

culled in Bulgaria last week, while around 400 to 500 have been culled this week.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency, and the National Sheep and Goat Breeders' Association (NOKA) are conducting a nationwide information campaign targeting livestock farmers. Vaccination options are also being discussed during these meetings, BTA reports.

## Access to Information Programme Foundation Presents Annual Awards



The Access to Information Programme Foundation presents its annual awards for contributions to freedom of information, Sofia, September 28, 2025 (BTA Photo/Minko Chernev)

**Sofia** - The Access to Information Programme Foundation presented its annual awards for contributions to freedom of information on September 28, which is International Right to Know Day. The ceremony took place at the Peroto Literary Club at the National Palace of Culture in Sofia.

Gergana Jouleva, Executive Director of the Foundation, opened the event by stating:

"Access to information also enables public participation in policy discussions, which is of vital importance. Access creates an environment that, we hope, prevents corruption. But as we all know, there are institutions that should ensure perpetrators are held accountable."

According to her, Bulgaria's main challenge is joining the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents.

"This goal has been included in national plans multiple times already. Another major challenge is implementation. That's where we all come in – those submitting requests and the institutions themselves," Jouleva added.

### Award Highlights

*Citizen Most Actively Using Their Right to Information – "Golden Key" Award*

**Winner:** Martin Atanasov, creator of the "Black Run" (Cherna Pista) map, was honoured. His platform compiles data on 177,000 road accidents in Bulgaria between 1 January 2021 and 14 April 2025, aiming to deepen public understanding of the causes of road crashes.

**Honourable Mention:** Blogger Boyan Yurukov was recognized for using Bulgaria's Access to Public Information Act (APIA) to request a list of 4,400 state-owned properties up for sale. He mapped them in an interactive platform showing urban spaces, historical sites, cultural areas, resorts, and even entire peninsulas – prompting questions like: Whose interests are being served? Is the sale necessary? Why aren't the properties handed over to municipalities?

*Most Active NGO in Using Access to Information – "Golden Key" Award*

**Winner:** The Institute for Market Economics (IME) for using APIA to produce reports, analyses, and publications fostering transparency and civic engagement. A key example is the annual "Regional Profiles: Indicators of Development" report. In 2025 alone, IME filed 265 information requests; since 2012, the total stands at 3,445.

**Honourable Mention:** The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee received recognition for uncovering how the Prosecutor General exerts control over the special prosecutor, appointed to investigate crimes committed by the Prosecutor General or their deputies. The information was obtained through persistent APIA requests aimed at increasing prosecutorial transparency.

*Best Journalism Campaign or Story Involving Access to Information – "Golden Key" Award*

**Winner:** Yanka Petkova of Offnews was recognized for a series of articles based on data received under APIA. Her reporting investigated:

- Transparency in public spending under the National Programme for Promoting Transplants
- Survival rates in Bulgarian transplants
- A case of a transplant patient who died from a hospital-acquired infection

Following her publications, the Bulgarian Medical Supervision Agency came under renewed scrutiny.

**Honourable Mentions:**

Desislava Nikolova (Capital) – for in-depth investigations into Bulgaria’s healthcare system, exposing systemic issues and sparking public debate.

Emiliya Dimitrova (Za Istinata) – for pursuing information on the timeline of a municipal water infrastructure project in Sevlievo. After an initial denial, she successfully challenged the refusal in court with the help of the Access to Information Programme.

*Best Institutional Practice for Providing Access to Citizens – “Golden Key” Award*

Only one nomination was received in this category – for Sliven Municipality – but the jury decided to present the award nonetheless. Sliven has upheld high standards in access to information for 25 years, consistently applying the law with precision, transparency, and innovation.

**Anti-Awards (“Rusty Key” & Others)**

*“Padlock” Anti-Award – For Failing to Fulfil Access Obligations*

Awarded to the Executive Agency for Medical Supervision for repeatedly denying journalists access to information about spending under the 2024–2028 National Programme for Organ Donation and Transplants, despite existing court rulings mandating transparency.

*“Shame” Anti-Award*

Given to the Special Prosecutor for Investigating the Prosecutor General and their Deputies, after it was revealed that APIA requests to Prosecutor Daniela Taleva were being redirected to a deputy of the very official she is meant to investigate – a clear conflict of interest that leads to refusals becoming standard practice.

*“Tied Key” Award – For the Most Absurd Case*

Presented to the Mayor of Galabovo Municipality, who hired a private lawyer to defend against journalist Venelina Popova’s challenge of a silent refusal to her APIA request – despite the municipality having in-house legal counsel. After being ordered to pay court costs, the journalist was then referred to a private bailiff, who nearly doubled the amount by adding enforcement fees and legal costs.

**About International Right to Know Day**

Celebrated annually since 2003 on the initiative of the International Network of Freedom of Information Advocates, this day promotes the right of access to public

information. In Bulgaria, the day has been marked by the Access to Information Programme since 2003, which uses the occasion to announce its annual awards.

**Officials, Experts Continue Explaining Benefits of Adopting the Euro Across Bulgaria**



The aim of the campaign is to provide citizens with clear, detailed and reliable information on the main stages and deadlines of the euro introduction process (BTA Photo/Pavlina Zhivkova)

The nationwide information campaign on the adoption of the euro in Bulgaria continued with meetings in four more regional centres – Veliko Tarnovo, Smolyan, Vratsa and Montana – as well as in smaller towns across the country. Ministers, government officials involved in the process, and experts took part in the events, explaining the main stages, deadlines, and Bulgaria’s preparedness to join the single currency on January 1, 2026. In smaller municipalities, citizens also had the opportunity to ask questions to experts from the Consumer Protection Commission (CPC).

**Veliko Tarnovo**

The information event in Veliko Tarnovo brought together ministers, deputy ministers, mayors and institutional representatives in the municipal hall, as part of the campaign organized by the Ministry of Finance and the Bulgarian National Bank. The discussion was moderated by Zornitsa Rusinova, Chair of the Economic and Social Council.

Finance Minister Temenuzhka Petkova said that euro area membership means economic and price stability, eliminating conversion costs from leva to euro. It also translates into more investment, more enterprises, more jobs, economic growth, and higher incomes for Bulgarian citizens, she noted. Petkova stressed that the government’s main priority is to ensure a smooth and fair transition to the single currency.

Minister of E-Government Valentin Mundrov underlined