

## Pleven Risk Assessment

### **RISK ASSESSMENT for CAST PROJECTS in PLEVEN REGION, ROMANIA**

Your safety is very important to us. This document covers the basics you need to be aware of before you travel to Bulgaria with us. Points 1 – 11 cover general points regarding the overall trip and sections 12-14 relate to the specific projects you may be working on in the Pleven region. You are likely to be working either in the city of Pleven. You should take this risk assessment with you to Bulgaria in order to refer to it during your trip. You should also read your induction pack thoroughly alongside this document. If you need help or advice, please contact Lydia Kinton, the CAST Project Co-ordinator for Pleven, Bulgaria [bact@cast-uk.com](mailto:bact@cast-uk.com)

**Please read this document carefully, act on the points which we suggest, and have a great trip! Thank you!**

	Risk	Ways to reduce the potential risk
<b>1. Travel</b>		
<b>1.1</b>	Difficulties in travel between designated UK airport to Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fly from the designated UK airport detailed in your acceptance letter to Sofia with your team.</li> <li>• Ensure you arrive at the airport at least two hours before the flight in order to check in with your team.</li> <li>• Ensure your luggage is packed and presented appropriately.</li> <li>• Ensure you have a passport which is valid, and take all relevant tickets/booking numbers/bank cards/insurance details with you to the airport.</li> <li>• Notify relevant members of your team should you have certain requirements when you travel.</li> </ul>
<b>1.2</b>	Difficulties in travel from Sofia to Pleven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You will arrive as a team and be met by our Bulgarian volunteer co-ordinator or a representative of the TBACT charity.</li> <li>• Transport is via a hired minibus which supports TBACT.</li> <li>• TBACT contact phone numbers as well as other useful numbers within Bulgaria are in your induction pack.</li> </ul>
<b>1.3</b>	Not having the relevant documents: visas, insurance, EHIC, official permission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No visa is required for British citizens. If you are of another nationality it is your responsibility to make the necessary arrangements.</li> <li>• Appropriate insurance should be obtained well in advance to your trip through a reputable company.</li> <li>• Make sure you have a valid European Health Insurance Card well in advance of your trip (as well as insurance).</li> <li>• Ensure you have sent an e-copy of your passport to <a href="mailto:bact@cast-uk.com">bact@cast-uk.com</a> . This is a necessary form of ID we must have before you travel so we can obtain permission from Child Protection for volunteers to work in the area.</li> </ul>

If you have any queries/concerns contact Lydia Kinton, CAST Project Co-ordinator for Bulgaria at [bact@cast-uk.com](mailto:bact@cast-uk.com)  
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<b>1.4</b>	Difficulties in travel to and from Maternal Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel via taxi, bus, or on foot. Ensure you always have address of Maternal Home and volunteer flat written down.</li> <li>• Ensure you carry a mobile phone and contact numbers for your team leader and volunteer co-ordinator (numbers provided in induction pack and acceptance letter).</li> <li>• Ensure you have adequate change.</li> <li>• Volunteers should not be allowed in without their badges (provided on arrival).</li> <li>• Do not take valuable belongings. Volunteers only require change for a taxi if they wish, one mobile phone per team which should be turned off upon arrival at the Maternal Home, and items for the children.</li> </ul>
<b>1.7</b>	Pick pockets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may be at higher risk of pick pockets (especially children) when walking or on public transport.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Accommodation</b>		
<b>2.1</b>	Theft/break in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the flat is always locked whether you are in or out of the flat.</li> <li>• Shut all windows and doors when not in the flat.</li> <li>• Avoid taking valuable items unnecessarily (especially jewellery).</li> <li>• Discuss with your team where valuable items are to be kept.</li> <li>• Turn off all plug sockets, water, and lights when ever you leave the flat unattended.</li> </ul>
<b>2.2</b>	Entering/leaving the accommodation at night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The stairwell is dark and automatic lights do not always work. Make sure you take a torch or some form of light (e.g. mobile phone) when going out at night.</li> <li>• Concrete steps can be slippery when wet.</li> <li>• Take care on the steps as they may be uneven.</li> <li>• When walking to the block of flats at night the access is off the main street so make sure you don't go out alone and take a mobile phone with you (kept out of sight).</li> <li>• Be sensitive of the neighbours and keep noise to an absolute minimum after 9:00pm.</li> </ul>
<b>2.3</b>	Electrical faults/fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although there should not be faults with the electricity supply you should take care when using plug sockets and not leave items plugged in unsupervised.</li> <li>• Do not leave gas stove unattended.</li> <li>• Ensure you know where exits and extinguishers are.</li> <li>• Be aware the plumbing can be temperamental.</li> <li>• Power cuts can occur.</li> </ul>
<b>2.4</b>	Cultural awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of apartment blocks were built during the</li> </ul>

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			<p>communist era. The majority of apartments are basic and most people live in similar accommodation. Volunteers should not draw comparisons between Bulgarian and foreign accommodation as this can cause offense.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The apartment CAST volunteers reside in is above the standard of living most people experience. Volunteers should be aware of this at all times.</li> <li>• Many people in the Pleven area live in poverty or know people who do. As such, volunteers should avoid openly complaining about comparatively lavish accommodation.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Medical</b>			
	<b>3.1</b>	Need to use local medical facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is not advisable to use the local health centres.</li> <li>• Volunteers should consider their health carefully before participating in the project. It is the responsibility of the individual volunteer to discuss their individual needs with their GP prior to their trip.</li> <li>• Volunteers should carry double doses of all prescribed medicines with them in case of losses.</li> <li>• It is the responsibility of individual volunteer to discuss health concerns with their team leaders or the relevant CAST officers.</li> </ul>
	<b>3.2</b>	Lack of appropriate vaccinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers should ensure they visit their GP/practice nurse well in advance of their trip.</li> <li>• It is the responsibility of the volunteer to discuss the nature of their work with their GP/practice nurse to ensure they receive all necessary vaccinations.</li> </ul>
	<b>3.3</b>	General illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mild sickness of some sort is common due to the proximity to project beneficiaries who invariably carry germs (e.g. stomach upset/cold). It is the responsibility of the volunteer to bring an appropriate first aid kit.</li> <li>• Volunteers should inform the team leader if they feel unable to attend a project due to illness.</li> </ul>
	<b>3.4</b>	HIV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bulgaria has a relatively low HIV/AIDS infection rate however CAST cannot guarantee that the project beneficiaries they work with do not carry the virus.</li> <li>• Risk of infection with HIV whilst working with infected children/adults is via infected blood coming into contact with your blood (e.g. in an open cut) or mucous membranes (e.g. the eye or the inside of the nose). The risk is very low. However volunteers should take reasonable precautions such as covering any cuts with plasters. If a child/adult cuts themselves or is bleeding please alert a member of staff rather than manage it yourself.</li> </ul>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You are not required to change nappies (where it is possible to come into contact with blood in faeces/urine).</li> <li>If you do come into contact with blood or bodily fluids make sure you wash immediately.</li> <li>It is not a requirement for volunteers to work anywhere they do not feel comfortable.</li> </ul>
	<b>3.5</b>	Headlice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is possible that some of the children/adults may have headlice. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to take treatments for headlice if you wish. Tea-tree shampoo can act as a deterrent.</li> </ul>
	<b>3.6</b>	Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some of the children may have ring worm. This is easily treated in the UK.</li> <li>Some of the people we work with have TB and Hepatitis.</li> <li>Volunteers should ensure they have been sufficiently vaccinated.</li> </ul>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Use of equipment</b>		
	<b>4.1</b>	Risk of using equipment	N/A for general volunteers
	<b>4.2</b>	Maintenance of equipment	Notify staff if equipment is broken or unsafe.
<b>5.</b>	<b>Catering</b>		
	<b>5.1</b>	Local food not able to satisfy special dietary requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If volunteers have special dietary requirements, it is their responsibility to take appropriate foods and food supplements from the UK and alert team leaders. However, there is a wide range of foods available in Pleven.</li> </ul>
	<b>5.2</b>	Risk of illness from eating local food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food is available from the local market/shops and restaurants. It is the responsibility of volunteers to be sensible when buying and cooking food supplies.</li> </ul>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Personal safety</b>		
	<b>6.1</b>	Accident/emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers are responsible for their own safety.</li> <li>It is the responsibility of the volunteer to have the appropriate insurance.</li> <li>If a volunteer is aware of a potential issue which may affect their safety, this should be discussed with the CAST project co-ordinator and team leaders prior to their trip.</li> <li>Accidents should be reported on the accident form.</li> </ul>
	<b>6.2</b>	Working alone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers should not be working alone at any time. If you find yourself in this situation you must find another</li> </ul>

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			<p>team member immediately.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers must read the risk assessments for all the projects and follow and act upon the advice given.</li> <li>• Don not be alone outside the Maternal home, always make sure you are with someone and that the team leader knows.</li> <li>• It is the responsibility of the volunteer to read the information in the induction pack regarding their projects thoroughly.</li> </ul>
	<b>6.3</b>	Risk of violence from the children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is the responsibility of the volunteer to read the risk assessments for all the projects and follow and act upon the advice given.</li> <li>• The people we work with can be unpredictable but generally mean no harm. Many are very weak and so can not cause much harm.</li> </ul>
	<b>6.4</b>	Risk of mugging/assault in Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers are responsible for their own personal safety. Volunteers should not go out alone, especially at night.</li> <li>• Do not have valuable items visible on your person.</li> <li>• Be sensitive and sensible when withdrawing money from the bank.</li> <li>• Do not act distastefully (e.g. shouting, 'practising' Bulgarian loudly in public, mimicking, clearly describing downfalls, or not using any Bulgarian for pleasantries).</li> </ul>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Physical hazards</b>		
	<b>7.1</b>	Risk of injury when out around the Pleven region and out on day trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is the responsibility of the volunteer to be sensible and to take sensible precautions to avoid injury (e.g. sensible footwear when walking to avoid injury due to pot holes).</li> <li>• Sometimes needles have been found from IV drug users in the garden of the building. There should be no reason for you to go to the area where they have been found, or anywhere in the garden, please be aware.</li> </ul>
	<b>7.2</b>	Risk of illness/harm due to climate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is very warm in the summers and usually very cold in the winters. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to be sensible about this and follow standard procedures for these temperature extremes.</li> <li>• In summer volunteers should wear a high factor sun cream and always carry a bottle of water.</li> <li>• Stay in the shade as much as possible.</li> </ul>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Biological Hazards</b>		

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	<b>8.1</b>	Risk of injury from animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mosquitoes are especially prevalent during summer months and volunteers should obtain necessary items in order to tackle this prior to their trip.</li> <li>• Stray dogs wonder the streets in Bulgaria but generally do not go too near humans if they are sensible. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to avoid them. It is up to individual volunteers whether they choose to have the rabies vaccine. See section 3.2.</li> <li>• Horses are used as a form of transport and volunteers should be careful around horses.</li> </ul>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Culture</b>		
	<b>9.1</b>	Risk of offending local people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers should dress modestly and conduct themselves in a manner which fits their work.</li> <li>• Volunteers should respect the religious beliefs held by team members and the Orthodox religion held by many Bulgarians.</li> <li>• Volunteers are expected to respect Bulgarian laws.</li> <li>• Volunteers should be aware that their accommodation in Bulgaria is above the average standard and be sensitive when discussing how people live.</li> <li>• British people have not been travelling to the Pleven region and foreigners are generally a novelty. Don't take offense if local people watch or observe you.</li> <li>• Men especially may stare at female volunteers. This is usually meaningless and should not cause alarm.</li> <li>• Volunteers should learn some basic Bulgarian such as 'hello', 'goodbye', 'please' and 'thank you'.</li> </ul>
<b>10</b>	<b>Stress</b>		
		Risk of loneliness, isolation and home sickness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is the responsibility of the volunteer to discuss concerns with their team leaders.</li> <li>• Volunteers should work with their team in order to form friendships and contribute socially.</li> <li>• Volunteers may make use of the local internet café and cheap phone cards to maintain contact with home.</li> <li>• Volunteers should make the most of training days and forums in order to get to know their team.</li> </ul>
<b>11.</b>	<b>Photography</b>		

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		Taking photos inappropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteers <b>MUST NOT</b> take photos (on cameras/mobile phones or other devices) in any of the government institutions (family type homes, orphanages, day care centres). This is due to child protection laws and if photos are taken it will seriously compromise our relationship with the authorities. Although this is unfortunate as we understand it is nice to take photos as memories, it is essential that you follow this rule.</li> <li>Carers in the institutions <u>can not</u> give permission for photos to be taken so volunteers should not ask.</li> </ul>
<b>12.</b>	<b>Maternal Homes</b>		
	<b>12.0</b>	Picking up the babies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The babies <b>NEED</b> human contact so don't be afraid to pick them up, they must be picked up as much as possible.</li> <li>Make sure you know the correct way to pick a baby up as not to drop them or make yourself or the baby uncomfortable.</li> <li>Know your limits, some of the babies maybe too heavy for you to pick up. Only do what you are comfortable with.</li> </ul>
	<b>12.1</b>	Risk of violence from the children – being pushed/having objects thrown at you/hair being pulled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The people you work with will not deliberately hurt you. However, some have behavioural problems and may act out in frustration/excitement/fear/ confusion. Please remember the background of the people you work with and possible reasons for their behaviour so please be sensitive to this in your reaction to their behaviour. You should not put yourself at any extra risk so it is important to rely on your own intuition when deciding the best course of action.</li> <li>It may often be appropriate to give no reaction to this behaviour other than calmly walking away so as not to encourage this behaviour and avoid putting yourself at extra risk. However it may be that turning your back on the child would be more risky than staying with them. Use your judgement or ask for help.</li> <li>Under no circumstances must you ever punish a child for being aggressive with you. Punishment is the responsibility of the carers – not you.</li> <li>It is advisable for those with long hair to tie it back, although there is one home where hair should be loose so as not to provoke a reaction. Further details are available at the apartment.</li> <li>Don't wear jewellery at all – it's too tempting!</li> <li>If you wear glasses where an old pair that you don't</li> </ul>

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			<p>mind getting broken or if possible, contact lenses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wear old clothes that you don't mind getting damaged/dirty.</li> <li>• Clothes with buttons or poppers can also provoke a reaction.</li> <li>• Most of the children are babies so none of these will be a particular risk to you, they just need to be picked up and held but you must be aware of this with regards to the older children.</li> </ul>
	<b>12.2</b>	Being scratched by the children by older children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any cuts or scratches should be disinfected and plastered straight away as many of the children enjoy playing in the soil and sand outside so the risk of infection will be fairly high. Cream and plasters should be carried by at least one member of the team.</li> <li>• If scratched ask a team member to come with you and help you clean and plaster the cut.</li> <li>• Prevention is better than cure, so try to avoid any rough play which could get out of hand and result in injury.</li> </ul>
	<b>12.3</b>	The older children wanting to be picked up/swung around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You are responsible for knowing your own limits. If you know that you have a weak back, please do not attempt to pick up the children continuously. Obviously many of the children are very small and light and so shouldn't pose any risk to hurting your back. However, many of the older children will also want to be picked up. Please be sensitive to this and try to be consistent with the children and the way that your work with them (although obviously you will be able to play in different ways with the different children).</li> <li>• Don't be afraid to say no to a child if you feel it would be unsafe for you or the child to carry them/swing them in a way they want. Try to explain by using gestures and distract them with another game/object. You could also involve another volunteer and play in pairs.</li> </ul>
	<b>12.4</b>	Misunderstanding with the carers, exacerbated by the language barrier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the Government staff don't understand English. It is your responsibility to learn a basic list of phrases or carry a list with you. It may also help to take a phrasebook/list.</li> <li>• Although you may disagree with some of the ways the carers work with the children, please remain calm and speak to your team leader about it later, when you are no longer in the presence of the Bulgarian staff. Do not criticise the staff directly.</li> <li>• Don't take the children outside unless you are 100% sure the carers have understood you and are allowing you to do so. Always arrange a returning time before</li> </ul>

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			<p>you leave.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure you always take a mobile and Volunteer Co-ordinator's number so you can always ring if there is a problem.</li> <li>• Always arrive on time.</li> </ul>
	<b>12.5</b>	Using the furniture/equipment within the home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers need to be careful when playing with the children in the home as the furniture and equipment in the homes is not particularly child friendly.</li> <li>• Technical equipment may have wires exposed and not be secured down so additional care must be taken.</li> <li>• Doors may not be secured so watch the children carefully.</li> <li>• There are rugs throughout the homes placed on hardwood floors which aren't secured down so care must be taken to avoid tripping/slipping.</li> <li>• Be wary of sharp corners, hot taps, and damp floors.</li> </ul>
	<b>12.6</b>	Entering/leaving the Maternal home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take care as steps may be uneven and the stairwells may not be well-lit.</li> <li>• When helping the children make sure you go slowly and carefully. Only carry them if you feel comfortable doing so (see section 12.3)</li> </ul>
		Taking the children into the garden/parks/out for the day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please see sections 7 and 8.</li> <li>• Only take the children out if you have clear permission and understanding from the carers. A carer will usually accompany you.</li> <li>• Make sure you return the children well within the time agreed.</li> <li>• There will be uneven surfaces so volunteers should take care when walking with the children and help them to avoid tripping, especially as some of the children may be very unsteady.</li> <li>• Some of the children behave unpredictably when crossing roads or passing shops with food displayed because they don't often get to go out.</li> <li>• Some of the children may use wheelchairs which do not hold the children securely. Volunteers should be particularly careful pushing wheelchairs over bumpy areas and strap the children in where possible.</li> </ul>

Whilst we have made every effort to provide a comprehensive risk assessment, as with anything there may be unforeseen risks. If you encounter any of these on your trip please inform your team leader. Life Improvement For Everyone and our partners cannot accept any liability for any accidents/incidents occurring during your trip unless there is a clear indication of negligence on

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our part. Please work with us to make your trip as safe and enjoyable as possible. Thank you and have a great trip!

Please ensure that:

- a) You have read and understood the risks described in sections 1 – 12 above.
- b) You are willing to undertake the work involved despite the potential risks.
- c) You will take responsibility for your own safety and well-being during your trip based on an awareness of the above risks.

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