

ROMA  
EDUCATION  
FUND

2015

# ANNUAL REPORT







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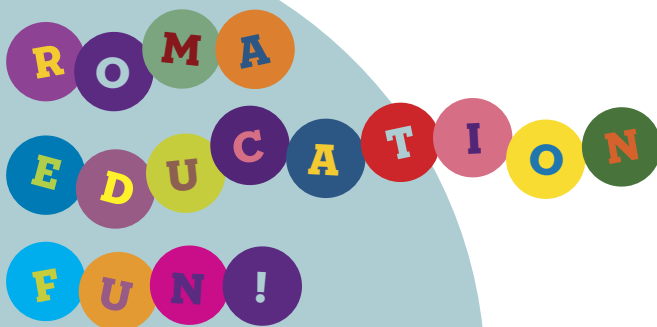
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Top: The foundations for school success begin in integrated, inclusive classrooms, as they do for this Roma pupil who has attended a Preschool Club in preparation for primary school, together with his peers in Ostrava Municipality, Czech Republic.

Photo: Jana Baudysova

Bottom: Members of Moldova's RomaVersitas tertiary support program attend the RomaVersitas Student Summit in September 2015. Left to right: REF LHP alumna Izabela Olari, and current LHP students Diana Leahu and Rada Padureanu. To Moldovan Roma students, "RomaVersitas is community. RomaVersitas is support. RomaVersitas is hope."

Photo: Miklos Deri



# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Dear Reader,

2015 has been a formative and transitional year for the Roma Education Fund. Now in our 10<sup>th</sup> year of operation, the right moment has come to reflect on REF's accomplishments and set forth future priorities.

Over the last decade, REF has evolved into an organization with a unique experience and position within Roma civil society. REF has invested in programs that help to improve educational outcomes on all educational levels for Roma children and youth in 16 countries by developing programs based on innovation, the ability to reach and educate Roma children and their parents, cooperation with local authorities and governments, and the potential to achieve impact, while serving as models for governments' systemic change in education.

By now REF's network has grown to incorporate five offices staffed by a team of committed Roma and pro-Roma professionals. To achieve this, REF consistently invested its funds in grants and projects, and effectively tapped into European Union Structural Funds, Instruments of Pre-accession and Norway Grants as well as attracting new sources of donor funding. This rapid growth prompted the Board's discussion about what and how to change REF's structure, operation and mode of action in 2015.

For the first time in REF's history, a Roma Executive Director, Mr. Nadir Redzepi, was selected by the REF Governing Board to lead the transition. Moreover, the practice of seconding the Executive Director to REF's founders has been discontinued and the position has been transferred to REF's payroll. Within the Board itself, Dr. Kinga Göncz, representing the Open Society Foundations (OSF), has joined the Board, replacing Mr. Robert Kushen. Ms. Mariam Sherman, representing the World Bank, has replaced her colleague, Ms. Anne Bjerde.

This has been also a year when the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the framework in which REF was founded and in which it functioned, has come to a closure. Obviously, REF will continue its mission but will need to define its strategy and priorities anew, especially in relation to the EU Roma Framework.

01 The foundations for school success begin in integrated, inclusive classrooms, as they do for this Roma pupil who has attended a Preschool Club in preparation for primary school, together with his peers in Ostrava Municipality, Czech Republic.  
Photo: Jana Baudysova

02 Daniela Roxin, a Roma teacher from Oradea, Romania, at the Roma Teachers Conference in Bratislava, Slovakia. She says, "It's very important that Roma communities participate in decision-making processes. They've learned recently that you've got to be firm and that in order to get something you need to follow the steps, organize yourselves and submit a request in person."  
Photo: Björn Steinz/Panos for Open Society Foundations

REF needs to build on this experience and develop even closer relations with EU institutions. The question is not what to radically change but how REF can continue to effectively realize its mission in Europe's rapidly changing social and political climate.

But what exactly are the challenges and the opportunities ahead?

The overall objectives of REF mission in Europe remains relevant: the education gap between the majority and Roma communities at all education levels remains and this requires the continuation of efforts to narrow it. A key challenge is how to mobilize the political will and commitment of state and education authorities to scale up and integrate model interventions developed by REF into their education systems. Joining forces with those willing to exert pressure and advocate for inclusive and quality education for Roma children, whether it be large international organizations or local grass-roots Roma NGOs, is valid as ever.

With the freedom of movement of citizens of EU Member States and recent mobility patterns of Roma children and adults from non-EU Member States, REF may consider expanding its programs and expertise to the "old" EU member states where the Roma population has increased but where such educational support programs as proposed by REF are non-existent; hence, there is a tiny number of educated Roma elite in countries like Germany, Italy or Spain.

REF is supported financially by a few of its founders and a rising number of new donors. The efforts to diversify donors and funding, including those of the EU, should be strengthened, and is strongly justified by REF's mission and outcomes. It may require even closer cooperation with academia as REF interventions are results-oriented, and research can inform state authorities and donors about their effectiveness, for example, through impact assessments. It is equally important to devote more resources to sustain REF's professional management.

After I was elected to Chair of REF Board I gave an interview to Romea in July 2015. I would like to recall one of my statements: "I strongly believe that REF should try to increase the number of Roma in formal education structures, especially at preschool and primary school levels; major change can and should happen with engagement of an enlarged Roma professional teaching staff, dedicated to and familiar with Roma

**03** Roma children in Nikola Kozlevo, Bulgaria, are participating in a project run by the Center for Local and Regional Policies to provide early childhood development services and prepare them for primary school.

Photo: Courtesy of CLRPP

**04-05** A member of the Voice of Roma, Askhali and Egyptians prepares for the second national secondary scholarship ceremony in Prishtina, Kosovo, which serves over 500 Roma high school students annually. This program is one of several REF secondary scholarship programs promoting high school graduation through mentoring, tutoring and modest financial support.

Photo: Majlinda Hoxha



03

communities and families.” I would like to reiterate this. REF’s project funded by Velux Foundation to support Roma teachers in three countries highlights REF’s priority – developing a general scholarship scheme to support and sustain the emergence of Roma teaching professionals.

REF annually supports approximately 1,400 Roma students at universities through its Scholarship Program, who are a resource both for the Roma community and for REF and other Roma-related institutions and offices. Engaging with Roma students who are beneficiaries of REF programs and scholarships to work with the Roma community is a priority, and it can be a requirement for these scholarship students to serve for a given period of time in Roma communities, whether in education institutions, community centers or civil society. Similarly, REF alumni should become key actors for multiplying REF’s outcomes, not the least, by joining REF or other offices and institutions as qualified and expert staff.



04

Budapest is at the center of Roma elite formation. It hosts the Open Society Foundations and the Central European University (CEU), which both have programs for training Roma students. Having REF headquarters in Budapest provides it with a unique opportunity for close cooperation, especially, many REF student beneficiaries end up continuing their education either at CEU or benefiting from OSF-funded programs or scholarships. Growing the potential of Roma students, and increasing their number and quality is an essential part of the REF mission. Forging close cooperation with both institutions can advance this mission.

*Andrzej Mirga*

Andrzej Mirga  
REF Chair



# DIRECTOR'S LETTER



05

It is a pleasure to share REF's 2015 Annual Report with you. Last year marked REF's tenth anniversary and the end of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, so this is a particularly apt time to reflect on what a difference REF has made since 2005.

Within the context of the Decade, it is clear that education stands out as the area where most progress was made in attempting to "close the gap" between Roma and the rest of society. The cumulative effect of ten years of work by REF has resulted in larger cohorts of Roma children enrolling in pre-school, completing primary school and going on to graduate from secondary and tertiary education. Ten years on, we have the data and the evidence to show that, where REF operates, it does so effectively and efficiently to "narrow the gap" in education between Roma and non-Roma.

In 2005 REF reached 5,000 beneficiaries. Ten years later the number of annual beneficiaries exceeded 74,400 children and parents. In ten years, more than 60,600 children have been supported with direct enrollment in early childhood development programs, and dropout-prevention programs have reached over 121,000 Roma pupils. Nearly 49,000 finished secondary school and more than 7,000 young Roma enrolled in university. In addition to partnerships with school principals and mayors, REF has always stressed community empowerment and actively engaging parents.

Challenges remain, however, and data from the *Roma Inclusion Index 2015*<sup>1</sup> indicate a possible worsening when it comes to overrepresentation of Roma in special schools, and segregation in general. In Serbia, for example, Roma children are 36 times more likely than other children to be placed in special schools. On the upside, preschool enrollment of Roma children, which is widely recognized as an agent for future successful enrollment in mainstream primary education, increased dramatically in Serbia from four percent in 2004 to 63% in 2014.

In Albania, the *Index* reports some of the most sobering results: on every indicator, girls are doing worse than boys, very few Roma are completing primary or secondary education and segregation is worsening. Yet even here there is good

news. In the last year, two regional authorities in Albania have adopted and scaled up REF intervention models in primary education to provide extracurricular help for Roma children. REF projects reduced dropout rates from 86% to three percent in participating schools. And REF's secondary education model has been adopted by the Albanian government, which matches REF's efforts and resources to cover secondary school scholarships combined with tutoring and mentoring.

There is reason to look forward to more encouraging data in the near future. In Romania, for example, 80% of Roma pupils now complete primary school, compared to 66% a decade ago. And in Slovakia, not only do 20% more students complete primary school than ten years ago, but there is also a promising quality indicator: Roma literacy skills have grown by 18%.

Looking back on the last ten years, it is clear that the Decade did not "close the gap". It was obvious from the beginning that it would take far more than 10 years to undo centuries of exclusion. But it did raise awareness about the plight of the Roma like never before. It extracted commitments from governments to develop inclusion strategies, and led to the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.

The strongest signal of political progress from Brussels was the Council of the European Union recommendations adopted on December 10, 2013, calling 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 – which included increasing access to preschool, preventing early dropouts, and ending segregation – amounted to an effective endorsement of REF's activities and programs.

Providing full access and support throughout the education cycle so that Roma students realize their academic potential is not only the right and just thing to do; it makes sense for the entire society, and enables young people to break out of vicious cycles of deprivation and exclusion.



06

From early childhood education to programs preventing early school leaving, REF has ensured that tens of thousands more Roma children are better prepared when they start school, less likely to dropout and much more likely to get better grades when they finish school. Well-educated and qualified, these young people are much better placed to compete in the labor market and make a valuable contribution to the future economic growth and prosperity of their countries.

Of course, if this is to happen, all of those countries will have to step up their efforts to eliminate the prejudice and discrimination that inhibits young educated Roma from taking their place in society. Investing now in Roma education will bring huge dividends for European countries in the near future.

What REF has done over the last decade is to show how its model interventions for inclusive education can provide the kind of support that gives every child the opportunity to succeed – by completing their education with better results. This approach is vindicated by the latest OECD report, *Low Performing Students: Why they fall behind and how to help them succeed*,<sup>2</sup> which says that around 4.5 million 15-year-olds in OECD countries, equivalent to more than one in four, fail to achieve the most basic level of proficiency in reading, mathematics and/or science.

This is a startling figure and an enormous challenge that needs to be overcome. As Andreas Schleicher, OECD Director for Education and Skills put it, “The social and economic gains from tackling low performance dwarf any conceivable cost of improvement. Education policy and practice can help overcome this issue. It needs to be made a priority and given the necessary resources so that every child can succeed at school.”

Over the last ten years REF has put into practice each of the OECD's recommendations outlined in its latest report on low performing students.<sup>3</sup> REF has built a unique and unsurpassed data and evidence base across 16 countries that demonstrate precisely what it takes in education policy and good practice to break cycles of disengagement, overcome

segregation and ensure that every child gets the quality of inclusive education that should be hers by right.

Much of the recent data about the effects of austerity measures, underinvestment in education and widening inequality gaps in many of the countries where REF works should give us cause for deep concern, but should never cause us to despair. Indeed what has filled me with hope and optimism for a better future is the many success stories from REF grantees that show how things can and do change for the better.

Success stories show how a combination of vision and commitment, funding support and local partnerships can provide children with the support they need to succeed in school. Access to education can transform lives, and REF made that a reality for tens of thousands of Roma families in 2015. But much more remains to be done by European governments to ensure that this young generation of Roma citizens, with all its potential, is not left behind. Ten years on, REF's mission remains as urgent and as vital to the future of Europe as it was in 2005.

Personally speaking, working with REF for more than ten years has been a unique privilege and a hugely rewarding experience and I wish the new director and all at REF every success for the coming decade.

Judit Szira  
Executive Director 2011-2015

<sup>1</sup> Available online:  
<http://www.romadecade.org/news/roma-inclusion-index-2015/9810>

<sup>2</sup> Available online:  
<http://www.oecd.org/education/low-performing-students-9789264250246-en.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.





07



08

**06** Roma and non-Roma children celebrate International Roma Day (April 8) in Podgorica, Montenegro. Together with the Ministry of Education over the last four years, REF has worked to close the segregated school at Konik Camp, housing some 1,500 Roma for over fifteen years, and enroll Roma children in Podgorica's mainstream schools.  
Photo: Emil Sabotic

**07-08** Sara was a participant in REF's A Good Start Project in Delcevo, Macedonia that targeted early childhood development outcomes beginning in 2012. Four years later, Sara is enrolled in a mainstream primary school, with a good attendance record. A Good Start continues to target Roma children under age six in Delcevo and many elements of its programming like Your Story and Toy Libraries have been scaled up and multiplied across the region.  
Photo: Robert Miskovics

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

The Roma Education Fund (REF) was established on the initiative of the Open Society Foundations (OSF) and the World Bank. The Fund has operated since 2005, using a combination of grants, scholarships and advocacy as tools to contribute to closing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma in Central and South Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The continuous support of OSF and the World Bank, along with other major donors like the Swedish International Development Corporation Agency (SIDA) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), has ensured the Fund's operation.

The extent of REF's strong working partnerships with educational institutions, municipalities and ministries, Roma NGOs, and national and international organizations is unmatched. REF has contributed to shaping National Roma Integration Strategies in the region and promoting their implementation and sustainability. As European Structural Funds (ESF) have become available, REF Switzerland and its

network of units in Hungary, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia subsequently have implemented 12 European projects in 2015 alone, which targeted inclusive education for Roma children and youth. This important development did not happen accidentally but was the product of a deliberate strategy to link outcomes from REF's grant and scholarship portfolios with research and policy recommendations, for from the outset REF planned for its projects to be flexible, adjustable and easily transferable to national education authorities.

## ASSESSING THE NEEDS: 2005-2010

During REF's first five years, the Fund supported several hundred grants in order to test educational approaches that would promote inclusive quality education for Roma. These projects assessed the needs of Roma communities and offered REF an opportunity to develop its integrated participatory approach. REF piloted numerous interventions that targeted schools, communities, children and parents, most often with no other financial contribution but its own. Despite communicating the encouraging changes in Roma communities where it worked, many local and national governments were often determined to keep the status quo and unreceptive to integrating excluded Roma populations.



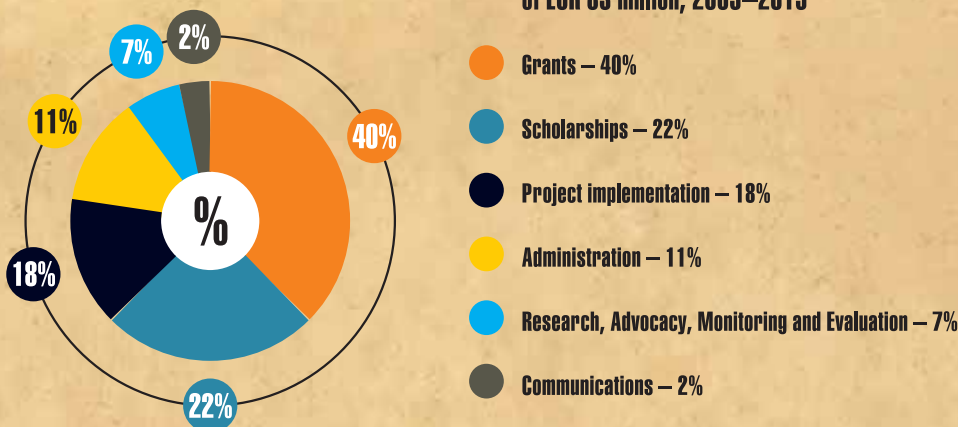
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## SERVING THE NEEDS: 2010-2015

Five years on, REF had the experience to develop its own educational models, for evidence from its grant portfolio clearly pointed to better attendance, increased school success, increased parental involvement and stronger community engagement in and commitment to education. In cooperation with the World Bank, a proprietary set of five models reflecting its best practices was refined as REF's main product, and by 2013 the models were fully operational, addressing: (1) ed-

ucational outcomes in early childhood development, (2) early school leaving in primary school, (3) transition to and graduation from secondary school, (4) improvement of graduation levels and strengthened identity of Roma students in tertiary education, and (5) second chance programs for adults.

### Distribution of REF spending of EUR 83 million, 2005–2015





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09 Community awareness-raising events show the demand among Roma parents to attend Second Chance programs. Basic qualifications are mandatory for employment in the Romanian labor market. This component of Roma Children and Parents Want to Go to School was heavily oversubscribed.

Photo: Georgiana Barbulescu

010 A member of the Kosovan press reacts at the second national secondary scholarship ceremony in Prishtina, Kosovo, which serves over 500 Roma high school students annually. News of the program was disseminated across Kosovo and demand remains high.

Photo: Majlinda Hoxha

## SUSTAINING THE SUCCESS: 2016-2020 AND BEYOND

By 2015, REF's models were being adopted as part of national education policies addressing Roma. For example, positive outcomes taken over by national governments - for instance, compulsory free-of-charge early childhood education in Croatia, Czech Republic (upcoming), Hungary and Serbia or national secondary scholarship programs in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia - have spurred REF to redouble its efforts to eliminate school segregation and promote the fulfillment of Roma children's right to quality inclusive education.

Internal indicators clearly show that REF has made a huge impact in the lives of its direct beneficiaries, but a new external evaluation will warrant the continuation of programs and strategies which have been most successful. Therefore, an independent impact evaluation of its decade of work is the next important step to quantify how and to what extent REF interventions in the field and in the policy arena are bringing

about meaningful and sustainable changes. The focus until 2020 will be on sustaining and scaling up these achievements. REF's five flexible, replicable models serve to support REF's ongoing dialogue in support of inclusive quality education with local authorities, schools and Roma communities.

REF is searching for solutions to ensure that graduates succeed in finding viable employment after graduation, and this may also mean finding ways to encourage students to move from general degrees in the humanities and social sciences to fields where employment prospects are better. REF is considering new programs such as developing after-school and post-graduate job skills development programs; engaging local and international entrepreneurs to mentor Roma graduates and provide additional professional training and support. Lastly, REF is looking into how it can help create better networks of graduates and professionals to support Roma after graduation and in their jobs.



## NEW COMMITMENTS OF REF FOUNDATIONS IN 2015 BY EDUCATIONAL MODELS

MODEL	NUMBER OF NEW PROJECTS IN 2015	FUNDS COMMITTED IN 2015, EUR
Early Childhood Education	15	654,640
Primary Education	8	120,515
Secondary Education	3	774,082
Tertiary Education (including Scholarship Program spending in 2015)	n/a <sup>4</sup>	2,879,145
Adult Education	2	99,272
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,527,653</b>

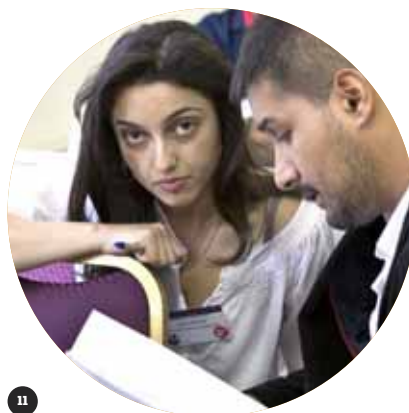
## ROMA EDUCATION IN 2015

In 2015 the Roma Education Fund distributed some EUR 4.5 million in educational services to 77,000 beneficiaries, in addition to over EUR 4 million devoted to 12 EU-funded projects. Among the highlights of the Fund's activities in 2015:

**Early childhood development (ECD)** policies in Croatia, Czech Republic (upcoming), Hungary and Serbia have been modified thanks in part to REF support, advocacy and lobbying. Now ECD services are fully covered by these states and Roma families have access to compulsory, free-of-charge services, though REF will keep a watchful eye over these normative developments. In 2015, 9,663 Roma children received ECD services supported by REF, with encouraging gains in enrollment and attendance.

Serving the needs of Roma **primary education** pupils remains a major challenge, especially for those attending special or basic schools and likely to drop out by fifth grade. Segregation continues in some countries, particularly in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and calls for inclusion matched by successful litigation have sometimes blown back to create the impetus to strengthen discrimination in school systems. Nevertheless, 8,264 of children accessed primary education in 2015, all of it done in cooperation with government sources, culminating in EUR 1,744,582 spent in 2015. Co-funding continues to increase, meaning REF can reach more students with the same financial resources.

**Secondary education** programs for Roma high school students has seen dramatic gains in state ownership, with REF's secondary scholarship programs now being funded by ministries or European Structural Funds. For example, REF's pioneering work in Macedonia has since emerged as one its most successful programs, reaching nearly 90% of Roma enrolled in secondary education in Macedonia thanks to the financial contribution of the state. Already in Serbia, REF is in the second year of implementing Instruments for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) projects that run nationwide and show



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consistent results of students' academic success. Here, tutoring, mentoring, study halls and a cash incentive form the core of REF's approach to help disadvantaged students attend and graduate from high school with a qualification or plans for further study. Kosovo and Montenegro governments have also committed to nationwide secondary school scholarship programs reaching over 600 students annually.

**RomaVersitas** addresses tertiary education by providing a home away from home for Roma students who may be living away from their families to attend university for the first time. RomaVersitas students benefit from this academic, professional and social support network which strengthens their Roma identity and prepares them with concrete skills for

<sup>4</sup> The Grant program had five RomaVersitas projects committed in 2015 in Tertiary Education; this model also includes the beneficiaries of the scholarship program of 1,427 students for 2015-16 academic year.

**011** REF Scholarship Program Country Coordinator for Serbia, Jelica Nikolic, advises a student at the RomaVersitas Student Summit in September 2015.

Photo: Miklos Deri

**012** RomaVersitas Student Summit participants in September 2015.

Photo: Miklos Deri



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today's competitive labor market. In September, the RomaVersitas Summit brought together 80 students from seven countries with RomaVersitas centers. These RomaVersitas members have the passion and persistence to take a leading role in shaping the next generation of Roma youth.

REF's **tertiary scholarship program** continues to support over 1,400 students a year under four schemes, with 331 students graduating from their degree programs in 2015. Importantly, students must now report their autumn semester grades before receiving their second installment in the spring.

REF Romania implemented and closed three **European Structural Fund projects** in 2015 and began implementing a Norway Grants project, Ready Set Go, with a total value of EUR 6,930,000. Together, reaching some 7,512 children and their families in 2015, these three projects operated in over 50 localities, offering integrated educational services to Roma children in first to eighth grade, as well as providing second chance programs to some 450 adults. REF Romania also secured funding from Norway Grants to manage and implement an early childhood development project, Ready Set Go!, that emerged from the principles of REF's first EU-funded project in Romania, A Good Start. Now operating in 11 municipalities, Ready Set Go embodies REF's flexible approach, providing an innovative menu of activities to create a culture of learning among children and parents previously excluded from classrooms and wider communities.

In terms of its own **sustainability**, REF sealed two new long-term contracts with SIDA and SDC till 2019 and 2020, re-

spectively. REF also welcomed new donors Porticus Foundation and World Vision in 2015 and REF was awarded an IPA project in Macedonia.

All in all, 2015 witnessed a continued expansion of REF activities and partnerships, with more Roma children enrolling in preschool, getting better grades in integrated primary and secondary schools, and a stable number of Roma students in universities receiving scholarships and increased number of them benefitting from mentoring.

Please read more in REF's 2015 Annual Report, which presents in detail the year's activities, achievements and outcomes:

- A summary REF's grant-giving and scholarship programs, highlighting the activities, outputs and trends.
- A snapshot of special events to coincide with REF's ten-year anniversary that brought together Roma teachers and Roma university students.
- A comprehensive section devoted to regions, presenting country highlights of REF's grant portfolio as well as detailed data on some its most outstanding projects, not to mention regional breakdowns of its scholarship program.
- The final results of REF's annual PWC audit presenting REF's financial health across its six units.
- Impressions from grantees and policymakers about REF's effects on a personal, community or governmental level.

# 2015 IN NUMBERS

## GRANT PROGRAM

In 2015, REF continued to operate the grant program scheme in all Decade of Roma Inclusion countries.<sup>5</sup>

REF had four in-country, project-based offices apart from its Budapest headquarters. One office operated in Bucharest,

Romania (since 2009); a second office in Belgrade, Serbia (2014); a third office in Presov, Slovakia (2014) and a fourth office in Podgorica, Montenegro (2014). REF activities in the branch offices were overseen by independent boards consisting of donors, Roma professionals and education experts.

In 2015, REF's Board committed EUR 2.1 million for 46 new grant requests, while the total number of active projects was 81.<sup>6</sup> REF commitment to 69 active projects in 2015 exceeded EUR 5.7 million, while implementing partners leveraged an additional EUR 3.9 million for implementing REF model-based projects. In addition, REF Romania leveraged EUR 6.9 million for the implementation of educational activities.

### FUNDS LEVERAGED BY REF GRANTEES IN ADDITION TO REF SUPPORT

EUR MILLION	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	TOTAL
Funds Leveraged	1.8	2.1	1.0	2.2	0.8	3.2	3.2	2.0	2.4	2.3	1.0	22.0
REF Funds Committed	3.4	5.6	4.6	3.2	2.8	2.1	3.0	2.7	1.8	2.4	2.0	33.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>55.5</b>

### NUMBER OF PROJECTS UNDER IMPLEMENTATION PER COUNTRY IN 2015

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF REF PROJECTS PER COUNTRY	FUNDING COMMITTED	NUMBER OF PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED WITH REF/ESF <sup>7</sup> /IPA <sup>8</sup>	FUNDING LEVERAGE BY NGOS	ESF/IPA LEVERAGED FUNDING (EUR)
Albania	5	568,640		254,705	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4	589,171		88,783	
Bulgaria	12	669,046		449,427	
Croatia	3	58,216		66,310	
Czech Republic	6	303,874		128,827	16,467
Hungary	10	375,662	1 <sup>9</sup>	332,174	1,273,751
Kosovo	4	622,977		498,639	
Macedonia	8	1,186,891		1,566,868	
Moldova	1	71,790		0	
Montenegro	3	174,858	2	0	115,243
Romania	0	0	5	0	6,930,000
Serbia	6	485,389	1	75,283	10,350
Slovakia	6	275,068	1	174,669	413,453
Regional project/Other	1	330,000		327,366	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>5,711,582</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3,963,051</b>	<b>8,759,264</b>

<sup>5</sup> The countries were Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovakia. The Grant program was not operational in Romania because REF Romania has been implementing large-scale national projects from ESF Funding.

<sup>6</sup> Including REF branch offices.

<sup>7</sup> European Structural Fund mechanism of the European Union in its 28 member countries.

<sup>8</sup> The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, or simply IPA, is a funding mechanism of the European Union for candidates (Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey) and potential candidates (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland and Kosovo).

<sup>9</sup> Velux, a pedagogic scholarship and mentorship support implemented in Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia.



**O13** Student member of RomaVersitas Moldova Natalia Duminica during a flash mob in Chisinau, Moldova.  
Photo: RomaVersitas Moldova



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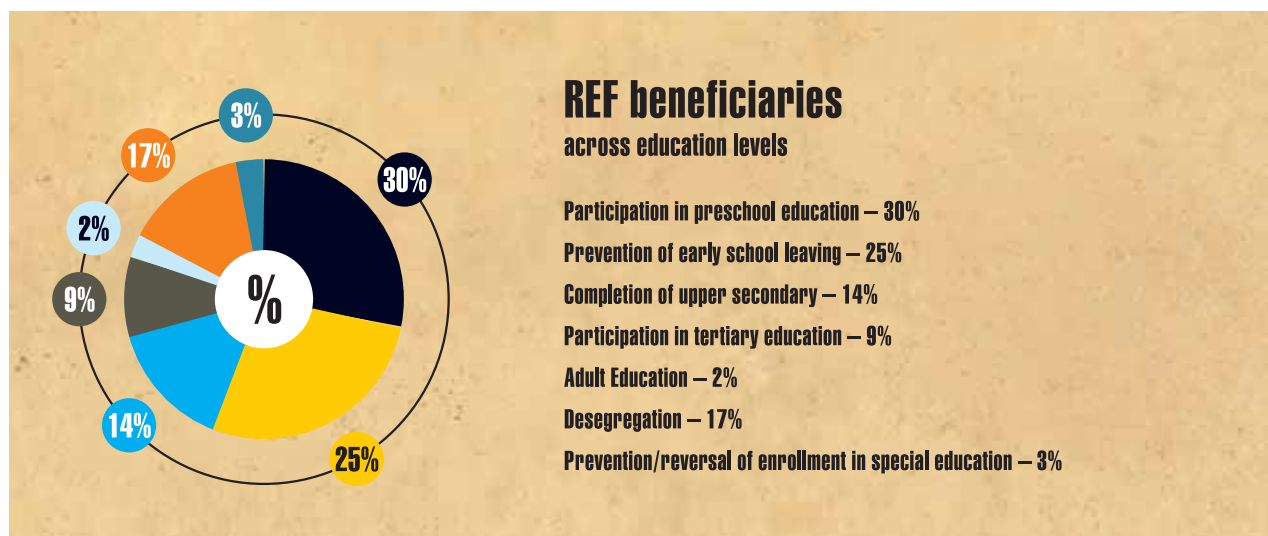
REF partners in 2015 worked in 369 municipalities, across 13 countries with more than 900 schools, serving 31,721 Roma children and students and 43,297 parents, 1,777 in-service teaching professionals, and empowering 682 Roma implementers. From Roma children and student beneficiaries, 9,663 attended early childhood education programs; 14,807

pupils were attending primary education programs; 4,383 from eight countries received secondary school scholarships and school-based mentoring; and 2,868 students in tertiary education programs received grant support, mentoring and skills training.

#### NUMBER OF REF SUPPORTED BENEFICIARIES IN 2015

##### INDICATOR

Participation in preschool education	9,663
Prevention of early school leaving	8,264
Completion of upper secondary	4,383
Participation in tertiary education (including tertiary education Scholarship Program)	2,868
Parental participation in children's education	41,836
Parents' participation in Toy Library	1,461
Desegregation <sup>10</sup>	5,608
Prevention/reversal of enrollment in special education	935
In-service teacher training	1,777
Roma professionals employed in REF projects	682
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>77,477</b>



<sup>10</sup> REF ECD beneficiaries enrolled in desegregated primary education schools.

**014** Community awareness-raising events show the demand among Roma parents to attend Second Chance programs. Basic qualifications are mandatory for employment in the Romanian labor market. This component of Roma Children and Parents Want to Go to School was heavily oversubscribed. Photo: Georgiana Barbulescu

**015-016** Feri was a participant in REF's A Good Start Project in Zborov, Slovakia, that targeted early childhood development outcomes beginning in 2012. Four years later, Feri is enrolled in a mainstream primary school, with a good attendance record. A Good Start continues to target Roma children under age six in Zborov and many elements of its programming like Your Story and Toy Libraries have been scaled up and multiplied across the region. Photo: Robert Miskovics



14

The most vulnerable Roma at risk of dropping out and low educational attainment are preschool and primary education students. The majority of these children come from socially deprived communities and have parents with incomplete educational backgrounds. Seventy-two percent of REF grants and 50% of overall REF spending targets these students. REF runs kindergarten enrollment projects in all of its focus countries, and our advocacy and expertise have contributed to the introduction and implementation of compulsory kindergarten in Croatia, Hungary and Serbia. In Hungary, for example, a strong enrollment campaign resulted in 76% of Roma children enrolling in kindergarten, which is beginning to approach the national average of 88%. Following up on successful litigation against school segregation in Croatia, conducted by the European Roma Rights Centre, REF assisted the government in launching a countywide preschool program targeting all Roma children, which resulted in 100% preschool enrollment of children ages five to six. In addition to kindergarten projects, REF has worked intensively in decreasing early school leaving from primary education and boosting access to integrated primary schools.

## FIVE MODELS SHAPING GRANTS AND POLICY

### Early childhood education

REF grantees implement cost-effective ECEC programs designed to improve the skills of Roma children and parents. Children who participated in ECEC programs have prospects for longer education careers compared to children who did not attend ECEC. Research shows that children who did not participate in preschool education are disadvantaged from the beginning of their school career. REF worked with national governments and local authorities and advocated for compulsory and free-of-charge ECEC for all children below school age. In 2015, REF grantees supported altogether 9,663 Roma children ages zero to six with ECEC services in 13 countries. In addition, 1,461 parents became members of Toy Libraries, together with their children.

### Primary education

In 2015, REF projects supported 14,807 primary school pupils covering enrollment, attendance and academic achievement. As a result at least 95% of supported students successfully completed their primary education. For example, through the work of REF partners, the segregation of Roma students in special classes decreased in the Czech Republic and Slovakia where the representation of Roma children in special schools is significant.



## Secondary education

A combination of stipends, tutoring and mentoring for secondary school students has proven successful in greatly reducing early school leaving and raising grade averages. When REF started its secondary scholarship program in 2007, the dropout rate for Roma students was over 26%. After four years of implementation REF sees dropout rates of less than six percent, dropping to zero for the last three school years. Overall in 2015, REF supported 4,383 Roma students with scholarships and mentoring in eight countries.

## Tertiary education: RomaVersitas

RomaVersitas student centers aim to tie academic success to employment success. Last year REF successfully managed eight RomaVersitas centers in seven countries with over 500 tertiary education students. There is a clear expectation on the part of students and their parents that the years invested in education will make it easier to find viable employment, and this will in turn lead to a growing Roma middle class and a strong professional and intellectual Roma elite.

## Second chance programs

Adults with incomplete education have the opportunity to complete primary and secondary school and obtain diplomas. Second chance programs have helped more than 2,300 adults to reintegrate into education systems over the past ten years.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In 2015 REF staff conducted 36 results-oriented monitoring visits. At the same time REF provided technical assistance to grantees and partners at multiple project sites, with on-site monitoring of respective projects partners, reviewing the quality of operations, engaging with direct project beneficiaries and local stakeholders in schools, municipalities and maintaining dialogues with strategic decision-makers in each country. In the grant cycle in 2015, REF staff visited the majority of active projects, out of which eight were projects directly implemented by REF.<sup>11</sup> Of all the projects monitored in 2015, only one was rated unsatisfactory.

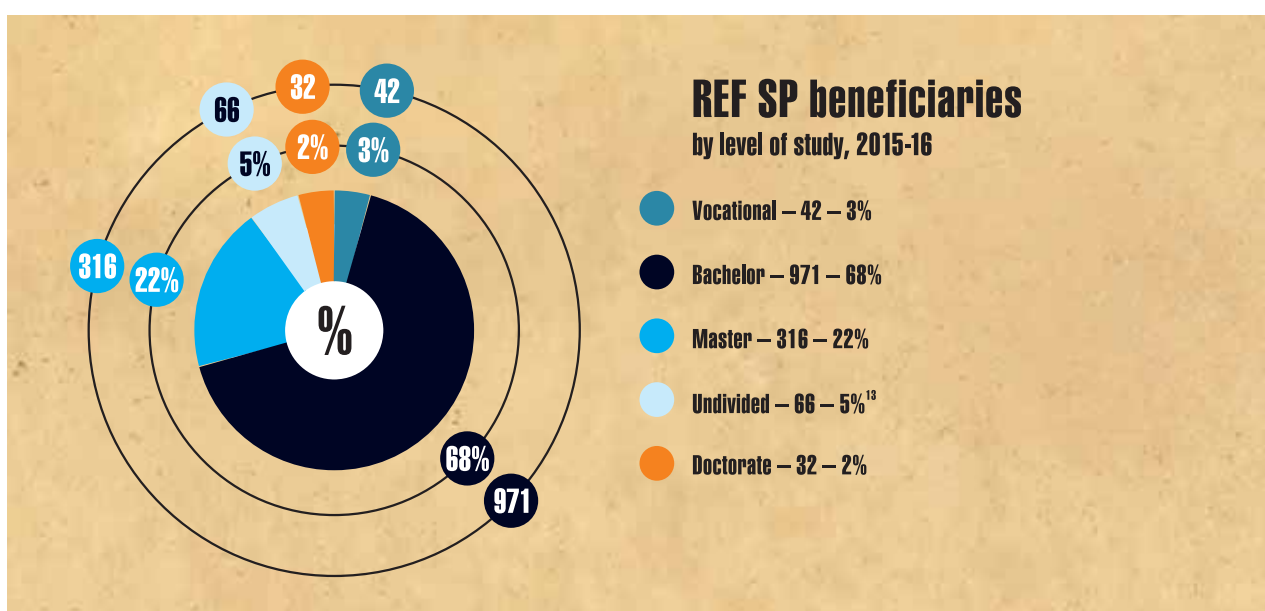
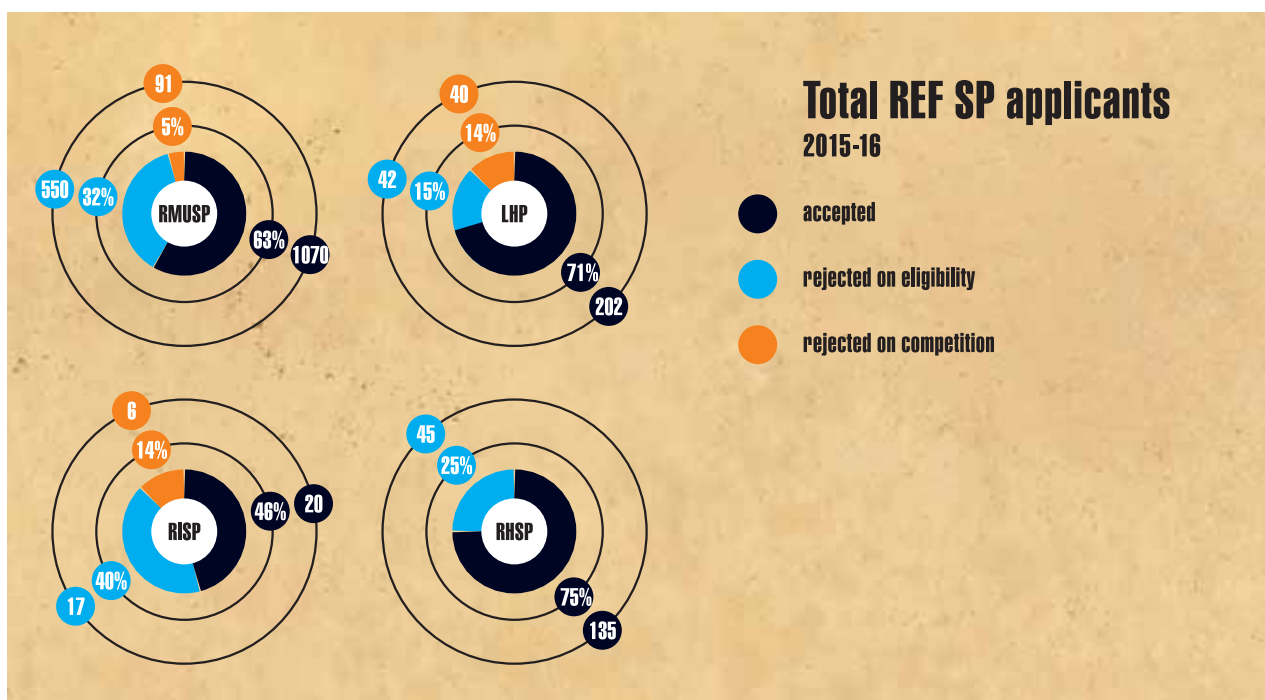
## SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

In 2015 REF continued to support Roma students in tertiary education. Within two of its four scholarship schemes REF Scholarship Program (hereafter, REF SP) also supported students in vocational studies (see below). For the 2015-16 academic year, REF SP selected 1,427 beneficiaries (52% beneficiaries from previous academic cycles), from a total of 2,218 submitted applications. This constitutes 64% acceptance rate in the program out of the total number of submitted applications, and 91% acceptance rate out of the total number of eligible applications.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> 3 ESF in Romania, 1 Ready Set Go; 1 REF Hungary-Velux CZ, HU and SK; 1 IPA Serbia, 1 IPA Montenegro.

<sup>12</sup> There are two types of reasons for which applicants can be rejected in REF SP selection: either they do not comply with the eligibility criteria of the program, or they are not accepted on competition grounds. Applicants can be rejected as ineligible either at the initial stage of selection based on the information provided in their applications, or at the last stage of selection based on the information about their actual enrolment status in a higher education institution as stated in official enrolment certificates issued by the respective institutions. Applicants rejected on competition grounds are eligible in the competition for scholarship support but the reason for rejection is on one hand due to their application's lower score received in the evaluation process, and on the other hand because of REF SP's budgetary limitation and incapacity to satisfy the whole demand for scholarship from the pool of Program's eligible applicants.





<sup>13</sup> Throughout this report, “undivided” mode of studies designates the mode of studies in which Bachelor and Master degrees are combined into one single program.



017

**017** REF Country Facilitator for Slovakia, Viktor Teru, participates in the Slovak Roma teachers working group at the Roma Teachers Conference held in Bratislava as part of a series of events marking REF's Tenth Anniversary.

Photo: Björn Steinz/Panos for Open Society Foundations

**018** Lukas Kovac teaches food science and economy at a secondary school in the Czech Republic. He was among REF's first scholarship beneficiaries in the Czech Republic and shared his experiences of overcoming the perceptions of others during the Roma Teachers Conference in September in Bratislava, Slovakia.

Photo: Björn Steinz/Panos for Open Society Foundations

## Four Scholarship Schemes

**Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP)** is the largest scheme, with 1,070 scholarship beneficiaries accepted for the 2015-16 academic year out of a total of 1,711 submitted applications (1,161 eligible) across 12 countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Turkey). The beneficiaries study in their own countries for a variety of specializations, in Bachelor, Master or Doctorate programs (or their equivalents) and received EUR 800 support for the academic year to cover basic living costs, as well as up to EUR 1,200 to cover tuition fees (if applicable). Scholarships of beneficiaries who received financial support from other resources (such as state-sponsored scholarships or other foundations) were reduced in line with the alternative financial resources. In addition to financial support, RMUSP offered support to six of its beneficiaries to participate in extracurricular activities, as described in the regional chapters of this report.

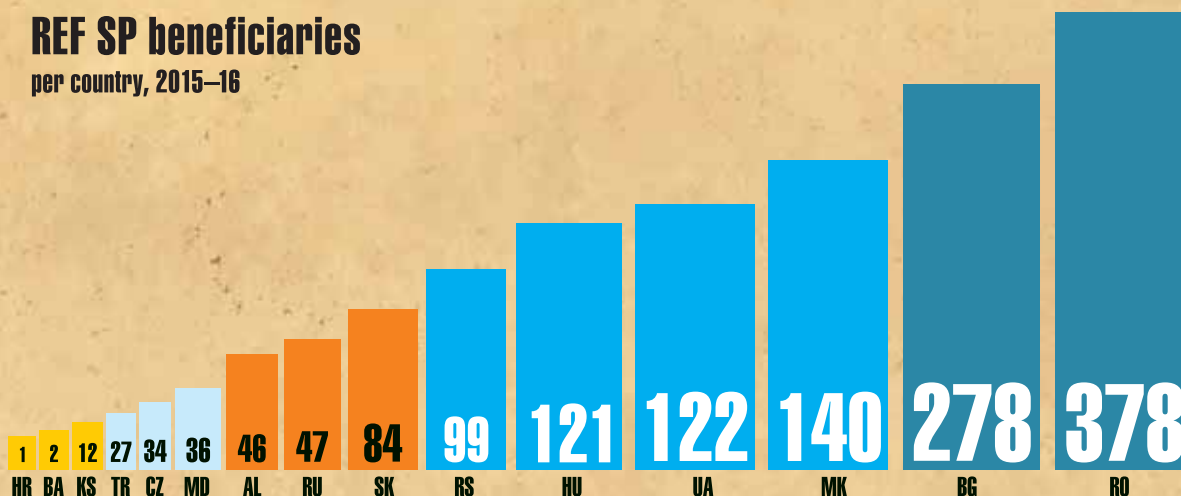
**Roma International Scholar Program (RISP)** accepted 19 beneficiaries in the 2015-16 academic year out of a total of 43 submitted applications (26 eligible). The beneficiaries come from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine, and received financial support to study outside their home coun-

tries in Bachelor, Master or Doctorate programs. The 19 accepted beneficiaries enrolled in universities in Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Russia, the Netherlands, UK and USA. REF granted them full or partial financial support to cover living and study costs. The amount of scholarships was calculated for each beneficiary based on the total costs for studies, estimates for the living costs and their alternative financial resources. The scholarship awards ranged from EUR 1,300 to EUR 9,050, while the average amount was EUR 6,400.



018

## REF SP beneficiaries per country, 2015–16



**Law and Humanities Program (LHP)** accepted 202 beneficiaries in 2015, out of a total of 284 submitted applications (242 eligible), across the three program countries Moldova, Russia and Ukraine. Beneficiaries received financial support to study in their own countries in Vocational, Bachelor, Master or Doctorate programs (or their equivalents). Each accepted beneficiary received 1,300 EUR financial support for living costs throughout the academic year, as well as additional support for a maximum amount of 1,000 EUR covering tuition fees (if applicable). In addition to the financial support, LHP scheme offers its beneficiaries academic and professional development support.

**Roma Health Scholar Program (RHSP)** accepted 135 beneficiaries in 2015, out of 180 submitted applications (135 eligible), across the four program countries Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia. Beneficiaries received support to continue medical studies in their own countries at vocational or tertiary levels. The scholarships granted for the 2015–16 academic year varied between 675 and 3,335 EUR, depending on the country and the level of studies. In addition to the financial support, RHSP beneficiaries receive academic and professional development support through additional components.

The figure above presents the number of scholarship recipients in each country. There are several factors explaining the differences in these numbers from country to country: first is

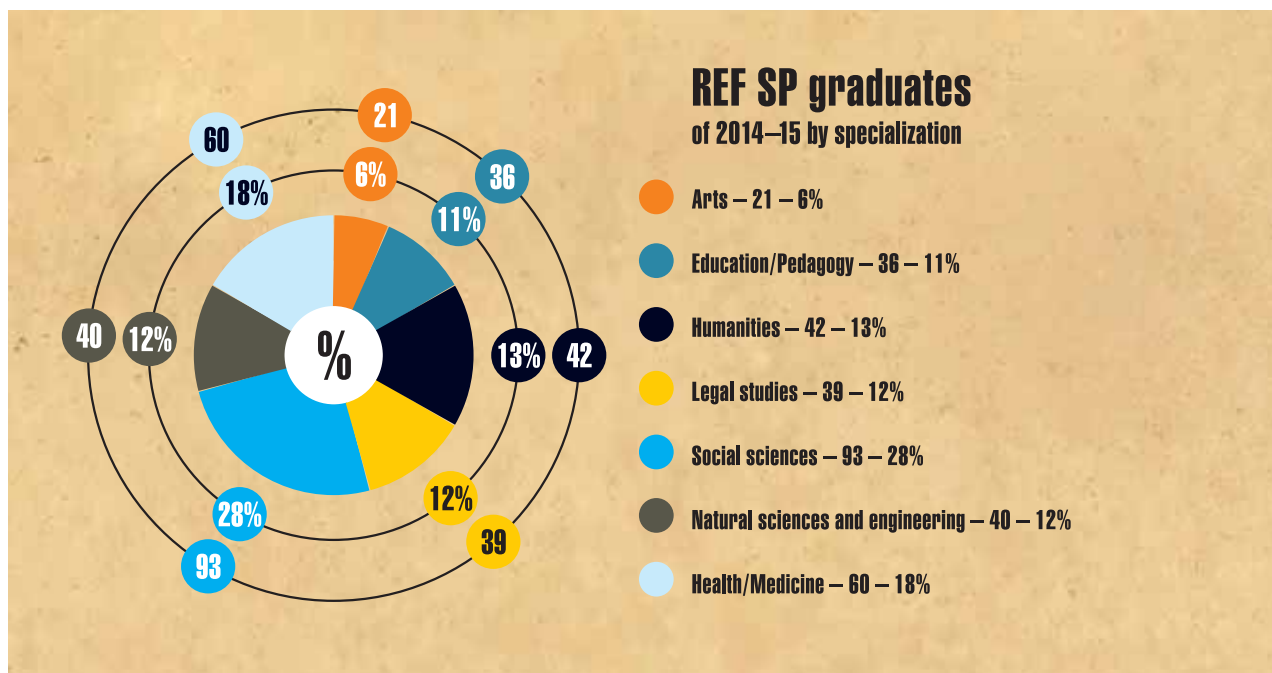
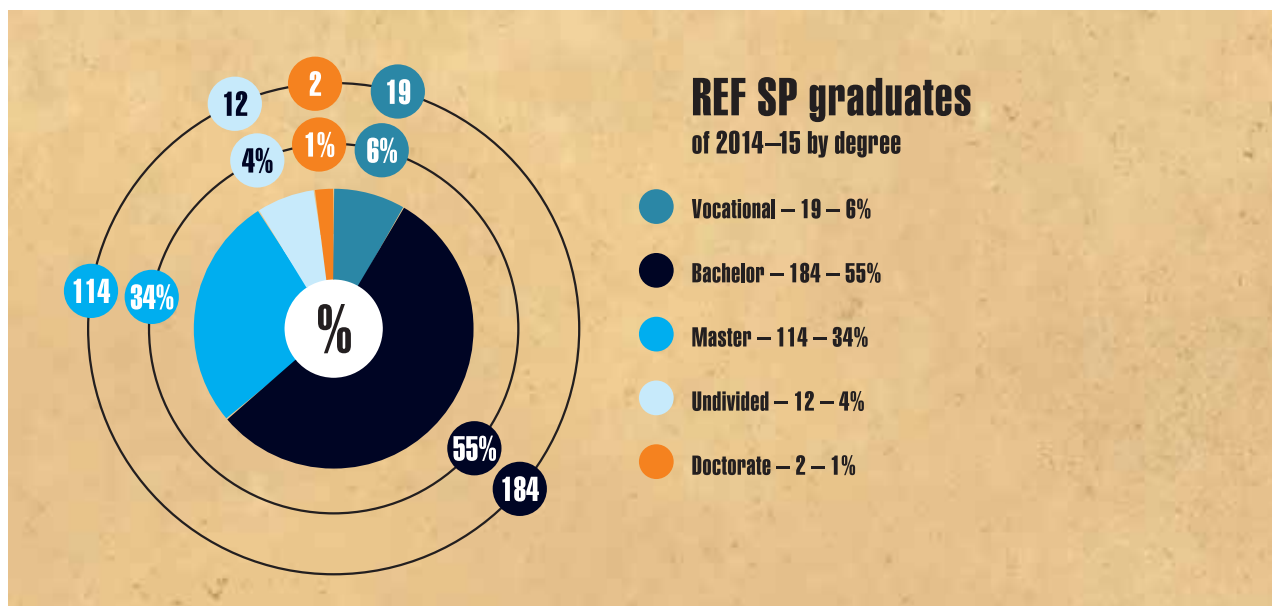
the relative Roma population size in each country; second is the difference in demand for scholarship support (that reflects, among others, the ratio of upper secondary school completion among Roma); third is the existence of alternative scholarship support in some of these countries; fourth is the focus of specific REF SP donors on specific countries.

## REF SP BENEFICIARIES' PROGRESS FROM ONE ACADEMIC YEAR TO ANOTHER

In the previous academic year (2014–15) 389 REF scholarship beneficiaries were in the final years of their degree programs and expected to graduate during 2015. Out of the 389 graduating students, 331 students (85%) graduated successfully, 56 (14%) postponed their graduation for the next year, while two students dropped out.

Among the remaining 920 beneficiaries who were not in a graduation year in 2014–15, 835 (91%) successfully transitioned to the next academic year (2015–16): 655 with continued REF support, 180 - without, while 55 (5%) beneficiaries dropped out or interrupted their studies and 30 (3%) could not be reached by REF. The current ratio of students in non-graduation years who interrupt their studies or drop out has diminished compared to previous years. This positive development can be attributed, among other factors, to the closer





monitoring of students' academic progress from one semester to another by REF SP, and to the more rigorous selection screening. However, the ratio of students who drop out, interrupt studies or postpone graduation varies from country to

country. The specific dropout rates in each country as well as specific reasons for dropping out or interrupting studies are presented in the regional chapters of this report.

# REF commitment

## to 69 active projects in 2015 per model of intervention

### REF MODELS

Early Childhood Education and Care	1,407,194 EUR
Primary Education	1,796,476 EUR
Secondary Education	1,339,280 EUR
Tertiary Education (grants only)	1,346,423 EUR
Adult Education and Training	179,191 EUR
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,068,565 EUR</b>

## MODELS' KEY PRIORITIES

## MAIN OBJECTIVES

### Expanding access to quality early childhood education and care

- \* Improve the school readiness of disadvantaged Roma (*and non-Roma*) children aged 0-6
- \* Improve the ECD outcomes of disadvantaged Roma (*and non-Roma*) children aged 0-6
- \* Improve the access to and participation in mainstream, non-segregated ECD services
- \* Improve the parenting skills and practices of Roma parents
- \* Improve the quality of ECD services

### Improving primary education outcomes for Roma children between six and fourteen

- \* Improved primary education performance
- \* Prevention of early school leaving
- \* Improved access to primary education
- \* Improved parental involvement in the education process
- \* Prevention of school segregation
- \* Initiate school desegregation at all levels
- \* Eased transition to secondary education

### Expanding access to and ensuring completion of and graduation from secondary education

- \* Maintain and increase the academic performance of Roma students enrolled in general education and technical vocational secondary education
- \* Maintain/Improve the secondary school graduation rate of Roma in secondary school age
- \* Maintain/Improve the secondary school retention rate of Roma students enrolled in general education and technical vocational education

### Expanding access, improving graduation levels and strengthening identity of Roma students in tertiary education

- \* Maintain and increase the retention levels of Roma tertiary students
- \* Maintain and improve the academic performance of Roma tertiary students
- \* Maintain and increase the graduation rate of Roma tertiary students

### Second chance programs for adult education and training

- \* Raise education attainment levels of Roma adults with incomplete primary and/or secondary education
- \* Improve the literacy levels and social-communication skills of illiterate and semiliterate Roma parents of preschool-age and school-age children
- \* Provide non-formal literacy trainings and social communication skills trainings





# CENTRAL EUROPE

**019** RomaVersitas Macedonia students Kenan Tair and Sibel Bajram prepare to present their national program to the student audience in Budapest, Hungary, during the RomaVersitas Student Summit in September 2015 as part of REF's tenth anniversary events. Photo: Miklos Deri

**020** A Roma pupil from Ostrava smiles at a Preschool Club located in Mariánské hořy neighborhood. Two clubs in Ostrava have had a positive impact on enrollment and attendance at Ostrava's public schools that are making renewed efforts to include Roma children in mainstream education in the Czech Republic. Photo: Jana Baudysova

COUNTRY	CENTRAL EUROPE			TOTAL
	NUMBER OF ACTIVE PROJECTS IN 2015	NUMBER OF DIRECT GRANT BENEFICIARIES	NUMBER OF PARENTS PARTICIPATING IN REF SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES	
Czech Republic	7	523	929	1,452
Hungary	12	1,655	2,560	4,215
Slovakia	7	1,337	2,390	3,727
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>9,394</b>



**021** Czech Roma recipients of the Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program, Martin Dudi (business management), St pán Mišurec (architecture and urbanism); and Tereza Heková (public administration) pause for a group photograph after the annual student forum bringing together leading policymakers, activists and leaders in Prague in December 2015.

Photo: Jana Baudysova

**022** Pro-Roma and Roma researchers, Martin Rövid and Iulius Rostas, sit among the audience members at a REF side-event held to coincide with the European Educational Research Conference held at Corvinus University in Budapest, Hungary in September 2015. Staff members and leading researchers presented a summary of REF's achievements and ongoing work to a friends and partners attending this event marking ten years of the Roma Education Fund.

Photo: Miklos Deri



021

## CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic exhibits a high level of educational inequality. A combination of segregation, inadequate supply of kindergarten places, the delayed start of mainstream schooling and a rigidly differentiated education system results in great numbers of Roma children being structurally excluded from mainstream educational opportunities.<sup>14</sup>

Mindful of the critical importance of quality preschool for later educational success, REF piloted a Preschool Enrollment Campaign in 2014, and continued to implement the project in 2015.

Twenty-seven Roma children ages three to six were assisted with kindergarten enrollment and meal fee coverage was assured by REF. The project continued to increase the number of Roma children attending preschool by conducting a door-to-door information campaign encouraging parents to enroll their children and making them aware of the fee waiver for children attending the final year of kindergarten before school.

Based on REF's Preschool Enrollment Campaign pilot, a randomized control trial (RCT) evaluation has been developed and initiated together with Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-Pal) in order to evaluate the effect of the preschool enrollment campaign in the Czech Republic. A first wave and a baseline survey of the RCT was implemented in 36 households at



the beginning of 2015 in four localities of the two regions Usti Nad Labem and Brno. A much larger second wave of the RCT is planned for another 76 localities and approximately 4,000 households throughout the Czech Republic. The campaign is built on the premise that many Roma preschoolers do not attend preparatory classes, although there is priority to enroll children aged five to six over younger ages, and many Roma families can benefit from waivers for tuition and fees for meals. The primary objective of the impact evaluation is to determine whether this information alone can change the mindset of the parents and bring the change in enrollment rates of Roma children in kindergartens.

Despite legislative changes in the Czech Republic such as waiving kindergarten fees for children enrolled in the last year of preschool prior to compulsory education and prioritizing their enrollment over younger children, inclusive measures

<sup>14</sup> Available online: <http://www.unicef.org/romania/RECI-Overview.pdf>




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#### Grantee Voices – Czech Republic

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Stefan Grinvalsky – Director of NGO Beleza, Ostrava

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Beleza has utilized Your Story interactive reading circles to foster reading out loud to children at home and to strengthen children's relationships to storytelling.

The Together to Preschool project aims to encourage Roma children of preschool age to attend a Mothers' Club that provides preschool services and prepares them for the transition to a mainstream school. Beleza also provides counselling and assistance with enrollment.

have not been sufficiently implemented in the Czech education system. For example, while kindergarten fees are waived, families still need to pay for their children's meals, a huge burden on socially disadvantaged Roma families.

In 2015, a project in Ostrava in the Poruba and Mariánské Hory districts continued to support socially disadvantaged Roma families and their children between the ages of three and seven in their enrollment into integrated mainstream public preschool facilities and to facilitate their transition to mainstream, desegregated primary school environment. It is in line with the strategic priorities of Ostrava City (Social Inclusion Program) as well as the Czech Education Act and related regulations. What make this project unique is the partnership with the Ostrava municipality, as well as cooperation with its preschools and primary schools.

Another focus of the project is the empowerment of Roma mothers through participation in Mother Club activities under the guidance of experienced teachers and their active involvement in the early childhood development of their children. The role of the project and the Mother Clubs is specific: to prepare underprivileged families with children for enrollment and ensure a smooth transition to and successful completion of mainstream preschools and primary schools. In 2015 alone, the project succeeded to enroll 51 children in mainstream kindergartens and provided kindergarten meals

for a total of 42 children. Eighteen mothers module participated in the weekly Your Story activity, which enhances parental involvement in their children's education, as well as advancing their reading skills.

A new initiative by Imagination Prague began in 2015, supporting children and parents from Prague 5's Smíchov district, which has a high number of disadvantaged Roma families. The project used a wooden frame to divide the space into multifunctional learning and play areas. The space was used for active learning for 32 children aged five to ten as a theater stage, interactive cinema, art gallery, exhibition place, skittle-alley, art studio and learning maze. The aim is to increase school attendance and results, to engage parents and encourage teachers and schools to become more involved in learning and teaching anti-bias approaches.

**023** The foundations for school success begin in integrated, inclusive classrooms, as they do for these two girls in a primary school in Ostrava, Czech Republic. The first cohort of Roma children to have attended Preschool Clubs in preparation for mainstream school, were enrolled in Ostrava's public schools, part of a wider effort to include Roma children in mainstream Czech education.  
Photo: Jana Baudysova

### Policymaker Voices – Czech Republic

David Benak – Junior Deputy Minister for Human Rights, Equal Opportunities and Legislation

The Roma Education Fund is helping to create positive role models that motivate other young Roma to continue their education and to see their future positively. REF has contributed to the fact that Roma realize that equal access to education is important and that something can be done about desegregation. I wish that REF continues its work because there are still many people who need to be persuaded that this is the right and only way.

### Policymaker Voices – Czech Republic

Katerina Valachová – Minister of Education

REF provides strong support to Roma students by providing university scholarships. By organizing regular meetings of Roma university students, REF helps Roma students to support and motivate each other.



## HUNGARY

Discussions on how to effectively reach out to the most marginalized children, inclusion in the schools and classroom and the overall quality of education in Hungary are intensifying as result of the latest reforms in the Hungarian education system. As noted in the 2015 EU progress report,<sup>15</sup> expenditure on basic education remains below the EU average.

Hungary adopted several national strategies in 2014-15 to improve the quality of its education and training system: on early school leaving, public education development, vocational and educational training (VET), higher education and lifelong learning. Moreover, early childhood education has been compulsory for all children from the age of three since September 2015.

Increasing the participation of disadvantaged students, in particular Roma, in mainstream inclusive education and improving support through targeted teacher training is a challenge. Vocational schools are not attractive to young people and do not provide flexible career opportunities. The EU report also emphasizes the need to increase efforts for inclusion of children by removing the barriers that segregate Roma children in schools, addressing discrimination and increasing capacities for inclusive education. National sources also confirm that due to the selectivity of the school system, the segregation index has risen further (Hungarian Academy of Sciences 2015).<sup>16</sup>

Roma pupils' educational attainment is below the national average. Nearly 78% of Roma complete eight years of schooling (lower secondary) as their highest education level compared to the national average of 24.6%, and account for less than one percent of graduates from tertiary education compared to 18.5% in the adult population (Ministry of Human Capacities 2014).<sup>17</sup>

Policy implementation remains slow. Building on the findings of a segregation analysis, a more in-depth study was commissioned by REF to observe the trends of affecting the most marginalized and Roma students as a result of reducing the

<sup>15</sup> *Education and Training Monitor 2015*, page 17. Available online: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/monitor15\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/monitor15_en.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> *Education and Training Monitor 2015 Hungary*, page 3.

Available online: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/docs/2015/monitor2015-hungary\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/docs/2015/monitor2015-hungary_en.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> *Op cit.*, pages 3-4.





023

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#### Grantee Voices – Hungary

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Attila Horváth – Beneficiary

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Attila's mother and grandmother attended the REF program A Good Start and developed their reading skills and comprehension. Earlier they were ashamed to read out loud but today they are happy to help even their neighbors, if needed.

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#### Grantee Voices – Hungary

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Mark Rezműves – RMUSP

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The reason is simple, I decided that I would go to university at the age of 15. There weren't any role models before me, I was merely curious, and I wanted to break out of what I considered to be deep poverty.

compulsory age for schooling from 18 to 16 years which will be published in 2016.<sup>18</sup> In 2015, REF continued cooperation with Nyíregyháza Pedagogical University to improve access to early childhood development services and raise awareness about the importance of ECD. The university has developed a syllabus for the course and the students are receiving credits for both academic and practical coursework that includes working with Roma families and children. This partnership engaged 54 university students (16 andragogy and 38 pedagogy) in community-based activities, working with Roma parents in 2015 to strengthen their parenting skills. Students attended some 476 sessions of REF's Your Story Clubs, Play Time in four Toy Libraries, group mentoring and family mentoring. "Both children and parents benefited from technical expertise of students," said Dr. Judit Kerülő, a participating professor from Nyiregyháza University.

REF's work with local partners has resulted in the introduction and improvement of ECD facilities in rural Roma communities. Toy Libraries are operating in four locations, with 234 families regularly borrowing toys and 385 children participating in playtime sessions. Fifteen Home School Community Liaison sessions, where Roma parents are invited to teach a class, were held in eight kindergartens. In total, 187 children received support for enrollment in preschool, 334 families received group mentoring and 84 families received individual mentoring from four mentors. These activities serve as cost-effective models for ECD service delivery to the most marginalized children.

<sup>18</sup> See also REF's study from 2015 on young Roma, success and the labor market in Hungary. Available online: [http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/young\\_roma\\_in\\_hungarian\\_secondary\\_schools\\_and\\_in\\_the\\_labor\\_market.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/young_roma_in_hungarian_secondary_schools_and_in_the_labor_market.pdf)



024



025

A Good Start's presence in seven localities has resulted in a measurable improvement in early childhood outcomes for 410 marginalized children. Yet the consistent application of standards remains a challenge due to limited understanding of holistic development and child outcomes by mainstream ECD staff.

Based on REF experiences, the lack of support to teachers and educators to ensure, monitor and evaluate quality is another bottleneck that REF will address in the forthcoming years for ensuring quality of services.

**024** Recipients of the Roma Memorial University Scholarship in the Slovakia react at the annual national student forum bringing together leading Slovak and Roma policymakers, activists and leaders held in Presov, Slovakia in November 2015.

Photo: Robert Nemeti

**025** REF Country Facilitator for Slovakia, Viktor Teru, poses at the annual Roma Memorial University Scholarship forum with Jarmila Vanova in Presov, Slovakia in November 2015.

Photo: Robert Nemeti

**026** Hungarian Roma Memorial University Scholarship Recipient Richard Lakatos, current IT student and founder of Roma News Youtube channel, addresses the audience at the annual student forum held in December in Budapest, Hungary at the premises of Erste Bank.

Photo: Robert Miskovics



## SLOVAKIA: REF NETWORK FOUNDATION

The REF Slovakia Foundation was established in 2014 to manage three scholarship projects in cooperation with 22 secondary schools and 24 universities. Based in the city of Prešov in eastern Slovakia, the office coordinates the Velux-supported pedagogical scholarship program, the Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program and the nationwide secondary scholarship program, the largest of the three projects. The secondary scholarship programs aims to improve students' academic performance, attendance and graduation rates, reduce dropout rates and increase the number of students moving from secondary to tertiary education.

In 2015 a total of 577 scholarships were awarded to students enrolled in academic secondary schools and vocational schools offering the Matura exam. At the end of the school year, the project managed a retention rate of 97.7% and 100% graduation rate. The transition rate from secondary to tertiary education has reached 33%, which is encouraging when compared to the national average pass-rate of 45% for the Matura exam (a crucial tool for applying to university).

The secondary scholarship program in Slovakia was established in partnership with Prešov University's Faculty of Education which provides an accredited training module, Mentoring Roma Youth. Sixteen mentors attended this three-



026

### Polymaker Voices – Slovakia

Jarmila Lajcaková – CVEK – Center for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture

We find REF's program of mentoring and tutoring Roma students at quality secondary schools an important model that should be followed and scaled up by state authorities, especially at secondary and university levels.

day training focused on increasing capacity of teachers. Upon successful completion of the training, mentors are awarded a certificate from Prešov University, as the training is accredited by the Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport.

Every second Roma child in Slovakia is enrolled in a segregated school. Segregation increased in the last decade from one-third to half of the Roma children enrolled in such schools. Negative trends are also evident in the overrepresentation of Roma children in special schools. New data show that Roma children are four times more frequently placed in special schools compared to the total population, representing an increase from 3.16 times higher frequency within a decade.<sup>19</sup>

The problem Slovakia faces with the segregation of Roma children in education is what REF focuses its efforts in solving. Therefore REF stands ready to support, cooperate and partner with the Slovak government, expressed in its National Roma Integration Strategy, the European Commission and the Roma community in Slovakia in the mission to end segregation of Roma in education.

Since REF was established it has contributed to the efforts to achieve desegregated education for Roma in the mainstream schooling system in Slovakia through three main methods: (1) policy development and implementation by the relevant authorities, (2) direct support to Roma children for education in mainstream schools and (3) measures to prevent and discourage segregated/special education and promote and motivate mainstream education.

Assuring access to mainstream kindergartens and primary schools is one of REF's priorities in Slovakia, which is why in 2015, the following three projects focused very much on this.

*A Good Start Phase III* in Banská Bystrica, implemented by the County Association of Roma Initiatives, aimed to enhance ECD outcomes and school readiness through improving the parenting skills of Roma parents, strengthening the link between parents and preschools, expanding the access to integrated ECD services and raising the quality of teaching and learning in ten localities. In total 13 children and their parents from predominantly Roma districts in Banská Bystrica were direct beneficiaries of the project. A total of 88 families were actively involved in project activities, and 31 children were enrolled in and started regularly attending kindergartens in the 2015-16 school year.

*A Good Start Phase III* in Zborov, implemented by the Civic Association Equal Chances had similar objectives. As a result of project activities, 37 children have been enrolled to kindergarten and 31 children to primary schools with the assistance of the project mediators, which is a great indicator of the increased transition from preschool to kindergarten. The Toy Library runs continuously in this locality, and 53 parents volunteer, while 31 children, library members, visit it constantly.

<sup>19</sup> Data on school segregation and overrepresentation in special schools of Roma in comparison to the total population used in this paragraph are taken from: Bojadjieva, A. et al. (2015) *Roma Inclusion Index 2015*. Budapest: Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation. Available online: [http://www.romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9810\\_file1\\_roma-inclusion-index-2015-s.pdf](http://www.romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9810_file1_roma-inclusion-index-2015-s.pdf) All Census data are available at the site of the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (Državni zavod za statistiku). Available online: <http://www.dzs.hr/Eng/censuses/census2011/censuslogo.htm>

## VELUX PEDAGOGY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

With the support of the Velux Foundation, REF addresses the problem of systemic absence of Roma teachers from nurseries and kindergartens in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia.

The aim of the project is to increase the number of kindergarten and nursery teachers of Roma origin in regions with high numbers of Roma residents in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia.

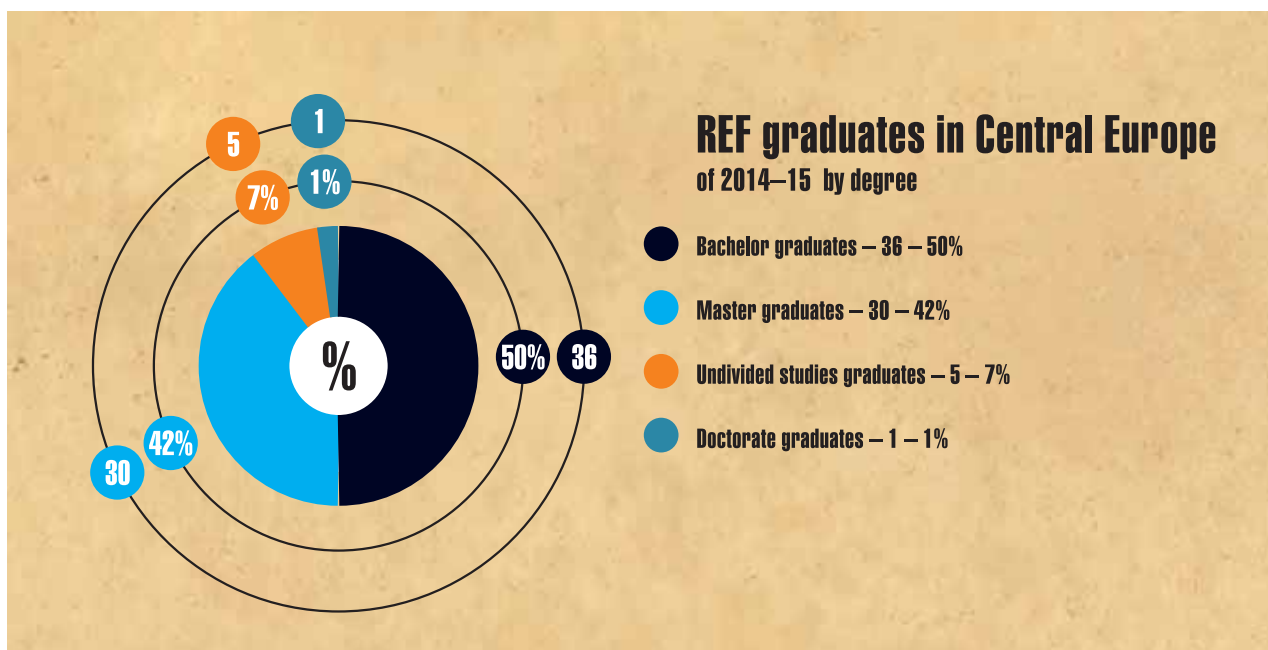
The project started in early 2014 and will last until 2022. It supports and mentors three cohorts of Roma girls from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The design of this project is unique since it will follow the life-paths of the beneficiaries from the months preceding their enrollment in pedagogical education until their graduation and actual employment.

In 2015, the project supported 53 Roma pedagogy students and is expected to support a total of 180 Roma by the project's end. During their pedagogical vocational studies, the project beneficiaries receive full financial support for their studies, including a yearly stipend during the last two years

of their vocational training, but also mentorship support and placement in internships in local kindergartens. A summer camp is also envisaged within the project, where beneficiaries from each of the three countries mentioned above would receive career guidance and training on alternative pedagogy.

## SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

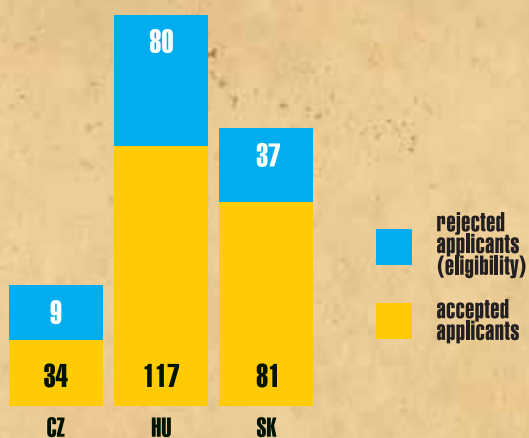
For the 2015-16 academic year the REF SP received 375 scholarship applications from the three REF countries of CE. The majority of these applications (358) were for the RMUSP scholarship scheme to pursue tertiary studies in their own countries, while a few (17) were submitted by students wishing to study abroad. Out of these 375 applications, 232 were accepted in RMUSP and seven were accepted for RISP. The seven students who received support to study abroad enrolled in universities in Prague, Budapest, Vienna, Copenhagen, College Station (Texas), New York and St. Andrews in Scotland. In addition to REF scholarships, two students from Hungary (RMUSP) received additional grants through Professional Development Fund to attend English language courses.





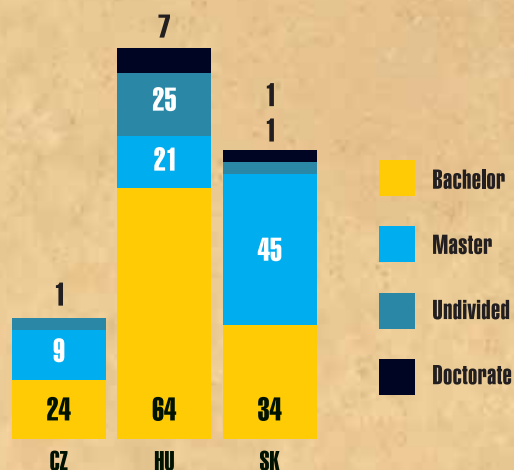
## RMUSP in Central Europe

total applicants, 2015–16



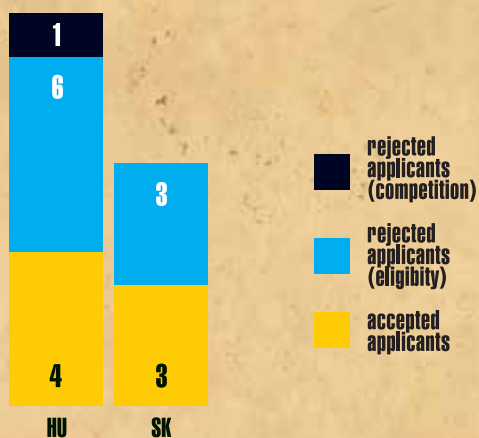
## RMUSP in Central Europe

accepted applicants by level of study, 2015–16



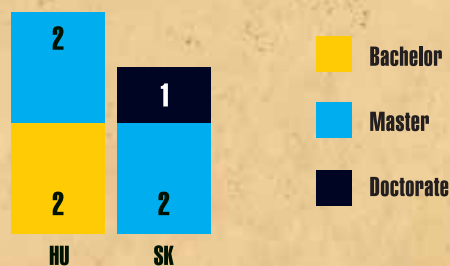
## RISP in Central Europe

total applicants, 2015–16

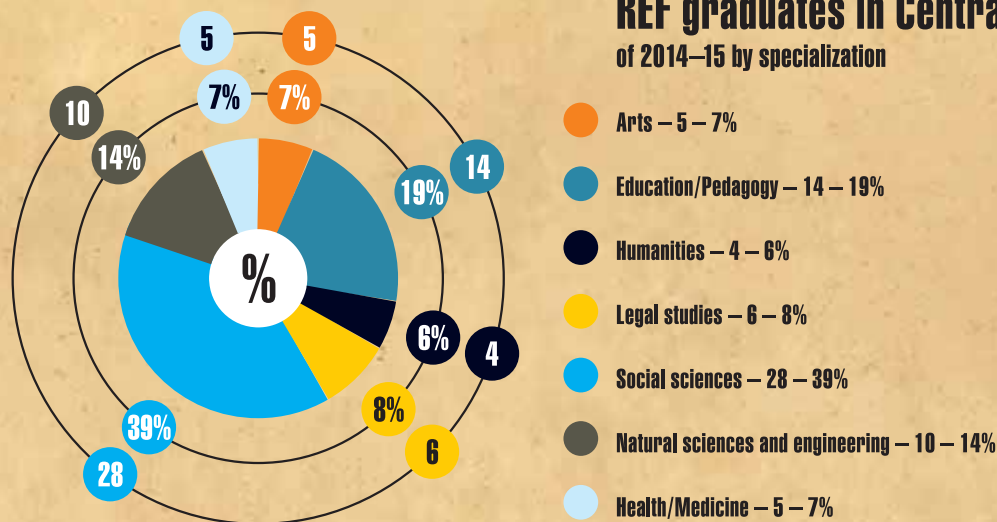


## RISP in Central Europe

accepted applicants by level of study, 2015–16



## REF graduates in Central Europe of 2014–15 by specialization



## MONITORING REF SP BENEFICIARIES' ACADEMIC PROGRESS

In 2015 the REF SP tracked beneficiaries' progress in order to monitor students' academic advancement and successful graduation, as well as cases of interrupted study.

From the 250 beneficiaries of the 2014-15 academic year in CE, 162 (65%) were not in graduation years, while the remaining 88 (35%) were in their final year and were supposed to graduate.

Among the 162 beneficiaries who were not in graduation year, 155 (96%) successfully progressed to the next academic year and continued their studies in the 2015-16 academic year (112 with continued REF support, 43 without), while the remaining seven (four percent) interrupted their studies or dropped out.

Among the 88 beneficiaries who were in final years and were expected to graduate during 2015, 72 (82%) graduated successfully, while 16 (12%) postponed graduation for a later cycle. The most common reasons for postponed graduation included difficulties in submitting the final Bachelor or Master theses on time, difficulties in passing final exams, while in the case of Hungary some graduating students did not manage to provide proof to their universities that they spoke a foreign language at intermediary level, which is a requirement for obtaining a university diploma.

### Grantee Voices – Slovakia

Peter Cina – Beneficiary

Peter enjoys the Toy Library in Zborov and he has always really looked forward to school. His father is a musician and his mother is a part of the AGS team in Zborov. Since he was a little boy he could participate in all the different kinds of activities. He remembers Family Education in his own house, he can still recall sessions when parents used to come to kindergarten to perform "little shows."



027



028

**027- 028** Maria was a participant in REF's A Good Start Project in Zborov, Slovakia, that targeted early childhood development outcomes beginning in 2012. Four years later, Maria is enrolled in a mainstream primary school, with a good attendance record. A Good Start continues to target Roma children under age six in Zborov and many elements of its programming like Your Story and Toy Libraries have been scaled up and multiplied across the region.

Photo: Robert Miskovics

**029** Recipients of the Roma Memorial University Scholarship in the Slovakia participate in the workshops held at the annual national student forum, bringing together Roma students with leading Slovak and Roma policymakers, activists and leaders in Presov, Slovakia in November 2015.

Photo: Robert Nemeti

### Grantee Voices – Slovakia

Viktória Cinová – Beneficiary

The big change came with the new ECD assistant. She visited parents and offered them material support from A Good Start (a REF ECD project that began in 2010). After several more home visits Viki began to trust the ECD assistant and started to enjoy every day in kindergarten.

In order to enhance the visibility of the program in the region, to publicly acknowledge Roma students' academic achievements, and also to create an opportunity for beneficiaries to meet and network, in autumn 2015 REF organized student fora in each of the three countries. Each event consisted of a public session followed by a closed workshop. The public and mediated part included congratulatory speeches by government and NGO representatives, as well as representatives from the private sector; and also featured presentations by Roma students who shared their personal stories with the audience. The workshop part focused on discussions related to Roma identity, as well as to other relevant matters, such as combating discrimination, community mobilization or access to labor market.

029









**030** A scholarship recipient and her father prepare to sign the contract for support in the 2015–2016 academic year at the second national secondary scholarship ceremony in Prishtina, Kosovo. The program serves over 500 Roma high school students annually and is one of several REF secondary scholarship programs promoting high school graduation through mentoring, tutoring and modest financial support. Photo: Majlinda Hoxha

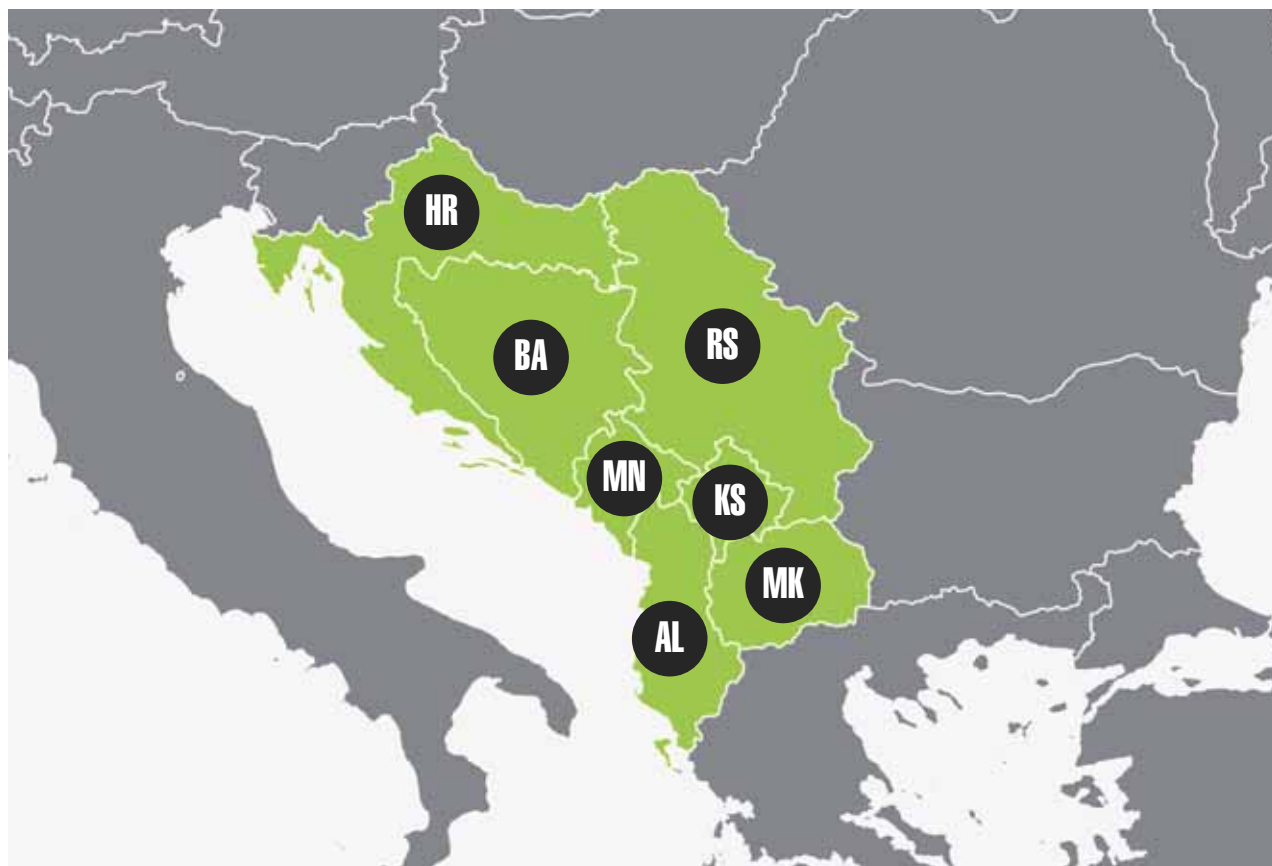
**031** Roma students react during the visit by a puppet theater to a public school in Rijeka, Croatia. Oaza, the Association of Homeless and Socially Vulnerable People, is providing a package of educational activities to Roma children that encourage academic development, cognition, improved social skills and integration. Photo: Courtesy of Oaza

036–051

# BALKANS

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF ACTIVE PROJECTS IN 2015	BALKANS		TOTAL
		NUMBER OF DIRECT GRANT BENEFICIARIES	NUMBER OF PARENTS PARTICIPATING IN REF SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES	
Albania	5	727	1,075	1,802
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4	768	1,292	2,060
Croatia	3	171	144	315
Kosovo	4	1,188	1,375	2,563
Macedonia	8	5,801	8,114	13,915
Montenegro	5*	1,359	606	1,965
Serbia	6	2,421	1,228	3,649
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>26,269</b>

\* MN 106 is not included in this number as it was not active in 2015.



AL

## ALBANIA

In 2015 the Albanian Parliament adopted a new law on higher education, which focuses on increasing the quality of teaching and regulating scientific research in higher education institutions. Key features include performance-based and competitive funding, increasing the autonomy of institutions and introducing a scholarship system for tertiary students. According to the Minister's Directive No. 29, dated October 2, 2015, higher education institutions will apply an affirmative action policy towards Roma students, including a tuition fee waiver from the 2015-16 academic year.

A new strategy for social inclusion is being prepared by the Ministry of Youth and Social Welfare, which will have an action plan focusing on improving the situation of Roma and Egyptian people (2015-2020). REF provided comments and recommendations on education, registration, anti-trafficking and health, based on findings and lessons learned in the past ten years. In this regard 2015 was a milestone, with visible progress in strategies, legislation and policies in Albania.

RomaVersitas (RV Albania) began its second academic year of operations in 2015. RV Albania operates two centers serving a total of 67 Roma students (47 female, 20 male). One center in Tirana serves two-thirds of the students and the remainder attend a second center in Korca. About 80% of the students have taken IT, English and Roma language classes.

Of 64 students, who were part of RV in 2014-15, nine graduated successfully and 55 continued on to the next academic year. Twenty-two percent of the current students are studying for Master degrees, while 78% are studying to receive a Bachelor degree in a wide range of subjects.



**032** Arben Kosturi from the NGO Disutni leads the Korca and Tirana branches of RomaVersitas Albania, a program that provides mentoring and tutoring support for Roma university students.  
Photo: Courtesy of Arben Kosturi

**033** Xhesika Korra teaches a class of 35 children at a mainstream secondary school in Durres, Albania. She received a Roma Memorial University Scholarship to support her university studies. Xhesika attended the Roma Teachers Conference held in Bratislava, Slovakia in November 2015 where she met other Roma teachers.  
Photo: Björn Steinz/Panos for Open Society Foundations

Several useful capacity building trainings were organized to equip students with new skills including time management, CV writing and project management.

RV Albania organized a summer camp focusing on the topic "Networking Together" for 34 participants, with Roma and non-Roma volunteers attending. The students had the chance to get to know each other better, work together as a team, share experiences, knowledge and create a functional network for the future. Five student-led, small-scale projects were granted in 2015 within RV Albania.

### Secondary Scholarship Program

For the first time in Albania, a secondary scholarship program was launched to support Roma students and improve academic success, retention and graduation rates in the Tirana and Durres regions. The goal of the program is to provide financial incentives, tutoring and mentoring to 80 Roma students who are in the last year of the lower secondary school (eighth-graders) over four years until they graduate.

At the end of the 2014-15, 76 out of the 82 beneficiary students (55 Roma and 27 Egyptian) successfully finished grade eight, and 65 registered for upper secondary. Raising parental and grandparental awareness turned out to be as important as securing financial and material support.

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#### Grantee Voices – Albania

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Xhenson Cela – RMUSP 2010–2014,  
RGPP 2015–2016

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Thanks to Roma Education Fund's financial and moral support I completed my first degree. It would have been impossible otherwise. REF not only supported me financially, but also taught me an important valuable and practical lesson, which I had the privilege to share with other Roma students, most of whom were preparing to apply.

REF's recognition and support motivated me as a student, playing a crucial role in pushing me to perform academically while also offering social and community activities.

Inclusive Quality Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Education for Roma/Egyptian Children was a multiyear project implemented by Save the Children with REF support. The project applied a holistic approach to provide quality inclusive education for all children in schools and kindergartens, and included capacity building for teachers, school principals, Regional Education Authority (REA) specialists; and provided educational support for children and promoted wider parental and community participation. The project resulted in national advocacy for improved legislation, better policies and concrete actions for social inclusion and to ensure access to quality inclusive education for Roma children. Some of the key initiatives of the project included collaboration with universities, intensification of work on birth registration and identity documents and support and encouragement for local governments to work on Roma and minority issues.



### Early Childhood Development in Albania and Kosovo

For almost two years NGO Amaro Drom in Albania and Kosovo Education Center in Kosovo have implemented projects based on REF's Early Childhood Development (ECD) model in 10 localities (Plementina, Gracanica, Gjakova, Serbobran, Preoce in Kosovo and Elbasan, Levan, Kucova and Grabian in Albania). Roma communities in Kosovo speak Romanes and Albanian or Serbian according to which language is dominant in their locality.

Fifty-five Roma children in Albania and 64 Roma children in Kosovo enrolled and successfully attended the first grade after being part of the ECD activities in preschool. The goal is to enroll all of the children into integrated schools together with majority children. Some 65 Roma mothers in Albania and around 70 mothers in Kosovo attended weekly Your Story sessions, reading and telling stories to their children every evening, creating small libraries with books for children in their homes and spending more qualitative time with meaningful interactions.

From field visits, it was clear to REF staff that the homes of mothers participating in Your Story sessions have more books, and the mothers read more to their children. For the children, being exposed to regular reading or storytelling is a great experience because it enlarges their vocabulary, stimulates their imaginations and creativity and makes adjustment to the school environment much easier.

Migration trends in 2015 affected the implementation of both ECD projects. A number of Roma families from Albania and Kosovo left for the EU, but the majority were very soon sent back, unfortunately even poorer than before.

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, REF, together with Association of Roma "Euro Rom," launched a secondary scholarship program in Tuzla Canton as a response to the high dropout rate (51%) of Roma students, according to the statistics provided by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport Tuzla Canton.

The program is built on REF's successful model and targets secondary school students and pupils in their final year in primary school, with a guarantee to support students who meet the annual performance criteria to complete secondary school. The secondary school scholarships program financially supports Roma students to register, start and finish secondary schooling, and provide mentoring and tutoring support for higher grades and to lower dropout rates.

In the 2015-16 school year, the program supported 55 Roma students in 16 secondary schools in eight municipalities. Extensive outreach work in Roma communities throughout Tuzla Canton contributed to an increased transition rate of 62.5% from primary to secondary education. The program expects similar successes in other municipalities with more Roma students attending secondary schools.

In addition to financial support, REF provides professional supervision and technical assistance to the program. World Vision Bosnia and Herzegovina co-financed scholarships of USD 5,000 and the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport Tuzla Canton actively contributes, from the project design and provision of baseline data through to active support in program implementation.

### Grantee Voices – Bosnia and Herzegovina

Dragan Jokovic – Executive Director,  
Citizens Association for the Promotion of Education of Roma "OTAHARIN"

REF has helped me and my organization grow professionally thanks to strong cooperation and partnership. One of the best moments was when we enrolled one of our Roma students in the local faculty, a first!

Another implementing partner is the Center for Roma Support "Romalen" Kakanj. REF's model intervention to improve primary education outcomes is highly recognized by the participating primary schools. The center has developed its own database that provides a reliable overview of the progress and results of the project and is a valuable resource tool for monitoring, planning, evaluation, prompt reactions and advocacy. The municipal authorities value "Romalen" as the key partner in work with Roma communities and have expressed their appreciation of REF's contribution to overcoming existing barriers to full inclusion of Roma children in primary education.

A project run by Citizens Association for the Promotion of Education of Roma "Otaharin" promotes education in primary education and preventing early school leaving of young Roma children, scaling up a previous REF-supported project. It improves and expands the level of participation of Roma children in preschool, primary and secondary education in the area of Bijeljina and Zivinice municipalities in Republika Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.





The city considers its ongoing partnership with Otaharin and REF as a good practice deserving to be scaled up across Bosnia and Herzegovina and Western Balkans.

Sensitizing staff running public kindergartens on Roma issues has led to the inclusion of 30 Roma children in mixed groups in the public kindergartens in Bijeljina and Zivinice in 2015. All of them continued to primary education. This is an important step forward in providing access to quality preschool education and improving school readiness. Prior to this intervention no Roma children had attended these kindergartens.

This intervention brought together municipal authorities, Centers for Social Work, the Ministry of Education, project schools, Roma communities and “Otaharin” as members of the Mobile Intervention Team in each project municipality. The cooperation across sectors and with the Roma communities resulted in a well-coordinated and integrated approach capable of dealing with complex challenges.

The City of Mostar’s Department for Social Activities is an implementing partner and co-funder in the Extended Stay project, which builds on and scales up the results achieved by the REF-supported Novi Most International Roma Education project. Roma participation has been ensured through engagement of two Roma staff from the Association of Roma “Neretva.”

This project strengthens communication and cooperation between governmental authorities, the Roma community, Roma NGOs, the Association of Young Psychologists, the Center for Social Welfare, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport Herzegovina Neretva Canton and primary schools. The premises for extended stay provide a safe, child-friendly and encouraging environment enabling children to learn, do their homework, attend after-school classes, have lunch and play on a daily basis.

Individual Development Plans devised for each beneficiary have resulted in improved social and emotional skills and better successes in school. The plans were developed in cooperation among the school, parents, pupils and other competent staff, and levels of progress were tailored to each pupil’s abilities. The City of Mostar is highly interested, and committed to creating the conditions for effective implementation of the Law on Primary Upbringing and Education.



## CROATIA

The latest official data on Roma in Croatia stems from the 2011 Census which recorded 16,975 Roma (0.4% in the total population) and almost twice as many as in 2001 (9,463). According to the 2011 Census, 14,369 people (0.3% of the total population) speak a Romani language as their mother tongue compared to 7,860 in 2001.<sup>20</sup>

One of the main problems often reported by schools and authorities is that Roma children do not properly speak the main language of instruction, thus contributing to early school leaving. Early childhood education and proper preschool programs are vital to ensure children are properly prepared for primary education.

In 2014 the government of Croatia introduced a compulsory one year of preschool which came into force from 2015.<sup>20</sup> The Statute on the Duration and Content of Preschool specifies a minimum duration of 250 school hours (or 150 at minimum depending on the number of children) plus 20% out-of-school cultural and other activities.<sup>21</sup>

In 2015 REF in partnership with UNICEF and OSF published Roma Early Childhood Inclusion (RECI+) report on Croatia which found that only 20% of Roma children attend some kind of preschool program including preparatory pre-primary. This ratio is mostly represented by Roma children in Medjimurje County, where a favorable policy has been implemented in collaboration with the government and REF. However other regions of the country show lower participation rates for preschool-age Roma children. Current government policy holds forth the promise and potential to reduce this inequality gap.

<sup>20</sup> Available online: <http://www.zakon.hr/z/492/Zakon-o-pred%C5%A1kolskom-odgoju-i-obrazovanju>, clause 23a, 3

<sup>21</sup> Available online: [http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2014\\_09\\_107\\_2081.html](http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2014_09_107_2081.html)



035

Kursanec is one of the localities where REF has run a preschool education program in collaboration with Medjimurje County. The preschool program is currently running without REF funding and maintained by the county and Croatian government. One of the main educational challenges after preschool was early school leaving from primary education. Therefore in 2014 REF began to support an initiative by university students from University of Cakovec to reduce drop-outs from elementary school and improve the academic achievements of Roma children. The project involved 67 Roma pupils from first and second grade who received regular after-school support in a program led by volunteer students from the Faculty of Teacher Training.

**035** Sfera, an NGO operating in Medjimurje County, Croatia, provides after-school tutoring to strengthen the educational outcomes of Roma students in the Croatia's county with the highest official Roma population. Photo: Courtesy of Sfera

**036** A Roma boy reacts during the visit by a puppet theater to a public school in Rijeka, Croatia. Oaza, the Association of Homeless and Socially Vulnerable People, is providing a package of educational activities to Roma children that encourage academic development, cognition, improved social skills and integration. Photo: Courtesy of Oaza

## External Evaluation of REF in Croatia

### First steps to success: Preschool and Roma inclusion in Croatia

In 2015 an external evaluation was done for the four-year REF-supported project, Preschool Education to Complete Integration, which ran from 2010 to 2014 and was implemented in six schools in Medjimurje County. The group of independent researchers from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb sought to assess to what extent the preschool program actually contributed to participating children's preparedness for school by assessing three cohorts of beneficiaries in academic knowledge, social and emotional skills, and ability to communicate in the Croatian language. Parents and school staff were also included in the evaluation through focus group discussions and survey questions.

The sample of pupils comprised 193 Roma and non-Roma primary school pupils attending regular curricula in roughly equal numbers from first to third grade. All Roma pupils had previously been the beneficiaries of the one-year preschool program and all non-Roma pupils had attended a kindergarten. The scores in the assessment of knowledge and understanding in three subjects confirmed a statistically significant difference and knowledge gap between the Roma pupils and their non-Roma peers in each grade. By the end of the first grade roughly one-fifth of the children could not understand Croatian well and needed the assistance of a Romani language interpreter to answer a set of knowledge questions. This problem was not observed in the groups attending second and third grade. Nonetheless, there were still problems, for by the end of the third grade while all the pupils could read and were fluent in Croatian, over two-fifths were slow readers who needed help with the meaning of key words.



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#### Grantee Voices – Croatia

Miljenka Župan – Project Coordinator,  
Maslacak Primary School, Medjimurje County

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The project is successful, in my opinion, as 90% of Roma children regularly attend kindergarten. They build friendships regardless of the community they belong to.

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#### Grantee Voices – Croatia

Maja Odrčić Mikulić – President of NGO Sfera

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The best part of this project is the moment when I enter the classroom and 20 pupils are yelling: Good morning!

Although these findings cannot be described as satisfactory and although they confirm that familiarity with Croatian as the language of instruction remains the greatest obstacle, there are good grounds for optimism. The evidence shows that this obstacle can be removed relatively easily: by extending the number of years in preschool education and by extending the number of hours dedicated to learning Croatian and other school subjects in primary school. This conclusion is supported by all the teachers, Roma assistants, school principals and parents who drew attention to the situation prior to the project when there were fewer Roma children attending preschool and primary school and when the majority of Roma first-graders did not understand Croatian.

Apart from extending preschool education to two or three years, all adult respondents were clear that many more changes are needed to improve the integration of Roma children in education. Parents, in particular, mentioned free textbooks and free school meals. They also spoke of the need for development of the pro-employment policies for young Roma who have finished vocational schools, with a view to helping them break the cycle of exclusion and poverty.



037



038

**037-038** Speakers prepare to address the audience at the second national secondary scholarship ceremony in Prishtina, Kosovo.

Photo: Majlinda Hoxha

**039** Dita was a participant in REF's A Good Start Project in Suto Orizari, Macedonia, that targeted early childhood development outcomes beginning in 2012. Four years later, Dita is enrolled in a mainstream primary school, with a good attendance record.

Photo: Robert Miskovics



## KOSOVO

The Office of Good Governance of the Republic of Kosovo in May 2015 began a process of consultations with civil society actors and other stakeholders about the preparation of a new policy document to replace the Strategy for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities, which expired at the end of 2015. The new policy document, covering five or six themes, including education, and following further consultation with local NGOs and international organizations, is due to be launched in 2016. REF is actively involved in the process, attending conferences, meetings and commenting on drafts.

### Secondary Scholarship Program

One of REF's biggest achievements is the multi-donor funded Secondary Scholarship Program (SSP) in Kosovo, which provided direct support to 500 Roma students through targeted interventions on the ground in 2015. The gender ratio is 217 females to 283 males. Unfortunately, migration seriously affected the program because 41 SSP beneficiary students left Kosovo with their families.

SSP students receive monthly stipends and are supported by mentorship and tutorship programs. While the monthly installments are disbursed by both implementing partners, the Ministry of Education Sciences and Technology (MEST) and Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (VoRAE), the mentorship and the tutorship program is implemented exclusively by VoRAE.

The overall GPA of the mentees in first semester of the 2014-15 academic year was 2.33, improving to 3.01 in the second semester and 95% of mentees successfully passing the school year. Among all students, the overall GPA in the first semes-

### Grantee Voices – Kosovo

Orhan Butic – Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, Secondary Scholarship Program in Kosovo

REF support is very important since the focus on high school students in this program provides an opportunity for children to remain in their classroom and continue their schooling. Parents of some scholarship beneficiaries expressed that, without the support from REF, their children would be unable to stay in school due to their economic conditions.

ter 2014-15 was 2.87 and increased to 3.34 in the second semester, which is a remarkable improvement. It's a "better than expected" increase, around 0.5 points in GPA from the first semester to the second.

### RomaVersitas Kosovo

2015 was a busy year for RomaVersitas Kosovo. Funded by REF and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, RomaVersitas Kosovo (RV Kosovo) has expanded its activities to cover three cities, Prishtina, Prizren and Peja. The number of beneficiaries increased from 40 to 74. Thirty students attend the Pristina Center, while the Prizren Center caters for 24, and the center in Peja for 20.

Besides academic tutoring and mentoring, several soft skills trainings were organized, and six student initiatives projects were developed. In 2015, RV Kosovo introduced needs-based stipends, supporting 35 students. The stipend supplements REF's merit-based tertiary education scholarship, RMUSP. This allows students who did not qualify for REF's merit-based RMUSP to get financial support to cover their basic costs. This new provision is RV Kosovo's response to the growing problem of increasing numbers of students dropping out from universities or migrating because of the lack of financial resources.





## MACEDONIA

REF's partnership with Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MoLSP) continued in 2015 and the initiative resulted in scaling up the original pilot preschool program from 10 municipalities to 18. At the start of the program REF provided full financial and technical support. Eight years later REF's support amounts to 26.6% of the total costs; the ministry provides 58.3% of the funding; 18 municipalities contribute 11.8%; 18 kindergartens contribute 3.3%. The MoLSP now manages and directs the funding into preschool enrollment and attendance for all Roma children aged between four and six years in all 18 project locations.

Within the last three years the enrollment rates of Roma children into preschools increased from 10% to 16% by 2014.<sup>22</sup> A cumulative assessment in 2015 of the children's regular attendance rate in public preschools is 91%.<sup>23</sup> One significant outcome is the adoption of a professional Roma teacher assistant job profile and since 2015, 17 Roma teacher assistants are officially employed, with permanent contracts as employees of the MoLSP in 19 kindergartens in 18 municipalities.

In 2015, the MoLSP integrated REF's early childhood education (ECD) model into its preschool program in the 18 targeted localities with the aim to raise the quality as well as increase access to ECD services for over 1,200 Roma children and their parents annually. This can be considered as REF's major impact on policy change in Macedonia.

The ministry has also extended the scope of the project to provide additional services for younger children (aged zero to four) by integrating 12 Your Story hubs where 19 mothers from Roma communities were selected as facilitators to work with more than 350 women to help them acquire the habit of reading stories to their children. The Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) program extended to five locations in 2015 and aims to foster closer cooperation between kindergartens and parents, and allow for more active parental participation.

The Macedonian Ministry of Education, together with a consortium of eight Roma NGOs,<sup>24</sup> have also invested in the REF-initiated model to prevent early school leaving. Based on the positive results<sup>25</sup> of previously implemented projects in primary education, the number of targeted municipalities will be increased from five to 16 municipalities, primary schools will be increased from seven to 49 primary schools and the number of Roma pupils in primary education targeted within



039

### Grantee Voices – Macedonia

Serdem Demirova – Beneficiary

In the beginning, Serdem had difficulty at kindergarten. She didn't speak Macedonian, she didn't know colors, the name of geometrical figures etc. However, over time Serdem overcame all barriers. Serdem looks more positive and confident after just one year of attending kindergarten. REF's project encourages all disadvantaged children to attend kindergarten until they go to elementary school in order for them to be ready for future school success.

this project will be increased from 600 to 1,600 per school year. The model aims to improve success and reduce the dropout rate of Roma children who attend grades four to six from 49 primary schools in 18 localities.<sup>26</sup> The project provides additional tutoring classes in Macedonian and Albanian languages and math for 1,396 Roma students.

One of the key elements is the tutoring and mentoring provided by 98 university students. REF and its local partners actively involved Macedonian universities and developed a specific practical curriculum for recognition of the additional classes in the primary schools, as an official (practical or theoretical) subject under the Pedagogy Faculties in 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Available online:

<http://www.undp.org/content/dam/rbec/docs/Policy-brief-Roma-education.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> The project database: the data is triangulated by the official transcripts, RTA (Roma teacher assistants) and local Roma NGOs.

<sup>24</sup> Consortia led by Roma Resource Center (RRC) and NGO Sonce-Tetovo.

<sup>25</sup> Thirty-nine percent from the total included students within MAC 084 (470) increased their knowledge, skills for reading, writing understanding, counting for subjects Macedonian language and math.

<sup>26</sup> Shuto Orizari, Chair, Karposh, Gjorche Petrov, Kumanovo, Shtip, Kochani, Vinica, Delchevo, Crnik, Pehchevo, Berovo, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kichevo, Debar, Prilep and Bitola.



## MONTENEGRO: REF NETWORK BRANCH OFFICE

### Getting ahead in Montenegro: Scholarship successes and affirmative action

Two years ago REF took over the implementation of the secondary and tertiary scholarship program for Roma students in Montenegro.<sup>27</sup> The Ministry of Human and Minority Rights granted REF with EUR 150,000, topping up REF's contribution of EUR 106,000 to support 71 high school students and 15 university students with scholarship and mentoring support. Over 97% of the high school students finished their grade successfully in 2014-15 academic year. No students had to retake the same grade and only two cases of dropouts were recorded. The dropout rate was just three percent, which is the best result achieved since the scholarship program was first introduced in Montenegro.

The REF team successfully negotiated with the Rector's Office of the University of Montenegro to use REF's tertiary education model, whereby all Roma students can now study free of charge, and additionally receive free accommodation and meals in student dormitories. Furthermore, REF committed the Ministry of Education to pass the decision to apply affirmative action measures for all students entering high school, allowing them to enroll into the high schools of their choice and allowing part-time Roma students to take their exams free of charge.

In April 2015 REF organized and implemented a campaign aimed at raising awareness about the importance of schooling in Roma communities, as well as a motivational campaign targeting the students in the final grades of elementary school.

#### Policymaker Voices – Montenegro

Natasha Vlahovic – Advisor to Bureau of Education, Ministry of Education

The inclusion of REF in the field of the education of Roma made it possible to improve the education policy towards these communities, to be more sustainable and effective.

REF has made a difference, as changes have been implemented within the preschool, primary, secondary and university education of Roma in Montenegro.

### All Roma children to be moved into integrated schools after decision to close of the Konik Camp school in Podgorica

Since the 2013-14 school year, the Roma Education Fund branch in Montenegro in collaboration with the Montenegro Ministry of Education implemented the project Support for the Integration and Voluntary Return of I/DPs and residents of Konik Camp. 2015-16 is the third academic year of its implementation. The project included support for children enrolled into integrated schools, transportation of Roma children from the camp to the city, parental empowerment and in-service teacher training. It helped also to enroll all preschool age children from the camp and its vicinity and 60-70% of children aged three to five into state run kindergartens.<sup>28</sup> Approximately 170 first-, second- and third-graders are included in the desegregation process. During this process, there was no white flight from the schools; nor was there any opposition from Roma parents fearful of change, two typical reactions to desegregation. This is most probably due to the strong support and involvement of the government in the process and the agreed maximum 15% enrollment rate of Roma pupils in the schools. Following these developments, the ministry scheduled the closure of the camp school in the summer of 2016. This will mark a historic moment for the families and children of Konik camp.

<sup>27</sup> The program is called Roma and Egyptian Scholarship Fund for the Support of Secondary and Tertiary Education of Roma/RE Youth in Montenegro, and is run in cooperation with the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and the Bureau of Education of Montenegro.

<sup>28</sup> In Montenegro preschool education is not mandatory.



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040 Roma primary and secondary school students from Belgrade starred in a REF-supported video campaign to encourage Roma students across Serbia to complete their studies. Knowledge is Power (*Zanje je moc*) eclipsed 25,000 views on Facebook and Youtube and was covered extensively in the Serbian media. Photo: Miklos Barna

The Konik refugee camp in Podgorica was established after the Kosovo conflict in 1999 with approximately 2,500 inhabitants. A few months after the camp became operational it was decided to establish a primary school in the camp as a temporary solution for lower grades only. This process of placement has resulted in the complete housing and educational segregation of children and adults in Konik Camp ever since. Most of the residents of the camp have no right to any sort of financial support such as family social allowance or child allowance. In addition to that, more than 30% of Roma families still had not managed to resolve their citizenship status in 2015 and half of the total number so-called legally invisible persons are children or minors.

## SERBIA: REF NETWORK BRANCH OFFICE

### Secondary School Scholarships

In 2015, the REF branch office in Serbia implemented an IPA-funded project Technical Support for Roma Inclusion in partnership with the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (MESTD) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) mission in Serbia, to support Roma inclusion through increased graduation rate of secondary Roma students and their facilitation into the labor market.

REF provided technical assistance by announcing, collecting and processing applications, contracting pupils, monitoring, collecting data, analyzing students' results and disbursement



of the scholarships. In addition, REF's innovative mentoring program helps students to achieve better grades and to improve their social and communication skills by building up their self-confidence and self-esteem. REF continually advocates with national institutions to formally integrate mentoring into the educational system.

Overall, out of the 525 scholarship beneficiaries (236 girls and 289 boys) in the 2014-15 school year, 342 are continuing the program in 2015-16, with 98 graduated. Approximately 170 new scholarship beneficiaries were supported in 2015.

In 2015 REF Serbia set up cooperation networks between the secondary scholarship programs in the Balkan countries and a peer-learning process among Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. All these countries are applying the same training package for mentors accredited in Serbia and Montenegro by their respective Ministries of Education, while in Bosnia and Herzegovina the accreditation procedure has begun. Terms of References for mentors are harmonized between these countries. Mentors, REF teams from Serbia and Montenegro and REF grantees implementing this program met in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia to exchange experiences and to learn from each other. REF finds such exchanges and comparisons very useful in order to find the most efficient way to have an impact on policymaking, and make the most of best practices to overcome the challenges facing young Roma to complete secondary school successfully.

## SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM IN BALKANS AND TURKEY

In the Balkan region REF SP implements three of its scholarship schemes - RMUSP, RISP and RHSP - in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey. While RMUSP and RISP are available for applicants from all countries, RHSP is only available for renewal applicants from Macedonia and Serbia. For the 2015-16 academic year the Program received 553 applications, out of which 481 were for the RMUSP scheme, 11 for RISP and 61 for RHSP. Out of the 553 submitted applications, 327 were accepted for support, out of which 271 in RMUSP, six in RISP and 50 in RHSP.

Only one application was submitted from Montenegro, but it was eventually rejected because of ineligibility. The reason



041

**041** Roma families attend International Roma Day (April 8) celebrations in Podgorica, Montenegro. Together with the Ministry of Education over the last four years, REF has worked to close the segregated school at Konik Camp, housing some 1,500 Roma for over fifteen years, and enroll Roma children in Podgorica's mainstream schools.  
Photo: Emil Sabotic

for the dearth of applications from Montenegro is the existence of an alternative scholarship scheme which is implemented by the government with REF's technical assistance. In Croatia there are also scholarship schemes implemented by the government for supporting Roma tertiary-level students, which is why REF receives so few applications for its Scholarship Program from these two countries. As for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the reason for which REF SP receives so few applications from this country is the particularly low ratio of high school graduates among Roma, an issue which REF is looking to address through its new secondary education level scholarship scheme.

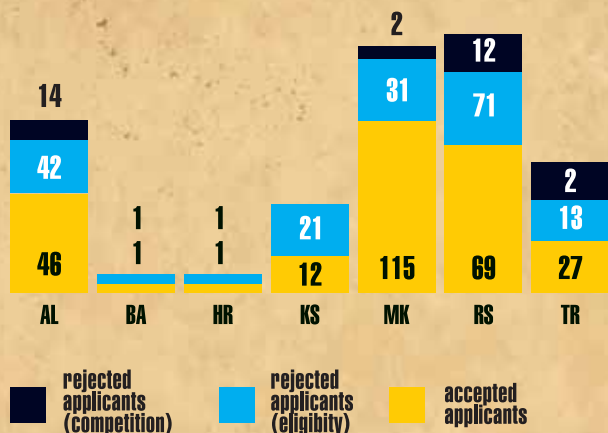
The six study-abroad beneficiaries accepted for RISP support study in Belgorod (Russia), Freiburg (Germany), Brighton (UK), Vienna (Austria), Florence (Italy) and Syracuse (USA).

In addition to the financial support for covering living and studies costs during the academic year, RHSP beneficiaries in Macedonia and Serbia had access to a range of additional components in 2015, aimed at supporting their academic and professional development, including mentorship support. In addition, two RHSP beneficiaries, one from Macedonia and another from Serbia, received grants to attend German-language courses. Two RHSP beneficiaries from Macedonia received support to participate in local academic conferences.



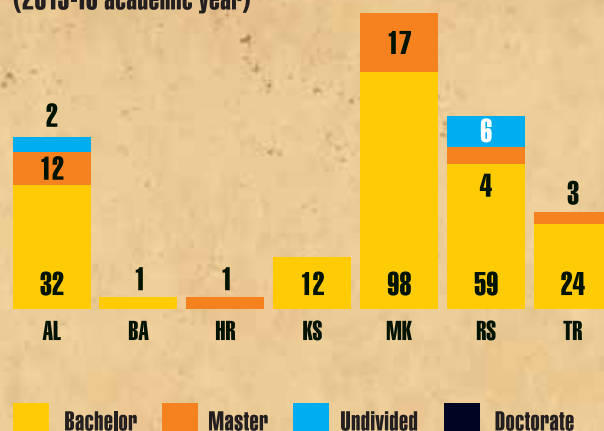
## RMUSP in Balkans and Turkey

Number of accepted and rejected scholarship applicants (2015-16 academic year)



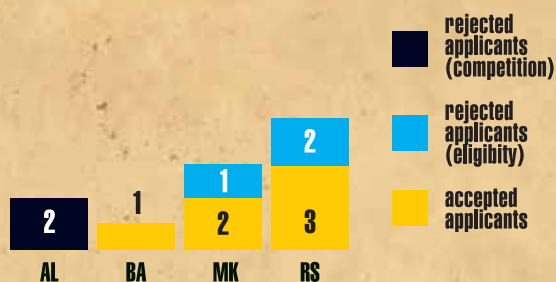
## RMUSP in Balkans and Turkey

Accepted applicants by level of studies (2015-16 academic year)



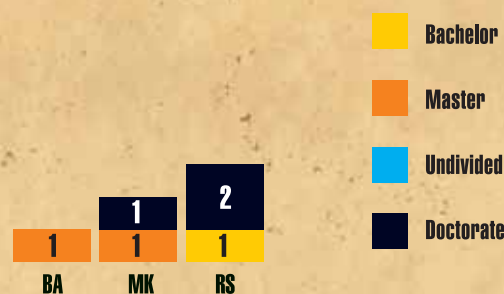
## RISP in Balkans

Number of accepted and rejected scholarship applicants (2015-16 academic year)



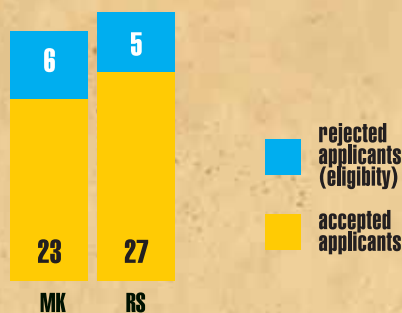
## RISP in Balkans

Accepted applicants by level of studies (2015-16 academic year)



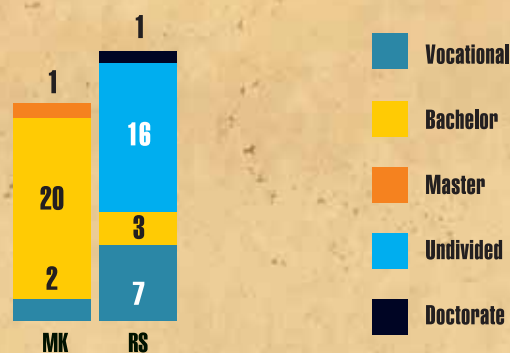
## RHSP in Balkans

Number of accepted and rejected scholarship applicants (2015-16 academic year)



## RHSP in Balkans

Accepted applicants by level of studies (2015-16 academic year)



042 A Roma primary school student performs at International Roma Day (April 8) celebrations in Podgorica, Montenegro.

Photo: Emil Sabotic



042

2015 saw the introduction of a new component to the program, the RHSP small-scale projects. This allows beneficiaries to apply for additional grants to up to EUR 2,500, to implement small-scale community development projects focusing on health and access to healthcare services. Two groups of ongoing RHSP beneficiaries in the Balkan region received small-scale project grants in 2015 – one Macedonian and one Serbian. The project in Macedonia was implemented in a Roma neighborhood in Prilep and consisted of information dissemination and an awareness-raising campaign for safe and responsible sex, responsibilities of both partners, prevention of STDs, reproductive health and the importance of gynecological visits. The project team in Serbia also focused on awareness-raising campaign for safe sex and prevention of STDs and organized lectures and workshops in the town.

Another new RHSP component in 2015 was the regional RHSP Annual Students' Conference, aimed at strengthening the community of Roma medical students. The conference was held in Bucharest in summer 2015 and gathered 30 RHSP beneficiaries from the four RHSP countries, including nine from Serbia and seven from Macedonia.

### Grantee Voices – Serbia

Danica Kugli – RomaVersitas Alumna

Danica's academic achievement, personal assertiveness and sense of empowerment played a key role in her path to success in the world of corporate business.

More specifically, she was particularly grateful for the RomaVersitas facilitated academic tutoring, as well as access to working learning groups, English classes and psychology workshops where she learned new assertiveness and other skills that empowered her further for her future professional endeavors. Later during her studies, when she got pregnant and married, RomaVersitas support contributed to Danica not giving up on her studies, in spite of becoming a mother, but graduating and later proving herself on the extremely competitive labor market as an employable expert.

## MONITORING REF SP BENEFICIARIES' ACADEMIC PROGRESS

In 2015 REF Scholarship Program continued to monitor beneficiaries' progress from one academic year to another, in the Balkans and Turkey, tracking their academic advancement, successful graduation and cases of students interrupting their studies or dropping out.

From the 341 REF Scholarship Program beneficiaries from Balkans and Turkey in the 2014-15 academic year, 253 (74%) were not in graduation years, while the remaining 88 (26%) were in final years of their degrees and were expected to graduate.

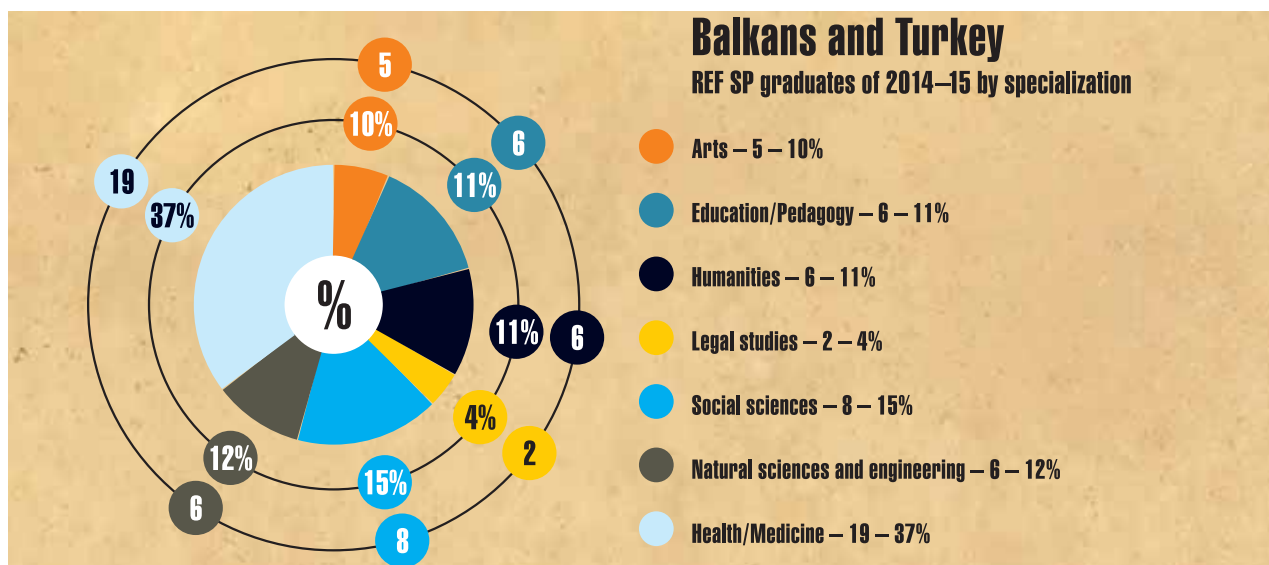
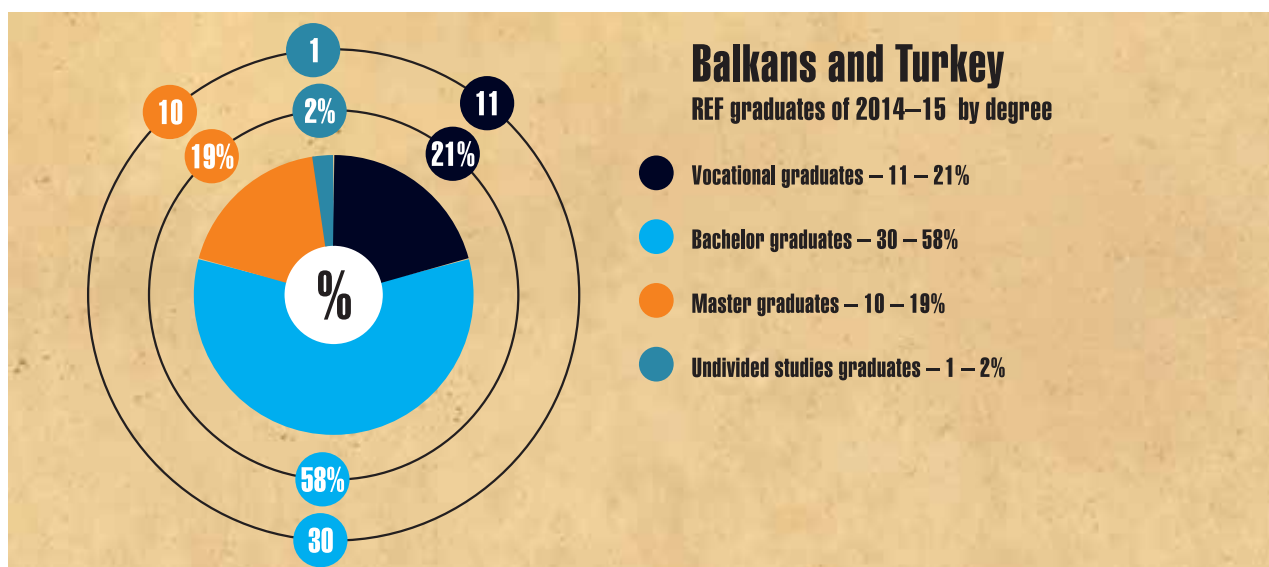
Among the 253 beneficiaries who were not in graduation, 211 (83%) progressed successfully to the next academic year: 159 with continued REF Scholarship Program support, while 52 without. However, 29 students (12%) interrupted their education or dropped out, while another 13 students (5%) could not be reached.

The number of students dropping out is highest in Macedonia, with 19 cases altogether (11 in RMUSP and 8 in RHSP). The reasons for the relatively high number of cases of dropping out or interrupting studies in Macedonia include immigration, difficulties with passing exams and fulfilling all

academic requirements, and personal and financial issues. The REF Scholarship Program is exploring ways to diminish dropout rates in Macedonia.

Among the 88 beneficiaries who were expected to graduate in 2015, 52 (60%) graduated successfully. Of the remaining 36, two students from RMUSP Macedonia decided to abandon their studies, while another 34 (14 from Macedonia and 10 from Serbia) postponed their graduation to the next year. This particularly high ratio of students from Macedonia and Serbia who

postpone their graduation is largely attributable to the very flexible systems in both countries allowing students to postpone the submission of their final theses or even passing of the state exams. REF Scholarship Program considers that students who postpone graduation run a high risk of abandoning the completion of their studies, therefore the program team is regularly in contact with students to encourage them to graduate. At the same time, REF SP is exploring how best to systematically encourage students from these two countries to graduate on time, despite the flexibility allowed by the local education system.







# SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

**043** Two Roma sisters who, with REF support, attend a mainstream preschool primary school are preparing for the next stage of their school careers, enrollment in a mainstream primary school. From Sofia's Fakulteta district, among the largest Roma settlements in Bulgaria, they are beneficiaries of a long-term desegregation project managed by REF and implemented by the Equal Opportunities Association.

Photo: Courtesy of Equal Opportunities Association

**044** Higher Education Program Manager Dan Pavel Doghi (far right) poses together with recipients of the Roma Health Scholar Program, implemented in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia, gathered in Bucharest for their first-ever regional meeting. The two-day event featured workshops on careers, identity and practice.

Photo: REF Scholarship Program

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF ACTIVE PROJECTS IN 2015	SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE		TOTAL
		NUMBER OF DIRECT GRANT BENEFICIARIES	NUMBER OF PARENTS PARTICIPATING IN REF SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES	
Bulgaria	12	6,274	18,460	<b>24,734</b>
Romania	5	3,889	3,623	<b>7,512</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>32,246</b>





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## BULGARIA

In 2015 REF has continued to provide support for the early childhood education (ECD) model and succeeded to build good quality ECD interventions in a number of Roma communities. For example, in Berkovitsa, REF ensured regular attendance of 80 Roma children aged three to six in kindergartens, a 90% increase compared to the previous year. A Toy Library was opened in Rakovitsa and a Your Story readers club was established for Roma mothers. Thirty-one children enrolled and benefited from the Toy Library and their mothers joined the reading clubs.

The Bulgarian Center for Local and Regional Policies continued their partnership with the municipality of Nikola Kozlevo for implementation of a preschool project in eight villages within the municipality. The project consisted of several components that aim to develop a sustainable early childhood education for Roma and non-Roma children of kindergarten and primary school-age from the Municipality of Nikola Kozlevo.

A campaign to increase the awareness of the importance of kindergarten enrollment among parents resulted in nearly 400 children aged three to six enrolling in kindergarten for the 2015-16 school year. The flow in preschool enrollments is directly attributable to the information and outreach work. In addition 134 primary school children were assisted in enrolling into mainstream schools in the municipality in 2015.

At the end of 2015, thanks to the advocacy efforts of REF's grantee, and a three-year partnership on the project, the municipal council of Nikola Kozlevo abolished the kindergarten fees for all children aged five to six. Moreover, the municipality supported the opening of two Toy Libraries - in Nikola Ko-

zlevo and Tsarkvitsa villages, realizing Your Story sessions with Roma mothers in four localities in the municipality - Tsarkvitsa, Nikola Kozlevo, Kriva Reka and Pet Mogili villages.

REF continued supporting the desegregation efforts started by Kyustendil municipality. Kyustendil municipality is one of the few municipalities in Bulgaria that plays an active role in desegregation of the Roma schools. The main project's activities were connected with the transportation of the children from Iztok district to the eight accepting schools in the city and back; the involvement of the children in extracurricular activities and different events for the children and parents.

About 350 children and students from preschool-age to twelfth grade benefited from the desegregation project activities, and 100 children participated in the extracurricular activities. Eighty percent of the students increased their school results, and more than 100 mothers participated in project activities.

RomaVersitas activities in 2015 continue in three localities in Bulgaria - Blagoevgrad, Shumen and Sofia. Roma university students from the three cities benefited from free English, IT and Romanes courses. There was also a mentoring program that supported the career and academic development of the Roma student members. Through the RomaVersitas clubs Roma students organized volunteer initiatives, made efforts to give back to local Roma communities and, through public debate about important issues, tried to attract the attention of the media and broader society.



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#### Grantee Voices – Bulgaria

George Samirov – RomaVersitas, Shumen

RomaVersitas changed my life 180 degrees. Until then I was ashamed of being Roma. I was working to support my mother and I hid my origin all the time. I became a student and continued to hide it. I was afraid. In 2014 I met Asen Asenov – a Roma health mediator in Shumen municipality and he invited me to apply to RomaVersitas. I applied and shared with the selection committee my concerns about my identity. One week after the interview I got a letter of approval but I continued hiding my ethnicity outside of the RomaVersitas premises. Once I met 21 other students who were also Roma a change started to happen. I gained a little more confidence. But after a course in Roma language led by Professor Hristo Kyuchukov I realized that I should be proud of my origin because we, the Roma, also have history, language and traditions. I felt relieved! I'd like to express my thanks to RomaVersitas for the opportunity and support they gave me to overcome my internal struggle.

045 REF Country Facilitator for Bulgaria, Ognyan Isaev, speaks at the opening ceremony of the new RomaVersitas branch opened in Shumen in 2015. RomaVersitas provides its members with mentoring, tutoring, academic support and a sense of community. Photo: Courtesy of RomaVersitas Bulgaria

046 Roma students from Rosia participate in the mentoring and tutoring after-school component of Roma Children and Parents Want to Go to School, a European Structural Fund's project implemented by REF Romania across the country. Photo: Georgiana Barbulescu



## ROMANIA: REF NETWORK FOUNDATION

Three ESF projects implemented by REF Romania were included by the Romanian Government in its Action Plan on the Implementation of Country Specific Recommendations 2014.<sup>29</sup> The “Second Chance” program, a new adult education component based on the official methodology of the Ministry of Education, proved to be a success. After monitoring and feedback from the project localities, the REF Romania team found there was a huge demand to scale up the second chance component as many Roma parents asked to be included in the program. In several participating schools the second chance program continued into its second year supported through local public funds.

The projects Roma Children and Parents Want to Go to School and Integrated Educational Services for Roma Communities which had similar components and approaches were implemented between May 2014 and December 2015 in partnership with the Resource Centre for Roma Communities, Community Development Agency “Together” and the Roma Education Fund Hungary. The projects were conducted in 85 schools in four regions (South Muntenia, North East, South East and Bucharest-Ilfov).

Over twenty months, both projects followed an integrated, innovative, dual-impact approach, with a focus on the family: preventive measures (a package of educational support, mentoring, guidance and counseling, catering and grants for 845 Roma stu-

<sup>29</sup> More specifically, a cumulative figure of 30,841 teachers. See also: *REF Annual Report 2014*, Table 7. Beneficiaries of REF-Funded Grant Projects by Indicator, p. 20. Available online: [http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ref\\_annual\\_2014\\_web\\_singlepages-mod.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ref_annual_2014_web_singlepages-mod.pdf)



047

dents enrolled in lower secondary school and 523 high school Roma students at risk of early school leaving) and corrective actions (a second chance program for 644 Roma adults).

The projects' strategy consisted of a concerted intervention by influential local players, the County School Inspectorates, schools and local communities and operated simultaneously at different levels: directly on the beneficiaries (students and adults from Roma families) and on the schools and the communities they come from. The measures developed in these projects were complementary and took into account the needs of educational support and personal development (to increase confidence and self-esteem) and social and economic needs of the target group.

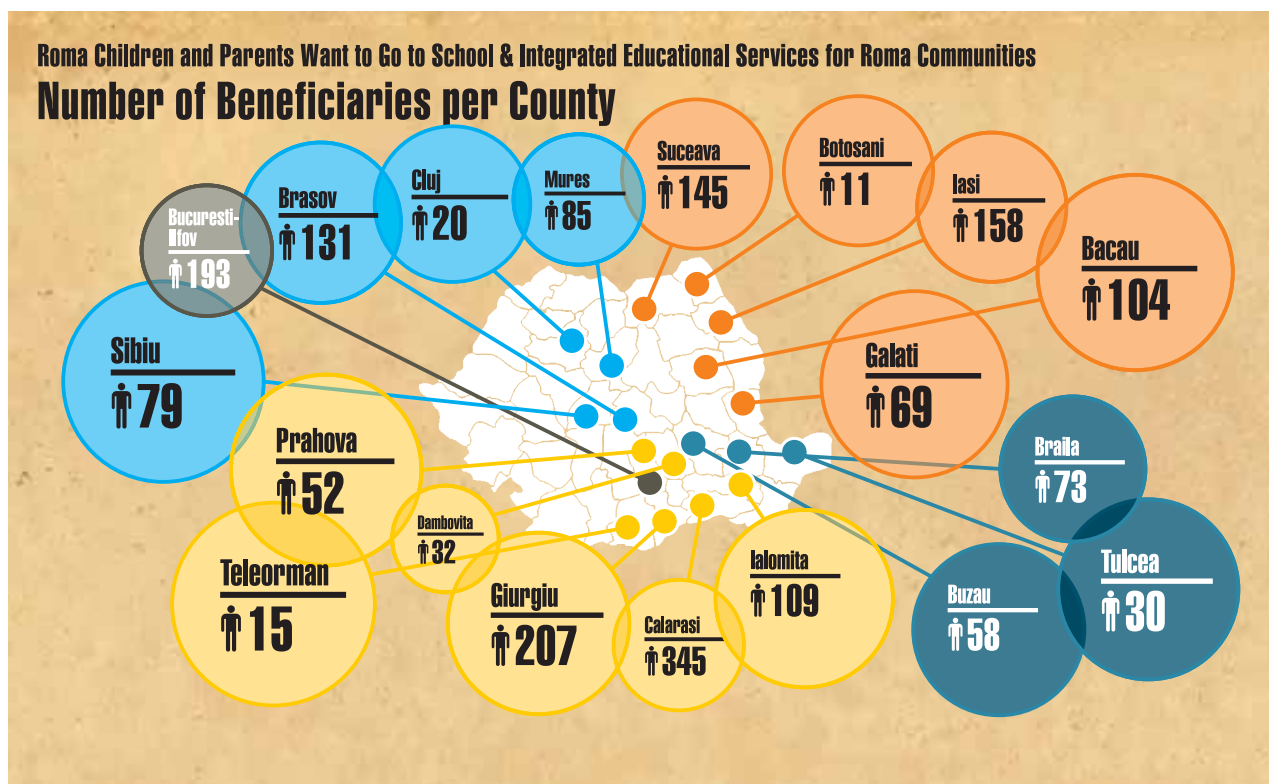
The intensive educational support program focused on two academic areas: improving Romanian language skills and Mathematics/History. After participation in the 2014-15 school year, 85% of students in both projects continued their studies, enrolling in the next school year.

In the second chance component for lower secondary students, 590 graduated, compared to 470 estimated at the beginning of the projects. The share of graduates of both second chance components was 88%. Among the two projects' results: skills improvement through training for 471 teachers and personnel involved in prevention and corrective measures against early school leaving; 1,934 scholarships granted to students as well as to 650 Roma adults enrolled in the "Second Chance" program.

The mentoring program offered support, guidance and counseling for developing relationships among the school, parents and community. The student-mentor relationship was individualized, focusing on the specific needs, problems, skills and potential of each student beneficiary. The mentoring program for the parents was adapted to the specifics of the adult, especially on raising awareness on the benefits that education could bring to their future, from helping with their children's homework to being able to apply for more jobs. The projects also took the socio-economic needs of the beneficiaries into



**047** Roma students dress for a school play in Fetesti, a city in southern Romania that was one of 18 locations where the REF Romania implemented Roma Children and Parents Want to Go to School, a European Structural Fund's project.  
Photo: Georgiana Barbulescu



account, and offered scholarships, school supplies and catering services within the educational activities.

To ensure the projects' sustainability, and provide truly integrated educational support, REF Romania put much effort into concluding partnership agreements with schools and municipalities. In the final months of the project Roma Children and Parents Want to Go to School, 26 such local partnerships were established thus ensuring the continuation of the project activities.

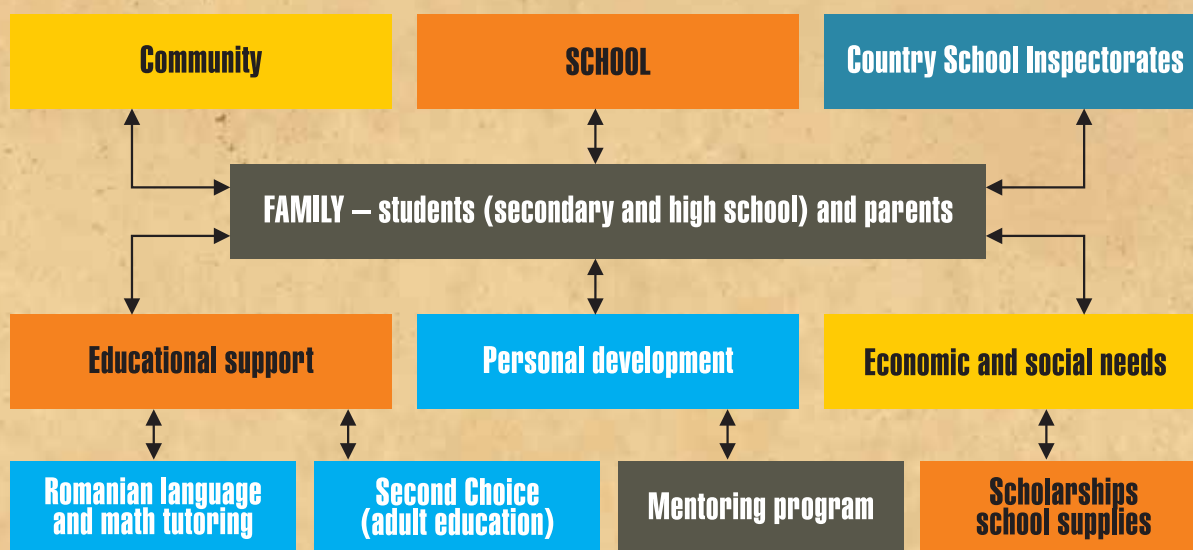
The projects also took into account the need to target Roma girls in education: 784 Roma girls out of a total of 1,347 students aged 10-18 benefited from intensive educational support, mentoring, guidance, counseling and grants. The awareness campaigns on the importance of education reached 2,000 women out of a total of 2,662 Roma parents in the four regions covered by the two projects.

The results of research undertaken in both ESF projects provide valuable insight for the development of new strategies at regional and local level educational policies to reduce absenteeism and early school leaving, and increase the successful school reintegration of vulnerable groups. Also, the sessions organized at regional level have created a favorable framework for sharing lessons learned and best practices.

The awareness-raising activities have succeeded in motivating Roma parents to do more to keep their children inside the educational system, encourage them to do well and continue on to secondary and tertiary education. By targeting families in the project Roma Children and Parents Want to Go to School, the fact that beneficiaries come from the same homes and families increased their motivation to continue their education and to advocate with schools, County Inspectorates and city halls to continue with the programs.

## Project Impact

**Roma Children and Parents Want to Go to School & Integrated Educational Services for Roma Communities**



The projects included intensive activities to improve relations between school authorities, teachers, children and parents, Roma and non-Roma. Educational and mentoring activities complemented by awareness sessions dealing with diversity, non-discrimination and mutual tolerance have created a firm foundation for trust and collaboration in the task to reduce inequities in educational outcomes

### Enhancing Roma Youth's Access to Higher Education

This project aimed to reduce dropouts at the early stage of university studies, combining scholarship awards and mentoring support for over 170 first and second-year Roma undergraduates and was implemented between May 2014 and November 2015.

One innovative aspect of the project was that 50 final-year Roma university students took part in the mentoring. Most of these 50 students were RMUSP alumni who received a

preparatory training to help them more fully understand the challenges faced by younger Roma students in a new learning environment. Mentoring sessions were held once a week and were tailored to the needs of the students. By the end of the program very close bonds had been forged between the mentors and the students.

### Ready Set Go!

Ready Set Go! - Increasing Early Childhood Development Outcomes for Roma Children is an initiative of REF Romania that aims to improve access to quality early childhood services for Roma children living in some of Romania's most disadvantaged communities. Operating in 11 localities in six counties in Romania, "Ready Set Go!" reaches over 1,000 children under age six and approximately 1,000 parents. The direct beneficiaries of the project are 560 children and their families, who are involved in quality educational programs in order for the children to improve their educational outcomes during primary school. By the end of 2015, 14 new kinder-



048

**048** Recipients Alberto-Andrei Bozgan and Huzum Vasilica Vladut of the Roma Health Scholar Program, implemented in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia, attend the scheme's first-ever regional meeting. The two-day event featured workshops on careers, identity and practice.

Photo: REF Scholarship Program

**049** Trainers Mariana Sandu and Marius Radulescu from Sastipen, present during first-ever regional meeting of the Roma Health Scholar Program, a scholarship for Roma medical professionals implemented in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia. They gathered in Bucharest to share information about careers, identity and practice.

Photo: REF Scholarship Program



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garten facilities are running in 11 localities providing ECD services for disadvantaged children, with spaces available until April 2017. Trained mediators and mentors participate in this unique programming that was developed and scaled up from an earlier pilot intervention in Telechiu in Bihor County in Romania.

The project, funded by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, was designed to run for a period of 29 months, from December 2014 to April 2017, in partnership with five NGOs, with technical support provided by the World Bank Office in Romania. Ready Set Go! is implemented with the authorization of local councils and city halls, and receives additional guidance from County School Inspectorates and the Ministry of Education.

## SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

For the 2015-16 academic year REF SP received 1,001 scholarship applications from Romania and Bulgaria alone, for three of its scholarship schemes: 872 applications were submitted for RMUSP, 119 for RHSP and 10 for RISP. Out of all applications submitted from the two countries, 567 have been accepted in RMUSP, 85 in RHSP and four in RISP. These two countries accounted for 45% of all submitted applications and 46% of all selected within REF SP, which reflects the large size of the Roma population in both countries, and the participation of these countries in three out of the four available scholarship schemes of REF SP.

In addition to the financial support for covering living and studies costs during the academic year, four RMUSP beneficiaries from Romania received Professional Development Fund support to participate in an international student medical congress in Serbia. Moreover, the medical students of the RHSP scheme implemented in Romania and Bulgaria bene-

### Beneficiaries Spotlight

#### Integrated Educational Services for Roma Communities

##### Students

I learned that school is very important and that is not good to skip class. I also learned that it is good to be more ambitious. I want to graduate from a university. I want to follow my dream and help the community to which I belong.

– Amir

I am currently part of a mentoring session and I wish to finish high school and pass the baccalaureate exam, continue with my studies and go medical school.

– Adrian

##### Second Chance Adults

Times were hard before and I did not have the chance to study more. I heard about this Second Chance project and I came here to Anton Pann School. I want to study as much as possible because I believe I can do it.

– Deujor

I came here to study more in order to get a job because I am young and no one will hire us without studies.

– Marinela

##### Mentors

One of the beauties of the program is that mentors work with wonderful young people, and every time they are surprising me in a good way, and I have a lot to learn from them. [...] Through this program we are trying to increase their self-esteem, to value them, and to prove to them that it is possible to have a career, to be a professional, to have success even though you are Roma. Another very important aspect is the relationship with parents because the projects also involve parents, and my role is to make parents aware of the huge importance of education in their children's lives. And also to make them aware about how important it is to support their children during the whole educational process, to encourage them, to value them in order for them to finish their studies and to have access to the labor market and to have the job they dreamt about.

##### Roma Children and Parents Want to Go to School"

Elena G. comes from a large family living in unimaginable conditions. Part of a single-parent family, with five siblings, she lives in a house that has two rooms, but only one is inhabitable. They have no electricity, no running water, their only source of income is social assistance and child allowances. Unfortunately, this situation is still very common in many communities in Romania.

But despite these precarious conditions, Elena has managed to get a place at the National College in Bucharest with a grade average of 8.12 at admission.

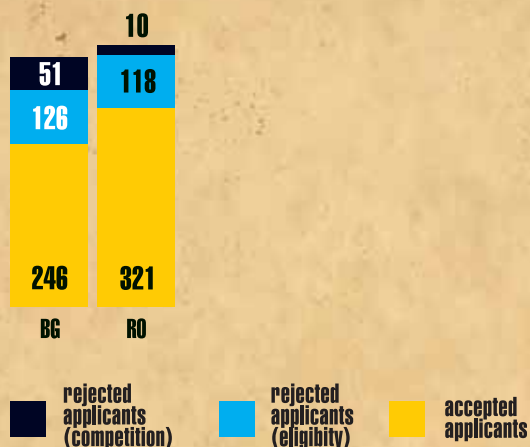
Elena is a direct beneficiary of the project Roma Children and Parents Want to Go School within Galbinasi Secondary School No.1 in Calarasi County. In the 2014–15 school year, she attended classes within the Intensive Educational Support program as well as the mentoring and counseling sessions organized within the project. When she expressed her intention to pass the exam at the National College Elena Cuza in Bucharest, Department of Teacher-Educators, a group of teachers (some of whom were contracted within the project) mobilized to help her fulfill her dream. Elena passed the admission exam and got a place at this school, showing how the desire to learn and community support can combine to turn dreams into reality.





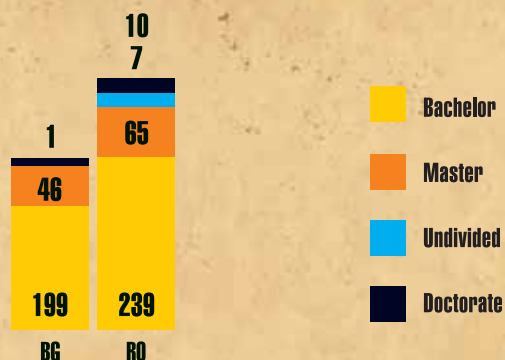
## RMUSP in South Eastern Europe

Total applicants, 2015–16



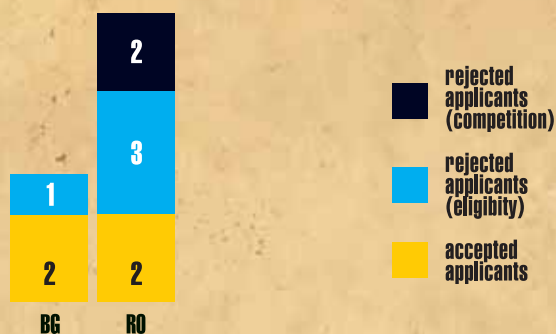
## RMUSP in South Eastern Europe

Accepted applicants by level of study, 2015–16



## RISP in South Eastern Europe

Total applicants, 2015–16



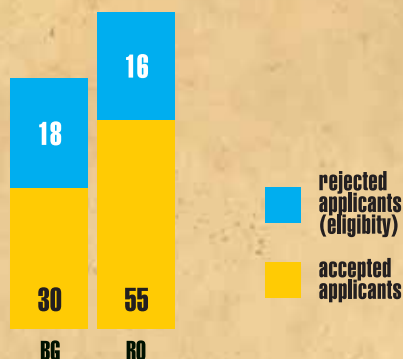
## RISP in South Eastern Europe

Accepted applicants by level of studies, 2015–16



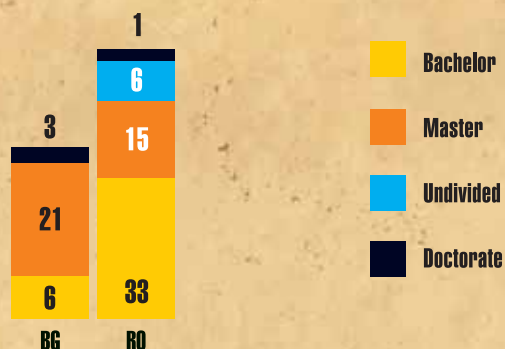
## RHSP in South Eastern Europe

Total applicants, 2015–16



## RHSP in South Eastern Europe

Accepted applicants by level of study, 2015–16



fited from a range of additional components in 2015. As was the case with every academic year since RHSP was launched, the 2015 RHSP beneficiaries from Romania and Bulgaria had mentorship support. In addition, two RHSP beneficiaries received grants for attending foreign language courses. One additional RHSP beneficiary received support for participating in an international congress for medical students organized in Romania.

An important development in REF SP in 2015 was the implementation of the RHSP small-scale projects. Under this new component, five groups of ongoing RHSP beneficiaries (four in Bulgaria and one in Romania) were granted financial support to implement projects focusing on health and access to health care services. The project in a village in the eastern part of Romania comprised an awareness raising campaign concerning breast cancer, emphasizing the importance of prevention and early detection check-ups. In Bulgaria, three projects consisted of awareness-raising campaigns about infant health and nutrition in Varna; also in Varna, another team ran an information campaign in a different Roma neighborhood about diabetes, hypertension, and healthy lifestyle. In the Burgas locality the third team dealt with prevention of Type-2 diabetes, while the team for the fourth Bulgarian project distributed hygiene packages to impoverished families in a Roma community in Dolna Banja.

The very first regional RHSP Annual Students' Conference was organized in summer 2015 in Bucharest, Romania, bringing together 30 RHSP beneficiaries from all program countries, including six from Romania and seven from Bulgaria.



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## MONITORING REF SP BENEFICIARIES' ACADEMIC PROGRESS

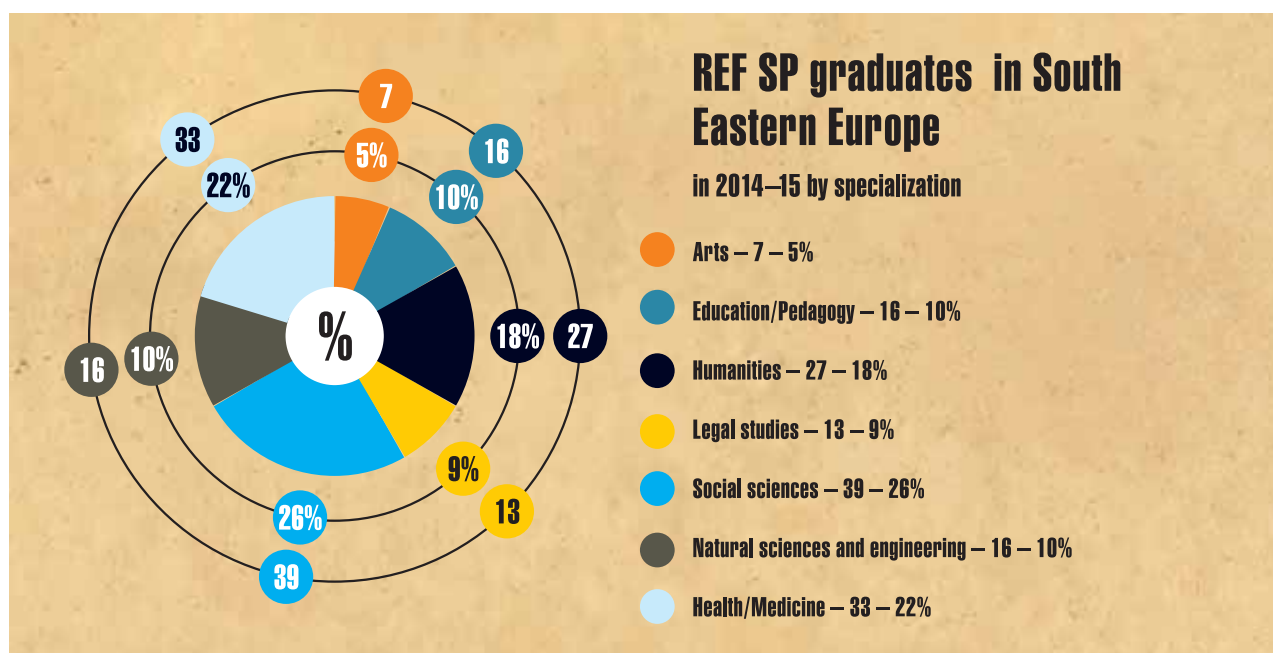
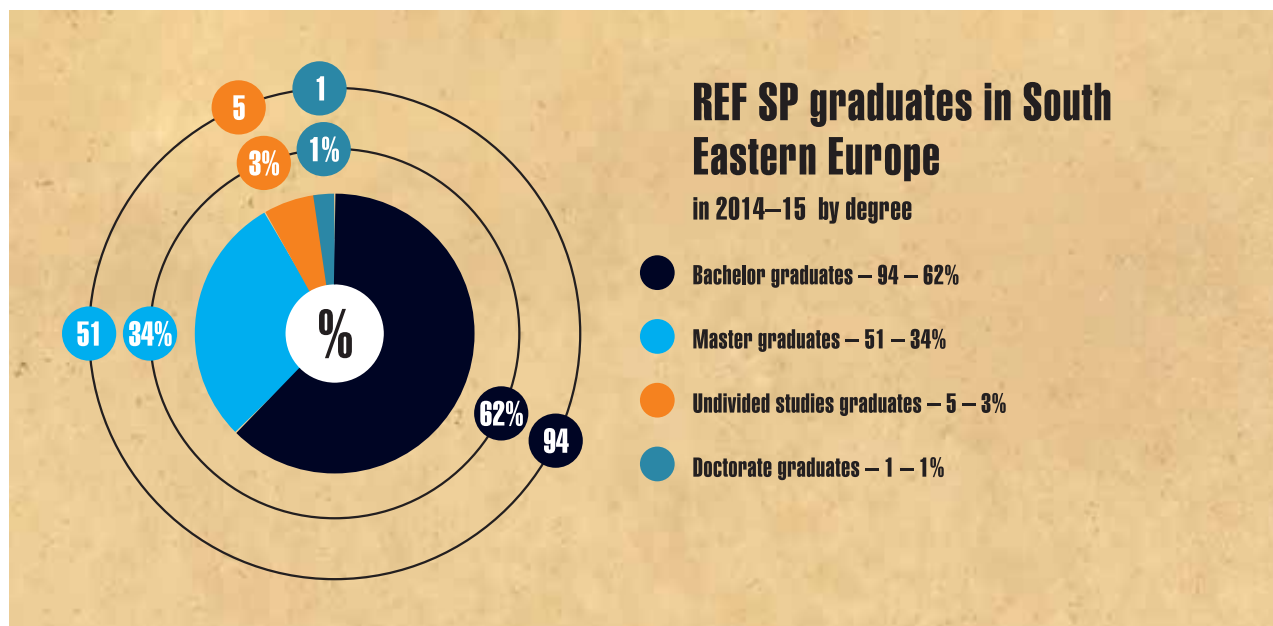
In 2015 REF Scholarship Program continued to monitor beneficiaries' progress from one academic year to another in Bulgaria and Romania, tracking their academic advancement, successful graduation, and cases of students interrupting or dropping out from their studies.

From the 537 REF Scholarship Program beneficiaries from Bulgaria and Romania in the 2014-15 academic year, 382 (71%) were not in graduation years, while the remaining 155 (29%) were in the final years of their degrees and were expected to graduate.

Among the 382 beneficiaries who were not in graduation years, 92% continued their studies in the 2015-16 academic year: 276 with continued REF Scholarship Program support, while 74 without. However, 17 students (4%) interrupted their education or dropped out, while another 15 (4%) could not be reached by REF and therefore their academic progress could not be tracked.

Among the 155 beneficiaries who were expected to graduate in 2015, 151 graduated successfully, while another four postponed their graduation to the next year.

**051** For Better Education, besides bussing Roma children to school as part of a major effort in Kyustendil, aims to improve Roma students academic skills and incentivizing their performance through summer camps.  
Photo: Courtesy of Sacho Krastev







# EASTERN EUROPE

**052** Law students Alona Kazanska and Zinaida Kupina attend the annual LHP conference in Chisinau, Moldova. LHP offers tertiary education scholarships with opportunities for professional development  
Photo: Eduard Bizgu

**053** International relations student Roman Zimenko raises his hand during a workshop held at the annual LHP conference in Chisinau, Moldova.  
Photo: Eduard Bizgu

COUNTRY	EASTERN EUROPE			TOTAL
	NUMBER OF ACTIVE PROJECTS IN 2015	NUMBER OF DIRECT GRANT BENEFICIARIES	NUMBER OF PARENTS PARTICIPATING IN REF SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES	
Moldova	1	90	40	130
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>130</b>

\* REF's Grant portfolio only operates on a small scale in Moldova does not operate in Russia and Ukraine. Only the Scholarship Program operates in all three countries under the Law and Humanities Program.





## SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM IN MOLDOVA, RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

For the 2015-16 academic year the REF SP received 289 scholarship applications from Moldova, Russia and Ukraine. The majority of these applications (284) were for the LHP scholarship scheme which is only implemented in these countries, while five applications were submitted for the RISP scheme that supports international student mobility. Out of the 289 submitted applications, 202 were accepted for LHP and three were accepted for RISP. Among the three international students who were accepted for RISP, one student is studying in Estonia and two in Austria.

In addition to the financial support for covering living costs and tuition fees throughout the academic year, the LHP scholarship scheme offers its beneficiaries support to study foreign languages, to participate in academic conferences, internships, and research projects, as well as for academic and professional development support through a range of additional components. Furthermore, the LHP scheme provides in-country professional development trainings and organizes an annual student conference bringing together beneficiaries from all three countries. LHP also provides support for beneficiaries who seek to implement small-scale community development projects aimed at advancing development of Roma communities at local level.

### Grantee Voices – Ukraine

Miroslav Horvat – Alumni of LHP REF scholarship program [2010-2014]

"They dreamed of giving me a good education and they insisted that I enter in a mainstream, not segregated school. I was really fond of studying and attended school with interest and pleasure." Miroslav is a passionate human rights and Roma rights activist and recently elected to the Uzhgorod City Council. "I develop and promote local programs in support of the Roma national minority in the city, in particular to promote equality in their right to education, especially in the settlements. I do believe that educated and motivated people can do a lot to help improve the lives of Roma people."

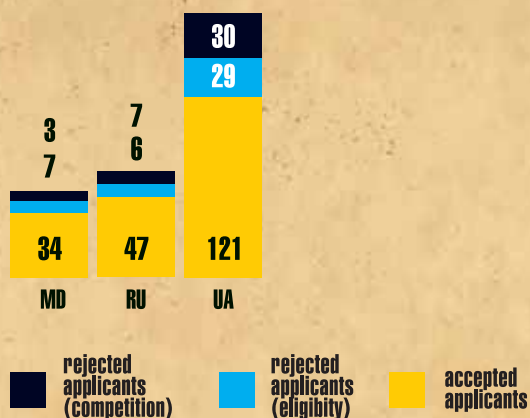
In addition to the scholarship support in the 2015-16 academic year, a number of 25 LHP beneficiaries from Moldova, Russia and Ukraine received additional financial support to study foreign languages in locally-accredited language schools. Among these beneficiaries, 24 received support for English courses and one for German. Nine students (two from Moldova and seven from Ukraine) also received financial support for participating in extracurricular activities that included in-country traineeships, attendance at local academic conferences, while five students received support to participate in regional conferences in Budapest and Warsaw.

To enhance beneficiaries' personal and professional development, in 2015 LHP organized one-day in-country trainings in each of the three LHP countries. In July 2015, 50 LHP beneficiaries and alumni from the three countries gathered for the two-day annual LHP students' conference in Chisinau, Moldova, where participants discussed issues related to Roma culture, identity and active citizenship.

In 2015 LHP also supported the implementation of four small-scale community development projects (at up to 2,500 EUR per project) by groups of past and present LHP beneficiaries, with one implemented in Moldova, one in Russia and two in Ukraine. The project in Moldova consisted of the renovation and reopening of a small community library in a Roma village, for which students organized a book donation campaign, while the project in Russia organized literacy classes for the inhabitants of a segregated Roma camp located in Tula district of Russia. One project in Ukraine aimed at increasing the knowledge and awareness of Roma living in a locality in the Transcarpathian region about political and social life, thus motivating them to become more active citizens in their communities' decision-making and electoral processes.

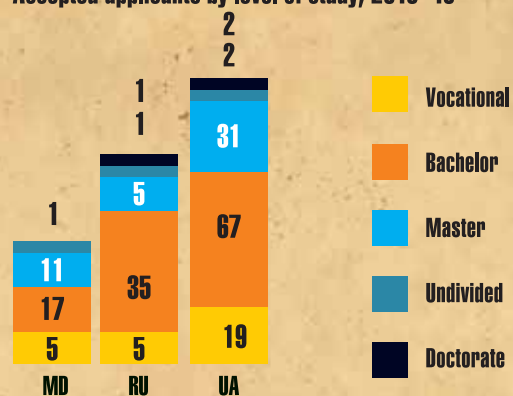
## LHP in Eastern Europe

Accepted and rejected scholarship applicants (2015–16 academic year)



## LHP in Eastern Europe

Accepted applicants by level of study, 2015–16



## RISP in Eastern Europe

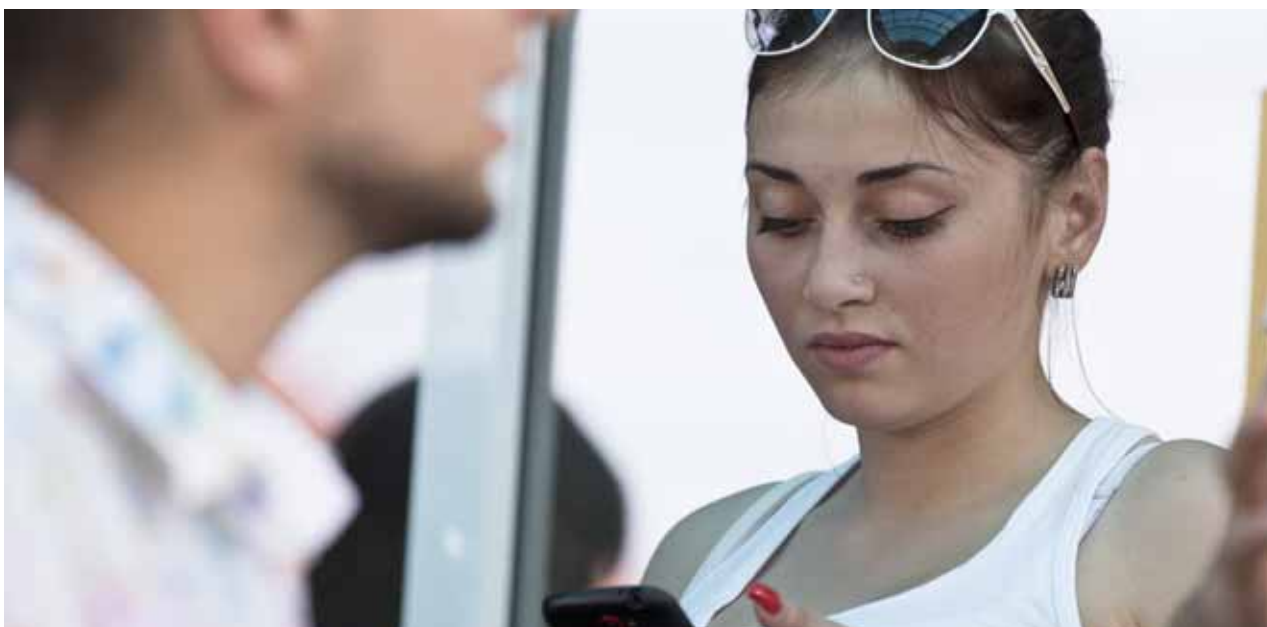
Accepted and rejected scholarship applicants (2015–16 academic year)



## RISP in Eastern Europe

Accepted applicants by level of studies (2015–16 academic year)





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Another Ukraine project focused on providing counseling and professional orientation to Roma students in graduation years, as well as to Roma recent graduates, in their efforts to access the labor market.

## MONITORING REF SP BENEFICIARIES' ACADEMIC PROGRESS

In 2015 the REF Scholarship Program tracked beneficiaries' progress from one academic year to another in the three countries, in order to monitor students' academic advancement, successful graduation, or cases of interrupted or dropped out studies.

Out of the 181 REF SP beneficiaries of the 2014-15 academic year, 124 (69%) were not in graduation years, while the remaining 57 (31%) were in the final years of their degrees and were expected to graduate in Moldova, Russia and Ukraine. Among the 124 beneficiaries who were not in graduation years, almost all (119 or 96%) progressed successfully to the next academic year (108 with continued REF support, 11 with-

out), while five students from Ukraine interrupted their studies or dropped out altogether.

Among the 57 beneficiaries who were expected to graduate in 2015, 56 graduated successfully, while one student enrolled in Doctorate studies prolonged the thesis writing period by one additional year.



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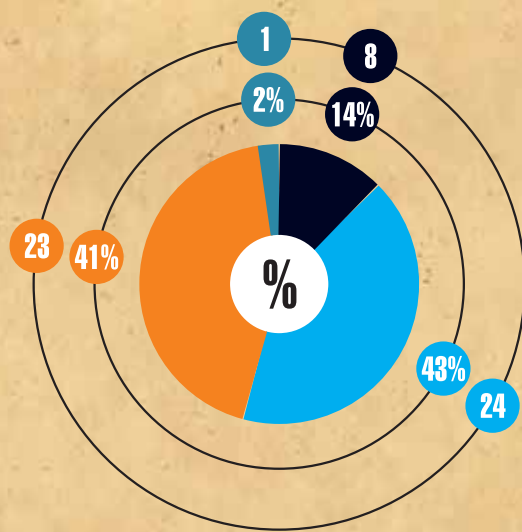


**054** Law student Zinaida Kupina takes a break from the workshops during the annual LHP conference in Chisinau, Moldova.

Photo: Eduard Bizgu

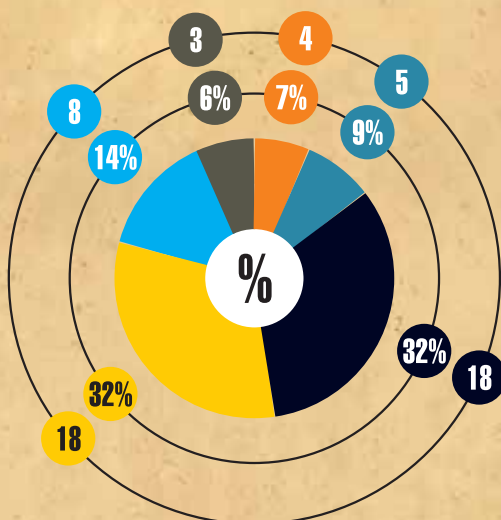
**055** LHP students react during the LHP annual conference in Chisinau, Moldova.

Photo: Eduard Bizgu



## REF SP graduates in Eastern Europe of 2014–15 by degree

- Vocational graduates – 8 – 14%
- Bachelor graduates – 24 – 43%
- Master graduates – 23 – 41%
- Undivided studies graduates – 1 – 2%



## REF SP in Eastern Europe graduates of 2014–15 by specialization

- Arts – 4 – 7%
- Humanities – 5 – 9%
- Legal studies – 18 – 32%
- Social sciences – 18 – 32%
- Natural sciences and engineering – 8 – 14%
- Health/Medicine – 3 – 6%

# TEN YEARS OF REF

Ten years marks an important threshold as REF seeks to refine its strategic framework of research, grants and scholarships. REF celebrated its ten-year anniversary, which coincided with the end of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, with several events targeting students, teachers, researchers and policymakers.

## ROMAVERSITAS SUMMIT

*RomaVersitas* provides academic services and support to almost 500 Roma students currently enrolled in universities in Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova and Serbia<sup>31</sup> through a combination of tutoring, mentoring, extracurricular activities and other opportunities for personal and educational growth. An important bridge between university and labor market success, as well as a bridge to develop and express their Roma culture, identity and pride, the Roma Education Fund hosted the *RomaVersitas* Summit in Budapest in early September, bringing together 80 Roma students for networking, capacity building, team building and personal development opportunities.

Henriett Dinok, a distinguished *RomaVersitas* alumna, was among the first to speak to the young audience of delegates selected by popular vote within their national programs.

“*RomaVersitas* is not just a training and scholarship program for Roma university students. *RomaVersitas* means a whole world for most of the students, *RomaVersitas* made us the people who our parents wanted us to be, who we wanted to be... *RomaVersitas* gave us not only financial support, but a community, values, a mission, a dedication.”

Over the next two days, the students presented how *RomaVersitas* has boosted the academic and professional skills



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they need for today’s competitive labor market. “University is the last piece of the puzzle. I enrolled because I wanted an opportunity for professional development as well as to be respected in society. With my achievements I hope to diminish the prejudices against Roma and show people that the situation of Roma is the result of poverty and social exclusion. If given a chance, they can do as well as non-Roma,” said Albi Veizi, a member of *RomaVersitas* Albania.

The participants also heard from business, political and social leaders like Andrzej Mirga, Chair of the REF Board; Peter Halacsy, CTO and co-founder of Hungary’s leading startup, Prezi; Erika Varga, entrepreneur and founder of *Romani Design*, an independent Roma fashion label; Terry Reintke, Greens MEP; and Zeljko Jovanovic, Director of OSF’s Roma Initiatives Office.

At its conclusion, Andrzej Mirga put forward that REF is “interested in seeing you be successful in a good, well-paid job. This is an immediate need after school. REF is more than this, mobilizing people, but about shaping future Roma elites. You are foreseen as the next generation to play a role in the Roma community. It is about multiplying your results within the community.”<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Follow the link to Facebook page featuring a video and gallery including links to all the participating programs: <https://www.facebook.com/RomaVersitasInternational/>

<sup>31</sup> Minutes to the concluding remarks of Andrzej Mirga, REF Chair, *RomaVersitas* Summit, Budapest, September 5, 2015.



To mark REF's anniversary, we produced a short video with remarks from donors, board members and former directors, including REF's co-founder, Mr. George Soros.

Watch how REF narrowed the gap at:  
<http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/videos/ten-years-roma-education-fund>

056 REF Grants Manager Beata Olahova and Monitoring and Evaluation Officer Marius Taba react together with friends at the ten-year celebration of REF at Corvinus University.  
 Photo: Miklos Deri

## ROMA TEACHERS CONFERENCE

The needs of children and families are at the forefront of REF's portfolio, often overshadowing the role of teaching professionals in providing quality, inclusive education services and shaping the destiny of children's social development and health, as well as later prospects for growth, happiness and a satisfying and rewarding life. Teachers' commitment and contribution is essential to REF's mission, but widespread bias and prejudice have often hindered the treatment of Roma pupils in Central and South Eastern European schools. This phenomenon has driven REF to provide over 30,000 teachers<sup>32</sup> from 2005-2014 with in-service training to challenge their often conservative attitudes to race, diversity and multiculturalism in schools.

On the occasion of its tenth anniversary, and to address the instrumental role Roma teachers play, REF brought together an international group of some 40 Roma teachers from Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia, most of whom are alumni of the REF Scholarship Program, to discuss the challenges, successes and future steps that would strengthen REF's vision of diverse, integrated schools providing quality educational services.

Professor Charles Payne from the University of Chicago, keynote speaker, cited the attitudes of teachers as a con-

tributing factor of racial inequality in the education system in the United States, a theory which gave rise to debate in which the Roma teachers reviewed their respective national education systems and identified and presented the main obstacles to change. Chief among their observations was the necessity of Roma teachers to participate in schools' administrative and policy decisions in order to directly influence local school politics.

Furthermore, participants reflected on their own institutional experiences, pedagogical developments and good practices when merging their Roma cultural background into their classrooms and mobilize successful teaching and learning methodologies and teachers' tools that incorporate their own intercultural background. The two main group sessions of the conference aimed to identify all challenges teachers face and identify possible solutions for overcoming them. Sharing the results in a roundtable discussion enabled the participants to get a deep insight into country-level situational analyses and provided a common tool-kit for overall solutions.

<sup>32</sup> More specifically, a cumulative figure of 30,841 teachers. See also: *REF Annual Report 2014*, Table 7. Beneficiaries of REF-Funded Grant Projects by Indicator, p. 20.  
 Available online: [http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ref\\_annual\\_2014\\_web\\_singlepages-mod.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ref_annual_2014_web_singlepages-mod.pdf)

**057** REF Chair Andrzej Mirga speaks at the opening of the RomaVersitas Student Summit in Budapest, Hungary. Photo: Miklos Deri

**058** REF Scholarship Program Officer Radoslav Kuzmanov presents the basic steps of how to form an international association to participants at the Roma Teachers Conference in Bratislava, Slovakia.

Panos for Open Society Foundations – Bjorn Steinz  
**059** REF staff and Roma teachers at the Roma Teachers Conference in Bratislava, Slovakia.  
 Photo: Open Society Foundations – Bjorn Steinz



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For example, Daniela Roxin who has been teaching Roma culture, history and traditions to grades five to eight at a middle school in Oradea for the last 11 years, shared some observations about her career:

“I consider it very important that the communities that I am involved with started to better understand the decision-making processes. They’ve learned that you’ve got to be firm and that in order to request something you need to follow the formalities, organize yourselves and submit a request in person. Through these kinds of experiences we have learned how to influence policies on the local level.”

Andrzej Mirga, Chair of REF’s Board, reiterated REF’s commitment: “Since 2005, 150 Roma students, with the support of REF’s scholarship program, have graduated from teaching and pedagogy faculties. Around 40 of you working as teachers are with us here today. While this is a positive outcome, it is not sufficient; we should all aim to increase this number... it should not be our ambition to be just Roma school assistants. We should have more and more teachers, highly qualified, part of professional teaching staff, with a significant role to play.”<sup>33</sup>

## REF SIDE-EVENT TO THE EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE

The Roma Education Fund hosted a side-event at Corvinus University on September 7, 2015 to coincide with the European Educational Research Conference in Budapest, Hungary and presented a brief survey of the Fund’s achievement in closing the gap in educational achievements between Roma and non-Roma entitled, Ten Years of the Roma Education Fund: From Pilot Projects to Education Policies.

Over the past 10 years REF has shown that desegregation is possible and better for all; that substantive Roma participation is crucial for success; and that effective cooperation on the ground delivers the kind of change that can transform the lives of tens of thousands of Roma pupils. As part of its mission to close the gap in educational achievements between Roma and non-Roma, REF has advocated for change through academic and policy debates, producing knowledge, generating data and disseminating information on how best to deliver equitable outcomes in education. Many international bodies and national governments have actively sought partnerships with REF to advise on policy and implement projects to promote inclusive education.

At the opening of the event, Andrzej Mirga, Chair of the Roma Education Fund, reminded the audience of REF’s mission. “REF advocates from involvement of central and municipal education authorities for introducing systematic change in education that would work to ensure better educational

<sup>33</sup> Available online:  
<http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/news/ref/news-and-events/ref-chair-andrzej-mirga-addresses-roma-teachers-working-conference-bratislava>





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outcomes and open prospects for Roma youth in future in particular as a labor market.”

The Central European University's Gabor Kezdi followed with a keynote presentation on measuring impact through random control trials, after which REF staff presented lessons learned from administering grants, scholarships and monitoring.

Dan Pavel Doghi, REF's Higher Education Program Manager, recalled, “There is an expectation that by now, after so many years of piloting and gathering results and proofs that our interventions work, its time the governments to get more involved. Adopt the good models that function and back up financially from the state budget. Roma can make it to higher education and can make it as mainstream professionals.”

Eben Friedman later moderated a debate among Magda Matache, Bernard Rorke and Cristian Brüggemann on recent educational policies, while Marton Rovid moderated the last debate on Roma education research with Andrew Ryder, Stela Garaz and Iulius Rostas.

In an open debate, Roma and pro-Roma scholars, educators, policymakers and REF staff reflected critically on: the lessons learned and potential cooperation with education scholars and Roma in the upcoming years; a review of recent developments in the ongoing struggle to improve educational policies for Roma; and considered a proposal to form a Roma Education Network.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION INTERNATIONALIZATION AND MOBILITY: INCLUSION, EQUALITIES AND INNOVATIONS**

In January 2015, REF partnered in a research and networking project consortium for a project funded by Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and entitled Higher Education Internationalization and Mobility: Inclusion, Equalities and Innovations (HEIM), aimed at analyzing how principles of equity and inclusion can be applied to internationalization strategies and programs in higher education, as well as developing research and innovation capacity in this field. The research focuses on the Roma community in Europe as a critical example of a marginalized group, at both staff and student levels. The project implementation is led by the Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research of the University of Sussex in UK, in partnership with two other European universities (Umea University in Sweden and University of Seville in Spain) and with REF as the non-academic partner of the project consortium. Project activities started in January 2015 and the planned project duration is three years.

During 2015 REF participated in the implementation of three working packages of the HEIM project. Two of these working packages consisted of research secondments, during which staff members (11 in total; eight from REF) and doctorate students (eight in total; five from REF) of partner institutions spent one month in another institution of the consortium with the aim of networking and conducting research on a specific theme of the project, while the third working package was a research and data analysis training organized by Sussex University for REF staff members and ongoing doctorate students who receive REF scholarship support.

In March 2015 REF hosted one senior researcher and one doctorate student from each of the three partner universities for a month, during which the seconded guests familiarized themselves with the barriers and enablers for accessing educational opportunities at tertiary level, and produced guidelines for good practice in supporting Roma access to higher education in their own countries.

In autumn 2015 it was REF staff representatives and ongoing doctorate students supported by REF who were seconded to each of the partner universities for a month (two secondees to each university respectively), to develop REF's expertise on barriers and enablers for marginalized minorities in European higher education and to apply REF's specialist knowledge to specific country contexts.

The consortium partners, including REF representatives, presented the HEIM project and its initial outputs at two international academic conferences focused on education

policies: the annual conference of the European Educational Research Association that took place in Budapest in September 7-11, 2015, as well as the conference of the Society for Research into Higher Education that took place in Newport in South Wales (UK) in December 9-11, 2015.

## ROMA EARLY CHILDHOOD INCLUSION +

### Roma Early Childhood Inclusion (RECI+) reports call for more action in Croatia and the Czech Republic

The Roma Early Childhood Inclusion (RECI) is a joint initiative between the Early Childhood Program of Open Society Foundations (OSF), REF and UNICEF. In 2015 two new joint reports were published about the inclusion of young Roma children and families in early childhood education and care (ECEC).

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The RECI+ reports are an important investment in addressing the crucial need to implement sound early childhood education and care policies for Roma children for three main reasons:

First, to widen the understanding that the early childhood period is the foundation stage not only of individual health, welfare and education, but also of social equality and cohesion. RECI+ reports address the need for credible and substantive contributions to national debates surrounding ECEC, integrated education and Roma inclusion; and provide practical assistance and support to governments, public authorities, policymakers and education practitioners.

Second, to support the growing commitment of Roma non-governmental organizations and governments to increase access to ECEC for Roma children.

Third, to provide intergovernmental organizations such as the European Commission and the Council of Europe with evidence-based research and guidance to ensure that EU Member States and accession countries fully recognize the importance of early childhood education and care (ECEC) to the success of Roma integration strategies; and to assist those governments to develop programs to ensure unhindered and equal access to quality ECEC services and provision for Roma children.

- 060 Veselina Ognanova, a Bulgarian Roma teacher at the Roma Teachers Conference in Bratislava, Slovakia. Photo: Björn Steinz/Panos for Open Society Foundations
- 061 REF Country Facilitator for Croatia Sinisa Music speaks at the launch of the Croatian report on early childhood outcomes in Zagreb, Croatia. Photo: Davor Kovacevic
- 062 RECI+ partners prepare for the launch of the Croatian report on early childhood outcomes in Zagreb, Croatia. Photo: Davor Kovacevic

In 2015 the three organizations launched the Croatian and the Czech reports with clear conclusions and recommendations. This cooperation will continue with the aim to produce a series of country reports, including one on Hungary which is scheduled to be published in 2016.

The RECI+ report highlighted several worrying factors in Croatia which affect the overall situation of early childhood development in the country, for example, low primary school completion rate (24% of sample), even lower secondary school completion rate (eight percent of sample), poor living conditions, and no health insurance coverage. The report's recommendations included the provision of free transportation, a compulsory (two-year) quality preschool education program, sufficient number of places in institutions and the engagement of Roma children in extracurricular, cultural and sports activities. Moreover, access to integrated preschool groups should be ensured for all Roma children, to avoid Roma community based preschool provision that is *de facto* ethnically segregated.

In early November 2015 the RECI+ special report on the Czech Republic was launched in Prague. The report confirmed that the Czech Republic exhibits a relatively high level of educational inequality. The main equity-related policy challenges relate to the inadequate supply of early childhood education and care provision, the delayed start of mainstream schooling, and a rigidly differentiated education system in which certain children, particularly Roma and children with disabilities, are structurally excluded from mainstream educational opportunities.

Among its recommendations, the report called on the central government to take all necessary legislative, legal, or administrative actions to ensure that within one year the pre-primary preparatory year (whether compulsory or an entitlement) is implemented only within kindergartens and mainstream basic schools; and to appoint appropriately trained Roma teachers, mediators and teaching assistants.

# FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

## ORGANIZATION OF ROMA EDUCATION FUND

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

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

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

## SUMMARY OF REF FINANCIALS

REF remained a significant source of funding for Roma education projects in 2015 and provided EUR 9.4 million to Roma organizations and Roma education related projects. Over 90% of REF budget is spent on programs and beneficiaries in 16 countries.

TABLE: SOURCES OF FUNDS AND SPENDING OF REF FOUNDATIONS IN 2015 IN EUR

	REF SWITZERLAND	REF HUNGARY	REF ROMANIA	REF SLOVAKIA
Opening foundation capital	31,164	(13,146)	(519,376)	(39,721)
Third party donor income	6,578,198	552,853	3,052,751	0
Other income	285,496	2,767	17,898	5
<b>Total Sources</b>	<b>6,894,858</b>	<b>542,474</b>	<b>2,551,273</b>	<b>(39,716)</b>
Transfers within REF network		1,533,371	141,569	191,954
<b>TOTAL SOURCES WITH TRANSFERS</b>	<b>6,894,858</b>	<b>2,075,845</b>	<b>2,692,842</b>	<b>152,238</b>
Grant program	1,830,261	67,663	0	253,270
Tertiary education scholarships	2,131,612	228,410	13,737	2,701
Own educational projects	9,086	480,172	3,523,572	45,687
Capacity building, policy development and communications	381,131	364,697	102,647	0
Administrative expenses	145,977	683,357	0	1,137
Other expenses	400,000	14,179	46,930	0
Accumulated capital	329,826	224,508	(1,021,443)	(150,556)
<b>Total Spending</b>	<b>5,227,893</b>	<b>2,062,986</b>	<b>2,665,443</b>	<b>152,238</b>
Transfers within REF network	1,666,965	12,859	27,399	0
<b>TOTAL SPENDING WITH TRANSFERS</b>	<b>6,894,858</b>	<b>2,075,845</b>	<b>2,692,842</b>	<b>152,238</b>



From total overall funding of EUR 9.9 million REF spent EUR 2.1 million on new grants contracted in its grant program in 13 countries and EUR 2.4 million on tertiary scholarships for Roma students in 16 countries. Altogether REF spending under these two programs in 2015 is allocated to the main educational models of REF as follows:

#### NEW COMMITMENTS OF REF FOUNDATIONS IN 2015 BY EDUCATIONAL MODELS

MODEL	NUMBER OF NEW PROJECTS IN 2015	FUNDS COMMITTED IN 2015, EUR
Early Childhood Education	15	654,640
Primary Education	8	120,515
Secondary Education	3	774,082
Tertiary Education (including Scholarship Program spending in 2015)	n/a <sup>34</sup>	2,879,145
Adult Education	2	99,272
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,527,653</b>

In 2015, REF developed and implemented 12 projects from funding provided, *inter alia*, by the European Union, Norway Grants, UNICEF, OSCE, Velux and the Network of European Foundations with a total spending of EUR 4.1 million. A further EUR 0.8 million was spent on capacity building, communication, technical assistance, policy development and trainings. The total administrative expenses, EUR 0.8 million, are less than 10% of program related spending.

## KEY EVENTS IN REF NETWORK

REF network had foundations and branch offices in six countries in 2015. Key developments are summarized below:

### REF Switzerland (REF CH)

REF Switzerland provided EUR 1.8 million for grants in the framework of the project support program and EUR 2.1 million for tertiary scholarships. Besides program costs, REF Switzerland funded the operations of the headquarters of REF Network in Budapest, Hungary, supported the implementation of ESF projects by REF Romania, including the provision of its own contribution to these projects, and secured funding for the various programs implemented by REF Slovakia. In addition, REF Switzerland provided EUR 570,000 bridge financing for REF Romania to allow full implementation of the ESF projects.

In relation to the ESF projects implemented by REF Romania since 2009 in the total amount of EUR 12 million, it is ex-

pected that accumulated project expenses not covered by ESF and REF contributions such as ineligible administrative expenses and foreign exchange losses suffered on financing these projects will have to be covered by REF Switzerland.

### REF Hungary (REF HU)

Besides managing the core programs of REF and being the headquarters of the REF network, REF Hungary has been active in the implementation of a number of educational projects financed from EU/IPA, EEA and other donor funds through its offices in Hungary, Serbia and Montenegro, including:

- Early childhood education and care at Konik Camp, Montenegro in partnership with HELP
- Secondary scholarship program in Serbia funded by OSCE
- HEIM research project funded by the Executive Research Agency of the EC
- Velux scholarship project for Roma students studying in pedagogy faculties in Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia funded by the Velux foundations
- The third phase of the 'A Good Start' funded by the Network of European Foundations, Erste and Freudenberg Stiftung

<sup>34</sup> The Grant program had five RomaVersitas projects committed in 2015 in Tertiary Education; this model also includes the beneficiaries of the scholarship program of 1,427 students for 2015-16 academic year.



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In addition, REF Hungary is partnering with REF Romania in implementation of its educational projects funded by ESF and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism.

In 2015, REF Hungary continued its cooperation with the Council of Europe Bank. Based on a framework loan agreement signed in 2013, REF Hungary utilized the full loan amount of EUR 1,500,000 to pre-finance EU-funded projects of REF Romania.

## REF Romania (REF RO)

In 2015, REF Romania successfully closed the implementation of three large-scale educational projects with a total value of EUR 4.0 million targeting Roma pupils and students in primary, secondary and tertiary education, as well as adults completing their secondary education. The closing reports of the projects were submitted in February 2016.

In addition, REF Romania continues the implementation of the Ready, Set, Go! - Increasing Early Childhood Development Outcomes for Roma Children, which targets early childhood development outcomes for some 1,400 Roma children. This project is supported by a grant through the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, in the framework of the "RO 25 Poverty Alleviation Programme in Romania." The total grant amount is EUR 2.43 million.

**063** RHSP student Alberto-Andrei Bozgan, in his fifth year of medical school, comments at the RHSP regional meeting in Bucharest, Romania.

Photo: REF Scholarship Program

**064** Alina Covaci, Program Officer at the OSF Roma Health Project, attends the RHSP meeting in Bucharest, Romania.

Photo: REF Scholarship Program

**065** Director of RomaVersitas Bulgaria, Reyhan Hyusein (center), poses with members of RomaVersitas Bulgaria after meeting with then Bulgarian Minister of Education Todor Tanev to discuss the program and its achievements.

Photo: Courtesy of RomaVersitas Bulgaria



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## REF Slovakia (REF SK)

In 2015, REF Slovakia continued the implementation of REF's secondary scholarship program to improve school academic performance of the disadvantaged secondary school students, their attendance rate, graduation rate, transition rate from secondary to tertiary education and to decrease their dropout rate in Slovakia. Besides this project, REF Slovakia participates in the implementation of the Velux project in partnership with REF Hungary in Slovakia and Czech Republic, and provides local coordination for REF's Tertiary Scholarship (RMUSP) program and country facilitator services to the Grant Program managed by REF Switzerland.



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## FUNDRAISING

REF is proud of further expanding its family of donors in 2015. New donors include Porticus, which funds REF's RomaVersitas program in several countries World Vision, which supported activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Embassy of the United States in Slovakia, which co-funded the Roma Teachers' Conference organized in the framework of REF 10 events in Bratislava.

Beside the continuous support from our loyal individual donors, REF continued to strengthen relationships and cooperation with its large donors, managing to ensure the long term commitment of the Swedish International Development Corporation (SIDA) for the period of 2015-2019 and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for the period of 2015-2020.

In 2015 REF actively applied for new calls funded by the EU/IPA or other institutional donors. As a result, REF Hungary has been awarded by the Ministry of Finance of Macedonia a grant of EUR 181,322, funded by IPA, to implement an educational project to increase the long-term employability of marginalized Roma communities in five localities through adult education and training, literacy programs, and increased access to early childhood education and care. REF was also awarded by Central European Initiative (CEI) Cooperation Fund a grant to co-fund an international knowledge exchange project focusing on Early Childhood Development.

## INCOME RECEIVED BY ROMA EDUCATION FUND NETWORK 2011-2015

DONORS	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	TOTAL
<b>RECEIVED BY REF SWITZERLAND</b>						
Council of Europe			7,788			7,788
DFID United Kingdom				50,000	50,000	100,000
ERSTE Group AG				500,000		500,000
European Commission			1,808			1,808
EU: AGS project			16,558			16,558
EVZ-Erinnerung	296,580	179,400		221,000	234,000	930,980
Finnish Government	100,000					100,000
Fundación Secretariado Gitano		5,965	7,936			13,901
HH Management					181,159	181,159
Individuals	4,555		450		5	5,010
Karl Popper Foundation			87,928			87,928
LEGO Foundation	7,660					7,660
Mirabaud wedding donations				35,466		35,466
Mirabaud Pierre					1,000	1,000
Morgan Stanley				197		197
Network of European Foundation		120,000	155,072		119,600	394,672
Norwegian Family		28,135	24,882	21,342		74,359
Porticus					100,000	100,000
Salzburg Global Seminar		1,026				1,026
SIDA Sweden	1,051,983		1,042,250		542,160	2,636,393
Soros-Bolton wedding			33,469	13,345		46,814
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	420,000	800,000	700,000	350,000	832,618	3,102,618
Open Society Foundations	5,195,047	6,584,344	4,363,123	2,094,538	4,492,342	22,729,394
Ostrava Municipality			6,200	6,200	6,200	18,600
The Velux Foundations					1,034	1,034
UNICEF				57,458		57,458
US Embassy, Slovakia					1,677	1,677
WB Community Fund	12,915	9,717	8,375	5,776	11,838	48,621
World Bank IBRD	363,891	703,915	290,366	291,925		1,650,097
World Vision					4,565	4,565
<b>Total received by REF Switzerland</b>	<b>7,452,631</b>	<b>8,432,502</b>	<b>6,746,205</b>	<b>3,647,247</b>	<b>6,578,198</b>	<b>32,852,218</b>
<b>RECEIVED BY REF HUNGARY</b>						
American House Family		4,902	5,112			10,014
Bernard Van Leer Foundation	260,918	68,448		68,111		397,477
European Commission-DG REGIO	717,244	236,195				953,439
European Commission-Research Executive Agency			40,622	40,622		
Fundación Secretariado Gitano		6,006				6,006
HELP HILFE		113,537	70,827	283,934	118,769	587,067
Ministry for Human and Minorities Montenegro			76,242		76,242	
Ministry of Slovak Republic				5,955	54,045	60,000
OSCE				46,313	86,438	132,751
REF Romania (ESF/EEA projects)				44,709	27,399	72,108
Sandor Demjan Foundation	250,000					250,000
Tempus Foundation	1,001	788	192			1,981
UNDP	1,732					1,732
The Velux Foundations				92,435	245,861	338,296
World Bank IBRD		8,184				8,184
Other donors, individuals			11,124	26,401	7,118	44,643
<b>Total received by REF Hungary</b>	<b>1,230,895</b>	<b>438,060</b>	<b>87,255</b>	<b>644,100</b>	<b>580,252</b>	<b>2,980,562</b>
<b>RECEIVED BY REF ROMANIA</b>						
Fundación Secretariado Gitano		3,811	1,400			5,211
Romanian Management Authority-as partner	180,128	149,155	406,796			736,079
Romanian Management Authority-as lead entity	2,144,240	556,629	3,233,296	1,050,075	2,804,606	9,788,846
Norway Grants					248,145	248,145
UNICEF	6,534	13,330				19,864
Individuals		100	23			123
<b>Total received by REF Romania</b>	<b>2,330,902</b>	<b>723,025</b>	<b>3,641,515</b>	<b>1,050,075</b>	<b>3,052,751</b>	<b>10,798,268</b>
<b>TOTAL DONATIONS RECEIVED</b>	<b>11,014,428</b>	<b>9,593,587</b>	<b>10,474,975</b>	<b>5,341,422</b>	<b>10,211,201</b>	<b>46,631,047</b>



## ACCOUNTING POLICY

### 1 BOOK-KEEPING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

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

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

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

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

All financial statements according to REF Accounting Policy (including the statement of income and expenditure, the balance sheet and the notes) have to be presented in EUR (additionally in local currency where necessary) and issued in English (including the audit reports).

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

### 2 ACCOUNTING PRINCIPLES

#### 2.1 GENERAL TERMS

The books of the REF Entities are basically maintained in local currency legally required, with the exception of REF Switzerland where the books are maintained in EUR since its functional currency is EUR.

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

##### 2.1.1 Currency Translation

All resulting unrealized and realized gains and losses from



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currency translations are recorded in a separate position in the statement of income and expenditure. Specific rules for the REF Entities are summarized below:

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

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

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

**067** The foundations for school success begin in integrated, inclusive classrooms, as they do for this Roma pupil who has attended a Preschool Club in preparation for primary school, together with his peers in Ostrava Municipality, Czech Republic. Photo: Jana Baudysova



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#### REF Slovakia

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

#### 2.1.2 Reporting Period

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

### 2.2 INCOME

#### 2.3.1 Programs and Grants

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

#### 2.2.2 Interest Income

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

### 2.3 EXPENSES

#### 2.3.1 Programs and Grants

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

#### 2.3.2 Administrative expenses

This includes administrative expenses of the operation, capital and equipment, contractors, HR related expenses of the administrative staff and their travel expenditures which do not directly belong to the projects. The administrative expenses have to be recognized at nominal value. Already known costs have to be accrued.

#### 2.3.3 Partner expenses

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

### 2.4 BALANCE SHEET

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

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

#### 2.4.2 Receivables valuation

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

#### 2.4.3 Deferred costs

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

#### 2.4.4 Accrued costs

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

## REF ENTITIES: BALANCE SHEET, DECEMBER 31, 2015 AND DECEMBER 31, 2014

	REF SWITZERLAND		REF ROMANIA		REF HUNGARY		REF SLOVAKIA	
	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
Cash at banks	2,513,648	2,637,563	751,394	54,718	272,266	221,280	8,791	65,166
Receivables	0	0	2,082,725	2,288,527	48,010	36,099	41,027	202,657
Loan to REF Entities	875,000	0	0	0	1,500,000	675,000	0	0
Inventories	0	0	0	3,484	7,751	8,387	0	0
Other current assets	3,549	2,796	0	0	41,515	47,194	250	7,489
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>3,392,197</b>	<b>2,640,359</b>	<b>2,834,119</b>	<b>2,346,729</b>	<b>1,869,542</b>	<b>987,960</b>	<b>50,069</b>	<b>275,312</b>
Recoverable Grants	360,841	384,180	0	0	0	0	0	0
Long-term loan to REF Romania	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Accrued income	24,795	20,543	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intangible assets	0	0	0	0	2,727	11,299	0	0
Tangible assets	0	0	13,526	9,287	14,273	12,249	0	0
<b>Total long term assets</b>	<b>385,636</b>	<b>404,723</b>	<b>13,526</b>	<b>9,287</b>	<b>17,000</b>	<b>23,548</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>3,777,833</b>	<b>3,045,082</b>	<b>2,847,645</b>	<b>2,356,016</b>	<b>1,886,542</b>	<b>1,011,508</b>	<b>50,069</b>	<b>275,312</b>
Liabilities		1,132	45,425	88,320	70,130	96,952	9,024	4,676
Accrued expenses	29,000	29,101	0	0	106,904	107,702	117,735	205,829
Provisions for projects granted	2,980,589	2,945,267	0	0	0	0	73,866	104,528
Accounts payable to partners	0	0	1,661,023	2,016,206	0	0	0	0
Loan from Council of Europe Development Bank	0	0	0	0	1,180,000	820,000	0	0
Long-term loans from REF Switzerland	0	0	569,774	0	305,000	0	0	0
Long-term loans from REF Hungary	0	0	1,500,000	655,000	0	0	0	0
Long-term loans from Agentia de Monitorizare o Presei	0	0	92,866	92,866	0	0	0	0
Other provision	438,418	38,418	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total liabilities and provisions</b>	<b>3,448,007</b>	<b>3,013,918</b>	<b>3,869,088</b>	<b>2,852,392</b>	<b>1,662,034</b>	<b>1,024,654</b>	<b>200,625</b>	<b>315,033</b>
Foundation capital as of January 1	31,164	2,011,017	-519,376	-203,300	-13,146	74,797	-39,721	6,638
Restatement of Foundation capital	0	0	0	1,203	0	0	0	0
Excess of expenditure over income	298,662	-1,979,853	-516,001	-319,837	240,308	-85,363	-110,835	-46,359
Year-end translation difference	0	0	13,934	2,558	-2,654	-2,580	0	0
Foundation capital as of December 31	329,826	31,164	-1,021,443	-519,376	224,508	-13,146	-150,556	-39,721
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND FOUNDATION CAPITAL</b>	<b>3,777,833</b>	<b>3,045,082</b>	<b>2,847,645</b>	<b>2,333,015</b>	<b>1,886,542</b>	<b>1,011,508</b>	<b>50,069</b>	<b>275,312</b>

**REF ENTITIES: STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE OVER INCOME, 2015 AND 2014**

		<b>REF SWITZERLAND</b>		<b>REF ROMANIA</b>	
		<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
		<b>EUR</b>	<b>EUR</b>	<b>EUR</b>	<b>EUR</b>
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>NOTES</b>				
Donations received from third parties		6,578,198	3,647,247	3,052,751	1,050,075
Donations received from REF Switzerland				141,569	0
Donations received from REF Hungary				0	0
Project Support and other Program Refund		93,443	216,382	0	0
Other income		0	0		727
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>6,671,642</b>	<b>3,863,629</b>	<b>3,194,320</b>	<b>1,050,801</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>					
Project Support Program	1	(1,750,126)	(1,743,051)	0	0
Tertiary Education Scholarships	2	(2,131,612)	(1,918,491)	(13,737)	(15,955)
A Good Start and complimentary projects	3	(83,373)	(12,264)	0	0
Konik Camp project in Montenegro	4	0	0	0	0
Communications	5	(132,536)	(98,625)	0	0
Policy development and capacity building	6	(245,357)	(203,405)	0	0
REF Romania - ESF projects	7	0	0	(3,245,753)	(1,213,945)
REF Romania - Ready, Set, Go	8	0	0	(305,218)	
REF Romania and its partners capacity building	9	(1,627)	(11,806)	(102,647)	(139,251)
Progress project in Slovakia	10	0	0	0	0
UNICEF	11	(7,459)	(32,444)	0	0
Medjimurje project	12	0	0	0	0
Velux project	13	0	0	0	0
OSCE-TARI project	14	0	0	0	0
HEIM - EC Reseach Executive Agency	15	0	0	0	0
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Hungary		(1,346,301)	(1,570,828)	0	0
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Slovakia		(179,095)	(242,950)		
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Romania		(141,569)	0	0	0
<b>Total Programs and Grants</b>		<b>(6,019,055)</b>	<b>(5,833,864)</b>	<b>(3,667,355)</b>	<b>(1,369,151)</b>
Administrative expenses		(145,977)	(133,210)	0	0
Provisions to cover risks in loans and receivables		(400,000)	(38,418)	0	0
<b>Net operating results</b>		<b>106,610</b>	<b>(2,141,863)</b>	<b>(473,035)</b>	<b>(318,350)</b>
Interest income		392	615	3	0
Interest cost		0	0	0	0
Gain on foreign exchange		191,661	161,395	17,895	2,438
Losses on foreign exchange		0	0	(60,864)	(3,926)
<b>Net financial results</b>		<b>192,053</b>	<b>162,010</b>	<b>(42,966)</b>	<b>(1,487)</b>
<b>EXCESS OF EXPENDITURE OVER INCOME</b>		<b>298,662</b>	<b>(1,979,853)</b>	<b>(516,001)</b>	<b>(319,837)</b>



		REF HUNGARY		REF SLOVAKIA	
		2015	2014	2015	2014
		EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>NOTES</b>				
Donations received from third parties		580,252	599,391	0	0
Donations received from REF Switzerland		1,505,972	1,085,625	179,095	242,950
Donations received from REF Hungary		0	0	12,859	16,000
Project Support and other Program Refund		0	44,709	0	0
Other income		1,253	3,058	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>2,087,477</b>	<b>1,732,783</b>	<b>191,954</b>	<b>258,950</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>					
Project Support Program	1	(67,663)	(90,158)	(253,270)	(287,597)
Tertiary Education Scholarships	2	(228,410)	(345,253)	(2,701)	(4,135)
A Good Start and complimentary projects	3	(7,880)	(5,986)	0	0
Konik Camp project in Montenegro	4	(218,285)	(273,947)	0	0
Communications	5	(94,673)	(84,196)	0	0
Policy development and capacity building	6	(270,024)	(256,097)	0	0
REF Romania - ESF projects	7	(18,458)	0	0	
REF Romania - Ready, Set, Go	8	(17,879)	(3,865)	0	
REF Romania and its partners capacity building	9	(9,362)	(11,075)	0	0
Progress project in Slovakia	10	(18,198)	(29,922)	0	0
UNICEF	11	0	(16,851)	0	0
Medjimurje project	12	0	(14,719)	0	0
Velux project	13	(51,551)	(50,443)	(45,687)	(13,580)
OSCE-TARI project	14	(111,971)	(72,095)	0	0
HEIM - EC Reseach Executive Agency	15	(26,588)	0	0	0
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Hungary		0	0	0	0
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Slovakia		(12,859)	(23,019)	0	
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Romania		0	0	0	0
<b>Total Programs and Grants</b>		<b>(1,153,801)</b>	<b>(1,277,627)</b>	<b>(301,657)</b>	<b>(305,312)</b>
Administrative expenses		(683,357)	(554,275)	(1,137)	0
Provisions to cover risks in loans and receivables		0	0	0	0
<b>Net operating results</b>		<b>250,319</b>	<b>(99,119)</b>	<b>(110,840)</b>	<b>(46,362)</b>
Interest income		497	839	5	3
Interest cost		(588)	0	0	0
Gain on foreign exchange		1,017	13,941	0	0
Losses on foreign exchange		(10,937)	(1,024)	0	0
<b>Net financial results</b>		<b>(10,011)</b>	<b>13,756</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>EXCESS OF EXPENDITURE OVER INCOME</b>		<b>240,308</b>	<b>(85,363)</b>	<b>(110,835)</b>	<b>(46,359)</b>

**068** Montenegrin Roma student in International Relations Serdjan Baftijari, REF Chair Andrzej Mirga, REF Serbia Country Facilitator Nadja Kocić-Rakocevic and Lion Djokaj, Deputy Minister for Human Rights from Montenegro pose at the RomaVersitas Student Summit. Photo: Miklos Deri

**069** RMUSP alumna Henriett Dinok speaking at the RomaVersitas Student Summit. Photo: Miklos Deri

**070** REF Scholarship Program staff and trainers at the annual LHP conference held in Chisinau, Moldova in 2015. Left to right appear Ion Duminica, trainer; Viorica Volovei, LHP Country Coordinator; Stela Garaz, REF Program and Studies Officer; and Dorina Ardeleanu, a member of the national selection board. Photo: Eduard Bizgu



## NOTES

### 1 PROJECT SUPPORT PROGRAM

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

### 2 TERTIARY EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The target of this Program is to provide scholarships for tertiary level Roma students. The Program consists of four schemes:

- Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP).
- Law and Humanities Program (LHP)
- Roma Health Scholar Program (RHSP)
- Roma International Scholarship Program (RISP)

### 3 A GOOD START AND COMPLIMENTARY PROJECTS

The target of this project is to ensure that Roma and other poor and excluded children have access to quality Early Childhood Education and Care services in Hungary, Macedonia, Romania and Slovakia.

### 4 KONIK CAMP PROJECT IN MONTENEGRO

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

### 5 COMMUNICATION

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

### 6 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

The target of this project is to support studies, technical assistance, strategy development, and learning activities to strengthen dialogue with governments and civil society on education reform and Roma inclusion.

### 7 REF ROMANIA – PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUNDS (ESF)

REF Romania implemented three educational projects funded by the European Social Funds and REF Switzerland. They were successfully closed by 31, December, 2015.

Children and Parents Want to Go to School aimed at developing and improving the skills and abilities for Roma people to assist them in improving their chances on the labor market by reducing early school leaving and providing access to quality education.

Integrated Educational Services for Roma Communities aimed at development and improvement of skills and abilities of Roma adults and children in order to facilitate their insertion in a modern, flexible and inclusive labor market by reducing the phenomenon of dropping out and providing equal access to education. The project targeted young Roma adults who have not completed compulsory education, as well as Roma children at risk of early school leaving by providing an integrated service package including mentoring, guidance and counseling, additional educational support and grants.

Enhancing Roma Youth's Access to Higher Education aimed at enhancing access to higher education and reduce their risk of drop out in the first years by providing study scholarships to Roma students enrolled in Bachelor studies and through the



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implementation of a mentorship scheme and provision and development of other services for students.

#### 8 REF ROMANIA – READY, SET, GO

The project is targeting early childhood development outcomes for some 1,400 Roma children residing in six of Romania's most disadvantaged counties with the highest absolute number and highest share of Roma population of preschool age. The project is supported by a grant from Norway through the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, in the framework of the R0 25 Poverty Alleviation Programme in Romania.

#### 9 REF ROMANIA AND ITS PARTNERS' CAPACITY BUILDING

This project provides capacity building and financial support for REF Romania and its partners for those activities, which are necessary for project implementation but not covered by ESF.

#### 10 PROGRESS PROJECT IN SLOVAKIA

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

#### 11 UNICEF PROJECT

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

#### 12 MEDJIMURJE PROJECT

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

#### 13 VELUX PROJECT

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

#### 14 OSCE TARI PROJECT

The project objective is to decrease dropout rate among Roma secondary school students at risk of dropping out in three main regions of Serbia. The program will run until the end of 2015–16 academic year.

#### 15 HEIM PROJECT

This is a research/innovation project with focus on how principles of equity and inclusion can be applied to internationalization strategies and programs in higher education, and on developing research and innovation capacity in this field. It focused on the Roma community in Europe as a critical example of a marginalized group, at both staff and student levels. The project is implemented in a partnership between three universities (Sussex, Umeå and Seville) and REF.



# BOARDS

**Andrzej Mirga** (Chair) is a Polish Roma who headed the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues at the OSCE's Warsaw-based Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) from 2006 till 2013. He is also a long-term associate of the Project on Ethnic Relations and has served as an expert on the Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers of the Council of Europe, and later as its chair, in addition to several official posts in Poland. Mirga was appointed to the position of Chair in spring 2015.

**Robert Kushen** (Vice Chair) 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. He left the board in late 2015 to join the Porticus Foundation, and Dr. Kinga Goncz joined as the representative of Open Society Foundations.

**William Lazarus Bila** is an expert in cross-cultural communication and currently serves as the elected Vice President for the Roma Community Centre in Toronto, Canada. He currently is consulting to Pedersen & Partners. He graduated with a BS in Finance and International Business from the Leonard N. Stern School of Business at New York University and an MBA from the Booth School of Business at the University of Chicago.

**Dr. Nicoleta Bitu** is the director of the Centre for Roma Studies of the National School for Political and Administrative Sciences. She has been active in the field of human and women's rights for over 24 years, at the forefront of the European mobilization of Roma women activists and of advocacy for the rights of Roma. A recognized and published expert in her field, she has worked for Romani CRISS, the Open Society Foundations, the Council of Europe and Romano ButiQ. Her work has provoked the Roma and feminist movements to think and act based on the universality of human rights when it comes to Roma women.

**Anna Bjerde** is Director of Strategy and Operations in the Europe and Central Asia Region of the World Bank, where she has worked since 1997. Ms. Bjerde is a graduate of the Masters of Business Administration and Economics Program from Stockholm University and has dedicated her career to development and global advocacy for the vulnerable and poor. She departed from the board in mid-2015 and was replaced by Mariam Sherman as World Bank representative.

**Dr. Kinga Göncz** is the chair of Roma Advisory Board of Open Society Foundations and a visiting professor at Central European University School of Public Policy. She has held different positions in the Hungarian Government between 2002 and 2009, including Minister of Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and she was a member of the European Parliament from 2009 to 2014.

**Livia Járóka**, PhD, is an anthropologist who researched Roma youth identity at University College London. A Chevening and Wenner Gren Scholar, she is a former Member of the European Parliament (2004-2014) and author of the European Framework Strategy for Roma Inclusion in 2011. She received the MEP Award in Justice and Fundamental Rights in 2006 and 2013 and was selected as a Young Global Leader (WEF) in 2006.

**Lisa Jordan** is Senior Director of Strategy and Learning at the Porticus Foundation. She has worked on strengthening democracy and civil society through positions with NGOs, governments and private philanthropic foundations for twenty years. Ms. Jordan previously served for nine years with the Ford Foundation as Acting Director and Deputy Director of the Governance and Civil Society Unit. She holds a Master's Degree in Development Studies from the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, Netherlands.

**Judith Tóth** (Treasurer) heads the Institute for Training and Consulting in Banking. She is a trained economist and has occupied different executive positions in the commercial banking and government field, especially regarding emerging markets. She stepped down from the Board in late 2015.

**Mariam Sherman** is the Director of Strategy and Operations in the Europe and Central Asia Region of the World Bank. She has occupied several positions in the World Bank in Washington and abroad, and previously worked for NGOs on programs in the Middle East and South Africa. She received a MS in Development Management from the American University in Washington DC, and a BA in Middle Eastern Studies (Arabic and Modern Hebrew) from Manchester University in England. Ms. Sherman joined the REF board in summer 2015.

**Alexander Wittwer** is currently Ambassador of Switzerland to Slovakia, and most recently Ambassador in Albania. Since joining Switzerland's Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in 1987, he has worked in various positions on three continents. A lawyer by training, Mr. Wittwer is the representative of the Swiss government on the REF Board.



# STAFF

## REF HUNGARY

**Katalin E. Koncz** is Executive Director of the Open Society Institute-Budapest. She is a member of the informal Roma Advisory Committee of the Open Society Institute. Judith Tóth (Treasurer of REF CH Board)

**Gyula Várallyay** is a former senior staff member of the World Bank; he served as Interim Director of REF on two occasions.

## REF ROMANIA

**Dezideriu Gergely** is a Romanian Roma and former director of the European Roma Rights Center. A human rights lawyer since 2001, he has held positions in governmental and nongovernmental institutions.

**Robert Kushen** (REF CH Interim Chair)

**Margareta (Magda) Matache** is a Roma rights activist from Romania. In 2012 she was awarded a Hauser post-doctoral fellowship at the FXB Center, where currently she works as an instructor. From 2005 to 2012 Matache was the executive director of Roma CRISS.

**Judit Szira** (REF Executive Director)

## REF SLOVAKIA

**Lydia Gabcova** is an independent Roma consultant specializing in Roma youth empowerment and participation in Slovakia. She holds a MA in Social Work from Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra and a post-graduate diploma from the Diplo Foundation. She currently advises the Roma Institute in Bratislava on ESF-funded projects.

**Robert Kushen** (REF CH Interim Chair)

**Valentina Petrus** is originally from Romania and now lives and works in Slovakia. She studied law at the University of Bucharest and at Comenius University in Bratislava. In 2015, Valentina joined the team of Habitat for Humanity International as an Assistant Legal Counsel for Europe, Middle East and Africa, as well as well as a Senior Advisor to the Open Society Foundation - Bratislava.

## REF HEADQUARTERS IN BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

**Judit Szira**, Executive Director  
**Erzsébet Báder**, Scholarship Program Officer  
**Tom Bass**, Communication Officer  
**Azam Bayburdi**, Administrative Officer  
**Dan Pavel Doghi**, Higher Education Program Manager, Director REF Romania until summer 2015  
**Andrea Dörömbözü**, Financial Officer until spring 2016  
**Nevsija Durmish**, Program Officer  
**Stela Garaz**, Program and Studies Officer  
**Merziha Idrizi**, Scholarship Program Officer  
**Anastasia Jelasity**, Fundraising & Communication Officer  
**Radoslav Kuzmanov**, Scholarship Program  
**Anasztázia Nagy**, Program Officer  
**Beata Bislim Olahova**, Grant Program Manager  
**Szilvia Pallaghy**, Program Officer  
**Beáta Prokaj**, Finance and Administrative Coordinator  
**Marius Taba**, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer  
**Péter Tóth**, Chief Financial Officer  
**Dennis Omondi Yonga**, IT Specialist  
**Jenő Zsiga**, Network Manager until summer 2015

## REF COUNTRY FACILITATORS

**Marsela Taho**, Albania and Kosovo  
**Aida Mihajlovic**, Bosnia and Hercegovina  
**Ognyan Isaev**, Bulgaria  
**Jan Stejskal**, Czech Republic (until fall 2015)  
**Yveta Kenety**, Czech Republic (started fall 2015)  
**Siniša-Senad Musić**, Croatia  
**Nikoletta Oláh** (until summer 2015), Hungary  
**Senad Mustafov**, Macedonia  
**Nadja Kocic-Rakocevic**, Serbia  
**Viktor Teru**, Slovakia

## REF ROMANIA

**Dan Pavel Doghi**, Country Director till summer 2015  
**Claudia Lixandru**, Chief Finance and Operations Officer  
**Ionela Cristea**, Project Manager  
**Danut Dumitru**, Project Manager  
**Maria Ursu**, Project Manager  
**Marian Daragiu**, Project Manager  
**Ana-Maria Cojocaru**, Financial Manager

More information about REF Romania's full staff can be found at: [www.romaeducationfund.ro](http://www.romaeducationfund.ro)

## REF SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM COUNTRY COORDINATORS

**Marsela Taho**, Albania  
**Merziha Idrizi**, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro  
**Orlin Orlinov**, Bulgaria  
**Yveta Kenety**, Czech Republic  
**Erzsebet Bader**, Hungary  
**Erxhan Galushi**, Kosovo  
**Ajsel Amet**, Macedonia,  
**Viorica Volovei**, Moldova  
**Amalia Florea**, Romania  
**Nicu Dumitru**, Romania  
**Maria Musatova**, Russia  
**Jelica Nikolic**, Serbia  
**Stanislava Dzurikova**, Slovakia  
**Cihan Uzuncarsilioglu Baysal**, Turkey  
**Serhiy Ponomaryov**, Ukraine

## PROGRAM COORDINATORS/ ADMINISTRATORS

**Dragana Radoman**, Program Coordinator in Montenegro  
**Darko Kerekes**, Program Administrator for REF Serbia  
**Radenka Vasiljević**, Local Coordinator for Central Serbia  
**Marija Aleksandrović**, Local Coordinator for Vojvodina  
**Alen Demiri**, Local Coordinator for South Serbia

## REF INTERNS AND VOLUNTEERS 2015

**Nicoleta Calin**, Romania  
**Judit Ignác**, Hungary  
**Emily Jensen**, USA  
**Mihály Orsos**, Hungary  
**Arnold Sándor**, Hungary  
**Morgan Stemple**, USA  
**Carmen Tanasie**, Romania  
**Ionica Toader**, Romania  
**Natalie Valentine**, USA

## RESEARCH ASSISTANTS 2015

**Manuela Demir**, Macedonia  
**Roland Ferkovics**, Hungary

# GRANT TABLE 2015

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE	TOTAL BUDGET	
<b>Czech Republic</b>		
<b>Association for Creativity in Education</b> Sokolov and Nejdek	3,863	Support the successful integration of Roma children into the educational programs of mainstream schools and improve their school results through implementation of innovative educational program Creative Partnerships.
<b>Bílý Nosoržec o.p.s. and Beleza Ostrava, o.s.</b> Ostrava region	191,847	Increase the enrollment rates in kindergartens and mainstream elementary schools and provide ECEC services to families.
<b>Inclusio o.p.s.</b> Prague	17,898	Increase the level of school attendance and to keep or improve school results of children participating in the project.
<b>People in Need</b> Prague	90,266	Increase the enrollment rate of children from disadvantaged environments in kindergartens and integrated primary schools.
<b>REF Czech Republic</b> Ústí nad Labem region	4,872	Information campaign on the importance of kindergarten enrollment and facilitation of preschool enrollment.
<b>REF Czech Republic</b> Ústí nad Labem region	11,595	Facilitate families to have their children enrolled in and attending preschool education, before they are placed in segregated or low-quality education.
<b>Hungary</b>		
<b>Add a kezdet az esélyegyenlőség megteremtésének segítése az oktatásban és a munkaerőpiacon közhasznú Egyesület (Give Me Your Hand Association)</b> Nyíregyháza, Nagydobos, Kántorjánosi, Hodász, Nagyecsed, Nyírparasznya, Szamosszeg, and Szamoskér	86,235	Provide ECEC services, increase the school readiness of Roma children through A Good Start program and increase the active citizenship of the Roma parents.
<b>Chance for Children Foundation</b> Budapest	28,695	Increase the school success of Roma children aged five to sixteen in the 8th and 9th districts in Budapest, ensuring their enrolment in integrated education and improving their chances of continued studies thus reinforcing their social inclusion.
<b>College of Nyíregyháza</b> Nyíregyháza city and Mátészalka sub region	15,421	Develop strategic partnerships to increase and sustain the attention of local and national governments (cooperation with higher education institutions) and ensure the long term sustainability of the ASG methodology through involvement of the AGS methodology into the local pedagogical programs.
<b>Give Me Your Hand Association</b> Nyíregyháza	10,358	Ensure access of disadvantaged children who live in three Roma neighborhoods in Nyíregyháza to primary education institutions.
<b>Khetanipe Association</b> Pécs	29,827	Develop the skills, capabilities and the school readiness of disadvantaged Roma children aged between zero and six. Strengthen the link between parents and preschools, expand access and participation in integrated ECEC services and raise the quality of education.
<b>Nagyecsed Városért Egyesület</b> Nagyecsed and Kántorjánosi	11,208	Provide Roma children with access to a range of toys in two Toy Libraries in order to challenge and stimulate further development.
<b>Óko Tisza Social Service</b> Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County	20,000	Promote the possibility for underprivileged pupils to have better results at school and take part in integrated education.
<b>ORIGO - Community Developer Association</b> Ábony	32,340	Decrease spontaneous segregation at the primary-school level, ensure the integration of school starters and support the transition of the children in different school levels.
<b>Roma Versitas Foundation</b> Nationwide	124,334	Increase the percentage of Roma university graduates and support them academically, professionally and financially through Roma Versitas centers.
<b>Roma Oktatási Integrációért Egyesület</b> Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, Miskolc	14,044	Ensure access of kindergarten age children to different ECEC programs in Miskolc in four different Roma neighborhoods.
<b>Slovakia</b>		
<b>Civic Association ETP Slovakia - Centre for Sustainable Development</b> Moldava nad Bodvou, Velka Ida, Saca, Rankovce	41,044	Achieve improvement in educational attainment, increase attendance rate, and encourage success in standard education institutions (kindergartens and schools) of marginalized Roma.
<b>County Association of Romani Initiatives, KARI Union</b> Four settlements in Banská Bystrica Municipality: Cementársená Cesta + Hrb, Sásová, Internátna 12, Kotva	44,545	Improve the early childhood development outcomes of 135 Roma and disadvantaged non-Roma children aged zero to six. Improve access to quality mainstream ECEC services.
<b>Cultural Association of Roma in Slovakia</b> Martin	67,960	Improve access to quality inclusive education and non-segregated ECEC services and through targeted interventions contribute to improving the results especially of Roma children in early childhood in the town of Martin.
<b>Equal Chances Association - Slovakia</b> Žborov	51,767	Improve the school readiness and early childhood development outcomes of 280 Roma and non-Roma children aged zero to six. Ensure access to quality mainstream ECEC services.

<b>Nadácia Rómsky vzdelávací fond - organizačná zložka zahraničnej nadácie Roma Education Fund - Roma Oktatasi Alap</b> Nationwide	413,453	Improve the school academic performance of the disadvantaged secondary school students through their attendance rate, graduation rate and transition rate from secondary to tertiary education and by decreasing their dropout rate.
<b>Ternipe - združenie pre rómsku mládež na Slovensku a v Maďarsku</b> Rimavska Sec	69,752	Improve Roma students' academic performances, increase their transition rate to secondary education and decrease dropout rate through after-school activities.
<b>BALKANS</b>	<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	
<b>Albania</b>		
<b>ARSIS, Social Organization for the Support of the Youth</b> Tirana and Durres	230,372	Decrease dropout rate among Roma and Egyptian lower and upper secondary school students at risk of dropping out through better outreach and positive interventions (scholarships and mentorship programmes) and support them till the final exam (Matura, or equivalent).
<b>Disutni Albania</b> Tirana and Korca	80,620	Increase the retention rate, academic performances and graduation rate, build the self-esteem and identity of about 80 Roma/Egyptian students. Improve professional and personal skills as well.
<b>Roma Women Rights Center (RWRC)</b> Tirana and Durres	61,740	Improve education level and employment prospects for 50 young Roma/Egyptian adults aged 16-35 who have not completed formal lower secondary education in Tirana and Durres through facilitation of access to adult education program and provision of tutoring. Influence and support the Ministry of Education and Sports in revising, improving and consolidating the adult education program considering Roma adults students' needs,
<b>Save the Children</b> Gjirokastra	101,906	Ensure access to ECEC institutional services for Roma and Egyptian children aged three to six.
<b>Union for Development and Integration of Roma Minority in Albania "Amaro-Drom"</b> Elbasan, Kucove, Grabian/Lushnje and Levan/Fier	94,002	Improve the ECEC outcomes and the school readiness of disadvantaged Roma children aged three to six. Strengthen parenting skills and the link between parents and preschools, expand the access to integrated ECEC services and raise the quality of teaching and learning.
<b>Bosnia &amp; Herzegovina</b>		
<b>Association of Citizens "OTAHARIN"</b> Bijeljina and Zivinice municipalities	73,754	Improve and expand the level of participation of Roma children at preschool, primary and secondary levels of education by including all Roma communities in Bijeljina and Zivinice.
<b>Association of Roma "Euro Rom"</b> Tuzla Canton, Tuzla, Banovici, Zivinice, Gracanica, Gradacac, Lukavac, Celic and Kladanj municipalities	373,504	Improve academic performance and transition rate to secondary education and maintain retention rate of Roma secondary school students through provision of scholarship, mentoring/tutoring and effective outreach. In addition it will also create a sustainable base for institutionalization of the project.
<b>Center for Support of Roma "Romalen" Kakanj</b> Zenica Doboj Canton, Kakanj municipality	80,930	Increase enrollment and attendance rate of all Roma children in elementary schools trough improvement of attendance, school performance and involvement of Roma parents in the education process.
<b>Mostar Municipality</b> Herzegovina Neretva Canton, Mostar municipality	60,983	Increase enrollment, academic success and attendance rate of all Roma children in primary school trough improvement of their school performance and involvement of Roma parents in the education process of their children.
<b>Croatia</b>		
<b>KINDERGARTEN "MASLACAK"</b> Mursko Sredisce	14,613	Ensure inclusion and regular attendance of preschool to a greater number of Roma children from Mursko Sredisce.
<b>NGO "SFERA"</b> Medjimurje County	17,442	Contribute to the social inclusion of the Roma population in Medjimurje County through strengthening educational achievements of primary school children with after-school support.
<b>Oaza, Association for Homeless and Socially Vulnerable people</b> Primorsko-Goranska County, Rijeka	26,161	Improve academic development, cognitive abilities, social skills and integration of Roma children into a desegregated school system through additional after-school classes.
<b>Kosovo</b>		
<b>Kosovo Agency for Advocacy and Development - KAAD</b> Nationwide	80,390	Increase the retention rate and academic achievements of Roma university students and increase post-graduation career prospects.
<b>Kosova Education Center</b> Srbobran/Municipality of Istog, Graçanica and Preoce/ Municipality of Graçanica, Plemetin/Municipality of Obiliq and Roma Mahalla in Gjakovë, Municipality of Gjakovë	100,019	Improve the school readiness and early childhood development outcomes of 110 RAE and 30 RAE returnees' children in five localities in Kosovo. Expand the access to integrated ECEC services
<b>Kosovo Agency for Advocacy and Development - KAAD</b> Nationwide (Prishtina, Prizren, Peje and Gjakova Universities)	160,188	Increase the retention and academic performances and graduation rate, while building the advocacy, self-esteem and identity of about 80 Roma full-time students enrolled in tertiary education in Kosovo.
<b>Ministry of Education Science and Technology in Kosovo and Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians</b> Nationwide	282,380	Improve academic performance and maintain the retention rate of RAE secondary school students through provision of scholarship, school based tutorship/mentorship and effective outreach.
<b>Macedonia</b>		
<b>Association for Roma Community Development SUMNAL</b> Skopje and Bitola	43,200	Improve the performance and grades of Roma pupils and decrease their dropout rate in school. Increase the capacities of students to work effectively with Roma children.



## GRANT TABLE 2015

<b>Association for support of marginalized groups - Roma Resource Center</b> Shuto Orizari	56,880	Increase retention rate and improve educational performance / outcomes of Roma children who study in second, third and fourth grades in primary education within municipality of Shuto Orizari.
<b>Consortium of NGOs - Association for support of marginalized groups Roma Resource Center (RRC) - Skopje</b> Shuto Orizari, Gorche Petrov, Karposh, Chair, Kumanovo, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kichevo, Debar, Bitola, Prilep, Shtip, Kochani, Vinica, Delchevo and Berovo	247,790	Increase retention rate and improve educational performance/outcomes of Roma children in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades in primary education in Macedonia for two school years 2015/16 and 2017/18.
<b>Ministry of Education and Science</b> Nationwide	306,530	Improve the retention and graduation rate of Roma students enrolled to secondary schools in Macedonia through the provision of scholarships and school-based mentoring/tutoring.
<b>Ministry of Labor and Social Policy</b> Shuto Orizari, Chair, Center, Karposh, Gazi Baba, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kichevo, Prilep, Bitola, Kumanovo, Veles, Shtip, Kochani, Vinica, Delchevo, Pehchevo and Berovo	224,908	Improve the ECEC outcomes and the school readiness of disadvantaged 995 disadvantaged Roma children aged three to six in 18 municipalities/localities in Macedonia. This is a continuation of the national preschool program.
<b>Roma Versitas Macedonia</b> Skopje, Tetovo and Stip	152,308	Enhance the retention rate, graduation, academic achievements and personal capacities of Roma university students in Macedonia.
<b>Roma Democratic Development Association SONCE</b> Tetovo, Gostivar, Debar and Kicevo	72,368	Increase retention rate and improve academic performance of Roma children from second and fourth grades in Tetovo, Gostivar, Debar and Kicevo
<b>Ternipe MK</b> Delchevo with village Trabatoviste, Pehchevo with village Crnik, Berovo and Vinica	82,907	Improve education level and achievements of 80 adult Roma from Delchevo, Trabatoviste, Pehchevo, Crnik, Berovo and Vinica through the educational program for adult students aged sixteen to forty and receiving of a diploma for primary and for adult students aged twenty to forty, receiving diploma for secondary education for the purpose of strengthening the awareness of the importance of the education and increasing their employment possibilities in the labor market.
<b>Montenegro</b> <b>Bureau for Education (BfE),</b> <b>Institute of Social Inclusion (ISI)</b> Nationwide	49,108	Improve the academic performance and transition rate to secondary education and maintain retention rate of Roma/RE secondary school students through provision of scholarships, school-based mentorship and effective outreach.
<b>Bureau for Education (BfE) with REF Montenegro</b> Nationwide	66,187	Improve the academic performance and transition rate to secondary education and maintain retention rate of Roma/RE secondary school students through provision of scholarships, school based mentorship and effective outreach.
<b>JPU Djina Vrbica</b> Konik Camp, Podgorica	14,400	Support the integration of 150 Roma and Egyptian children into preschool and primary schools and develop a Toy Library as part of an ECEC component.
<b>Serbia</b> <b>Association of Roma-Serbian Friendship Stablo</b> Nis	43,340	Improve the retention, performance and graduation rates of 89 Roma full-time tertiary students in Serbia by providing them with academic tutoring/mentoring and other programs.
<b>Consortium of five Roma NGOs: Romanipen, Kragujevac; Roma Association of Kraljevo; Romanicikna, Krusevac; Roma Association of Obrenovac; "Small Happy Colony", Novi sad; Partner organization MENA</b> Kraljevo, Krusevac, Kragujevac, Obrenovac, Novi Sad	103,365	Reduce the gap in early childhood development outcomes between Roma and non-Roma by offering addition to or alternative for ECEC services. Improving parenting skills of Roma parents and strengthening the link between parents and preschools.
<b>Novi Sad Humanitarian Centre</b> Novi Sad, Subotica, Sombor, Zabalj, Vrsac, Sabac, Beograd and Nis	19,724	Increase academic performance of secondary school Roma students in Serbia who are in danger of dropout and contribute to closing the educational gap between Roma and Non Roma, through implementation of after class volunteer-based tutoring, promoting academic achievement and instilling positive academic attitudes among Roma adolescents.
<b>REF Serbia</b> Nationwide	10,350	Increase enrollment and retention rate and improve learning outcomes of Roma students enrolled in secondary schools in Serbia
<b>Vojvodinian Roma Centre for Democracy (VRCD)</b> Vojvodina	155,035	Contribute in building competent academic Roma community in Vojvodina through empowerment and providing atmosphere which will lead to successful studying, graduation, improved professional, personal and social competences of Roma students.
<b>Vojvodinian Roma Centre for Democracy (VRCD)</b> Vojvodina	163,925	Increase the graduation rate of prospective Roma university students and improve the professional and academic achievements of tertiary students in a Roma Versitas center.
<b>SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE</b> <b>Bulgaria</b> <b>Association Center for Local and Regional Policies</b> Nikola Kozlevo	98,070	Develop a sustainable early childhood education development model for Roma and non-Roma children at kindergarten and elementary school age from the Municipality of Nikola Kozlevo.
<b>"Amala - R" Foundation</b> Pleven	5,074	Ensure access to quality education of 40 Roma children in mixed schools of Pleven from kindergarten and first grades.
<b>AMALIPE Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance</b> Nationwide	10,335	Promote better access to quality education from through the Inclusive Public Education Act in rural areas. Prevent segregation on ethnic and social basis in the education system.
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>		



<b>Center for Local and Regional Policies</b> Nikola Kozlevo	92,536	Provide access for Roma children for early childhood development and education. Improve their education learning and readiness for elementary education.
<b>Equal Opportunities Initiative Association</b> Sofia	65,530	Increase the share of Roma children within Sofia Municipality who successfully enrol into mainstream facilities for mandatory preschool education as a precondition for enrolment in primary school.
<b>Equal Opportunities Initiative Association</b> Sofia	68,380	Support a preschool campaign in the Roma community to facilitate the enrollment of their children in preschools.
<b>Foundation of Regional and Cultural Development "Nangle - 2000"</b> Berkovitsa Town	56,885	Improve ECEC outcomes and school readiness of 80 disadvantaged Roma children aged three to six in the remote quarter of Rakovitsa by improving the access to public mainstream kindergarten and transition to public mainstream elementary education.
<b>Foundation of Regional and Cultural Development "Nangle - 2000"</b> Berkovitsa Town	9,326	Improve ECEC outcomes and the school readiness of 50 disadvantaged Roma children aged three to six in the remote quarter of Rakovitsa by improving the access to public mainstream kindergarten and transition to public mainstream elementary education.
<b>Kyustendil Municipality</b> Kyustendil, Iztok district	90,729	Provide the opportunity for Roma children from Iztok to study in mixed/integrated schools, rather than attending segregated schools.
<b>New Future</b> Montana	30,338	Inspire the kids in pursuing new knowledge and skills and to show the parents how important are additional activities in their children development. Provide equal access to extracurricular activities to kids, keeping them busy and focused to be better prepared for school.
<b>"New Future" Association</b> Montana	8,200	Develop skills and knowledge of Roma children from Ogosta District through organization and provision of extracurricular classes.
<b>Roma Versitas Association</b> Sofia, Shumen and Blagoevgrad	133,643	Encourage and assist Roma youth to get higher education and establish Roma Versitas program in Bulgaria.
<b>EASTERN EUROPE</b>	<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	
<b>Moldova</b>		
<b>Roma National Centre</b> Nationwide	71,790	Improve young Roma students' academic performance at the tertiary level by offering a wide range of services through a Roma Versitas center.
<b>INTERNATIONAL</b>	<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	
<b>Central European University</b> International	330,000	The Roma Education Fund has supported the Roma Graduate Preparation Program (RGPP), previously known as the Roma Access Program (RAP) of Budapest's Central European University (CEU) since 2005. The program has supported young Roma to access internationally recognized graduate universities, including the CEU, and to pursue their Master's studies.

# REF NETWORK

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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

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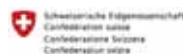
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This Report has been prepared by REF staff.

Cover photo:  
Preschool Clubs in Ostrava have had a positive  
impact on enrollment and attendance at Ostrava's public  
schools that are making renewed efforts to include Roma  
children in mainstream Czech education.  
Photo: Jana Baudysova

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Roma Education Fund

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