



Panel Admission: 2015

Languages: English, Bulgarian,
German (good level)

Location: Bulgaria

“Sevdalina was extremely helpful in keeping the focus on the important issues during the entire mediation. And when we were stuck, she just kept moving the discussion forward.”

Client Feedback

Sevdalina Aleksandrova

Overview

Sevdalina Aleksandrova is a mediator and lawyer with extensive experience in real estate, contractual disputes, commercial and family mediations. She is also among the leading mediation trainers in Bulgaria with thousands of mediators, lawyers and judges trained over a period of more than 10 years. In addition to that she is an expert in development of successful mediation programs from scratch, international consultant and author.

Currently, she is the Vice-President of the Center for Dispute Resolution, Sofia, Bulgaria.

Professional Background

Sevdalina has over 10 years' experience as a lawyer, mediator, mediation trainer and international mediation consultant. She served as a Manager and Mediator in the establishment of the first commercial mediation centers in Bulgaria within the USAID Commercial Law Reform Program in Bulgaria, and took part in the incorporation of the Professional Association of Mediators in Bulgaria, where she was a President and Vice-President for a period of 6 years. At this position she co-managed a project resulting in the development of an internationally recognized structure, such as the Settlement Center at the Sofia Regional Court (acknowledged as a model by the European Parliament in its Resolution (2011/2026(INI))). She also served as an expert in various international projects focused on promoting cross-border mediation. She has been a mediation trainer leading

certification mediation trainings and various trainings for legal professionals, specified under the Coaching section below.

In addition to that, she has been involved in the legislative process and in the legal analysis of mediation legislation in 2006 and 2015. In this period, she also gained extensive experience as a mediator in various fields, mostly in contractual disputes, real estates, commercial and family cases.

In 2012 she co-founded the Center for Dispute Resolution, Sofia, where she is currently a Vice-President, mediation trainer and mediator.

Experience

- Commercial Contracts
- Partnership & Shareholder
- Matrimonial Finance
- Property

Dispute Resolution

Commercial Contracts

- Breach of contract for the delivery of medical equipment where the purchaser ordering the equipment refused payment. After exploring in mediation the reasons for that a scheme for deferred payment of the consumables and part of the equipment was agreed on, with the rest of the equipment returned as allegedly unsuitable for the purposes of the purchaser.
- Various disputes related to breach of commercial contracts, mostly regarding unpaid price by the purchaser due to claimed defects. Resolved based on the future interest of continuing doing business together or the debtor bringing value (introducing the creditor to new clients or business partners) or paying in kind instead of direct payment of the due sum, or agreeing on deferred or reduced payment schemes.

Matrimonial Finance

- Mediating various disputes involving the distribution of property between spouses in process of divorce or immediately after divorce. In most of the cases releasing the pressure

between the ex-spouses was the first crucial step to the resolution. Afterwards, focusing on their vision for the future and the purposes for which they needed the real estates, such as living there, receiving income from them, selling them or ensuring property for their children, as well as discussing the actual contribution of each of them for the purchase of these properties, were the keys to reaching a lasting mediated agreement.

- Mediating various disputes between ex-partners involving bank credits and mortgages on real estates bought during their marriage. Helping them analyse and evaluate their priorities and all options regarding their joint property and credit in order to find a way to pay it together, sell it, or transfer it to their children or to one of them, who is able to continue paying the mortgage on his/her own after paying the other spouse his/her share of the property.

Partnership & Shareholder

- Numerous cases between two shareholders in limited liability companies willing to leave the company or acquire the sole ownership over the company. In most of the cases both shareholders achieved the desired result of having a fully owned company (one of them new one, and the other – keeping the old company). This result came mainly as a consequence of clarifying what they would be willing to give in exchange for acquiring what they considered their priority. Some of them preferred the freedom of a new company and distributing some of the clients among themselves, while others worked for keeping the old company because of the brand and the licenses it had. The reasonable evaluation of the cash they would be able to receive for their share in the company (including during possible litigation) was in all cases one of the most decisive factors for reaching an agreement.

Property:

- Mediating a dispute related to the conclusion of a real estate purchase and sale transaction where the purchaser did not want to risk paying an advance payment directly to the seller and the seller refused to enter into the transaction without receiving the payment directly and immediately after the preliminary agreement. They did not like the option of an escrow account because of the costs and time associated with it and after exploring various other options and the interest of both parties to close the deal, they agreed on another option to have the money kept by a third party chosen by them, suitable for both of them.

- Mediating a dispute between two heirs holding together the property rights over numerous real estates. They had difficulties deciding how to distribute the income from the estates for the past few years and subsequently put an end to their joint property. After reaching an agreement regarding the contribution of each of them to the management and repair of the properties they decided upon the distribution of the rent price in accordance with their quota in the real estates for a fixed period in the future and agreed on parameters and term for the future sale of one of the estates.
- Dispute between more than ten co-owners of numerous properties. Mediation was held through their representatives authorized to take decisions and after exploring the priorities of each of the co-owners regarding the real estates, a plan with options about their distribution was prepared to serve for the notary partition of the properties.

:Landlord & Tenant

- A dispute over the new price of a leased property upon renewal of a lease agreement, where the long-term interests of the landlord and the tenant were explored by the mediator. Parties reached a long-term agreement reflecting their interests with a clear mechanism for adjustment of the rent over the years.
- A dispute over unpaid rent price for an industrial site and default interests and interests accumulated for a long period. The landlord and the tenant discussed various options for resolving the situation, including the future purchase of the site by the tenant and as it was a specific property, that could be rented or purchased by a very limited number of players on the market, they finally agreed on a deferred payment of the rent price due, and renegotiated the conditions of the lease agreement.

Other Alternative Dispute Resolution

- Numerous family cases, including cross-border.
- Cases between banks and consumers related to abuse of credit cards by third persons.
- Case between municipality and a company regarding a permit for superficies initially refused and granted after mediation clarifying the misunderstanding between them.

Coaching / Training

Nominated as an ADR Trainer in the CEDR 2012 awards for excellence in ADR.

Directly involved in the development and delivery of certification and professional trainings in the field of conflict resolution and mediation, in particular:

- **Certification trainings for mediators** (few times a year, 2006-present), over 400 mediators personally trained so far (about 1/3 of all mediators in Bulgaria)
- **Training in Family Mediation** for mediators (2014)
- **Seminar in Judicial Intercultural Communication** in Family Mediation for judges under the project JUST/2013/JCIV/AG/4628 "Judicial Intercultural Communication in Family Mediation" (2014)
- **Training in cross-border mediation** for judges, lawyers and mediators (2012)
- **Advanced Mediation** Trainings (2010, 2011, 2013)
- **Trainings in mediation techniques for judges**, together with a team of trainers from Harvard University (2009, 2011)
- **Seminars in mediation and referral for junior judges and prosecutors** at the National Institute of Justice (2013, 2014)
- **Training in Commercial Mediation** for judges and lawyers, together with a team of trainers from Harvard University (2011)
- **Training in Family Mediation** for judges and mediators, together with a team of trainers from Harvard University (2011),
- **Training of Trainers** for mediators (2009), training of trainers for mediators and judges (2012)
- **Seminars in mediation for lawyers** (2006, 2007, 2013), municipality officials (2007), private bailiffs (2007), etc.
- **Seminars in Negotiations** for politicians at the Bulgarian School of Politics (2011, 2012, 2013)

Some of the trainings were held within the following projects:

- Get Ready to settle - Sofia Regional Court ADR Program, funded by the Bulgaria Fund, BTD/German Marshal Fund (2009), implemented by the Professional Association of Mediators in Bulgaria
- Mediation and the Judiciary – a Successful Blend for Improved Access to Justice and Court Services, funded by the America for Bulgaria Foundation (2011-2012), implemented by the Professional Association of Mediators in Bulgaria
- European Network of Mediators for cross border dispute resolution in Europe (EuroNetMed) (2011-2012), funded by the EU Civil Justice Directorate, implemented by the Professional Association of Mediators in Bulgaria
- “Judicial Intercultural Communication in Family Mediation” JUST/2013/JCIV/AG/4628

Personal Style

Sevdalina’s style has been assessed as patient and encouraging parties’ to express their concerns and release pressure. At the same time, she is dedicated to leading them through mediation in a straight-forward manner by focusing their attention on exploring their priorities and assessing the realistic options for a settlement agreement.

Feedback – Clients

- *“Sevdalina is tireless in building awareness of the value that mediation brings to conflicting parties. As a highly experienced dispute resolution professional and top mediator trainer, Sevdalina is skilled in active listening and quickly gains the trust and confidence of the parties to build an effective environment for needed communication. As a business owner, Sevdalina has great acuity in understanding and handling complex matters and managing sensitivities that arise from multiple, conflicting viewpoints and responsibilities. I have known her professionally for more than ten years and I am confident to recommend her as top tier dispute resolution professional.” Chris Thompson, international development consultant on designing and implementing legal reforms in Europe and Asia*
- *“We clarified the issues so quickly thanks to her way of leading the conversation step by step.”*
- *“She provided a very clear structure for our negotiations.”*

- *"I liked the practical approach, the personal attitude and attention to my concerns."*
- *"She was so patient with us and handled the difficulties in the conversation so that we could finally hear and understand each other."*
- *"She helped me overcome a very difficult situation where urgent reaction from the other party was necessary and I couldn't speak directly to him."*
- *"She never gave up. I found it very helpful to have in the conversation someone who believed in the happy ending even when I did not."*

Professional Skills

- **Mediator, 2005 – present**

Mediation practice focused on disputes related to commercial transactions, shareholders' relations, contracts (esp. for services), real estate transactions (sales, lease, etc.), family and succession disputes. Conducted over 100 mediations, including cross-border mediations.

Registered mediator at the mediation centers of the Center for Dispute Resolution, Professional Association of Mediators in Bulgaria, Bulgarian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, mediator at the first Court Settlement Center at the biggest Bulgarian Court - the Sofia Regional Court.

Qualifications and Training

- **Advanced Trainer**
CEDR Train the Trainer - Master Skills Mediation Trainer Programme, Training of trainers for experienced mediation trainers, CEDR EU Train the Trainer Project, 2012
- **Certified Trainer**
Training of trainers for mediation trainer; participation in the international team for development of curriculum, training materials and examination tests for a certification training program for mediators, USAID, Commercial Law Reform Program in Bulgaria, 2005-2006
- **Certification in Commercial Mediation**
Specialization in Commercial Mediation, Suffolk Law School, Boston
Training in advanced mediation techniques and advanced skills for trainers, exchange of

experience with international experts in negotiation and mediation and professors from Harvard and Suffolk Law School, USAID, World Learning, 2006

- Certified Mediator
Certification Mediation Training, USAID, Commercial Law Reform Program in Bulgaria, 2005
- Specialization in German Law
ZEDES-Germanicum, Centre for European and German Studies at the University of Sofia, Sofia, Bulgaria, 1999 – 2001

Diplomas and Certificates

Master of Law

Specializations: Jurisdiction and Public Administration

University of Sofia St. "Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Law, 1998 –2003

Memberships

Sofia Bar Association

Publications

- Author of the analysis of the Bulgarian Mediation Law in the European Handbook on Mediation, edited by prof. Giuseppe De Palo and Mary B. Trevor, to be published by the ADR Center Rome, Oxford University in 2012.
- Co-author of the guide in Cross-border mediation produced under the European Network of Mediators for cross border dispute resolution in Europe (EuroNetMed) Project (2011-2012), funded by the EU Civil Justice Directorate, implemented by the Professional Association of Mediators in Bulgaria, 2012.
- Co-author of the guide "Legal Instruments and Procedures Applicable in Cross-border Mediation" under the EC Funded Project JUST/2013/JCIV/AG/4628, implemented by The Craiova Court of Appeal and partners, 2014.
- Author of Participants' guides for Certification mediation trainings, Family mediation training, Negotiation, Training in mediation techniques for judges, Seminar in Mediation Advocacy for lawyers, etc., 2006-2014.

Work Experience

- **Legal analysis expert, 2007 - present**

International expert and author, 2012, European Handbook on Mediation (Analysis of the Bulgarian Mediation Law), edited by prof. Giuseppe De Palo and Mary B. Trevor, published by the ADR Center Rome, Oxford University.

Legislation expert, 2007 , 2015

Member of a workgroup on the Amendment and Supplement Act to the Mediation Act and the Ordinance on its implementation.

- **Attorney-at-Law, 2004 – present**

Registered at the Sofia Bar Association

Legal practice mainly focused on Corporate, Commercial Law, Real Estate Law, Treaty Law and ADR, special focus on negotiating and saving difficult transactions, and representing clients in resolving disputes

- **Expert in Promotion of Mediation – Events, Films and Media Coverage, 2005-2012**

Organized series of promotional events, such as seminars and roundtable discussions for businesses, lawyers, media, judges, etc. Participated in the organization of the Mediation Week and Mediation Days campaigns in Sofia and Stara Zagora, which were chosen by the DG Enterprise and Industry of European Commission as a good practice among a great number of such practices and were presented at the Conference on the European Charter for Small Enterprises.

Assisted in the production of (i) a training film on mediation, produced by the Stara Zagora Chamber of Commerce (2006); (ii) a film on mediation of the Bulgarian National Television based on a real-life case, mediated by her (2007); and iii) a mediation video showing variety of real mediation stories - "Mediation – the Modern Solution" prepared under the Project 'Mediation and the Judiciary, funded by the America for Bulgaria Foundation, performed by the Professional Association of Mediators in Bulgaria (2012);

Published dozens of articles and interviews about mediation in various magazines, newspapers, online media, TV and Radio Programs, and maintained informational web-sites on mediation.

- **Expert in Development of Mediation Programs, 2005 - present**

Mediation Expert, 2013-2014, Consulted on mediation issues upon customers' requests, Virtual Social Academy Project, Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, subcontractor Ecorys SEE.

Mediation Expert, 2013-2014, Prepared analyses related to mediation; Speaker on mediation awareness events, EIRENE Project, funded by the EU.

International expert, 2012, Expert mission on Mediation Service Development, Ministry of Justice, National Bureau of Enforcement, Tbilisi, Georgia, EU Commission, TAIEX.

Program coordinator, Assisted in the establishment of the first Commercial Mediation Centres in Bulgaria (with the Stara Zagora Chamber of Commerce, the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the American Chamber of Commerce) and has participated in their management directly (as a mediation program coordinator) and as an expert. This work was performed within the USAID Commercial Law Reform Project.

Court Mediation Programs Expert, Participated in the establishment (in 2010) and development of the Settlement Centre of the Sofia Regional Court as an expert and project manager under the projects supporting the development of the center:

- “Get Ready to Settle - Sofia Regional Court ADR Program” (January-October 2009) funded by USAID's Bulgaria Fund; and
- “Mediation and the Judiciary – a Successful Blend for Improved Access to Justice and Court Services, funded by the America for Bulgaria Foundation” (2011-2012);

The expert support included: strategic planning and annual planning and analysis sessions, administrative and technical assistance, training of court mediation coordinators, development of effective systems, rules and documents for case administration, for quality control and customer satisfaction, and selection and development of mediators. The Settlement Center was explicitly recognized as a *successful model* by the European Parliament in its Resolution of 13 September 2011 on the implementation of the directive on mediation in the Member States, its impact on mediation and its take-up by the courts ([2011/2026\(INI\)](#)).