



SUCCESS STORY

Improving Mobility for the Disabled

Custom-made wheelchairs bring mobility to disabled



Photo: Special Olympics Romania Foundation/Cristian Ispas

Motivation Foundation employees Gigel, left, and Fane are customizing an active-style wheelchair for an adult with a spinal cord injury at the foundation's production factory in Bragadiru, just outside Bucharest, Romania.

USAID, in partnership with a local organization, Motivation Foundation, helps people with disabilities get the wheelchairs, equipment, and training they need to achieve greater mobility and realize their potential.

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For people with motor disabilities, achieving some level of mobility is critical to their independence, ability to work, and even self-esteem. Without proper equipment, a disabled person who would otherwise be capable of leading a productive life may be confined to his or her bed, unable to work and with few opportunities to leave home. Wheelchairs are one of the most important pieces of equipment that a person with limited mobility could get; yet industrially produced wheelchairs are too expensive for most Romanians.

USAID, in partnership with a local organization, Motivation Foundation, is helping to provide the wheelchairs, equipment, and training to assist people with disabilities in achieving mobility and realizing their potential. Aware of the importance of and demand for wheelchairs, Motivation Foundation opened a wheelchair production workshop where they make custom-built wheelchairs and positioning systems and train people in how to use them. For some time, the workshop's space and capacity was limited, keeping production below 20 wheelchairs per month. But thanks to USAID, Motivation Foundation was able to build a larger wheelchair production factory, with new tools and equipment, and more staff. Production capacity jumped to 60 wheelchairs per month, making it possible to begin meeting the demand for wheelchairs in Romania. In fact, the factory is producing enough wheelchairs to begin sending them to neighboring Moldova, which also faces a critical shortage of mobility equipment.

In addition, the factory hired several people with disabilities to help produce and test equipment, as well as train new users. With more space, higher production, and greater staff, the USAID-supported facility is helping to meet the needs of people with disabilities. With their newfound mobility, these motivated people are finishing school, finding jobs, and coming closer to achieving economic independence.