

THE **HOUSE OF  
OPPORTUNITY  
PROGRAMME**



*Preventing modern slavery, transforming lives*



## 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.

FSCI has three main programmes:

- [House of Opportunity](#)
- [Social Enterprise](#)
- [Early Years Education](#)

# 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.



# 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 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 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.

# HOW HOUSES OF OPPORTUNITY WORK

Our residential training centres equip vulnerable young people with the skills they need to live successful, independent lives.



**Budgeting & IT:**  
Houses of Opportunity enable residents to learn essential life skills and complete their education.



**Education & Employment:**  
We work with residents to support their continued education or help them apply for and retain a job.



**Cooking Skills:**  
Stoyil joined the House of Opportunity unable to use a knife and fork. He is now a great cook!



**Family style home :**  
House parents provide each resident with individual care in safe, nurturing environment.

# THE HOUSE OF OPPORTUNITY: STORIES

## MARIA

Maria\* 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.

\*Name changed



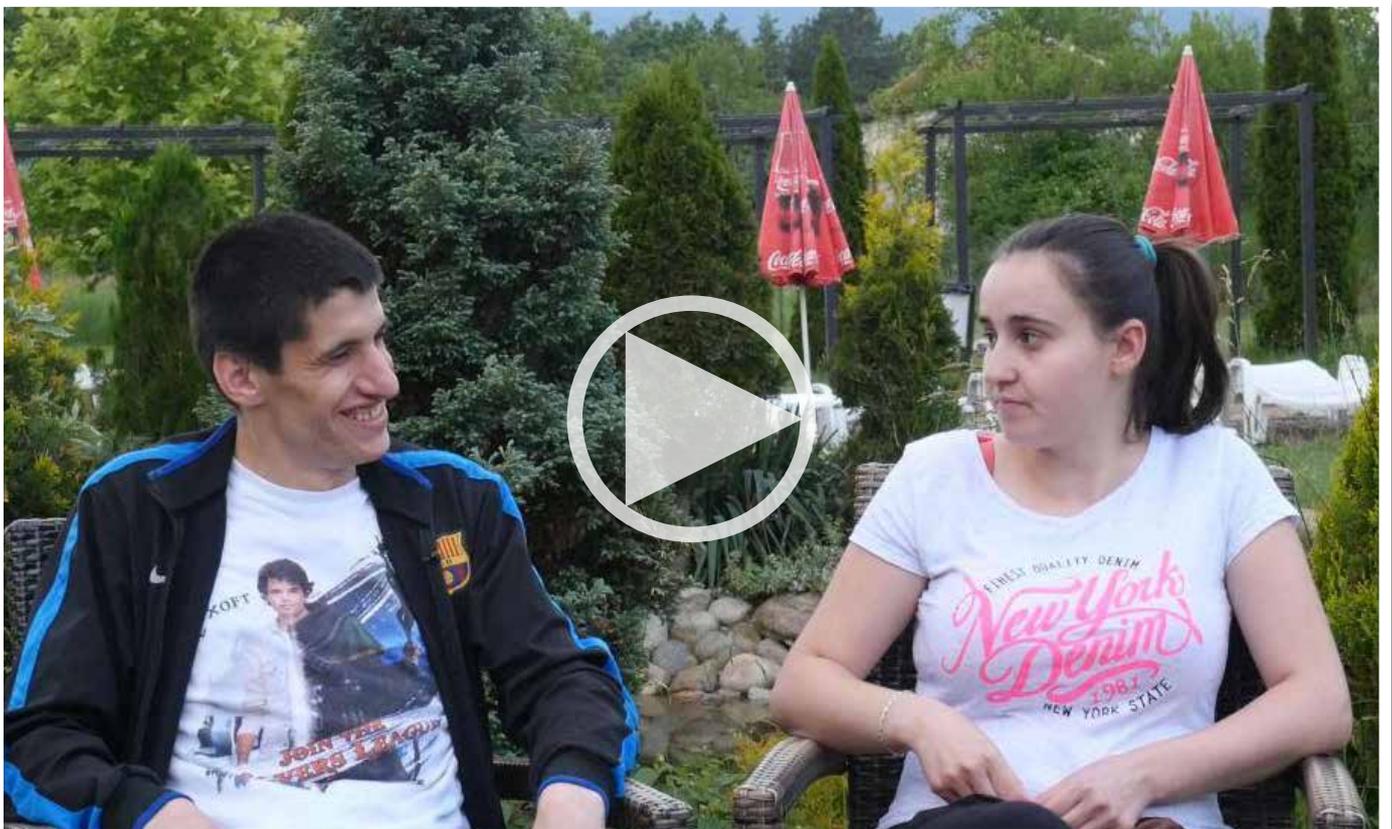
# THE HOUSE OF OPPORTUNITY: STORIES

## 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!

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.



## WHAT DOES IT COST?

FSCI and its partners operate 10 Houses of Opportunity in Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia 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 €37,000 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?



If you would like to find out more about the House of Opportunity Programme please get in touch with us.

Are you part of a company that does business in Southeast Europe or 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.

Chris Mould  
Chief Executive, FSCI

If you would like to receive our e-newsletter, please sign up here.

E-news

## Contact details:

Richard Parsons  
rich.parsons@fscinet.org  
+44 (0)1722 580192

FSCI (UK)  
Unit 9 Ashfield Trading Estate  
Salisbury  
Wiltshire  
SP2 7HL

FSCI Sofia Office:  
Teodora Koleva  
t.koleva@fscibulgaria.org

[www.fscinet.org](http://www.fscinet.org)

UK supporters can donate to:

[www.fscinet.org/donate](http://www.fscinet.org/donate)

Bank transfer:

Acc. name: FSCI (UK)  
Santander, 53 Silver Street,  
Salisbury, SP1 2NG  
Sort code: 09-01-29

Account No: 11340290

Cheques: FSCI (UK)

FSCI (UK) is a Registered Charity in England & Wales (1170914)

The Foundation for Social Change and Inclusion is a Registered NGO in Bulgaria (175633540)

The Trussell Trust is a Registered Charity in England & Wales (1110522) and Scotland (SC044246)  
Registered Limited Company in England & Wales (5434524)

© 2018 by FSCI (UK)

**FSCI**  
Foundation for Social  
Change and Inclusion