



# BULGARIA

## 2025-2027 IFRC network country plan



Multi-Year Funding Requirement **CHF 34.3M**

12 March 2025

### In support of the Bulgarian Red Cross



**28**

National Society  
branches



**2,691**

National Society  
local units



**543**

National Society  
staff



**16,546**

National Society  
volunteers

### People to be reached



**20,000**

Ongoing  
emergency  
operations



**5,000**

Climate and  
environment



**15,000**

Disasters  
and crises



**10,000**

Health and  
wellbeing



**20,000**

Migration and  
displacement



**15,000**

Values, power  
and inclusion

### IFRC network multi-year focus

#### Emergency response

- Population movement crisis

#### Longer-term needs

- Disaster preparedness
- Climate change adaptation

#### Capacity development

- Humanitarian diplomacy
- National Society development

### Key country data links

**INFORM Severity rating** **Low**

**INFORM Climate Change Risk Index** **Low**

**Human Development Index rank** **70**

**World Bank Population figure** **6.4M**

**World Bank Population below poverty line** **20.6%**

Country Cluster Delegation to Central and  
South-Eastern Europe, Sarajevo

# Funding requirements

2025

2026\*\*

2027\*\*

\*\*Projected funding requirements

**Total 13M CHF**

**Total 10.9M CHF**

**Total 10.4M CHF**

Through the Host National Society

**11.5M CHF**

Through Participating National Societies

**530,000 CHF**

Through the IFRC

**1M CHF**

**HNS Breakdown**

**IFRC Breakdown**

**Ongoing emergency operations**

**800,000 CHF**

**Longer term needs**

**1M CHF**

Climate & environment

**3M CHF**

Disasters & crises

**3M CHF**

Health & wellbeing

**3.1M CHF**

Migration & displacement

**500,000 CHF**  
Values, power & inclusion

**100,000 CHF**  
Enabling local actors

**Ongoing emergency operations**

**900,000 CHF**

**Longer term needs**

**25,000 CHF**

Climate & environment

**25,000 CHF**

Disasters & crises

**25,000 CHF**

Health & wellbeing

**25,000 CHF**

Migration & displacement

**25,000 CHF**  
Values, power & inclusion

**25,000 CHF**  
Enabling local actors

Through the Host National Society

**10.4M CHF**

Through Participating National Societies

**380,000 CHF**

Through the IFRC

**150,000 CHF**

**HNS Breakdown**

**IFRC Breakdown**

**Ongoing emergency operations**

**800,000 CHF**

**Longer term needs**

**1M CHF**

Climate & environment

**3M CHF**

Disasters & crises

**3M CHF**

Health & wellbeing

**3M CHF**

Migration & displacement

**300,000 CHF**  
Values, power & inclusion

**100,000 CHF**  
Enabling local actors

**Ongoing emergency operations**

**900,000 CHF**

**Longer term needs**

**25,000 CHF**

Climate & environment

**25,000 CHF**

Disasters & crises

**25,000 CHF**

Health & wellbeing

**25,000 CHF**

Migration & displacement

**25,000 CHF**  
Values, power & inclusion

**25,000 CHF**  
Enabling local actors

Through the Host National Society

**9.9M CHF**

Through Participating National Societies

**380,000 CHF**

Through the IFRC

**150,000 CHF**

**HNS Breakdown**

**IFRC Breakdown**

**Ongoing emergency operations**

**800,000 CHF**

**Longer term needs**

**1M CHF**

Climate & environment

**3M CHF**

Disasters & crises

**3M CHF**

Health & wellbeing

**2.5M CHF**

Migration & displacement

**300,000 CHF**  
Values, power & inclusion

**100,000 CHF**  
Enabling local actors

**Ongoing emergency operations**

**900,000 CHF**

**Longer term needs**

**25,000 CHF**

Climate & environment

**25,000 CHF**

Disasters & crises

**25,000 CHF**

Health & wellbeing

**25,000 CHF**









Migration & displacement

**25,000 CHF**  
Values, power & inclusion

**25,000 CHF**  
Enabling local actors

See back page for explanatory note on funding requirements

## Participating National Societies bilateral support for 2025

National Society name	Funding Requirement	Climate	Disasters and crises	Health and wellbeing	Migration	Values, power and inclusion	Enabling local actors
Canadian Red Cross Society	300,000						
Hong Kong Red Cross, Branch of the Red Cross Society of China	30,000						
Korean Red Cross	50,000						
Swiss Red Cross	100,000						
Turkish Red Crescent Society	50,000						
Total Funding requirement <b>CHF 530,000</b>							

### Participating National Societies

American Red Cross\*

The Canadian Red Cross Society

Hong Kong Red Cross, Branch of the Red Cross Society of China

Italian Red Cross\*

Korean Red Cross

Swiss Red Cross

Turkish Red Crescent Society

*\*National Societies which have contributed only multilaterally through the IFRC in the first half of 2024.*

### IFRC Appeal codes

Emergency Appeal:

**MDRUA6600** Ukraine and Impacted Countries

Longer-term needs:

**MAABG001**

### Hazards



Fires



Floods



Earthquakes



Extreme weather conditions



Population movement

# NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The **Bulgarian Red Cross** was founded in 1878 and was admitted to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in 1921.

It operates across the country through 28 regional branches and over 2,691 local units, adhering to the Bulgarian Red Cross Act and the principles of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. The National Society is the largest volunteer organization in Bulgaria, providing first aid training, disaster relief, humanitarian aid, rescue operations and various social and health services. The Bulgarian Red Cross follows a four-tier organizational structure, culminating in the General Assembly, its highest governing body.

The Bulgarian Red Cross Strategic Plan, in line with Strategy 2030, focuses on three main strategic goals developed through several national general assemblies:

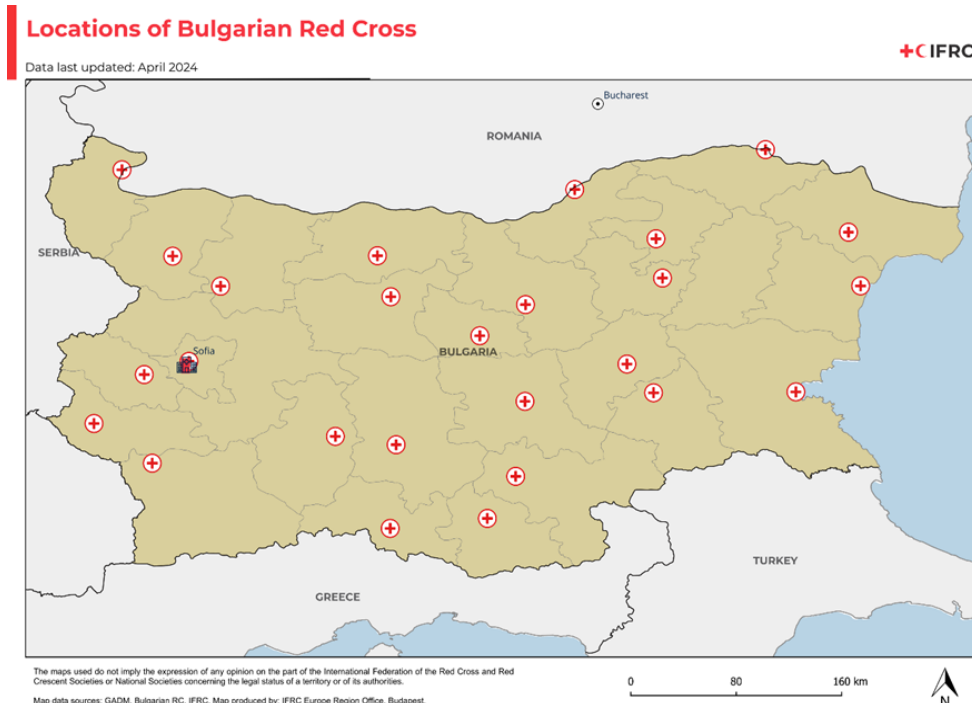
- Support empathetic and active individuals to overcome vulnerabilities and build integrated, prosperous, and sustainable communities.

- Implement essential activities for successful intervention in disaster and crisis situations and preserve the health and lives of affected members of the communities.

- Make a significant contribution to the reduction of poverty and social exclusion and ensure acceptance of humanitarian values in society to limit negative social attitudes (such as xenophobia, discrimination, intolerance, and aggression).

As outlined in the Strategic Plan 2020-2030, its programmes target various areas including first aid, disaster response, long-term development, shelter, health, youth engagement, and migration.

In 2023, the National Society reached approximately 747,000 people through its long-term services and development programmes and 170,000 people through disaster response and early recovery programmes.



*The map does not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the IFRC or the National Society concerning the legal status of a territory or its authorities*

# IFRC NETWORK ACTION

## JOINT SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Bulgaria, located in the eastern Balkan Peninsula, has diverse terrain including mountains, rivers, lakes and a coastline. With a population of about 6.4 million, 75 per cent reside in urban areas, while 25 per cent of the population live in rural regions. However, the country faces challenges from a persistent trend of population aging and uneven distribution.

As of 2025, Bulgaria's GDP growth is projected at 2.9 per cent according to the European Commission. Despite improvements, the poverty rate remains a pressing issue. About 30 per cent of the Bulgarian population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2023, the second-highest rate in the European Union.

Bulgaria continues to face migration-related challenges due to its position on key routes from Asia, the Middle East and Africa. In response, the country aims to strengthen its international development cooperation policy while pursuing economic stability through Eurozone inclusion. However, efforts to join the Eurozone have encountered setbacks. In June 2024, the

European Central Bank reported that Bulgaria did not meet the inflation criteria for euro adoption, potentially delaying its entry until 2026. Despite this, Bulgaria achieved full membership in the Schengen Area on 1 January 2025, marked by the removal of checks on individuals at internal land borders. Controls at internal air and sea borders between Bulgaria and other Schengen countries had already been lifted on 31 March 2024.

In terms of environmental challenges in the country, Bulgaria faces multiple environmental threats in the form of pollution, deforestation and biodiversity loss. Industrial activities, outdated infrastructure and inefficient waste management contribute to environmental degradation. Air pollution remains a pressing concern, particularly in urban areas such as Sofia. A 2024 survey by the European Investment Bank revealed that 96 per cent of Bulgarian respondents recognize the need to adapt to climate change, with 50 per cent considering climate adaptation a national priority.

Bulgaria faces issues of aging population, poverty and loneliness, particularly in rural areas. Emigration, driven by low incomes, contributes to population decline and poses risks of trafficking. Social cohesion is a concern in Bulgaria, with persistent issues related to discrimination, social exclusion and poverty, particularly among minority communities.



The Bulgarian Red Cross team conducting training in first aid and CPR, in February 2024 (Photo: Bulgarian Red Cross)



# ONGOING EMERGENCY RESPONSE

For more real-time information on emergencies, see IFRC GO page [Bulgaria](#)

<b>Emergency Operation</b>	Ukraine and Impacted Countries Crisis
<b>Appeal number</b>	MGR65002
<b>People to be assisted</b>	22.7 M (total); 180,000 (in Bulgaria)
<b>Duration</b>	September 2022-December 2025
<b>Funding requirement</b>	Total: CHF 800 M (IFRC); CHF 2.7 billion (Federation-wide) Bulgaria: CHF 25.1M (IFRC); CHF 30.3 M (Federation-wide)
<b>Emergency Appeal</b>	<a href="#">Revised Emergency Appeal</a>
<b>Link to Operational Strategy</b>	<a href="#">Revised Operational Strategy</a> <a href="#">Bulgaria Response Plan</a>
<b>Link to Operational Update</b>	<a href="#">Operational Update No. 11</a>

The international armed conflict in Ukraine continues, inflicting a devastating toll on the lives of people. The protracted crisis has resulted in massive civilian casualties, severe harm to critical infrastructure and livelihoods and widespread displacement from front-line communities, leading to an alarming escalation in humanitarian needs, inside and outside of Ukraine. Millions of people have crossed borders from Ukraine into neighbouring countries and beyond. Most of these individuals have been displaced for nearly two years and the gaps in meeting their needs are still increasing. Displaced people from Ukraine still require safety, assistance and critical protection to lead dignified lives and restore their wellbeing and livelihoods.

First launched in February 2022, the IFRC Emergency Appeal was revised in May 2023, in support of the work of 18 National Societies including the Bulgarian Red Cross who are responding to the crisis. The revised Emergency Appeal presents a substantial increase in people targeted, funding requirement and geographical coverage, to support the National Societies in assisting people in Ukraine and other impacted countries affected by the crisis. It also represents a shift in response from an emergency phase to a protracted crisis scenario, while recognizing the need to remain agile and proactive in what continues to be a highly dynamic environment.

## Short description of the emergency operational strategy

The Bulgarian Red Cross has been actively involved in the IFRC Ukraine and affected countries response, raising nearly CHF 3 million from the public, with expenditures totalling CHF 2.08M.

The National Society's interventions under this emergency appeal will consist of:

## Health and care

Provide health information through awareness sessions at regional branches and humanitarian service points. Support access to health services in Bulgaria by supporting part payment of health insurance for vulnerable groups, and the reimbursement of medical expenses. Provision of mental health and psychosocial support through community-based activities and group therapy sessions, as well as face-to-face and online or phone consultations with psychologists to help address the mental health needs of displaced people from Ukraine.

## Shelter, housing and settlements

Replenishment of sleeping kits that were distributed to displaced people from Ukraine in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. Provision of temporary collective shelters for displaced people from Ukraine to access at regional locations close to border crossing points.

## Cash and voucher assistance (CVA)

Provide cash grants to newly arrived displaced people from Ukraine and support to vulnerable households to address the increased costs associated with the winter season.

## Livelihoods

Purchase large parcels of emergency food assistance to support households. Purchase migrant food kits and set up soup kitchens for daily food supply at larger branches.

## Protection, gender and inclusion (PGI)

Manage and create child friendly spaces in all humanitarian service points. Provide art therapy classes in selected location. Develop Bulgarian Red Cross specific minimum standards for

child friendly spaces. Provide prevention and protection of sexual exploitation and abuse and child safeguarding training for staff and volunteers.

## Community engagement and accountability (CEA)

Manage effective feedback mechanisms for the Ukraine response, including a helpline with Ukrainian-speaking operators, social media and face-to-face channels. Train staff and volunteers on CEA fundamentals, including responding to feedback. Institutionalize CEA approaches in all long-term programs and operations.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



## Climate and environment

Bulgaria is ranked 50th in the 2025 Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI), receiving 'low', 'very low' and 'medium' ratings in GHG emissions and climate policy, energy use and renewable energy, respectively.

Bulgaria's current climate features hot, dry summers and cold winters, but climate change is anticipated to alter these patterns significantly. Rising temperatures are expected, leading to reduced snowmelt flow and more frequent and intense heatwaves. Climate models predict hotter, drier summers and milder winters with less snowfall, impacting agriculture, water resources and ecosystems, requiring adaptation measures.

Air pollution is a significant environmental challenge in Bulgaria, particularly in urban areas and industrial zones. The main sources of air pollution include vehicle emissions, industrial activities and residential heating. According to the European Environment Agency (EEA), Bulgaria has struggled to meet European Union air quality standards, with high levels of particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) and nitrogen dioxide (NO2) exceeding permissible limits. Poor air quality poses risks to public health, contributing to respiratory diseases, cardiovascular problems and premature mortality. The European Environment Agency's 2024 report highlights that a significant proportion of Europe's urban population lives in cities where EU air quality standards are regularly exceeded, impacting public health and the environment. Public awareness of environmental issues is growing.

Climate change not only intensifies disaster damage but also prompts ecological shifts, affecting livelihoods and disease distribution. Higher temperatures pose health risks, particularly for vulnerable groups and changing precipitation patterns challenge water and food access. The agricultural sector may experience reduced crop yields and increased vulnerability to pests and diseases due to changing temperature and precipitation patterns. Water resources could become strained, affecting both the availability of

drinking water and irrigation for agriculture. Infrastructure, such as buildings and transportation networks, may face increased risks from extreme weather events, including floods and storms. The health sector may also face increased burdens due to heat-related illnesses, the spread of vector-borne diseases and respiratory problems associated with worsening air quality.

Bulgaria has enacted environmental laws and regulations to address pollution, waste management and biodiversity conservation. The government enforces these regulations through monitoring, inspections and penalties for non-compliance. As an EU member state, the country has aligned its environmental policies with EU standards and directives. The country implements EU regulations related to air and water quality, waste management and nature conservation, essential for EU funding and environmental sustainability.

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Bulgarian Red Cross aims to ensure that it is an effective partner of the state in adequately responding to protect the life and health of the population, build resilience of vulnerable individuals and communities, reduce damage and recovery and prevent, recognize and mitigate the risks and impacts of climate change. Its high-level objectives include to:

- Ensure that all its own strategies, policies and programmes work towards increasing its resilience to the impacts of climate change
- Support local communities as well as national, regional and local authorities to adapt to climate change and mitigate risks
- Contribute to the international climate resilience and preparedness by encouraging stronger global engagement and exchanges on adaptation
- Strengthen its role at the mountain rescue service as a leading structure in the prevention, assistance and rescue of victims in the mountains and a partner of the state

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## Planned activities in 2025

- Install a 115kWh solar panel and battery system
- Continue to raise funds for the installation of solar panel and battery systems at its headquarters and regional branches with the aim to reduce overhead costs and carbon footprint
- Implement climate awareness projects involving youth engagement in activities such as tree planting, clean-up drives and recycling campaigns
- Conduct outreach to schools and youth groups to raise awareness about the heightened risk of climate disasters such as flooding, hurricanes and extreme weather events
- Involve community groups and stakeholders such as municipalities, fire services and national park rangers in the design of activities to address long-term climate change challenges

- Support projects that include community-based green infrastructure, grassland renewal actions and river clean-up actions
- Establish shelters for the vulnerable population to provide refuge and support during extreme weather events

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## Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC provides comprehensive support to the Bulgarian Red Cross in the conception and execution of initiatives focused on climate change adaptation and improved resilience enhancement. This includes capacity building, knowledge dissemination, technical support and financing. These combined efforts are intended to improve the capacity of the Bulgarian Red Cross to address climate related issues faced by communities, with the aim of safeguarding the most vulnerable segments of the population.



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## Disasters and crises

For more real-time information on emergencies, see IFRC GO page [Bulgaria](#).

Bulgaria faces various hazards such as earthquakes, floods, droughts and extreme temperatures, with vulnerability influenced by factors such as poverty rates and healthcare access. The country's coping capacity for these hazards is limited, highlighting the need for comprehensive disaster risk reduction strategies, better infrastructure and enhanced institutional capacities. Chronic disasters including floods, droughts and extreme temperatures are common, affecting agriculture, water resources and public health, especially for vulnerable groups.

In [September 2023](#), a sand-spout (tornado) and intensive rainfall unleashed flooding on Bulgaria's southern Black Sea coast. Infrastructure was heavily damaged, with floods sweeping cars and caravans into the sea and inundating housing, hotels and campsites in parts of the region.

Forest fires are a recurring threat in Bulgaria, especially during hot and dry weather conditions. Forest fires can devastate ecosystems, destroy habitats and threaten human settlements. The risk of forest fires is higher in regions with dense forest cover, such as the [Balkan Mountains](#) and [Rhodope Mountains](#).

The Government of Bulgaria has implemented policies and action plans for disaster risk reduction and management, including the National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (2018-2030) and the National Programme for Disaster Risk Reduction 2021-2025. Coordination mechanisms involve various ministries, agencies and local authorities to ensure a

comprehensive and integrated approach to disaster response and recovery. The Bulgarian government has also implemented early warning systems to alert communities and authorities about impending disasters, such as floods, earthquakes and forest fires. These systems use technology, including sirens, weather forecasts and mobile phone alerts to disseminate timely information and warnings.

## Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Bulgarian Red Cross aims to effectively execute and enhance its auxiliary role to the public authorities for adequate response to disaster and crisis situations at national and local levels to protect the life and health of the population, build resilience of vulnerable individuals and communities, reduce damage and recovery and prevent, recognize and mitigate the risks and impacts of climate change. It also aims to strengthen its mountain rescue service for prevention, assistance and rescue of victims in the mountains. Additionally, the Bulgarian Red Cross will focus on its responsibility as a partner of the state in the eradication of the consequences of disasters, accidents and catastrophes. The Bulgarian Red Cross also plans to improve its water rescue activities, while partnering with institutions and organizations to reduce water trauma in Bulgaria..

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## Planned activities in 2025

- Develop a crisis operation centre to improve its crisis response mechanism



- Establish a mobile mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) unit with the capability to set up a child friendly space as part of emergency response efforts
- Maintain emergency relief items for a minimum of 1,000 people
- Upgrade its existing very high frequency (VHF) radio network by transitioning to modern digital radio networks to enable seamless and secure communication and extended coverage, even in challenging terrains and adverse weather conditions
- Upgrade and maintain three regional warehouses strategically situated across the nation for the rapid deployment of life-saving supplies and resources during times of crisis
- Provide winter uniforms for high-altitude rescues, upgrade helicopter and dog rescue equipment, enhance transport units and kennels and offer international training for senior mountain rescue operators and team leaders
- Focus on vital skills and teamwork for the Water Life Saving Service (WLSS) by providing cutting-edge equipment for water rescue scenarios and comprehensive training to new volunteers
- Establish a cash and voucher assistance (CVA) working group, finalize standard operating procedures (SOPs), map financial service providers in Bulgaria and sign a framework agreement with a local provider

**The IFRC** supports the Bulgarian Red Cross in disaster response and recovery operations by mobilizing resources, providing humanitarian aid and assisting in the coordination of relief efforts. The IFRC helps build local capacities by training volunteers and promoting community-based initiatives to enhance resilience and preparedness for future disasters.

The IFRC is supporting the Bulgarian Red Cross in expanding its MHPSS services for disaster-affected populations, as well as safeguarding the well-being of staff and volunteers. Beyond immediate response, IFRC's support focuses on strengthening local institutions, advocating for disaster preparedness policies and addressing root causes of crises such as conflict and poverty. Collaboration with partners promotes sustainable development and resilience-building in communities.

The IFRC also supports the Bulgarian Red Cross in addressing the underlying causes of crises, including conflict, poverty and inequality. It will work in collaboration with other humanitarian and development partners to advocate for peace, social justice and equitable access to resources. By promoting comprehensive and holistic approaches to disaster management, the IFRC will support the National Society in reducing vulnerabilities, saving lives and improving the well-being of communities affected by disasters and crises.

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## Longer-term support from the IFRC network



### Health and wellbeing

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Bulgaria exhibits a mixed health profile, with an average life expectancy of approximately 75.8 years, with females averaging 79.4 years and males 72.3 years, as of 2024. Major diseases prevalent in the population include cardiovascular diseases, cancer, respiratory issues, diabetes and mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety.

The incidence of various diseases, including cardiovascular, pulmonary, musculoskeletal, endocrine and infectious diseases, has surged in Bulgaria. Accidents and traumas disproportionately affect children, low-income individuals and specific ethnic communities, contributing to premature death and disability.

Road traffic trauma has emerged as a leading cause of mortality and permanent disabilities, especially among young individuals, warranting urgent intervention and preventive measures. In 2024, Bulgaria reported 479 road traffic

fatalities, a decrease from 525 in 2023. Despite this reduction, the country continues to have one of the highest road fatality rates in the European Union, with 81.6 deaths per million inhabitants, significantly above the EU average of 45.5.

Bulgaria's health priorities include improving healthcare access and quality, strengthening primary healthcare services, addressing health inequalities and promoting preventive measures. Access to healthcare faces challenges, particularly in rural and remote areas. Disasters and crises further disrupt healthcare services, making it difficult for affected populations to access medical care. Epidemics such as influenza outbreaks periodically challenge public health in Bulgaria.

Malnutrition is generally not a major concern in Bulgaria, but it can affect vulnerable groups such as the elderly and socially disadvantaged populations. Non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, are a growing

health burden in Bulgaria. Climate change poses various health risks in Bulgaria, including increased heat-related illnesses, changes in water availability leading to water-borne diseases and the prevalence of vector-borne diseases such as tick-borne encephalitis and West Nile virus.

The Bulgarian government has implemented policies and action plans to address health issues, including the National Health Strategy, National Plan for Health Promotion and National Environmental Health Action Plan. Coordination mechanisms involving various ministries, agencies and local authorities aim to ensure effective emergency response and health crisis management.

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Bulgarian Red Cross emphasizes healthy lifestyle and mitigating health risk factors across environmental, economic, social and behavioural domains. In line with its mission, the Bulgarian Red Cross advocates for a comprehensive approach to enhance community health and wellbeing, confronting the challenges head-on and striving for lasting impact. For this, the National Society aims to:

- Increase health awareness among aged and vulnerable groups with activities, education and campaigns promoting disease prevention and healthy ageing
- Strengthen the resilience of communities and their training in first aid, to deal with different types of traumas and build habits for safer living
- Support vulnerable migrants and displaced persons to access health services, including MHPSS, medicines and equipment
- Further develop its MHPSS capacities and increase the ability to respond to emerging mental health and psychosocial needs, through provision of basic psychosocial support

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### Planned activities in 2025

- Promote voluntary participation of retirees in community activities and civil society development
- Publish and distribute advertising materials to promote voluntary blood donation and raise awareness about organ, tissue and cell donation
- Introduce digital platforms for first aid training and equip regional branches with new first aid equipment

- Provide first aid training tailored for refugees and migrants, ensuring accessibility and availability
- Support over 4,000 refugees and migrants in accessing health services and medical equipment and reimburse costs associated with healthcare, medicine and specialist visits
- Publish guidebooks in multiple languages to raise awareness about accessing health services
- Establish mobile health teams equipped to respond to emergencies such as influx of refugees and flood disasters
- Pilot mini mobile units for road safety and mass casualty response in partnership with the Ministry of Interior
- Facilitate technical support for health emergency preparedness through knowledge sharing, conferences and capacity building
- Develop MHPSS micro-projects based on identified needs, including art therapy classes, first aid training and cultural events

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### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC supports the Bulgarian Red Cross regarding community health programmes, promoting health education and enhancing access to healthcare services, particularly in underserved areas. This includes training volunteers, establishing health clinics and supporting outreach initiatives to address specific health needs.

The IFRC also supports the Bulgarian Red Cross in strengthening health emergency preparedness and response. This involves enhancing the capacity of local health teams, promoting early warning systems for disease outbreaks and coordinating with relevant authorities to ensure an effective health response during crises. In addition, the IFRC supports the Bulgarian Red Cross in strengthening its MHPSS capacity including the staff and volunteer care.

In collaboration with the IFRC, the Bulgarian Red Cross also works on promoting disease prevention and control, focusing on vaccinations, hygiene practices and disease surveillance. This includes initiatives targeting zero-dose and under-immunized children, aiming to increase vaccination coverage and protect vulnerable populations.



Migration and displacement in Bulgaria encompass diverse groups, including migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons. Bulgaria serves as both a transit and destination country, with occasional instances of originating migration flows.

Historically, refugees and asylum seekers in Bulgaria have primarily hailed from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, but the ongoing conflict in Ukraine has led to a shift in this trend. Fluctuations in asylum applications are influenced by regional and global geopolitical dynamics. While many asylum seekers previously aimed to transit through Bulgaria to reach other EU countries, a notable change has occurred, with numerous refugees from Ukraine now opting to stay in Bulgaria until the conflict subsides.

The causes of migration and displacement in Bulgaria are multifaceted. Economic factors including the pursuit of better job opportunities and higher wages drive labour migration, while conflict, political instability and persecution remain significant drivers of refugee flows.

Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers encounter humanitarian needs and gaps in support along their journey. Access to safe shelter, healthcare, education and legal assistance are essential requirements, yet language barriers, discrimination and limited social and labour integration opportunities present additional challenges.

Bulgaria aligns with international and regional frameworks such as the Global Compact on Refugees, implementing national legislation and establishing coordination mechanisms to manage migration and displacement. However, the dynamic political landscape, characterized by frequent elections and xenophobic displays, poses challenges to the establishment of a comprehensive and consistent governmental strategy for refugee protection and integration.

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Bulgarian Red Cross aims to strengthen its auxiliary role as an important partner of state institutions, local authorities, international and non-governmental organizations in the reception and socio-economic integration of refugees and migrants, in the formation of a tolerant social environment and in the empowerment of refugee and migrant communities. Its high-level objectives include to:

- Provide timely and effective assistance to protect vulnerable persons, including restoring family links services

- Ensure meaningful participation of refugee and migrant communities and facilitate sustainable integration into host community

### Planned activities in 2025

- Encourage staff and volunteers to participate in national and international thematic trainings, seminars and conferences on working with refugees and migrants to enhance knowledge and skills
- Empower and assist refugees and migrants to access social services, humanitarian assistance, education, health, housing and the labour market
- Organize information meetings with refugees and migrants to educate them on their rights and obligations
- Assist and protect migrants and refugees along the Balkan migration route through humanitarian service points (HSPs)
- Raise awareness among Bulgarian host community and overcome xenophobic displays
- Conduct advocacy before national and local authorities, public and private stakeholders to ensure meaningful participation and health, educational and labour integration

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

**The IFRC** works closely with the Bulgarian Red Cross to improve its capacity in responding to the needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, by supporting with technical expertise, resource mobilization and capacity building. This enables the Bulgarian Red Cross to provide vital services such as emergency relief, access to healthcare, psychosocial support and assistance in the process of integration and social inclusion. The IFRC also assists in promoting awareness, community engagement and advocacy efforts to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of migrants and displaced populations. Additionally, it will assist the Bulgarian Red Cross in strengthening the resilience of affected communities and facilitate their successful integration into the host society.

The IFRC will also provide support to the National Society in coordinating with stakeholders such as government agencies, civil society organizations and international partners, to ensure a comprehensive and collaborative response to migration and displacement issues in Bulgaria.



## Values, power and inclusion

In Bulgaria, marginalized groups such as single mothers, disabled individuals and ethnic minorities often experience significant inequalities, with limited access to resources and opportunities. Their exclusion from decision-making processes further exacerbates this situation.

Human trafficking is a pressing concern in Bulgaria, necessitating measures to identify and protect at-risk individuals, provide comprehensive support to survivors and enhance law enforcement against traffickers. Refugees, migrants and others separated from their families require specialized assistance to facilitate family reunification and address the psychological impacts of separation. Disabled individuals often face risks of violence and exclusion, hampering their accessibility, opportunities and support services.

Gender inequality is high, especially considering its intersection with other forms of inequality. Efforts should concentrate on promoting gender equality, challenging harmful gender stereotypes and empowering women and girls.

Single mothers constitute one of the most vulnerable population groups in Bulgaria, with poverty rates nearly three times higher than the national average. Child poverty is particularly prevalent among families with multiple children, contributing to social marginalization. Children are especially susceptible to violence and exclusion, underscoring the importance of comprehensive child protection systems to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Discrimination and marginalization are also faced by the LGBTQI+ community, racialized individuals and ethnic and religious minorities. In Bulgaria, individuals are at risk of identity-based violence, including sexual and gender-based violence.

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Bulgarian Red Cross aims to make a significant contribution to reducing poverty and social exclusion and creating the conditions for protection, gender and inclusion (PGI), sustainable growth and opportunities to improve the quality of life of vulnerable groups by harnessing new reserves, resources and means to unlock their potential for meaningful participation in society. It also focuses on creating the conditions for improving the adaptation of vulnerable persons to their environment and enhancing their skills and capacities to cope with the difficulties and challenges they face in their daily lives.

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### Planned activities in 2025

- Carry out an assessment of existing PGI practices and develop and implement a set of policies, guidelines and standards to complement the current operational frameworks
- Revise/update the child protection policy and other relevant internal documents
- Develop PGI/ Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) guidelines and referral pathways, follow-up on procedures and map service providers
- Disseminate updated procedures among the relevant internal stakeholders (both nationally and locally) by implementing a series of training and information sessions
- Ensure the national focal point is prepared to train local staff and volunteers on PGI topics
- Develop a basic PGI e-learning course in Bulgarian within the e-learning platform
- Conduct a CEA self-assessment and to develop a workplan to help address the identified needs from this self-assessment
- Organize community engagement and accountability (CEA) events for children and adults, including host communities

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### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC provides technical expertise, guidance and resources to help the Bulgarian Red Cross in implementing programmes and initiatives that promote inclusivity, respect for diversity and the empowerment of vulnerable populations. This includes support in developing and implementing policies that uphold human rights, gender equality and social inclusion.

The IFRC provides support to the Bulgarian Red Cross in advancing community dialogue, raising awareness and advocating for the rights of marginalized individuals and groups. Through knowledge exchange and learning platforms, the IFRC improves the capacity of the Bulgarian Red Cross to respond to the needs of vulnerable populations effectively. It enables the Bulgarian Red Cross to uphold humanitarian values and contribute to a more equitable and inclusive society in Bulgaria.

# ENABLING LOCAL ACTORS

The Bulgarian Red Cross is committed to the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) process and is currently planning on implementing a PER assessment. This workshop will be supported by the IFRC disasters and preparedness delegate and will be followed up by a plan of action for the National Society to be able to carry out the identified activities to improve the response capacity of the Bulgarian Red Cross.



## Strategic and operational coordination

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Increase its collaboration with the IFRC and ICRC on issues related to the Movement's global policies
- Participate more actively in preparing and conducting fora of the National Societies in the Balkan region and take a leading role in the dialogue to establish lasting partnerships
- Launch an internship programme for volunteers to work on specific activities and projects to support the implementation of ongoing programmes as well as strengthening new programmatic endeavours
- Increase visits to and from other National Societies and organizations for transferring good practices and know-

how at different levels, as well as to initiate joint activities and projects

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC offers technical assistance, guidance and resources to aid the Bulgarian Red Cross in developing and executing strategic plans and operational frameworks. This support includes identifying priorities, setting objectives and designing programmes aligned with community needs. This assistance enables the Bulgarian Red Cross to strengthen its capacity to mobilize resources and coordinate emergency responses effectively. Moreover, the IFRC fosters collaboration among various stakeholders, promoting partnerships with government entities, local organizations and other National Societies.



## National Society development

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Invest resources and introduce new technologies in the training process, expanding the volume of interactive training, including in a virtual environment
- Mobilize resources from the local community
- Strengthen the youth departmental structure at branch level through youth academies, bringing young leaders together with the specific goal to improve volunteer engagement
- Launch an internship programme for volunteers to work on specific activities and projects to support the implementation of ongoing programmes as well as strengthening new programmatic endeavours

- Modernize and standardize the training equipment and apparel for use by the youth disaster response teams including improved first aid kits for early responders and winter uniforms

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC supports the National Society's youth programmes via the IFRC Capacity Building Fund (CBF). It will provide technical capacity building support in areas such as of volunteer management, branch development and logistics development. Through knowledge-sharing platforms, training programmes and collaborative partnerships, the IFRC facilitates continuous learning and growth within the Bulgarian Red Cross.





## Humanitarian diplomacy

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Share information with government institutions, NGOs and other partners about the components of the Movement and strategic documents related to the auxiliary role of National Societies
- Disseminate knowledge about emblem protection, the role of the Red Cross in conflict and disaster situations, its fundamental principles and internal regulations
- Share effective policies and practices with government institutions, particularly from EU countries, to address priority issues impacting vulnerable groups and enhance responses
- Promote the ratification, promulgation and effective implementation at national level of all major international humanitarian law instruments, in liaison with relevant state institutions

- Organize joint information campaigns to promote the identity of the Movement and promote respect for international humanitarian law (IHL) norms

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

**The IFRC** supports the National Society through guidance, training and resources to build the capacity of the Bulgarian Red Cross in humanitarian diplomacy, including effective communication, negotiation and coordination with relevant stakeholders. The IFRC collaborates with the Bulgarian Red Cross to effectively represent the needs and concerns of vulnerable populations, foster partnerships with government entities and international organizations and contribute to shaping humanitarian policies and practices at the national and international levels.



## Accountability and agility (cross-cutting)

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Ensure the quality and effectiveness of programmes by improving financial management, reporting and control systems by adopting new technology and tools
- Update electronic databases to regulate activities, programmes and budgets
- Standardize frameworks and guidelines on PMER across all levels of the National Society
- Train relevant staff and volunteers to strengthen PMER structures and systems within the National Society and in the broader Movement context
- Develop a methodological guide for the management, monitoring and evaluation of projects and activities

- Explore and introduce new online platforms for access to specialized information to increase health awareness of the public
- Train staff and volunteers in safety and security

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

**The IFRC** supports the National Society's efforts to enhance transparency, integrity and responsible governance within the organization. This includes guidance, training and resources to enhance the capacity of the Bulgarian Red Cross in financial management, as well as monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Additionally, the IFRC assists in building the organization's adaptive capacity, enabling it to respond effectively to evolving humanitarian challenges.

# THE IFRC NETWORK

## The IFRC

The Central and South-Eastern Europe (CSEE) regional office of the IFRC oversees operations in Bulgaria. Aligned with its core functions, the IFRC supports the Bulgarian Red Cross through various means, encompassing technical assistance, capacity building and coordination of international aid during crises. Recent assistance includes guidance on disaster risk

reduction, health initiatives, volunteer management and community resilience.

The IFRC aids the Bulgarian Red Cross through emergency appeals and the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), addressing disasters and crises and assisting individuals displaced by the conflict in Ukraine.

## IFRC Membership coordination

IFRC membership coordination involves working with member National Societies to assess the humanitarian context, humanitarian situations and needs; agreeing on common priorities; jointly developing common strategies to address issues such as obtaining greater humanitarian access, acceptance and space; mobilizing funding and other resources; clarifying consistent public messaging; and monitoring progress. This also means ensuring that strategies and programmes in support of people in need, incorporate clarity of humanitarian action, links with development assistance

and efforts to reinforce National Societies in their respective countries, including through their auxiliary role.

The Bulgarian Red Cross closely partners with the IFRC, benefiting from technical support, capacity building and resource mobilization for emergency response and community programmes. Operating within the IFRC's CSEE Regional Office, the Bulgarian Red Cross engages in knowledge exchange, collaboration and advocacy with neighbouring National Societies.



*Bulgarian Red Cross volunteers and staff providing mental health and psychosocial support to children displaced from Ukraine, under the EU4Health project, in March 2024 (Photo: IFRC)*

## Movement coordination

The Bulgarian Red Cross ensures regular exchanges with the IFRC, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and participating National Societies, for the alignment of support and action between Movement partners. In times of emergencies, closer coordination is organized. This is carried out in line with the Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation (SMCC) principles and the newly-adopted [Seville Agreement 2.0](#).

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**The ICRC** supports the Bulgarian Red Cross based on its mandate, offering technical expertise, capacity building and advisory support. This includes assistance in disaster management, health services, civilian protection and humanitarian law.

## Coordination with other actors

The Bulgarian Red Cross collaborates with public authorities at national and sub-national levels through coordination mechanisms led by relevant ministries and agencies. It actively participates in assessments, first response activities and registration processes during disasters, showcasing its auxiliary role. The National Society also forms partnerships with ministries and departments for longer-term work, addressing issues in the areas of health, social welfare, education and civil protection.

The Bulgarian Red Cross, along with the IFRC and other network partners, engages in inter-agency coordination mechanisms

such as the humanitarian country teams, sectoral clusters and working groups. In cases relevant to shelter assistance, it may contribute to shelter cluster coordination.

The National Society builds partnerships with international actors such as UN agencies, INGOs and embassies, facilitating knowledge exchange and resource mobilization. It collaborates with national and local actors including the private sector, academic institutions and NGOs, leveraging diverse expertise and resources for resilience-building and community development.



## The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 16 million volunteers. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

### About the plan

The plan reflects the priorities of the host National Society, the IFRC and National Societies providing international support, for 2025 and subsequent years. It is aligned with IFRC [Strategy 2030](#), representing the collective ambitions of the IFRC membership, and is the result of a joint planning process and will serve for joint monitoring and reporting. It will be revised on an annual basis to adjust priorities and funding requirements to the needs in-country.

### Explanatory note on funding requirements and definitions

- The total funding requirements show what the IFRC network seeks to raise for the given year through different channels: funding through the IFRC, through participating National Societies as bilateral support, and through the host National Society from non-IFRC network sources. All figures should include the administrative and operational costs of the different entities
- Host National Society funding requirements not coming from IFRC network sources can comprise a variety of sources, as demonstrated when reporting on income in the [IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#)
- Participating National Society funding requirements for bilateral support are those validated by respective headquarters, and often represent mainly secured funding
- IFRC funding requirements comprise both what is sourced from the IFRC core budget and what is sought through emergency and thematic funding. This includes participating National Societies' multilateral support through IFRC, and all other IFRC sources of funding
- Figures for the years beyond 2025 most often represent partial requirements that are known at time of publication. Many National Societies have annual internal approval processes for funding requirements, and lower figures do not mean a decrease in funding requirements in future years
- Missing data and breakdowns: data may not be available from all IFRC network members for funding requirements. This may lead to inconsistencies across different reporting tools as well as potential under-estimation of the efforts led by all
- Reporting bias: the data informing this Federation-wide overview is self-reported by each National Society (or its designated support entity) which is the owner and gatekeeper, and responsible for accuracy and updating. IFRC tries to triangulate the data provided by the National Societies with previous data and other data in the public domain
- **Definitions:**
  - » **Local units:** ALL subdivisions of a National Society that coordinate and deliver services to people. These include ALL levels (provincial, state, city, district branches, sections or chapters, headquarters, and regional and intermediate offices, as well as community-based units)
  - » **Branches:** A Branch has its roles, responsibilities and relationship with the National Headquarters defined through the National Society's Statutes, including the level of autonomy given, especially in the area of its legal status, mobilising local resources and building local partnerships, and the decisions it makes. It has a local-level decision-making mechanism through its Branch members, board and volunteers, equally defined through the National Society's Statutes

### Additional information

- [IFRC network country plans](#)
- [All plans and reports](#)
- Data on National Societies on [IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#)
- Live data on active emergency operations on [IFRC GO platform](#)
- Live data on [IFRC-Disaster Response Emergency Fund Response and Anticipatory pillars](#)
- [Evaluations and research databank](#)
- [Donor response reports](#)

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