

## Background

The Ancora Salvării Foundation was founded in 2002 and aims to support families with a disabled or chronically ill family member in order for them to not have to be submitted into state care, and preventing other non-desirable situations to arise.

The Ancora Salvării Foundation is a Christian, non-profit organisation supporting those in need, irrespective of their race, religion, nationality, et cetera. Our care is specifically aimed at people with a disability or chronic disease.

Our goal is to develop projects fulfilling needs not (yet) met by the state or (state-related) institutes.



*The Ancora Iași*



*Centre Adapted Therapy*



*Home Visits*

## The City of Iași

Our first project was establishing a rehabilitation centre for disabled children. At the request of local authorities, we put our focus on children with autism. When we first started out in 2003, there was no adequate care for this group in the province of Iași. Until August 2016, this day care centre offered behavioural therapy, play therapy, movement therapy, counselling, education, and activities stimulating integration into society. This way, we supported more than 150 children with autism and related disorders, often resulting in them being accepted into a kindergarten/school or one of the centres for adults we are cooperating with.

In the autumn of 2016, our centre was split into two individual, independent psychology practices in which the psychologists – formerly employed at the Foundation – continue their specialist work for autistic children and their families. They work independently, but the Foundation supports them by offering space and resources. We are thrilled that our psychologists – in whom we have invested quite a lot – can continue this wonderful job in Iași independently.



*Therapy for Autism*



*Celebrating Children's Day in Strunga*



*Autism Day in Tg. Frumos*

### Strunga and Tg. Frumos

The land in **Strunga** was acquired at the end of 2003. Because of its hilly character, we levelled and fenced it in 2004. In 2005 we added a playground (made in the Netherlands), an outdoor pool, and an army tent for activities. In 2007 we visited families 'recommended' to us by local social services. These visits were meant to get an idea of the social needs, especially the needs of people with a disability. We started to build the Social Services Centre in 2008, and every year since then improvements have been made on the building and the playground. In the summer of 2016 we started preparations for gaining a licence for our social services – a process which is still ongoing.

The team working on a permanent contract consists of a social worker, a concierge, and a cluster leader. Our occupational therapist and the other board members of the Foundation all work on a voluntary basis, and the aforementioned psychologists are working on a zero-hour contract. Volunteers are also involved in several other activities.

Our clients are from the community of Strunga, but also from Pașcani, Costești, Tg. Frumos, Ion Nelculce, and Butea. The Foundation's wheelchair accessible minivan serves as their taxi.

This year we offered the following services – some of which were co-financed by the cooperation programme between Switzerland and Romania:

- a weekly therapy group for toddlers and pre-schoolers with a disability;
- a weekly after-school therapy group for primary school children with a disability;
- a weekly therapy group for teenagers and adults with a disability;
- extensive psychological tests (July);
- a monthly support group for mothers of children with a disability;
- a monthly support group for siblings of children with a disability;
- integration activities for children from Strunga and neighbouring communities on Saturdays and during holidays.

Other services:

- offering humanitarian aid;
- repairing, customising, and donating orthopaedic aids;
- creating and/or customising aids made from cardboard and/or wood.



*Support Group for Mothers*



*Crafts Exhibit*



*Celebration on the Special School in Tg. Frumos*



In **Tg. Frumos**, we teamed up with the local State Social Services Centre. Our clients are people with autism as well as their families. In 2016 we visited their homes for a first evaluation, we paid counselling visits to their schools, and we organised support groups and events to increase public knowledge of autism.

Therapy and counselling sessions were held at our centre in Strunga, because of the space and resources we have there (incl. an extensive playground). Moreover, the rooms are always available: during weekends, in the evening, and even on public holidays.



*Pupils from the Special School travel to Strunga for Extracurricular Activities*

#### Ancora's subsidiary foundation in Moldova

In 2014, the Romanian Foundation established a Moldovan Foundation with its own executive director and accountant. With help from our specialists from Romania, the Netherlands and Great Britain, this foundation offers:

- courses, workshops, and conferences on Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and special education;
- counselling for parents of children with a disability;
- integration activities for children with a disability.

These services are provided in cooperation with state institutions, parent organisations, and local churches.

#### Translation work

In previous years, we translated a lot of literature on autism and special education from Dutch into Romanian. In 2016, we focused on reprinting *Geef me de 5* in Romanian (generally known in English as *The Essential 5*) and translating Colette de Bruin's *Auti-Communicatie* (Auti Communication) into Russian. *Prikkels in de groep* (Stimuli in groups), a Dutch book on sensory integration which we translated into Romanian last year, is currently being translated into Russian.



*Course on Autism*

*Consults at School*

*Autism Day in Bălți*

### Special events in 2016

- ❖ A conference in Iași, Bălți, and Chișinău, at which Olga Bogdashina – a renowned specialist on autism – was the keynote speaker.
- ❖ For the first time, we celebrated Autism Day (4 April) and the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (6 December) in Tg. Frumos. We have already been celebrating these days in Iași and Bălți for several years.
- ❖ Celebrating Easter and Christmas in Strunga and Bălți, including continuing the tradition of *Colindatul*: making home visits to sing Christmas carols.
- ❖ Celebrating International Children's Day (1 June) in Strunga (Romania) and Bălți (Moldova) with field trips and integration activities.
- ❖ Camp days in the 'Park of Joy' in Strunga for children and teenagers from the province of Iași, supervised by Romanian volunteers from various churches.
- ❖ An exhibit of artwork made by clients from Strunga, Butea, Costești, Ion Neculce, and Tg. Frumos to mark the ending of the project 'We create, we're happy, and we pay it forward', financed by the Vodafone Romania Foundation.
- ❖ Setting up the projects 'Education: a step closer to integration into society for children with disabilities' and 'Intervention in autism becomes more efficient by cooperating' in Bălți, a city in the north of Moldova. These projects are financed by the Dutch Embassy in Bucharest (Romania). We organised two special events for these projects in Bălți: one for Autism Day (8 April) and one for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 8 December.



*Educating Parents*



*Conferences with Olga Bogdashina in Iași and Bălți*



### Difficulties in 2016

- The surprising motivation of the provincial government in Iași and the local authorities in Tg. Frumos for not granting our funding request.
- The standstill in the process of acquiring a licence in Tg. Frumos, because the local government is still working on getting the necessary permits, including the one from the fire department.
- The time it is taking to get several important documents for our premises in Strunga. Legislative changes forced us to update our documents in order to continue our work.

### Goals for 2017

- ✓ Obtaining licences for all social services in the province of Iași.
- ✓ Putting a roof over the pool and terrace in the park in Strunga (with help from Dutch volunteers), in order for our services to be expanded and intensified.
- ✓ Starting up a mobile office in a donated camper van (to arrive in Romania at the beginning of 2017), so we can offer our services to isolated areas in Romania and Moldova.
- ✓ Continuing our services in Moldova, expanding our education on several specialties, and involving children and teenagers with disabilities in various activities.
- ✓ Organising a workshop in March (with help of a Dutch psychiatrist) on suicide prevention, hosting a workshop on working with pupils with autism and visual disabilities (with help of a Dutch field expert), and translating literature on these subjects.
- ✓ Improving our ability to create and customise aids.



*Donated Camper Van and Its Interior*



*| Customising Aids*

### Our partners

In Romania:

- 1) The local authorities of Iași and Tg. Frumos, and the community of Strunga
- 2) Special schools in the province of Iași
- 3) FONSS, the federation of social NGO's (of which we are a member), co-members, and other NGO's operating in the same area as Ancora
- 4) The Dutch Embassy in Bucharest
- 5) Local churches





## In Moldova:

1. The Alecu Russo State University of Bălți
2. The department of special and integrative education at the School Inspection of Bălți
3. The Centre for Adult Education for medical staff in Bălți
4. NGO's operating in the same field as Ancora
5. The Dutch Consulate in Chișinău
6. Local churches

## In Belgium:

- i. Stichting VzW Vrienden voor vrienden (Friends for friends Foundation, *Prieteni pentru Prieteni* in Romanian), Lier-Antwerp

## In the United Kingdom:

- I. Olga Bogdashina, a recognised expert on autism

## In the Netherlands:

- A. Support Foundation Ancora Salvării, Gouda
- B. Stichting Sarfath, Capelle aan den IJssel
- C. Mytyl schools (schools for children with disabilities) in Rotterdam and Utrecht
- D. Churches in Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel, Gouda, The Hague, and Spakenburg
- E. Private sponsors



Media



State University of Bălți



Shipments from the Netherlands