

OFFICIAL RULES

Photography Contest "SOFIA: OLD EUROPE, NEW ENERGY"

1. CONTEST ORGANIZER

1.1. The photography contest "SOFIA: OLD EUROPE, NEW ENERGY" (hereinafter referred to as the "Contest") is organized by Sofia Tourism Administration at Sofia Municipality | Visit Sofia (hereinafter referred to as the "Organizer").

1.2. The Official Rules of the Contest are publicly announced and accessible for the entire duration of the initiative on the official electronic portal of the Organizer: <https://visitsofia.bg> and/or via the Official Rules link provided in the invitation.

1.3. The Organizer reserves the right to supplement and amend the Official Rules, with amendments coming into force from the moment of their public announcement.

2. TIMEFRAME, THEME AND TERRITORIAL SCOPE

2.1 The photo contest launches on 07.10.2026 and accepts entries until 23:59 on 25.10.2026.

2.2. Theme of the contest: The general theme of the contest is "SOFIA: OLD EUROPE, NEW ENERGY". Entries must correspond to one of the following four thematic categories: Historical Layers, Green Sofia, Cultural and Religious Tolerance, City Vibe.

2.3. Territorial scope: The photographs must be taken within the territory of the city of Sofia.

3. ELIGIBILITY

3.1. Any person over 18 years old as of the contest launch date: 07.10.2026 is eligible to participate in the Contest.

3.2. The Contest is open to professional and non-professional photographers from all over the world.

3.3. Participants are free to choose the equipment they wish to take photos with.

3.4. The participant must be the author of the submitted photograph(s) within the meaning of the Bulgarian Copyright and Neighboring Rights Act under the Bulgarian legislation (Закон за авторското право и сродните му права).

3.5. Employees of Sofia Tourism Administration are NOT eligible to participate in the Contest.

4. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

4.1. The Contest is free of charge (there is no entry fee).

4.2. Submission Limit: A participant may submit a maximum of four photos in total — one photo for each of the four categories. Submitting more than one photo within the same theme is not permitted.

- 4.3. By submitting their photos for the Contest, the participant and author of the photograph declares that their participation and the submitted photos comply with the provisions of the Bulgarian Copyright and Neighboring Rights Act.
- 4.4. Photos must not contain obscene, indecent or offensive content, or shots, messages, texts, etc., that violate good manners, morals, and dignity. Such entries will not be published.
- 4.5. The photos must not be taken in a studio.
- 4.6. The photos must correspond to the theme of the Contest and the specific thematic category to which they are submitted.

5. TECHNICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS FOR PHOTOGRAPHS

- 5.1. Format and resolution: Files must be in JPEG/JPG format, in high resolution – a minimum of 24 Megapixels (Mpx) or a file with a long side of at least 6000 pixels.
- 5.2. Visual clarity: Digital frames, watermarks, logos, or signatures are not allowed on the images
- 5.3. File naming: Each file must be named according to the following template: Category_First-Name_Last-Name_Title.jpg (Example: Historical layers_John_Smith_Largo.jpg).
- 5.4. Description: Each photograph must be accompanied by the first and last name of the author and a short description of up to 50 words. The Organizer reserves the right to edit the description for the purposes of the Contest.
- 5.5. Relevance: The photos must reflect the current and real appearance of the locations (taken in recent years). Archival shots of places that are currently drastically changed, renovated, or no longer exist will not be accepted.
- 5.6. AI Ban: Images generated entirely or partially using Artificial Intelligence (AI) are not permitted. The works must be authentic photographs taken by a human.
- 5.7. Authenticity verification: The Organizer has the right to request the original raw file (RAW or unedited file with EXIF data) from the finalists for technical verification. Refusal to provide it will lead to automatic disqualification.

6. CONTEST MECHANISM

- 6.1. The theme and thematic categories of the Contest, as well as the detailed official rules, deadlines, and application terms, are published on the opening day of the contest, 07.10.2026.
- 6.2. Participants apply for the Contest by filling out the registration form provided in the open call. In the form, participants must fill in the author's first and last name, email, contact phone number, the photo according to the category selected by the participant (one photo per category, and a short description of up to 50 words per photograph. Only the photo and the author's names will be published publicly.
- 6.3. Anonymous evaluation and selection: The final selection of the photographs will be carried out by the team of Sofia Tourism Administration under complete anonymity of the photos. The

Organizer will evaluate the works without having access to the names and information of the authors, solely based on the artistic and technical qualities of the photograph and its connection to the specific thematic category.

6.4. Announcement of finalists: The Organizer will announce the finalists on the communication channels of the Sofia Tourism Administration | Visit Sofia: the website and/or on the social networks of Visit Sofia.

6.5. Each participant in the Contest receives:

6.5.1. Honorary certificate: Issued by Sofia Tourism Administration | Visit Sofia.

6.5.2. Impact: An opportunity for the photos to represent Sofia in official tourism campaigns all over the world.

6.6. Award for the authors of the selected photographs:

6.6.1. Financial honorarium: A fixed honorarium of the amount of 150 EUR for each photograph selected as a finalist. If one author has photos approved in more than one category, they receive an honorarium for each approved photo.

6.6.2. Participation in an international exhibition: The selected photographs (including the author's name and description) will be included in an official exhibition at the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Warsaw, Poland. Printing and organizational expenses are fully covered by Sofia Tourism Administration | Visit Sofia.

6.6.3. The financial honorarium must be received within two months from the announcement of the contest finalists.

7. COPYRIGHTS' SETTLEMENT

7.1. By participating in the contest, applicants declare that they are the sole authors of the submitted photographs and hold full copyright over them. The Organizer does not verify the authorship of the photographs and accepts the act of submission as a declaration of authorship by the participants. The applicant whose name is submitted in the registration form used to send the photo will be considered the author of the photograph.

7.2. Third-party rights: The photographs must comply with the conditions of Art. 13 of the Bulgarian Copyright and Neighboring Rights Act (Закон за авторското право и сродните му права), namely that the consent of the photographed person is present (if there are people in the photo), whereby this consent is expressed in their agreement to be photographed, as well as for the photograph in which they are captured to participate in the Contest, which the participant declares by publishing the photo and bears responsibility for. In the presence of identifiable individuals in the shot, the author guarantees that they have their explicit consent for photography and public display. For minors, written consent from parents/guardians is required. The Organizer bears no responsibility in case of claims by third parties.

7.3. Grant of Rights by the Participants: By applying to the Contest, participants grant to the Sofia Tourism Administration at Sofia Municipality | Visit Sofia (written in Bulgarian as: Общинско предприятие „Туризм“ при Столична община), a non-exclusive right (in accordance with Art. 36, Para. 3 of the Bulgarian Copyright and Neighboring Rights Act), which is territorially unrestricted for the entire legal term of copyright protection (70 years) under Bulgarian legislation, to use the photos for the purposes of the exhibition, as well as for future marketing, informational and

advertising materials (online and offline), brochures, catalogs, websites, and social networks of the Sofia Tourism Administration | Visit Sofia and its partners. The photographs must not be bound by an exclusive copyright agreement with third parties.

7.4. Attribution of the Author: The authors agree that when the photos are used for future marketing and digital purposes, the Organizer is NOT obliged to explicitly display the author's name on or next to the image. The name shall be publicly announced within the exhibition in Warsaw and during the presentation of the finalists.

7.5. Retroactive Disqualification: The Organizer reserves the right to disqualify a participant at any time (even after the end of the exhibition) if the use of AI or the violation of third-party copyrights is proven. In such a case, the participant bears full legal and financial responsibility, shall be removed from the materials, and shall be liable for a full refund of the fee, as well as compensation for reputational damages.

8. LIABILITY

8.1. The Organizer bears no liability for any temporary unavailability of the Contest web page and registration form, as well as for any other technical issues related to the Contest. Any such and other issues will be resolved in a timely manner.

8.2. The Organizer is not liable for situations where it is impossible for certain individuals to participate in the Contest, when such impossibility is beyond its control.

8.3. The Organizer is under no obligation to engage in correspondence regarding non-winning claims or other similar matters.

8.4. The Organizer is not liable for non-received awards due to incorrect or incomplete data provided by the participant.

9. PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION

9.1. By entering the Contest, participants voluntarily agree to provide the Organizer with their personal data mentioned above, or any data additionally requested by the Organizer for the purposes of the Contest.

9.2. The Organizer undertakes to collect, process and store the personal data of the participants in strict compliance with the provisions of the Bulgarian Personal Data Protection Act and Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation / GDPR) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (GDPR).

9.3. Contest participants agree that the Organizer may process the personal data provided in connection with the participation in the Contest for the purposes of the Contest.

9.4. By entering the Contest, each participant accepts that their names may be published in public materials related to the Contest and on the social networks of Visit Sofia for the purpose of identifying the individual as a winner and informing third parties about the award won.

9.5. Personal data will not be provided to third parties, except in cases where required by Law.

10. AMENDMENT AND SUPPLEMENTATION OF THE OFFICIAL CONTEST RULES

The Organizer reserves the right to amend and supplement these Official Rules during the course of the Contest. Any amendments and supplementations shall be made solely in writing and shall enter into force as of the date specified therein, but not earlier than their publication on the official website: <https://visitsofia.bg>.

11. PREMATURE TERMINATION OF THE CONTEST

The Organizer has the irrevocable right to terminate the Contest at any time by announcing this on the official website: <https://visitsofia.bg>.

12. MISCELLANEOUS

12.1. By entering the Contest, each participant is deemed to be notified of, familiar with, and in agreement with the terms and conditions of these Official Rules.

12.2. By entering the Contest, participants accept and commit to comply with these Official Rules.

