2) The aggregate amount of the monetary liabilities of the Bulgarian National Bank shall consist of:

1. all banknotes and coins in circulation issued by the Bulgarian National Bank;
2. any balances on accounts held by other parties with the Bulgarian National Bank, with the exception of the accounts held by the International Monetary Fund.

(3) The gross international reserves of the Bulgarian National Bank shall be equal to the market value of the following assets of the Bank:

1. banknotes and coins held in freely convertible foreign currency;
2. funds in freely convertible foreign currency held by the Bulgarian National Bank on accounts with foreign central banks or with other foreign financial institutions, whereof obligations are assigned one of the two highest ratings by two internationally recognized credit rating agencies;
3. the Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) of the International Monetary Fund held by the Bulgarian National Bank;
4. debt instruments held by the Bulgarian National Bank and issued by foreign countries, central banks, other foreign financial institutions or international financial organizations, whereof obligations are assigned one of the two highest ratings by two internationally recognized credit rating agencies, and which are payable in freely convertible foreign currency with the exception of debt instruments given or received as collateral;
5. (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) the balance on accounts receivable and accounts payable on forward or repurchase agreements of the Bulgarian National Bank, concluded with or guaranteed by foreign central banks, public international financial organizations or other foreign financial institutions, whose obligations are assigned one of the two highest ratings by two internationally recognized credit agencies, as well as futures and options of the Bulgarian National Bank, binding foreign persons and payable in freely convertible foreign currency;
6. (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) the monetary gold.

Article 29. (1) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 20 of 1999, effective as of 5 July 1999) The official exchange rate of the lev to the Deutschemark shall be BGN 1 per DEM 1.

(2) When the euro becomes legal tender in the Federal Republic of Germany, the official exchange rate of the lev to the euro shall be determined by multiplying the exchange rate as per para. 1 by the official exchange rate of conversion of the Deutschemark to the euro. Thus established exchange rate shall be published by the Bulgarian National Bank in the Darjaven Vestnik.

Article 30. (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) On demand, the Bulgarian National Bank shall be bound to sell and purchase euro against levs up to any amount within the territory of this country on the basis of spot exchange rates which shall not depart from the official exchange rate by more than 0.5 per cent, inclusive of any fees, commissions and other charges to the customer.

Article 31. (1) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) The Bulgarian National Bank may take any necessary action in connection with the acquisition, possession and sale of gross international reserves under Article 28, para. 3.

(2) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) The Bulgarian National Bank shall invest its gross international reserves in accordance with the principles and

practices of prudent investment, with investments in securities being limited to liquid debt instruments satisfying the provisions of Article 28, para. 3, item 4.

(3) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) With the exception of the reserves under Article 28, para. 3, items 3 and 6, the lev equivalent of the gross international reserves denominated in currencies other than euro shall not deviate by more than two per cent, both plus or minus, from the lev equivalent of the Bank's total monetary liabilities denominated in these currencies.

(4) The total amount of the liabilities on loans drawn by the Bulgarian National Bank, which are denominated and payable in foreign currency, shall not be increased if this increase would result in an amount in excess of ten per cent of the assets of the Bulgarian National Bank as reported in the last balance sheet.

(5) The restriction under para. 4 shall not apply to any change in the amount of liabilities of the Bulgarian National Bank to the International Monetary Fund.

Article 32. The Bulgarian National Bank shall have the right to carry on:

1. credit operations against collateral;
2. precious metals operations;
3. foreign exchange operations;
4. deposit and financial investment operations;
5. operations connected with the payments turnover;
6. commission operations;
7. cross-border bank operations.

Article 33. (1) The Bulgarian National Bank may not extend credits to banks, except in the cases under para. 2.

(2) Upon emergence of a liquidity risk that may affect the stability of the banking system, the Bulgarian National Bank may extend to a solvent bank lev-denominated credits with maturity no longer than three months, provided they are fully collateralized by gold, foreign currency or other such high-liquid assets. The terms and procedure for extension of such credits, as well as the criteria establishing the occurrence of a liquidity risk, shall be determined by an ordinance of the Bulgarian National Bank.

(3) Credits under para. 2 may be extended solely up to the amount of the excess of the lev equivalent of the gross international reserves over the total amount of monetary liabilities of the Bulgarian National Bank.

Article 34. In the event of default in the repayment of any collateralized credit, the Bulgarian National Bank shall have the right to sell the collateral as received without litigation. The sale proceeds shall cover the Bank's claims in respect of the credit principal, interest and costs, and the current account of the borrower shall be credited with the balance.

Article 35. The Bulgarian National Bank shall announce the base interest rate for the corresponding period in accordance with a method determined by the Gov-

erning Council, and shall publish it in the *Darjaven Vestnik*.

Article 36. (1) Any unrealized profit of the Bank, arising from changes in the valuation of the Bank's assets or liabilities in gold or denominated in gold or in foreign currencies as a result of a change in the price or the rates of exchange of gold or foreign currencies against the lev, shall be assigned to a Special Reserve Account. Apart from the cases under para. 2, the amounts on this account may be used to cover other losses incurred by the Bank.

(2) (amended; *Darjaven Vestnik*, issue 10 of 2005) Losses arising from any change under para. 1 shall be covered by funds on the Special Reserve Account and by the Reserve Fund.

Article 37. The Bulgarian National Bank may:

1. buy and sell gold specie and bullion or other precious metals;
2. buy, sell or contract deals in foreign currencies using to this end all customary means;
3. open and maintain accounts with international financial institutions, central banks and other financial institutions outside this country;
4. open and maintain accounts or act as a representative or correspondent of international financial institutions, central banks and other financial institutions outside this country.

Article 38. The Bulgarian National Bank shall accept for safekeeping precious metals, securities and other valuables under conditions defined by the Governing Council. The Bank shall have the right to unilaterally discontinue its obligations of a depository by giving the depositor a written notice of 14 working days, after which the Bank may transfer any unclaimed valuables deposited for safekeeping to the common public warehouses for the account and at the risk of the said depositor.

Article 39. (1) (amended; *Darjaven Vestnik*, issue 49 of 1998; issue 39 of 2005, issue 108 of 2006, effective as of 1 January 2007) The Bulgarian National Bank shall accept from banks, the Council of Ministers, ministries and other government agencies, the Bulgarian Deposit Insurance Fund, the Investor Compensation Fund, international financial institutions, institutions and bodies of the European Union, as well as from municipalities money on current accounts or time deposits under conditions announced by the Governing Council.

(2) The Bank may decline any application for the opening of a current or deposit account, as well as close such an account by giving the account holder a written notice of 14 working days, without explaining the reasons for its actions.

(3) (amended; *Darjaven Vestnik*, issue 10 of 2005, issue 52 of 2007, effective as of 1 November 2007) Under terms set by it, the Bulgarian National Bank may open accounts of government securities primary dealers, of government securities subdepositories and of other entities as determined by the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Bulgarian National Bank pursuant to the Ordinance under

Article 36, paragraph 1 of the Law on the Government Debt.

Article 40. (1) For the purpose of facilitating non-cash payments, the Bulgarian National Bank may organize and operate payment systems and clearing offices, as well as issue ordinances providing for the establishment and operation of such systems and offices.

(2) The Bank, as a commissioner, shall have the right to effect collection of payments.

Chapter Six **Relationships with Banks**

Article 41. (1) The Bulgarian National Bank shall:

1. determine by an ordinance the minimum reserve requirements which banks shall be required to keep with the Bulgarian National Bank, the method of their calculation, as well as the terms and procedure for interest payments on them;

2. establish by an ordinance other terms and requirements for the maintenance of the stability of the credit system.

(2) Any bank, which fails to comply with the set minimum reserve requirements, shall pay penalty interest on the amount of the deficiency for the time until elimination of the said deficiency at a rate not exceeding the double amount of the base interest rate of the Bulgarian National Bank.

Article 42. (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 59 of 2006) The Bulgarian National Bank shall compile the balance of payments, monetary and interest rate statistics, as well as financial account statistics of Bulgaria. For this purpose, all government and municipal authorities, as well as legal entities and physical persons, shall provide information to the Bulgarian National Bank in accordance with a procedure established by the Bulgarian National Bank.

Chapter Seven **Relations between the Bulgarian National Bank and the State**

Article 43. (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) (1) The Bulgarian National Bank shall act as the fiscal agent and depository of the State by virtue of concluded contracts at market conditions and prices of services.

(2) In its capacity of a fiscal agent and depository of the State, the Bulgarian National Bank:

1. shall provide bank service of the accounts and payments included in the single account system, on behalf and for the account of the Ministry of Finance;

2. shall collect and provide to the Ministry of Finance regular information on budget entities' bank accounts in the country;

3. shall act as an agent on government debts or government guaranteed debts;

4. may perform other activities agreed with the Minister of Finance.

(3) In its capacity of an agent on government debts, the Bulgarian National Bank shall keep government securities accounts, which are registered by debt acquirer.

(4) The Bulgarian National Bank may act as a representative by proxy of the Council of Ministers for purposes and under conditions agreed upon between the Council of Ministers and the Bank.

Article 44. (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) When exercising their powers and carrying out their duties under this Law, the Bulgarian National Bank, the Governor and the members of the Governing Council shall be independent and neither the Bank, nor the Governor, nor the members of the Governing Council shall seek or take any instructions from the Council of Ministers or from any other bodies and institutions. The Council of Ministers and other bodies and institutions shall not give instructions to the Bulgarian National Bank, the Governor or the members of the Governing Council.

Article 45. (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) (1) The Bulgarian National Bank shall not extend credits and guarantees in any form whatsoever, including through purchase of debt instruments, to the Council of Ministers, municipalities, as well as to other government and municipal institutions, organizations and enterprises.

(2) Paragraph 1 shall not apply to extension of credits to state-owned and municipal banks in the cases under Article 33, para. 2.

(3) The Bulgarian National Bank may extend credits to the government against purchases of Special Drawing Rights from the International Monetary Fund, extended by the Governing Council under the following terms:

1. the decision by the Governing Council shall be taken no later than seven days after the date of the relevant purchase of Special Drawing Rights from the International Monetary Fund;

2. the time limit for the utilization of the credit by the State shall be 90 days after the date of the relevant purchase of Special Drawing Rights from the International Monetary Fund;

3. payments of the principal and interest shall be effected no later than the dates whereon the Bulgarian National Bank must effect the relevant payments to the International Monetary Fund and up to amounts required for the said payments.

(4) Upon the expiry of the time limit under para. 3, item 2, the right of the State on the unutilized portion of the extended credit shall be extinguished.

Chapter Eight

Accountancy and Balance Sheet

Article 46. The Bulgarian National Bank shall keep accounts and records in compliance with the Law on the Accountancy and in connection with international accounting standards.

Article 47. The fiscal year of the Bulgarian National Bank shall begin on 1 January and end on 31 December.

Article 48. (1) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) The expenditure of the Bulgarian National Bank shall be made in accordance with the annual budget approved by the Governing Council of the Bulgarian National Bank and published in the Darjaven Vestnik.

(2) The administrative expenditure shall be made in accordance with a decision of the Governor or a Deputy Governor authorized by him.

(3) The reports on the budget outlays of the Bank shall be examined by the National Audit Office, which shall prepare a special report on the results of the examination. The report on the budget expenditure of the Bank shall be addressed to the National Assembly simultaneously with its annual report.

(4) (new; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 37 of 2006) The enactment of the Public Procurement Law shall be controlled by the National Audit Office. The Public Financial Inspection Agency bodies shall not conduct inspections of the Bulgarian National Bank.

Article 49. (1) The Bulgarian National Bank shall:

1. publish weekly the balance sheet of the Issue Department, which shall show the position of its basic assets and liabilities, inclusive of the gross international reserves as per Article 28, para. 3 and the total amount of the Bank's monetary liabilities as per Article 28, para. 2;

2. publish in the Darjaven Vestnik the position of its basic assets and liabilities at the end of each month, presenting separate balance sheets of the Issue and Banking Departments, an annual financial statement and the profit and loss account of the Bank.

(2) The format and contents of the consolidated balance sheet of the Bulgarian National Bank as well as of the separate balance sheets of the Issue and Banking Departments, shall be determined by an ordinance issued by the Bank and shall comply with the requirements of the international accounting standards.

(3) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) The consolidated financial statement of the Bulgarian National Bank shall be certified by an external auditor and shall be published together with the auditor's report in accordance with the requirements of the international accounting standards.

(4) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 37 of 2006) The external auditor shall be appointed by the Governing Council for a term of three years on the basis of a procedure under the Public Procurement Law.

Article 50. (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) The Bulgarian National Bank shall address the annual budget approved by the Governing Council to the National Assembly within a thirty-day period, and twice a year a report which reviews and assesses the Bank's activities during the previous period. This report shall be published.

Article 51. (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005) The Bulgarian National Bank shall address its annual report on the Bank's activity, the consolidated financial statement, together with the auditor's report under Article 49, para. 3, and the budget report thereof to the National Assembly no later than 30 April of the following year.

Chapter Nine

Other Provisions

Article 52. Distraints, enforcements and collateral on money and securities deposited with the Bulgarian National Bank shall be allowed only if they do not infringe on the rights of the Bank related to the said property.

Article 53. (1) The Bulgarian National Bank may set off on its receivables, which are still not due, where a bank has commenced liquidation of its business or has suspended payments on its debts, as well as in the cases where the Bulgarian National Bank has the right to collect receivables before their falling due.

(2) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 59 of 2007, effective as of 1 March 2008) The Bulgarian National Bank shall have the right to obtain an order for immediate execution under Article 418 of the Code of Civil Procedure on presentation of a statement of account proving arrears, including any interest due.

Article 54. (1) The Bulgarian National Bank may not acquire real estate and real rights, except for:

1. securing premises for the performance of its activity and housing for its employees;
2. protecting itself against losses arising from credit transactions.

(2) The Bank is obliged to dispose of any real estate under item 2 of para. 1 of this Article within three years after acquisition.

Article 55. (1) The Bulgarian National Bank shall have ownership right on the property owned and acquired by it, which shall be separate from state ownership.

(2) Acquisition of immovable and movable property and disposition thereof shall be effected by the Governor of the Bulgarian National Bank or by an official authorized by him according to a procedure established by the Governing Council and in compliance with the provisions of the State Property Law.

Article 56. Except in the cases provided for by this Law, the Bulgarian National Bank may not:

1. extend credits or buy securities or any other negotiable instruments;
2. maintain any deposits denominated or payable in levs;
3. maintain any deposits with local persons.

Article 57. The Bulgarian National Bank may incorporate or acquire interest in companies in connection with the activities performed by it. The Bank may not participate in companies in a general partner capacity.

Article 58. Specialized bank archives operating with a permanent set of documents shall be established at the Bulgarian National Bank. The procedure for attendance of the users of the said archives shall be determined by the Governing Council of the Bank.

Article 59. (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 153 of 1998, issue 109 of 2001, issue 108 of 2006: effective as of 1 January 2007) The Bulgarian National Bank shall be exempt from paying state taxes and fees with the exception of the value added tax, excise duties and customs duties.

Article 60. The Bulgarian National Bank shall adopt ordinances on the enactment of this Law.

Chapter Ten

Administrative Penal Liability

Article 61. (1) (amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 2005; previous wording of Article 61; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 24 of 2009) Whoever commits or permits the commitment of a violation of this Law or legislative acts governing its enactment shall be fined in the amount of BGN 500 to BGN 3000, unless this violation constitutes a criminal offence. If the offender is a sole proprietor or a legal entity, a property sanction shall be imposed in the amount of BGN 5000 to BGN 30,000.

(2) (new; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 24 of 2009) In case of repeated violation under paragraph 1, the fine or respectively the property sanction shall be double.

(3) (new; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 24 of 2009, effective as of 31 March 2009, supplemented; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 44 of 2009, effective as of 12 June 2009) The fines and property sanctions under paragraphs 1 and 2 shall also be imposed in case of violation of Regulation (EC) No 2182/2004 of the Council of 6 December 2004 concerning medals and tokens similar to euro coins amended by Regulation (EC) No 46/2009 of the Council of 18 December 2008 (OJ, L 17/5 of 22 January 2009); and Regulation (EC) No 2183/2004 of the Council of 6 December 2004 extending to the non-participating Member States the application of Regulation (EC) No 2182/2004 concerning medals and tokens similar to euro coins amended by Regulation (EC) No 47/2009 of the Council of 18 December 2008 (OJ, L 17/7 of 22 January 2009).

Article 62. (1) Statements for violations detected under Article 61 of this Law shall be drawn up by officers authorized by the Governor of the Bulgarian National Bank, and the penalty decree shall be issued by the Governor of the Bulgarian National Bank or by an official authorized by him.

(2) The ascertainment of a violation, the issue, appeal against and execution of penalty decrees shall be made in compliance with the Law on the Administrative Violations and Penalties.

Additional Provisions

(title amended; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 59 of 2006)

§ 1. ‘Spot exchange rate’ shall mean the price set for foreign currency transactions for immediate transfer by bank remittance within the period provided for by law or by the rules of banking practices.

§ 1a. (new; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 59 of 2006) ‘A service supplier’ shall be a person who carries out in his line of business activities and operations in banknotes and coins, including their sorting out, safekeeping, transportation and/or distribution.

Transitional and Final Provisions

§ 2. This Law shall repeal the Law on the Bulgarian National Bank (published in the Darjaven Vestnik, issue 50 of 1991; amended, issue 32 of 1996).

§ 3. The term of office of the Governor, Deputy Governors and other members of the Governing Council incumbent upon the entry of this Law into force shall be terminated.

§ 4. Until constitution of the Bulgarian National Bank managing bodies pursuant to the provisions of this Law, the functions of the said bodies shall be performed by the Governing Council incumbent upon the entry of this Law into force.

§ 5. Members of the opening Governing Council, constituted pursuant to this Law, shall be elected or appointed, as the case may be, for the following terms of office:

1. the Governor for six years;
2. the Deputy Governor heading the Issue Department for six years; the Deputy Governor heading the Banking Supervision Department for four years; and the Deputy Governor heading the Banking Department for two years;
3. of the other members, one for one year, another one for three years, and the third one for five years, as designated by the act of appointment.

§ 6. Ordinances on enforcement of the repealed Law on the Bulgarian National Bank, issued by the Bulgarian National Bank, shall remain in force insofar they do not contravene this Law.

§ 7. Until the passage of a State Coat-of-Arms Law, the Bulgarian National Bank shall retain its present seal.

§ 8. The total amount of monetary liabilities of the Bulgarian National Bank under Article 28, para. 2, item 2 shall not include any obligations thereby assumed before 31 December 1996 with an original maturity exceeding two years.

§ 9. The increase of capital of the Bulgarian National Bank from BGN 200,000 to BGN 20 million shall be for the account of the Reserve Fund of the Bulgarian National Bank.

§ 10. Within 14 days after the entry of this Law into force, the receivables of the Bulgarian National Bank from the State, as well as any other assets of the Bank related to obligations of the State to foreign creditors, shall be restructured in accordance with contracts concluded between the Governor of the Bank and the Minister of Finance.

§ 11. The following amendments and supplements are made to the Law on the State Budget Procedures (Darjaven Vestnik, issue 67 of 1996):

1. Paragraph 5 is created in Article 3:

‘(5) The Bulgarian National Bank may extend credits to the state budget under the terms and according to a procedure established by the Law on the Bulgarian National Bank.’

2. Article 32 is repealed.

§ 12. This Law shall enter into force on the day of its publication in the Darjaven Vestnik, except for the provisions of Articles 28, 29, 30, 31 and 49 which shall enter into force on 1 July 1997.

§ 13. The enforcement of this Law shall be assigned to the Governing Council of the Bulgarian National Bank.

Amendments to the Law on the Bulgarian National Bank

(published; Darjaven Vestnik, issue 10 of 28 January 2005)

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Final Provision

§ 27. (1) Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Article 45 shall apply until the date of entering into force of the Treaty of Accession of the Republic of Bulgaria to the European Union.

(2) For the obligations on credits extended by the Bulgarian National Bank before the date under para. 1 against purchases of Special Drawing Rights from the International Monetary Fund, government principal and interest payments shall be effected no later than the dates whereon the Bulgarian National Bank shall effect the relevant payments to the International Monetary Fund and up to amounts required for the said payments.

These amendments are adopted by the 39th National Assembly on 14 January 2005, and are sealed with the official seal of the National Assembly.

Relevant Community Legislation

Directive 2000/12/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 March 2000 Relating to the Taking Up and Pursuit of the Business of Credit Institutions

Directive 98/26/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 1998 on Settlement Finality in Payment and Securities Settlement Systems

Council Regulation (EC) No. 1103/97 of 17 June 1997 on Certain Provisions Relating to the Introduction of the Euro