

**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE CEDAR FOUNDATION**

2016



changing lives!

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear friends,

In 2016 The Cedar Foundation entered a new phase of development. We are in the process of implementing a 5-year strategy, devised by the foundation's team and Board of Directors. Our effort throughout the year was in line with the strategic goals to provoke positive change in social policies and attitudes, to ensure greater independence for our children and young adults and to prepare them for life in a family, to build a strong organizational culture, and to achieve financial stability. And as you will see in our report, we have been successful in achieving the goals.

Undoubtedly, our greatest success was the change in the lives of close to 100 children and young adults that The Cedar Foundation supports every day in Kyustendil and Kazanlak. We witnessed the change when a 14-year-old boy met his role model and they beatboxed together in front of 250 people. We witnessed it when a brother and a sister shared with us that they felt loved in their new family in the US. We also witnessed it when we announced to 8 of our young adults with intellectual difficulties who had spent years in closed institutions that they will be travelling to Italy...

We'd like to see this type of change happening to all children and young adults in Bulgaria who need it. That's why we share our practice, train other professionals and advocate for the rights of children and young adults on the national level. In 2016 we trained over 250 professionals in the social sphere. Thanks to our advocacy effort, we managed to prevent the transfer of close to 1500 children and young adults with disabilities from their family-type homes to other homes, unknown to them.

Change is possible because we are a strong team of 90 people on the ground and 5 in the central office. But it is also because we are not alone. I am happy that we have managed to keep our long-term partnerships with corporate and individual donors, volunteers, non-governmental organisations, and local and state authorities. Meanwhile, we have also attracted new partners to our cause through the creation of an Advisory Board, the carrying out of a successful campaign on the local level in Kazanlak, and the membership in different business organisations among others. I believe that all of this will bring sustainable results from our work with disadvantaged children and young adults.

I'd like to thank The Cedar Foundation team and all of you who support us every day.
Let's continue changing lives together!

Sincerely,

Alexandrina Dimitrova

Executive Director

FACTS AND FIGURES

9 social services



protected home



family-type homes in two Bulgarian municipalities



centre for social rehabilitation and integration



100 supported children and young adults

3 adopted children



2 children being prepared for adoption



250+

professionals in the social sector trained



1500+

hours of voluntary work



4.3%

administrative costs



PROVOKING A POSITIVE CHANGE IN THE SOCIAL POLICIES AND ATTITUDES

Advocacy for inclusion in society of children and people with disabilities is a very important part of our work and is key to the deinstitutionalization process. We work determinedly to increase public understanding of the problems people with disabilities face and to change social attitudes and national policies relating to them.

In 2016 we took the following important steps concerning the social policies:



We developed and introduced a system for measuring the quality of life in social services. It is based on practices adopted during the collaboration with Iceland's authorities;



The Cedar Foundation was chosen to represent the NGO sector as a co-chair of the Permanent Expert Group on Deinstitutionalization together with the Bulgarian State Agency for Child Protection. The Expert group initiated the acceptance of a new Action plan as a part of the National deinstitutionalization strategy of children in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2016 to 2020;



The Cedar Foundation provided training to 100 social sphere professionals in Latvia sharing our experience in the process of deinstitutionalization, as well as our system for measuring the development of institutionalized children;



We conducted a successful advocacy campaign aiming to prevent the implementation of controversial new texts in the Regulations for the implementation of the Law for social assistance. The campaign helped to support and protect nearly 1500 children and young people with disabilities, who were at risk of being moved from the social care homes where they live.



CHANGE IN SOCIAL ATTITUDES DEPENDS UPON ACTIVE COMMUNICATION AND TAKING A CLEAR POSITION.

 ***In 2016 we had over 120 media appearances***

In 2016 we:

Were an author of the chapter about deinstitutionalization in the "Notebook 2015" report of the National Network for Children and presented it to the national authorities and to the broader public;

We had our first local campaign in Kazanlak aiming to increase the visibility and the acceptance of the children and young people living in our social centres in town, as well as to raise funds to support our activities and to establish good local partnerships;

We actively developed our communications strategy and took a clear public position on key issues such as health and the rights of people with disabilities, children's rights, deinstitutionalization, leadership and corporate social responsibility.





PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE WE SUPPORT TO BECOME MORE INDEPENDENT.

In our family-type homes and our protected home in the towns of Kyustendil and Kazanlak, we provide around the clock individual care to close to 70 children and young adults. The Cedar Foundation staff works tirelessly in order to give them the chance to become as independent as possible.

The Cedar Foundation also manages a Centre for social rehabilitation and integration in the town of Kyustendil. In 2016 the Centre provided everyday specialized services to 35 young people with disabilities and their families.

Our social services employ the following specialists:

SOCIAL WORKERS

SOCIAL THERAPISTS

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS

PHYSIOTHERAPISTS

SPEECH THERAPIST

LABOUR COUCH

ART THERAPIST

PSYCHOLOGIST

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER

The key results of this fundamental activity in 2016 are the everyday achievements of our children and young adults.

We conducted several specialized training sessions for the Foundation's teams working in our social services, including "managing difficult behaviour and crisis situations", "a toy-library – a method for skills development", modern methods for art therapy, working with families of young people with disabilities, group work and sensory integration;

We discussed individual cases of our children and young adults with external consultants (so-called supervisors) in order to ensure quality support;

3 of the children from our centres participated in the mentorship programme ABLE Mentor in Kazanlak, where they developed and implemented different projects under the supervision of mentors;

One child successfully completed a hairdressing course and now she is a certificated professional; another youngster with a disability gained a qualification in construction;

One child started his secondary education at the Music school in the village of Shiroka Laka; four other children began at the School of Tourism and Management; and another one studies at the Professional School of Transport in Sofia;

We became a partner in the project "Leaving the nest" which aims to develop the skills needed for independence of the young people with disabilities living in our social services. This is a project with 2 partner organisations in Italy and France. The project provides the opportunity for our young adults to leave Bulgaria for the first time, to interact with people of their age from other countries, and to broaden their horizons;

The Cedar Foundation has provided additional private lessons for three of the children in order to improve their performance in school.



The sensory stimulation helps us work for sensory integration.

Normally, sensory integration starts in early childhood, when you are a little baby and there is someone close to you helping you to explore the world.

This is not the case for the children we are taking care of. Most of our children and young adults display disturbed sensory-integrative functions: they have difficulties processing certain information coming from the sensory systems - vision, hearing, smelling, taste, pain, and motor skills. This affects their motor skills, their concentration abilities, and their behaviour.

Poor sensory processing and difficulties in motor control are serious drawbacks in everyday life. Through sensory stimulation we facilitate the sensory experience, of movement, physical sensing, vision, sensing the body, taste, and hearing. This allows the establishment of a link between already existing information, memory and knowledge and supports a person's reaction to multiple external stimuli.

Supervision

Supervision is a practice of regular meetings of a professional (the so-called supervisor) with the working teams. During the meetings the professional discusses with the teams their work with the children and young adults, as well as other professional needs. The focus falls on the development of the team and the individual team members. The main goal is to increase the understanding, the acceptance, and the team competence. The supervision supports the experts to learn from their experience, to develop their competencies, and to increase the quality of their work. The Cedar Foundation works with some of the most qualified and experienced supervisors in the social system.

GROWING UP IN A FAMILY ENVIRONMENT OR IN A FAMILY-TYPE SETTING IS A KEY FACTOR FOR CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT. MOREOVER, THE TYPE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE HAS A SERIOUS IMPACT ON THE SELF-SUFFICIENCY LEVEL OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES.

This is the story of G.



We took her out of the institution when she was five years old. She was neither talking, nor walking – she was just crawling on the floor. A year later in our centre she spoke for the first time thanks to the efforts of our team - the team members actively communicated with her, they taught her to pronounce words, and build sentences. They took her out on walks and she started communicating with other children and fostered friendships for the first time in her life! We also organized for her a customized wheelchair, which allowed her to move independently. At the end of 2016, at the age of 6 G. was adopted and now she lives with her new family, attends a kindergarten, and goes to swimming lessons.



PREPARING THE CHILDREN FROM OUR FAMILY-TYPE CENTRES FOR LIFE IN A FAMILY

The children and young adults are taken out of an institution or they come to us in need of emergency accommodation and our goal is to provide them with a family-type environment and care. At the same time we know that the best environment for child development and well-being is the family. Therefore, we are constantly seeking opportunities to maintain contact with the biological families or relatives of the children and young adults in our centers, as well as to support the transition of some of the children to a family.

This requires building up children's independence and their ability to take care of themselves. Therefore, all children and young adults in our family-type centers and protected home are provided with 24-hours a day high quality individual



care, adapted to their specific needs. These needs depend on amongst other things the child's age, their physical and emotional condition, life circumstances (e.g. forthcoming adoption) and on their educational needs.

Key results in 2016:

5 % of the children and young people from our family-type houses live in a family;

3 children were adopted in the USA;

The adoption process has been started for 3 more children;

We have started preparing 2 children for transition to a foster family





BUILDING A STRONG ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

At the end of 2015 as part of the preparation and development of our five-year strategy, we conducted a survey among the members of the Cedar Foundation team, as well as among external stakeholders, concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the organization. We discovered that the Cedar Foundation has a reputation as a pioneering organization on deinstitutionalization issues and strongly influences the policies and practices in the field at the national level. At the same time, the results indicated that there was no unified understanding among the interviewees about the organization's identity and that team members reported that they did not have a sense of belonging to the Cedar Foundation. Based on these results, in the next five years the Cedar Foundation will put serious efforts into building and developing its organizational culture and to investing in the teams in Sofia, Kystendil, and Kazanlak.

Key results in 2016:



The staff turnover decreased from 30 % in 2015 to 15 % in 2016;

We introduced modern business models for team management and improvement of the internal communications, including digital instruments;

We held team coaching sessions for all the Foundation's teams with an external consultant;

We reformulated our values and our mission;

We carried out exchange visits between our teams in Kyustendil and Kazanlak;

We lectured at a conference for leadership and team management;

A Program Manager joined our team. She is responsible for the management of the social services on the organisational level, which contributes to their better functioning and quality;

We took a public position on new leadership practices and management challenges in the non-profit sector;

We started an Erasmus + Programme that allows 2 students from Germany to hold an internship in our social services;

We established an Advisory Board and invited successful and public persons, who are respected professionals in their fields to become members and to act as consultants to us and to become ambassadors of our cause.



THE CEDAR FOUNDATION ADVISORY BOARD



David Butts
Managing Partner,
CMS Cameron McKenna



Elena Dilkova
Executive Director,
Bulgaria Engineering



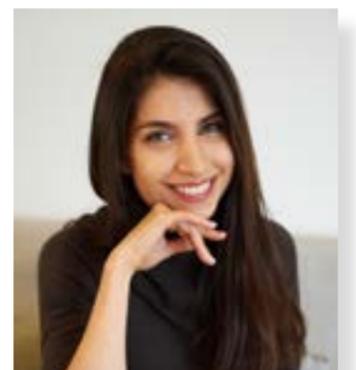
Hristo Hristov
Executive Director,
Netinfo



Ilian Milinov
Designer,
Playground Energy



Sasha Bezuhanova
Founder,
MOVE.BG

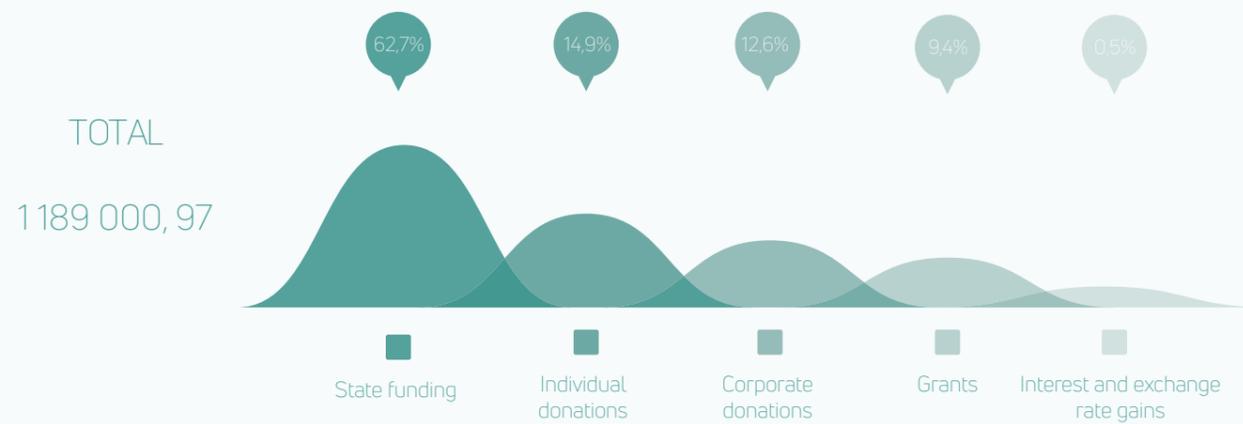


Stilyana Kandjeva
Consultant,
BICA

ACHIEVING FINANCIAL STABILITY

Financial stability is an indicator of sustainability and it is a major priority for every organization. However, for the Cedar Foundation financial stability is vital for the provision of our high-quality care and as an engine for developing our activities.

In 2016 we managed to diversify and balance our financing sources.



The difference between revenue and expenditure is covered by reserves from previous years.

State funding of the services:

For many years, state funding has been key to covering our basic needs and in ensuring a solid base for improving the quality of care for the children and young adults.

Corporate donations:

This is an especially important component for achieving financial stability. In 2016 we engaged new corporate partners for our cause, because we believe that the involvement of the private sector is of key importance for achieving positive social change. Therefore, one of our goals for 2017 is the establishment of long-term partnerships.

Individual donations:

There was an increase in private donations in 2016, which indicates an increase in the credibility of the Foundation and in the engagement of the larger public with the cause.

Projects:

Grant/project funding is a good way to implement specific activities as part of our work. In 2016 we implemented two projects. The first one – “Together for a change: Advocating for a better quality of life in social services” was funded by the European Economic Area financial mechanism; and the second – “Advancing the expertise of the social services employees and improving their teamwork and work with the people they support”, which was funded by the Social Protection Fund.

Transparency is a core financial value, and we are very exacting about our funding sources. We build up partnerships with private and corporate donors with proven high integrity levels and who share the Foundation’s values.

IMPORTANT MOMENTS WITH OUR PARTNERS IN 2016



Bulgarian Business Leaders Forum

Over the past year the Cedar Foundation has joined the Bulgarian Business Leaders Forum (BBLF). This is a forum, where leaders in business and leaders in the non-profit sector can interact and together implement socially responsible projects that are beneficial both for business and society. Our participation in BBLF is also part of the Cedar Foundation’s plan to implement up-to date and innovative business models in our work.



ICAP Group

ICAP Group is one of the most successful regional level groups in the field of business services in Southeast Europe. The aim of our partnership is to increase and accelerate the interaction between the business and the non-profit sector. In order to promote this relationship, at the end of 2016 the Cedar Foundation awarded the TRUE LEADERS prize to successful and socially responsible companies.



German-Bulgarian Industrial-Commerce Chamber (GBICC)

GBICC represents German businesses in Bulgaria and is a key partner for the Cedar Foundation. In 2016 GBICC donated part of the funds collected at the 17th Ball of German Economy to the Cedar Foundation. We invested these funds in the everyday occupational and art therapy for the children and young adults in Kyustendil.

EVENTS AND CAMPAIGNS

„I am a child from your town, too“



The successful campaign “I am a child from your town, too” in Kazanlak was supported by the Kazanlak municipality, the Kazanlak Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Rotary Kazanlak. The goal of the campaign was raising funds in support of the children and youngsters living in our family-type houses in the town. In addition, the campaign aimed to raise public awareness and to call for acceptance, integration and support for disadvantaged young people. The campaign achieved high visibility in Kazanlak and the closing event was a charity ball. Altogether, 19 000 leva were raised and the funds were invested in the local social services.

Annual charity ball



Our biggest fundraising event in 2016 was the Annual Charity Ball of the Foundation. For the first time the Annual ball had a patron – the Olympic champion in rowing Roumiana Neikova. Other celebrities joined the annual ball in support of our cause: Yana Marinova, Radina Dumanian, Yana Titova, as well as Peyo Filipov and the musicians from Camino band. As every year, among the guests were disadvantaged young people and social workers from the Cedar Foundation team. The event raised 60 000 leva.

Pub Quizzes



In 2016 our traditional Pub Quizzes were again very successful and entertaining. We managed to raise close to 10 000 leva!

SOME OF OUR PARTNERS` EVENTS IN SUPPORT OF OUR CAUSE:

Around the world in a day



Rugby tournament



BOARD OF DIRECTORS THE CEDAR FOUNDATION



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Resolute Asset Management



Dimitar Rusev
Chief Financial Officer,
Infinity Group



Mark O'Sullivan
Executive Director,
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Lawyer



Filip Genov
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Projects, UniCredit Bulbank



Natalia Kirilova-Todorova
Executive Director,
Digital Marketing Group



Stuart Byfield
Educator, International School
of Zug and Luzern

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