



With support from the European Union

AGS IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS FOR MACEDONIA

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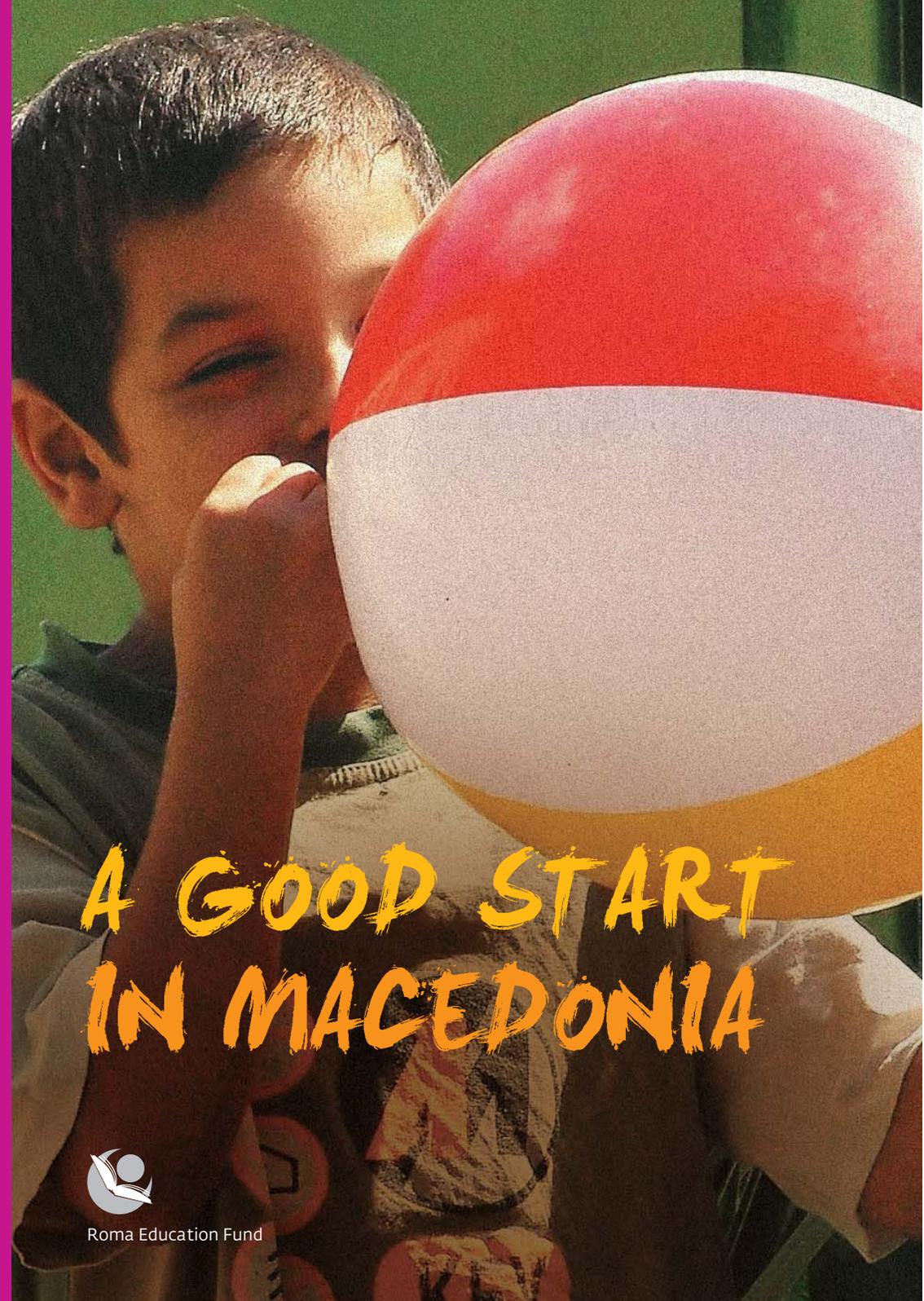
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A GOOD START IN MACEDONIA



Roma Education Fund

ABOUT A GOOD START

A Good Start is funded by the European Union. Explicit but nonexclusive in its targeting, the project currently helps more than 4,000 Roma and non-Roma children from ages zero to six to access early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. With a mandate until June 2012, it operates in a total of 16 locations in Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, and Slovakia. Coordinated by **Roma Education Fund**, its three international partners are the **International Step By Step Association (ISSA)**, **Fundación Secretariado Gitano**, the **Slovak Governance Institute**, and 12 local implementing partners.

PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES IN MACEDONIA

Throughout Macedonia, only about 3.5 percent of Roma children are enrolled in preschool, according to official data from 2005–2006. Language is one of the major causes for non-enrollment in kindergarten in Šuto Orizari. Additionally, there is a serious problem with the lack of parental identification documents and birth certificates, as well as with access to immunization and medical examination for toddlers.

The remaining AGS project localities (Vinica, Trbotiviste/Delchevo, and Crnik) are located in the northeast of Macedonia. In the municipality of Vinica there are approximately 20,000 inhabitants (1,230 Roma). In Trbotivište, within the territorial borders of the municipality of Delchevo, there are 542 people, of whom 112 are Roma. Crnik has a total population reaching 1,030 (350 Roma). In both Trbotivište and Crnik, there is lack of local health assistance and services for children and families with children under age three.

Ambrela performs a set of regular activities in Šuto Orizari: home visits, supporting families to get identity documents, and awareness-raising workshops on health and education. In cooperation with the local service for vaccination and immunization, Ambrela checks which families did not bring their children to be vaccinated and subsequently visits those families. To date, Ambrela has helped about 106 families to get identity documents/birth certificates in Macedonia, and many others to get vaccinations. Regular home visits and community motivation events and regular evening meetings with parents and representatives provides unique opportunities to discuss ECEC issues.

NGO Kham is the implementing partner in the northeast. Within the home visits and other contacts, parents are informed about the time frame and necessary documentation for the enrollment of their children in primary school and preschool. Kham also organizes community motivation events, on the developmental phases of the child, the importance of regular immunization, and communication between parent and child. In Vinica, Crnik, and Delchevo, with the financial support of the local municipalities and the Roma Education Fund, kindergartens and preschools were modified and renovated to provide educational services for disadvantaged children there. ISSA also carried out professional trainings for the ECEC teams in the localities.

Using additional financial support from the Bernard van Leer Foundation, activities focusing on quality early childhood services are strengthened in one selected Macedonian locality out of the four. Also, to provide educational developmental toys for the disadvantaged, deprived children and for their parents, two Toy Libraries are established in Macedonia as part of A Good Start, one in Skopje and one in Vinica. Based on the cooperation started in 2011, the LEGO Foundation provides DUPLO and LEGO toys and teacher training for all Good Start beneficiary kindergartens in 2012.

ABOUT THE ROMA EDUCATION FUND

With its headquarters in Budapest, the Roma Education Fund (REF) was created within the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2005. Its mission and ultimate goal is to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma.

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