Child screening

Screening is also applied to children, both accompanied and unaccompanied. The same as adults, children do not receive an official permit to enter the country until their screening is complete.

- During the screening minor children are accompanied by an adult family member, where such is present.
- Unaccompanied minors must get a representative to accompany and assist the child during the screening. It is mandatory that at least one social worker must be present to ensure that the child's best interest during the screening.
- Screening of unaccompanied minors can be made in Elhovo Screening Centre, SCTAF Busmantsi and SCTAF Lyubimets.

Important! Your age must be established as part of the screening process. If you are a minor, you need to report so to the screening authorities.



Contact details:

Centre for Legal Aid Voice in Bulgaria Foundation – independent non-governmental organisation providing legal aid to persons seeking protection, refugees, migrants, people in undocumented situations in Bulgaria since 2009.

Website: **centerforlegalaid.com/**
Email: **voiceinbulgaria@gmail.com**
Phone: **+359 87 8257169** (WhatsApp/Viber)

This brochure was published as part of the Civil Engagement in the Monitoring of the Asylum and Migration System project with the financial help of the Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme within the framework of the Civic Engagement and Transparency Mechanism (CETM) 2024-2029. The project is executed by Centre for Legal Aid – Voice in Bulgaria together with Mission Wings and Iura Humana.

The views and opinions expressed herein are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the governments of Switzerland and Bulgaria.

SWISS–BULGARIAN
Cooperation Programme

Since 12 June 2026 the European Union (EU) has applied new rules on migration and asylum. The majority of them are directly applicable in all member states, including Bulgaria as an external EU border.

As part of the new rules, Bulgaria has begun implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/1356 on screening. Screening has not been defined as a procedure with the respective procedural guarantees, but as a technical process involving preliminary checks.



What is screening?

Screening is the first mandatory check you will be asked to undergo when entering or settling on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Until the screening is complete:

- you will not be considered as having officially entered on the territory of the country;
- you will not be allowed to leave the screening centre.

Who is subject to screening?

Screening is applied to:

- any third-country nationals who have crossed the border irregularly;
- persons in an irregular situation on the territory of the country.

The screening is conducted irrespective of whether you have applied for international protection or not.

How long does the screening take?

- A maximum of 7 days for screening at the border and
- a maximum of 3 days for screening inside the country.

Important! Even if not all checks have been completed, the screening must end within the specified terms and you will be referred to the next procedural steps.

Фондация Мисия Крила
Център за правна помощ Глас в България
Iura Humana

Who performs screenings in Bulgaria?

- Border police;
- Migration Directorate under the Ministry of Interior (**MoI**), Migration division/sector/unit under the Sofia Metropolitan Directorate of Interior and the regional MoI directorates.

Where is screening performed in Bulgaria?

- Elhovo Screening Centre near the border with Turkey;
- Special Centre for Temporary Accommodation of Foreigners (**SCTAF**) – Lyubimets, near the border with Turkey;
- Screening Centre – the town of Dragoman, near the border with Serbia;
- SCTAF Busmantsi, the city of Sofia
- Border Police premises.

These are closed-type centres which cannot be left during the screening.

What checks are made during the screening?

1. Health check:

- The health check must be performed by a qualified medical professional: there must be a physician, a nurse or a paramedic available.
- You are entitled to access specialised medical care and basic treatment.

2. Vulnerability check:

Vulnerability checks must be made at the time of your screening by specialised employees of the screening bodies trained for this purpose.

You are a vulnerable person if:

- you are a pregnant woman;
- (an unaccompanied) child;
- a single parent;
- an elderly person;
- you have special needs as a result of a disability;
- you have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual harassment;
- you have an unconventional sexual orientation;
- you are the victim of human trafficking;
- you are a stateless person.

If you are identified as a vulnerable person, you are entitled to:

- qualified support by a psychologist or a psychiatrist;
- specialised medical care.

Important! If you have special needs or you have been victim of violence, it is important that you say so promptly at the time of the screening procedure. This can be of key importance for your access to protection and adequate support.

3. Identity check and verification

- You are under the obligation to **identify yourself** and the names and date of birth filled in the form cannot be changed at a later time without providing an original identification document from your country of origin.
- **Registration of biometrical data:** you are obliged to provide biometrical data – fingerprints and a photograph.
- **Security check:** during the screening, a check will be made whether there is any threat to national security and internal order. The screening authorities make an inquiry in European information systems and data bases, including Interpol for any information/signal about a security threat.

Filling in the screening form

- The information collected from you during the screening must be filled in a form.
- You have the right to receive a hard copy or an electronic copy of the form.

Important! Before the form is forwarded by the screening authorities to the following stage, you have the right to point to any information contained in the form which is incorrect. The screening authorities must make note of any such statement under the respective information.

Procedure referral

After the screening is complete, you can be referred to:

- standard protection procedure;
- border protection procedure – a type of a fast-track procedure with shorter deadlines for receiving status which is conducted in a closed centre.

The new European rules make access to protection harder. The screening does not provide guarantees that you will be automatically referred to a standard protection procedure.

Important! You have the right to receive information on the available options for international protection. If you are looking for protection, you must explicitly state that you wish to file an application. If you do not file an application for protection, you can be subject to return procedure.

Try to explain in as much detail as possible the reason why you are seeking protection. You can ask in your protection application form to be provided with a lawyer if you do not know one. You have the right to free legal aid, including using a legal aid lawyer appointed by the state through the National Legal Aid Bureau.

You have the right to an interpreter.
Any information must be presented to you in a language which you understand. If you find it difficult or cannot understand the information, ask for an interpreter.