

Country profile: ROMANIA



Country facts

Capital:
Bucharest

Main country facts:
Joined NATO in 2004, joined the EU in 2007

Population:
Over 22 million

Urbanization:
54 percent live in cities

Life expectancy:
72 years

Unemployment rate:
7.8 percent

Population living below poverty line: 25 percent

Habitat facts

When the program started:
1996

Highlights:
Eclipse Build 1999, Euro Habitat Build 2007, Big Build 2009 and 2010

Families served:
More than 2,600

Global Village volunteers hosted:
More than 4,000

Housing solutions:
New houses
Renovations and repairs
Energy-efficient housing
Housing for vulnerable groups

Habitat for Humanity in Romania

In 1996, Romania became Habitat for Humanity's 50th country worldwide. Since then, Habitat Romania has overseen seven affiliates in Beius, Cluj, Craiova, Comanesti, Cumpana, Pitesti and Radauti. In 2011, another affiliate will open in Ploiesti, which is only 60 km away from the capital and will have a significant strategic importance for the development of Habitat projects in Romania. The affiliates are spread across the three historic provinces of the country, with the national office in Bucharest.

The housing need in Romania

According to the national statistics, 35 percent of the housing stock in Romania is in a state of complete neglect and needs urgent repairs. Progress toward a stable market economy has been slow and difficult after years of the oppressive rule of dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. Real wages for working Romanian families have dropped by about 40 percent, putting additional pressure on the strained social system. The unemployed, farmers and housewives are the social categories most affected by severe poverty. Two-thirds of Romania's poor live in rural areas.

In the cities, many dwellers live in cramped apartments in condominium complexes. Much of Romania's housing stock is low-quality and deteriorating because of a lack of maintenance. A family of eight is more likely to live in a two-room flat than in a house. More than 10,000 blocks of flats were constructed before 1980 and now need serious renovation to their infrastructure, heating systems and roofs. More than half of rural communities have no access to piped water.

Since 2005, Romania has faced its worst floods in the past 100 years. The summers of 2008 and 2010 brought new floods in the country, leaving thousands of people in temporary shelters.

How Habitat addresses the need

Habitat Romania acts as a catalyst for improving housing conditions and offering support, expertise and experience to various groups and parties. The organization has taken leadership on tackling repairs, renovations and rehabilitation of old communist-era block apartments and disaster response projects.

Here are some examples of Habitat projects in Romania:

Construction and rehabilitation of homes and apartments blocks

Habitat for Humanity Romania builds and renovates homes in partnership with low-income families throughout the country. This can range from one-house builds to blitzes of 10 or more houses in just one week. Rehabilitation work is aimed at improving living conditions for families in the communist-era apartment blocks.

Energy-efficient housing

Habitat Romania helps families all over the country to save on energy cost by thermo insulating houses and doing minor repairs that will minimize the heat loss. In addition to this, 160 families in Moinesti, Comanesti and Darmanesti area will receive trainings covering practical tips for more energy efficient households.

Affordable housing for vulnerable groups

Habitat for Humanity Romania is actively working to provide simple and decent shelter for vulnerable groups such as the Roma, the mentally disabled and former orphans raised in state-run institutions. These groups are marginalized in society and have no access to funds to improve their housing situations.

Disaster response program

Thousands of families are left without houses following natural disasters: floods, earthquakes, landslides and wildfires. Over the years, Habitat Romania has helped more than 750 families in all the areas of the country affected by floods. Wherever possible, Habitat Romania has rehabilitated homes destroyed by water, but often has had to rebuild them entirely. This is by far their biggest program, carried out in partnership with government and local governments.

Meet a Habitat family

Daniela Moldovan (40) is a widow that lives with her two daughters: Anamaria (17) and Dana (15) in a semi-derelict house situated right next to a railway station. Their house consists of one room that serves both as a kitchen and a bedroom and a space converted into a lumber room. There is no bathroom or toilet in the house. There are cracks in the walls, and the roof is deteriorated. Due to location of the house Daniela is constantly worried about the safety of her two daughters. They have been living in these conditions for 13 years.

Habitat Romania is helping the family build a new house on the land that Daniela inherited from her late husband.

Daniela says: *“I still can’t believe that we are going to have a new home, with at least one room, a bathroom and a kitchen. I’m so happy to have found and work with Habitat.”*



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Habitat for Humanity International is a global charity dedicated to eliminating poverty housing. Since its foundation in 1976, Habitat has built and renovated more than 400,000 houses worldwide, providing simple, decent, affordable shelter for 2 million people.

In Europe and Central Asia Habitat for Humanity International works with families in need in 23 countries, building and repairing houses, offering housing microfinance services, improving water and sanitation, working on disaster response and advocating for affordable housing. In this region, Habitat has served more than 11,000 families together with volunteers and homeowners. Find out more at www.habitateurope.org.