

Education for all: Breaking the cycle of poverty



CONCORDIA Social Projects Position on Education



CONCORDIA is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation present in Austria, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Germany and Switzerland dedicated to deliver social and educational services in support of disadvantaged children, young people and their families towards an independent and self-determined life. We believe that access to quality education is the single most important factor in stopping the transmission of poverty from parents to children. It can provide job opportunities, resources and skills that equip individuals and their communities with assets for a self-determined future. The current paper: „Education for all: Breaking the cycle of poverty” connects all CONCORDIA Social Projects (further called CONCORDIA) educational interventions.

CONCORDIA’s work is meant to protect all children’s rights as stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as in the National Legislation, regarding promoting and respecting children’s rights of the countries in which it develops services. In all actions with and for children CONCORDIA is committed to safeguard children and to report and respond to any alleged abuse, taking all the measures as stipulated in CONCORDIA Child Protection Policy and in the internal national policies and procedures.

Education in CONCORDIA – give children wings



Priority 1: Early childhood development

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child emphasised that the child's right to education begins at birth and that the right to maximum development through education must be recognised in early childhood. In CONCORDIA we believe that pre-primary school education (from birth to school start) is an indispensable part of a child's journey. As part of our activities, we offer opportunities for early education, prioritising the poorest and hardest-to-reach children. Our multi-disciplinary teams welcome daily preschool-aged children and offer them all-day holistic support which includes psychosocial, cognitive and physical development where individual talents and strengths are being promoted. Our teams work in co-operation with the parents and communities, engaging them in the development of their children, as well as with a range of institutions and authorities, which is essential for achieving sustainable impact on a local level.

Priority 2: Basic education (primary and secondary school)

Following the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which promotes all children and youngsters, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, verbal or other abilities, we created a socio-inclusive approach which ensures access to education for all - including children from disadvantaged marginalised groups or areas. Through our innovative programmes, we help children and young people at risk to successfully complete school and to develop as a person, feeling ready and empowered to embrace the challenges they are confronted with. Via informal educational and recreational activities, our participants are given the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills and abilities, which are essential for a life lived independently and with human dignity. Next to traditional learning support, we focus on learning socioemotional skills, sports and musically creative content, as well as innovative teaching forms that put the child at the centre of all educational efforts.



CONCORDIA Primary School in Romania is a school where the needs of each individual child count. We believe in the right of every child to quality education, which is why CONCORDIA also supports school attendance for those children from disadvantaged backgrounds who would not normally get such an opportunity. At CONCORDIA primary school, we want to live a culture of growing, where children participate in all decisions that are relevant to them.

We assume that every child comes to school with a wealth of experience, knowledge and skills, but also with very individual life and development needs. We understand school as a cultural centre and as a meeting place for all who want to educate themselves, a place where an exchange of experiences between generations is possible. We know that we cannot do it all alone: CONCORDIA works with teachers, partner organisations and decision-makers to ensure that whilst at school, children and young people enjoy a respectful and encouraging environment, where their talents are cultivated.

Remedial education

One key instrument to support the way out of intergenerational poverty and uplift children and youth from disadvantaged communities is through remedial education. The remedial education activities in CONCORDIA Day Centres provide extra assistance to students who, due to various reasons, have fallen behind the rest of the class in areas such as literacy or mathematics. CONCORDIA educators work closely with local school teachers, who apply appropriate teaching methods to fulfil their student's individual requirements.

Priority 3: Vocational education & job coaching

With its work, CONCORDIA creates bridges of cooperation between the education system and the social service system and provides them with examples of tailor-made paths of education and professional training for learners coming from disadvantaged families and communities, some of whom have missed years of formal education.

Our educational model includes social, emotional and school intervention in working with young people, practical learning of a profession, counselling to gain access to the labour market and support to find a home. Thus, vocational education in CONCORDIA is complemented by concepts such as **School for Life** (learning basic life skills by applying one's experiences and needs), **Case Management** (individual intervention which provides regular monitoring and intensive advising to all students, addressing their academic and non-academic needs and concerns), **Job Coaching** (employment support and mentoring while setting into the new role, guidance on budgeting, debt management, housing, etc.) and **Empowerment** activities.

CONCORDIA Vocational School offers inclusive vocational training and career guidance opportunities for 40 young people annually. The aim of the project is to guarantee the access of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to quality education and professional training and to develop the skills necessary for independent living. The educational model we implement is based on a holistic approach that also includes the social and emotional plan and personalised interventions in accordance with the needs.

Priority 4: School for life: unlocking the door of independent living

CONCORDIA's "School for Life" approach helps young people in their process of transitioning, assisting them to develop interpersonal skills. This includes self-awareness, problem-solving, learning to negotiate, decision-making, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, conflict resolution, empathy, coping with emotions, stress management, money management, raising a family, and running a home. The approach aims to empower and guide young people and young care leavers to be competent and to step confidently into independent and healthy adult lives.

Priority 5: Increased capacity at a systemic level – CONCORDIA Academia

CONCORDIA, in addition to its continuous efforts to provide social services to vulnerable individuals and communities, defining its target group, increases its impact by addressing a systemic intervention.

CONCORDIA Academia is a regional centre for education and innovative practices in the social field, providing highly qualitative, customised training programmes to professionals and private and public organisations acting in the social field. It strengthens the organisational effort to train resilience, to be innovative and to continuously scan the horizon, exploring the tendencies and addressing the challenges of a highly dynamic context of needs. Identifying the key competencies in the next decade and ways to develop them at both individual and organisational levels, Academia proves that CONCORDIA invests professionals as key players in conducting social intervention.

Cross-cutting issue: Advocacy and Education on children's rights and child protection

Systematic barriers within education prevent the most vulnerable children from accessing some of their basic human rights: education and non-discrimination. We are aware that the reasons for discrimination, segregation and exclusion are innumerable, complex, and depending on the context. CONCORDIA sees its role not only as a service provider but also takes a rights-based approach to support civil societies in our partner countries in claiming their own right to education. Advocacy in education has the key task of drawing attention to what stands in the way of the right to education and advocating for additional funding. Together with other stakeholders, our advocacy contributes to a structural and systemic change to ensure that vulnerable children, e.g. such as girls and Romn*ja children, are enrolled in school and receive a quality education.

Education in emergencies

In CONCORDIA, schools and other educational settings provide a safe space not only for protection but also for psychosocial activities, a place for warm meals, health support and space for leisure and play. CONCORDIA encourages the placement of refugee children in national education systems and, where this is not possible, supports their learning needs through the facilitation of online learning, language courses, supervised online learning, etc. CONCORDIA also supports the capacity building of teachers and other caregivers to support children's and youth's continuous learning.