

CHILD POVERTY

PART 2

GOOD PRACTICES FROM
CARITAS PROJECTS IN EUROPE



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Foreword

This publication, *Changing the Life Path of Children in Poverty across Europe*, is another important outcome of INCLUSION II, the program of Caritas Europa supported by the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, for the year 2011.

It follows and is related to the previous publication on Child and Family Poverty, «Navigating safe passage through the labyrinth of poverty» made by Caritas Europa in October 2010. While the aim of the latter was to describe the importance of children and families for our society in the light of Christian social teaching, as well as to conduct an analytical reflection on the root causes of poverty for children and families and how to best address them through the provision of social protection and social welfare, the present publication aims at strengthening the conclusions of the previous paper by presenting concrete examples drawn from the living experience of Caritas organizations. It represents a «collection of best practices» of the Caritas work with children and families living in or at risk of poverty in almost all countries of Europe, showing how Caritas projects provide children and families with the resources necessary to find their way out of the «labyrinth of poverty».

This collection can be used by Caritas colleagues, especially in European countries, to identify existing projects or potential partners whose work could be interesting for their own organization, and thus to promote mutual learning and cross-stimulation within the Caritas Europa network. At the same time, the collection offers valuable examples of anti-poverty interventions that can inspire policy and decision-making at various levels: the European Institutions, national governments, regional and local authorities, but also social partners, the organized civil society and Churches.

This publication is the fruit of joint work done in close and friendly cooperation by expert staff of national member organizations: Geneviève Colas (Secours Catholique), Dr. Rosemary Keenan (Westminster Catholic Children's Society, member of Caritas Social Action Network), Dr. Verena Liessem (Caritas Germany) with precious contributions and support by Leontine Pässler and Lucia Bucher, and by staff members of the secretariat of Caritas Europa (Adriana Opromolla, Alain Rodriguez). I express my deep gratitude for their commitment to publish this collection notwithstanding serious challenges.

I also thank very sincerely all the project managers in the Caritas Europa network who have contributed with their input and testimonies to this important exercise of knowledge-gathering and sharing.

I wish every reader to find this publication truly insightful and inspirational, just as I wish to all Caritas organizations and decision-makers to continue our endeavor in finding together innovative solutions towards our «Zero Poverty» objective.



Rev. Fr. Erny Gillen
President of Caritas Europa



Asylum Homes for Mother and Child

Caritas Czech Republic

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Parish Charity Karlovy Vary

Caritas Czech Republic offers five different asylum homes: «Asylum Home St. Zdislava», «Asylum home St. Zdislava – Domažlice», «Asylum home St. Zdislava – Karlovy Vary», «House Jonah» and «St. Agata Home Břeclav». All projects offer help to mothers and their children, but vary in their target groups, services, funding and partnerships.

The projects all address the needs of deprived mothers and their children, who are in need of shelter. This includes amongst others: pregnant women, victims of domestic violence, families living in unsuitable conditions and homeless families. The target group of some asylum homes also includes homeless people and other people in crisis.

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The Caritas «Asylum Homes for Mother and Child» provide necessities such as shelter and sanitary facilities. Moreover most asylum homes offer counselling and help concerning applications for welfare benefits. The staff help the mothers to improve their parenting skills and to develop a stronger mother-child relationship. The Caritas projects support the children in their intellectual, social and psychological development. The asylum homes aim to convey a sense of security, love and safety. The average stay varies from project to project, e.g. mothers can stay with their children for up to one year at the «Asylum home St. Zdislava – Domažlice».

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The major aim of all Czech Caritas «Asylum Homes for Mother and Child» is to reintegrate the mothers and their children into society. This is encouraged by supporting the mothers' social and educational skills which in turn builds the mothers' self-esteem and self-confidence, which eases their way back into society and ensures their emotional well-being. By explaining the welfare benefits system to mothers, the staff help them to deal with their immediate financial issues. All of the works contribute to an improvement in the living conditions of mothers and children.

The «Asylum home St. Zdislava – Domažlice» has a partnership with the German diocese of Regensburg. This cooperation includes economic support and donations of equipment and school supplies. Furthermore the «Asylum home St. Zdislava – Karlovy Vary» works with Caritas Switzerland.

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Caritas Czech Republic

No volunteers work at the «Asylum home St. Zdislava – Karlovy Vary», «House Jonah» and the «St. Agata Home Břeclav». In contrast a few volunteers work at the «Asylum Home St. Zdislava» and the «Asylum home St. Zdislava – Domažlice». They organize motivating activities, repair the houses and raise money for the projects.

The funding of the Caritas asylum homes varies from project to project. «Asylum Home St. Zdislava» is, in part, funded by the European Union.

The «Asylum home St. Zdislava – Karlovy Vary» is only funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). The «Asylum home St. Zdislava – Domažlice» is also funded by the European Union, as well as by national and local government sources. Caritas Czech Republic also funds projects. Donations and church collections are also used to help finance the projects. The «Asylum Home St. Zdislava» is also funded by the ESF, by national government sources as well as own funds.

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The «Asylum home St. Zdislava – Domažlice» regularly communicates with the public authority and recommends improvements to the law on social services.

Petruska

Caritas Moldova

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The Caritas «Petruska» project is a temporary placement centre for children in crisis situations, which is located in Tiraspol.

The project addresses poor and vulnerable children from 4–14 years old, who are from socially deprived families. These include amongst others homeless children and foster children, who lack adequate adult supervision.

The «Petruska» project offers complex social services to 25 children, who live at the centre, and to approximately 60 additional children, who seek daily help at the centre. This includes providing the children with necessities like food, clothing and sanitation facilities. In emergency cases medical assistance is also provided. Psychologists offer counselling to the children and their parents. Pastoral care is provided by a priest. The centre also offers educational and cultural activities to the children, including a daily after-school programme, where the staff help the children with their homework. This results in the children achieving better educational outcomes. Puppet theatre workshops, computer workshops and other educational classes are also offered. Cultural activities include excursions to the theatre, the museum or the library and the celebration of holidays. Social workers regularly work with the families/carers of the children to ensure the children's reintegration into their families and an improvement in the children's living conditions.

The major aim of this Caritas project is to guarantee a safe environment, where the children can receive educational as well as psychological support. Above that, the project contributes to the reintegration of children into their families and supports their social inclusion. Throughout the project the children develop and strengthen their social skills and their self-esteem, through socialising with their peers.

By ensuring the children's emotional well-being in addition to social-skills and education, «Petruska» contributes to their reintegration into society as well as to increasing their employability and a way out of the labyrinth of poverty.

Volunteers make up twenty-five percent of those involved in this Caritas project. They work in the education programme of the «Petruska» centre.

The Caritas project is funded by grants from European government sources. The project is also being supported with resources and knowledge by Caritas Austria, Caritas Romania and Caritas Ukraine. Caritas Moldova also cooperates with the Tiraspol State Administration. Thanks to the project the local administration has raised awareness of the importance of non-state actors in the field of social protection of children.

It is planned to expand the project to offer help to more children

House for Mother and Child

Caritas Austria

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The Caritas «House for Mother and Child» is a project of Caritas Austria, which is located in Linz. The project addresses lone mothers, who are not able to cope with their current situation. This includes amongst others pregnant women, divorced women and women who are victims of domestic abuse. Up to 10 single mothers and their children live in the «House for Mother and Child». Each single headed household lives in their own small apartment, in which they can stay up to two years. After moving out of the project, help is still provided by the social workers of Caritas Austria.

The Caritas «House for Mother and Child» helps lone mothers to develop new perspectives and prepares them for independent living. It facilitates the growth of a stronger mother-child relationship through the development of parental skills.

Amongst the general aims of the Caritas projects are: avoiding the homelessness of women with children, reducing violence against women and children, and the reduction of child and family poverty. The project offers different services addressed to the mothers, as well as to their children.

The social workers act as advocates for the needy mothers and their children. The Caritas staff offer advice concerning judicial questions and questions about the governmental support system. They also offer debt counselling. One important long term result of this work is the financial stability of families, which is the basis of starting an independent and successful life without poverty. Another important aspect of work is to increase the mothers' knowledge of the social support system and how to access it, which is an important short term step towards a life without poverty. The mothers are also supported in their search for employment and in their search for a new home.

In addition to the help offered to the women, the social workers also offer counselling and fun-activities for the children. The children's emotional well-being is an important aim of the work. To this end, Caritas «House for Mother and Child» offers group and individual counselling to the children as well as playgroups and outdoor-activities.

The project also gives mothers and children an opportunity to socialise and to exchange ideas and experiences with people who cope with similar situations. In this community, mothers and children are able to develop and improve their social skills. This project is based on voluntary engagement by the mothers and requires them to work with the social workers. The women pay rent for their small apartments

A few volunteers are involved in the project. They assist the professional staff in looking after the children. In some cases volunteers enter into a partnership to help one family.

The «House for Mother and Child» is funded by grants from local and national government sources as well as by churches. Caritas Austria's own funds are used to finance the project.





Initiative Cream Topping

Caritas Germany

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The «Initiative Cream Topping» is a project of Caritas Germany, which was founded in 2006 and operates in the district of Tübingen in south-west Germany. «Initiative Cream Topping» aims to provide the means to enable deprived children to experience the 'better' things in life.

The project aims to help children and teenagers (up to 18 years old) from very poor families, whose financial situation prevents them from joining a sports club or other spare time activities. The impact of this poverty results in the children and teenagers being unable to participate in sports or other creative activities, which in turn prevents them from exploring their full potential and from socialising with their peers.

By funding their membership, the Caritas project offers children and teenagers the opportunity to join a sports club or a creative workshop. The children and teenagers choose the activity they wish to participate in. This could be, for example, a soccer club, theatre workshop or music lessons. After the children and teenagers choose the club/activity, which they wish to participate in, social workers contact the clubs or organisations and register the children/teenagers. Caritas supports children from deprived families, in their dreams of becoming for example a musician, comic artist or soccer star.

The major goal of the «Initiative Cream Topping» project is to stop the vicious cycle of social exclusion, low self-esteem and pessimistic visions of the future. Moreover it is the project's aim, as the name suggests, to make the young people feel like the crème de la crème.

With the membership in a sport club or music school, the children and teenagers are able to socialise with their peers, in this way their social exclusion decreases and their social skills improve. Even more important, the children and teenagers are able to discover their potential, improve their self-esteem and become more self-confident.

By giving the children/teenagers the chance to have membership of a sports club, theatre club, art school, etc. they become an active member of society. In this way Caritas fosters emotional well-being and helps children and young people to develop new perspectives in their lives.

The trustees of the project meet four times a year to award grants based upon the applications they receive.

The «Initiative Cream Topping» involves partnerships with the chocolate-festival «chocolART» and other local businesses. The local trade and business association of Tübingen won an award for special social involvement from the German Department of Trade and Industry, due to its support of the Caritas project.

The project is funded by grants, non-governmental sources as well as by churches.



Youth Club

Caritas Georgia

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The Caritas «Youth Club» is a mobile youth work project of Caritas Georgia, which operates in Tbilisi. It started functioning in 2007.

The project addresses three categories of children and teenagers: abandoned street children, children on the streets and children/youth from Roma families.

The category of street children includes children, who have no connection to their families as well as children who have difficulties with their families and periodically live on the streets. Children of the streets are children, who spend their whole day on the streets but return home at night. The majority of children and teenagers seeking help at the «Youth Club» are in need of basic skills in writing, reading and maths.

The Caritas «Youth Club» consists of a drop-in centre and a street worker group. The drop-in centre offers the youth shower facilities, washing machines and warm meals. Psychologists offer group and individual therapy. When necessary, medical assistance is also provided by the centre. In addition, the centre offers different workshops including hairdressing, sewing, decorative wood engraving and working with computers. The «Youth Club» centre offers the youth a place to socialise and to participate in sports and intellectual games.

The street worker group consists of a psychologist, social workers and volunteers. They work with the street children at places, where the children/teenagers meet, work or stay for the night. The mobile group offers counselling and organizes different fun activities for the children, e.g. soccer matches. A «mobile school» is offered, where the children can learn the basic skills of writing, reading and maths. The work with Roma children is mainly performed on the street, since they are not allowed to visit the drop-in centre by their parents. The social workers and therapists work with the children and teenagers for a two-year period.

One of the main goals of the Caritas project is to raise awareness of the need for a healthy life style. For this purpose, regular conversations and discussions are held to inform them about the consequences of drug/alcohol abuse and prostitution. Other important aims of the project are to improve the physical and psychological health of the youth and to prepare the children and teenagers for an independent life by equipping them with the necessary skills for this. All these factors are important for the integration of the children and teenagers into society. Young people are helped to develop new aspirations and to support them in completing their school career and seeking employment. With this project, Caritas Georgia supports children and young people escape poverty.

Half of the «Youth Club» staff are volunteers, who organise different fun activities for the children and teenagers. The Caritas project cooperates with different organisations, e.g. the SOS Kinderdörfer, which organises outdoor activities and vocational training for the youth.

The project is solely funded by Caritas Germany. Caritas Georgia closely cooperates with the State Care Agency and the public schools, which includes sharing practical experiences.

Caritas is the only organization working with street children and other children at risk in Georgia. It has been lobbying about the problem of street children for many years. Nowadays it is hoped that the real needs of street children have been understood by the Government. The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs, leading the reform on children in Georgia, has promised to devote more attention to this problem as from 2012.



Active communities to prevent the institutionalization of children and youth

Caritas Bulgaria

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The Caritas Ruse Project, «Active communities to prevent the institutionalization of children and youth» aims at reducing crimes committed by children and youths within the Ruse and Vratsa municipalities.

The main goal of the project is to increase the community resources in Ruse and Vratsa municipalities to prevent the accommodation of minors in reformatory institutions. The project seeks to restore the relationship between children with anti-social behaviour, their family and the wider community. This is achieved through a three tiered approach. Firstly, the creation of a support network within the community and the strengthening of community resources for children with anti-social behaviour and their families. Secondly, the creation of a support network of families and/or parents/guardians of children with anti-social behaviour. Thirdly, the establishment of a partnership network of interested institutions and NGOs in the towns of Ruse and Vratsa for continuous preventative work with youth.

The project aims to establish a pilot model between January 2010 and March 2012 based upon best practice obtained from restorative justice systems popular in USA and Canada. This involves the minor participating in consultations and training programs to overcome behavioural issue. This includes work conducted for the benefit of the community. This is all overseen by members of a team of professionals and volunteers committed to the child's interests.

The work is aimed at young offenders (aged between 14 and 18) and their families, Child victims of trafficking (who are treated as offenders in Bulgaria) and children who are in or leaving punitive institutions for children. The project provides a mentoring scheme where young offenders and mentors establish relationships of trust spending time together, (at least 10 hours per month), encourage good behaviour and offer emotional support. In conjunction, support groups for parents and families are run to facilitate family understanding and develop family relationships.

In addition, the project also seeks to address infrastructure: Creating a volunteer network of professionals and stakeholders; conducting family conferences on specific cases; organising the training of volunteers to aid young people; creating support groups for families of children with anti-social behaviour and organising working visits for magistrates and parents in order to increase the understanding of those who make decisions about the future of the child. There is a continual aim to change the existing legislation and social perception against which the children are judged and supported and to ensure that legislation corresponds to that of the EU.

Caritas Ruse works in partnership with Prison Fellowship Bulgaria. The organization is part of the world-wide network of Prison Fellowship International. PFI is a global association of over 100 national Prison Fellowship organisations. Their mission is to be a reconciling community of restoration for all those involved in and affected by crime. In Bulgaria the PFB main partners are the Orthodox Church and the Direction General «Executing of punishment» under the Ministry of Justice.

90% of those working on the project are volunteers. In addition, there are 4 employees: 2 in each municipality.

The project is run through grants from non-government sources with an overall budget of 111 700 BGN. Caritas Ruse is actively attending and participating in a national coalition of NGOs seeking to reform the youth justice system. It is hoped this project's outcomes will contribute to initiatives which seek to introduce an adequate system of juvenile justice in Bulgaria.

Chance S

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«Chance S» is a collection of more than 60 projects of Caritas Stuttgart (a member of Caritas Germany) that work for the future reduction of child poverty under the motto of 'We provide opportunities for the future.' Some projects aim to reduce the number of children living at risk of poverty, whilst others focus on encouraging children and giving them hope for a better future. This is achieved through projects which are focused on specific age ranges of children and through the identification of new and forward-looking programs within the field of child poverty.

«Chance S» is directed to poor children and youth in Stuttgart. It is a long-term project. The projects goal is to give the children a future with possibilities. This is done by encouraging the children but also through having expectations of them. Self-confidence, education and social skills are procured. Currently, there are more than 10,000 children in Stuttgart who live in poverty or at risk of poverty (14% of the 74,268 children under 15 years). The projects of «Chance S» and Caritas Stuttgart focus their work on children, youth and families in the alleviation of child poverty.

«Chance S» aims to raise public awareness of the issue of child poverty, therefore reducing child poverty in the future and raising funds for the work of today. To gain publicity and raise awareness «Chance S» highlights its support from politicians, famous people and other foundations. This gives a signal to the society that something has to be done and the engagement of these people can have a multiplier function.

«Chance S» generates money through fundraising and through grants from other charitable organizations. Funds are either given directly to each project or invested to generate capital for the «Chance S» foundation. This allows each project to receive the amount of money it needs to fulfill its aims as each project is allocated funds on a needs basis. Furthermore the investment of the money generates capital for the future; ensuring the longevity of projects in a time of economic crisis where fundraising and state funding is in danger of reduction. In this way, «Chance S» offers a single opportunity to systematically support children and families which are poor or are at risk of poverty.

The involvement of volunteers is different in each project. Volunteers work according to the needs of each project. Some projects rely mainly on the work of volunteers. An example is «Freunde schaffen mit Erfolg» which has over 50 volunteers. Other projects work only with professionals who are mainly educators trained in social work.

«Chance» S is part of the Caritas Gemeinschafts Stiftung (foundation) which was founded in 1999. The Caritas Gemeinschafts Stiftung foundation advances the work of Caritas Stuttgart.

Emergency Shelter

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The Caritas project «Emergency Shelter» is a project of Caritas Austria, which is located in Graz. It was established in 1996 and includes an emergency shelter, accompanied (sheltered) housing and individual counselling.

The project addresses the needs of teenagers and young adults (14 – 21 years old), who do not have a place to stay overnight. The Caritas social workers provide easily accessible, low-threshold immediate help. In 2010 about 250 teenagers and young adults' sought help at the «Emergency Shelter». The emergency shelter provides necessities, like a bed for up to 10 nights per month, food and shower facilities. It also provides washing machines, telephone, internet access and storage.

The accompanied housing is offered to homeless young adults (18–21 years old), who are in need of longer term help and shelter. The «Emergency Shelter» also offers individual counselling, help with finding a permanent residence, job seeking, financial advice and access to other support systems including qualified social workers.

The overall aim of the project is to improve the situation of the teenagers/young adults in a lasting way. The Caritas project provides teenagers and young adults with a safe place, where they get the chance of taking a «break». The social workers help them to develop new aspirations and goals in their lives. The general aims of this Caritas project are to avoid teenage homelessness and to ensure the emotional well-being of teenagers and young adults.

This Caritas project helps teenagers to improve their relationship with their parents, providing a neutral space for the teenagers and offering counselling in cases of conflict. It tries to prevent stressed teenagers from drifting into drug abuse, criminality or other high risk and anti-social behaviours. As a community the teenagers and young adults improve their social skills through socialising with their peers. The accompanied housing prepares the young adults for an independent life and gives them the chance of a fresh start. With the help of social workers the young adults are able to find an apartment and employment. These two steps ease the way back into society and out of poverty.

The «Emergency Shelter» is funded by the City of Graz and by funds from Caritas Austria. Recommendations made to the public authorities have included the need for more special housing for teenagers.



Artemide

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«ARTEMIDE» is a project coordinated by Caritas Ambrosiana, in collaboration with the social enterprise «Farsi prossimo» in Milan (Italy).

The project addresses vulnerable families (especially mothers) with infants (aged between 0 and 3), in need of psycho-pedagogical support during the periods of maternity and early childhood.

«ARTEMIDE» facilitates contacts between these families and counselling and other services at parish level; between families and the professional staff of the social enterprise, and connects them with different relevant public services in the territory. It offers targeted interventions for help and support, orientation on educational, social and healthcare services available in the territory, home visiting services to mothers, opportunities to socialize in groups and share experiences with other families, in particular to receive advice on parenting, maternity and early childhood problems.

The project goals are:

- 1) Targeted pathways to help families and children;
- 2) Psycho-pedagogic and relational support;
- 3) Addressing the basic economic difficulties of vulnerable families;
- 4) Orienteering on the access and use of public services for vulnerable families.

Around 50% of those engaged in the project are volunteers. They all have responsibilities in the counselling centres at parish level.

The project was initially funded by regional authorities (Regione Lombardia). At the present it is financed by Caritas Ambrosiana, by private donors through a fund-raising campaign and by parishes in various territories.

Social Support for Families in Crisis

Caritas Austria

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Caritas «Social Support for Families in Crisis» is a mobile project of Caritas Austria, which is offered in different regions within Austria.

Support is offered to children and parents, who are unable to deal with specific issues within their lives, such as domestic violence, overstrained parents, families with financial issues, difficult housing conditions and divorced parents and their children.

The Caritas project works on behalf of the Austrian Youth Welfare Service and offers help to families in problematic situations. The qualified social workers of the «Social Support for Families in Crisis» project develop strategies and solutions with the families. Furthermore the families receive support and guidance in multiple and holistic ways. This includes counselling, information about other Caritas services plus assistance and support to cope with their daily life. The family social workers assist a family for a maximum time of 24 months.

The first priority of this Caritas service is the well-being of children. Overall the staff of the «Social Support for Families in Crisis» try to help the families to solve their problems and to improve their living conditions. Through the help of the social workers, parental skills improve and parents are able to raise their children in a more positive way. The long term goal of the Caritas project is to prepare families to cope with their everyday life independently. In addition the Caritas social workers help the families to develop stronger parent-child relationships and to ensure the emotional well-being of all family members.

This project involves early intervention to solve family issues, so that children of families in need are able to grow up in a stable environment. This enables family members to interact in a healthy way and to find alternatives to domestic violence and abuse.

This is a basic step for enabling children to live a healthy life which creates resilience and so helps to prevent them from engaging in high risk behaviours such as drug abuse. «Social Support for Families in Crisis» also helps families out of poverty, by arranging debt counselling and employment advice.

The project is funded by the Youth Welfare Service and by donations from other initiatives. Partnerships with the Austrian Youth Welfare Service, other social work organisations and educational institutes have also been established.

St Francis Family Centre

Catholic Children's Society (Westminster) UK

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The «St Francis Family Centre» is a project of the Catholic Children's Society, Westminster, which is a member of the Caritas Social Action Network for England and Wales.

The project was founded in 1986 and works with poor and socially isolated families and their children living in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. This includes families living in substandard accommodation, families with a large number of children and single mothers and their children. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is the borough with the highest level of poverty in England.

St Francis' plays a key role in the community and offers practical and effective help to families. The project includes a nursery for 2 year olds and an after school group for 5-10 year olds. Moreover, a toy library is offered to the children as well as family holidays and day trips. In addition to the child support, St Francis also supports the parents by offering drop-in sessions for families and information about welfare benefits, health issues, housing, training and employment.

The overall goal of the project is, to improve the local social networks as well as family ties. By achieving this goal the emotional well-being of families is ensured and a way out of poverty is offered.

An important result of the staff work is that parents are able to regain or restore their self-esteem and to develop aspirations for themselves and their children. New self-esteem and confidence are important driving factors which ease the way back into society, because parents are encouraged to seek employment. In addition the «St Francis Family Centre» informs parents about appropriate support services in the wider community including health services and ways in which to access these. The services improve the families living conditions and indirectly effect the development of the children in a positive way.

The staff of St Francis also directly improve the children's development. They ensure that socially isolated children are able to socialise with their peers in a safe and welcoming environment. This supports the children to develop social skills from an early age. Early indicators of health problems and developmental delays, caused by poverty and social factors, are promptly addressed before they become serious.

Occasional volunteers are involved in the project, for example by work in the after-school programme. Past parents also volunteer to fundraise for the project and so give back something to their local community.

«St Francis Family Centre» is funded by grants from local government sources (Early Year Education Grant), churches, grants from non-government sources as well as by the Society's own funds. The project was inspected by the Office for Standards in Education and has been judged in all quality areas as 'outstanding'. Reports of the «St Francis Family Centre», are seen by the local authority and other funders.

With Me

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The Caritas project «Mit Mir» («with me») is a project of Caritas Switzerland, which is offered in many cantons.

The project is addressed to kindergarten- and school-aged children from needy and socially isolated families as well as to volunteers. Caritas Switzerland mediates voluntary godparents for children, whose parents do not have enough time to interact with them. Those include, amongst others, children from lone parent households and children with many siblings.

Today traditional family structures are decreasing and the relationship with relatives are less close and supportive. For children of poor families it is often difficult to develop new relationships, to compensate for missing family structures. The outcome of this is the increased social isolation of these children and their parents. The «Mit Mir» project offers the children a way out of this situation.

Once or twice a month the godparents spend quality time together with the children. While the parents have time to concentrate on their work, job-seeking or just relax for a few minutes. The godparents and children use their time in a creative and diversified manner, for example they bake or cook together instead of going out to eat fast food.

The volunteers commit to a partnership for a longer period and are prepared by Caritas staff. Caritas also offers meetings for all volunteers as well as further training. The goal of Caritas Switzerland is to develop a long term partnership between the child and the voluntary godparent.

The major aim of the «With Me» project is to strengthen the children in their development. By spending time with their voluntary godparents the children improve their self-confidence as well as their social skills. Developing a steady relationship to adults other than their parents gives the children a new outlook on life. The children are also better able to develop their full potential. With the help of the volunteers the emotional well-being of the children is ensured and new relationships are encouraged.

Not only the children benefit from the relationship, the voluntary godparents and the parents benefit from this project. The godparent-child relationship supports the family's reintegration into society and the volunteers can learn a lot from their godchildren.

The project thus encourages a more inclusive society by establishing relationships between vulnerable children and volunteers from different backgrounds.

The Caritas project is funded by grants from non-governmental sources, churches as well as Caritas Switzerland's own funds. It was inspired by a similar project from Caritas Germany.



Family and Children's Poverty Programme

Caritas Spain

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The «Family and Children's Poverty Programme» is a project of Caritas Spain, which operates in Bizkaia, in the Basque Country.

The project targets vulnerable families, who lack a good education and therefore also lack good opportunities to improve their economic status. Very poor families with children are addressed. The project operates in three areas of Bizkaia (Otxarkoaga, San Francisco and Rekalde), in neighbourhoods with trans-generational poverty and a large number of migrants and Romani people.

At specific centres the «Family and Children's Poverty Program» offers counselling to parents, in order to help them develop better parenting skills. Vocational and professional training is offered for the adults. Social workers support families or single parents, with personal or group mentoring, on a long-term basis if necessary. Caritas staff support the children in their social and educational development. In addition, sports and leisure activities are offered to the families.

The major aim of the Caritas «Family and Children's Poverty Program» is to reintegrate the families into society by creating a social support network for these particularly vulnerable families. The project aims to increase coordination with other Caritas programmes, social services, educational centres and other European projects. Another important long term goal of the project is to improve the parents' and children's economic and professional situation. This is encouraged by supporting the parents in developing professional skills, which help them to find employment. The social workers also support the parents and children in developing social skills as well as improving their self-esteem. All these factors help the families to develop new perspectives and ensure their emotional well-being.

Most of the work is carried out by volunteers who are trained and accompanied by professionals. There are approximately 300 volunteers and 15 professionals involved in the project. About 500 families have been supported by the Caritas project.

The «Family and Children's Poverty Program» involves a partnership with nine other organisations working at local level in family and childhood projects. The network is called RED KOMETA. The project involves cooperation with Caritas Germany, Caritas Austria, Caritas Italy, Caritas Romania, Caritas Lithuania and the British Caritas Social Action Network. It consists of visiting similar projects in every country and reflecting about important elements such as: networking, participation, improving parenting skills and how to work in teams of volunteers and professionals.

The project is funded by grants from local government sources, grants non-government sources, e.g. by private foundations like the Caixa and the Victor Tapias Foundation, as well as by churches. In addition, Caritas Spain uses its own funds to finance the project.

Recommendations include: more investment in creating personal autonomy rather than social dependency; more and better social policies, specifically concerning families, and concrete means to counter the worrying trends in poor school performance.

Counselling Service

Caritas Czech Republic

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The Caritas «Counselling Service» provides professional social counselling in the Hodonin, Czech Republic.

The project enables people to access and understand social and legal systems, helping them to develop skills for independent living. It addresses those who have been involved in criminal activity, are victims of domestic violence or crime, and families with children.

The «Counselling Service» aims to support users who find themselves in adverse life situations, providing them with the knowledge and capacity to handle the situation themselves. Likewise, this knowledge also strengthens competencies and skills of the users, allowing themselves to prevent or alleviate their social exclusion and poverty. This is achieved through increasing awareness of social and legal areas, facilitating the functioning of family and community relationships, and working with individuals as they engage and collaborate with institutions and organisations.

Legal support is provided on a range of issues. This includes advice on social benefits and services, social insurance issues on pensions and health, employment concerns such as job searches, and practice interviews. Legal advice on housing, family and divorce, consumer protection and property is also available. In addition, advice on financial problems, education and the legal system are provided. The project provides instant support to those who are experiencing crisis situations such as the loss of housing, domestic violence and the loss of livelihood.

Currently, 90% of service users receive appropriate information and are able to address their social, financial and legal problems. 50% of users involved their family within the process which strengthens family relationships.

There are no volunteers in this project. The counselling service is provided by trained staff who act as a first point of reference, aiding the work undertaken by lawyers, attorneys and psychologists in the local area. The project also has a trained lawyer available to provide advice.

The counselling service is free for users. To provide this service, the project is funded by Christian churches, grants from local and national government, the EU and Caritas Czech Republic.





Charity Second Hand Shop

Caritas Czech Republic

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The Caritas «Charity Second Hand Shop» provides free clothing, shoes, toys, baby carriages (prams and buggies) and books for deprived families and children. It is run by the Parish Caritas of Česká Lípa. The project helps children and families from the regions of Česká Lípa, Nový Bor, Mimoň and their surroundings. These children and families come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds: incomplete families, families experiencing domestic violence, families with very low financial income, etc. In those regions there are many families who need the support of the social system. Lately the differences between socially well adapted families and those experiencing some kind of hardships are increasing. In those areas, as well as in other regions of the Czech Republic, almost no families experience extreme deprivation; however, many families live on a very low income, which causes disadvantage in several aspects of life e.g. reducing the possibility of following a well-balanced diet, providing sufficient education to children or assuring good medical care.

Since there is no other facility in the region providing services to these families, our organisation is the only one operating in this rather big area. For the provision of services we cooperate with all relevant organisations and offices including the government, the police, courts, the local municipality, school and healthcare facilities etc. The project also focuses on children living in the refugee camp in Bělá, which is a result of the Chechen War. In the camp of Bělá there are families who were detained by police as they came to the Czech Republic irregularly. Those families must wait in the camp until a decision is made by the relevant ministry. Then, they are either allowed to stay in the country or repatriated. As families are always detained without any financial support or the necessary minimum for survival, our organisation provides them with clothes, toys, medical aids, etc. The families can stay in the camp up to 180 days. Their stay is funded by the Home Office.

Two people are working for the Charity second hand shop. The number of individuals helped by this project is growing steadily. In 2010, 183 adults and 363 children benefited from being able to purchase items from the shop (5653 items).

This project is funded by Caritas in the Czech Republic and relies on donations of money and goods from the public. These have to be sought on an annual or more frequent basis.

School Start +

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The Caritas project «School Start +» is a project of Caritas Switzerland, established by Caritas Zurich in 2006. Today the project is also offered in other Swiss cantons.

The project targets poor parents and their children (0–7 year olds) with a migratory background. The Caritas staff prepare the parents and their children for the start of kindergarten or primary school. The service is offered in German and other languages, such as Albanian, Turkish, Portuguese and Tamil.

Children from families with a migratory background often have difficulties when starting school. These difficulties often arise from language barriers and cultural differences, for example parents may not speak the official language or understand the Swiss educational system.

Caritas Switzerland offers courses to parents while their children are supervised at a playgroup. At the playgroup the children get the opportunity to socialise with other children and play creatively. In the courses Caritas staff inform parents about the Swiss kindergarten, educational system, educational opportunities, such as libraries, schools and playgroups. Bridges between the families and these institutions are built before the children start school and includes advice to parents on how they can support the academic success of their children.

Because kindergarten and elementary school highly influence child-development and the children's future it is the overall goal of the project to ensure that the children start school with the same preconditions as their schoolmates. The project moreover supports the integration of the families into society as well as their way out of poverty.

The Caritas «School Start +» offers help to children at an early age, before any problems occur in school. It is easier for the children to socialise and to develop new friendships with schoolmates, when starting school with equal preconditions. This aspect ideally prevents the children from being discriminated against by their school peers.

By guaranteeing a good start into kindergarten or school, the project also gives the children the opportunity to pass through school with more success. Being able to achieve good academic results enables the children to obtain employment which helps to lift them out of poverty.

The Caritas project is funded by grants from local and national government sources, grants from non-government sources as well as by churches. Caritas Switzerland also uses its own funds to finance the project. The public authority funding the project evaluates «School Start +».





School Counselling and Therapy Service

Catholic Children's Society (Westminster) UK

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The «School Counselling and Therapy Service» are a service delivery project of the Catholic Children's Society of Westminster, which is a member of the UK Caritas Social Action Network.

The project was founded in 1986 and works with children living in London and Hertfordshire, who are in need of emotional support. The Catholic Children's Society offers counselling, play therapy, child and adolescent psychotherapy to children both in their schools (primary and secondary schools) and at a centre in north London. Moreover, training and consultation to school staff, parents and other professionals on how to address children's behaviour management and mental health issues is also provided by the «School Counselling and Therapy Service».

The project helps the children to solve difficulties concerning a wide range of topics, including problems at home, problems with peer relationships, school related difficulties, bereavement and depression. The counsellors and therapists, who are based in the schools, meet up with the children on a regular basis for individual or group counselling. Child-friendly techniques such as art, play, and games are used to enable children to explore their feelings and experiences. This project supports the children in difficult situations and makes them feel valued and so helps them to develop self-esteem and to manage their difficulties. By helping the children, the counsellors and therapists endeavour to prevent them from trying to solve their problems with alcohol, drugs or violence.

The overall aim of the «School Counselling and Therapy Service» is to help children to overcome emotional and psychological factors which prevent them from achieving academically. Being able to succeed in school enables them to obtain employment which helps to lift them out of poverty. The children also learn techniques and insights which can be used in the future to address the factors which prevent them from achieving. Moreover mental health issues, arising out of financial and relational poverty, are identified and treated. The outcome of this is that the children are enabled to enjoy, achieve and to make a positive contribution to their society.

As well as professionally qualified counsellors and therapists the Catholic Children's Society project involves three volunteers, who are all professionally trained and accredited by a professional body. The counselling and therapy service is based on service agreements with each school in which the service is delivered.

There are a range of funding streams including grants from local government, grants from non-government sources as well as churches. The charity's own funds are used to help finance the project.

Regular progress reports are provided to the schools and other funders. This includes recommendations on how to improve the service and to report on outcomes for the children.



Art Therapy Studio

Caritas Georgia

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The Caritas «Art Therapy Studio» is a project of Caritas Georgia, which is located in Tbilisi.

The project is addressed to children and teenagers from 8 - 18 years old from socially deprived families living below the poverty line. These include amongst others, children with many siblings, children who face severe problems in their life and consequently suffer from post-traumatic stress, as well as children from internally displaced people (IDP) families.

Caritas Georgia offers different art workshops, individual development programs and therapy to the children and teenagers. Based on their interests and abilities, the children attend for example traditional carpet weaving workshops, design workshops, decorative wood engraving workshops or architecture workshops. Psychologists offer individual therapy as well as group therapy. The children are also provided with lunch during their stay at the «Art Therapy Studio». At regular internal exhibitions the items created by the children and teenagers are displayed. A competent jury selects the best works and awards the artists with symbolic prizes.

The major aims of the project are ensuring the emotional well-being of the children and teenagers, improving their social skills and preparing them for later employment.

A fundamental part of the creative process at the studio is creating items with their own hands which increases and develops the children's self-esteem and self-confidence. By working on their projects in combination with therapy the internal tensions of the teenagers and children decrease. The project enables and supports the development of new friendships, which help the children to improve their social skills. Through the project the behaviour and sense of responsibility of the children and teenagers improves. Developing social skills and improving their behaviour facilitates the children's re-integration into society. By offering a place to the children and teenagers, where they can develop new perspectives and solve their personal problems, Caritas Georgia tries to prevent the children from slipping deeper into poverty, into drug/alcohol abuse or delinquency. In addition, providing the children and teenagers with vocational art skills gives them a chance of getting out of poverty by finding employment, for example employment in small factories, where they get the opportunity to fulfil customer orders.

Caritas Georgia arranged a partnership with the State Academy of Arts in Tbilisi. They plan to invite Art Specialists for lectures at the Caritas Art Studio to increase the motivation of the children engaged in the art workshops and to motivate them to continue studying arts at a professional level.

Half of the «Art Therapy Studio» staff are volunteers, who organize different fun activities for the children and teenagers.

The Caritas project is funded by grants from non-governmental sources, including funding from Caritas France, Caritas Belgium and Caritas Czech Republic. Moreover Caritas Georgia closely cooperates with the State Care Agency; this includes sharing practical experiences.

Youth Rehabilitation Centre

Caritas Georgia

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The «Youth Rehabilitation Centre» is a project of Caritas Georgia, which operates in Tbilisi. Similar centres are open in west, central and south west Georgia.

The project addresses children and teenagers, who are 6-18 years old and are categorized as «Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances». These children are often affected by either external or internal violence, moreover they usually lack adequate adult supervision. The children are selected from lists provided by the Ministry of Education of Georgia and district schools. The centre works with about 150 children and teenagers.

The Caritas project offers help concerning psychological rehabilitation, spiritual upbringing and education. The «Youth Rehabilitation Centre» psychologists offer group and individual therapy to support the children and teenagers in solving personal issues or in coping with post traumatic stress syndrome. The Caritas staff promote community cohesion by engaging children, with different religious beliefs and nationalities in collaborative activities. This is important because such differences often produce conflicts in Georgia.

The Centre offers access to secondary education and the Youth Centre children regularly attend classes, where they can study: mathematics, English, Italian, history, art, etc. After-school help is also offered by the «Youth Rehabilitation Centre». Drama, dance and «Puppet Show» workshops are also offered. In addition the children and teenagers have access to vocational education, e.g. hairdressing and car-maintenance.

The Caritas staff organize different sport and culture activities. The children and teenagers are able to participate in different sporting activities (e.g. soccer and table tennis) and sport competitions. In addition, regular visits to museums and historical places of interest are arranged.

The major goal of this Caritas project is preventing the institutionalization of children (we help the poorest families to live with their children and avoid placement in state orphanages and other institutions). Another goal is also to promote children's psychological health and emotional well-being, as well as basic education of children and young people. By providing the children with a family-type environment the Caritas staff help children and teenagers to strengthen their social skills. The workshops, e.g. drama and dance, provide youth with more self-confidence and self-esteem. All these factors enable children to develop aspirations, which lead them out of poverty. The project thus promotes child and adolescent integration into society.

Twenty per cent of the «Youth Rehabilitation Centre» staff are volunteers, who organise different leisure activities for children and teenagers.

The project used to be funded through grants from both governmental and non-governmental sources. The latter ones ceased in 2009. Nowadays the «Youth Rehabilitation Center» is supported just by the national government and is experiencing real financial problems.

Caritas Georgia closely cooperates with the State Care Agency, this includes sharing practical experiences.





The modern social blending of work with family commitments

Caritas Lithuania

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The project with its partner Caritas, Archdioces of Vilnius works with families with children under 18; elderly and ill persons; communities and employers to balance work and family commitments in Lithuania.

The project was set up in September 2009 and it will continue until August 2012.

The project aims at helping people to balance work and family commitments by providing child care services, a safe environment for children, homecare and social assistance for elderly and ill persons. The project also includes work with communities and employers to encourage them to create favorable conditions for blending work with family commitments. This is achieved through the provision of childcare services, skills and consultation to families in need, aiding parents to get back to work. There is also homecare and social assistance for elderly and ill persons. In addition, the project works with communities and employers in order to advocate for the creation of better working conditions and childcare environments.

The project aims at helping parents to get back to work. Groups of parents are organised in order to help them develop their parenthood skills. Children can spend time in Day Care centres while parents are working or learning new working skills. Families can also rely on the Caritas Home Care Service and so have time for work and learning.

The process is very integrated. It enables unemployed people to get theoretical knowledge for example through social grants such as a grant to learn English or Computer literacy skills. The project involves all three levels of participants (parents/families, employers, society, government, local communities etc.). Project activities cover the whole of Lithuania.

We seek the creation of a favourable environment for persons willing to blend work with family commitments. In the long term it is expected that communities and employers will be more active by helping families in need to get back to work.

The project is completely funded by the ESF. The total budget is about 2.3 million Euros.

There is a lack of active contribution from the various levels of governance to the project goals. This is attributed to the newness of this type of services for local government in the regions.

The economic crisis is increasing the number of families who need help. The project has become very important for the regions which were hit the hardest by the economic crisis.

The project is clearly too short to help unemployed persons in the long term. We recommend foreseeing longer implementation periods for effective social help. The various levels of governance should pay attention to such projects as an opportunity to solve social problems by involving social partners having experience in this specific field. The question of funding is very important. The involvement of social partners would help EU and national governments to use money in the most efficient way.

School counselling

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«School counselling» is a project from Secours Catholique – Caritas France.

The project works with children anywhere in France.

School counselling consists of interventions to provide children with the necessary resources and support to succeed at school, particularly when the needed support is not given at home.

The project contributes to preventing children from failing academically. It provides children with the opportunity to develop social links outside their usual environment, through a child-adult relationship which focuses on the child's specific needs. It also promotes and develops teenagers' and children's talents through play, leisure and cultural activities.

About 4,000 volunteers work with 5,500 children and teenagers in France to help them in educational activities.

The budget costs relate mainly to the recruitment and training of volunteers, who work free of charge from 2 to 10 hours per week. Grants from non-governmental sources are used for teaching tools, resources and equipment. Sometimes the local authority or school makes resources available at no cost, for example libraries, computers and rooms. Such contributions enable these initiatives to flourish and without them these projects would not be viable.

Day Work

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The Caritas «Day Work» is a youth employment project of Caritas Austria, located in Graz.

The project was founded in 1999 and is designed to help jobless teenagers and young adults, who are between 15 and 25 years old. This includes homeless teenagers, teenagers who are mentally ill, physically disabled or who have learning difficulties. Only teenagers/young adults, who completed their compulsory education, are eligible to enter the project.

Caritas «Day Work» offers employment to up to 10 young people on a daily basis. The working area consists of the «Day Work» factory, the mailroom and the «Day Work» store. Teenagers and young adults are involved in the whole process of production, from developing a design to selling the final product. At the factory the young people produce bags, wallets and accessories from recycled material (e.g. bags from tarpaulin). At the mailroom, mailing and enveloping is done, at the «Day Work» store the young adults sell their products. In 2010, 60 young people were employed and 1,800 bags were made and «Day Work» products won the 2010 slow fashion award. Besides employment, the project also offers educational mentoring and consultation to the young adults and teenagers.

The general working hours are Monday to Friday from 9:00 am until 2:00 pm. The hourly work is arranged by the employee. Teenagers and young adults get paid daily after finishing their work. The Caritas project is often the only opportunity for the young people to earn money for their immediate needs.

The overall goal of the Caritas project is to stabilise the social and mental situation of the teenagers and young adults. Staff help to reintegrate the young people into the job market by assisting them to find stable employment or on-the-job training.

The project also supports the young people in their creativity and helps them to develop an everyday life structure. The self-esteem, independence and pride of the teenagers increases with every new product they develop. By working in the «Day Work» store or in the factory the young people also develop and strengthen their social skills.

The «Day Work» gives the young adults and teenagers a great opportunity to develop new perspectives on their lives. The teenagers are prepared for an independent life including employment, which gives them the chance to get out of poverty.

The young people who work at the «Day Work» are ideally prevented from slipping deeper into poverty or into delinquency or other anti-social activities.

The City of Graz as well as private donors funds the project. In addition, Caritas uses its own funds to finance the project. Partnerships with public organisations and other youth organisations are involved within the «Day Work» project.

The Caritas staff also made recommendations of more low-threshold offers for the jobless youth to the public authority.

Caritas advised the local authority on the need to create more easily accessible services, training and work opportunities for unemployed young people.

Flex-Projects

Caritas Luxembourg

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FOGAflex (2001-2004), QUALiflex (2005-2008), FORMAflex (2009-2010) and VALiflex (2011-2013) are all projects which have been run by Caritas Luxembourg over the last ten years. VALiflex is ongoing and is funded to run until 2013.

The projects address low-skilled people (women and men having already informal competences in childcare) wanting to re-enter the labour market. They also respond to the generalized need to reconcile work and family life, through the development of new childcare structures to increase flexibility and improve the work-life balance. Under these projects, new and more flexible childcare services are made available so as to allow gainfully employed parents to find a better balance between their jobs and parental responsibilities. Vocational training in childhood education and care is provided to low-skilled workers. Over 200 new childcare structures have been created in Luxembourg, more than 160 women and men have received vocational training, more than 65% of whom have reintegrated into the labour market. The project goals are the reconciliation of professional and family life, the reintegration of women into the labour market, the reintegration of men in the childcare and education sector.

Due to the specialized professional nature of the services, it was not possible to engage many volunteers. The pilot-projects were funded under the EU program EQUAL. As of 2005 the Caritas childcare services were mainstreamed into the public service system so that today they are equally financed by municipalities and by the national government. Today, the European Social Fund is still financing the vocational training and quality monitoring activities.

These projects work in partnership or transnational co-operation with the Ministry of Family, the Ministry of Education, Employment Agencies, two syndicates and Caritas Luxembourg.

The projects have achieved the retraining of more than 160 men and women and have a reintegration quota of over 65%. The projects have highlighted the importance of in-house Caritas training for all poorly qualified employees in Caritas childcare and the continuation of funding for project VALiflex.



Family holiday

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The family holiday project is an initiative of the St Francis Family Centre which is run by the Catholic Children's Society in the Diocese of Westminster in England.

The project targets families living in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, one of the local authorities with the highest child poverty rates in England. The families all use St Francis Family Centre and are chosen as service users because of their social isolation, poverty and the developmental delay experienced by their children.

The Family Centre offers a nursery for two year old children and an after-school group for children aged five to ten years of age. Social work, support, advice and parents groups are also provided. Families who have never been on a holiday are given the opportunity to plan and save a small amount towards the cost of a holiday in a holiday camp beside the sea. The families go away together and are able to support each other in a new and challenging environment.

The goal of the family holidays is to give families, living in poverty, a new experience of being together without the stress of everyday living in a poor inner city area. The project increases the family's sense of achievement and self-worth and gives them aspirations for the future. The children are given play opportunities which would be beyond the financial capacities of their family and also get to experience life in a cleaner and healthier environment. They also experience leisure time with their parents and this helps to improve family relationships.

Families go on holiday without being accompanied by staff or volunteers and the cost of the project consists mainly of the charges made by the holiday camp at which they stay. Funding comes from a number of sources including grant making trusts, the society's own funds and money raised by the families through a range of activities that they themselves plan and execute with the support of the staff at the centre.

Family holidays / Family-hosted holidays for children

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«Family holidays» and «Family-hosted holidays for children» are project models of Secours Catholique - Caritas France.

These two project models target children, parents and families across France. Both models enable children to discover a different environment from the one they usually know, to participate in new leisure, sports, cultural and social activities and so help them to grow. Having new experiences in a positive atmosphere helps to contribute to their personal development, fulfilment, autonomy and socialization. Both projects create partnerships with social services.

«**Family Holidays**» gives the opportunity for entire families to go on holidays together whilst being accompanied by the staff of Secours Catholique at a holiday resort. With 'Family Holidays' the accompaniment provided during the holiday period allows the project staff to identify the concrete needs of children and provide them with the appropriate support (e.g. new eye-glasses, dental care etc.).

«**Family-hosted holidays for children**» is a different model which enables the families with whom Secours Catholique works all year round, to send their children on holidays with host families for 3 weeks (on average). These host families live in a different environment, which allows the hosted children to enjoy a period of time in a different familial context in the company of other children of the same age. 'Family hosted holidays' also creates networks amongst families: between children's families and host families, between host families themselves and between the volunteers engaged with families. The expected result is the establishment of lasting relationships between host families and the children they receive and their family of origin. The project is mainly implemented by volunteers: about 2,000 host families and a large number of volunteers responsible for preparing and monitoring the reception of children / families.

The budget costs relate mainly to the recruitment and training of volunteers who work free of charge to help the families during holidays. Sometimes, the family welfare system provides financing («cheques vacances»).



Holiday camp for children and teenagers

Caritas France

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«Holiday camp for children and teenagers» is a project of Secours Catholique - Caritas France. It is run throughout the French territory.

The project works with 700 young people across 50 holiday camps.

Under this project, the Secours Catholique delegations set up holiday camps (sometimes in cooperation with existing holiday resorts) for the duration of fifteen days. These camps are for children and teenagers accompanied by the same delegations throughout the year. Partnerships with other associations exist.

The priorities of the «Holiday camp» project are: to give children the opportunity to spend holidays with other young people; to experience living in a group, to learn about becoming autonomous and to discover a new environment through cultural activities and sport.

Improved socialization is an important expected result, which is achieved through learning to live in a group. Sometimes, young people who participated in the holiday camps become camp counsellors later on, so enabling them to be responsible for younger children, even from their own neighbourhood.

120 people, camp-counsellors and directors are volunteers.

Grants from non-governmental sources are sometimes obtained, although not systematically. The family welfare system also provides finance or other facilities from the city or region.





Caritas Europa, the network of Caritas organisations in Europe, has a heartfelt commitment to analyse and fight poverty and social exclusion; and to promote true integral human development, social justice and sustainable social systems in Europe and throughout the world.

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