



Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria

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Bulgaria may prove an excellent “one-stop-shop” for big foreign investors

All who want to directly invest in Bulgarian tourism will be able to do so swiftly and easily through the one-stop-shop mechanism. The idea is for the Ministry of Tourism to speed up the administrative procedures, to coordinate the process and cooperate with the investors so that the investment project be realized within a shorter period of time.

“If we become a one-stop-shop destination all big investors who want to put their money in our economy will know that we will collaborate and lead them through the entire process. Thus the administrative burden for all big investors in the tourism sector will be significantly reduced. The Ministry is also working on some draft amendments to the Law on Tourism that are also closely linked to this idea”, explained the Minister for an interview for the news site investor.bg.

“It is clear that we need to take this step. We have already researched the good practices of some of our country-competitors. The mechanism is used in Spain, Croatia, Montenegro, Turkey and is a good practice that we want to introduce as well, taking into account the specifics of our reality. Besides, investors seem to be quite keen on the idea”, concluded the Minister.

New promotional videos for Bulgaria to have more of a personal touch

“New promotional videos marked by a personal touch for some of our target markets will be shot”, said Minister Angelkova during an interview for the daily *Trud* newspaper. According to the Minister the production process will take a year as

the idea is to shoot in real time and feature all four seasons rather than resort to the use of existing footage.

The videos will feature celebrities from some of Bulgaria's target markets which will add a personal touch to the promotional clips. "The videos that will be broadcast in India, Turkey and Germany, for example, will feature a local celebrity – athletes, actors, musicians who have visited Bulgaria and are willing to promote the country as a preferred tourist destination", explained the Minister.

One of India's biggest Bollywood stars Ajay Davgan has already accepted to take part in such a promotional clip which will be broadcast only in India. "This is a market with a population of 1.250 billion people. And I think that when Indians see that one of their movie idols promotes Bulgaria, their curiosity will be piqued", noted the Minister and added that a similar video will be shot with a Turkish TV series celebrity. This promotional strategy has already been used by Croatia – they have broadcast a video featuring a Korean celeb in Korea which has brought 4 million Korean tourists to the country in just four years.

Tourist Flow between the People's Republic of China and Bulgaria is to increase

This was negotiated between Bulgaria's Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova and the Chairman of the Chinese National Tourism Administration Li Jinzao. The two parties agreed to sign a bilateral agreement and an action plan for increasing the tourist flow.

Li Jinzao was on a three-day visit to Bulgaria together with 9 other Chinese officials. "16 000 Chinese citizens visited Bulgaria last year and the majority have traveled for tourism purposes", Minister Angelkova informed the Chinese high-standing guests, adding that these numbers show the ever growing interest of the Chinese tourists in Bulgaria as an attractive European destination. "Shortly Bulgaria will welcome 216 000 Chinese tourists, may be even more", concluded the Minister.

Possibilities for creating a Bulgarian-Chinese Tourism Chamber will also be probed as well as for sending Chinese tourists to Bulgaria as part of China's social programmes. Minister Angelkova introduced her colleague to the ministry's idea of creating joint tourist products with neighboring countries: Bulgaria-Turkey-Greece and Bulgaria-Romania-Serbia. She also informed the Chinese delegates that a Bulgarian-Romanian tourist information center in China is to be established. Guided tours for Chinese media will also be organized. Li Jinzao noted that Chinese tourists are particularly attracted by combined holidays (heritage and SPA tourism, for

example) and invited Minister Angelkova to attend the upcoming tourist exhibit in Xian in June.

Bulgaria's Ministry of Tourism has undertaken all possible measures to counter expected drops in Russian tourists

"The upcoming summer season will be difficult due to geopolitical and economic factors, but talks of grave decreases of inflowing tourists are ungrounded, noted Bulgaria's Minister of Tourism", Nikolina Angelkova adding that final numbers of expected drops will be known at the end of April.

"The Ministry will strive to enhance not only summer tourism exchange between the two countries but also packages for children camps, family vacations, cultural and historical, mountain, balneo and SPA tourism", explained the Minister. Fast tracking visa-issuing procedures for Russian and Ukrainian tourists have also been introduced as a measure for stimulating tourist inflows from the two regions.

At the beginning of March Bulgaria was featured at the two biggest exhibits in the Russian capital – INTOURMARKET and MITT where Minister Angelkova met with high-standing officials, including Oleg Safonov, the acting head of the Russian Federal Tourism Agency and Alexander Bogdanovich Karlin, governor of the Altai Region. "The National Representation of the Ministry of Tourism was made an associated member to the Association of the Russian Tour Operators. This is a clear indication that economic cooperation in the tourism sector between Bulgaria and Russia will be strengthened", said Nikolina Angelkova.

No apocalyptic forecasts should be made concerning the tourist flow from the Russian Federation and Ukraine, concluded the Bulgarian Minister. Drops are to be expected in view of the current geopolitical situation but they will be countered by an increase in tourists from other markets. Preliminary data by tour operators and tour agencies indicates that a 5% rise of German tourists is to be expected. There is increased tourist interest from Poland (6-7%), the Czech Republic (5-6%), Turkey and Greece (10%), Belarus (5%), Serbia (2%) and Macedonia (3%). An increase of 40% of inflowing tourists is also expected from smaller markets such as Lithuania, Latvia and Moldova. A considerable growth of Austrian tourists (10-15%) is also predicted.

France is a market that will expand during the upcoming season. The exhibit "The Epopee of Thracian Kings: Archeological Finds in Bulgaria" in one of the world's

most renowned museums *Le Louvre* has already triggered the interest of potential French tourists. The exhibit will be widely promoted and will focus on Bulgaria's rich cultural and historical heritage which appeals to French travelers.

Cultural and pilgrimage tourism to be the spotlight for incoming Russian tourists

Cooperation in the field of cultural and pilgrimage tourism and a joint programme between Russia and Bulgaria dubbed "A Trip Down Bulgaria's Memory Lane" were the main topics of discussion at a meeting between Bulgaria's Deputy Minister of Tourism Nadya Marinova and Russia's Deputy Minister of Culture Alla Manilova during the International Tourist Exhibit MITT (18-21 March).

The Moscow International Travel and Tourism Exhibit is the biggest in Russia and the third largest such exhibit in the world. The Bulgarian stand featured 24 tourist companies and municipalities which promoted the country's venues for all-year tourism – seaside, winter, green, mountain, cultural and historical routes, balneo, SPA, wellness, recreation. A Bulgaria-Russian business forum was also organized during the fair where possibilities for expanding bilateral cooperation were discussed.

Promotion of Bulgaria on Pan-European channels is in full Swing

The TV promotional campaign on the Pan European channels Eurosport, Discovery Channel, Euronews, National Geographic Channel is now undergoing. The promotional spots are broadcast on all four channels. "We did our best to launch the campaign as soon as possible so that we could effectively assimilate the available EU funds", said the Minister. She noted that some of the TV channels had started to broadcast the spots as early as the beginning of March. To fast-track the launch of the campaign the Ministry has re-edited some of the country's previous video spots – an image video (<http://www.tourism.government.bg/bg/kategorii/videogaleriya/imidzhov-klip-na-bulgariya>) and a short promotional video (<http://www.tourism.government.bg/bg/kategorii/videogaleriya/reklamen-klip-na-bulgariya-s-fokus-vurhu-kulturniya-turizum>) with more and newer videos to be made available soon. The 30-second spots will be broadcast on all four channels in

prime time (during morning shows and in the evening). The campaign will be divided into three time periods of 8 consecutive weeks. The videos are in German, French, English, Russian, Spanish and Bulgarian but other language versions

“The massive promotion on the Pan European channels is one measure to counter the drop of Russian and Ukrainian tourists for Bulgaria. Expectations are that there will be an increase in the number of tourists from Germany, Austria and France for the upcoming season”, explained the Minister.

Bulgaria’s cultural institutes will promote tourism abroad

The cooperation agreement was signed by Minister Angelkova and the Minister of Culture Vezhdi Rashidov. Bulgaria has 11 cultural institutes in Berlin, Bratislava, Budapest, Warsaw, Vienna, London, Moscow, Paris, Rome, Skopje and Prague. They will be promoting Bulgaria’s rich cultural heritage as well as possibilities for the different types of tourism - seaside, balneo and SPA, eco, rural, sport, adventure, hunting, golf, wine and gourmet.

“Culture and tourism should go hand in hand. This is the only way for us to attract an even greater number of tourists and to show the beauty of our unique heritage”, noted the Minister of Culture Vezhdi Rashidov.

Minister Angelkova noted that Bulgaria’s cultural institutes abroad have central and are therefore very convenient venues for various promotional and other campaigns that will feature Bulgaria as a tourist destination. “We all have a vouched interest to make our country a recognizable and preferred destination and we must unite our efforts to create a positive image for Bulgaria”, stressed the Minister.

Minister Nikolina Angelkova met with EU Commissioner Karmenu Vella

Minister Angelkova discussed with Karmenu Vella, EU Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries possibilities for attracting more tourists through the maritime industry at a meeting between the two on 24th March. Bulgaria’s Tourism Minister invited Commissioner Vella to attend the Meeting of the Ministers of Tourism from the Danube region which the Ministry will host at the beginning of June. The two officials took part in an International conference entitled “Intelligent and Blue Growth – New Opportunities for Blue Economy in the Black Sea Region”.

“Cruise tourism generates revenues of about 40 billion euro and has created over 340 thousand jobs” stated Angelkova during the opening of the conference’s second panel discussion. In the past year the share of home cruise tourism had also increased. “Additional tourist products can be offered during cruise travels”, explained the Bulgarian Minister and added that the cultural and heritage routes that have been created allow for brief guided tours of historical sites during planned cruises.

Bulgarian Employees to be offered vouchers for travels within the country

The suggestion was made by representatives of the Confederation of Employers and Industrialists in Bulgaria (CEIBG) during a meeting with Minister Angelkova. The Chair of the Board of Directors of GEIBG Kiril Domuscheiv and the executive director of the organization Evgenii Ivanov said that this is already a good practice in many EU member-states.

Minister Angelkova approved of the idea for home-trip vouchers for employees and noted that this could boost interior tourism. She said that the measure could be introduced after it has been discussed with the Minister of Finance.

As the biggest employers’ organization in Bulgaria, CEIBG is ready to cooperate with the Ministry of Tourism in introducing concrete measures for increasing the quality of the tourist product, the inflow of tourists and for consolidating the tourist branch industry.