Svaka djeca traži da imaju ista prava i obaveze!

Pomagam jedno drugome

Pomodiću ti oko pripreme za pismeni iz matematičke, edone!

Hvala ti, družića, to bi mi puno značilo!
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Drawings by children attending desegregated public schools in Podgorica, Montenegro.

Top left: All children have the same rights and responsibilities.
Top right: Let’s help one another!
Bottom left: I’ll help you with the homework to prepare for the math test, Edon.
Bottom right: Thanks! It would mean a lot to me!
Dear Readers,

Welcome to our 2014 Annual Report, which outlines the impressive achievements of the Roma Education Fund in closing the gap between Roma and non-Roma in the critical area of education.

As a reminder of what is at stake, 2014 saw the European Union (EU) commence infringement proceedings against the Czech Republic for illegally segregating Romani children in schools and providing them with a substandard education. The EU move was partly inspired by a finding of the European Court of Human Rights in 2007 that the Czech government was violating the rights of Romani children through school segregation. Unfortunately, seven years later the situation is much the same, prompting the EU to take action.

The Czech Republic is not alone: throughout Europe, Romani children are not receiving the education they need to achieve success in a competitive world. Romani children lag behind their non-Romani peers throughout the region, with low levels of school entry and high levels of school dropout. In a world where a university degree is increasingly seen as a basic work requirement, most Romani students never get there – indeed, in many countries the majority of Romani children never finish secondary school.

We can – we must – do better!

The Roma Education Fund has shown through its model programs how to do better. With a modest financial investment and applying the expertise REF has developed, schools throughout the region are educating thousands of Romani children and preparing them for productive futures. Let me introduce you to a few of the people who make this possible.

2014 saw a rejuvenated Board of Directors continuing its oversight of REF’s work. We were pleased to welcome four new members: Bill Bila, an expert in cross-cultural communication who has recently become a consultant in social entrepreneurship and human resources as a member of Pedersen & Partners global executive search team, in addition to serving in a volunteer capacity for several Roma NGOs across Europe and North America; Nicoleta Bitu, who has worked for more than two decades to shed light on and fight the discrimination against the Roma minority in Romania and Europe, with a particular focus on Romani women; Andrzej Mirga, who formerly served as senior advisor to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Contact Point on Roma and Sinti Issues; and Anna Bjerde, Director of Strategy and Operations for the Europe and Central Asia region at the World Bank. These Directors replace those who have rotated off: Costel Bercus, Henna Hutu and Katarina Mathernova. We are grateful for their many years of dedicated service.

I particularly wish to note the contribution of Costel Bercus, the outgoing Chair and a member of the REF Board since 2005. As a founding father of REF, Costel has overseen the transformation of the organization into the leader in the field of Roma education. Without Costel, it would not have been possible.

In my years of collaboration with REF I have gotten to know many of the staff, a talented and hard-working group of Roma and non-Roma from all over the world. They make it all happen, from program design and implementation, to monitoring and evaluation, to ensuring accountability for how REF spends its money. They are our critical connection to Romani communities. While the program has grown markedly in recent years, our staff remains modest in size. This growth has not been without challenges, yet our staff remains dedicated to the cause.

We are deeply grateful to our many REF supporters, a diverse group: governments, individuals, private foundations and international organizations. Their resources keep us going. Most of all, we are grateful to the Romani families with whom we work every day. They are doing something many of us take for granted, something that seems simple if you are not faced with poverty and discrimination on a daily basis: they are sending their children to school.

Rob Kushen, Acting Chair
I feel very glad to share REF’s 2014 Annual Report with you. Looking back on the year, it has been exciting and interesting, although also challenging as we continue expanding to serve more students in more places.

Five years ago we had just one office in Hungary. By 2014, REF offices had been set up in four additional countries (Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and our newest in Presov, Slovakia), offices that enable us to make efficient and effective use of EU funds for Roma education.

Just two years ago we were cooperating with a single Ministry of Education to implement a secondary education support and scholarship program. By 2014 REF was actively cooperating in this program with six different Ministries of Education in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

Another significant change has taken place in our university scholarship program, which until a few years ago was the only dedicated fund supporting Romani university students. After ten years of REF scholarship support, more donors have begun to follow REF’s lead. Accordingly, in 2014, we decided to note other sources of scholarship support in determining the level of REF support for any given student. As a result, we were able to support a larger number of students to go to university.

The year was one of change and progress but some things remain the same, such as REF’s commitment to desegregation and ensuring that Romani children have equal access to quality, integrated education. This is not just a moral and legal imperative; the evidence shows that it makes long-term economic sense. Put simply, desegregation is better for everyone: better for Romani students and better for building social cohesion and a healthier society for all. Segregation needs to be consigned to the past.

Ethnically mixed schooling has a huge bearing on future life chances for young Roma. That friends make a difference to the quality of our lives is a given, but recent research supported by REF shows just how much of a difference inter-ethnic friendships make to Romani secondary school students in Hungary.

This research shows that Romani adolescents with high status peer contacts are significantly less likely to drop out of school than those with similar test scores and family background but without such contacts. For Roma, many of these contacts are with non-Romani peers: “While the average residual gap in dropout rates is 13 percentage points, it shrinks to seven percent for those who had at least one high-status peer contact and to zero for those who had at least two high-status contacts.”

The research confirms that contact with members of the majority leads to better choices and better integration of members of a disadvantaged minority; and that for majority students, close contact with members of a disadvantaged minority decreases prejudice against that minority. Exposure of Romani students to non-Romani classmates increases inter-ethnic friendships and all students demonstrably benefit from such friendships. The policies that make sense and are more likely to produce higher social cohesion are those that integrate more Romani students and at the same time raise their academic achievement.

As the 2014 Eurydice report on early school leaving makes clear, young people who fail to complete secondary education are more likely to depend on social welfare and less likely to participate in lifelong learning. Such young people are at a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion, and the impact of leaving education and training early can be carried across generations. School segregation, early tracking and class repetition correlate with higher dropout levels. In contrast, high-quality early childhood education and care and well-designed primary and secondary education help ensure that students stay in school. Successful completion of secondary education is a prerequisite for social inclusion. Therefore, combating early school leaving and improving academic performance in secondary school is a high priority for REF: in 2014, a total of 5,432 students from eight countries received secondary school scholarships and school-based mentoring.

You will find evidence in this report of REF’s considerable achievements and impact. Access to quality education transforms lives, and REF made that a reality for tens of thousands of Romani families in 2014. But beyond the scope of REF projects, the painful reality is that too many families remain trapped in poverty compounded by discrimination. Europe has not yet recovered from the economic crisis, the inequality gap continues to widen and the hardest hit are Europe’s poorest and most vulnerable citizens. Investments in education that target the most disadvantaged are especially
important for equity, justice and the future prosperity of our societies. REF will keep equity and anti-discrimination on Europe’s education policy agenda up to 2020 and beyond.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all REF partners for their invaluable collaboration and look forward to continuing our joint endeavors to turn the right to education into a reality for millions of young Roma across Europe, and to hasten the day when every child has access to quality inclusive education without discrimination.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the staff in all five countries, our board members and donors for their commitment and support over the years and especially in 2014.

Judit Szira, Executive Director

1 Available online: http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/young_roma_in_hungarian_secondary_schools_and_in_the_labor_market.pdf
OVERVIEW

The Roma Education Fund has worked for almost a decade to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. In that time REF has shown that desegregation is possible and better for all; that substantive Roma participation is crucial for success; and that effective cooperation on the ground delivers the kind of change that can transform the lives of tens of thousands of Romani pupils.

We are proud to say that REF’s deep cooperation with a growing number of national governments, local authorities, schools and civil society, and REF’s close connection with local Romani communities and parents, has greatly contributed to defining the policy debate on Roma education across Europe. REF’s concrete achievements and successes in the field have generated a substantial body of evidence-based good practice about what it takes to narrow, and ultimately close, the equity gap between Roma and non-Roma in kindergartens, schools and universities. Our successes have garnered wide recognition from national governments that are now far more open to policy dialogue, and many have actively sought partnerships with REF to advise on policy and implement projects to promote inclusive education.

REF’s growth over ten years has been remarkable: In 2005 REF reached 5,000 beneficiaries; ten years later REF’s outreach has multiplied twentyfold and the cumulative number of annual beneficiaries averages 100,000. REF has a formidable track record of working in partnership with educational institutions, municipalities and ministries, Romani NGOs, and national and international organizations to develop and implement complex programs to promote inclusive education for Roma.

REF uses four tools to achieve its mission: grants provided to consortia of civil society and public institutions to implement education reform projects; reimbursable grants provided for bridge funding to ensure efficient implementation of EU-supported education projects; scholarships provided to Romani students in secondary and tertiary education; and policy advocacy and research to promote evidence-based models of best practice, introduce innovative methodologies and curriculum reform, and advocate for policies that deliver increased equity in access and outcomes for Romani pupils.

REF’s five models of intervention for inclusive education aim to: (1) expand Romani children’s access to quality early childhood education and care (ECEC); (2) improve primary education outcomes for Romani children aged six to fourteen; (3) improve academic performance and graduation rates from secondary education for Romani pupils; (4) expand access to tertiary education, improve graduation levels and strengthen identity of Romani university students; and (5) improve employment prospects for young Romani adults through second chance programs for adult education and training.

The cumulative effect of years of work by REF and its partners, with ever greater numbers of children enrolled in preschool, and larger cohorts of Romani students successfully graduating
from secondary and tertiary education, has created an unprecedented momentum around the policy debate on Roma education in Europe.

The total Roma population in the 16 REF focus countries is about six million. Of this total it is estimated that 50 percent of the population is under 25, which means that the adult Roma population is approximately 3,000,000 people.

In 2014 REF projects and scholarship program reached 35,236 students at all levels of education from early childhood education until tertiary education. REF activities in the last nine years have reached a total of approximately 235,393 children and young people. If we consider that the students on average are participating in REF programs for 1.5 years, we have to calculate 75 percent of this number, which is 176,544. Then we can say that REF has reached 5.8 percent of the Romani student generation during the nine years of its existence.

REF has always placed great emphasis on parental involvement. Outreach to parents who had before had little or no engagement with the schools and educational authorities is crucially important. First, this level of increased parental engagement dispels the prejudicial notion that Romani parents are simply uninterested in education; and second it highlights the feasibility of deliberate targeting to empower and involve socio-economically disadvantaged and socially excluded parents.

In 2014 over 54,000 parents were involved in REF projects activities from preschool through upper secondary, which is approximately 1.6 percent of the estimated population over 25. In the last nine years, we have reached 500,000. As parental involvement on average lasts 1.5 years in REF projects, the cumulative total would be around 375,000 over nine years. If we take into account the spillover effect on families of one parent’s direct involvement, this would double the number to 750,000, leading to 25 percent of the adult Roma population in REF focus countries who has directly and indirectly benefited from REF interventions in the last decade.

REF has a vital role to play and must press on with its successes to ensure that this widening consensus and commitment to close the gap between Roma and non-Roma translates into better educational results through effective implementation on the ground.

In the strongest political signal yet to come from Brussels, the December 2013 European Council recommendations called on Member States “to ensure equal treatment and full access for Roma boys and girls to quality and mainstream education and to ensure that all Romani pupils complete at least compulsory education.” The recommendations fully embraced the REF agenda and included: eliminating any school segregation; ending inappropriate placement of Romani pupils in special

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1 The Roma population is estimated to be between 10-12 million Europe-wide according to European Commission DG Justice. Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index_en.htm. REF acts in the southern and central part only.
3 In the grant program average participation is 1.5 years, in university scholarship it is 2.5
4 In the grant program average participation is 1.5 years, in university scholarship it is 2.5
5 REF partners continue to follow the student/school career longitudinally in most cases, even after direct participation ends.
6 This number includes adult education and Roma employed by REF-funded projects.
7 We calculate with the 75 percent of the 500,000 considering that the average participation in REF programs is 1.5 years (if the average participation of beneficiaries were two years, we would calculate 250,000 people).
needs schools; reducing early school leaving; increasing access and quality of early childhood education and care; and encouraging greater parental involvement and improving teacher training.

Even allowing for tangible progress made, the challenges to close the gap in education outcomes between Roma and non-Roma, especially in times of economic crisis, remain formidable. The latest 2014 EU Monitor reports that nineteen EU Member States actually cut their education expenditure in 2012, also warning that this continued underinvestment risks undermining Europe’s prospect for sustainable and inclusive growth. On the issue of discrimination, denying opportunities to disadvantaged young learners is described as an “unacceptable waste – not only for the individuals, but for society as a whole.”

This “unacceptable waste” comes at a high cost: a 2011 estimate of the annual loss to Member States due to labor market disengagement among young people was EUR 153 billion, corresponding to 1.2 percent of GDP in Europe (Eurofound, 2012).

The Monitor, in setting out a policy agenda for Europe in education and training, stands as a strong endorsement of REF’s five models of intervention in preschool, primary, secondary, tertiary education and second chance programs. The recommendations confirm that REF’s strategy and mission to promote equity, improve quality, broaden access and increase completion rates throughout the entire education cycle is vital for Roma inclusion and for Europe’s future. The measures and policies contained in the report are an affirmation that REF’s carefully targeted and closely monitored interventions to ensure equality of access and opportunity for Romani pupils is the way forward.

REF’s five models of intervention, designed to ensure that Roma graduate and accrue the requisite skills and qualifications to compete in the labor market, put REF at the forefront in implementing the kind of change that is right for the well-being of individual students, right for the better inclusion of Romani communities and right for a more cohesive and just Europe.

In 2014, from a total of 81 active projects, REF grants supported a grand total of 95,710 direct beneficiaries across 13 countries. From that total, 8,093 beneficiaries attended early childhood development (ECD) projects. Overall, increased enrollment and attendance rates were evident in each country where REF-supported ECD projects. In Macedonia, a REF program resulted in a national preschool project which maintained a 90 percent attendance rate for beneficiary children, while in a similar Montenegrin project the rate exceeded 80 percent. Bulgarian and Romanian early childhood development projects recorded similar improvements in attendance rates. Most REF partners in ECD projects confirmed that parents feel increasingly empowered and able to take an active role in their children’s education.

More than 20 percent of the active projects in the REF portfolio in 2014 focused on primary education. The projects primarily targeted those children at most risk of early leaving and supported 19,001 pupils. In some project locations REF interventions brought the dropout rates down by 90 percent. In the town of Montana in Bulgaria, the dropout rate in the schools participating in the REF project fell to zero, compared to the previous academic year average of seven percent.

Overall, project interventions in primary schools are leading to improved education performance, with students successfully completing their school grades and enrolling in the next academic year. Through REF interventions, increasing numbers of Romani children are staying in education and thriving in quality learning environments that are inclusive and welcoming.

REF has made remarkable progress in spreading its model secondary education support and scholarship programs. In 2014, a total of 5,432 students from eight countries received...
secondary school scholarships and school-based mentoring. Just two years ago REF cooperated with only one Ministry of Education on this priority. By 2014, REF was actively cooperating with a total of six different Ministries of Education in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia to implement secondary scholarship schemes.

For example in Serbia, the Ministry of Education and Science agreed to cooperate with REF to scale up the secondary scholarship program for Romani students from regional to national level. And in Montenegro, the government actually requested that REF take over the distribution of the state-funded secondary and tertiary education scholarship scheme.

Also in 2014, with the support of the Velux Foundation, REF set up the Pedagogy Scholarship Program for secondary school students to address the systemic absence of Romani teachers from nurseries and kindergartens in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia.

**TERTIARY EDUCATION PROGRAM**

REF supports greater access to tertiary education for Roma through its Scholarship Program and also through grants offered to local organizations to implement RomaVersitas projects, which combine financial support to Roma university students with a comprehensive package of academic and professional development services.

The Scholarship Program runs **four scholarship schemes**: the Roma University Scholarship Program (RMUSP), the Law and Humanities Program (LHP), the Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP) and the Roma International Scholar Program (RISP). In 2014 the Program selected 1,441 beneficiaries out of 2,410 applicants, and invested EUR 1,922,578 in financial support, which averages at EUR 1,334 per student. Also in 2014, from the 426 beneficiary students who were in final years, 335 successfully graduated; among the remaining 91 the majority postponed their graduation for the next academic year. The majority of successful graduates obtained Bachelor level diplomas in social sciences or humanities.

**RomaVersitas programs** provide Romani university students with additional support, networking opportunities and help to build a sense of identity and community belonging. The programs also provide library access, foreign language courses, academic mentoring and training for labor market integration. REF supported the RomaVersitas initiative in Hungary, Macedonia and Serbia for a number of years, and in 2014 REF successfully scaled up the initiative to include four more countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Kosovo and Moldova). RomaVersitas programs to a large extent equip Romani students with skills needed to compete in volatile labor markets, and until now these programs have resulted in a much increased graduation rate of enrolled students.

REF is encouraged to note that more and more stakeholders across the Decade countries are following REF’s efforts to widen access and improve graduation rates for Romani students in higher education. In Romania, in addition to the existing affirmative action program, two scholarship schemes for Romani students have been supported by EU Structural Funds since 2010: one for medical studies and another scheme which provides support for students in the first stage of their tertiary studies. In Bulgaria, America for Bulgaria Foundation offers funding to cover tuition fees for Romani students. In Hungary, REF’s RomaVersitas model of combining scholarship
support with intensive academic and professional development support has been adopted by nine Szakkollégiums, which are EU-funded projects implemented by the government and four churches.

In spite of these successes, the gap between Roma and non-Roma in tertiary education remains huge, and much work needs to be done. The combination of financial support and professional development is vital for students to graduate with the skills needed to compete in the labor market. As World Bank data shows, the employment gap between Roma and non-Roma stands at approximately 26 percentage points across four countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania and Serbia). In a region characterized by falling birth rates and aging populations, Roma constitute the youngest and fastest growing demographic segment, to such an extent that Roma will soon be entering the labor market at relative rates that are almost two-and-a-half times higher than the majority populations. As many as 12 percent of new labor market entrants in Serbia are of Romani origin, and for Romania the figure is 21 percent and for Bulgaria 25 percent.⁴⁰

**MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

In 2014 REF staff conducted 27 comprehensive country visits, where they provided technical assistance to grantees and partners at multiple project sites, with on-site monitoring to control project content, quality and operations, engaging local stakeholders and building policy dialogues with strategic decision-makers in each country. Sixty-nine projects were visited in 2014; 66 were rated as satisfactory and three as unsatisfactory. The grant program received two complaints and they were resolved internally.

As part of its mission to provide quality services to its beneficiaries, applicants to the university Scholarship Program may appeal the decision, by submitting a written contestation to a designated email account. Appeals may be forwarded to the Scholarship Program Ombudsperson, who reviews individual appeal cases based on the materials and evidence provided by the applicants, the Scholarship Program and the National or International Selection Board members. For the academic year 2014–2015, 63 applicants contested the reason for rejection, such as non-compliance with the Scholarship Program eligibility criteria or rejection in competition. After the review of the submitted contestations, 53.9 percent (34) remained rejected, 46 percent (29) received a positive resolution for further review and evaluation of their applications, out of which 33.3 percent (21) were eventually selected for a scholarship (i.e., 15 scholarships were granted as a final outcome of the entire evaluation process).

In 2014, REF staff continued to work with MIT’s Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) to design impact evaluation interventions for future REF activities. The cooperation resulted in two initiatives in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. In Slovakia REF, together with the World Bank, J-PAL and the Slovak Governance Institute, provided quality assurance and impact evaluation mechanisms for the PROGRESS project *Investing in the Early Years of Children - Promoting Social Innovation and Roma Inclusion*, implemented by the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for Roma Communities in Slovakia in 21 localities. In the Czech Republic, REF staff, together with local partners and J-PAL experts, designed a methodology for an ECD information campaign in remote Romani communities in 21 localities.

⁴⁰ The World Bank: Roma Inclusion is Smart Economics, 2011.
the Czech Republic, with the objective to measure the impact of the information campaign and follow the enrollment rates of Romani children to mainstream preschools.

In 2014 we continued working with World Bank Anchor team members Bojana Naceva and Plamen Danchev on developing more efficient tools in monitoring and evaluation.

With the support of the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, REF greatly benefited from collaboration with the International Child Development Initiative (ICDI) from the Netherlands, which provided extensive training for staff and project partners and the development and piloting of several quality assessment tools to ensure high standards in REF’s ECD projects.

REF’s work with ICDI focused on analyses of processes for quantitative and qualitative data-collection tools. REF adapted and used ECD-Quat, a useful tool to assess the quality of REF’s Toy Libraries, while another tool, the Home Learning Environment Parent Interview, was piloted with beneficiary parents in order to measure the optimal changes in responsive parenting. Currently REF and ICDI will focus on providing professional support by training REF grantees and ECD professionals who will administer these tools. In addition, REF and ICDI will continue its work to develop a tool for measuring the learning outcomes of beneficiary children.

SHAPING THE ROMA EDUCATION AGENDA

Due to its wide geographic reach and extensive experience at local and regional level, REF is uniquely placed to assist in shaping the national and international policy frameworks for inclusive education. In 2014 REF worked with 277 mayors, and actively contributed to national policy debates on Roma education in many of the countries. REF’s growing evidence-based body of research and good practice, rooted in almost a decade of direct experience, has made REF an indispensable partner at national and EU policy level to close the gap between aspirations and implementation. REF will continue to deepen partnerships with local and national authorities to push for greater progress on the ground that is needed to deliver on the promise of desegregated and inclusive education to create the opportunities that can transform the lives of millions of Romani pupils and students.

In 2014 REF staff made various contributions to professional conferences, workshops and platforms organized by the European Commission in Brussels. Such consultations included REF inputs into guidelines for an expert group on early school leaving and early childhood education. These guidelines are now part of the European Commission’s recommendations for member states. REF staff provided professional feedback and comments to national institutions in various member states and aspirant countries on education priorities for Romani communities in operational frameworks for IPA and ESF funding schemes.

REF staff members were active participants in the Decade of Roma Inclusion meeting on the topic of Inclusive Education without Discrimination and contributed to examining the problem
of discrimination of Romani children in education. Drawing from REF’s considerable experience and evidence-based research, REF staff shared the lessons, experiences and good practices of anti-discrimination and desegregation initiatives, and elaborated on the institutional mechanisms needed to prevent and combat all forms of discrimination in education.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, over 70 education experts - including the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma Issues, the ROMED/ROMACT Secretariat from the European Commission (DG Employment), high-level CAHROM11 participants and government officials - convened in the town of Kakanj, the site on an ongoing REF primary school project. REF was recognized publicly for its role in supporting the inclusion of Romani children during this three-day country meeting to highlight examples of good practice in desegregation and preschool enrollment.

The European Commission DG Enlargement in 2014 awarded prizes for best projects on Roma Integration in the Western Balkans and Turkey to three REF grantees. The prizes honored the contribution and the valuable work of civil society in supporting social inclusion of Romani people. The aim of the awards was to raise the political importance of the integration of Roma as part of the enlargement process, to enhance the role of civil society and to show the commitment of the European Commission towards Roma. Each of the seven winners was awarded a prize of EUR 14,000. Out of the seven winners, three were REF implementing partners, while two additional partners were among the shortlisted group of 21.

REF staff facilitated an exchange program between Croatia’s Medjimurje County and select REF grantees from Hungary for capacity building of institutions and primary school staff on inclusion of Roma and other national minorities in education under the project The Wheel that Connects People, supported by the European Commission within the framework of Integration of Disadvantaged Groups in Regular Education System.

Together with UNICEF in Moldova, REF facilitated a cross-country exchange of experience and learning from Serbia.
and Bulgaria for representatives from the Moldovan Ministry of Education, local authorities, teachers and NGOs. The officials learned about different models of desegregating Romani schools and classes, and had the opportunity to visit integrated schools attended by Romani children. The visits provided an opportunity to deepen the understanding of the process and the instruments that are applied for full and successful integration.

The REF desegregation study reports were shared as practical examples of how to prevent school segregation and overcome barriers to equal access to quality education services. In Moldova, REF, together with its grantee the National Roma Center, worked intensively with municipalities and regional education offices to desegregate a remote Roma-only school in Vulcanesti. As a result of the initiative, the Ministry of Education provided a school bus for the rural Romani community in Vulcanesti to enable the children to attend the nearest mainstream school where Romani children could learn in an integrated environment. The initiative has the support of the regional Educational Directorate and, therefore, it is expected that the segregated school in Vulcanesti will be closed down in 2015.

Communications

The Communication Department reported a 62 percent increase in media visibility in 2014. REF projects and campaigns were featured 276 times, compared to 172 times in 2013. The best-performing countries were Hungary, Serbia and Macedonia, hinting that the climate among national media was receptive to feature content on Roma education (see page 14). Online appearances dominated all other media formats by three to one (193 occurrences or 75 percent of the total) over traditional media, among which television lead the pack of traditional media with 29 occurrences in 2014.

Three public relations events (see page 14) proved crucial to the year’s increase: the Knowledge is Power campaign against dropping out of school in the spring of 2014; the DG Enlargement’s Roma Integration Award, where REF grantees won three out of seven prizes in the autumn of 2014; and the RMUSP gala series, a public relations activity in its fourth year that generates some 28 percent of REF’s total volume of media coverage.

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FINANCING AND LEVERAGING FUNDS FOR ROMA EDUCATION IN 2014

REF Program expenses in 2014

REF remains among the most efficient organizations operating in the field of education as REF spends 90 percent of its operating budget on programs, ensuring that donations have a maximum impact in all 16 countries.

From its total budget for 2014, REF contracted EUR 2 million on 36 new grants and spent another EUR 2.3 million on the tertiary scholarship program for over 1,400 Romani students. REF also spent EUR 1.7 million to pre-finance and implement own educational projects in Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia, EUR 0.8 million on capacity building, communication, data collection, policy development, training and EUR 0.7 million on administration.

Funds leveraged by the Grant Program

In addition to REF support, Grant Program beneficiaries continued to be extremely resourceful in leveraging funds from other sources. 2014 marked another big success with grantees securing over EUR 2.3 million from other sources for their activities.

Funds from European sources

Since 2010 REF has directly implemented its own projects directly from EU sources, which had a positive result of increasing the number of REF’s direct beneficiaries.

In 2014 REF received income directly from European Funds: Social Funds in Romania, Instruments for Pre-Accession in Montenegro and Serbia, and European Commission, DG Employment in Slovakia. REF will receive the majority of the financing under these multi-year funds in 2015 when EU/IPA/EEA related incomes will amount to seven times more than in 2010.

TABLE 2. FUNDS LEVERAGED BY GRANTEES IN ADDITION TO REF SUPPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funds Leveraged</td>
<td>1,764,584</td>
<td>2,060,144</td>
<td>1,023,197</td>
<td>2,355,695</td>
<td>841,858</td>
<td>3,210,141</td>
<td>3,412,151</td>
<td>1,964,511</td>
<td>2,375,767</td>
<td>2,275,175</td>
<td>20,965,223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REF Funds</td>
<td>3,352,595</td>
<td>5,592,141</td>
<td>4,616,061</td>
<td>3,229,615</td>
<td>2,773,112</td>
<td>2,055,069</td>
<td>3,013,443</td>
<td>2,733,810</td>
<td>1,851,499</td>
<td>2,359,222</td>
<td>31,556,567</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 3. CONTRACTED FUNDS FROM EUROPEAN SOURCES, 2010–2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU AND IPA FUNDS</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European Commission - DG REGIO</td>
<td>956,555</td>
<td>717,244</td>
<td>256,195</td>
<td>18,366</td>
<td>3,752,609</td>
<td>1,289,194</td>
<td>717,456</td>
<td>2,006,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commission - University of Sussex</td>
<td>44,800</td>
<td>44,800</td>
<td>68,841</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council of Europe</td>
<td>7,788</td>
<td>7,788</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundación Secretariado Gitano – Comenius</td>
<td>15,782</td>
<td>9,336</td>
<td>25,118</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress Slovakia</td>
<td>5955</td>
<td>62,986</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruments for Pre-Accession - Montenegro Konik Camp</td>
<td>113,537</td>
<td>70,827</td>
<td>285,934</td>
<td>122,564</td>
<td>590,862</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe-Instruments for Pre-Accession in Serbia</td>
<td>146,313</td>
<td>133,313</td>
<td>179,626</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ostrava Municipality</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td>18,600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEA Norway Funds in Romania</td>
<td>1,289,194</td>
<td>717,456</td>
<td>2,006,650</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian Management Authority - Partners</td>
<td>180,128</td>
<td>149,155</td>
<td>406,796</td>
<td>736,079</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian Management Authority - POSDRU</td>
<td>1,289,194</td>
<td>2,006,650</td>
<td>736,079</td>
<td>13,744,459</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL OF EU, EEA AND IPA FUNDS</td>
<td>956,555</td>
<td>3,041,612</td>
<td>1,071,298</td>
<td>3,752,609</td>
<td>1,392,477</td>
<td>6,561,775</td>
<td>2,619,756</td>
<td>19,396,082</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Due to late financing of these sources, and in order to be able to implement these projects, REF relied on pre-financing from own sources as well as a EUR 0.8 million loan from the Council of Europe Development Bank.

**Funds accessed for Roma education through the Revolving Loan Program**

Given the scarcity of funds available to Romani NGOs implementing European Structural Funds and other projects in the region, REF has also made available its financial resources through a system of revolving and reimbursable grants. As a result, REF mobilized European Social Funds worth up to EUR 34.3 million in the period 2005-2014 through providing EUR 0.68 million in reimbursable grants. This program has been implemented in Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. The current leveraging ratio is 51 to 1.

In order to further develop this resource for Romani NGOs, the Council of Europe Development Bank has provided a loan to REF, which enables it to make available EUR 1.5 million in financial resources in the form of reimbursable grants in all Decade countries.

**CONCLUSION**

Despite the evident gap still remaining in school completion rates between Roma and non-Roma, there is an emerging positive trend over recent years. The year 2014 witnessed continued growth and expansion of REF activities, with increasing numbers of children enrolling in preschool, attending integrated primary schools and successfully completing their secondary education. More and more young Roma who complete secondary education are entering universities, not only because of their own personal determination and ambition, but also because organizations such as REF offer scholarships and tutoring support and inspire others to do so as well. However, the wider political and economic crises have led to disinvestment in education and cutbacks in social services and welfare provision, which have hit the poorest hardest and led to rising inequality. Throughout 2014 REF has kept equity and inclusion on the education policy agenda for Europe.

The EU recommendations call on governments to be more proactive in addressing the many forms of exclusion that obstruct the promise of equity and inclusiveness in education and training for all citizens by 2020. The priorities identified and the calls for a comprehensive and coordinated policy approach stand as a complete confirmation of REF’s five models of intervention from preschool enrollment to university graduation. REF’s experience in working to close the gap between Romani and non-Romani pupils, and REF’s active pursuit of equity in unpropitious times, demonstrates that fostering partnerships among communities, schools, local, regional and national authorities results in better educational outcomes.
2014 IN NUMBERS

GRANT PROGRAM

In 2014 the REF Board supported 35 new grant requests for a contractual commitment totaling EUR 2.4 million. In addition REF implementing partners mobilized an additional EUR 2.2 million for their project activities from national and local governments, EU funds and other sources. REF had a successful year receiving EU funds in 2014, securing EUR 4.7 million from ESF/IPA funding, which enabled REF to implement activities on a much larger scale in countries such as Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

In 2014, from a total of 81 active projects, REF grants supported a grand total of 95,710 direct beneficiaries across 13 countries. The 81 active projects in 2014 covered 432 localities in 277 municipalities, across 13 countries, serving 35,234 Romani

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4. NEW PROJECTS RECEIVED AND APPROVED 2006–2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRENDS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incoming Project Proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change from previous year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change from previous year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 5. NUMBER OF PROJECTS UNDER IMPLEMENTATION PER COUNTRY IN 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>COUNTRY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REF COMMITTED FUNDING (EUR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUMBER OF PROJECTS UNDER IMPLEMENTATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUMBER OF PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED WITH ESF/IPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF/IPA LEVERAGED FUNDING (EUR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Czech Republic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hungary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kosovo</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macedonia</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moldova</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Montenegro</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Romania</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Serbia</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Slovakia</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional project/Other</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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12 In 2013, a model-based approach was introduced.
13 European Structural Fund – funding mechanism of the European Union in the 28 member countries.
14 The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, or simply IPA, is a funding mechanism of the European Union for candidate/potential candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey).
15 Ministry of Education and Sports, Czech Republic.
children and students and 54,603 parents. From this, 8,093 beneficiaries attended early childhood education programs; 19,001 pupils were enrolled in primary education programs; 5,432 students from eight countries received secondary school scholarships and school-based mentoring; and 2,708 students in tertiary education programs received grant support, mentoring and skills training.

A main focus of the REF portfolio is the early childhood development (ECD) model. REF-sponsored ECD program activities have reached over 1,650 young Romani parents in Albania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Kosovo, Montenegro, Slovakia and Serbia, addressing education and health issues, enhancing parenting skills, and providing guidance for better physical, emotional and motor skills development of their young children.

**TABLE 6. TOTAL NUMBERS OF REF-SUPPORTED BENEFICIARIES IN 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>8,093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>19,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>5,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary education**</td>
<td>2,708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education</td>
<td>495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ participation in ECD</td>
<td>15,734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ participation in primary school</td>
<td>29,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ participation in secondary school</td>
<td>9,191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents’ participation in tertiary education</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-service teacher training</td>
<td>2,366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desegregation</td>
<td>3,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention/reversal of enrollment in special education</td>
<td>1,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roma employment within REF projects</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>97,149</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

- Comprises beneficiaries of REF’s Tertiary Education Scholarship Program and RomaVersitas projects.
- The data include project beneficiaries from 72 REF active grants and nine REF implemented projects (Romania, Serbia, Montenegro and the Pedagogy Scholarship Program in Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia supported by VELUX).
In addition, in most of the project localities, the literacy and reading skills of mothers have greatly improved under the guidance of experienced educators. In 2014 mothers benefited from debates, workshops, Toy Library visits and educational events, boosting their confidence and improving their capabilities to support their children’s education. Parents have become more active in their children’s school life, more aware of the consequences of segregated education, and as a consequence far less willing to enroll their children in segregated schools.18

The early childhood education projects have enabled Romani children to acquire basic knowledge and skills, and to be ready to attend preschool and elementary school. For instance the enrollment rate of Romani children increased by 50 percent in Craiova in Romania as a direct consequence of REF-supported ECD interventions.

The increasing enrollment and attendance rates were noticeable in each country where REF-supported ECD projects, with attendance rates as high as 90 percent, and exceeding 80 percent in Montenegro. Most REF partners in ECD projects confirmed that parents’ heightened awareness of the importance of preschool for their children’s later educational success and development has led to a proactive approach to enrollment to the extent that in the targeted communities, parents are acting on their own initiative to enroll their children without external interventions and prompting.

Altogether about 54,603 parents took an active part in many of the projects: 15,734 parents participated in early childhood activities; 29,146 parents in activities related to primary school; 9,191 parents in secondary school projects; and 37 parents in tertiary education projects. About 495 adults were provided with second chance education support. In terms of professional development 2,266 teachers and Roma mediators received additional training, and a total of 451 Roma were employed within REF-supported projects.

The figure on the next page describes parental participation in various ECD activities promoted by REF and its partners. Promoting positive parenting has resulted in more children enrolling to preschools and integrated schools and a greater parental empowerment.

### Table 7. Beneficiaries of REF-Funded Grant Projects, by Indicator (2005–2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in preschool education</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>2,966</td>
<td>4,497</td>
<td>10,441</td>
<td>3,418</td>
<td>8,034</td>
<td>11,309</td>
<td>8,178</td>
<td>7,252</td>
<td>8,093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention of early school leaving</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>2,765</td>
<td>5,339</td>
<td>7,256</td>
<td>10,938</td>
<td>15,322</td>
<td>18,902</td>
<td>17,205</td>
<td>15,892</td>
<td>19,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of upper secondary education</td>
<td>1,278</td>
<td>2,687</td>
<td>4,797</td>
<td>5,060</td>
<td>6,282</td>
<td>5,303</td>
<td>6,122</td>
<td>4,119</td>
<td>3,447</td>
<td>5,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in tertiary education (RomaVersitas)</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>1,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental participation in children's education</td>
<td>3,050</td>
<td>4,761</td>
<td>29,780</td>
<td>29,674</td>
<td>42,685</td>
<td>50,016</td>
<td>70,139</td>
<td>67,219</td>
<td>52,227</td>
<td>52,949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental participation in toy library</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,541</td>
<td>1,654</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desegregation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,734</td>
<td>3,553</td>
<td>5,675</td>
<td>6,534</td>
<td>9,331</td>
<td>7,283</td>
<td>1,301</td>
<td>7,819</td>
<td>3,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention/reversal of enrollment in special education</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>7,390</td>
<td>1,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-service teacher training</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>2,977</td>
<td>4,018</td>
<td>4,488</td>
<td>2,945</td>
<td>3,125</td>
<td>3,512</td>
<td>3,085</td>
<td>3,874</td>
<td>2,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roma employed by REF-funded projects</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>5,078</td>
<td>31,951</td>
<td>54,106</td>
<td>64,133</td>
<td>74,040</td>
<td>92,921</td>
<td>119,101</td>
<td>102,799</td>
<td>100,904</td>
<td>95,710</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes REF Romania, REF implemented projects
** The total excludes the indicator: desegregation and prevention/reversal of enrollment in special education; the beneficiaries in these two categories are accounted under the indicators: preschool participation and prevention of early school leaving.
A Romani student registers during the launch of REF’s national scholarship program in Pristina, Kosovo. Photo: Jetmir Idrizi

In Montenegro the RomaVersitas project was suspended in September 2014. REF will launch a new call for RV program in Montenegro intending to find a new implementing partner.

### Share of REF-supported beneficiaries (percent)

- Staff employed in REF projects – 0.5
- Beneficiaries in ECD – 8.7
- Beneficiaries in primary education – 20.5
- Beneficiaries in secondary schools – 5.9
- Beneficiaries in tertiary education – 2.9
- Beneficiaries in adult education – 0.5
- Parents participation in ECD activities – 17.3
- Parents participation in primary education – 42
- In-service teacher training – 1.7

### Share of REF-supported parents across early childhood education activities (percent)

- Parents in Your Story-ECD workshops – 10.4
- Parents in Toy Library – 10.5
- Parents in non formal literacy programs – 7.3
- Parents in Home School Community Liaison / Parents participating in community motivation events / Parents’ Clubs – 31.5
- Parents empowered and involved in their children education through various ECD project activities – 40.3

### The RomaVersitas model program beneficiaries per country and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BG</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HU</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MK</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNE</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRB</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In Montenegro the RomaVersitas project was suspended in September 2014. REF will launch a new call for RV program in Montenegro intending to find a new implementing partner.*
Similarly to previous years, preventing early school leaving leads REF’s portfolio in the field of primary education, accounting for over 54 percent of the active projects that worked with children in primary schools. To a large extent the projects targeted children at risk of dropping out; in some project locations the initiatives decreased the dropout rates by 90 percent. For example, in Bulgaria a project that was implemented in Montana decreased the dropout rate to zero compared to the previous academic year (seven percent) in the selected schools.

Beyond the phenomenon of early school leaving, the number of children of compulsory school-age who are excluded from the education system is a significant challenge in the Western Balkans. For instance, in projects implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina, REF partners identified and enrolled over 100 such children back into school. To accomplish this small but important step, REF grantees developed good cooperation with municipal authorities in addressing registration issues and securing identification for children who often do not even possess birth certificates.

REF’s grantees have been recognized as key partners working with Romani communities, and our contribution to overcoming existing barriers to the full inclusion of Romani children in primary education has been noted. One of the project localities in Kakanj was visited by Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma Issues and the ROMED/ROMACT Secretariat, from the European Commission (DG Employment), as part of their in-country meeting as a good practice example.

Similar positive developments were recorded in educational performance as a result of project interventions. For instance in a Romanian project, many beneficiary students received school awards for their excellent academic performance. Furthermore, many students successfully completed their school grades and enrolled in the next academic year.

REF’s secondary education scholarship model was implemented in seven countries in 2014 (Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia), and a total of 5,432 students received secondary school scholarships and school-based mentoring. By 2014, REF was actively cooperating with Ministries of Education in six countries to implement secondary scholarship schemes.

In Macedonia the completion rate of upper secondary education by Roma increased by seven percent in the last five years, and through the national scholarship scheme REF supports 60 percent of the entire Roma cohort in secondary education. Altogether in the Western Balkans in 2014, REF’s secondary education model was adopted by the governments of Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia, with the respective governments matching REF’s efforts and resources for secondary school scholarships, together with tutoring and mentoring activities for a total of 3,266 Romani students.

Despite the evident gap in school completion rates between Roma and non-Roma, there is an emerging positive trend in the last few years where more young Roma are entering universities, not only because they are persistent but also because organizations like the Roma Education Fund are offering them scholarships and tutoring support.
Additional assistance comes from organizations like RomaVersitas (RV), which works with Romani university students for encouragement, networking, promoting identity and community belonging, while also providing access to a library, foreign language courses, academic mentors and training for labor market integration. REF has been supporting the RV initiative in Hungary, Macedonia and Serbia for a number of years, and in 2014 REF successfully scaled up the initiative to five more countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Moldova and Montenegro. RV programs equip Romani students with skills necessary for labor market integration. The third figure on page 21 describes the REF-supported RV participants across countries and by gender distribution.

**TERTIARY EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

In 2014 REF’s Scholarship Program continued to support Romani students in tertiary education and in vocational education, through financial as well as academic and professional development support. Through its four scholarship schemes the program selected 1,441 beneficiaries out of 2,410 applicants. The four scholarship schemes are the Roma University Scholarship Program (RMUSP), the Law and Humanities Program (LHP), the Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP) and the Roma International Scholar Program (RISP). The total number of awarded scholarships slightly decreased compared to previous years, with a relatively high decrease in RHSP due to the fact that some of the students from previous RHSP cohorts graduated parallel to the stop in recruitment of new beneficiaries. The last phase of the project implementation had been planned for only formerly recruited beneficiaries to continue to receive support.²⁰

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 8. NUMBER OF YEARLY SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED SINCE 2008</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMUSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RISP</td>
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<tr>
<td>LHP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 9. YEARLY SPENDING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS SINCE 2008 (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMUSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RISP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LHP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

²⁰ Initially RHSP was launched by OSF and REF in 2008 as a pilot project to support medical studies for Roma in Romania, and then it was extended to Bulgaria, Serbia, and Macedonia. The initial plan was to recruit students into the project during three academic years (three cohorts), then continue to support the medical studies of those students recruited during the first three project years until they graduate. However, due to the fundraising efforts of OSF, REF and the other partners involved in the implementation of RHSP, in some countries the project managed to recruit more than three cohorts of new students. In Romania, for instance, due to the funds provided through the EU Structural Funds, RHSP was able to recruit new students in the project during five cohorts. At the moment, the project supports only ongoing beneficiaries, but in case REF and partners manages to secure alternative funding, the recruitment of new cohorts will be restarted.
In 2014 the program invested EUR 1.92 million in financial support for the selected scholarship beneficiaries, which constitutes EUR 1,334 per student on average. Individual beneficiaries’ financial support depends on the amount of tuition fees, if any, and on the specific scholarship scheme, with students generally receiving the highest amounts in the study-abroad scholarship scheme RISP.

In spite of the growing presence of alternative support programs in the region targeting students from marginalized groups, the demand for the REF scholarships remained relatively high, with an acceptance rate of 60 percent in 2014, the highest competition rates being in the RISP scheme. For comparison, in 2013 the acceptance rate in the program was 60 percent, in 2012 it was 58 percent, while in 2011 it was 62 percent.

An overwhelming majority of beneficiaries received support to study in Bachelor programs or local equivalents. At the same time, in the international scholarship scheme RISP, the majority of beneficiaries study in post-graduate programs.

In the RHSP and LHP schemes, students also received, to a limited extent, support for vocational studies.

The male/female distribution in the Scholarships Program is generally balanced and comparable to the one observed in the mainstream student population. However, in the medical...
studies RHSP scheme the female beneficiaries prevail. Following the success of previous years, REF organized RMUSP gala events in eight countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia) to publicly award scholarships to selected Romani students and attract media attention to the existence of an emergent Romani elite. The galas were attended by over 500 student beneficiaries and nearly 60 Roma professionals, intellectuals and leaders from around the region. The events generated some 55 mentions of REF and its scholarships schemes in the media.

Besides hosting galas in more countries for more REF beneficiaries than in previous years, the content of the galas changed in 2014: in addition to the official ceremony REF organized small workshops with participants discussing Roma-related issues, and strategies for professional development and job search for graduates.

In the summer of 2014, 426 scholarship beneficiaries were expected to graduate, i.e., they were attending the final year of studies in their respective level of education. Among them, 78 percent, or 335 individuals, graduated successfully, while the other 22 percent postponed their graduation for the next academic year or dropped out. For comparison, the average figure of successful graduation among the university students in the OECD countries is 68 percent. Among the 334 successful REF graduates, an absolute majority obtained Bachelor diplomas or local equivalents in social sciences or humanities-related specializations. Most beneficiaries who finished vocational education graduated in the fields of medical studies or pedagogy. Three beneficiaries graduated with Doctorate degrees.

As an adjustment to the positive developments in the region with more and more programs and scholarship schemes available for Romani university students, REF introduced a “cumulative benefits” policy in 2014. According to this policy, the REF scholarship amount was adjusted to reflect the alternative financial support that beneficiaries obtained from other sources, be it national governments, national/international NGOs or private third parties. In line with this cumulative
benefits policy, students who received up to 30 EUR per month as financial support from alternative resources also received the REF scholarship without any further adjustments. However, students who received between 31 and 80 EUR per month as alternative additional financial support had a reduced REF scholarship amount. Finally, for students receiving more than 80 EUR per month from non-REF sources, REF covered only the tuition fees, if tuition fees were to be paid.

Tables 13 and 14 below summarize the use of the cumulative benefits policy in each country for the 2014–2015 academic year. The data reveal that 17 students received alternative financial support in an amount up to 30 EUR per month; 17 students received between 31 and 80 EUR per month; and 53 students received above 80 EUR per month. Among the 53 students in the latter category, REF covered only the tuition fees for 15 students, while REF did not provide financial support to the remaining 38 students.

In most of the cases of alternative support, students received scholarships through programs implemented by Ministries of Education. The highest amounts of such government-initiated support were given in Slovakia, where students received stipends in an amount of EUR 230–275 per month. In Hungary students received support through so-called Szakkollégiums, projects implemented by the government and four state-subsidized churches that offer financial support in an amount of 165 EUR per month. In Bulgaria 18 REF scholarship beneficiaries received support from NGOs covering their tuition fees.

Due to this approach, REF successfully reserved EUR 48,275. REF used the savings to cover scholarships for more Romani
Table 13. Use of Cumulative Benefits Policy, 2014-2015 Academic Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Number of Students Receiving Alternative Support (Total)</th>
<th>Saved Amount in EUR from REF Scholarship Program Budget, Due to the Alternative Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>24,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9,301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>123</strong></td>
<td><strong>48,275</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14. Types and Amounts of Alternative Support Received by Students in the 2014-2015 Academic Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Stipend Up to 30 EUR/Month</th>
<th>Stipend of 30-80 EUR/Month</th>
<th>Stipend Above 80 EUR/Month, But Students Paying Tuition Fees</th>
<th>Stipend Above 80 EUR/Month and Students Not Paying Tuition Fees</th>
<th>Alternative Support for Covering the Tuition Fee</th>
<th>Alternative Non-Financial Support (Dormitory and Meal), Also Considered for the REF Scholarship Calculation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

students, opening the way to accept all students who were on the waiting lists, and who otherwise would not have been accepted in the Scholarship Program because of the limited funds available. This approach has increased the number of Romani students who benefit from financial support during their university studies, be it from REF or from other stakeholders.
REF’s secondary and tertiary scholarship programs provide vital support in the form of financial assistance, mentoring and guidance for thousands of students every year. Dedicated to reducing early leaving and increasing graduation rates, the programs provide powerful motivation and public recognition of students’ achievements, leaving them better prepared to compete on the labor market and encouraging some to pursue further studies.

REF’s secondary scholarship schemes cover part of the basic and hidden costs of secondary education to combat the practice of early school leaving to take up menial employment instead of continuing and completing secondary education. Through mentorship and tutoring REF improves academic progress, encourages social integration in schools and motivates families to support their children to continue schooling.

The scholarship schemes for secondary studies are implemented through REF’s Grant Program that cooperates with public and non-governmental organizations. To date, secondary scholarship schemes have been implemented in seven countries: Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia. In 2014 the REF-financed secondary school program’s number of beneficiaries reached 5,432.

The tertiary-level scholarship schemes are implemented directly by REF staff in cooperation with a team of mainly Romani country-based coordinators. Since 2005 almost 7,000 Romani students from 16 countries have received scholarship support. Today, REF provides support to about 1,500 students in 16 countries each year through four scholarship schemes. Two of the four schemes provide support for all accredited specializations, while one provides support exclusively for medical studies. The four schemes provide academic and professional development support in addition to financial support. Finally, two of the four schemes provide limited options to pursue vocational studies that can later allow transition to university studies. REF’s main goal in providing tertiary education scholarship support is to substantially contribute to the emergence of a generation of intellectual and skillful young Roma with higher education degrees, confident about their Roma identity, having on one hand considerable market prospects, and on the other hand being prepared and motivated to become agents for positive change for the Romani community, as well as for wider society, nationally and internationally.

Since 2005 when REF was founded, the scholarship support for Romani secondary school pupils and university students has expanded both in numbers and in geographical scope. Funding has also diversified over time. Originally, Open Society Foundations was the main donor; since then other donors – notably the Swedish International Development Agency; the Swiss Development Agency; the Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future Foundation; the Romanian government with EU Structural Funds; the Montenegrin government with EU pre-Accession Funds; and most recently the Velux Foundation – have joined the initiative to support Romani students to access and successfully complete secondary and tertiary education. As explained below, in some countries governments joined the effort too, either by aligning with REF in support of the scholarship schemes in place, or by launching their own Romani student support programs.

Changes over time

As the REF scholarship schemes evolved and expanded to support more beneficiaries in more countries, changes took place in the types of support offered to students, in the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of their academic progress and in the overall management of the programs. REF constantly adapted to respond to changes and challenges in different national education systems, and to meet the particular needs of Romani communities in each country.

In both secondary-level and tertiary-level scholarship schemes, REF has increased transparency about its targeting principles, selection procedures and application evaluation.

The four scholarship schemes are: Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP) supporting Romani students in 13 countries (i.e., all Decade countries and in addition in Turkey); Law and Humanities Program (LHP) supporting Romani students in Moldova, Russia and Ukraine; Roma International Scholar Program (RISP) offering support to Romani students studying abroad; and Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP) providing support to Romani students pursuing medical studies (the latter scheme was first piloted in Romania, but later expanded to Bulgaria, Macedonia and Serbia).
mechanisms. Since 2011, the names and university affiliations of all tertiary-level scholarship beneficiaries are published on the REF website. The names of all national selection committee members responsible for evaluating the tertiary scholarship applications are also public. The introduction of an electronic system of application and evaluation for the tertiary scholarships made it possible to send personalized letters to all rejected applicants, listing the specific weaknesses in their applications. REF considers this to be both fairer and more educative.

REF has begun to merge upper-secondary-level and tertiary-level support for students, an approach that allows for a longer period of targeted support to the same individuals. Under this approach, the support begins at the end of lower secondary and continues until the graduation of tertiary education for the same beneficiaries. This approach allows REF to target beneficiaries coming from particularly vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds, who would not complete upper secondary and then tertiary education without outside support. The Velux-funded Pedagogical Scholarship Program is part of this approach.

Besides the scholarship, some of the schemes of the Scholarship Program, such as the Law and Humanities Program (LHP) and the Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP), provide a more comprehensive package of services. In addition to financial support, the schemes offer a combination of academic components, such as mentorship, professional development and language courses, opportunities to attend summer schools, internships and conferences, as well as the chance to implement small-scale initiatives at the local level. Similarly, the RomaVersitas projects funded by REF offer the same to their beneficiaries. Results of this approach are being analyzed to compare with that of RMUSP, which provides only financial support, but to a greater number of students.

The transition in 2011 from a paper-based system to electronic management of application and evaluation processes in the tertiary scholarship schemes marked a major development. Not only did this dramatically improve efficiency, but the electronic system also made it possible to gather important data on the socio-economic background and ongoing academic progress of all tertiary student beneficiaries. This allowed for a deeper understanding by REF of the program's target group, and has proven to be an invaluable resource for informed deliberation and quality decision-making concerning program development. REF has already used part of this data, in anonymized and aggregated form, to prepare academic articles, reports, conference presentations and working papers, hence intensifying its contribution to the academic and policy discussions about Roma access to higher education.

The Central European University’s Roma Graduate Preparation Program (RGPP), recently described in the New York Times as a “de facto hub for an elite group of young Roma intellectuals,” has been supported by REF since 2005. Since that time, the program (formerly the Roma Access Program) has enrolled more than 128 Roma students from over 14 countries in an intensive learning experience that enables them to become competitive candidates for placement in English language post-graduate programs at CEU and other universities. RGPP students are provided with tutoring in their chosen discipline in social sciences, law and humanities as well as intensive academic English language training, and individual mentoring and support. More than half of the students who have completed the course have gone on to further studies, many have taken up internship opportunities abroad, or worked for international organizations, and an increasing number have become visible advocates for Roma inclusion at the European level. As positive role models for other young Roma, successful alumni have played a key role in encouraging other Roma students to realize their potential and sign up for what can turn out to be a life-changing program.

Of the 126 students enrolled so far, 70 were accepted in MA programs; to date 23 students graduated from public policy programs; three in economics and seven in legal studies.
In response to increasing demand and tertiary-level schemes becoming more competitive over time, REF allocated scholarship places by weighing a combination of factors, which included the level of in-country demand, the existence of alternative funding support for Romani students and the size of the Romani population.

In 2014 the program introduced the principle of “cumulative benefits” in the calculation of the tertiary scholarship stipends, adjusting the amounts awarded to take into account all other sources of funding secured by students. This permits REF funding to reach more students, particularly those who cannot secure alternative support.

The outcomes of the REF scholarship schemes on Roma access to education

The impact of REF’s secondary scholarship schemes on attendance rates among upper-secondary Romani pupils is borne out by UNDP research data. The figures for Bulgaria and Macedonia reveal that a higher share of Roma aged 20 to 26 has completed upper secondary education as of 2011 in comparison to 2004. For example, in Bulgaria 10 percent of Romani respondents had completed upper secondary education; by 2011 the figure was 18 percent. In Macedonia, where the REF and Ministry-operated secondary scholarship program was tied to a mentoring and tutoring scheme that supported 60 percent of all Romani pupils, the enrollment rate rose from 10 percent in 2004 to 17 percent in 2011.

Since the first tertiary-level scholarship scheme (RMUSP) was launched in 2001, nearly 7,000 young Roma have received scholarship support for three academic years on average. Among beneficiaries who received support during the last two complete academic years (2012–2013 and 2013–2014), 950 were in graduation years, i.e., in the last year of their respective academic program. From these graduating students 753 graduated successfully, which means a 79 percent successful completion rate at the level of the entire Program. The other 21 percent postponed their graduation for a later year or dropped out altogether.

Similar data for the mainstream students are regretfully unavailable for the majority of REF countries, to make comparisons between REF scholarship beneficiaries and mainstream students possible. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) provides an average figure for 2011 for the OECD countries, according to which the proportion of students who enter tertiary education and graduate with at least a first degree among OECD states is 68 percent. EUROSTAT also collected data on completion rates in tertiary education for 2008, for a range of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) countries; according to this data, the median completion rate in EHEA countries where data is available is 72 percent. Both OECD and EUROSTAT ratios of higher education successful completion are below the similar figure for REF. However, a more reliable comparison will be only possible when data on the mainstream students becomes available for all 16 REF countries.

Fifty-six percent of REF beneficiaries who graduated in the last two academic years obtained Bachelor degrees or equivalents, while 35 percent successfully finished post-graduate education, in most cases Master degrees or equivalents. Six students completed their Doctorates. The majority of the successful graduates majored in specializations related to social sciences and humanities (details on page 31). In some countries REF graduates in social sciences and humanities constitute over 90 percent (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Moldova and Kosovo). The ratio of REF graduates in natural sciences, engineering and health remains relatively low at 25 percent, compared to the average of 39 percent among mainstream students. However, the situation is different in the countries where RHSP program has been implemented (Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia) and the ratio of medical studies graduates is relatively high.

In some countries tertiary-level students graduated within one year after the traditional timing of graduation. The reasons for this postponement are specific to each country. In Macedonia...

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23 RMUSP was originally administered by the Open Society Institute. The program became part of REF in 2007.
and Serbia, for instance, students prolong their final thesis writing time or have to take postponed exams they cumulated from previous academic years. In response to the latter phenomenon, in 2014 REF introduced a system of interim reporting and modified the application eligibility criteria to discourage students from postponing exams from one academic year to another. In Hungary some tertiary-level students faced difficulties with graduation because of the requirement to have a certificate proving intermediate-level fluency in a foreign language.

Among the tertiary scholarship beneficiaries of the last two academic cycles there are also students who interrupted their education or dropped out altogether. Out of the total number of students supported in the respective two cycles (both in graduation and non-graduation years), a total of nine percent interrupted their studies, postponed graduation or dropped out. Another seven percent lost contact with REF and therefore there is no information on their academic standing. In the worst-case scenario in which one would assume that the latter group of students also interrupted studies or dropped out, this would give a total dropout, studies interruption and graduation postponement rate of 16 percent within the whole group of REF tertiary scholarship beneficiaries (i.e., including both those who were in graduation years and who were in non-graduation years), which compares favorably with the reported average rate of 32 percent across OECD countries, as well as the reported average rate of 28 percent across EHEA countries. As illustrated in above figure, the country-level data that is available for a few REF countries also confirm this tendency.

However, the situation may be different when country-level data are scrutinized. In some countries the dropout, studies interruption and graduation postponement rate among REF beneficiaries is particularly high, which is notably the case in Czech Republic, Kosovo and Serbia where this rate approaches 30 percent. REF is currently analyzing the specific causes in each of these countries to devise country-specific solutions.

Being aware that increased access to tertiary education for Romani women constitutes an important factor for the development of the entire Romani community, REF Tertiary Scholarship Program encourages particularly women to enroll in higher education. The ratio between male and female in the Program is generally balanced and comparable with that among the mainstream students. As it is the case within the mainstream student population, among REF scholarship beneficiaries female students are overrepresented in social sciences and humanities–related fields and at the same time greatly underrepresented in fields of engineering, sciences, mathematics and computing. Various academic studies and statistical data reveal that the latter fields provide more secure employability than the former ones. Therefore, in the years to come, along with encouraging more Romani women to pursue tertiary education, REF will also develop strategies towards diversifying the palette of specializations chosen by Romani women pursuing tertiary studies.

See footnotes 24 and 25.

Data on gender distribution among mainstream students is regularly collected and made publicly available by EUROSTAT (see http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database).

This difference between girls and boys in higher education is also discussed in an article published by The Economist on March 7, 2015, “Nature plus nurture: Girls do better than boys in school and university. But both can still improve - sometimes for surprising reasons.” Available online at: http://www.economist.com/news/www.blogs/21645754-girls-do-better-than-boys-school-university-both-can-still-improvesometimes

The country-level policy impact of the REF scholarship schemes

In 2005 when REF was founded, the organization was the only international stakeholder implementing secondary-level and tertiary-level scholarship-based projects and programs for Roma. Among the Decade countries only two had prior experience with affirmative action enrollment programs for Roma in higher education, launched in Romania in 1992 and in Serbia in 2003. Romania began a similar program for secondary students in 1999. Since REF’s establishment, several other countries and international actors joined the effort to widen access to secondary and tertiary education through scholarship-based support to Romani students, which in several cases was a direct scaling-up of the REF scholarship model.

From the very outset, REF’s objective was that national governments would buy into the ownership of REF’s pilot programming. Secondary education scholarship programs based on the REF model were implemented in six out of the 16 countries where REF operates. This has been a positive development, for two years ago REF cooperated only with one Ministry of Education in Macedonia. Today, REF is now partnering with four more Ministries of Education in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia to implement secondary scholarship schemes.

In Macedonia, REF started to implement secondary scholarship schemes in 2005, and in 2007 the Macedonian Ministry of Education joined the effort by contributing with 50 percent of the project budget as well as with its expertise. In 2014 they raised financial support to 62 percent. This joint effort resulted in support for 2,820 young Roma in upper secondary education. A total of 99 percent of these beneficiaries successfully graduated from upper secondary education, while 62 percent continued with tertiary education (compared to national average of 64 percent31).

In Serbia, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science, REF agreed to scale up the secondary scholarship program for Romani students at national level, partnering in the coordination of mentoring and tutoring support program to students. REF’s current portfolio of secondary scholarship programs in Serbia has successfully expanded with support from the EU funding Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for almost 600 secondary school scholarships. While scaling up is a welcome sign of progress, the downside is sluggish implementation from the side of the governments involved.

In Montenegro REF has taken over from the government the distribution of the state-funded secondary and tertiary education scholarship scheme and, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, worked to improve the quality of the program. In 2014 REF’s secondary education model was also adopted by the governments of Albania and Kosovo, matching REF’s efforts and resources for secondary school scholarships together with tutoring and mentoring activities. In Kosovo the Ministry of Education partnered with REF to develop the scheme in the country and contributed 50 percent of the project budget which supported 550 Romani pupils who enrolled in upper secondary education by autumn 2014.

Since REF began implementing tertiary-level programs, more stakeholders in the Decade region followed our initiative and joined the effort to increase access to higher education for young Roma. In Romania the effort has been joined by EU Structural Funds, which has granted co-financing to two REF scholarship schemes for Romani students since 2010: one for a project supporting medical vocational and tertiary studies through comprehensive financial, academic and professional development support that lasted between 2010 and 2013 and granted 459 scholarships; another, for a project supporting Romani students in the first stage of their tertiary studies, through financial support and additionally through an innovative mentorship support, with final year Romani students acting as mentors. This project began in 2014 and targeted 170 beneficiaries.

31 National Statistics Office 2013–2014 school year all State Matura exam. The calculation is done for both sessions from June and August 2014 and is including all the students enrolled for exam.
In Hungary REF’s RomaVersitas model of combining scholarship support with intensive academic and professional development support for Romani students has been replicated to some extent by nine *Szakkollégiums*, which are EU-funded projects implemented by the government and four historical churches, under which students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds receive financial support during their studies, as well as accommodation, tutoring and mentoring services, participation in seminars, trainings, experience-based work groups, camps, and common extracurricular activities. In 2014 about 180 Romani students benefited from the support of the *Szakkollégiums* projects.

The administrative data collected by REF throughout 2014 reveal that Romani students have access to alternative support in other countries, although the respective support does not target Roma exclusively. In autumn 2014, 123 (or about nine percent) shortlisted REF applicants for tertiary scholarships reported having alternative financial support, in a majority of cases through government-initiated scholarship schemes. The support mainly consisted of monthly stipends, and in some cases students also benefited from free-of-charge accommodation in student dormitories. In Bulgaria 18 REF scholarship beneficiaries received support covering their tuition fees from the NGO Student Society for the Development of Interethnic Dialogue, with financial support from the Trust for Social Achievement.

**Looking forward**

As the job market becomes ever more tough and competitive for higher education graduates, the question has arisen as to whether REF should go beyond the originally proposed outcome to produce a “critical mass” of Roma university graduates, and find ways to enhance their professional profiles to make them more competitive when it comes to the search for quality employment. One way would be to encourage Roma to choose specializations and courses of study where there is labor market demand for graduates. The Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP) and the Velux-funded Pedagogical Scholarship Program are both important steps in this direction. Another avenue currently under exploration is to develop a network of potential employers in the public, private and non-profit sectors in each country willing to host young professionals as trainees or junior staff.

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**Scholarship Spotlight**

Štefan Vavrek, former university scholarship beneficiary and serving mayor of Rimavská Seč, Slovakia

Five years ago Štefan Vavrek was a young Roma student enrolled in the Faculty of Pedagogy. Today he is mayor of Rimavská Seč, a town of 2,000 inhabitants in southeastern Slovakia with a Roma population of around 25 percent. The road to local government reflects the decision he took after becoming a math teacher and returning to his community to open a path for many other Roma children to succeed.

Štefan was inspired to be a math teacher after being granted a scholarship by the Roma Education Fund. “My father, a teacher himself, raised me in good faith, perceiving education as a value and a life-long asset,” he recalls. Startled by the high dropout rates and grade repetition by Roma children in the local primary school, Štefan decided to open an after-school program for under-performing Romani children, also bringing together professional Roma and non-Roma volunteer-teachers to provide after school tutoring to Romani children under the newly established network – “Ternipe.”

During his time leading the project for approximately 249 children and 500 parents at the after-school center, the grade average of participating children improved by 0.5 points, the drop-out rate decreased to zero, the school transition rate of the primary school pupils improved to 95 percent, and half of the parents attended parents’ evenings at the primary school. A thriving community and social life emerged and the after-school center became a lively and dynamic place.

The after-school program has since earned visibility at the European level and was included in the European Union’s best practice catalogue “CEDEFOP: 2014” as a successful model for preventing early school leaving.

“By being close to my community I gained the trust and support of the majority population, and both Roma and non-Roma supported me to run in the local elections,” he acknowledges. Mayor Vavrek hopes he can be an inspiration to the next generation!
The challenges to fully inclusive education for Romani pupils in Central Europe remain formidable. As the 2014 EU Monitor stresses, states must do more to mitigate the impact of socio-economic and socio-cultural inequalities which often overlap and intensify each other. For many Roma these multiple disadvantages result in low educational attainment and are transmitted from one generation to another. Also with reference to the Roma, the report highlights the need to address “processes of assessment which unjustly perceive some children as less educable than others and lead to organizational segregation,” and systematic biases in provision and opportunity.

In Central Europe, 22 projects were under implementation in three countries (Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia) in 2014, and eight were completed by the end of the year. 2014 also saw the REF launch of the Pedagogy Scholarship Program in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, with the support of VELUX, to support young Romani women in pedagogical studies to qualify as kindergarten and nursery school teachers.

### Central Europe

**Czech Republic / Hungary / Slovakia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF ACTIVE PROJECTS IN 2014</th>
<th>NUMBER OF DIRECT GRANT BENEFICIARIES</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PARENTS PARTICIPATING IN REF SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
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<td>1,789</td>
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<td>1,820</td>
<td>3,630</td>
<td>5,450</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

021 Romani pupils play at one of two preschool clubs supported by REF in Ostrava, Czech Republic.
Photo: Jana Baudysova

022 Former A Good Start beneficiaries are now successfully enrolled in primary school in Nyíregyháza, Hungary.
Photo: Robert Miskovics
While the **Czech Republic** remains one of the best performers in the EU on early school leaving, a high proportion of Romani children leave school early. The Czech Republic is one of the EU countries where students’ socioeconomic backgrounds have the strongest impact on educational performance. Early streaming at the age of 11 (compared to an OECD average age of 14) contributes to inequality. Participation by Romani children in early childhood education and care (children who stand to benefit the most) is very low, estimated at about 28 percent compared to a 2012 national average of 86.1 percent. The report notes that “the number of Roma children in special schools, which have lower educational standards, is disproportionately high, reducing their chances of completing upper secondary education and entering the labor market.”

Three out of four projects implemented in the Czech Republic aimed to increase enrollment rates of Romani children in preschool and to highlight the importance and long-term benefits of early childhood education, and how it can prevent wrongful placement of children in special or “practical” schools.

In the National Reform Programme of the Czech Republic 2011, aimed at contributing to Europe 2020 Strategy, the government committed to increase the availability of preschool training for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, including the introduction of the right for the socially excluded to be admitted to nursery school. At the same time, the system of educational psychology counseling will be transformed so that it can adequately diagnose the individual needs of children and propose appropriate compensatory and support measures with the full cooperation of nursery and basic schools and nongovernmental organizations. Additionally, the Ministry of Education introduced a plan to make the last year of preschool compulsory in 2014.32

Considering the urgent need to address the problem of low enrollment in preschool education, the Roma Education Fund launched an information campaign in four socially excluded localities in the Ustecky Region. This region was targeted because of its very high rates of unemployment; the large number of socially excluded localities and segregated or practical schools; and because it is the region with the most Roma in the Czech Republic.

Many parents in the socially excluded localities have had problematic experiences with the kindergartens – often they get referred to preparatory classes in segregated schools, or have been rejected from mainstream preschools for reasons of capacity. Another challenge is the inability of the poorest families to pay fees and cover additional costs.

Those active in disseminating the information knew the localities well, and used the opportunity of direct interaction with the families to take stock of the challenges ahead as well as drawing attention to the specific registration dates for the kindergartens. Some parents felt pressured to register their children in preparatory classes in segregated schools; others feared their children would have no protection against racism in the kindergarten; and many were anxious about the hidden extra expenses that come with preschool participation. One direct result from this short information campaign was that almost 30 children enrolled in preschool. However, around 250 children were identified by REF as socially excluded in the given localities, which is why REF will continue to scale up this outreach and information campaign based on the impact analysis of the pilot phase, designed in collaboration with the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab33 (JPAL) due to be launched in 2015. Its planned duration is for two years and it is planned to involve 80 localities and around 4,000 Roma households in regions with high intensity of socially excluded Roma.

The town of Ostrava attained a degree of notoriety by virtue of its association with the 2007 European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) verdict that declared discrimination against...
Romani children in the Czech education system to be systematic and unlawful. Over the last two years the Ostrava municipality has joined with REF and two local NGO partners to implement the project Together to Preschool! The Czech School Inspectorate also joined in this successful endeavor to overcome the barriers between the institutions and Romani families.

For years following the ECtHR judgment there was no change in Ostrava, and little effort by the institutions and authorities to address the issue of inclusive education. REF and its partners began an early childhood education program to better prepare young Romani children for school. Within two years REF partners were operating two preschool clubs attended by more than 90 children, which is around 70 percent of the socially excluded Romani children in both localities. The clubs provide professional early childhood education services for mothers and young Romani children. When the children reach the age of five they are enrolled into mainstream preschool institutions, and later to integrated mainstream schools.

The project is implemented under the patronage of the Ostrava municipality, which provides both funding and technical assistance. The combination of REF preschool model with the legislative framework that provides free preschool for five-year-olds laid the ground for positive cooperation engaging the local kindergartens and elementary schools, while at the same time providing valuable services for the children and their families. More than 100 children passed through the preschool clubs, and 57 children are currently attending kindergarten.

The project has not only resulted in increased and regular attendance of children in the preschools and kindergartens, but has also succeeded in halting the placement of Romani pupils into the practical schools, the very practice that prompted the ground-breaking litigation that culminated in D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic, putting Ostrava on the map for all the wrong reasons. In addition to the positive educational outcomes, the project has had an impact on how the educational authorities and the wider public in Ostrava view school desegregation and the importance of preschool for all children, as well as the benefits integrated education bring to all. These benefits and the successes of the project were celebrated in a month-long photographic exhibition held in the Ostrava House of Culture in late 2014 that was viewed by over 20,000 visitors.
Scaling up REF’s Secondary School Scholarship Program in Central and South Eastern Europe and the Balkans

- Year of establishment
- † Number of participants in 2014
By contrast, in Hungary the enrollment rate of Romani children in preschool is high (about 79 percent). This high rate is largely attributable to the fact that preschool is compulsory and free-of-charge, and the result of REF projects seven to nine years ago, when REF organized intensive enrollment campaigns in the poorest counties of Hungary with local Romani partners. However, according to the EU Monitor, the success of this reform will depend on the country’s ability to provide the required number of places in early childhood education, and on tackling other barriers to access (e.g., distance from nursery schools, transport and financial constraints). According to an EU Fundamental Rights Agency survey, the dropout rate for Roma is more than seven times higher than non-Roma, fewer than 20 percent complete secondary education, while a mere 0.5 percent complete tertiary education.

Debate has intensified in Hungary following the recent slew of education reforms about how best to provide quality inclusive education for the most marginalized children. The 2014 EU progress report noted that expenditure on basic education remains below the EU average, and pointedly stressed that more efforts are needed to ensure education is inclusive, to address discrimination and to remove the barriers that continue to segregate Romani children, a trend that has actually increased in recent years.

The evidence from REF-supported studies (School Choice) identified the current structural reforms and budgetary cuts as additional barriers to equal and inclusive education.

Building on the findings of segregation analysis, a more in-depth study was commissioned by REF to observe the impact of reducing the compulsory school leaving age from 18 to 16 years. The study will be completed in 2015.

The dropout rate from vocational education is particularly high in disadvantaged areas. According to a report by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, the Hungarian education system has become exceedingly selective and polarized. According to the EU Monitor, ensuring that students from disadvantaged backgrounds, in particular Romani children, have equal access to high quality, inclusive, mainstream education remains a major challenge.

The ethnic gap in secondary school dropout rates is very large: the dropout rate is 32 percent for Romani secondary school students compared to five percent for non-Romani secondary school students. The study further stated that one quarter of this gap can be explained by the gap in educational achievement emerged in primary school, before enrollment in secondary school.

The aftermath of a widely publicized murder of a schoolteacher in the Roma neighborhood of Olaszliszka in 2006 left the local community traumatized. It was this context that prompted REF to choose to work with the Romani community and schools in Olaszliszka to address the issue of access to quality education.

In 2004, school principal Béla Lakatos decided to implement a new education model to desegregate the schools in Ács, a small town of 7,000 in northwestern Hungary. "Success for this initiative was not sure at that time because it was not an everyday practice in the local government system," admits Béla. However, eight years later he and his colleagues had implemented full integration for the three schools of the locality.

At the same time, Béla and his colleagues set about tackling the problem of early school leaving among pupils, including Roma children, from vocational secondary school. They established a dual system vocational class, where local companies provided not only workplace training, but also a mentor for every student in order to help them overcome their school and family problems. "This program was successful because 80 percent of our children are working and, out of these, 60 percent in the same company where they did their training."

Since 2010, Béla Lakatos has been serving his community from the Mayor’s office, where winning the mayoral race with 67 percent of the vote is significant since, according to Mayor Lakatos "I always declare myself openly as Roma and I work for Roma as well."

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35 Gábor Kertesi and Gábor Kézdi, School Choice, and Educational Policies in 100 Hungarian Towns, Roma Education Fund, 2013.
REF focused on two components: enrollment of Romani children in an integrated school, complemented by additional academic support and working with parents to give their children the support they need in the new school. In the framework of the project, 27 children who participate regularly in mentoring and tutoring sessions have gained from 10 percent to 20 percent on Hungarian language and mathematics scores. Average cumulative Grade Point Average has increased by 12 percent. Of this group of children, 13 have enrolled in the integrated Tolcsva school, and REF’s local partner provides daily transport to and from the school for all 13 children. Another positive outcome of the program is that parents have become more active, regularly attend parents’ club meetings and visit schools every month in order to follow their children’s school performance.

Founded in 2001, the RomaVersitas program in Hungary is the oldest of all REF-funded projects targeting students in tertiary education and supporting them through to successful graduation. One of the outcomes in 2014 was the fact that students took more exams during their studies and acquired more credits than in the previous academic year. In the 2012–2013 academic year, the average GPA was 3.7; five semesters later, GPA rose to 4.2 out of 5.0.

**Slovakia**

In Slovakia, participation in early childhood education and care (77.1 percent) is among the lowest in the EU and falling. Among marginalized Romani communities the rate is as low as 24 percent. Capacities in kindergartens are insufficient in certain parts of the country. As regards equity, the EU Monitor states that Slovakia lacks any systematic strategy to ensure that early childhood education could become inclusive with a view to raising overall educational outcomes, and that this further hinders disadvantaged Romani pupils. Early tracking and the disproportionate placement of Romani pupils in special schools perpetuate inequalities. As elsewhere, this practice greatly reduces pupils’ chances of completing upper secondary education and entering the labor market in a country where the youth unemployment rate is one of the...
highest in the EU, and where the labor market disadvantage for people without upper secondary education is significantly higher than elsewhere in the EU.

In 2014, REF supported the implementation of nine projects in Slovakia, six of which were preschool projects. Three of these early childhood projects were a continuation of the European Commission funded project *A Good Start*, and all six were primarily concerned with improving children's early development and health, and increasing enrollment rates in preschool institutions. As a result of work with parents they enrolled their preschool children in the mainstream kindergartens. The children were well received by teaching staff, and the relationship between staff and parents markedly improved.

The largest REF program in Slovakia is the nationwide secondary scholarship program implemented by the local branch office, which has a network of partners comprising 147 secondary schools and supports 350 students annually. The project works to improve academic performance, attendance and graduation rates, to decrease dropout rates among secondary school students and to increase the numbers of students successfully making the transition from secondary to tertiary education. In the 2013-2014 school year, 96 percent of beneficiaries awarded with scholarships successfully completed the school year. One-hundred percent of the 78 beneficiaries in their last year of secondary education successfully completed the Maturita exam which is considered a crucial tool for applying to university. While 60.5 percent reported that they were searching for work and might apply to university the following year, 39.5 percent went on to higher education. This is a significant and promising result for the secondary scholarship program if we compare it to the 52 percent of the general population that passed the Maturita exam and enrolled to university for the 2014-2015 academic year.

Throughout 2014 REF was involved in training, content and technical assistance and quality assurance in a challenging social experimentation project called *Investing in the Early Years of Children – Promoting Social Innovation and Roma Integration*. Implemented by the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities in Slovakia, it was initially designed to scale up REF’s AGS early childhood education model.

With funding support from the European Commission DG EMPL, 300 Romani mothers improved their parenting and...
literacy skills, and became more confident and better able to express themselves as members of a community of mothers, through their participation in the Your Story reading club throughout the year. In a survey conducted after the project, 70 percent of mothers responded that they read more often and regularly to their children, 42 percent of mothers felt much more self-confident in their parenting practices and 39 percent of mothers responded that these activities have significantly improved their relation towards their children.

In all project localities, kindergarten capacities were below the actual demand from parents in the communities. Therefore, the share of three-to-five-year-old Romani children in project communities who enrolled and attended kindergarten remained stable during the project at the level of 28 percent, with additional six percent of children enrolled in community center programs.

Another survey was conducted with kindergarten principals/teachers to assess the children’s performance and the impacts of the project. Kindergarten principals identified the following major project benefits for children of participating mothers: improved psycho-motoric competencies (100 percent of principals agree) and enrollment of six-year-old children directly to the first grade rather than to preparatory zero grade (80 percent). Furthermore, 73 percent of principals agreed that the project improved the children’s vocabulary, while 50 percent reported that the project children had improved cognitive skills that they used in problem solving, group work, and critical and creative thinking. When considering project impacts on mothers, 80 percent of principals reported that

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Facilitator Spotlight

**Adela**

Adela was really looking forward to facilitating the Your Story sessions. Apprehensive at first, she found comfort in leading discussions among her new friends. She listened to them, guided the interviews, played games and created a fun and safe environment. She became very close with her group, managing even to find a job for one participant. As she became more involved she found that the women began to gain confidence. They began to express their opinions more readily and even began discussing the possibility of completing their education. The women became stronger as individuals and as a group. They supported each other more than before, becoming strong community members. Adela grew personally from the experience as well. As she became more immersed in the community, the women adopted her as a close friend and confidante. At program’s end, she was able to leave behind a legacy of four great facilitators to lead other groups of women.

When Adela gave her group the opportunity to share what the program meant to them, she was at a loss for words upon hearing their responses. The women said their sessions provided a place to relax, feel safe, switch off the stresses of their domestic duties and enjoy each other’s company. The sessions were a place to learn new things about how to live better lives. They were able to build strong friendships among other mothers who could support them at home through child care, cooking and giving advice. She also found that the mothers credited the program with creating a stronger relationship between the mothers and their children, allowing them to prioritize spending time with their children. Adela was speechless but managed to add, “I am happy to have women on whom I can rely on and so privileged to be a part of this program. Thanks again for being such crazy women! You’ve inspired me!”
Romani mothers who participated in the project activities had much higher interest than the non-project mothers in the educational progress of their children and improved cooperation with the kindergarten.

For the first time ever an impact evaluation is currently being performed and will be ready in 2015, in order to demonstrate if this Roma education program was effective or not. Participating mothers were selected to the project randomly in 21 localities, and at the end it will be possible to compare the results of project participants with non-treated control groups in each locality, using counterfactual impact evaluation to measure the outcomes and clearly understand the results. The evaluation component is being carried out by experts from the Central European University, J-PAL Poverty Action Lab, the Slovak Governance Institute and the World Bank.

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM IN CEE

In 2014 REF received 404 applications from the three Central Europe countries, 382 for the Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP) and 22 for the Roma International Scholar Program (RISP). From these applicants 239 were selected for support through the RMUSP scheme to pursue studies in their own countries, while 11 were awarded scholarship support through the RISP scheme to study abroad. Among the RISP students, five received support to study in UK; two to study in US; two Slovak students to study in the Czech Republic; one to study in Netherlands and one in Austria. The total acceptance rate was 63 percent in RMUSP and 50 percent in RISP.

Among the selected scholarship beneficiaries, those studying in undergraduate programs constitute the majority. At the same time, RISP beneficiaries pursuing post-graduate studies make up more than 50 percent. In the two schemes, 11 beneficiaries received support for doctorate studies.

In fall 2014 REF organized gala events in all three countries, which were attended by a total of 100 REF beneficiaries, increasing the visibility of the program in the region and creating an opportunity for students to meet and network.

The demand for REF scholarships in the region increased in 2014, particularly in Slovakia where there are more and more young Roma graduating secondary education and therefore eligible to apply to university studies. The number is expected to grow further in the years to come.

### TABLE 15. TOTAL APPLICANTS AND BENEFICIARIES OF RMUSP AND RISP IN CENTRAL EUROPE IN 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RMUSP</th>
<th></th>
<th>RISP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td>Beneficiaries</td>
<td>Applicants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent out of total number applicants</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>50</td>
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</table>

### TABLE 16. TOTAL BENEFICIARIES OF RMUSP AND RISP BY LEVEL OF STUDIES IN CENTRAL EUROPE IN 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RMUSP</th>
<th></th>
<th>RISP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>Undivided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although the three countries in Eastern Europe – Moldova, Russia and Ukraine – are not part of the Decade for Roma Inclusion, REF operates the Law and Humanities tertiary education scholarship program thanks to financial resources provided by the German Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future (EVZ). Romani students from the three countries are also eligible to receive support for tertiary-level studies abroad. On an exceptional basis, REF has also supported a limited number of grant projects in Moldova.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF ACTIVE PROJECTS IN 2014</th>
<th>NUMBER OF DIRECT GRANT BENEFICIARIES</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PARENTS PARTICIPATING IN REF SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>2,040</td>
<td>2,520</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

028 Scholarship Program staff Stela Garaz, Ektarina Nazarzhova and Yiorica Volovei savor the day during an extracurricular event at the Annual LHP conference in Budapest, Hungary. Photo: REF Budapest

029 Viktor Chovka, scholarship beneficiary from Ukraine, during the LHP annual conference in July in Budapest, Hungary. Photo: REF Budapest
EASTERN EUROPE

MOLDOVA

In 2014, REF supported the establishment of a RomaVersitas program in Moldova. This REF model program draws from the experiences of similar programs in countries such as Hungary, Macedonia and Serbia. The Roma National Center implements the RomaVersitas model in Chisinau where 33 university students have been provided with a space to meet one another and exchange experiences; to use computers and access the internet; to attend English language classes and computer training courses; and to participate in regular professional development trainings, thematic debates, and public lectures and presentations. Romani students have been supported through the Law and Humanities Program in Moldova since 2004. Currently implemented by the REF Scholarship Program, it includes a yearly scholarship to cover tuition fees and some living costs, as well as opportunities to participate in a range of professional development training.

REF, together with UNICEF in Moldova, facilitated cross-country experiences and learning from Serbia and Bulgaria for representatives of the Moldovan Ministry of Education, local authorities, teachers and NGOs. The officials learned about the desegregation models of Roma schools and classes and visited schools where Romani children study in integrated settings. The visits gave the opportunity to deepen the understanding of the process and the instruments that are applied for successful full integration.

Law and Humanities Program Spotlight
Grigore Zapescu

After graduating from high school in 2011, I participated in local public administration meetings where I met civil society representatives, including organizations promoting Romani causes. This experience prompted me to volunteer and later coordinate my own projects.

In 2013 two other LHP beneficiaries and I obtained financial support from LHP to implement “Water – the Elixir of Life,” a small-scale project to build a well in a Romani village without access to potable water. This project gave me valuable experience in the development, coordination, implementation and reporting. In 2014 I obtained funding for another small-scale project, “I am a child – I have the right to play,” which aimed to renovate the children’s playground in another Romani community. The liaison and cooperation with the local administration during these two projects was particularly valuable experience.

In 2014, along with a group of young Roma, we attended a meeting led by the Prime Minister of Moldova. We expressed the need for greater access to education for Roma and promotion of social inclusion policies. We also discussed the problems faced by Roma people, solutions to solve them and how the government can directly influence development of the Roma minority.

The discriminatory attitude and indifference towards Roma led me to be more active, invest in my own education, and follow certain professional goals – all personal steps that are helping me to improve the plight of Roma. I view this as a personal matter, because I believe that the problems of our community affect us individually and the change starts with each of us.

Now I want to create a non-governmental organization that will work in partnership with the state and international institutions, aimed at creating an inclusive and effective education system based on principles of equity, non-discrimination and respect for diversity, which will contribute to Roma integration.

As for the professional and personal development, my goals are to deepen my knowledge in the field of law, to obtain a Master’s degree in human rights, to obtain a lawyer’s license, and of course, to start my own family. I believe that education is humanity’s most powerful tool.
In 2014 REF received 212 applications from Moldova, Russia, Ukraine for the Law and Humanities Program (LHP) and Roma International Scholar Program (RISP) scholarship schemes, out of whom 179 were accepted, 177 in LHP and two in RISP. The beneficiaries recruited in LHP received support to pursue higher education and to a limited extent, vocational education, in their own countries, while the RISP-selected beneficiaries received support to study abroad. The two RISP-selected beneficiaries are both from Moldova and both pursue Bachelor-level education in Austria.

A majority of 59 percent of accepted LHP beneficiaries study in Bachelor programs. Seventeen percent study in vocational programs in academic specializations that can lead to university studies.

Besides scholarship support, the LHP scheme offers academic and professional development support through several additional project components. LHP language grants sponsor students’ enrollment in foreign language schools during the academic year, whereas the LHP Professional Development Fund offers support for students’ participation in extracurricular activities such as conferences and symposia, summer schools, fellowships, research initiatives or summer internships within their countries. The LHP international internship component offers financial support to pursue summer internships outside students’ home countries. Hence, in 2014, LHP offered additional support to 26 ongoing beneficiaries to attend foreign language courses, with most students studying English.

Four beneficiaries received Professional Development Fund support, two for pursuing in-country summer internships and another two for attending professional development trainings. One student received international internship support, which offered her the possibility to join REF headquarters as an intern for six weeks in summer 2014.

In addition, four groups of LHP beneficiaries developed and implemented projects in their countries, with support received under the LHP Small-Scale Projects component. Two of these projects were implemented in Moldova, one in Ukraine and one in Russia.

One of the projects implemented in Moldova was for the renovation of a children’s playground, as well as the football field and volleyball courts in a Romani village. The other project in Moldova resulted in the building of a sports hall for young Roma and non-Roma in an ethnically mixed village, as well as the organization of competitive events within the hall with the aim to encourage communication between Romani and non-Romani youth.

The small-scale project in Ukraine consisted of offering guidance and support to the Romani community in a village in the Transcarpathia region for a range of administrative and legal matters, including assistance for applying for birth certificates, passports and identity cards, applying for social safety net programs, clarifying property rights and registering their residence.

### TABLE 17. TOTAL APPLICANTS AND BENEFICIARIES OF LHP IN EASTERN EUROPE IN 2014–2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LHP Applicants</th>
<th>LHP Beneficiaries</th>
<th>RISP Applicants</th>
<th>RISP Beneficiaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The small-scale project in Russia organized catch-up classes for first-grade primary school children in a segregated Roma school in a village located in Tula Oblast, south of Moscow. All these projects not only offered support to Romani communities in specific localities of the three countries, but also constituted a valuable professional experience for the involved REF beneficiaries in developing and implementing a project, in mobilizing the community, and in establishing links for cooperation with local administration, schools and community leaders.

In 2014 the LHP beneficiaries also had the opportunity to meet for professional development courses and for an annual conference. At the end of March, Moldovan LHP students met in Chisinau for a two-day computer-training workshop, during which attendees improved their skills with Microsoft Office applications, familiarized themselves with various internet tools and also with basic cybersecurity. In July Russian and Ukrainian beneficiaries participated in a training organized in Budapest on how to write and implement small-scale projects for Romani community development. Lastly, 42 REF beneficiaries and alumni from all three countries participated in a two-day joint conference in July 2014 at Central European University in Budapest, during which participants discussed the ways and strategies for Roma inclusion from the civil society perspective. These events not only offered students the possibility to improve their professional skills and knowledge about Roma inclusion, but also the possibility to meet, network and form a community of young Romani students in Eastern Europe.

**TABLE 18. TOTAL BENEFICIARIES OF LHP BY LEVEL OF STUDIES IN EASTERN EUROPE IN 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocational</th>
<th>Bachelor</th>
<th>Master</th>
<th>Undivided</th>
<th>Doctorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>105</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scaling up REF’s RomaVersitas in Central and South Eastern Europe and the Balkans

— Year of establishment
— † Number of participants in 2014

Serbia I (Novi Sad)
2009
Serbia II (Niš)
2013
†165

Hungary
1996 (since 2006 supported by REF)
†49

Kosovo
2014
(Prizren, Prizren, Prizren)
†40

Albania
2013
Tirana
†61

Macedonia
2001 (since 2007 supported by REF)
Skopje, Tetovo, Stip
†59 monitoring / tutoring

Bulgaria
2014
Sofia, Shumen, Blagoevgrad
†75

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In the Western Balkans, REF supported a total of 42 projects in seven countries in 2014, reaching more than 25,630 beneficiaries, which accounted for 72 percent of all REF beneficiaries last year.

### Balkans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of Active Projects in 2014</th>
<th>Number of Direct Grant Beneficiaries</th>
<th>Number of Parents Participating in REF Supported Activities</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,669</td>
<td>1,506</td>
<td>3,175</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,196</td>
<td>1,984</td>
<td>3,180</td>
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<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>1,813</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9,021</td>
<td>13,580</td>
<td>22,601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FYR Macedonia</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7,931</td>
<td>15,523</td>
<td>23,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3,170</td>
<td>3,651</td>
<td>6,821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,711</td>
<td>3,820</td>
<td>5,531</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

033 Romani pupils who participate in countywide desegregation program, attend the preschool in Kursane in Medjimurje Couttffy, Croatia. Photo: REF Budapest

034 An Albanian RMUSP finalist receives a pin declaring his commitment to Study! Grow! Inspire! Unite!, the slogan of the 2014 REF Gala series held in November in Tirana, Albania. Photo: Elvin Shytaj
European Commission Progress Reports on Albania have repeatedly urged the government to focus as a matter of urgency on improving access to inclusive education for Romani children from preschool to higher education. According to the UNDP household survey, an estimated 34 percent of three-to-six-year-old Romani children are enrolled in preschool; the enrollment rate in compulsory education is 48 percent; among Romani students the lower secondary completion rate is below 25 percent and the upper secondary completion rates fall below five percent. These rates contrast significantly with those of non-Romani children at each education level. For instance, the preschool enrollment rate for non-Romani children is 57 percent, enrollment to primary schools is 91 percent and upper secondary completion rates are above 40 percent. Thus, REF has focused in particular on supporting projects that aim to reduce these gaps.

There are encouraging signs of local authorities adopting REF intervention models in primary education. The Regional Education Authorities in Korca and Gjirokastra have taken over the responsibility to support catch-up classes for Romani children from sixth to ninth grade in primary schools. This was initially coordinated within a REF-supported project, Inclusive Quality in Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Education for Roma/Egyptian Children, and implemented in cooperation with Save the Children Albania. The authorities intend to continue the support and to increase the coverage to include Romani/Egyptian children from first to fifth grade from September 2015.

The catch-up classes have resulted in a remarkable decrease in early school leaving of Romani/Egyptian children since 2009. Before the project the dropout rate was 86 percent. During the last two years the dropout rate of Romani/Egyptian children from schools participating in the program fell to zero in 2014.

In 2014, REF also launched a new secondary scholarship program and introduced the RomaVersitas model to Albania.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina the gross enrollment rate to compulsory education for 7-to-15-year-old disadvantaged Roma is estimated at 61 percent, compared to a 96 percent rate among disadvantaged non-Roma. In an effort to close this gap, REF partner organization Sae Roma has collaborated closely with the Ministry of Education Tuzla Canton and the Pedagogical Institute Tuzla. Between 2012 and 2014 the project was implemented in four municipalities, covering 11 settlements in Tuzla Canton, and working intensively with 428 school-age Romani children to ensure that they are all registered and attending school. The implementing partners managed to obtain co-funding from the ministry, the municipality and the pedagogical institute. The educational authorities were fully engaged in registering Romani children who were out of school, organizing and delivering trainings and workshops for teachers, school staff, Romani and non-Romani children and their parents, as well as hosting roundtables to raise public awareness and strengthen local community support for inclusive education for Romani children. As a direct result of one roundtable where teachers and specialists from the Center for Social Work Gracanica discussed the barriers to regular attendance, the Center for Social Work decided to provide free bus transportation for Romani children living in remote areas of Gracanica so that all children have access to schools.

38 UNDP, Roma Data.
This successful model of collaboration led to an increase in the primary school enrollment rate from 85 percent at the outset of the project to 100 percent in 2014. Not only was every child enrolled, but the project interventions contributed to improved academic performance from GPA 1.9 to 2.3 (on a five point scale), and a decrease in the number of school absences per pupil from 65.4 in the first project year to 31.2 in the second project year.

REF project partner, the Association for the Promotion of Education of Roma – Otaharin, was among the seven prizewinners out of 21 shortlisted nominees in the first ever EU Award for Roma integration in the Western Balkans and Turkey in October 2014.

**CROATIA**

In Croatia, REF has worked in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Medjimurje County Administration in seven municipalities with eleven Romani communities since 2010, covering all children in the relevant cohort each year, which amounts to between 740 and 800 children over the four years. In 2014 REF provided support in five municipalities and two projects are sustained by funding from either IPA or the municipality itself. The activities resulted in better acquisition of language of instruction and school readiness, and led to better learning outcomes in the first grade of elementary school, thus setting the vital foundation for later academic success.

For many years REF had persistently advocated for free preschool for all, and through its projects demonstrated good practice and better results. In 2014, the education law was amended to introduce free-of-charge obligatory preschool education, starting with all children that reached the age of five by March 31, 2014. Before this change, though Romani children were entitled to a waiver from kindergarten fees, very few parents had been aware of this provision; in addition, due to the limited number of preschool places, there was no guarantee that children could enroll. The new reform promises to ensure that no child is left behind, and from 2015 mayors, municipal and educational authorities will have the opportunity to ensure full and equal access to inclusive, high-quality preschool education for all Romani children.
In Kosovo, REF supported an innovative early childhood development (ECD) project with a complex approach focusing on preschool and primary school-age beneficiaries, professionals and parents. Following an exchange of experience study visit organized by REF to Macedonia, the Kosovo Education Center has adopted REF’s ECD model which will enable 140 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) children to receive early childhood education and care services for the upcoming two years. The project also works on decreasing early school leaving, with special efforts made to keep girls in school and ensure a smooth transition to high school and/or vocational training.

Last year the Ministry of Education partnered with REF to develop a nationwide secondary scholarship program and contributed 50 percent of the costs of the project, which supported 550 Romani students who enrolled in upper secondary education. 2014 also marked a year of considerable progress for RomaVersitas Kosovo which was launched with a REF grant in 2013. The implementing partner Kosovo Agency for Advocacy and Development (KAAD) has not only overseen increased retention rates among Romani university students, but also managed to secure additional funding which allowed for more services covering more localities than originally planned. Of the 40 students supported, only two will have to repeat their exams and two emigrated. Seven students successfully completed their studies and graduated in 2014.

RomaVersitas Kosovo signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Business College Mitrovica (IBCM). As part of this cooperation IBCM donated equipment for Student Resource Centers in Peja, Gjakova and Prizren, and donated over 220 English language books to their library. IBCM also offered RomaVersitas Kosovo a deep discount on its accredited three-month English language courses, and plans to offer this course to all beneficiaries from 2015.

After eight years of work in FYR Macedonia, REF has scaled up two of its model programs with the government. The preschool program, which began as a REF-funded intervention in 2006 and is now implemented by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MoLSP), expanded coverage from 10 to 18 municipalities. Currently, the ministry provides 58.3 percent of the funding; 17 municipalities contribute 11.8 percent; 18 kindergartens contribute 3.3 percent; and REF’s support amounts to 26.6 percent of the project costs. The MoLSP now manages and directs the funding into preschool enrollment and attendance for all Romani children aged between four and six years in all 18 project locations. This is a good practice arrangement as preschool is neither free nor compulsory in Macedonia.

Within the last three years, the enrollment rates of Romani children into preschools increased from 10 percent to 16 percent by 2014 at national level, to a large extent due to the joint intervention. Thanks to REF, the program also ensured that 17 Roma began working at preschools and from 2015 they will receive permanent employment contracts as employees of the MoLSP working in 18 kindergartens across 18 municipalities as regular preschool non-pedagogical support staff. The ministry has also extended the scope of the project to provide additional services for 1,000 younger children (aged zero to four) by integrating REF’s A Good Start early childhood model into its preschool program. The activities include Toy Libraries, Home School Community Liaison programs, Your Story reading clubs for mothers, and nutrition and vaccination support for children provided by health professionals.

39 Available online: http://www.undp.org/content/dam/rbec/docs/Policy-brief-Roma-education.pdf
The government in Macedonia has also invested in the REF-initiated secondary scholarship program since its inception in 2009. In 2014 the Macedonian Ministry of Education more than doubled its financial commitment to the project from 30 percent to 62 percent. This joint effort resulted in support for 2,820 young Roma attending upper secondary education. A total of 99 percent of these beneficiaries successfully graduated upper secondary education, while 62 percent continued on to tertiary education (just two percentage points lower than the national average of 64 percent). Given the remarkable achievements of this project it is almost certain that the Ministry of Education will continue to allocate resources to support the secondary education scholarship scheme for Romani students.

As a follow-up to a project implemented by REF partner National Roma Centrum in Macedonia, a policy recommendation was adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science, which recognized the added value of community-based Romani mediators for effective prevention of early school leaving of Romani children. The ministry has allocated financial resources to employ the Romani mediators officially from 2015, which will allow the mediators to continue their community-based work.
BALKANS

BALKANS

MONTENEGRO

In Montenegro, the REF branch office collaborated with the German foundation HELP to finalize implementation of the first phase of the Assistance programme for integration and return of RAE and other I/DPs residing in the Konik area and to start the second phase of this EU and Montenegrin government-funded program. In 2014 REF intensified the work with the kindergarten and parents in the Konik camp. The professional preschool staff and Romani/Egyptian (RE) mediators conducted regular visits to the families of the children who were attending kindergarten regularly, as well as to the families of children who were frequently absent.

As a result of these activities the number of children attending the kindergarten was almost double the original estimate of 60 children annually: in the 2012-2013 school year 97 children took part in the kindergarten program; the following school year that number increased to 122 children, with 78 percent of the children regularly attending state-run kindergartens.

The second important component of the project was to increase access of Romani/Egyptian children from the Konik camp to mainstream integrated schools in the city. As a result of cooperation between REF, the Ministry of Education and the Bureau for Education, Schools and Preschool Institutions, 62 first-graders and 75 older children from the camp were attending six city schools in the 2013-2014 academic year as part of the long-awaited desegregation process.

As a part of the project a student volunteer program was established. REF succeeded to attract 98 university students to work as volunteers in Konik camp. Volunteers worked with approximately 160 younger children and 60 first-graders who were attending mainstream schools in the city. The student volunteers mainly focused on development of the children’s language, social and communication skills. The goal is not only for better school achievement for the children, but also to benefit the volunteers in the longer term. Working in a culturally diverse and acutely deprived environment sensitizes these young adults, and better prepares them to meet the challenges to deliver more inclusive education practices and attitudes in their future profession.
In 2014 in Serbia, the Roma Education Fund continued to support the network of Toy Libraries in its mother-child educational project, which enabled mothers to take a more active role in their children's lives and empowered Romani women in patriarchal communities. The Toy Libraries have enabled Romani children to interact with non-Roma and to improve their focus, language, social and educational skills. By developing cooperation with preschool institutions and local self-governments, the project ensured partial sustainability of educational outcomes for Romani children. The project was also one of seven prizewinners of the first EU Award for Roma integration in the Western Balkans and Turkey awarded by the European Commission in October 2014.

REF in cooperation with the OSCE mission in Serbia and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Development (MESTD) began implementation of the project Technical and expert support to the MESTD for establishing and strengthening the program for prevention of dropouts of Roma from secondary schools. This is an EU-funded program which provides scholarships and educational support in the form of individual and group mentoring for Romani pupils in Serbia, and represents a nationwide extension of a project implemented by REF in Vojvodina since 2007. The number of secondary scholarships awarded in 2014 was 525, but the mentoring component has not yet started.

RMUSP Spotlight
Martin Osmanović

Martin's father works at the market and his mother stays at home. Most of his family has only finished primary school. Most of his family is unemployed. He had no connections or privileges when he was enrolling in university or seeking employment opportunities after graduation. Martin Osmanović thanks his humble and honest family who pushed him and led him to succeed. And he has had a series of successes: straight-A student in primary and secondary school, graduated from university with 9.86/10 on his final thesis and named the best Roma student in Serbia by the National Council.

Today, he is doing his graduate work in information technology, employed in his field, and in 2014 he enjoyed one of his greatest successes when he went to China for training with the company Huawei as one of the top 10 students in Serbia. This success was made sweeter when, out of the 10 students, he was one of two who were chosen by the staff as having made the greatest impression during his work there.

“I've always tried to be the best, if not the best. I've never put myself at a disadvantage. I have hands to work, eyes to see, and a head to think like everyone else.”
My Romani Friends

Our classmates Danijel and Nurija are Roma. Other children have been avoiding any contact with them and separating them from everyone else. They do not care about their feelings and enjoy humiliating them. We all know that the majority of Roma live in terrible material circumstances. One day, Danijel, called Danko, came to school without having washed his face. We were upset when he told us that his tap froze during the winter and that there was no water. Our teachers checked his living conditions. His house was made mostly out of cardboard. So we responded and organized a humanitarian action, donating as much money as we could to Darko’s and Nurija’s families. Regardless of their sorrow, they cheer us up with their songs and humour. Our assistance has helped them a lot. They smile all the time, no matter their problems.

ROMA DAY

Every classroom and even mine
Has some decoration of its own.
The decorations in my classroom are
Danko and Nurija.
They begin to sing from the bottom of their hearts to the teacher,
Instead of mobile phones, their pockets are full of marbles.
Djelem, djelem, they sing every day as they travel,
Djelem, djelem, they love and they are joyful.
Decoration of my classroom they remain, because they are just two.

The mentoring component intended to provide learning assistance for the Romani scholarship recipients with GPAs ranging from 2.5 to 3.5/5.0 and at risk of failing and eventually dropping out from secondary school. It was planned for the mentors to begin working with these students as soon as the scholarship scheme started. Unfortunately, due to administrative delays, the Serbian Ministry of Education has yet to engage mentors. It was obvious that many of these pupils would fail to complete their schooling without proper support mechanisms; and once it became clear to REF that these administrative delays would be protracted, the REF team organized university student volunteers to work with the secondary students to provide them with additional learning support and motivate them to complete their education. However, this volunteer support could only cover 20 percent of the cohort.

The RomaVersitas program in Serbia was initially implemented in Vojvodina region, where a relatively high number of Romani students study in tertiary education. In 2014, REF extended the RomaVersitas program to Kragujevac and Nis in Central and South Serbia. Project activities for 89 students were conducted in different locations in Kruševac, with students from the College for Educators, and at the University of Kragujevac’s Pedagogical Faculty in Jagodina.

In Vojvodina, the RomaVersitas project reported a 35 percent increase over the last three years in enrollment rates of secondary school graduates to tertiary education. RomaVersitas students played a key role in this success by encouraging and working with the high school graduates, motivating them to continue their education, and guiding them through the whole enrollment process. This approach resulted in an increase from 21 freshmen in 2012 to 59 in 2014.
Scholarship Program in Balkans and Turkey

Out of the four scholarship schemes of REF’s Scholarship Program, three run in the Balkan region: the Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP), the Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP) and the Roma International Scholarship Program (RISP). In 2014 REF received a total of 588 applications from students from this region and accepted 340: 273 for RMUSP support, 64 for RHSP support and three for RISP support. The three RISP beneficiaries received support to study abroad, one in Germany, another in the UK and the third in Ukraine.

In terms of distribution per level of studies, the majority of accepted beneficiaries pursue education in Bachelor programs. In RHSP, the medical studies scholarship scheme, 33 percent of selected beneficiaries pursue education in medical vocational programs.

In 2014 REF organized gala events in Albania, Macedonia and Serbia to publicly celebrate the achievement of Romani student beneficiaries of REF’s scholarship schemes, to offer a networking opportunity to students and also to increase the program’s visibility. Overall, 166 students attended these events in addition to political and diplomatic representatives, Roma intellectuals, artists, activists, public representatives and NGO leaders. The galas, held simultaneously in Skopje and Tirana on November 7, and Belgrade on November 28, combined speeches, public celebrations of the students’ achievements, and roundtables and panel discussions; they covered topics ranging from career opportunities and the state of the labor market, to the workings of prejudice, media portrayals, public perceptions and the vicissitudes of Roma identity.

Table 19. Total Applicants and Beneficiaries of RMUSP, RHSP and RISP in the Balkans in 2014–2015 Academic Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RMUSP</th>
<th></th>
<th>RHSP</th>
<th></th>
<th>RISP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td>Beneficiaries</td>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td>Beneficiaries</td>
<td>Applicants</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>22</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20. Total Beneficiaries of RMUSP and RHSP by Level of Studies in the Balkans in 2014–2015 Academic Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RMUSP</th>
<th></th>
<th>RHSP</th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Vocational</td>
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<td>Master</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
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<tr>
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<td>97</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
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<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22</td>
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</table>
In 2014 a total of eight projects were supported by REF in Bulgaria, out of which three were completed by the end of the year. The projects focused on increased preschool enrollments, improved primary education attendance, and support to secondary school students. In Romania REF supported six projects, three of which were newly launched with EU funding in 2014 to combat early school leaving and provide second chance learning for young Roma to be better able to compete on the labor market.

In its latest 2014 assessment of progress made on Roma inclusion, the European Commission stressed that both Bulgaria and Romania need to intensify efforts to tackle segregation of Roma children in special schools or special classes in mainstream schools, citing new research by the Fundamental Rights Agency which found that for segregation in mainstream schools the percentage in Bulgaria is 29 percent and Romania 26 percent. Both countries face common challenges: low public expenditure on education, poor quality and efficiency, for Romani children low enrollment rates at preschool, high dropout rates from secondary school and stark inequalities between Roma and non-Roma at every stage of the education cycle.
According to the latest EU reports, the education system in Bulgaria is in dire need of improvement in terms of quality and efficiency. Public expenditure per student is among the lowest in EU28. Bulgaria has one of the highest proportions of young people who are not in employment, education or training (21.5 percent in 2012). Adult participation in lifelong learning is the lowest in the EU, with a significant gap compared to the EU average (1.7 percent compared to 10.5 percent in 2013).

The gap between Roma and non-Roma is stark: according to the Fundamental Rights Agency, among those aged 25–64, 80 percent of non-Roma completed upper secondary education in Bulgaria, whereas the rate among the Roma is 12 percent. Of the respondents who had attended school but left before the age of 16, the figures were 73 percent for Roma and 26 percent non-Roma. Despite preschool being obligatory, only 38 percent of Romani children are enrolled compared to 79 percent of non-Romani children.41

The 2014 Country Specific Recommendations by the European Council called on Bulgaria to scale up existing efforts to improve teacher training and reduce de facto segregation in

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schools, as well as to step up efforts to improve access to quality inclusive preschool and school education of disadvantaged children, in particular Roma.

Two projects currently underway provide support for the early childhood education model. One of the projects in Berkovitsa ensures regular attendance of Romani children in kindergartens, improves preschool learning outcomes, and facilitates children’s transition to desegregated mainstream elementary education. The project has succeeded in raising the percentage of Romani children attending kindergarten to 90 percent. Furthermore, 31 preschool Romani children received assistance in Bulgarian language skills in order to facilitate their enrollment into mainstream non-segregated primary schools.

A second preschool project based in Sofia also significantly increased the number of children enrolled and attending preschools. At the beginning of the 2013–2014 school year, the Equal Opportunities Association (EOA), launched a two-year, REF-supported project called Let’s Make Education Our Value. The program works with 208 children aged three to six. Since the REF interventions, which include support, advice and information for parents, the percentage of children between three and six enrolled in kindergartens rose from about 55 percent to more than 85 percent.

A project of the Association Center for Local and Regional Policies in partnership with the Municipality of Nikola Kozlevo implemented a preschool project in eleven villages within the municipality. The project consists of several components that aim to develop a sustainable early childhood education for Romani and non-Romani children of kindergarten and elementary school-age from the Municipality of Nikola Kozlevo.

The project is still ongoing, but there have already been considerable improvements and results. A campaign carried out to increase the awareness of the importance of kindergarten enrollment among parents resulted in 207 children enrolling in kindergarten for the 2013–2014 academic year. The following year a further 181 children enrolled, achieving a total of 388 Romani children, including 24 three-year-olds, in preschool within two years. The surge in preschool enrollments is directly attributable to the information and outreach work. In addition 85 primary schoolchildren were assisted in enrolling into five mainstream schools in the municipality in 2014.

In Montana, REF supported an interesting initiative that combined informal education, arts and culture targeting young Roma attending the local high schools with the aim to reduce dropout rates and raise graduation rates. As a result of the project, the dropout rate has fallen to zero, school attendance has improved markedly, and five students who were supported to continue their studies beyond secondary education enrolled into university. Of the five students, two opted for Primary and Preschool Pedagogy, one student chose Bulgarian Language and History, the fourth is training as a medical laboratory assistant and the fifth student will major in midwifery.
General government expenditure on education in Romania as a proportion of GDP is the lowest in the EU by a substantial margin and has fallen steadily since the onset of the crisis, reaching three percent in 2012.\(^{42}\) The statistics show that Romania is not only lagging behind the rest of Europe at every stage of the education cycle, but inequalities are particularly stark between Roma and non-Roma, and for the most disadvantaged the situation is worsening.

Participation in early childhood education is among the lowest in the EU and is about 24 percent for children from marginalized Romani communities. The early school-leaving rate is one of the highest in the EU, with the rate among Roma almost double that of non-Roma. Participation in lifelong learning activities continues to be among the lowest in the EU. Basic skills in math, science and reading of 15-year-olds fall far short of the EU average. Almost 90 percent of unregistered, unemployed Roma have a low level of education, and over half of all Roma still lack the minimum compulsory level of education.

Three new EU-funded projects launched by REF in 2014 specifically target young Roma and adults with a view to boosting their skills and qualifications to better compete on the labor market, by providing “second chance” training, and preventing early school leaving and dropping out from secondary, upper secondary and university studies.

In May 2014 REF launched the preparatory phase of the 16-month project *Integrated Educational Services for Roma Communities*, designed to improve the employability, competences and skills of Romani students aged 14 to 18. The program has three main strands: the provision of second chance programs and counseling services for more than 300 Roma who left school without qualifications; delivering an integrated service package, which includes mentorship and counseling, stipends and educational support to an estimated 500 high school pupils at risk of early school leaving (ESL); and building the capacities of 220 officials responsible for the implementation of measures designed to prevent ESL.

The project will be implemented in partnership with the “Together” Agency for Community Development in 17 counties across five regions.

Since the beginning of the project, over 40 schools from Romania were selected for the implementation of the project activities and 57 school principals were involved in monitoring the teachers’ activities in relation with the school beneficiaries and the implementation of the program. Also, more than 1,000 parents are involved in the activities where 67 school mentors were trained for offering counseling and information on the importance of education for parents and their children. More than 50 Romani communities have been selected since 2014, to be visited and informed about the project activities, and research is being conducted to assess the real impact

of the project on reducing early school leaving rates in the five regions. Another important component is represented by the implementation of the interregional platform for educating disadvantaged groups, which is dedicated mainly to school teachers (220), mentors (67) and school principals (57) and also to the project teams (main applicant and partners).

A similar project, Roma Children and Their Parents Want to Go to School, was also launched in May 2014 for students aged 10 to 14. Implemented in cooperation with the Resource Center for Roma Communities (CRCR) from Cluj, this project also provides second chance services, a support package to prevent ESL and capacity building for officials tasked with tackling ESL. The project will be implemented in Romania’s Central, North-East and South Muntenia regions targeting 310 adults, 800 fifth to eighth grade pupils, and about 240 teachers.

Two training courses were organized to improve the skills of teachers who are involved in the prevention and correction of early school leaving. Ninety teachers of Romanian Language and Literature and Mathematics attended a course which aimed to train them in the development of strategies and teaching and evaluation techniques, as well as methods of working with Romani students who are at risk of early school leaving, while a second training course was attended by 150 teachers involved in the implementation of corrective measures to tackle early school leaving in second chance programs. The purpose of this course was to acquire the professional skills for counseling in adult education, to learn negotiation techniques to be applied in school-community relationships, and to adapt the teaching process to adult education, while also focusing on Romanian and European legislation on equal opportunities.

After 66 mentors completed their training, the mentoring program for the student and adult project beneficiaries started in November 2014. The role of mentors is to motivate the project beneficiaries for further study, to organize and conduct individual and group meetings for personal development and communication skills and to provide educational and professional guidance. Also the mentors, where
appropriate, monitor the academic progress of Educational Integrated Service pupils and Educational Support students and work to improve the quality of school attendance.

In December 2014, REF Romania launched the activities of educational support and second chance in 43 schools. Eight hundred secondary school students have started to benefit from the integrated services of mentoring, counseling and additional sessions on Romanian Language and Literature and Mathematics. Also, 310 Roma adults started attending the second chance courses for the secondary level and were integrated in the mentoring program.

A third project launched at the end of 2014: Enhancing Roma Youth’s Access to Higher Education, focuses on tertiary education and aims to reduce the risk of dropouts at the early stages of university studies, through scholarships and an integrated mentorship system for 170 first and second-year Romani undergraduates. Mentoring, as a method of reducing university dropouts, will be disseminated to universities to promote this method. The selection of 50 mentors among Romani students from the final years of Bachelor, Master or Doctoral studies represents an innovative approach. Within the project, an electronic communication network for Romani students in Romania will be developed and will be linked to the Roma Education Fund alumni network. A total of 121 Romani students from the first year of university studies registered in 38 universities from Romania, were supported in 2014.

Scholarship Program in SEE

In 2014 REF Scholarship Program received a total of 1,210 applications from Romania and Bulgaria, for three of the four scholarship schemes of the program that are open to the applicants from these two countries. From this total, 671 applications were successful: 576 in RMUSP, 87 in RHSP and eight in RISP. The acceptance rates were 57 percent in RMUSP, 51 percent in RHSP and 35 percent in RISP. The eight RISP beneficiaries study in France (2), UK (2), Netherlands (1), Germany (1), Hungary (1) and Spain (1).

The distribution of accepted beneficiaries per level of studies in each scholarship scheme is presented in the Table 22 below.

In 2014 REF organized galas in both countries, events that were attended by 258 students.
### TABLE 21. TOTAL APPLICANTS AND BENEFICIARIES OF RMUSP, RHSP AND RISP IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE IN 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RMUSP</th>
<th></th>
<th>RHSP</th>
<th></th>
<th>RISP</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td>Beneficiaries</td>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td>Beneficiaries</td>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td>Beneficiaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,015</strong></td>
<td><strong>576</strong></td>
<td><strong>172</strong></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 22. TOTAL BENEFICIARIES OF RMUSP, RHSP AND RISP BY LEVEL OF STUDIES IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE IN 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RMUSP</th>
<th></th>
<th>RHSP</th>
<th></th>
<th>RISP</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>Undivided</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>459</strong></td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The network of Roma Education Fund consists of four entities (REF Entities) that have been established as legally separate foundations in Switzerland, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, respectively. The REF Entities cooperate based on a memorandum of understanding to achieve their shared primary objective to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. Each REF Entity has its separate board with independent members for their decisions. REF entities include:

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 23. SOURCES AND SPENDING OF REF FOUNDATIONS OF FUNDS IN 2014 IN EUR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REF SWITZERLAND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening foundation capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third party donor income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers within REF network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SOURCES WITH TRANSFERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary Scholarship Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own educational projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity building, policy development and communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative expenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accumulated capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Spending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers within REF network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SPENDING WITH TRANSFERS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Not including transfers from REF Romania. Total income considering this transfer is EUR 644,300

In 2014, REF remained a significant source of funding for Roma education projects. In the form of grants and loans, REF provided EUR 6.9 million to Romani organizations and Roma education-related projects. At the same time, REF is proud of being among the most efficient and effective organizations operating in the field of education: 90 percent of its budget is spent on programs and beneficiaries in 16 countries.

From a total funding available for REF in 2014 of approximately EUR 7.6 million, REF spent EUR 2.1 million on new grants contracted in 2014 and EUR 2.4 million on the tertiary scholarship program for Romani students. REF also spent EUR 1.7 million to implement its own educational projects from funding provided, inter alia, by the European Social Fund (ESF), European Commission, DG Employment, Norway Grants, UNICEF, OSCE and Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). A further EUR 0.8 million was spent on capacity building, communication, technical assistance, policy development and trainings. Although the REF network...
has been enlarged by establishment of a new foundation in Slovakia and a new branch office in Serbia, total administration expenses remained at the previous level of EUR 0.7 million, which is around 10 percent of total spending.

Thanks to our donors, including EUR 75,000 in donations from private individuals, as well as rigorous cost control and financial management, REF was able to maintain similar level of activities as in the previous years.

REF STRATEGY AND BUSINESS PLAN RENEWED FOR 2015-2020

In 2014, based on the review of past achievements and its experience gained over nine years in 16 countries of its operations, REF has defined its long-term strategy and business plan for the period of 2015-2020. REF has become a unique and important factor in narrowing the gap between Roma and non-Roma in educational outcomes and envisages remaining a main catalyst in this field in the following periods. To achieve this, besides maintaining diversified international activities, REF plans to scale up best practices in implementation EU/EEA funds. According to the strategy and business plan, which is available on REF’s website, by 2019 REF expects to spend a total budget of EUR 16.5 million, including the mobilization of EUR seven million of EU/EEA funds. The implementation of REF’s new strategy and business plan requires a complex fundraising strategy to maintain and enlarge the esteemed family of REF donors.

KEY EVENTS IN REF NETWORK

In 2014 REF witnessed further expansion of its network by the establishment of a new foundation, REF Slovakia in Presov, Slovakia and opening a branch office in Belgrade, Serbia. The new members of REF network are expected to scale up the activities of REF and mobilize additional ESF and IPA funding for Roma education projects in these two countries.

REF Switzerland (REF CH)

REF Switzerland provided EUR 1.7 million for grants in the framework of the project support program and EUR 1.9 million for tertiary scholarships. Due to the fact that some of our large donors committed funds for 2014 already in the course of 2012 and 2013, this spending on grants and scholarships was financed partly from new donor incomes and partly from funds accumulated in REF’s foundation capital of EUR 2,011,017 as of December 31, 2013. Since expenses
were only partly covered by new donor income, total expenses over income of REF Switzerland was EUR -2.0 million, including transfers to other REF entities of EUR 1.8 million. REF foundation capital (EUR 31,164) and cash position (EUR 2,637,563) remained stable in 2014.

REF Hungary (REF HU)
Following the opening of a branch office in Montenegro in 2013, REF Hungary opened a fully operational branch office in Belgrade, Serbia in 2014. The opening of the branch office in Belgrade was made possible by the funding received from OSCE Serbia to participate in a secondary scholarship (TARI) program in three locations of Serbia. Out of the total budget of EUR 839,310 of the TARI program, REF (financed by IPA funds) share is EUR 179,625.

The branch office in Montenegro successfully applied for a second round of funding for the local IPA, to implement the Konik Camp project in a consortium with Help – Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe e.V. The total budget managed by Montenegro branch office is EUR 331,309. In addition to this project, REF has agreed with the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro to manage a secondary scholarship and mentorship program for Roma and Egyptian secondary school students in a total value of EUR 150,000 for 2014 and 2015.

In 2014, REF Hungary established a foundation in Presov, Slovakia in order to scale-up its activities, and especially to apply for local ESF funds in the country.

On top of the projects of the branch offices, REF HU has been successful in applications for and started implementation of other international educational projects, including:
- A university research staff and student exchange program with the University of Sussex (UK), the University of Umea (Sweden) and the Universidad de Sevilla (Spain) with a total budget of EUR 89,600 for REF Hungary within the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation;
- A knowledge-sharing and capacity-building project involving NGOs from Bulgaria, Moldova and Serbia with a total budget USD 74,934 funded by UNICEF.

REF Hungary was successful in raising the attention of corporate donors, including renowned institutions such as Erste Group AG or Morgan Stanley.

It was a great honor for REF to be invited by Forbes Hungary as the first charity guest of their inaugural “The Best Gala” dinner in 2014. Forbes invited a selection of the most successful business people, celebrities and artists, as well as leading diplomatic missions in Hungary. As a result of the event REF raised some EUR 12,000, which is funding the “Forbes Scholarship” awarded to two exceptional Roma university students in Hungary.

In 2014, REF Hungary continued its cooperation with the Council of Europe Development Bank. Based on a loan agreement signed in 2013, in the course of 2014, REF Hungary drew EUR 0.5 million from the facility to pre-finance EU-funded projects of REF Romania.

REF Romania (REF RO)
Following the successful closure of two main and two partner ESF projects in 2013, REF Romania has received the final reimbursement of the Romanian management authority and recognized the final expenses of the projects in 2014.

In 2014, REF Romania remained successful in raising ESF and EEA funds and started implementation of large-scale educational projects, including:
- “Integrated Educational Services for Roma Communities” that provides integrated services to 310 Roma adults and 500 Roma secondary school students with a total budget of EUR 1.93 million funded by the EU;
- “Roma Children and Parents Want to Go to School!” that aims to prevent early school leaving of 800 Roma and help 310 Roma adults to complete their secondary education. The total budget of EUR 1.97 million is funded by the EU;
- “Enhancing Roma Youth’s Access to Higher Education” provides study scholarships and mentoring scheme to 170 Roma students enrolled in the first year of their Bachelor studies in Romania. The total budget of EUR 0.48 million is funded by the EU;
- The “Ready, Set, Go! – Increasing Early Childhood Development Outcomes for Roma Children” targets early childhood development outcomes for some 1,400 Romani children residing in six of Romania’s most disadvantaged counties with the highest absolute number and highest share of Roma population of preschool-age. The project is supported by a grant from Norway through the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014, in the framework of the “RO 25 Poverty Alleviation Programme in Romania.” The total grant amount is EUR 2.45 million.
REF Slovakia (REF SK)
REF Slovakia, established by REF Hungary in 2014, currently implements REF’s secondary scholarship program to improve school academic performance of the disadvantaged secondary school students, their attendance rate, graduation rate, transition rate from secondary to tertiary education and to decrease their dropout rate in Slovakia. The total budget of this program for the academic years of 2013–2014 and 2014–2015 is EUR 413,453.

REF Slovakia participates in the implementation of a nine-year long Pedagogy Scholarship Program in Slovakia and Czech Republic. The program with a total budget of EUR 1.14 million is funded by the Velux Foundations and the implementation is led by REF HU.

REF Slovakia also acts as a local coordinator of REF’s Tertiary Scholarship (RMUSP) program.

FUNDRAISING

REF is proud of having an expanding family of donors and is committed to follow a complex fundraising strategy to keep current donors and tap new sources of long-term funding. The key elements of REF’s fundraising strategy are to:

- Keep and strengthen long-term commitments of existing donors, while focusing on further diversification of incomes;
- Intensify communication and use new techniques to reach out to potential new donors;
- Cooperate with potential corporate donors active in the geographic region of REF and replace core costs with in-kind donations from suppliers;
- Strengthen cooperation with multilateral institutions and organizations (including public institutions) to create and utilize co-funding opportunities, such as the unique cooperation with the Council of Europe Bank;
- Applications for and implementation of EU/EEA funded projects falling within the competency and priorities of REF;
- Advocacy at EU and national level for funds for Roma education purposes.

In the last five-year period between 2010 and 2014, REF Network Entities raised more than EUR 44 million. Since donated funds are not necessarily spent in the year of donations, due to multi-year funding agreements or because donations are made for academic years, there is a strong fluctuation in donor incomes presented by the periods of actual receipt of funds by REF Entities. Similarly, in 2014, spending of REF Entities were partly covered by new donations and partly by accumulated income over the 2010–2014 period. An accrual-based presentation of donor incomes (when donations are presented in line with actual spending) would show more even distribution of donations over time.
### TABLE 24. DONATIONS RECEIVED BY REF ENTITIES, 2010–2014

#### DONORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DONORS</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
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<td>20,084</td>
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<td>EU: AGS project</td>
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<td>EvZ Stiftung “Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft”</td>
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<td>296,580</td>
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<td>Fundación Secretariado Gitano</td>
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<td>Government of Spain</td>
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<td>Individuals</td>
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<td>450</td>
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<td>LEGO Foundation</td>
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<td>Mirabaud wedding donation</td>
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<td>Morgan Stanley</td>
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<td>197</td>
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<td>Municipality of Ostrava</td>
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<td>Network of European Foundation</td>
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<td>155,072</td>
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<td>74,359</td>
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<td>2,094,538</td>
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<td>22,181,881</td>
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<td>Salzburg Global Seminar</td>
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<td>1,042,250</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
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<td>37,458</td>
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<td>World Bank Community Connection Fund</td>
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<td>9,717</td>
<td>8,375</td>
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<td>290,366</td>
<td>291,925</td>
<td>2,015,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total received by REF Switzerland</strong></td>
<td>7,148,989</td>
<td>7,452,631</td>
<td>8,432,502</td>
<td>6,746,205</td>
<td>3,647,247</td>
<td>33,427,574</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### DONATIONS RECEIVED BY REF HUNGARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DONORS</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American House Family</td>
<td>4,902</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4,902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernard Van Leer Foundation</td>
<td>260,918</td>
<td>68,448</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>329,366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commission-DG REGIO</td>
<td>956,555</td>
<td>717,244</td>
<td>234,195</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,907,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundación Secretariado Gitano</td>
<td></td>
<td>6,006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6,006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HELP HILFE</td>
<td>113,537</td>
<td>70,827</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>184,364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry for Human and Minorities Montenegro</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>76,242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Slovak Republic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5,955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REF Romania (Romanian Management Authority)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandor Demjan Foundation</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempus Foundation</td>
<td>2,025</td>
<td>1,001</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>192</td>
<td></td>
<td>4,006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations Development Program (UNDP)</td>
<td>1,732</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Velux Foundations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>92,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Bank IBRD</td>
<td>6,385</td>
<td>8,184</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other donors, individuals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37,525</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total donations received by REF Hungary</strong></td>
<td>764,965</td>
<td>1,230,895</td>
<td>438,060</td>
<td>87,255</td>
<td>644,100</td>
<td>3,365,275</td>
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#### DONATIONS RECEIVED BY REF ROMANIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DONORS</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fundación Secretariado Gitano</td>
<td>3,861</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5,261</td>
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<tr>
<td>Romanian Management Authority - as partner</td>
<td>180,128</td>
<td>149,155</td>
<td>406,796</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>736,079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian Management Authority - as lead entity</td>
<td>2,144,420</td>
<td>556,629</td>
<td>3,233,296</td>
<td>1,050,075</td>
<td></td>
<td>6,984,420</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>6,534</td>
<td>13,330</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19,864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>123</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total donations received by REF Romania</strong></td>
<td>2,330,902</td>
<td>725,025</td>
<td>3,641,515</td>
<td>1,050,075</td>
<td></td>
<td>7,745,517</td>
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</table>

#### TOTAL DONATIONS RECEIVED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8,113,954</td>
<td>11,014,428</td>
<td>9,593,587</td>
<td>10,474,975</td>
<td>5,341,422</td>
<td>44,538,366</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACCOUNTING POLICY

1 BOOK-KEEPING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

2 ACCOUNTING PRINCIPLES

2.1 GENERAL TERMS

The books of the REF Entities are basically maintained in local currency as of legal requirement with the exception of REF Switzerland where the books are maintained in EUR since its functional currency is EUR.

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

2.1.1 Currency Translation

All resulting unrealized and realized gains and losses from currency translations are recorded in a separate position in the statement of income and expenditure. Specific rules for the REF Entities are summarized below:

REF Switzerland

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

REF Hungary

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

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Photo: REF Romania

A Romani orchestra visits a classroom of a school participating in REF’s ESF project, Roma Children and Parents Want to Go to School.
REF Romania
All local currency positions in the profit and loss statement of REF Romania shall be translated from RON into EUR at the yearly average exchange rate of RON/EUR. All balance sheet positions at year-end are translated at the year-end rate of RON/EUR. All exchange rates are based on a publication of the Romanian National Bank.

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

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

2.2 INCOME

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

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

2.3 EXPENSES

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

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

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

2.4 BALANCE SHEET

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

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

2.4.3 Deferred costs
Costs have to be accrued actively which has emerged until the balance sheet date but does not relate to the activities of the year.

2.4.4 Accrued costs
Costs have to be accrued which are recognized until the balance sheet preparation and relates the activities of the year.
### TABLE 25. REF ENTITIES: BALANCE SHEET, DECEMBER 31, 2014 AND DECEMBER 31, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>REF SWITZERLAND</th>
<th>REF ROMANIA</th>
<th>REF HUNGARY</th>
<th>REF SLOVAKIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cash at banks</strong></td>
<td>2,637,563</td>
<td>3,668,166</td>
<td>55,180</td>
<td>235,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Receivables</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,307,835</td>
<td>2,285,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loan to REF Romania</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>675,000</td>
<td>319,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inventories</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,514</td>
<td>39,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other current assets</strong></td>
<td>2,796</td>
<td>40,302</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total current assets</strong></td>
<td>2,640,359</td>
<td>3,708,468</td>
<td>2,366,620</td>
<td>2,560,498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recoverable grants</strong></td>
<td>384,180</td>
<td>393,380</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long-term loan to REF Romania</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>572,802</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accrued income</strong></td>
<td>20,543</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intangible assets</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9,365</td>
<td>28,653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tangible assets</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total long term assets</strong></td>
<td>404,723</td>
<td>966,182</td>
<td>9,365</td>
<td>28,697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total assets</strong></td>
<td>3,045,082</td>
<td>4,674,650</td>
<td>2,375,894</td>
<td>2,589,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liabilities</strong></td>
<td>1,132</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>89,064</td>
<td>54,546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accrued expenses</strong></td>
<td>29,101</td>
<td>28,357</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provisions for projects granted</strong></td>
<td>2,945,267</td>
<td>2,654,444</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accounts payable to Partners</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,036,143</td>
<td>1,660,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loan from Council of Europe Development Bank</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>820,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long-term loans from REF Switzerland</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>572,802</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long-term loans from REF Hungary</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>680,695</td>
<td>320,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long-term loans from Agentia de Monitorizare o Presei</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>93,649</td>
<td>184,866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other provision</strong></td>
<td>38,418</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total liabilities and provisions</strong></td>
<td>3,013,918</td>
<td>2,663,633</td>
<td>2,899,651</td>
<td>2,792,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foundation capital as of January 1</strong></td>
<td>2,011,017</td>
<td>842,019</td>
<td>-203,960</td>
<td>-339,232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restatement of Foundation capital</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,203</td>
<td>4,366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Excess of expenditure over income</strong></td>
<td>-1,979,853</td>
<td>1,168,098</td>
<td>-319,837</td>
<td>138,364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year-end Translation Difference</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1,165</td>
<td>-6,668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foundation capital as of December 31</strong></td>
<td>31,164</td>
<td>2,011,017</td>
<td>-523,757</td>
<td>-203,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL LIABILITIES AND FOUNDATION CAPITAL**

|                      | 3,045,082 | 4,674,650 | 2,375,894 | 2,589,195 | 1,011,508 | 471,381 | 275,312 | 0    |

---

*Please note that the Foundation capital of REF Hungary and REF Slovakia has a positive balance according to applicable national accounting rules.*
### TABLE 26. REF ENTITIES: STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE OVER INCOME, 2014 AND 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donations received from third parties</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,647,247</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6,746,205</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,050,075</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,641,515</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations received from REF Switzerland</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>195,661</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations received from REF Hungary</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Support and other program refund</td>
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<td>216,382</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>239,241</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other income</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>727</td>
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<td>178</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest Income</td>
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<td></td>
<td>819</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain on Foreign Exchange</td>
<td></td>
<td>161,395</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2,438</td>
<td></td>
<td>9,270</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4,025,659</td>
<td></td>
<td>6,985,877</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,053,240</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,847,443</td>
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</table>

#### EXPENDITURE

<table>
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<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Support Program</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,743,051</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,859,971</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>179,652</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary Scholarships</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,918,491</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,746,007</td>
<td></td>
<td>15,955</td>
<td></td>
<td>21,367</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU Roma pilot - A Good Start and complimentary projects</td>
<td></td>
<td>12,264</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>97,056</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konik Camp project in Montenegro</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1,220</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
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<td>98,625</td>
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<td>258,829</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy development and capacity building</td>
<td></td>
<td>203,405</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>307,085</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Administrative expenses</td>
<td>554,275</td>
<td>459,413</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Value Adjustment on receivables</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losses on foreign exchange</td>
<td>1,024</td>
<td>2,276</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,832,926</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,426,222</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>305,312</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excess of expenditure over income</td>
<td>-85,363</td>
<td>-357,143</td>
<td>-46,359</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notas: 1-20
1. PROJECT SUPPORT PROGRAM
In the framework of the Project Support Program REF Entities provide grants to consortia of civil society and public institutions to implement education reform projects at all education levels in the Decade of Roma Inclusion countries.

2. TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
The target of this project is to provide scholarship for tertiary-level Romani students. The Program consists of five components:
- Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP).
- Law and Humanities Program (LHP)
- Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP)
- Interregional Scholarship Scheme (RISP)
- Professional Development Fund (PDF)

3. A GOOD START AND COMPLIMENTARY PROJECTS
The objective of this project is to ensure that all Romani and other poor and excluded children have access to quality ECEC services in 16 localities in rural and urban localities of the most deprived settlements in FYR Macedonia, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. This position contains the accumulated costs of this year.

4. KONIK CAMP PROJECT IN MONTENEGRO
This is an assistance program for the integration and return of displaced persons and residents of Konik camp in which REF implements the educational component through early childhood development programs.

5. COMMUNICATION
REF’s Communications promotes the exchange of knowledge and experiences, and communicating information on policies and programs that support Roma inclusion in education systems and represents one of the major pillars of REF’s activities through conferences, workshops and publications. This position contains the accumulated costs of this year.

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

7. INTERNATIONAL FAMILY PROJECT
This project supported networking and knowledge sharing on education issues that arise in family environments in Roma Decade and other European countries and ran until 2013.

8. REF ROMANIA – EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
The objective of this project is to increase school success rates for 1,250 Romani children in urban and rural areas and, children and their families have benefitted from the complex intervention package aimed to support school retention and to improve learning outcomes. The project ran until 2013. This position contains the accumulated costs of this year.

9. REF ROMANIA – SCHOOL AFTER SCHOOL
This project increases the enrollment and academic success in primary education for 2,000 children at risk from early school leaving. The project is implemented in three development regions in Romania and will service 50 schools over two school years and ran until approximately 2013.

10. REF ROMANIA – HEALTH PROGRAM
The objective of this project is to enable access to education and young Roma’s integration in the labor market, specifically in professions with high social prestige as well as those in the medical field and ran until approximately 2013.

11. REF ROMANIA – YOUTH ON THE LABOR MARKET
The project facilitates the access of the Roma youth in the labor market in order to reduce their social exclusion, discrimination, and risk of poverty and ran until 2012.

12. REF ROMANIA – CHILDREN AND PARENTS GOING TO SCHOOL
The target of this project is to develop and improve the skills and abilities of Roma people aiming for facilitation and insertion on the labor market by reducing early school leaving and providing access to quality education and will run until approximately the end of 2016.
13. REF ROMANIA – INTEGRATED EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR ROMA COMMUNITIES
The target of this project is to provide better access to the labor market for Roma people developing and improving their skills and abilities through reducing early school leaving. The project will run until approximately the end of 2016.

14. REF ROMANIA – INCREASING ACCESS OF THE ROMA YOUTH TO UNIVERSITY EDUCATION
The project increases access of young Roma to university education and reducing the dropout especially in the first years by providing an integrated package of 170 scholarships and mentorship scheme for freshmen until approximately the end of 2016.

15. REF ROMANIA – READY, SET, GO
The project is targeting early childhood development outcomes for some 1,400 Romani children residing in six of Romania’s most disadvantaged counties with the highest absolute number and highest share of Roma population of preschool-age. The project is supported by a grant from Norway through the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009–2014, in the framework of the RO 25 Poverty Alleviation Programme in Romania.

16. 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. The program will run until approximately the end of 2016.

17. 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.

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

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

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

21. OSCE TARI PROJECT
The project objective is to decrease dropout rate among Romani secondary school students at risk of dropping out in three main regions of Serbia. The program will run until approximately the end of 2015.
BOARDS

REF SWITZERLAND

01 Robert Kushen (Interim Chair) is a Senior Advisor at the Open Society Foundations (OSF); presently, he is the Director of the Institute of Roma Inclusion. He served as the Director of the Legal Adviser of the U.S. Department of State between 1999 and 2002. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Swiss Legal Academy. He is a lawyer.

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

03 Nicoleta Blaj is a PhD student in political science at the National School for Political and Administrative Sciences and president of Romani ButG association. He has worked for the OSF among others to shed light on and fight discrimination against the Roma minority in Romania and Europe, specifically women who face both ethnic and gender discrimination. She is a recognized and published expert in her field and sits on the boards of various local, national and international organizations.

04 Anna Björde is Director of Strategy and Operations at the Europe and Central Asia Vice Region of the World Bank, where she has worked since 1997. She is a graduate of the Master's Program at the University of Oulu and specialized in Roma youth empowerment and participation in Slovakia. She holds a MA in Social Sciences and president of Romani ButG association. He has worked for the OSF among others to shed light on and fight discrimination against the Roma minority in Romania and Europe, specifically women who face both ethnic and gender discrimination. She is a recognized and published expert in her field and sits on the boards of various local, national and international organizations.

05 Lívia Jároka, PhD, is an anthropologist who researched Roma youth identity at University College London. A Chevening and Wenner Gren Scholar, she is a former Member of the European Parliament (2004–2014) and author of the European Framework Strategy for Roma Inclusion in 2011. She received the MEP Award in Justice and Fundamental Rights in 2006, 2007, and was selected as a Young Global Leader (YFL) in 2008.

06 Lisa Jordan is Senior Director of Strategy and Learning at the Porticus Foundation. She holds a Master's Degree in Development Studies from the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, Netherlands.

07 Andrzej Migas is a Polish Roma who headed the Contact Point for Roma and Ethnic Minorities at the OSCE’s Warsaw-based Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) from 2006 till 2013. He is a long-term associate of the Project on Ethnic Relations and has served as an expert on the Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers of the Council of Europe, and later as its chair, in addition to several official posts in Poland.

08 Nadir Redzepi is a Macedonian Roma and has been an NGO activist since 1998. Currently he holds the position of Project Manager at Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma at the Open Society Foundations.

09 Judith Tóth is a Roma activist. She holds a Juris Doctor degree from Comenius University in Bratislava.

10 Alexander Wittwer is currently Swiss Ambassador to Slovakia and representative of the Swiss government on the REF Board. He studied at the University of Berne and is a lawyer.

11 Costel Bercus (Chair) graduated with a degree in International Relations and European Studies from Spiru Haret University in Bucharest and worked for the Romanian Center for Social Interventions and Studies before joining the Roma Education Fund in 2005.

12 Henna Muttu is a Finnish Roma activist. She studied in the International Master of Education Program at the University of Oulu and specialized in intercultural education and special education.

13 Katarina Mathenova was appointed as Senior Advisor for Europe and Central Asia Region, and Roma Issues at the World Bank in 2010. She holds a Juris Doctor degree from Comenius University and a Master of Law degree from the University of Michigan.

REF HUNGARY

14 Katalin E. Koncz is Executive Director of the Open Society Institute-Budapest. She is a member of the informal Roma Advisory Committee of the Open Society Institute.

15 Judith Tóth (Treasurer of REF CH Board) currently advises the Roma Institute for Inter-cultural Education and Special Education.

16 Desiderius Gergely is a Romanian Roma and former director of the European Roma Rights Center. A human rights lawyer since 2001, and actively involved and held positions in governmental and nongovernmental institutions such as Romani CRIS, Romania’s National Council for Combating Discrimination, the Council of Europe Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers and the European Commission on Non-Discrimination. He was appointed to the REF Romania Board in 2014.

17 Karina (Magda) Matiche is a Roma rights activist from Romania. In 2012 she was awarded a Hauser postdoctoral fellowship at the FXB Center, where currently she works as an instructor. From 2005 to 2012 Matiche was the executive director of Romani CRIS. Prior to this, Matiche served as a youth worker and trainer on cultural diversity and minority rights.

18 Judit Szira is an independent Roma consultant specializing in Roma youth empowerment and participation in Slovakia. She holds a MA in Social Sciences and president of Romani ButG association. He has worked for the OSF among others to shed light on and fight discrimination against the Roma minority in Romania and Europe, specifically women who face both ethnic and gender discrimination. She is a recognized and published expert in her field and sits on the boards of various local, national and international organizations.

REF ROMANIA

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

20 Valentina Petrus is originally from Romania and now lives and works in Slovakia. She studied law at the University of Bucharest and at Comenius University in Bratislava. She has more than 12 years of professional experience in human rights legislation, legal research and analysis, training, NGO development projects and policy issues. In 2015, Valentina joined the team of Habitat for Humanity International as an Assistant Legal Counsel for Europe, Middle East and Africa, as well as a Senior Advisor to the Open Society Foundation - Bratislava.

REF SLOVAKIA

21 Gyula Váralyay is a Roma rights lawyer since 2001, and actively involved and held positions in governmental and nongovernmental institutions such as Romani CRIS, Romania’s National Council for Combating Discrimination, the Council of Europe Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers and the European Commission on Non-Discrimination. He was appointed to the REF Romania Board in 2014.

22 Judith Tóth (Treasurer) heads the Institute for Inter-cultural Education and Special Education.

23 Margarita (Magda) Matiche is a Roma rights activist from Romania. In 2012 she was awarded a Hauser postdoctoral fellowship at the FXB Center, where currently she works as an instructor. From 2005 to 2012 Matiche was the executive director of Romani CRIS. Prior to this, Matiche served as a youth worker and trainer on cultural diversity and minority rights.

24 Judit Szira is an independent Roma consultant specializing in Roma youth empowerment and participation in Slovakia. She holds a MA in Social Sciences and president of Romani ButG association. He has worked for the OSF among others to shed light on and fight discrimination against the Roma minority in Romania and Europe, specifically women who face both ethnic and gender discrimination. She is a recognized and published expert in her field and sits on the boards of various local, national and international organizations.
Anastasia Jelasity in 2007. She recently graduated with an MA in Public Policy from Central European University, Budapest.

Merzilia Idrizi is a Macedonian Roma who has been working at REF since its establishment. She holds an MA in Public Administration from the University of Skopje, where in 2010 she also obtained her PhD in Sociology on Roma education.

Peter Tóth (Chief Financial Officer) is a Hungarian finance professional. He graduated from the Budapest University of Economics in 1997 and earned a Chartered Financial Analyst designation in 2001. He joined REF in May 2014. He also serves as a member of supervisory board of the Foundation for the International Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities.

ERÖSZÁNCSI ORSZÁGOS ORSÓFIANYOSZTÁZ (FOSIM) among others.

Aida Mihajlovic is a Macedonian Roma who has been working at REF since 2006. Ms. Mihajlovic holds a degree in Business Management and an MA in Social Politics from ELTE University. She spent eight years as an Assistant Casino Manager before joining REF.

Jezika published in Croatia and primary school education, concentrating on equity and inclusion issues.

Slovenian language grammar Gramatika Romskog jezika is an Alumni of the Harvard Kennedy School’s Executive Education program. She previously worked as a licentiate diploma in Political Science and the Foundation Open Society Institute – Macedonian (FOSIM) among others.

Judit Szira is a Slovak Roma who has worked at REF since 2006. She holds a degree in Mathematics and Chemistry and a degree in Physics. She has managed numerous programs dealing with education, health, civil participation and gender issues.

Tom Bass is a Macedonian Roma and analyst to EU projects before joining REF. He is graduate student at the University of Split, Faculty of Social Sciences, English Department, Sarajevo University.

Azam Bayburdi (Finance and Administrative Coordinator) holds an MBA in Economics and joined REF in 2010.

Dan Pavel Doghi (Higher Education Program Manager, Director REF Romania) is a Romanian Roma who worked for seven years at the OSCE ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues. He studied social work at Babes-Bolyai University and completed a postgraduate course in International Diplomacy at Malta University.

Nadezda Kostovska (Senior Program Officer) is a Macedonian Roma who has been actively involved with Roma civil society since 1999. She has managed numerous programs dealing with education, health, civil participation and gender issues.

Stella Garas (Program and Studies Officer) is a Moldovan national and holds a PhD in Political Science from Central European University, as well as a licentiate diploma in Political Science and English Language from Moldova State University. She previously worked for the CEEU Asia Research Initiative and joined REF in January 2012.

Zoltan Varadi, Hungary

Szilvia Pallaghy (Program Officer) holds an MBA, an MA in Literature and an MA in Psychology. After working in the private sector as Human Resources Specialist for General Electric, she worked at the Budapest Ministry of Education before joining REF.

Nikola Zoric (Scholarship Program Officer) is an Albegovica and has been actively involved with Roma civil society since 1999. She has managed numerous programs dealing with education, health, civil participation and gender issues.

Nadja Jocić-Rakovic is a Serbian Roma who has been actively involved with Roma civil society since 1999. She has managed numerous programs dealing with education, health, civil participation and gender issues.

SLOVAKIA

Viktor Turo is a Slovak Roma. He graduated from St. Elisabeth University of Health and Social Work in Michalovce. Viktor has spent more than 10 years as manager of Roma projects and he worked in the Roma settlements as a social worker. Was a member and leader of many NGOs, informal groups, and a youth trainer.

Aluna Lepadatu, USA

Michelle Fong, USA

Jasar Jasarevic, Serbia

Aluна Lapadatu, Moldova

David Mahomad, Bulgaria

Philippe-Edgar Maritsa, Bulgaria

Mihaly Oros, Hungary

Jozsef Rustas, Hungary

Eser Smith, USA

Zoltan Varadi, Hungary

Chessa Arey, USA

Madalina Buica, Moldova

Laszlo Hars, Hungary

REF COUNTRY FACILITATORS

ALBANIA AND KOSOVO

Marsela Taho received her degree in social work from the University of Tirana and also completed the Romen Participation Program at the Central European University in Budapest. She has worked with children and their families as a social worker for many different organizations.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Ognjan Iasev is a Roma from Varbita, Bulgaria. He has an undergraduate degree in Journalism from Shumen University “Bishop Konstantin Preslavsky”, a MA in Psychology from the University of Veliko Tarnovo “St. Cyril and Methodius”, and a post-graduate diploma from the Bulgarian School of Politics “Dimitar Panitch” at New Bulgarian University of Sofia. In 2013 Ognyan was selected as a trainee to participate in the World Forum for Democracy, organized by Council of Europe.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Jan Stejskal holds a Ph.D. in law and legal science and a B.A. degree in sociology and media studies, both from the Masaryk University, Brno. Previously he worked as an educator in law and political science, as an election campaign manager, and as a coordinator of the “Together to School” (Úkřešte návštěvu škol) coalition.

CROATIA

Siniša-Senad Musić is a Roma from Zagreb, Croatia. He is graduate student at the University of Split, who also teaches at the Centre for Professional Studies of Accounting and Finance. He also works for Roma National Council (RNV) and is the President of Roma Youth Organization (ROM).

HUNGARY

Nikoletta Olah is a Hungarian Roma who graduated with a BA from the University of Pécs in Social Work, a BA from Corvinus University in Social Management and an MA in Social Politics from ELTE. Previously she worked as a project coordinator and analyst to EU projects before joining REF.

Zsuzsa Arany, Hungary

Máté László, Hungary

REF HEADQUARTERS IN BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

Judit Szirá (Executive Director) holds a teaching degree in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and a degree in Public Education. Judit has been working from the beginning of her career in the field of public education, concentrating on equity and inclusion issues.

Ernőszék Bádér (Scholarship Program Junior Officer) is a Hungarian Roma who holds a BA degree in English Studies. She previously worked as an International Coordinator at the Roma Press Center in Budapest.

Tom Bass (Communication Officer) holds MAs in Political Science and Creative Writing and a certificate in literary translation. He previously worked as an editorial consultant for the Open Society Foundations and other prominent international organizations.

Azam Bayburdi (Administrative Officer) holds an MBA in Finance, Statistics, and Management from Greenwich University. Before joining REF as an Administrative Officer, Azam worked for the Ministry of Education.

Dan Pavel Doghi (Higher Education Program Manager, Director REF Romania) is a Romanian Roma who worked for seven years at the OSCE ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues. He studied social work at Babes-Bolyai University and completed a postgraduate course in International Diplomacy at Malta University.

Andrea Dirombít (Financial Officer) is a Hungarian Roma who holds an MA degree in English Studies from ELTE University. She spent eight years as an Assistant Casino Manager before joining REF.

Nerija Durmi (Junior Program Officer) is a Roma from Macedonia. She holds an International Baccalaureate from the United World College of the Adriatic in Italy, and a BA degree in English Language and Literature. Nerija is the co-author of the Romani-language grammar Gramatika Romskog jezika published in Croatia and primary school textboo Romani ćhib in Kosovo. She previously worked for RomaVersitas in Skopje and on Roma inclusion issues at the Foundation Open Society Institute – Macedonia.

MERZILJA IDRIZI (Scholarship Program Officer) is a Macedonian Roma, has a BS degree in Economics and Financial Management from the University of St. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje and joined REF in 2007. She recently graduated with an MA in Public Policy from Central European University.

Anastasia Jelasity (Fundraising and Communication Officer) has a BA in Political Science from DePaul University and MA in Applied Linguistics from University of Illinois in Chicago. A dual citizen of Greece and the United States, she was previously responsible for strategic planning for the Association of Business Women in Serbia.

Nikola Zoric (Scholarship Program Officer) is a Macedonian Roma who previously worked for Roma NGO Drom in Voin, Bulgaria. He holds a MA in Psychology from South West University in Bulgaria.

Anastazija Nagy (Program Officer) is a Hungarian Roma who graduated from Budapest’s Corvinus University - Faculty of Public Administration in 2002 and holds a MA by Policy from Central European University, Budapest.

Beata Bilimol Olaheva (Grant Program Manager) is a Slovak Roma who has worked at REF since 2006. She holds a degree in Business Management and received an MBA from the CEU Business School. Beata was also a member of the Management Board of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and is an Alumni of the Harvard Kennedy School’s Executive Education program.

REF STAFF

REF INTERNS AND VOLUNTEERS

Chezza Arey, USA

Madalina Buica, Moldova

Michelle Fong, USA

Jasar Jasarevic, Serbia

Aluна Lapadatu, Moldova

David Mahomad, Bulgaria

Philippe-Edgar Maritsa, Bulgaria

Mihaly Oros, Hungary

Jozsef Rustas, Hungary

Eser Smith, USA

Zoltan Varadi, Hungary

Chessa Arey, USA

Madalina Buica, Moldova

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David Mahomad, Bulgaria

Philippe-Edgar Maritsa, Bulgaria

Mihaly Oros, Hungary

Jozsef Rustas, Hungary

Eser Smith, USA

Zoltan Varadi, Hungary
## GRANT TABLE 2014

### CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>TOTAL BUDGET</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Czech Republic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ostrava region</td>
<td>Bily Nosorozec o.p.s. and Beleza Ostrava, o.s.</td>
<td>191,817</td>
<td>Increase the enrollment rates in kindergartens and mainstream elementary schools, and provide ECEC services to families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prague</td>
<td>People in Need</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>Increase the enrollment rate of children from disadvantaged environments in kindergartens and integrated primary schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usti Nad Labem Region</td>
<td>REF implemented project</td>
<td>4,872</td>
<td>Information campaign on the importance of kindergarten enrollment and facilitation of preschool enrollment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hungary</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Add a kezd az eselyegenloseg megtersemesnek segitese az oktatásban és a munkaesőpiacon közhasznú Egyesület (Give Me Your Hand Association)</td>
<td>86,235</td>
<td>Provide ECEC services, increase the school readiness of Romani children through A Good Start program and increase the active citizenship of the Roma parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khetanipe Association</td>
<td>11,208</td>
<td>Develop the skills, capabilities and school readiness of disadvantaged Roma children aged between zero and six. Strengthen the link between parents and preschools, expand access and participation in integrated ECEC services and raise the quality of education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nagyecsed Városért Egyesület</td>
<td>32,340</td>
<td>Provide Romani children with access to a range of toys in two Toy Libraries in order to challenge and stimulate further development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ORIGO-PLUSZ Community Developer Association</td>
<td>29,827</td>
<td>Decrease spontaneous segregation at the primary-school level, ensure the integration of school starters and support the transition of the children in different school levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roma European Organization</td>
<td>32,340</td>
<td>Enroll disadvantaged Roma children in integrated schools in Tolcsva, reverse segregated education and enhance their transition to secondary schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RomaVersitas Foundation</td>
<td>19,241</td>
<td>Reduce dropout rates in early school and facilitate school enrollment for Romani children returning from Canada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Szines Gyöngyök Egyesület (Colorful Beads Association)</td>
<td>27,280</td>
<td>Increase the percentage of Romani university graduates and support them academically, professionally and financially through RomaVersitas centers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sírius Gyöngyök Egyesület</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>Advocacy awareness on the value of education through arts and music performed by six young Roma from Budapest at a Pécs music festival with the act Tudas6alom, meaning “Knowledge is power.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Slovakia</strong></td>
<td>Civic Association ETP Slovakia – Centre for Sustainable Development</td>
<td>40,044</td>
<td>Achieve improvement in educational attainment, increase attendance rate, and encourage success in standard education institutions (kindergartens and schools) of marginalized Roma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Country association of Romani Initiatives, KARI Union</td>
<td>42,545</td>
<td>Improve the early childhood development outcomes of 135 Roma and disadvantaged non-Roma children aged zero to six. Improve access to quality mainstream ECEC services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural Association of Roma in Slovakia - K2RS</td>
<td>49,560</td>
<td>Reduce the gap in early childhood development results of children aged zero to three and three to six from the Roma communities in Martin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal Chances Association – Slovakia</td>
<td>24,149</td>
<td>Reduce the gap in early childhood development outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. Enhance the teaching quality and sensitivity of the teaching staff in preschool facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ternipe – združenie pre rómsku mládež na Slovensku a v Maďarsku</td>
<td>413,455</td>
<td>Improve the school academic performance of disadvantaged secondary school students through their attendance rate, graduation rate, transition rate from secondary to tertiary education and by decreasing their dropout rate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Terpine – združenie pre rómsku mládež na Slovensku a v Maďarsku</td>
<td>69,752</td>
<td>Improve Roma students’ academic performance, increase their transition rate to secondary education and decrease dropout rate through after-school activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The County Association of Roma Initiatives - KARI
Banska Bystrica .................................................. $2,866

EASTERN EUROPE

TOTAL BUDGET
Moldova
Roma National Centre
Nationwide .......................................................... $71,790

Union of Young Roma Tarnar Rom
Ursari, Parcari, Scimina (Calarasi District), Vulcanaesti (Nisporeni District) ...... $13,809

BALKANS

TOTAL BUDGET
Albania
ARSIS, Social Organization for the Support of the Youth
Tirana and Durres .................................................. $263,572

Disutni Albania
Tirana and Korca .................................................. $109,620

Save the Children
Korca and Gjirokaster ............................................. $93,020

Union for Development and Integration of Roma Minority in Albania “Amaro-Drom”
Elbasan, Kucove, Grabian/Lushnje and Levan/Fier ................................ $83,296

Bosnia & Herzegovina
Association of Citizens “OTAHARIN”
Bijeljina and Zivince Municipalities ........................................... $73,754

Center for Support of Roma “Romalen” Kakanj
Zonica Doboj Canton, Kakanj municipality ................................... $80,930

Novi Most International
Mostar ................................................................. $62,132

SAE Roma
Kiseljak, Husino, Ljubice, Bukinje/Olanovica, Skahovica, Grivice, Oska, Banovici and Cubric .................................................. $67,054

Croatia
Kindergarten “Maslacak”
Murasko Sredice ..................................................... $14,702

Medjimurska Zupanija
Macevac, Mala Subotica, Oreho vocab Pribisljavc and Kotoriba (Medjimurje County) ............................ $42,150

NGO “SFERA”
Medjimurje County .................................................. $15,442

Oaza, Association for Homeless and Socially Vulnerable People
Primorsko-Goranska County, Rijeka ........................................... $26,161

Kosovo
Kosovo Agency for Advocacy and Development – KAAD
Nationwide .......................................................... $80,590

Kosovo Education Center
Slobodan/Municipality of Jezin, Gračanica and Preševo/ Municipality of Gračanica, Pejinci/Municipality of Obiliq and Roma Mahalla in Gjakovë, Municipality of Gjakovë .............................. $100,619

Ministry of Education Science and Technology in Kosovo and Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians
Nationwide .......................................................... $282,380

Save the Children
Gjakovë/Elbasca, Perizaj/Uroševac, Gjipjan/Gjiplani, Mitrovica North, Mitrovica South, Peja/Piç, Prizren .... $39,266

support kindergarten attendance of Roma children from marginalized Roma communities. Increase the ability of mothers to manage their own life and their parental skills at the same time.

Support young Romani students’ academic performance at the tertiary level by offering a wide range of services through a RomaVersitas center.

Convince decision-makers and ensure political commitment for the implementation of desegregated elementary school services for Roma children in Moldova. Develop a national curricula for community mediators in educational system.

Decrease dropout rate among Roma and Egyptian lower and upper secondary school students at risk of dropping out through better outreach and positive interventions (scholarships and mentorship programme) and support them till the final exam (Matura or equivalent).

Increase retention rate, academic performances and graduation rate; build the self-esteem and identity of about 80 Roma/Egyptian students. Improve professional and personal skills as well.

Ensure school enrollment and attendance of Romani and Egyptian children and encourage interethnic interactions and relations in selected primary schools.

Improve the ECEC outcomes and the school readiness of disadvantaged Roma children aged three to six. Strengthen parenting skills and the link between parents and preschools, expand the access to integrated ECEC services and raise the quality of teaching and learning.

Improve and expand the level of participation of Roma children in the field of preschool, primary and secondary education by including all Roma communities in Bijeljina and Zivince.

Increase enrollment and attendance rate of all Roma children in elementary schools through improvement of attendance, school performance and involvement of Roma parents in the education process.

Create sustainable conditions for full integration of Roma children in elementary school education within Medjimurje County.

Contribute to the social inclusion of the Romani population in Medjimurje County through strengthening educational achievements of primary school children with after-school support.

Improve academic development, cognitive abilities, social skills and integration of Roma children into a desegregated school system through additional after-school classes.

Increase the retention rate and academic achievements of Roma university students and increase post-graduation career prospects.

Improve the school readiness and early childhood development outcomes of 110 RAE and 90 RAE returnees children in five localities in Kosovo. Expand the access to integrated ECEC services.

Improve academic performance and maintain the retention rate of RAE secondary school students through provision of scholarship, school based tutorship/mentorship and effective outreach.

Support a total of 450 marginalized preschool and school aged children in eight municipalities located throughout Kosovo.
**Macedonia**

**AMBRELA Foundation**  
Shuto Orizari  
$61,222

**Association for Roma Community Development**  
SUMNAL  
Skopje and Bitola  
$43,200

**Association for Support of Marginalized Groups - Roma Resource Center**  
Shuto Orizari  
$56,880

**Foundation Open Society -Macedonia**  
Skopje  
$35,426

**Ministry of Education and Science**  
Nationwide  
$306,930

**Ministry of Education and Science of Republic of Macedonia**  
Nationwide  
$334,864

**Ministry of Labor and Social Policy**  
Shuto Orizari, Chaar, Center, Karposh, Gazi Baba, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kichevo, Prilep, Bitola, Kumanovo, Vele, Shtip, Kochani, Vinica, Delchevo, Palchevo and Berovo  
$40,000

**NGO KHAM - Delchevo**  
Crnik - Pelcevo, Delchevo and vTrabovisnica, Vinica  
$71,375

**Roma Democratic Development Association**  
SONCE  
Tetovo, Gostivar, Debar and Ricevo  
$72,568

**RomaVersitas Macedonia**  
Skopje,Tetovo and Strp  
$152,308

**Svetlaidnima**  
Kochani  
$54,155

**Montenegro**

**Bureau for Education (BIE), Institute of Social Inclusion (ISI)**  
Nationwide  
$49,018

**Bureau for Education (BIE), Institute of Social Inclusion (ISI)**  
Nationwide  
$66,187

**Help – Hilfe zur Selbshilfe e.V.**  
836

**JPV Djina Vrbitca**  
Konik Camp, Podgorica  
$14,400

**Roma Education Fund Representation Office in Montenegro**  
Nationwide  
$72,289

**Roma Education Fund Representation Office in Montenegro**  
Podgorica, Konik Camp  
$9,070

**Serbia**

**Association of Roma-Serbian Friendship Stablo**  
Nis  
$45,340

**Consortium of five Roma NGOs**  
Kraljevo, Krusevac, Krajsugavec, Ohrenovac and Novi Sad  
$132,480

**Preparatory Preschool Program – PPP implemented by REF**  
Nationwide  
$68,800

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Reduce the gap in early childhood development outcomes through increased numbers of enrolled children aged three to six in kindergarten and primary schools by facilitating access to quality ECEC programs.

Improve the performance and grades of Roma pupils and decrease their dropout rate in school. Increase the capacities of students to work effectively with Roma children.

Increase retention and improve educational performance/outcomes of Roma children who study in second, third and fourth grades in primary education within municipality of Shuto Orizari.

Empower about 80 Roma University and 40 high school students socially and academically in order to be better prepared for their future career and to become socially responsible and active citizens.

Improve the retention and graduation rate of Roma students enrolled to Secondary schools in Macedonia through the provision of scholarships and school-based mentoring/tutoring.

Improve the retention and achievement rates of all Romani students enrolled in first, second, third and fourth classes in secondary schools from 2011-2015.

Improve the school readiness of 477 Roma children aged (5.8–5.9) in 18 Macedonian localities by increasing access to mainstream kindergarten services.

Improve the ECEC outcomes and the school readiness of 995 disadvantaged Roma children aged three to six in 18 municipalities/localities in Macedonia. This is a continuation of the national preschool program.

Advocate for the implementation of policy documentation and institutionalization of Roma mediators in elementary schools.

Provide assistance and improve enrollment to kindergartens of 63 beneficiary children. Involve Roma parents in ECEC education and improve the socio-economic status of the Roma families.

Increase retention rate and improve academic performance of Roma children from second and fourth grades in Tetovo, Gostivar, Debar and Ricevo.

Enhance the retention rate, graduation, academic achievements and personal capacities of Roma university students in Macedonia.

Increase the literacy rate of at least 50 Romani adults and assistance through "Second Chance" programs.

Improve the academic performance and transition rate to secondary education and maintain retention rate of Roma/RE secondary school students through provision of scholarships, school-based mentorship and effective outreach.

Provide safe transport facilities and ensure regular attendance to city schools.

Support the integration of 150 Romani and Egyptian children into preschool and primary schools and develop a Toy Library as part of an ECEC component.

Improve the academic performance and transition rate to secondary education and maintain retention rate of Roma/RE secondary school students through provision of scholarships, school-based mentorship and effective outreach.

Provide useful summertime activities and prepare RE children for the next academic year. Build a relationship between the RE community and primary schools participating in the desegregation process.

Improve the retention, performance and graduation rates of 89 Roma full-time tertiary students in Serbia by providing them with academic tutoring/mentoring and other programs.

Provide comprehensive early childhood education services to Roma children.

Contribute to the social inclusion and poverty reduction of Serbian Roma by reducing the gap in early childhood development outcomes between Roma and non-Roma with special regard to the most disadvantaged.
Romania (Center, North East and South Muntenia)

Communities; REF Budapest

REF Romania, Resource Center for Roma Communities; REF Budapest

Romania (Center, North East and South Muntenia)

SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

Bulgaria

“Amala – R” Foundation

Pleven

Nikola Kozlev

Association Center for Local and Regional Policies

Kyustendil Municipality

Kyustendil, Iztok District

“New Future” Association

Montana

Resource Center for Education and Culture Sham Foundation

Montana Municipality

RomaVersitas Association

Sofia, Shumen and Blagoevgrad

Romania

Matias Organization

Jilava

Romani CRISS – Roma Centre for Social Intervention and Studies

Craiowa, Dolj county

Ruhama Foundation

Teleskov and Oradea

INTERNATIONAL

Central European University

International

VELUX Projects

REF + VELUX Foundation

Czech Republic (Ustrzycky, Moravian-Silezian, Prague City, South Moravian, Olomouc) Hungary (Borsod-Abasúj)

Zemplén, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Pest, Budapest, Heves, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Hajdu-Bihar, Baranya) Slovakia (Prešov, Kosice, Banska Bystrica and Nitra)

IPA Projects

Medjimurje County

Croatia (Medjimurje County)

Help – Hilfe Zur Selbsthilfe, REF, Legal Centre, Juventas, Danish Refugee Council and Red Cross of Montenegro

Montenegro

REF

Serbia (Vojvodina)

ESF Projects

REF Romania, Community Development Agency “Together,” REF Budapest

Romania (Center, North East, South East, Bucharest Ilfov and South Muntenia)

REF Romania, REF Budapest

Romania (Bucharest Ilfov)

REF Romania, Resource Center for Roma Communities; REF Budapest

Romania (Center, North East and South Muntenia)

TOTAL BUDGET

330,000

Increase the graduation rate of prospective Romani university students and improve the professional and academic achievements of tertiary students in a RomaVersitas center.

Support the access of Roma children from Pleven to preschool and primary education and improve their education performance and learning skills.

Develop a sustainable early childhood education development model for Roma and non-Roma children at kindergarten and elementary school age from the Municipality of Nikola Kozlev.

Support a preschool campaign in the Romani community to facilitate the enrollment of their children in preschools.

Increase Roma preschool children’s education learning outcomes and transition to public desegregated mainstream elementary education.

Provide the opportunity for Roma children from Iztok to study in mixed/integrated schools, rather than attending segregated schools.

Develop skills and knowledge of Roma children from Ogoستa District through organization and provision of extracurricular classes.

Prevent school dropouts and increase graduation rates of Romani secondary school students from the municipality of Montana.

Encourage and assist Roma youth to get higher education and establish RomaVersitas program in Bulgaria.

Ensure the enrollment and the improved performance of Romani children into preschool programs and primary education.

Increase attendance and enrollment rate of involved Roma children to kindergarten and school, and ensure quality early childhood services for 120 children.

Improve the attendance rate of children ages zero to three and three to six years old in preschool programs and while simultaneously working to improve local parenting skills.

The Roma Education Fund has supported the Roma Graduate Preparation Program (RGPP), previously known as the Roma Access Program (RAP) of Budapest’s Central European University (CEU) since 2005. The program has supported young Roma to access internationally recognized graduate universities, including the CEU, and to pursue their Master’s studies.

Increase the number of female kindergarten teachers and nursery of Romani origin in the regions of Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. Facilitate the access to pedagogical vocational education for ethnic Romani women coming from poor social-economic background.

Include three primary schools in the Extended Stay Program in order to improve the academic achievement of Romani children.

Help the social integration of I/DP living in the Konik Camp area through offering employment, housing, educational desegregation, ECEC services and legal services.

Increase the enrollment and retention rate and improve learning outcomes of Romani students enrolled in secondary schools in Serbia.

Development and improvement of skills and abilities of Roma in order to facilitate their insertion in a modern, flexible and inclusive labor market by providing equal access to education and reducing the phenomenon of dropping out.

Enhance Roma youth’s access to higher education and reduce their risk of dropping out in their first years by providing 170 study scholarships to Roma students enrolled in their first year of Bachelor studies, and through the implementation of a mentorship scheme for Roma students in first year of Bachelor studies.

Development and improvement of skills and abilities of the Roma in order to facilitate their insertion in a modern, flexible and inclusive labor market by providing equal access to education and reducing the phenomenon of dropping out.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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

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This Report has been prepared by REF staff.

Cover photo:
RMUSP scholarship beneficiaries Ariela Tifi, Klaudia Vezaçi, Aurora Koci and Danjel Hyseni attend the REF Gala held in November in Tirana, Albania.
Photo: Elvin Shytaj

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