Project "EU Regional Action for Roma Education: Increased Education Support and Opportunities for Roma Students in the Western Balkans and Turkey (RARE)", phase II

Call for the Selection of Implementing Partner Organizations in the Western Balkans and Turkey

in the field of

Increasing Access and Participation of Roma Students in Tertiary Education and Transition to Labor Market through Employability

Call open until July 14, 2023

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1. Background

The project *EU Regional Action for Roma Education: Increased Education Support and Opportunities for Roma Students in the Western Balkans and Turkey (RARE), phase II* constitutes a second phase of the already-implemented project during 2018-2021 by REF. During the first phase of the project, the education services provided through the seven project countries (Albania – ALB; Bosnia and Herzegovina – BIH; Kosovo – KOS; Montenegro – MNE; North Macedonia – MAC; Serbia – SER; Turkey – TUR) amounted to involving more than 4500 Roma children and youth (from all educational levels) in education activities. The present project continues the gains and results of the initial project, while, at the same time, creating a well-founded base for children and youth inclusion and participation in education.

The project envisages three specific calls for implementing partner organizations in the fields of: 1. Early Childhood Development and primary school education (ECD and PRI), 2. Secondary Education (SEC) and 3. Tertiary Education (TER).

The project objectives will be achieved through:

- Contribution to improving the educational outcomes of Roma children and youth. Through the activities, the children and the students will benefit from pre-school education and enrolment into primary schools, scholarship provision for Roma students in secondary and tertiary education, including mentoring and support.
- Generate support in the transition of Roma students from education to employment. Secondary and tertiary students will benefit from an employability-aimed approach (training on soft skills, material support, internship opportunities and experience exchanges etc.).
- Promote inclusive education within the education systems of the project countries. The project will build capacities of relevant authorities and their understanding of the specific challenges faced by the Roma community, support regional networking and exchanging experiences with the aim to contribute to mainstreaming of Roma in the relevant policy domains.
- Increase access and participation of Roma girls in the education and contribute to improved gender equality.
  In this sense, beneficiaries will be selected according to criteria that will support and promote gender equality in the sense that priority will be given to girls/women to be included in the project, thus ensuring gender inclusion throughout the entire period of the implementation of the project (related to all specific objectives).

The project is expected to run until December 2026. The potential implementing partner organizations will be covering activities for 3 academic years: 2023-2024 academic year; 2024-2025 academic year; 2025-2026 academic year.

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2. Objective of the Call

The objective of the call is to select **one partner organization per assigned country** for the implementation of activities related to increasing access and participation of Roma students in tertiary education and transition to labor market. These activities are to be implemented through academic tutoring, mentoring, and other professional development services – internships, tailored trainings in professional development, computer courses, foreign language competences etc. The activities will serve to increase the employability potential of the young Roma in the labor market.

The granted entities will be responsible for implementation of their proposed activities, as well as data collection (upon the supervision and coordination of REF), policy dialogue with local actors, participation in project-related professional trainings and events.

Particular attention will be paid to ensure that the partners are aware of gender-sensitive approach and to apply it in the project implementation.

There will be one grant awarded in each of the countries assigned in the Call.

Additionally, two specific calls for implementing partner organizations in the fields of **ECD and Primary Education (ECD and PRI)** and **2. Secondary Education (SEC)** are published parallel to this call. Implementing partners in each of the assigned countries for each level of education will be responsible for the implementation of activities to:

- Expand the access of Roma children to **preschool education** in quality kindergarten, and at the same time to support the parents in the sphere of child development and early childhood education and
- Expand access to quality **primary school education** and improved gender equality.
  (The link of that call can be found in the respective section of the website of REF, together with the link to the present call)
- Support the graduation of Roma **secondary students** and to increase their employability potential in the labor market.
  (The link of that call can be found in the respective section of the website of REF, together with the link to the present call)

2.1 Geographical Coverage

Eligible countries where the project should be realized are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey.

Note: The applicant needs to take into consideration during the selection of specific locations that the proposed project activities cannot take place at those locations where there is currently an on-going REF supported project.

The potential grantees have to take into account several aspects when proposing locations within their applications. Preference would be given to applications who include locations

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where parents and/or community members have experience in project activity involvement and/or collective activities for positive change; presence of other initiatives relevant for the priorities of the Roma communities; locations with considerable number of Roma community members, along with Roma representation in the institutions (e.g. municipal councils, municipalities, administration etc.). These aspects should be properly described and documented in the submitted applications.

2.2   Target Group

Distribution of final beneficiaries according to countries are indicated in the table below. They must be disaggregated by gender in all aspects of the application. REF plans to increase the scale of interventions and number of new activities in countries where it has cultivated strong partnerships and solid implementation capacities, thus the size of target groups could change slightly due to this reason.

Note: The beneficiaries of this project cannot be persons who are beneficiaries of other REF's interventions in the countries of operations.

Countries	Total No. of students/year	Total No. of students/year	Total No. of students/year
	(Academic Year 1)	(Academic Year 2)	(Academic Year 3)
Final beneficiaries TER			
Albania (ALB)	50	50	50
Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH)	40	40	40
Kosovo (KOS)	50	50	50
North Macedonia (MAC)	10	10	10
Montenegro (MNE)	10	10	10
Serbia (SER)	10	10	10
Turkey (TUR)	30	30	30
Total	**200**	**200**	**200**

Note: It is mandatory to gender-disaggregate the beneficiaries in the application and annexes (min. 50% should be represented by Roma girls/women).

2.3   Available Funds

The unit costs per student involved in tertiary school-related activities (TER), including employability actions, is at approx. 1185 Eur./student/year including all activity and administration-related costs. The total available annual (i.e. academic year) country-based budget cannot exceed the limits highlighted below:

Countries	Maximum annual budget (Euro/year) (Academic Year 1)	Maximum annual budget (Euro/year) (Academic Year 2)	Maximum annual budget (Euro/year) (Academic Year 3)
Allocation TER			
Albania (ALB)	59,250.00	59,250.00	59,250.00

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Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH)	47,400.00	47,400.00	47,400.00
Kosovo (KOS)	59,250.00	59,250.00	59,250.00
North Macedonia (MAC)	15,850.00***	15,850.00***	15,850.00***
Montenegro (MNE)	11,850.00	11,850.00	11,850.00
Serbia (SER)	15,850.00***	15,850.00***	15,850.00***
Turkey (TUR)	35,550.00	35,550.00	35,550.00
Total	**245,000.00**	**245,000.00**	**245,000.00**

*** The unit costs allocated to these countries is higher as, through the project proposals to be submitted, support is also expected to be provided for the Roma students who already receive scholarships from the in-country public institutions (MoEs or institutions alike) and, thus, will not be part of the primary target group of the project proposals. The breakdown of the primary target group for all 3 years and for TER activities is to be found in the tables above and additional support is to be provided to beneficiaries beyond the above-mentioned numbers.

Note: It is recommended to thoroughly read all the instructions and recommendations contained in the Annex Budget form prior to elaborating the budget proposal. All budget sheets are mandatory to be filled in. Indirect costs must be in maximum value of 7% of the total direct justified costs of the budget proposal.

3. Eligible Activities

The main purpose of the action is to create and consolidate a qualified pool of Roma with higher education degrees, to help inclusion by serving as resources for their communities, as well as maintain and improve performance and graduation levels of Roma tertiary education students and facilitate their transition to the labor market.

The activities aim to support 200 university students yearly in the assigned countries over the three academic years from 2023 to 2026 through merit-based scholarship support, academic support, and professional development. The support to be provided to the students in these countries is to be focused on increase of beneficiaries' graduation and employability as closely linked to each other. Therefore, the applicants are to plan to cover both objectives (3.1 and 3.2) in their proposals.

3.1 Activity Set 1 – Increasing Graduation Rate of Roma at University Level through Implementation of Scholarship Scheme

Objective:
The objective of the financial support is to improve retention, performance and graduation levels of Roma tertiary education students through academic tutoring, mentoring, and other professional development services. In addition to that it also aims to increase their employability potentials at the labor market.

Eligible activities:

- Scholarship support for 200 students (per academic year) in tertiary education in the assigned countries

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Implementation of scholarship and mentorship scheme: The aim of the scholarship is to cover the educational cost of Roma tertiary students and through this to enable their regular university attendance. Scholarships will be transferred in installments to the beneficiaries, or - in case of underage students - to the parents' account. The scholarships will be conditioned to regular attendance of university classes and passing the required exams.

The scholarships will be provided to students pursuing full-time Bachelor level degrees or masters studies at state/public universities or state-accredited universities.

(Indicative target group is 200 students, who will be selected at the first year of the project and involved in each of the project years. Through this method the project will ensure to follow at least one cohort of students until graduation.).

- <u>Mentorship and tutorship support to Roma tertiary students,</u> in order to improve the academic performance and graduation levels and prevent drop-out of Roma tertiary education students.

  Mentoring and tutoring will be also a core activity and closely linked to scholarship provision. Mentors and tutors will be responsible to follow the academic development, attendance of students, as well as to keep regular contact with professors and students. In general, mentors and tutors will work with students at individual level targeting their needs, but tutoring can be applied in small groups as well if more students are facing similar educational problems. As mentioned above, in case of criteria such as school failure or high absenteeism rate scholarship will be suspended.

- <u>Establishment of Alumni</u>: This activity might include creating of an alumni network, sharing of experiences, sharing of information within the network, formal and informal events among alumni members and current beneficiaries. Note: Students' involvement into REF activities is required and grantees are expected to facilitate the process.

3.2 Activity Set 2 – Facilitating Transition to Labor Market through Employability

Objective:

The objective of the financial support is to facilitate the transition of tertiary Roma students to the labor market, by providing career guidance and trainings, and developing opportunities for internships placement, including digital literacy. In complement to this, REF will support scholarship beneficiaries and graduates to access labor market by identifying and facilitating labor market entry with potential employers.

Eligible activities:

- <u>Support to tertiary school students' employability potential</u>: This might include soft skills development, career coaching, language classes, internships, voluntary work in Roma CSOs etc. Needs will be mapped by the grantees and the needed training will be organized accordingly.

  Establishing a link between the needs of the market and the potential of the beneficiaries (at the level of skills and abilities required on the labor market).

  Engaging in best-practice exchanges with other relevant Roma CSOs active in the field of employability, youth support, entrepreneurship etc.

  Supporting beneficiaries to enhance their proactivity with the potential employers.

- <u>Support to tertiary students in acquiring/improving their IT skills</u> related to the university and especially the labor market needs and facilitate learning labs and learning hubs

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offering a multi-sided studying/professional development/employment/IT technology and Internet support.

All eligible activities listed above are expected to be included in the submitted proposals. Any other activities/actions that applicants consider valuable for the potential impact of their proposals are welcome (and will be considered beneficial).

3.3   Cross-Cutting Priorities, which will be targeted by the entire Project

Partner organizations should, to the greatest extent possible, include in their project proposals how they plan to:

> • Contribute to learning or improving Romani language, to exploring the Roma culture and to consolidating ethnic identity;
> • Contribute to policy development in their project area and to regional knowledge exchange and communication;
> • Advocate for changes in policy development through their project-related activities, and/or contribute to existing advocacy efforts in their area;
> • Contribute to building an inclusive education system;
> • Build common regional policy efforts among the seven countries among the future grantees.

Gender mainstreaming should be an integral component of all projects and its inclusion in the project proposal is mandatory.

3.4   Time Frame for the Project Implementation

The projects should be implemented in the period of September 2023 – June 2026.
The grant-making project is in its first year of implementation and is part of the second phase of the funding program RARE. Applications submitted must cover three academic years, but the second and the third years will be contracted upon satisfactory monitoring of the implementation, quality performance and adequate reporting of the grantee in their first academic year of project implementation (thus, the continuation of the grant contract from one academic year to the other will be based on the implementation of the previous year, as assessed byREF). The grants will be signed with the selected partner organizations on a one-year basis.

4. Assessment and Selection of Applications

4.1   Eligibility Criteria

In order to be awarded a grant, the following eligibility criteria apply:

- The applicant is a legally registered non-governmental organization in the given country.
- Operational capacity: systems and processes for ensuring sound management of funds. At a minimum, an organization needs to have basic accounting and reporting systems.
- Proven relevant experience and indicating ability to fulfil the objectives of the action.

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- Core values in line with REF's values – tenacity, integrity, justice, accountability and inquisitiveness- and REF's commitment to integration and gender mainstreaming.

4.2   Selection Criteria

- Track record of project implementation: priority will be given for organizations which have proven their management capabilities, grassroots activities, commitment to the call's objectives and effectiveness in using funds, according to satisfactory monitoring reports, as well as successful outcomes and closure of similar relevant projects.
- Geographical operation of the organization: Organization's previous affiliation and work in the given territorial area will be a basic condition of funding.
- Experience with Roma community and target groups: REF will prioritize organizations that are rooted in their community and operate with community input, involvement, and investment.
- Roma involvement in planning and management of the project: REF prioritizes organizations in which Roma leadership and/or participation/membership is encouraged and valued.

5. Eligible Costs

The budget for the action has to be planned in a realistic and cost-effective manner. The eligible costs will be those which are:

- necessary for the implementation of the project and properly estimated;
- incurred during the implementation of the project;
- in line with the supported entities' accounting practices:
- not used to make a profit;
- not already covered by other sources of funding;
- identifiable and verifiable;
- recorded in the accounting records of the sub-grantee and determined according to the accounting standards and the usual cost accounting practices applicable to the sub-grantee;
- compliant with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- reasonable, justified and in compliance with the requirements of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

REF will conduct project monitoring and evaluation following the selection of the partner organizations to ensure that implementation is in line with the proposed project implementation and monitoring plan. Each partner organization (grantee) will have to collect baseline data and maintain databases of project beneficiaries. This information will be provided to REF on a regular basis. The grantee will submit intermediary and final narrative and financial reports, as agreed in the grant contract.

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During the project implementation, REF will conduct technical assistance visits to offer support to partner organizations and address issues that may occur during the implementation. As part of the project, REF will carry out mid-term and final evaluation and partner organizations are expected to take part in this process.

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning represent main components of the additional support provided by REF along with the grant offered. Through the implementation of the grant contracts, the potential grantees will be requested to regularly submit data and information regarding the results and impact of their action. The knowledge related to results of activities, the extent of the involvement of the beneficiaries, the results at the level of interventions would inform policy building on project impact and overall advocacy efforts. The data and information to be regularly submitted would come along with the reporting instruments on the project or during the project implementation.

At the same time, in addition to the project-based monitoring and evaluation purposes, the monitoring, evaluation, and learning processes would also be aimed at informing, contributing to, and aligning to the regional policy initiatives, on themes related to the grantees' activities and actions.

During the implementation, REF will be:
- Overseeing and supporting project implementation – regular field visits by Country Facilitators, periodical monitoring visits, reviewing supported entities' narrative and financial reports, advisory and technical support to supported entities in implementation and reporting.
- Reviewing supported entities' intermediary and final narrative and financial reports and closure of the projects – in line with REF grant scheme procedures, the reports submitted by supported entities will be reviewed by Country Facilitators, Project Officers, Grant Officer and Finance Manager. The projects will be closed only upon positive reviews and approval of narrative and financial reports.
- Providing professional trainings and capacity development.

7. Application Submission

7.1   Submission Deadline and Format

The deadline for the submission of applications is July 14, 2023 by midnight, CET time.

Applications must be submitted electronically to the following address:
rareproposals@romaeducationfund.org.

The subject line of the e-mail should contain the following:
RARE - Call for Proposals 2023 – tertiary education – [country name]

The application package must include all required annexes listed below. Application form, Budget and Logical Framework must be submitted in the original format of the template provided (Word or Excel). In addition, the application package must include a true scan (in PDF) of the original version as evidenced by the presence of scanned signatures. Failure to submit a required annex or submission of the application documents in different formats that

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prescribed will result in rejection in the administrative check phase. A potential applicant may submit applications to more than one of the advertised calls for selection.

Annexes:
1. Application form, including its annexes (Logical Framework, Advocacy Plan, Communication and Visibility Plan), along with other optional annexes (such as potential references, list of previous projects, etc.)
2. Budget form
3. Organizational eligibility assessment, including CVs of proposed management team
4. Signed partnership statement/s (if applicable)

(All formats from the above-mentioned annexes can be retrieved from the link of the announcement of the present call).

In addition to the above-mentioned documents the applicant should attach the following documents:
- Annex 1. Proof of registration
- Annex 2. Organizational statutes (of the main applicant and the partnering organization if applicable)
- Annex 3. Annual financial reports for the last two years (2021, 2022) and audit report, if available

7.2   Information and FAQs

REF encourages applicants to consult the Roma Education Fund website on a regular basis so that they are timely and adequately informed on project activities, calls and updates. If information needed cannot be found on the website, please send an email with your question to:

rareproposals@romaeducationfund.org

no later than June 12, 2023. REF will provide answers to all questions no later than June 15, 2023 for this Call for Proposals.

Names of selected grantees shall be published on REF's website.

8. Tentative timetable for evaluating applications

July 14, 2023	Deadline to submit full proposal including all annexes listed above
August 25, 2023	Selection of partner organizations
August 31, 2023	Notification of selected partners
September 14, 2023	Contracting of the partner organizations

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