

Dimitar Radev: The euro as a sign of belonging

Statement by Mr Dimitar Radev, Governor of the Bulgarian National Bank, on the occasion of the adoption of the euro in Bulgaria, Sofia, 31 December 2025.

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There are moments that are difficult to explain with figures, analyses, or institutional formulas. Moments in which what is heard is not a position, but an experience. Increasingly often, young, highly educated Bulgarians speak about Bulgaria's European path with an emotion that cannot be learned or simulated – with a confidence that comes not from declarations, but from belonging.

A few weeks ago, I attended such a conversation. A Bulgarian who grew up in the Netherlands and today holds a responsible position in a European institution said, quite simply: "From a young age, I tried to convince my classmates and friends that Bulgaria is part of Europe. They did not understand me. Today, everyone understands."

There was no pose in those words. There was calmness and clarity.

Today, the words "Welcome, Bulgaria" can be heard and seen in Frankfurt, Brussels, Luxembourg, and in many other places across Europe. Our response to our friends there is brief and clear: "Thank you, friends. We are home."

This is not protocol. This is a feeling.

In this sense, the euro is not merely an economic decision. It is not just a currency. It is a sign of belonging – that your place is not on the periphery, but within a space of shared rules, trust, and responsibility. A sign that the effort you have made has been recognised and accepted.

The Bulgarian lev has always been more than money. Its name comes from the lion – a symbol that has accompanied Bulgarian statehood for centuries. The lev remains part of our history and of the memory of generations of Bulgarians. No one is taking it away. It simply takes its place in the story of our country – alongside the marks, francs, and liras of other European nations.

The euro does not interrupt this story. It continues it.

The Bulgarian letters, the images of the Madara Horseman, Saint Ivan of Rila, and Paisius of Hilendar on European currency state clearly: we are not abandoning who we are. We are affirming who we are.

In recent days, this choice was also acknowledged by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew – with that calm authority that does not judge, but recognises the meaning of symbols. A moment that reflects Bulgaria's confident presence in Europe, spiritual maturity, and respect for its own history. Not as a renunciation of identity, but as its confident presence within a broader community.

This moment does not call for exaltation. It calls for clarity. And for the calm confidence that belonging, memory, and the future can move forward together.

GOD SAVE BULGARIA

This is what is written on the newest European coins. And that says enough.

Because Bulgaria is Europe. And Europe is Bulgaria.