

ANNUAL REPORT

20
23



STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION FOR THE WELLBEING OF ROMA COMMUNITIES

In 2022, the Roma Education Fund embarked on a transformative journey of growth, adapting to change while remaining rooted in its origins. With nearly two decades of experience, the organization has forged a formidable legacy.

On this fertile foundation, in 2023 Roma Education Fund leadership has crafted a new strategy, redesigning its mission, vision, and core values.



CIPRIAN NECULA

CHAIR - ROMA EDUCATION FUND

REF'S PRIORITIES FOR 2024

1. Education for Roma communities' Resilience, for Sustainable Development, and Dignity
2. Education for Jobs of the Future
3. Education for Roma Future and Leadership
4. Education for Democracy and Public Engagement

NEW MISSION

To increase the Resilience of Roma Communities in the face of social, economic, environmental, health, political changes and crises through Education.

NEW VALUES

REF values are LINKS that connect Roma communities with educational setups designed to increase the Resilience of the Roma.

NEW VISION

To create a supportive environment for every child, young person and parent with whom REF works, empowering them to develop personal resilience in rapidly changing societies.

To instill confidence and a sense of belonging, and to encourage active participation within their communities while emphasizing the importance of education as a catalyst for growth and development.

2023 IN NUMBERS



3,458 BENEFICIARIES

25,940 EDUCATIONAL LEARNING HOURS

2,606 SCHOLARSHIPS

1,752 MEALS

745 MENTORING HOURS

700 SOCIAL VOUCHERS

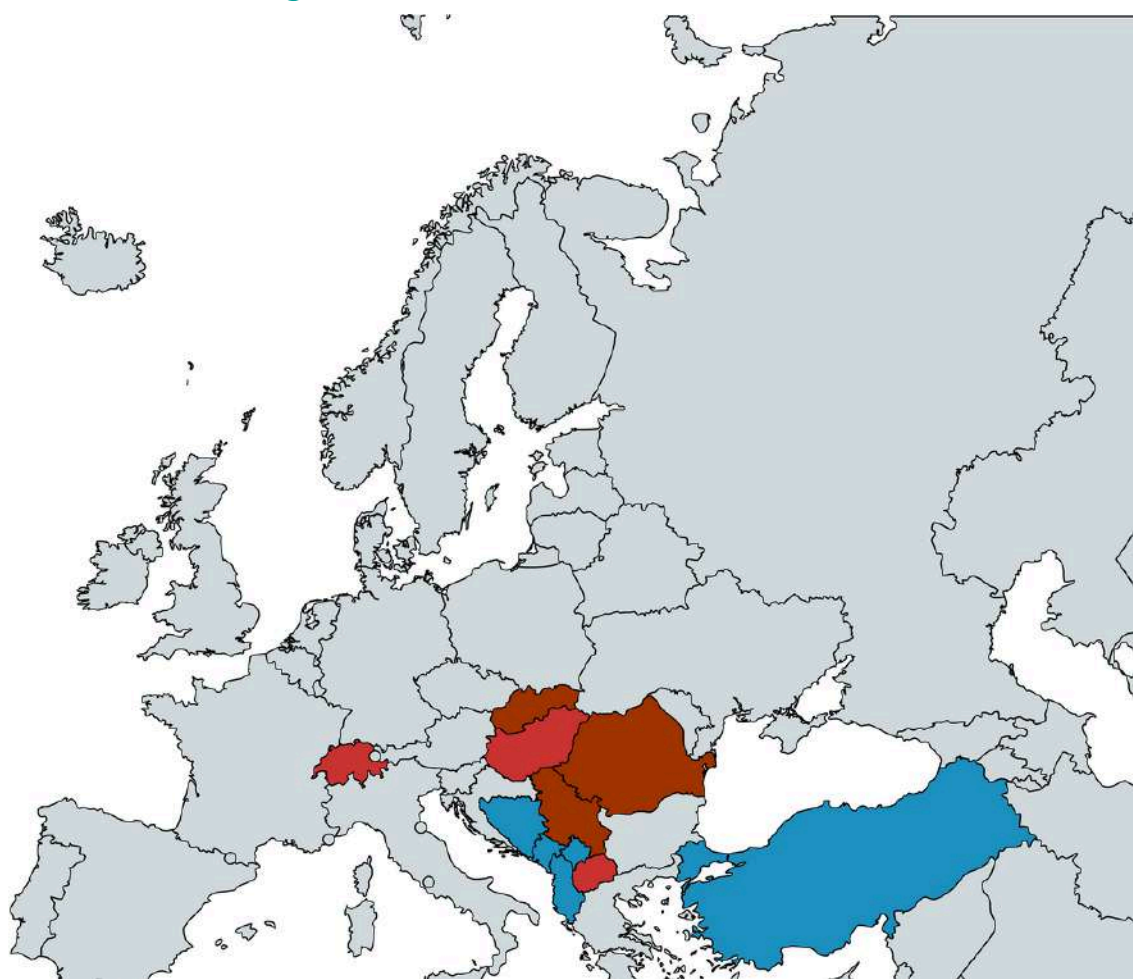
530 TUTORING HOURS

6 OFFICES

9 IMPLEMENTATION COUNTRIES

REF's Network

- REF'S OFFICES
- IMPLEMENTATION COUNTRIES
- OFFICE & IMPLEMENTATION



REF ROMANIA | 12 PROJECTS

DONORS

PROJECTS

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

- EU Regional Action for Roma Education: Increased Education Support and Opportunities for Roma Students in the Western Balkans and Turkey, phase II
- European Youth Summit G1000 Invisibles G1000 i - YES
- The First Trinational Congress

EUROPEAN UNION, SOCIAL EUROPEAN FUND

- Connected to Education – Integrated Approach for Children Whose Parents Work Abroad
- Build Your Own Future!
- Learning Today in Order to Get a Job Tomorrow
- Equal Education - Together for Children

COUNCIL OF EUROPE DEVELOPMENT BANK

- One-Stop-Shop Centre for Roma Vulnerable Refugees from Ukraine

EEA AND NORWAY GRANTS

- Minus segregation, Diversity plus – Peer education for Roma and non-Roma communities

VELUX FOUNDATIONS

- Pedagogy Scholarship Program in Hungary, Slovakia and Romania
- Shaping Academic and Employment Skills for Young Roma (SHAPYR)

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION OF DORTMUND, GERMANY

- Resist, Revolt, Rejoin!



EU REGIONAL ACTION FOR ROMA EDUCATION: INCREASED EDUCATION SUPPORT AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ROMA STUDENTS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY (RARE), PHASE II - DGN II

The main outputs of the activities are related to management and administration of grants in 7 countries in the Western Balkans and Türkiye. The education-focused activities within the grants are divided into 4 main educational levels: Early Childhood Development, Primary Education, Secondary Education, and Tertiary Education, covering three academic year, with the start of the 2023-2024 academic year.

The main interventions are centred around the following:

- offering comprehensive education services to Roma children and students to both have both access to inclusive quality education and ensure swift transition to one educational level to the other;
- enhancing employability potential of the project.

PEDAGOGY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM IN HUNGARY, SLOVAKIA AND ROMANIA

The students who are enrolled have benefited from a variety of interventions and educational services, including:

- Mentoring and tutoring in subjects like English, IT, and Romani language and Roma culture.
- Participation in boot camps.
- Scholarships.
- Exposure to international educational approaches, such as Reggio Emilia and Nurture International Study visits.
- Ongoing mentoring and pedagogical assistance.
- Engaging in exchange programs focused on Interculturality and School Inclusiveness.
- Attending training sessions covering topics like Inclusion, Inclusive Classroom, and Innovative Teaching Methods.



ONE-STOP-SHOP CENTRE FOR ROMA REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

During the project's implementation period, a dedicated team of facilitators actively engages with beneficiaries. In 2023, approximately 60 families (comprising 50 parents and 100 children) have been registered at the OSS Center. These families have availed themselves of a range of services provided by the OSS Centre, including:

Educational Activities: Encompass diverse offerings such as painting and drawing sessions, personal development activities, soft skills development, Romanian or English language classes.

Summer School Activities: Organized by our project partner, Questfield, these activities provide additional learning opportunities for children during the summer months.

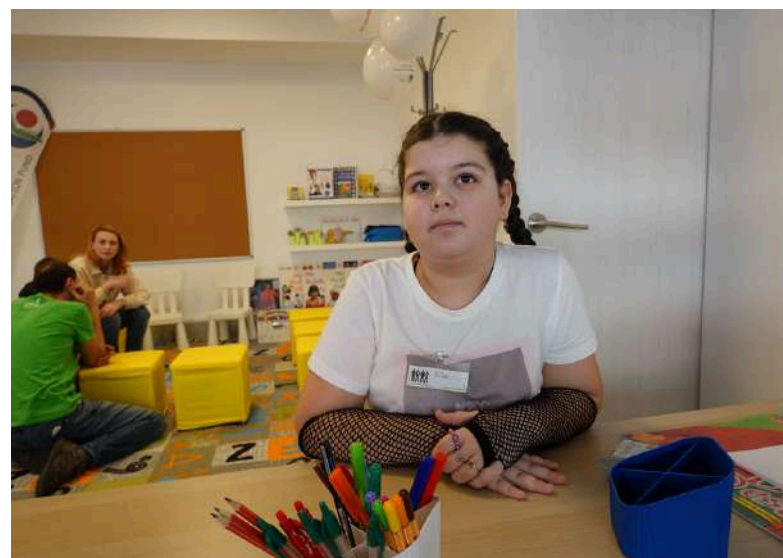
Counselling and Support Sessions: Primarily focused on psychological support, these sessions benefit both parents and children. The Mind Will Project, a partner in our initiative, plays a crucial role in providing this support.

Access to Rights and Services: The facilitators assist families in accessing essential rights and services: medical assistance, educational services, and financial benefits based on their refugee status.

Material Support: Beneficiary families receive practical assistance, including meals and transportation, to facilitate their access to OSS services.

Support for Migrants and Refugees: For all migrants and refugees who seek it, we facilitate their integration in Romania. This involves ensuring access to state support, education, and any other entitled services.

These efforts collectively contribute to enhancing the well-being and integration of the Roma families from Ukraine within the community.



CONNECTED TO EDUCATION - INTEGRATED APPROACH FOR CHILDREN WHOSE PARENTS WORK ABROAD

COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES – A MULTIFACETED APPROACH:

Educational Support and Tutoring: Our project provides personalized assistance to children, including tutoring and educational support. This ensures that they receive the guidance they need to thrive academically.

Counselling Sessions: We offer counselling sessions to address emotional well-being, self-esteem, and coping strategies. These sessions empower children to navigate challenges effectively.

Summer Camps and Scholarships: Through summer camps and scholarships, we create enriching experiences for children, fostering personal growth and skill development.

Digital Literacy Classes: Our digitalization classes equip children with essential IT skills using digital boards and equipment we provided to each school.

Storytelling Sessions: Storytelling not only sparked creativity but also led to the creation of a storybook, capturing the imagination of young minds.

Parental Guide for Families Separated by Work Abroad: Parents working abroad receive guidance on maintaining strong family bonds despite physical distance.

Community Mobilization Support: We engage the community to create a supportive environment for children's education and overall well-being.

Reading and Play Centres: These centres, strategically located in the project's schools, encourage reading, play, and educational activities.

Child-Centered Approach: Our activities revolve around the children themselves, emphasizing their active participation and curiosity. Teachers facilitate rather than dictate.

Parenting Sessions and Health/Nutrition Advice: We empower parents with knowledge on parenting, health, and nutrition, ensuring holistic family support.

Integrated Psychological Support: Beyond education, our project addresses emotional needs. Children receive psychological support to cope with their unique circumstances.

This multifaceted approach aims to create inclusive environments where children can learn, grow, and thrive.



REF SERBIA, NORTH MACEDONIA, SLOVAKIA

DONORS

PROJECTS

**AUSTRIAN
DEVELOPMENT
AGENCY**

Education, Employment, Partnerships and Gender Equality: A Winning Formula for Roma in VET (WinForVET)

**KFW DEVELOPMENT
BANK**

Improved Education and Integration Opportunities for Roma in Serbia [Phase 2]

**EUROPEAN
COMMISSION**

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

VELUX FOUNDATIONS

Pedagogy Scholarship Program in Hungary, Slovakia and Romania

Shaping Academic and Employment Skills for Young Roma (SHAPYR)



EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, PARTNERSHIPS AND GENDER EQUALITY: A WINNING FORMULA FOR ROMA IN VET

The activities and outputs are focused on two specific areas, throughout all years of implementation:

Education - scholarships, mentoring and tutoring and improving access to education and employment for Roma girls and women;

Employability - job placements, internships, vocational trainings, professional skills development, cooperation and partnerships with employers, civil society, public and private sector institutions for Roma workforce inclusion aimed at influencing policy changes.

Activities in 2022-23 (school year cycle which includes activities between Sept 2022-September 2023):

- **Scholarships** for secondary school students in VET system of education and for short-term VET courses
- **Mentoring** for the developing a clear career path, individual development plans and career development plans
- **Tutoring** sessions in specific subjects and soft-skills trainings on various employment related skills
- **Paid internships** for selected beneficiaries and study visits to Roma and non-Roma small businesses
- **Advocacy roundtables** and policy papers focused on improving national frameworks for VET



COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY

ROMA FACES OF CHANGE EVENT | A BOOK AND A DOCUMENTARY - MAY 16 | BELGRADE, SERBIA

The Roma Education Fund (REF), the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC) and the Open Society Foundations (OSF) in partnership with the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue and with the Commissioner for Protection and Equality from the Republic of Serbia organized on May 16th the Roma Faces of Change international event.

The event was addressed by the Ambassador of Sweden to the Republic of Serbia, H.E. Ms. Annika Ben David and by Mr. Ciprian Necula, Chair of Roma Education Fund.

Through these two educational and cultural items (the book and the documentary), Roma Education Fund intends to highlight the activity of those who gave their best contribution to the Roma movement in countries like Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Great Britain, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, and Serbia. Armed with the powerful tool of education and energized by their unrelenting will to pave the way to a better future for their brothers and sisters, these militants became the Roma Faces of Change through their Resistance.



ROMA EMANCIPATION FOR THE MODERNIZATION OF ROMANIA EVENT | FEBRUARY 20 | BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

Event organized by Roma Education Fund, Aresel civic platform, REDI - Roma Entrepreneurship Development Initiative and European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture - ERIAC with the support of the Embassy of Sweden in Bucharest, the "Romania 2030 Project" Foundation, the Master of Roma Studies within the SNSPA and the World Bank.

Among our distinguished guests: Lucian Romașcanu, the Romanian Minister of Culture, Mircea Geoană, the NATO Deputy Secretary General (Video Intervention), Ms Clotilde Armand, the Mayor Of Sector 1, Bucharest, Florin Manole, Secretary Of State, Government Of Romania, Zeljko Jovanovic The Director Of The Open Society Foundations Rome Initiatives Office and many more.



COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY

MENTORING PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL ROMA STUDENTS EVENT | 31ST OF OCTOBER, BELGRADE, SERBIA

GOAL - to advocate for the implementation of REF's Mentoring Program for Roma High School students at a national level. This program has achieved remarkable results over the past 15 years. During this period, the percentage of Roma pupils dropping out of high school education has been significantly reduced, from 7 to 2.4 percent.

Dr. Ciprian Necula, the president of the Roma Education Fund, Mr. Tomislav Žigmanov, the Minister for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, Ms. Slavica Đukić Dejanović, the Minister of Education, and Mr. Redjepali Chupi, the director of REF Serbia, delivered the opening speeches at the conference. Zdenka Milivojević's "Recommendations for the Institutionalization of the Mentoring Support Program" was presented to the public.

THE SECOND EDITION OF THE NICOLAE GHEORGHE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE | NOVEMBER 10-11, BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

Researchers from India, UK, Moldova, and Romania participated at the second edition of the International Scientific Conference. The official opening of the session took place at the Embassy of India in the presence of His Excellency, Mr. Rahul Shrivastava, the Ambassador of India to Romania and the host of the event.



COMMUNICATION SPECIAL PROJECTS

FIGHTING RACISM THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

REF Romania is developing two projects simultaneously, both aimed at empowering members of the Roma community:

ROMSTORIA
HOST - VALENTIN NEGOI, PHD HISTORY

Seeks to increase awareness among the Romanian public regarding important events in Roma history and culture. By illuminating these aspects, our goal is to counteract racism within society and promote a deeper understanding and appreciation for Roma heritage.

ROMA STATUS
HOST - GABRIEL ZORILĂ, ROMA STUDIES M.A.

Through the #RomaStatus and #InspiringStories initiatives, our objective is to celebrate Roma individuals who can inspire other young Roma and contribute positively to Romanian society. We will achieve this by sharing their accomplishments and contributions through social media posts, informative cards, and podcast episodes.



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