

„BUCURIA” – A NEW HOME, A NEW CHANCE – FOR YOUNG PEOPLE  
WHO LEAVE THE SPECIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM  
IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF IAȘI

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**Abstract**

At the level of the Municipality of Iași, the „Bucuria” Multifunctional Destination Social Center of the Directorate of Social Assistance Iasi constitutes a viable solution for the protection and for the preparing for independent living and for prevention and combat the risk of the young people which is in need not to becoming homeless or socially marginalized persons.

Officially opened on September 26, 2014, the center operates with a capacity of 26 places in residential mode and 49 places in day mode. Residential services are provided free of charge, at demand, for a fixed period, depending on the particular situation of each beneficiary and in relation to his individual needs, in accordance with minimum quality standards for the social services centers with accommodation, organized as residential centers for young people who leave the child protection system applicable to this social center. Young people are encouraged and supported to participate in daily activities and get involved in household activities. At the same time, they are guaranteed access to the programs of social integration/reintegration, are supported to restore/strengthen the link with family of origin and extended family, with friends, as well as for (re)integration into community, they are guided on the labor market and their access to courses is facilitated.

**Keywords:** Social center, residential services, social integration

**Résumé**

Au niveau de la Municipalité de Iași, le Centre Social Destination Multifonctionnel „Bucuria” de la Direction de l'Assistance Sociale de Iași est une solution viable pour la protection et la préparation à la vie indépendante et pour la prévention et la lutte contre le

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risque des jeunes qui veulent et n'ont pas besoin devenir des sans-abri ou des personnes socialement marginalisées.

Inauguré officiellement le 26 septembre 2014, le centre fonctionne avec une capacité de 26 places en mode résidentiel et 49 places en mode jour. Les services résidentiels sont fournis gratuitement, sur demande, pendant une période déterminée, en fonction de la situation particulière de chaque bénéficiaire et en fonction de ses besoins individuels, conformément aux normes minimales de qualité pour les centres de services sociaux avec hébergement, organisés en centres résidentiels. pour les jeunes qui sortent du dispositif de protection de l'enfance applicable à ce centre social. Les jeunes sont encouragés et soutenus pour participer aux activités quotidiennes et s'impliquer dans les activités ménagères. En même temps, on leur garantit l'accès aux programmes d'intégration/réintégration sociale, ils sont soutenus pour rétablir/renforcer le lien avec la famille d'origine et la famille élargie, avec les amis, ainsi que pour la (ré)intégration dans la communauté, ils sont guidés sur le marché du travail et leur accès aux cours est facilité.

**Mots clés:** Centre social, services résidentiels, insertion sociale

### **Rezumat**

La nivelul Municipiului Iași, Centrul Social Destinație Multifuncțional „Bucuria” al Direcției de Asistență Socială Iași constituie o soluție viabilă pentru protecția și pregătirea pentru viață independentă și pentru prevenirea și combaterea riscului tinerilor care doresc a nevoie să nu devină persoane fără adăpost sau marginalizate social. Deschis oficial pe 26 septembrie 2014, centrul funcționează cu o capacitate de 26 de locuri în regim rezidențial și 49 de locuri în regim de zi. Serviciile rezidențiale se prestează gratuit, la cerere, pe o perioadă determinată, în funcție de situația particulară a fiecărui beneficiar și în raport cu nevoile individuale ale acestuia, în conformitate cu standardele minime de calitate pentru centrele de servicii sociale cu cazare, organizate ca centre rezidențiale. pentru tinerii care părăsesc sistemul de protecție a copilului aplicabil acestui centru social. Tinerii sunt încurajați și sprijiniți să participe la activitățile zilnice și să se implice în activitățile casnice. În același timp, li se garantează accesul la programele de integrare/reintegrare socială, sunt sprijiniți pentru restabilirea/întărirea legăturii cu familia de origine și familia extinsă, cu prietenii, precum și pentru (re)integrare în comunitate, sunt îndrumat pe piața muncii și accesul acestora la cursuri este facilitat.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Centru social, servicii rezidențiale, integrare socială

## **1. Introduction**

After the communist period, the children in the foster care centers grew up and turned into another vulnerable group defined as young people who leave the social protection system. Research shows that there have been early concerns of institutional actors for their reintegration and socio-professional insertion in an attempt to reduce other possible social risks, as a result of the lack of support for this category of beneficiaries from the social protection system, through the development of some special services (Mihalache, 2013, pp. 138-139).

The manual of procedures regarding the socio-professional insertion of young people who leave the child protection system states that „The young people reaching the age of leaving the protection system are one from the most problematic and vulnerable groups in Romania. [...] The group has a great rate of

failure in terms of social insertion. Because of this, the group generates increasing social problems, providing clients to the adult care system, prisons, trafficking and prostitution networks”. (Hope and Homes for Children Romania, *Salvați copiii*, 2006). According to the Strategy for the protection and promotion of children's rights 2014-2020, „ the young people who leave the special protection system after reaching the age of 18 represents a vulnerable category, exposed to the risk of social exclusion due to low availability of development services for an independent living skills. Lacking family support and without skills necessary for socio-professional integration, these young people do not even benefit from services social counseling and assistance in finding a job or securing one social housing”(Source: <http://www.mmuncii.ro>). At the level of the Municipality of Iași, a viable solution for the protection and for their preparing for independent living and for prevention and combat the risk of them becoming homeless or socially marginalized persons constitutes the „Bucuria” Multifunctional Destination Social Center of the Directorate of Social Assistance Iasi.

## **2. Center capacity**

Officially opened on September 26, 2014, the center operates with a capacity of 26 places in residential mode and 49 places in day mode. Residential services are provided free of charge, at demand, for a fixed period, depending on the particular situation of each beneficiary and in relation to his individual needs, in accordance with minimum quality standards for the social services centers with accommodation, organized as residential centers for young people who leave the child protection system applicable to the social center, code 8970 CRT-I, from the Order no. 29/2019, Annex no. 3.

## **3. Conditions of access/admission**

To be admitted, a few conditions must be met, respectively: the young person must come from a center placement; minimum age, 18 years old / maximum age, 26 years; domicile within the municipality of Iași; to be without family support and/or housing; to be autonomous and have a state of physical and mental health to enable him to live in collectivity; not to have registered disciplinary violations which would have caused the termination of the contract for the provision of social services in another period of time.

## **4. Equipment and accommodation facilities**

„Even if the way of organizing life in a placement center has improved, it still does not allow the realization of structured, constant and coherent activities training of independent life skills. Children and young people do not have access in the kitchen, they are not involved in the supply, they have no way to get an idea about managing a budget, about elements of managing a home. Young people don't develop knowledge of social services in the community, orientation skills general in the social environment. Many of them don't know what they have to do to get

their identity documents, they don't know how to fill out simple forms, or what to do in various situations such as looking for a job, registering with a doctor family, calling service providers. Most of these steps are carried out by a social worker or an educator.” (Good practice guide for social and professional integration of young people (post)institutionalized, COTE Foundation, 2009). The residential center „Bucuria” ensures everyone beneficiary housing and household conditions, a safe and comfortable living environment, with respect the quality standards provided by the acts in force. The building consists of ground floor and 3 floors, respectively 1 apartment for people with disabilities, located on the ground floor and compound from 1 room with 2 beds, 1 kitchen and 1 group sanitary; 3 apartments with 4 rooms (2 places/each room), 1 kitchen, 1 group bathroom and 1 living room; 2 office spaces. The rooms are customized, furnished accordingly and have dual functionality; the kitchens are equipped with furniture, crockery and stove, ensuring the necessary conditions for food preparation and preservation; the living rooms are equipped with a table for serving food and with TV; sanitary groups are organized and equipped with shower, sink, toilet and washing machine for each of them. Beneficiaries live in an environment of life that promotes one's own initiative and responds to everyone's wishes and expectations.

## **5. Preparation for independent and active living - services and activities**

„For young people who are going to leave the protection system, intervention is necessary to several specialists, social workers, psychologists, educators, to support them and guides”. (Manual of procedures regarding the socio-professional insertion of young people who leave the child protection system, Hope and Homes for Children Romania, *Salvați copiii*, Romania, 2006). „In the process of transition to an independent life young people coming from the protection system face a complex of vulnerabilities: level reduced adaptation in the community [...], limited access to the labor market and counseling professional [...], limited access to vocational training programs and skills reduced digital [...], poor housing or lack of a home after leaving the system [...], low level of expectations and self-esteem and dependence on the protection system [...]” (Methodology for supporting young people who have left the institutionalized system of child protection, 2021). After leaving the special protection system, intervention is continued, through counseling services (social, primary psychological, vocational) and through information, extracurricular education, respectively training, development and improvement the skills and habits of independent living, socialization, cultural activities, of entertainment and leisure (concerts, theater, opera, museums, cinema etc). Young people are encouraged and supported to participate in daily activities and get involved in household activities. At the same time, they are guaranteed access to the programs of social integration/reintegration, are supported to restore/strengthen the link with family of origin and extended family, with friends, as well as for (re)integration into community, they are guided on the labor market and their access to courses is facilitated.

## 6. Diversity through collaboration

An important role in ensuring the continuity of support measures for young people in situations of risk is the collaboration of the Social Assistance Directorate and the Social Center with Destination Multifunctional „Bucuria” with various partners. Among them, we mention the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection Iași (for the referral of young people aged between 18-26 years old, domiciled in the municipality of Iași, which no longer appears with special protection measure within the D.G.A.S.P.C.), County Agency for Employment (for insertion on the labor market and transmission of the list with vacant jobs at the level of Iași county, weekly), the County Library „Mr. Asachi” Iași (for the provision of library, cultural and recreational services in the book lending point of the Library „Gh. Asachi” established in the premises of the Center Social with Multifunctional Destination „Bucuria”), Emmaus Foundation (for accommodation after ending the period of residence in the center, if no solutions were found for housing), *Omenia* Humanitarian Foundation (for accommodation after the end of the period of residence in the center, if no housing solutions were found), professional training/reconversion.

## 7. Concrete achievements

Measures by which young people are supported to develop skills for life independent and active is reflected in a number of results, such as: improvement self-image and increasing self-respect, acquiring skills and personal abilities, improving educational and social status, increasing the degree of professional integration.

The situation of the young residents from the "Bucuria" Center in the period 2018-2022

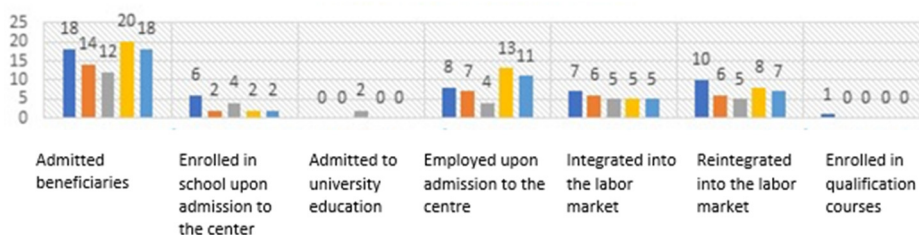


Figure 1. The situation of young residents in the center of Bucuria

Source: Iași Social Work Directorate, 2022

## 8. Events and activities

Within the Center, activities and information sessions are permanently organized which include topics such as: knowledge of legal rights and obligations,

drawing up a Curriculum Vitae and presenting it at a job interview, planning and managing the personal budget, maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle, sexual and contraceptive education, education against smoking and consumption of alcoholic beverages, drugs, communication and relationship and the types of abuse, the way to identify and report potential abuses or others forms of degrading treatment.

## **9. Examples of activities carried out:**

### *The year 2022*

- activities to stimulate the creativity of young people from center frame ("Thinking Hats");
- working visit of representatives from the Republic Moldova within the project „Center of social (re)integration – integrated approach to needs young people with limited opportunities“;
- activity to protect young people from actions manipulatives regarding the promotion of products that contain tobacco ("World No Tobacco Day").

### *The year 2021*

- self-knowledge activity ("Who am I?");
- information on increasing the motivation of the beneficiaries to preserve jobs and prevent the risk of social exclusion ("Evolution of the labor market in the context of Covid-19");
- activity to support the beneficiaries they had the festive course organized by the educational units with the opportunity to complete the studies high school ("Important steps in life");
- activity about the environment and ways to protect it („International Day Without Plastic Bags”);
- information about the danger of hepatitis, the modalities of prevention, local medical testing network, available treatments, but also promoting a style of healthy life ("World Day to fight against hepatitis");
- information about the traffic phenomenon people ("Don't fall victim to them").

### *The year 2020*

- activities carried out on the occasion of international and national days:
- International Day for Non-Violence in Schools (January 30), Small Union Day (January 24, 2020);
- information and debates about the coronavirus (eg: „Covid-19 - psychological impact on daily life");
- interactive debate about food;
- recreational activities ("The puzzle, a complete activity", „Spring in colors").

*The year 2019*

- medical-themed activities (about flu, seasonal allergies, food poisoning, dental hygiene, the effects of the heatwave, etc.), social/psychological (about vulnerabilities, family, bullying, anger, gambling addiction, etc.);
- activities on the occasion of national and international days (“Union Day”, „International Women's Day”, the Easter holidays, „Children's Day”, „World Day without Cars”);
- information activities regarding the selective collection of household waste, cleaning and space care green around the center;
- celebrating the beneficiaries' birthdays;
- sports competitions, trips and spiritual journeys.

*The year 2018*

- civic greening action within the „I want a country like outside” project;
- „Primary prevention of delinquency” information, carried out by the specialists in the framework of The psychosocial assistance service of the Iași Maximum Security Penitentiary;
- information on the risks of social networks with free access to personal data and on ways to restrict potential cybercriminals (“Securing of personal data in social networks”).

**10. Legislative milestones** that regulate the activity with young people coming from the centers placement:

- Law no. 292/2011 of social assistance, with subsequent amendments and additions;
- H. G. no. 440/2022 for the approval of the Strategy regarding social inclusion and reduction of poverty for the period 2022-2027;
- Order no. 29/2019 for the approval of minimum quality standards for services social centers with accommodation, organized as residential centers for young people who leave the system of child protection, applicable to residential centers for young people in difficulty, code 8790 CRT-I and 8790 CR-II (Annex No. 3);
- The methodological norms for the application of Law no. 116/2002 on the prevention and combating social marginalization, approved by H.G. no. 1149/2002 – instruments of support for young people leaving placement centers and who are a target group priority, but also for other disadvantaged groups;
- Law 76/2002 regarding the unemployment insurance system and employment stimulation work, with subsequent amendments and additions.

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