

# Open World Alumni

## MĂDĂLINA VOINEA

### Communications Officer

Expert Forum, Prahova

Development & Fundraising  
South Bend, IN  
November 2022



Mădălina is a highly dedicated individual, advancing the Romanian society towards a functional democracy where citizens are aware of their rights and responsibilities. Her main activities at Expert Forum are communication and fighting disinformation. She believes that the Expert Forum's work needs to be highlighted in order to gain traction and serve its purpose of informing the citizens of the current state, nationally and regionally, across different domains. Mădălina also works in projects of monitoring the propaganda narratives that influence public opinion but also developing better tools to fight disinformation and misinformation.

"Open World gave me the opportunity to experience live what civil society in the US means. In South Bend, Indiana, I stayed with a host family that had been involved in NGOs for over 20 years. I met people with a real spirit of solidarity and an honest perspective on the challenges they face. I felt that each person is open both in sharing their experience, but also in listening to what we as Romanians have to say. Culturally, the program has a huge impact on a person who has never been to the US, especially since we are staying with host families. I loved it."



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## ANDREEA RUSU

**Executive Director**

**FILIA Center, Bucharest**

**Development & Fundraising  
South Bend, IN  
November 2022**



Andreea has been selected, at the age of 23 - as the youngest Executive Director of FILIA. As a young leader of a 20-year old, well-established organization, her team's focus has been to improve women's access to information about reproductive health and safety, through activism, advocacy, studies/analyzes and grassroots work. Since 2019, FILIA's staff has grown from 6 to 15 employees, while the organization's budget increased by almost 100%. Under her leadership, the FILIA Center has consolidated its voice as a watchdog that advocates for the women's dignity and safety and against any form of women discrimination or denigration.



"Being my first experience in the United States, I was nervous both for the time zone difference and the lack of contact with the family and the workplace, as well as for living with a family that I did not know beforehand. But the Open World experience has completely exceeded my expectations in terms of inter-cultural exchange, openness and kindness. The warmth we received from our American family and the host organization was amazing. Regarding the professional side of the program, I observed that the cultural differences in terms of civic involvement and especially fundraising make it complicated to replicate, but tools can be adapted to the local specifics of Romania."



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## CIPRIAN STĂNESCU

Founder

Social Innovations Solutions, Bucharest

Development & Fundraising

South Bend, IN

November 2022



From the many years spent in the Aspen Institute network to the social entrepreneurs in the Ashoka community and the young leaders in the Global Shapers network, Ciprian's career was built on learning from his peers.

In the past years, together with a relatively small team of 4, he built Social Innovation Solutions into a strong and relevant NGO in Romania. Now, with almost 20 people in the team, more than 150 partners involved, tens of stakeholders and 10 running programs, Social Innovation Solutions enters a new stage of development.



"Open World helps professionals to better understand the culture and specifics of the United States through meetings with organizations from big cities but, more importantly, with organizations and leaders from medium and small cities."



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## LAURA BURTAN

### Project Manager & Researcher

#### Funky Citizens, Bucharest

#### Development & Fundraising South Bend, IN November 2022



Laura has been a member of the Funky Citizens team since late 2016, first joining as a researcher and fact-checker and currently working as project manager. She has joined this organization as a firm believer in the values it promotes, including transparency and accountability in all public matters, and for its continuous work in the field of civic education. Laura has added a layer of community building to all projects she has written for Funky Citizens in the last few years, hoping this will help other NGOs and would benefit the sector in general. In this sense, her greatest achievement to date is "the Funky Republic" project, through which they wish to establish a network of civically aware NGOs trained to behave like local branches of Funky Citizens in different municipalities in Romania.

"A complete, professional and personal experience, which I wholeheartedly recommend! The theme of the program is only a small part of what you will learn during your time in the States - you will return home with new friends, new ideas, with a new perspective of your field of activity."



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**MIHAELA MANGU DĂRVARIU**

**Executive Director**

**ANAIS Association, Bucharest**

**Development & Fundraising  
South Bend, IN  
November 2022**



Mihaela's colleagues, founding members of ANAIS association, invited her to join the team in laying the foundations of the association since she was 24 years old. Ever since, her professional activity has been dedicated to the development of ANAIS. Mihaela has focused on the development of programmes and services, their implementation, the management of financial resources as well as the identification of funding.



"Participating in the Open World program gave me the opportunity to get to know a small part of the United States of America and its culture through the eyes of the local communities I interacted with.

This experience was a special opportunity to meet new people, experts in their fields and representative organizations, both from Romania and from the United States. The organized framework in which the entire visit took place is one of the advantages of this program."



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## ANCA SANDU

### Fundraising Manager

"Casa Bună" Association, Bucharest

Development & Fundraising  
Salt Lake City, UT  
November 2022



Before she worked in a social NGO, Anca thought she was a PR and communication specialist. After more than seven years of volunteering for social causes she decided to leave her corporate life to become something she would have never guessed: a good fundraiser. Anca discovered that the reason of this hidden professional side was that, when she believes so strongly in a cause, she will use all her skills, even the ones she isn't aware of. Helping people, and especially children in need, showed Anca that she could be a social worker, a community manager, a fundraiser, a driver of a truck or a carrier.



"I went in the Open World program without any expectations. I told myself that any learning experience is useful and that something good must come out of it. But I didn't get excited. I had been to the USA many times, the trip itself was not something out of the ordinary. American culture was quite familiar to me and I didn't expect any surprises. But I had many surprises, all pleasant: the warmth of the welcome in Washington and Salt Lake City, the care for our comfort and the efficiency, the quality of the people I interacted with, the wonderful host. I came back with a lot of ideas and a changed perspective. I believe that Open World is a very generous opportunity, which can ignite sparks of good in the civil society."



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## ELENA ARHIRE

### Project Manager

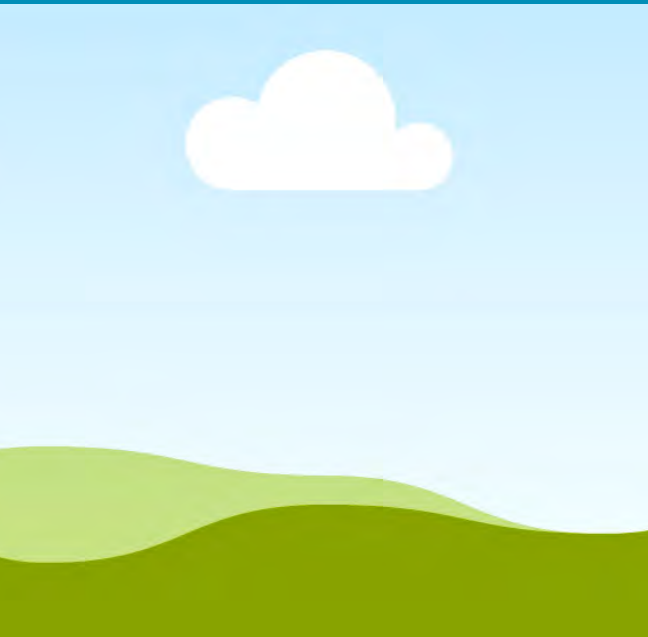
#### ANAIS Association, Bucharest

#### Development & Fundraising (NGOs) - Salt Lake City, UT - 9th of November 2022

Elena has integrated ANAIS in May as project manager of the program the association has developed as part of their response to the crisis in Ukraine, dedicated to Ukrainian women and girls housed in different accommodation centers from Bucharest-Ilfov area. Therefore, she is in charge of organizing and articulating the creation of informal safe spaces in order to engage these women and girls in conversations related to their psychosocial needs, but also their rights and ways of adapting to the new Romanian social context they are currently experiencing.

As part of ANAIS Association team, she has a particular interest in the institutional/legal tools defined at state/regional level in order to promote and protect women's rights in different national frameworks. At the same time, Elena is focused on the development capabilities of the association, by trying to access funds and develop different programs in order to support their core activities.

testimonial



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# Open World Alumni

## AMELIA FRUNZĂ

### Programs Coordinator

"Star of Hope" Association, Iași

Development & Fundraising  
Salt Lake City, UT  
November 2022



Amelia is coordinator of the Sculeni (Ukraine broder) customs point through the project of her association. Their objective is to improve the facilitation services by providing basic emergency services for Ukrainian refugees, as well as providing specialized services (social assistance, emotional and legal counseling, therapy for children with special needs, etc.).

Amelia is a person who likes to experiment, try new things and apply the things learned so that she can always get better results. Organizational development projects are among her favorites.

"The Open World experience grew me both on a personal level and on a professional level. I learned a lot about the American Culture, about the way they think about things and the US system. I really liked the fact that I visited a host community with a smaller group of Romanians, during which we had time to learn about what each of us do in our NGOs and how we can grow the organizations we are part of. I would definitely like to develop strategic relationships and partnerships in the near future! Thank you for this extraordinary experience!"



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## DANIELA BOLOLOI

### Director

### Help Autism Association, Bucharest

### Development & Fundraising Salt Lake City, UT November 2022



Daniela is the president of the Help Autism Association and of the network of autism organizations RO TSA - made up of 91 organizations at national level representing over 4000 patients with autism, clinical psychologist and psychotherapist. Driven by the personal experience of being the mother of a child with autism, she has tried to lift all the barriers of access to public psychological, medical, educational, social and professional services, Daniela founded the Help Autism Association in 2010. Out of the desire to coagulate similar organizations in a unique voice, Daniela created RO TSA. Daniela is also a member of the plenary of the Economic and Social Council, advising on new legislation proposed by the Romanian Parliament and Romanian Government.

"America is the country where you can see implemented what we only dream of and think it's impossible to achieve. Participating in the Open World program, you have the opportunity to meet organizations, communities, people whose values and life experiences can inspire you and show you that anything you dream of can be realized. Why? Because they have already been implementing it for 20, 30 or over 60 years. Of course, they can still polish and improve many aspects, and the most important thing is that they are willing to learn in order to evolve towards an even better version. It inspires me so much that I want to come back soon. Thank you for this opportunity to be part of the Open World program."



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## MELANIA MEDELEANU

**Director**

**"Zi de Bine" Association, Bucharest**

**Development & Fundraising  
Salt Lake City, UT  
November 2022**



Melania Medeleanu is the founder of Zi de BINE Association, which for almost 3 years has been implementing monthly projects in areas such as education, health, environment, social inclusion. Melania also supports organizations with significant impact in society (e.g. Magic Association – which, under her coordination, developed from a small camp for children with oncological diseases up to a series of programs that offer material and emotional support to families in which an oncological diagnosis occurs). In this capacity she has developed projects and programs that have improved the lives of thousands of people in the last 10 years. With a journalistic background, Melania has made her projects publicly visible. Under her coordination, the projects have benefited from funding exceeding 10 million euro.

Through all her activity so far, Melania Medeleanu has proven to be a leader who inspires, motivates and involves people in their mission to change society for the better.



"What impressed me the most in this trip is the tradition of volunteerism and social involvement. The extra years of American democracy compared to the young Romanian democracy translate especially into this type of involvement in the community, which you meet at every step. On the one hand, it seemed sad to me that we are so far away. On the other hand, it is clear to me that we are on this path and that each generation that follows us is more and more involved and more willing to contribute to the community. At the same time, looking at the struggles of American organizations to obtain funds to support their beneficiaries, I realized that our challenges are not much different and, in some places, the shortages have made us more creative in terms of fundraising. But it was necessary to fly overseas to understand this better. Thank you, Open World, for opening my world:)"



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