***Practical Information for Participants***

* **The Venue**

**Grand Hotel Sofia:** [www.**grandhotelsofia**.bg](http://www.grandhotelsofia.bg), located at the central area of Sofia city.

A limited number of rooms have been blocked at this hotel at the preferable rate for a single room of  € 130 per night, which will be available **until 1 November 2016**.

If you wish to book a room at Grand Hotel Sofia, please send an e-mail to:

Mrs. Gabriela Petrova: gpetrova@mtitc.government.bg and

copy Ms. Julieta Tencheva: jtencheva@mtitc.government.bg, indicating under “Subject”: *Regional Cybersecurity Forum for Europe*.

Other hotels in the vicinity of **Grand Hotel Sofia, where the participants are required to make their booking by themselves :**

**BEST WESTERN PREMIER THRACIA HOTEL**: <http://thraciahotel.com>

**CENTRAL PARK HOTEL**: [www.centralparkhotel.bg](http://www.centralparkhotel.bg)

**SOFIA HOTEL BALKAN**: [www.sofiabalkan.com](http://www.sofiabalkan.com)

***General Information***

**Bulgaria,** officially **the Republic of Bulgaria**, is one of the oldest states in Europe, located in Southeastern Europe, bordering five other countries: Romania to the north (mostly along the Danube), Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia to the west, and Greece and Turkey to the south. The Black Sea defines the extent of the country to the east.

Currently Bulgaria functions as a parliamentary democracy under a unitary constitutional republic. A member of the European Union since 2007 and of NATO since 2004, it has a population of approximately 7.4 million, with Sofia as its capital and largest city.

* ***Sofia***

***Sofia***, the capital of Bulgaria, lies in the southern part of Sofia Valley, which has an area of 1180 km² and an altitude of 550 m above sea level, just at the foot of Vitosha Mountain. The majestic chain of the Balkan Range surrounds it by the north. Few capital cities in the world can boast such pretty and high mountains in their close proximity.

Sofia is the main economic, cultural, scientific and financial centre of the country and has a population of about 1.5 million.

Founded seven thousand years ago, Sofia is the second oldest city in Europe. It has been given several names in the course of history and remnants of the old cities can steel be seen today. The history of Sofia goes back to the stone age and is strongly influenced by its favourable geographical location, hot mineral springs and fertile soils. In Sofia there are traces of Thracian, Slav and Roman civilisation.

Historic landmarks include the 10th-century Boyana Church (one of the UNESCO World Heritage protected sites), the Alexander Nevski Cathedral (one of the world's largest Orthodox churches), and the early Byzantine Church of St Sophia, built in the 3th century.

***Some of Sofia's popular sights:***

* An ancient cultural-communication complex “Serdica”, the first phase of a subterranean archaeological complex, where recently unearthed relics of ancient Sofia are displayed. A whole street of 4th – 5th century AD houses of the ancient Romans was found during excavations for a new Sofia metro line.
* The late Roman Church of St George (4th century AD), situated in the courtyard of the Sheraton Sofia Hotel Balkan;
* The Basilica of St Sophia (5th century) - one of the oldest preserved early Christian temples in Europe;
* The tiny Church of St. Petka of the Saddlers from the 14th century featuring some fine frescoes;
* The gold-domed Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, with its rich collection of icons in the Crypt;
* The Banya Bashi Mosque, built in the 16th century;
* The Sofia Synagogue, the largest in the Balkans;
* The Bulgarian National Historical Museum, noteworthy for its Thracian treasures;
* The National Archaeological Museum and the Largo, an architectural complex in downtown Sofia;
* The National Art Gallery;
* The National Gallery of Foreign Art.

For more information about Sofia, please visit*:* [*www.visitsofia.bg/en*](http://www.visitsofia.bg/en)

* **Entry into Bulgaria**

**Sofia Airport**

Sofia Airport is the biggest airport in the country and provides passenger, baggage, aircraft, cargo and mail handling services to more than 65 air companies operating to and from Sofia. <http://www.sofia-airport.bg/>

Sofia`s International Airport is located at a distance of ten kilometres east of the city centre. Sofia Airport has two terminals with the capacity to serve over 3.5 million passengers. A courtesy shuttle connected Terminal 1 and Terminal 2 every 30 minutes between 07:00 hrs and 18:00 hrs.

Sofia **Metro Line 1** connects Sofia Airport to the city centre and provides direct connection from the airport to the large Sofia residential districts in close proximity – “Druzhba” and “Mladost”, as well as to more distant Sofia districts to the west – “Zapaden Park” and “Lyulin”.

The journey time from Sofia Airport to the city centre is approximately 18 min.

Changing trains from Line 1 to Line 2 at Serdika Metro Station, passengers can travel from the airport to Sofia Central Bus and Railway Stations within less than half an hour.

Connection with the railway transport is possible two stops from Metro station Sofia

The other Metro stations allow convenient transport connections to bus or trolleybus lines of the city transport system.

*The metro trains on the route to the airport operate from 5:30 a.m. to midnight on weekdays and weekends/holidays.*

The metro station at Sofia Airport is located in the eastern part of Terminal 2. You can reach it by following the floor markings in blue at the public area of Terminal 2.

For more information, please visit: [*www.metropolitan.bg*](http://www.metropolitan.bg)

Two **bus routes** (No 84 and 384) connect the airport:

* **Line 84** Sofia: Airport Terminal 2 – Terminal 1 – Christopher Columbus blvd. – Tsarigradsko Shose blvd. – Gen. Gurko str., and back: Gen. Gurko str. - Tsarigradsko Shose blvd. – Christopher Columbus blvd. – Prodan Tarakchiev str. - Sofia Airport, Terminal 2, and Terminal 1. The journey time from the start to the final destination is approximately 40 min. on weekdays, and 30 min. at weekends/holidays. Bus line 84 can be used as a transport link between Sofia Airport Terminal 2 Metro Station and Terminal 1. The line operates on the route under an all-day timetable:

Weekdays                            Weekends/ Holidays

First Bus                               First Bus
Т2: 05:00 a.m.                     Т2: 05:00 a.m.
Т1: 05:05 a.m.                     Т1: 05:05 a.m.

Last Bus                               Last Bus
Т2: 12:20 a.m.                     Т2: 11:23 p.m.
Т1: 12:24 a.m.                     Т1: 11:27 p.m.

* **Line 384:** Sofia Airport, Terminal 2 – Christopher Columbus blvd. – Prof. Tsvetan Lazarov str. – Druzhba Metro Station – Obikolna str. - Druzhba 2, and back: Druzhba 2 - Obikolna str. - Prof. Tsvetan Lazarov str. – Iliya Beshkov blvd. – Captain Dimitar Spisarevski blvd. - Christopher Columbus blvd. - Sofia Airport, Terminal 2. The journey time from the start to the final destination is 20-25 min. on weekdays and weekends/holidays.

The line operates on the route under an all-day timetable.

Weekdays Weekends/ Holidays

First Bus Firts Bus

Т2: 05:52 a.m. Т2: 05:56 a.m.

Last Bus Last Bus

Т2: 10:58 p.m. T2: 10:50 p.m.

**Taxis** are available at the landside of the arrivals areas of Terminals 1 and 2. Company “OK Supertrans” [*www.oktaxi.net*](http://www.oktaxi.net/) is the official taxi provider to Sofia airport. You can request the service at the offices of OK Supertrans in the Arrivals of Terminal 1 and Terminal 2, tel: +359 2 973 2121, and the floor markings in yellow will lead you to the taxi stand area.

*Important!*

We recommend that you do not use taxi services offered outside the office of the taxi operator or in front of the terminal to avoid the risk of abuse.

* **Visa Requirements**

A valid passport/ID document is required for entry to Bulgaria. Passports of participants should be valid for at least 6 (six) months after leaving Bulgaria for those requiring a visa, and 3 (three) months on entry for visa exempt nationals other than those from EU countries, whose passports must be valid for the period of stay.

A consultation with the Bulgarian Embassy or Consulate in the participants' country is advisable and especially for those participants requiring visas.

For this purpose, you may also visit the website of the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: [*http://www.mfa.government.bg*](http://www.mfa.government.bg)

# No entry visas are required for citizens of the EU and EFTA member states. They still need a valid passport or ID card (for EU citizens only).

* **Vaccinations and Medical Insurance**

There are no special vaccination requirements for entry into Bulgaria. However, it is highly recommended that participants be covered by medical insurance and carry proof of such cover.

* **Currency/Exchange/Credit Cards**

The national monetary unit in Bulgaria is the Lev (pl. Leva; BGN). One Lev is made up of 100 stotinki. Banknote denominations include 2; 5; 10; 20; 50 and 100 leva, as well as coins of 2,00 and 1,00 lev and smaller denominations.

Visa, MasterCard, Diners Club, Visa, American Express are mostly accepted.

They can be used for the payment of all services in hotels, restaurants, night clubs, tourist agencies and shopping malls. ATM machines are also available. For cash exchange the rate in leva is higher than for credits cards.

For information on the exchange rates please visit: [*www.bnb.bg*](http://www.bnb.bg)

A number of exchange offices are open every day including week-ends and public holidays.

Due to risk of deception, it is advisable to exchange money in the hotels or in official bank and exchange offices rather than making deal with individuals.

* **Single Emergency Number: 112**
* Ambulance
* Fire/Rescue
* Police
* Traffic police
* **Banks**

Banks are open Monday to Friday from 8.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. All banks exchange currency.

* **Climate**

The climate in Sofia is moderate continental and mountainous.

In November the temperatures in Sofia normally is in the range between 8°-9° and -3° - -4° Celsius with occasional rain/smow fall.

* **Electrical Appliances**

Mains electricity in Bulgaria is 220V / 50Hz.

* **Time**

Local time in Bulgaria is EET; (CET +1); (GMT +2).

* **Transport**

A public transport network (busses, trams, metro [*www.metropolitan.bg*](http://www.metropolitan.bg), trolleys and taxis) operates in the city. [*http://www.sofiatraffic.bg/en/common/*](http://www.sofiatraffic.bg/en/common/). For metro, please The price of a ticket for a single journey is 1,60 lev (≈0.80 Euro). Ticket stubs for ten single trips per passenger cost 12 Leva (6.00 Euro).

Taxi can be ordered from the hotel or restaurant, or by mobile. They render good service at comparatively good prices, which are slightly different depending on the taxi company:

* **Shops**

Normally shops in Sofia are open from 10 a.m. until 7:30 p.m. on work days and from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. on Saturday and occasionally on Sunday. **Only local currency is accepted at shops.** The large shopping malls are open from 10 a.m. till 10 p.m.