

ROMA  
EDUCATION  
FUND

2014

# ANNUAL REPORT





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Drawings by children attending desegregated public schools in Podgorica, Montenegro.

*Top left:* All children have the same rights and responsibilities.  
*Top right:* Let's help one another!

*Bottom left:* I'll help you with the homework to prepare for the math test, Edon.

*Bottom right:* Thanks! It would mean a lot to me!



# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our 2014 Annual Report, which outlines the impressive achievements of the Roma Education Fund in closing the gap between Roma and non-Roma in the critical area of education.

As a reminder of what is at stake, 2014 saw the European Union (EU) commence infringement proceedings against the Czech Republic for illegally segregating Romani children in schools and providing them with a substandard education. The EU move was partly inspired by a finding of the European Court of Human Rights in 2007 that the Czech government was violating the rights of Romani children through school segregation. Unfortunately, seven years later the situation is much the same, prompting the EU to take action.

The Czech Republic is not alone: throughout Europe, Romani children are not receiving the education they need to achieve success in a competitive world. Romani children lag behind their non-Romani peers throughout the region, with low levels of school entry and high levels of school dropout. In a world where a university degree is increasingly seen as a basic work requirement, most Romani students never get there - indeed, in many countries the majority of Romani children never finish secondary school.

## **We can - we must - do better!**

The Roma Education Fund has shown through its model programs how to do better. With a modest financial investment and applying the expertise REF has developed, schools throughout the region are educating thousands of Romani children and preparing them for productive futures. Let me introduce you to a few of the people who make this possible.

2014 saw a rejuvenated Board of Directors continuing its oversight of REF's work. We were pleased to welcome four new members: Bill Bila, an expert in cross-cultural communication who has recently become a consultant in social entrepreneurship and human resources as a member of Pedersen & Partners global executive search team, in

addition to serving in a volunteer capacity for several Roma NGOs across Europe and North America; Nicoleta Bitu, who has worked for more than two decades to shed light on and fight the discrimination against the Roma minority in Romania and Europe, with a particular focus on Romani women; Andrzej Mirga, who formerly served as senior advisor to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Contact Point on Roma and Sinti Issues; and Anna Bjerde, Director of Strategy and Operations for the Europe and Central Asia region at the World Bank. These Directors replace those who have rotated off: Costel Bercus, Henna Hutu and Katarina Mathernova. We are grateful for their many years of dedicated service.

I particularly wish to note the contribution of Costel Bercus, the outgoing Chair and a member of the REF Board since 2005. As a founding father of REF, Costel has overseen the transformation of the organization into the leader in the field of Roma education. Without Costel, it would not have been possible.

In my years of collaboration with REF I have gotten to know many of the staff, a talented and hard-working group of Roma and non-Roma from all over the world. They make it all happen, from program design and implementation, to monitoring and evaluation, to ensuring accountability for how REF spends its money. They are our critical connection to Romani communities. While the program has grown markedly in recent years, our staff remains modest in size. This growth has not been without challenges, yet our staff remains dedicated to the cause.

We are deeply grateful to our many REF supporters, a diverse group: governments, individuals, private foundations and international organizations. Their resources keep us going. Most of all, we are grateful to the Romani families with whom we work every day. They are doing something many of us take for granted, something that seems simple if you are not faced with poverty and discrimination on a daily basis: they are sending their children to school.



Rob Kushen, *Acting Chair*

# DIRECTOR'S LETTER

I feel very glad to share REF's 2014 Annual Report with you. Looking back on the year, it has been exciting and interesting, although also challenging as we continue expanding to serve more students in more places.

Five years ago we had just one office in Hungary. By 2014, REF offices had been set up in four additional countries (Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and our newest in Presov, Slovakia), offices that enable us to make efficient and effective use of EU funds for Roma education.

Just two years ago we were cooperating with a single Ministry of Education to implement a secondary education support and scholarship program. By 2014 REF was actively cooperating in this program with six different Ministries of Education in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

Another significant change has taken place in our university scholarship program, which until a few years ago was the only dedicated fund supporting Romani university students. After ten years of REF scholarship support, more donors have begun to follow REF's lead. Accordingly, in 2014, we decided to note other sources of scholarship support in determining the level of REF support for any given student. As a result, we were able to support a larger number of students to go to university.

The year was one of change and progress but some things remain the same, such as REF's commitment to desegregation and ensuring that Romani children have equal access to quality, integrated education. This is not just a moral and legal imperative; the evidence shows that it makes long-term economic sense. Put simply, desegregation is better for everyone: better for Romani students and better for building social cohesion and a healthier society for all. Segregation needs to be consigned to the past.

Ethnically mixed schooling has a huge bearing on future life chances for young Roma. That friends make a difference to the quality of our lives is a given, but recent research supported by REF shows just how much of a difference inter-ethnic friendships make to Romani secondary school students in Hungary.

This research shows that Romani adolescents with high status peer contacts are significantly less likely to drop out of school than those with similar test scores and family background but without such contacts. For Roma, many of these contacts are with non-Romani peers: "While the average residual gap in dropout rates is 13 percentage points, it shrinks to seven percent for those who had at least one high-status peer contact and to zero for those who had at least two high-status contacts."

The research confirms that contact with members of the majority leads to better choices and better integration of members of a disadvantaged minority; and that for majority students, close contact with members of a disadvantaged minority decreases prejudice against that minority. Exposure of Romani students to non-Romani classmates increases inter-ethnic friendships and all students demonstrably benefit from such friendships. The policies that make sense and are more likely to produce higher social cohesion are those that integrate more Romani students and at the same time raise their academic achievement.

As the 2014 Eurydice report on early school leaving makes clear, young people who fail to complete secondary education are more likely to depend on social welfare and less likely to participate in lifelong learning. Such young people are at a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion, and the impact of leaving education and training early can be carried across generations. School segregation, early tracking and class repetition correlate with higher dropout levels. In contrast, high-quality early childhood education and care and well-designed primary and secondary education help ensure that students stay in school. Successful completion of secondary education is a prerequisite for social inclusion. Therefore, combating early school leaving and improving academic performance in secondary school is a high priority for REF: in 2014, a total of 5,432 students from eight countries received secondary school scholarships and school-based mentoring.

You will find evidence in this report of REF's considerable achievements and impact. Access to quality education transforms lives, and REF made that a reality for tens of thousands of Romani families in 2014. But beyond the scope of REF projects, the painful reality is that too many families remain trapped in poverty compounded by discrimination. Europe has not yet recovered from the economic crisis, the inequality gap continues to widen and the hardest hit are Europe's poorest and most vulnerable citizens. Investments in education that target the most disadvantaged are especially

03 Romani pupils who were REF beneficiaries in its early childhood program are now enrolled successfully in primary school in Zborov, Slovakia. Photo: Robert Miskovics



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important for equity, justice and the future prosperity of our societies. REF will keep equity and anti-discrimination on Europe's education policy agenda up to 2020 and beyond.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all REF partners for their invaluable collaboration and look forward to continuing our joint endeavors to turn the right to education into a reality for millions of young Roma across Europe, and to hasten the day when every child has access to quality inclusive education without discrimination.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the staff in all five countries, our board members and donors for their commitment and support over the years and especially in 2014.

Judit Szira, Executive Director

<sup>1</sup> Available online:  
[http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/young\\_roma\\_in\\_hungarian\\_secondary\\_schools\\_and\\_in\\_the\\_labor\\_market.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/young_roma_in_hungarian_secondary_schools_and_in_the_labor_market.pdf)

- 04 REF representatives register RMUSP beneficiaries at the REF Gala held in November in Sofia, Bulgaria. Photo: Mihail Novakov
- 05 An integrated classroom provides a great start for new friendships for two classmates in Prague, Czech Republic. Photo: Jana Baudysova



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## OVERVIEW

The Roma Education Fund has worked for almost a decade to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. In that time REF has shown that desegregation is possible and better for all; that substantive Roma participation is crucial for success; and that effective cooperation on the ground delivers the kind of change that can transform the lives of tens of thousands of Romani pupils.

We are proud to say that REF's deep cooperation with a growing number of national governments, local authorities, schools and civil society, and REF's close connection with local Romani communities and parents, has greatly contributed to defining the policy debate on Roma education across Europe. REF's concrete achievements and successes in the field have generated a substantial body of evidence-based good practice about what it takes to narrow, and ultimately close, the equity gap between Roma and non-Roma in kindergartens, schools and universities. Our successes have garnered wide recognition from national governments that are now far more open to policy dialogue, and many have actively sought partnerships with REF to advise on policy and implement projects to promote inclusive education.

REF's growth over ten years has been remarkable: In 2005 REF reached 5,000 beneficiaries; ten years later REF's outreach has multiplied twentyfold and the cumulative number of annual beneficiaries averages 100,000. REF has a formidable track record of working in partnership with educational institutions, municipalities and ministries, Romani NGOs, and national and international organizations to develop and implement complex programs to promote inclusive education for Roma.

REF uses four tools to achieve its mission: **grants** provided to consortia of civil society and public institutions to implement education reform projects; **reimbursable grants** provided for bridge funding to ensure efficient implementation of EU-supported education projects; **scholarships** provided to Romani students in secondary and tertiary education; and **policy advocacy and research** to promote evidence-based models of best practice, introduce innovative methodologies and curriculum reform, and advocate for policies that deliver increased equity in access and outcomes for Romani pupils.

REF's five models of intervention for inclusive education aim to: (1) expand Romani children's access to quality **early childhood education and care** (ECEC); (2) improve **primary education** outcomes for Romani children aged six to fourteen; (3) improve academic performance and graduation rates from **secondary education** for Romani pupils; (4) expand access to **tertiary education**, improve graduation levels and strengthen identity of Romani university students; and (5) improve employment prospects for young Romani adults through **second chance programs** for adult education and training.

The cumulative effect of years of work by REF and its partners, with ever greater numbers of children enrolled in preschool, and larger cohorts of Romani students successfully graduating



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from secondary and tertiary education, has created an unprecedented momentum around the policy debate on Roma education in Europe.

The total Roma population in the 16 REF focus countries is about six million.<sup>2</sup> Of this total it is estimated that 50 percent<sup>3</sup> of the population is under 25, which means that the adult Roma population is approximately 3,000,000 people.

In 2014 REF projects and scholarship program reached 35,236<sup>4</sup> students at all levels of education from early childhood education until tertiary education. REF activities in the last nine years have reached a total of approximately 235,393 children and young people. If we consider that the students on average are participating in REF programs for 1.5 years,<sup>5</sup> we have to calculate 75 percent of this number, which is 176,544. Then we can say that REF has reached 5.8 percent of the Romani student generation during the nine years of its existence.<sup>6</sup>

REF has always placed great emphasis on **parental involvement**. Outreach to parents who had before had little or no engagement with the schools and educational authorities is crucially important. First, this level of increased parental engagement dispels the prejudicial notion that Romani parents are simply uninterested in education; and second it highlights the feasibility of deliberate targeting to empower and involve socio-economically disadvantaged and socially excluded parents.

In 2014 over 54,000 parents were involved in REF projects activities from preschool through upper secondary, which is approximately 1.6 percent of the estimated population over 25. In the last nine years, we have reached 500,000.<sup>7</sup> As parental involvement on average lasts 1.5 years in REF projects,

the cumulative total would be around 375,000 over nine years.<sup>8</sup> If we take into account the spillover effect on families of one parent's direct involvement, this would double the number to 750,000, leading to 25 percent of the adult Roma population in REF focus countries who has directly and indirectly benefited from REF interventions in the last decade.

REF has a vital role to play and must press on with its successes to ensure that this widening consensus and commitment to close the gap between Roma and non-Roma translates into better educational results through effective implementation on the ground.

In the strongest political signal yet to come from Brussels, the December 2013 European Council recommendations called on Member States "to ensure equal treatment and full access for Roma boys and girls to quality and mainstream education and to ensure that all Romani pupils complete at least compulsory education." The recommendations fully embraced the REF agenda and included: eliminating any school segregation; ending inappropriate placement of Romani pupils in special

<sup>2</sup> The Roma population is estimated to be between 10-12 million Europe-wide according to European Commission DG Justice.

Available online: [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index_en.htm). REF acts in the southern and central part only.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, *Roma and education: Challenges and opportunities in the European Union*. EU Bookshop, 2012.

Available online: <http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/roma-and-education-pbNC3111389/>

<sup>4</sup> Includes university scholars.

<sup>5</sup> In the grant program average participation is 1.5 years, in university scholarship it is 2.5.

<sup>6</sup> REF partners continue to follow the student's school career longitudinally in most cases, even after direct participation ends.

<sup>7</sup> This number includes adult education and Roma employed by REF-funded projects.

<sup>8</sup> We calculate with the 75 percent of the 500,000 considering that the average participation in REF programs is 1.5 years (if the average participation of beneficiaries were two years, we would calculate 250,000 people).



needs schools; reducing early school leaving; increasing access and quality of early childhood education and care; and encouraging greater parental involvement and improving teacher training.

Even allowing for tangible progress made, the challenges to close the gap in education outcomes between Roma and non-Roma, especially in times of economic crisis, remain formidable. The latest 2014 *EU Monitor* reports that nineteen EU Member States actually cut their education expenditure in 2012, also warning that this continued underinvestment risks undermining Europe's prospect for sustainable and inclusive growth. On the issue of discrimination, denying opportunities to disadvantaged young learners is described as an "unacceptable waste - not only for the individuals, but for society as a whole."

This "unacceptable waste" comes at a high cost: a 2011 estimate of the annual loss to Member States due to labor market disengagement among young people was EUR 153 billion, corresponding to 1.2 percent of GDP in Europe (Eurofound, 2012).

The *Monitor*, in setting out a policy agenda for Europe in education and training, stands as a strong endorsement of REF's five models of intervention in preschool, primary, secondary, tertiary education and second chance programs. The recommendations confirm that REF's strategy and mission to promote equity, improve quality, broaden access and increase completion rates throughout the entire education cycle is vital for Roma inclusion and for Europe's future. The measures and policies contained in the report are an affirmation that REF's carefully targeted and closely monitored interventions to ensure equality of access and opportunity for Romani pupils is the way forward.

REF's five models of intervention, designed to ensure that Roma graduate and accrue the requisite skills and qualifications to compete in the labor market, put REF at the forefront in implementing the kind of change that is right for the well-being of individual students, right for the better inclusion of Romani communities and right for a more cohesive and just Europe.

## GRANT PROGRAM

In 2014 the REF Board supported 35 new grant requests for a contractual commitment totaling EUR 2.4 million, out of which REF contracted EUR 2 million. In addition REF implementing partners mobilized an additional EUR 2.2 million

for their project activities from national and local governments, EU funds and other sources. REF had a successful year winning multi-year EU funds in 2014, securing EUR 4.8 million from ESF/IPA funding, which enables REF to implement activities on a much larger scale in countries such as Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

In 2014, from a total of 81 active projects, REF grants supported a grand total of 95,710 direct beneficiaries across 13 countries. From that total, 8,093 beneficiaries attended **early childhood development (ECD)** projects. Overall, increased enrollment and attendance rates were evident in each country where REF-supported ECD projects. In Macedonia, a REF program resulted in a national preschool project which maintained a 90 percent attendance rate for beneficiary children, while in a similar Montenegrin project the rate exceeded 80 percent. Bulgarian and Romanian early childhood development projects recorded similar improvements in attendance rates. Most REF partners in ECD projects confirmed that parents feel increasingly empowered and able to take an active role in their children's education.

More than 20 percent of the active projects in the REF portfolio in 2014 focused on **primary education**. The projects primarily targeted those children at most risk of early leaving and supported 19,001 pupils. In some project locations REF interventions brought the dropout rates down by 90 percent. In the town of Montana in Bulgaria, the dropout rate in the schools participating in the REF project fell to zero, compared to the previous academic year average of seven percent. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, REF partners worked with local authorities to address the issue of children who lack basic ID and registration papers, enrolling over 200 children into the compulsory education system.

Overall, project interventions in primary schools are leading to improved education performance, with students successfully completing their school grades and enrolling in the next academic year. Through REF interventions, increasing numbers of Romani children are staying in education and thriving in quality learning environments that are inclusive and welcoming.

REF has made remarkable progress in spreading its model **secondary education support and scholarship programs**. In 2014, a total of 5,432 students from eight countries received

<sup>9</sup> With number of teachers and Roma employed in REF projects.



06 A young Romani girl reacts in class at one of two preschool clubs supported by REF in Ostrava, Czech Republic.  
Photo: Jana Baudysova

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secondary school scholarships and school-based mentoring. Just two years ago REF cooperated with only one Ministry of Education on this priority. By 2014, REF was actively cooperating with a total of six different Ministries of Education in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia to implement secondary scholarship schemes.

For example in Serbia, the Ministry of Education and Science agreed to cooperate with REF to scale up the secondary scholarship program for Romani students from regional to national level. And in Montenegro, the government actually requested that REF take over the distribution of the state-funded secondary and tertiary education scholarship scheme.

Also in 2014, with the support of the Velux Foundation, REF set up the Pedagogy Scholarship Program for secondary school students to address the systemic absence of Romani teachers from nurseries and kindergartens in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia.

## TERTIARY EDUCATION PROGRAM

REF supports greater access to tertiary education for Roma through its Scholarship Program and also through grants offered to local organizations to implement RomaVersitas projects, which combine financial support to Roma university students with a comprehensive package of academic and professional development services.

The Scholarship Program runs **four scholarship schemes**: the Roma University Scholarship Program (RMUSP), the Law and Humanities Program (LHP), the Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP) and the Roma International Scholar Program

(RISP). In 2014 the Program selected 1,441 beneficiaries out of 2,410 applicants, and invested EUR 1,922,578 in financial support, which averages at EUR 1,334 per student. Also in 2014, from the 426 beneficiary students who were in final years, 335 successfully graduated; among the remaining 91 the majority postponed their graduation for the next academic year. The majority of successful graduates obtained Bachelor level diplomas in social sciences or humanities.

**RomaVersitas programs** provide Romani university students with additional support, networking opportunities and help to build a sense of identity and community belonging. The programs also provide library access, foreign language courses, academic mentoring and training for labor market integration. REF supported the RomaVersitas initiative in Hungary, Macedonia and Serbia for a number of years, and in 2014 REF successfully scaled up the initiative to include four more countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Kosovo and Moldova). RomaVersitas programs to a large extent equip Romani students with skills needed to compete in volatile labor markets, and until now these programs have resulted in a much increased graduation rate of enrolled students.

REF is encouraged to note that more and more stakeholders across the Decade countries are following REF's efforts to widen access and improve graduation rates for Romani students in higher education. In Romania, in addition to the existing affirmative action program, two scholarship schemes for Romani students have been supported by EU Structural Funds since 2010: one for medical studies and another scheme which provides support for students in the first stage of their tertiary studies. In Bulgaria, America for Bulgaria Foundation offers funding to cover tuition fees for Romani students. In Hungary, REF's RomaVersitas model of combining scholarship



support with intensive academic and professional development support has been adopted by nine *Szakkollégium*s, which are EU-funded projects implemented by the government and four churches.

In spite of these successes, the gap between Roma and non-Roma in tertiary education remains huge, and much work needs to be done. The combination of financial support and professional development is vital for students to graduate with the skills needed to compete in the labor market.

As World Bank data shows, the employment gap between Roma and non-Roma stands at approximately 26 percentage points across four countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania and Serbia). In a region characterized by falling birth rates and aging populations, Roma constitute the youngest and fastest growing demographic segment, to such an extent that Roma will soon be entering the labor market at relative rates that are almost two-and-a-half times higher than the majority populations. As many as 12 percent of new labor market entrants in Serbia are of Romani origin, and for Romania the figure is 21 percent and for Bulgaria 23 percent.<sup>10</sup>

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In 2014 REF staff conducted 27 comprehensive country visits, where they provided technical assistance to grantees and partners at multiple project sites, with on-site monitoring to control project content, quality and operations, engaging local stakeholders and building policy dialogues with strategic decision-makers in each country. Sixty-nine projects were visited in 2014; 66 were rated as satisfactory and three as unsatisfactory. The grant program received two complaints and they were resolved internally.

As part of its mission to provide quality services to its beneficiaries, applicants to the university Scholarship Program may appeal the decision, by submitting a written contestation to a designated email account. Appeals may be forwarded to the Scholarship Program Ombudsperson, who reviews individual appeal cases based on the materials and evidence provided by the applicants, the Scholarship Program and the National or International Selection Board members. For the academic year 2014–2015, 63 applicants contested the reason for rejection, such as non-compliance with the Scholarship Program eligibility criteria or rejection in competition. After the review of the submitted contestations, 53.9 percent (34) remained rejected, 46 percent (29) received a positive resolution for further review and evaluation of their applications, out of which 33.3 percent (21) were eventually selected for a scholarship (i.e., 15 scholarships were granted as a final outcome of the entire evaluation process).

In 2014, REF staff continued to work with MIT's Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) to design impact evaluation interventions for future REF activities. The cooperation resulted in two initiatives in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. In Slovakia REF, together with the World Bank, J-PAL and the Slovak Governance Institute, provided quality assurance and impact evaluation mechanisms for the PROGRESS project *Investing in the Early Years of Children - Promoting Social Innovation and Roma Inclusion*, implemented by the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for Roma Communities in Slovakia in 21 localities. In the Czech Republic, REF staff, together with local partners and J-PAL experts, designed a methodology for an ECD information campaign in remote Romani communities in

<sup>10</sup> The World Bank: Roma Inclusion is Smart Economics, 2011.

- 07 Romani primary school pupils jump together with their non-Romani peers as part of a desegregation project together with the municipality in Sofia, Bulgaria.  
Photo: Courtesy of Equal Opportunities Initiatives Association
- 08 Romani teenagers wait in expectation of the launch of REF's secondary scholarship program in Pristina, Kosovo.  
Photo: Jetmir Idrizi
- 09 RMUSP finalist Klaudia Veizaj participates in the debate on Roma identity as part of the program of the REF Gala held in November in Tirana, Albania.  
Photo: Elvin Shytaj



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the Czech Republic, with the objective to measure the impact of the information campaign and follow the enrollment rates of Romani children to mainstream preschools.

In 2014 we continued working with World Bank Anchor team members Bojana Naceva and Plamen Danchev on developing more efficient tools in monitoring and evaluation.

With the support of the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, REF greatly benefited from collaboration with the International Child Development Initiative (ICDI) from the Netherlands, which provided extensive training for staff and project partners and the development and piloting of several quality assessment tools to ensure high standards in REF's ECD projects.

REF's work with ICDI focused on analyses of processes for quantitative and qualitative data-collection tools. REF adapted and used ECD-Quat, a useful tool to assess the quality of REF's Toy Libraries, while another tool, the *Home Learning Environment Parent Interview*, was piloted with beneficiary parents in order to measure the optimal changes in responsive parenting. Currently REF and ICDI will focus on providing professional support by training REF grantees and ECD professionals who will administer these tools. In addition, REF and ICDI will continue its work to develop a tool for measuring the learning outcomes of beneficiary children.

## SHAPING THE ROMA EDUCATION AGENDA

Due to its wide geographic reach and extensive experience at local and regional level, REF is uniquely placed to assist in shaping the **national and international policy frameworks** for inclusive education. In 2014 REF worked with 277 mayors, and actively contributed to national policy debates on Roma education in many of the countries. REF's growing evidence-based body of research and good practice, rooted in almost a decade of direct experience, has made REF an indispensable partner at national and EU policy level to close the gap between aspirations and implementation. REF will continue to deepen partnerships with local and national authorities to push for greater progress on the ground that is needed to deliver on the promise of desegregated and inclusive education to create the opportunities that can transform the lives of millions of Romani pupils and students.

In 2014 REF staff made various contributions to professional conferences, workshops and platforms organized by the European Commission in Brussels. Such consultations included REF inputs into guidelines for an expert group on early school leaving and early childhood education. These guidelines are now part of the European Commission's recommendations for member states. REF staff provided professional feedback and comments to national institutions in various member states and aspirant countries on education priorities for Romani communities in operational frameworks for IPA and ESF funding schemes.

REF staff members were active participants in the Decade of Roma Inclusion meeting on the topic of *Inclusive Education without Discrimination* and contributed to examining the problem

of discrimination of Romani children in education. Drawing from REF's considerable experience and evidence-based research, REF staff shared the lessons, experiences and good practices of anti-discrimination and desegregation initiatives, and elaborated on the institutional mechanisms needed to prevent and combat all forms of discrimination in education.

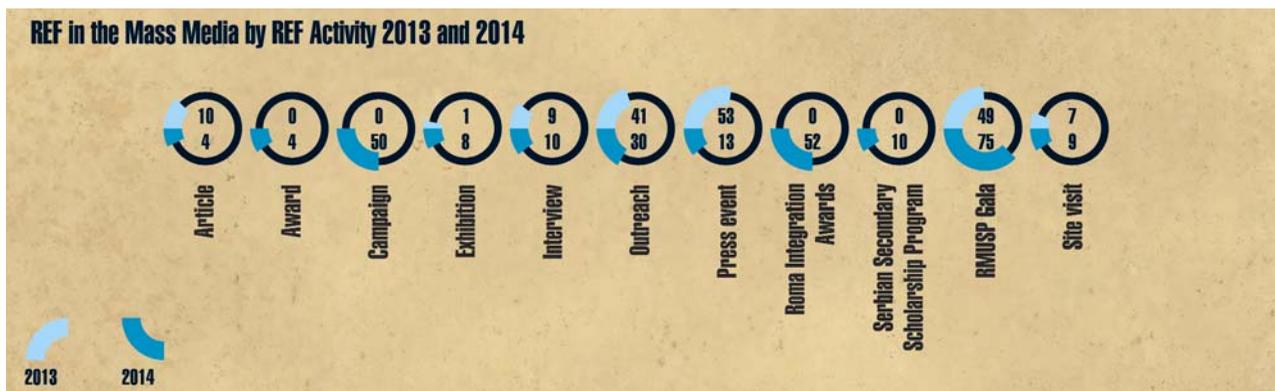
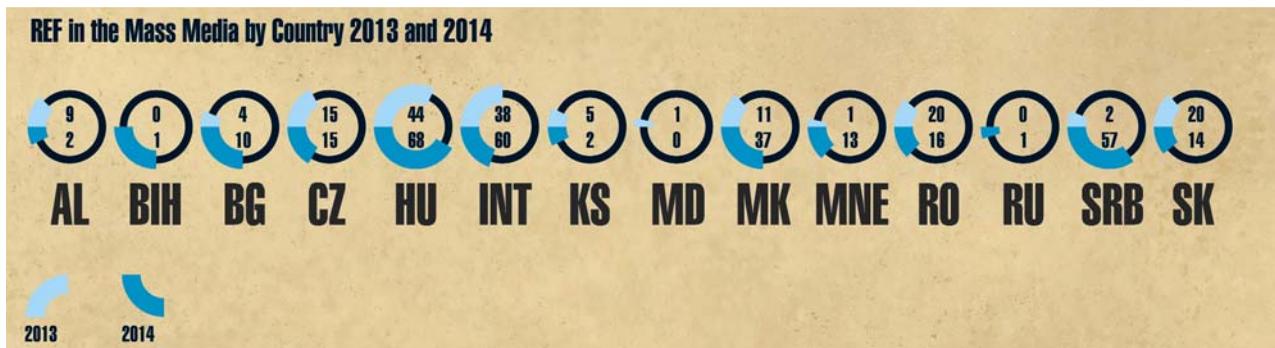
In Bosnia and Herzegovina, over 70 education experts - including the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma Issues, the ROMED/ROMACT Secretariat from the European Commission (DG Employment), high-level CAHROM<sup>11</sup> participants and government officials - convened in the town of Kakanj, the site on an ongoing REF primary school project. REF was recognized publicly for its role in supporting the inclusion of Romani children during this three-day country meeting to highlight examples of good practice in desegregation and preschool enrollment.

The European Commission DG Enlargement in 2014 awarded prizes for best projects on Roma Integration in the Western Balkans and Turkey to three REF grantees. The prizes honored

the contribution and the valuable work of civil society in supporting social inclusion of Romani people. The aim of the awards was to raise the political importance of the integration of Roma as part of the enlargement process, to enhance the role of civil society and to show the commitment of the European Commission towards Roma. Each of the seven winners was awarded a prize of EUR 14,000. Out of the seven winners, three were REF implementing partners, while two additional partners were among the shortlisted group of 21.

REF staff facilitated an exchange program between Croatia's Medjmurje County and select REF grantees from Hungary for capacity building of institutions and primary school staff on inclusion of Roma and other national minorities in education under the project *The Wheel that Connects People*, supported by the European Commission within the framework of *Integration of Disadvantaged Groups in Regular Education System*.

Together with UNICEF in Moldova, REF facilitated a cross-country exchange of experience and learning from Serbia



<sup>11</sup> Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues.

and Bulgaria for representatives from the Moldovan Ministry of Education, local authorities, teachers and NGOs. The officials learned about different models of desegregating Romani schools and classes, and had the opportunity to visit integrated schools attended by Romani children. The visits provided an opportunity to deepen the understanding of the process and the instruments that are applied for full and successful integration.

The REF desegregation study reports were shared as practical examples of how to prevent school segregation and overcome barriers to equal access to quality education services. In Moldova, REF, together with its grantee the National Roma Center, worked intensively with municipalities and regional education offices to desegregate a remote Roma-only school in Vulcanesti. As a result of the initiative, the Ministry of Education provided a school bus for the rural Romani community in Vulcanesti to enable the children to attend the nearest mainstream school where Romani children could learn in an integrated environment. The initiative has the support of the regional Educational Directorate and, therefore, it is expected that the segregated school in Vulcanesti will be closed down in 2015.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The Communication Department reported a 62 percent increase in media visibility in 2014. REF projects and campaigns were featured 276 times, compared to 172 times in 2013. The best-performing countries were Hungary, Serbia and Macedonia, hinting that the climate among national media was receptive to feature content on Roma education (see page 14). Online appearances dominated all other media formats by three to one (193 occurrences or 75 percent of the total) over traditional media, among which television lead the pack of traditional media with 29 occurrences in 2014.

Three public relations events (see page 14) proved crucial to the year's increase: the *Knowledge is Power* campaign against dropping out of school in the spring of 2014; the DG Enlargement's *Roma Integration Award*, where REF grantees won three out of seven prizes in the autumn of 2014; and the RMUSP gala series, a public relations activity in its fourth year that generates some 28 percent of REF's total volume of media coverage.

TABLE 1. REF PROGRAM EXPENDITURES IN 2014

	REF SWITZERLAND	REF ROMANIA	REF HUNGARY	REF SLOVAKIA
	2014 EUR	2014 EUR	2014 EUR	2014 EUR
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>				
Project Support Program	1,743,051	0	90,158	287,597
Tertiary Scholarship Program	1,918,491	15,955	345,253	4,135
EU Roma Pilot - A Good Start and complimentary projects	12,264	0	5,986	0
Konik Camp Project in Montenegro	0	0	273,947	0
Communications	98,625	0	84,196	0
Policy Development and Capacity Building	203,405	0	256,097	0
REF Romania - Equal Opportunities	0	515,639	0	0
REF Romania - School after School	0	103,458	0	0
REF Romania - Health Program	0	3,378	0	0
REF Romania - Children and Parents Want to Go to School	0	278,893	0	0
REF Romania - Integrated Educational Services for Roma Communities	0	205,036	0	0
REF Romania - Increasing Access of Roma Youth to University	0	107,541	0	0
REF Romania - Ready, Set, Go!	0	0	3,865	0
REF Romania and its Partners Capacity Building	11,806	139,251	11,075	0
Progress Project in Slovakia	0	0	29,922	0
UNICEF	32,444	0	16,851	0
Medjimurje Project in Croatia	0	0	14,719	0
Velux Project	0	0	50,443	13,580
OSCE - TARI Project in Serbia	0	0	72,095	0
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Hungary	1,570,828	0	0	0
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Slovakia	242,950	0	23,019	0
<b>TOTAL PROGRAMS AND GRANTS</b>	<b>5,833,864</b>	<b>1,369,151</b>	<b>1,277,626</b>	<b>305,312</b>



10 LHP scholarship beneficiaries from Moldova, Russia and Ukraine gather together during an extracurricular event as part of their annual conference in Budapest, Hungary.  
Photo: REF Budapest

**MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS**

European Schools Quietly Segregating Roma Children by Amana Fontanella-Khan  
<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/03/08/european-schools-quietly-segregating-roma-children.html>

The Future of Europe's Roma Communities by Nick Thorpe  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01t9g54>

From Exclusion towards Integration of Roma and Egyptians by Anasztazia Nagy and Klaus Mock  
<http://chalkboard.tol.org/from-exclusion-towards-integration-of-roma-and-egyptians/>

**FINANCING AND LEVERAGING FUNDS FOR ROMA EDUCATION IN 2014****REF Program expenses in 2014**

REF remains among the most efficient organizations operating in the field of education as REF spends 90 percent of its operating budget on programs, ensuring that donations have a maximum impact in all 16 countries.

From its total budget for 2014, REF contracted EUR 2 million on 36 new grants and spent another EUR 2.3 million on the tertiary scholarship program for over 1,400 Romani students. REF also spent EUR 1.7 million to pre-finance and implement own educational projects in Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia, EUR 0.8 million on capacity building, communication, data

collection, policy development, training and EUR 0.7 million on administration.

**Funds leveraged by the Grant Program**

In addition to REF support, Grant Program beneficiaries continued to be extremely resourceful in leveraging funds from other sources. 2014 marked another big success with grantees securing over EUR 2.3 million from other sources for their activities.

**Funds from European sources**

Since 2010 REF has directly implemented its own projects directly from EU sources, which had a positive result of increasing the number of REF's direct beneficiaries.

In 2014 REF received income directly from European Funds: Social Funds in Romania, Instruments for Pre-Accession in Montenegro and Serbia, and European Commission, DG Employment in Slovakia. REF will receive the majority of the financing under these multi-year funds in 2015 when EU/IPA/EEA related incomes will amount to seven times more than in 2010.

TABLE 2. FUNDS LEVERAGED BY GRANTEEES IN ADDITION TO REF SUPPORT

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	TOTAL
Funds Leveraged	1,764,584	2,060,144	1,023,197	2,235,695	841,858	3,210,141	3,212,151	1,964,511	2,375,767	2,275,175	<b>20,963,223</b>
REF Funds											
Committed (EUR)	3,352,595	5,592,141	4,616,061	3,229,615	2,773,112	2,055,069	3,013,443	2,723,810	1,831,499	2,369,222	<b>31,556,567</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,117,179</b>	<b>7,652,285</b>	<b>5,639,258</b>	<b>5,465,310</b>	<b>3,614,970</b>	<b>5,265,210</b>	<b>6,225,594</b>	<b>4,688,321</b>	<b>4,207,266</b>	<b>4,644,397</b>	<b>52,519,790</b>

TABLE 3. CONTRACTED FUNDS FROM EUROPEAN SOURCES, 2010-2016

EU AND IPA FUNDS	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	TOTAL
European Commission - DG REGIO	956,555	717,244	236,195	18,366				<b>1,928,360</b>
European Commission - University of Sussex						44,800	44,800	<b>89,600</b>
Council of Europe				7,788				<b>7,788</b>
Fundación Secretariado Gitano - Comenius			15,782	9,336				<b>25,118</b>
Progress Slovakia					5,955	62,986		<b>68,941</b>
Instruments for Pre-Accession - Montenegro Konik Camp			113,537	70,827	283,934	122,564		<b>590,862</b>
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe - Instruments for Pre-Accession in Serbia					46,313	133,313		<b>179,626</b>
Ostrava Municipality				6,200	6,200	6,200		<b>18,600</b>
EEA Norway Funds in Romania						1,289,194	717,456	<b>2,006,650</b>
Romanian Management Authority - Partners		180,128	149,155	406,796				<b>736,079</b>
Romanian Management Authority - POSDRU		2,144,240	556,629	3,233,296	1,050,075	4,902,719	1,857,500	<b>13,744,459</b>
<b>TOTAL OF EU, EEA AND IPA FUNDS</b>	<b>956,555</b>	<b>3,041,612</b>	<b>1,071,298</b>	<b>3,752,609</b>	<b>1,392,477</b>	<b>6,561,775</b>	<b>2,619,756</b>	<b>19,396,082</b>



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Due to late financing of these sources, and in order to be able to implement these projects, REF relied on pre-financing from own sources as well as a EUR 0.8 million loan from the Council of Europe Development Bank.

### **Funds accessed for Roma education through the Revolving Loan Program**

Given the scarcity of funds available to Romani NGOs implementing European Structural Funds and other projects in the region, REF has also made available its financial resources through a system of revolving and reimbursable grants. As a result, REF mobilized European Social Funds worth up to EUR 34.3 million in the period 2005-2014 through providing EUR 0.68 million in reimbursable grants. This program has been implemented in Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. The current leveraging ratio is 51 to 1.

In order to further develop this resource for Romani NGOs, the Council of Europe Development Bank has provided a loan to REF, which enables it to make available EUR 1.5 million in financial resources in the form of reimbursable grants in all Decade countries.

## **CONCLUSION**

Despite the evident gap still remaining in school completion rates between Roma and non-Roma, there is an emerging positive trend over recent years. The year 2014 witnessed continued growth and expansion of REF activities, with increasing numbers of children enrolling in preschool, attending integrated primary schools and successfully completing their secondary education. More and more young Roma who complete secondary education are entering universities, not only because of their own personal determination and ambition, but also because organizations such as REF offer scholarships and tutoring support and inspire others to do so as well. However, the wider political and economic crises have led to disinvestment in education and cutbacks in social services and welfare provision, which have hit the poorest hardest and led to rising inequality. Throughout 2014 REF has kept equity and inclusion on the education policy agenda for Europe.

The EU recommendations call on governments to be more proactive in addressing the many forms of exclusion that obstruct the promise of equity and inclusiveness in education and training for all citizens by 2020. The priorities identified and the calls for a comprehensive and coordinated policy approach stand as a complete confirmation of REF's five models of intervention from preschool enrollment to university graduation. REF's experience in working to close the gap between Romani and non-Romani pupils, and REF's active pursuit of equity in unpropitious times, demonstrates that fostering partnerships among communities, schools, local, regional and national authorities results in better educational outcomes.

# 2014 IN NUMBERS

## GRANT PROGRAM

In 2014 the REF Board supported 35 new grant requests for a contractual commitment totaling EUR 2.4 million. In addition REF implementing partners mobilized an additional EUR 2.2 million for their project activities from national and local governments, EU funds and other sources. REF had a successful year receiving EU funds in 2014, securing EUR 4.7 million from ESF/IPA funding, which enabled REF to implement

activities on a much larger scale in countries such as Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

In 2014, from a total of 81 active projects, REF grants supported a grand total of 95,710 direct beneficiaries across 13 countries. The 81 active projects in 2014 covered 432 localities in 277 municipalities, across 13 countries, serving 35,234 Romani

TABLE 4. NEW PROJECTS RECEIVED AND APPROVED 2006-2014

TRENDS	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Incoming Project Proposals <sup>12</sup>	67	130	107	105	86	118	98	80	57	50
Change from previous year	n/a	48%	-18%	-2%	-18%	27%	-17%	-22%	-29%	-12%
Approved	12	49	34	54	41	36	51	51	39	35
Change from previous year	n/a	75%	-31%	59%	-24%	-12%	38%	0%	-22%	-10%

TABLE 5. NUMBER OF PROJECTS UNDER IMPLEMENTATION PER COUNTRY IN 2014

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF REF SUPPORTED PROJECTS UNDER IMPLEMENTATION	REF COMMITTED FUNDING (EUR) FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	NUMBER OF PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED WITH ESF <sup>13</sup> /IPA <sup>14</sup>	ESF/IPA LEVERAGED FUNDING (EUR)
Albania	ALB	4	549,308	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	BIH	4	283,870	
Bulgaria	BUL	8	450,200	
Croatia	CRO	4	100,455	1
Czech Republic	CZE	3	226,719	1
Hungary	HUN	8	292,273	
Kosovo	KOS	4	502,055	
Macedonia	MAC	13	1,486,729	
Moldova	MD	2	85,599	
Montenegro	MNE	6	211,890	1
Romania	ROM	3	190,434	3
Serbia	SER	4	408,345	1
Slovakia	SK	8	727,486	1
Regional project/Other	INT	1	330,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>72</b>	<b>5,845,363</b>	<b>8</b>
				<b>4,779,340</b>

<sup>12</sup> In 2013, a model-based approach was introduced.

<sup>13</sup> European Structural Fund – funding mechanism of the European Union in the 28 member countries.

<sup>14</sup> The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, or simply IPA, is a funding mechanism of the European Union for candidate/potential candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey).

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Education and Sports, Czech Republic.

children and students and 54,603 parents. From this, 8,093 beneficiaries attended early childhood education programs; 19,001 pupils were enrolled in primary education programs; 5,432 students from eight countries received secondary school scholarships and school-based mentoring; and 2,708 students in tertiary education programs received grant support, mentoring and skills training.

A main focus of the REF portfolio is the early childhood development (ECD) model. REF-sponsored ECD program activities have reached over 1,650 young Romani parents in Albania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Kosovo, Montenegro, Slovakia and Serbia, addressing education and health issues, enhancing parenting skills, and providing guidance for better physical, emotional and motor skills development of their young children.

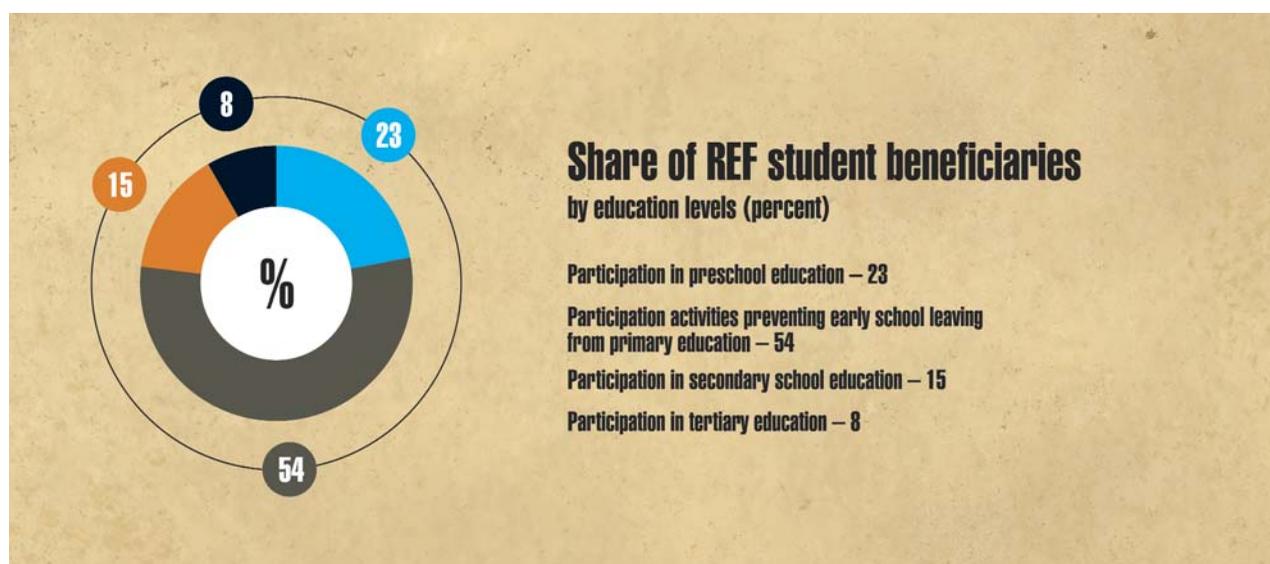


TABLE 6. TOTAL NUMBERS OF REF-SUPPORTED BENEFICIARIES IN 2014

INDICATOR	NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES
Preschool	8,093
Primary school	19,001
Secondary school	5,432
Tertiary education <sup>16</sup>	2,708
Adult education	495
Parents' participation in ECD	15,734
Parents' participation in primary school	29,146
Parents' participation in secondary school	9,191
Parents' participation in tertiary education	37
In-service teacher training	2,266
Desegregation	3,591
Prevention/reversal of enrollment in special education	1,004
Roma employment within REF projects	451
<b>TOTAL<sup>17</sup></b>	<b>97,149</b>

<sup>16</sup> Comprises beneficiaries of REF's Tertiary Education Scholarship Program and RomaVersitas projects.

<sup>17</sup> The data include project beneficiaries from 72 REF active grants and nine REF implemented projects (Romania, Serbia, Montenegro and the Pedagogy Scholarship Program in Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia supported by VELUX)



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TABLE 7. BENEFICIARIES OF REF-FUNDED GRANT PROJECTS, BY INDICATOR (2005-2014)

YEAR	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>INDICATOR*</b>	<b>NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES</b>									
Participation in preschool education	600	2,966	4,497	10,441	3,418	8,034	11,309	8,178	7,252	8,093
Prevention of early school leaving	269	2,765	5,339	7,256	10,938	15,522	18,902	17,205	15,892	19,001
Completion of upper secondary education	1,278	2,687	4,797	5,060	6,282	5,303	6,122	4,119	3,447	5,432
Participation in tertiary education (RomaVersitas)	207	319	795	636	475	482	566	566	816	1,269
Parental participation in children's education	2,050	1,7561	29,780	29,674	42,685	5,0136	70,139	67,219	52,227	52,949
Parental participation in toy library	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,541	1,654
Desegregation	0	1,734	3,553	5,673	6,534	9,331	7,283	1,301	7,815	3,591
Prevention/reversal of enrollment in special education	0	353	525	172	125	435	503	528	7,390	1,004
In-service teacher training	551	2,977	4,018	4,488	2,945	3,125	3,512	3,085	3,874	2,266
Roma employed by REF-funded projects	123	589	802	733	638	553	765	598	650	451
<b>TOTAL**</b>	<b>5,078</b>	<b>31,951</b>	<b>54,106</b>	<b>64,133</b>	<b>74,040</b>	<b>92,921</b>	<b>119,101</b>	<b>102,799</b>	<b>100,904</b>	<b>95,710</b>

\* Includes REF Romania, REF implemented projects

\*\* The total excludes the indicators: desegregation and prevention/reversal of enrollment in special education; the beneficiaries in these two categories are accounted under the indicators: preschool participation and prevention of early school leaving.

In addition, in most of the project localities, the literacy and reading skills of mothers have greatly improved under the guidance of experienced educators. In 2014 mothers benefited from debates, workshops, Toy Library visits and educational events, boosting their confidence and improving their capabilities to support their children's education. Parents have become more active in their children's school life, more aware of the consequences of segregated education, and as a consequence far less willing to enroll their children in segregated schools.<sup>18</sup>

The early childhood education projects have enabled Romani children to acquire basic knowledge and skills, and to be ready to attend preschool and elementary school. For instance the enrollment rate of Romani children increased by 50 percent in Craiova in Romania as a direct consequence of REF-supported ECD interventions.

The increasing enrollment and attendance rates were noticeable in each country where REF-supported ECD projects, with attendance rates as high as 90 percent, and exceeding 80 percent in Montenegro. Most REF partners in ECD projects confirmed that parents' heightened awareness of the importance of preschool for their children's later educational success

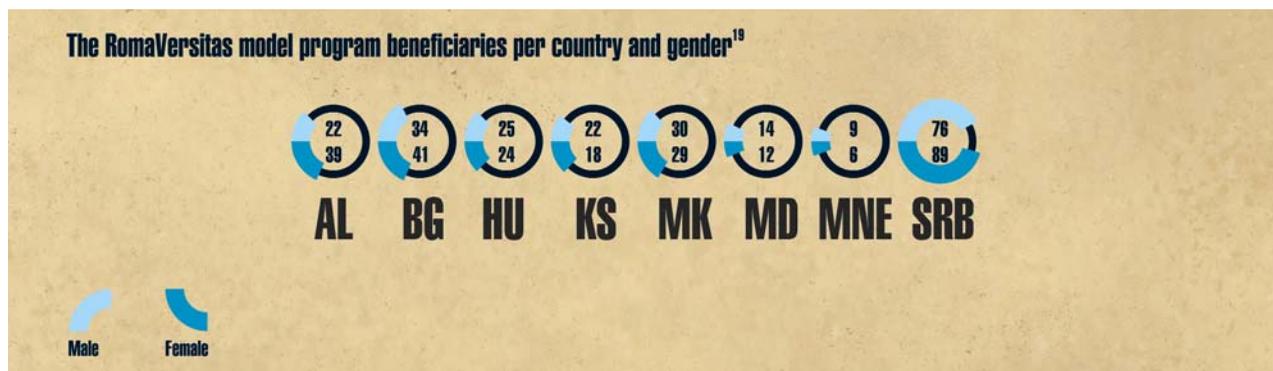
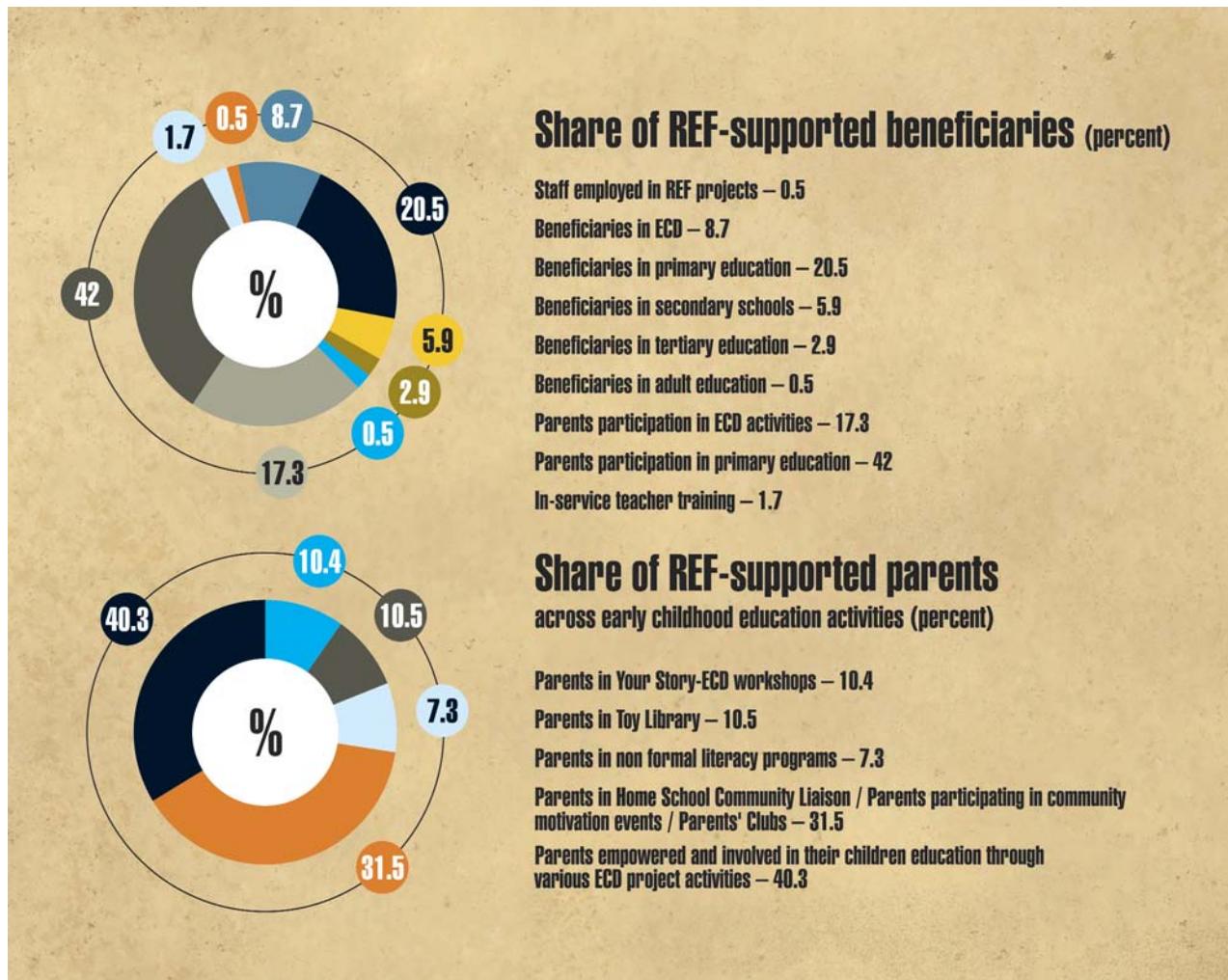
and development has led to a proactive approach to enrollment to the extent that in the targeted communities, parents are acting on their own initiative to enroll their children without external interventions and prompting.

Altogether about 54,603 parents took an active part in many of the projects: 15,734 parents participated in early childhood activities; 29,146 parents in activities related to primary school; 9,191 parents in secondary school projects; and 37 parents in tertiary education projects. About 495 adults were provided with second chance education support. In terms of professional development 2,266 teachers and Roma mediators received additional training, and a total of 451 Roma were employed within REF-supported projects.

The figure on the next page describes parental participation in various ECD activities promoted by REF and its partners. Promoting positive parenting has resulted in more children enrolling to preschools and integrated schools and a greater parental empowerment.

<sup>18</sup> 2014 indicator table shows that 3,591 pupils enrolled to integrated schools while 1,004 were prevented from enrollment in special school.

011 A Romani student registers during the launch of REF's national scholarship program in Pristina, Kosovo.  
Photo: Jetmir Idrizi



<sup>19</sup> In Montenegro the RomaVersitas project was suspended in September 2014. REF will launch a new call for RV program in Montenegro intending to find a new implementing partner.

Similarly to previous years, **preventing early school leaving** leads REF's portfolio in the field of primary education, accounting for over 54 percent of the active projects that worked with children in primary schools. To a large extent the projects targeted children at risk of dropping out; in some project locations the initiatives decreased the dropout rates by 90 percent. For example, in Bulgaria a project that was implemented in Montana decreased the dropout rate to zero compared to the previous academic year (seven percent) in the selected schools.

Beyond the phenomenon of early school leaving, the number of children of compulsory school-age who are excluded from the education system is a significant challenge in the Western Balkans. For instance, in projects implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina, REF partners identified and enrolled over 100 such children back into school. To accomplish this small but important step, REF grantees developed good cooperation with municipal authorities in addressing registration issues and securing identification for children who often do not even possess birth certificates.

REF's grantees have been recognized as key partners working with Romani communities, and our contribution to overcoming existing barriers to the full inclusion of Romani children in primary education has been noted. One of the project localities in Kakanj was visited by Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma Issues and the ROMED/ROMACT Secretariat, from the European Commission (DG Employment), as part of their in-country meeting as a good practice example.

Similar positive developments were recorded in educational performance as a result of project interventions. For instance in a Romanian project, many beneficiary students received school awards for their excellent academic performance. Furthermore, many students successfully completed their school grades and enrolled in the next academic year.

REF's **secondary education scholarship model** was implemented in seven countries in 2014 (Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia), and a total of 5,432 students received secondary school scholarships and school-based mentoring. By 2014, REF was actively cooperating with Ministries of Education in six countries to implement secondary scholarship schemes.

In Macedonia the completion rate of upper secondary education by Roma increased by seven percent in the last five years, and through the national scholarship scheme REF supports 60 percent of the entire Roma cohort in secondary education. Altogether in the Western Balkans in 2014, REF's secondary education model was adopted by the governments of Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia, with the respective governments matching REF's efforts and resources for secondary school scholarships, together with tutoring and mentoring activities for a total of 3,266 Romani students.

Despite the evident gap in school completion rates between Roma and non-Roma, there is an emerging positive trend in the last few years where more young Roma are entering universities, not only because they are persistent but also because organizations like the Roma Education Fund are offering them scholarships and tutoring support.



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- 012** A Romani boy reacts during a break from REF's primary school program in Gostivar, Macedonia.  
Photo: Robert Miskovics
- 013** A Romani girl reacts during a break from REF's primary school program in Gostivar, Macedonia.  
Photo: Robert Miskovics
- 014** Two RMUSP finalists listen to the debate during the REF Gala in Budapest, Hungary.  
Photo: János Szabó



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Additional assistance comes from organizations like RomaVersitas (RV), which works with Romani university students for encouragement, networking, promoting identity and community belonging, while also providing access to a library, foreign language courses, academic mentors and training for labor market integration. REF has been supporting the RV initiative in Hungary, Macedonia and Serbia for a number of years, and in 2014 REF successfully scaled up the initiative to five more countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Moldova and Montenegro. RV programs equip Romani students with skills necessary for labor market integration. The third figure on page 21 describes the REF-supported RV participants across countries and by gender distribution.

## TERTIARY EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

In 2014 REF's Scholarship Program continued to support Romani students in tertiary education and in vocational education, through financial as well as academic and pro-

fessional development support. Through its four scholarship schemes the program selected 1,441 beneficiaries out of 2,410 applicants. The **four scholarship schemes** are the Roma University Scholarship Program (RMUSP), the Law and Humanities Program (LHP), the Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP) and the Roma International Scholar Program (RISP). The total number of awarded scholarships slightly decreased compared to previous years, with a relatively high decrease in RHSP due to the fact that some of the students from previous RHSP cohorts graduated parallel to the stop in recruitment of new beneficiaries. The last phase of the project implementation had been planned for only formerly recruited beneficiaries to continue to receive support.<sup>20</sup>

TABLE 8. NUMBER OF YEARLY SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED SINCE 2008

SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME/ ACADEMIC YEAR	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
RMUSP	674	916	1,029	1,081	1,076	1,072	1,089
RISP	19	26	20	36	42	36	24
LHP	84	109	145	157	160	175	177
RHSP	36	86	249	223	227	170	151
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>813</b>	<b>1137</b>	<b>1,443</b>	<b>1,497</b>	<b>1,505</b>	<b>1,453</b>	<b>1,441</b>

TABLE 9. YEARLY SPENDING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS SINCE 2008 (EUR)

SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME/ ACADEMIC YEAR	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
RMUSP	585,528	854,451	1,001,254	1,116,277	1,143,409	1,167,393	1,137,214
RISP	80,757	106,347	104,370	195,897	217,632	171,500	126,418
LHP	125,450	139,555	169,835	276,272	303,534	311,060	315,606
RHSP	123,747	243,290	318,950	260,965	445,595	380,145	343,340
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>915,482</b>	<b>1,343,643</b>	<b>1,594,409</b>	<b>1,849,411</b>	<b>2,110,170</b>	<b>2,030,098</b>	<b>1,922,578</b>

<sup>20</sup> Initially RHSP was launched by OSF and REF in 2008 as a pilot project to support medical studies for Roma in Romania, and then it was extended to Bulgaria, Serbia, and Macedonia. The initial plan was to recruit students into the project during three academic years (three cohorts), then continue to support the medical studies of those students recruited during the first three project years until they graduate. However, due to the fundraising efforts of OSF, REF and the other partners involved in the implementation of RHSP, in some countries the project managed to recruit more than three cohorts of new students. In Romania, for instance, due to the funds provided through the EU Structural Funds, RHSP was able to recruit new students in the project during five cohorts. At the moment, the project supports only ongoing beneficiaries, but in case REF and partners manages to secure alternative funding, the recruitment of new cohorts will be restarted.

In 2014 the program invested EUR 1.92 million in financial support for the selected scholarship beneficiaries, which constitutes EUR 1,334 per student on average. Individual beneficiaries' financial support depends on the amount of tuition fees, if any, and on the specific scholarship scheme, with students generally receiving the highest amounts in the study-abroad scholarship scheme RISP.

In spite of the growing presence of alternative support programs in the region targeting students from marginalized groups, the demand for the REF scholarships remained relatively high, with an acceptance rate of 60 percent in 2014, the highest competition rates being in the RISP scheme. For comparison, in 2013 the acceptance rate in the program was 60 percent, in 2012 it was 58 percent, while in 2011 it was 62 percent.

An overwhelming majority of beneficiaries received support to study in Bachelor programs or local equivalents. At the same time, in the international scholarship scheme RISP, the majority of beneficiaries study in post-graduate programs.



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In the RHSP and LHP schemes, students also received, to a limited extent, support for vocational studies.

The male/female distribution in the Scholarships Program is generally balanced and comparable to the one observed in the mainstream student population. However, in the medical

TABLE 10. RATIO OF ACCEPTED APPLICATIONS, 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME	SUBMITTED APPLICATIONS		ACCEPTED APPLICATIONS	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
RMUSP	1,893		1,089	58
RISP	54		24	44
LHP	210		177	84
RHSP	254		151	59
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,410</b>		<b>1,441</b>	<b>60</b>

TABLE 11. SCHOLARSHIP BENEFICIARIES BY DEGREE LEVEL, 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME	VOCATIONAL		BACHELOR		MASTER		UNDIVIDED		DOCTORATE	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
RMUSP	0	0	840	77	219	20	8	1	22	2
RISP	0	0	8	38	11	46	0	0	4	17
LHP	30	17	105	59	27	15	9	5	6	3
RHSP	21	14	81	54	34	23	10	7	5	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1,034</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>3</b>

\* "Undivided" in this refer to tertiary-level programs outside the Bologna process that generally last for five to six years and according to which students receive diplomas equivalent to Master degrees upon graduation.

TABLE 12. SCHOLARSHIP BENEFICIARIES BY GENDER, 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME	TOTAL NUMBER BENEFICIARIES		FEMALE	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
RMUSP	1,089		543	50
RISP	24		13	54
LHP	177		84	47
RHSP	151		105	70
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,441</b>		<b>745</b>	<b>52</b>



- 015** LHP beneficiary Aluna Lepadatu sends a message to her Romani peers during a workshop in Chisinau, Moldova.  
Photo: REF Budapest
- 016** RMUSP beneficiary Angel Kochev glances from the student crowd during the REF Gala held in November in Sofia, Bulgaria.  
Photo: Mihail Novakov

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studies RHSP scheme the female beneficiaries prevail. Following the success of previous years, REF organized RMUSP gala events in eight countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia) to publicly award scholarships to selected Romani students and attract media attention to the existence of an emergent Romani elite. The galas were attended by over 500 student beneficiaries and nearly 60 Roma professionals, intellectuals and leaders from around the region. The events generated some 55 mentions of REF and its scholarships schemes in the media.

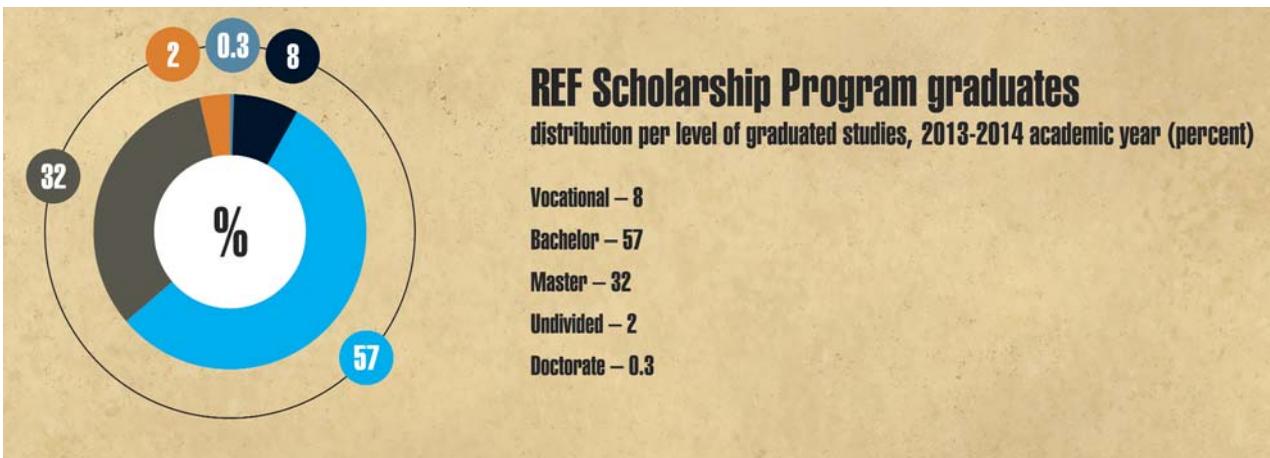
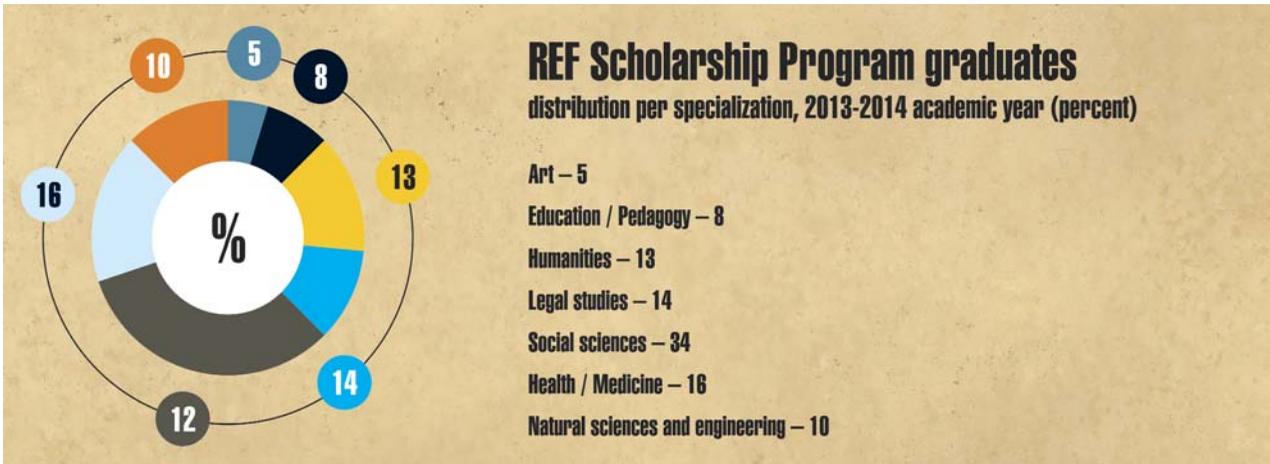
Besides hosting galas in more countries for more REF beneficiaries than in previous years, the content of the galas changed in 2014: in addition to the official ceremony REF organized small workshops with participants discussing Roma-related issues, and strategies for professional development and job search for graduates.

In the summer of 2014, 426 scholarship beneficiaries were expected to graduate, i.e., they were attending the final year of studies in their respective level of education. Among them, 78 percent, or 335 individuals, graduated successfully, while the other 22 percent postponed their graduation for the next academic year or dropped out. For comparison, the average figure of successful graduation among the university students in the OECD countries is 68 percent.<sup>21</sup> Among the 334 successful REF graduates, an absolute majority obtained Bachelor diplomas or local equivalents in social sciences or humanities-related specializations. Most beneficiaries who finished vocational education graduated in the fields of medical studies or pedagogy. Three beneficiaries graduated with Doctorate degrees.

As an adjustment to the positive developments in the region with more and more programs and scholarship schemes available for Romani university students, REF introduced a “cumulative benefits” policy in 2014. According to this policy, the REF scholarship amount was adjusted to reflect the alternative financial support that beneficiaries obtained from other sources, be it national governments, national/international NGOs or private third parties. In line with this cumulative



<sup>21</sup> Data published in OECD “Education at a Glance,” 2013; data for 2011. Available online: <http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2013%20%28eng%29-FINAL%2020%20June%202013.pdf>



benefits policy, students who received up to 30 EUR per month as financial support from alternative resources also received the REF scholarship without any further adjustments.

However, students who received between 31 and 80 EUR per month as alternative additional financial support had a reduced REF scholarship amount. Finally, for students receiving more than 80 EUR per month from non-REF sources, REF covered only the tuition fees, if tuition fees were to be paid.

Tables 13 and 14 below summarize the use of the cumulative benefits policy in each country for the 2014-2015 academic year. The data reveal that 17 students received alternative financial support in an amount up to 30 EUR per month; 17 students received between 31 and 80 EUR per month; and 53 students received above 80 EUR per month. Among the 53 students in the latter category, REF covered only the tuition

fees for 15 students, while REF did not provide financial support to the remaining 38 students.

In most of the cases of alternative support, students received scholarships through programs implemented by Ministries of Education. The highest amounts of such government-initiated support were given in Slovakia, where students received stipends in an amount of EUR 230-275 per month. In Hungary students received support through so-called *Szakkollégiums*, projects implemented by the government and four state-subsidized churches that offer financial support in an amount of 165 EUR per month. In Bulgaria 18 REF scholarship beneficiaries received support from NGOs covering their tuition fees.

Due to this approach, REF successfully reserved EUR 48,275. REF used the savings to cover scholarships for more Romani

TABLE 13. USE OF CUMULATIVE BENEFITS POLICY, 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF STUDENTS RECEIVING ALTERNATIVE SUPPORT (TOTAL)	SAVED AMOUNT IN EUR FROM REF SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM BUDGET, DUE TO THE ALTERNATIVE SUPPORT
Albania	1	700
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	-
Bulgaria	19	3,331
Croatia	0	-
Czech Republic	4	709
Hungary	44	24,475
Kosovo	0	-
Macedonia	13	3,500
Moldova	3	-
Russia	0	-
Romania	24	6,259
Serbia	0	-
Slovakia	14	9,301
Turkey	1	-
Ukraine	0	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>48,275</b>

TABLE 14. TYPES AND AMOUNTS OF ALTERNATIVE SUPPORT RECEIVED BY STUDENTS IN THE 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

COUNTRIES	STIPEND UP TO 30 EUR/MONTH	STIPEND OF 30-80 EUR/MONTH	STIPEND ABOVE 80 EUR/MONTH, BUT STUDENTS PAYING TUITION FEES	STIPEND ABOVE 80 EUR/MONTH AND STUDENTS NOT PAYING TUITION FEES	ALTERNATIVE SUPPORT FOR COVERING THE TUITION FEE	ALTERNATIVE NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORT (DORMITORY AND MEAL), ALSO CONSIDERED FOR THE REF SCHOLARSHIP CALCULATION
Albania	0	0	0	0	1	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bulgaria	0	0	1	0	18	0
Croatia	0	0	0	0	0	0
Czech Republic	1	1	0	0	1	1
Hungary	4	6	12	22	0	0
Kosovo	0	0	0	0	0	0
Macedonia	0	0	0	0	10	3
Moldova	1	1	0	0	0	1
Russia	0	0	0	0	0	0
Romania	10	8	0	6	0	0
Serbia	0	0	0	0	0	0
Slovakia	1	1	2	10	0	0
Turkey	0	0	0	0	1	0
Ukraine	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>5</b>

students, opening the way to accept all students who were on the waiting lists, and who otherwise would not have been accepted in the Scholarship Program because of the limited funds available. This approach has increased the number of Romani students who benefit from financial support during their university studies, be it from REF or from other stakeholders.

# SCHOLARSHIPS: PROMOTING SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY SUCCESS

REF's secondary and tertiary scholarship programs provide vital support in the form of financial assistance, mentoring and guidance for thousands of students every year. Dedicated to reducing early leaving and increasing graduation rates, the programs provide powerful motivation and public recognition of students' achievements, leaving them better prepared to compete on the labor market and encouraging some to pursue further studies.

REF's secondary scholarship schemes cover part of the basic and hidden costs of secondary education to combat the practice of early school leaving to take up menial employment instead of continuing and completing secondary education. Through mentorship and tutoring REF improves academic progress, encourages social integration in schools and motivates families to support their children to continue schooling. The scholarship schemes for secondary studies are implemented through REF's Grant Program that cooperates with public and non-governmental organizations. To date, secondary scholarship schemes have been implemented in seven countries: Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia. In 2014 the REF-financed secondary school program's number of beneficiaries reached 5,432.

The tertiary-level scholarship schemes are implemented directly by REF staff in cooperation with a team of mainly Romani country-based coordinators. Since 2005 almost 7,000 Romani students from 16 countries have received scholarship support. Today, REF provides support to about 1,500 students in 16 countries each year through four scholarship schemes.<sup>22</sup> Three schemes provide support for all accredited specializations, while one provides support exclusively for medical studies. Two of the four schemes provide academic and professional development support in addition to financial support. Finally, two of the four schemes provide limited options to pursue vocational studies that can later allow transition to university

- 017** Romani secondary scholarship recipient Esat Tahiri reflects on the day's events after the conclusion of the opening ceremony to the national scholarship program held in Pristina, Kosovo.  
Photo: Jetmir Idrizi
- 018** Roma Graduate Preparation Program class of 2013–2014 in Budapest, Hungary.  
Photo: Courtesy of Central European University

studies. REF's main goal in providing tertiary education scholarship support is to substantially contribute to the emergence of a generation of intellectual and skillful young Roma with higher education degrees, confident about their Roma identity, having on one hand considerable market prospects, and on the other hand being prepared and motivated to become agents for positive change for the Romani community, as well as for wider society, nationally and internationally.

Since 2005 when REF was founded, the scholarship support for Romani secondary school pupils and university students has expanded both in numbers and in geographical scope. Funding has also diversified over time. Originally, Open Society Foundations was the main donor; since then other donors – most notably the Swedish International Development Agency; the Swiss Development Agency; the Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future Foundation; the Romanian government with EU Structural Funds; the Montenegrin government with EU pre-Accession Funds; and most recently the Velux Foundation – have joined the initiative to support Romani students to access and successfully complete secondary and tertiary education. As explained below, in some countries governments joined the effort too, either by aligning with REF in support of the scholarship schemes in place, or by launching their own Romani student support programs.

## CHANGES OVER TIME

As the REF scholarship schemes evolved and expanded to support more beneficiaries in more countries, changes took place in the types of support offered to students, in the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of their academic progress and in the overall management of the programs. REF constantly adapted to respond to changes and challenges in different national education systems, and to meet the particular needs of Romani communities in each country.

In both secondary-level and tertiary-level scholarship schemes, REF has increased transparency about its targeting principles, selection procedures and application evaluation

<sup>22</sup> The four scholarship schemes are: *Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP)* supporting Romani students in 13 countries (i.e., in all Decade countries and in addition in Turkey); the *Law and Humanities Program (LHP)* supporting Romani students in Moldova, Russia and Ukraine; *Roma International Scholar Program (RISP)* offering support to Romani students studying abroad; and *Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP)* providing support to Romani students pursuing medical studies (the latter scheme was first piloted in Romania, but later expanded to Bulgaria, Macedonia and Serbia).



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mechanisms. Since 2011, the names and university affiliations of all tertiary-level scholarship beneficiaries are published on the REF website. The names of all national selection committee members responsible for evaluating the tertiary scholarship applications are also public. The introduction of an electronic system of application and evaluation for the tertiary scholarships made it possible to send personalized letters to all rejected applicants, listing the specific weaknesses in their applications. REF considers this to be both fairer and more educative.

REF has begun to merge upper-secondary-level and tertiary-level support for students, an approach that allows for a longer period of targeted support to the same individuals. Under this approach, the support begins at the end of lower secondary and continues until the graduation of tertiary education for the same beneficiaries. This approach allows REF to target beneficiaries coming from particularly vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds, who would not complete upper secondary and then tertiary education without outside support. The Velux-funded Pedagogical Scholarship Program is part of this approach.

Besides the scholarship, some of the schemes of the Scholarship Program, such as the Law and Humanities Program (LHP) and the Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP), provide a more comprehensive package of services. In addition to financial support, the schemes offer a combination of academic components, such as mentorship, professional development and language courses, opportunities to attend summer schools, internships and conferences, as well as the chance to implement small-scale initiatives at the local level. Similarly, the RomaVersitas projects funded by REF offer the same to their beneficiaries. Results of this approach are being analyzed to compare with that of RMUSP, which provides only financial support, but to a greater number of students.

The transition in 2011 from a paper-based system to electronic management of application and evaluation processes in the tertiary scholarship schemes marked a major development. Not only did this dramatically improve efficiency, but the



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electronic system also made it possible to gather important data on the socio-economic background and ongoing academic progress of all tertiary student beneficiaries. This allowed for a deeper understanding by REF of the program's target group, and has proven to be an invaluable resource for informed deliberation and quality decision-making concerning program development. REF has already used part of this data, in anonymized and aggregated form, to prepare academic articles, reports, conference presentations and working papers, hence intensifying its contribution to the academic and policy discussions about Roma access to higher education.

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**Spotlight on the Tertiary Education**  
Roma Graduate Preparation Program

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The Central European University's Roma Graduate Preparation Program (RGPP), recently described in the *New York Times* as a "de facto hub for an elite group of young Roma intellectuals," has been supported by REF since 2005. Since that time, the program (formerly the Roma Access Program) has enrolled more than 120 Roma students from over 14 countries in an intensive learning experience that enables them to become competitive candidates for placement in English language post-graduate programs at CEU and other universities. RGPP students are provided with tutoring in their chosen discipline in social sciences, law and humanities as well as intensive academic English language training, and individual mentoring and support. More than half of the students who have completed the course have gone on to further studies, many have taken up internship opportunities abroad, or worked for international organizations, and an increasing number have become visible advocates for Roma inclusion at the European level. As positive role models for other young Roma, successful alumni have played a key role in encouraging other Roma students to realize their potential and sign up for what can turn out to be a life-changing program.

Of the 126 students enrolled so far, 70 were accepted in MA programs; to date 23 students graduated from public policy programs; three in economics and seven in legal studies.

In response to increasing demand and tertiary-level schemes becoming more competitive over time, REF allocated scholarship places by weighing a combination of factors, which included the level of in-country demand, the existence of alternative funding support for Romani students and the size of the Romani population.

In 2014 the program introduced the principle of “cumulative benefits” in the calculation of the tertiary scholarship stipends, adjusting the amounts awarded to take into account all other sources of funding secured by students. This permits REF funding to reach more students, particularly those who cannot secure alternative support.

### **The outcomes of the REF scholarship schemes on Roma access to education**

The impact of REF's secondary scholarship schemes on attendance rates among upper-secondary Romani pupils is borne out by UNDP research data. The figures for Bulgaria and Macedonia reveal that a higher share of Roma aged 20 to 26 has completed upper secondary education as of 2011 in comparison to 2004. For example, in Bulgaria 10 percent of Romani respondents had completed upper secondary education; by 2011 the figure was 18 percent. In Macedonia, where the REF and Ministry-operated secondary scholarship program was tied to a mentoring and tutoring scheme that supported 60 percent of all Romani pupils, the enrollment rate rose from 10 percent in 2004 to 17 percent in 2011.

Since the first tertiary-level scholarship scheme (RMUSP) was launched in 2001,<sup>23</sup> nearly 7,000 young Roma have received scholarship support for three academic years on average. Among beneficiaries who received support during the last two complete academic years (2012–2013 and 2013–2014), 950 were in graduation years, i.e., in the last year of their respective academic program. From these graduating students 753 graduated successfully, which means a 79 percent successful completion rate at the level of the entire Program. The other 21 percent postponed their graduation for a later year or dropped out altogether.

Similar data for the mainstream students are regrettably unavailable for the majority of REF countries, to make comparisons between REF scholarship beneficiaries and mainstream students possible. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) provides an average figure for 2011 for the OECD countries, according

to which the proportion of students who enter tertiary education and graduate with at least a first degree among OECD states is 68 percent.<sup>24</sup> EUROSTAT also collected data on completion rates in tertiary education for 2008, for a range of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) countries; according to this data, the median completion rate in EHEA countries where data is available is 72 percent.<sup>25</sup> Both OECD and EUROSTAT ratios of higher education successful completion are below the similar figure for REF. However, a more reliable comparison will be only possible when data on the mainstream students becomes available for all 16 REF countries.

Fifty-six percent of REF beneficiaries who graduated in the last two academic years obtained Bachelor degrees or equivalents, while 35 percent successfully finished post-graduate education, in most cases Master degrees or equivalents. Six students completed their Doctorates. The majority of the successful graduates majored in specializations related to social sciences and humanities (details on page 31). In some countries REF graduates in social sciences and humanities constitute over 90 percent (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Moldova and Kosovo). The ratio of REF graduates in natural sciences, engineering and health remains relatively low at 25 percent, compared to the average of 39 percent among mainstream students.<sup>26</sup> However, the situation is different in the countries where RHSP program has been implemented (Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia) and the ratio of medical studies graduates is relatively high.

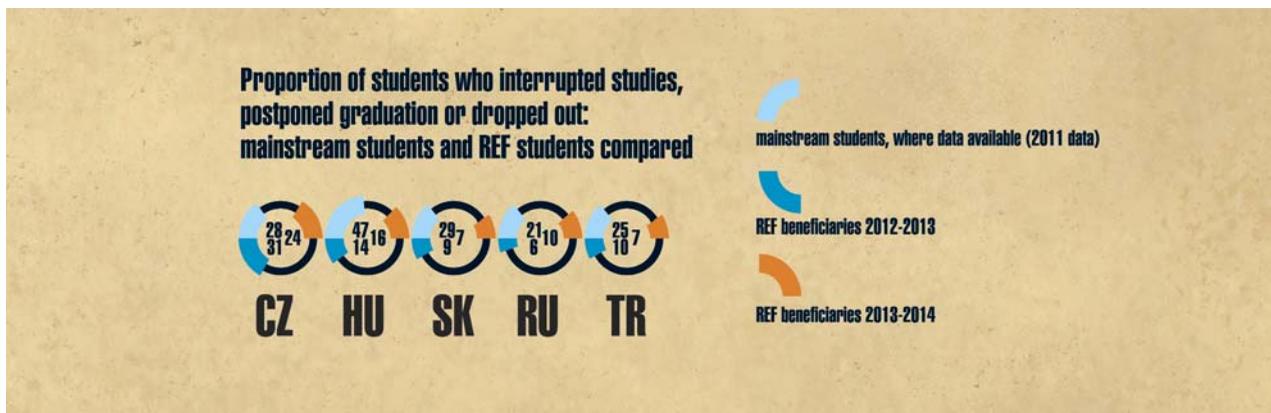
In some countries tertiary-level students graduated within one year after the traditional timing of graduation. The reasons for this postponement are specific to each country. In Macedonia

<sup>23</sup> RMUSP was originally administered by the Open Society Institute. The program became part of REF in 2007.

<sup>24</sup> Data published in OECD “Education at a Glance,” 2013; data for 2011 (study available online at <http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2013%20%28eng%29-FINAL%2020%20June%202013.pdf>).

<sup>25</sup> European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report. Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> EUROSTAT, data for 2010, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>



and Serbia, for instance, students prolong their final thesis writing time or have to take postponed exams they cumulated from previous academic years. In response to the latter phenomenon, in 2014 REF introduced a system of interim reporting and modified the application eligibility criteria to discourage students from postponing exams from one academic year to another. In Hungary some tertiary-level students faced difficulties with graduation because of the requirement to have a certificate proving intermediate-level fluency in a foreign language.

Among the tertiary scholarship beneficiaries of the last two academic cycles there are also students who interrupted their education or dropped out altogether. Out of the total number of students supported in the respective two cycles (both in graduation and non-graduation years), a total of nine percent interrupted their studies, postponed graduation or dropped out. Another seven percent lost contact with REF and therefore there is no information on their academic standing. In the worst-case scenario in which one would assume that the latter group of students also interrupted studies or dropped out, this would give a total dropout, studies interruption and graduation postponement rate of 16 percent within the whole group of REF tertiary scholarship beneficiaries (i.e., including both those who were in graduation years and who were in non-graduation years), which compares favorably with the reported average rate of 32 percent across OECD countries, as well as the reported average rate of 28 percent across EHEA countries.<sup>27</sup> As illustrated in above figure, the country-level data that is available for a few REF countries also confirm this tendency.

However, the situation may be different when country-level data are scrutinized. In some countries the dropout, studies

or graduation postponement rate among REF beneficiaries is particularly high, which is notably the case in Czech Republic, Kosovo and Serbia where this rate approaches 30 percent. REF is currently analyzing the specific causes in each of these countries to devise country-specific solutions.

Being aware that increased access to tertiary education for Romani women constitutes an important factor for the development of the entire Romani community, REF Tertiary Scholarship Program encourages particularly women to enroll in higher education. The ratio between male and female in the Program is generally balanced and comparable with that among the mainstream students.<sup>28</sup> As it is the case within the mainstream student population, among REF scholarship beneficiaries female students are overrepresented in social sciences and humanities-related fields and at the same time greatly underrepresented in fields of engineering, sciences, mathematics and computing.<sup>29</sup> Various academic studies and statistical data reveal that the latter fields provide more secure employability than the former ones.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, in the years to come, along with encouraging more Romani women to pursue tertiary education, REF will also develop strategies towards diversifying the palette of specializations chosen by Romani women pursuing tertiary studies.

<sup>27</sup> See footnotes 24 and 25.

<sup>28</sup> Data on gender distribution among mainstream students is regularly collected and made publicly available by EUROSTAT (see <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>).

<sup>29</sup> This difference between girls and boys in higher education is also discussed in an article published by *The Economist* on March 7, 2015, "Nature plus nurture: Girls do better than boys in school and university. But both can still improve - sometimes for surprising reasons." Available online at: <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21645734-girls-do-better-boys-school-and-university-both-can-still-improve-sometimes>

<sup>30</sup> See, for instance, Reimer, D. et al. (2008), "Labor Market Effects of Field of Study in Comparative Perspective." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 49(4-5), 233-256.

- 019 Albanian RMUSP finalists celebrate together with their musician classmates at the conclusion of the REF Gala held in November in Tirana, Albania. Photo: Elvin Shytaj
- 020 The campaign poster for former RMUSP recipient and current mayor of Rimavska Sec, Slovakia. Photo: Courtesy of Štefan Vavrek.



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## The country-level policy impact of the REF scholarship schemes

In 2005 when REF was founded, the organization was the only international stakeholder implementing secondary-level and tertiary-level scholarship-based projects and programs for Roma. Among the Decade countries only two had prior experience with affirmative action enrollment programs for Roma in higher education, launched in Romania in 1992 and in Serbia in 2003. Romania began a similar program for secondary students in 1999. Since REF's establishment, several other countries and international actors joined the effort to widen access to secondary and tertiary education through scholarship-based support to Romani students, which in several cases was a direct scaling-up of the REF scholarship model.

From the very outset, REF's objective was that national governments would buy into the ownership of REF's pilot programming. Secondary education scholarship programs based on the REF model were implemented in six out of the 16 countries where REF operates. This has been a positive development, for two years ago REF cooperated only with one Ministry of Education in Macedonia. Today, REF is now partnering with four more Ministries of Education in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia to implement secondary scholarship schemes.

In Macedonia, REF started to implement secondary scholarship schemes in 2005, and in 2007 the Macedonian Ministry of Education joined the effort by contributing with 50 percent of the project budget as well as with its expertise. In 2014 they raised financial support to 62 percent. This joint effort resulted in support for 2,820 young Roma in upper secondary education. A total of 99 percent of these beneficiaries successfully graduated from upper secondary education, while 62 percent continued with tertiary education (compared to national average of 64 percent<sup>31</sup>).

In Serbia, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science, REF agreed to scale up the secondary scholarship program for Romani students at national level, partnering in

the coordination of mentoring and tutoring support program to students. REF's current portfolio of secondary scholarship programs in Serbia has successfully expanded with support from the EU funding Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for almost 600 secondary school scholarships. While scaling up is a welcome sign of progress, the downside is sluggish implementation from the side of the governments involved.

In Montenegro REF has taken over from the government the distribution of the state-funded secondary and tertiary education scholarship scheme and, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, worked to improve the quality of the program. In 2014 REF's secondary education model was also adopted by the governments of Albania and Kosovo, matching REF's efforts and resources for secondary school scholarships together with tutoring and mentoring activities. In Kosovo the Ministry of Education partnered with REF to develop the scheme in the country and contributed 50 percent of the project budget which supported 550 Romani pupils who enrolled in upper secondary education by autumn 2014.

Since REF began implementing tertiary-level programs, more stakeholders in the Decade region followed our initiative and joined the effort to increase access to higher education for young Roma. In Romania the effort has been joined by EU Structural Funds, which has granted co-financing to two REF scholarship schemes for Romani students since 2010: one for a project supporting medical vocational and tertiary studies through comprehensive financial, academic and professional development support that lasted between 2010 and 2013 and granted 439 scholarships; another, for a project supporting Romani students in the first stage of their tertiary studies, through financial support and additionally through an innovative mentorship support, with final year Romani students acting as mentors. This project began in 2014 and targeted 170 beneficiaries.

<sup>31</sup> National Statistics Office 2013-2014 school year all State Matura exam. The calculation is done for both sessions from June and August 2014 and is including all the students enrolled for exam.

In Hungary REF's RomaVersitas model of combining scholarship support with intensive academic and professional development support for Romani students has been replicated to some extent by nine *Szakkollégiums*, which are EU-funded projects implemented by the government and four historical churches, under which students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds receive financial support during their studies, as well as accommodation, tutoring and mentoring services, participation in seminars, trainings, experience-based work groups, camps, and common extracurricular activities. In 2014 about 180 Romani students benefited from the support of the *Szakkollégiums* projects.

The administrative data collected by REF throughout 2014 reveal that Romani students have access to alternative support in other countries, although the respective support does not target Roma exclusively. In autumn 2014, 123 (or about nine percent) shortlisted REF applicants for tertiary scholarships reported having alternative financial support, in a majority of cases through government-initiated scholarship schemes. The support mainly consisted of monthly stipends, and in some cases students also benefited from free-of-charge accommodation in student dormitories. In Bulgaria 18 REF scholarship beneficiaries received support covering their tuition fees from the NGO Student Society for the Development of Interethnic Dialogue, with financial support from the Trust for Social Achievement.

## Looking forward

As the job market becomes ever more tough and competitive for higher education graduates, the question has arisen as to whether REF should go beyond the originally proposed outcome to produce a "critical mass" of Roma university graduates, and find ways to enhance their professional profiles to make them more competitive when it comes to the search for quality employment. One way would be to encourage Roma to choose specializations and courses of study where there is labor market demand for graduates. The Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP) and the Velux-funded Pedagogical Scholarship Program are both important steps in this direction. Another avenue currently under exploration is to develop a network of potential employers in the public, private and non-profit sectors in each country willing to host young professionals as trainees or junior staff.



### Scholarship Spotlight

Štefan Vavrek, former university scholarship beneficiary and serving mayor of Rimavská Seč, Slovakia

Five years ago Štefan Vavrek was a young Roma student enrolled in the Faculty of Pedagogy. Today he is mayor of Rimavská Seč, a town of 2,000 inhabitants in southeastern Slovakia with a Roma population of around 25 percent. The road to local government reflects the decision he took after becoming a math teacher and returning to his community to open a path for many other Roma children to succeed.

Štefan was inspired to be a math teacher after being granted a scholarship by the Roma Education Fund. "My father, a teacher himself, raised me in good faith, perceiving education as a value and a life-long asset," he recalls. Startled by the high dropout rates and grade repetition by Roma children in the local primary school, Štefan decided to open an after-school program for under-performing Romani children, also bringing together professional Roma and non-Roma volunteer-teachers to provide after school tutoring to Romani children under the newly established network – "Terapie."

During his time leading the project for approximately 249 children and 500 parents at the after-school center, the grade average of participating children improved by 0.5 points, the drop-out rate decreased to zero, the school transition rate of the primary school pupils improved to 95 percent, and half of the parents attended parents' evenings at the primary school. A thriving community and social life emerged and the after-school center became a lively and dynamic place.

The after-school program has since earned visibility at the European level and was included in the European Union's best practice catalogue "CEDEFOP: 2014" as a successful model for preventing early school leaving.

"By being close to my community I gained the trust and support of the majority population, and both Roma and non-Roma supported me to run in the local elections," he acknowledges. Mayor Vavrek hopes he can be an inspiration to the next generation!



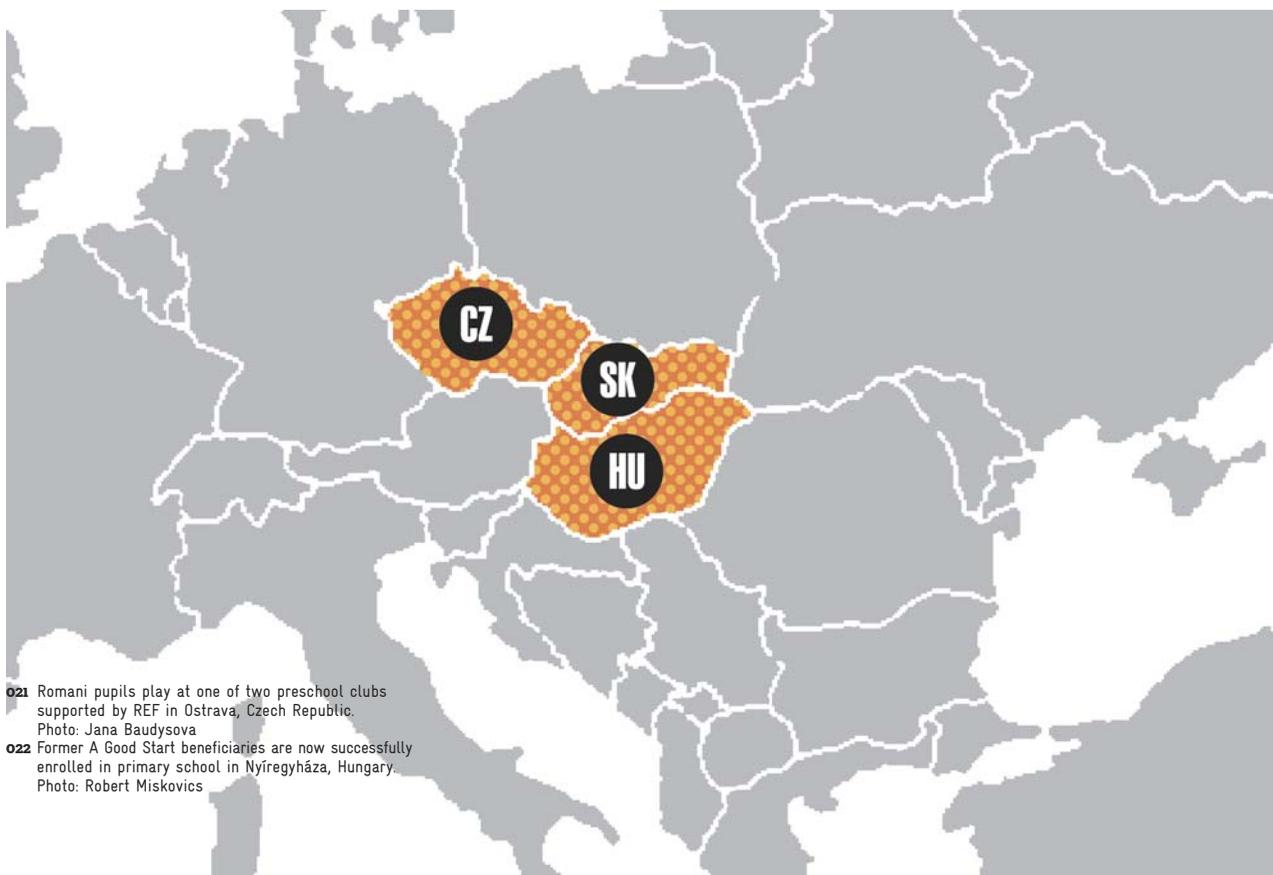
# CENTRAL EUROPE

Czech Republic / Hungary / Slovakia

In Central Europe, 22 projects were under implementation in three countries (Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia) in 2014, and eight were completed by the end of the year. 2014 also saw the REF launch of the Pedagogy Scholarship Program in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, with the support of VELUX, to support young Romani women in pedagogical studies to qualify as kindergarten and nursery school teachers.

The challenges to fully inclusive education for Romani pupils in Central Europe remain formidable. As the 2014 *EU Monitor* stresses, states must do more to mitigate the impact of socio-economic and socio-cultural inequalities which often overlap and intensify each other. For many Roma these multiple disadvantages result in low educational attainment and are transmitted from one generation to another. Also with reference to the Roma, the report highlights the need to address “processes of assessment which unjustly perceive some children as less educable than others and lead to organizational segregation,” and systematic biases in provision and opportunity.

COUNTRY	CENTRAL EUROPE			TOTAL
	NUMBER OF ACTIVE PROJECTS IN 2014	NUMBER OF DIRECT GRANT BENEFICIARIES	NUMBER OF PARENTS PARTICIPATING IN REF SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES	
Czech Republic	4	400	1,789	2,189
Hungary	9	1,944	4,141	6,085
Slovakia	9	1,820	3,630	5,450



021 Romani pupils play at one of two preschool clubs supported by REF in Ostrava, Czech Republic. Photo: Jana Baudysova

022 Former A Good Start beneficiaries are now successfully enrolled in primary school in Nyíregyháza, Hungary. Photo: Robert Miskovics



# CENTRAL EUROPE

## CZECH REPUBLIC

While the **Czech Republic** remains one of the best performers in the EU on early school leaving, a high proportion of Romani children leave school early. The Czech Republic is one of the EU countries where students' socioeconomic backgrounds have the strongest impact on educational performance. Early streaming at the age of 11 (compared to an OECD average age of 14) contributes to inequality. Participation by Romani children in early childhood education and care (children who stand to benefit the most) is very low, estimated at about 28 percent compared to a 2012 national average of 86.1 percent. The report notes that "the number of Roma children in special schools, which have lower educational standards, is disproportionately high, reducing their chances of completing upper secondary education and entering the labor market."

Three out of four projects implemented in the Czech Republic aimed to increase enrollment rates of Romani children in preschool and to highlight the importance and long-term benefits of early childhood education, and how it can prevent wrongful placement of children in special or "practical" schools.

In the National Reform Programme of the Czech Republic 2011, aimed at contributing to Europe 2020 Strategy, the government committed to increase the availability of preschool training for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, including the introduction of the right for the socially excluded to be admitted to nursery school. At the same time, the system of educational psychology counseling will be transformed so that it can adequately diagnose the individual needs of children and propose appropriate compensatory and support measures with the full cooperation of nursery and basic schools and nongovernmental organizations. Additionally, the Ministry of Education introduced a plan to make the last year of preschool compulsory in 2014.<sup>32</sup>

Considering the urgent need to address the problem of low enrollment in preschool education, the Roma Education Fund launched an information campaign in four socially excluded localities in the Ustecky Region. This region was targeted

because of its very high rates of unemployment; the large number of socially excluded localities and segregated or practical schools; and because it is the region with the most Roma in the Czech Republic.

Many parents in the socially excluded localities have had problematic experiences with the kindergartens - often they get referred to preparatory classes in segregated schools, or have been rejected from mainstream preschools for reasons of capacity. Another challenge is the inability of the poorest families to pay fees and cover additional costs.

Those active in disseminating the information knew the localities well, and used the opportunity of direct interaction with the families to take stock of the challenges ahead as well as drawing attention to the specific registration dates for the kindergartens. Some parents felt pressured to register their children in preparatory classes in segregated schools; others feared their children would have no protection against racism in the kindergarten; and many were anxious about the hidden extra expenses that come with preschool participation. One direct result from this short information campaign was that almost 30 children enrolled in preschool. However, around 250 children were identified by REF as socially excluded in the given localities, which is why REF will continue to scale up this outreach and information campaign based on the impact analysis of the pilot phase, designed in collaboration with the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab<sup>33</sup> (JPAL) due to be launched in 2015. Its planned duration is for two years and it is planned to involve 80 localities and around 4,000 Roma households in regions with high intensity of socially excluded Roma.

The town of Ostrava attained a degree of notoriety by virtue of its association with the 2007 European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) verdict that declared discrimination against

<sup>32</sup> Still a plan.

<sup>33</sup> Available online: <http://www.povertyactionlab.org/>



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#### Parent Spotlight

Margita from Ostrava:

"My children learned how to speak properly."

"When the kids stayed at home with me, they could barely speak. Thanks to the 'mama club,' they speak clearly and recognize all colors," says Margita. Margita has ten children and her partner is deaf. The youngest is 18 months old and her oldest two have families of their own. After observing the project field worker regularly picking up other children from her settlement to accompany them to the mama club, Margita asked if her children could join. Eventually, three of them started attending. Compared to their peers, her children were underdeveloped and did not speak very much. However, since attending the mama club, they are progressing quickly. Margita is proud of that – "they acquired many other skills."

Romani children in the Czech education system to be systematic and unlawful. Over the last two years the Ostrava municipality has joined with REF and two local NGO partners to implement the project *Together to Preschool!* The Czech School Inspectorate also joined in this successful endeavor to overcome the barriers between the institutions and Romani families.

For years following the ECtHR judgment there was no change in Ostrava, and little effort by the institutions and authorities to address the issue of inclusive education. REF and its partners began an early childhood education program to better prepare young Romani children for school. Within two years

023 Two Romani boys pause from playing at one of two preschool clubs supported by REF in Ostrava, Czech Republic.  
Photo: Jana Baudysova

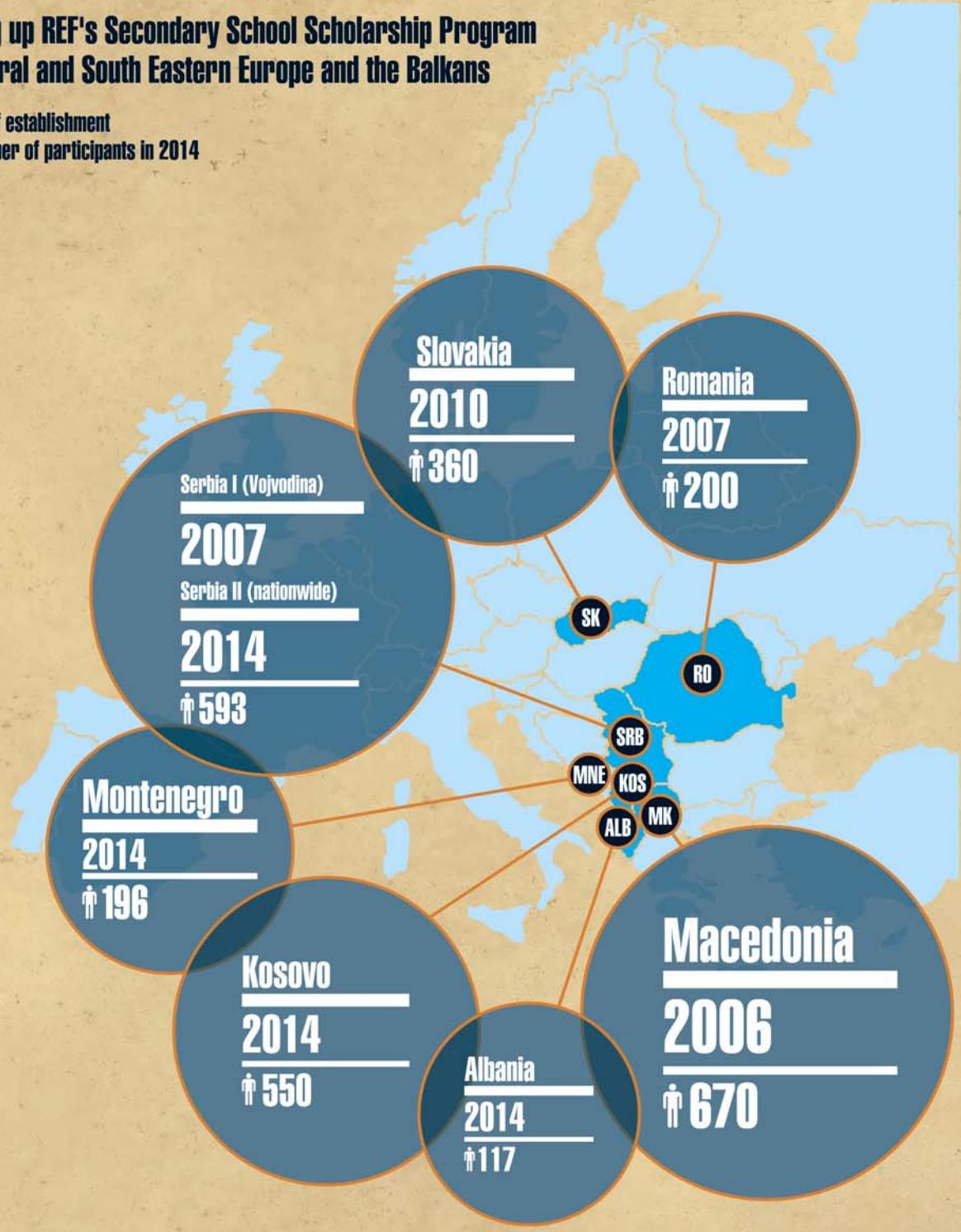
REF partners were operating two preschool clubs attended by more than 90 children, which is around 70 percent of the socially excluded Romani children in both localities. The clubs provide professional early childhood education services for mothers and young Romani children. When the children reach the age of five they are enrolled into mainstream preschool institutions, and later to integrated mainstream schools.

The project is implemented under the patronage of the Ostrava municipality, which provides both funding and technical assistance. The combination of REF preschool model with the legislative framework that provides free preschool for five-year-olds laid the ground for positive cooperation engaging the local kindergartens and elementary schools, while at the same time providing valuable services for the children and their families. More than 100 children passed through the preschool clubs, and 57 children are currently attending kindergarten.

The project has not only resulted in increased and regular attendance of children in the preschools and kindergartens, but has also succeeded in halting the placement of Romani pupils into the practical schools, the very practice that prompted the ground-breaking litigation that culminated in *D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic*, putting Ostrava on the map for all the wrong reasons. In addition to the positive educational outcomes, the project has had an impact on how the educational authorities and the wider public in Ostrava view school desegregation and the importance of preschool for all children, as well as the benefits integrated education bring to all. These benefits and the successes of the project were celebrated in a month-long photographic exhibition held in the Ostrava House of Culture in late 2014 that was viewed by over 20,000 visitors.

## Scaling up REF's Secondary School Scholarship Program in Central and South Eastern Europe and the Balkans

- Year of establishment
- † Number of participants in 2014



024 Béla Lakatos acts as the mayor of Ács and is a former REF grantee.  
Photo: Courtesy of Béla Lakatos



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### Grantee Spotlight

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Béla Lakatos, Mayor of Ács

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In 2004, school principal Béla Lakatos decided to implement a new education model to desegregate the schools in Ács, a small town of 7,000 in northwestern Hungary. "Success for this initiative was not sure at that time because it was not an everyday practice in the local government system," admits Béla. However, eight years later he and his colleagues had implemented full integration for the three schools of the locality.

At the same time, Béla and his colleagues set about tackling the problem of early school leaving among pupils, including Roma children, from vocational secondary school. They established a dual system vocational class, where local companies provided not only workplace training, but also a mentor for every student in order to help them overcome their school and family problems. "This program was successful because 80 percent of our children are working and, out of these, 60 percent in the same company where they did their training."

Since 2010, Béla Lakatos has been serving his community from the Mayor's office, where winning the mayoral race with 67 percent of the vote is significant since, according to Mayor Lakatos "I always declare myself openly as Roma and I work for Roma as well."

## HUNGARY

By contrast, in **Hungary** the enrollment rate of Romani children in preschool is high (about 79 percent). This high rate is largely attributable to the fact that preschool is compulsory and free-of-charge, and the result of REF projects seven to nine years ago, when REF organized intensive enrollment campaigns in the poorest counties of Hungary with local Romani partners. However, according to the *EU Monitor*, the success of this reform will depend on the country's ability to provide the required number of places in early childhood education, and on tackling other barriers to access (e.g., distance from nursery schools, transport and financial constraints). According to an EU Fundamental Rights Agency survey, the dropout rate for Roma is more than seven times higher than non-Roma, fewer than 20 percent complete secondary education, while a mere 0.5 percent complete tertiary education.

Debate has intensified in Hungary following the recent slew of education reforms about how best to provide quality inclusive education for the most marginalized children. The 2014 EU progress report<sup>34</sup> noted that expenditure on basic education remains below the EU average, and pointedly stressed that more efforts are needed to ensure education is inclusive, to address discrimination and to remove the barriers that continue to segregate Romani children, a trend that has actually increased in recent years.

The evidence from REF-supported studies<sup>35</sup> (School Choice) identified the current structural reforms and budgetary cuts as additional barriers to equal and inclusive education.

Building on the findings of segregation analysis, a more in-depth study was commissioned by REF to observe the impact of reducing the compulsory school leaving age from 18 to 16 years. The study will be completed in 2015.

The dropout rate from vocational education is particularly high in disadvantaged areas. According to a report by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, the Hungarian education system has become exceedingly

selective and polarized. According to the *EU Monitor*, ensuring that students from disadvantaged backgrounds, in particular Romani children, have equal access to high quality, inclusive, mainstream education remains a major challenge.

The ethnic gap in secondary school dropout rates is very large: the dropout rate is 32 percent for Romani secondary school students compared to five percent for non-Romani secondary school students.<sup>36</sup> The study further stated that one quarter of this gap can be explained by the gap in educational achievement emerged in primary school, before enrollment in secondary school.

The aftermath of a widely publicized murder of a schoolteacher in the Roma neighborhood of Olaszliszka in 2006 left the local community traumatized. It was this context that prompted REF to choose to work with the Romani community and schools in Olaszliszka to address the issue of access to quality education.

<sup>34</sup> Education and Training Monitor 2014 Hungary, page 7.  
Available online:

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/docs/2014/monitor2014-hu\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/docs/2014/monitor2014-hu_en.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Gábor Kertesi and Gábor Kézdi, *School Choice, and Educational Policies in 100 Hungarian Towns*, Roma Education Fund, 2013.

<sup>36</sup> How can young Roma achieve success in Hungary? Roma in Secondary Schools and in the Labor Market.

Available online:

[http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/young\\_roma\\_in\\_hungarian\\_secondary\\_schools\\_and\\_in\\_the\\_labor\\_market.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/young_roma_in_hungarian_secondary_schools_and_in_the_labor_market.pdf)



025

**Campaign Spotlight**

Knowledge is Power /  
A TudásBáloom /  
O Zhanipe Zor Sil!

*Fight for yourself!  
Fight for yourself!  
Fight for yourself!  
Don't be scared!  
Fight for yourself!  
Defend your rights!  
Your rights, your rights!  
Your rights, your rights, your rights, your rights!  
Swear you'll fight with all your might!  
Defend your rights, defend your rights!*

Knowledge is Power, with nearly 100,000 views on Youtube\* and some 2,500 likes on Facebook since its release in 2014, became REF's most successful youth education campaign to date. Made public during a press conference in Telepy Comprehensive Grammar School in Budapest's Ninth District in February, this Hungarian-language video appeared on Hungary's leading news portals and generated 44 mainstream media citations, including television coverage.

The Roma performers in Knowledge is Power addressed Roma youth directly, challenging them to stay in school, value education and complete their studies through powerful, street-wise lyrics. Tapping into a broader European youth movement, the message struck a chord not only with Roma audiences aged 16 to 24 but also with their mainstream peers and the general public in Hungary.

As part of the campaign, REF sponsored a competition open to youth under age 18 to submit their lyrics or poems on the theme of Knowledge is Power. From a pool of 15 submissions, the shortlisted candidates were invited to Budapest for the closing event hosted at the premises of the Hungarian software developers, Prezi. A jury awarded the Best Young Slammer and the Best Group Slam with language lessons.

Knowledge is Power later collected a cash award as recognition for its contribution to public dialogue from the Central and Eastern European Association for Historical and Social Research. Knowledge is Power also won first prize at the MEET Film Festival in Italy.

\* Available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhdimBAKFCE>

**025** Mizo played a starring role as a beatbox and lyricist in Knowledge is Power, a campaign to motivate Romani youth to stay in school and complete their studies.

Photo: REF Budapest

**026** Two sisters who were secondary scholarship recipients smile at the last day of school before their graduation from the hospitality high school in Brezno, Slovakia.

Photo: Milan Jaros

REF focused on two components: enrollment of Romani children in an integrated school, complemented by additional academic support and working with parents to give their children the support they need in the new school. In the framework of the project, 27 children who participate regularly in mentoring and tutoring sessions have gained from 10 percent to 20 percent on Hungarian language and mathematics scores. Average cumulative Grade Point Average has increased by 12 percent. Of this group of children, 13 have enrolled in the integrated Tolcsva school, and REF's local partner provides daily transport to and from the school for all 13 children. Another positive outcome of the program is that parents have become more active, regularly attend parents' club meetings and visit schools every month in order to follow their children's school performance.

Founded in 2001, the RomaVersitas program in Hungary is the oldest of all REF-funded projects targeting students in tertiary education and supporting them through to successful graduation. One of the outcomes in 2014 was the fact that students took more exams during their studies and acquired more credits than in the previous academic year. In the 2012–2013 academic year, the average GPA was 3.7; five semesters later, GPA rose to 4.2 out of 5.0.



**SLOVAKIA**

In Slovakia, participation in early childhood education and care (77.1 percent) is among the lowest in the EU and falling. Among marginalized Romani communities the rate is as low as 24 percent. Capacities in kindergartens are insufficient in certain parts of the country. As regards equity, the *EU Monitor* states that Slovakia lacks any systematic strategy to ensure that early childhood education could become inclusive with a view to raising overall educational outcomes, and that this further hinders disadvantaged Romani pupils. Early tracking and the disproportionate placement of Romani pupils in special schools perpetuate inequalities. As elsewhere, this practice greatly reduces pupils' chances of completing upper secondary education and entering the labor market in a country where the youth unemployment rate is one of the



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highest in the EU, and where the labor market disadvantage for people without upper secondary education is significantly higher than elsewhere in the EU.

In 2014, REF supported the implementation of nine projects in Slovakia, six of which were preschool projects. Three of these early childhood projects were a continuation of the European Commission funded project *A Good Start*, and all six were primarily concerned with improving children's early development and health, and increasing enrollment rates in preschool institutions. As a result of work with parents they enrolled their preschool children in the mainstream kindergartens. The children were well received by teaching staff, and the relationship between staff and parents markedly improved.

The largest REF program in Slovakia is the nationwide secondary scholarship program implemented by the local branch office, which has a network of partners comprising 147 secondary schools and supports 350 students annually. The project works to improve academic performance, attendance and graduation rates, to decrease dropout rates among secondary school students and to increase the numbers of students successfully making the transition from secondary to tertiary education. In the 2013-2014 school year, 96 percent of beneficiaries awarded with scholarships successfully completed the school year. One-hundred percent of the 78 beneficiaries in their last year of secondary education successfully completed the Maturita exam which is considered a crucial tool for applying to university. While 60.5 percent reported that they were searching for work and might apply to university the following year, 39.5 percent went on to higher education. This is a significant and promising result for the secondary scholarship program if we compare it to the 52 percent of the general

population that passed the Maturita exam and enrolled to university for the 2014-2015 academic year.

Throughout 2014 REF was involved in training, content and technical assistance and quality assurance in a challenging social experimentation project called *Investing in the Early Years of Children - Promoting Social Innovation and Roma Integration*. Implemented by the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities in Slovakia, it was initially designed to scale up REF's AGS early childhood education model.

With funding support from the European Commission DG EMPL, 300 Romani mothers improved their parenting and

Following up on the EU-funded pilot *A Good Start*, which ran from 2010 to 2012, REF continued to promote inclusive models of early childhood development (ECD) in 2014. In northeastern Hungary REF, in cooperation with Nyiregyhaza Pedagogical University, continued working to widen access to ECD services, raise awareness and further develop effective methods and procedures to enhance parenting skills in seven localities. Sixty-four university students (49 pedagogy and 15 andragogy) were directly involved in community activities and working with Romani parents. Students attended all sessions of the Reading Clubs, Play Time, group mentoring and family mentoring. "Both children and parents benefited from technical expertise of students," said a participating professor from Nyiregyhaza University. The university developed a syllabus for the course and the students received credits for theoretical and practical components related to working with Romani families and children.

Nonetheless, barriers to access quality ECD services remain to be overcome and REF aspires to dismantle them. REF's work with local partners has resulted in the introduction and improvement of ECD facilities in seven rural Romani communities. Toy libraries are operating at four locations, where some 234 families regularly borrow toys and some 410 children participate in playtime sessions. Fifteen *Home School Community Liaison* sessions were held in eight kindergartens. In total, 241 children received support for enrollment in preschool, 334 families received group mentoring and 84 families received individual mentoring from four mentors.

These activities serve as cost-effective models for ECD service delivery to the most marginalized children. Yet the consistent application of standards remains a challenge due to limited understanding of holistic development and child outcomes by mainstream ECD staff. The lack of support to teachers and educators to ensure, monitor and evaluate quality is another bottleneck that REF set out to address through capacity development at all levels.

In 2014 REF, jointly with International Child Development Initiatives, started to conduct assessments of the learning outcomes and school readiness of students from different ECD activities.

027 Velux-supported Romani pedagogy students study with their non-Romani peers in the computer lab in Košice, Slovakia.  
Photo: REF Budapest



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### Facilitator Spotlight

Adela

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Adela was really looking forward to facilitating the *Your Story* sessions. Apprehensive at first, she found comfort in leading discussions among her new friends. She listened to them, guided the interviews, played games and created a fun and safe environment. She became very close with her group, managing even to find a job for one participant. As she became more involved she found that the women began to gain confidence. They began to express their opinions more readily and even began discussing the possibility of completing their education. The women became stronger as individuals and as a group. They supported each other more than before, becoming strong community members. Adela grew personally from the experience as well. As she became more immersed in the community, the women adopted her as a close friend and confidante. At program's end, she was able to leave behind a legacy of four great facilitators to lead other groups of women.

When Adela gave her group the opportunity to share what the program meant to them, she was at a loss for words upon hearing their responses. The women said their sessions provided a place to relax, feel safe, switch off the stresses of their domestic duties and enjoy each other's company. The sessions were a place to learn new things about how to live better lives. They were able to build strong friendships among other mothers who could support them at home through child care, cooking and giving advice. She also found that the mothers credited the program with creating a stronger relationship between the mothers and their children, allowing them to prioritize spending time with their children. Adela was speechless but managed to add, "I am happy to have women on whom I can rely on and so privileged to be a part of this program. Thanks again for being such crazy women! You've inspired me!"

literacy skills, and became more confident and better able to express themselves as members of a community of mothers, through their participation in the *Your Story* reading club throughout the year. In a survey conducted after the project, 70 percent of mothers responded that they read more often and regularly to their children, 42 percent of mothers felt much more self-confident in their parenting practices and 39 percent of mothers responded that these activities have significantly improved their relation towards their children.

In all project localities, kindergarten capacities were below the actual demand from parents in the communities. Therefore, the share of three-to-five-year-old Romani children in project communities who enrolled and attended kindergarten remained stable during the project at the level of 28 percent, with additional six percent of children enrolled in community center programs.

Another survey was conducted with kindergarten principals/teachers to assess the children's performance and the impacts of the project. Kindergarten principals identified the following major project benefits for children of participating mothers: improved psycho-motoric competencies<sup>37</sup> (100 percent of principals agree) and enrollment of six-year-old children directly to the first grade rather than to preparatory zero grade (80 percent). Furthermore, 73 percent of principals agreed that the project improved the children's vocabulary, while 50 percent reported that the project children had improved cognitive skills that they used in problem solving, group work, and critical and creative thinking. When considering project impacts on mothers, 80 percent of principals reported that

<sup>37</sup> Ability to hold a pencil, draw, physical development, usage of basic skills.

Romani mothers who participated in the project activities had much higher interest than the non-project mothers in the educational progress of their children and improved cooperation with the kindergarten.

For the first time ever an impact evaluation is currently being performed and will be ready in 2015, in order to demonstrate if this Roma education program was effective or not. Participating mothers were selected to the project randomly in 21 localities, and at the end it will be possible to compare the results of project participants with non-treated control groups in each locality, using counterfactual impact evaluation to measure the outcomes and clearly understand the results. The evaluation component is being carried out by experts from the Central European University, J-PAL Poverty Action Lab, the Slovak Governance Institute and the World Bank.

## SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM IN CEE

In 2014 REF received 404 applications from the three Central Europe countries, 382 for the Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP) and 22 for the Roma International Scholar Program (RISP). From these applicants 239 were selected for support through the RMUSP scheme to pursue studies in their own countries, while 11 were awarded scholarship support through the RISP scheme to study abroad. Among

the RISP students, five received support to study in UK; two to study in US; two Slovak students to study in the Czech Republic; one to study in Netherlands and one in Austria. The total acceptance rate was 63 percent in RMUSP and 50 percent in RISP.

Among the selected scholarship beneficiaries, those studying in undergraduate programs constitute the majority. At the same time, RISP beneficiaries pursuing post-graduate studies make up more than 50 percent. In the two schemes, 11 beneficiaries received support for doctorate studies.

In fall 2014 REF organized gala events in all three countries, which were attended by a total of 100 REF beneficiaries, increasing the visibility of the program in the region and creating an opportunity for students to meet and network.

The demand for REF scholarships in the region increased in 2014, particularly in Slovakia where there are more and more young Roma graduating secondary education and therefore eligible to apply to university studies. The number is expected to grow further in the years to come.

TABLE 15. TOTAL APPLICANTS AND BENEFICIARIES OF RMUSP AND RISP IN CENTRAL EUROPE IN 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

	RMUSP		RISP	
	Applicants	Beneficiaries	Applicants	Beneficiaries
Czech Republic	63	43	1	0
Hungary	179	104	12	7
Slovakia	140	92	9	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Percent out of total number applicants</b>		<b>63</b>		<b>50</b>

TABLE 16. TOTAL BENEFICIARIES OF RMUSP AND RISP BY LEVEL OF STUDIES IN CENTRAL EUROPE IN 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

	RMUSP				RISP		
	Bachelor	Master	Undivided	Doctorate	Bachelor	Master	Doctorate
Czech Republic	29	11	3	0	0	0	0
Hungary	66	29	1	8	4	2	1
Slovakia	52	39	0	1	1	2	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Percent</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>18</b>

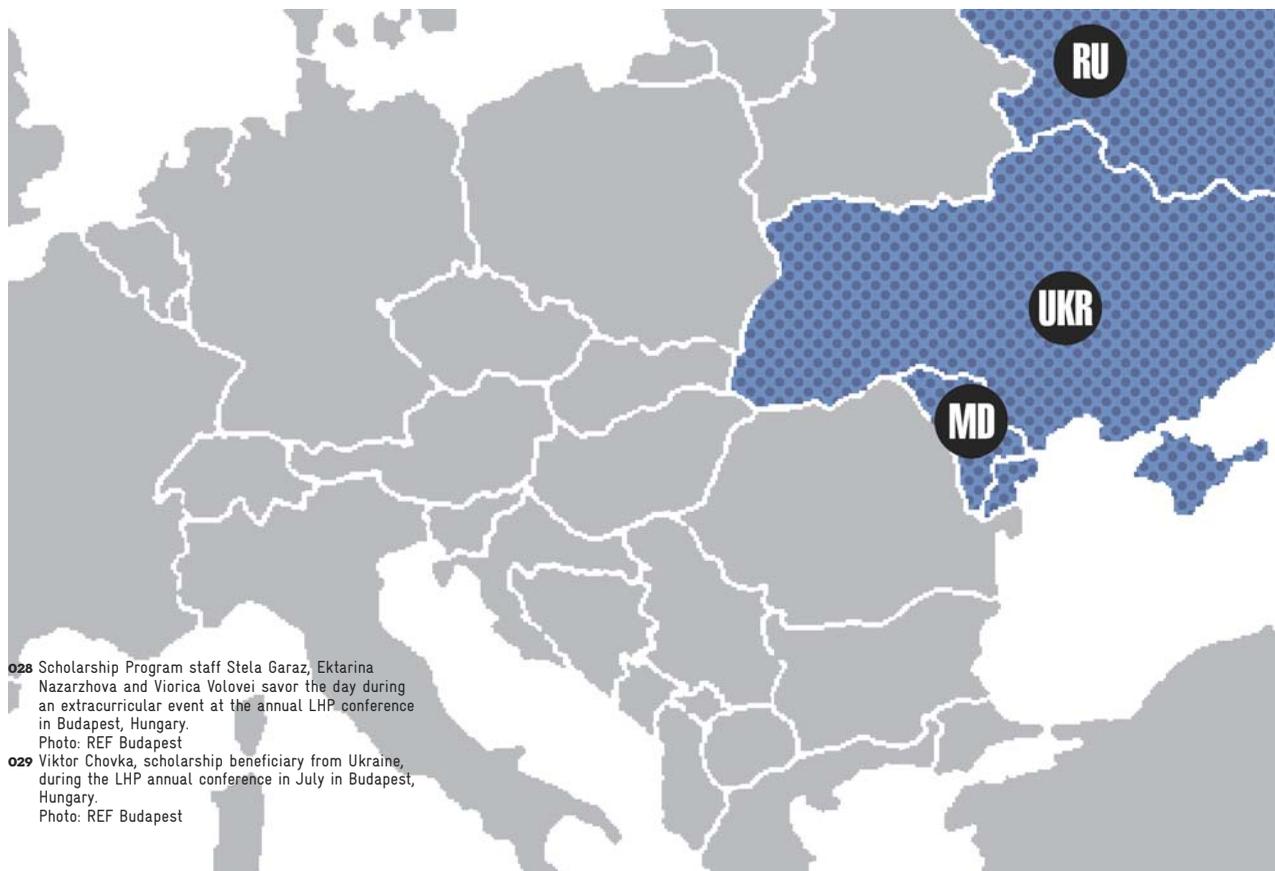


# EASTERN EUROPE

Moldova / Russia / Ukraine

Although the three countries in Eastern Europe - Moldova, Russia and Ukraine - are not part of the Decade for Roma Inclusion, REF operates the Law and Humanities tertiary education scholarship program thanks to financial resources provided by the German Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future (EVZ). Romani students from the three countries are also eligible to receive support for tertiary-level studies abroad. On an exceptional basis, REF has also supported a limited number of grant projects in Moldova.

COUNTRY	EASTERN EUROPE			TOTAL
	NUMBER OF ACTIVE PROJECTS IN 2014	NUMBER OF DIRECT GRANT BENEFICIARIES	NUMBER OF PARENTS PARTICIPATING IN REF SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES	
Moldova	2	480	2,040	2,520



**028** Scholarship Program staff Stela Garaz, Ektarina Nazarzova and Viorica Volovei savor the day during an extracurricular event at the annual LHP conference in Budapest, Hungary. Photo: REF Budapest

**029** Viktor Chovka, scholarship beneficiary from Ukraine, during the LHP annual conference in July in Budapest, Hungary. Photo: REF Budapest



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# EASTERN EUROPE



## MOLDOVA

In 2014, REF supported the establishment of a RomaVersitas program in **Moldova**. This REF model program draws from the experiences of similar programs in countries such as Hungary, Macedonia and Serbia. The Roma National Center implements the RomaVersitas model in Chisinau where 33 university students have been provided with a space to meet one another and exchange experiences; to use computers and access the internet; to attend English language classes and computer training courses; and to participate in regular professional development trainings, thematic debates, and public lectures and presentations. Romani students have been supported through the Law and Humanities Program in Moldova since 2004. Currently implemented by the REF Scholarship Program, it includes a yearly scholarship to cover tuition fees and some living costs, as well as opportunities to participate in a range of professional development training.

REF, together with UNICEF in Moldova, facilitated cross-country experiences and learning from Serbia and Bulgaria for representatives of the Moldovan Ministry of Education, local authorities, teachers and NGOs. The officials learned about the desegregation models of Roma schools and classes and visited schools where Romani children study in integrated settings. The visits gave the opportunity to deepen the understanding of the process and the instruments that are applied for successful full integration.

### Law and Humanities Program Spotlight

Grigore Zapescu

After graduating from high school in 2011, I participated in local public administration meetings where I met civil society representatives, including organizations promoting Romani causes. This experience prompted me to volunteer and later coordinate my own projects.

In 2013 two other LHP beneficiaries and I obtained financial support from LHP to implement "Water – the Elixir of Life," a small-scale project to build a well in a Romani village without access to potable water. This project gave me valuable experience in the development, coordination, implementation and reporting. In 2014 I obtained funding for another small-scale project, "I am a child – I have the right to play," which aimed to renovate the children's playground in another Romani community. The liaison and cooperation with the local administration during these two projects was particularly valuable experience.

In 2014, along with a group of young Roma, we attended a meeting led by the Prime Minister of Moldova. We expressed the need for greater access to education for Roma and promotion of social inclusion policies. We also discussed the problems faced by Roma people, solutions to solve them and how the government can directly influence development of the Roma minority.

The discriminatory attitude and indifference towards Roma led me to be more active, invest in my own education, and follow certain professional goals – all personal steps that are helping me to improve the plight of Roma. I view this as a personal matter, because I believe that the problems of our community affect us individually and the change starts with each of us.

Now I want to create a non-governmental organization that will work in partnership with the state and international institutions, aimed at creating an inclusive and effective education system based on principles of equity, non-discrimination and respect for diversity, which will contribute to Roma integration.

As for the professional and personal development, my goals are to deepen my knowledge in the field of law, to obtain a Master's degree in human rights, to obtain a lawyer's license, and of course, to start my own family. I believe that education is humanity's most powerful tool.

- 030** Opportunities to network can lead to lasting friendships during the annual LHP conference in Budapest, Hungary.  
Photo: REF Budapest
- 031** Grigore Zapescu has led several small-scale projects during his time as an LHP beneficiary in Moldova.  
Photo: Courtesy of Grigore Zapescu

TABLE 17. TOTAL APPLICANTS AND BENEFICIARIES OF LHP IN EASTERN EUROPE IN 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

	LHP		RISP	
	Applicants	Beneficiaries	Applicants	Beneficiaries
Moldova	35	33	2	2
Russia	43	38	0	0
Ukraine	132	106	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Percent</b>		<b>84</b>		<b>100</b>

## SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM IN EE

In 2014 REF received 212 applications from Moldova, Russia, Ukraine for the Law and Humanities Program (LHP) and Roma International Scholar Program (RISP) scholarship schemes, out of whom 179 were accepted, 177 in LHP and two in RISP. The beneficiaries recruited in LHP received support to pursue higher education and to a limited extent, vocational education, in their own countries, while the RISP-selected beneficiaries received support to study abroad. The two RISP-selected beneficiaries are both from Moldova and both pursue Bachelor-level education in Austria.

A majority of 59 percent of accepted LHP beneficiaries study in Bachelor programs. Seventeen percent study in vocational programs in academic specializations that can lead to university studies.

Besides scholarship support, the LHP scheme offers academic and professional development support through several additional project components. LHP language grants sponsor students' enrollment in foreign language schools during the academic year, whereas the LHP Professional Development Fund offers support for students' participation in extracurricular activities such as conferences and symposia, summer schools, fellowships, research initiatives or summer internships within their countries. The LHP international internship component offers financial support to pursue summer internships outside students' home countries. Hence, in 2014, LHP offered additional support to 26 ongoing beneficiaries to attend foreign language courses, with most students studying English.

Four beneficiaries received Professional Development Fund support, two for pursuing in-country summer internships and another two for attending professional development trainings. One student received international internship support, which offered her the possibility to join REF headquarters as an intern for six weeks in summer 2014.

In addition, four groups of LHP beneficiaries developed and implemented projects in their countries, with support received under the LHP Small-Scale Projects component. Two of these projects were implemented in Moldova, one in Ukraine and one in Russia.

One of the projects implemented in Moldova was for the renovation of a children's playground, as well as the football field and volleyball courts in a Romani village. The other project in Moldova resulted in the building of a sports hall for young Roma and non-Roma in an ethnically mixed village, as well as the organization of competitive events within the hall with the aim to encourage communication between Romani and non-Romani youth.

The small-scale project in Ukraine consisted of offering guidance and support to the Romani community in a village in the Transcarpathia region for a range of administrative and legal matters, including assistance for applying for birth certificates, passports and identity cards, applying for social safety net programs, clarifying property rights and registering their residence.

032 LHP students react during an extracurricular event during their annual conference in Budapest, Hungary. Photo: REF Budapest



032

TABLE 18. TOTAL BENEFICIARIES OF LHP BY LEVEL OF STUDIES IN EASTERN EUROPE IN 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

	Vocational	Bachelor	Master	Undivided	Doctorate
Moldova	1	24	6	0	2
Russia	5	23	1	7	2
Ukraine	24	58	20	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Percent</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>

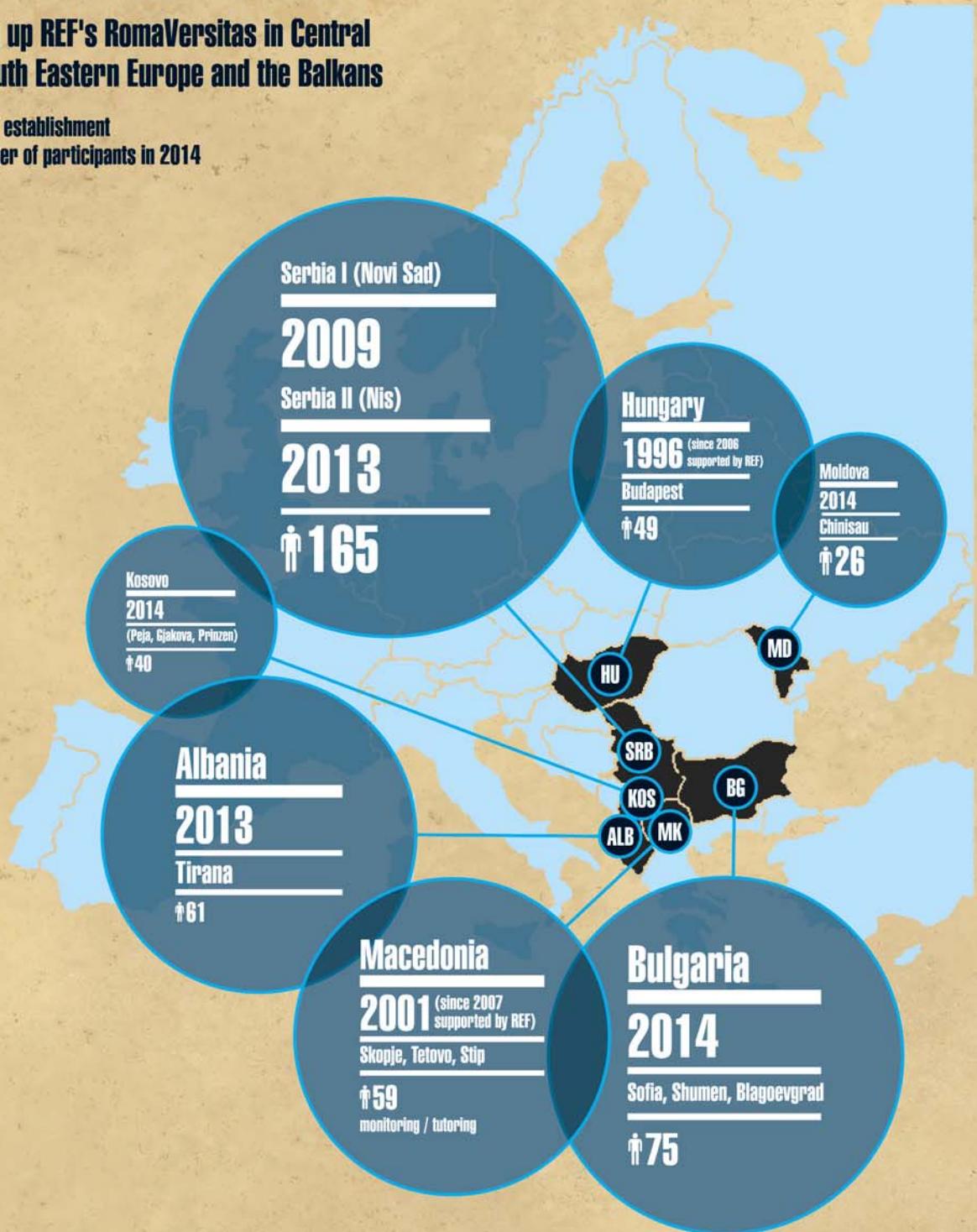
The small-scale project in Russia organized catch-up classes for first-grade primary school children in a segregated Roma school in a village located in Tula Oblast, south of Moscow. All these projects not only offered support to Romani communities in specific localities of the three countries, but also constituted a valuable professional experience for the involved REF beneficiaries in developing and implementing a project, in mobilizing the community, and in establishing links for cooperation with local administration, schools and community leaders.

In 2014 the LHP beneficiaries also had the opportunity to meet for professional development courses and for an annual conference. At the end of March, Moldovan LHP students met in Chisinau for a two-day computer-training workshop, during which attendees improved their skills with Microsoft Office applications, familiarized themselves with various internet tools and also with basic cybersecurity. In July Russian and Ukrainian beneficiaries participated in a training organized in Budapest on how to write and implement small-

scale projects for Romani community development. Lastly, 42 REF beneficiaries and alumni from all three countries participated in a two-day joint conference in July 2014 at Central European University in Budapest, during which participants discussed the ways and strategies for Roma inclusion from the civil society perspective. These events not only offered students the possibility to improve their professional skills and knowledge about Roma inclusion, but also the possibility to meet, network and form a community of young Romani students in Eastern Europe.

## Scaling up REF's RomaVersitas in Central and South Eastern Europe and the Balkans

- Year of establishment
- † Number of participants in 2014





033



034

# BALKANS

Albania / Bosnia and Herzegovina / Croatia / Kosovo / FYR Macedonia / Montenegro / Serbia

In the Western Balkans, REF supported a total of 42 projects in seven countries in 2014, reaching more than 25,630 beneficiaries, which accounted for 72 percent of all REF beneficiaries last year.

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF ACTIVE PROJECTS IN 2014	NUMBER OF DIRECT GRANT BENEFICIARIES	BALKANS	
			NUMBER OF PARENTS PARTICIPATING IN REF SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES	TOTAL
Albania	4	1,669	1,506	3,175
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4	1,196	1,984	3,180
Croatia	5	879	934	1,813
Kosovo	4	9,021	13,580	2,2601
FYR Macedonia	13	7,931	15,523	23,454
Montenegro	7	3,170	3,651	6,821
Serbia	5	1,711	3,820	5,531



**033** Romani pupils who participate in countywide desegregation program, attend the preschool in Kursanec in Medjmurje County, Croatia. Photo: REF Budapest

**034** An Albanian RMUSP finalist receives a pin declaring his commitment to Study! Grow! Inspire! Unite!, the slogan of the 2014 REF Gala series held in November in Tirana, Albania. Photo: Elvin Shytaj

# BALKANS



AL

## ALBANIA

European Commission Progress Reports on **Albania** have repeatedly urged the government to focus as a matter of urgency on improving access to inclusive education for Romani children from preschool to higher education. According to the UNDP household survey, an estimated 34 percent of three-to-six-year-old Romani children are enrolled in preschool; the enrollment rate in compulsory education is 48 percent; among Romani students the lower secondary completion rate is below 25 percent and the upper secondary completion rates fall below five percent.<sup>38</sup> These rates contrast significantly with those of non-Romani children at each education level. For instance, the preschool enrollment rate for non-Romani children is 57 percent, enrollment to primary schools is 91 percent and upper secondary completion rates are above 40 percent. Thus, REF has focused in particular on supporting projects that aim to reduce these gaps.

There are encouraging signs of local authorities adopting REF intervention models in primary education. The Regional Education Authorities in Korca and Gjirokastra have taken over the responsibility to support catch-up classes for Romani children from sixth to ninth grade in primary schools. This was initially coordinated within a REF-supported project, *Inclusive Quality in Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Education for Roma/Egyptian Children*, and implemented in cooperation with Save the Children Albania. The authorities intend to continue the support and to increase the coverage to include Romani/Egyptian children from first to fifth grade from September 2015.

The catch-up classes have resulted in a remarkable decrease in early school leaving of Romani/Egyptian children since 2009. Before the project the dropout rate was 86 percent. During the last two years the dropout rate of Romani/Egyptian children from schools participating in the program fell to zero in 2014.



BIH

The project partners in cooperation with specialists from the Institute for Educational Development also developed an education module, Roma history, culture and tradition and their incorporation in the educational learning process, for primary schools. The module was accredited by the Ministry of Education and Sciences for adaptation in the primary school curriculum nationwide. As part of the accreditation process 250 primary education teachers have been trained in the last two years.

In 2014, REF also launched a new secondary scholarship program and introduced the RomaVersitas model to Albania.

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** the gross enrollment rate to compulsory education for 7-to-15-year-old disadvantaged Roma is estimated at 61 percent, compared to a 96 percent rate among disadvantaged non-Roma.<sup>39</sup> In an effort to close this gap, REF partner organization Sae Roma has collaborated closely with the Ministry of Education Tuzla Canton and the Pedagogical Institute Tuzla. Between 2012 and 2014 the project was implemented in four municipalities, covering 11 settlements in Tuzla Canton, and working intensively with 428 school-age Romani children to ensure that they are all registered and attending school. The implementing partners managed to obtain co-funding from the ministry, the municipality and the pedagogical institute. The educational authorities were fully engaged in registering Romani children who were out of school, organizing and delivering trainings and workshops for teachers, school staff, Romani and non-Romani children and their parents, as well as hosting roundtables to raise public awareness and strengthen local community support for inclusive education for Romani children. As a direct result of one roundtable where teachers and specialists from the Center for Social Work Gracanica discussed the barriers to regular attendance, the Center for Social Work decided to provide free bus transportation for Romani children living in remote areas of Gracanica so that all children have access to schools.

<sup>38</sup> UNDP, Roma Data.

Available online: <http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/ourwork/povertyreduction/roma-in-central-and-southeast-europe/roma-data.html>

<sup>39</sup> UNDP document Roma Survey Data Bosnia and Herzegovina 2011.

Available online:

<http://www.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/ourwork/povertyreduction/roma-in-central-and-southeast-europe/roma-data.html>



035

035 Tatjana Obradovic-Tosic representing the network of Hands of Friendship Serbia; Ljatifa Sikovska from Ambrella, Macedonia; Commissioner Štefan Füle; Beata Bislim Olahova, Grant Program Manager from Roma Education Fund; and Dragan Jokovic from Otaharin, Bosnia and Herzegovina at the presentation of the Roma Integration Awards in Brussels, Belgium. Photo: Courtesy of European Commission

### Integration Spotlight

REF grantees take home 3 of 7 prizes at EU Roma Integration Award ceremony

On October 1, 2014 in another first from the European Commission, awards were presented for Roma integration to civil society organizations from the Western Balkans and Turkey. Four current REF grantees were shortlisted organizations and three were among the seven winning organizations that took home cash prizes of EUR 14,000. The Commission's stated purpose was to practically demonstrate its commitment to Roma people, highlight innovative approaches to integration, and to stress the political importance of Roma inclusion in the enlargement process.

The three winning organizations were *Ambrella* from Macedonia, which has a strong focus on participation and empowerment through education; *Otaharin* from Bosnia and Herzegovina which aims to ensure Romani children enroll and attend preschool and complete primary education; and from Serbia the organization *Hands of Friendship* which runs Toy Libraries and Mothers' Clubs. Also among the nominees was Kosovo's *Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians*, which provides rights education and vital information to enable communities to access basic housing, health and education services.

In presenting the awards, Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy declared the Commission, governments and civil society need to send out the same message that Roma integration is important not just for Roma, but for the entire society to create "an environment in which each member of society contributes with their spirit and work force, to allow countries to grow strong and prosperous, from an economic, social and cultural perspective."

During a three-day study tour of the European institutions in Brussels, all four organizations had the opportunity to showcase their work and demonstrate how, with REF guidance and financial support, they implement and manage complex and innovative projects that make a reality of the right of Romani children to quality inclusive education.



## CROATIA

This successful model of collaboration led to an increase in the primary school enrollment rate from 85 percent at the outset of the project to 100 percent in 2014. Not only was every child enrolled, but the project interventions contributed to improved academic performance from GPA 1.9 to 2.3 (on a five point scale), and a decrease in the number of school absences per pupil from 65.4 in the first project year to 31.2 in the second project year.

REF project partner, the *Association for the Promotion of Education of Roma - Otaharin*, was among the seven prizewinners out of 21 shortlisted nominees in the first ever *EU Award for Roma integration in the Western Balkans and Turkey* in October 2014.

In **Croatia**, REF has worked in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Medjimirje County Administration in seven municipalities with eleven Romani communities since 2010, covering all children in the relevant cohort each year, which amounts to between 740 and 800 children over the four years. In 2014 REF provided support in five municipalities and two projects are sustained by funding from either IPA or the municipality itself. The activities resulted in better acquisition of language of instruction and school readiness, and led to better learning outcomes in the first grade of elementary school, thus setting the vital foundation for later academic success.

For many years REF had persistently advocated for free preschool for all, and through its projects demonstrated good practice and better results. In 2014, the education law was amended to introduce free-of-charge obligatory preschool education, starting with all children that reached the age of five by March 31, 2014. Before this change, though Romani children were entitled to a waiver from kindergarten fees, very few parents had been aware of this provision; in addition, due to the limited number of preschool places, there was no guarantee that children could enroll. The new reform promises to ensure that no child is left behind, and from 2015 mayors, municipal and educational authorities will have the opportunity to ensure full and equal access to inclusive, high-quality preschool education for all Romani children.

KS



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## KOSOVO

In **Kosovo**, REF supported an innovative early childhood development (ECD) project with a complex approach focusing on preschool and primary school-age beneficiaries, professionals and parents. Following an exchange of experience study visit organized by REF to Macedonia, the Kosovo Education Center has adopted REF's ECD model which will enable 140 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) children to receive early childhood education and care services for the upcoming two years. The project also works on decreasing early school leaving, with special efforts made to keep girls in school and ensure a smooth transition to high school and/or vocational training.

Last year the Ministry of Education partnered with REF to develop a nationwide secondary scholarship program and contributed 50 percent of the costs of the project, which supported 550 Romani students who enrolled in upper secondary education. 2014 also marked a year of considerable progress for RomaVersitas Kosovo which was launched with a REF grant in 2013. The implementing partner Kosovo Agency for Advocacy and Development (KAAD) has not only overseen increased retention rates among Romani university students, but also managed to secure additional funding which allowed for more services covering more localities than originally planned. Of the 40 students supported, only two will have to repeat their exams and two emigrated. Seven students successfully completed their studies and graduated in 2014.

RomaVersitas Kosovo signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM). As part of this cooperation IBCM donated equipment for Student Resource Centers in Peja, Gjakova and Prizren, and donated over 220 English language books to their library. IBCM also offered RomaVersitas Kosovo a deep discount on its accredited three-month English language courses, and plans to offer this course to all beneficiaries from 2015.

MK

## FYR MACEDONIA

After eight years of work in **FYR Macedonia**, REF has scaled up two of its model programs with the government. The preschool program, which began as a REF-funded intervention in 2006 and is now implemented by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MoLSP), expanded coverage from 10 to 18 municipalities. Currently, the ministry provides 58.3 percent of the funding; 17 municipalities contribute 11.8 percent; 18 kindergartens contribute 3.3 percent; and REF's support amounts to 26.6 percent of the project costs. The MoLSP now manages and directs the funding into preschool enrollment and attendance for all Romani children aged between four and six years in all 18 project locations. This is a good practice arrangement as preschool is neither free nor compulsory in Macedonia.

Within the last three years, the enrollment rates of Romani children into preschools increased from 10 percent to 16 percent by 2014 at national level, to a large extent due to the joint intervention.<sup>39</sup> Thanks to REF, the program also ensured that 17 Roma began working at preschools and from 2015 they will receive permanent employment contracts as employees of the MoLSP working in 18 kindergartens across 18 municipalities as regular preschool non-pedagogical support staff. The ministry has also extended the scope of the project to provide additional services for 1,000 younger children (aged zero to four) by integrating REF's *A Good Start* early childhood model into its preschool program. The activities include Toy Libraries, Home School Community Liaison programs, Your Story reading clubs for mothers, and nutrition and vaccination support for children provided by health professionals.

<sup>39</sup> Available online:  
<http://www.undp.org/content/dam/tbec/docs/Policy-brief-Roma-education.pdf>



038

**Spotlight on Secondary School Scholarship Beneficiary in Macedonia**  
Selika Aljili



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- 036** Romani secondary scholarship recipients smile at the launch of the national program in Pristina, Kosovo. Photo: Jetmir Idrizi
- 037** REF Board Member Nadir Redzepi addresses RMUSP finalists at the REF Gala held in November in Skopje, Macedonia. Photo: Robert Atananovski
- 038** Idriz Durmis poses next to a microscope in the microbiology lab of his university in Tetovo, Macedonia. Photo: Robert Miskovics
- 039** Selika Aljili smiles together with her after-school tutor in Tetovo, Macedonia. Photo: Robert Miskovics

There is not anything that 16-year-old Selika Aljili does not like about school. Her favorite subject is accounting because she likes to play with numbers. Her favorite teacher makes learning fun, even when she corrects her English mistakes. And Selika has Romani and non-Romani friends who are Macedonian, Albanian, Bosnian and other ethnicities. "School will help me achieve my dreams and become successful," says Selika. She is grateful to have had an opportunity to have a tutor, and she has seen the results in her grades at the Arseni Jovkov School of Economics and Law in Skopje.

Malala Yousafzai is her role model because of her work in women's education as well as being the youngest ever Nobel Peace Prize recipient, which inspires Selika further: "I want to be successful in my life and to achieve many goals. I want to become a voice for the Roma and advocate that we are not who people think we are. Roma are human beings too and don't deserve to be called Gypsies. I want my future career to be a manager of a company, and an activist for Roma rights. My family thinks education is very important because they say without it you are no one. As long as I have my family by my side I know I will be able to achieve my dreams. That's why this scholarship was very helpful for me. I was able to support myself buying school supplies and books. My favorite hobby is reading because I can escape into a fantasy world in books. Eventually, I would like to volunteer at an organization which helps people, especially kids, achieve their goals and dreams."

**Spotlight on Current RMUSP Beneficiary and Former Secondary School Scholarship Beneficiary in Macedonia**  
Idriz Durmis

Idriz Durmis hopes to become a biologist who will make a discovery and contribute in the field of molecular biology and genetics. Until then, this first year university student studying molecular biology credits his REF scholarship with allowing him to accomplish his studies and to cover all the expenses related to his books and equipment which are needed for laboratory work.

According to Idriz, "There are many things that I like about the university. First of all, the professors and assistants are very communicative and, always available. Also, the students are great and they are not selfish about their knowledge; If you ask them something, they will help you with pleasure. There are a lot of laboratories for students to practice. That being said, the location of the faculty is a bit problematic, but the faculty is in a natural environment and it fits the subjects of studies. Some of the laboratory equipment is old which means it is more difficult to handle."

Idriz is part of a small group of students who see each other every day and also have contact with students in other fields of studies. However, he has not yet met any other Romani students in his faculty.

Though his idols are Charles Darwin and Stephen Hawking, Idriz considers his parents as his greatest role models and mentors. He and his family are well aware that education offers a brighter future, improves character, thinking and understanding the world.

The government in Macedonia has also invested in the REF-initiated secondary scholarship program since its inception in 2009. In 2014 the Macedonian Ministry of Education more than doubled its financial commitment to the project from 30 percent to 62 percent. This joint effort resulted in support for 2,820 young Roma attending upper secondary education. A total of 99 percent of these beneficiaries successfully graduated upper secondary education, while 62 percent continued on to tertiary education (just two percentage points lower than the national average of 64 percent).<sup>40</sup> Given the remarkable achievements of this project it is almost certain that the Ministry of Education will continue to allocate resources to support the secondary education scholarship scheme for Romani students.

As a follow-up to a project implemented by REF partner National Roma Centrum in Macedonia, a policy recommendation was adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science, which recognized the added value of community-based Romani mediators for effective prevention of early school leaving of Romani children. The ministry has allocated financial resources to employ the Romani mediators officially from 2015, which will allow the mediators to continue their community-based work.

<sup>40</sup> National Statistic Office 2013-14 school year all State Matura exam. The calculation is done for both sessions from June and August 2014 and includes all the students enrolled for exam.

MNE

## MONTENEGRO

In **Montenegro**, the REF branch office collaborated with the German foundation HELP to finalize implementation of the first phase of the *Assistance programme for integration and return of RAE and other I/DPs residing in the Konik area* and to start the second phase of this EU and Montenegrin government-funded program. In 2014 REF intensified the work with the kindergarten and parents in the Konik camp. The professional preschool staff and Romani/Egyptian (RE) mediators conducted regular visits to the families of the children who were attending kindergarten regularly, as well as to the families of children who were frequently absent.

As a result of these activities the number of children attending the kindergarten was almost double the original estimate of 60 children annually: in the 2012-2013 school year 97 children took part in the kindergarten program; the following school year that number increased to 122 children, with 78 percent of the children regularly attending state-run kindergartens.

The second important component of the project was to increase access of Romani/Egyptian children from the Konik camp to mainstream integrated schools in the city. As a result of cooperation between REF, the Ministry of Education and the Bureau for Education, Schools and Preschool Institutions, 62 first-graders and 75 older children from the camp were attending six city schools in the 2013-2014 academic year as part of the long-awaited desegregation process.

As a part of the project a student volunteer program was established. REF succeeded to attract 98 university students to work as volunteers in Konik camp. Volunteers worked with approximately 160 younger children and 60 first-graders who were attending mainstream schools in the city. The student volunteers mainly focused on development of the children's language, social and communication skills. The goal is not only for better school achievement for the children, but also to benefit the volunteers in the longer term. Working in a culturally diverse and acutely deprived environment sensitizes these young adults, and better prepares them to meet the challenges to deliver more inclusive education practices and attitudes in their future profession.



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**040** Romani and Egyptian children attend an integrated preschool in Podgorica, Montenegro.

Photo: Srdjan Ilic

**041** RMUSP student speakers Silvija Nestic and Martin Osmanovic attend the REF Gala held in November in Belgrade, Serbia.

Photo: Srdjan Ilic

**042** Higher Education Program Manager Dan Pavel Doghi and Open Society Foundations' Roma Initiatives Office Director Zeljko Jovanovic speak at the REF Gala held in November in Belgrade, Serbia.

Photo: Srdjan Ilic



042



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#### RMUSP Spotlight

Martin Osmanović

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Martin's father works at the market and his mother stays at home. Most of his family has only finished primary school. Most of his family is unemployed. He had no connections or privileges when he was enrolling in university or seeking employment opportunities after graduation. Martin Osmanović thanks his humble and honest family who pushed him and led him to succeed. And he has had a series of successes: straight-A student in primary and secondary school, graduated from university with 9.86/10 on his final thesis and named the best Roma student in Serbia by the National Council.

Today, he is doing his graduate work in information technology, employed in his field, and in 2014 he enjoyed one of his greatest successes when he went to China for training with the company Huawei as one of the top 10 students in Serbia. This success was made sweeter when, out of the 10 students, he was one of two who were chosen by the staff as having made the greatest impression during his work there.

"I've always tried to be the best, if not the best. I've never put myself at a disadvantage. I have hands to work, eyes to see, and a head to think like everyone else."

## SERBIA

In 2014 in **Serbia**, the Roma Education Fund continued to support the network of Toy Libraries in its mother-child educational project, which enabled mothers to take a more active role in their children's lives and empowered Romani women in patriarchal communities. The Toy Libraries have enabled Romani children to interact with non-Roma and to improve their focus, language, social and educational skills. By developing cooperation with preschool institutions and local self-governments, the project ensured partial sustainability of educational outcomes for Romani children. The project was also one of seven prizewinners of the first EU Award for *Roma integration in the Western Balkans and Turkey* awarded by the European Commission in October 2014.

REF in cooperation with the OSCE mission in Serbia and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Development (MESTD) began implementation of the project *Technical and expert support to the MESTD for establishing and strengthening the program for prevention of dropouts of Roma from secondary schools*. This is an EU-funded program which provides scholarships and educational support in the form of individual and group mentoring for Romani pupils in Serbia, and represents a nationwide extension of a project implemented by REF in Vojvodina since 2007. The number of secondary scholarships awarded in 2014 was 525, but the mentoring component has not yet started.

The mentoring component intended to provide learning assistance for the Romani scholarship recipients with GPAs ranging from 2.5 to 3.5/5.0 and at risk of failing and eventually dropping out from secondary school. It was planned for the mentors to begin working with these students as soon as the scholarship scheme started. Unfortunately, due to administrative delays, the Serbian Ministry of Education has yet to engage mentors. It was obvious that many of these pupils would fail to complete their schooling without proper support mechanisms; and once it became clear to REF that these administrative delays would be protracted, the REF team organized university student volunteers to work with the secondary students to provide them with additional learning support and motivate them to complete their education. However, this volunteer support could only cover 20 percent of the cohort.

The RomaVersitas program in Serbia was initially implemented in Vojvodina region, where a relatively high number of Romani students study in tertiary education. In 2014, REF extended the RomaVersitas program to Kragujevac and Nis in Central and South Serbia. Project activities for 89 students were conducted in different locations in Kruševac, with students from the College for Educators, and at the University of Kragujevac's Pedagogical Faculty in Jagodina.

In Vojvodina, the RomaVersitas project reported a 35 percent increase over the last three years in enrollment rates of secondary school graduates to tertiary education. RomaVersitas students played a key role in this success by encouraging and working with the high school graduates, motivating them to continue their education, and guiding them through the whole enrollment process. This approach resulted in an increase from 21 freshmen in 2012 to 59 in 2014.

#### My Romani Friends

Our classmates Danijel and Nurija are Roma. Other children have been avoiding any contact with them and separating them from everyone else. They do not care about their feelings and enjoy humiliating them. We all know that the majority of Roma live in terrible material circumstances. One day, Danijel, called Danko, came to school without having washed his face. We were upset when he told us that his tap froze during the winter and that there was no water. Our teachers checked his living conditions. His house was made mostly out of cardboard. So we responded and organized a humanitarian action, donating as much money as we could to Danko's and Nurija's families. Regardless of their sorrow, they cheer us up with their songs and humour. Our assistance has helped them a lot. They smile all the time, no matter their problems.

#### ROMA DAY

Every classroom and even mine  
Has some decoration of its own.  
The decorations in my classroom are  
Danko and Nurija.  
They begin to sing from the bottom of their hearts to the teacher,  
Instead of mobile phones, their pockets are full of marbles.  
Djelem, djelem, they sing every day as they travel,  
Djelem, djelem, they love and they are joyful.  
Decoration of my classroom they remain, because they are just two.



043

## SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM IN BALKANS AND TURKEY

Out of the four scholarship schemes of REF's Scholarship Program, three run in the Balkan region: the Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP), the Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP) and the Roma International Scholarship Program (RISP). In 2014 REF received a total of 588 applications from students from this region and accepted 340: 273 for RMUSP support, 64 for RHSP support and three for RISP support. The three RISP beneficiaries received support to study abroad, one in Germany, another in the UK and the third in Ukraine.

In terms of distribution per level of studies, the majority of accepted beneficiaries pursue education in Bachelor programs. In RHSP, the medical studies scholarship scheme, 33 percent of selected beneficiaries pursue education in medical vocational programs.

In 2014 REF organized gala events in Albania, Macedonia and Serbia to publicly celebrate the achievement of Romani student beneficiaries of REF's scholarship schemes, to offer a networking opportunity to students and also to increase the program's visibility. Overall, 166 students attended these events in addition to political and diplomatic representatives, Roma intellectuals, artists, activists, public representatives and NGO leaders. The galas, held simultaneously in Skopje and Tirana on November 7, and Belgrade on November 28, combined speeches, public celebrations of the students' achievements, and roundtables and panel discussions; they covered topics ranging from career opportunities and the state of the labor market, to the workings of prejudice, media portrayals, public perceptions and the vicissitudes of Roma identity.

TABLE 19. TOTAL APPLICANTS AND BENEFICIARIES OF RMUSP, RHSP AND RISP IN THE BALKANS IN 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

	RMUSP		RHSP		RISP	
	Applicants	Beneficiaries	Applicants	Beneficiaries	Applicants	Beneficiaries
Albania	90	40	0	0	1	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5	3	0	0	0	0
Croatia	1	1	0	0	0	0
Kosovo	56	16	0	0	0	0
Macedonia	180	106	44	38	2	1
Serbia	128	77	38	26	4	2
Turkey	39	30	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Percent</b>		<b>55</b>		<b>78</b>		<b>43</b>

TABLE 20. TOTAL BENEFICIARIES OF RMUSP AND RHSP BY LEVEL OF STUDIES IN THE BALKANS IN 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

	RMUSP				RHSP				
	Bachelor	Master	Undivided	Doctorate	Vocational	Bachelor	Master	Undivided	Doctorate
Albania	28	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Croatia	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kosovo	15	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Macedonia	97	9	0	0	11	23	4	0	0
Serbia	66	11	0	0	10	6	10	0	0
Turkey	25	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Percent</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>



060-067

# SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

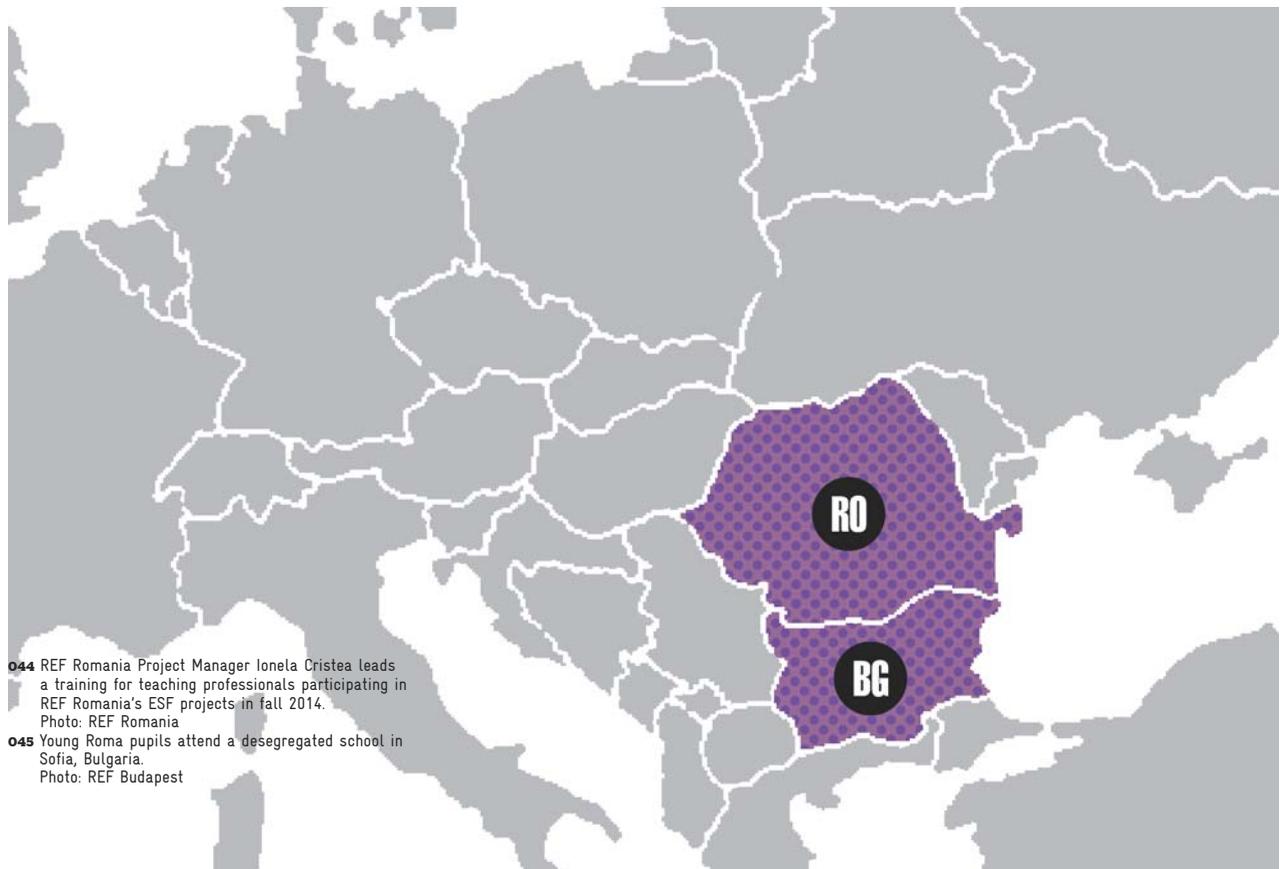
Bulgaria / Romania

In 2014 a total of eight projects were supported by REF in Bulgaria, out of which three were completed by the end of the year. The projects focused on increased preschool enrollments, improved primary education attendance, and support to secondary school students. In Romania REF supported six projects, three of which were newly launched

with EU funding in 2014 to combat early school leaving and provide second chance learning for young Roma to be better able to compete on the labor market.

In its latest 2014 assessment of progress made on Roma inclusion, the European Commission stressed that both Bulgaria and Romania need to intensify efforts to tackle segregation of Roma children in special schools or special classes in mainstream schools, citing new research by the Fundamental Rights Agency which found that for segregation in mainstream schools the percentage in Bulgaria is 29 percent and Romania 26 percent. Both countries face common challenges: low public expenditure on education, poor quality and efficiency, for Romani children low enrollment rates at preschool, high dropout rates from secondary school and stark inequalities between Roma and non-Roma at every stage of the education cycle.

COUNTRY	SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE			TOTAL
	NUMBER OF ACTIVE PROJECTS IN 2014	NUMBER OF DIRECT GRANT BENEFICIARIES	NUMBER OF PARENTS PARTICIPATING IN REF SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES	
BULGARIA	8	3,883	6,440	10,323
ROMANIA	6	1,608	2,500	4,108



044 REF Romania Project Manager Ionela Cristea leads a training for teaching professionals participating in REF Romania's ESF projects in fall 2014. Photo: REF Romania

045 Young Roma pupils attend a desegregated school in Sofia, Bulgaria. Photo: REF Budapest



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# SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE



## BULGARIA

According to the latest EU reports, the education system in **Bulgaria** is in dire need of improvement in terms of quality and efficiency. Public expenditure per student is among the lowest in EU28. Bulgaria has one of the highest proportions of young people who are not in employment, education or training (21.5 percent in 2012). Adult participation in lifelong learning is the lowest in the EU, with a significant gap compared to the EU average (1.7 percent compared to 10.5 percent in 2013).

The gap between Roma and non-Roma is stark: according to the Fundamental Rights Agency, among those aged 25-64, 80 percent of non-Roma completed upper secondary education in Bulgaria, whereas the rate among the Roma is 12 percent. Of the respondents who had attended school but left before the age of 16, the figures were 73 percent for Roma and 26 percent non-Roma. Despite preschool being obligatory, only 38 percent of Romani children are enrolled compared to 79 percent of non-Romani children.<sup>41</sup>

The 2014 Country Specific Recommendations by the European Council called on Bulgaria to scale up existing efforts to improve teacher training and reduce *de facto* segregation in

### Grantee Spotlight

Bulgarian 'desegregation kid' makes it to university

Zhaneta is known in her neighborhood as one of the "desegregation kids," one of the thousands of Romani children from all over Bulgaria who attended mainstream schools in a decade of desegregation, that ran from the year 2000, supported first by Open Society's Roma Initiatives and then from 2005 by REF.

She grew up in the Roma neighborhood of Kosharnik, which is about seven kilometers outside the city of Montana in northwestern Bulgaria. This is a poor neighborhood, and home to an estimated 3,500 people who have limited access to health, social and educational services.

Zhaneta completed her primary education in an integrated school with the support of the local REF partner, the SHAM Foundation, which also managed the desegregation process in the Montana region for years. From the start of secondary school she was a good student, but money shortages at home meant that both Zhaneta and her sister, who is in 10<sup>th</sup> grade in the same school, started to miss classes. Until recently Zhaneta had given no thought to university studies, determined just to complete secondary school and try to find a job.

SHAM encouraged her to consider going to university, and she enrolled in preparatory courses organized by the foundation. They also provided her with a transport card, which helped her get to classes regularly. She made great progress and succeeded in passing the Matura state exam. She has now been accepted to study pedagogy in the University of Veliko Tarnovo. Spurred on by Zhaneta's success, her sister now has her sights set on applying for university next year.

<sup>41</sup> Fundamental Rights Agency, Roma survey - Data in Focus. Education: the situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States, 2014.

- 046** REF Country Coordinator Viktoria Petrova introduces the Scholarship Program to the Bulgarian RMUSP finalists during the REF Gala held in November in Sofia, Bulgaria.  
Photo: Mihael Novakov
- 047** Danut Dumitru, Project Manager at REF Romania, George Soros and Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou visit the premises of the I.C. Bratianu primary school.  
Photo: Courtesy of European Commission

schools, as well as to step up efforts to improve access to quality inclusive preschool and school education of disadvantaged children, in particular Roma.

Two projects currently underway provide support for the early childhood education model. One of the projects in Berkovitsa ensures regular attendance of Romani children in kindergartens, improves preschool learning outcomes, and facilitates children's transition to desegregated mainstream elementary education. The project has succeeded in raising the percentage of Romani children attending kindergarten to 90 percent. Furthermore, 31 preschool Romani children received assistance in Bulgarian language skills in order to facilitate their enrollment into mainstream non-segregated primary schools.

A second preschool project based in Sofia also significantly increased the number of children enrolled and attending preschools. At the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, the Equal Opportunities Association (EOA), launched a two-year, REF-supported project called *Let's Make Education Our Value*. The program works with 208 children aged three to six. Since the REF interventions, which include support, advice and information for parents, the percentage of children between three and six enrolled in kindergartens rose from about 55 percent to more than 85 percent.

A project of the Association Center for Local and Regional Policies in partnership with the Municipality of Nikola Kozlevo implemented a preschool project in eleven villages within the municipality. The project consists of several components that aim to develop a sustainable early childhood education for Romani and non-Romani children of kindergarten and elementary school-age from the Municipality of Nikola Kozlevo.

The project is still ongoing, but there have already been considerable improvements and results. A campaign carried out to increase the awareness of the importance of kindergarten enrollment among parents resulted in 207 children enrolling in kindergarten for the 2013-2014 academic year. The following year a further 181 children enrolled, achieving a total of 388 Romani children, including 24 three-year-olds, in preschool within two years. The surge in preschool enrollments is directly attributable to the information and outreach work. In addition 85 primary schoolchildren were assisted in enrolling into five mainstream schools in the municipality in 2014.

In Montana, REF supported an interesting initiative that combined informal education, arts and culture targeting

young Roma attending the local high schools with the aim to reduce dropout rates and raise graduation rates. As a result of the project, the dropout rate has fallen to zero, school attendance has improved markedly, and five students who were supported to continue their studies beyond secondary education enrolled into university. Of the five students, two opted for Primary and Preschool Pedagogy, one student chose Bulgarian Language and History, the fourth is training as a medical laboratory assistant and the fifth student will major in midwifery.

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#### Policy Spotlight

Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou Visits REF Sites in Romania and Hungary

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A REF-supported daycare center in the small village of Jilava outside Bucharest was the site of a high-profile visit when European Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou dropped by accompanied by George Soros, Chair of Open Society Foundations on March 10, 2014.

Vassiliou, the outgoing Commissioner and Member of the EC in Charge of Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, had travelled to Bucharest to discuss education and employment prospects for young people in Romania. She chose to visit Jilava, which has a large Romani population, to see first hand what is being done on the ground to promote inclusion in the local classrooms.

To close the gap in provision of early childhood education and care services for Romani children under six, with the support of REF, the NGO *Matias* in collaboration with School No. 1 opened the daycare center in Jilava. The center is a hive of activity with 25 preschool children attending daily from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. The center also caters for thirty primary school pupils, three high school students, and regularly provides educational and counseling services for parents.

Ms Vassiliou travelled on to Budapest for the launch of Erasmus+ on March 13, and took some time from a busy schedule to visit the Ferencvárosi Tanoda (study center) in Budapest's ninth district. This Tanoda, supported by REF and run by the Community Association for Chances, places a strong emphasis on parental involvement in children's education and provides tutoring, mentoring, leisure time activities and career guidance for young people. The Ferencvárosi Tanoda was also the location for the shooting of REF's hugely popular campaign video *Knowledge is Power (A Tudás Hatalom)*, which sends a strong message to Roma youngsters to stick with their studies.

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## ROMANIA

General government expenditure on education in **Romania** as a proportion of GDP is the lowest in the EU by a substantial margin and has fallen steadily since the onset of the crisis, reaching three percent in 2012.<sup>42</sup> The statistics show that Romania is not only lagging behind the rest of Europe at every stage of the education cycle, but inequalities are particularly stark between Roma and non-Roma, and for the most disadvantaged the situation is worsening.

Participation in early childhood education is among the lowest in the EU and is about 24 percent for children from marginalized Romani communities. The early school-leaving rate is one of the highest in the EU, with the rate among Roma almost double that of non-Roma. Participation in lifelong learning activities continues to be among the lowest in the EU. Basic skills in math, science and reading of 15-year-olds fall far short of the EU average. Almost 90 percent of unregistered, unemployed Roma have a low level of education, and over half of all Roma still lack the minimum compulsory level of education.

Three new EU-funded projects launched by REF in 2014 specifically target young Roma and adults with a view to boosting their skills and qualifications to better compete on the labor market, by providing “second chance” training, and preventing early school leaving and dropping out from secondary, upper secondary and university studies.

In May 2014 REF launched the preparatory phase of the 16-month project *Integrated Educational Services for Roma Communities*, designed to improve the employability, competences and skills of Romani students aged 14 to 18. The program has three main strands: the provision of second chance programs and counseling services for more than 300 Roma who left school without qualifications; delivering an integrated service package, which includes mentorship and counseling, stipends and educational support to an estimated 500 high school pupils at risk of early school leaving (ESL); and building the capacities of 220 officials responsible for the implementation of measures designed to prevent ESL.



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### Early Childhood Spotlight

Alexandru F.

Alexandru F. is being raised by his grandmother while his mother is working abroad in France to support the family. Time to time she comes home and is able to see the progress her son is making in kindergarten. Alexandru attended the nursery which was built from REF's resources as an annex to the existing building of the Community Center in Telechiu, Bihor County in Romania. He had perfect attendance in preschool. At the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year, five-year-old Alexandru entered kindergarten and was crying for his grandma at the beginning of the school day. However, after a few months he turned into the little boy who wanted to stay in school as long as possible. In the kindergarten he likes to play alone or talk to adults. He wants to be a cook.

The project will be implemented in partnership with the “Together” Agency for Community Development in 17 counties across five regions.

Since the beginning of the project, over 40 schools from Romania were selected for the implementation of the project activities and 57 school principals were involved in monitoring the teachers' activities in relation with the school beneficiaries and the implementation of the program. Also, more than 1,000 parents are involved in the activities where 67 school mentors were trained for offering counseling and information on the importance of education for parents and their children. More than 50 Romani communities have been selected since 2014, to be visited and informed about the project activities, and research is being conducted to assess the real impact

<sup>42</sup> European Commission, *Education and Training Monitor 2014*, Volume 2.

Available online:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/docs\\_autres\\_institutions/commission\\_europeenne/swd/2014/0337/COM\\_SWD\(2014\)0337\(PAR2\).EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/docs_autres_institutions/commission_europeenne/swd/2014/0337/COM_SWD(2014)0337(PAR2).EN.pdf)



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048 Alexandru F. pictured with his grandmother in  
 049 2011 and in the early childhood development and  
 050 kindergarten program (center) of REF. In 2014,  
 three years later, Alexandru enrolled in preschool  
 and is proudly sitting in his class in Bihor County,  
 Romania.  
 Photo: Robert Miskovics



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#### Parent Spotlight

Bianca

Bianca lives alone in a two room house and cares for nine children, four of her own, and five nieces and nephews. Her husband and other relatives have left to pursue work abroad. When she learned that her husband had been arrested in France, she knew she'd have to find a job to make ends meet. Although she herself has never learned to read or write, she had always hoped that her children would have the opportunity for a good education. When she found the Mofleni center, she was happy that the children would be able to receive help in school that she could not provide.

Bianca volunteered to participate in a conference in Barcelona. Bianca displayed bravery and overcame her fears of traveling alone, which she had never done before. When she got to Barcelona, she stepped up onto that podium and spoke to a large audience in Romanes, presenting the project impact better than any experienced speaker.

When the second phase of A Good Start early childhood development program began, Bianca joined the staff at the center. She acted as the school mediator between parents and the school, which was very difficult at times, but she loved her job. Because Bianca does not know how to write, the Mofleni center helps her to prepare her monthly reports. Bianca started learning the alphabet while working in the center and she intends to finish her studies so she can improve her parenting skills and help her children in the learning process.

of the project on reducing early school leaving rates in the five regions. Another important component is represented by the implementation of the interregional platform for educating disadvantaged groups, which is dedicated mainly to school teachers (220), mentors (67) and school principals (57) and also to the project teams (main applicant and partners).

A similar project, *Roma Children and Their Parents Want to Go to School*, was also launched in May 2014 for students aged 10 to 14. Implemented in cooperation with the Resource Center for Roma Communities (CRCR) from Cluj, this project also provides second chance services, a support package to prevent ESL and capacity building for officials tasked with tackling ESL. The project will be implemented in Romania's Central, North-East and South Muntenia regions targeting 310 adults, 800 fifth to eighth grade pupils, and about 240 teachers.

Two training courses were organized to improve the skills of teachers who are involved in the prevention and correction of early school leaving. Ninety teachers of Romanian Language and Literature and Mathematics attended a course which aimed to train them in the development of strategies and teaching and evaluation techniques, as well as methods of working with Romani students who are at risk of early school leaving, while a second training course was attended by 150 teachers involved in the implementation of corrective measures to tackle early school leaving in second chance programs. The purpose of this course was to acquire the professional skills for counseling in adult education, to learn negotiation techniques to be applied in school-community relationships, and to adapt the teaching process to adult education, while also focusing on Romanian and European legislation on equal opportunities.

After 66 mentors completed their training, the mentoring program for the student and adult project beneficiaries started in November 2014. The role of mentors is to motivate the project beneficiaries for further study, to organize and conduct individual and group meetings for personal development and communication skills and to provide educational and professional guidance. Also the mentors, where

**Spotlight on Telechiu ECD program**

**Rafael**

In 2012, Rafael began attending kindergarten and he also participated with his mother in Your Story, a component of REF's early childhood development program, A Good Start. Active parental involvement and support can significantly boost ECD effectiveness in addition to institutional services. Now enrolled in primary school, and supported by his mother, Rafael's favorite school activity is creative writing. Rafael has a twin sister and they live with their parents and five brothers and sisters in a modest house in the village.



appropriate, monitor the academic progress of Educational Integrated Service pupils and Educational Support students and work to improve the quality of school attendance.

**Patricia**

Patricia was a quiet girl when she started kindergarten. As a kindergartener she played alone and preferred to keep to herself. She has since grown up to become social and friendly, especially when playing with girls. REF's Toy Library operates in her settlement and offers a wide range of toys, puzzles, children's books and games, effectively functioning as a family resource center. So far it has secured plenty of toys for children and their families to borrow. Thanks to this toy lending service Patricia is in primary school and her favorite school activity is coloring. She's also passionate about books. She lives with her parents in a one-room home along with her brother and sister.



In December 2014, REF Romania launched the activities of educational support and second chance in 43 schools. Eight hundred secondary school students have started to benefit from the integrated services of mentoring, counseling and additional sessions on Romanian Language and Literature and Mathematics. Also, 310 Roma adults started attending the second chance courses for the secondary level and were integrated in the mentoring program.

**Florina**

Florina is a very friendly and communicative child and she prefers to stand rather than sit in a formal setting. She lives with her parents, sister and two brothers in a small house. She is in the preparatory class, preparing for entering first grade, where the children enjoy themselves and the time they spend with each other. Florina's smile communicates her love of learning. Often ill, Florina has not had the best attendance record.



A third project launched at the end of 2014: *Enhancing Roma Youth's Access to Higher Education*, focuses on tertiary education and aims to reduce the risk of dropouts at the early stages of university studies, through scholarships and an integrated mentorship system for 170 first and second-year Romani undergraduates. Mentoring, as a method of reducing university dropouts, will be disseminated to universities to promote this method. The selection of 50 mentors among Romani students from the final years of Bachelor, Master or Doctoral studies represents an innovative approach. Within the project, an electronic communication network for Romani students in Romania will be developed and will be linked to the Roma Education Fund alumni network. A total of 121 Romani students from the first year of university studies registered in 38 universities from Romania, were supported in 2014.

**Leon**

Since being exposed to kindergarten activities, Leon has grown into a bright and engaged child. He helps the teacher and supports the other children when they are upset or need help. He loves math and Legos, as well as solving worksheets and watching cartoons and listening to stories. He is now enrolled in the first grade of primary school. Leon lives with his sister and parents who are unemployed in a house that needs a lot of repairs. Understanding and using math, logic and problem-solving skills are essential for a good student, so his parents are encouraging him to continue the path he started in school.



**SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM IN SEE**

In 2014 REF Scholarship Program received a total of 1,210 applications from Romania and Bulgaria, for three of the four scholarship schemes of the program that are open to the applicants from these two countries. From this total, 671 applications were successful: 576 in RMUSP, 87 in RHSP and eight in RISP. The acceptance rates were 57 percent in RMUSP, 51 percent in RHSP and 35 percent in RISP. The eight RISP beneficiaries study in France (2), UK (2), Netherlands (1), Germany (1), Hungary (1) and Spain (1).

The distribution of accepted beneficiaries per level of studies in each scholarship scheme is presented in the Table 22 below.

In 2014 REF organized galas in both countries, events that were attended by 258 students.



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TABLE 21. TOTAL APPLICANTS AND BENEFICIARIES OF RMUSP, RHSP AND RISP IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE IN 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

	RMUSP		RHSP		RISP	
	Applicants	Beneficiaries	Applicants	Beneficiaries	Applicants	Beneficiaries
Bulgaria	403	232	79	38	12	4
Romania	612	344	93	49	11	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,015</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Percent</b>		<b>57</b>		<b>51</b>		<b>35</b>

TABLE 22. TOTAL BENEFICIARIES OF RMUSP, RHSP AND RISP BY LEVEL OF STUDIES IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE IN 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

	RMUSP				RHSP				RISP		
	Bachelor	Master	Undivided	Doctorate	Bachelor	Master	Undivided	Doctorate	Bachelor	Master	Doctorate
Bulgaria	187	38	4	3	13	22	0	3	1	3	0
Romania	272	63	0	9	39	8	0	2	1	2	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Percent</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>13</b>

052 Two exceptional Hungarian RMUSP students received scholarships made possible by a charity gal a sponsored by Forbes Hungary in late 2014. Photo: Courtesy of Forbes Hungary

053 Romanian teaching professionals undergo training in expectation of joining the REF's ESF project, Enhancing Roma Youth's Access to Higher Education in November 2014. Photo: REF Romania

# FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

## ORGANIZATION OF ROMA EDUCATION FUND

The network of Roma Education Fund consists of four entities (REF Entities) that have been established as legally separate foundations in Switzerland, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, respectively. The REF Entities cooperate based on a memorandum of understanding to achieve their shared primary objective to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. Each REF Entity has its separate board with independent members for their decisions. REF entities include:

- Roma Education Fund Switzerland, established in 2005
- Roma Education Fund Hungary, established in 2006
- Roma Education Fund Romania, established in 2009
- Roma Education Fund Slovakia, established in 2014

Roma Education Fund Hungary opened branch offices in Montenegro and in Serbia, whose figures are presented in the books of Roma Education Fund Hungary.

## SUMMARY OF REF FINANCIALS

In 2014, REF remained a significant source of funding for Roma education projects. In the form of grants and loans, REF provided EUR 6.9 million to Romani organizations and Roma education-related projects. At the same time, REF is proud of being among the most efficient and effective organizations operating in the field of education: 90 percent of its budget is spent on programs and beneficiaries in 16 countries.

From a total funding available for REF in 2014 of approximately EUR 7.6 million, REF spent EUR 2.1 million on new grants contracted in 2014 and EUR 2.4 million on the tertiary scholarship program for Romani students. REF also spent EUR 1.7 million to implement its own educational projects from funding provided, *inter alia*, by the European Social Fund (ESF), European Commission, DG Employment, Norway Grants, UNICEF, OSCE and Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). A further EUR 0.8 million was spent on capacity building, communication, technical assistance, policy development and trainings. Although the REF network

TABLE 23. SOURCES AND SPENDING OF REF FOUNDATIONS OF FUNDS IN 2014 IN EUR

	REF SWITZERLAND	REF HUNGARY	REF ROMANIA	REF SLOVAKIA
Opening foundation capital	2,011,017	74,797	-203,920	6,638
Third party donor income	3,647,247	599,391*	1,050,075	0
Other income	378,392	17,838	3,165	3
<b>Total Sources</b>	<b>6,036,656</b>	<b>692,026</b>	<b>849,320</b>	<b>6,641</b>
Transfers within REF network	0	1,130,334	0	258,950
<b>TOTAL SOURCES WITH TRANSFERS</b>	<b>6,036,656</b>	<b>1,822,360</b>	<b>849,320</b>	<b>265,591</b>
Grant Program	1,743,051	90,158	0	287,597
Tertiary Scholarship Program	1,918,491	345,253	15,955	4,135
Own educational projects	56,514	478,904	1,169,236	13,580
Capacity building, policy development and communications	302,030	340,293	139,251	0
Administrative expenses	171,628	557,879	3,926	0
Accumulated capital	31,164	-13,146	-523,757	-39,721
<b>Total Spending</b>	<b>4,222,878</b>	<b>1,799,341</b>	<b>804,611</b>	<b>265,591</b>
Transfers within REF network	1,813,778	23,019	44,709	0
<b>TOTAL SPENDING WITH TRANSFERS</b>	<b>6,036,656</b>	<b>1,822,360</b>	<b>849,320</b>	<b>265,591</b>

\* Not including transfers from REF Romania. Total income considering this transfer is EUR 644,100.

SAJÁT

## Könyvvizsgáló leszek!

Volt egy jótékonyági Forbes Gála, lett két Forbes-ösztöndíjas.

IRTA: MOLNÁRFI KATI

**E**gy testvérem van, ő érettségi után szakmát választott, nem tanult tovább, ahogy a szüleim sem. Én lennék a családban az első generációs értelmiségi – mutatja be magát a húszéves Csiki Piroska, aki a Budapesti Gazdasági Főiskola pénzügyi és számviteli alapképzésén első éves, és a mesterszak után – ebben teljesen biztos – könyvvizsgáló szeretne lenni.

Az első jótékonyági Forbes Gála árverésén 3,5 millió forintot gyűjtöttünk össze, amiből a Roma Oktatási Alap a pénzügyi és üzleti tanulmányokat folytató ösztöndíjait támogatja. Lakatos Richárdot és Csiki Piroskát több száz roma hallgató közül választották ki a Forbes-ösztöndíjra.

Piroska kiemelkedő, 4,9-es átlagára és eltökéltségére már a közgazdasági szakközépben felhívta az EV tanácsadó cég is, és nemcsak rendszeres anyagi támogatást, de személyes mentort is ajánlottak neki. „A segítségük nélkül a nyelvvizsgáimat sem tudtam volna letenni.”

„Muzsikuscsalád vagyunk, mindenki zenél. Nagyon összetartunk. A diszkriminációból megszerecsére nem sokat tapasztaltunk eddig, nem annak alapján írték meg minket a környezetünk, hogy romák vagyunk – mondja Piroska. – A szakközépben az évfolyamunkon csak öten voltak cigányok, és sosem különböztettek meg minket, most már tudom, hogy ez nagy dolog volt.”

Lakatos Richárd is az első diplomás lesz a családjában. Az ország egyik legszegényebb térségében, egy Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén mezei kisvárosban. Encsen szülte-

**LAKATOS RICHÁRD  
24 ÉVESEN MÁR  
LOVÁRI-MAGYAR  
SZÓTÁRAT  
FEJLESZTETT.**

oktatássoftveren dolgozott együtt a híres cigány költővel, Cholai Daróczi Józseffel, de szervezett, ahogy ő mondja, free-hug flashmobot is Cigány vagyok, beszéljesszünk címmel. A budapesti járőrelőknél próbálták megmutatni, hogy a romák pont ugyanúgy a magyar társadalom tagjai, mint bárki más. Ő indította el a Roma News

Productiont is. Az előteleték ellen küzdő YouTube-csatorna arról szól, hogyan látják ma a magyarok a cigányokat.

A Google és a 444.hu által szervezett videós tehetségkutatóra, a KI Mit Tube-ra készített. Ahogyvan minket látunk



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has been enlarged by establishment of a new foundation in Slovakia and a new branch office in Serbia, total administration expenses remained at the previous level of EUR 0.7 million, which is around 10 percent of total spending.

Thanks to our donors, including EUR 75,000 in donations from private individuals, as well as rigorous cost control and financial management, REF was able to maintain similar level of activities as in the previous years.

## REF STRATEGY AND BUSINESS PLAN RENEWED FOR 2015-2020

In 2014, based on the review of past achievements and its experience gained over nine years in 16 countries of its operations, REF has defined its long-term strategy and business plan for the period of 2015-2020. REF has become a unique and important factor in narrowing the gap between Roma and non-Roma in educational outcomes and envisages remaining a main catalyst in this field in the following periods. To achieve this, besides maintaining diversified international activities, REF plans to scale up best practices in implementation EU/EEA funds. According to the strategy and business plan, which is available on REF's website,<sup>43</sup> by 2019 REF expects to spend a total budget of EUR 16.5 million, including the mobilization of EUR seven million of EU/EEA funds. The implementation of REF's new strategy and business plan requires a complex

fundraising strategy to maintain and enlarge the esteemed family of REF donors.

## KEY EVENTS IN REF NETWORK

In 2014 REF witnessed further expansion of its network by the establishment of a new foundation, REF Slovakia in Presov, Slovakia and opening a branch office in Belgrade, Serbia. The new members of REF network are expected to scale up the activities of REF and mobilize additional ESF and IPA funding for Roma education projects in these two countries.

### REF Switzerland (REF CH)

REF Switzerland provided EUR 1.7 million for grants in the framework of the project support program and EUR 1.9 million for tertiary scholarships. Due to the fact that some of our large donors committed funds for 2014 already in the course of 2012 and 2013, this spending on grants and scholarships was financed partly from new donor incomes and partly from funds accumulated in REF's foundation capital of EUR 2,011,017 as of December 31, 2013. Since expenses

<sup>43</sup> Available online: [http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ref\\_business\\_plan\\_2015-2020\\_web.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ref_business_plan_2015-2020_web.pdf)

were only partly covered by new donor income, total expenses over income of REF Switzerland was EUR -2.0 million, including transfers to other REF entities of EUR 1.8 million. REF foundation capital (EUR 31,164) and cash position (EUR 2,637,563) remained stable in 2014.

**REF Hungary (REF HU)**

Following the opening of a branch office in Montenegro in 2013, REF Hungary opened a fully operational branch office in Belgrade, Serbia in 2014. The opening of the branch office in Belgrade was made possible by the funding received from OSCE Serbia to participate in a secondary scholarship (TARI) program in three locations of Serbia. Out of the total budget of EUR 839,310 of the TARI program, REF (financed by IPA funds) share is EUR 179,625.

The branch office in Montenegro successfully applied for a second round of funding for the local IPA, to implement the Konik Camp project in a consortium with Help - Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe e.V. The total budget managed by Montenegro branch office is EUR 331,309. In addition to this project, REF has agreed with the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro to manage a secondary scholarship and mentorship program for Roma and Egyptian secondary school students in a total value of EUR 150,000 for 2014 and 2015.

In 2014, REF Hungary established a foundation in Presov, Slovakia in order to scale-up its activities, and especially to apply for local ESF funds in the country.

On top of the projects of the branch offices, REF HU has been successful in applications for and started implementation of other international educational projects, including:

- A university research staff and student exchange program with the University of Sussex (UK), the University of Umea (Sweden) and the Universidad de Sevilla (Spain) with a total budget of EUR 89,600 for REF Hungary within the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation;
- A knowledge-sharing and capacity-building project involving NGOs from Bulgaria, Moldova and Serbia with a total budget USD 74,934 funded by UNICEF.

REF Hungary was successful in raising the attention of corporate donors, including renowned institutions such as Erste Group AG or Morgan Stanley.

It was a great honor for REF to be invited by Forbes Hungary as the first charity guest of their inaugural "The Best Gala"

dinner in 2014. Forbes invited a selection of the most successful business people, celebrities and artists, as well as leading diplomatic missions in Hungary. As a result of the event REF raised some EUR 12,000, which is funding the "Forbes Scholarship" awarded to two exceptional Roma university students in Hungary.

In 2014, REF Hungary continued its cooperation with the Council of Europe Development Bank. Based on a loan agreement signed in 2013, in the course of 2014, REF Hungary drew EUR 0.5 million from the facility to pre-finance EU-funded projects of REF Romania.

**REF Romania (REF RO)**

Following the successful closure of two main and two partner ESF projects in 2013, REF Romania has received the final reimbursement of the Romanian management authority and recognized the final expenses of the projects in 2014.

In 2014, REF Romania remained successful in raising ESF and EEA funds and started implementation of large-scale educational projects, including:

- "Integrated Educational Services for Roma Communities" that provides integrated services to 310 Roma adults and 500 Roma secondary school students with a total budget of EUR 1.93 million funded by the EU;
- "Roma Children and Parents Want to Go to School!" that aims to prevent early school leaving of 800 Roma and help 310 Roma adults to complete their secondary education. The total budget of EUR 1.97 million is funded by the EU;
- "Enhancing Roma Youth's Access to Higher Education" provides study scholarships and mentoring scheme to 170 Roma students enrolled in the first year of their Bachelor studies in Romania. The total budget of EUR 0.48 million is funded by the EU;
- The "Ready, Set, Go! - Increasing Early Childhood Development Outcomes for Roma Children" targets early childhood development outcomes for some 1,400 Romani children residing in six of Romania's most disadvantaged counties with the highest absolute number and highest share of Roma population of preschool-age. The project is supported by a grant from Norway through the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014, in the framework of the "RO 25 Poverty Alleviation Programme in Romania." The total grant amount is EUR 2.43 million.



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### **REF Slovakia (REF SK)**

REF Slovakia, established by REF Hungary in 2014, currently implements REF's secondary scholarship program to improve school academic performance of the disadvantaged secondary school students, their attendance rate, graduation rate, transition rate from secondary to tertiary education and to decrease their dropout rate in Slovakia. The total budget of this program for the academic years of 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 is EUR 413,453.

REF Slovakia participates in the implementation of a nine-year long Pedagogy Scholarship Program in Slovakia and Czech Republic. The program with a total budget of EUR 1.14 million is funded by the Velux Foundations and the implementation is led by REF HU.

REF Slovakia also acts as a local coordinator of REF's Tertiary Scholarship (RMUSP) program.

## **FUNDRAISING**

REF is proud of having an expanding family of donors and is committed to follow a complex fundraising strategy to keep current donors and tap new sources of long-term funding. The key elements of REF's fundraising strategy are to:

- Keep and strengthen long-term commitments of existing donors, while focusing on further diversification of incomes;
- Intensify communication and use new techniques to reach out to potential new donors;
- Cooperate with potential corporate donors active in the geographic region of REF and replace core costs with in-kind donations from suppliers;
- Strengthen cooperation with multilateral institutions and organizations (including public institutions) to create and utilize co-funding opportunities, such as the unique cooperation with the Council of Europe Bank;
- Applications for and implementation of EU/EEA funded projects falling within the competency and priorities of REF;
- Advocacy at EU and national level for funds for Roma education purposes.

In the last five-year period between 2010 and 2014, REF Network Entities raised more than EUR 44 million. Since donated funds are not necessarily spent in the year of donations, due to multi-year funding agreements or because donations are made for academic years, there is a strong fluctuation in donor incomes presented by the periods of actual receipt of funds by REF Entities. Similarly, in 2014, spending of REF Entities were partly covered by new donations and partly by accumulated income over the 2010-2014 period. An accrual-based presentation of donor incomes (when donations are presented in line with actual spending) would show more even distribution of donations over time.

TABLE 24. DONATIONS RECEIVED BY REF ENTITIES, 2010-2014

DONORS	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	TOTAL
<b>RECEIVED BY REF SWITZERLAND</b>						
AOSI	20,084					20,084
Austrian Government	1,000,000					1,000,000
Council of Europe				7,788		7,788
DFID United Kingdom	1,233,907				50,000	1,283,907
ERSTE Group Bank AG					500,000	500,000
European Commission DG Regio				1,808		1,808
EU: AGS project				16,558		16,558
EVZ Stiftung "Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft"	95,000	296,580	179,400		221,000	791,980
Finnish Government		100,000				100,000
Fundación Secretariado Gitano			5,965	7,936		13,901
Government of Spain	11,670					11,670
Individuals		4,555		450		5,005
Karl Popper Foundation				87,928		87,928
LEGO Foundation		7,660				7,660
Mirabaud wedding donation					35,466	35,466
Morgan Stanley					197	197
Municipality of Ostrava				6,200	6,200	12,400
Network of European Foundation	200,000		120,000	155,072		475,072
Norwegian Family			28,135	24,882	21,342	74,359
Open Society Institute	3,944,829	5,195,047	6,584,344	4,363,123	2,094,538	22,181,881
Salzburg Global Seminar			1,026			1,026
SIDA Sweden		1,051,983		1,042,250		2,094,233
Soros-Bolton wedding donation				33,469	13,345	46,814
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	247,382	420,000	800,000	700,000	350,000	2,517,382
UNICEF					57,458	57,458
World Bank Community Connection Fund	31,069	12,915	9,717	8,375	5,776	67,852
World Bank IBRD	365,049	363,891	703,915	290,366	291,925	2,015,146
<b>Total received by REF Switzerland</b>	<b>7,148,989</b>	<b>7,452,631</b>	<b>8,432,502</b>	<b>6,746,205</b>	<b>3,647,247</b>	<b>33,427,574</b>
<b>RECEIVED BY REF HUNGARY</b>						
American House Family			4,902	5,112		10,014
Bernard Van Leer Foundation		260,918	68,448		68,111	397,477
European Commission-DG REGIO	956,555	717,244	236,195			1,909,994
Fundación Secretariado Gitano			6,006			6,006
HELP HILFE			113,537	70,827	283,934	468,298
Ministry for Human and Minorities Montenegro					76,242	76,242
Ministry of Slovak Republic					5,955	5,955
Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)					46,313	46,313
REF Romania (Romanian Management Authority)					44,709	44,709
Sandor Demjan Foundation		250,000				250,000
Tempus Foundation	2,025	1,001	788	192		4,006
United Nations Development Program (UNDP)		1,732				1,732
The Velux Foundations					92,435	92,435
World Bank IBRD	6,385		8,184			14,569
Other donors, individuals				11,124	26,401	37,525
<b>Total donations received by REF Hungary</b>	<b>964,965</b>	<b>1,230,895</b>	<b>438,060</b>	<b>87,255</b>	<b>644,100</b>	<b>3,365,275</b>
<b>RECEIVED BY REF ROMANIA</b>						
Fundación Secretariado Gitano			3,811	1,400		5,211
Romanian Management Authority - as partner		180,128	149,155	406,796		736,079
Romanian Management Authority - as lead entity		2,144,240	556,629	3,233,296	1,050,075	6,984,240
UNICEF		6,534	13,330			19,864
Individuals			100	23		123
<b>Total donations received by REF Romania</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,330,902</b>	<b>723,025</b>	<b>3,641,515</b>	<b>1,050,075</b>	<b>7,745,517</b>
<b>TOTAL DONATIONS RECEIVED</b>	<b>8,113,954</b>	<b>11,014,428</b>	<b>9,593,587</b>	<b>10,474,975</b>	<b>5,341,422</b>	<b>44,538,366</b>



055 A Romani orchestra visits a classroom of a school participating in REF's ESF project, Roma Children and Parents Want to Go to School. Photo: REF Romania

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## ACCOUNTING POLICY

### 1 BOOK-KEEPING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The business and reporting period of REF Entities are defined on a yearly basis, starting at January 1 and ending at December 31. In general the financial statements of each legal entity should be prepared by the mid of February of the following year in accordance with this policy.

REF Entities maintain double-entry bookkeeping. The bookkeeping is maintained in local currency. The reports are compiled by the commissioned accounting firm as follows:

- REF Switzerland: Admingroup Services AG, Zug;
- REF Hungary: Admingroup Ltd., Budapest;
- REF Romania: REF Romania staff (national standards) and AdminGroup Ltd., Budapest (REF Accounting Policy);
- REF Slovakia: Ing Tatiana Henneľová.

The audit is made by PWC Switzerland for REF Switzerland, by Moore Stephens Hezicomp Ltd. for REF Hungary, Finans Audit Services Srl for REF Romania and BDR, spol. s r.o for REF Slovakia.

All financial statements according to the REF Accounting Policy (including the statement of income and expenditure, the balance

sheet and the notes) have to be presented in EUR (where necessary additionally in local currency) and have to be issued in English (including the audit reports).

The annual and audit reports of REF Entities according to this REF Accounting Policy will be published on the REF website.

## 2 ACCOUNTING PRINCIPLES

### 2.1 GENERAL TERMS

The books of the REF Entities are basically maintained in local currency as of legal requirement with the exception of REF Switzerland where the books are maintained in EUR since its functional currency is EUR.

Most of the financial transactions of REF Entities are denominated in Euro (EUR). To compare and for a better understanding these financial statements are presented in EUR.

#### 2.1.1 Currency Translation

All resulting unrealized and realized gains and losses from currency translations are recorded in a separate position in the statement of income and expenditure. Specific rules for the REF Entities are summarized below:

**REF Switzerland** Transactions in currencies other than EUR are translated at the daily rate. All balance sheet positions at the year-end are translated at the relevant year-end rate (USD/EUR, CHF/EUR, etc.). All exchange rates are based on a publication of OANDA.

**REF Hungary** All local currency positions in the profit and loss statement of REF Hungary shall be translated from HUF into EUR at the yearly average exchange rate of HUF/EUR. All balance sheet positions at year-end are translated at the year-end rate of HUF/EUR. All exchange rates are based on a publication of the Hungarian National Bank.



**REF Romania** All local currency positions in the profit and loss statement of REF Romania shall be translated from RON into EUR at the yearly average exchange rate of RON/EUR. All balance sheet positions at year-end are translated at the year-end rate of RON/EUR. All exchange rates are based on a publication of the Romanian National Bank.

**REF Slovakia** Transactions in currencies other than EUR are translated at the daily rate. All balance sheet positions at the year-end are translated at the relevant year-end rate (USD/EUR, CHF/EUR, etc.). All exchange rates are based on a publication of the European Central Bank.

**2.1.2 Reporting Period**

The business and reporting period is defined on a yearly basis, starting at January 1 and ending at December 31.

**2.2 INCOME**

**2.2.1 Donations Received**

The donation income has to be recognized at nominal value when received. The promised donation income is not allowed to be recorded for prudency reasons, which means, that the donation income has to be presented on a cash basis.

**2.2.2 Interest Income**

The interest income has to be recorded and timely appointed by using the effective received interest rates by banks.

**2.3 EXPENSES**

**2.3.1 Programs and Grants**

The program and grant expenses paid have to be recognized at nominal value. Already known costs have to be accrued. The grants at the Project Support Program and Tertiary Scholarships have to be presented at the actual year on total contractual value while other program related expenses on the value they are paid.

**2.3.2 Administrative expenses**

This includes administrative expenses of the operation, capital and equipment, contractors, HR-related expenses of the administrative staff and their travel expenditures which do not directly belong to the projects. The administrative expenses

have to be recognized at nominal value. Already known costs have to be accrued.

**2.3.3 Partner expenses**

If REF is a main project leader (direct contract with the donor) and channels funds to Partners, then all expenses relates to Partners have to be presented as REF expenditure in the financial statement due to the fact that REF is in charge of reporting the entire project cost.

**2.4 BALANCE SHEET**

**2.4.1 Intangible and tangible asset valuation, depreciation accounting principles**

Tangible and intangible assets have to be carried at their costs less depreciation and any accumulated impairment loss. The useful life of property rights, intellectual products has to be determined by each REF entity. The qualification and classification of fixed assets have to be determined according to the applicable national rule of each REF entity. The depreciable amount of a depreciable asset has to be allocated on a systematic basis using straight-line method to each accounting period during the useful life of the asset. The fixed assets above a certain value, defined by the applicable national rule of each REF entity, have to be accounted as depreciation in lump sum when it started to use. REF Entities have to apply extraordinary depreciation by devaluation when the asset is permanently reduced, because it has become redundant and/or damaged. The foundations should not use the revaluation model of assets.

**2.4.2 Receivables valuation**

Receivables are recorded at nominal value less any accumulated impairment loss.

**2.4.3 Deferred costs**

Costs have to be accrued actively which has emerged until the balance sheet date but does not relate to the activities of the year.

**2.4.4 Accrued costs**

Costs have to be accrued which are recognized until the balance sheet preparation and relates the activities of the year.

056 A Romani boy who participates in REF's after-school tutoring for primary school pupils poses in front of the chalkboard in Gostivar, Macedonia.  
Photo: Robert Miskovics

TABLE 25. REF ENTITIES: BALANCE SHEET, DECEMBER 31, 2014 AND DECEMBER 31, 2013

	REF SWITZERLAND		REF ROMANIA		REF HUNGARY		REF SLOVAKIA	
	2014	2013	2014	2013	2014	2013	2014	2013
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
Cash at banks	2,637,563	3,668,166	55,180	235,083	221,280	27,759	65,166	0
Receivables	0	0	2,307,835	2,285,922	36,099	47,500	202,657	0
Loan to REF Romania	0	0	0	0	675,000	319,999	0	0
Inventories	0	0	3,514	39,493	8,387	6,766	0	0
Other current assets	2,796	40,302	0	0	47,194	30,396	7,489	0
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>2,640,359</b>	<b>3,708,468</b>	<b>2,366,529</b>	<b>2,560,498</b>	<b>987,960</b>	<b>432,420</b>	<b>275,312</b>	<b>0</b>
Recoverable grants	384,180	393,380	0	0	0	0	0	0
Long-term loan to REF Romania	0	572,802	0	0	0	0	0	0
Accrued income	20,543	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intangible assets	0	0	0	44	11,299	22,074	0	0
Tangible assets	0	0	9,365	28,653	12,249	16,887	0	0
<b>Total long term assets</b>	<b>404,723</b>	<b>966,182</b>	<b>9,365</b>	<b>28,697</b>	<b>23,548</b>	<b>38,961</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>3,045,082</b>	<b>4,674,650</b>	<b>2,375,894</b>	<b>2,589,195</b>	<b>1,011,508</b>	<b>471,381</b>	<b>275,312</b>	<b>0</b>
Liabilities	1,132	632	89,064	54,546	96,952	69,307	4,676	0
Accrued expenses	29,101	28,557	0	0	107,702	7,278	205,829	0
Provisions for projects granted	2,945,267	2,634,444	0	0	0	0	104,528	0
Accounts payable to Partners	0	0	2,036,243	1,660,281	0	0	0	0
Loan from Council of Europe Development Bank	0	0	0	0	820,000	319,999	0	0
Long-term loans from REF Switzerland	0	0	0	572,802	0	0	0	0
Long-term loans from REF Hungary	0	0	680,695	320,000	0	0	0	0
Long-term loans from Agentia de Monitorizare o Presei	0	0	93,649	184,866	0	0	0	0
Other provision	38,418	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total liabilities and provisions</b>	<b>3,013,918</b>	<b>2,663,633</b>	<b>2,899,651</b>	<b>2,792,495</b>	<b>1,024,654</b>	<b>396,584</b>	<b>315,033</b>	<b>0</b>
Foundation capital as of January 1	2,011,017	842,919	-203,960	-339,232	74,797	440,286	6,638	0
Restatement of Foundation capital	0	0	1,203	4,236	0	0	0	0
Excess of expenditure over income	-1,979,853	1,168,098	-319,837	138,364	-85,363	-357,143	-46,359	0
Year-end Translation Difference	0	0	-1,163	-6,668	-2,580	-8,346	0	0
<b>Foundation capital as of December 31<sup>44</sup></b>	<b>31,164</b>	<b>2,011,017</b>	<b>-523,757</b>	<b>-203,300</b>	<b>-13,146</b>	<b>74,797</b>	<b>-39,721</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND FOUNDATION CAPITAL</b>	<b>3,045,082</b>	<b>4,674,650</b>	<b>2,375,894</b>	<b>2,589,195</b>	<b>1,011,508</b>	<b>471,381</b>	<b>275,312</b>	<b>0</b>

<sup>44</sup> Please note that the Foundation capital of REF Hungary and REF Slovakia has a positive balance according to applicable national accounting rules.

TABLE 26. REF ENTITIES: STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE OVER INCOME, 2014 AND 2013

	NOTES	REF SWITZERLAND		REF ROMANIA	
		2014	2013	2014	2013
		EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
<b>INCOME</b>					
Donations received from third parties		3,647,247	6,746,205	1,050,075	3,641,515
Donations received from REF Switzerland		0	0	0	195,661
Donations received from REF Hungary		0	0	0	0
Project Support and other program refund		216,382	239,241	0	0
Other income		0	0	727	178
Interest Income		615	431	0	819
Gain on Foreign Exchange		161,395	0	2,438	9,270
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>4,025,639</b>	<b>6,985,877</b>	<b>1,053,240</b>	<b>3,847,443</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>					
Project Support Program	1	1,743,051	1,869,971	0	179,652
Tertiary Scholarships	2	1,918,491	2,746,007	15,955	21,967
EU Roma pilot - A Good Start and complimentary projects	3	12,264	97,056	0	0
Konik Camp project in Montenegro	4	0	1,920	0	0
Communications	5	98,625	25,829	0	0
Policy development and capacity building	6	203,405	307,085	0	0
International family project - FSG	7	0	7,162	0	4,297
REF Romania - Equal opportunities	8	0	0	515,639	1,262,594
REF Romania - School after School	9	0	0	103,458	1,371,653
REF Romania - Health Program	10	0	0	3,378	602,707
REF Romania - Youth on Labor Market	11	0	0	0	149
REF Romania - Children and parents want to go to school	12	0	0	278,893	0
REF Romania - Integrated educational services for Roma communities	13	0	0	205,036	0
REF Romania - Increasing access of the Roma youth to university education	14	0	0	107,541	0
REF Romania - Ready, Set, Go	15	0	0	0	0
REF Romania and its partners capacity building	16	11,806	112,806	139,251	220,013
Progress project in Slovakia	17	0	0	0	0
UNICEF	18	32,444	0	0	-36
Medjimurje project	19	0	0	0	0
Velux project	20	0	0	0	0
OSCE-TARI project	21	0	0	0	0
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Hungary		1,570,828	910,000	0	0
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Slovakia		242,950	0	0	0
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Romania		0	201,670	0	0
<b>Total Programs and Grants</b>		<b>5,833,864</b>	<b>6,512,507</b>	<b>1,369,151</b>	<b>3,662,996</b>
Administrative expenses		133,210	166,808	0	0
Value Adjustment on receivables		38,418	-1,000,000	0	0
Losses on foreign exchange		0	138,465	3,926	46,083
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>6,005,492</b>	<b>5,817,779</b>	<b>1,373,077</b>	<b>3,709,079</b>
<b>Excess of expenditure over income</b>		<b>-1,979,853</b>	<b>1,168,098</b>	<b>-319,837</b>	<b>138,364</b>

		REF HUNGARY		REF SLOVAKIA	
		2014	2013	2014	2013
		EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>NOTES</b>				
Donations received from third parties		599,391	87,255	0	0
Donations received from REF Switzerland		1,085,625	925,556	242,950	0
Donations received from REF Hungary		0	0	16,000	0
Project Support and other program refund		44,709	46,411	0	0
Other income		3,058	3,882	0	0
Interest income		839	714	3	0
Gain on Foreign Exchange		13,941	5,261	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>1,747,563</b>	<b>1,069,079</b>	<b>258,953</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>					
Project Support Program (Grants)	1	90,158	6,160	287,597	0
Tertiary Scholarship Program	2	345,253	207,390	4,135	0
EU Roma pilot - A Good Start and complimentary projects	3	5,986	99,676	0	0
Konik Camp project in Montenegro	4	273,947	180,180	0	0
Communications	5	84,196	92,163	0	0
Policy development and capacity building	6	256,097	336,891	0	0
International family project - FSG	7	0	4,698	0	0
REF Romania - Equal opportunities	8	0	29,792	0	0
REF Romania - School after School	9	0	0	0	0
REF Romania - Health Program	10	0	0	0	0
REF Romania - Youth on Labor Market	11	0	0	0	0
REF Romania - Children and parents want to go to school	12	0	0	0	0
REF Romania - Integrated educational services for Roma communities	13	0	0	0	0
REF Romania - Increasing access of the Roma youth to university education	14	0	0	0	0
REF Romania - Ready, Set, Go	15	3,865	0	0	0
REF Romania and its partners capacity building	16	11,075	1,650	0	0
Progress project in Slovakia	17	29,922	5,933	0	0
UNICEF	18	16,851	0	0	0
Medjimurje project	19	14,719	0	0	0
Velux project	20	50,443	0	13,580	0
OSCE-TARI project	21	72,095	0	0	0
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Hungary		0	0	0	0
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Slovakia		23,019	0	0	0
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Romania		0	0	0	0
<b>Total Programs and Grants</b>		<b>1,277,627</b>	<b>964,533</b>	<b>305,312</b>	<b>0</b>
Administrative expenses		554,275	459,413	0	0
Value Adjustment on receivables		0	0	0	0
Losses on foreign exchange		1,024	2,276	0	0
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>1,832,926</b>	<b>1,426,222</b>	<b>305,312</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Excess of expenditure over income</b>		<b>-85,363</b>	<b>-357,143</b>	<b>-46,359</b>	<b>0</b>

**057** A Romani girl conjugates the verb "to thank" during an after-school tutoring session at a primary school participating in REF's ESF project, Roma Children and Parents Want to Go to School. Photo: REF Romania

**1. PROJECT SUPPORT PROGRAM**

In the framework of the Project Support Program REF Entities provide grants to consortia of civil society and public institutions to implement education reform projects at all education levels in the Decade of Roma Inclusion countries.

**2. TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

The target of this project is to provide scholarship for tertiary-level Romani students. The Program consists of five components:

- Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP).
- Law and Humanities Program (LHP)
- Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP)
- Interregional Scholarship Scheme (RISP)
- Professional Development Fund (PDF)

**3. A GOOD START AND COMPLIMENTARY PROJECTS**

The objective of this project is to ensure that all Romani and other poor and excluded children have access to quality ECEC services in 16 localities in rural and urban localities of the most deprived settlements in FYR Macedonia, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. This position contains the accumulated costs of this year.

**4. KONIK CAMP PROJECT IN MONTENEGRO**

This is an assistance program for the integration and return of displaced persons and residents of Konik camp in which REF implements the educational component through early childhood development programs.

**5. COMMUNICATION**

REF's Communications promotes the exchange of knowledge and experiences, and communicating information on policies and programs that support Roma inclusion in education systems and represents one of the major pillars of REF's activities through conferences, workshops and publications. This position contains the accumulated costs of this year.

**6. POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

The target of this project is to support studies, technical assistance, strategy development, and learning activities to

strengthen dialogue with governments and civil society on education reform and Roma inclusion.

**7. INTERNATIONAL FAMILY PROJECT**

This project supported networking and knowledge sharing on education issues that arise in family environments in Roma Decade and other European countries and ran until 2013.

**8. REF ROMANIA – EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

The objective of this project is to increase school success rates for 1,250 Romani children in urban and rural areas and, children and their families have benefitted from the complex intervention package aimed to support school retention and to improve learning outcomes. The project ran until 2013. This position contains the accumulated costs of this year.

**9. REF ROMANIA – SCHOOL AFTER SCHOOL**

This project increases the enrollment and academic success in primary education for 2,000 children at risk from early school leaving. The project is implemented in three development regions in Romania and will service 50 schools over two school years and ran until approximately 2013.

**10. REF ROMANIA – HEALTH PROGRAM**

The objective of this project is to enable access to education and young Roma's integration in the labor market, specifically in professions with high social prestige as well as those in the medical field and ran until approximately 2013.

**11. REF ROMANIA – YOUTH ON THE LABOR MARKET**

The project facilitates the access of the Roma youth in the labor market in order to reduce their social exclusion, discrimination, and risk of poverty and ran until 2012.

**12. REF ROMANIA – CHILDREN AND PARENTS GOING TO SCHOOL**

The target of this project is to develop and improve the skills and abilities of Roma people aiming for facilitation and insertion on the labor market by reducing early school leaving and providing access to quality education and will run until approximately the end of 2016.



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### 13. REF ROMANIA – INTEGRATED EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR ROMA COMMUNITIES

The target of this project is to provide better access to the labor market for Roma people developing and improving their skills and abilities through reducing early school leaving. The project will run until approximately the end of 2016.

### 14. REF ROMANIA – INCREASING ACCESS OF THE ROMA YOUTH TO UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

The project increases access of young Roma to university education and reducing the dropout especially in the first years by providing an integrated package of 170 scholarships and mentorship scheme for freshmen until approximately the end of 2016.

### 15. REF ROMANIA – READY, SET, GO

The project is targeting early childhood development outcomes for some 1,400 Romani children residing in six of Romania's most disadvantaged counties with the highest absolute number and highest share of Roma population of preschool-age. The project is supported by a grant from Norway through the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009–2014, in the framework of the RO 25 Poverty Alleviation Programme in Romania.

### 16. REF ROMANIA AND ITS PARTNERS CAPACITY BUILDING

This project provides capacity building and financial support for REF Romania and its partners for those activities, which are necessary for project implementation but not covered by ESF. The program will run until approximately the end of 2016.

### 17. PROGRESS PROJECT IN SLOVAKIA

The project aims at investing in early childhood development by promoting innovation and social integration of Roma in Slovakia. REF has an advocacy role in the project in order to share its experiences and knowledge on early childhood development.

### 18. UNICEF PROJECT

The objective of the project is to support desegregation of Romani children and improve data collection on Romani children in Moldova including study visits to Bulgaria and Serbia.

### 19. MEDJIMURJE PROJECT

The project supports the Integration of disadvantaged groups in regular education system in Medjmurje County in Croatia.

### 20. VELUX PROJECT

This project supports the increase the number of female kindergarten teachers and nurseries of Roma origin in the regions of Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia with high numbers of Roma residents. The program will run until approximately the end of 2022.

### 21. OSCE TARI PROJECT

The project objective is to decrease dropout rate among Romani secondary school students at risk of dropping out in three main regions of Serbia. The program will run until approximately the end of 2015.

# BOARDS

## REF SWITZERLAND

- 01 Robert Kushen** (Interim Chair) is a Senior Advisor at the Open Society Foundations (OSF); presently, he is the Director of the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation. From 1991-1996, he served in the Office of the Legal Adviser of the U.S. Department of State; between 1999 and 2002 he served as Executive Director of Doctors of the World.
- 02 William Lazarus Bila** is an expert in cross-cultural communication and currently serves as the elected Vice President for the Roma Community Centre in Toronto, Canada. He currently is consulting to Pedersen & Partners. He graduated with a BS in Finance and International Business from the Leonard N. Stern School of Business at New York University and an MBA from the Booth School of Business at the University of Chicago.
- 03 Nicoleta Bitu** is a PhD student in political science at the National School for Political and Administrative Sciences and president of Romano ButiQ association. She has worked for more than two decades to shed light on and fight discrimination against the Roma minority in Romania and Europe, specifically women who face both ethnic and gender discrimination. She is a recognized and published expert in her field and sits on the boards of various local, national and international organizations.
- 04 Anna Bjerde** is Director of Strategy and Operations in the Europe and Central Asia Vice Region of the World Bank, where she has worked since 1997. Ms. Bjerde is a graduate of the Masters of Business Administration and Economics Program from Stockholm University and has dedicated her career to development and global advocacy for the vulnerable and poor.
- 05 Lívia Járóka**, PhD, is an anthropologist who researched Roma youth identity at University College London. A Chevening and Wenner Gren Scholar, she is a former Member of the European Parliament (2004-2014) and author of the European Framework Strategy for Roma Inclusion in 2011. She received the MEP Award in Justice and Fundamental Rights in 2006 and 2013 and was selected as a Young Global Leader (WEF) in 2006.
- 06 Lisa Jordan** is Senior Director of Strategy and Learning at the Porticus Foundation. She holds a Master's Degree in Development Studies from the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, Netherlands.
- 07 Andrzej Mirga** is a Polish Roma who headed the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues at the OSCE's Warsaw-based Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) from 2006 till 2013. He is also a long-term associate of the Project on Ethnic Relations and has served as an expert on the Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers of the Council of Europe, and later as its chair, in addition to several official posts in Poland.
- 08 Nadir Redzeqi** is a Macedonian Roma and has been an NGO activist since 1998. Currently he holds the position of Project Manager at Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma at the Open Society Foundations.
- 09 Judith Tóth** (Treasurer) heads the Institute for Training and Consulting in Banking. She is a trained economist and has occupied different executive positions in the commercial banking and government field, especially regarding emerging markets. She joined the REF Board in late 2013.
- 010 Alexander Wittwer** is currently Swiss Ambassador to Slovakia and representative of the Swiss government on the REF Board. He studied at the University of Berne and is a lawyer.

- 011 Costel Bercus** (Chair) graduated with a degree in International Relations and European Studies from Spiru Haret University in Bucharest and worked for the Romani Center for Social Interventions and Studies before joining the Roma Education Fund in 2005.
- 012 Henna Huttu** is a Finnish Romani activist. She studied in the International Master of Education Program at the University of Oulu and specialized in intercultural education and special education.
- 013 Katarina Mathernova** was appointed as Senior Adviser for Europe and Central Asia Region, and Roma Issues at the World Bank in 2010. She holds a Juris Doctor degree from Comenius University and a Master of Law degree from the University of Michigan.

## REF HUNGARY

- 014 Katalin E. Koncz** is Executive Director of the Open Society Institute-Budapest. She is a member of the informal Roma Advisory Committee of the Open Society Institute.
- Judith Tóth** (Treasurer of REF CH Board)
- 015 Gyula Várallyay** is a former senior staff member of the World Bank; he served as Interim Director of REF on two occasions.

## REF ROMANIA

- 016 Dezirderiu Gergely** is a Romanian Roma and former director of the European Roma Rights Center. A human rights lawyer since 2001, and actively involved and held positions in governmental and nongovernmental institutions such as Romani CRISS, Romania's National Council for Combating Discrimination, the Council of Europe Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers and the European Commission Governmental Experts Group on Non-Discrimination. He was appointed to the REF Romania Board in 2014.
- Rob Kushen** (REF CH Interim Chair)
- 017 Margareta (Magda) Matache** is a Roma rights activist from Romania. In 2012 she was awarded a Hauser postdoctoral fellowship at the FXB Center, where currently she works as an instructor. From 2005 to 2012 Matache was the executive director of Romani CRISS. Prior to this, Matache served as a youth worker and trainer on cultural diversity and minority rights.
- Judit Szira** (REF HQ Executive Director)

## REF SLOVAKIA

- 018 Lydia Gabcova** is an independent Roma consultant specializing in Roma youth empowerment and participation in Slovakia. She holds a MA in Social Work from Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra and a post-graduate diploma from the Diplo Foundation. She currently advises the Roma Institute in Bratislava on ESF-funded projects.
- Rob Kushen** (REF CH Interim Chair)
- 019 Valentina Petrus** is originally from Romania and now lives and works in Slovakia. She studied law at the University of Bucharest and at Comenius University in Bratislava. She has more than 12 years of professional experience in human rights legislation, legal research and analysis, trainings, NGO development projects and policy issues. In 2015, Valentina joined the team of Habitat for Humanity International as an Assistant Legal Counsel for Europe, Middle East and Africa, as well as well as a Senior Advisor to the Open Society Foundation - Bratislava.



# STAFF

## REF HEADQUARTERS IN BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

- 020 Judit Szira** (Executive Director) holds a teaching degree in Mathematics and Chemistry and a degree in Public Education. Judit has been working from the beginning of her career in the field of public education, concentrating on equity and inclusion issues.
- 021 Erzsébet Báder** (Scholarship Program Junior Officer) is a Hungarian Roma who holds a BA degree in English Studies. She previously worked as International Coordinator at the Roma Press Center in Budapest.
- 022 Tom Bass** (Communication Officer) holds MAs in Political Science and Creative Writing and a certificate in literary translation. He previously worked as an editorial consultant for the Open Society Foundations and other prominent international organizations.
- 023 Azam Bayburdi** (Administrative Officer) holds an MBA in Finance, Statistics, and Management from Greenwich University. Before joining REF as Administrative Officer, Azam worked for the Ministry of Education.
- 024 Dan Pavel Doghi** (Higher Education Program Manager, Director REF Romania) is a Romanian Roma who worked for seven years at the OSCE ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues. He studied social work at Babes-Bolyai University and completed a postgraduate course in International Diplomacy at Malta University.
- 025 Andrea Dörömbözs** (Financial Officer) is a Hungarian Roma who holds an MA degree in English Studies from ELTE University. She spent eight years as an Assistant Casino Manager before joining REF.
- 026 Nevsija Durmish** (Junior Program Officer) is a Roma from Macedonia. She holds an International Baccalaureate from the United World College of the Adriatic in Italy, and a BA degree in English Language and Literature. Nevsija is the co-author of the Romani-language grammar Gramatika Romskog Jezika published in Croatia and primary school textbook Romani ehib 1 in Kosovo. She previously worked for RomaVersitas in Skopje and on Roma inclusion issues at the Foundation Open Society Institute - Macedonia.
- 027 Stela Garaz** (Program and Studies Officer) is a Moldovan national and holds a PhD in Political Science from Central European University, as well as a licentiate diploma in Political Science and English Language from Moldova State University. She previously worked for the CEU Asia Research Initiative and joined REF in January 2011.
- 028 Merziha Idrizi** (Scholarship Program Officer) is a Macedonian Roma, has a BS degree in Economics and Financial Management from the University of St. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje and joined REF in 2007. She recently graduated with an MA in Public Policy from Central European University.
- 029 Anastasia Jelasity** (Fundraising and Communication Officer) has a BA in Political Science from DePaul University and MA in Applied Linguistics from University of Illinois in Chicago. A dual citizen of Greece and the United States, she was previously responsible for strategic planning for the Association of Business Women in Serbia.
- 030 Radoslav Kuzmanov** (Scholarship Program Officer) is a Bulgarian Roma who previously worked for Roma NGO Drom in Vidin, Bulgaria. He holds a MA in Psychology from South West University in Bulgaria.
- 031 Anasztázia Nagy** (Program Officer) is a Hungarian Roma who graduated from Budapest's Corvinus University - Faculty of Public Administration in 2002 and holds a MA in Public Policy from Central European University, Budapest.
- 032 Beata Bislim Olahova** (Grant Program Manager) is a Slovak Roma who has worked at REF since 2006. She holds a degree in Business Management and received an MBA from the CEU Business School. Beata was also a member of the Management Board of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and is an Alumni of the Harvard Kennedy School's Executive Education program.

- 033 Szilvia Pallaghy** (Program Officer) holds an MBA, an MA in Literature and an MA in Psychology. After working in the private sector as Human Resources Specialist for General Electric, she worked at the Hungarian Ministry of Education before joining REF.
- 034 Beáta Prokaj** (Finance and Administrative Coordinator) holds an MA degree in Economics and joined REF in 2010.
- 035 Marius Taba** (Monitoring and Evaluation Officer) is a Romanian Roma who has been working at REF since its establishment. He holds an MA in Public Administration from the University of Bucharest, from where in 2011 he also obtained his PhD in Sociology on Roma education.
- 036 Peter Tóth** (Chief Financial Officer) is a Hungarian finance professional. He graduated from the Budapest University of Economics in 1997 and earned a Chartered Financial Analyst designation in 2001. He joined REF in May 2014. He also serves as a member of supervisory board of the Foundation for the International Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities.
- 037 Dennis Omondi Yonga** (IT Specialist) worked as an IT specialist for five years in Kenya prior to joining REF. Dennis holds a diploma in IT from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Nairobi.
- 038 Jenő Zsiga** (Network Manager) is a Hungarian Roma who holds a BA from Budapest Business College and holds an MA in Economics from the University of Pécs. As a young Roma activist he was one of the founders of the "Bronz Klub."

## REF COUNTRY FACILITATORS

- ALBANIA AND KOSOVO**
- 039 Marsela Taho** received her degree in social work from the University of Tirana and also completed the Roma Participation Program at the Central European University in Budapest. She has worked with children and their families as a social worker for many different organizations.
- BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**
- 040 Aida Mihajlovic** graduated from the Faculty of Arts and Science, English Department, Sarajevo University. She has worked for 15 years in the Bosnian NGO sector.
- BULGARIA**
- 041 Ognyan Isaev** is a Roma from Varbitsa, Bulgaria. He has an undergraduate degree in Journalism from Shumen University "Bishop Konstantin Preslavsky", a MA in Psychology from the University of Veliko Tarnovo "St. Cyril and Methodius", and a post-graduate diploma from the Bulgarian School of Politics "Dimitar Panitsa" at New Bulgarian University of Sofia. In 2013 Ognyan was selected as a trainee to participate in the World Forum for Democracy, organized by Council of Europe.
- CZECH REPUBLIC**
- 042 Jan Stejskal** holds a Ph.D. in law and legal science and a B.A. degree in sociology and media studies, both from the Masaryk University, Brno. Previously he worked as an educator in law and political science, as an election campaign manager, and as a coordinator of the "Together to School" (*Jekhetane andre škola*) coalition.
- CROATIA**
- 043 Siniša-Senad Musić** is a Roma from Zagreb, Croatia. He is graduate student at the University of Split, who also teaches at the Centre for Professional Studies of Accounting and Finance. He also works for Roma National Council (RNV) and is the President of Roma Youth Organization (ROM).
- HUNGARY**
- 044 Nikolett Oláh** is a Hungarian Roma who graduated with a BA from the University of Pécs in Social Work, a BA from Corvinus University in Social Management and an MA in Social Politics from ELTE. Previously she worked as a project coordinator and analyst to EU projects before joining REF.

- 045 FYR MACEDONIA**
- Senad Mustafov** is a Macedonian Roma who graduated from the Faculty of Law of "Justinian I" at "St. Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje. Since 1999-2002 he has been actively involved with Roma Civil Society, working as a volunteer. He previously worked at Foundation Open Society Institute - Macedonia (FOSIM) among others.
- 046 SERBIA**
- Nadja Kocić-Rakocevic** is a Serbian Roma who has been actively involved with Roma civil society since 1999. She has managed numerous programs dealing with education, health, civil participation and gender issues.
- 047 SLOVAKIA**
- Viktor Teru** is a Slovak Roma. He graduated from St. Elizabeth University of Health and Social Work in Michalovce. Viktor has spent more than 10 years as manager of Roma projects and he worked in the Roma settlements as a social worker. Was a member and leader of many NGOs, informal groups, and a youth trainer.

## REF INTERNS AND VOLUNTEERS

- Chessa Arey**, USA  
**Madalina Buicu**, Moldova  
**Michelle Fong**, USA  
**Jasar Jasarov**, Macedonia  
**Áluna Lepadatú**, Moldova  
**Dzevid Mahmud**, Bulgaria  
**Philippe-Edner Marius**, USA  
**Mihály Orsos**, Hungary  
**Jozsef Rostas**, Hungary  
**Ezer Smith**, USA  
**Zoltan Varadi**, Hungary



# GRANT TABLE 2014

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE	TOTAL BUDGET	
<b>Czech Republic</b>		
<b>Bily Nosorozec o.p.s. and Beleza Ostrava, o.s.</b> Ostrava region	191,847	Increase the enrollment rates in kindergartens and mainstream elementary schools, and provide ECEC services to families.
<b>People in Need</b> Prague	30,000	Increase the enrollment rate of children from disadvantaged environments in kindergartens and integrated primary schools.
<b>REF implemented project</b> Usti Nad Labem Region	4,872	Information campaign on the importance of kindergarten enrollment and facilitation of preschool enrollment.
<b>Hungary</b>		
<b>Add a kezred az eselyegyenloseg megteremtésének segítése az oktatásban és a munkaerőpiacon közhasznú Egyesület (Give Me Your Hand Association)</b> Nyíregyháza, Nagydobos, Kántorjánosi, Hodász, Nagyecsed, Nyírparasznya, Szamosszeg and Szamoskér	86,235	Provide ECEC services, increase the school readiness of Romani children through A Good Start program and increase the active citizenship of the Roma parents.
<b>Khetanipe Association</b> Pecs	29,827	Develop the skills, capabilities and school readiness of disadvantaged Roma children aged between zero and six. Strengthen the link between parents and preschools, expand access and participation in integrated ECEC services and raise the quality of education.
<b>Nagyecsed Városért Egyesület</b> Nagyecsed and Kántorjánosi	11,208	Provide Romani children with access to a range of toys in two Toy Libraries in order to challenge and stimulate further development.
<b>ORIGO-PLUSZ Community Developer Association</b> Abony	32,340	Decrease spontaneous segregation at the primary-school level, ensure the integration of school starters and support the transition of the children in different school levels.
<b>Public Association for Roma in Olaszliszka</b> Tolcsva	19,241	Enroll disadvantaged Romani children in integrated schools in Tolcsva, reverse segregated education and enhance their transition to secondary schools.
<b>Roma European Organization</b> Miskolc	27,280	Reduce dropout rates in early school and facilitate school enrollment for Romani children returning from Canada.
<b>Roma Versitas Foundation</b> Nationwide	85,669	Increase the percentage of Romani university graduates and support them academically, professionally and financially through Roma Versitas centers.
<b>Színes Gyöngyök Egyesület (Colorful Beads Association)</b> Pecs	473	Advocacy awareness on the value of education through arts and music performed by six young Roma from Budapest at a Pécs music festival with the act Tudas6alom, meaning "Knowledge is power."
<b>Slovakia</b>		
<b>Civic Association ETP Slovakia - Centre for Sustainable Development</b> Moldava nad Bodvou, Velka Ida, Saca, Rankovce	41,044	Achieve improvement in educational attainment, increase attendance rate, and encourage success in standard education institutions (kindergartens and schools) of marginalized Roma.
<b>County association of Romani Initiatives, KARI Union</b> Four settlements in Banska Bystrica Municipality: Cementárenska Cesta+ Hrb, Sásová, Internátna 12, Kotva	44,545	Improve the early childhood development outcomes of 135 Roma and disadvantaged non-Roma children aged zero to six. Improve access to quality mainstream ECEC services.
<b>Cultural Association of Roma in Slovakia - KZRS</b> Martin	49,910	Reduce the gap in early childhood development results of children aged zero to three and three to six from the Roma communities in Martin.
<b>Equal Chances Association - Slovakia</b> Zborov	24,149	Reduce the gap in early childhood development outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. Enhance the teaching quality and sensitivity of the teaching staff in preschool facilities.
<b>Equal Chances Association - Slovakia</b> Zborov	51,767	Improve the school readiness and early childhood development outcomes of 280 Roma and non-Roma children aged zero to six. Ensure access to quality mainstream ECEC services.
<b>Nadácia Rómsky vzdelávací fond - organizacná zložka zahraničnej nadácie Roma Education Fund - Roma Oktatasi Alap</b> Nationwide	413,453	Improve the school academic performance of disadvantaged secondary school students through their attendance rate, graduation rate, transition rate from secondary to tertiary education and by decreasing their dropout rate.
<b>Ternipe - združenie pre rómsku mládež na Slovensku a v Maďarsku</b> Rimavska Sec	69,752	Improve Roma students' academic performance, increase their transition rate to secondary education and decrease dropout rate through after-school activities.

<b>The County Association of Roma Initiatives - KARI</b> Banska Bystrica	32,866	Support kindergarten attendance of Romani children from marginalized Roma communities. Increase the ability of mothers to manage their own life and their parental skills at the same time.
<hr/>		
<b>EASTERN EUROPE</b>	<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	
<b>Moldova</b>		
<b>Roma National Centre</b> Nationwide	71,790	Improve young Romani students' academic performance at the tertiary level by offering a wide range of services through a RomaVersitas center.
<b>Union of Young Roma Tarna Rom</b> Ursari, Parcani, Schinoasa (Calarasi District), Vulcanesti (Nisporeni District)	13,809	Convince decision-makers and ensure political commitment for the implementation of desegregated elementary school services for Roma children in Moldova. Develop a national curricula for community mediators in educational system.
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<b>BALKANS</b>	<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	
<b>Albania</b>		
<b>ARSIS, Social Organization for the Support of the Youth</b> Tirana and Durres	263,372	Decrease dropout rate among Roma and Egyptian lower and upper secondary school students at risk of dropping out through better outreach and positive interventions (scholarships and mentorship programme) and support them till the final exam (Matura or equivalent).
<b>Disutni Albania</b> Tirana and Korca	109,620	Increase the retention rate, academic performances and graduation rate; build the self-esteem and identity of about 80 Roma/Egyptian students. Improve professional and personal skills as well.
<b>Save the Children</b> Korca and Gjirokastra	93,020	Ensure school enrollment and attendance of Romani and Egyptian children and encourage interethnic interactions and relations in selected primary schools.
<b>Union for Development and Integration of Roma Minority in Albania "Amaro-Drom"</b> Elbasan, Kucove, Grabian/Lushnje and Levan/Fier	83,296	Improve the ECEC outcomes and the school readiness of disadvantaged Roma children aged three to six. Strengthen parenting skills and the link between parents and preschools, expand the access to integrated ECEC services and raise the quality of teaching and learning.
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<b>Bosnia &amp; Herzegovina</b>		
<b>Association of Citizens "OTAHARIN"</b> Bijeljina and Zivinice Municipalities	73,754	Improve and expand the level of participation of Roma children in the field of preschool, primary and secondary education by including all Roma communities in Bijeljina and Zivinice.
<b>Center for Support of Roma "Romalen" Kakanj</b> Zenica Dobojski Canton, Kakanj municipality	80,930	Increase enrollment and attendance rate of all Roma children in elementary schools through improvement of attendance, school performance and involvement of Roma parents in the education process.
<b>Novi Most International</b> Mostar	62,132	Increase number of Roma children who are enrolled in mainstream education, decrease number of children enrolled in special schools and increase number of students who finish their elementary education through accelerated learning program.
<b>SAE Roma</b> Kiseljak, Husino, Ljubace, Bukinje/Olanovica, Skahovica, Grivice, Oskova, Banovici and Cubric	67,054	Improve and expand the level of participation of Roma children in preschool, primary and secondary education in 10 Roma communities.
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<b>Croatia</b>		
<b>Kindergarten "Maslacak"</b> Mursko Sredice	14,702	Ensure inclusion and regular attendance of preschool for a greater number of Roma children from Mursko Sredice.
<b>Medjimurska Zupanija</b> Macinec, Mala Subotica, Orehovica Pribislavac and Kotoriba (Medjimurje County)	42,150	Create sustainable conditions for full integration of Roma children in elementary school education within Medjimurje County.
<b>NGO "SFERA"</b> Medjimurje County	17,442	Contribute to the social inclusion of the Romani population in Medjimurje County through strengthening educational achievements of primary school children with after-school support.
<b>Oaza, Association for Homeless and Socially Vulnerable People</b> Primorsko-Goranska County, Rijeka	26,161	Improve academic development, cognitive abilities, social skills and integration of Roma children into a desegregated school system through additional after-school classes.
<hr/>		
<b>Kosovo</b>		
<b>Kosovo Agency for Advocacy and Development - KAAD</b> Nationwide	80,390	Increase the retention rate and academic achievements of Roma university students and increase post-graduation career prospects.
<b>Kosova Education Center</b> Srbobran/Municipality of Istog, Gračanica and Preoce/ Municipality of Gračanica, Plemetin/Municipality of Obiliq and Roma Mahalla in Gjakovë, Municipality of Gjakovë	100,019	Improve the school readiness and early childhood development outcomes of 110 RAE and 30 RAE returnees children in five localities in Kosovo. Expand the access to integrated ECEC services.
<b>Ministry of Education Science and Technology in Kosovo and Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians</b> Nationwide	282,380	Improve academic performance and maintain the retention rate of RAE secondary school students through provision of scholarship, school based tutorship/mentorship and effective outreach.
<b>Save the Children</b> Gjakova/Dakovica, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Mitrovica North, Mitrovica South, Peja/Peć, Prishtina and Prizren	39,266	Support a total of 400 marginalized preschool and school-aged children in eight municipalities located throughout Kosovo.

## Macedonia

**AMBRELA Foundation**

Shuto Orizari

61,222

Reduce the gap in early childhood development outcomes through increased numbers of enrolled children aged three to six in kindergarten and primary schools by facilitating access to quality ECEC programs.

**Association for Roma Community Development****SUMNAL**

Skopje and Bitola

43,200

Improve the performance and grades of Roma pupils and decrease their dropout rate in school. Increase the capacities of students to work effectively with Roma children.

**Association for Support of Marginalized Groups -****Roma Resource Center**

Shuto Orizari

56,880

Increase retention rate and improve educational performance/outcomes of Roma children who study in second, third and fourth grades in primary education within municipality of Shuto Orizari.

**Foundation Open Society -Macedonia**

Skopje

35,426

Empower about 80 Roma University and 40 high school students socially and academically in order to be better prepared for their future career and to become socially responsible and active citizens.

**Ministry of Education and Science**

Nationwide

306,530

Improve the retention and graduation rate of Roma students enrolled to Secondary schools in Macedonia through the provision of scholarships and school-based mentoring/tutoring.

**Ministry of Education and Science of Republic of****Macedonia**

Nationwide

334,864

Improve the retention and achievement rates of all Romani students enrolled in first, second, third and fourth classes in secondary schools from 2011-2015.

**Ministry of Labor and Social Policy**

Shuto Orizari, Chair, Center, Karposh, Gazi Baba, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kichevo, Prilep, Bitola, Kumanovo, Veles, Shtip, Kochani, Vinica, Delchevo, Pehchevo and Berovo

60,000

Improve the school readiness of 477 Roma children aged (3,8-5,7) in 18 Macedonian localities by increasing access to mainstream kindergarten services.

**Ministry of Labor and Social Policy**

Shuto Orizari, Chair, Center, Karposh, Gazi Baba, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kichevo, Prilep, Bitola, Kumanovo, Veles, Shtip, Kochani, Vinica, Delchevo, Pehchevo and Berovo

224,908

Improve the ECEC outcomes and the school readiness of 995 disadvantaged Roma children aged three to six in 18 municipalities/localities in Macedonia. This is a continuation of the national preschool program.

**National Roma Centrum**

Nationwide

13,495

Advocate for the implementation of policy documentation and institutionalization of Romani mediators in elementary schools.

**NGO KHAM - Delchevo**

Crnik - Pehchevo, Delcevo and v.Trabotiviste, Vinica

71,373

Provide assistance and improve enrollment to kindergartens of 67 beneficiary children. Involve Roma parents in ECEC education and improve the socio-economic status of the Roma families.

**Roma Democratic Development Association****SONCE**

Tetovo, Gostivar, Debar and Kicevo

72,368

Increase retention rate and improve academic performance of Roma children from second and fourth grades in Tetovo, Gostivar, Debar and Kicevo

**RomaVersitas Macedonia**

Skopje, Tetovo and Stip

152,308

Enhance the retention rate, graduation, academic achievements and personal capacities of Roma university students in Macedonia.

**Svetla idnina**

Kochani

54,155

Increase the literacy rate of at least 50 Romani adults and assistance through "Second Chance" programs.

## Montenegro

**Bureau for Education (BfE), Institute of Social****Inclusion (ISI)**

Nationwide

49,108

Improve the academic performance and transition rate to secondary education and maintain retention rate of Roma/RE secondary school students through provision of scholarships, school-based mentorship and effective outreach.

**Bureau for Education (BfE), Institute of Social****Inclusion (ISI)**

Nationwide

66,187

Improve the academic performance and transition rate to secondary education and maintain retention rate of Roma/RE secondary school students through provision of scholarships, school-based mentorship and effective outreach.

**Help - Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe e.V.****JPU Djina Vrbica**

Konik Camp, Podgorica

836

Provide safe transport facilities and ensure regular attendance to city schools.

Konik Camp, Podgorica

14,400

Support the integration of 150 Romani and Egyptian children into preschool and primary schools and develop a Toy Library as part of an ECEC component.

**Roma Education Fund Representation Office****in Montenegro**

Nationwide

72,289

Improve retention rate and achievement of Roma/RE secondary school students through provision of scholarships, school based mentorship, and effective outreach; improve transition rate from secondary school to tertiary level and increase graduate rate through RomaVersitas type services.

**Roma Education Fund Representation Office****in Montenegro**

Podgorica, Konik Camp

9,070

Ensure useful summertime activities and prepare RE children for the next academic year. Build a relationship between the RE community and primary schools participating in the desegregation process.

## Serbia

**Association of Roma-Serbian Friendship Stablo**

Nis

43,340

Improve the retention, performance and graduation rates of 89 Roma full-time tertiary students in Serbia by providing them with academic tutoring/mentoring and other programs.

**Consortium of five Roma NGOs**

Kraljevo, Krusevac, Kragujevac, Obrenovac and Novi Sad

132,480

Provide comprehensive early childhood education services to Roma children.

**Preparatory Preschool Program -****PPP implemented by REF**

Nationwide

68,600

Contribute to the social inclusion and poverty reduction of Serbian Roma by reducing the gap in early childhood development outcomes between Roma and non-Roma with special regard to the most disadvantaged.

<b>Vojvodinian Roma Centre for Democracy (VRCD)</b> Vojvodina	163,925	Increase the graduation rate of prospective Romani university students and improve the professional and academic achievements of tertiary students in a RomaVersitas center.
<b>SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE</b>		
<b>Bulgaria</b>		
<b>"Amala - R" Foundation</b> Pleven	6,608	Support the access of Roma children from Pleven to preschool and primary education and improve their education performances and learning skills.
<b>Association Center for Local and Regional Policies</b> Nikola Kozlevo	98,070	Develop a sustainable early childhood education development model for Roma and non-Roma children at kindergarten and elementary school age from the Municipality of Nikola Kozlevo.
<b>Equal Opportunities Initiative Association</b> Sofia	68,380	Support a preschool campaign in the Romani community to facilitate the enrollment of their children in preschools.
<b>FRCD "Nangle - 2000", Montana</b> Berkovitz Municipality	15,128	Increase Roma preschool children's education learning outcomes and transition to public desegregated mainstream elementary education.
<b>Kyustendil Municipality</b> Kyustendil, Iztok District	90,729	Provide the opportunity for Roma children from Iztok to study in mixed/integrated schools, rather than attending segregated schools.
<b>"New Future" Association</b> Montana	8,200	Develop skills and knowledge of Roma children from Ogosta District through organization and provision of extracurricular classes.
<b>Resource Center for Education and Culture Sham Foundation</b> Montana Municipality	29,442	Prevent school dropouts and increase graduation rates of Romani secondary school students from the municipality of Montana.
<b>RomaVersitas Association</b> Sofia, Shumen and Blagoevgrad	133,643	Encourage and assist Roma youth to get higher education and establish RomaVersitas program in Bulgaria.
<b>Romania</b>		
<b>Matias Organization</b> Jilava	76,851	Ensure the enrollment and the improved performance of Romani children into preschool programs and primary education.
<b>Romani CRISS - Roma Centre for Social Intervention and Studies</b> Craiova, Dolj county	59,387	Increase attendance and enrollment rate of involved Roma children to kindergarten and school, and ensure quality early childhood services for 120 children.
<b>Ruhama Foundation</b> Telechiu and Oradea	54,196	Improve the attendance rate of children ages zero to three and three to six years old in preschool programs and while simultaneously working to improve local parenting skills.
<b>INTERNATIONAL</b>		
<b>Central European University</b> International	330,000	The Roma Education Fund has supported the Roma Graduate Preparation Program (RGPP), previously known as the Roma Access Program (RAP) of Budapest's Central European University (CEU) since 2005. The program has supported young Roma to access internationally recognized graduate universities, including the CEU, and to pursue their Master's studies.
<b>VELUX Projects</b>		
<b>REF + VELUX Fundation</b> Czech Republic (Ustecky, Moravian-Silesian, Prague City, South Moravian, Olomouc) Hungary (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Pest, Budapest, Heves, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Hajdu-Bihar, Baranya) Slovakia (Prešov, Košice, Banská Bystrica and Nitra)	1,273,751	Increase the number of female kindergarten teachers and nurseries of Romani origin in the regions of Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. Facilitate the access to pedagogical vocational education for ethnic Romani women coming from poor social-economic background.
<b>IPA Projects</b>		
<b>Medjmurje County</b> Croatia (Medjmurje County)	11,313	Include three primary schools in the Extended Stay Program in order to improve the academic achievement of Romani children.
<b>Help - Hilfe Zur Selbsthilfe, REF, Legal Centre, Juventas, Danish Refugee Council and Red Cross of Montenegro</b> Montenegro (Podgorica - Konik Camp area)	36,448	Help the social integration of I/DP living in the Konik Camp area though offering employment, housing, educational desegregation, ECEC services and legal services.
<b>REF</b> Serbia (Vojvodina)	10,350	Increase the enrollment and retention rate and improve learning outcomes of Romani students enrolled in secondary schools in Serbia.
<b>ESF Projects</b>		
<b>REF Romania, Community Development Agency "Together," REF Budapest</b> Romania (Center, North East, South East, Bucharest Ilfov and South Muntenia)	37,770	Development and improvement of skills and abilities of the Roma in order to facilitate their insertion in a modern, flexible and inclusive labor market by providing equal access to education and reducing the phenomenon of dropping out.
<b>REF Romania, REF Budapest</b> Romania (Bucharest Ilfov)	9,443	Enhance Roma youth's access to higher education and reduce their risk of dropping out in their first years by providing 170 study scholarships to Roma students enrolled in their first year of Bachelor studies, and through the implementation of a mentorship scheme for Roma students in first year of Bachelor studies.
<b>REF Romania, Resource Center for Roma Communities; REF Budapest</b> Romania (Center, North East and South Muntenia)	37,743	Development and improvement of skills and abilities of the Roma in order to facilitate their insertion in a modern, flexible and inclusive labor market by providing equal access to education and reducing the phenomenon of dropping out.

# REF NETWORK

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGS	A Good Start
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ERRC	European Roma Rights Centre
ESF	European Social Funds
ESL	Early School Leaving
EU	European Union
GPA	Grade Point Average
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison
IPA	Instruments for Pre-Accession
J-PAL	Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
LHP	Law and Humanities Program
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSF	Open Society Foundations
PDF	Professional Development Fund
RCT	Randomized Control Trials
RECI	Roma Early Childhood Inclusion
REF	Roma Education Fund
RMUSP	Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program
RHSP	Roma Health Scholarship Program
RISP	Roma International Scholar Program
TARI	Technical Assistance for Roma Inclusion

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This Report has been prepared by REF staff.

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RMUSP scholarship beneficiaries Ariela Tifi, Klaudia Veizaj,  
Aurora Koci and Danjel Hyseni attend the REF Gala held in  
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GOVERNUL ROMÂNIEI  
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CERCETĂRII ȘTIINȚIFICE



Organization for Security and  
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Government of Montenegro  
Ministry for Human and Minority Rights



Government of Montenegro  
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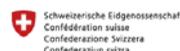
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Roma Education Fund

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