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Information for Swiss citizens in Bulgaria: Preparedness measures and what to do in a crisis

1. Introduction

Under the Federal Act on Swiss Persons and Institutions Abroad – [Swiss Abroad Act](#) (SAA) – which came into force on 1 November 2015, Swiss citizens are expected to rely on their own means to support themselves during a stay abroad. The legislation requires individuals to assume personal responsibility in preparing for and carrying out a stay abroad or in exercising an activity abroad, to behave in a manner commensurate with the risks involved and to use their own resources to overcome any difficulties that arise.

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) may offer support to people who cannot reasonably be expected or are unable to protect their interests themselves or with the help of third parties. Consular assistance (applying to the FDFA for help) is only an option when a person has done everything in their power to handle the situation on their own or with the help of the local authorities, insurer(s) and other potential providers of assistance. There is no legal entitlement to assistance from the Swiss federal government.

2. Where to find information

Local authorities bear the primary responsibility for the security of all residents, including the Swiss community abroad. In a crisis, local authorities have first-hand information about the ongoing situation. They may issue recommendations to protect residents and measures to deal with the crisis. In the event of a crisis, these instructions must be followed.

Specific advice on preparedness and information about crises may be available on the following authorities' websites.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <https://www.mfa.bg/en>

The Ministry of Defence: <https://www.mod.bg/en/index.php>

The Bulgarian Government: <https://gov.bg/en>

Press Releases from BTA: <https://www.bta.bg/en>

General advice is provided by the Swiss federal authorities and international organisations:

In the FDFA's travel advice www.eda.admin.ch > *Representations and travel advice* you will find an up-to-date assessment of the security situation in Bulgaria. If you have any questions in this regard, please do not hesitate to contact your Swiss representation.

Further useful information and factsheets can be found at www.eda.admin.ch > *Representations and travel advice* > *Select country*.

The Federal Office of Public Health (www.bag.admin.ch), the website www.healthytravel.ch and the World Health Organization (www.who.int) are important sources of information on health matters.



3. Important preparedness measures

Always have the following at hand (non-exhaustive list):

- Important documents (and copies of these documents): valid travel documents, driving licence and vehicle documents, residence permits and exit visas, valid entry visas and vaccination certificates, etc.
- Funds: Reserves of cash and foreign currencies, credit card(s), bank card(s), etc.
- Information & communication: List of important phone numbers, mobile phone (ideally with spare battery and sufficient credit), battery-powered (short-wave) radio with spare batteries.
- Healthcare: First aid kit with medicines you need, blood group card, vaccination certificate, insurance policies (health, accident, repatriation), etc.
- Emergency supplies: Drinking water, food (and ideally a camping stove), fuel, etc.

Different preventive measures can reduce the risk to property and persons (non-exhaustive list):

- Have your home and furnishings/installations inspected for earthquake, fire, flood and storm safety, and install a fire alarm.
- Secure walls, doors and windows against unauthorized access.
- Arrange a meeting place with your family in case access to your home is cut off.
- Plan escape routes to a safe place in your country of residence or to a safe country.
- Keep the Swiss representation informed of any change in your address, telephone numbers (including mobile numbers abroad and in Switzerland) and email address so that we can contact you in the event of an emergency. You can also do this online: www.eda.admin.ch > *Services and publications* > *Services for Swiss nationals abroad* > *Registration, deregistration and change of address*:

4. What to do in a crisis

- Periodically review your preparedness measures.
- Notify the Swiss representation if you are leaving the country temporarily.
- Stay informed about the ongoing situation. Follow media reports, announcements by the local authorities and the FDFA's website.
- Follow the instructions of the local authorities re. Precautions, restricted zones and evacuations, for example.
- Avoid demonstrations, riots and public gatherings of all kinds.

- Stay in contact with your relatives (in Switzerland).
- Regularly check the FDFA's travel advice. The Swiss representation in Romania will usually inform you by email or SMS of any sudden and (serious) deterioration in the local security situation.
- Please note FDFA security recommendations in this respect. In the event of a prolonged crisis, the FDFA may recommend that Swiss nationals leave the affected region particularly if:
 - state collapse is imminent;
 - armed conflict breaks out;
 - foreigners face an especially high threat of kidnapping by terrorist groups;
 - a natural, industrial or nuclear disaster makes it risky to remain in the country;
 - Swiss citizens face a specific threat because of their nationality.
- Whether a Swiss national decides to leave an affected region is their own decision, which they take voluntarily and at their own risk and cost.
- Crises can escalate suddenly, escape routes may be blocked and it may no longer be possible to (safely) leave the country/area. If the security situation deteriorates, leave the country/area while it is still possible and while commercial transport links are still available.



- Please note that depending on the situation on the ground, the possibilities for the Swiss representation in Bulgaria to help you in the event of a crisis may be limited or – in the worst case – not exist at all.

5. TravelAdmin: [Information TravelAdmin](#)

You and your relatives can enter the dates of your holidays, visits and business trips (short-term stays outside your host country) on the TravelAdmin portal. Also ask your visitors from Switzerland to register on TravelAdmin. Your data will be used by the FDFA to locate and contact you more easily if a serious crisis occurs while you are abroad. You will receive a message if the security situation in a particular region suddenly deteriorates.

Please note: TravelAdmin Online Registration is not an early warning system for natural catastrophes such as earthquakes, tsunamis, tornadoes, etc. Always follow the warnings and instructions of the local authorities in such situations.

6. Useful contacts

Embassy of Switzerland in Bulgaria

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