



TECHNICAL BRIEF

Supervision of the Social Sector Workforce

CASE STUDY - ROMANIA¹

1 / Information presented in this document was obtained through review of relevant documents available online. The findings presented are limited to what was readily available through these sources. Interviews to confirm information or provide more details were not conducted.

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Introduction

Romania has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to children's rights and social protection, reflected in its early ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) and subsequent reforms to align national systems with international standards. These reforms accelerated during Romania's EU pre-accession period, leading to the establishment of a specialised child protection system centred on Law No. 272/2004.² A key pillar of this system is the professionalisation of the social service workforce, including the structured introduction of professional supervision. Drawing on both international experience and local leadership—especially from non governmental organisations (NGOs)—Romania has embedded supervision within its regulatory frameworks, quality standards, and training programmes to improve the effectiveness, ethics, and wellbeing of social workers.

In Romania, the occupation of “Supervisor in social services” was introduced in 2016 in the *Catalogue of Occupations* with a training program that is authorized by the **Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity**. Following the successful completion of the program, participants receive a graduation certificate for the occupation of “supervisor in social services”, **COR code 263513**.³

History of training in supervision in social services

Between 2001 and 2002, the Resource and Information Centre for Social Professions (CRIPS), in partnership with the Child Protection Authority, World Vision, and the Jordan Institute at the University of North Carolina, implemented a USAID-funded project titled *Human Resources Development in Child Protective Services*.⁴ The project included a training-of-trainers (ToT) programme for supervisors in the child protection system.

In 2004–2005, the first masters-level university programmes specialising in **Supervision in Social Services and Mental Health** were launched at West University of Timișoara,⁵ Northern University of Baia Mare, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, and the University of Bucharest. In 2008, a master's programme in **Supervision and Social Planning** was established at the University of Iași.⁶ The master's programs in supervision follows European standards, involving an extended cycle of study with requirements such as participation in personal supervision projects and direct supervision by trainers. While not mandated by law, these programmes offer in-depth training with significant practical components.



2 / See here: <https://www.refworld.org/legal/legislation/natlegbod/2004/en/147428>

3 / <https://ssmatic.ro/fisa-postului/supervizor-in-servicii-sociale>

4 / <http://www.crips.ro/>

5 / MA “Supervision in Social and Mental Health Services” is a two year program organised within the Center for Continuing Education created through a Tempus project under the Department of Social Work of the Faculty of Sociology and Psychology - West University. See here <https://fsp.uvt.ro/educatie/programe-de-master/>

6 / Alexandru Ioan Cuza University from Iasi has a Master's program in Social Supervision and Planning. See <https://www.fssp.uaic.ro/departamente/sociologie-si-asistenta-sociala/specializari/master>

Between 2007 and 2008, the Romanian Adoption Office financed professional supervision in adoption and post-adoption services under the national interest programme *Coordination and Monitoring of Adoption Services*. Implementation was carried out by three Professional Civil Societies of Social Assistance (SCPAS): Lavric and Porumb; Roşu and Associates; and Sălăjeanu and Cristea.

In 2007, graduates from the supervision master's programme at West University of Timișoara established the **Romanian Association of Supervisors (ASR)**.

Significant publications followed and whilst now more than a decade since their publication, they still form a cornerstone in the practice of social work supervision. These include:⁷

SUPERVISION IN CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES IN ROMANIA (2013), published by the International Foundation for Children and Family (FICF) with support from the National Federation of NGOs for Child Protection (FONPC), the French Development Agency, and Secular Solidarity.

TRAINING MANUAL FOR SUPERVISORS AND CONSULTANTS OF FOSTER FAMILIES (2015), by FICF and the Social Activities and Practice Institute (SAPI), Bulgaria.⁸

In 2016, the occupation **Supervisor in Social Services** was officially added to Romania's Catalogue of Occupations, thanks to the initiative of two NGOs, Concordia and the Federation of NGOs for Children (FONPC). The occupational standard was approved in 2017, and the training programme was authorised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity.⁹ Upon successful completion, graduates receive certification (COR code 263513). Certified supervisors can join ASR and access European-level resources via the European Association of Supervisors.

Since 2023, the **National College of Social Workers of Romania (CNASR)** initiated internal selection and training activities for supervisors, specifically targeting registered members of the National Register of Social Workers in Romania (RNASR). This initiative aims to enhance professional competence, ensure ethical practice, and prevent burnout in the profession of social work supervision.¹⁰

Definition of supervision in social work

Supervision in social work in Romania is most commonly defined as an interactive, ongoing professional development process that supports reflective practice. It enables professional such as social workers, psychologists, and educators—to strengthen their effectiveness in working with clients while maintaining a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives.¹¹

Supervision in **social services** addresses a wide range of topics. The topics included in supervision are determined by the type of social service being supervised. The topics include:

Developing and strengthening the professional skills of staff

Adaptation to the workplace

Time management

Support in identifying and solving problems

Professional risks and responsibilities

Ensuring compliance with minimum quality standards

Collaboration between professionals and teamwork

Requesting and offering help

Reducing stress and preventing the effects of burnout

Promoting a healthy work environment.

Promoting remediation and critical thinking

Empathy and compassion

Assertiveness and conflict management

Values and motivation

7 / See <http://www.ficf-romania.ro/images/pdf/brosura-FICF-Supervizarea-in-serviciile-de-protectie-a-copilului-din-Romania.pdf>

8 / See <http://www.ficf-romania.ro/images/pdf/Manual-de-formare-pentru-supervizori-si-consultanti-ai-familiei-de-plasament.pdf>

9 / See <http://www.ficf-romania.ro/images/pdf/brosura-FICF-Supervizarea-in-serviciile-de-protectie-a-copilului-din-Romania.pdf>

10 / See <https://www.cnasr.ro/blog/post/selectie-cnasr-asistenti-sociali-supervizori>

11 / See <http://www.ficf-romania.ro/images/pdf/brosura-FICF-Supervizarea-in-serviciile-de-protectie-a-copilului-din-Romania.pdf>

The role of the supervisor in social services is considered essential within any organisation providing social services, whether public or private. This importance stems both from legally established standards and from the requirements of professional ethics.

Supervision provides dedicated time and space for professionals to reflect on their practice, particularly in complex situations, to analyse challenges and identify effective solutions.¹²

The regulatory framework in Romania regulates the supervisory activity in various normative acts including:

1. Law 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of children's rights¹³,
2. Law 466/2004 regulating the status of the social worker and its activities¹⁴,
3. Law 47/2006 on the national social assistance system¹⁵ and,
4. Law 292/2011 on social assistance¹⁶.

Since 2003, a series of mandatory minimum quality standards have been developed and adopted in response to the need to uphold the rights of children in vulnerable situations, those at risk, and those engaged in the child protection system. All minimum quality standards—regardless of service type—require that professional supervision be provided for social service workers. Meeting these standards is a legal condition for obtaining or maintaining a licence to operate a social service.

The first was Order No. 35/2003 that approved the minimum standards for professional foster care, along with a methodological guide for their implementation.¹⁷ This was followed by Order No. 177/2003, which introduced standards for the child helpline, counselling centres for abused, neglected, and exploited children, and resource centres for the prevention of child abuse, neglect, and exploitation.¹⁸

In 2004, additional service-specific standards were adopted, including:

- Order No. 21/2004 – minimum standards for residential child protection services.¹⁹
- Order No. 25/2004 – standards for day care centres for children with disabilities.²⁰
- Order No. 27/2019 – quality standards for day social services for children.²¹

Each of the Minimum Mandatory Standards for Residential and Non-Residential Services includes a supervision standard under the Human Resources chapter. Using a residential child protection service, as an example it would include content such as:

It must have an efficient supervision system to ensure optimal operation, with the outcome being a motivated and effective staff delivering quality services to resident children.

Supervision must occur regularly—at least weekly—both individually and in teams, and must be documented.

The residential service coordinator must ensure both internal and external supervision for specialized staff and volunteers, with designated staff supervising volunteers and the service provider ensuring supervision for the coordinator.

Supervision must be conducted by qualified professionals with relevant academic training or at least two years of experience in child and family services.

Indicators include the frequency of supervision sessions and proper documentation.

12 / <https://childhub.org/ro/stiri-protectia-copilului/asistenta-sociala-supervizarea-ofera-ghidare-perspectiva-un-spatiu-unde-sa-te-opresti-si-sa-reflectezi>

13 / See <https://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/Legislatie/L272-2004-R.pdf>

14 / https://mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/Legislatie/Asistenta-sociala-2018/Legea_466_2004_la_18-01-2018.pdf

15 / See <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/69884>

16 / See <https://legislatie.just.ro/public/detaliiidocument/133913>

17 / See <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/43957>

18 / See <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/43957>

19 / See <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/50380>

20 / See <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/50634>

21 / See https://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/Familie/2019/Ordine_standard/Ordin_27_2019.pdf

Structure and implementation

As explained above, all mandatory minimum service standards include a specific human resources chapter that addresses supervision. These standards require both internal and external supervision programmes for professionals working within social services. Supervisors may be **internal or external** to the organisation and can include professionals such as psychologists, social workers, service managers, doctors, or sociologists, but they must be registered as supervisors. This requirement stems from the recognised need to ensure effective case management (see definition at right), preserve professional capacity, and maintain staff motivation.

In line with its mission, each social service provider is responsible for organising its workforce effectively to maintain or improve service quality. This includes developing a personnel strategy that integrates continuous training and professional supervision.

CASE MANAGEMENT

the mandated working method in child protection—is defined as a coordinated set of techniques, procedures, and tools used to manage all social assistance and child protection activities in the best interest of the child. These activities are implemented by professionals across public and private institutions. Staff serving as case managers or prevention case managers, as defined by the current standards, require structured professional orientation, performance evaluation, and access to supervision.

The role of the supervisor

The role of the supervisor is understood as:

having the role of providing professional support and guidance to social workers, helping them to develop their skills and effectively manage complex situations.

includes aspects such as monitoring, evaluation, counselling and mentoring, helping to improve the quality of social services provided.

responsible for ensuring that social workers adhere to professional and ethical standards in their practice.

Service providers are required to define the roles of both case managers and case workers in job descriptions, in accordance with current legislation and the mandatory minimum standards. They must also allocate resources from their own budget to guarantee that professional staff have access to supervision sessions **at least once per month**.

ORDER No. 288 of July 6, 2006, approving the Mandatory Minimum Standards on Case Management in the field of child rights and protection, includes Standard 12: Supervision, which requires service providers to maintain an effective, ongoing system of staff supervision.²² This Order includes the following:

- Expected result: Case managers benefit from supervision by qualified and experienced professionals, enabling services to operate at optimal efficiency.
- Implementation procedures:
 - Service providers must ensure both internal and external supervision for case managers.
 - Service coordinators are responsible for organising internal supervision sessions—individually and in teams—at least once per month, or upon request.
 - External supervision must be conducted by professionals with higher education in social sciences or medicine, a minimum of five years of experience in child and family services, formal supervision training, and at least two years of relevant experience beyond those they supervise.
 - Coordinators and other staff conducting internal supervision must complete at least 42 hours of continuing training in supervision, funded by the employer.

22 / See <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/73764>

Training of supervisors in social services

The program authorized by the **Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity**, for the job of “Supervisor in Social Services” is addressed to professionals in public and private social services, who wish to develop their skills and become authorized supervisors to provide support in the professional development of professionals through a guided process of reflection, guidance in the process of identifying the role and responsibilities.

Eligibility criteria for supervisors in social services according to the Occupational Standard endorsed by CNASR and the Association of Supervisors in Romania (ASR).²³

1. Graduate + master’s degree: Psychology, Social Work, Sociology
2. Professional experience: minimum 5 years of seniority in social services
3. Duration: 18 months
4. Total study hours: 375 hours (125 hours theory and 250 hours practice/interview)
5. Format: Blended (online and in-person)
6. Practical sessions: Individual and group supervision, applied exercises and mentoring sessions.
7. Internship period: between 70-104 hours, for a direct and valuable experience.²⁴

Training of supervisors in social work

In response to its commitment to ensuring high-quality, ethical professional practice and to strengthening skills while preventing burnout, the National College of Social Workers (CNASR) launched the first national selection process in 2024 for the training of 25 supervising social workers.

Eligibility criteria for candidates:

Must be a licensed social worker, registered in the National Register of Social Workers in Romania (RNASR).

Must hold the professional competence level of “senior social worker.”

Must have at least five years of experience in the field of social work.

Completion of a supervision training course (e.g., a master’s degree in supervision or training aligned with the occupational standard for Supervisor in Social Services, COR code 263513) is considered an asset but is not a mandatory requirement.

Following the selection process, a professional training contract is signed between the National College of Social Workers of Romania (CNASR), as the training provider, and the selected candidate. The contract outlines CNASR’s role in delivering and supporting training for the professional competence of Supervisor in Social Work. The contract spans 24 months, including 50 hours of theoretical instruction and 100 hours of practical training and supervision, in accordance with the CNASR-developed Norms on the Supervision of Social Workers.

The contract is implemented in two phases, with all training costs fully covered by the service provider.

YEAR I:

Completion of the training programme, which includes 50 hours of theoretical instruction and 100 hours of practical training.

YEAR II:

The beneficiary organises and delivers supervision for at least seven social worker supervisees, conducting a minimum of eight supervision sessions per supervisee, and participates in at least two evaluation sessions with another supervisor.

²³ / See <https://concordia-academia.ro/uploads/resurse/supervizor-in-servicii-sociale-pages-1-5.pdf>

²⁴ / An example of a supervision course can be found here <https://concordia-academia.ro/curs-supervizare-in-servicii-sociale/>

Currently, CNASR has completed the second stage of selection at national level for the training of supervisory social workers. The first cohort completed the first year of training and started the activities planned for the second year of training. More information about the social worker's supervisory activity:

- Code of Practice of Social Worker available [here](#)
- Code of ethics available [here](#)

Strengths, challenges and lessons learned

STRENGTHS FROM GOOD PRACTICE MODELS

Romania has established a strong regulatory foundation for supervision in social work, positioning it as an essential function within both public and private social service providers. Supervision is mandated in all minimum quality service standards, with clear requirements for internal and external supervision, frequency (at least monthly), and supervisor qualifications. The development of an occupational standard for supervisors (COR code 263513), along with accredited training programmes supported by the Ministry of Labour and CNASR, has formalised the role and promoted consistency in practice. The creation of a dedicated association—ASR—and efforts to link Romanian supervisors with European networks further reinforce a professional identity for supervisors. Supervision is widely recognised not only as a tool for oversight but also for reflection, capacity building, and burnout prevention, contributing to a supportive and rights-based service environment.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

A supervisor who has completed the training offered by CNASR supervises the professional path and supports the professional development **exclusively for social workers** at the beginner/practitioner/ and specialist levels, as well as their professional path for solving aspects related to the profession and professional dilemmas. They do not supervise other professions that might have a supervisory role, supervising social workers.

A supervisor who has completed training as a supervisor in social services provides space for reflection and professional analysis for any professional working in social work, including those in social worker positions regardless of his or her professional degree.

These two approaches to supervision have the potential to strengthen the practice of supervision in social services and social work. However, there is also the potential for overlap, duplication, and confusion. There is a need to clarify in the legal context so it is clear who should be supervised by whom.



LESSONS LEARNED

Romania's journey to ensure quality professional supervision as a core part of social work practice and delivery of social services provides useful lessons learned. These lessons, gleaned from more than two decades of efforts to strengthen the profession of social work should be considered for other contexts looking to strengthen supervision mandates and practice.

LEGAL AND POLICY MANDATES ANCHOR SUPERVISION IN PRACTICE

Embedding supervision requirements into national legislation, minimum quality standards, and licensing regulations creates a strong foundation for consistent practice. In Romania, supervision is not optional—it is a legal condition for operating licensed social services, which has helped to institutionalise it.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND OCCUPATIONAL PROFILES DRIVE RECOGNITION

Establishing an officially recognised occupational standard for “Supervisor in Social Services” and defining levels of professional competence provides clarity about the role and career pathway. This also facilitates the development of appropriate training and certification programmes.

PUBLIC-NGO COLLABORATION FUELS INNOVATION AND CAN JUMP START THE PROCESS

Much of Romania's early progress in supervision was led by NGOs drawing on international experience. Their collaboration with government bodies helped translate global good practices into national standards and fostered local ownership of supervision models.

SUPERVISION SUPPORTS WORKFORCE STABILITY AND QUALITY

Romania's use of supervision as a strategy to improve emotional support, reduce burnout, and maintain ethical standards highlights its critical role in staff retention and service quality. Supervision is not only a compliance mechanism—it is viewed as a developmental and protective factor for professionals.

TRAINING IS ESSENTIAL

Creating high-quality training opportunities—including master's programmes and certified short courses—has been key to building a competent pool of supervisors. The use of national selection processes and state-supported training helps ensure consistency and equity in access.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS ADD SUSTAINABILITY AND MOMENTUM

The establishment of the Romanian Association of Supervisors (ASR) and CNASR's leadership have given supervision a professional identity and continued visibility. These bodies also connect Romanian professionals to broader European initiatives, sustaining momentum and encouraging peer learning.

FINAL NOTE

It should be noted that the current status of supervisory training provision is at a crossroads. For the past seven years, several organisations have been providing supervision to all professionals engaged in social services. In 2023, CNASR entered into the field, with a focus on supervision of social workers. Whilst this is a positive addition to the field of supervision, there is a need for the organisations involved to clarify clear mandates, closely coordinate, and ensure that the legal framework be revised to ensure that the supervision requirements for social workers are clearly articulated.

Starting on July 1, 2025, the Romanian Association of Supervisors (ASR), which has been in a process of reorganisation, officially opened the registration process for new members, stating, “We invite you to join a professional community that supports supervision as a reflective, ethical and lifelong learning-oriented practice. ASR's mission is to promote high standards in supervision and to support the development of the professional identity of supervisors in Romania.”²⁵

25 / Personal communication with the author.