

Country info: Bulgaria (България, officially the Republic of Bulgaria - Република България), is a country in southeastern Europe bordered by Romania, Serbia, Macedonia, Greece, Turkey and the Black Sea.

Human Rights 2015: an overview by Amnesty International:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/bulgaria/>

Number of sex workers: 11 000 as of 2014, according to a national mapping conducted by outreach teams for the Program Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS¹

HIV/AIDS rates: The general number of registered people living with HIV in the country as of 25 July 2015 is 2 169 persons. More data: http://aidsprogram.bg/static_info1.php?main=data

HIV rates among sex workers: 1.76% (2012) according Country Progress Report for UNAIDS 2014²

Legislation and sex work: Sex work in Bulgaria is neither legal, nor criminal, it is not regulated by any law. Still, sex workers can be fined

- for “gaining money in an immoral way” under the Criminal Code,
- for lack of personal documents and being too noisy under the Law for violating public order,
- for standing on the street / road / ring road under the Traffic law.

The Criminal Code punishes the following crimes:

- organization of paid sexual services: the organizers of sex industry and people providing venues for sex work are viewed as criminal subjects. As a result of this, not just managers but also indoor sex workers who work collectively may be punishable under the law
- coercion of underage prostitution;
- trafficking of human beings, which is often mixed with sexual exploitation and prostitution (mentioned also in the Law against trafficking of human beings).

There are no regulations on offering sexual services via the Internet.

What about buying sexual services? → no regulation, never mentioned in any law

1 Practical guidelines for service delivery “Case Management”, Varleva T., Boneva S. ..., Program Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS, Ministry of health 2014

2 COUNTRY PROGRESS REPORT ON MONITORING THE 2013 POLITICAL DECLARATION ON HIV/AIDS, THE DUBLIN DECLARATION AND THE UNIVERSAL ACCESS IN THE HEALTH SECTOR RESPONSE, UNAIDS 2014

An old article in the Penal code “Unearned income through immoral means” states that able-bodied persons of age, who continuously fail to engage in ‘socially beneficial’ work, or those who receive income through ‘unwarranted or immoral means’, are subject to up to two years of imprisonment or probation”. It still exists in the Criminal/Penal Code – article 329 but is rarely used by the police and most often in courts is declared as inoperative!

According to article 31 of the Personal Income Tax Act, Part II, Chapter 7, letter (t) and (u) there is a license tax for companions and masseurs, which implies sex work. This opportunity is still available but after 2013 the license tax is regulated by the Law on local taxes and fees for two activities – male and female companions and masseur and masseuse. It should be clarified that this is regulation concerns two sex work’ related activities but only in indirect way!

According to the article 156, §1 of the Criminal Code, a penalty from 3 to 10 years imprisonment and and fine up to one thousand BG leva (about 511 EURO) is applied to those who kidnap a person (not only women) for the purposes of debauchery. This act is defined as “Abduction with purpose of debauchery”.

Services for sex workers: About 80% of the territory of the country is covered by 9 NGOs working in the biggest cities providing mainly outreach services with focus on HIV prevention in the frames of Program for prevention and control of HIV/AIDS 2004 - 2015, administered by the Ministry of health and funded by GFATM. Additionally there are small projects (some with human rights protection focus) funded by the European commission. GFATM left the country after December 2015 and the services are still not guaranteed by the national and local authorities.

Sex workers’ movement: Due to heavy stigmatization of all marginalized groups in Bulgaria, stigma around sex work and negative attitude of media that often mix sex work and trafficking, sex workers hide and fear being “outed” and raise their own voices.

There is no self-organization of sex workers in Bulgaria.

Detailed information and data can be found:

http://www.wedworks.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/WS2-Report_Piloting_Deliverable_D9_final.pdf - WEDworks project, 2013 - 2014

<http://www.indoors-project.eu/> - INDOORS project 2009 - 2014

<http://tampep.eu/documents/Bulgaria%20National%20Report.pdf> – TAMPEP, 2007