

“Step in the Future”

(Skills for Independent Life)

A project of Step for Bulgaria Foundation and partner organizations

Objectives and target group

Step in the Future! is a full-year educational program for Bulgarian teenagers living without parental care. The program aims to support the young participants in developing personal and professional skills and knowledge to manage successfully their independent life beyond the social care institution.

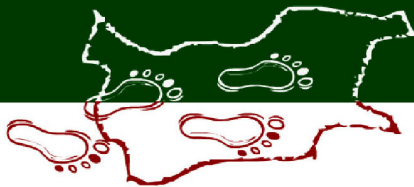
The program is one of multiple initiatives of Step for Bulgaria Foundation, which strives to foster the social inclusion of underprivileged youth. We do this by both strengthening their social adaptation capabilities and promoting an understanding of the reality they face among Bulgarian society through the contribution and personal testimonials of volunteers from all ages and professions involved in our programs.

Description

In the first half of 2009, a pilot version of the program was tested at the “Lyuba Teneva” social care home in Berkovitsa. Fifteen teenagers living in the home, without parental care, participated in courses teaching them useful independent life skills. The pilot program included courses on Personal Economics and Finance, the Economic Benefits of Education, and Entrepreneurship.

In October 2009, we begin the program’s implementation in six social care homes across the country, in the cities of Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna and Berkovitsa. More than 50 students have been confirmed to participate in the program. In every location, bi-weekly 5-hour sessions will take place on weekends. The educational courses include special guest lectures or special events where we invite the most studious and dedicated students to participate. The program participants are selected by the Foundation’s project management team in consultation with the management of the partnering social care institutions.

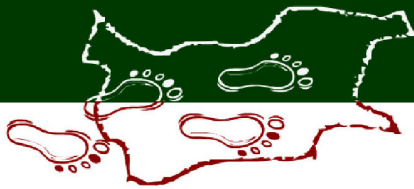
In 2009/2010, *Step in the Future!* consists of 4 modules, each comprising several 5-hour courses and lasting for 1 to 2 months. A detailed description of the four modules is provided on page 3. The courses comprise of a variety of useful life skills and knowledge themes, among which: economics knowledge, personal and professional communication skills, negotiation and presentation skills, analytical skills, psychological methods for managing difficult situations, personal health and human rights knowledge. The sessions are taught by volunteer trainers from Step for Bulgaria Foundation and partner organizations, among which BEST (the association of engineering and technology students in Europe), the Sofia University Business Club, University of the 21st Century,



the Bulgarian Yoga Association and others.

Along with the educational sessions, monthly visits with professionals from various fields allow the participants to become acquainted with a variety of professional backgrounds and career developmental paths. This year we plan to have as our guests a professional artist, journalist, sportsman, psychologist, fashion designer, hair-stylist, lawyer, real estate agent, medical doctor and more. In addition, each of the participants will be asked to complete a general professional plan at the start of the program and set up monthly objectives to achieve in collaboration with an individual supervisor. In order to secure the engagement of the participants and to teach a sense of responsibility, we will also ask them to choose a way in which to contribute (or “give back”) to the program. This could be either through starting a new activity in their social care home (e.g. teaching English to younger kids after school), designing a new project within their community or supporting the program trainers during the sessions by preparing additional material and presenting in class.

At the end of the program, the students who performed the best and attended consistently the sessions will be invited to participate in Summer Academy STEP Bulgaria 2010.



Educational modules and content included in Step in the Future! 2009-2010:

Weeks 1-8: Emotional health and effective communication

- knowing oneself
- forming relationships of trust
- communicating without aggression and managing conflicts
- psycho-drama

Weeks 9-10: My rights and my health

- Shaping a Charter of essential human rights
- inter-ethnic relationships and civic engagement
- personal health: addictive substances, HIV, healthy lifestyle

Weeks 11-17: Management and leadership skills

- team work and team management skills
- negotiation skills
- project development and presentation
- leadership skills

Weeks 18-20: Professional orientation and entrepreneurship

- two half-day traineeships arranged in professional areas of interest to the participants (i.e. with a professional cook/ psychologist/ hair dresser/ bank officer/ journalist/ photographer; or at a construction site/ furniture factory/ tailor's workshop)
- development of a business project and first implementation stages/