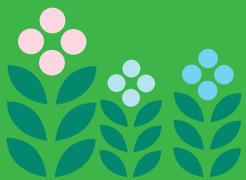




NATIONAL NETWORK FOR CHILDREN

A CHANGE  
IN A CHILD  
IS A CHANGE  
FOR BULGARIA



ANNUAL REPORT  
2016

## ABOUT NNC

The National Network for Children (NNC) is an alliance of 137 civil society organisations and supporters, working with and for children and families across the whole country.

Promotion, protection and observing the rights of the child are part of the key principles that unite us. We do believe that all policies and practices, that affect directly or indirectly children should be based first and foremost on the best interests of the child. Furthermore they should be planned, implemented and monitored with a clear assessment of the impact on children and young people, and with their active participation.

## OUR VISION

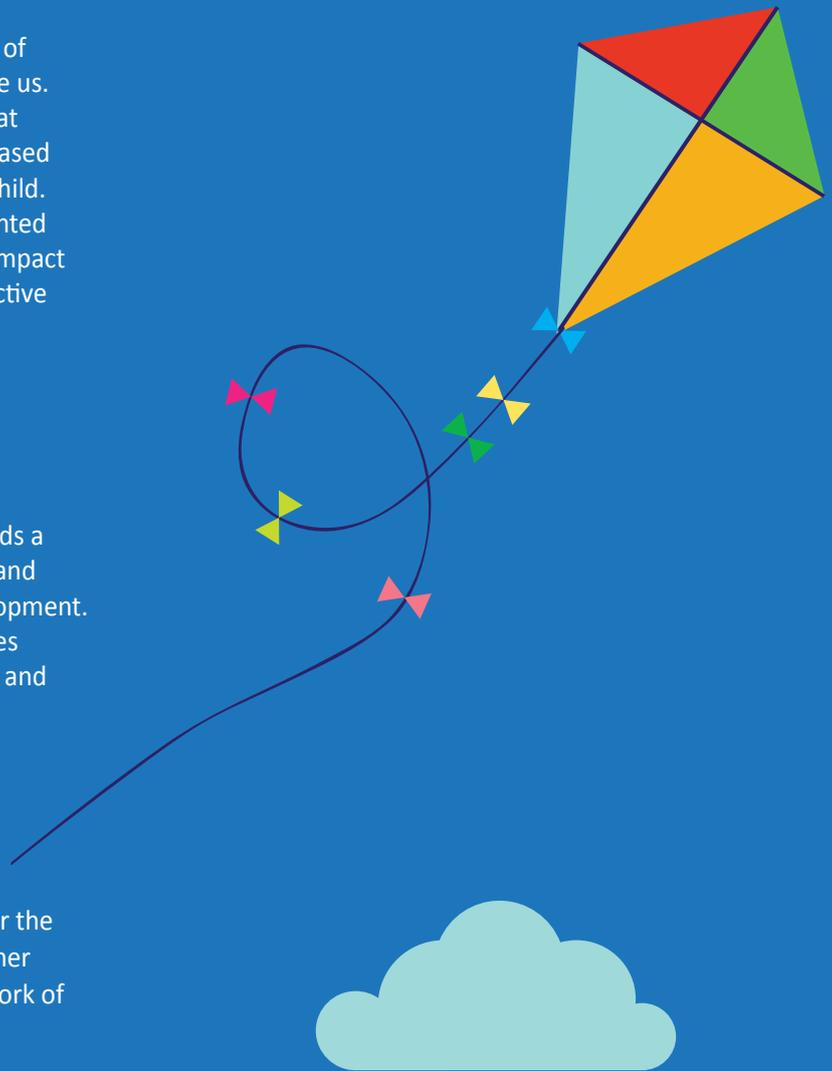
The National Network for Children works towards a society where every child has their own family and enjoys the best opportunities for life and development. There is a harmony between the sectoral policies for the child and the family, and the child rights and welfare are guaranteed.

## OUR MISSION

The National Network for Children advocates for the rights and welfare of children by bringing together and developing a wide, socially significant network of organisations and supporters.

## OUR GOALS

- Influence for better policies for children and families;
- Changing public attitudes to the rights of the child;
- Development of a model for child participation;
- Development of the National Network for Children;
- Improving the capacity of the Network and its member organisations;
- Promotion of the public image of the National Network for Children.





**Vesela Banova**  
*Child and Space*  
President of the NNC  
Management Board



**George Bogdanov**  
Executive Director,  
National Network  
for Children

## Dear friends,

2016 was a very special year for the National Network for Children. In 2016 we turned 10 years and celebrated the establishment of this unique for Bulgaria association, which brings together like-minded people and organisations, safeguarding the rights of the children. Ten years ago, led by the principles embedded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 12 organisations got together and set up the National Network for Children as an organisation for public benefit. Now, a decade later, the Network unites more than 130 organisations, standing by the same principles, vision and values.

Our birthday is both a reason to feel proud and to look back and make an evaluation. We have achieved a lot. The next pages will provide an account of only part of our most significant achievements and results of our work. Over the years we managed to make some major breakthroughs, we initiated and took part in several major reforms, affecting the children of Bulgaria: ranging from closing down of the big child institutions and moving the children out, the development of foster care, of services in support of families, through to the new legislation in the field of education and the first steps in reforming child justice.

The progress made in each of these fields is huge and inevitable, however the work that remains to be done is even more since no reform, process or policy is finalised with the adoption of a new law, road map or strategy. What makes reforms a reality and what improves people's lives is the hard day-to-day work.

This is exactly what we, the 140 and more organisations, do: everyday efforts, which sometimes go unnoticed, to return a child to their family, to make the school a more friendly place for both children and those who teach them, to ensure access of an expectant mother to free consultation and finally to see one more smile on a child's face.

Thanks to our joint advocacy efforts, as a Network we can proudly state that last year alone, the dozens of positions and opinions sent by us to the various state institutions, resulted in more than 35 specific amendments in various strategies, plans and legal documents. Despite the fact that the really hard work of all Network member organisations may be unnoticed and obscure for many people, it has a real impact on the lives of the children and their families and moves our society forward in the name of those we work for: the children.

However, the biggest and hardest challenge remains changing our attitudes and treating the child as an equal member of society, bearer of rights, having his or her opinion, and as a unique individual, entitled to special protection and support, regardless of his or her origin, social status, gender and age. Even though progress is slow, we work to achieve zero tolerance to violence against children – both within the family (65 % of the registered cases) and at school and in the street; equal treatment and special support during judicial proceedings; ethical approach to the coverage of children in the media. In 2016 alone, we reached more than 1 million Bulgarian people in the social media in order to build together positive parenting models, friendly environment in the kindergartens and schools, in the courtrooms and in the medical establishments.

Today, we need the energy of the entire society in order to leave to every little or grown up Bulgarian citizen a more secure, more prosperous and more supporting country. At the National Network for Children, we believe that if every day we make small changes for the child so that he or she would become a more independent and successful adult, then we change Bulgaria!

Vesela Banova

George Bogdanov

# 10 ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE NATIONAL NETWORK FOR CHILDREN OVER 10 YEARS

**1.** For 10 years now we have been working and helping the children of Bulgaria. Last year alone, the member organisations of the National Network for Children provided support to **79 044 children, 36 577 families and 8 262 professionals.**



**5.** The National Network for Children was among the leading organisations in the process of drafting and discussing the Pre-school and School Education Act, which determines the development of 977,086 Bulgarian children. Even though, as each new law, it may not be perfect in terms of texts and implementation standards, we consider it a huge step forward in the **Bulgarian education reform.**



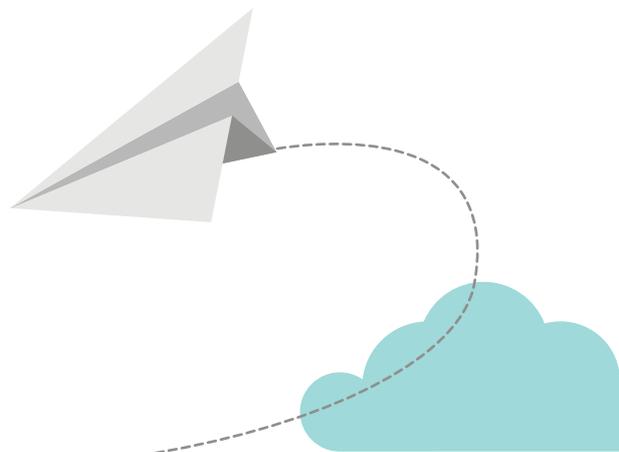
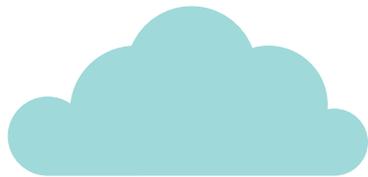
**3.** The children placed in institutions were anonymous and very often the efforts to make changes were focused on “reforming” and “restructuring” of the buildings, without having any significant impact on the care provided to the children and on their lives. The Network was actively involved in the **development and implementation of the Vision for Deinstitutionalisation** and its Action Plan. As a result of this in the past 6 years over 7,000 children were moved out of the institutions and more than 13,600 other children and their families were supported in order to prevent their placement in institutions.



**2.** Being united by a particular cause is a cause in itself, but to unite more than 140 organisations, working for the children and families, unified by the values of safeguarding children’s rights, is a real achievement. The Network became the **biggest coalition of civil society organisations in Bulgaria** and consolidated the sector in order to stand as an equal partner and a corrective next to the state institutions with a view to better legislation, policies and practices concerning the child and the family.

**4.** Ten years ago no one was aware of what **child justice** was, while today the state is **committed to conducting a reform** in this field. This gives us hope that child offenders will not be treated as criminals but will be entitled to support and will have a chance to reintegrate. This law matters to more than 10, 000 children who are annually affected by the old Law on Combating Anti-social Behaviour of Underage and Minor Children, which does not meet the international and European standards, and to over 2,000 children who annually spend time in closed-type institutions.





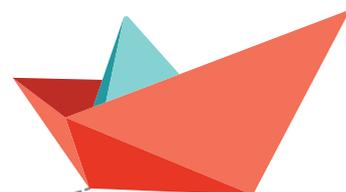
**6.** We developed a **Vision for family policy and supported the undertaking of a commitment for the drafting of a National Strategy for the Child and the Family.** We worked actively for the ratification of the Lanzarote Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation. We put a lot of effort and managed to secure the amendments to the Radio and Television Act, which regulate the ethical approach to the coverage of children in the media and protecting them from harmful content. This is the beginning of success. What will be harder to achieve though, will be to ensure that what is put in writing will become part of our lives. We work every day to succeed in this.

**7.** For five years now, the Network has been monitoring how the state fulfils its commitments to children and families and by drafting its **independent Report Card: What is the Average Government score for Childcare?**, the Network awards grades, makes recommendations and draws the public attention to the areas where the governments are successful and to those where more effort is required.

**8.** Last year alone, **the news and information placed on our website and the social media**, where we promote child rights, positive parenting and various types of support for the parents, reached **more than 1.5 mln.** Bulgarians. Over a period of 10 years, the Network became an important and reliable source of information in the social media through its website and the newsletter, disseminated to over 6,000 subscribers weekly.

**9.** More than 350 children and young people took part in the activities of Megaphone youth network. We develop **various models of genuine participation of the children and young people** by consulting them, holding discussions and conducting the Network's key activities together with them. *Megaphone* provides an opportunity to children, young people, professionals and organisations to learn about the rights of the child, to develop communication skills and to practice their right to express opinion.

**10.** It is our dream to build a Centre for the rights of the children in Bulgaria. We launched successfully the very ambitious project for **building the House of Children.** Within only a year, we managed to raise funds and to purchase a plot in the centre of Sofia. We are in the process of preparing the construction related documentation and the architectural design so that the House can become a reality. Over 15,000 children will have access to the trainings and activities held in the House of Children and the project will be run as a social enterprise, employing and training young people, leaving care.



# THE YEAR IN POLICIES FOR CHILDREN



“All organisations related to children should work for the best interest of each child.”

### Art. 3

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

## Vision for family policy

was presented to the National Assembly by the Network for Children. The document is the result of a broad consultations process, involving parents, experts, representatives of the legislature, the executive and local authorities, as well as civil society organisations, working with children and families across the country.

### 13

reports and analyses were drafted and promoted by the National Network for Children (NNC) in 2016. Those include also the contribution of NNC to the Universal Periodic Review of human rights and provision of information to the members of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

### 60

positions and opinions have been sent to the state institutions, concerning various areas of child welfare in Bulgaria. This contributed to more than **35 amendments** to various strategies, plans and statutory documents.

## What do we teach children?

is the heading of the open letter which NNC sent with relation to the series of protests against the refugees. The letter raises concern of false data and use of hate speech, resorted to by protest organisers, who are quoted by politicians and media. At the same time, unaccompanied child refugees are still being placed in the refugee centres together with adults, they are deprived of care and have no access to health, social and education services.

## Policy in support of families

As a result of the long-time efforts of member organisations and discussions on presenting the Vision for family policy, a commitment was undertaken in the Draft National Child Protection Programme for 2017 for development of a new National Strategy for the Child and Family.

The idea is to develop a system of targeted support for parents and adoption of a family-focused approach in all areas related to child welfare: social and economic measures, education, healthcare, housing, child protection, social assistance, etc.



# THE NATIONAL NETWORK FOR CHILDREN TURNED 10!

In 2016, the National Network for Children marked its 10-year anniversary.



When back in 2006, 12 organisations united in order to act as better advocates for the rights of children in Bulgaria, they laid the foundations of the Network, which has been monitoring the children's policies and practices in the country, making recommendations and coming up with decisions, with the ultimate goal to safeguard the rights of children and is based on the experience of the people and organisations working with and for the children and families.

Today the Network unites 137 organisations and more than 3000 people working daily with and for the children of Bulgaria.

Many of them support the most disadvantaged – children living in poverty, victims of violence, those who have no access to medical care, those who do not go to school or for some reason cannot live with their family, as well as children in conflict with the law. Unfortunately, there are still many children in Bulgaria who live in extremely difficult situation.

Many of those over 3000 people work so that this can be avoided: children, parents, teachers, doctors to be able to recognize violence and to help prevent it; to help provide support to every family so that it can raise their child in the best possible way, to have better education, accessible to every child; to prevent children who are in conflict with the law from becoming adult offenders and to be able to enjoy a full life.

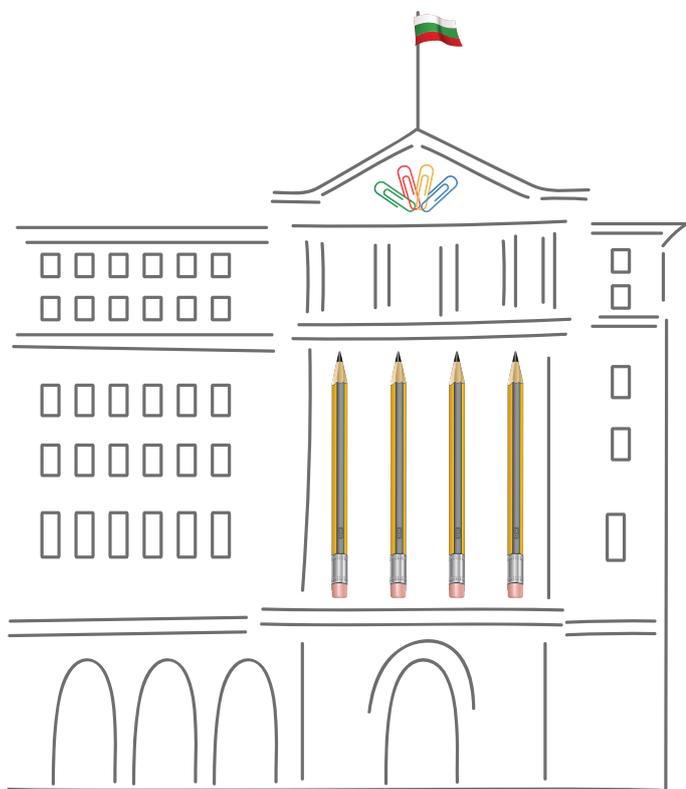
For 10 years already, all these people have been united by the idea that every child in Bulgaria should have a family and the best life and development opportunities; that they should be involved in the decision-making on matters affecting them. And that every family with the right support – the support they need, should be able to ensure that their children enjoy this.

We have achieved a lot throughout these years and this is why during the whole of 2016 we were telling some of the success stories. Who are the superheroes in the organisations which are part of the Network and how they change the lives of many children and families on a daily basis – you can find this out on the website of the National Network for Children: <http://nmd.bg/category/10-godini-nmd/>.



# REPORT CARD 2016:

## What is the average Government score for childcare?



For the fifth consecutive year, with its annual **Report Card 2016: What is the average Government score for childcare?** the National Network for Children evaluated the Government's progress on fulfilling their own commitments to the children of Bulgaria.

**The Report Card evaluates five areas: General principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; Family Environment and Alternative Care; Healthcare; Education and Justice.**

NNC report is published in two versions: a popular one for the broad public, including children and an expert one for the specialists and institutions.

The progress of Government policies for children in 2016 **was assessed as poor and the average annual grade awarded is average 3.28.** For comparison purposes, in 2015 the Government scored 3.20.

**The highest grade in 2016 was for Healthcare – good 3.58,** with the highest grade scored in sub-area Hospital and Pre-hospital Care – good 4.04.





A positive development observed are the extra medical tests offered for newborn babies and pre-school and school children. *Health and Counselling Centres for Maternal and Child Health* were established with the regional general hospitals, providing comprehensive services to children and pregnant women.

**The lowest grade in Report Card 2016 is in area General principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – average 2.91**, and the poorest scoring sub-area is Non-discrimination – poor 2.00. No progress has been identified for fifth consecutive year with the commitment to establish a special unit which would review cases of discrimination against children. Our country continues to be one of the three EU member states which have no specialised children’s ombudsman; discriminatory practices and unequal treatment of child refugees, children with disabilities and children of Roma origin continue as far as their access to quality education, healthcare and adequate housing and social environment is concerned.

**Family and alternative care area scored average 3.00**, since despite of the Government’s commitment, in practice there is still no comprehensive approach for child and family support.

**Education and Justice areas were awarded identical grades – good 3.54.**

The adoption of the Pre-school and School Education Act is considered an achievement in the Education area, however the early dropping out of school continues to be of a great concern. Efforts are being made in the Justice area and there is a clearly stated intention of reforming the child justice system but at the same time, no real change has been identified and there is no co-ordination between the activities of the various institutions in this field.

This year, for the drafting of the Report Card, **the National Network for Children consulted also the children and young people by holding 9 focus groups and conducting an online inquiry**, in which took part 120 children aged 12-18 years from across the country. The children awarded the highest grade to the Justice area and in particular to the Government’s commitment to get children acquainted with internet safety. The grade awarded by the children to this area was 3.88. The lowest grade the Government received from the children for General principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, with sub-area Child Poverty – receiving average 2.61.

It is for the first time that the document was launched simultaneously in 8 regions of the country. The issues covered by the Report Card were presented for discussion not only to the national authorities but also to representatives of local authorities, schools, healthcare establishments, courts, etc.

## Report Card 2016 grades are:

General principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	2.91
Family Environment and Alternative Care	3.00
Healthcare	3.58
Education	3.54
Child Justice	3.54
Annual grade	3.28





## Opening Doors for Europe's Children campaign

The Network is the campaign's co-ordinator for Bulgaria. The campaign aims to improve national and European policies in support of the deinstitutionalisation process. In the course of the year we participated in a number of international events and European level fora, where we shared Bulgaria's experience in reforming the system of care and the use of European Structural Funds money for the development of new services and for closing down children's institutions.

## The social services in support of children

NNC and other civil society organisations opposed amendments to the legislation and thus prevented the option of large-scale moving of children and young people with disabilities from one Centre to another as well as of referring adults and people with disabilities to the child services. As a result of the series of positions stated and the meetings held with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the other institutions involved, a decision was taken in January 2017 to postpone the changes and set up a working group which is to come up with a proposal of specific texts amending the controversial texts in the Implementing Regulation for the Social Assistance Act.



# THEMATIC AREA: EDUCATION



“ ‘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.’

## Art. 28

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

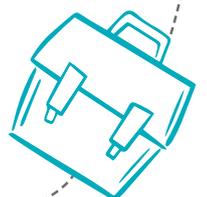
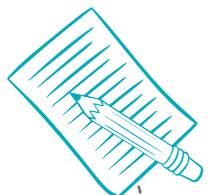


## The new Pre-school and School Education Act

and the standards to it were at the core of the work the Network did in the field of education. Some of the major achievements of the new Act were placing a focus in the general education on key competences, inclusive education, perceiving parents as partners, etc. Throughout the year, we participated in the discussion of and submitted nine positions on the draft State Educational Standards presented by the Ministry of Education and Science. More than 20 specific proposals and texts are incorporated in the final version of the documents and NNC will continue watching the implementation of the new legislation and advocating for efficient support to the schools and creation of educational environment where parents are equal partners.

## Community Schools

The Network continues supporting the development of the philosophy and the way the community school operates as an open and multifunctional centre which creates, supports and connects the community of students, teachers, parents and other participants in the community life of a particular populated area. This year, the existing network of 13 community schools was joined by 20 new schools, which are supported by 15 NNC member organisations.





## SLUCHILISHTE

is a virtual resource centre, pooling together useful materials for teachers, students, parents and professionals working with children. The platform brings together various materials, trainings and good practices on topics, which are of interest to children and professionals, such as prevention of violence, digital literacy, civic and health education, inclusive education, pre-school education, students' self-government, working with parents, dropping out of school, etc. The platform can be accessed on [www.sluchilishte.bg](http://www.sluchilishte.bg).



## NNC stopped non-transparent funding

at the amount of BGN 1.5 mln. for projects under OP Science, Education and Smart Growth. The funding was suspended by the Ministry of Education and Science following a warning sent by the National Network for Children. The check identified unclear moments in the process of review and approval of projects as well as faults in the procedure and the criteria for approval of the projects under the Operational Programme.

## Psychological support at school

As a result of the support of the Network and other organisations and professionals, the operation of the National Mobile Group for psychological support by school psychologists was renewed. The Mobile Group responds to the need for intervention in crisis situations or situations of violence against children, which is of key importance for the schools where there is no psychologist or pedagogical counsellors available or where they need extra expert support.



## Priority themes

Dropping out of school and school violence continue to be **priority themes** in the area of education. Since 2016 NNC has become a partner in the implementation of two projects aiming to resolve these problems: *Key to a School without Fear* and *Identifying the Early Signs of Dropping out of School*.

# THEMATIC AREA: HEALTH



“ ‘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.’

## Art. 24

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



## Early Childhood Development

continued to be among the Network's priority themes. In the course of the year we took part in a number of meetings and conferences on the topic, focused on presenting good practices, discussions on the main challenges to specialists working with children, and on improving the policies in that field.

## Fund for treatment of children

NNC expressed their opinion on the draft amendments to the Rules of Operation of the Fund for treatment of children and thus shared the concerns expressed by a number of parents, parental and civic organisations with relation to the proposed amendments and the non-participation of the stakeholders in the process of drafting the new amendments.





### Alert of unhealthy foods offered in schools

Following alerts and complaints sent to NNC and also by colleagues from all over the country, concerning the foods offered in school snack shops and the failure to comply with the existing legal regulations, we urged the Ministry of Education and Science and the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency to start large-scale inspections for the compliance with the statutory requirements in the school snack shops countrywide.

### Paediatrics Medical Standard

The Network welcomes the expanding of paediatrics' main tasks to include involvement in activities such as prevention of abandonment, early childhood development, integrated health and social services for children, etc. At the same time, the organisation proposed that the standard should include the understanding of health as full physical, mental or social welfare of the individual and not only as a lack of disease. The position of the Network's member organisations is that the **creation of an appropriate environment for children in all maternity and children's wards** across the country should be one of the priority tasks in the policy for improvement of maternal and child healthcare.

### Centres for comprehensive services for children with disabilities and chronic diseases

The Network contributed to the regulation of the new Centres by stating its position on the matter and by making specific recommendations concerning parents' participation in the development and co-ordination of the medical and social plan, provision of an option for having someone to accompany the child, as well to the fine-tuning of project texts concerning the child's referral, admittance and discharge from the Centre, and the work of the multidisciplinary team.

# THEMATIC AREA: JUSTICE



” ‘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.’

## Art. 37

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



## Real reform in child justice

Last year, a great deal of our efforts were focused on the debates on the new draft Bill on Diversion from Penal Proceedings and Implementation of Corrective Measures for Underage Children, and the amendments to the Penal Code (PC) and the Penal Procedure Code (PPC) associated with it. We advocated for urgent closure of boarding schools for children, social support for children in conflict with the law and development of specialised services adequate to their needs.

## Numerous alerts

concerning children diagnosed with serious diseases, mental suffering, children whose stay in socio-pedagogical boarding schools (SPBS) has been illegally extended, formal education process, suspicions of sexual abuse and many other, were submitted by the National Network for Children. We reiterated that even though there are intense discussions on child justice reform, this is highly insufficient in terms of safeguarding the rights of the children currently placed in SPBS.

## Judicial reform

As a result of a position stated by the National Network for Children concerning a Road Map for the implementation of the Updated strategy for continued judicial reform, a number of important measures were included in the document, related to the setting up of a clear co-ordination mechanism between all stakeholders and of quality standards for the services in the case of diverting underage children who are in conflict with the law.



## Development of Child Rights Centres

The project *Development of Centres for the Rights of Children in Conflict or Contact with the Law*, supported by Velux Foundation, was launched during the year. It aspires to support child justice reform by developing models of services for children in conflict or contact with the law and contributing to a change in public attitudes to these groups of children. A number of preparatory activities were conducted during the year, such as convening an Advisory Board, involving representatives of all stakeholders.

## Zero tolerance to violence against children

A Round Table discussion on the issues of violence and aggression among and against children was held in the National Assembly at the initiative of the Committee for Interaction with Non-governmental Organisations jointly with the National Network for Children. As a result of the Round Table, a working group was set up, involving a number of Parliamentary Committees, led by the Committee for Interaction with Non-governmental Organisations and Citizen's Complaints, representatives of several ministries, SACP, ASA, UNICEF, National Network for Children and various other civic organisations.





# CHILD PARTICIPATION



**140 children and young people have been part of the youth network Megaphone to this day. Currently, the NNC is working actively with 30 of them and the newly joined in 2016 are 20 young people aged 14-17 years, representing 10 Network member organizations**

## Megaphone Programme

Megaphone Youth Programme is a platform of the National Network for Children for child and youth participation (known also as “the small Network within the big Network”). Its members are children and young people who are either volunteers or are supported by Network member organisations. Together with the young Megaphone members we plan, prepare and conduct key Network activities and campaigns so that we can ensure that with their assistance these events would prove to be as much useful as possible for the children of Bulgaria. And while doing this, we discuss and practice the rights of children and in particular their right to express an opinion.

In order to keep *Megaphone* going, to attract more and more new children and young people, and in order to enable them to develop their knowledge and skills related to their rights, the National Network for Children organises for a fourth consecutive year a series of three activities aimed at building the capacity of the young people and their organisations. These are the so called **Autumn School on the Rights of the Children, Spring Meeting of Megaphone and Child and Youth Panel to the Annual Meeting of the National Network for Children.**

We established the *Megaphone* Programme in 2016. It brings together and redefines the concept not only of those three activities but also the three most important public activities of the National Network for Children: the **Golden Apple Awards, Report Card and Voice it Youth Forum.** In this way we shaped a unique programme for the development

of the capacity not only of the children and young people in *Megaphone* but also of the Network member organisations. The purpose of the Programme is to provide an opportunity to the participants to learn more about their rights and mostly about their right to an opinion and participation, to discuss ways how to uphold them in their everyday life, to introduce those in the activities of their organisations and last but not least, to practice them in the course of activities implementation under the Programme.

**Megaphone Programme is something like a two-year training adventure.** During the first year the young participants go through the above three training activities and the three public activities. The purpose of the former is to develop the participants’ knowledge and skills related to the rights of the children, and the purpose of the latter is to enable the participants to practice those rights in areas which are of interest and significance to them. During the second year, the same participants identify their roles “by interest” – as co-facilitators, PRs and advocates – and based on their experience, interests and future career plans assist the new *Megaphone* members in the process of engaging in the first-year activities. The adult professionals from the participating member organisations go through a similar process but to a much greater extent in the role of professionals supporting the young people and with a view to the organisational development they seek.



'Children have the right to give their opinion when adults make decisions that affect them. They also have the right to respect for their opinions.'

### Art. 12

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



## Child participation

In 2016 the National Network for Children continued organising important activities and events, related to the development of child participation. The piloting of the *Megaphone* Programme served as a framework and contributed to consistency in the development of *Megaphone* Youth Network, the roles there and the opportunities to join. Before the launch of the Programme, however, the work done in the field of child participation went through a number of key points:

- The beginning of 2016 saw the official launch of the Right(s) Court for Children project, which is being implemented in partnership with other organisations working with and for children from Hungary, Romania, Italy and the UK. The project's purpose presupposes monthly consultative meetings of the Network's Secretariat with two groups of 8th-grade students from Sofia and Panagyurishte. The final outcome sought by the project is the development of a computer game based entirely on the advice, experience and recommendations to the children. The topic of the game will be the judicial system and how a child can find their way in it during court proceedings.
- Megaphone Youth Network held their Conference of the Future in April. The purpose of the event was to remind ourselves of what Megaphone has accomplished so far and also to update the vision and to set new goals for the period 2016 – 2020. It is namely during the Conference that the idea and need of a children and youth participation programme shaped up in greater detail. As a result of this, the Secretariat embarked on the preparation of Megaphone Programme.
- On 20 November 2016, for a second consecutive year we conducted a Youth Forum Voice it: Your Opinion Matters. The occasion was again the anniversary of the signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the focus of the event was placed on the right to opinion. More than 200 young people took part in the one-day forum which covered topics such as The right to participation in school and in the judicial system, What does it take to become a leader, The rights of the child in the media, etc.







# HOUSE OF CHILDREN

The House of Children will provide active and developmental environment for children from all over Bulgaria, of various groups, ages, families and interests.

This will be an open, modern space for trainings and events, aspiring to become a national children's rights advocacy centre.

This will be a place where children will have the opportunity to gain knowledge and develop skills which they will need when they grow up and professionals will be able to develop their competency.

**The House will be run as a social enterprise and it will hire young people,** who are leaving institutions or foster care and thus enable them to acquire work habits and to have a chance of a good future.

In 2014, the General Assembly of the National Network for Children made a decision for the building of a House of Children which is to become an advocacy centre where children will learn about their rights. After more than a year of efforts, having defended the idea in front of donors and charity foundations such as OAK and VELUX, in 2016 the dream of the House of Children started to become a reality.

In 2016, the National Network for Children managed to identify a plot of land and to purchase it with funds from donations. A public competition will be announced for the development of a conceptual design, which will be followed by the project's next stage: development of an architectural plan. The House of Children will be built in the centre of Sofia, in the vicinity of Hristo Botev Blvd. on an area of 825 sq.m. The construction works are planned to commence in 2017.

The House will meet all requirements for a **child friendly environment**. It will feature premises for holding of events and interactive activities, meeting rooms where issues and matters of current importance for the children of Bulgaria will be discussed, administrative offices of the National Network for Children, a kitchen, a cafe and a hostel section which would ensure the sustainability of the House as a social enterprise.

There are projects and goals which require time, perseverance, faith and a lot of money in order to achieve them. The House of Children is exactly this type of project. It may look like an ambitious project for Bulgaria, where the problems of survival are abundant at this moment. However, we need to believe and to see **the future of our country as a place for mature and developed individuals and leaders.** And to work as a community for this future.

You also can contribute to the laying of the foundations. Make a donation for the building of the House of Children on the website of the Network for Children <http://nmd.bg/en/donate-online/> or in the Global Giving international fundraising platform: <https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/help-140-bulgarian-ngo-to-build-house-of-children/>

**Be architects of the future!**



# GOLDEN APPLE ANNUAL AWARDS



**Golden  
Apple  
awards**



For sixth consecutive year, the National Network for Children organised the Golden Apple Annual Award Ceremony. The awards are presented in recognition of the efforts of various people, organisations and institutions to improve the lives and welfare of Bulgarian children. The awards were handed on the eve of Children's Day – 1 June in the Central Military Club, Sofia.



**Hero of Children Award** was presented to Vera Kirilova from Plovdiv, Network coordinator of the National Alliance for Volunteer Action for organising a number of volunteer initiatives engaging young people or in support of socially disadvantaged children. The stories of 16 Heroes of Children were presented in this category and the winner was chosen based on an online public vote.



President Rossen Plevneliev received the **Special Achievement Award** on his consistent efforts and support in areas related to the safeguarding of the rights of children and for including the topic in the agenda of the various authorities in the country.



The **Special Contribution Award** was presented to Irena Yankova from the School Board of Trustees of Hristo Botev Primary School, Tarnava village.

This year the awards were distributed in **10 categories** on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the National Network for Children:

**Hero of Children, School, Hospital, Municipality, Journalist, Benefactor, Inspiring Personality, Campaign or Social Innovation, Special Contribution Award and Special Achievement Award.**

A total of 40 people and institutions were nominated in the various categories.

**The school** Award was bestowed upon **Hristo Botev Primary School, Galabnik village, Radomir Municipality** for their active work with children at risk of social exclusion and dropping out of the education system.

The Jury presented the **Hospital** Award to **Dr Hristo Stambolski General Hospital, town of Kazanlak** for engaging a social worker in the maternity ward, who consults pregnant women and mothers, where a risk of abandoning the child has been identified.

The **Municipality** Award was won by **Veliko Tarnovo Municipality** for the efficient work of the local administration over the last 10 years, put into the development of a sustainable social services network in support of children and their families.

The award in the **Journalist** category was awarded to **Children's Dnevnik** for the media's long-term commitment to the safeguarding of the rights of children and to social causes.

The award in one of the new categories – **Benefactor**, was presented to the **Bulgarian company Ficosota Ltd.** for their in-kind donation of more than 10 thousand litres of liquid detergents and 7 tonnes of washing powder, which NNC member organisations distributed among families in need from across the country.

The other new award, **Campaign and Social Innovation** was given to **Reach for Change and The Change competition of Nova Broadcasting Group**, which finds social entrepreneurs that improve children's lives.

The **Inspiring Person** award was won by **Dr. Lidiya Marinova**, who has been actively working for many years in Varna for prevention of child abandonment and for providing support to the families of children with disabilities as well as for improving parents' and children's health culture.

This year the award statuettes were made by students from **St Luca National High School of Applied Arts, Sofia**. They are the work of students from various specialties and were made of a variety of materials: wood, glass, metal, textile, paper.





# THE NETWORK'S DEVELOPMENT

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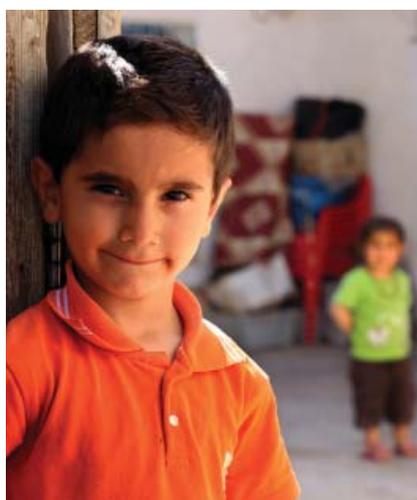
consultations and recommendations were given by the National Network for Children to its members and to other organisations on various cases and issues related to working with and for children as well as to children and parents, who have been referred to various forms of support.

5

Are the sustainable partnerships between organisations established through the Network, thus generating new opportunities for the care offered by the organisations to the children they work with.

## Thematic working groups

The National Network for Children has **four thematic working groups** which unite the members by interests. The groups' role is to present for discussion basic themes of advocacy depending on the expertise of the organisations participating in them, as well as to offer an opportunity for exchange between the organisations. The groups are: *Family* – 66 participants, *Health* – 43 participants, *Education* – 63 participants, *Justice* – 34 participants, NNC members.



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new organisations, working with and for children and families joined the Network in 2016. The Network's new members come from Yambol, Sofia, Vratsa, Pazardzhik, Dupnitsa, Kyustendil, Varna and Burgas. Two of them work in the field of children's contact with the judicial system; six – for access to better education, supporting teachers and improving relationships at school; one operates in a Roma community, one works with women and children who were victims of violence, two – for children and young people with disabilities and one organisation which brings together children and young people in institutional care.



## REGIONAL COORDINATION

In 2016 continued the development of the new Network structure: the regional co-ordination. Our main objective for adopting this mechanism was to respond to the necessity, clearly stated by the Network members, for more advocacy activities at local and regional level; to improve the efficiency of work within the Network and to support the activity and relations between the NNC members.

The Network has 8 regional co-ordinators for the following regions:

- Northeast (Varna, Dobrich)
- Northeast Central (Razgrad, Novi Pazar, Targovishte and Silistra)
- North Central (Rousse, Pleven, Gabrovo, Veliko Tarnovo, Lovech)
- Southeast (Bourgas, Yambol, Sliven)
- Southeast Central (Stara Zagora, Chirpan, Kazanlak, Dimitrovgrad, Haskovo, Kardzhali)
- Southwest Central (Plovdiv, Pazardzhik, Rakitovo)
- Northwest (Vratsa, Byala Slatina, Vidin)
- Southwest (Pernik, Trun, Gotse Delchev, Dupnitsa, Kyustendil, Sofia region)

Based on the experience we gained since the launch of the mechanism, we carried out an internal evaluation and held a number of discussions with a view to improving regional co-ordination within the Network. As a result, each of the eight regions has its Regional Council, where each NNC member organisation from the region is represented. The Regional Council decides on the joint work priorities for the region, makes strategic decisions, plans regional activities and participates in regional co-ordination activities.

The organisations in each of the regions nominate one of them to act as a regional co-ordinator and to be in charge of the co-ordination of the activities agreed by the Regional Council, which can involve both participation in national initiatives and campaigns of the Network, and specific regional initiatives promoting co-operation at local level.

## International relations

The National Network for Children is a member of a number of European and International networks and coalitions, which enables better dissemination and access to information about what happens to the children and families as well as opportunities for advocacy at European level. We are a member and national partner of **Eurochild** European Network for Children which advocates for putting children's rights and wellbeing in the heart of lawmaking in Europe. NNC Executive Director Mr. George Bogdanov is also a member of **Eurochild** Management Board. The National Network for Children is a member, co-founder and Vice-President of **ChildPact** Black Sea Regional Coalition for Child Protection which focuses their efforts on the development of child protection mechanisms based on an adequate assessment of the situation and securing ways for the funding of those. We are also member of the **International Step by Step Association**, which operates in the field of early childhood development.

In 2016 we took part in the 8th Children Rights Coalitions Forum in Europe, where, at the invitation of the organisers, we carried out a panel for training and exchange on networks organisational development.

The National Network for Children was also actively involved in the organisation and holding of the Council of Europe High-level Conference in April in Sofia, participating both in the discussions and in the securing of the participation of children and young people in the event. The conference launched the third Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (the Sofia Strategy).



# FINANCIAL REPORT

In the past year the National Network for Children implemented activities related to training, exchange of experience and good practices in Bulgaria and abroad, successfully implemented series of campaigns, child participation, strategic planning, etc.

The implementation of the majority of the NNC's commitments was possible thanks to the trust of our partners and funding organizations.

## STATEMENT OF PROFIT AND LOSS (one-sided)

In BGN thousands

	Note	2016	2015
1. Revenues	3	880	661
2. Expenses	4	(930)	(615)
<b>Gross result</b>		<b>(50)</b>	<b>46</b>
3. Finance income	5	-	5
4. Finance costs	5	(2)	(2)
<b>Net result</b>		<b>(52)</b>	<b>49</b>

## CONDENSED BALANCE SHEET

In BGN thousands

ASSETS				LIABILITIES			
SECTIONS, GROUPS, ITEMS	Note	2016	2015	SECTIONS, GROUPS, ITEMS	Note	2016	2015
<b>B. NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>				<b>A. EQUITY</b>			
II. Tangible fixed assets		521	3	VI. Reserves		78	130
<b>TOTAL SECTION B:</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>TOTAL SECTION A:</b>		<b>78</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>C. CURRENT ASSETS</b>				<b>C. LIABILITIES, incl:</b>			
II. Receivables	7	14	5	less that 1 year		15	-
IV. Cash and cash equivalents	8	732	264	over 1 year		20	-
<b>TOTAL SECTION C:</b>		<b>746</b>	<b>269</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>D. DEFERRED EXPENSES</b>				<b>D. FINANCING AND DEFERRED INCOME</b>			
		-	241	less that 1 year		643	383
				over 1 year		511	-
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>1 267</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>1 267</b>	<b>513</b>

## Projects implemented during the reporting period are:

- **‘Co-operation and monitoring to realize children’s rights’**, donor UNICEF – Bulgaria – project duration 20 months, end of the project November 2017
- **‘Development of Community Schools in Bulgaria – Phase 2’**, donor Charles Stewart Mott Foundation – project duration 24 months, end of the project June 2018
- **‘Vision for family policy in support of children and families in Bulgaria’**, donor Programme for support of the NGO sector in Bulgaria under the EEA Financial Mechanism, project duration 18 months, end of the project April 2016
- **‘Child Rights Hubs’**, donor Velux Foundation, project duration 36 months, end of the project March 30, 2019
- **‘Rights Courts for Children’**, donor Programme Justice of the European Commission, duration 24 months, end of the project September 2017
- **Institutional support to implement the strategy of the NNC 2015-2020**, donor OAK Foundation, duration 36 months, end of the project June 2019
- **‘Rescue: Reading the early signs of dropping out of school’**, donor Erasmus +, project duration 36 months, end of the project September 2019

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

All amounts in BGN thousand unless otherwise indicated

### 3. REVENUES

	2016	2015
Income from donations under conditions	859	641
Membership fees	13	13
Income from unconditional donations	8	7
	<b>880</b>	<b>661</b>

The Association does not account for revenues from business activities.

The income from donations, represent income from projects under which the Association is a Beneficiary and which have been recognised in the year when the associated expenses have been incurred.

### 4. EXPENSES

The Association’s expenses are related to its core activity only. Following are the analysed by nature of expenses:

	2016	2015
Cost of materials	46	7
Hired services	444	329
Wages and salaries	341	215
Compulsory social securities	64	36
Depreciation	4	4
Other costs	31	24
	<b>930</b>	<b>615</b>

# WHO ARE WE?

## Management Board

The National Network of Children Has a Management Board of seven member organizations elected by the General Assembly. Each organization has one representative. The Management Board supports, consults and mentors the work of the Secretariat.



Vesela Banova,  
"Child and Space"  
Assocation,  
President



Georgi  
Apostolov,  
Applied  
Research and  
Communications  
Fundation



Maria Gineva,  
"Future for  
Children"  
Association



Mariana  
Nikolova,  
"Karin Dom"  
Foundation



Ivan Ivanov,  
"Agapedia"  
Foundation



Dr. Radosveta  
Stamenkova,  
Bulgarian Family  
Planning and  
Sexual Health  
Association



Gancho Iliev,  
"World without  
Bounderies"  
Association

## Supervisory Board

The Supervisory Board makes a review of the financial situation of the organization at the end of the year and financial monitoring throughout the whole year. Also the Supervisory Board monitors compliance with the rules and procedures of the organization.



Kaloyan  
Damyanov,  
'National  
Association  
of Resource  
Teachers',  
Chairman



Spaska Petrova,  
"New Way" Asso-  
ciation



Alben Boneva,  
"Helping Hand"  
Foundation

## Secretariat

The Secretariat is the 14-member team responsible for the operational implementation of the strategic objectives of the National Network for Children and 8 regional coordinators applying Strategy of the Network in different regions.



The team of the Secretariat of the National Network for Children has four departments – Program Department, Network Development and child and youth participation, Communications and Campaigns and Administrative Department. For more information and contact details see <http://nmd.bg/en/about-us/>

# DONORS AND FRIENDS

On behalf of all member organisations of the National Network for Children, the Secretariat would like to express their heartfelt gratitude to our partners and friends.

The people and companies who have worked with us for the better future of Bulgarian children are:

**Borika – Bankservice Shareholding Company**, who supported the House of Children project by donating BGN 15,000;

**Mtel**, who supported NNC in organising the Golden Apple Award Ceremony by donating BGN 5,000;

**Fikosota Synthesis**, who donated 15 tonnes of hygiene and cleaning materials, which were distributed among the families most in need across the country with the assistance of NNC member organisations;

**The American Chamber of Commerce and Chamber members** who provided financial support for the School as a Community Centre project;

**Mihalkovo** – one of the oldest bottled mineral water manufacturers in the country who supported the annual awards ceremony „Golden Apple“.

**National School for Applied Arts „St. Luka“** – its director Mrs. Baleva and talented children from Grade 9 who gratuitously created unique statuettes for the 10 categories in the anniversary edition of the annual awards „Golden Apple“.

**Bulgaria Air**, which ensured the plane tickets to Brussels for the participation of two Bulgarian children in the international forum of Eurochild on the children’s rights.

**Anna Rizova-Noykova** (Design for Friends), who supports the organisation’s visual identity;

**Marieta Vassileva** (Taralezh “Hedgehog”), who produced basic printed materials of the organisation;

**More than 155 individual donors**, who joined the fundraising campaign at the Global Giving international platform;

and many other organisations and individuals, who assist us daily in the implementation of our projects and activities.

## DONORS



THE VELUX FOUNDATIONS

VILLUM FONDEN × VELUX FONDEN

# NETWORK MEMBERS 2016

## Blagoevgrad Region

Association 'Community Council on Education' – Gotse Delchev

## Burgas Region

'The Faithful Steward' Association – Burgas  
'Demetra' Association – Burgas  
'Regional Roma Alliance' Association – Burgas  
'Roosters' Association  
'Smile' Association – Burgas

## Varna Region

Association of Parents of Children with Dyslexia – Varna  
'Gavroche' Association – Varna  
'Eurointegration' Association – Varna  
'Karin Dom' Foundation – Varna  
'Vassilitsa' Association  
Agency for Social Development  
'Vision' – Varna  
'Joy for Our Children' Foundation – Varna  
Social Association 'St. Andrei' – Varna  
Family Center Maria – Varna  
Spina Bifida and Hydrocefalia Association – Varna  
'Sauchastie' Association – Varna  
'Colourful Future' Association – Varna

## Veliko Tarnovo Region

'International Social Service' Foundation – Veliko Tarnovo  
'Youth Tolerance' Association – Gorna Oriahovitsa  
Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance AMALIPE – Veliko Tarnovo

## Vidin Region

'Organization Drom' – Vidin

## Vratsa Region

'First of June' Association – Byala Slatina  
Association Vratsa Software Society  
'Science and Technology Centre' Association – Vratsa  
'New Way' Association – Hayredin  
School Board of Trustees of 'Hristo Botev' School – Tarnava

## Gabrovo Region

YMCA Gabrovo Association  
'Social Dialogue 2001' Association – Gabrovo

## Dobrich Region

'Helping Hand' Foundation – Dobrich

## Kardjali Region

Association 'Initiative for Development – Kardzhali Decides' – Kardzhali

## Kyustendil Region

Association "Knowledge, Success, Change" – Dupnitsa  
Association Largo – Kiustendil  
Parental Boards of Trustees of Kindergarten 'Kalina' – Dougnitsa

## Lovech Region

'Ecomission 21st Century' Association – Lovech  
'Knowledge' Association – Lovech

## Pazardjik Region

'Future' Foundation – Rakitovo  
'Juleviya Dom' Foundation  
KUZMANOV Foundation – Zvanitchevo  
Crime Prevention Fund IGA – Pazardzhik  
'Social Practices in the Community' Foundation – Pazardzhik

## Pernik Region

'PULSE' Foundation – Pernik  
'White Swallow' Association – Tran

## Pleven Region

Pleven Public Fund  
'Chitalishta' – Pleven

## Plovdiv Region

'Big Brother, Big Sister' Association – Plovdiv  
National Alliance for Volunteer Action – Plovdiv

## Razgrad Region

'Janeta' Association – Razgrad  
Youth Forum 2001 – Razgrad

## Ruse Region

BRTMI Association – Ruse  
'Equilibrium' Association – Ruse  
European Center for Mediation and Arbitrage (ECMA)  
'Caritas-Ruse' Foundation – Ruse  
Open Society Club – Ruse  
Centre Dynamica Association – Ruse

## Silistra Region

'Ekaterina Karavelova' Women's Association – Silistra  
'Hope for a Good Future' Association – Silistra

## Sliven Region

Society for the support of children and adults with mental, physical and sensory disabilities

'St. Stiliyan Child Protector' – Sliven

'The Health of Romany People' Foundation – Sliven  
IRA Foundation – Sliven  
'Doctors of the World' Foundation – Bulgarian Branch – Sliven  
'Roma Academy for Culture and Education' Association – Sliven

## Sofia City Region

'Agapedia – Bulgaria' Foundation  
Alliance of Bulgarian Midwives  
Association for Bulgarian family values, traditions and culture  
'Bulgarche'  
'Alpha Club – to Survive' Association  
Association for Early Childhood Development  
'Parents' Association  
Charity Foundation  
Bulgarian Association of Adopted Children and Adoptive Parents  
Bulgarian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association  
Bulgarian Pediatric Association  
Bulgarian Helsinki Committee  
'Bulgarian Child' Foundation  
BNC 'Together for the Children'  
Bulgarian Training Centre  
'Child and Space' Association  
'Children's Books' Association  
'Children and Adolescents' Association  
Association 'Children of Bulgaria'  
'EVRIKA' Foundation  
ECIP Foundation  
'Teach for Bulgaria' Foundation  
'Maternal and Child Health' Foundation  
'For our Children' Foundation  
'Health and Social Development' Foundation  
Ethnic Minorities Health Problems Foundation  
Social Activities and Practices Institute  
'Concordia Bulgaria' Foundation  
'The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award – Bulgaria' Foundation  
International Legal Center  
Arete Youth Foundation  
M&M Physio Foundation  
National Foster Care Association  
National Network of Health Mediators  
Foundation 'Hope for the Little Ones'  
'Hope for Us' Association  
National School Eco-Parliament  
'Society for All' Association  
'Paideia' Foundation  
'Partners – Bulgaria' Foundation  
'Human Rights' Project

'Applied Research and Communications' Foundation  
'Friends 2006' Foundation  
Association Re-Act  
Reachout.BG Association  
Association for Progressive and Open Communication – Sofia  
'Cedar' Foundation  
'Step for Bulgaria' Foundation  
'Step by Step' Foundation – Sofia  
Social Theatre Formation  
'Flower'  
Association for Pedagogical and social help for children – FICE Bulgaria  
Worldwide Foundation for Vulnerable Children  
'Tsvetan Tsanov' Foundation  
'Centre Nadya' Foundation  
Centre for Inclusive Education  
Centre for Psychosocial Support  
Habitat for Humanity  
SOS Children's Villages – Bulgaria

## Sofia Region

'Towards a Better Life' Association – Chelopech

## Stara Zagora Region

'Future for Children with Disabilities' Association – Kazanlak  
Chitalishta 'Vazrodna Iskra' – Kazanlak  
'Clovers' Association – Chirpan  
National Association of Resource Teachers – Stara Zagora  
'Samaritans' Association – Stara Zagora  
'World without Boundaries' Association – Stara Zagora

## Targovishte Region

'Academica 245' Association – Antonovo  
'Naya' Association – Targovishte  
Club of NGOs – Targovishte

## Haskovo Region

'Children and Families' Association – Haskovo  
'Give a Smile' Foundation – Dimitrovgrad  
'Hope for Protection' Association – Haskovo

## Shumen Region

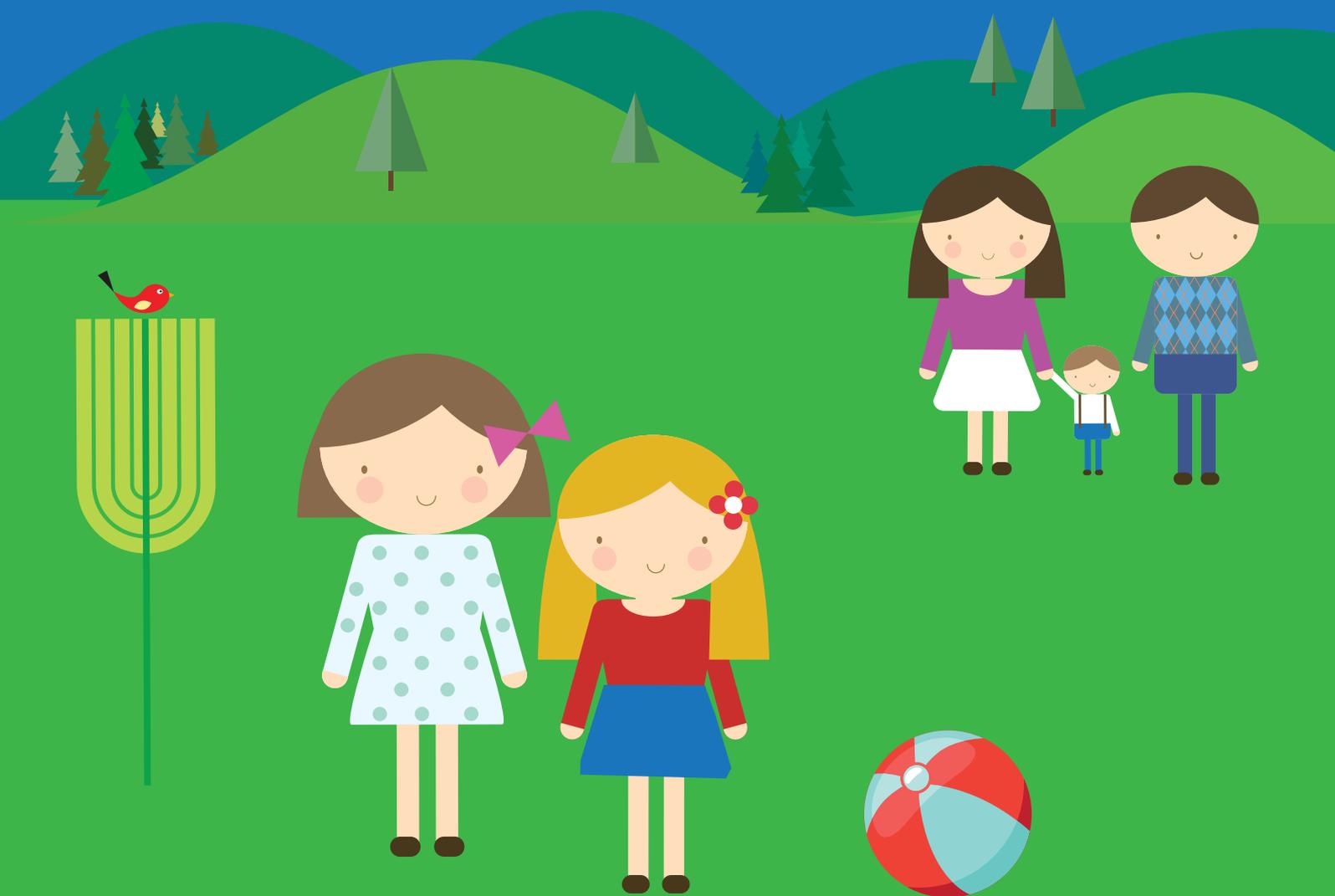
'SOS Women and Children survived violence' Association – Novi Pazar  
Association of Roma Women  
'Hayatchi' – Novi Pazar

## Yambol Region

Municipal School Board of Trustees – Boliarovo  
Library 'Úmenie 2003' – Yambol



NATIONAL NETWORK FOR CHILDREN



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