



A U S T R A L I A A N D

the Republic of Bulgaria

Key engagement

Bilateral relations between Australia and Bulgaria are grounded in the framework of the EU-Australia partnership and the NATO-Australia dialogue. Australia and Bulgaria cooperate on a number of areas of mutual interest, including counter-terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, illegal people movements, international trafficking in drugs and other forms of transnational crime.

Australia and Bulgaria established diplomatic relations in 1972.

Outlook

A comprehensive and ambitious Australia-EU Free Trade Agreement will provide a platform to develop further trade and investment ties between Australia and Bulgaria, contributing to the post COVID-19 recovery of both countries.

Bilateral relations

Australia and Bulgaria share warm people-to-people ties and are like-minded on a range of international issues in multilateral fora. The Bulgarian community in Australia is the largest Bulgarian diaspora in the Indo-Pacific. Bulgarian students routinely perform well in the Australian Mathematics Competition. There are two AFL teams in Bulgaria.

Foreign policy

Bulgaria's foreign policy focus is on further integration with the EU and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007. Bulgaria held the Presidency of the EU Council for the first time in 2018. Bulgaria has been a member of NATO since 2004 and has participated in joint exercises and provided bases during the Kosovo crisis in 1999. Bulgaria contributed troops to the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. Bulgaria takes an active role in multilateral institutions and was a non-permanent member on the United Nations Security Council in 2002-03. Bulgaria is a member of the Australia Group and several other like-minded groupings such as the Wassenaar Agreement, the Zangger Committee, the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Missile Technology Control Regime. Bulgaria joined the World Trade Organization in 1996.

FAST FACTS



Bulgarian visitors to Australia (Year ended June 2020) **1,800**



Australian returns from Bulgaria (Year ended June 2020) **2,800**



Resident Australian population born in Bulgaria (2016 census) **3,287**



Australian residents of Bulgarian descent (2016 census) **6,765**



Bulgarian student enrolments in Australia (2019) **221**

High level engagement

2012 Then Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs Richard Marles visited Bulgaria and met with then Deputy Foreign Minister Ivan Naydenov and members of Parliament.

2009 President Georgi Parvanov made the first visit to Australia by a Bulgarian Head of State. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Marin Raykov and Deputy Minister of Economy, Energy and Tourism Evgeni Angelov accompanied him.

Political overview

Bulgaria's national day, on 3 March, commemorates the signing of the Treaty of San Stefano between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in 1878, which gave northern Bulgaria autonomy. Bulgaria became independent in 1908, ending approximately 500 years of Ottoman rule.

In 1990, Bulgaria held its first multi-party election, ending the communist era that had prevailed from the end of World War II. Under its July 1991 constitution, Bulgaria is a parliamentary republic with a parliamentary executive. It has a single chamber, 240-member parliament called the National Assembly, which is elected every four years by universal suffrage. Members are elected through a system of proportional representation, with a four per cent threshold for party representation.

The prime minister and cabinet are drawn from the group able to command a majority in the Assembly. The president, who is also Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, is popularly elected once every five years for a maximum of two terms. The president enjoys largely ceremonial powers but does hold certain emergency powers and may return legislation to the National Assembly for further consideration, which can in turn be overruled.

Public diplomacy

The Australian Embassy in Athens promotes Australian culture and values in Bulgaria. It also showcases Australia as an innovative and attractive trade and investment partner.

The Australian Embassy in Athens actively showcases Australia as an inclusive, open and diverse society and participates in LGBTIQ events.

Australian Embassy in Athens is accredited to Bulgaria.

Australian [Consulate in Sofia](#).



<https://www.facebook.com/AustralianGreece/>



<https://twitter.com/AusAmbAthens/>

Economic diplomacy

In 2019, Australia's two-way goods and services trade with Bulgaria was valued at \$159 million. Total merchandise imports from Bulgaria were valued at \$105 million, compared with Australian merchandise exports to Bulgaria of \$26 million.

Major merchandise imports from Bulgaria to Australia included medicaments (including veterinary); travel goods, bags & like containers; oil-seeds & oleaginous fruits; and cheese & curd.

Major merchandise exports to Bulgaria from Australia included precious metal ores & concentrates; wool & other animal hair; medicaments (including veterinary); and pharmaceutical products (excluding medicaments).

[More economic and trade information.](#)

Australia continues to seek opportunities to promote Australian business and raise awareness of potential benefits of increased trade between Australia and Bulgaria. This work has intensified following the launch of the Australia-EU FTA negotiations in June 2018.

[More information about the Australia-EU FTA.](#)

Business

The [Bulgarian Australian Business Council](#) provides a valuable network to promote economic relations between Australia and Bulgaria.

[Austrade's Warsaw Office](#) is responsible for Bulgaria.

Travel

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See [Smartraveller](#) for information on travelling to Bulgaria.