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**MISTAKES AS A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE:  
ACCSN 2.0.  
A DARIAH-ERIC PROJECT**

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2.0. DARIAH-ERIC ПРОЕКТ

ДИЛЯНА БОТЕВА-БОЯНОВА

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# Mistakes as a Source of Knowledge: ACCSN 2.0. A DARIAH-ERIC Project

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## MISTAKES AS SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE: ACCSN 2.0. DARIAH-ERIC проект

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Under the title “Mistakes as a source of knowledge: ACCSN 2.0”, Assist. Prof. Dr. Lily Grozdanova (Sofia University, Faculty of History) submitted a proposal to the DARIAH Theme 2024-2026 on ‘Mistakes’ that has been selected for funding. In this proposal, she underlined that “learning from mistakes has always been a crucial development strategy for humanity on an individual and community level”, specifying that “it is a seemingly straightforward concept” which is also “severely complex” and “multilayered”, offering an approach with the consideration of the Digital Humanities environment (DH). Accordingly, the proposal offered “a unique research angle, exploring mistakes as a source of knowledge not just in the sense of development through experience but as actual expertise and information markers”. It also aimed to define the next stage of development of the Ancient Coins Counterfeits Scientific Network (ACCSN), initially funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.<sup>1</sup> Because of this, the achievements of this network within 2021/2–2023/4 will be presented here so that the new stage of its development within the years 2025–2026 can be fully and correctly estimated.

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*“Ancient Coins Counterfeits Scientific Network (ACCSN): Digital Assets for Prevention of Cultural Heritage Forgery”* is a project initially funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, which

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<sup>1</sup> Most sincere gratitude is due to the Alexander von Humboldt foundation for the initial financial support of the Ancient Coins Counterfeits Scientific Network (ACCSN). This initiative proves with every passing year its importance and usefulness not only for the numismatists worldwide, but also for the international society in general. Gratitude is also due to DARIAH-ERIC for the support for the further development and sustainability of this international platform aiming to contribute to the prevention of spread of ancient coins counterfeits and forgeries.

awarded me the Humboldt-Alumni-Preis 2021 for Innovative Initiatives (BGR 1074508).<sup>2</sup> It was established to deal with the spread of counterfeits of ancient numismatic items<sup>3</sup> – a practice which leads to historical, social, and identity deformations; accordingly, measures are needed to counteract this threat. No doubt, the most effective measure is the existence of a stable and proactive academic network as a platform for sharing relevant information and for providing the critical mass of experts needed working together. Obviously, only combined efforts of researchers in the fields of ancient numismatics and history, archaeometry and digital humanities on an international level have the potential to develop an adequate and functional solution to a problem of such complexity.

This newly created platform was soon recognised as an important opportunity to disseminate relevant information, and authors such as Prof. Aleksander Bursche and Dr. Kyrylo Myzgin chose the website of ACCSN to publish their opinion on a scientific issue that became popular in the European mass media at the end of 2022 (“*Some remarks on the re-evaluated Sponsianus coins*”).<sup>4</sup>

Already within the first year of its existence, i.e., the second half of 2021 and the first half of 2022, ACCSN (later identified as **ACCSN 1.0**) undertook several main activities, carried out throughout all three years of the initial project:

1. Organisation and co-organisation of different meetings (seminars, workshops, round tables, conferences and numismatic schools) aiming at making the public and the numismatic community as aware as possible of the issue of forging ancient coins.

1.1. In 2022, the ACCSN team organised the First International Experimental Numismatics Workshop: Expertise in the identification of forgery techniques (29.04.–1.05.2022) at the Archaeological base in Malko Gradishte village (SE Bulgaria).<sup>5</sup> During the days of the workshop, under the scientific guidance and expertise of Prof. Ilya Prokopov, the participants were able to explore and test a variety of practices for the identification of forgery techniques. The international team was involved in intensive discussions and conducted practical experiments, amongst which XRF analyses on test materials. A key aspect of the event was the opportunity for the invited young scholars and students to acquire a new set of skills in numismatics.

1.2. In collaboration with the Measuring Ancient Thrace Project (KP-06-H50/3 of 30.11.2020, funded by the Bulgarian National Research Fund), PD Dr. Habil. Vladimir Stolba presented the topic “Coin Forgeries” in the Seminar “Methodological Debate: Methodology of Numismatics” (03.05.2022) at Sofia University. The presentation aimed to address the students’ audience and introduce them to the complexity of the issue.<sup>6</sup>

1.3. To find a combination of a specialised and multifaceted audience for the important discussion about ancient coin forgeries and their effect on scientific research and society, a round table concept was developed, accepted by the advisory board of the XVI International Numismatic Congress (Warsaw, 11–16.09.2022).<sup>7</sup> The Round table was met with expected interest and, to our delight, was estimated as highly successful and meaningful, with its main topics being already published (Boteva, Prokopov, Köster, Emmanuel Flueck, and Grigorova-Gencheva 2025).

1.4. On the 18.05.2023, at the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski,” the ACCSN 1.0 organised a seminar discussing different aspects of the topic of ancient coin forgeries. The audience of specialists in Numismatics, but also students, was inspired by the presenters (Prof. Bartosz Aw-

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.humboldt-foundation.de/en/apply/alumni-programmes/alumni-abroad/humboldt-alumni-award-for-innovative-networking-initiatives/sponsored-networking-initiatives> (24.04.2026).

<sup>3</sup> <https://accs-network.com/> (2.05.2026).

<sup>4</sup> <https://accs-network.com/2022/12/11/some-remarks-on-the-re-evaluated-sponsianus-coins/> (2.05.2026).

<sup>5</sup> <https://accs-network.com/2022/06/02/first-international-experimental-numismatics-workshop-expertise-in-the-identification-of-forgery-techniques/> (2.05.2026).

<sup>6</sup> <https://digithrace.uni-sofia.bg/2022/05/17/seminar-methodological-debate-methodology-of-numismatics/?lang=en> (24.04.2026)

<sup>7</sup> <https://accs-network.com/2022/07/17/inc-2022-podium-discussion-update/> (2.05.2026).

anowicz among them), and an active discussion followed.<sup>8</sup>

1.5. During the international conference 10<sup>th</sup> Joint Meeting of ECFN and Nomisma.org & 2<sup>nd</sup> BulgNR TOGETHER (19–23.06.2023, Sofia) (Boteva-Boyanova, Tzvetkova, Grozdanova, Grigороva-Gencheva and Prokopov 2025), the Network organised “ACCSN Workshop: *Forgery Techniques*”.<sup>9</sup> It was devoted to experimental numismatics for identifying artificially created worn marks on forged coins and to a possible reassessment of a brass medallion of the Roman colony Deultum in the province of Thrace. Being considered during the last 60 years to be a forgery, thanks to the p-XRF analysis (with Bruker, Titan, S1), this brass medallion is now proven to be authentic, thus arming the researchers with an important historical testimony (Zlateva, Prokopov, Boteva-Boyanova 2025).

1.6. The first issue of “*Sofia Numismatic School (SNS)*” was held 12–16.09.2023. Sixteen young researchers and nine internationally renowned lecturers with expertise in the field of numismatics, from Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Romania, Greece, etc., took part. Thus, Sofia became one of the world centres of numismatic studies, such as Vienna, Rome and Athens, where such schools have already been established for years, even decades. The SNS has created an invaluable opportunity to establish and develop lasting, sustainable links among the scientific and educational communities and young researchers in the context of pan-European processes of consolidation and cooperation. Among the leading scholars who joined as lecturers are the members of ACCSN: Prof. François de Calatay, Prof. Ilya Prokopov, PD Dr. Habil. Vladimir Stolba, Assoc. Prof. Julia Tzvetkova, Assoc. Prof. Valentina Grigороva-Gencheva, Dr. Ulrike Peter and Dr. Lily Grozdanova, and me. Each of them delivered a specialised course that further developed the trainees’ numismatic expertise. The host and main organiser of the event was the Faculty of History of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, with the co-organisation and supported by the project BGR1024508 HFST “Ancient Coins Counterfeits Scientific Network (ACCSN)”, as well as project BG05M2OR001-1.001-0001 “Establishment and Development of the Centre of Excellence “Heritage BG”, in partnership with the project “SUMMIT” under contract BG-RRP-2. 004-0008, project “Measuring Ancient Thrace” (N<sup>o</sup> KP-06-H50/3 of 30.11.2020, funded by the Bulgarian National Research Fund), and with the assistance and hospitality of the Archaeological Museum “Prof. Mechislav Domaradski” – Septemvri and Archaeological Museum – Hisarya.

1.7. In December 2023, the ACCSN Team organised the initially planned workshop in Berlin. After participating in the “CN workshop and the 3rd Heinrich Dressel lecture”<sup>10</sup> of our partner CN Team at the BBAW, the Berlin ACCSN workshop<sup>11</sup> was held on December 1<sup>st</sup>. Thus, the workshop was attended by members of the Network and interested researchers from different areas. The fruitful discussions led to the creation of the so-called “To-do list” of the ACCSN, identifying and formulating practical tasks that need to be addressed to continue the work of the Network, also after the end of the project supported by The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Thus, a road map was created for the next stages of the work to prevent the spread of counterfeits of ancient numismatic monuments. Options for follow-up projects to support the network, which has already proven its expertise, sustainability, and international scientific and societal importance, were also discussed.

1.8. Within the frames of the conference “*Researches of Ancient Thrace between Traditionality and Modernity: Theoretical Aspects and Scientific Methodology*” (11–13.04.2024, Sofia) at the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, the next Workshop (“*Ancient coin counterfeits*”) was organised, where members from Belgium, Bulgaria, Egypt and Germany represented the ACCSN (Boteva-Boyanova, Tzvetkova, Grozdanova 2024).

1.9. The educational activities of the Network include the hybrid webinar “Numbers in Nu-

<sup>8</sup> <https://accs-network.com/2023/07/18/seminar-ancient-coins-forgeries-periods-expertise-examples/> (2.05.2026).

<sup>9</sup> <https://accs-network.com/2023/07/18/10th-joint-meeting-of-ecfn-and-nomisma-org-2nd-bulgnr-together/> (2.05.2026).

<sup>10</sup> <https://accs-network.com/2023/11/28/cn-workshop-and-the-3rd-heinrich-dressel-lecture/> (2.05.2026).

<sup>11</sup> <https://accs-network.com/2023/11/28/accsn-meeting-1st-december-berlin/> (2.05.2026).

mismatics – Definitions, Experiments, Evaluation, Presentation” with lecturer Prof. Dr.-Ing. Jean Hourmouziadis Corpus Nummorum, Berlin, held on Zoom and at the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.<sup>12</sup> The need to handle numerical data in numismatics has increased rapidly over the past 20 years. The introduction of modern measurement techniques and computers has generated vast amounts of such data, which require a sound understanding of the quality and evaluation of this information. The webinar discussed the numbers, their digits, and their validity for the daily work in numismatics. Statistics were reviewed, and their shortcomings and possibilities were presented. The principal, hardware and data characteristics of modern experimental techniques, such as the measurement of the electrical conductivity and the XRF-analysis, were explained. Finally, the biological and mathematical background of artificial intelligence was mentioned, as well as its shortcomings and the potential for its use in numismatic research.

1.10. At the Nomisma workshop (Frankfurt, 21–22.08.2024), a workgroup “ACCSN” was created – further proof of the needed concept and sustainability for the Network. *Nomisma.org* is a collaborative project whose goal is to promote the use of digital representations in numismatics according to the principles of Linked Open Data (LOD). The *Nomisma meetings* (often joint with the European Coin Find Network (ECFN) meetings) offer a productive space where specialists in numismatics can present and discuss studies of coin finds from the Iron Age to the Medieval period, results of digital projects on coin finds, including GIS applications, statistical studies, database and online applications, etc.

2. Collaboration with other projects. The development needed in the field of IT regarding the ancient coins counterfeits and forgeries was and still is worked on in close collaboration with the Corpus Nummorum (CN) team.<sup>13</sup> The CN data model was extended for the needs of the counterfeits topic. Applied is an adaptation of the CN database and interface for the needs of the forgeries research with identified new data fields needed for the correct processing of precise data on counterfeit objects. The team also developed procedures for entering data and describing in standardized manner numismatic objects in Bulgarian based on the CN concepts. The CN contains a specialised ACCSN collection, which is also available directly through the ACCSN webpage. Different stages of developing new functionalities were presented by Jan Köster (BBAW, Germany) initially during the XVI International Numismatic Congress in Warsaw (11–16.09.2022) (Köster 2025) and then during the 10th Joint Meeting of ECFN and Nomisma.org & 2nd BulgNR TOGETHER in Sofia (19–23.06.2023). Technical development is also actively continuing now.

The organisation of different scholarly forums was in collaboration with the Measuring Ancient Thrace Project (№ KP-06-H50/3 of 30.11.2020, funded by the Bulgarian National Research Fund)<sup>14</sup> and – in some cases – with the project BG05M2OR001-1.001-0001 “Establishment and Development of the Centre of Excellence “Heritage BG””.<sup>15</sup> The cooperation and collaboration with the Centre of Excellence “Heritage BG” continues nowadays even more closely.

3. The ACCSN team and the Nomisma Forgeries Working Group started developing a specialised dictionary for the description of the forgery topic in Bulgarian, German and English, which will be implemented in the developed digital product. Development of specialised ontology is of crucial importance as it will facilitate the development of the needed terminological standardisation and the creation of an ontology for the stable integration of the scientific data generated by ACCSN in the LOD.

4. The experimental numismatics. Activities in this field resulted in the gathering of new data and expertise in the area of forgery identification. The equipment used is kept by the partner organisation of the Regional History Museum – Sofia, which will host experimental work further within the framework of future projects. The ACCSN team developed specialised educational professional video materials to further advance the expertise in recognising forgeries of the par-

<sup>12</sup> <https://accs-network.com/2024/05/03/webinar-numbers-in-numismatics-definitions-experiments-evaluation-presentationlecturer-jean-hourmouziadis/> (2.05.2026).

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.corpus-nummorum.eu/> (24.04.2026).

<sup>14</sup> <https://digithrace.uni-sofia.bg/?lang=en> (25.04.2026).

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.nasledstvo.bg/> (25.04.2026).

ticipants in the workshops and future educational events, also for the use of the network members.

5. In 2022 Prof. François de Callataÿ contributed to the activity of the ACCSN by transmitting to the project info cards with ca. 2,500 specimens identified as Greek coin forgeries.<sup>16</sup> These info cards were digitised as digital cultural heritage objects. They were prepared for the creation of data gallery on the ACCSN's webpage, offering the public open access to these key scientific data files.<sup>17</sup>

6. Initially, ACCSN was created as a network of twenty numismatists from four European countries. For three years, the network managed to expand on three continents with thirty-four members, who represent different stakeholders: universities, academies, museums, auction houses, private researchers and collectors.

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The main driving force behind all these activities was Dr. Lily Grozdanova – highly motivated, digitally orientated and experienced numismatist – and her application with the stable international team of experts for the DARIAH Theme 2024-2026 on 'Mistakes' came as a logical next step on the road of sustaining and expanding the above-described network into ACCSN 2.0.

As until 2024 there was not a single digitised collection of counterfeits to assist specialists in further developing their expertise, she had the idea to digitise the most significant collection of counterfeits (containing 1,242 forgeries of Greek and 2,123 of Roman coins), which belongs to the Coin cabinet of the Royal Library of Belgium<sup>18</sup> – an idea thoroughly discussed with Prof. François de Callataÿ. Thus, she set *Mistakes as a source of knowledge: ACCSN 2.0* project's **central goal** to digitise this collection through on-site processing of the objects. They were expected to be photographed and measured using a specialised QuickPX hard- and software system provided by the partner projects Corpus Nummorum (CN) and DigiThrace. After the initial processing, datasets were to be created for each object and entered in Corpus Nummorum, as CN platform is currently the only digital tool actively developed, in cooperation and interoperability with ACCSN, to handle and process data for numismatic counterfeits in a scientific manner.

Despite some problems with transporting the specialised QuickPX installations from Sofia to Brussels, the project team managed to digitise all 1,294 Greek forgeries, i.e., 100% of this task was completed. The forgeries of the Roman coins are digitised only partially: 482 out of 2123, i.e. 23%. In addition to these, 161 original coins have been digitised and will be used as reference items.

A second project's goal is to perform the second stage of the digitisation of the "Callataÿ' file of counterfeit Greek coins" – transforming the data in the info cards into DB datasets, adding them to the CN platform and actively connecting the stable URIs of the platform with the digital heritage objects published on the ACCSN platform. For this purpose, an innovative paradigm for processing and digitising this info card collection was developed, as the files underwent AI processing and data extraction.

The third goal is to develop further the already initiated "coin forgery determination card" and ontology that can be internationally applied to fill up a severe absence of an internationally standardised expertise procedure for forgery identification. This need was addressed by new rounds of active debates within the Nomisma Forgeries Working Group, defining the terminology, especially during the Nomisma meeting at l'École Française d'Athènes (5–6.05.2025). The simultaneous development of the "coin forgery determination card" promises to be a sound basis for identifying forgeries in the future, thus having a crucial impact on the diverse stakeholders' ability to identify suspicious objects and process them optimally for data exchange. The achieved tech-

<sup>16</sup> <https://accs-network.com/network/#François-de-Callataÿ> (2.05.2026).

<sup>17</sup> <https://accs-network.com/counterfeits-info-cards-collection/> (2.05.2026).

<sup>18</sup> Callataÿ 2009. This collection is mainly the result of two massive donations generously made by professional numismatists: Paul Tinchant, through regular shipments between 1935 and 1952, and Druso Franceschi on January 30, 1992.

nological development is currently being integrated in the CN Editor and the results will soon be actively visible on the new tool developed by the project team: [accfsn.corpus-nummorum.eu](http://accfsn.corpus-nummorum.eu).

In the application, it is explicitly stated that “the Project Team will also strive to involve MA and PhD students in the process of the collection digitisation to promote this specific and vital area of expertise”. Of course, this means motivated and organised efforts to train colleagues from the young generation numismatists to work with the specialised QuickPX hard- and software system and to improve their knowledge in the general field. To fulfil this urgent need, ACCSN joined efforts with other partners in the organisation and realisation of the Second Sofia Numismatic School (10–14.09.2025), which took place at the Archaeological base at the ancient Roman colony of Deultum, Burgas region (Lupov, Moskov 2025). It was attended by fifteen students from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Moldova, the Netherlands, Romania, Poland, the UK, and Bulgaria. The international team of thirteen lecturers included highly acclaimed scholars: Prof. Christopher Howgego, Acad. Prof. François de Callataÿ, Prof. Ilya Prokopov, Prof. Habil. Cristian Găzduc, Prof. Lyudmil Vagalinski, Dr. Ulrike Peter, PD Dr. Habil. Vladimir Stolba, Assoc. Prof. Mariangela Puglisi, Assoc. Prof. Valentina Grigorova-Gencheva, Assoc. Prof. Julia Tzvetkova, Assoc. Prof. Dario Calomino, Assist. Prof. Dr. Lily Grozdanova, and Krassimira Kostova – Director of the Municipal History Museum of Sredets.

The forum was made possible through the partnership and collaboration of the following institutions: the Faculty of History at the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, the National Archaeological Reserve Deultum–Debelt, and the Municipal History Museum of Sredets. It was also financially supported by the SUMMIT project (Sofia University Marking Momentum for Innovation and Technological Transfer),<sup>19</sup> the research project “Upgrading the Historical Narrative: From Deultum to DigiDeultum”, led by Prof. Lyudmil Vagalinski (Project No КП-06-H80/7 from 08.12.2023, BNSF),<sup>20</sup> as well as the “Mistakes as a source of knowledge: ACCSN 2.0”, funded by DARIAH-ERIC, led by Assist. Prof. Dr. Lily Grozdanova.<sup>21</sup> The DigiThrace web platform (created within the project Measuring Ancient Thrace, led by Assoc. Prof. Julia Tzvetkova – No КП-06-H50/3 from 2020, BNSF) provided the web space needed for communicating the SNS 2025 event.

The preliminary results of the *Mistakes as a source of knowledge: ACCSN 2.0* project’s activities were presented at the “DARIAH Annual Event 2025: The Past” in Göttingen (17–20.06.2025) with the presentation “Learning from past mistakes: ACCSN 2 Project” (authored by Lily Grozdanova, Ulrike Peter and me). At the “DARIAH Annual Event 2026”, 26–29.05, Rome, all the new developments and results achieved during the project’s year will be presented by Ulrike Peter and Lily Grozdanova.

The “Third Bulgarian Numismatic Readings & 2<sup>nd</sup> International Experimental Numismatic Workshop TOGETHER” is an important scholarly forum currently organised by three institutions: the Faculty of History of the Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”, the Regional Archaeological Museum in Plovdiv, and the Regional History Museum – Sofia. It’s first part, the 3<sup>rd</sup> BulgNR, will be hosted by Regional Archaeological Museum in Plovdiv on 25–27.06.2026, and will be held under the title “*Traditions and Innovations in Numismatics*”, focusing on numismatics as a source of information about the history of economics, trade, finance, and cultural memory in Southeast Europe, combining traditional and innovative approaches to scientific research. The second part, the 2<sup>nd</sup> IEN Workshop with experimental application of an innovative workflow for intensive processing of large numismatic arrays (so far practiced only in Switzerland) will be hosted by the Regional History Museum – Sofia on 28.06-3.07.2026. Our partners in this complex organization, providing invaluable financial support, are the First Investment Bank (Sofia), “Mistakes as a source of knowledge: ACCSN 2.0” Project funded by DARIAH-ERIC (led by Assist. Prof. Dr. Lily Grozdanova) and Project BG16RFPR002-1.014-0011 Sustainable Development of the Center of Excellence “Heritage BG,” funded under the grant aid procedure BG16RFPR002-1.014 “Sustain-

<sup>19</sup> <https://summit.uni-sofia.bg/> (2.05.2026).

<sup>20</sup> <https://digideultum.eu/> (2.05.2026).

<sup>21</sup> <https://accs-network.com/> (2.05.2026).

able Development of Centers of Excellence and Centers of Competence, Including Specific Infrastructures or Their Associations from the National Roadmap for Scientific Infrastructure”.<sup>22</sup> It is to be explicitly said that with the latter, ACCSN already has a long and fruitful collaboration, and we do hope that it will continue successfully in the future.

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So far, there are several outcomes of the project presented here, some of them with immense importance. Here, I should start with the explanation by Lily Grozdanova herself: “The gathered information will extend its influence and meaning beyond the specific scientific horizon of the issue. Its dissemination, also considering the proper data security and preservation actions, will facilitate an active dialogue and help to communicate the issue comprehensively and morally guiding to the society.” To this I would like to add that thanks to DARIAH-ERIC project *Mistakes as a source of knowledge: ACCSN 2.0* the internationally recognised ACCSN platform is enriched and further developed with additional features, and the interoperability between the CN and the ACCSN platforms became much stronger.

The project and its results received special recognition from the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science, which awarded the project team the First Special award for the application of Open Science, “ORBIT 2025”.<sup>23</sup> (Fig. 1)

**Fig. 1.** First Special award for the application of Open Science, “ORBIT 2025”. (Photography by L. Grozdanova)



There is also yet another meaningful result of the project. The active debate within the Nomisma.org Forgeries Working Group on terminology showed convincingly that the name of the platform should also be further developed and expanded into the *Ancient Coins Counterfeits and Forgeries Scientific Network (ACCFSN)*. This important task will, of course, be dealt with responsibility and in due time.

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<sup>22</sup> [https://www.bg-numismatic-readings.com/about-bulgnr3/sponsors\\_3/](https://www.bg-numismatic-readings.com/about-bulgnr3/sponsors_3/) (12.05.2026).

<sup>23</sup> <https://novini.bg/article/2025111014574809545> (10.05.2026); <https://www.bta.bg/bg/news/bulgaria/regional-news/1005570-ministerstvoto-na-obrazovaniето-vrachi-za-parvi-pat-nagradite-za-prinos-kam-otvo> (10.05.2026).

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