



The **Rehabilitation Foundation “Speranța”** is a Romanian NGO aiming to provide direct support for children with disabilities and their families. Ever since our founding in 1992, we are offering free of charge multidisciplinary therapies for children with autism, L. Down syndrome, Asperger, neuromotor deficiency, ADHD, cochlear implant, mental retardation a.s.o.

Since 2007, we are elaborating and promoting inclusive education guidelines, both on a local and a national level.

The Foundation was internationally acknowledged by the following two monitoring reports presented at Brussels:

- 2002 country report - "Human Rights for People with Intellectual Disabilities", document of Inclusion Europe;

- 2005 monitoring report - "Rights to Education and Employment of People with Intellectual Disabilities" published by Open Society Institute.

In 2013 the Ministry of National Education nominated the Foundation as Romania's representative to UNESCO Awards for promoting quality education for people with intellectual disabilities.

### **Accomplishments**

- We have developed the web-based Inclusive Education Network as a national information resource provider for teachers, parents, mass media, community which is counting over 4000 members.
- Starting 2007, we have established 7 educational assistance and resource centers, 4 of them in rural area, providing specific services for over 1000 special needs children and their parents. The accomplishments of this positive experiences stood as a basis for the elaboration of the Methodology for setting up, organizing and running rehabilitation and education support centers for children and youths (CASE), in partnership with the Romanian Ministry of Education and the representatives of 24 County School Inspectorates.
- In March 2015, the Rehabilitation Foundation Speranta, along with the Institute for Public Policy (IPP) Bucharest, published the analysis report "Education – a (non)chance to integrate children with disabilities in Romania", the first national report monitoring the level of application of Article 24 - Education - the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Over 500 teachers were provided with inclusive education trainings, ADHD trainings, classes management trainings, diversity management in school trainings.
- We are among the few therapists in Romania specialized in ADHD (Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). In 2013, we were the only organization in Romania which align with the international movement for establishing the World ADHD Awareness Day.
- We have elaborated and published a large number of information resources papers for parents, specialists and schools.

The Foundation was also involved in implementing inclusive education in Romanian schools, through:

- direct support for schools (training, counseling and guidance for teachers, direct support for children with disabilities to facilitate their inclusion into mainstream education - recovery activities, counseling teachers and parents, etc.)
- by proposing legislative changes in support of inclusive education and dropout prevention for children from disadvantaged groups (methodologies, working strategies, national monitoring report on the right to education of children with disabilities).

## Activities and experience

The Rehabilitation Foundation "Speranta" has an experience of over 24 years in services of support, recovery and rehabilitation for disabled and special needs children, information, counseling and support for their parents as well as involvement in inclusive education in Romanian schools. It has also developed and run training programs, accredited by the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, for teachers from mainstream and special education, to promote the right to education and teaching strategies to support the disabled children inclusion in the educational system (Inclusive education, Diversity management in schools, Learn to understand children with ADHD). In this period, we prepare for accreditation a training program for teachers and school staff - Management of undesirable behaviors in school – which includes effective ways of understanding and managing children with ADHD and also to manage pupils' behaviors of concern according to a lifelong learning perspective

As a non-profit, non-governmental organization which has never been financed by local authorities, in support of the services provided, we had been obliged to run in partnership or to coordinate more than 50 projects with European and international funding. We will mention only five of the most important projects that have synergic actions with this proposal

**Project: "A new face of the school"** - May 2010 - April 2011, co-funded through the Sectorial Operational Program - Human Resources Development.

The project provided equal chances to education, with no discrimination, for the disabled children. It produced changes within schools and within the community, through creating inclusive cultures and practices with the goal of decreasing dropping out of school. By means of an innovative approach which combines the child, the parent, the teachers and the community, we had been offering a model of inclusive school, to address the needs of the children within the community.

**Projects: "Learn to understand children with ADHD"** (June 15,2011 to June 14,2012) and **"Learn to understand the ADHD child - phase 2"** (September 1, 2012 to August 31, 2013), funded through the OSI Grants.

We trained specialists to work with children, parents and teachers, in order to increase social and educational inclusion of children with ADHD. We established a Resource Center on ADHD problems. The Child and Adolescent Development Center (CADC) was set up as a response to multiple requests from teachers and parents, and to their need to better manage the behavior of children with ADHD and to improve the relations these children have with peers, teachers and parents.

The **project "Centres for Children in Rural Areas"**, a Foundation's initiative to influence educational policies for SEN children nationwide, materialized in 2012 in developing the Methodology for Establishment, Organization and Operation of Education and Rehabilitation Support Centers (CASE) for children in rural area; this achievement was possible with the support and involvement of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports and of 24 county school inspectorates. In this project funded by the Open Society Institute - Mental Health Initiative, the Foundation supported the establishment of Orientation, Counselling and Educational Assistance Centre in the town Albeștii de Arges, Arges county; the initiative was based on the protocols of collaboration with the Association Let me hear your voice, headquartered in Curtea de Arges, the Arges County Council, the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection Arges City Hall and City Council Albeștii de Arges.

The **project “A good start”** ran in partnership with “Save the children” Timisoara branch, funded by the EEA Grants 2009-2014, within the NGO Fund in Romania. We have established an innovative early intervention center for small disabled children or neuro developmental disorders and their families. The project ended on 31.03.2016.

This project, with major impact in supporting people with disabilities in the Western region of Romania, materialized in concentrating the efforts of the Rehabilitation Foundation “Speranta” on bringing together in a common purpose - early intervention for children with developmental delays, counseling and parental education - institutions and organizations such as Save the Children - Timis branch, the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection Timis, Municipal Emergency Hospital - Odobescu Clinic, Public Health Directorate Timis. These actions were taken to increase access to multidisciplinary services for screening, intervention, monitoring, awareness of risks and prevention and reducing the risk of social and educational exclusion for children with disabilities or at risk for disability and their families. The project was funded by the SEE 2009 – 2014 grants, within the NGO Fund in Romania - Component 4 - Social and basic services.

Besides the direct intervention for children, parental counseling had a significant role, which was:

- Preventing behavioral, emotional and development problems in children, by increasing parental knowledge about children's developmental stages and methods / techniques for positive discipline;
- Increase parenting skills on managing challenging behaviors in children;
- Improve the parent-child relationship;
- Psycho-education of parents regarding the child's disabilities.
- Raising parents' awareness about the stages of child development;
- Training parenting skills;
- Improve parent-child communication and relationship.

Also, within the project, we wrote and published the Toddler observational guide (0-4 years): my child's abilities; it is a tool that helps the parents to observe and detect, as early as possible, signs of developmental delays or anomaly, and to seek for a specialized help in the shortest time.

**“Inclusive Education - a right of the children with disabilities”, national project**, ran in partnership with the Public Policies Institute in Bucharest (01.04.2014 – 30.06.2015) and financed through the 2009 – 2014 EEA grants and the NGO Fund in Romania, Component 2 - Social justice, subcomponent 2.2 Tackle social disadvantage, poverty and exclusion.

Although in 2010 Romania has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the analysis report Education—a (non)chance to integrate children with disabilities developed in the framework of the project, represents the first national assessment of the current state of integration of children with disabilities in mainstream schools.

It was also meant to propose solutions adapted to facilitate the development of inclusive practices in targeted schools.

In the project, we supported 30 schools in 14 counties of Romania (Alba, Arad, Arges, Bistrita Nasaud, Brasov, Buzau, Covasna, Cluj, Dambovita, Ialomita, Maramures, Mures, Prahova) to become county level resources in implementing inclusive practices.

57 resource persons from 30 schools were trained to develop inclusive practices, which then provided advice and current information on educational inclusion to other 391 teachers.

22 working groups were established to support inclusion in the 25 schools involved in the project. The working groups discussed the health/medical/educational/social situation of children in their school and proposed measures for 593 children to facilitate their maximum development potential. Personalized suggestions were made for each school to develop inclusive practices. To support their

implementation the schools benefited from specialized materials on educational inclusion (paper and online) and counseling.

It was developed and released a TV spot with national and international coverage broadcasted 217 times between 07-17 for one month (23 March-22 April 2015)

The team of specialists consists of psychologists, speech therapists, physiotherapists, art therapist, music therapist

Besides offering direct support to children involved, they are carrying out informing and training activities for parents and teachers