



CASE STUDY

NEXT Publishing House

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CONNECT Association (formerly called ADO SAH ROM) was founded in 2000 and is active in the fields of migration, decent work and social dialogue. The association conducts awareness campaigns, research and advocacy and monitors public policies, facilitating citizens' access to services and promoting the interests of different social groups. Since 2010 CONNECT Association has been involved in projects aimed at the integration of foreigners in Romanian society. An important component of these projects was the publishing of Romanian language handbooks for speakers of Turkish and Arabic, dictionaries, thematic vocabularies and information brochures in Turkish, Chinese, Arabic and English, and preparation manuals for obtaining Romanian citizenship etc.







SHORT SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

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DESCRIPTION OF YOUR ORGANISATION

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Its main donors are the European Commission, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Romanian Government. CONNECT Association is an affiliated member of SOLIDAR and a founder of the Romanian NGDO Platform (FOND Romania), it employs 10 people and sometimes works with volunteers.



PROJECT

What are the local social realities?

In Romania there is a foreign community made up of Europeans established in Romania (estimated at around 40,000 people) and a growing community of third-country nationals, of around 65,000 persons, from 142 countries. The top five countries of origin are the Republic of Moldova – 10,719, Turkey – 915, China – 7659, Syria – 4,630 and Iraq – 2,518.

Sixty percent of the third country nationals are men and 9,672 are aged between 0 and 18 years old.

In Romania, at the end of April 2016 there were also 2,584 people with a form of international protection, from 51 countries, of which 843 (33%) are women and 1,741 (67%) are men. Of the 2,584 individuals, 736 (28.5%) are aged between 0 and 18 (325 female and 411 male). The main countries of origin are: Syria (1,563), Iraq (353) and Afghanistan (135). Most Syrian citizens are usually family members or close relatives of Syrian citizens who have settled in our country.





Most immigrants from Romania, regardless of legal status, have no diploma to prove their level of education and cannot access vocational training courses, they cannot continue their education or cannot engage in the labour market. Furthermore, Romanian language programmes are scarce and not adapted to the needs of immigrants. In addition, in Romania there are no cultural products that address speakers of Turkish, Chinese and Arabic. A large number of immigrant children do not attend school. They learn Romanian on the street but do not know how to read and write.

What are the specific innovative elements in your project/service?

The publishing house was developed as a social economy enterprise, by CONECT Association, with funding from the European Social Fund. This social economy enterprise brings together several areas of the creative industry (printing, design, photography, software and applications for smart devices, web design, social media, information technology) to generate value-added products and create jobs in a highly advanced field of specialisation. It is innovative because it has introduced the notion of a social business, it covers a specialised area, and its distribution channels are based on an online store in five languages and a dedicated mobile app. Members of vulnerable groups were hired and trained to work in the publishing house as DTP artists, sales agents, graphic artists, and proof-readers.

What are the key characteristics of the project/service?

Target groups

Immigrants in Romania and members of their families (persons with lawful residence, asylum seekers and refugees); ethnic minorities in Romania, underrepresented or whose needs were

not addressed by other publishers; Romanians in the Caucasus, Asia, Near and Middle East and their families as well as individuals from these states in those regions who wish to learn Romanian; students of foreign schools in Romania; students studying Turkish, Chinese or Arabic and foreign students studying in Romania; students from high schools where rare languages are taught etc.

Principles

Creating the conditions for improving the integration of immigrants in Romanian society, by providing cultural products, helping them to learn the Romanian language and promoting Romanian, Turkish, Chinese and Arabic culture among people from Romania and Caucasus, Asia, Near and Middle East countries.

Drivers

Immigrants need to access the fundamental rights to education and culture, to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. Due to the small number of foreigners on Romanian territory, their need to access cultural goods is ignored by the public sector and impossible to cover by the private one.

Outcome

Giving immigrants and the people interested in Romanian, Chinese, Turkish and Arabic languages access to cultural products, helping them to learn a new language and embrace the culture of the host country as a means of integrating in society, making them open to others and developing the necessary skills to access the labour market, education or vocational training.





Can this project be transferred to a larger context (a bigger region, the whole country, EU-wide)? If so, what is necessary to transfer it (special structures, finances, common definition of standards...)? If not, why not?

The publishing house provides bilingual fairy tales (Romanian-Chinese, Romanian-Turkish, Romanian-Arabic, English-Arabic etc.), language manuals (Romanian for Arabic speakers, Arabic for Romanians etc.), dictionaries, conversation guides etc. This kind of project could be easily transferred to other contexts. The condition for a successful social business is the mastering of business management, a skill which is lacking usually in NGOs. The main problem of this type of enterprise is the capacity of the new social economy structures to become competitive and survive in a free market. Another problem is the low skill levels and professionalism of the staff recruited from the vulnerable groups, the majority of whom have little working experience and have difficulties in reaching even minimum standards of productivity. Cooperation with national and European social business networks might be a solution to these problems.

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SOLIDAR, together with our national members and partners, has developed 17 case studies in 2016, presenting innovative, effective, sustainable and tailor made models to promote social inclusion, the social economy and quality job creation by adapting a social investment approach. In their daily work, SOLIDAR members and partners anticipate new or unmet needs of socio-economically vulnerable people and empower them to actively participate in society and to access the labour market.

These case studies gather strong evidence of the social impact of the activities undertaken by our members and partners to help Member States making progress towards the achievement of the social and employment objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the implementation of the Social Investment Package.

SOLIDAR is a European network of membership based Civil Society Organisations who gather several millions of citizens throughout Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR voices the values of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions across the three main policy sectors; social affairs, lifelong learning and international cooperation.



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