

News Bulletin

Bulgaria and Greece have signed a Joint Action Programme for the period 2016 - 2018 in the field of tourism



The Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria Nikolina Angelkova and the Minister of Economy, Development and Tourism of the Republic of Greece Giorgos Stathakis

The Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria Nikolina Angelkova and the Minister of Economy, Development and Tourism of the Republic of Greece Giorgos Stathakis signed a Joint Action Programme for the period 2016 - 2018 for action in the field of tourism on

1st August. This happened within the intergovernmental meeting that was held today in Sofia. Earlier both ministers met in a bilateral meeting.

“Traditionally Bulgaria is visited by many Greek tourists and many Bulgarians choose Greece as their holiday destination. Therefore, it is of mutual interest to further enhance our cooperation and to undertake even more joint initiatives”, Minister Angelkova said.

She acquainted her Greek colleague with the event organized by Bulgaria and the World Tourism Organization in Sofia in the period 29 November - 1 December. Minister Stathakis promised to personally attend the event, if possible, otherwise the forum will be attended by the responsible Deputy Minister. Both ministers discussed the opportunities for exchange of experience in the tourism sector and more specifically in the improvement of the regulatory framework and staff training in the branch of tourism.

Greek tourists mainly come to Bulgaria for winter tourism, while the Bulgarian tourists prefer to go to Greece in the summer. For the past year, 972,971 Greeks visited Bulgaria (for tourism purposes) and 1,043,078 Bulgarians visited Greece. The positive data were preserved in the first 6 months of 2016, when over 520 thousand Greeks were in Bulgaria and around 515 thousand



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Bulgarians visited our southern neighbour.

Both ministers agreed to resume the talks in September at expert level and to prepare a Memorandum with specific topics and commitments for enhancing the cooperation. These include exchange of experience for the diversification of the touristic product and development of a mutual touristic product for remote markets with an emphasis on the cultural and religious tourism.



The Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria Nikolina Angelkova and the Minister of Economy, Development and Tourism of the Republic of Greece Giorgos Stathakis

Minister Angelkova has opened the First Folklore Festival “St. Constantine - 2016”

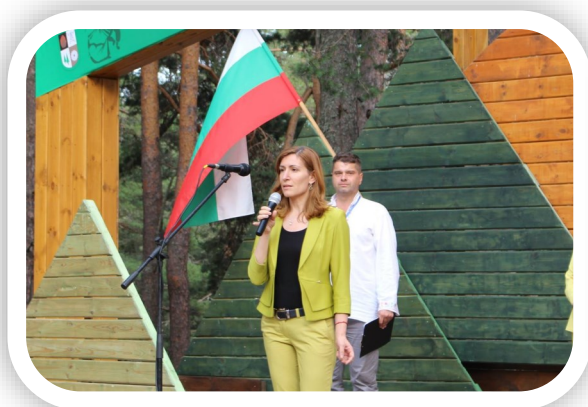
“Such events add value to the Bulgarian touristic product and create an opportunity for further promotion of the region and its attractions.” This was said by Minister of Tourism Angelkova during the opening ceremony of the First Folklore Festival “St. Constantine - 2016” on 30th July. The launching ceremony was attended by the Mayor of Peshtera Nikolay Zaychev, the deputy Desislava Kostadinova etc.

Minister Angelkova highlighted the positive fact that the festival gathered more than 90 folklore ensembles from Bulgaria and the programme went on throughout the entire weekend. “The Ministry of Tourism will continue to support such events, which help us preserve our traditions and customs while at the same time

they promote the domestic tourism”, she added.

Earlier in the day Nikolina Angelkova visited the village of Dorkovo (Rakitovo municipality) to greet the participants and guests of the XVIII International Festival for Authentic Folklore taking place in the village. She acclaimed the idea of the mayors to unify the two festivals, so that the participants may perform on the stages of both municipalities - Peshtera and Rakitovo.

The first folklore festival “St. Constantine - 2016” is held under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism, and the two-day holiday of folk arts and crafts will have more than 750 participants from this and other regions of the country. According to the expectations of the local authorities, the forum will attract more than



Minister Angelkova attends the Todorka's Sun Ancient Cultures Festival in Vratsa

Overnight stays in Vratsa have registered a 13% growth for the first five months of 2016, their total number being 34 000 for the entire region's territory. The region has a lot to show to tourists and event tourism can give a fresh boost to the sector's development. Thus said the Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova during the opening (22nd July) of the Todorka's Sun Ancient Cultures Festival, which is held between 22 - 24 July in the Vologra locality near the village of Ohoden. The event was attended by the Vratsa mayor Kalin Kamenov, the Municipal Council's chair Rumen Antov, the Regional Governor Malina Nikolova, MP's, town councillors, etc.

Earlier that day Minister Angelkova visited the Gradishte locality and God's Bridge. She announced to reporters that the Ministry of Tourism is continuing the bill board campaign to promote domestic tourism, with Vratsa being one of the new cities included in campaign. The bill board campaign was started at the beginning of the year by the Ministry, with 12 large Bulgarian municipalities taking part in it. Local government provided free areas, while the Ministry of Tourism elaborated the visions. Thus, more than 50 tourism sites were advertised country-wide at minimum cost.

According to her, tourism can drive the region's development. „Unique natural sites are and numerous cultural-historical sites are concentrated here, we need to join efforts to make them more recognizable to both Bulgarian and foreign tourists”, she emphasized.

The Todorka's Sun Ancient Cultures Festival aims to preserve North-West's cultural-historical heritage and promote the Bulgaria-Romani cross-border region as a place of long-standing history and rich traditions. The event is carried out under a project entitled “Danube – I can hear you and will ever forget you, I can see you and will remember you, I can replicate you and understand you” and is funded under the Romania Bulgaria Interreg V-A Program. Art groups, archeologists, and historians from Bulgaria, Russia, Romania, Serbia, Macedonia, and Albania will take part in the festival's third edition.



Photos from the Todorka's Sun Ancient Cultures Festival in Vratsa

Minister Angelkova: At the new sea beach concessions, a sun umbrella and a sun lounger will be offered at between BGN 2 and 4.

A base price of sun umbrellas and sun loungers at the Bulgarian beaches is introduced – BGN 2, 3, and 4. The requirement will be embedded in all sea beach concession procedures, which are due to be announced and will become effective as soon as the next summer season. This was announced today by the Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova, following the Council of Ministers' session (20th July). The changes are made in the amendments and additions to the Methodology for determining the minimum amount of the concession payment for sea beaches and in the minimum criteria for comprehensive assessment of bids placed in competitions held to select sea beach concessionaires, which were adopted by the cabinet at today's meeting.

„Optimization of the Methodology will factor in the specifics of the beaches, reducing the prices of beach accessories and encouraging the offering of extra services“, Minister Angelkova said. According to her, a 40% weight is set for the offered price of 1 sun umbrella and 1 sun lounger in beach concession competitions, with all formulas determining a base price for 1 sun umbrella and 1 sun lounger. The price will vary depending on the beach specifics and the proximity and availability of accommodation beds in the settlement near the beaches. For beaches located near settlements with 10 000 residents, the price will be up to BGN 2, for those near settlements with 10 000 residents – BGN 3, while at national resorts – BGN – 4. „These changes result from the government's work and will change quality-wise the Bulgarian sea tourism product“, Nikolina Angelkova emphasized.

She explained that all expiring concessions will be granted under the new methodology. These include 15 large, highly visited beaches (Nessebar – old town, Dyuni, the three parts of the St. Vlas beach, etc.). Case-by-case discussions will be held for the existing contracts to implement the new rules. Responding to a reporter's question, Minister Angelkova announced that more than 200 signals have already been placed alleging irregularities at the sea beaches. Some 160 of these were placed by telephone, and some 40 – by e-mail. The Ministry was alerted mostly about failure on the part of concessionaires/lessees to comply with the free area, as well as isolated cases relating to the cleanness of seas beaches. „Starting this week, we also have a mobile field group at the Black Sea to investigate incoming signals about the sea beaches“, Nikolina Angelkova added.

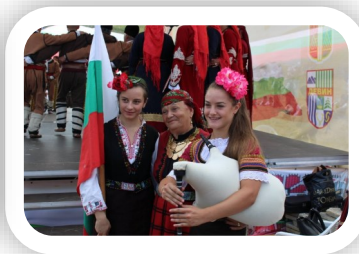
Minister Angelkova: Over 100 000 visited the Rozhen Fair on a single night

Over 100 000 visited the Rozhen Fair on the peak night between Saturday and Sunday. This was announced before reporters by the Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova. She visited the Fair on its last day (17th July), looking at the craftsmen workshop and welcoming participants in the event.

„After a nine-year hiatus, it is the second year running that the organizers have managed to reinstate this unique event of Bulgarian traditions and folklore“, Minister Angelkova said. She committed that the Ministry of Tourism will continue its support for organizing the event and shared hopes that next year the meadows of Rozhen will again welcome hundreds of thousands of guests from all over the country. „In order to support the holding of such events, we are elaborating a dedicated module in the online registry of tourist attractions“, Nikolina Angelkova added.

Responding to a reporter’s question on the situation in Republic of Turkey, the Minister commented that as soon as yesterday the Ministry made contact, together with the Association of Bulgarian Tour Operators and Travel Agents (ABTOTA), with the large-scale tour operators active on the Turkish market. Yesterday, a chartered flight took home 258 Bulgarian tourists from Antalya, with other groups returning by bus from our southern neighbour today.

The Rozhen Fair is held during the period 15-17 July, 2016 on the Rozhen meadows in the Rhodope mountain. The event is one of the most symbolic festivals gathering in one place all lovers of the Rhodope folklore. During the Fair’s three days, participants had the opportunity to become familiar not only with the authenticity of the Rhodope lifestyle and folklore, but also with the folk customs, crafts, and the beauty of the Rozhen area.

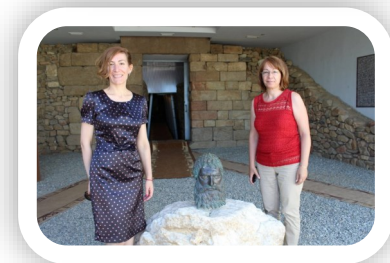


Minister Angelkova organizes a meeting to coordinate the efforts for promoting tourism opportunities in the Rose Valley

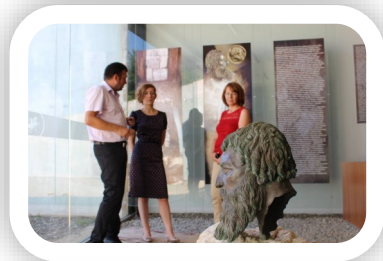


According to marketing surveys for our leading tourism markets, the rose is one of the symbols that foreigners most often associate Bulgaria with. We need to unite the efforts of all stakeholders in this process in order to make this region even more popular and assert it as one of the most visited tourist destinations. Thus said Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova during a meeting with representatives of the tourism trade, rose producers, and mayors from the Rose Valley area dedicated to coordinating efforts for promotion of tourism in the region on 7th July.

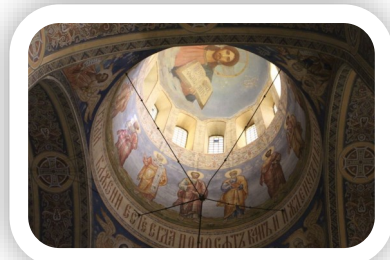
„We now have the natural hub – the new Rose Museum”, Minister Angelkova indicated. The government disbursed BGN 1 mil. for its construction, and since its opening, the growth in visits to the venue has been 47%. „We have the basis to build on – each year the Rose Festival welcomes hundreds of thousands of tourist and attracts the attention of both remote markets (Japan, China, etc.), and the European ones as well“, Nikolina Angelkova added. According to her, Kazanlak Municipality alone has welcomed over 220 000 tourists, with accurate data for the region not available, as during the Rose Festival tourists find accommodation in hotels within a 100 km. radius.



„As an administration, we want to support the region and establish it as one of Bulgarian tourism’s symbols. This is precisely the reason why one of the eight cultural-historical destinations developed by the Ministry – The Valley of Roses and Thracian Kings – is entirely concentrated in the region the Minister of Tourism announced.

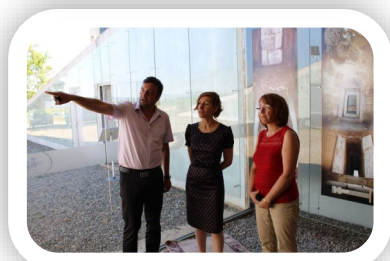


According to the Bulgaria Tourism Regionalization Concept, one of the nine marketing tourism zones also covers the Rose Valley and bears that name. The region is also known as The Valley of Thracian Kings. There are more than 200 tourist attractions here as well, which are included in the Ministry of Tourism’s online registry.



Responding to a question, Minister Angelkova announced that since the year’s start our country has been visited by some 2 mil. foreign tourists, the growth being nearly 14% compared to last year’s same period. Over 4.6 mil. overnight stays in the country have been registered, generating nearly BGN 190 mil. revenues (13.5% growth).

Today’s discussion was hosted by Galina Stoyanova, mayor of Kazanlak Municipality, who emphasized that it was the first time for a meeting in such format to be initiated. „Rose production can be the basis for development of tourism in the region. It is probably the first time that these people have met and had the opportunity to discuss how we can develop the region”, she indicated.



The meeting was attended by the mayors of Sopot Municipality and Nikolaevo Municipality – Deyan Doynov and Kosyo Krastev, the deputy mayor of Pavel Banya Municipality – Yordana Eneva, and others.

Minister Nikolina Angelkova bestows a “Mayor of the Month” award to Kazanlak’s mayor Galina Stoyanova

The Minister of Tourism Nikolina Angelkova bestowed the „Mayor of the Month“ recognition, on the subject matter of Holidays and Festivals, in the “50 000 Municipalities” category, to Kazanlak’s mayor Galina Stoyanova. The ceremony, which is part of the monthly campaign of the kmeta.bg website, was held today (12th July) in the Peroto literary club at NPC (National Palace of Culture).

Holidays and festivals are exceptionally important to us not only as heritage we need to preserve, but as a way to develop year-round tourism“, Minister Angelkova noted. She emphasized Kazanlak proved this year again that it is one of the country’s festival centres, with traditions in event tourism, having attracted thousands of tourists during the Rose Festival. „To stimulate this type of tourism, the Ministry will set up a registry of festivals, which will be part of the online registry of tourist attractions“, she noted further. Minister Angelkova advised that in some 10 months the Ministry-created Registry of Online Attractions has registered nearly 4 mil. visits. A peak in the visits was registered during the Easter holidays - 300 000 and around 24 May – 350 000. Once the summer season began, visit incidence also increased substantially, registering a circa 40% growth of visitors during the past two months 40%.

Two other mayors were rewarded during the media’s June campaign. The Byala Slatina mayor Ivo Tsvetkov, who won in the “Municipalities with 20 000 – 50 000 residents” category and the Tutrakan mayor Dimitar Stefanov, winner in the „Municipalities with 20 000 residents.“ The awards were handed by the Deputy Minister of Culture, Boni Petrunova, and Lyudmil Veselinov,

Deputy Minister Georgieva attended the opening of the first-of-its-kind Universe Sexual Assault Referral Centre in the city of Bourgas

Deputy Minister Minister of Tourism Irena Georgieva attended the opening of the first-of-its-kind Universe Sexual Assault Referral Centre in the city of Bourgas on 18th July. Its establishment was initiated by the UK embassy in our country, with the financial support of the Bourgas and Sozopol Municipalities. The official opening was also attended by the Bourgas mayor, Dimitar Nikolov, Her Excellency Emma Hopkins, UK ambassador, Sotir Tsatsarov, Prosecutor General, Georgi Kostov, Chief Secretary of the Ministry of Interior, and others.

„Establishment of the centre is evidence of the successful partnership among the institution and a way to increase tourist security“, Deputy Minister Georgieva said. She reminisced that the Ministry of Tourism is also backing for a second straight year the British embassy’s TakeYourPic initiative for responsible tourism by English visitors to our country. The campaign is carried out in the social networks Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr and is an innovative way to inform British visitors in real-time, by sharing both satisfying and unpleasant experiences, of what could improve or jeopardize their vacation in our country. According to her, the initiative has become recognizable among the most vulnerable group – those aged 14 – 35, and has been adopted as a successful practice by tour operators and travel agencies. "Official stats about the campaign are also positive – incidents involving British tourists in our country have declined by 25%", Irena Georgieva stated further.

Later that same day Deputy Minister Georgieva and Zhivko Tabakov, advisor to the Minister of Tourism, offered a floral tribute at the commemoration ceremony to honour the memory of the victims of the terrorist act at Sarafovo Airport in 2012.



Minister Angelkova and Kazanlak’s mayor Galina Stoyanova



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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