
BULGARIA

International Adoption Program

PROGRAM INFORMATION



HOPE INTERNATIONAL

ADOPTING FROM BULGARIA

Qualifications for Adopting from Bulgaria

U.S. Requirements:

- 1) You must be a U.S. citizen. If you are married, your spouse must also be either a U.S. citizen or in legal status in the United States.
- 2) If you are unmarried, you must be at least 25 years old.
- 3) Department of State now requires children immigrating to the US to have received COVID vaccinations if available for the child's age.
- 4) You cannot currently be on probation or parole or have any pending criminal proceedings.

Texas Requirements:

- 1) You cannot have a felony conviction against a person
- 2) You cannot have a child abuse referral with a finding of "sustained or unable to determine"

Bulgarian Requirements:

- 1) Prospective Adoptive Parents must be at least 15 years older than the child.
- 2) Prospective Adoptive Parents must be no more than 50 years older than the child.
- 3) Marriage Requirement: prospective adoptive parents can be a heterosexual married couple or a single person.

******The age difference is not required for adoption by spouses when it exists for one of them.

IN COUNTRY PROVIDER: Hope International works with the Association for International Adoption and Reintegration (AMOR), which is a registered non-profit association in Sofia, Republic of Bulgaria.

TIMEFRAME: To adopt the youngest child with no known special needs, you will likely wait five-seven years for a referral. If you are open to adopting a child with an identified special need, the wait for a referral will be shorter but the timeframe depends on the how open you are to different issues and what age child you are willing to adopt. If you are matched with a "waiting child" your adoption can be processed in 12-18 months. *This may happen in the frame of 6-8 months if you are already signed in the register of candidate adopters and already have submitted full dossier in Bulgaria.*

THE CHILDREN: The children available for adoption in Bulgaria are of Roma, Turkish, and Bulgarian heritage. The youngest children available for international adoption from Bulgaria are 18 months old. There are many older children, from whom many are a part of a sibling group, and children with special needs currently available for adoption.

Process of Adopting from Bulgaria – Hague Convention country

As with all of Hope's adoption programs, you must first participate in a general information meeting/phone call prior to contracting with the agency. Once this meeting has taken place and you decide to work with Hope International, you will submit an application. Next the Executive Director will prepare your contracting documents. Once you have reviewed and signed the contracts and paid the initial agency and service fees, Hope immediately begins working on your home study and USCIS approval. Hope strives to offer the fullest level of support and services possible – even sending for apostilles and document authentications on your behalf in order to complete your adoption dossier in the quickest manner possible. While there are many aspects outside of Hope's control with adoption and foreign adoptions in particular, Hope has found during years of experience that hard work on things that can be controlled – paperwork, preparing and authenticating dossiers, etc. – usually quickens your overall adoption process.

1. Completion of an International Home Study – For families that live in Texas, Hope International will conduct the home study. If you live outside of Texas, Hope will assist you to find an agency to conduct your home study. Hope International will supervise this agency, and the agency must meet the standards for an exempted provider and use employees to conduct the home study. Your final USCIS approval is contingent upon the recommendation for approval given by your home study agency. Your completed home study is valid for 12 months; an update will be necessary annually until a child is placed in your home and is also required if your living circumstances change prior to your adoption, such as change in health or residence. You are also required to obtain a physical, at least ten hours of pre-adoptive training, and to have both criminal and child abuse background checks. Hope will assist you with referrals for this training and in obtaining the clearances.

2. Apply to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) – USCIS must pre-approve you as potential adoptive parents regarding an international adoption. Hope International will assist you by reviewing and submitting an I600A application to USCIS with your completed home study. USCIS must approve your ability to provide proper parental care for a child. Your I-600a approval and USCIS fingerprints will be valid for 15 months. Once you submit the I-600 petition, your fingerprints must be valid at the time of the child's visa appointment.

3. Completion of a dossier – Once you have completed the home study and submitted your petition to USCIS, you are ready to work on the remainder of your dossier documents. Your dossier consists of all the documents necessary for processing your adoption in the country of operation. Hope will assist you as you gather all the necessary documents. Hope will go over the preparation of your dossier in detail and will send all your documents for authentication as needed. Most dossier documents require authentication through notarization and some of them need apostilles. Once you receive USCIS approval, your dossier is ready to go to Bulgaria for translation, legalization, and submission to the Ministry of Justice (MOJ). You will be given a dossier number. Hope's staff is available to answer any

questions you have regarding the dossier. The dossier completion timeframe is up to you; however, you are not eligible for a child referral until the dossier is completed and in Bulgaria.

*For a waiting child adoption, the parents may be matched with a child, after submission of an Application, Letter of Support by the Primary Provider, Declaration, and concluded Contract with the Foreign Supervised Provider. After approving the application for a specific child, MOJ gives a 6-month term for presenting the home study – reflecting the specific needs of the identified child, immigration approval with the characteristics of the specific child, as well as all necessary documents for submission of the full dossier in Bulgaria.

4. Child referral – Once your dossier is complete and you have received notification of your USCIS approval, you are ready for a child referral. During the home study process you will have clarified the type of child you feel most equipped to parent. It is important to be honest with identifying the child you would like to adopt. It is helpful to take an inventory of your child preferences and to prioritize the most important characteristics (i.e. - sex, age, health status, etc.) Please be advised that if your list of criteria is too restrictive, you may significantly narrow your referral options.

The issuance of a referral depends on your child preferences and can take several months if you are open to a variety of special needs, to several years for minor special needs, to five years for a child with no known special needs. Referrals come in the form of a medical abstract, complete with pictures, and (occasionally) video, as well as Certificate under art.17/c/ from The Hague Convention, which represents the agreement by the Minister of Justice of Republic of Bulgaria to adopt the specific child. Medicals usually include birth information (weight, height, head, and chest circumferences), Apgar scores, availability information, medical diagnoses, and other updated measurements. Information regarding birth parents is minimal, if available at all.

Medical Evaluation - Hope recommends you have the information evaluated by a doctor skilled in evaluating international adoption referrals. You will also be given the untranslated documents, so you can obtain your own translation if you desire. Once your doctor has given you their evaluation of the child's referral information, you will notify Hope if you are comfortable proceeding with an adoption of this particular child. You will have at least two weeks to consider the referral information barring extenuating circumstances and based on the child's need for a more immediate response.

5. Acceptance of a referral and travel

Trip One: If married, both parents must travel to meet the child. Once you have accepted a child referral, within two months of receiving the official referral information, you will be scheduled to travel to Bulgaria for five days to meet with the child. If you decide to move forward with the adoption of this particular child, you will sign acceptance paperwork. Once you return to the US, you may be able to continue to meet with your child though video calls. The Ministry of Justice can then approve your application after the U.S. Embassy in Sofia issues Letter Article 5, which represents agreement for

continuation of the adoption procedure under art.17 from the Hague convention by the U.S. side. For such issuance, the U.S. Embassy has to receive the approved I-800 form ex-officio from DHS and also receive filled form DS-230 and the document with the case and invoice numbers. After presenting Letter Article 5 in MOJ, the Minister signs an agreement for the adoption of the specific child and this agreement is forwarded to the Sofia City Court.

Trip Two: Only one parent is required to make this trip – the non-traveling parent must authorize him/her with notarized Power of Attorney, to represent both parents in all procedures during the contact, signing documents, and immigration procedures for visa. Once the decision from the Bulgarian court goes in force, then travel arrangements will be made for you to travel to Bulgaria for your visa interview at the U.S. Embassy in Sofia. The time between trip one and trip two will vary depending on a variety of circumstances (such as the time necessary for receiving I-800 and respectively Letter Article 5) – you can tentatively expect 3-5 months between the two trips.

The second trip will be a minimum of 12 days. The Bulgarian passport is received in three days term after submitting the necessary documents. After receiving the passport, the medical examinations can be made in two of the certified hospitals in Sofia. The results of the examinations are ready in 48 hours. After receiving the full package with medical information from the clinic, you can schedule a visa interview at the U.S. Embassy.

6. Preparing to Travel – You must have a valid U.S. Passport and a visa to travel to Bulgaria. Some immunizations are recommended by the CDC to travel to Bulgaria. Upon arrival, you will be welcomed by an AMOR representative and led through each step of the adoption process.

7. Post-Adoption – When you return home, and for the first 3 years following adoption, Hope International or your home study agency will provide post-adoption supervision as required by the State of Texas (or your state of residence) and Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Ministry of Justice requires six post-adoption reports, one every six months for three years. Hope International or your home study agency will prepare these reports and forward them to Bulgaria. At the completion of the initial six-month post-adoption period, you will be ready to proceed with your Registration of Foreign Decree. Hope International will refer Texas families to local family law attorneys. If you reside outside of Texas, Hope recommends that you contact a member of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys (AAAA) regarding the completion of a registration or re-adoption in your state.

For further information please contact Hope International:

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