

## News Bulletin

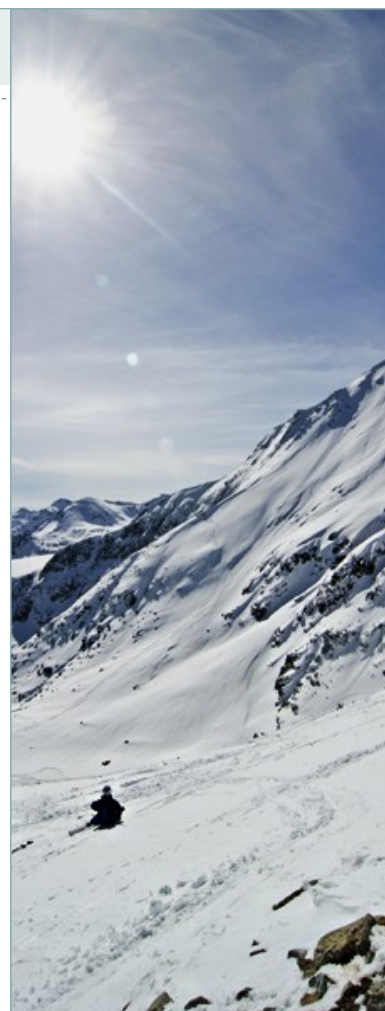
### Pan-European Channel Advertising of Bulgaria with a total of 442 million views

Bulgaria launched a massive Pan-European Channel promotional campaign on Eurosport, Discovery Channel, Euronews and National Geographic Channel which has had an outreach of 442 million views from March till October 2015. This became clear from the campaign's conclusive report which was presented on **7 December 2015**.

Bulgaria's TV promotion on all four Pan European channels was EU funded under Operational Programme "Regional Development" 2007-2013. Apart from the wide-range prime time broadcasting of the two video spots for Bulgaria (an image video and a video spot on cultural and heritage tourism in German, French, English, Russian, Spanish and Bulgarian: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-scFRoikSFo>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QZ-KOgRYEM> ), crews have also visited the country to shoot additional footage. Euronews featured the annual Art Fest Apollonia in the ancient town of Sozopol in their popular LeMag culture programme (<http://www.euronews.com/2015/08/31/culture-by-the-black-sea-at-bulgaria-s-apollonia-festival> ).

The Eurosport crew shot five live reports on the variety of sports that could be practiced in the country (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poiXZ2MLa1s&feature=youtu.be>) while National Geographic channel produced a video spot which focused on the natural assets and sites of Bulgaria. Image-making static and pre-roll banners were also published on the official websites of the Pan European channels.

These four TV channels actually cover almost all of Europe which remains a major market for Bulgaria as well as countries from the Near East, Africa and Asia.



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## Head of the Federal Agency for Tourism of the Russian Federation Oleg Safonov sees Bulgaria as a good tourist destination for Russians

Russia remains one of the important markets for Bulgaria and the Ministry of Tourism of Bulgaria will continue with efforts to stimulate the incoming tourist flow. This became clear during the meeting of Minister Angelkova with the head of the Federal Agency for Tourism of the Russian Federation Oleg Safonov in Moscow on **9 December 2015**. The two officials met in the Russian capital to discuss possibilities for strengthening bilateral cooperation in tourism.



**Oleg Safonov and Minister Angelkova during meeting in Moscow**

“We are highly motivated to offer the best conditions for our tourists. We continue to probe all possibilities for facilitating visa issuing procedures for citizens of the Russian Federation as well as for opening outsourced visa centers”, said the Bulgarian Minister during the meeting. She also noted that visas are being currently issued at 21 such outsourced centers. Mr. Safonov stressed that he would be glad if more Russians chose Bulgaria for their vacation as the country offers plenty of opportunities for tourism and is a traditional vocational spot for Russians.

Both Mr. Safonov and Minister Angelkova agreed that the Bulgarian-Russian round table discussion held in November in Sofia has been quite fruitful. The round-table discussion was attended by high Russian officials including the Executive Director of the Ural Tourism Association Mikhail Maltsev

and the Consul General of the Russian Federation in Varna Sergey Lukanchuk who also expressed willingness to help spur the tourist flow. The round-table in Sofia was held shortly after the conclusion of a fam tour for Russian media and tourist agency representatives.

During the Moscow meeting, Oleg Safonov stated that a follow-up round-table in the Russian capital will be scheduled for February of next year.

“The Bulgarian tourist business is fully prepared to participate in such an event”, stressed Minister Angelkova. A b2b forum will also be organized during the international travel exhibit in Moscow in March which will be a yet another possibility for strengthening the business partnerships between the two countries.

At the end of January Bulgaria is expected to host a sitting of the intergovernmental commission for economic, scientific and technical cooperation which will be attended by Mr. Safonov. It has been agreed that one of the sessions of the Commission will be dedicated to discussing

cooperation in tourism and to boosting the tourist flow. Possibilities for opening an information call center for Russian tourists in Bulgaria were also discussed.

During her Moscow visit the Bulgarian minister met with Vladimir Chernekov, the Head of Department of National Policy and inter-regional relations and tourism of Moscow as well as with his first deputy Sergey Shpilko who is also chairman of the Moscow Committee for Tourism and Hotel Industry. She also held meetings with representative of the Association of Tour Operators in Russia (ATOR). A number of issues have been discussed and concrete measures for furthering bilateral cooperation in the tourism sector have been outlined.



### **Ministry of Tourism to organize joint roundtable on tourist flow between Bulgaria and India**

In 2016 Bulgaria will host a roundtable to identify measures for promoting the tourist flow with India with the participation of representatives of some of the largest Indian companies in the field of tourism. This was agreed at a meeting between the Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria Nikolina Angelkova and the State Minister of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation of India Mahesh Sharma, held in New Delhi **on 23 November**.

Minister Angelkova is the first minister of tourism with whom her Indian counterpart meets after his inauguration in May this year. During the conversation, Minister Sharma expressed his desire to personally attend the upcoming business forum. Both ministers supported the idea of organizing Days of Bulgaria in India and Days of India in our country, which is also a good way of promoting the opportunities for bilateral tourism.

The two ministers discussed the need for a new agreement for bilateral cooperation with concrete steps to boost tourism. “Undoubtedly, India is one of the most promising distant markets for us and we are keen to deepen the ties between our two countries”, Nikolina Angelkova stressed. Minister Sharma noted that the focus of future cooperation between the two countries could be the opening of a direct airline to connect Sofia with Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta and Amritsar and become a prerequisite for a major breakthrough in the Indian tourist market. Thus, Bulgaria can become an aviation hub from which tourists can easily reach other destinations in Western Europe or the United States, for example. Minister Angelkova pointed out that Bulgaria is in the process of examining the experience of other countries in the field of outsourcing visa centers to issue tourist visas to Indian citizens. “Thus our country will become more easily accessible to Indian tourists and the number of trips will significantly increase”, said Minister Angelkova.

*Nicolina Angelkova:  
“We plan to organize guided tours for all important markets. For us it is very important to show the Indian business what Bulgaria has to offer and I am sure that if we deepen our cooperation serious results will be soon to follow”.*

## **Bollywood Blockbuster *Dilwale* is expected to boost tourist flow to Bulgaria**

*“The upcoming December premiere of Dilwale (The Big Hearted), a Bollywood romantic action comedy film that was shot in Bulgaria starring Shahrukh Khan (SRK) and Kajol, is expected to boost the interest of Indian tourists to Bulgaria“ said representatives of leading Indian tour operators*

The upcoming December premiere of Dilwale (The Big Hearted), a Bollywood romantic action comedy film that was shot in Bulgaria starring Shahrukh Khan (SRK) and Kajol, is expected to boost the interest of Indian tourists to Bulgaria. This is what representatives of leading Indian tour operators shared at a meeting with the Bulgarian Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova, which took place in Mumbai during the Minister’s official visit to the country (23-25 November). The meeting, organized by the Honorary Consul of Bulgaria in Mumbai Vinay Patil, was attended by over 80 tour operators and members of the Travel Association of Tour Operators of India.

“In 2016, the Ministry of Tourism will organize expedient tours for journalists for the Indian market, as well as a joint roundtable to promote tourist flows from and to both countries. There are real opportunities to significantly increase the number of Indian tourists to Bulgaria, especially since Bollywood has chosen us as one of their leading film-making locations”, said Minister Angelkova. She recalled that in 2016 another 10 Bollywood productions will be shot in Bulgaria.

The main tourism issues discussed at the meetings in Delhi and Mumbai were related to travel arrangements and visa issuance to Indian citizens. Minister Angelkova presented the so far achievements in

this regard – she specified that active work is ongoing to set up outsourced visa centers for issuing tourist visas to Indian citizens, thus substantially easing the current procedures. Minister Angelkova noted that the focus of future cooperation



**Bollywood’s sweethearts SRK and Kajol strolling down the open antique market of Sofia**

between the two countries could be the opening of a direct airline connecting Sofia with Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta and Amritsar.

Qatar Airways India has already expressed interest in assisting the Ministry of Tourism with the logistics for those familiarization trips to Bulgaria for Indian media and tour operators. This was stated at the meeting of Minister Angelkova with the management of the major international air carrier of India.

## Minister Angelkova presented past year accomplishments in tourist sector and priorities for 2016 before a total of 80 ambassadors and diplomatic corps members

The institution's performance was presented by Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova at a working breakfast attended by more than 30 ambassadors and a total of over 50 representatives of the Diplomatic Corps in Bulgaria on 10 November 2015. The Bulgarian Minister noted that a great deal has been achieved within a comparatively short time including the drafting of 12 seminal regulations, a change in the promotion of the country with a focus on a personal-touch approach in the video spots and completed work on three projects with European funding totaling some BGN 17 million.

“That has year, be-  
new institu-  
meet every-  
us is more  
said Minister  
lined some



**Minister Angelkova presents administration's accomplishments to members of diplomatic corps**

been a difficult first cause to establish a tion and endeavor to one's expectations for than a challenge”, Angelkova. She out- of the Ministry's ac-  
complishments and

laid a special change in the country's promotional campaign. “Each country has something to show, but in order to stand out in such a diverse world one must be innovative. Hence, in our promotional strategy we have put all the stakes on personal touch. One of our new marketing products is a trailer featuring some of the biggest Hollywood stars sharing their experience of Bulgaria”, the Minister added. In her words, the very fact that within only a few days the trailer reached over 2.5 million people on the Internet and that the Bulgarian spot was the only one shown before more than 50 ministers and deputy ministers from around the world at the largest tourism fair - WTM London, is indicative of being on the right track. “Future lies with digital marketing and in 2016 we are planning to heavily stake on it by organizing expedient tours for journalists and unfolding strategic partnership with low cost airlines and major tour operators”, summed up Minister Angelkova.

emphasis on the  
“A major problem in the sector and one we have been tackling from day one, is the status of national resorts. We have set up a working group with representatives of the sector and I believe we have found a compromise and workable solutions for their operation”, Minister of Tourism explained. One of the problems requiring long-term measures is the adequate staffing of the sector. With a view of addressing this issue a Council of Ministers Decree is being prepared to provide for the establishment of a Tourism Personnel Board, which will be composed of representatives of various stakeholder institutions and organizations.

## **35% increase of TUI-Central Europe charter flights and a double increase of incoming tourists from that market are expected**

*„It is crucial for us to be in constant contact with the big tour operators. I have held a number of meetings with the tourist branch industry and they are all preparing for the 2016 summer season and will be offering special packages at competitive prices”, said Minister Angelkova.*

Charter flights from countries where TUI-Central Europe operates including Germany, Austria, Poland, Switzerland are expected to increase in the summer of 2016. The announcement was made during a meeting of the Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova with the management of one of the world's biggest tour operators on **9 November 2015**. The Minister held talks with Oliver Dörschuck, CEO of TUI-Germany, Florian Fleischer director “Production and sales”, Elke Janssen, referent “Quality support management” and Seam Harteneck „Hotel concepts“ referent.

Statistical data by the tour operators indicates that tourists from these markets will double in the upcoming summer season – an increase from 80 000 to 130 000 is expected. Preliminary talks are also held with the TUI Group Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium and the Scandinavian countries where an increase of flights is also expected. „It is crucial for us to be in constant contact with the big tour operators. I have held a number of meetings with the tourist branch industry and they are all preparing for the 2016 summer season and will be offering special packages at competitive prices”, said Minister Angelkova. She stressed that the state administration is also actively engaged in the preparations for the 2016 season – a key factor in the country's marketing strategy for next year will be working in partnership with the big tour operators.

The TUI management noted that it expects the Bulgarian business to focus on increasing the quality of the tourist product mostly in the food and public services sectors. They also said that Bulgaria boasts very good tourist facilities, which gives it a competitive edge on the world tourist market. Minister Angelkova informed that actions have already been taken to overcome one of the major issues in the sector related to improving personnel qualifications; an interministerial council will also be created which will offer concrete solutions in that respect. The Ministry of Tourism is in constant contact with the Consumer Protection Commission and will push for legislative changes which will increase the Ministry's control functions and thus help increase the quality of the tourist product. „The general trend is for a drop in the malpractices in the tourist industry which shows an overriding desire to offer quality tourist services”, stressed Nikolina Angelkova.

*The 50 little known tourist attractions in Bulgaria which the Ministry has also actively promoted, have gained popularity by attracting 14% more tourist visits. The share of Bulgarians interested in particular tourist destinations within the country has also reached 62% which is a 4% increase compared to 2014.*

## **Ministry's Campaign for Boosting Home Tourism Has Met Set Target**

The campaign for boosting home tourism has met the set target by reaching the expected 2 million people. The campaign which was funded by Operational Programme Regional Development 2007-2013 was independently

evaluated by the ESTAT agency.

The campaign's conclusive report which was presented on **3 December 2015**

indicates that 300 000 people have visited at least one of the sites featured in the campaign while

the number of Bulgarians who have vacationed in the country in the past 12 months has reached up to 3 million people.

The 50 little known tourist attractions in Bulgaria which the Ministry has also actively promoted, have gained popularity by attracting 14% more tourist visits. The share of Bulgarians interested in particular tourist destinations within the country has also reached 62% which is a 4% increase compared to 2014.

Year-round home tourism has also been strengthened following the campaign's promotional activities. The number of overnight stays by Bulgarians has steeped and many Bulgarians have come to see their country as a preferred vocational spot. The total cost of the EU-funded campaign amounts to over 1,5 mn euro. Bulgaria's first-ever stand-alone Ministry of Tourism has managed to make up for the delays in the execution of some of the activities and has brought the campaign to a successful end.

Activities have been all encompassing including TV spots on channels with national coverage, video clips, media publications, external and Internet advertising.



**Murals from one of the 50 little known sites—the Zemen Monastery**

## Minister Nikolina Angelkova awarded best 2015 five-star hotels in winter and summer resorts

The Bulgarian Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova awarded the winners in two of the major categories of the Bulgarian Hotel and Restaurant Association's annual awards for excellence on **1 December** in Sofia. The Bulgarian Hotel and Restaurant Association (BHRA) is a non-profit organization and a member of the International Hotel and Restaurant Association. It is also the biggest such organization in the country with a membership that covers 80% of all hotels and restaurants in Bulgaria.

Minister Angelkova presented the prizes for best five-star mountain hotel to aparthotel Lucky Bansko (located in one of Bulgaria's leading winter tourism resorts) and for best five-star sea hotel to Marina Grand Beach Hotel (at the Golden Sands resort on the northern seacoast).

Despite the existing geopolitical hurdles and a somewhat difficult summer tourist season, overnights



**Minister Angelkova with head of BHRA Blagoy Ragin during the Association's official ceremony**

stays by foreign tourists in the country's high-class hotels amount to 1,2 million people. "This goes to prove that tourists demand a high-quality product and are willing to spend their money on it. Hence we should continue to focus on excellence and on offering an even bigger and better

tourist portfolio", stated the Ministry during the official ceremony. She also noted that the Association's annual awards are a benchmark for quality and an objective and trustworthy assessment of the work of the country's leading hotels and restaurants.

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