



The "Creating and implementing integrated community services" project is implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education and Research in Romania. It is an ESF financed project and is implemented in 116 marginalized rural communities in Romania. The main objective of the project is to support the set up and functioning of integrated community teams (social assistant, community nurse and school counselor or mediator). This is a pilot intervention at a national level, and we aim to regulate it as general local practice after the project will have been concluded.

The financing contract was signed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September 2018 and will be concluded on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 2022 and it is the first ever project implemented in a partnership between these three strategic ministries in Romania.

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This is a difficult time for all of us. Businesses close, schools close, projects get suspended, people stay at home, social distancing is a must in order to protect oneself and others.

For the social workers, community medical assistants and school mediators that make up the teams that operate within the project, this is not an option, as they are an integral part of the mechanism meant to alleviate the burdens of such times.

Whereas usually they tackle the individual vulnerabilities of the impoverished communities within which they operate, they now face an additional common challenge that arises from the coronavirus pandemic that puts us all at risk. And because of the previous understanding that they have of the specific needs of their communities, they now represent an integral part of the support mechanism that operates at a local level.

Besides the daily operations that they usually perform, they now have to take on additional tasks in order to ensure that the community is protected and the regulations imposed by this state of emergency are withheld.



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As accurate information is essential today, they are an important resource in keeping the public up to date with the mandatory regulations imposed, informing the members of the communities on the steps they have to take in order to keep themselves and their loved ones safe. They assist the local authorities. Distribute leaflets. Monitor the persons that have returned from abroad. Make sure that children keep on learning even if schools are closed, ensuring that they have the most adequate resources given the context they are facing. That the elder in need are monitored and kept safe. They shop for those who cannot do it themselves. Make sure people are healthy and have access to basic medical services. That children of infected persons are kept safe and not needing anything. They teach people how to make their own masks. Contact NGOs in order to intermediate additional resources, be they human or financial. Some have even kept on working while donating their salaries in order to make sure that the needs of others are met.



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No task is beneath them, and all their efforts are directed towards making sure that the communities gets through these trying times. It may not be what they have initially signed up for, but they have risen above and they face these challenges with no fear, only thinking of the good of others.

We, the team that manages this project, are directing all our efforts in ensuring that they are all protected. We have redirected non-essential financial resources towards buying adequate protection gear. We keep a close eye on what happens in the communities and try to make sure that their specific needs are met.



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But most of all, we are humbled by the dedication of these small teams operating in the most impoverished communities and by their resilience in the face of these unknown challenges that they are facing.

**Social workers. Community nurses. School mediators.**



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