



FOUNDATION ANCORA SALVĂRII

10 YEARS OF IMPLICATION IN SOCIETY





Table of contents:

1. **Introduction**
2. **Projects**
 - A. Day centre Ancora in Iași
 - B. Home therapy in the countryside and Park of Joy in Strunga
 - C. Integration activities and leisure activities in Bălți, Moldova
 - D. Collaborations with other organisations and institutions
 - E. Literature translated into Romanian
3. **Impressions of sponsors and partners from the Netherlands**
4. **Impressions of participants**
5. **Ideas for the future**



1. Introduction

An adventure becomes life fulfilment



In 1996, I left the Netherlands and went to Romania, not knowing what to expect but curious to what the future would bring. Trusting the Lord that He would protect and guide me—which He has indeed done all these years—I set out.

During the first year, I worked I several children's homes in the province of Braşov. Overcome by the hurt experienced by these children who have been abandoned by their parents as well as by society, we tried to be a gleam of hope and to bring a little bit of warmth.

Subsequently, I moved to Iaşi, where I worked in a project for youngsters above the age of 18 who had been expelled from children's homes and were now living on the streets. This project was organised by two people from the Netherlands.

While working in this project, I also worked as a humanitarian worker in the children's hospital Sf Maria. In my position as occupation therapist, I noticed that vulnerable people were not stimulated to integrate into society.

What is more, their families were being marginalised because of lack of specialised support.

This is why the Ancora Salvării Foundation was established in 2002. The first steps were hesitant, yet after ten years we can say that we have found our place and purpose inside as well as outside the Romanian society. It is our desire to meet those needs which are not alleviated by society. We are open to every collaboration which enables us to help socially deprived people.

For this reason we have expanded our field of activity to the city of Iaşi as well as to villages outside the province of Iaşi, and to the village of Strunga in particular. In addition, we are participating in projects in Moldova (in Bălţi and Chişinău) and we offer specialised advice when requested.



We are glad that we have been able to work together with Western organisations from the start, thus enhancing our professionalism. We are thankful for the received information, and we would like to thank the specialists from the Netherlands and Belgium for their permission to translate their books, articles, brochures, and courses.



It is important to mention that we would not have been able to do all these wonderful things without our loyal sponsors from abroad, because we do not yet have stable financial support from within Romania.



To conclude: many thanks (“mulțumesc frumos” in Romanian) to those who have supported us in whatever manner! Together we can do wonderful things for the people surrounding us.

Inge José Smelik (Inga) director of the Ancora Salvării Foundation.



2. Projects

A. *Daycentre Ancora in Iași*

In the autumn of 2003, we started with activities for children and youngsters with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The need for activities for these people came up during a meeting with the child welfare office of Iași. The city did not yet offer them assistance.

Goals:

1. Stimulating and supporting optimal development of participants of the Foundation.
2. Encouraging social and professional integration of participants and improving their environment.
3. Support for families of participants.





Services offered:

1. Therapy aimed at children and youngers with autism (group therapy as well as individual sessions)

- Activities to teach them skills and to stimulation their cognition.
- Speech therapy, stimulating verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Educational activities.

2. Physiotherapy

- Physiotherapy for children with cerebral palsy (CP) or another motor disability.
- Activities to encourage sensory integration, knowing one's own body, and to learn motor skills.
- Physiotherapy based on Sherborne Developmental Movement.

3. Other therapies

- Activities aiming to increase the ability to do things independently (ADL: activities of daily living), occupational therapy.

- Educational and labour activities.
- Creative therapy.
- Play therapy.

4. Social and recreational activities

- Participating in events, markets, and exhibitions.
- Visiting the city together, trips like visiting museums.
- Feasts on special days: 2 April (World Autism Awareness Day), 1 June (International Children's Day), Christmas, Easter, birthdays, and national holidays.

5. Individual help and support group for parents

- Monthly meetings of the parents' group.
- Individual help on the parent's request.

6. Information activities on autism spectrum disorders (ASD)

- Professional support at home or in institutions.
- Workshops and courses.



Our results

From 2003 to 2013 there were 160 beneficiaries at the Ancora Salvării Foundation in different programmes of our centre in Iași. From them:

- 35 children are currently receiving either individual or group therapy at day centre Ancora;
- 36 former beneficiaries attend Constantin Păunescu, a primary and secondary school for special education in Iași;
- 70 parents of children or teenagers with autism have participated in support groups;
- 10 children attend a regular school;
- 23 beneficiaries received the information they needed through counselling and an admission process, without participating in one of the programmes;
- 3 beneficiaries have been transferred to a project for teenagers, at the parents organization ANCAAR Iași.

All beneficiaries have taken part in the therapy of our Foundation for periods varying from one till seven years.



The team of “Ancora”

is a young one, consisting of motivated people experienced in offering therapy to children and adolescents with ASD.

Below are several of the courses successfully completed by our staff members: Sherborne Developmental Movement, Sensory integration for people with ASD, Cognitive therapy for children, adolescents, and adults with neuropsychological behavioural disorders – Elements from the Educational Programme TEACCH,

Support and coaching in the field of autism, Basic course The Essential 5 (author: Colette de Bruin), international conference Understanding autism! Sensory perception, communication and language – techniques and treatments (speaker: Olga Bogdashina), Professional course to specialize in autism (by specialists from LunetZorg, a Dutch organization supporting disabled people in the Dutch province of Brabant), Activity leader. Specialists from the Netherlands, Belgium, Great Britain, the United States of America, and Romania were involved with these courses

B. Home therapy in the countryside and Park of Joy in Strunga

The project in Strunga started in August 2007. We conduct conversations with families with a family member with a disability or chronic disease. At the moment, we are offering the following services:

- A group of eight children attends weekly therapy sessions in which they are offered cognitive and educational activities.
- Three children attend weekly speech therapy sessions to stimulate their verbal and non-verbal communication.



- Three children and two teenagers attend physiotherapy sessions. Their sensory integration is stimulated, they are getting to know their own bodies, they are learning motor skills, and they do activities based on Sherborne Developmental Movement.
- Elderly people as well as chronically ill people are visited monthly as well as with Christmas and Easter.
- Every weekend—and daily during the summer holidays—the Park of Joy is open to children from Strunga and its surrounding areas. Volunteers from Romania and the Netherlands organise recreational activities to strengthen relationships between people with and without a disability and to stimulate creative and physical skills.





C. Integration activities and leisure activities in Bălți, Moldova

In the Republic of Moldova, Ancora is cooperating with parents' association Provita, an association for parents of children with a disability or chronic disease in Bălți. Since 2008, the Ancora Salvării Foundation is involved in:

- Activities supporting integration and leisure, which are held almost weekly in the home of the Foundation in Bălți or in the city's library. Children and adolescents participate in various activities, e.g. sports, games, painting, and crafts.

- Activities supporting children and adolescents with various forms of cerebral palsy or other forms of motor disorders. Activities include education and therapy, or, to be more precise, home visits or visits at institutions, providing orthopaedic materials, and courses for specialists working at the daycentres and in the hospital of Bălți. Dutch specialists visit the Foundation regularly to share their ideas and experiences, to give courses, and to participate in our activities.

- Organising courses and conferences on care for persons with disabilities.

- Providing sanitary and orthopaedic materials.





D. Collaborations with other organisations and institutions

- *December 2013:* collaboration with Trinitas, a primary and secondary school for special education in Târgu Frumos, and Petru Rareș Primary School in Hârlău. We organised a project to promote the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- *November 2013:* organising a course called “Special teaching methods for children with learning disabilities in classes at schools for regular education” in Bârlad, in cooperation with Hester Houweling and the Star of Hope Foundation.
- *November 2013:* activities organised together with day centre Stejarul in Iași, including physiotherapy consultations, group activities for children, and a parents' group.
- *September 2013:* collaboration with school no. 6 (a school for special education) and the organisations AITA and Verbina in a project called “Education for children with ASD”. The projects aims at developing and expanding education for children with autism in Moldova by integrating them in the educational system. In October we celebrated the opening of classes for children with autism at school no. 6 in Chișinău, in the presence of the Dutch Ambassador in Romania and Moldova.
- *July 2013:* signing a cooperation agreement with the local government offices of the city of Târgu Frumos. We will offer social services as long as the multifunctional centre of Târgu Frumos exists.
- *March 2013:* partner in making and presenting a documentary on autism in Romania. This project was realised in collaboration with ANCAAR Iași (Asociația Națională pentru Copii și Adulți cu Autism).



- *March 2013:* organising the course “Theoretical and practical aspects of ASD” in Onești as well as a workshop aimed at making didactic materials for classes with children with autism in Pașcani.

- *December 2012:* partner in “Join as a volunteer!”, a project in which infants from kindergarten no. 14 in Iași and children from day centre Ancora participated.

- *May 2012:* organising the course “Theoretical and practical aspects of ASD” in two groups: one for psychology students and one for special education teachers.

- *April 2012:* translating the conference “Autism: special people among us” and participating in the presentations, in cooperation with ANCAAR Iași.

- *November–December 2011:* partner in the project “Let's be happy during the holidays”, together with Octav Băncilă Secondary School of Arts, Trinitas in Târgu Frumos, and the primary schools Erbiceni and Scobâlțeni.

- *November 2011:* advising the staff of Trinitas concerning pupils with ASD. Organising several extracurricular activities in the Park of Joy in Strunga for pupils of this school and participants of the Foundation.

- *September 2011:* publication of the Russian translation of Geef me de 5 (Give me 5, dă-mi o mână de ajutor – pedagogie modernă pentru lucrul cu persoane autiste) by Colette de Bruin, supervised by the Foundation. The book was published in Romanian in 2008, also under supervision of the Foundation, but in collaboration with Elena Vataman (director of the AITA Foundation in Chișinău). The book is published by Graviant Educatieve Uitgaven in Doetinchem, the Netherlands.

- *May–June 2011:* participant in a project called “Being an amazing child” in cooperation with a primary school in Erbiceni in the province of Iași.



- *April 2010, 2011, and 2012:* collaboration with ANCAAR Iași in the project “Show you care”, aiming to celebrate World Autism Awareness Day on 2 April by organising activities and participating in them.

- *March–April 2009:* collaboration with Constantin Păunescu (a primary and secondary school for special education), ANCAAR Iași, and LOTUS Iași to organise educational activities entitled “Let’s make ourselves known through dance!”

- *December 2008:* collaboration with Constantin Păunescu and ANCAAR Iași in a project called “December: gifts month”.

- *September 2008–March 2011:* collaboration with Constantin Păunescu to implement the project “We’re learning together”. We were aiming to secure education for children with autism by creating and offering alternative learning methods. Five classes for pupils with ASD were established in Constantin Păunescu’s auxiliary branch Brândușa. Collaboration between teachers and specialists from the Foundation was also important.

- *April–November 2008:* collaboration with the art school Octav Băncilă in Iași to celebrate the day centre’s fifth anniversary. The project, “Communication and getting acquainted through ‘artistic’ language”, featured an exhibition called “Souls expressed in colours”, in which works of the Foundation’s participants were being showcased. Other celebratory art activities included dance, choir, and music.





E. Literature translated into Romanian

- *March 2014*: Romanian translation of the Dutch book *Auti-Communicatie* (*Auti-comunicare* in Romanian). Author: Colette de Bruin. Publisher: Graviant Educatieve Uitgaven, Doetinchem.
- *September 2010*: Romanian translation of the Dutch book *Denken doe* (*Gândește și Aplică* in Romanian). Author: Steven Degrieck. Publisher: Uitgeverij Fides, Iași.
- *September 2008*: Romanian translation of the Dutch book *Geef me de 5* (*Give me 5: dă-mi o mână de ajutor – pedagogie modernă pentru lucrul cu persoane autiste* in Romanian) (generally known in English as *The Essential 5*). Author: Colette de Bruin. Publisher: Uitgeverij Fides, Iași.
- *2007–2011*: translating the courses “Professional specialising in autism” and “Support and coaching in the field of autism”, in cooperation with the ZZG Group (a Dutch organization) and Fontys OSO University of Eindhoven, the Netherlands. The course was given in Iași.
- *2006*: publishing a book entitled *Autismul – sexualitate ciudată, controlabilă*. Authors: Tudor Mitasov and Inge José Smelik. Publisher: Uitgever Stef, Iași.
- *2005*: publishing a brochure entitled *Elemente de intervenție în Autism*. Authors: Tudor Mitasov and Inge José Smelik. Publisher: Uitgever Stef, Iași.





3. Impressions of sponsors and partners from the Netherlands

Colette de Bruin – *director of Geef me de 5 Academie (The Essential 5 Academy) in the Netherlands* *Give me 5 in Romania*

When I met Inga some 5 or 6 years ago after a lecture in the Netherlands, she touched my heart with her passionate story about using The Essential 5 to help 'her' children and the projects she started in Romania. Over time, she continued to touch my heart. Through the collaboration between the organisation of The Essential 5 in the Netherlands and the Ancora Salvării Foundation in Romania, our mutual respect increased.

During the past years, Inga has taken courses in the Netherlands and has tagged along with visits to clients. She has experienced how The Essential 5 in the Netherlands continues to develop in order to offer each child with autism and their parents a programme trying to help them to increase their quality of life.

We for our part visited Romania twice, and we were warmly welcomed everywhere we went: by the day centres of Ancora and Bălți, by the children's home, and by the families. We saw first-hand how the staff members of the Ancora Salvării Foundation dedicate

themselves to the children, preparing them for a future in which they can live as independently as possible. The means to do so are more limited in Romania than in the Netherlands. We are glad that we can lend a hand by means of our collaboration, so the Romanian children receive the opportunity to learn and develop optimally, just like Dutch children. This is every child's right.

Inga has arranged for The Essential 5 to be translated into Romanian and Russian. She is also arranging a translation of *Auti-communicatie (Auti-communication)*, a book describing a manner of communication offering extra clarity to people with autism. This book will be published in Romanian in 2014.

It has been a delight to give lectures to parents and professionals, and to train the staff of the Ancora Salvării Foundation.

I hope the collaboration between The Essential 5 and the Ancora Salvării Foundation will be a long and fruitful one.



Anita van der Lugt

speech therapist at the Rijndam Rehabilitation Centre, the Netherlands

The significance of aids

The Rijndam Rehabilitation Centre offers help to children with various disabilities. Because of their disabilities, most of these children are restricted in their daily lives and are unable to live life like their peers. The therapists of the RRC help children and their parents to find solutions, because we want every child to be able to join others, whether with or without disability. We want them to be able to go outside with their families, to simply sit at the dinner table and eat together, or play with friends. For this reason, aids are essential.

A hoist to safely get in and out of their wheelchairs, an aid to sit on the floor and play with their friends, or a chair with extra support so children can sit at the dinner table, a special cup allowing them to drink on their own, an adapted bicycle so children can go outside, a push car to help them walk, or a communication aid to make clear what they want.

Because *that* is what we want most of all: for all children to be able to play together, eat together, and work together, regardless of their disabilities. And that is why we are glad that we are able to help children in Romania and Moldova, through the Ancora Salvării Foundation, by donating second-hand aids.



Cokki Drost – Smelik, Inge José's sister

It has already been 17 years since Inge left for Romania, a country we only knew by name. For our parents it was quite a distance; at first they could only make pre-arranged calls, so Inge would be near a phone. For the past years, however, Skype has made communication a lot easier...! Our parents travelled to Romania every year and have come to love the country and its inhabitants. I myself have been to Romania six times to see what Inge is doing.

One time I went with my husband, a few times with my sister Marieke and sister-in-law Gerda, and the last time (after my father's passing) with my mother. I have gotten an impression of the beautiful country and the wonderful projects! I admire the staff, who skilfully and lovingly help the children in the day centres in Strunga and Moldova to develop themselves.



Inge, now that it is the 10th anniversary of the Ancora Salvării Foundation, I would like to congratulate you. You have left behind a lot in the Netherlands, but your work in Romania has been blessed abundantly, your network continues to expand, and there is still a lot of knowledge to be passed on. I know that you have got people helping you in the Netherlands, Romania, and Moldova. I pray that God will continue blessing you and your staff.





Maaske Treurniet, *speech therapist and lecturer at the Fontys University of Applied Sciences in Eindhoven, the Netherlands*

In 2007, I went to the day centre of Ancora for four months as a volunteer. I was a speech therapy student at the time. The centre already looked wonderful then, but I think I would be amazed if I were to visit again!

My project was called “Complete Communication” and, together with four teachers, I researched the best manner to help children communicate in their own ways. One of these children was an eight-year-old boy who did not talk at all. He just pointed at what he wanted. For instance, if he had to go to the toilet, he could only ask if he was allowed to go if he could point at a toilet at that exact moment.

Therefore, we made him a keychain with six little pictograms of everyday things, like a toilet and a drink. In addition, I taught his mother and his teacher how to train him to use the pictograms. When I had returned to the Netherlands, I received the news that he had used the keychain for the first time. It was on a warm day and he was playing outside when he went to someone of the kitchen staff and showed the pictogram for “drink”. After some time, the boy had a file filled with pictograms with which he could make himself clear. It is fantastic that this aid helps him to make contact with others and that he has become a lot happier!

I went back to Iași for two weeks in 2008 and saw that the book I had made was used often. The project has got lasting effects on the participants, because the teachers help the children to implement the new ways of communication. They have also shared their knowledge with other psychologists, educators, and trainees in Romania.

In 2008 I attended the celebration of Ancora's fifth anniversary, and now we are already celebrating its 10th anniversary! Congratulations!



Frank Rote and Hans Piederiet of the CED-group, an authoritative Dutch organisation in the field of teaching, education, and childcare

Dear Ancorians,

On behalf of the entire CED-group we would like to congratulate you on the 10th anniversary of the day centre! You can look back in gratitude on the progress you have been able to make in providing care and education for children with a disability. This is a difficult task to carry out in a troubled country, including troubles in the social sphere.

With sincere compassion, inspiration, and endurance you have significantly contributed to gaining recognition for young autistic persons in Romania and Moldova. They have a right to education and to a special approach to developing their talents in particular.

While special education is rather new to Romania and Moldova, it has been part of the Dutch education system for quite some time already, where it often originated from sincere compassion and Christian humanist inspiration. For this reason, it sometimes seems as if our countries cannot be compared on a

level of education. However, it has not been that long since the emergence of the conviction that children with special needs have a right to more than day-care. Special schools want to provide more than care: they want to educate children. As a national education organisation, the CED-group has been a vanguard for these schools. For example, our efforts to develop learning pathways and to tailor approaches and didactics to the needs of children with various learning difficulties and learning needs has greatly aided Dutch teachers, and we have been able to support numerous schools.

Many of our publications have already been translated into Romanian, through which they have contributed to an increase in professionalism in Romania as well. This makes us glad and we would very much like to continue our fruitful collaboration, thus mutually increasing the expertise which is needed to develop the talents of these special children and their contribution to a society in which all talents are recognised and used.

We wish you every success with your work and we hope to see you soon!

Kind regards from the Netherlands,

Frank Rote, General Customer Relationships

Hans Piederiet, manager Advice, Training, and Support



4. Impressions of participants

Afloarei Gica, mother of Sami

My son has been diagnosed with infantile autism and a mental disability. We needed help. We had no knowledge of autism nor of what to do or where to go, and I wondered what happened with children with autism because I had never heard of adults with autism. The physician who diagnosed our son told us about the day centre of Ancora Salvării and said it would be good for him to go there. I doubted if he would be accepted into the centre for daily attendance, because he was rather restless and not easy to work with. However, I was surprised when they told me that we were both welcome. They have helped us tremendously.

At the centre we have met honest people who are confident in what they do for

the children. They asked me to join the therapy sessions for a few days. I sensed that they are close to my son, and I saw that they put together a child-specific programme. Everything is special. The specialists of the centre answered my questions and they knew what my son needed. Every hour, every day is used optimally. I learned how to communicate with my son, and I learned about the effects of autism on his life as well as on mine. Because of all this, my son has become a happy, calm child with autism. He likes to assist with household chores, he communicates with help of pictograms and objects, and makes several noises and signs and goes on until we understand him.

I know he will soon become an adult with autism, a special adult, one who will learn new things. I thank God for my son and for the people of Ancora Salvării.



Maria Abraham, mother of Simona, from the village of Fărcășeni in the community of Strunga

Gladly I thank the Ancora Salvării Foundation, which will celebrate its 10th anniversary in March. They organised their activities for children with a disability with sacrifices and a lot of love. I thank them on behalf of my child, Dogaru Simona, who has been supported by the Foundation (represented by Inge José Smelik) for seven years now.

I would also like to thank all members of staff, who patiently and devotedly support us as parents, and, more importantly, our children. Raising a child with a disability requires a network of coaching and supporting people, and my child has found such people here. Simona takes part in group therapy sessions, which has played a significant role in improving her health. And all this by these

wonderful people. Because of her health, Simona has never had the chance to enter a therapy programme, but the Foundation saw to it that my daughter is surrounded by people who help her in her suffering.

I want to thank all benefactors, because you made it possible for our children to learn to be happy with their lives. I pray to the good Lord to bless you and your loved ones. Thanks be to the Ancora Salvării Foundation and its entire staff and I wish you, fantastic people, “la mulți ani”, many more years. We want you next to us always!

Grosu Emilia - *mother of Loredana*



The Ancora Salvării Foundation was a miracle from God when I said to myself that society has no place for my daughter, Loredana, who suffers from spastic quadriplegia. She was offered a community—something which she has long wished for—and she soon felt at home. She was pleased with her classmates and the Foundation's team, and during her time with them, she made astonishing progress.

When life gives you a child with disabilities, one is completely taken aback and unable to respond properly. The Foundation was a great help to me as a mother. I learned how to behave towards my child, because loving it or simply caring for it is not enough. It is necessary to encourage the development of qualities which help him to manage on his own.

Good cooperation between parents and specialists is essential, as is listening to the advice offered by these specialists and others offering their help, because we as parents have a tendency to be overprotective, thus restricting the child's development of abilities to do things independently. Another important aspect is that the therapy your child receives at the centre has to be carried on at home to ensure the best possible result.

I would like to thank the entire team of the Ancora Salvării Foundation for helping my daughter as well as myself, and I wish them strength and patience to continue offering their help to people with a disability. May God reward you for all your love!



Loredana Grosu, participant
since the start of the Foundation

A child with a disability needs well-trained staff, a guide who helps him to develop self-confidence and who encourages him to fulfil his dreams. To me, the Ancora Salvării Foundation was like a guide who radically changed my life. It has given me hope and strength to fight. Most importantly, the Foundation made me feel appreciated and understood because they allowed me to recover physically as well as mentally in order to gain self-confidence. They provided an environment in which I could develop my own identity.

If one would ask me about the best years of my life so far, I would tell about my years with the Ancora Salvării Foundation. I am filled with pleasant emotions when I think about those years—to me, it resembles a piece of heaven.

I thank God for sending these special and dedicated people of the Foundation into my life. I will never forget my time with the Ancora Salvării Foundation and I will always be thankful for all the good things I received while I was with them.





5. Ideas for the future

- It is our desire to satisfy the needs of our participants as best we can, thus not only creating the possibility to make the most of their potential and use it in therapy, yet also getting a better picture of their personalities, based on understanding and respect.
- Next year, the centre in Strunga will receive its permit to operate as a social services centre for people in problematic situations.
- As of 2015, we would like to offer social services to a group of 30 people in the Multifunctional Social Centre in Târgu Frumos, which has been established by the local government.
- Our services in Moldova will be expanded based on experiences gained in Romania. We would like to increase the number of activities for children as well as courses for educators and personnel of institutions and organisations aiming to help people with special needs.



Foundation Ancora Salvării,
Str. Pantelimon nr. 10,
Bl. F5, sc. A, parter, ap. 3 Iași,
Romania

Tel.: (004)0232-277025 ; (004)0770-555443
E-mail: ancorasalvarii@yahoo.com
www.ancorasalvarii.ro