[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) [Template:Pp-semi](/wiki/Template:Pp-semi) [Template:Pp-move-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-move-indef) [Template:Use dmy dates](/wiki/Template:Use_dmy_dates) [Template:Coord](/wiki/Template:Coord) [Template:Infobox country](/wiki/Template:Infobox_country) **Bulgaria** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en); [Template:Lang-bg](/wiki/Template:Lang-bg), tr. [*Template:Transl*](/wiki/Template:Transl)), officially the **Republic of Bulgaria** ([Template:Lang-bg](/wiki/Template:Lang-bg), tr. [*Template:Transl*](/wiki/Template:Transl), [Template:IPA-bg](/wiki/Template:IPA-bg)), is a country in [southeastern Europe](/wiki/Southeast_Europe). It is bordered by [Romania](/wiki/Romania) to the north, [Serbia](/wiki/Serbia) and [Macedonia](/wiki/Republic_of_Macedonia) to the west, [Greece](/wiki/Greece) and [Turkey](/wiki/Turkey) to the south, and the [Black Sea](/wiki/Black_Sea) to the east. With a territory of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), Bulgaria is Europe's [16th-largest country](/wiki/List_of_European_countries_by_area).

Organised [prehistoric](/wiki/Prehistoric) cultures began developing on Bulgarian lands during the [Neolithic](/wiki/Neolithic) period. Its ancient history saw the presence of the [Thracians](/wiki/Thracians), [Greeks](/wiki/Ancient_Greece) and [Romans](/wiki/Roman_Empire). The emergence of a unified Bulgarian state dates back to the establishment of the [First Bulgarian Empire](/wiki/First_Bulgarian_Empire) in 681 AD, which dominated most of the [Balkans](/wiki/Balkans) and functioned as a cultural hub for [Slavs](/wiki/Slavs) during the [Middle Ages](/wiki/Middle_Ages). With the downfall of the [Second Bulgarian Empire](/wiki/Second_Bulgarian_Empire) in 1396, its territories came under [Ottoman](/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) rule for nearly five centuries. The [Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78](/wiki/Russo-Turkish_War_(1877–78)) led to the formation of the Third Bulgarian State. The following years saw several conflicts with its neighbours, which prompted Bulgaria to align with Germany in both world wars. In 1946 it became a one-party [socialist state](/wiki/People's_Republic_of_Bulgaria) as part of the Soviet-led [Eastern Bloc](/wiki/Eastern_Bloc). In [December 1989](/wiki/Revolutions_of_1989) the ruling [Communist Party](/wiki/Bulgarian_Communist_Party) allowed [multi-party](/wiki/Multi-party_system) elections, which subsequently led to Bulgaria's transition into a [democracy](/wiki/Democracy) and a market-based economy.

Bulgaria's population of 7.4 million people is predominantly urbanised and mainly concentrated in the administrative centres of its [28 provinces](/wiki/Provinces_of_Bulgaria). Most commercial and cultural activities are centred on the capital and largest city, [Sofia](/wiki/Sofia). The strongest sectors of the economy are heavy industry, power engineering, and agriculture, all of which rely on local natural resources.

The country's current political structure dates to the adoption of a democratic constitution in 1991. Bulgaria is a [unitary](/wiki/Unitary_state) parliamentary republic with a high degree of political, administrative, and economic centralisation. It is a member of the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union), [NATO](/wiki/NATO), and the [Council of Europe](/wiki/Council_of_Europe); a founding state of the [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](/wiki/Organization_for_Security_and_Co-operation_in_Europe) (OSCE); and has taken a seat at the [UN Security Council](/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council) three times.

## Contents

* 1 History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]
  + 1.1 Prehistory and antiquity[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]
  + 1.2 First Bulgarian Empire[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]
  + 1.3 Second Bulgarian Empire[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]
  + 1.4 Ottoman rule[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]
  + 1.5 Third Bulgarian state[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]
* 2 Geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]
  + 2.1 Environment[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]
  + 2.2 Biodiversity[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]
* 3 Politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]
  + 3.1 Administrative divisions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]
  + 3.2 Foreign relations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]
  + 3.3 Military[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]
* 4 Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]
  + 4.1 Science and technology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]
  + 4.2 Infrastructure[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]
* 5 Demographics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]
* 6 Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]
* 7 See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]
* 8 Footnotes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]
* 9 References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]
* 10 Bibliography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]
* 11 External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

### Prehistory and antiquity[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) Human activity in the lands of modern Bulgaria can be traced back to the [Paleolithic](/wiki/Paleolithic). Animal bones incised with man-made markings from [Kozarnika](/wiki/Kozarnika) cave are assumed to be the earliest examples of [symbolic behaviour](/wiki/Symbolic_behaviour) in humans.[[1]](#cite_note-1) Organised prehistoric societies in Bulgarian lands include the [Neolithic](/wiki/Neolithic) [Hamangia culture](/wiki/Hamangia_culture),[[2]](#cite_note-2) [Vinča culture](/wiki/Vinča_culture)[[3]](#cite_note-3) and the [eneolithic](/wiki/Eneolithic) [Varna culture](/wiki/Varna_culture) (fifth millennium BC). The latter is credited with inventing [gold](/wiki/Gold) working and exploitation.[[4]](#cite_note-4)[[5]](#cite_note-5) Some of these first gold smelters produced the coins, weapons and jewellery of the [Varna Necropolis treasure](/wiki/Varna_Necropolis), the oldest in the world with an approximate age of over 6,000 years.[[6]](#cite_note-6) This site also offers insights for understanding the social hierarchy of the earliest European societies.[[7]](#cite_note-7)[[8]](#cite_note-8) [Thracians](/wiki/Thracians), one of the three primary ancestral groups of modern Bulgarians,[[9]](#cite_note-9) began appearing in the region during the [Iron Age](/wiki/Iron_Age).[[10]](#cite_note-10) In the late 6th century BC, the [Persians](/wiki/Achaemenid_Empire) conquered most of present-day Bulgaria.[[11]](#cite_note-11)[[12]](#cite_note-12)[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) and kept it until [479 BC](/wiki/Second_Persian_invasion_of_Greece).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) With influence from the Persians,[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) the bulk of the Thracian tribes were united in the [Odrysian kingdom](/wiki/Odrysian_kingdom) in the 470s BC by king [Teres](/wiki/Teres_I),[[13]](#cite_note-13)[[14]](#cite_note-14)[[15]](#cite_note-15) but were later subjugated by [Alexander the Great](/wiki/Alexander_the_Great) and by the [Romans](/wiki/Roman_Empire) in 46 AD. After the division of the [Roman Empire](/wiki/Roman_Empire) in 5th century the area fell under [Byzantine](/wiki/Byzantine) control. By this time, [Christianity](/wiki/Christianity) had already spread in the region. A small [Gothic](/wiki/Goths) community in [Nicopolis ad Istrum](/wiki/Nicopolis_ad_Istrum) produced the first [Germanic language](/wiki/Germanic_languages) book in the 4th century, the [Wulfila Bible](/wiki/Gothic_Bible).[[16]](#cite_note-16)[[17]](#cite_note-17) The [first Christian monastery](/wiki/Monastery_of_Saint_Athanasius) in Europe was established around the same time by [Saint Athanasius](/wiki/Saint_Athanasius) in central Bulgaria.[[18]](#cite_note-18) From the 6th century the easternmost [South Slavs](/wiki/South_Slavs) gradually settled in the region, assimilating the Hellenised or Romanised Thracians.[[19]](#cite_note-19)[[20]](#cite_note-20)

### First Bulgarian Empire[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|alt=Krum feasting with his nobles after the battle of Pliska, detail from the Manasses chronicle|left|Khan Krum feasts with his nobles after the battle of Pliska. His servant (far right) brings the wine-filled](/wiki/File:Krum1.jpg) [skull cup](/wiki/Skull_cup) of [Nicephorus I](/wiki/Nicephorus_I). In 680 [Bulgar](/wiki/Bulgars) tribes[[9]](#cite_note-9) under the leadership of [Asparukh](/wiki/Asparukh_of_Bulgaria) moved south across the [Danube](/wiki/Danube) and settled in the area between the lower Danube and the [Balkan](/wiki/Balkan), establishing their capital at [Pliska](/wiki/Pliska).[[21]](#cite_note-21)[[22]](#cite_note-22) A peace treaty with Byzantium in 681 marked the beginning of the [First Bulgarian Empire](/wiki/First_Bulgarian_Empire). The Bulgars gradually mixed up with the local population, adopting a common language on the basis of the local [Slavic](/wiki/Slavic_languages) dialect.[[23]](#cite_note-23) Succeeding rulers strengthened the Bulgarian state throughout the 8th and 9th centuries. [Krum](/wiki/Krum_of_Bulgaria) doubled the country's territory, killed Byzantine emperor [Nicephorus I](/wiki/Nicephorus_I) in the [Battle of Pliska](/wiki/Battle_of_Pliska),[[24]](#cite_note-24) and introduced the first written code of law. Paganism was abolished in favour of [Eastern Orthodox Christianity](/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox_Church) under [Boris I](/wiki/Boris_I_of_Bulgaria) in 864. This [conversion](/wiki/Christianization_of_Bulgaria) was followed by a Byzantine recognition of the [Bulgarian church](/wiki/Bulgarian_Orthodox_Church)[[25]](#cite_note-25) and the adoption of the [Cyrillic alphabet](/wiki/Cyrillic_script) developed at [Preslav](/wiki/Preslav_Literary_School)[[26]](#cite_note-26) which strengthened central authority and helped fuse the Slavs and Bulgars into a unified people.[[27]](#cite_note-27)<ref name=RCJ\_BG>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref> A subsequent cultural golden age began during the 34-year rule of [Simeon the Great](/wiki/Simeon_I_of_Bulgaria), who also achieved the largest territorial expansion of the state.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

Wars with [Magyars](/wiki/Magyars) and [Pechenegs](/wiki/Pechenegs) and the spread of the [Bogomil heresy](/wiki/Bogomilism) weakened Bulgaria after Simeon's death.[[28]](#cite_note-28)[[29]](#cite_note-29) Consecutive [Rus'](/wiki/Kievan_Rus') and Byzantine invasions resulted in the seizure of the capital [Preslav](/wiki/Preslav) by the Byzantine army in 971.[[30]](#cite_note-30) Under [Samuil](/wiki/Samuel_of_Bulgaria), Bulgaria briefly recovered from these attacks,[[31]](#cite_note-31) but this rise ended when Byzantine emperor [Basil II](/wiki/Basil_II) defeated the Bulgarian army at [Klyuch](/wiki/Battle_of_Kleidion) in 1014. Samuil died shortly after the battle,[[32]](#cite_note-32) and by 1018 the Byzantines had ended the First Bulgarian Empire.[[33]](#cite_note-33)

### Second Bulgarian Empire[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) After his conquest of Bulgaria, [Basil II](/wiki/Basil_II) prevented revolts and discontent by retaining the rule of the local nobility and by relieving the newly conquered lands of the obligation to pay taxes in gold, allowing them to be paid in kind instead.<ref name=Ostrog>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref> He also allowed the [Bulgarian Patriarchate](/wiki/Bulgarian_Orthodox_Church) to retain its [autocephalous status](/wiki/Autocephaly) and all its [dioceses](/wiki/Diocese), but reduced it to an [archbishopric](/wiki/Orthodox_Archbishopric_of_Ohrid_(ancient)).<ref name=Ostrog/>[[34]](#cite_note-34) After his death Byzantine domestic policies changed and a series of unsuccessful rebellions broke out, [the largest](/wiki/Bulgarian_uprising_against_the_Byzantine_Empire_(1040-1041)) being led by [Peter Delyan](/wiki/Peter_Delyan). In 1185 [Asen dynasty](/wiki/Asen_dynasty) nobles [Ivan Asen I](/wiki/Ivan_Asen_I) and [Peter IV](/wiki/Peter_IV_of_Bulgaria) organised a [major uprising](/wiki/Uprising_of_Asen_and_Peter) which resulted in the re-establishment of the Bulgarian state. Ivan Asen and Peter laid the foundations of the Second Bulgarian Empire with [Tarnovo](/wiki/Veliko_Tarnovo) as the capital.[[35]](#cite_note-35) [thumb|right|The walls of](/wiki/File:20140621_Veliko_Tarnovo_002.jpg) [Tsarevets fortress](/wiki/Tsarevets_(fortress)) in [Veliko Tarnovo](/wiki/Veliko_Tarnovo), the capital of the second empire

[Kaloyan](/wiki/Kaloyan), the third of the Asen monarchs, extended his dominion to [Belgrade](/wiki/Belgrade) and [Ohrid](/wiki/Ohrid). He acknowledged the spiritual supremacy of [the pope](/wiki/The_pope) and received a royal crown from a [papal legate](/wiki/Papal_legate).<ref name=EB1911>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> The empire reached its zenith under [Ivan Asen II](/wiki/Ivan_Asen_II) (1218–1241), when commerce and culture flourished.[[36]](#cite_note-36) The strong economic and religious influence of Tarnovo made it a "[Third Rome](/wiki/Third_Rome)", unlike the already declining Constantinople.[[37]](#cite_note-37) The country's military and economic might declined after the Asen dynasty ended in 1257, facing internal conflicts, constant Byzantine and Hungarian attacks and [Mongol domination](/wiki/Mongol_invasion_of_Europe).[[36]](#cite_note-36)[[38]](#cite_note-38) By the end of the 14th century, factional divisions between [the feudal landlords](/wiki/Boyars) and the spread of Bogomilism had caused the Second Bulgarian Empire to split into three tsardoms—[Vidin](/wiki/Tsardom_of_Vidin), [Tarnovo](/wiki/Second_Bulgarian_Empire#Ivan_Alexander_and_fall_of_Bulgaria) and [Karvuna](/wiki/Despotate_of_Dobruja)—and several semi-independent principalities that fought each other, along with Byzantines, Hungarians, Serbs, [Venetians](/wiki/Venetian_Republic) and [Genoese](/wiki/Genoese_Republic). By the late 14th century the [Ottoman Turks](/wiki/Ottoman_Turks) had started their conquest of Bulgaria and had taken most towns and fortresses south of the Balkan mountains.[[36]](#cite_note-36)

### Ottoman rule[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Hristo_Botev_by_Georgi_Danchov_Zografina.jpg)[Hristo Botev](/wiki/Hristo_Botev), a prominent revolutionary in the April Uprising Tarnovo was captured by the Ottomans after a three-month siege in 1393. After the [Battle of Nicopolis](/wiki/Battle_of_Nicopolis) in 1396 brought about the fall of the Vidin Tsardom, the Ottomans conquered all Bulgarian lands south of the Danube. The nobility was eliminated and the peasantry was [enserfed](/wiki/Serfdom) to Ottoman masters,[[39]](#cite_note-39) with much of the educated clergy fleeing to other countries.[[40]](#cite_note-40) Under the Ottoman system, Christians were considered an [inferior class](/wiki/Rayah) of people. Thus, Bulgarians, like other Christians, were subjected to heavy taxes and a small portion of the Bulgarian populace experienced partial or complete [Islamisation](/wiki/Islamisation),[[41]](#cite_note-41) and their culture was suppressed.[[40]](#cite_note-40) Ottoman authorities established the Rum [Millet](/wiki/Millet_(Ottoman_Empire)), a religious administrative community which governed all Orthodox Christians regardless of their ethnicity.[[42]](#cite_note-42) Most of the local population gradually lost its distinct national consciousness, identifying as Christians.[[43]](#cite_note-43)[[44]](#cite_note-44) However, the clergy remaining in some isolated monasteries kept it alive, and that helped it to survive as in some rural, remote areas,[[45]](#cite_note-45) as well as in the militant [Catholic community](/wiki/Roman_Catholicism_in_Bulgaria) in the northwestern part of the country.[[46]](#cite_note-46) Several Bulgarian revolts erupted throughout the nearly five centuries of Ottoman rule, most notably the [Habsburg](/wiki/Habsburg_Monarchy)-backed[[47]](#cite_note-47) Tarnovo uprisings [in 1598](/wiki/First_Tarnovo_Uprising) and [in 1686](/wiki/Second_Tarnovo_Uprising), the [Chiprovtsi Uprising](/wiki/Chiprovtsi_Uprising) in 1688 and [Karposh's Rebellion](/wiki/Karposh's_Rebellion) in 1689.[[39]](#cite_note-39) In the 18th century, the [Enlightenment](/wiki/Age_of_Enlightenment) in Western Europe provided influence for the initiation of a movement known as the [National awakening of Bulgaria](/wiki/National_awakening_of_Bulgaria).[[39]](#cite_note-39) It restored national consciousness and became a key factor in the liberation struggle, resulting in the 1876 [April Uprising](/wiki/April_Uprising). Up to 30,000 Bulgarians were killed as Ottoman authorities put down the rebellion. The massacres prompted the [Great Powers](/wiki/Great_Powers#History) to take action.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) They convened the [Constantinople Conference](/wiki/Constantinople_Conference) in 1876, but their decisions were rejected by the Ottomans. This allowed the [Russian Empire](/wiki/Russian_Empire) to seek a solution by force without risking military confrontation with other Great Powers, as had happened in the [Crimean War](/wiki/Crimean_War).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) In 1877 [Russia declared war](/wiki/Russo-Turkish_War,_1877–1878) on the Ottoman Empire and defeated its forces with the help of [Bulgarian volunteers](/wiki/Opalchentsi).

### Third Bulgarian state[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|alt=The Defence of the Eagle's Nest, painting by Alexey Popov from 1893, depicting the Defence of Shipka Pass|The Russian and Bulgarian](/wiki/File:The_defeat_of_Shipka_Peak,_Bulgarian_War_of_Independence.JPG) [defence of Shipka Pass](/wiki/Battle_of_Shipka_Pass) was crucial for the independence of Bulgaria.[[48]](#cite_note-48) The [Treaty of San Stefano](/wiki/Treaty_of_San_Stefano) was signed on 3 March 1878 by Russia and the Ottoman Empire, and included a provision to set up an autonomous Bulgarian principality roughly on the territories of the Second Bulgarian Empire.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)[[49]](#cite_note-49) The other [Great Powers](/wiki/Great_Powers#History) immediately rejected the treaty out of fear that such a large country in the Balkans might threaten their interests. It was superseded by the subsequent [Treaty of Berlin](/wiki/Treaty_of_Berlin,_1878), signed on 13 July, provided for a much smaller state comprising [Moesia](/wiki/Moesia) and the region of [Sofia](/wiki/Sofia), leaving large populations of Bulgarians outside the new country.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)<ref name=BBCProfile>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref> This played a significant role in forming Bulgaria's militaristic approach to foreign affairs during the first half of the 20th century.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

The Bulgarian principality won [a war against Serbia](/wiki/Serbo-Bulgarian_War) and incorporated the semi-autonomous Ottoman territory of [Eastern Rumelia](/wiki/Eastern_Rumelia) in 1885, proclaiming itself an independent state on 5 October 1908.[[50]](#cite_note-50) In the years following independence, Bulgaria increasingly militarised and was often referred to as "the Balkan [Prussia](/wiki/Prussia)".[[51]](#cite_note-51)[[52]](#cite_note-52) Between 1912 and 1918, Bulgaria became involved in three consecutive conflicts—two [Balkan Wars](/wiki/Balkan_Wars) and [World War I](/wiki/World_War_I). After a disastrous defeat in the [Second Balkan War](/wiki/Second_Balkan_War), Bulgaria again found itself fighting on the losing side as a result of its alliance with the [Central Powers](/wiki/Central_Powers) in World War I. Despite fielding more than a quarter of its population in a 1,200,000-strong army[[53]](#cite_note-53)[[54]](#cite_note-54) and achieving several decisive victories, at [Doiran](/wiki/Battle_of_Doiran_(1917)) and [Dobrich](/wiki/Battle_of_Dobrich), the country capitulated in 1918. The war resulted in significant territorial losses, and a total of 87,500 soldiers killed.[[55]](#cite_note-55) More than 253,000 refugees [immigrated](/wiki/Immigrated) to Bulgaria from 1912 to 1929 due to the effects of these wars,[[56]](#cite_note-56) placing additional strain on the already ruined national economy.[[57]](#cite_note-57) The political unrest resulting from these losses led to the establishment of a royal [authoritarian dictatorship](/wiki/Authoritarianism) by Tsar [Boris III](/wiki/Boris_III_of_Bulgaria) (1918–1943). Bulgaria entered World War II in 1941 as a member of [the Axis](/wiki/Axis_Powers) but declined to participate in [Operation Barbarossa](/wiki/Operation_Barbarossa) and saved its Jewish population from deportation to [concentration camps](/wiki/Nazi_concentration_camps).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The sudden death of Boris III in the summer of 1943 pushed the country into political turmoil as the war turned against Germany and the communist guerrilla movement gained momentum. The government of [Bogdan Filov](/wiki/Bogdan_Filov) subsequently failed to achieve peace with the Allies. Bulgaria did not comply with Soviet demands to expel German forces from its territory, resulting in a declaration of war and an invasion by the USSR in September 1944.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The communist-dominated [Fatherland Front](/wiki/Fatherland_Front_(Bulgaria)) took power, ended participation in the Axis and joined the Allied side until the war ended.[[58]](#cite_note-58) [thumb|left|alt=Photograph of Bulgarian soldiers cutting enemy barbed wire during World War I|](/wiki/File:Bulgarian_soldiers_with_wire_cutters_WWI_(contrasted).jpg)[World War I](/wiki/World_War_I): Bulgarian soldiers cutting barbed wire laid by the [Entente Powers](/wiki/Entente_Powers) and preparing to advance. The [left-wing uprising](/wiki/Bulgarian_coup_d'état_of_1944) of 9 September 1944 led to the abolition of monarchic rule, but it was not until 1946 that a [one-party](/wiki/One-party_state) [people's republic](/wiki/People's_republic) was established.[[59]](#cite_note-59) It became a part of the Soviet sphere of influence under the leadership of [Georgi Dimitrov](/wiki/Georgi_Dimitrov) (1946–1949), who laid the foundations for a rapidly industrialising [Stalinist](/wiki/Stalinism) state which was also highly repressive with thousands of dissidents executed.[[60]](#cite_note-60)[[61]](#cite_note-61)[[62]](#cite_note-62) By the mid-1950s standards of living rose significantly,[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) while political repressions were lessened.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) By the 1980s both national and per capita GDPs quadrupled,[[63]](#cite_note-63) but the economy remained prone to debt spikes, the most severe taking place in 1960, 1977 and 1980.[[64]](#cite_note-64) The Soviet-style [planned economy](/wiki/Planned_economy) saw some market-oriented policies emerging on an experimental level under [Todor Zhivkov](/wiki/Todor_Zhivkov) (1954–1989).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) His daughter [Lyudmila](/wiki/Lyudmila_Zhivkova) bolstered national pride by promoting Bulgarian heritage, culture and arts worldwide.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) In an attempt to erase the identity of the [ethnic Turk](/wiki/Turks_in_Bulgaria) minority, an assimilation campaign was launched in 1984 which included closing mosques and forcing ethnic Turks to adopt Slavic names. These policies (combined with the end of communist rule in 1989) resulted in the emigration of some 300,000 ethnic Turks to Turkey.[[65]](#cite_note-65)[[66]](#cite_note-66) Under the influence of the [collapsing of the Eastern Bloc](/wiki/Revolutions_of_1989), on 10 November 1989 the Communist Party gave up its political monopoly, Zhivkov resigned, and Bulgaria embarked on a transition to a parliamentary democracy.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The first free elections in June 1990 were won by the [Bulgarian Socialist Party](/wiki/Bulgarian_Socialist_Party) (BSP, the freshly renamed Communist Party).[[67]](#cite_note-67) A [new constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_Bulgaria) that provided for a relatively weak elected president and for a prime minister accountable to the legislature was adopted in July 1991. The new system initially failed to improve living standards or create economic growth—the average quality of life and economic performance remained lower than under communism well into the early 2000s.[[68]](#cite_note-68) A 1997 reform package restored economic growth, but living standards continued to suffer.[[69]](#cite_note-69) After 2001 economic, political and geopolitical conditions improved greatly,[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) and Bulgaria achieved high Human Development status.[[70]](#cite_note-70) It became a member of [NATO](/wiki/NATO) in 2004[[71]](#cite_note-71) and participated in the [War in Afghanistan](/wiki/War_in_Afghanistan_(2001–present)). After several years of reforms it joined the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union) in 2007 despite continued concerns about government corruption.[[72]](#cite_note-72)

## Geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Bulgaria occupies a portion of the eastern [Balkan](/wiki/Balkans) peninsula, bordering five countries—[Greece](/wiki/Greece) and [Turkey](/wiki/Turkey) to the south, [Macedonia](/wiki/Macedonia_(country)) and [Serbia](/wiki/Serbia) to the west, and [Romania](/wiki/Romania) to the north. The land borders have a total length of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), and the coastline has a length of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) Its total area of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) ranks it as the world's 105th-largest country.[[73]](#cite_note-73)[[74]](#cite_note-74) Bulgaria's geographic coordinates are [43° N](/wiki/43rd_parallel_north) [25° E](/wiki/25th_meridian_east).[[75]](#cite_note-75) The most notable [topographical](/wiki/Topographical) features are the [Danubian Plain](/wiki/Danubian_Plain_(Bulgaria)), the [Balkan Mountains](/wiki/Balkan_Mountains), the [Thracian Plain](/wiki/Thracian_Plain), and the [Rhodope Mountains](/wiki/Rhodope_Mountains).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The southern edge of the Danubian Plain slopes upward into the foothills of the Balkans, while the [Danube](/wiki/Danube) defines the border with Romania. The [Thracian](/wiki/Thracia) Plain is roughly triangular, beginning southeast of [Sofia](/wiki/Sofia) and broadening as it reaches the [Black Sea coast](/wiki/Bulgarian_Black_Sea_Coast).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

[Template:Imageframe](/wiki/Template:Imageframe)

The Balkan mountains run laterally through the middle of the country. The mountainous southwest of the country has two alpine ranges—[Rila](/wiki/Rila) and [Pirin](/wiki/Pirin), which border the lower but more extensive [Rhodope Mountains](/wiki/Rhodope_Mountains) to the east.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) Bulgaria is home to the highest point of the Balkan peninsula, [Musala](/wiki/Musala), at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert)[[76]](#cite_note-76) and its lowest point is sea level. Plains occupy about one-third of the territory, while plateaus and hills occupy 41 per cent.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The country has a dense network of about 540 rivers, most of which are relatively small and with low water levels.[[77]](#cite_note-77) The longest river located solely in Bulgarian territory, the [Iskar](/wiki/Iskar_(river)), has a length of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). Other major rivers include the [Struma](/wiki/Struma_River) and the [Maritsa](/wiki/Maritsa) in the south.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

Bulgaria has a dynamic climate, which results from its being positioned at the meeting point of [Mediterranean](/wiki/Mediterranean_Sea) and continental air masses and the barrier effect of its mountains.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) Northern Bulgaria averages [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) cooler and registers [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) more precipitation annually than the regions south of the Balkan mountains. Temperature amplitudes vary significantly in different areas. The lowest recorded temperature is [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), while the highest is [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert).[[78]](#cite_note-78) [Precipitation](/wiki/Precipitation_(meteorology)) averages about [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) per year, and varies from [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in [Dobrudja](/wiki/Dobrudja) to more than [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in the mountains. Continental air masses bring significant amounts of snowfall during winter.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

### Environment[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

Bulgaria adopted the [Kyoto Protocol](/wiki/Kyoto_Protocol)[[79]](#cite_note-79) and achieved the protocol's objectives by reducing [carbon dioxide emissions](/wiki/Carbon_dioxide_emissions) from 1990 to 2009 by 30 percent.[[80]](#cite_note-80) However, pollution from factories and metallurgy works and severe [deforestation](/wiki/Deforestation) continue to cause major problems to the health and welfare of the population.[[81]](#cite_note-81) In 2013, air pollution in Bulgaria was more severe than any other European country.[[82]](#cite_note-82) Urban areas are particularly affected by energy production from coal-based powerplants and automobile traffic,[[83]](#cite_note-83)[[84]](#cite_note-84) while pesticide usage in the agriculture and antiquated industrial sewage systems produce extensive soil and water pollution with chemicals and [detergents](/wiki/Detergents).[[85]](#cite_note-85) Bulgaria is home to [Maritsa Iztok-2](/wiki/Maritsa_Iztok_Complex), a [lignite](/wiki/Lignite)-fired power station causing the highest damage costs to [health](/wiki/Health) and the [environment](/wiki/Environmental_degradation) in the entire European Union according to the [European Environment Agency](/wiki/European_Environment_Agency).<ref name=EEA>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> It is the only EU member which does not recycle municipal waste,[[86]](#cite_note-86) although an [electronic waste recycling](/wiki/Computer_recycling) plant opened in June 2010.[[87]](#cite_note-87) The situation has improved in recent years, and several government-funded programs have been put into place in an attempt to reduce pollution levels.[[85]](#cite_note-85) According to Yale University's 2012 [Environmental Performance Index](/wiki/Environmental_Performance_Index), Bulgaria is a "modest performer" in protecting the environment.[[88]](#cite_note-88) Over 75% of surface rivers meet the standards for good quality. An improvement of water quality began in 1998 and has maintained a sustainable trend of moderate improvement.[[89]](#cite_note-89)

### Biodiversity[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[Template:Category see also](/wiki/Template:Category_see_also) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|upright=0.70|](/wiki/File:Kamchiareserve.jpg)[Alluvial forest (Longoz)](/wiki/Old-growth_forest) in [Kamchia Biosphere Reserve](/wiki/Kamchia_(biosphere_reserve)) The interaction of climatic, hydrological, geological and topographical conditions have produced a relatively wide variety of plant and animal species.[[90]](#cite_note-90)Bulgaria is one of the countries with highest [biodiversity](/wiki/Biodiversity) in Europe.[[91]](#cite_note-91)Bulgaria's biodiversity [is conserved](/wiki/List_of_protected_areas_of_Bulgaria) in three national parks, 11 nature parks[[92]](#cite_note-92) and 16 [biosphere reserves](/wiki/Biosphere_reserve).[[93]](#cite_note-93) Nearly 35 per cent of its land area consists of forests,[[94]](#cite_note-94) where some of the oldest trees in the world, such as [Baikushev's pine](/wiki/Baikushev's_pine) and the [Granit oak](/wiki/Granit_oak),[[95]](#cite_note-95) grow. Most of the plant and animal life is central European, although representatives of Arctic and alpine species are present at high altitudes.[[96]](#cite_note-96) Its flora encompass more than 3,800 species of which 170 are [endemic](/wiki/Endemism) and 150 are considered endangered.[[97]](#cite_note-97) A checklist of larger [fungi](/wiki/Fungi) of Bulgaria reported that more than 1,500 species occur in the country.[[98]](#cite_note-98) Animal species include [owls](/wiki/Owl), [rock partridges](/wiki/Rock_partridge), [wallcreepers](/wiki/Wallcreeper)[[96]](#cite_note-96) and [brown bears](/wiki/Brown_bear).[[99]](#cite_note-99) The [Eurasian lynx](/wiki/Eurasian_lynx) and the [eastern imperial eagle](/wiki/Eastern_imperial_eagle) have small, but growing populations.[[100]](#cite_note-100) In 1998, the Bulgarian government approved the National Biological Diversity Conservation Strategy, a comprehensive programme seeking the preservation of local ecosystems, protection of endangered species and conservation of genetic resources.[[101]](#cite_note-101) Bulgaria has some of the largest [Natura 2000](/wiki/Natura_2000) areas in Europe covering 33.8% of its territory.[[102]](#cite_note-102)

## Politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|left|alt=The National Assembly building in Sofia|The National Assembly building in](/wiki/File:National_Assembly_of_Bulgaria.jpg) [Sofia](/wiki/Sofia).

Bulgaria is a [parliamentary democracy](/wiki/Parliamentary_democracy) in which the most powerful executive position is that of prime minister.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The political system has three branches—legislative, executive and judicial, with [universal suffrage](/wiki/Universal_suffrage) for [citizens](/wiki/Citizen) at least 18 years old. The [Constitution of Bulgaria](/wiki/Constitution_of_Bulgaria) provides also possibilities of direct democracy.[[103]](#cite_note-103) Elections are supervised by an independent Central Election Commission that includes members from all major political parties. Parties must register with the commission prior to participating in a national election.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) Normally, the prime minister-elect is the leader of the party receiving the most votes in parliamentary elections, although this is not always the case.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

Political parties gather in the [National Assembly](/wiki/National_Assembly_(Bulgaria)), which consists of 240 deputies elected to four-year terms by direct popular vote. The National Assembly has the power to enact laws, approve the budget, schedule presidential elections, select and dismiss the [Prime Minister](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Bulgaria) and other ministers, declare war, deploy troops abroad, and ratify international treaties and agreements. The [president](/wiki/President_of_Bulgaria) serves as the [head of state](/wiki/Head_of_state) and [commander-in-chief](/wiki/Commander-in-chief) of the armed forces, and has the authority to return a bill for further debate, although the parliament can override the [presidential veto](/wiki/Presidential_veto) by a simple majority vote of all members of parliament.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

GERB-backed [Rosen Plevneliev](/wiki/Rosen_Plevneliev) is the elected President of Bulgaria after the [presidential elections in 2011](/wiki/Bulgarian_presidential_election,_2011) in which he received 52.5 per cent of the votes on the second round against 47.5 per cent for his then-Socialist Party opponent [Ivaylo Kalfin](/wiki/Ivaylo_Kalfin).[[104]](#cite_note-104) [thumb|right|alt=Diagram of political parties in the Bulgarian parliament|Political groups in the](/wiki/File:43rd_National_Assembly_of_Bulgaria_(2014).svg) [Parliament](/wiki/National_Assembly_(Bulgaria)) and number of representatives (2014):[[105]](#cite_note-105)  
[Template:Colorbox](/wiki/Template:Colorbox) [GERB](/wiki/Citizens_for_European_Development_of_Bulgaria) (centre-right, 83)  
[Template:Colorbox](/wiki/Template:Colorbox) [BSP Left Bulgaria](/wiki/Bulgarian_Socialist_Party) (centre-left, 38)  
[Template:Colorbox](/wiki/Template:Colorbox) [DPS](/wiki/Movement_for_Rights_and_Freedoms) (centrist, 36)  
[Template:Colorbox](/wiki/Template:Colorbox) [Reformist Bloc](/wiki/Reformist_Bloc) (right-wing, 23)  
[Template:Colorbox](/wiki/Template:Colorbox) [Patriotic Front](/wiki/Patriotic_Front_(Bulgaria)) (right-wing, 18)  
[Template:Colorbox](/wiki/Template:Colorbox) [BBTs](/wiki/Bulgaria_Without_Censorship) (populist, 14)  
[Template:Colorbox](/wiki/Template:Colorbox) [Attack](/wiki/Attack_(political_party)) (far right, 11)  
[Template:Colorbox](/wiki/Template:Colorbox) [ABV](/wiki/Alternative_for_Bulgarian_Revival) (centre-left, 11)  
[Template:Colorbox](/wiki/Template:Colorbox) [Independent](/wiki/Independent_politician) (6)

Until February 2013 GERB had 117 seats in the National Assembly, ruling as a [minority government](/wiki/Minority_government) without support from the other political parties in the parliament.[[106]](#cite_note-106) The government resigned on 20 February 2013 after [nationwide protests](/wiki/Protests_against_the_Borisov_cabinet) caused by high costs of utilities, low living standards[[107]](#cite_note-107) and the failure of the democratic system.[[108]](#cite_note-108) The protest wave was marked by self-immolations, spontaneous demonstrations and a strong sentiment against political parties.[[109]](#cite_note-109) As a consequence, the Parliament was dissolved and a new provisional government was set up by the President. The subsequent snap elections in [May 2013](/wiki/Bulgarian_parliamentary_election,_2013) elections resulted in a narrow GERB win.[[110]](#cite_note-110) However, with no support from the other three political parties that entered the parliament, on 24 May, GERB leader Borisov returned the president's mandate to try and form a government. The Bulgarian Socialist Party nominated ex-Finance Minister [Plamen Oresharski](/wiki/Plamen_Oresharski) for the post of Prime Minister in May 2013.[[111]](#cite_note-111)[[112]](#cite_note-112) Only two weeks after its initial formation the Oresharski government came under opposition criticism and had to deal with [large-scale protests](/wiki/2013–14_Bulgarian_protests_against_the_Oresharski_cabinet) some with more than 11 000 participants.[[113]](#cite_note-113) The government survived five [votes of no-confidence](/wiki/Vote_of_confidence) before voluntarily resigning[[114]](#cite_note-114) on 23 July 2014.[[115]](#cite_note-115) On 6 August, a [caretaker government](/wiki/Bliznashki_Government) led by [Georgi Bliznashki](/wiki/Georgi_Bliznashki) was sworn into office and the Oresharski government was officially dissolved.[[116]](#cite_note-116) A new round of [parliamentary elections](/wiki/Bulgarian_parliamentary_election,_2014) on 5 October 2014[[117]](#cite_note-117) again resulted in a [GERB](/wiki/GERB) victory with around a third of the vote. A total of eight parties won seats, the first time since the beginning of democratic elections in 1990 that more than seven parties entered parliament.[[118]](#cite_note-118) After being tasked by [President](/wiki/List_of_heads_of_state_of_Bulgaria) [Rosen Plevneliev](/wiki/Rosen_Plevneliev) to form a government, Borisov's GERB [formed a coalition](/wiki/Second_Borisov_Government)[[119]](#cite_note-119) and members of the parties in the [Reformist Bloc](/wiki/Reformist_Bloc) ([Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria (DSB)](/wiki/Democrats_for_a_Strong_Bulgaria), [Union of Democratic Forces (SDS)](/wiki/Union_of_Democratic_Forces_(Bulgaria)), [Bulgaria for Citizens Movement (DBG)](/wiki/Bulgaria_for_Citizens_Movement) and [Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BZNS)](/wiki/Bulgarian_Agrarian_National_Union)) were chosen for Minister positions. The vice chairman of the [Alternative for Bulgarian Revival](/wiki/Alternative_for_Bulgarian_Revival) party [Ivaylo Kalfin](/wiki/Ivaylo_Kalfin) was voted for Depute Prime Minister and Minister of Labor and Social Policy.

Bulgaria has a typical [civil law](/wiki/Civil_law_(legal_system)) legal system.[[120]](#cite_note-120) The judiciary is overseen by the Ministry of Justice. The Supreme Administrative Court and Supreme Court of Cassation are the highest courts of appeal and oversee the application of laws in subordinate courts.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The Supreme Judicial Council manages the system and appoints judges. Bulgaria's judiciary, along with other institutions, remains one of Europe's most corrupt and inefficient.[[121]](#cite_note-121)[[122]](#cite_note-122)[[123]](#cite_note-123)[[124]](#cite_note-124) Law enforcement is carried out by organisations mainly subordinate to the [Ministry of the Interior](/wiki/Ministry_of_Interior_(Bulgaria)).[[125]](#cite_note-125) The [National Police Service](/wiki/National_Police_Service_(Bulgaria)) (NPS) combats general crime, maintains public order and supports the operations of other law enforcement agencies.[[126]](#cite_note-126) NPS fields 27,000 police officers in its local and national sections.[[127]](#cite_note-127) The Ministry of Interior also heads the Border Police Service and the [National Gendarmerie](/wiki/Gendarmerie_(Bulgaria))—a specialised branch for anti-terrorist activity, crisis management and riot control. Counterintelligence and national security are the responsibility of the State Agency for National Security, established in 2008.[[128]](#cite_note-128)

### Administrative divisions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Bulgaria is a [unitary state](/wiki/Unitary_state).[[129]](#cite_note-129) Since the 1880s, the number of territorial management units has varied from seven to 26.[[130]](#cite_note-130) Between 1987 and 1999 the administrative structure consisted of nine provinces (*oblasti*, singular [*oblast*](/wiki/Oblast)). A new administrative structure was adopted in parallel with the decentralisation of the economic system.[[131]](#cite_note-131) It includes 27 provinces and a metropolitan capital province (Sofia-Grad). All areas take their names from their respective capital cities. The provinces subdivide into 264 [municipalities](/wiki/Municipalities_of_Bulgaria).

Municipalities are run by mayors, who are elected to four-year terms, and by directly elected municipal councils. Bulgaria is a highly [centralised](/wiki/Centralization) state, where the national Council of Ministers directly appoints regional governors and all provinces and municipalities are heavily dependent on it for funding.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | [300px|right](/wiki/File:Bulgaria_Aministrative_Provinces_numbered.png) | 1. [**Blagoevgrad**](/wiki/Blagoevgrad_Province) 2. [**Burgas**](/wiki/Burgas_Province) 3. [**Dobrich**](/wiki/Dobrich_Province) 4. [**Gabrovo**](/wiki/Gabrovo_Province) 5. [**Haskovo**](/wiki/Haskovo_Province) 6. [**Kardzhali**](/wiki/Kardzhali_Province) 7. [**Kyustendil**](/wiki/Kyustendil_Province) 8. [**Lovech**](/wiki/Lovech_Province) 9. [**Montana**](/wiki/Montana_Province) 10. [**Pazardzhik**](/wiki/Pazardzhik_Province) 11. [**Pernik**](/wiki/Pernik_Province) 12. [**Pleven**](/wiki/Pleven_Province) 13. [**Plovdiv**](/wiki/Plovdiv_Province) 14. [**Razgrad**](/wiki/Razgrad_Province) | **<ol start=15> <li>**[**Ruse**](/wiki/Ruse_Province) **<li>**[**Shumen**](/wiki/Shumen_Province) **<li>**[**Silistra**](/wiki/Silistra_Province) **<li>**[**Sliven**](/wiki/Sliven_Province) **<li>**[**Smolyan**](/wiki/Smolyan_Province) **<li>**[**Sofia Province**](/wiki/Sofia_Province) **<li>**[**Stara Zagora**](/wiki/Stara_Zagora_Province) **<li>**[**Targovishte**](/wiki/Targovishte_Province) **<li>**[**Varna**](/wiki/Varna_Province) **<li>**[**Veliko Tarnovo**](/wiki/Veliko_Tarnovo_Province) **<li>**[**Vidin**](/wiki/Vidin_Province) **<li>**[**Vratsa**](/wiki/Vratsa_Province) **<li>**[**Yambol**](/wiki/Yambol_Province) **</ol>** | |

### Foreign relations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [|thumb| The EU parliament in Brussels. Bulgaria is one of 28 member states of the European Union.](/wiki/File:European-parliament-brussels-inside.JPG)

Bulgaria became a member of the [United Nations](/wiki/United_Nations) in 1955 and since 1966 has been a non-permanent member of the [Security Council](/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council) three times, most recently from 2002 to 2003.[[132]](#cite_note-132) Bulgaria was also among the founding nations of the [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](/wiki/Organization_for_Security_and_Co-operation_in_Europe) (OSCE) in 1975. It joined [NATO](/wiki/NATO) on 29 March 2004, signed the European Union [Treaty of Accession](/wiki/Treaty_of_Accession_2005) on 25 April 2005,[[71]](#cite_note-71)[[133]](#cite_note-133) and became a full member of the European Union on 1 January 2007.[[72]](#cite_note-72) Polls carried out seven years after the country's accession to the EU found only 15% of Bulgarians felt they had personally benefited from membership, with almost 40% of the population saying they would not bother to vote in the [2014 EU elections](/wiki/Elections_to_the_European_Parliament).[[134]](#cite_note-134) Euro-Atlantic integration became a priority for the country since the fall of Communism, although the Communist leadership also had aspirations of leaving the Warsaw Pact and joining the [European Communities](/wiki/European_Communities) by 1987.[[135]](#cite_note-135)[[136]](#cite_note-136)[[137]](#cite_note-137) Bulgaria's relationship with its neighbours since 1990 has generally been good. The country also plays an important role in promoting regional security.[[138]](#cite_note-138) Bulgaria has an active tripartite economic and diplomatic collaboration with Romania and Greece,[[139]](#cite_note-139) maintains strong relations with EU members, the United States, and Russia, and continues to improve its traditionally good ties with [China](/wiki/China)[[140]](#cite_note-140) and [Vietnam](/wiki/Vietnam).[[141]](#cite_note-141) The [HIV trial in Libya](/wiki/HIV_trial_in_Libya), which followed after the imprisonment of several Bulgarian nurses in [Benghazi](/wiki/Benghazi) in 1998, had a significant impact on relations between Bulgaria, the European Union, and Libya. It resulted in the release of the nurses by Muammar Gaddafi's government, which was granted a contract to receive a nuclear reactor and weapons supplies from France in exchange.[[142]](#cite_note-142)

### Military[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

[thumb|left|alt=Bulgarian MiG-29 fighters in flight|](/wiki/File:BAF_MiG-29s_in_flight_Garchev.png)[Mikoyan MiG-29](/wiki/Mikoyan_MiG-29) jet fighters of the [Bulgarian Air Force](/wiki/Bulgarian_Air_Force). Bulgaria hosted six [KC-135 Stratotanker](/wiki/KC-135_Stratotanker) aircraft and 200 support personnel for the war effort in Afghanistan in 2001, which was the first stationing of foreign forces on its territory since World War II.[[8]](#cite_note-8) International military relations were further expanded in April 2006, when Bulgaria and the United States signed a defence cooperation agreement providing for the usage of [Bezmer](/wiki/Bezmer_Air_Base) and [Graf Ignatievo](/wiki/Graf_Ignatievo_Air_Base) air bases, the [Novo Selo](/wiki/Novo_Selo_Range) training range, and a logistics centre in [Aytos](/wiki/Aytos_Logistics_Center) as [joint military training facilities](/wiki/List_of_joint_US-Bulgarian_military_bases).[[143]](#cite_note-143) The same year [*Foreign Policy*](/wiki/Foreign_Policy_(magazine)) magazine listed Bezmer Air Base as one of the six most important overseas facilities used by the [USAF](/wiki/United_States_Air_Force) due to its proximity to the [Middle East](/wiki/Middle_East).[[144]](#cite_note-144) A total of 756 troops are [deployed abroad](/wiki/Military_of_Bulgaria#Deployments) as part of various UN and NATO missions. Historically, Bulgaria deployed significant numbers of military and civilian advisors in Soviet-allied countries, such as [Nicaragua](/wiki/Nicaraguan_Revolution)[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) and [Libya](/wiki/Great_Socialist_People's_Libyan_Arab_Jamahiriya) (more than 9,000 personnel).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

Domestic defence is the responsibility of the all-[volunteer](/wiki/Volunteer_military) [military of Bulgaria](/wiki/Military_of_Bulgaria), consisting of [land forces](/wiki/Bulgarian_land_forces), [navy](/wiki/Bulgarian_Navy) and [air force](/wiki/Bulgarian_Air_Force). The land forces consist of two mechanised brigades and eight independent regiments and battalions; the air force operates 106 aircraft and air defence systems in six air bases, and the navy operates a variety of ships, helicopters and coastal defence measures.[[145]](#cite_note-145) Following a series of reductions beginning in 1990, the number of active troops contracted from 152,000 in 1988[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) to about 32,000 in the 2000s,[[146]](#cite_note-146) supplemented by a reserve force of 302,500 soldiers and officers and 34,000 paramilitary servicemen.[[147]](#cite_note-147) The inventory is mostly of Soviet origin, such as [MiG-29](/wiki/MiG-29) fighters, [SA-10 Grumble](/wiki/SA-10_Grumble) SAMs and [SS-21 Scarab](/wiki/SS-21_Scarab) short-range [ballistic missiles](/wiki/Ballistic_missile). By 2020 the government will spend $1.4 billion for the deployment of new fighter jets, communications systems and [cyber warfare](/wiki/Cyber_warfare) capabilities.[[148]](#cite_note-148) Total military spending in 2009 cost $819 million.[[149]](#cite_note-149)

## Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|alt=Rates of economic growth (green and red) and unemployment (blue)|Rates of economic growth (green and red) and unemployment (blue).](/wiki/File:WIKI_Economic_Growth_in_Bulgaria.gif) Bulgaria has an emerging [market economy](/wiki/Market_economy)[[150]](#cite_note-150) in the upper middle income range,[[151]](#cite_note-151) where the private sector accounts for more than 80 per cent of GDP.[[152]](#cite_note-152) From a largely agricultural country with a predominantly rural population in 1948, by the 1980s Bulgaria had transformed into an industrial economy with scientific and technological research at the top of its budgetary expenditure priorities.[[153]](#cite_note-153) The loss of [COMECON](/wiki/COMECON) markets in 1990 and the subsequent "[shock therapy](/wiki/Shock_therapy_(economics))" of the planned system caused a steep decline in industrial and agricultural production, ultimately followed by an economic collapse in 1997.[[154]](#cite_note-154)[[155]](#cite_note-155) The economy largely recovered during a period of rapid growth several years later,[[154]](#cite_note-154) but the average salary remains one of the lowest in the EU at 885 leva (€452) per month in September 2015.[[156]](#cite_note-156) More than a fifth of the labour force are employed on a [minimum wage](/wiki/Minimum_wage) of €1 per hour.[[157]](#cite_note-157) Wages, however, account for only half of the total household income,[[158]](#cite_note-158) owing to the substantial [informal economy](/wiki/Informal_economy) which amounts to almost 32% of GDP.[[159]](#cite_note-159) Bulgarian PPS [GDP](/wiki/GDP) [per capita](/wiki/Per_capita) stood at 47 per cent of the EU average in 2014 according to [Eurostat](/wiki/Eurostat) data,[[160]](#cite_note-160) while the cost of living was 48 per cent of the average.[[161]](#cite_note-161) The currency is the [lev](/wiki/Bulgarian_lev), which is pegged to the euro at a rate of 1.95583 levа for 1 euro.[[162]](#cite_note-162) Bulgaria is not part of the [eurozone](/wiki/Eurozone) and has abandoned its plans to adopt the euro.[[163]](#cite_note-163) Economic indicators have worsened amid the [late-2000s financial crisis](/wiki/Late-2000s_financial_crisis). After several consecutive years of high growth, GDP contracted 5.5 per cent in 2009 and unemployment remains above 12 per cent.[[164]](#cite_note-164)[[165]](#cite_note-165) Industrial output declined 10 per cent, mining by 31 per cent, and ferrous and metal production marked a 60 per cent drop.[[166]](#cite_note-166) Positive growth was restored in 2010,[[165]](#cite_note-165) although investments and consumption continue to decline steadily due to rising unemployment.[[167]](#cite_note-167) The same year, intercompany debt exceeded €51 billion, meaning that 60 per cent of all Bulgarian companies were mutually indebted.[[168]](#cite_note-168) By 2012, it had increased to €83 billion, or 227 per cent of GDP.[[169]](#cite_note-169) The government implemented strict austerity measures with IMF and EU encouragement to some positive fiscal results, but the social consequences of these measures have been "catastrophic" according to the [International Trade Union Confederation](/wiki/International_Trade_Union_Confederation).[[170]](#cite_note-170) [Corruption](/wiki/Corruption) remains another obstacle to economic growth. Bulgaria is one of the most corrupt European Union members and ranks 75th in the [Corruption Perceptions Index](/wiki/Corruption_Perceptions_Index).[[171]](#cite_note-171) Weak law enforcement and overall low capacity of civil service remain as challenges in curbing corruption. However, fighting against corruption has become the focus of the government because of the EU accession, and several anti-corruption programs have been undertaken by different government agencies.[[172]](#cite_note-172) [thumb|left|alt=Map showing Bulgaria and its main export partners by share of total exports|Bulgaria (orange) and its largest export partners by share of total exports.](/wiki/File:Bulgaria_export_partners.png) Economic activities are fostered by the lowest personal and corporate income tax rates in the EU,[[173]](#cite_note-173) and the second-lowest [public debt](/wiki/Public_debt) of all member states at 16.5 per cent of GDP in 2012.[[174]](#cite_note-174) In 2013, GDP ([PPP](/wiki/Purchasing_power_parity)) was estimated at $119.6 billion, with a per capita value of $16,518.[[175]](#cite_note-175) Sofia and the surrounding [Yugozapaden](/wiki/Yugozapaden) planning area are the most developed region of the country with a per capita PPS GDP of $27,282 in 2011.[[176]](#cite_note-176) Bulgaria is a net receiver of funds from the EU. The absolute amount of received funds was €589 million in 2009.[[177]](#cite_note-177) The labour force is 2.45 million people,[[178]](#cite_note-178) of whom 7.1 per cent are employed in agriculture, 35.2 per cent are employed in industry and 57.7 per cent are employed in the services sector.[[179]](#cite_note-179) Extraction of metals and minerals, production of [chemicals](/wiki/Chemical_industry), [machinery](/wiki/Machinery_industry) and vehicle components,[[180]](#cite_note-180) [petroleum refining](/wiki/Refined_petroleum_fuel)[[181]](#cite_note-181) and steel are among the major industrial activities.[[182]](#cite_note-182) Mining and its related industries employ a total of 120,000 people and generate about five per cent of the country's GDP.[[183]](#cite_note-183) Bulgaria is Europe's sixth-largest coal producer.[[183]](#cite_note-183)[[184]](#cite_note-184) Local deposits of coal, iron, copper and lead are vital for the manufacturing and energy sectors.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) Almost all top export items of Bulgaria are industrial commodities such as oil products, copper products and pharmaceuticals.[[185]](#cite_note-185) Bulgaria is also a net exporter of agricultural and food products, of which two-thirds go to [OECD](/wiki/OECD) countries.[[186]](#cite_note-186) It is the largest global producer of perfumery essential oils such as [lavender](/wiki/Lavender_oil) and [rose oil](/wiki/Rose_oil).[[8]](#cite_note-8)[[187]](#cite_note-187) Agriculture has declined significantly in the past two decades. Production in 2008 amounted to only 66 per cent of that between 1999 and 2001,[[185]](#cite_note-185) while cereal and vegetable yields have dropped by nearly 40 per cent since 1990.[[188]](#cite_note-188) Of the services sector, [tourism](/wiki/Tourism_in_Bulgaria) is the most significant contributor to economic growth.[[189]](#cite_note-189) In recent years, Bulgaria has emerged as a travelling destination with its inexpensive resorts and beaches outside the reach of the tourist industry.[[190]](#cite_note-190)[[191]](#cite_note-191) [Lonely Planet](/wiki/Lonely_Planet) ranked it among its top 10 destinations for 2011.[[192]](#cite_note-192) Most of the visitors are British, Romanian, German and Russian.[[193]](#cite_note-193) The capital [Sofia](/wiki/Sofia), the medieval capital [Veliko Tarnovo](/wiki/Veliko_Tarnovo),[[194]](#cite_note-194) coastal resorts [Golden Sands](/wiki/Golden_Sands) and [Sunny Beach](/wiki/Sunny_Beach) and winter resorts [Bansko](/wiki/Bansko), [Pamporovo](/wiki/Pamporovo) and [Borovets](/wiki/Borovets) are some of the locations most visited by tourists.[[189]](#cite_note-189)

### Science and technology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|upright|right|alt=An IBM Blue Gene/P supercomputer used by several Bulgarian scientific organisations|A](/wiki/File:Blue_Gene_main.JPG) [supercomputer](/wiki/Supercomputer) cabinet at NCSA.

Bulgaria spends 0.25 per cent of GDP on scientific research, thus having one of the lowest R&D budgets in Europe.[[195]](#cite_note-195)[[196]](#cite_note-196) Chronic underinvestment in research since 1990 forced many scientific professionals to leave the country.[[197]](#cite_note-197) As a result, Bulgaria scores low in terms of innovation, competitiveness and high-value added exports.[[198]](#cite_note-198)[[199]](#cite_note-199) Principal areas of research and development are energy, [nanotechnology](/wiki/Nanotechnology), [archaeology](/wiki/Archaeology) and medicine.[[195]](#cite_note-195) The [Bulgarian Academy of Sciences](/wiki/Bulgarian_Academy_of_Sciences) (BAS) is the leading scientific establishment and employs most Bulgarian researchers in its numerous institutes. It has been active in the field of [space science](/wiki/Space_science) with [RADOM-7](/wiki/RADOM-7) radiation monitoring experiments on the [International Space Station](/wiki/International_Space_Station)[[200]](#cite_note-200) and [Chandrayaan-1](/wiki/Chandrayaan-1),[[201]](#cite_note-201) and domestically developed space [greenhouses](/wiki/Greenhouse) on the [Mir space station](/wiki/Mir_space_station).[[202]](#cite_note-202)[[203]](#cite_note-203) Bulgaria became the [sixth country](/wiki/Timeline_of_space_travel_by_nationality) in the world to have an astronaut in space with [Georgi Ivanov's](/wiki/Georgi_Ivanov) flight on [Soyuz 33](/wiki/Soyuz_33) in 1979. Bulgaria is an active member of [CERN](/wiki/CERN) and has contributed to its activities with nearly 200 scientists since its accession in 1999.[[204]](#cite_note-204)[[205]](#cite_note-205) In the 1980s Bulgaria was known as the "[Silicon Valley](/wiki/Silicon_Valley) of the [Eastern Bloc](/wiki/Eastern_Bloc)" because of its large-scale computing technology exports to [COMECON](/wiki/COMECON) states.[[206]](#cite_note-206) The [ICT](/wiki/Information_and_communication_technologies) sector generates 10 per cent of GDP[[207]](#cite_note-207) and employs the third-largest contingent of ICT specialists in the world. A [National Centre for Supercomputing Applications](/wiki/National_Center_for_Supercomputing_Applications_(Bulgaria)) (NCSA) operates the only supercomputer in Southeastern Europe.[[208]](#cite_note-208)[[209]](#cite_note-209) The [Bulgarian Academy of Sciences](/wiki/Bulgarian_Academy_of_Sciences) is planning to buy another supercomputer in 2015 which will be used together with Hi-Tech SME's.[[210]](#cite_note-210) Internet usage has increased rapidly since 2000—the number of users grew from 430,000 to 3.4 million (48 per cent penetration rate) in 2010.[[211]](#cite_note-211) Telephone services are widely available, and a central digital trunk line connects most regions.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) More than 90 per cent of fixed lines are served by the [Bulgarian Telecommunications Company](/wiki/Bulgarian_Telecommunications_Company) (BTC),[[212]](#cite_note-212) while mobile services are provided by three operators—[Mtel](/wiki/Mobiltel), [GLOBUL](/wiki/GLOBUL) and BTC/Vivacom.[[213]](#cite_note-213)

### Infrastructure[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|left|alt=Trakiya motorway, one of the main national motorways|](/wiki/File:Trakiya_highway_04.jpg)[Trakia motorway](/wiki/Trakia_motorway).

Bulgaria's strategic geographic location and well-developed energy sector make it a key European energy centre despite its lack of significant fossil fuel deposits.[[214]](#cite_note-214) Nearly 34 percent of its electricity is produced by the [nuclear power station at Kozloduy](/wiki/Kozloduy_Nuclear_Power_Plant)[[215]](#cite_note-215) and public opinion strongly supports nuclear energy development.[[216]](#cite_note-216) The rapid expansion of alternative energy sources such as wind and solar power stations[[217]](#cite_note-217) make Bulgaria one of the fastest-growing wind energy producers in the world.[[218]](#cite_note-218) The country aims to produce 16 percent of its electricity from renewable energy sources by 2020.[[219]](#cite_note-219) The national road network has a total length of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert),[[220]](#cite_note-220) of which [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) are paved, but nearly half fall into the lowest international rating for paved roads.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) Railroads are a major mode of freight transportation, although highways carry a progressively larger share of freight. Bulgaria has [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) of railway track[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) and currently a total of 81 km of [high-speed lines](/wiki/High-speed_rail) are in operation.[[221]](#cite_note-221)[[222]](#cite_note-222)[[223]](#cite_note-223)[[224]](#cite_note-224) Rail links are available with Romania, Turkey, Greece, and Serbia, and express trains serve direct routes to [Kiev](/wiki/Kiev), [Minsk](/wiki/Minsk), [Moscow](/wiki/Moscow) and [Saint Petersburg](/wiki/Saint_Petersburg).[[225]](#cite_note-225) Sofia and Plovdiv are the country's air travel hubs, while Varna and Burgas are the principal maritime trade ports.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) Varna is also scheduled to be the first station on EU territory to receive natural gas through the [South Stream](/wiki/South_Stream) pipeline.[[226]](#cite_note-226)

## Demographics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The population of Bulgaria is 7,364,570 people according to the 2011 national census. The majority of the population, or 72.5 per cent, reside in urban areas;[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) approximately one-sixth of the total population is concentrated in Sofia.[Template:SfnTemplate:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) [Bulgarians](/wiki/Bulgarians) are the main ethnic group and comprise 84.8 per cent of the population. [Turkish](/wiki/Turks_in_Bulgaria) and [Roma](/wiki/Roma_in_Bulgaria) minorities comprise 8.8 and 4.9 per cent, respectively; some 40 smaller minorities comprise 0.7 per cent, and 0.8 per cent do not self-identify with an ethnic group.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

[Template:Bar box](/wiki/Template:Bar_box)

All ethnic groups speak [Bulgarian](/wiki/Bulgarian_language), either as a first or as a second language. Bulgarian is the only language with official status and native for 85.2 per cent of the population. The oldest written [Slavic](/wiki/Slavic_languages) language, Bulgarian is distinguishable from the other languages in this group through certain grammatical peculiarities such as the lack of [noun cases](/wiki/Noun_cases) and [infinitives](/wiki/Infinitives), and a suffixed [definite article](/wiki/Definite_article).[[227]](#cite_note-227)[[228]](#cite_note-228) Government estimates from 2003 put the literacy rate at 98.6 per cent, with no significant difference between the sexes. Educational standards have been [traditionally high](/wiki/Education_in_Bulgaria),[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) although still far from European benchmarks and in continuing deterioration for the past decade.[[229]](#cite_note-229) Bulgarian students were among the highest-scoring in the world in terms of reading in 2001, performing better than their Canadian and German counterparts; by 2006, scores in reading, math and science had deteriorated. State expenditures for education are far below the European Union average.[[229]](#cite_note-229) The [Ministry of Education, Youth and Science](/wiki/Ministry_of_Education,_Youth_and_Science_(Bulgaria)) partially funds public schools, colleges and universities, sets criteria for textbooks and oversees the publishing process.[[230]](#cite_note-230) The State provides free education in primary and secondary public schools.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The educational process spans through 12 grades, where grades one through eight are primary and nine through twelve are secondary level.[[230]](#cite_note-230) High schools can be technical, vocational, general or specialised in a certain discipline, while higher education consists of a 4-year [bachelor](/wiki/Bachelor's_degree) degree and a 1-year master's degree.[[231]](#cite_note-231) [thumb|left|Bulgarian Orthodox](/wiki/File:Theophany_Crucession_in_Bulgaria.jpg) [Theophany](/wiki/Epiphany_(holiday)) [Crucession](/wiki/Crucession). The Constitution of Bulgaria defines it as a [secular state](/wiki/Secular_state) with guaranteed religious freedom, but designates [Orthodoxy](/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox_Church) as a "traditional" religion.[[232]](#cite_note-232) The [Bulgarian Orthodox Church](/wiki/Bulgarian_Orthodox_Church) gained [autocephalous](/wiki/Autocephaly) status in 927 AD,[[233]](#cite_note-233)[[234]](#cite_note-234) and currently has 12 dioceses and over 2,000 priests.[[235]](#cite_note-235) More than three-quarters of Bulgarians subscribe to Eastern Orthodoxy.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) [Sunni Muslims](/wiki/Sunni_Islam) are the second-largest community and constitute 10 per cent of the religious makeup, although a majority of them do not pray and find the use of [Islamic veils](/wiki/Hijab) in schools unacceptable.[[236]](#cite_note-236) Less than three per cent are affiliated with [other religions](/wiki/Religion_in_Bulgaria), 11.8 per cent do not self-identify with a religion and 21.8 per cent refused to state their beliefs.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

Bulgaria has [a universal healthcare](/wiki/Health_in_Bulgaria) system financed by taxes and contributions.[[237]](#cite_note-237) The National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) pays a gradually increasing portion of the costs of [primary healthcare](/wiki/Primary_health_care).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) Projected healthcare expenditures for 2013 amount to 4.1 per cent of GDP.[[238]](#cite_note-238) The number of doctors is above the EU average with 181 physicians per 100,000 people,[[239]](#cite_note-239) but distribution by fields of practice is uneven, there is a severe shortage of nurses and other medical personnel, and the quality of most medical facilities is poor.[[240]](#cite_note-240) Personnel shortages in some fields are so severe that patients resort to seeking treatment in neighboring countries.[[241]](#cite_note-241) Bulgaria ranks 113th globally by average life expectancy, which stands at 73.6 years for both genders.[[242]](#cite_note-242) The primary causes of death are similar to those in other industrialised countries, mainly [cardiovascular diseases](/wiki/Cardiovascular_disease), [neoplasms](/wiki/Neoplasm) and [respiratory](/wiki/Respiratory) diseases.[[237]](#cite_note-237) Bulgaria is in a state of demographic crisis.[[243]](#cite_note-243)[[244]](#cite_note-244) It has had negative population growth since the early 1990s, when the economic collapse caused a long-lasting emigration wave.[[245]](#cite_note-245) Some 937,000 to 1,200,000 people—mostly young adults—left the country by 2005.[[245]](#cite_note-245)[[246]](#cite_note-246) The [total fertility rate](/wiki/Total_fertility_rate) (TFR) was estimated in 2013 at 1.43 children born/woman, which is below the replacement rate of 2.1.[[247]](#cite_note-247) A third of all households consist of only one person and 75.5 per cent of families do not have children under the age of 16.[[244]](#cite_note-244) Consequently, population growth and birth rates are among the lowest in the world[[248]](#cite_note-248)[[249]](#cite_note-249) while death rates are among the highest.[[250]](#cite_note-250) The majority of children are born to unmarried women (of all births 57.4 per cent were outside marriage in 2012).[[251]](#cite_note-251) [Template:Largest cities of Bulgaria](/wiki/Template:Largest_cities_of_Bulgaria)

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|upright|alt=Thracian golden wreath exhibited in the National Historical Museum|](/wiki/File:Sofia_-_Odrysian_Wreath_from_Golyamata_Mogila.jpg)[Thracian](/wiki/Thracia) golden [wreath](/wiki/Wreath) in the [National Historical Museum](/wiki/National_Historical_Museum_(Bulgaria)). Traditional Bulgarian culture contains mainly [Thracian](/wiki/Thracian), [Slavic](/wiki/Slavic_peoples) and [Bulgar](/wiki/Bulgars) heritage, along with [Greek](/wiki/Ancient_Greece), [Roman](/wiki/Ancient_Rome), [Ottoman](/wiki/Ottoman_Empire), [Persian](/wiki/Ancient_Persia) and [Celtic](/wiki/Celts) influences.[[252]](#cite_note-252)[[253]](#cite_note-253)[[254]](#cite_note-254) [Nine historical and natural objects](/wiki/List_of_World_Heritage_Sites_in_Bulgaria) have been inscribed in the list of [UNESCO World Heritage Sites](/wiki/UNESCO_World_Heritage_Site): the [Madara Rider](/wiki/Madara_Rider), the Thracian tombs in [Sveshtari](/wiki/Thracian_Tomb_of_Sveshtari) and [Kazanlak](/wiki/Thracian_Tomb_of_Kazanlak), the [Boyana Church](/wiki/Boyana_Church), the [Rila Monastery](/wiki/Rila_Monastery), the [Rock-hewn Churches of Ivanovo](/wiki/Rock-hewn_Churches_of_Ivanovo), [Pirin National Park](/wiki/Pirin_National_Park), [Sreburna Nature Reserve](/wiki/Srebarna_Nature_Reserve) and the ancient city of [Nesebar](/wiki/Nesebar).[[255]](#cite_note-255) [Nestinarstvo](/wiki/Nestinarstvo), a ritual fire-dance of Thracian origin,[[256]](#cite_note-256) is included in the list of [UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage](/wiki/UNESCO_Intangible_Cultural_Heritage_Lists).[[257]](#cite_note-257) Fire is an essential element of Bulgarian folklore, used to banish evil spirits and diseases. Bulgarian folklore personifies illnesses as witches and has a wide range of creatures, including [lamya](/wiki/Slavic_dragon), [samodiva](/wiki/Samodiva_(mythology)) ([veela](/wiki/Supernatural_beings_in_Slavic_folklore)) and [karakondzhul](/wiki/Karakoncolos).[[258]](#cite_note-258) Some of the customs and rituals against these spirits have survived and are still practised, most notably the [kukeri](/wiki/Kukeri) and survakari.[[259]](#cite_note-259) [Martenitsa](/wiki/Martenitsa) is also widely celebrated.[[260]](#cite_note-260) [Slavic culture](/wiki/Slavic_culture) was centred in both the First and Second Bulgarian Empires during much of the [Middle Ages](/wiki/Middle_Ages). The [Preslav](/wiki/Preslav_Literary_School), [Ohrid](/wiki/Ohrid_Literary_School) and [Tarnovo](/wiki/Tarnovo_Literary_School) literary schools exerted considerable cultural influence over the Eastern Orthodox world.[[261]](#cite_note-261)[[262]](#cite_note-262)[[263]](#cite_note-263) Many languages in Eastern Europe and Asia use [Cyrillic](/wiki/Cyrillic) script, which originated in the Preslav Literary School around the 9th century.[[264]](#cite_note-264) The medieval advancement in the arts and letters ended with the Ottoman conquest when many masterpieces were destroyed, and artistic activities did not re-emerge until the [National Revival](/wiki/Bulgarian_National_Revival) in the 19th century.[[265]](#cite_note-265) After the Liberation, Bulgarian literature quickly adopted European literary styles such as [Romanticism](/wiki/Romanticism) and [Symbolism](/wiki/Symbolism_(arts)). Since the beginning of the 20th century, several Bulgarian authors, such as [Ivan Vazov](/wiki/Ivan_Vazov), [Pencho Slaveykov](/wiki/Pencho_Slaveykov), [Peyo Yavorov](/wiki/Peyo_Yavorov), [Yordan Radichkov](/wiki/Yordan_Radichkov) and [Tzvetan Todorov](/wiki/Tzvetan_Todorov) have gained prominence.[[266]](#cite_note-266)[[267]](#cite_note-267) In 1981 Bulgarian-born writer [Elias Canetti](/wiki/Elias_Canetti) was awarded the [Nobel Prize in Literature](/wiki/Nobel_Prize_in_Literature).[[268]](#cite_note-268) [thumb|left|Bulgarian folk dancers and musicians in traditional attire.](/wiki/File:Bulgarian_folk_dancers_and_musicians_in_Brussels.JPG) Bulgarian folk music is by far the most extensive traditional art and has slowly developed throughout the ages as a fusion of Eastern and Western influences. It contains Far Eastern, Oriental, medieval Eastern Orthodox and standard Western European tonalities and modes.[[269]](#cite_note-269) The music has a distinctive sound and uses a wide range of traditional instruments, such as [gadulka](/wiki/Gadulka), [gaida](/wiki/Gaida) ([bagpipe](/wiki/Bagpipe)), [kaval](/wiki/Kaval) and [tupan](/wiki/Davul). One of its most distinguishing features is *extended rhythmical time*, which has no equivalent in the rest of European music.[[8]](#cite_note-8) The [State Television Female Vocal Choir](/wiki/Bulgarian_State_Television_Female_Vocal_Choir) is the most famous performing folk ensemble, and received a [Grammy Award](/wiki/Grammy_Award) in 1990.[[270]](#cite_note-270) Bulgaria's written musical composition can be traced back to the early Middle Ages and the works of [Yoan Kukuzel](/wiki/Yoan_Kukuzel) (c. 1280–1360).[[271]](#cite_note-271) Classical music, opera and ballet are represented by composers [Emanuil Manolov](/wiki/Emanuil_Manolov), [Pancho Vladigerov](/wiki/Pancho_Vladigerov) and [Georgi Atanasov](/wiki/Georgi_Atanasov_(composer)) and singers [Ghena Dimitrova](/wiki/Ghena_Dimitrova), [Boris Hristov](/wiki/Boris_Christoff) and [Nikolay Gyaurov](/wiki/Nicolai_Ghiaurov).[[272]](#cite_note-272)[[273]](#cite_note-273)[[274]](#cite_note-274)[[275]](#cite_note-275)[[276]](#cite_note-276) Bulgarian performers have gained popularity in several other genres like [progressive rock](/wiki/Progressive_rock) ([FSB](/wiki/FSB_(band))), [electropop](/wiki/Electropop) ([Mira Aroyo](/wiki/Mira_Aroyo)) and [jazz](/wiki/Jazz) ([Milcho Leviev](/wiki/Milcho_Leviev)).

[thumb|right|](/wiki/File:Rila_Monastery,_August_2013.jpg)[Monastery of Saint Ivan of Rila](/wiki/Monastery_of_Saint_Ivan_of_Rila) The religious visual arts heritage includes [frescoes](/wiki/Fresco), [murals](/wiki/Mural) and [icons](/wiki/Icon), many produced by the medieval [Tarnovo Artistic School](/wiki/Painting_of_the_Tarnovo_Artistic_School).[[277]](#cite_note-277) [Vladimir Dimitrov](/wiki/Vladimir_Dimitrov), [Nikolay Diulgheroff](/wiki/Nikolay_Diulgheroff) and [Christo](/wiki/Christo) are some of the most famous modern Bulgarian artists.[[265]](#cite_note-265) Film industry remains weak: in 2010, Bulgaria produced three feature films and two documentaries with public funding. Cultural events are advertised in the largest media outlets, including the [Bulgarian National Radio](/wiki/Bulgarian_National_Radio), and daily newspapers [*Dneven Trud*](/wiki/Dneven_Trud), [*Dnevnik*](/wiki/Dnevnik_(Bulgaria)) and [*24 Chasa*](/wiki/24_Chasa).[[278]](#cite_note-278) While major sections of [Bulgaria's media](/wiki/Media_of_Bulgaria) are controlled by state entities, including [Bulgarian National Television](/wiki/Bulgarian_National_Television), the [Bulgarian National Radio](/wiki/Bulgarian_National_Radio), and the [Bulgarian Telegraph Agency](/wiki/Bulgarian_Telegraph_Agency), reporting is generally deemed to be unbiased by direct government interference, although there is no specific legislation to maintain this.[[279]](#cite_note-279) Written media has no legal restrictions,[[280]](#cite_note-280)and a large number of private television and radio stations also exist. Despite this, traditional Bulgarian media outlets are experiencing negative economic and political pressures, and instances of self-censorship have emerged. Meanwhile, internet media is growing in popularity due to its lack of censorship and the diversity of content and opinions it presents.[[281]](#cite_note-281) [thumb|upright|left|](/wiki/File:Mavrudwine.jpg)[Mavrud](/wiki/Mavrud) - the most famous Bulgarian red [wine](/wiki/Wine). [Bulgarian cuisine](/wiki/Bulgarian_cuisine) is similar to those of other Balkan countries and demonstrates a strong Turkish and Greek influence.[[282]](#cite_note-282) [Yogurt](/wiki/Yogurt), [lukanka](/wiki/Lukanka), [banitsa](/wiki/Banitsa), [shopska salad](/wiki/Shopska_salad), [lyutenitsa](/wiki/Lyutenitsa) and [kozunak](/wiki/Kozunak) are among the best-known local foods. Oriental dishes such as [moussaka](/wiki/Moussaka), [gyuvech](/wiki/Gyuvech), and [baklava](/wiki/Baklava) are also present. Meat consumption is lower than the European average, given a notable preference for a large variety of salads.[[282]](#cite_note-282) [Rakia](/wiki/Rakia) is a traditional fruit [brandy](/wiki/Brandy) which was consumed in Bulgaria as early as the 14th century.[[283]](#cite_note-283) [Bulgarian wine](/wiki/Bulgarian_wine) is known for its [Traminer](/wiki/Traminer), [Muskat](/wiki/Muscat_(grape)) and [Mavrud](/wiki/Mavrud) types, of which up to 200,000 tonnes are produced annually.[[284]](#cite_note-284)[[285]](#cite_note-285) Until 1989, Bulgaria was the world's second-largest wine exporter.[[286]](#cite_note-286) Bulgaria performs well in sports such as [wrestling](/wiki/Wrestling), [weight-lifting](/wiki/Olympic_weightlifting), [boxing](/wiki/Boxing), gymnastics, volleyball, football and tennis.[[287]](#cite_note-287) The country fields one of the leading men's volleyball teams, ranked sixth in the world according to the 2013 [FIVB](/wiki/FIVB) rankings.[[288]](#cite_note-288) [Football](/wiki/Association_football) is by far the most popular sport.[[287]](#cite_note-287) Some famous players are [AS Monaco](/wiki/AS_Monaco) forward [Dimitar Berbatov](/wiki/Dimitar_Berbatov) and [Hristo Stoichkov](/wiki/Hristo_Stoichkov), winner of the Golden Boot and the [Golden Ball](/wiki/Golden_Ball_(FIFA)) and the most successful Bulgarian player of all time.[[289]](#cite_note-289) Prominent domestic clubs include [PFC CSKA Sofia](/wiki/PFC_CSKA_Sofia)[[290]](#cite_note-290)[[291]](#cite_note-291) and [PFC Levski Sofia](/wiki/PFC_Levski_Sofia). The best performance of the national team at FIFA World Cup finals came [in 1994](/wiki/1994_FIFA_World_Cup), when it advanced to the semi-finals by defeating consecutively [Greece](/wiki/Greece_national_football_team), [Argentina](/wiki/Argentina_national_football_team), [Mexico](/wiki/Mexico_national_football_team) and [Germany](/wiki/Germany_national_football_team), finishing fourth.[[287]](#cite_note-287) Bulgaria has participated in most Olympic competitions since its first appearance at the [1896 games](/wiki/1896_Summer_Olympics), when it was represented by [Charles Champaud](/wiki/Charles_Champaud).[[292]](#cite_note-292) The country has won a total of 218 medals: 52 gold, 86 silver, and 80 bronze,[[293]](#cite_note-293) which puts it in 24th place in the [all-time ranking](/wiki/All-time_Olympic_Games_medal_table).

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

* [Outline of Bulgaria](/wiki/Outline_of_Bulgaria)
* [International rankings of Bulgaria](/wiki/International_rankings_of_Bulgaria)
* [List of twin towns and sister cities in Bulgaria](/wiki/List_of_twin_towns_and_sister_cities_in_Bulgaria)

## Footnotes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

[Template:Reflist](/wiki/Template:Reflist)

## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

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## Bibliography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

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* [Template:Dmoz](/wiki/Template:Dmoz)
* [Template:Wikiatlas](/wiki/Template:Wikiatlas)
* [Bulgaria Profile](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bulgaria) from [Balkan Insight](/wiki/Balkan_Insight)
* [President of The Republic of Bulgaria](http://www.president.bg/)

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