

Case study

“Change a destiny. Give value to life”

Overview

Driver	BRD Groupe Société Générale (BRD GSG)
Country	Romania
Societal issue addressed	Long term assistance for children and youth at-risk, to overcome their physical or social disadvantage and become independent, responsible citizens
Partners	Association for Community Relations (ARC), further NGOs
Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In June 2009 BRD GSG launched the second year internal campaign for rising funds ▪ In spring 2010 BRD GSG will launch the second round of grants.
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1.040 employees joined the program in its first year of implementation and the number raised to 1.600 till the end of September 2009 ▪ 50.000 Euro raised by the employees ▪ 50.000 Euro sponsored by the company ▪ 10 NGOs granted through the program



Executive Summary

“Change a destiny. Give value to life” is a program that allows BRD Groupe Société Générale (BRD GSG) employees to get social involved in assisting children and teenagers at risk due to physical, mental and social challenges. Employees can offer their support by raising money monthly through payroll-giving, but also they can offer their support through volunteering time. BRD GSG implemented the pilot year in 2008-2009 when 1.040 employees enrolled in the program. The donor employees raised 50.000 Euro, which was doubled by the company. This amount was granted to 10 selected non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that assist teenagers and children at-risk who want to have a normal life. After the great results reached in the pilot year, BRD GSG and its employees launched in June 2009 the new donation campaign and prepare the new projects selection round for 2009 – 2010.

“Besides financial support, employees can also offer their time to the granted NGOs.”

1. Situation and societal issue

People that face physical, mental or even social challenges in Romania represent social categories that have little opportunities in the society. National statistic say that 3% of Romanian population are special needs people, and only 4% of these are employed. Also, almost 30% of the people living in the rural areas live in poverty, which is a rate 70% higher than in urban areas.

No matter whether it is a physical, mental or even social handicap, people belonging to these social groups are most of the time marginalized, isolated in their familial environment, or worse, in care institutions. This happens due to many factors that include:

- The general perception that these people do not have the capacity to become socially responsible as equal citizens,
- Most of the time people are not used to integrate a person that is physically or mentally challenged in their peer, educational, or work groups,
- People from social disadvantaged groups (rural areas, former institutionalised children) do not have access to information or educational programs that can lead them decent employment opportunities,
- There are few programs for special-needs of children and teenagers that teach them on how they can live an independent life and to earn abilities for a decent job,
- There are little facilities, especially for physically challenged categories, starting from access in public spaces or institutions, to job fares adapted to their needs, which generates isolation,
- Usually, the general opinion associates special-needs to the idea of illness. This leads to the public perception and, even worse, their own perception, that special-needs people do not have the capacity to live a normal life.

In the past years, in Romania, NGOs developed programs for special-needs of people that offer medical assistance, physical and mental recovery, leisure and socialising activities. Still, many of these NGOs have limited capacity to assist them in finding a job, help them earn abilities for an independent job, not to mention, counselling them on how to start their own business.

Thus, there are only a few initiatives that focus on their needs to integrate in the society as independent, responsible and active citizens.

2. Partners

The partners in the pilot year were:

1. Association for Community Relations
2. The grantees, who assist youth and children at-risk who want to reach an independent life:
 - ASCENDENT Association
 - ACSIS Association
 - Ovidiu ROM Foundation
 - Motivation Romania Foundation
 - Danis Foundation
 - Carmen Sylva Foundation

- Alaturi de voi Association
- Alternative Sociale Association
- AVIS Association
- Missio Link International Association

a. Community organisations

In the program's pilot year the above mentioned community organisations were involved. They received granting through the program and assisted teenagers and children at-risk with through different projects (for details please see point 4.a, p. 6). Further NGOs are and will be granted in the second round of the program.

BRD GSG decided to assist the targeted social group through NGO programs due to some key advantages offered by these institutions:

1. The selected NGOs already have specialised services for the targeted beneficiaries that focus on assisting them in creating an independent life,
2. These NGOs have a wide experience in working with beneficiaries and their results showed that their work has an impact,
3. NGOs are more efficient in using the available resources than other institutions
4. NGOs want and can host BRD GSG volunteers who want to contribute with their knowledge, time and experience
5. Amongst all non-profit structures in Romania, NGOs are the most transparent, and flexible structures, thus guaranteeing a good use of the resources raised by the employees and the company.

b. Broker/ intermediary organisations

The main partner in the program is Association for Community Relations, a national NGO, whose role was to offer technical assistance in integrating the payroll-giving mechanism within the company, promoting the program within the NGO sector and assistance in the selection process for the grantees.

The main tools offered by ARC to the company, in the pilot year of the program were:

1. Technical information on how the mechanism works and how it should be integrated in the company
2. A guide book for national and local coordinators of the program describing their responsibilities, giving tools and guidelines regarding their work in the program
3. A training session for the coordinators in order to help them understand better their role and answer their questions
4. Assistance in promoting the program within the NGO sector – create the application forms and guides, disseminate the information regarding the granting opportunity
5. Assistance in the selection process – create the selection criteria and coordinate the jury meeting

Depending on the needs of the second year of the program, most likely their role will evolve to new needs and areas of interest.

c. Driver

BRD GSG initiated the program and further coordinates it by mobilising its employees, communicating the donation and volunteering opportunities, and reporting the results. The company selected a national coordinator and other six local coordinators who have the role to:

- Motivate their colleagues to become donors,
- Respond to any questions of the employees,
- Manage the donors data-base,
- Disseminate information regarding the amounts raised by the employees,
- Select grantees,
- Communicate volunteering opportunities and
- Report intermediary and final reports

3. Programme Description

a. Initiation

BRD GSG developed in the last years many community initiatives and in 2007 the company decided to launch a program that offers its employees the opportunity to get involved in community initiatives on the long-term. Thus, the company looked for social causes that can combine employee interests and also are aligned to corporate values.

For BRD GSG, children and youth at-risk that want to overcome their physical or social disadvantage and become independent, responsible citizens represent an investment. The company considers that with a bit of help and confidence they can overcome the general perceptions and they can turn from people dependent on external resources (public or family) into people that can support themselves.

These conditions were the ground, which lead the company in building the payroll-giving program “Change a destiny. Give value to life”. The main goal of the program is to facilitate BRD GSG employees’ involvement towards NGOs that assist children and teenagers from the selected target group. Based on a payroll giving program, employees raise money and the company doubles the amount of money raised by the employees. Besides financial support, employees can also offer their time to the granted NGOs.

2008 represented the pilot year, thus BRD GSG selected five locations: Bucharest, Cluj Napoca, Constanta, Iasi and Timisoara to test the program. The main objectives for the first year were:

1. Create an internal payroll-giving system and create a company/employee fund to support children and youth at-risk programs.
2. Select and support 10 partner NGOs that offer assistance to selected target group in five pilot locations (Bucharest, Cluj Napoca, Constanta, Iasi and Timisoara).
3. Support employee volunteering in the projects implemented by partner NGOs and supported financially by the company and the employees.

b. Process

After BRD GSG decided to build the program, they entrusted ARC with setting up the program. ARC offered technical assistance in integrating the payroll-giving mechanism within

the company, promoted the program within the NGO sector and gave assistance in the selection process for the grantees.

2007 represented the planning stage and the launching event took place in April 2008. For the near future, the program will keep the current objectives and the strategy. The only change – the program becomes national. The decision to enlarge the number of locations where BRD GSG employees can join the program is a part of the initial planning when the company decided to have a testing phase in six locations, and in the second year to expand it to all national branches. Thus, other NGO grantees will join the program in the future.

Other than that, the program will keep its focus on assisting children and youth at-risk due to physical, mental and social challenges to overcome their current social status, and help them gain an autonomous life. The reasons for this decision are:

- The good response from BRD GSG employees to the selected causes
- The good alignment between the program approach and the corporate values
- The valuable results that can be anticipated amongst the beneficiaries after the first year of program implementation

c. Resources

In the pilot year most of the invested resources were financial, and they were entirely covered by BRD GSG employees and the company. GSG entrusted ARC with setting up the program.

d. Activities

Brief description of the programme's workings/ activities (planned and realized).

The program is structured on a one-year time unit. Each program cycle includes six major stages:

1. **Annual design and planning** – in the first year this stage included the activities such as: identifying the program characteristics – goal, objectives and annual plan. In the further cycles this stage includes program adjustments.
2. **Local coordinators training** – this stage refers to integrating new local coordinators in the program team, giving all necessary information regarding their role in the program, bringing-up previous challenges, finding common solutions, discussing and refining areas of knowledge such as: grantees selection, monitoring, evaluation and improving communication channels with company employees and the grantees.
3. **Launching the new year payroll-giving** – the local and national coordinators disseminate information regarding the opportunities for involvement, motivate BRD GSG employees to join the program, update the donors list, communicate the previous year results (amounts raised by the employees and the company, results generated within the NGOs activities, planned results for the new year, opinions from BRD GSG volunteers, etc).
4. **Launching the granting opportunities** – BRD GSG, along with its partner, Association for Community Relations disseminate the information to the NGO sector in Romania regarding the financing opportunity, evaluate the applications and where needed, visit the applicant NGOs.

5. **Grantees assist at-risk children and youth** – each selected NGO offers assistance to their beneficiaries, BRD GSG employees take part in the granted programs as volunteers whenever their expertise and time suit to the projects.
6. **Year evaluation** – Grantees report the results achieved based on the financial and human support offered by BRD GSG employees and the company.

4. Impact

a. Benefits to the local/ regional community

In the pilot year of “Change a destiny. Give value to life” the NGOs, who received granting through the program, reached the following results:

- 32 children from a disadvantaged neighborhood in Bucharest had the opportunity to go to school where they could use for the first time a computer or learn foreign languages; (Ovidiu Rom Association, Bucharest)
- 15 teenagers in Bucharest with great school performance, orphans of coming from poor families, received scholarships for one year. In exchange, they assisted other 60 children in Sunday Schools to improve their school performance; (Ascendent Association, Bucharest)
- 12 young adults were assisted in finding a secure job and become independent (Motivation Association, Bucharest)
- 15 single mothers started earning a constant income by working in the textile workshop, so they put the grounds for a secure life, preventing them to abandon their children (Acsis Association, Iasi)
- 25 orphan teenagers with HIV will develop specific profession skills, vital in getting a job and become independent (Alaturi de Voi Foundation, Iasi)
- 70 home-alone children, whose parents left home to find jobs abroad, were included in a program that aims to create a safe space where children can learn social skills and develop social activities that can compensate the absence of parents. (Alternative Sociale, Iasi)
- 10 young adults in wheel-chairs were initiated to learn and start working as tailors (Carmen Sylva Association, Constanta)
- 24 former convicted teenagers learned the process and principles on how to start a small business (Danis Foundation, Cluj Napoca)
- 30 homeless children received IDs and started attending school due to AVIS Foundation reintegration program (AVIS Foundation, Timisoara)
- 20 teenage girls, former victims of physical and emotional abuse got assistance for educational and social reinsertion (Missiolink, Timisoara).

b. Benefits to the community organizations

The grant program offered to the selected NGOs the opportunity to use the grants in a quite flexible manner. BRD GSG wants to use both financial and volunteers time to assist beneficiaries and also to help NGOs develop their capacity.

On the long run, the company expects that “Change a destiny. Give value to life” will lead to long-term partnerships with NGOs so that their beneficiaries will receive in-depth assistance towards an independent life.

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c. Benefits to the companies

The main benefit for the company is related to employees' satisfaction in doing a good thing.

In the same time, the program allows BRD GSG to find community partners that act in a responsible manner towards the company as well, not only towards their beneficiaries. This leads to a trustful, transparent relation.

On the long run the company expects public opinion to describe BRD GSG employees and the company as responsible towards community and committed to children and youth at risk that want to live a normal life.

Based on the pilot year experience BRD GSG in co-operation with ARC wants to expand the program for 2009-2010 to a national level.

5. Contact & Further Information

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INCLUDE – Pathways to Community Investment

The European project INCLUDE provides local intermediaries like civil society organisations, economic development agencies, chambers of commerce and public authorities with support that will help them to engage businesses in innovative cross-sectoral partnerships. INCLUDE identifies on a worldwide scale good examples of collaborative business initiatives as well as business engagement in cross-sectoral partnerships, which contribute towards skills development and employability of disadvantaged groups, towards social inclusion and innovation in addressing societal challenges and communicates them.

INCLUDE builds upon the results of the CSR-Laboratory “Skills for Employability enhanced through Employee Engagement” which was carried out as part of the European Alliance for CSR and is run jointly by UPJ and the ENGAGE initiative coordinated by Business in the Community (BITC). Partners of the project are the German Federal Department of Labour and Social Affairs, Citi-Group, Asociata pentru Relatii Comunitare (Romania), Önkéntes Központ Alapítvány (Hungary), SMartKolektiv (Serbia), Pontis Foundation (Slovakia) and Özel Sektör Gönüllüler Derneği (Turkey).

The project is supported by the European Commission (Directorate-General for Employment, social affairs and equal opportunities).

Further information about the project is available at www.bitc.org.uk/global/include.html (in English) www.upj.de/include (in German)

UPJ

UPJ is the German national network of engaged businesses and local non-profit intermediary organizations. Its projects and programmes create new connections between businesses, civil society organizations and public authorities thus contributing to solve societal challenges and to shape sustainable communities. UPJ, a registered charity under German law, provides organizations from the business, community and public sectors with information and consultancy to improve their Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Social Responsibility activities. www.upj.de



ENGAGE

ENGAGE is an international programme that brings together businesses and community organisations around the globe to increase the quality and amount of employee community engagement in their local communities. Its mission is twofold: To inspire, mobilise and support companies to develop sustainable community investment programmes, and to provide community organisations with a network, tools and support that will help them work more effectively with business partners. www.engageyouremployees.org



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