

# **BULGARIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE**

**2007 Activity Report**

The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee is an independent non-governmental organisation for the protection of human rights: political, civil, cultural, social. Our work is focused on protecting the rights of society's most vulnerable members: minorities, disadvantaged groups, detained individuals, women and children. The objectives of the committee are to promote respect for the human rights of every individual, to stimulate legislative reform to bring Bulgarian legislation in line with international human rights standards, to trigger public debate on human rights issues, to carry out advocacy for the protection of human rights, and to popularise and make widely available human rights instruments.

The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee was established on 14 July 1992. The organisation is registered as a legal entity working in the public benefit, certificate Ministry of Justice No. 001/12.07.2001.

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## Projects in 2007

### Institutional Support and Media Advocacy Programme

The Institutional Support Programme coordinates the overall activities of the BHC. It offers support in the implementation of all committee activities, projects and initiatives. The staff of this programme are involved in fundraising for new projects. The preparation of the BHC annual report on the human rights situation in Bulgaria is carried out in the framework of this programme. The other activities include publishing, maintenance of a web site, conduction of media human rights monitoring, media advocacy.



#### Media advocacy

In the framework of the Institutional Programme, the BHC publishes the monthly magazine *Obektiv*, which is being published for the fourteenth year. The magazine is published as a monthly Bulgarian-language publication and a electronic English-language quarterly digest. Ten Bulgarian and three English magazines were published in 2007. The magazine is distributed among the printed and electronic media, state institutions, international organizations and foreign embassies, NGOs, and individuals interested in human rights. All issues of the magazine are available online on the BHC web page. Yuliana Metodieva is editor-in-chief, Vyara Angelova – editor, and Emil Cohen – special correspondent/editor of the domestic and international human rights news section of the web page.

In 2007, BHC staff engaged in media advocacy on human rights issues. They has many appearances in various programmes of the three national TV networks – Bulgarian National TV, bTV and Nova TV, as well as on some smaller cable operators. In connection with the BBC documentary „Bulgaria's Abandoned Children“, the BHC researcher who consulted the BBC film crew, Slavka Kukova, took part in several televised disputes. The film generated a tremendous public outcry, both domestically and abroad, and the French Channel 2 also shot a film about the home for disabled children in the village of Medven (it is yet to be broadcast). The coordinator of the Anti-discrimination Programme, Margarita Ilieva, had three appearances on Al Jazeera.

#### Checks of cases of human rights violations

As part of the ongoing monitoring activity, in 2007 the BHC carried out daily press monitoring. On-the-spot investigations were carried out when reports of human rights violations were received.

#### Internet site

The BHC continued to maintain its Internet site [www.bghelsinki.org](http://www.bghelsinki.org). During the year, the site completely renewed its information structure. Apart from the main information headings, the

site now features a daily selection of international and domestic human rights news. In the last months of 2007, the visits to the site doubled in comparison to the beginning of the year.

In the implementation of all its programmes and initiatives, the BHC counts on the valuable support of its Institutional Support colleagues, who in 2007 were involved in the administrative supervision of our projects – Vyara Ivanova, who were responsible for the committee's financial management and reporting – Gergana Ermenkova and Asia Grudova, and assisted the organisation of our public events and the everyday functioning of the BHC office – our technical assistants Ivelina Masheva, Radoila Hristova and Krasimir Gegov.

## Legal Defence Programme

In 2007 the activities of the Legal Defence Programme were implemented in the framework of the core programme for legal defence and consultations, and three specialised legal sub-programmes: the Anti-Discrimination Programme, the Project for Litigation on Behalf of Victims of Racially Motivated Violence, Hate Speech and Discrimination, and a joint project with the Mental Disability Advocacy Center, Budapest, for litigation and advocacy on behalf of people with mental disabilities. The Legal Defence Programme was staffed with three attorneys, one junior attorney, two lawyers, two legal interns, a social worker and one volunteer. In some cases the Programme cooperated with a network of human rights lawyers. The Committee lawyers provided representation before the domestic courts, the European Court of Human Rights, the European Committee of Social Rights. The Legal Defence Programme also supported a Paid Internship Programme, which worked with law students or recently-graduated law students who work as interns at the BHC for several months and acquire valuable practical experience.

### Cases before international courts

As at 31 January 2008, the Legal Defence Programme was offering representation in 24 cases before the European Court of Human Rights in spheres like illegal detention, fair trial, police brutality, freedom of association, refusal to register a religious association, religious discrimination, prison conditions, administrative detention of foreign nationals, restitution.

During the year, the European Court of Human Rights, delivered judgments in seven cases in which the Legal Defence Programme was offering representation. These were the decisions in the cases of *Angelova and Iliev v. Bulgaria* – right to life, *Bashir and Others v. Bulgaria* – illegal detention, right to personal life, *Debelyanovi v. Bulgaria* – right to property, *Glas Nadezhda Ltd. and Elenkov v. Bulgaria* – freedom of opinion and religious freedom, *Ivanova v. Bulgaria* – religious freedom, *Mussa and Others v. Bulgaria* – right to personal and family life, *Ivan Vasilev v. Bulgaria* – prohibition of torture.

In partnership with INTERIGHTS, London, the Programme took part in the drafting of three collective complaints for violations of the European Social Charter regarding the health and labour rights of inmates in Bulgarian prisons. Work on the collective complaints was halted to mid-2007 on account of the undergoing reform in the penitentiary system. However, in late 2007 the reform came to a standstill, and the legal work on the complaint has been resumed again.

## Cases before domestic courts

In 2007 the Legal Defence Programme filed 38 lawsuits on different cases posing human rights problems. Parallel to this, work on cases from previous years continued. Among the cases filed in 2007, are:

- A civil lawsuit against the Ministry of Healthcare and the Sofia Cancer Dispensary because of malpractice and failure to provide medicine and therapy prescribed by law. The lawsuit was filed on behalf of the son of a cancer-patient who had undergone a successful operation with good perspectives for recovery. Subsequently he was not provided with therapy and medicine, and died several months later.
- Two cases of police violence. In one case a man was illegal detained and beat by police officers after asking them to stop harassing a taxi driver. The second case concerns a beating with truncheons in a police station in Burgas, where the local prosecutor wanted imposition of an administrative sanction, rather than to indict the perpetrators.
- A civil lawsuit on behalf of Martin Lyubenov, who died after falling from a moving train in suspicious circumstances after an argument with officers from Transport Police and after being beaten by them. The BHC is helping the victim's family in renewing the criminal proceedings. A complaint has been prepared before the UN Human Rights Committee.
- Refusal of Sofia City Court to register the International Krishna Consciousness Society – Sofia Nadezhda with the motive that another denomination belonging to the same creed already existed in Bulgaria. The BHC provided legal defense before the Supreme Court of Cassation, which confirmed the decision of the lower-instance court. An application to the ECHR is being prepared.
- Lawsuit for age discrimination on behalf of Slavcho Dashev. The applicant was refused to be provided with legally prescribed medicine for chronic Hepatitis C (which he contacted during state-paid dental treatment in 1978) on account of his age – 70 years. The BHC provided legal consultations in a procedure before the National Health Insurance Fund and a number of medical centres. Mr Dashev was provided with therapy, although not the best in the country, and by the end of the year the results were very good. He was refused more expensive therapy giving a higher chance for cure from the chronic illness.

The other cases filed during the year concerned psychological re-testing of employees of the Ministry of the Interior (a method used for dismissal of 'inconvenient' staff); expulsion of a foreign national without motives and with no proof in the issuing body; legal defence in defamation lawsuits filed against environmental organisations; systematic bans on holding environmental protests, as well as other bans on peaceful assemblies; complaints against illegal detention of environmental activists during spontaneous protest activities.

## Legal consultations

The BHC offered pro bono legal consultations to individuals addressing the Committee. The

number of requests for written consultations remained high during the year, therefore the BHC engaged new legal interns to assist in answering these. Requests for consultations on cases involving more serious violations were normally answered within 30 days.

A total of 338 new requests for consultations were received at the BHC during the year. The Legal Defence Programme answered 104 requests concerning already undertaken cases, parallel with the new cases in 2007.

## **Anti-Discrimination Programme**

In 2007, the Anti-Discrimination Programme provided legal representation in several dozen cases filed since 2004. Among them are:

- Eight civil lawsuits against the politician Volen Siderov for harassment and incitement to discrimination on behalf of the members of the Citizens Against Hatred Civil Coalition. Six of the lawsuits are pending at second instance, while one (case of a woman with Armenian ethnic belonging) was won at the first-instance district court.
- An unprecedented case was won against the Prosecutor's Office for discriminatory written statements of a prosecutor in connection the investigation of the death of Romani man. This victory confirms the very positive decision of the district court, achieved by the Programme, which convicted the prosecutor's office to pay damages to the brother of the victim for the caused indignation resulting from the discriminatory hate speech of the prosecutor.
- Representation before the Supreme Court of Cassation to a Romain claimant against the Sofia electricity company in a case of ethnic discrimination consisting of installing the electricity meter of the claimant on an inaccessible height. The judgment of the Supreme Court is forthcoming.
- The Programme achieved a double victory in a case of discriminatory refusal to access to commercial services against Roma against the company managing the St. Petersburg Hotel in Plovdiv and the adjoining public pool Aquapark. The regional court ruled in favour of the two claimants, victims of arbitrary refusal of access to the pool from two of the company's employees. The case is ending before the Supreme Court of Cassation.
- In a case concerning discriminatory refusal to employment of a Romani man, the Programme achieved victory at the second-instance court. The case is pending before the Supreme Court of Cassation.
- The Programme offered procedural representation to the family of a Romani man killed by police, by appealing for the fourth time (successfully) and fifth time the termination of the investigation by the Sofia Regional Military Prosecution.
- The Programme won a case for an explicitly racially motivated refusal of access to the services of a cafe towards Roma. The Programme won the case before the third-instance Supreme Court of Cassation. The clients received damages from the

discriminating company.

The other cases concern similar problems of refusal of access to services to Roma in the access to restaurants, commercial services, refusal to employment, demolition of houses by the local authorities without prior warning, arbitrary cutting off of the electricity supply of bill-paying customers.

The new cases of the Anti-Discrimination Programme in 2007 concern death causes by law enforcement officers during apprehension, degrading treatment of a detainee, religious discrimination, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, refusal to investigate a racist attack by skinheads. Among the cases are:

- A case against the District Directorate of the Police in Plovdiv for the killing of a Romani man during his detention by police. The lawsuit claims that the killing was disproportional as the use of lethal firearms was not necessary and discriminatory as a non-Roma would not have been killed in the same circumstances. The case is pending before the Plovdiv Court of Appellate.
- A lawsuit against the Pleven District Police Directorate on behalf of a Roma, victim of degrading treatment by the police during detention. The claimant had been hit, racially insulted, and driven to the police station in the trunk of the patrol car.
- An appeal against an unfavourable decision of the Anti-Discrimination Commission regarding religious discrimination against a student by the Theology Department of the Sofia University. The claimant, who is non-Orthodox, was forced to take part in Orthodox religious services as part of his curriculum. The case is pending before the Supreme Administrative Court.
- A complaint before the Anti-Discrimination Commission (ADC) in connection with gender discrimination of a father, who raised his son alone until the boy was three, but was deprived of custody in favour of the mother solely on the grounds of his gender. In all their decisions the courts explicitly held that women are more suited to raise a child than a man. The case is pending the ADC.
- Representation of the Romani Baht Foundation (RBF) in proceedings before the Supreme Administrative Court (SAC), filed upon the complaint of the Sofia Municipal Council against a decision of the ADC. The ADC endorsed a complaint of the RBF against a decision of the Sofia municipality which bans the movement of horse-drawn carriages on the streets of Sofia outside the Roma neighbourhoods. The Anti-Discrimination Commission established indirect discrimination against Roma, consisting of a more unfavourable effect on them in comparison to the other parts of the population, who, unlike Roma, do not depend on horse-drawn carriages for transportation. The SAC repealed the Commission's decision. The programme appealed the SAC decision before a five-member panel of the SAC.

## Positions

The Anti-Discrimination Programme drafted a professional legal position paper to the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) regarding an ECRI draft-

Recommendation for Prohibition of Racial Profiling by the Police.

The Programme also drafted an amicus brief to the Constitutional Court on its own motion regarding the constitutionality of a newly-adopted provision in the Local Government and Local Administration Act.

The Anti-Discrimination Programme prepared an analysis of the jurisprudence of the Commission for Protection from Discrimination from the viewpoint of the international and European standards, and the effectiveness and institutional capacity of the organ. The analysis was published in the annual report of the BHC, and in other places.

### **Advocacy activities**

The Programme engaged in advocacy before the minister of justice for drafting transparent and adequate rules for nomination of the national judges at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, through participation in working groups, drawing up positions and draft-rules. The proposals were adopted to a considerable degree in the rules.

### **Participation in international seminars and conferences**

In 2007 the Anti-Discrimination Programme offered international cooperation on issues of anti-discrimination law. The lead attorney Margarita Ilieva took part as an expert in seminars and conferences on these issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Turkey and Kosovo, giving specialised presentations, publications and consultations on the development and adoption of national anti-discrimination law in some of these countries.

### **Research activities**

The Anti-Discrimination Programme carried out a number of research activities connected with the ban on wearing religious headscarves in schools imposed by the educational authorities in the Rhodopa region; national and international legal studies on the extradition orders; analysis of domestic legislation from the point of view of its compatibility with the Convention Against Torture and drafting proposals for introducing of provisions in Bulgarian legislation criminalizing torture.

### **Litigation on Behalf of Racially Motivated Violence, Hate Speech and Discrimination Project**

In 2007, the Legal Programme special project offered pro bono legal defence before the domestic courts in seven cases filed during the year. The lawsuits concerned hate speech of public officials, three cases of racially motivated murder, skinhead attacks (here the BHC was successful in achieving two restrictive orders under the new Code of Criminal Procedure on behalf of the victims of these attacks), and police violence. The project is coordinated by Svilen Ovcharov.

Below are summaries of some of the filed lawsuits:

- Hate speech of the mayor of the Ovcha Kupel municipality in Sofia: The project

represents the Sofia-based Interethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation before the Anti-Discrimination Commission in a case involving hate speech of the mayor of a Sofia municipality in which he generalises a large part of negative individual characteristics as inherently belonging to all Roma.

- Representation in a racially motivated murder case and a case of inflicting bodily injury to two boys. A 17-year-old boy was killed in an incident in August 2007, while his 15-old-friend was beaten. The perpetrators were established by the Sofia Regional Police Directorate, which took over the investigation from the Samokov regional police department (which has a long history of covering and even promoting racist violence on the Roma in the city). The BHC lawsuit is assisting the investigation authorities in establishing the racist motive of the attack.
- Representation in a case of arbitrary detention and death in the Balchik district police station: In August 2007 a police patrol stopped the car, in which the victim — who was heavily drunk - was being driven home by his brother. The victim was detained for no apparent reason and taken to the Balchik police station. The next day his relatives learnt that he had died of blood loss After his throat was cut. The two glass doors of the police station were broken, and the police claimed that he had thrown himself at the doors three times, and that his movements were uncoordinated because he was handcuffed and drunk; the two police officers nearby were unable to restrain him. The Varna Military Regional Prosecutor's Office has opened preliminary proceedings into the case.
- Representation of a boy of Romani origin who was twice attacked by skinheads. He was attacked during an environmental street performace. A week later he was attacked again by members of the same group in retaliation for testifying against them. In this case the BHC was successful in getting an restrictive order, which is the first case under the new Code of Criminal Procedure. In a similar case of inflicting bodily injury on racist motives, the BHC also managed to get a restrictive order.
- Representation of a victim of police violence who was also subjected to racist verbal abuse. The man died afterwards; the post mortem established that complications of ulcer of the diodenum were the cause of death. The victim did have such a medical condition, but the same forensic medical experts had a long history of falsifying death certificates. Two preliminary proceedings have been started — one against the medical staff of the Kazanlak hospital, an the second — against the police officers from the Grukovo police station who carreid out the arrest. An application before the ECHR will be filed soon, without waiting for the exhaustion of the ineffective domestic remedies.
- Representation in a case of a mass police beating and pogrom over Roma houses in Sofia's Filipovtsi neighbourhood; the attack was carried out with the apparent aim of intimidating the neighbourhood inhabitants. The domestic remedies have proven to be ineffective owing to delays and formalism of the Bulgarian judicial system. An application to the European Court is being prepared.
- Representation of a national of Nigeria who was beaten by a group of skinheads. The Sofia Prosecutor's Office refused to investigate the case. An application to the

European Court is being prepared.

## **Litigation and Advocacy Mental Health Project**

The BHC is implementing the project together with the Mental Disability Advocacy Center – Budapest, which is involved with advocacy on behalf of the rights of people with mental disabilities. The activities were connected with providing pro bono representation before the Bulgarian courts and the European Court of Human Rights. The project is coordinated by the legal consultant Aneta Mircheva, Asya Alexieva is social worker.

During the year, the project was involved in litigation for the protection of the rights of people with mental disabilities in the spheres of violations of the right to life, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment, detention, right to personal life, placement under guardianship, right to medical care, right to education. In 2007, several proceedings concluded regarding investigations of death cases; with only one exception, effective investigations were not carried out in none of the cases, despite clear indications of violations. Lawsuits were filed under the Responsibility of the State Act. The cases filed under the project can be grouped in the following spheres:

- **Death cases:** The legal consultant is involved in several cases connected with death of patients/clients of social services in institutions, which occurred in obscure circumstances. Four lawsuits have been filed against two state psychiatric hospitals and two social care homes for adults. In all four cases, despite the existence of numerous indications of death caused by negligence or violence, effective investigations were not carried out.
- **Illegal detention:** The cases undertaken by the legal monitor are connected with illegal detention in a psychiatric hospital.
- **Property fraud:** In connection with numerous cases of property frauds during the treatment of people with mental disabilities in psychiatric hospitals, the legal consultant filed several lawsuits on behalf of clients.
- **Guardianship problems:** The project places special emphasis on the institute of guardianship, i.e. the taking away of part or all of the human rights of citizens on the basis of the existence of a mental disability. Expert evaluations were performed on clients which established that a large part of their condition is the result of a permanent damage from life in the institution, rather than the result of mental illness. The cases of lifting of guardianship are extremely diverse, but one thing which is common among them are existing conflicts with guardians and deprivation of the right to life in the community, from contact with one's own children. Just one guardianship case in 2007 had a positive outcome. The BHC started proceedings for lifting the guardianship of a client, which were endorsed by the Varna Court of Appellate. However, despite the successful court proceedings, in 2007 F. I. continued living in a social care institution because there are no adequate social services within the community that would allow him to overcome the consequences of his stay in the institution.

The project was also involved in the situation of children in institutions, the right to education and the processes of integration and reintegration of people with mental disabilities. The project staff was involved in extensive work with guardians of people placed in institutions. The programme offered support to and/or pressure on social institutions for undertaking measures for treatment of people placed under guardianship or with neglected health problems; for undertaking measures for adequate education of children in institutions. At the end of 2007 the project filed a complaint to the Prosecutor General insisting that a check is carried out in the activities of all childcare institutions in Bulgaria.

### **Trainings and consultations of the target group**

Apart from litigation, in 2007 the project carried out a lot of direct work with its target group in the form of trainings and consultations to users of psychiatry and to organisations working with the target group. Project staff continued networking with formal and informal groups working on the rights of individuals with mental health problems or who take care of such people. At the end of 2007, the legal consultant started work on consulting and assisting users of psychiatry wishing to self-organise different forms of NGOs.

### **Participation in working groups**

During the year, the project staff was involved in solving public problems through the means of negotiations, participation in working groups, public councils and others.

At the beginning of 2007, the working group at the Ministry of Education established to draft a Decree on the education of children with specific educational needs, concluded its activities. By year's end, however, such a Decree was not adopted. At the end of the year, the legal consultant started work on cases of discrimination of children with learning disabilities and discrimination of individuals with mental disabilities.

## **Paid Internship Programme**

In 2007 the BHC set up a Paid Internship Programme for law students or recently-graduated lawyers, who initially work at the BHC as volunteers in order to gain practical experience, and in cases of good performance continue to work here as legal interns. One of them continues to work at the BHC still.

In 2007, the two legal interns and the volunteer were involved in various legal and non-legal activities in support of the activities of the attorneys and lawyers working in the three specialised sub-program components. A large part of the activities involved drafting and filing various legal and other documents before the Bulgarian national institutions, and collection, translation and drafting materials necessary for filing applications before international jurisdictions for human rights protection.

One of the main roles of the legal interns and the volunteer involved giving written consultations to individuals alleging human rights violations. Several strategic cases for the Committee were identified in the course of this activity. In connection with cases undertaken by the BHC, participants in the Internship Programme held meetings with clients, traveled in the country to investigate specific facts about the cases. Special attention was given to the

interns' and volunteer's qualification. They took part in the seminars and trainings organized by the BHC, and assisted in their organisation.

The activities of the Legal Defence Programme during 2007 were carried out by Margarita Ilieva (head of the Anti-Discrimination Programme), Svilen Ovcharov (head of the Project for Litigation on behalf of Victims on Racially Motivated Violence), Aneta Mircheva (head of the Project for Litigation and Advocacy on Behalf of People with Mental Disabilities), the lawyers Daniela Fartunova, Yordanka Bekirska, Polina Rusinova, the legal interns Georgi Voinov and Varka Kalaidjieva, the social worker Asya Alexieva, and the volunteer Stanislava Stoeva.

## Closed Institutions Programme

In 2007 the Closed Institutions Programme continued work on the Project for Study of Court Practices on Drug-Related Crimes. The project's main goal is to make an analysis of the activities of the law enforcement authorities in fighting drug-related crimes. During the first half of 2007 the project staff studied the court practices on criminal cases on crimes related to the production, distribution, possession or transfer of drugs and monitored drug-related court hearings. The researchers Stanimir Petrov and Dr. Georgi Bankov carried out visits to prisons and prison hostels, where they interviewed inmates and studied therapeutic activities involving drug-addicts. The study established the scope of the legislative deficit in the sphere of criminal execution. The conclusions were presented before the working group at the Ministry of Justice involved in drafting a new Execution of Sentences Act.

The project staff also answered written requests for legal advice on indictments or sentences connected to drug-related crimes. In connection with received reports about the conditions in the arrest rooms of Sofia City and District Courts, and Plovdiv District Court, the BHC carried out visits to these places, and informed the minister of justice about the extremely inhuman conditions in which detainees are placed before and after court hearings.

The project findings were published in the book *Drugs, Crimes and Punishments*. The book makes an analysis of the court practice on drug-related crimes and pin-points the weak points in the fight against drug abuse.

In June 2007 the BHC started work on the project Assisting the Reform in Bulgaria's Penitentiary Institutions, directed at assisting the process of reforms in closed institutions through monitoring prisons and prison hostels, investigation detention facilities and juvenile reformatory facilities. The project staff met with officials from the executive and legislative branches to report their findings about the most problematic spheres established in the course of the monitoring. At the same time, the BHC drew up proposals for necessary amendments and structural changes in the system of the penitentiary institutions.

By the end of 2007, 29 monitoring visits were carried out in prisons and prison hostels. The main points of monitoring were connected with overcrowding, bad living conditions, quality of resocialisation activities, medical care, disciplinary practice, and employment. In the course of the monitoring the BHC researchers established that urgent measures are needed in the prisons and closed prison hostels in order to alleviate overcrowding. Furthermore, that in eight out of

12 prisons across the country, the cell lack individual lavatories; the inmates are forced to use common buckets for physiological needs, in view of the other inmates in the cell. As a result of the monitoring, the BHC clearly defined the problems before the penitentiary establishments, prepared recommendations for synchronisation of the legislation and the material and moral conditions of detention with the international standards for treatment of prisoners, and took part in a working group at the Ministry of Justice, formed to draft a new Execution of Sentences Act.

In two cases, after visits to the Sofia and Pazardzhik prisons, the BHC carried out checks on reports of excessive use of force and auxiliary means by the guards during the bringing under control of mass inmate protests. In the beginning and end of 2007, the BHC carried out visits to the prisons in Plovdiv, Pleven, Belene and Bobovdol, to interview inmates who had been arrested during the last two years and to study access to legal defence and how the police detention was carried out. The data was used for the writing of the annual human rights report of the BHC.

During the year, the programme researchers carried out visits to four investigation detention facilities in Gabrovo, Haskovo, Kardjali and Burgas. In them, as in most of the other investigation facilities, no repair works had been carried out and it was not possible to provide adequate living conditions – light, ventilation, exercise, and leisure activities. Several investigation detention facilities are located underground with no possibility for outdoor stay, light and fresh air, keeping food parcels, and visits.

Together with the IGA Crime Prevention Fund, the project researchers were engaged in the project Pilot Model for Alternative Services in Support of Re-Structuring and Reforming Childcare Institutions. The BHC carried out a survey of the quality and scope of social services which the children receive during their stay in juvenile reformatory schools.

## **Refugees and Migrants Legal Protection Programme**

In 2007 the Programme offered legal defense to refugees, asylum seekers and other individuals of concern to the UNHCR. The Programme offered legal consultations and representation before the State Agency for Refugees and the courts, carried out monitoring in the places for police detention in the country and at the borders, lobbied before the relevant state institutions and organisations.

The Programme is staffed with eight people, five of whom attorneys, and a national network of associated attorneys, specialised in refugee, immigration and human rights law. The Programme works with 10 attorneys in Sofia, Nova Zagora, Svilengrad, Malko Tarnovo and Lessovo, who offer legal consultations and procedural representation to asylum seekers and refugees (including groups in need of special protection, e.g. unaccompanied minors, victims of violence, single parents, individuals with disabilities).

### **Consultations and legal representation**

Legal aid was offered chiefly through consultations and representation directed at establishing adequate legal standards for a quick and fair administrative and court procedure for granting

status. Legal representation was offered through administrative and procedural representation - before the State Refugee Agency, interviews and consultations, appeal of administrative refusals, collection of information on the country of origin, legal defense before the Supreme Administrative Court, representation before other state bodies, legal consultations on other issues.

The Programme offered representation and consultations in 4,660 caseloads to a total of 3,156 beneficiaries, of which asylum seekers – 1,375, recognised refugees – 95, individuals with humanitarian status – 121, applicants – 642, rejected asylum seekers – 152, 44 separated children, migrants – 693 and 34 other categories of individuals. The main countries of origin of refugees in Bulgaria are Iraq – 54.6%, the Palestine – 8.2%, Afghanistan – 7.8%, Armenia – 6.5% and Iran – 3.4%. In 2007, 23 separated from their parents children filed applications for protection, but not one was recognized as a refugee, while five children were given humanitarian status.

In 2007, the Programme filed a total of 758 lawsuits before the regional courts and the Supreme Administrative Court. A total of 68 cases were heard in court. Twelve cases were won.

In 2007, the Programme started offering assistance to illegally residing foreign nationals placed in the Special Institution for Temporary Placement of Foreigners in Busmatsi to appeal the length of their detention in a deportation procedure, which exceeded 6 months. Parallel to this the Programme carried out general monitoring of the cases of 693 immigrants detained for illegal stay.

### **Centres for Legal Aid in the reception centres of the State Refugees Agency**

The BHC Centres for Legal Aid functioning in the reception centre of the State Agency for Refugees (RAF) in Sofia, and in the Registration Admittance Centre in Banya, continued to operate on the basis of bilateral agreement between the BHC and RAF from 2003. The Programme's consultants and attorneys offered pro bono legal aid to asylum seekers and refugees placed in the Registration and Admittance Centres in Sofia and Banya. A total of 616 consultations were offered in these centres in 2007. In December the Programme signed an agreement with the Migration Directorate at the Ministry of Interior for offering legal aid to foreigners placed in special institutions and for monitoring the access of asylum seekers, detained for illegal entry or stay, to access to procedure.

### **Border monitoring**

The Programme's lawyers have free access to monitor the facilities for police detention at the borders. Since the beginning of 2007, the weekly monitoring was carried out at the main border check point – Kapitan Andreevo, as well as the neighbouring border check points Novo Selo, Malko Tarnovo, Lesovo, and the facility for temporary placement of adults in Ljubimets. As a result of the activities on monitoring and consultation, 645 asylum seekers received access to the territory, and from there on – to a refugee status determination procedure.

In 2007 the number of people applying for asylum in Bulgaria was 975 people from 44 countries, in comparison to 639 people from 27 countries in 2006, 822 people from 38 countries in 2005, 1,127 persons from 42 countries in 2004. Thus, the number of individuals who received access to the territory and protection, increased with 52% in comparison to the previous year. Of these, 51% are applications registered with the assistance of the Programme – 645 applications out of a total 975 new asylum applications in 2007.

### **Consultations in the sphere of social rights of refugees and individuals with humanitarian status**

During the year the Programme assisted the Bulgarian Red Cross with legal consultations in the sphere of social rights of refugees and individuals with humanitarian status. Similar assistance was rendered to the Caritas Federation-Bulgaria, but directed to asylum seekers. The Programme also offered assistance to the ZEMLJACHESKI organisations of refugees and migrants, e.g. the Council of Women Refugees, the Ethiopian Association, the Afghan Cultural Association. In cooperated with the ACET organisation in cases of individuals who had been subjected to torture. Programme staff was active in initiatives and training programmes of staff of the State Refugee Agency, the Border Police Chief Directorate, the State Agency for Child Protection, among others.

### **Other activities**

In 2007 the Refugee Programme also implemented several other projects and initiatives:

- The Programme continued to represent the BHC in the Bulgarian Refugee Council, established together with the Bulgarian Red Cross and the Caritas Bulgaria Federation as a public benefit NGO formed on a wide public basis, aimed at consolidating the efforts of NGOs engaged in protection of asylum seekers, refugees and individuals with humanitarian status, joint fundraising and institutional development.
- The Swiss Federal Refugee Agency, through the Swiss Embassy in Sofia, engaged the Refugee Programme to conduct legal analyses and information gathering on cases of Bulgarian asylum seekers in Switzerland.
- The Programme functions as national coordinator of the Separated Children in Europe Programme, an initiative of the Save the Children Alliance.
- In 2007 the Programme started monitoring the transposing of Directive 2004/83/EC on the minimal standards of the conditions which nationals of third countries or individuals without citizenship should have to be able to apply for refugee status or for international protection (the so called Qualification Directive). The activity is carried out under a joint project of the Dutch Refugee Council.

Iliana Savova is programme director; Atanas Dolapchiev, Antoaneta Sabeva, Valentina Nielsen, Georgi Toshev, Elitsa Sekulova, Maisun Shabaan, and Mariana Andreeva are the programme staff.



## Programme for Protection of the Rights of Children in Institutions

The BHC has been involved in monitoring children's institutions since 1997. The BHC lasting engagement to children in state institutions is focused on their right to life, access to quality medical care, to quality education, to opportunities for socialisation and full development of their potential.

Although without a specially formulated project, during the year the BHC continued to carry out activities aimed at attracting the attention of the national and international public to the problems of institutionalised children in the country. The Programme consulted staff working in childcare institutions. During the year, the Programme coordinator-researcher, Slavka Kukova, took part in discussions with state bodies responsible for child protection, lobbied in Bulgaria and abroad for genuine deinstitutionalisation and offering quality care for the children in institutions. The BHC cooperated with MDAC about the rights of children with mental disabilities.

In September the BBC documentary Bulgaria's Abandoned Children was broadcast in the UK. The film was filmed with the active assistance of the BHC in the social care home for children with mental disabilities in the village of Mogilino, near Ruse. The film sparked a serious public response and opened the possibilities for coalition-building between the organisations who had expertise in the sphere of care for disabled children. Although the government did not fully acknowledge the problem with institutional care of disabled children and for years failed to take effective measures for deinstitutionalisation, the BHC managed to gather together and coordinate a group of NGOs to remedy the problem. Urgent assistance in the form of specialised care was offered to the children of Mogilino. Currently, work is underway to creation of services in the nearby city of Ruse, where they will have access to healthcare, education and rehabilitation services; placement with foster families, and hopefully adopted. The model is being prepared to be multiplied in the other similar 26 childcare homes across the country. For the first time so many diverse NGOs and media were united with the aim to protect the rights of children with mental disabilities.

In connection with the BBC documentary about the children of Mogilino, Slavka Kukova had a number of media appearances. The first televised discussion of the problem of the state policy to the children in disabilities after the broadcasting of the film in the UK, took place in the studio of the Nova Televiziya together with the Movement of the Bulgarian Mothers and the State Agency for Child Protection. The topic was also discussed in the studios of the nationwide bTV and 7 Days television. The *Capital* weekly featured an article by the project coordinator, who was also interviewed for the Mediapool electronic news site, alongside several articles in the BHC magazine *Obektiv*. The project coordinator also took part in the shooting of a film for the French Channel 2 about the home for children with disabilities in the village of Medven; the film is yet broadcast

## “Initiative Equal Rights for Women. Now!” Project

This is BHC's newest project and it includes a series of initiatives for fighting discrimination against women. This will be achieved by giving women sufficient knowledge and information to enable them to act in defence of their human rights, to be free from gender discrimination, to improve their position in society and to raise public awareness regarding these problems.

The BHC attracted the actress Elen Koleva, winner of the Ascer prize for leading actress for her performance in the film “Shivachki” (Seamstresses) at the 2007 Annual Film Awards, to be the 'face' of the project. Through the interviews, which she gives in the media, Elen Koleva undertook to advocate for the idea of equal rights of women in society, at the work place, in education and the family. At a meeting with journalists that took place on 26 November, the project was presented to 13 journalists from different cities and media. Thus, an informal network of journalists interested in the topic of gender discrimination was set up.



*The actress Elen Koleva and BHC attorney Margarita Ilieva during the project launch meeting with journalists, November 2007*

The public will also be informed about the initiatives for fighting gender discrimination through an online information center, created by the BHC. The web site <http://ravni.bghelsinki.org> offers detailed information on discrimination and its forms, manifestations, statistical data, mechanisms for protection at the national and European level, alongside other useful information.

The BHC organised a training seminar for 20 practicing lawyers from the whole country, which helped establish a network of trained human rights activists. The goal of the training was to assist the provision of competent legal defense to victims of discrimination in the cities outside Sofia. In July 2008, the BHC will organise a follow up seminar.

With the view of informing the public and employers, employees and professional organisations regarding discrimination, the mechanisms for protection and the competent bodies that deal with it, the BHC started a campaign for distribution of posters and 20,000 fame cards featuring such information. Two lines of distribution, ending by post and handing out in popular city locations, guarantee their wider popularisation.

In 2007 the project was coordinated by Yordanka Bekirska and Daniela Furtunova.

## Evaluation of the Roma Education Fund Projects and the Possibilities for Scaling Up at the National Level

The project involved an evaluation of the acting desegregation projects in Bulgaria and developed a methodology for evaluation of the possible scaling up of these projects in a national desegregation programme for Roma education.

The project activities included performing an evaluation of the eight acting desegregation projects in Bulgaria following a methodology, which the BHC applied in similar projects in the past. The BHC researchers conducted an evaluation of the factors, which influence the academic achievements of the Roma children, studying in integrated and in segregated educational environments. The project also performed an evaluation of the economic and institutional opportunities for turning desegregation into a national policy, including the cost of such a step.

A team of leading experts – pedagogues, sociologists, ethnologists and representatives of human rights NGOs working on Roma education – were engaged as a Steering Committee for the project. The results will be published in the Spring of 2008.

The project was carried out by Krassimir Kanev, Svetlana Tacheva, Emil Cohen and Ljuba Batembergska.

## JOINT PROJECTS

### **Project for Development of Policies for Alternative Care for People with Mental Illnesses and Mental Disabilities**

The project was launched in October 2006 and continued for a year. Its goal was to develop a strategy and to implement a national action plan for promoting life in the community for people with mental disabilities. The project was jointly implemented with the Open Society Institute Mental Health Initiative. The project activities were implemented by the consultant Slavka Kukova, who worked together with local human rights organisations, the responsible state bodies and international experts.

The consultant identified the problems connected with the legislative framework, the political documents and sources of financing, which hinder the development of community services for people with mental disabilities. The consultant also gathered current information on the development and application of the policy for people with intellectual disabilities and mental illnesses in Bulgaria.

The project consulted the Bulgarian Centre for Non-Profit Law on assisting municipalities in signing contracts with local providers of social services. The project consultant took part in two direct negotiations for setting up centres for rehabilitation and social integration for individuals with intellectual disabilities in Pazardjik and Razlog.

The consultant also took part in a working group at the Ministry of Education concerning the drafting of a new decree on the state educational requirements for children with disabilities. In addition, the consultant took part in the implementation of a project together with the Centre for Social Practices for consulting the Ministry of Education in the process for closing down special schools for children with learning disabilities and providing them with quality education in the mainstream schools. Ten of the special schools that were in the most desperate state and offered very low-quality education, were closed down, and the children – moved to mainstream schools in the places where they lived.

The project consultant visited all community services for people with learning disabilities and mental illnesses. The goal of the visits was to identify the deficiencies in the provision of services and the needs in terms of organisational development.

Nineteen day-care centres for children and adults were visited, housing some 500 clients, alongside 17 sheltered houses (120 clients), two centres for rehabilitation and social integration (around 60 clients). Although the efforts of the Bulgarian authorities and the European funds during the last three years have been directed to these services, the monitoring established that they are not a real alternative to institutional care, they do not live up to the individual needs of their clients, they do not lead to active and effective deinstitutionalisation, they are not construed in a way so as to assist an autonomous life, and last but not least, they cannot offer quality care. Community services are insufficient in number, servicing a very limited number of individuals with mental disabilities, while at the same time costing very much, since often new and expensive buildings are built, which later the municipalities cannot maintain. It is a cause for concern that in most of the sheltered houses, the monitoring established data about incidents which lead to serious violations of clients' rights. The day-care centres affirm the discriminatory model of raising children with disabilities away from their peers and from qualified specialists and with no idea about integration into mainstream schools. Employees in alternative care services are unaware of the state policy, legislation and practice regarding people with disabilities. People with mental health problems have an even smaller chance of living a fulfilled life in community owing to the lack – almost without exceptions – of alternative services for them. There is only one sheltered house they can use outside of Sofia, and just two day-care centres.

In April 2007 the project consultant made a presentation on the services for people with mental disabilities in Bulgaria at a conference on community life in Zagreb. She assisted a research on the services in large institutions and services in the community for people with mental disabilities, covering 26 countries, by supplying information and an analysis of the situation in Bulgaria.

At the end of 2007 comparative maps of institutional and alternative care for people with mental disabilities were drawn up. They offer clear insight into the policy on a state and local level for development of services for people with mental disabilities. The maps are available on the BHC web site.

## RESEARCHES

The European Roma Rights Centre commissioned the BHC Legal Defence Programme to draft a legal analysis of the compatibility of the healthcare system in Bulgaria with the European Social Charter (revised). The analysis also focused on the treatment of the poor sections of the population in their access to healthcare.

In 2007 the BHC wrote the Annual Shadow Report on Racism and Xenophobia in Bulgaria for the European Network Against Racism. The report, one of 26 on the situation with racism in EU member states, contains a compilation of information and data, gathered by the BHC in

the course of the year. The report, which was written by Svilen Ovcharov, is available on the ENAR web site.

In December 2007 the BHC started a project for study of the situation with the rights of underage offenders places in juvenile reformatory establishments. Its main focus is on the work of the local commissions for combating juvenile delinquency, which will reveal more comprehensive data on the system of justice underage offenders. The project is currently at the stage of processing of statistical information. The research is carried out by Lubomir Stoychev.

## TRAININGS

In 2007 the Anti-Discrimination Programme carried out a training on legal anti-discrimination protection at a seminar for NGO activists and trade union activists. Sixty participants were trained to identify and determine cases of discrimination on different grounds like race/ethnicity, age, gender, religion/belief, sexual orientation and disability, to document fact and elaborate strategies for successful litigation before the courts and the Anti-Discrimination Commission. The BHC also carried out a train-the-trainers seminar in preparation for the event.

The staff of the Refugee Programme took part in training programmes for staff of the State Refugee Agency, the Border Police Chief Directorate, the State Agency for Child Protection and some other organisations.

As already stated above, in the framework of the Project “Initiative Equal Rights for Women. Now!” the BHC trained 20 practising lawyers and helped establish a network of human rights activists. The goal of the training was to assist the provision of competent legal defense to victims of discrimination in the cities outside Sofia.

## PARTNERS

In 2007 the BHC cooperated with and/or rendered assistance to a series of Bulgarian, foreign and international organisations: the Equal Rights Trust, the European Roma Rights Centre, the Mental Disability Advocacy Centre, INTERIGHTS, the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights and local Helsinki Committees, the European Network Against Racism, the Swiss Federal Refugee Agency, the Save the Children Alliance, the United National High Commissioner for Refugees, the Bulgarian Red Cross, the Caritas federation – Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Refugee Council (of which it is co-founder), the Bulgarian Centre for Non-Profit Law, Centre ACET for Torture Victims, the IGA Crime Prevention Fund, the Interethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation, the Council of Women Refugees, the Ethiopian Association, the Afghan Cultural Association.

In March 2007, upon the invitation of ENAR – the European Network Against Racism, the BHC coordinated a meeting of Bulgarian NGOs for the establishment of ENAR-Bulgaria. ENAR is a network of 600 European NGOs, working on the issues of racism in the EU member states. The BHC is coordinator of the ENAR-Bulgaria secretariat.

## PUBLICATIONS

In 2007, the BHC published the monthly *Obektiv* magazine in Bulgarian. The magazine is also published as a quarterly English-language publication in electronic format. All issues of the magazine are available on the BHC web page.



In the Spring of 2007 in response to the transformation of the public radio Nova Evropa [New Europe] in the commercial radio Z-Rock, the BHC organised a discussion and published a book on this issue. The publication, *How and Why for the Nova Evropa Radio Stop Broadcasting?*, gathers a rich resource of documentation connected with the closure of the radio; interviews and publications from the Bulgarian media by former journalists working in the radio, public figures, media analysts, minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors of the radio. The BHC interest in the organisation of the round table discussion and in the publication is a human rights interest aiding to ensure the independence and objectivity of the Bulgarian media, to make them less dependent from commercial and political interests.

In June 2007 the BHC published the book *Drugs, Crimes and Punishments. Are the Measures Against Drug Distribution in Bulgaria Effective?*. In the report the BHC answers the question how the judicial system and the other law enforcement bodies in Bulgaria are fighting drug-related crimes. The BHC analysed a large data base on the procedural acts against individuals charged with drug-related crimes. Nearly 50 court hearings connected with drug crimes were monitored; they shed light on the differences in the court practices of the different courts. The research was conducted between August 2006 and May 2007 in the framework of the project for monitoring the effect of the Penal Code amendments penalizing possession of the so called 'single drug dose'. The publication is available on the BHC web site in the Special Reports section.



## FINANCING

The activities of the BHC during the year were financed by foreign and domestic governmental donors. The biggest share belongs to the Open Society Institute and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Among our other large donors were the European Roma Rights Centre, Mental Disability Advocacy Center, the Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe, the Democracy Commission of the US Embassy in Sofia, the Leon Levy Foundation (the Leon Levy grant is not listed separately in the 2007 income because it was received in advance in 2006), and the Roma Education Fund. In a new and positive development during the year, the BHC received funding from the Employment Bureau for hiring one staff member with special needs. After the two-year term of the support runs out, the BHC will continue to finance this position.

The share of financial contribution of all donors can be seen in the 2007 financial report.

### Report on Income and Expenditures of the BHC

Covering the period 01.01.2007 - 31.12.2007

#### I. INCOMES

##### A. Received Financing in 2007

| Donor  | Project Name  | Amount in BGN |
|--|---|---------------|
| Open Society Institute – Budapest                        | Institutional Support of the BHC, Publishing of Obektiv magazine, maintenance of web site   | 229 794,63    |
| Open Society Institute – Budapest , Internship Programme | Internship Initiative 2007/2008: Research of the Situation of Underage Offenders  | 23 767,45     |
| Open Society Institute – Budapest                        | OSI Health Project  | 2 896,58      |
| Open Society Institute – Sofia                           | Litigation on Behalf of Victims of Racially Motivated Violence, Hate Speech and Discrimination  | 13 678,00     |
| United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees            | Refugees and Migrants Legal Protection Programme  | 192 962,00    |
| European Roma Rights Center – Budapest                   | Educational Integration of Roma: Political and Legal Preparation  | 52 807,41     |
| European Roma Rights Center – Budapest                   | Research for Filing a Complaint Under the European Social Charter   | 2 413,66      |
| Mental Disability Advocacy Center – Budapest             | Strategic Litigation on Behalf of People with Mental Disabilities Project   | 45 200,72     |
| Trust for Central and Eastern Europe                     | Assisting the Reform in Bulgaria's Penitentiary Institutions  | 32 726,39     |
| Roma Education Fund (REF)                                | Evaluation of REF Financed Desegregation Programs and Options for Scaling Up at the National Level                                    | 19 558,30     |
| Democracy Commission , US Embassy                        | Initiative Equal Rights for Women. Now!   | 12 233,00     |
| USAID  | Study of the Court Practices on Drug-Related Crimes and Monitoring the Effect of the Penal Code Amendments Penalizing the Single Dose | 6 935,72      |

|   |  |                   |
|---|--|-------------------|
| Matra KAP Programme, Royal Netherlands Embassy                              | Writing of a Shadow Report on the State Report on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child | 8 103,00          |
| IGA Crime Prevention Fund   | Monitoring of the human rights of individuals sentenced to probation                           | 1 000,00          |
| European Network Against Racism (ENAR)                                      | Writing a Report on Racism in Bulgaria   | 4 889,57          |
| ENAR  | Founding of the ENAR Network in Bulgaria   | 144,99            |
| Swiss Embassy   | Assessment of Cases of Bulgarian Asylum Seekers in Switzerland                                 | 550,00            |
| Private donations   | Donations for the Mogilino social care institution   | 1 651,84          |
| Return of project financing from the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC)     | On Torture Prevention Project; the amount will be returned to the EC                           | 29 361,05         |
| Member-committees of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights | Fees for participation in the IHF GA   | 6 056,83          |
| Labour Bureau   | Programme for Hiring Staff with Special Needs  | 1 190,85          |
| Other income (including interest)   |  | 1 589,60          |
| <b>Total income in 2007</b>   | Approximately calculated in BGN  | <b>689 511,59</b> |

**B. Remaining sums from 2006**

|               |                   |
|---------------|-------------------|
| in US Dollars | <b>173 257,93</b> |
| in Euro       | <b>50 899,53</b>  |
| in BGN        | <b>68 700,84</b>  |

**II. EXPENDITURES**

| <b>Expenses</b>   | <b>Amount in BGN</b> |
|---|----------------------|
| <b>1. Maintenance of offices, salaries for staff, contracts with external contributors, domestic travel, court fees</b> | 606 739,13           |
| <b>2. Publications</b>  | 25 576,10            |
| <b>3. Seminars and conferences</b>  | 17 186,59            |
| <b>4. Others</b>  |                      |
| Membership fee (Bulgarian Media Coalition, IHF)   | 2 715,80             |
| Donations   | 941,36               |
| Returned unspent project funds and interest   | 67 261,13            |
| International travel  | 6 859,80             |
| Bank commissions  |                      |
| - in US Dollars   | 527,49               |
| - in Euro   | 375,84               |
| - in BGN  | 1 057,02             |

## Governance and staff

### Board of Directors

Krassimir Kanev, chair, Iliana Savova, deputy-chair, Yuliana Metodieva, Ramadan Kehayov, Emil Cohen, members

### Staff

#### Chair

Krassimir Kanev

#### Administrative Department

Desislava Simeonova, programme director (from January 2008)

Vyara Ivanova, administrative director

Asya Grudova, accountant

Gergana Ermenkova, accountant (until November 2008)

Ivelina Masheva, technical assistant

Radoila Hristova, technical assistant

Krassimir Gegov, technical assistant

#### Legal Defence Programme

Margarita Ilieva, attorney-at-law, legal consultant, coordinator, Anti-Discrimination Programme  
Svilen Ovcharov, attorney-at-law, legal consultant, coordinator, Litigation on Behalf of Victims of Racially Motivated Crimes Project, Hate Speech and Discrimination

Aneta Mircheva, attorney-at-law, legal consultant, coordinator, Strategic Litigation and Advocacy on Behalf of People with Mental Disorders Project (in cooperation with MDAC)

Daniela Furtunova, attorney-at-law, legal consultant

Yordanka Bekirska, legal consultant (until November 2007)

Polina Russinova, legal consultant (until June 2008)

Georgi Voinov, legal consultant

Varka Kalaidjieva, attorney-at-law, legal consultant (until August 2007)

Asya Alexieva, social worker, Strategic Litigation and Advocacy on Behalf of People with Mental Disorders Project

Stanislava Stoeva, volunteer

#### Closed Institutions Programme

Stanimir Petrov, coordinator

Dr. Georgi Bankov, coordinator

Lubomir Stoytchev, researcher, Project for Study of the Situation of Underage Offenders

#### Media Advocacy Programme

Yuliana Metodieva, editor-in-chief, *Obektiv* magazine

Vyara Angelova, editor, *Obektiv* magazine

Emil Cohen, special correspondent

Donka Mangacheva, type-setting

Lubomir Pozharliev, press monitor

**Programme for Protection of the Rights of Children in Institutions/Programme for  
Advocacy for the Rights of People with Mental Disabilities**

Slavka Kukova, coordinator

**Refugees and Migrants Legal Protection Programme**

Iliana Savova, attorney-at-law, programme director

Atanas Dolapchiev, attorney-at-law

Valentina Nilsen, attorney-at-law

Georgi Toshev, attorney-at-law

Mariana Andreeva, attorney-at-law

Antoaneta Sabeva, consultants

Maisun Shabaan, consultant

Elitza Sekulova, accountant

## Donors

### **Open Society Institute, Budapest**

*Institutional Support of the BHC, Lobbying Through Participation in the Media, Publication of the Obektiv Magazine and Maintenance of a Website*

*Study of the Situation of Minors in Reform Schools and Juvenile Correctional Boarding Schools – OSI Internship Programme*

*Development of Policies for Alternative Care for People with Mental Problem Project – OSI Mental Health Programme*

### **Open Society Institute, Sofia**

*Legal Defence Programme: Litigation on Behalf of Victims of Racially Motivated Crime, Hate Speech and Discrimination Project*

### **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**

*Refugees and Migrants Legal Protection Programme*

### **Leon Levy Foundation**

*Legal Defence Programme: Paid Internship Programme, Litigation*

### **Judicial Strengthening Initiative, East-West Management Institute, United States Agency for International Development**

*Closed Institutions Programme: Study of the Court Practice on Drug-Related Crimes and Monitoring the Effect of the Penal Code Amendments Penalizing the Single Drug-Dose*

### **Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe**

*Closed Institutions Programme: Assisting the Reform in Bulgaria's Penitentiary Institutions*

### **Roma Education Fund**

*Assessment of the Roma Education Fund-financed Projects and of the Possibilities for Scaling Up the Process at the National Level*

### **Democracy Commission, United States Embassy in Bulgaria**

*Initiative Equal Rights for Women. Now! Project*

### **Mental Disability Advocacy Center, Budapest**

*Strategic Litigation and Advocacy on Behalf of People with Mental Disabilities*