Annual report 2020



VOLUNTEER ONCE A WEEK - FRIENDSHIP FOR LIFE



"I DON'T FEEL SO ALONE, AND I SMILE MORE."

Janka, 16

### DEAR BUDDY FRIEND,

2020 was full of surprises for all of us. We experienced many new feelings and emotions, learned to stay in touch despite social distancing, and tried to overcome the new and unknown. The pandemic showed us how valuable our health is, we re-evaluated our priorities and realized the importance of time spent together. Our relationships were challenged every day, along with our patience and trust – trust in ourselves, but also trust in the relationships around us. Trust is not only one of the core values of the BUDDY program, but also the essence of our relationships with our volunteers, their relationships with the children, and our relationships with you: our supporters, friends and partners.

Despite the challenges, 2020 brought us results which we are very grateful for. Especially that our BUDDY children are still joyful and trust their BUDDY volunteers.

We hope you can find a moment to read our annual report for the year 2020.

COVID-19 brought us challenges which we had to overcome but nevertheless we have many achievements we want to share with you. In the first section, you'll find how many new BUDDY relationships we created, you'll read about the BUDDY system in 2020, how we established partnerships with new centres for children and families, and our supporting activities for children and volunteers. You'll also discover how we create and evaluate the quality of the relationships. Even in 2020 we worked on children's development and their path to independence. You can read about the results and impact of our work, and how our young adults who have already left the centres are managing. We are happy that our **supporters** had the time to share their thoughts on our core value – trust, and how much they value their time. At the end you'll find a summary of our financial management and long-term strategic plan.

We'd like to thank you for your trust and support. We are grateful, because thanks to your support we can give children who cannot grow up in their own families what they are missing – a feeling that someone cares for them and accepts them for who they really are.

Thanks to trust and quality time spent between the BUDDY volunteer and child, these children can walk their path to independence.

In the name of all BUDDY children, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts,

Laci and the BUDDY team





# **BUDDY story**

In 2006 Ladislav Kossár bought a bracelet for one thousand crowns from children living in a children's home.

He visited the children's home and asked:

"How can I help you?"

The answer was simple:



### Our goal

To create (un)conventional friendships between adult volunteers and vulnerable children who are not growing up in their own families.

#### **VISION**

So that every child not growing up in their own family has at least one person they can trust and can lead an independent life with dignity.

#### **MISSION**

We find, train and support volunteers so they can provide individual long-term support for vulnerable children who are not growing up in their own families.

"Find a way for these children to spend their free time away from the children's home."

That's how the BUDDY story started.

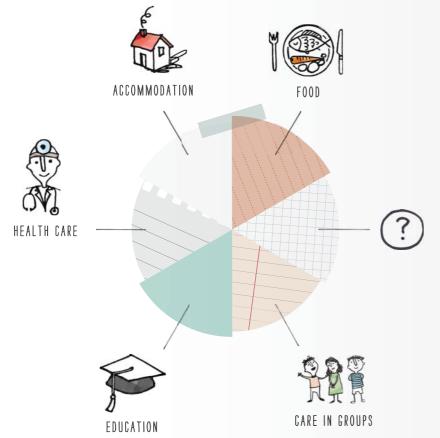
We grew up in a loving family, we received an education and understood that no one can manage in life alone. That's why we think that every child should have someone, someone who can help them find their place in life.

Ladislav Kossár, founder & Lucia Kossárová, co-founder

# What are children missing?

#### Children's basic needs are met...

The centres cover children's material needs.



## ...but they are missing individual attention.

Every child has unique social and emotional needs, which are often not being met.





The ability to build a **friendly** and **voluntary** relationship based on **trust** with adults outside of the centres is essential for a child's development.



The social networks of children who grow up in centres rarely stretch beyond their institutions. Their view of the world is therefore often distorted. Children lack healthy family role models and real contact with the outside world, where they would be responsible for themselves.

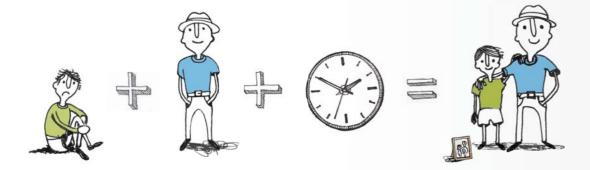
Children need real **role models** to look up to and learn from. We carefully select mature adults with a **good set of values**, who can provide real **support** and give them the most valuable thing: **their time**. So a few hours a week can make a positive change to the child for the rest of their life.



Every child is different.
Only targeted individual care can address deeply-rooted traumas and **unleash potential** in each child.







# **BUDDY equation**

BUDDY is about a relationship that heals children and teaches them to trust adults again. When children spend free time with their volunteer, they can build a relationship based on trust, and at the same time they gain support to help them reach their full potential.

#### **PROBLEM**

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), it is a child's human right to grow up in a family environment, an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. However, almost 3,500 children in Slovakia do not grow up in their families but in institutional residential group homes. They have many traumatic experiences from their biological families, and institutional care cannot give them what they need most: a close relationship with an adult who spends time with them individually and is not paid to do so. They often end up on the edge of society after leaving the centre.

#### **SOLUTION**

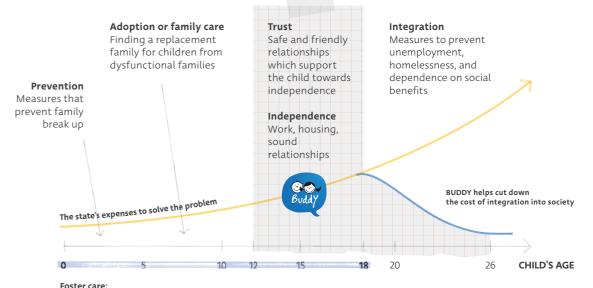
BUDDY finds, selects and connects volunteers with children from centres. During their meetings with the child, they provide the most valuable resource, their time. Like this, a healthy, trusting and **long-term relationship** can gradually grow between them.

This relationship provides the **basis for meeting the individual needs** of the child and **supports** them while they are finding their place in society.

# Our place in the system

BUDDY supports children and young people who cannot grow up in their own families. BUDDY steps in to complement the foster care system for children and young people. As children grow up, the system has to allocate increasing amounts of money for every child to adapt into society.

In our program we strive to help children get ready to leave the centre, so it becomes easier for them to become independent members of our society. Our ultimate wish remains that children do not have to grow up in institutions.



Children are under the care of centres for children and families, either in residential group homes or foster families

2010

#### Development of children's skills

- education focused on children's skills, preparation for independence (tutoring, IT, finance, work, communication)
- weekend program with experiential and life skills learning
- first employee

2016-2018

#### Program development and professionalisation

- selection, education, and support of the volunteers by coordinators (psychologists) is the basis of our work
- professionalisation of the organisation
- focusing on impact and quality measurement
- sustainability strategy
- 10 workers



2006

#### Willingness to help children

- founder buys a bracelet
- BUDDY program begins as a summer camp called "4 Elements"
- establishment of civic association
- volunteer team

2014

#### We figure it out

- 8 years passed from founding the organisation and we understood the need for and strength of an individual approach
- attachment theory has become the scientific basis for our work
- we stop direct work with children and start our professional cooperation with volunteers as key agents of change
  - 3 BUDDY pairs emerge organically

- 3 workers



2019

#### Stabilisation and preparation for growth

- strengthening the team and sustaining the quality of the program  $\,$
- new child protection policy
- first local volunteer recruitment campaign
- fundraising and marketing strategy definition
- 13 workers

12

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### **Achievements** and challenges of 2020

What we've achieved despite the tough year





We made the application form more complex. This enabled us to attract candidates who are more likely to be appropriate for BUDDY volunteering.

#### We did it.

Maintaining relationships and in person meetings was challenging in 2020. Nevertheless, we managed to keep the BUDDY relationships going in the online world and to strengthen the unity of our internal team. We organized an online Christmas party for 140 guests: children, volunteers, our internal team and employees from the centres. We also established partnerships with new centres. Our move to the online world made our work more efficient and prepared us for the expansion to new regions.



"All of a sudden, the entire difficult volunteer recruitment process flashed in front of my eyes like a movie - the application, personal interview, selection rounds, training sessions, and finally meeting the child. Our work has a purpose.

Ianine Lacho volunteer recruitment

time makes it worth it."

Finding a suitable volunteer is difficult and often lengthy, but the sparks in a child's eyes when they

meet their volunteer for the first

#### Long-term research into the impact of the program

We've launched a long-term research project into the impact of the BUDDY program, in collaboration with Fordham University and the Slovak Academy of Sciences. We enrolled the first 15 BUDDY children as well as 15 children in the control group. We'll be monitoring changes in their self-esteem, trust towards adults, emotional regulation, quality of life and resilience.

The results should help us improve our work and give further evidence for the importance of a safe, trusting adult in the life of a traumatized child

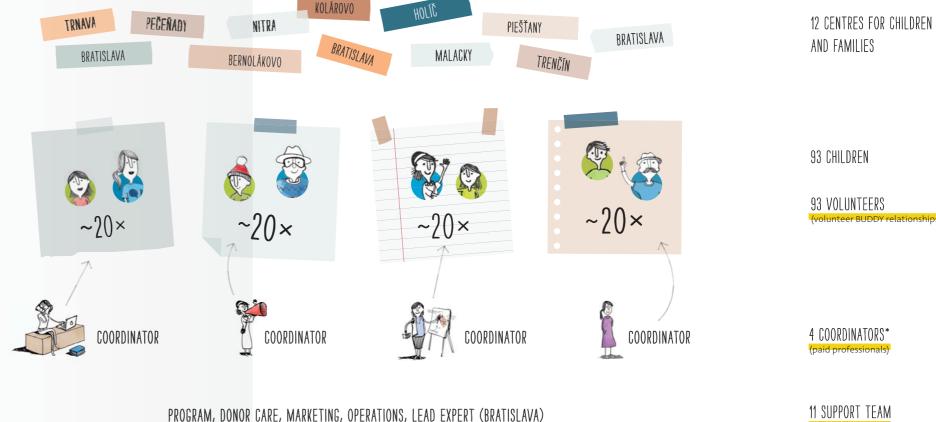
#### Challenges we had to overcome

#### Due to the COVID-19 pandemic we:

- moved our program online (recruitment & selection, training, care and research)
- were discovering new ways of supporting the **BUDDY** relationships
- had to postpone creating new BUDDY pairs in Košice and Prešov from fall 2020 to the first half of 2021
- cancelled our BUDDY Day where every year our team, volunteers, children and supporters get together

### **BUDDY** world in 2020

BUDDY is a program in which a 15-member expert team converts financial donations from our supporters into (un)conventional friendships. Children meet with their volunteers, who give them their time for free. Together they build relationships, which eventually play a key role for the children's successful integration into society.





238 FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS

### What did the program achieve in 2020?

RECRUITMENT

Operating in four Slovak regions.

Getting ready for the expansion

recruitment campaign, including

After operating in Bratislava,

Trnava and Nitra region, we

expanded our program to

Trenčín region.

to Eastern Slovakia.

In fall 2020 we began a

nation-wide volunteer

Prešov and Košice.

#### Establishing new partnerships with two centres for children and families.

Centres from Holíč and KS Dúha Bratislava have joined the BUDDY program. Currently we work with 12 centres for children and families.





\*Centre for children and families

#### Extended application form.

Although filling in the application form is now more complex. it helps us and the candidates to better evaluate their readiness for this type of volunteering.

#### The selection process was adapted to the online format.

Initial information and training session and individual meetings can be now done online.







#### Enrolled 19 new children. At least one child was enrolled in the program in 10 out of 12 centres we work with.

#### Created 20 new relationships.

In addition to our 19 new children, we also found a substitute volunteer for one of our children already in the program.

#### **EDUCATION**

#### 40 volunteers were trained in child protection.

Part of our prevention plan is to minimize volunteers' unwanted behaviour towards children.

#### Online workshops and discussions for volunteers and centre employees.

We added a new online evening discussion format to our educational curriculum to help volunteers and centre staff better address the needs of vulnerable children.

#### Organization of 5 evening trainings.

We covered the following topics: motivation for change, addictions, financial literacy, career selection and safety on the internet.

#### Thanks to the online format. the number of participating volunteers tripled.

Staff from the centres were also able to join us for these online training sessions, as it was easier for them to participate during their busy schedules.



### CARE

#### 93 children and 93 volunteers had our support.

Despite the pandemic, we managed to retain the number of children in our care; the average age of children was 16 and the volunteers' age 36.

#### Improvement in relationship monitoring.

30 established parameters now enable us to regularly monitor the quality of our BUDDY pairs in four categories: child, volunteer, relationship and child protection.

#### Support for volunteer-child online communication.

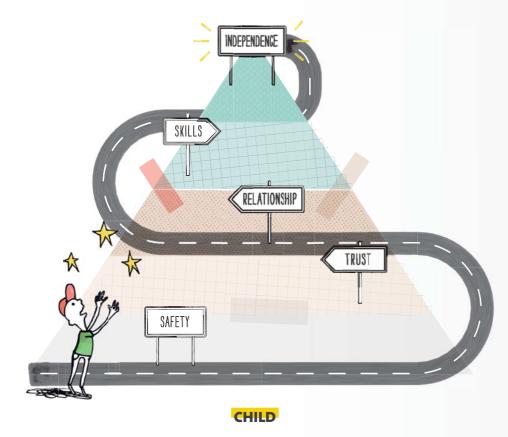
We created a support manual for volunteers and systematically motivated them to be creative in how they communicate in the online world.

#### 16 children graduated from the BUDDY program.

We are happy that although they are no longer in the program, 13 young people continue to have a relationship with their volunteers. The average graduating age of children from the program is 20.

#### 21

#### **YOUNG ADULT**

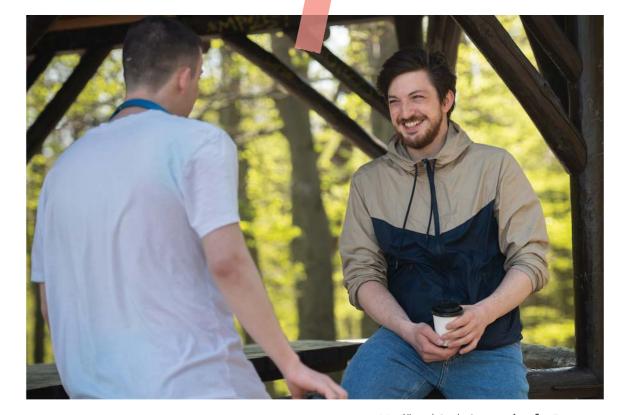


# **BUDDY pyramid**

Our vision is that every child not growing up in their own family has at least one person they can trust, and can lead an independent life with dignity. To achieve this the child must feel safe. Only if they feel safe can they form a trusting relationship. This relationship enables further skill development, which is needed to start an independent and fulfilled life.

#### Matúš has become independent.

He has a safe place to live, has a job, and is learning how to be responsible with money.



Matúš and Ondrej - together for 5 years

"I am proud of myself - for the first time in my life I've ended the month with a proper sum of money in my bank account, not just like 30 cents. Can you imagine? I had 60 euros in my bank account at the end of the month!"

#### Matúš

(BUDDY young adult, 19)

"Even I am jealous of that."

#### Ondrej

(BUDDY volunteer, technical consultant, 32)

# BUDDY relationships heal and teach to trust again

Life hasn't been easy for Livia and she doesn't have a close relationship with her family.

The beginning of their relationship wasn't easy either. Even though Lívia and Simona immediately connected at their first meeting, Lívia's fear of disappointment was stronger. She was afraid to trust a new person. She wasn't sure if Simona's intentions were real, if she'd really be there for her in the tough situations as well as the happy ones. For four long months Lívia refused to meet-up, until she finally got the courage to give the new friendship a chance.

Lívia had loved riding horses since she was a small girl; however due to an injury, she had had to stop for a longer time. Sima knew this and organized a day of horse-riding for Lívia. That was a major turning point in their relationship. Sima knew what would make Lívia happy, and **she did something for her that nobody had ever done before**.

Lívia appreciates Simona's **patience**, and that she supported her even in the hardest periods of her life. She can always say how she feels. To her, Sima is a sister, mother and friend, all in one.

Sima admires Lívia's perseverance. Even though she hit rock bottom a few times, she always manages to get up and move on. Nothing will stop her. Sima is also proud what a great mother Lívia has become, and that often she knows how to react better than Sima does. Lívia and her daughter get along really well.

Today they are both happy mothers of beautiful children, help each other out, respect one another and **believe their friendship will last for a lifetime**.



Lívia and Simona - together for 6.5 years

"I would recommend the BUDDY program to every child. It's a great feeling, to have someone you can trust, someone who's always there for you.

Especially, as children like myself had to go through very difficult stuff.

Lívia

(BUDDY young adult, 22)

TRUST

SAFETY

# We create quality relationships

We monitor the quality of relationships thoroughly because it is the core requirement for ensuring a positive impact on the child.

Since 2018 we've been using standardized questionnaires for both children and volunteers in the BUDDY program so we can evaluate the quality of their relationships.

We are happy that despite the difficult COVID year, the relationship quality rating has improved.

## How do volunteers perceive their BUDDY relationships?\*

5 aspects of the quality of the relationship from the perspective of the volunteers:

68 68 2019 2020 \*\*\*

CLOSENESS

ABILITY TO SOLVE THE CHILD'S PROBLEMS

COMFORT LEVEL

COMPATIBILITY WITH THE CHILD

SATISFACTION

# How do children perceive their BUDDY relationships?\*

5 aspects of the quality of the relationship from the perspective of the children:



COMPATIBILITY WITH THE VOLUNTEER

SATISFACTION

FEELS HAPPY

CLOSENESS

CHILD DOESN'T FEEL THAT
THE VOLUUNTEER IS TOO PRESCRIPTIVE



<sup>\*</sup> In the pandemic situation we managed to get answers from 44 volunteers and 35 children before they left the centres

<sup>\*\*</sup> There is no satisfactory value, our goal is to maximise the scores (max. 100)

PRACTICAL LIFE SKILLS

HEALTH.

SKILLS

WORK And Learning

PEOPLE

Janko's journey

to independent accommodation

AND SUPPORT

The star is a tool that helps record a child's achievements in different life stages, and supports him/her on the path to an independent life with dignity. Twelve children worked with the Outcome Star™ in 2020, an evidence-based tool for both monitoring and supporting change. The children select where they are on the journey of change and decide what they want to improve in their life. Each year, the Outcome Star will help us systematically monitor the development and change of children on their paths to independence. We couldn't engage more children with this tool due to COVID-19.

\* The Outcomes Star ™

#### (5) INDEPENDENCE

I live independently and manage well enough without support from a service. I know how to get help if I need it.

#### 4) GETTING THERE WITH SUPPORT

I have somewhere stable to live or I am applying for a place. I mostly manage to be OK but need some support with the tenancy agreement, sharing with people or other issues.

#### TRYING TO SORT THINGS OUT

Thanks to the support, I have somewhere to live and I am not at risk of eviction. I am taking steps to live my life independently in the future, but it's early days.

#### ACCEPTING HELP

I am at risk of eviction, living in assisted living, staying somewhere unsuitable or homeless. I engage with support but don't take the initiative.

#### ) STUC

I am at risk of eviction, living in assisted living, staying somewhere unsuitable or I am homeless. I don't have or don't accept help.

# ...on the path to independence

Each corner of the Star presents one key life area. At the beginning, the child may not see any way out from their problem. Once they have a safe trusting relationship with the volunteer, the child can accept help from the volunteer in trying to solve the problem. Together they find solutions to overcome difficult life situations. The child manages to solve the problem and with time can see what he/she achieved which motivates him/her not to give up. The child also knows he/she can depend on their volunteer and ask for help.



# Young adults in the BUDDY program

The BUDDY program had **31 young adults** over 18 years old who left their centre in 2020. We are happy that with the help of BUDDY volunteers we can help improve their chances of getting accommodation and a job, and can reduce their chances of getting involved in illegal activities.



#### 100%\*

of young adults had **accommodation**\*\* several months or years after leaving their centre.



#### 90%\*

of young adults had a **job**\*\* several months or years after leaving their centre, they study, or are on maternity leave.

- Answers were provided by 29 children out of the 31 who have already left their centre.
- \*\* Different forms of employment and accommodation.

For comparison, according to research by the Institute for Work and Family Research, 60% (227 of 376) of young adults who left centres between 2015 and 2017 had a job within the first year after leaving.

(Fico, M., 2017, Work with Children from Children's Homes and Their Work Experiences After Leaving. Institute for Work and Family Research.)

# Evaluation of the BUDDY program by our children, volunteers and centres

We always strive to improve and create even stronger unique friendships. That's why we are interested in the opinions of our volunteers, our children and the centres we collaborate with. Experience with the program is also often evaluated by our donors or volunteer candidates.

#### Children

100%

of interviewed children said they **can always rely on their volunteer** (always comes, does what he/she promised, etc.)

#### Centres

100%

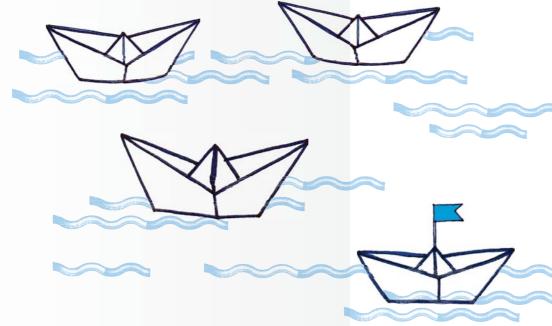
of centres that provided feedback would **recommend us** to other centres.

#### Volunteers

98%

of volunteers who provided feedback said the **support** they obtain from the BUDDY program **makes them a better volunteer**.

BUDDY changes the lives of children, volunteers and our supporters. We improve society by connecting worlds that would otherwise not meet. Based on qualitative data from more than 80 questionnaires, we summarized the impact of our program as follows:



#### CHILDREN

- support in all areas of their life
- help with school, job, accommodation and personal challenges
- positive change in their behaviour and stronger self-confidence
- different perspective on various life situations
- BUDDY volunteers have become their trusted adults

#### VOLUNTEERS

- become more humble. patient, empathic and grateful
- personal growth
- joy from helping

#### SUPPORTERS

- gratitude
- satisfaction from helping
- insight into a different world
- contributing to a better society

#### SOCIETY

- contributing to a systematic change
- society is more empathetic, and inequality declines
- connecting worlds that would otherwise not meet



#### "A RISING TIDE RAISES ALL BOATS.

John F. Kennedy



#### Child

"Since have had my BUDDY volunteer my whole life has basically changed. When I was in the centre, I was always there playing video games and watching TV. It's different now, he takes me out, we go out together and I started doing more sports."

#### Rišo

(BUDDY child, 15)



#### Volunteer

"BUDDY volunteering gave me an opportunity to find a new friend. Also, it enabled me to broaden my horizons outside my normal routine and the bubble in which I live, to appreciate that there are people suffering or maybe who don't have as much support at home as we do."

#### Lukáš

Sales manager (BUDDY volunteer, 41)



#### Supporter

"BUDDY brings true value for children from centres and it is done by the right people."

#### Marek Sásik

Slovenská sporiteľňa (supporter of the BUDDY program for 8 years)

## What do you get from your relationship?

"She gives me nice memories, we enjoy good meals together and sometimes when we aren't doing anything, Sveta just comes, and that makes my day."

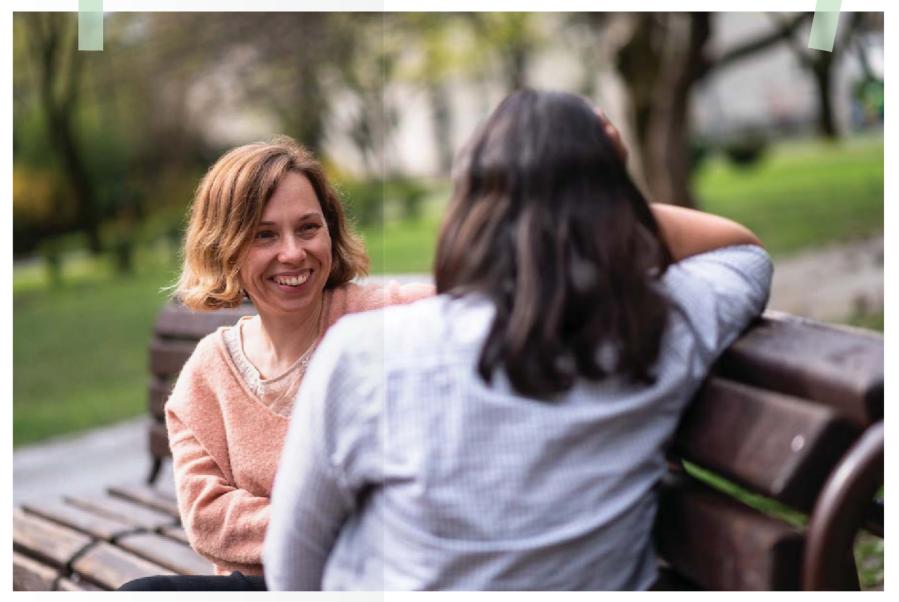
#### Kvetka

(BUDDY child, 13)

"We are friends. I know how to help Kvetka in many ways, but she also helps me improve when she gives me feedback. When we talk about something, she makes me see things from a different perspective."

#### Svetlana

(BUDDY volunteer, architect, 42)



Svetlana and Kvetka - together 1.5 years

### We asked our supporter:

### Why do you support the BUDDY program?

"I often visit my parents, mainly during the weekends. When I get close to the city where I grew up, sometimes I ask myself, what would my life look like without these roots, without my background, without my family? What would I build on, what would I use as a base?

Children in centres are somewhat self-made. Their fate. their life situation, their roots...because of those, not because of their own fault they ended up growing up without their family, growing up in the system.

The relationship they have with their BUDDY volunteer can partially substitute for not having a family, and most importantly, it can inspire them not to repeat the same mistakes as their own family; so their children will have a place to come back to, and an opportunity to explore their roots when they are approaching their town where they were born."

### What does trust mean to you?

"Trust for me is something like a personal bond with a person I know very well. Someone who's been there with me through crazy and difficult times but also the good ones; basically, that we have a stable foundation, and we have many reasons to trust one another. In today's world full of individualism and empty words, trust is very valuable and unique."

#### How much do you value time?

"Time is a valuable commodity. It is very hard to manage time, and usually it shows that some things you just cannot do faster - they need their time. Time are moments either well or less well spent, depending on how and with whom we spend it. Time is something which is, with few exceptions, "in our hands." In the end, it is up to us how we manage to use it."

Peter Barecz publisher of FORBES magazine





# Revenues and expenses

Despite the pandemic, in 2020 we increased the proportion of regular revenues in our total budget. Most of our donations come from regular individual monthly supporters. We continue to build our multi-source financing model, which enables the independence and sustainability of the program. Most of our expenses are spent on the program team, who carry out recruitment, selection and care for our volunteers. Other expenses are linked to acquiring and caring for our BUDDY supporters and operations.

#### **BUDDY team news in 2020**

#### We hired a field social worker.

Since June our field social worker has provided help and support to young people who have already left their centres. Seven young people are already receiving support from her.

#### We strengthened our team to recruit new supporters.

A new colleague focusing on finding new supporters joined our team, and we strengthened our campaign team.

#### We expanded our donor care team.

Our main ambition is to maintain quality care and to increase the number of our financial supporters. So we have hired a part-time team member to help us with this goal.

	₹
REVENUES	572 269
Individuals	277 604
Businesses	178 532
Foundations	90 049
Public funding	24 593
Other	1 491

EXPENSES	532 830
Program	352 204
Donors/Supporters	180 626

#### **PROGRAM**

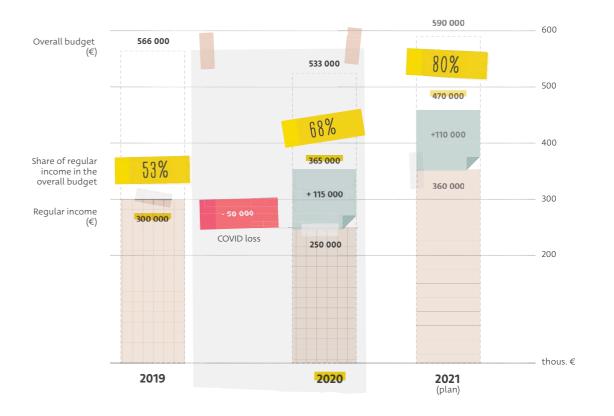
Recruitment, volunteer selection and care, relationships with centres, child protection, quality monitoring and impact measurement. Includes proportion of operations expenses according to the average number of team members.

#### **DONORS AND SUPPORTERS**

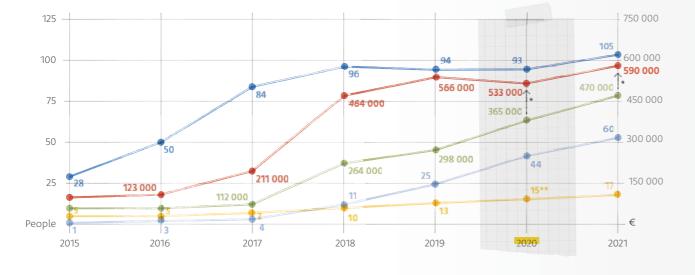
Care for new and existing supporters, building brand awareness. Includes proportion of operations expenses according to the average number of team members.

#### **OPERATIONS**

Ensuring the organization functions correctly – accounting, administration, financial management and control, rent, phone and IT.



Despite a €50,000 loss due to the pandemic (due to some regular donors withdrawing and regular events being cancelled) our revenue from our regular donations grew by 115.000 EUR. The proportion of our regular income in the overall budget thus increased from 53% to 68%. Our goal is that regular expenses for long-term care of BUDDY pairs is to the extent possible covered by long-term regular revenue.



# Quality and growth

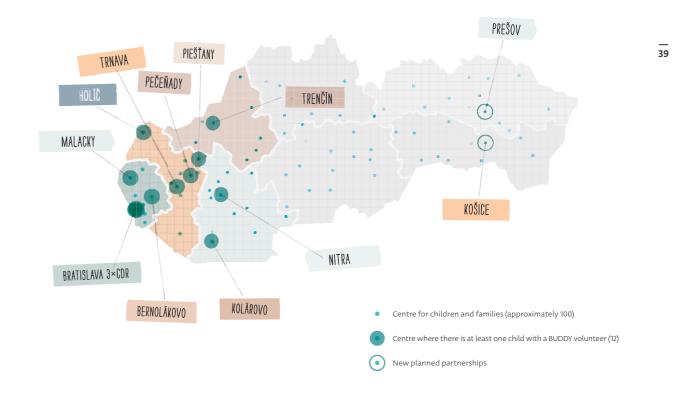
In 2020 we found 19 new children their BUDDY volunteer and thus the number of children whose lives we have positively affected increased to 137. We supported approximately the same number of children as in 2019, as we were still ending "supporting" and "tutoring" BUDDY pairs (these used to be a part of the program in the past).

- children active in the program
   budget (€)
   regular income (€)
   cummulative number of children who went through the program
   team
- Team professionalization enabled us to lower the care expenses for one child in 2020. One coordinator takes care of approximately 20 pairs.
- \*\* Includes full-time employees, professional consultants and team volunteers.

Austerity measures were implemented during 2020 due to COVID, which enabled us to lower our overall organizational costs and prepared us for growth in 2021. We continue to improve the efficiency of our internal team, strengthen the proportion of regular revenue in the overall budget to achieve a balanced budget and help as many children as possible.

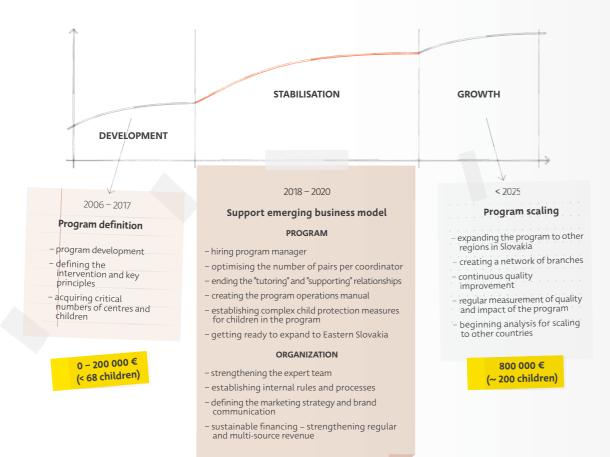
### BUDDY in Slovakia

BUDDY continues to expand into new regions and cities. Today, children have their BUDDY volunteer in ten cities and four regions: Bratislava, Trnava, Trenčín and Nitra. We are planning new partnerships with centres in eastern regions of Slovakia: Košice and Prešov.



### Strategic plan

All investments into the BUDDY program are made to ensure its sustainable growth for future years.

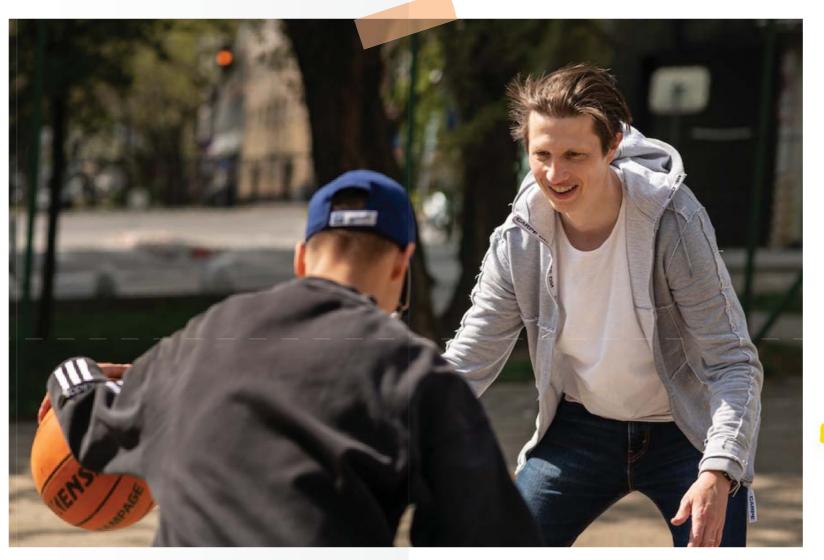


(~ 100 children)



# Mato, how do you see your future? Do you know what you'd like to do?

Mato: "Yes, I'd like to become a barber. I already cut children's hair at the centre. I'd love to become a barber, I just hope to get accepted by the school because I really like doing it."



Maťo and Lukáš – together 3 years

# Can the relationship with your volunteer help you achieve this dream? How?

Maťo: "Yes, he supports me. Lukáš tells me I should do it and that he'll help me with it as much as he can."

**Maťo** (BUDDY child, 14)

### **THANK YOU**

to our 100 volunteers and over 200 business and individual supporters.

We couldn't do it without you.







































































Paul Shane Spear





PRO BONO SERVICES



DONATION

# You can support the BUDDY program with

Civic association PRO VIDA

Strážna 11, 831 01 Bratislava

OFFICE

Štúrova 3 (Luxorka), 811 02 Bratislava

ID: 37 927 051

TAX ID: 2022409301

IBAN: SK32 0900 0000 0051 4724 3608 IBAN: SK90 1100 0000 0026 2383 9960

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everybody needs someBUDDY