

Annual Report 2023





VOLUNTEER ONCE A WEEK – FRIENDSHIP FOR A LIFETIME



Dear BUDDY friends

Love.

The only thing, they say, that is meaningful.

We think so too.

Shakespeare's sonnets. Monet's dancing water lilies. Bach's cantatas.

A mother gazing fondly at her sleeping child.

16-year-old Bianka from Topolčany. Spending time with her volunteer on a park bench. It feels like the world is standing still in this moment, with everything condensed into it. Acceptance, comfort, trust. Laughter. Being together is so ordinary and yet so extraordinary. Breathing the same crisp spring air. Just because they can. Time. Together. Love. Being. Life.

Thank you, my friends, for your time. For your love in a thousand guises: volunteers, donors, therapists, the selection team, graphic designers and illustrators, marketers and managers, journalists, and participating centres for children and families. All of you who help us. 2023 was a beautiful year. But it was also one of the most challenging years for us. It tested our love and patience. One of our colleagues had a very difficult medical crisis to deal with. Things are much better now.

We had love, patience, peace and wisdom on our side. We bonded. Some plans were pushed back, and we adjusted the tempo and working hours. For 21 children, we may have found someone who will be dear to them for a lifetime, someone they can trust. We also secured new donors and recruits.

Thank you.

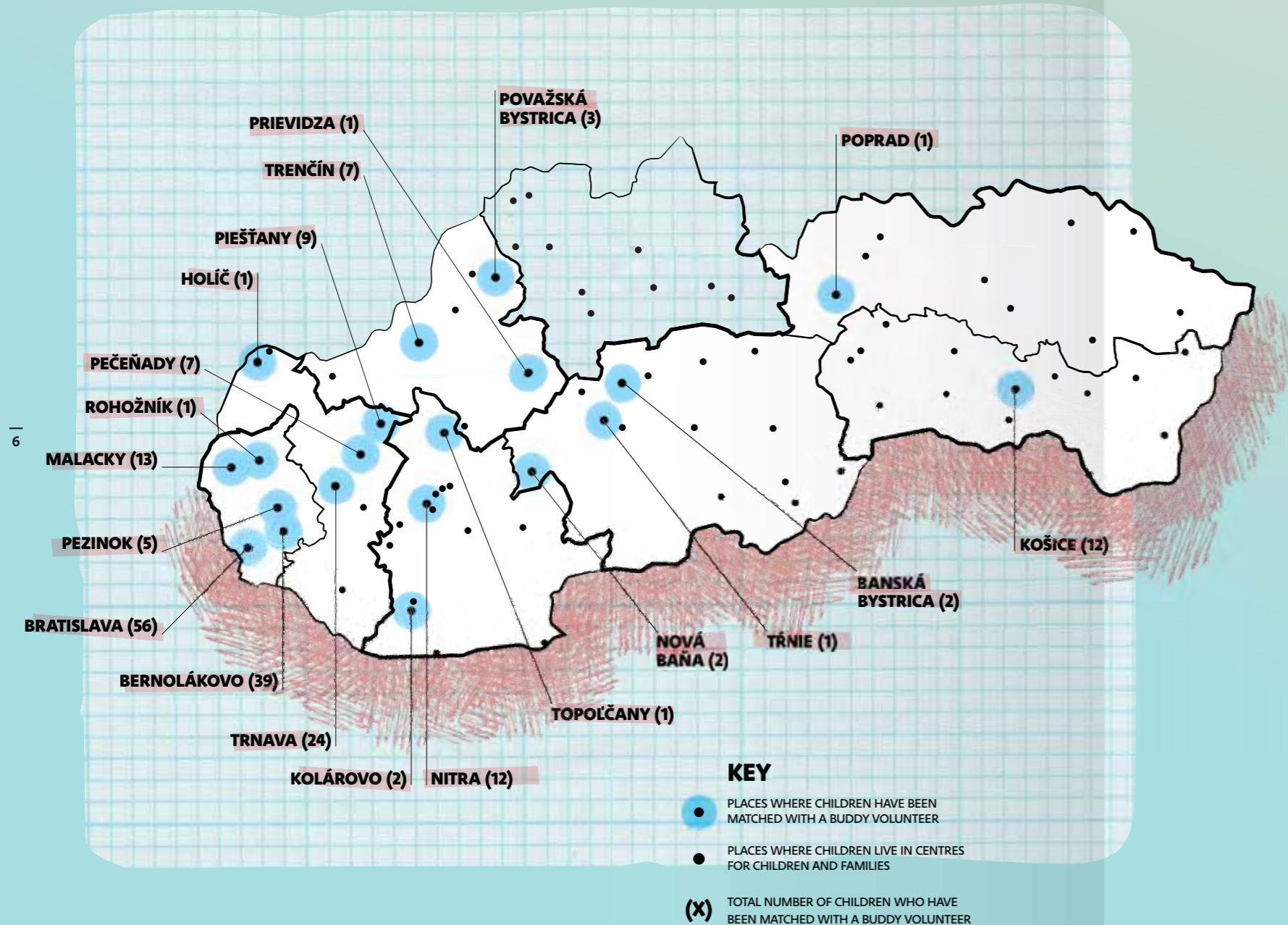
Thank you for your trust and love. We are patiently doing our best to conjure up that same love and trust for children in every corner of our beautiful Slovakia. For children who won't get the time, attention or acceptance they need from their parents, either today or tomorrow. But they do have us. And even if they don't know us by name, and even if you don't know their names, there's one thing we do know: we know they can feel our support. They can see and experience love every week in its thousand glorious forms, in a thousand and one beautiful places.

Just as it is. A couple of hours together a week. A few hours of joy. And in those hours the wonder and awe of all life.

My heartfelt thanks on behalf of the entire BUDDY team,

Laci Kossár,
founder

Map of Changed Lives



Since the program started, we have found BUDDY volunteers for **199** children in **20** towns and cities across Slovakia.

60% of them are still under the active care of professional BUDDY psychologists.

Every week, there are 20 towns and cities in Slovakia, from Malacky to TrnIE to Košice, where BUDDY pairs get to meet up.

We have a presence in seven out of the country's eight regions. And we're hoping to find our first BUDDY volunteers in the eighth, Žilina, too.

Where did we match new pairs in 2023?

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| +2 Banská Bystrica | +1 Piešťany |
| +2 Bernolákovo | +1 Poprad |
| +3 Bratislava | +1 Prievidza |
| +2 Košice | +3 Považská Bystrica |
| +1 Malacky | +1 Topoľčany |
| +2 Nová Baňa | +1 TrnIE |
| +1 Pezinok | |

BUDDY helps children to live better lives



SUPPORT

"She understands me, she knows how to help me, she encourages me. She always makes time for me. She takes interest in me."

Dominika (16)

RESPONSIBILITY

"I'm doing better in school and I'm getting more exercise."

Roman (15)

RELATIONSHIPS

"I've started to be more talkative, more smiley. I'm not sad as much, I feel more alive since we've been together."

Tamara (13)

CONFIDENCE

"I feel less ashamed. I don't get as stressed when I have to speak in public, for example (she suggested various stress management techniques)."

Helena (15)

COMFORT

"When I get nervous, I think of her and it calms me down."

Erika (16)

RESILIENCE

"I don't feel anxious as much; I can handle things better."

Šimon (18)

CLOSENESS

"I feel like I am loved. It puts me in a better frame of mind."

Nikola (17)

QUALITY OF LIFE

"She showed me that there are other ways to live than always feeling miserable. She's been a great help to me."

Sofia (16)

TRUST

"We discuss things I wouldn't share with anyone else."

Lucia (17)

BEHAVIOUR

"I don't answer back as much as I used to. I've made progress in my relationship with my mum."

Alica (15)

Source: Internal survey using a standardised questionnaire for children. Youth Mentoring Survey, 2023 (61 responses)

"I LOVE EVERYTHING WE DO, AND I'M ESPECIALLY HAPPY TO BE WITH HER. I WOULDN'T CARE IF ALL WE DID WAS SIT THERE FEELING BORED... JUST AS LONG AS I'M WITH HER."

Bianka (16)

"I'M A BETTER LISTENER I'M MORE PATIENT. I'VE LEARNT TO BE LESS ANNOYED WHEN SOMETHING DOESN'T WORK OUT THE WAY I WANTED."

Katka (44), Trenčianske Teplice
BUDDY volunteer



"I'M LEARNING THAT LITTLE THINGS LIKE PAYING ATTENTION, SAYING A FEW KIND WORDS, AND HAVING SOMEONE THERE FOR YOU ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANYTHING ELSE. WE OFTEN GET SO CAUGHT UP IN OUR OWN EGOS AND NEEDS THAT WE FORGET WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT."

Juraj (37), Galanta
BUDDY volunteer

"I THINK I'M A BETTER PERSON FOR HAVING HIM IN MY LIFE."

Boris (14)



What makes my BUDDY volunteer so special?

85%
"SUPPORTS ME"

85% of the children surveyed said that their BUDDY volunteer makes them feel better when they share their problems

98%
"MAKES ME HAPPY"

98% of the children surveyed said they were happier because of their volunteer

87%
"LISTENS"

87% of the children surveyed said their BUDDY volunteer listens to them more than other adults

Source: Internal survey using a standardised questionnaire for children – Youth Mentoring Survey, 2023 (61 responses)

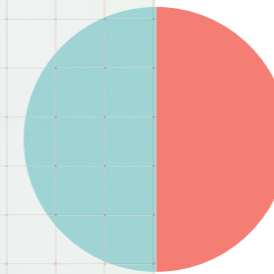
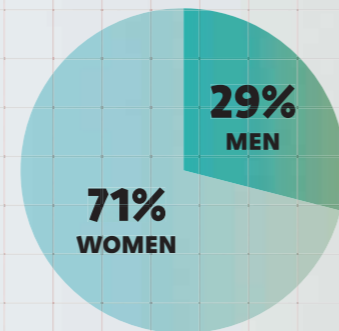
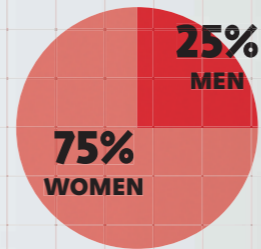
- ...SHE ENCOURAGES ME
Renáta (16)
- ...SHE HAS A GOOD HEART
Veronika (13)
- ...HE'S KIND AND CARING TOWARDS OTHERS, TOO
Krištof (12)
- ...WHEN I TELL HER SOMETHING, SHE GIVES ME SUPPORT AND DOESN'T JUMP RIGHT IN AND START LECTURING ME
Barbora (18)
- ...SHE ALWAYS MAKES TIME FOR ME
Tatiana (16)
- ...SHE TAKES AN INTEREST IN ME
Elizabet (16)
- ...HE'S MINE
Jakub (15)
- ...SHE GETS ME
Rebeka (14)
- ...SHE HASN'T LET ME DOWN ONCE
Amélia (15)
- ...SHE TRIES
Eliška (15)
- ...SHE TAKES AN INTEREST IN WHAT I HAVE TO SAY WHEN WE'RE TALKING
Katka (18)
- ...SHE LAUGHS WITH ME
Veronika (13)
- ...IF I DON'T KNOW SOMETHING, SHE EXPLAINS IT TO ME
Linda (12)



New BUDDY volunteers in 2023

14
220
APPLICANTS
TO VOLUNTEER

21
NEW BUDDY
VOLUNTEERS



The ratio of boys to girls
in the centres is **50:50**



15
The program currently cares for to **30% male**
and **70% female pairs**.

**We are putting a lot of effort into
reaching out to more men so we can
assign BUDDY volunteers to children more
evenly.**

What do I get out of BUDDY volunteering?



"It's so easy to make a difference. With just a little more time, we can show a child a different outlook on the world and the people around them."

Ján Malega (38)
BUDDY in Košice



"It's so rewarding to be able to help a child by giving them our time! They really pick up on it and gradually come to understand that they have someone in their life to share both the good times and the bad."

Barbora Linde (36)
BUDDY in Považská Bystrica



"Everyone should step out of their comfort zone once in a while. The most valuable thing we can give to someone is our time. We all have so little of it, and everyone is rushing around, telling themselves they wouldn't be able to fit this in. But it's pretty easy. It's about getting your priorities right."

Jana Kropáčková (40)
BUDDY in Košice

A BETTER WORLD



HUMILITY



VOLUNTEERING HELPS ME GROW

83%

of volunteers would recommend BUDDY volunteering to others

Source: Internal survey using standardised questionnaire for volunteers. Match Characteristics Questionnaire, 2023 (71 responses)

"I really appreciate that we can talk about serious topics. I show her compassion and understanding, and so does she."

"We get on well. We trust each other. I don't offer her advice. I just keep her on track. I feel we're on the same page. Her and me. We're friends, simply... BUDDIES."

"Having a good friend is a big deal."

Ľudka Uhrová (30), Malacky
4.5 years in BUDDY program



FRIENDSHIP

Powerful moments from our interviews with BUDDY volunteers:



GRATITUDE

"I am acutely aware that genuine friendships and a supportive and loving family are not a given in life. It's because I built up solid relationships in my youth that I feel this is something I need to nurture and pay forwards. I want to be as good a friend to someone else as my friends and family are to me. Because humans are social creatures and need to feel that they belong somewhere," she says resolutely, her face lit up.

"She likes to write me letters full of thanks, because she knows I am always touched by them. The moment I see her holding a piece of paper, tears well up in my eyes. I keep all my letters from her in a safe place."

Lenka Remeteiová (31), Košice
2.5 years in the BUDDY program

Read more at:
www.dennikn.sk/autor/buddy





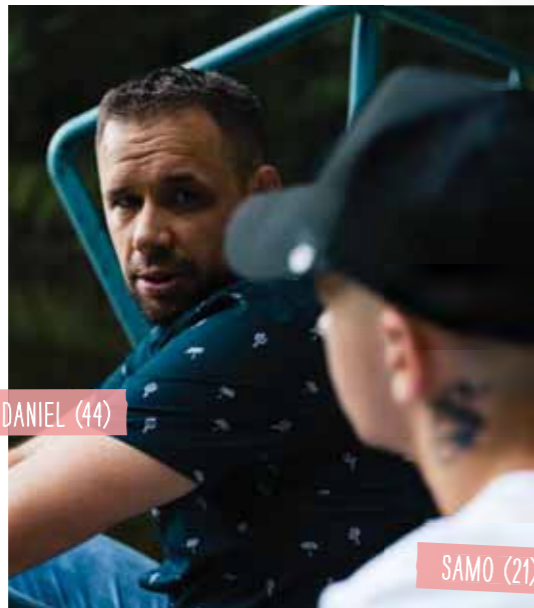
BUDDY LUKÁŠ (41)

ONDREJ (14)



DANIELA (14)

BUDDY LUCIA (39)



BUDDY DANIEL (44)

SAMO (21)



BUDDY NELLA (31)

JANKA (18)



BUDDY IVANA (36)

LUJZA (23)



BUDDY SVETLANA (41)

KATKA (13)



BUDDY PETER (45)

KAMIL (12)



BUDDY ZUZKA (57)

KARIN (16)

What do the Centres for Children and Families say?



"Centres that work with us **recommend working with the BUDDY program** to others"

CHILDREN'S HOME

KOŠICE CENTRE

"We are so glad the BUDDY program is up and running in our region. It brings the children a lot of positivity and satisfaction, a meaningful way of spending time, and opens up new horizons to the world around them... **We can say from experience that this program is worthwhile for the children.** It makes them happy."

Thank you.

TRNAVA CENTRE

"I notice that, through their relationship with a volunteer, the children have been able to form more **intimate relationships** with other adults who are part of their lives."

KOLAROVO CENTRE

"Tamara's BUDDY volunteer **gives her motivation** to study and aim high in life."

POP RAD CENTRE

"The main benefit of this program is that the children have someone to **give them their full attention**, which they don't have to share with other children in the group. This is such a **simple thing, but it is often missing in these children's lives. They may not say it out loud, but you can see it in their behaviour.**"

Source: Annual feedback from centres about a specific BUDDY pair, 2023 (75 responses)

Taking care of BUDDY relationships

BUDDY coordinators are professionals whose role is to encourage BUDDY volunteers throughout the ups and downs of their assignment. They accompany them and give them guidance so that they are able to really be a support for the children.



Alexandra Petržalková
psychologist

25 pairs
Bratislava / Bernolákovo / Trenčín
Pezinok



Katarína Šiborová
psychologist

21 pairs
Bernolákovo / Malacky / Holíč



Daniela Bachoríková
psychologist

26 pairs
Trnava / Bernolákovo / Pečeňady
Piešťany / Topolčany



Barbora Hurtišová
social worker

13 pairs
Banská Bystrica / Nitra / Prievidza
Tŕnie / Kolárovo / Nová Baňa



Kamila Janušková
psychologist

22 pairs
Považská Bystrica / Bratislava



Michaela Valušová
psychologist

12 pairs
Košice / Košická Nová Ves / Poprad

Whatever life has thrown at us, we've been better at dealing with it together.

Milan is a blond 40-year-old from Bratislava. He has an older sister, works in an office, and likes music, organising festivals, dancing and cars.

Adam is an athletic, dark-haired, 30-year-old man who grew up in a children's home from the age of three, has many half-siblings, and is now an expert at painting high-end cars.

Besides wanting to live life to the full and be good to people, there is something else they have in common. That is the special friendship between a child from a children's home and an older friend from the "outside world", which started more than seventeen years ago, and which inspired the formation of the BUDDY program in Slovakia.



How did you meet?

Milan: It's common knowledge today that Laci Kossár founded PRO VIDA out of a desire to make a real difference to children from children's homes. One of the activities that the program wanted to introduce to the children with the help of volunteers was tutoring in basic skills, such as computer literacy and writing a CV. And that's how I arrived at the children's home, along with seven other colleagues from an international IT company who wanted to share their knowledge with others.

Adam: I remember that Milan fascinated me because of the many hobbies he had at that time and because he oozed positive energy. Even after the course was over, he would pop in to visit me and our friendship began to grow naturally from there. It was authentic, spontaneous and nobody was pretending to be anything they weren't. We simply went with the flow. Back then, I was a youngster who was very interested in the world out there. And Milan was like a fresh breeze of inspiration for me.

What made your friendship special at that time?

Milan: Usually, kids from a children's home only get to meet adults who are paid to be there. Doctors, nurses, therapists and social workers. They're wonderful people, to be clear, but the relationship is always forged from a position of authority, and the kids interact with them differently. I spent my spare time with Adam. And I gave him the attention that children from the children's home are sorely lacking.

Adam: Over time, I got to know Milan's friends and family. We went on trips, concerts, had conversations and explored the world together. Just like buddies.



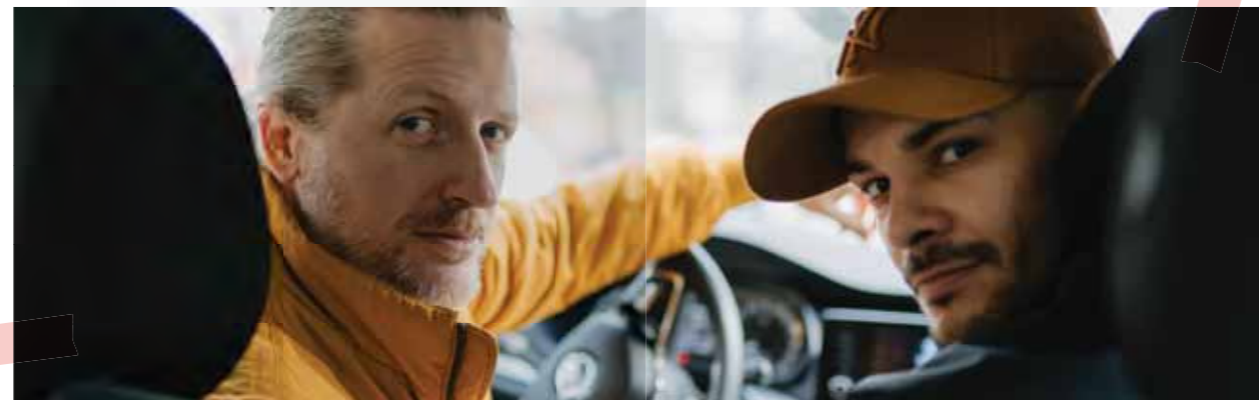
Do you see yourselves as family?

Milan and Adam: Absolutely. (with one voice)

Milan: I introduce him as my brother. If anyone starts to say that we don't look like each other, I tell them that we're brothers, but we have a different mum and dad. (laughs)

Your relationship served as the inspiration to build the BUDDY program as we know it today. How did that come about?

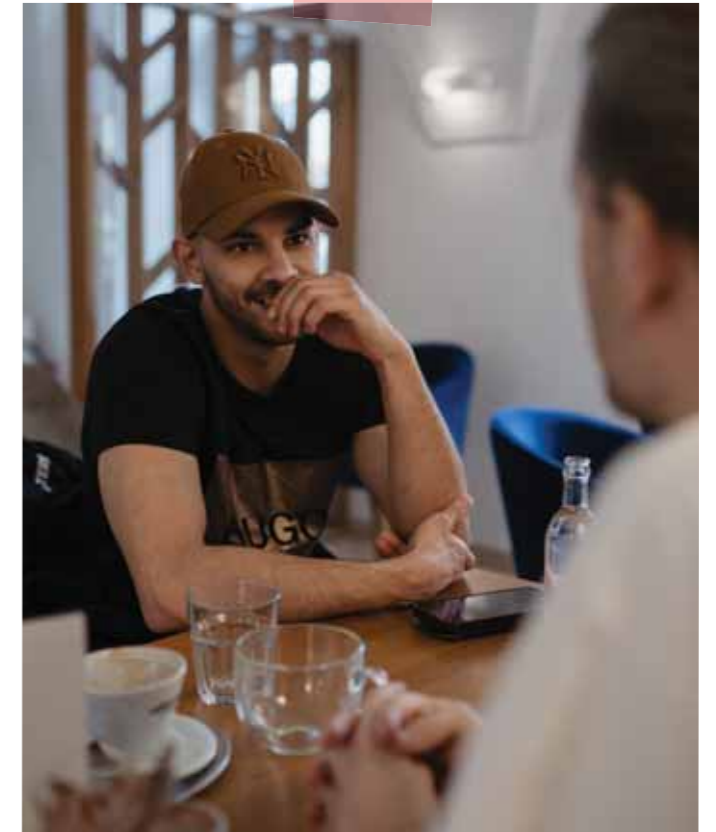
Milan: By sheer coincidence, I bumped into Laci in the supermarket one night and mentioned to him how happy I was that I had been meeting up with Adam of my own accord for almost three years now, and what a great lad he was. At the time, Laci and a number of his colleagues and experts were wondering how they could structure the program to make it more effective. At that moment, everything clicked into place. We realised that it is essential for a child from a children's home to find someone who will remain in their life and help them to build their own identity. In that situation, they would no longer need a computer or any development courses. Because they would work their way there on their own. And that's how the story of today's BUDDY program began to take shape, with a clear structure, a selection process, training, supervision, the support that volunteers receive and, most importantly, the tangible impact it has on the children.



In interviews, you often mention the importance of doing good and supporting each other. But not many people know that you yourself, Adam, are helping young people from children's homes to become self-sufficient.

Adam: Yes, that's right. People often have no idea how difficult it is for children from a children's home to leave the security of that safe haven on their eighteenth birthday. With one bag of clothes, a few hundred euros, a poor grasp of the real world and no family or support to turn to. I, too, still remember how tough it was at first. After work, I'd find myself completely alone, surrounded by four walls at a hostel, and the sadness would overwhelm me. In the beginning I would often call Milan and tell him how sad I was feeling. With no one there waiting for me. But Milan always showed up and helped me banish those thoughts. That's why I also try to help as much as I can. Since leaving the children's home, I've helped three young boys to get a start. They stayed with me for a few months so they could find their feet, and I encouraged them in their decisions to get a job, become independent and live a happy and stable life. Personally, I don't celebrate any holidays. I don't even do gifts. For me, the true value of a friend is the time we spend together. Outside of dates set by someone else. I like my gift to someone to be that we have a good chat, help each other out, and spend time in each other's company.

That's what matters to me in life.



Written by Simona Lučkaničová
Photography by Paulína Štěpková

Our search for volunteers has become more efficient

For people to get excited about our program, they need to understand it. To understand it, they need to be given solid information.

The most comprehensive source of information for potential applicants is our website.

That's why one of our most important marketing goals is to invite people to engage with the content on our site.

WE MANAGED TO MAKE MORE PEOPLE CURIOUS, AND FOR LESS MONEY. NOW WE HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE HOW MANY OF THEM WILL BE MOTIVATED TO BECOME BUDDY VOLUNTEERS.



Compared to 2022, our campaign costs went down



But traffic to our site went up



Sensitivity in our communications is important to us

We work with a vulnerable group of young people whom we treat with respect, including when it comes to communicating with the public.

We protect children's identities (and we do not show their faces) so that they are not exposed to stigma or media pressure.

Rather than fixating on the vulnerable backgrounds of some of the children, we communicate the positive impact that BUDDY relationships have had on their lives.

Our aim is not to highlight gaps in the system, but to build a trusting relationship with the Centres for Children and Families that entrust these children to us.

We feel accountable not only for our mission, but also for the way we communicate our work to the outside world.



We are pleased that this was also noticed by the jury for PROKOP, the prestigious competition to identify the best PR projects in Slovakia, which awarded us a prize for Ethics in Communication.

BUDDY in the media

Articles about us have appeared in:

Aktuality.sk

The story of BUDDY pair Ondrej and Adam:

After leaving the children's home, he spent all his money, which he now regrets. Today, he plans to become a programmer.

Nový čas pre ženy

THIS will capture your heart! How to help CHILDREN who DON'T LIVE with their own family? YOU too can help

Aktuality.sk

The healing power of friendship: A program that helps children in institutional care

Hospodárske noviny

BUDDY means more than just a friend

lenprezeny.sk

"Helping" is good for our physical and mental wellbeing. And it won't cost you a penny!

Denník Postoj

The story of Milan and Adam, the first BUDDY pair:

They found a way to help children from children's homes: Giving them your friendship and your time is a life-changer



Radio shows and podcasts:

sme.sk - Rozhovory ZKH

Zuzana Hanzalová with Lucia Kossárová:

Each volunteer must be a stable element for the child

Rádio Lumen

Lucia and Laci Kossár on the show Vitaj doma, rodina!:

You too can help children from Centres for Children and Families. The BUDDY program is looking for friends for abandoned children

FUN rádio

Nedeľná talkshow so Šarkanom:

"As many as 80-90% of the children from the centres who have had a Buddy have found a job and a place to live," says Ladislav Kossár, founder of the BUDDY program.

Podcast DÁ SA TO

Laci Kossár makes miracles happen

Rádio Slovensko

Nočná pyramída with Ladislav Kossár

Rádio Regina

The Ľudia show featuring Zuzka Zimová and BUDDY volunteer Lukáš

Rádio Slovensko

The Kontakty show featuring Zuzka Zimová and BUDDY volunteer Bea



Television:

TA3

Raňajky featuring Laci Kossár

RTVS

Správy o 19:00 – news report on volunteering and the BUDDY program

RTVS24

Interview 24 – interview with Laci Kossár

TV JOJ

Noviny o 19:00 – news report on volunteering and the BUDDY program

JOJ24

24 Podcast – interview with psychologist Martin Vrabel' and BUDDY volunteer Matúš



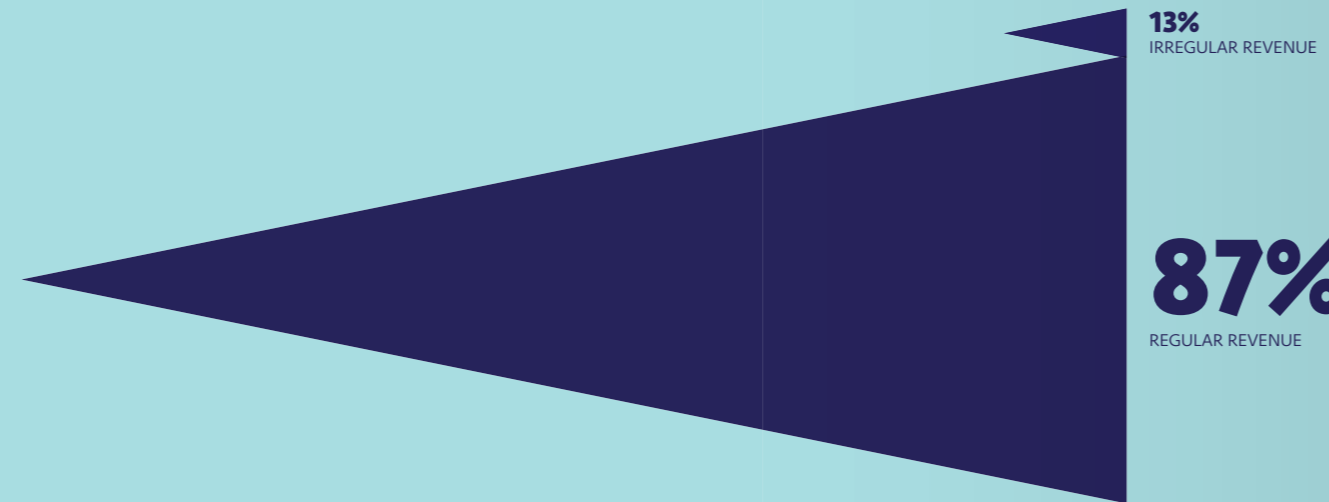
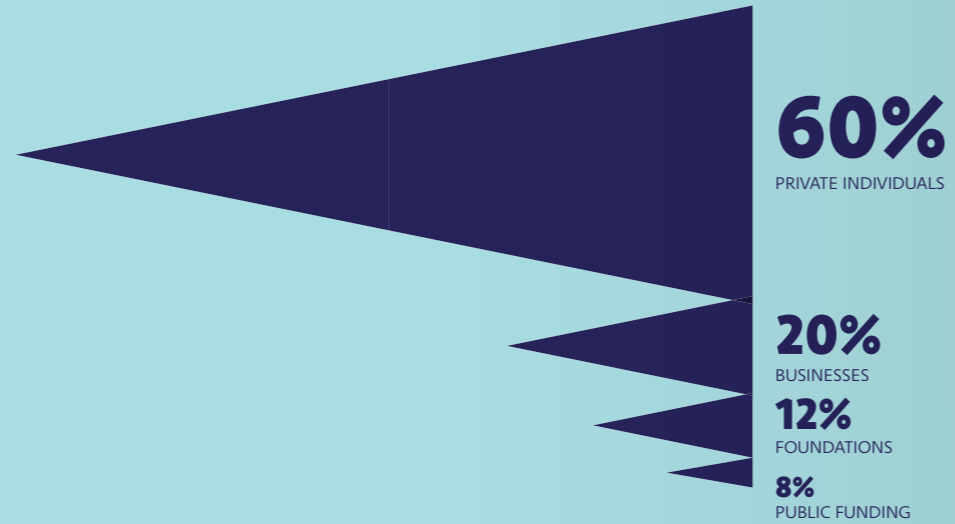
www.tvojbuddy.sk/buddy-v-mediach

BUDDY Day 2023



In 2023, we received

€ 744 500

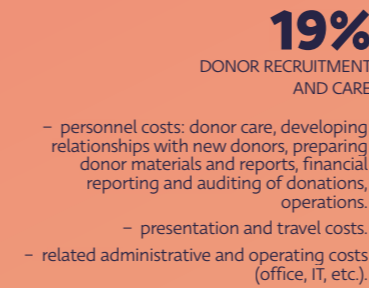


Budget in 2023

€ 742 600



- personnel costs: recruiting volunteer applicants, coordinating the selection of volunteers, caring for pairs in the program, overseeing the safety and quality of the program.
- costs associated with recruitment campaigns and advertising (creative production, digital and print media, radio, OOH).
- cost of advertising materials and administration.
 - operating costs.



- personnel costs: donor care, developing relationships with new donors, preparing donor materials and reports, financial reporting and auditing of donations, operations.
 - presentation and travel costs.
- related administrative and operating costs (office, IT, etc.).

Our plans for 2024



MORE CHILDREN

We want to change the lives of 20 more children. Besides finding new BUDDY volunteers, over a period of seven to ten years we do our best to nurture the quality of their relationships so that they have the potential to have a healing effect on the children.

EFFICIENT RECRUITMENT

Identify ways to target as many people as possible in all corners of Slovakia who might make great BUDDY volunteers. And do this effectively, focusing on particular types of people, and remembering to get value for the money being invested.

QUALITY CARE

The program's absolute priority is the safety of the children, which we consider at every step of the process. We are constantly working to improve the quality of BUDDY relationships and support BUDDY volunteers so they can be the best they possibly can in their relationships with the children.

ŽILINA REGION

The BUDDY program is now present in seven of the country's eight regions. We are aiming to spread to the north of Slovakia and recruit our first BUDDY volunteers around Žilina, Martin, Dolný Kubín, Liptovský Mikuláš, Bytča, Čadca and Ružomberok.

TEAM SUPPORT

We would need to boost the BUDDY team with more donor care and fundraising staff. Long-term relationships with donors make the organisation stable and enable us to focus on helping children.

THANK YOU

FOUNDATION SUPPORT



Mercedes-Benz
Financial Services



Nadácia
Volkswagen Slovakia



CORPORATE SUPPORT



MAPLE & FISH
LAW FIRM



**"If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together."**

(African proverb)

BUDDY world:

- 199 BUDDY volunteers
- more than 200 individual and corporate sponsors
- 24 participating Centres
- internal BUDDY team and other collaborators
- all supporters and promoters of the BUDDY concept

THANK YOU for being with us



Facebook Tvoj Buddy

Instagram tvojbuddy

LinkedIn Tvoj Buddy

www.tvojbuddy.sk

Civic association PRO VIDA
Strážna 11
831 01 Bratislava

OFFICE
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811 02 Bratislava

Registration
number: 37 927 051

IBAN: SK32 0900 0000 0051 4724 3608

**everybody
needs
someBUDDY**