

## Bulgarian Justice – Heading towards a Digital Future

Bulgaria continues to accelerate the digitalization of its judicial system, as part of the broader European trend toward e-justice. This process, which began with the introduction of the Unified Portal for Electronic Justice (EPEJ) with certain useful but rather limited functionalities, has reached a new stage with the recent entry into force of significant amendments designed to enhance efficiency, reduce administrative burden, and facilitate access to justice.

As per the amended Civil Procedure Code (CPC), as of 1 July 2025, orders for payment proceedings shall be conducted entirely electronically, including the submission of applications, and the issuance of payment orders and writs of execution.

In August 2025, substantial amendments to the Administrative Procedure Code (APC) were also adopted aimed at the full digitalization of administrative proceedings, which are set to enter into force on 1 July 2026.

### 1. Amendments to the CPC concerning Payment Order Procedures

Pursuant to the recent amendments, all procedural steps in payment order procedures shall be carried out in electronic form, unless expressly provided otherwise. This includes the submission of applications, communication between the parties and the court, and the issuance of court acts within the proceedings.

- **Electronic Applications for Payment Orders**

Applications for issuance of payment orders shall be submitted via an electronic form on the EPEJ.

Mandatory electronic submission applies to specific categories of applicants: traders, the state and state institutions, municipalities, notaries and private bailiffs, as well as parties represented by an attorney-at-law. Applicants outside these categories may submit applications on paper but, overall, the scope of exemption from electronic submission is fairly narrow and encourages broader use of digital means.

The applications shall be reviewed by a judge determined in line with the principle of random allocation, meaning that the case may be handled by a judge from any district court in the country in view of balancing workloads and speeding-up the process. Exceptions apply to cases initiated based on certain types of contracts, acts, or documents, which are allocated according to the rules of local jurisdiction.

- **Electronic Issuance of Payment Orders and Writs of Execution**

Payment orders shall be issued in electronic form and signed by the judge with an electronic signature. This allows for rapid service through the EPEJ where the debtor receives a notification and

access to the document. The debtor may also file an objection electronically via the EPEJ or on paper at any district court.

These changes accelerate the process substantially – a payment order may be issued and received within hours of filing an application.

Writs of execution, which are essential for initiating enforcement proceedings, are also issued electronically as a rule as of 1 July 2025, for all cases where such writs are issued and must be signed by a judge.

## 2. Key Amendments to the APC

Mandatory electronic document exchange has been introduced for administrative bodies, judicial bodies, the Ombudsman, persons exercising public functions, organizations providing public services and attorneys-at-law. The authorities must publish on their websites, and in their offices, information regarding the electronic submission of requests, proposals, complaints, and signals. As a principle, the acts issued by administrative bodies and courts shall be in electronic form.

- **Issuance of Individual Administrative Acts**

Requests for issuance of individual administrative acts may be submitted electronically 24/7. Authorities shall be accepting requests in compliance with the Electronic Document and Electronic Certification Services Act and the Electronic Governance Act.

For each request for issuance of an individual administrative act, the administrative body shall create an electronic case file containing all electronic documents and information submitted or generated by the parties and authorities. If a document on paper is involved, it shall be entered into the electronic case file by scanning and storing its electronic image.

- **Electronic service and notifications**

Certain participants in proceedings (administrative bodies, judicial authorities, the Ombudsman, persons exercising public functions, organizations providing public services and attorneys-at-law) must indicate an electronic address for service and receipt of documents through the Secure Electronic Service System or EPEJ. If documents are not downloaded within seven days of dispatch, they are deemed served on the first day following the expiry of that period. If no electronic address has been provided, the authority or court shall publish a notice on its website granting the respective party 14 days to provide one.

- **Participation via videoconference**

The court may, on its own initiative, order participation of a party, its representative, a witness, or an expert in a hearing by videoconference for reasons of security or other grounds.

The amendments to the CPC and APC in 2025 mark an important stage in the digitalization of Bulgarian justice contributing to faster and more accessible proceedings. Further extension of the

scope of e-justice is expected in the future in view of the next level of modernization and increased efficiency of the judicial system.

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