



**CHARITY IN BULGARIAN PRINT MEDIA.  
01-31 DECEMBER 2012.  
SOME PROBLEMS IN COMMUNICATING CHARITY AND ITS  
REFLECTION IN BULGARIAN PRINT OUTLETS.**

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БЛАГОТВОРИТЕЛНОСТТА И ОТРАЗЯВАНЕТО ѝ В  
БЪЛГАРСКИТЕ ПЕЧАТНИ МЕДИИ**

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***Abstract:** The Conference talk presents some of the results of a research about the publications in the Bulgarian press related to charity, conducted for the period 01-31 December 2012. The main goal of the research is to establish how are charitable activities presented in the Bulgarian press – the main topics of the publications, the usage of terminology, the key words associated with charity (giving, sponsoring, sponsorship, philanthropy) and whether the topics are a matter of present interest. The attention is focused mainly on the publications' headings – the language used in the headlines and do they correspond to the content of the publications. For the purpose of comparison and analyzes of the data, a research is being referred to a similar research, which has been conducted for an earlier period, namely 01-31 December 2006.*

***Key words:** Charity, media, Bulgaria, communication, philanthropy, reputation.*

***Резюме:** Докладът представя данни от изследване - анализ на публикациите на тема „благотворителност“ в българския печат в периода 1-31 декември 2012 г. – основни теми, използване на термините, свързани с темата, и тяхната актуалност. Основно внимание се обръща на заглавията на публикациите. За сравнение и анализ на данните се използва изследване, проведено за периода 1-31 декември 2006 г. Основна цел на проведеното изследване е да се установи как се говори за благотворителността – кои са основните теми, асоциирани с ключовите думи, свързани с благотворителност, какъв е езикът, който се използва в заглавията, дали те съответстват на съдържанието на самите публикации.*

***Ключови думи:** Благотворителност, медия, България, комуникация, репутация.*

Doing good is a matter of personal choice. There are individuals who are doing good things in response to their internal inclination, some do good by choosing not to perform bad deeds, to some the good-doing has evolved into a personal cause, and to some of them it is the choice of profession, development and personal realization. The issue which arises interest is how does good-doing in its form known to society as charity, benevolence, manifests itself in the Bulgarian media – with what language, by the force of what communication logic, and what are the main topics – object of the media interest.

As a starting point, we have to offer a definition of what actually is „charity”. The Bulgarian Center on Non-Commercial Law offers detailed explanations of the variety of legal entities with non-commercial goal (LUNCG) – associations and foundations. In addition, it offers a choice of two differing statutes under which any association or foundation may exist: statute for private benefit and statute for public benefit. Naturally, the legal form that a definite charitable activity may take or may not take is of significance to its development from the point of view that any activity should be placed in the context of the social relations and taking into account the prevailing norms. The form as such might contribute to the positive expansion of the charitable activities, yet the leading factor is still the internal impulse of the individual and his/hers need for self-establishment through good deeds. As for me, I am interested in the charity activities of the organizations, which are linked to the understanding and the communication of the organization’s reputation, and hence I evaluate as an important step the tracking down of what and how is the theme considered in the common public space. This publication reflects a stage in the search for a broader view in regard to communication of the organizations’ activities and the positioning of the organization in the society, thrive for the establishment of the organizations as citizens and their role as socially responsible entities.

Therefore it would be important to specify the choice of the specific media outlets and the period that is object of the research. The selection of the printed media provides with the opportunity to easily follow the materials, to analyze them as texts, not to allow for the non-verbal part of the communication to exert influence. The chosen period is the month of December 2012, first of all due to the tradition in Bulgarian society to talk about charity more than usual during that month and therefor providing us with the chance to screen the situation based on a more representative volume of material of how and what is being said. An important argument in support of applying the chosen approach was that, as Blaxter points out, „surveys lend themselves to future replication” (Blaxter et al., *How to Research*, 2001: 79). Nother argument that was determinant for the selection of the period was the availability of a research study from 2006 conducted in the month of December, which renders itself to be used as comparison and eventually to allow drawing some more generalized conclusions, or to follow up on trends. The 2006 research refers only to the headlines of the publications, but by repeating the used methodology and the



comparison of the data we are at ease to expand the information on the theme. It is in that sense that in the current publication and in any future work on the subject I intend to pay special attention to the headlines.

The research encompasses publications in Bulgaria's national and regional printed media in the period 01 – 31 December 2012. The included outlets – daily, weekly and monthly issues, provide with an overview on a national scale. The selection was conducted on the basis of searching for key words – charity, charitable and their derivatives; sponsor, donation, benevolence and their derivatives; philanthropy. With the access to the specialized software kindly secured by Agency „Cross” one could ascertain with a reasonable level of confidence that there are no publications in the Bulgarian printed media outlets of the designated period, which in their headlines or in the texts contain some of the indicated key words, and which had not been included. It is important to specify a constriction in research - the study does not reflect on the location and positioning of the publications within the printed body and this fact contributes to a certain extent to limiting the data analyzes.

In the process of searching with the key words indicator, 818 pages with publications have been found, in Word, adjusted to print „Arial”, size 11, which encompasses publications with a total of 430 905 words. At the stage of gathering the publications and their first-hand review it was recognized that despite the presence of the key words, the themes of some of the publications did not correspond to the common theme of the present research - charity. This discovery brought to the initiation of a stage of selection of the publications based on subjective estimation. The publications containing the key words but not reflecting on the charity subject were cast aside. The result of that separation showed to be extremely interesting and its' analyzes could also add up to the acquisition of a common vision in the way printed media outlets in Bulgaria perceive charity.

Out of the total of the 818 pages with key words, 483 are publications on the theme, 401 are other publications. The general volume of the articles which speak of charity is 252 145 words, while the number of words in the rest of the articles is 182 629. This means that almost half of the publications containing one or more of our key words do not actually consider our theme, but are connected to different daily issues or that the use of the terms is not in their correct sense – due to misunderstanding or due to other reasons. This could be taken as an interesting trend – words connected to traditionally good and positive activities are made use of in order to illustrate social relations, which are connected to negative reactions, not desired practices and vicious interrelations.

Amongst the dismissed publications are such that ascribe to the key words the following meaning:

- sponsorship (sports) without charity element
- sponsor in the negative context – for illegal or immoral acts, unrealistically huge profits

- political party sponsors and donators, persons with doubtful image, figureheads
- donating – rewarding and make over, usually used to describe business transactions avoiding tax legislation
- donation – against a favour, for example bribe in a hospital or other public entities

At the very beginning of the month of December publications prevail in which one speaks of sponsorship. A great part of these are directly or indirectly linked to sports. These publication and such which make mentioning of corporate sponsorship were put aside in order to concentrate on the analyzes of the publications dealing indeed with charity, donations, philanthropy. Yet, I have included in the research publications linked to sponsorship on behalf of companies and organizations of children tournaments, or children sports activities. Example: **CEZ Organizing children hockey tournament | | 10.12.2012 00:53 | Class | page 2 |**

Some publications which I included in the analyzes contain only the key word sponsor, sponsors, sponsorship, but it is used in the sense of actually donating financial means, work or materials, and judging from the context, there has been used the term sponsor because of lack of understanding of the precise terminology. An example in this is the article about „Pustretz Jr.” in Mont-Press of the town of Montana, dated 04 December 2012, in which they talk both about charity work and about social activity, yet the sole key word in the article I have detected in my search was „sponsor”.

Some articles which were not included in the next level of review of the publications, refer to the typical corporate sponsorship without the element of charity an approach as for example:

**GLOBAL BUSINESS WITH TRADITION | | 11.12.2012 16:36 | Forbes Bulgaria | page 117 |**

Interview with Fred Noe, 7<sup>th</sup> generation distiller and member of the Beam Family, which is in the bourbon production for over 200 years. „...How is the brand presented in Eastern Europe, where are traditionally other hard drinks consumed such as vodka, brandies, ouzo and so on? You need to educate the consumer and to show him how to enjoy. Just placing a bottle on the shelf won't do.

We are sponsoring events that are attended by key groups of consumers from our perspective. We place the name Jim Beam there, where its potential fans are.”

The word sponsor is at some instances also used in a negative aspect, bearing the meaning of a person who is involved in illegal or immoral deeds, as well as linked to unrealistically high profits. Example: **10 MiG-23 waiting for a buyer in the yard of the former collective farms | | 07.12.2012 02:18 | Airborne Landing, Burgas | page 4; 5 | ANI PETROVA** „...One could not



rule out the possibility that the expenses for the deal as well as the commission would be covered by „sponsors” from across the Ocean”.

I have also put aside all articles about the report by Transparency International that speaks about the donors to political parties. Also articles about „donations” (meaning bribes) received on the election silence day prior to the first Referendum in Bulgaria and articles about candidates for the position of Chief State Prosecutor and for other actual posts in the legal system of the State, relevant to the analyzed period, were put aside.

Other articles containing our key words but irrelevant to our theme that were excluded pertain to the supposed sponsorship to the Football Club „Levsky” by „Gazprom” and to the Prime-Minister’s visit to the USA, where there is talk about party sponsors. The word „sponsor” is encountered more often than in comparison to the word „donor” (donation), but it is used to convey several varying meanings, at least two out of which are negative. Sponsor (businessman with a dubious image) and sponsor of political party (dubious or fake personality) are other meanings used. The positive meanings are sponsor – the typical meaning of sponsor, sponsor – donator, who does not want publicity, makes indeed a personal donation, but is called sponsor in the publication.

The articles that stayed into the texts for analyzes due to their containing the word „charity” had two distinctive features – they were almost completely connected to the theme of charity, as differing from the ones containing the key words donation and sponsor. They also repeated „charity” more often, sometimes exchanging it with „donorship”, „donation”, „sponsorship”, obviously in order to avoid tautology. That is, if an article contains the word charity and it is not used to illustrate by the way how good a certain person is, then the usual case is that this article speaks exclusively about charity.

The word „donation” is used most often in the context of donorship, but there are some exceptions where it is used in the legal aspect of grantorship, rewarding and make over, usually used to describe business transactions avoiding tax legislation. Such texts were excluded from the analysis as well.

I have not included in the analyzes publications in which the word „donation” is used in order to describe relations with medical establishments, where one has to make the payments under the form of a donation, in order to receive the corresponding service. There are cases in which the word „donor” is used as a substitute to the word „donator”, in the sense of donator of organs.

Some of the **leading themes** about charity during the period are the campaign called Bulgarian Christmas, the events in the town of Pernik which received damages by a strong earthquake and the flood in the village of Biser, the dismissal of the Value Added Tax (VAT) in cases of food donations in order to assure the creation of Bulgarian foodbank and the blood donorship subject. There are many publications informing of individual causes – the need of some child or of some person for help. It is delightful to note that there are articles

carrying news of successful campaigns – collected means for some of these individuals.

I regret to say that there are articles which describe abuses in the charity work – as for example about a burglar plundering religious sites, about abuses of donated means and materials in municipalities, etc. It is good that despite the large number of such articles, the number of themes they contain is small – i.e. the media demonstrates sensibility on the theme and reprimands similar ill deeds actively.

Another actual theme is the one about blood donation. Counting on from the start of the year, over 131 630 persons have become voluntary blood donors. This is reported by the five regional centers on transfusion hematology in the country. Experts expect the number of blood donors to increase by the end of the year. The daily „Duma” reminds that during the whole 2011 their number was 165 255. **The number of voluntary blood donors is exceeding 131 630 | | 28.12.2012 01:30 | Duma | page 5 |**

Often the information about charitable activities or donorship is included in the column named „News”, or in the general information pages of the newspapers, and is made mentioning of along with other general topics in short informative style. Although the selected method of analyzes does not permit to judge about the positioning of these materials within the body of the printed media, still placing the information about charitable activities in these sections is indicative that no special attention is being paid to them. Out of a total of 707 publications on the theme, 29 in all fall into this category of short reports (News, Events, Occurrences, In Short, the Events in Brief), where some other short information are also to be found.

Among the main themes, connected to our key words, three main categories may be identified: campaigns by companies and organizations which are active in promoting their own activities, news on a regional scale in the local press, actual themes of the day which make use of the key words but are as a matter of fact not linked to the theme of charity. Occasionally, themes squeeze through and find their place in the media that are connected to charity but do not fall into any one of the three categories.

The missing themes are the themes about compassion and mercy, sincere benevolence, the ordinary people doing good things. There are such people and their activity is important, but usually doesn't make its way to the media - these are small NOGs, small scale associations whose activity is not aimed at making profits, various groups of individuals who are dedicated to some common noble cause. Themes about charity through free labour are also almost missing – „One of each three Bulgarians (31%) has helped unfamiliar persons by labour and not with money during 2012. This is disclosed in a study of the World Charity Index – the largest thus far research on a world scale. The study is measuring three aspects of charity activities – donation of money, donation of time (voluntarism), and rendering help to an unfamiliar person. „In Short” | | 21.12.2012 02:39 | „Free People” (Svoboden narod) | page 4 |



However, articles that reflect this kind of charity are in very low numbers. This probably indicates that the daily efforts of the ordinary person do not manage to reach the media space – on one hand, there is no one to communicate these efforts, because they are performed motivated by internal impulse, inner need, and not in order to be posted or advertised. On the other hand, however, this speaks of absence of interest in the media in connection to this matter, lack of searching of information on the theme. The question arises – if the information is forwarded – would it receive its realization? Because the daily effort is there, it exists, one can read about it in blogs, internet forums and social networks where the individuals and small scale NGOs are getting organized, make plans, gather together and report to each other. A whole parallel world exists, which is not covered by the Bulgarian press.

#### **Names of individuals and entities**

It is difficult for the individual to be included in the press publications about charity with his or her name, if he or she has not proven themselves as good specialists in some other areas. Therefore, for their charity initiatives the press reflects on names such as the singer Vanja Kostova, prof. Petja Vassileva - ophthalmologist, the sportists Maria Grozdeva and Hristo Stoichkov. Some famous Bulgarians are included in the publications for their charitable acts, but only few of them make it to the headlines. Whether this is due to their stronger recognition, or to the fact that their names are attracting attention, and they are hence positioned in the headlines – as to draw the readers' attention to the article, is a question to which no answer could be found. Most probably it is both. There is an interesting trend to talk about some actors with the names of their most famous screen heroes – **Djaro from „Under Cover”**. For instance in the headline **„The „Hook” introduced orphans into the cinema”** it is not clear whether **„The Hook”** should be classified as a name, as a company, or as a product.

There are some headlines where a given person's name, usually a famous individual, is mentioned and in the article the word charity is found, but this is not the theme of the publication. One can observe a tendency, in cases of general articles, introducing a well-known person, or in interviews, somewhere at the end of the material to add that he/she has participated in some charity campaigns, but these are rarely indicated more specifically, and are rather used to add value to the description of the celebrity.

It is very rare that an ordinary person is mentioned. He should have either done something exceptional or be a member of a group. There is a tendency I would like to mention, without being able to support with specific proof, that is taking shape as a result of observations in various spheres including the one of charity – everyone wants to enter the media, but there usually turn out people with problems, linked to scandals or spectacular behavior and ones connected to watching the fun tendency.

In the service sector exists the understanding that people do not like those to whom they pay their bills. The banks and the mobile operators are part of these companies and they also appear to be the ones who are the main intermediaries and carriers of the charity campaigns, providing bank accounts and SMS services for charitable activities. Maybe as an attempt to offer compensation for their not very attractive everyday attitudes and activities and because of the specific role as an inevitable mediator the banks and the mobile operators are among the most active charity providers and due to this they appear comparatively more often in the publications and even in the headlines. It is not possible to prove it but there is a hypothesis that their comparatively frequent mentioning in this sort of articles is due also to the fact that they are amongst the biggest advertisers in the same editions.

„Vivacom” is one of the companies that manage to get by the gatekeepers and to be included with its name not only in the common texts but also in the headlines. This company except as a mediator is an initiator and is engaged in numerous initiatives – in the sphere of culture, in educational initiatives for altruistic children, develops projects like the one named „Small Coins”, under which small coins are being collected for the sake of some cause – this year for abandoned children. The „MTel” clients will be receiving a special document added to their monthly payment confirmations with detailed information about the donations they have committed for the cause „The Bulgarian Christmas” through SMS-messages, through which this company is included in publications.

All three mobile operators are present in the articles, but as intermediaries, because they offer their capacities for sending the SMSs. Globul excludes VAT on the SMSs linked to donations, and thus succeeds to „capitalize” its mediator’s role and to turn it into a supportive role.

The role of intermediaries is played also by most banks which open donors’ accounts and are made mentioning of through them. MKB Unionbank is a bank that is included in the texts through its initiatives for deserted children and not as just a mediator.

Other companies, which manage to make it to the headlines are „Asarel-Medet” for having provided two replicas from the Golden Treasure of Panagjurishte; „Tehnopolis” for issuing discount vouchers for children of deceased policemen; „Fihealth” for donating vaccines Vaxigrip, „CEZ” with its donation for young scientists, „AVON” for its campaign against breast cancer, „Refan” for its activities.

Facebook is included in the headlines yet I need to make the point that the company’s name is not linked to the corporate identity, but rather to the public role of the social net. Putting it in a direct way, I do not think that by writing out Facebook, journalists are aware that this is the name of a company. **Facebook collected blood for a sick child | People helped the two-year old son of the stage-producer Drago Sholev | 29.12.2012 01:00 | Standard | page7 |**



It is of interest to present the observations about the media outlets' role. Besides being the intermediary, they are often the partner to such initiatives and also sometimes – the initiator. However (it is not clear whether because of fear mentioning the competition, or simply because of the still being formatted culture of charity), it is often the case that the initiative of a given media is not made mentioning of in the other media, even if they happen to be from the same media group. A clear example of this is the campaign by the newspaper „Trud” for people with brain hematoma. This conclusion is drawn upon the analysis of the printed media and I have not attempted making a parallel to electronic media.

### **The headlines**

In the total of 707 articles we could detect the following key words in 107 of the headlines:

- Charitable – 26
- Charity – 13
- With charitable aim – 4
- Devoted to charity – 13
- Donor – 0
- Sponsor – 0
- Philanthropy – 1
- Donator – 13
- Donators – 7
- Donors' – 6
- Donate – 14
- Donations – 7
- Donated – 3

There are some other words that are repeating. Very often there could be detected words connected to childrenq they even outnumber our keywords associated to charity:

- Children – 103
- Childrens' – 20
- Child – 13
- Orphan, orphans – 8
- Toys – 2

Another words that often make it to the charity headlines are the ones referring to financing means

- Leva – 46
- Money – 38

With regret to say it, but many of the headlines have word that are related to unpleasant situations compared to the positive ones

- Sick, sickness – 22
- Poor, Poverty – 9
- Misfortune, calamity – 1
- Cancer – 7
- Gifts – 13
- Present – 3
- Happiness – 3
- Love – 2
- Gladness – 1

Another category of word that could be considered as tendency in being mentioned in the headlines is the jobs:

- Businessman – 3
- Business – 9
- Member of Parliament – 8

If you wish to talk about charity you then have to consider carefully how and whether to use the words donation and sponsor, which are very often being associated with not-charitable activities and with disrespectful deeds.

The review of the headlines on the theme of charity as well as the general review of the articles with the aim of selecting these which are not connected to the theme of charity revealed some very interesting trends in the use of our key words, but also made possible some general conclusions in respect to the coverage of the theme of charity with the words linked to the same theme.

If one reads the two files separated only by the indicator of the usage of the key words, it is possible to receive the impression that the talk is about two different Bulgarias. One of them is being described as suffering state in which however there are good people with good intentions who manage to fulfill these intentions. The lexicon in these publications is carefully selected, elegant, taking care of not offending anyone because of their special needs or difficult position. In the other we discover a state that deals solely with criminal acts and sports activities, at that the sports activities being determined by circles of individuals offering financing connected to the other, the criminal part and connected to the political figures. In this sport there are almost no sportsmen and there are no young talents or investment in such, in this sports there are arrangements and influences. The language is rough, at instances intentionally sarcastic and mocking, unrestrained.

Another general impression that is left after reading the articles in the charity section is that it still seems to compensate lapses and omissions in the organization of our public life.

Many articles devoted to charity direct the attention towards questions for which it is presumed that should be addressed by the institutions, but they are negligent towards them and hence it is necessary to seek help from the society, from the citizens. One can recognize a trend that the majority of articles are of that kind and are not linked to social development. Rather to social



compensation. This eventually is the reflection of the actual state of affairs, but bearing in mind the formatting role of the media it worries me to think of the negative effect on the reader – the feeling that something is not as it should be and the depressive feeling of not managing to cope, instead of enthusiasm for creativity and development.

After separating 483 pages of publications on the theme with general volume of 252 145 words it turns out that the total number of publication on charity is 707 articles. Compared to 115 articles in 2006 we could say that charity has increased as topic of interest to the printed media in Bulgaria. This is important if we want to talk about charity, showing that there is room for the theme and if we want apply the results of this research to evaluate some social processes in the further analysis of the data gathered.

### Literature

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