INVESTING AND INNOVATING IN ROMA EDUCATION

**Toy Libraries** – In 2011 REF introduced Toy Libraries to a handful of Roma communities, encouraging children and their caregivers to check out quality toys and to learn by playing on site. REF’s network of Toy Libraries has since expanded to nearly 40 Roma communities, reaching 2,000 Roma families and their children in 2016.

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**Tutoring and Mentoring** – For students who may underperform due to years of substandard teaching and low-quality schools, tutoring services are a proven remedy to improve the grades of primary and secondary school students at risk of dropping out. Mentors may also be part of this package, providing accessible role models to students and helping them to graduate.

**Secondary Education Scholarships** – A rapidly growing number of secondary education scholarships now reach thousands of Roma secondary students a year, helping them with financial and academic support to go the extra mile and complete their studies.

**RomaVersitas** – RomaVersitas is a unique service for Roma university students to empower themselves and enhance their academic performance. University-level likelihood, career opportunities and training in soft skills that make a positive difference in the job-market.

**Tertiary Education Scholarships** – REF’s flagship tertiary education scholarship program has been a motor of success to create a critical mass of highly educated Roma professionals and intellectuals. Ask nearly any Roma student how they managed to study, and the majority will answer that the support of the Roma Education Fund made their achievements possible.

WHY PARTNER WITH US?

- Extensive geographical coverage and on-the-ground experience in target countries, including partnerships with municipalities, local governments and ministries.
- Deep understanding of EU funding mechanisms and valuable experience in administering and implementing EU funds.
- Substantial grant-giving experience and implementation of large-scale projects in 16 countries.
- High-quality monitoring and evaluation expertise recognized by the World Bank, J-Pal, EU, Sida, SDC and national governments. REF is noted for:
  - result-based systems and procedures developed together with the World Bank.
  - network of skilled professionals across Europe.
  - online IT platform tailored for monitoring a large number of projects, grantees and scholarships.
- Transparent operations that are supported by financial audit by PWC and a quality management system according to ISO 9001.

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REF'S BELIEF IN THE INDUSTRY OF KNOWLEDGE - WE BELIEVE IN THE INDUSTRY OF KNOWLEDGE

**REF NETWORK**

**REF ROMANIA**
Fundatia Roma Education Fund Romania
Str. Vaselor Nr. 60, Sector 2
Bucharest, Romania 021 255
www.romaeducationfund.ro

**REF MONTENEGRO**
Roma Education Fund Representative Office in Montenegro
Husinjskih rudara 64
Konik, Podgorica, Montenegro 81000
email: refmontenegro@romaeducationfund.org

**REF SLOVAKIA**
Nadácia Rómsky vzdelávací fond – organizacná zložka zahranicnej nadácie
Levocská 4, Prešov, Slovakia 08001
email: refslovakia@romaeducationfund.org

**REF SERBIA**
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Zahumska 14, Room 415
Belgrade, Serbia 11000
email: refserbia@romaeducationfund.org

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Konik, Podgorica, Montenegro 81000
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REF's belief in the industry of knowledge: we believe in the industry of knowledge. We believe in the power of education and the potential of individuals, and we believe in the importance of empowering Roma communities with the tools they need to succeed. We believe in the transformative power of education and the positive impact it can have on society. We believe in the importance of supporting Roma students and scholars as they pursue higher education and achieve their goals. We believe in the need for continued funding and support for Roma Education Fund initiatives. We believe in the potential of Roma students to succeed academically and contribute to their communities. We believe in the importance of investing in the future of Roma students and scholars. We believe in the power of education to create a brighter future for Roma communities and the world. We believe in the need for continued support and funding for Roma Education Fund initiatives. We believe in the importance of investing in the future of Roma students and scholars.
The Roma Education Fund (REF) is an international, non-governmental organization that was established in 2005. With an active and growing network of representative offices across Central, Eastern, South-Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the REF’s mission is to contribute to bridging the gap in educational attainment between Roma and non-Roma. The Fund provides grants and scholarships to organizations and individuals who share its belief in quality, inclusive education and desegregated schools and classrooms.

**HOW DOES REF ACHIEVE ITS MISSION?**

1. **GRANTS**
   - Provides grants to civil society and public institutions to implement education projects in the following areas of intervention:
     - Expanding Roma children’s access to quality, early childhood education and care
     - Improving primary education outcomes for Roma children aged six to fourteen
     - Boosting academic scholarships for Roma students pursuing Bachelor, Master or Doctorate degrees at state-accredited universities.
   - Enhancing employability prospects for young Roma and adults through various career programs for adult education and training.

2. **TERTIARY EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS.**
   - REF provides merit-based, open competition academic scholarships for Roma students pursuing Bachelor, Master or Doctorate degrees at state-accredited universities.
   - Supporters of the Roma Education Fund and a coalition of like-minded donors, institutions and non-governmental organizations over the last decade in enhancing Roma access to quality, inclusive education.

3. **ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH.**
   - Ref promotes evidence-based models of good practice and intercultural policies for Roma education students in 13 countries of Central, South-Eastern Europe and the Balkans.
   - Early school leaving programs have reached over 120,000 Roma children in 13 countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe and the Balkans – making up one-third of all Roma in these countries. These programs have influenced Roma students’ life trajectories by enhancing their chances in the labor market and for higher education.

4. **EXTERNAL SUPPORT.**
   - REF implements large-scale grants funded by European Structural and Social Funds, EU Instruments for Pre-Accession (IPA), EEA/Norway Grants and the German Development Bank to amplify its mission.

**THE PROBLEM TODAY**

As a consequence of the migration and refugee crisis in Europe, drastic cuts in public expenditure are expected to negatively impact students’ learning. Similarly, in the light of cuts in public expenditure, the Roma Education Fund and other like-minded donors are committed to continue investing in education programs.

Today, the discrepancies in educational attainment between Roma and non-Roma remains significant across Europe. Roma students are over-represented in special schools, and many others are placed in school special programs for Roma children at a disproportionately high rate. Roma tend to perform worse than their non-Roma peers and drop out of school more often than from all educational levels.

The evidence shows that Roma students bring about high economic costs to society. Currently people with lower secondary or even no education – many of whom are Roma in Central and South-Eastern Europe and the Balkans – make up many of the unemployed; all these aspects have influence on their health, living conditions, and future earning potential.

**REF ACHIEVEMENTS**

In 2017, REF Grant Marked 10,000 beneficiaries. More than a decade later REF’s outreach has multiplied twentyfold, and the cumulative number of annual beneficiaries reaches 100,000 people.

- More than 70,000 children have been supported with direct enrollment in early childhood development programs.
- Early childhood programs have reached over 120,000 Roma children in 13 countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe and the Balkans.
- Parents are prioritized to the educational success of their children. Through these activities, REF partners have reached out to over 450,000 Roma parents.
- REF has trained more than 30,000 teachers in teaching environments more welcoming to previous line and inclusive for Roma children.
- Over 4,000 scholarships have been granted annually to Roma students to complete their upper secondary education through the provision of scholarship and training.
- Over 1,000 Roma health education students have benefited from free digital in English, English language and communication skills under the Elementary scholarship programs in seven countries.

**TERTIARY EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

During 2007–2017, the REF Scholarship Program has awarded 12,581 scholarships to 6,258 Roma tertiary education students in 16 countries.

- **Roma International Scholar Program (RISP)** – 254 scholarships have been awarded to 143 tertiary education students in medicine in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia.
- **Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP)** – 1,412 scholarships have been awarded to 534 tertiary education students in medicine in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia.
- **Law and Humanities Program (LHP)** – 1,391 scholarships have been awarded to 559 tertiary education students in law and humanities.
- **Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP)** – 9,524 scholarships have been awarded to 5,022 tertiary education students in 13 countries.
- **Roma Education Fund Graduates Program (REFGP)** – 1,037 scholarships have been awarded to 517 tertiary education students in medicine in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia.
- **Ref International Scholar Program (RISP)** – 425 scholarships have been awarded to 144 tertiary education students in 16 countries.
REF achieves its mission through a collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach that integrates advocacy, research, and comprehensive grant programs. The Fund has a global reach, with a focus on Eastern, South Eastern Europe and the Balkans, where the need for quality education is most acute. The Fund’s approach is guided by the belief that education is a fundamental human right and that it plays a critical role in promoting social inclusion, economic development, and personal empowerment. REF works closely with local partners and communities to ensure that its programs are tailored to meet the specific needs of the regions it serves.

REF’s strategic priorities are reflected in its core programs, which are designed to address the root causes of educational inequality and to create lasting change. These programs include:

1. **ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH**
   - **TERTIARY EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS**
     - Since its inception, the REF Scholarship Program has awarded over 12,580 scholarships to 6,258 individuals. These scholarships support tertiary education students in 13 countries, providing them with the opportunity to pursue academic degrees and thereby enhance their career prospects.
     - The REF Roma International Scholar Program (RISP) has awarded 254 scholarships to 143 students, enabling them to study in 16 countries.
     - The Law and Humanities Program (LHP) has awarded 1,391 scholarships to 559 students, supporting their pursuit of academic degrees in law and humanities.
     - Students are supported in achieving excellence in academic, professional, and societal fields.

2. **EXTERNAL SUPPORT**
   - **General support offers a wide range of services and resources to REF partners and grant beneficiaries.**
   - **Communications and Information Services**
     - REF’s communication department provides strategic and tactical support to its partners and grant beneficiaries, ensuring that they have access to the necessary tools for effective advocacy and program implementation.

3. **THE PROBLEM TODAY**
   - Disparities in educational attainment between Roma and non-Roma remain significant across Europe, with Roma students experiencing lower educational outcomes.
   - Educational opportunities for Roma are limited, and many Roma are disproportionately affected by poverty, unemployment, and discrimination.
   - The evidence shows that early school leavers bring about significant economic costs to society. Concretely, people with lower secondary or even no education—many of whom are Roma in Central and South Eastern Europe and the Balkans—are more likely to be unemployed; all these aspects have influence on their health, living conditions, well-being and lifetime earnings.

REF’s work is more urgent now than ever before. The Fund’s mission is to contribute to closing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma and to ensure that all children, regardless of their background, have access to quality education. REF’s programs are designed to address the root causes of educational inequality and to create lasting change. By working with local partners and communities, REF has been able to make a significant impact in promoting social inclusion, economic development, and personal empowerment.

The Roma Education Fund (REF) is an international non-governmental organization that was established in 2005. The Fund's mission is to contribute to closing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. It aims to ensure that Roma children and adults have equal access to quality education, and that Roma students are empowered to realize their full potential. REF works in Eastern, South Eastern Europe and the Balkans, where the need for quality education is most acute. The Fund’s approach is guided by the belief that education is a fundamental human right and that it plays a critical role in promoting social inclusion, economic development, and personal empowerment. REF works closely with local partners and communities to ensure that its programs are tailored to meet the specific needs of the regions it serves. REF's core programs include advocacy, research, and comprehensive grant programs, which are designed to address the root causes of educational inequality and to create lasting change. These programs include tertiary education scholarships, international research and collaboration, and professional development initiatives. The Fund has a global reach, with a focus on Eastern, South Eastern Europe and the Balkans, where the need for quality education is most acute. REF is committed to empowering Roma students and communities to achieve their full potential, and to breaking down the barriers that have prevented many Roma from accessing quality education.
The Roma Education Fund (REF) is an international non-governmental organization that was established in 2005. With an active and growing network of representative offices across Central, Eastern, South Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the REF’s mission is to contribute to the fight against

problems with education faced by Roma children and youth. The Fund provides grants and scholarships to motivate and encourage Roma students and volunteers.

HOW DOES REF ACHIEVE ITS MISSION?

1. GRANTS

The Roma Education Fund provides grants to civil society and public institutions to implement education projects in the following areas of intervention:

- Expanding Roma children’s access to quality, early childhood education and care
- Improving primary education outcomes for Roma children aged six to fourteen
- Ensuring secondary education prospects for young Roma and adults through second chance programs for adult education and training

2. TERTIARY EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS

The Roma Education Fund provides merit-based, open competition academic scholarships for Roma students pursuing Bachelor, Master or Doctorate degrees at state-accredited universities.

3. ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH

REF promotes evidence-based models of good practice and strategies for mainstreaming education and opportunities for Roma students. Many Roma are channeled into segregated schools or classes, and many others are placed in special schools where Roma children are disproportionately represented. Roma tend to score far worse than their non-Roma peers and drop out much more often from all educational levels.

The evidence shows that early school leavers bring about high economic costs to society. Currently, people with low secondary or no education — many of whom are Roma in Central and South Eastern Europe and the Balkans — are making up a large share of the unemployed; all these aspects have influence on their health, living conditions, well-being and lifetime earnings.

4. EXTERNAL SUPPORT

REF implements large-scale grants funded by European Structural and Social Funds, EU Instruments for Pre-Accession (IPA), EEA/Norway Grants and the German Development Bank to amplify its mission.

REF ACHIEVEMENTS

Since 2007 the REF Scholarship Program has awarded 12,581 scholarships to 6,258 Roma tertiary education students.

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- Parents are a crucial factor to the educational success of their children. Through their activities, REF partners have reached out to over 450,000 Roma parents.

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1. GRANTS. REF provides grants to civil society and public institutions to implement education projects across the following areas of intervention:
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   - Improving primary education outcomes for Roma children aged six to fourteen
   - Boosting secondary graduation rates from secondary education for Roma pupils
   - Improving the graduation rates and strengthening the identity of Roma students in tertiary education
   - Enhancing employment prospects for young Roma and adults through second-chance education programs for adult education and training

2. TERTIARY EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM. REF provides merit-based, open competition academic scholarships for Roma students pursuing Bachelor, Master or Doctorate degrees at state-accredited universities.

3. ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH. REF generates evidence-based models of good practices and advocates for transformative amendments, curriculum reform and research priorities targeting Roma education.

4. EXTERNAL SUPPORT. REF implements large-scale grants funded by European Structural and Social Funds, EU instruments for Pre-Accession (IPA), EEA/Norway Grants and the German Development Bank to supply its mission.

THE PROBLEM TODAY

Today, the discrepancies in educational attainment between Roma and non-Roma remain significant across Europe, with Roma children consistently scoring lower than their non-Roma peers and dropping out of school at significantly higher rates. Roma tend to attend schools that are more racially segregated, and far more of their students do not achieve the minimum level of education expected in education. Such a shift in policies threatens the achievements made through the efforts of the Roma Education Fund and a coalition of like-minded donors, institutions and non-governmental organizations over the last decade in enhancing Roma access to quality, inclusive education.

As a consequence of the migration and refugee crisis in Europe, drastic cuts in public expenditure are expected in education. Such a shift in policies threatens the achievements made through the efforts of the Roma Education Fund and a coalition of like-minded donors, institutions and non-governmental organizations over the last decade in enhancing Roma access to quality, inclusive education.

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REACHING OUT TO ROMAS: PROGRESS AND PROJECTIONS

External support has multiplied twentyfold and the cumulative number of annual beneficiaries reaches 100,000 people.

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- Parents and caregivers from the educational success of their children. Through their activities, REF partners have reached out to over 450,000 Roma parents.
- REF has trained more than 30,000 teachers in teaching Roma students.
- Over 4,000 scholarships have been granted annually to Roma students to complete their upper secondary education through the provision of school-based mentoring and tutoring.
- Over 1,000 Roma teachers have been supported in improving their skills in digital literacy, English language and communication skills under the Digital Literacy programs in seven countries.

TERTIARY EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

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INVESTING AND INNOVATING IN ROMA EDUCATION

Toy Libraries – In 2011 REF introduced Toy Libraries to a handful of Roma communities, encouraging children and their caregivers to check out quality toys and to learn by playing on site. REF’s network of Toy Libraries has since expanded to nearly 40 Roma communities, reaching 2,000 Roma families and their children in 2016.

Your Story – Storytelling sessions empower mothers, help build their relationships with their children as well as one another and lead to better literacy and critical skills. Hundreds of Your Story sessions have been held within REF’s early childhood education and care programs over the last five years.

School Desegregation – Bussing has been a potent tool to catalyze desegregation processes. REF provides transportation services together with complex intervention for children, parents and teachers as a way to close segregated schools and enroll children in mainstream ones. Every day REF helps hundreds of children reach mainstream schools and get the education they deserve.

Tutoring and Mentoring – For students who may underperform due to years of substandard teaching and low-quality schools, tutoring services are a proven remedy to improve the grades of primary and secondary school students at risk of dropping out. Mentors may also be part of this package, providing accessible role models to students and helping them to graduate.

Secondary Education Scholarships – A rapidly growing number of secondary education scholarships now reach thousands of Roma secondary students a year, helping them with financial and academic support to go the extra mile and complete their studies.

RomaVersitas – RomaVersitas is a unique service for Roma university students to empower themselves and enhance their academic performance. Functioning like a student union in seven countries, these centers provide academic support, networking opportunities and training in soft skills that make a positive difference in the job-market.

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YOUR STORY

Henriett Dinók, alumna of REF’s Scholarship Program and junior research fellow at the Institute for Legal Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, was appointed as Executive Director of RomaVersitas in Hungary, a REF-supported program of which she is also an alumna. She said, “RomaVersitas presented me with the feeling that has guided my life ever since my first open university weekend: an endless hunger for more knowledge.”

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- High-quality monitoring and evaluation expertise recognized by the World Bank, EU, EUI, EEA and national governments
- REF methodology - result-based systems and procedures developed together with the World Bank network of skilled professionals across Europe
- Online IT platform tailored for managing, evaluation of projects, governance and scholarship management systems according to EU demands

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**REF NETWORK**

**ROMA EDUCATION FUND**
Mark Centre, Teréz körút 46
Budapest, Hungary
+36 1 235 8030, fax: +36 1 235 8031
www.romaeducationfund.org

**REF ROMANIA**
Fundaţia Roma Education Fund România
Str. Vaselor Nr. 60, Sector 2
Bucharest, Romania 021255
www.romaeducationfund.ro

**REF SLOVAKIA**
Nadácia Rómsky vzdelávací fond – organizacná zložka zahraničnej nadácie
Levocská 4, Prešov, Slovakia 08001
email: refslovakia@romaeducationfund.org

**REF SERBIA**
Roma Education Fund Representative Office in the Republic of Serbia
Zahumska 14, Room 415
Belgrade, Serbia 11000
email: refserbia@romaeducationfund.org

**REF MONTENEGRO**
Roma Education Fund Representative Office in Montenegro
Husinjskih rudara 64
Konik, Podgorica, Montenegro 81000
email: refmontenegro@romaeducationfund.org

**RomaEducationFund**
@romaeducation
roma_education_fund
romaeducationfundref

REF believes the foundation of school success begins in integrated, inclusive classrooms. This first grader, who attended one of two REF-supported Preschool Clubs in Ostrava, is now enrolled in a mainstream primary school in the city.

PHOTO: REF – JANA BAUDYSOVA

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- TRANSPARENT OPERATIONS THAT ARE SUPPORTED BY FINANCIAL AUDIT BY PWC AND A QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ACCORDING TO ISO 9001

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- Your Story: Storytelling sessions empower mothers, help build their relationships with their children as well as one another and lead to better literacy and critical skills. Hundreds of Your Story sessions have been held within REF’s early childhood education and care programs over the last five years.

- School Desegregation: Bussing has been a potent tool to catalyze desegregation processes. REF provides transportation services together with complex intervention for children, parents and teachers as a way to close segregated schools and enroll children in mainstream ones. Every day REF helps hundreds of children reach mainstream schools and get the education they deserve.

- Tutoring and Mentoring: For students who may underperform due to years of substandard teaching and low-quality schools, tutoring services are a proven remedy to improve the grades of primary and secondary school students at risk of dropping out. Mentors may also be part of this package, providing accessible role models to students and helping them to graduate.

- Secondary Education Scholarships: A rapidly growing number of secondary education scholarships now reach thousands of Roma secondary students a year, helping them with financial and academic support to go the extra mile and complete their studies.

- RomaVersitas: RomaVersitas is a unique service for Roma university students to empower themselves and enhance their academic performance. Functioning like a student union in seven countries, these centers provide academic support, networking opportunities and training in soft skills that make a positive difference in the job-market.

- Tertiary Education Scholarships: REF’s flagship tertiary education scholarship program has been a motor of success to create a critical mass of highly educated Roma professionals and intellectuals. Ask nearly any Roma student how they managed to study, and the majority will answer that the support of the Roma Education Fund made their achievements possible.

WHY PARTNER WITH US?
- Extensive geographical coverage and on-the-ground experience in target countries, including partnerships with municipalities, local governments and ministries.
- Deep understanding of EU funding mechanisms and substantial experience in absorbing and implementing EU funds.
- Substantial grant-giving experience and implementation of large-scale projects in 16 countries.
- High-quality monitoring and evaluation expertise recognized by the World Bank, J-Pal, EU, Sida, SDG and national governments. REF is noted for:
  - result-based systems and procedures developed together with the World Bank
  - network of skilled professionals across Europe
  - online IT platform tailored for monitoring a large number of projects, grantees and scholarships.
- Transparent operations that are supported by financial audit by PWC and a quality management system according to ISO 9001.

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REF NETWORK

ROMA EDUCATION FUND
Mark Center – Teréz körút 46
Budapest, Hungary, 1066
+36 1 235 8030, fax: +36 1 235 8031
www.romaeducationfund.org

REF ROMANIA
Fundaţia Roma Education Fund România
Str. Vaselor Nr. 60, Sector 2
Bucharest, Romania 021 255
www.romaeducationfund.ro

REF SLOVAKIA
Nadácia Rómsky vzdelávací fond – organizacná zložka zahranicnej nadácie
Levocská 4, Prešov, Slovakia 08001
email: refslovakia@romaeducationfund.org

REF MONTENEGRO
Roma Education Fund Representative Office in Montenegro
Husinjskih rudara 64
Konik, Podgorica, Montenegro 81000
email: refmontenegro@romaeducationfund.org

REF SERBIA
Roma Education Fund Representative Office in the Republic of Serbia
Zahumska 14, Room 415
Belgrade, Serbia 11000
email: refserbia@romaeducationfund.org

REF MONTENEGRO
Roma Education Fund Representative Office in Montenegro
Husinjskih rudara 64
Konik, Podgorica, Montenegro 81000
email: refmontenegro@romaeducationfund.org

REF SERBIA
Roma Education Fund Representative Office in the Republic of Serbia
Zahumska 14, Room 415
Belgrade, Serbia 11000
email: refserbia@romaeducationfund.org

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REF’S BELIEF: The foundation of adult learning begins in early childhood, and those who are educated improve their quality of life and that of their communities.

Henriett Dinók, alumna of REF’s Scholarship Program and junior research fellow at the Institute for Legal Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, was appointed as Executive Director of RomaVersitas in Hungary, a REF-supported program of which she is also an alumna. She said, “RomaVersitas presented me with the feeling that has guided my life ever since my first open university weekend: an endless hunger for more knowledge.”