

TITLE

A shortcut to the open labour market

Romania: Pro ACT Support Association

PROJECT SUMMARY

Pro ACT supports people with disabilities who formerly lived in institutions to find and retain employment in the open labour market and to live independently. Founded in 2011, Pro ACT Support Association is approved by the Romanian Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection, and the Elderly to provide social inclusion services. As of June 2016, all 40 clients of Pro ACT were employed.

FACTS & FIGURES

- In 2015, 38 full-time or part-time jobs were created
- In 2016, of a total of 40 clients, 10 are employees in the private sector, 2 in the public sector, 14 in the open labour market, 2 in social enterprises, and 12 in Pro ACT's small social enterprises.

PROBLEMS TARGETED

Romanian employers tend not to hire people with disabilities, and even greater stigma is attached to those who suffer from multiple discrimination – for example, intellectual disability and/or mental health issues, Roma origin, female, coming from public institutions of social assistance (orphanages).

SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

Social inclusion services promote the de-institutionalization of adults with disabilities (many who have lived most of their lives in institutions), in combination with integration in community housing and an individualized approach to recovery. The Pro ACT programme has targeted the employment of 40 people with intellectual disabilities in the open labour market, all of whom have found and kept employment (with the exception of two participants who were later employed in social enterprises). This approach eliminates the typical steps taken by many organizations in this field, such as training, sheltered employment, or employment with a job coach. Employers soon understood that engagement with people with disabilities does not require a lot of specialized skills, but simply openness and flexibility. Employment included jobs in warehouses, as an assistant tailor, as carpenters, and even farm work.

All employees are supported in a person-centred manner to assess their skills, talents, and desired field of work, and are later assisted to engage with employers to find suitable jobs. Employers were

educated as to how to make reasonable accommodations at the workplace, and Pro ACT staff remain engaged to help resolve challenges that may arise on both sides.

OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

Pro ACT's supported employment programme costs approximately US\$35,000 per year and is financed by an Open Society Foundation grant. The organization's efforts are focused not only on de-institutionalizing adults with disabilities but they also target social authentic inclusion, including community integration and support activities

QUOTE

"I now have a job and I have learned how to get there by myself. I feel I have more freedom, I know my way! No one orders me what to do."

— Gina Mezei, client, Pro ACT Suport

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REFERENCES

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