

## **Social enterprise and the rights of persons with intellectual disabilities:**

### **A case study of Romania's "Pentru Voi" Fundatia**

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*Pentru Voi Fundatia, a private, non-government organization (NGO) dedicated to providing direct service and advocacy to adults with intellectual disabilities, is discussed as an exemplar of best practice in interdisciplinary community development (ICD). Specifically, we discuss the organization's use of social enterprise to provide for the general welfare of the community while simultaneously providing opportunities and services to a specific vulnerable population. The Pentru Voi Bakery, which provides opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities to live and work in a community setting, is used to showcase the key elements of successful ICD and social enterprise development.*

#### **Introduction**

The post-communist era in Romania has brought with it a series of significant social changes. One such change is a shift in responsibility for the care of individuals with physical and mental disabilities. Rapid deinstitutionalization of this population has resulted in the need for innovative practices among community-based agencies to promote and protect the rights of children and adults with disabilities. "Pentru Voi Fundatia" (For You Foundation) is presented here as an organization that engages in "best practices" of interdisciplinary community development (ICD). ICD is based on positive social, economic, and organizational changes that improve the general welfare of the community while providing services to a specific vulnerable population. Specifically, the development strategy implemented by "Pentru Voi" illustrates the integration of local, national and international resources through social entrepreneurship, resulting in economically viable partnerships that offer adults with intellectual disabilities access to education and employment opportunities within a community context.

The history of "Pentru Voi" is presented, as it provides an excellent opportunity for highlighting the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in the development and delivery of social services in a post-communist Eastern Europe country experiencing numerous barriers to successful service provision and proactive community development. John Dewey's pragmatism provides the theoretical construct for discussing and understanding "Pentru Voi" as an exemplary model of interdisciplinary community development and social enterprise development. Given the organization's relatively short history (as it was founded in 1996), the many ways in which the organization has been able to effectively create positive social change is certainly of note.

The "Pentru Voi" Bakery is the social enterprise initiative that is a hallmark of the organization's success. This social enterprise initiative draws together the public and private sectors to create opportunities for clients to build human and social capital and to sustain the NGO with financial capital generated from the enterprise. This social enterprise initiative provides a template for other organizations to utilize in creating their own successful social enterprise initiatives. While other organizations may not choose to operate a bakery, they can learn from the