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Project Application Template, Social Projects outside Denmark

When filling out the template, please do not exceed 5 pages. Please write in a straightforward language easy to understand. It does not have to be free of language mistakes, but it needs to be understandable, written straightforwardly and not "fluffy".

1. Name of organisation: General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection District 1, Bucharest (DG1) - in partnership with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bucharest School Inspectorate• VIA University College, Faculty of Education and Social Studies, Denmark (VIA)• Bucharest University, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Science (UB)• CRIPS – Resource and Information Center for Social Professions, Bucharest (CRIPS)		
Address and country:	Bucharest, District 1, 17 Maresal Averescu Boulevard, Romania	
Contact person / Project coordinator and e-mail to contact	Name: Ioan Danut Fleaca E-mail: danut_fleaca@yahoo.com	
Legal responsible: <i>(name and position)</i>	Ioan Danut Fleaca, General Director	
Telephone:	Cell phone: 0040723573714	Date: April 2015
2. Project title:	Romanian-Danish Child Perspectives – a Holistic Approach in Romanian Early Childhood Education (RODACARE)	
3. Project presentation: <i>Please summarize the project in 10 lines at a maximum (please do not change size or format). Please note that this description will form the basis of explaining, understanding and remembering your project. It is recommended that this is the last part of the form to be filled in, and it should contain what you see as the best possible summarization of background, idea and key elements of the project</i>		
4. Project period : <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Duration: 4 years• Intended starting date (start expected to be earliest six months after submitting the application): October 2015 <p>The new proposal is based on the best practice in early childhood education inspired from Danish social pedagogy, adapted to the Romanian context and validated through Romanian Danish Center for Integrated Education project, funded by Velux Foundation, 2012.</p>		
5. Budget and financing for the project in total including all costs (amount in EUR): 2.618.549,96 Euro own contribution a minimum of 1.080.677,12 Euro		
6. Amount applied for (amount in EUR): 1.467.938,39 Euro		

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<p>7. Applying organisation, ½ page:</p>	<p>The General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection District 1(DG1) is a public institution subordinated to Local Council District 1 of Bucharest, with juridical personality, formed by the union of Public Social Assistance Service and Public Specialized Child Protection Service from District 1, and with an annual budget of 25.219.350 euro and a total staff of 1.790 employees. The mission of DG1 is to offer a wide range of social assistance services to the District 1 community which respond to identified needs for different groups of vulnerable citizens, included the operation of all early childhood institutions (0-3 years), residence homes and foster care for children and youngster (0-18 years), and a number of specialized social institutions. Since 2001, DG1 has been responsible for implementation of a large number of externally funded development projects, always in close cooperation with relevant national authorities, and with direct references to national and European strategies. Where possible, DG1 always strives for obtaining professional inspiration from countries with advanced welfare performance, such as Denmark. Many new social initiatives have been developed and implemented by DG1, with support from ministerial agents, and disseminated as innovative new standards to other parts of Romania.</p> <p>DG1 has itself implemented 12 large-scale projects co-funded by the European Social Fund (4+ million euro), 3 projects co-funded by national funds (300.000 euro) and one project co-funded by the Velux Foundations. DG1 has been partner in several transnational projects, among these 3 extensive projects related to child and youth protection promoted by the Italian Amici dei Bambini Association. Since 2001, all projects have been addressing development needs in the area of child protection, services for disabled people and seniors, drugs and abuse prevention, support to single mothers and to other vulnerable groups of citizens. The RODACARE project will be implemented by DG1 in very close cooperation with Bucharest School Inspectorate, as one objective is to facilitate the vulnerable children’s transition between nurseries and the kindergartens. In Romania the nurseries are coordinated by the DGs, and the kindergartens are under the Inspectorate’s jurisdiction. Both DG1 and Bucharest School Inspectorate have solid experience in operating large-scale development projects, and together they act as main operators for the Ministry of Education and other ministries in piloting new national and regional strategies in the area of early childhood education. DG1 is the main applicant and project manager. The expertise in the field of social pedagogy and early childhood education will be assured by the consortium formed by University of Bucharest (UB) and VIA University College (VIA) from Denmark. The 2 universities are running a very unique reciprocal double degree program in social pedagogy and they have been cooperating in several joint projects in the area of early childhood and vulnerable groups. The technical payments of supplementary salaries (scholarships) for the staff involved in training will be operated via the non-profit association CRIPSS, member of the DG1 network of social partners located in the head quarter of DG1.</p> <p>The management team of the project will be composed from the project manager and assistant manager (DG1) and one training coordinator (VIA). The Danish and Romanian trainers teamwork will assure the adaptation and implementation of the Danish expertise to the real needs and conditions of the Romanian context for a change with a positive impact on child development. The selected project manager will have strong expertise and experience in managing minimum 3 externally funded projects. The training coordinator will be very experienced in early educational programs design and change management. The management team will be assisted by administrative staff.</p>
<p>8. Country and area / city of project:</p>	<p>The project takes place in Bucharest, District 1, Romania. Bucharest is the Capital municipality and the cultural, industrial, and financial centre of Romania. It is the largest city in Romania, located in the South-East of the country and divided into six districts disposed radially so that each one has under its administration a certain area of the City centre.</p> <p>The area of intervention of the project is at District 1 level. The total capacity of places in nurseries</p>

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in District 1 is 470 places for children in 4 nurseries (Rodacie included as the fourth) for a population of 230.000 inhabitants. Statistically this means that less than 3 in 100 children between 0 and 3 years attend a formal ante-preschool educational programme (source: 2014 European Union Report: Investment in Children, Romania Country Report). The number of kindergartens in District 1 is higher than the nurseries: 20 kindergartens with a capacity of 6.350 children (source: Press Communicate, District 1 City Hall, 2014). All the 3 nurseries (not the Rodacie nursery), and the 6 selected kindergartens located in close proximity of the nurseries, are targeted in the RODACARE project through an institutional partnership between DG1 and Bucharest School Inspectorate.

9. Problem presentation (1/2 page):

In Romania, the public nursery system for children aged 0 to 3-4 years is operated with many similarities to the nurseries in the 1950's in, for example, Denmark. The consequence is a system that is not able to offer the single child sufficient stimulation, personal development and preparation for life in broad scale. The Romanian nurseries are focusing on medical and sanitary care with a limited consideration of educational aspects and very limited stimulation of the small child's development needs. The main staffs, managers included, are nurses, doctors, health specialists and medical assistants. The children are protected like small patients, with fever checking every morning, medical observations, with a strong focus on health and nutrition, protection and safety. The overall aim is to ensure that the children are in a physically good condition. Often the nurseries are designed like clinical and hospital-like environments with artificial and uncreative outdoor facilities, and not as an educational framework with creative, 'warm' and home-like environments and recreative outdoor facilities for the small children. The existing nursery system is still performing without a coherent legislation regarding the educational aspects targeting children between 0 and 3 years, and as a consequence most nurseries are developed without a systematic and consistent curricular planning and structure, and without a clear educational and learning approach. Aspects like psychological care, emotional and cognitive stimulation, creativity and motoric development are often absent in the daily routines. All in all the reality is that 50 years of reforms of the nursery systems in Western European countries have not been seriously reflected in Romanian practise during and after the communist period.

There are many reasons for the lack of innovation toward a modernization of the educational system. First of all the absence of an integrated, coherent policy and legislation in the early education field for children between 0 and 6 years. Childcare and early educational services for infants and preschool children are still scattered among various governmental and decentralized actors, in regard to their organization, functioning and financing. This has led to a lack of homogenous, clear-cut educational, cognitive and developmental standards (source: 2014 European Union Report: Investment in children, Romania Country Report). Secondly a lack of appropriately trained staff and change of paradigm from medical to educational principles. The medical staff needs training in educational methodologies and there should be more and well-educated early childhood educators. More studies made by UNICEF (2002, 2006) show that a large percentage of the nursery personnel is classified in the category of primary caretakers (nurses) lacking professional educational qualifications. On the level of governmental policies, there are no courses of action regarding the training of educators in the early education field, especially for the group of educators working with children between 0 and 3 years.

Beside of this general deadlock, where initiatives for improvements rarely will be taken by the medical staff itself and national initiatives are modest, it is a fact in public Romanian nurseries that the majority of children live in socially disadvantaged families. So the poor families and their children are those who are affected mostly by the low educational quality of the nurseries. Compared with many European countries where the composition of children in nurseries reflects the social panorama, in Romania the children in nurseries come from vulnerable families. 87% of all families with children enrolled in nurseries in District 1 have less than 250 euro per month as income. For almost 90% of the families the enrollment of the children in nurseries is a condition for being possible to

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keep the job. App. 26% of the families are either mono-parental, the parents have left abroad for working or a family member has a disability (source: DG1 internal research, December 2014). On this background nurseries have to be seen as a basic part of the social protection system. Many international surveys indicate that small children who are fostered in families with low human or social resources and support are in risk of becoming unstimulated in many development areas with significant risks of cognitive, mental, social or motoric problems later in life. If the parents are not fully able to establish solid attachment relations to their small children, it is even more important that the nurseries are professionally capable of taking this educational responsibility.

In addition to the urgent need of reforming the nursery system itself, the bridge from nursery to kindergarten - difficult for many socially disadvantaged children – together with the general needs of educational innovation in the Romanian kindergartens should be considered as one holistic process toward quality improvements for the children in the pre-schooling age of 0 to 6 years. In Romania the nurseries' focus on health and the kindergartens' strict focus on cognitive learning and school readiness represent a bad mixture for children coming from socially disadvantaged families. The reform of nurseries has to be followed by implementation of new educational methodologies in the kindergartens, and most important to target this changing process to the kindergartens that receive the highest number of socially disadvantaged children – both children leaving from nurseries or from the families.

The partnership between DG1, Bucharest University and VIA University College has proved that the target group of socially disadvantaged children from the successful Danish-inspired nursery Rodacie, co-funded by Velux Foundations, have met serious difficulties when leaving the nursery for public kindergartens. To introduce Danish pedagogy in Romania has demonstrated significant and very recognized improvements of the small children's well-being and personal development, but at the same time it has revealed the weaknesses and limitations of the existing kindergartens. The partnership intends to build on the findings and results from the Rodacie project by adapting these results to all nurseries in the district and to six kindergartens that are identified as located in the poorest areas of the district.

As a conclusion, the RODACARE project addresses the specific needs of nurseries at sectorial level, as part of the reforming of early education childhood education in Romania, by developing new *educational* approaches, expressed through new attitudes and behaviors towards the child, new values, new perspectives upon the child and family, more friendly educational environments, and a more flexible cooperation and cohesion between the nurseries and the kindergartens. The key factors of the project success are related to:

- The partnership between the two main bodies: DG1 and the School Inspectorate, responsible for the nurseries and kindergartens, in a common development project.
- The model of Danish early childhood education and social pedagogy, as a system that has proved its worth in promoting long-term socially sustainability for more than 100 years.
- The Rodacie experience as a Danish-Romanian successful model in public education and childcare applied in a pilot nursery with 30 children.
- The real development perspective of the early childhood standards at both *sectorial* (all nurseries in one district of Bucharest), *institutional* (DG1 and School Inspectorate) and *policy level* (UB).

10. Activities of the project, 1½ page:

Target groups and institutions:

- Children (and parents) enrolled during the project period in the St Andrei, Jiului and Vrancei nurseries, with a special attention on (the high percentage of) children coming from families with low social, economic and cultural resources. The nurseries' intake of children is 120, 170 and 180 - a total of 470 children in 2015.
- Children (and parents) enrolled during the project period in the kindergartens No. 28, No.

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42, No. 44, No. 177, No. 248 and No. 252 with a special attention on children coming from families with low social resources. The kindergartens' intake of children is 220, 191, 299, 109, 41, 209 and 287 - a total of 1356 children in 2015.

- All staff groups at the target institutions (management, educators, health staff, kitchen, etc.), 165 staff from nurseries and 163 staff from the kindergartens, a total of app. 328 persons.
- Physical and creative environments with focus on indoor design, room structure, furniture, toys, materials, colors and on outdoor facilities like playground will be designed and realized for all 9 institutions.

The project activity overview and the project organisation are considered as one consistent system. The project is targeting two sector areas – nurseries and kindergartens – as two independent tracks in a combined and integrated development process (the timeframe of activities is attached as a Gantt-scheme).

1. Project Management:

The management unit will consist of a project manager, assistant manager and training coordinator. Beside the overall planning, operations and progressions in the project in accordance with the contractual obligations given by the Velux Foundations, the management team will set up:

- The intervention strategies based on the analyzed needs, and selection of educational and methodological topics targeting specific development needs for nurseries and kindergartens.
- The success indicators and milestones, monitoring and impact evaluation methodologies.
- The methodological framework of implementing the new educational standards in early education system.
- Monitoring and reporting procedures

An Advisory Board consisting of the management unit, the nursery and kindergarten managers, top representatives from DG1, VIA, UB and the School Inspectorate, and parents' representatives will meet each six month in form of mini-conferences for ensuring consistency and good practice in the project implementation related to the following dimensions:

- Monitoring and quality assurance of all activities, thematic interventions and development strategies.
- Recommendation of improvements and adjustments.
- Dissemination procedures and policy-making actions/interventions.

The result of the meetings at the Advisory Board level is to make use of the existing resources, institutions and legislation, while continuing to develop and improve systematically an integrated and coherent approach in early childhood education.

2. Designing the holistic approach in early childhood education (RODACARE model) at sectorial level:

A. Planning and execution of the renovation, re-design and re-thinking of the indoor and outdoor facilities with the purpose to create physical frameworks and environments that are suitable for adapting the educational aims and activities from Danish pedagogy. The *nurseries* renovation and re-design processes are part of the DG1 investment.. How we can make best use of the environment for the child development will be the main reflection question. Establishing of expertise subgroup (VIA and UB) will be responsible for the analysis, plans and operations.

B. Development of training and competence development programmes for staff groups in the nurseries and kindergartens. Establishing of expertise subgroups (VIA and UB). The training components, the methodological kit and the evaluation procedures will be specially designed for each of the individual target groups – managers, educators, medical staff and other groups – and for the training of all groups together. Training will be executed both on cross- and single-institutional lev-

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el. The initial step will be to train and motivate the managing staff for a short and long term institutionalization of the educational progress. The Danish experts will train the peer Romanian experts with the purpose to ensure the project's sustainability and local ownership during and after the completion of the project. The transfer of knowledge from Danish to Romanian experts is a key factor in maintaining the educational improvements with a long term impact.

C. Execution of initial training of staff in Danish inspired methodologies.

D. Study visits to Denmark: Key persons from nurseries, kindergartens, DG1, the School Inspectorate and the Romanian experts will use joint study visits to Denmark for clarifying their common understanding of Danish early childhood pedagogy in practice. The study visit agendas will consist of a mix of full-day visits to peer institutions, introductions by a broad scale of relevant Danish sector representatives and follow-up production meetings.

3. Implementation of the holistic approach in early childhood education (RODACARE model) at sectorial level:

The most essential process in the project will be to ensure that the new methodologies, professional behaviors and human values are taken into real and deep possession on short and long term by the professional staff groups individually and as institutional groups. Experiences from numerous similar transfer projects demonstrate that this is the most critical aspect if the project shall bring sustainable improvements and innovation of systems that are based on many years of local traditions. The educational solutions *have* to be specially and intelligently designed for the Romanian society and not just a mechanical transfer of a Danish system. Therefore the project will invest considerable resources in the post-training stages:

A. Provision of concrete educational activities based on child perspectives.

B. Active involvement of the parents in the educational activities.

C. Observation and follow-up activities for ensuring maximum implementation of training inputs through peer training realized by the Rodacie staff under the coordination of the experts and trainers. The main objective is to assure that the new values (integration, child perspective, embodiment, etc.) are integrated in a reflective performance in the everyday life in the institutions.

4. Monitoring and impact evaluation on children development:

A. Elaboration of Good Practise Handbook for the educational institutions' managers, and based on RODACARE model of early education and change management.

B. Impact on national, regional and local policy-making.

5. Dissemination:

A. Initial, Midterm and Final Conferences with participation of project staff, involved educators and managers from 9 institutions, parents, together with representatives from other DGs and School Inspectorates from different counties of Romania, press media and VIPs from relevant ministries and social authorities. The project will have a web site and dissemination materials will be elaborated.

11. Expected outcome and impact from the project, 1/2 page:

In short the project's overall milestones will be to:

1. Develop a new coherent and sustainable educational model in all three existing nurseries in District 1 with the *measurable* result that children in social risk are improving personal competences and life perspectives in broad scale. Such a milestone requires a longitudinal perspective and continuous data collection in order to document the development of children on a longer term. UB and VIA will carry on observation, data collection and analysis using scientific tools and methodologies.

2. Improve the access to the kindergartens located in socially disadvantaged areas in District 1, with the *measurable* result that the access from nursery to kindergarten for children at risk is

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considerably improved and that a vertical consistency in the early childhood education system 0 to 6 years is demonstrated. Specific indicators on access, enrollment, participation and school readiness will be used. DG1 will set up a data base to track the children enrolled in nurseries and further on in kindergartens and schools.

3. Extend the results to key stakeholders to positively influence on regional and national policy-making in integrated early education based on the power of example from District 1. Another project initiated by the UB in partnership with VIA University College focuses on systematic influence at the policy level: RODAWELL, the Romanian Danish Center for Children Wellbeing is intending to become an experimental and innovative intervention and training provider in the field of education for primary level and kindergartens children aged 4 to 11 years.

Detailed indicators, success criteria and evaluation methods for level 2. and 3. will be defined between the partners in the initial stage of the project. The main stakeholders will be parents and educators, but the children themselves will be actively included in the evaluations. It is expected that a minimum of 80 % of the children in the nurseries demonstrate (1) significantly higher social, emotional, creative, motoric and cognitive development level in comparison with the mainstream nurseries, based on the medical model (the whole process of training and staff development will be evidence-based, involving systematic observation on children development, adult-children interactions, group dynamics, emotional wellbeing of staff, parents and children.), and (2) significantly improved access from nursery to kindergarten for the children involved. Both indicators reflect the need to focus more on disadvantaged children. For example, the World Bank report *Toward an equal start: closing the early learning gap for Roma children in Eastern Europe* (2012, page 12) shows that enrollment rate of 3-6 years old Roma children is much lower than majority children: only 37% Roma children are attending kindergarten, compared to 77% of the majority population. Within the project we intend to have a minimum of 60% of children rate of enrollment to kindergarten.

The established partnership between DG1, UB and VIA believes strongly in the Danish-Romanian educational model that has been successfully demonstrated as a pilot project in the Rodacie nursery. We have noticed the extensive curiosity among parents in Bucharest to get their children in the new public nursery. We have noticed the respect and interest for the new model among Romanian policy-makers, politicians, educational experts and mass media. And as the most important part of everything, we have noticed how children, staff and parents are being satisfied with the new Rodacie nursery. We feel sure that the model can be effectively transferred in a practice at sectorial level for childcare to a broader sector in Romania, not only in District 1 and Bucharest, but to other areas of the Romanian society. The network of all the 42 DGs, in cooperation with the school inspectorates and universities and teacher colleges from all over the country will be the platform to disseminate the results and the RODACARE experiences. It is all about the children and future citizens in Romania, so this is our long term ambition and dream.

12. Exit strategy:

Like DG1 will take full responsibility in maintaining and further developing all results and quality standards of the Rodacie nursery after the completion of the project granted by the Velux Foundations, the DG1 also will take full responsibility in managing and supporting the three reformed nurseries after the four years of development actions. DG1 will ensure that all four nurseries in the district will be maintained and further developed as new Danish-inspired childcare services, especially offered to the district's socially vulnerable families. A successful continuation depends on a motivated and professionally stimulated staff, headed by managers who feel ownership of the new Romanian-Danish model. Therefore the continuing staff training is essential for the exit strategy. The six kindergartens have adapted new practices that ensure children's smooth and flexible access from the nurseries, with a special attention of the socially vulnerable children. The kindergartens will maintain and further develop this practice, guaranteed by the School Inspectorate of Bucharest and thus also by the School Inspectorate on district level. The two bodies have signed the attached

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document that formally confirms their responsibility related to the taking over and continuation of all project results.

13. Budget summary and financing:
½ - 1 page:

Categories	Total cost	Own contribution DG1
Project management & administration	299.800	
In- & Outdoor renovation and re-design of the nurseries	207.000	55.645,16
Development, Execution and Implementation of Training	674.918	
Educational activities with and for the children	1.160.031,96	1.025.031,96
Travelling	262.000	
Dissemination	6.900	
Other costs	7.700	
TOTAL COSTS	2.618.349,96	
Velux contribution	1.467.777,10	
DG1 own contribution		1.080.677,12
VAT (non-eligible cost)	69.895,74	