

## Vibrant and socially responsible church

### Context

Although Romania has been a member of the EU since 2007, its economic development remains sluggish. There are pronounced economic disparities between urban and rural areas. Rural areas are being especially affected by outmigration and population ageing.

The Reformed Church in Romania (RCR) has been a long-standing HEKS/EPER partner and is present mainly in rural Transylvania. The RCR membership totals 530,000 in the two Church districts of Oradea and Cluj-Napoca. The RCR is often the only official institution in small villages. It also discharges social responsibility in society through social welfare activities.

Through its welfare and social work, the RCR has built up a home care and assistance service in five regions of Transylvania since 2001. Its workers currently look after the elderly and people in need of care in some 130 localities. It is planned to expand this cost-efficient service, which enables the elderly to stay at home for as long as possible. Besides, as part of its welfare and social work, the RCR runs a women's shelter and counselling centre for victims of domestic violence in Braşov, and as such is active in a field that is taboo in Romania. Another shelter is planned for Oradea.

Social inclusion for the Roma is a priority under the HEKS/EPER country programme in Romania. It places the emphasis on promoting education, improving access to health care, employment and income. Mures, Cluj and Bihor are project regions.

If the RCR is to remain a vibrant church in the future, it will need support. A continuing training programme is to be mounted to undergird the work of pastors. There is great need for support for the maintenance of church buildings. HEKS/EPER





assistance is to make it possible to renovate churches, pastorages and parish halls in strategically important church parishes.

### **Objectives, priorities, activities**

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- The social service runs a home care and assistance programme in 170 villages in Transylvania, and other villages are constantly being added.
- Home care nurses provide medical, social and home nursing assistance.
- Victims of domestic violence receive counselling and assistance in breaking out of the circle of violence and building new self-confidence. As an emergency measure and to protect them against further violence, they are placed in a women's shelter. The existing counselling centre and the women's shelter in Braşov are to be maintained. Similar facilities are being set up in Oradea.
- Roma children in 80 Transylvanian villages are receiving remedial teaching.
- To ensure that pastors are able to cope with the multifaceted demands of their work, they need regular continuing training. The training programme is attended by 250 pastors each year.
- 12 church buildings in strategically important church parishes are being renovated.

### **Target groups**

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Some 13 500 elderly and care-dependent people (120 000 visits per year); 200 victims of domestic violence with about 300 children; 3 000 Roma children; 400 pastors; 12 church parishes and their roughly 6 000 members.

### **Partnerships, networks, alliances, memberships**

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In Romania HEKS/EPER works with the RCR and its welfare and social service. An important programme component comprises knowledge transfer and relations between Switzerland and Romania. This takes the form of partnerships between church parishes, group trips or the sharing of know-how.

### **HEKS/EPER on the ground**

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The desk officer responsible for HEKS/EPER church cooperation is present regularly in Romania.

### **Topics and working approach**

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HEKS/EPER has been cooperating with the RCR for decades now. This cooperation also invariably entails the sharing of knowledge and experiences between Romania and Switzerland.

#### **Country:**

Romania

#### **Programme costs 2018:**

CHF 2 421 900.–

**HEKS/EPER No.:** 394.200

#### **Responsibility:**

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