

# Pharmacies in Bulgaria - traditions, falls and upsurges



## Bulgaria joined PGEU in 2007

Pharmacy and the Pharmaceutical Society in Bulgaria have undergone enormous changes and development during the past 50 years. Looking back through the centuries we can see the growth of the Pharmaceutical sector – first pharmacy data dates from 1879, after the Bulgarian Liberation. At that time, the number of pharmacies in Bulgaria was 32 and later – 1888 – 73; 1945 – 569; 1990 – 1540 and, in 2009 – around 4500.

### From 1944 up to 1990

The Bulgarian political system changed in 09.09.1994 and the Communist Party came into power. The first change in the Law for population health occurred in April 1945. The Ministry of People's Health has exclusive rights to open pharmacies.

### From 1990 up to 2007

In 1990 here in Bulgaria came a huge reversal when the Communist Party resigned and the first democratic government was set up.

The first private pharmacies were founded in 1991 in Bulgaria. We can see between 1991-2000 a strong expansion in retailing and wholesaling. Into the mid-90s around 98% of all governmental and municipal pharmacies had been closed exceptionally those in hospitals and some very specific in special ministerial areas (internal affairs etc).

### ADVANTAGES:

- Free place for private initiative and possibility for every master-pharmacist to prove his/her professional skills.

### DISADVANTAGES:

- Some persons and companies with not clear incomes entered into the pharmaceutical system
- Very strong price dumping
- The rapid change in valuable system and replacement of professional interests with another ones – financial, corporate and others interests
- Depreciation of education, shortage of young persons in scientific and teaching areas.
- Not proper pharmacy distribution along the country
- Lost of trust in pharmaceutical society on behalf of the community

### From 2007 up to the present

These problems gave rise to a necessity for an emergency change in legislation. After some year discussions between political parties, institutions, in February a Bulgarian Pharmaceutical Union had been constituted by the law. This union unified all masters of pharmacy along the country – around 5000. The first democratic elected Management Board had been chosen.



### What's coming after?

1. In April 2007 – a Bulgarian Medicine Act had been voted into the Parliament and the ethical model “one pharmacist – one pharmacy” had been endorsed.
2. Bulgaria became a member of PGEU.
3. The Ethical Code of Conduct had been accepted by the society.
4. Rules for continues training of masters of pharmacy had been prepared by Quality Commission and approved by Managing Board of BPhU.
5. The guideline for Good Pharmaceutical Practice had been prepared by Quality Commission and approved by the Minister of Health.

BPhU starts several community activities to try to restore and get higher the image of profession of master of pharmacy. May and June 2008 a very strong positive campaign had been placed in Bulgaria. The device for this campaign was “ASK THE PHARMACIST”. It was conducted through the five biggest towns in Bulgaria. The mission of this campaign was:

### Your pharmacist is not simply a medicine seller and his/her advice could help you:

- to avoid undesired medical reactions
- to find when self-treatment is dangerous for your health
- to follow the health style of life
- to use prescribed medicines properly

The discussions because of this campaign and wide media coverage pointed out the need of pharmaceutical care in the community and confirmed the statement that just in a pharmacy owned by a pharmacist the patient could be supplied with necessary professional information.

Unfortunately the strong wish for change of Medicine Act and in August 2008 the ethical model “one pharmacist – one pharmacy” was discarded. Now everybody who wants to, no matter the type of profession; can open the pharmacy and own up to four pharmacies. The pressure goes to completely liberalization of the pharmaceutical sector.

**BPhU expresses its special thanks to the management of Austrian, French, German, Greek and other Pharmaceutical Unions and especially to PGEU for their strong support for defending our requests. It had been shown with representation of many members from these organizations in the meetings organized by BPhU on the National Pharmaceutical Forums in 2007 and 2008. Our guests had been mag. Pharm. Leopold Schmuidermaier, Mr John Chave, Mr Giovanni Mancarella etc.**

