

# Slovakia

## EUROSTAT 2017/ OECD 2015

Population	5,397,036
Roma population official	105,738
Roma population unofficial	380,000-600,000
Early school leavers (2015)	6.9%
Early childhood education (2015)	28.4%
Tertiary educational attainment (EUROSTAT 2015)	23.6%

- ✓ Early childhood education
- ✓ Primary education / Desegregation
- ✓ Secondary school scholarships
- ✓ Tertiary education scholarship program
- ✓ REF-implemented project - VELUX

## ACTIVE GRANTS

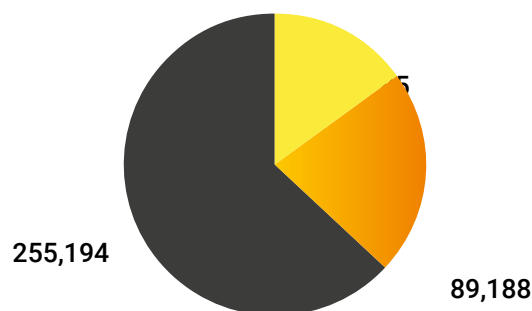
Organization	Project name	Amount Approved by REF Board (EUR)
REF Slovakia Foundation	Secondary Scholarship Program	236,282
Ternipe – Association for Roma Youth in Slovakia and Hungary	After-school Model in Rimavská Seč	69,752
Equal Chances Association	A Good Start – Phase 3 Zborov	51,767
County Association of Romani Initiatives – KARI Union	A Good Start – Phase 3 Banska Bystrica	44,545
Cultural Association of Roma in Slovakia	A Good Start – Phase 3 Martin	67,960
Equal Chances Association	A Good Start – Phase 4 Zborov	29,550
County Association of Romani Initiatives	A Good Start – Phase 4 Banska Bystrica	20,000
Roma Education Support Trust – Opre Roma	Training: Creation of a Desegregated and Fully Inclusive Environment at Slovak Schools in cooperation with ROCEPO – Roma Education Centre Prešov	1,350

## REF-IMPLEMENTED PROJECT

Donor	REF Network Entity	Project name	Contracted amount
VELUX FOUNDATIONS	REF Hungary	Pedagogy Scholarship Program in Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia	1,139,000

## REF investments in Slovakia in 2016, EUR

- Co-funding
- Scholarships awarded
- Grants contracted



## BACKGROUND

The latest census in Slovakia (2011) shows that two percent of the population self-identified as Roma, the second largest ethnic minority in Slovakia after Hungarians. Unofficial sources say that Roma represent 7.5 percent of Slovak inhabitants. In response to growing extremism in the country over the last decade, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic recommends that secondary schools and institutions offer activities aimed to prevent racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, extremism and other forms of intolerance through excursions to concentration camps and commemorative places of holocaust in Slovakia and the region. Nevertheless, according to the Slovak Public Defender of Rights, in 2013 Roma represented over 88 percent of the pupils in the special education classes and schools surveyed.<sup>15</sup>

Early school leaving of Roma from secondary schools is very high; while only 35 percent of Roma students enroll in secondary schools, only about 19 percent graduate. UNDP figures further indicate that only two percent of the working age Roma population (aged 15-65) completed the Matura exam which must be passed in order to apply to a university or other institutions of higher education, and enrollment in tertiary education is below one percent.

## REF IN SLOVAKIA

### Expanding Roma children's access to quality early childhood education and care

**327** children involved in Toy Library activities

**16** kindergartens included in the projects

**4** participating municipalities

**399** parents involved in ECD clubs, Your Story session and other community activities

Only **3%** dropout rate from the kindergartens

<sup>15</sup> Available online: <http://www.vop.gov.sk/files/ExtraordinaryReport.pdf>

## REF Slovakia enhances academic performance of Roma students in vocational schools and gymnasia through merit-based (GPA-related) schemes

**97%** graduation rate among the secondary school recipients in year 2015-16

**82%** transition rate from secondary to tertiary education

**2%** dropout rate

**0.2%** unjustified absences among the secondary school recipients in year 2015-16

REF's nationwide secondary scholarship program, implemented since 2011, is the only specific program aimed for Roma students in secondary schools in Slovakia. The goal is to address the problem of low retention, completion and achievement rate of Roma students in secondary education, as well as to improve the transition rate of Roma students from secondary to tertiary education, through the provision of scholarships which are also accompanied by mentoring and tutoring support to improve or maintain academic performance. REF worked closely with the Ministry of Interior through the Office of Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities in Slovakia which provided financial support for mentoring and tutoring of the Roma scholarship beneficiaries in school year 2016-2017.

In addition to increasing the number of Roma students who complete secondary and tertiary education, the long-term goal of the secondary scholarship program is to increase their employability in Slovakia. Along the way, the program aims at additional results such as boosting the self-confidence and self-esteem of Roma communities, positively changing the perception of Roma by the non-Roma and encouraging educational institutions to offer a more inclusive learning environment for Roma students. The project creates a solid base for reducing the gap between Roma and non-Roma students and develops and promotes mentorship and tutorship as a model for academic support of disadvantaged students.

Two summer camps were organized in 2016 for 51 scholarship beneficiaries of both the Secondary Scholarship Program and Velux Pedagogical Scholarship Program. The aim was to have an event where students could meet, interact and share experience on their pedagogical studies and enhance their social and professional skills. A "Living library" activity was organized with invited guests as living books, sharing their inspirational and motivational stories. Participants were kindergarten and primary school teachers, employees of Methodological Pedagogical Center in Prešov, mentors and representatives of the State Scientific Library in Prešov. The students left the camps with a renewed sense of the significance of being educated young Roma who will be future educators and make a difference in the Roma community by being role models to the younger generations.

In the academic year 2015-16 REF Slovakia supported 210 students in three categories:

**40** gymnasium students

**45** vocational school students with GPA up to 1.54 (excellent)

**125** vocational school students with GPA 1.55 – 2.5 (very good to excellent)

**15** mentors and **42** tutors from 22 secondary schools were engaged to help the students in need of additional academic support.

In the academic year 2016-17 REF Slovakia supported 386 pupils from 129 secondary schools in four categories:

- 69** first year gymnasium students
- 66** gymnasium students in years 2-4
- 59** vocational schools with very good GPA up to 1.54
- 192** vocational school students with good GPA from 1.55 – 2.5

**12** mentors and **15** tutors were secured to work with students in **12** secondary schools.

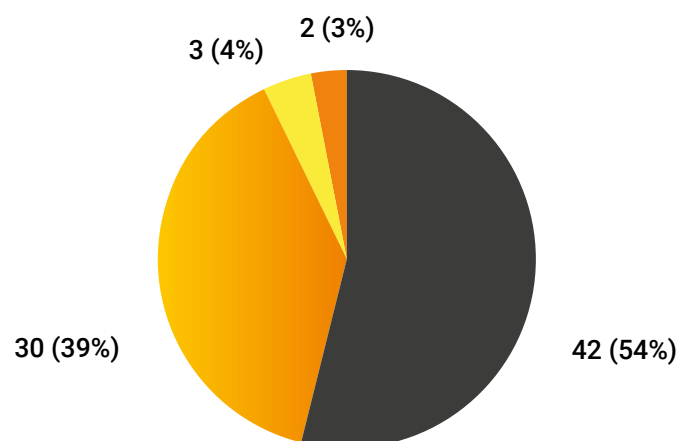
## REF SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (REF SP)

Out of the 139 scholarship applications received from students from Slovakia for the 2016-2017 academic year, 79 were awarded scholarships, including 2 students who received support to study abroad in universities in Budapest, Hungary and Texas, USA.

Program	Submitted applications	Eligible	Beneficiaries	Ratio of beneficiaries from eligible
RMUSP	136	115	77	67%
RISP	3	2	2	100%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>68%</b>

## RMUSP levels of study in Slovakia in 2016-2017

- BA
- MA
- Undivided
- PhD



## MONITORING REF SP BENEFICIARIES' ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND GRADUATION STATUS IN 2015-2016

In 2016 the REF SP tracked beneficiaries' progress in order to monitor students' academic advancement, successful graduation, and cases of students interrupting or dropping out from their studies.

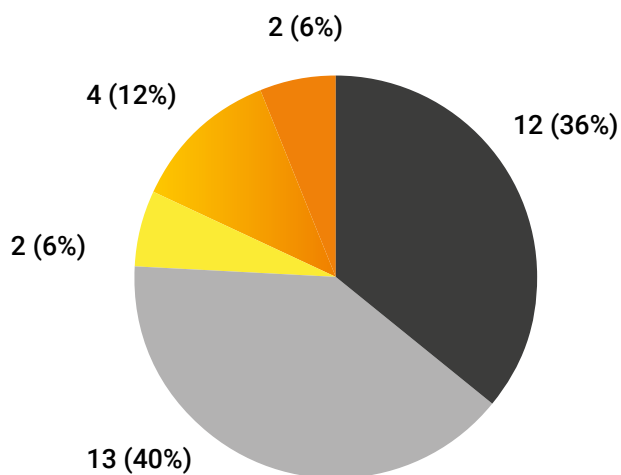
**90%** progressed successfully to the 2016-17 academic year.

Out of the **38** students who continued their studies in 2016-17, **28** continued with REF Scholarship Program support

**33** out of **42** final year students graduated (78%), **14** BAs and **19** MAs. Nine students (22%) prolonged thesis writing by one year or needed to retake final exams.

### RMUSP graduates' fields of study in Slovakia in 2015-2016

- Humanities
- Social Sciences
- Health/Medical Studies
- Education/Pedagogy
- Arts



## Spotlight



### Olga Bagarová, RMUSP Comenius University in Bratislava, Organic Chemistry

Olga Bagarová comes from a Roma settlement in the eastern foothills of the Tatras in Slovakia. She attended mostly segregated schools, but due to her academic discipline she was regarded as an “exception” and not weeded out from non-Roma classes. Her parents played a large part in encouraging her love of math and science, and by now she is a sophomore in chemistry at the Comenius University in Bratislava.

*I remember that in school everyone was kind to me, but when talking about Roma in general, they did not like us, and they did not hide their feelings. I knew that they considered me to be an “exception” and if I did not happen to have good grades, they would not bother to talk to me. Later on, I started to attend a bilingual grammar school. It was not too hard and I was again the only Roma in our class. Everyone got on very well, but it was exactly the same. Their opinions about Roma are not very favorable and I was again the “exception.” If I ceased being friends with everyone who thinks that a polite educated Roma is a bizarre and rare phenomenon, I would not have any friends at all. The majority rarely see many positive examples of Roma, so they think that Roma are satisfied with being excluded and since they do nothing to change the situation.*

*Although I was motivated and had a stable family life, it would have been nearly impossible to study without a REF scholarship. The scholarship is not only about money but also about opportunities and consciousness. I get to meet other young educated people and I am very happy to know that there are so many future Roma leaders and people show society that we are successful just by going about their daily lives. I also know that I can turn to REF’s staff in Slovakia for advice and they will listen and try to help.*

*At age 17 I was already involved in social issues. I have trained in quite a few national and international workshops and became a local volunteer to help, motivate and educate Roma teenagers and youth, including time at Lunix IX, one of Slovakia’s most disadvantaged Roma communities.*