



## PHILANTHROPY AND CHARITY IN BULGARIA THROUGH THE LENS OF MEDIA

### *Summary*

The goals of the present analysis of media coverage of charity and philanthropy are to study the context and the way the topic is presented to broad public in Bulgaria, what the profile of the giver (current and in the past) is, and to highlight some of the main challenges in the process of communication about the topic. The analysis was initiated by the Bulgarian School of Politics “Dimitry Panitza” and was part of the project “Promoting Philanthropic Culture in Bulgaria 2012 - 2014”, supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. It was prepared by Assoc. Professor Maria Neikova, PhD, based on the data provided by the sociological agency ESTAT Ltd.

The present summary contains only the main results and recommendations from the analytical report. The full paper is available in Bulgarian.

### **Main results**

- Usually articles about charity and philanthropy are included in Bulgarian media during the main religious holidays;
- Group acts of charity are in the focus of media more often than individual ones;
- Media do not have a critical view to the relationship “state acting - charity”

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IN BULGARIA 2012-2014”



## Recommendations

### To Non-governmental organizations, including foundations:

- To work for better understanding in media and broad public about their role as key players which compensate for some deficits of public policies in different areas;
- To be trained on a permanent basis in effective work with media: how to find an interesting accent in the campaign so to attract media attention, to find a suitable “face” of the campaign, to improve their skills on how to write a press release and other materials for announcing results, etc;
- To seek collaboration with mayors, municipalities, municipal councilors, and if necessary - regional governors, so as to ensure that their campaigns and initiatives will be done. The role of local authorities is vital and achieving good results in the area of charity and philanthropy will be difficult without their support.

### To media:

- To continuously train their journalists in effective interaction with NGOs, including foundations, and in understanding of their work, as most of the foundations work for coping with deficits in public (and private) sector.

## The study

The survey covered two months - one which was a typical “holiday month” (December 2012) and another, which was a “normal” (non-holiday) month (March 2013). The range of media included in the survey was very broad and varied from traditional daily newspapers through electronic media to Internet sites, and from newspapers with national coverage to local ones, as well as media specialized in different spheres. The total number of surveyed media was 474. During the surveyed months, 252 of them had publications in the field of charity and

philanthropy. The total number of registered publications was 2153, of which 67 % were published in December 2012 and 33 % - in March 2013.

In general, articles about philanthropy and charity were rarely published on the front pages of newspapers, nor were among the leading materials in electronic media emissions. The small amount of commentary texts showed that most media had a rather passive position towards charity and philanthropy, and often were provoked by a particular event. We could conclude that their attention was usually drawn from a particular action of a person or company, and media did not have their own policy to bring the topic into their agenda. That was the reason why we could not find commentaries or other analytical materials about the role of charity and philanthropy as important activities, supplementing or substituting public policies or activities of public authorities.

Another conclusion from the survey was that media generally focus mostly on the type of activity - charity or giving, rather than on beneficiaries of the activity, most often children.

## **Who are current philanthropists?**

The general conclusion was that the portrait of philanthropists in media is not clear. Most often these are non-for-profit organizations and celebrities, among them sportsmen/women and actors/actresses. At local level, mayors, municipal councilors and regional governors play a key role, and usually there is not an initiative at municipal level without their presence.

Generally celebrities prefer health care, social policy, culture, sports activities and religious donations as areas of giving. Non-for-profit organizations focus their attention mainly on social policy, health care and education. Business people and political parties have similar preferences and usually give for social causes. Companies also prefer to donate to social causes, and sports clubs - to health care, social policy and of course - sports activities.

Another conclusion from the survey was that the portrait of current philanthropists needed additional clarification and density, which could be done only in cooperation between media and philanthropists themselves, irrespectively if they were individuals or organizations.