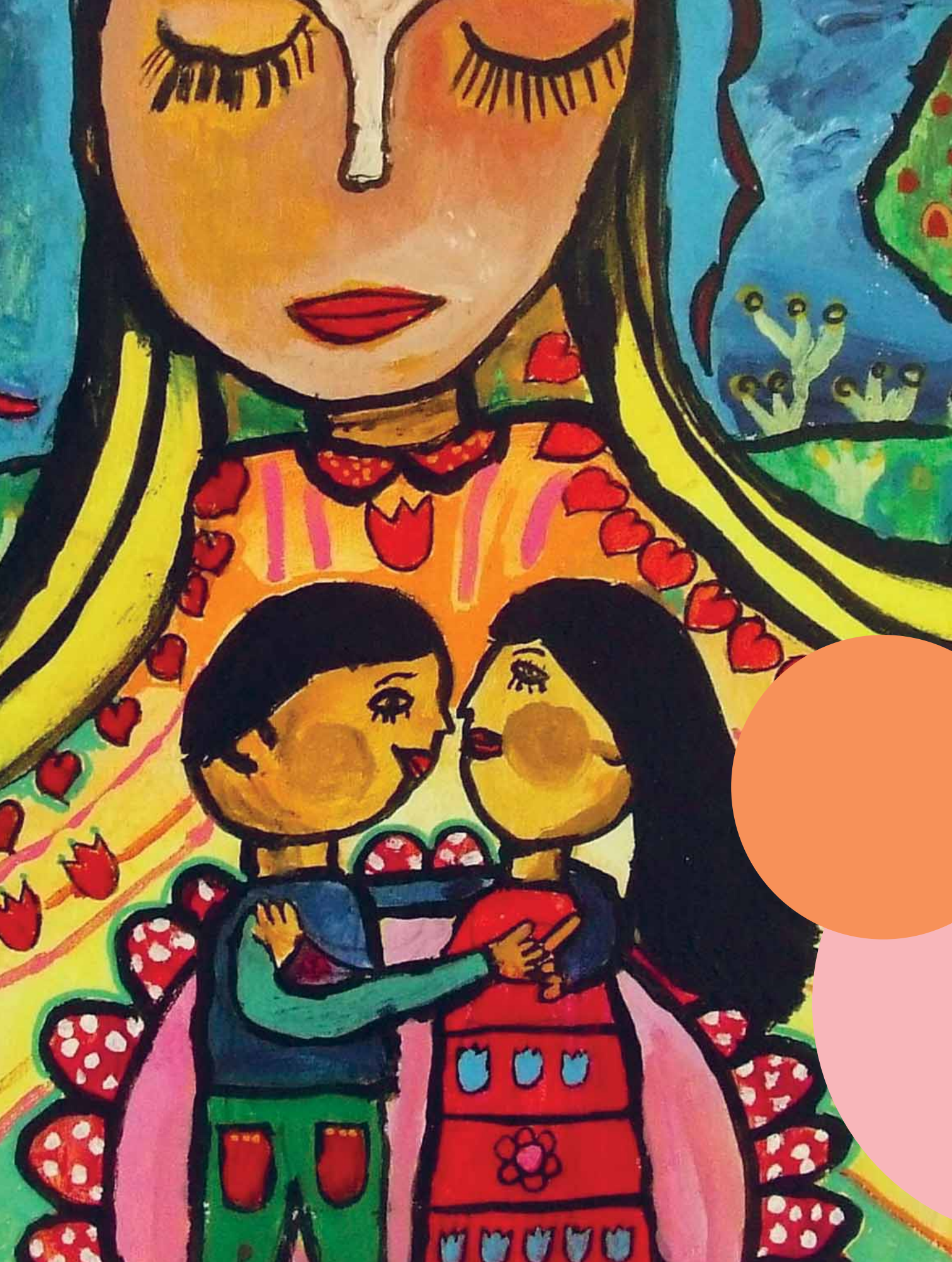


ROMA
EDUCATION
FUND

2013

ANNUAL REPORT





- 01 Father and child participants in REF's A Good Start program in eastern Macedonia.
Photo: Srdjan Ilic
- 02 Teenage girls study during a summer literacy program at Konik Camp in Podgorica, Montenegro.
Photo: Kieran Kesner
- 03 RMUSP finalist at the REF Scholarship Gala in Skopje, Macedonia in November 2013.
Photo: Robert Atanasovski



01



02



03

R O M A
E D U C A T I O N
F U N

Artwork by Mezó Károly Berettyóújfalú, 2013

Reproduced with permission of the Igazgyöngy Foundation

Available online:
<http://igazgyongy-alapitvany.hu/en/>

C

CONTENTS

C M

04–05

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

D L

06–07

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

E S

08–015

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

F M

016–017

FIVE MODELS SHAPING REF GRANTS AND POLICY

N

018–025

2013 IN NUMBERS

Grant Program
Scholarship Program
Leveraging Funds for Roma Education

C E

026–035

CENTRAL EUROPE

Czech Republic / Hungary / Slovakia

E E

036–041

EASTERN EUROPE

Moldova / Russia / Ukraine

B

042–055

BALKANS

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

S E E

056–069

SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

Bulgaria / Romania

F A

070–079

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

B S

080–081

BOARDS AND STAFF

G T

082–085

GRANT TABLE 2013

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Dear Readers,

Nine years have passed since I first joined the Roma Education Fund in 2005. Since my mandate will soon come to an end, this will be my last message as Chairman of the Board. After the extraordinary privilege of working for the REF, I would like to use this opportunity to review some of REF's great achievements since its establishment in 2005. I also would like to share some of the lessons that I have learnt while working with REF to build a stable institution capable of standing up for Romani children's right to education.

Working in 16 countries, REF has developed a model project intervention that enables us to reduce the education gaps among Roma and non-Roma. This intervention includes educational tools and methods to increase the participation of Romani children in preschool and primary education; working with Romani families and non-Romani community members; facilitating the transition from primary to secondary education by reducing dropout rates and providing additional educational support, which proves to be one of the best areas for investing in Roma education; and improving methods and building skills among teaching professionals as well as motivating them to support Roma education – and which taken together represent some of the greatest achievements of our Fund. Last but not least, by promoting the transition from secondary to tertiary education as well as improving graduation rates among Romani students in higher education, REF is in the unique position to affirm that it successfully managed to support more than 8,000 Romani university students to graduate from higher education through its Scholarship Program. None of this could have been achieved without the work of REF's dedicated staff and the active participation of Board members. I would like to take this last opportunity to thank all REF family members for their commitment and effort in making this Foundation a respectable charity institution.

Regarding the future, there are other things to be done to benefit the education of Romani children. The financial resources that are available to support education of Roma represent a key factor but not an exclusive one. Over the

years REF has managed to mobilize financial resources along with its abilities, skills, professional staff, confidence and transparency. But two substantial challenges remain. The first is to scale-up more project interventions that will support more children and provide opportunities for quality education. For that there is a need for REF to diversify and engage itself in more solid partnerships with public central authorities as well as local public authorities. In this way, REF should use the same ingredients that made its programs successful and funnel them into larger and more ambitious projects. The second challenge for the future is for REF to orient itself towards making the best use of the funding opportunities of the European Commission and European Structural Funds.

Here, I would remind you that REF was successful when using European Structural Funds in Romania. Although it was not easy to manage the challenges brought about by their implementation, we have learnt there is a need for more institutional and financial efforts to successfully complete European Structural Funds projects. I'm happy to say that REF's team did very well in meeting the project indicators and expected outcomes. Learning from these lessons, REF should aim to reach larger funding opportunities due to the experiences gained until today, for I believe that no one else can do it better than REF.

In future, I would be very pleased to know that REF has managed to support more and more Romani children to access quality education, to hear about its ongoing professional development, and last but not least, to see REF focus more upon the transition from school to labor market.

I cannot write this message without using the opportunity to welcome Judit Tóth, who recently joined our Foundation as Treasurer of the Board, and who brings some 25 years of experience from the Institute for Training and Consulting in Banking.



04



05

04 RMUSP finalist speaking at a panel at REF Scholarship Gala in Budapest, Hungary in November 2013. Photo: Zoltán Sárosi
05 Bulgarian RMUSP finalists after the REF Scholarship Gala in Sofia, Bulgaria in December 2013. Photo: Eleonora Kostadinova and Katerina Pencheva

I also wish to thank Pierre Gassmann whose membership mandate of the Board also is close to ending. Pierre stood by REF since its establishment and was among the most active Board members. Over the years, Pierre proved his support for the Roma community through his active role in the decision-making of the Board and offered his support when REF needed interim management. Pierre has been a resourceful senior mentor from whom I have gained a great amount of experience, and I wish here to express my profound gratitude for his outstanding contribution to the development of the Foundation.

Finally, I would like to thank all our executive directors, past and present, for their cooperation and our work together over the past eight years, their commitment and support and their professional achievements in their capacity as managers who have made REF the leading international NGO in the field of Roma education that it is today. Hereby, I extend my thanks and appreciation to all of our staff members for their commitment and dedication to the Roma issue.

I will close my message for 2013 Annual Report by expressing once again my full commitment to the Roma issue and assure you that I will continue to do my work in Romania, taking with me the great experience I had with REF and sharing it with other stakeholders in civil society and state

institutions, and among Romani community members. In my capacity as a Romani leader, I will continue in future to bring my contribution to improving the situation of Roma in Europe.

Yours sincerely,

Costel Bercus, Chairman of the Board

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

When the Decade started nearly ten years ago, almost no one could have predicted the current economic crisis. Drastic cuts in public expenditure gravely affected the education sector, with the poorest and most disadvantaged communities being hardest hit. The deterioration was greatest in Romania and Bulgaria, which have some of the largest Roma communities. Between 2008 and 2010 public expenditure in real terms was cut by 40 percent in Romania and 21.6 percent in Bulgaria. While educational expenditure relative to gross domestic product (GDP) was greater than six percent in nearly half of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and G20 countries in 2013, five countries spent less than five percent on education.¹ Among this five are the Czech Republic (4.7 percent), Hungary (4.6 percent) and Slovakia (4.6 percent).

After eight years of REF's policy advocacy, project implementation and cooperation, there has been a discernible and positive shift in attitudes towards Roma education and many concrete achievements. A large number of organizations have joined in REF's mission to close the gap in educational outcomes, and are actively engaged working in the field with Roma communities and schools. More and more governments have developed inclusive strategies for Roma education in national policies.

At the European Union level Roma advocates are increasingly visible and across the continent there is a growing number of well-educated Romani professionals and active citizens. The Decade of Roma Inclusion and the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies provided two of the most important political frameworks for a comprehensive approach to inclusive education for Roma. These were important steps forward, because prior to the launch of the Decade in 2005, Roma education rarely surfaced as a pressing priority in EU or national policy agendas. Since then the policy debate has been utterly transformed, and from the highest levels – at least in policy documents – there is a firm consensus and commitment around closing the gap in terms of educational outcomes for Roma. However, in too many countries this has yet to translate into effective implementation.

In the strongest political signal yet to come from Brussels, the Council of the European Union recommendations adopted on December 10, 2013 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 Roma pupils complete at least compulsory education.” The measures recommended included: eliminating any school segregation; ending inappropriate placement of Roma pupils in special 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 – all approaches REF has provided in its activities and programs.

In its assessment of the national integration strategies, the Commission called on specific member states to develop “concrete targets and corresponding measures” to address segregation (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia); to pay more attention to higher education (Bulgaria); to ensure that mainstream policies respond to the specific needs of Roma (Hungary, Slovakia); to ensure that all children finish primary school and facilitate completion of secondary education (Romania); to promote second-chance education (Slovakia). The Council recommendations reaffirmed the importance of widening access to second-chance education and adult learning, and urged member states to provide support for the acquisition of skills that are adapted to the needs of the labor market. The Commission urged states to develop robust monitoring mechanisms; to devise concrete measures; allocate proportionate financial resources; set clear targets for measurable deliverables; and to be “convincing” in fighting discrimination. The Commission Communication of June 2013 followed by the Council Recommendations in December was the strongest expression of political will from the EU, but the task ahead remains to make a tangible difference to the lives of millions of Roma across Europe.

Affirmative policies still face challenges from many quarters. However, our experience in the Visegrad countries and Montenegro, Romania and Serbia and FYR Macedonia is encouraging. While the impact is difficult to measure, in terms of outcomes we see a growing number of young Roma in

06 RMUSP finalists sign their contracts at the REF Scholarship Gala in Skopje, Macedonia.
Photo: Robert Atanasovski

secondary and tertiary education. When REF started its secondary scholarship program in 2007, the dropout rate of Roma students in countries where REF intervened was as much as 26 percent. After four years of implementation, REF has reduced dropout levels to less than six percent in its beneficiary population. Over the last three academic years, among graduate students the dropout rate is zero percent.

Across the continent many millions of Roma subsist in conditions of desperate poverty and exclusion. Bearing in mind that so many live in such dire and inhumane circumstances, I find it difficult to report about our achievements to date, as we are acutely aware of how much more needs to be done. However, in terms of progress made, allow me to share some independent research findings with you: according to World Bank research,² kindergarten enrollment is increasing and this outcome concurs with REF activities; REF runs kindergarten enrollment projects in all of its focus countries. The number of Roma completing secondary education increased over the last eight years. Significant progress can be observed, for example, in FYR Macedonia that has been quantified by a recent UNDP study.³ In 2004 about 10 percent of Roma completed upper secondary education. By comparison in 2011, the completion rate in FYR Macedonia had risen to 17 percent. REF played a decisive role in this achievement: since 2007 REF has operated a secondary scholarship program tied to a mentoring and tutoring scheme that supported 60 percent of the Roma students in secondary education in FYR Macedonia. In neighboring Bulgaria, primary school dropout rates declined and completion rates of at least lower secondary education improved by 16 percent compared to 2004. REF invested significant efforts and funds into its Bulgarian portfolio, and supported around 4,000 Roma children to complete quality education in integrated schools.

We still have a relatively long way to go before anyone could say that the gap has closed between Roma and non-Roma students but we believe it is visibly decreasing. Data from the Regional Roma Survey conducted by UNDP and World Bank⁴ shows that, of the four Decade priority areas, it is only in education that clear advances are being made.



06

For these achievements we must thank our donors and partners in the field.

Judit Szira, Executive Director

¹ Noorani, S., Pejnovic, S. and Desurmont, A. (2012). *National Sheets on Education Budgets in Europe*. Eurydice: Brussels. Available online: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/National_Budgets.pdf

² De Laat, J., with Ali, R., Illieva, V., Sykora, C. and Lepeshko, N. (2012). *Toward an Equal Start. Closing the Early Learning Gap for Roma Children in Eastern Europe*. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available online: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTROMA/Resources/RomaECDFinalReport.pdf>

³ Brüggemann, C. (2012). *Roma Education in Comparative Perspective. Analysis of the UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011*. Roma Inclusion Working Papers. Bratislava: United Nations Development Programme. Available online: http://issuu.com/undp_in_europe_cis/docs/education_web

⁴ Brüggemann, C. (2012). *Roma Education in Comparative Perspective*. Bratislava: UNDP. Available online: http://issuu.com/undp_in_europe_cis/docs/education_web

07 Teenage girls study during a summer literacy program at Konik Camp in Podgorica, Montenegro. Photo: Kieran Kesner
08 Young boys react in Konik Camp, Podgorica, Montenegro. Photo: Kieran Kesner



07



08

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Roma Education Fund (REF) has been working since 2005 to promote equal access to quality education for Roma in all countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Its mission is to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. To achieve this mission, REF uses four major tools: (1) the provision of **grants** to consortiums of civil society and public institutions implementing education reform projects; (2) the provision of **loans** (revolving grants) that provide bridge funding for efficient implementation of EU funds for projects in the field of education; (3) provision of **scholarships** to Romani students at tertiary education level; and (4) initiating **research and policy** dialogue on issues affecting the education of Roma such as the prevalence of Roma in special education, segregation and education financing.

After eight years of operation, the Roma Education Fund believes that it is on the tipping point of changing attitudes and commitments towards Roma education. More governments, more mayors, a broad range of European Union (EU) actors and other donors, and the civil sector are working together to invest in Roma education, with more and more quality projects in the field, and by now even state scholarship support is being provided in the region. The sum of these achievements shows that, even if the gap could not be closed in just eight years, it was possible to narrow it during REF's eight years of operations.

Only a decade ago, the idea of Romani children regularly attending school seemed impossible. Our programs and

policies have demonstrated that, given the proper investment and intervention, even the most disadvantaged can succeed in their early years, go on to succeed in primary school, transit to quality vocational education or secondary schools, graduate with academic results close to or equal to their mainstream peers, qualify for a place in university and even move on to advanced graduate study.

REF PROGRAMS

Grant Program

In 2013, the REF Board approved 39 new grant requests out of 57 incoming project applications for a contractual commitment of EUR 1.9 million. REF mobilized an additional EUR 2.3 million for Roma education from national and local governments and other funds due to the consortium partners in these projects.

In 2013 REF grants supported a significant number of beneficiaries, some 100,900 Romani children, parents and others under nine project indicators; the largest number of beneficiaries were supported in programs preventing early school leaving (15,892 Romani students across 13 countries), the second largest intervention focused on early childhood education and care (7,252 young Romani children) and the third largest was the secondary scholarship program (3,447 Romani

students). Every successfully completed school year is an individual success of the students and an important achievement, which leads them to the next level in their educational career. The average retention rate of students in REF-supported programs is more than 98 percent, which shows that students participating in REF-supported activities are performing better than the European statistics on early school leaving.⁵

In 2013, REF managed altogether 80 projects; the vast majority were implemented satisfactorily. In 2013 the Grant Program piloted a new application process that required an in-depth needs assessment and data collection about targeted communities; this new approach has been found to help both applicants and REF staff to best identify the most significant education gaps that they intend to address. This will continue in REF's upcoming programming.

REF has been able to document successful policies and programs for the inclusive education of Roma, through activities funded by REF, governments and other donors. We already know well that some policies have long-lasting positive impacts, and understanding why and how this is so can provide clear directions on what to do. The benefits of good policies are also confirmed by the first feedback from REF-financed projects, and in order to multiply good results, REF is shifting from supporting pilot project ideas to model-based project support.

The methodology of the model-based grant applications allows the applicant to select an implementation model that will trigger the appearance of a set of ready-made component entries and indicators, developed by REF together with an anchor team from the World Bank, in the areas of early childhood education and care, primary education with a focus on preventing early school leaving, secondary school scholarships with mentoring and tutoring, adult education programs and Romaversitas (centers) for Romani university students. (For more details, see pages 16 and 17 of this report.)

REF staff conducted 35 comprehensive country visits where they provided technical assistance to the grantees and partners at multiple project sites, with on-site monitoring to control the respective projects' content, quality and operations, engaging local stakeholders and building policy dialogues with strategic decision-makers in each country. In the grant cycle in 2013, as a result of REF's monitoring and evaluation missions to multiple projects, 79 projects were rated as satisfactory and one as unsatisfactory. Several REF-supported projects have been included into the European Union's CEDEFOP best practice projects catalog,⁶ which helps REF to share its experience with professionals involved in education across Europe.

REF's intent is to scale up its successful interventions through policy or government measures in order to create a critical mass of reforms in the region that would encourage Romani children and youth to fulfill their right to an inclusive and quality education.

⁵ In 2013 the dropout rate on average was 2.7 percent according to findings of the European Commission.

⁶ Available online: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4123_en.pdf

In 2013, REF's model on secondary education was scaled up by the governments of Kosovo, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia; they have pledged a significant proportion of co-funding, matching REF's efforts and resources to provide merit-based secondary school scholarships, together with tutoring and mentoring activities for a total of 3,447 Romani students. For example, REF's secondary scholarship support, matching funds with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia, supported 73 percent of the Romani students enrolled in secondary schools in the country.

2013 external evaluation of REF's secondary school scholarship program in three Romanian regions reveals how powerful educational support services can be, boosting disadvantaged students' attendance, achievement and graduation rates. Among the program's student beneficiaries, half live in poverty or severe poverty; a quarter of them travel more than 20 kilometers from home each day to attend vocational and upper secondary schools in the region. Data shows that 70 percent of all recipients increased their grade point average (GPA) under the program; 99 percent of twelfth-graders finished their studies. Sixty-four percent who took the baccalaureate exam passed, bettering the national average of 56 percent. Forty-three percent of twelfth-graders continued their education, from whom 37 percent enrolled in college. This program data shows that it is possible to narrow the gap with conditional cash transfers coupled with careful and efficient program implementation.

REF has aspired to create a substantial increase in the percentage of Romani students enrolling in vocational and secondary schools and decrease the dropout rate by implementing secondary school scholarships in the region; these programs have since become examples for national governments as REF's scholarship programming has been proven to inspire students to enroll in vocational and secondary schools, to complete their studies and to join the labor market or study at the university level. REF believes this to be a great result and an example to be replicated by other countries in the Decade countries. Additionally, REF triggered cross-country learning and an exchange of experiences within the ministries of education in various countries.

Revolving Loan Program

Under the Revolving Loan Program, REF's reimbursable grants have mobilized European Structural Funds worth up to EUR 34.3 million in the period 2005–2013 by providing financial support of EUR 680,000 in reimbursable grants to a total of 39

- 09 RMUSP finalist reacts at the REF Scholarship Gala in Nitra, Slovakia in October 2013.
Photo: Roma Education Fund
- 010 RMUSP finalists and featured student speakers react at the opening of the REF Scholarship Gala in Tirana, Albania in November 2013.
Photo: Ardit Duraku

NGOs for Roma education. This program has been implemented in Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. The Council of Europe Development Bank broke important new ground by making its first loan directed toward Roma inclusion, providing REF with additional resources that REF can put into this revolving loan program in the upcoming years.

Tertiary Scholarship Program

Under the tertiary scholarship program in 2013, REF awarded 1,453 scholarships to individual Romani students in 15 countries for an overall expenditure of EUR 2,975,364, which also includes all administrative costs of the program. Among the scholarship recipients in 2013–2014, 888 students were enrolled in Bachelor degree programs, 336 in Master degree programs, 103 in undivided tertiary education programs and 42 in doctoral programs.⁷

In the 2012–2013 academic year, out of 1,501 scholarship beneficiaries, 513 (34 percent) students were planning to graduate in 2013, of whom 352 (69 percent) graduated successfully, 77 (15 percent) postponed their studies, 45 (9 percent) dropped out and 39 could not yet be reached. From the cohort of 352 students who graduated successfully, 38 percent graduated in Social Sciences, 18 percent in Health and Medicine, 11 percent in Legal Studies, 11 percent in the Humanities, nine percent in Education, nine percent in Natural Sciences and Engineering, and four percent in the Arts.

When compared to data about mainstream students, a study published by the European Commission in 2012, "The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report,"⁸ shows that the completion rate from higher education by 2008 was on average 72 percent in European countries (including non-EU countries such as Armenia and Russia). REF data so far show a completion rate of 69 percent, a difference of less than five percent – reflecting the enormous progress in Roma tertiary education completion rates that REF has enabled with its Scholarship Program.

⁷ Eighty-four students were also included in vocational studies within RHSP and LHP scholarship schemes.

⁸ Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. (2012). "The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report." Brussels: Eurydice. Available online: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/EC-30-12-534/EN/EC-30-12-534-EN.PDF



09

In 2013, the Scholarship Program held six national RMUSP galas and invited the national press in Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, FYR Macedonia and Slovakia to meet nearly 600 scholarship finalists, providing the mass media with positive examples of Romani academic achievement and diversity. REF's Scholarship Program was cited over 40 times in national print, radio and television alongside a sharp increase in traffic on REF's Facebook page.

Following REF's example, as well as a global trend to support disadvantaged students with conditional cash transfers, more and more countries are allocating resources for scholarships for disadvantaged students. In Hungary the government adopted the Romaversitas program and opened nine religious colleges for Romani university students. In Slovakia, the government started to take important steps and began giving significant amounts of scholarships to disadvantaged students. Echoing REF's approach of providing quality secondary school scholarship programs that make a substantial difference in Romani students educational careers, the governments of Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Romania and Serbia have scaled up their scholarship programs to varying degrees – upgrading the amount of financial support available per month and the overall ability of such scholarships to anchor children in the school system and allow them to complete their studies.



010

Policy and Research

REF made a huge step forward in 2013 by gaining the support of the European Commission's PROGRESS program in a partnership with the Slovak government's Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities to undertake an impact evaluation of its early childhood education and care activity, Your Story.⁹ Years of REF experience in Slovakia resulted in scaling up the original pilot program from four localities to 21, and from a civil society initiative to a government-led program in the most disadvantaged areas of Slovakia. This is an important milestone in promoting early childhood activities and bringing government commitments forward, especially where preschool is not compulsory yet. This is the first time when a Decade country evaluates a Roma education activity by involving randomized control groups. The methodology of this impact evaluation has been designed by the World Bank and J-Pal,¹⁰ experts in randomized controlled trials and impact evaluations.

In a detailed study published by REF in 2013, professors Kézdi and Kertesi¹⁰ aimed to examine the degree to which residential segregation, inter-school mobility, local educational policies and the share of a town's Romani population influence school segregation in Hungarian primary schools. In order to determine the impact of various factors on school segregation, a sample was conducted in 100 towns and cities in Hungary with the largest Romani populations outside of Budapest. It was found that the inter-district mobility of

⁹ Your Story is a program that empowers families, especially women, by using literacy as a tool for empowerment through reading children's books.

¹⁰ J-Pal is Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab.

¹¹ Available online: http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/school_segregationschool_choice_and_educational_policies_-_final.2013.pdf

011 A volunteer assists a young Roma girl with her homework after school at the House of Colors in Tirana, Albania. Photo: Elvin Shytaj

higher status students (white flight), local educational policies and the share of the Romani population in a town were found to have the largest degree of influence on school segregation while residential segregation plays a negligible role. Such starting results provide evidence for continuing REF advocacy that inclusive educational outcomes are not determined by residential segregation; indeed, this evidence challenges common misconceptions that school segregation mainly is the result of residential segregation.

To encourage states to rid their school systems of segregation, REF has engaged in action research to collect information and carry out cost-benefit analyses that should lead to efficient policymaking towards integration benefits (including economic benefits and increase in social capital). In 2013, REF documented its experience in school desegregation by developing a toolkit, "Making Desegregation Work!" The toolkit provides an overview on the types of school segregation, offers solutions and demonstrate good practices that have

worked to make education systems more inclusive for Romani students.¹²

In Romania, home to one of Europe's largest and most diverse Romani populations, REF aspired to demonstrate to the Romanian government how substantial funding available from the European Union could be used to develop supplemental programs to ensure high-quality, inclusive education for Roma. Among four projects awarded to REF three years ago, 50 School After School study halls were created across Romania to prevent the early school leaving of over 2,200 at-risk Romani primary school students, whereby over 85 percent improved their academic results in language and math. In parallel, REF reached another 1,500 lower secondary school students at risk of early school leaving with mentoring and tutoring at 50 more sites in Romania through its Equal Opportunities Program. This project effectively reduced early school leaving to 6.3 percent of those enrolled in the program, compared to 26.4 percent of those students who were not enrolled.

In 2013 REF also began to survey the educational and employment outcomes of its Scholarship Program with a Tracer Study, piloting it in Moldova, Russia and Ukraine.¹³ REF's Scholarship Program aims to allow more and more Romani students to enroll in and graduate from tertiary education

with a professional qualification, and this study points to how Romani students are decreasing the gap in educational expectations and outcomes. The Tracer data reveals that having a scholarship for the majority of Romani students was a substantive help to enroll, progress and graduate successfully from tertiary education, without making sacrifices about the desired major or compromising one's full-time studies. While the program contributed to reducing the gap in education outcomes, the gap in employment after graduating is still substantial; the study revealed that the unemployment rate is higher among Romani higher education graduates than among non-Romani peers of comparable age.

As an educational foundation, REF aspires to influence future generations of teachers, involving them in REF's fieldwork and advocating for inclusive teaching methods to be included in the academic curricula of pedagogical faculties. Such a revised university curriculum has two components: students receive credits for attending lectures combined with compulsory

practical training held in REF project sites. REF hosted a policy exchange with representatives of universities providing pre-service teacher training from Hungary, FYR Macedonia and Romania in mid-December, including Goce Delcev University - Shtip and the University of Skopje from FYR Macedonia, the Emanuel University of Oradea from Romania and the University of Miskolc and the Teacher College from Nyíregyháza from Hungary. As a result, new approaches to learning have begun for a new cohort of student-teachers in these universities, and the curriculum has been reformed to reflect this change.

011



TABLE 1. REF PROGRAM EXPENDITURES, 2013

	NOTES	REF SWITZERLAND	REF ROMANIA	REF HUNGARY
		2013 EUR	2013 EUR	2013 EUR
EXPENDITURE				
Project Support Program (Grants)	3	1,869,971	179,652	6,160
Tertiary Scholarships	4	2,746,007	21,967	207,390
EU Roma Pilot - A Good Start and complementary projects	5	97,056	0	99,676
Konik Camp Project in Montenegro	6	1,920	0	180,180
Communications	7	258,829	0	92,163
Policy development and capacity building	8	307,085	0	336,891
International family project - Fundación Secretariado Gitano	9	7,162	4,297	4,698
REF Romania - Equal Opportunities	10	0	1,262,594	29,792
REF Romania - School After School	11	0	1,371,653	0
REF Romania - Health Program	12	0	602,707	0
REF Romania - Youth on Labor Market	13	0	149	0
REF Romania and its partners' capacity building	14	112,806	220,013	1,650
PROGRESS project in Slovakia	15	0	0	5,933
UNICEF		0	-36	0
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Hungary		910,000	0	0
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Romania		201,670	0	0
Total Programs and Grants		6,512,507	3,662,996	964,533

¹² Available online: http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/desegregation_toolkitclean_draft_27_march_14.pdf

¹³ Available online: http://romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/a_tracer_study_ref_2014.pdf

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 012 Parliamentarian Ágnes Oszolykán speaks at the REF Scholarship Gala in Budapest in November 2013. Photo: Zoltán Sárosi
- 013 RMUSP finalist speaks to her peers at the REF Scholarship Gala in Budapest in December 2013. Photo: Zoltán Sárosi
- 014 Teacher and student during a summer literacy program at Konik Camp in Podgorica, Montenegro. Photo: Kieran Kesner



Financing and Leveraging Funds for Roma Education

In managing its programs, REF is among the most efficient and effective organizations operating in the field of education. REF spends 92 percent of its operating budget on programs, ensuring that donations have a maximum impact in 16 countries.

From a total budget of approximately EUR 11 million in 2013, REF contracted EUR 1.9 million on 39 new grants and spent another EUR 2.9 million on tertiary scholarships for over 1,450 Romani students. REF also spent EUR 3.6 million to prefinance and implement European Structural Fund projects in Romania, EUR 1.0 million on capacity building, communication, data collection, policy development and training, EUR 0.8 million on administration,¹⁴ with an additional EUR 0.9 million being accounted for by ongoing partnerships in Konik Camp, the follow-up phase of the previously EU-funded early childhood education and care project A Good Start, and a Fundación Secretariado Gitano partnership. Owing to the continuous cost control, proper donor reporting and fundraising, REF's finances were stable in 2013, ensuring an income for smooth operations.¹⁵

On top of the EUR 11 million spent in 2013, REF also leverages funds for Roma education in three different ways with great results, allowing REF to mobilize a much larger pool of financial resources from other sources.

Funds leveraged by the Grant Program in 2013 originate from implementing partners that are participating in REF grant projects, including international foundations, national ministries and agencies, local municipalities, international organizations and private funds. This is a growing tendency and REF intends to leverage funds year by year in the grant program.

REF also started to leverage funds for Roma education directly from EU sources in the last four years, which had a positive result of increasing REF's direct income and also the diverse sources of these funds. In 2013 REF has received income directly from the European Commission in Brussels, European Structural Funds in Romania, Instruments for Pre-Accession in Montenegro and Serbia, and European Structural Funds in Slovakia. Compared to 2010, REF recorded almost a five-fold increase in its funding coming from European sources.¹⁶

Given the scarcity of funds available to Roma NGOs implementing European Structural Funds and other projects in the region, the third way REF leverages funding for Roma education is through a system of revolving loans and reimbursable grants. With REF funding used as bridge finance, REF mobilized money for European Structural Funds worth up to EUR 34.3 million in the period 2005–2013 by providing EUR 680,000 in reimbursable grants. This program has been implemented in Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. The current leveraging ratio is 51 to 1.

TABLE 2. FUNDS LEVERAGED BY THE GRANT PROGRAM IN 2013

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	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	18,688,048
REF Funds Committed (EUR)	3,352,595	5,592,141	4,616,061	3,229,615	2,539,692	2,085,069	3,013,443	2,723,810	1,831,499	28,983,925
Total	5,117,179	7,652,285	5,639,258	5,465,310	3,381,550	5,295,210	6,225,594	4,688,321	4,209,279	47,671,973

¹⁴ Administration has been excluded from this table but can be accounted for fully in REF's full Profit and Loss table on page 74.
¹⁵ Please refer to the financial statement on REF's income on page 78.
¹⁶ Please note that 2014 includes what is contracted the time of writing this report.



014

TABLE 3. FUNDS LEVERAGED FROM EUROPEAN SOURCES, 2013

EU AND IPA FUNDS	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	TOTAL
European Commission - DG REGIO	956,555	717,244	236,195	18,366		1,928,361
Council of Europe				7,788		7,788
Fundación Secretariado Gitano - Comenius	15,782	9,336				25,118
Progress Slovakia					68,941	68,941
Instruments for Pre-Accession - Montenegro Konik Camp			113,537	70,827	119,638	304,002
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe - Instruments for Pre-Accession in Serbia					107,258	107,258
Ostrava Municipality				6,200	6,200	12,400
Romanian Management Authority - Partners		180,128	149,155	406,796		736,079
Romanian Management Authority - POSDRU		2,144,240	556,629	3,233,296	1,924,787	7,858,952
Subtotal of EU and IPA funds	956,555	3,041,612	1,071,298	3,752,609	2,226,824	11,048,898

In 2013 the REF donor family has expanded to welcome new members such as Velux Foundation, the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic and the Municipality of Ostrava, Czech Republic. REF has been supported by the Council of Europe Development Bank loan to provide liquidity for both the implementation of European Structural Fund programs and a revolving loan program for Roma nongovernmental organizations. REF also anticipates a new agreement with Serbian office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in 2014, and which was agreed at the time of writing this report.

REF would like to express its gratitude to its donor family, to members new and old, for their contributions that have allowed us to pursue our mission as a foundation. REF also would like to acknowledge the special role of 29 private individuals who supported the Fund in 2013 with their personal donations.

Summary

Using its available resources and networks, REF promotes equal chances for enrollment and the provision of quality services by public institutions that would culminate in the school success of Romani children in all levels of education. Its strategic vision gives REF the flexibility to quickly target opportunities as they become available. Through partnership with local, regional and national governments, REF can scale up its education models. REF has acquired the resources, experience and know-how for a flexible approach that allows it to choose among advocacy, cooperation or implementation when designing Roma education programs for respective countries in which it operates.

As a result of REF's interventions, reading comprehension and math scores are up among participants at project sites and across programs, reflecting an overall improvement in literacy and numeracy in some of the most disadvantaged Romani communities where improvement was once thought unachievable. No better acknowledgment of REF's beliefs is when a government steps in to act, taking ownership of educational policy and using REF's experience as a guide to Roma education programs as we report in the following pages of REF's 2013 Annual Report.

FIVE MODELS SHAPING REF GRANTS AND POLICY

The Roma Education Fund has begun a shift from its current proposal-based grant design to a model-based grant design. The purpose of the model framework is to better assess REF's actual progress compared to its targets. The methodology of the model-based applications will allow the applicant to select an implementation model which will trigger the appearance of a set of ready-made component entries and indicators.

Developed by REF staff, together with Plamen Danchev and Bojana Naceva from the World Bank's anchor team, the five models will apply to the following areas: (1) early childhood education and care, (2) primary education with focus on preventing early school leaving, (3) secondary school scholarships with mentoring and tutoring, (4) adult education programs and (5) Romaversitas (centers) for Romani university students. These models are anticipated to help implement national Roma social inclusion policies. Project proposals will have well-defined project development objectives, results frameworks, outcome and output indicators, risk assessment combined with risk mitigation measures, project management and implementation requirements, monitoring and evaluation tools; the value of these models is that they will be adopted and implemented on an achievable scale, while good practice and good policy can be scaled up on EU and national levels.

REF has gained extensive experience and knowledge surrounding the types of interventions in and approaches to Roma education that produce results on the ground. A comprehensive evaluation of effective solutions has generated a good practice model for achieving results in

different country and policy settings. It is REF's intention to replace a need-based approach of sponsoring NGO proposals with a more targeted use of resources to fund the models REF believes will generate effective results. REF does not rule out the possibility of accommodating innovative and promising solutions that are produced by civil society organizations, but REF will streamline supported interventions under the broadly defined models that have proven to be effective.

The five models described below serve as a structure to help applicant organizations adopt a well-defined methodology, with an option to adopt those components that are applicable in the context of the localities where they plan to implement a program. It is important to note that applicants can supplement the models by adding additional components and indicators if they are justifiable under a concrete problem-solving framework. All the models include a cross-sectorial component on promoting desegregation and integration of Roma in education.

MODEL 1 EXPANDING ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL EDUCATION: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The early childhood education and care (ECEC) model aims to improve the school readiness and early childhood development outcomes of Romani children aged between zero to six by improving the enrollment and attendance in the mainstream preschool services; enhancing the parenting skills and improving the practices of Romani parents; strengthening the link between parents and preschool facilities; and raising the quality of ECEC services, such as teaching and learning methods.

MODEL 2 AVOIDING EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

The primary education model intends to improve the primary education outcomes of Romani children aged between six and fourteen by supporting primary education enrollment and school-after-school programs (tutoring and mentoring)

with improved access (enrollment) to primary education, preventing early school leaving, enhancing the parental skills, strengthening the link between parents and schools, providing remedial classes to children and offering professional support and guidance to school staff and authorities.

MODEL 3 EXPANDING ACCESS TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

The secondary education model aims to improve the academic performance of students and to maintain the retention and graduation rate of Romani secondary school students through better outreach, provision of scholarships, school-based mentorship support and tutorship support.

MODEL 4 EXPANDING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION: ROMAVERSITAS

The Romaversitas model intends to improve the retention, performance and graduation levels of Romani full-time tertiary education students by providing them with academic tutoring and mentoring and to help strengthen their Romani identity and community participation. This model consists of compulsory and optional components. It serves as a bridge for young Romani scholars and includes scholarships, mentoring, tutoring and additional training in professional development and foreign language competences.

MODEL 5 SECOND CHANCE PROGRAMS FOR ADULT FUNCTIONAL LITERACY AND FORMAL SCHOOL COMPLETION

The adult education and training model aims to improve the education level and employment prospects for young Romani adults. It provides those with incomplete primary and/or secondary education with tutoring and financial support for completing formal primary and/or secondary education. This model also aims to improve the literacy and social communication skills of illiterate and semi-literate Romani

parents (mainly mothers) of preschool- and school-age children and enhance their involvement in their children's education through provision of non-formal literacy and social communication skills trainings.

Summary

Embedding effective models for Roma education requires strong partnerships with national and sub-national education authorities and implies intense communication with them throughout the process of adjusting best practice models to national and local contexts. The move from proposal-based to model-based program design suggests REF's increased accountability and ownership over the implemented projects and their results, as well as the ability to multiply and enhance these models.

REF is currently creating an **online application platform** that will enable the applicants to choose the type of intervention they aim to implement. The system will offer them the tools necessary to create a successful intervention.



015

015 Two siblings pose after tutoring at the community center in Telechiu, Romani. Photo: Zsolt Fekete

2013 IN NUMBERS

GRANT PROGRAM

In 2013, REF continued to reduce the educational gap between Roma and non-Roma through a variety of programs that reached approximately 47,136 Romani children, along with 53,768 parents. The REF Board approved 39 new grant requests out of 57 incoming project applications. There was a slight decrease in the number of applications received in 2013, compared to previous years, notably due to piloting a new more demanding application form, which requires an in-depth needs assessment and data collection from the targeted communities. This new application format enables REF management and the Board to better understand the scope of the problems at the level of specific Romani communities, and at the same time the collected data supports applicants to better identify the most significant education gaps within the targeted communities.

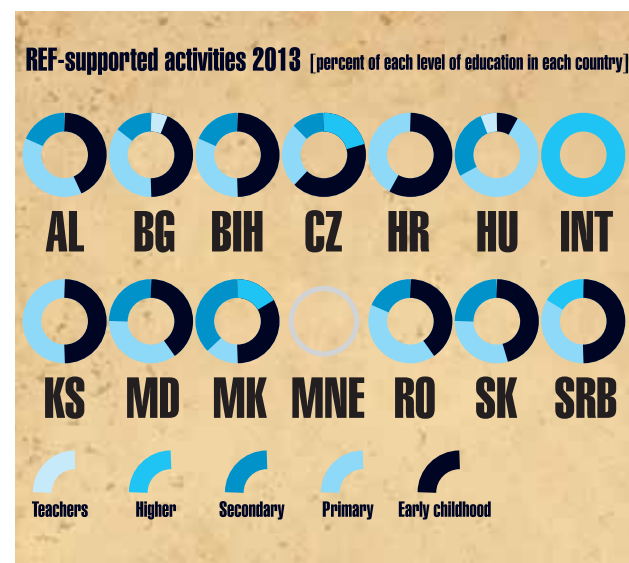
TABLE 4. NEW PROJECTS RECEIVED AND APPROVED, 2006-2013

NEW PROJECTS YEAR								
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Received	130	107	105	86	118	98	80	57
Change from previous year	n/a	-18%	-2%	-18%	37%	-17%	-22%	-29%
Approved	49	34	54	41	36	51	50	39
Change from previous year	n/a	-31%	59%	-24%	-12%	42%	-1%	-22%

REF's Board continued to support projects of sufficient quality but also considered the strategic narrowing of projects to those identified by the Grant Program priorities developed at each level of the education cycle; taking into

account lessons learned through REF-supported experiences and best practices. These include early childhood education and care (ECEC), primary education (early school leaving - ESL), secondary education, adult education and higher education (Romaversitas centers).

In 2013, REF project partners implemented 80 projects across various educational fields. The figure below describes the distribution of REF-supported projects with the elements listed in the program priorities.



Overall, two-thirds (66 percent) of the REF-supported interventions covered compulsory education and one-third (27 percent) covered preschool. Approximately five percent of the projects covered higher education, whereas two percent covered teacher training programs. Teacher training activities took place in Bulgaria (nine percent of all activities in the country) and Hungary (two percent of all activities in the country). The retention rate is significantly better with REF beneficiaries in secondary education and tertiary education, i.e., for those who have already reached the second milestone of an education cycle; 98 percent of REF secondary school scholars complete school and successfully graduate. It is very important that REF keeps supporting and cultivating this target group in order to maintain their chances for graduation and better educational results. These groups also serve as role models for their local communities, families and siblings.

016 Your children from Konik Camp attend a mainstream primary school in Podgorica, Montenegro. Photo: Srdjan Ilic



In Albania, Hungary, Moldova and Romania there were more activities covering primary education than covering early childhood or secondary education. In Croatia and Kosovo, about half of the interventions covered primary education and the other half covered early childhood education.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, FYR Macedonia and Serbia there were more activities covering early childhood education than primary and secondary education. In the Czech Republic there was an equal proportion of interventions implemented at the primary, secondary and tertiary level of education.

2013 was successful for the mainstreaming of REF's model on secondary education, which was scaled up by the governments of Kosovo, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia; within the partnership, the governments have pledged a significant proportion of co-funding, matching REF's efforts and resources to

provide merit-based secondary school scholarships, together with tutoring and mentoring for Romani students. REF's efforts in supporting secondary school Romani students have been realized in half of the Decade countries.

REF continued to oversee the quality of REF-supported projects through monitoring and evaluation visits. REF staff conducted 35 comprehensive country visits, where they provided technical assistance to the grantees and partners at multiple project sites, with on-site monitoring to control the respective projects' content, quality and operations, engaging local stakeholders and building policy dialogues with strategic decision-makers in each country. As a result of REF's monitoring and evaluation missions to multiple projects, 79 projects were rated as satisfactory and only one as unsatisfactory.

TABLE 5. GRANT PROGRAM INDICATORS 2005-2013

YEAR	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
INDICATOR									
NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES									
Participation in preschool education	600	2,966	4,497	10,441	3,418	8,034	11,309	8,178	7,252
Prevention of early school leaving	269	2,765	5,339	7,256	10,938	15,522	18,902	17,205	15,892
Completion of upper secondary education	1,278	2,687	4,797	5,060	6,282	5,303	6,122	4,119	3,447
Participation in tertiary education [1]	207	319	795	636	475	482	566	566	816
Parental participation in children's education	2,050	17,561	29,780	29,674	42,685	50,136	70,139	67,219	52,227
Parents' participation in toy library	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,541
Desegregation	0	1,734	3,553	5,673	6,534	9,331	7,283	1,301	7,815
Prevention/reversal of enrollment in special education	0	353	525	172	125	435	503	528	7,390
In-service teacher training	551	2,977	4,018	4,488	2,945	3,125	3,512	3,085	3,874
Roma employed by REF-funded projects	123	589	802	733	638	553	765	598	650
Total	5,078	31,951	54,106	64,133	74,040	92,921	119,101	102,799	100,904

* includes EU Pilot Project, REF Romania, Demjan Project and IPA KONIK



017 Two boys from Konik Camp in Podgorica, Montenegro.
Photo: Srdjan Ilic

From 2014, in anticipation of enhancing its partnerships under its grants, REF will require grantees to implement new good governance measures alongside the existing regulations on Financing and Procurement already required by REF. This will enhance the operations of partners, with the aim to improve their existing activities.

MORE INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND IN REF'S OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/documents/operational_guidelines_2012_may.pdf

In 2013, REF has supported a chain of Toy Libraries that help to develop the cognitive and motor skills of young children at a community level; it has proved to be an efficient and effective tool in attracting a large number of families and promoting play between children and their parents; about 498 children and 1,541 parents benefited from 12 library projects, including two parent employees at each site. (For more on Toy Libraries, see page 45 of this report.)

In the upcoming period REF activities will widen the focus on the youngest children from ages zero to three in its early childhood development priorities; REF will focus heavily on increasing parenting skills, and supporting healthy childhood development and nurturing; introducing a mother tongue support program for young children whose native language is different from the language of instruction where applicable. REF will continue to expand its program priorities in all areas in its focus countries in the upcoming years; this will allow a solid baseline for improving the education trends across the region.

Based on the results of the Regional Roma Survey conducted by UNDP and World Bank¹⁷ the data shows that, from the Decade of Roma Inclusion's four milestones that have yielded improvements, the best has been the field of education. REF will work to support the trends towards the further improvement of education for Roma.

Table 5 shows the number of participants in REF-supported projects from 2005-2013.

Tables 6, 7 and 8 present REF's spending in its Grant Program broken down by country in 2013, cumulative spending for the 2005-2013 period by country and REF's cumulative grant spending by year, respectively.

¹⁷ Brüggemann, C. (2012). Roma Education in Comparative Perspective. Analysis of the UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011. Roma Inclusion Working Papers. Bratislava: United Nations Development Programme. Available online: http://issuu.com/undp_in_europe_cis/docs/education_web

TABLE 6. PROJECT FINANCING BY COUNTRY, 2013*

all numbers in EUR								
2013								
	ALBANIA	BULGARIA	BOSNIA & HERZ.	CROATIA	CZECH	HUNGARY	KOSOVO	
Committed	130,758	217,628	145,431	71,602	90,266	62,229	480,769	
Contracted	130,719	211,020	76,794	120,639	238,043	183,937	193,075	
Disbursed	107,954	153,262	55,726	65,168	132,196	212,831	104,704	
	FYR MACEDONIA	MOLDOVA	MONTENEGRO	ROMANIA	SERBIA	SLOVAKIA	INTERNATIONAL	TOTAL
Committed	267,464	71,790	129,695	58,710	166,220	483,205	0	2,375,767
Contracted	256,152	71,790	63,508	60,000	166,220	104,174	0	1,876,071
Disbursed	408,710	15,000	7,400	262,510	114,936	245,939	82,276	1,968,612

TABLE 7. PROJECT FINANCING BY COUNTRY, 2005-2013*

all numbers in EUR								
2005-2013								
	ALBANIA	BULGARIA	BOSNIA & HERZ.	CROATIA	CZECH	HUNGARY	KOSOVO	
Committed	806,902	6,067,493	595,319	844,557	969,970	2,550,190	791,826	
Contracted	806,863	6,060,885	526,682	833,426	904,010	2,482,209	504,132	
Disbursed	759,740	5,934,677	433,482	680,205	695,329	2,374,536	342,427	
	FYR MACEDONIA	MOLDOVA	MONTENEGRO	ROMANIA	SERBIA	SLOVAKIA	INTERNATIONAL	TOTAL
Committed	3,818,140	610,660	637,899	5,236,662	3,517,971	2,494,839	521,541	29,463,968
Contracted	3,794,757	610,660	555,512	4,535,797	3,507,231	2,086,841	521,541	27,730,546
Disbursed	3,560,704	511,750	499,404	4,530,188	3,175,220	2,071,373	426,234	25,995,268

TABLE 8. PROJECT FINANCING, 2005-2013*

all numbers in EUR										
2005-2013										
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	TOTAL
Committed	3,352,595	5,592,141	4,616,061	3,229,615	2,539,692	2,085,069	3,099,218	2,573,810	2,375,767	29,463,968
Contracted	2,208,856	6,190,978	4,437,800	3,453,046	2,402,296	1,945,612	2,525,302	2,690,585	1,876,071	27,730,546
Disbursed	1,048,245	3,852,621	4,797,243	4,429,848	2,701,429	2,467,656	2,201,194	2,528,422	1,968,612	25,995,268

* The numbers do not contain accrual reversals and repayments

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

In 2013 REF's Scholarship Program continued to support Romani students in higher education through financial as well as through academic and professional development support through its three in-country scholarship schemes - Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP), Law and Humanities Program (LHP), the Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP) - plus one international scholarship scheme, the Roma International Scholar Program (RISP). For the academic year of 2013-2014 REF awarded a total of 1,453 scholarships to students in 15 countries across all four of the scholarship schemes accumulating an overall budget of EUR 2,975,364, including all administrative expenses related to the program.

In 2013 the Scholarship Program continued the practice of conducting personal interviews with first-time applicants. This strengthened the selection process by helping students to learn more about REF and its goals and gave REF a better understanding of the program's applicants. REF also introduced a system of two separate scholarship installments, with the second installment being conditional upon the successful submission of an interim report containing proof of satisfactory academic results from the first semester as well as proof of enrollment for the second semester by each scholarship beneficiary. This system was introduced to increase the overall accountability of the students benefiting from the program as well as to motivate the students to perform to the best of their academic abilities. In a continuation of the Scholarship Program's network and efforts to its increase visibility, REF organized Scholarship Galas in Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, FYR Macedonia and Slovakia. During these galas students could meet Romani intellectuals, and most importantly meet one another to form the basis of an alumni network.

New Findings on Graduation Rates

The positive impact of REF's tertiary scholarship program can be proven by the data presented below.

In the 2012-2013 academic year, out of 1,505 scholarship beneficiaries, 513 (34 percent) of the students were planning to graduate, 352 (69 percent) graduated successfully; 77 (15 percent) postponed their studies, 45 (nine percent) dropped out and another 39 (nine percent) could not be reached at this time.

When compared to data about mainstream student bodies, a study published by the European Commission in 2012, "The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report," shows that the completion rate from higher education by 2008 was on average 72 percent in European countries (including non-EU countries such as Armenia and Russia).¹⁸ REF data so far show a completion rate of 69 percent, a difference of less than five percent reflecting the enormous progress in the tertiary education completion rates of Roma.

Making this comparison at the country level in the countries where mainstream data is available, Hungary has a completion rate of 51 percent for RMUSP compared to the mainstream graduation rate of 43 percent. The Czech Republic completion rate for RMUSP is 40 percent and 70 percent for mainstream students. In Slovakia, 95 percent of RMUSP beneficiaries graduated, compared to the mainstream rate of 63 percent. No further data on mainstream graduate rates are available from REF's portfolio, but countries with the lowest completion rates in the program are FYR Macedonia (49 percent), Serbia (52 percent), Kosovo (50 percent) Hungary (51 percent) and Czech Republic (40 percent). At the same time, the basket of three LHP countries of Moldova, Russia and Ukraine (92-100 percent), Slovakia (95 percent) and Romania (70 percent) have the highest completion rates.

The graphics on pages 23-24 contain the total numbers of scholarships, as well as the numbers of scholarships given in each scheme, for each academic year between 2008 and 2013.

¹⁸ Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. (2012). "The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report." Brussels: Eurydice. Available online: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY/OFFPUB/EC-30-12-534/EN/EC-30-12-534-EN.PDF>

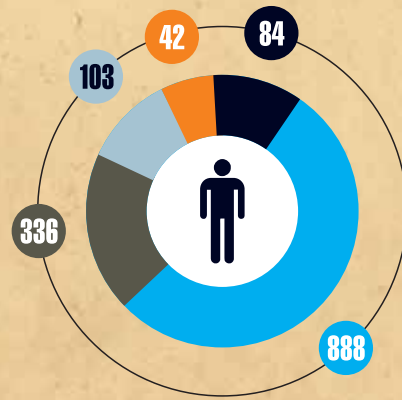
Number of yearly scholarships awarded 2008-2013

Scholarship scheme	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
RMUSP	674	916	1,029	1,081	1,076	1,072
RISP	19	26	20	36	42	36
LHP	84	86	145	157	160	170
RHSP	36	109	249	223	227	175
TOTAL	813	1,137	1,443	1,497	1,505	1,453

Yearly spending for scholarships* 2008-2013

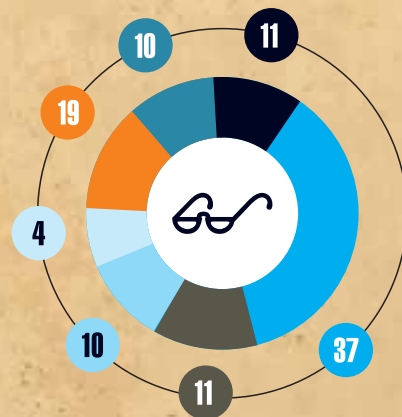
Scholarship scheme	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
RMUSP	585,528	854,451	1,001,254	1,116,277	1,143,409	1,167,393
RISP	80,757	106,347	104,370	195,897	217,632	171,500
LHP	125,450	139,555	169,835	276,272	303,534	311,060
RHSP	123,747	243,290	318,950	260,965	445,595	380,145
TOTAL	915,482	1,343,643	1,594,409	1,849,411	2,110,170	2,030,098

* Spending reflects Scholarship Program stipend costs for beneficiaries and does not include administrative or other program expenses.



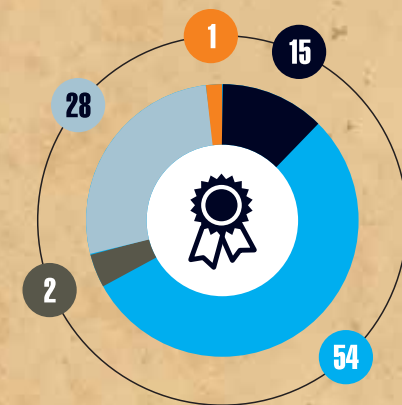
Scholarship beneficiaries by degree level 2013–2014 academic year

Bachelor – 888
Master – 336
Undivided tertiary (medicine) – 103
Doctorate – 42
Vocational – 84



Graduates' field of studies

Humanities – 11%
Social Sciences – 37%
Legal Studies – 11%
Education – 10%
Arts – 4%
Health/Medicine – 19%
Natural Sciences and Engineering – 10%



Graduates' level of diploma obtained

Vocational – 15%
Bachelor – 54%
Undivided tertiary (medicine) – 2%
Master – 28%
Doctorate – 1%



018

018 Young pupils in a village kindergarten in Medimurje County, Croatia.
Photo: Tom Bass

LEVERAGING FUNDS FOR ROMA EDUCATION

REF, together with a broad consortium of educational, governmental and nongovernmental partners, has achieved a positive change, whereby the majority of participating Decade countries are matching REF funding on Roma education with additional financial resources.

Funds leveraged by the Grant Program

In 2013 the Grant Program leveraged funds from its implementing partners in REF grant projects, including national ministries and agencies, local municipalities and international organizations. This is a growing tendency and REF intends to absorb more leveraged funds year by year in the Grant Program, which raised EUR 4,209,279 in 2013. (See Table 2.)

Funds leveraged from EU Calls

REF also started to leverage its funding from European sources in the last four years, which had a positive result of increasing REF's direct income, from institutions like the European Commission in Brussels, European Structural Funds from Romania, Instruments for Pre-Accession in Montenegro and Serbia, and European Structural Funds in Slovakia. Compared to 2010, REF recorded almost a five-fold

increase in its European funding, leveraging EUR 3,752,609 in 2013. (See Table 3.)

Funds leveraged from the Revolving Loan Program

Given the scarcity of funds available to Roma NGOs implementing European Structural Funds and other projects in the region, REF has also made available its financial resources through a system of revolving loans and reimbursable grants. As a result, REF mobilized money for European Structural Funds worth up to EUR 34.3 million in the period 2005–2013 through providing EUR 680,000 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 Roma NGOs, the Council of Europe Development Bank provided a loan to REF, which enables it to make available an additional EUR 1.5 million in financial resources in the form of reimbursable grants in all Decade countries.



019



020

C E

026-035

CENTRAL EUROPE

Czech Republic / Hungary / Slovakia

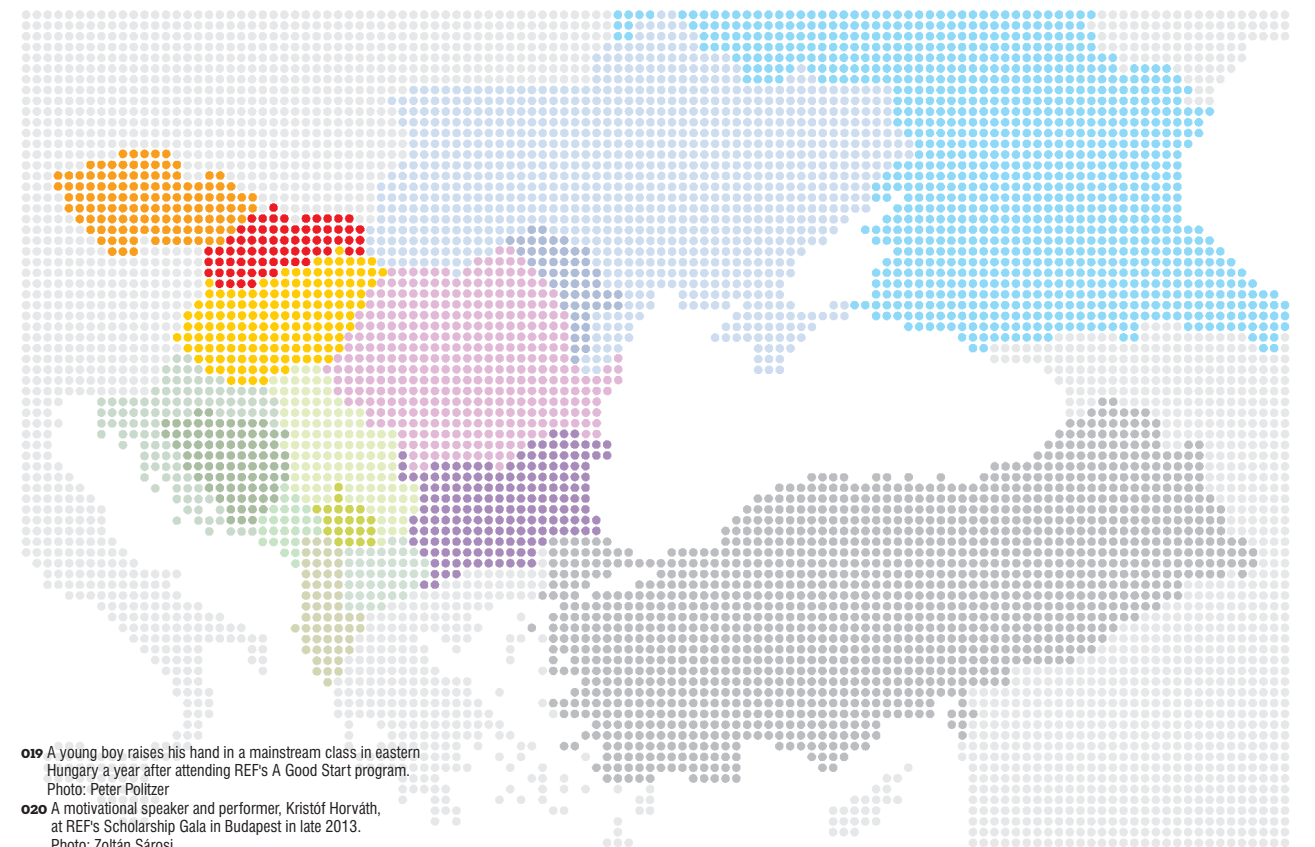
REF and its partners are pursuing a new financial and professional partnership in the Czech Republic with the Municipality of Ostrava, including a small top-up of additional governmental funding, to invest in and provide access to early childhood educational services for disadvantaged Romani children. REF considers this an encouraging signal after the path-breaking *D.H. and Others* decision of the European Court of Human Rights in 2006 that Romani children were systematically assigned to segregated schools based on their racial or ethnic identity rather than intellectual capacities.

The Hungarian government has recently strengthened its requirements regarding compulsory hours of schooling, in effect supporting afterschool tutoring and mentoring as tools to address early school leaving in primary and secondary schools. Afternoon schooling is an increasing trend, slowly being absorbed as an accepted state policy as part of

measures to alleviate early school leaving. REF has supported 19 afterschool study halls to remain in operation, providing mentoring, tutoring and educational support services in Hungary.

In Slovakia, REF has been among the first in Roma-related projects to use randomized control trials (RCT) to analyze the effectiveness of a Roma-targeted intervention, in this case, A Good Start's Your Story project in 21 locations.

In 2012-2013 academic year, REF started to implement its secondary school scholarship model. Without such scholarship support, many Romani students would be unable to finish their studies as their parents simply cannot provide them with the necessary financial support. As a result of tutoring and mentorship, participating children have improved their overall GPAs in most instances.



019 A young boy raises his hand in a mainstream class in eastern Hungary a year after attending REF's A Good Start program. Photo: Peter Pollitzer
020 A motivational speaker and performer, Kristóf Horváth, at REF's Scholarship Gala in Budapest in late 2013. Photo: Zoltán Sárosi

CENTRAL EUROPE

CZECH, HUNGARIAN AND SLOVAK ROMANI UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS

In 2013 in Central Europe, REF received 396 applications for the tertiary level in-country Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP) and 18 applications for the study-abroad Roma International Scholar Program (RISP). Among these applications, 235 successfully passed the selection process. Table 9 presents the respective figures for each program country in the region, while Table 10 presents the distribution of accepted applicants per level of studies.

TABLE 9. SUBMITTED APPLICATIONS VS SCHOLARSHIPS GRANTED FOR THE 2013-2014 ACADEMIC YEAR

	RMUSP		RISP	
	APPLICANTS	BENEFICIARIES	APPLICANTS	BENEFICIARIES
Czech Republic	73	41	2	0
Hungary	180	135	10	7
Slovakia	143	92	6	4
Total	396	268	18	11
		(68%)		(61%)

TABLE 10. SCHOLARSHIP BENEFICIARIES' LEVEL OF STUDIES. 2013-2014 ACADEMIC YEAR

	RMUSP			RISP		
	BACHELOR	MASTER	DOCTORATE	BACHELOR	MASTER	DOCTORATE
Czech Republic	29	12	0	n/a		
Hungary	81	43	11	5	1	1
Slovakia	55	37	0	1	2	1
Total	165	92	11	6	3	2
	(62%)	(34%)	(4%)			

In addition to the scholarship support, scholarship beneficiaries from the region received additional grants for their academic and professional development. Hence, six students from Slovakia and one from Czech Republic received additional financial support for attending foreign language courses in accredited language schools in their localities of residence, while two students in Hungary received additional financial support for conducting research projects.

021 A class of children and their mothers pose at the Telechiu Community Center in western Romania. Photo: Zsolt Fekete
022 A new generation of RMUSP finalists at the conclusion of REF's Scholarship Gala in Skopje, Macedonia in November 2013. Photo: Robert Atanasovski

ABOUT AT A GLANCE

Each country profiled in this report is preceded by a concise list of important data designed to orient readers in the respective educational landscape of each country. What follows as a short commentary on the significance of this data and its interpretation.

ROMA POPULATIONS

Due to a consistent lack of disaggregated data collection on ethnic demographics by many European states, official and accurate numbers for the total population of Roma, much less more specific data about age, gender, income or education, are perceived as being unreliable, incomplete or even nonexistent. To address this outstanding gap, we provide estimates from four sources: (1) official Census data which often does not reflect real numbers since many Roma may be unwilling to voluntarily identify themselves, (2) an unofficial estimate gathered by Roma activists and NGOs and knowledgeable experts in the field, (3) a general estimate from Wikipedia, and (4) an estimate from the Roma and Travellers Division of the Council of Europe. Nearly everyone agrees that Roma are among the most disadvantaged minority populations in Europe, by far faring the worst in nearly every category, be it education, employment, health or housing. The implications of this lack of data on attempts to improve Roma's educational as well as socio-economic outcomes within participating Decade countries are outlined in *No Data, No Progress*, in 2010.¹⁹

THE REPRESENTATION OF ROMANI STUDENTS IN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ASSESSMENT STUDIES

International student assessment studies, such as PISA, TIMSS or PIRLS allow for the measurement and assessment of the knowledge and skills that students have acquired and thus provide information about students' actual learning outcomes. Additionally, they can provide valuable information about equity levels in education by measuring how certain background characteristics (such as gender, migrant background or socio-economic status) influence learning outcomes. Learning outcomes in reading, math and science complement other important data on education systems such as educational enrollment or attainment.

The potential to measure learning and schooling characteristics of Roma students with PISA, and other international student surveys, is currently limited as only very few countries sample a sufficiently large number of Roma students.²⁰ Reasons for the underrepresentation of Roma students are manifold, such as Roma students might speak other languages than Romani as the first home language – currently the only way to identify Roma students

¹⁹ Available online: http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/no-data-no-progress-country-reports-20100628_0.pdf



021



022

in the sample – or might not want to identify themselves as Romani-speaking in order to avoid stigmatization and discrimination. Moreover, some Roma students might be absent from school or have dropped out of school before the age of 15, or might be among those 15 year olds that are excluded from PISA as they still attend low grade levels at this age.²¹

Besides PISA, other international studies are the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) – carried out since 1995 and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) – carried out since 2001 by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). TIMSS tests students' competencies in mathematics and science at grades four and eight, PIRLS does the same for reading literacy.

Since the 1990s international student assessments, especially PISA, have received increasing public attention and its coordinating organizations have gained substantial influence in shaping educational discourse around the world. Policymakers have used international student achievements studies as points of reference to generate reform pressure or back up educational reforms.

In many countries, however, not only performance but also equity within the education system has attracted public attention. A common understanding of equity in education is that all students reach at least a basic minimum level of skills and that personal or socio-economic circumstances, such as gender, ethnic origin or family background, do not present obstacles for educational success.

THE PERFORMANCE OF ROMANI SPEAKING STUDENTS IN SLOVAKIA²²

PISA 2009 data shows that Romani-speaking students come from more disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds compared to their Slovak and Hungarian-speaking peers. Romani students show schooling and learning characteristics that are negatively associated with performance, notably little average preschool experience and a higher average share of students in

vocational tracks with direct access to the labor market. The performance gap as compared to their peers represents about four years of regular schooling. The great majority of Romani-speaking students (96 percent) performs below Level 2, the baseline level considered necessary for full participation in social and economic life in modern societies. Romani-speaking students also repeat classes more frequently during their school career and, related to this, are in lower grades than their peers at age 15. It is obvious that Romani-speaking students thus face multiple disadvantages that may present severe barriers for success in society and the labor market after the end of their schooling.

Due to very small sample sizes, in particular for Romani-speakers, results can only be considered as first indication of learning characteristics and outcomes for Roma students that need to be investigated further. Despite these shortcomings, results overall speak for various disadvantages Romani-speaking students face in Slovakia. The introduction of a variable asking for the belonging to an ethnic or national minority in the national PISA context questionnaires has a considerable potential to improve the monitoring of Romani students educational outcomes in countries with large Roma populations. In countries with smaller Roma populations the introduction of an oversample also bears potential to improve data collection.

²⁰For more on measuring test scores and achievement of disadvantaged students, see Christian Brüggemann and Simone Bloem. (2013). "The Potential of International Student Assessments to Measure Educational Outcomes of Roma Students." *Sociológia* 45, No. 6. Available online: http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/documents/bruggemann_bloem_2013_the_potential_of_international_student_assessments_to_measure_educational_outcomes_of_roma_students_0.pdf

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.



023

023 Two young boys make friends in an integrated classroom in eastern Hungary.
Photo: Peter Politzer

CZECH REPUBLIC

AT A GLANCE	
Population	10,609,762
GDP (EUR)	286.5 Billion
Roma Population – Official Census	11,746
Roma Population – Unofficial Estimate	175,000
Roma Population – Wikipedia	13,000
Roma Population – Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division Estimate	–
TIMSS 2011 Math	511 (2.4)
TIMSS 2011 Science	536 (2.5)
PIRLS 2011 Reading	545 (1.6)
Average PISA Reading Performance (2012)	493
Average PISA Math Performance (2012)	499
Average PISA Science Literacy (2012)	508

TOGETHER TO PRESCHOOL: EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN OSTRAVA

Seven years after the European Court of Human Rights judgment regarding *D. H. and Others vs. the Czech Republic*, REF was invited to launch a project to ameliorate persistent segregation in Ostrava in cooperation with a number of other partners.

With support from REF and the financial contribution of the municipal government of Ostrava, a systematic preschool education and early elementary school registration project has been established in order to prevent Romani pupils from enrolling in so-called “practical” schools that typically offer a sub-standard educational curriculum. REF brought together two nongovernmental organizations, *Beleza* and *Bílý Nosorožec* (White Rhinoceros), to implement this first important step to end segregation in the Ostrava-Poruba and Mariánské Hory-Hulváky districts.

“We are well aware that supporting equal chances begins with supporting education, which represents an investment in a common future. That is why we are glad, that REF has picked Ostrava for its project, and that is also why we decided to participate in it financially,” said Martin Štěpánek, Deputy Mayor of Ostrava.

In effect scaling up and tailoring some elements of REF’s existing A Good Start Program, Ostrava has agreed to the creation of Mothers’ Clubs, whereby children from socially- excluded localities gain the necessary skills for a successful start in kindergarten and elementary school under the guidance of well-qualified teachers. Mothers’ Clubs also hold regular meetings of the Your Story program, whereby mothers continuously develop the skills that are often missing from many of today’s families. With increased parental participation, families’ interest in enrolling their children in

local kindergartens has increased during the first year of this three-year project. From approximately 60 children of preschool age who have already attended Mothers’ Clubs, 20 have continued to attend the local kindergartens. “Our children have a chance for a better future,” remarked two mothers participating in the project.

One preschool teacher in Ostrava-Poruba said, “Looking at the children, it is obvious that they have made great progress in the Mothers’ Clubs, and I dare to say, that if the cooperation between the parents, NGOs and preschools, or later schools will continue, and the project may not only disclose new opportunities for Romani children but can also build a bridge over the persisting barriers between the Roma and the majority.”

REF IN SELECT CZECH MEDIA

- <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/08/world/europe/roma-children-kept-separate-and-unequal.html?ref=europe>
- <http://www.romea.cz/cz/zpravodajstvi/domaci/38-romskych-vysokoskolaku-ziskalo-stipendium>
- <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-republic-38-romani-college-students-win-scholarships>
- http://www.denik.cz/z_domova/stipendia-maji-zvysit-pocet-romskych-vysokoskolaku-20131108.html
- <http://carolina.fsv.cuni.cz/#a1692>
- http://www.rozhlas.cz/zpravy/politika/_zprava/studuji-pedagogiku-i-medicinu-pocet-romskych-vysokoskolaku-na-univerzitach-roste—1279002
- <http://romove.radio.cz/cz/clanek/26228>
- <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/domaci/249707-romsti-vysokoskolaci-dostali-stipendium-od-vzdelavaciho-fondu/>
- <http://www.metropol.cz/porady/prazsky-expres/6323/archiv/>



HUNGARY

AT A GLANCE	
Population	9,939,470
GDP (EUR)	196.6 Billion
Roma Population – Official Census	700,000
Roma Population – Unofficial Estimate	800,000
Roma Population – Wikipedia	1,000,000
Roma Population – Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division Estimate	700,000
TIMSS 2011 Math	515 (3.4)
TIMSS 2011 Science	534 (3.7)
PIRLS 2011 Reading	539 (2.9)
Average PISA Reading Performance (2012)	488
Average PISA Math Performance (2012)	477
Average PISA Science Literacy (2012)	494

SAVING STUDY HALLS IN HUNGARY²³

Operating for almost a decade in Hungary, *tanodas* are community-based extracurricular facilities. They run after school and support disadvantaged Romani students with mentoring and tutoring. *Tanodas* aim to foster their success at school and improve their future chances in the labor market and social integration. One effect among others has been strengthening the relationship between schools and parents.

According to Hungary’s earlier Public Education Act, the tasks of the Hungarian Ministry of Education shall include the “designing and dissemination of extracurricular methods (‘Tanoda’) in order to support the educational success of disadvantaged pupils.” However, the Public Education Act was modified in 2012 and *tanodas* are no longer included or specified in the new law. Scores of *tanodas*, particularly in remote villages, would have faced certain closure.

The Roma Education Fund, together with the Open Society Foundation’s program, Making the Most of EU Funds, supported those *tanodas* experiencing financial difficulties. Despite the apparent availability of European Union funding for extracurricular study groups since 2004, the European Structural Funds were unable to ensure their continuity because of funding delays. The aim of this timely funding has been to give bridging resources and know-how to those *tanodas* that want to apply to the Structural Funds but could not have survived in the interim.

In the last decade *tanodas* have played a crucial role in local community development and the improvement of children’s skills and academic achievements. This joint endeavor by the Roma Education Fund and Making the Most of EU Funds has ensured the continuous operation of *tanodas* and the academic achievements of those

children who were involved in these institutions. The maximum grant was EUR 10,000 per *tanoda* for eight months, which could be spent on maintenance and educational activities. REF commissioned TÁRKI-TUDOK Zrt., to prepare an assessment regarding all *tanodas*, the basis for an upcoming study.

Nineteen *tanodas* have received grants from the emergency fund, reaching 663 children at risk of dropping out across Hungary, for a total of just over EUR 180,000. Almost half of the *tanodas* have since requested an extension of funding due to the unpredictability of the Structural Funds in Hungary.

BENEFICIARY SPOTLIGHT: MONIKA CHEN - RISP

My name is Monika Chen and I was born in 1991 in Budapest, Hungary. I’m an only child and my family comes from traditional Romani roots with a focus on respecting our family values that have accumulated through generations and generations. Even though my family is not the typical Romani musician family, my mother is a singer who started singing at a young age in a Romani folk band. Her unique voice was quickly discovered by others but it has been very hard for her to keep up with her passion. What I really admire about her is her strong will. Everyone knows how challenging a singing profession can be but she always holds her head high and gives her all to every situation. My father, who is of Chinese origin, left home when I was eight years old, so I spent most of my life with my mother. I’m so blessed to have the support of my mother’s family who has taught me so many lessons. One that will always stick with me is that we alone have the power to decide our destiny and we must follow our dreams. The youngest of my four aunts was the first in the family to attend university; and she set an example for my cousins and me to follow in her footsteps and pursue higher education.

I spent many of my holidays at Roma summer camps. Besides being able to bond with other kids my own age, I had the opportunity to find my hidden creative talents in painting, writing and singing. My mother had high hopes that introducing me to this world would turn into a future for me but I steered towards a more predictable and safe route.

²³ This article was written by Roland Ferkovics and Nikoletta Olah and originally appeared in Transitions Online’s education supplement: <http://chalkboard.tol.org/rescuing-afterschool-tanodas-in-hungary/>

024 RMUSP finalist reacts at the close of REF's Scholarship Gala in Budapest, Hungary in December 2013. Photo: Zoltán Sárosi
025 Hungarian Roma entertainer Caramel at the REF Scholarship Gala in Budapest, Hungary in December 2013. Photo: Zoltán Sárosi



024

When I finished primary school at the age of 14, I knew that education would be a crucial part of my life. I was accepted to a competitive bilingual secondary school where I studied most subjects in English. After secondary school I took a gap year to work in Germany as well as at home completing various jobs to collect money to further my education since I knew that my family, despite all efforts, would be unable to support me financially.

I always keep my future in mind and I feel like there are so many opportunities abroad that will help me reach both my professional and personal goals. After my gap year, I applied to and was accepted by the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. I yearned to be part of something important and meaningful while I attended school. In 2012 I started my first year at St. Andrews with the help of the RISP scholarship. I still cannot begin to express enough gratitude for this financial support. My first semester I took three courses: Management, Psychology and Film.

My first year in Scotland has lived up to all of my expectations. It was the perfect opportunity to learn how to adjust and transition into being a part of a more culturally diverse society. I'm currently pursuing a degree in Management which I found a passion for over the past year. But in order to take my future studies to the next level I've decided to also pursue a degree in Psychology with a focus on Neuroscience. I intend to combine my Management degree with a Psychology degree because in my opinion these two subjects are the best combination to have. A good manager or CEO of any organizations can only enhance their skills by having background knowledge of the basic psychological processes.

I'm only 21 but I feel I've come a very long way. I grew up in a healthy, loving family but going through the hardships as well as the bright moments in life teaches you to never take anything for granted.

REF IN SELECT HUNGARIAN MEDIA

- http://belfold.ma.hu/tart/cikk/a/0/168827/1/belfold/Nemzetkozi_roma_szervezetek_tartottak_megemlekezeset_Budapesten
- http://index.hu/belfold/2013/06/21/noveli_a_szegregaciot_a_szabad_iskola...
- <http://www.168ora.hu/landingpage/barmit-is-mond-fidesz-bebizonyosodott-e...>
- http://hvg.hu/karrier/20130708_Tanulmany_a_szabad_iskolavalasztas_erosit
- http://nol.hu/belfold/a_szabad_iskolavalasztas_befolyasolja_legeroteljes...
- <http://www.edupress.hu/hirek/index.php?pid=egycikk&HirID=29331>
- <http://www.stop.hu/belfold/romak-vagyunk-itt-vagyunk-nem-felunk/1137376/>
- <http://www.mon.hu/romanap-nemzetkozi-roma-szervezetek-tartottak-megemlekezeset-budapesten/2237789>
- <http://www.hajdupress.hu/hirek/cikk/27574-opre-roma-egyesitetek-a-vilag-romait-budapesten>
- http://www.nepszava.hu/articles/article.php?id=636184&referer_id=friss#null;
- http://galamus.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=202343:romanap-nemzetkoezi-roma-szervezetek-tartottak-megemlekezeset-budapesten&catid=76:hazai-vonatkozasu-hirek&Itemid=113
- <http://www.mon.hu/romanap-nemzetkozi-roma-szervezetek-tartottak-megemlekezeset-budapesten/2237789>
- http://atv.hu/cikk/20130408_a_duna_parton_emlekeztek_a_holokauszt_roma_al-dozatairahttp://inforadio.hu/hir/belfold/hir-555706
- http://belfold.ma.hu/tart/cikk/a/0/168827/1/belfold/Nemzetkozi_roma_szervezetek_tartottak_megemlekezeset_Budapesten
- http://www.hirado.hu/Hirek/2013/04/08/14/Viragok_a_Dunaban_igy_emlekeztek_Budapesten_fotok.aspx
- <http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2013/08/roma-hungary>
- <http://chalkboard.tol.org/rescuing-afterschool-tanodas-in-hungary/>



025

to finish their studies as their parents simply cannot provide them with the necessary financial support to do so.

Out of 320 (the total number of Romani students supported), 310 passed to the following academic year. Out of 57 students in the final year, 55 successfully completed their studies, two female students failed school. Six students will continue their studies in schools of music, where they will receive the teachers' training degree which will make them eligible for teaching in elementary art schools. In terms of the project's goal of increasing the number of students who after finishing their high school would continue their studies at universities - out of 49 students finishing in fourth grade,²⁴ 22 submitted applications to universities and 18 of them were admitted. However, only 15 actually started attending school, and the remaining three students did not start studying due to financial reasons.

The following tables below show the results from the secondary scholarship programs where a comparison between semesters indicates that the performance of all groups of students dropped a maximum of 0.34 of GPA. This was noted in the fourth-grade students, where according to their teachers they underperform with GPA because they are focused on studying for their final graduation exam. On the other hand, positive developments of maximum improvement by 0.29 have been noted with third grade students. The results show that there is a constant need for provision of academic support to students to maintain good performance and cope with academic challenges.

²⁴ The total number of students in the fourth grade was 57; however, six of them are still continuing at the same school (students attending art schools, if they continue for two more years, are eligible to teach at primary art schools). Two additional students dropped out, so only 49 graduated and left school.



SLOVAKIA

AT A GLANCE	
Population	5,488,339
GDP (EUR)	133.4 Billion
Roma Population – Official Census	89,920
Roma Population – Unofficial Estimate	253,943
Roma Population – Wikipedia	550,000
Roma Population – Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division Estimate	500,000
TIMSS 2011 Math	507 (3.8)
TIMSS 2011 Science	532 (3.8)
PIRLS 2011 Reading	535 (2.8)
Average PISA Reading Performance (2012)	463
Average PISA Math Performance (2012)	482
Average PISA Science Literacy (2012)	471

SECONDARY SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS IMPROVE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Secondary school scholarships have made it possible for Romani students to successfully finish their studies; for example, 72 percent (232) of students have one or both parents who are jobless and live off social welfare. It is quite clear that without scholarship support, most of these students would not be able

TABLE 11. GPA COMPARISONS²⁵

GRAMMAR SCHOOLS ²⁶ GPA UP TO 2.5												
BASELINE		1 ST SEMESTER			2 ND SEMESTER			DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SEMESTERS				
GRADES	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	DIFF.	FEMALE	DIFF.	MALE	DIFF.	FEMALE	DIFF.	MALE	FEMALE
I	1.75	1.58	2.17	-0.42	1.78	-0.20	2.13	-0.38	1.58	0.00	0.04	0.20
II	2.00	1.30	2.47	-0.47	1.66	-0.36	2.38	-0.38	1.87	-0.57	0.09	-0.21
III	1.54	1.49	1.88	-0.34	1.99	-0.50	1.59	-0.05	1.87	-0.38	0.29	0.12
IV	1.72	1.71	1.40	0.32	1.60	0.11	1.72	0.00	1.89	-0.18	-0.32	-0.29

TVET SCHOOLS ²⁷ GPA UP TO 1.5												
BASELINE		1 ST SEMESTER			2 ND SEMESTER			DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SEMESTERS				
GRADES	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	DIFF.	FEMALE	DIFF.	MALE	DIFF.	FEMALE	DIFF.	MALE	FEMALE
I	1.38	1.15	1.76	-0.38	2.07	-0.92	1.72	-0.34	2.15	-1.00	0.04	-0.08
II	1.29	1.23	1.32	-0.03	1.27	-0.04	1.53	-0.24	1.16	0.07	-0.21	0.11
III	1.24	1.24	1.48	-0.24	1.65	-0.41	1.23	0.01	1.54	-0.30	0.25	0.11
IV	1.25	1.21	1.74	-0.49	1.33	-0.12	1.61	-0.36	1.67	-0.46	0.13	-0.34

TVET SCHOOLS GPA 1.6 - 3.0												
BASELINE		1 ST SEMESTER			2 ND SEMESTER			DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SEMESTERS				
GRADES	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	DIFF.	FEMALE	DIFF.	MALE	DIFF.	FEMALE	DIFF.	MALE	FEMALE
I	2.15	1.59	2.30	-0.15	2.40	-0.81	2.26	-0.11	2.47	-0.88	0.04	-0.07
II	1.91	1.54	2.27	-0.36	2.27	-0.73	2.15	-0.24	2.15	-0.61	0.12	0.12
III	1.31	1.54	2.24	-0.93	2.30	-0.76	2.13	-0.82	2.33	-0.79	0.11	-0.03
IV	1.92	1.56	2.22	-0.30	2.09	-0.53	2.24	-0.32	2.27	-0.71	-0.02	-0.18

The scholarship program engaged 42 mentors (four of them Roma) and 68 tutors who worked with students. Twenty-three mentors had been trained and this improved, to a great extent, the attitude of teachers towards Romani students in the participating schools.

The highest ratio of supported beneficiaries originate from the poorest regions in Slovakia with the highest rates of unemployment. From 320 students, 110 were from Presov region, 127 from Kosice region, 66 from Banska Bystrica, two from Zilina, 11 from Nitra, three from Trnava, one from Bratislava.

PROGRESS: SOCIAL EXPERIMENTATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for Roma Communities in Slovakia, is implementing an early childhood project that utilizes REF’s experience under the umbrella of PROGRESS, financed by the European Commission (DG EMPL). REF’s involvement in PROGRESS is motivated by its aspiration that the research results will be the basis for an evidence-based policy framework surrounding early childhood education not only in Slovakia but also on a larger scale.

Besides the Slovak government as the main implementing entity alongside REF, other international and national partners are involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the project, such as the World Bank, the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab and the Slovak Governance Institute. PROGRESS also contains an evaluation aspect designed to measure the results of the various activities and REF’s main role in the project is to provide technical assistance and support surrounding the content and quality of the early childhood education and care interventions.

The project is working with approximately 525 children from ages zero to six and 315 mothers in accessing early childhood education and care services in 21 different locations in the southern part of Slovakia. It will measure the impacts and progress against a predetermined set of indicators in order to analyze if the methodology being used is effective in raising the competencies of the children as well as their primary caregivers.

²⁵ The scale for GPA evaluation in Slovakia ranges from one to five; one refers to excellent academic performance and five results in failure of the subject.
²⁶ Grammar schools - gymnasiums (general higher secondary education), specialized schools (professional higher secondary education which is always completed by standardized final state exams - *maturita*).
²⁷ Vocational schools (practical professional schools either completed by final state exams. or professional training certificate).

The project seeks to empower families, especially women, through a program called Your Story. Your Story is a program that uses literacy as a tool for empowerment through the reading of children’s books. This process engages women in the context of the stories as well as simultaneously emulating a teaching method that they can replicate later in their own homes. The mothers are expected to read regularly to their children at home and discuss the main themes and lessons of the stories. The success of this intervention relies heavily on taking a systemic approach which educates and empowers Romani mothers - who are key players in taking steps to improve the development outcomes of their children.

026 A Bulgarian RMUSP finalist reviews her photographs of the REF Scholarship Gala in Sofia, Bulgaria in December 2013. Photo: Eleonora Kostadinova and Katerina Pencheva
027 A group of LHP finalists workshopping at their annual jamboree in Kiev, Ukraine. Photo: Sergey Melnik



026



027

The evaluation component of the project has been carefully built into the overall process allowing for a rigorous evaluation of the outcomes for the beneficiary children. Seeing as the project aims to ultimately address policymakers, it is essential to draw evidence-based conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the interventions being made. The counterfactual impact evaluation is important in this case, as it helps to verify or reject the presumed casual connection between the intervention and results.

The project seeks to identify net effects or impacts. Ultimately it seeks to compare the results of the intervention participants to the results of a group not involved in the intervention. The “treated” or “treatment” groups were distinguished from the “control” groups.

The selected localities are as follows: Plavecký Štvrtok, Zlaté Klasy, Jelka; Šimonovce, Širkovce, Rapovce; Prakovce, Rudňany, Krompachy; Výborná, Rakúsy, Lubica; Stará Lubovňa, Žehňa, Sabinov; Čaňa, Vechec, Sobrance; Jasov, Medzev, Drienovec.

The project has a diverse target group that includes Slovak-, Romanes- and Hungarian-speaking mothers. Activities are always tailored and carried out in the language that is spoken by the majority of the mothers in a given session. Based on the evaluation method, only the mothers in the “treatment” group are involved in project activities, not mothers in the “control” group. The implementation of the project is still ongoing.

REF IN SELECT SLOVAK MEDIA

- <http://www.topky.sk/cl/10/1345697/Mladi-Romovia-sa-mozu-uchadzat-o-vysokoskolske-stipendium>
- http://www.piestanskydennik.sk/sita-detail/?tx_kiossita_pi1%5Bdetail%5D=168766
- <http://www.news.sk/rss/clanok/2013/04/1221291/mladi-romovia-sa-mozu-uchadzat-o-vysokoskolske-stipendium/>
- <http://know.sk/spravodajstvo/mladi-romovia-sa-mozu-uchadzat-o-vysokoskolske-stipendium>
- <http://www.sme.sk/c/6762443/skolky-su-plne-caplovic-ich-chce-navyse-zadarmo-aj-pre-stvorrocnych.html>
- <http://www.parameter.sk/rovat/kulfold/2013/04/08/romak-vilagnapja-tarsadalmi-integracio-fontossagat-hangsulyoztak-az>
- <http://www.rtv.s.sk/tv/programmes.detail/archive/93?date=04.11.2013>
- <http://chalkboard.tol.org/a-better-start-in-slovakia>



028



029

E E

036-041

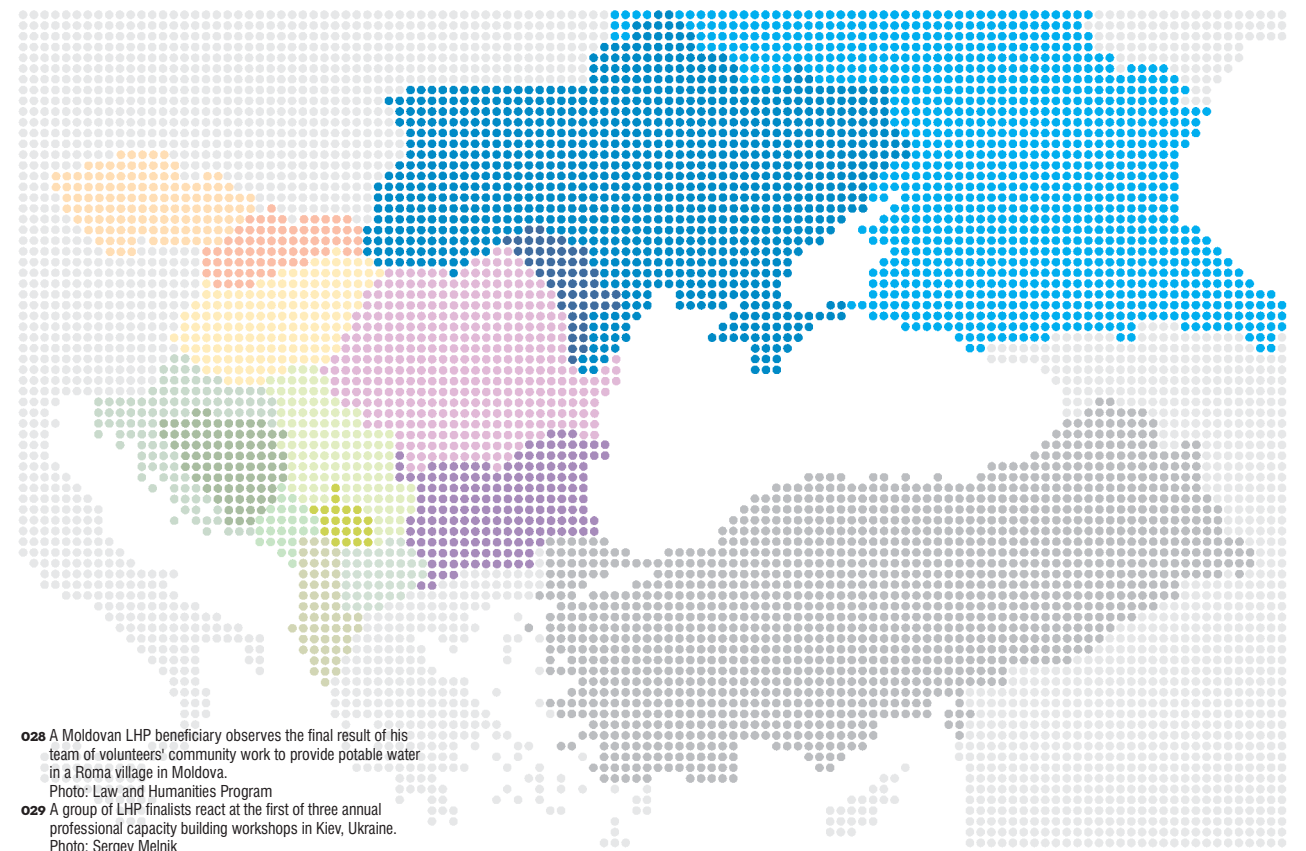
EASTERN EUROPE

Moldova / Russia / Ukraine

At the boundaries of REF's portfolio, and lying outside the scope of the Roma Decade, the cluster of Moldova, Russia and Ukraine account for the smallest amount of REF expenditures.

While REF has been active in Moldova with some small-scale primary and secondary school interventions, with approximately one project per year, the bulk of its activity is represented by the Law and Humanities Program, which has created a new generation of Romani professionals, of whom 200 graduated successfully up until 2013. The majority received BA degrees and one-third graduated with MA degrees.

The respective scholarship program in these countries have more components in comparison with other scholarship schemes, whereby language training, professional development workshops and conferences are part of this scheme.



028 A Moldovan LHP beneficiary observes the final result of his team of volunteers' community work to provide potable water in a Roma village in Moldova.
Photo: Law and Humanities Program

029 A group of LHP finalists react at the first of three annual professional capacity building workshops in Kiev, Ukraine.
Photo: Sergey Melnik

EASTERN EUROPE

TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM RECRUITS BRIGHT YOUNG MINDS

In 2013 REF received 228 applications for the in-country Law and Humanities Program (LHP) which is supported by Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future” – EVZ, and four applications for the study-abroad Roma International Scholar Program (RISP). Among these applications, 177 complied with all eligibility criteria and successfully passed the selection process. Table 12 presents the respective figures per each program country in the region, while Table 13 presents the distribution of accepted applicants per level of studies.

TABLE 12. SUBMITTED APPLICATIONS VS. SCHOLARSHIPS GRANTED FOR THE 2013-2014 ACADEMIC YEAR

	LHP		RISP	
	APPLICANTS	BENEFICIARIES	APPLICANTS	BENEFICIARIES
Moldova	47	36	4	2
Russia	50	42	0	0
Ukraine	131	97	0	0
Total	228	175	4	2
		(77%)		(50%)

TABLE 13. SCHOLARSHIP BENEFICIARIES' LEVEL OF STUDIES. 2013-2014 ACADEMIC YEAR

	LHP			
	VOCATIONAL	BACHELOR	MASTER	DOCTORATE
Moldova	0	23	9	4
Russia	3	21	17	1
Ukraine	14	54	27	2
Total	17	98	53	7
	(10%)	(56%)	(30%)	(4%)

	RISP		
	BACHELOR	MASTER	DOCTORATE
Moldova	2	0	0
Russia	n/a	n/a	n/a
Ukraine	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	2	0	0

030 A group of LHP finalists react at the first of three annual professional capacity building workshops in Kiev, Ukraine. Photo: Sergey Melnik

Besides the scholarship support, LHP enhanced beneficiaries' academic and professional development by implementing a range of additional program components. Through these components, 21 scholarship recipients from the region received support to attend foreign language courses in accredited language schools in their localities, seven received grants to attend international academic conferences and symposia, summer schools, computer courses and in-country internship programs. Two received financial support for internships in organizations or companies outside their home countries and three groups of students received grants to implement small-scale Romani community development projects. In addition, in 2013 LHP beneficiaries from each of these three countries participated in in-country professional development trainings and in an annual LHP student conference held in St. Petersburg, Russia.

030



MOLDOVA

AT A GLANCE	
Population	3,619,925
GDP (EUR)	12.68 Billion
Roma Population – Official Census	12,933
Roma Population – Unofficial Estimate	–
Roma Population – Wikipedia	150,000
Roma Population – Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division Estimate	–
TIMSS 2011 Math	–
TIMSS 2011 Science	–
PIRLS 2011 Reading	–
Average PISA Reading Performance (2012)	338 (2009 Data)
Average PISA Math Performance (2012)	397 (2009 Data)
Average PISA Science Literacy (2012)	413 (2009 Data)

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE TRACER STUDY²⁸

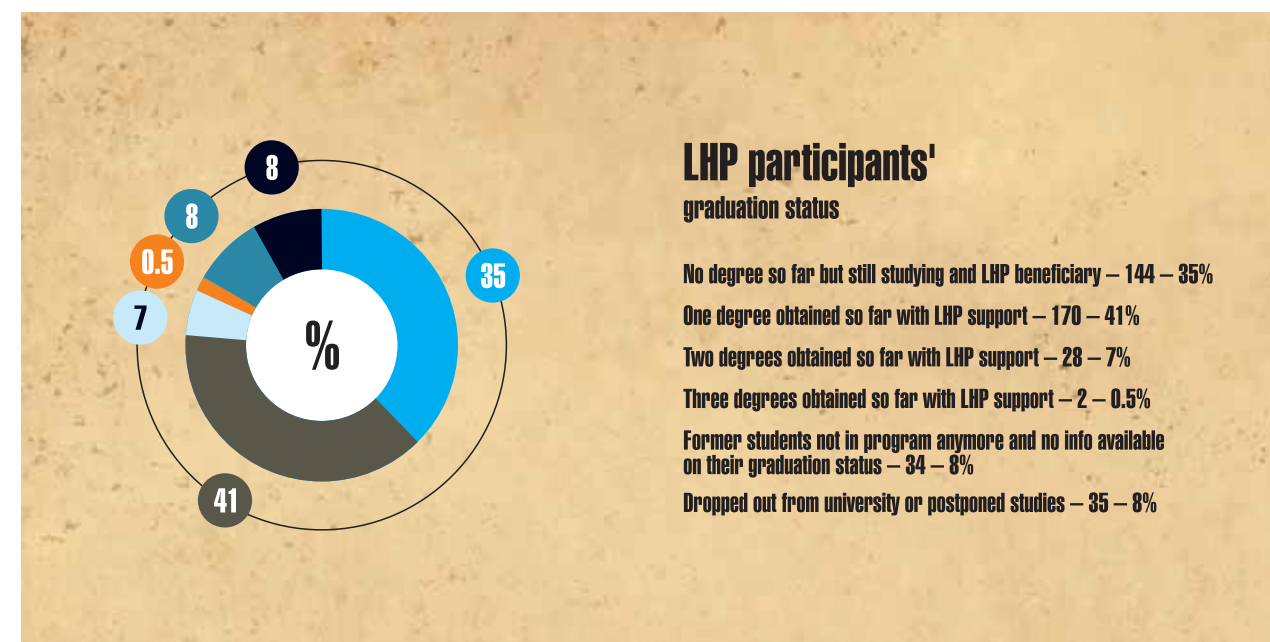
After 10 years of implementing LHP and following the request of one of the program's donors, REF began to investigate the degree in which the program contributed to the academic trajectory of its beneficiaries, as well as whether the beneficiaries managed to enter the job market on positions relevant for their studies after obtaining higher education degrees. The

main reason was to identify the ways in which the REF Scholarship Program could be better tailored to respond to the needs of its beneficiaries and to help them become successful in their initial career stages. The results of this investigation are summarized below.

Graduation Status

From the 413 individuals who participated in LHP so far, 200 (48 percent) obtained at least one tertiary level degree with complete or partial LHP support, while 144 did not graduate yet but are still in the program. Also, 35 beneficiaries (eight percent) dropped out their university studies before graduation or postponed graduation for later. The graphic below presents further details on LHP participants' graduation status until now.

Among the 35 who dropped out or postponed their studies, an absolute majority (25) are from Moldova. The main reason for abandoning or postponing studies stated by the respective Moldovan students was migration abroad, either together



²⁸ Available online: http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/a_tracer_study_ref_2014.pdf

031 An LHP finalist reacts at the first of three annual professional capacity building workshops in Kiev, Ukraine. Photo: Sergey Melnik



031

with his/her entire family or alone to find better employment opportunities. Some of these former students stated that although they consider the LHP support as being significant for pursuing higher education, it is not enough for supporting a family. Most of them migrated to Russia. Other reasons stated by those who dropped out from university were marriage and/or childcare. It is also worth mentioning that the dropout rate generally decreased over time in the program, since majority of participants who dropped out were those in the first years of the program.

The dropout rate in LHP could be compared to that in the mainstream population. A recent European Commission study based on 2008 data reveals that the university completion rate in Russia is 80 percent (i.e., dropout or postponement rate is 20 percent). Similar data for Moldova and Ukraine are unfortunately unavailable, but one could make a judgment based on the average university completion rate for Europe in general, which is 72 percent (therefore, dropout/ postponement rate is 28 percent). The countries which according to the same EC study had the highest university completion rates in 2008 were Armenia and Portugal, with 95 percent and respectively 86 percent completion rates (i.e., five percent and nine percent dropout/postponement).²⁹ Compared to these figures, the eight percent dropout rate in the LHP program is not high.

LHP PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING IN MOLDOVA

During the first of three LHP professional capacity building events in the academic year, the Scholarship Program organized a two-day professional development training in Chisinau, Moldova on March 16-17, 2013. The training was entitled “Nuts and Bolts of Project Development and Implementation for Community Development Small Scale Projects,” for 32 Law and Humanities Program (LHP) beneficiaries and alumni. The training sessions were organized through practical exercises around the topics of small-scale community development project designing,

management practicalities, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, or any challenges in project implementation. The event was also envisaged to further the development of the REF Alumni and Beneficiary network by bringing LHP beneficiaries together to discuss and work together as a group during the training.

SMALL-SCALE PROJECTS BY LHP BENEFICIARIES

LHP Small-Scale Projects were introduced as new program component in summer 2012. The experience in implementing the component during the first year has been overall positive. At the end of April 2013 the program launched a new call for proposals for the respective component and selected three project proposals for support. One such project was led by Grigore Zapescu, a BA student in the third year in Legal Studies and LHP beneficiary since 2011, leading an implementation team of three current and one former LHP students of Moldova.

The goal of the project was to build a water well in a Roma village in Moldova where there was no potable water, with the collaboration with local authorities and under the guidance of a Moldovan Roma NGO. Despite several challenges that the implementation team faced on the way, the water well was eventually built and now the villagers have a source of potable fresh water.

²⁹ Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. (2012). “The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report.” Brussels: Eurydice. Page 102. Available online: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/EC-30-12-534/EN/EC-30-12-534-EN.PDF



RUSSIA

AT A GLANCE	
Population	142,500,482
GDP (EUR)	2,553 Trillion
Roma Population – Official Census	182,766
Roma Population – Unofficial Estimate	–
Roma Population – Wikipedia	1,000,000
Roma Population – Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division Estimate	825,000
TIMSS 2011 Math	542 (3.7)
TIMSS 2011 Science	552 (3.5)
PIRLS 2011 Reading	568 (2.7)
Average PISA Reading Performance (2012)	475
Average PISA Math Performance (2012)	482
Average PISA Science Literacy (2012)	486

The program team considered this project a good practice of Romani students’ activism and involvement in Romani community development, and Aluna Lepadatu, another LHP beneficiary, wrote an article to share this experience with the readers of *Saptamina*,³⁰ a national newspaper in Moldova.

GRANT PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

Between 2007 and 2014, REF committed EUR 610,660 and disbursed EUR 496,750 (about two percent of REF commitments and disbursements) for nine projects taking place in Moldova, one of which is ongoing (see Table 14).³¹ The projects aimed at increasing participation of Romani children in quality preschool and compulsory education, involving developing partnerships with local and central authorities and Romani and non-Romani parents as well as teachers and educators. Desegregation of Romani schools by transferring Romani pupils to nearby mixed schools and raising awareness among Romani parents of the importance of education as well as encouraging dialogue between Roma and non-Roma at the local level were among the objectives of REF-funded projects. Additionally, in 2008 an educational needs assessment was carried out in 38 localities populated by Roma and again between 2008 and 2010. REF contributed to the consolidation of the Romani (school) mediators network by piloting the initiative in four localities. The ongoing project focuses on increasing the retention rate, performance and graduation of Romani students in post-secondary vocational education and higher education by providing them with tutoring and other academic support.

TABLE 14. GRANT COMMITMENTS IN MOLDOVA, 2007-2014 (EUR)

2007	2008	2009	2011	2012	2014	Total
65,790	86,570	188,005	159,505	39,000	71,790	610,660

The three main REF partners implementing projects in Moldova are the NGOs Ograda Noastra, the Union of Young Roma Tarna Rom and the Roma National Center from the Republic of Moldova.

UKRAINE

AT A GLANCE	
Population	44,573,205
GDP (EUR)	337.4 Billion
Roma Population – Official Census	47,587
Roma Population – Unofficial Estimate	–
Roma Population – Wikipedia	400,000
Roma Population – Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division Estimate	–
TIMSS 2011 Math	–
TIMSS 2011 Science	–
PIRLS 2011 Reading	–
Average PISA Reading Performance (2012)	n/a
Average PISA Math Performance (2012)	n/a
Average PISA Science Literacy (2012)	n/a

³⁰ Available online: <http://saptamina.md/pub/2013/12/fondul-pentru-educatia-romilor-in-sustinerea-initiativelor-studentilor-romi-din-moldova.html>

³¹ See page 23 of this report, plus REF contractual information from 2014.



032



033

B

042–055

BALKANS

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

After intense policy dialogues and exchange, the secondary scholarship services developed by REF have been taken up by four national governments in Kosovo, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, resulting in financial investments and in increased incentives targeted at Roma to access and complete secondary education. It is soon expected to result in increased graduation rates among Roma comparable to national averages. For example, in FYR Macedonia, when REF started its secondary scholarship program in 2007, the dropout rate for Romani students was up to 26 percent. After four years of implementation REF records levels of

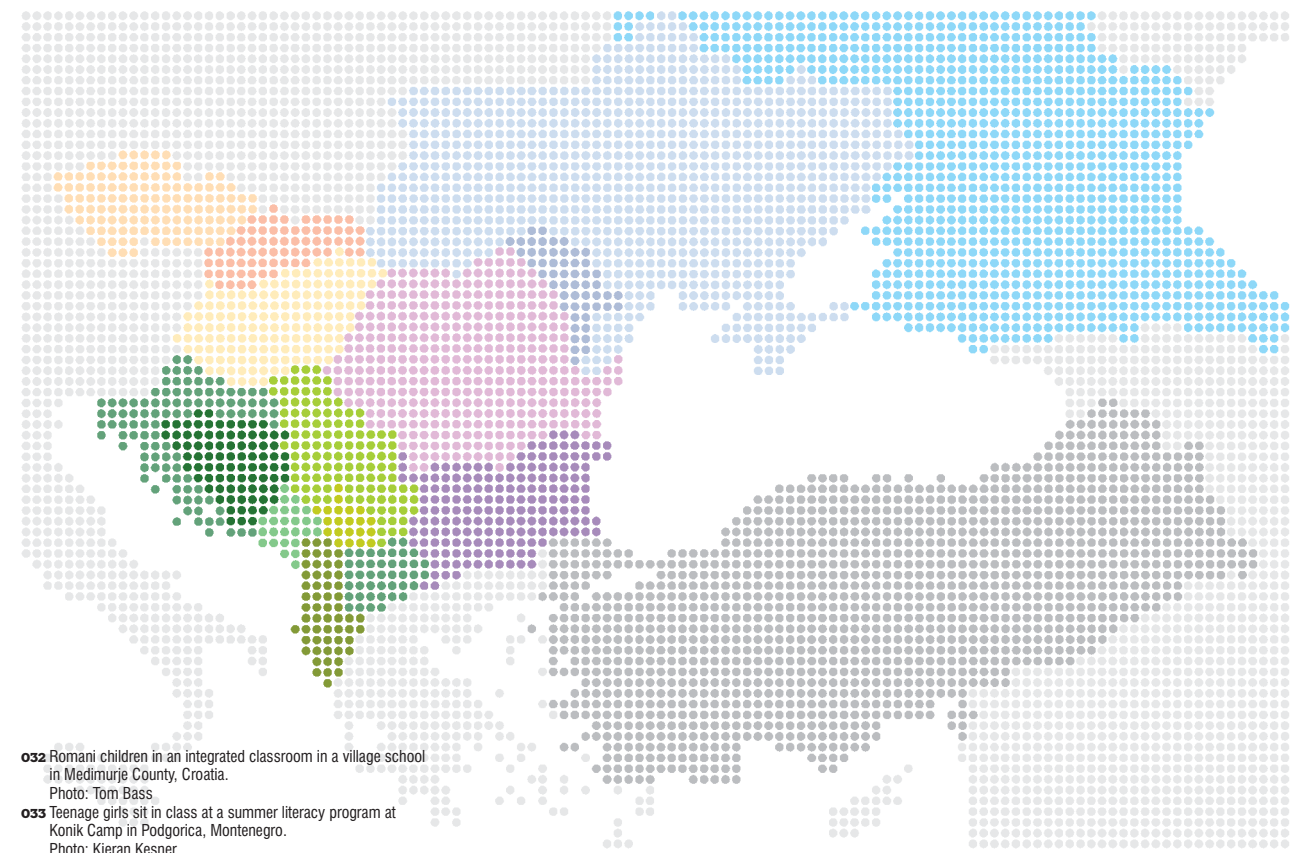
less than six percent, and among graduate students the dropout rate is almost zero percent for the last three school years. The number of Roma finishing secondary education at national level, has also increased markedly in the last eight years; for example, in FYR Macedonia,³² where in 2004 only about ten percent of Roma completed upper secondary education, now at least 17 percent do. These data are positive indicators for the national governments about where REF was successful, and now they all recognize the value of these schemes in retaining and educating Romani children in school and contribute to REF secondary school scholarship schemes.

The European Instruments for Pre-Accession in Serbia have recognized REF's secondary scholarship program as worthy of scaling up nationally, and an external evaluation²⁵ proved that this powerful tool is having a strong impact on the performance of Romani students in secondary and upper secondary school.

This is why the Ministry of Education and OSCE in cooperation with REF started a national secondary scholarship scheme for Romani students using IPA funding in Serbia. In Montenegro, the Ministry of Human Rights and the Ministry of Education invited REF to supplement their own secondary and tertiary scholarship funds with REF's mentoring and tutoring components in a nationwide project financed by the government of Montenegro for Romani and Egyptian students.

Montenegro is also the site of a major policy achievement, whereby children from Konik Camp in Podgorica are being bussed from the camp to mainstream schools with financial support from the city, which is a landmark desegregation effort begun by REF.

³² Brüggemann, C. (2012). Roma Education in Comparative Perspective. Analysis of the UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011. Roma Inclusion Working Papers. Bratislava: United Nations Development Programme. Available online: http://issuu.com/undp_in_europe_cis/docs/education_web



032 Romani children in an integrated classroom in a village school in Medimurje County, Croatia. Photo: Tom Bass
033 Teenage girls sit in class at a summer literacy program at Konik Camp in Podgorica, Montenegro. Photo: Kieran Kesner



034

BALKANS

TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM RECRUITS YOUNG BALKAN SCHOLARS

In 2013 REF received 650 applications for the in-country Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP) and Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP), as well as and 16 applications for the study-abroad Roma International Scholar Program (RISP). Among these applications, 372 complied with all eligibility criteria and successfully passed the selection process. Table 15 presents the respective figures per program and per each country in the region, while Table 16 presents the distribution of accepted applicants per level of studies.

TABLE 15. SUBMITTED APPLICATIONS VS SCHOLARSHIPS GRANTED FOR THE 2013-2014 ACADEMIC YEAR

	RMUSP		RHSP		RISP	
	APPLI-CANTS	BENEFICIARIES	APPLI-CANTS	BENEFICIARIES	APPLI-CANTS	BENEFICIARIES
Albania	74	36	n/a	n/a	1	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	9	5	n/a	n/a	0	0
Kosovo	44	16	n/a	n/a	1	0
FYR Mac.	186	105	72	56	8	4
Serbia	192	97	73	49	6	4
Total	505	259	145	105	16	8
		(51%)		(72%)		(50%)

034 Romani boxer Marjus Malko attends the REF Scholarship Gala in Tirana, Albania in November 2013.

Photo: Ardit Duraku

035 Members of the REF-supported National Center for Community Services and Romani Kham convene in Tirana, Albania.

Photo: Elvin Shytaj

TABLE 16. SCHOLARSHIP BENEFICIARIES' LEVEL OF STUDIES 2013-2014 ACADEMIC YEAR

RMUSP			
	BACHELOR	MASTER	DOCTORATE
Albania	18	18	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5	0	0
Kosovo	11	5	0
FYR Macedonia	94	11	0
Serbia	82	15	0
Total	210 (81%)	49 (19%)	0
RHSP			
	VOCATIONAL	TERTIARY	
Albania	n/a	n/a	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	n/a	n/a	
Kosovo	n/a	n/a	
FYR Macedonia	19	37	
Serbia	23	26	
Total	42 (40%)	63 (60%)	
RISP			
	BACHELOR	MASTER	DOCTORATE
Albania	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bosnia and Herzegovina	n/a	n/a	n/a
Kosovo	n/a	n/a	n/a
FYR Macedonia	0	3	1
Serbia	1	2	1
Total	1	5	2

In addition to the scholarship support, 26 beneficiaries of RHSP and RMUSP received additional financial support to attend foreign language courses in accredited language schools in their localities of residence.

BELIEVE YOU CAN SUCCEED

In a series of one-day scholarship events hosted between October 30 and November 18, 2013, the Roma Education Fund and its representatives met over 600 young Romani scholars who it supports through the Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program. Beginning in Nitra on October 30 and subsequently fanning out to Tirana, Skopje, Prague, Sofia and Budapest, REF gathered together a select group of leading Romani activists, intellectuals and professionals to inspire and motivate a new cohort of Romani university students studying in the sciences and humanities.

THE CAMPAIGN

<http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/videos/take-your-place>

SCALING UP TOY LIBRARIES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IN FYR MACEDONIA AND SERBIA

Play has long been acknowledged as a crucial factor in children's development, linked to intellectual, motor and personal and social development. Children growing up in poverty are more likely to suffer poor health and developmental problems, which in turn may influence parenting responses.

The Roma Education Fund has grouped its early childhood education and care model interventions around parenting skills and ensuring access to and providing quality services in the Western Balkans. On-site activities have included a matrix of enrollment support, accompaniment and transport to preschool, home visits, meetings on education and health, Your Story reading sessions, Home Preschool Community Liaison sessions - where parents are assisted and work with teachers on delivering preschool sessions - and the Mothers' Club program.

An innovation that REF learned about in Turkey and in the United Kingdom, a Toy Library is a community venue where children, their families and caregivers can go to borrow toys, puzzles, games and books that are designed to support children's development and learning through play. The items from the library may be borrowed and enjoyed at home. Toy libraries exist in both rich and poor nations around the world, and also enable children living in the most marginalized and poor homes to access educational toys.

After piloting Toy Libraries as part of REF's early childhood education and care initiative, A Good Start, REF has scaled them up and started five new Toy Libraries in Serbia and one in Konik Camp, Podgorica, Montenegro. They provide carefully selected educational toys for borrowing and some toy libraries also offer information and advice about play and learning, and provide an opportunity for parents to borrow books related to parenting. Children and families have access to quality toys that have an educational and stimulating value to develop important milestones like fine motor skills and provide opportunity for the whole family to spend quality time together and have meaningful interactions. Toy Libraries allow parents to borrow educational developmental toys and return them at a later date; the same principle as borrowing a book from a library. To use the toys, families must register first. Borrowed toys are supposed to be returned within a week. Once the

035



toys/books are returned the toy library staff assesses the learning in an informal manner. REF has since joined the International Association of Toy Libraries as a member and operates 12 Toy Libraries in the region.

Developing good parenting skills in the parents of disadvantaged Romani children can balance the learning environment in the early years, which is essential in countries where there is little or no quality institutionalized early childhood development services.

Literacy activities (reading and discussions during weekly sessions, regular reading to their children at home, practicing comprehension) served to empower Romani mothers and enabled them to learn about toys. REF's projects targeted fathers as well as, involving them in shared family reading and playing time when the parents are leading playing activities with their children, while understanding the role of play in child development.

In several European countries, there is a lack of early childhood facilities for all children. There are not enough places in the kindergartens and their quality is under the required minimum, especially in rural and underdeveloped areas and large urban ghettos. The Roma Education Fund has adopted the methodology and adjusted to Romani communities through which Romani children and parents can be prepared for compulsory schooling, which is usually starting at the age of five to six in the region.

AL

ALBANIA

AT A GLANCE	
Population	3,011,405
GDP (EUR)	26.73 Billion
Roma Population – Official Census	8,301
Roma Population – Unofficial Estimate	150,000
Roma Population – Wikipedia	8,301
Roma Population – Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division Estimate	–
TIMSS 2011 Math	–
TIMSS 2011 Science	–
PIRLS 2011 Reading	–
Average PISA Reading Performance (2012)	394
Average PISA Math Performance (2012)	394
Average PISA Science Literacy (2012)	397

REF KEEPS ROMANI CHILDREN ATTENDING SCHOOL

In a tightly orchestrated campaign to support Romani children in accessing quality education, the Roma Education Fund, provided its local partners, the National Center for Community Services and Romani Kham, with last-minute support.

REF's resources enabled the daily bussing of children from 38 Romani families to schools in downtown Tirana after they had been evicted to a new site 11 kilometers outside the Center. At the new site, they received assistance from the city, which provided rudimentary public services including a vaccination program for young children. REF's partners provided hot meals and educational support for 89 Romani children from the youngest of age till age 15, as well as 56 mothers who received parenting and counseling support. Five additional partners joined this common effort.

The former mayor of Tirana, now prime minister, Edi Rama, has spoken widely about his party's platform to provide access to quality inclusive education to all children in Albania. REF is encouraged by the government's intervention to help this disadvantaged community with its resources. As part of its advocacy to promote Romani children's access to quality education, articles in *Shqip* and *Telegraf* and an Albanian public television broadcast covered the intervention and urged the government to intervene with its resources, quoting fully from REF's press release

"Poor, homeless children are far less likely to prepare for and attend school and they are prone irreversible emotional and physical damage by living a meager existence with their families on the streets. In order to fill this gap in services as well as fulfill fundamental human rights that the Albanian government is unable to guarantee, REF has contributed to



036

036 Swiss Ambassador to Albania, Alexander Wittwer, talks to RMUSP finalists at the REF Scholarship Gala in Tirana, Albania in November 2013. Photo: Ardit Duraku

037 Romani and non-Romani pupils do activities together in an integrated school in Medimurje County, Croatia. Photo: Tom Bass

providing basic amenities for these families (some 114 adults) and funding appropriate housing solutions in an effort to assure the children of Ruga Kavaja attend school. Specifically, from 29 children under age 5, 8 are attending kindergarten thanks to REF's intervention; from 33 children between ages 5-10, 11 are currently attending preschool or primary school and REF will enroll another 22; and 34 children between ages 10-15 are also attending school with REF's assistance."

Later, REF and its partners designed a public relations event and invited the Minister of Social Welfare and Youth, Erion Veliaj, as well as the head of State Social Services, Etleva Bisha, to visit the new site and share their thoughts about the future of the community. The minister expressed his gratitude for the contributions made by all, and especially the children for their exemplary school attendance, and pledged to find a better housing solution.

REF IN SELECT ALBANIAN MEDIA

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8ruuWVyDwE>; <http://gazeta-shqip.com/lajme/2013/12/25/thyejme-mitin-e-sizifit-se-bashku/>;
<http://mapo.al/2013/12/27/per-nje-politike-te-mire-per-romet/>

BIH

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

AT A GLANCE	
Population	3,875,723
GDP (EUR)	32.16 Billion
Roma Population – Official Census	8,864
Roma Population – Unofficial Estimate	–
Roma Population – Wikipedia	480,000
Roma Population – Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division Estimate	–
TIMSS 2011 Math	–
TIMSS 2011 Science	–
PIRLS 2011 Reading	–
Average PISA Reading Performance (2012)	n/a
Average PISA Math Performance (2012)	n/a
Average PISA Science Literacy (2012)	n/a

BRIDGING THE GAP IN ROMAN EDUCATION IN MOSTAR

Novi Most International, an NGO from Mostar, has been working with Romani communities in Bisce Polje and Juzni Logor in association with the "Mustafa Ejubovic – Sejh Jujo" primary school. The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport Herzegovina-Neretva County-Canton, and the OSCE office in Mostar all consider this project to be very important in taking steps to increase Romani children's access to mainstream education.

Ending in February 2014, the Novi Most Roma Education project achieved a number of very significant results including decreasing the number of Romani students enrolled in the special school "Los Rosales," successfully transferring five Romani students from "Los Rosales" to the primary school working with the project, increasing the number of Romani children in primary school as well as in secondary school, increasing the level of school performance and increasing school attendance.

There are currently 77 Romani children living in Bisce Polje from the ages of six to sixteen. Before the project started only four of these children were attending a mainstream primary school, eight of these children were attending a special school, five of these children were attending an accelerated learning program and the remaining 60 children were not registered in the school system at all. However, with the help of the project, there are currently 25 Romani pupils attending primary school, seven Romani primary school graduates and one Romani secondary school graduate. It is also important to mention that no Romani pupil whose family remained in the area for the duration of the project dropped out of school.

HR

CROATIA

AT A GLANCE	
Population	4,475,611
GDP (EUR)	78.15 Billion
Roma Population – Official Census	9,463
Roma Population – Unofficial Estimate	–
Roma Population – Wikipedia	–
Roma Population – Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division Estimate	–
TIMSS 2011 Math	490 (1.9)
TIMSS 2011 Science	516 (2.1)
PIRLS 2011 Reading	553 (1.9)
Average PISA Reading Performance (2012)	485
Average PISA Math Performance (2012)	471
Average PISA Science Literacy (2012)	491

ENROLLING IN PRESCHOOL AND DESEGREGATING KINDERGARTENS IN MEDIMURJE

Croatia's Medimurje County is the site of an ongoing REF project to enroll young Romani children in preschools and subsequently desegregate kindergartens through a long-term intervention in early childhood education and care and primary school services. Plaintiffs from Medimurje won the Orsus case in the European Court of Human Rights in 2010 and that verdict subsequently resulted in REF being invited by the Croatian national government and the Medimurje school inspectorate to address Roma education in Medimurje, which according to the latest Croatian Census, has the largest



037



038

038 A young girl plays during a village kindergarten's second shift in Medimurje, Croatia. Photo: Tom Bass

amount of Roma in all of Croatia. Operating in four localities, in a mixture of sites that incorporate community centers, preschool facilities and kindergartens, this intervention in partnership with the local authorities supports REF's belief that everyone has a role to play in investing in children's cognitive, motor, physical and psychological development. REF's flexibility has allowed it to adopt a different approach at each site, whether a community center hosting early childhood education and care, a standalone kindergarten with several shifts of children a day or a primary school in a town center.

Despite some mainstream parental resistance, REF's constant work with both Romani and non-Romani communities, as well as its strong partnership with the regional authorities and national stakeholders, has settled the unease. The Roma Education Fund's regular monitoring missions have clearly established that Medimurje's intent is good, while there is still a long way to go.

FOR MORE IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF CROATIA'S EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND REF'S ROLE IN EDUCATION IN MEDIMURJE, VISIT:

<http://www.opendemocracy.net/tom-bass/desegregating-roma-and-croat-schoolchildren-what-has-been-done>
<http://infoagr.am/croatia-child-by-child-step-by-step>

KS

KOSOVO

AT A GLANCE	
Population	1,847,708
GDP (EUR)	14.11 Billion
Roma Population – Official Census	–
Roma Population – Unofficial Estimate	40,000
Roma Population – Wikipedia	–
Roma Population – Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division Estimate	–
TIMSS 2011 Math	–
TIMSS 2011 Science	–
PIRLS 2011 Reading	–
Average PISA Reading Performance (2012)	n/a
Average PISA Math Performance (2012)	n/a
Average PISA Science Literacy (2012)	n/a

EQUAL CHANCES FOR ALL IN KOSOVO

“In Kosovo, there are 28 primary schools that have Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students, four high schools, and no more than 70 students attending university.”

– *Kosovapress, May 9, 2013*

The efforts of the Kosovar government to improve educational outcomes for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) pupils have seen a number of positive results in recent years, including accepting and inclusion strategy for the RAE community with special measures on education. Other more concrete efforts have included the provision of over 5,400 textbooks in the 2009-2010 academic year and 200 scholarships to RAE pupils in the 2012-2013 academic year, proof of how governments are adopting scholarship programs similar to REF's models for secondary and tertiary levels of education.

These are important steps in improving access to education for disadvantaged students from RAE communities. REF has facilitated two policy dialogue roundtables in 2013 with high-level officials representing the Minister of Education Science and Technology, the Minister of EU Integration and the Embassy of Switzerland to the Republic of Kosovo.

REF's strategic flexibility enabling it to know when and how to advocate, cooperate and/or implement projects is apparent in REF's targeted grants in Kosovo. Through its models REF aspires to address many of the systemic problems identified in a recent United Nations Development Programme report.

MK

FYR MACEDONIA

AT A GLANCE	
Population	2,087,171
GDP (EUR)	22.4 Billion
Roma Population – Official Census	53,879
Roma Population – Unofficial Estimate	–
Roma Population – Wikipedia	260,000
Roma Population – Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division Estimate	–
TIMSS 2011 Math	–
TIMSS 2011 Science	–
PIRLS 2011 Reading	–
Average PISA Reading Performance (2012)	n/a
Average PISA Math Performance (2012)	n/a
Average PISA Science Literacy (2012)	n/a

SECONDARY SCHOLARSHIPS GO NATIONAL

FYR Macedonia has led the pack in the Balkans when it comes to recognizing the commitment needed to lift Romani communities out of poverty and making inclusive, quality educational opportunities available to Romani children. Due to the Ohrid Framework Agreement and due to the Decade, FYR Macedonia has made many reforms to include Roma in public, academic and civic life.

For REF this has meant access to political channels, engagement with strategic decision-makers, building relationships on trust and social cohesion, and legislative changes that have gone out of their way to attain FYR Macedonia's commitment to quality inclusive education among other fundamental human rights. FYR Macedonia is one of the exemplary countries where REF implements its programs at each education level in active partnership with the national and local governments including Roma civil society organizations.

One of the largest partnerships has been FYR Macedonia's national Roma Secondary School Scholarship program, and 2013 marked the third phase of collaboration between REF and the Ministry of Education, Sports and Science in offering this nationwide scholarship program. The Ministry is supporting the project activities with half of the costs and there are signals it may contribute further in the next programming phase.

This program provided 1,169 beneficiaries with support that enabled them to complete their secondary education and transition to university in FYR Macedonia, which represents some 73 percent of Roma officially registered in secondary education. The rate of secondary school completion among enrolled girls is equal to that of the boys (97 percent) and so

REF's early childhood education and care and preprimary interventions in more than ten localities with different implementing partners – including Save the Children, Shpresa e Jetes (Hope of Life) and Balkan Sunflowers – has reached 250 preschool-aged children and their families.

With the same partners, REF's primary and secondary program helped 175 pupils in the compulsory age cohort and 15 street children who are among the most at-risk and disadvantaged children in Kosovo.

Another proven model to reduce early school leaving and better educational outcomes was prepared for implementation in 2013 when REF negotiated a new secondary scholarship program with the Kosovar government and Voice of RAE NGO, targeting over 500 secondary school age children beginning in 2014 .

Romaversitas, a supplementary activity to the Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program, is a RAE-led study hall that serves as an incubator for 40 RAE university students, plus 15 talented RAE high school graduates who anticipate being enrolled as freshmen. It provides extra resources, tutoring, IT and language learning opportunities open to students not only studying in Pristina but also at a few rural universities. The Pristina venue offers a home away from home for students, where they can study, socialize, exchange information, use computers and internet, and also have book and library services; it is maintained and co-funded by the Kosovo Agency for Advocacy and Development. Data collection began in 2013 regarding the students' academic results under the program.

This model has been scaled up from its original location in Budapest, Hungary that has been operating since 2006.

REF IN SELECT KOSOVAR MEDIA

<http://www.kosovapress.com/?cid=1,84,165048>
<http://www.koha.net/arkiva/?page=1,13,145640>
<http://www.kosova-sot.info/arsim/komunitetet-ende-braktisin-arsimin-obligativ>
<http://www.kosovapress.com/sq/politike/komunitetet-ende-braktisin-arsimin-obligativ-3788/>
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88RPNgWdZQA&list=PLRrFsdYf5HhJpjsE_tg8Y82KaTseurEO9&index=1



039

is the rate of transition to university (approximately eight percent for both girls and boys).

The average grade point average (GPA) of the graduate scholarship recipients for the school year 2012-13 is 4.023, which is a very good GPA. For beneficiaries enrolled in the four-year program the average graduate GPA is 4.50 (excellent), meaning that most of the scholars that graduate had very good if not excellent grades; the average graduate GPA for beneficiaries enrolled in the three-year program is 3.55 (very good). 112 students successfully passed the state Matura exam.

The project activities have contributed towards increased students' motivation, improved attendance, and improved graduation rates. The improved attendance is so far the biggest benefit of the project activities. While there are still some Romani students who are lagging behind in achievements despite the project interventions, participating teachers have noticed an increase in the motivation within the majority of students. Moreover, the vast majority of students expressed high hopes for their future, which can be considered as an indicator of their positive self-perceptions and belief in their abilities.

Students completing secondary education have much better prospects to access the labor market than those without qualifications.³³ From the results given, it can be seen that from year to year the number of students dropping out of school obviously decreases and the number of Romani secondary students that get enrolled in higher education increases. Although the sample of students who failed to complete the school year is rather small, a clear pattern of gender-specific reasons for dropping out can be observed. While the main reason for terminating the schooling for female students is marriage, for male students it is a large number of absences which lead to removal from school.

According to the available records, almost 40 percent of the total or 73 percent of the ones which passed the Matura exam have enrolled into university. The project records offer information on the chosen vocations of some of the students. They indicate that the most preferred vocations are: medicine (three students enrolled), management (two enrolled), philology (three enrolled), and law (two enrolled) and philosophy (two enrolled) followed by: engineering, insurance, pedagogy, literature, technical science, gender studies and finance with one student enrolled in each.³⁴

BENEFICIARY SPOTLIGHT: ADEM CINDAROVSKI – RMUSP

Adem Cindarovski is 47 years old, studying Philology at “Goce Delchev” University – Stip.

“Nothing has changed since last year. I live alone, my parents are deceased, and it's taken me two years to get myself out of my current situation. I receive no additional revenues other than the scholarship. I live alone in Stip and pay MKD 2,500 for rent, common costs and electricity. By studying and pursuing a career, I want to prove to all Roma that age is not a criterion.

“I joined the National Roma Centrum – Kumanovo to volunteer and have participated in seminars on ‘No Roma in special schools.’ After a training seminar, I participated in a fieldwork survey of families with children in special schools in Stip; the purpose of the survey was to discover the ways and techniques such as schools and staff separate Romani children into special classes and exclude them from mainstream classrooms.”

REF IN SELECT FYR MACEDONIAN MEDIA:

<http://www.tol.org/client/article/23634-macedonia-roma-education.html>
<http://www.idividi.com.mk/vesti/makedonija/835715/index.html>
http://www.fakulteti.mk/news/13-11-10/sveचना_ceremonija_po_povod_potpishuvanje_na_dogovori_za_stipendiranje_na_studenti_romi_vo_makedonija.aspx
<http://www.makfax.mk/#322600>
<http://www.skopjeinfo.mk/gradot/644008596/potpisani-dogovorite-za-stipendiranje-na-talentrante-romi>

³³ External project evaluation report 2011, Ana Mickovska-Raleva

³⁴ Vocations/types of faculty selected are reported in the form they were entered into the project database.

039 Macedonian RMUSP finalist signs his contract before the REF Scholarship Gala in Skopje, Macedonia.
Photo: Robert Atanasovski



MONTENEGRO

AT A GLANCE	
Population	653,474
GDP (EUR)	7.429 Billion
Roma Population – Official Census	2,601
Roma Population – Unofficial Estimate	20,000
Roma Population – Wikipedia	28,000
Roma Population – Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division Estimate	–
TIMSS 2011 Math	–
TIMSS 2011 Science	–
PIRLS 2011 Reading	–
Average PISA Reading Performance (2012)	422
Average PISA Math Performance (2012)	410
Average PISA Science Literacy (2012)	410

DESEGREGATING EDUCATION AT KONIK CAMP³⁵

In a consortium with Help (Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe e.V.)³⁶ and in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education, REF started to implement a project to increase the complex integration process of Konik Camps' inhabitants within the framework of the *Assistance Program for Integration and Return of RAE and other I/DPs residing in the Konik Area*. The project is financed by the European Commission's Instruments for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and Montenegrin government funds till 2016. In this complex partnership REF designed and implemented the educational integration of Romani and Egyptian children living in Konik Camp.

Konik Camp houses more than 2,000 people, most of whom live in extreme poverty. They moved to Montenegro during the Kosovo conflict and have remained in the camp's difficult living conditions for the last thirteen years. Residents live in metal containers or barracks built from wood, plastic and other gathered materials. Konik's inhabitants suffer from high levels of unemployment and discrimination by the majority who isolate them by not accepting them as equal citizens.

Romani and Egyptian children attend a provisional segregated school in metal containers established near Konik Camp 2. However, the children can gain very little as the quality of education and attendance rates are extremely low. The “school” covers children from first to fourth grades, after which they are supposed to join and extended building of the school, which is outside of the camp. However, at this point many of the children stop attending school and only a small percent of them pass to the next grade. Data shows that the dropout rate for Romani and Egyptian children who were enrolled in the first grade fell to 35 percent by the end of second grade, to less than half that amount by the end of fourth grade

with only 13 percent of children transferring to fifth grade, according to an evaluation of Roma education in Montenegro by Johanna Crighton, a UNICEF Consultant in 2012.

When REF started to implement the educational activities, the initiative has garnered much support from Romani parents and local schools, and since September 2013 the first grade of the Konik School has been closed and the Romani children are attending integrated schools outside of the camp. Six primary schools were selected by the Ministry of Education and Roma Education Fund based on the closest distance from the camp, considering the percent of Romani children attending the school and available places for newcomers.

It is envisaged that the segregated branch school will be gradually closed within the next four years and all children from the Konik camp will gradually attend integrated classes outside of the camp by 2017. The basic conditions of the desegregation model are based on the REF's experiences and lessons learned during the organization's eight years of developing and evaluating local level desegregation models in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania.

“Hana, aged six, was born and currently lives in the Konik camp. She lives in the Camp 1 where most of refugees and internally displaced persons from Kosovo live. Her parents as well as other camp residents live in this refugee camp since 2000. She has three female and two male siblings and the family live in squat without water, electricity or a regular diet. She is a first grade pupil of a ‘Vuk Karadzic’ school and receives much positive feedback from her teachers. Hana is a role model to other children and her teachers recognize her as a leader in the classroom. She is very communicative, cheerful, and above all, very smart. Despite the fact that she lives in the camp in poor living conditions, Hana regularly attends school and is very motivated to study. I am sure that she is going to be one of the best in her school.” – Serdjan Baftijari, Roma and Egyptian Assistant

In the long term, REF intends to improve the learning outcomes of Romani and Egyptian children in Montenegro and plans to further extend its work to the secondary and university level due to the low transition rate of Romani and Egyptian students. The Roma Education Fund has

³⁵ This article was revised from an article in Transitions Online by Anasztázia Nagy of the Roma Education Fund and Klaus Mock of Help - Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe e.V. Available online: <http://chalkboard.tol.org/from-exclusion-towards-integration-of-roma-and-egyptians/>

³⁶ Available online: <http://www.help-ev.de/en/>

SRB

SERBIA

AT A GLANCE	
Population	7,243,007
GDP (EUR)	80.47 Billion
Roma Population – Official Census	147,604
Roma Population – Unofficial Estimate	450,000
Roma Population – Wikipedia	800,000
Roma Population – Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division Estimate	600,000
TIMSS 2011 Math	516 (3.0)
TIMSS 2011 Science	516 (3.1)
PIRLS 2011 Reading	–
Average PISA Reading Performance (2012)	446
Average PISA Math Performance (2012)	449
Average PISA Science Literacy (2012)	445

OSCE, EU DELEGATION AND MINISTRY OF EDUCATION JOIN REF TO SUPPORT SECONDARY SCHOLARSHIPS

REF has opened its national representation office in Serbia to participate more actively in national policy dialogues, initiatives and programs related to Roma. With the support of the European Commission's Instruments for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), the Serbian branch office of the Roma Education Fund, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Ministry of Education are implementing a 20-month national mentoring and scholarship program for Romani high school students in all of Serbia, aiming to decrease the dropout rate among the most vulnerable Romani students and to support them through a set of different institutional and program support tools.

This nationwide project is built on the experiences and results from Vojvodina, where since 2007, REF and the Provincial Secretariat for Education and Culture of Vojvodina implemented a secondary scholarship and mentorship program for Roma. A total of 860 scholarships were awarded to Romani students who attended 131 schools throughout Vojvodina; the students were selected based on their GPA and need for assistance, and 54.6 percent of the recipients were female. Students with exceptional academic performance (GPA 4.75) received additional rewards. An external evaluation reports better achievements, in particular a decrease in absenteeism and increase in GPA.³⁷

³⁷ Available online: http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/external_evaluation_secondary_scholarships_in_ap_vojvodina.doc



040 A young girl from Konik Camp waits to enter a mainstream primary school after being bussed to downtown Podgorica, Montenegro. Photo: Srdjan Ilic



KEEPING ROMA STUDENTS IN HIGH SCHOOL

By Christopher F. Schuetz
New York Times, July 7, 2013

NOVI SAD, Serbia – Kosta Kuzmanovic's wish is to be a radiologist in Australia. But the path is lined with hurdles for the 17-year-old Roma student from this dusty East European city, which still bears scars from wartime bombings in 1999.

As a member of one of Europe's more disenfranchised minority groups, he may face financial, linguistic, bureaucratic and social barriers. If he does make it to an Australian university, it will be because of both his hard work and the Secondary Scholarship Program, run by the Roma Education Fund, a regional organization.

The program makes it possible for him to attend the Novi Sad Medical High School here, which offers counseling and financing for Roma students, "I have an opportunity, why wouldn't I use it?" he said.

The Serbian government does not track how many Roma youth are in school. But the R.E.F. estimates that only one in three Roma students in Serbia even attempts to enroll in high school.

And while attendance is rising, it is still very low.

The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development's Program for International Student Assessment, known as PISA, found that only 15 percent to 20 percent of Roma students made it to high school in Serbia in 2009. But that is still better than in 2004, when attendance was 8.3 percent.

To better address some of these issues, the R.E.F.'s Secondary Scholarship Program, which has traditionally relied on outside funding, is set to undergo a change this autumn when it is implemented nationwide under the Ministry of Education and financed with pre-accession E.U. funds. (Serbia is in the process of applying to become an E.U. member.)

The program offers scholarships from the primary to university levels and falls under the umbrella of the Decade of Roma Inclusion project, started by a dozen European countries in 2005.

"Education is just one part of the problem," said Marius Taba, an officer with the R.E.F. in Budapest.

Also offered is a comprehensive program for high school students that includes counseling, tutoring and a monthly stipend of about EUR35, or \$45, to help offset the cost of books, transportation and clean clothes, which are needed even at free public high schools.

"That's pretty big money for this country," said Mr. Kuzmanovic, the aspiring medical student.

While parents tend to rely on the stipend, students say that mentoring is the most important factor to their academic success.

Mentors are generally high school teachers who provide tutoring and personal support in less-than-welcoming environments. But because there are few Roma teachers in the Serbian school system, most come from non-Roma backgrounds.

"You can count the number of Roma teachers on one hand," said Judit Szira, R.E.F.'s executive editor [Sic].

But their engagement with students and parents ensures their familiarity with the community.

Szezana Radisic, a local teacher, mentors seven Roma scholarship students at the Novi Sad Medical High School. She said her job was as much about keeping her students on track as it was about advocating for them among her colleagues.

"You have to solve an existing problem, not make a bigger problem out of it," Ms. Radisic said.

Initially, other teachers were suspicious of what was seen as the Roma students' special status; but eventually they learned to work with Ms. Radisic to accommodate them.

The R.E.F. believes that involving parents is an important part of preventing students from dropping out, Ms. Szira said. Special care is taken to have parents visit the schools. This often happens on weekends or after normal course hours because many Roma parents, who may not have had much formal education themselves, do not feel welcome in institutional settings.

"It is difficult, but also important, to speak to the parents," Ms. Radisic said. "In the end, it's about increasing the student's ambitions."

Since 2007, the R.E.F. has awarded 1,620 scholarships in Vojvodina Province, of which Novi Sad is the principle city. During the program's first year, 52 scholarship students made it to a university; by 2010, that number rose to 134 recipients.

And while university admissions rates rose, high school dropout rates fell, from seven percent in the 2007–8 school year to less than three percent in 2009–10. The program tries to balance integrating Roma students with nurturing their sense of identity.

"There is no shame in being Roma," said Jilijana Varga, a Roma student at the medical high school. Like other Roma students here, she said her family would not be able to afford to send her if it were not for the scholarship.

Many of Ms. Radisic's students deal with adult stresses. They support their families financially, or care for sick or disabled parents as well as younger siblings.

But while the program's directors acknowledge these social problems, they also expect students to maintain a high academic standard, as scholarships are granted and renewed only on merit. If grades slip below a certain level, or if there are too many unexplained absences from school, a student's stipend can be removed, though there will still be access to a mentor. "Not only do we want them to be in the school, we want them to be good students," said Mr. Taba, the R.E.F. officer.

THE FULL ARTICLE CAN BE ACCESSED HERE

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/08/world/europe/keeping-roma-students-in-high-school.html?_r=2&

Reproduced with permission of the New York Times © 2013

BRINGING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION TO SERBIA'S SCHOOL SYSTEM

Serbia has been breaking ground with constitutional and legislative changes that officially recognize Roma as a national minority, with all the subsequent privileges, rights and protections thereof. In particular, Serbia's Law on the Foundation of Education has recognized inclusive education as a priority.

Implemented together with the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD) and a consortium of partners including the World Bank and the Roma Education Fund, the DILS project has acted to support the recognition of inclusive education as interpreted through the new law.

Part of a project funded by the World Bank, Delivery of Local Implementation Services (DILS) addresses how to improve access to and the efficiency, equity and quality of local delivery

of health, education and social protection services in a decentralized public system, from which social inclusion forms a significant portion, including both children with disabilities and socio-economically disadvantaged children like Roma.³⁸ Covering 298 schools across Serbia, this sequence of trainings and grants was designed to instill the values of inclusive education in the Serbian education system.

The "Educational Inclusion of Roma" component aimed to ensure that a policy of Roma integration at the municipal level was achieved. Fifty-six different municipalities with a high number of Romani individuals were selected to receive grants to aid in this goal. Two million euros were awarded on average EUR 35,000 per municipality, leading to 192 local education institutions and 56 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) being effected.

Municipalities that received grants created local development teams consisting of individual representatives from the

041 A group of primary school students study after school at Makis Camp outside downtown Belgrade, Serbia. Photo: Bojana Andric



041

local government, education institutions and at least one NGO. The local development teams worked to provide full coverage of enrollment in preschool for Romani children, improving the quality of services provided at the local level and to create a local action plan to ensure the sustainability of the implementation of the inclusion of Romani students.

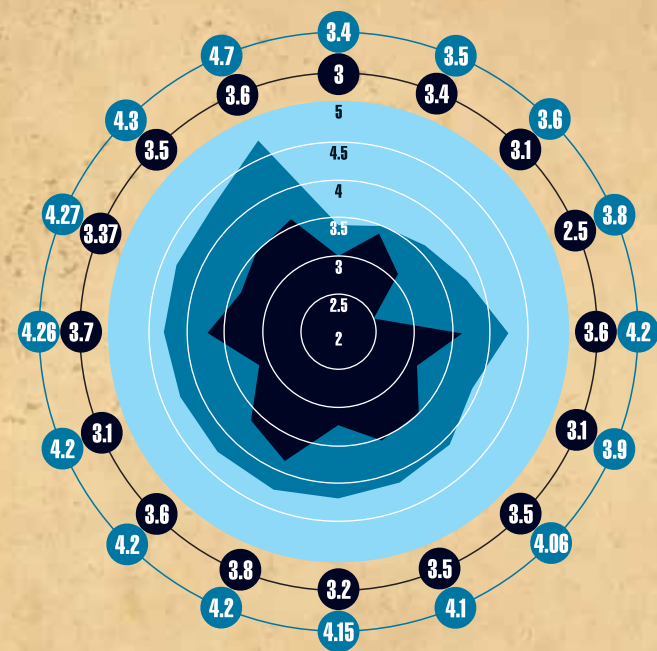
An evaluation of the educational program was completed, measuring the dropout rates, absentee rates, academic achievement, repetition rates and segregation rates of Romani students, parental satisfaction rates and motivation to access higher education.

Overall the DILS program has shown that external support to schools and teachers through a variety of programs is essential to increase the schools self-efficiency.

REF IN SELECT SERBIAN MEDIA

- http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/08/world/europe/keeping-roma-students-in-high-school.html?_r=3&
- <http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/videos/romaversitas-serbia>
- <http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1143206>
- <http://www.beta.rs/?tip=article&kategorija=vestiizemlje&ida=2899723&id=&ime>

Opinion of School Principals Involved in DILS/REF Program and School Principals from Control Group of Schools on Changes That Took Place at the School Level since 2011



- The number of students from deprived backgrounds who leave school has decreased. – 3.4 – 3
- The number of students from deprived backgrounds who entered our school has increased. – 3.5 – 3.4
- The number of students from deprived backgrounds who enroll in secondary schools has increased. – 3.6 – 3.1
- School cooperates with local and other NGOs more successfully. – 3.8 – 2.5
- Inclusive culture is more evident in the school. – 4.2 – 3.6
- School achievement of students from deprived backgrounds has improved. – 3.9 – 3.1
- The conditions for the implementation of inclusive education in the school are very improved. – 4.06 – 3.5
- Students from deprived backgrounds are more evenly divided in classes. – 4.1 – 3.5
- Coordination of activities at the local level has been improved. – 4.15 – 3.2
- Parents of students are more satisfied with the school. – 4.2 – 3.8
- Teachers know better how to provide additional educational support. – 4.2 – 3.6
- School has developed measures to prevent dropout of students from deprived backgrounds. – 4.2 – 3.1
- Remedial teaching is rather perceived as a means of support available to all students, than as solution for failure. – 4.26 – 3.7
- Cooperation between schools and the municipality is more efficient. – 4.27 – 3.37
- Teachers collaborate more effectively with parents of students. – 4.3 – 3.5
- School provides financial support to greater extent for students from deprived backgrounds. – 4.7 – 3.5

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN DILS/REF SCHOOLS

The school involved peers in preventing dropout. In the cases of children who already dropped out of school the joint work of teaching assistants, peers and teachers gave good results. Several children have returned to school. In our school, we strive to involve students who need additional support in all school activities so that these students actively participate in clubs and extracurricular activities at school, in accordance with their interests. When celebrating important dates in the school we are involving all those students in the preparation and execution of the program in the city or in the school.

http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/file/publications/dils_moestd_final_evaluation_report_-_dec_2013.pdf

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN MUNICIPALITIES INVOLVED IN DILS/REF PROGRAM

In all primary schools in the municipality, desegregation of classes was made in 2009. Since then, the Roma children attend school with other children. Student M.A. who dropped out of primary school in the sixth grade, returned to regular education after year because we provided her with meals, free school supplies, textbooks. She is accepted by her peers and receives support from teaching assistants. Schools, NGOs, teaching assistant and the Center for Social Work took out the whole documentation of a Roma family whose three children have not previously attended school, aged 10, 8 and 6 years old and enrolled them in the first grade. The children were not in the births register. The family is provided by social assistance for the first time.

http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/file/publications/dils_moestd_final_evaluation_report_-_dec_2013.pdf

³⁸ Available online: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/0,contentMDK:21691800-menuPK:64282138-pagePK:41367-piPK:279616-theSitePK:40941,00.html>



042



043

S E E

056-069

SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

Bulgaria / Romania

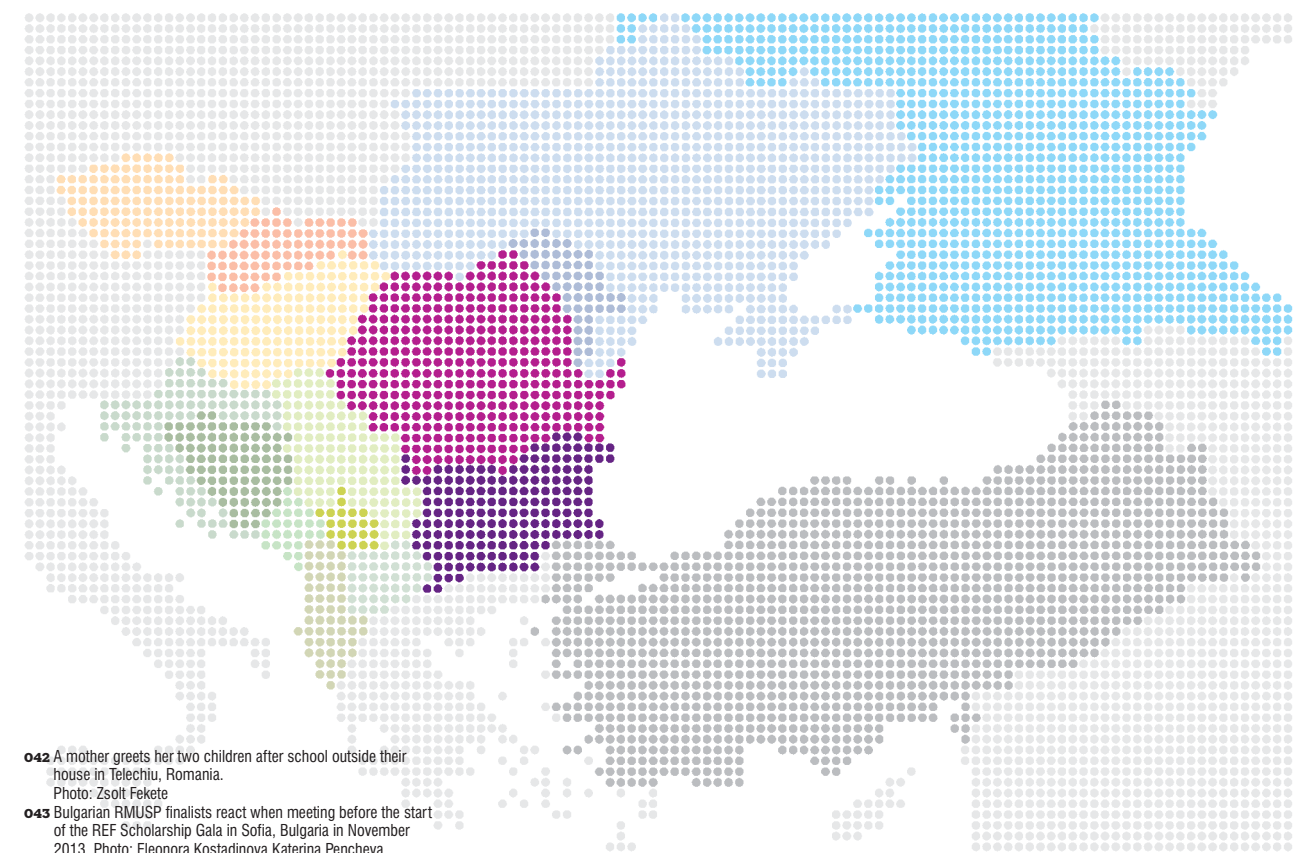
REF funded over 20 afterschool study halls in many Bulgarian municipalities for a number of years in order to prevent early school leaving. By 2013, the governmental bodies responsible for programs on national minorities including Roma have continued to pledge financial support to sustain these activities based on REF's experience.

Furthermore, positive changes are expected to result from an ongoing reform of Bulgaria's early childhood education and care system informed by some of REF's experience with Roma education.

In Romania, REF has successfully worked together with European Structural Funds to prevent nearly 4,000 at-risk Romani primary and secondary school students from

dropping out through study halls, tutoring and mentoring.

Having received a bridging loan to ensure the operation of its three European Structural Fund projects, REF Romania completed their implementation: School After School for Romani pupils at risk of dropping out, Equal Opportunities in Education providing tutoring and mentoring to encourage young Roma to finish their studies, and Roma Health Scholarships in order to develop a new cadre of Romani health professionals. The Roma Education Fund Romania also strived to consolidate its partnerships with a broad range of Roma and non-Roma NGOs in 2013, working together to target crucial elements of Romanian educational policy that would allow Romani children to fulfill their right to quality inclusive education.



042 A mother greets her two children after school outside their house in Telechiu, Romania.
Photo: Zsolt Fekete

043 Bulgarian RMUSP finalists react when meeting before the start of the REF Scholarship Gala in Sofia, Bulgaria in November 2013. Photo: Eleonora Kostadinova Katerina Pencheva

SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS GENERATE NEW LAYERS OF ROMANI ELITES

In the region in 2013 REF received 1,068 applications for the in-country Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP) and Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP), as well as 30 applications for the study-abroad Roma International Scholar Program (RISP), which makes South Eastern Europe the region with the highest number of applications for REF scholarships. Among these applications, 595 successfully passed the selection process. Table 17 presents the respective figures per program and per each country in the region, while Table 18 presents the distribution of accepted applicants per level of studies.

044



TABLE 17. SUBMITTED APPLICATIONS VS SCHOLARSHIPS GRANTED FOR THE 2013-2014 ACADEMIC YEAR

	RMUSP		RHSP		RISP	
	APPLI-CANTS	BENEFICIARIES	APPLI-CANTS	BENEFICIARIES	APPLI-CANTS	BENEFICIARIES
Bulgaria	397	210	94	65	14	8
Romania	529	305	n/a	n/a	16	7
Total	974	515 (53%)	94	65 (69%)	30	15 (50%)

TABLE 18. SCHOLARSHIP BENEFICIARIES' LEVEL OF STUDIES 2013-2014 ACADEMIC YEAR

RMUSP	BACHELOR	MASTER	DOCTORATE
	Bulgaria	158	47
Romania	213	80	12
Total	371 (72%)	127 (25%)	17 (3%)

RHSP	VOCATIONAL	TERTIARY
	Bulgaria	25
Romania	n/a	n/a
Total	25 (39%)	40 (61%)

RISP	BACHELOR	MASTER	DOCTORATE
	Bulgaria	2	4
Romania	4	2	1
Total	6	6	3

In addition to the scholarship support, scholarship beneficiaries from the region received additional grants for their academic and professional development. Hence, within the RMUSP's Professional Development Fund three students from Romania received additional financial support for attending academic conferences and symposia and one received support for conducting a research project, while another 11 (seven from Bulgaria and four from Romania) received additional support for attending foreign language courses in accredited language schools in their localities of residence. Within the RHSP's foreign language component 20 medical students benefited from additional financial support for attending foreign language courses.

044 RMUSP finalists react after attending the REF Scholarship Galas in Sofia, Bulgaria in late 2013.
Photo: Eleonora Kostadinova and Katerina Pencheva
045 Siblings at the Telechiu Community Center in western Romania.
Photo: Zsolt Fekete



045

IMPLEMENTING EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL FUNDS

Even with recent progress in narrowing differences between Roma and non-Roma in education - progress due in no small part to initiatives like REF - the continuing gaps are telling. According to EU statistics, less than half of Romani youth complete primary education in Europe compared to 97 percent of non-Roma.³⁹ Non-completion of formal schooling leads to automatic exclusion from secondary and tertiary education. Since demand for unskilled labor is low in general, failure in school has long-term consequences for employability and social inclusion.

As these numbers suggest, national and local governments in countries with significant Romani populations have failed to address the challenges that impede progress for Roma in school. The reasons are many, but include a lack of political will, lack of knowledge of what works and inadequate resources from state budgets.

In 2004, before REF was launched, the World Bank conducted a needs assessment⁴⁰ where they estimated that closing the gap between Roma and non-Roma in education in the eight initial Decade countries would require investments of about EUR 120-200 million annually in the early stages and between EUR 390-650 million annually by the end of the Decade. The expectation was that by 2015 national governments would be absorbing at least 90 percent of the costs of educating Roma and external financing requirements would be reduced to about EUR 40-65 million annually. While detailed funding data is lacking in most countries, it is clear that no country with a significant Romani population has invested this level of resources in order to bridge the gap between Roma and non-Roma in education.⁴¹

Because of this failure, EU funding for Roma education remains a resource of disproportionate importance. In the last few years, EU funding has been married to a stronger political commitment by the EU to focus attention on the need for Roma integration. Almost 10 years ago, OSF and the World

Bank persuaded key national players to launch the Decade of Roma Inclusion and two years ago the EU elaborated a Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020, both of which highlight the importance of Roma education. The EU began to provide the possibility to make use of Structural Funds specifically for improvements to Roma education (as well as initiatives targeting Roma public health and employment) and tried - mostly unsuccessfully - to persuade national governments with large Roma populations to make specific commitments in this regard.

A critical part of EU funding is spent in the form of grants to local nonprofit organizations working on Roma education issues, which are frequently much more experienced working in Romani communities than is local government. However, for many NGOs, these relatively large grants, complex reporting requirements and delays in disbursement can overwhelm their capacities. One of REF's key aims has been to support NGOs in developing the capacity to absorb these funds and in dealing with the difficulties caused by donor requirements and delays in funds disbursement. By establishing local offices, REF can help build consortia of local NGOs to implement programs, act as the back office to administer EU funds and provide partners with a source of cash flow when needed. REF uses these local offices to maximize the amount of EU funding utilized for Roma education and to ensure its effective use.

³⁹ EU Justice Commissioner Viviane Reding quoted by Deutsche Welle. Available online: <http://www.dw.de/just-42-percent-of-roma-children-finish-school-in-europe/a-14967291>
⁴⁰ Available online: http://www.wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDS/IB/2006/02/14/000012009_2006021410407/Rendered/PDF/352110REV0Needs1AssessmentSummary.pdf
⁴¹ Available online: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/147EN.pdf



BULGARIA

AT A GLANCE	
Population	6,981,642
GDP (EUR)	104.6 Billion
Roma Population – Official Census	370,908
Roma Population – Unofficial Estimate	–
Roma Population – Wikipedia	80,000
Roma Population – Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division Estimate	750,000
TIMSS 2011 Math	–
TIMSS 2011 Science	–
PIRLS 2011 Reading	532 (4.1)
Average PISA Reading Performance (2012)	436
Average PISA Math Performance (2012)	436
Average PISA Science Literacy (2012)	446

DESEGREGATING FAKULTETA

Home to the largest Romani settlement in Sofia, the Fakulteta area is estimated to house some 40,000 Roma. Educational opportunities in the area are limited, and only one municipal school exists in Fakulteta, where children from first to eighth grade are educated. In terms of the number of registered students, this school has the largest student body in Sofia, having somewhere between 1,200 and 1,300 students. Although the school has the largest student population, it has the lowest attendance rate and student performance is far below average. Preschool facilities are not available in Fakulteta or in the other large Romani settlements in Sofia.

Unequal access to education is a particularly striking problem in both early childhood development and education in kindergartens and preschool, both of which are presently compulsory according to Bulgarian law, and elementary school education (first to fourth grade). Presently preschool education may be achieved by attending either a kindergarten or primary school. The problem with the preschool education is particularly pertinent in Sofia, where the facilities of kindergartens do not provide enough places for the children in the growing city. The registration process is completed by using an electronic system that was established by the Sofia municipality. This electronic system has the largest effect on Romani families and creates many different obstacles. Most Romani families do not have internet access or home computers and there is often lower literacy rates among Romani parents.

The Equal Opportunities Association (EOA) has been working on these problems surrounding early childhood education for the past few years through the framework of REF- funded projects. In 2010 the EOA implemented a pilot project that was supported by REF with the aim to assist Romani families in enrolling their children into mainstream preschool facilities.



The results of the pilot year were very positive with the creation of a working relationship and partnership with educational authorities and teachers in Sofia. The project was also able to successfully enroll 211 children into kindergarten and assisted 56 children from the preschool group to enroll in mainstream elementary schools. The pilot project was also successful in creating a list of eight mainstream schools all bordering the Roma districts and prepared a group to be registered into preschool in the next academic year.

Table 19 shows the number of Romani children in three of the largest Roma settlements in the framework of a previously supported REF program in Bulgaria.

TABLE 19. NUMBER OF ROMANI CHILDREN IN THREE BULGARIAN SETTLEMENTS

YEAR OF BIRTH	FAKULTETA	PHILIPOV TZI	CHRISTO BOTEV
2006	297	56	81
2007	264	70	92
2008	284	59	88
2009	291	66	89
2010	277	58	87
2011	292	56	98
2012	304	49	92

The third phase of the ongoing project includes 703 active profiles of Romani children, already included in the previous programs and a group of 1,430 uncovered children with the aim to recruit them. The group consists of both girls and boys from ages one to six from Sofia as direct beneficiaries, and their families as indirect beneficiaries. REF's partner, the Equal Opportunities Association works with the Sofia Municipality and the district municipalities in the districts where the Romani population is concentrated. The local kindergartens also play a role in discussing possible extracurricular activities and by providing data on the attendance rates of Romani children.

046 RMUSP finalists and speakers network at the conclusion of the REF Scholarship Gala in Sofia, Bulgaria in November 2013. Photo: Eleonora Kostadinova Katerina Pencheva

BETTER EDUCATION IN KYUSTENDIL

At the foot of the mountains along the Sofia to Kumanovo road lies Kyustendil, an important regional trading hub and home to a substantial population of Roma, few of whom who are enjoying prosperity brought about by Bulgaria's EU membership.

The integration of Romani children into mainstream education is directly dependent on the desegregation of Romani-only schools that are widespread throughout Bulgaria. Desegregation efforts in Bulgaria over the past decade have managed to produce a number of positive effects that have been achieved mainly by Romani grassroots organizations working alongside local government entities. The Bulgarian government has adopted a number of initiatives that set the ultimate goal of gradually eliminating Romani-only schools and furthering the integration of Romani children into mainstream education.

Starting in 2011, the Kyustendil municipality applied to REF and was granted funds for two separate project proposals. REF began the "For a Good Education" project in 2012 and continued the project in 2013. The project aims to provide Romani children from the Iztok Romani settlement the opportunity to study in a mixed or integrated schools within the Municipality of Kyustendil. This is in opposition of attending the segregated school located within Iztok where the quality of education is significantly lower as well as the rate of completion and transition to secondary school. Beyond the quality of education offered at Romani-only school students in attendance do not have the opportunity for interethnic interaction with other students.

Upon the implementation of the project a total of 334 Romani children from Iztok are enrolled in mainstream schools within the city. The accepting schools actively encourage student's participation, seek to decrease the number of absences, follow the outlined transportation schedule, as well as ensure that inclusive practices are being upheld and followed.

The Regional Educational Inspectorate is involved in the monitoring of the projects progress every six months and reports on the results of the children. So far 70 percent of students who are involved in the desegregation project have experienced a positive increase in their school performance. There is also a positive decrease in the absenteeism of over 60 percent of the students. Finally, there was an increase in the number of parents who were involved

in their children's education, and the transition to secondary school has increased 95 percent.

BELIEVE YOU CAN SUCCEED IN SOFIA

The Roma Education Fund invited nearly 200 Romani university students to the premises of Sofia's Modern Theater on Friday, November 15, 2013 to celebrate and publicly recognize their educational achievements and success. Hailing from across Bulgaria and studying across a wide range of disciplines, they all were finalists to receive the 2013-2014 Roma Memorial University Scholarship.

The result of the Scholarship Programs has been a new wave of Romani students applying to, enrolling in and graduating from state-accredited universities in Bulgaria and this year's REF scholars are studying in fields across the academic spectrum. Competition for the award has steadily increased over the years, and from an eligible pool of 352 students, 209 were chosen as finalists, indicating how much higher education is increasingly in demand among Roma who have successfully completed secondary education.

Hosted by Bulgarian National Radio's Valeri Lekov, the two-hour event featured remarks and inspiration from a selection of the brightest of Bulgaria's burgeoning Romani professional cohort: Kalinka Vassileva from Bulgaria's Trust for Social Achievement; Krasimir Krasimirov, PR expert at Bulgaria's National Assembly; Denitsa Mihaylova from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Nikolay Urumov, one of Bulgaria's most respected actors. REF took the occasion to debut four short videos about current RMUSP beneficiaries and their university careers, sharing their experiences among this new and exciting wave of Bulgarian Romani students. The annual number of RMUSP scholarships has grown from 140 in 2006 up to 254 in 2010, and the total number of scholarships disbursed now exceeds 1,700 in the eight years of its operation, meeting REF's aspiration to create a new generation of educated Romani elites. A report on the gala aired on Bulgaria's Nova TV.⁴²

⁴² novanews.bg/news/view/2013/11/15/62038/студенти-от-ромски-произход-получиха-ст

ROMANIA

AT A GLANCE

Population	21,790,479
GDP (EUR)	280.7 Billion
Roma Population – Official Census	515,250
Roma Population – Unofficial Estimate	2,500,000
Roma Population – Wikipedia	2,500,000
Roma Population – Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division Estimate	1.85 Million
TIMSS 2011 Math	482 (5.8)
TIMSS 2011 Science	505 (3.0)
PIRLS 2011 Reading	502 (4.3)
Average PISA Reading Performance (2012)	438
Average PISA Math Performance (2012)	445
Average PISA Science Literacy (2012)	439

REF ROMANIA COMPLETES THREE ESF PROJECTS

REF Romania is a separate legal entity and sister foundation created in 2009 in order for REF to be eligible to apply for and implement European Structural Fund projects for Roma social inclusion. Since such funds have begun to be available to recent EU member states like Romania, REF has aspired to be able to leverage the vast resources of these mechanisms to improve the opportunities for Romani children to access inclusive and quality education in Romania.

REF Romania recovered in 2013 from a systemic blockage of European Structural Funds once the European Commission decided to continue payments to Romania within the Sectoral Operational Program for the Development of Human Resources (the audit missions of the European Commission identified solutions to the problems recorded in 2011 and 2012); thereafter a better functioning of this bureaucratic mechanism was recorded and reimbursements to the ESF-funded implementing entities were accelerated, especially in the second part of 2013.

In 2013 REF Romania completed all its remaining three ESF funded Strategic Projects - School after School Project, Equal Opportunities in Education Project and Roma Health Scholarships Project - and submitted applications to European Structural Fund calls with six project proposals.

Severe cash shortages in 2013 had the effect of forcing REF's Grant Program to announce a moratorium on all its Romanian grants and this remains in place at the time of writing this report.

047 Young children attend afterschool activities at the Telechiu Community Center in western Romania.
Photo: Zsolt Fekete

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT: THE CAUSE AND EFFECTS OF EARLY SCHOOL DROPOUT

REF commissioned an independent study by Claudiu Ivan and Iulius Rostas on the academic achievements and obstacles of Romani students within its School After School project.

A sample of Romani and non-Romani students were randomly selected using multiple stages of selection and were selected based on a predetermined selection algorithm. A second sample of students who left school early was not randomly selected. Classroom teachers were responsible for selecting the Roma in the sample. All research included in the study from the sample of Romani students was identified by their teachers and kept absolutely confidential.

The data collected shows that the proportion of students who dropped out during the two years of the study (2011-2013) was 19.7 percent (percentage applies to students randomly selected in the sample). In basic terms, one out of five students who were interviewed in 2011 left school by 2013. Among non-Romani students interviewed about one in fourteen, or seven percent, dropped out of school over the course of the two-year study. On the other hand, nearly one in three Romani children, or 31 percent, dropped out of school over the course of the two-year study. Overall, 80 percent of the students who dropped out of school over the course of the two-year study were Romani students. From the data we can conclude that a Romani student is six times more likely to drop out of school than a non-Romani student. The study concludes that the perception that the school environment is hostile and unfamiliar is the strongest indicator of dropout rates. The data show that 64.1 percent of students said that the school is a place where they love to go, while among dropouts only 12.3 percent perceived the school as a friendly environment where they enjoyed learning.

SPOTLIGHT: SCALING UP STUDY HALLS IN ROMANIA

To address the early school leaving of Romani students in primary and secondary school, REF has supported afterschool study halls as a proven method to improve the learning outcomes of disadvantaged Romani students. They often do not have access to an environment conducive to studying at home, including a desk, good light, computer, home library or parental academic support.



047

Because of these barriers, REF established and supported 50 School After School Study Centers in Romania⁴³ with the financial support of European Structural Funds. REF's previous success with study halls includes two in southeastern Slovakia, which later were recognized as best practices and included in the prestigious CEDEFOP catalog⁴⁴ of the European Commission.

Moreover, since most public schools are of moderate quality in Eastern Europe, many parents pay out of their own pockets for tutoring and extracurricular activities for their children.⁴⁵ Since most Roma do not have this option, and many Romani parents had negative experiences with the education system, REF takes over this role.

BENEFICIARY SPOTLIGHT: A WELL-DESIGNED SCHOOL ATTRACTS EVERYONE IN JILAVA

The village of Jilava has been synonymous with incarceration and punishment for the last century in Romania but a local NGO is working to change Jilava's reputation to that of innovation and inclusion.

A short commute from Bucharest's center and flanking the city's ring road, Jilava's modern history has been dominated by the existence of a fort built by Romania's King Carol I that

subsequently became a home for political prisoners during the communist regime and continues to operate as a penitentiary today.

But that may slowly change thanks to the work of a dedicated community NGO working to increase Romani children's chances for academic success in what till now was been a prison town.

Within earshot of the incarcerated is a small local community center. Recently renovated with support from the Roma Education Fund, the building has become a learning center and study hall for local Romani children that until very recently had few opportunities to learn.

Managed by the Matias Association and providing social and educational services, the center is currently used daily by 25 preschool children, 30 primary school students and three high school students. Parents are often also invited to attend as part of educational and counselling campaigns. Preschool children attend Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. and primary students come at least once a week.

Such has been the success of children attending the project, that word of mouth has convinced some non-Romani parents to also send their children to the center.

⁴³ Inequity and Inequality: Teacher Absenteeism, Romani Pupils and Primary Schools in Romania. Center for Urban and Regional Sociology, Roma Center for Social Intervention and Studies, and Roma Education Fund (2012). Available online: http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ref_ta_screen_doublepages.pdf

⁴⁴ Available online: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4123_en.pdf

⁴⁵ Available online: <http://www.euractiv.com/education/europeans-spend-billions-shadow-news-505387>

50 SCHOOLS, 2,000 STUDENTS: SCHOOL AFTER SCHOOL IN ROMANIA

Together with partners from the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport, *O Del Amenca* Cultural Center for Roma, *Amare Rromentza* Roma Center and the Resource Center for Roma Communities, REF Romania implemented a European Structural Fund project to renovate and equip the facilities for 50 School After School centers in three central, northeastern and southern regions of Romania.

Within this large-scale scheme, 283 teachers, school directors and school inspectors were trained for five days in implementing School After School programs, children's psychological development, educational counseling, new methods of teaching, intercultural concepts and abilities, and mobilizing communities to value education.

The project also realized that not only parents have an important role in their children's education and set up local support groups in order to involve the respective communities in the education process. Each group had a mixture of members from among the beneficiaries and participants, including parents, teachers, local authorities' representatives, school mediators and police. Each local support group was enabled toward increasing community participation in education and finding solutions for project sustainability.

An awareness-raising campaign targeting parents also was carried out. The campaign highlighted the importance of education for Roma. Local conferences were held in each region of the project, with the participation of school directors, county inspectors and public local authorities.

Fifty centers worked four hours per day in the afternoon; each center hosts about 30 students that work with three teachers. Due to the extended program, children were provided with food. Most of the selected children have difficult educational backgrounds and poor socio-economic status, and are at risk of early school leaving. Thus, in order to prevent the abandonment, the School After School contains five main activities (modules), of which three are highlighted next.

048



048 A young girl participant receives tutoring in REF Romania's School After School program.
Photo: Roma Education Fund Romania

049 Pupils receive afterschool tutoring under REF's ESF-funded project, School After School.
Photo: Roma Education Fund Romania

I can do better! - Recovery and remediation for children with learning difficulties - Romani children often have a low level of reading and writing competencies, problems that have their roots in the period of acquiring language during the kindergarten and preschool period (which they do not attend). Delays in language acquisition may be attributed to:

- A large number of children in a family reduces the amount of available cognitive stimuli for each child.
- Lack of toys, games, books, photos, media, etc.
- The parents do not have conversations with their children or read to them.
- Sharing a room with several people, whereby noise affects their comprehension.
- Parents often incorrectly use Romanian grammar.
- Many traditional Romani communities speak Romanes, a distinct language from Romanian.

We play, we learn! We learn by playing! - Thematic activities and leisure activities - Traditional school methods do not allow learning through play. The SAS program compensates through a variety of activities that gap within the public education system.

We are different! - Self-knowledge and personal development activities - Romani students experience an acute self-doubt because they are Roma. It is very important for them to speak about Romani culture and history of Roma, to discuss with them issues about individual and ethnic self-esteem, to play games and do exercises aimed at combating stereotypes and prejudices about the Romani ethnic identity, trying to build an ethnic positive self-image.

Using specific learning activities, more time is given to children for self-knowledge and knowledge of others. By building a positive self-image, children will be more emotionally stable, will relate better with others, will have a greater resistance to criticism and failures and will be more motivated to complete the activities in which there are involved. In other words, they are likely to decrease early school leaving.

Other modules include homework supervision and guidance - Homework for a 10 (10 is the best grade in Romania) - and skills development activities - Healthy lifestyle!



049

Results

SAS connects three pillars: family, school and community. The SAS program is not just about school (although the name is misleading!), but a tripartite partnership with well-defined responsibilities:

- Parents understood the importance of education and sent their children to school, supporting and continuously pursuing their educational trajectory.
- Schools and teachers created a suitable environment for learning (learning methods adapted to cultural variety, but focused on educational outcomes without ignoring the emotional and cognitive development of students), providing quality educational services.
- The community carried out specific measures for both family and school: infrastructure and various resources that exceed the school and family resources (food, teachers' pay, children's transport to school, involvement in extracurricular and informal learning, etc.).

Final numbers

- 2,246 primary students attended the SAS program each year:
 - 91.8 percent of them have shown real progress in terms of personal development and social skills;
 - In terms of academic progress, over 85 percent of students proved progress at main disciplines: Romanian/Hungarian (85.6 percent) and math (88.2 percent).
- 2,836 parents (or tutors) participated to counselling sessions regarding education (and additional themes).
- Over 20,000 people from all 50 communities understood the impact of education on their life and especially for their children's future.
- The rate of school enrollment increased from 85 percent to 94.4 percent.

150 ROMANI HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

REF has aspired to address the near complete absence of Romani health professionals from Romani communities by supporting scholarships for doctors, nurses and technicians in the health sector. Partnering together with the Media Monitoring Agency, the Sastipen Association, Association of Resident Doctors in Romania and Open Society Foundations, the Roma Education Fund implemented a European Structural Fund project to address this problem. The project incorporated tertiary scholarship, mentorship and tutorship support, as well as combating the stereotypes related to the access of Romani students to highly-qualified professions.

Out of 167 Romani students candidates to enroll in medical studies at the universities in Romania, 133 successfully began their studies at the Faculty of Medicine and medical vocational schools by the time the project closed in late 2013. 147 Romani students were provided with mentorship support, that added to the successful increase in their Grade Point Average (GPA), i.e., ten percent of these students maintained GPA over 9.00 out of maximum 10.00, whereas 100 percent of these students maintained a GPA over 7 out of maximum of 10 and minimum of 6. Some 26 beneficiaries also took part in various national and international Congresses and Conferences on Health.

Final achievements

- 147 Romani students in the faculties of medicine completed the mentorship program
 - 100 percent of these students had a GPA over 7.00 points (on a scale up to 10.00 points)
 - Ten percent of these students had a GPA over 9.00 points
 - Twenty-six participations to various national and international health congresses and conferences
- 167 Romani potential candidates for the admission exams to the Faculties of Medicine of which 133 Romani students moved to the next educational cycle (are either now students in the Faculties of Medicine or students in health sector vocational schools.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS AND THE WORLD BANK GET BEHIND EDUCATION FOR ROMA⁴⁸

George Soros, founder and chairman of the Open Society Foundations, and Jim Yong Kim, president of the World Bank, on May 10, visited Frumusani, a small Roma village on the outskirts of Bucharest, Romania. In Frumusani, the Roma Education Fund - supported by the World Bank, Open Society Foundations, the European Union, and other donors - is working to remove the barriers local Roma children face to complete their primary school education.

Frumusani means beautiful in Romanian, but the conditions in which the Roma families live here are not. A dusty track leads from the local school to the village. Most houses - made of mud walls with corrugated roofs - have no electricity, water, or proper sanitation. Children in Frumusani often do their homework by candlelight.

Frumusani is not the only village in Romania facing these challenges, but the plight of local residents, repeated all around Central and Eastern Europe, tells a bigger story of generational poverty, political apathy, and a legacy of segregation and distrust.

“We are one of the richest regions in the area and yet until recently no one knew how the budget was divided,” says Cristian Buceanu, a local Roma councilor elected in 2012. The lack of opportunity permeates every part of Frumusani.

During a visit by George Soros and Jim Yong Kim to one house, a local man, Gheorghe Mircea explains: “The Roma are different. If we try to get a job, they won’t hire us.” Asked by George Soros how life now compares to life under Ceaucescu - Romania’s former communist leader who oversaw a brutal and repressive regime until 1989 - Gheorghe Mircea replies, “Life was better; at least then we had jobs.” To make ends meet, Gheorghe Mircea and his family collect worms, which they sell as fishing bait. Some years back, his house burnt down after faulty electrical wiring, used to siphon electricity from his mother’s house next door, started a fire. Of his nine children, only three go to school. All participate in the Roma Education Fund School After School Program; his daughter is top of her class.

⁴⁸ A Voices blog post by Eleonor Kelly. Available online: <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/open-society-foundations-and-world-bank-get-behind-education-roma>



050

050 Medical professionals participating in REF’s ESF-funded received mentoring support to improve their grades, graduate successfully and go on to serve their communities. Photo: Roma Education Fund Romania

Last year Cristian Buceanu, the only Roma representative on the council, introduced a proposal to allocate approximately 10,000 euros to expand the electricity network to houses in Frumusani. The other councilors voted against the proposal, alleging that the Roma townspeople do not contribute to the local budget and therefore should not benefit from public funds.

Many countries often think of education as an expense. We want to say these are the most strategic investments you can make in a country.

- Jim Yong Kim, World Bank President

To break the negative stereotypes Roma children must be educated to celebrate and take pride in their Roma heritage. That is what the REF has done.

- George Soros, Chair of the Open Society

The government, however, almost entirely ignores the town’s inhabitants. Officially, most of the homes in Frumusani do not exist. A recent land registry exercise from the mayor’s office recorded the area as largely empty. The asphalt road that joins the village to the main road stops on the town’s border - another sign that officially, the real Frumusani is off the map. But the sprawling lanes of Frumusani tell a different story.

Filled with rudimentary lean-to mud buildings as well as sturdier and older brick houses that predate the Ceaucescu era, Frumusani is far from empty. Chickens peck in backyards, horses gallop past the town’s blacksmiths where local men congregate, and children on their way back from school mill past small vegetable gardens, dry and sparse due to the lack of water.

Children like 14-year-old Simona Nedelcu attend the local school where 700 students are split evenly between Roma and non-Roma. Here, Roma children participate in School after School and Equal Opportunities in Education, two Roma Education Fund programs that offer mentoring, homework

051



clubs, and overall extra support in Math and Romanian – core subjects for national entry test for high school.

For two years, the programs have provided mentors to Roma students, offering guidance and building relationships between parents, schools, and students; stipends to cover school books and uniforms; homework clubs where students can complete their lessons undisturbed; and training so that teachers can play a positive role in Roma education. “With the School After School project, I have the sense that someone cares about us,” comments one Roma student during a visit by George Soros and Jim Yong Kim to the local school. “Working with parents is as important as working with children,” explains Mihaela Gheorghe from the Romanian NGO, the Center for Education and Social Development, which works with children in Frumusani. “Most parents do not know how to read or write so even if help exists for their children’s education, it is nearly impossible for them to find out about it.” Better access to schools and improving educational outcomes are key, explains Costel Bercus, of the Roma Education Fund.

From house to house in Frumusani, parents all agreed on one thing – education is the key to change for their children’s future. Jim Yong Kim agrees. “Many countries often think of education as an expense,” he comments. “We want to say these are the most strategic investments you can make in a country.” Still growing up in Frumusani is not easy. For Simona Nedelcu, everyday tasks can be a struggle. In a two-room house, surrounded by siblings and family, finding somewhere quiet to do her homework is a challenge. Uniforms and books present more obstacles and often, children will stay home from school if they don’t have a clean uniform—not uncommon when washing materials, water, and electricity are scarce.

Cristian Buceanu is determined, despite the lack of support from his fellow councilors. He was elected last year with the support of local Roma townspeople who were familiar with him from the many years he spent working in the community. “We need to raise awareness with Roma in Frumusani that they must ask for their rights,” says Cristian Buceanu, who explains that going door to door, talking with the local Roma

is the best way to mobilize people behind change. Pushing change with his fellow councilors is an uphill struggle. They do not see assisting local Roma as a priority. “For twenty years, no one asked about Roma. If Roma start to have their own representatives, this can change.”

It’s not difficult to see the changes education is bringing – and can bring – to Frumusani and other Roma villages like it in Romania. Of Romania’s 21 million inhabitants, the Roma at nearly two million is a young population. Education offers a path for Roma to claim their own rights: the right to employment, the right to political participation and representation, the right to safe and adequate housing. All of this – all inalienable rights in an open society – begins with education and ideas as simple as a quiet place for Simona and her classmates to do their homework, and a mentor to encourage them to keep coming back to the classroom, despite the overwhelming challenges Roma children face at home.

FOR PHOTOS

<http://romaisues.wordpress.com/tag/george-soros/>

REF RO IN SELECT ROMANIAN MEDIA

http://adevarul.ro/educatie/scoala/de-tiganii-altfell-1_5241380bc7b855ff56bbae71/index.html
<http://www.ziarulprofit.ro/index.php/se-incheie-proiectul-servicii-de-srijin-educational-pentru-elevii-de-liceu-de-etnie-roma/>
<http://www.amosnews.ro/99-din-elevii-romi-de-clasa-xii-au-absolvit-liceul-2013-10-04>
<https://www.ultima-ora.ro/2013/10/02/99-din-elevii-romi-au-absolvit-liceul-in-cadrul-proiectului-servicii-de-srijin-educational-pentru-elevii-de-liceu-de-etnie-roma/>
<http://radiogradio.ro/index.php/2013/10/05/99-din-elevii-romi-de-clasa-a-xii-a-au-absolvit-liceul/>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Wwgi3pKsXo>
<http://giurgiuonline.net/scoala-dupa-scoala-la-scoala-10-in-atentia-france-24/>
<http://giurgiu-net.ro/2013/11/13/scoala-dupa-scoala-in-problema-romilor-in-atentia-reporterilor-canalului-france-24/>
<http://www.giurgiu-news.ro/DOCUMENTAR-AL-FRANCEZILOR-DESPRE-COPIII-ROMI-DE-LA-SCOALA-10-8075/pagina-0>

051 A Romanian teacher and his class of pupils in a village school participating in REF’s ESF projects in Romania.
Photo: Cristian Dulcea

052 George Soros, Chair of the Open Society Foundations, and Jim Yong Kim, World Bank President, at visit to a REF school site in Romania.
Photo: Dominic Chavez/World Bank

052



FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

REF FINANCE

REF is among the most efficient and effective organizations operating in the field of education. REF spends 92 percent of its operating budget on programs, ensuring that donations have a maximum impact in 16 countries.

From a total budget of approximately EUR 11 million in 2013, REF spent EUR 1.9 million on 39 new grants and spent another EUR 2.9 million on tertiary scholarships for over 1,450 Romani students. REF also spent EUR 3.6 million to pre-finance and implement European Structural Fund projects in Romania, EUR 1.0 million on capacity building, communication, data collection, policy development and training, EUR 0.8 million on administration, with an additional EUR 0.9 million being accounted for by ongoing partnerships in Konik Camp, the follow-up phase of the previously EU-funded early childhood education and care project A Good Start, and a Fundación Secretariado Gitano project.

General Overview of REF Financials

Owing to continuous cost control, proper donor reporting and fundraising, REF financials were stable in 2013, ensuring an income for smooth operation. REF's income increased significantly comparing to 2012's figure of EUR 9,593,587 and in 2013 it reached EUR 10,474,975 due to the fact that Romania's European Structural Funds reimbursed all of those expenses which were pending for more than 12 months.

Owing to REF's effective and regular monitoring, EUR 285,652 were refunded or recovered from project beneficiaries of the grant and other programs as these funds were not needed to reach the project objectives. This leftover has

been reallocated to other programs where REF faced higher demand.

REF has finished the International Family project in 2013 with Fundación Secretariado Gitano's (FSG) where all three REF foundations participated. REF has successfully implemented the second phase of A Good Start (AGS) project financed by the Network of European Foundation and other individual donors up to EUR 196,732.

In addition, REF has been supported by a large number of individual donors in 2013, up to EUR 45,066.

REF Switzerland (REF CH)

REF CH provided EUR 1,869,971 for grants and more than EUR 2.7 million for tertiary scholarships. As a result of the continuous donor support and leading out the EUR 1 million value adjustments on long term loans from last year, REF CH reached 1,168,098 EUR excess of income over expenditure and more than EUR 2 million foundation capital in 2013.

Owing to continual follow-up and control of the 2013 budget, and reallocations based on the savings from studies and research, REF was able to dedicate more funds to the Roma International Scholarship Program, capacity building in Romania and software development for the grant program which amounts EUR 85,415.

REF Hungary (REF HU)

REF Hungary opened fully operational branch office in Montenegro in order to implement the Konik Camp project in a consortium with Help - Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe e.V. as a winner of local IPA call with the total budget of EUR 1,475,142 out of which our Montenegro branch office manages EUR 386,943.

Owing to the active fundraising in 2013 REF HU has been granted by Velux Foundations to implement nine-year long Pedagogy Scholarship Program in three countries for EUR 1,139,000 and by OSCE Serbia to participate in a secondary scholarship program in three locations of Serbia. Out of the total budget of EUR 839,310 REF (financed by IPA funds) share is EUR 179,625. Both program implementations started in 2014.

REF Romania (REF RO)

In Romania REF RO has successfully closed its two main projects which resulted the reimbursement of its project expenses from the previous year hence REF RO had positive



053

053 RMUSP finalist volunteers for afterschool tutoring at House of Colors in Tirana, Albania. Photo: Elvin Shytaj

result of EUR 138,364. Its negative foundation capital which is acceptable by the local statutory requirements improved almost by EUR 1 million in 2013.

At the time of completing this report, REF RO has been awarded three European Social Fund (ESF) calls and is going to implement three new projects for the duration of 18 months with a budget of EUR 4.165 million in total.

Fundraising

Due to the current financial environment, REF had to shift its fundraising strategy, focusing on the following main directions:

- Open local branch offices so as to run on local ESF and IPA

calls in consortium in order to mobilize bigger funds for Roma education;

- Work with past donors and encourage an extension of their contributions;
- Engage donors in new EU member countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia);
- Mobilize more private sector resources, especially from private foundations and private companies, as well as individual donations;
- Participate in a selection of tenders and calls where the REF Network can contribute its professional knowledge, but for which REF currently does not have dedicated financial resources.

054 Believe that you can succeed! There's a place waiting for you!
Photo: Tom Bass



054

Organization of the Roma Education Fund (REF)

The Roma Education Fund entities are established as legally separate foundations in Switzerland (2005), Hungary (2006) and Romania (2009), respectively. The three Roma Education Fund entities work together based on a memorandum of understanding signed by each entity. Each country Foundation has its separate board with independent members for their decisions. These boards engaged in Switzerland and Hungary a company called AdminGroup as their independent bookkeepers. Furthermore, AdminGroup Ltd. in Hungary established an expense coding system to ensure cost analysis among the several programs of the Roma Education Fund and supports the Foundations with several consultations in their financial operations.

Roma Education Fund Hungary opened branch offices in Serbia and in Montenegro in 2013. The figures of the new branch offices in Serbia and Montenegro are fully presented in Roma Education Fund Hungary's books. At the time of writing this report in early 2014, REF was in the process of finalizing the establishment of its Slovak office.

Network audit, monitoring and controlling

The audit was made by PWC Switzerland for REF Switzerland, by Moore Stephens Hezicomp Kft. for REF Hungary and Diaconu Srl for REF Romania.

All financial statements (statement of income and expenditure, balance sheet and notes) are presented in EUR (where necessary additionally in local currency) and are issued in English (including the audit reports). The annual and audit reports will be published on the REF website.

REF has been monitoring regularly all projects in order to reduce risks and to have a proper financial and quality control of these grants (more details can be found in the country sections).

To improve this monitoring and controlling system REF has invested in developing an online application platform which will help the grantees and the management to gain better project indicators and have more automated controls in all cycle of the projects.

ISO 9001:2008

In 2012 REF was awarded with ISO 9001:2008 certification; in 2013 the second surveillance audit extended the validity of the certification for another year.

REF PROFIT AND LOSS

STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2013 AND 2012

	NOTES	REF SWITZERLAND		REF ROMANIA		REF HUNGARY	
		2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012
		EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
INCOME							
Donations received from third parties	1	6,746,205	8,432,502	3,641,515	723,026	87,255	438,060
Donations received from REF Switzerland		-	-	195,661	510,016	925,556	1,034,832
Project Support and other program refunds	2	239,241	180,898	-	-	46,411	9,523
Other income		-	-	178	-	3,882	7,458
Interest income		431	782	819	286	714	1,026
Gain on foreign exchange		-	-	9,270	8,368	5,261	52
Total Income		6,985,877	8,614,182	3,847,443	1,241,696	1,069,079	1,490,951
EXPENDITURE							
Project Support Program (Grants)	3	1,869,971	2,690,585	179,652	-	6,160	-
Tertiary Scholarships	4	2,746,007	2,582,697	21,967	18,909	207,390	67,219
EU Roma Pilot - A Good Start and complimentary projects	5	97,056	63,808	-	-	99,676	665,344
Hungarian Microregion Development Program		-	528	-	-	-	126,771
Konik Camp project in Montenegro	6	1,920	-	-	-	180,180	-
Communications	7	258,829	113,362	-	125,680	92,163	38,563
Policy development and capacity building	8	307,085	449,453	-	-	336,891	255,307
International family project - FSG	9	7,162	4,474	4,297	924	4,698	10,746
REF Romania - Equal opportunities	10	-	-	1,262,594	801,317	29,792	71,214
REF Romania - School after School	11	-	-	1,371,653	1,048,423	-	-
REF Romania - Health Program	12	-	-	602,707	222,409	-	-
REF Romania - Youth on Labor Market	13	-	-	149	119,861	-	-
REF Romania and its partners capacity building	14	112,806	13,007	220,013	229,086	1,650	-
PROGRESS project in Slovakia	15	-	-	-	-	5,933	-
UNICEF		-	-	-36	13,342	-	-
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Hungary		910,000	1,036,000	-	-	-	-
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Romania		201,670	514,478	-	-	-	-
Total Programs and Grants		6,512,507	7,468,392	3,662,996	2,579,951	964,533	1,235,164
Administrative expenses		166,808	167,517	-	-	459,413	531,338
Value adjustment on long-term loan	16	-1,000,000	1,000,000	-	-	-	-
Losses on foreign exchange		138,465	95,083	46,083	24,808	2,276	20,192
Total Expenditure		5,817,779	8,730,992	3,709,079	2,604,759	1,426,222	1,786,694
Excess of expenditure over income		1,168,098	-116,810	138,364	-1,363,063	-357,143	-295,743

REF BALANCE SHEET

BALANCE SHEET AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2013 AND 2012

	REF SWITZERLAND		REF ROMANIA		REF HUNGARY	
	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
Cash at banks	3,668,166	1,564,422	235,083	151,754	27,759	398,610
Receivables	0	0	2,285,922	2,015,833	47,500	45,930
Loan to REF Romania	0	0	0	0	319,999	0
Inventories	0	0	39,493	84,595	6,766	7,717
Other current assets	40,302	13,223	0	0	30,396	49,888
Total current assets	3,708,468	1,577,645	2,560,497	2,252,182	432,420	502,145
Recoverable grants	393,380	454,701	0	0	0	0
Long-term loan to REF Romania	572,802	2,219,001	0	0	0	0
less value adjustment	0	-1,000,000	0	0	0	0
Intangible assets	0	0	44	121	22,074	2,568
Tangible assets	0	0	28,654	70,891	16,887	22,768
Total long term assets	966,182	1,673,702	28,698	71,012	38,961	25,336
Total assets	4,674,650	3,251,347	2,589,195	2,323,194	471,381	527,481
Liabilities	632	6,102	54,546	107,750	69,307	73,552
Accrued expenses	28,557	20,707	0	0	7,278	13,643
Provisions for projects granted	2,634,444	2,367,695	0	0	0	0
Accounts payable to partners	0	0	1,660,281	266,419	0	0
Loan from Council of Europe Development Bank	0	0	0	0	319,999	0
Long-term loans from REF Switzerland	0	0	572,802	2,149,144	0	0
Long-term loans from REF Hungary	0	0	320,000	0	0	0
Long-term loans from Agentia de Monitorizare o Presei	0	0	184,866	139,113	0	0
Funds unused	0	13,924	0	0	0	0
Total liabilities and provisions	2,663,633	2,408,428	2,792,495	2,662,426	396,584	87,195
Foundation capital as of January 1	842,919	959,729	-339,232	1,004,214	440,286	736,029
Restatement of foundation capital	0	0	4,236	24,807	0	0
Excess of expenditure over income	1,168,098	-116,810	138,364	-1,363,063	-357,143	-295,743
Year-end translation difference	0	0	-6,668	-5,190	-8,346	0
Foundation capital as of December 31	2,011,017	842,919	-203,300	-339,232	74,797	440,286
Total liabilities and foundation capital	4,674,650	3,251,347	2,589,195	2,323,194	471,381	527,481

055 A Bulgarian RMUSP finalist relaxes after the REF Scholarship Gala in Sofia, Bulgaria.
Photo: Eleonora Kostadinova and Katerina Pencheva

Notes

GENERAL TERMS

The books of the REF Foundations are basically maintained in local currency as of legal requirement with the exception of REF Switzerland where the books are maintained in EUR since the majority of the transactions is in this currency. Many of the financial transactions are denominated in Euro (EUR). To compare and for a better understanding these financial statements are presented in EUR.

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.

SWISS FRANC (CHF)

Transactions in currencies other than EUR are translated at the daily rate. All balance sheet positions at the year-end are translated at the year-end rate CHF/EUR. All exchange rates are based on a publication of OANDA.

HUNGARIAN FORINT (HUF)

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.

ROMANIAN LEI (RON)

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.

Reporting Period

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

Comparability with prior year

Financial statements are presenting the prior year and the actual reporting period from January 1 to December 31. Major errors from previous years have to be restated and presented. Errors shall be construed as major in our cases, if in the year when discovered by the audit the aggregate amounts of all error (either



055

negative or positive) for the same year and after effect thereof “increasing or decreasing the equity” exceed two percent of the balance sheet total of the financial year audited.

Accounting principles

INCOME

Donations Received

The donation income is 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 is presented on a cash basis.

Interest Income

The interest income is recorded and timely appointed by using the effective received interest rates by banks.

EXPENSES

Programs and Grants

The program and grant expenses paid are recognized at nominal value. Already known costs have to be accrued. The grants of project support program are presented at the actual year on total contractual value while other program related expenses on the value are paid.

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.

Partner expenses

If REF is a main project leader (direct contract with the donor) and channels funds to Partners, 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.

BALANCE SHEET

- Intangible and tangible asset valuation, depreciation accounting principles.
- Tangible and intangible assets are carried at their costs less depreciation and any accumulated impairment loss.
- The useful life of tangible and intangible assets are determined in accordance with the national rules of each foundation.
- The useful life of an intellectual product has to be determined by each foundation.
- The qualification and classification of fixed assets have to be determined according to the applicable national rule of each foundation.
- The depreciable amount of a depreciable asset is 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 rules of each foundation – are accounted as depreciation in lump sum when it started to use.
- The foundations applied extraordinary depreciation by devaluation when the asset is permanently reduced because it has become redundant and/or damaged.

Receivables valuation

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

Deferred costs

Costs is accrued actively which has emerged until the balance sheet date but not relates the activities of the year.

Accrued costs

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

DETAILED NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2013 AND 2012

1. Donation table (See next page)

2. Project Support Program and Other Program Refunds

When projects conclude, they are reviewed, mostly by external parties with documentation in a compulsory report. If not all the funds were used they will be refunded to the Roma Education Fund. The refund means accrual reversal of that amount of the grant that was contracted but not paid and/or actual refund of the grant, which already transferred to the grantee.

3. Project Support Program (Grants)

The target of this project is to provide grants for initiatives by governmental and nongovernmental agencies in the Decade of Roma Inclusion countries at all education levels. This position contains the accumulated costs of this year.

4. Tertiary Scholarships

The target of this project is to provide scholarship for tertiary level Romani students. This position contains the accumulated costs of this year. 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)

5. EU Roma Pilot – A Good Start and complementary projects

The target 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 will run until approximately the end of 2014. This position contains the accumulated costs of this year.

6. Konik Camp Project in Montenegro

This is an Assistance Program for integration and return of I/DPs and residents of Konik camp in which REF implements the educational component through early childhood development programs.

DONATION TABLE

INCOME RECEIVED BY ROMA EDUCATION FUND NETWORK 2009-2013

DONORS	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	TOTAL
RECEIVED BY REF SWITZERLAND						
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				1,233,907
European Commission					1,808	1,808
EU: AGS project					16,558	16,558
EVZ - Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future"	153,580	95,000	296,580	179,400		724,560
Finnish Government			100,000			100,000
Fundación Secretariado Gitano				5,965	7,936	13,901
German Government	1,550,000					1,550,000
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
Network of European Foundation	400,000	200,000		120,000	155,072	875,072
Norwegian Family				28,135	24,882	53,017
Salzburg Global Seminar				1,026		1,026
SIDA Sweeden	572,658		1,051,983		1,042,250	2,666,891
Soros-Bolton wedding					33,469	33,469
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	368,353	247,382	420,000	800,000	700,000	2,535,735
Open Society Institute	2,760,840	3,944,829	5,195,047	6,584,344	4,363,123	22,848,183
Ostrava Municipality					6,200	6,200
WB Community Fund	14,577	31,069	12,915	9,717	8,375	76,653
World Bank IBRD		365,049	363,891	703,915	290,366	1,723,221
Total donations received by REF Switzerland	5,820,008	7,148,989	7,452,631	8,432,502	6,746,205	35,600,335
RECEIVED BY REF HUNGARY						
American House Family				4,902	5,112	10,014
Bernard Van Leer Foundation			260,918	68,448		329,366
European Commission - DG REGIO		956,555	717,244	236,195		1,909,994
Fundación Secretariado Gitano				6,006		6,006
Sandor Demjan Foundation			250,000			250,000
Tempus Foundation	1,067	2,025	1,001	788	192	5,073
UNDP					1,732	1,732
World Bank IBRD		6,385		8,184		14,569
HELP HILFE				113,537	70,827	184,364
Other donors, individuals					11,124	11,124
Total donations received by REF Hungary	1,067	964,965	1,230,895	438,060	87,255	2,722,242
RECEIVED BY REF ROMANIA						
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	5,934,165
UNICEF			6,534	13,330		19,864
Individuals				100	23	123
Total donations received by REF Romania	-	-	2,330,902	723,025	3,641,515	6,695,442
Grand Total	5,821,075	8,113,954	11,014,428	9,593,587	10,474,975	45,018,018

056 Twins walk in the morning to the branch school located in Konik Camp, Podgorica, Montenegro. Photo: Srdjan Ilic

7. 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.

8. 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. This position contains the accumulated costs of this year.

9. International Family Project

The target of this project is to support networking and knowledge sharing on education issues that arise in family environments in Roma Decade and other European countries and was closed by the end of 2013. This position contains the accumulated costs of this year.

15. PROGRESS Project in Slovakia

The project aims Investing in early childhood – promoting innovation and social integration of Roma in Slovakia. REF has an advocacy role in order to share its experience and knowledge on early childhood development. The program will run until approximately the end of 2014.

10. REF Romania – Equal Opportunities

The target 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 was closed by the end of 2013. This position contains the accumulated costs of this year.

16. Value Adjustments on long-term loans

Based on the risk analysis of long-term loans, a value adjustment had to be booked in 2012 to cover the risk of non-recovering and could be released in 2013 due to significant governmental payment for prior years.

Other Information

Guaranties: Roma Education Fund Hungary (REF Hungary) as a borrower entered into a framework loan agreement of EUR 1,500,000 with Council of Europe Development Bank. The specific objective of the loan is to bridge cash flow gaps of Roma Education Fund Hungary's partners caused by significant delays in payments made from European Structural Funds. REF Hungary received an undertaking of EUR 1,500,000 from Foundation Open Society Institute for the purpose of financing the loan repayment if any partner fails repaying bridge financing received from REF Hungary.

11. REF Romania – School After School

The target of this project is to increase 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 was closed by the end of 2013. This position contains the accumulated costs of this year.

12. REF Romania – Health Program

The target of this project is to enable access to education and young Romas' integration in the labor market, specifically in professions with high social prestige as well as those in the medical field and will run until approximately the beginning of 2014. This position contains the accumulated costs of this year.

13. REF Romania – Youth on the Labor Market

The target of this project is to facilitate the access of the Romani youth in the labor market in order to reduce their social exclusion, discrimination, and risk of poverty and was closed in 2013. This position contains the accumulated costs of this year.

14. REF Romania and its partners capacity building

The target of this project is to provide 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 2014. This position contains the accumulated costs of this year.

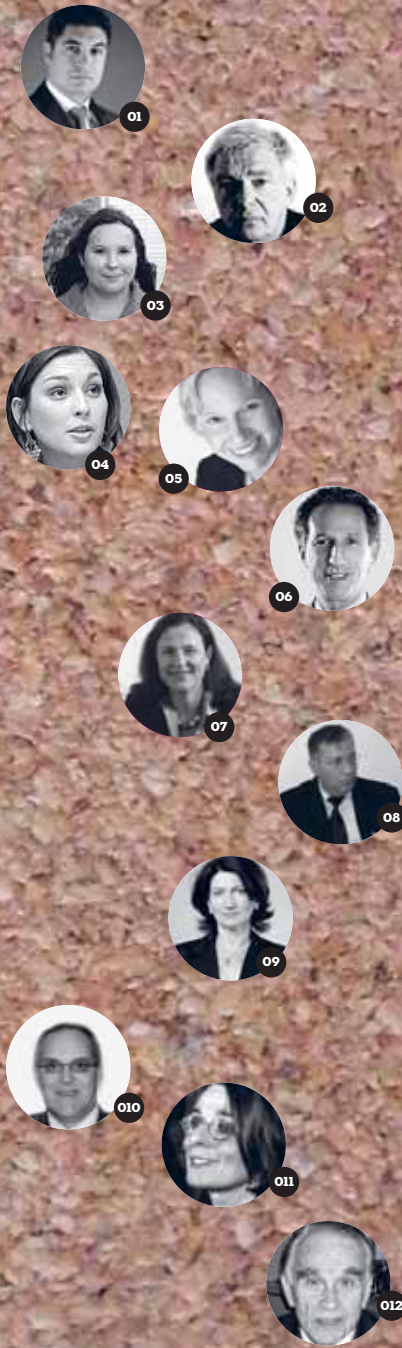
056



BOARDS

REF SWITZERLAND

- 01 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.
- 02 Pierre Gassmann** (*Vice-Chair*) is a Swiss national and an associate at Wolf Group Consultants. He holds an MBA (INSEAD) and an MA from the Graduate Institute for International Relations in Geneva.
- 03 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.
- 04 Lívia Járóka** is a social anthropologist and elected Member of the European Parliament since 2004 in the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats). She was the first Romani woman to be elected as a Member of the European Parliament.
- 05 Lisa Jordan** is Executive Director of the Bernard van Leer Foundation where she oversees programs that impact over a million disadvantaged children every year. She holds a Master's Degree in Development Studies from the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, Netherlands.
- 06 Robert Kushen** (*Vice-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.
- 07 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.
- 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*) has been heading the Institute for Training and Consulting in Banking for almost 25 years. 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 Albania and representative of the Swiss government on the REF Board. He studied at the University of Berne and is a lawyer.



REF HUNGARY

- 011 Costel Bercus** (*Chair*).
- 011 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.
- 012 Gyula Várallyay** is a former senior staff member of the World Bank; he served as Interim Director of REF on two occasions.

REF ROMANIA

Costel Bercus (*Chair of REF Board*);
Pierre Gassmann; Rob Kushen; Judit Szira

STAFF

REF HEADQUARTERS IN BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

- 013 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, often concentrating on equity and inclusion issues. She also is a board member of the Hungarian Tempus Foundation.
- 014 Erzsébet Báder** (*Communications Assistant*) 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.
- 015 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.
- 016 Azam Bayburdi** (*Administrative Assistant*) holds an MBA in Finance, Statistics, and Management from Greenwich University. Before joining REF as Administrative Assistant, Azam worked for the Ministry of Education.
- 017 Stanislav Daniel** (*Studies Officer*) is a Slovak Roma who holds a degree in Social Work in Roma Communities from the University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra, Slovakia. He previously worked for the OSCE ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues.
- 018 Dan Pavel Doghi** (*Higher Education Program Manager, Interim 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.
- 019 Andrea Dörömbözü** (*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.
- 020 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.
- 021 Merziha Idrizi** (*Scholarship Program Alumni and 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.
- 022 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.
- 023 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 the Central European University, Budapest.
- 024 Beata Bislim Olahova** (*Grant Program Manager*) is a Slovak Roma who has worked at REF since 2006. She holds BS/BA honors degree in Business Management and an MBA from the Central European University Business School, Budapest.
- 025 Szilvia Pallaghy** (*Program Manager of the EU-funded A Good Start*) 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.
- 026 Beáta Prokaj** (*Finance and Administrative Coordinator*) holds an MA degree in Economics and joined REF in 2010.
- 027 Shemi Shainov** (*Senior Program Officer*) is a Macedonian Roma who holds a BA in Economics. Before joining REF, he worked as a freelance consultant, mainly on small and medium-scale enterprise development and training programs.

- 028 Marius Tabă** (*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, where in 2011 he also obtained his PhD.
- 029 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.
- 030 Jenő Zsiga** (*Finance and Administration Manager*) is a Hungarian Roma who holds a BA from the 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**
- 031 Marsela Tahó** 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**
- 032 Aida Mihajlović** graduated from the Faculty of Arts and Science, English Department, Sarajevo University. She has worked for 15 years in the Bosnian NGO sector.
- BULGARIA**
- 033 Milen Milanov** is a Bulgarian Roma and holds a BA in International Business Relations. He previously worked for Sofia Municipality as a Deputy Mayor and was also a National Coordinator of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in the government of Bulgaria.
- CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA**
- 034 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**
- 035 Biserka Tomljenović** holds an MA degree in social work from University of Zagreb Faculty of Law. She has a wide-ranging experience in the social and civil sector.
- HUNGARY**
- 036 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.

- FYR MACEDONIA**
- 037 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.
- ROMANIA**
- 038 Danut Dumitru** is a Romanian Roma who holds a BA in Sociology and Social Work from the University of Bucharest and an MA in Community Administration of Justice. He graduated from Roma Access Program of the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary and previously worked for Roma Initiatives Office in Budapest, among others.
- SERBIA**
- 039 Natasha Kocić-Rakočević** 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.

REF INTERNS

- Madalena Boicu** (Romania)
- Olesja Cili** (Albania)
- Ana Conkova** (Slovakia)
- Eric Helms** (USA)
- Roland Ferkovics** (Hungary)
- Jelena Jovanovic** (Serbia)
- Patricia Patkanova** (Slovakia)
- Edita Rigova** (Slovakia)
- Tomas Sivak** (Slovakia)
- Simona Torotcoi** (Romania)
- Audrey Werth** (USA)

REF ROMANIA, BUCHAREST

The full list of staff at REF Romania can be found at <http://romaeducationfund.ro/en/about-us/staff/>

60 Vaselor Street
2nd floor, District 2
021255 Bucharest, Romania

REF BRANCH OFFICES

MONTENEGRO
Husinjskih rudara 64
Konik
81000 Podgorica
tel.: 00382.695.064.07

040 Dragana Radoman (*Konik Camp Program Coordinator*) graduated from the University of Montenegro and obtained a graduate diploma on youth work from Jonkoping University in Sweden. She previously worked for Save the Children as a Country Coordinator for its Child Trafficking Response unit.

SERBIA
Roma Education Fund Representative Office
Vlajkovićeve 28,
11000 Belgrade, Serbia
tel.: 00381.63.346.507

SLOVAKIA
Levočská 4
080 01 Prešov
tel.: 00421.944.251.841

041 Stanislava Dzurikova (*Country Coordinator for Tertiary Scholarship Program*) has an MA in Economics from the University of Bratislava and previously worked for the Open Society Foundations Slovakia

042 Rudolf Pohodko (*Coordinator for Secondary School Scholarships*) is a Slovak Roma who holds MA honors degree in primary-school teaching the University of Prešov. He previously worked at the Open Society Foundation in Prešov as coordinator's assistant.



GRANT TABLE 2013

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Czech Republic

Olomouc region

Romodrom	56,017	Integrate and prepare Romani and non-Romani children to mainstream education through the provision of ECEC services.
----------	--------	--

Ostrava region

Bily Nosorozec & Beleza	191,847	Increase the enrollment rates in kindergartens and provide ECEC services to families.
-------------------------	---------	---

Nationwide

Slovo 21	16,196	Improve educational performance, attendance rates and support Romani students transition to tertiary education after the state Matura exam.
----------	--------	---

Prague

People in Need	50,000	Improve educational performance and increase integration in selected primary schools for Romani children.
----------------	--------	---

Hungary

Baranya region

Szama Da Noj	16,460	Support Romani students in the eighth grade of primary school to advance to secondary school.
--------------	--------	---

Budapest

Waldorf Pedagogical Institute	12,935	Provide teacher trainings following the Waldorf methodology in order to break down cultural and language barriers.
-------------------------------	--------	--

Municipalities of Györk,

Nyírcsáholy and Mérk

Unity in Diversity	27,789	Continue the Your Tale component of A Good Start program and use mothers as agents of change in communities for improving ECEC.
--------------------	--------	---

Encs subregion and Nyírbátor subregion

Romnibus	51,160	Improve the academic achievements of 131 Romania primary and secondary school students.
----------	--------	---

Nyíregyháza, Nagydobos, Kántorjánosi,

Hodász, Nagyecsed, Nyírparasznya, Szamosszeg, and Szamoskér

Add a kezed az eselyegyenisseg megteremtésenek	48,720	
--	--------	--

Nationwide

Roma Versitas Foundation	85,669	Increase the percentage of Romani university graduates and support them academically, professionally and financially through Roma Versitas centers.
--------------------------	--------	---

Tolcsva

Association for the Roma in Olaszliszka	19,241	Enroll disadvantaged Romani children in integrated schools in Tolcsva, reversing segregated education and enhancing their transition to secondary schools.
---	--------	--

Miskolc

Roma European Organization	27,280	Reduce early school leaving and facilitate the school enrollment for Romani children returning from Canada.
----------------------------	--------	---

Nagyecsed

Nagyecsed Városért Egyesület	11,208	Provide Romani children with access to a range of toys in two Toy Libraries in order to challenge and stimulate further development.
------------------------------	--------	--

International

Central European University	330,000	Through the Roma Access Program, host Romani students from various countries with the aim to increase their English language and academic skills which will enable them to enroll to internatioal Mastre's Degree Programs in English language at the Central European University in Budapest or elsewhere.
-----------------------------	---------	---

Slovakia

Košice-Šaca

Civic Association ETP Slovakia	86,808	Establish a community center where long-term services will be provided to the whole Romani community including ECEC.
--------------------------------	--------	--

Spisska Nova Ves

Civil Association Spectrum - East	69,643	Prevent the wrongful enrollment of Romani children in the special education system through an accelerated learning program.
-----------------------------------	--------	---

National publication

Civil Association Spectrum - East	1,800	Assess the effectiveness of zero-grade classes through a comprehensive research study.
-----------------------------------	-------	--

Zborov

Equal Chances Initiative, ECH	28,416	Provide access to quality ECEC services for disadvantaged Romani children and also operate one Toy Library through A Good Start.
-------------------------------	--------	--

Banska Bystrica

The County Association of Roma Initiatives – KARI	32,866	Provide access to quality ECEC services for disadvantaged Romani children and enhance their school readiness through A Good Start.
---	--------	--

Nationwide

Open Society Foundation – Slovakia	193,000	Manage a nationwide secondary scholarship fund aimed at improving the retention and achievements of Romani students in secondary schools at the national level by providing scholarships and tutoring and mentoring support.
------------------------------------	---------	--

Martin

Cultural Association of Roma in Slovakia	46,121	Improve parenting skills and ensure access to quality ECEC services.
--	--------	--

Moldova

Bursuc, Ciocilteni, Micleuseni, Vulcanesti and Stejareni

Roma National Center	39,000	Improve access to quality of education for Romani children and to improve school attendance rates.
----------------------	--------	--

Nationwde

Roma National Center	71,790	Improve young Romani students' academic performance at the tertiary level by offering a wide range of services through a Roma Versitas center.
----------------------	--------	--

BALKANS

Albania

Kucova, Grabian, Elbasan and Levan

Amaro Drom	56,990	Provide ECEC services and enrollment assistance for 150 three-to-six year-old Romani and non-Romani children.
------------	--------	---

Tirana

Romani Baxt Albania	18,258	Increase ECEC outcomes for 170 direct beneficiaries and prepare them for mainstream kindergartens.
---------------------	--------	--

Baltez and Tirana

Save the Children	93,020	Ensure school enrollment and attendance of Romani and Egyptian children and encourage interethic interactions and relations in selected primary schools.
-------------------	--------	--

Bosnia & Herzegovina

Mostar

Novi Most International	62,132	Decrease the number of Romani children enrolled in special schools and increase the number of students who finish elementary education.
-------------------------	--------	---

Tuzla Canton

SAE Roma	65,847	Improve and expand the level of participation of Romani children in preschool, primary and secondary education in 11 Romani communities.
----------	--------	--

Kakanj municipality

Center for Roma Support Romalen	68,854	Provide equal opportunities for Romani pupils and support their integration into society by participating in mainstream education.
---------------------------------	--------	--

Croatia

Vodnjan

Merlin association for promotion of creativity	10,000	Provide quality afterschool support to Romani children between the ages of 7 and 15.
--	--------	--

Medjimurje County

Medjimurje County	60,168	Create sustainable conditions for full integration into heterogeneous preschool and primary schools for all Romani children in the county.
-------------------	--------	--

Medjimurje County

NGO Sfera	17,442	Contribute to the social inclusion of the Romani population in Međimurje County through strengthening educational achievements.
-----------	--------	---

Medjimurje County

Medjimurje County	43,029	Create sustainable conditions for the full integration of Romani children into elementary school education in Međimurje County through ECEC services.
-------------------	--------	---

Medjimurje County

Medjimurje County	11,131	Include three primary schools in the Extended Stay Program in order to improve the academic achievement of Romani children.
-------------------	--------	---

Kosovo

Gjakova/Đakovica, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Mitrovica North, Mitrovica South, Peja/Peë, Prishtina, and Prizren

Save the Children Kosovo	39,266	Support a total of 400 marginalized preschool and school-aged children in eight municipalities located throughout Kosovo.
--------------------------	--------	---

Prishtina

Shpresa e jetes	71,001	Increase attendance rates and ECEC outcomes for roughly 300 Romani, Ashkali and Egyptian children.
-----------------	--------	--

Fushe Kosovo, Shtime, Gracanica, Obilic, Podujevo, Gjakova, Peja, Prizren, Ferizaj (Dubrava) and Lipjan municipalities

Balkan Sunflowers	17,980	
-------------------	--------	--

Nationwide

Kosovo Agency for Advocacy and Development	80,390	
--	--------	--

Macedonia

Nationwide

Ministry of Education and Science	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.
-----------------------------------	---------	---

Delchevo, Pehchero, Berovo, Vinica

Ternipe MK	70,000	
------------	--------	--

Kochani

Svetla idnina	54,155	
---------------	--------	--

Skopje, Bitola, Kumanovo, Kicevo, Strumica

Institute for Human Rights	13,390	Engage stakeholders in six roundtable events and develop an analytical report including conclusions and recommendations.
----------------------------	--------	--

Skopje

Roma Versitas Foundation	35,000	Empower approximately 80 Romani university students and 40 high school students to better prepare them for their future careers at a Roma Versitas center.
--------------------------	--------	--

Kumanovo

National Roma Centrum	13,495	Advocate for the implementation of policy documentation and institutionalization of the Romani mediators in elementary schools.
-----------------------	--------	---

GRANT TABLE 2013

Nationwide Ambrela	57,352	Provide access to quality ECEC services for disadvantaged Romani children and to enhance their school readiness through provision of a Toy Library.
Delchevo, Pehchero, Berovo, Vinica NGO Kham – Delchevo	62,368	Provide access to quality ECEC services for disadvantaged Romani children and to enhance their school readiness through provision of a Toy Library.
Nationwide Ministry of Labor and Social Policy	19,761	Improve the school readiness of approximately 380 Romani children, ages 3.8 to 5.7, in 18 localities in Macedonia through ECEC services.
Tetovo, Gostivar, Debar, Kicevo Roma Democratic Development Association SONCE	72,368	Provide afterschool support to Romani children in second and fourth grade of primary school in Tetovo, Gostivar, Debar and Kicevo.
Nationwide Macedonian Ministry of Labor and Social Policy	60,000	To improve the school readiness of approximately 477 Romani children, ages 3.8 to 5.7, in 18 localities from Macedonia through ECEC services.
Montenegro Konik Camp, Podgorica JPU Djina Vrbica	14,400	Support the integration of 150 Romani and Egyptian children into preschool and primary schools and developed a Toy Library as part of an ECEC component.
Nationwide Ministry of Education, Bureau for Education	78,795	Support a secondary scholarship program with a focus to improve the enrollment and retention rates of 180 students enrolled in General Education and Technical Vocational Education schools.
Podgorica Institute of Social Inclusion	36,500	Improve the academic achievements of 14 university students and increase the number of Roma enrolled in universities through a Roma Versitas center.
Serbia Gazella Settlement Mali Princ	64,820	Prevent segregation and to decrease the dropout rates among Romani students.
Vojvodina Vojvodinian Roma Center for Democracy (VRCD)	163,925	Increase the graduation rate of prospective Romani university students and improve the professional and academic achievements of tertiary students in a Roma Versitas center.
Nationwide Preparatory Preschool Program implemented by REF	68,600	Contribute to poverty reduction by reducing the gap in ECEC outcomes between Roma and non-Roma.
Kraljevo, Krusevac, Kragujevac, Obrenovac, Novi Sad Consortium of five Roma NGOs	122,280	Provide 714 children with access to Toy Libraries and other tailored ECEC services.
Nis Association of Roma-Serbian Friendship Stablo	43,340	Improve the retention, performance and graduation rates of 89 Roma who are full-time tertiary students in Serbia in Roma Versitas centers.
SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE		
Bulgaria		
Kyustendil Center for Regional Development Roma	59,276	Reintegrate Romani adults who have not completed primary or secondary school through Second Chance programs.
Sofia Equal Opportunities	19,750	Enroll approximately 500 Romani children in mainstream educational facilities.
Sofia Diverse and Equal Association Sofia	61,818	Promote the social inclusion of Romani children and their parents living in the town of Buhovo through equal access to education.
Nadezhda quarter in Sliven Roma Academy for Culture and Development	19,876	Increase the number of children in preschool and increase the capacity of parents to be involved in the educational process.
Nikola Kozlevo Center for Local and Regional Policies	34,737	Motivate approximately 100 parents to enroll and send their children (54) to preschool programs for the school year 2012/2013.
Kyustendil Municipality Kustendil Municipality	16,610	Create conditions for the equal integration of Romani children from Kyustendil into the social, economic and political life of the country.
Montana Municipality Resource Center for Education and Culture Sham Foundation	29,442	Prevent school dropouts and increase graduation rates of Romani secondary school students from the municipality of Montana.
Pleven Amala R	4,884	Coordinate with approximately 31 Roma children, their parents and teachers in order to provide them access to mainstream education.
Berkovitz Municipality FRCD Nangle – 2000, Montana	15,128	Provide ECEC services to 60 Romani children from the Rakovitsa area and teach them Bulgarian.
Sofia Equal Opportunities Initiative Association	68,380	Support a preschool campaign in the Romani community to facilitate the enrollment of their children in preschools.
Nikola Kozlevo Association Center for Local and Regional Policies	98,070	Create a sustainable ECEC model for Romani and non-Romani children at kindergarten and elementary school-age.
Montana Municipality Association New Future	8,200	Provide afterschool study hall programs and extracurricular activities (arts) to enhance the learning of selected number of Romani students in secondary schools.

Romania

Campia Turzi Association for Promoting Social Inclusion	251,180	Increase the existing GPA of Romani students who are project beneficiaries and support student's transition to high school.
Calarasi Center for Education and Social Development Association	171,400	Actively increase the number of Romani students from the Calarasi area who seek to obtain a higher education degree.
Gura Pravat, Mare Village, Arges County Asidera	23,000	Increase the enrollment of 60 children, ages 10-15, into high school by utilizing active intervention measures.
Dracea Village O Drom O Lacho Association	15,655	Increase the access to education of all Romani children living in Dracea village in Teleorman County.
Jilava Matias Organization	59,600	Ensure the enrollment and the improved performance of Romani children into preschool programs and primary education.
Neamt Apis Neamt	32,104	Support the implementation of existing policies surrounding the REF RO school-after-school programs.
Vaslui County Vaslui County	19,800	Support ECEC services and enrollment in elementary school for Romani children in Vaslui County.
North East Region, South Muntenia Region and Center Region Roma Education Fund Romania	249,305	Offer retention services to Romani students at the secondary level through mentoring and tutoring programs.
Telechiu Ruhama	54,196	Target 90 percent of Romani children ages zero to six living in Telechiu with ECEC programs and a Toy Library.
Mofleni Romani CRISS	59,387	Increase the attendance of Romani children from Mofleni in kindergarten and to ensure quality ECEC services.
Jilava Matias Association	17,251	Increase the academic achievements of Romani and non-Romani disadvantaged children in the education system.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGS	A Good Start
APIS	Association for Promoting Social Inclusion
CURS	Center for Urban and Regional Sociology
DILS	Delivery of Improved Local Services
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
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
ISSA	International Step by Step Association
J-PAL	Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
LHP	Law and Humanities Program
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
SGI	Slovak Governance Institute
TA	Technical Assistance
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Copyright © Roma Education Fund, 2014
All rights reserved

This Report has been prepared by REF staff.

Cover photo:
Teenage girls study during a summer literacy program at Konik
Camp in Podgorica, Montenegro.
Photo: Kieran Kesner

All photos used in this publication are owned by or their user right
has been purchased by the Roma Education Fund.

Graphic design by Anikó Bieder and Balázs Gelsei





Roma Education Fund

CONTACT INFORMATION

Roma Education Fund
Mark Center
Teréz körút 46, 1066 Budapest - Hungary
tel.: +36 1 235 8030
fax: +36 1 235 8031
e-mail: info@romaeducationfund.org
web: www.romaeducationfund.org
skype: [roma.education.fund](https://www.skype.com/name/roma.education.fund)
fb: www.facebook.com/RomaEducationFund
twitter: [@romaeducation](https://twitter.com/romaeducation)

Roma Education Fund - Romania
Vaselor 60 str., Sector 2 Bucharest - Romania
tel.: +40 785 231 910
fax: +40 21 312 5049
e-mail: info@romaeducationfund.ro
web: www.romaeducationfund.ro
fb: www.facebook.com/Roma-Education-Fund-Romania