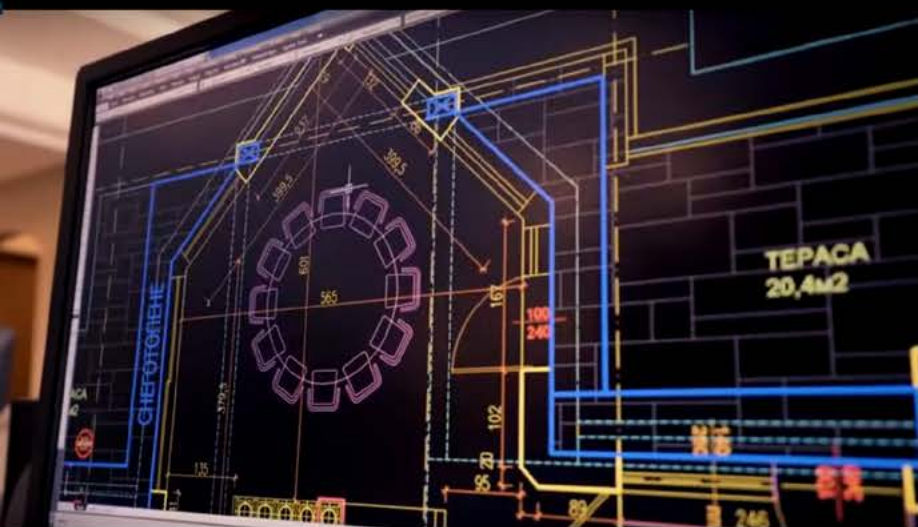




# ANNUAL REPORT

2020



ANTI  
CORRUPTION  
FUND



## BOYKO STANKUSHEV

Member of the Board and Managing Director of  
the Anti-Corruption Fund Foundation

The same sociological study revealed that for Bulgarians, not poverty, but the lack of integrity and fairness is the most significant problem. All this in the most impoverished member state of the European Union!

In the last three decades, Bulgarian society has witnessed the gradual and unobstructed transformation of criminal organizations into legitimate economic entities, active in spheres like tourism, construction, services, security, finance. Since then, many of these influential players have developed their own political platforms and built networks of dependent media. They have extended their influence on public institutions, keeping them passive, and sometimes covertly obstructing the law. In this dark status quo of carefully intertwined criminal ties and systems, those in control often silence freethinking voices and stifle civic positions and actions.

Such developments feed feelings of public distrust, social apathy, and cynicism among many Bulgarians. Terms like ‘mafia,’ ‘oligarchy,’ ‘state,’ and ‘power’ may often seem like synonyms for them. 72% of the respondents in a recent survey agreed that “Bulgarian elections typically bring thieves and liars to power.” Another 80% believed that it was “highly unlikely to get rich by legal means in Bulgaria.”<sup>1</sup> Ordinary people often feel like there are no alternatives for them but emigration and escape, be it raking manure in Greece or picking strawberries in Germany. Nevertheless, the craving for justice is more present in Bulgarian society than ever.

In its relatively short history, the Anti-Corruption Fund Foundation (ACF) has emerged as a vibrant organization answering the people’s need for justice by revealing, investigating, and fighting corruption. We often face difficulties in our everyday work — open hostility or silence at the high levels of power, fear, and suspicion among ordinary people. Almost daily, we receive refusals to our requests for public information. What keeps us going is our sense of mission — we are offering an alternative to apathy and helplessness. A fight against corruption in which all kinds of civic players could take part.

Our story in 2019 is an example of this collaborative approach. In all our investigations, we rely on courageous journalists, whistleblowers, and citizens, who, against all the odds, prove that change is possible. We collaborate with all the media who still value freedom and those Bulgarian citizens who want to live with honor and dignity and believe that societal prosperity is achievable.

We continue to rely on the help — be it moral support, expertise, information, funding — of all free people in our country and abroad. We are genuinely grateful for all the support of our friends and partners that we have received so far. And we vow to continue our work.

The Anti-Corruption Fund Foundation (ACF) is a non-profit organization<sup>2</sup> working in defense of the public interest by investigating high-level corruption. The foundation is registered in the Bulgarian Registry of Non-Profit Making Legal Persons.

The foundation does not carry out any economic activities and relies on donations from funding organizations and private persons to finance its operations.

In 2019, ACF worked on projects funded by the America for Bulgaria Foundation and the Open Society Initiative for Europe. Additional partners included the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Foundation and the Embassy of the Netherlands in Bulgaria. In December 2019, ACF began a 34-month project, supported by the Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria, under the EEA Grants 2014-2021 funding mechanism.

In 2019, the ACF Board elected a new director, Boyko Stankushev, a journalist with over 40 years of experience and a former program director and member of the board of Bulgarian National Television.

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<sup>2</sup> Registered at the Sofia City Court, Case №726/2016)

## In 2019, ACF continued its efforts towards achieving three strategic goals:

- Encouraging Proactive Institutional Response to Corruption
- Encouraging Citizen Involvement with Reporting and Fighting Corruption
- Promoting a More Cooperative and Inclusive Approach to Fighting Corruption



# ENCOURAGING PROACTIVE INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO CORRUPTION

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ACF acts as an advocacy organization, aiming to encourage state institutions' proactive investigation of corruption practices. Our approach is to carry out our own research on suspected corruption and conflicts of interest and demand reaction from institutions. We screen reputable regional and national media and receive tip-offs from citizen activists and whistleblowers. We request public documents from all the relevant institutions, citing Bulgaria's *Access to Public Information Act*. We evaluate the cases and investigate the ones that meet our criteria, combining expert research and legal analysis of all available documentation. If we encounter proof or have reasonable doubts about wrongdoing, we file reports with all public institutions having jurisdiction to investigate the suspected violations. In 2019, ACF filed 27 reports to various institutions such as the Prosecutor's Office, the Public Financial Inspection Agency, the Commission for Counteracting Corruption, and the Forfeiture of Illegally Acquired Property.

Below we present a summary of ACF's key investigations in 2019 and the reactions of the public institutions.

# ROADS TO NOWHERE

ILLEGAL EXPLORATIONS ALONG A  
HIGHWAY UNDER CONSTRUCTION

FEBRUARY 2019



The satellite images show that the illegal roads near Kresna were constructed between June and September 2018.

Following a tip-off, several visits on-site, and analysis of satellite data, ACF discovered more than seven kilometers of illegal roads and exploration wells in the region of Kresna, Southwest Bulgaria. The forest passages and the wells served illegal preparatory and exploratory activities before the official opening of a tender procedure for the extension of the “Struma” Highway section estimated at over BGN 430 million. The unsanctioned gathering of information would have given a considerable advantage to any participant in the tender procedure and was a violation of various European and national legislation. On 11 February 2019, ACF filed reports with several branches of the Prosecutor’s Office. Initially, the Sofia City Prosecutor’s Office refused to investigate the case. Still, ACF had its decision reversed by an appeal to the Prosecutor’s Office of Appeal in Sofia.

ACF collaborated with the leading national TV channel bTV for in-depth coverage of the case on 11 February 2019. Several days after the airing of the TV report, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry removed from office the director of the Public Forestry Department, where the illegal activities took place. The authorities also imposed a fine on Patproject 2000, the company which claimed to have carried out the unlawful works. However, as of February 2020, there is still no investigation of the possibility of wrongdoing on behalf of officials at the Road Infrastructure Agency, the public body overseeing the realization of the multi-million “Struma” highway project.

# THE APARTMENTGATE

MARCH 2019

Bulgaria's 'Second-Most Powerful Politician' Resigns Amid Real Estate Scandal



Business Markets World Politics TV More

TELEPOLIS

Source: RadioFreeEurope, Reuters, Telepolis

ACF and Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty's joint investigation revealed that several influential politicians and high-level officials affiliated with the ruling GERB party had purchased luxury properties in the capital Sofia. They acquired the properties significantly below the market prices from a large construction company with considerable business interests in the city. The story turned into one of the biggest corruption scandals since Bulgaria's entry into the European Union, generating enormous levels of public attention and debate. It affected the May 2019 European Parliament election campaign in Bulgaria and led to many resignations.

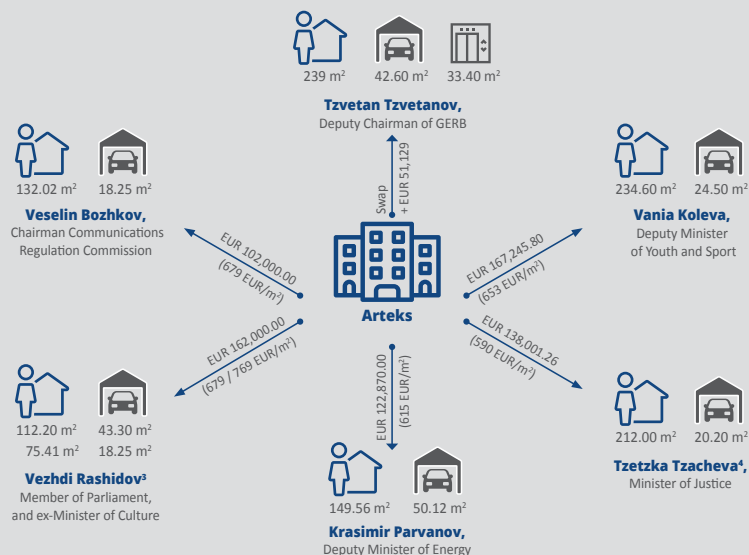
“Middle-class Bulgarians struggling to pay a mortgage on a small city apartment are deeply resentful that politicians were able to buy luxury homes so cheaply.”

Investigative journalist and ACF co-founder Nikolay Staykov quoted on The Apartmentgate scandal in Financial Times

**FT** FINANCIAL  
TIMES

Tzvetan Tzvetanov, at the time, Chairman of GERB's parliamentary group and the second most influential politician in the party, was among those implicated in the scandal. Mr. Tzvetanov was forced to leave his position days after the revelations, and, in May, resigned from all executive-level positions in the party. The scandal also led to the resignations of Tzetzka Tzacheva, Minister of Justice, Vania Koleva, Deputy Minister of Sport, Krasimir Parvanov, Deputy Minister of Energy, Aleksandar Manolev, Deputy Minister of Economy, Tomi Nikolov, Deputy Governor of Sofia, Delian Dobrev, Member of Parliament and former Minister of Economy, Energy, and Tourism. Plamen Georgiev, Chairman of the Commission for Counteracting Corruption and the Forfeiture of Illegally Acquired Property, was involved in a related property scandal. Mr. Georgiev resigned in the summer but was later appointed Bulgaria's Consul General in Valencia, Spain, despite having no prior diplomatic experience.

Analysis of the Bulgarian Property Register by ACF and independent journalists established that during 2018 Bulgarian real estate developer Arteks sold luxury properties to several senior public officials. The sales took place between June and December of 2018, in various buildings in Sofia's Izток neighborhood where property prices are amongst the highest



While the resignations represented a positive first step, ACF was keen to see the relevant institutions investigating the issue and its systemic causes. Our legal team filed reports with the National Revenue Agency, several parliamentary committees, and the Public Prosecution Office, which transferred the signal to the Commission for Counteracting Corruption. On 19 June 2019, The Commission terminated its proceedings and decided no wrongdoing had occurred. On 25 November 2019, the National Revenue Agency revealed in a media interview that it is about to finish its audit of the implicated persons' accounts. The Agency did not provide further details, and on 28 November 2019, ACF sent an inquiry about the results. As of February 2020, we are still waiting for the Agency's reply.



Europe

May 16th 2019 edition >

Secrets and lies

## A political scandal in Bulgaria involving penthouses

The Economist

# AHMED DOGAN, THE SOVEREIGN OF THE COLD RESERVE

THE CASE WITH THE VARNA THERMAL POWER PLANT ACQUISITION

JUNE 2019



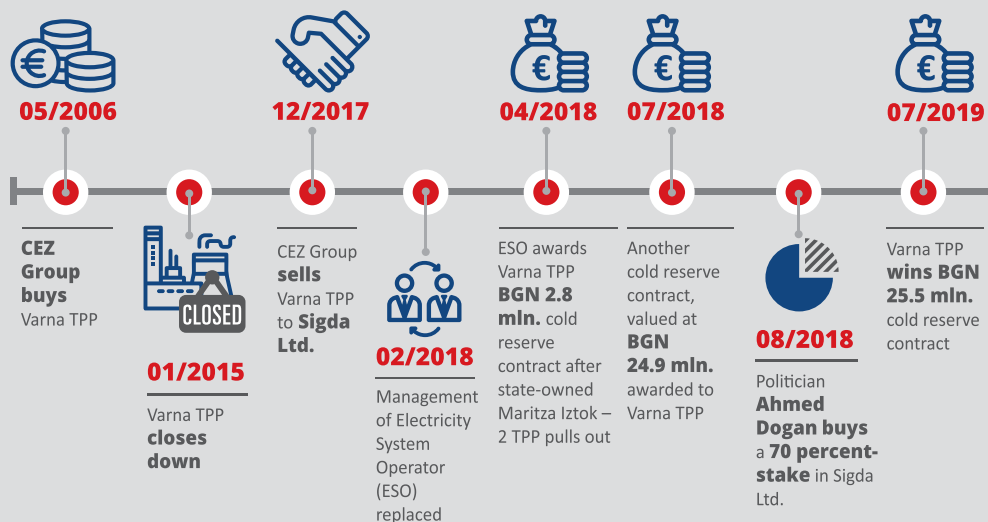
Photo: ACF

On 19 June 2019, ACF alerted four public institutions about significant red flags in prominent Bulgarian politician Ahmed Dogan's acquisition of the Varna Thermal Power Plant. The Varna TPP, the second-largest thermal power plant in Bulgaria, first became the property of the family company of Danail Papazov, a former transport minister with no previous experience in the sector. In August 2018, Mr. Dogan acquired the majority stake in Mr. Papazov's company. Mr. Dogan is the honorary chairman and most influential figure of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, a political party which had often assumed a kingmaker role in Bulgarian politics. Immediately after Mr. Dogan acquired Varna TPP, the facility landed on a BGN 28,4 million-contract to serve as "cold reserve" for Bulgaria's electricity supply system.

The ACF began its investigation on the case in October 2018, filing requests for access to public informa-

tion to all the relevant institutions. We initiated a court case and challenged the Ministry of Energy's initial refusal to provide us details about the deal. Our investigation raised serious concerns about the sources of the deal's financing and the facility's reliable operation. Suspicious was also the apparent ease with which the Varna TPP won lucrative public contracts once it changed hands from the Czech state-owned company CEZ to its new owners.

ACF filed reports with the State Agency for National Security, the Ministry of Energy, the Energy and Water Regulatory Commission, and the National Revenue Agency. The first three institutions did not identify any proof of wrongdoing or causes for concern. As of 2020, we are still waiting for the reply of the National Revenue Agency.



# WAR FOR CARCASSES

MULTI-MILLION CONTRACTS TO  
QUESTIONABLE MOBILE INCINERATORS

AUGUST 2019

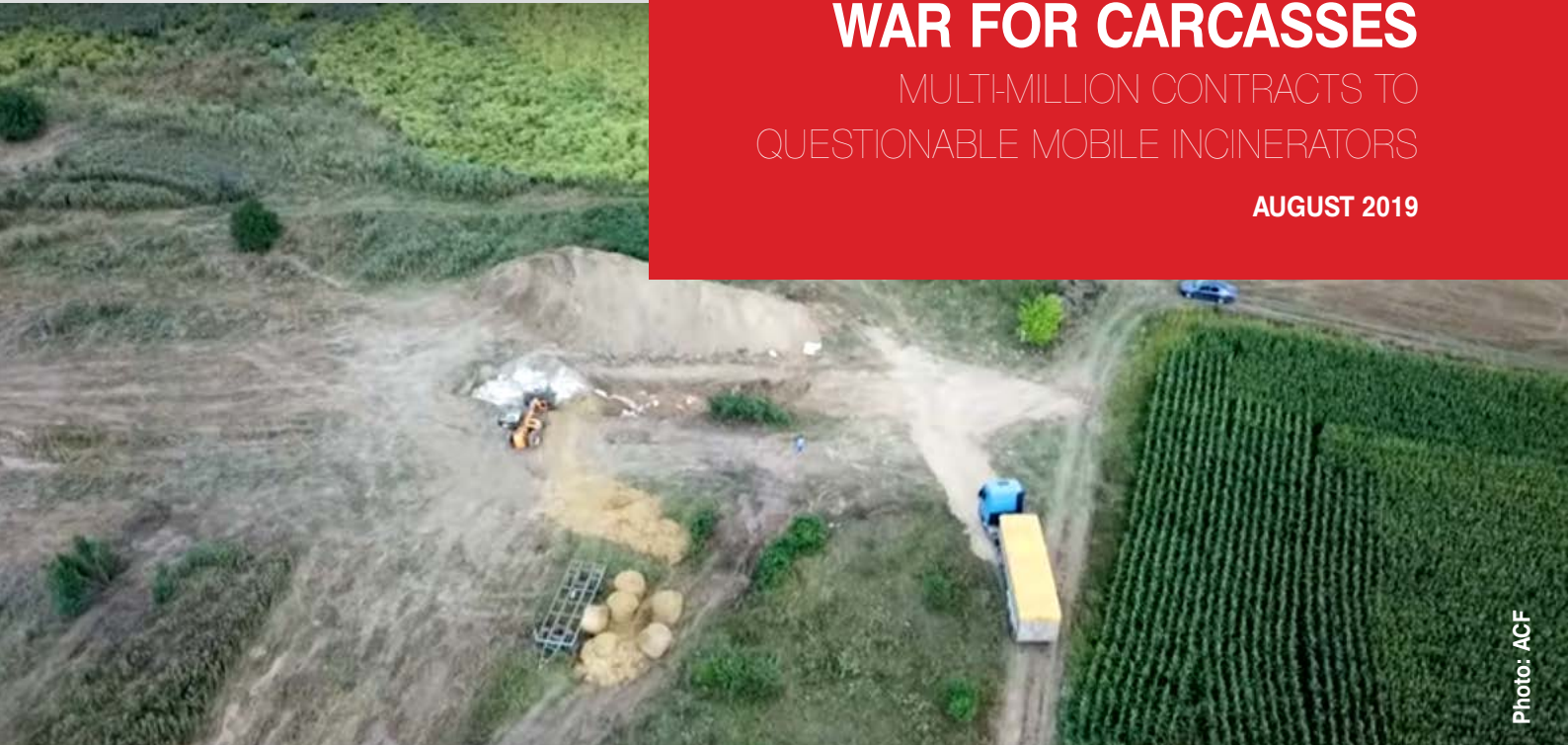


Photo: ACF

In 2018 and 2019, the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency spent nearly BGN 60 million to dispose of animal carcasses, awarding two companies, Sin Krast 2016 and Eko BG – SJP, with lucrative contracts. ACF identified several red flags and violations of the *Public Procurement Act*, and, together with Genka Shikerova, a reputed investigative journalist, initiated an investigation. The Food Safety Agency annexed the initial agreements, increasing the contractors' assigned workload without receiving additional performance guarantees. It paid the two companies to process record amounts of animal waste with mobile incinerators. However, the investigation proved that their capacity was insufficient to handle the declared volumes.

On 8 August 2019, we filed a report with the Public Financial Inspection Agency (PFIA) about possible contract irregularities. With Genka Shikerova, we published a short documentary presenting our findings, which went viral on YouTube. Shortly after its publication, the Specialized Prosecution Office initiated an investigation of the facts. On 30 August 2019, The Financial Inspection Agency started audits on the Food Safety Agency's operation, and, on 24 September 2019, dismissed its executive director, Damian Iliev, and his deputy, Todorka Yankovska – Stefanova. However, to this day, the authorities have not explained the dismissals of the two. As of February 2020, we are still waiting for the outcome of the official investigations of the case.

# THE KTB CASE FILES:

## THE MISSING NAMES

October & November 2019



Corporate Commercial Bank (KTB) was one of the leading Bulgarian banks until it lost its license in November 2014, several months after declaring insolvency. In July 2017, Bulgaria's public prosecution office lodged court action against the bank's owner, Tzvetan Vassilev, and 17 other defendants. Mr. Vassilev, indicted on 146 counts, escaped to Serbia and is currently fighting an extradition appeal of the Bulgarian authorities.

The names of a long list of politicians, public figures, media company owners, and high-level public officials appear in the investigation documents about the KTB bankruptcy. Surprisingly, the Prosecutor's Office had interrogated very few of these people. The ACF's legal team strived to fill this gap and analyzed more than 200,000 pages of evidence which the Prosecution's Office lodged in court. ACF's investigation raised questions whether the Prosecution Office examined thoroughly and in good faith all factors that caused the bank's collapse.

We presented the result of our analysis in a series of investigative documentaries, "The KTB Files: The Missing Names." On 18 October 2019, we launched the first episode looking at the connection between KTB's bankruptcy and the failure of the South Stream Gas Pipeline project. On 6 November 2019, we released a second episode, "The Initials D.P." It presented evidence of the considerable loans that the now insolvent bank gave to companies of Delyan Peevski, MP from the Movement for Rights and Freedoms party. In January 2020, ACF released the third episode of the series and is working on its final two. After the release of all the documentaries, ACF will send reports to all the relevant public institutions, outlining the loopholes we have identified in the Prosecutor's approach.

# THE GOLDEN PUDDLE

IRREGULARITIES FOR BGN 27 MILLION

NOVEMBER 2019

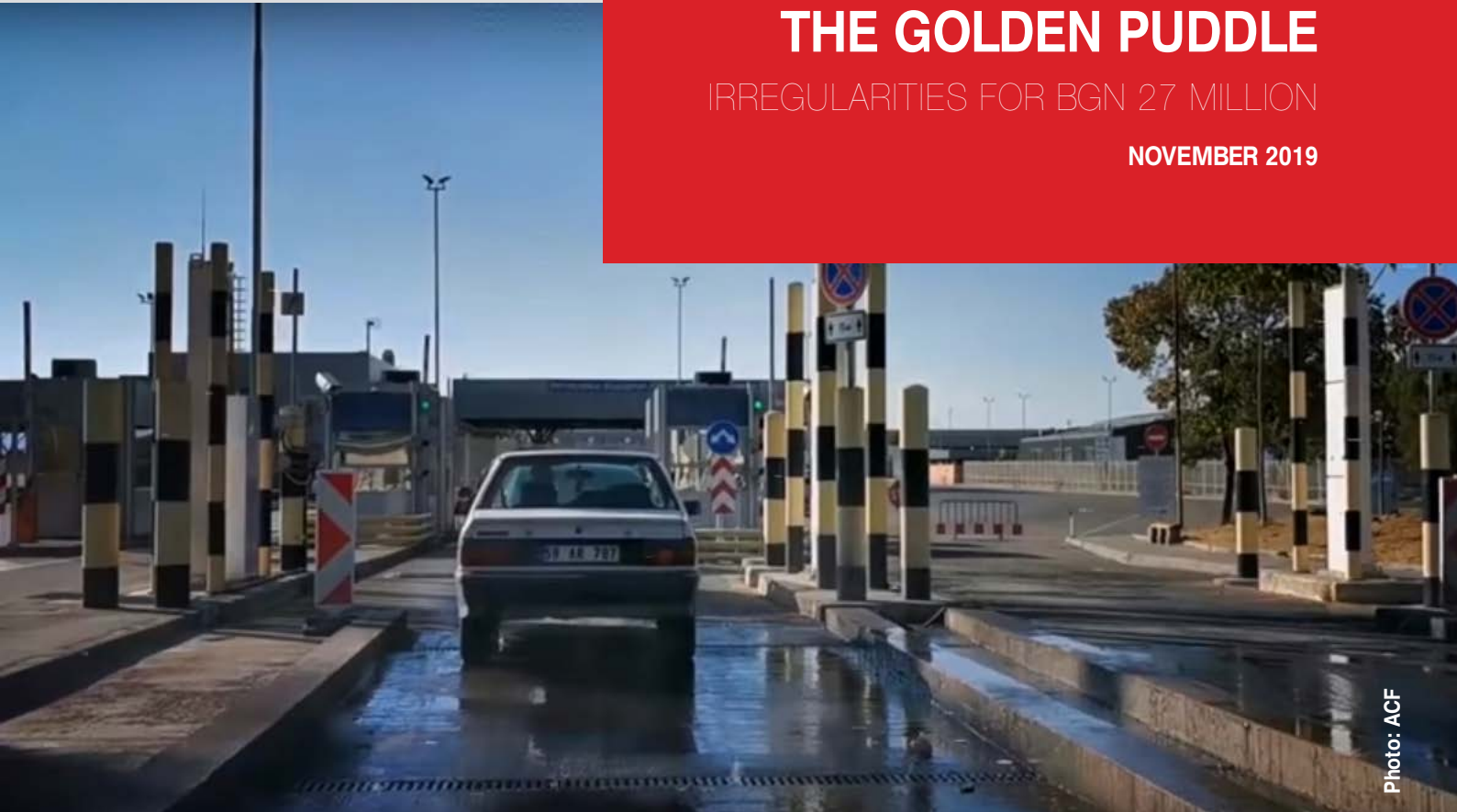


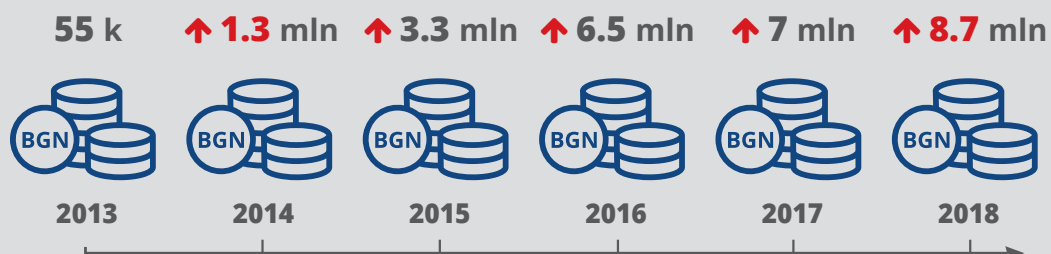
Photo: ACF

Between 2013 and 2018, the Food Safety Agency awarded more than BGN 27 million to a private company, P.F.C. EOOD, which had no prior experience, to carry out preventive disinfection of vehicles at border crossings between Bulgaria and Turkey. The grounding of the subcontracting remains unclear: there were no tender procedures announced on the website of the Food Safety Agency.

Moreover, according to the current legal framework in Bulgaria, veterinary control and disinfection are strictly within the competence of the State Agency and cannot be subcontracted. On 24 October 2019, ACF sent signals about the possible illegality of the contract to the Public Financial Inspection Agency and the Specialized Prosecution Office.

## ■ Company profit according to the annual financial statements filed on record

### Annual profit of P.F.C. Ltd. as per Bulgarian Commercial Register



# OTHER CASES

## THE ADONIEV CASE

In January 2019 concluded “The Adoniev Case,” one of ACF’s major 2018 investigations. It dealt with Sergei Adoniev, a Russian oligarch who was granted Bulgarian citizenship on special merits despite his failure to meet the legally defined criteria. In his citizenship application, he also had failed to mention a 1998 US court conviction for fraud, money laundering, and violating a trade embargo against third countries. ACF worked on the Adoniev Case throughout 2018, filing reports with the Bulgarian Presidency and the State Agency for National Security. At the beginning of 2019, the Bulgarian authorities finally announced their decision to strip Mr. Adoniev of his Bulgarian citizenship, motivating their decision with intelligence reports by partner agencies.

### For oligarchs or Mafiosi, obtaining a Bulgarian passport is easy and cheap

By Georgi Golev | EURACTV.com

Jan 22, 2019 (updated: Jan 23, 2019)

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The New York Times

### Bulgaria Revokes Bulgarian Citizenship of Russian Millionaire Adoniev

By Reuters

Jan. 23, 2019



SOFIA — Bulgaria has revoked the Bulgarian citizenship of Russian telecoms millionaire Sergei Adoniev over a 20-year-old fraud conviction in the United States, the justice ministry said on Wednesday.

Eager to join EU’s border-check-free Schengen zone, Bulgaria said on Tuesday that it plans to stop letting wealthy foreigners buy citizenship — which allows free movement within the entire European Union — in return for investment.

Source: The New York Times



Photo: Road Infrastructure Agency

## THE NEW TOLL SYSTEM CASE

On 23 January 2019, ACF sent a report to the Public Financial Inspection Agency about suspicious changes in the Road Infrastructure Agency’s contract for the creation of a new toll system. The amendments to the BGN 180 million contract were set to reduce several critical components from the project deliverables without lowering the overall price. On 13 March 2019, the PFIA initiated a financial inspection, and, as of February 2020, ACF is awaiting information about the results.

## THE BRIDGE OVER STRUMA RIVER CASE

On 23 April 2019, ACF filed reports with the Regional Prosecutor's Office Pernik and the Public Financial Inspection Agency about a Pernik Municipality's contract with a local company, Via Intelego Ltd. The signing of the BGN 368,982 contract for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of a bridge over the Struma River constituted a possible violation of the *Public Procurement Act*. We found that Via Intelego's managing director, Ivo Gadzhov, was the first cousin of Pernik Municipality's deputy mayor for construction, Vladislav Karailiev. ACF

also filed a report about a possible conflict of interest with the Commission for Counteracting Corruption. The PFIA announced starting a financial investigation on 13 June 2019, but, as of February 2020, there is no information about the results. On 23 August 2019, the Regional Prosecutor's Office – Pernik decided not to investigate the case. ACF appealed the decision before the District Prosecutors' Office – Pernik, which ruled in favor of the Regional Prosecutor's Office. We are waiting for a reply from the Commission for Counteracting Corruption.

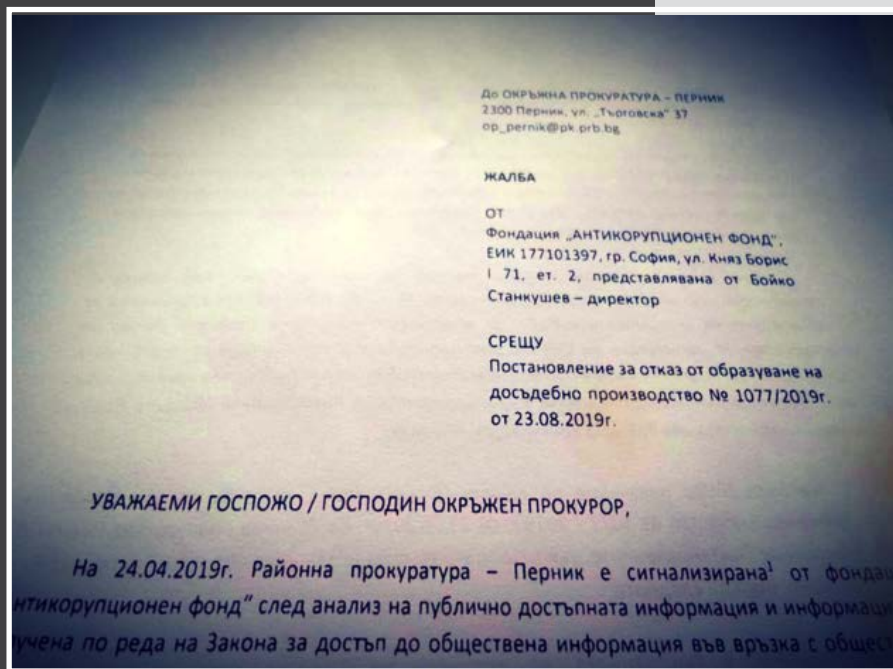


Photo: ACF

## THE BLAGOEVGRAD FEST CASE

On 10 September 2019, ACF filed a report with the Public Financial Inspection Agency about three contracts for the provision of information services that the Blagoevgrad Municipality made with its subsidiary company "Blagoevgrad fest." According to Bulgarian *Public Procurement Act*, contractors to municipalities are not obliged to hold tenders or announce suppliers and business partners. The scheme raised suspicions that the municipality was attempting to circumvent the disclosure of information about its BGN 511,000 contracts with local media. The local elections in October 2019 brought a new mayor to Blagoevgrad municipality who publicly discussed the information services contracts, demonstrating a will to improve transparency.



# THE ACF INVESTIGATIONS IN 2019:

## OVERVIEW OF THE INSTITUTIONAL REACTIONS

### ROADS TO NOWHERE



**PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE:**  
Refusal to investigate



**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE:**  
Firing of 1 public official



**SOFIA APPELLATE  
PROSECUTION OFFICE:**  
Upholding ACF's appeal

### THE APARTMENTGATE



12 politicians and public  
officials resign



**COMMISSION FOR  
COUNTERACTING CORRUPTION:**  
No wrongdoing



**NATIONAL REVENUE AGENCY:**  
Awaiting reply

### THE SOVEREIGN OF THE COLD RESERVE



**STATE AGENCY FOR  
NATIONAL SECURITY:**  
No wrongdoing



**MINISTRY OF ENERGY:**  
No wrongdoing



**ENERGY AND WATER  
REGULATORY COMMISSION:**  
No wrongdoing



**NATIONAL REVENUE AGENCY:**  
Awaiting reply

### WAR FOR CARCASSES



**SPECIALIZED PROSECUTION OFFICE:**  
Starting an investigation



**FINANCIAL INSPECTION AGENCY:**  
Firing of 2 public officials

### THE GOLDEN PUDDLE



**FINANCIAL INSPECTION AGENCY:**  
No reaction



**SPECIALIZED PROSECUTION OFFICE:**  
No reaction

### THE ADONIEV CASE



**MINISTRY OF JUSTICE:**  
Revoked citizenship

### THE NEW TOLL SYSTEM CASE



**FINANCIAL INSPECTION AGENCY:**  
Starting an inspection

### BRIDGE OVER STRUMA RIVER



**FINANCIAL INSPECTION AGENCY:**  
Starting an inspection



**REGIONAL PROSECUTOR'S  
OFFICE PERNIK:**  
Refusal to investigate



**COMMISSION FOR  
COUNTERACTING CORRUPTION:**  
Awaiting reply

### THE BLAGOEVGRAD FEST CASE



**FINANCIAL INSPECTION AGENCY:**  
Awaiting reply



# ENCOURAGING CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT WITH REPORTING AND FIGHTING CORRUPTION

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For us, citizens and independent media are the crucial agents able to press for executive and judicial action on corruption. We are indebted to courageous journalists, whistleblowers, and citizens without whose tip-offs our work would not be possible. Our experiences show that citizens' actions are the prime factor influencing public institutions' reactions to corruption. With our publications, we strive to stir citizen's disapproval toward corruption in the country and encourage them to demand change in institutional responses.



Nikolay Staykov  
interviewed about  
the Apartmentgate  
scandal on bTV

In 2019, we used a variety of printed and digital media to communicate our messages to our audiences. 420 articles and reports in Bulgarian print and digital media mentioned ACF; English-language media published or broadcast 84 articles and stories about our activities. Media all over the world, including the USA, UK, Germany, Austria, Spain, France, covered ACF investigations, and cited our experts.

In 2019, we also increasingly sought more direct access to our target audiences via social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube. Social media channels proved essential for directly informing citizens about our anti-corruption investigations.

| Video                                                    |  facebook # Views |  YouTube # Views |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>APARTMENTGATE</b><br>20 March 2019                    | 41,600                                                                                              | 14,223                                                                                             |
| <b>THE SOVEREIGN OF THE COLD RESERVE</b><br>19 June 2019 | 95,100                                                                                              | 27,426 *                                                                                           |
| <b>WAR FOR CARCASSES</b><br>14 Aug. 2019                 | 3,400                                                                                               | 91,583 *                                                                                           |
| <b>THE KTB FILES: THE MISSING NAMES</b><br>18 Oct. 2019  | 32,700                                                                                              | 23,245                                                                                             |
| <b>THE KTB FILES 2: THE INITIALS D.P.</b><br>6 Nov. 2019 | 315,200                                                                                             | 54,178                                                                                             |
| <b>THE GOLDEN PUDDLE</b><br>13 Nov. 2019                 | 109,300                                                                                             | 18,364 *                                                                                           |

Views of our videos on social media channels, 1 January – 31 December 2019

\* Aggregated figure for Bulgarian and English version of the video

The video content we have published in 2019 significantly increased ACF's visibility on social media. Between 1 January and 31 December 2019, the ACF's Facebook page followers grew from 1,282 to 10,058.

ACF's better visibility led to an increase in the number of tip-offs we received from sources and whistleblowers. In 2019, ACF received a total of 254 tip-offs via email, and between three to five weekly face-to-face signals at our office.

# ENGAGEMENT WITH JUDICIAL REFORM IN BULGARIA

ACF IS AMONG THE LEADING CIVIC EXPERT ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGED IN PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS

## QUESTIONS TO THE SUPREME JUDICIAL COUNCIL

On 16 October 2019, ACF and the Institute for Market Economics jointly submitted nine questions to the Supreme Judicial Council about the hearing of Ivan Geshev, the only candidate for the office of Prosecutor General of Bulgaria. ACF, other civil society organizations, and some professional organizations have, on various occasions, expressed considerable doubts about Mr. Geshev's integrity and track record. However, the Supreme Judicial Council did not take such positions into account and, on 24 October, elected Mr. Geshev Prosecutor General.

## MEETING THE VENETIAN COMMISSION DELEGATION

On 7 – 8 November 2019, Assoc. Prof. Atanas Slavov, senior legal expert at ACF, took part in a meeting with the visiting delegation of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe. The discussions centered on the draft amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code and the Judicial System Act. Those proposals aimed to introduce possibilities to prosecute the Prosecutor General and the two chief judges in the Bulgarian judicial system. Such amendments are a long-standing recommendation of the Venice Commission, highlighted in a European Court of Human Rights' decision.

## AN OPEN LETTER TO EU INSTITUTIONS

On 12 December, ACF joined five other local expert organizations in an open letter to the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, ambassadors of all EU member states in Bulgaria, the Monitoring Committee of the Council of Europe, and Bulgarian Prime Minister, Boyko Borisov. The letter objected to proposed amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act and the Judicial System Act tabled by the Council of Ministers, which failed to address the recommendations of the Venice Commission. ACF and the other expert organizations also called for the resignation of Justice Minister Danail Kirilov, who initiated the changes.

## TAKING PART IN CONSULTATIONS ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

On 19 December 2019, Assoc. Prof. Slavov and Denitsa Rukanova, the ACF legal program coordinator, were invited to consultations on reforming the Bulgarian Constitution, initiated and led by the Bulgarian President, Rumen Radev. The still ongoing meetings aim to address the identified lack of a mechanism to investigate the Prosecutor General. After the event, the ACF has provided its expert legal opinion on the possible constitutional amendments in line with European standards.



Photo: ACF



# PROMOTING A MORE COOPERATIVE AND INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO FIGHTING CORRUPTION

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ACF believes that successfully fighting corruption necessitates the joined efforts of diverse civic actors. In 2019, we strove to develop cooperation and multiple domestic and foreign partnerships across various sectors of society. We initiated several citizen networks and coalitions centered on an anti-corruption stance.

## CREATING A NETWORK OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS

One of ACF's long-standing aims is to support independent media willing to expose corruption behavior and encouraging journalistic involvement in corruption investigations. In 2019, we held several events, under the umbrella of the Embassy of The Netherlands in Bulgaria, in a bid to increase the capacity of investigative journalists in the country. On 14 – 15 March 2019, in Sofia, ACF held the “Corruption Red Flags in Public Procurement and Conflicts of Interest” conference. The event targeted regional media, bringing together 20 journalists from small local publications and regional correspondents of the national press.



Photo: ACF

Between 29 November and 1 December 2019, ACF organized “The Role of Independent Media in Fighting Corruption” conference. It was a large-scale event featuring lectures by the ACF experts and the respected Dutch investigative journalist Siem Eikelenboom of the “Free Press Unlimited,” a Dutch non-governmental organization supporting independent journalism. The event brought together nearly 30 journalists from regional and national print and broadcast outlets. We organized a follow-up virtual seminar in April 2019 and scheduled another one in February 2020.



## АНТИКОРУПЦИОННИ ИНСТИТУЦИИ: тенденции и практики



## ACF'S ANNUAL ANTI-CORRUPTION REPORT

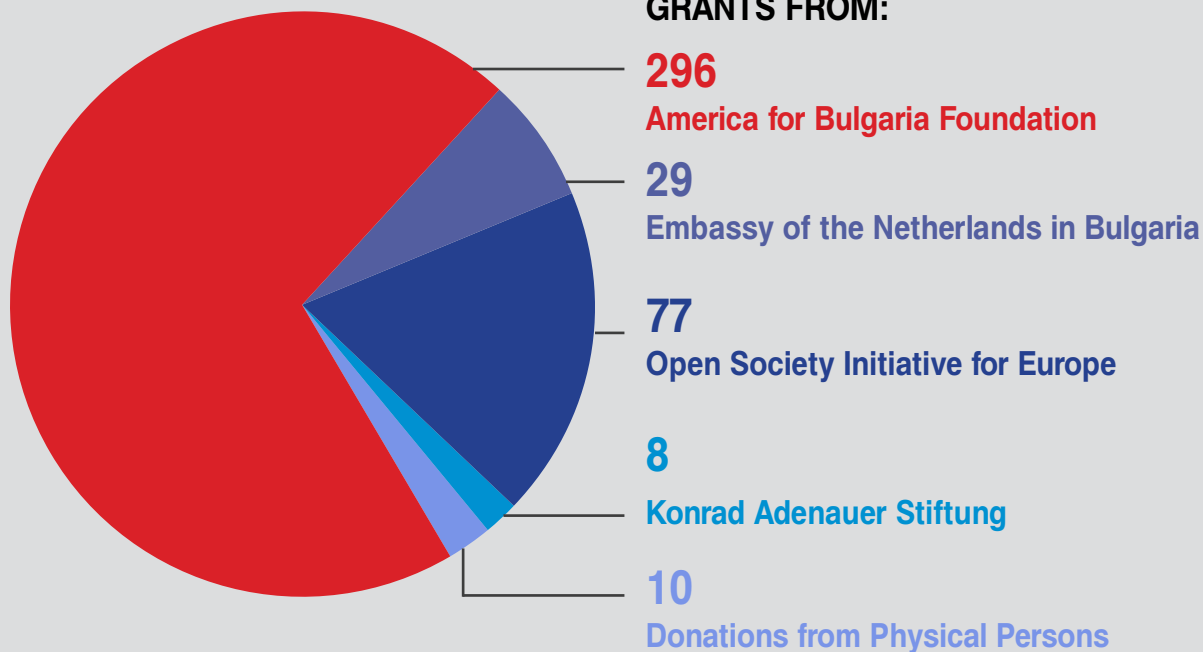
On 30 May 2019, ACF launched its annual monitoring report *Anti-corruption Institutions: Trends and Practice* developed with the support of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and its Rule of Law- South East Europe Programme. The report evaluated the work of the leading Bulgarian anti-corruption institutions in 2018 – the Prosecutor's Office, the court system, and the Commission for Counteracting Corruption. The report has put forward several conclusions and recommendations to relevant institutions. Its launch event helped disseminate them to public officials, magistrates, representatives of professional organizations, high-level EU diplomats, and journalists. The European Commission's Cooperation and Verification Mechanism also mentioned some of the recommendations in its *Progress Report for Bulgaria in 2019*.



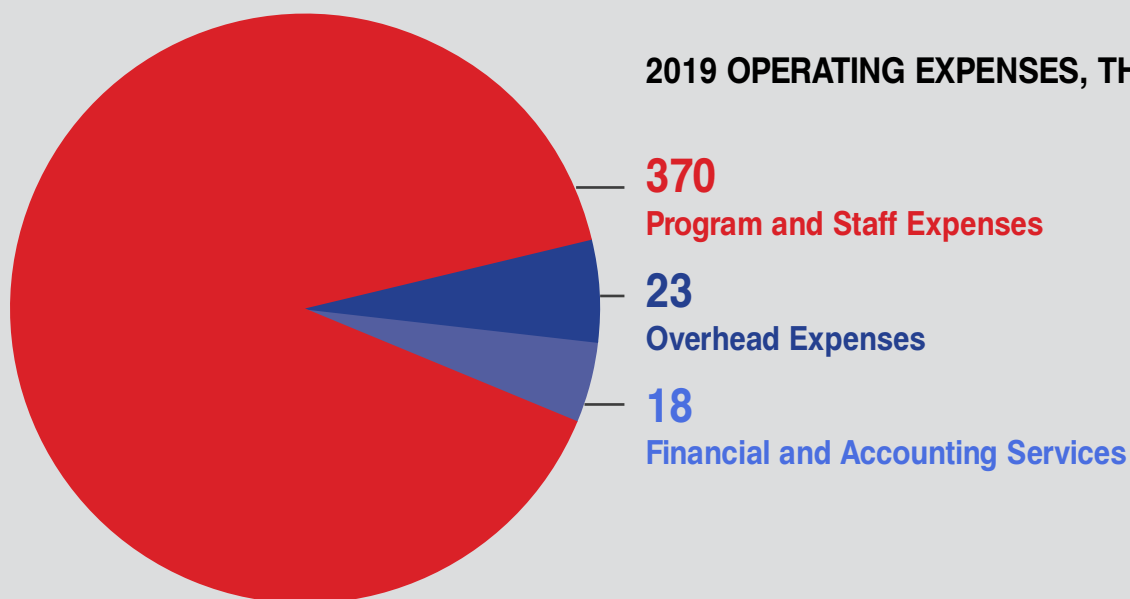
# FINANCIALS

The Anti-Corruption Fund adheres to the strictest rules of financial reporting. In addition to its regular financial reports practices, the ACF Board had appointed an independent external auditing company assessing the organization's financial performance in 2019. The auditing report will be completed in June 2020 and sent to our donors and partners.

## 2019 OPERATING REVENUES, THOUSANDS BGN GRANTS FROM:



## 2019 OPERATING EXPENSES, THOUSANDS BGN



# KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2019



254

TIP-OFFS FOR  
CORRUPTION RECEIVED  
FROM THE CITIZENS

TIP-OFFS FOR  
CORRUPTION FROM  
MEDIA MONITORING

78

11

LITIGATIONS AFTER  
INSTITUTIONAL REFUSALS  
OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION

9

LITIGATIONS OF REFUSALS  
OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION  
WON IN COURT

ANTI-CORRUPTION  
INVESTIGATIONS

12



27

REPORTS FILED TO  
INSTITUTIONS

55

CORRUPTION-LINKED  
PUBLICATIONS ON  
ACF'S WEB SITE

INVESTIGATION  
DOCUMENTARIES  
PRODUCED BY ACF

9

826 319

VIEWS OF OUR INVESTIGATION  
DOCUMENTARIES ON  
YOUTUBE AND FACEBOOK



504

MEDIA PUBLICATIONS  
IN BULGARIAN AND  
INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

PUBLISHED ANALYSES

7

12

POLITICIANS AND  
PUBLIC OFFICERS WHO  
HAVE RESIGNED AS A RESULT  
OF ACF INVESTIGATIONS

0

POLITICIANS IN JAIL

# ACF TEAM



Boyko has more than 40 years of journalistic experience and has taken executive positions in both television and the radio.

**BOYKO STANKUSHEV**

Director of ACF



Nikolay specializes in economic analyses, investigations, and obtaining and analyzing information from public databases.

**NIKOLAY STAYKOV**

Co-founder and  
Investigative Journalist



Denitsa is an attorney-at-law with nine years of legal experience. She holds a Master of Laws Degree and a Master's Degree in International Relations.

**DENITSA RUKANOVA**

Legal Program  
Coordinator



Atanas is an expert on constitutional law, anti-corruption legislation, the judicial reform framework, and the administrative reform frameworks in Bulgaria.

**ATANAS SLAVOV**

Senior Legal Expert



Lora is an attorney-at-law, experienced in litigation and consultation in civil, corporate, and administrative law, member of the Sofia Bar Association, and certified mediator.

**LORA GEORGIEVA MATEEVA**

Senior Legal Expert



Andrey is a practicing defense lawyer and former public prosecutor at the Sofia District Prosecution Office and the Sofia City Prosecution Office.

**ANDREY YANKULOV**

Senior Legal Expert



Sofiya holds a Master of Laws Degree and has five years of legal experience in civil law, commercial law, property law, labor law.

**SOFIYA ZHELEVA**

Legal Expert



Stefan combines his background in Social Anthropology and his digital communication expertise to ensure ACF's investigations reach out and mobilize diverse audiences.

**STEFAN KRASTEV**

Public Outreach Coordinator



Mario has a Bachelor's degree in Political Science. He integrates and analyses data from multiple databases and resources to back up all ACF's investigations.

**MARIO RUSINOV**

Analyst

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Dr. Phillip Gounev is a leading expert in anti-corruption and EU home affairs.

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