

**OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE – SOFIA FOUNDATION
ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2019**



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MISSION

To develop and support the values and practices of the open society in Bulgaria

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To support the democratization of public life

-

To work for the extension and guaranteeing of civil freedoms

-

To support the strengthening of civil sector institutions

-

To support the European integration and regional cooperation of Bulgaria

Founder

George Soros

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1. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 2019 Open Society Institute – Sofia continued working on four main priorities: good governance, rule of law and human rights, European policies and civic participation. The activity of the Institute was carried out through the following programmes: European Policies, Governance and Public Policies, Public Debate, Legal Programme, Roma Programme and Active Citizens Fund Programme.

Open Society Institute – Sofia Foundation (in partnership with Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation and Trust for Social Achievement Foundation) is Fund Operator of the Active Citizens Fund in Bulgaria under the EEA FM 2014-2021. The Programme amounts to EUR 15 500 000, provided by the donor countries – Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, and its main objective is *civil society and active citizenship strengthened and vulnerable groups empowered*. The Programme seeks to develop the long-term sustainability and capacity of the civil society sector, strengthening its role in promoting democratic participation, active citizenship and human rights. It shall operate until 2024.

In 2019 within Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria, Open Society Institute – Sofia supported 59 projects of public benefit non-governmental organizations oriented towards fostering democratic culture and civic awareness, encouraging the protection of human rights and citizens' engagement in environment protection, including in relation to climate change, as well as promoting the bilateral cooperation with the donor countries. Within the Fund, during the year the Institute also launched the Projects Generation Facility (PGF) which is a specialized mechanism for support of civic organizations working for the equal inclusion of the Roma. PGF provides free consultation services for the development of good ideas, including such from organizations with limited capacity, in order for them to fully develop and implement their initiatives with funds from open funding programmes outside the Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria.

During the year, using its own funds and funding from other sources, including from the European Commission, Open Society Institute – Sofia continued carrying out a series of research and operational initiatives encouraging the informed public debate about democracy and the rule of law, EU convergence processes, as well as human rights protection, social integration of vulnerable communities and the improvement of the access of educated young people of Roma origin to university education and good jobs in the private sector.

As part of its efforts to guarantee its long-term sustainable development, Open Society Institute – Sofia continued providing consultancy services within its business activity. In this respect, along with the management of the Active Citizens Fund, during the year the Institute was also involved in carrying out research activities ordered by external clients mainly in the field of education, including the maintaining and updating of the Bulgarian University Ranking System.

Georgi Stoytchev, Executive Director

2. FINANCIAL PROFILE

I. Revenues

The total amount of the revenues in 2019 comes up to EUR 4 924 thousand as compared to EUR 557 thousand in 2018.

Revenues from grants

The revenues from grants in 2019 amount to EUR 4 475 thousand compared with EUR 266 thousand in 2018.

In 2017 the Foundation was selected for Operator of the Active Citizens Fund in Bulgaria under the EEA FM 2014-2021 for the period until 2024. The amount of the recognized revenue from EEA FM funding in 2019 reached EUR 4 191 thousand as compared to EUR 14 thousand for 2018.

In 2019 the Foundation was coordinator of an international project supported by the European Commission. The approved revenues in terms of its implementation amount to EUR 142 thousand. In 2018 the recognized revenue for the coordination of 2 projects supported by the EC amounted to EUR 144 thousand.

The revenues from the Open Society foundations network recognized in 2019 amount to EUR 109 thousand, including EUR 35 thousand of funding from the Foundation to Promote Open Society for a new two-year project launched in 2019. By comparison, in 2018 the recognized revenues from OSFs amounted to EUR 72 thousand.

In 2019 programme activities funded by other donors to the amount of EUR 33 thousand were carried out, whereas the amount for 2018 was EUR 36 thousand.

Projects funded by other donors in 2019:

Donor	Project name	Funding in thousand EUR
Roma Education Fund	Organization of student scholarship scheme	23
Other donors		10
Total		33

Reserve Fund revenues

In 2019 interest revenues were generated to the amount of EUR 10 000.

Business Activity

In 2019 the Foundation realized revenues from business activity to the amount of EUR 439 thousand from the following activities:

Management of Active Citizens Fund under the EEA FM	EUR 235 thousand
Activities assigned by the Ministry of Education	EUR 146 thousand
Others	EUR 58 thousand

By comparison, in 2018 the business activity revenues came up to EUR 285 thousand.

Result from the activity

In 2019 the costs exceeded the revenues with EUR 276 thousand and the negative difference was covered by the financial reserves of the Foundation.

By comparison, in 2018 the negative result from the activity of the Foundation covered by its financial reserves amounted to EUR 362 thousand.

Net Assets

As at the end of 2019 the amount of the net assets totaled EUR 7 287 thousand against EUR 7 563 thousand in 2018. The decrease in terms of 2018 reflects the negative result from the activity of the Foundation in 2019. The net assets of the Foundation as at December 31, 2019 include buildings and land to the amount of EUR 330 thousand and investments in subsidiaries of EUR 491 thousand.

II. Costs

In 2019 the total costs amounted to EUR 5 200 thousand against EUR 919 thousand in 2018.

Programme Costs

In 2019 the programme costs came up to a total of EUR 4 576 thousand against EUR 397 thousand in 2018.

Amount of the programme costs in the period 2015-2019 by programme areas, in thousand EUR:

Programme area	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
	in thousand EUR				
Active Citizens Fund / NGO Programme	4 191	14	42	-426	2 883
Emergency Fund			10	-19	26
Governance and Public Policies	34	69	72	91	171
European Policies	46	25	26	30	53
Legal Programme	41	46	73	43	38
Public Debate	25	53	23	23	44
Roma	239	234	221	204	102
Others		-44			3
Total	4 576	397	467	-54	3 320

In 2019 the Foundation used its own reserves to cover programme costs totaling EUR 101 thousand against EUR 132 thousand in 2018.

Supported projects

In 2019 a total of 73 projects were funded of which 60 projects of organizations, including 2 international partners, and 13 projects implemented by Open Society Institute – Sofia.

Programme area	Number of projects funded	Including		
	Total	Funded projects of organizations	Projects of Open Society Institute – Sofia with external funding	Other project initiatives of Open Society Institute – Sofia
Active Citizens Fund	60	59	1	
Governance and Public Policies	2		2	
European Policies and Civic Participation	3		1	2
Legal Programme	3		2	1
Public Debate	2	1		1
Roma	3		3	
Total	73	60	9	4

By comparison, in 2018 a total of 18 projects were funded of which 3 projects of partner organizations and 15 operational projects implemented by Open Society Institute – Sofia. Support was provided for the participation of mentors and scholarship beneficiaries in 4 conferences in the field of healthcare.

The administrative costs in 2019 amount to EUR 185 thousand against EUR 238 thousand for 2018.

The amount of the costs for business activity in 2019 comes up to EUR 439 thousand against EUR 285 thousand for 2018.

In 2019 the Foundation had 40 employees, including part time. In terms of full time the average number of the employees of the Foundation was 25.

III. Reporting and Control

The financial reporting is kept in accordance with the Bulgarian accounting legislation, the International Financial Reporting Standards, as well as the approved standards and the requirements of the donor organizations. Open Society Institute – Sofia Foundation is registered for public benefit and each year it publishes the reports on its activity.

Since 2012 the quality management system of Open Society Institute - Sofia has been certified according to the ISO 9001:2008 standards and since 2017 it has been certified as per ISO 9001:2015.

3. ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND BULGARIA UNDER THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA FINANCIAL MECHANISM 2014-2021



Since 2018 Open Society Institute – Sofia Foundation, in partnership with Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation and Trust for Social Achievement Foundation, has been Operator of the Active Citizens Fund in Bulgaria under the EEA FM 2014-2021. The Active Citizens Fund amounts to nearly EUR 15 500 000, provided entirely by the donor countries – Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The main objective of Active Citizens Fund is *civil society and active citizenship strengthened and vulnerable groups empowered*. The fund is supporting the long-term sustainability and capacity of the civil society sector, strengthening its role in promoting democratic participation, active citizenship and human rights. The thematic priorities of the Active Citizens Fund are six. OSIS is managing three of them: 1. Strengthened democratic culture and civic awareness; 2. Increased support for human rights; 3. Increased civic engagement in environmental protection/climate change. The other three priorities are managed by WCIF: 1. Vulnerable groups are empowered; 2. Civil society organizations (CSOs) actively address gender equality and gender based violence; 3. Enhanced capacity and sustainability of the civil society sector including CSOs.

In 2019 the Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria entered its active phase of implementation, including announcement and completion of planned calls for proposals of public benefit civic society organizations. During the year Open Society Institute – Sofia supported 59 projects aimed at fostering democratic culture and civic awareness, encouraging the protection of human rights and citizens' engagement in environment protection, including in relation to climate change, as well as promoting the bilateral cooperation with the donor countries.

The beginning of 2019 saw the completion of the first call for strategic projects (projects with grants between EUR 10 001 and EUR 200 000). Of all 364 project proposals received, 74 had been filed in partnership with organizations from the donor countries Norway and Island (bilateral projects). As a result of the call, the implementation of a total of 61 projects started within the six programme priorities, 13 of which bilateral. Contracts were signed for 36 projects under the three priorities managed by OSIS, of which 7 are being implemented in partnership with organizations from the donor countries (Island, Lichtenstein, Norway).

INSTITUTE – SOFIA AS PER THE FIRST CALL FOR STRATEGIC PROJECTS OF ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND
BULGARIA UNDER THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA FINANCIAL MECHANISM 2014-2021

1. Thematic priority Strengthened democratic culture and civic awareness

Organization	Project	Amount in EUR
Access to Information Programme Foundation	Access to Information Forum	179 507 €
RiskMonitor Foundation	Security Risks. Towards a Bold Reform of Institutional Policies	167 800 €
Habitat for Humanity Foundation	Research based arguments for new housing policies in favour of all	92 993 €
Center for Independent Living	Inclusiveness and Disabilities	134 900 €
Institute for Market Economics	Reducing Poverty and Inequality of Opportunities through Reforms in Social Transfers and Social Services	193 541 €
Fourty-two Foundation	Channel 4	34 740 €
Devetaki Plateau Association	Active citizens in the villages	104 256 €
Retina Bulgaria Association	Vision for Vision	116 595 €
For Our Children Foundation	Bulgaria grows with its children	56 890 €
Association of Parks in Bulgaria	Informed citizen participation in favor of nature	159 500 €
Center for Sustainable Communities Development	Social and legal action to combat honor related abuse	145 519 €
Regional Association for Development and Innovation – Mizia	Democratization of the processes of design and implementation of policies in the cities with district division – Sofia, Plovdiv and Varna	90 084 €
European Institute Foundation	C:L:A:S:S	186 866 €
Anti-Corruption Fund Foundation	Accountable Local Authorities, Strong Communities: Implementing local accountability and integrity standard through engagement of local NGOs and media	182 655 €
Foundation Darik	Causes with voice and face	45 440 €

Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law Foundation	Civic Hubs in Universities: Activating civic energy for supporting civil society organizations	109 130 €
Community Donation Fund Stara Zagora Foundation	Advocacy campaign for social housing and housing plots in the municipalities of Stara Zagora, Plovdiv, and Maritza	69 833 €
Citizen Participation Forum	Entrance For Citizens - CPF Network for Improvement of Local Public Consultations	105 954 €
Center for the Study of Democracy	Countering conventional crime through monitoring and raising civil awareness	172 900 €

2. Thematic priority Increased support for human rights

Organization	Project	Amount in EUR
IKAR	The Butterflies of Plato	68 348 €
Global initiative in psychiatry - Sofia	Ex iure ad iustatium (from rights to justice); Principles for fair court proceedings for people with disabilities	149 200 €
"Theatre Tsvete" Association	Practice your rights with knowledge and creativity	113 606 €
Peace Research Institute Plovdiv	She in Bulgaria - setting up community groups working for visibility of women's problems and establishing a network of activists for women's rights	20 719 €
Foundation "Bulgarian Lawyers for Human Rights"	International Human Rights Standards on Focus	134 898 €
Center for Legal Aid Voice in Bulgaria	Efficient legal aid for refugees and migrants in Bulgaria	157 395 €
Fine Acts Foundation	Creative campaigning: innovation in support of human rights	69 585 €
Time Heroes Foundation	Youth volunteering in support of human rights	89 979 €
Partners Bulgaria Foundation	Increasing Democratic Competency and Human Rights Awareness among Young People	170 946 €

LGBT Youth Organization Deystvie	National LGBTI Legal Program	110 820 €
Multi Kulti Collective	Migrants Got Talent	141 380 €
Infinite Opportunities Association	Toler@nce platform 2.0	75 700 €

3. Thematic priority Increased civic engagement in environmental protection and climate change

Organization	Project	Amount in EUR
Slow Food in Bulgaria	Eco-society through food: personal choices against climate change	49 500 €
Junior Achievement Bulgaria	Green cooperation beyond borders	143 818 €
Society for Investigation Practices	Citizens and Experts for the Application of Green Laws	114 000 €
Association for social responsibility and development through innovation	For clean air in Kyustendil	63 024 €
Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds	Citizen Science in support of local communities and nature	123 129 €

In 2019, within the measure supporting the development of a project idea with partners from the donor states (Island, Lichtenstein and Norway), 23 initiatives were funded of Bulgarian non-governmental organizations and their partners from the donor countries.

SEED MONEY FACILITY PROVIDED UNDER MEASURE 1: FUNDS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECT IDEAS WITH PARTNERS FROM THE DONOR STATES – ISLAND, LICHTENSTEIN AND NORWAY WITHIN ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND BULGARIA UNDER THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA FINANCIAL MECHANISM 2014-2021

Organization	Amount in EUR
Junior Achievement Bulgaria Foundation	1 380 €
Baby and Child Association	1 057 €
Education without Backpacks	1 415 €
Green Industry, Innovations and Technology Transfer Foundation	1 500 €
Institute for Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Development and Innovation (IESDI)	1 500 €
FigitalKidZ Foundation	1 017 €
Alliance for Regional Cooperation and Development	1 440 €
Initiative for Social Empowerment	1 500 €

Bulgarian School of Politics "Dimitry Panitza" Association	1 500 €
Community Center "Future Now 2006"	1 295 €
State Diagnostic and Counselling Centre (Island)	815 €
Partners Bulgaria Foundation	875 €
Sports Council Stavanger (Norway)	1 500 €
Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus-Bulgaria Association	1 429 €
National Institute for Cultural Heritage Association	1 500 €
International Development Norway AS (Norway)	1 452 €
Youth for development of Lyaskovets Association	528 €
Culture break borders (Norway)	1 500 €
Fose of Love Association	1 077 €
Edu Compass Foundation	1 029 €
New Road Association	1 499 €
Institute for Human Rights Association	1 043 €
Discovered Spaces Association	1 465 €

On March 15, 2019 the Small Initiatives Scheme (projects with seed money between EUR 2 000 and 10 000) was also launched. Until the deadline, September 15, 2019, of the first session of the Scheme a total of 119 project proposals had been submitted under the six programme priorities. The second session of the open call for the Small Initiatives Scheme of Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria was announced on September 16, 2019 with deadline March 16, 2020. Orientation seminars and webinars were organized to support the organizations – potential candidates for the scheme.

The project promoters were offered orientation seminars, consultations and online resources to facilitate their capacity to implement the projects.

In December 2019 the first annual meeting for project promoters on the topic *Communication of Civic Organizations – Possible Solutions* was held. The annual meeting attracted over 80 representatives of civic organizations funded under the first call for strategic projects of Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria.



Sofia, December 5, 2019, annual meeting on Communication of Civic Organizations – Possible Solutions, Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria

In 2019, OSIS launched the predefined Project Generation Facility (PGF) which is a specialized mechanism for support of civic organizations working for the equal inclusion of the Roma. The PGF provides free consultation services for the development of good ideas, including coming from organizations with limited capacity in order for them to fully develop and implement their initiatives with funds of open funding programmes outside the Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria.

Predefined project	Amount in euro
Project Generation Facility	15 073 €

With the launching of the funded projects under the ACF calls Open Society Institute – Sofia started the acceptance of financial and technical reports of the beneficiaries, project implementation monitoring and audit.

4. EUROPEAN POLICIES PROGRAMME

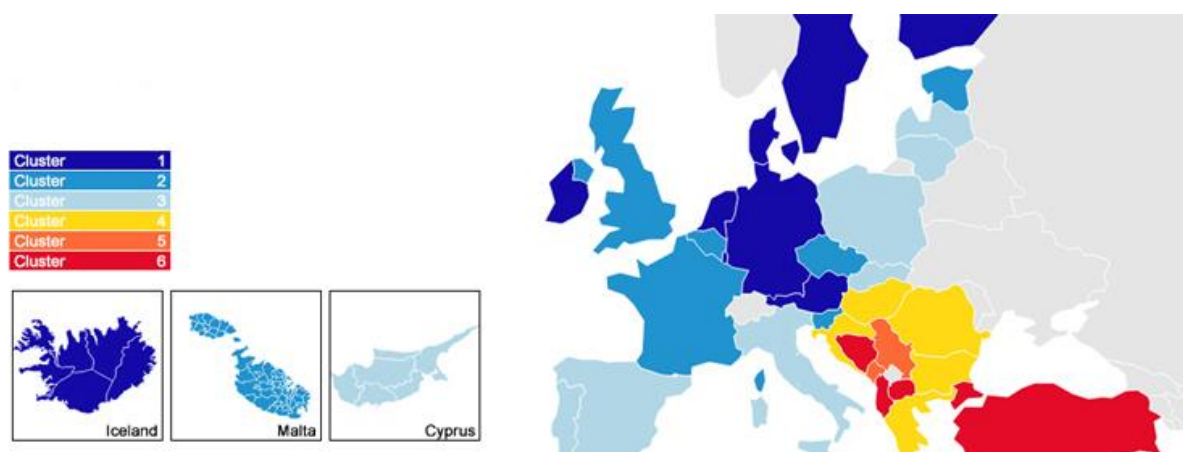
In 2019, 12 years after joining the EU, Bulgaria continued facing a number of specific challenges. Bulgaria has two unfinished projects for European integration – the Schengen and Euro Area memberships. The Brexit decision reopened the debate about the future of the EU, which once again posed the problem of Multi-speed Europe and the risk of Bulgaria lagging behind.

Against this background, the role of the European Policies Programme was to support the full integration of Bulgaria to the EU, as well as to hold an informed public debate on the application and formulation of the common European policies and the EU convergence processes.

The Programme combines research and analytical approaches with monitoring activities. Through the European Policies Initiative, the Programme is establishing and developing contacts with research institutes and experts with similar goals in EU and particularly in the new CEE member states, as well as in the countries of the neighborhood policy and the Western Balkans.

Main Programme initiatives in 2019:

The **European Catch-Up Index** of the European Policies Programme was continued in 2019 as one of the main projects of the Programme. The project registers to what extent the member states from Central and Eastern Europe “caught up” with the older member states in terms of the following categories: economy, quality of life, democracy and good governance. The Index is published on a special internet-based interactive platform of the Catch-Up Index - www.TheCatchUpIndex.eu, which provides each user with the opportunity to draw up his or her *own index* based on the data entered and the functionalities of the platform with graphical representation.



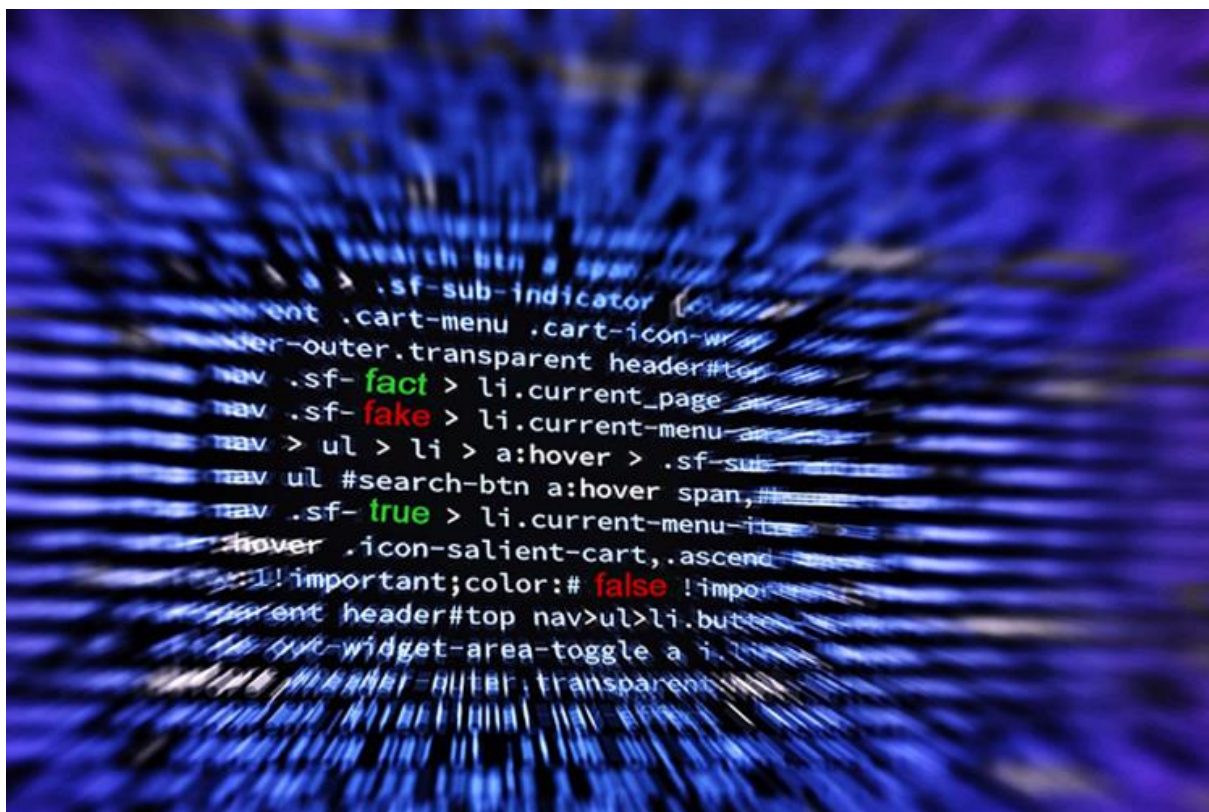
2018 Catch-Up Index

On March 14, 2019 the report *How Hard Can It Be? Findings of the European Catch-Up Index 2018* was published including the results of the *Catch-Up 2018* (published on the websites www.osis.bg and www.thecatchupindex.eu). The Index was presented at Bulgarian and

international events, with publications and interviews in national and international media. In 2019 more data were collected and analyzed in terms of 47 basic indicators about 35 countries for the following edition of the Catch-up Index 2019.

The series of analytical materials (policy briefs), already established as a successful format, continued in 2019. Special analytical materials were published as a series in a digital form on the website www.osis.bg in Bulgarian and in English, and were disseminated via the media, social networks and e-mail. An analysis was dedicated to the European Parliament elections and the CEE results, one of the main political events of 2019 in the EU.

Another initiative of the Programme in 2019 was the second issue of the **Media Literacy Index 2019** and the release of a report in Bulgarian and English entitled *Media Literacy Index 2019: Just Think about it*. The Index is about measuring resilience to 'post-truth', 'fake-news' and their consequences in a number of European countries and offering an useful instrument to finding measures and solutions. The publication of the report on the 2019 index had massive coverage in Bulgaria and abroad, including by CNN, World Economic Forum (the organizers of the Davos meetings), etc. The index was presented at a number of forums dedicated to the topic, including at the international conference *Fostering Democratic Resilience in the Digital Age* in Tel Aviv.



Media Literacy Index 2019

In 2019, through European Policies Programme, OSIS launched a new two-year project - Maintaining institutional capacity and regional civil society cooperation, supported by Foundation to Promote Open Society (FPOS) and aimed at strengthening the foundation and

its contribution to the development of the regional cooperation with similar civil society organizations in Europe within Open Society European Network (OSEN).

Project funded by FPOS	Amount in euro
Maintaining institutional capacity and regional civil society cooperation	35 368

5. GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC POLICIES PROGRAMME

Socio-economic analyses, reports, trainings and participation in public events

In 2019 the team of the Governance and Public Policies Programme continued the traditional monitoring of the economy and its participation in the debates on the economic and budget policy. The publication *Where and How Many are the Bulgarians* provoked wide interest and has over 100 thousand views on the website of 24 Chasa newspaper. Other topical issues were the country's candidacy for the Eurozone, the economic situation and risks, the effects of the European membership, the 30th anniversary since the beginning of the transition period. Analyses of the economic policy and the state of the Bulgarian and global economies were discussed at a number of discussions and published in the mass media.

In 2019 the agreement with the National Statistical Institute was continued for provision and processing of anonymized individual data from the Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) for Bulgaria, including an indicator of the ethnic self-determination of the respondents. OSIS further developed its partnership with NSI by taking part in a working group and organizing several expert discussions/focus groups assigned by NSI within the development of instruments for the forthcoming big national study among hard to access vulnerable groups, carried out in partnership with the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights.

Within a contract with the Central European University the Programme continued participating in the preparation of the third edition of the Civil Monitoring Report on Roma Integration with a governance expert whose task is to support the organizations of all thematic fields preparing the Bulgarian part of the report and to review parts of the reports for other EU countries. In 2019 the contract with CEU was extended to the end of April, 2020.

Completion of the evaluation of Teach for Bulgaria – one of the biggest programmes aimed at attracting teachers to the field of school education. The evaluation of the programme was based on statistical methods for comparative evaluation of the added value and analysis of the effectiveness of various teaching practices.

Early learning and early childhood development

In 2019 representatives of the programme continued working on the current monitoring of the initiative of Trust for Social Achievement Foundation for care services - Nurse Family Partnership Program (NFPP). NFPP is an innovative initiative for Bulgaria supporting pregnant women from vulnerable communities by nurses. The model has been licensed and

developed by Colorado University. After its introduction in Fakulteta housing area, Sofia, in 2019 the initiative expanded to cover the city of Plovdiv where OSIS organized the surveys of the participating pregnant women and mothers of vulnerable groups.

In 2019 continued the preparation of a report on early childhood development under the RECI programme (Roma Early Childhood Interventions) assigned by the Roma Education Fund, UNICEF and Open Society Foundations.

2019 saw the completion of the work on the drafting of four analytical reports and the training of the partners to use analytical tools supporting advocacy activities aiming to encourage Roma participation in the early childhood development services under Paruvipe programme, OSI-Budapest.

School education activities

In 2019 OSIS continued participating in the Innovative Schools Committee established to promote innovations in the Bulgarian secondary education. The Committee consists of experts of the Ministry of Education, as well as representatives of leading academic institutions, of the business and NGOs.

Activities in the field of higher education and scientific research policies

In 2019 the consortium led by OSIS prepared the updated annual edition of the Bulgarian University Ranking System. The activities are carried out as per contract with the Ministry of Education and Science. Developed with the participation of OSI-Sofia, the Ranking System is increasingly establishing itself as an important tool in the field of university education and is acknowledged by prestigious international academic publications.

Cooperation with other programs of OSI-Sofia

Two short analytical reports were completed on the employment policies towards young Roma, as well as two academic reports on the evaluation of the results from the implementation of the Bridge to Business Programme in Bulgaria. The reports were drawn up in cooperation with the Roma Programme team within Bridge to Business project and reviewed by a research team of CEU.

Representatives of the Governance and Public Policies Programme participate in the Project Generation Facility project within Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria.

Project in partnership with Trust for Social Achievement	Amount in euro
Development of methodology for a longitudinal study on the feasibility and acceptability of Nurse Family Partnership pilot project	178
„Push – Precarious Housing in Europe. Pushing for innovation in higher education,, funded under Erasmus+ Programme	Amount in euro

6. LEGAL PROGRAMME

The Legal Programme of Open Society Institute – Sofia aims at the application of the principles of rule of law and fundamental human rights protection and supports the reforms guaranteeing Bulgarian citizens better access to justice. The Programme has three thematic priorities: rule of law, fundamental human rights and transparency and accountability of the institutions.

Rule of Law

The Programme monitors and publishes on a regular basis results of studies on the public attitudes in the country towards the core EU values (democracy, rule of law and fundamental human rights protection). On June 13, 2019 the data of the third national representative sociological survey on the topic were presented, summarized in the report *Democracy and Civil Participation. Public Attitudes towards Democracy, Rule of Law and Fundamental Human Rights in 2018*. The study shows the main risks and challenges to the application of the rule of law principle in the country: the public confidence in the main institution of representative democracy remains constantly low, the attitudes that the laws in the country are not clear and comprehensible, and that people are not equal before the law prevails.

Fundamental Human Rights

In 2019 the Programme organized the fifth students' paper contest of the topic: Historical Significance of the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789. Nine students' papers were received from six law faculties in the country. No first prize was awarded. On December 12, 2019 two second and two third prizes were given. By this contest the Programme aims to attract the interest of law students in the topic of constitutional protection of human rights and to encourage students' research in this regard.



Associate Prof. Yuliya Zaharieva (second from the left) – member of the Board of Trustees of OSI - Sofia, is awarding the prizes to the winners of the students' paper contest

Transparency and Accountability of the Institutions

On January 29, 2019 the Program presented to the expert public and representatives of non-governmental organizations its report *What We (don't) Know about Prosecutors General in the EU Member States*. The report contains the results of a comparative legal study of the functions and profiles of the prosecutors general of the EU member states carried out during most of 2018. The study was funded through seed money provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and aims to facilitate the public debate on the election of a new prosecutor general planned for the end of 2019.



Presentation of the report What We (don't) Know about Prosecutors General in the EU Member States

Since 2019 the Legal Programme has been implementing another research project on the transparency and accountability of the institutions of the judiciary. The study aims to establish whether at all and to what extent the media influences the detection and successful prosecution of the misappropriation of EU funds in Bulgaria. In order to answer this question, the study shows the practical dimensions of the term used by the prosecutor's office *cases of particular public interest* – which cases attract most media attention and why, which the most frequently reported violations and crimes are, in how many of the cases the law enforcement authorities take action to establish the alleged violation or crime and what their reaction regarding to the media interest in the issue is. The research method consists of analysis of the content of news texts of three media within a three-year period. The study had been funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and was carried out in the period September 2019 – April/May 2020.

The Programme continues monitoring the effectiveness of the public costs made for justice and public order within the third stage of the project *The Price of Justice in Bulgaria*.

Projects funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands	Amount in euro
What We (don't) Know about Prosecutors General in the EU Member States	3 000
Analysis of media coverage of EU funds misappropriation	6 300

Students' paper awards of the contest Historical Significance of the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789	Amount in euro
Filip Robert Samuilov	357.90
Mila Plamenova Petrova	357.90
Yana Krasteva Vancheva	255.65
Petya Valentinova Petrova	255.65

7. PUBLIC DEBATE PROGRAMME

The Public Debate Programme works on encouraging the public debate on key issues concerning the state of democracy and human rights in Bulgaria.

In 2019 the Public Debate Programme supported a project of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee for the promotion of the book *Freedom of Speech Cannot Defend itself* which includes journalistic texts of Emil Cohen published in various media during 2005-2019 and dealing with hot civil society topics, as well as some of his theoretic works. Together with the presentation of the book a new annual award for human rights opinion journalism was announced, named after the civil activist, researcher and journalist Emil Robert Cohen.

In relation to the forthcoming 30th anniversary of the foundation of Open Society Institute – Sofia, in 2019 an internal project within the Public Debate Programme was carried out, entitled Open Society and its Enemies: 30 Years after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, envisaging activities for the free dissemination of Karl Popper's book *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, to be reissued by Ciela publishing house in the spring of 2020.

Organization	Topic	Amount in euro
Bulgarian Helsinki Committee	Freedom of Speech Cannot Defend itself	3 249

8. ROMA PROGRAMME

In 2019 the Roma Programme continued pursuing its strategic aims and priorities and was involved in the implementation of the following initiatives:

Initiatives aimed at the establishment of interethnic tolerance and overcoming of the negative public attitudes towards the Roma people:

Bridge to Business – An Initiative for Improving the Access of Young People of Roma Origin to Employment in the Private Sector of Bulgaria and Hungary; Ref. No. VS/2016/0236



2019 saw the completion of the project launched at the end of 2016 and carried out with the support of the EU Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme 2014-2020. It was implemented in partnership with the Central European University and Autonomia Foundation, Hungary. Bridge to Business aimed to facilitate the access of young Roma (aged 18-35), who have at least high school education and passed their school-leaving exams, to highly qualified positions in the private sector that correspond to their education and qualification. At the same time the project was working with senior high school students in Sopot, Stara Zagora, Sofia, Strazhitsa and Nikola Kozlevo, helping them pass the final certification examinations. Another element of the programme was oriented towards cooperation with private companies to provide a more favorable environment and apply staff employment policies which would provide better access to jobs for qualified Roma in corporate environment in Bulgaria.

Within the project and in partnership with other NGOs and business companies the *Diversity Pays Off* initiative was developed, which turned into a platform for sharing experience and ideas in terms of diversity in business companies. Several events were held in 2019 in which participated representatives of over fifty Bulgarian and foreign companies, non-governmental organizations, diplomatic delegations and public institutions.



Third meeting of the initiative Diversity Pays Off; Sofia, March 28, 2019

Final events were organized with the participation of representatives of Bulgarian, Hungarian and European institutions, representatives of business and non-governmental organizations, experts, politicians and young people. The project was presented to a number of EU events organized by EC and the European Economic and Social Committee – conferences on the employment of vulnerable groups, workshops, presentations. The results of the project were presented to employees of the European Commission in Brussels.



Final conference of the Bridge to Business Initiative, Sofia, June 13, 2019

The analytical products of the project are available on its website and on the website of Open Society Institute - Sofia.

Web:

Bridge to Business: <http://bridgetobusiness.eu>

Diversity Pays Off: <https://diversitypaysoff.eu/>

Facebook:

Bridge to Business: <https://www.facebook.com/bridgetobusiness.eu/>

Diversity Pays Off: <https://www.facebook.com/diversitypaysoff/>

Initiatives for Roma capacity building for full participation in public life

Scholarship programme students of Roma origin at Bulgarian universities

Open Society Institute - Sofia is cooperating with Roma Education Fund to provide scholarships to young people of Roma origin. Two schemes were announced in 2019: RMUSP (Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program) and RHSP (Roma Health Scholarship Program). In the period April-May 2019 an information campaign was conducted to provide opportunities for receiving scholarships and over 150 people were reached through meetings held in Pazardzhik, Sopot, Teteven, Omurtag, Montana and Sofia. For 2019-2020 academic year 154 applications under the RMUSP scheme were approved. Nine scholarship beneficiaries were approved within RHSP.

The Roma Programme in cooperation with the Public Health Program of OSFs and the Roma Education Fund organized the mentorship of medical students of Roma origin with RHSP scholarships.

International project funded by the European Commission		Amount in euro
Bridge to Business		176 890
including own contribution		35 378
Health scholarships for Roma funded by Open Society Institute - Budapest		Amount in euro
Mentor component		27 350
Scholarship programmes funded by Roma Education Fund		Amount in euro
Organization of RMUSP and RHSP programmes		22 855

14. PROJECT DESIGN UNIT

Project Design

In 2019 the Project Design Unit was working on the development and formulation of project ideas and on the preparation of documents and proposals for funding from various sources in connection with the implementation of the strategy and achievement of the aims of OSIS, as well as on securing the sustainable development of the foundation in the following main fields:

- The Unit supported the partners of LEUPHANA UNIVERSITÄT LUNEBURG and Public Policies Governance Programme in the preparation of the project Precarious Housing in Europe. Pushing for innovation in higher education, funded under the priority Strategic Partnership for Higher Education (KA203) of Erasmus+ Programme;
- The Unit provided its assistance in the preparation of the proposal in 2018 and in the negotiation process in 2019 of the project Roma Early Childhood Inclusion (RECI+) report Bulgaria, assigned by Open Society Institute Foundations, UNICEF and Roma Education Fund;
- The Unit supported the Roma Programme in the preparation of a funding proposal - Bridging Disadvantaged Youth and Business aiming to continue the activities of the Bridge to Business Programme.

Assistance in project implementation and accounting

In 2019 the Unit was actively supporting the implementation of perennial projects, including [Bridge to Business](#) – an initiative for the improvement of the access of educated young people of Roma origin to employment in the private sector of Bulgaria and Hungary, funded under the EU Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme 2014-2020. The project was implemented in the period October 2016 – September 2019 and at the end of 2019 the Unit provided its assistance in the finalization and accounting of the work.

Other activities

During the year the Unit was engaged in the preparation of the annual audit of the Quality Management System of Open Society Institute - Sofia regarding its ISO 9001:2015 certification.

GEORGI STOYTCHEV
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE – SOFIA FOUNDATION