



Prietenia
Pantelimon



Zentrum für
Heilpädagogik
Corabia Bukarest

42nd Romania Newsletter

May 2026



Everyone as they are!



Preface

by Mathias Clauberg

Dear Readers,

Education and further training in Romania is and remains an important topic: where can Romanian-speaking people learn professional skills to support their specific clientele?

Elena B., a teacher at Corabia, attended the introductory course offered by the Anthroposophical Society in Bucharest, together with the Section for Curative Education and Inclusive Social Development (Goetheanum) in Bucharest.

Oana M. describes her experience of a further training course offered by Concordia in Bucharest. (Concordia Academia is a center for education and further training in Romania and offers numerous opportunities for people working in the social, educational & socio-medical fields. The courses are aimed at practitioners, managers, HR strategists as well as specialists in supervision, coaching and consulting services in organizational development)

These courses, alongside the practice-oriented training by Bogdan Leonte in Pantelimon, are currently the courses in the supra-regional offer that staff from both Corabia and Pantelimon can attend in the social field.

Social conditions shape the lives of people with special needs very differently, both in Romania and in Switzerland. However, the legal regulations are surprisingly similar! Bureaucratic, in fact!

For instance, the hygiene regulations of the authorities in Romania simply forbid the integration of a person in need of assistance, even into the simplest work processes, e.g. in the large kitchen. In the residential home, they are nevertheless allowed to prepare their meals in the evening and on weekends, together with their caregivers. In this private-like environment, however, the same regulations apply as in professional restaurants and canteens. What a discrepancy! After all, specialists are not being trained here; rather, people in need of assistance are being helped to achieve the greatest possible independence in a human-centered environment. The goal is surely to be able to learn something that contributes to community building and where the joy of life outweighs the suffering and hardships.

Three articles in this newsletter provide information about the present situation of assisted living arrangements and their view into the future, in Pantelimon (RO) and Langenbruck (CH).

Then follows a report from another perspective:

What did life in Pantelimon feel like for a German volunteer (2024/2025) in Pantelimon? What opportunities did the community in Pantelimon and the social environment of Bucharest offer him?

And at the end of the newsletter, as every year: finances and current news from Pantelimon, as well as the announcement of future projects.

We hope you enjoy reading it.

Further Training in Bucharest

by Oana Mihailescu

For the second time, a further training course on curative education and social therapy took place in Bucharest in autumn 2025. This training, designed in 4 modules of 3 days each, was developed in cooperation with the Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences, Concordia Academia Bucharest, Walter Dahlhaus and Volker Ermuth.



Middle front Walter Dahlhaus, back row second from right Volker Ermuth

Participation in the course organized by Concordia gave me the necessary support to cope with a situation I did not feel prepared for: leading a class with five children with special educational needs, starting in autumn 2025.

Over the past nine years, I had mainly participated in continuing education courses for traditional and Waldorf education. Until this school year, I had no experience teaching children with special needs, but the course I attended helped me to understand and penetrate deeper into the world of these children. By nature, I am an ambitious person focused on results, but this year, through the course, I learned how important it is to adapt to the needs of the children in front of me and to create space for independence and autonomy by truly starting from their abilities. I understood that, beyond biological age, it is important to relate to the socio-emotional age of the children I work with, to pay attention to their language with which they communicate with me beyond words, to see

the individual progress of each child and to adapt the content I bring to them in a differentiated way.

Many thanks to the great team of trainers who shared their real-life experiences with us and for their openness in answering specific questions, and for the support they gave us as participants so that we could bring in our own experiences and support each other.

Report on the introductory course "Inclusive Social Development" and on everyday life at Corabia

by Elena Balanescu - teacher at Corabia School

This year, Corabia welcomed six new employees into its family who do not yet have experience in curative education. To introduce them, the introductory course "Inclusive Social Development" (DSI) – curative education, social therapy and social agriculture – was offered, in which experienced staff from Corabia also participated. The course takes place in modules over the course of this school year and is organized by: the Section for Inclusive Social Development at the Goetheanum – Switzerland, the "Association for the Promotion of Special Education, Social Therapy and Biodynamic Agriculture in Romania" – Urlați Center, and the Anthroposophical Society in Romania. From the trainers who accompanied us along this path, we received a new approach to curative education, social therapy and social agriculture with anthroposophical inspiration, which takes up new perspectives in current social and professional contexts adapted to our time.

Further information on the organization of this course, the trainers and the conditions of participation can be obtained from Mr. John and Mrs. Roxana Byrde, as well as Mr. Vlad Popa.

Regarding Mr. Dahlhaus's book "Mental Illnesses in People with Disabilities", we have engaged with it in the teaching staff by reading and discussing some chapters, but also through individual study by colleagues who felt the need to obtain information about mental illnesses in people with disabilities.

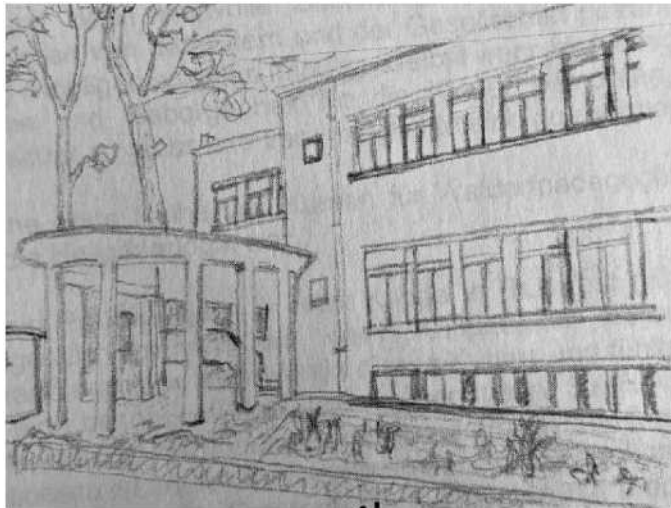
And so we don't forget the children: we are pleased to inform you that we have two preschool classes in this school year, and I am the class teacher in one of them. For me personally, the children in this class represent a great challenge, as some of them have very rare genetic diagnoses (Jacobs syndrome, X tetrasomy). The experience of the teaching team in this class helps us find ways and means to offer the children meaningful activities for their harmonious development. The other preschool class is accompanied by a new colleague in curative education, who, however, has knowledge of Waldorf education. She faces the same challenges but successfully manages, together with the class teaching team, to form a beautiful and harmonious group.

It is also worth mentioning that starting this school year, all classes have a longer school program.

We are happy to share with you that all colleagues from Corabia are preparing the Flower Bazaar together with the children, parents and school staff.

On behalf of my colleagues from Corabia, I wish you all the best!

Corabia Impressions



Practice-oriented Training

by Bogdan Leonte



Empowerment through Art - Creative Methods for Working with People in Need of Support

The two-day workshop "Empowerment through Art" is aimed at the employees of the facility for adult people in need of support in Pantelimon. It combines creative practice with easily understandable theory and provides practical approaches to strengthen people in need of support in their self-determination and ability to express themselves.

On the first day, the focus is on self-awareness and empowerment. Participants reflect on their own attitudes and learn methods with which clients can discover and make visible their strengths. Creative techniques such as painting, drawing or collages are specifically used as resource-oriented tools.

The second day is dedicated to the topics of attitude, boundaries and communication in everyday work. Using creative exercises and practical case studies, participants develop strategies to promote self-efficacy, respect boundaries and constructively guide difficult situations.

The workshop offers space for exchange, reflection and practical experimentation – with the aim of strengthening professional certainty of action and effectively implementing empowerment in everyday life.





The Vision of the Prietenia Association for the Future of the Residents in Pantelimon, from the Perspective of the Social Worker in Pantelimon, Aura Mirancea

The association's vision for the future of the residents living in Pantelimon focuses on a life of dignity, security, and meaningfulness, where every person is recognized and supported as a unique individual.

We strive for the residents to live in a stable, predictable, and empathetic environment that provides protection, continuity, and development opportunities tailored to each individual's abilities.

The beneficiaries living in Pantelimon are people without family support, without parents, who have spent their entire lives in institutions. Because they lack the experience of a family environment and genuine involvement in the community, they have not had the opportunity to experience what social belonging, natural relationships, or the emotional security of a real "home" mean. At the same time, society is not yet fully prepared to provide the level of security, understanding, and protection that these people need to integrate fully.

In this context, social integration represents an extremely delicate and complex process, especially considering that most of the residents suffer from severe impairments. The association makes continuous efforts to create safe bridges between the residents and the community through gradual introduction, guided activities, and carefully structured frameworks that do not evoke anxiety or risks, but rather acceptance, familiarity, and emotional balance.

The "Living House" represents a place of safety and belonging for the nine beneficiaries – a home where they support each other, build stable relationships, and feel truly "at home." Living in the residential house is not merely a form of protection, but a humane alternative to institutionalization, offering a living environment very close to family life, with clear routines, meaningful relationships, and constant support from a dedicated multidisciplinary team.

In the medium and long term, our vision focuses on maintaining this safe framework, developing the highest possible level of functional independence, and strengthening the sense of belonging. We know that for these residents, stability, continuity, and predictable relationships are essential for their quality of life. We firmly believe that every person, regardless of their life history or level of disability, has the right to a home, to protection, and to a life of respect and dignity.

Past, Present and Future of Social Care in Pantelimon from the Perspective of the Managing Director Mugur Ciobanu.

Six years ago, we welcomed residents from state institutions into our facility. They live here permanently and have been benefiting from the social services offered by our center in Pantelimon ever since.

Looking at their development, a positive evolution can be observed in all of them. This reinforces our conviction that the family environment in which they shape their daily lives is good. Above all, they have gained self-confidence and security, and our center has become a "home" for them.

In view of the new European directives on the integration of people with disabilities into society, we believe that our center offers them optimal living conditions, as they are integrated into the surrounding society as a large family.

We always apply the "PAT" concept, which has been developed and proven over time and stands for Practice, Art and Theory. (See 40th Newsletter 2024)

By "Art" we mean musical activities, theater, drawing, sports, walks, etc., but all in moderation and adapted to the special needs of the people, in line with the available financial resources. Currently, the average monthly cost for the care of one client amounts to 2300 euros.

How do I see the future?

Given their positive development, I am convinced that we can preserve and consolidate what we have achieved so far by continuing to offer them support and remaining aware of the need for this support until the end of their lives.



Pantelimon and its residents



Living Self-Determined – Vision, Practice and Future

My Personal Background

Domenig Christian Gaegauf



I am turning 44 this year. Since birth, I have probably suffered from verbal and motor dyspraxia, which delayed my language and action development. I also felt burdened because of my clairvoyance, as I could not separate the different worlds. In addition, the misjudgment by doctors and curative educators, who classified me as cognitively disabled, led me to withdraw more and more from life. All this traumatized me to such an extent that in my youth I gave up both my speech and my ability to act.

After finishing school, my parents looked for a living and working situation for me in over 30 institutions. I was classified as a highly difficult client. In the institution that was finally found, after barely two years, I was admitted to psychiatry as unmanageable. Fortunately, I was only in that inhumane place for a week. My parents found another home option for me. Although it was better than anything else I had experienced, even there I did not feel truly recognized as a whole human being. I was underweight, practically no longer slept, and was a bundle of misery.

This deepest inner despair of not being seen as a mentally intact person led me, at the age of 32, to communicate to my parents using Facilitated Communication (FC) that I could no longer manage to eke out my life in institutions and that I wanted to found my own institution.

Vision

I was now at the point where my dreams for a good life could become reality. I had this vision inside me for a long time, which I would now like to describe.

I see a small residential community with 4–5 people with various disabilities. Such combinations of people with different disabilities have something good about them, as they offer opportunities for the cognitively fit as well as the others to help one another. I have experienced this time and again and see that a good sense of self-esteem can be developed when people can support each other in mutual respect and appreciation.

I see the need for all of us to exchange views on how we experience nutrition and what exactly we want. No one should dominate here with their ideas, but it must be made conscious again and again that nutrition is centrally important for our well-being.

I also see the way people receive medical care as a major problem. I want to rely much more on natural products, medications, and natural healing methods. Psychotropic drugs should never be given without informing the affected persons well and asking them if they really want them. I have the ability to see diseases through my clairvoyance and could also make a contribution there. I simply want to develop more personal

responsibility, self-determination, and individual paths that ultimately benefit not only us but society as a whole.

I also have wishes regarding artistic activities. I would like to see a person in the residential community from time to time who brings us good music or enriches us with a reading or a lecture. Only in this way is our spiritual side activated.

Practice

Today, eleven years after my decision not to return to the institution, it is a life like on another planet for me. I live in my own apartment, supported by a team of four people working part-time. My parents are also still involved.

I still require support in all areas of life. However, my problems have decreased since I have been living with assistance, as a result of the good guidance. Unfortunately, Facilitated Communication only works with a very few people so far in a way that allows me to have good conversations. Here, much patience is still needed on my part, but also on the part of my companions.

I can now participate in life as an equal human being. For instance, I can co-decide in team meetings, conduct job interviews, and say whom I want to hire.

I see from many years of experience that employees are always well motivated when dealing with us accompanied people if they can help shape their own workplace. Thus, it is essential that work schedules and workflows are organized by the team itself and discussed with us residents. In this way, we understand the needs of the employees better and are more motivated to help where possible. It is about the self-determination and co-determination of everyone in the community. Only then is everyone recognized as a whole human being and met at eye level.

I live in my neighborhood with people who recognize me as a neighbor with my need for support and also with my abilities.

Slowly but surely, my self-esteem is growing, and I have regained the motivation to develop. Thus, I have finally become a human among humans. Before, I had no life perspectives at all and actually just wanted to die.

Future

In the future, I would also like to live as self-determinedly as possible, as only this form creates the prerequisite for contributing to life in my own way.

Living arrangements must stem from the individual needs of each separate person. This provides a variety of new forms and places of living for people in need of support that hardly anyone can imagine. Currently, the guidelines of institutions dominate, which are shaped by the overreaching regulations of the state. What business does the state have

to intervene here? It only creates chaos. In the social sphere, people ought to support each other through free agreements.

I see that more and more people in need of support wish for a self-determined life, which is also granted to us by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Commentary on the reports on the forms of community

by Mathias Clauberg

These 3 articles by Aura Mirancea and Mugur Ciobanu from Pantelimon RO, and Domenig Gaegauf from Langenbruck CH, about communities for people from the spectrum of the socially inclusive movement, primarily want to show the future development that is important to the authors.

Of course, the experiences gained and the knowledge about projects already realized are the basis for something new. In this context, the fundamental question arises as to whether the future cannot really be something completely unprecedented?

This question immediately evokes the next question for me:

How is development, which after all underlies the social sphere, to be thought and felt, i.e., lively and spiritually? Or is everything just "project management" based on what is already available?

What forms of consciousness are already available to us today?

The naturalist H.C. Zehnder suggests a "realization process in 4 stages: from pure spiritual intuition, through inspiration (related to hearing), to pictorial imagination (related to seeing), up to the objective, material conception of the subject." (See his article in the weekly magazine "Das Goetheanum" No. 11 of March 13, 2026)

This suggestion from anthroposophically oriented Goetheanism seems promising for the practice of seeking people who want to renew and shape communities instead of merely managing them.

I-Message

I,
A person with a distorted surface,
I disturb and irritate,
I and a few others.
We awaken dull souls through our way of being.
This is the chance to break down rigid boundaries.
Let us break down the boundaries
In our thinking, in our feeling!
Questions will emerge from human depths about our being human:

Who am I, where do I come from?
What have I set out to do in this life?
Yes, where do I really come from?
The ultimate source of my biography, do I know it?
And suddenly it becomes clear to me:
In the encounter with You (plural),
In the encounter with You (singular)
I live.
Only then am I truly human,
I have my place.
Finally I feel it, I know it quite clearly:
Whether I live with or without a disability,
Has nothing to do with all of this.
We are simply human,
Fully human,
Without ifs or buts!

Domenig Christian Gaegauf and Mathias Clauberg

Report of a One-Year Volunteer in Pantelimon 2024/2025

I am Timon, the volunteer who helped out at the Pantelimon Center from August 2024 to August 2025.

I can still remember my first hours in Romania well; I was sick. My supervisor, Mugar, picked me up from the airport. He drove me via the ring road around the huge city of Bucharest into the suburb of Pantelimon, which I had previously only known from Google Maps. Behind the Penny, the metal gate opened up to us, in front of which the Streetview images had ended. In the midst of this very densely built-up small town lay what was almost a park with orchards, foil tunnels, fields and, above all, many chickens and cats. And one or two dozen warm-hearted people.

Mugar showed me the four volunteer rooms, of which probably only one would be occupied this year, and from my selection, my first day consisted only of recovering.

As you can see, the Asociatia Prietenia gets more volunteers in some years and fewer in others. At the same time, volunteers like me naturally come straight from school and therefore often cannot bring any experience in the social field. Accordingly, the association also has to position itself in terms of personnel so that it remains capable of working. In other words, volunteers are not needed for what the association does. So what did I actually do there?

Well, instead there were two areas of responsibility for me: on the one hand, I had two free hands for all those activities that were pending but had little priority. On the other hand, there were those tasks for which I was trained from home, but which did not correspond to the classic image of a residential center for people with disabilities.

Under the latter falls, for example, the fact that there is a piano in the event hall of the day center, but nobody on the entire property who could play the piano. Except me, at least. At the same time, the fact that nobody had used it for a long time was also evident in that one of my earliest and longest tasks consisted of first repairing and tuning the entire piano. The same applied to a guitar there.

Other activities for which I could bring skills from home were, for example, pruning fruit trees, repairing bicycles, or my previous knowledge of wood and metal processing.

And in the first category? This includes, among other things, the many, many meters of fences that received a new coat of paint from me, the new chicken coop, the massage room which had to be replastered, a freshly varnished staircase, as well as an entire house wall which first had to be stripped of the remnants of its old paint before receiving new paint.

The crowning achievement of my year was then the small park with a waterfall mentioned in the last newsletter, which was also intended as a lasting sign of my work here and will hopefully last a few more years.

The hidden third category otherwise consisted of simple household chores, or keeping the residents busy for an hour or two during a meeting of the permanent staff.

Outside of my specific service, my life this year was strange; I came into contact with many, many people in Pantelimon and Bucharest, but I found it difficult to converse with a large part of them even in English. And yet, at some point, I started to create a "diary of interesting people" for those contacts that I don't want to forget.

My contact with Germany remained mainly digital, except for a few visits, and even before I came to Romania, I had unfortunately heard many prejudices for which it was necessary to prove the opposite. Except for the definitely justified climatic prejudices of long 40°C, I have not had to agree with anyone yet.

Even my initially skeptical grandparents have now been convinced of Romania and have refrained from car jokes.

If an opportunity arises, I would like to return. Secretly, Bucharest will probably remain for me in the long run the city where I was properly adult for the first time.

And if an even better opportunity arises, then this time I will also manage to make friends with Benni and Bella, the two guard dogs.



Timon brings music to Pantelimon and rejoices (in orange) with the community



Finances of the RO Group 2025

Balance 01.01.2025: 3,085

Expenses: Miscellaneous: 105 | Total expenses: 105

Income:

- General donations: 4,895

- Donations from SoHa employees: 1,630

- Miscellaneous: 4

Total income: 9,614

Final balance 31.12.2025: 9,509

In 2025 we did not have any major expenses, but the donations from last year will soon be needed for air source heat pumps. These will help reduce the costs of energy procurement in Pantelimon, together with the already existing solar systems. This is necessary because the energy costs from the electricity provider are about to rise.

Fortunately, the Pantelimon facility was able to largely reduce its economic dependence on the state through further long-term leasing of a part of the large property.

Economic independence ensures survival in uncertain times.

We hope to be able to continue supporting Pantelimon thanks to you, dear donors.

In the coming years, the topic of further training remains important:

Bogdan Leonte will continue his courses for the staff in Pantelimon as practice-oriented training. Twice a year he visits the institution to support the staff with advice and courses.

From October 2nd to October 6th, 2026, employees from Romania, from Pantelimon and Három Galamb, will come again to the autumn conference of the Section for Curative Education and Inclusive Social Development. The theme of the conference will be "Abundance and Boundaries – Transitions as an Opportunity".

We look forward to hearing news from our guests about their work, as well as to an intensive exchange about the contents of the conference.

Thank you for your faithful support,
with warm regards,
also from the colleagues in Pantelimon and the Corabia School,
Heleen Biekart and Mathias Clauberg



Contact & Info

Sonnenhalde Gempen is now a foundation.

For your donations to Romania, the account number is now:

IBAN: CH12 8080 8001 4685 0713 8

Raiffeisenbank Dornach, Bruggweg 129, CH-4143 Dornach

PC-40 9606-4 Bankclearingnr. 80939 SWIFT-CODE: RAIFF 22

The account holder is:

Stiftung Sonnenhalde Gempen

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