



## **INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE – BULGARIA 2011 ANNUAL REPORT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

International Social Service-Bulgaria (ISS-Bulgaria) is a legal entity registered as a foundation in the Court of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria, in 2002.

It is also registered as a non-for profit legal entity in the Central Registry of the Bulgarian Ministry of Justice.

ISS-Bulgaria aims to protect children's rights by providing consultancy, social services and legal assistance to children and families in need. ISS-Bulgaria is one of the largest providers of services for children and families in Bulgaria and it is licensed by the State Agency for Child Protection. It is also a Correspondent within the International Social Service network, comprising more than 140 countries worldwide. As such, ISS-Bulgaria provides assistance to family situations that require cross-border intervention in areas of child protection, child abduction, separation and divorce, family reunification and inter-country adoption.

### **ISS-BULGARIA MAIN PRIORITIES FOR 2011**

In 2011 ISS-Bulgaria main priorities were:

- I. Development of social services for children and families and implementation of projects in the area of child protection;
- II. Provision of community-based social services for children and families based on contracts for management of services with external service provider concluded with the municipal authorities;
- III. Participation in Conferences, multi-agency working groups and other forums aiming at discussion and development of policies for children in the country;
- IV. Inter-country casework within the ISS network providing assistance to children and families in cross-border situations.

## ISS-BULGARIA MAIN OUTCOMES FOR 2011

In 2011, ISS-Bulgaria became one of the largest providers of social services for children and families in the country. Based on contracts with municipalities to award the management of social services to an external provider, during the reporting period, ISS-Bulgaria managed services for children and families in four municipalities - Targovishte, Veliko Tarnovo, Sevlievo and Smolyan. For the same period, under projects, the organisation developed and managed 10 social services for children and families – four services on district level in Veliko Tarnovo, Targovishte, Gabrovo and Smolyan as well as six services on municipal level in Devin, Dospat, Zlatograd and Rudozem municipalities in Smolyan district. In this regard, in 2011, ISS-Bulgaria has employed **144 staff** and has managed funds of **1 558 529 BGN**.

ISS-Bulgaria continued its work on foster care. More than 80 new foster families were trained, assessed and supported after accommodation of children by the ISS-Bulgaria professional staff under the "Expanding the model of foster care in Bulgaria" project, financed by UNICEF in Targovishte, Veliko Tarnovo, Gabrovo and Smolyan. Thus for 2011, the total number of foster families in the four areas that have been evaluated and supported by the training teams of the organisation were **151** and **147 children** have been placed with them.

ISS Bulgaria continued to actively cooperate with NGOs working in the area of human rights and child protection. The organisation was involved in the consultative process and the discussions in the Parliament of the newly drafted primary legislation regarding children called the Child's Act. ISS-Bulgaria expressed opinion and supported events and statements of the National Network for Child regarding the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the provision social services children and families and initiatives. ISS-Bulgaria participated in the working group entitled to develop a methodology for the terms and the conditions with respect to the provision of services to children, victims of violence in Crisis Centres.

In 2011 ISS-Bulgaria actively worked within the International Social Service network. ISS-Bulgaria provided assistance to over **150 children** and families in cross-border situations. Last year we have been working on **176 cases** in total, of which **88 cases** have been newly registered only in 2011.

## I. Development of social services for children and families and implementation of projects in the area of child protection

№	Project title	Timeframe and place of implementation	Source and amount of financing	Aims and target groups	Main activities	Outcomes achieved
1	<p><b>‘Expanding the model of foster care in Bulgaria’</b></p> <p>The project was carried out in partnership with the Institute for Social Activities and Practices (ISAP) in 8 districts in Bulgaria – <b>Sofia city and Sofia district, Pernik, Smolyan, Veliko Tarnovo, Gabrovo, Targovishte and Shumen.</b></p> <p>ISS-Bulgaria was responsible for the implementation of the project in 4</p>	<p><b>1 July 2009 - 28 February 2012</b></p>	<p><b>UNICEF</b></p> <p><b>265 411 BGN</b></p>	<p><b>Aims:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Development of the model ‘Foster care centre’ on district level. Creation of a common practice for the provision of the foster care social service between partners in 8 districts;</li> <li>2. Elaboration of unified training programme for foster care candidates and for trainers–social workers;</li> <li>3. Implementation of National Information Campaign for foster care on local level;</li> <li>4. Development of the capacity of the partners in the process of the provision of foster care service;</li> </ol> <p><b>Target groups:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social service providers – NGOs and municipal authorities;</li> <li>2. Divisions of the Agency for Social Assistance – on national and local level;</li> <li>3. Members of the Child Protection Commissions;</li> <li>4. Society – campaigns for foster care recruitment;</li> <li>5. Candidates for foster families that</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provision of the foster care service in its all stages;</li> <li>2. Production of a training film under the training programme for trainers of foster families;</li> </ol>	<p><b>191 candidates for foster families</b> have been assessed and trained by the teams of the District Centres for foster care in Veliko Tarnovo, Smolyan, Targovishte and Gabrovo, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Gabrovo – 28</li> <li>• District Veliko Tarnovo-49</li> <li>• District Targovishte - 88</li> <li>• District Smolyan - 26</li> </ul> <p>As per 31 December 2011 <b>151 families</b> have been recruited and supported as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Gabrovo – 19</li> <li>• District Veliko Tarnovo - 33</li> <li>• District Targovishte - 79</li> <li>• District Smolyan - 20</li> </ul> <p><b>147 children</b> have been placed in foster families during 2011 and there were <b>121 children</b> in foster care as per 31 December 2011.</p>

	of the districts – Smolyan, Veliko Tarnovo, Gabrovo and Targovishte			have started the foster care process; 6. Approved foster families; 7. Children who needs foster families; 8. Children, placed in foster families.		
2	<p><b>‘Regional approach for the reform in the public care for children in District Smolyan’</b></p> <p>The project was carried out in 4 municipalities within District Smolyan – <b>Dospat, Devin, Zlatograd and Rudozem</b></p> <p>The project implementation regarding the opening and the start of the service provision in <b>Dospat and Zlatograd</b> was supported by the <b>‘Partnership assisting children and</b></p>	<p><b>1 February 2010 – 31 December 2012</b></p>	<p><b>OAK foundation</b> – Geneva, <b>Lord Michelham from Helingli foundation</b> – Geneva and <b>International Social Service - Switzerland</b></p> <p>The project has been cofinanced by <b>Dospat</b> and <b>Rudozem</b> municipal authorities</p> <p><b>170 412 BGN</b></p>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Support of the deinstitutionalisation process and restructuring of the community care for children in District Smolyan by means of development of accessible and needs-based social services for children and families aiming at prevention of institutionalisation, violence and social isolation and setting up of conditions for successful social integration.</p> <p><b>Specific aims:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Setting up of advocacy partnership network and district and local level aiming at improvement of coordination and introduction of multi-disciplinary approach when working with children and youngsters at risk;</li> <li>2. Public awareness to the problems of children and families at risk and broader involvement of the society protection of children’s rights in particularly with regard to the social services, violence on children and social inclusion of children with disabilities;</li> <li>3. Setting up of Day-care Centres for children and youngsters with disabilities (DCCD) in Dospat and</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provision of transparent and effective management of the project;</li> <li>2. Enhancement of the staff providing the services;</li> <li>3. Provision of services for children and families at risk in the municipalities in District Smolyan;</li> <li>4. Implementation of Information Campaign on violence prevention in the four municipalities;</li> <li>5. Provision of training to professionals</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Four meetings assessing the implementation of the project in the respective municipality have been carried out by the Operation Partnership Groups set up in 2010 in Rudozem and Devin;</li> <li>2. Four meetings have been done by the Consultative Council set up in 2010 with the participation of representatives from the state institutions working with children.</li> <li>4. 18-days training has been carried out on issues related to children’s rights and provision of social services focusing on the needs of the child and the family.</li> <li>5. Provision of consultancy of the teams which turned into group supervisions after the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of the project implementation. Each service provider’s team received one group supervision (5 group supervisions per team). Each member of the team received two individual supervisions;</li> <li>6. The Day-care centre for children and youngsters with disabilities (DCCYD) in Rudozem and the Community Support Centres (CSC) in Devin and Rudozem have provided social services for the period 1 April – 31 December 2011. Capacity of all social services is approximately 20 cases per month. The team in CSC in Devin had 23 cases and in Rudozem – 17 cases. Above 500 children have been involved in group work in CSC in Devin and above 120 children in Rudozem. 20 children with disabilities received services in the DCCYD in Rudozem whereas the number of parents</li> </ol>

	<b>families of District Smolyan</b> ’ project presented below.		Zlatograd and Community Support Centres (CSC) in Dospat, Zlatograd, Devin and Rudozem. 4. Setting up of environment to prevent children from abuse and violence by introduction of internal policies, procedures and standards for child protection in institutions and organizations involved in working with children in District Smolyan. <b>Target groups:</b> 1.Children at risk from 3 to 18 years old and their families; 2. Children with disabilities from 6 to 18 years old and their families; 3. Children and families from the community; 4. Professionals working with children and families.	from the Social service in Smolyan, one mainstream school in Smolyan and the institution for abandoned children from 7 to 18 years old in Shiroka Laka for the development and introduction of a system with rules and procedures for violence prevention.	and members of the extended family consulted by the teams is above 30. 7. Training of teachers from mainstream school in Zlatograd and training of social workers from the Child Protection departments in the whole District Smolyan has been carried out by the ISS-Bulgaria team aiming at introduction of internal policies and procedures for child protection	
3	<b>‘Partnership supporting children and families in District Smolyan’ (BG051PO001-5.2.06 -0047-C-0001)</b>  The project was implemented by ISS-Bulgaria in	<b>1 January - 31 December 2011</b>	Operational programme ‘Development of human resources 2007-2013, co-financed by the EU through the European Social Fund, ‘Social	<b>Purpose:</b> to increase the quality of life of children in risk and their families in District Smolyan by development of community social services for prevention of institutionalisation and social isolation and successful social integration. <b>Specific aims:</b> 1. Development of Community Support Centres (CSC) in Zlatograd and Dospat and Day-care centre for children with disabilities (DCCD) in Dospat aiming at prevention of institutionalization, social isolation and	1. Management of the project; 2. Capacity building of the CSC and DCCD staff; 3. Realisation of the information Campaign; 4. Tender procedures for selection of companies for	1. Memorandum for cooperation between the project partners and the interested partners (Regional Directorate for Social Assistance, Regional Inspectorate for Education, Regional health Inspection) has been signed - Operational partner group in Dospat and Zlatograd were set up and 12 meetings for project assessment in the respective municipality were carried out; - Four meetings of the Consultative Council on district level were carried out with the participation of the state institutions, working with children; 2. 25 people have been selected to provide social services. All professionals have passed 14-days introductory training and 4-days follow-up training;

<p>partnership with Zlatograd and Dospat municipalities</p>		<p>services for social</p> <p><b>236 194,40 BGN</b></p>	<p>successful social integration;</p> <p>2. Capacity building of the staff of the CSC and DCCD by acquisition of new knowledge, skills and experience for provision of social services for children and families with high quality and effectiveness;</p> <p>3. Public awareness in the problems of children and families at risk by realization of Information Campaign.</p>	<p>provision of goods and services and conclusion of contracts for implementation ;</p> <p>5. Provision of social services in the CSC in Zlatograd and CSC in Dospat;</p> <p>6. Provision of social services in the DCCD in Dospat.</p>	<p>3. Between 1 April and 31 December, there were 2 CSC in Zlatograd and Dospat functioning with the capacity of average 25 cases per month. They have provided variety of consultative services for children and families focusing on the child. Above 800 children have used the group form of services in the two CSC;</p> <p>4. Between 1 April and 31 December 2011, there was a DCCD in Dospat functioning with the capacity of 20 children. 20 children with disabilities and 68 parents, relatives and members of the extended families have used the services of the DCCD;</p> <p>5. Within a period of 3 months after the start of the service provision, there was consultancy of each team which resulted in group supervisions from the fourth month until the end of the project implementation. Each team has received one group supervision per month (total 5 supervisions per team). Each member of the team received two individual supervisions;</p> <p>6. Plan for implementation of the Information Campaign has been developed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- regional round table for 40 professionals on ‘Role of the Community Support Centres in providing preventative social services’ was organised;</li> <li>- Initial and final press-conferences were carried out;</li> <li>- Final Conference on district level on ‘Social services for children and families in District Smolyan – outcomes and challenges’ with 85 participants was done;</li> <li>- Four types of information materials (4000 copies in total) providing information on the provision of social services and violence prevention for children and public have been printed out;</li> <li>- More than 20 publications regarding the project in the local and electronic media have been published.</li> </ul>
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## II. Provision of community-based social service for children and families

### 1. Outcomes

Provision of community-based social services for children and families is one of our priorities. For 2011 ISS-Bulgaria has managed various community-based social services for children and families. Information regarding the type of social service, capacity, location, number of staff and financial resources is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Social service	Capacity	Location Municipality	Number of staff	Financial resource
Community Support Centre (CSC)	66	Targovishte. Within the CSC there are <b>Centre for Emergency Accommodation</b> with 4 beds capacity and <b>Day-care Centre</b> for children with disabilities with the following capacity: 5 children full day care, up to 8 children half-day care and up to 10 children hourly care	15	State delegated activity based on a contract with the respective municipality after a competition procedure
	60	Veliko Tarnovo	11	
	40	Sevlievo	9	
	30	Smolyan	8	
	25	Zlatograd	7	
	25	Dospat	7	HRD OP, Priority Access 5 'Social Inclusion and Promotion of Social Economy' and 'Partnership for support of children and families in Smolyan district' project, contract BG051PO001-5.2.06 - 0047-C-0001
	20	Rudozem	4	
	20	Devin	4	

<b>Day-care centre for children with disabilities (DCCD)</b>	24	Sevlievo	8	State delegated activity based on a contract with Sevlievo municipality after a competition procedure
	20	Dospat	10	HRD OP, Priority Access 5 ‘Social Inclusion and Promotion of Social Economy’ and ‘Partnership for support of children and families in Smolyan district’ project, contract BG051PO001-5.2.06 - 0047-C-0001
	20	Rudozem	8	‘Regional approach for the reform in the public care for children in District Smolyan’ project financed by private donors - OAK foundation – Geneva, Lord Michelham from Helingli foundation – Geneva and International Social Service - Switzerland
<b>Centre for Social Rehabilitation and integration of children and youngsters with disabilities (CSRI)</b>	40	Veliko Tarnovo	8	State delegated activity based on a contract with Veliko Tarnovo municipality after a competition procedure
<b>‘Mother and Baby’ Unit (MBU)</b>	8 couples mother-child	Targovishte	6	State delegated activity based on a contract with Targovishte municipality after a competition procedure
<b>Centre for family type accommodation for children from 15 to 18 (20) years old (CFTA)</b>	10	Smolyan	7	State delegated activity based on a contract with Smolyan municipality after a competition procedure
<b>Supervised housing</b>	4	Veliko Tarnovo	1	State delegated activity based on a



<b>for care leavers (SH)</b>				contract with Veliko Tarnovo municipality after a competition procedure
	6	Smolyan	2	State delegated activity based on a contract with Smolyan municipality after a competition procedure
	8	Sevlievo	2	State delegated activity based on a contract with Sevlievo municipality after a competition procedure

Some of the social services provided in the municipalities are consolidated in the so called Complexes for social services for children and families (CSSCF) which allows flexible use of human and financial resources. There four Complexes for social services for children and families (CSSCF) set up with decision of the Municipal Councils set up in the municipalities of Targovishte, Smolyan, Sevlievo and Dospat.

Table 2 provides figures on the work done by the ISS-Bulgaria teams with respect to the different social services for 2011.

*Table 2  
Total number of cases for 2011 in the Complexes for social services for children and families (CSSCF) in the four municipalities and other services*

<b>Social services</b>	<b>CSSCF in Targovishte</b>	<b>CSSCF in Sevlievo</b>	<b>CSSCF in Smolyan</b>	<b>Social services in Veliko Tarnovo – CSC, CSRI and SH</b>
Total number of cases	351	198	106	255
Community Support Centre	303, including 17 cases of the Emergency Accommodation Centre and 62 case of the Day-care Centre for children with disabilities	154	83	198
‘Mother and Baby’ Unit	16 mothers and 32 children	-	-	-
Centre for Social Rehabilitation and Integration	-	-	-	52
Day-care centre for children with disabilities	-	32	-	-
Center for family type accommodation for children	-	-	16	-
Supervised housing	-	12	7	5

In 2011 Community Support Centres (CSC) in Targovishte, Sevlievo and Veliko Tarnovo continue the trend from the past two years to work in excess of the capacity. Average monthly number of cases exceeds 50 to 100% capacity approved. However, the team of the ISS-Bulgaria and CSC worked hard to keep the quality of services for children and families. These efforts were assessed by the municipal councils in the municipalities of Targovishte and Sevlievo and in the summer of 2011, decisions were taken to increase the capacities of the CSC in Targovishte with 14 cases and in CSC in Sevlievo with 15 cases.

## **1.1. Good practices for working with target groups**

### **1.1.1. Life skills preparation of children and youngsters**

One of the main target groups of ISS-Bulgaria since it was set up in 2002 is working with children and youngsters who are leaving specialized institutions for children (care leavers) as to develop their life skills and to prepare them for independent life after the institution. For that reason ISS-Bulgaria develops the capacity of the teams in all consultative services that manages for provision of life skills trainings, individual and group work with children and youngsters placed in residential community services.

Group work includes more than 40 children from the Homes for children deprived of parental care in Veliko Tarnovo, Popovo and Sevlievo as well as more than 50 children from the Helping schools in Veliko Tarnovo and Novo selo village in Veliko Tarnovo municipality. Professionals work with children to overcome aggression, resolve conflicts, development of basic life skills including nutrition, hygiene, health care, clothing, team work skills and etc.

In 2011 for the third consecutive year, the team of the Complex for social services for children and families in Targovishte organized two camps, in April and in September, for life skills development of children from the Home for abandoned children in Popovo. Every child who attends the group work can take part in the camp unless he/she has serious offences between the camps. This is a stimulus for the children and motivates them from positive changes. During the time of the camps children work hard in teams and they rely on each other. They learn to understand what it is to be part of a team and what is to trust a person.

### **1.1.2. Foster care**

During the last two years (23 June 2009 – 31 December 2011) ISS-Bulgaria in partnership with Institute for Social Services and Practices Association and Samaryani Association actively worked to develop 'foster care' social service under the 'Expansion of the foster care model in Bulgaria' project financed by UNICEF. Based on this project, District Foster Care Centres in 9 administrative districts were set up, where new models for foster care provision were tested. ISS-Bulgaria is provider of foster care service and manages 4 of the newly set up District Foster Care Centres in Targovishte, Gabrovo, Veliko Tarnovo and Smolyan.

Though the number of staff working in the District Foster Care Centres is small (between 3 and 5 specialists and 16 persons in total) significant result were achieved. At the end of 2011 there were **151 foster families** that have been trained, assessed and recruited by the Child Commissions in the respective municipalities and **147 children** have passed over the foster families.

In June 2011 in Veliko Tarnovo ISS-Bulgaria initiated for second consecutive year a meeting of the foster families and foster children from Targovishte, Veliko Tarnovo, Gabrovo and Smolyan districts who have been trained and supported by the organization under the 'Expansion of the foster care model in Bulgaria' project. The meeting was attended by the deputy chair of the Agency for Social Assistance, deputy mayor of Veliko Tarnovo, 'Social services' programme director of UNICEF,

representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Regional Directorate for Social Assistance, Child Protection Department and professionals from Veliko Tarnovo providing services for children and families. More than 80 foster parents and 65 children took part in the meeting. Rearing and upbringing of a child, relations with the biological parents and adoption of the child were amongst the issues that were discussed during the meeting.

### **1.1.3. Changing awareness towards children with disabilities**

In 2011 ISS-Bulgaria expanded the work as provider of social services for children with disabilities by:

- providing support to Dospat and Rudozem municipalities in Smolyan district for setting up of Day-care Centres for children with disabilities in the framework of two projects<sup>1</sup>. ISS-Bulgaria managed the two Day-care Centres for a period of 9 months (April – December 2011). ISS-Bulgaria considers the two project as very successful (achieved 100 % of the planned capacity, stimulation of development of children who used the services of the Day-care centres, awareness of parents to search and support and to use the services for their children) in view of the specifics of the local communities, traditions and cultural characteristics.

- managing the Centre for social rehabilitation and integration of children with disabilities in Veliko Tarnovo municipality after a competition procedure and concluded contract for management of the services with outside provider.

One of the main tasks of ISS-Bulgaria as a service provider is preparation of awareness campaign with respect to the rights of children with disabilities titled 'Let's embrace those who are different'. In order to define the target groups and main activities under the campaign, an inquiry was held to explore attitudes of professionals, parents and children in 6 mainstream schools and 6 kindergartens in Veliko Tarnovo towards children with disabilities. The data were processed and summarized in a special edition. They are presented at a round table discussion on "Challenges to the social inclusion of children with disabilities in Veliko Tarnovo" held on 5 December 2011 in the building of City Hall, organized on the occasion of December 3, International Day people with disabilities. The discussion involved directors of educational institutions participated in the inquiry, representatives of various institutions directly related to the integration process. After analysis of the inquiry a discussion was held between experts from all areas who shared hardships and good practices in working with children with mental and physical disabilities.

## **1.2. Inter-institutional partnerships on local level**

The Complexes for social services in Targovishte, Sevlievo and Smolyan and the Community Support Centre in Veliko Turnovo continued to be sought as partners in the implementation of local and regional policies for children and families. Their representatives participated in the work of the Commission for the child in Targovishte, Veliko Tarnovo and Sevlievo, in the multi-disciplinary team under the Coordination Mechanism for action in case of child victims of violence in Targovishte and Veliko Tarnovo and in the Commission for adoption at the Regional Directorates for Social Assistance in Gabrovo, Smolyan and Veliko Tarnovo.

In 2011, some of the social services managed by ISS-Bulgaria continued to be centres for training and exchange of best practices between colleagues from similar social services in country as well as between representatives of the local authorities. Experts from the Community Support Centers in Targovishte and Smolyan, from the Day-care Center for children with disabilities and the supervised

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<sup>1</sup> The two projects are described on pages 3 – 6 of the current report

housing in Sevlievo provided trainings and shared their experiences with the staff of new or existing services in other municipalities - Zlatograd, Devin, Dospat, Rudozem, Provadia and Sofia. ISS-Bulgaria organised inter-regional meeting of experts from the Community Support Centres in Targovishte, Veliko Tarnovo, Gabrovo, Lovech and Smolyan on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of May 2011 in Veliko Tarnovo. The meeting was evaluated by participants as very useful as all participants gained information of the general and specific work of each Center, are shared achievements and problems in the work of each Community Support Centre. There was also a training on the "Assessment of parental capacity" delivered by experts of 'Lumos – Bulgaria' foundation.

### **1.3. Improving quality of services**

Achieving and maintaining high quality of social services is impossible without the continuous improvement of knowledge and skills of the teams. Believing that the human factor is crucial for achieving the aims of the social service, ISS-Bulgaria annually organizes training events, provides opportunities for participation of representatives of various social service providers in professional meetings and events and provides professional support by regular group and individual supervisions of the teams.

In 2011 there were 16 trainings in 25 days for the teams in the four municipalities where the ISS-Bulgaria manages social services. The trainings involved about 30% of the experts. There were four group supervisions and average of two individual supervisions. Representatives of the teams participated in four meetings for exchange of experience on a specific topic, carried out in various cities in the country.

During the annual performance appraisal for 2011, ISS Bulgaria observed that the prevailing level of staff performance meets the requirements of the job description. In each of the social services 10 to 15% of employees have shown performance exceeding the requirements. However, the performance appraisal provides an opportunity to assess gaps in the work of the services, to analyze the results and their base to prepare the training programme and support of the staff for 2012. At the beginning of each calendar year, the teams of the social services make self-assessment of quality of services in accordance with the Regulation on criteria and standards for social services for children. ISS-Bulgaria discusses the results with the teams which results in plans for quality improvement. The assessment of the social services provided in the Complexes for social services in Targovishte and Sevlievo done in January showed that 90% of the minimum standards for quality of the social services were covered. It also demonstrated that the results achieved in the previous years are not stable. This is the basis for reconsideration of the existing service policies and procedures and the need for their update. This update was made by September 2011 and the staff of the social services is aware of the changes in the documentation.

### **III. Participation in conferences, multi-agency working groups and other forums aiming at discussion and development of policies for children in the country**

In 2011 experts of ISS Bulgaria participated in the work of the multi-agency group to develop a methodology for the work of Crisis Centers in Bulgaria, which is expected to become operational in 2012.

ISS-Bulgaria is a preferred partner in the formulation of new policies for children and families. ISS-Bulgaria participated in the final work under the Child Act draft by providing feedback on texts related to child protection, adoption and foster care. Many of the proposed texts were included in the final draft of the law. ISS-Bulgaria also took part in a press conference held in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2011 as to present the final draft of the Child Act. It

also participated at the Round table held in the Parliament on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2011, which opened public debate on the legislation.

In view of the experience, the achieved results and the good practice set up in the area of foster care, ISS-Bulgaria was invited together with the ‘Institute for Social Activities and Practices’ association to provide training on foster care to the directors of the Regional Directorates for Social Assistance held on 6-7 September 2011. ISS-Bulgaria experts participated in workshops with representatives of the Agency for Social Assistance as to discuss the various stages of foster care provision as well as the opportunities to involve NGOs in the ‘I have a family’ project and ‘Take me’ project under the OP DHR.

#### **IV. Inter-country casework within the ISS network providing assistance to children and families in cross-border situations.**

##### **1. Inter-country casework of ISS-Bulgaria**

ISS-Bulgaria is part of the International Social Service network ([www.iss-ssi.org](http://www.iss-ssi.org)) established in 1924 in Geneva, Switzerland. Nowadays the network includes more than 140 countries all over the world. ISS-Bulgaria is representing International Social Service and it is the only non-for-profit legal entity in Bulgaria providing assistance and support to children and families in cross-border situations. ISS-Bulgaria is acting as a Correspondent in the International Social Service network. For that reason one of the main priorities of ISS-Bulgaria since it was established in 2002 is provision of social and legal support and consultancy in the following areas:

- Family relations
- Parental rights and obligations
- Personal relations between children and parents
- International child abduction
- Children at risk
- Placement outside the family, guardianship
- Inter-country adoption
- Documentation
- Legal Assistance
- Citizenship/Nationality
- Tracing of biological family
- Unaccompanied children and minors
- Victims of crime

ISS-Bulgaria dealt with 458 inter-country cases for the period 2002 – 2011, of which there are 288 closed cases and 170 pending cases.

*Information as per 31.12.2011*

<b>Period</b>	<b>Register cases</b>	<b>Pending cases</b>	<b>Closed cases</b>
<b>2002 - 2004</b>	75	0	75
<b>2005</b>	34	1	33
<b>2006</b>	42	1	41
<b>2007</b>	29	10	19

<b>2008</b>	46	13	33
<b>2009</b>	56	44	12
<b>2010</b>	88	61	27
<b>2011</b>	88	39	49
<b>Total:</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>289</b>

## 2. Inter-country casework in 2011

There were 176 inter-country cases during 2011, of which:

- 88 newly registered for 2011,
- 30 pending cases from 2009,
- 12 pending cases from 2008,
- 9 pending cases from 2007,
- 1 case from 2006, closed in 2011,
- 2 cases from 2008, closed in 2011,
- 4 cases from 2009, closed in 2011,
- 23 cases from 2010, closed 2011.

*Cases (problem types) in line with the ISS consolidated problem codes  
for the period 01.01.2011 – 31.12.2011*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Type of service</b>	<b>Number of cases</b>
<i>Adoption</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>
	Consultancy	
	Post-adoption monitoring (reports from abroad)	
	Social studies of mother who have given births abroad and who have abandoned their babies (Greece)	3
<i>Welfare of adults</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>
	Consultancy and assistance	
<i>Welfare of children</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>
	Parental rights and obligations (exercise of parental rights and obligations, right of contact, residence of the child)	19
	Limitation and deprivation from parental rights and obligations	3
	Criminal proceedings related to violation of right of contact	1
	Child at risk	13
	Child abduction	
	Reunification after abduction	1
	Reunification abroad	26
	Monitoring of children after reunification abroad	10
	Reunification in Bulgaria	1
	Placement with relatives	3
	Contacts with relatives	1
	Social investigation aiming at removal of children abroad	1
<i>Legal issues</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>
	Documentation (issuing of birth	1

	certificate)	
	Legal consultancy	2
	Searching of origin	1
	Citizenship	1
<i>Family tracing and reunion</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>
	Family reunion	
	Tracing of family members (known family)	
	Tracing (after adoption)	1
	Tracing and reunification	
<i>Health related assistance</i>	<b>Общо</b>	<b>0</b>
	Support of a child after surgery операция	
<b>Total number of all cases</b>		<b>88</b>

*Number of cases as per origin of the signal  
(number of requests referred to the ISS-Bulgaria) for the period 01.01.2011 – 31.12.2011*

<b>Country</b>	<b>individual / legal entity</b>	<b>Number of cases</b>
<i>Bulgaria</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>
	SACP <sup>2</sup> / ASA <sup>3</sup>	4
	DSA <sup>4</sup> / CPD <sup>5</sup>	52
	Courts	11
	Individuals / lawyers	1
<i>From abroad:</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Germany</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>
	ISS network	7
<i>Greece</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>
	ISS network	4
<i>Spain</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>
	ISS network	4
<i>United Kingdom</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>
	Individuals	2
<i>Canada</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>
	ISS network	1
<i>Czech Republic</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>
	ISS network	1
<i>Switzerland</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>
	ISS network	1
<b>Total number of all requests</b>		<b>88</b>

*Number of cases as per destination of signal  
(number of requests referred from the ISS-Bulgaria) for the period 1.01.2011– 31.12.2011*

<b>Country</b>	<b>Individuals / Legal entities</b>	<b>Number of cases</b>
<i>Bulgaria</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>
	DSA / CPD	14
	ISS-Bulgaria	4
	Courts	2
<i>To::</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>
<i>Greece</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

<sup>2</sup> State Agency for Child Protection under the Bulgarian government ([www.sacp.government.bg](http://www.sacp.government.bg))

<sup>3</sup> Agency for Social Assistance under the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy ([www.asp.government.bg](http://www.asp.government.bg))

<sup>4</sup> Directorate for Social Assistance under the Agency for Social Assistance

<sup>5</sup> Child Protection Department within the Directorate for Social Assistance

	ISS network	15
<i>Germany</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>
	ISS network	14
<i>Italy</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>
	Italian embassy in Bulgaria	7
<i>Spain</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>
	ISS network	6
<i>United Kingdom</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>
	ISS network	4
<i>Cyprus</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>
	ISS network	3
<i>Austria</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>
	ISS – German Branch	3
<i>USA</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>
	ISS network	3
<i>Poland</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>
	ISS network	2
<i>FYROMacedonia</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>
	ISS network	1
<i>Sweden</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>
	ISS network	1
<i>Netherlands</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>
	ISS network	1
<i>Hungary</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>
	ISS network	1
<i>Belgium</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>
	ISS network	1
<i>Russian Federation</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>
	ISS network	1
<i>France</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>
	ISS network	1
<i>ISS-Bulgaria</i>		<b>4</b>
Total number of all requests		<b>88</b>

### 3. Other activities related to inter-country casework

In September 2011, ISS-Bulgaria inter-country casework manager participated in the Supervisors' meeting organized by the International Social Service General Secretariat. The meeting was held in Belgrade, Serbia for 3 days (19-21 September 2011) and there were colleagues from the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, Israel, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Poland, Spain, Belgium and Romania. The following topics related to inter-country casework were discussed during the meeting:

- 1) Application of the 1996 Hague Convention,
- 2) International mediation and mediation-based approaches,
- 3) Cooperation in the International Social Service network.

ISS-Bulgaria and ISS-Spain made a presentation on a joint case related to two children with Bulgarian citizenship but with Spanish habitual residence who were illegally retained for more than a year in Bulgaria as the Bulgarian authorities refused to issue passports based on the lack of consent of the father whose parental rights were temporarily terminated with a decision of the Spanish Criminal Court.