Dear friends,

For over 13 years now, trust has been at the heart of the care we provide to disadvantaged children and young adults. After surviving a number of traumas such as abandonment, neglect, ridicule and rejection, they find it difficult to show trust and often, through their behaviour, test us, the adults. But now the children and young adults see that even in the hardest of times, we, the people from the Cedar team, do not give up on them, but the opposite - we talk to them, help them and show them how to cope with their raging and quite often incomprehensible emotions. And most importantly, we are by their side every day and support them in their development as personalities.

We are proud to share with you that in 2018 we have managed to build upon that trust with the children and young adults as well as with you - our partners. You were by our side for every step of the children and young adults’ development by supporting us with your experience, expertise, time and resources. At the same time, Cedar’s network has expanded and we have added new supporters to our cause. As recognition of our work, we have gained the trust of the institutions that evaluate our efforts and we are considered an example of good practice for sustainable development.

In the following pages you will be able to take a glimpse at the different aspects of our work and learn more about our achievements through the past year. They were all possible thanks to the entire Cedar team and all of you, who are part of our cause and give us the confidence that we can keep on following our commitment to children and young adults. We cannot change their past, but we can help them all deal with their traumas and have an honorable future.

Thank you from my heart for all your help throughout 2018. Together we change lives!

Alexandrina Dimitrova
Executive Director
The Cedar Foundation
More than 7000 children and young adults in Bulgaria grow up without parental care.

We:

- Actively participate in the design, execution, and assessment of deinstitutionalization policies i.e. the shutting down of state institutions and the prevention of child abandonment;
- Provide 24-hour individual care and specialized support to disadvantaged children and young adults;
- Support parents of young adults with intellectual disabilities;
- Develop donation practices and change attitudes towards disadvantaged children and young adults.
The Year in Numbers

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<tr>
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<td>individual care</td>
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<tr>
<td>children and young adults in our centers</td>
<td>people in our team</td>
<td>additional employees in our centers, beyond the state requirements and funding</td>
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<tr>
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<td>hours of voluntary work</td>
<td>new companies, attracted to our cause</td>
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<table>
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<th>100%</th>
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<tr>
<td>of the funding raised in Bulgaria invested in our programmes</td>
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Provoking a Positive Change in Social Policies and Attitudes

“I am impressed by the wonderful conditions in which the children live and grow in the “Siyanie” family-type centers, created in a joint project between The Cedar Foundation and Kyustendil Municipality in 2010. The type of care provided by the centers is very close to that of a family environment. The quality services that they provide are evidence that the process of deinstitutionalization in Bulgaria is successful. I am grateful to The Cedar Foundation for their good partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in the name of our common goal - to improve the children of Bulgaria’s quality of life.”

Biser Petkov, Minister of Labour and Social Policy

The Cedar Foundation is a key participant in the process of deinstitutionalization in Bulgaria and is actively participating in making positive changes in the social environment. We are members of “Childhood 2025”, National Network for Children and Eurochild. For 5 years now, we have been a co-chair of the Permanent expert working group for deinstitutionalization with the State Agency for Child Protection.

In 2018:

• We were acknowledged for our good practice by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy and the Chairperson of the State Agency for Child Protection. They visited our family-type centers in Kyustendil and became closely familiar with the innovative methods we are applying in the management of social services. They met the members of the Foundation’s team and the young adults, living in the centers. Both the Minister and the Chairperson took away excellent impressions of the professional approach of our employees, and their essentially human care and warm relationship with the young adults.

• We were honoured with 1st place in the “Sustainable Development” category of the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP) “I guarantee a happy childhood” awards. The nominees were evaluated by a 7-member commission. Head of the jury was Dr. Eleonora Lilova, chairperson of SACP. The members were representatives of the SACP Advisory Board, Council of Children, academic circles, National Association of the Municipalities and public figures. The award was granted personally by Dr. Lilova at a ceremony.

• We participated in developing the Social Services Law, which enables the development of social services in Bulgaria and the access to support by all those who are in need or experiencing difficulties.
• We continued to actively lobby for an increase in the government financial provision for social services, specifically those that offer 24-hour care. As a result, the provision for family-type centers for disabled children and young adults for 2019 was increased by 18%.

• We partnered the campaign of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy “Mission is Possible”, which aims to popularize the process of deinstitutionalization and attract public support.

In 2018:
• We were covered by the media over 190 times
• Our web page was visited by an average of 1470 users per month
• We increased our Facebook page likes by 184 people
• We published 171 Facebook posts, each one reaching approximately 406 people
In 2018:

- We were one of the organizers of a seminar called “Models of residential care applied to family-type centers”. This was part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy campaign “Mission is Possible”. The purpose of this event was to support social service provision by sharing experience and a discussion to enable every provider to choose the type of care most suitable for children and young adults, based on their needs. Further, the seminar aimed to canvas the participants’ ideas on quality standards so that they could be incorporated into the secondary legislation of the Social Services Law. The Cedar team shared their experience of therapeutic care and focused on our “Person-centered Planning” approach.

- Cedar’s Executive Director was a mentor in the Academy for Social Entrepreneurs organised by the Reach for Change Bulgaria, also known as The Change. Alexandrina Dimitrova helped one of the teams during a practical case study, related to the integration of disabled children and young adults. The practical task gave the participants a chance to learn more about the real needs and challenges that disabled children and young adults in Bulgaria are facing. With Alexandrina’s support, the team managed to develop an idea for creating a social enterprise which supports the formation of skills and training for children and young adults with intellectual disabilities.

- Alexandrina Dimitrova was chosen to be a mentor in the Organizational Development and Leadership Programme by the National Network for Children (NNC). The programme’s purpose is to systematically and sustainably support organizations that are members of NNC in setting and achieving personal goals for organizational development and leadership.
Provision of 24-hour Individual Care for the Children and Young Adults in our Family-type Centers

Project “Discover me. See me. Support me.”*
The project “Discover me. See me. Support me.” started in May 2018. Its purpose is to support the process of social inclusion and the building of skills for greater independence of the children and young adults in our centers. As part of the project, they have been included in different pedagogical and psychological activities, sensory therapy, rehabilitation, occupational therapy and mentor support.

Intensive individual and group psychological therapy was organized for the children and young adults without disabilities. They gave the following results:

- they feel calmer and the therapy engages with their emotional and behavioural needs and problems;
- there is an improvement in their independence and autonomy skills, increased learning motivation, better understanding of real life;
- they have a better idea of the labour market, their social inclusion and personal development;
- they are more confident in their own abilities and they are developing their talents.

In addition, the children and young adults were also provided with:

A mentor in personal development, who supports them in taking daily and long-term decisions, and works towards their upbringing and improvement of their general knowledge.

Therapeutic activities, which contribute to compensating their developmental difficulties, increasing their level of independence and developing their learning and working skills. The practical activities help them overcome and recover affected functions, connected to their motor activity, etc., which were impaired as a result of abandonment or neglect.

*funded by the European Union under the “Human Resources Development” Operational Programme
Art therapy and occupational therapy, which contribute to the development of the children and young adults’ labour habits, their activity and socialization, as well as provide satisfaction with their results. Art is a tool of expression and communication, especially for the non-verbal children. In the “Cooking” programme, which is part of their occupational therapy, the young adults build up their knowledge for different food products and also learn to recognize fruits and vegetables, some of which they can use to prepare simple meals by themselves. In “Gardening” they boost their skills for plant and lawn care, weeding, planting and watering flowers and vegetables.

Rehabilitation and kinesiotherapy, which are beneficial to the children by restoring and maintaining their health, improving blood circulation, warming up and moving muscle groups. Regular sessions contribute not only to their physical comfort, but also to enhancement of their mental stability.

Sensory simulation and therapy activities, through which children and young adults overcome impaired sensory functions and perceptions.
Camping and Trips

Camping and trips are definitely some of the most anticipated and exciting days of the year. In 2018 they were filled with adventures, fun experiences, challenges and learning.

In the autumn, the children and young adults without disabilities embarked on a real mountain adventure in the heart of Bulgaria - Uzana, funded by the International Women’s Club - Sofia. They participated in a mountain experience camp. Experiential learning is a methodology, through which we learn by the experience we gain in an organized and guided way.

Through fun group games the young adults had the opportunity to learn more about the features of the Stara Planina region, as well as the necessary equipment for hiking and a stay in the mountains. They learned to navigate with a map and a compass and also which natural objects and celestial bodies can help them understand where they are.

After the training sessions, the time for the ”big challenges” arrived – the climbing of two peaks in the area – Mount Korita and Mount Ispolin, and a night out camping. These adventures presented the young adults with many challenges and not just physical ones. In addition to the tiring climb and the fear of sleeping under the open sky, they faced the challenge of group work – meeting the needs and wishes of the whole group, not just their own.

Despite all the difficulties, however, they managed to overcome their fears and climb the peaks, thanks to their mutual support, desire and tenacity. Their journey was also an inward one, towards themselves. They set goals, beyond the limits of their daily lives, understood more about themselves and others, gained courage and self-esteem. And most importantly, they supported each other and showed sympathy and concern towards their friends.

Summer didn’t pass without the mandatory mountain and seaside vacations, funded by our friends from Orphan Sponsorship International. Apart from that, additional one-day excursions to the Rila Monastery, Yuchbunar and Rupite were also organized.
A long-awaited dream became reality for 9 of our children in Kazanlak. Keen on Bulgarian folk music and folklore, they are now a part of the folk group “Mavruda”, led by their music teacher, conductor and composer Dimitar Gaydarov. During the classes, they study songs from Bulgarian folklore, play and sing in a group, and prepare for their performances. Two of them - Ema and Yulian have a notable talent for singing and take individual singing lessons, which promotes their better musical understanding. As with every band, the young people from “Mavruda” must overcome some difficulties. Mr Gaydarov shares that each one of them has a strong personality and often the pursuit of self-expression turns out to be an obstacle, which they must overcome together. Apart from a music teacher, he is also a mentor and a friend to them, who helps them learn how to control their emotions and work towards improving their teamwork.

In the past year “Mavruda” took part in 6 festivals and concerts in the country and returned with well-deserved awards.

“Mavruda” folklore band is funded with the help of Sopharma Trading.
“Personally, I am impressed, because they have progressed really fast and I see constant striving for improvement in each of them. I see sporting competitiveness between the children - they always want to prepare and learn new songs. ” their musical teacher Mr. Gaydarov enthusiastically shares. He also adds: “In the past few months Ema has learnt to play the drum and mandoline. She dreams of becoming a singer and often asks me to rehearse new songs. Now she is learning “Ganyova mama dumashe” by Todor Kozhuharov and “Kanyat me mamo na tezhka svatba” by Kiril Hristov. It's a great achievement for Ema that with a lot of hard work, she is overcoming her fear of going out on stage and using her voice. And Yulian, he stands out with his amazing ear for music. He is enthusiastic about Rhodopean songs and recently he has been exploring Thracian songs which are typical to the Kazanlak area. They have more ornaments and better articulation of the voice itself, at which Yulian is very good. I think it’s only a matter of time before he goes out on a national stage and I will work in that direction and help him get there.”, Gaydarov says.
In the past year, in our Social Rehabilitation and Integration Center, we worked with 40 young adults with intellectual disabilities. We supported them in building skills for greater independence and increasing their self-esteem. The programme covered the following activities:

- **Logorhythmics** - following a music rhythm with clapping, guided by a speech therapist and a psychologist. This method helps improve the speech rhythm and breathing pace. Most of the young adults enriched their vocabulary and became more verbal.

- “**Make and learn**” and “**National identity**” aid the recalling of facts, connected to national and religious holidays, as well as other important events. The young adults learn poems, songs and create postcards and souvenirs for a particular occasion, which helps them remember and understand a particular event more easily.

- The “**I learn**” programme helped one of the girls graduate secondary school. In the same programme, a lot of young adults gained new skills - reading, writing, mathematics, recognizing colours and shapes, orientation, etc.

- **“Applied arts”** - the young adults make postcards and other hand-made items and some of them have even learned the techniques of decoupage and paper folding. They can craft flower and paper decorations and with a little help, they can design pictures with quills.

- **“Shop with me”** - it helps the young adults improve their skills in public place communication. In a group or individually, on a fixed budget, they visit a supermarket and they learn how to navigate a pedestrian route, recognize and handle banknotes and coins, become acquainted with different goods, select products within their budget, compare prices and calculate their bill, as well as communicate correctly with the store personnel and others.

- “**The stage is mine”** and “**I sing and dance**” helps to improve memory, self-trust and self-respect of the young adults, as well as overcoming shyness and anxiety. With this programme, the young adults learned new poems, sketches, lines, songs and dances and perfected their stage behaviour.

- **“Photography”** develops a sense for aesthetics through capturing beautiful landscapes and buildings. This activity helps the young adults to become acquainted with new shapes and different objects from the living and non-living world. As a result, their works were included in an exhibition at the center.
In order to support the young adults in their future professional achievements, we closely collaborate with the local Bureaus of Labour. As a result, 5 young adults from Kazanlak are working and developing their skills in different areas. Georgi and Petar are working at a fast-food restaurant after school. “I can make a small doner kebab in less than 10 seconds”, Petar shares, and Georgi is saving money, because he “has his eye on” a BMX bike.

In Kyustendil 12 young adults with disabilities are working part-time. They are coping with their responsibilities well, and they feel satisfied and significant. One of the young adults was included in a training at the Bulgarian-German professional education center in Tsarevo in order to advance his qualification to “Assistant Chef”. He successfully passed oral, written and practical exams and received a qualification diploma. He returned to Kyustendil self-confident and happy and his mother cannot describe how proud she is of her son’s achievements.
Building a Strong Organizational Culture

“In order for you to take care of others, first you need to take care of yourself. This is a main rule in the caring professions, like social services. We believe that the children can feel happy and relaxed, only if the people around them feel this way.

Working in social services is not for everyone. We are proud that our team members have brave hearts and take their work as a Mission. It is important for us to invest in them through trainings, supervisions, fun team buildings and small gestures of gratitude. We fight for their rights, because they are the people, who turn the children and young adults from “a diagnosis” to “personalities” and fill their souls with faith and hope in others, despite all the traumas and separations they have been through.“

Vania Stratieva-Dimitrova
Program Director

Team trainings in 2018

- Sensory integration and therapy training and practical sessions conducted by the sensor therapist Anna Ivanova;
- “Psychodiagnostics as a method in assessing the needs of the users”, conducted by the specialists from MRG Consult;
- “Supported decision-making for people with intellectual disabilities” facilitator training, conducted by the Bulgarian Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (BAPID)
- “Team management and effective communication”, provided by MRG Consult;
- “Transfers within the institution. Conversion to speech”, part of the “Child and their symptoms” programme by the Child and Space Association with guest-lecturer Silven Makali - psychologist, member of the Freudian Field Association, L’ACF Aquitania;
- “Pedagogy of sexuality”, conducted by specialists from the Association for pedagogical and social assistance for children - FICE Bulgaria;
- Case work with young adults training, conducted by the Association for pedagogical and social assistance for children - FICE Bulgaria;
• Participation in the 7th Psychodrama Festival - Plovdiv on the topics: “How to develop and reward the strong side of young people”, “The sorrow that frightens us”, “Human rights and sociodrama”, “Discover your voice”;

• “Team, communication, conflict” - seminar to define the challenges in working with team management, acknowledging one’s own style of communication, work and conflict, conducted by the Smokinya Foundation;

• Training on the changes in the Regulations on the Application of the Social Assistance Act, conducted by experts from the Agency for Social Assistance (ASA);

• Consultation by the English ergotherapist Heather Angilley for the children and young adults with disabilities in Kazanlak;

• “Music in action”, conducted by the Worldwide Orphans Bulgaria foundation, part of the programme “Toy Library”;

• “Dark side of young people: theory and show of violence in young workers” in Rovereto, Italy under the Erasmus Programme.

Supervisions

On a monthly basis we conduct group and individual supervisions, i.e. guidance for our teams with an independent expert. They provide our employees with support in coping with challenging behaviours, as well as an opportunity to discuss the difficulties they are facing. Throughout the supervisions they learn and try out different techniques for coping with their own emotions in their work, as well as with the emotions of the children and young adults. The frequent meetings help with providing professional help and reduce the tension and stress within the team.

Team building

Each year we organize team buildings to improve the communication between the teams, increase their motivation and unravel the potential of each and every employee.

In 2018 part of our team went on a hike to the Seven Rila Lakes, which generated the positive emotions of satisfaction, unity and support.

The rest of the team enjoyed the hospitality of our neighbour North Macedonia. Throughout their stay the employees took part in various games and presentations, which helped them improve their day-to-day teamwork.
Interns from Germany in our family-type centers in Kazanlak

In 2018 we continued our partnership with the German organization Robert Kümmert Akademie.

In the spring we welcomed two interns - Lucas and Karo, who worked for one month in two of the Cedar’s family houses in Kazanlak.

Throughout their stay, they managed to keep all the children and young adults engaged and got actively involved in different workshops and therapeutic sessions as well as in everyday activities like shopping, feeding and cleaning.

Apart from the children and young adults, the interns created strong bonds with the foundation’s team, despite the language barrier between them.

“Right from the very beginning of their stay in Kazanlak, we helped them learn several Bulgarian words, but even when they did not understand our language, they applied great sensitivity, which helped them communicate wonderfully with everyone.” – shared Denitsa Panayotova, team leader.

Throughout the entire month the interns initiated different activities, which made the everyday life of the children and young adults more interesting and exciting.

“We are happy that we had the chance to carry out different projects. The team always created a positive working environment and supported our ideas. One of the most exciting experiences was painting the columns in one of the houses. We had the children and young adults do their handprints with paint. Everybody had lots of fun and felt relaxed. Even one of the young adults, of whose reaction we were not sure, came to us in his wheelchair, moving on his own with his hands open. The entire experience had a very positive impact on his behaviour.

We decided to do finger painting on paper on the next day, to make him this happy again. ” – Lucas and Karo said.

The Cedar Foundation’s team is grateful to the interns for their devotion, motivation and care! We continue our partnership with the Academy in 2019 and cannot wait to meet the new interns!
Volunteer Support

As a result of our 8-year partnership with the International School of Zug and Luzern, in the spring of 2018, in Kyustendil, once again we welcomed a group of students from Switzerland.

As an end of their fundraising activities, conducted throughout the school year, they successfully completed a volunteer project within our services in Kyustendil. The project activities were entirely funded by resources, they raised at various charity initiatives.

The surplus of their raised funds was invested in buying a much-needed van for our centers in Kyustendil.

The Swiss volunteers’ visit was exciting for them as much as it was for the children, young adults and employees in our centers. In the span of 2 days they all participated in various repairing and art activities - they worked on creating flower and herb gardens, building furniture from wooden pallets, building a tent and garden swings, and making a tactile path, which will be used for the social rehabilitation and integration therapy sessions in the center.

“I decided to get in touch with The Cedar Foundation as I was immensely drawn to the work the organization does with some of the most unprivileged children and youths in Bulgaria.

The amazing, thoughtful work that Cedar does gives me hope that the circumstances in which these children in Kyustendil and Kazanlak were born will not be the circumstances in which they spend their lives. It gives me confidence that there are people who understand the lack of justice and its social factors and decide to dedicate their careers to tackling it.

Most of the volunteer work I do for The Cedar Foundation involves translation of the articles they publish on the problems that the members of their team face and the solutions they propose and enact.

Due to my personal circumstances, I’m not working in the field with their child care professionals. I am also not lobbying for changes in the governmental approach to children and youths in need. But I believe that helping out the people who help out the most is more than just a gesture to these children and youths. By helping The Cedar Foundation publish its content in English, I believe I am contributing to a heightened awareness of everything they do, and, by extension, to a stronger, international support of their work.

This is why I strongly recommend volunteering for Cedar. Giving them a hand in achieving their goals helps children and youths live healthier, more educated and dignified lives.”

Andrey Krachkov
Volunteer
Achieving Financial Stability

“Steady increase in fundraising inflow outlines the improved financial performance of the foundation. This combined with efficient management of various project costs and operational expenses creates a healthy financial position with an outlook for further improvement.”

Dimitar Rusev
Financial Director, Squircle Capital Bulgaria
Member of the Cedar Foundation’s Board of Directors

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We would like to thank Cedar Switzerland for covering our administrative costs.
Highlights

Party with a cause
Throughout the past year we developed the idea of a Party with a cause - an opportunity for individual sponsors to combine a happy personal occasion with the support of a good cause. A lot of people embraced the idea and became ambassadors of our mission. We found new friends.

Marketing with a cause
Marketing with a cause is becoming an increasingly popular tool for fundraising. In 2018 we had the chance to collaborate with one of the most successful Bulgarian brands - DRAG. We sold approximately 400 bicycles with a cause and established a good partnership with this socially responsible business in Bulgaria.

Annual Charity Ball
In last year’s report we marked the 2017 Charity Ball as the most successful by far. We are proud to share, that in 2018 we surpassed these results. We organized our first themed ball (Once Upon a Time Charity Ball) and shared our fairy-tale with over 200 people. Together we raised over BGN 100 000 for the cause.

Continuity
Building trust is key for working with our partners. And in 2018 a big part of our long-term friends remained by our side and supported us in frequent and new initiatives.

“(...) After all, giving the present of happiness is the best selfishness in the world, because we, people, feel happy, when we are useful.

Doing good can and should be a practice - then it becomes a habit of the heart!”

Nikolay and Diana Georgievi,
Wedding with a Cause
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Filip Genov
First Vice-President, Special Projects, UniCredit Bulbank

Stuart Byfield
Educator, International School of Zug and Lucern

Natalia Kirilova-Todorova
Executive Director, Digital Marketing Group

Mark O’Sullivan
Executive Director, Cedar Tanzania

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The Cedar Foundation • Annual Report 2018
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We would also like to thank all individual donors and supporters who continue to make our work possible.
cedarfoundation.org