

News Bulletin

**Minister Nikolina Angelkova and the European Commissioner for
Regional Policy Corina Crețu opened a Conference on
Tourism Development and Security**

Tourism is an essential pillar in the economies of the countries of the Danube region. In the last year over 132 mln. foreign tourists visited the countries of

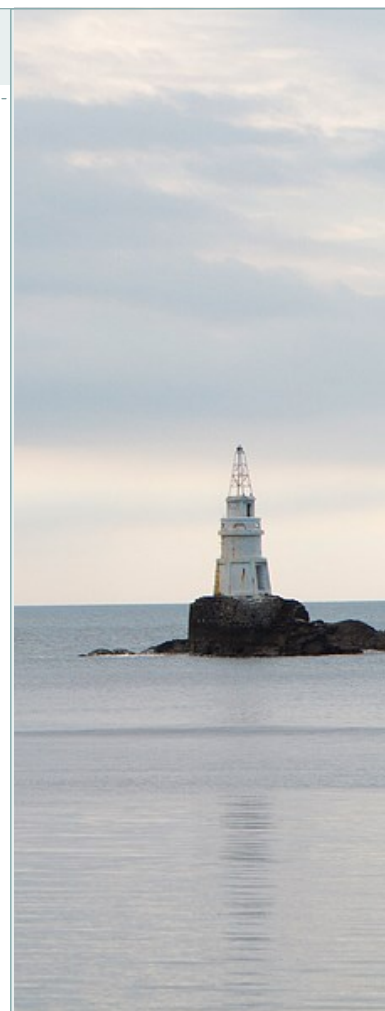


Minister Angelkova and EU Commissioner Corina Crețu during the opening of the Conference on Tourism Development and Security in the Danube region

the region. This inevitably brings the issue for a better cooperation in all fields, so that we can ensure the sustainability of these results and their improvement. This was said by Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova in her opening speech in the conference “Sustainability of Tourism Development and Security in the Danube Region” on **June 17th** in Ruse.

„For a second consecutive year Bulgaria is hub for generating ideas and discussing topics related to the development of the Danube region”, pointed out Minister Angelkova and reminded that in the preceding year Bulgaria organized a large-scale event entitled “Sustainable Tourism through Cooperation with European Funds and Investments”, which was opened by the General Secretary of the World Tourism Organization Taleb Rifai.

“This year the European Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu has personally attended the conference, which is a high appraisal of both the importance of the Danube strategy for the European Union and the Bulgarian role in it”, added Nikolina Angelkova.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Minister Angelkova and EU Commissioner Corina Crețu open a conference on Tourism Development and Security.....1

Bulgaria was proposed for a coordinator of BSEC tourism group.....4

Minister Angelkova with an award by the Balkan Alliance of Hotel Organizations.....5

The Ministry of Tourism to organize 60 tours for foreign media 11

Lonely Planet with a piece on Bulgaria as a great adventure destination.....12

“Our country has a huge potential to stimulate the sector development in the Danube region”, she said. Seven large regions fall within the Bulgarian part of the Danube region – Vidin, Vratsa, Montana, Pleven, Veliko Tarnovo, Ruse and Silistra.

“For a second consecutive year Bulgaria is hub for generating ideas and discussing topics related to the development of the Danube region.”

Nearly half a million of tourists were accommodated within their territory in 2015 and the revenue is over 8 mln. BGN. The Minister further said that the cruise visits are also of great importance for the region and this year Bulgaria expects 340 visits of cruise ships in Ruse.

The European Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu commented that the issue of safety is crucial for the Danube region and for visiting tourists. She was emphatic that the sense of lack of safety should be eradicated, because safety and security are essential when it comes to choosing a tourist destination.

Mrs. Crețu stressed the fact that each 5th European citizen lives and works in the Danube region, which is inhabited by more than 112 mln. of inhabitants and added that 1 Euro out of 10 Euros in the domestic products of the EU comes from tourism. The Danube region has always been a safe destination and we must keep working in this direction, especially taking into account the international situation, the European Commissioner added.



Minister Angelkova and Commissioner Crețu visited some of the region’s landmarks, including the Ruse Lom and the Ivanovo Rock Monasteries

Vasile Danku, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Regional Development and Public Administration of Romania, pointed out the importance for the countries of the Danube region to adopt common decisions for expanding the contacts in order to create a regional identity and a common Danube brand, which could turn the region into a recognizable tourist destination.

After the opening of the conference, Minister Angelkova, Commissioner Crețu and Deputy Prime Minister Danku visited “Baba Tonka” High School of Mathematics in Ruse to get acquainted with the results of the project entitled “ICT – a force for change in education” co-funded by the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Romania – Bulgaria 2007 – 2013. Various specialized classrooms were equipped and modernized under the project.



Minister Angelkova and Commissioner Crețu during their tour of the Ivanovo Rock Churches which are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List

“Our country has a huge potential to stimulate the sector development in the Danube region”.



Minister Angelkova and Commissioner Crețu visited the mathematical high-school Baba Tonka in Ruse



One of the modernized and fully equipped classrooms under the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Romania-Bulgaria 2007-2013 “ICT—a force for change in education”

Bulgaria has been proposed to become a coordinator of the tourism group within the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation /BSEC/

Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova has been proposed to become the coordinator of the tourism group within the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). The proposal was made by the

trips within the Organization by developing common products, which could attract more tourists from distant markets. “We must utilize the past experience gathered from the cooperation in the Danube region to further improve the achieved results” she said.



Minister Angelkova during the conference of ministers of the BSEC countries

General Secretary of the Organization Michael Christides in a conference of the ministers of the BSEC countries, who are in charge of culture and tourism, held in Sochi, Russia on 23rd June.

The forum was organised under the aegis of the Russian presidency of the Organization and the proposal was supported by the host country and the other participants.

“Thank you for the honour granted to Bulgaria. We are among the founders of the Organization and over the years we have been working for the enhancement of mutual cooperation in all fields”, said Minister Angelkova. She pointed out that over 53% of the foreign tourists visiting Bulgaria come from countries of the BSEC. “This is a total of over 3.7 million people per year. If we look at the region as a whole, it turns out that it is among the most important and largest tourist-generating markets for the Bulgarian tourism”, further stated Nikolina Angelkova. In her opinion the member-states of BSEC should facilitate and foster the

The topics discussed during the forum also included the cinematic tourism and the opportunity for popularization of the touristic destinations through movies. Minister Angelkova introduced the Bulgarian experience in making an advertising video featuring some of the most popular Hollywood actors. She emphasized that this is a real marketing instrument for promoting tourism. Specific examples were given of the substantial increase of the number of tourists as a result of film productions, e.g. after the world première of “Harry Potter”, a 50% growth of tourists was registered in the locations shown in the film. In the year 2000, after the première of “The Beach” starring Leonardo DiCaprio, over 22% more young people visited Thailand etc.

“We must utilize the past experience gathered from the cooperation in the Danube region to further improve the achieved results”.

The following officials participated in the forum: the General Secretary of BSEC Michael Christides, the Executive Director of the World Tourism Organization Zoltán Somogyi, the Deputy Director of the Federal Tourism Agency Sergey Korneev, representatives of ministries and national institutions from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Russia and Serbia.

Minister Angelkova received an award by the Balkan Alliance of Hotel Organizations for contribution to the development of tourism

The Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova has received the award "Person of Tourism in the Balkans for the year 2015 and a Minister with Special Contribution to the Sector Development" of the Balkan Alliance of Hotel Organizations. This happened in a ceremony on **June 15th** in Montenegro within the Conference of Interregional Cooperation „Destination as a Brand“. The award was handed by the Minister of Sustainable Development and Tourism of Montenegro Branimir Gvozdenović.

"The Balkans have all natural and cultural resources to become one of the most visited tourist destinations and this depends on the mutual efforts of the government and business representatives", said Minister Angelkova during the opening of the conference. In her opinion, in a globalized environment it is important to enhance the cooperation between the Balkan countries in order to be competitive on the global tourist market. "Such events are of vital importance, because they strengthen the connections and launch new partnerships", she said. In her speech, Minister Angelkova thanked for the honour and underlined that the award is a recognition for the work of the executive authority, the efficient partnership with the municipalities and most of all for the efforts of the tourist sector in Bulgaria.

Earlier, both ministers signed an agreement for cooperation between Bulgaria and Montenegro in the field of tourism. One of the objectives laid down in the document is the improvement of the contacts and tourism connections between both countries.

Actions will be undertaken for better presentation of the cultural and historical traditions, as well as facilitation of the tourist exchange procedures between Bulgaria and Montenegro.

According to data of the National Statistical Institute in the first 4 months of 2016 some 2,000 Montenegrin tourists visited Bulgaria, while more than 1,200 Bulgarians travelled to Montenegro through the same period. It is highly prospective to develop common prod-



Minister Angelkova and the Minister of Sustainable Development and Tourism of Montenegro Branimir Gvozdenović

ucts for the remote markets between both countries.

The „Destination as a Brand“ conference was attended by representatives of the tourism sector from Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, the Balkan Alliance of the Hospitality Associations, the Association of Hotel Owners, managers and representatives of the summit in the field of tourism in Eastern Europe etc. The conference was focused on the opportunities for cooperation between the countries in the region for attracting more tourists and on the steps for turning Eastern Europe into one of the most attractive international tourism destinations.

Minister Angelkova and Sofia Mayor Yordanka Fandakova opened an international conference on tourism development in the capitals of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) states

The member-states of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) registered a total of 95 mln. visits by foreign tourists last year and the revenue from their visits amounts to around 63 bln. dollars according to data of the World Tourism Barometer. “We still have many non-utilized opportunities for partnership in tourism and we are convinced that this potential can be developed by joint initiatives, which will further develop the current achievements”, said Minister of Tourism Angelkova during the opening of the international conference “The Capital

– sustainable tourism destination. Role and contribution of the media for the sustainable development of destinations”, held in Sofia on [June 28th](#). The event was attended by the Mayor of Sofia Municipality Yordanka Fandakova, Krasimir Tulechki, director of “Eastern Europe” Directorate in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, representatives of the SEECP member-states, the European Tourism Commission, tourist associations, media etc.



Minister Angelkova and the Sofia mayor Yordanka Fandakova opened a SEECP international conference

„It is important to offer to those tourists, who visit our capitals, a variety of tourist attractions, so that they wish to stay longer”, said Minister Angelkova. In her opinion that is the reason why one of the 8 cultural and histori-

cal destinations developed by the ministry is completely focused in Sofia region. The symbiosis between historical heritage and modern services is focal for attracting more tourists. This is more than evident in Sofia – in the last year the city accommodated nearly 916 thousand visitors and the income only from overnight accommodation were 116 mln. BGN.

Sofia Mayor Yordanka Fandakova announced that in 2015 the rate of registered overnight accommodations rose by 8%, and for the first five months of this year the increase is 7%. “The ancient archeological heritage of Sofia can be compared to that of Rome and Athens and we are actively involved in showing this heritage to our guests”, the mayor said.

Minister Angelkova has showed AEK "Etar" and Gabrovo to representatives of the Diplomatic Corps in Bulgaria

Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps in Bulgaria have attended the annual meeting in Gabrovo municipality and had the opportunity to visit some of the main touristic attractions in the region. The visit was organized jointly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Tourism on **June 25th**.

„For the second consecutive year, thanks to the good partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we managed to show to all of you, the representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, some of the emblematic places in Bulgaria”, said Minister Angelkova in her address to the diplomats today in the “Etar” complex. She emphasized that these meet-



Minister Angelkova and members of the Diplomatic Corps during their tour of Gabrovo and the region

ings strengthen the connections and contacts with the representatives of the foreign missions in Bulgaria. „This is of great importance, not only because you are ambassadors of your own countries, but in a way you are also ambassadors of Bulgaria to your compatriots. Thus, you may play a major role for making our country popular, including as an attractive touristic destination”, said Minister Angelkova.

More than 24 ambassadors and heads of foreign missions in Bulgaria took part in the visit. Their hosts were the Mayor of Gabrovo Tanya Hristova and the Governor Nikolay Sirakov, who managed to show within two days some of the main touristic sites in the region, such as the House of Humour and Satire, the House-Museum “Dechkova kashta”, the Interactive Museum of Industry in Gabrovo, etc. The programme also involved a visit to the village of Bozhentsi, and today the guests have visited the unique for the Balkans outdoor architectural and ethnographic complex “Etar”. This is the second year, in which the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have organized such a visit. Last year the representatives of the Diplomatic Corps visited Haskovo and Kardzhali.

The National Tourism Council has discussed the Programme for National Advertising for 2016

Velingrad will host the international tourist exhibition for spa, wellness and health tourism in 2018. The decision of the Municipal Council for its organization and conduct has been laid out to the Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova by the Mayor of Velingrad Dr. Kostan

Austria etc.", said Minister Angelkova. According to her the draft programme includes 13 new offers for participation in oversea exhibitions, but the Bulgarian attendance will depend on the activity of the sector. Among them are exchange markets in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, India, China etc.



Minister Angelkova presented the Annual National Advertising Programme during the external meeting of the National Tourism Council in Velingrad

"We will further develop the initiatives that were started in 2016 - better online activity, direct forms of advertising, such as organizing journalist and expedient tours, partnerships with large tour operators etc.", the minister said.

"This is the second year, in which we discuss the programme for national advertising about 6 months prior to the period of performance. This allows us to schedule more effectively our marketing activities"

din Koev in a meeting of the National Tourism Council which took place in Velingrad on **1st July**. The forum also discussed the Annual Programme for National Advertising for 2017 and the work of the Interinstitutional Council for Personnel in Tourism.

"This is the second year, in which we discuss the programme for national advertising about 6 months prior to the period of performance. This allows us to schedule more effectively our marketing activities", said Minister Angelkova. She announced that the results are now a fact and for the first five months of the year 2016 the country was visited by over 1,9 mln. of foreign tourists, which is nearly 9% more than for the same period in 2015. The rise in the visits for holiday and vacation is 20%, and the income from international tourism for the period from January to April amounts to 453 mln. Euro, which marks an increase of 8%.

"In 2017 Bulgaria will participate in 45 international exchange markets in some of the greatest tourism-generating markets – Germany, Russia, Spain, The UK,

The meeting of the National Tourism Council was attended by the Deputy Minister of the Regional Development and Public Works Denitsa Nikolova, the Deputy Minister of Defense Desislava Yosifova, representatives of other ministries, the chairman of Velingrad Municipal Council, the Chairman of the Commission for Consumer Protection Dimitar Margaritov, the Executive Director of the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency Dr. Damyan Iliev, the National Revenue Agency, tourism associations, branch organizations, resorts and tourist complexes, consumer and business organizations, schools etc.

Minister Angelkova met with representatives of the tourism business in Batak and Rakitovo

Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova has visited touristic sites in the municipalities of Batak and Rakitovo, among which the Church Ossuary “Sveta Nedelya”, the Early Christian Basilica in Nikolitsa, the Pliocene Park and the Medieval Fortress in Tsepina.

During her tour on **30th June**, Minister Angelkova had meetings with representatives of the local tourism business, which were also attended by the Governor of Pazardzhik region Ginche Karaminova, the Mayor of Batak Municipality Petar Paunov, the Mayor of Rakitovo Kostadin Holyanov and the Mayor of Peshtera Municipality Nikolay Zaychev.



Minister Angelkova and representatives of the local authorities of Batak and Rakitovo met with members of region's tourist sector

The small municipalities will be included in the journalist tours that will be organized by the Ministry of Tourism

“The small municipalities will be included in the journalist tours that will be organized by the Ministry of Tourism”, announced Minister Angelkova. She also commented that Pazardzhik region has lots of cultural and historical monuments that need to be better popularized.

Another advantage of the region is its location not far from the capital, which gives further perspectives for both pushing upward the domestic tourism and attracting foreign tourists thanks to Trakia Motorway, which is on the road from Asia to Europe. According to Minister Angelkova, Tsigov Chark can also offer accommodation facilities.



Minister Angelkova visited some of the landmarks of the Batak and Rakitovo municipalities

More than 1,500 people have visited the National Archeological Reserve Deultum – Debelt

More than 1,500 people have visited the National Archeological Reserve Deultum in Debelt since its opening two months ago. This became clear during the visit of the Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova in Sredets municipality on **26th June**. She went sightseeing to some of the main touristic attractions in the region and conducted a working meeting for the development of tourism, attended by the members of parliament Diana Yordanova, Rumen Zhelev, the Governor of Burgas region Valcho Cholakov, the Mayor of Sredets Ivan Zhabov, the Mayor of Kameno Zhelyo Vardunski etc.



„Sredets is located very close to our large Black Sea resorts and at the same time it can offer many attractions to tourists”, said Minister Angelkova. She recalled that over 2,7 mln. BGN were invested in the museum in Debelt, which keeps unique Thracian artefacts. „We will include the municipality within the range of foreign journalist tours that we are preparing with the hope that this will be a first major step for the popularization of the region“, reported Minister Angelkova. According to her, the forecasts are for around 20 thousand tourists

visiting the municipality per year with peak tourist flow in the active summer months.

Earlier today Minister Angelkova was a guest of the patronal feast All Saints’ Day in Sredets and gave an icon to the local church as a present. Together with the Mayor Ivan Zhabov and the Deputy Mayor Angel Tashev she visited the village of Fakia, where she was welcomed with 27 authentic Strandzha dishes. After that, they visited the Thracian Megalithic Sanctuary “Markov Kamak”, which is located near the Bulgarian-Turkish border. It is more than 2,000 years old and is a complex of stones of the worshipers of the sun. They also visited the church in the village of Dolno Yabalkovo, built at the end of the 19th century.



The region has preserved its authentic customs and folklore traditions

The Ministry of Tourism has started a public procurement award procedure for 60 informative tours for the foreign media

More than 420 foreign tourists will visit Bulgaria within the journalist tours, initiated by the Ministry of Tourism. The public procurement procedure has been opened on **June 28th** and is titled „Organizing and conducting thematic tours for representatives of the print and electronic media and bloggers with specialized columns and broadcasts on tourism”. The procedure is divided into 12 lots, where each lot will be applied for by different tenderers, who will commit to provide representatives of the media of various reputable editions from the countries specified in the public procurement scope.



There will be 60 tours for representatives of leading media from over 50 markets that are important for our country. Among them are the UK, Ireland, France, the Scandinavian countries, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Romania, Turkey, Greece, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Serbia, China, Japan, India, Israel etc. The official statistics data show that in the last year over 6,5 mln. tourists from the above countries visited Bulgaria.

Each tour will take into account the specifics of the respective market and will be aimed at showing the diversity of our country. Leading accent in the tours will be the given to eight cultural and historical destinations developed by the Ministry of Tourism. These thematic trips will allow the media to get acquainted with the numerous historical and cultural monuments in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian architecture, crafts and customs. The journalists will visit our large seaside and mountain resorts, as well as small settlements with well-developed environmental and rural tourism.

The experience acquired by many countries shows that the organizing of journalist and expedient tours is among the most efficient forms of advertising. Thanks to such tours the journalists get directly acquainted with the tourism opportunities offered by certain destinations and later they share their experiences through the media. In this way the potential tourists learn new and interesting facts from the first-hand source, which provokes the willingness to travel. The journalist tours are an extremely suitable and economically beneficial form of advertising tourism as they supplement the effect of the traditional communication channels. This is why the organizing of these tours is laid down as one of the major activities in the Annual Programme for National Advertising, which was reviewed in a meeting of the National Tourism Council in July 2015.

According to the provisions of the public procurement contracts, the selected contractors will bear all costs for the organizing of the tours, including airline tickets, hotel accommodation, transport, tour guides etc.

The world's largest travel guide publisher Lonely Planet ran an extensive article on Bulgaria

The world's largest travel guide publisher Lonely Planet recently ran an [extensive piece](#) on the variety of possibilities for adventure tourism in Bulgaria. The author dubs the country “a land of wine and roses which unravels layers of history, epicurean tradition and unspoiled outdoors that make it a great all-round adventure travel destination”.



The screenshot shows the Lonely Planet website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links for Destinations, Bookings, Shop, and Sign In. The main heading is "Exploring Bulgaria's backcountry" under the "TIPS & ARTICLES" section. Below the heading is a small circular profile picture of the author, Brana Vladislavjevic, and her name. The article text begins with: "For some travellers, Bulgaria brings to mind only the cheap-and-cheerful beach and ski resort boom of recent decades. They couldn't be more wrong; the land of wine and roses unravels layers of history, epicurean tradition and unspoiled outdoors that make it a great all-round adventure travel destination. Here are our top suggestions for a vintage road trip in Bulgaria's backcountry."

The top suggestions for a vintage road trip in Bulgaria's backcountry include the wine-producing picturesque town of Melnik, the Valley of Roses known for its centennial traditions in rose-oil production, the Rila Monastery—a hub of Bulgarian spirituality which is also included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, the country only narrow-gauge railway which weaves through rugged mountainous landscapes and stunning scenery and the village of Gorno Gladishte where slow food is “not a fad but a traditional way of life”.

Tipple like the Thracians



Karsoburi house in the village of Melnik © Brana Vladislavjevic / Lonely Planet

Not many nations can rival Bulgaria in winemaking history stakes, as grape growing in its fertile valleys can be traced back to Thracian times. The Struma River Valley beneath the rugged Pirin Mountains – one of Bulgaria's five official wine regions – is home to Melnik, a tiny village of grand National Revival-style houses overlooked by

Renaissance spiritual heritage



UNESCO World Heritage-listed Rila Monastery © Brana Vladislavjevic / Lonely Planet

The capital Sofia has been busy rediscovering its Thracian and Roman roots in recent years, while the ancient city of Plovdiv is preparing to be the 2019 European Capital of Culture. But the ultimate historical and cultural experience in Bulgaria remains the venerated Rila Monastery – the guardian of national identity and Orthodox faith throughout the Ottoman era.

Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria
1 Saborna Str., Sofia

Phone: +359 2 9046 840

Fax: +359 2 4470 899

E-mail: press@tourism.government.bg