ABOUT THE NNC

The National Network for Children (NNC) is an alliance of 122 organisations from the whole country, working with children and families in four main domains: health, education, family, and child and juvenile justice.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to strengthen and facilitate the cooperation between the NGOs and all the interested parties in order to guarantee the rights and welfare of children.

NETWORK MEMBERS
Dear colleagues and friends,

Our overall balance for 2013 showed that it was a year full of challenges faced by the cause for better life of children in our country, as well as by us as a network of civil organisations working for children and families.

In the past year we continued our united efforts to make the child welfare a priority in every sphere of life and we do believe that someday it will become a fact. As a network of civil society organisations we advocated for the opportunity the citizens to be able to participate in making the decisions that affect them, so that the civil service would service the citizens, and not vice versa. And most importantly – we will continue to insist that despite the political crisis, working for the cause of children must be a top priority for all government institutions, local authorities, businesses, civic organisations and individuals.

In the past year we at the National Network for Children:

• Insisted for the development of an independent family policy with a clear objective, measures and activities, which would envisage specific commitments in various sectors.
• Studied what parents think about the right of opinion, the right to protection from corporal punishment and the right to protection by the state;
• Continued to reiterate on the importance of the way in which the closure of children’s homes in our country is performed;
• Worked also for the educational reform and developed a Vision for Education;
• Tried to remind that children’s rights apply to all children, no matter whether they were born in Bulgaria or are refugee children.

And in 2014 we will continue to work together, united by the cause to make life of children better!

Vesela Banova
‘Child and Space’,
President of the NNC Management Board

Dear colleagues and friends,

2013 was a turbulent year. A year, when we experienced three governments, two parliaments, ongoing protests and counter-protests.

In this complex political environment to guarantee the rights and welfare of children was a serious challenge for our entire society and country. More than half of the children in the country live at risk of poverty and social exclusion, maternal and child health are not a priority for the health care system and we rank last in reading literacy of students aged 15-16 in the EU.

At the same time, last year has shown us that a new generation of children and young people is coming. Generation full of energy, enthusiasm, fighting spirit and determination to live a normal and dignified life. Children and young people stated their opinion on a number of issues, and argued it strongly and with proper justification.

The National Network for Children believes and will continue to advocate that the key sectoral policies require major reforms in which children and young people must play an active role!

For this to happen it is necessary to unite the efforts of the entire society so that all Bulgarian children could have a family and safe home, access to health care, quality education and hope for the future.

Only together and with faith, perseverance and consistency we can place the issues of child welfare and support for the parents in the focus of the work of politicians and public administration.

George Bogdanov
Executive Director,
National Network for Children
There are four main areas of influence that cover also the NNC thematic working groups – Family, Health, Education and Juvenile Justice.

The organisations working in the Network have reached more than 80,940 children and over 7,331 families in one year.

More than 1,600 people work in the member organisations of the National Network for Children.

More than 2,200 people were volunteers in the member organisations of the Network.

Nearly 6,000 professionals have been trained in the NNC member organisations.

At the end of 2013 the member organisations of the National Network for Children were 122. Further information about them you can find on www.nmd.bg

Fifteen new NGOs joined the National Network for Children in 2013.

In 2013 the National Network for Children provided consultation to 40 organisations on various issues related to their work for children and families.

In 2013 we have disseminated 30 good practices of our member organisations.
THE YEAR IN POLICIES
FOR THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN BULGARIA

Average 3 200 61%

Over 80

Family Policy

More than half of Bulgarian parents (61%) claimed that they would not spank their child, while the rest 39% were in favour of spanking as a disciplinary approach. These were the results of a survey on ‘Attitudes of parents and young people to three of the children’s rights’ commissioned by the NNC to ESTAT Agency. 94% believe that they should encourage their child to express his/her opinion. The intervention of the state in cases related to children’s right to protection from corporal punishment was approved by 58% of the respondents. 80-85% of the respondents stated clearly that they are ready to report in case they witness a child abuse. Over 80%, however, were adamant that attempts to intervene in family disputes would bring nothing but trouble.

200 organisations opposed the transfer of the State Agency for Child Protection and prevented it. The NNC reacted strongly to the proposed transfer of the SAPC to the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Nearly 200 organisations insisted for the establishment of an independent body to monitor what is happening to children and families in our country. As a result of the active campaign the State Agency for Child Protection preserved its status as an agency under the Council of Ministers.

The NNC participation contributed for over 80 changes for more efficient development of the operational programs for the new programming period 2014-2020. Representatives of our member organisations contributed to the development of the Partnership Agreement, the Human Resources Development OP (HRDOP), the Good Governance OP and the Science and Education for Smart Growth OP, so that they could provide greater number of opportunities for supporting the work for children and families in the country.

We were very active in the work for better policies for children and families in the country – in 2013 we sent more than 22 official positions and opinions on key issues related to children; we sent more than 100 letters; participated in the work of 11 working groups in a number of ministries and agencies with specific proposals in the different areas of children’s lives.

100

Child Refugees

The NNC reacted strongly to the proposed transfer of the SACP to the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Nearly 200 organisations insisted for the establishment of an independent body to monitor what is happening to children and families in our country. As a result of a meeting in the Council of Ministers it was decided not to intervene in family disputes.

We continued to insist on the development of an independent family policy. The National Network for Children issued an opinion concerning the Law on Family Allowances for Children, which once again emphasized on the need for a comprehensive policy rather than making changes piece by piece.

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We contributed to the interim evaluation report on Bulgaria’s progress in observing the human rights as part of the Universal Periodic Review, a new mechanism of the UN Human Rights Council.

We sent a Statement to all political parties which underlined the need for placing the children as a priority in the government policy.

Average 3 is the score that the government got in ‘Report Card 2013: What is the average score of the government for childcare?’ The results of the evaluation in 2013 were even lower than in 2012. They showed the urgent need for measures in the complex policy area for family support, education and health. The results were presented to the media in April, and to the representatives of the competent government authorities at a special meeting in the Council of Ministers.

What is the average score of the government for childcare?'

The Progress of Bulgaria

We contributed to the interim evaluation report on Bulgaria’s progress in observing the human rights as part of the Universal Periodic Review, a new mechanism of the UN Human Rights Council.

We submitted proposals for the development of the National Programme for Child Protection, and insisted on adequate actions within the process of closing children’s homes, on promoting measures to address poor housing conditions and the need for adequate housing policy, on strengthening the capacity of ASA with additional personnel, training, finance and material resources, and others.

Protection Programme

We contributed to the interim evaluation report on Bulgaria’s progress in observing the human rights as part of the Universal Periodic Review, a new mechanism of the UN Human Rights Council.

We contributed proposals for the development of the National Programme for Child Protection, and insisted on adequate actions within the process of closing children’s homes, on promoting measures to address poor housing conditions and the need for adequate housing policy, on strengthening the capacity of ASA with additional personnel, training, finance and material resources, and others.

Priority

We sent a Statement to all political parties which underlined the need for placing the children as a priority in the government policy.

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We sent a Statement to all political parties which underlined the need for placing the children as a priority in the government policy.
2013 did not bring any major changes for better policies for children and families. There is still no independent body to monitor the observance of children’s rights. Child poverty in the country continues to be the highest in the EU. In 2013 were adopted some important strategic documents that are expected to contribute to the welfare of children, such as the National Health Strategy 2014-2020, the Strategy for Lifelong Learning. The National Network for Children continued its efforts to place children and families as a priority in the government policy.

REPORT CARD 2013

What is the average government score for childcare?

“Report Card 2013: What is the average government score for childcare?” is the annual report of the National Network for Children on the progress of government institutions in implementing their own commitments to the children of Bulgaria. The selection of themes and commitments is based on a detailed review of all national strategies, plans and programs affecting the policies or measures related to children. The commitments are split into five main areas: General principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Family environment and alternative care, Education, Healthcare and Juvenile justice.

In 2013 was made a review of the progress in the implementation of 40 separate commitments. In the calendar year 2012, the score for the implementation of selected government commitments in the policy areas for children and families in Bulgaria was 2.90— even lower than that in 2011. Highest (average 3.44) is the score in ‘Juvenile justice’, which is mostly due to the work performed in 2012 for developing an action plan and timetable for the implementation of the Concept for Juvenile Justice Reform. Second scored the ‘Education’ area with reported improvements in the coverage and work on new state educational standards for general and specialised education. In the area ‘Family environment and alternative care’ with higher than average 3 scored the development of foster care and adoption, and ‘Healthcare’ remained with lowest scores, with the only reported improvement in the reduced indicators for infant mortality. The most acute problems indicated in the report relate to child mental health, inclusive education and child discrimination.

These scores show the urgent need for measures in the complex policy area for family support, education and health. The results were presented to the media in April, and to the representatives of the competent government authorities at a special meeting in the Council of Ministers.

Besides monitoring how these commitments are fulfilled, the Report Card provided recommendations for specific measures that could improve the lives of children in our country. Part of the recommendations relate to the required immediate actions.

In mid-April 2013 the National Network for Children presented to journalists, politicians and experts from NGOs the second issue of the Report Card – ‘Report Card 2013: What is the average government score for childcare?’. This is an independent review, which shows the degree of implementation of the commitments undertaken by the government related to policies for children and families. The report gave the following marks to the government:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Childcare Policy</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
<td>Average 2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family environment and alternative care</td>
<td>Average 2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>Poor 2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Average 3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile justice</td>
<td>Average 3.44</td>
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The main 13 recommendations outlined in the Report Card which would lead to improving the life and welfare of Bulgarian children are the following:

1. Ombudsman for the child to ensure that the rights of children are observed;
2. Sufficient number of different forms of childcare and support for the parents;
3. Standards for prevention of abandonment of babies;
4. Increasing the number of social workers and improving the quality of social work;
5. Eliminating the option for dis-adoption and the practice of ‘secret of adoption’;
6. Improving the work related to de-institutionalisation and foster care services;
7. Establishing maternal and child health centres in all regions;
8. Development of a network for mental healthcare and support for children and young people in the whole the country;
9. Taking urgent measures to reduce infant mortality in the regions with the highest indicators;
10. Modernising the Bulgarian school by means of a new law on education;
11. Building specialised facilities for interviewing children based on specific standards;
12. Development of services for children with behavioural problems;
As a partner in the Eurochild and ‘Hope and Homes for Children’ campaign ‘Opening Doors for Europe’s Children’ the National Network for Children had the opportunity to present the current problems in the closure of children’s homes in Bulgaria to the competent EC officials. The campaign aims to demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of using EU funds for that process, thereby encouraging the use of funds in the best possible way in the different countries in Europe.

Together with the Coalition and the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria we urged for the adoption of amendments to the Guidelines for Applicants for the ‘Childhood for All’ Project, which would allow for more flexibility in order to ensure the quality of the childcare; as well as for a change in the methodology for calculating the costs of the Family-type Placement Centres in order to achieve more adequate care for the children placed in there. At the end of the year some of the guidelines were changed, but the standard for the costs remained unchanged.

We have contributed to the third monitoring report on the implementation of the Action Plan for deinstitutionalisation covering the period July 2012 – June 2013. The Chapter ‘Interaction with NGOs’ contains a detailed text about input of the NNC to the process.

We drew attention to the case of Russevi family from Nikolaevo and the evidence for the helplessness of the state in the face of poverty, and the ineffectiveness of social assistance cash benefits when it is provided outside the logic of family support.

We have prepared positions on the need to introduce real family income taxation and develop independent family policy as well as on the need for statutory regulation of the six innovative services that should replace the care in the pilot infant homes under the ‘DIRECTION family’ project.

The National Network for Children takes part in the newly formed inter-institutional working group ‘Improving the care and services for children and families’. The group is chaired by the State Agency for Child Protection, and involves representatives from all institutions competent on the issues of children and families.

The National Network for Children has raised the issue of the remuneration for the social workers employed in the Child Protection Departments under the ‘Strengthening the capacity of the ASA’ Project it was made the same as that of their colleagues. This reduced the permanent staff turnover which was threatening for the quality of work.

The introduced changes improved the preparation of foster families for their role during the transition of the child placed with them to the adoptive parents.

Furthermore, the NNC member organisations provided comments on the draft state educational requirements for obtaining the qualification for the occupation ‘foster parent’ prepared by the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training.

Since 2013 the NNC members have participated in the development of statutory regulation and financial standard for the innovative services to prevent the abandonment and placement of babies in care homes.

We joined efforts with many organisations to monitor and offer specific actions to guarantee that the complex process of deinstitutionalisation in Bulgaria is happening in the best interest of the child – we joined the Coalition ‘Childhood 2025’ which unites 17 non-governmental organisations and individuals.

The aim of the Coalition is to obtain assurance for sustainable development of the deinstitutionalisation, regardless of political changes, with top priority – development of individual community-based care for each child participating in the process. Together with the Coalition we take part in a number of advocacy activities to improve the quality of care for children and to improve the management and coordination of the deinstitutionalisation process.

In the past year our main focus continued to be the way in which the deinstitutionalisation process has been implemented in our country – closure of children’s homes, prevention of abandonment and support for families, provision of alternative care and support for care leavers.

We continued to work on synchronising the procedures for foster care and adoption. With the participation of the Network and its members were supplemented the training programs for the prospective foster parents and adoptive parents; the ‘Methodological guidance for cooperation and coordination of the administrative procedures for domestic and international adoption’ was updated. The introduced changes improved the preparation of foster families for their role during the transition of the child placed with them to the adoptive parents.

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THEMATIC AREA: EDUCATION

Major issue in education remains the need for a comprehensive education reform which should make the environment in kindergartens and schools more friendly, more secure and supporting the development of children. Unfortunately, after the deliberations on the draft law on preschool and school education were almost finalised in 2013, the work on a new law on education started all over again.

We launched a process of dialogue and coordination on the objectives and vision of education, shared by the members of the National Network for Children. Our ideas about what the school should look like in the future were presented in a publication in the special edition of ‘Capital’ newspaper – ‘The New 20 – What will happen in the next two decades.’

The National Network for Children continued its efforts for the development and adoption of a new Law on preschool and school education. The development of a draft law on school education started all over again at the end of the year, and since then there has been no information about its content, method of development and vision for the reform.

In 2013 we placed as a new focus the topic of early childhood development. We did a review and analysis of the practices of early childhood development in the country in order to make specific recommendations. We also helped to coordinate the making of a film for promoting the importance of the work for early childhood development.

We actively advocated for easier access for children and students to school trips – we proposed changes to the draft Ordinance on the organisation and conducting of recreational and tourist trips of children and students, and in the Tourism Act by insisting on equal opportunities for all children and students in Bulgaria, with clear minimum standards for adults engaged in protecting their life, health and safety, and for flexibility for travel promoters about how and with which partners to implement the specific trip.

As a result of our participation in the programming of the ‘Science and Education for Smart Growth’ Operational Programme the directors of schools and kindergartens have been added as a target group in that program. This will create opportunities to support them, and thus accordingly to improve the way in which the childcare and educational facilities are managed.

Art. 28

‘All children and young people are entitled to basic education which shall be free. Rich countries should support the poor countries in achieving this. Discipline in schools should respect human dignity. Young people should be encouraged to reach the highest educational levels they are able to.’

RIGHT TO OPINION

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THEMATIC AREA: HEALTH

Health continues to be a critical area of child welfare. The infant mortality rate continues to be one of the highest in Europe. Health education continues to be delivered as an elective education or as a pilot, which restricts health awareness among children. Bulgaria has no system for psychiatric care for children developed.

Art. 24
Convention on the Rights of the Child (publication adapted for children, unicef.bg)

‘Children have a right to high quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and clean environment in order to be healthy.
Rich countries should help poor countries to achieve this.’

In 2013, due to the cooperation of the National Network for Children and the magazine ‘Practical Paediatrics’ a number of articles on health-social problems reached many doctors and health professionals. The magazine published also articles of experts, representing some of the Network members.

Proposals of the National Network for Children on improving access to medical services of people in remote and inaccessible areas, activities related to the improvement of mental health and psychiatric care, the emphasis on maternal and child health and the goals of reducing child morbidity and mortality were included in the National Health Strategy on 2014-2020.

Our participation in the programming of the ‘Human Resources Development’ Operational Programme contributed for the explicit inclusion of children and young people as a target group in the work for better access to health care.

We continued to insist for the adoption of an ordinance by the Ministry of Health to introduce a standard for the school toilets. Currently there is an open petition to change the condition of school toilets, which has over 200 signatures. This petition is expected to be submitted to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Science.

The National Network for Children continued the advocacy for understanding the importance of integrated health-social services like family counselling centres, maternal and child health centres, early intervention centres, mental health centres for children aged 0-3.

In late December 2013, the Network issued an opinion on the need to regulate these and other innovative services, and insisted on this also in its other positions and opinions sent to the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science and other institutions during the year.

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The World Health Organisation defines health as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’.
Art. 37
Convention on the Rights of the Child (publication adapted for children, unicef.bg)

‘Children who break the law should not be treated with cruelty. They should not be detained in prisons with adults and should continue to maintain contact with their families.’
THEMATIC AREA: CHILD PARTICIPATION

Why child participation? Because there is no way you can work for someone without asking them what they think about it. Participation is a leading principle in promoting the rights and welfare of children – each child must be able to participate in making the decisions that concern them, express an opinion and this opinion to be taken into account. This is the only way children can learn to form and express their opinion and take responsibility for their participation and decisions. Decisions of adults should be tailored to what children think and feel. We believe that only through the child participation we can be sure that we are a genuine network ‘for the children’.

Megaphone

Megaphone is the way we offer to children and young people to get involved in the work of the National Network for Children. Megaphone members are children and young people, most often volunteers or clients of NNC member organisations who have expressed their willingness and are committed to participate in the activities of the Network.

In 2013 the Megaphone group designed their own logo, reflecting the way in which its members understand the existence of their platform. Young people with the support of the National Network for Children are undergoing an intensive process of building their internal capacity – what is the most appropriate structure for work, what people, knowledge and resources are needed, what are the most important goals they want to achieve – so as to strengthen its position as a meaningful child unit in the Network.

In 2013 three major events were held to support the inclusion of children and young people. In April was organised a spring camp for youth participation, which involved 25 children and young people. During the camp, participants were introduced to the basic activities of the NNC and were invited to join what they deemed most appropriate.

Children and young people were invited to the annual meeting of the National Network for Children.

During the event they further developed various ideas on how to include the Megaphone in the Network’s activities.

Autumn camp for child and youth participation was held in September, its purpose was to invite new children and young people, volunteers and clients of the Network members to join the Megaphone and contribute to its development.

In 2013 for the first time the National Network for Children made an attempt to include children and young people in making recommendations for better policies and practices for children and families in our country.

The specific manner is the inclusion of children and young people in the development of the annual report for the progress on the government commitments to children – Report Card 2014. Five teams of children and young people worked on organising and conducting their own research and opinion on the five key areas of the report. The Report Card to be released in March 2014 has a special section that will reflect the work of the young people.

Another main course of action for the development of child participation was aimed to improve our understanding of what it really means to involve children and young people in our work. We developed and translated a number of resources and materials to help the Network and anyone who is interested. Standards for protection and participation were also developed to ensure the safety of children and their full inclusion.

Press conference

On the occasion of 20th November and the anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, young people members of Megaphone held a press conference where they talked about the major challenges for the children’s rights in the country.

In 2013 Annual Report | www.nmd.bg | 2013 Annual Report

The adults

In spring a series of regional meetings were held to promote child participation in Byala Slatina, Sofia, Razgrad, Gotse Delchev and Kardzhali. The meetings were attended by over 200 students and teachers who were committed to clarifying and promoting child participation.
THE YEAR IN CAMPAIGNS AND PROJECTS

On 29 May 2013, the National Network for Children for the third time presented the annual awards ‘Golden Apple’. Individuals and organisations who received a diploma and a chocolate statuette were nominated by organisations that are members of the Network.

Fairy tale hero of 2013 became Darin Madjarov – creator of the website ucha.se. Ucha.se is a fast, easy and interesting way to watch video lessons in all subjects, to ask and answer questions, order new video lessons and get e-mail with the news. To date the site has over 2,450 video lessons. Ucha.se won again the first place for an educational website in the ranking of BG websites in 2013.

Another 200 children placed in foster care received financial support from Mtel at the amount of BGN 200 as part of the ‘Foster a child. Create a future’.

700 people have voted on ‘Dnevnik’ newspaper website. 62.5% of the voters stated that the toilets are dirty and there is no toilet paper there. One-fifth or 19.5% did not know what the toilets in the schools of their children look like, and only 18% indicated that the toilets are clean, with toilet paper, soap and water.

On 29 May 2013, the National Network for Children for the third time presented the annual awards ‘Golden Apple’. Individuals and organisations who received a diploma and a chocolate statuette were nominated by organisations that are members of the Network.

On 1 June 2013 was launched the NNC project ‘Exchange and cooperation for improving child welfare’ approved for funding under HRDOP, scheme ‘Without Frontiers’ Component 1 – phase 2, funded by the European Social Fund of the European Union.

The main objective of the project is to support the way in which we understand and implement the development and care services in early childhood.

On 10 July 2013 was launched the project of the National Network for Children: LESSON: Strengthening the development of organisational capacity approved for funding under the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme.

The project shall provide for the exchange of experiences and innovative practices, as will identify some good examples. They will be promoted, and thus will be addressed the importance of paying attention to the way we work for the development of our children from a very early age.

Early childhood development

On 10 July 2013 was launched the project of the National Network for Children: LESSON: Strengthening the development of organisational capacity approved for funding under the Bulgarian-Swiss Cooperation Programme.

The main objective of the project is to support the good work of civil society organisations working with and for children and families. Also, the project supports the advocacy for improved policies in the country by supporting the development of the Report Card.

10 awards

1,200 video lessons

200

700

In 2013, the National Network for Children started work on two new projects – ‘Exchange and cooperation for improving child welfare’ and LESSON: Strengthening the development of organisational capacity’, which will support the work for better policies for children and families and will support the civil society organisations working with and for children and families.
The purpose of the ‘Golden Apple’ awards is to find individuals and institutions that contribute significantly to the life and welfare of Bulgarian children by drawing attention to the need for special attitude to children. The awards encourage us all to put children in the centre of our work and show that each one can have a contribution to the cause of children.

As the Journalist of the Year was declared Zornitza Stoilova from ‘Capital’ newspaper. Etropole Municipality received the award for their ongoing targeted policy for support and assistance to families with children. Bogdan Botsev, deputy mayor of the municipality of Gotse Delchev was honoured for his active support for many initiatives for children and young people.

The ‘Golden Apple’ in the category ‘Hospital’ was given to Targovishte Hospital – for their work to prevent baby abandonment and neglect of children from vulnerable communities. In the ‘School’ category the award was presented to the school ‘Nikola Vaptsarov’ in the village of Selanovtsi, Oryahovo municipality for opening the school to the parents.

ANNUAL ‘GOLDEN APPLE’ AWARDS

In 2013 the third annual awards for contributions to the life and welfare of Bulgarian children ‘Golden Apple’ were presented. This year, 12 member organisations of the National Network for Children nominated 17 institutions and individuals in seven categories: Fairy tale hero, Journalist, Local politician, Municipality, Hospital, School and Business Company.
ONE YEAR OF PARTNERSHIP
between ContourGlobal Maritsa Iztok 3 and the National Network for Children

ContourGlobal Maritsa Iztok 3 has been supporting child participation of NNC since 2012. The partnership with ContourGlobal provides an opportunity to include children and young people in the work of the National Network for Children, consulting with them on how they can participate in the activities of the Network in the most efficient manner, and what they think about the proposals for better policies for children in the country.

ContourGlobal Maritsa Iztok 3 has committed to the cause of more and better participation of children in their communities. In 2013 this included full financial and logistical support.

To tell you what happened at last camp, we publish here the letter from Denny!

This year for the first time the team of facilitators -- Stanislav Dadov (NCN), Miroslava Assenova (P.U.L.S. Foundation) and Christina Baeva (Partners-Bulgaria Foundation) were joined by the young enthusiasts -- members of the NNC youth group ‘Megaphone’, in their responsible ‘position’ as co-facilitators -- Nia, Denny and Rumen.

We opened the camp with a friendly and relaxed day of talks, acquaintance, sharing expectations, fears and hopes and finished with the entertaining, but also inviting thoughts film ‘Accepted’ that cheered us up and helped to loosen the situation.

On September 25, we started work. We started with a wonderful initiative ‘Secret friend’ where each of us pulled the name of one of his/her co-campers for whom he/she had to make special efforts and come up with nice surprises during our stay. We drafted the rules of the camp, then young people discussed the questions ‘Who are we, where did we come from, what we like or dislike in our settlement, and what could we do to improve it?’. Then -- this time with the people accompanying them -- they prepared a map of their city with their favourite places for young people and those that have been changed for the better with the help of their respective member organisation of the National Network for Children.

The day continued with a session open only to members of ‘Megaphone’ who acquainted the future members of the youth group with its main points. We finished the busy schedule with tasks in teams of three (accompanying adult from NNC member organisation and two young people) to develop a logo and motto of the respective team.

On the third day we were joined by George and Maria from the Secretariat of the National Network for Children, who brought their emotion and enthusiasm to the group and illustrated to us through games and visual presentation with drawings the structure, achievements and nature of NNC – in such an interesting way that charmed us all. The next session was about the meaning of child participation, led by Stan and me, Denny.

It became more concrete with the explanation of some key activities of the National Network for Children by the co-facilitators who took part in them -- respectively the Report Card evaluating the performance of government on policies for children, the ‘Golden Apple’ awards and the Annual Meeting of the NNC. We finished the day with a team exercise for young and ... not so young people, preventing two eggs from falling down, and walking down stairs that provoked the creativity and united the group.

Friday started early with a visit to the administration of the ‘Maritsa Iztok’ EAD mines, where we learned how the company operates and its history, and continued with the visit to the ‘Maritsa-Iztok 3’ Thermal Power Plant. Professionals from the plant were able to turn our tour into a pleasant and interesting experience. In the afternoon we went back to work on the big question ‘How does the ‘Megaphone’ operate and what does it need?’ on which young people and adults worked together and presented their solutions.

Saturday was a busy day for teenagers because Annie and Zdravko from the NNC Secretariat taught them some important skills in working with the media, and Maria and Marusya -- in project work. The themes of the two parallel running modules were set in advance by the participants themselves and they seemed satisfied with their choice.

The evening was diversified not only by the wedding that was celebrated in the hotel, but also by the party organised by the group. At our last, most crazy and dancing event everybody (including the adults accompanying us) got certificates for their participation and commitment, we revealed our secret friends, and the ceremony was accompanied by a large dose of hugs, kisses, thanks and gifts!

I do sincerely hope that the six days together brought us not only a lot of positive emotions, but also valuable experience, knowledge and skills that will remain with us so that we could turn them into action and ideas in the future!

Smiles from me, Denny!
(Dennitsa Marincheva)
COMMUNICATIONS

The National Network for Children distributes news, projects and initiatives related to children and families, both in Bulgaria and in Europe, and worldwide.

Our website www.nmd.bg is gaining popularity and last year reached 17,000 monthly visits.

Our Facebook page – www.facebook.com/nmdbg was liked by nearly 22,000 users at the end of the year, and that number continues to grow. You can also follow us there.

We would like to invite you to support us on the new social network www.yatoto.com.

The NNC newsletter is sent to nearly 5,500 subscribers in Bulgaria and 800 recipients abroad. You can also subscribe at www.nmd.bg.

THE NEED FOR NEW SCHOOL TOILETS – BIG OR SMALL?

The Problem

The majority of students in the country avoid the toilets at school because of poor hygiene. ‘Holding it’ leads to a number of mental and physical problems.

What needs to change?

• It is necessary for the Ministry of Health to establish a standard that says what a school toilet should look like – with hot water, soap, toilet paper and to be cleaned regularly.

• Earmarked funds should be allocated for repair and maintenance of toilets, so that they would meet the standard.

• Headmasters also need to plan how to manage school toilets so that they remain in good condition. For this purpose they may use the Practical guide for the management of school toilets.

• Of course, much of the responsibility lies with the students – the toilets will never be in good condition unless they are kept and left in the condition in which they were found.

You can support the petition for cleaner school toilets at:

http://www.parlicij.com/novi_wc

FOSTER A CHILD. CREATE A FUTURE

Support and promotion of foster care in Bulgaria

BGN 1,- is the amount you can donate by sending the text DMS DETE to 17 777.

You can donate also by a bank transfer to IBAN BG13UNCR76301078951570, online to: www.nmd.bg, as well as in special money-boxes in every Mtel shop in the country.

The ‘Foster a child. Create a future’ is implemented by Mtel and the NNC for a second consecutive year. In 2013 Mtel provided financial assistance to nearly 200 children in foster care in Bulgaria. The amount that the telecom donates to a child amounts to BGN 200 which is given as a lump sum to the foster parents. BGN 300 is the envisaged amount for a child with a disability. With this support Mtel aims to help foster families in meeting the initial needs of the children when they first come to their new home. This need was identified as a priority by the foster parents themselves in the special survey conducted in late 2012.

Partners to the programme are also the Bulgarian Donors’ Forum, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the State Agency for Child Protection, Sega newspaper and Netinfo.

There is a phone number for donations which anyone can use to provide financial assistance to children placed in foster care.

The telecom Mtel was awarded a prize in the category ‘Most transparent donation program’ in recognition of the ‘Foster a child. Create a future’ Project.

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The main task of the National Network for Children is to support civil society organisations working with and for children and families. In 2013 we were able to support over 40 organisations with consultancy, advice, assistance for project development and finding partners. Furthermore, we distributed over 30 good practices of our member organisations.

Thus we contributed to make their success in working for the children more visible, the parents and children to know better where they can turn for help if needed, and the institutions to recognize their practices.

We organised also a number of trainings – over 100 organisations got the chance to increase their organisational capacity in different areas.

Thematic Working Groups (TWG) provide opportunities to the member organisations for exchange, sharing and learning in various topics. Moreover, they are a way to disseminate good practices and to identify key issues in working with children and families. The principal areas of work in the TWG are:

- **Family** – deals with the policies and practices related to children and families at risk, children placed in the care system – children in the children’s homes, deinstitutionalisation, foster care, prevention of abandonment, etc. The group involves 56 member organisations.
- **Education** – the group focuses on problems related to child education – from infancy to higher education.
- **Health** – the focus for the group are all policies and practices related to children and families, maternal and child health, mental health, health and sexual education, etc. 31 organisations participate in the group.
- **Juvenile justice** – the ‘Juvenile justice’ group involves organisations that work with child witnesses or victims of crime, children in conflict with the law, neglect and abuse of children, street children, etc. 27 organisations participate in this group.
- **Protection** – the group involves 58 members organisations.

The group discusses topics such as pre-school and school education, dropping out of school and access to education, inclusive education for children with special educational needs, etc. The group involves 58 members organisations.

Main direction in the work of the National Network for Children is the development of cooperation at local level. Te collaboration of civil society organisations and local authorities is crucial for improving the life of children and their families. Based on the Agreement signed in late 2012 between the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria and the National Network for Children, in 2013 was drafted a ‘Manual of good practices in the cooperation between NGOs and municipalities in the field of policies and services for children and families.’

The Manual covers 13 good practices of cooperation between NNC member organisations and local authorities, and the description of the practices is agreed by both parties in the partnership.

The Manual was presented at an event held in July at the Residence of the French Ambassador, alongside a panel organised to discuss the successes and challenges in the cooperation between municipalities and NGOs. The drafting of this Manual supported further the partnership of the organisations and authorities whose practices it covers. The Manual was translated into French and Romanian.

The National Network for Children continues its activities at international level, and thus gets the opportunity to share, learn and present our own practices. Our participation in regional and European networks allows us to get an insight into the regional and European policies and their significance for the children in our country. NNC is a member of the European child network Eurochild, which enables us to participate more actively also at European level, getting acquainted with good working practices from across Europe, and disseminating information about what is happening to children in our country. Since June 2011 George Bogdanov, the NNC Executive Director is a member of Eurochild Management Board.

The National Network for Children is actively involved in the campaign ‘Opening Doors for Europe’s Children’ aiming to promote the use of European Structural Funds for closing children’s homes. The National Network for Children is part of the development of the regional network of coalitions for children the ChildPact, and is advocating for the establishment by the European Commission of a separate mechanism to support child protection.

As a result of its active participation the National Network for Children will host the 7th Regional Meeting of the coalitions in 2014.
In 2013 reports were submitted for 6 projects launched in 2012, as well as 6 projects which were launched in 2013:

- Balkan Trust for Democracy;
- Open Society;
- UNICEF Bulgaria;
- Embassy of France in Bulgaria for promoting good practices of NGOs with municipalities;
- OAK – Three rights;
- OAK – an interim report;
- Ministry of Education, Science and Youth – Child participation;
- UNICEF Bulgaria – a small project;
- ContourGlobal Maritsa Iztok 3;
- Lloyds Foundation;
- PROCOPIL Programme – a project funded by the French Embassy;
- Mtel.

In 2013 were signed three long term contracts – under the Swiss program, ‘Without Frontiers’ – HRDOP and as project partners under Daphne Programme for which we received advance payment in 2013.

The NNC Financial Report was prepared on 13.01.2014.

In the current year the efforts for securing funding for the core operations of the National Network for Children continue.

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<th>Named Revenue</th>
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Date: 13.01.2014

Lidia Ivanova, Accountant
Svetlana Pavlova, CPA, Registered Auditor, Date of the audit report: 13.01.2014

George Bogdanov, Executive director

FINANCIAL REPORT

Our financial activity in the past year was extremely intensive. Many projects were finalised, successful campaigns were executed, and the commitments to the different funding organisations were implemented.
WHO ARE WE?

Management Board
The NNC has a Management Board of seven member organisations elected by the General Assembly. Each organisation has one representative on the Board. The Management Board supports, consults and monitors the work of the Secretariat.

Vesela Banova, ‘Child and Space’ Association, President
Gancho Iliev, ‘World Without Boundaries’
Georgi Apostolov, Applied Research and Communications Fund
Maria Gineva, ‘Future for Children with Disabilities’ Association
Mariana Evtimova Foundation
Mariana Nikolova, ‘Karin Dom’ Foundation
Dr. Radosvet Stamenkova, ‘Bulgarian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association’

Secretariat
The Network Secretariat consist of 11 people.

Supervisory Board
The Supervisory Board makes a review of the economic situation of the NNC Association at the end of each financial year.

Spaska Petrova, ‘New Way’ Association, Chairperson
Rositsa Sredkova, ‘Development Initiative – Kardzhali decides’ Association
Albena Boneva, ‘Helping Hand Foundation’

Executive Director: George Bogdanov
Programming Department: Danny Kolev, Varya Ivanova, Milena Nikolova
Marketing and Public Relations: Anna Kolarova, Zdrava Stoeva
Network Development: Maria Brestinchka Stantslav Dodov, Manouya Tvetkova
Administrative Department: Lida Ivanova, Hristo Hristov
DONORS AND FRIENDS

On behalf of all member organisations of the National Network for Children, the Secretariat would like to express sincere gratitude to our partners and friends. The individuals and companies who have worked with us for a better future for the children in Bulgaria are:

ContourGlobal Maritsa Iztok 3, which continue to actively support the participation of children and young people;

Mtel and ‘Foster a Child. Create a Future’ Project, which supports the development and promotion of foster care in Bulgaria;

ESTAT Agency that surveyed and analyzed what parents and young people think about the right of opinion, to protection from corporal punishment and to child protection by the state;

Communication agency All Channels Group, which helps in changing the attitudes towards children’s rights and to present better our work;

Company for International Meetings (CIM), which help us organise events;

Perfetta Artisan Chocolates, who made each year chocolate statuettes for the ‘Golden Apple’ awards;

Ficosota Syntez Bulgaria, who participated in our campaign to support refugee children in Bulgaria;

Interlang, translation agency that helps us with translations into English and French of various documents and publications;

Party Service, who take care of the catering for our events;

Samsung Bulgaria and our partnership under the career guidance project ‘Trends of Tomorrow’;

Anna Rizova – Noykova (Design For Friends), who created the new visual identity of the organisation;

Marieta Vasileva (Taralej), who makes all printed materials of the organization;

The European Commission’s Representation in Bulgaria, which provides facilities for events and donations in kind;

Emmy Mednik, on whom we can always rely for fast and quality translations;

The French Embassy and the French Cultural Institute in Sofia, in addition to providing organisational and logistical support, they are our traditional partner in the development of civil society, local communities and the promotion of good practices;

Sofia Puppet Theatre, which is the host of the Golden Apple Awards;

Servet Mustafova, an intern, without whose support the launch of our new website would have been impossible;

Yuji Miyata – donor;

and many other organisations and people who help us ever day in the implementation of our projects and activities.
ABOUT THE NNC

The National Network for Children (NNC) is an alliance of 122 organisations from the whole country, working with children and families in four main domains: health, education, family, and child and juvenile justice.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to strengthen and facilitate the cooperation between the NGOs and all the interested parties in order to guarantee the rights and welfare of children.

NETWORK MEMBERS
REPORT CARD – ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS TO THE CHILDREN OF BULGARIA

‘GOLDEN APPLE’-ANNUAL AWARDS FOR CONTRIBUTION TO THE CHILDREN OF BULGARIA

CHILD AND JUVENILE JUSTICE

HEALTH FOR THE CHILDREN AND CHILD-FRIENDLY JUSTICE

FAMILY AND EDUCATION FOR EVERY CHILD

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FACEBOOK.COM/NMDBG

2013 ANNUAL REPORT
A CHANGE IN A CHILD IS A CHANGE FOR BULGARIA

NATIONAL NETWORK FOR CHILDREN