

In brief

Ten years after the establishment of its country office in Bulgaria and in relation to the Bulgarian accession to the EU, CARE International Bulgaria passes on the torch to the team of Bulgarian specialists who have worked over the last years for the successful implementation of the organisation's programmes. This national nongovernmental organisation, called ECIP Foundation, is a legal successor of CARE Bulgaria and continues to implement its ongoing projects. Since May 2007, the name of CARE International Bulgaria Foundation has been changed to ECIP Foundation, which will carry on the mission of the organisation within the country by developing projects and programmes in the sphere where expertise has already been gained – social policy reforms, integration of minority groups, social services management, and others.

CARE IN BULGARIA

A story that began after the Second World War

CARE was active in Bulgaria from 1946 – the year of its establishment. The aid that our country received back then was delivery and distribution of the legendary “CARE packages” as part of the unprecedented humanitarian aid programme for supporting the affected population in Europe during World War II. After CARE ceased its work in Bulgaria in 1948 and after a period of provision of humanitarian aid in the early 90s, the Foundation re-established a country office in 1997, which was registered as CARE International Bulgaria Foundation. The name “CARE”, together with its meaning as a word, stands for Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere.

CARE in Bulgaria after 1997 until now

The work of CARE Bulgaria is focused on rendering assistance and supporting social policy reforms, which may be generalised as developing and providing social services within the communities, humanitarian and technical support, local capacity development etc. The various programmes are mainly directed to disadvantaged people – children in specialised institutions, people with disabilities, single mothers, human trafficking victims, marginalised representatives of ethnic minority groups, and others. This includes development of new community based social services, establishment of day and social-advice centres, implementation of educational and health projects for minority groups, and projects for prevention of trafficking in human beings and use of drugs. An important aspect of the organisation's activities is the developed cooperation with public institutions and the established partnerships with other NGOs in Bulgaria. During 2005 the CARE Bulgaria team started and successfully implemented one of the largest humanitarian operations implemented by a Bulgarian NGO for supporting the

affected population and overcoming the consequences of the floods in Bulgaria.

CARE Bulgaria programmes' funding

The programmes of CARE in Bulgaria have been funded by different international institutions like EU PHARE programme, MATRA programme /Nederland/, UNICEF, World Bank, USAID, ILO, CIDA, Municipality of Vienna, Aktion Mensch (Germany), and others.

CARE Strategy for the Balkans – evolution towards local entities

In 2005 CARE MERMU (Middle East and Eastern Europe Regional Management Unit) adopted a strategy for the organisation's activities on the Balkans, which was elaborated by Country Offices' representatives. For the process of development of the strategy some political factors have been considered – the upcoming EU membership of Bulgaria and Romania, the end of the war in Former Yugoslavia and the humanitarian crises in the region. Also, some factors have been recognized for progressive socio-economic development of the Balkan countries, the work of other humanitarian organisations and funding agencies and accomplishments of the organisation up to date. According to the adopted strategy framework, till year 2010 CARE is engaged to follow an organisational evolution policy for its Country Offices towards non-governmental organisations in the region (Macedonia, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina) or towards establishment of partnership networks (Kosovo).

CARE BULGARIA BECOMES ECIP FOUNDATION

The evolution of CARE International Bulgaria towards an independent NGO

In 2005 the Board of Directors of CARE International Bulgaria adopted a decision for evolution

towards a national NGO. This decision is in line with the adopted Balkan's strategy of the organisation and the time frame was orientated to the forthcoming EU membership of the country. The fact that the achieved membership will change the status of the country was considered: from receiving external aid to granting aid to other indigent countries and regions in the world. After an intensive preparation period (during 2006), in February 2007 the Board of Directors of CARE International Bulgaria assessed the readiness of the team to act independently and elected new members of the Board of Directors, consisting only of Bulgarian citizens, which will direct the organisation in the future under the name of ECIP Foundation.

The name ECIP/ ЕКИП

The team of the successor organisation chose the name ECIP, which is unique in its meaning and identity as written in English and in Cyrillic alphabet:

- In Bulgarian ЕКИП means "team" and visualizes the team-oriented principle of work, solidarity and collaboration with other NGO and public institutions. This way the word "екип" is used in Bulgarian in its semantic meaning.
- In Latin alphabet used is the English abbreviation ECIP – Effective Community Care and Inclusion Programmes. The letters are extracted as abbreviation from this formulation, which reveals the activity and the mission of the organisation.

ECIP Foundation – successor organisation of the CARE International Bulgaria

According to the Bulgarian Law for non-profit entities, ECIP continues the existing registration of CARE as a foundation. In this sense ECIP Foundation is the legal successor of CARE in Bulgaria. This is a unique fact in the 60 year history of CARE International, in which the local representative office is transformed into national NGO – ECIP – as a successor of the mission and legal statue of CARE in Bulgaria.

The evolution of CARE in Bulgaria toward national and independent NGO is in line with the policy of CARE International for assistance of the civil society and for strengthening the capacity of the local NGOs. The national NGOs in Bulgaria are well- developed and are expected to play an active role in estimating and promoting high quality services and innovations in Bulgaria. These NGOs are now in a position to apply for grants from the EU and other countries and to start their own fundraising programmes. The team and the board of directors of ECIP Foundation have achieved considerable practical experience and the necessary knowledge to manage the transition to independence and to fulfil ECIP's role as a national NGO.

Future programme strategy of ECIP Foundation

Upon its transformation the ECIP Foundation will continue to implement six projects of CARE, with the longest running until 2011. All of the projects, except one, are locally funded and managed with no direct CARE International involvement. This way the transition of know-how is guaranteed. This know-how is linked with the adopted policies for achievement of high standards for project quality, technical and financial accountability and measuring of the outcomes. This means that the achievement of the goals of these six projects is assured.

The mission and vision of ECIP Foundation are in accordance with the adopted working standards and programme documentation of CARE International. This approach is based on recognition of the right of every person to live with dignity and to have access to quality services, which will guarantee his/her self-fulfilment.

The future programmes of ECIP Foundation will be implemented through following the best practices and the policy for programming introduced by CARE in Bulgaria. In the organisation's profile will dominate the following basic programme priorities:

- ECIP Foundation will implement projects in the social policy sphere, orientated to establishment and management of community based social services.
- ECIP Foundation will continue to provide technical support and will promote initiatives for development of local capacity and strategies for improvement of the social policies within the community.
- ECIP Foundation will implement projects in order to improve the educational and health status of minority groups.
- ECIP Foundation will implement projects for prevention of trafficking in human beings and will stress on the international dimension of this phenomenon and on the measures for its prevention in the region.
- ECIP Foundation will continue to keep up resources and skills for emergency response situations in the country.
- ECIP Foundation will continue to participate actively in the international movement for fight against global poverty, which means assisting with aid and implementing programmes for the development policy in the developing world.

In the next months, ECIP Foundation will work out its own strategy for programme and organisational evolution for the period of 2007 – 2010.

