



EUROPEAN UNION



GOVERNMENT OF ROMANIA



## CASE STUDIES ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES: best practices in mainstreaming approaches and successful projects implemented under Structural Instruments in Romania

Brochure prepared under the contract

*"Evaluation of the way in which the provisions regarding equal opportunities have been mainstreamed within the Romanian Framework of Structural Instruments"*



10

Inspiring  
Stories on  
Equal  
Opportunities

Project co-financed from the European Regional Development Fund through OPTA 2007-2013



# Introduction



*Often in the past, people with limited opportunities have achieved outstanding results and left a mark in history: researchers, writers and many others. Now, as it should be, "Equal opportunities for all" is a key principle of EU policies.*

Structural Instruments have provided, throughout time, a solid support to the respect, application and implementation of this principle in different national contexts. The 2007-2013 programming period has reaffirmed the importance of the principle of equal opportunities between men and women in planning, implementing and evaluating interventions and has broadened its scope and content to combating all forms of discrimination.

This publication contains examples of best practice projects in Romania addressing equal opportunities issues and targeted to vulnerable groups.

The projects presented, have been financed under the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development and the Regional Operational Programme and illustrate the efforts, energy and time that have been invested in addressing the social problems of our society, with remarkable achievements. Such projects have managed to transform the lives of the vulnerable groups addressed, by providing shelters for homeless people or for mothers with

financial difficulties, training and counseling for women willing to be entrepreneurs, social programs for youngsters, support and specialized aid for people with medical problems.

Even more important, as confirmed by the testimonials, people assisted have regained their self-confidence and have reintegrated in society.

These stories are the visible and tangible results of the work performed by our authorities in terms of attaining integration of the principle of equal opportunities in the different stages of the Operational Programmes, thus ensuring its rightful application and implementation also from the side of the beneficiaries.

In this publication, we also present three successful examples of integration of the equal opportunities principle in different stages of the Operational Programmes, respectively the design stage of the interventions addressing vulnerable groups, the monitoring of Programme achievements related to equal opportunities issues and the successful example

of a communication campaign in the language of minorities.

We trust that the content of this publication will lead to an even greater confidence in the role that Structural Instruments can play in promoting equal opportunities and non-discrimination and as such making the Romanian society an example for other countries.

Eugen Teodorovici,  
Minister of European Funds

# Case studies

<b>Section 1:</b> <b>Best practice projects targeting vulnerable groups</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Story 1</b> Socio-Professional Insertion Workshops	<b>6</b>
<b>Story 2</b> MIOS - Integrated occupational measures for the unemployed people in Covasna county	<b>9</b>
<b>Story 3</b> Shelters for mothers & children in emergency situations	<b>11</b>
<b>Story 4</b> Improving the access of youngsters in prison to training programs and labor market integration	<b>13</b>
<b>Story 5</b> ESTHR – equal opportunities for women in Romania	<b>16</b>
<b>Story 6</b> Expansion and equipment of the Brancovenesti Centre	<b>18</b>
<b>Story 7</b> Empowering Roma women on the labor market	<b>20</b>
<b>Section 2:</b> <b>Best practices in mainstreaming equal opportunities issues in the different stages of the Operational Programmes</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Story 8</b> SOP Human Resource Development: a strategic approach for addressing equal opportunities issues and needs of vulnerable groups	<b>24</b>
<b>Story 9</b> SOP Environment: a multi-language information and publicity campaign targeting ethnic minorities	<b>26</b>
<b>Story 10</b> Regional Operational Programme: a best practice in monitoring the implementation of the equal opportunities principle	<b>28</b>

# Best practice projects targeting vulnerable groups

## Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development

### Socio-Professional Insertion Workshops



#### PROJECT IDENTIFICATION DATA

**Beneficiary:**

Samusocial Association of Romania

**Target group:**

Homeless adults located in Bucharest

**Operational Programme:**

Sectoral Operational Programme  
Human Resources Development  
Priority Axis 6 "Promoting social inclusion", Key Area of Intervention 6.1  
"Developing social economy"

**Total budget:**

4,733,760 RON, out of which  
3,453,913 RON co-financing from the  
ESF

**Length:**

36 months (period: January 2009 –  
December 2011)

#### I. What the best practice is all about

The main goal of the project was the social and professional insertion of homeless adults living in Bucharest, who received training, social and medical care and psychological counselling in order to successfully adapt to the rhythm imposed by employers at workplace. The idea was/ rationale was to offer the homeless people life alternatives for the medium and long term, leading to their social and professional reintegration rather than short term social aid.

Participants benefited of a coherent set of activities that accompanied them in their process of reintegration on the labor market:

#### 1. Selection of target group:

Working on the field, the association's mobile teams identified homeless adults and directed them to the Samusocial Day Centre, where they were registered in the association's database and provided with medical care, information and basic counseling aimed at socio-professional insertion.

#### 2. Psychological counseling and training:

After the medical check-up and initial counseling, the persons able and willing to work entered a structured psychological counseling programme. The team of psychologists offered specialized support meant at motivating people in their

social and professional reintegration.

#### 3. Establishing the insertion workshop:

Two insertion workshops (equipment recycling and making of cloth bags) were set-up and agreements signed with professional networks of recyclers and large companies and institutions that sponsored the workshops with IT equipment.

#### 4. Employment in the workshop:

Following the counseling, a number of participants were recommended for employment in the workshops and after an interview process were legally employed for at least 6 months. Along with financial labor rights, workshop employees were provided with clothing, food and accommodation.

#### 5. Awareness raising activities

During the project awareness raising campaigns related to the topic of social inclusion were conducted on a yearly basis, as well as events targeting NGOs active in the field of social economy, local authorities and Ministries' representatives. The message of the campaign reached also the wider public through numerous appearances in the media.

## Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development

### Socio-Professional Insertion Workshops

From the streets to employment...



#### Workshops activities - Social economy model

Work experiences were organized in two workshops operating as social enterprises. In the main one, participants were engaged in dismantling, reparation and revaluation of computers, sports and paramedical equipments, which were then either sold for recycling or donated, promoting at the same time waste reduction and environmental protection. In a smaller workshop, women made cloth bags.

Throughout the insertion process, employees took part in **professional training courses** according to their previous professional background or specialization, focusing on professions currently demanded on the labor market, such as heating system technician, plumbing, gas engineer and electrician and ICT skills development.

Furthermore, in order to create the prerequisites for professional insertion, participants were supported in obtaining identification papers and civil status documents, in the creation of employment files (recovering study diplomas and employment record books), in the active search for jobs in the media and online and in the mediation with potential employers as well as in solving housing problems (e.g. temporary shelters, social motels, rental housing, family reintegration).

Along with the professional training, participants continued on their route to reintegration and self-esteem restoration, receiving **social and psychological counseling**.

In addition, they benefited of **extra-professional, socio-cultural activities** meant to create group cohesion and relationships different from those at workplace. Activities included the participation to NGO fairs, exhibits and the involvement in social projects such as renovation of a kindergarten and of a school camp and the building of a playground.

**Radu**, aged 56, has been in the Samusocial records since November of 2010. In 2000 he and his wife were evacuated from the apartment where they lived due to accumulating large tenant debts. When Radu presented himself at the Samusocial centre he was in a depressive state, with no hope of finding a job after repeatedly being refused in interviews due to his age and vulnerable physical state. Radu adapted very well to the workshop conditions, becoming a key member of the team. With the money he earned, he rented a one-room apartment along with his wife. He presently works legally as a plumber.

## Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development

### Socio-Professional Insertion Workshops

#### II. Being a best practice - The difference that counted

All project indicators were achieved, most notably the number of social and medical interventions accomplished and the number of jobs created in the real economy:

- 20 social economy specialists trained
- 1,751 homeless adults receiving professional counseling
- 31 participants employed in the insertion workshops and achieving professional qualifications
- 17,036 social interventions and 7,820 medical interventions to improve the lives of homeless people
- 501 homeless adults receiving counseling for professional reinsertion
- 64 jobs created in the real economy

#### III. Lessons for the future

The insertion workshop based on the **concept of social economy** has been used as an effective tool for the social and professional reintegration of people going through difficult life situations.

Its concept can be easily replicated in order to address other vulnerable groups (e.g. Roma, people with disabilities) by adapting to the specific technological and professional training needs of the different target groups.

#### The key factors of success

1. The project came along with a viable solution for helping homeless people to leave the streets, and as a complementary alternative to traditional social assistance. The project team has adapted well to the new needs consisting in matching the labor market demand with the abilities and skills in the case of participants.
2. Social workers communicated periodically with the people supported by the association in their process of socio-professional reintegration, and also with potential employers.
3. All the project activities have continued also after its conclusion. As the revenues obtained from recycling the materials in the workshop are small, the associations Samusocial and Workshops without Frontiers are supported by private companies to develop continuously new projects, very similar to this one and to support in this way people belonging to vulnerable groups.

#### IV. Conclusions

Making its debut in Romania and based on the experience of Workshops without Frontiers (France), the project consisted in hiring homeless adults in socio-professional insertion workshops with the purpose of offering them an incentive in the regaining a social life by building confidence and self-esteem.

The insertion workshop has successfully integrated the aspects of social (offering jobs and ensuring a shelter) and economic (job security and certainty of a monthly salary) inclusions, as well as environmental ones (recycling used computers and protecting the environment), being a sound example of both human solidarity and sustainable development.

*Doru, aged 60, has been in the Samusocial records since January of 2009. After 38 years living in Boston, USA, he was repatriated following divorce. He came to the association's office asking for support in obtaining identity papers, shelter and a job, in a precarious physical and emotional state. After following all the steps, he was hired into the insertion workshop. A short while after finalizing the project contract (May of 2010), he obtained a job at an ecological car wash. He presently lives in a social motel and works at the same car wash.*

### Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development

#### MIOS - Integrated occupational measures for unemployed people in Covasna county



#### PROJECT IDENTIFICATION DATA

**Beneficiary:**

SC Brahms International SRL Brasov

**Target group:**

Unemployed persons in the County of Covasna

**Operational Programme:**

Sectoral Operational Programme  
Human Resources Development  
Priority Axis 5 "Promoting active em-  
ployment measures", Key Area of In-  
tervention 5.1 "Developing and imple-  
menting active employment measures"

**Total budget:**

2,178,495 RON, out of which  
1,830,409 RON co-financing from the  
ESF

**Length:**

16 months (period: November 2010 –  
February 2012)

#### I. What the best practice is all about

The overall objective of the project was to increase the employment rate of long-term unemployed, young unemployed, job-seekers and inactive population in the county of Covasna with a specific focus on ethnic minorities.

The project beneficiary implemented an integrated set of activities contributing to the empowerment and training of unemployed, aimed at facilitating their integration into the labor market, ensuring, at the same time, the absence of any form of discrimination based on gender, age, ethnicity or disability.

An essential element of the project success consisted in an in-depth analysis of the county's labor market with the purpose of identifying the needs and constraints faced by the target group and the professional skills demanded on the labor market.

Following the context analysis it was decided to focus project activities in the cities of Sfantu Gheorghe, Covasna and Baraolt, locations that reported a significant number of unemployed persons.

The training curricula and locations were then established and participants identified through an intensive advertising campaign, based on multiple media channels, such as posters, flyers, brochures, press releases, local radio and television ads.

The 1,310 selected participants took part in various trainings on topics such as: job-seeking techniques, professional counseling paths and information on the evolution of the labor market.

Trainings participants obtained nationally recognized qualifications, but what really made the difference was the fact that the activities have been organized in rural areas thanks to the acquisition of mobile laboratories.

The specialized training equipment, transported to the training site allowed participants living in the most remote rural areas to take part in the project, optimizing, at the same time, the project costs.

#### II. Results achieved - reaching the objective

All project indicators were achieved, which is a remarkable fact considering the high number of people who benefited from professional counseling:

- 1,115 people benefiting of professional counseling
- 660 people benefiting of mediation services
- 448 people taking part to the training courses and 430 obtaining certificates
- 99 people obtaining a job by the end of the project

# Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development

## MIOS - Integrated occupational measures for unemployed people in Covasna county



### MIOS – Get involved in this project and unemployment can turn into history

Csaba Hollo and Constantin Modoaca are two project participants who had worked in the field of security and lost their jobs due to the economic crisis.

After taking part in the entrepreneurship and technician job courses, they founded Grizzly Security, a company specialized in security and protection.

Csaba and Constantin had already thought about starting a business, but taking part in the project gave them the skills and confidence to start their own company that is now successfully running.

### III. Being a best practice - the difference that counted

The key success factors of the project have been the innovative character, the equality mainstreaming approach and sustainability, accompanied by an effective monitoring:

#### Innovation

The mobile laboratories installed at the training locations were selected based on the participants' area of residence, allowing a wide and cost effective participation of the target groups of the County.

#### Mainstreaming

The project has promoted equal opportunities and non-discrimination throughout its entire implementation: in order to facilitate the participation of unemployed from the Hungarian minority, the project team included Hungarian speaking experts.

#### Sustainability

In order to ensure sustainability of project results, the Public Employment Service of the County of Covasna, partner of this initiative, continued monitoring the employment status of participants following the conclusion of project activities:

mediation services were monitored for 6 months

- Participants who graduated from a training program were monitored for a period of 12 months.

#### Monitoring

All project partners had quality management systems certified ISO 9001:2008, which guaranteed an effective management and weekly monitoring of the status of activities and progress in the achievement of project indicators.

### IV. Conclusions

By participating in project activities, unemployed persons of the County of Covasna maximized their chances of finding an occupation, gained trust in themselves and developed skills and abilities matching the economical transformation of the labor market that the County is currently undergoing.

## Regional Operational Programme

### Shelters for mothers and children in emergency situations



#### PROJECT IDENTIFICATION DATA

**Beneficiary:**

General Directorate of Social Care and Child Protection, Constanta

**Target group:**

Mothers from the county of Constanta that found themselves in a critical financial situation

**Operational Programme:**

Regional Operational Programme  
Priority Axis 3, "Improvement of social infrastructure", Key Area of Intervention 3.2 "Rehabilitation / modernization / development and equipment of social services infrastructure"

**Total budget:**

2,294,087 RON, out of which 1,501,112 RON co-financing from the ERDF

**Length:**

17 months (period: December 2009 – May 2011)

#### I. What the best practice is all about

The project addressed the risk of separation of children from their mothers in emergency situations by constructing a new building where they can be jointly accommodated and where mothers can receive counseling services aimed at their reintegration in society.

With a total budget exceeding 2.2 million RON, the project was part of a broader social initiative of the General Directorate of Social Care and Child Protection (GD SCCP) of Constanta aimed at providing protection households for people with disabilities, victims of domestic violence and young people in situations of risk of social exclusion.

In 2007, an increasing number of requests made by the mothers of children apt to enter the emergency centres, lead to the decision of building specific facilities for their joint accommodation.

The new building was constructed as an annex to the existing shelter for Children in Emergency, with a total surface of over 200 square meters.

The new facilities have the capacity to accommodate 16 people in 8 bedrooms, each with an individual toilet and host also has 2 kitchen spaces, 1 medical office, 1 psychological office, 1 administration office, 1 administrative staff office, a storage space, 2 waiting rooms, 3 toilets for the staff and 1 laundry area.

Apart from accommodation, in the newly built centre, specialized staff provides mothers and children with medical care and emotional support.

Psychological counseling, information and orientation sessions, aimed at facilitating family and community reintegration, are provided not only to the patients of the centre, but also to their relatives with the aim of achieving family reintegration and offering emotional and relational support.

Mothers and their children may remain in the centre for 90 days during which they are supported and taught how to better take care of their children, of their households and how to find a job to reintegrate in society in the best possible way.

## Regional Operational Programme

### Shelters for mothers and children in emergency situations



#### II. Being a best practice - The difference that counted

The centre continues to provide assistance at its maximum capacity even after project completion, supporting the reintegration of mothers and children in risk situations.

In 2011, the Centre accommodated 25 children, of whom 19 left the centre by the end of the year and, among them, 12 were reintegrated in their families.

Even stronger results were obtained in 2012, when the centre hosted a total of 49 children, of whom 46 left the Centre by the end of the year and, among them, 35 were reintegrated in their families.

#### III. Lessons for the future

The key factors to success of the project "Shelters for Children in Emergency" have been:

##### **Innovation:**

The project is innovative by nature, pioneering at national level the joint treatment of children and mothers, facilitating their social reintegration so that they may regain the possibility to take care of their children on their own.

##### **Sustainability:**

The Centre has established a series of partnerships for the provision of additional services to children, such as the one with the "Mihail Koiciu" school,

where children hosted by the Centre can go to study.

Considering that there is a General Directorate of Social Care and Child Protection in every county of Romania, the initiative presents great potential of replication at a local, regional and national level.

Furthermore, the approach to social reintegration adopted for mothers and children in risk situations, may be transferred also to other target groups.

#### IV. Conclusions

The implementation of the "Shelter for Children in Emergency" project has enhanced the capacity of the Constanta community to better reintegrate in society mothers and children in critical situations.

Experience showed that the services offered by the Centre have had a positive impact on the lives of the mothers and children and that the results can be capitalized and replicated.



# Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development

## Improving access of youngsters in prison to training programs and labor market integration



### PROJECT IDENTIFICATION DATA

**Beneficiary:**

National Administration of Penitentiaries, Romania

**Target group:**

Youth serving sentences in prison

**Operational Programme:**

Sectoral Operational Programme  
Human Resources Development  
Priority Axis 6 “Promoting social inclusion”, Key Area of Intervention 6.2  
“Improving the access and participation of vulnerable groups on the labor market”

**Total budget:**

18,500,000 RON, out of which  
16,570,821 RON co-financing from the  
ESF

**Length:**

36 months (period: December 2008 – November 2011)

### I. What the best practice is all about

The overall objective of the project was to provide youth serving sentences in the prisons of Craiova and Tichilesti with training programs and support services aimed at labor market integration, both during the serving of their sentence and following its completion.

The project rationale stems from the understanding of the role that penitentiaries should play in facilitating the social inclusion of youngsters by supporting them in acquiring, during the serving of their sentence, the skills needed to access the labor market in the future.

Detainees of the prisons of Craiova and Tichilesti were involved in professional and social skills training programs that allowed them on one hand to be prepared to face real work conditions and, on the other hand, to develop the social skills required to interact efficiently within work teams.

Support services were offered to help them evaluating their professional development potential, identifying the jobs they want to perform during their training and improving their social and self-marketing skills needed to seek and access employers in order to enter the job market.

Youngsters had the possibility to apply their skills within the workshops organized with the project assistance.

A workshop specialized in the production of cardboard folders represents a successful example of social enterprise, marketing and selling its products to local firms in Craiova and to public administrations.

Furthermore, in order to accompany youngsters on the labor market, both penitentiaries have organised job fairs, where interview simulations with representatives of employers from Craiova and Braila took place.

#### Workshops Craiova

- Cardboard
- Gastronomy - bakery
- Wrought iron

#### Workshops Tichilesti

- Milling
- Bakery
- Carpentry

On those occasions, young people could, on one hand, practice the skills they acquired during self-marketing courses and, on the other, be identified by employers seeking new employees.

Strong contributions have been made to the creation of framework of cooperation between youth correctional facilities and employers, in order to identify and promote job opportunities, either during sentence execution for youth in open or semi-open regimes, or after their release from the penitentiary.

### Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development

#### Improving the access of youngsters in prison to training programs and labor market integration

Young people rapidly and steadily gained confidence and began projecting themselves in the future in a positive manner, which is rarely seen among vulnerable groups.



An innovative aspect of the project consisted in the development of the skills of the staff employed in the correctional facilities, empowering them to become actors of change within the penitentiaries and role models for youth.

Through trainings and internships in Austrian corrective institutions, the staff developed teaching skills, began to work with passion and fully understood the importance of their role with respect to the education of young people.

#### II. Results achieved - reaching the objective

One of the greatest achievements was the change induced in the atmosphere of penitentiaries, which is now more relaxed, based on mutual trust and not anymore only on obedience: in the penitentiary of Craiova, the number of violent incidents between youngsters dropped from **1/week** for **280** prisoners to **1/3 weeks** for **550** prisoners.

Youth no longer need to see prison staff as somebody to fear, but as mentors, role models, in terms of professionalism and work dedication.

#### Facts and figures of the project:

- 6 workshops equipped
- 93 young detainees receiving assistance and counselling
- 36 penitentiary employees attending professional training to become vocational counsellors and trainers

- 6 internships in Austrian corrective institutions organized
- Project experience disseminated to 40 local public administrations
- 8 regional seminars and 2 national conferences organised

#### III. Being a best practice – The difference that counted

The project showcases several aspects of best practice:

##### Partnership:

A key to success has been the strong partnership between the National Administration of Penitentiaries of Romania, the two penitentiaries involved in the project, a training institution specialized in social work and the Austrian Ministry of Justice that facilitated transfer of know-how and transnational internships.

##### Innovation:

The mix of social and professional training and work experience, innovative particularly for the context in which they were performed, succeeded in developing a better living and stimulating environment for prisoners and better working conditions for the penitentiaries staff.

##### Communication:

Representatives of the penitentiary personnel shared their formative experience during regional seminars, where they had the chance to present the work done and the results achieved.

### Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development

#### Improving the access of youngsters in prison to training programs and labor market integration



Communication activities have been also targeted towards local authorities and centres for employment in order to create the premises for further support to the target groups, once they are seeking for a job on the labor market.

**"We make people grow!"** is the slogan of a project partner. Indeed, building constructive interpersonal relationships, based on trust and providing a positive outlook are the key to promote a more egalitarian society.

Furthermore, discussions are under way aimed at introducing the innovative approach of the project in the Romanian legal framework.

#### Sustainability:

Penitentiary employees assumed the role of multipliers and were trained to become agents of change inside the penitentiary system.

To this end, they provided trainings to the colleagues who could not take part in the project activities, ensuring sustainability in the future.

#### IV. Conclusions

In order to answer to the personal and professional development needs of youth serving sentences, the project has developed a coherent set of accompanying measures, aimed at empowering the individual and increasing his/her chances of finding a job in the future.

The renewed atmosphere within the corrective institutions, the changes of perception induced in potential employers, trade unions and other relevant actors on the job market, have created the premises for the sustainability of project results and their capitalization beyond the end of this project.



# Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development

## ESTHR – equal opportunities for women in Romania



### PROJECT IDENTIFICATION DATA

**Beneficiary:**

National Trade Union Bloc

**Target group:**

Women discriminated at the workplace

**Operational Programme:**

Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development

Priority Axis 6 “Promoting social inclusion”, Key Area of Intervention 6.3

“Promoting equal opportunities on the labor market”

**Total budget:**

9,708,576 RON, out of which  
8,446,888 RON co-financing from the  
ESF

**Length:**

3 years (period: 2008 – 2011)

### I. What the best practice is all about

The National Trade Union Bloc (BNS) is one of the five major trade union confederations of Romania, with extensive experience in the implementation of social projects.

The direct promoter of the project was the Organization of Women (OFem), a department of BNS, composed of representatives of women's organizations and federations affiliated to BNS, its strategic mission being the promotion of gender equality, both on the labor market and in society.

The experience of OFem was complemented with the knowledge of equal opportunities issues and social economy, brought by the transnational partner Consorzio ABN, an Italian non-profit organization, specialized in the development and implementation of complex strategies for social integration

**The overall objective of the project was to promote and develop the principle of equal opportunities in the Romanian society by eliminating gender discriminatory practices on the labor market.**

In order to achieve these objectives, the partnership developed a structured set of activities focusing on:

- 1.The identification of the nature of gender discrimination at local level

2.The promotion of equal opportunities in the Romanian public administration

3.The creation of new jobs and personal development of women

4.The creation of a national network of Gender Committees

The methodological approach adopted for identifying the nature and distribution of gender discrimination was based on a survey of over 100,000 individuals from different Romanian regions.

The survey revealed that very few companies in Romania have internal regulations regarding female discrimination at workplace and even when such regulations are in place, employees are not always aware of their existence. In some cases, such rules are not clear enough or not sufficiently explained or promoted.

The results of the research were published in hard copies and online on the website: [www.egalitatedesansa.ro](http://www.egalitatedesansa.ro).

The second phase of the project consisted in promoting equal opportunities among the Romanian public administration. To this end, a team of professionals, mainly composed of women elaborated the **“Guide of good practices on equal opportunities and combating discrimination in society and on the labor market”**.

# Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development

## ESTHR – equal opportunities for women in Romania

The Guide presents a set of recommendations addressing both institutions and women directly, which are aimed at eliminating gender discrimination in the public sector.

Another set of activities carried out during the second phase of the project consisted in the **organization of seminars and conferences** targeting managers of several public entities and public employment services, as well as politicians and representatives of civil society.



Furthermore, a campaign targeting the promotion of equal opportunities issues among the general public was rolled out on the national press, radios, televisions and a dedicated website monitored on a daily basis.

In order to support the **creation of new jobs and the personal development for women**, 8 Equal Opportunities Points (EOPs) were set-up in Bucharest, Braila, Iasi, Oradea, Pitesti, Targu Jiu, Timisoara and Sibiu. The EOPs provided advice to women victims of discrimination and offered entrepreneurial guidance to those interested in starting their own businesses.

Additionally, to help women start their own business, a business plan competition was launched, awarding to each of the 40 winning proposals a grant of RON 20,000.

Ms Tudor Milena, one of the winners of the business plan competition, managed to develop with the funds received through the project ESTHR her own business in the field of manufacturing of natural, organic soaps which are unique in Romania and even the world.

Her products have been increasingly demanded by consumers from Romania and other countries.

Last but not least, the objective of **creating a nationwide network of Gender Committees** was achieved through the formal establishment of 8 regional Gender Committees and a national Gender Committee.



Since their creation, 68,361 women have joined the Gender Committee network and put forward proposals related to innovation of labor legislation.

## II. The difference that counted

Sustainability is one of the key success factors: even after the completion of project activities, all Gender Committees have continued their work, regularly hosting activities such as roundtables, conferences and seminars to disseminate information and raise awareness about their work and about the Equal Opportunities Points.

Gender Committees and EOPs are collaborating with the National Council for Combating Discrimination, which has both an informative and active intake in the settlement of cases of discrimination.

The project presents a high potential of replicability towards people from any other vulnerable groups.

## III. Conclusions

The ESTHR project has provided a positive contribution to the development of women's role in the Romanian labor market and more broadly in Romanian society by actively combating existing forms of gender discrimination.

**The impact of this project is still visible and present through the activities of Gender Committees and Equal Opportunities Points which are receiving financial support from BNS.**

# Regional Operational Programme

## Expansion and equipment of the Brancovenesti Centre



### PROJECT IDENTIFICATION DATA

**Beneficiary:**

General Directorate of Social Care and Child Protection of Mures

**Target group:**

Adults with psychological and neuro-psychological disabilities in the County of Mures

**Operational Programme:**

Regional Operational Programme  
Priority Axis 3, "Improvement of social infrastructure", Key Area of Intervention 3.2 "Rehabilitation/ modernisation/ development and equipment of social services infrastructure"

**Total budget:**

3,539,273 RON, out of which  
2,781,549 RON co-financing from the ERDF

**Length:**

17 months (period: 17 March 2010 – 17 August 2011)

### I. What the best practice is all about

The Neuropsychiatric Recovery and Rehabilitation Centre (NRRC) of Brancovenesti holds the mission of promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities who are temporarily or permanently deprived of their family environment and require specialized support and therapeutic recovery activities.

Due to the poor condition of the premises and equipment of one of the accommodation facilities of NRRC Brancovenesti, the General Directorate of Social Care and Child Protection (GDSCCP) of Mures decided to support its expansion and modernization in order to increase the life quality of institutionalized persons.

**The project consisted in building a new annex to one of the existing accommodation facilities, so as to relocate 50 patients into modern spaces.**

The new facilities, with a total surface of over 1,100 square meters, are properly arranged and equipped to respond to the beneficiaries' needs who, in this way, can receive more proper medical and social rehabilitation services (physiotherapy services, relaxation sessions, involvement in occupational therapy activities, etc), specific to their type and degree of disability.

As part of the medical and social rehabilitation process, occupational therapy programs are conducted through work-

shops where patients are involved in such activities like painting, production of ceramics, crafts, theatrical plays, dancing, carpentry and tailoring. Each resident participates in one or two workshops, depending on skills and preferences.

The new centre, with spacious and modern rooms, is able to better accommodate these activities: patients have more intimacy and are spurred on being more creative.

### II. The difference that counted

The 50 adults relocated in the new accommodation facilities of the NRRC Brancovenesti have benefited from the increased quality of life, determined by the improved recovery and rehabilitation of facilities and services, now in line with the European standards.

The project is considered:

**Innovative:**

Within the new premises and thanks to the newly purchased medical and treatment equipment, disabled patients can benefit of an optimum rehabilitation therapy.

**Sustainable:**

At the end of each fiscal year, the County Council allocates the financial resources needed to cover the current expenses of the centre.

## Regional Operational Programme

### Expansion and equipment of the Brancovenesti Centre



#### III. Conclusions

The project has provided a positive contribution to the reform of the protection system for disabled adults in the County of Mures, by modernizing the offer of health services to persons unable to secure their own social needs or by developing their own capacities and skills for social integration.

*"After being relocated to the new centre, patients seem now to be more involved in social activities and the number of crisis has diminished significantly"*

(Director of the Brancovenesti Centre).



The activities of the project "Expansion and equipment of the neuropsychiatric recovery and rehabilitation Brancovenesti Centre" and the related work methodology can be transferred to projects aimed at the same target groups or even similar ones.

Currently, GDSCCP Mures is implementing three new projects based on the same methodology.



# Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development

## Empowering Roma women on the labor market



### PROJECT IDENTIFICATION DATA

#### Beneficiary:

"Together" Agency for Community Development

#### Target group:

Roma women

#### Operational Programme:

Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development  
Priority axis 6 "Promoting social inclusion", Key Area of Intervention 6.3  
„Promoting equal opportunities on the labor market”

#### Total budget:

4,460,984 RON, out of which  
3,720,948 RON co-financing from the  
ESF

#### Length:

24 months. (period: October 2010 – September 2012)

#### Website:

[www.privestemaasacumsunt.ro](http://www.privestemaasacumsunt.ro).

### I. What the best practice is all about

The project aimed at changing how the Roma people are generally perceived in the Romanian society by promoting equal opportunities on the labor market, especially for Roma women.

In order to achieve such goal, the project rolled out a complex set of activities comprising:

1. A **national research study** aimed at understanding the challenges faced by Roma women on the labor market and the ways in which they are perceived
2. The **training** of trade union leaders and representatives of NGOs in order to develop their capacity to promote the interests of Roma women
3. The creation of an **inter-professional network** of representatives of trade unions, civil society, and experts capable of advocating the rights of Roma women and vulnerable groups
4. **Awareness raising** activities among employees belonging to vulnerable groups about their rights on the labor market
5. The roll-out of an **informative campaign**, aimed at combating stereotypes by promoting examples of role models of Roma people

The output of the first activity consisted in the elaboration of the study **“Roma women on the labor market: interests,**

**union representation and participation”**, which revealed that the issues faced by Roma women on the labor market are similar to those faced by employees with low income, low education and fixed term or part-time contracts.

In particular, the main challenges identified are related to salary rights (unpaid overtime hours, lower pay than other employees on similar positions), work environment and safety, opportunities of career development and cases of discrimination on behalf of co-workers. According to the study, such issues can be reflected in the agenda of Trade Unions, which in Romania are institutions with a considerable negotiating power.

Following completion of the study, 80 “actors of change” attended training courses in the field of mobilization and participatory management, aimed at gaining the necessary knowledge and tools to promote the rights of Roma women and vulnerable groups on the labor market.

Training participants entered also the **project competition “See me as I am”** aimed at developing local initiatives combating various forms of discrimination and the exclusion of vulnerable groups on the Romanian labor market.

# Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development

## Empowering Roma women on the labor market



The 20 best public participation projects received awards at the end of the course: among these, there were awareness raising events, local studies and campaigns for child clothing and toys donations organized by Roma women.

The newly trained experts, organized in an inter-professional network, have engaged themselves in the organization of multiplying events and signed-off 31 partnership agreements with local public authorities and other non-governmental organizations with relevant competencies in working with vulnerable groups. In addition, the National Council for Combating Discrimination endorsed the network, as well as the approach proposed, by assigning staff to be part of it.

The members of the inter-professional network developed the “**Strategy for promoting equal opportunities and non-discrimination of vulnerable groups on the labor market**”, which envisioned an increased access of vulnerable groups to education, training and economic activities, protection against discrimination and the efficient implementation of European legislation. The strategic document was further developed by the Romanian Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Protection and subject to a public debate.

Last but not least, the fourth line of activity consisted in the launching of an informative campaign aimed at combating discrimination of Roma women at the workplace and dissemination of success stories. The campaign achieved high levels of visibility through conferences, TV and radio spots and articles published on the national and local press.

The most successful formats of communication were the “**Living Library**” events on the occasion of which Roma

women role models shared their life stories with participants, and the “**Which one?**” events, where people randomly addressed on the streets were informed about the campaign and asked to guess out of 2 women which one they thought was of Roma ethnics.

### II. The difference that counted

All project indicators were achieved or exceeded and in particular:

- The study “Roma women on the labor market” was based on 800 questionnaires responses
- 30 trade union representatives, 30 NGO representatives and 20 public institutions’ departments of equal opportunity trained
- 58 multiplying events organized in all counties, during a 3-month period
- Over 1,500 people informed on the rights at the workplace
- 4 meetings of the inter-professional network were organized, attended by 182 participants
- 31 protocols signed with local and central authorities committing to the promotion of equal opportunities on the labor market
- 33 Roma women presented as community roles models in the national and local press

# Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development

## Empowering Roma women on the labor market

- 2 ads created and broadcasted on the TV and radio 260 times

them to vulnerable groups have been vital throughout the project.

### III. Lessons for the future

The project has proposed an innovative strategic approach to solving the problem of discrimination of Roma women on the labor market, which is expected to generate changes in terms of mentality and attitude in the long term, rather than providing a short-term solution to inclusion.

In Romania, as in the rest of Europe, the image of Roma women is quite negative. The social marketing campaign against the stereotyping of Roma women at workplace was the first of its kind in Romania and has led to an increase in their visibility on the national job market.

This project has been also the first one to assign a key role to trade unions in the promotion of inclusion, combating against multiple forms of discrimination, discouragement and exclusion of disadvantaged groups from the job market.

Several surveys performed by the National Council for Combating Discrimination have revealed that Roma employees, especially women, are still among the most discriminated at workplace.

The “Empowering Roma women on the labor market” has addressed these problems in order to show all relevant social parties that priority should be given to professional aptitude rather than religious affiliation, ethnics or sexual orientation.

The future commitment of the social parties and multiplying agents trained during the project will play a vital role in the elimination of discriminatory practices in the Romanian society, which, however, will need to be accompanied by strong political will for permanent elimination of the problem.

### IV. Conclusions

This initiative has improved the position of Roma women on the job market, through a complex approach that has taken into account the consolidation of trade union and NGO capabilities.

The creation of a viable partnership between these structures and the accomplishment of a transfer of knowledge from

# Best practices in mainstreaming the principle of equal opportunities in the different stages of the Operational Programmes

# Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resource Development

## A strategic approach for addressing equal opportunities issues and needs of vulnerable groups



### IDENTIFICATION DATA

**Operational Programme:**  
Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resource Development

**Operational Programme stage identified as best practice:**  
Programming: Context Analysis, Strategy Development, Monitoring indicators and design of interventions

**Source of funding:**  
ESF

### I. What the best practice is all about

SOP HRD has been designed to address the thematic priority of the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013 "**Development and more efficient use of the human capital in Romania**".

The Programming stage of SOP HRD is hereby presented as best practice in consideration of the coherent and linear approach that was adopted in defining the needs of vulnerable groups in Romania and the strategy and measures to address them.

### Context analysis

The Programme has been developed taking into account European and National guidelines related to human capital development which have been embedded in the national context through an attentive analysis of the existing situation on social inclusion, education and employment issues.

Relevant data regarding equal opportunities issues and the socio-economic situation of vulnerable groups were collected through the National Institute of Statistics and analyzed under the 5 pillars of:

- Education
- Employment
- Social inclusion
- Health
- Lessons learned from the past

### Strategy development

To deepen the knowledge on the current situation, an analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) was conducted in order to identify the strategic priorities relevant to equal opportunities to be addressed through the Programme.

Based on the SWOT analysis, SOP HRD decided to adopt a targeted strategy, addressing the identified weaknesses of human resources in Romania that included:

- High level of school abandonment
- High rate of unemployment
- Insufficient integration of vulnerable groups in the population
- Insufficient development of occupational health and security

The focus on such aspects is reflected in the specific objectives of the programme, that stem from the **general objective of "development of human capital and increase of competitiveness"** which are adequate for addressing the needs of vulnerable groups:

# Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resource Development

## A strategic approach for addressing equal opportunities issues and needs of vulnerable groups

- Promotion of **continuous education and training**
- Promotion of **entrepreneurial culture**
- Help **young people entering the labor market**
- Developing an **inclusive and flexible labor market**
- Promoting the **(re)insertion in the labor market of inactive people**
- Improving **public employment services**
- Facilitating **access to education for vulnerable groups**

### Design of interventions

In order to implement the specific objectives related to equal opportunities and address the conditions of vulnerable groups, SOP HRD has adopted:

- **Nine targeted interventions directly addressing vulnerable groups**, covering the topics of employment, health, well-being, social inclusion, education, training and human rights.
- **A global mainstreaming approach**, i.e. specific actions and tools (such selection criteria, monitoring and reporting requirements at project level) aimed at ensuring that vulnerable groups benefit from opportunities offered by the Programme beyond the scope of target interventions.

Both approaches are aimed at ensuring opportunities for disadvantaged groups to access the labor market, retain employment, build vocational capacity through training and qualifications, access public services and improve their quality of life.

### Monitoring indicators

In order to measure the extent to which the programme objectives are achieved, SOP HRD has defined a set of output and result indicators aimed at capturing the specific achievements related to equal opportunities and vulnerable groups. The Programme is keeping separate evidence of the number of persons benefiting from assistance in terms of gender, disability, age, or possible institutionalization in corrective institutions.

### II. The difference that counted

SOP HRD has defined a robust and relevant statistical baseline, thanks to which the European and National priorities related to the Romanian human capital have been adapted to the current situation of vulnerable groups.

These efforts have led to the definition of an effective strategy addressing equal opportunities and the needs of disadvantaged persons, paving the way for the improvement of their conditions.

### III. Lessons learned

The replicability of the approach of SOP HRD to Programming is linked to the availability of reliable and updated rele-

vant socio-economic data both for the Programme as a whole and for the vulnerable groups that may be addressed through its interventions. Therefore:

- Addressing the issue in an early stage of programming allows Managing Authorities to ensure the availability of a sound statistical baseline when defining the Programme specific objectives in relation to Equal Opportunities and vulnerable groups
- Despite the fact that a Programme may not include targeted interventions, mainstreaming of equal opportunities should be considered already in the phase of programming and relevant indicators established
- These steps can pave the way for pursuing the respect of equal opportunities in all phases of implementation, setting the conditions for a positive contribution to improving the life of vulnerable groups in the future

### IV. Conclusions

SOP HRD is considered a best practice since it disclosed the positive outfalls of the proper approach to mainstreaming the equal opportunities principle in the programming stage.

A proper approach to equal opportunities is possible when data necessary for appropriate analysis and planning are available. Furthermore, SOP HRD teaches that the proper design of programmes can give additional coherence and consistency to the interventions financed under Structural Instruments.

## Sectoral Operational Programme Environment

### A multi-language information and publicity campaign targeting ethnic minorities



#### IDENTIFICATION DATA

**Operational Programme:**  
Sectoral Operational Programme Environment

**Operational Programme stage identified as best practice:**  
Launching of calls for proposals - Information and Publicity

**Source of funding:**  
ERDF

#### I. What the best practice is all about

The global objective of SOP ENV is to improve the living standards and the environment, focusing in particular on meeting the environmental acquis.

In order to inform all potential beneficiaries and citizens about the role of the Programme, the available financing opportunities and the potential benefits that the investments may lead to, the Programme has adopted a communication plan foreseeing a mix of tools such as a Programme website, dissemination events, publications and use of media.

Following an evaluation of the impact of its communication activities, the Managing Authority of the Programme has decided to roll-out a campaign targeting ethnic minorities through the use of dedicated media channels.

Such new campaign, implemented between March and August 2012, pursued the general objective of "**ensuring access to information about SOP Environment, in an equal and non-discriminatory manner in the languages of the national minorities for which media channels exist**".

More specifically, the campaign foresaw the translation of the contents of the previous communication campaigns in Romanian language, into the languages of ethnic minorities.

The selected languages were seven:

- German
- Hungarian
- Russian
- Ukrainian
- Turkish
- Roma
- Serbian

The communication plan for the media was rolled out between April and June 2012. In such period, a total of 5.231 radio spots, with a 40 second duration, were broadcasted through 54 radio stations, geographically covering 24 of the 41 Romanian counties. At the same time, the appearances in the press were 310 through 30 newspapers, one of which with national coverage.

**"WE INVEST IN ENVIRONMENT. WE BELIEVE IN THE FUTURE"**

was the slogan developed within the first promotional campaign (2008 – 2009). The message was replicated in different languages in the targeted campaign for ethnic minorities for the purpose of ensuring continuity with the powerful visual identity that had already been gained.

## Sectoral Operational Programme Environment

### A multi-language information and publicity campaign targeting ethnic minorities

The approach of SOP Environment is a best practice in the stage of Launching of Calls for Proposals, particularly in relation to information and publicity activities targeting vulnerable groups since:

- It is the first initiative launched in Romania under Structural Instruments addressing ethnic minorities;
- It aims at ensuring free, equal and unrestricted access to information in relation to the financing opportunities available within the Programme.

#### II. The difference that counted

The implementation of the information campaign of SOP Environment generated several positive outcomes, that will eventually contribute to rebalancing the negative effects of other forms of discrimination affecting disadvantaged groups of the population. The campaign in fact allowed:

#### III. Lessons learned

Equal and unrestricted access to information



Equal access to all potential beneficiaries regardless of their belonging to ethnic groups, either majorities or minorities



Financial assistance granted exclusively on selection criteria and quality of financing applications



Removal of unjustified barriers



The targeted promotional campaign of SOP Environment is a best practice that can be easily replicated in the framework of other Operational Programmes, by transposing the existing information and publicity material (e.g. radio spots, websites, brochures) in the languages of ethnic minorities.

One of the lessons learned is represented by the importance of carrying out impact evaluations of communication activities.

These evaluations, in fact, can support the better planning of future communication activities as in this case, where the evaluation of the national promotional campaign lead to the launching of a targeted communication campaign.

#### IV. Conclusions

The removal of language barriers faced by ethnic minorities is an example of best practice because the initiative:

- Applied adequately the principle of equal opportunities;
- Ensured equal access to information to all the potential beneficiaries of Structural Instruments.

## Regional Operational Programme

### A best practice in monitoring the implementation of the equal opportunities principle



#### IDENTIFICATION DATA

**Operational Programme:**  
Regional Operational Programme

**Operational Programme stage identified as best practice:**

Programme Monitoring: System of indicators, reporting requirements, implementation manuals

**Source of funding:**  
ERDF

#### I. What the best practice is all about

The Regional Operational Programme (ROP) is one of the 7 Programmes financed under the Convergence Objective of Cohesion Policy in Romania, its strategic objective being supporting the economic, social, territorially balanced sustainable development of Romanian Regions.

In relation to Equal Opportunities, ROP affirms that its interventions and implementation system shall provide for appropriate **measures in order to ensure accessibility for beneficiaries, without any discrimination** based on sex, racial and ethnic origins, religion, age, disabilities and sexual orientation.

This objective is detailed in a number of specific objectives that identify the thematic areas of intervention of the Programme relevant to equal opportunities:

- Ensuring balanced participation of men and women in the labor market
- Ensuring equal opportunities in education and vocational training
- Encouraging women entrepreneurs
- Reconciliation between family and professional life
- Ensuring access to social infrastructure for vulnerable groups
- Ensuring balanced participation of men and women in decision-making

- Ensuring upgraded equipped infrastructure for pre-university education for disadvantaged children
- Ensuring students modernized pre-university education infrastructures

#### Monitoring indicators

In order to ensure an adequate monitoring of the contribution of the Programme to the implementation of the equal opportunities principle, the system of indicators comprises a set of specific indicators capturing the effects produced by financed interventions on vulnerable groups including for instance:

- Number of jobs created with breakdown by gender, Roma ethnics, people with disabilities
- Number of men/women that benefited from medical services offered by rehabilitated/ equipped medical units
- Number of persons reintegrated on the labor market, with breakdown by gender, Roma ethnics, people with disabilities

Applicants are required to detail in their financing applications the expected contribution of projects to the promotion of equal opportunities and, in case of funding, to report periodically on progress.

Achievements were then subject to monitoring on the occasion of on-site visits performed by ROP staff.

## Regional Operational Programme

### A multi-language information and publicity campaign targeting ethnic minorities

#### Implementation manuals

The monitoring and implementation of the principle of equal opportunities has been supported through the dissemination of the “**Booklet on Equal Opportunities and Non-discrimination**”, containing practical information for beneficiaries on the implementation of the equal opportunity principle during the phases of project preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.



#### Reporting requirements

The strong commitment of ROP in relation to Equal Opportunities is reflected also in the information included in **Annual Implementation Reports** (AIR).

The 2011 AIR, for instance, accounts for the active engagement of Programme Stakeholders in relation to Roma issues, in terms of participation to national conferences, consultations with the European Commission and identification of potential courses of action for better approaching the integration of Roma population in the period 2014-2020.

#### Approach to Roma integration in the future programming period (AIR 2011)

Future interventions addressing Roma communities in the period 2014-2020, should be based on integrated development plans for disadvantaged communities, targeting also Roma issues.

AIRs include also examples of interventions financed under ROP and their specific effects, quantified in terms of indicators, on vulnerable groups.

Evidence of the focus of ROP on equal opportunities is confirmed by the activities of the **Monitoring Committee**, whose members include organizations representative of vulnerable groups. To better understand the contribution of ROP to the “National Strategy for Roma people”, during Monitoring Committee meetings specific attention is paid to presenting the results achieved by ROP projects targeting Roma communities.

#### II. The difference that counted

The system of indicators of ROP enables the monitoring of the implementation of equal opportunities from project to Programme level, with specific attention on women, disabled persons and Roma.

The monitoring system as well as the practical guidance booklet have paved the premises for the effective application of the principle at beneficiary level, ensuring that disadvantaged groups have access to the infrastructure, goods and services created by the Programme.

#### III. Lessons learned

ROP shows that the effective monitoring of equal opportunities may be achieved under any Operational Programme by:

- Defining relevant indicators for equal opportunities that are coherent from Programme to project level;
- Providing the right tools to beneficiaries in order to ensure the understanding of the issues and of monitoring requirements;
- Ensuring an active monitoring focused on assistance to beneficiaries in complying with the principle during project implementation;
- Enhancing type and quality of relevant information made available to Programme stakeholders in AIRs and Monitoring Committees.

#### IV. Conclusions

The monitoring system of ROP is considered a best practice for including a comprehensive system of indicators, tools for beneficiaries and targeted reporting to Programme stakeholders.

The approach adopted for monitoring equal opportunities:

- Is coherent with the overall strategy of the Programme in addressing vulnerable groups;
- Has resulted in the appropriate mainstreaming of the principle in the different phases of the Programme's life-cycle.

# **Equal opportunities in a nutshell**

## **Key concepts and definitions**

### **Article 16 of General Regulation 1083 /2006**

The Member States and the Commission shall ensure that equality between men and women and the integration of the gender perspective is promoted during the various stages of implementation of the Funds.

The Member States and the Commission shall take appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the various stages of implementation of the Funds and, in particular, in the access to them. In particular, accessibility for disabled persons shall be one of the criteria to be observed in defining operations co-financed by the Funds and to be taken into account during the various stages of implementation".

### **Equality mainstreaming**

According to the European Commission ("The ESF and Equality mainstreaming", 2010) Equality mainstreaming is about incorporating equality, non-discrimination and diversity into the legislation, policies, programmes and practices of public institutions.

Mainstreaming equality and ensuring equal opportunities for all - through European Structural Funds - concerns the inclusion in existing national and regional policies and programmes of opportunities for disadvantaged groups to access the labor market, to retain employment, to build vocational capacity through training and qualifications, to access public services and to improve their quality of life.

The goal is that these opportunities will be available equally for both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged people.

### **Main categories of vulnerable groups**

- Women
- Young people
- Aged People
- Persons with disabilities
- Racial/ethnic groups
- Persons with different sexual orientation
- Persons with different religion/belief

### **Relevant areas / topics**

- Education and training
- Social independence
- Employment
- Health, well being, environment
- Fundamental rights



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Framework Agreement for evaluating the Structural Instruments during 2011-2015, Lot 1 – Evaluations

Subsequent Contract no. 4 - *Evaluation of the way in which provisions regarding equal opportunities have been mainstreamed in the Romanian Framework of Structural Instruments*

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