



2023

**TRUST FOR SOCIAL
ACHIEVEMENT**

5

AREAS OF SUPPORT

125

ACTIVE PROJECTS

38

GRANTEES

41 149

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

2,436,000 leva

TOTAL PROJECT FUNDING

17

DONORS



The Trust for Social Achievement is dedicated to helping people reach their full potential. We work to create opportunities for disadvantaged groups, with a focus on the Roma, 72% of whom currently live below the poverty line.

We are a grant-making, nongovernmental organization dedicated to reducing poverty and decreasing achievement gaps. Toward this end, we support projects in First Foundations, Early Learning and Care, Educational Achievement, Employment and Entrepreneurship, Housing and Zoning, as well as Capacity Building.

Over the last 10 years TSA has partnered with 87 nongovernmental organizations, in order to help over 330 000 people from poor and disadvantaged communities in more than 700 locations throughout Bulgaria.

As a pioneer and an incubator for new approaches and ideas, TSA tests how best to tackle deeply rooted achievement gaps. Achieving scale and sustainability will take time and cooperation. This is why TSA values partnership and the creation of networks and coalitions of like-minded allies. Together, we can make a difference!

Bozhidar's small shop

Three generations live in Bozhidar's house – grandparents, their children, and grandchildren. Now they can sleep in peace, knowing that their home and livelihood are legally theirs.



Bozhidar Todorov (57) has lived his whole life in the Kavaklia neighborhood in Dupnitsa.

He helped build his house with his own hands, though it is not legal. His father lived there before him, but no one can remember anyone in the family having documents to show that they own it. To find a way to feed his family, Bozhidar opened a grocery shop in his house. Over the years it became more and more difficult for the shop to meet regulatory requirements. Because his livelihood was at risk, he spent a long time actively searching for a solution.

Ultimately, help came from the “Community Investment Fund – Peshtera.” TSA helped to launch and support this Fund, which is working to solve the long-standing problem of non-regulated neighborhoods throughout Bulgaria like Kavaklia.

Bozhidar's plight is shared by more than 90% of the residents in his neighborhood. To solve this problem, the Fund faced many challenges. The

first was to convince residents like him to set aside money to buy the land under their homes. At the same time, they worked with families to obtain notary deeds for their homes so that they could be approved when applying to purchase the communal land under their house.

Secondly, the Fund's team had to convince local government that the change was necessary and that it would benefit people from their municipality.

TSA and the Fund approached the Dupnitsa municipality and proposed that they help to create a model that would first zone the neighborhood and then work with local residents so that they could purchase the land under their home at market value prices.

The municipality required that residents like Bozhidar first request a notarized inspection of their house so that they could qualify to buy the land, which was privately owned by the municipality. Additionally, residents were asked to pay off accumulated local taxes and fees for their homes.

Initially, everyone said, “that will never happen”. Residents complained that they would not be able to come up with enough money and the municipality was resistant to the model. No one believed that after so many decades a solution could finally be found.

But the proposed solution is now a reality. Three generations live in Bozhidar's house – grandparents, their children, and grandchildren. Now they can sleep in peace, knowing that their home and livelihood are legally theirs.





The community now dreams of the day when the neighborhood will have sewers and the streets will be paved. And step by step residents are becoming homeowners. In 2023, 20 families received notary deeds for their properties and another 20 are waiting to go through the same procedure. In total, 40 applications have been submitted to purchase the land on which their homes are built.

A Bulgarian Champion

Vanyo is one of the 1,700 children participating in the project, “Equal Chance – Access to Secondary Education” administered by the Trust for Social Achievement.



Becoming an athletic champion in Bulgaria after many years of self-doubt.

This is the story of 19 – year-old Vanyo who was attending the Financial and Economic Vocational High School “Vasil Levski” when his Physical Education teacher noticed his talent. He saw that the boy was interested in sports and invited him to train in athletics.

With the support of his family and his teachers, Vanyo started to train.

“My motivation is my family. They support me in every decision I make and are by my side in both victories and losses. My girlfriend also helps me not to give up”, shares the young man.

With self-discipline and



encouragement, Vanyo became the Bulgarian champion for the 800m distance run.

“My last competition was in Serbia – the Balkaniada. It was the largest competition and the greatest challenge I’ve ever been in”, says the student, adding that his dream is to one day study at the National Sports Academy. Perhaps also the Olympics. “Making it to the Olympics sounds bold and maybe even a little far-fetched, but one has to believe in their dreams and to aim high”, the young man adds.

Vanyo is one of the 1,700 children participating in the project, “Equal Chance – Access to Secondary Education” administered by the Trust for Social Achievement and implemented by partner organizations throughout Bulgaria, including Center Amalipe, which works

with the school where Vanyo studies. The project provides free textbooks and transportation to students facing financial hardship. Since its launch in 2012, more than 4,500 scholarships have been distributed.



My dream to go to university has come true

A dream fulfilled – I finished high school and am going to the university.



Sofiyka, from the town of Dalgopol, is 43 years old and is working as a health mediator. She just started her first year at the Medical University in Varna.

While she did not manage to finish high school with her classmates, after enrolling in night school she was quickly able to get her diploma.

She then began to dream of becoming a university student, but she did not know how to make it come true until one day her friend saw a social media ad for preparatory courses to help participants apply to programs in medical universities. So, she contacted the Trust for Social Achievement, and before she knew it, she was enrolled in the “Scholarship Support for Roma Nurses and Midwives” project. With the project’s

support, a teacher helped her to prepare for her exams.

Five months later, Sofiyka not only managed to pass the exam but obtained an excellent result. However, a low grade from her high school diploma stopped her from qualifying at the Medical University in Varna. Rather than giving up, Sofiyka’s ambition only grew. She continued her preparatory work and tried again the following autumn.

Once more she sat the exam, and this time her efforts were rewarded with success.

“I, as well as similar Roma women who already have families of our own, have raised our children and we are happy to watch them succeed. We also deserve a chance to be an example for younger members of our community and to make our own dreams come true. This shows that we can also succeed”, says Sofiyka, adding that women like her often need a helping hand to get on the right track.

The “Scholarship Support for Roma Nurses and Midwives” project aims to create inspiring role models for young people from the Roma community as well as to contribute to the development of home visiting care and to address the nursing shortage in Bulgaria.

The project currently supports 32 women aged 28-50 across Bulgaria.



The privilege and responsibility of becoming a teacher

“ I want to be a good example for my children and their peers, so that they grow up knowledgeable and capable.”



“Illiteracy is on the rise, and the happiness of people depends largely on our level of enlightenment as well as the example we set for others”, Veronika Metodieva shares. With a great desire to learn and develop, she decided to become a teacher and continue studying at the age of 32. This year, she is about to start her third year studying Primary School Pedagogy at the branch of the University of Veliko Tarnovo in Vratsa.

Veronika plays many roles – she is the mother of two girls, Alissia (aged 13) and Anastasia (aged 4). She also works as a resource teacher at the high school in Oryahovo. She says that the thing that would bring her the most joy would be to see her children get a higher education.

„This is the greatest wealth they could possess.“

Veronika considers her own greatest success the moment when she decided to apply for the university, which she could not have achieved without the

support of her husband. *“He supports my desire to keep studying and developing, so I made the decision to become a student as well”,* she shares.

Her path has not been without obstacles. She failed to get into the university the first time, but this did not stop her. Soon after her first attempt, she heard about the work of the New Road Association and their partnership with the Trust for Social Achievement. She applied for the Young Roma Teachers project and joined a preparatory course that they were offering for university entrance exams. With this step, she became one of 76 women supported through the project.

“The day I found out I was going to become a student, I felt true gratitude. I want to be a good example for my children and their peers, so that they grow up knowledgeable and capable”, Veronika says.

And she looks toward the day when she hopes to join the growing number of Young Roma Teachers (currently 41) who have graduated from university.



Free legal consultations



“ The Legal Incubator taught me to believe in myself more, to be more proactive, and to intentionally seek a good environment ... ”

“I find inspiration in my work, because the people I help look up to me”, shares Kamelia Mihailova from the village of Mihailovo in the Vratsa region. She currently works as a senior specialist in the municipality of Khayredin and helps people find seasonal work or employment.

Still, she is worried that many are becoming increasingly disillusioned and disengaged. Fate is not always fair to the people she works with, and in truth it has not been kind to her either. Kamelia lost her parents shortly before enrolling in the Legal Incubator. They had supported her to continue her studies and were proud of her achievements.

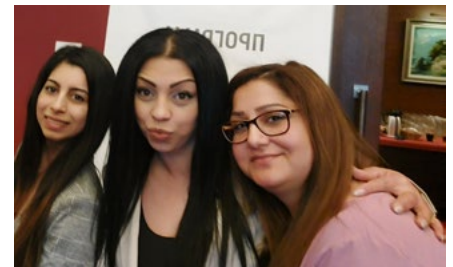
Kamelia learned about the Legal Incubator from a friend. At first, she was skeptical and hesitant to apply. However,

encouraged by her friends, she decided to try. She is now educating herself about all sorts of legal topics and is grateful both for the knowledge as well as the new social connections.

“The Legal Incubator taught me to believe in myself more, to be more proactive, and to intentionally seek a good environment where I can develop”, Kamelia explains. “Over time the Incubator has become a big family, because over the years all of the participants have gotten closer”.

A total of 42 people have participated in the Legal Incubator since its launch in 2020. Participants are

law students who have built on their knowledge while receiving valuable advice and guidance from respected lawyers and judges. In exchange, the Incubator aims to engage participants in the provision of free advice to vulnerable people and those from poor communities who do not have access to legal aid.



“This is how we can help each other”, says Kamelia as she recalls one of her most recent cases. “A quarrel broke out between two young people living in a home for abandoned children, which resulted in a filed complaint. Thanks to advice that we were able to provide with my mentor at the Incubator, we managed to avoid a lawsuit”, she shares as she highlights again one of the many positive impacts of the Incubator.







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