



# BULGARIA

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## *Bulgarian Evangelical Theological Institute (BETI)*

The Bulgarian Evangelical Theological Institute began informally with a small group of key spiritual leaders. Extension courses were held in secret under the communist regime and continued until its fall in 1989.

The fall of communism opened new doors for establishing a regular and open program; BETI was registered with the government in 1990. Many books, including workbooks and textbooks, had already been translated during the communist era and these materials were very helpful in the establishment of a recognized school.



By 1992, over 200 church leaders were involved in the extension programs. In the fall of that year, the full time program was established in Sofia with students representing all five major denominations in Bulgaria. The following year, a third program was started. This leadership-training program is designed for leaders of large churches and national groups. It meets three times a year for one week of concentrated study. All three programs continue to grow and serve the needs of the church in Bulgaria.

Prior to BETI's founding, there had been no other institution for theological education in Bulgaria for 45 years. There were no trained pastors. When formal courses began in 1987, not a single pastor or church leader in the entire country had ever gone to Bible school or completed a correspondence course.

Today B.E.T.I brings together the vision of five major Protestant denominations in Bulgaria. The educational departments consist of highly qualified and spiritually experienced professors representing each denomination. Hundreds of ministers are trained to reach Bulgaria for Christ.

## *BETI in Context*

Bulgaria is a country of 8,194,772 people and slightly larger than the state of Tennessee. It has been one of Europe's poorest countries, although the rise of multi-party democracy offers some hope. Eighty five percent of the people are Bulgarian Orthodox and there is a growing Muslim population. The Protestant Church accounts for about 1.25% and has a growth rate of 17%. Well-trained Christian leaders are needed to encourage and disciple this growth and BETI is working to meet this need.



## *BETI at a Glance*

- 487 students. 144 full-time, 343 part-time; 55% male, 45% female
- 238 graduates since founding. 172 are serving in ministry
- Accredited by the European Evangelical Accrediting Association
- 11 full-time, 19 part-time faculty members led by a board of directors
- 100% extension courses taught in Bulgarian without translation
- 45% full-time courses taught in Bulgarian without translation
- Library contains 9,380 volumes and subscribes to 37 journals

## *BETI as a Personal Experience*

I was privileged to teach Systematic Theology at BETI's Department of Pentecostal Studies in 2001-2002. The course included the disciplines of Pneumatology, Ecclesiology and Eschatology. I was successful in integrating the curriculum with some practical experience of the students at the Pravetz Church of God. What a great testimony it was to see ministers, fully trained in Bulgaria, preaching the Gospel of the Risen Savior in the hometown of the communist leader Zhivkov who ruled Bulgaria over 36 years.

Indeed, God has a sense of destiny for our existence. In His divine grace, He desires that we might be a part of His universal plan. In the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the Bulgarian Evangelical Theological Institute gives simple men and women the tools and skills to become a part of God's plan for Bulgaria.