

BABUSHKA ADOPTION ACTIVITY

REPORT 2007





Foreword

The year 2007 has been a difficult one for Kyrgyzstan and its citizens, where the unstable political situation has hindered economic growth of the country. Inflation, and specifically food prices, has increased dramatically; the US Dollar exchange rate has decreased; and Kyrgyzstan's debt to international donors has increased. There is deep conflict among the government legislation, executive bodies and judicial power, which resulted in mass demonstrations by the opposition, changing the Kyrgyz Constitution and dissolution of parliament. Indeed, the government tries to support its citizens by increasing salaries and pensions, but the increase typically causes higher inflation, thus our older people, the most vulnerable layer of population, live almost on the verge of starvation. The existing pension reform needs to be improved, considering all latest economical and social indicators, but due to the political and economical crises, this most important issue is left without proper attention.

The unstable political, economical and social situation has adversely affected Babushka Adoption's beneficiaries. The prices for some foodstuffs have increased by more than 50%, and for dairy and oil by even more than 100%. The inflation rate was 20%, while the average pension rate remained almost at the same level. Please, see Section #4. on page 12.



The price increases and dollar exchange rate decrease also very negatively affected the financial sustainability of Babushka Adoption Foundation, as Babushka Adoption in the past years used to plan its yearly budget in USD, but all administrative expenses, including salaries were made in the Kyrgyz national currency the "SOM".

However, most of all the budget of BA suffered due to providing additional payments to babushkas. BA received from sponsors for monthly support of one babushka 10 USD. In the beginning of the year an exchange rate for 1 USD was 40 soms. In the middle of the year the exchange rate for 1 USD fell to 35 soms. In order to support its beneficiaries BA paid from its reserve funds 400 soms monthly, while 10 USD made up only be 350 soms. Monthly 1000 beneficiaries of BA got in average additional 50 soms additional from BA's administrative budget. This is a considerable amount of money for an administrative budget of a charity NGO, like BA, which always has to strive for its financial sustainability.

In general for BA 2007 has been a year of dynamic transition towards development and self sustainability. BA launched in partnership with Help Age International a project "Dignity in Ageing". The project is aimed to give more opportunities to our vulnerable older people to improve their lives by uniting into Self Help Groups and carrying out joint activities on income generation, developing of social support network and advocacy. Also the project helps to strengthen the organizational capacity of employees of BA. An overall goal of the project is to strengthen civil society and to improve its constructive engagement with the Government. The Babushka Adoption Foundation and HAI successfully finished the first inception phase of the project. It is believed that the project



will further favor the development of program activity and will help to discover new areas and ideas for BA further expanding into new products and fields.

2. Alleviation of impact of poverty on vulnerable elderly people in the Kyrgyz Republic by providing financial and social services

The main program activity of Babushka Adoption Foundation is aimed at alleviating the impact of poverty on vulnerable older people, living in Bishkek and Batken province of the Kyrgyz Republic. Babushka Adoption alleviates the impact of poverty by providing financial and social support to its beneficiaries. The financial support is given by individual sponsors, who "adopt" one or several beneficiaries for an unspecified period of time. In



order to implement our goal we carry out the following types of activity: prepare and update our database of the neediest elderly people seeking and receiving support from us, involve new sponsors for their support, and provide social services to our target group.

• Number of "adopted" supported babushkas

Preparing and updating our database of the needy older people. Prior to involving sponsors willing to support the needy older people, BA prepares a date base of the babushkas, who are in real need of financial backup. To collect a database of elderly people in need of support, Babushka Adoption Foundation worked with numerous Apartment Block Management representatives, Ministry for Social Protection, Social Protection Departments of Bishkek city and Batken region and with other non-governmental organizations, who provided us with lists of vulnerable elderly people in need of support. During 2007 we registered applications from 285 (126 in Bishkek and 159 from Batken) older people, seeking support from BA. After the registration of the applicants, social workers need made an assessment of living conditions of the older people.

Assessment of living conditions of the applicants. During 2007, staff members of Babushka Adoption Foundation have assessed the living conditions of 204 potential beneficiaries. The assessment has been done in order to find out if the registered elderly people could be supported by our organization or not. During the assessment social workers filled in special questionnaires, which included information about pension rate, state of health, state of living, and family status of an applying person. Having collected the questionnaire results, BA staff members selected those applicants, who best fit our criteria. The information, received following the assessment is included in a biography. There are the following criteria for acceptance to the BA waiting list.

Our selection criteria are the following ones:



- The grandmother or grandfather must be over 65 years old
- Her or his pension should be less than 1200 soms (22 EUROS)
- She or he should live alone with no close relatives or with handicapped children or children also on pension
- Her or his health and housing conditions are also taken into account .



During the money distribution

The biographies have been typed, translated into English; photos have been taken and inserted into the database and so new profiles have been prepared for sponsors, who are willing to "adopt" babushkas.

A diagram about the number of adoptions since 1999 can be seen in Section # 4. We currently support 1000 beneficiaries (as of December 31, 2007).

- **Number of sponsors**

BA Foundation has implemented a number of activities related to coordination work with sponsors, which includes: involvement of sponsors, maintaining strong relationships with them, improving of sponsor coordination work and building up and maintaining a relationship between sponsors and their beneficiaries.

Involvement of sponsors is one of the prior objectives of BA Foundation. Usually, to obtain new sponsors BA holds PR campaigns (here in abroad), such as publishing articles in mass media, holding presentations and dissemination of BA's printing materials. This year there has been only one small publication about BA Foundation in a Danish magazine "Ældre Sagen" in April of 2007. It was an article about the experience of a Danish couple of sponsors: Mrs. And Mr. Søndergaard, who visited Kyrgyzstan as tourists in the past year and during their stay had a chance to talk with their "adopted" babushka and to take a closer look at the charity activity of the "Babushka Adoption" Foundation.



*Danish Family Søndergaard
visiting the office of Babushka
Adoption*

It was a very interesting and captivating article; BA expected that the article would help to involve additional new 50-100 sponsors, however there has not been any feedback after the publication because in the e-mail address of "Babushka Adoption", mentioned in the article there was a mistake. In 2007 the new sponsors were mostly involved by old sponsors of BA who spread the word about BA to their friends, relatives and colleagues. 58 persons requested information about sponsorship terms and out of that amount 43 became real sponsors, transferring money for support of 158 beneficiaries. 77 sponsors quit the sponsorship program of BA.

We currently have 735 sponsors who support our work. In Section #4, please, find information about the origin of sponsors



Maintaining a strong relationship of Babushka Adoption with the sponsors. A key activity for Babushka Adoption Foundation is to maintain a strong relationship with our sponsors and particularly keeping them informed about their beneficiaries. Within 2007, the Babushka Adoption Foundation has sent 559 renewal of sponsorship forms to sponsors, as well as 104 reports informing sponsors about the deaths of beneficiaries or removal of beneficiaries from the program. 594 sponsors got receipt funds, transferred to BA. BA sent confirmation about receiving and handing over parcels to 121 sponsors, from their "adoptees". Furthermore, we prepared and sent 735 New Year letters to our sponsors by post. With this letter we thanked all sponsors for their contribution to the well-being of Babushka Adoption Foundation in 2007 and also included the financial report about their sponsorship balance. We helped to organize visits of sponsors to their babushkas. 16 sponsors visited personally their "adopted" beneficiaries.

Improving of sponsor coordination work. In order to make the work, related to maintenance of correspondence with sponsors less time taking and more effective, the Sponsor Coordinator and our CIM Advisor developed new templates of letters (renewal, money receiving confirmation, change of beneficiary) in English and German. In December 2007 BA sent questionnaires to all babushka sponsors in order to collect some statistical and other useful information on the attitude, requirements and suggestions of sponsors to improve the sponsor coordination work.



Maintaining a relationship between sponsors and their beneficiaries. During 2007, Babushka Adoption Foundation continued to build up and maintain a relationship between beneficiaries and their sponsors. Our team acted like a bridge between sponsors and their beneficiaries by translating letters, by helping beneficiaries to send letters to their sponsors, by delivering gifts and additional money.

Sponsors from the company "Intrepid Trade Austria" invited their "adopted" babushkas for dinner

Our beneficiaries and

their sponsors have exchanged 262 letters during 2007. Staff members of Babushka Adoption Foundation provided translation of the correspondence. BA staff members delivered 67 parcels to their recipients, took photos and sent them to the sponsors. Furthermore, 57 sponsors have transferred 1423 EUROS to their beneficiaries as additional money gifts.



- **Voice of a babushka supported via Babushka Adoption Foundation:**

My name is Bodyaikina Mariya Nikolaevna. I am 88 years old and live in Bishkek. I was born in “Tyup” village, Issyk-Kul region, finished school there and pedagogic college in Prjevalsk, Issyk-Kul. I had to start working very early, when I was only 15 years old. From the age of 15 I worked as a primary school teacher for 35 years. During the Second World War all the men left to fight, I worked as a school director.

I got married when I was 18 years old and had 2 children. My husband died in 1991. My elder daughter and her family had a car accident in 1993, after this my granddaughter became an invalid. So it was very difficult for my daughter to see her daughter unable to move, and after a year she died. So now I live with my invalid



granddaughter, who is 39 years old. My son is in Karaganda, Kazakhstan and he is not able to support us. He is in a difficult financial situation too.

Since my only granddaughter became an invalid I have had very hard times. We had to be in several hospitals for long stays. But it did not help. We did not have enough money, so we had to sell our house. There was nothing to eat, so we ate only bread and the vegetables from our own garden.

At the moment I am a pensioner and I get 1400 soms, which is not enough to pay for public utilities and sufficient food. I pay for water-40 soms/month; for gas-120 soms/month; for electricity and hot water-heating 500 soms/month. And lately food is becoming more and more expensive. The price of one liter of oil increased from 50 soms to 110. The price of one loaf of bread, 400 grams, from 5 soms to 11 soms and the price of milk 2,5% from 15 som to 28 soms. Also I suffer from high blood pressure, stroke and some other geriatric diseases.

So the help and support of my sponsor: Mr. Markus Müller via “Babushka Adoption” means very much for me and my granddaughter to live our difficult lives, especially now, when the prices for food, electricity and gas have been permanently increasing.

2.2 Mobilization and empowering vulnerable older people and their communities to achieve secure livelihoods

- **Project “Home Visiting Service”**



In 2007 Babushka Adoption Foundation continued providing social support to our beneficiaries. Thanks to financing from the Bishkek International Women’s Club, Babushka Adoption Foundation continued providing its home visiting service to some of our neediest beneficiaries. The social workers have rendered social services to older people, for example doing shopping, paying bills, helping in the household, cleaning, and doing small laundry. 60 beneficiaries of BA got home care services via the project “Home Visiting Service”. There are four social workers in the project “Home Visiting Service”. Each of four social workers visited 5 babushkas weekly to help the babushkas. If the state of health of one of the supported babushkas changed for the better, BA made a rotation, providing social services to another babushka, who needed the services of a social worker.

A social worker at work helping the babushka to clean her house



- **Project “Dignity in Ageing”**

In Summer-Autumn 2006 BA set up experimental Self Help Groups 8 (SHGs) in Batken region of the Kyrgyz Republic, providing opportunities for beneficiaries of BA and their communities to achieve secure livelihoods. The groups were engaged in: a) income bringing activities, b) providing social services, and c) advocacy work. In December 2007 the number of SHGs increased by 19. The groups were accomplished within the framework of the project “Dignity in Ageing”, implemented jointly by “Babushka Adoption” Foundation and Help Age International and financed by the European Commission. The Self Help Groups leaders got trainings from Help Age International on establishing SHGs, business and project planning and reporting. Babushka Adoption is effectively supporting 25 groups of older people to undertake sustainable local community development action.

The project gives opportunities to existing SHGs of BA and newly established ones to grow, to promote their activities, to protect the rights of older people, to participate in decision making of the community and to integrate old people’s rights into the national policies. Below, please, see a success story from the Self Help Group “Lakomka” (Gourmand).

Success story of a Self Help Group “Lakomka” (Gourmand)

A Self Help Group “Lakomka” was established in September 2006 by the Foundation Babushka Adoption. The Self Help Group consists of 10 members.

The group is engaged in making confectionery and its sale. The group is headed by Asiya Trisheva who used to work in confectionery for more than 30 years.

The members of the group are lonely older grannies, who have no other relatives, who are in a poor state of health and who receive very low pensions. Before being taken care of by Babushka Adoption Foundation they felt forgotten and helpless and even did not



dear to dream that one day some positive changes might come.

The situation was changed when were taken care of by Babushka Adoption Foundation, which firstly found sponsors, who gave financial support to the babushkas and then provided some new opportunities to the older women to improve their livings through uniting into a Self Help Group.

The Self Help Group, headed by babushka Asya is one of the best among 15 SHGs. The members of the SHGs meet often, they communicate with each other, remembering about their youth times, they do some activities, like cooking and have joint dinners. Especially they like to spend holidays together.

- **Arranging social events for our beneficiaries**

BA staff members took part in organizing and holding the event “From Heart to Heart” of the network “Age Net Without Borders”, on May 20th, 2007 (BA is a member of the network). During this event, we assisted members of “Age Net” in



organizing an exhibition/sale of babushkas' handicrafts, we negotiated with Mass Media on showing informative video reels of the event on local TV in Bishkek and Batken, and we assisted in placing charity donation boxes (in Bishkek and Batken).

For the Day of Older people - October 1, the staff of BA distributed foodstuff to 70 most needy beneficiaries, having collected the foodstuff from local stores/markets.



2.3 Collaboration with international organization, donors and others

- **Help Age**

In early 2005 Babushka Adoption approached HelpAge International (HAI), the leading organization globally working to promote the rights of older people in developing and transition countries, to support us in realizing its new strategic objectives. We identified the need to become more development orientated to achieve more sustainable change with and for older people to address their key problems. The developmental approaches in our work should be realized through training and practical activities in self help group development and advocacy work. HAI has strong experience in introducing the older people's self help group model in a number of countries across Eastern Europe and Central Asia, including in Kyrgyzstan. Babushka Adoption and HAI work closely on successful implementation of the project "Dignity in Ageing". HAI shares its expertise regarding all aspects of the project.

- **EC (TACIS)**

With support of HelpAge International we applied for funding from the European Commission TACIS Institution Building Partnership Program (IBPP). The grant application was successful and Babushka Adoption Foundation with support of HAI has started implementing the proposed action.

The particular focus of the program activity is on strengthening our organization in undertaking community development work with older people's groups in two regions of Kyrgyzstan (Batken oblast and Bishkek city), and on building the capacity of Babushka Adoption undertake effective advocacy and policy work with the government at local and national levels and other key decision makers. The objectives of the project are as follows:

1. Objective #1: BA strengthened and effectively supporting 25 oldage groups to undertake local community development action.
2. Objective #2: Old people's rights and concerns integrated in national level policies and practices.
3. Objective #3: Role of old people in community governance strengthened by inclusion in planning and decision making.



In the process of launching of the project we worked on developing a new organizational structure, developed terms of references for the project staff members, held a recruitment process via advertising positions in the local newspaper and made a budget review.

As soon as the project started we held a project steering committee meeting, in the course of which we planned our project activity for one year, from June 2007-till June 2008. We made a presentation of the project "Dignity in Ageing" to the NGOs, working for social security of the population, governmental institutions, such as the social development department under the apparatus of the prime minister, social fund and others.

Since the start BA staff members have had a chance to improve their professional qualifications, by taking part in the trainings on the specifics of working with older people and community development. The trainings were given by specialists of Help Age International (London) and financed by the European Commission.



Also BA staff members as well as the leaders of SHGs took part in the following trainings: "Age Awareness" and "Gender Mainstreaming", "Community Development". "Participatory approaches of working with older people". "Project management". We got training on the financial guidelines of implementation of the EC project. BA and Help Age International office in Kyrgyzstan met regularly to discuss the aspects of running the project, planning activities, holding of events and other issues.

- **Working with International Consultants**

From August 2006 till August 2007 BA staff members worked with a CIM Advisor, Ms. Kristin Linke, who assisted the Director of BA and the staff on strengthening our organizational capacity and consulted on management issues. With the assistance of the CIM Advisor the staff members developed a logical framework work plans, conducted staff performance appraisals and started preparation for implementation of the EC project. In September 2007 the staff members got trainings from Cristina Herrera, our former Board member on "Team Building" and "Work Planning".

- **Partnerships and networking**

We continued cooperation with the friends and partners of BA: Verein "Babushka Adoption" Switzerland and "Elnura" Foundation The Netherlands. The above mentioned partners assisted BA in providing all necessary information to the people interested in joining the sponsorship program of Babushka Adoption and provided consultancy to the existing sponsors and other people. Mrs. Kaethi Huessy and Mr. Peter Schmidt from Verein "Babushka Adoption" Switzerland worked with the Swiss Bank "UBS" on keeping the account of BA. Mr. Jan van Bremen, Mr. Ruud van der Leur and Mr. Bert Hamming from "Elnura" Foundation, the Netherlands as always supported BA in raising funds and spreading the word about the charity activities of BA Foundation.

Also in 2007 BA tightly worked with the network "Agenet without borders" to organize some actions/events to make some positive changes in the lives of older people. Program Coordinator-Jyldyz Shamirova took part in the conference of "Age Net", where the participants outlined a strategy document of



development of the network. The Director and Program Coordinator of BA participated in monthly meetings "Leaders Club" of the organizations, working for social protection of older people.

Throughout the year BA held presentations to International Women's Club, Rotary Club.

- **Working with the Advisory Board**

In 2007 BA kept on working closely with the Advisory Board. Our former Chairperson, Mrs. Evelyn Brealy left for her motherland. She was consulting BA on strategic management and organizational development of BA for 2,5 years. She was replaced by Mr. Jonathon Hornbrook, Director of the Program "Support of Regional Economic Cooperation in Central Asia" GTZ (German Technical Cooperation Program). He kept on attending management meetings with

the Director of BA in order to supervise the activities and consult on capacity building. Besides Mr. Jonathon Hornbrook

consulted BA on some issues regarding implementation of the EC project. The Board initiated changes in its Charter, in order to transfer the highest management functions from the Founder to the Board. The Director was working on making alterations to the Charter. She worked with lawyers in order to introduce correct changes. The changes were then considered by the Board. Also two other Board Members, Cristina Herrera and Ariane Schibli Zalokar left the Board in December of 2007 and were substituted by new members, Simone Wunsch, Director of the German Development Bank and Mr. Talay Asylbekov, President of the International Business Council.



An ordinary Board Meeting of Babushka Adoption, May 2007

- **Strengthening of financial management system**

In order to implement this objective, we developed some new rules and procedures, like a new salary scale, new procedures of purchasing and vehicle maintenance. BA developed a new fundraising strategy. We worked on securing funding sources. We submitted project proposals to the Max van der Stoel Award (The Netherlands) and the German Foundation "Erinnerung". However, these proposals were not successful.

3. Communications and requests to sponsors

Ending up our annual activity report, which is highlighting the most remarkable and important activities in the past year, we would like to thank all people involved in BA's activities, babushkas' sponsors, donors and partners for our fruitful and close cooperation. In fact, if there had not been any close cooperation among us, the prosperity and success of the Foundation would have been in question. We are very much looking forward our cooperation to continuing in 2008 and the coming years. We would like to thank especially the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe with its headquarters in



Bishkek for its continuous financial support of the ideas and charity activity of BA.

In 2008 we will continue our main activity of providing financial and social support to vulnerable elderly people in Bishkek and Batken. We will continue working with the beneficiaries and their communities on supporting their efforts to develop and strengthen the Self Help Groups. At the same time we will make a marketing research of what we can do more to provide new products for our beneficiaries and organizational activities.

During this year our priority will be improving our funding situation so that we can grow in future years from a more secure base. We are already very busy raising funds to cover the administration and management costs of our NGO, and we are working hard on a fundraising strategy, which targets our current sponsors as well as seeking new supporters and donors. We plan to extend our fundraising and promotional activities in Europe, and hope to find volunteers in Europe, for example, in Switzerland, in Holland or Germany who will support us with these tasks.

We look forward to the continued involvement of our current supporters, sponsors and donors.



4. Figures and facts

Table 1. Picture of increase of prices for most necessary foodstuffs

Product	Price in January 2007 in Som, Kyrgyz national currency	Price in October 2007 in Som, Kyrgyz national currency	Increase by
Bread 450 gr.	5	11	by 2,2 times
Milk 1 liter	18	30	by 1,6 times
Oil 1 liter	50	100	by 2,0 times
Butter 250 gr.	25	70	by 2.8 times
Meat 1 kg.	110	170	by 1.55 times

Table 2. Picture of decrease of the exchange rate of the USD

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Average exchange rate of 1 US\$ to Kyrgyz currency (som)	46	49	48	45	43	41	41	34

Table 3. Picture of minimum cost of living for older citizens and other people

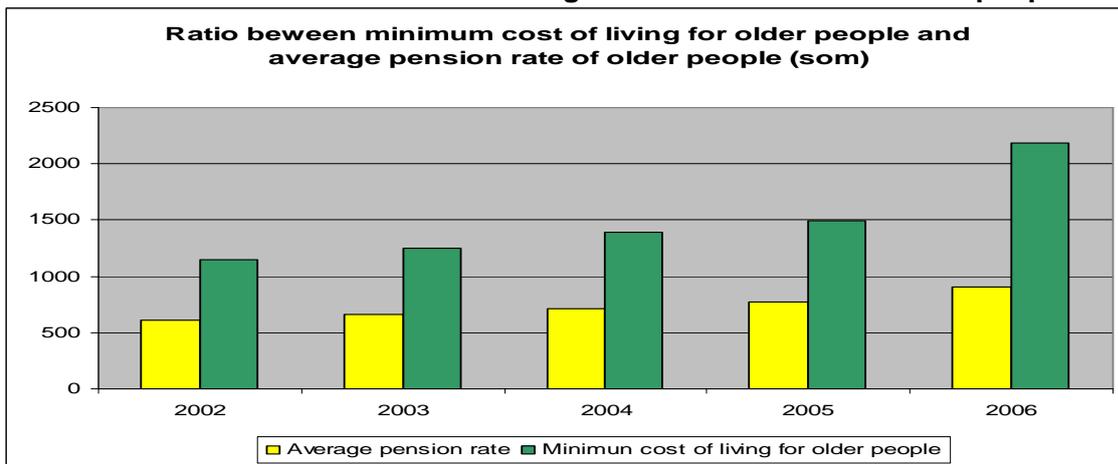




Table 4. Picture of number of adoptions per year

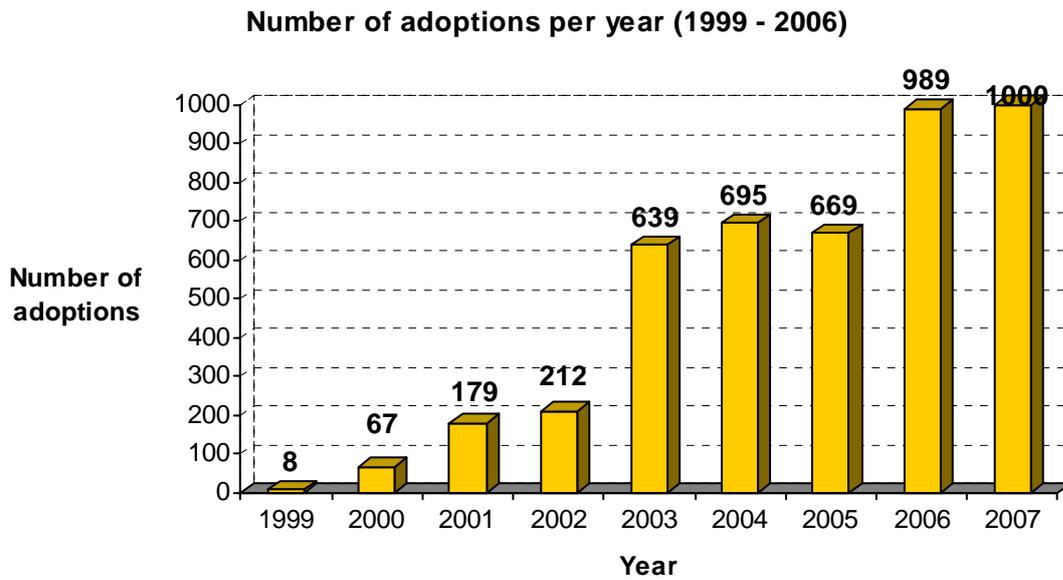


Table 5. Number of sponsors per country

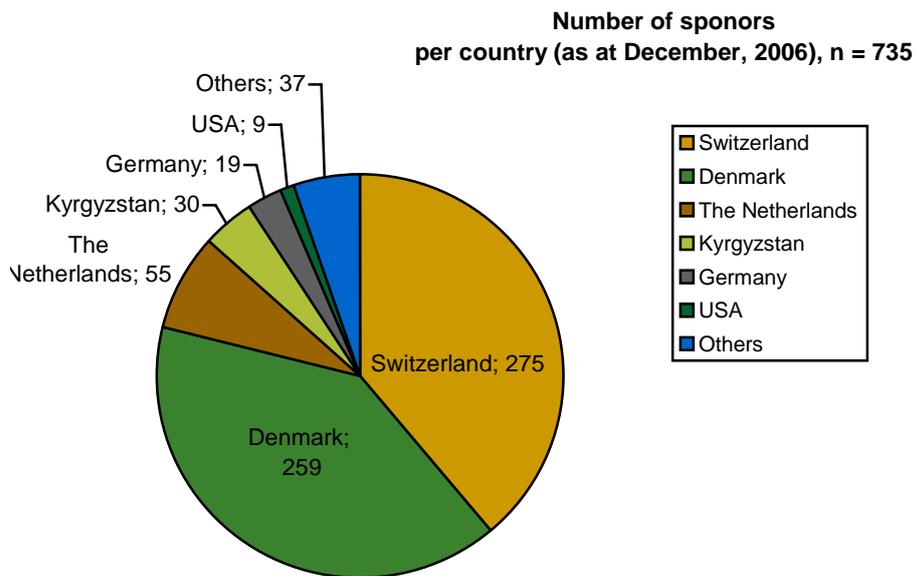




Diagram of Babushka Adoption expenses in 2007 in %

