NATIONAL ANNUAL REPORT 2016

SOS CHILDREN’S VILLAGE CROATIA
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1.1 SUMMARY OF SOS CHILDREN’S VILLAGE CROATIA WORK IN 2016

The political situation during 2016 was quite eventful, culminating in early parliamentary elections in September. However, Croatian economy recorded faster growth than expected, the tourist season was excellent and for the first time in many years, public debt decreased. Many analysts believe that this is the result of politicians being focused on themselves instead of meddling in economy. Thanks to the reduction of income tax in early 2015 and to deflation, personal consumption continued to rise steadily. Despite the above, the poverty index went up by 3% in comparison with 2015 and now stands at 20%, a fact which cannot be overlooked. The unemployment rate went down and now stands at 14.8%. Of the 241,860 persons who were unemployed in December 2016, 29% were people younger than 25, a third of population capable of labour. It is therefore not surprising that a large number of young people are leaving Croatia and looking for better prospects in other EU countries. We have had two such cases for now – two of our young persons left Croatia to live and work abroad.

The table below provides an overview of the most important economic trends in 2016 when compared to 2015:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic trends*</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>+1.6%</td>
<td>+2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exports</td>
<td>+11.3%</td>
<td>+4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imports</td>
<td>+6.5%</td>
<td>+4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy and transportation prices</td>
<td>+2.5%</td>
<td>+2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial products prices</td>
<td>+2.4%</td>
<td>+3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food expenditures</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
<td>+0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total inflation</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
<td>+0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of the unemployed persons in December</td>
<td>284,657</td>
<td>241,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average monthly paid off gross earnings</td>
<td>+2.2%</td>
<td>+1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average monthly paid off net earnings</td>
<td>+4.3%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty index</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Source: Računovodstvo, revizija i financije (Bookkeeping, Audit and Finances), Issue 2, 2017

We were successful in finding employment for our remaining young people who became independent in 2016. We hope that they will find their happiness and place under the sun in Croatia and we plan to help them in the future as much as we are able.

Due to political upheavals in 2016, including the collapses of the government in January and June and early elections in 2016, no social fund grants could be drawn from the EU, so as a result, the Ministry of Social Welfare (now called Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy) did not issue any calls for project proposals. It was uncertain whether we would be able to fund all our programmes and FSP projects. However, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of the directors and co-workers in Children’s Villages and the national team of the Association, we managed to maintain all the mobile team activities in locations SOS Children’s Village Lekenik and SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci, and to transform ERP...
in Drenovci into a FSP project. We moved the mobile team to Županja. Given that this programme covers southeast Slavonia, the mobile team is part of the SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci location.

We continue to monitor the DI process, which so far has affected only the state-owned homes. The extensive advocacy project “Building Capacity of Professionals Working with Children in Care” came to a close with a big conference in 2016 in Zagreb. The participants agreed that it was a helpful and productive project.

We are still facing big challenges regarding our Sustainable Path Strategy, which requires us to attain financial independence in 2019. Not a lot of time is left, so we had to hire new expert workers. We have two new co-workers in our FR department, employed under the employment scheme “Subsidized In-Service Training without Permanent Employment”, which allows us to hire new young co-workers and thus increase the quality of our work. On the other hand, recruiting new SOS mother candidates is getting more and more difficult. We do receive applications, but very rarely do we hire any of the applicants.

Local FR income was 96% of the plan, a good result for the FR team and all of us together. The slower rise of volume of FR activities has resulted in not fulfilling the 100% of the plan, but we will compensate for this by increasing our income and number of donors in 2017. Individual giving and corporate donations are still the strongest FR channels.

Expenses in 2016 decreased by 3% in comparison to 2015, due to the reduced work volume in the FSP projects. Investments were 132%, thanks to donations in kind that qualify as capital assets. Budget expenditures in 2016 were 93%, due to the shutting down of the ERP Migrants.

Association SOS Children’s Village Croatia is one of 135 members of the federation SOS Children’s Villages International from Innsbruck, Austria. Association President and Board of Directors Chairwoman Prof. Mariza Katavić and the National Director were invited to the 20th Ordinary General Assembly of SOS Children’s Villages International in Innsbruck, which took place in the period between June 23 and 25, 2016.

President and Senate members of SOS Children’s Villages International are all elected for a four-year term, so General Assembly is held every four years and attended by the MA presidents and national/executive directors from 135 member nations, as well as by the PSA directors. Among other activities, President and Senate members are elected at the Assembly. Mr. Siddartha Kaul has been re-elected as the President, and our president Prof. Katavić was re-elected as the member of the SOS Children’s Villages International Senate.
The Board of Directors held four sessions in the course of the year, receiving detailed progress reports on activities taking place in our programmes, which provide not only care for our children and youth in the Villages and Youth Facilities, but also services for children and families through our mobile teams in the locations SOS Children’s Village Lekenik, SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci and in the wider area around Županja. Monitoring financial indicators is extremely important for the work of our Association and therefore of great interest to our Board of Directors, who were regularly briefed on such issues at the sessions.

SOS Children’s Village Croatia National Management Team, which has seven members, held four regular sessions to discuss current events and activities in programmes and to monitor the implementation of the work plan and financial plan for 2016. Thanks to the professional and selfless work of everyone involved, in 2016 we made sure that our children and youth had everything they needed to live and develop as they should while fulfilling all our obligations to our co-workers at the same time.

Ours vision remains the same – we will continue to be a provider of high quality social services for children, youth and all families in the Croatian welfare system.

Višnja Tuškan-Krupić
National Director
The work of the Programme Department in 2016 was as intensive as ever. Our activities were focused on monitoring developments in the Croatian welfare system, changes in legislation and ongoing DI process on the one hand and realization of the planned goals defined in our Sustainable Path Strategy on the other. For us as a civil society organization, the ongoing DI process in the Republic of Croatia did not bring any bigger developments or changes in 2016. This is a direct reflection of activities carried out by the competent Ministry, which were primarily focused on transforming state-owned homes. We can say, once again, that during this slow and lengthy process of changing the paradigm from institutional to non-institutional forms of social services, our SOS Children’s Villages, as children’s homes, continue to provide high-quality care for children without adequate parental care with the same intensity, while our youth programs make sure that young persons can acquire adequate education and psychological and social skills required for independent life.

The biggest obstacle to unhindered carrying out of our primary activity – quality care for our children, youth and families – were frequent political upheavals, primarily frequent changes of head personnel in the competent Ministry of Social Policy and Youth (now renamed as Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy) poorly defined legislation relevant to our work, lack of clarity in regulations and their uneven practical application. Despite that, the work with our children and youngsters took the form of professionally guided and planned activities in the SOS Children’s Village and the youth programs and it went on smoothly, always with the goal of attaining high quality of services for children and youngsters, with focus on their best interests, safe development and fulfilment of their potential.

As in previous years, our expert work and all relevant programs and activities on both program locations were planned, monitored and carried out in keeping with the defined guidelines for the SOS Children’s Village Program Policy implementation process. The annual plans for locations were drafted on the basis of completed evaluations of results achieved so far. We are proud of active participation, motivation and full engagement of our co-workers in the completed implementation process.

The activities in the area of family-based care and family strengthening programs were all carried out in an effort to follow and fulfil the goals defined in our long term Sustainable Path Strategy. We are particularly pleased that the quality of work in our SOS Children’s Village has contributed to our being recognized by the welfare system as a form of family-based alternative care appropriate for the care and joint placement of multiple siblings. As further proof, we offer the fact that in 2016, our 18 SOS family houses provided home solely for biological siblings.

Our expert workers’ psychosocial and pedagogical activities are based on regular drafting of individual development plans for each child and young person in our care, to keep up with their development and growth. We respond to observed needs with respect to their wishes and our current abilities.

Once again this year, we used the spring holidays to hold the SOS CVC Youth Day in Orahovica for 22 young persons and 7 educators. We took into account the opinion of our young people as we thought about the ways of improving this process, so this year in the period leading up to the 3-day event we carried out the self-evaluation of young people about the quality of care in SOS Children’s Villages in all four Youth Facilities. This approach was a big success – we got to hear the opinions of all our young people and Youth Day was a more relaxed and comfortable affair, with more time for educational workshops and socializing.
Young people chose the main theme of the event themselves: romance and male-female relationships. Workshops and making of the video clip additionally encouraged creativity and motivated young people to work constructively and with purpose. Judging from their final comments, we can conclude that they were very pleased with the results of the three days they spent working and socializing together.

The results of the joint efforts and continued, structured support from expert workers on all levels – Children’s Village, youth programmes, National Office – are visible every day, but when you have the opportunity to encounter so many bright, mature and creative young people in one place and see how they think about the work we do for them, how they evaluate it, when you get a constructive proposal for change after every observation, it is a profoundly moving experience.

We are equally proud when we see that among 27 young people in the SIL programme who have successfully graduated from high school, 14 are college students and 9 are gainfully employed. In addition to receiving financial and expert help and support through activities designed to prepare young people for independent life, our young people in the SIL programme also have the chance to live in apartments loaned to us by the City of Zagreb Office of Property Management. Currently there are 7 accomplished young people living on their own in three apartments. Young people who are still looking for employment...
get help and support to encourage and strengthen them for the challenges ahead. This is also why our advocacy efforts are focused on designing and adopting measures aimed at boosting the employment prospects of young people leaving care.

To maintain the high quality and professionalism of our work with children and youth, we monitored the quality and results of pedagogical work in all projects through personal visits and through monthly and annual reports, statistical indicators and monitoring the implementation of individual development planning and quality standards of care for SOS mothers. We also carried out internal research to evaluate the supervision, performance assessments of our youth and statistical monitoring of college students. The relevant expert co-workers carried out the self-evaluation of their work as part of the quality management process on national and programme level. Furthermore, we carried out the mandatory annual monitoring of capacity utilization in both SOS Children’s Villages and the attached Youth Homes, which is an important groundwork and preparation for annual strategic planning.

We continue excellent and fruitful collaboration in the local communities where our programmes are active, which is reflected in both our SOS Children’s Villages being part of their respective counties’ welfare plans as social services providers. We also get support in the form of co-financing our FS programmes and family separation prevention programmes.

To keep in line with the needs of communities in which we work, we cooperated with the relevant stakeholders and launched the initiative to expand social services we provide on both our programme locations, through obtaining the decision issued by the competent Ministry to confirm that we fulfil minimum requirements to provide social services (licence) in accordance with the DI process, the existing legal regulations and relevant documents.

We maintain constant cooperation and communication with all relevant stakeholders, such as our competent Ministry, Office of the Ombudswoman for Children, Social Welfare Centres, Social Work Study Centre, civil society organizations etc. We would like to emphasize that we take active part in the work of the National Commission for Youth Strategy under the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth. We also had significant support from the competent Ministry and the Office of the Ombudswoman for Children in the implementation of our advocacy activities as Association SOS Children’s Village Croatia.

The Ministry of Social Policy and Youth has invited us to actively participate in the work of the National Body for the Monitoring of Youth at Risk of Social Exclusion. Additionally, two of our co-workers are involved in a major international project, Regional Child Protection Hub for Southeast Europe, as members of the national multidisciplinary team of child protection experts.

Thanks to all these multilayered, rich, excellent relationships with the above stakeholders, we were able to organize and implement the project AudTrain II, in which SOS CVC assisted the project bearer – Council of Baltic Sea States. The project was centred around theoretical and practical training in which 23 experts from the various social welfare fields and SOS CVC learned how to apply a structured method of system-based audit of how children’s rights are implemented in the institutional care system.

We continue the practice of holding a regular pedagogical section as a central annual meeting between key expert co-workers from all programmes and locations. We discussed, as we always do, the current situation in the projects, we shared positive experiences and accomplishments, but also the difficulties that we face. We planned the steps in the process of obtaining licence for new services; we defined future plans and agreed on how to proceed in response to calls for proposals. We presented the results of implemented advocacy activities and we also tackled the issues of human resources management. All participants were very active in the work of the section and pleased with the process, which resulted in constructive conclusions, proposals and plans for further work.
In recent years, FSP has stood out as an important segment of our work. This is an extra-institutional service that we provide through our mobile teams in the homes of beneficiaries or on the premises of our Counselling Centre.

We are pleased with and proud of our FSP “Loving Home for Every Child”. Not only have the results been visible and good, with a growing number of beneficiaries, but they are also continually expanding both in geographic and conceptual terms. Today, our programmes of working with families are being implemented in Sisak-Moslavina County, Osijek-Baranja County and Vukovar-Srijem County.

Under the auspices of the Programme SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevc and in cooperation with the local community and our partners, in March we began providing new extra-institutional services of psychosocial support and speech therapy as part of the projects “A Loving Home for Every Child” and “I Read, Write and Speak Better” to children in the SOS Children’s Village and in the local community. We hired a team consisting of psychologist and social worker. We signed a cooperation agreement with Social Welfare Centres Valpovo and Našice and we received funding from the Osijek-Baranja County to implement the programme.

The ERP “We Help Restore the Safety of Home for Children and Families”, launched in 2014 to help the flood victims in the Županjska Posavina, was completed at the end of the year. Our experts in two SOS Mobile Teams will continue to work in Eastern Slavonia as FSP, by providing social services in the local community for the families in the local community. The programme will continue under a new name – “A Loving Home for Every Child – Eastern Slavonia – Mobile Team for Children, Youth and Families”. The teams will cooperate closely with the competent social welfare centres and elementary schools to provide services of counselling and psychosocial support to children and parents, to organize services and activities aimed at strengthening parental competences, increasing the quality of life for children and their families.

In the Sisak-Moslavina County, the programme “A Loving Home for Every Child”, which is financially supported by the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy, continues to garner good results, including even more children, parents, families and experts who work with children. The broad range and quality of programme activities, large number of beneficiaries and their positive feedback and excellent cooperation with the local community are the main features of this programme. All additional programmes (“I’ll Step into Your Shoes”, “Little Groups for Big Changes”) within this programme are carrying on as planned. The field evaluation of the project concluded with positive observations and conclusions. The
evaluation was reported, both orally and in writing, to the staff of the foundation that monitors the realization of the project and spending of the funds set aside for the programme.

We begin the short overview of numerous activities carried out in 2016 with important, gratifying news that the team has moved into new premises in the elementary school Mladost.

In the course of the year, the Mobile Team crossed many kilometres helping families. They travelled through various locations in the Sisak-Moslavina County (Lekenik, Glina, Topusko, Dvor, Sisak, Petrinja, Hrvatska Kostajnica, Lipovljani, Sela and app. 20 smaller villages) and carried out numerous activities and projects. Here are some of the most significant accomplishments:

To improve the availability of social services and ultimately prevent family separation, SOS Mobile Team provided 1287 services for at-risk families, referred by the SWC Sisak, SWC Hrvatska Kostajnica, SWC Glina and SWC Petrinja. Thirty-three families with 72 underage children received individualized services of counselling and assistance, as well as services of help in kind, individual psychosocial work with the children, organizational help, summer vacations, information about their rights, study help. Several families were especially lucky, because they spent four days in the seaside town of Petrcane for free, thanks to the Zadar Tourist Board, its Petrcane branch office and selfless residents of Petrcane.

However, the Mobile Team is not the only thing that can be described as mobile. Our Counselling Centre for Children, Youth and Families also travels to its target users in Lekenik, Glina, Dvor, Hrvatska Kostajnica and Topusko. The Counselling Centre provided 211 counselling services for children and 171 counselling services for parents. A total of 52 families had the chance to receive support in difficult situations and crises, to learn about coping with hardships, to resolve various problems and learn new skills.

In addition to individual psychosocial work as part of the programme, we also carry out psychosocial activities with groups of parents and children. Programme “Little Groups for Big Things” was designed to help elementary school age children develop self-esteem and communication and social skills. In 2016, we implemented a series of such workshops in three elementary schools, through 28 individual workshops. For all classes in elementary schools Mladost, Sela and Glina, we organized workshops on the topic of violence, non-violent conflict resolution and tolerance, reaching 995 students.
We held two schools for parents and four training sessions. App. 60 parents learned more about child rearing and expanded their parental capacity.

We took our families to a seaside vacation, but we also had fun in Lekenik. During July, we offered daily entertainment and creative activities, enjoyed by many children in the SOS Children’s Village Lekenik and the local community.

We provided training for teachers, reaching 149 teachers in five training programmes. It is difficult to assess the value of ongoing supervision, but we are certain that six experts from the SWC Hrvatska Kostajnica who took part in 24 supervision sessions appreciated them very much.

The programme team in charge of all the activities, including further ambitious plans, consists of two psychologists, two social workers, special education teacher and social pedagogue. The contribution of volunteers to the programme and children’s quality of life cannot be overstated. In 2016, they dedicated 257 hours to SOS. Volunteer Marija alone provided 100 services of study help for children from at-risk families, much to their delight.

Our creative, hard-working team also developed an educational booklet Say No to Violence, and we are close to completing the interactive website for children, parents and experts where they will be able to learn useful information on prevention and recognition of violence against children and between children.

Monitoring and evaluations of all our FSP projects show that we are achieving our goals and that the efforts of our experts contribute to raising the quality of life for children and their families.

In February, we completed all the activities for the ERP project “Migrants in Slavonski Brod”. We also held the final meeting with the on-site project coordinator and we drafted the final financial and narrative report.

During 2016, we had the opportunity to personally showcase the work of our National Office Programme Department, as well as the programmes of SOS Children’s Village and FSP, to colleagues and collaborators from the Regional Office Programme Department, IO Human Resources Department and HGFD team. One short observation from the HGFD colleagues summarizes their impressions well: “… this was a wonderful and inspirational experience, we gained insight into a complex, rich work with children and youth, we are impressed with your results and how smoothly everything works, we enjoyed spending time with you.”
National Office Programme Department carried out a wide range of programmes and activities. Here are some of them:

- we continue to share our experiences and know-how at conferences, international meetings of experts, with students of social work and special education, in the media (we appeared on two Croatian TV shows, *Best of Croatia* and *Normal Life* )

- we took part in training courses and expert topical meetings of the Regional Office (Community of Practice – Care; Quality Management and Internal Control; meeting of the FSP advisors)

It is important to point out that we regularly apply for public grants in order to expand our programme activities, and we do everything we can to secure funding necessary for the implementation of our activities with the support of the local community, public and private companies and organizations.

For example, thanks to the financial support of the Sisak-Moslavina County and City of Glina, we launched a sub-programme “Glina Excels!” This collaboration enabled us to secure and equip a space for children and youth from Glina and Topusko and offer them speech therapy, various educational activities and psychosocial activities for the purpose of developing their potential and raising their quality of life. Given that this area lacks organized activities for children and youth, we want to provide them with quality programmes and services aimed at developing creativity, boosting self-esteem and personal strength, meaningful use of free time, study help etc. We use the premises loaned to us by the local kindergarten. Company Vivera was instrumental in helping us equip this space properly.

To ensure the continuation of our existing programmes and implement new activities, in 2016 our Association designed and submitted nine project proposals to various European, national and local calls for proposals. In eight of them, we applied as project bearers and the remaining one is led by our umbrella organization SOS Kinderdorf International, with us as partners. These efforts have led to approvals of two new projects. One has been approved by the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy – a project called “I’ll Step into Your Shoes; Cycle II – Prevention of Violence Among Children”. This project is already underway. Project “Prepare for Leaving Care – A Child Protection System that Works for Professionals and Young People”, where we are one of six partner organizations, will launch in early 2017.
We want to emphasize that with the help and support of the National Office, project teams from SOS Children’s Villages Lekenik and Ladimirevci successfully submitted their projects to various national and local calls for proposals, thus ensuring that their local communities and fellow citizens can use speech therapy treatments for preschool children. In Lekenik we also work on boosting the self-confidence of children through the Little Fairy Tale Theatre, and experts in Slavonia provide counselling and psychosocial help and support for families in their own homes, through the FSP activities.

In addition to the new project proposals we submitted, we have to mention that 2016 will be remembered for seven projects that ran throughout the year. Four were successfully completed at the end of the year and the remaining three will continue to run in 2017 as well, thanks to the financial support we received. We will continue to carry out the following programmes: our FSP “A Loving Home for Every Child – SOS Mobile Team and Counselling Centre for Children, Youth and Families in Sisak-Moslavina County”; project “I’ll Step into Your Shoes; Cycle II – Prevention of Violence Among Children”, which will be implemented in Township of Glina, Municipality of Lekenik and in the wider area of the City of Sisak.

Our important advocacy work in 2016 carried on through the project “Building Capacity of Professionals Working With Children in Care”, a product of a joint idea between our international organization SOS Kinderdorf International and eight SOS Children’s Village national associations from Estonia, Latvia, Italy, France, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Croatia. The main goal of this project for Croatia is training 120 professionals working with children in alternative care to apply children’s rights in their everyday work, a goal we accomplished in the second year of implementing this project. In 2016, we held five regional trainings with a total of 98 professionals working with children and youth in alternative care. The professionals were very pleased with the training and with the opportunity to share experiences with other colleagues from the system during the training.

We successfully completed the project by holding a final conference on November 24 in Zagreb. Among the speakers were our valued collaborators on the project: Ombudswoman for Children Ivana Milas Klarić and Nino Žganec, head of the Social Work Study Centre, affiliated with the University of Zagreb School of Law.
We continued our advocacy work regarding the employment of youth from alternative care, by carrying out a study of employment and dignified work for youth from alternative care in order to design and guide the best possible future advocacy activities in this very important field.

We also continued our practice of involving our own young people in advocating for their own rights. One of our young persons took part in planning the international advocacy campaign of SOS-Kinderdorf International, which took place in June 2016 in Innsbruck. This marked the first time that our international organization has involved young people in planning advocacy activities on such a high level, which is a testimony to how much we prioritize youth involvement in our organization.

In view of the fact that protecting children and their rights are our mission and vision, in 2016 we set up refresher courses on Child Protection Policy for all our co-workers, especially parts that deal with preventing all forms of children’s rights violations and responding in cases of such violations.

Gordana Daniel
National Programme Development Director
In keeping with our 3-year Fundraising Strategy, we increased local income and strengthened cooperation with companies. Our presence on social networks, especially on Facebook, raised the awareness of SOS Children’s Village Croatia and various campaigns and activities of our Association.

2016 was also notable for participation of citizens in our Friends Club, through which they help us provide daily care to our children and youth, and for maintaining our corporate partnerships throughout the year.

**FRIENDS CLUB**

We continued our recruiting efforts in 2016, as well as our efforts to maintain a steady base of donors who are members of the Friends Club.

In 2016, we received help in the form of donations from 24,200 private citizens. Of that number, 21,500 have signed standing orders. Our main focus remains on signing standing orders in direct contact with private citizens, i.e., F2F and D2D.

Throughout 2016, we cooperated with two agencies and we began collaboration with the Wustenrot Housing Loans Bank and with the sales representatives who joined the effort to recruit new potential donors.

We are present in Zagreb, Osijek, Split, Rijeka, Virovitica, Đakovo, Varaždin. In the course of the year, we had 35 SOS representatives who worked on different locations.

The agencies train SOS representatives in sales and communication skills, while SOS Children’s Village Croatia is in charge of training SOS representatives in mission, vision and basic information on SOS-Kinderdorf International. Part of our training includes examples and practices of other countries that implement F2F projects. We have reaffirmed that training SOS representatives is always essential and needed.

As for the locations where we raise donations and have private citizens sign standing orders, we are happy to have longstanding partners who allow us the use of their premises for promotional purposes free of charge. We are a daily presence in shopping malls, supermarket chains and in public spaces in the cities.

We collaborate with seven biggest banks in our market (Zagrebačka banka, Privredna banka Zagreb, Erste & Steiermärkische banke, Hypo Alpe-Adria-Bank, Hrvatska poštanska banka, Raiffeisen Bank Austria, Societe Generale).

**PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMPANIES**

We were able to rely on support from our numerous partners from the corporate and business sector throughout 2016. They support different areas of our work with their financial donations – we offer them a range of projects to focus on. Most of them choose donations that support one or more SOS families (utility costs, food, clothing and footwear). This includes our longtime partners such as Erste & Steiermärkische Bank, Dr. Oetker, Bosch, Mazda, Medtronic, Merkur osiguranje, Auto Krešo and Siemens, but
also companies that became our donors this or last year (Exportdrvo, Wollsdorf Components, Croatia Deutsche Bank).

Others prefer one of our corporate packages that fit the activities or the location of the company, or that otherwise reflect how the company chooses to implement its CSR practices, including education (Fondacija Bonartes, Xellia), health (Colgate), expert work with the children (INA, Scott Bader, Helen Doron School) or our more recent FSP projects (Vivera). Medical Intertrade, Kaufland, Pis, Namještaj Mima, Croatian Insurance Bureau, Sanofi and Integralog remain our longstanding, steadfast partners who prefer to give general donations.

Our biggest donor is INA. In addition to financial donation to cover the cost of special education treatments during the year, INA also helped in our joint CRM with Gibonni and Oliver Dragojević, by selling their collaborative CD *Familija* in INA’s gas stations. This campaign and generous donations that accompanied it were heavily covered by the media. The formal handover ceremony, which included a private concert held in SOS Children’s Village Lekenik, remains one of the most wonderful events we organized for our children and co-workers.

The above CRM (cause-related marketing) is the collaboration model that we managed to set up with several more partners besides INA: Escape studio waived its entire participation fee for an IT conference, Rekord-tim finalized the second 6-month agreement about selling kitchen sponges and towels and Palmotive repeated its traditional campaign, by waiving proceeds from selling shower foams in the Drogerie-Markt drugstore chain.

We respond to increased interest of companies to have their employees acting as corporate volunteers by engaging them in investment activities in the Villages (repainting house fronts, painting fences, planting trees) or in sports or cultural programs. This has a double benefit of meeting the interest of donors, most of whom are either longstanding partners or new partners that show great potential, while also covering planned investment costs in the Villages; at the same time, we ensure the loyalty of our partners and transparency of our work. For example, employees of GlaxoSmithKline, Erste Bank and Astellas painted the family house fronts, wooden pergolas and fences around SOS houses, RSM and Adria Group planted new trees around the SOS Children’s Village Lekenik playground, while Xellia employees spent their Family Day riding bicycles with our children and youth in Lekenik.

Our new donor Crodux organized a lovely trip to the FC Lokomotiva grounds, including football game and time with FC Lokomotiva players. Erste & Steiermärkische Bank took the participants in our Little School of Life on a financial tour of their bank, where children could see what the real bank vaults look like. Opel Croatia took us ice skating with rock musician Ivan Dečak and TV personality Renata Sopek. During this event, Opel also extended our agreement to use their vehicle Opel Karl free of charge until the end of January 2017.

Starting with this year, our partner Bagatin Clinic has included us in the D2D platform “Helping is Always In”. Together with their business partners, they raised funds for the annual sponsorship of utility costs for one SOS family and enough money to buy Christmas gifts for all 44 young people in our Youth Facilities.

Other donations in kind or in services that should be mentioned are Nike sneakers for young people, donated by Katapult; clothing for children and adults, donated by Aqua Maritima; donation of products from Kaufland and Lidl; weekly delivery of organic produce from Eko Sever; an all-year donation by Merkur osiguranje and household appliances from Whirlpool and Grundig.
PUBLIC RELATIONS - Report on notable events in 2016

Our children from Lekenik meet their Royal Highnesses

During their visit to Zagreb and the surrounding area in mid-March, famous royal couple from the United Kingdom, Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall, met with the children from the SOS Children’s Village Lekenik. Despite their tight schedule, the royals managed to see some of the best sights in our capital, including Croatian National Theatre, where they were greeted by our children. Excited children, decked in their best attire, charmingly handed their Royal Highnesses flowers and small gifts. Ten of our children aged five to eleven attended this wonderful occasion and they will surely remember it for the rest of their lives. We owe a debt of gratitude to the British Embassy, our loyal partner and friend. The embassy was instrumental in enabling children to meet two such eminent people.

Appearances on Croatian television

In April 2016, Ms. Ana Tomašković, a noted producer and host of the TV show Normal Life, which runs on Croatian Television, invited guests from the SOS Children’s Village Croatia to her show: SOS mother Gordana Gašparović, former SOS child Nensi Dubravec, SOS Children’s Village Lekenik Director Mario Čović and National Program Development Director Gordana Daniel. In the show, they spoke of mission, vision and type of care provided by our Association, with special emphasis on the joy of giving and selflessness of people who do this kind of work. Information on the charity helpline ran in the bottom part of the screen throughout the show, to raise awareness of all viewers interested in helping and donating to the SOS.
Respected journalist and longtime TV host on Croatian Television, Branimir Bilić, launched a new show in September, called *Croatia at Its Best*. Representatives of the Association SOS Children’s Village Croatia had the honor of being his first guests. Together with the representatives of two more NGOs, they talked about children in need and what needed to be done to make sure childcare organizations could carry on with their work.

**Daliborka Matanović, proud recipient of the Hermann Gmeiner Award**

In April 2016, Daliborka Matanović, who grew up in the care of SOS Children’s Village Croatia, won the prestigious Hermann Gmeiner Award. Ever since 1991 this award has served as a way of honoring accomplished young people who became role models in their communities after leaving SOS and achieving notable results in sports, culture, science, technology and society in general.
When she was a child, Daliborka Matanović believed she would always be followed by misfortune. Amazingly, today this twenty-seven-year-old economist from Croatia is grateful for all of her experiences in life. Her story touched the hearts of many people around the world and international organization SOS-Kinderdorf International recognized her conscientious approach to life, her responsibility and hard work. Daliborka received her award in June, during the SOS-Kinderdorf International General Assembly in Innsbruck. After accepting her award, Daliborka was also congratulated warmly by the president of SOS-Kinderdorf International, Siddhartha Kaul.

“It may sound strange, but I am grateful for all the hardships I went through. They taught me how to distinguish between good and bad, how to remain realistic and how to keep my two feet firmly planted in the ground, how to appreciate proper values in life. I am grateful because all of that has made me strong and independent. Today I can face any challenge”, says our Daliborka proudly.
INA, Gibonni & Oliver join forces to help our children

This year, one of SOS Children’s Village Croatia’s biggest corporate partners INA inspired our famous singer/songwriter and humanitarian Gibonni to do another good deed. INA and Gibonni were joined by legendary singer Oliver Dragojević, deftly combining music with charity aimed at helping children. These two great singers recorded an album together and donated HRK 50,000 from the proceeds of the sales of Familija to children without parents.

On top of this generous donation, INA’s Chairman of the Board Mr. Zoltán Áldott handed a donation cheque in the amount of HRK 150,000 to the SOS Children’s Village Croatia National Director Višnja Tuškan-Krupić. The donation will go towards renovating the roof of SOS Social Center in Lekenik.
As an icing on the cake, in late November Gibonni and Oliver played a concert for our children, SOS mothers and co-workers in the SOS Children’s Village Lekenik. To thank them, our children prepared a short program for them. Members of the drama club performed two scenes from the plays staged by the SOS Little Fairy Tale Theatre in recent years, our violinists showed off their skills and girls from our dance troupe danced to a song from the album *Familija* by Gibonni and Oliver. The stars were particularly moved by the dance number.

**Children’s dream holiday – celebrating ice cream!**

Fittingly for a hot Saturday in May, ice cream company Ledo, a loyal partner of SOS Children’s Village Croatia, organized a big celebration of ice cream – GelattoDay! Being wonderful friends that they are, they invited children from the SOS Children’s Village Lekenik to attend this sweetest of all days. GelattoDay was celebrated in the Maksimir Park in Zagreb. The entertainment program featured lots of games and several well-known performers: Ana Miščević, Amela Čilić, Ana Strizić, Tea Blažević and rap star Nered, who performed a song with his son.
Lyoness donation for softer dreams of children from Ladimirevci

On the last day of school, children from the SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci were greeted by a genuine surprise. Friends and partners from the company Lyoness came to visit and they brought an impressive gift: their generous donation included 47 beds and mattresses for all 16 SOS houses, much to the delight of children.

Our little actors wow Šibenik again

Children from the SOS Children’s Village Lekenik are traditionally a part of the International Children’s Festival in Šibenik. On June 30, 2016, they appeared at the festival for the fifth time, with their new play called Little Skyscrapers. Thanks to the wonderful text by the great writer and director of the SOS Children’s Village Lekenik drama club, Mr. Rusmir Agačević, our little actors outdid themselves. Their performance was further enhanced by two special guests. For the first time ever, performing with the children were SOS mother Iskra, who convincingly played a witch, and psychologist from the SOS Children’s Village Lekenik Lovorka, who appeared as a gentle fairy.
Performing at the International Children’s Festival in Šibenik is always a great honor and joy for us. Our children are always delighted to be there and they are truly dedicated to performing to the best of their ability. Organizers of the International Children’s Festival recognize their commitment too, as do the loyal viewers who always welcome them and greet their performances with raucous applause. Taking a bow in front of such an appreciative audience is always a pleasure.

Kids from Lekenik play with the footballers from the Croatian First League

We will remember the rainy September for an unusual football encounter we had on the FC Lokomotiva field in Kajzerica. That is where a friendly game between children from the SOS Children’s Village Lekenik and players of the FC Lokomotiva took place, on the initiative of Crodux, FC Lokomotiva general sponsor.

More than twenty little footballers had the chance to measure themselves against the players of this successful club, which plays in the Croatian First League. MC and entertainer Luka Bulić made the entire event even more fun. Attending the charity event were also Iva Balent, Agrokor Marketing Director, entrepreneurs Danijela Gajski and Karla Kaić and architect Ante Vrban.

“We are incredibly glad that our collaboration with Lokomotiva now has an added humanitarian dimension. We hope that the little footballers will always remember this day, because we certainly will. We want them to associate the beginning of this new school year with having fun and learning new football tricks. I am sure
this is just the first in a series of similar events and I look forward to seeing all of you again”, said Andrea Čermak, Crodux Marketing Director.

Children received jerseys to play in and they looked just like professional players. Each team was augmented with three senior players. After a tight game, which seemed like it could go either way until the very end, children had the chance to talk with their football idols and take pictures with them. They also received special medals to remind them of this special day.

Unforgettable party during the Open Door Day in SOS Social Center

Open Door Day in the SOS Social Center in Lekenik proved to be one of our most creative days. Numerous children from the Village and local community took part in as many as eight educational-creative workshops to showcase the work of SOS Social Center, which has been going on for many years now.

SOS Social Center has been active in the SOS Children’s Village Lekenik since 2007. It was founded to offer children a safe and comfortable place for educational, creative and social development. At the moment, it features 13 workshops led by external collaborators of the Village. During the Open Door Day, children showed how they spend time in drama club, hobby art workshop, dance classes, rock rehearsals, chess club, photography club, art workshop and violin workshop.

The day ended on a high note, with a surprise – after the creative workshops were done, popular singer Ivan Zak played a surprise concert for the children. The singer came to the SOS Children’s Village Lekenik as a treat for the chil-
dren, who truly enjoyed themselves. Guests and children sang along with Zak, and afterwards he spent time with the children, taking photographs with them and signing autographs.

**Olympic champions visit the youngest Lekenik residents**

December, the month of giving, began with the visit from Olympic champions – Sinković brothers and Josip Glasnović – who arrived to meet the youngest residents of the SOS Children’s Village Lekenik.

In collaboration with the Croatian Olympic Committee, the three Olympic champions and Crodux representatives – who initiated this visit – spent the morning with children in the SOS Social Center, where children generally spend most of their free time.

Talking to children and playing with them, they had the opportunity to see how children spend their days, where they play and socialize, and what activities they pursue to fill their free time. Children were delighted with the presents they received – creative supplies that will enable them to make their own presents for others under the mentorship of their hobby art instructor and their auntie from the Little Playroom.
SOS Children’s Village Croatia Christmas campaign

We celebrated the end of 2016 with a Christmas campaign, which included a TV spot and five video clips to be used on social networks.

We used the videos to send a message of family togetherness, love and attention that children without parental care enjoy under the care of SOS Children’s Village Croatia.

The campaign was broadcast on five TV stations, one national and four local ones. Four leading news portals in Croatia also lent their support: Večernji.hr, Net.hr, Telegram.hr and Poslovni.hr. We also promoted this campaign through Facebook advertising. This proved to be an excellent channel to raise the awareness of the general public about the work of our Association and to recruit new potential donors. We raised donations through a phone helpline as well.

Marinka Šenjug
Head of Fund Development and Communications
Activities aimed at human resources management in 2016 were implemented in keeping with the long-term strategy “Sustainable Path 2020” and in keeping with the annual strategic work plan “ONE Movement 2016”, which is based on vision, mission and guidelines of the global SOS organization. Planned activities were completed successfully and progress was reviewed regularly, in quarterly strategic reviews. We maintained the continuity of progress and professional human resources management throughout the year.

Funds for the hiring of new employees remained limited in 2016, so we took advantage of the employment schemes offered by the Croatian Employment Service to augment our teams with six new young employees without having to invest additional funding (we used the employment scheme “Subsidized In-Service Training without Permanent Employment”). We secured the financing for the prevention programs designed to support children and families outside SOS from public funding.

Although the statistic data point to a high unemployment rate in Croatia, finding new employees who meet the high standards we set for ourselves once again proved very challenging. Our fundraising team was augmented this year with two young new hires, a corporate partnership coordinator and SOS representative coordinator. Through this measure, we brought the organizational structure of the Fundraising Department in line with the long-term goals of the “Sustainable Path 2020” strategy.

In 2016 we carried out a total of 31 recruitment and selection procedures. This number includes employees in new work posts, replacements for employees on sick leave, support during periods of increased work volume, employees being switched from one work post to another and in-service training schemes that do not include permanent employment.

Our recruitment and selection processes were tailored to needs and opportunities, and as a special challenge (as in previous years) we kept a permanently open call for SOS mother candidates in the effort to secure a sufficient number of SOS mother candidates in coming years, as dictated by our retirement plans for existing SOS mothers. Aside from the permanently open call, we also advertised job vacancies on employment portals and with Croatian Employment Service. Keeping in mind the costs of the selection procedure, in terms of organization and candidates themselves, we collaborated with the CES and carried out the first round of selection (psychological testing) in regional CES offices around the country. We are very thankful to CES for their partnership and support.

To maintain the high quality of our work throughout the year, we implemented numerous educational activities, ranging from conferences where our employees gained new insights and presented papers, to targeted courses designed to build the capacity of our employees to face the challenges ahead. Throughout the year we carried out a training program called “Supporting Change Management”, which we ran in regular, planned intervals. This program was designed to help us as a team to cope with challenges of making changes that are necessary to maintain a steady pace of progress.
As in previous years, we put a special emphasis on building the capacity of our employees who work directly with children and youth. To that end, we ran a series of trainings called “Working with Abused and Neglected Children”. All of our SOS mothers, SOS aunties and members of the child development team took part. We also reviewed the School for SOS mothers and SOS aunties and we made the education plan for 2017. In the course of 2017, starting in January, we plan to carry out training for 17 employees (3 SOS mothers, 3 SOS mother candidates and 11 SOS aunties). The school includes theoretical and practical training.

Volunteer work is essential to the success of the SOS Children’s Village. In 2016, our volunteers worked 2,681 hours for free in various activities (tutoring, sports, music and art workshops…).

As in previous years, at the end of the year the Association SOS Children’s Village Croatia carried out the process of strategic planning based on the “Sustainable Path 2020” strategy. The strategic guidelines that refer to human resources development have been clearly defined for 2017.

Two important visits of our international colleagues reaffirmed the quality of our work. In June, we welcomed the representatives of the Hermann Gmeiner Fonds Deutschland, and in November we received a visit from the international HR director and regional HR director in SOS-Kinderdorf International. Their feedback on our work has given us additional motivation to work even harder in the future.

In 2017, we will pay special attention to maintaining our organizational culture and to harmonizing our organizational culture and processes with our long-term goal – ensuring a happy childhood for as many children and youth as possible.

Professionalism, expertise and motivation of our co-workers on all levels (especially in new, developing programs) remain as a key guideline of the human resources management.

Josip Marinković
Head of Human Resources
### 1.2 Time Schedule of Major Events for 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>1st NMT Meeting &lt;br&gt;NA Plan 2016, 4th Review to RO EUCB &lt;br&gt;FDC Annual Report 2015 to FDC EUCB &lt;br&gt;February 25th 2016 – 24th SOS CV Croatia Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Audit 2016 &lt;br&gt;12th Board Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Audit Report for the year 2016 &lt;br&gt;2nd NMT Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>13th Board Meeting &lt;br&gt;<em>May 25th, 20th Anniversary of SOS CV Ladimirevci – event</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>3rd NMT Meeting &lt;br&gt;26th General Assembly SOS CV Croatia- Board election &lt;br&gt;1st Board meeting &lt;br&gt;Audit report 2016 to RO EUCB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Children summer holidays at the seaside &lt;br&gt;4th NMT Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Children summer jobs and organized free-time activities &lt;br&gt;NA Plan 2017 - HY Review to RO by August 8th, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>5th NMT Meeting &lt;br&gt;Final FDC Business Plan target for 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td><em>October 5th, 25th Anniversary of SOS CV Croatia - event</em> &lt;br&gt;2nd Board Meeting &lt;br&gt;October 8th 2016 SOS CV Lekenik Day &lt;br&gt;Strategic and Annual planning WKS for 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Final Budget Proposal + final FR ratios sheet 2018 &lt;br&gt;Christmas campaign</td>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Christmas celebration in facilities &lt;br&gt;6th NMT Meeting &amp; 3rd Board Meeting together</td>
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SECTION TWO

BOARD MEMBERS LIST
### 2.1 LIST OF BOARD MEMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mrs. Mariza Katavić</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mr. Branimir Vlajo</td>
<td>Vicepresident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mrs. Lea Sokolić</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mrs. Tatjana Josipović</td>
<td>Member (as of June 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mrs. Wendy Zečić</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mrs. Caroline Taylor</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mrs. Katrin Raie</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1 SOS CHILDREN’S VILLAGE LEKENIK

Today there are 79 children living in the SOS Children’s Village Lekenik – 45 are elementary school students, 2 attend high school and 32 are preschoolers. In the course of 2016, 13 new residents joined us, while 10 children left to continue on their path outside Lekenik. Students who completed the 8th grade (fewer in number than in previous years) transferred to the SOS Youth Facilities and several children reunited with their biological families or were adopted…

Early in the year, during the winter break, a number of our children took part in the program “Odmorko” in Zagreb, which offered a range of sports they could pursue during the holidays. In January, we received a visit from Ms. Deng Ying, the ambassador of China. We prepared a short program for her. Later in the month, we received a visit from the Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy, whom we took on the tour of the Village.

In February, we held a traditional Masked Ball in the Social Center. For two hours, our children and children from the local kindergarten and school competed in the best costume contest. Also in February, we attended the concert given by the Henschel Quartet in Zagreb. We spent some time with the musicians and we brought them a present on the behalf of SOS Children’s Village Croatia.
In March we celebrated the arrival of spring and return of storks to our region, once again in cooperation with the local kindergarten and the Lekenik Tourist Board. During the same month, our friends from the XVI Gymnasium and famous rock band Hladno pivo organized a benefit concert for us, ten children saw the show \textit{Maša and the Bear} in the Lisinski Concert Hall and our delegation attended the reception for the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall in the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, celebrating the 400\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of William Shakespeare’s death at the same time. We said farewell to a longstanding employee of ours (housekeeper) at a joint lunch, and in late March we appeared in a TV show \textit{Normal Life}, which garnered a lot of attention.

In April, we celebrated the Earth Day at a special event (app. 70 children from SOS Children’s Village Lekenik and local community took part). A farewell party to mark the retirement of our very first SOS mother, who came to the Children’s Village in 1993, was a particularly moving and solemn occasion.

In May, we attended the anniversary celebration of the SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci and we were gifted a beautiful little cottage in Gradec, a small hill near Lekenik, which we will use as a weekend getaway. On Mother’s Day, we held our Bike Tour. In addition to children and SOS employees, friends of the SOS from the Xellia Company also took part. Our children marked the ending of the school year with a special event in school.

In June, ten of our children traveled to Prague. The trip was organized by our friends from the NGO Lastavica. Late in June, the first group of our children left for Rovanjska, a small village near Zadar, to spend their vacation there (35 children). At the same time, our drama club performed their play \textit{Little Skyscrapers} at the International Children’s Festival in Šibenik. It was their fifth appearance there.

At the beginning of July, the second group of children vacationed in Rovanjska. Upon returning to the Village, some of the children spent the second part of their holidays in their biological families, but most of the children spent August in the Village. We offered a range of outdoor and indoor activities in the Social Center, including trips to the pool in Zagreb as part of the program “Okvirko”. In mid-July we received a visit from the Minister of the Social Policy and Youth and other Ministry officials, all of whom came to the Village to learn more about our work.

During a special ceremony in September, we said farewell to our youngsters who completed the elementary school and were getting ready to move to the SOS Youth Facilities, to continue their high school education there. Young people prepared special gifts for their SOS mothers, and they still visit them on weekends, to share their adventures in the big city, high school and YFs, and to enjoy the warm family mood that always greets them in the Village. In mid-September, NGO Andautonija, dedicated to the preservation of cultural heritage, made it possible for us to visit the archeological site in Šćitarjevo and attend their traditional event Dionysian Festival. At the end of the month, we attended the lecture given by the Adriatic Maritime Institute as part of the project of manufacturing traditional boats and a rowing course.

In October, we celebrated our Village anniversary. As usual, children and guests were able to enjoy a multitude of sports and cultural activities and we were especially delighted by the appearance of the rock band Vatra, who played a brief outdoor concert for us. October was also marked by the continuation of the project \textit{I Read Better, I Write Better}. In addition to working with preschool children in the Lekenik Municipality, we also began the diagnostic work and followed up with therapy for children in the township of Glina. In late October, we organized the Open Door Day in the Social Center, to showcase activities on offer to the local community. We invited the children from the Lekenik Municipality to join our extracurricular activities, such as our drama club, rock band, pottery workshop and many other activities. The response was great, and this event was reported in the media – on Nova TV, HRT, RTL, in the daily paper \textit{Večernji list} and on Pixel.
In November, we held a health food workshop with the representatives of Mazda Croatia. We also held the 8th Millennium Fairy Tale Read-A-Thon. For 24 hours straight, our SOS families and co-workers read out fairy tales, fables, poems and other writing for children. Our longtime partner and donor INA gave us a musical treat by organizing a concert to mark the completion of the project Understanding – First Step Towards Happiness, featuring acclaimed musical artists Oliver Dragojević and Gibonni.

We started December by riding on the Christmas Tin Express Train in Zagreb, an event organized by the Croatian Railways, and by taking a short tour of Advent events in the Zrinjevac Park in Zagreb. In the Village, we welcomed the representatives of Crodux, who brought along our Olympic champions, the Sinković brothers and Josip Glasnović, and we all thoroughly enjoyed our Christmas party, which featured performances by app. 40 people from the SOS Children’s Village Lekenik, rock band Vatra, a high school rock band from Zagreb and rock band from the SOS Children’s Village Lekenik called Currently Nameless.

Late in the year we also took a trip to the homestead Salaj, organized for 90 children and co-workers, and several children and parents treated by the Mobile Team. App. 20 co-workers and young people (SOS Children’s Village Lekenik, Youth Facilities Velika Gorica and Zagreb) attended the charity performance in the Komedija Theatre. During the winter break, we offered activities for children in Zagreb and in SOS Children’s Village Social Center as part of the program “Okvirko”, and several children spent the holidays with their biological families. We launched a project called the Friendship Network in cooperation with a teacher and children from the elementary school Kralj Tomislav from Zagreb (exchange of letters and small gifts between children from lower grades), and we struck a partnership with the Kindergarten Staševica from Ploče on the project Children Send Hugs to Other Children (exchange of drawings between children of kindergarten age, donations in kind, financial donations). All students (app. 1000 students from 50 homerooms) and teachers from elementary school Brestje in Zagreb took part in the big Christmas drive to collect presents for the children in the SOS Children’s Village Lekenik.
3.2 SOS YOUTH FACILITY ZAGREB AND VELIKA GORICA

In the course of 2016, we looked after 13 young people in the Youth Facility in Zagreb – 8 boys and 5 girls.

We have 6 young people in the SIL program – 2 are college students and 4 are employed. Our students are successful and hard-working and one of them has also been employed on a temporary basis throughout his studies. Our working young people are equally committed and diligent. They also take pains to attend on-the-job training programs and they actively seek better jobs. Four of our girls are in the follow-up program. Two graduated from college and another two have been working steadily in their chosen professions. In 2016, our basic program in YF was completed by three young men, and we also welcomed a girl from SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci who enrolled in a high school here in Zagreb.

Our young people pursue various extracurricular activities: gym, street work out, free climbing, taekwondo, hiking, foreign language courses, driving school. Some also take additional classes to fulfill their curricular and extracurricular needs: computer classes, chemistry, math, physics, photography, astronomy… In late May, we took part in the empirical educational project Blue World, on the islands of Cres and Lošinj (Apoxyomenos, dolphin observation, visiting Lubenice etc…). We celebrated a successful end to the school year. Everyone voted to nominate Daliborka Matanović, formerly our YF resident, for the Hermann Gmeiner Award. She won the award, so we threw a party for her in June after her return from the formal award ceremony, where she was recognized for her achievements and hard work.

In September we celebrated the 20th anniversary of YF Zagreb. During that time, we provided home for 68 young people who are independent adults today.

In the course of 2016, Youth Facility Velika Gorica looked after 16 young people, 10 girls and 6 boys. We had 10 young people in our SIL program, 6 of whom are college students, while the remaining 4 are gainfully employed. Monthly number of young people fluctuated depending on when they completed their education and on the arrival of new residents from Lekenik upon the completion of their elementary education.

In September, 5 new residents arrived. They will be working their way to independence by learning life skills through daily chores, in high school, in neurolinguistic programming workshops, additional training etc. Four of them came from SOS Children’s Village, after a farewell celebration called Corn Festival. Their SOS mothers entrusted them to the care of educators in Youth Facility Velika Gorica, knowing that they can rely on them fully. The fifth young person did not live in Lekenik prior to her arrival here. To increase group cohesion, we organized a day trip to the Tuhelj Spa for all of them.

Our young people completed the school year 2015/2016 in June, with an enviable grade average of 3.9. We are very proud of their accomplishments and happy to say that their results are a reflection of all the energy and efforts that the pedagogical team of the YF invest in their work with the young people. There was no need for remedial classes and none of our young people were held back. Three best students received special rewards. Our two volunteers, pedagogy students, were undeniably an important factor in this success. They helped our young people with their studies. We also provided our young people with additional lessons, organized study time and we cooperated closely with their teachers and educators. We also held NLP workshops for them!

In June, we spend a week at the seaside in Šibenik with our young people. Two of our girls vacationed in Rovanjska. Five of our young people found summer jobs and earned extra money that way. It is worth
mentioning that several youngsters bought bicycles. One of our girls volunteered at the European Universities Games in Zagreb and at the Davis Cup. She gained many valuable insights into the life of a student. She also successfully enrolled in college this year, after passing her nationwide school-leaving exam. She is now our 6th college student in the SIL program. Two of our young people are students at the University of Applied Health Sciences, one studies at the School of Naval Sciences, one is an agronomy major and one attends Bernays. Young people who are not in college are gainfully employed.

We are happy to say that young people in the YF pursue extracurricular activities. Football is popular with both boys and girls. Four are members of various football clubs. Others train judo, volleyball and ice skating. We are particularly glad that three of our girls attend a two-year diving and underwater photography course, donated by the association Roniti se mora. They already passed the first level successfully. Diving may very well become a source of additional income for them in the future.

In order to teach our young people as many life skills as possible, we put up two small garden beds behind our house, where we planted fruit-bearing trees. While we are on the subject of our yard, we have to praise our Village handymen, who renovated our driveway.

Christmas was a wonderful time for our young people. There was no snow, regrettfully, but they received many presents. Everyone had the chance to spend Christmas holiday in a family setting, with their own SOS families.

We set many new goals and project activities for ourselves in 2017, through individual plans for our young people and the overall YF plan. With our pedagogical team in the YF Velika Gorica and the support from our colleagues in the Village and the National Office, success is guaranteed!

Mario Čović
SOS Children’s Village Lekenik
At the end of 2016, we provided care for 64 children in 16 SOS families in the Children’s Village. As is the case every year, the number of children in SOS families decreased in September due to transfers of children to SOS Youth Facilities in Osijek. Additionally, during this period last year eight children were adopted or transferred into a different type of placement. Although we kept receiving admission requests throughout the year, we did not have the capacity to admit new children before autumn. We accepted several new admission requests at the end of the year and we expect to welcome new children in early 2017. Economic situation in the Osijek-Baranja County, where SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci is located, as well as overall economic situation in Eastern Croatia, which is made up of five counties, continues to be very unfavorable, so 2016 continued the trend of young people and entire families leaving Croatia in search of better prospects in work and life. Germany and Ireland are the most frequent destinations for young people leaving the country. For many years now, children whom Social Welfare Centers are trying to place tend to come from families that have been on welfare for generations, living in intellectual and emotional deprivation. SWCs generally remove children from the families in the most severe cases of poverty and family violence, usually after children have been exposed to both for years.
During the year, children joined or continued to pursue activities offered by organizations and NGOs in the local community. Boys and girls played football in the village football club Slavonac/Slavonka, and several very promising children have been training in the football club Valpovka, which is situated 6 km away, in the town of Valpovo.

Children who attend workshops in the Valpovo Community Center for Technology took part in town and county competitions, with great results. Most accomplished was our girl Manuela, who won an international photography prize and received a county award for her accomplishments in the field of technological culture. Our young fishermen who are members of the fishing society Amur in Ladimirevci also won medals. Several children are members of the folk society Ladimirevci, where they learned about folk dancing and folk customs, and several children sing in the church choir. In 2016, we also joined the hiking society Zanatljija in Osijek, so many of our children, young people and their SOS mothers went mountain hiking on weekends.

In late spring, we welcomed a group of aviation enthusiasts from the NGO Fly Beyond Dreams. They spent a week lovingly teaching children about aviation and flying skills, through a range of different activities. Among other things, children had the opportunity to take part in panoramic flights over Osijek, to control a drone and make different flying vessels. Several children expressed a wish to become pilots when they grow up.

For ten of our children, the most important event of the year was their trip to Prague, funded by the civil organization Lastavica from Prague. The trip featured a range of cultural, entertainment and educational activities and plenty of opportunities to socialize with children from SOS Children’s Villages in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia and SOS Children’s Village Lekenik from Croatia. Our generous hosts were full of positive energy and they shared with us some of the most important values in life, such as togetherness, tolerance, sharing and helping others.

In addition to donation of a weeklong stay in Prague, we also received some other important donations: accommodations for SOS families at the seaside during the summer holidays, both by individuals and tourist companies. Donations always reach their peak during the Christmas season. Just before the end of the year, a group of around hundred young people from Croatia, who moved to Ireland in search of better opportunities, sent a present for each child in our Village.

Psycho-pedagogical activities are ongoing and in keeping with SOS family development plans, which are drafted by SOS mothers and family advisors. Members of the child development team provided expert help to children, SOS mothers, SOS aunties and SOS Youth Facility educators in a timely and consistent manner. In particularly demanding situations, we also relied on outside help from speech therapists, special education teachers, child psychiatrist and psychotherapist.

In cooperation with the Volunteer Center Osijek, we hired qualified volunteers to help with tutoring the children. They were essential in motivating children who struggle with schoolwork. As a result of systematic tutoring in math, chemistry, physics and English, we observed a definite improvement in grades in all these subjects and increased self-confidence of children themselves, as evidenced in the way children relate to adults and overall better mood of the children. Children with speech impediments, such as dyslalia and dysgraphia, received help from the speech therapist on the premises of SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci, and we also provided speech therapy for children from the local community in collaboration with two kindergartens in Belišće and Valpovo and the elementary school in Ladimirevci. For children with more severe developmental difficulties, we found help in Osijek, in an NGO specializing in early development of children, and three of our school-age children traveled every day to the Ivan Štark Center for
Education and Child Rearing in Osijek, until the competent Social Welfare Center found a more appropriate placement for them.

At the traditional annual daytrip for children, young people and co-workers of SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci, which we usually organize just before the beginning of the new school year, we handed out our traditional awards for the most accomplished children in the previous school year. SOS mother Đurđa and others from the Village will remember 2016 forever, because all children in her SOS family completed the school year with top marks. They all took a photograph together, shining with pride: SOS mother Đurđa, eight-year-old Antonia who wants to be a doctor; fifth-grader Valentina, who still isn’t sure about her future profession; new high school student Marija and high school graduate Petar, who trained as a car mechanic.

Throughout 2016, we continued to work in eight villages in Eastern Slavonija as part of our Emergency Relief Program “We Help Restore the Safety of Home for Children and Families”. We provided support for more than 900 children and 80 families through our psychosocial workshops and individual and group counseling. At the end of the year we began transitioning this ERP into a FSP – we signed new cooperation agreements with stakeholders in the local community and moved our office to the city of Županja, our FSP’s new headquarters.

In 2016, we also launched a FSP program in Osijek-Baranja County, in the Valpovo region, which includes SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci. In eight months of work, we achieved excellent results in 18 families with 30 children, referred to us from the Social Welfare Centers in Valpovo and Našice. The goal was to prevent separating children from their biological families. Osijek-Baranja County and City of Valpovo co-finance this program.

At the end of the year, SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci received a commendation from the City of Valpovo for making significant contribution to the development of civil life in the City of Valpovo, in the form of the Matija Petar Katančić Plaque.

At the get-together of all co-workers at the end of the year, we thanked each other, with special thanks to those who celebrated their 5th, 10th and 15th anniversary of working and living in the SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci. We are all looking ahead to 2017, when we will be celebrating the 20th anniversary of SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci formal opening.
3.4 SOS YOUTH FACILITIES OSIJEK AND OSIJEK I

During 2016, we looked after 27 young persons in our two SOS Youth Facilities – 14 girls and 13 boys. We also had 15 young people in the SIL program. YF Osijek provided home for 6 girls and 8 boys during 2016, while YF Osijek 1 housed 7 girls and 6 boys. The number of young people fluctuated in the course of the year, because several youngsters transferred to the SIL program after turning eighteen and graduating from high school, while others completed the SIL program and began living on their own. Last autumn, three new young people started attending high school after moving to YFs in Osijek. Preparing children in the SOS CV Ladimirevci through the program “Little School of Life” was as successful as always. Three new arrivals quickly adjusted to the rules and obligations in the YF and new duties in school, all with the help of their educators.

Throughout the year, educators provided help and support for young people in all development areas. Their achievements were monitored and measured through goals defined in their individual development plans. A new development in 2016 was hiring two trainee psychologists under the employment scheme of the Croatian Employment Service, which enabled them to work in the YF without entering a permanent employment agreement. This ensured the provision of ongoing psychological help for young people through counseling sessions. The trainees also took part in workshops on building self-esteem and self-confidence.

Educators monitored the performance of young people in school through work in their main care groups and through contact with school. As a result, young people were successful in completing their school year. In addition to educators, psychologist trainees also took part in motivating young people. They held workshops on study methods and memorization to help young people acquire new techniques in their studies. Many of our youngsters also attend practical training as part of their high school education, some in school and some in other venues. Our two chefs-in-training are a great help to our cook John, and students of the School of Catering and Tourism did their summer training and spent part of their winter holidays working in a hotel in Opatija. We are proud of the fact that the overall grade average of our students was very good at the end of the year and that no young people were held back in school in either of our YFs. This year we would like to shine a light on Martina, a first-year student at the Požega Polytechnic, where she is studying trade. We are very proud of her, because she worked hard to enroll in the college of her choice. Despite new obligations, she continues to successfully pursue dance – she has already won many awards. Our educational goals were achieved in part thanks to the work of 8 volunteers who helped young people with their schoolwork. They invested a total of 155 hours in study help in both YFs. Receiving help is wonderful, and giving help is even better, so our youngsters were active as volunteers themselves. Our boys volunteered at the international gymnastics tournament, and most of our young people volunteer at a dog shelter.

During the year, we prepared our young people for independent life. We organized workshops on healthy food, responsible money management, proper use of household appliances, sewing, safe use of the internet and social skills. Both YFs have organic gardens, where our youngsters raise fruit and vegetables and expand their knowledge of plants and gardening. In addition to going on excursions, hiking and fishing expeditions with their educators, young people filled their free time by participating in creative workshops, especially during holidays. They made Christmas and Easter decorations, such as candle holders, scented candles etc., all as unique gifts for their SOS mothers. Young people took part in the workshop on children’s rights organized by the Office of the Children’s Ombudswoman, while educators and other
co-workers of the SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci participated in a training program called Child Protection Policy. We have a high awareness of children’s rights in YFs, as evidenced by the existence of bodies we call Youth House Councils, where all young people participate in making decisions that affect them. Once a year we organize an event called Youth Day. During this event, our youngsters meet their peers from other YFs and give grown-ups feedback on life in the youth programs and recommendations on how to improve youth care.

One of the best events in 2016 was the joint vacation in coastal town of Biograd. We continue to be successful in finding employment for our young people in the SIL program. In the past year, all young people without health restrictions found a job and their educators were a great source of support in this endeavor. Throughout the year, young people could attend a donated free foreign language course of their choice, so three youngsters chose English classes. We organized a music workshop for young people. Every week they study music with the help of trained musicians. Cooperation with SOS mothers is ongoing; they are in constant contact with young people and educators in the Children’s Village and YFs. SOS family remains a place where bonds between biological siblings are nurtured and maintained.

Zoran Relić
SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci
3.5 SUCCESS STORIES

**Frane (14)**

A little over six years ago, a family of six – four boys and two girls – arrived in the SOS Children’s Village Lekenik from a small town in Dalmatia. Many things have happened since then: two older sisters enrolled in high school and this year the eldest boy Frane will also be completing elementary school. Frane is different from other children in many ways. He never sees any point to long discussions or speeches. He is a quiet, hard-working boy who shows his interests and aspirations through action. And for Frane, love of cooking and gardening rules supreme. With the help of his brothers, Frane designed and planted not one, but two separate garden beds in the yard of his SOS house. One bed is a reminder of his home region, consisting of plants found in Dalmatia, many of them herbs used for cooking. His other bed is dedicated to vegetables and he also makes use of it in his cooking. Not surprisingly, Frane wants to train as a chef. Everything points to him becoming a proponent of organic cuisine, like Jamie Oliver and many modern chefs who believe in raising their own produce. In addition to many savory dishes, Frane also enjoys baking and making crepes and he recently started making his own fruit juices. He truly is a remarkable boy!

**Ria (14)**

Ria has been living in the SOS Children’s Village for the past three years. She came here with older sister and a baby brother. Despite a difficult childhood, Ria has grown into a very responsible and emotionally warm young person who will be completing elementary school this year and enrolling in high school. Ria has always been a pillar of strength for her little brother, who is much younger than her. She looks after him and she tries to teach him good manners. Ria has many friends and she often lends her strength to them as well. Even her choice of future profession reflects her nurturing nature and desire to help others – she wants to train as a physical therapist. When you ask her what her greatest wish in life is, she always says that she wants to have her own family, with three or four children to whom she wants to give everything. Ria also plans to become a legal guardian to her little brother as soon as she turns eighteen. She is ready to take on this great responsibility. We wish Ria luck with high school. She is a very good student, so we have no doubt that she will be able to enroll in the school of her choice.

**Tea (7)**

Tea came to the SOS Children’s Village with her brother and little sisters a little over a year ago. This merry band filled the SOS Poinsettia House with their laughter, toys and an odd diaper as soon as they moved in. Next to her brother, Tea is the eldest child in the family, so she instantly took over the role of main source of support to the younger family members, who needed more help to adjust to the new environment, SOS auntie and SOS mother. Tea took to living in the SOS Children’s Village right away. She joined several workshops and clubs. She enjoys making pottery and paper sculptures, she draws beautifully and she enjoys playing computer games. Tea loves going to school and she is very proud of being a first grader.

She looks forward to new challenges and she sees them as excellent opportunity to speak her mind – and she prefers to speak her mind on almost any subject. At the moment, she is preoccupied with several important questions. First, “why do snakes exist when they serve no purpose and they are mean”, and
secondly, “how can fish live underwater without dying”. In addition to pondering such philosophical issues, Tea also enjoys beautiful things, nice clothes and jewelry. She wants to become a hairdresser when she grows up. As practice, she recently gave a haircut to her Ken doll. To be honest, we hope her hair experiments will stop there. We are delighted that little Tea enjoys living in the SOS Children’s Village so much and that she calls it the “City of the Heart” in her drawings. To all of us who have dedicated their lives to children, seeing such praise is truly rewarding.

Manuela (14)

One sunny, but chilly morning in early autumn, six-year-old Manuela arrived in the SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci with her two younger brothers. Employees of the competent social welfare center carried them out of the car one by one. They were unkempt, unwashed, still sleepy from the car ride and very, very quiet, their eyes wide, their lips trembling. They just watched everything around them in silence. After several days of keeping to themselves, Manuela spoke a few words with her SOS mother, letting her know that she understood Croatian. She communicated with her brothers in Romani, explaining that neither of them could speak Croatian. Soon, they relaxed enough to start playing together in their room, but as soon as anyone approached them, they would fall completely silent. Manuela took it upon herself to be their spokesperson, to help her younger brothers. Little by little, SOS mother earned Manuela’s trust and Manuela’s playful six-year-old brother started coming out of his shell. When Manuela started school, her sketchy knowledge of Croatian made schoolwork difficult, so she had to repeat the first grade twice.

More than seven years have passed since then. In the meantime, her two oldest sisters also arrived in the SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci and Manuela (her friends call her Manu) has completely adjusted to living in the Children’s Village. Soon she will be completing elementary school. She is a sensitive, outgoing girl. She speaks excellent Croatian, but she hasn’t forgotten Romany either. Although she is a private person who values a small circle of trusted people, she knows how to stand up for herself and she often bravely initiates projects tied to children’s and human rights both in school and at the sessions of the Children’s Parliament in the Children’s Village. She enjoys writing and she often writes lyrical, philosophical letters to her close friends, about trust, love, expectations and acceptance. She even includes some of her innermost thoughts in her school essays, albeit very shyly. She enjoys singing and she has already sung at many events with her school and church choirs. She has a keen sense of color, she is artistic and creative and she even chooses her clothes with great care. But above all else, her favorite channel of communication is photography.

“Looking at the world through the camera lens makes it so much more interesting. I just love to take photographs!” says Manuela. For the past three years, Manuela has dedicated a lot of her free time to photography, as a member of the photography club at the Community Centre for Technology in Valpovo. Her talent has garnered a lot of attention already: she won an international prize at the contest in Lidice in the Czech Republic. She accepted her award in the Czech consulate in Zagreb. Manuela is also a proud recipient of the award given out by the Osijek-Baranja County Society for Technological Culture for her extraordinary accomplishments and contribution to the development of technological culture. She accepted this award at a formal reception from the hands of the county prefect himself. She and another boy were the only child recipients at this ceremony.

And so our Manuela courageously walks her own path. She often mentions something that her psychologist told her as her motto: “Your emotions are a reflection of experiences and worries that no child should ever have to face and you carry them on your small shoulders”. This is how she encourages herself and how she seeks and accepts support.
Eleonora (19)

Eleonora came to the Youth Facility after personally requesting placement through the Social Welfare Center. She arrived here in November 2012. She was a second-grade student at a Trade School of Machine Engineering, where she was training as a technician. She was very thin and obviously neglected. Up to that point, Eleonora had lived in very difficult conditions. Her father and brother were both unemployed and her mother worked only intermittently. Her mother is a mental patient who occasionally had to be admitted to the psychiatry ward of the Osijek University Hospital. Due to her mental struggles, she and Eleonora were often in conflict. Eleonora’s parents paid no attention to their household. Often there was no food in the house and they lived in utter squalor. It is no wonder that in such conditions Ela, as we all call her, was neglected and left to her own devices. The turning point for Eleonora came when she found the courage to speak to her social worker and ask to be removed from her family in order to complete her high school education and finally take a step towards a better future.

Eleonora adjusted to living in the Youth Facility very quickly. She worked on herself a lot and with help and support of her educator she came to terms with leaving her family as she set new life goals for herself. She successfully completed her 3-year high school course and then she enrolled in the 4th grade to gain additional qualifications and thus increase her career opportunities. During her schooling, she also underwent a knee surgery. She faced painful and long rehabilitation with great courage and determination and she recovered completely.

During her stay in the Youth Facility Osijek, Eleonora perfected many life skills and grew into a very independent and responsible girl. Inquisitive by nature, she jumped at the chance to enroll in the underwater photography course. However, this course requires applicants to complete a diving course, which Eleonora failed due to her frail health. Still, it was worth a try and she became richer for a new experience. Throughout her life in the Youth Facility, Eleonora was active in the local community. She volunteered in NGO Dokkica and at various sporting events in Osijek.

Last summer, Eleonora focused her efforts on finding a job. She planned to move to Zagreb, a bigger city with much better prospects of employment. Thanks to the help of SOS Children’s Village Croatia, she succeeded. She now lives in an apartment that we got on loan from the City of Zagreb. Soon after moving to Zagreb, Eleonora found a job as a waitress. She is very happy with her job and her boss is delighted with her approach to work and with how quickly she learned the ins and outs of this job to become a reliable worker.

The contrast between that small, thin girl four years ago and Eleonora of today is truly amazing. Today, our Ela is a healthy, self-confident young woman who has faith in her future. The way she fought for herself, for a better life is truly inspiring – her maturity, perseverance and accomplishment all make her… OUR PRIDE AND JOY.

Ivan (17)

This is a story of an extraordinary young man who was born in 1999, in a small Slavonian village Lapovci, situated near Đakovo. He was the oldest child in a family that eventually grew to include five more children. Ivan had four brothers and a sister.

Unfortunately, Ivan’s early childhood was not easy. His dad was left alone with six small children. Their mother abandoned them, refusing to seek custody of her children. Ivan’s father, a war veteran, could not provide proper care for his children and he sought solace in alcohol. Children lived in squalor; they
were neglected and left to fend for themselves. As the eldest child in the family, Ivan carried the heaviest burden. Luckily, both parents agreed to have their children placed in the SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci in 2010. They were entrusted to SOS mother Monika and Ivan developed a strong bond with her. He can always rely on her and speak to her about everything. When Monika talks about Ivan, she always says how impressed she is with his wonderful attitude and how it affects his brothers and sister. From his first day in the Children’s Village, he acted as their role model in how he approached his schoolwork and his daily chores.

After four years in the Children’s Village, Ivan moved to Youth Facility Osijek 1 in 2014. He enrolled in the first grade of the School of Civil Engineering and Geodesy in Osijek, studying to be a civil engineering technician. He adapted quickly to the new environment and he is popular both in school and in the Youth Facility. Although seemingly an unassuming boy, he attracts friends with his wonderful personality: he is humble, responsible, kind and grateful for small things…

In short, his kind, warm gaze simply radiates positive energy. He is also a fighter: at the end of the last school year, he struggled with physics and he was convinced he would have to take remedial classes. This compelled him to work harder and ask for extra help. Thanks to tutoring and a few sleepless nights, he remedied his marks in physics before the end of the school year and he successfully completed the second grade.
He began this school year with very good marks. Ivan never misses any of his classes – he is simply too conscientious and responsible when it comes to school.

Ivan is also a very creative boy and he loves to spend his free time drawing. He recently took up a new hobby – graffiti. He is doing really well and his murals can be seen on the noise barrier along the Osijek beltway, which is the officially sanctioned space for graffiti artists in the city. Ivan says, gratefully: “I am thankful to city authorities for letting us have this great canvas for our art!”

Ivan is a young man who sets a great example for his younger siblings. He already has all the prerequisites for a successful life on his own!