

PRO REFUGIU ASSOCIATION

# ACTIVITY REPORT

2013





Pro Refugiu Association

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## Foreword



Through this report Pro Refugiu Association would like to present the positive results obtained during 2013. The organization carried out various projects, activities focused on asylum seekers, refugees and victims of human trafficking. We continued our work in order to provide specialized legal, psychological and social assistance to high professional standards. At a strategic level a great importance was given to the identification and implementation of sustainable solutions for improving these services.

With this occasion we would like also to thank our collaborators, partners, donors which during 2013 have supported our efforts to implement successfully all the projects, activities for the benefit of the target groups.

## General Information

Pro Refugiu Association is a non-governmental organization with headquarters in Bucharest, Romania, formed in early 2011 from the initiative of a group of specialists in assisting victims of human trafficking, asylum seekers and refugees.

Since its beginning the organization followed a work philosophy based on protection and promotion of the rights of human trafficking victims, asylum seekers and refugees according to the national and international legislation, and also, to manage the problems that these persons face.

The Objectives considered since the time of formation are:

1. Help to combat the human trafficking phenomenon, illegal migration.  
2. Identify the needs, problems of the human

trafficking victims, asylum seekers and refugees.

3. Development of special programs of legal, psychological and social assistance at the highest professional standards for the target groups benefit.

4. Advocacy and lobby to improve the legislation and practice in the field of protection for the victims of human trafficking, migration, asylum procedure in Romania.

The fundamental values are:

1. Respect for human rights.
2. Holistic approach (bottom up) of the human trafficking, migration phenomenon and cooperation at national and international level.
3. Tolerance.
4. Equality.
5. Trust.

## Pro Refugiu Association organizational structure

### STEERING COMMITTEE

President

Vice President

Secretary

### Assistance department for victims of human trafficking



Trafficking in women is a complex problem that manifests itself in a national, European and largely international context. If human traffic for many people is just a topic for debate and conferences, for us the phenomenon is a daily reality.

For each beneficiary we need to reinvent a bit, because each one is unique in his/her way, even if often they have gone through similar histories. But what gives us the power and strength to continue to work are the successes of reintegrating these people in society.

## LEGAL COUNSELLING AND ASSISTANCE

- Information and guidance regarding victims' legal situation.
- Support for requesting the "reflection period" if there are indications of trafficking.
- Legal assistance in front of competent authorities (police, prosecutor, courts) to guarantee that human trafficking victims can effectively exercise their rights during the access to the justice system.

## SOCIAL COUNSELLING AND ASSISTANCE

- Information, advice about the process of social and occupational reintegration in society.
- Guidance on the job market.
- Support for access to education and training.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING

- Psychological evaluations and counselling, psychotherapy in order to help the victims to overstep the trauma suffered as result of the exploitation to which they were subjected.

## STAFF / COLLABORATORS

4 lawyers

3 social workers

3 psychologists

## Assistance department for asylum seekers and refugees



The Romanian asylum process and the integration one are complex and frequent changes to legislation can make it a difficult system to understand. Asylum seekers, refugees are some of the most vulnerable people in society and that is why it is relevant to receive help to navigate the process.

### LEGAL COUNSELLING AND ASSISTANCE

- Information concerning rights and obligations for asylum seekers and refugees as stipulated in the legislation.
- Legal assistance and representation for asylum seekers during the entire procedure (administrative and court phases).
- Support in obtaining travel and residence documents for refugees.

## SOCIAL COUNSELLING AND ASSISTANCE

- Support for learning Romanian language by organizing periodic language courses for asylum seekers and refugees.
- Counselling for access to education and to the job market.
- Cultural and recreational activities (cultural orientation sessions, visits to museums, drawing and paintings, artistic and documentary film projections).

## PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING

- Individual and group psychological sessions.
- Psychological evaluations.
- Psychotherapy in order to help asylum seekers and refugees to overstep the trauma suffered as result of the inhuman treatments to which they were subjected in the origin countries.

## STAFF / COLLABORATORS

|           |                  |                 |
|-----------|------------------|-----------------|
| 4 lawyers | 2 social workers | 2 psychologists |
|-----------|------------------|-----------------|

## Continuous vocational training department

Optimizing the assistance services provided for the benefit of the target groups is a goal to which the organization attaches importance. In order to improve the quality of the provided services, it is required a consolidation of the capacities of the professional groups (lawyers, psychologists, social workers) who provide these services.

The consolidation of their professional capacities is achieved through involvement, participation in trainings, workshops, exchange of best practices at national and international level.

### STAFF / COLLABORATORS

 3 trainers

## Research and lobby department

Aims to research and monitor the phenomenon of human trafficking and migration. Other specific activities include the development of practical recommendations meant to improve the legal provisions in the field; the collection of information on best practices. The results of the researches are used to influence key areas of government policy and legislation, in order to improve the target groups rights.

### STAFF / COLLABORATORS

 2 researchers

## Financial department

Within the department, the accounting qualified personnel prepare the annual budget, performs the financial management of grants, records the financial operations and prepare financial reports.

STAFF / COLLABORATORS

2 financial responsible

## PRO REFUGIU ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES IN 2013



The organization implemented various projects for the benefit of its target groups, organized raising awareness campaigns concerning human trafficking phenomenon, continued to collaborate with national stakeholders, foreign organizations.

## PROJECTS

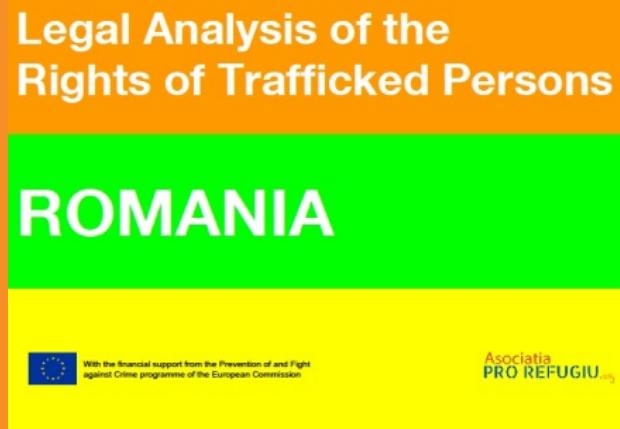
### Promotion of the rights of trafficked persons in Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia with emphasis on legal support- a human rights based approach

Starting with January 2013 Pro Refugiu Association implements as co-beneficiary the transnational project alongside Netherlands Helsinki Committee (main applicant), Human Rights League Slovakia, Animus Bulgaria, Caritas Ruse Bulgaria and Adpare Association Romania. The project is financed by the European Commission through its Program Prevention of and Fight against Crime. It will finish at the end of December 2015. Total budget of the project is of 779.130 Euro.

The project is aimed at:

- Increasing knowledge of lawyers and social workers about human trafficking, its impact and the legal rights of trafficked persons.
- Enhancing victims' access to legal counseling, aid and representation during criminal and other legal proceedings.
- Increasing the capacity of NGOs and social workers to provide legal information and counseling to trafficked persons.
- Enhancing the capacity of NGOs to effectively advocate for the protection and promotion of the rights of trafficked persons as victims and witnesses of a serious crime and human rights violation.

In 2013 the project started with detailed research in Romania Bulgaria and Slovakia to map the current situation in regard to the position of human trafficking victims in criminal and other relevant legal proceedings. The research was conducted in the first half of 2013 and the information obtained was inserted in national reports.



Regarding Romania, Pro Refugiu Association through its legal experts had the main responsibility to conduct the research and to elaborate the national report. The report looks per country at the legal provisions pertaining to the position of victim/witnesses of human trafficking as well as at their implementation in practice based on the information collected from NGOs and relevant national institutions such as National Agency Against Traffic in Persons, Ministry of Justice, Public Ministry, Romanian General Inspectorate of Police, National Council of Magistracy. Also interviews with victims took place, through which it was recorded their experiences with the various actors (law enforcement, prosecutors, lawyers

and judges) during the different stages of the criminal proceedings. Attention was also paid to the national definition of human trafficking and the way it is applied in practice, in particular if it offers equal protection without discrimination to all victims subjected to various forms of exploitation. The report contains also a number of recommendations aimed at improving access of trafficked persons to legal aid and representation, as well as the improvement of their treatment as victim/witnesses in criminal and other relevant legal proceedings. The recommendations are based on the minimum standards as laid down in EU Directive 2011/36/EU, the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking and other relevant international standards, including the UN Trafficking Protocol

During 2013 Pro Refugiu Association was actively involved in the recruitment, selection and training of 20 social workers from various Romanian NGOs and institutions (General Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection).



*Meeting with social workers during the recruitment process*

The training for social workers took place in Bucharest in November 2013 and with this occasion participants learned how to provide basic legal information to human trafficking victims, what are the rights of the victims according with national and international legislation, how it work the national mechanism for identification and referral of victims and the program of victim/witness coordination during the criminal trial.

The project will continue in 2014 with other activities in which Pro Refugiu Association will have an active role such as training for lawyers, developing a special manual for lawyers focused on how to provide specialized legal aid and representation for the victims during criminal trial and other legal proceedings. Next to these activities the NGO will be involved in developing a model to systematically monitor court cases in Romania with respect to the treatment of the victims concerned and the protection of their rights and interests. The monitoring will be carried out by law students who will be specifically trained to this aim by Pro Refugiu Association lawyers, legal experts.

During project's implementation several expert meetings between lawyers, social workers will take place in order to discuss based on the cases assisted, positive results obtained. Another relevant activity which started already and will continue during the rest of project's implementation is the lobby & advocacy activity to enhance the position of trafficked persons in criminal and other relevant legal proceedings.

## Support victims of human trafficking. A better chance for reintegration in society



The project was implemented between February – December 2013. Its main activities consisted in providing necessary legal, social and psychological support for victims of human trafficking. The NGO staff provided during 2013 necessary aid for 31 victims of human trafficking.

The support consisted in:

- Informing victims about the rights stipulated in the national legislation;
- Legal assistance in front of all competent authorities during criminal, civil proceedings;
- Support for access to education, job market;
- Support for the regularization of the administrative situation for victims foreign citizens who needed to stay in Romania during the legal proceedings;
- Psychological support to overstep the trauma suffered (individual and group counselling sessions).

## Coaching - innovative approach for better integration of refugees

Pro Refugiu Association started in August 2013 the transnational project alongside its partners Caritas Prague Czech Republic and Human Rights League Slovakia. The project will be implemented until July 2015 with the financial support of the European Commission Grundtvig Program Learning Partnerships. Total budget of the project is of 42.600 Euro.

Main objectives of the project are to improve quality of counseling, assistance for refugees' integration by strengthening professional skills of staff from NGOs and institutions; increase level of communication, collaboration among professionals (social workers, psychologists, lawyers) working with refugees in Romania, Czech Republic and Slovakia.



In 2013 Pro Refugiu Association has developed also project's website <http://prorefugiu.org/grundtvig-project/> that will be used to disseminate all information concerning the activities that will be implemented (study visits, seminars in Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia; development of a coaching manual for specialists from NGOs and institutions working with refugees).

The website contains also an online forum for specialists from different countries to interact, exchange information, best practices, discuss upon topics related to innovative methods, techniques from coaching that can be adapted, used for the refugees' support during the integration process in the countries that have granted a form of protection.

The project started in 2013 with a study visit in Romania organized by Association Pro Refugiu to which participated representatives of the partners' organizations. Also at the meetings organized were invited specialists (social workers, psychologists) from other Romanian NGOs having as target group refugees and also representatives from the Bucharest University, Department of Sociology and Social Work.

Pro Refugiu Association organized also a visit in the Reception and Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers from Bucharest and with this occasion the Czech and Slovakian specialists were able to find out relevant data concerning the reception conditions, integration programs for refugees in Romania. The study visit was a very good opportunity for specialists from all three countries involved to exchange information, best practices regarding refugees' assistance.

## Colorful Emotions - art therapy for refugees children

The project was implemented between February-December 2013.

The main objectives were to improve through art therapy the quality of life for 25 refugees' children and to increase the number of professionals from non-governmental organizations that use this type of therapy during their daily work with refugees' children. It is well known that art therapy offers refugees' children the opportunity to overstep the trauma suffered by using the therapeutic effect of the artistic medium.



Through the art therapy program developed by the NGO's art therapists these children had the opportunity to express their emotions freely and creatively. During the art therapy workshops organized classical visual art methods were used such as painting, drawing, modelling with clay. In this way the outside world was reflected and transformed into an artistic self-expression.

The art therapy workshops took place in a special environment in order for children to feel comfortable and to externalize their emotions properly.

Another aspect taken into account during project's implementation was to organize

3 art therapy courses for professionals (psychologists, social workers) from various Romanian NGOs which have as target group refugees. 20 professionals benefited from these special courses during which they learned about methods, techniques of art therapy that can be adapted and used during the daily work with refugees' children.



## Support for asylum seekers - a multidisciplinary approach

The project was implemented between January – December 2013.

Main objective was to improve the access to specialized legal, psychological and social assistance for the asylum seekers during the refugee status determination in Romania. One of the problems identified during time was the existence of a deficient collaboration between

lawyers-psychologists-social workers that provide specialized assistance for the asylum seekers which face many challenges during the process of refugee status determination and it is

very important for professionals to learn how to work in multidisciplinary teams to assist them during the entire procedure.

## PROJECT'S ACTIVITIES

1. Selection of 24 professionals (lawyers, psychologists, social workers)

2. Organize one training for professionals during which they learned how to work together to help the asylum seeker from the moment of the first interview in front of the Romanian General Inspectorate for Immigration until the appeal phase in court. Participants to the training learned about the most important skills, attitudes for multidisciplinary work. Lawyers received detailed information about what is the PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), how it manifests in relation the asylum seekers, the relevance in court of medical reports presenting details concerning the physical and psychological trauma of their clients. It was important for legal practitioners to learn more

information about it because many therapeutic elements are inherent to the process of preparing the asylum claims. Participants learned how to communicate and exchange relevant information when they are assisting their clients.

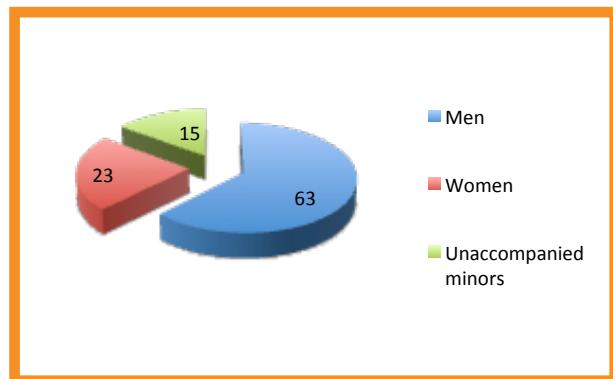
3. Provide legal, psychological and social assistance for asylum seekers during refugees' status determination in Romania.

Specialized assistance was provided to the following categories of asylum seekers as result of the multidisciplinary teams work. Information material concerning the asylum procedure was also prepared in various languages (English, French, Turkish, Farsi, Urdu) and distributed to the asylum seekers.

4. Five expert meetings with lawyers, psychologists and social workers took place in order to discuss upon the cases assisted, results obtained.

5. Final conference to present positive results achieved during project's implementation. To this event were invited to participate

representatives from Romanian NGOs and competent authorities having as target group asylum seekers.



## Chance and Challenge- Partnership for a sustainable Romanian- Norwegian cooperation

The mobility project was implemented between 29 May – 27 June 2013 by Pro Refugiu Association in partnership with Pro Sentret organization from Norway, with the financial support of the Fund for Bilateral Relations as part of the NGO Fund, EEA Grants Financial Mechanism 2009-2014. The operator of the NGO Fund in Romania is a consortium consisting of Civil Society Development Foundation, Romanian

Environmental Partnership Foundation and Resource Centre for Roma Communities. Total budget of the mobility project was of 2352 Euro.

The main objectives were to develop a sustainable partnership between Pro Refugiu Association and Pro Sentret organization in order to create a common future application under NGO Fund in Romania part of the EEA Grants and to identify additional Norwegian partners for the application.

With the occasion of the study visit in Norway representatives of Pro Refugiu Association had several meetings in Oslo with Pro Sentret staff.



The discussions were focused on the future project that would be developed in partnership having as main objective to improve social assistance provided to victims of human trafficking and also on how assistance is provided in Norway for the victims.

In Norway, Pro Refugiu Association representa-

tives carried out also a visit in a reception and accommodation center for asylum seekers from Oslo with the support of the Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers (NOAS) obtaining with this occasion relevant information about the asylum procedure in Norway, the rights and obligations of asylum seekers.

## National and International Events

Besides the implemented projects in 2013 Pro Refugiu Association started a raising awareness campaign regarding the negative implications

of human trafficking phenomenon. Its target groups were teenagers (14-17 years old) from 5 different Romanian counties. The information campaign took place in various high-schools from Bacau, Teleorman, Dambovita, Timis and Mures counties which during the years had

many victims recruited for various forms of exploitation. 425 teenagers received relevant information concerning the negative implications of human trafficking, forms of recruitment used by traffickers, forms of exploitations, how to protect themselves in order not to become potential victims.

Representatives of the organization participated in 2013 also at two international events organized by ELENA ECRE:

- *The international protection of refugees, May 2013, Lisbon, Portugal*
- *Refugee Protection and the Dublin System: Can they ever be compatible? December 2013, Dublin, Ireland*



## Partners, Networks

Being aware of the fact that international, regional cooperation is essential for exchange of information, experience and good practices

Association Pro Refugiu continued also in 2013

to maintain a very good collaboration with various organizations, institutions at national and international level.

## INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

- Netherlands Helsinki Committee
- Pro Sentret Norway
- Human Rights League Slovakia
- Animus Foundation Bulgaria
- Caritas Ruse Bulgaria
- Caritas Prague Czech Republic
- Group 484 Association, Serbia
- Human Resource Development Foundation, Turkey
- Greek Council for Refugees
- Human Rights Defence Centre, Greece
- Association TRABE Iniciativas para la Economia Social y Solidaria, Spain

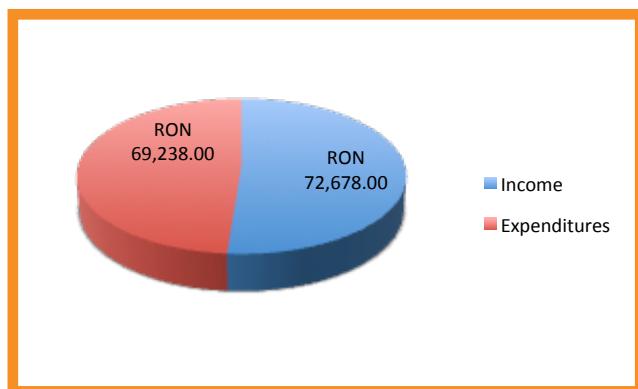
## INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

- Pro Refugiu Association is member of two international networks
- Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)
- Child Rights International Network (CRIN)

## NATIONAL PARTNERS

- Romanian General Inspectorate for Immigration
- National Agency Against Traffic in Persons
- National Agency for Community Programs for Education and Professional Development
- Nicolae Titulescu University, Law Faculty
- Bucharest University, Faculty of Sociology and Social Assistance
- Betania Association, Bacau County
- People to People Foundation, Arad County
- Global Help Association, Dolj County
- Generatie Tanara Association, Timisoara County
- Conexiuni Foundation, Hunedoara County

## Financial Information



Income 72678 Romanian Lei

Expenditures 69238 Romanian Lei



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