



**Foundation for Social
Change and Inclusion**



Restoring dignity, reviving hope



INTRODUCTION

Hidden from the world's gaze, hundreds of thousands of people are living in severe poverty in the Balkans. Young people, particularly state and foster care leavers and Roma, become prostitutes and criminals because of severe deprivation and having grown up with a lack of proper education, job opportunities, access to social services and support. Families spend freezing winters living in one room shacks with leaking roofs. Human traffickers prey on these highly vulnerable members of a fractured society. The legacy of communism, failed political reform and war has left Southeast Europe a region where too many people are simply struggling to survive.



The Foundation for Social Change and Inclusion (FSCI) was founded in 2008 with the support of UK-based NGO The Trussell Trust to help revive hope and restore dignity to some of the most vulnerable and marginalised individuals and communities in Bulgaria. FSCI now works with individuals, groups and communities throughout Southeast Europe by partnering with local people, organisations, businesses, churches and municipalities, helping them to effect positive change in their communities.

On the following pages we will introduce FSCI's three main programmes:

1. House of Opportunity
2. Social Enterprise
3. Early Years Education



“The team of House of Opportunity were the reason I did not give up. They gave me hope, advice and time. I started combining my education with work as a receptionist - this is when I met a boy. We are married now and have a baby boy. I truly believe that “House of Opportunity” Programme is very meaningful - I have experienced it. All of the young people that lived in the House of Opportunity received support, hope and a boost in life.”
Maria*, former House of Opportunity resident.

MISSION & VISION

MISSION

FSCI works towards the social development and integration of underprivileged individuals, groups and communities.

VISION

Our vision is a world where children are not abandoned and where everyone has the opportunity to live a successful life free from poverty, crime and prostitution.

To see an end to the vicious cycle of poverty and social isolation broken. To see a better, more hopeful future realised with dignified living for everyone.

OBJECTIVES

- To work for the social development of underprivileged individuals, groups and communities;
- To help underprivileged children, young people, adults and families meet their potential as an accepted part of society;
- To promote the rights of underprivileged individuals, groups and communities, in particular those of children and young people;
- To encourage and popularise voluntary work.

*Name changed to protect identity

FSCI PROGRAMMES:

1. THE HOUSE OF OPPORTUNITY

ABANDONED

Every year thousands of young people across the Balkans leave state institutions and foster care. With a lack of proper education, no idea of how the real world works, no family to support them and no help from the state, they are left to make their own way in life. Many fall prey to traffickers and pimps, while others end up living in extreme poverty. Many will go on to abandon their own children. This is repeated by the next generation in what becomes a cycle of abandonment.



PREVENTION NOT RESCUE

Our House of Opportunity Programme (HOP) provides care leavers with up to two years of life skills training, employment opportunities and accommodation in a family-style small group home. FSCI's team have experience and knowledge of how to set up and run residential training programmes to equip vulnerable young people with the tools they need to live successful, independent lives free from crime and prostitution.

Evaluation proves that real transformation is possible. A recent study showed that 53 percent of young people on the Programme started work, 74 percent improved their social skills, 25 percent improved their level of education or are in the process of doing so, 78 percent have a place of their own to live after the Programme, 100 percent have preserved or improved their health.

WHAT DOES IT COST?

FSCI and its partners operate 11 Houses of Opportunity in Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Albania.

There are also plans to develop HOPs with our partners in Moldova and Greece (where the programme may be adapted for helping unaccompanied young refugees).

Each House of Opportunity costs between €24,000 and €33,000 a year to run, depending upon which country and city it is based.

Sofia typical costs (monthly):
Rent: rent-free agreement*
Staff salaries: €1150
Food for residents: €320 (5 residents)
Utilities: €175

Serbia typical costs (monthly):
Rent: €265
Staff salaries: €1650
Food for residents: €400 (5 residents)
Utilities: €200

*We seek rent-free apartments from municipal authorities wherever we operate, but where the need is great and we have good partners we will rent suitable property.

Will you consider supporting the House of Opportunity Programme?



FSCI PROGRAMMES: 2. SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

NO JOB - NO FUTURE

The unemployment rate among state and foster care leavers is extremely high which means that it is very difficult for them to find a job. Many do not have a basic grasp of what is required in the work place.

HOPE SOAP

In 2012 FSCI started a soap-making project as part of the House of Opportunity Programme (HOP) called HOPE SOAP. We believe that soap making can be of great benefit to the young people on the Programme. This work engages their time in productive activities, gives them a sense that their contribution matters and develops their skills to manage tasks in a limited time frame.

In 2013 HOPE Soap won first prize in a national competition for the best business plan of an NGO. The project also won a prize from the employees of Bulbank. The soap has been marketed to wedding organisers and is sold through two shops in Sofia. An online catalogue has been set up and we have plans to develop the project further.



SUNRISE CARWASH

In summer 2016 Sunrise carwash was opened in the Bulgarian city of Burgas. Staffed by young people from HOP Burgas, the carwash is a great place to learn skills including customer service and marketing. Contracts have been secured to wash vehicles belonging to local companies; this means the team already have a good base on which to build the business.



HOPE RESTAURANTS AND CATERING

Our most ambitious social enterprise is a new restaurant business in Sofia which opened with support from Rotary International in autumn 2016. The restaurant includes a catering business. This gives us “in-house” employment and training capacity that we can offer to young people in our HOPs.

We want to develop training and qualifications that will enable young people to learn valuable, transferrable skills that they can take with them upon graduation.



**WILL YOU
INVEST IN US?**

We are seeking social investors who are willing to support FSCI with low return loans that will help us to train, establish and grow our businesses throughout the Balkans.

FSCI PROGRAMMES:

3. EARLY YEARS EDUCATION



EXCLUDED, MARGINALISED, TRAPPED

Treated with prejudice and suspicion, many Roma live in extreme poverty and have very poor access to education and health care. There is a significant generational poverty cycle which is very difficult for their children to escape. The barriers to Roma children successfully breaking out of this cycle include low levels of literacy and suspicion of education among adults, isolation caused by ability to only speak in local Roma dialect and low standards of living. The problems are compounded by a lack of good schools and kindergartens to serve these communities.

The consequence of low school attendance rates and high levels of drop-out for those who do attend results in difficulties in securing employment, and children end up working in low skill jobs or becoming involved in criminal activities.

OPENING THE SCHOOL DOOR

Our programme promotes education in high-risk communities. Outreach workers spend time with local families, encouraging them to send their children to the kindergarten and helping them where appropriate. The kindergarten staff work to ensure that children can make the change from early years education to school fully supported and with a much greater chance of making it all the way into secondary education - greatly improving their future prospects and helping to break the cycles of poverty and exploitation of young uneducated children.

We opened a kindergarten in September 2015 as part of a Centre for community support in the Roma neighbourhood of Fakulteta, Sofia. FSCI is working with its partners to replicate this model: A2B, our partners in Albania, opened a kindergarten in Peqin in autumn 2016.

“Since my early years I have been volunteering in our community. After graduating I became part of the FSCI team that works in the neighbourhood of Fakulteta where I grew up and still live. I want to be a good example for the young people in our community and to help them and their parents change their attitudes towards education and early marriages”.

Sevda, teacher at Fakulteta



WHAT DOES IT COST?

Our kindergartens cost €19,000 - €25,000 per year to run.

Fakulteta, Bulgaria, typical costs (monthly):

Rent: €95

Staff salaries: €1050

Food for children: €105
(12 children per day)

Peqin, Albania, typical costs (monthly):

Rent: €100

Staff salaries: €1120

Food for children: €880
(Breakfast and lunch for 30 children per day)

Will you consider supporting the Early Years Education Programme?



WILL YOU HELP US TO RESTORE DIGNITY AND REVIVE HOPE?

If you would like to donate or find out more about our work and individual programmes or if you are interested in a programme-specific budget and long-term funding, please get in touch with us.

Are you part of a company that does business in Southeast Europe? Are you a business owner who would like to support a social development programme that protects vulnerable young people and helps them to achieve their potential?

If so, we would love to hear from you and discuss how you could become part of something that is really changing lives. We need grants and social investment funding to make our plans a reality; your business could make a huge difference.

If you would like to receive a regular FSCI Newsletter, please email us.

Thank you.

Chris Mould
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