



**ROMA**  
EDUCATION FUND  
Invest | Educate | Engage

# 2017

ANNUAL REPORT

*Mother and son interact  
during a visit to the REF Toy Library  
in Fakulteta District in Sofia, Bulgaria in July 2017.  
Photography ©2017 REF | Dia Photography*





## Contents

<b>Chairman's Message</b> .....	2
2017 at a Glance .....	4
Grant Program .....	4
Tertiary Scholarship Program .....	7
<b>Features</b> .....	10
Ready Set Go!	
Changing the World of Roma Children in Romania .....	10
Behind the Tourist Façade:	
Desegregating Schools in Croatia's Unvisited Interior .....	13
Dream to Dream:	
Bulgarian Roma Gain Traction and Skills in Secondary Education .....	14
Towards Knowledge Production in Higher Education of Roma .....	16
Weaving a Tale of the Unexpected:	
Roma Adult Employment in Macedonia .....	18
Sustaining REF Intervention Models and Best Practices in	
Student-Teacher Curricula and Training .....	19
<b>REF Network</b> .....	20
Hungary Foundation .....	20
Montenegro Branch Office .....	25
Romania Foundation .....	28
Serbia Branch Office .....	34
Slovak Foundation .....	40
<b>REF Portfolio Countries</b> .....	44
Albania .....	44
Bosnia and Herzegovina .....	49
Bulgaria .....	53
Croatia .....	58
Czech Republic .....	60
Kosovo .....	64
Macedonia .....	69
Moldova .....	75
Russia .....	79
Turkey .....	82
Ukraine .....	84
<b>Finance and Administration</b> .....	87
<b>Communication and Visibility</b> .....	100

## Chairman's Message

In 2017 REF focused on refining a complex restructuring of its network and developing a new strategy, a continual process that I believe essential to REF's stringent management. While these organizational developments preoccupied REF's senior management team, two outstanding projects implemented by the REF Network deserve to be highlighted:

- REF Romania finished the implementation of Ready Set Go!, an early childhood education project supported by Norway Grants. For the first time, REF led the construction and refurbishment of 10 kindergartens in some of Romania's poorest localities, enabling disadvantaged children to prepare for primary school and to develop the competencies necessary for their continuation in Romania's school system.
- Supported by KfW, the German Development Bank, REF's branch office in Serbia began the implementation of a national project providing secondary school scholarships and facilitating the transition of Roma youth into the labor market.

These two projects focusing on both the start and end of students' school careers reflect REF's commitment to the education of Roma children and youth, and also suggest a new avenue for REF to concentrate on in the future.

The systematic segregation of Roma children in Europe's schools and classrooms remains a persistent challenge, even as REF invests in, educates and engages with Roma children and youth in order to fulfill REF's goal to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma.

In 2017 the tenth anniversary of the European Court of Human Rights' landmark ruling in *D.H. and Others v. Czech Republic* was of direct relevance to REF and its core mission. The judgment exposed the discriminatory practice of channeling Roma children into special education institutions. The Open Society Foundations (OSF) organized a conference in Prague in November, coinciding with this important anniversary. Earlier, a similar event had been organized by the OSF Justice Initiative in European

Parliament in Brussels (2016), debating findings of a study on *Strategic Litigations Impacts: Roma School Desegregation*. The participants in both events reached a rather discouraging conclusion – the impact of the Strasbourg ruling was insufficient to challenge the system.

This pessimistic evaluation, however, needs to be measured against the numerous initiatives to counter this practice, such as REF's efforts at desegregation, the European Commission's latest infringement proceedings – reacting to the discrimination of Roma children in schooling – against the Czech Republic (2014), Slovakia (2015) and Hungary (2016), or some 2,000 mostly Roma parents protesting against the segregation of Roma children in Ostrava, where the Czech case originated, which took place at the time of the November 2017 conference in Prague. In the longer run, therefore, signs of hope were noticeable.

A pertinent question to ask here is why is segregation so difficult to end in Europe's national school systems? Does it only pertain to Roma children? Do we need to change our strategies and goals about how to achieve measurable progress? What are the obstacles that prevent progress here?

There are several factors that maintain this practice in Europe. Roma nominally enjoy constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination as citizens; in practice, however, they face deep discrimination rooted in popular prejudices and stereotypes that find their expression in the systemic segregation of Roma in schools. Desegregation clashes directly with a past and current practice that is "normal" in the mindset of the majority, a powerful political constituency.

It is no coincidence that some national legislation has been devised in such a way to not directly discriminate against Roma but to indirectly create such a result: such laws might outline the conditions for setting up special education institutions (where Roma children have been ruinously directed and, as a result, overrepresented) or provide caregivers the right to decide where their child is enrolled (contributing to white flight from schools that are predominantly Roma).



Differences between East and West suggest an interesting paradox. Despite segregation, notable groups of educated Roma leaders emerged in the East, whereas in the West, thought of as being more inclusive (for example, in the United Kingdom, the inclusion of Roma migrant children into so-called super-diversity schools), an educated Roma stratum is missing. This paradox indicates a more formal “inclusion” in the West and a more “resilient” attitude to education by some parents and children in the East. REF and its donors have also played a part in creating such a difference, as its scholarship schemes exclusively supported Roma students in the former Decade of Roma Inclusion countries.

Here, we must ask: is REF’s mission “to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma – including through desegregation” still applicable? Or should we think about some alternatives? Below I consider some avenues for further exploration.

- The example of Roma parents protesting in Ostrava provides one answer: Roma parents need to be empowered to speak out publicly, as a powerful constituency that can impact policy makers.
- Standing together and forming a coalition against segregation – whether with the European Commission in Brussels, national equality bodies or civil society actors, including Roma organizations – is better suited to bring results. The evidence where inclusive education has brought about concrete and lasting outcomes needs to be shared widely to change the mindset of the majority.

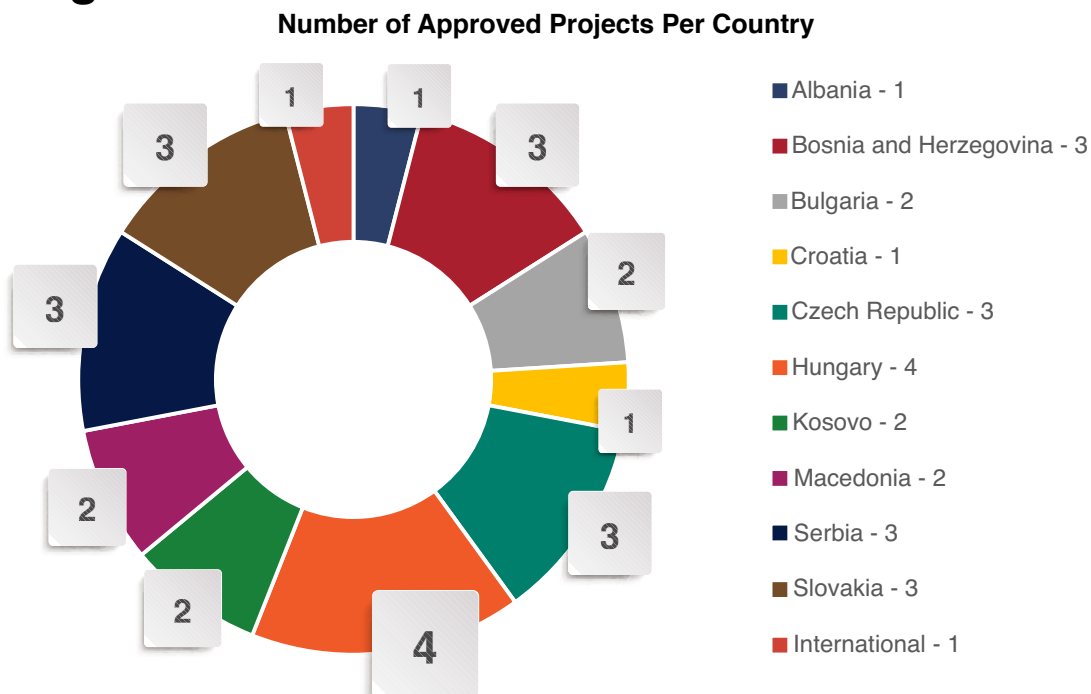
- Efforts to develop a sense of “resilience” in parents and pupils, along with efforts to increase their self-esteem and pride in their ethnic identity, should continue. To this end, qualified and trusted staff, including Roma teaching staff, must remain one of REF’s top priorities.
- Finally, there are many “community schools” where REF can concentrate its support in order to turn them into “quality schools” that remain open and inclusive to all children. REF plans to study several refreshing new grass-roots initiatives in specific localities and explore how parents were mobilized and engaged, building their resilience and ensuring their children’s future prospects and opportunities.

**Andrzej Mirga**  
Chair



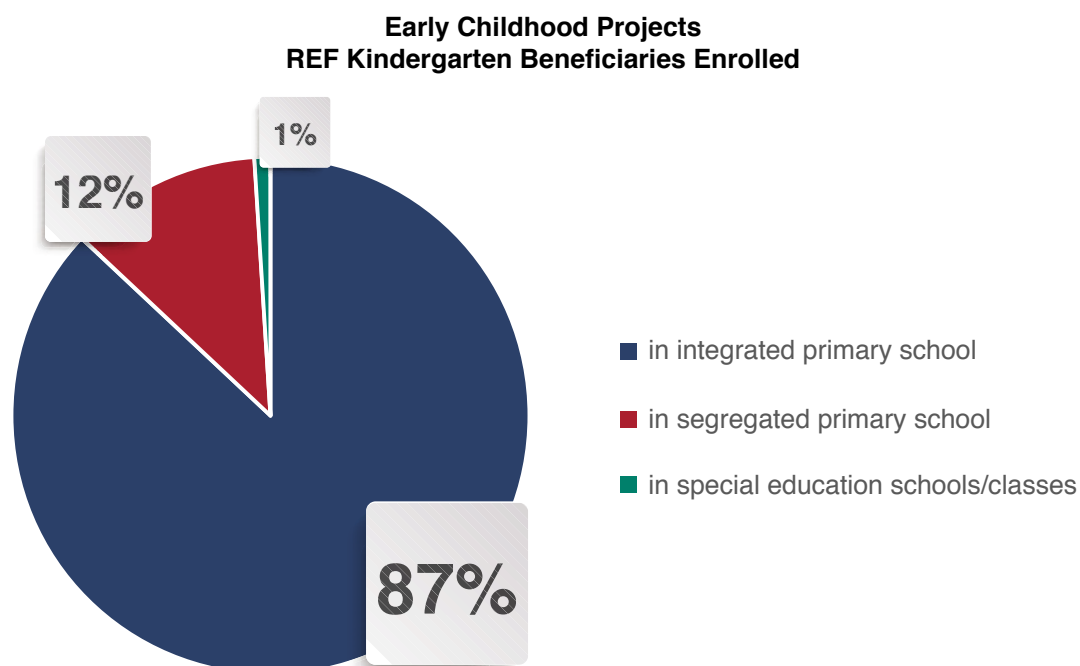
## 2017 at a Glance

### Grant Program



### Early Childhood Education

7,044 children benefitted from REF's early childhood education program (ECD) in 2017, out of which 1,610 were new beneficiaries. Altogether 3,607 parents participated in activities such as Your Story sessions for mothers, early childhood education clubs, and Home School Community Liaison, where parents are invited to teach in kindergartens.





## Primary Education

The total number of REF primary school beneficiaries was 2,280, out of which 989 were new in the 2016–17 academic year. Mentoring and tutoring support was provided to 1,924 students for better integration in schools, retention in grades and academic improvement.

### 2016–17 school year

**95%** of pupils attended integrated primary schools, while 3% attended segregated (Roma) primary schools, and 2% attended church-run schools.

Dropout rate among REF beneficiaries was **5%**.

**All** primary school beneficiaries who stayed in school succeeded to transition to the secondary educational level.

REF beneficiaries' GPA increased by an average of 1.58% – this is on top of the

**9% improvement** after REF intervention in 2015–16.

## Secondary Education

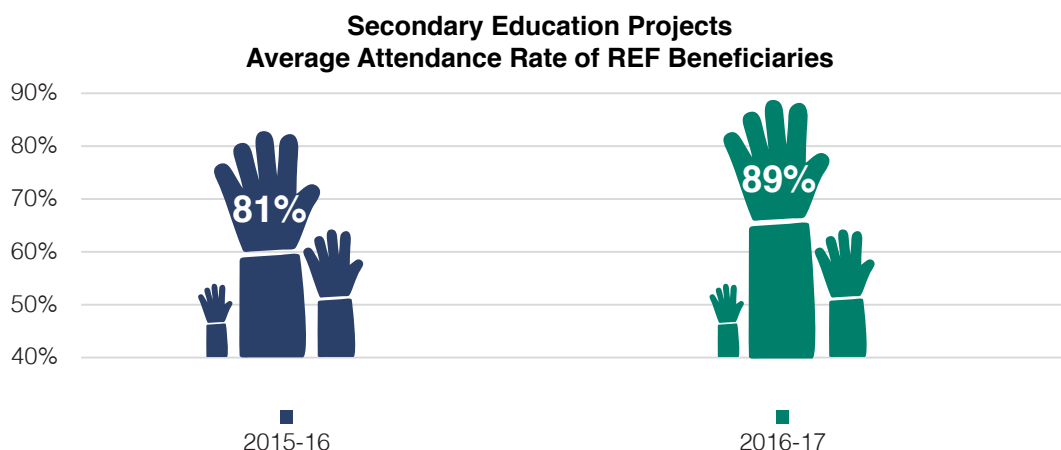
REF Secondary Scholarship and Mentoring Program included 279 municipalities and 1,089 secondary schools. The projects targeted 3,672 students, out of which 509 students enrolled in gymnasias (college prep), 1,242 enrolled in four-year vocational schools with Matura (final exam), and 85 enrolled in three-year vocational schools without Matura. 1,663 students received mentoring and tutoring support for the purpose of better integration in schools, retention in grades and academic improvement.

### Secondary education scholarships 2016–17 school year

**89%** completion of the academic year  
**82%** transition to the next grade

The average attendance rate among secondary scholars in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Kosovo rose significantly in 2016–17 in comparison to the previous academic year.

In 2016–17, REF beneficiaries' GPA **increased by 6%** – this is on top of the 7% improvement after REF intervention in 2015–16.



## Tertiary Education (RomaVersitas)

The Grant Program provides academic and professional development support to Roma students enrolled in tertiary education through 17 RomaVersitas centers in eight countries. (Please note: Tertiary scholarships are addressed in *Tertiary Scholarships at a Glance*).

### Number of Tertiary Students in RomaVersitas Centers

RomaVersitas	Number of students
Albania	80
Bulgaria	128
Hungary	80
Kosovo	80
Macedonia	160
Moldova	55
Romania	80
Serbia	65

RomaVersitas students from Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia report the highest rate of employment  
**(75% on average).**

## Adult education

443 adult students benefited from second chance programs, 239 of whom were new in the academic year 2016–17.

### Roma Adults Who Went on to Employment after REF Second Chance Program

#### Employed after acquiring diploma



#### On internship practice



## Adult education (primary and secondary)

**10%**

of the adult Roma women and men were employed after acquiring primary or secondary school certificates in Macedonia (Second Chance program).

**2%**

dropout rate among the adult learners in Albania and Macedonia.

## Tertiary Scholarship Program

The main goal of Roma Education Fund Scholarship Program (REF SP) is to create a critical mass of Roma higher education graduates who are academically and socially equipped with the skills and competences that enable them to become professionals in their fields, and who remain connected to the Roma community in order to contribute to its advancement and inclusion in mainstream society. REF SP's financial support facilitates Roma students' access to higher education, strengthens their academic efforts during their studies and helps them to successfully graduate.

As the largest tertiary education scholarship program for Roma university students of its kind, REF SP offers four merit-based scholarship schemes in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe and Turkey. Scholarships are provided for one academic year and students can renew their scholarships provided they have successfully completed the previous academic year.

**Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP)**, the largest of all four schemes, is designed to facilitate Roma youth's access to tertiary education and to enable larger numbers of Roma to enter the labor market as mainstream professionals. The beneficiaries study in their home countries in Bachelor, Master or Doctorate programs.

### 2017–18 academic year

**950** RMUSP students in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Turkey

Students received **€800 support** for the academic year to cover basic study and living expenses, as well as up to **€800 to cover tuition fees**.

Following global trends in the labor market, as well as Roma community development needs more broadly, the REF SP, as of 2016, has implemented a new measure in awarding additional evaluation scores to applicants pursuing higher education studies in pedagogy, natural sciences, law, medical studies, IT or engineering, in order to incentivize Roma students to consider pursuing fields of studies that are either in high demand on the labor market or that serve the development of Roma communities.

In 2017 REF SP introduced another new element in the scholarship application form: volunteer activities in favor of the Roma community are now valued up to 20 percent in relation to the total score. An applicant may have volunteered for a civil society organization, institution or public authority, joined an informal group, or contributed in his/her own personal capacity volunteering in the Roma community.

**Law and Humanities Program (LHP)** has been co-financed by REF and by the Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future since 2007. REF SP implements the program in collaboration with national partners in Moldova, Russia and Ukraine.

### 2017–18 academic year

**208**  
LHP beneficiaries received

**€1,300 financial support**  
to cover basic study and living expenses,  
as well as additional tuition fee support up to  
**€1,000**.

Professional development support was offered through a range of activities such as foreign language and IT courses, participation in conferences and seminars, internships and research projects.

The annual student conference brought together 50 LHP students and alumni from all three countries. LHP offers grants for small-scale projects aimed at advancing the development of Roma communities at the local level.

**Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP)** is implemented in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania, and Serbia to support students in medical studies in their own countries at vocational or tertiary level.

### 2017–18 academic year

**76** RHSP students received  
**between €1,420 and €3,335**  
depending on the country and the level of studies.

Beneficiaries also received academic and professional development support.

**Roma International Scholar Program (RISP)** students receive financial support to study outside their home countries in Master or Doctorate programs.

### 2017–18 academic year

**5**  
beneficiaries from Bosnia and Herzegovina,  
Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine.

**€5,000 to €9,050 scholarships**  
(on average €6,610), taking into consideration  
students' secured third-party support, to cover their  
living and study-related expenses at universities  
in Estonia, France, the United Kingdom, and the  
United States.

For each scholarship cycle, the total number of scholarships is determined by the availability of funds for that year. The number of scholarships allocated in each country is decided based on the following factors:

- Demand for scholarships as expressed in past years, measured by the number of applications, which also reflects the ratio of upper secondary school completion among Roma;
- Existence of alternative scholarship programs and student loan schemes in a given country;
- The focus of specific REF SP donors on specific countries.

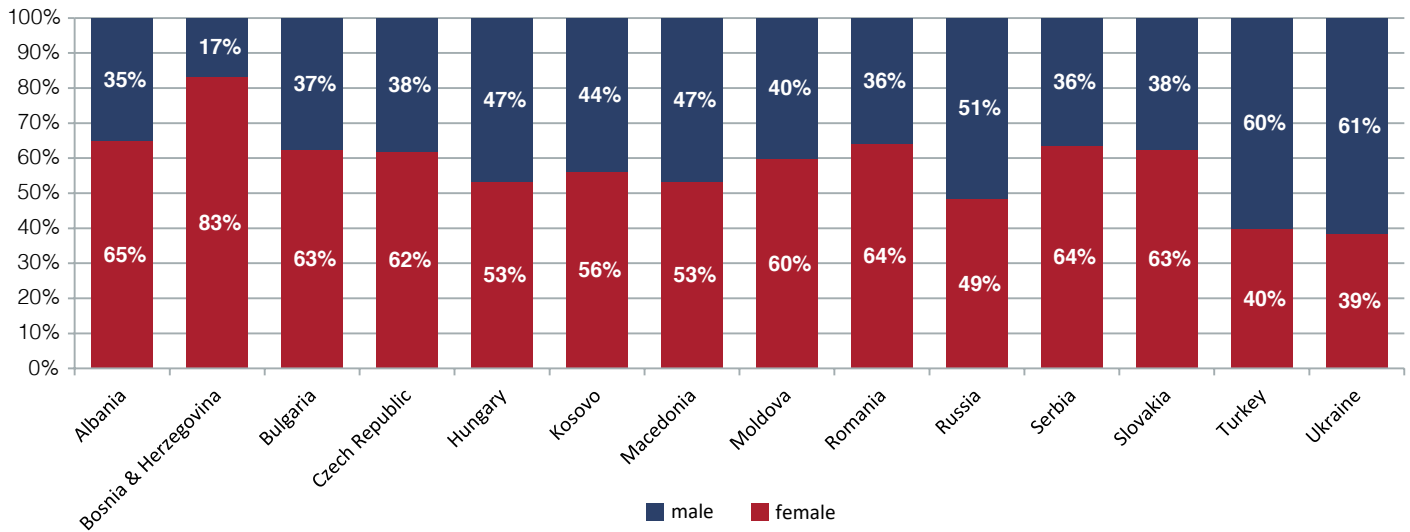
## REF Tertiary Education Scholarship Program in 2017–18

REF SP Scheme	Number of submitted applications	Awarded scholarships	Acceptance rate from the pool of submitted applications
RMUSP	1,635	950	58%
RHSP	126	76	60%
LHP	320	208	65%
RISP	17	5	29%
Total	2,098	1,239	60%

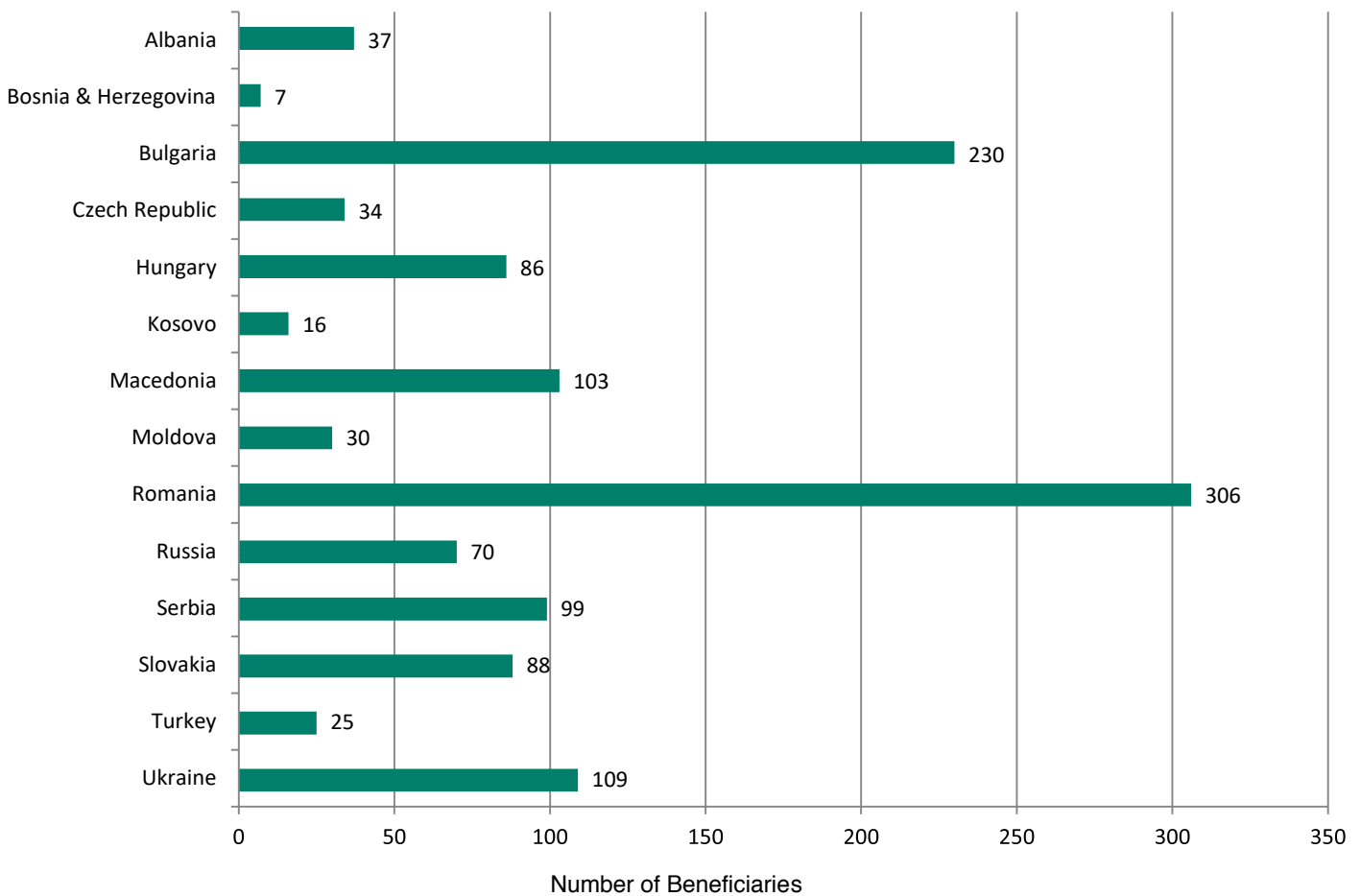
Out of the total 1,239 awarded scholarships, 721 (58%) are awarded to Roma female students and 518 (42%) to Roma male students.



## REF Tertiary Education Scholarship Program By gender in 2017-18



## REF Tertiary Education Scholarship Program Beneficiaries All Schemes per Country, 2017-18 Academic Year



## Features

### Ready Set Go!

#### Changing the World of Roma Children in Romania



*After two years of establishing the groundwork for measurable impacts in early childhood education for 14 kindergarten groups in six counties in Romania, Ready Set Go! inspired hundreds of families to enroll their children in local kindergartens, many of them attending early childhood education and care for the first time.*

Two Roma girls play in Galbinasi, Romania, the site of a refurbished Ready Set Go! kindergarten and playground in the spring of 2017. Photography © 2017 REF Romania

Ready Set Go! (RSG), which built on the experience of REF's portfolio of early childhood education (ECE) projects across Central and South Eastern Europe, scaled up many of the good practices embedded in REF's intervention model for children under age six. RSG packaged together social interventions that are proven to improve kindergarten enrollment and attendance of some of the most disadvantaged Roma children in Romania.

The project "Ready Set Go! – Increasing Early Childhood Development Outcomes for Roma Children" (December 2014–April 2017) was financed by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009–2014, RO25 – Poverty Alleviation Programme, through a grant on Norway's behalf in the approximate value of €2,800,000. It was implemented by REF Romania together with its partners, the Ruhama Foundation, Divers Association, Center for Education and Human Rights Association (CEDO), Association Justice and Brotherhood, and REF Hungary, with the technical assistance of the World Bank. Additional funding, through September 2017, was provided by the Open Society Foundations' Early Childhood Program.



## For the First Steps in Life are the Most Important!

#NorwayGrants #RomaEducationFund #REFpelocurifitigatastart #REFreadyssetgo  
[www.readyssetgo.ro](http://www.readyssetgo.ro)



**14** kindergarten groups established in **11** localities: Ineu, Drumbrava, Șilindru (Bihor County); Huseni (Sălaj County); Deaj, Beica de Jos (Mureș County); Traian, Căzănești (Ialomița County); Budești, Gălbinași (Călărași County); Românești (Dâmbovița County);

**5** kindergarten places constructed and **5** other ones renovated;

**570** children benefited from high quality Early Childhood Development (ECD) services and material support;

**530** caregivers involved in the project, with improved parental skills;

**14** Educators, **14** Preschool Mediators, **14** Your Story (YS) Facilitators, **12** Community Facilitators actively involved in supporting and providing community-based and quality ECD services;

**10** Toy Libraries established, with more than **2000** toys and games made available for children and their caregivers;

More than **1000** children and their caregivers benefited from the toys and games in the Toy Libraries;

More than **1000** YS sessions organized, involving **530** caregivers of the children;

More than **90** parents supported to become Educators for a day;

More than **100** community events organized with over **6000** participants.

The project 'Ready Set Go!' – Increasing Early Childhood Development Outcomes for Roma Children (RSG) is financed through the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009 – 2014, R025 – Poverty Alleviation Programme. Official information regarding the Norwegian Financial Mechanism can be retrieved at: [www.norwaygrants.org](http://www.norwaygrants.org).





## For the First Steps in Life are the Most Important!

#NorwayGrants #RomaEducationFund #REFpeolocurifitigatastart #REFreadyssetgo  
[www.readyssetgo.ro](http://www.readyssetgo.ro)



**Infrastructure**  
(construction/renovation works,  
IT infrastructure, kindergarten equipment)

**971.208 EUR**



**Early Childhood Development (ECD) Services**  
(including material support, socio-educational vouchers,  
clothes, books, toys and games, consumables)

**1.252.389 EUR**



**160 EUR**  
child / project month



**Project budget**  
**3.009.344 EUR**

**2.807.344 EUR**  
**Norwegian Financial Mechanism**

**202.000 EUR**  
**Own contribution**

The project 'Ready Set Go!' – Increasing Early Childhood Development Outcomes for Roma Children (RSG) is financed through the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009 – 2014, RD25 – Poverty Alleviation Programme. Official information regarding the Norwegian Financial Mechanism can be retrieved at: [www.norwaygrants.org](http://www.norwaygrants.org).





## Behind the Tourist Façade: Desegregating Schools in Croatia's Unvisited Interior



A few hundred meters from the main road, but out of sight of the holidaymakers who pass on their way to the 19th century Austro-Hungarian villas in Opatija, lies a hidden Roma settlement which has existed since those villas were built. Demus Litanj calculates that his five children are the sixth or seventh generation to live here. The 59-year-old scrap metal dealer said a trip for water carries the risk of a bear attack. "They stay in the shadows in the summer, no one has been attacked for a few years: it's more dangerous in the winter. It is very different to live here in winter."

Croatia became an EU country in 2014, but little has changed for the Roma of Delnice. The stream that is the source of water is still deemed unsafe. They pick mushrooms in the forest. The government doesn't allow electricity because it is an illegal settlement. A dog shelters from the heat in a makeshift kennel made from a broken oven.

At 34, Ramic Sivana has nine children. She receives social benefits, but says it is a struggle to feed and clothe them. "We live mostly from the scrap iron and the bottles, for which we get half a kuna each. I would like my children to have a normal home, so I can keep them and so they don't look as poor and pathetic as now."

It's a shocking end to the first stop of our tour, but happier tales await down the road where just €10,000 a year from REF has revolutionized a town. "We have done a good thing here," says Spomenka Cilar, who has taught at the kindergarten for 28 years – the last eight of them as principal.

"When I became a teacher here, I resolved to create an integration program." The project started for a six-month trial in 2009. "Then we had 15 Roma children and it was problematic. The Roma didn't have the habit of sending kids to school every day, if at all. The parents needed time to see the benefits, and there were individual problems with non-Roma parents, 10 of whom took kids away to two private kindergartens in the area."

The next couple of years, with support from all the schools, showed signs of a breakthrough. "Our teachers had kids here, which set an example; more friendships developed as more Roma children enrolled in primary schools; and it was no longer the case that Roma children would arrive at primary school with no knowledge of Croatian," Spomenka underlines. "It gets easier and easier each year."

In the last school year, 27 children used the daily bus service to and from the settlement two miles away. Spomenka is particularly pleased when she has an opportunity to chat with Roma parents she bumps into in town. "That didn't happen before", she says. "I can't speak for the whole town, but I see the parents of the kids talking too, which is a big difference."

Spomenka says "the full support" from the town mayor was crucial, as well as organized parents' meetings and the help of experts. "One Roma teaching assistant and one language expert would improve things even further."

## Dream to Dream: Bulgarian Roma Gain Traction and Skills in Secondary Education

When the Roma Education Fund and the Ministry of Education introduced a basic scholarship for over 600 Roma high school students in late 2016, the public reaction was blistering. Angry parents protested and sympathetic politicians assured their constituencies that any measure to support Roma students was a grave mistake that would be repealed immediately. Any hint of affirmative action or positive discrimination was deemed a scandal, even unconstitutional, especially in the press. However, REF's partner, the Ministry of Education and Science's Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities, refused to back down, even with national elections looming, and went on the offensive to explain the rationale for the program.

Despite the controversy, the program moved ahead, albeit nominally modified in such a way that public money was channeled to Bulgarian teachers acting as mentors and tutors in the program, and REF's private contribution was earmarked to support students.

By the start of the 2017–18 academic year, the

first results began to roll in about the academic performance of Roma students supported by the secondary scholarship and mentoring program, vindicating any doubts about the efficacy of this unique scheme. Importantly, from 339 female and 261 male students who were selected in the beginning of 2017, 84 out of 100 seniors went on to graduate and pass the state Matura exam, and 44 continued with tertiary education.

While these are all encouraging numbers in the program's first year, and suggest the real impact that scholarships, when matched with academic support, can have on the performance of disadvantaged students, the impact is in the accomplishments and aspirations of the students.

The aspirations of the students can be seen in a photo project commissioned by REF. Through the art of photography, *REF Secondary Education Scholars in Bulgaria towards A Profession of Their Dreams* features 20 of the secondary school scholars in their dream professions, dreams to which they are one step closer thanks to their hard work and REF-supported scholarships.



**“I have always succeeded.”  
– Katia Dimitrova**

*Katia is a third-year student at Bratya Miladinovi High School. “When we were younger, the kids made fun of me, saying that I will never succeed, that I will remain illiterate. After 8th grade everything changed. I showed everyone that I was no different and even could be better than them. I want to be like my uncle who graduated from the University of Veliko Tarnovo and is now a primary school teacher. I will graduate, too, and then become a flight attendant, travel around the world, to go to Dubai, Paris – it’s beautiful there. I will succeed.”*

*Location courtesy of Sofia Airport and General Directorate “Border Police,” Ministry of Internal Affairs, Bulgaria. Photography © 2017 REF | Rayko Chaprazov*



**“Everything is achievable with hard work.”  
– Antonio Antonov**

*Antonio is a fourth-year student at Ivan Hadjiyski High School in Sofia. “I was very young when I had my first computer. The games made me want a better and more powerful computer. I constantly wanted money for computer updates. In the end, mom and dad gave up, and I started to repair and update them by myself. I could learn about everything online. Now, I’m even helping with the computers at school. If a person is stubborn they can achieve anything. I’m now studying for the Matura exam with a special focus on mathematics. It’s going to be hard but I want to study IT and eventually have my own company.”*

*Location courtesy of SAP Development Center in Bulgaria. Photography © 2017 REF | Rayko Chaprazov*



**“Believe in yourself”  
– Maria Stanoeva**

*Maria is a fourth-year student at Neofit Rilski High School in Dolna Banya. “I spend all my time studying and have excellent grades in all my subjects. In the summer I help my parents in the strawberry fields. But really all I have to do is study and I’m lucky my school is here in town. I’m planning to apply to become a dental technician, as dentistry is not really my thing. It’s only three years and seems very achievable. My cousin graduated from Southwest University in Pedagogy so we have a good example of what education can do in my immediate family.”*

*Photography © 2017 REF | Rayko Chaprazov*



**“Everyone loves good food.”  
– Antonio Antonov**

*Asen is a second-year student at the School of Tourism and Food Technologies and hails from the mountain town of Razlog. “I make the best sweets, and baklava is my favorite. Even if I don’t need a higher education to be a chef, I’m thinking of going to the University of Blagoevgrad to study the tourism industry. I live next to the major resort of Bansko and if you’re careful how you present yourself, it’s possible to get a job there.”*



## Towards Knowledge Production in Higher Education of Roma



*Roma graduate students, University of Sussex staff and Roma Education Fund employees at the University of Sussex during a work package of the Higher Education Internationalisation and Mobility Project. Photography © 2017 University of Sussex, CHEER*

### **Tertiary Education Scholarship Program:** supporting Roma students in higher education since 2008.

With over 8,000 qualifying Roma students since its establishment, the program is the largest of its kind, providing financial support to Roma students from 16 countries in a merit-based competition that, at its peak, disbursed up to 1,500 scholarships a year.

Entering its second decade of operation, important shifts in priorities, as well as new opportunities, are gaining traction within the tertiary education program. In response to global trends, labor market skills requirements, and the broader needs for Roma community development, REF's Tertiary Education Scholarship Program has prioritized Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, along with medical, law, pedagogy and interdisciplinary studies within its application process since 2016.

Among a number of categories that ultimately determine an applicant's success, enrollment in one of the REF priority studies holds significant weight in the competition for the scholarships awards, with 34 percent of awarded scholarships in the last two academic years given to Roma students studying in one of the priority subject areas.

### **Professional Development Grants:** supporting beneficiaries in building academic and professional networks.

In 2017, 53 grants were awarded for students to participate in extra-curricular activities, conferences, foreign language courses, internships and research projects. Four grants were awarded to students pursuing internships in microcredit institutions in Macedonia and Serbia in cooperation with the Roma Entrepreneurship Development Initiative.

### **Small-scale projects grants:** promoting and strengthening the philosophy of community participation of scholarship beneficiaries and program alumni.

In 2017, nine small-scale projects were granted to scholarship beneficiaries and alumni who had the opportunity to gain experience in designing and implementing community projects, acquire new sets of skills and communicate with local authorities to benefit their Roma communities.

### **Higher Education Internationalisation and Mobility (HEIM) Project: Inclusion, Equalities and Innovations:** developing new opportunities and international cooperation in higher education.

Funded by EU Research and Innovation Programme Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions in Partnership, the University of Sussex (UK), Umea University (Sweden), the University of Seville (Spain) and the Roma Education Fund focused on how principles of equity and inclusion can be applied to internationalization strategies and programs in higher education, as well as on developing research and innovation capacity in this field.

Over three years, the HEIM consortium investigated who is able to participate in and benefit from policy initiatives and strategic interventions, and whether certain social groups are disadvantaged or excluded from the opportunities offered by higher education internationalization and mobility in Europe. The project was implemented from January 2015 to December 2017 and focused on the Roma community in Europe as a critical example of a marginalized group, at both staff and student levels.

Seven Roma current PhD students and eight selected professionals with MA degrees were seconded to one of the three universities with the purpose of capacity building in academic research skills and methodologies, and additional trainings on academic standards, presentations, publishing, the impact agenda and more. The participants attended up to four weeks, either by participating in summer school training or conducting research on a specific topic defined by the project. Twelve academic papers were produced, from which five were published in leading journals on education, pointing to the efficacy of this program in developing a new generation of Roma knowledge producers linked to the international academic community.

Statements from students participating in the training course about their experience:

*"This was a very valuable time to reflect, learn from the UK experience with diversity and equality and remind myself that I'm indeed a critical thinker."*

*"The learning infrastructure (library) and access to online information was amazing."*

*"Meeting with lecturers and doctoral researchers and representatives from local NGOs was really valuable."*

**Romani Studies Program at Central European University (CEU):** where many young Roma scholars begin their international academic journey.

This new academic unit, opened in summer 2017 and chaired by Dr. Iulius Rostas, continues to develop the potential of students through the Roma Graduate Preparation Program, while recruiting faculty and students to join this newest MA program. With this welcome prospect for a new, innovative hub of Roma-led research in the region, REF agreed to support 10 Roma MA students each year.

**Fully-funded scholarship at Oxford University:** for Roma who are accepted to study at the Blavatnik School of Government.

One Roma student per year for the next seven years will be supported to study in this rigorous, world-class Master of Public Policy program that is the alma mater of many leading figures in government and public service. Interest in the program has been exceptional, with over 800 applications received. A final decision about who will be the first Roma student to attend under this scheme will be made in late spring 2018. REF believes such a scholarship will contribute to developing Roma leadership at the highest level and open new opportunities for dialogue and integration.

Through its financial support of Roma students in higher education, the REF Scholarship Program has set the stage for building a network of Roma knowledge producers who are anticipated to influence their professional fields and speak on behalf of the power of education to impact and develop the potential of Roma. Tracer studies conducted in 2014, 2015, 2016 for various REF scholarship schemes, following the students and graduates' trajectories, reveal that REF scholarship alumni to some extent have contributed to strengthening the Roma rights movement by serving in numerous government agencies and non-profit institutions, found employment in mainstream professions and have acted as valuable role models for an upcoming generation of Roma youth.



## Weaving a Tale of the Unexpected: Roma Adult Employment in Macedonia



Donors and governments increasingly are asking REF how the foundation intends to not only close the gap in educational outcomes but how it will bridge the gap to employment for Roma participants in its programs. Although the organization has yet to formalize the expansion of its mission beyond classrooms and the policies that affect them, REF has begun to explore this complex and dynamic terrain where employment is even more uncertain than education for Roma adults.

Two projects implemented by REF in Macedonia over the last two years – and funded by the European Union's Instruments for Pre-Accession Assistance – aimed to give adults a second chance to complete their education and encourage their chances of employment. What no one could be sure of at the beginning were what turned out to be the positive results: 36 Roma adults have since found official employment.

Zaklina Trencevska, the executive director and owner of a garment factory in Delcevo, a small mountain town in eastern Macedonia near the Bulgarian border, has hired several Roma employees who participated in REF's second chance projects. What follows is an interview with her about her industry and why she chose to recruit Roma for her very competitive business.

### **Why are textiles so important in Delcevo?**

The textile industry is one of the leading export-oriented industries in Macedonia, and the largest concentration of companies is in the eastern part of the country, much of it in Delcevo with over 2,000 workers. Our companies have many years of experience tailoring clothing for men, women and children for the European market, and we also produce industrial work clothes for which we use up-to-date machines and require skilled workers.

### **How many Roma live in your city? Are you familiar with the businesses in which they work?**

Delcevo is fairly mixed – a Macedonian majority and many different minority groups. According to the information provided by the Employment Agency, only 8 percent of the working-age Roma are employed by the formal or informal economy, while 68 percent of Roma employed are low-skilled workers. Roma work in their own businesses that do not pay into the social or health system, and a small percentage deals with agriculture and public services.

### **How did you come to know about this program retraining Roma adults?**

The NGO Ternipe approached our company. What we liked was that this project focused on results, the acquisition of a diploma for secondary education, which makes it much easier for Roma adults to find work. Here at the Trenteks factory, four Roma women have been employed thanks to the two REF implemented projects, "Improving Roma Employment through Education and Training" and "School Completion as Pathway towards Employment."

### **What prompted you to recruit workers from vulnerable groups?**

We were involved in meetings where we were introduced to the challenges that Roma face. We heard from several Roma women who spoke about how difficult it was to integrate and improve their standard of living. Ternipe provided us with direct meetings for interviews, and we gave a chance to the best candidates. They are diligent, responsible workers and have contributed to improve our products.

### **Do you think that Second Chance programs are important for the personal and professional development of Roma?**

A lot of companies think that education and training for adults is a losing investment. But I'm convinced that the benefits of adult education affect the quality of work and the production of our company. Non-formal education programs and lifelong learning are both very important in order to address the lack of technical skills and experience that are acquired beyond formal education, and which are necessary for us employers.

### **Share some good examples related to Roma workers, some stories of working collaboration.**

Roma employees in our company have successfully mastered their jobs. They respect their work, and some have showed interest in more complex work. For example, Tezgul started cleaning, then moved to a sewing station, then ironed men's shirts and now knows many other processes. Recognizing her work ethic, the management team appointed her as a controller and gave her the time to learn the necessary control tasks. Now we are pleased with how she performs her work assignments.

## Sustaining REF Intervention Models and Best Practices in Student-Teacher Curricula and Training



*A pedagogy student from the University of Nikšić Faculty of Philosophy tutoring a Roma girl at Konik Camp in Podgorica, Montenegro as part of a now compulsory teacher training component to the course. Photography © 2017 REF | Sami Mustafa*

*This year the University of Nikšić in Montenegro joined a handful of faculties that have embedded best practices from REF's intervention models in their teaching curricula. Like the University of Debrecen and Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, the Philosophy Faculty at the University of Nikšić has signaled that it believes equity in education services and among teaching professionals is a vital component in creating quality, inclusive classrooms. Student-teachers must volunteer in disadvantaged communities in order to gain the skills and competences to develop their ability to respond to the needs of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Here, Biljana Maslovarić, Vice Dean for Science and International Cooperation at the Faculty of Philosophy, underlines the faculty's commitment to human rights in education:*

Academic communities are inherently privileged in their influence and ability to shape the societies around them. At the Faculty of Philosophy, where future teachers are educated in Montenegro, social accountability accounts for 20 percent of coursework from the 2017–18 academic year.

In response to real challenges in Montenegro's school system, the Faculty has partnered with the Pedagogical Center of Montenegro and the Roma Education Fund since 2009 to nurture and promote student volunteer practice. Student volunteers are part of a wider effort to guarantee quality education for all. Our volunteer work is multidimensional and may incorporate mediation, tutoring or mentoring – a combination that is delivered

within the classroom, after school and in the community. Student-teachers also may act as social workers, helping solve administrative challenges like birth certificates, registration, enrollment and identity cards that, in the past, have often discouraged disadvantaged families' access to social services. This policy outreach extends not only to Roma, Egyptian and other minority families but also to internally displaced, refugees and others who need help navigating Montenegro's administration.

For example, our pedagogy students have been active at Konik Camp in Podgorica for several years. Natasa Durutovic, a junior in Pedagogy, has been volunteering for over two years. She tutors twice a week in both mathematics and Montenegrin as a second language, as many students speak primarily Albanian and Romanes, and she has observed some big changes in her students.

Natasa said, "A fifth-grader who is 14 years old from a functionally illiterate family performed very badly in school because he had been sent by his parents to beg on the streets from an early age. He did not know how to attend school, to sit at a desk in a disciplined manner. With the help of the mediator and the tutors, he started to become curious about school and expressed an interest to come to the workshop with the second- and third-graders who I usually teach. He didn't care that the other kids were much younger – he wanted to learn how to read and write in Montenegrin. When I began, I had no idea about the real impact that living in Konik Camp had on students like him."

Milos Bulatovic, a senior in Psychology, who tutors in literacy and numeracy, said about his volunteering at Konik, "I work with lower primary school kids, helping them with their homework. They have better social skills than before – the kids are not as shy and they speak freely now. This is the same with older children in upper primary grades who report that they now have a better connection with other children in the mainstream school."

Such intercultural work has a deep impact on education and how future teachers will develop and then engage with their students and their social and educational realities. In appreciation of a nearly decade-long partnership that has sparked a fundamental change in how the faculty embraces sustainable social change, the Roma Education Fund was honored during an official ceremony marking the faculty's 70<sup>th</sup> jubilee in late October.

## REF Network

### Hungary Foundation

#### REF-supported projects in 2017

Educational level	Project name	Grantee organization
Early childhood	ECD Program in Budapest	Közös Esély (Common Chance Association)
Early childhood	A Good Start for Roma children	Give Me Your Hand Association
Early childhood	Complex Desegregation Program in Mátészalka Microregion	Vazdune Cherhaja (Rising Stars) Romani Women's Association
Primary	Further Steps for István Akna	Khetanipe Association
Primary	Catch-up Tutoring for Underprivileged Children	Öko Zemplén Szociális Szövetkezet
Primary	Get Ready to Desegregate	Rosa Parks Foundation
Tertiary	RomaVersitas Hungary	RomaVersitas Foundation
Tertiary	Roma in European Societies	Central European University

#### REF-implemented projects in 2017

Educational level	Project name	Donor
Secondary	Pedagogy Scholarship Program in Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia	VELUX Foundations
Secondary	Professional Intergovernmental Know-how Exchange on the Implementation of Large-scale Scholarship and Mentoring Program for Roma Students	Central European Initiative
Tertiary	Higher Education Internationalisation and Mobility	EU Horizon 2020



## Developments in education and policies

Roma participation in early childhood education and care in Hungary is 91 percent, close to the national average and the highest in the region (Fundamental Rights Agency, 2016). The provision of free kindergarten, school meals and textbooks to disadvantaged pupils has expanded substantially since 2015. However, increasing residential separation and the effect of parental choice on local school enrollment policies have resulted in the education system becoming ever more ethnically segregated over the last decade.

Most Roma children still attend schools where all or most children are Roma, and early school leaving is more than six times higher (59.9 percent) among Roma than among non-Roma (8.9 percent). Although successful pedagogical models for inclusive education have been developed in Hungary, the number of schools using them is limited.

## REF in Hungary

### Combatting the Segregation of Roma in Hungarian Schools

REF supports the implementation of desegregation projects that involve actions to enroll and to retain Roma children in integrated schools and to ensure achievement comparable to their non-Roma peers. Grantees are selected by using a matrix of demographic, geographic and social indicators. For example, eastern Hungary, which is most densely populated by Roma according to the national census of 2011, lags behind in nearly every category, whether education or employment. And in Csobánka, just outside Budapest city limits, the segregation of Roma students is an ongoing issue.

Hungary's rural areas are well-known for their lack of quality services, whether education or healthcare, and deeply embedded social and economic problems. On REF's behalf, the Give Me Your Hand Association has been working to bring about sustainable change by strengthening the cooperation among local authorities, educational institutions and Roma parents. For example, the establishment of reading circles and constant community outreach have changed the outlook on education in Nyíregyháza, with some 52 participating children entering primary school at age six and already able to read and write. Near the Hungarian-Romanian border in Nagyecséd, REF is also improving these services through a grant to the "Vazdune Cherhaja – Rising Star Association."

In some of the poorest settlements in Hungary (Nyírcsaholy, Kántorjánosi, Rohod and Nagyecséd), seven Toy Libraries have been established to develop disadvantaged children's skills through playing with quality, interactive toys. First piloted by REF in Hungary in 2011, Toy Libraries target vulnerable communities and loan out toys that develop experiential learning and support concrete educational milestones to better prepare them for school.

Toy Libraries and early childhood development (ECD) services	Number
Toy Libraries	8
Trained Toy Librarians	18
Registered Toy Library members (also involved in other forms of parental participation, such as ECD clubs, Home School Community Liaison, etc.)	280
Children participating	327
Kindergartens involved	17
Parents involved in Your Story sessions	264

### Toy Library Opens in Budapest's District Eight

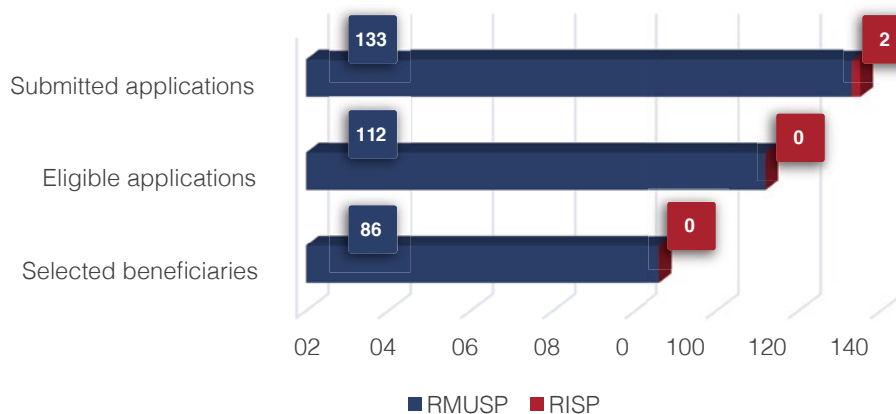
Budapest's eighth and ninth districts are highly segregated, with a significant number of Roma pupils confined to schools attended by few non-Roma children. Many of the children come from multiply disadvantaged families, according to research by REF grantee, Rosa Parks Foundation.

REF decided it was time to highlight the issue of segregation in the nation's capital. Directly implemented by REF since mid-2017, a Toy Library has opened in district eight, with the intent of reaching children under age 10 with quality educational toys, as well as programming that includes stay-and-play services and opportunities for Roma mothers to join Your Story sessions.

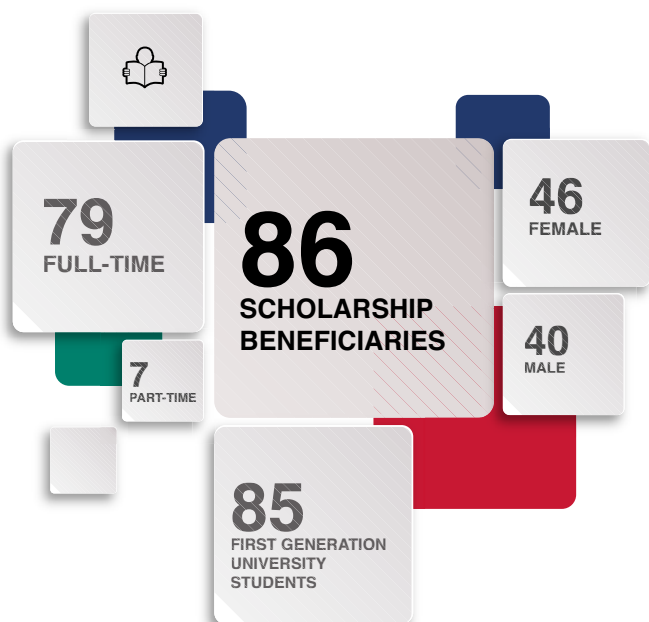
## Tertiary Scholarship Program

**2017-18 Academic Year**

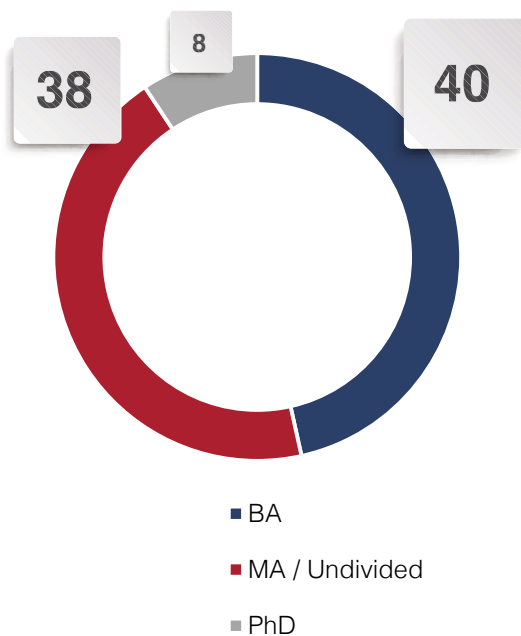
### Applications and Beneficiaries by Program



### Demographics of Scholarship Beneficiaries

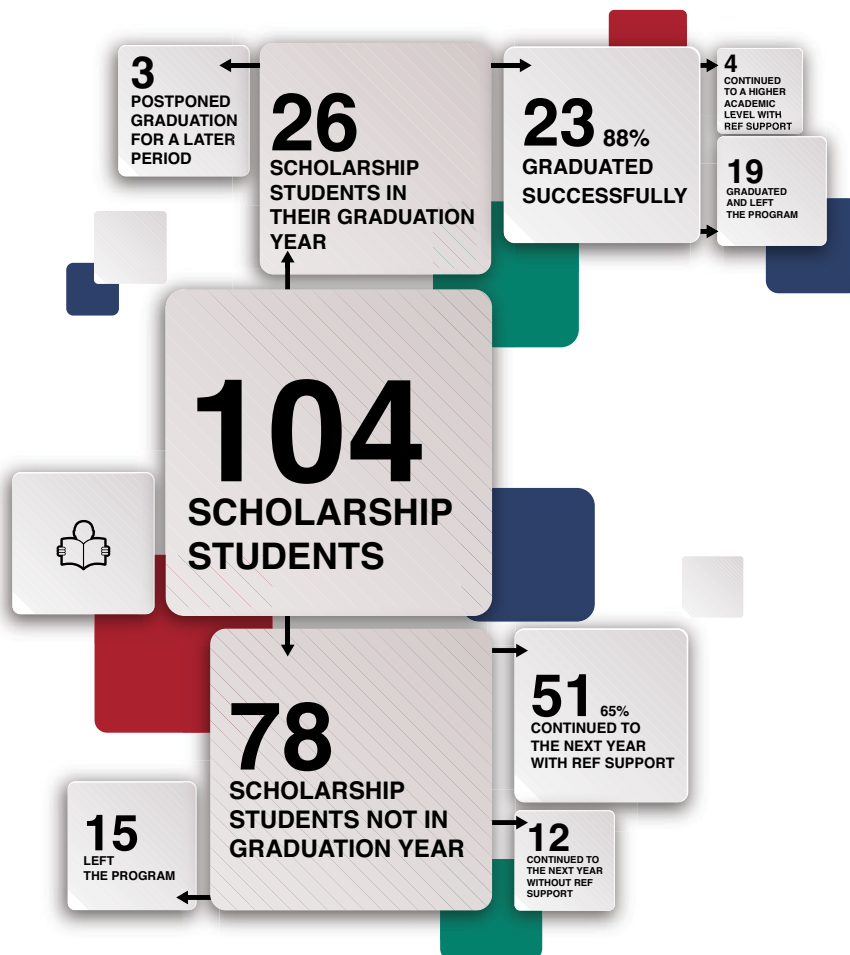


### Level of Studies

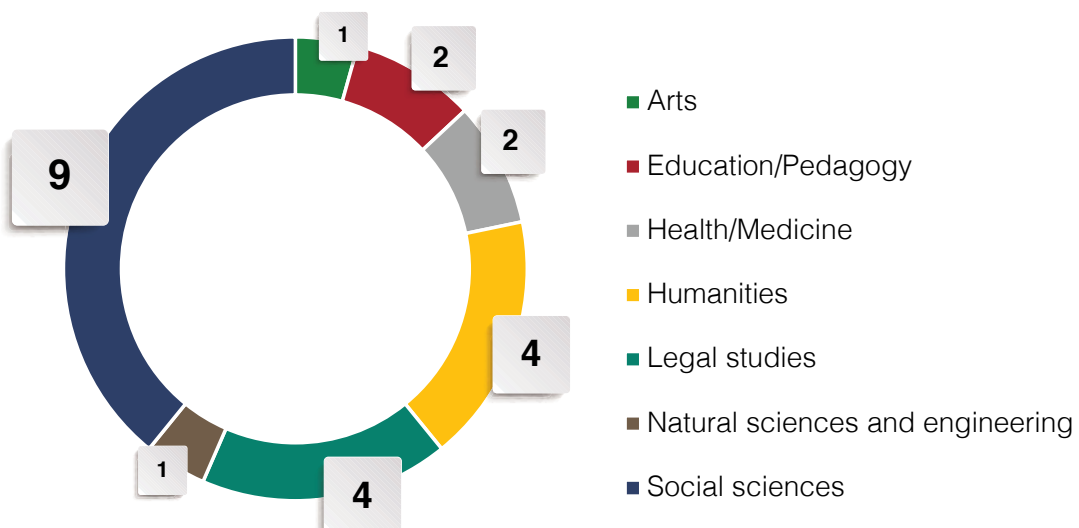


## 2016-17 Academic Year

### Graduation data



### Graduates' Fields of Study



## Spotlight



**Klára Gulyás**

*is a single mother, activist, social worker and now is studying for a PhD in Cultural Anthropology. She attends Eszterházy Károly University in Eger and is a first time REF scholarship recipient.*

In today's world everyone is expected to play several roles in their lives. I live every minute of my life as a Roma woman, as the mother of my daughter, as a professional in my job, and none of these roles weaken me. On the contrary – my roles interconnect, they shape me, and I shape them through living life.

As a professional in the field of social sciences, it is my duty to help disadvantaged groups. Parallel to my undergraduate studies, I joined the mentoring program of the local Roma self-government, through which we help disadvantaged children who attend segregated schools. After working with those amazing children, I realized that I needed to gain knowledge from multiple fields if I wanted to tackle the multidimensional issues present in the educational integration of Roma children. After graduating in Social Pedagogy with excellent results, I pursued an MA degree in Minority Policies at the University of Szeged and also worked with the Roma community in development and mediation through the University of Debrecen. There I met professors whose support motivated me to start cultural anthropology.

Along the way, I aimed for nothing less than to fight against Roma stereotypes that depicted me as less capable than my peers. It's vital for me to succeed based upon my real knowledge, and that it is not mistaken for positive discrimination. Despite all my efforts, though, most of my peers considered my results as benefiting from positive discrimination.

I financed the first year of my PhD myself, but the high tuition fees made it impossible to raise a child. I was rejected from several state and charity programs. But I won a REF scholarship, which is helping me get one step closer to achieving my dreams. Besides the financial support, I am grateful for the new opportunities that it brings and belonging to a community of young Roma professionals with whom I can engage in professional discourse. I've been waiting a long time for that.

## Montenegro Branch Office

### REF-supported projects in 2017

Educational level	Project name	Grantee organization
Primary	Providing Social Services for the Regular Attendance of Primary Education	Nikšić – Center for Roma Initiatives
Secondary	Roma and Egyptian Scholarship Fund for the Support of Secondary and Tertiary Education of Roma/RE Youth in Montenegro, Phase II	Ministry of Education, Bureau for Education

### REF-implemented projects in 2017

Educational level	Project name	Donor
Early childhood Primary Adult	Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of Roma, Egyptians and Other Vulnerable Groups	European Union

## Developments in education and policies

The Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro 2016–2020 has a measure to prepare and adopt amendments to the law on preschool education, with the aim to increase the number of children who enroll and attend. One of the ways to achieve this is through the exemption of fees and investment in designing bus routes and organizing transport for Roma and Egyptian (RE) children to and from preschools.

According to research conducted by the Ministry of Education in 2016, only one in four RE children enroll in primary school, although enrollment is obligatory by law, and a further 11 percent drop out (boys 9.4 percent and girls 13.8 percent). The most critical age for dropping out is age 10.

The 2016–2020 Strategy also specifies measures to increase enrollment in four-year secondary schools. In accordance with the principle of affirmative action, quotas for enrollment and scholarships are set for a certain number of RE students in secondary schools and universities.

## REF in Montenegro

### Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of Roma, Egyptians and Other Vulnerable Groups

Following its commitment to desegregate Konik Camp and bus RE primary and secondary school students to mainstream schools around the capital Podgorica, REF began implementing a new project, with the support of the European Union, extending its activities to reach RE families in Nikšić and Berane.

Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of Roma, Egyptians and Other Vulnerable Groups builds upon REF's model interventions in Podgorica to discourage early school leavers from dropping out of primary school and enrolling in secondary school.

## REF beneficiaries' education results in the 2016–17 school year

**372** children participated in REF projects (preschool, primary and secondary schools in Podgorica, Berane and Nikšić).

**319** primary school children and **117** secondary pupils were mentored through student voluntary practice and mentoring program to ensure academic and social integration.

**323** teachers trained in Berane and Nikšić.

**7** city schools continue to support the process of desegregation in Podgorica.

**7** RE mediators liaise with children, families and schools (1 per primary school).

**16** university students (9 females/7 males) received scholarships.

A protocol on prevention and action in the case of risk of early school dropout passed all national legal procedures.

Only **4%** dropout rate.

## Secondary education scholarships



**91%** of the secondary scholars in Montenegro completed the academic year.

*Denis (right) is a student in the REF-managed secondary scholarship program in Montenegro.  
Photography © 2017 REF | Tom Bass*

## Policy Change on Roma Associates in Montenegrin Schools

*As a further signal of the changing climate regarding RE in education in Montenegro, REF has developed and sought approval for a new vocational qualification: the associate in the social inclusion of Roma men/women and Egyptian men/women in education.*

REF has cooperated with the Center for Vocational Education and state institutions, i.e., Bureau for Education, Employment Agency, and Ministry for Human and Minorities Rights, to develop a new vocational qualification, the associate in the social inclusion of Roma men/women and Egyptian men/women in education. After the adoption of the Educational Program at the National Council for Education, this vocational qualification is now listed in the National Qualifications Framework for the sector of education and training as a level three vocational qualification.

This innovative program covers all existing and potential RE mediators from all regions and cities where they are currently or will be working in the future, and is an important step to qualify the work of the dedicated RE mediators who have worked on REF and other donors' projects in Montenegro.



## Tertiary Scholarship Program

Due to the low number of Roma students pursuing and completing secondary education in Montenegro in 2017, REF SP received very few applications for scholarships. REF Grant program is addressing this challenge by implementing a secondary education level scholarship program, as well as cooperating with the government in Montenegro in providing support to Roma students in tertiary education.

## Spotlight

REF believes that social inclusion is further improved by extracurricular activities in which all children take part. One such activity is the winter carnival in Kotor. In 2017 REF participated for the third year in row with the “Joyful Classroom” theme. RE children attending REF’s seven partnership schools (all seven city schools in Podgorica) marched in the festivities, and the jury praised the children’s energy and charm during the parade.



Photography © 2017 REF Montenegro

## Romania Foundation

### REF-implemented projects in 2017

Educational level	Project name	Donor
Secondary	Pedagogy Scholarship Program in Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia	VELUX FOUNDATIONS
Early childhood	Ready, Set, Go!	Norway Grants
Tertiary	European Voluntary Service for All Roma Versitas	Allianz Cultural Foundation REF Hungary

### Developments in education and policies

A recent survey by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA 2016) shows that only 38 percent of Roma children attend early childhood education and care. Access to quality education is a particular challenge in rural areas, where 45 percent of Romania's school population resides. The difference between early school leaving in rural (26.6 percent) and urban areas (6 percent in cities, 17 percent in towns and suburbs) is high, and 77 percent of Roma aged 18–24 are early school leavers.

Spending on education is low, and mechanisms to channel funds to disadvantaged schools are insufficient. Romania's general government expenditure on education as a proportion of GDP remains the lowest in the EU: 3.1 percent in 2015 compared to the EU average of 4.9 percent. Underfunding is evidenced by the unusually large financial burden falling on Romanian households, which spend 39 percent of what the government spends on education: this is the highest proportion in the EU.

The tertiary educational attainment rate is the lowest in the EU. This is due to a combination of factors that limit the potential number of students: high dropout rates in pre-university education, increasing but relatively low pass rates for the baccalaureate exam and low participation of disadvantaged groups in higher education.

### REF in Romania

#### Velux Scholarship Program in Pedagogy

In 2016, REF Romania joined the Scholarship Program in Pedagogy, becoming the fourth country to join this international project implemented by REF and financed by the VELUX Foundations through 2022, with a contribution from REF Hungary for each participating student's last two academic years.

The project aims to support Roma female students enrolled in secondary education – specifically pedagogy – in the transition from school to working life by developing practical skills to improve their employability prospects in the labor market as teachers. The young women benefit from financial (ensuring payment of transportation, accommodation and meals) and academic support – tutoring, counseling and guidance for continuing education or obtaining a job. Also, through the mentoring component, students can increase their self-esteem and embrace their identity and belonging to the Roma community. In their last two academic years the program beneficiaries will receive an additional scholarship, following their academic performance.

**58** students received scholarships covering tuition and living allowance

**30** mentors, providing psycho-pedagogical counseling services

**31** tutors (Romanian language, Math, English)

A summer camp that allowed students to get to know each other and reflect on their educational and professional challenges

**100%** of the REF-supported secondary school students in Romania have transitioned to the next grade.

## RomaVersitas – A New Branch in Romania

Started in 2016, the RomaVersitas program in Romania, supported by REF headquarters, aims to increase retention, academic performance and graduation rates, while also raising the self-esteem of full-time tertiary education Roma students in Bucharest. Proven already to have influenced the transition and graduation of hundreds of Roma university students in seven countries, RomaVersitas targets improving their academic results through mentoring and tutoring, while also investing in their professional capacities and abilities in order to improve their access to the labor market.

In 2017 RomaVersitas established an Education and Innovation Development Center – a fully equipped technical facility on the premises of REF Romania's office in Bucharest. Students attend English language courses held by the British Council and have learned more about their own culture and history through learning Romanes. They also are required to take human rights and gender studies trainings in order to equip them for the challenges they face in universities and the workplace.

**26** female students and **17** male students

**20** students won project grants financed by the Ministry of Youth and Sport and implemented the Roma Health Campaign in four Roma communities around Bucharest.

**14** RomaVersitas students participated in the youth caravan organized by REF Romania in partnership with the National Roma Cultural Center – Romano Kherr. The aim of the youth caravan was to present to the public a series of cultural activities to increase the self-esteem of young Roma students and combat gender stereotypes and prejudices against Roma.

**82%** of students who participated in RomaVersitas have since enrolled in a Masters program.

## EVS4ALL – European Voluntary Service for ALL

EVS4ALL spanned two years (2015–2017) as part of Erasmus + Key Action 2 and was implemented through an initiative by the Allianz Cultural Foundation, in cooperation with Volonteurope and Itineraire International and coordinated by IKAB – Bildungswerk. REF Romania was one of fourteen partners from a range of organizations across Europe. The project aimed at showcasing how European Voluntary Service could become more inclusive for young people who have few such opportunities.

**Final policy recommendation report** "Towards a More Inclusive Europe – The European Service for All" was made public in October, with the presence of Members of European Parliament, representatives of the European Commission and civil society representatives from Europe.

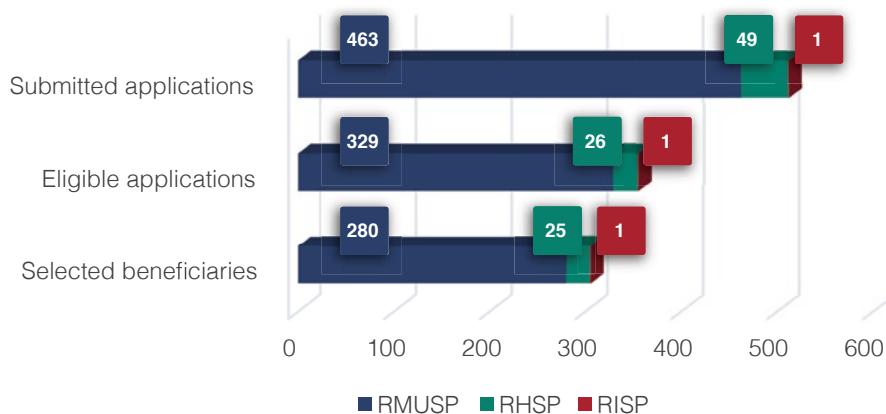
**Over 20 students** participated in volunteering activities for a period of four months in different countries as partner members through the EVS 4ALL program – for example, two Roma girls from Romania volunteered in Germany.

**Over 35 volunteering events** took place during the project implementation.

## Tertiary Scholarship Program

2017-18 Academic Year

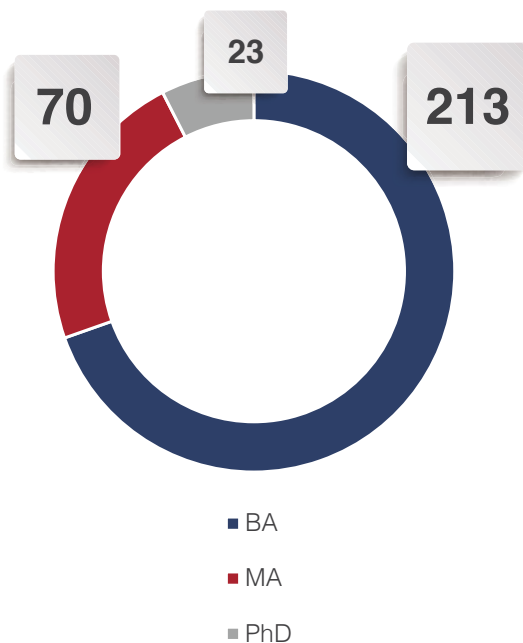
### Applications and Beneficiaries by Program



### Demographics of Scholarship Beneficiaries



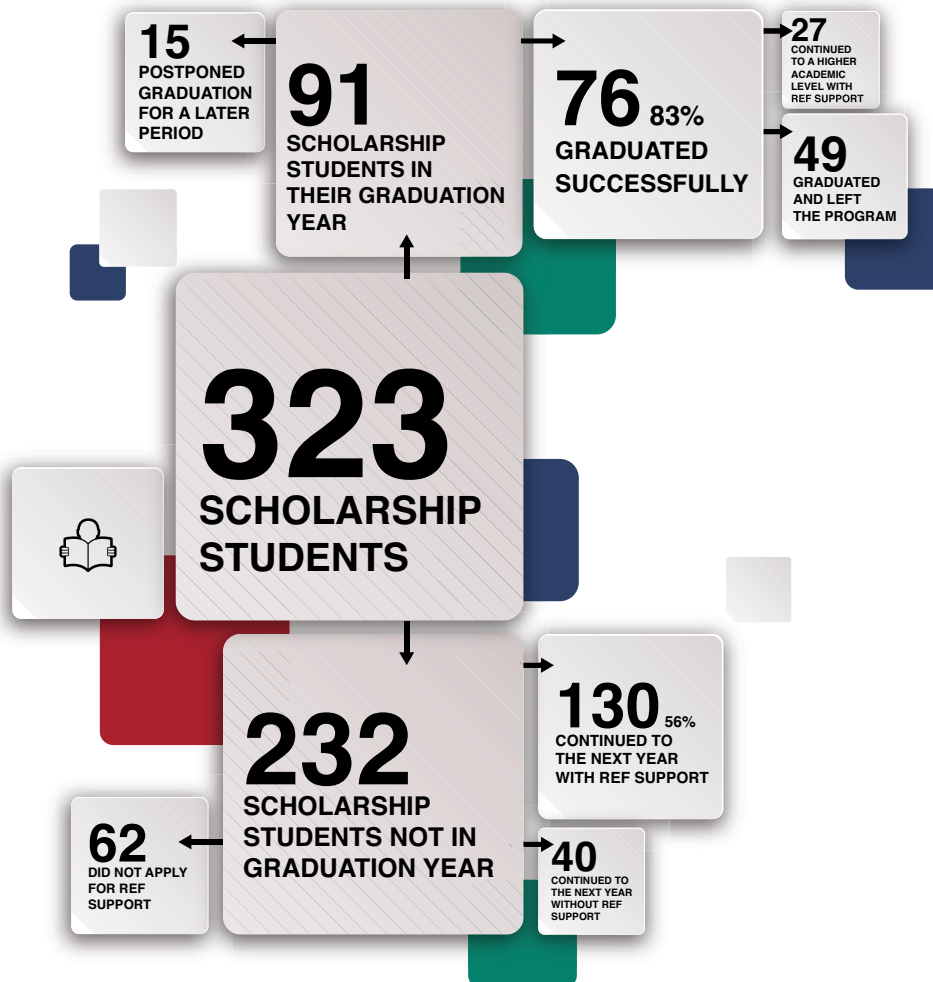
### Level of Studies



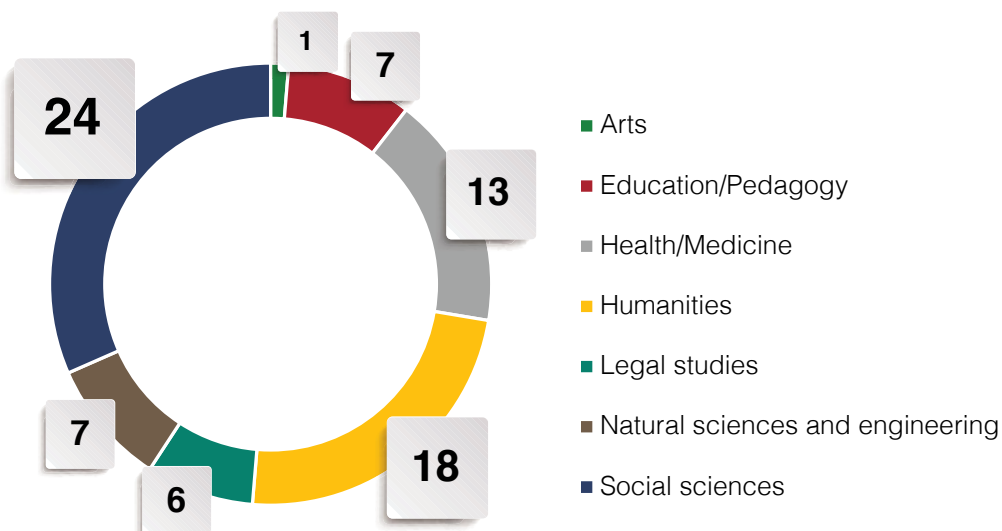


## 2016-17 Academic Year

### Graduation data



### Graduates' Fields of Study



## Spotlight

### Ready Set Go! – Increasing Early Childhood Development Outcomes for Roma Children

The closing conference in Bucharest in April 2017 was attended by partners, contributing experts, government agency representatives and international experts. They were shown the impact of how early childhood education can make a significant difference for underfunded communities.

*“I feel ashamed because I don’t always have something for him to eat. I don’t bring him to school because I can’t leave my child hungry. At home I can cook him onion soup, I can find something to feed him, but I can’t send him to school with a jar of soup to eat at school.”*

*Florina Maruntelu from Galbinasi, spoke of her experience before the project began*

Ready Set Go! overcame this obstacle common to many participating families by offering socio-educational vouchers to complement their household budgets. Meanwhile, REF began to construct and refurbish 10 kindergartens in 11 municipalities involved in the project, bringing a new dimension to its implementation work, and solving the problem of too little space for kindergarten-age pupils at its project sites.

*“We lack young Roma teachers in education, people who can gain their trust, because trust is a very serious issue. Coming from outside, even as Roma ourselves, they regard us as outsiders. We are well dressed, we drive cars and we talk about education.”*

*Marian Daragiu, Ready Set Go! Project Manager*

*“We bring the culture of books and reading into homes.”*

*Furugh Switzer, Founder of the Your Story method.*

Mothers who participated in the Your Story Sessions received a selection of children’s books to stock their home libraries. Most households did not have books at home until the literacy activities of the Ready Set Go! project.

According to an International Development Learning Assessment (IDELA) of RSG conducted by the World Bank, together with REF, children participating in the project showed promising results in their scores in emergent literacy and numeracy, motor and socio-emotional development, executive function and cumulative learning skills regardless of the language spoken at home.

*"Preschool education helps us and teaches us, parents and children, how to live together. When you interact with children of different culture or ethnicity, it is easier to be more tolerant and integrated into society. [...] The most visible results come from NGOs that manage to bring together all these entities. We have a lot to learn from NGOs, which bring together many partners. This project had some simple but very effective instruments: renovating schools, shaping the mission of parents themselves, Toy Libraries to help children to be accustomed to this idea.*

*Ligia Deca, State Advisor to the Presidency of Romania*

*"I want to emphasize the importance of education and investment in education for eradicating social exclusion in vulnerable communities and particularly among the Roma community."*

*Elisabetta Capannelli, Country Manager of World Bank Romania*



*Enjoying the new playground, a young Roma girl reacts outside the kindergarten refurbished in Galbinesi by REF Romania during a tour by REF stakeholders. Photography © 2017 REF Romania*

## Serbia Branch Office

### REF-supported projects in 2017

Educational level	Project name	Grantee organization
Early childhood	Toy Libraries – Our Space for Growth	Consortium of Six Roma organizations: NGO Romanipen, NGO Romani Cikna, NGO Hands of Friendship, NGO Humanitarian Center Rom, NGO Small Happy Colony, NGO Indigo Nis
Primary	Introduction of the Roma Language with Elements of National Culture in Primary Schools in Serbia	Centre for Education of the Roma Community
Tertiary	RomaVersitas Vojvodina	Vojvodinian Roma Center for Democracy

### REF-implemented projects in 2017

Educational level	Project name	Donor
Secondary Tertiary	Improved Education and Integration Opportunities for Roma in Serbia, Employment Empowerment of Young Roma and Reintegration of Returnees	KfW – German Development Bank

## Developments in education and policies

The action plan for the implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma 2016–2025, adopted in June 2017, emphasizes the need for full involvement of Roma children and youth in all education levels from preschool to tertiary, and also focuses on dropout prevention. Out of 64 percent of Roma students that finish their primary (compulsory) education, only 22 percent continue to high school, whereas in the general population 93 percent graduate from primary school and 90 percent continue to secondary education.

The Law on the Foundations of the Educational System adopted in 2017 introduces professional instructions for developing individual educational plans and procedures for the admission of vulnerable groups of students using affirmative measures. However, the Law does not address children from returnee families, as a vulnerable group with specific requirements for integration into the educational system, since there are very few institutional and procedural guidelines addressing their needs.



## REF in Serbia

### Improved Education and Integration Opportunities for Roma in Serbia, Employment Empowerment of Young Roma, and Reintegration of Returnees

The project, which runs from late 2016 to 2019, provides technical assistance and efficient mechanisms to combat discrimination and to create conditions in which Roma can access quality education and employment. It is implemented by REF's branch office in Serbia and is supported under the auspices of the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of the Federal Republic of Germany in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic Serbia.

#### The project consists of three components

##### **Component 1: Support for Roma secondary school students through REF's Secondary Scholarship and Mentorship Program**

Objective: to decrease dropout rates, improve the academic performance of students and maintain the retention and graduation rate of Roma secondary school students through better outreach, provision of scholarships, and school-based mentorship and tutorship support.

##### **Component 2: Strengthening professional and life skills of REF secondary school students**

Activities: REF has developed an individual approach, offering multiple services ranging from counseling and training to job search assistance. The candidates have the possibility to undertake additional qualifications, training programs and/or paid internships.

##### **Component 3: Improving reintegration of the Roma returnees in Serbia**

Methodology: Based on research of six locations with the highest number of Roma family returnees, REF designed a small grant program with two key intervention areas: (a) preparatory preschool program, and (b) primary education. Four local non-governmental organizations received grants for implementing this component. Project activities are taking place in five locations (Subotica, Nis, Leskovac, Surdulica and Vladicin Han). The projects began with the start of the 2017–18 school year.



## **HIGHLIGHTS** till November 2017

Secondary Scholarship and Mentorship Program

**126** Roma students graduated  
**348** progressed successfully to the next grade



Vocational Education and Training (VET)

**174** Roma students participating in a variety of fields:  
administration, beauty, hospitality, IT, locksmith, machine operator,  
sales and welding, and upgrading qualifications to obtain IV vocational degree

Cooperation with employers

Launched cooperation with  
**10** companies and institutions  
in providing internships  
for Roma students

Professional Development

**35** Roma students attending foreign language courses  
and IT training

In 2016-17 school year **498** secondary school beneficiaries received scholarships and mentoring support. 474 of them completed the school year 2016/17 and transitioned to the next grade. The remaining 24 repeated grade, switched to part-time education or dropped out.

In 2017-18 school year **500** beneficiaries are receiving scholarships and mentoring support.

**149** mentors

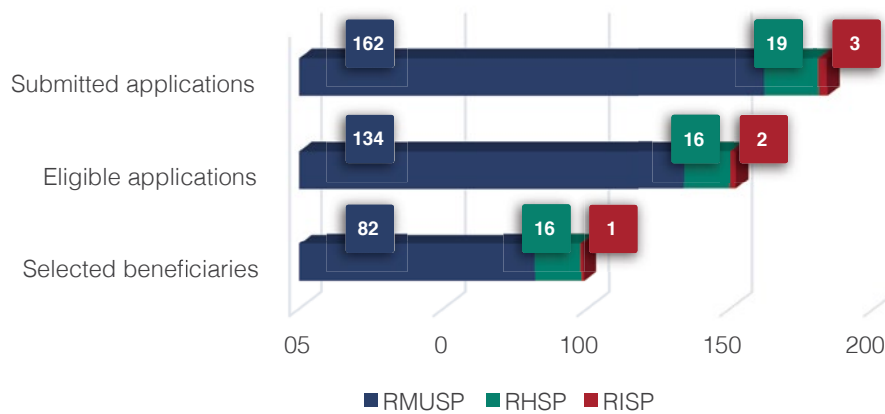
Less than **3% dropout rate** among REF secondary scholars in 2017.

**96%** of the secondary scholars in Serbia completed the academic year.

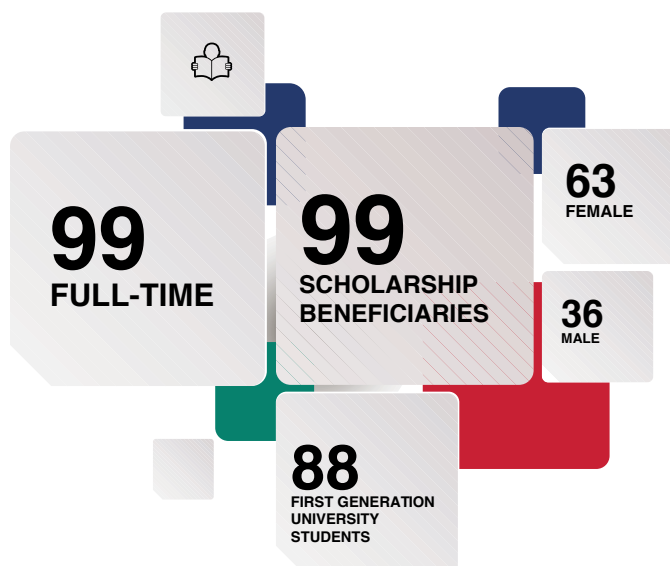
## Tertiary Scholarship Program

2017-18 Academic Year

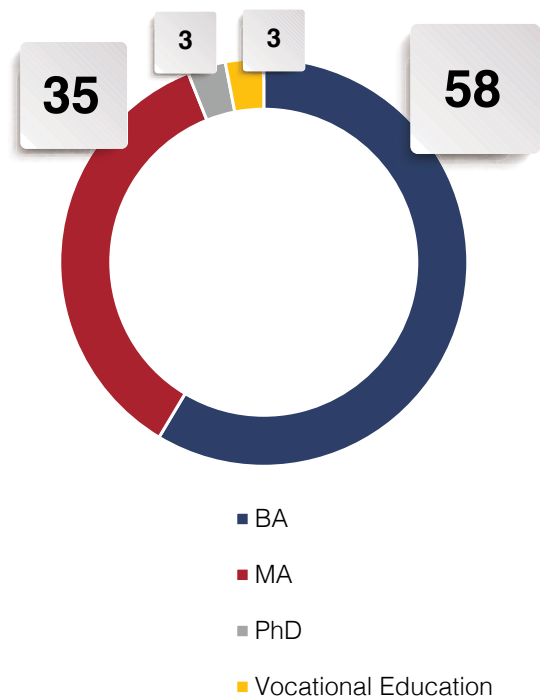
### Applications and Beneficiaries by Program



### Demographics of Scholarship Beneficiaries

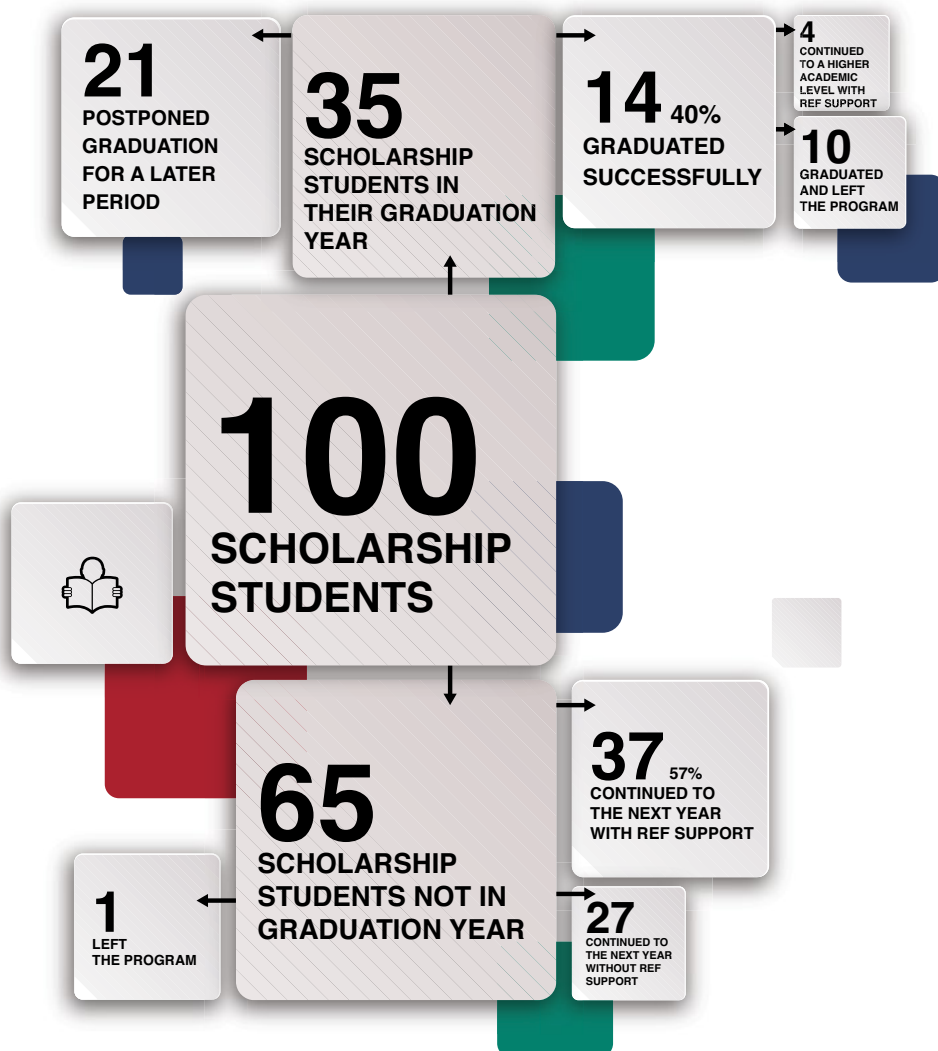


### Level of Studies

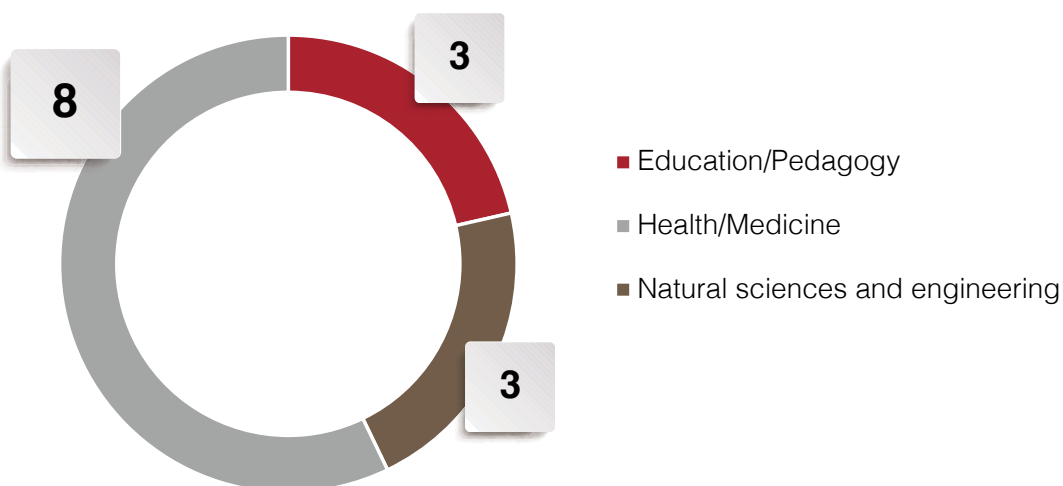


## 2016-17 Academic Year

### Graduation data



### Graduates' Fields of Study



## Spotlight

### Marketable VET Skills Lead to Real Employment in Serbia



*Participants in Improved Education and Integration Opportunities for Roma in Serbia, Employment Empowerment of Young Roma, and Reintegration of Returnees after completing further vocational education training in welding. Photography © 2017 REF Serbia*

As Serbia gears up to negotiate the *acquis communautaire* for accession to European Union membership, one story of how the potential of inclusive education and employment policies can impact the Serbian labor market begins along the Belgrade to Nis corridor. Smederevska Palanka, a municipality of 50,000 inhabitants, is just one of many locations participating in a nationwide project implemented by REF to improve labor market access for Roma high school graduates.

Nemanja Nedeljković is one of five Roma students who graduated with a certificate in industrial welding at the Goša Institute in July 2017. “I was a REF scholarship recipient and my mentor helped me apply. I gained a lot of experience during the four months, and a job offer came from one company in Pirot. I also had an offer to work in Slovakia.”

For Serbia's Roma population, officially estimated to be nearly 150,000 (and unofficially 450,000), unemployment persists well above the national average. This is compounded by systemic barriers to accessing quality inclusive education, and a very low 11 percent graduation rate from secondary education for Roma compared to the majority's 88 percent.

REF's years of investments in secondary school education and vocational education and training (VET) have begun to pay off, leading to over 100 qualified Roma VET students graduating in 2016, with another 350 students on its rolls, all of whom have improved their grades and attendance as a result of REF's financial assistance of €28 per month.

With the conviction that more could be done to improve students' chances in the labor market, REF designed a new nationwide training project to address the fact that only 14 percent of young Roma find employment.

“Improved Youth Employment Opportunities,” supported under the auspices of the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of the Federal Republic of Germany in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Serbia, sought to reinforce Roma students' achievements by expanding the scope of its Secondary Scholarship and Mentoring Program to offer advanced skills training to better position Roma for the labor market.

Stefan Durmišević has also shared his experience: “I was impressed by my instructor's care when welding corners. I received an offer for work in a Pirot-based company specializing in the production and installation of basketball hoops and constructions.”

Serbia's socio-economic stabilization hinges on the participation of young women and men like Nemanja and Stefan. Foreign investment has been increasing, particularly in automobile and electrical goods manufacturing, yet finding employable candidates with the right skills is a problem for employers not only in Serbia but also for neighboring countries.

Žarko Vasov underlined the tangible opportunities that come with welding certification. “I received an offer from the Goša Institute and there is possibility of employment in the assembly line as an installer, which means that I can stay in Smederevska Palanka after the training.”

Since 2005 REF has contributed to shaping the Serbian policy agenda on Roma education by lobbying and working together with multiple missions, agencies, ministries, town halls and donors. The words of Nemanja, Stefan and Žarko are encouraging signs that education and employment, given the right level of care and intervention, do produce results.



## Slovak Foundation

### REF-supported projects in 2017

Educational level	Project name	Grantee organization
Early childhood	A Good Start Project	Equal Chances Association (ECHA)
Early childhood	A Good Start Project	County Association of Romani Initiatives, KARI Union
Early childhood	A Good Start Project	Košice Self-governing Region
Early childhood	A Good Start Project	Cultural Association of Roma in Slovakia
Secondary	Support of Roma Secondary School Students in Slovakia	Roma Education Fund – Presov

### Developments in education and policies

The action plan for Slovakia's Strategy Plan for the Integration of the Roma 2016–2018 pledges the largest amount on education, with the aim to impact school policies and job creation. Noteworthy action points are the provision of scholarships and support for mentoring and tutoring, which are vital for improving the rate of early school leaving among Roma children (58 percent according for Fundamental Rights Agency [FRA], compared to 7 percent nationally).

The FRA survey indicates that 62 percent of Roma children attend a school where all or most other children are also Roma (2016). The 2015 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey shows a very wide gap between pupils who speak Slovak at home and those who do not – most commonly Roma pupils. The recommendation by the Council of the European Union calls on Slovakia to “Improve the quality of education and increase the participation of Roma in inclusive mainstream education” (Council of the European Union, 2017).

### REF in Slovakia

#### Increasing achievement of Roma secondary school students

REF's nationwide secondary scholarship program, implemented since 2011, is the only specific program aimed for Roma students in secondary schools in Slovakia. The project creates a solid base for reducing the gap between Roma and non-Roma students and promotes mentorship and tutorship as a model for academic support of disadvantaged students.

#### Support of Roma Secondary School Students in Slovakia Implemented by REF Slovakia since 2016

**618** scholarships awarded in 2016–17 and 2017–18 academic years to 544 secondary school students attending vocational schools with Matura exam

**146** secondary schools participating in the program

**31** tutors and **15** mentors recruited

**2%** dropout from the program

**98%** successfully completed the academic year

**91%** attendance rate

**3.5%** improvement of GPA average after project intervention

**95** pupils already graduated in 2016–17

**30** scholars who were in graduation year transitioned to tertiary education

Roma female students enrolled in secondary education – specifically those studying to work in kindergartens or early childhood education – can also benefit from the Scholarship Program in Pedagogy, financed by the VELUX Foundations.

The young women benefit from financial and academic support – tutoring, counseling and guidance for continuing education or obtaining a job. Also, through the mentoring component, students can increase their self-esteem and embrace their identity and belonging to the Roma community.

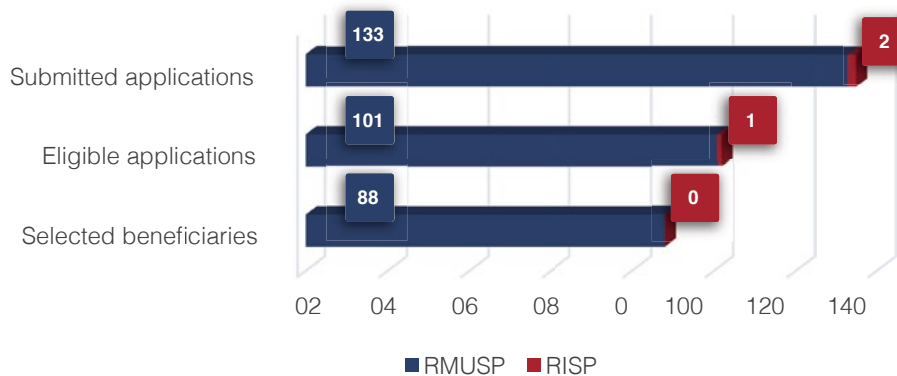
**78** female Roma high school students in pedagogy have been awarded scholarships since 2014. The scholarships cover tuition and living allowance.

A summer camp in 2017 brought together the students to exchange experiences and enhance professional development

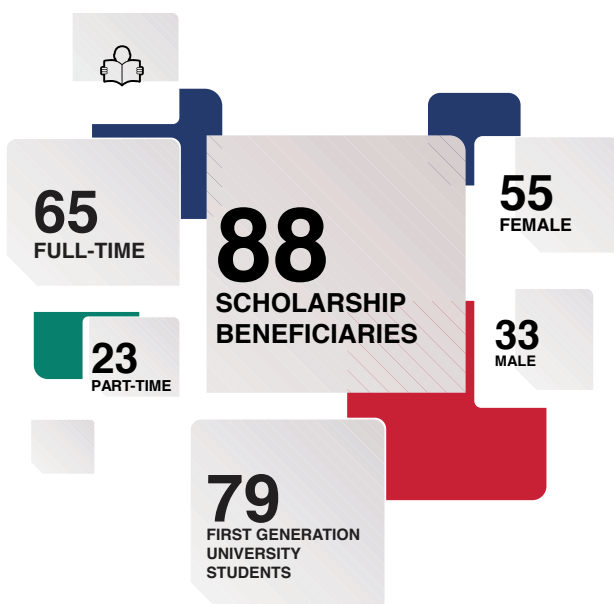
## Tertiary Scholarship Program

**2017-18 Academic Year**

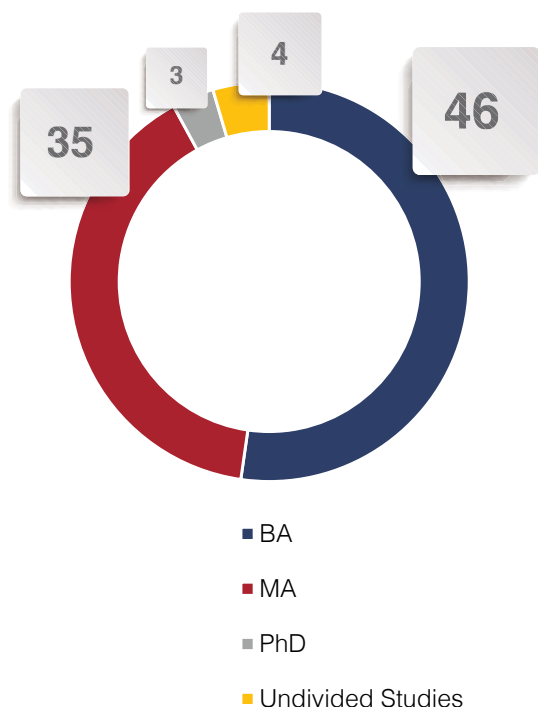
### Applications and Beneficiaries by Program



### Demographics of Scholarship Beneficiaries

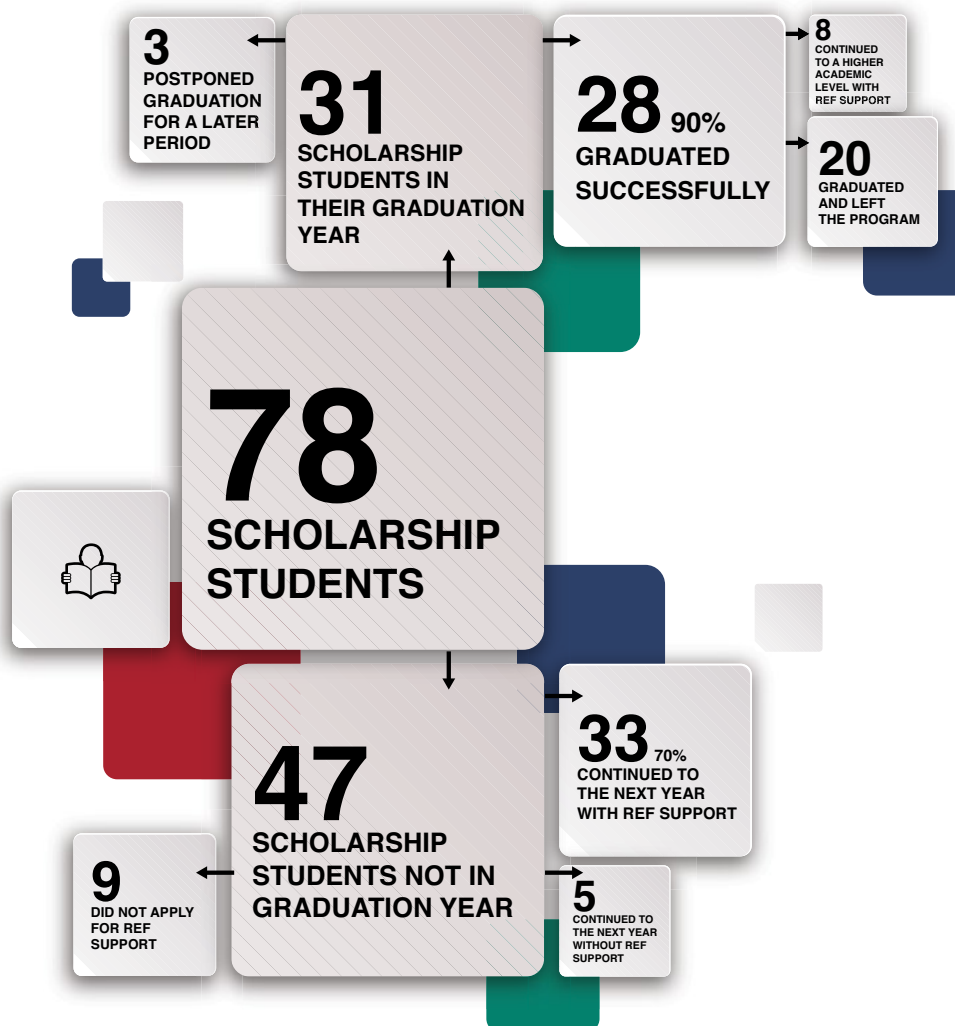


### Level of Studies

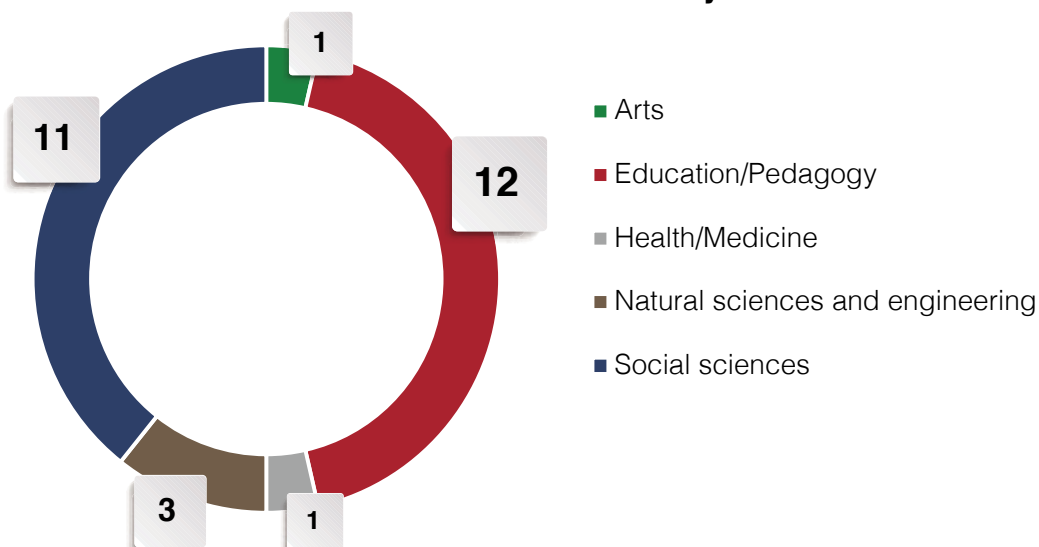


## 2016-17 Academic Year

### Graduation data



### Graduates' Fields of Study



## Spotlight



*Photography courtesy of Rudolf Rusnak.*

**Rudolf Rusnak** is a graduate student in social work at the St. Elizabeth University of Health Care and Social Work in Bratislava. Previously, he worked as a mentor for REF. He currently works as a health education coordinator and participates in a number of volunteer initiatives, including Palikerav, which works with Roma youth. He has received REF scholarship support for one year.

Social work was a good choice for me because I feel very committed to helping vulnerable people. I grew up in an extremely poor family and my mother raised all of us alone. Although she has only a basic education, we managed to survive, with the help of my grandparents. By the time I was in secondary school, I was working in a bakery to help cover my travel to school.

My personal and professional life has been dedicated to children living in much the same conditions as myself. I coach them on personal hygiene, why it's important to study or how to prepare for a job. I sometimes invite parents to my workshops so that they can also participate and begin to encourage their children to dream about the future, what they can be or achieve. This is very important.

I also believe kids should make and learn from their mistakes.

## REF Portfolio Countries

### Albania

#### REF-supported projects in 2017

Educational level	Project name	Grantee organization
Early childhood	Improving the Access of Roma Children to Quality Preschool Education	Rromani Baxt Albania
Early childhood	Early Childhood Care and Development for Roma Children in Albania	Save the Children
Secondary	Improved Educational Achievements of Roma and Egyptian (R/E) High School Students	ARSIS – Social Organization for the Support of the Youth
Tertiary	RomaVersitas Program in Albania	RomaVersitas Albania
Adult	Increasing Education Level of Adult Roma in Albania	Roma Woman Rights Centre (RWRC)

#### Developments in education and policies

The Law on the Rights and Protection of the Child passed in February 2017 and a new law on national minorities, recognizing Roma for the first time as a national minority, was adopted in October 2017.

According to a recent UNICEF Report (2017), access to preschool is far from universal. Though there is a greater awareness of the benefits of early childhood education, preschool is not obligatory – 53.1 percent of children ages 5–6 were enrolled in kindergarten in urban areas, with much lower numbers in rural areas and among Roma children.

Albania has a nine-year compulsory education system, but according to the latest Ministry of Education data, only 14 percent of Roma students successfully graduated and only 3 percent of the graduates continued to upper secondary school (grades 10–12).

According to the UNICEF Report “Underinvestment in Education,” the literacy rate for Roma is 65 percent compared with non-Roma Albanians at 95 percent, and Roma women have spent an average of only 5 years in school, which is in stark comparison to 10 years for non-Roma women.

#### REF in Albania

##### Early childhood education facilitates Roma children enrolling in mainstream Albanian schools

REF financed two multi-dimensional, early childhood education projects in Albania in 2017. Local organizers Romano Sezi, Voice of Roma and Rromani Baxt provided an integrated approach, cooperating with families, schools and local authorities, and also working with teams of mediators, to boost kindergarten enrollment and prepare disadvantaged children for primary school.



**650** Roma and **127** non-Roma children in Elbasan, Fier and Tirana.

**100% enrollment rate**

(83 out of 83 eligible children) in first grade.

**92%** attendance rate

Toy libraries – high-quality educational toys loaned to

**over 500 underprivileged children**

and supervised play lessons showed and inspired parents how to play and interact with their children

This intervention employed a combination of tools selected from REF's early childhood education model and tailored to the local Roma community – good parenting workshops, Your Story literacy empowerment sessions for mothers and continuous community outreach and education, while constantly liaising with education officials. Hot meals are also provided for those children who qualify within these two projects.

Undergraduate and graduate students from the Education Faculty of the University of Elbasan volunteered in two project kindergartens, and further discussion is under way about integrating the best practices embraced by these projects into the faculty's curriculum.

## Secondary School Scholarships Reduce Early School Leaving and Improve Grade Transitions

Conceived to address early school leaving and dramatically increase the number of Roma secondary school graduates, this REF-designed and financed secondary school and mentoring project is implemented in Albania by ARSIS – Social Organization for the Support of Youth. Aiming to increase enrollment, improve transition and retention rates, and ultimately improve the academic results of Roma students, ARSIS provides secondary and vocational students with a modest €30 scholarship per month in Albania's two largest metropolitan areas, Tirana and Durrës, as well as nine months of mentoring and six months of tutoring per school year.

**2016–17 academic year**

**87** students received a scholarship - 53 females and 34 males.

**48** students in academic secondary schools and 39 in vocational secondary schools.

**97%** of the secondary school scholars transitioned to the next grade.

The average attendance rate **doubled!**  
(from 36% in 2015-16 to 72% in 2016–17)

Of special note, ARSIS was awarded second place at the 2017 EU Roma Integration Awards for the Western Balkans and Turkey, hosted by DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, for implementing REF's secondary school scholarship and mentoring program in Albania.

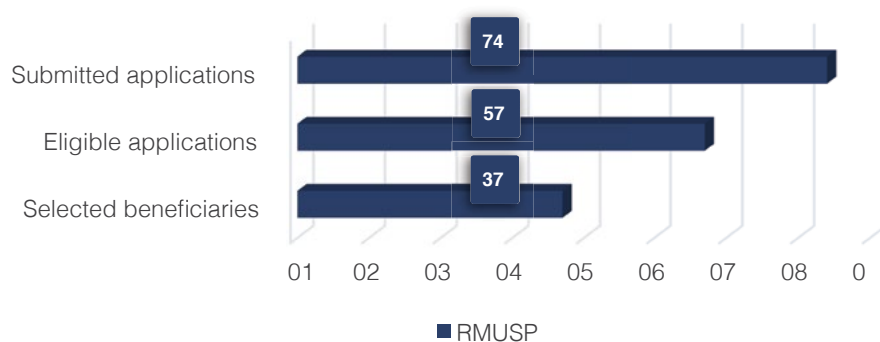
## Adult education

**11%** of the adult Roma women and men were employed after acquiring a diploma in a **REF-supported** second chance program.

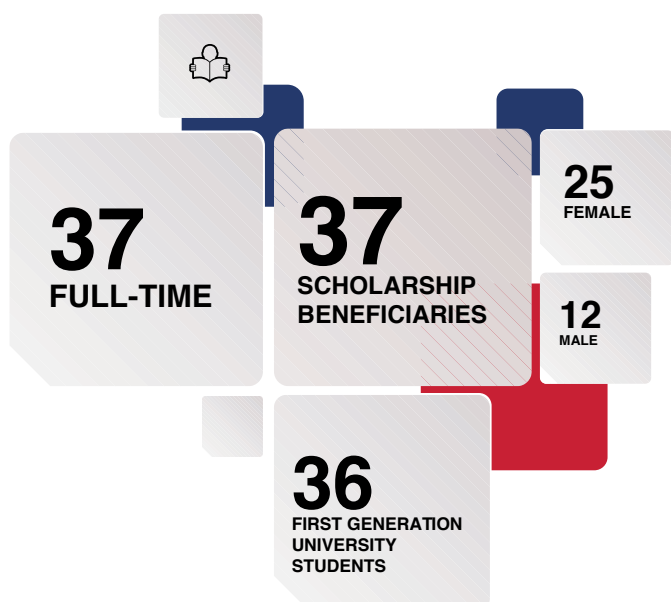
## Tertiary Scholarship Program

2017-18 Academic Year

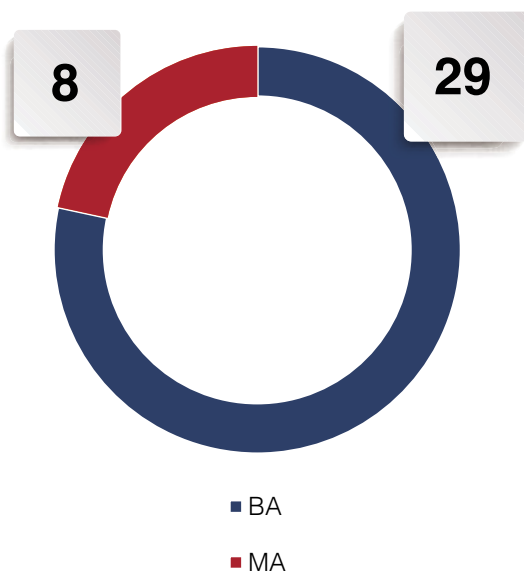
### Applications and Beneficiaries by Program



### Demographics of Scholarship Beneficiaries

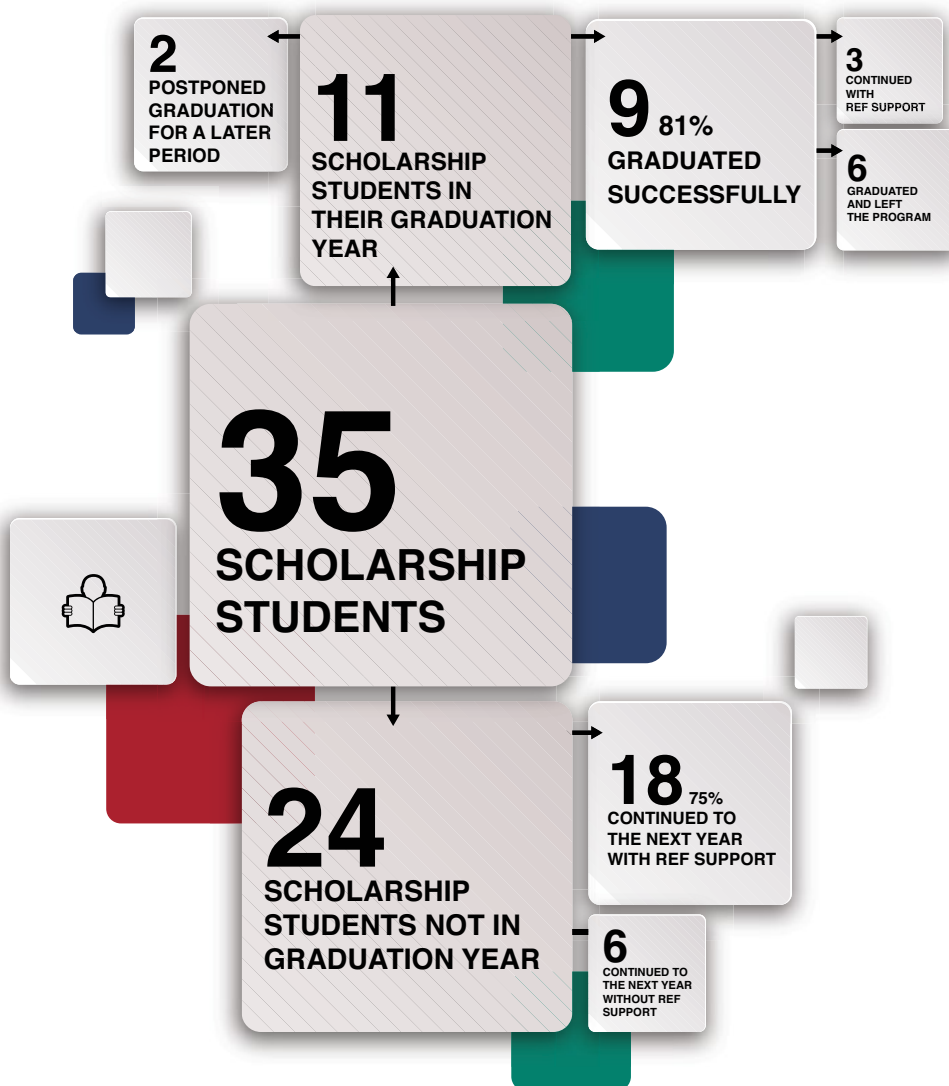


### Level of Studies



## 2016-17 Academic Year

### Graduation data



## Spotlight

### Early Childhood Education and Parenting in Rraphiste, Albania

Coaching on good parenting is a proven way to improve the development of young children from disadvantaged backgrounds. No more so than in Albania, where Roma families face many challenges in helping their children enroll in kindergarten and transition to primary school.



**Sonila Ademi**

*Sonila Ademi is a mother of three from Rrapishte, a Roma community in Elbasan, Albania.*

*Photography © 2017 REF*

Since attending parenting sessions for over a year organized by Romano Sezi, a local Roma NGO, Sonila has been reading stories to her children regularly and encouraging them to discuss the stories with her. At home, she's put together a small library from the books she's received from Your Story, a women's literacy empowerment program supported by REF.

Due to her attendance at the parenting sessions, her role has changed in the community, too. She's become a mediator, active in advising other mothers on practical parenting skills to ensure their children are healthy and meeting early childhood development milestones.

Sonila said of the perspectives offered by this program, "I enrolled Ermela in kindergarten and Erion in school and I'm very keen to talk to the teachers about their progress." She added, "Romano Sezi has hired me to translate in the kindergarten and help both Roma children and their teachers."

# Bosnia and Herzegovina

## REF-supported projects in 2017

Educational level	Project name	Grantee organization
Primary	Development of the Roma Community in Tuzla Canton 2016–2018	“Sa E Roma” Tuzla
Primary	Maintaining and Increasing the Number of Roma Children in Primary Schools in the Municipality of Kakanj	Center for Roma Support “Romalen”
Primary	Education for All	City of Mostar, Department for Social Activities, Local Administration
Primary	Education for All – Supplementary Grant	Center for Psychological Support “Sensus”
Secondary	Secondary School Scholarship Program	Euro Rom

## Developments in education and policies

The Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina specifically provides that primary education is free and compulsory for all children. It lasts nine years.

Although the gap between Roma and the total population for primary school enrollment and completion has decreased over time, disparities still persist. Whereas 97.6 percent of non-Roma children enroll, only 69.3 percent of Roma children do. The gender disparities are even more worrisome, with only 47 percent of Roma girls enrolling in primary school and only 20 percent of those graduating after 9 years (*Roma Inclusion Index*, 2015).

There is no systematic monitoring of the participation rates of Roma children in primary schools, no systematic data collection on school enrollment, progress and completion, as well as no systematic approach to address the issue of school-aged children who are out of the school system. A high dropout rate leads to low enrollment in secondary education.

## REF in Bosnia and Herzegovina

### A Comprehensive Approach to Primary Education

REF has supported primary education projects over several years in order to show local authorities that investments in Roma education are sustainable and can have a measurable and proven impact on Roma children’s school success. This engagement has resulted in significant partnerships with schools and governing bodies in the three participating cantons as well as bolstered the capacities of local Roma NGOs to implement, manage and monitor projects that REF has financed.

#### In Tuzla Canton

##### Enrollment in mainstream primary schools

All **41** school-age children have been enrolled in mainstream schools in 2016–17 and 24 in 2017–18.

All Roma parents whose children enrolled in first grade participated in joint parenting skills workshops with non-Roma parents.

##### School achievement

GPA  
**improved from 2.5 to 2.95** (on a 5.0 scale)

All 8 graduates **(100%)** enrolled in secondary education (compared to 69% before project intervention).

**57** teachers and pedagogues strengthened their communication competencies with Roma children and parents.



## In the Municipality of Kakanj

**24%** increase of Roma children attending school in 2016–17.

**No children dropped out** of the project schools.

**4** primary school graduates continued to secondary education.

Roma mediators have made strong links between families and schools, which was not the situation before the project began.

Recognition of the good practices embedded within REF's primary intervention model was made during the EU Roma Integration Awards for the Western Balkans and Turkey in April 2017, when the grantee Center for Psychological Support "Sensus" was awarded first place for their work in the City of Mostar.

**95%** attendance rate among all primary school beneficiaries in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2016–17, up from **91%** in 2015–16.

## Secondary Education

The secondary education intervention model developed by REF – first deployed in Macedonia in 2006 and scaled up in another eight participating countries since then – ran in Tuzla Canton for a second school year in 2016–17.

Implemented by Euro Rom, with financing, technical support and supervision provided by REF, the program supports Roma secondary school students and students in their final year of primary school, with a modest scholarship, provided they meet performance criteria each year. The scholarship financially helps Roma students to register, start and finish secondary school, while the accompanying mentoring and tutoring components ensure better quality of education, a decreased dropout rate and successful transition to the next grade.

**100%** of primary students transitioned to secondary education in 2017–18

Academic performance **improved from GPA 2.2 to 3.3** (on a 5.0 scale)

**93%** retention rate, compared to 51% prior intervention. Out of 75 students, 5 students dropped out while one student moved to France.

**94%** graduation rate (15 out of 16 students) with 3 graduates enrolled in tertiary education.

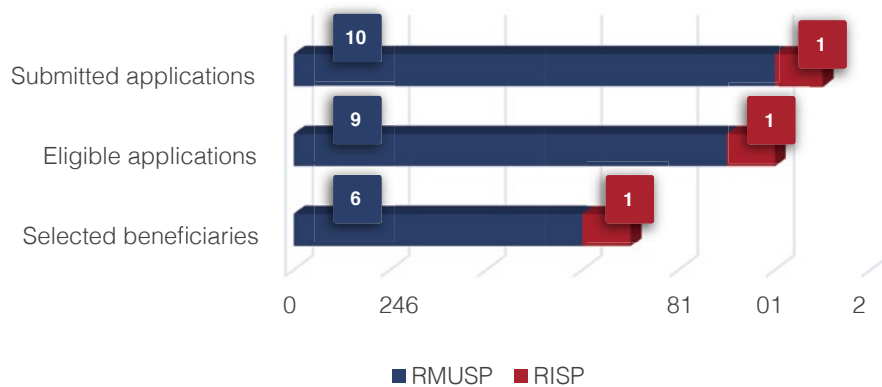
The Pedagogical Institute Tuzla Canton accredited a training package that was previously delivered in Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo.

**25 mentors** who were provided with high-quality training in 2015 and 2016 gained official certificates from the Pedagogical Institute Tuzla Canton in 2017.

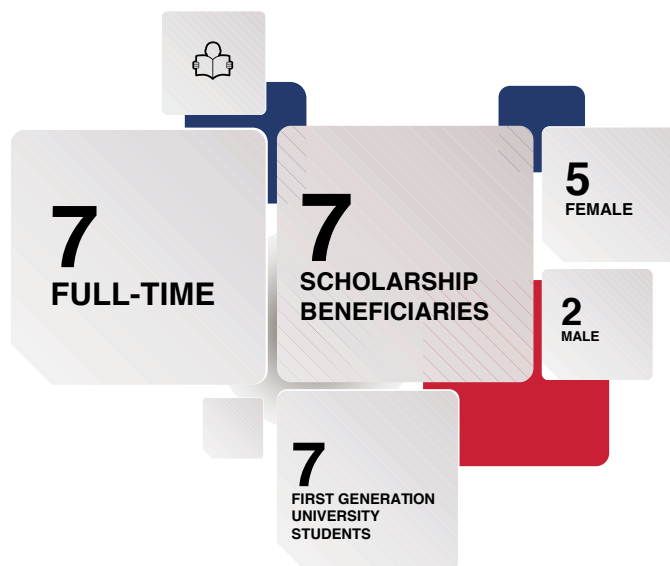
## Tertiary Scholarship Program

**2017-18 Academic Year**

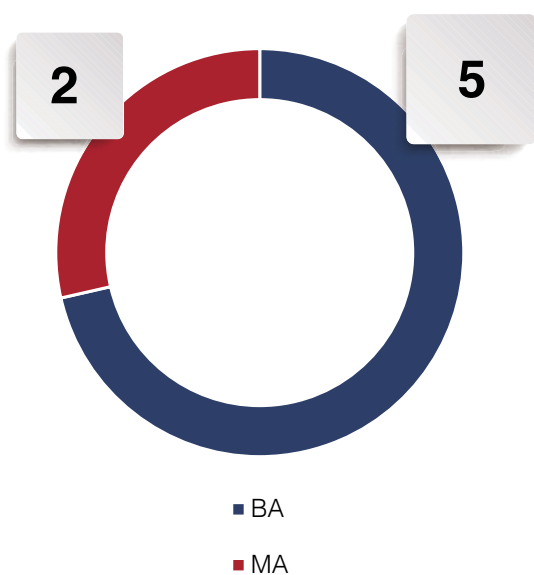
### Applications and Beneficiaries by Program



### Demographics of Scholarship Beneficiaries



### Level of Studies



## Spotlight



### Nedžad

*Nedžad is a leading Roma advocate in Tuzla and represents REF's grantee, the Association of Roma "Euro Rom." Prominent on numerous policymaking bodies in Tuzla Canton and on the national level, Nedžad has coached numerous families and their children on the vital role of education in providing better opportunities and broader horizons to Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

When I advise Roma families, I always remind them of what I tell my own children: "Be who you are. Do not pretend to be someone you are not. Use your knowledge and personality to challenge prejudices as well as to understand your own fears about the others. You're not less worthy because you're Roma. Get as much of an education as you can – and in many cases financial aid is available."

But why would I say that? Because in my community, Roma have been largely absent from positions where they could create policy or make decisions – mostly because of their insufficient education. However, for the last two years we've seen graduation rates of close to 100 percent. And five Roma graduates have gone on to university for subjects like pedagogy, engineering, medicine and mining.

When we started the program to enroll Roma students in Tuzla's secondary schools, we had a steep learning curve with parents as well as with teachers, tutors and schools themselves. Parents didn't understand that the education of their children hinged on their support as well. We had to explain that schools are not babysitters. Students who exceed the excused number of absences or dip too far below the grading threshold will find their support suspended until their attendance and grades improve. This is where parents must step in and correct their children's behavior and performance.

We've made some big steps here in Tuzla and have managed to enroll **all** Roma students who finished primary school into local secondary schools, to the point that we have more Roma students in secondary school than in the first grade of primary school this year.

# Bulgaria

## REF-supported projects in 2017

Educational level	Project name	Grantee organization
Early childhood	Early Childhood Development of Roma Children in Kindergartens in Berkovitsa Town	Foundation of Regional and Cultural Development Nangle – 2000
Early childhood	Equal Opportunities for Roma Children in Kindergartens and Preschools in Sofia in Transition to Mainstream	Equal Opportunities Initiative Association
Early childhood	The Sooner Educated the Better Successful	Center for Local and Regional Policies
Primary	For Better Education	Kyustendil Municipality
Secondary	Support for Roma Students to Complete Successfully their Secondary Education	Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (CEICSEM)
Tertiary	RomaVersitas – A Step Further to Shape the Roma Elite in Bulgaria	RomaVersitas Association

## Developments in education and policies

Educational outcomes in Bulgaria are strongly linked to socioeconomic background and, contrary to the general trend in the EU, the proportion of early school leavers (aged 18–24) is rising: 13.8 percent in 2016 compared to the EU average of 10.7 percent. Among Roma aged 18–24, the rate of early school leavers jumps to 67 percent, with women disproportionately at risk (77 percent vs. 57 percent for men).

Segregation in education and enrollment in high-quality early childhood education add to the challenge of the socioeconomic inclusion of Roma (Fundamental Rights Agency, 2016). Sixty percent of Roma students receive education in schools where all or most students are Roma. The creation of separate classes based on ethnicity is prohibited by law, but monitoring remains challenging, including due to the difficulty of collecting data based on ethnicity. The participation of Roma children in early childhood education is improving but remains low (66 percent in 2016 compared to 42 percent in 2011). Recently, authorities announced plans to extend compulsory preschool attendance to age four.

## REF in Bulgaria



*Mother is reading a story to her daughter at the REF Toy Library in Fakulteta District in Sofia, Bulgaria in July 2017.  
Photography ©2017 REF | Dia Photography*

REF's Secondary Scholarship and Mentoring Program in Bulgaria is the largest among the REF countries which participate in the program. Beneficiary students qualify for a €30 monthly scholarship, which is a major top up for the majority of families with monthly household budgets averaging €50 per person. In most cases, the scholarship made a contribution to alleviating the daily costs associated with traveling to school, as the majority of students live in rural areas and must travel to a nearby town to attend secondary school.

### Secondary Scholarship and Mentoring Program in Bulgaria 2016–17

Out of nearly 1,500 applicants, **339 female and 261 male students** were selected from 96 cities and 170 villages.

**Over 100 tutors** and mentors were trained for the program and worked with students at their schools.

**84** of the 100 final year students graduated and passed the state *Matura* exam.

**44** continued with tertiary education.

**100%** of the secondary scholars in Bulgaria completed the academic year.

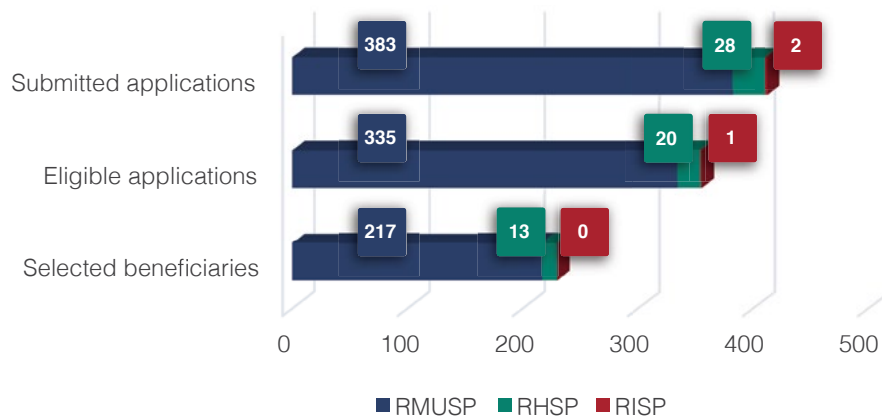
**0%** dropout rate compared to 2.4% national average.



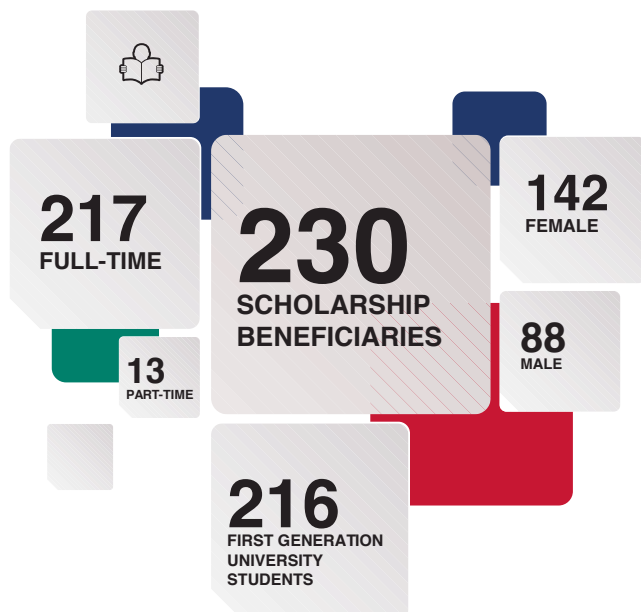
## Tertiary Scholarship Program

2017-18 Academic Year

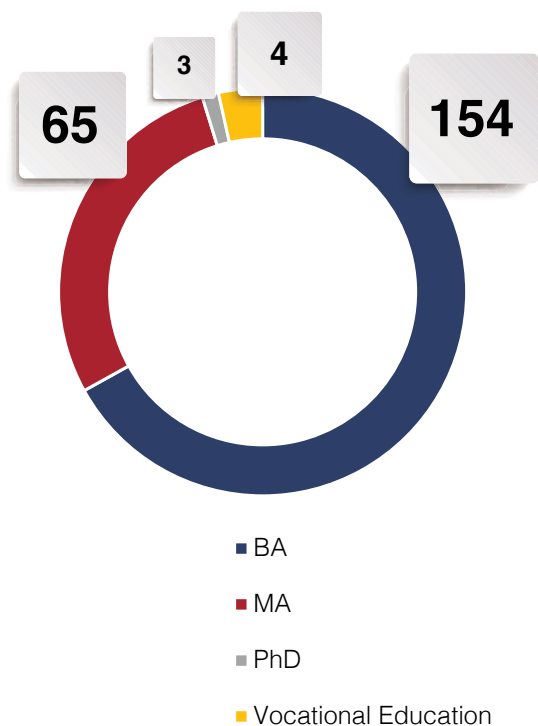
### Applications and Beneficiaries by Program



### Demographics of Scholarship Beneficiaries

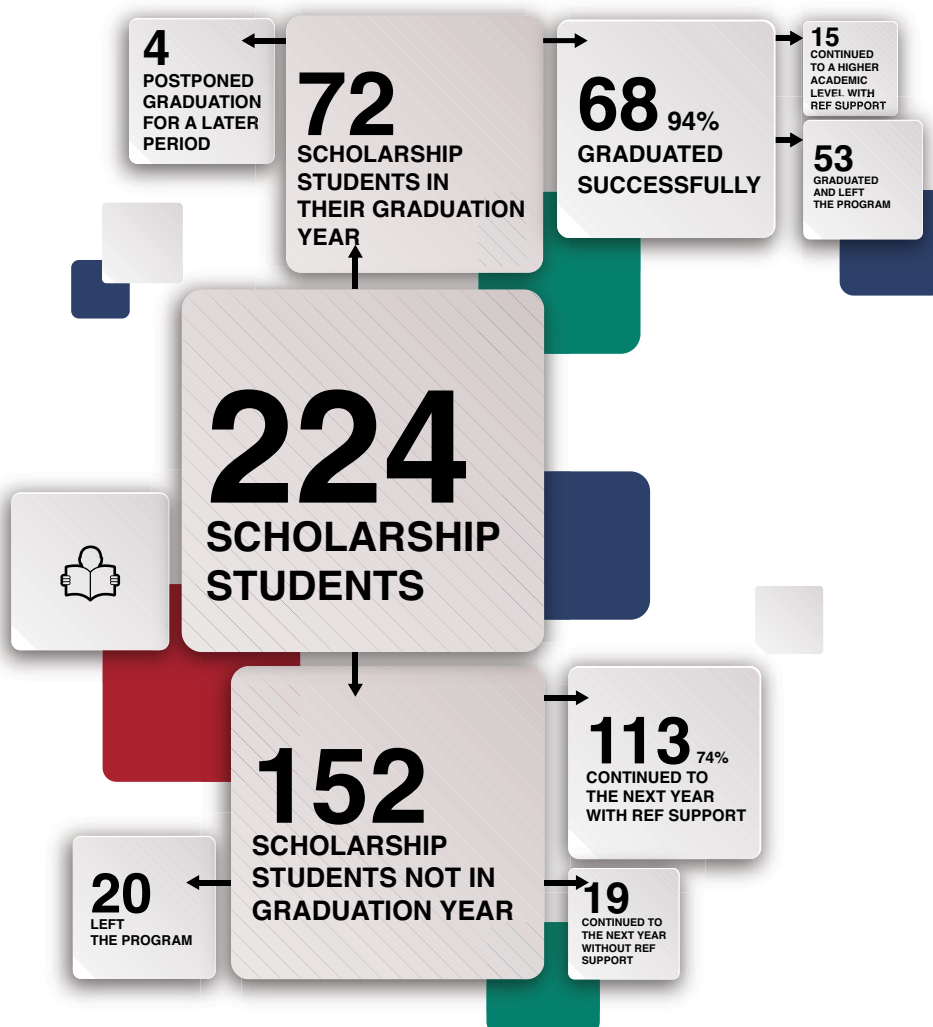


### Level of Studies

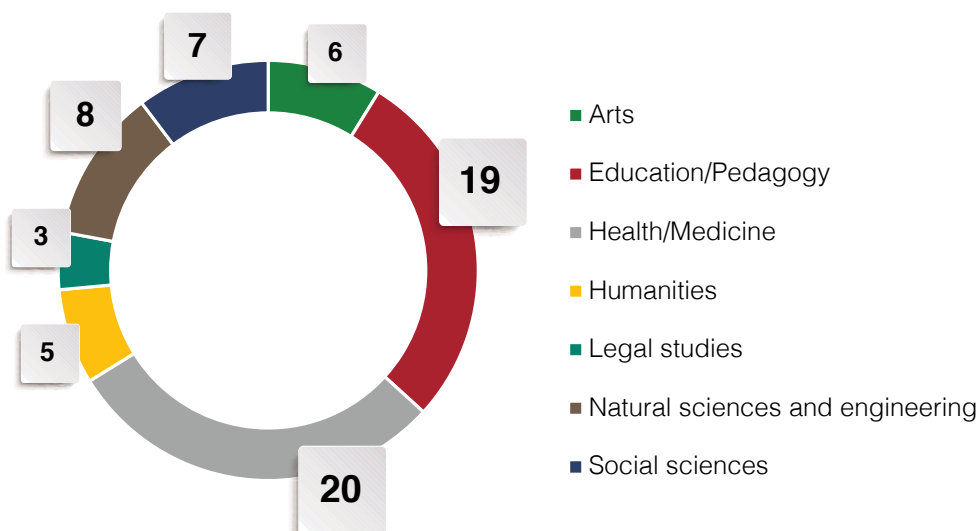


## 2016-17 Academic Year

### Graduation data



### Graduates' Fields of Study



## Spotlight

### “The Girl from Vakarel”



**Elisaveta**

*Elisaveta is a 12th grade student in Sofia and receives a scholarship under the project “Support for Roma Students to Complete Successfully their Secondary Education,” supported by REF and the Ministry of Education and Science.*

*Photography courtesy of Elisaveta.*

When Elisaveta appears in hairdressing competitions “The Girl from Vakarel” is how others usually call her, referring to her village outside of Sofia. Twice she has won first place, and in 2016 she was also at an international competition in Verona, Italy, winning third place. She is now dreaming of a trip to France, a country she has always been interested in.

The day for Elisaveta begins at 4:30 a.m. She gets up, prepares breakfast for her mother and her sisters, then takes the early train to Sofia, where she is in school until noon. Doing her homework on the train, she is in a hurry to return to Vakarel, as she works at a local market from 4 p.m. until late into the night. Her earnings go towards helping her mother raise her two younger sisters.

The trip from Vakarel to Sofia is expensive for Elisaveta and her younger sister, Margarita, who is also a high school student in Sofia. In fact, Elisaveta’s two scholarships for her excellent GPA, from REF and from the Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities, go for her travel costs.

Usually parents are the ones who teach their children to read and write. But with Elisaveta it’s the opposite. Her mother finished only the second grade, as her classmates harassed her because of her ethnic background. Now, though, she can read thanks to Elisaveta.

Elisaveta dreams of becoming a lawyer. Her goal is to study law.

## Croatia

### REF-supported projects in 2017

Education level	Project name	Grantee organization
Primary	Knowledge for Future	Town of Kutina
Primary	Educating and Integrating	Oaza, Association for Homeless and Socially Vulnerable People

### Developments in education and policies

The latest available data from 2015 show that only 73.8 percent of pupils ages 4–6 attended early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Croatia, one of the lowest rates in the EU. The 2017 action plan for the implementation of the 2014 Strategy for Education, Science and Technology aims to increase ECEC participation to the EU average of 95 percent by 2020, which will require heavy investment in expanding capacity (National Statistics Office, 2017).

Conversely, according to the newest study on Education and Training in Croatia (European Commission, 2017), the country has the lowest early school leaving rate in the EU – which is among the main strengths of Croatia's education system. Among 18–24-year-olds, the rate was 2.8 percent in 2016, well below the EU average of 10.7 percent. Nevertheless, nearly 45 percent of pupils from the lowest socioeconomic quartile fail to achieve the basic level of proficiency in mathematics, compared to only 15 percent from the top quartile. A similar performance gap is seen in science and reading skills.

### REF in Croatia

#### Building trust between the community and school

The Roma settlement of Škurinje consists of approximately 100 inhabitants who are all seen as Roma by neighboring communities, even if only one family has declared themselves to be so. The Oaza Association primarily works with homeless people but in 2014 they assembled a team that started to work with Roma children in the primary school in Škurinje. Working together with the school pedagogue, teachers and the Roma assistant to provide tutoring and mentoring, gradually Oaza worked with the school to enroll the Roma children while improving its performance without losing its non-Roma students.

#### 2016–17 school year

**46** children attended integrated primary school

Attendance rate rose to **84%**, up from 67% in 2015–16.

**29** beneficiaries received tutoring and mentoring support

The average GPA of the pupils improved by **4%**, from 3.11 to 3.31 after the project intervention.

The program consisted of three interlinked parts: homework assigned to all children, learning by playing, and a tailored approach to each student's learning needs. Additionally, REF subsidized hot meals for children who stayed after school to catch-up classes run by Oaza, which was an incentive for families facing tight household budgets.

Overall, REF recorded a trend: increasing the social inclusion of Roma children in school and after-school activities also increased parental involvement in education. In turn, this built trust between the community and the school, preventing school segregation and most importantly giving children an avenue to develop their skills and express themselves through music, dance and sport.

## Tertiary Scholarship Program

A scholarship scheme for supporting Roma tertiary education students is implemented by the Croatian government, which currently satisfies the demand for scholarship support from the Roma community.

## Spotlight

### A day in the life of... Maja Odrčić Mikulić



*"Teaching Croatian and other subjects to Roma children in the village of Kuršanec helps them integrate and enables staff to learn, create and lead."  
Photography © 2017 REF*

The hardest part of my job is helping parents overcome their fear of the unknown and trusting the educational institutions.

Working in the center of Roma society has shown me the flaws in my country's education system: it is too reactive, rather than proactive. Having said that, the Ministry of Science and Education does provide us with help, too – financing teacher salaries, school meals and materials for students.

The afternoon shift starts at 1:30pm, when students who attend regular morning classes come to us. After doing assignments and solving additional tasks we find time to talk, paint and play. I meet incredible people through this work, who share my vision of a world without prejudice, one in which everyone can achieve their dreams. Working here has given me the opportunity to learn, create and lead: all things that I never thought I was capable of.

Teaching ends at 4:30pm and then we write more daily reports. After that we reach out to partners and political organizations, plan activities and look for ways to get funding.

Although living in harsh conditions, our students bring joy to our lives. When a pupil hugs me and says, "Thank you for explaining this, teacher, now I understand," all the difficult times magically disappear.

*Maja Odrčić Mikulić is a teacher and project coordinator at the Roma Family Centre in Kuršanec. Maja spoke to Dan Nolan.*

*Edited courtesy of the Times Education Supplement. This article appeared in the November 3, 2017 edition. Available online: <https://www.tes.com/news/teacher-stories/tes-magazine/a-day-life-maja-odrcic-mikulic>*



## Czech Republic

### REF-supported projects in 2017

Educational level	Project name	Grantee organization
Early childhood	Support of Roma Children in Ustí region	NGO Romano Jasnica
Early childhood	Together to Preschool	Beleza Ostrava, o.s
Early childhood	Together to Preschool	Beleza – Mamaclub, z. s.
Primary	Dža dureder	Slovo 21

### Developments in education and policies

According to the Education and Training Monitor published by the European Commission in 2017, the socioeconomic background of students in the Czech Republic impacts strongly on their educational performance. The Czech Republic also showed one of the largest, and increasing, differences between schools on the basis of socioeconomic status. There is a high rate of school segregation affecting Roma, who are directed to “practical” schools with lower learning standards. While the proportion of Roma pupils attending “practical” schools has declined and the proportion attending mainstream education has risen in recent years, 30 percent of Roma children still attend a school where all or most pupils are Roma (Fundamental Rights Agency 2016).

The proportion of Czech secondary students in vocational education and training (VET) in 2015 was 73 percent, the highest in the EU, and 87 percent of recent VET graduates were employed in 2016, also well above the EU average (75 percent). By contrast, only 67 percent of Roma youth aged 15–18 are in school (compared to 96 percent of non-Roma). Recruiting more Roma teachers who could serve as role models could help improve the educational outcomes of Roma pupils.

### REF in the Czech Republic

#### REF-supported primary education projects

**2016-17 school year**

**98%** completed the academic year and transitioned to the next grade

## Velux Pedagogy Project Invests in Young Roma Women to Become Teachers in their Communities

Since 2016, the Pedagogy Scholarship Project, financed by VELUX Foundations, seeks to develop the potential of young Roma women in four countries, including the Czech Republic, to become teachers in their communities. The students who qualify to attend teaching colleges benefit from scholarships, and tutors and mentors meet their students four times per week to discuss academic and life issues. The relationship established between each student and her tutor/mentor is very important, and both parties have a responsibility to each other.

### 2016-17 school year

**8** students enrolled

**8** tutors and mentors

**2** students on schedule to graduate at the end of 2017–18 school year

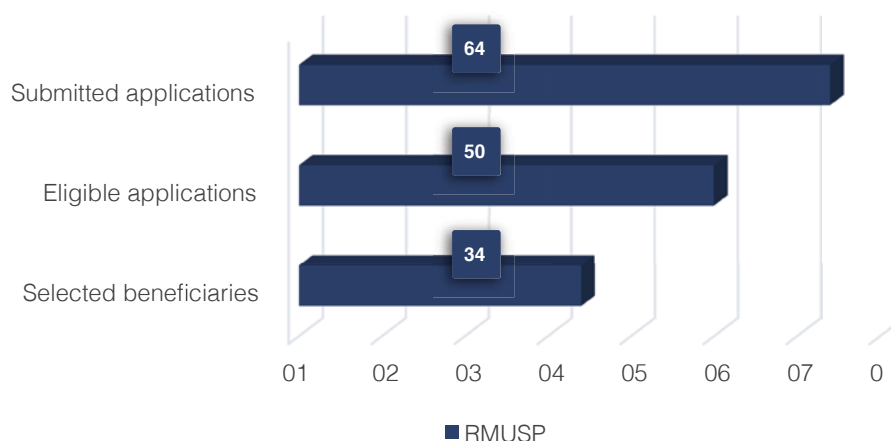
**1** student dropped out late in 2017 to begin working.

The Velux Scholarship Project aims to develop teachers who are specifically focused on early childhood education, with the objective that they will return to their communities to prepare children under age six for entry into mainstream schools. All the young women who participate in this project have been recruited from regions with significant Roma populations.

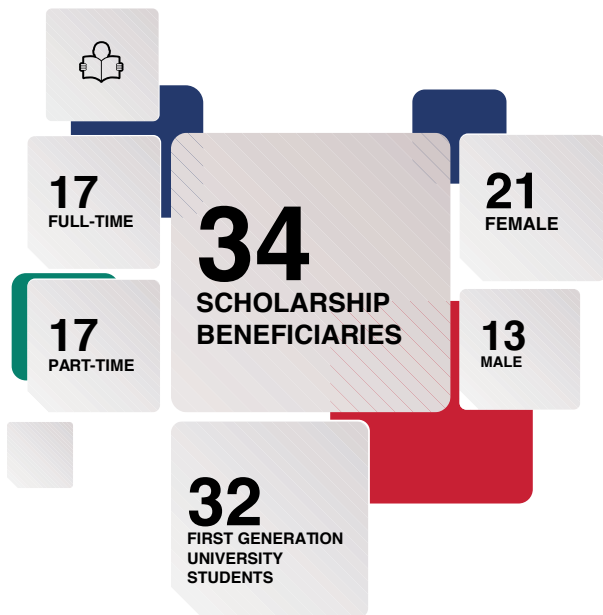
## Tertiary Scholarship Program

### 2017-18 Academic Year

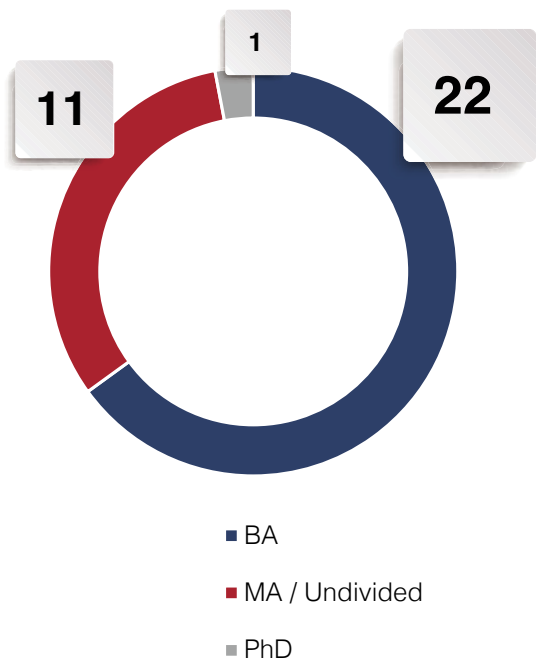
#### Applications and Beneficiaries by Program



## Demographics of Scholarship Beneficiaries



## Level of Studies

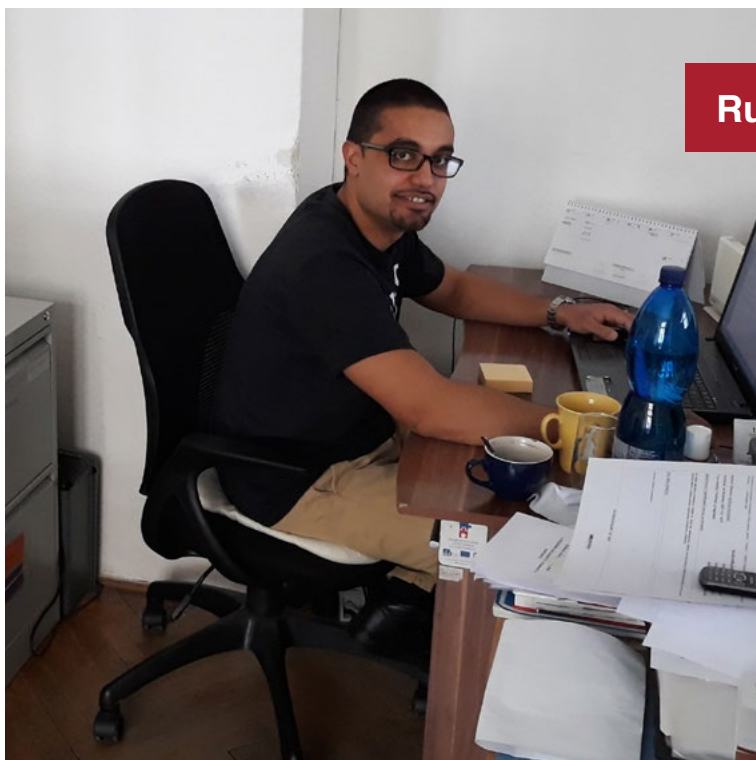


## 2016-17 Academic Year

## Graduation data



## Spotlight



**Rudolf Majovsky**

*Rudolf Majovsky recently has switched careers from social work to information technology. He is currently studying computer science at the University of Ostrava. Winning a REF scholarship convinced him that he could change course and pursue his real passion.*

I'm not a typical IT student as not one of my fellow students has a social work background. Although I was dedicated to supporting children and having an impact on their development and outlook, I felt I needed to pursue something else that I was passionate about. I encountered a lot of prejudice from others during my work with Roma. Racism seems to be an insurmountable obstacle for mainstream Czech society to overcome. As far as I'm concerned, it doesn't matter what color you are. If you enjoy the job, you will do it as well as anyone else, without regard to race, religion or anything else.

## Kosovo

### REF-supported projects in 2017

Educational level	Project name	Grantee organization
Early childhood	TOGETHER for Equity in Early Childhood	Kosova Education Center (KEC)
Secondary	National Roma/Ashkali/Egyptian Secondary Scholarships Program in Kosovo	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Kosovo
Secondary	National Roma/Ashkali/Egyptian Secondary Scholarship Program in Kosovo	Kosovo Ministry of Education Science and Technology in partnership with Voice of Roma Ashkali and Egyptian
Tertiary	RomaVersitas Kosovo	NGO Advancing Together
Tertiary	RomaVersitas Kosovo – RV Kosovo	RomaVersitas Kosovo

### Developments in education and policies

The EU Progress Reports for Kosovo continue to highlight the low levels of school participation among Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) children. The rate of enrollment in compulsory education (grades 1–9) is about 85 percent, well below the 96 percent national average, and decreases significantly in the higher levels of the education system. Thus, in lower secondary education the participation of RAE children is 65 percent, while in the upper secondary education it drops to only 30 percent. Though an equal number of boys and girls are enrolled at the primary level, the rate of girls' participation in secondary education decreases over time.

In the last few years, a large number of RAE families emigrated abroad. Some do not enroll at all or drop out of school because their families migrate during the school year, or leave the country and, when they return, it is difficult for them to go back to education. Sometimes, the reason for this is the lack of documentation from the schools in European countries, as well as difficulties in official recognition of foreign school records.



## REF in Kosovo

### National Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians Secondary Scholarships Program in Kosovo Implemented by the Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians

Supported by REF and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Kosovo since 2014

**500** secondary scholarships yearly

**231** female and **269** male secondary scholars in 2016-17

**79** secondary schools in 22 municipalities involved

**95%** attendance rate in 2016-17

**96%** completed the academic year in 2016-17

**4%** dropout rate (11 female and 11 male students) in 2016-17

**144** secondary scholars received mentoring support, while 104 received tutoring support

**32** tutors and mentors

**7%** increase in average GPA (from 2.77 to 3.13)

All 133 scholars in 2017 finished high school successfully and received their diploma.

## RomaVersitas

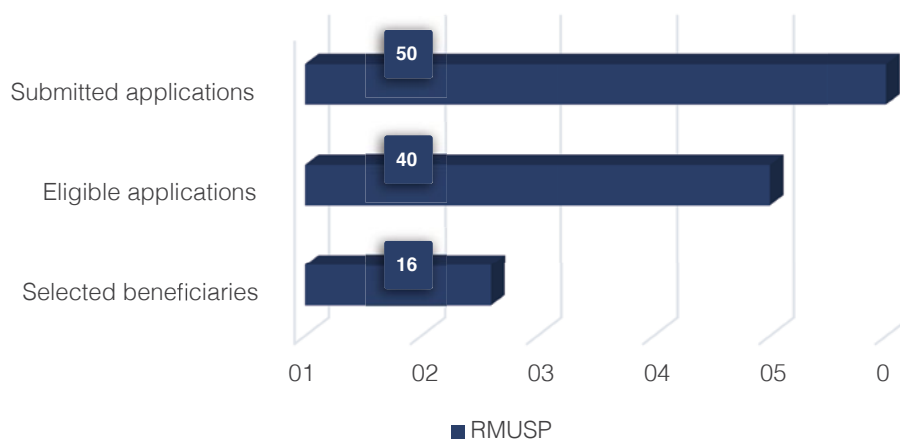
In 2017, as part of the European Commission's EU Roma Integration Award for the Western Balkans and Turkey, 13 projects were selected for their contributions to the inclusion, integration and empowerment of Roma children and young adults. The first and second prizes in Kosovo were awarded to two REF-supported grantees: Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians won first prize for their After-School Support through Education Centres project, while the second prize was awarded to Advancing Together for the RomaVersitas Kosovo Program.

RomaVeritas program was launched in 2015 with the aim to increase the number of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian university graduates in Kosovo. Approximately 60 students per year participate in RomaVersitas activities in Prishtina, Peja and Prizren, with 14 students receiving their Bachelor diplomas in 2017 in Medicine, Economy, Law and Information Technology.

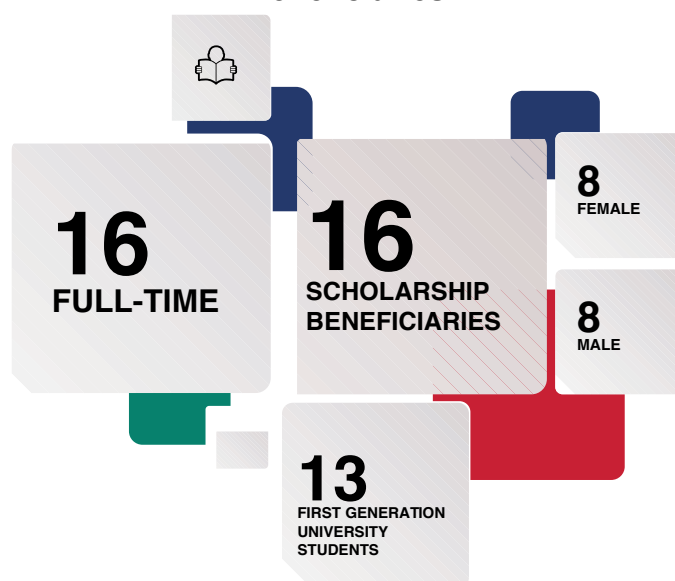
## Tertiary Scholarship Program

2017-18 Academic Year

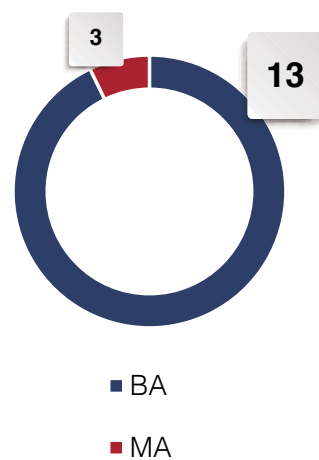
### Applications and Beneficiaries by Program



### Demographics of Scholarship Beneficiaries



### Level of Studies



2016-17 Academic Year

### Graduation data



## Spotlight

REF is in the third year of financing and monitoring the implementation of its national secondary school scholarship and mentoring program in Kosovo. This year, photographer Artan Korenica spent time with students in and out of school to capture their daily lives.



### Linda Hyseni

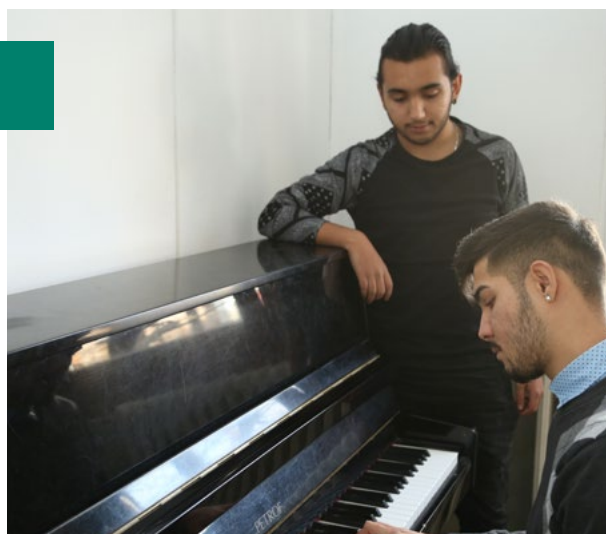
*attends the Hivzi Sylejmani Economics High School in Fushe Kosove and studies banking and security. She volunteers every day after school at the Fidan Luah learning center and hopes to continue her own studies and become a teacher.*

*Photography © 2017 REF | Artan Korenica*

### Argjend Kryeziu

*Argjend Kryeziu (right) attends music classes at the Lorenc Antoni High School in Prizren, where he's in his third year. He believes that continuing his tertiary education will allow him to become a professional pianist. Gjylgjan Kallo (left) is a senior and studies the clarinet. He sees himself continuing a career in acting, singing and playing clarinet. He has received many awards for singing and he qualified for an Albanian talent show.*

*Photography © 2017 REF | Artan Korenica*





## Jeton Berisha

*Jeton Berisha is a second year student attending the Hivzi Sylejmani high school in Fushe Kosove, specializing in the judiciary. He volunteers as a tutor at the Fidan Lahu learning center in Fushe Kosova, where many scholarship beneficiaries also volunteer as tutors.*

*Photography © 2017 REF | Artan Korenica*

## Merita Hasani

*Shkurte Behluli (right), second year student in administration; Albert Bajrami (standing); and Selami Osmani (left), are rehearsing for a play that later ran at the National Theater in Prishtina. All of them share the common vision of having good jobs and fulfilling careers in their chosen professions.*

*Photography © 2017 REF | Artan Korenica*



*Photography © 2017 REF | Artan Korenica*

*Students prepare their homework at a study hall at the Fidan Lahi learning center in Fushe Kosove. Some of the students are tutors at this center and some in another learning center, Balkan Sunflowers.*

# Macedonia

## REF-supported projects in 2017

Educational level	Project name	Grantee organization
Early childhood	Inclusion of Roma Children in Preschool Education	Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Unit for Implementation of Roma Strategy
Primary	Integration of Roma Children in Regular Schools in Macedonia, out of Special Schools and Desegregation in Regular Schools	Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Sector of Non-discrimination
Primary	Tutoring Support of Education of Roma Children in Primary Education in Macedonia	Consortium of NGOs – Association for support of marginalized groups Roma Resource Center (RRC) – Skopje
Secondary	Scholarship, Mentoring and Tutoring for Secondary Roma Students	Ministry of Education and Science
Tertiary	RomaVersitas – Macedonia	RomaVersitas – Macedonia
Tertiary	RomaVersitas – Support for Development towards Personal and Collective Equal Approaches and Opportunities	Association of Citizens RomaVersitas Macedonia
Adult	Roma Graduate and Enhance their Lives	Ternipe MK

## REF-implemented projects in 2017 with the support of European Union IPA funds

Educational level	Project name	Donor
Early childhood Primary Secondary Adult education	Improving Roma Employment through Education and Training	Financed by European Commission through Macedonian Ministry of Finance grant to Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, implemented by REF Hungary
Primary Secondary Adult	School Completion as Pathway towards Employment	Financed by European Commission through Macedonian Ministry of Finance grant to Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, implemented by REF Hungary



## Developments in education and policies

Segregation is a major issue regarding the education of Roma. More than 50 percent of Roma live in segregated settlements, often attending lower quality schools.

Primary and secondary education in Macedonia is obligatory and free of charge. Books and transportation (depending on the distance) are also free. Roma children accounted for 5 percent of children enrolled in primary education and 2.8 percent of secondary school students in the 2016–17 school year. Whereas the overall dropout rate in primary education is around 11 percent, the rate for Roma children is between 20–25 percent. The dropout rate of Roma students in secondary education is almost 4 times that of the overall dropout rate (14–16 percent compared to 4 percent).

The number of Roma enrolling in tertiary education in Macedonia is increasing, but still only 0.7 percent of all university students in the country.

## REF in Macedonia

### Scaling up Early Childhood Education in Macedonian Municipalities

Twelve years have elapsed since REF entered into its first partnership with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. Now over a decade later, REF can report that its latest early childhood education and care project enrolled 600 Roma children in 19 kindergartens in 18 municipalities, with 22 Roma teaching assistants driving the effort, of whom 18 were hired on permanent employment contracts.

**270** school-age children, or 100% of the eligible cohort, went on to enroll in their local primary schools

Budget contributions from:

Participating kindergartens	4%
Municipalities	12%
Ministry of Labor and Social Policy	46%
Topped up by REF	38%

### Macedonia's Secondary Scholarship and Mentoring Program Leads the Way with Innovative Approaches and Programs

Since beginning in 2006 as the first of its kind in the region, Macedonia's Secondary Scholarship and Mentoring Program, co-financed by REF and the Macedonian government, has led the way in providing modest stipends and robust academic support to Roma students attending secondary schools across Macedonia.

With REF providing technical assistance, supervision, and monitoring and evaluation functions, and the Ministry of Education of Science leading the implementation, thousands of students have passed through this program.

By August 2016, the principles of the program had been adopted into Article 54, line 3 of the Education Act which regulates that this scholarship be made available to Macedonian Roma students. REF is now lobbying strategic decision-makers within the administration to append REF's mentoring and tutoring component as a good practice to the current legislation.

### 2016–17 school year

**582** Roma secondary students received a scholarship

**632** received mentoring and/or tutoring support

**84** mentors/tutors in 84 secondary schools in 25 municipalities.

**100%** of secondary school students, who completed the academic year, transitioned to the next grade.

## A Second Chance in Macedonia: Integration of Roma Communities into the Labor Market through a Comprehensive Approach

Within two projects funded under the European Union's Instruments for Pre-Accession Assistance, REF and local partners sought to improve the prospects for adults to complete basic school qualifications that are a prerequisite for official employment. A team of ten mediators worked in ten locations providing education and training activities: Improving Roma Employment through Education and Training (December 2015–December 2017) and School Completion as Pathway towards Employment (December 2016–December 2017).

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### Primary education diplomas

**190** Roma adults  
(ages 16-40) completed  
**67%** women

Strengthened cooperation and  
increased networking with local  
employment offices and businesses

Established **18** partnerships

#### Secondary education diplomas

**142** Roma adults  
(ages 18-40) completed  
**42%** women

#### Soft skills and active job search training

**125** adults (70 women)  
completed training

#### Community support groups

**10** groups established  
women's empowerment groups,  
with 78 trainings

#### Early childhood education and care

**120** children participated in  
program activities  
**72** children enrolled  
in kindergarten

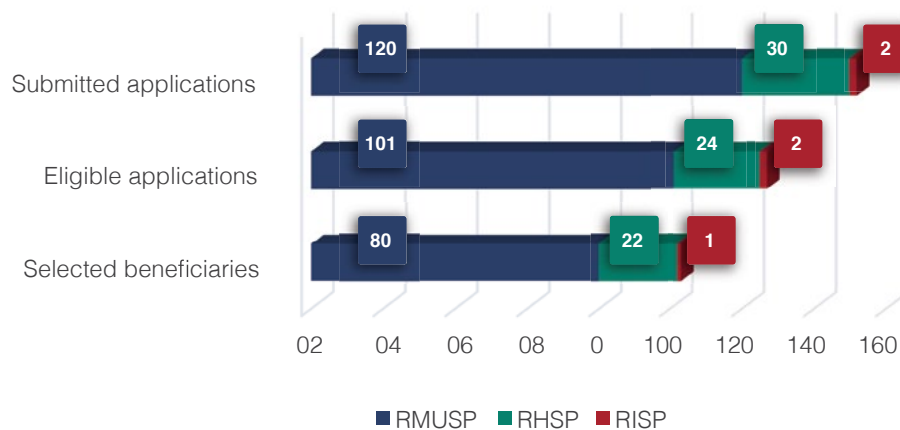
#### Employment

**34** participants found employment

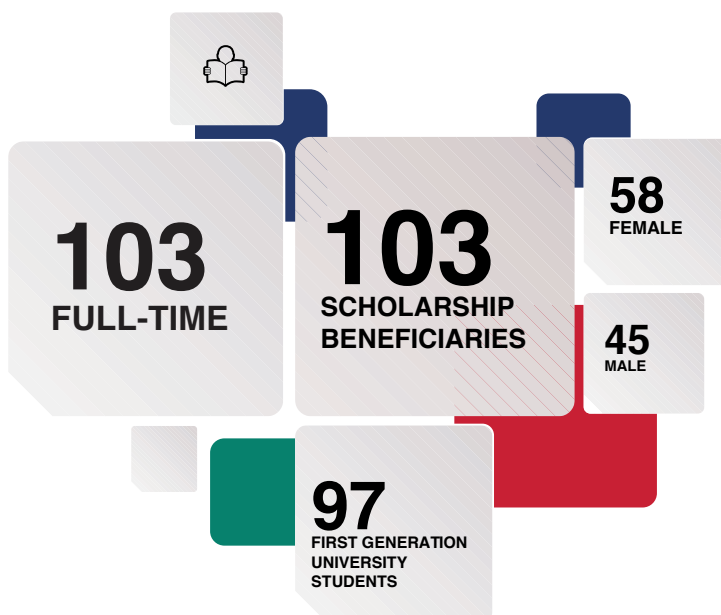
## Tertiary Scholarship Program

**2017-18 Academic Year**

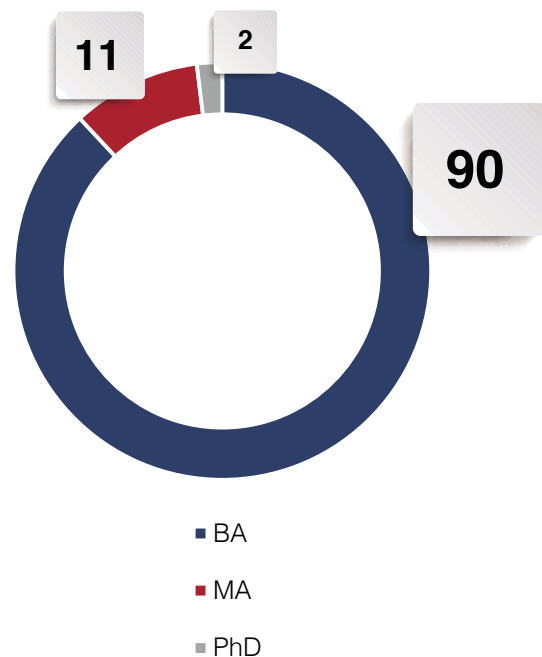
### Applications and Beneficiaries by Program



### Demographics of Scholarship Beneficiaries



### Level of Studies

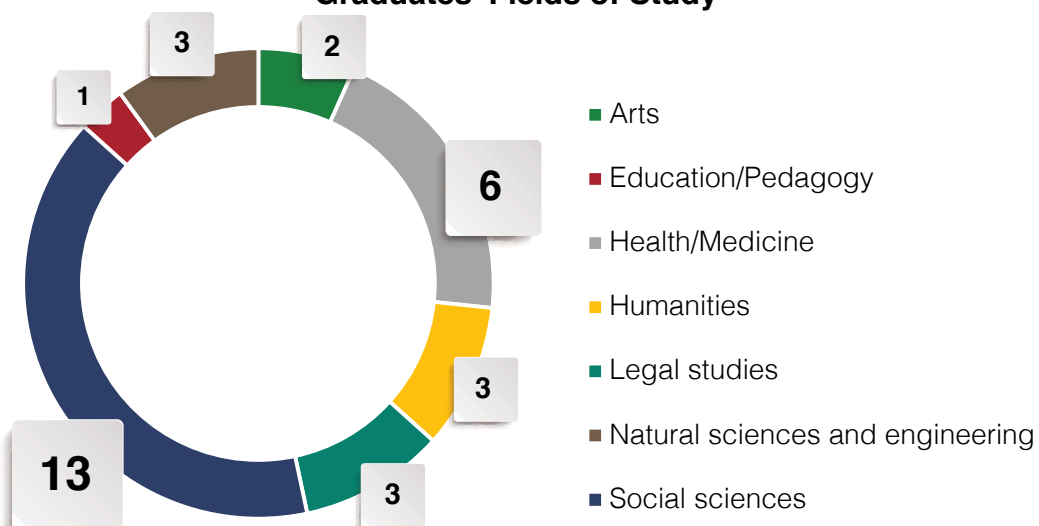


## 2016-17 Academic Year

### Graduation data



### Graduates' Fields of Study



## Spotlight



**paubusinessschool •**  
Midi-Pyrenees, France

### Ahmet Kamber

*is in the MBA program at Pau Business School in France. A graduate from the Faculty of Economics at Saints Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, he was an active member of RomaVersitas and volunteered on numerous occasions. His studies in France are supported under REF's Roma International Scholar Program.*



[Voir les statistiques](#)

[Promouvoir](#)

Like many of my close friends, I was born in Germany and returned to Shuto Orizari at age six when my parents' asylum claim was rejected. I had grown up with songs, traditions and culture of Macedonia's Roma, so I quickly adapted to school and was among the top students in my class. When I was in secondary school I had a teacher who didn't think I had the right stuff for economics. I took that as a challenge and later was accepted to the economics faculty in Skopje.

When I was a senior in secondary school, I began to realize that I could learn a lot outside the classroom. I started to be active locally, joining several clubs, volunteering for NGOs, sharing my time and energy to improve the lives of people in the community. I even won a national prize for the best draft business plan. As an undergraduate, I tutored Roma primary school students in Shuto, helped female entrepreneurs apply for small business loans, volunteered for the Red Cross in my neighborhood and participated in as many RomaVersitas workshops about Roma identity and culture as I could. Growing up in Shuto has been a very positive experience and living there has made me love my people and culture.

I was enticed to go to France because of my appreciation of French economists and business practices. The Grandes Ecoles, to which Pau belongs, are some of the best in the world, and I was overjoyed to be accepted to this prestigious management program. The first semester was a whirlwind of new information: big data, design thinking, project management and so on. Upon graduation my ambition is twofold. I'd like to work internationally as an analyst and later apply for a PhD.



# Moldova

## REF-supported projects in 2017

Educational level	Project name	Grantee organization
Tertiary	RomaVersitas Moldova	Roma National Centre

## Developments in education and policies

The 2016–2020 Roma Action Plan in Moldova aims to achieve the following specific objectives: (1) to increase the participation rate of Roma children, especially of Roma girls, in the preschool and pre-university education system; (2) to increase the number of Roma in higher education; (3) to prevent discrimination of Roma in the education system; and (4) to reduce the illiteracy rate among Roma.

According to the Regional Roma Survey conducted in 2011 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the literacy rate among Roma is 69 percent compared to 99 percent among non-Roma. The report also showed a huge gap in preschool enrolment (21 percent of Roma compared to 79 percent of general population) and the difference is even more alarming in upper-secondary education enrollment (16 percent/78 percent).

## REF in Moldova

### RomaVersitas – A Leader in Community Involvement and Driver for Change

Since 2015, REF has supported the Moldovan chapter of RomaVersitas, a student club where members receive academic and soft skills training in order to enable their graduation and later professional success. RomaVersitas is also very active in encouraging and developing students' Roma cultural heritage and pride. Approximately 30 students from across Moldova are provided with individually tailored tutoring by university professors, and mentoring for working in teams, fighting stereotypes, reacting to conflict situations and debating. In addition, students are enrolled in English and digital literacy classes.

A community-building program organizes events and social activities benefitting the Roma community. Several current and former members have gone on from their experience at RomaVersitas to set up their own NGOs, for instance, advocating for the rights of Roma women and girls in Moldova.

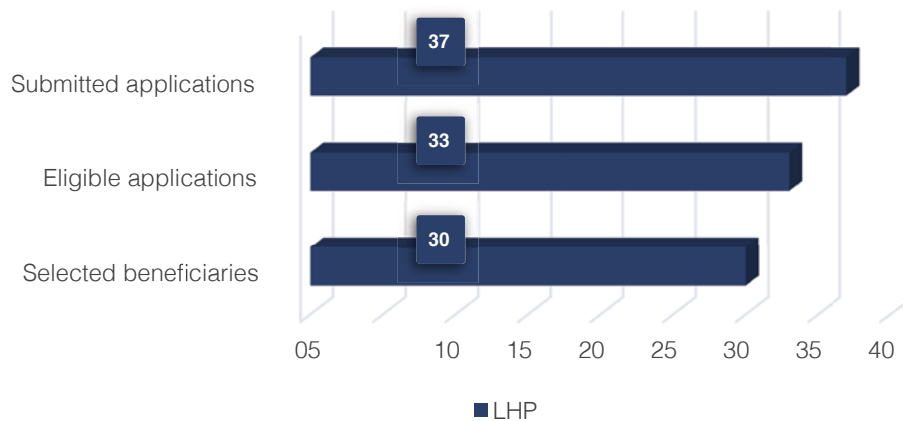
### Law and Humanities Program Scholarship Program (LHP)

REF has co-financed the Law and Humanities Program Scholarship Program (LHP) in Moldova together with the Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future (EVZ) since 2007.

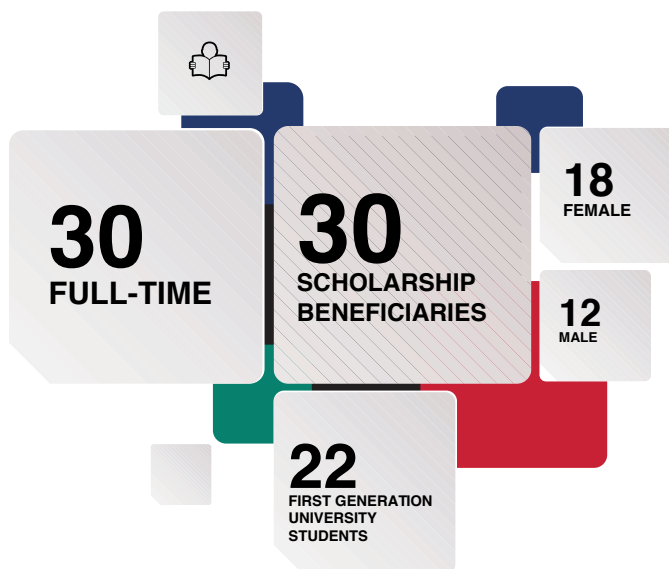
## Tertiary Scholarship Program

2017-18 Academic Year

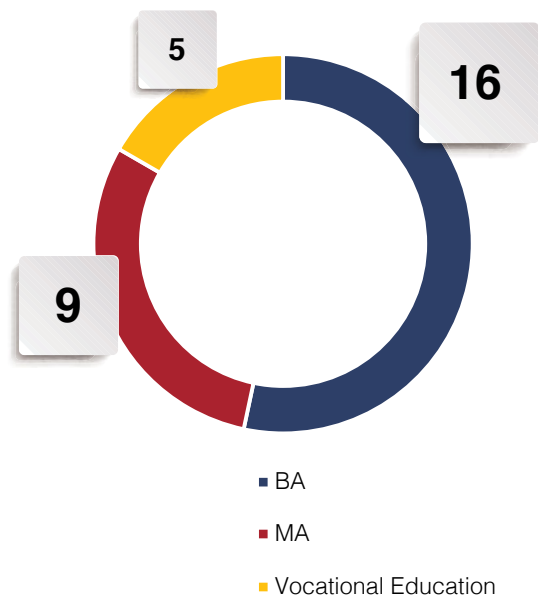
### Applications and Beneficiaries by Program



### Demographics of Scholarship Beneficiaries



### Level of Studies

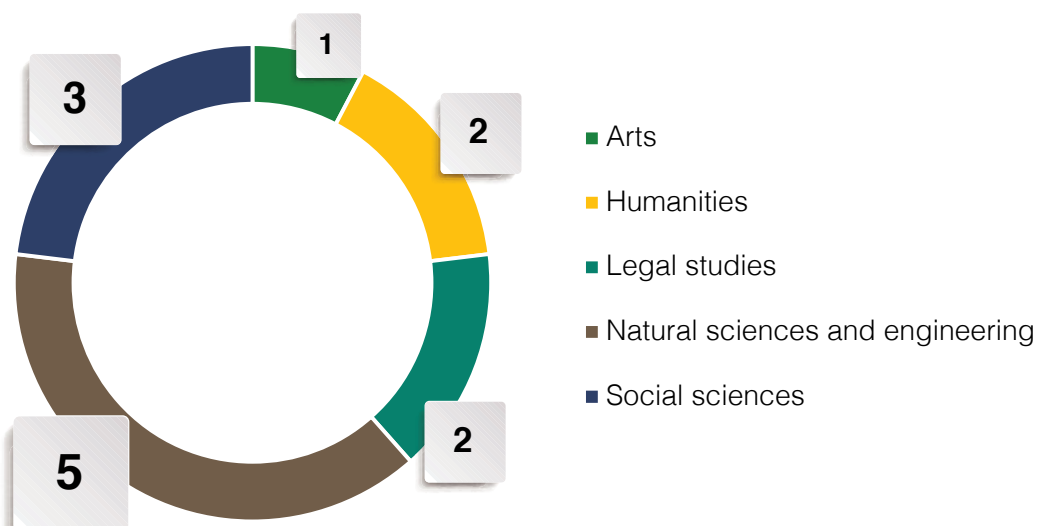


## 2016-17 Academic Year

### Graduation data



### Graduates' Fields of Study



## Spotlight

### Radu Marian

*attended the Academy of Economic Sciences in Chisinau for a BA in Finance and Banking before going on to win a Chevening Scholarship from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office to attend the University of Edinburgh from where he attained a Master's degree. He returned home in 2017 where he is now working in fundraising for the Association of Information and Communications Technology Companies in Moldova. He is active in national politics and considering running for public office. Radu was a Law and Humanities Program scholarship recipient for three years.*



I feel that I won life's lottery. I didn't grow up surrounded by much material wealth, but my parents knew from the beginning that education would push my siblings and myself forward. My family expected me to study music – my mother is a conductor – but I was more intrigued by the broader picture, especially the huge questions that followed the global financial crisis.

In my role writing funding proposals at the Association of Information and Communications Technology Companies in Moldova, I'm applying the lessons I learned in Edinburgh to help businesses balance their goals with social responsibility. I think the start-up community has a responsibility to involve and educate young Roma, especially girls. I also volunteer at the Executive Bureau of the Action and Solidarity Party, Moldova's leading pro-European political party. Having soaked in the Moldovan start-up world for a little while, I've got an idea to develop a procurement application to reduce the misuse of government funds.

I'd like to emphasize that curiosity is a really important quality for any student. Read and learn outside your field. Being able to think differently helps you become more creative and to solve complex problems. Also, I think Roma students should not shy away from non-Roma students. The redemption of Roma will not come from getting solely involved in Roma-related activities, but also by getting involved in all levels and fields of society.

# Russia

## Developments in education and policies

According to the latest official research (2016), a significant portion of Roma children do not enter school at all or quickly drop out of formal education without acquiring sufficient proficiency. Two main issues affect the educational prospects of the Roma population in Russia: the difficulty of access to primary and secondary education and the low quality of the formal education they receive.

One of the main barriers to Roma children's access to education is the lack of required documents, particularly that of registration at their place of residence. Quality education is often hindered by segregated instruction of Roma children in separate classrooms and the often unjustified, large-scale placement of Roma children to classes for the developmentally disabled.

Only 4 percent of Roma in Russia have higher education.

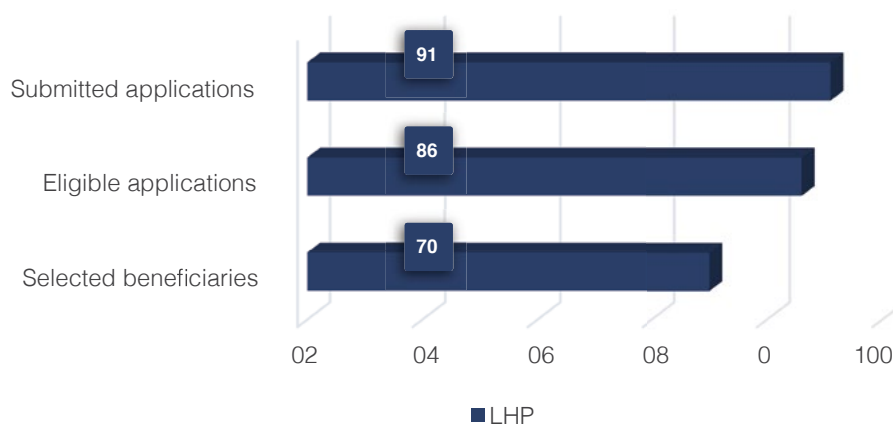
## REF in Russia

REF has co-financed the Law and Humanities Program Scholarship Program (LHP) in Russia together with the Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future (EVZ) since 2007.

## Tertiary Scholarship Program

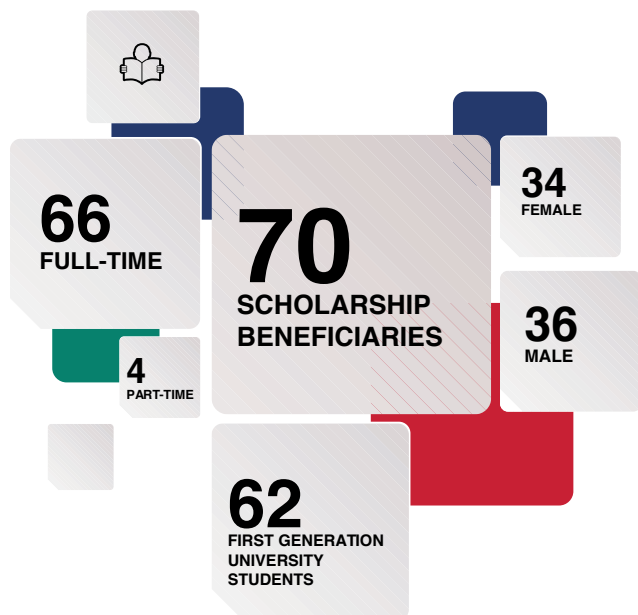
**2017-18 Academic Year**

### Applications and Beneficiaries by Program

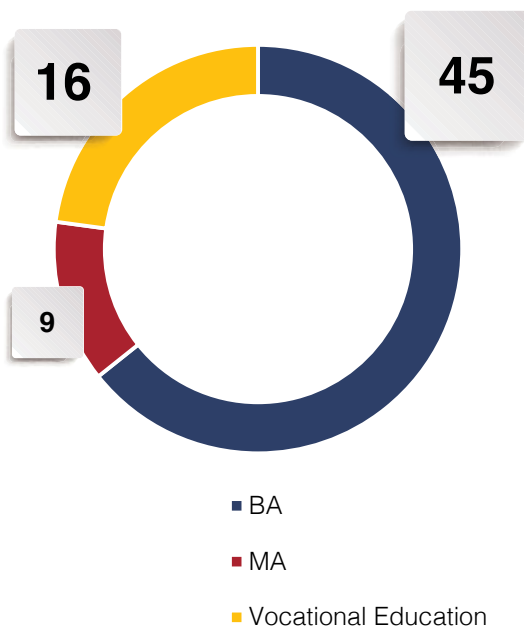




## Demographics of Scholarship Beneficiaries

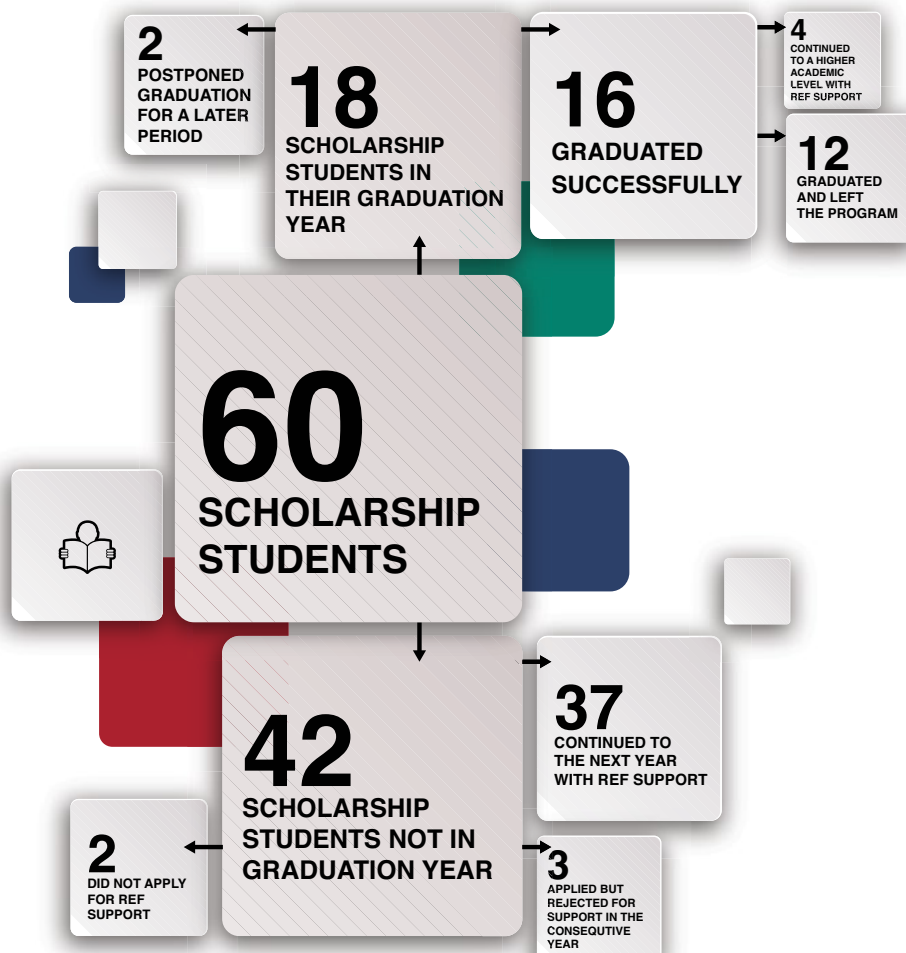


## Level of Studies

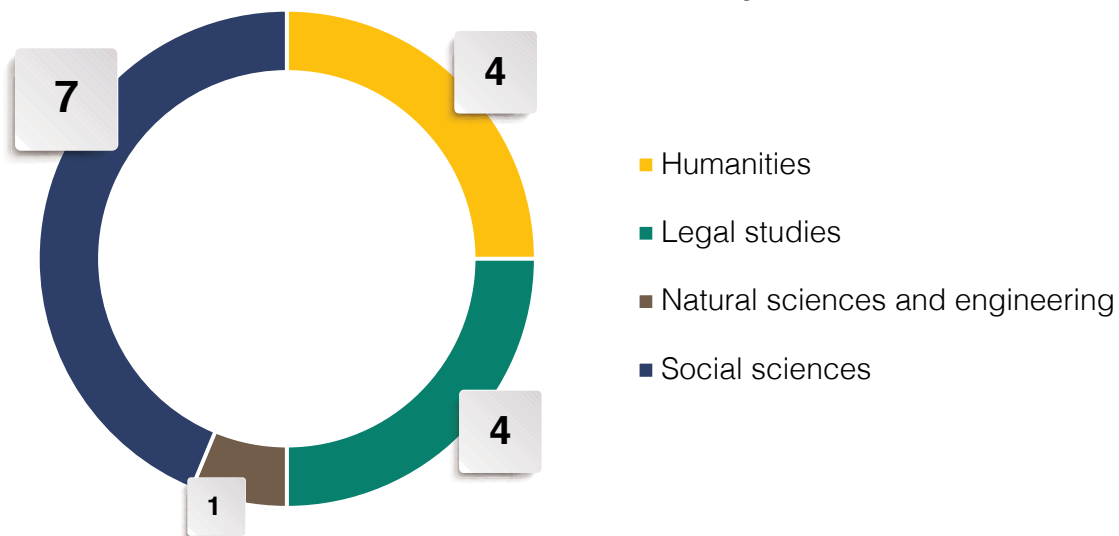


2016-17 Academic Year

## Graduation data



### Graduates' Fields of Study



### Spotlight



**Ilyana Berezovskaya**

*is an alumna of REF's Law and Humanities Program (LHP). She graduated in 2013 from a five-year program in Accounting, Analysis and Audit at the Finance and Economic Faculty of the University of Pskov. In addition to her LHP scholarship, she began to work part-time at Sberbank, advancing since her graduation to the position of client manager.*

My father is traditional but he also strongly believes in higher education. My brother already graduated summa cum laude and my younger sister is still in school. My extended family also has quite a few university graduates who are now economists, lawyers and so on. When I was in high school, I just wanted to study well and make my parents proud of my achievements.

I'm creative and wanted to study humanities, but I decided to be more practical as I appreciate stability. So I applied to the Faculty of Economics here at the University of Pskov. The LHP scholarship made it a lot easier for me to study but it really wasn't enough, so I decided to work. I haven't hidden my identity as a student or bank employee; I'm proud of being Roma and want to be an example to other young Roma.

I really appreciate my parents. They educated me and my siblings and did not punish us, while instilling in us respect for our elders, obedience, modesty and politeness. My father is a very talented musician and we always have lots of guests who come to discuss current affairs and be entertained with his songs and music in our cozy home.

Working at Sberbank has been like joining another family. I've been there five years and have a good relationship with colleagues, management, and most importantly the premium customers I'm responsible for. I'm hoping when I don't have to balance my studies and work, that I will be able to dedicate some time to a few projects I have in mind to support my community.

## Turkey

### Developments in education and policies

In 2014, 20 percent of young people with tertiary education were unemployed. Ninety-six percent of children were enrolled in primary education and 94 percent in lower secondary education. The enrollment rates for upper secondary stood at 79 percent, and higher education enrollment was at 40 percent. Absenteeism is high and not monitored consistently. Progress is still needed to make education more inclusive, among others for Roma and children with disabilities. Gender disparity, notably for dropouts, remains substantial.

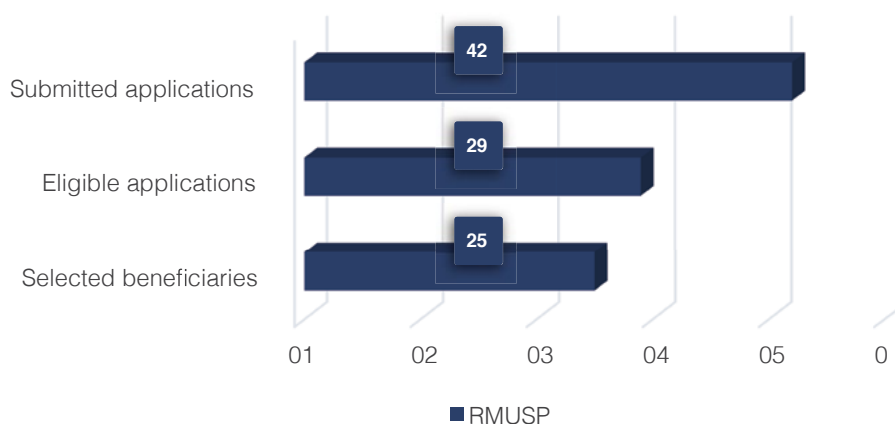
### REF in Turkey

REF supports Roma university students in Turkey through the provision of tertiary education scholarships.

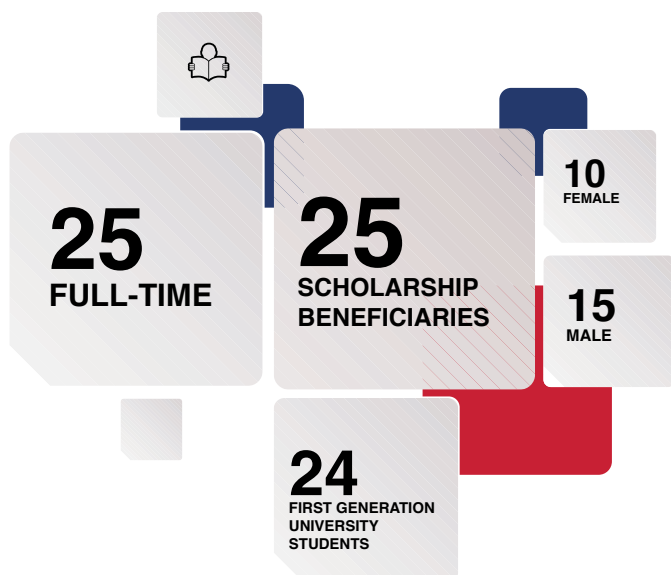
### Tertiary Scholarship Program

**2017-18 Academic Year**

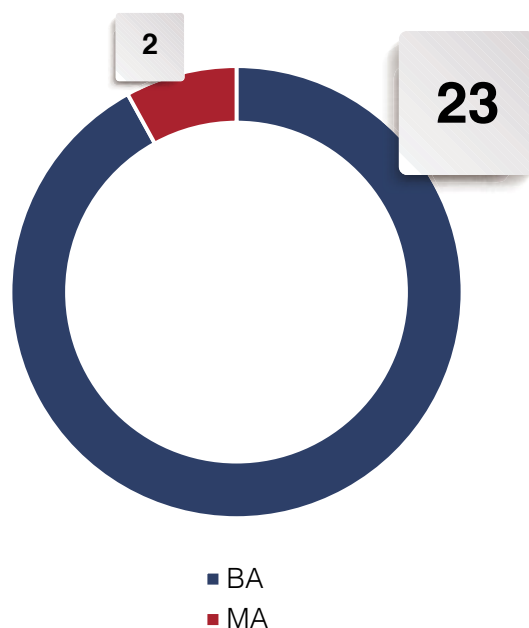
#### Applications and Beneficiaries by Program



#### Demographics of Scholarship Beneficiaries



#### Level of Studies



## 2016-17 Academic Year

### Graduation data



# Ukraine

## Developments in education and policies

The National Action Plan on the Implementation of the Strategy for Protection and Integration of the Roma National Minority into the Ukrainian Society until 2020 addresses Roma access to higher education, though provisions are generic and immeasurable. They are not grounded on any statistical evidence, which is generally unavailable, and provide for no indicators to assess progress.

According to unofficial estimates, less than 1 percent of Roma in Ukraine has higher education. Yet, the legislation and state programs governing the field of higher education in Ukraine are silent on the issue of supporting Roma enrollment. Students cannot benefit from any affirmative action measures or scholarships targeting Roma young people.

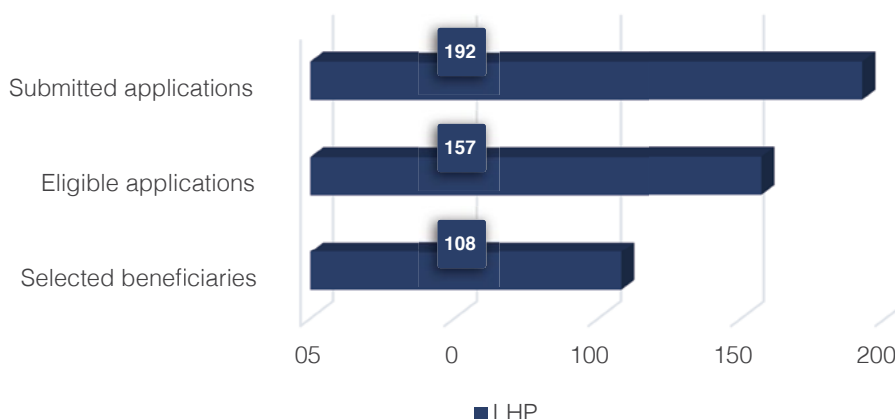
## REF in Ukraine

REF has co-financed the Law and Humanities Program Scholarship Program (LHP) in Ukraine together with the Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future (EVZ) since 2007.

## Tertiary Scholarship Program

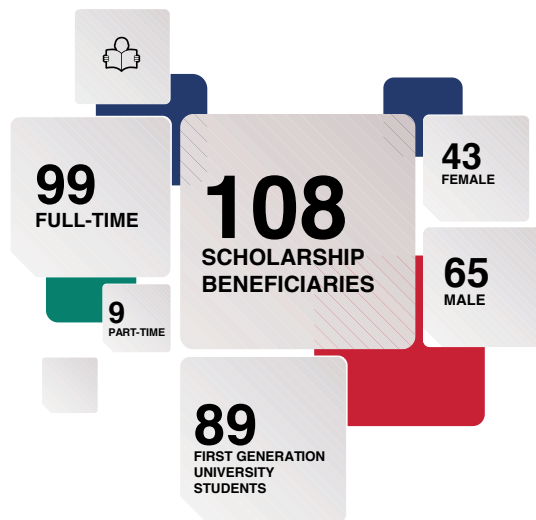
**2017-18 Academic Year**

### Applications and Beneficiaries by Program

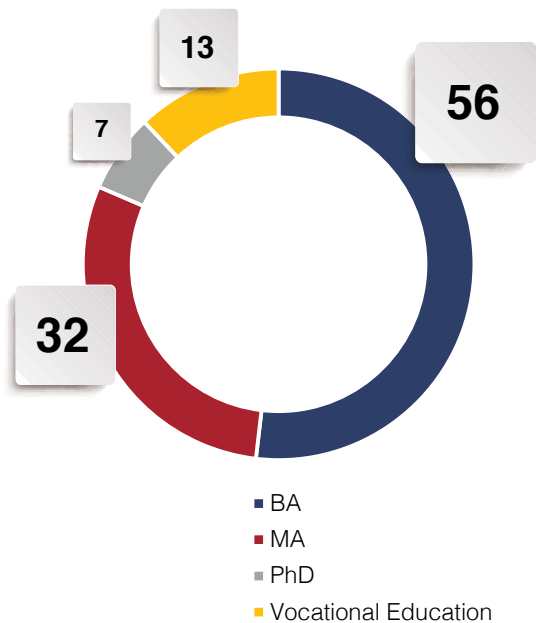




## Demographics of Scholarship Beneficiaries

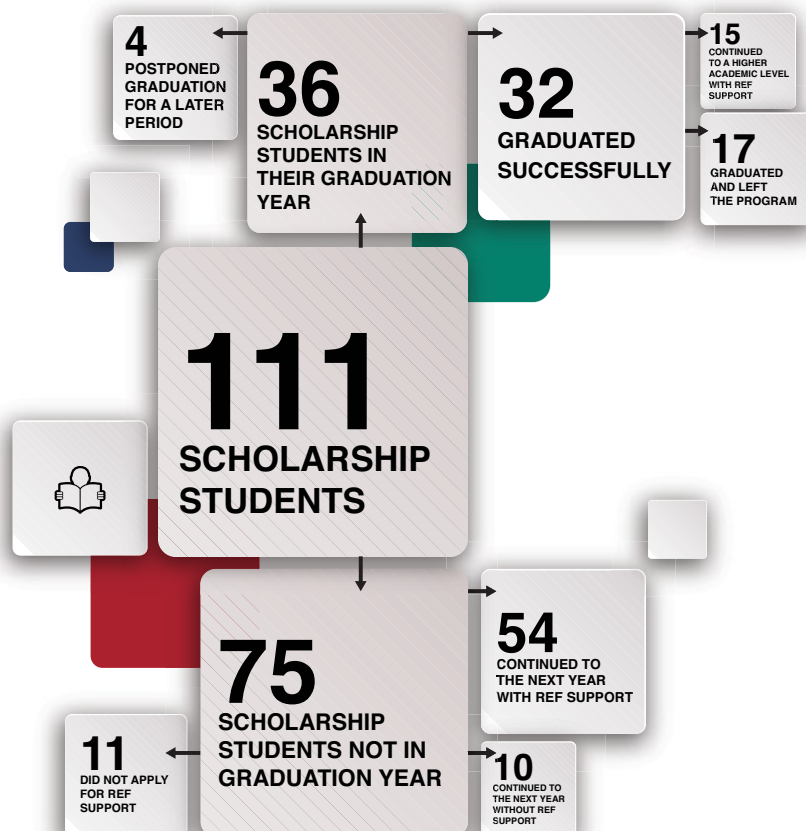


## Level of Studies

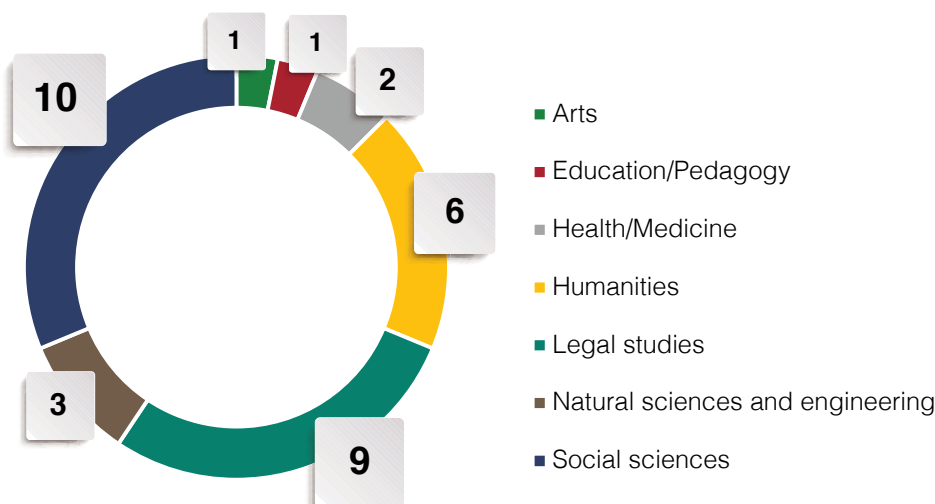


## 2016-17 Academic Year

## Graduation data



## Graduates' Fields of Study



## Spotlight



### Yulian Kondur

*is a Ukrainian law student from Izmail, near Odessa. He originally received a scholarship for four years from the REF's Law and Humanities Program. He also attended the Roma Graduate Preparation Program at Central European University. He is currently supported under REF's Roma International Scholar Program and studying International Law and Human Rights at the University of Tartu, Estonia. Yulian is an integral part of a new generation of Roma equipped with the tools to contribute to the development of their communities.*

My family has been working on Roma issues since 1991, when Ukraine became an independent state and civil society organizations started to emerge. Before engaging in the NGO sector, my mom and dad were professional Roma musicians and dancers and also were well respected among Roma. This later led to the establishment of a Roma youth center in my hometown. I've been continuously involved in all kinds of civic activities that my family has been running.

I chose to study law because I wanted to learn how to make the society where I live a better place for everyone. Human rights law has gradually become both my academic as well as practical field of activities. Therefore, I see myself working in this area in the future, particularly in advocacy.

Roma students are perceived through a lens of prejudice, which is a reflection of deeply entrenched stereotypes and stigmas. So, I would advise Roma students to be ready to counter it. But how? By being ready to work more than others, to be the best. Negative perceptions, I strongly believe, are not a constant but rather the result of superficial knowledge and awareness about the culture and history of Roma, hence they can be overcome gradually.

I'd like people to love each other and learn, not for the sake of being smart, but learn simply for the sake of being a better you, and help those who need it the most – there are always people in need.

# Finance and Administration

## Organization of Roma Education Fund

The network of the Roma Education Fund consists of four entities (REF Entities) that have been established as legally separate foundations:

- 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

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 a separate board with independent members for their decisions.

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

## Summary of REF financials

In 2017 REF provided €8.1 million to Roma organizations, Roma education-related projects and beneficiaries of REF educational programs. Eighty-eight percent of the REF budget is spent on programs and beneficiaries in 16 countries.

## Sources of Funds and Spending of REF Foundations in 2017 (€)

	REF SWITZERLAND	REF HUNGARY	REF ROMANIA	REF SLOVAKIA	Combined
Opening foundation capital	440,896	415,857	579,368	-119,726	1,316,395
Third party donor income	6,629,721	1,423,000	536,433	20,000	8,609,154
Other income	98,964	4,130	8,705	1,427	113,226
<b>Total Sources</b>	<b>7,169,581</b>	<b>1,842,987</b>	<b>1,124,506</b>	<b>-98,299</b>	<b>10,038,775</b>
Transfers within REF network		2,223,958	821,596	127,052	3,172,606
<b>TOTAL SOURCES WITH TRANSFERS</b>	<b>7,169,581</b>	<b>4,066,945</b>	<b>1,946,102</b>	<b>28,753</b>	<b>13,211,381</b>
Grant program	1,603,775	0	175,267	68,340	1,847,382
Tertiary scholarship program	1,831,880	139,741	38,697	9,168	2,019,486
Own educational projects	59,187	1,276,754	1,662,860	86,565	3,085,366
Capacity building, policy development and communications	245,543	625,236	299,912	0	1,170,691
Administrative expenses	178,379	976,160	0	0	1,154,539
Other expenses	346,080	24,070	52,000	0	422,150
Accumulated capital	477,010	764,958	-282,634	-135,320	824,014
Total spending	4,741,854	3,806,919	1,946,102	28,753	10,523,628
Transfers within REF network	2,427,727	260,026	0	0	2,687,753
<b>TOTAL SPENDING WITH TRANSFERS</b>	<b>7,169,581</b>	<b>4,066,945</b>	<b>1,946,102</b>	<b>28,753</b>	<b>13,211,381</b>
Grant program	-1,603,775	0	-175,267	-68,340	-1,847,382
Tertiary scholarships	-1,831,880	-139,741	-38,697	-9,168	-2,019,486
Own educational projects	-59,187	-1,276,754	-1,662,860	-86,565	-3,085,366
Capacity building, policy development and communications	-245,543	-625,236	-299,912	0	-1,170,691
Administrative expenses	-178,379	-976,160	0	0	-1,154,539
Other expenses	-346,080	-24,070	-52,000	0	-422,150
Accumulated capital	-477,010	-764,958	282,634	135,320	-824,014
<b>Total Spending</b>	<b>-4,741,854</b>	<b>-3,806,919</b>	<b>-1,946,102</b>	<b>-28,753</b>	<b>-10,523,628</b>
Transfers within REF network	-2,427,727	-260,026	0	0	-2,687,753
<b>TOTAL SPENDING WITH TRANSFERS</b>	<b>-7,169,581</b>	<b>-4,066,945</b>	<b>-1,946,102</b>	<b>-28,753</b>	<b>-13,211,381</b>

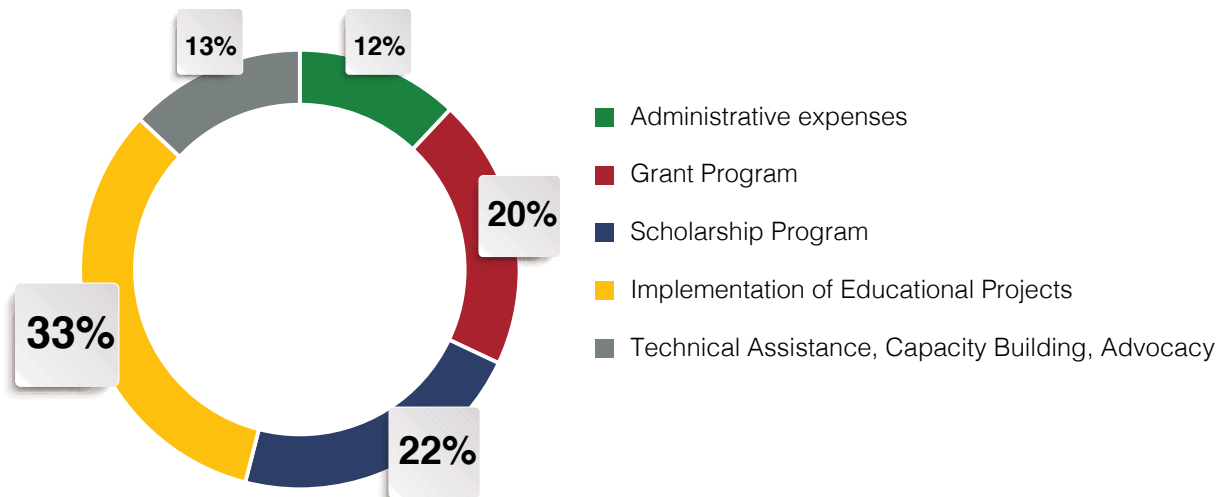
From total overall funding of €10 million, REF spent €1.8 million on new grants contracted in its grant program in 13 countries and €2 million on tertiary scholarship programs for Roma students in 16 countries. Altogether REF spending under these two programs in 2017 is allocated to the main educational models of REF as follows:

## Commitments of REF Foundations in 2017 by Educational Model

MODEL	NUMBER OF NEW PROJECTS CONTRACTED IN 2017	FUNDS COMMITTED IN 2017 (€)
Early Childhood Education	22	623,385
Primary Education	10	281,616
Secondary Education	3	261,131
Tertiary Education	n/a <sup>1</sup>	2,662,776
Adult Education	2	37,960
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3,866,868</b>

In 2017, REF developed and implemented nine projects from funding provided, inter alia, by the European Union, Norway Grants, KfW, OSCE and VELUX FOUNDATIONS, with a total spending of €3.0 million. A further €1.17 million was spent on technical assistance, capacity building and advocacy. The total administrative expenses, €1.15 million, represent 12 percent of total spending.

### 2017 spending by program (mil €, %)



<sup>1</sup> Includes the beneficiaries of REF Tertiary Education Scholarship Program and eight RomaVersitas projects.



## Key Events in REF network

### REF Switzerland (REF CH)

REF CH allocated €1.6 million for grants and €1.83 million for the tertiary scholarship program, as well as €245,543 for technical assistance, advocacy and capacity building,

The headquarters of the REF Network in Budapest, Hungary, provided capacity building and core support to the operations of REF Romania and secured funding again for the various programs implemented by REF Slovakia, REF Montenegro and REF Serbia.

In 2015, REF Switzerland provided a €570,000 recoverable grant for REF Romania to finance the full implementation of ESF projects; it is possible that REF Romania will not be able to repay the full amount of this recoverable grant, hence a provision of €350,000 was created in 2016 and an additional €100,000 in 2017 to fully reflect this risk.

In 2016 REF management introduced a comprehensive risk management framework, reviewed and improved its donor reporting practices and key financial processes, and started strengthening and restructuring the operations and cooperation of REF Network entities. This initiative continued in 2017: an Internal Control System was introduced and Operational Guidelines were revised to further strengthen REF operations and mitigate risk.

### REF Hungary (REF HU)

Besides managing the core programs and being the headquarters of the REF network, REF HU was active in 2017 in the implementation of a number of educational projects financed by various donors through its offices in Hungary, Montenegro and Serbia:

- Implementation of a three-year, €2.4 million project, funded by KfW, to improve the education, integration and employment opportunities for Roma in Serbia
- Continuing the implementation of the third phase of an early childhood education project at Konik Camp, Montenegro, in partnership with Help – Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe e. V.
- Continuing the implementation of the Higher Education Internationalisation and Mobility research project funded by the Executive Research Agency of the European Commission
- Continuing the secondary scholarship project, funded by the VELUX Foundations, for Roma female students studying pedagogy in Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, and expanded to Romania
- Completing with REF Romania the implementation of Ready Set Go! in Romania, funded by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and aiming at providing comprehensive early childhood services in marginalized communities
- Implementation of the secondary scholarship program in Montenegro, funded by the Ministry of Human Rights and Minorities and REF
- Implementation of knowhow exchange project, funded by Central European Initiative, that aims to transfer the monitoring and evaluation knowledge of the REF secondary scholarship program to project partners (Ministries and project staff) in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

## **REF Romania (REF RO)**

REF RO successfully finished the implementation of Ready Set Go! – Increasing Early Childhood Development Outcomes for Roma Children, which targeted early childhood development outcomes for some 1,400 Roma children. Ready, Set, Go! was 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 was €2.43 million.

As a follow-up to the best practices of this project REF RO implemented a second phase of Ready Set Go! with the support of Open Society Foundations’ Early Childhood Program and ADECO.

A new ESF-funded project was launched by REF RO, Integrated Measures for Disadvantaged Groups from Harsova, aiming to develop integrated programs for pupils and their parents in vulnerable groups to increase participation in preschool, primary and secondary education.

REF RO implemented the RomaVersitas project in Bucharest and coordinated REF Tertiary Scholarship Programs in Romania. In addition REF RO implemented the Romanian share of the VELUX pedagogy scholarship project (€146,853).

REF RO continued their activities in the field of advocacy and lobbying for improvement and change relevant policies in Romania.

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

In 2017, REF SK continued the implementation of REF’s secondary scholarship program to improve the academic performance of disadvantaged secondary school students, their attendance rate, graduation rate, transition rate from secondary to tertiary education and to decrease their dropout rate in Slovakia, in the grant amount of €68,340.

REF SK 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 and Grant Program.

REF Slovakia started a strategic cooperation with the Ministry of Interior of Slovakia and benefited by almost €20,000 from the government.

## Income

DONORS	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
<b>RECEIVED BY REF SWITZERLAND</b>						
Bill Cook Foundation					4,673	<b>4,673</b>
Council of Europe	7,788					<b>7,788</b>
DFID United Kingdom		50,000	50,000			<b>100,000</b>
EPTISA Regional Office for Southeast Europe					4,275	<b>4,275</b>
ERSTE Group AG		500,000				<b>500,000</b>
European Commission	1,808					<b>1,808</b>
EU: AGS project	16,558					<b>16,558</b>
EVZ Erinnerung		221,000	234,000	262,000	260,000	<b>977,000</b>
Fundación Secretariado Gitano	7,936					<b>7,936</b>
HH Management			181,159			<b>181,159</b>
Individuals	450		5	197	752	<b>1,404</b>
Karl Popper Foundation	87,928					<b>87,928</b>
Mirabaud wedding donations		35,466				<b>35,466</b>
Mirabaud Pierre			1,000			<b>1,000</b>
Morgan Stanley		197				<b>197</b>
Network of European Foundations	155,072		119,600			<b>274,672</b>
Norwegian Family	24,882	21,342				<b>46,224</b>
Porticus			100,000	90,000		<b>190,000</b>
SIDA Sweden	1,042,250		542,160	503,894	1,018,256	<b>3,106,560</b>
Soros-Bolton wedding	33,469	13,345				<b>46,814</b>
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	700,000	350,000	832,618	850,000	850,000	<b>3,582,618</b>
Open Society Institute	4,363,123	2,094,538	4,492,342	4,916,294	4,506,490	<b>20,372,787</b>
Ostrava Municipality	6,200	6,200	6,200	7,200		<b>25,800</b>
The Velux Foundations			1,034			<b>1,034</b>
UNICEF		57,458				<b>57,458</b>
US Embassy, Slovakia			1,677			<b>1,677</b>
WB Community Fund	8,375	5,776	11,838	11,544	7,114	<b>44,647</b>
World Bank IBRD	290,366	291,925			(21,840)	<b>560,451</b>
World Vision			4,565			<b>4,565</b>
<b>Total received by REF Switzerland</b>	<b>6,746,205</b>	<b>3,647,247</b>	<b>6,578,198</b>	<b>6,641,129</b>	<b>6,629,721</b>	<b>30,242,500</b>

DONORS	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
<b>RECEIVED BY REF HUNGARY</b>						
American House Family	5,112					<b>5,112</b>
Bernard Van Leer Foundation		68,111				<b>68,111</b>
CFCD Macedonia				81,821	152,670	<b>234,491</b>
CEI Fund EBRD					25,740	<b>25,740</b>
HELP HILFE	70,827	283,934	118,769	75,721	312,558	<b>861,809</b>
KfW1				799,461	406,183	<b>1,205,644</b>
Bureau of Education Montenegro				8,418		<b>8,418</b>
Ministry for Human and Minority Rights Montenegro		76,242		79,657	80,240	<b>236,139</b>
Ministry of Slovak Republic		5,955	54,045			<b>60,000</b>
OSCE		46,313	86,438	59,581	46,463	<b>238,795</b>
REF Romania (ESF/EEA projects)		44,709	27,399	3,727		<b>75,835</b>
Tempus Foundation	192					<b>192</b>
The Velux Foundations		92,435	245,861		397,662	<b>735,958</b>
Research Executive Agency			40,622			<b>40,622</b>
Other donors, Individuals	11,124	26,401	7,118	9,632	1,484	<b>55,759</b>
<b>Total received by REF Hungary</b>	<b>87,255</b>	<b>644,100</b>	<b>580,252</b>	<b>1,118,018</b>	<b>1,423,000</b>	<b>3,852,625</b>
<b>RECEIVED BY REF ROMANIA</b>						
Fundación Secretariado Gitano	1,400					<b>1,400</b>
ADECO - ECD Ready Set Go					17,109	<b>17,109</b>
European Voluntary Service for All					3,159	<b>3,159</b>
Romanian Management Authority - as partner	406,796				(133,382)	<b>273,414</b>
Romanian Management Authority - as lead entity	3,233,296	1,050,075	3,052,751	1,659,208		<b>8,995,330</b>
Norway Grants				1,030,186	643,380	<b>1,673,566</b>
Other donors, Individuals	23			2,858	6,168	<b>9,049</b>
<b>Total received by REF Romania</b>	<b>3,641,515</b>	<b>1,050,075</b>	<b>3,052,751</b>	<b>2,692,252</b>	<b>536,433</b>	<b>10,973,026</b>
<b>RECEIVED BY REF SLOVAKIA</b>						
Ministry of Interior, Slovakia	0			12,000	20,000	<b>32,000</b>
<b>Total received by REF Slovakia</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12,000</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>32,000</b>
<b>TOTAL DONATIONS RECEIVED</b>	<b>10,474,975</b>	<b>5,341,422</b>	<b>10,211,201</b>	<b>10,463,399</b>	<b>8,609,154</b>	<b>45,100,151</b>

## Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

### 1 Bookkeeping and reporting requirements

The business and reporting period of REF Entities are defined annually, starting on January 1 and ending December 31.

REF entities maintain double-entry bookkeeping maintained in local currency. 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.

Financial statements are prepared according to REF Accounting Policy (including the statement of income and expenditure, the balance sheet and the notes), presented in EUR (€) (additionally in local currency where necessary), issued in English (including the audit reports) and published on the REF website.

### 2 Main accounting principles

The books of the REF Entities are maintained in local currency as 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 EUR and, for better comparability, financial statements in the annual report are presented in EUR.

Donation income is recognized at nominal value when received and presented on a cash basis, while promised donation income is not recorded for prudence reasons.

The program and grant expenses paid are recognized at nominal value. Already known costs are accrued. Grants awarded by the Project Support (Grant) and Tertiary Scholarship Programs are presented on total contractual value in the year they are awarded. Other program related expenses are recognized in the period to which they are related.

Administrative expenses include operations, purchases, contractors, salaries of administrative staff and their travel expenditures not directly related to the programs. Administrative expenses are recognized at nominal value, already known costs are accrued.

In case of projects implemented in partnerships and REF is the main project implementer responsible for reporting the entire cost of the project to the donor, all expenses related to partners are presented as REF expenditure in the financial statement.

Tangible and intangible assets are carried at their costs less depreciation and any accumulated impairment loss. The useful life of property rights, intellectual products, and the qualification and classification of fixed assets are determined according to the applicable national rules by each REF entity. The depreciable amount of a depreciable asset is 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, is accounted as depreciation in lump sum when put in use. REF Entities have to apply extraordinary depreciation by devaluation when the asset's usability is permanently reduced, or if it has become redundant and/or damaged. The foundations do not use the revaluation model of assets.

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



## Roma Education Fund (REF)

### Statement of Income and Expenditure 2017 and 2016

		REF SWITZERLAND		REF HUNGARY		REF ROMANIA		REF SLOVAKIA	
		2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016
		EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
<b>INCOME</b>									
Donations received from third parties		6,629,721	6,641,129	1,423,000	1,118,018	536,433	2,692,252	20,000	12,000
Donations received from REF Switzerland				2,223,958	1,191,179	615,485	479,668	74,232	285,025
Donations received from REF Hungary						206,111	42,692	52,820	65,776
Project Support and other Program Refund		75,163	63,229	0	663				
Other income				1,368	7,594			1,427	1,980
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>6,704,884</b>	<b>6,704,358</b>	<b>3,648,326</b>	<b>2,317,454</b>	<b>1,358,029</b>	<b>3,214,612</b>	<b>148,479</b>	<b>364,780</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>									
Project Support Program (Grants)	1	-1,603,775	-1,556,429	0	-123,039	-175,267	-7,523	-68,340	-273,314
Tertiary Scholarship Program	2	-1,831,880	-1,890,497	-139,741	-171,120	-38,697	-41,500	-9,168	-8,285
Communications	3	-59,493	-40,687	-311,133	-103,994				
Policy development and capacity building	4	-186,050	-236,902	-313,841	-324,926				
A Good Start and complementary projects	5			-136					
REF Romania - ESF projects	6			0	-596	-16,672	-144,429		
REF Romania - Ready, Set, Go	7			-2,887	-18,054	-1,499,335	-934,863		
REF Romania and its partners' capacity building	8			-262		-299,912	-451,460		
Progress project in Slovakia	9								
Konik Camp project in Montenegro	10			-301,749	-106,410				
UNICEF	11								
Velux project	12	0	-933	-72,741	-72,573	-146,853	-11,184	-68,079	-52,352
OSCE-TARI project	13			0	-58,449				
HEIM - EC Research Executive Agency	14			-14,316	-31,285				
IPA Macedonia - Fostering Social Inclusion	15			-307,476	-83,250				
KfW - Improved education and integration, Serbia	16	-59,187		-537,583	-51,304				
CEI Fund project	17			-39,866					
Ministry of Interior, Slovakia	18							-18,486	0
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Hungary		-1,738,010	-1,524,811						
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Slovakia		-74,232	-285,025	-53,179	-65,998				
Grants to Roma Education Fund, Romania		-615,485	-479,668	-206,847	-42,089				
<b>Total Programs and Grants</b>		<b>-6,168,112</b>	<b>-6,014,952</b>	<b>-2,301,757</b>	<b>-1,253,087</b>	<b>-2,176,736</b>	<b>-1,590,959</b>	<b>-164,073</b>	<b>-333,951</b>

## Roma Education Fund (REF) Statement of Income and Expenditure 2017 and 2016

		REF SWITZERLAND		REF HUNGARY		REF ROMANIA		REF SLOVAKIA	
		2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016
		EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
Administrative expenses		-178,379	-173,941	-976,160	-872,181				
Provisions to cover risks in loans and receivables		-100,000	-350,000						
<b>Net operating results</b>		<b>258,393</b>	<b>165,465</b>	<b>370,409</b>	<b>192,186</b>	<b>-818,707</b>	<b>1,623,653</b>	<b>-15,594</b>	<b>30,829</b>
Interest Income		207	46	292	426	0	3	0	1
Interest cost		-22,881	-20,849	-64	-3				
Gain on Foreign Exchange		23,594		2,470	14,569	8,705	20,924		
Losses on foreign exchange		-223,199	-33,592	-15,738	-17,611	-34,601	-29,615		
Net financial results		-222,279	-54,395	-13,040	-2,619	-25,896	-8,688	0	1
<b>EXCESS OF EXPENDITURE OVER INCOME</b>		<b>36,114</b>	<b>111,070</b>	<b>357,369</b>	<b>189,567</b>	<b>-844,603</b>	<b>1,614,965</b>	<b>-15,594</b>	<b>30,830</b>

## Roma Education Fund (REF)

### Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2017 and 2016

	REF SWITZERLAND		REF HUNGARY		REF ROMANIA		REF SLOVAKIA	
	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016
	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR	EUR
Cash at banks	2,485,938	3,278,445	892,165	1,191,277	156,223	386,204	23,810	39,403
Receivables	0	0	57,816	57,945	224,626	1,580,746	159,671	18,731
Loan to REF entities	662,476	575,000	0	0	0	0		0
Inventories	0	0	0	7,697	0	420,632		0
Other current assets	6,731	440	70,349	48,101	0	0	4,750	250
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>3,155,145</b>	<b>3,853,885</b>	<b>1,020,330</b>	<b>1,305,020</b>	<b>380,849</b>	<b>2,387,582</b>	<b>188,231</b>	<b>58,384</b>
Recoverable grants		0		0		0	0	0
Accrued income	0	56,589	0	0	0	0		0
Intangible assets	0	0	293	495	0	0		0
Tangible assets	0	0	32,666	15,632	5,294	10,189		0
<b>Total long term assets</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>56,589</b>	<b>32,959</b>	<b>16,127</b>	<b>5,294</b>	<b>10,189</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>3,155,145</b>	<b>3,910,474</b>	<b>1,053,289</b>	<b>1,321,147</b>	<b>386,143</b>	<b>2,397,771</b>	<b>188,231</b>	<b>58,384</b>
Liabilities			157,048	118,659	58,980	2,881	19,006	16,078
Accrued expenses	47,936	24,000	76,798	101,631	0	0	180,755	140,644
Provisions for projects granted	1,893,472	3,014,501	0	0	0	0	114,440	21,388
Accounts payable to partners	0	0	0	0	1,806	1,245,749		0
Loan from CoEB	0	0	0	680,000	0	0		0
Loans from REF Switzerland	0	0	54,485	5,000	607,991	569,774		0
Funds unused	0	0	0	0	0	0	9,350	0
Other short-term liabilities to related parties (OSF)	205,650	0	0	0	0	0		0
Other provision	531,077	431,077	0	0	0	0		0
<b>Total liabilities and provisions</b>	<b>2,678,135</b>	<b>3,469,578</b>	<b>288,331</b>	<b>905,290</b>	<b>668,777</b>	<b>1,818,404</b>	<b>323,551</b>	<b>178,110</b>
Foundation capital as of January 1	440,896	329,826	415,857	224,508	579,368	-1,021,443	-119,726	-150,556
Restatement of Foundation capital	0	0	0	0	-19,740	0		
Excess of expenditure over income	36,114	111,070	357,369	189,567	-844,603	1,614,965	-15,594	30,830
Year-end translation difference	0	0	-8,268	1,782	2,341	-14,154		0
Foundation capital as of December 31	477,010	440,896	764,958	415,857	-282,634	579,368	-135,320	-119,726
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL</b>	<b>3,155,145</b>	<b>3,910,474</b>	<b>1,053,289</b>	<b>1,321,147</b>	<b>386,143</b>	<b>2,397,772</b>	<b>188,231</b>	<b>58,384</b>

## Notes to the financial statements

### **1 Project Support (Grant) Program**

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

### **2 Tertiary Scholarship Program**

The target of this Program is to provide scholarships for tertiary level Roma students.

Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP)

Law and Humanities Program (LHP)

Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP)

Roma International Scholar Program (RISP)

### **3 Communication**

REF's communication activities promote the exchange of knowledge and experiences, and communicate information on REF's policies and programs that support Roma inclusion in education systems through conferences, workshops and publications.

### **4 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.

### **5 A Good Start and Complementary 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. The project was completed in 2015.

### **6 REF Romania – Projects Supported by European Social Funds (ESF)**

REF Romania implemented three educational projects funded by the European Social Funds and REF Switzerland. They were successfully closed by December 31, 2015 and fully reported in 2017.

### **7 REF Romania – Ready, Set, Go!**

The project targets early childhood development outcomes for 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 RO 25 Poverty Alleviation Programme in Romania.

### **8 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.

### **9 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. The project was completed in 2015.

### **10 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. Phase 2 of the project was completed in 2017. REF has signed a partnership and funding agreement to participate in the continuation of the project.

### **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. This program was completed in 2015.

### **12 VELUX Project**

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

### **13 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 was completed by the end of 2015–16 academic year and continued from funding provided by KfW (please see note 16).

### **14 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 focuses 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.

### **15 IPA Macedonia – Fostering Social Inclusion**

*Improving Roma Employment through Education and Training* is implemented at five locations in Macedonia together with two implementation partners. The aim of the project is increasing the long-term employability of marginalized Roma communities through adult education and training, literacy programs, and increased access to early childhood education and care. The project is financed the Ministry of Finance of Macedonia as contracting authority through IPA – Human Resource Development budget in the framework of external actions of the European Union.

### **16 KfW – Improved Education and Integration Serbia**

In the framework of the project *Improved Education and Integration Opportunities for Roma in Serbia* (Phase 1), KfW supports REF to improve access to education and employment opportunities for Roma in Serbia. This project is composed of three components: (1) secondary school education for Roma youth, (2) employability of graduates of the REF secondary scholarship program and (3) re-integration of migrants returning to Serbia from Germany.

### **17 CEI Project**

The project *Professional Intergovernmental Know-how Exchange on the Implementation of Large-scale Secondary School Scholarship and Mentoring Program for Roma Students* aims to strengthen the capacities of the relevant Ministries in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia which are currently partnering REF on the project management of the secondary scholarship and mentorship program.

### **18 Ministry of Interior, Slovakia**

The target groups for this *Peer Mentoring* project include primary, secondary and tertiary education students. REF's secondary and tertiary scholarship beneficiaries gain experience and build their capacities by mentoring REF's primary education beneficiaries to succeed in school.

# COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

## Conferences and Events

In 2017 REF Communications organized or contributed to a number of alumni and project launch events and knowledge-exchange forums.

### **Improved Education and Integration Opportunities for Roma in Serbia, Employment Empowerment of Young Roma and Reintegration of Returnees**

Project launch in cooperation with the German KFW Development Bank  
June 2017, Belgrade, Serbia

### **Building a Community for Roma Parents with Young Children**

Early childhood development workshop and study trip for REF's grantees to Toy Library  
July 2017, Roma district of Fakulteta, Sofia, Bulgaria

### **Critical Thinking on Education and Civic Activism**

Law and Humanities Program (LHP) Alumni Summer Conference  
July 2017, Kiev, Ukraine

### **Third Regional Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP) Students' Conference**

July 2017, Skopje, Macedonia

**REF and Ambassadors' Working Luncheon**, hosted by the Swiss Ambassador to Slovakia, H.E. Alexander Wittwer  
September 2017, Bratislava, Slovakia

### **Second Professional Intergovernmental Know-How Exchange on Secondary School Scholarships and Mentoring for Roma Students**

Conference and workshop funded in partnership with the Central European Initiative  
September 2017, Podgorica, Montenegro

### **Increasing Employability of Roma through Second Chance Adult Educational Programs**

Closing conference funded by the EU/IPA through the Macedonian Ministry of Finance grant to Ministry of Labor and Social Policy

December 2017, Skopje, Macedonia



*3rd Regional RHSP Students' Conference, Macedonia, July 2017*



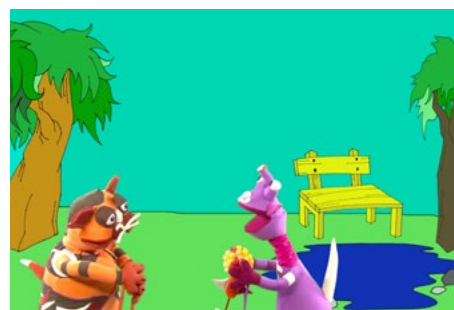


*Ms. Tezgjulj Alija from Skopje had a speech on stage while obtaining her diploma for primary education, December 2017.*

## Communication Grants

### ***Do You Speak Meow – Learning Romani***

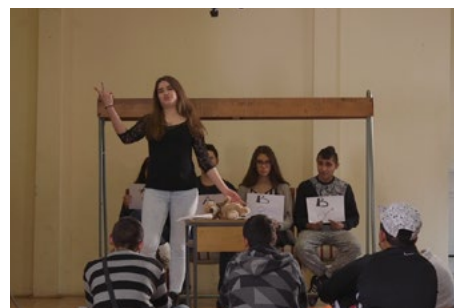
Producer: Media Content Studio, €3,500 grant  
TV series, 15 episodes, broadcast by local TV stations in Serbia (TV LAV Vrsac, RTV Vojvodine, TV Forum, TV Kovacica-Novi Sad, RTV Stara Pazova and RTV2) and available for check out at REF's five Toy Libraries in Serbia.



*Do You Speak Meow – production still*

### ***Bad Words***

Producer: ArtAkcija, €9,000 grant  
TV program, 30 episodes aired nationally on Radio Television Serbia; aimed at youth audience (in Romanes and Serbian) and targeting popular culture and multicultural background of today's generation of young Serbian children, both Roma and non-Roma.



*Still from preproduction of Bad Words, February 2017*

### **Online tutorial for prospective Roma university students in Hungary**

Producer: Unitut, €6,100 grant

### ***Home Away from Home***

Producer: Romawood, €8,500 grant  
Documentary presenting REF's efforts and achievements in desegregating primary school in Konik refugee camp in the capital of Podgorica, Montenegro

### ***Rising to the Top***

Producer: REF Communications. Videographer: Markus Stein, €5,200 grant  
Video blog featuring 11 prominent Roma artists, activists and academics speaking about their personal and educational journeys

### **Longitudinal photography of Roma children in Macedonia, Slovakia, Romania and Hungary**

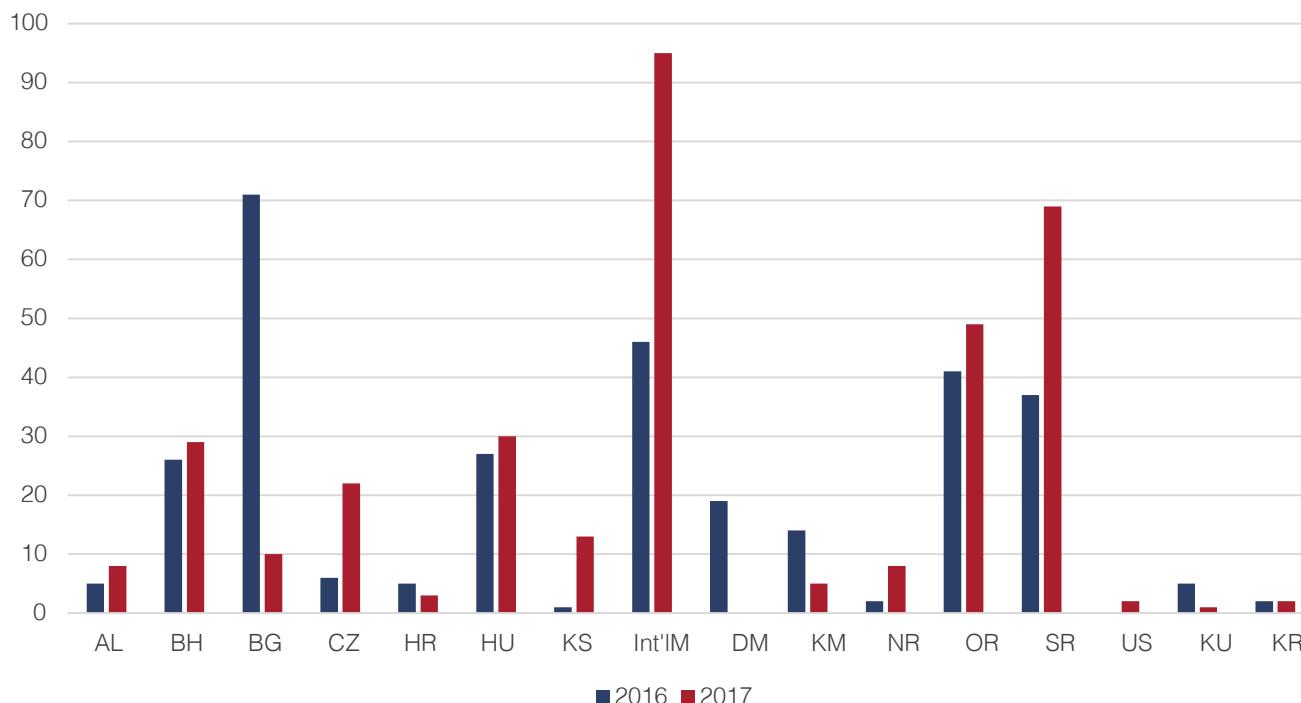
Photographer: Robert Miskovics, €2,800 grant

### **Photographic portraits of Secondary Scholarship Students in Bulgaria**

"Dream to Dream: Bulgarian Roma Gain Traction and Skills in Secondary Education"  
Photographer: Raycho Chaprazov, €6,500 grant

## Media Outreach

In 2017 gains were reported in Albania, Bosnia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kosovo, International, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Russia. These trends reflect the priorities, investments and efforts made by REF in those respective media markets.



Why are Roma blamed for Europe's rejection of refugees?, Al Jazeera, opinion piece by REF Chair Andrzej Mirga  
<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/12/roma-blame-europe-rejection-refugees-161214082111342.html>

A day in the life of... Maja Odrčić Mikulić, Times Education Supplement, small journalism grant of €2,000 by Dan Nolan  
<https://www.tes.com/news/teacher-stories/tes-magazine/a-day-life-maja-odrcic-mikulic>

Bulgaria attempts to combat discrimination against Roma, Lancet Medical Journal, featured a Roma Health Scholar from Bulgaria  
[http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(17\)30136-8/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(17)30136-8/fulltext)

Europe's Roma Do Not Have Equal Education, Voice of America  
<https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/europes-roma-still-struggle-to-get-good-education/4108678.html>

Caught in the vicious circle of poverty, Official Magazine of the German Parliament, on educational segregation of Roma in Bulgaria  
<http://www.das-parlament.de/2017/37/themenausgaben/-/526056>

Nazistretoriken är vardag i Bulgarien – romerna för rädda för att protestera, Hufvudstadsbladet (Finland), featuring the REF country facilitator for Bulgaria, Ognyan Isaev  
<https://www.hbl.fi/artikel/nazistretoriken-ar-vardag-i-bulgarien-romerna-for-radda-for-att-protestera/>

The Refugee Camp You Never Heard of, Open Democracy, article about Konik Camp in Podgorica, Montenegro, written by REF Communication Officer, Tom Bass  
<https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/tom-bass/report-from-europes-longest-running-refugee-camp>

[illegible]

## Notes

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dotted lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a guide for handwriting practice. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

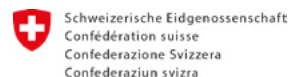
# Thank You!

**We would like to thank all of the individuals and civil society organizations with whom we have partnered in 2017.**

**The work we do would not be possible without the enthusiastic participation of children, parents, teachers, schools, government officials, and policymakers.**

**Thanks to our supporters for making all our achievements possible in 2017!**

ADECO  
Bill Cook Foundation  
Central European Initiative  
City of Ostrava  
Council of Europe Development Bank  
European Commission  
European Voluntary Service  
EVZ Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future"  
Government of Macedonia, Ministry of Finance  
Government of Montenegro, Ministry for Human and Minority Rights  
Government of Montenegro, Ministry of Education  
Government of Slovakia, Ministry of Interior  
Help, Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe e.V.  
KfW Development Bank  
Norway Grants  
Open Society Foundations  
OSCE  
Romanian Ministry of European Funds  
Porticus  
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency  
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation  
The VELUX FOUNDATIONS  
The World Bank  
University of Sussex



# REF Network

## Governing Boards

### REF SWITZERLAND FOUNDATION

Andrzej Mirga (Chair)  
Dr. Kinga Göncz (Vice Chair)  
Gábor Ormosy (Treasurer)  
William Lazarus Bila  
Dr. Nicoleta Bitu  
Yvana Enzler  
Lisa Jordan  
Pierre Mirel  
Mariam Sherman  
Sybille Suter

### REF ROMANIA FOUNDATION

William Lazarus Bila (Chair)  
Dr. Nicoleta Bitu  
Dezideriu Gergely  
Margareta (Magda) Matache

### REF SLOVAKIA FOUNDATION

William Lazarus Bila (Chair)  
Lydia Gabcova  
Dr. Ingrid Kosova

### REF HUNGARY FOUNDATION

Dr. Kinga Göncz (Chair)  
Gábor Ormosy  
Gyula Várallyay

## REF Network Foundations and Branch Offices

### ROMA EDUCATION FUND HEADQUARTERS

Mark Center – Teréz krt. 46  
Budapest, Hungary, 1066  
+36 1 235 8030, fax: +36 1 235 8031  
email: [info@romaeducationfund.org](mailto:info@romaeducationfund.org)  
[www.romaeducationfund.org](http://www.romaeducationfund.org)

### REF SERBIA

Roma Education Fund Representative  
Office in the Republic of Serbia  
Vlajkovicева 28  
Belgrade, Serbia 11000  
+381 11 328 3306  
email: [refserbia@romaeducationfund.org](mailto:refserbia@romaeducationfund.org)

### REF ROMANIA

Fundația Roma Education Fund România  
Str. Vaselor Nr. 60, Sector 2  
Bucharest, Romania 021 255  
+40 21 200 0600  
email: [office-romania@romaeducationfund.org](mailto:office-romania@romaeducationfund.org)  
[www.romaeducationfund.ro](http://www.romaeducationfund.ro)

### REF MONTENEGRO

Roma Education Fund Representative  
Office in Montenegro  
Trg nezavisnosti No.1  
81 000 Podgorica, Montenegro  
+382 69 816861  
email: [refmontenegro@romaeducationfund.org](mailto:refmontenegro@romaeducationfund.org)

### REF SLOVAKIA

Nadácia Rómsky vzdelávací fond – organizacná zložka  
zahranicnej nadácie  
Levocská 4, Prešov, Slovakia 08001  
+421 51 775 4114  
email: [refslovakia@romaeducationfund.org](mailto:refslovakia@romaeducationfund.org)



[www.facebook.com/RomaEducationFund](https://www.facebook.com/RomaEducationFund)



[@romaeducation](https://twitter.com/romaeducation)



[roma\\_education\\_fund](https://www.instagram.com/roma_education_fund)



[romaoktatasialap](https://www.youtube.com/romaoktatasialap)