

# ANNUAL REPORT 2015



The „Social Activities and Practices Institute” is a non-governmental, non-profit organization, registered under the terms and conditions of the Bulgarian legislation in 2001.

## MISSION OF THE ORGANISATION

We work for the development of social work as a helping profession aimed at the social inclusion of vulnerable groups of people in the public life of Bulgaria, since we believe in the abilities of every person to be fully contributing and active citizen of his or her country.

*We are a community of experts in the provision of help to children and families that combine theory and practice.*

We work for the professionalization of the social practice with children and families by:

- ✓ Developing new models, carrying out scientific research and scientific-applied studies;
- ✓ Analyzing our experience and transferring it to the professional community;
- ✓ Spreading knowledge and new skills, supporting professional development through sharing and analyzing the professionals’ own experience.

We understand the process of helping as having a good attitude to the client, respect for the rights, and empowering of people.

**We achieve our mission by:**

- ✓ Organizing specialized trainings for specialists from the helping professions, judges and public prosecutors;
- ✓ Providing social services to people in vulnerable situations by supporting them and by helping their inclusion in the public life;
- ✓ Supervising teams that are working in the social and educational areas;
- ✓ Initiating various forms of development of the capacity of professionals based on activity, participation and mutual support;
- ✓ Actively participating in the establishment of the social policy by conducting public discussions, round tables and campaigns related to the social inclusion of isolated groups of people;
- ✓ Aiding governmental decisions by carrying out research and evaluations related to the social sphere.

***Our overall activity is organized in three methodological programs: Trainings, Methodological Support and Services, Social Services for Children and Families at Risk, Children and Justice, Prevention of Abuse. We contribute not only on a national level, but also on an international level by organizing a series of initiatives within the framework of projects***

*with international partners, participation in EC forums, expressing opinions and recommendations.*

**The activities of the Institute are carried out by an organizational and expert team.**

**There are 129 people working** in the Social Activities and Practices Instituted **based on labour contracts** with the following positions: Executive Director - 1, Program Director - 2, Community Support Centre Director – 1, Complex for Social Services Director – 4, Head of the Unit „Public Relations” – 1, Expert on Programs and Projects - 1, Head of Community Support Centre – 1, Specialist in Social Activities-Expert – 1, Specialist in Social Activities - 55 including 7 heads of sectors, Psychologist – 23 including 4 heads of sectors, Social Activities Assistant – 10, Senior Social Worker – 1, Social Workers – 9, Program Coordinator -1, Community Support Centre Coordinator - 1, Senior Accountant -1, Junior Accountant – 1, Human Resources -1, Cashier - 4, Accountant-Cashier -1, Receptionist - 4, Nurse – 1, Hygiene worker - 4.

#### **PROGRAM „TRAININGS, METHODOLOGICAL SUPPORT AND RESEARCH”**

**Strategic goal: increasing the capacity of the helping specialists through provision of training, methodological support and supervision**



**Result 1: Increased capacity of the specialists working in the organization** – total number of training hours provided to the teams of SAPI - 312 hours. Total number of participants in the trainings – 159 /some SAPI employees have participated in more than one training/. In accordance with the internal standard of the organization, every employee of SAPI has received a minimum of 20 hours of training during 2015.

**1) Increased capacity of the team of supervisors and methodological consultants through provision of trainings for consultation and supervision of foster families**

In 2015 we continued the successful training of professionals supporting foster families within a project funded by the program “Grundtvig” of the European Commission (EC), by conducting a **three-day training /in total 24 hours/**.

**2) Developed capacity of the specialists from SAPI in the sphere of abuse prevention and caseworking with children victims of abuse and in families where abuse is present.**

In 2015 two 3-day trainings **/in total 48 hours/** were conducted within the project “Listen to the Child” funded by the “Criminal Justice” Department of the EC, during which **57 people** have



been trained in total, from whom 12 were representatives of the SAPI teams. The training presented the French and Italian tools for assessment of the needs of children victims of abuse.

In Total **17** experts from SAPI participated in training with the topic „Working with abusive parents”, led by the international consultant Orthodoxy Salomon.

**3) Provided support for the teams of the newly established Child Advocacy and Support Centres *Protection Zone* in the cities of Montana and Shoumen regarding the implementation of an integrated approach based on an inter-institutional and multidisciplinary cooperation for work with children victims of abuse and their families.**

In 2015 the teams from the *Protection Zone* centers in Montana and Shoumen have participated in three 3-day trainings **/in total 120 hours/** on the following topics:

1. Attitudes, values, introduction to social practices, and professional ethics. Introduction to the methodology of the Child Advocacy and Support Centre *Protection Zone*,
2. Work with children victims of abuse, types of work, specifics.
3. Casework – evaluation and planning.

Participants in the training were the teams from the two *Protection Zone* Centres and representatives of the local “Child Protection” Departments, as well as representatives of the services and representatives of the Ministry of Interior Affairs.

**4) Extended competencies of the teams from the social services aimed at working with children in conflict with the law.**

In 2015 started the training of the newly established team for provision of the service „Intensive socio-educational support for children in conflict with the law” at the Child and Youth Zone in the city of Sliven. The trainings were carried out within the project “Support for children in conflict with the law, children at risk and their families” funded by UNICEF. In 2015 a total **13 days of training /104 hours/** were carried out, in which all the specialists from SAPI providing the above mentioned service – **12** - participated, as well as 8 representatives of the service Centre for Psychological Support managed by the „Child and Space” Association. The training topics were aimed at providing knowledge on: child development and deviations in child development; international standards and internal normative framework for social services and for child justice; basis of social work and casework; approaches for reduction of tension and challenging behavior; integrated approach in cases of children/youths at high risk, a package of integrated services.

**5) Increased capacities of the employees of the services and of prison officers for provision of integrated services to youths leaving prison.**



In 2015 based on the project ‘Integrated service for a follow-up support of youths released from prison’ SAPI conducted a 2-day training of the teams in Sofia, Vidin and Shoumen regarding the provision of integrated services to youths leaving prison, in conjunction with representatives of the prisons in the country. Participants in the training were a total of **30 people, 7 of whom were SAPI employees.**

**Result 2: Increased capacity of external professionals as a result of trainings conducted within projects implemented by SAPI.**







### **1) Developed capacity of probation officers for individual and group work.**

In 2015 a 17-day training **/in total 136 hours/** for probation officers from the Ministry of Justice was carried out within the project „Increasing the capacity of the probation officers”, funded by the “Norwegian Financial Mechanism”. Total number of participants in the training – **60**, of whom 15 training interns. The training included the following topics: legal framework of probation; probation activity related to individual cases; group training and group programs; multicultural work and work with different ethnicities; probation activity related to minors; supervision; teamwork.

### **2) Increased capacity for social work of the nurses from the „Maternal and Child Health” Centres in the cities of Shoumen and Sliven.**

Eight 2-day trainings of the teams from the two Centres **/in total 128 hours/** have been carried out with a total of **30** participants within a project funded by UNICEF. The trainings were based on four topics: normative regulations concerning child protection, social services and social welfare; case management and casework with children at risk; working with families – a systematic approach; prevention of the institutional care and reintegration, resilience approach.

3) The SAPI team has continued the **trainings** of experts aimed at **junior judges and public prosecutors** on the topic of child interviewing within the joint programs with the National Justice Institute. SAPI managed to carry out the trainings for child interviewing planned in the yearly calendar of the organization, with the additional participation of external organizations.

### **Result 3: Provided methodological support and supervision to the teams from the social services.**

In accordance with the policies for professional support adopted by SAPI, each member from the service teams received one individual and one group supervision during 2015. The social services teams have received support not only from experts from SAPI but also from international supervisors – Victoria Quandamatteo, Professor Ugo Sabatello, Orthodoxy Solomon.

In order to achieve a higher level of quality of the psycho-social services, at the end of 2015 we developed a **Program for Methodological and Expert help**, which is conceptually different and aims to increase the professional development and competences of the teams. The types of support have been expanded with new possibilities such as – clinical meetings in regards to casework, literary cafe, and group forms for self-reflection. For the implementation of the Program, we appointed experts from our services. The experts are long-term SAPI employees who have successfully passed through the different career stages in the organization, and based on a profile of competences that they have already acquired.

We started the initiative to organize work meetings of the expert team, during which the different forms of methodological support, supervision and intervision (peer supervision that requires active involvement of all participants) are discussed in order to ensure the professional support of the teams providing the services.

**Result 4: Strengthening of the capacity of the Professional Training Centre /PTC/ and conduction of trainings**

*In 2015 PTC successfully completed the procedure for preparation and certification of the Quality Standard ISO – 9001 carried out by an international certifying organization. All internal normative acts of PTC, all forms and procedures have been put in accordance with the Quality Standard.*

*In 2015 we successfully launched the Education and Methodological Council as part of PTC, and we invited as members professionals from the areas of social work, jurisprudence, pediatrics etc.*

*In 2015 we developed over 1000 pages of training programs as a result of public procurements, and after a request or in relation to projects.*

**Trainings organized by the Professional Training Centre - PTC**

In 2015 SAPI successfully fulfilled its Indicative Training Program as follows:

DATE	DAY OF TRAINING	TOPIC	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
26-27.02.2015	2	Social animation	15
6-7.04.2015	2	Social work with families-parental alienation	10
16-17.04.2015	2	Child development stage-module 2 "7-12 years old"	8

23-24.04.2015r	2	Child interviews	12
24-25.04.2015r	2	Supervision in the social work "Photolanguage and psychodramatic techniques in the supervision"	9
29-30.04.2015r	2	Special casework - module 2 "The professional assessment in the social work"	11
12-13.05.2015	2	Casework-module 3 "Casework interventions"	11
14-15.05.2015	2	Social work with families –module 1 "Work techniques. Family assessment. Assessment of the parenting capacity.	9
15-16.05.2015r	2	Supervision in the social work-module 8	9
19-20.05.2015r	2	Child development stage-module 3 "Adolescence:12-18 years old	9
2-3.06.2015r	2	Social work with families –module 1 "Work techniques. Family assessment. Assessment of the parenting capacity.	16
12.06.2015r	1	Casework - (funded by the Social Protection Fund of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy)	4
11-12.06.2015r.	2	Social work with families (Parental alienation)	14
30.06-01.07.2015r	2	Social work with families -module 2 "Consulting"	14
30.06.2015	1	Child development stage-module 3 "Adolescence:12-18 years old	8
22-23.07.2015	2	Interview of children involved in legal procedures	11
23-24.07.2015r	2	Social animation	11
25-26.09.2015	2	Training of trainers of candidates for adopters and foster families - module 1	7
28-29.10.2015r	2	Training of trainers of candidates for adopters and foster families - module 2	9
14-15.12.2015r	2	Training of trainers of candidates for adopters and foster families - module 3	9
months.4 – 7. 2015 r.	8	Introduction to Resilience	57
months.5-9.2015 r.	211	Social inclusion project	970
<b>257 days</b>			<b>1233 participants</b>

PTC has also fulfilled a public procurement for the conduction of 1-day introductory and 3-day continuing trainings within the Project for Social Inclusion of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy for the teams of the services „Formation and development of parental skills” and „Family consultation and support”.

***Total number of specialists trained by SAPI during 2015 – 1539 people***



**Total number of days of training – 331, total number of training hours - 2648.**

### **Forthcoming trainings in 2016**

The forthcoming trainings for 2016 will be carried out based on the Indicative Program for Trainings of PTC, which is promoted on the website of the organization. The topics have been discussed and approved at a meeting of the Education and Methodological Council. We adopted as a new tendency the provision of the training programs and materials to the scientific representatives of the Review Council.

### **Result 5: Research**

The Social Activities and Practices Institute has adopted as a priority the analysis of the practices and models used in the provision of services and in projects.

We have carried out research in 2015 based on the activity and experience of the organization coming from the management and the closing down of the Home for Children „Assen Zlatarov” in Sofia. We identified the lessons learned from and about the process of de-institutionalization.

### ***Priorities of the program and challenges for the next year***

#### **Priorities:**

- Sustainability of the program
- Development of the program
- Promotion of the results and achievements
- Building of international partnerships

#### **Tasks:**

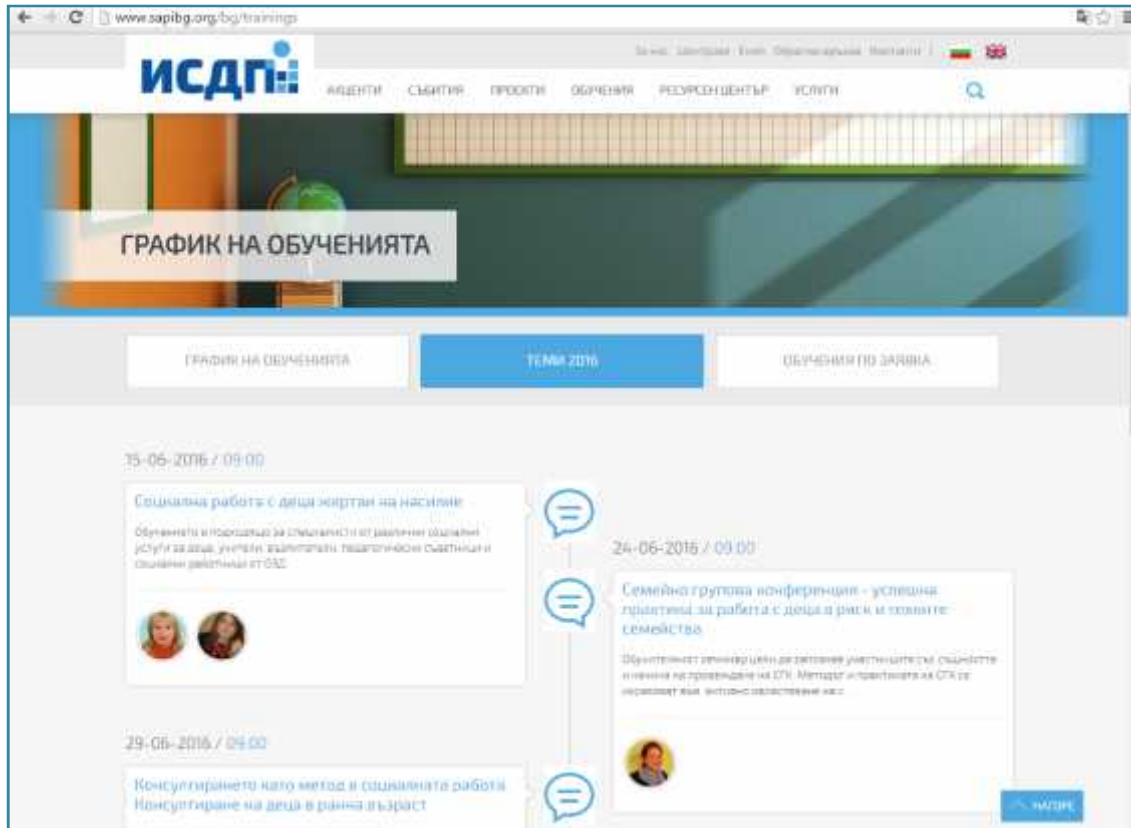
- Organizational planning of the program activities
- Expansion of the team of the program

**In 2015 we successfully achieved most of the goals set in our annual program**

#### **Challenges:**

- Promotion – advertisement of the services provided by PTC.

- Involvement of additional trainers who are external to the organization.
- Expansion of the activity of the organization on an international level through the establishment of Resilience Resource Centres in countries from Eastern Europe



The non-fulfillment of some of the goals may have occurred due to the following reasons:

1. We have not received a minimum of eight requests by external for the organization experts for some of the trainings. The possible reasons for that could be, on one hand, the lack of interest from the professional community in the provided topics, and on the other hand, the insufficient promotion of the planned trainings amongst the people concerned.

In 2016 we will take the following measures to minimize the negative effect of these factors:

- Carry out a survey on the preferred topics and forms of trainings regarding social work.
- Update of the list of e-mails of potential participants, and spreading out information among them.
- Re-development of the SAPiB website and creation of more possibilities to access information and to request trainings, in addition to the ones planned in the annual program.

2. The trainings offered by PTC are mostly in the area of social work and are most suitable for social workers and psychologists who have already been trained by SAPI from the Child Protection System and from the social services.

***In order to expand the activity of PTC during the second half of 2016, the Education and Methodological Council will propose training topics suitable for specialists from a wider variety of occupations /such as teachers, medical personnel/, as well as will invite trainers on these topics.***

3. We need to implement a system for evaluation of the quality of the trainings. We need to expand the package of services and, in addition to the trainings, to provide an assessment of the training needs of the requesting party, a model for implementation of the learned information in the practice, and an evaluation of the quality of the provided services, etc.

#### **PROGRAM „SOCIAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AT RISK”**

During 2015 the Social Activities and Practices Institute achieved sustainability of the already managed services delegated by the mayors of the Municipalities of Shoumen, Vidin and Sofia. The Institute expanded its territorial scope of activity by taking over the management of CSSCF (Complex for Social Services for Children and Families) in the Municipality of Stara Zagora. In addition to that, the Institute accepted the challenge to develop new forms of integrated services in the Municipalities of Sliven and Montana that are oriented towards the specific needs of children at a higher level of risk, children victims of abuse or children in conflict with the law. The professional skills of the SAPI specialists, the approach used, and the competences that we systematically improve have been recognized by the leading «Child Protection» units and by the clients, who are able to make more and more informed choices of a service provider.





For the Social Activities and Practices Institute the year 2015 was the year during which:

***We celebrated 10 years of management of the services in the Complex for Social Services in Shoumen in the month of May by organizing the Fourth International Conference “Children and Justice – New Approaches and Practices”.*** This was an opportunity for us to draw some conclusions, to feel gratification, and to take pride in the efforts of the teams of CSSCF and SAPI. During all these years, the Complex has established itself as a center and a laboratory of SAPI for launching of new services, and promotion of the experience of the Organization. The Complex has received an appraisal from representatives of the government structures and from other partners for the high quality in the work of the team, whose competences and specialization have been developed by SAPI during those ten years.

***After winning a competition of the Municipality of Stara Zagora, from 01. 10. 2015 SAPI took over the management of the Complex for Social Services to Children and Families in the Municipality, which has been established in 2005 and includes two services delegated by the state – Community Support Centre and Unit “Mother and Baby”.*** Our main priority has been to continue to develop the good experience acquired throughout the years, and to continue the development of the services in the Complex in accordance with the acquired expertise, approaches and methods of work used by the Institute.

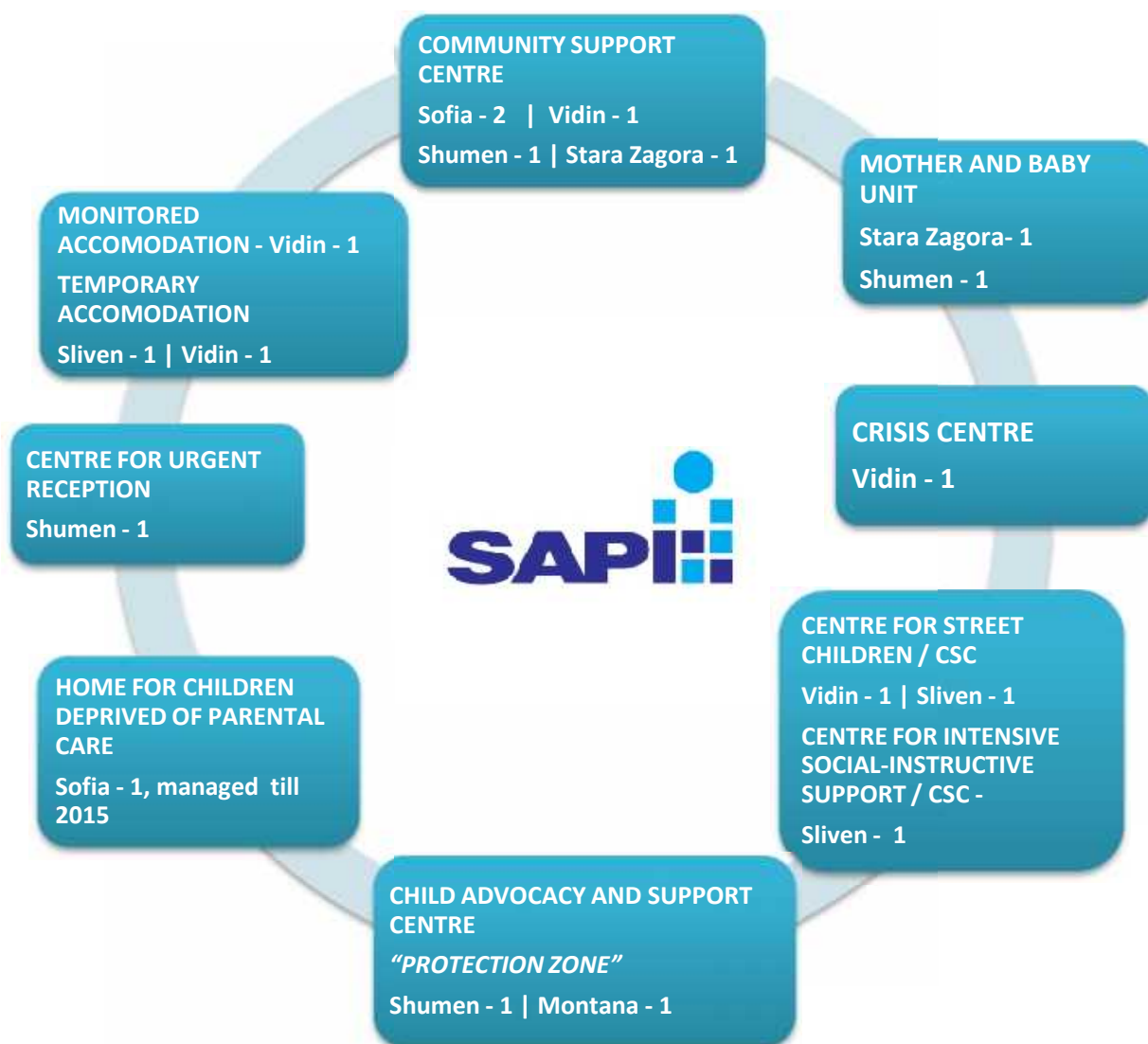
***We have closed down the Home for Children Deprived of Parental Care “Assen Zlatarov” in Sofia, and we have provided alternative care for the children.*** The preparation of the children to leave the home has been done in accordance to a specially developed program by the experts of SAPI. Our main goal was to prepare the children for the change in an accessible manner and to secure a smooth transition to the new services. ***As a final event, on September 16th the Institute organized a Round Table entitled „Lessons from and about the Deinstitutionalization”, and presented in front of the professional community a research of its two-year model of social practice in the provision of residential services. The identified achievements and challenges represent a real contribution to the process of deinstitutionalization on a national level.***

We launched a **new model in support of children at high level of risk** through the establishment of **Child and Youth Zone – a complex of services for children and youths under the project „Support of children in conflict with the law, children at risk and their families”** in partnership with the Municipality of Sliven and UNICEF. On 17.07. 2015 the Chair of the Management Board of SAPI signed a contract for the provision of social services with the mayor of the Municipality of Sliven. The experts of SAPI developed the methodology for provision of integrated services to the Centre for intensive socio-educational support, transitional and monitored housing.

At the end of 2015 SAPI took over the management of the **Child Advocacy and Support Centres Protection Zone in the Municipalities of Montana and Shoumen**. UNICEF, the Social Activities and Practices Institute, and the Association Animus” Foundation have developed a model for provision of integrated services to children victims of abuse and their families. The model is based on the experience and efforts of SAPI since 2008 onwards in the implementation of child-friendly procedures for children victims and witnesses of crimes, as well as on the reform in the area of child justice. We adopted an **integrated approach** in the work with children victims of abuse and their families that is based on a multi-institutional and multidisciplinary coordinated interaction between the *Protection Zone* Centre and all the institutions involved in a case of child abuse – police, social services, Prosecutor’s Office, Court, medical institutions etc. The integrated process is aimed at protection, child-friendly justice, and physical and psychological recovery of children victims of abuse.

**Strategic goal for the provision of the services: Improvement of the quality of the provided services by connecting theory and practice and transforming them in laboratories for approbation and implementation of new models and methods of work in accordance with the European social practices.**

## The Network of Services Managed by SAPI



### 1) Team for provision and management of social services, supervision and methodological support

At the end of the year, 111 people had been working in SAPI based on labor contracts, and about 10 experts, who support the teams, had been working on civil contracts. The positions occupied are: Directors - 7; Specialists in Social Activities - 62 including 7 heads of sectors; Psychologists – 20 including 5 heads of sectors; Educators - 1; Nurses - 1; Cashiers - 4; Receptionists - 4; Hygiene Workers - 4; Drivers – 2, and 6 Social Activities Assistants.

The organization has been applying and improving for the fourth consecutive year a Career Development System for specialists. **A total of 6 consultants and 13 experts from the specialists in Shoumen and Vidin, from the Community Support Centre in Sofia, and from CSSCF in Stara Zagora have the competence and** preparation to lead trainings for specialists, to



develop training programs, and to carry out supervision of social workers under the supervision of Professor Nely Petrova, PhD, Nadya Stoykova, PhD, Darinka Yankova and Elena Manasieva – methodologists and supervisors in SAPI.

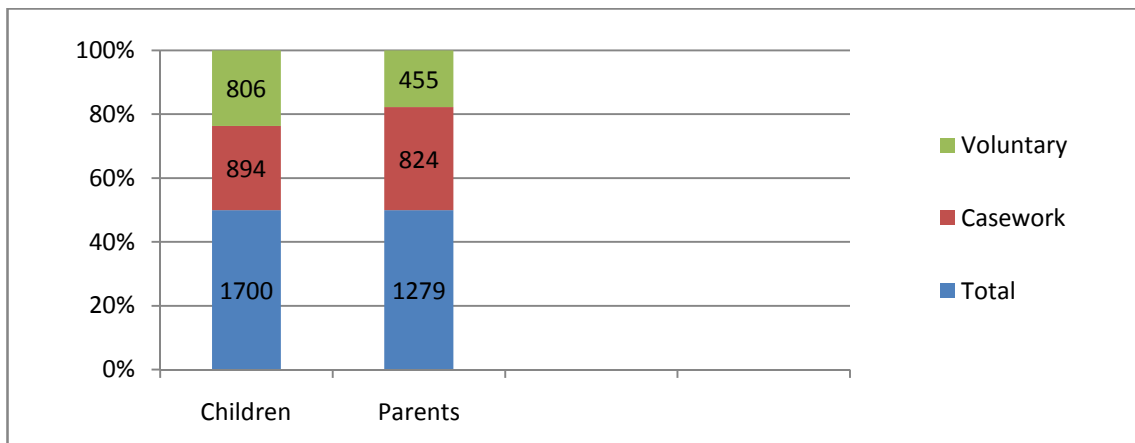
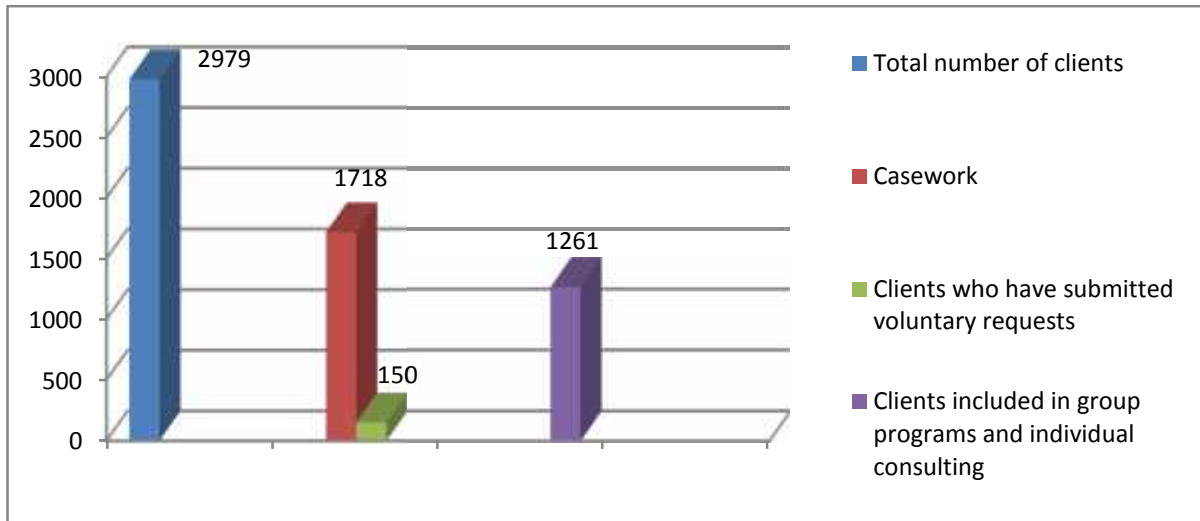
## **2) Types of groups that we have supported**

The social structures carried out their activities in 2015 in accordance with the priorities set by the Social Activities and Practices Institute. All the teams of the organization have worked for the ***achievement of results, oriented towards the needs of the clients, and we directed our efforts towards improvement of the life of people in need.*** We have strengthened the interaction with partners from other institutions that are involved in the support of children and families at risk. At the same time, we have ***carried out activities aimed at the prevention of the risk and the avoidance of repeated victimization of child victims; we have also worked to prevent the risk of relapse in children perpetrators of antisocial behaviors and crimes, and to support the parents in the provision of better care for their children.*** We have also aimed to create a sustainable and working model for multi-institutional interaction on a Municipal level, to increase the capacity and the number of services that are provided on the ground, so that they can satisfy better the needs of the target groups. In 2015 our main priority was again the standard for quality of the social services, and the achievement of efficiency of the implemented activities.

**In the sphere of social services, we provided support to 2 979 clients in total:**

- **1 718 caseworks, of whom 150 submitted voluntary requests. Compared to the data from last year /1518 clients/ there is an increase of 12 %, that can be attributed largely to the clients who have submitted a voluntary request.**
- **The clients included in group programs and in individual counselling are 27% less than the previous year but their total number 1 261 is indicative of the fact that we develop programs and trainings with students and professionals, and that the services continue to be open and accessible not only for children and parents at risk, but also for the prevention of risks.**

The analysis of the different ways for casework to be requested shows that the highest percentage comes from casework ordered by CPU - around 50 %, after that come the casework referred by an order - around 25-30 %, which is almost the same percentage as the percentage of clients that submitted a voluntary request, whose number, compared to last year, has significantly increased in “CSC Slaveikov” and “CSC Nadejda” in Sofia, and in CSSCF in the city of Shoumen. Regarding the duration, the highest percentage of referrals come from six-month referrals, followed by three-month referrals, and the lowest percentage is for the short-term referrals /one month/, and long-term referrals /one year/.



The diagram above shows that from the overall number of clients 43% are adults and 57% are children. Distributed over casework the ratio is 52% children to 48 % parents.

### **The capacity of the services delegated by the state and managed by SAPI is 488**

For another year, the capacity of the services in Shoumen and Vidin has remained unchanged and, since the teams have been working on a regional level, this has required the teams to work double over their normal capacity. In the above-mentioned regions, over 30% of the cases have been referred by the Social Assistance Directorates in the districts of Shoumen and Vidin. The remoteness is one of the risks that we have recognized and that we try to manage by working directly with clients. The service teams in Sofia and Stara Zagora have also worked over their normal capacity during 2015.

We maintain the work quality by providing additional financial and human resources from the projects that we carry out in the Municipalities of Shoumen, Sofia, Vidin and Sliven.

**The overall financial contribution of SAPI in its structures is 81 000lv.** The additional funding comes from the activities of implemented projects, and to a large extent, it is used to provide the training and qualification of the specialists, to cover business trips expenses and additional remuneration of subsidiary specialists who support the direct work with clients.

## **2.1 ) Priorities in the support of risk groups of children**

**2.1.1. The provision of intensive integrated services is the new approach of SAPI for supporting children at high risk.** In the last few years, a group of children has emerged, whose life and wellbeing is at high risk and who require a new type of services. These are children between 12-17, who have run away from their homes or alternative care homes, and who are being exploited and involved in prostitution or use psychoactive substances. Some children of this group are also children perpetrators of crimes. Very often, instead of receiving support and care, these children are treated as criminals. The high risk presupposes a provision of an intensive integrated service. In 2015 the **number of children and youths in conflict with the law** who have received intensive psycho-pedagogical support in Sofia, Vidin, and Shoumen is **141**.

Within the specialized service “Intensive socio-educational support of children in conflict with the law” in the short period of three months we have targeted our efforts towards promotion of the activities, identification of the users, development of the design of the integrated services, and their launching on the territory of the Municipality of Sliven. We have put in motion an inter-institutional collaboration with the Municipality of Sliven, the Regional Administration in Sliven, the Probation Department, the Regional and District Court, the Regional and District Prosecutor's Office, the „Social Support” Directorate, and the Regional Directorate for Social Support, the general education schools and the operating social services for children. We count as success the requests we received from the Regional Prosecution in the city of Sliven.

The requests were for the provision of psychological support to underage defendants, analysis of the reasons for committing a crime, and child hearing in a “Blue Room”. **A total of 17 children** have been directed by the CPU and the secondary school system.

As a result of the active work for promoting the specialized services provided in the Complex, we also managed to motivate 10 voluntary clients to use our services. The intensive socio-educational support includes also the participation of children in workshops and group

programs such as “School Support”, “Art”, “Cooking”, “Style”, “Profession”, “Computer”, “Story Telling”, “Photos and Cinema”.



***A priority for us continued to be the application of an integrated approach towards the specific needs of the children victims of abuse.*** During the report period in the social service we worked with **188 children victims of abuse**. We report a decrease of 25% in the number of children victims, which is a result of the active work with parents, preventive programs, and our work in a network together with the educational, judicial, and health institutions. We were confronted with the challenge to develop for the first time in the country a Child Centre for Advocacy and Support of children victims of abuse and their families in Montana and Shoumen in partnership with UNICEF and the two municipalities. Our efforts were aimed at the gathering and training of professional teams, creating an inter-institutional partnership, and applying an integrated approach towards the children victims – protection, child-friendly justice, and physical and psychological recovering. For the three-month period since their establishment the centres have worked with **18 children**.

**2.1.2.** In 2015 in the CSSCF Vidin we started a new practice that would allow us to fully comply with the requirements of Directive 2012/29/EU *for individual assessment of every victim of crime. As a result of the support of the Program “Criminal Justice”,* SAPI in partnership with the Ministry of Justice, the Prosecution Office of the Republic of Bulgaria, the State Agency for Child Protection and the Paediatric Association, and based on the study of the experience in France, Italy, Northern Ireland and Finland, developed a model for inter-institutional collaboration on a local level in regards to cases of children victims of abuse, as well as a framework for individual integrated assessment. The model foresees the gathering of a multi-institutional team in relation to the case of every individual child victim or witness of abuse. The team **makes an individual assessment** and defines the risk for the health and security of the child, the risk of threat and manipulation. Based on the assessment, *the need for health treatment, support and protection, and special measures for participation in legal procedures are determined, and the child is put in the centre of coordinated actions on the part of the police, prosecution, medical and social institutions.* We started to apply in practice this model in the cases of children victims of abuse and witnesses of crimes in the CSSCF Shoumen, *and later in the newly-established Centres for Advocacy and Support – “Protection Zone” in Shoumen and Montana.*

The specialized teams of the Social Activities and Practices Institute, which include 9 psychologists and 10 social workers, have made *assessments, and initiated preparation and collaboration for the hearing of 54 children throughout the course of the year.* In comparison to the previous year we report an increase of 15%. *The conclusions for us are that, in spite of the delay in the judicial reform, we have made an attempt to show a successful model for priority consideration of the best interest of the child in cases of participation in legal procedures.*

**2.1.3.** In the three Community Support Centres in Sofia, Shoumen and Vidin we started a new for the country **integrated service for a follow-up support of youths aged 14 to 29 who have been previously detained, as well as support of their families.** The aim of the service is to promote the opportunities for re-socialisation, independent life, and successful social inclusion of the youths through the creation and approbation of a model for integrated psycho-social-judicial service for a follow-up support and accompaniment. **The team consisting of a youth social worker, a psychologist and a jurist was identified as a good practice.** The team is mobile and can show up on the spot when needed to provide the youths with information and consultation. In 2015 **were organized a total of 60 information meetings with youths,** who at the moment were detained in the Central Sofia Prison, Kazichene Prison, Kremikovtsi Prison, the Corrective Home in Boychinovtsi, Bobov Dol Prison, Vratsa Prison, and the Prison Dorm in Veliko Tarnovo. On the basis of the information meetings in Sofia and Shoumen we have started a psycho-social-legal support in **9 cases.**

**2.1.4.** We focused our efforts on the **prevention of the risks for social exclusion**, dropping out of the education system, as well as prevention of the aggression in children. During the year the most risky turned out to be those children raised in institutions, in the Centres for Accommodation of a Family Type, and in families with low parental capacity. Along with prevention, we also embarked on targeted actions for **early intervention** and social inclusion, and overall prevention of the problems in their very beginning. Last but not least, we provided the families with support for overcoming crisis and difficult situations, and worked with them in the process of recovering from the consequences of traumatic experiences. **During the report year we have carried out individual casework on a total of 197 cases on prevention of dropping out from the education system.**

**In regards to prevention of abuse in Shoumen, Sofia and Vidin, for the first time we developed and started a group program for children “KIKO AND THE ARM”.** The Program was developed within the project “Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in Central and Eastern Europe”. **There were 10 children at the age of 5-11 years old that were included in the Program and placed in foster families in Shoumen, and another 20 children that visited kindergartens in Shoumen, Sofia and Vidin on a daily basis.** In a fun way - through Kiko and his friend the Arm – the children were encouraged to learn several simple rules in order to be able to say “NO” to unwanted touch.

In Sofia we also **started a new initiative supported by UNICEF called “Club for Children’s Rights”.** The starting of the club coincided with the 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CRCUN.

**2.1.5.** A priority in the services in 2015 from the point of view of the children was the **prevention of the separation between them and a parent** with whom they do not communicate or is at conflict with the other parent. Based on our quantitative indicators, we report **59 children**, and the most cases are in Sofia and Stara Zagora. We worked for the improvement of the psychological well-being of the children, for the decrease of their anxiety and feeling of guilt, for change of the separation situation organizing mediated meetings with the parent. We organized such mediated meetings between a child and a parent in 15 cases, and we can report that they are a good practice, that some results have been accomplished in the direction of rebuilding the contact with the estranged parent after a prolonged period of termination of the connection.



**2.1.6. We continued our individual and group work for promoting opportunities for all children to live in a favourable family or close-to-the-family environment.** We have provided family care to **18 newborn babies** of risk families or separated from their biological parents, 16 of whom are in Shoumen. Since 2012 the total number of **newborn babies placed in foster families with the help of SAPI is 105**. We continued to develop the foster care for babies and for children with disabilities, as well as to professionalize the foster families. **25 are the professional families specialized in care for children with disabilities, and 22 specialized in care for newborn babies.** There are a total of 213 cases of children in alternative care, and they have increased by 40 % in comparison to the previous year. We tried to help **22 children placed in foster families to understand, accept, and re-consider their situation and story** through individual work, psychological consultations, workshops and group programs. In this way we continued to share the care with the foster families and the biological parents of the children.

**2.1.7. We applied a new model of socio-educational and psycho-social accompaniment during the process of removing children from the HCDPC “Assen Zlatarov”.**

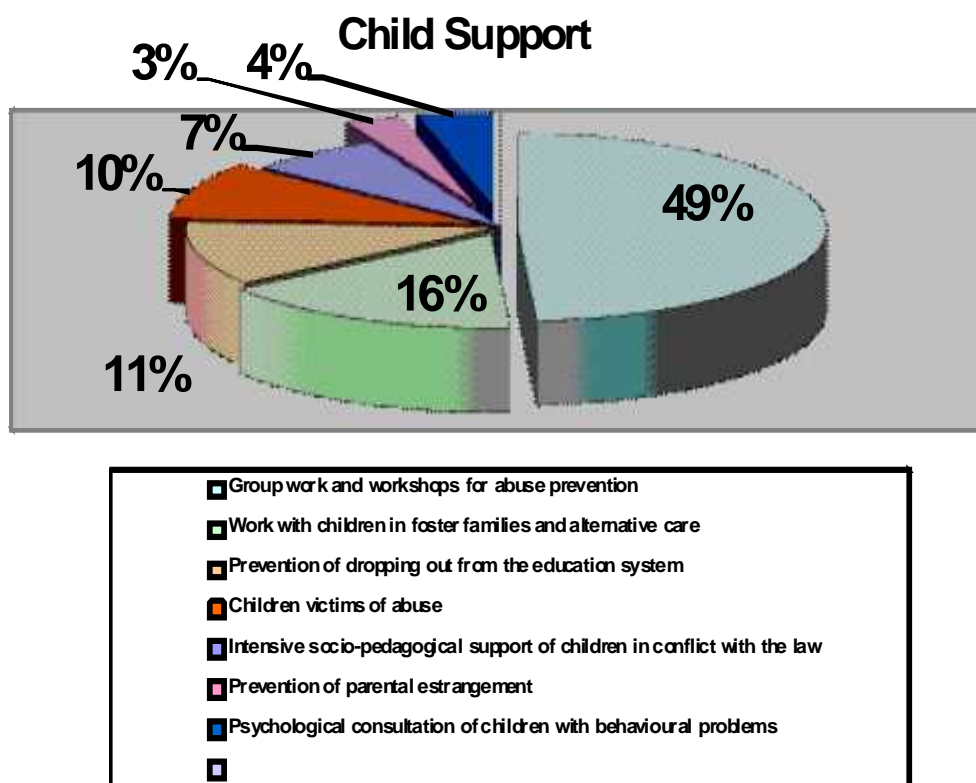
A substantial part of our work was the preparation of the children for leaving the home, which was carried out based on an especially developed program by the experts of SAPI. The main goal was to prepare the children in an accessible way for the change in their lives, and to ensure smooth transition to the new services. An important part of the work was aimed at updating the assessment of the children, and their placement in groups, based on specific criteria for the new ACFT. The preparation of the children was done by a team of educators, social workers, and psychologists from the Home and the CSC. The team responsible for every child defined the instruments and the approach for working with the child, based on the interests and the wishes of the child – an interview, creation of a life book, a memory box, lexicons, use of the method “my backpack”, etc. The idea was that the children would accept the change, and would leave with memories about this part of their lives in the home, which to be able to integrate afterwards. The children had the opportunity to visit the new services, to get to know the environment, and to participate in the decoration and cleaning of their rooms before moving.

***The lessons learned through the experience of SAPI during the process of de-institutionalization:***

- The healthy children in the residential services are not „easy children“, and contrary to the common view, they are vulnerable and need special care. These are children with complex needs and many problems, some of them are in high risk, and the form of care and the accompaniment in the residential services are not enough.

- The work with children in alternative care suggests the need for new ideas, new forms of integrated services such as intensive socio-pedagogical support, psycho-social support, etc.
- The work with the children poses the requirement for the expertise of the team, i.e. it is necessary to know what is the role of each specialist, what is the need for his/her additional preparation and competence, and the need for the inclusion of a new professional figure of social educator in the residential services.
- Of key importance is the inclusion of many actors - the inclusion of representatives of various institutions such as CPU, the school, MIA, YCFAAMU, the municipalities, the social services, volunteers, etc. It is necessary that the work with the children is collaborative and ongoing. When the work is long-term the relationships between the partners are easier, and they reach a collaborative professional understanding about the problems and the joint activities.

**There are 1700 children that** have been covered in all our services and activities, from which **819 within casework** / an 8% increase in comparison to the previous year/, and another **881 within group-work**, workshops and prevention trainings.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Trainings and group programs on prevention of abuse – 825; Work with children in foster care and alternative care – 213; Prevention of dropping out of the school system -197; Intensive work with children in conflict with the law - 141; Support of children victims of abuse – 188 ; Mediated meetings in cases of parental estrangement – 59; Psychological consultation of children with behavioural problems.

## 2.2) Family Support

We have supported a total of 1 279 parents – 749 within casework, and 530 volunteer clients within group support and consultation. The analysis reveals a 25 % increase in comparison to the previous year <sup>2</sup>.

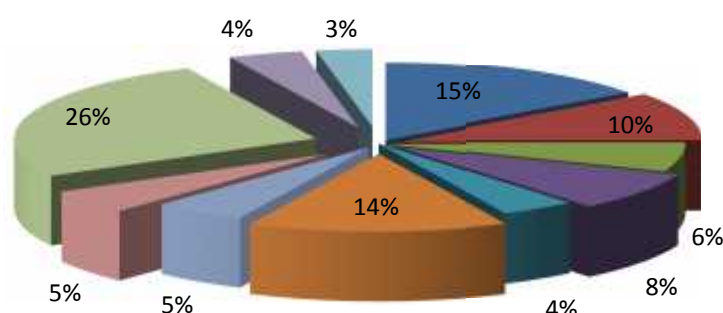
This is yet another year when the tendency for almost equal number of cases of children and parents was preserved, as well as the tendency for increase in the number of volunteer clients, who express their own desire for professional support in the process of upbringing and educating their children, as well as an increase in the participation in group programs and consultation meetings. **Considerably increased is also the number of requests for preparation of candidates for adoptive parents**, only in Sofia their number is 87, while there are a total of 105 for the whole organization. In **2015 there was also an increase in the number of cases of family consultation and parental estrangement**.

The group programs for parents affirmed themselves, and we became a recognized provider of well-developed programs for parents in the country. Continued the interest in the School for Pregnant in Shoumen, the Program «Positive Parenthood», «Smack-Free – How to Educate Our Children with Love and Respect» in Vidin, Sofia and Shoumen. Adopters and foster families

attend the self-help groups that the organization develops. The teams in Shoumen, Sofia and Vidin supported and participated in the organization for the second year of two national initiatives – **A week of the Fathers – National Campaign “To be a Father” and an Information Day for Adopters**.

These data demonstrate that the protection system continues to be centred on

### Parental Support



- Group work with parents
- Consultation and support for increasing parental capacity
- Assessment of parental capacity
- Training and support of adopters
- Family consultation
- Training and support of foster families
- Abandonment prevention
- Consultation in cases of parental estrangement
- Консултиране и подкрепа при възпитание на дете
- Psycho-diagnosics
- Psychological consultation

<sup>2</sup> Consultation and support of families in the upbringing and education of their children; Group work with parents – 194; Individual support and consultation of families for increase of the parental capacity-139; Training and support of foster families - 175; Training and support of candidates for adopters and adopters - 105; Psychological consultation of parents when risks have been established – 34; Consultation in cases of estranged parents – 67; Psychodiagnosics – 50; Abandonment prevention – 52; Family consultation - 50

the child, and often the parents are not in the focus of support. The almost equal number of children and adults among the users of the social services is due to the increase of group programs, the volunteer clients, and the trainings of candidates for adopters. ***It can be noticed that the services have not worked on requests for re-integration, and there are very few assessments of parental capacity and prevention of abandonment.***

### 3) Quality Management

In 2015 once again we set as a priority the quality of the social services and the monitoring of the effect of the implemented activities. We have analyzed all our closed cases, including the cases in which we did not manage to motivate the clients to visit the services. The results show that in **95 % of the cases we accomplish the tasks indicated in the individual plans of the clients, along with the pre-planned change and support.** In most of the cases we identified together with the clients the improvements in the functioning of the family, the improvement of the relationships, the learning of new skills, the recognition and use of personal resources, the decrease of anxiety and the lack of confidence, and many other positive changes for particular clients and environments that they live in. In our work with the children we noticed an improvement of the social skills, of the relationships children – parents, of the motivation of the children to go to school regularly, as well as a decrease in the aggressive behaviour, and learning of skills for expression of emotions and anger control. This gives us professional satisfaction and the self-esteem of professionals who know what they are doing and how to do it.

**In 5% of the cases we failed to negotiate collaborative work,** and the reasons for this are different, but at the basis are the difficulties to attract people that do not think that there is a problem, and therefore, are not willing to use psycho-social support.

Of prime importance for our work are the feedbacks of our clients and partners, which we analyze regularly. We also try to encourage **the participation of the children** by stimulating the work of the Council of Users. During the year active were the councils of users of the children in Shoumen, Vidin, HCDPC Assen Zlatarov and CSC Sofia. The children with whom we work are included in the discussions, analysis and recommendations that we make in regards to policy changes.

During the year continued the practice of providing opportunities for training internships within the services of the organization for students in the major “Social Pedagogy” from Sofia University, as well as students in the major “Social Pedagogy” and “Social Activities” from Shoumen University.

During next year it is necessary to extend the range of the indicators that we monitor, and to deepen the analysis of the data. It is important, for example, to study the extent to which we have contributed for the temporary character of the alternative care, the extent to which the

plans for services contain activities for advocacy, social support, and access to universal social resources, if there is a relationship and what kind between the risk assessment and the intensity of the intervention, the extent to which we really work on a multi-institutional level and in an integrated way, what is the mean duration of the provided support, how do we evaluate the results, how do we monitor progress with time, etc.

## PROGRAM "CHILDREN AND JUSTICE. PREVENTION OF ABUSE"

The main program priorities on which we worked are the same as in the previous year:

- **Increasing the competence of professionals working with children victims of abuse and their families.**
- **Raising the awareness of a wider circle of professionals.**
- **Increasing the quality of direct work with children victims of abuse and guaranteeing access of more children to high-quality services.**
- **Introducing an integrated approach to the work on cases of abuse of children.**

In 2015 we introduced two additional priorities:

- Increasing the range of services for children and youths in conflict with the law.
- Guaranteeing the active participation of clients in the activities, policies, and services for children victims of crimes and their families.

**Result 1:** In 2015 SAPI contributed for the formulation of adequate policies for children victims or witnesses of crimes, and for the application of the legislation in accordance with the best interest of the child, as well as for guaranteeing the rights of children participating in legal procedures in agreement with the international standards.

In 2015 the team of SAPI continued its targeted activities for *the introduction of an integrated approach* to the work in the system on cases of violence against children, and with this we contributed for the application of Directive 2012/29/EU regarding the minimum standards for the rights, support, and protection of the victims of crimes.

In the beginning of 2015 in Vidin we completed successfully the implementation of the project «**A Package of Integrative Services for Guaranteeing the Rights of Children Participating in Legal Procedures**», supported by the Bulgarian-Swiss Program for Collaboration. This allowed us to continue the activities for the introduction of adequate policies for children victims of crimes. Within the framework of the project we created methodological and information

materials in support of experts: a training program, a manual for experts who participate and carry out interviews with children victims and witnesses of crimes, a brochure for information of children and parents “The Important One is You” and a film.

In 2015 SAPI continued the implementation of the project “Listen to the Child – Is the Legislation Becoming Child-Friendly”, and in April 2015 we started a **piloting of a model for integrated approach for collaboration** in the cases of children victims of crimes. In this way SAPI has done targeted work for the introduction of the requirements of Directive 2012/29/EU, and especially of article 22 for the preparation of individual assessments of abused children. To achieve this goal, SAPI extended its partnerships with responsible ministries and structures in charge of the policies for children and child justice, such as the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme Cassation Prosecution, and the State Agency for Child Protection. In addition, we extended our partnerships with other organizations, such as the Program for Development of the Justice System, the Bulgarian Paediatric Association, and others.

With the aim of guaranteeing the active participation of the users – the children victims of crimes and their parents, in the prepared analysis and assessments of the existing justice provision for children, and the practices for child participation in legal procedures, SAPI carried out 10 interviews with users (children and parents), who have passed through legal procedures. This allowed us to hear the voice of the child victim, and to come up with suggestions for improving the practice based on the opinion of the users. This is an approach that SAPI plans to introduce in a sustainable way in its work on the assessment of its services, and in regards to suggestions for improvement of the policies for children.

**Result 2:** In 2015 SAPI contributed for the provision of better conditions in accordance with the rights of the children victims or witnesses of crimes, and for the decrease of the risk of secondary traumatization of the children during their meetings with the law-enforcement organs.

Within the framework of the Program „Justice for Children – Prevention of Abuse“ SAPI carried out activities related to the support of other organizations in the process of **building specialized premises for hearing children victims or witnesses** of abuse in several new cities in the country.

In 2015 SAPI supported a project of UNICEF-Bulgaria for building a so-called „blue room“ for interviewing and hearing children in the Municipality of Sliven (the room in Sliven was officially opened in January 2015). In this way, with the support of SAPI have been built 13 out of all 14 such rooms in the country.

**Result 3:** In 2015 SAPI contributed for a greater access to the service for preparation of children for interviewing in front of a judge or for hearing in court, and provided the



**opportunity for a greater number of children to have access to child-friendly conditions when they are victims or witnesses of crimes.**

In 2015 SAPI managed to increase the number of members of the mobile team for interviewing children with representatives from the teams in Sliven and Montana. We also trained new experts from the SAPI CSC in Sofia, and from the Association „Animus“- Sofia. A total of 12 additional experts joined the team.

Based on data from the mobile teams in Shoumen, Vidin, Sofia, Montana, and Stara Zagora, **the total number of children** who have passed through child-friendly procedures and hearing since the opening of the blue rooms to the end of 2015 is 109.

**The mobile team of SAPI continued its activity for hearing children on a national level.** The members of the mobile team from the CSSCF Vidin supported a team of 33 people in Montana, while the team in Shoumen supported the team in Sliven.

During the past year in the centres for services for children and families managed by SAPI psycho-social support was provided to **188 children victims of abuse.**

**Result 4:** In 2015 SAPI contributed for the raising of the awareness of a wider circle of citizens and professionals in regards to the abuse phenomenon, and to good practices for prevention of child abuse in the country and on an international level.



Throughout the year within the framework of the project „Prevention of Sexual Violationn and Sexual Exploitation of Children in Central and Eastern Europe“ we started a campaign for prevention of abuse in Vidin, Sofia and Shoumen. We published materials for children and parents, and for the first time we developed and started a group program for young children

„KIKO AND THE ARM“, which helps children to acquire skills for protecting themselves from violence and abuse. The campaign „One of Five“ was combined with a number of activities for raising the awareness of the wider public in regards to the need for protecting children from sexual abuse, and one of the events was a discussion in the Red House in Sofia focused on fathers and their role as parents.



In 2015 SAPI also continued to be part of a big international network for prevention of violence and sexual exploitation of children comprised of countries from Central and Eastern Europe. In September 2015 experts from SAPI participated in an international conference for

prevention of violence and sexual abuse of children in Bucharest, Romania, which was one of the annual conferences of ISPCAN.

**Result 5: In 2015 SAPI contributed for the spreading of good practices for prevention of violence against children through trainings and consultations of parents.**

The experience of SAPI gained throughout the previous years in regards to the programs for working with parents on prevention and support of parents and children victims of abuse continued to be multiplied in 2015 mainly through activities and services provided in the CSSCF and CSC in Sofia, Vidin, and Shoumen. Some of the programs are «Positive Parenthood» for parents of children between 7 and 14 years old, and «Smack-Free – How to Educate Our Children with Love and Respect» for parents of children between 0 and 6 years old. A total of 194 parents were included in group programs during the year, which is more than the previous year (131 parents).

In the centres for social services of SAPI we provided daily free consultations for parents who have difficulties in the education and upbringing their children, and who would like to receive additional information and support.

**Result 6: In 2015 SAPI contributed for the improvement of the policies for children in conflict with the law and for the introduction of innovative services.**

In 2015 SAPI in partnership with the ICS – Bulgaria and «Child and Space», and with the financial support of UNICEF-Bulgaria, provided trainings and methodological support in the region of Sliven for the development of innovative social services for children at high risk of getting in conflict with the law.

The teams of SAPI in Sofia, Shoumen, and Vidin provided monthly support within the framework of an Integrated Service for Ongoing Support of Youths between 14 and 19 years of age who have been punished with the measure «Detention». The service was funded by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism.



Some of the activities for supporting the justice system reform, and more precisely for improvements in the efficiency of one of the alternatives to the detention measure, were aimed at increasing the competence of the probation officers. In partnership with Foundation C.E.G.A we implemented the project **“Increasing the Competence of Probation**

**Officers”**, funded by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and managed by MDEP. The size and activities of the project provided the opportunity to train 200 officers and representatives of the justice system.

**Result 7: Contributions to lobbying and reformation of the youth justice system.**

We carried out a number of events for lobbying and promotion of the reform regarding the rights of children victims in the justice system – a round table; meetings of the Support Council in partnership with the Ministry of Justice, SACP, SCP and others; experts of SAPI actively participated in the work meetings and discussions initiated by the MJ for the introduction of legislative changes and the introduction of Directive 2012/29/EU in the country.



## CONTRIBUTION OF THE SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICES INSTITUTE ON A NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

The Social Activities and Practices Institute continues to be a key partner of the state, and of NGO and other structures in the process of democratization of the country, of guaranteeing the rights of children, of the de-institutionalization of the care and services for children at risk, of reformation of the justice for children and the prevention of child abuse.

### ***Participation of SAPI in working groups for changes in the normative regulation and for policy changes***

In 2015 SAPI was a member of the National Council for Child Protection, where the Institute participated actively in the name of the best interest of the child. Representatives of the organization participated in a working group for changes in the CPC of the MJ, in a working group for changes in the legislation for children victims of abuse of the National Assembly, in a working group for changes in the regulation of social services, and in a working group for the development of a Plan for Poverty of the MLSP. The expertise of the Institute is highly valued by the responsible agencies for carrying out the policies for children and families. The organization was invited and participated in the consultative processes for analysis and

preparation of a plan for de-institutionalization, and for changes of the methodologies for provision of social services.

The difficulties associated with the many changes in our country in the sphere of guaranteeing people's rights motivated us to develop standards, recommendations, and official positions. We have delivered all of these to the competent institutions.

### ***European dimensions in the activities of SAPI***

In 2015 the main priority of the organization was the support of the failing reform for introduction of child-friendly justice, no matter if the children are victims or perpetrators. In the very beginning of the year SAPI participated in the International Congress for Child Justice in Geneva where Nelly Petrova gave a talk about the role of NGO in the process of introducing child-friendly justice. In Brussels at an international meeting we presented studies of the attitudes regarding the introduction of foster care as an alternative to the detention of children. The project "Listen to the Child – Is Justice Becoming Child-Friendly?" was presented at an international conference in Rome. The practice of social service provision was the topic of a presentation of Bulgaria delivered by SAPI at a meeting of APFEL in Geneva. Representatives of the Institute were invited and participated in the 9<sup>th</sup> Forum "Integrated System for Child Protection" organized by the Fundamental Rights Agency and the European Commission. The social services provided by the organization were frequently visited by international delegations, which allowed us to compare our experience and to become more daring, claiming that we work on a European level. SAPI works for the increase of the competence of the professionals from the helping professions in Moldova, and Latvia by providing trainings in "Introduction of the Resilience Approach". Within the project "Bientretans – a Network of Resilience" we carried out two five-day trainings of trainers on resilience **/a total of 80 hours/** with **57** participants. Within the framework of the project "Social Inclusion of Children in Conflict with the Law" we carried out an international conference in Shoumen with the participation of international partners where new models and practices of socio-educational support were presented.

We believe that it is necessary to strengthen our activities for increasing the information of the public in regards to the important topics about children and families, as well as to express in a written form our standpoints in the country and on a European level.

***Publications and research studies*** – manual for professionals "Good Treatment in the Education Institutions: A Network of Resilience", "A Chance Outside" – guidelines for the path of change and the new opportunities that could be found for youths released from prison, Manual for Professionals from the Prison System, Manual for Adoption and Foster Care, Methodological Guidelines for the Provision of Services "Formation and Development of Parental Skills", and "Family Consultation", Manual for Experts Participating and Leading Interviews with Children Victims or Witnesses of Crimes, a brochure for information of children

and parents “The Important One Is You”, and films. The materials are available at <http://sapibg.org/en/resource-centers>.

***Organizational consultation for strategic planning of the priorities of the organization.***

Thanks to the support of the OAK Foundation, we had the chance to analyze the development of the organization, to put in perspective our current achievements and the mission and goals that were set out in the charter of the association. This process provided us with the opportunity to re-consider our identity as an institute, which should function in a clearer and more strategic way as a connecting unit between knowledge and practice. This allowed us to set new strategic goals and activities that will lead us in the next five years.