

# Newsletter

2021/1 April



DEAR FRIENDS, PARTNERS AND SPONSORS



*2020 was an unusual and hard year for all of us from both human and economic point of view. But in times of hardships, you find out who your most devoted friends are. We consider ourselves blessed, because many people stood beside us and our sponsors have doubled their efforts to support us in this period. Thanks to them we have managed to maintain and even extend some of our services in response to the raising number of social aid requests.*

*The only department we had to temporarily close, was the Boarding School, as students now study online from their homes. But for the rest, we have maintained all our activities, and we were fortunate enough to be able to develop new ways of helping people in this period.*

*In this newsletter we invite you to read about our latest aid campaigns, activities, and about the general effects of the pandemic on Caritas.*

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## WIN-WIN COLAB WITH FOOD BANK

Recently we developed a partnership with the newly-formed **National Food Bank**, from where we receive large quantities of food that is close to expiry date. We also donate food to the Bank when we have a surplus.

*(details will come in Annual report)*

## EMERGENCY WINTER AID PROJECT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SOEB

Our Soup Kitchen feeds around 180 people on daily basis in Oradea city – including 40 homeless people and poor families and 70 elderly home residents. However, in wintertime we always try to reach more beneficiaries through individual aid programs and street food distributions. Stichting Oost Europa Boskoop (SOEB) foundation was our partner for this year's emergency aid program.



Winter is the hardest period for the vulnerable groups, such as homeless people, poor families with many children, and lonely old people with small pensions who cannot buy firewood. For these categories, getting the proper amount of calories in the winter is absolutely crucial, and sometimes can mean the difference between life and death. That is why we try to reach and help poor and homeless people on the streets, through periodic hot meal distributions, and also non-perishable food packages.

Another line of help we try to provide, in order to assure the minimal conditions of survival

in the winter period for the underprivileged is by supplying them with firewood during the coldest months: December, January, February.

As the winter hardships were combined with the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus lockdown, we saw a huge increase in demand for social aid, so we have devised an emergency winter aid project to help poor families. Our sponsor for this project was the foundation **Stichting Oost Europa Boskoop (SOEB)** who teamed up with the youth group of the local Protestant Church to raise money for this project. Most of the necessary funds



were collected by the protestant youth group **SIGN (Samen In de Naam van God – Together In the Name of God)**, by a 12-hour fundraising action on January 23, where they sold food and sweets in schools, and 5 members of the group participated in a virtual cycling competition, pedaling up the virtual version of the famous route Alp D'Huez, and for each kilometer they received donations from sponsors. That's how the necessary funds were collected to help poor people in Romania.

The Emergency Winter Aid project consists of three parts, namely street hot meal distributions every Friday in the city center throughout winter, from December to the end of February. Each time, 100 servings of cooked food are distributed with high caloric intake. There are also 150 packages of non-perishable food to be distributed for needy families or elderly people without relatives. In the third part of the project, we offered for 100 people compressed firewood bricks. Each household received 130 kg of such bricks. This is not a very large amount, but it is enough for each household to be heated for about two weeks, or if they are used combined with other wood or coal, then they last even longer.



The objective of this program was to provide emergency aid, which means that through this project, we do not bring long-term changes in the lives of beneficiaries, we rather aim to reduce the discomfort of vulnerable groups, caused by low temperatures, and financial hardships. *(continued on next page)*



*We constantly struggled to make beneficiaries respect social distancing rules during street distributions. Sometimes we succeeded, but other times the crowd was just too overwhelming. So many people were desperate to receive Caritas help.*



(... continued from page 3)

We met single-parent families, where budgetary deficiencies were created as a result of the implementation of online education. We met lonely elders, who from their very small pension, managed to buy some firewood, but it was not enough to last until the end of winter and the donation from Caritas came as a rescue. Even though we have not been able to improve their lives on

long-term, we have at least helped them to get through this difficult period, and at least for the moment they are somewhat safe.

Implementing this project was a real delight not only for the beneficiaries, but also a treat for the souls for our employees and volunteers, who were extremely enthusiastic to be able to participate. We would like to express our most sincere gratitude to the sponsors who made all this possible. We hope we can do something similar next winter too.



*The firewood aids provided by Caritas were almost life-saving for lonely old people, who many times run out of firewood by the end of winter.*

## SECOND-HAND CLOTHING SUPPLY ASSURED



We feel very grateful, because even though the pandemic has limited international transport possibilities for a while, our sponsors have managed to continuously supply us with second-hand clothes. The number of these transports did not decrease, as our sponsors made extra efforts to assure, that we have adequate amounts on our stock for this hard period for both selling in our charitable shops, and giving them out for poor people and families. For this we would like to say special thanks to our benefactors from **Caritas Uden, Mag. Peter Zidar diakon, SOEB,** and **Freundeskreis Villingen- Schwenningen.**



## CELEBRATING EASTER BY CHARITABLE ACTIONS



*"I am a Christian, and I ask for my part in the suffering of my fellow human beings," was said at the pre-easter holy mass of Caritas staff members, led by economic director Egeli Jozsef. It was in this spirit that Caritas staff prepared for the celebration of the Resurrection. An important part of Easter preparation is to make an extra effort to help more disadvantaged people and poor communities during the Holy Week, making the feast of the poor more beautiful and enriching their festive table.*

Accordingly, during Holy Week, 150 packages of non-perishable food were distributed by Caritas staff and volunteers from the diocese, with the support of the **SOEB** foundation in Boskoop as final part of the winter aid project. The large packages contained sugar, oil, rice, pasta, salami, cake, margarine and canned food to cover each family's basic food needs for several weeks.

In addition, an **extra 90 registered beneficiaries** of Caritas Soup Kitchen receive extra Easter aid packages containing ham, pastry, canned soup and other durable food at both Catholic and Orthodox Easters. A significant part of the contents of the packages was collected in **catholic parishes of Oradea city**, supplemented by food donated by deacon Mag. **Peter Zidar** from Austria and the aid organisation **Caritasverband Passau**. In addition to individual aid, Caritas Catolica supports communities in need at institutional

level too. During Holy Week, a total of 1,900 jars of apple puree, beans and carrots were donated to disadvantaged gipsy families, as well as an additional 620 kg of beans, peas and other vegetables to the National Food Bank which distributes them further to dozens of NGO-s. The high-quality products were donated to us by the Dutch company HAK.

At the same time, the supply of clothing to poor communities was continued. During the Easter period, a total of 6400 kg of second-hand clothes, shoes, toiletries and household objects were donated to the social departments of the municipalities of poor villages like Sacueni, Tinca and Husasau de Tinca.

With these offerings, the diocesan organization Caritas strived to help those in need to have a cloudless Easter holiday, without the overwhelming worries of everyday needs, and enriching their festive table.



## SHOEBOX PROGRAM CONTINUED



*Kids from church community in Fughiu village receiving the shoeboxes before Christmas. They were part of 1000 children receiving such goods.*

For decades, we have been giving out to the poor children in Romania shoeboxes with Christmas presents, offered by school students and church communities, such as **Purgstahl** and **Wieselburg** from Austria, and **Mariaward Schule** from Burghausen, Germany. Even though 2020 was a tough year, with unusual situations and limited contact between people, all parishes managed to deal with it in their own way, and we managed to distribute the Christmas shoebox packages to the families where it was needed the most.

Arranging this aid action was a true challenge. In some parishes the organization of the traditional nativity play was allowed, which gave perfect opportunity to hand out the shoeboxes to the youth. At other parishes, in the so-called “red zone” meetings were not allowed because of the virus protection rules, so we have transported the packages going from house to house.

By this small act of kindness, the true spirit of Christmas was taken to every poor home, thanks to the donation of the german and Austrian school children, for which we thank them from the bottom of our hearts. The offering of Christmas shoebox presents was initiated many years ago by ing. Werner Scholz, and the program is still active today, thanks to the above mentioned parish communities and the organization of **Mr. Martin Distelberger**. With their help, last Christmas we have distributed a total amount of 1000 shoeboxes in poor communities in Oradea city and neighbouring villages including orthodox, reformed, catholic church communities.



*Martin Distelberger's team of volunteers load up a truck of humanitarian aids at Wieselburg. Destination: Caritas Catolica Oradea. Thanks for their tireless efforts.*

## DEMENTIA CARETAKING COURSE

Thanks to the financial help of our sponsors **Stichting Steungroep Nederland Roemenie**, 10 of our employees – including caretakers from all 4 Caritas Elderly Homes – managed to complete the Dementia Masterclass led

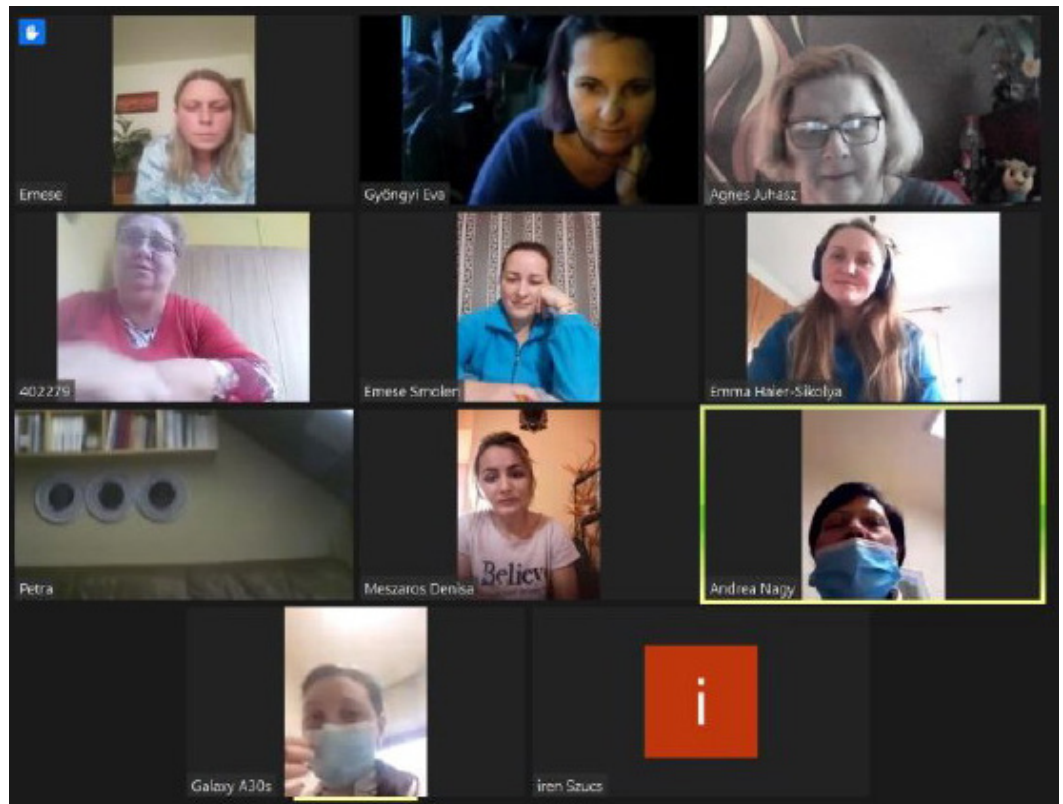
right environment too. Thanks to our Dutch sponsors participants have also received professional handbooks on dementia care.

“This course was extremely important for our colleagues, as we have to receive more and more demented patients in our elderly homes, and there are no fixed standards for this line of work in Romania. Our teacher, Agnes Juhász is a renowned professional, who has worked for

years in setting up dementia sections in various institutions” – says Emma Haier, leader of St. Martin’s Elderly Home in Oradea.

“Such a course is also important, because it is a good activity for burn-out prevention. Our employees were introduced to a new, somewhat different working attitude than what they have used in the past. Instead of focusing on what a patient cannot do and where he/she needs help, we need to focus more on what the patient still can do, develop

by Agnes Juhász, a dementia specialist from Hungary. Our employees were not only able to learn about the professional care techniques for people with dementia, but they were given guidance on how to create the



*Because of the virus protection regulations the course had to be held online, but still it was a very practical one, focused on real-life solutions. We wish to thank StNedRom for making this possible.*

those abilities, and recognize them as living, valuable persons. The new attitude is more differentiated care, adapted to individual needs of patients” – she added.

As we said a total of 10 employees have participated at the course – 3 from St. Elisabeth’s Elderly Home, 3 from Marghita and 4 from St. Martin’s Elderly Home, the latter being specialized in taking care of bedridden and demented beneficiaries.



## FOOD AID DISTRIBUTIONS



Giving out food packages to poor people was literally our first service at Caritas. We started this activity back in 1989, even before the organization was officially registered. Many of our sponsors for food donations have been besides us throughout 3 decades.

Food aid distribution is still one of our major social activities, especially in wintertime, when it is the hardest period for the poor. In the past months we have continued this tradition, helping hundreds of beneficiaries with canned, and non-perishable food packages, but also clothes, winter coat and self-hygiene materials, such as shower gels and shampoos, thanks to our devoted partners such as Caritasverband Passau, mag. **Peter Zidar diacon, Stichting Oost Europa Boskoop (SOEB) foundation, Barmherzigen Schwestern from Augsburg, Caritas Uden and Caritas Schijndel.**

We wish to say special thanks to the company **Hak Holland**, for continuously providing us with high quality canned food such as – applesauce, chickpeas, beans, peas, carrots or pickled cabbage – a part of which we use to cook hot meals for our beneficiaries, and another part we distribute directly to the poor people.

## NEW CARITAS SHOP OPENED

As approx. 20% of our total income comes from the sales of our second-hand shops, the 2-month lockdown in spring resulted in a serious budgetary deficit for Caritas. We tried to rebalance this at the end of the year by opening an additional second-hand shop in December, near the so-called Rogerius market, a very frequented place in Oradea.



Up to this moment the new shop has outstanding results in selling, also aided by restructuring the working system of our employees, enabling us to select and distribute the clothes more efficiently and supply each shop with new merchandize on daily basis. You will learn more about our restructuring in the upcoming Annual Report.





## HELP FOR BREAST CANCER PATIENTS

*As part of the International Month against Breast Cancer, the so-called Pink October, we have launched a new kind of assistance – the program provides external breast prostheses, wigs and orthopedic bras to women with cancer, in order to make secondary side effects of treatment easier to tolerate.*



We also provide counseling and treatment for lymphedema, which often occurs in case of mastectomy. The prosthesis, wigs and bras we use in this service are provided by our Dutch sponsors: **Stichting Steungroep Nederland Roemenië Foundation** and **Stichting Oost-Europa Boskoop**.

"It was our long-time dream to be able to support women in Romania who suffered from the side effects of cancer-treatment, by providing them external breast prostheses, wigs and orthopedic bras. For this we needed a reliable local partner, who has qualified staff, but at the same time also has a social sensitivity, and an empathetic attitude which is indispensable for carrying out this activity. This partner was for us Caritas Catolica, with whom we have been working for many years" – said Jan and Coby Willemsen, the leaders of the Stichting Steungroep Nederland Roemenie foundation. "We congratulate Caritas Catolica for opening the new department, we hope it will contribute to the improvement of many women's lives" – they added.

Until now there was no such service in Bihor County, and it was very much needed, because in the state system the sick are entitled to only 1 free prosthesis in 3 years. The prosthesis is usually worn out much sooner, being worn daily. The same applies to wigs and bras.

The new service was officially launched at the end of October 2020, and since then it has helped more than 30 patients. We wish to thank in their names to Stichting Steungroep Nederland Roemenie for the wonderful initiative and continuous support.



## EFFECTS OF COVID ON WORK OF CARITAS IN ROMANIA

### UNEMPLOYMENT ON NATIONAL LEVEL CAUSED BY THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

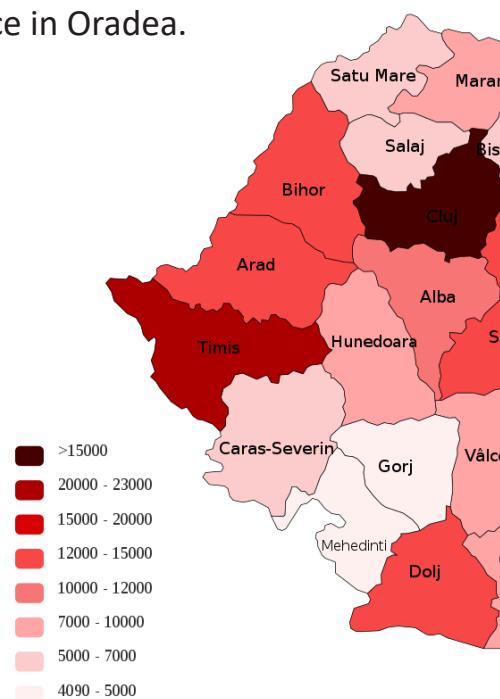
- On national level approx 800.000 people have lost their jobs (within Romania) after the first wave of Coronavirus, and more and more people are fired each day as large companies are forced to cease or reduce production
- In addition to this there are other hundreds of thousands of Romanians who were working abroad in countries like Italy and Spain and were forced to return home because they had no proper health insurance. These people are now back in Romania with little savings, and no income. High percentage was working on “black” (without papers) abroad. They are expected to become social cases soon
- Over 1 million total infections, over 25.248 deceased till April 2021
- Number of cases are on the rise – fourth wave is expected in May, after the start of the school year

### EFFECTS OF CORONAVIRUS IN BIHOR COUNTY, OUR AREA OF ACTIVITY

- 15 companies have fired over 3500 employees within 2 months after the lockdown in Bihor County. We hope there will be no further significant dismissals as Bihor County is out of the “red zone” this means that the travel restrictions are removed.
- Over 14.000 confirmed cases of infection, over 800 deceased.

### EFFECTS ON CARITAS

- We were forced to permanently close our social boarding school, as students are learning online. It will be not reopened for at least until September, but possibly 2 years.
- We were forced to temporarily close the kitchen on Sirul Canonicilor street (the one where groups from Jersey used to prepare food for street distribution) but we are planning to reopen it as soon as possible
- We were forced to reduce the number of our employees by 5%
- As approx. 20% of our total income comes from the sales of our second-hand shops, the 2-month lockdown in spring resulted in a serious budgetary deficit for Caritas. We tried to rebalance this at the end of the year by opening an additional second-hand shop in December, near the so-called Rogerius market, a very frequented place in Oradea.





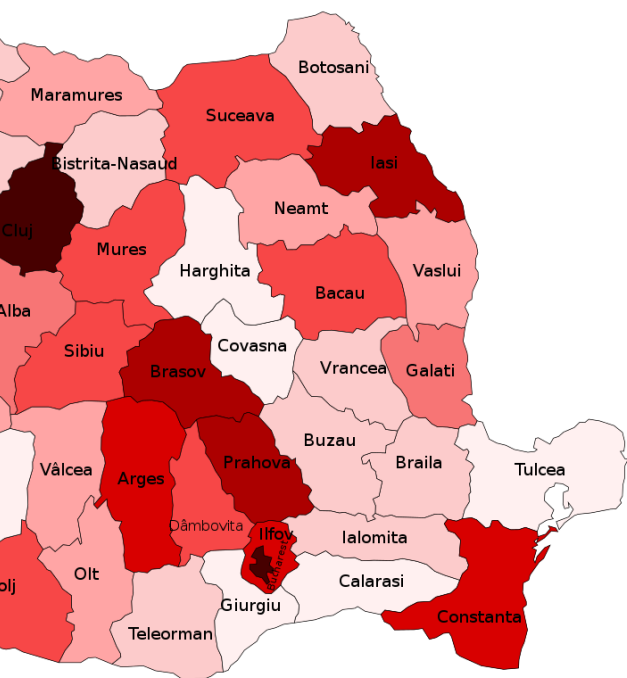
## WHAT WE DID DURING THE LOCKDOWN

- Except the boarding school we have maintained all our social services: homecare, soup kitchen, elderly homes, aid program
- Besides this we have created a new service initiated by the bishop: acquiring medicine, shopping and paying bills for lonely old people during the lockdown (and even after) with help of volunteers
- We have doubled the number of beneficiaries of our emergency aid program
- Since the Romanian government did not provide enough help at the start of the crisis, we have created a partnership through which we were able to receive a large quantity of virus protection materials from the Hungarian government. We have donated further a big part of these to benefit other organizations, hospitals and schools too.
- We have joined multiple national level partnerships to provide material help for families who have lost their income
- Even though the pandemic caused lots of hardships, we still managed to launch our program for aiding women with breast cancer. This was a project we were planning and preparing for more then a year in partnership with Stichting Steungroep Nederland Roemenie

## WHY WE CONTINUOUSLY NEED YOUR HELP

- Inland fundraising is almost impossible at the moment
- The number of social aid requests has tripled, and number of our social beneficiaries has doubled since the beginning of 2020
- A new lockdown is expected by the end of May, following the start of the school year.
- If we again loose the income of our second-hand shops in case of a new lockdown, it will be almost impossible for us to keep our social services running as before

Thank you for being our faithful partners in times of need!



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