



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



STORIES^{OF} RENEWAL

eBOOK





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

STORIES OF RENEWAL, MORE THAN THE SUCCESS OF PROJECTS



THOMAS STAUFFER

HEAD OF
THE SWISS
CONTRIBUTION
OFFICE ROMANIA

EMBASSY OF
SWITZERLAND
BUCHAREST

Meeting specific goals and targets is essential to the success of a project. But relating the success of a project to the impact on those benefitting from it, is the most significant reward one can hope for. The meaning, which lies behind the goals and targets of the projects we have supported, is that every single initiative aiming to change, reform, improve, is a contribution to the renewal of society. There is no irrelevant contribution. Every single person can make a difference and rewrite the story, weaving his or her new thread into the narrative of our lives.

It is a privilege to be part of an endeavor renewing lives and communities.

We have decided to share the stories behind ten projects financed within the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme and to invite you to help these projects grow further. This way you can be one of those people contributing to Romania's stories of renewal.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS



CĂTĂLINA FILIP

PHOTOGRAPHER

I received enthusiastically the proposal to be part of the team of journalists who embarked on documenting the Swiss Romanian Partnership's projects. From the very beginning, going on such a journey seemed to open up wonderful possibilities for me.

But what I saw and felt on the way exceeded my expectations by far. It was a great joy to discover the beautiful outcomes these partnership projects may create, when people from different walks of life manage to put into practice their best ideas on life expectancy, hope, cultural identity and love for nature, with utmost warmth and dedication.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

STORYTELLING ON CONFIDENCE



VICTOR KAPRA

JOURNALIST

At the end of each trip I wrote a story about optimism. About Romanians who build a better life for Romanians. It's amazing how much latent energy we can discover in Romanian towns and villages. This energy can be put to such good use when friendly countries, like Switzerland, generously offer their experience, know-how and support.

The Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme planted the seeds of confidence that such efforts can be successful. These seeds will multiply in the next years, with exceptional effects on the future of our communities and our country.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



HOW FIVE PEOPLE BUILT A 80 KM LONG ROAD

Author:
Victor **KAPRA**

Foto:
Cătălina **FILIP**



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

*A foreign diplomat, after seeing the road built by Cornel Stanciu with just a handful of people:
Mr. Stanciu, will you kindly see to the construction of highways in Romania, too? You seem more than qualified!
As you come from Brașov and pass Bunești commune, you have to forget the landscape and grab hold of the steering wheel: you are now probably on the worst road in Romania.
Layers of wavy tarmac shot with millions of craters.*

However, the road is beautiful, guarded by old poplars, decorated by mistletoe. There's even a story with these poplars: some locals wanted to cut them down out of some stupid whim. They were saved by the Mihai Eminescu Foundation which bought them for a huge amount (150 million lei, 16 years ago) and now they are part of the regional patrimony.

VISCRI - THE INHABITED MUSEUM

After working the steering wheel slaloming through the potholes, you get to the most well-known Romanian village in the world, Viscri. A genuine museum in open air, except it is inhabited. Old pear trees by the roadside, water springs with gutters for livestock to drink, old houses dating back from the 1700-1800s, carefully restored.

Green grass. Time passes serenely beyond the large gates and shutters closed on the windows. The Sachsens who set up this village hundreds



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



of years ago left. Only their names remain on the walls. Also owing to Prince Charles, who bought and restored a house in the area, Viscri was saved. Except for one household of a stubborn local, you won't see plastic thermopane windows or paints of chemically-designed colours like pink or deep purple, now highly fashionable through the Sachsen villages in Transylvania.

Although when we went there the tourist season had not begun yet, Viscri already had plenty of foreigners, thrilled to see, like in the movies, horse carriages or herds of cows growing from one household gate to another, leaving for the grasslands every morning.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

The museums in the western world hire actors to simulate life in the old days. At Viscri, nobody is playing any roles, people actually live like that.

But there's a problem. If you are an active type tourist, and you haven't come all this way just to linger around in between copious meals from guesthouses, there's really not much to do in Viscri.

You can visit the fortified church and the village museum, you can hitch a ride in a horse carriage to





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



the brickwork workshop or to the sheep stable and that's about it.

But the surroundings offer lots of things to discover across tens of kilometres radius. The landscape was modelled by the Sachsen beginning with the 12th century. They cut down trees to make grasslands but left here and there old oak trees for cattle to take shelter from the scorching sun. During autumn they would release the pigs to eat the fallen acorns. Nature offered plenty of oak trees. And so they brought and planted pine trees for a softer wood. The landscape has remained the same for the most part - you can recognize a Sachsen village by the secular trees scattered on grasslands and by the pine tree forests.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



Botanists from all over Europe come to these places driven by fascination: the grasslands feature about 120 species of different plants per square meter, a biodiversity difficult to match by other parts of the continent.

WE CAN DO MORE

A handful of people from the Adept Transylvania Foundation - after struggling for years to convince new settlers of Sachsen villages that their riches would not consist in thermopane windows and red iron-sheet roofs, but in



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



preserving carefully what they found to be - set out to boost the tourism in the area to make the locals more prosperous.

Cornel Stanciu, a former mountain-bike champion, knows the forests around like no other. It's hard to catch up with him: he runs from the Sachsen house from 1837 that he is restoring to the airport in Târgu Mureș where he is seeing off some foreign tourists.

Then, runs through the forests again, to see how his project is coming along. He's the type of person picking up plastic bottles and garbage thrown away by people, muttering angrily.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

THE BEGINNING WITH FIVE BICYCLES

In 2008, the Adept Foundation bought the first five bicycles. We realized that people would not come to ride a bike in the area if they didn't have the guarantee of specially fitted routes. We had nice routes for bikers, but if it rained, they became impossible to use. There was also a shortage of guides that could both speak a foreign language and also know the paths through the forest.



And so we got the idea to build the first stone route for bikers. We didn't know anything about it, we did some research, some foreign volunteers gave us a hand and in 2011 we inaugurated the first 7 kilometres.

These 7 kilometres of the pilot road were proof that the Adept Foundation could do a good job in the area and in 2013 we got a bigger grant from the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme* allowing to build a road that could link along 80-100 kilometres all the Sachsen



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



villages, from Viscri to Sighișoara. The road mostly goes through the woods.

WHAT ONLY FIVE RESOLUTE MEN CAN DO

In one month, if the summer is not a rainy one, the road for bicycles from Viscri to Sighișoara, 80 km long, passing through Bunești Criț and Saschiz, will be ready.

It's an ecological road, 80-90 centimetres wide, consolidated with stone, to help tourists not get stuck in the mud in case of rain. The route will also be marked accordingly, using the Swiss funds, and a guiding application for smart phones is also almost complete.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

HOW MANY PEOPLE BUILT THIS 80-KM LONG ROAD?

I TOGETHER WITH FOUR BOYS IN THE VILLAGE, PLUS A SPECIAL, NARROW TRACTOR.





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



HOW BICYCLES TRANSFORM TOURISM IN THE AREA

For those who have never practiced tourism on a bicycle before, this road may seem like any other path. But this “path” can change the economy of the place in interesting ways.

Ever since the path was opened, 15 guesthouses have been opened in the area, as well as four bike rental points. I met in Viscri an English journalist who travelled from Great Britain to Australia riding a bike (he even wrote a book about it). This summer he brought five groups of foreign tourists keen on mountain biking. The last group had just left, that included two ironman contenders.

We will extend the touristic season from March to



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

October. It's great to ride a bike on a path in autumn.

Also, the guesthouses and tourist services in the eight villages which the path crosses will be brought back to life - says Cornel Stanciu.

As a result of the partnership, specialists in bike tourism from Switzerland came in, tested the road and shared with the local guides some of their experience. They left content.

A PATH TOWARDS THE FUTURE OF TOURISM

Having breakfast at the guesthouse in Viscri where I was staying, I saw on the counter a bowl with an enticing beige paste. Was it bean paste?

No Sir, it's cream from here, in the village. This is how real cream looks like, it's not white as you know it from the supermarket - said the lady seeing to the kitchen business laughing.

That's why tourists from other Sachsen villages come to Viscri.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

To discover a part of the genuine origins of a life partly lost.

Because of the disastrous road, Viscri is a remote settlement as you drive from Brașov. Few cars dare test their suspensions against the potholes in the road.

Five people, five villagers, with help from the Swiss, built in two years what others won't build in decades: a road and a future for the tourism in the area.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



OFFICE FOR LOST CHILDREN

Author:
Victor **KAPRA**

Foto:
Cătălina **FILIP**



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

SONJA KUNZ CAME TO ROMANIA WITH THE **SWISS RED CROSS** IN 1992. SHE CAME HERE FOR TWO YEARS BUT SHE STAYED TWENTY INSTEAD. SHE IS STILL LIVING IN **GHIMBAV** AND COORDINATING THE **PECA** FOUNDATION FOR ABANDONED CHILDREN.

With money from Swiss and German donations, Sonja looked for and bought two old Sachsen households which she restored and adapted to become homes where children could live the life of normal families (which some of them never had). Houses with big rooms, a big play yard and large back yards to grow what is necessary for the kitchen.

After years of investment, they look like households of hard-working and thriving families with lots of children.

After 1992, we hoped Romania would slowly get back on its feet and that we would no longer have abandoned children. I was even talking to Sonja saying that when we “run out” of children to take care of, we will make these houses shelters for senior citizens.

But real life argued against: to this day, 1,400-1,500 children are abandoned in Romania every year, most of them right after birth, in maternity - says Carmen Cristureanu, Director of PECA Foundation

Carmen has a big smile on her face. She's just



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



learnt that a catering company will send a huge pot of soup of local cuisine as a donation meant to thrill the foreign guests. It's hot, there's sign of an upcoming storm.

Their guests are a few Swiss citizens working hard to build the roof of the Foundation's textile items workshop.

CHILDREN THAT NOBODY WANTS

Most Romanian families who want to adopt children have very strict criteria: the child is not to be of a certain ethnic group, not older than three years, should be blond, and a girl. Waiting lists for adoption are long because few children fit the strict "set" of criteria of the parents to be.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



The PECA Foundation, however, has no acceptance criteria and they refuse no child, many children being disabled.

For instance, we have six children with Beta Thalassaemia Major (a hereditary disorder) who take blood transfusions every month and require constant medical monitoring.

We also have Mara. Both her parents are schizophrenic. They met in the hospital, fell in love



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



and that's how she came along. She's a normal child and the Swiss doctors told us there's just 13% likelihood that she will develop her parents' condition. Or take Nelu, who had a certain form of leukaemia. Fortunately, now he is cured. These are children that nobody actually wants.

The children from the PECA Foundation are spread into three groups, in fact family groups, with separate and dedicated households, kitchens and social parents.

All that could be done for these family groups not to resemble an orphanage has been done: children go out in the streets to play with the neighbours,



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



IT MAY SEEM INCONCEIVABLE FOR US, ROMANIANS, BUT THESE PEOPLE TAKE VACATION FROM THE COMPANIES WHERE THEY WORK IN SWITZERLAND IN ORDER TO COME TO GHIMBAV, AT THE PECA FOUNDATION, AND WORK AS VOLUNTEERS SAYS CARMEN.

have friends on the outside, have their own rooms and they go to the park or to cinema. Those who are older are assigned responsibilities matching their capacity, such as looking out for the poultry enclosure.

Almost 80% of our financing comes from Switzerland, from donations. The fact that we have been included in the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme* helped us



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



consolidate the relationship with our Swiss friends, which is very important.

Also thanks to this Programme, we got a grant to set up the Diversis Workshop which we are now extending - explains Director Carmen Cristureanu. It's a protected economical unit which hires persons in need or disabled persons and this will secure in the future part of our financing, from the sale of our products.

HOW TO LISTEN TO THE CHILDREN

A Swiss volunteer who was a great help is Barbara. She is a psychologist for organizations and, among



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



others, she taught us about active listening.

These children, even if some suffer from cognitive impairment, sensory-wise they respond better than others, they feel things more intensely beyond words.

Here is an example of an exercise that we conducted here, at PECA, with Barbara: one of us was telling something important, the other was supposed to listen but had also received a secret task - to count in their mind to one hundred, thus not being able to focus on what she was hearing. Another colleague was watching the reactions of the speaker who could tell that he was talking without being listened to, which hurt him.

We understood how important it was to listen to every child carefully when they want to tell us something - says Carmen.

Radu can win at any time a



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

casting for a TV commercial for children products. He is cheerful, blonde, is red in his cheeks and laughs mouth wide open to the ears. You can't even tell he's been locked for days indoors with his brother, naked - so as not to get their clothes dirty, while their mother was away working as a prostitute. In the meantime, the brother had to fill in the role of the father, while mommy is expecting a new baby. Radu stayed to be raised at PECA.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Alex is now 22 years old and he was also raised at PECA. He recently got a work contract at a pastry shop in Zürich and while he's waiting for his papers to come out, he helps raising the little ones. His advantage is that he attended school in German, a language which he now speaks well.

These children will stay with the PECA Foundation for abandoned children until they turn 18 or until they finish studying, at age 26.





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Those who grew up at the PECA Foundation in these 20 years sometimes come back to us, just as we sometimes go to see our parents on vacations or when we need help - says Carmen.

I would later learn that over the past years donations to PECA slowly increased even from Romanian persons and companies, as did the number of Romanian volunteers.

The Swiss model is starting to pay off in involving the local society, after decades of hard work.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



A TREASURE OF THE CARPATHIANS

Author:
VICTOR **KAPRA**

Foto:
CĂTĂLINA **FILIP**



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

*THE CAR VEERS ON A SMALL STREET AND I CAN SUDDENLY SEE THE SCENERY OF A POST-APOCALYPTIC FILM - THE REMAINS OF THE **REȘITA METALLURGIC** COMPLEX WHERE IRON-MELTING FIRE HAS BEEN RAGING WITHOUT REST FOR A QUARTER OF A MILLENNIUM, SINCE **1771**.*

Ceaușescu, a megalomaniac, turned it into a colossus. When the complex was forced to pass the test of economic competitiveness after 1989, it began to wobble. Poor management.

It ended up a wreck in the hands of some Americans. That was even worse.

Now it is the property of some Russians who, seemingly, made it profitable again, but its former glory is long since gone. The complex only melts scrap iron on little staff.

Reșița has lost much of the population and has grown poor. While for a cup of good Italian coffee in Bucharest you'd pay at least 12 lei, here will only cost 4 lei. An apartment sold by a local who fled to Italy to seek work can be rented with as little as 50 Euros per month.

Huge warehouses, all rusted up, with their windows broken, where you can still hear



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

infernally industrial banging. A string of houses right next to the old industrial mammoth. At number 12, the gate bears the logo of the international organization for nature preservation, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) with the famous image of the Panda bear.

Strange! What chance does nature stand in this slag and sinter landscape?



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Well, nature will take its course, provided humans let it be and don't stump under their feet. It has this awesome power to prevail and regenerate. The beautiful things in Reșița: wooded hills descending to apartment windows.

Hills where now foxes sneak, making their way into the town to drink water from water ponds and search for food through garbage bins.





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

And if you head South, down an impeccable road, you come across a piece of heaven. I'll tell you all about that later.

RALUCA AND WILD CATS

Raluca Crîsta, the project manager, opens the door for us. If I had a lobby firm, I'd make her a job offer she couldn't refuse. There is something about her way, about her looseness, her smile when speaking of negotiations, strategies or situations which would infuriate most of us.

Raluca, could you please tell me your favourite animal and how you have come to love it?
Wild cats.

There are certain exemptions when it comes to hunting protected animals - bear, wolf and wild cat. If proven that they cause damage, hunters are entitled to shoot a number of specimens. I was revolted - what harm can these "kitties" do? And I started to do some research, I talked to hunters, biologists and I understood. The conclusion: it's a highly intelligent animal! I saw it for the first time in a corn field where it came to hunt for field mice.

WILD NATURE WITH SEVERAL MIDWIVES

South of Reșița, down to the Danube, and



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

off to the right, beyond the Retezat Mountains, lie some fantastic lands: four national parks plus a natural park and a Natura 2000 site which, in turn, include strictly protected areas. It is, perhaps, the most spectacular part of the Carpathians.

Such reservations are, legally speaking, like a wonder



kid with several midwives: the defence and preservation of these parts, in addition to their own administrations, fall under several institutions' care, including forest administrations, administrations of hunting domains, water administration, mineral resource agencies, APIA, etc.

It's easy to imagine how coherent the management of these reservations is and how likely it is that the institutions involved will pass responsibility to one another when a problem occurs.

THE REȘIȚA SUBSIDIARY OF THE WWF

Thanks to a grant received from the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme* the Reșița subsidiary of the WWF was set up, with a clear agenda - "Wildlife in the South-Eastern Carpathians, richness for people".

The reasons for creating this subsidiary also include the task to clarify and put order in what needs to be done further with over 300,000 hectares, which is the total surface of these protected areas South-West of the Carpathians.

In other words, the clear and right path of management for this fabulous yet frail richness



of Romania - landscapes, plants, animals, birds, people with millenary traditions - to remain unaltered.

What wildlife means and why it is worth preserving it

There are few wild areas left in the whole Europe where nature takes its normal course, just like at the beginning of time. Where neither the species of animals and birds, nor the landscape have been



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

substantially altered by man
and his activities.

Wild as they are, these areas
are still inhabited. Can the
people finally get some hope of
prosperity, after generations of
fight against poverty?

“Together with our partners
from the WWF Switzerland, we
began a study to see what the
people in the protected areas
and the authorities understand
when it comes to wildlife, how



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



it works for them and against
them - explains Raluca Crîsta.

The result was encouraging:
people have a positive attitude
towards natural beauties that
must be preserved, but at the
same time they want a long
term economic development
for themselves. And that is
because mostly what they've
seen was abuse, which terribly
upsets them. The sites are
pundered and the locals get
nothing.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Locals that own land in the protected areas have restrictions to obey but they receive no compensation for it, although they are entitled to it by law and the Constitution. The state simply found there were too many of them and ceased payments. And this is where their frustration comes into play: how is that, you come on my land telling me I can't do this and that and offer nothing in return?

Not to mention that the locals from the protected areas haven't exactly been explained what they can and can't do and, especially, why.

And these explanations must be more complex because it's not enough to tell them that they must protect a tree or a bird, because in nature everything is connected, interrelated and frail; a small lack of balance can lead to catastrophic effects".

THE CHANCE TO BE BOTH PROSPEROUS AND FRIENDS WITH NATURE

The area of South-Western Carpathians is fabulous, as I was saying. Cultural diversity, so much promoted by the European Union, has been around these parts for hundreds of years. Croatian, German, Czech, Serbian and of course Romanian communities live in harmony,



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



at the same time preserving their cultural identity and language.

Villages hung up on rocks that you can only reach by climbing wooden ladders or after striding heavily up a long and steep hill path, across waters and mountains, remote places where life is simple and authentic.

There are villages still preserving the ancestral way of



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



practicing agriculture.

For the tourists coming from the over-technologic West all these are attraction sites for which they'd be willing to pay to experiment. "Foreign tourists want to see how they milk a cow, they want a ride in a horse carriage, they want to eat fruit straight out of the trees which haven't been treated with pest-control chemicals, they want to hand mow - see if they could survive in these conditions.

Or they want to learn about nature, about the behaviour of wild animals, about how ecosystems work.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



If we guide them, we who know the places and the people, they can do it. But if they come randomly and disorganized, they stand no chance, because there are no operational info points, there is no touristic agenda in place.

Not to mention that not all people in the villages are used to working together, to helping each other out or are willing to rely on trusted people.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Now, we are trying to implement a pilot-program of a touristic organization, because there are examples of attractive, friendly tourism, such as the touristic activities of Hârtibaciului Plateau. All we have to do is copy-paste it and bring it to other protected areas - says Cătălin Gavrilă, a WWF communication specialist. We can guide locals on the right path because we've seen what needs to be done”.

Cătălin Gavrilă has set as a personal objective to see a wild animal every day - mammals, birds, reptiles, fishes.

“I managed to pull it off so far!” That means that our job here is justified. I think what impressed me the most was the quickest European bird, the peregrine falcon. It is highly sensitive, very proud and determined. I think people tend to disregard wild animals and I think they have forgotten how to live in harmony with nature. For example, too many people incapable of understanding nature were given the right to carry a hunting rifle. Alternate manual and an advocate of the wilderness before the National Forest Administration. The most important duty we have, if we want to save the Earth, is to get educated” - said Sir Peter Scott, the founder of the WWF.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



WWF Reșița managed to create in the local schools several clubs of rangers for the protection of nature. Not only students, but also teachers receive training. Thus, an alternate manual is to be issued on wilderness, for classes outside the curriculum or for tutoring classes.

But WWF's main activity is that of lobby and strategy making, acting as the advocate



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



of the wilderness before the authorities and hunting organizations. Some pay attention to them, some don't, but WWF pushes forward. Recently, the organization signed a partnership with the National Forest Administration for studying and creating ecological corridors - essential areas for wildlife to move and for its genetic welfare, connecting the protected areas in the South-Western Carpathians.

If currently these protected areas are like children with too many midwives, WWF Reșița is trying hard to lay the bases of a consistent administration thereof.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

I was invited in Switzerland at a university and gave a presentation - says Raluca. They no longer have wolves and in the mountains, sheep graze in electric enclosures. We discussed a little bit on the matter of wolves crossing the border from Italy, frightening the Swiss.

“How do you manage with wolves in Romania, because we can see you have plenty?” - they asked.

I answered that we let our sheep graze freely and if wolves or bears come and attack, they will kill one or two and then leave - they take their toll, something that shepherds have regarded for centuries as the natural course of things. But this philosophy is slowly changing here too, younger shepherds are no longer willing to pay this toll to nature and grab their rifle readily. It's interesting that the



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



Swiss, through the WWF, launched a program to reintroduce guard dogs in sheep flocks, after initially giving up their services.

RESTORING AUROCHS TO THE WILDERNESS

You have probably seen aurochs in zoos or in enclosures built in reservations. The proud and majestic animals of the old days have come to look like mere cows.

WWF Reșița is supporting the reintroduction of these animals as wild animals in the Țarcu Mountains. First 17 aurochs were brought from various European countries which, after



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



adapting, were left free. This month is scheduled to arrive from Europe another shipment of 14 specimens, and if the program continues in the years to come, we could have in the Țarcu Mountains a population counting 500 capita.

NO CHAINS, BUT MINDFULNESS

I liked that the WWF Reșița activists are not a species of environmentalists tying themselves with chains to the



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

fence of the Ministry of the Environment.

They started methodically to build the bases of a consistent conservation of wild areas and to prove that man can lead a decent life without pillaging everything around him.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



WHY DR. ALEXANDRU CĂBUZ WROTE “YES, WE CAN!” ON HIS FOREHEAD

Author:
VICTOR **KAPRA**

Foto:
CĂTĂLINA **FILIP**



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

MR. CĂBUZ, I THINK IT'S RATHER DIFFICULT FOR PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU DO. YOU, THE SCIENTISTS, SPEAK A CERTAIN LANGUAGE, SOMETIMES HARD TO UNDERSTAND BY THE LAYMAN. LET'S TRY A STORY-TELLING EXERCISE! IF YOUR OLD AUNT ASKED YOU WHAT YOU DID, WHAT WOULD YOU TELL HER?

He looks out of the window and focuses for a couple of minutes. Aunt, there are a lot of researchers and university professors in Romania struggling to achieve something with their research, but you can hardly see any results to help develop this country.

For the last couple of years, we have been helping them take out the results of their research from their drawers and hand them over to companies that in turn can create jobs. If they're conducting research, at least let them do it with some use. Somewhere, on the outskirts of Bucharest, in a wide and roomy attic, on Puțul lui Crăciun Street.

You have to take your shoes off as you walk in, like in a Buddhist temple, in order to step on the impeccable wood floor. A habit that probably Alexandru Căbuz acquired during his passage through Japan.

On his Facebook account, the profile picture shows him with a slogan written on his forehead: “Yes, we can!”

With a degree in Electronic Engineering obtained in the United States, he then got a doctorate in Physics at Université de Montpellier in France and continued with two post-doctoral study programs at Aston University of Birmingham, Great Britain (in Neural Computing) and at Fresnel Institute, Marseille, France.

He returned to Romania and is now working with the Romanian Institute of Science and Technology, where he is developing a project, Technology Transfer through Visibility and Mentorship, in partnership with the prestigious Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne and financed by the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme.

THE PURPOSE?

Romanian research, fragmented into dozens of universities and hundreds of centres and institutes, is far from being as efficient as it can be. The project Technology Transfer through Visibility and Mentorship has set a goal for two years to give it a certain consistency in terms



of strategy and know-how.

A relatively stupid question:

WHY DID YOU RETURN TO ROMANIA?

At his desk, Alexandru is standing. On the computer unit lie two orthodox icons. I'd ask him why he works standing, but I'm preparing to ask him another question, perhaps a bit uneasy.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



Why did you return to Romania? With your diplomas, you could have conducted research and be prosperous in lots of other beautiful places. Everybody asks me that. (Laughs).

Beyond the attachment to these places, I felt that here I could do more than in any other country. Many say there's a lot of potential here, that in Romania you can do lots of extraordinary things.

But somehow this potential is not achieved, it is not materialized; ideas remain suspended and



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

I though I perhaps could do something about that.

I came back after 15 years of studying and research abroad, in 2010, and I worked for the National Authority for Research [ANCS - a public institution of the government, Ed.] in a very, very good team. At that time, five years ago, the director of ANCS was Dragoș Ciuparu, himself freshly returned from America, from Yale University. What we achieved at ANCS is little to be seen these days, but at least we learned a lot from this.

THE ISRAEL SHORT-CIRCUIT

Then there was a special moment, when I went training with the World Intellectual Property Organization, in Israel.

The training course took three weeks, they were intensive intellectual property and entrepreneurship courses and



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

this combination fascinated and took over me.

I came back with the even clearer idea that we have to succeed in interconnecting the academic environment - researchers, with the industry - entrepreneurs. For a while I worked at a start-up business with one of the collaborators from the Ministry of Research. I failed. I had designed a social media for researchers, where scientific papers could be evaluated online.

WHY DID IT FAIL?

We had the ambition to make it as an online network where scientific papers could be evaluated in the academic environment, pursuant to which researchers could obtain scientific prestige, visibility and be promoted, obtain professor positions, research grants, etc. In the scientific world, if research results are not validated by the scientific community, they basically don't exist. The failure came from the fact that we wanted to change a system that has settled over 400 years, namely the validation of research through publicizing in prestigious scientific publications such as Nature and so on.

Moving this validation process that takes place through scientific journals, conferences, on



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



a web platform is a change of paradigm which will not happen soon or it probably will happen, but in another decade.

THE UPSIDE OF A FAILURE IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

This failed entrepreneurship experience was useful to me as I got the chance to see firsthand how things are in research.

The connection between entrepreneurship, between



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

industries and research is looking bad in Europe, with a few exceptions - Great Britain, Switzerland, perhaps the Netherlands. In Romania, things are exceptionally bad in this regard.

In Europe, the use of ideas coming from research into industry is done with great difficulty, because of bureaucracy and centralized systems. That is why we don't really have start-up businesses worth billions in Europe; many of the entrepreneurs and researchers with something to say go to America.

And this state of facts has been the starting point of project Technology Transfer through Visibility and Mentorship with Switzerland.

KEY POINTS IN RESEARCH: COMMUNICATION, RESEARCH CONTRACTS, PATENTS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

So, we aimed to build bridges across this gap between Romanian researchers and companies and industries.

It's a long term project, but now, after two years, we have already thrown a rope across this abyss, we're now trying to throw another one and perhaps in the end we



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

can build a rope bridge. It's difficult enough because the momentum in the academic environment is great and this applies to places around the world, not just Romania.

In a nutshell, I worked in four directions over these two years: Communication, Research contracts, Patents and Entrepreneurship

Let's begin with communication. **WHAT STAGE ARE WE IN WITH THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT?**

A research institute is first of all supposed to have a decent website, with a section in English, relevant for the companies and organizations in need of researcher services. It's pretty difficult.

One of the institutes I started with, a high-performing research institute, perhaps the best performing in the country,



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

“Petru Poni” in Iași, has a terrible website. I explained we can’t put them in contact with potential foreign partners because they will say “Ok, what’s their website address?”

I’m not saying that it’s bad faith, it’s just that the website is not seen as a priority by the researchers from Iași.

These are busy people, preoccupied with getting grants from the state and from the UE, with their own promotion, whereas the website provides none of these on the short term.

In the case of Petru Poni, the lack of a website was a deal breaker because our credibility is also at stake.

If I go to a partner in Great Britain or Switzerland two or three times to present them such institutions with an online platform that was last updated 20 years ago, at one point they won’t even talk to me, thinking I’m not serious.

DO WE HAVE SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES IN THE ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION?

I think the most efficient one in this sense is the Polytechnic University of Cluj, and that’s precisely why we are working with them.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

The Polytechnic University from Cluj has put up sustained efforts in the past three to five years in order to show a credible business card and it also engaged with its example the other universities in Cluj from their association. Maybe the other universities don’t have their information as well structured and updated, but at least they are trying and they understood the importance of online communication.

The Cluj Polytechnic is a fine example that we are using in order to convince other universities in the country to make a decent profile for themselves on the Internet.

The contract culture is missing from the academic environment

I brought from Switzerland an expert in contract negotiation who looked through the deals on research projects signed between a University in



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Romania and large foreign industrial groups. The expert discovered unfavourable clauses, I'd even say humiliating - if that's not too harsh a word, for an academic institution. But they were accepted because they need funds, money, in order to keep the researchers in the University, in Romania. There were clauses forbidding the publication of research results. And if an academic institution does not publish what they discovered, their work, it's as if it didn't exist.

Or clauses on assuming responsibility: the university conducts research, the research result is included in a product for the beneficiary, and then the product is sold.

If the beneficiary is summoned in justice because of that product, the Romanian university shall jointly be liable. Which is not normal, because the beneficiary conducts the final tests of the product, he has the final responsibility for launching a product on the market.

The good thing is that after these two years the universities that I have visited are beginning to understand that we no longer swim in a local pond, like 25 years ago, but in a global ocean, where all sorts of sharks hunt, where the



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

competition and rivalries are fierce.

WHAT ABOUT THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP SIDE?

In entrepreneurship you can do things by the book and still fail. Success depends on the existence of an ecosystem: legislation, a mature enough financial environment with the proper financial tools and taxation, human resources, mindsets, culture. In premiere I brought the 3 Day Start-up in Eastern Europe, which is a program launched in the USA by the large universities of the East Coast, then diffusing in Western Europe and Asia.

In our region it had yet to arrive and we organized two editions in Cluj, last autumn and this spring. We are also planning another edition in Timișoara this autumn.

It's a very intense program, spanning across three days,

54 hours, Friday to Sunday. Students only go home to sleep. For the rest of the time, they stay together and work around the clock.

The pressure is high; they never relax all this time. They come Friday after-noon, propose ideas that are then voted by the whole group. The six-seven ideas gathering most votes go into production, team are formed working hard over the next two days to create the business models based on those ideas.

Sunday evening the team goes into the pitch and must present their project, a prototype. The company that kindly hosted us, Fortech, selected in April three teams from 3Day Startup, which they called in their talent nursery to further develop their solutions.

TRANSFER OF BEST PRACTICES IN RESEARCH

Thanks to the Swiss support, we can also exchange experts. For example, we had a group of 15 Romanian researchers travel to Lausanne, researchers from six different universities and institutes from Bucharest, Iași, Cluj, Timișoara, working in several fields, from computer science to philology and sciences of life. They saw how research is conducted in Switzerland, how problems were solved efficiently with an effort that began in 1990.

It's about a transfer of best practices. We also had Swiss experts coming over to workshops in Romania, speaking about the correct templates of contracts between a researcher and a beneficiary, about the methods to optimize patent costs and about entrepreneurship.

CAN YOU SUM UP IN 25 SECONDS WHAT YOU HAVE ACHIEVED IN THESE TWO YEARS WITH THE SWISS SUPPORT?

Romania, like other countries in Eastern Europe, is facing serious problems of interconnection, of linkage between the academic environment, the researchers, and the industrial environment. The missing link is the professionals that can perform this technological transfer; we're talking about a distinct job, neither academic, not industrial.

This specialization we





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

achieved together with the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, over the past two years, with our team which has thus become the only team in Romania capable of filling this role, with great added value for the Romanian academic environment, for updating and connecting it with the society. There is also added value for the industrial environment, helping to increase competitiveness.

I believe it took me more like 30 seconds.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



ON HOW PEASANTS IN SASCHIZ LEARN THAT THEY CAN BE SWISS TOO

Author:
VICTOR **KAPRA**

Foto:
CĂTĂLINA **FILIP**



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

WHEN LANDING ON THE HUMAN TONGUE CARRIED GENTLY BY A TEASPOON, THE TRADITIONAL RHUBARB JAM MADE IN THE OLD **SACHSEN** COMMUNE OF **SASCHIZ** (**KEISD**, **KEISSD** – IN THE LOCAL DIALECT) IN **MUREȘ** COUNTY PRODUCES QUITE OPPOSITE EFFECTS: SOME ARE SO CRAZY ABOUT IT THAT THEY DEVELOP A PASSION FOR IT, WHILE SOME DON'T LIKE IT AT ALL.

THERE REALLY IS NO MIDDLE WAY.

And that's because in the original recipe, sugar is added with scarcity, just enough to tie the vigorous rhubarb stems, freshly picked from the gardens on the Transylvanian Plateau.

In today's superficial world and in the modern food industry, marketing only emphasizes the intense, sweet taste, caught on the peak of the tongue which brings instant pleasure.

Our jam is more refined; you can also feel the ever so gentle astringent taste, as well as the slightly sour taste of rhubarb - explains Ben Mehedin of the Adept Foundation, the head of project "Sachsen rhubarb jam, produced with Geographical indication".

The headquarters of the Adept Foundation in Saschiz lies in a multi-secular Sachsen house, across the huge fortified evangelic church. If you take out the computers and phones from the rooms with smoked wood beams



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

ceilings, you can shoot a film of the old days without altering the scenery too much. Behind the house operates the Sachsen rhubarb jam “factory”, a plant which any city fellow in southern Romania will most definitely mistake for burdock. The factory is in fact a not very sophisticated kitchen, but legally authorized as a food-making module.

Rhubarb (rubarbărul - the way locals call it) is specific to Sachsen cuisine, from where it spread all around Transylvania. Beyond the Carpathians it is a curiosity little known. But in the Anglo-Saxon countries, rhubarb is an herb intensely used in cuisine, like parsley in our parts.

How EUROPE MAKES A LOT OF MONEY ON TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS

In a world of monosodium glutamate poured into just about everything, where food is industrially made on conveyor belts, like bags of chemicals, people are seeking and are happy to find “real” food.

The European Union has created and passed in a law the concept of “product of Geographical Indication” A label that guarantees that a type of bacon, sausage, cheese, beverage, etc. is authentic, specific to



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



a certain place, and it complies with a local recipe developed over a long time. The product of geographical indication belongs to a community and is protected.

For example, have you seen how many “Tecuci mustard” types there are in stores? As there is no legal protection and no recipe of fabrication well defined, anyone can apply this label to their jar, even if they make the mustard from paints



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

and adhesives at Strehaia. There are countries in Europe (Italy, Switzerland, France, for example) that have registered hundreds of products with Geographical Indication. The exports of European countries consisting in such products exceed 11 billion Euros annually.

WHERE DOES ROMANIA STAND IN THIS REGARD?

The story is long and pertains to the national specificity:



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

scepticism (the opinion that what is possible in the Western countries “is not possible here”), a somewhat chronic incapacity to work in teams for a final joint purpose and the lack of confidence that a product that we see as simple could bring economic benefits. We have a single product acknowledged in the EU as being of geographical indication, which is the Topoloveni Jam. On the other hand, the process of European





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



acknowledgment of the fantastic Pleșcoi sausages seems to be stuck sine die due to dispute among the producers. The method of production of the Sachsen rhubarb jam from Saschiz was inaugurated by Prince Charles who, as we know, is in love with this area.

After the initial solemn moment, the harder process of European recognition started and especially of changing mindsets.

There is a conflict here: locals have a strong appetite to “modernize” (like for example fitting thermopane windows to two hundred-year old houses) and don’t really understand why



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



tourists, a source of good money, avoid precisely that - going on vacation to escape their thermopane-fitted homes only to find others just like them.

Thanks to the financing provided by the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme* the locals of Saschiz started to learn and understand after certain training programs that the simple plant turned into a jam



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



the recipe of which has been developed over time by the Sachsen may become a valuable local product which they can send and sell all throughout Europe. They understood this denomination of bureaucratic resonance “product of geographical indication”.

Visits followed, thanks to the same financing program, to the Swiss food farms and factories which disseminate all over Europe local delicatessen like Fromage Gruyère or the Damassine brandy. These visits have a point, because in Switzerland the peasants from Saschiz can realize that they have everything they need in order to identify and launch their



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

traditional products. And more importantly, they can realize that what they see in the Swiss villages “is possible” in their village too.

These are seeds of changing mindsets that will sprout slowly, over time, but with potentially great effects.

The Swiss don't finance this transfer of know-how for reasons of cuisine archaeology. Once the Saschiz Jam is acknowledged in Europe as a product of geographical indication (a process which is underway and which will take a while longer because in the world of slow food you must not rush procedures), it may act as an instrument of development for the area, for reasons that require no further explanation. In order for this jam not to have an “industrial” taste, the solution is not to make the pot where you make it bigger, but to make it into several pots,



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

with more locals, based on a strict compliance with the established recipe and with the local ingredients - explains Ben Mehedin (see photo).

For the time being, the jam sells in a little store of the Saschiz foundation and at local producer fairs.

But there is a good chance that in a few years the place will be made prosperous by this simple, visually unappealing plant, called rhubarb.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME





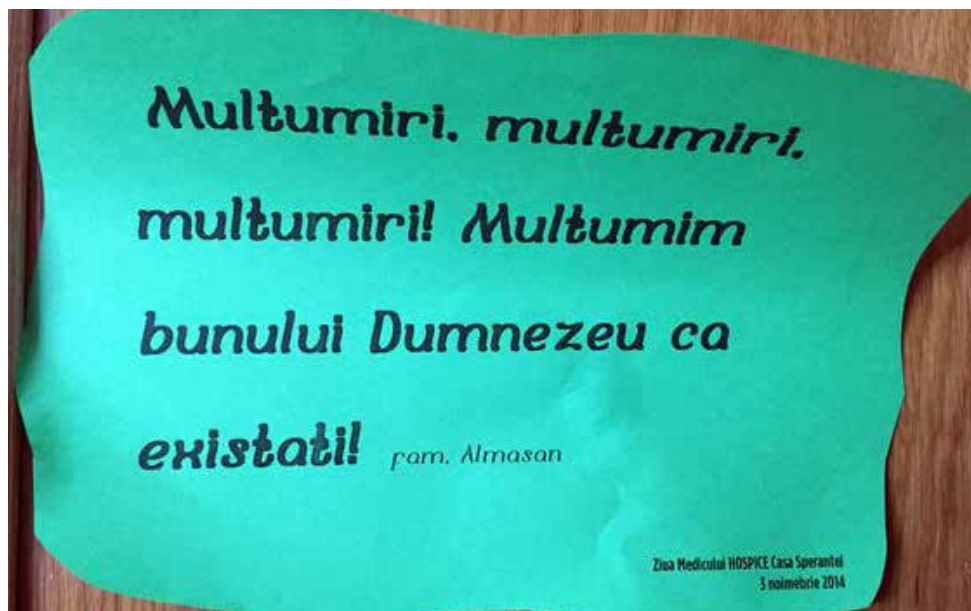
PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



ON THE THERAPY OF PAIN AND CRUELTY

Author:
VICTOR **KAPRA**

Foto:
CĂTĂLINA **FILIP**
VICTOR **KAPRA**



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

GRANNY, WHEN YOU'RE GONE, WHERE WILL YOU GO?

IF YOU SIT BY THE SEASHORE, YOU CAN SEE SHIPS OUT IN THE DISTANCE. BUT AFTER A WHILE YOU CAN'T SEE THEM ANYMORE, BECAUSE THEY GO OVER THE HORIZON. THAT DOESN'T MEAN THEY NO LONGER EXIST, BUT JUST THAT YOU CAN'T SEE THEM ANYMORE.

It will be the same with me. You won't see me, but I'll be with you. There are no people shown in the images of this article. Decency requires that suffering not be photographed.

We are rather primitive and cruel when it comes to severe illnesses, most times incurable. About 80% of cancer patients face great pains during the advanced stages of their illness. But with a fairly simple medication, 90% of these pains can be fully controlled or reduced to an acceptable level.

"However, studies show that only three out of ten cancer patients in Romania receive the right medication against pain. It's awful" - says Associate Professor MD. Daniela Moșoiu (see photo), Director of National Education, Strategy and Development, Palliative Care - Hospice Casa Speranței. The causes include: most family doctors are not trained in the field of palliative treatments, the patients and their



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



families are not informed on the rights that they have, the local health system is hospital-centred - if you're sick at home, you get very few medical services.

A piece of the truth: in the Romanian health system, a patient "who stands little chance of recovering" is regarded by many as a condemned person for whom medical expenditures are really rather pointless. Nobody says it out in the open, but it's a reality accepted in silence.

PALLIATIVE CARE, A SIGN OF A CIVILIZED COUNTRY...



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



A quiet street in Braşov. Hospice Casa Speranței, an NGO you probably heard of. A place where adult cancer patients or HIV patients, as well as children with severe, incurable illnesses receive support and treatment.

"We started in 1992. Palliative medical services don't aim to cure patients with incurable illnesses - that's not even possible - but to bring quality to

their lives, like for instance make them active, useful, part of the community” - explains Dr. Daniela Moșoiu.

Although there are now 72 organizations providing palliative services to chronic patients in Romania, only 10% of these patients end up benefitting from them.

However, over the past few years a profound change has been taking over the system, the education, the civilization as a whole, the medical sector and these days this change is driven by the financial aid of the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme* and by means of the know-how from this country organized in cantons.

A friend of mine, working as a doctor in Boston, came back to Romania years ago when her grandmother had only very little left to live.

The effort it took her to get some morphine to calm her pain down reminded her of Kafka. She failed in procuring it and the old woman faded after enduring atrocious suffering.

The law at the time, designed to prevent drug consumption, also had an absurd effect on patients.



“We tried hard, for almost five years, to change these provisions related to restricting some medicine, which happened in 2007. The law states clearly: any doctor has the right to prescribe any medicine - including derivatives from morphine, to any patient that needs it, assuming responsibility for that, obviously.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



But even today there are doctors who are afraid to prescribe such treatments. Let alone the fact that there are counties where people still don't know that the police no longer deals with monitoring medical prescriptions, like eight-ten years ago, when they were obliged to count each vial of morphine a patient got his hands on" - explains Dr. Moșoiu.

BRAȘOV-SWITZERLAND DUPLEX

At the top floor of Hospice Casa Speranței there is a video-conference centre whereby the Swiss Hospital Saint Gallen gets in touch, for three years now, with the doctors in Brașov involved in the project of introducing palliative



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



medicine on a large scale in Romania.

"The very project through which we got this Swiss financing was drafted together with Dr. Florian Strasser from Saint Gallen. We showed him the graphs and schemes through the video camera.

We started the project with a research project that took more than one year. We didn't want to do it the Romanian way - to



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



have a project executed from one day to the other and with good results, if possible. With this research project we identified the needs, legislation barriers and the state of facts.

We found that, for example, family doctors - the most suited link in the medical chain to apply palliative treatments - had almost no training in this field whatsoever, not due to their fault, but the system's" - states Dr. Daniela Moșoiu.

THE SEEDS OF MEDICAL CIVILIZATION

After conducting this research, we launched stage two of the project: education. We



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



selected 166 family doctors from four areas: Brașov, Cluj, București and Iași. They attended courses for a month.

The result was extraordinary: after the final test, we asked them how many of them wanted to stay with the project. And 93 of them said "yes, I want to continue implementing this with my patients" Resources only allow us to register 20-25 doctors into the



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



system, each with five patients on palliative approach, so that after some time we can end up having 100 patients. The data collected pursuant to treating these 100 patients will be documented in electronic files and based on that we will be able to come up with proposals to forward to the National House of Health Insurance. Thus, palliative procedures could be introduced nationwide into family medicine. This is our end purpose.

THE CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE

Medication against pain is essential, but when it comes to the palliative approach, other



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



interventions of the doctor in relation to cancer patients are also important.

The communication with the patient is often marked by a conspiracy of silence. At the request of the family, the doctor won't tell the patient the real diagnosis - a solution that may seem good for the moment, but one that only produces complications in the future: postponing treatment,



tense relations with the dear ones when the truth is revealed.

It's important to correctly communicate bad news related to an illness: starting with the diagnosis and going to information on possible mutilating treatment - says Dr. Moșoiu. You can't change what is bad, but at least you don't add to the existing bad situation. The doctor must learn how to communicate this news in such a way that at the end of the conversation the patient is not desperate, but can see a glimmer of hope.



In the field of communication, we have created an online platform, infopaliatie.ro, destined to patients and their families: it provides information on the rights they have (pension, disabled status), how to administer specific medication, how to take care of themselves.

For example, cancer eats away on someone's energy and energy comes from muscular fibres. If the patient is put in a bed by the family, without physical activity, he may quickly end up in cachexy.



We offer them diet schemes and physical exercise schemes which make the difference on the quality of their life. At the ground floor of Hospice Casa Speranței from Brașov, in the day centre which resembles a friendly salon of a roomy house, patient ladies encourage one another to not give up. They work and



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

make various items which are then sold and bring some little cash to the NGO, they have a little hair-dressing and cosmetics parlour in a corner and there's even a piano. If they feel they're giving up, the psychologist awaits them in his cabinet or the priest or reverend comes to encourage them. On the first floor, children forget about their illness playing.

On the top floor, two monitors and a video camera establish whenever necessary a connection with the doctors of Saint Gallen Cantonal Hospital.

That is where the support come for some Romanian doctors determined to change the way in which families and the society treat their kin struck by serious illnesses.

For the time being, palliative care, starting with access to medicines alleviating pain and going all the way to counselling, is out of the reach of most local patients with incurable illnesses. Which is cruel.

The seeds of change have started, however, to sprout in Romania too. the income tax already paid to the state in the previous year and involves no cost for the person redirecting this money.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



MOM IS IN SPAIN ALL THE TIME

Author:
VICTOR **KAPRA**

Foto:
CĂTĂLINA **FILIP**



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

**MADAM, YOUR CHILD NEEDS THERAPY.
ARE YOU SAYING THAT I HAVE A HANDICAPPED CHILD? GET OUT OF HERE!**

Early summer, on our way from Bacau heading South-East. Smooth hills, scattered villages, few people. Crosses embellished with artificial flowers here and there, at crossroads.

You can't help but think that it wouldn't be a bad idea to move to these beautiful and quiet places. But the dusty road, shaped into the soil itself, waiting for a tarmac layer that no one knows when will arrive, bluntly brings you right back to reality.

The locals live off of their grab hoes and of what their animals give off. They depend on the sky: if it rains, it's all good; if there's a drought, poverty slowly creeps in. The minibus stops in front of the day centre of the Foundation for Community Support Foundation from the Motoșeni commune. All children gathered from the neighbouring villages get off.

SPANISH CITIZEN

He is five years old and is a Spanish citizen. First name: Aurel. Last name: a complicated



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



one, of foreign resonance. He was born in Spain and his mother, Romanian, temporarily sent him here to stay with his grandparents, in Moldova. It's common knowledge: most times, what is temporary soon turns into being definitive. Mom is in Spain all the time - he tells me, as if he were telling a tale.

He's queuing up, waiting for his turn with the speech therapist. He is suffering from echolalia. A strange disorder: he keeps repeating several times the question he is asked, instead of giving an answer. It's how his brain works.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

After one year of therapy, he's almost entirely cured. He was lucky to be found in time by the mobile recovery team.

Adriana, six years old. Applauds thrilled every time Oana, the speech therapist, says "Bravo!". She can only utter five words that are intelligible. After six more months of therapy, she managed to learn one more: "sheep". For the rest of the time, she speaks her own language.

MIORIȚA AND CHILDREN WITH PROBLEMS

Two years ago, the team of physical therapists, psycho-pedagogy specialists, speech therapists and art therapists from the Community Support Foundation Bacău and the partner association Daniel Centre - Bacău received a grant through the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme* and ever since



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



they have been driving tens of kilometres every day through the poorest villages around, providing therapy to the children born with neurological problems - speech or locomotor disability, cognitive impairment, autism.

The parents from these villages, simple people, regarded the misfortune of having a disabled child in their family with resignation.

From the very beginning we had to fight with people's mindsets. We tried to convince them that their child needed therapy, treatment and that he can be recovered if we deal with it together - says Silviu, physical therapist.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



They felt offended. "Are you saying that I have a handicapped child?" We were met with criticism.

Later, when they saw the results in the recovery of some children we had gotten a chance to work with, more and more started to come to us willingly. Rumour had got around and now we even have a waiting list.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Some felt embarrassed to take their sick child to specialists “in the city”, as they didn’t even have the money for a commute worth tens of kilometres and they weren’t sure they could get state aid for the child caretaking.

The therapists at Community Support Foundation provided counselling on how to obtain a disability certificate and caretaker indemnity, which was important because most of the families of these villages have no constant income.

TENS OF CHILDREN WITH PROBLEMS IN JUST A FEW VILLAGES

In the ten villages of Bacău county where they work, the team at Community Support Foundation and their partner Daniel Center identified in two years tens of children with problems, from those with cognitive impairment to those with hyperkinetic syndrome.

Some of them are born with these disorders because their mothers don’t go to the doctor during pregnancy and go through difficult births. In other cases, children develop a cognitive impairment because nobody takes care of them. They go to school on and off and for the rest of the time they are left to their own devices.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



We teach the parents how to spend time with them and how to play with them. Everybody is tired when they get home, but if we can't offer the child at least one hour just for them, then they can't develop normally - explains Silviu.

The rural caravan of therapists leaves every day from the partner association Daniel Centre in Bacău, where the Association for supporting children with neuromotor impairment operates, the president of which is Mărioara Popa.

AN NGO BORN OUT OF DESPAIR

The Daniel Centre was one of the first NGOs set up in Romania. Out of despair. In



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

December 1989, Mrs. Popa had already been taking care of her son Daniel for several years, who was suffering from an incurable illness, subacute sclerosing panencephalitis. The 1989 overthrow of the Communist regime brought some hope of a cure - the foreign countries surely had a cure for the illness.

With help from Church, Mrs. Popa, along with other mothers of children sick with panencephalitis requested help from Western clinics. However, the illness that progressively destroys the brains proved to be incurable.

Daniel died after five years of ordeal, and Mărioara Popa found closure in helping the children from Bacău born with neurological problems.

The Daniel Centre that I created in 1992 with Swedish and Swiss support helped me



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

survive the loss of Daniel - says Mrs. Popa. Daniel Centre welcomes for treatment children right after birth, but also some that are older.

An example to take pride in is Răducu, a boy who at age four didn't speak at all, although physically sound. In one year he developed the vocabulary of a two-year old. He made progress and now he's a fifth grader and goes to math competitions.

Some of the patients grew alongside the Daniel Centre. Costel is now 26 years old and suffers from a severe cognitive impairment. They sympathetically call him "Director" because every day, at 8 o'clock sharp, he opens the door of the Centre. He has no other place to go. Thanks to the therapy, he can pull off remarkable performances, given his condition. He can buy bread by himself, he goes to church, is independent, which is not the case with other patients like him who did not receive treatment.

Thanks to the partnership with the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme we exchanged experience with similar centers in Switzerland.

I dream that one day we can do what I saw



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



THE DANIEL CENTRE THAT I CREATED IN 1992 WITH SWEDISH AND SWISS SUPPORT HELPED ME SURVIVE THE LOSS OF DANIEL - SAYS MRS. POPA.

them doing over there. Disabled persons aren't left just lying around with their families; they find suited occupations for them.

For example, I saw a journalist that could only move his head. They fitted a touch screen for him and he wrote his articles with a pencil he held in his mouth - says physical therapist



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



Lavinia.
Camelia was born hearing impaired. She learned how to write and read before she could speak. She was lucky to receive a brain implant which now helps her hear. At 12 years of age, she only has the vocabulary of a five-year old, but she's making progress. She's such a hard-working child: beside school, she undergoes 8 hours of speech therapy per day in order to reach a stage when she can express herself normally.

As you are reading these lines, the team of Community Support Foundation and Daniel



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



Centre is somewhere in one of the villages of Bacău, trying hard to offer a chance to normal life to some children who otherwise, due to poverty and a primitive social assistance system, would stand none.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



MĂLÂNCRAV AND THE GOLDEN APPLES

Author:
VICTOR **KAPRA**

Foto:
CĂTĂLINA **FILIP**



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

FRUIT ARCHAEOLOGY

IN ANY HYPERMARKET YOU CAN SEE IN SPRING SEEDLINGS OF FRUIT TREES FROM VARIOUS PLACES. THEY GIVE YIELD QUICKLY AND MAKE EXHIBITION-WORTH FRUIT, BIG, SHINY, COLOURFUL, PERFECT.

The mobile phone becomes useless even before arriving in Mălâncrav village, in the county of Sibiu. The reception recedes down to the last line.

A random rabbit or falcon clear the car's path last second, showing an offended attitude like they own the place, a place now disturbed by the presence of man, a place which is theirs, with gentle hills and inviting forests.

You are then greeted into a multi-secular Sachsen house with thick walls, with old furniture items and chimneys all glazed in blue; you gaze at the pictures of the long gone or disappeared masters of the place, hung on walls.

A calm and steady noise of grab hoes clearing the corn field from weeds just by the forest edge. Time unwinds differently, with no television, no mobile Internet. And it doesn't seem too bad either.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

THE APPLE MANOR

When bought by the Mihai Eminescu Trust Foundation, the ruins of the Apafi Manor in Mălâncrav (14th century) were guarded by sheep who took shelter there to rest among the decaying walls.

Then restorers came along, searched for photos, old plans and foundations overrun by weeds.

The manor was reborn and now the locals proudly show you the way to their “castle”.

Mălâncrav is called in Hungarian Almakerék, which in an approximate translation means “the apple wheel”. Wide orchards covered these places once.

When it started restoring the Apafi manor, the Mihai Eminescu Foundation also bought the rest of the apple orchards left in desolation nearby, to avoid an unpleasant surprise of having someone come over and cut down the old trees and then build some hotel-guesthouse painted in Arabian pink, as was the case in some other places in Transylvania.

It was simply better to keep the landscape as it has been for centuries: the manor, the tower of the fortified church, the orchard and the strings



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



of houses covered in red shingles.

THAT WAS THE BEGINNING.

Did I just say perfect? They look close to perfect, but taste like a supermarket. They're juicy and dull. Plastic. Many people buy these seedlings and plant them thrilled in their gardens.

In the same gardens in villages, however, you may come across some old, twisted



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



tree, giving another sort of fruit, maybe not as good-looking, but with a real taste.

Back in the day, Transylvanian households had their settled way about apples too: some were to be kept over winter (and remained tasty and fresh even after Ester); some were used to make a fine brandy. They were apples that ripened in the summer, while others were just right to make apple pies.

Apple trees also had a decorative purpose. The restorers of the Apafi Manor searched through Europe in order to reconstruct the park of the manor, containing a sort of apple trees



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

making a kind of glowing-red fruits and with leaves that stayed green until frost set in, giving a chromatic contrast in the garden during autumn.

This way of handling fruits is all but lost, but it survives in places that are yet to be discovered.

Skills originating from Switzerland

The SAVE organization
(Safeguard for Agricultural





Varieties in Europe) has been operational for almost 20 years in Switzerland. They are trying hard to preserve old sort of vegetables and fruits which otherwise would disappear faced with the assault of genetic improvement laboratories.

SAVE signed a partnership with Mihai Eminescu Foundation and, with a grant in amount of close to a quarter of a million Swiss francs given by the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme*, it took on a daunting task: identifying and saving old sorts of fruit trees in the area of Sibiu, Brașov and Harghita as part of the project “Mălâncrav Orchard”.



First, surveys were conducted in the villages: what old sorts of trees there were, the age of the trees, ripening time, what they were traditionally used for, the taste they had.

They identified dozens of forgotten sorts of apple trees, pear trees, cherry trees and at the same time people understood that a tree inherited from the parents of grandparents can be much more valuable than a foreign seedling bought from a hypermarket.



THE REBIRTH OF THE MĂLÂNCRAV ORCHARD

Based on the Swiss know-how, they selected 50 old and forgotten sorts of apple trees from the area, well adapted to the climate for hundreds of years. During spring, blossomed branches taken from rediscovered apple trees took the road to Mălâncrav in order to be engrafted.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Romania, because the last official local tree inventory register dates back from the last century, since 1969. Our orchard in Mălâncrav stretches over 108 hectares. With the old sorts in the nursery we will partly replant it, because we have 30 vacant hectares at this point - says administrator Dan Marton.

But, in a few years, we also want to sell to locals in the area seedlings of apple trees rediscovered by us and bred in our nursery.

“Some are keen on luxury automobiles. I am keen on tractors” - says Dan Marton laughing.

Swiss francs was also used to buy farm equipment, irrigation systems, tools for looking after the trees, but also to educate locals on orchard matters, (re)teaching them, for example, how to engraft the trees on their own. The Mălâncrav orchard is reborn year in, year out, with lots of hard work because it is ecologically certified and no industrial care-taking methods are used.

For now, only the trees belong to the Mihai Eminescu Foundation, the soil is still a property of the state.

“We also set up a small factory of organic



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

apple juice, because the royalty we pay to the state is high and we have to come up with several sources of income” - explains Dan Marton.

National patrimony is not just buildings and items from times past. It also means the forgotten taste of a flavoured apple or of a juicy pear which our ancestors savoured, tastes which are not endangered to be extinct for ever.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

PEOPLE WHO LEARNED HOW TO HELP THEMSELVES

Author:
VICTOR **KAPRA**

Foto:
CĂTĂLINA **FILIP**



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

THE PERSONS YOU SEE IN THE PICTURE ARE TWO ROMANIAN AND ONE SWISS CITIZEN DRIVING TOGETHER A FIRE-FIGHTING PUMP FROM THE EARLY 1900s, NOW A HISTORICAL EXHIBIT AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF FIRE FIGHTERS - FOIȘORUL DE FOC.

THE IMAGE IS A SUITED METAPHOR FOR A JOINT ROMANIAN-SWISS PROJECT THAT WILL SAVE FOR YEARS TO COME MANY LIVES, DWELLINGS, FORESTS.

Sounds a bit dramatic?

Perhaps, but only if we overlook how many children die every year burnt alive, locked inside homes engulfed by flames, for instance. Or if we overlook the people who in less than two hours lose everything and all they have left are the clothes they have on.

What the budget can't do, the volunteers can. Five years ago, the Government passed a law according to which every commune in Romania must set up its own service of volunteer fire-fighters.

What money do we do that with? - asked the mayors. We can find the people, but we need the equipment, trucks, we can't just give those buckets of water.

And so, the law, useful in itself, remained just a sentence on a document in many settlements. A handful of people, both Romanian and



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Swiss, found the solution notwithstanding. And they started off from a base set up in 1993: the association Opération Villages Roumains-Suisse.

There is a background of the cooperation so that, with the support of the Association, after the law was passed, four centres of volunteers for emergency situations were set up (for fires, floods, accidents) at Gherla, Oltina-Constanța, Livezi-Bacău and Deda-Mureș. Training the volunteers was done both by local army forces and by Swiss fire-fighters coming on vacation voluntarily in order to help out the Romanians.

This successful endeavour qualified the Association Opération Villages Roumains-Suisse for receiving a grant in the amount of 250,000 Swiss francs through the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme*, destined for the project “Pompiers 2013-2016”, thanks to which the number of volunteer fire-fighting centres in Romanian villages trained to intervene in emergency situations will increase.

WHERE FIRE-FIGHTING TRUCKS COME FROM

At a first sight, the Swiss Pascal Praz, President of the Association Opération Villages Roumains-Suisse gives the impression of a perfect bonhomme. It's just an appearance,



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

because he proofs of a lot of energy when it comes to rescuing fire-fighting trucks from Switzerland from decommissioning in order to give them to Romanian villages.

There are trucks planned for decommissioning that have been in service for 20 years, but with only 15,000 km of running service. They work perfectly.

We take them, give them a full service, fit them with everything that is required and donate them to the volunteer fire-fighting centres in Romania - says Pascal who managed to bring in almost 20 such truck so far. And he's not stopping here.

A fire-fighting unit in Switzerland ordered fire-proof overalls. When they arrived, the commander noticed that the pants only had one reflective band. „Mais non, je



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



veux deux bandes” – he uttered.

The rejected but new protection gear ended up, thanks to Pascal Praz, not in a Swiss incineration facility, but in the storeroom of some Romanian volunteer fire-fighters.

WHY VOLUNTEER FIRE-FIGHTERS ARE IMPORTANT

Even before meeting with the Swiss delegation, at Livezi, Bacău county, volunteer fire-fighters fought alone, for ten minutes, a fire that had spread over two houses, before the professional fire-fighters arrived from a greater distance. The ten minutes made a huge difference.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



Many times, professional fire-fighters are summoned at small fires - a summer kitchen, a barn, for example - although in the meantime a much worse fire could occur some place else.

Volunteer fire-fighters can deal with such cases just fine and, moreover, they are also trained to intervene in other cases, like floods.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Since the Swiss-financed project began, four more centres have been set up: at Crucea-Suceava, Cornești-Cluj, Plăieșii de Jos and Sânmartin – Harghita. Others will follow until 2016.

They have been designed to work as regional emergency intervention centres covering 4-5 communes, so that we will end up having a total of 40-50 volunteer fire-fighters capable of acting together - explains Francisc Giurgiu, the Romanian counterpart of the project (see photo).

TAUGHT HOW TO HELP THEMSELVES

At the National Museum of Fire Fighters there is a showcase dedicated to Swiss fire-fighters, inaugurated two years ago. It can be considered a token of gratitude from the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations in Romania to their Swiss colleagues with whom they have been collaborating for four years in good conditions.

Although the budget can't really support it (or it is poorly managed), the collaboration between people who put their wits and ingenuity to work can work wonders.

True wonders, no exaggeration, because in the years to come it may be that these communal



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

centres of volunteer fire-fighters will save many lives. These are people who learned how to help themselves when faced with misfortunes, which is important. Pascal Praz, Colonel Contanța Ene, Head of coordination of volunteer services for emergency situations and Francisc Giurgiu. Europe in order to reconstruct the park of the manor, containing a sort of apple trees making.





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



THE REVOLUTION OF WHEELCHAIRS

Author:
VICTOR **KAPRA**

Foto:
CĂTĂLINA **FILIP**



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

SUDDENLY, ONE DAY YOUR LEGS JUST FREEZE UP AND YOU PEE YOUR PANTS.

Age doesn't matter. You may be 15 years old, or 60, or 27. A tumour on your spine, a wrong plunge in the water taken in the summer, a drop from a height, a stroke. Or one second too late in hitting the brake pedal. Here is what the occupational doctor tells you after several days of crying your eyes out because, usually, they don't keep you in the hospital for more than ten days after a surgery - it's how the system works in some places.

"Take this certificate and go home, enjoy your pension, there is nothing more you can do. If you try, you may fall and hurt your head, causing even more damage!"

A 19-year old girl from Neamț with her spine broken after slipping off a tree while picking fruit spent seven years indoors following that precise advice. That is until the Motivation Romania Foundation found her.

N's STORY

At 18 years of age he plunged in the water and fractured his spine. After three years of physical therapy he got back the function of his



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

arms but was told he'd never be able to leave the wheelchair. He had just graduated from high-school. He started working as a type-writer, then as an IT trainer. He had a diary where he wrote all his feelings and thus talking to himself, he discovered psychology.

He signed up for college and studied psychology. Now, aged 41, he provides therapy to adults, children and couples. He's preparing a doctorate on school integration of disabled children.

He drives a specially fitted car; he swims, plays basketball and practices kendo. He also collaborates with the Foundation Motivation Romania, teaching other people in wheelchairs how to become independent and that life does not end with an illness or accident.

When you step in the quarters of the Foundation Motivation Romania of Cornetu Commune close to Bucharest, you are greeted by a nice girl with such short arms that her fingers sprout somewhere from above the elbow joint. But she is a civil servant/assistant/ secretary like any other: operates the PC, answers the phone, and makes copies of documents using the copy machine.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



Nothing is strange here, at Motivation. If you open the door to any office, you will see there is at least one disabled person working, people in wheelchairs but with professional performances no different from those of a “normal” person.

The Foundation Motivation Romania for supporting disabled children and adults has been operational for 20 years and has had a fate



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



full of adventure. It started in a locality near Bucharest, in a state-owned building robbed and destroyed by locals during the events of 1989. The restored building was attractive for other purposes and, moreover, the local community was not thrilled to see growing numbers of “handicapped persons” on their territory. After the eviction, help from the Presidency and subsequent governments was promised but never came.

The Foundation Motivation had no choice but to move and start over, at Cornetu, Ilfov County. Romania officially registers 714,000 citizens with various disabilities. Of such,



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



around 100,000 can't walk and need wheelchairs. About the same number of population as in a town like Târgoviște.

Still, nobody knows exactly how many there are, it's a secret. Romania doesn't maintain a precise statistic, perhaps also because a person struck by paralysis can turn into a source of income for various suppliers of medical equipment, from wheelchairs



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



to devices for urinary incontinence, all paid by the state.

It's a matter of local mindset: a person who can no longer walk is a finished person. They can do little more than wait for the end in the house which there's no point in leaving because they are fed and taken care of by the family.

Age doesn't matter; it doesn't matter that this disabled person can still do many things after overcoming the initial depression period.

The doctor hands them a certificate and suggest that they don't try to overcome this conditions because they can hurt themselves



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

even worse.

Change comes in the form of a partnership with Switzerland. Two years ago, the Foundation Motivation launched a partnership with the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme* which ensured a significant financing.

This partnership is the beginning of a revolution in terms of social integration of disabled persons.

Maybe the word "revolution" sound strange, but it's no exaggeration, the change is profound. In the last two years, thanks to the partnership with the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme, the Institute Swiss Paraplegic Research transferred its experience in Romania.

Thus, doctors, social workers, psychologists, therapists, university professors or Romanian students found



out and learned that disabled persons can be treated differently than a useless crippled.

THE REVOLUTION OF WHEELCHAIRS

The Romanian medical system excludes people in wheelchairs from society. Like I was saying, these people are suggested to vegetate because any attempt to overcome their condition is risky, if not useless altogether.

Based on the partnership with the Swiss, the Foundation Motivation struggled to introduce in Romanian the International classification of functioning (CIF), a system for assessing the capacity of disabled people to do various activities.

The principle: people with the same disability diagnosis may function differently. People are no longer judged collectively as sick and incapable individuals, but their capacity to conduct various activities is ascertained and then they are counselled and supported into finding a job, if they want.

After all, in tens of thousands of cases, the brain and arms work as in any other person, and motion can be achieved by means of a wheelchair or specially fitted car. The disability is not necessarily given by the



medical condition, but by the relationship of the individual with the environment - explains Cristian Ispas, General Director of Motivation. If the environment is adapted to suit a disabled person, such person can work at normal potential.

Disability becomes manifest only when difficulties arise, like for example a long sequence of stairs to climb.

The momentum of thinking is big, but the Motivation Foundation managed to produce a small revolution: 151 specialists working in social care and neurology have been trained so far. Doctors, social workers, therapists, they all got to know the Swiss experience in social inclusion of disabled persons and will know how to apply it from now on.

All these training session held all across the country are in fact seeds sown over two



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

years which can shift mindsets and, further, the destiny of thousands of Romanians in wheelchairs. Let's take a single, elementary, example of approach: through the health insurance system, wheelchairs are simply left on the doorstep of persons who can no longer move and that's it. Nobody trains these people how to use them, how to avoid accidents, how to sit in a correct position.

Motivation does things differently: when delivering the wheelchair, they explain to the beneficiary how to use it, they encourage them - it's difficult to transfer your body from the bed to the chair just by the strength of your own arms, then they follow-up on what happens next.

The Foundation has its own system of delivery of wheelchairs, about 2,000 per year, made by its own employees, in turn found in wheelchairs.

Because yes, the Foundation has arranged to provide services destined to disabled persons, operating as a social enterprise, including a physical therapy centre, an adapted transport system, camps and seven sports associations for disabled persons. Of the 240 employees of the Foundation all around the country, 30 are in wheelchairs and they always find a more



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

natural, closer way to counsel and help others in similar condition.

"If only this ratio were to be found in the county administrations dealing with disabled persons!" - says Cristian Ispas (photo).

The degree of civilization of a society can also be measured by the way they treat the categories of underprivileged citizens, through the support given to them.





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

Many of the tens of thousand of children and adults in wheelchairs have remarkable courage and determination to overcome their condition and live like normal people.

For the time being, most of the civil servants are rather uncaring and don't encourage this battle because that's how the system has been working for decades and that's what they were taught in school.

But, thanks to the Swiss-Romanian partnership, mindsets change little by little. The story of a winner: Erika Garnier – Project Manager with the Motivation Romania Foundation

“Five years ago I didn't care whether a building had stairs or not and I totally ignored the elevator in my hasty ascent by stairs to the 6th floor of a building where I was studying.

In the meantime things have changed and I no longer like any building that has stairs and no ramp. It's not a whim, it's because the way I move around has also changed.

In the early days of year 2010 my feet started to feel numb, powerless and I soon realized I couldn't walk anymore. After the initial major



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



shock, two diagnoses and one surgery I found out I would be using a wheelchair for the rest of my life. I didn't like that at all so I chose to ignore the information and set a personal objective to prove the doctors wrong. And so I also refused their advice to get in contact with the people from Motivation Romania Foundation.

Except that things didn't quite work out the way I had planned. The seven long weeks I spent in a hospital bed, without a wheelchair, made me realize that this piece of equipment was not meant to limit me, but to somehow give me back my freedom of motion, even if in a different way.

My current colleagues from Motivation reached me during the visits they were paying at patients' homes and explained why the rented wheelchair I was using was not good for me



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

and invited me to be part of a physical therapy session. There I met people in wheelchair who were happy, people with jobs and families. I stayed at Motivation as a volunteer, and then I became part of the communications team. In the meantime, I learned from the trainers in wheelchairs that I could have an independent life. They were patient with me and taught me how to live differently: beginning with clothes, cooking from the wheelchair, and going to how to hold on to a job.

I tried basketball and dancing in a wheelchair right after the first active recovery sessions I was part of, although when I first started using a wheelchair, these seemed like extreme sports to me.

In the meantime, I also became a trainer on how to live an independent life for beginners just starting to use wheelchairs and I stayed involved in the activities that have the role to restore people's faith that abilities truly matter and that these abilities can even be discovered in extreme situations".



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME





PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

The Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme (SRCP) is part of a non-refundable support offered by the Swiss Federal Council to 13 EU member states who joined between 2004 and 2013. Switzerland's support is an expression of solidarity with new EU member states and puts the grounds for stable economic and political connections with these countries.

THE SRCP AIMS TO:

- contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities between Romania and more advanced countries of the enlarged EU, and
- contribute within Romania to the reduction of economic and social disparities between the dynamic urban centers and the structurally weak peripheral regions.

The SRCP shall enhance the visibility of bilateral relations and provide room for a good use of Swiss knowledge and expertise, but shall also pursue a sustainable, economically and socially balanced development.

THE SRCP IS GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

transparency, social inclusion, equal opportunities and rights, sustainable development, commitment of all actors involved, subsidiarity and decentralization.



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

In 2011, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation selected a consortium formed by KEK-CDC Consultants (www.kek.ch), Civil Society Development Foundation (www.fdsc.ro) and Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation (www.repf.ro) as the Swiss Intermediate Body (SIB) for managing and administrating the Partnership and Expert Fund and the Thematic Fund for Civil Society Participation.



Fundația pentru
Dezvoltarea
Societății
Civile



fundația pentru
parteneriat

