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Chairman’s Message

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”
- Nelson Mandela

Thinking about education as a “danger” to the status quo for Roma communities oppressed by racism and a “weapon” of positive change in the world was key in my decision to accept the responsibility of becoming the new Chair of REF’s Governing Board in November 2019.

I now have the enormous responsibility of building on the work of my predecessors with care and passion. At the same time, my responsibility is to shape the future of an organization that has been a driver of the education agenda in Europe, positively affecting tens of thousands of Roma parents and students at all levels of education. The organization lives and works in very different times and faces different challenges than when it was created in 2005. Most importantly, governments in Central and Eastern Europe are less open to Roma, and racism is more widespread and politically reinforced, while EU enlargement still gives hope and yet raises caution. This requires important organizational adaptation and a new strategy.

In 2019, REF continued to support scholarships for Roma students, give grants for advocacy, research and educational activities, directly implement projects, and advocate for Roma education at the local, national and European levels. It was also a year of celebration, with Roma Education Fund Romania celebrating 10 years of existence. A decade of activity has meant a significant impact on the education of 23,778 pupils and adults through 2,478,075 teaching hours delivered in 557 schools. This milestone was acknowledged by Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, who participated in a celebration at one of the 11 kindergartens built with REF support during these years. I am also proud of the development of REF structures in Serbia and Slovakia that have become important actors in civil society and relevant partners for national and local authorities in improving access to education for Roma.

In 2020, “transition” will be a key word. We will intensify and complete the transition we started in 2019: the transition of our headquarters from Budapest to Belgrade, the leadership transition at the board and management levels, and the transition from the strategy of the last 15 years to a new one for post-2020. This transition period will have a great impact on how our organization works and the change we can contribute towards in the educational experiences of Roma students, their families and communities.

2020 is not only a year of transition because of our own internal changes. All the social, political and economic contexts are changing as a response to the worldwide coronavirus crisis. Roma communities have been greatly affected by the crisis because many live in extremely poor conditions due to historical marginalization, and access to online solutions is not always available to them. REF is prepared to adapt and react to the new context, to identify the best solutions for Roma students at all levels and to contribute with our own resources to reducing the negative impact of the pandemic.

Finally, I do believe that a library card can be a dangerous weapon. However, Roma Education Fund, not only as a single institution but as part of a larger collective – together with many Roma with library cards, their parents, Roma and pro-Roma organizations, and supportive public officials – is more than a weapon. It is a kind of liberation army against oppression, inequality and injustice. I am ready to do my part, but I cannot do it alone without you.

Are you ready to join us?

Thank you for your continued support,
Ciprian Necula
Chair
2019 YEAR IN REVIEW

6,754 beneficiaries

2,568 preschool children

881 primary school children

2,029 secondary school students

1,976 Roma parents

1,276 tertiary scholarship students

1,276

603 in-service trained teachers

265 municipalities

628 mentors and tutors

595 educational facilities

16 PROJECT COUNTRIES

200 volunteers
## Early childhood education and care

### Expanding access to preschool education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2018/2019</th>
<th>1,716 children</th>
<th>55% girls</th>
<th>45% boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance rate</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool facilities</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>in 20 municipalities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropout rate</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>67% female</td>
<td>33% male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Results

- **58** Toy Libraries established by REF in 10 countries
- **6** new Toy Libraries in 2019
- **3,617** Roma children were involved in Toy Library activities throughout 2019
- **2,601** registered Toy Library members throughout 2019

“I think it is a positive change that there are more volunteers, preschool children, and even older students, who are more than happy to take part in playful and skill developmental activities. Through personal attention and one on one involvement the children are more motivated to do homework and are increasingly involved in learning together. I really believe that exercise games relieve stress during the day, stress at home, and the attention we give the children and personal conversations we have contribute towards a sense of balance.”

– Lajtai Kíra, Special Educator, Khetanipe
## Primary education projects

### Preventing early school leaving in primary education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>50 schools</th>
<th>26 municipalities</th>
<th>in 7 countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Hungary, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia

### Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>280 children</th>
<th>484 parents</th>
<th>76 volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48% female</td>
<td>52% male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>91% attendance rate</th>
<th>100% graduation rate of final year students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>38 tutors</th>
<th>41 mentors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

### Spotlight:

#### Bosnia and Herzegovina

- **Denita Salkanović** won 2nd place in the Cantonal Competition in German language for primary and secondary schools.
- **Armin Baltić** won 1st place in the sport competition for primary schools to celebrate “Day of Army Bosnia and Herzegovina” in the category – Cross-country running.
- **Severdan Džinalić** won 1st place in the sport competition for primary schools in the City of Mostar in the category – Long jump.
### Secondary education projects

Expanding access to secondary education through scholarships, mentoring and tutoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>133 project schools</th>
<th>in 32 municipalities</th>
<th>in 3 countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601 students received scholarships</td>
<td>475 students transferred to an integrated school/class as a result of REF projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>316 female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>285 male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% graduation rate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97.5% completed the academic year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5% dropout rate (compared to 7% regional average)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17% of the graduates continued into a university or college</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85% of students attend vocational secondary schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83% of the graduates transitioned to the labor market</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15% of students attend academic secondary schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 students received scholarships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138 parents involved in project activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 mentors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Hungary |                      |                |
| 34 students participated in mentoring and tutoring program |                      |                |
| 0% dropout rate |                      |                |
| All students participated in soft skills training |                      |                |
| 40 peer mentors |                      |                |

Results 2018/2019
Expanding access to higher education

Scholarship Program

In the 2018/2019 academic year REF awarded scholarships through four scholarship schemes to students from 14 countries. 744 scholarships were awarded.

Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP)

- 34 awarded scholarships
- 68% female
- 32% male
- Specialties include general medicine, dentistry, surgery, internal medicine, nursing and health management
- 59% first generation students

Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP)

- 574 awarded scholarships
- 59% female
- 41% male
- 82% first generation students

Law and Humanities Program (LHP)

- 118 awarded scholarships
- 45% female
- 55% male
- 97% graduation rate

Roma International Scholarship Program (RISP)

- 18 awarded scholarships
- 56% female
- 44% male
- destination countries: Albania, Austria, Czechia, England, France, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, Ukraine and USA

“In 2019, the LHP program gave me the opportunity to participate in the project “Roma Women in Politics”, where I was trained in leadership skills. The combination of a leader and Roma future professional sounded like ‘ridiculous nonsense’ a couple of decades ago. Now this is reality.”

- Tatiana Cebotari, Moldova
I am often told that I am unique, mainly in comparison with other Roma women. Usually, the sentences in this context end with either “and you are Roma?” or “…even though you are Roma?”. It saddens me when I am told that I am different from the rest of my community because the only difference is that I had the privilege and possibility to acquire education. I want that ‘privilege’ for all Roma.

- Sunita Memetovic, Sweden

One of the reasons I decided to continue my studies was to prove to my parents, and non-Roma people as well, that it is possible for a Roma girl from a disadvantaged background to study at an international university and achieve more than is expected from her. Roma Education Fund certainly has an important role in my academic successes and without its support I would not have been able to challenge the racial and gendered stereotypes.

- Marina Csikos, Hungary
The program aims to:

- increase the number of female early childhood and kindergarten teachers of Roma origin
- increase Roma children’s enrollment, attendance and success in kindergarten education
- increase Roma children’s primary school readiness

The trainings we received were very useful, I really enjoyed that while we were learning, we were also playing and challenging one another, and having to complete tasks together as a team. I’m very happy to have joined this community, I’ll never forget it, and I’m really excited to be able to attend the training sessions this year again.

- Erika Farkas (Grade 11)
Improved Education and Integration Opportunities for Roma in Serbia, Employment Empowerment of Young Roma and Reintegration of Returnees

Scholarships and project-based mentoring for vocational education in school year 2018/2019

- 310 students
  - 145 female
  - 165 male
  - 92% of all students successfully completed school year

Increased employability through specialized trainings in school year 2018/2019

- 131 young people successfully placed in internships
  - 62 female
  - 69 male
- 284 young people completed vocational training
  - 131 female
  - 153 male

Professional development

- Completed English and German language courses
  - 42 female
  - 64 male
- Completed category B driving license training
  - 2 female
  - 4 male

Reintegration of Roma returnees in school year 2018/2019

- 186 families
- 5 municipalities (Subotica, Nis, Leskovac, Vladicin Han, Surdulica)

- Enrollment and textbook/materials assistance for pre-primary education (children aged 5-7)
  - 36 girls
  - 39 boys
- Tutoring and language support for primary school (children aged 7-10)
  - 88 girls
  - 81 boys

This project is supported by:
### EU REGIONAL ACTION FOR ROMA:
Increasing Educational Opportunities for Roma in the Western Balkans and Turkey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early childhood development</th>
<th>419 children were enrolled in kindergarten or preschool in school year 2018 / 2019</th>
<th>1,115 family (home) visits conducted by the school and project staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary education</td>
<td>36 femaleGrade 1 65 children enrolled in Grade 1 of primary school in year 2019/2020</td>
<td>14 female Grade 2 39 children enrolled in Grade 2 of primary school in year 2019/2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29 male</td>
<td>25 male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary education</td>
<td>198 female beneficiaries 72 internship placements 36 female 36 male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary education</td>
<td>45 female scholarships 16 female internships 34 male 19 male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>60 young Roma employed 7 Memoranda with ministries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Countries:**

- [Albania](#)
- [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)
- [Kosovo*](#)
- [Montenegro](#)
- [North Macedonia](#)
- [Serbia](#)
- [Turkey](#)

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.*
Research and Advocacy

Publications

Analytical Report
Representation of Roma in European Curricula and Textbooks

A joint project carried out between 2016 and 2019, focusing on national curricula and textbooks for history, civics and geography from 22 countries. A quantitative analysis, showing how often Roma are mentioned, and a qualitative overview on topics that engage with the ethnic minority were analyzed. REF hired and trained eight Roma research fellows to examine over 850 textbooks and evaluate their portrayal of Roma.

Book Chapter
Path to Higher Education: Combating Antigypsyism by Building Roma Students’ Aspirations and Resilience

Published in “Dimensions of Antigypsyism in Europe” European Network Against Racism, 2019.
Book chapter co-authored by REF scholarship alumna, Simona Torotcoi, and REF Research Officer, Marko Pecak

Roma Civil Monitor Synthesis Report
Roma civil monitor pilot project:

A synthesis of civil society’s reports on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies in the European Union: Educational Chapter

2019 Highlights

Advocacy grants cross-country interventions
Building-up cross-country advocacy networks and regional knowledge exchange; gaining political and civic support for placing Roma educational challenges on political agendas

European Campaign on Early Childhood Development
Advocating to the European Commission to allocate funds for ECD and bring policy changes. REF put together two case studies on desegregation and ECD Toy Library interventions for the campaign.

Post-2020 Roma Strategies
REF led the recommendations related to education for the proposal submitted to the European Commission.

Recommendation packages to the Ministry of Education in Bulgaria on the national program “Support to municipalities for implementation of activities for educational desegregation”
The recommendation package is based on REF’s desegregation model that has proven its impact in several European countries.

Roma Mayors advocacy meetings in Slovakia
Emphasizing the proven results of REF’s Toy Library models as an efficient tool for ensuring the entrance of children to quality mainstream primary schools, and detailed scenarios of how Roma mayors could have a lead on the nationwide policy introduction of Toy Libraries.

Outreach
Communication and Visibility

Communication grant

Photo and audio exhibit

When I grow up I would like to be a rich woman

Network newsletter

NEW

10 YEARS

Celebrating 10 years of REF Romania with Romanian President

REF Slovakia beneficiaries have breakfast with Slovak President

Toy Library installation at ISSA conference 2019

67% increase in REF Facebook traffic

New REF website launched in 2019

134% increase in Instagram followers

20 new videos featured

64% increase of REF citations in international media
## Summary of REF financials

### Commitments of REF foundations in 2019 by educational model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Number of projects in 2019</th>
<th>Funds committed in 2019 (EUR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>145,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Education</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>427,245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>159,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary Education - RomaVersitas grants</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>240,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary Education - Scholarship program</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>1,402,876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Project implementation - All educational levels</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5,526,455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>7,901,639</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sources of funds and spending of REF foundations in 2019 in EUR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>REF SWITZERLAND</th>
<th>REF HUNGARY</th>
<th>REF ROMANIA</th>
<th>REF SLOVAKIA</th>
<th>REF N. MACEDONIA</th>
<th>REF SERBIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening foundation capital</td>
<td>402,785</td>
<td>1,830,140</td>
<td>(642,173)</td>
<td>(67,484)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third party donor income</td>
<td>7,323,249</td>
<td>1,689,875</td>
<td>523,040</td>
<td>72,617</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other income</td>
<td>74,542</td>
<td>59,005</td>
<td>32,411</td>
<td>1,684</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(240)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Sources</strong></td>
<td>7,800,576</td>
<td>3,579,020</td>
<td>(86,722)</td>
<td>6,817</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(240)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers within REF network</td>
<td>1,777,593</td>
<td>845,405</td>
<td>348,723</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>97,702</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write off REF CH loan at REF Romania</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>572,111</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL SOURCES WITH TRANSFERS</strong></td>
<td>7,800,576</td>
<td>5,356,613</td>
<td>1,330,793</td>
<td>355,539</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>97,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant program</td>
<td>1,066,057</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>110,583</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Release(-)/Building(+) of provisions for projects granted</td>
<td>(370,518)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary scholarship Program</td>
<td>1,255,802</td>
<td>167,004</td>
<td>22,499</td>
<td>9,845</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>44,398</td>
<td>87,171</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own educational projects</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,585,390</td>
<td>1,604,417</td>
<td>289,516</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>53,778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity building, Policy Development and communications</td>
<td>215,760</td>
<td>324,895</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative expenses</td>
<td>181,168</td>
<td>541,543</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,540</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other expenses</td>
<td>28,056</td>
<td>36,267</td>
<td>26,321</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision for future projects &amp; co-funding</td>
<td>1,517,549</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accumulated capital</td>
<td>1,481,395</td>
<td>54,195</td>
<td>(309,284)</td>
<td>(54,404)</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>39,956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Spending</strong></td>
<td>5,419,667</td>
<td>4,796,464</td>
<td>1,343,952</td>
<td>355,540</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>97,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers within REF network</td>
<td>2,380,909</td>
<td>537,695</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL SPENDING WITH TRANSFERS</strong></td>
<td>7,800,576</td>
<td>5,334,159</td>
<td>1,343,952</td>
<td>355,540</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>97,462</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Please see 2019 full Annual Report for complete information on sources of funds and spending, donations received, statement of expenditures over income and balance sheets of all REF entities.
Thank You
2019 Donors

YOUR SUPPORT MEANS THE WORLD TO US
We are happy to have you in our community...
investing in, educating and engaging Roma children, youth and families.

Council of Europe Development Bank
European Commission
EVZ – Erinnerung Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future”
HELP HILFE
KfW Development Bank
Ministry of Interior, Slovakia
Open Society Institute
Romanian Management Authority (as partner)
Swedish International Development Agency
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
World Bank Community Connections Fund
CEI Cooperation Fund
The Velux Foundations
REF NETWORK:

GOVERNING BOARDS – 2019

REF SWITZERLAND FOUNDATION
Andrzej Mirga (Chair until November 22, 2019)
Ciprian Necula (Chair starting November 22, 2019)

REF ROMANIA FOUNDATION
Andrzej Mirga (Chair)

REF SLOVAKIA FOUNDATION
Andrzej Mirga (Chair until November 22, 2019)
Ciprian Necula (Chair starting November 22, 2019)

REF HUNGARY FOUNDATION
Kinga Göncz (Chair)

REF SERBIA FOUNDATION
Ciprian Necula (Chair)

REF NORTH MACEDONIA FOUNDATION
Andrzej Mirga (Chair)

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