



Annual Report 2017

The Cedar Foundation



changing lives!



Dear friends,

The following report will introduce you to The Cedar Foundation's accomplishments during the past year. It will provide you with information about the number of children and young adults we support, their development and successes as well as the steps that we have taken in our work to change the attitudes and policies towards underprivileged children and youth. I would like to take this opportunity to tell a story that shows what happens beyond the words of this report, and that is what makes positive change possible.



A Statement from our Executive Director

A year and a half ago, a 21-year old man with an intellectual disability had to leave his grandmother's house as she could no longer provide sustainable care for him. A social worker from his hometown at the Black Sea coast brought him to one of our family-type homes in Kyustendil. Shortly after their arrival, the social worker left, while the young man had to stay. It turned out that no one had told him that our center was to be his new home. Instead, he was misled to believe that he had come to Kyustendil on a trip. The young man felt rejected and resentful. He began running away, jumping over the fence. However, every time he attempted an escape, there was a member of our team who comforted and reassured him. And every time he felt abandoned, our team showed him that he is loved and respected.

He no longer attempts to flee. In the summer of 2017 he started a job and has had the incredible opportunity to travel to Italy along with seven other young adults with disabilities and the accompanying members of our team. He boarded a plane for the first time, visited new places, met peers from various countries and took part in seminars. Upon his return, he brought souvenirs for everyone from his family-type home, for every member of our team and every child and youth he lives with. He bought these souvenirs from his own savings.

This and other similar stories' happy conclusions are possible because of the dedication of The Cedar Foundation's team, who works every day so that our 100 children and youths in Kyustendil and Kazanlak are loved, supported, accepted and valued. We will continue to care for them as well as to work for a sustainable change in Bulgaria's social system. It is difficult at times, but we know that change is achievable as we are not alone. Our partners, donors, and volunteers stand with us.

I would like to express my gratitude to the entire team of The Cedar Foundation as well as to everyone who supports us daily. Together we change lives.

Alexandrina Dimitrova
Executive Director, The Cedar Foundation



The Problem and our Solution

More than 7000 children and young adults in Bulgaria grow up without parental care. Nearly a thousand of them are in state institutions.

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
- **Offer** round-the-clock individual care and specialized support to underprivileged children and youths
- **Support** parents of young adults with intellectual disabilities

The Past Year in Numbers

In 2017:

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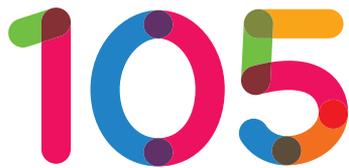
Largest NGO provider
of „family-type center” social
services in Bulgaria

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social services

A stylized number '24/7' composed of overlapping, colorful geometric shapes in shades of orange, blue, green, and pink.

individual care

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children and young adults
in our care

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adopted children

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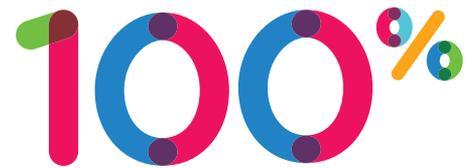
employees

A stylized number '80' composed of overlapping, colorful geometric shapes in shades of green, blue, orange, and pink.

trained professionals

A stylized number '87' composed of overlapping, colorful geometric shapes in shades of green, blue, orange, and pink.

volunteers

A stylized number '100%' composed of overlapping, colorful geometric shapes in shades of pink, blue, orange, and green.

of the funding raised in
Bulgaria invested in our
programs.

Provoking a positive change in the social policies and attitudes

In order to achieve sustainable and large-scale change we work directly with local and national authorities as well as with other nongovernmental organizations and networks. The Cedar Foundation is a member of Eurochild, The National Network for Children and the “Childhood 2025” Coalition. We are co-chairs of the Permanent expert working group on deinstitutionalization together with the State Agency for Child Protection and we are members of the working group for the establishment of a new Social Services Act.

In 2017:

- We were one of the initiators of the changes in the Regulations for the application of the Social Assistance Act. We actively participated in the task force, working with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy to develop the changes. Thus, we prevented the unnecessary and unplanned transfer of more than 1500 children and youths with disabilities from their current family-type homes to new and unfamiliar centers.
- We participated in the sessions of the Monitoring Subcommittee for the Operational Programme “Human Resources Development” of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. Due to our, as well other nongovernmental organizations’ insistence, the planning of new social services for children and youths who are still in state institutions included training sessions for the teams which would be caring for them as well as for transfer preparations.
- For yet another year we authored the section on deinstitutionalization in the “Report Card 2017” of The National Network for Children, where we reviewed the policies and practices in the field in 2016. We presented our conclusions to the Committee on Children, Youth and Sport in the National Assembly.
- We continued our advocacy for wage increases for social services employees and increased acknowledgment of the invaluable work they perform for the most vulnerable groups in Bulgarian society.



Local Initiatives

For a second consecutive year, we organized a Spring Charity Ball in Kazanlak. The deputy mayor of the Municipality of Kazanlak as well as other representatives of the local authorities and businesses attended the event.

Together with Mrs. Maya Manolova, the Republic of Bulgaria's Ombudswoman, we organized a charity event in support of children and youth with disabilities from the family-type homes "Siyanie" in Kyustendil. Local entrepreneurs, business representatives and public and cultural figures attended the event.



- We launched a new web-page, which garnered a weekly average of **153 visits**
- We **increased the likes** of our Facebook page **by 362**
- We **published 178 posts** on Facebook, reaching an average of **557 people**
- We attracted **32 new partners** to our cause





Sharing of Experience and Capacity Building

In our twelve years of existence, we have gained significant experience and expertise in the social sphere. We constantly learn new things but also share our experiences and best practices.

In 2017:

- We were invited by the international office of SOS Children's Villages to hold a webinar for 20 representatives of the organization from Central and Eastern Europe. The topics of the webinar included: the management of social services with government funding, cooperation between the nongovernmental sector, the state and local authorities and social advocacy;
- We monitored the quality of a social service that offers around-the-clock care for children deprived of parental care. We were chosen to perform this task by For Our Children Foundation;
- We participated in and shared Bulgaria's experience at an international forum on deinstitutionalization in Brussels.

Provision of 24-hour individual care for children and young adults in our family-type centers

Camps – working towards a deeper connection between the children, youth, and our team

Every year at The Cedar Foundation we aim to provide a program for summer recreation for the children and youths we serve. Our summer camps at the seaside or in the mountains are always eagerly anticipated. Many activities ranging from talent evenings and photo challenges to sports competitions take place. The focus of the past year was the “Feeling Secure Together” camp which took place in the village of Ravda by the Black Sea. Fourteen children and youths without disabilities from one of our family-type centers in Kazanlak attended the camp. The program offered various ‘missions’, which aimed to stimulate and develop teamwork, identification and recognition of emotions, as well as to build trust and a sense of belonging between members of the group. We believe that the development of a reliable and stable relationship between the youths is fundamental to the success of our service. Their traumatic past and delicate age (most of the children being between 11 and 18 years old) implies the need for sustained efforts in order to provide a safe, yet stimulating environment.



Case Managers/ Mentors

Every child and every youth we care for has a personal mentor (in the case of children and youths with no disability) or case managing social worker (for the children and youths with disabilities). Mentors and case managers have the most experience with the child or youth in question; their emotional status, anxieties and aspirations. They are the ones who can give advice, provide guidance, and are prepared to provide personal support in the case of a challenge or an emergency.





Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapy is a method for working with people with disabilities, which aims to develop and improve their physical abilities (fine and gross motor skills) as well as to stimulate their initiative and autonomy through the performance of everyday tasks.

Occupational therapy sessions at The Cedar Foundation's services are led by trained specialists who work with children and youths both individually and in groups through extracurricular activities and clubs.

Through gardening, pet care and culinary activities such as creating menus and the preparation of various dishes, the children and youths from our homes develop their work habits, master organizational skills in the house, further their sense of autonomy and responsibility and most importantly, feel useful, fulfilled and valuable.





Success Story

“The Cedar Foundation made our childhood dreams come true. It gave us the opportunity to make friends we won’t forget and to be tutored by teachers who gave us all their love, support, and warmth.”

At the end of 2017, we contacted the parents of two of the past years adopted children - a brother and sister now living in the USA. In 2015 we transferred them away from a state institution to one of our family-type homes in Kazanlak. During their stay with us, they received unconditional love and support, established true friendships and developed their talents.

We approached their parents, asking them to record short clips of their children in which they would share what The Cedar Foundation meant for them. Their father said that they were so excited about the project that they wrote a script which they would read in front of the camera. Here is a brief quote from their video:

“The Cedar Foundation made our childhood dreams come true. It gave us the opportunity to make friends we won’t forget and to be tutored by teachers who gave us all their love, support, and warmth.

In the space of two years, The Cedar Foundation made our friends and us feel special. They took us to different places to show us that it’s not just children with parents who are capable of anything. The Cedar Foundation filled our hearts with happiness. To us, this was something new, something which made us forget the offenses, the shouting and the hate amongst which we lived before. It showed us that we mean something, that we are important and valuable to them.”



We create opportunities for increased autonomy for the youths we support

Leaving the Nest

We at The Cedar Foundation believe in the potential of people with disabilities and encourage them to explore their personal capabilities. In June 2017, six youths from our family-type homes and two from the social rehabilitation and integration center left the country for the first time to participate in an international exchange program in Turin, Italy. The project was made possible through the invitation of the Italian organization Il sogno di una cosa in partnership with the French Association Fenêtres as part of the European program Erasmus+. The main purpose of the program was to encourage the exchange of experience between organizations providing social services, as well as to create opportunities for social inclusion of disabled youth by motivating them to become more autonomous and self-confident. During their 10-day stay, the youths participated in various group activities on topics such as “Home Management”, “Area Mobility”, “Food and Cooking”, and “Leaving the Nest.” They visited a didactic farm, entered an orienteering race, prepared ice cream and participated in a football competition. They performed bravely and sincerely. They proved to themselves and to us that they are highly capable when given the chance and came back home after amassing a trove of new impressions, skills and valuable friendships.

Center for Social Rehabilitation and Integration

At the Center for Social Rehabilitation and Integration in Kyustendil, our team works with youths from our family-type homes as well as youths with disabilities who live with their families in the city. In addition to traditional therapy sessions (i.e. sessions with speech therapists, counsellors, art therapists, kinesitherapists), our center provides youths with support when starting a new job and adapting to the workplace. With our help, in 2017 two of the youths who visit the center began work at the Slunce kindergarten as part of the employment and training program for people with permanent disabilities. The center is also a place where the parents have the opportunity to share the daily difficulties and challenges they face, exchange ideas and receive specialist advice.



Megaphone Youth Network

Two of the youths from our family-type homes in Kazanlak are part of the youth network Megaphone - a platform of the The National Network for Children dedicated to child and youth involvement. Socio-educative and public campaigning activities related to children's rights are embedded within the program, in which youths can participate in two stages. During the first stage, youths master the ability to understand and protect their personal as well as other people's rights as part of group activities within a safe space, while during the second stage, they participate directly in The National Network for Children's most important annual initiatives. Through their participation our youths gained the self-confidence and assuredness to communicate their ideas freely, they learned how to map out and follow their goals and established new friendships.





Success
Story

A New Friendship

The friendship between Stefcho and Yulian began during an international exchange project in Italy. Stefan is a young man who lives in a protected home in Kazanlak, managed by The Cedar Foundation and Yulian is a youth who comes from a family that visits the center for social rehabilitation and integration in Kyustendil. They shared a room during their stay in Turin, helped one another and worked as a pair for many of their assigned activities. Before their departure, Yulian's mother was anxious and worried about the idea of her son sharing a room with another boy, her fears were assuaged and she was pleasantly surprised of the budding friendship and attachment between the two boys. She promptly invited Stefcho to visit them at their home in Kyustendil. Stefcho and Yulian can't wait for their next meeting!



Building a Strong Organizational Culture

Driven by the belief that our team is our most valuable resource, in 2017 we continued investing in the personal and professional development of our employees and providing support to our volunteers.

Trainings

Our team's specialists participated in a number of training sessions helping them find answers to the challenges they face on an everyday basis in their work. They encouraged them to try new approaches and resources and to exchange experiences and ideas with their colleagues in the field. These are the trainings which representatives of our team have undergone in 2017:

- “Specifics in the Work with Children with Multiple Disabilities. Modern Approaches”, organized by Karin Dom in Varna addressing topics such as “Creative therapies—music therapy and art therapy”, “The quality of life of children with complex and intensive needs for support”, “Children’s nutrition and diet” and “How to communicate with parents effectively during the process of integration.”
- A training for professionals who work with children and youth exhibiting defiant behaviors, organized by The Lumos Foundation, discussing “An Introduction to intellectual challenges and autism spectrum disorder”, “Positive behavior support and strategies for behavior management”, “Communicational problems and strategies” and “Personal and staff regard”
- A training on the topic of “Active family support”
- A training as well as practical sessions on sensory integration
- A training on the topic of “Bulgarian sign language - the basic signs”
- A training on applied behavioral analysis led by Eyal Cohen of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, including topics on “Evaluating a child’s needs using VB-MAPP” and “Training approaches with applied behavioral analysis, overcoming unacceptable behavior”

Supervision

All specialists who work directly with children and youth in our centers participate in regular group supervisions. Supervision is an important element of social work which is necessary for ensuring the quality of the social services offered. It is a process that allows the employee to receive feedback and discuss the quality of their work with the help of an independent expert.

Teambuilding Events

Our teams from Kazanlak had their annual teambuilding at the beginning of September 2017 in Burgas. The atmosphere by the sea and the opportunity for informal communication outside the workplace injected fresh energy and enthusiasm for the work into the team.

The teams from the family-type centers “Siyanie” and the center for social rehabilitation and integration “Sineva” in Kyustendil enjoyed their teambuilding event in Kriva Palanka, Macedonia. This close location was very welcoming and the program contributed to bonding and fostering team identity across the two teams.



Support from Interns and Volunteers

As part of our partnership with the German organization *Robert Kümmert Akademie* on a project funded by the Erasmus+ program, in April 2017 we welcomed two interns to work in one of our centers in Kazanlak. Aiko and Anika, two students working on their degrees in the social sector, participated in various group games and individual activities. Their diverse ideas about therapy and games grabbed the attention of both children and youths and they easily established great emotional bonds with them as well as with the members of our team. In addition, the volunteers actively engaged in the everyday activities at the center while also initiating activities where they could pay individual attention to every child and youth. Our team at the center could always count on them and their support was much appreciated.

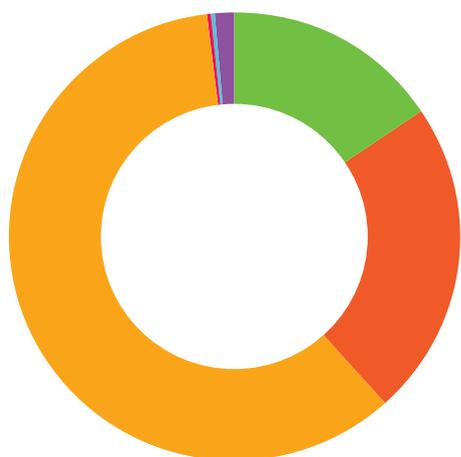
We continued our cooperation with the *International school of Zug and Luzern*. Towards the end of May 2017, with the help of a group of 14 middle school students and support from their parents and teachers, we implemented a project for the construction and furnishing of domed tents to create spaces for relaxation and sensory therapy in two of our centers in Kazanlak. During their stay, the students planted fruit trees, vegetables, herb gardens and flowers that our children and youth continued to look after during the summer. Together with the children and youth from our centers, they took part in maintenance, art, and decorative activities as well as in rose-picking, a lesson in Bulgarian traditional dances, a barbecue party and a sports day.

Fourteen-year-old Alex spoke about his experience with us:

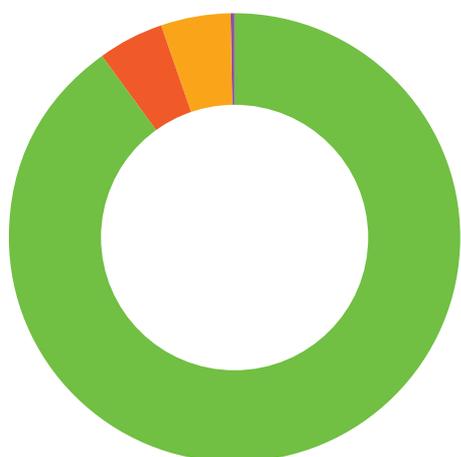
“Before I came here I shaved my hair off for the Cedar Foundation and I raised 1 100 CHF for the cause. I also made a presentation about the foundation for the people, who asked why I did it...So far I really enjoy helping here. It’s great experience, because you get to know new people and try different things. Everyone should try it!”



Achieving Financial Stability



Income	Amount in BGN	%
individual donations	215,288.55	15.6%
corporate donations	314,922.53	22.8%
state funding	823,060.36	59.6%
grants	3,660.39	0.3%
economic activity	4,623.96	0.3%
in-kind donations	18,545.44	1.3%
interest and exchange rate gains	0.00	0%
Total income	1,380,101.23	



Expenditure	Amount in BGN	%
programme expenses	1,238,212.68	90.1%
fundraising expenses	66,001.28	4.8%
general and administrative expenses	66,615.74	4.8%
financial loss	3,363.36	0.2%
Total expenditure	1,374,193.06	

We would like to thank
The Cedar Foundation- Switzerland
for covering our administrative costs

Key moments from the past year

Annual Charity Ball

The 2017 Annual Charity Ball was the most successful in recent years. We invested much time and effort to attract allies and partners, ultimately managing to raise nearly 85 000 leva to help us continue working towards our mission.



Pub Quiz

In 2017, we continued our tradition of organizing charity pub quizzes. We acquainted more people with our cause and won reliable and trustworthy supporters amongst Bulgaria's young entrepreneurs.



Corporate Teambuilding

We organized our first corporate teambuilding with a cause. We invited 30 lawyers to our centers where they met some of our children and youths, took part in fun activities with them and embraced The Cedar Foundation's cause with their hearts.



Other partnership events in support of our cause

- Partnership with Begach Sports Club
- Around the world in a day
- St. Patrick's Day Ball



A few words from our partners

“I had previously cared for some of these residents when they lived at an orphanage nearby, so I was thankful for the opportunity to begin volunteering with the Cedar Foundation so that I could visit one of the residents whom I had previously known. The most valuable aspect of my participation is that two times a week I get to spend quality time with a young lady who hasn't had a lot of love poured into her life throughout the years. I know that my time investment and my investment of myself in another life is making a difference. This is very satisfying, especially as I see her responding to such an outpouring of love. I know that my visits are improving the life of this young lady and I am thankful for the opportunity afforded me by the Cedar Foundation.”

-Cecily Willard,
volunteer in one of our
Family-type centers in Kazanlak

“We chose to support the Cedar foundation because the nature of their work is extremely challenging. It requires continuous efforts as opposed to any short term project. The care for people with disabilities is a constant, ongoing process, complex and very specific in its essence. We were inspired by the positive way in which they communicate the problems as well as the solutions they are working towards.

I appreciate the proactiveness in their work with the donors and the fact that they create a friendly and cooperative environment for their partners to share. This is very motivating and stimulates the accumulation of more positive energy towards the cause.

The NGOs in Bulgaria have to learn how to communicate with the business as to achieve faster results and create more sustainable practices. What is remarkable about the Cedar foundation is their ability to communicate effortlessly with different sectors and on different hierarchical levels.”

-Elena Dimitrova,
Human Resources Manager,
Schneider Electric

List of all partners who supported Cedar in 2017

We would also like to thank all individual donors and supporters who continue to make our work possible!

Alta Oils
America for Bulgaria Foundation
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Arteks
Beery.bg
Begach
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BoardGames.BG
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Bridal House
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LZ Yachting
M+S Hydraulic AD
Magic Outdoors
Mall of Sofia
McCarthy's
Mega Mall Sofia
Mokuso Massages
MOTO-PFOHE
Murphy's Misfits Rugby Club
MWAH
myhome.bg
NeedUs
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