# Bulgaria

## COVID-19 cases

On 21st September 2020 there were 18,819 registered COVID-19 cases and 755 deaths in the overall population.[[1]](#endnote-1) To our knowledge, data on COVID-19 cases, deaths, job-loss, and poverty were not disaggregated by disability.

## Emergency, lockdown, and confinement

The state of emergency in Bulgaria started on 13th March 2020 and ended on 13th May.[[2]](#endnote-2) According to the Bulgarian Ombudsman, mandatory requirements for obtaining disability-related benefits were suspended and the period for accommodation in residential social services of persons with disabilities was extended. The government allocated approximately €22.5 million for municipalities to expand their services and hire additional personnel to deliver food, medicine, and other essential goods to several target groups, including persons with disabilities.[[3]](#endnote-3)

## Involvement of organisations of persons with disabilities

DPOs collaborated with the Bulgarian Ombudsman and the Monitoring Council in advocating persons with disability rights. DPOs raised several issues during the state of emergency: provisions of drugs to persons with chronic diseases; provision of personal protective equipment for the staff of institutions for persons with disabilities; exemption for persons with disabilities and their families for paying taxes for the social services when the social services are used remotely; guaranteeing of the rights of the persons with disabilities during the COVID-19 outbreak; and validity of the expert decisions determining permanently reduced working capacity/type and degree of disability which expired during the COVID-19 pandemic. After DPOs raised these issues the Ombudsman and/or Monitoring Council contacted the relevant authorities with recommendations. This approach was successful in the case of exempting persons with disabilities and their families form paying social service taxes during the time these services were suspended.[[4]](#endnote-4)

## Communications and announcements

The news on the Bulgarian National Television and the briefings held by Bulgaria’s operational headquarters about COVID-19 were translated using sign language interpretation.[[5]](#endnote-5) At the end of March 2020, the Minister of Labor and Social Policy opened a hotline operated by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy that provided psychological support to older people and persons with disabilities.[[6]](#endnote-6) Nevertheless, it is not clear how accessible this hotline was and whether there were additional provisions for deaf and hard of hearing or persons with other access needs. Moreover, the government launched a COVID-19 Uniform Information Portal where a specialized section for persons with disabilities provide up-to-date information relevant to this target group.[[7]](#endnote-7) This information is not provided in easy-read or other formats.

## Institutions and closed settings

We did not find publicly available, disaggregated data on deaths/cases in care home. Visits of persons living in care homes were prohibited. These restrictions are still in force.[[8]](#endnote-8) The validity of orders for placement in specialized institutions and community-based services, delegated by the state to municipalities, which expire after 1st March 2020, were extended until 31st December 2020.[[9]](#endnote-9)

## Healthcare

We found no information regarding discriminatory policy of triage or admissions for treatment.

## Social protection

Employers were obligated to grant annual pay leave to certain categories of employees, including those with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities.[[10]](#endnote-10) The expert decisions determining working capacity/type and degree of disability with expired term continue their effect during the state of emergency and the emergency epidemic situation and three months after the end of emergency.[[11]](#endnote-11)

1. WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard, Bulgaria, available at: https://covid19.who.int/table [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Information provided by EDF. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. FRA, Coronavirus pandemic in the EU - Fundamental Rights Implications - Bulletin 2, available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\_uploads/bg\_report\_on\_coronavirus\_pandemic\_-\_may\_2020.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Information provided by Bulgarian Ombudsman, 2 September 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Проект на Закон за българския жестов език, available at: <http://www.strategy.bg/PublicConsultations/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=5369> [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. FRA, Coronavirus pandemic in the EU - Fundamental Rights Implications - Bulletin 2, available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\_uploads/bg\_report\_on\_coronavirus\_pandemic\_-\_may\_2020.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. COVID-19 Unified Information Portal, A person with a disability, available at: https://coronavirus.bg/bg/az-sum/litse-uvrejdania [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Information provided by Bulgarian Ombudsman, 2 September 2020. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. COVID-19 Unified Information Portal, A person with a disability, available at: https://coronavirus.bg/bg/az-sum/litse-uvrejdania [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. COVID-19 Unified Information Portal, A person with a disability, available at: https://coronavirus.bg/bg/az-sum/litse-uvrejdania [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. COVID-19 Unified Information Portal, A person with a disability, available at: https://coronavirus.bg/bg/az-sum/litse-uvrejdania [↑](#endnote-ref-11)