

Country: Bulgaria

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No. Asylum seekers 2007	No. of persons granted protection	No. of Ngos'/ GOs'/ projects offering mental health services	No. of NGOs'/ GOs'/ projects working with persons with broken family links	No. of NGOs'/ GOs'/ projects working with survivors of torture	No. of NGOs'/ GOs'/ projects working with the elderly and frail
975	335	5	2 /Bulgarian Red Cross and State Agency for Refugees/	1 ACET Assistance Centre for Torture Survivors	2 BRC CARITAS

Access to health system: Asylum seekers receive their health insurance paid by the State Agency for Refugees and are entitled to medical/health services like Bulgarian citizens. Refugees have to pay regularly their health insurance or the employer has to do it in accordance with the labour contract. Those who fail to pay get only emergency medical care. Till the end of 2009 one hospital in Sofia provides free medical care and hospitalization to recognized refugees without health insurance thanks to an agreement with the Bulgarian Red Cross, financed by UNHCR project.

Legal Access to mental health care: In accordance with the Bulgarian health insurance, asylum seekers and refugees with paid health insurance have access to psychiatrist or psychologist upon referral by their General practitioner /GP/. If they do not have a GP, they have to pay to a private doctor or receive the free services provided by the Nadya centre foundation or ACET. In case the refugee does not speak Bulgarian, he/she should be accompanied by somebody who does - a friend, social worker from BRC or volunteer from the Council of Refugee Women.

Systematic assessment of mental health needs: No, at the reception centres only a general medical check is undertaken.

Main stakeholders in the asylum system: State Agency for Refugee within the Council of Ministers and Ministry of Interior, directorate "Migration" and "Border Police", City courts - for the rejection in the accelerated procedure, Supreme Administrative Court 1st and 2nd instance - for rejection in the standard procedure. NGOs : Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, Bulgarian Red Cross, Caritas, Bulgarian Refugee Council, UNHCR.

Housing/social support: Accommodation possible in one of the 2 reception centres.

Country specific features: What drew my attention? Good collaboration among the NGOs in the field and good co-operation with the GOs in the field/ cooperation agreement signed between BRC and SAR, BHC and SAR, BHC and Ministry of Interior, BRC and Ministry of Interior/ Centre Nadya Foundation and Mol.

Difficulties: Lack of assessment about the mental health problems and needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Only Nadya centre foundation and ACET have records of their asylum cases. Only persons with obvious mental problems are transferred from reception centres to psychiatric hospitals.