



**Foundation for Social
Change and Inclusion**



Restoring dignity, reviving hope

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.

We want to see an end to the vicious cycle of poverty, social isolation broken, and 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.

BACKGROUND

Hidden from the world's gaze, hundreds of thousands of people are living in severe poverty in Bulgaria. Young people, particularly state 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. Despite its beauty, rich culture and European Union membership, Bulgaria is a country where too many people are simply struggling to survive.

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 works with individuals, groups and communities to break the poverty cycle and bring them hope for a better future. We operate in union with our partners and founders The Trussell Trust UK. We also work in partnership with local people, organisations, businesses, churches and municipalities, helping them to effect positive change in their communities.

We currently have three main programmes:

1. The **House of Opportunity Programme**. Family-type homes for state care leavers where we develop life-skills and employment opportunities.
2. The **Social Enterprise Programme**. We are piloting an integrated approach to developing the social and employment skills of care leavers and people at risk of poverty. Currently this is primarily by means of soap making workshops and associated training for sales skills and managing a small business.
3. Our **Early Years Education Programme** offers a range of services in Roma communities working on early interventions for school dropout prevention and complete educational integration of children of Roma ethnic origin.



FSCI PROGRAMMES: 1. THE HOUSE OF OPPORTUNITY

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Every year hundreds of teenage Bulgarians leave state institutions. With the highest rate of abandoned children in the European Union and change taking place slowly, these young people are vulnerable to crime, prostitution and human trafficking because they are unprepared for life outside the state-run orphanages. 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 have no option but to make their own way in life. Many fall prey to traffickers and pimps, while others end up living in extreme poverty; many go on to abandon their own children as a result of the pressures they face. This is repeated by the next generation in what becomes a cycle of abandonment.

PROVIDING A SOLUTION

Our House of Opportunity Programme provides care leavers with two years of life skills training, employment opportunities and accommodation in a family-style, small group home. FSCI's team of qualified professionals have experience and knowledge of how to set up and run a residential training programme to equip vulnerable young people with the tools they need to live successful, independent lives free from crime and prostitution. Evaluation results prove that real transformation is possible. According to FSCI statistical data from 2014, 53 percent started work, 27 percent kept their job for six months or more, 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 to live after the Programme, 100 percent have preserved or improved their health.



THE HOUSE OF OPPORTUNITY: STORIES

MARIA

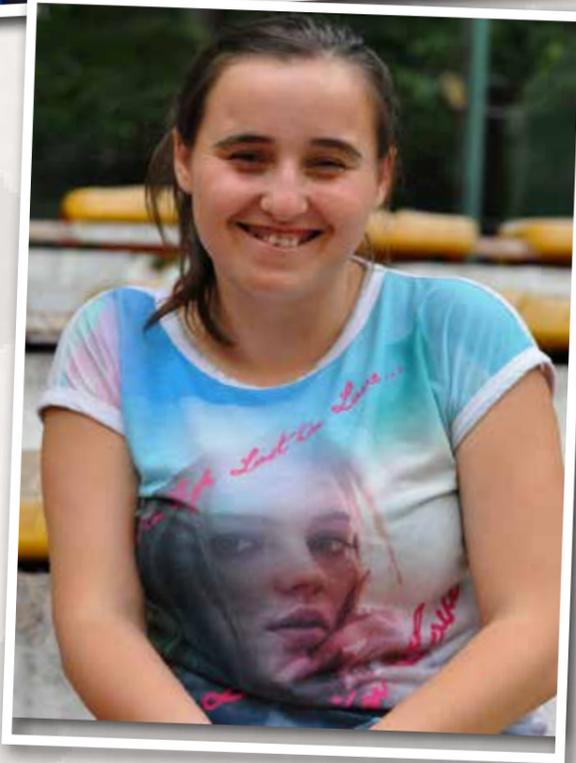
Maria (name changed) grew up in a children's institution in Ruse, Bulgaria. Girls are particularly vulnerable when leaving state-care and the director of the orphanage was greatly concerned for Maria's future - so we provided a place for her at House of Opportunity Ruse.

Maria was in our programme almost a year, during which she made real progress. She found a good job as a receptionist and began an 'Early Childhood Education' course in the university. All this was done with the guidance and help of the House of Opportunity staff who showed her that she needed to continue her studies so that she could have a secure future.

"The team of House of Opportunity Ruse helped me realise how important education is for me - they were the reason I did not give up on university. They gave me hope, advice and time - I did not work during the first year, as I had to go to classes. After that I started combining my education with a nice work as a receptionist - this is when I met a boy, who turned out to be a really nice person. We are married now and have a little baby boy - we are very happy together. I truly believe that "House of Opportunity" Programme is very meaningful - I have experienced it. All of the young people and I that lived in the HOP received support, hope and a boost in life."

Maria has plans for the future: She has finished studying to become a pre-school teacher and when her son turns two years old, she hopes to go back to work as a receptionist until she finds a teaching position in a kindergarten.





THE HOUSE OF OPPORTUNITY: STORIES

NADIA & GANUSH

The story of Nadia & Ganush is both tragic and touching. Separated at a young age after being taken into care following the death of their mother, the children had lost touch completely. Nadia joined the House of Opportunity Programme in 2014 and moved to the Sofia House the next year. Ganush joined the programme in January 2016 but it wasn't until they met and swapped their personal stories that they were able to put the pieces together and realised that they were brother and sister!

"I believe that the fate has a hand in our meeting," says Ganush. "I didn't even know that Nadia existed but she had heard about me. For me it was a big surprise, even a shock, but good one! I am very happy that we met each other."

"We are alike in terms of character – sharing both good and bad traits. We often argue, about stupid things, of course – what to buy from the shop and what to cook, but we live well together in the 'House of Opportunity' like normal people. Now we are getting to know each other – Nadia is shy and doesn't talk much. But I can wait."

Now Nadia & Ganush have the chance to be a family again and we hope that they will derive strength from each other for their shared journey on the difficult road to independence.

SCRAVENA, BULGARIA: Our first House of Opportunity (The House of Joshua) operated between Sept 2007 and Nov 2016 and achieved great results. Over 40 young people have been given a chance to benefit from the programme here.

RUSE, BULGARIA: FSCI successfully launched the third House of Opportunity during the spring of 2011 in the large north-western city of Ruse, a border city with a high concentration of organised crime, trafficking and prostitution.

CHISINAU, MOLDOVA: FSCI's partners, Beginning of Life, hope to add a HOP to their roster of projects that support vulnerable young people.

VARAZDIN & CAKOVEC, CROATIA: Two organisations, I want Life & Hope for Life, opened HOPs in these neighbouring towns in 2016, with different levels of support from their local authorities.

VARNA, BULGARIA: The latest House of Opportunity is based in this major city, which is a centre for both tourism and commerce.

BELGRADE & NIS, SERBIA: Belgrade was the first non-Bulgarian HOP to open (autumn 2015) and is run by local NGO, Center Star. Nis HOP opened in late 2016.

BURGAS, BULGARIA: The House of Opportunity in Burgas was opened in September 2014 and immediately welcomed 4 young people.

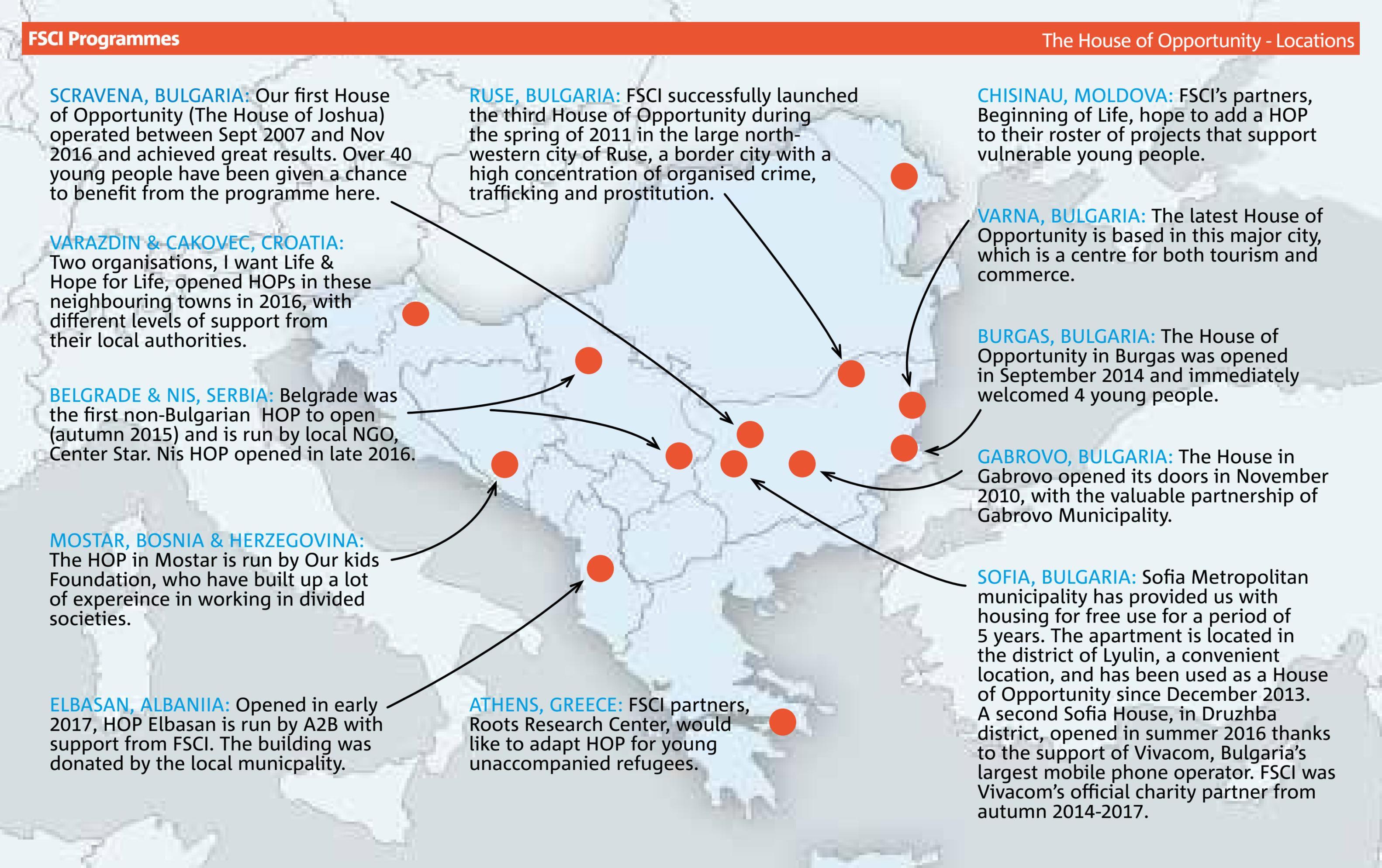
MOSTAR, BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA: The HOP in Mostar is run by Our kids Foundation, who have built up a lot of experience in working in divided societies.

GABROVO, BULGARIA: The House in Gabrovo opened its doors in November 2010, with the valuable partnership of Gabrovo Municipality.

ELBASAN, ALBANIA: Opened in early 2017, HOP Elbasan is run by A2B with support from FSCI. The building was donated by the local municipality.

ATHENS, GREECE: FSCI partners, Roots Research Center, would like to adapt HOP for young unaccompanied refugees.

SOFIA, BULGARIA: Sofia Metropolitan municipality has provided us with housing for free use for a period of 5 years. The apartment is located in the district of Lyulin, a convenient location, and has been used as a House of Opportunity since December 2013. A second Sofia House, in Druzhba district, opened in summer 2016 thanks to the support of Vivacom, Bulgaria's largest mobile phone operator. FSCI was Vivacom's official charity partner from autumn 2014-2017.



FSCI PROGRAMMES:

2. SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

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

PROVIDING A SOLUTION

In March 2012 FSCI started a soap-making project as part of the House of Opportunity Programme (HOP) called HOPE SOAP. In FSCI we believe that HOPE SOAP can help restore the hope of young people living in harsh social isolation. This work engages their time with productive activities, gives them a sense that their contribution matters and develops their skills to manage tasks in a limited time frame.

In February 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.

BENEFITS FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE

Soap production includes a small number of simple operations, suitable for the intellectual and physical capabilities of the young people in HOP. The process is a unique combination of creative activity and routine sequence. Thus their working habits and psycho-social skills are developed in a safe environment.

SUNRISE CARWASH

In August 2016 Sunrise carwash was opened in the Bulgarian coastal city of Burgas. Staffed by young people from the Burgas HOP, this carwash will be a great place to learn basic business skills including customer service and marketing. An innovative profit-sharing scheme acts as an incentive for the young people employed at the carwash and with contracts secured to wash vehicles belonging to local companies, the team already have a good base on which to build the business.

HOPE RESTAURANTS AND CATERING

Our newest social enterprise is a restaurant business in Sofia which opened in autumn 2016. Thanks to the support of Rotary International we have established a cafe that will also include a catering business. This gives us “in-house” employment and training capacity that we can offer to the young people in our HOPs. This creates an opportunity to develop vocational training and qualifications that will enable vulnerable young people to learn valuable, transferrable skills that they can take with them into the jobs market. Profits generated by the business will be used to develop it further and support the House of Opportunity Programme.



FSCI PROGRAMMES:

3. EARLY YEARS EDUCATION

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The Roma community is very marginalised in Bulgaria; they are treated with prejudice and suspicion. People in some parts of the community live in extreme poverty and have very poor access to education and health care. There is a significant generational poverty cycle which it is very difficult for their children to escape from.

Education is a key factor in breaking out of this poverty cycle because those with basic qualifications, such as the Bulgarian School Diploma, have a much better chance of gaining legitimate employment. There are, however, very significant barriers to young children of Roma ethnic origin successfully entering the education system. Research shows that reasons for the general failure of educational work with Roma children are of a complex and difficult nature.

The following reasons are strong factors why children find it difficult to adapt to the school environment and to integrate further in society:

- Low levels of literacy and qualification among adult Roma; severe social isolation of the Roma community;
- Low standard of living (a factor in low school attendance, incomplete participation in educational activities and high rate of school dropouts);
- Lack of good child care skills and responsible parenthood in the community;
- High unemployment rate amongst ethnic minorities;
- Myths, attitudes and prejudice which aggravate marginalisation.

The consequence is a poor level of school attendance and a high level of drop-out for those who do attend. Only 11 percent of Roma children in Bulgaria will go on to graduate high school. This results in difficulties in securing legitimate employment, and young people end up working in low skill jobs or becoming involved in criminal activities.





PROVIDING A SOLUTION

FSCI is partnering with World Without Borders (WWB) to deliver an Early Years Education Programme in Stara Zagora which is developing effective practices to encourage early education in high-risk communities, funded by The Trussell Trust. WWB's team of 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 closely with local primary schools to ensure that young 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. In time this will improve employability amongst Roma people. It will help to break the generational cycles of poverty, deprivation and exploitation of young uneducated children, who often end up working in the sex industry.

FSCI is working together with the Trussell Trust to replicate this model in other Roma communities. We started a kindergarten in September 2015 as part of a Centre for community support in the Bulgarian Roma neighbourhood "Faculteta". The kindergarten is going really well with 13 children attending regularly and a waiting list of nearly 20. Plans to grow this Centre are being developed.

LEADING THE WAY

Sevda is part of the team at the Faculteta kindergarten in Sofia. She is a keen advocate of education in Roma communities.

"Since my early years I have been volunteering in different NGOs that work in our community. After graduating as an assistant tutor I became part of the FSCI team that works in the neighbourhood of Faculteta 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"



HOW OUR KINDERGARTENS WORK

Our Early Years Education Programme consists of special kindergartens tailored to individual communities. By working together with families we aim to provide a vital pathway into education for marginalised children.



SPECIALIST TEAM: A blend of experience and local community knowledge is essential



TEACHING: Basic literacy, numeracy and creative play to prepare for primary school



INVESTING IN FAMILIES: Encouraging families to keep their children learning and growing in confidence and capability



COMMUNITY RELATIONS: Promoting the value of education in the surrounding community

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Based on the success of the Faculteta kindergarten we plan to increase the number of places available to children – ensuring that even more children in this community get the best possible start to their education.

We have been gifted some land and we plan to build a bespoke community centre that will allow us to expand the kindergarten and also set up services such as housing and welfare advice, family planning, adult education, teen support groups, job

searching, and medical clinics which will benefit the whole community of Faculteta. This community-led approach will help marginalised families to realise futures filled with possibility for their children and help set a template for similar projects in other communities.

The cost of building and equipping the new centre will be £65,000. Would your organisation be willing to help raise funds for this innovative and vital project?



PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

FSCI DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

INCREASING SOCIAL CHANGE AND INCLUSION ACROSS SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

The dangers that state care leavers face when they leave institutions at eighteen, the high school drop-out rate and social isolation of Roma children and the huge challenges vulnerable young people face when finding and keeping a job are not just limited to Bulgaria. These shared problems undermine communities across the Balkans. The FSCI has developed practical, down-to-earth ways to chip away at the issues. As we replicate our projects in community after community, we are taking steady steps towards transforming society. Our vision is two-fold:

1) BULGARIA

We want to continue with the development and replication of the FSCI's three programmes in Bulgaria.

There is a desperate need to provide more young care leavers with the skills and confidence they require to build futures free of threat from crime, prostitution and human trafficking. Unless action is taken, the alarming cycle of abandonment will continue.

We look forward to a future where any vulnerable young person that leaves state care has an opportunity of a residential place in our **House of Opportunity Programme**, enabling them to make a good transition to independent adulthood. Of course, the House of Opportunity will not suit everyone: some young people will have alternative positive options. Some will have physical or learning disabilities which require ongoing professional care, and the HOP

is not designed to provide for people with these additional care needs. But we calculate that about 50 such Houses are required. We aim to develop a network of Houses of Opportunity spread across the country to ensure accessibility.

Our **Social Enterprise Programme** is early stage and still experimental. We aim to develop new social enterprises providing employment, teaching young people useful skills and trading effectively to generate a financial surplus. We also have plans to scale up and replicate the "HOPE Soap" business in other FSCI centres across the country.

Similarly, we are developing a number of suitable locations and partners to run the **Early Years Education Programme**. We aim to establish this key programme in several Roma communities in Bulgaria as finances permit.

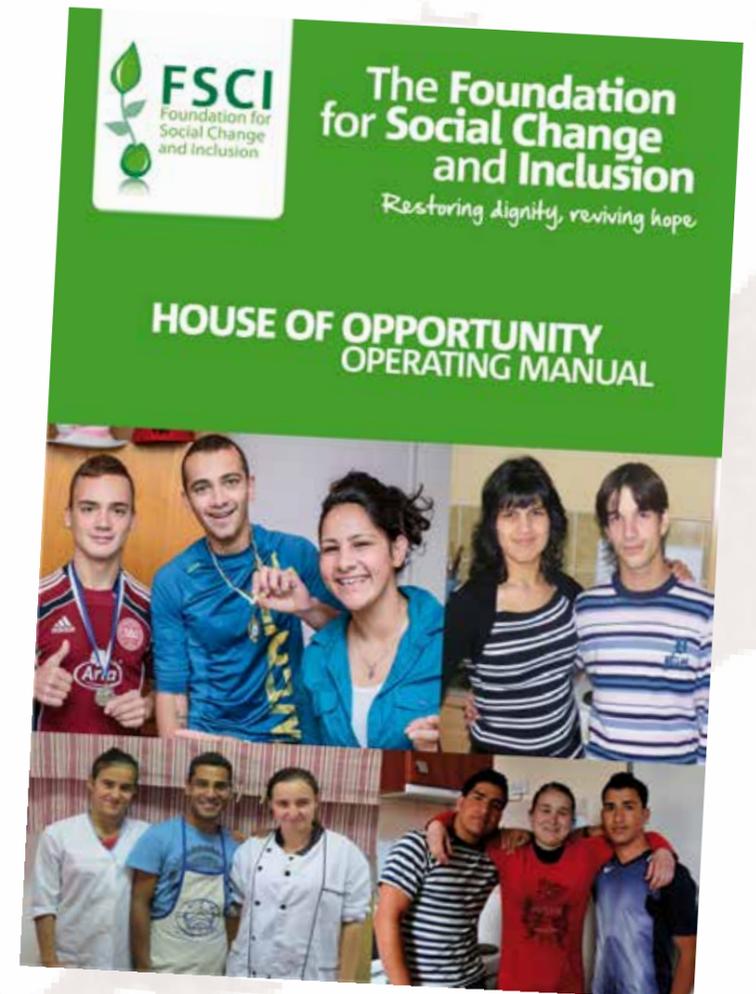
2) OTHER COUNTRIES

Our programmes equipping children and young people with the skills to build a better life and to become contributing members of society are just as much needed in neighbouring countries. By scaling up our work across the Balkans and Eastern Europe, we will make our programmes more sustainable, increase their impact and attract more financial support including social investment. We will also build the all important capacity at local level which is essential to good delivery and sustainable outcomes.

We are inviting people and organisations from a number of different countries who have an interest in the different areas FSCI is working in and who share our vision and values, to partner with us by joining our FSCI Development Programme. One component of this programme is an annual conference that will enable people across the Balkans who are interested in addressing similar issues and who might be facing similar problems

to get together to network, share knowledge and good practice, exchange experiences, discuss ideas and build capacity. Other components of the FSCI Development Programme include operational manuals and training to enable people to run FSCI projects and funding to help them get these projects established.

Since launching the FSCI Development Programme in 2015, we have held two FSCI Network Conferences, one in Sofia and one in Belgrade, with over 50 participants drawn from ten countries and have signed up partners (below) to our Programme. We have seen Houses of Opportunity starting in Serbia (Belgrade and Niš), Croatia (Varaždin and Čakovec) and Albania (Elbasan) as well as a similar programme in Mostar, Bosnia & Herzegovina. Others are planned in Moldova and Greece.



Bosnia & Herzegovina



Croatia



Roots Research Centre, Greece



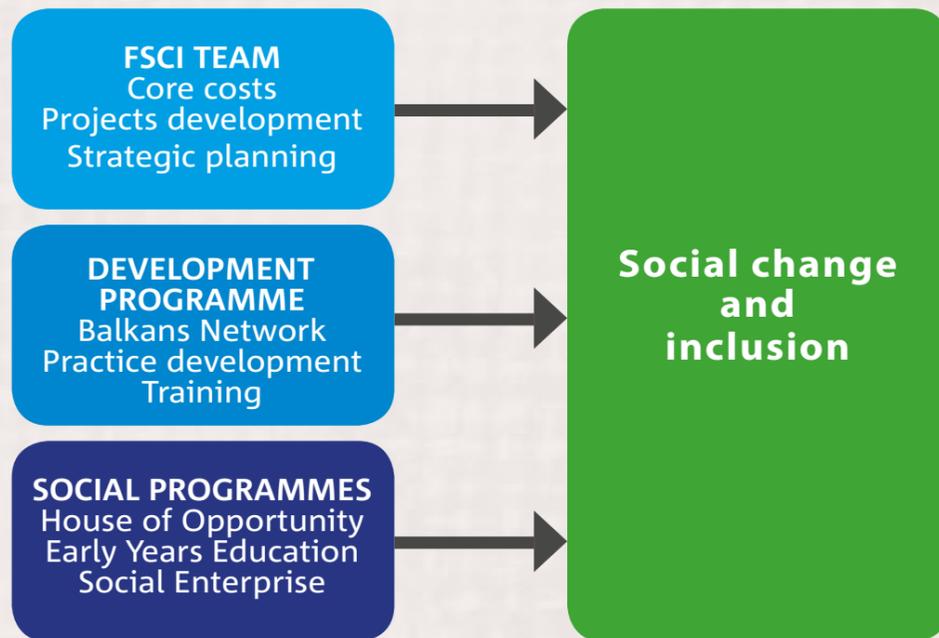
Moldova



Serbia

HOW YOU CAN HELP

If our work is to grow in the Balkan region, we need to raise more funds. The following graphic demonstrates areas of our work in which you could offer financial support:



Without the FSCI Team at the head office none of the work of FSCI could be done.

By supporting the Development Programme, you would enable us to build capacity, grow the work of FSCI in Bulgaria and across the Balkans and Eastern Europe and help develop individual people and organisations as well as projects.

Opportunity, Early Years Education and Social Enterprise, all need financial support so that we can replicate them. For instance, each House of Opportunity costs between €20,000 and €28,000 a year to run. We need donors to support the start-up and early years. Over a five year period each house should become financially self-sufficient which means your gift is an investment which will have impact well beyond what it initially pays for. Self-sufficiency will be achieved by a combination of individual donor funding, support through Bulgarian businesses' corporate social responsibility programmes, match funding from municipalities and "twinning" with European and US schools or churches who will adopt a house.

Kindergartens cost between €19,000 and €25,000 a year to run.

If you are part of a church or are a teacher in a Secondary/Sixth form school and would like to know more about our "twinning" scheme and our FSCI school packs, do get in touch with us. We would also love to hear from you if you are interested in organising fundraising events for FSCI.

Are you part of a company that does business in Bulgaria or other Balkan countries? 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 social investment funding to make our plans a reality; your business could make a huge difference.

Do you represent an organisation that works in the field of social care, anti-trafficking, social enterprise or development projects in the Balkans? We would welcome discussion with you about our mutual interests and the chance to explore ways in which we can work together.

If you would like to receive a regular FSCI newsletter, please email us your details.

If you would like to 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.

If you would like one of our team to come and speak at your school, church or community group, please do get in touch.

Chris Mould
Founder and Chairman, FSCI

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Bank transfer:

Acc. name: FSCI (UK)

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Salisbury, SP1 2NG

Sort code: 09-01-29

Account No: 11340290

Cheques: FSCI (UK)

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