



ANTI
CORRUPTION
FUND

2020

ANNUAL REPORT

CONTENTS

1	ADDRESS	4
2	ABOUT US	5
3	ACF INVESTIGATIONS IN 2020	6
4	INVOLVING LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS	28
5	ACF PUBLICATIONS	29
6	AWARDS FOR THE ACF	34
7	PROMOTING A COMMUNITY OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS: THE RED LINE AWARDS FOR JURNALISM AGAINST CORRUPTION	38
8	ACF IN THE MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA	40
9	FINANCIALS	43
10	ACF'S KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2020	44
11	ACF TEAM AND BOARD	45

ADDRESS



Boyko Stankushev,
Managing Director of
the Anti-Corruption Fund

"Life is what happens while we're busy making other plans," John Lennon once sang.

The global pandemic has upset the plans of many, and in a country like Bulgaria, it was sometimes used as a smokescreen to cover up information from society. However, at the Anti-Corruption Fund, we did everything possible to follow our mission even in such an unfavorable environment. We reformed and adapted our investigative tools so that, with very limited options for face-to-face meetings, with responsible institutions' growing passivity towards large-scale corruption, and in the face of most media's complaisant silence, we could continue to get nearer to the truth. In 2020, our proactive attitude and search for new ways of raising awareness about corruption among Bulgarian citizens received recognition. Our investigations won two of the prestigious "Radostina Konstantinova" Awards for Investigative Journalism and the "Right to Know Day Golden Key Award" of the Access to Information Programme Foundation. Our video investigations reached more than 6 million views on all social media.

The search for facts, relationships, and circumstances proving high-level corruption is sometimes a challenging, often dangerous, and, at times, a solitary affair. The media monopoly in Bulgaria, the overt and covert pressure on media and control of their editorial policies, the defective and harmful Bulgarian radio and television law have sharply narrowed the opportunities for cooperation with other investigative organizations and journalists. This is one of the

reasons corruption practices of abusing the national wealth have become blatant yet remained virtually unpunished. In recent years, Bulgaria has been sinking into a dark and enchanted cycle: the powerful political and business figures use their illegally accumulated riches to create a false reality in the media, which, in turn, allows them to run their criminal schemes unobstructed. In this process, we have been increasingly witnessing a symbiosis between the institutions entitled to control, including the law enforcement, on the one hand, and corporate interests and even outright mafia-like structures, on the other. Almost all responsible institutions have become habituated to keeping silent or even openly lying when confronted with uncomfortable questions. International indexes reflect this reality: between 2013 and 2020, Bulgaria has slumped to the bottom among the 27 EU states in Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index. Simultaneously, Bulgaria also occupied the bottom place among the European Union countries in the Transparency International's 2020 Corruption Perception Index. "The fish rots from the head," as the proverb goes: it is the politicians and high-level public servants we must hold accountable for such a dire and gruesome development. This is the democratic principle to which we aspire, and we are glad that more and more voices among the civil society and our partners share this view.

"Freedom of speech cannot alone defend itself," wrote Bulgarian sociologist and human rights activist Emil Cohen in a post-humous book. Freedom of speech remains our only means of achieving the truth. At the ACF, we believe that only by sharing our efforts in a vital community of free people could we restore the values of justice and honesty in our society. If we do not want to squander our lives as insignificant and useless people, we need courage, solidarity, and bold dreams; therefore, we appeal and extend a hand to everyone.

As John Lennon said elsewhere: **"A dream you dream alone is just a dream. A dream you dream together is a reality."**

ABOUT US

The Anti-Corruption Fund (ACF) works in civil society's interest to investigate, prevent, and disrupt corruption at all levels in Bulgaria.

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 tipoffs 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.

ACF also uses various social media channels and audiovisual production to reach out to the citizens and encourage broad citizen involvement with reporting and fighting corruption.

Finally, the ACF works to develop a more cooperative and inclusive community of independent journalists and civic activists who share the values of fighting against corruption. The foundation does not carry out any economic activities. It relies on donations from funding organizations and private persons to finance its operations.

In 2020, ACF worked on projects funded by America for Bulgaria Foundation and the Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria under the EEA Grants 2014-2021 funding mechanism. Additional partners included the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Foundation and the Embassy of the Netherlands in Bulgaria.

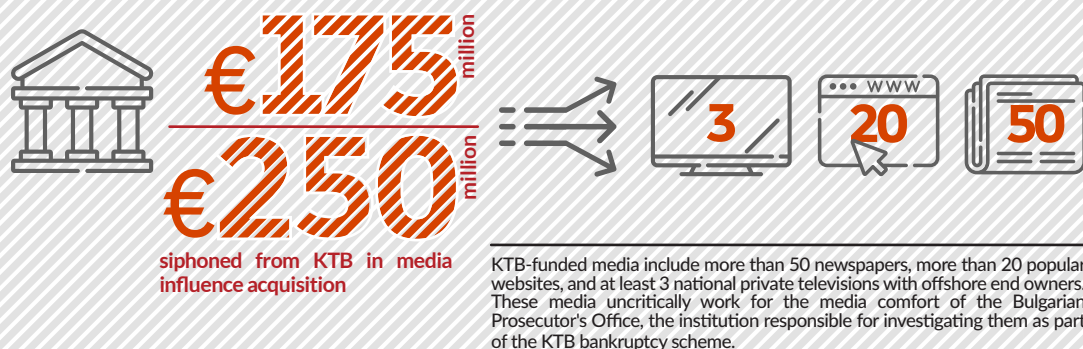
Below we present a summary of ACF's key investigations in 2020 and the public institutions' reactions.

ACF INVESTIGATIONS IN 2020



KTB BANK: USING DEPOSITORS' MONEY TO GARNER MEDIA INFLUENCE

Corporate Commercial Bank (KTB) was one of the leading Bulgarian banks until it declared insolvency in 2014. The names of a long list of politicians, public figures, media company owners, and high-level public officials appeared in the investigation documents about its bankruptcy. Surprisingly, the Prosecutor's office had interrogated very few of them. The ACF's investigation of KTB's bankruptcy showcased the suspicious links between business people, politicians, and public servants existing in the country.



In the third part of the investigation, ACF revealed that KTB Bank 'invested' an estimated EUR 175 million to EUR 250 million in media influence acquisition. The money was disbursed to dozens of websites, newspapers, and national private TV channels. The media capture scheme involved both direct loans to publishing companies and covert advertising agreements ostensibly concluded in respect of 'information services,' along with loans to side-line businesses of the media owners. The complete information about the financial transactions and transfers in question was available to the investigators of the Bank's bankruptcy. Still, six years after the start of the prosecutorial investigation, no party has been held to account or brought to justice.

"Media financing was an essential part of the KTB's modus operandi. It relied on illegally using depositors' money to garner media influence, which was subsequently used in the pursuit of overtly political aims," Nikolay Staykov, the author of the investigation, pointed out. "The political advantages gained, in turn, ensured that those in the innermost circle of the bank had continued access to financing in the form of deposits from State-owned enterprises and other public institutions, as well as to the public procurement market while enjoying the protection of regulatory bodies."



Nedyalko Nedyalkov,
tabloid website owner



'Citizens' protests' in support of the nomination of Ivan Geshev for Prosecutor General, organized by Nedyalko Nedyalkov

The episode focuses on an offshore company with unknown owners incorporated in the Caribbean island of Anguilla. The company received a loan of **EUR 9.7 million** against false collateral of a ship that the company never acquired. Significant amounts of this money were paid into the private bank accounts in the KTB of **Nedyalko Nedyalkov**, the owner of a host of tabloid websites, ostensibly on the grounds of 'acquisition of company shares.' The money channeled through Nedyalkov's accounts in the KTB was used to finance new media, with the monthly transfers to **PIK News EOOD** reaching **EUR 50 000**. In 2019, this website, well known for its pro-government stance, organized 'citizens' protests' in support of the nomination of Ivan Geshev, the prosecutor in charge of the KTB investigation, for election as Prosecutor General.

Nedyalko Nedyalkov's company received a loan from KTB for EUR 9.7 million against false collateral of a ship that the company never acquired.



The investigation revealed a financing scheme involving documentary fraud with implications for several jurisdictions. **After releasing all the documentaries in the KTB series, ACF will send reports to all the relevant public institutions, outlining the loopholes identified in the Prosecutor's approach. ACF is also calling for a probe to establish whether the national authorities' failure to investigate to date constituted a case of concealment and complicity in the commission of a crime both before and after the Bank's closure.**

MISSION ABU DABHI: OFFICIAL HUMANITARIAN AID OR A COVER FOR PRIVATE BUSINESS DEALINGS?

In April 2020, the Minister of Economy Emil Karanikolov visited the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in what was widely publicized in the media as a mission to secure an official UAE “donation” of medical supplies and medicines to treat Covid-19 in Bulgaria. According to the Ministry’s official press release, the minister returned with a cargo plane with 15 tons of packages, “15 tons of medical supplies - masks, gloves, disinfectants, and clothing.”

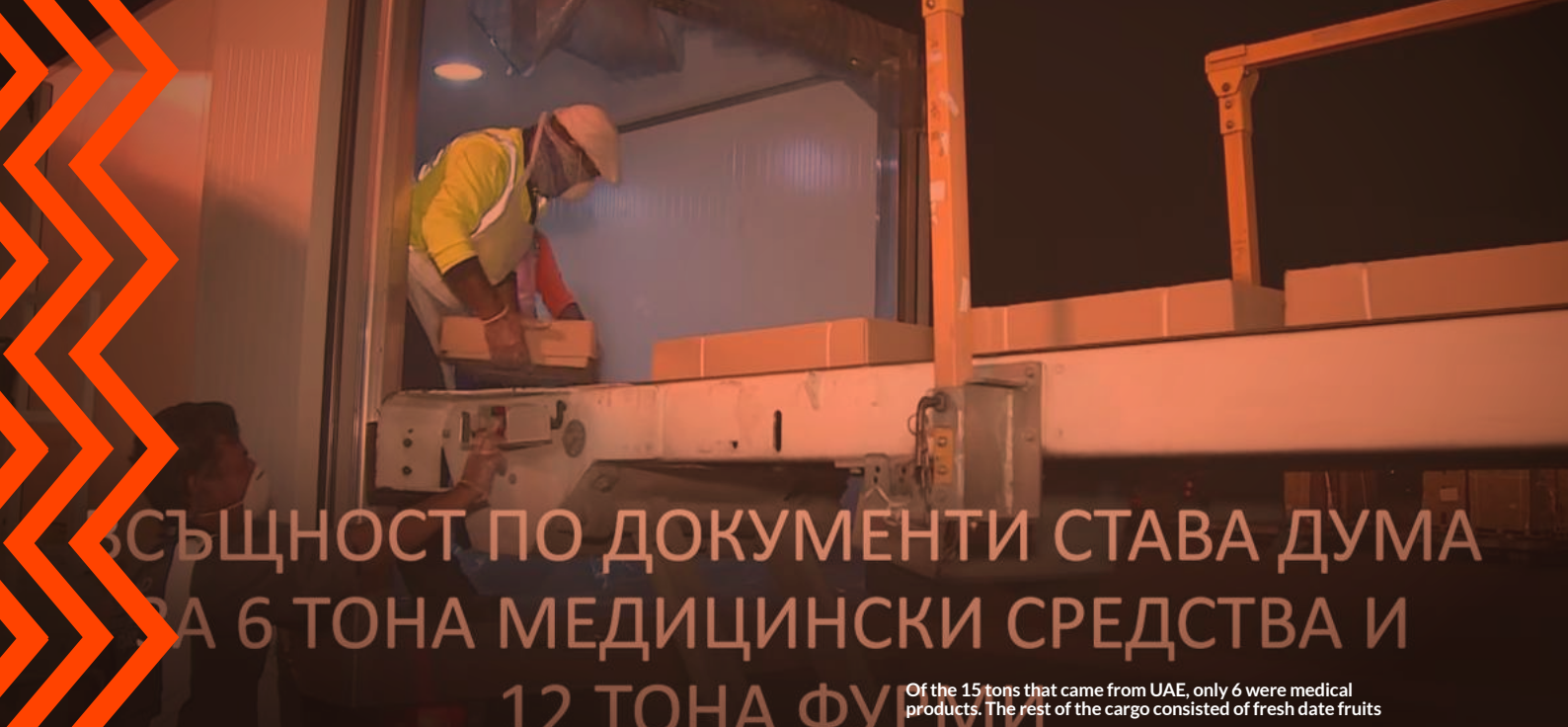


Emil Karanikolov, Minister of the Economy, flew to UAE on a trip which turned out to be a food barter between two private companies.

Series of media investigations questioned the official narrative of humanitarian aid between two friendly governments. First, it became clear that the cargo was not a donation but rather a barter of food and medical supplies organized by two private companies. The companies in question were “Intrust,” a company of the influential media tycoon and MP from the Movement for Rights and Freedoms party Delyan Peevski, and “Gradus,” a company of Ivan Angelov, another businessman close to the government. Mr Delyan Peevski, one of the wealthiest Bulgarians, had been spending considerable time in the UAE, where he owned real estate and had business with registered companies.

As it turned out, from the announced 15 tons, only 6 were medical supply products. The rest of the cargo consisted of fresh date fruits. The Minister of Economy explained that the dates were “a donation” from a dates producer who requested to distribute them among Bulgaria’s neediest.

In May, the Anti-Corruption Fund produced a short documentary video presenting the discrepancies between the official documentation and the public explanations. The imported cargo’s customs documentation revealed that the dates’ UEA sender was not a food producer but a construction company. A letter from the Ministry of the econ-



omy to the Customs agency also explained that the whole shipment was “unexpected.” The Ministry officially “abandoned” it at Sofia Airport to be donated to the Bulgarian Red Cross.

The ACF documentary raised the question of why a minister of the economy had to fly to the UAE to assist in the food swap between two private companies? Why was the operation presented as humanitarian cooperation between two governments? What was the goal of the “Mission Abu Dhabi?”

In the summer, the Prime Minister BrorISOV asked for the economy minister Mr. KaranIKOLOV’s resignation, explaining publicly that he was one of the “Delyan Peevski” ministers in the government. Such a public statement gave further credibility to suspicions that governmental institutions may have been used to assist private companies’ business dealings in this and other cases.

THE EIGHT DWARFS: THE STORY OF A CRIMINAL CAPTURE OF A MILLION-DOLLAR BUSINESS

The “Eight Dwarfs” story tracking the criminal capture of a million-dollar business drew more attention to the work of ACF than ever before. Despite the witness’s statements, many documents, and other evidence presented in the case, the institutional responses were scant. However, the public resonance of the story was enormous, both in Bulgaria and internationally. Millions of people on social media watched the 4 videos of the series, and the “eight dwarfs” became one of the recurrent slogans of the anti-corruption protests that swept Bulgaria in the summer of 2020. According to Politico, “The Eight Dwarfs” story became “the epitome of the national malaise of corruption in Bulgaria.”

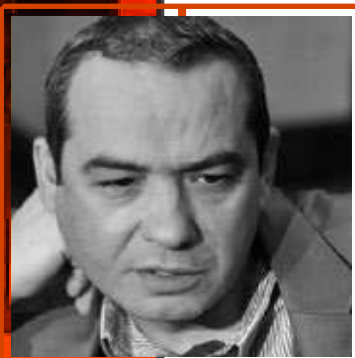
THE EIGHT DWARFS 1: ASSISTANCE WITH THE PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE THAT COSTED EUR 1,5 MILLION



Mr. Iliya Zlatanov,
Izamet's owner
and manager

A family conflict escalated in a war between the partners in the largest elevator manufacturer in Bulgaria, Izamet Ltd, with a turnover and profit of millions of EUR. For years, **Mr. Iliya Zlatanov**, Izamet's owner and manager, filed complaints and reports to various law enforcement institutions, but they remained unanswered.

He finally sought assistance from **Petyo Petrov**, former head of the criminal investigation department at the Sofia City Prosecutor's Office. Mr. Petrov had a reputation as a middleman with connections in the Specialized Prosecutor's Office (SPO). Zlatanov met Petrov in his informal office at “The Eight Dwarfs” restaurant in Sofia, heavily guarded by the private security company “Delta Guard” and police patrols. Attorney Petrov promised to assist Zlatanov with a rapid intervention of the Prosecutor's Office against his opponents for controlling the family business. In return for this assistance, Petrov demanded half of the recovered assets of the Izamet elevator company.



Petyo Petrov

Just days after Mr. Zlatanov signed a promissory note worth EUR 1.5 million in favor of Mr. Petrov's wife, the Specialized Prosecutor's Office pressed criminal charges, detained, and performed search and seizure procedures against his opponents in the company. However, in the ensuing months, Mr. Petrov's appetite for business capture grew, and he turned from a “helping hand” into a rival, attempting to effectively take over and appropriate all of Mr. Zlatanov's company and assets - with further help from law enforcement institutions.



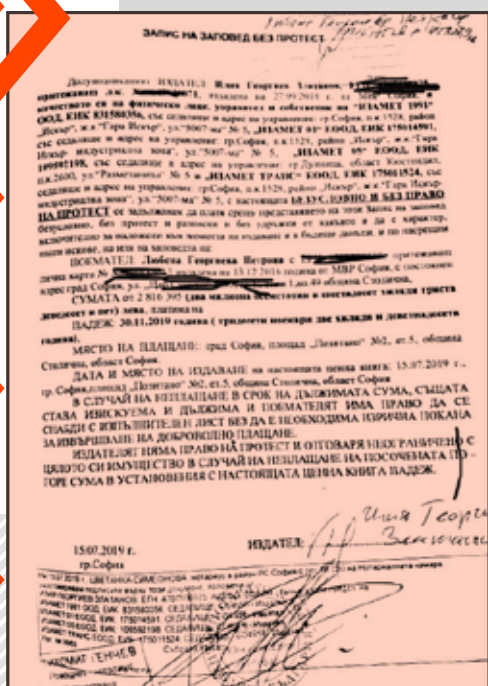
Lyubena Petrova

One of the prominent participants and beneficiaries in "The Eight Dwarves" is the wife of the former high-ranking magistrate Petyo Petrov - Lyubena Petrova. A few years ago, she was the only spokesperson for the emerging Plan B civic group, which defended the judiciary's status quo. Several members of the Plan B association's board became the lawyers who helped turn the Zlatanov family's assets into Lyubena Petrova's possession.

After receiving threats about his life and that of his son, Zlatanov signed all documents for the transfer of his company Izamet to Mr. Petrov and his wife and urgently fled abroad to a country he does not want to reveal.

The ACF's legal department analyzed not only Mr. Zlatanov's testimonies but a wide array of the official documentation. It bore serious indicators and raised doubts about the Prosecutor's Office's adequate and objective reaction in the whole case. The main question was why the Prosecutor's Office acted just after the intervention of attorney Petyo Petrov?

Immediately before releasing the first series of the "The Eight Dwarfs" investigation, the author Nikolay Staykov received intimidating phone calls. Staykov's home was vandalized on 18 and 19 June 2020. Three international media organizations reacted with positions calling Bulgarian authorities to investigate the case and ensure the journalist's security. As a result, on July 2, 2020, the Prosecutor's Office issued an order for police protection for Staykov. The ACF also took measures to enhance Staykov's security and safety.

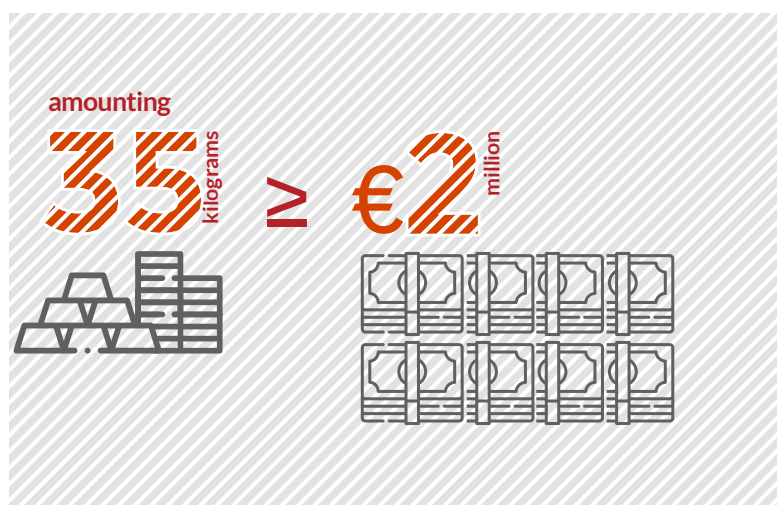


One of the most important documents in "The Eight Dwarfs" series for which there is still no explanation. For what service the businessman Iliya Zlatanov owed nearly 1.5 million EUR to the former magistrate Petyo Petrov the Euro's wife? Zlatanov signed the document after their meetings in the "Eight Dwarves." Wasn't that the price of a corrupt service in the Prosecutor's Office?

THE EIGHT DWARFS 2: AND A QUESTIONABLE DISPOSITION OF 35 KILOGRAMS OF GOLD BY THE PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

The second part of the Anti-Corruption Fund's documentary video explored the Specialized Prosecutor's Office's handling of material evidence in "The Eight Dwarfs" case.

Just days after Mr. Zlatanov signed a promissory note worth EUR 1.5 million in favor of Mr. Petrov's wife, the Specialized Prosecutor's Office (SPO) pressed criminal charges, detained, and performed search and seizure procedures against his opponents in the company. The SPO's investigative measures against Iliya Zlatanov's former wife and son involved seizing valuables from their security vaults, amounting to 35 kilograms of gold bars and coins worth more than 2 million EUR. According to official documents, the SPO took them as material evidence and "returned" them to Zlatanov based on an invoice for the gold's acquisition.



The SPO confiscated 35 kilograms of gold bars and coins worth more than 2 million EUR from Mr. Zlatanov's opponents. However, Mr. Zlatanov testifies that the gold was never his property.



However, Iliya Zlatanov, Izamet's owner, testifies that the gold was never his property. According to his account, Petyo Petrov, the former Head of the Sofia Criminal Investigation Department, and his wife, Lyubena Petrova, proposed to assist him in gaining possession of the coins under documents attesting to their origin. Therefore, the invoices, stating his name as its owner, were fake. The gold was returned to him only on paper: he signed the return protocols on the Specialized Prosecutor's Office's parking lot. After that, the gold was immediately transferred to the trunk of Petyo Petrov's wife's car, and he has not seen it ever since.

Iliya Zlatanov discussed the story about the gold in a Viber chat with a Viber user, "Lyubena." Iliya Zlatanov's son - Yavor, the owner of the safety vaults from which the Prosecution Office confiscated the gold a year ago, also comments in the investigation's second part. He assures he is the real owner of the gold and can prove the purchase of part of it with documents.

July
2020

If this is true, it would mean that both sides in the conflict confirm the suspicions that the Specialized Prosecutor's Office returned the gold illegally.

To whom the Prosecution had returned 35 kilograms of gold – the material evidence seized after searches - and how? The return in March 2020 poses more questions about the Specialized Prosecutor's Office's role in the case. Unfortunately, the questions remain unanswered to date.

On July 7, five days after the release of the second episode in the ACF series, the Specialized Prosecutor's Office (SPO) broke into the house owned by Iliya Zlatanov and performed a search and seizure operation. According to the press release, the SPO seized material evidence, some of which – yellow metal coins – “were identical with those returned to that person earlier in the year by orders of SPO prosecutors working on the same case.” The press release aims to refute Zlatanov's claims that all the gold was taken by Lyubena Petrova following its return by the SPO, i.e., that the arrangement made with Petrov to divide it equally was not honored.



Security cameras record the police's entrance into the house of Iliya Zlatanov on July 7, 2020, in the absence of any other persons.



Ivan Geshev @IvanGeshevPG · Jul 8, 2020

Истината няма нюанси и бързо се установява. Очаквам т.нар. „Антикорупционен фонд“ да се извини на институцията Прокуратура на Република България, но това изисква достойнство. Знаем откъде идват хибридните атаки, те няма да спрат нашата работа в името на българските граждани!



234

22

145



On the same day of the search and seizure operation, The Prosecutor General published a tweet where he requested an apology from the Anti-Corruption Fund, apparently for the allegations of SPO's questionable disposition of material evidence of great value made in “The Eight Dwarfs” series.

The ACF team responded with a detailed analysis “Ten questions about “The Eight Dwarfs,” that remain unanswered.” The ACF pointed that the search and seizure procedure conducted on July 7 involved many alleged violations of the procedural law, such as police’s entrance into the property in the absence of any other persons. The search and seizure also only revealed 79 yellow-metal coins, which objectively represents a negligible part of the kilograms of gold worth EUR 2 million mentioned in the movie. In addition, it is not clear how the authorities ascertained that the coins “coincide.”

August
2020

THE EIGHT DWARFS 3: THE STRANGE CASE OF RETURNING 500,000 EURO TO THE PERSON WHO DID NOT OWN THEM



Dimitar Lambovski

“Has anyone from the Prosecutor’s Office ever given you 500,000 euros in an envelope? I guess not. No one had given it to me before, either.” This is the beginning of the main witness’s story in the third part of “The Eight Dwarfs” investigation, Dimitar Lambovski, a businessman and Member of Parliament in the 39th National Assembly (2001-2005). His witness account directly pointed to more striking legal violations in the disposal of money seized and kept by the Specialized Prosecutor’s Office in “The Eight Dwarfs” case.

Lambovski received on paper the 550 thousand EUR seized in 2019 after SPO performed a search of the bank safe of Iliya Zlatanov’s former wife - Julia. The investigative measures took place within the Specialized Prosecutor’s Office’s criminal proceedings upon the report filed by Iliya Zlatanov.

The Specialized Prosecutor's Office gave the money to Lambovski based on a very unusual legal document, a "contract for responsible safekeeping" of money bearing the names of Lambovski and Yavor Zlatanov.

However, both parties in the contract, Yavor Zlatanov, and Dimitar Lambovski, directly deny having concluded it. Lambovski claims that he was, in fact, summoned to "The Eight Dwarfs" restaurant and forced under duress by Petyo Petrov to sign the protocol for receiving the money from the SPO.

Lambovski further states that the money, just as the gold in the story told in Part 2, was returned to him only on paper. In reality, it was "collected" by the attorneys recommended by the former head of the Investigation Department of the Sofia City Prosecutor's Office Petyo Petrov – "The Euro" in the parking lot of the SPO. "The statements in "The Eight Dwarfs" give a reason for a thorough internal investigation of the Specialized Prosecutor's Office; especially its disposal practices with material evidence of great value in this criminal case," said the film's legal adviser and ACF's senior legal expert Andrey Yankulov.

Once again, the Specialized Prosecutor's Office did not provide any comment on the investigation.



August
2020

EIGHT DWARFS 4: THE ROLE OF THE PROSECUTOR GENERAL

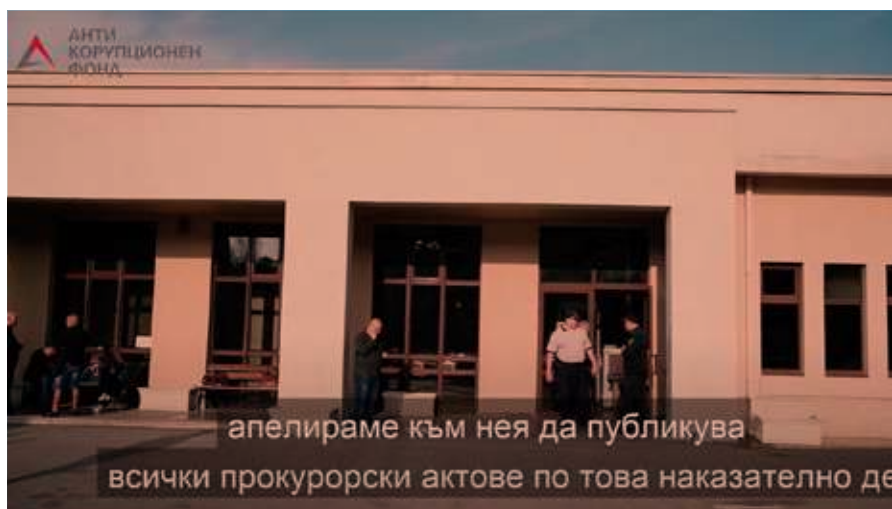
The fourth and final part of the Anti-Corruption Fund's investigation concluded the involvement of institutions in the conflict in the "Izamet" elevator factories.

A document, mentioned in a court hearing, reveals that the very next day after businessman Iliya Zlatanov met Petyo Petrov "The Euro," the former head of the Sofia City Prosecutor's Office's Investigation Department, the former Prosecutor General ordered the National Investigation Department to investigate the existing files about all Zlatanov's previous complaints. Why is this document important?

There had been no substantial progress on the three case files in question during the three previous years. During this time, Zlatanov was kicked out of his factories with a private bailiff by his son. This led to the meeting and request for “informal assistance” with the former head of the Investigation Department of the Sofia City Prosecutor’s Office, Petyo Petrov, “The Euro.”

In Zlatanov’s own words, the assistance came, as if on “a magic carpet:” two weeks after the meeting, the SPO detained his opponents in the legal dispute on charges of racket and extortion. However, days before the arrests, Zlatanov signed a promissory note worth nearly 1.5 million EUR in favor of Petyo Petrov’s wife – Lyubena Petrova.

“We received no answer from the Prosecutor’s Office. It only reinforced our doubts about whether and how it acts on command in similar cases. And how this happens precisely when scandalously notorious former magistrates are involved,” said the author of the investigation **Nikolay Staykov**.



It is also essential to recall that upon his leaving the Prosecutor’s Office back in 2015, there was a request for disciplinary proceedings against Petrov, which the Supreme Judicial Council rejected. At the same time, Petrov’s future wife, Lyubena, organized “counter-protests” supporting the same Prosecutor General Sotir Tsatsarov.

The Prosecutor’s Office’s speedy action probably began the day after the first meeting in the “Eight Dwarves” with the signature of the then Prosecutor General Sotir Tsatsarov.

“An in-depth and objective inquiry into “The Eight Dwarfs” case is crucial at this moment of critically low trust in the work of the Prosecutor’s Office. It is also a test for the professionalism, independence, and integrity of the system as a whole”, said the Anti-Corruption Fund’s director **Boyko Stankushev**.



Citizen gather in front of “The Eight Dwarf” restaurant in July 2020 demanding answers from the Prosecutor’s Office about ACF’s investigation.

"THE EIGHT DWARFS" CASE: THE MAIN EVENTS

2017



Iliya Zlatanov and Yavor Zlatanov enter a **legal conflict over their company Izamet's assets**. Il. Zlatanov lodges complaints against his son with the SCPO and the SDPO. There are no institutional reactions.

25 June
2019

Yavor Zlatanov transfers the company assets to a new company - "K Correction"; bars his father from entering the company's factories.



27 June
2019



Iliya Zlatanov visits the "Eight Dwarfs" restaurant and seeks assistance from Petyo Petrov, "The Euro," former head of the criminal investigation department at the SCPO known as a middleman with connections in SPO.

3 July
2019

With "The Euro" 's assistance, Iliya Zlatanov submits a new extortion complaint to the SPO.



4 July
2019



A SPO prosecutor initiates criminal proceedings without any preliminary investigation. SPO immediately summons Iliya Zlatanov for questioning.

15 July
2019

Iliya Zlatanov signs a promissory note to Petyo Petrov's wife, Lyubena Petrova, worth more than EUR 1 400 000.



17 & 18 July
2019



The SPO proceeds to press criminal charges, detain, and perform search and seizure against Iliya Zlatanov's opponents. The authorities seize around 35 kg of gold in coins and ingots for over EUR 2 million and EUR 550 000 in cash from their bank safes.

End of August
2019

Petyo Petrov proposes Iliya Zlatanov to split the EUR 550 000, seized by the SPO, in two.



Beginning of Sept.
2019



Meeting with Lyubena Petrova: Petyo Petrov's wife proposes splitting the gold, seized by the SPO, in two.

26 November
2019

A partner of Petyo Petrov "The Euro" acquires Yavor Zlatanov's company "K Correction."



15 January
2020



Iliya Zlatanov and Yavor Zlatanov enter a **legal conflict over their company Izamet's assets**. Il. Zlatanov lodges complaints against his son with the SCPO and the SDPO. There are no institutional reactions.

March
2020

Iliya Zlatanov and businessman Dimitar Lambovski are summoned to SPO and sign receipts stating they have received the gold and euro collected as physical evidence on the case. Both testify that Lyubena Petrova collected the gold and the money at the SPO's parking lot.



Abbreviations:
SCPO - Sofia City Prosecutor's Office
SDPO - Sofia District Prosecutor's Office
SPO - Specialized Prosecutor's Office

20 March
2020

At a meeting in the "The Eight dwarfs," Petrov demands that Iliya Zlatanov signs all the necessary papers for his company's complete transfer to him. He threatens Zlatanov that his son Yavor (whose kidney has been removed and who needs hemodialysis) would not be given medical treatment and would be left to die; Zlatanov himself would be imprisoned.

7 April
2020

Iliya Zlatanov meets Lyubena Petrova who threatens him with a gun and orders him to visit a notary between 13 and 15 April for the complete transfer of his company to Petrov "The Euro."



12 April
2020

Iliya Zlatanov flees the country.

18 & 19 June
2020

Immediately before releasing the first series of the "The Eight Dwarfs" investigation, the author Nikolay Staykov's home is vandalized, and he receives intimidating phone calls. 3 international media organizations issue positions calling Bulgarian authorities to investigate the case and ensure the journalist's security.



18 & 19 June
2020



Iliya Zlatanov and businessman Dimitar Lambovski are summoned to SPO and sign receipts stating they have received the gold and euro collected as physical evidence on the case. Both testify that Lyubena Petrova collected the gold and the money at the SPO's parking lot.

1 July
2020

ACF publishes the first part of the "Eight Dwarfs" investigation. Two days later, the Sofia City Prosecutor's Office (SCPO) initiates a preliminary investigation on the movie's information.



7 July
2020



The SPO carries out a search and seizure operation at Iliya Zlatanov's house near Sofia and claims finding the "missing gold." In a tweet, the Prosecutor General asks the ACF for an apology. The ACF publishes a detailed analysis pointing at alleged procedural law violations during the search and seizure operation: the police entered the property in the absence of witnesses; the operation revealed just a negligible part of the gold worth EUR 2 million mentioned in the movie.

September
2020

ACF sends the legal analysis of the "Eight Dwarfs" case to the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Sofia City Prosecutor's Office, the Minister of Interior, the Minister of Justice, the Council of Notaries of the Notary Chamber, the Inspectorate of the Supreme Judicial Council, and the Supreme Bar Council, appealing for an objective, impartial, and comprehensive investigation of all allegations of committed crimes.

9 September
2020



Political journalism magazine Politico calls the "Eight Dwarfs" investigation "an epitome of the national malaise of corruption" in Bulgaria.

December
2020

The four series of "The Eight Dwarfs" investigation have amassed more than 3,500,000 views on social media.





After the final episode in the "Eight Dwarfs" investigation, The Anti-Corruption Fund (ACF) compiled and sent a detailed legal analysis of the case. The analysis contained all the facts revealed in the investigation – the testimonies of the main witnesses who spoke in front of the camera – Mr. Ilia Zlatanov, Mr. Dimiter Lambovski, and others, as well as descriptions and photocopies of the original documents on the case.

The analysis of all the evidence raises reasonable suspicions of:



- Numerous crimes and violations committed by magistrates, notaries, lawyers, and police officers around a scheme of illegal influence on institutions, extortion, and unlawful business capture.



- The Specialized Prosecutor's Office handling of the gold and cash seized as material evidence in the case, amounting to over EUR 2.5 million.



- The police protection of Mr. Petyo Petrov's informal office at "The Eight Dwarfs" restaurant, which according to witnesses' accounts, lasted for years.



- The alleged criminal acts perpetrated against the Zlatanov family.



- The legal income and property status of Mr. Petrov and his related parties

ACF sent the analysis to the **Prosecutor General of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Sofia City Prosecutor's Office, the Minister of Interior, the Minister of Justice, the Council of Notaries of the Notary Chamber, the Inspectorate of the Supreme Judicial Council, and the Supreme Bar Council**, appealing for an objective, impartial, and comprehensive investigation of all allegations of committed crimes.



Following the first publication of the ACF on the subject, the Sofia City Prosecutor's Office initiated a preliminary inspection on June 26, 2020. On June 30, Nikolay Staykov, the author of the publication, gave testimony at the Sofia City Prosecutor's Office. Immediately after, the SCPO also summoned the first participants in the case. To this date, there are no announced results of the preliminary inspection.

Responding to the report we filed to the Minister of the Interior, in October 2020, the Sofia Police Department initiated an internal investigation which stated that there never was an official police protection post in front of "The Eight Dwarfs" restaurant. However, this result of the inspection contradicts the testimonies of numerous witnesses who reported a continuous presence of a police patrol car in front of the restaurant. It raises the question: what were the grounds for its presence there if there was no official order?

The Council of Notaries of the Notary Chamber, the Inspectorate of the Supreme Judicial Council, and the Supreme Bar Council stated that their institutions do not find signs of misconduct of the magistrates, notaries, lawyers involved in the case.



THE MASK IS IMPOSSIBLE: HOW THE HEALTH MINISTRY DISTRIBUTED 1.2 MILLION DEFECTIVE MASKS WITHOUT EVEN TESTING THEM

The ACF's video investigation "The Mask is Impossible" revealed that the **Ministry of Health of Bulgaria (MoH)** had distributed 1.2 million defective Chinese masks among people on the front lines against COVID-19.

At the end of March 2020, the Health Minister signed two contracts with China to supply nearly 3 million protective masks and 50 respirators worth EUR 4.6 million. The mask producers were the companies RYZUR and HANGZHOU. Even before signing the contracts, there were media reports about RYZUR's masks failing to provide the specified COVID-19 protection. In early May 2020, an American laboratory tested the RYZUR masks and found that their filtration level was between 27 % and 33.9 % instead of the 99.2 % claimed by the manufacturer. Nevertheless, the MoH purchased precisely this type of masks.



The Ministry of Health purchased 3 million masks and 50 respirators for 4.6 million EUR.

The ACF has monitored the case since the very beginning and, on many occasions, filed requests for access to public information. In July, following a complaint by ACF, the court ordered the Minister of Health to disclose the agreements for the supply of face masks and ventilators from China.

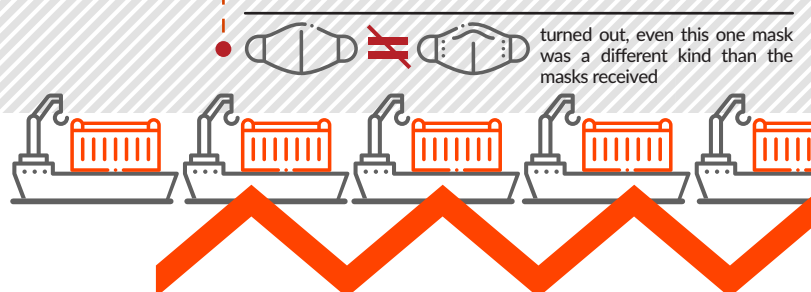


testing included

1x



out of a total of 1.2^{million} in 5 separate shipments



A detailed analysis of the test documentation provided to ACF after the court decision raised some alarming questions. The testing included only one mask out of a total of 1.2 million received in 5 separate shipments. The protocol did not specify the method of examination. The Virology Laboratory, which performed the test, did not have accreditation from the Executive Agency "Bulgarian Accreditation



Service,” the only Bulgarian institution entitled to accrediting laboratories assessing compliance.

The final documentation ACF received on the case demonstrated even more blatant irregularities in MoH’s handling of the case. According to the protocol, the only mask tested was not the same type as the masks purchased by Bulgaria. In other words, none of the 1.2 million RYZUR masks received in 5 shipments had ever been tested. Nevertheless, all the masks were distributed and used by people working on the front line against COVID-19. There is no evidence that users were informed of the possible health risks.

In January 2021, ACF filed a report with the Prosecutor’s Office, stating all the irregularities and requesting an inspection.

OTHER CASES IN 2020

POSSIBLE INFLUENCING OF THE STATE GAMBLING COMMISSION



Vasil Bozhkov,
owner of the biggest
gambling businesses
in Bulgaria



Vladislav Goranov
the finance minister

In January 2020, Vasil Bozhkov, owner of the biggest gambling businesses in Bulgaria, fled to Dubai to escape arrest on the charges of the Prosecutor's Office for leading an organized criminal group formed for the purpose of extortion, coercion, tax crimes, money laundering, and other crimes.

In May, from Dubai, Mr. Bozhkov published a text message exchange allegedly revealing that the finance minister Vladislav Goranov promised him assistance in the State Gambling Commission at the Ministry of Finance. Several days later, Mr. Bozhkov published another written memo of a meeting between him and the businessman Kiril Domuschiev, publicly known for his close contacts with the finance minister. In a statement, Mr. Domuschiev has confirmed the authenticity of the document claimed by the publisher. According to the text of the document, Mr. Bozhkov committed to buying advertising time in Mr. Domuschiev's Nova TV, and, in return, he had to receive "full support of the State Commission on Gambling in regularizing his business so that it complied with the laws of the Republic of Bulgaria."

Several media published the two documents, but the Prosecutor General publicly dismissed them, stating he was not familiar with the content of the alleged correspondence but was informed by his colleagues that there is "nothing irregular."

The Anti-Corruption Fund sent a referral to the Prosecutor General, calling for an inspection of the content of the text message exchange and the memo about the alleged influencing of an independent state regulatory body.

According to the ACF, confirming the messages' authenticity, claimed by the accused businessman and not denied by the Minister of Finance (and even indirectly confirmed in his public statement about being in contact with the businessman), would mean:

- the arranged meetings between the two preceded key sessions of the State Gambling Commission at the Ministry of Finance regarding the businessman's gambling business.
- the Minister reported to the businessman about his instructions to the former chairwoman of the State Commission on Gambling.
- the Minister reported to the businessman about his advice to another former chairperson of the State Commission on Gambling not to take actions interfering with the routine operation of the businessman's companies during inspections of them by the Commission.

THE SILISTRA CASE: BYPASSING TENDER PROCEDURES DURING THE COVID-19 STATE OF EMERGENCY

On 18 March 2020, the mayor of Silistra opened a procedure for supplying insurance services for the municipal fleet and real estate property worth EUR 28,580. The municipality did not organize a competitive tender procedure, stating that Bulgaria's state of emergency restrictions constituted a "force majeure" that granted it an excuse from observing the Public Procurement Act (PPA) 's regulations. It thus resorted to direct negotiation, extending for 12 months the contractual relationship with Asset Insurance, the service provider at the time.



Dimitar Petzov,
Anti-corruption activist
and journalist in Silistra

However, following a publication by local journalist Dimitar Petzov, ACF's investigation showed that the Silistra Municipality had been under a legal obligation of opening a public procurement tender even before the announcement of the state of emergency. The declared need for urgency in appointing an insurance provider was due to the municipality's delayed actions and represented a PPA violation.

"This case is an example of a worrying trend of using the state of emergency legislation as an excuse for bypassing legal procedures serving to defend the public interest," said ACF's director **Boyko Stankushev**.

ACF has filed a report with the Public Financial Inspection Agency (PFIA), asking for a check into the 18 March 2020 public procurement and all Silistra Municipality's insurance services tenders in 2017 – 2020.

THE BLAGOEVGRAD CASE: SIPHONING PUBLIC FUNDS THROUGH A MUNICIPAL COMPANY

According to media publications, in the period 2016 – 2017, the municipal company “Blagoevgrad Invest 2016” paid tens of thousands EUR as remunerations to employees of the Municipality of Blagoevgrad for services related to the execution of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP). However, the company's annual reports did not contain information about any such contracts signed with firms under the NEEAP. There were serious indicators that the municipal company was used to make bonus payments to selected officials in addition to their monthly salaries.



“Blagoevgrad Invest 2016” also signed several contracts with private companies without conducting procurement orders in accordance with the Public Procurement Act (PPA). The company entered contracts with firms without seeking multiple offers, rendering free competition impossible. It also signed several agreements for delivering identical services twice with companies from a certain circle of providers close to the municipal officials. The Anti-Corruption Fund (ACF) alerted the Public Financial Inspection Agency (PFIA) regarding potential misuse of public funds and conflict of interest in “Blagoevgrad Invest 2016.” There is no response from the Agency so far.

INSTITUTIONAL REACTIONS TO ACF INVESTIGATIONS IN 2020:

Investigation		Reaction
THE EIGHT DWARFS		Sofia City Prosecutor's Office: preliminary investigation since June 26, 2020. However, no results are published to date.
		The Council of Notaries of the Notary Chamber: no signs of misconduct of notaries involved in the case.
		The Inspectorate of the Supreme Judicial Council: no signs of misconduct of magistrates involved in the case.
		The Supreme Bar Council: no signs of misconduct of lawyers involved in the case.
		Ministry of the Interior: internal investigation: no official police protection of the "The Eight Dwarfs" restaurant.
THE MASK IS IMPOSSIBLE		Prosecutor's Office: response pending
POSSIBLE INFLUENCING OF THE STATE GAMBLING COMMISSION		Prosecutor's Office: integrated the ACF's report to the case
BYPASSING TENDER PROCEDURES DURING THE COVID-19 STATE OF EMERGENCY		Public Financial Inspection Agency: financial inspection of Silistra Municipality pending.
SIPHONING PUBLIC FUNDS THROUGH A MUNICIPAL COMPANY		Public Financial Inspection Agency: response pending

May
2020

INVOLVING LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS

ACF has always worked to investigate corruption cases and conflict of interest not only on a national level but on the level of regions and municipalities as well. With the “Accountable Local Authorities, Strong Communities” project, we sought to expand our grasp of the situation across the country and mobilize local communities in 10 Bulgarian cities to improve public authorities' transparency and accountability.



Arne Disch,
senior consultant at ACF's
Norwegian partner

We first created a Local Accountability and Integrity Standard (LAIS), which promoted good practices of municipal transparency and accountability from across the European Union. The Standard was prepared in cooperation with our Norwegian partner Scanteam after an analysis of the situation on the ground and with the active participation of local coordinators and activists and cooperation with local authorities in the selected municipalities.



Public presentation of the project

We held a meeting with civic activists and non-governmental organizations who will be monitoring the implementation of the Standard locally in their communities and exposing bad practices using an electronic application. We also plan meetings and training for the local communities' representatives - journalists, activists, NGOs, which will improve their capacity to submit signals to the competent authorities. The ACF will submit the developed Standard for Accountability and Integrity for consideration to the regional anti-corruption councils. We will propose the Municipal Councils to approve and adopt it as a code of ethics (standard for good management practices in the municipality), i.e., after a possible decision of the respective municipal council to make the Standard part of the local legislation.



ACF PUBLICATIONS



ANTI-CORRUPTION INSTITUTIONS: ACTIVITY WITHOUT VISIBLE RESULTS. ACF'S ANNUAL ANTI-CORRUPTION MONITORING REPORT 2019

Anti-Corruption Institutions: Activity Without Visible Results



ANTI-CORRUPTION
FUND

This is the second comprehensive report that the ACF prepared with the support of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. This report presented the results of ACF's annual independent civic monitoring of cases of (alleged) corruption crimes and conflicts of interest at the highest levels of government. The monitoring presents analysis of 40 key criminal cases in the pre-trial and trial phase for the period 2014-2019 and assessment of decisions on signals of conflict of interest of the Commission for Combating Corruption and Confiscation of Illegal the acquired property (KPKONPI) for 2019.

The report provides a concrete answer to the question of the fight against political corruption in Bulgaria in the last 5 years.



Andrey Yankulov,
senior legal expert
at the ACF and author



Atanas Slavov,
senior legal expert
at the ACF and author

only

3

cases have resulted
in final convictions



Some of the report's conclusions:

– the efforts to combat high-level corruption in the past five years have not led to any effective punishment. Only **3 of the 40** examined cases have resulted in **final convictions**. This percentage is significantly lower than the overall rate of convictions achieved by the Bulgarian prosecutor's office.

only suspended
prison sentences



– None of the examined final court verdicts were pronounced in 2018 and 2019. There are **no prison sentences** on all the reviewed cases, only suspended prison sentences.

7

final acquittals



– **There are 7 final** acquittals, issued primarily on cases where the **charges were unfounded**, meaning that the indicted actions of the defendants were not considered criminal by the courts concerned.



status remains
unknown

– Around one quarter of all the examined cases (11 out of 40) are **still at the pre-trial phase of proceedings, or their status remains unknown**



2019 - 2018 50 % less conflict of interest cases

- The **conflict-of-interest cases** in 2019 are half the ones in 2018 (14 cases in 2019 and 28 cases in 2018).



failure to investigate all possible relationships

- In 2019, CAFIAP continued to follow a **formalistic approach** in ascertaining conflicts of interest, which results in a failure to investigate all possible relationships that can lead to dependences and to exercising official duties under undue influence.

ACF presented the report both as an in-presence event with experts and live-streamed it through its Facebook profile, where it got significant attention.

ACF sent the report to all relevant institutions dealing with anti-corruption in Bulgaria, as well as embassies and European institutions.

In October 2020, the European Commission published its first Report on the Rule of Law in the European Union, which made a detailed analysis of the state of the judiciary system and the fight against corruption in Bulgaria. The report mentioned the ACF's Anti-Corruption Monitoring report 10 times throughout the text when referencing institutional handling high-level corruption cases in Bulgaria and confirming one of its main conclusions that the "formalistic approach" hampers the effective anti-corruption investigation in Bulgaria.



Public presentation of ACF's Annual Anti-Corruption Monitoring Report, June 24, 2020



ACF director Boyko Stankushev and senior legal expert Atanas Slavov present the Anti-Corruption Report to Her Excellency Ambassador Herro Mustafa, файл Meeting Ambassador Mustafa

PREVENTING CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND MISUSE OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT



The ACF's experts prepared this guidebook to answer the needs of our partner network of investigative journalists, independent media practitioners, and active grass-root organizations working in the field of anti-corruption. The guidebook aims to provide in-depth legal expertise and know-how which, would help them indicate red signals of corruption cases in public procurement and instances of conflict of interest of key public officials.

The guidebook provides legal expertise in cases involving access to public information and deepens the knowledge and practical skills of journalists and grass-roots anti-corruption activists on using national and international registers and databases for corruption indicators. It focuses on developing practical skills concerning:

- requesting access to information and use of national and international registers and databases.
- Developing practical skills in detecting indicators of high-level corruption, misuse of public funds (public procurement), and conflict of interests.
- developing skills in protecting sources of information in line with national and European standards and practices.



Discussing the guidebook with ACF's partner journalist network.

CONTROLLING THE PROSECUTION FUNCTION: THE NECESSARY CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

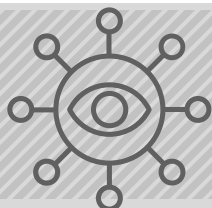


The Anti-Corruption Fund's analysis "Exercising control over the prosecution function: the necessary criminal justice reform" addressed some of Bulgaria's criminal justice system's essential issues and identified possible solutions.

The text reviews the prosecutorial institution's development in Europe and Bulgaria, the different criminal justice

systems, the attempts made so far for reform, the identified problems, and the solutions sought. The focus is on the lack of possibilities for external control over some of the prosecutorial institution's actions, a problem outlined both in Bulgaria's current public debate and in the positions of many European institutions, including the European Court of Human Rights, The Venice Commission, The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO).

The analysis of the Anti-Corruption Fund identifies two key directions of the reform:



1) Overcoming the notion of the “general supervision” function of the Prosecutor’s Office



2) Creating forms of independent procedural control by the court over the criminal prosecution’s implementation - whether, who, when, and for what to be charged with a crime of a general nature.

The analysis defends the introduction of judicial control both when the Prosecutor’s Office exercises its power to prosecute at the pre-trial stage and when it does not.

“Uncontrolled criminal prosecution by the Prosecutor’s Office is a luxury that much stronger legal and political systems than ours cannot afford,” said Andrey Yankulov.



AWARDS FOR THE ACF

ACF's role in revealing and exposing corruption was also recognized in **two awards received in the reported period** – two awards for investigative journalism of the “Radostina Konstantinova” Foundation in May 2020 and the “Golden Key” award for **“Non-governmental organization, most actively using the instruments of the Access to Public Information Act”** in September.

ACF'S INVESTIGATIONS WIN AT THE PRESTIGIOUS “RADOSTINA KONSTANTINOVA” COMPETITION FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM



The investigations of the Anti-Corruption Fund “War for Corpses” by Genka Shikerova and “The KTB Case: The Missing Names” by Nikolay Staykov won two of the three awards in 2020 at the prestigious competition for investigative journalism “Radostina Konstantinova.”

The jury of the competition unanimously awarded the grand prize to the investigation “War for Carcasses” by Genka Shikerova. The investigation, realized in cooperation with the ACF in July 2019, traces the spending of nearly EUR 15 million by the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency between 2018 and 2019 on the disposal of animal carcasses. In violation of the Public Procurement Act, The Agency paid to only two companies to process record quantities of carcasses with mobile incinerators whose capacity turned out to be many times lower than declared. Nova TV rejected the idea for this investigation, and a little later, Genka Shikerova was fired from the media.



Genka Shikerova



AWARDS FOR THE ACF



Nikolay Staykov

The ACF co-founder and investigative journalist Nikolay Staykov also received the Radostina Konstantinova award for his video series “The KTB Case: The Missing Names,” created in collaboration with Mihail Mihailov (video and editing) and Veselin Kalanovski (voice).



The series presented the results of Staykov’s analysis of 200,000 pages of documents collected by the Prosecution Office during the investigation into the bankruptcy of Corporate Commercial Bank (KTB). The files include the names of many politicians, public figures, media owners, and government officials who have not been questioned by the prosecutors. The investigation raises many serious questions about the Prosecution Office’s work, the banking system, the links between politicians, senior officials, and big business in Bulgaria.

“The awards are a recognition of the exceptional mastery and courage of the two authors we work with,” said the ACF director **Boyko Stankushev**. ***“They are also an acknowledgment of the uncompromising work of the Anti-Corruption Fund’s entire team in detecting and uncovering corruption in Bulgaria and give us the motivation to continue.”***

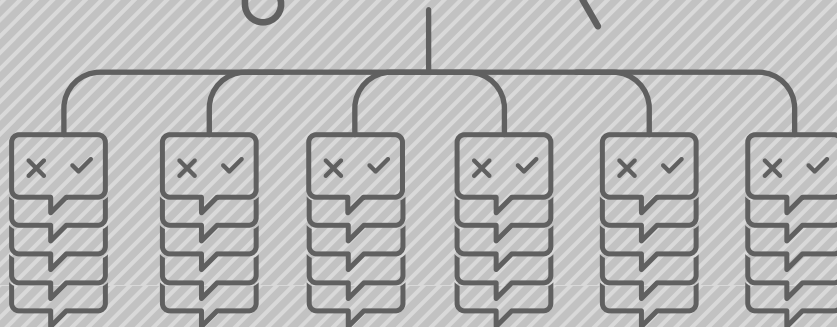
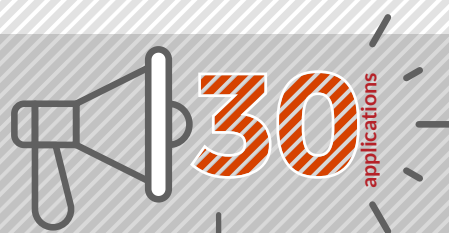
GOLDEN KEY AWARD FOR THE ACF

The Anti-Corruption Fund received the Golden Key Award at the 18th ceremony for the Right to Know Day, September 28, organized by the Access to Information Program. ACF received the award in the category “Non-governmental organization, which most actively used the Access to Public Information Act (APIA).”

ACF received the award in the category “Non-governmental organization, which most actively used the Access to Public Information Act (APIA).”



The APIA was one of the main instruments The Anti-Corruption Fund used to obtain information in some of its landmark investigations. In 2018 and 2019, the ACF won 2 cases against the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency's illegal refusals to provide crucial public information on the “Golden Puddle” and “War for Carcasses” investigations, specifying the scale of the misuses and violations of the law. In 2019, ACF also won a lawsuit against the Minister of Energy, who refused to provide a document justifying the private Varna Thermal Power Plant's designation as a “cold reserve” for the Bulgarian energy system instead of the state-owned Maritsa Iztok 2 Thermal Power Plant. In 2020, in a lawsuit filed by ACF, the court ordered the Minister of Health to provide contracts for the supply of masks and respirators from China worth EUR 2.3 million.



Since the beginning of 2020, ACF has **submitted over 30 applications to various institutions requesting access to public information under the APIA** and has won most lawsuits filed for refusals of institutions to provide such information.

“Access to public information is a civil right. We are glad that more and more organizations and citizens in Bulgaria are actively fighting to realize it. The shared efforts make us stronger in the fight for the right to know,” stated ACF’s director **Mr. Stankushev**.



September
2020

PROMOTING A COMMUNITY OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS: THE RED LINE AWARDS FOR JOURNALISM AGAINST CORRUPTION

On December 9, 2020, the International Anti-Corruption Day, the Anti-Corruption Fund (ACF) presented its first Red Line Awards: Journalism Against Corruption Awards. The Red Line Competition for Anti-Corruption Journalism was organized with the support of America for Bulgaria Foundation and the US Embassy in Bulgaria. The awards honored courageous journalists and investigators who, over the past year, have shed light on corruption cases or contributed to the establishment of the rule of law in Bulgaria.

"We looked for investigations and materials that have broadened our understanding of corruption, awakened active civic energy, and drawn a red line beyond which, as a society, we cannot tolerate corruption," said **Boyko Stankushev**, director of the ACF. *"The name of the awards also refers to the role of a good journalistic investigation: drawing a red thread between scattered facts, testimonies and data, and helping us understand our situation."*



At an online ceremony on International Anti-Corruption Day, December 9, the Anti-Corruption Fund (ACF) announced the Red Line Awards winners for anti-corruption journalism.

The awards' jury was chaired by Prof. Ivo Draganov, New Bulgarian University, and NATFA "Krastyo Sarafov." Its members were Irina Nedeva, a journalist at the Bulgarian National Radio and chairman of the Association of European Journalists; attorney Alexander Kashamov from the Access to Information Program; Nikolay Staykov, investigative journalist and co-founder of ACF and Boyko Stankushev, director of ACF. The jury reviewed 26 nominations of journalists from 15 media.

THE RED LINE AWARDS FOR 2020



Nikolay Stoyanov
Capital

Award for journalistic investigation for his series of articles on suspicious loans from the state Bulgarian Development Bank



Martin Georgiev
Sega

Award for establishing the rule of law for a series of materials addressing the judiciary's problems in Bulgaria



Marian Ivanov
BNR - Radio Burgas

Award for young journalist for following several cases of suspicion of corrupt practices in Burgas and the region



Kanna Racheva
bTV

Award for overall contribution and presence



Venelina Popova

Regional Journalism Award for a series of articles revealing the origin of donations made by MP Delyan Peevski



special remark

to **Nikolay Marchenko**,
Bivol

for journalistic intransigence and courage



special remark
to **Polina Paunova**,
Radio Free Europe/Radio
Liberty Bulgaria

for journalistic audacity
and reflex



INCREASING THE PUBLIC IMPACT: ACF'S INVESTIGATIONS IN THE MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

In 2020, ACF achieved a sizeable expansion of its audiences and increased recognition of its mission. In its various channels, **the ACF audiences expanded between 3 and 5 times**. (See chart) The views of the ACF's video investigations have increased almost tenfold. (See chart) These positive current dynamics have brought a secondary surge of past ACF investigations as well. For instance, "The KTB Case Files: The Initials D.P." exceeded 1 million views on Facebook, receiving over 400,000 new organic, unsponsored views.

Indicator	2019	2020
 Number of visitors on acf.bg	10 979	81 695
 Media publications mentioning ACF	504	1 746
 Facebook followers	10 058	52 942
 ACF YouTube channel subscribers	3 922	16 100
 Views of all ACF video investigations on YouTube	233 176	1 115 338
 Views of all ACF video investigations on Facebook	611 100	5 100 000

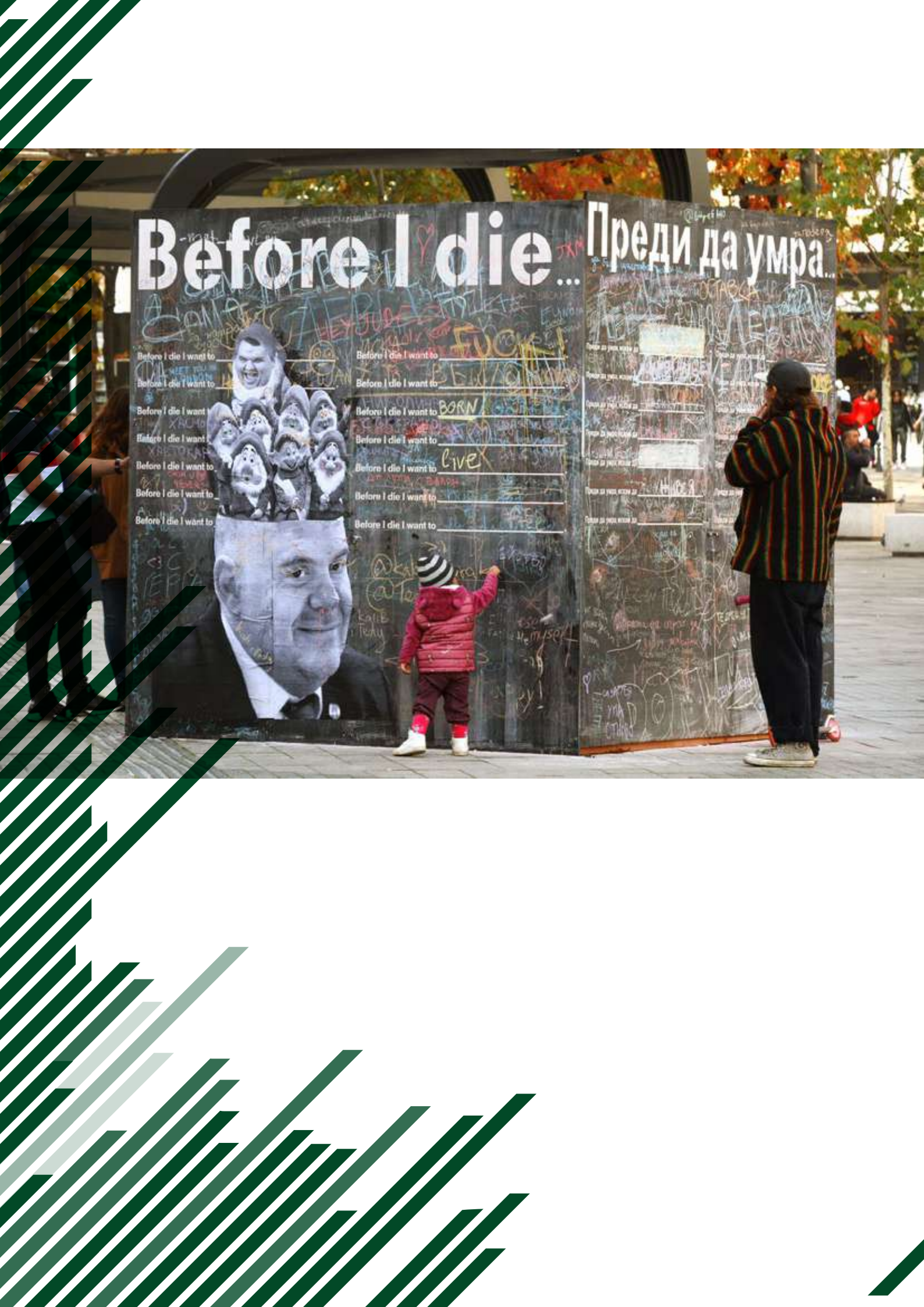
The organization's messages reached broader and more diverse target groups of citizens, non-governmental organizations, and institutions. On several occasions, they became a central topic of the public debate in the country and received the attention of prime-time televisions and media. Such occasions were the ACF's public statement, urging the Prosecutor's Office to investigate the businessman Vasil Bozhkov's allegations of high-level corruption and conflict of interest (May), the ACF's Annual Anti-Corruption Monitoring Report (June), "The Eight Dwarfs" Investigation (June-September).

Several authoritative foreign media used ACF investigations, such as the "The Eight Dwarfs" to illustrate Bulgaria's situation regarding corruption and the rule of law. Politico wrote that the "Eight Dwarfs" **"has come to epitomize the national malaise (of corruption)."** Among the media that wrote about ACF investigations or cited opinions of ACF experts were The Financial Times, Politico, German TV ARD, Al Jazeera, Swiss daily Neue Zürcher Zeitung, the German radio Deutschlandfunk Kultur and others.

“The Eight Dwarfs” also provoked lots of reactions from foreign embassies in Sofia and members of the European Parliament. It became a viral term used in public discussions regarding the rule of law and fight against corruption topics, and even inspired tens of memes, jokes, and stories on social media and a public screening of the series in Rouse, organized independently of the ACF.

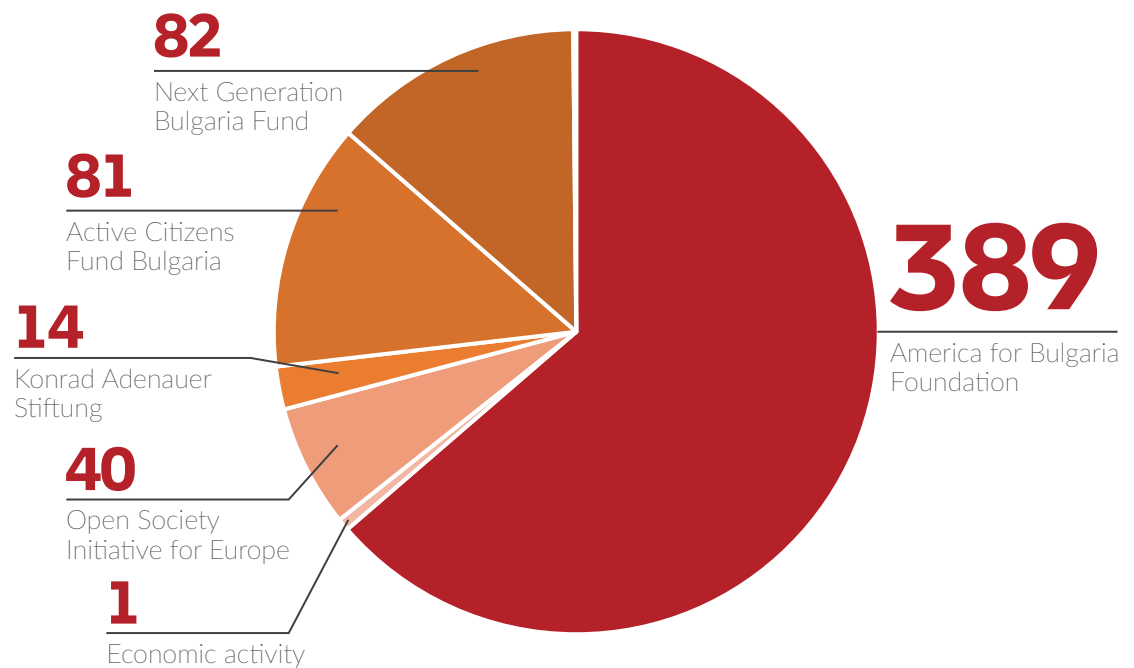


Video	Facebook	YouTube
THE KTB FILES 3: KTB'S MEDIA FLEET AND THE PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE3 January 2020	257 138	34 290
MISSION ABU DHABI May 2020	161 057	19 799
EIGHT DWARFS June 2020	735 293	274 801
EIGHT DWARFS 2 July 2020	730 712	168 814
EIGHT DWARFS 3 August 2020	718 392	155 449
EIGHT DWARFS 4 August 2020	612 155	128 189
THE MASK IS IMPOSSIBLE 1 September 2020	40 187	30 857
THE MASK IS IMPOSSIBLE 2 September 2020	52 953	17 887

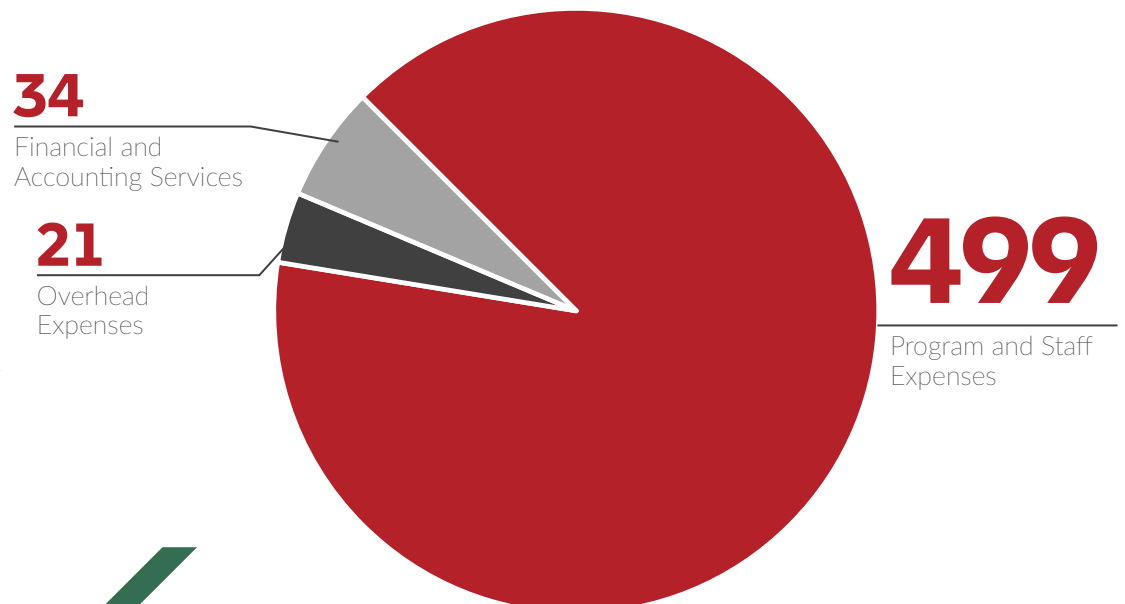


FINANCIALS

Operating revenues 2020,
thousands of BGN



Operating expenses 2020,
thousands of BGN



ACF'S KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2020

331

Tip-offs for corruption
received from the
public

86

Corruption
investigations after
media monitoring

10

Litigations related to
access to information
requests



2

Access to information
requests litigations
won in court



8

Published
anti-corruption
investigations



7

Published analyses

11

Reports filed
to institutions



8

video Investigations
produced by the ACF

6,215,338

Views of our
investigation videos
on YouTube
and Facebook



111

Corruption-linked
publications
on ACF's web site



1746

Media publications
in Bulgarian and
international media



ACF TEAM AND BOARD



Boyko Stankushev
Director of ACF and member
of the Board



Phillip Gounev, PhD
Chairman of the Board



Sofia Razboynikova
Member of the Board



Rossen Bossev
Member of the Board



Ilian Vassilev
Member of the Board



Nikolay Staykov
Co-founder and investigative
journalist



Denitsa Rukanova, ML, MIR
Legal program coordinator



Andrey Yankulov,
Senior legal expert



Assoc. Prof. Atanas Slavov, PhD
Senior legal expert



Lora Georgieva Mateeva, ML
Senior legal expert



Sofiya Zheleva, ML
Legal expert



Daniela Peneva
Legal expert



Pavla Sivova
Junior legal expert



Stefan Krastev, MA
Public outreach coordinator



Mario Rusinov, BA
Analyst