

EXTERNAL EVALUATION  
REF SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

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# 1. Acknowledgements

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We would like to thank to the members of the Strategy Board for providing essential feedbacks. Special thanks to William Newton-Smith for his feed-backs, which have contributed a lot to the research.

We would also like to express our gratitude to all the scholars, members of the National Selection Boards, country coordinators who were ready to answer the questionnaire.

## 2. Executive Summary

During our research we have applied a mixed **methodology**: (1) interviewing (questioning) people related to REF Scholarship Program, (2) analyzing documents and (3) analyzing data. We were in the fortunate situation to know REF quite well as a similar external evaluation has been conducted by us in October 2008. Because of this at many points we had a chance to use that information and make comparisons or have better understanding of some situations.

Our **main findings** shortly were the following (please see in more elaborated form p. 30):

- The REF Scholarship Program's staff and implementing bodies are **highly professional, committed, with high ethical standards and paying special attention to personal data protection, human rights and legitimacy**.
- Concerning the strategy it seems to us that **fundamental elements of planning have to be further declared**.
- On the **outcome level the program is obviously a real success** as it is the biggest financial source for academic development of the Roma in the region. After 8 years of experience and over 5100 granted scholars it is time to have evaluations and measures on its **impact**.
- Concerning **daily operation** we have to lay down first of all, that is a **huge administrative job**, which is administered professionally.
- **Staff members enjoy working with Ref SP**, they very much appreciate the multicultural environment. The most often mentioned shortcomings were the **missing capacities**.
- **Tasks and responsibilities** are not fully clear.
- There are **well defined checks and balances** in the selection procedure to ensure equal opportunity for all and fair competition.
- The **conflict of interest rules** and procedures are also satisfying.
- We were very much missing an **up-dated and coherent policy paper** that describes the goals of the program, the elements, the expected results, the functions of the different bodies, the selection procedure, etc.
- The **role of National Selection Boards** was raised as they are often Roma representatives to guarantee the Roma community element, but their decisions are rather limited as the selection is almost normative.
- We tried to analyze the **challenges of integration of the REF Scholarship Program into REF**. We have found the following fields as the ones which have to be considered if the goal is to achieve real integration – they are also quite sensitive ones:
  - The necessity of Roma representation in the staff,
  - Building up a common goal for the organization as one and define the probably different strategies to contribute to it,
  - The clear relation of the decision making bodies,
  - The question of confidential information within the organization,
  - The possible fields of cooperation.

Our **recommendations** are the following (please see in more elaborated form at p. 31):

1. A **common strategy building session** should be held for the entire REF
2. REF Scholarship Program should have an **up-dated and coherent policy paper**

3. In general **more information should be shared on the Scholarship Program publicly.**
4. We have proposed to use concrete **indicators** (listed them in the document, p. 31)
5. We suggested having **special chapter in the country assessments on Roma higher education** (instead of having separated base-line studies).
6. An **evaluation research on the impact of the Scholarship Program** concerning the Roma community in the region should be done.
7. We definitely recommend to have a **more careful follow-up on the students**, until their graduation at least. We also recommend to **set-up a more detailed data-base on the scholars' pool.**
8. Overlaps between the Scholarship Program and the Projects (**double payment of scholars** through the two sources) should be detected and analyzed, best synergic matching should be worked out.
9. We recommended working out an **internal regulation on confidentiality.**
10. We suggested having a **clear organogram** on the Scholarship Program within REF.
11. We recommend having a **more clear coordination of the REF Programs** in the countries with special emphasis on the cooperation of the coordinators and facilitators.
12. We suggested **calling in the National Selection Board members' experience** more intensively.
13. We proposed to reconsider the Rejection Letter to **refused applicants.**
14. We recommended to include **compulsory co-operation with the program** (i.e. participation in researches, answering questionnaires) **in the contract form.**
10. We also suggested having more vivid relation with the scholars **besides the financial support.**

### 3. Background Information

Based on our Terms of Reference and contract during our evaluation we have been concentrating on the following questions and topics:

- Were the transfer of the Program from OSI and its integration into REF smooth (i.e. management, supervision, daily operations, etc.)?
- Is the current functioning of the Program efficient? (i.e., level and use of human resources, coordination among different players inside and outside of REF, decision-making procedures regarding individual applications for scholarships, financial management, database and record keeping). A small number of indicators for measuring efficiency, which might be tracked over time, should be proposed (including calculating the current status for each indicator).
- From an administrative perspective, what are the consequences of having different procedures and criteria for different Programs
- What should be the linkages between the Scholarship Programs and the other programs that REF runs (strategies for individual countries, policies and strategies for the different programs, donor coordination and fundraising, etc.)?
- Are there any specific strategic issues that should be addressed at the current stage of the Program's development looking at the future?

Our task has been to:

- Develop interview guidelines/questionnaires
- Review existing strategy and program management papers
- Analyze the internal rules and regulations for the selection and evaluation of grantees (grant scheme analysis).
- Review the existing data base and grant management system (GMS)
- Review the internal regulations on daily operation analysis
- Interview the REF Director, all staff associated with the Scholarship Programs, selected REF Board members, members of the Scholarships Strategy Board, approximately 16 recipients of scholarships (5 from the RMUSP and LHP, and 2 of the three other components), and donors to the Programs.
- Prepare a preliminary and a final report (approximately 40 pages).

We are in the fortunate situation to know REF quite well as a similar external evaluation has been conducted by us in October 2008. Because of this at many points we had a chance to use that information and make comparisons or have better understanding of some situations.

## 4. Methodology

During our research we have applied a mixed methodology: (1) interviewing (questioning) people related to REF Scholarship Program, (2) analyzing documents and (3) analyzing data.

The following **interviews** have been conducted:

- Interview with staff members (4) and country coordinators (8) (questionnaire: Annex 1 and 2)
- More detailed questions on history, Health Scholarship Program and Alumni Associations with responsible staff members (questionnaire: Annex 3)
- Questionnaire for randomly selected scholars and refused applicants (100 sent 7 received) (questionnaire and diagrams based on the answers: Annex 4 and 5)

Here we have to make some comments. Based on our contract with REF we have aimed to ask at least 16 scholars (see in 3. Background information). We also have decided to ask refused applicants, although it has not been a part of our ToR. In the first round we used the contact list sorted by the REF SP office, but the outreach was absolutely unsuccessful. In the second and the third round we sorted a brand new and country-wise representative list of applicants from the GMS database and approximately 50 questionnaires was sent via e-mail with the deadline of 1st of March. Until the end of the deadline (and today) nobody has answered.

As we have suspected that the zero reply is related to language barriers, we have decided to ask Hungarian scholars in Hungarian. In the academic year 2008-2009 Hungary had the fourth biggest amount of granted scholars. Because of that we translated our questionnaire to Hungarian and sent 20 to different applicants (10 granted; 10 rejected) we have received 7 fulfilled questionnaires up to this day (after personal phone calls and request for the answer). In the fifth round we asked to help the REF SP office to outreach those applicants who speak English and 20 questionnaires was sent out to them. Our effort was unsuccessful, the English speaking applicants have not answered at all.

At the Board meeting (8<sup>th</sup> of June) we had a common agreement that we ask for the support of the country coordinators. We also have agreed that we do not ask rejected applicants. We have handed over the contact list of 37 scholars from 13 countries to the REF Scholarship staff, to translate the questionnaires to national languages, send them out and translate back the answers to English. We have received all together 5 answers from two countries. This way our final sample on scholars consists of 10 persons: 5 from Hungary, 3 from Moldova and 2 from Russia. From the rest (10 countries) we have no data. At the relevant questions we have considered the answers of the 2 refused Hungarian respondents, too.

**All together approximately 140 questionnaires were sent out to 14 countries (in 4 different rounds) and only 12 have arrived back from 3 countries.** Unfortunately lot of the contacts does not exist and the e-mail addresses are not updated. Even from the existing contacts students do not tend to answer. We know that this is not a representative sample at all, still in the Report we consider the very limited answers we have received.

- Interview with Strategy Board members (3) (questionnaire: Annex 6)
- Questionnaire for National Selection Board members (3) (Annex 7)
- Questions to country facilitators (3)
- Interview with Toby Linden (REF executive manager)

- Interview with a refused applicant who has submitted complaint

### **Data base analysis** on applicants and granted scholars (GMS)

#### **Document analysis**

- Program Policy Paper
- Status Reports
- Annual Reports
- Board Presentations
- In-house evaluation documents
- Working Group meetings' minutes
- ToRs for different tasks
- Job descriptions
- Forms (application, contract, etc.)
- Calls for applications
- Procedure descriptions

We have to make another note here. Our starting point on the methodology issues was the previous research on REF's operation. So we have prepared questionnaires with a lot of "closed" questions, where the answer is yes or no, or the responsive has to give a score. This method did not seem to be very efficient as the **samples are very small** (in the case of REF we have asked 15 staff members, here we could talk to 4), and as the nature of the tasks are very different. So finally we ended up to have rather conversations with those we could personally achieve, or ask open questions via e-mails and analyze data and documentation. Still we – of course – use the outcomes of the questionnaires.



## 5. Introduction of the REF Scholarship Program

Since much less information is available publicly on the REF Scholarship Program related to other REF programs, in this case we found it important to have an introduction part.

### 5.1. History

**The Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP)** was set up with resources from the International Nazi Persecutee Relief Funds of the USG, to establish Roma elite in Central and Eastern European Countries. The Open Society Institute with grants from the C.S. Mott Foundation and the Remembrance, Responsibility and Future Foundation was the main financial source of the program for its 3rd, 4th and 5th year of existence. Starting with the sixth year, the financial support comes principally from REF with the continuous support of the Remembrance, Responsibility and Future Foundation. In 2007, the Roma Memorial Scholarship Program was completely reshuffled. It was extended and incorporated in the structure of REF. As for now the REF scholarship program contains six different scholarship schemes: the Roma Memorial University Scholarship Core Program, the Roma Interregional Scholarship scheme, the Roma Supplementary Grant Scholarship Scheme, the Law and Humanities Program (LHP), and the Health Scholarship Program (RHSP), which has started in 2008 and the Professional Development Fund Grant launched in 2009.

### 5.2. Elements of the Program

**The RMUSP Core Program** is implemented in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Slovakia since the academic year 2001-2002. In 2006 RMUSP Core Program was initiating in Croatia and Turkey and in 2008 Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo and in 2009 was extended to Albania.

**The Roma Supplementary Grant Scholarship** started in academic year 2007-2008. The goal of the program to provide supplementary funds for full-time MA/MS, Ph.D. or postdoctoral Roma students of humanities or natural sciences, citizens of one of the following RMUSP Program countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey, or Ukraine.

**The Roma Interregional Scholarship** established also in the academic year 2007-2008. The aim of the scholarship is to promote academic mobility of Roma students within the region of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe. The scholarship provides supplementary funds for Roma students, citizens of one of the following RMUSP Program countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey, or Ukraine.

To be considered for these three scholarship above, the applicant needs to be already enrolled as a full time BA/BS, MA/MS, Ph.D. or postdoctoral student at a recognized and well-established university in an RMUSP program country other than his/her home country.

**The Law and Humanities Scholarship Program (LHP)** has been functioning in Moldova, Russia, Ukraine and Poland since 2004. Due to the needs of the students, this program aims to improve the language skills of its grantees. It offers a language tutoring in foreign languages, in addition to standard curricular subjects. Also, the LHP Alumni and Scholars participate in

an Annual Students Conference held in one of the LHP Program Countries. In the 2007-2008 academic year 83 candidates were supported. Fifty grantees are supported through the funds of the Remembrance, Responsibility and Future Foundation, and 33 grantees receive scholarships from the REF's Core Program funds.

In 2007, the REF designed a new program called the **Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP)**. The program offers scholarships for Roma students pursuing degrees as nurses or medical doctors at state accredited/recognized medical and medical-vocational schools as well as for resident physicians in the countries of their residence. This scholarship has become available for students since the spring of 2008. The main task of the RHSP is to improve the level of Roma representation among medical professionals by providing assistance for health education, mentorship, and advocacy training<sup>1</sup> in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, with a pilot project in Romania. In 2009 the program has been extended to Bulgaria and in 2010 it shall be extend to two or three other countries.

### 5.3. Data on the Program

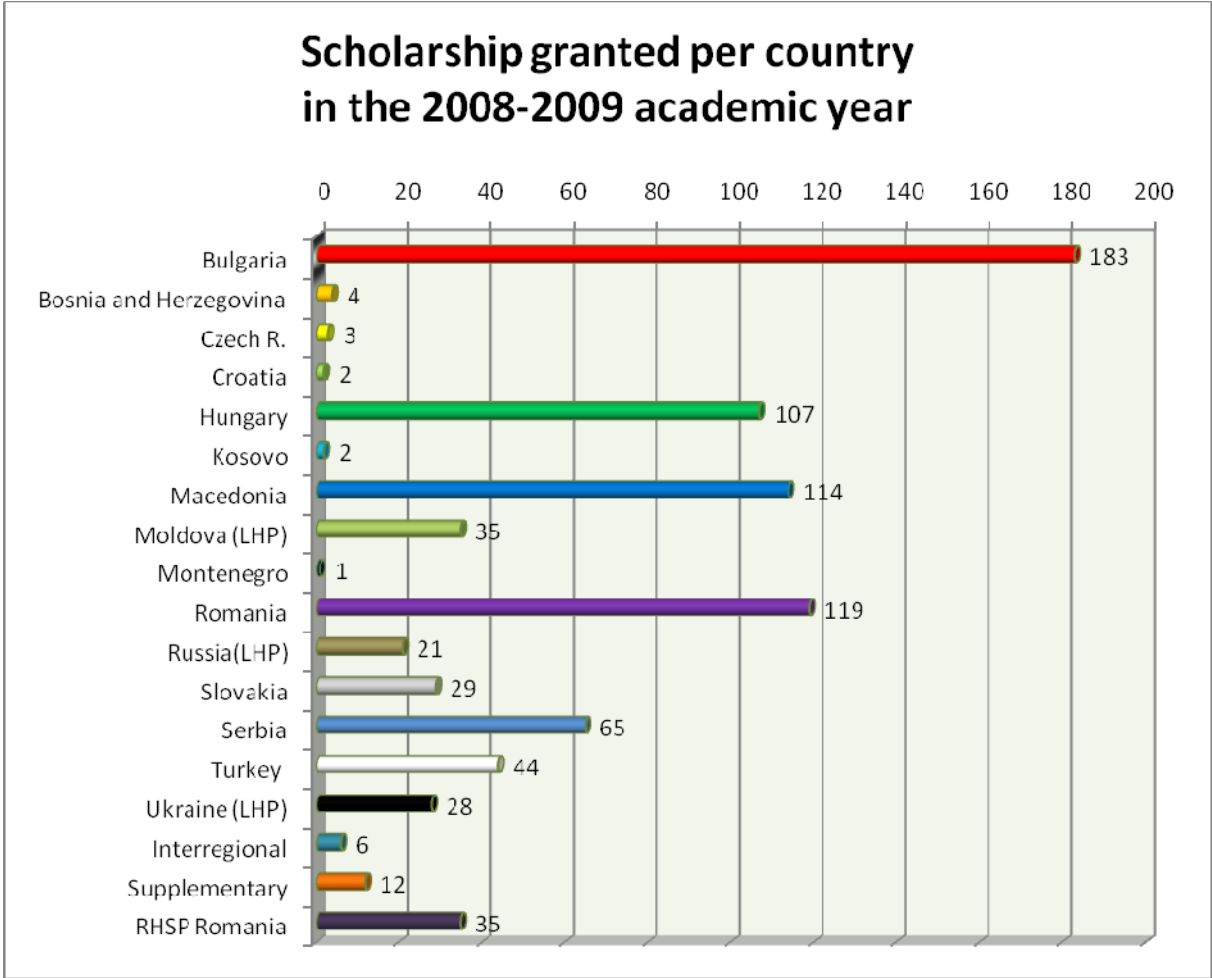
Since 2001 the RMUSP Core Program granted **more than 5100 applicants** 80% of them are renewal. Based on the database we received the total expenditure (altogether, with the new programs) on scholarships since 2001 is 3.487.368 USD, and 2.960.777 USD on the RMUSP Core Program.<sup>2</sup>

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Bulgaria	98	154	138	149	146	141	180	183
Bosnia –H.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Czech R.		9	17	19	18	15	12	3
Croatia	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2
Hungary	214	331	226	193	138	102	113	107
Kosovo	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Macedonia	43	35	37	37	37	67	115	114
Moldova (LHP)							34	35
Montenegro	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Romania	176	162	266	230	223	248	160	119
Russia (LHP)							13	21
Slovakia	55	56	68	46	32	24	26	29
Serbia	66	66	56	68	51	45	55	65
Turkey	0	0	0	0	0	4	6	44
Ukraine (LHP)							35	28
Interregional	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	6
Supplementary	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	12
RHSP Romania	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>813</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>645</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>682</b>	<b>810</b>

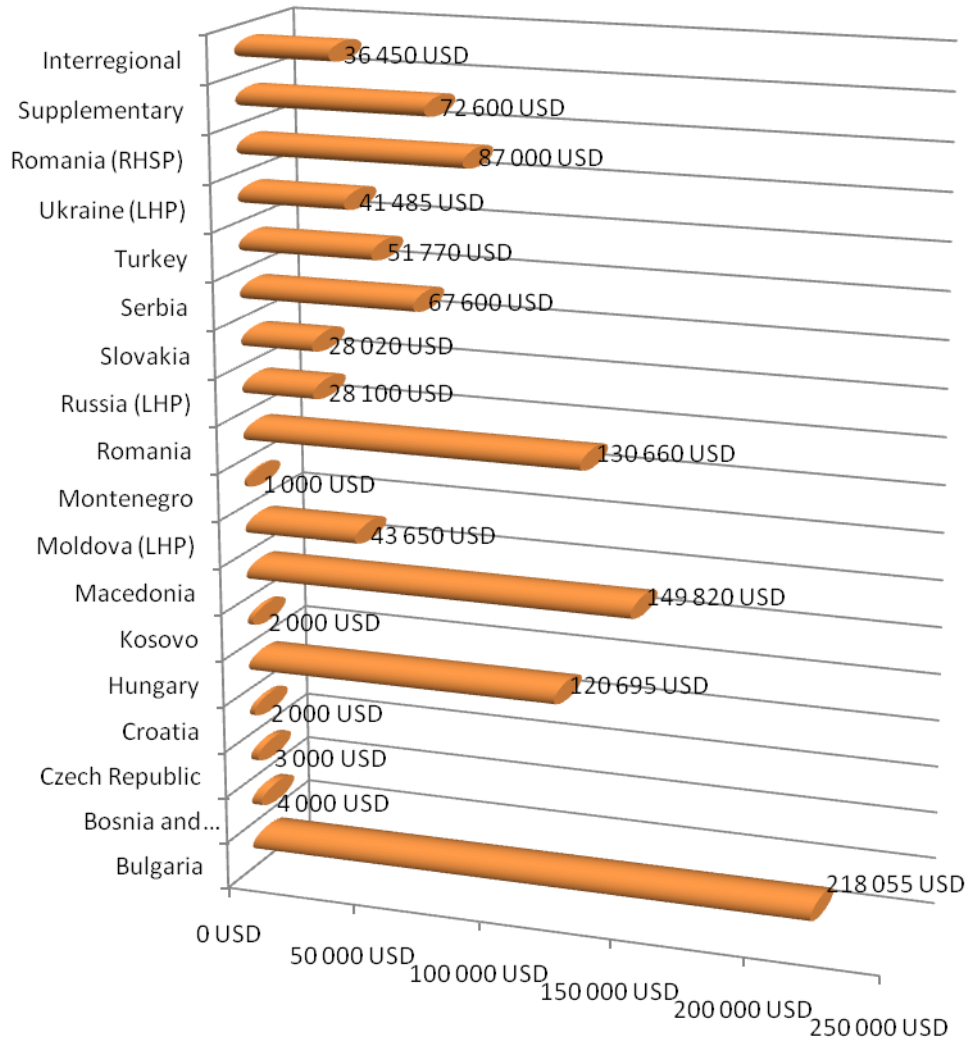
<sup>1</sup> Mentorship and Advocacy Components are coordinated by OSI Budapest.

<sup>2</sup> Data 15<sup>th</sup> April 2008

The Roma Education Fund Scholarship Program has granted **810 applicants** and has allocated **1 087 905 USD** in the academic year **2008-2009**.



## Grant amount in 2008-2009



## 6. Strategy building

### 6.1 What is the strategic goal? What are the short-term goals?

On REF's website we may find a clear statement on the mission and goals of the organization:

#### *What are the goals of the Roma Education Fund?*

*The goal of the Roma Education Fund is to contribute to closing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma, through policies and programs to support quality education for Roma including desegregation of educational systems. The Roma Education Fund was created in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Therefore it also shares the goals of the Decade.*

#### *What are the activities of the Roma Education Fund?*

*The Roma Education Fund finances projects that meet its goals and are proposed and implemented by Governments, NGOs and private organizations. The Roma Education Fund supports greater research, studies and evaluations that contribute to effective policies and programs for inclusion of Roma in national education systems. The Roma Education Funds supports exchange of ideas, views and experiences across the Decade countries but also with any country that has relevant experience in promoting the goals of the REF.*

This description obviously does not include the Scholarship Program where individuals are supported. (Although "to contribute to closing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma" could be a relevant goal even for the Scholarship Program.) If we go to the Scholarship webpage, we find no mission or strategic goal set.

We have asked the staff members, Strategic Board members and others who play important role (National Selection Board members for example) what they think about the **strategic goal** of the Scholarship Program. "To establish an Academic Roma elite in Central and Eastern European countries" has been mentioned most often (as it is also stated in the Program Policy Paper). Another point of view has also been raised: "The long term objective is to ensure that the percentage of Roma who graduate from university is no less than the percentage of non-Roma who graduate."

**The definition of "Roma elite"** seemed to be a very sensitive and rather unclear idea. It means that everyone has answered what they mean by that but these answers were very different. We have found the following possible answers to be discussed (and to set a very clear and common strategy on):

- Roma elite are those who have a strong Roma identity and successful on the labor market to achieve prestigious job

- Roma elite are those who have achieved social success (education, labor market, networks, income, living conditions) and have a Roma origin independently from their self-identification
- Roma elite are those who are active and have an influence on Roma human rights, culture, political activism or other fields
- Roma elite are those who are very active in their own community to give support with their resources: higher education, higher social prestige

We have discussed in details the formation of the **Health Scholarship Program** (the newest element) to have a closer look on the creation of mission, goals and strategy. The discussions have started about this program in 2006 in OSI New York. If we understand it right, in the creation of this program George Soros's personal commitment has played a crucial role, the concrete starting point was a conference on the health status of the Roma in Eastern-Europe.

Based on the basic documentation of the Program it seems that the granting techniques have no direct relation to the change of the health status of the Roma. Bulgaria and Romania are the prioritized countries, because of the size of the Roma population. The base-line studies discuss the legal background, minority policy, state support and other donors, educational system background. If we believe that the calling need for such a scholarship program is the bad health status of the Roma, there has to be a kind of logic-chain in assessment and goal setting. For example if teenage pregnancy is significantly high amongst Roma girls and the experience is that non-Roma community nurses have a lot of prejudices and do not treat them carefully, do not pay attention on prevention and education (and Roma are dismissive towards them at the same time), we easily come to the conclusion that Roma community nurses should be supported in their education.

All we are trying to say here is that while Roma Health Scholarship is an extremely important new element of the REF Scholarship Program, the goal setting and targets are not really clear. It seems that it was set up to improve the health status of the Roma, but it is not described how it would be achieved by the targeted numbers of scholars/countries on the long run. It was also stated that the goal is to have Roma doctors in the society as it breaks the stereotypes, which is very true and important, but it will not change the health status of the Roma, but the general view on the Roma minority.

Concerning feasibility, it seems that target numbers were set high. In Romania it was aimed to have 60 scholars, right now there are 36, of which 15 were already in the RMUSP. Based on our discussions preparatory courses<sup>3</sup> and secondary education support would be very important to have more enrolled Roma in health education. The proportion of vocational training should be reconsidered, too, based on the initial experiences.

To sum-up, we were suggested to do a little case study on Health Scholarship – as the newest element – to see how the strategy was formed. We do believe that Roma health scholarship is extremely important. It has to be declared: what the strategic goal is: to improve the health status of Roma, or to have real high prestigious jobs for Roma. Both of them are absolutely

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<sup>3</sup> REF Scholarship staff is working on that for Bulgaria, the Call for Training Organizations has been published. Also, they have announced a RHSP Preparatory Courses Grant for Bulgarian Applicants who intend to enroll in Medical Universities. These Courses are offered by Medical Universities in Sofia. This was designed for Bulgarian from the outset as in Bulgaria Medical Higher Education is highly competitive and elitist. In Romania, this need was clear after the Pilot year and REF is now discussing possibilities of using its resources in Romania in order to organize Preparatory Courses.

relevant, but conclude to radically different granting strategy. In the first case we have to know which significant health problems of the Roma are rooted in discriminative health services, cultural differences, etc. that may be improved by doctors and nurses who accept and are accepted by Roma. If we set the second goal, then we have to research those highly prestigious health education areas, where Roma have significantly lower chance to get enrolled, because of the need of extra lessons, protectionist networking, whatever. Based on the goals and the findings of the assessments we should obviously set very different targets/countries/health education area.

It is very easily possible that this kind of strategy exists, and we are lacking information. Based on the documentation and discussions we had the impression that some kind of further clarification of goals, strategy and targets should be done.

## **6.2 When do we consider the Program successful?**

From all answers for this question it became very clear: there is a **very strong need** to have more data, even big researches conducted to be able to **measure the success of the Program** after 8 years of existence, having allocated 2.960.777 USD and having granted more than 5100 scholars. As the goals are not clearly set (on the strategic, long-term level and on the outcome, short-term level) the ideas on success criteria are very different amongst important stake-holders in the Program, too.

Success of the Program has been described in the following ways in the interviews:

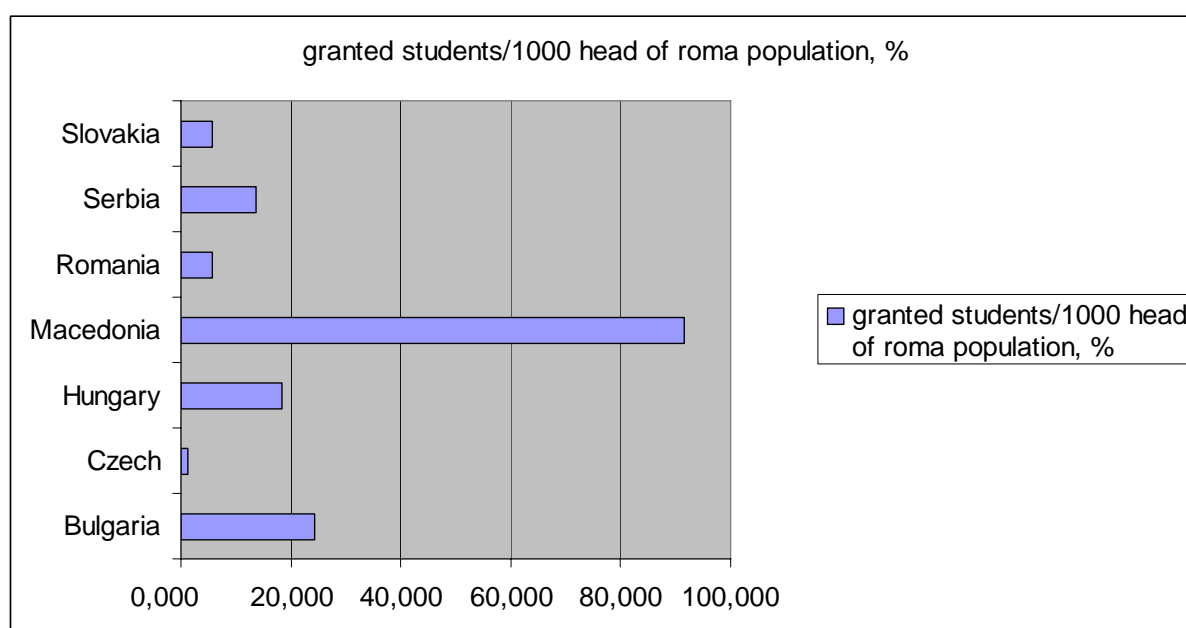
- The more students receive scholarship who consider themselves as Roma (not publicly, only in the confidentially treated application) based on the rather normative selection criteria (GPA based)
- Those who receive the scholarship have a strong and measurable influence on their close environment (on the long-term on their families' living standards for example)
- In 10 years time the number and proportion of Roma intellectuals grow measurably
- Certain percentage of Roma population between the ages of 16-33 have received REF support
- Increasing number of supported scholars by countries
- The percentage of drop-outs from the universities amongst Roma decreases measurably

In the case of the REF projects we had an easier task to compare set goals and achievements. The country assessment documents contain very concrete goals by countries, and the list of supported projects have a quite detailed description. So we could at least detect areas that were named as focus, but no project was implemented to serve the goals. (Teachers anti-discrimination training for example.) In the case of the Scholarship Program it is more complicated. The base-line studies (which exist only in the case of Health Program) are about the education system and education data of the countries, but clear focus/target areas are not necessarily identified. Based on our view it is closely related to the uncertainty of the strategic goal and the success criteria. If we aim to close the education gap between Roma and non-Roma, than simply we target to have the same percentage at the different majors. If we concentrate on elite building, we may concentrate on supporting highly prestigious professions. If we think that educating Roma has a long-term effect on the next generations we may concentrate on some other (less prestigious) professions, like teachers' trainings. If

we find the most burning issue the discrimination of Roma on special fields we may concentrate our support on educating lawyers, for example.

On the **outcome level we do think that the program is successful** as a very high number of scholars have been supported who identified themselves as Roma and were selected based on transparent and normative procedures. The question is the long-term effect of this support, which we do not know.

We have done a rather primitive calculation to see how the given grants in the 2008-9 academic year relate to the size of the Roma community. (Numbers on the Roma community we take from the country assessments of REF, so we show numbers only on these countries.)



It shows that related to the size of the Roma population the largest proportion has been supported in Macedonia. Based on the REF data Macedonia has a Roma population of approximately 120.000 persons. In the last academic year 114 grants were given, which means that almost 0,1% of all Roma people have received a scholarship. Based on some internet research we have found the data that in Macedonia with the population of 2 million people there has been a total enrollment to higher education of 44.710<sup>4</sup>. It means that the enrollment ratio for the whole population is 2,2%. Still, it is hard to evaluate if this highest ratio of Roma scholars' support is a success or not, as we have no data on the Roma enrollment rate, or we do not have clearly set targets to be reached by countries and majors.

Based on Working Group memos (prior body of the Strategy Board) there have been set up target numbers by countries – although the needs or goals to be reached they are built on are not really clear. Still, these numbers are not limits, rather reflect on the outreach targets. As the program is not competitive but eligibility based, if more scholars fulfill the selection criteria, the budgetary conditions allow to support more students than set in the target numbers.

<sup>4</sup> Morgan, Anthony: Higher Education Reform sin the Balkans. Data from 2002.



### **6.3 What makes this Scholarship Program a Roma scholarship program?**

With some of the important role players, with whom we had a chance to discuss the Program personally have concluded to some very basic questions. **What makes this Scholarship Program a Roma scholarship program?** The importance of an ethnically defined scholarship program can be rooted only in one very simple fact: Roma people have less chance in the education system. Why do they have less chance? (a) Because of their social background – no books on the shelves, no access to private lessons, no family motivation, no chance to learn languages and travel, etc. (b) Because of discrimination – their Roma origin is related to strong negative stereotypes and it often leads to unfair exclusion from free competition. (And of course these two factors are very strongly inter-related.)

If we accept the train of thought above – as our discussion partners did – we necessarily come to the conclusion that the scholarship program strongly has to deal with the social and/or identity question. These factors might/should be dealt with on at least three levels: selection, during scholarship, follow-up.

#### *Selection Phase*

Applicants have to **identify themselves as Roma**, and the list of the supported scholars – because of personal data protection reasons – dealt with **confidentially**. Here we would like to raise some arguments that were raised pro and contra. On one hand in many of the countries concerned racism is so strong that supported scholars really may get in life danger if their names were published. This situation is merely different from the REF projects where not individuals but organizations are concerned. On the other hand if from the beginning publicity was a given condition, applicants could decide if they take this “risk” or not. As someone has asked: “What makes this scholarship a Roma scholarship if people hide their ethnicity in their community but apply for financial support based on this?”

Social background is not considered, the selection is **academic merit-based**. Roma community activity is a subject of consideration, but as NSB member has pointed, it plays a rather minimal role in the selection. The argument is that these are scholars, who may not have the opportunity to participate in such activities (there is no NGO operation in their neighborhood, or simply they concentrate on their studies).

#### *During the scholarship*

This scholarship functions clearly as a financial support to those who were selected. Based on the (rather minimal) feed-back from granted **scholars they often would need more support**, kind-of community building, stronger relation with the scholars and the grant-giving organization.

The list of supported scholars is dealt confidentially because of the racism in the countries. It also means that these scholars may suffer of prejudices, discrimination, etc, and if they have a Roma identity - even if they do not will to share it publicly – could gain a lot from peer group meetings or other common activities – as one of them has suggested. Based on our experience it is **very difficult to keep more vivid contact with the students** as the data base is not really

up-dated, we have failed to receive e-mail answers. After being accepted and paid scholars do not really feel any obligation (and they do not have an obligation) to be in touch with the donor organization, besides a written yearly Report.

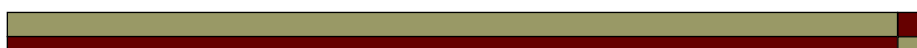
### Follow-up

Practically there is no follow-up at the moment. To **set up functioning alumni groups** would be a useful tool to implement sustainability and to follow the achievements of the granted scholars. As we understand the SP staff is working on this issue and special efforts are taken at the moment to have real and lively alumni groups in the countries.

Still, besides the alumni follow-up and evaluation of the last 8 years would be crucial. We do believe that after granting more than 5100 scholars (scholar years exactly as many of them are renewals) is necessary to make a kind of balance sheet.

Based on our interviews with important role players in the SP the **following researches have been suggested to be conducted or data to be presented** to have more information on the effects of the program:

- See statistics about numbers of applications received, and how many applications have been approved. *(This data is fully available from GMS and based on our notes in the Status Reports SP staff has presented these success rates by countries. Here we show one of these statistics made by REF SP staff as an example.)*



### Scholarship Cycle 2007-2008 – Roma Memorial University Scholarship program, Supplementary- and Interregional Scholarship programs

#	Country	Number of applicants	Grants Assigned
1	Bulgaria	344	180
2	Croatia	3	2
3	Czech Rep.	20	12
4	Hungary	165	114
5	Kosovo	29	12
6	Macedonia	233	115
7	Montenegro	10	6
7	Romania	482	160
8	Serbia	138	55
9	Slovakia	39	26
10	Turkey	8	6
11	Supplementary	9	5
12	Interregional	8	7

- Applications total: 1,363
- Renewal 529
- New 833
- Scholarships total: 700
- Renewal -331 Granted
- New – 369 Granted

Total Granted **700**

- Review of several applications from each year to gain a clearer sense of the application pool.
- Review of plan and understanding of vision for working with alumni. *(Based on REF website's vacancies, the organization seeks a Consultant to conduct a research and support the development of the Alumni Strategy of the REF/ Academic Scholarship Programs. The consultant will be responsible for defining goals in accordance with REF/Academic Scholarship Program input, drafting a strategy and creating an action*

*plan for developing an Alumni Program. So it seems that the whole concept is in the making and based on our interview with responsible staff it is a priority area of the organization.)*

- Definition of “Roma elite”
- Range of statistics country by country on Roma versus non-Roma application rates to universities (broken down by subjects is possible), relative graduation rates, employment successes after graduation.
- Research on to what extent scholarship programs which provide substantial mentoring have better graduation rates and employment successes.
- Research on the pre-university programs for disadvantaged groups and their effect on university success.
- Evaluation research based on the scholar circle of 8 years: the effect on their close circle (family, community), life quality change

All these considerations on success criteria and evaluation bring us back to the original question: **what is the creating reason and the long- and short-term goal of spending this money?** If we believe that Roma people have less chance in the education system, should not we support those who are most in need? It brings us back to the consideration of social background of the applicants. Or as one of the decision makers of REF has pointed out: even economically it is much more arguable to support those who have worse situation. On the other hand the argument was also mentioned that if we wish to build a Roma elite we have to support those who have the best chance and take the most efforts (study hard and have good grades) to achieve real success.

To summarize this very sensitive and difficult part of the Report:

**Identity, ethnicity can not and must not be checked or controlled by anyone.** Self-declaration is the only (democratic and acceptable) way, as it works in the program. But, if there is an NGO financed scholarship program, (1) where students apply on voluntary bases for financial support and (2) its strategic, long-term goal is to build a Roma elite in the region, and (3) the selection is academic merit based, we have to **consider** if it serves efficiently its goals in the existing system. In the existing system we have the following important elements:

- The list of supported scholars is not public.
- It means that scholars who do not undertake their Roma identity **openly** may also receive support.
- The selection is academic-merit based, Roma community work plays little, social background plays no role in the selection (except for LHP).
- During the scholarship scholars do not have common activities, peer-group meetings, where they could receive a kind of support in their Roma identity, or to build small Roma scholar communities. (At the moment, hopefully alumni strategy will change it.)

Although the operation of the Scholarship Program is well-standardized, procedures are clear, administration is highly professional, still, in the given constellation it does not necessarily serve efficiently to the strategic goal: to build a Roma elite in the region.

We do not know the right answer, but one thing is very clear based on our talks, interviews and fulfilled questionnaires. **Most important role players in the REF Scholarship Program have very different ideas on the values, mission, goal, necessary achievements, the**

**importance of the Roma identity and social background issue.** It obviously is a very sensitive field where transparency, objectivity, professionalism, commitment to the Roma, openness for disadvantaged situations, accountability are all considered and these *might* be conflicting or rival factors.

## 7. Daily operation

If we are to evaluate the daily operation of the REF SP, we must keep in mind that **the staff has to deal with more than 800 scholars and around 1500 applications from 15 countries with a permanent staff of 3 or 4 persons**, which is a huge administrative job. Our impression from the beginning was that **staff members are highly professional** in this administration, they were very up-dated and extremely helpful, reacting for all kinds of requests of ours even in the middle of the office moving.

### 7.1 Scholars' view on daily operation

The most important feed-back on daily operation is the beneficiaries' opinion. As we have mentioned in the Methodology part, we were not very successful in reaching scholars. Still, based on the received answers (which do not set a representative sample!) we find it important to show the most important outcomes. (Diagrams in Annexes 11.6)

To sum up the scholars opinion we may state the following:

The scholars seem more or less satisfied with the communication and administration.

- The most efficient form of communication is phone; all of the scholars said that they could contact the staff via phone.
- One of them mentioned that the coordinator or the staff never contacted him, but it means for him that everything is all right.
- **Out of 9 respondents 5 would not have continued their studies if they had not received the scholarship.** For 4 of them the scholarship was crucial, without it she could not have continued her studies.

The granted applicants had two open questions in the questionnaire, which were the following:

- In what way did these contacts (with the REF staff, coordinators, etc.) support your work? List!

For this question the answers were similar, all of the granted scholars mentioned that the clarity of the deadlines was very important, and the staff warned them about this through various communication channels. International relation building was mentioned and the chance to receive further scholarships. As one of them has summarized, information, moral support, and encouragement. The respondents have also mentioned that **staff members were very helpful.**

- What recommendations would you have in relation with the scholarship program? (Administration, contact keeping, missing services, etc.)

For this question we have received the following answers:

- More feedback on the grant process
- Periodical warnings on the deadlines (per half year)
- Faster processing

- More lively relation in the scholar peer group and with the grant-giving organization
- Native speaking staff
- To spread out more information among Roma youth about this scholarship program.
- The local staff should more often organize meetings w/the scholars in order to directly inform them on the coming programs/projects, application procedures. It is suggested to set up an Internet group-network to facilitate this process of 2-way communication
- The administration should organize more educational exchange of experience programs at least one in 3 months
- To pay more attention and necessary support for Roma student applicants
- The administration should evaluate with more attention the results of the program at the end of each year. (How many Roma are graduated/ how many got experience on summer workshops). More importantly, how many graduated Roma were employed after the implementation of the REF program for last four years and how long time they were looking to find a job

Up to this day we have received only two questionnaires from rejected applicants. These two questionnaires introduce two very different attitudes to the REF Scholarship Program and staff. One of the applicants has very disaffected answers; the other person gives high scores on the questions, but both of them mention that the reason of their rejection is not clear enough.

## ***7.2 Staff's view on daily operation***

We mean by the staff's view the whole REF staff, not only the Scholarship Program Staff. We had an opportunity to interview several people from the REF Project Office who have experience with the Scholarship Program. Very importantly **staff members enjoy working with Ref SP, they very much appreciate the multicultural environment**. The most often mentioned shortcomings were the **missing capacities** (especially in some periods of the year: application submission and contracting). Probably 1 full-time staff member and 1 half-time accountant would be necessary.

Several members have noted that the exact **tasks and responsibilities are not fully clear**, there are questionable areas of overlaps or lack of capacities appears. One of the staff members have mentioned that informing the applicants and scholars is extremely time consuming, as they mostly contact the office via phone.

An interesting issue has been raised by several respondents. The **transfer of the scholarship is in December**, usually around Xmas (the unfortunate double payment by the bank's fault was probably also related to the holiday closing of the system). It seems a rather bad timing, as most of the expenses appear at the beginning of the academic year. With this timing it makes the impression of "Xmas present" rather than a support for buying books, paying extra lessons, etc. We had a chance to have a deeper interview with a scholar who has received the grant three times already. He has mentioned that although you have to submit a **budget**, it is rarely monitored or controlled, so the students spend it on whatever they wish. He suggested to introduce more tough rules and procedures on it.

Related to the daily operation, the **question of payments** was raised. A National Selection Board member has mentioned that the payment they receive for the evaluation of the whole application documents is rather symbolic and has been decreased in the last years (and paid

rather late). H/she has also said that they would agree rather to do it on voluntary bases as they are very committed to the Program (Roma people), but in this case they would not do the very formal evaluation which is a merely administrative task.

**National Selection Board** members have also mentioned that they feel a very strong time pressure, usually the given time framework is very tight. They are all very satisfied with the preparatory work of the scholarship staff.

Concerning **information-flow** the following comments have been made in our interviews. National Selection Board members feel that they have too little relation with the scholarship staff, although they play a key role. It means the lack of information to both directions: they receive very little (actually they get the applications and guidelines), although Strategy Board decisions and other crucial information would be helpful for them. They also miss the opportunity to give feed-back on their experiences related to the application pools year by year.

The **role of the country-coordinators** seems well-defined, their ToR is clear. For the question on what their tasks are they all answered the same: communication with applicants (new, and renewal also), REF SP office, NSB members and universities. They are responsible for the organization of National Selection Board meetings, Orientation Sessions, outreach, promotion and administration. They also do the translation of applicants' packages, send and receive the enrollments, perform validity checks and enter data in the GMS.

Based on the **feed-back from country facilitators** (who are responsible for the projects in the countries) in some countries applicants or scholars often reach them on scholarship issues, because they do not get any, or satisfying answers for their questions from the coordinators. County facilitators suggest having more intensive cooperation with the coordinators to have better outreach to and more efficient support for potential applicants.

Respondents are **highly satisfied** with the checks and balances built in the procedure that **insure equal opportunities for all**: validity of documents submitted, selection committee members' good faith, high ethical standards of REF SP staff, careful approach in consideration of the obtained official documents, double checks with the institutions on every point where some information were not clear, criteria of the selection procedure, no individual decisions, clearly defined deadlines, open advertising and recruitment campaigns, good information for national scholarship administrators, thorough reapplication procedure.

### ***7.3 Our view on daily operation***

As we have mentioned before we are convinced that the **administration of the program is highly professional**. Going through the documentations we have received and based on the discussions we have the following notes:

An **up-dated coherent strategy document** / policy paper would be crucial. We would also suggest to make it public. The Policy Paper we have received is from 2005 (probably, no date), it does not contain new elements of the Program (naturally) and it still names OSI as the managing organization. Up-dating is important, but the contents are as important, too. It is necessary to have a coherent document that clearly describes the following: (1) Long-term

goals (2) Short-term goals (3) Success criteria (4) Indicators (5) Country assessments and strategies (6) Description of the Program (7) Selection criteria and procedure (including procedure for complaints) (8) Exact tasks and responsibilities of the different bodies - Strategy Board, National and International Selection Committees, etc.

Much of these information do exist in written forms, but it is rather difficult that important decisions on the Program are available only in minutes of meetings, or presentations, while the basic document, the Policy Paper is not up-dated.

The Scholarship staff is responsible for preparing the Strategy Board meetings – which are held once a year. The **members of the Strategy Board are pleased with this job**, the meetings are well prepared, minutes are professionally taken, and the agenda is being kept.

**Conflict of interest rules** are set clearly, the National Selection Board members' ToR includes that they do not participate in the evaluation of applications where they are interested partners (family or business relations).

The **outreach and dissemination** varies by countries. All different channels are used such as (mentioned by the country coordinators) visits around the country, websites, advertising on local radios, mailing lists, newspapers, meetings, trainings, through NGOs (Roma and non-Roma). More interestingly most scholars say that they have heard about the Scholarship Program through acquaintances, and that is the experience of the staff, too.

**Supervision and internal evaluation.** The yearly evaluation has a clear procedure, it contains performance measurement based on well defined personal responsibilities. The SOWs are clear, although on the daily bases staff members experience some unclear areas. Here we would like to make a minor comment. In the present SOW of the manager of the Scholarship Program the OSI is named as the supervising authority. Based on our understanding the SP manager is supervised by the executive manager of REF. Either we misunderstand or the document has to be up-dated.

**Recruitments** are through open competitions, based on well-defined ToRs. (Here again we recommend to give clear feed-back to the rejected candidates on the reasons of the decision.) The exceptions are the NSB members, who are recommended. Their identity is confidential, we agree with it as a tool for fair competition, they can not be accessed by the applicants.

## ***7.4 Roles and responsibilities of different bodies***

Another important issue is the **exact role, tasks and responsibilities of the different bodies** involved in REF Scholarship Program's operation. As the Scholarship Program is an integrated part of REF, the **Board** is supposed to be the main decision making power – based on our interviews the Board rarely makes decisions on scholarship issues, rather overviews reports and presentations.

The relation and responsibility share between the Board and the **Strategy Board** is not clear at all. The role of the Strategy Board is also a question, we have not seen a very clear Terms



of Reference for this body. Based on our understanding, the role of the Strategy Board should be to build and monitor the strategy (goals, success criteria, country strategies, bases of selection, etc.) for the scholarship program (still it is a question if they make these decisions on their own, or the final decision is the Board's responsibility). Based on the answers of the Strategy Board members some of them also noted that their task is to make decisions in questionable cases (when the NSB ignore the Selection Guidelines) of individual applications.

**National and International Selection Committees**<sup>5</sup> are the bodies where the decisions on the applications are made. There is a Terms of Reference for them, based on our discussions they are selected for this position based on personal recommendations. Someone has mentioned the rotation of these Committees as a tool for transparent and accountable procedure. The rotation is after 3 years, it will happen the first time next year. As we have mentioned before, it would be important to declare, what their responsibility is exactly. Since the selection procedure became very normative (if the application is formally acceptable, the applicant is eligible, then the GPA is the important factor, and the recommendation, motivation letters), members have mentioned that they feel their role very administrative. As we understand, the original idea was to have people from the Roma community, but as the Roma civil activity has lost its importance in the evaluation work, the necessary competence from their side is not really clear.

## **7.5 Dealing with complaints**

The **complaints are systematically administered** in the REF Scholarship office. However, complaints sometimes arrive not straight to them, but through the country facilitator, or directly to some high-level officials. We had the opportunity to interview a refused applicant who has submitted a complaint, too. Based on this discussion and our own findings, the following weak points seem to exist in the complaint treatment procedure. (Although we have to know, that those who are refused, often will complain without any legal bases and will never accept the decision, however fair that was.)

- The **Rejection Letter** on refusal is very general, it does not describe the concrete reason only mentions “high competition”. Very interestingly as we understand from REF Scholarship staff, previously they had the practice of giving concrete feed-back and they have received significantly more complaints. The REF Project Office has exactly the opposite experience: since they give concrete feed-back on the reasons of refusal, they receive fewer complaints. Anyway, a common complaint/appeal treatment procedure should be worked out where besides the frequency of appeals related to reasoning other considerations play role, too. (I.e. giving feed-back is assistance for the refused applicant on what to improve, the otherwise transparent and fair decision is visible, etc.). This **complaint/appeal procedure** has to be clearly defined in written form and made public.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Int'l Selection Board dissolved by REF Board decision in September Retreat meeting, 2008 and replaced by the Western Balkans SB for the Western Balkans applications and the Selection Sub-Board of the SB to take decisions on Interregional, Supplementary Grants as well as appeals or exceptional cases.

<sup>6</sup> In practice the complaint procedure looks like the following: The Rejection Letter states that decision is final and may not be appealed. Therefore they have the following practice:

(1) **inquiries** – when students write to ask the reasons for rejection; (2) **complaints** – when students write to state they disagree with the rejection and bring their arguments and attach academic transcripts.

i. The inquiries are responded in written form and we itemize all possible reasons for rejection.

ii. If repetitive inquiry they send the case to the Legal department.

- Based on our personal interview with the complaining student we think that it would be useful to have a rather **“independent” body** within the organization who deal with the appeals and contains of staff members who do not deal with the applications on any level. As we understand, the complaints – if decided so by the staff – may get to the Strategy Board Selection Sub Board, which fulfills this independency. Still, the criteria are not really clear, which cases get to this stage. It should be clearly defined in written form. (In the concrete case based on documents we have seen, the fault of REF SP is not proved, the scholar was late with the submission.)

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**iii.** If the Student complains from the outset, and the case looks questionable in terms of Program decision the case is sent for revision to the Strategy Board Selection Sub-Board.

## 8. Challenges of integration – possibilities for closer cooperation

It is clear from our Terms of Reference and even from the interviews with decision makers, that there is a clear goal of **integrating the Scholarship Program** into REF. The recent moving to a common office is an important step forward to it. Based on discussions we understand that at the beginning, when the Program was moved from OSI, not much basic changes have happened, it was rather the change of logo. Administratively the integration (set schedule in the Working Group's minutes) have been successful, still it seems that for harmonized and fruitful daily operation further steps should be taken.

What is the necessary level of integration? It has to be defined by the decision making bodies. But an interesting example of having different support policies within one organization is the **double payment** of some scholars through REF project parallel with REF individual scholarship. REF Scholarship Program's scholars may be supported through a REF project (like Romaversitas), where the selection procedure and criteria, services, policy on confidential data, relationship with the students, etc. are radically different. Both financial sources come from REF. Based on Romaversitas data from 28 asked scholars (1/3 of all Hungarians) 15 receive REF scholarship, too. **We do not think that one scholar should receive only one scholarship** or the programs should be exclusive in other words. **But we do think that the two elements could be/ should be harmonized.** REF provides scholarship on academic merit-based selection, and besides the financial support, no other services are insured. Romaversitas considers social background and Roma community activity at the selection and provides tutoring, mentoring, community development. Obviously, those who have weaker academic achievements and come from a socially disadvantaged situation need this kind of support, as with the simple financial support they easily drop out from the university. The Romaversitas type of scholarship program (which is proportionately more expensive, but gives better chances for those who would otherwise drop out from the university) could be the "basics" and the REF type of support could be built on it as a second element, the extra for those, who achieve higher GPA, as an academic success based motivation. This is just an example, these overlaps between the Scholarship and Projects should be detected, analyzed and the most efficient solutions looked for.

As we have mentioned it before, we are in the fortunate situation to have conducted an external evaluation of REF, so we may see the integration from both sides. For us it is quite obvious that there are **basic differences on several fields between REF Project Office and REF Scholarship Programs, which create rather serious challenges for the integration** (and also tension within the whole staff). We would like to emphasize that the **following listing of possible challenges of integration is totally value-free**: we do not think that one or the other department is better. What we do think is that to establish real integration, fruitful common work, efficient use of sources, experiences, knowledge, data, there is a need for common understanding on many fields, which might be achieved only through dialogue and mutual compromises.

- We have asked both staffs about the 5 most positive and 5 most negative things in working with REF / REF Scholarship Program. In the case of REF Project Office the high **Roma representation within the staff** was one of the most frequent answers. It was the outcome of a very conscious recruitment strategy, where young Roma professionals with a human rights activity background have enjoyed priority. In the

case of the Scholarship Program (that was taken over from OSI) there was not such a policy<sup>7</sup>. Professional quality in the administrative type of work was the leading selection criteria. (This phenomenon also appears in the case of country facilitators (project development) and coordinators (scholarship). As someone has argued: it is a tool for transparency to have coordinators who are not members of the Roma community – there is less chance of influence. At the same time country facilitators are very active in their own country's Roma community, that is their main tool of project initiation.). We think, that concerning the different type of expertise needed in the two kinds of work (project development vs. scholarship administration) this difference may be well argued. But we have to keep in mind that on both sides we have experienced a kind of intolerance towards this difference (on one hand professionalism on the other hand Roma commitment is questioned). We may frame this situation as two parts of an organization have to get integrated where “technocrat” and “Roma community involvement” values conflict. Although we do not think that people with human rights activity would not be highly professional in project management, or highly professional administrators would not be committed for the Roma issue at the same time. What we think is that this never discussed but existing difference between the two offices may lead to prejudices that cause real barriers of integration and cooperation.

- Although the project development and the scholarship giving are different activities, we do believe that **common strategy could be built on commonly defined goals**. “Closing the gap between educational outcome of Roma and non-Roma” could be an absolutely relevant mission for the Scholarship Program, too, as it is readable now at the entrance of the new common office. The consideration of disadvantaged situation (social background, discrimination) and the importance of Roma identity and community activism are very different in the two offices at the moment in the granting policy. Again: both approaches are absolutely relevant! It may be stated that on one hand projects are financed to decrease disadvantages and strengthen Roma communities, on the other hand Roma scholars who have the best chances to achieve success are granted to build up a Roma elite. The two ways together serve the goal of closing the educational outcome gap. But as long as these discussions are not conducted, the necessity and effectiveness of the approaches will be questioned. As long as the expected results, concrete goals are not set for the organization as a whole and these are not itemized for the project and scholarship part, true integration will be rather difficult. To have REF as one integrated organization with different offices it has to be clarified that they all work for the same goals – probably with different approaches.
- Another obstacle of integration is the **unclear relation of decision making bodies** within the whole REF. It seems at the moment that the Board does not make decisions on scholarship issues – while it is a part of the organization so the overall responsibility is there. The role of the Strategy Board should be better defined, how it relates to the Board concerning responsibilities and decision-making competence.

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<sup>7</sup> Here the scholarship staff members have mentioned the following 5 most positive things working with REF SP: visible success of the program, multicultural environment, international environment, good cooperation with the staff, professional system and procedure, working with Youth

- A very often mentioned issue was the **question of confidentiality**. Staff members of the REF Project Office have claimed that they have no access to the GMS. Scholarship staff members have argued that they have a legal obligation to treat personal data of scholars confidentially. We do think that an inside regulation should be developed that contains concrete rules who, in what position and for what reasons may access the GMS data - and of course all of them have to sign a Statement of Confidentiality.
- Not to approach the issue of integration only from the obstacles' side, we find it important to list **possible fields of co-operation**. When we asked about this issue our respondents, the answers were radically different. Some think, that the moving of the Scholarship Program from OSI to REF is basically an administrative issue, the two parts have not much to do together content wise. Others definitely think that the pool of scholars from 15 countries is a huge resource that must not be wasted. These Roma young professionals might be a great help in community projects on one hand, on the other hand they might learn a lot from participating in one way or the other in projects implemented in their countries. The country assessments were another issue raised. REF Project Office has spent quite a lot of efforts to have objective picture on the educational situation of the Roma in the countries. Special focus on higher education could be built in these studies and also with the exploration of the possible cooperation between the two parts. Several staff members have mentioned that regular consultation would be very helpful: if we are convinced that we have no cooperation to do and do not communicate because of this, probably we will never find the basics of common work and waste a lot of chances to find creative solutions.
- Interestingly while most respondents agreed that there is no real cooperation between the two parts (disagreed on if it was needed at all or not), **country coordinators were rather satisfied on all levels with the cooperation**. It probably means (based on the 8 received questionnaires) that on the local levels REF staff members succeed to build up cooperation, as probably they are more dependent on each other far from the headquarters. (Here we also have to note that some country facilitators were not satisfied at all with the cooperation with the coordinators.)

## 9. Main findings

First of all we have to emphasize that we found the REF Scholarship Program's staff and implementing bodies **highly professional, committed, with high ethical standards and paying special attention to personal data protection, human rights and legitimacy.**

Concerning the strategy it seems to us that **fundamental elements of planning have to be further declared**, such as long- and short-term goals, the concept of Roma elite, success criteria, expected outcomes, priorities in support related to the targets (i.e. Roma identity and confidentiality, GPA and social background, the necessity of other services than financial support, etc.). Most surprisingly we have met the most different ideas on these issues from people who all play a crucial role in forming the program.

On the **outcome level the program is obviously a real success** as it is the biggest financial source for academic development of the Roma in the region. After 8 years of experience and over 5100 granted scholars (scholar years more exactly as the proportion of renewals is quite high) it is time to have evaluations and measures on its impact and long-term effects on the social status of the Roma – and make modifications if the results direct so. As sociologist we actually think that this sample (as an amount and in time) of young Roma intellectuals from 15 countries is a real “gold-mine” to do analyses.

Concerning **daily operation** we have to lay down first of all, that keeping contact with more than 800 scholars from 15 countries during a year is a **huge administrative job**, which is administered professionally. Although we could reach very few scholars, the ones who responded were basically satisfied with the staff's performance. (Here we must note that the **data base on the contacts** contains much invalid information which is a barrier of keeping vivid relation with the grantees.) Based on our discussions we think that **staff members enjoy working with Ref SP**, they very much appreciate the multicultural environment. The most often mentioned shortcomings were the **missing capacities**. They also mentioned that **tasks and responsibilities** are not fully clear. An interesting point was the critique on the timing of **the money transfer** which happens in December. We found that there are **well defined checks and balances** in the selection procedure to ensure equal opportunity for all and fair competition. The **conflict of interest rules** and procedures are also satisfying. We were very much missing an **up-dated and coherent policy paper** that describes the goals of the program, the elements, the expected results, the functions of the different bodies, the selection procedure, etc. The **role of National Selection Boards** was raised as they are often Roma representatives to guarantee the Roma community element, but their decisions are rather limited as the selection is almost normative.

As it was a core element of our task, we tried to analyze the **challenges of integration of the REF Scholarship Program into REF**. Administratively it has happened already of course, but on several levels these two departments function as two organizations (even **double finance** scholars through scholarship *and* project without concept of harmonization of the two elements). We have found the following fields as the ones which have to be considered if the goal is to achieve real integration – they are also quite sensitive ones: The necessity of Roma representation in the staff, building up a common goal for the organization as one and define the probably different strategies to contribute to it, the clear relation of the decision making bodies, the question of confidential information within the organization, and the possible fields of cooperation.

## 10. Recommendations

1. A **common strategy building session** should be held for the entire REF (with external lead) to discuss the most basic issues that are crucial for the organization to function as one (like the question of Roma elite, the importance of Roma representation in the organization, the importance of Roma identity and community building, the expected impacts of REF's activities within 5-10 years, the principals of support, the consideration of disadvantaged situation, confidentiality and cooperation, etc.)
2. REF Scholarship Program should have an **up-dated and coherent policy paper publicly accessible** that clearly describes the following: (1) Long-term goals (2) Short-term goals (3) Success criteria (4) Indicators (5) Country assessments and strategies (6) Description of the Program (7) Selection criteria and procedure (including procedure for complaints) (8) Exact tasks and responsibilities of the different bodies - Strategy Board, National and International Selection Committees, etc.
3. In general **more information should be shared on the Scholarship Program publicly**. Although we find the program functioning in a transparent way (meaning that the risk of corruption is minimized) it does not **seem** transparent for many actors (even within REF!) because little information exists in written form and is available.
4. We propose to use the following **indicators**:

*Outcome indicators:*

Number of submitted applications related to targeted number/country/major

Number of supported scholars related to targeted number/country/major

% of invalid contacts in GMS

*Achievement indicators:*

% of successfully graduated amongst granted scholars

% of successfully employed amongst granted scholars

Decrease of drop outs amongst Roma students

*Long-term effect indicators:*

Number of Roma intellectuals' growth/country

Number of Roma leaders' growth

5. As REF Project Office has developed high quality **country assessments** and they are regularly up-dated we suggest to concern to have a **special chapter in them on Roma higher education** (instead of having separated base-line studies for RHSP). Such a common assessment may also reveal the opportunities of cooperation and more effective and creative use of resources.
6. After 8 years of existence and over 5100 scholars it would be crucial to have an **evaluation research on the impact of the Scholarship Program** concerning the Roma community in the region. The concrete content of the research very much depends on the given framework (of course budget and time).

7. We definitely recommend to have a **more careful follow-up on the students**, until their graduation at least. Alumni groups could play a crucial role in this. We also recommend (based on a staff member's recommendation) to **set-up a more detailed data-base on the scholars' pool** (data also on social status, like education of parents, living conditions, region, etc.). It should serve the measurement of the success and the targeting of the program.
8. Overlaps between the Scholarship Program and the Projects (**double payment of scholars** through the two sources) should be detected and analyzed. These supports may be basically different concerning selection procedure, criteria, services, etc. Their best synergic matching should be worked out.
9. We recommend working out an **internal regulation on confidentiality** that clearly describes for whom, for what reason what data are accessible, and must be treated confidentially. We do not think that data can not be shared within the organization, even if they are personal data, the question is for what reason.
10. It would be very helpful to have a **clear organogram** on the Scholarship Program within REF, where decision making power and responsibilities are well defined.
11. We recommend having a **more clear coordination of the REF Programs** in the countries with special emphasis on the cooperation of the coordinators and facilitators. Administrative efficiency could also be considered as REF has a double representation in most countries.
12. We suggest **calling in the National Selection Board members' experience** more intensively as they are the ones who have the best overview of the applicants' and scholars' pool year by year. they have no opportunity to share their opinion in details. As it was mentioned: they have an impression of the whole picture, what the characteristics are of the national applicant pool, what the tendencies are related to the previous year, etc.
13. We propose to reconsider the announcement letter to **refused applicants**. We are convinced that clear reasoning functions better and is more transparent. We also suggest to set-up an independent body within the organizations who deal with the complaints (the ones that do not get to the next, appeal phase, or to the Selection Sub-Board).
14. We recommend including **compulsory co-operation with the program** (i.e. participation in researches, answering questionnaires) **in the contract form**. The contracts of REF (on projects and individual scholarships) should be better harmonized concerning the principle obligations of granted persons and organizations (although there must be obvious differences).
15. We also suggest having more vivid relation with the scholars **besides the financial support**. On one hand to have **alumni groups** is probably only possible if some kind of peer group building happens during the scholarship already. On the other hand we must not forget that these youngsters often suffer of prejudices and discrimination, support their Roma identity **besides** their academic development would be crucial. To build up a Roma elite in the region.



# 11. Annexes

## **11.1: Interview questions to staff members and country coordinators**

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### 1. Clarifications

- Is there an up-dated version of the Program Policy Paper?
- Differences in the Paper and the website information:
  - Health
  - Supplementary
  - Interregional
- GPA plays a crucial role. How about the freshmen?
- 1 Selection Board for all or each country? How is it related to Selection Committees?
- What is the relation between the Strategy Board and the REF Board?
- Country contacts: their relation to the country facilitators, and REF management
- Orientation Meetings: for which programs?
- Alumni Groups: do they monitor themselves?
- I would like to see the “Complaint Folders”
- The double payment story
- How many grantees/year and all together?

#### 2. General

5 most positive things working with REF RMUSP

5 biggest challenges working with REF RMUSP

#### 3. REF and RMUSP - integration

- What are the content based linkages between RMUSP and other REF programs? (Common country strategies, etc.)
- How would you evaluate the coordination between RMUSP and REF programs? 1-6
  - Strategy building
  - Supervision
  - Inside communication
  - Communication with (potential) grantees
  - Communication with (potential) donors/ fundraising
  - Communication with policy makers
  - Administration, daily operation

Problems:

### 3. Efficiency and effectiveness of RMUSP

- How would you evaluate the decision making procedure on individual applications? 1-6
  - transparency
  - publicity
  - clarity of expectations
  - clarity of role of different players
  - selection criteria

Problems:

- What are the checks and balances built in the process for transparent, accountable procedure that insures equal opportunities for all? List
  
- How efficient are these? 1-6

Problems:

- How overall (all-in, comprehensive) are the regulations on conflict of interest? 1-6

Problems:

- What are the basics of the internal regulations on publicity related to grant programs?
  
- How efficient are these? 1-6

Problems:

- Evaluate RMUSP's performance related to other similar organizations in 1-6
  - Efficient and fast contracting
  - Fast disbursement
  - Services
  
- How do you evaluate the effectiveness of source allocation? What data do you have?
  
- Evaluate the efficiency of RMUSP's monitoring and evaluation system 1-6

- transparency
- publicity (towards applicants)
- clarity of aspects and protocols
- usage of monitoring and evaluation outcomes (feedback and program planning)

Problems:

- What is the procedure of dealing with appeals?
- Evaluate your complaint policy and practice 1-6
  - Clarity of protocols
  - Accountability

Problems:

### **Outreach and dissemination**

- What are the main channels and methods of reaching stakeholders? List
  - Potential applicants
  - Potential partners
  - Potential donors
- How standardized and efficient RMUSP's outreach and dissemination are? 1-6

Problems:

### **Internal organization**

- Evaluate your record keeping and data collection practice 1-6

Problems:

- What information/statistics do you get regularly from your records and data? What is the learning from it?
- Can you tell the granted person/program cost ratio?
- Evaluate the recruitment procedure 1-6
  - transparency
  - publicity
  - clarity of expectations
  - selection criteria

Problems:

- Evaluate the clarity of personal tasks and responsibilities 1-6

Problems:

- Evaluate the clarity of task and responsibility division with REF 1-6

Problems:

- Which are the missing capacities and competencies for operation?

- What are the forms of internal communication?

- Evaluate communication 1-6
  - internal communication within the staff of the office
  - with Country Contacts
  - with REF staff
  - with the Strategy Board
  - with the Board
  - with the Bank

Problems:

- Evaluate the procedure of internal evaluation 1-6
  - clarity of protocol and expectations

Problems:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of work load division 1-6

Problems:

## **11.2 Interview questions to country coordinators**

### **1. General**

Describe your tasks and responsibilities

What is your personal motivation to work with REF RMUSP?

What is your personal mission to work with REF RMUSP?

5 most positive things working with REF RMUSP

5 biggest challenges working with REF RMUSP

### **2. REF and RMUSP - integration**

- How would you evaluate the coordination between RMUSP and REF programs? 1-6
  - Strategy building
  - Supervision
  - Inside communication
  - Communication with (potential) grantees
  - Communication with policy makers
  - Administration, daily operation

Problems:

### **3. Efficiency and effectiveness of USP**

- How would you evaluate the decision making procedure on individual applications? 1-6
  - transparency
  - publicity
  - clarity of expectations
  - clarity of role of different players
  - selection criteria

Problems:

- What are the checks and balances built in the process for transparent, accountable procedure that insures equal opportunities for all? List
  
- How efficient are these? 1-6

Problems:

- How overall (all-in, comprehensive) are the regulations on conflict of interest? 1-6

Problems:

- Evaluate RMUSP's performance related to other similar organizations in 1-6
  - Efficient and fast contracting
  - Fast disbursement
  - Services (mentoring, etc.)
  - Respond to real needs
  - Respond to other scholarships, university fees, studying abroad, fees for dormitory, etc. ..

How do you evaluate the

Problems:

- What is the procedure of dealing with appeals?
- Evaluate your complaint policy and practice 1-6
  - Clarity of protocols
  - Accountability

Problems:

#### **4. Outreach and dissemination**

- What are the main channels and methods of reaching stakeholders? List
  - Potential applicants
  - Potential partners
- How standardized and efficient RMUSP's outreach and dissemination are? 1-6

Problems:

#### **5. Internal organization**

- Evaluate your record keeping and data collection practice 1-6

Problems:

- What information/statistics do you get regularly from your records and data? What is the learning from it? (on effectiveness of source allocation? What data do you have? Academic achievements or other, like personal improvements? Or civil involvement? Individual, or by cohort? )

- Evaluate the recruitment procedure 1-6
  - transparency
  - publicity
  - clarity of expectations
  - selection criteria

Problems:

- Evaluate the clarity of personal tasks and responsibilities 1-6

Problems:

- Evaluate the clarity of task and responsibility division with REF country facilitators 1-6

Problems:

- Which are the missing capacities and competencies for operation?

- What are the forms of internal communication?

- Evaluate communication 1-6
  - internal communication within the staff of the office
  - with REF staff
  - with the Strategy Board

Problems:

- Evaluate the procedure of internal evaluation 1-6
  - clarity of protocol and expectations

Problems:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of work load division 1-6

Problems:

### **11.3 Questions on the Health Scholarship Program**

- How, exactly when and by whom was the Program initiated?
- Based on what data / research /assessment findings was it initiated?
- What was the concrete decision-making procedure on the program? (Written program proposal (by whom) sent to which body, who has discussed it, who has decided on the introduction, etc.)?
- What are the concrete goals set (numbers of students by fields and countries)? Goals for the longer run? (For example: Number of Roma doctors/nurses in countries? Better health status of the Roma in the countries concerned?)
- How are these met at the moment? (Concrete goals on supported scholars)
- What are the ways of internal monitoring/evaluation of this new program?
- How would you evaluate the success of this program until now?
- Based on your view in what ways could it be developed further?

### **11.4 Questions to granted applicants**

- How did you get information on REF's Scholarship?
- Was the information on the REF website/ by other information sources adequate for your application? Score 1-6  
Problems:
- Did you get any support from REF Scholarship office before submission? Yes / No
- If yes, was this support efficient? Score 1-6  
Problems:
- How long time did it take from the submission until contracting?
- What were the forms of communication with REF SP?
- How often have you been contacted by REF SP staff (the country coordinator, or other staff) during your grant?



- In what way did these contacts support your work? List!
- Did you get any support BESIDES the scholarship grant from REF RMUSP? What was it? How efficient was it? Score 1-6

Problems?

- What recommendations would you have in relation with the scholarship program? (Administration, contact keeping, missing services, etc.)

### ***11.5 Questions to refused applicants***

- How did you get information on REF's Scholarship?
- Was the information on the REF website/ by other information sources adequate for your application? Score 1-6 (1 worst, 6 perfect)

Problems:

- Did you get any support from REF Scholarship office before submission? Yes / No

- If yes, was this support efficient? Score 1-6

Problems:

- What was the reason for your rejection?

- Was the justification clear? Score 1-6

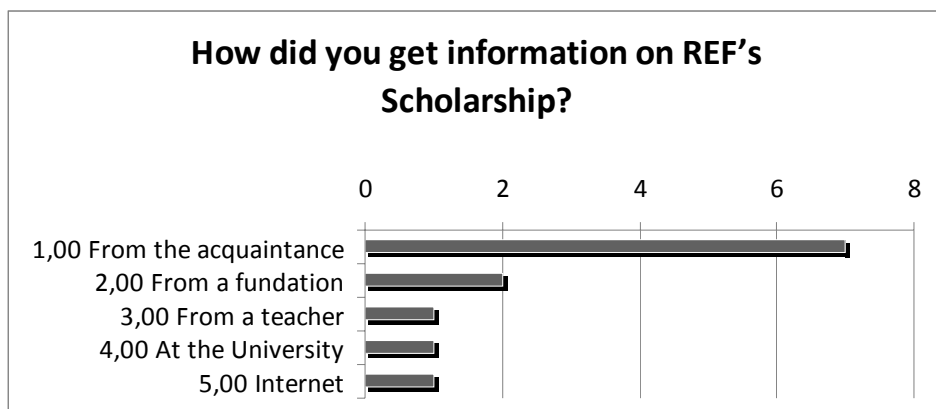
Problems:

- Do you feel that your application was judged fairly and objectively? Score 1-6

Problems:

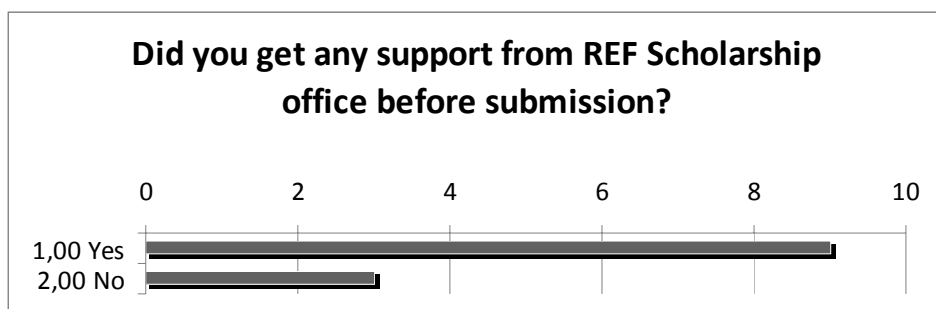
- How likely are you to submit another application to REF Scholarship Program? Score 1-6

## 11.6 Scholars' responds in diagrams



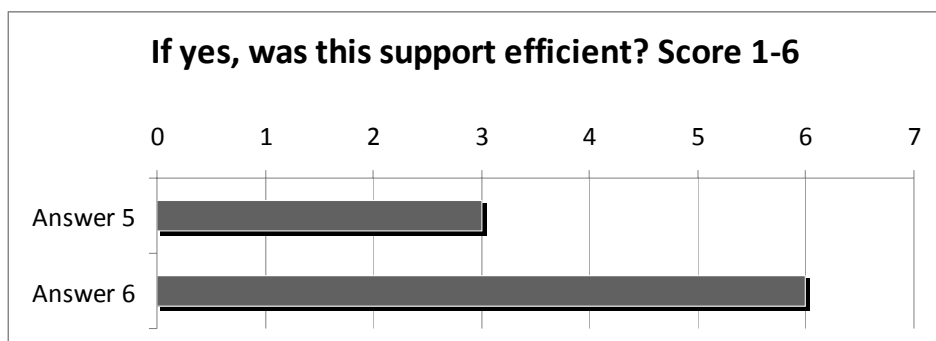
Was the information on the REF website adequate for your application? Score 1-6 (1: not at all, 6: absolutely)

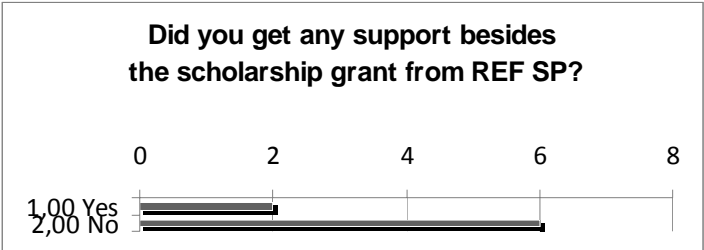
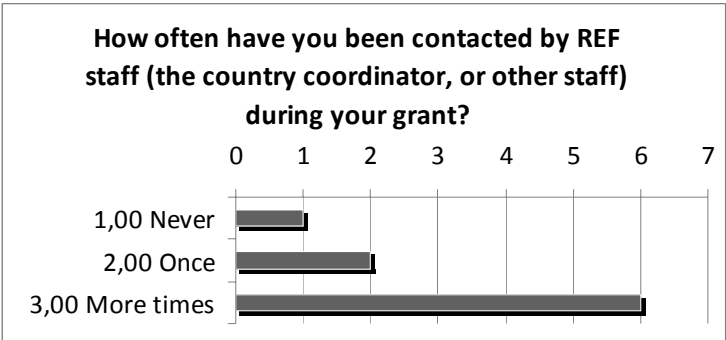
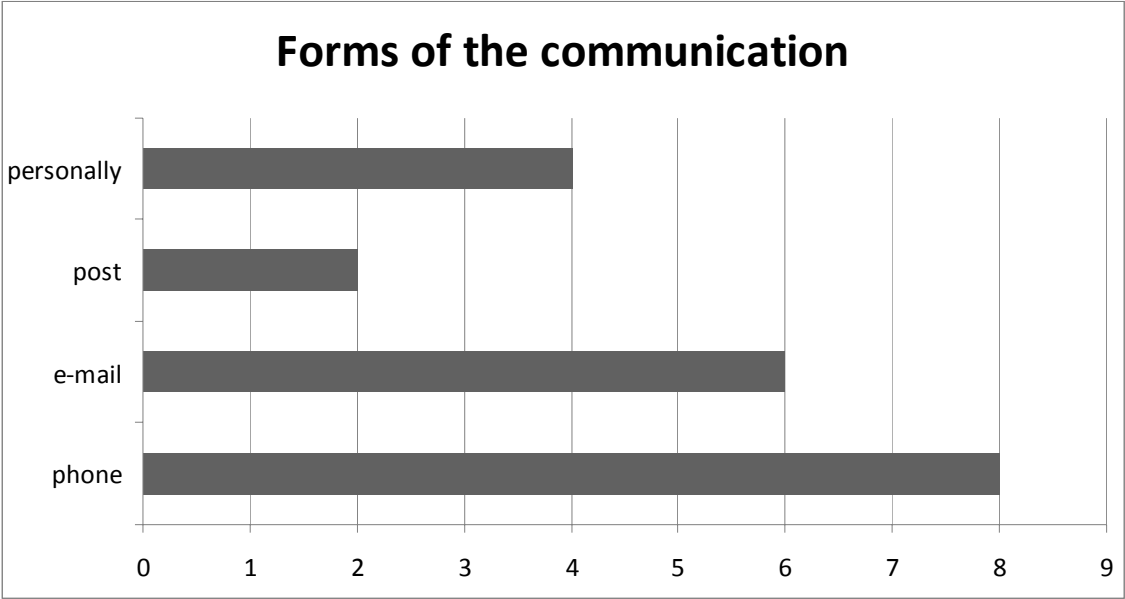
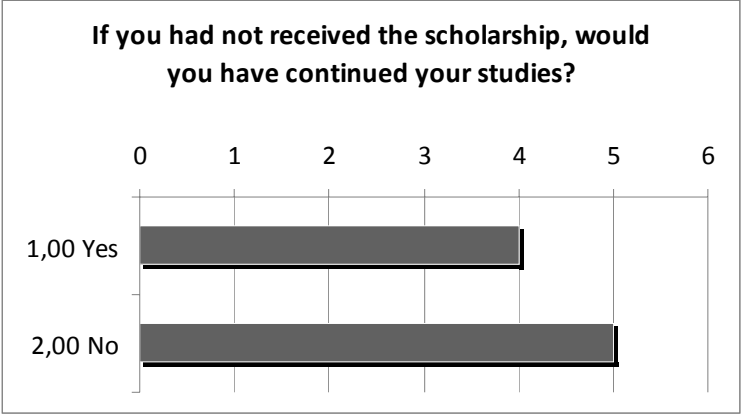
Average of sores: 5,03



If yes, was this support efficient? Score 1-6 (1: useless 6: absolutely efficient)

Average of scores: 5,66





## 11.7 Questionnaire to the Strategy Board Members

- How often does the Board meet?
  
- How would you evaluate the coordination between the Scholarship and other REF programs? 1-6
  - Strategy building
  - Supervision
  - Inside communication
  - Communication with (potential) grantees
  - Communication with policy makers
  - Administration, daily operation

Problems:

- What is the way of decision making? (Consensus, voting, etc.)
  
- How would you evaluate the decision preparation that REF RMUSP staff does? Score 1-6

Problems:

- What are the weak points of the Strategy Board's operation?
  
- How would you evaluate the cooperation with REF RMUSP staff? Score 1-6

Problems:

- How would you evaluate the decision making procedure on individual applications? 1-6
  - transparency
  - publicity
  - clarity of expectations
  - clarity of role of different players
  - selection criteria

Problems:

- What are the checks and balances built in the process for transparent, accountable procedure that insures equal opportunities for all? List

- How efficient are these? 1-6

Problems:

- How comprehensive are the regulations on conflict of interest? Score 1-6

Problems:

- How would you evaluate the effectiveness of the Scholarship Program? ( Effect on academic achievements, on personal improvements, on civil involvement, on roma intellectuals growing share, etc. Shortly: How effectively does it contribute to the set goals – building-up a roma elite in the countries concerned.) 1-6

Problems:

- What are the success criteria of the REF Scholarship Program based on your opinion?
- What information/analysis/research would assist your work in making policy decisions?

### **11.8 Questions to Selection Committee Members**

- What is the way of decision making in the Committee? (Consensus, voting, etc.)
- How would you evaluate the decision preparation that REF RMUSP staff does? Score 1-6

Problems:

- What are the weak points of the Selection Committee's operation?
- How would you evaluate the cooperation with REF RMUSP staff? Score 1-6

Problems:

- How would you evaluate the decision making procedure on individual applications? 1-6
  - transparency
  - publicity
  - clarity of expectations
  - clarity of role of different players
  - selection criteria
  - clarity of protocols

Problems:

- What are the checks and balances built in the process for transparent, accountable procedure that insures equal opportunities for all? List
  
- How efficient are these? 1-6

Problems:

- How comprehensive are the regulations on conflict of interest? Score 1-6

Problems: