



### **STEP Bulgaria 2010 Summer Academy**

*STEP Bulgaria Summer Academy* is a summer educational program for Bulgarian youth living without parental care. For a fourth consecutive year, the program will take place with the participation of international and Bulgarian volunteer teachers and underprivileged youth from across the country. The summer academy aims at the successful social integration of the young participants, who need to prepare for their life outside of the orphanage. Our focus is on teaching English, computer literacy and professional skills to support the youth's independent life as university students or young employees. We also support the career orientation of our students through discussions with professionals from various fields and individual career guidance sessions.

In August-September 2010, for 2 weeks, about 40 teenagers living in social care homes in Sofia, Plovdiv, Berkovitsa, Gabrovo, and Silistra will participate in *STEP Bulgaria*. The majority have taken part in the full-year alternative education program *Step in the Future!*, and have received training on communication and conflict resolution skills, civic and health education, leadership and teamwork skills, and job application tips. As a result, the goal of the Summer Academy is to strengthen these core skills and to improve our students' capacity to apply them both in Bulgarian and in English, through using computers and internet and through bringing to life their own business ideas. Based on their career interests, in the individual career planning sessions the young participants will be able to discuss specific skills, contacts and actions needed to get closer to their professional goals. The academy management is already in touch with professionals who could offer internship opportunities for *STEP Bulgaria 2010* participants. Our team members are committed to support the youth's development beyond the duration of the summer academy.

The summer academy educational activities focus on developing analytical and creative thinking as well as learning about job-hunting or continuing one's education. English and computer skills are taught by international volunteers, who use interactive techniques to stimulate students' active participation and self-initiative. Our partners from BEST, human resource consultancies, and University of the 21<sup>st</sup> century moderate the different sessions. Professionals from various fields (among which banking, telecommunications, the arts, transportation and construction) meet the young participants to share their career paths and practical advice. Along with educational courses, the summer academy features dance, art, photography, music, yoga and sports workshops. On the official closing night, before receiving their participation certificates, all participants will present their business projects in front of invited guests and media representatives.

STEP Bulgaria has enjoyed the continuous support of the Karl Popper Foundation, the Consulate of Switzerland in Cambridge, Harvard Bulgarian Club, Bulgarian-American Chamber of Commerce, Bulgarian Ministry of labor and social affairs, Bulgarian Ministry of Culture, EKSA LTD, BTC, Herlitz Bulgaria, Focus Info Agency, Radio Darik, Blagotvoritel Foundation, and other public, private and non-governmental organizations and media.