



BLAGOEVGRAD MUNICIPALITY

ИЗХ. № 63-00-959/02.03.2022

TO:

*Mr Daniel Butler
Mayor of the City and County of Limerick
Mayor's Office, Merchants Quay
Limerick*

Dear Mr. Butler,

After the visit of the Bulgarian Ambassador to Ireland in Limerick in January 2022, and after getting acquainted with the vigorous development of the city of Limerick and its region, I would like to confirm our interest in exploring the potential for cooperation between our cities - Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria and Limerick, Ireland.

Building on top of the strong historical connection - the Irishman James Boucher, born in Bruff, Limerick, who devoted much of his life to the Bulgarian national cause and rested near by the Rila Monastery in Blagoevgrad region, we want to establish bilateral contacts and cooperation in areas of mutual interest, business and entrepreneurship, information and communication technologies, but also culture, sports, tourism, research and education through our economic and university centers.

The city of Blagoevgrad is a young and modern city with a deep history. It is located in the southwestern part of Bulgaria, 100 km south of the capital Sofia. The city is the economic, cultural and educational center of Southwestern Bulgaria.

The history of Blagoevgrad dates back to Antiquity, when during the 3rd century BC the favorable conditions and the hot mineral springs contributed to the establishment of the Thracian settlement Skaptopara.

After the Ottoman conquest of the peninsula, from the XV century on the site of Skaptopara again there is a city with a large population - Gorna Dzhumaya. On May 9, 1950, the town of Gorna Dzhumaya was renamed Blagoevgrad in honor of the political figure Dimitar Blagoev. As of December 15, 2021, the city is the 14th most populous in Bulgaria with 73,463 inhabitants.

With the presence of modern transport links, with its cultural and historical landmarks, with its natural beauty and healing mineral waters, the city is becoming increasingly attractive for cultural and ecological tourism, summer and winter recreation. The city of Blagoevgrad is extremely tidy and compact. Getting around is easy, even without a car.

Blagoevgrad is a young university town. It houses the Southwestern University "Neofit Rilski" and the American University in Bulgaria, which are increasingly established in the cultural and social life of the city and bring its fame to be the youngest university center. The city also has a College of Tourism and a College of Economics and Management.

The age structure of the population of Blagoevgrad, the presence of many young people and its strategic location predispose the development of the city as a tourist destination and as an innovative and modern technology center that allows the development of various sectors of the economy.

Blagoevgrad has a rich history and many cultural and tourist attractions, as well as a rich annual cultural calendar, filled with many and varied events that attract many guests and

visitors throughout the year. Some of the most interesting places worth seeing in Blagoevgrad are the ancient Varosha district, located on the left side of the Bistritsa River, on the slopes of Rila Mountain, Bachinovo Park, the Church of the Annunciation and the Regional History Museum.

One of the largest enterprises on the territory of Blagoevgrad Municipality successfully develop its activity in several main sectors - food industry - production of beer, meat and meat delicacies, bottled table water; in the production of elements for mechanical engineering; in the construction industry - construction of road infrastructure, bridges, buildings and facilities; in high-tech production of prostheses, orthoses, wheelchairs, etc.

The existing investors in Blagoevgrad do not stop developing, improving the quality, increasing the quantity and expanding the portfolio of their products by modernizing and accelerating their production capacity, by purchasing machinery and building additional building stock.

Since the summer of 2021, Blagoevgrad Municipality has a new management team and a new Mayor. We have a bold and ambitious Development Plan for the Municipality of Blagoevgrad. Among the highlights in this plan are the implementation of projects for high-tech zone, projects for industrial and logistics park, development of projects for quality and full use of mineral waters available in the Blagoevgrad area, as well as projects for more accessible urban and green an environment that meets the overall European zero-carbon focus.

The ambition of the Municipality of Blagoevgrad is to become a modern, innovative, connected and green municipality, providing a high standard of living for its citizens and conditions for sustainable economic development.

Establishing bilateral contacts and analyzing possible areas of interaction can lead to practical cooperation on projects that we mutually identify as promising and subsequently proceed to possible twinning. We are ready for additional contacts, with exchange of letters or visits.

Dear Mr. Butler, please accept the assurance of my highest consideration.

Town of Blagoevgrad, February 2022g.

ILKO STOYANOV

Mayor of Blagoevgrad Municipality

