



## **Asociatia "Caritas - Asistentă Socială" Filiala Organizației Caritas Alba Iulia**

“Association „Caritas – Social Assistance” was founded in 2005 with the main scope of developing and promoting primary and specialised social services for all categories of persons and communities at risk of social exclusion. Association „Caritas – Social Assistance” is part of the Organisation Caritas Alba Iulia in Romania, an NGO of public utility, founded by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Alba Iulia.

The main programmes and activities of the association are:

- Roma Integration Programmes
- Early Education and Development Programmes
- Programmes for children and youth: Family Home Center, Day Care Centers for Children in Need, Counselling Center for Disadvantaged Children and Youth
- Family Assistance Programmes
- Day Center for people with disabilities
- Counselling Programmes for Addicts
- Programmes for the elderly: Day Centers, Elderly Care
- Volunteering activities for the benefit of people at risk: elderly, people with disabilities and illnesses, children in need
- Community development programmes

The main target groups of these programmes are: children, youth, elderly, single parents, disabled people, people with addiction, people with no income or low income, ethnic communities at risk of social exclusion, other people or communities in situations of social need s. The association has in total 27 day centers for children, elderly and people with disabilities, out of which 15 are licensed, and in case of 12 centers, the process of licensing has been started. These programmes and activities cover a wide geographical area, the association being present in 6 counties of Romania (Alba, Hunedoara, Mures, Harghita, Covasna, Cluj), collaborating closely with a number of 64 local public authorities: 18 in Mures county, 33 in Harghita county, 9 Covasna County, 1 in Alba County and 3 in Hunedoara County.

In the beginning of March 2017 a number of 153 specialists working at Association „Caritas – Social Assistance” (social workers, psychologists, special education teachers) and hundreds of volunteers were registered.

The Association “Caritas – Social Assistance” has considerable experience in implementing projects. Since 2014 we realised various projects in social field, funded by EEA Grants, and are currently implementing two projects funded through Erasmus Plus. The main projects were the following:

1. “Hand in Hand in Sângeorgiu de Mureș”, implemented between 2014 – 2016, with the goal to increase social inclusion and improve the situation of Roma in Sângeorgiu of Mures, contributing to the development of local ethnic community.

2. “A change for a better future”, implemented between March 2015 – April 2016, with the main goal of increasing access to basic social services and provision of services for children in difficult situations in rural areas, aiming to prevent social exclusion.

3. „United Networks – integrated initiative for the social inclusion of marginalised communities”  
The project was implemented between May 2015 – January 2017, with the main aim to support the fight against social exclusion among children and youth within disadvantaged communities (including Roma communities) in Mures, Harghita and Covasna counties, through developing the social infrastructure in the field of social inclusion.

4. „Young Caritas – Create future!”, implemented between April 2015 – March 2016

The main goal of the project was to encourage young people's active participation in community life and in solving social problems of the community through volunteering, developing an appropriate institutional framework for these activities and use effective methods to involve young people in such initiatives.

Besides, we are implementing as partners, two other projects currently, funded by Erasmus+:

1. “Basic Education for Roma Adults” - Strategic Partnership for Adult Education, which aims to increase access and participation in education and implement a specific manual for the adult Roma population.

2. „Entdecke deine Welt! - Potenziale von Jugendlichen und Regionen fördern” - Strategic Partnership in the field of Youth, which aims to support the competences and capabilities of youth in rural areas to participate actively in their communities’ life and engage as active citizens in local affairs.

The activities and different programmes of Association “Caritas – Social Assistance” aim to support families by approaching their needs and problems from different perspectives. The main programmes that address the needs of families and children are the following:

- Roma Integration Programmes in 3 counties that offer various types of services for Roma children and families, Roma communities, supporting their education, social welfare through social services, offering counselling, assistance. Currently a number of 440 Roma children benefit from the services and activities.
- Family Assistance Programmes that offer social, educational and psychosocial services for children and their parents with special focus to the development of parental competences
- Day Care Center for counselling families and children, which offer support and assistance to parents to face psychosocial difficulties that affect family relationships, developing parenting skills to prevent child separation from family and child support when problems arise in their development
- Programmes for people with disabilities, which offer activities, services and support groups even for families who are living with a disabled person
- The Family Home Center in Stremt (Alba County): the goal of the center is to provide care, education and socialization for children and youth coming from families with difficulties. These families do not succeed to assure these children a proper environment for their normal growth and development and the Centers assumes some of the parents’ responsibilities. The fact that these children live in this center also helps their families financially. The Family Home Center also prepares children and families to reintegrate socially and as a family.
- Counselling Programmes for Addicts offers help for the family and relatives of the addicts through personal and family counselling and self-help groups
- Early Education and Development Programmes help developing and educating children from an early age (0-3 years). It also aims to prevent child neglect, to reduce the isolation of families by offering counselling for parents, group activities for new-born babies and small children with their parents, parents’ support groups, and support group for pregnant women.

These direct activities with families offer us a great overview of the challenges, problems, needs of the families in the region we are working, as well as experience in dealing with these challenges. Many years’ experience in implementing the a.m. programmes helped us to develop approaches and

competences in family education, counselling, support and solution for those affected or threatened by poverty and difficulties.

We are able to organise in our region family fora in the following locations: Sângeorgiu de Mureș, Sfântu Gheorghe, Ojdula, Miecurea Ciuc and Odorheiu Secuiesc.

An important aspect of our work is the involvement of local public authorities in the process of providing services for beneficiaries, collaborating closely with a number of 64 local public authorities: 18 in Mures county, 33 in Harghita county, 9 Covasna County, 1 in Alba County and 3 in Hunedoara County. The main aim of collaborating with these local public authorities is to raise awareness on the social issues and the situation of marginalised groups, for a better sustainability of the services offered for the beneficiaries.

Another important experience to be mentioned is the development of existing social infrastructure for the benefit of marginalised communities, including families in difficult situations. This experience was gained through the project “United Networks – Integrated initiative for the social inclusion of marginalised communities” which was implemented in Mures, Harghita and Covasna counties and built up a Regional Forum, and 3 Operational Networks involving key stakeholders from different related institutions (General Directorates of Social Assistance and Child Protection, Departments of Public Health, School Inspectorates, Employment Agencies).

[www.caritas-ab.ro](http://www.caritas-ab.ro)