Phoenix Inspire Additional Documentation

Thank you for taking the time to read our additional document. This additional document includes:

1. a background to Vidin and our struggle to help disadvantaged young adults in this very poor area of Europe
2. the English translation of a report presented on Bulgarian National Television about our work in Novo Selo, Vidin
3. Background to Vidin and what we are doing

It is a fact that Vidin is the poorest region of Europe. With high unemployment a lack of capital investment and a lack of opportunities the Vidin region has seen a steady decline as residents relocate to other parts of Bulgaria or overseas. A survey of organizations in 2014 identified that only two of them actively invest in young people, with one of them being Phoenix Inspire. This is the reality of life in Vidin.

However, for a young adult from the Roma community the situation is much worse as the stigma and reputation limits their opportunities. As a result too many Roma do not see a reason to value education nor training as neither will lead to a job. Too many families turn to alternatives of prostitution, begging, petty crime and the black market to make their money.

We realise that we cannot change years of neglect but at least we aim to do something and our applied model of teaching and training is successful others will follow.

Our aim is to change this situation by teaching and training young adults to become practicing bakers, pastry chefs and service personnel. There are many catering businesses in Bulgaria and across Europe which need competent personnel with first class training. We aim to develop young Roma adults into such personnel.

You may wonder how we will do this.

We create and open a social enterprise. Our social enterprise is a bakery/pastry shop selling hand made products and beverages. The young adults work, learn and practice their skills and knowledge in a safe but live environment. The young adults work through a structured practical training programme which also includes under pinning knowledge.

Phoenix Café was created in July 2013 with donations received from friends and well wishes during 2012 and 2013.

The name ‘Phoenix Cafe’ really does not convey a true picture of what it really is. As a social enterprise Phoenix Cafe would be better described as bakery or patisserie serving hot and cold drinks in a warm and welcoming environment. The primary purpose of Phoenix Cafe is to give young adults the opportunity to learn how to bake, to cook and to serve customers professionally. A key to our success is that all our products are made on the premises. And as a result those who work in the café develop their skills and knowledge. Our customers can see our products are being made using a range of ingredients, good techniques and in a professional and appropriate environment. Our customer care is way beyond what is currently available here in Bulgaria.

Unfortunately, we have to find and move to new premises as our new land lord has raised the rent way beyond our capabilities. It could be argued that we are a victim of our own success as we invested heavily to make the place professional, look smart, warm and friendly. Converting the kitchen into a professional environment with tiled walls, new windows and correct equipment cost a lot of money. Whilst the equipment can be relocated it would be wrong to take the tiles off the wall.

Some of the funds raised will be used to help us recreate that same environment in a new location, just as smart and welcoming.

Our new venue will be able to offer more opportunities as a result of this project. We will be able to employ additional trainees thereby giving them the chance to have a better life. Apart from being able to continue to prepare, bake and present hand-made products we will change the service style from pay and collect to service at table.

As each trainee learns how to make a wide range of products they will be taught skills and techniques which will enable them to become competent and successful. It is ok to be able to make something but it is as equally important to understand why and how. Alongside skills development and competence the trainees will gain knowledge and understand through theory exercises and assessment.

Each trainee will work in all areas of the social enterprise and in doing so will become an all-round employee with added value to potential employers.

***Our trainees will learn:-***

Front of house

* The making and serving of beverages
* Customer care and dealing with customers
* Dealing with payments
* Serving, clearing and cleaning

Back of house

* Preparing, making, baking and the finishing of fermented goods
* Preparing, making, baking/cooking and the finishing of pastry goods
* Preparing, making, baking/cooking and the finishing of hot and cold desserts
* Preparing, making, baking and the finishing of biscuits
* Preparing, making, baking and the finishing of cakes
* Preparing and the making of soups
* Preparing and the making of sandwiches

Across both areas

* Food hygiene
* Team work
* Calculating and budgeting

There is nothing like this in Bulgaria. We believe that this will help these young adults to progress into employment and a better life.

1. Translation of article found at:

<http://archive.bnt.bg/bg/news/view/41838/anglichanin_obuchava_deca_ot_dom_vyv_vidinsko>

Englishman develops a learning centre for children in Vidin region

In order to help our campaign, the dialogue within this TV report has been kindly translated into English by a Bulgarian student at PACE University, New York.

Mick Cooper, who lives in Novo Selo, Vidin, wants to teach children from the local Children’s Home how to cook and bake and in this way to help them find their path in life. 52 year old Mick was involved in similar projects in his home country, England. In order to build his professional learning center, he counts on his own funds and donations. Other Englishmen in the village, together with the local citizens, are organizing a charity event next Sunday in Sofia to collect donations for the initiative.

Novo Selo has an extremely high unemployment rate of about 27%, meaning that over 230 of its citizens live only on social benefits. Every year the young adults leave the Children’s Home in the village without a job for a long time, and are often forced to resort to illegal means in order to ensure their survival. That is why Mick’s project inspires so much hope in the people of the village and is of crucial importance to them.

Petya Petkova, a senior student who is to leave the Children’s Home this year, shares that she is going to be alone after she graduates and if she had the opportunity to visit the learning center, it would have helped her a lot in her search for a job after high school. The director of the Children’s Home, Latinka Petrova, says that the learning center something everyone is desperate to see happen.

Mick is known among the people in Novo Selo as someone who regularly donates to the kindergardens, the school, the retirement club and other social establishments in the village. He has their full support, as well as the trust and respect of the mayor and the regional authorities. His goal is to give the young people in the region the chance to learn, grow and travel the world, practicing their professions. A large part of the required professional equipment for the center is already bought and delivered, but the building where the center in going to reside needs major repair. To fund this, Mick counts on the support and donations of like-minded people both in Bulgaria and in England.

Translation from Bulgarian to English by Adelina Ivanova