**‘From Street to Home’**

**Workstream 5 (Deliverable 5.1b):**

**Case Studies of Best Practice:**

**Republic of Romania**

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Authorship:

Professor Morag MacDonald, Birmingham City University

Dr James Williams, Birmingham City University

Dr Caren Weilandt, Independent consultant

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For further information please contact:

Professor Morag MacDonald (project co-ordinator)

Social Research and Evaluation Unit   
Birmingham City University Attwood Building  
City North Campus  
Perry Barr   
Birmingham  
B42 2SU  
  
Tel: 0044 121 331 6305  
Mobile: 0044 7767777431

Email: [morag.macdonald@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:morag.macdonald@bcu.ac.uk)

Website: <http://streettohome.eu/>

# Romania: Casa Ioana

Website: <http://casaioana.org/en/>

In 1997, the Casa Ioana Association (Casa Ioana) opened the country’s first night shelter, for people who had lost their homes, following a request by the Mayor of Bucharest. Since 2000 however, they have focused their attention on providing temporary accommodation and professional psychosocial support to women and children experiencing domestic violence and family homelessness. They have grown to become Bucharest’s largest single provider of temporary accommodation and specialist support. On any given day, they support 20 families and nine single women.

Casa Ioana’s primary objectives are to:

* deal with the causes and consequences of domestic violence and family homelessness, by preventing it at the grassroots level, addressing its symptoms and reducing its recurrence
* equip people with skills for independent living, by making independence an integral part of their ACASĂ Programme through encouraging full participation of beneficiaries
* provide support services where quality is verifiable by improving services, evaluating service outcomes, improving staff training programmes and offering cost effective services

Casa Ioana uses a three-way approach that involves:

Provision – they provide a wide-range of support services for women and children experiencing domestic violence and family homelessness. Their network of services supports vulnerable women and children to regain control of their lives and move forward in a positive way.

Protection – they advocate for improvements to domestic violence and homeless policy and practice, and the implementation of legislation to meet the needs of vulnerable women and children.

Prevention – they help to prevent domestic violence and family homelessness through campaigning, education, training and research. They work in partnership with other agencies to raise awareness of domestic violence and family homelessness, its causes and solutions.

Casa Ioana’s integrated ACASĂ programme meets the particular needs of families and individuals over an extended period. They work with a broad network of both public-sector agencies and other service providers to help women and children resolve all their problems and acquire the necessary skills and assistance they need to regain family stability and affordable housing. They address the multiple underlying issues of domestic violence and family homelessness, rather than simply focusing on providing short-term emergency shelter.

Casa Ioana is dedicated to improving their services and they work hard to learn about the people they work with, e.g. their backgrounds, their needs and their ambitions. They have a hugely varied group of people to support and are committed to providing the holistic and personalised support beneficiaries need to move on with their lives.

Casa Ioana’s services fall under three general headings:

* temporary accommodation
* psychosocial support
* peer support

Casa Ioana manages two family shelters in Bucharest: a family centre for women and children who are homeless as a result of domestic abuse and another centre for families experiencing homelessness.

Casa Ioana’s centres are designed to provide temporary accommodation together with support services. The centres are not emergency night shelters and their beneficiaries are expected to work with the psychosocial support team and plan towards self-dependency. Casa Ioana also provides its psychosocial support to women and children who live outside their centres.

Through their ACASĂ programme, Casa Ioana provides comprehensive services that keep the family together whilst placing emphasis on empowering individuals: a process by which people are supported to take control of their daily lives and exercise choice. Empowerment means that beneficiaries have the authority to take decisions in matters relating to themselves, in relation to their daily lives and in connection to their self-development.

Casa Ioana places great reliance on the positive outcomes that peer support offers. Their regular support groups – also referred to as self-help groups – are groups of people who meet to share common problems and experiences associated with domestic abuse and homelessness. In a support group, people are able to talk with others who are like themselves – people who truly understand what they are going through and can share the type of practical insights that can only come from first-hand experience.