

Annual Report 2007



Roma Education Fund

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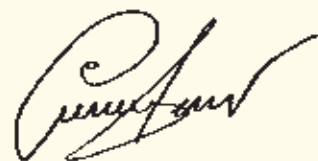
MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

*I*N 2007, THE ROMA EDUCATION FUND (REF) continued its fast development, expanding its activities and its staff. The year has been marked by a number of important events: the REF hosted in Budapest the largest ever conference on the education of Roma in Europe, with more than 450 participants, including the European Commissioner for Education and Culture and the Prime Minister of Hungary. The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights ruled, in an unprecedented move to condemn a whole system, that placement of Roma children in special schools for the mentally disabled was an act of discrimination in breach of Article 14 of the European Convention of Human Rights. The REF participated actively in the preparation of an amicus brief that was referred to a number of times in the judgment. Spain joined the REF as a donor. The REF increased its participation in international events and conferences, showing that it has gained recognition as one of the most reliable sources of information and analysis on education of Roma children in the region.

Of course, the most important result for the REF is the impact it has on Roma communities. In 2007, the REF improved its monitoring and evaluation of its programs and projects and spent resources and energy in designing more sophisticated indicators and evaluation methods. This is work in progress. But the monitoring and evaluation system is already producing very interesting results that the REF is sharing with its partners. Overall, projects are moving in the right direction. Of course, some projects are encountering difficulties – it seems that some implemented by governments are most problematic – and these difficulties require adaptation in REF strategies. Thanks to its flexibility, and the close working relationship between its Board and the management, the REF is very adaptable and can react rapidly. It is, therefore, able to adjust its interventions to the evolving situation on the ground. The presence of country facilitators in the largest REF partner countries has been assisting this process.

The REF continues to face important challenges: reforms of education systems are happening but too slowly; donors are moving out of Europe; the available large-scale financing mechanisms are still very slow and bureaucratic; and xenophobia remains very high and has actually reached worrying peaks in Europe in 2007.

The REF is ready to meet the challenges ahead. It is there to serve the Roma communities and the Roma children, and I hope very much that partners and donors will continue to grow in number and interest. Because it is only together that we will make a difference.



Costel Bercus

THE GOVERNING BOARDS OF THE REF

*T*HE REF CONSISTS of a Swiss and a Hungarian Foundation, each of which is overseen by a separate Governing Board.

THE SWISS FOUNDATION'S GOVERNING BOARD

The Swiss Foundation's Governing Board is responsible for the overview of the REF's general operations and the approval of grants and projects. In accordance with the statutes and by-laws of the REF, the Swiss Foundation's Governing Board consists of at least nine members, appointed in the following manner:

- ⇒ The Open Society Institute appoints one member in its role as founder of the REF.
- ⇒ The World Bank appoints one member in its role as founder of the REF.
- ⇒ The Open Society Institute and the World Bank mutually agree on the appointment of a member who is a Swiss national. (Swiss law requires a Swiss national on the Governing Board).
- ⇒ The Open Society Institute and the World Bank appoint, on the basis of a transparent process, three members of Roma origin.
- ⇒ The two largest donors to the REF apart from the founding members – whether governments or multilateral organisations – are invited by the founding members to appoint members.
- ⇒ The largest private donor or consortium of private donors of REF is invited by the founding members to appoint a member.

The Swiss Foundation's Governing Board meets regularly, four times a year. The board's members mutually agree on the appointment of one member as Chair. The Chair organizes the Swiss Foundation's Governing Board meetings and proposes their agenda in consultation with the REF Director.

The primary responsibilities of the Swiss Foundation's Governing Board are as follows:

- ⇒ Setting the REF's policies.
- ⇒ Approval and amendment, as necessary, of the REF's operations guidelines, and internal policies.
- ⇒ Selection of the REF's Director.
- ⇒ Approval of the REF's annual budgets.
- ⇒ Approval of the REF's annual financial audits.
- ⇒ Resolution of issues confronting the REF, as necessary.
- ⇒ Approval of projects and programmes.

MEMBERS OF THE SWISS FOUNDATION'S GOVERNING BOARD*



Costel Bercus, *Chair Since October 2005*

Costel Bercus is a Romanian Roma. Until recently, he was the Executive Director of Romani CRISS (Romanian Center for Social Interventions and Studies), one of the largest Roma nongovernmental organizations in Romania.



William Newton-Smith, *Vice-Chair*

William Newton-Smith, Canadian national, is a philosopher who has recently retired after teaching at Oxford University for 35 years. He has been actively involved in the reform of higher education in former communist countries and is Chair of the Higher Education Board of the Open Society Institute.



Pierre Gassmann is a Swiss national. He worked for 25 years for the International Committee of the Red Cross, where he held various senior management positions. Since 2004, he has been advisor to Harvard University's program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflicts Research.



Christian Petri is Executive Director of the Freudenberg Foundation and representative of a group of foundations that, with the assistance of the Network of European Foundations (NEF), have set up a project for supporting the REF.



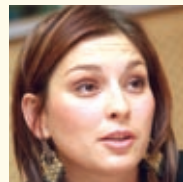
Nadir Redzeqi is Macedonian Roma and NGO activist since 1998. With his 10 years of experience, working on the Roma issues on local, national and international level, he is recognized as an activist aiming to contribute Roma integration and institutional set-up of Roma issues. During this period he held various positions in managing and coordinating Roma related actions. He is a member of the Decade of Roma Inclusion Coordinative Body in Macedonia and an active international actor for the Decade of Roma Inclusion. At present, he is Executive Director of Roma Democratic Development Association Sonce.



Nicole Wyrsh was born as a citizen of Buochs in the Swiss Canton of Nidwalden. Eight years ago she was appointed Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Switzerland in Nairobi. During a leave from September 2001 until December 2004, she was working for the office of Arthur Dunkel in Geneva, supporting preparations of countries wanting to join the WTO. After 2004, she was Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Switzerland in Mexico City and currently, she is Ambassador to Macedonia.

* As of December 31, 2007.

Lívia Jároka is a Hungarian Roma. She is member of the European Parliament, the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender.



Annette Dixon, a New Zealand national, was, until October 2005, Chair of the REF Board. She is the World Bank's Country Director for Central Asia. Before joining the Bank, she held important posts in the New Zealand Government. She began her career in the NGO sector.



THE HUNGARIAN FOUNDATION'S GOVERNING BOARD

The Hungarian Foundation's Governing Board is responsible for overseeing the operation of the REF Secretariat in Budapest and the approval of selected grants and projects for Hungary.

Composition of the Hungarian Foundation's Governing Board

Costel Bercus, Chair

Costel Bercus is a Romanian Roma. Until recently, he was the Executive Director of Romani CRISS (Romanian Center for Social Interventions and Studies), one of the largest Roma nongovernmental organizations in Romania.



Julius Várallyay

Julius Várallyay is a former senior staff member of the World Bank, where he worked on projects and country programs in the regions of Latin America, Europe, and Central Asia. He was the first Interim Director of the REF.



Katalin E. Koncz

Katalin E. Koncz has been the Executive Director of the Open Society Institute-Budapest since 1993. Before that, she served as the Executive Director of a Hungarian non-profit organization devoted to the educational and professional training needs of young Central and East Europeans. She is a member of the Informal Roma Advisory Committee of the Open Society Institute.





THE REF AND ROMA INCLUSION IN EUROPE

*T*HE YEAR 2007 saw very mixed messages sent across Europe on Roma inclusion. On one side, Europe has experienced a strong upsurge of xenophobia, in large part targeting immigrants but also aimed at ethnic minorities. The Roma have been particularly hard hit by this wave of racist prejudice. A number of European governments have acted decisively to restrict illegal immigration and have also unfortunately used concerns about illegal immigration for populist political purposes. This has seriously damaged the cause of the Roma in Europe. On the other side, some progress has been made at the European level. The idea of adopting a specific policy on Roma inclusion is slowly progressing in the European Parliament and the European Commission. On November 13, 2007, the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights ruled that segregating Roma students into special schools is a form of discrimination that violates fundamental human rights. This judgment is groundbreaking because the Court ruled for the first time that racial segregation amounts to discrimination in breach of Article 14 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Some positive policy changes, even if modest, have also taken place in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, to cite only a few countries. There is an increased willingness among EU countries to use some of the European Union Structural Funds to support Roma inclusion.

In this context, the strategy of the Roma Education Fund (REF) has increasingly been to work with EU institutions, both to influence policies and to ensure that Structural Funds can support effectively Roma inclusion in education systems. The REF has increased its role as a facilitator and advocate for scaling up government programs that benefit Roma children and for improving policies. It is also increasingly providing technical support and strengthening Roma NGOs, associations, and local governments. It is clear that the REF has a very important role to play in bringing together the various stakeholders working on improving education outcomes for Roma – including Roma civil society, ministries, education-specialized institutions, universities and many others. By acting as a facilitator, advocate and institutional developer, the REF can have a greater impact than it would by simply directly funding large-scale government programs.

The REF has also embarked on an ambitious program of evaluation and policy studies. This program followed the well-received REF country assessment series, now available for eight countries involved in the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The series aims to document successful policies and projects and to provide advice on some important policy directions – such as positive actions to support student's entry in tertiary education, the closing down or active reduction of special schools, the introduction of multicultural education and the development of pre-school education. The publication of these studies is followed by active in-country dissemination, through seminars and conferences. Finally, the REF has been very active in creating broader partnerships and encouraging cross country learning, involving also Western European institutions, such the Spanish Federacion Secretariado Gitano (FSG) and various NGOs working on Roma issues in Germany, Portugal, France, and Ireland. The REF has also scaled up its collaboration with UNICEF, UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the European Commission.

The REF Board has been working closely with REF management and staff to develop its strategic approaches and to strengthen the organization. By end of 2007, the REF was fully staffed with 21 permanent employees, of which 15 are Roma, and the organization now has fully developed operational procedures, a management information system and well-defined internal processes and mechanisms. The year 2007 was, therefore, a time of consolidation with some strategic reorientation. The REF now has important visibility and strong recognition by both governments and Roma civil society.



REF OPERATIONS IN 2007

*T*HE 2007 OPERATIONS OF THE ROMA EDUCATION FUND (REF) focused on the following principal areas:

1. Project Support Program: projects and programs supported by grants approved by the REF Board.
2. Policy Development and Technical Assistance Program: studies, technical assistance, strategy development, and learning activities that help create a framework for dialogue with governments and civil society on education reform and Roma inclusion.
3. Communication and Cross Country Learning Program: activities to promote the exchange of knowledge on education reforms and Roma inclusion and to advocate for more inclusive education systems.
4. Special Directly Implemented Programs.
5. Reimbursable Grant Program: a mechanism to help Roma NGOs and local governments access EU funds for the purpose of Roma education.
6. REF Scholarship Program: the largest scholarship program for Roma students in Europe.
7. REF program administration.

1. PROJECT SUPPORT PROGRAM: REF GRANTS

The REF finances projects implemented by a variety of organizations that meet REF criteria for eligibility.

Grant Eligibility: Grant applications are accepted from public and private entities in member countries of the Council of Europe. Special attention is focused on the nine Decade of Roma Inclusion countries, but applications are considered from other countries, especially European countries with substantial Roma populations. Project eligibility and evaluation criteria for project proposals are included in the Operations Guidelines, approved by the REF's Board in 2005 and revised and approved in 2007.

Grants are mainly awarded for one of the following three categories:

1. Grants aimed at reform of education systems and at scaling up successful pilots.
2. Grants piloting and testing Roma educational interventions that can be scaled up or directly influence policy changes.
3. Grants that support the analysis of Roma education issues and help develop policies and institutional capacity.

The Role of the REF in Supporting School Desegregation Efforts¹

In the last decade, there has been a growing awareness among policy-makers and various civil society actors that segregated schooling poses a major barrier for access to equal educational opportunities for Roma communities throughout Europe. The launch of the Decade of Roma Inclusion has been a major impetus for the development and implementation of school desegregation policies, which are formulated as a priority in the area of education in the Decade Action Plans of several governments. As school desegregation is one of the major instruments for the realization of the Decade goals in the area of education, the REF has sought to promote actions by grassroots organizations and governments to make this desegregation an irreversible process. A wide range of initiatives funded by the REF are expected to result in reducing levels of school segregation in the long-term. Here, however, we focus on initiatives that involve direct desegregation action, i.e. discontinuing Roma children's attendance of segregated schools and classes, and their integration in mainstream education as well as first-year enrolment of Roma children in integrated classes.

Since its establishment in 2005, the REF has supported school desegregation projects in Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, and Slovakia. These projects involve: taking actions to enroll Roma children in integrated schools, to retain them at these schools, and to ensure achievement comparable to their non-Roma peers; developing methodological tools for integrated education; training teachers to work with Roma children in integrated schools and other activities, to create a supportive educational environment for Roma children in mainstream schools; and, undertaking public campaigns for mainstreaming school desegregation in national educational policies. The REF's overarching principle is that the positive practices emerging from the grassroots level should gradually move into mainstream public policies, which should be substantially shaped by civil society experiences and implemented with the involvement of Roma organizations. To that end, the REF sought to support both Roma grassroots activities that develop models for engaging Roma communities in school desegregation and governmental programs for establishing a policy infrastructure for school desegregation.

The phenomenon of school segregation, which affects large numbers of Roma in the countries of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, has different historic roots and manifestations ranging from erroneous placement of Roma children in special schools for children with mental disabilities to maintenance of Roma-only schools, to separation of Roma children in Roma-only classes within mainstream schools. One or more of these patterns exist in most of the Decade countries. Initiatives supported by the REF have addressed segregation of Roma in Roma-only schools, segregation in Roma-only classes in mainstream schools, and segregation in special education facilities. By the end of 2007, the REF provided funding for desegregation to Roma organizations and government bodies in Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, and Slovakia.

Although conditions in these countries vary, the REF's experience reveals that a set of elements is essential for advancing desegregation. These elements include: motivational work with Roma parents by grassroots Roma NGOs; collaboration between Roma NGOs, education specialists, school administrators and school maintainers in the planning and implementation of school desegregation activities; confidence-building activities with non-Roma parents and the larger community; academic

¹ This section was prepared by Rumyan Russinov, REF Deputy Director.

support for Roma children moved from segregated into integrated schools; and development of a policy framework at the central level of government, including provision of the required financial resources. In the countries where the REF supports desegregation activities, projects include a combination of two or more of these elements.

In **Bulgaria**, starting from 2005, the REF has been supporting school desegregation action initiated by Roma grassroots organizations in nine towns – Berkovitsa, Montana, Pazardjik, Pleven, Plovdiv, Sliven, Sofia, Stara Zagora, and Vidin – and school desegregation action initiated by a mainstream school in one town, Blagoevgrad.² These activities follow a model of integrating Roma children from Roma-only schools into mainstream schools, developed in 2000, with the launch of the first desegregation project by a Roma grassroots organization in the town of Vidin. The model includes: motivational campaigns among Roma parents to encourage enrolment of their children in mainstream schools outside the Roma neighborhood; planned enrolment of Roma children in mainstream schools, with a view to avoiding re-segregation in the new schools; provision of academic support for Roma children who need to catch up with their peers from the mainstream schools; extra-curricular activities involving Roma and non-Roma students, and transportation for Roma students who live far away from their new schools.

In addition, in 2007, the REF supported a scheme developed by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education's Centre for Integration of Minority Children and Pupils and partially funded by the state budget. Through that scheme, the Centre provides funding to projects that are run by NGOs or local authorities and are aimed at enrolment of Roma children from Roma-only schools into mainstream schools according to the model developed in Vidin and practiced in the other eight towns where Roma NGOs pioneered school desegregation action.

In March 2008, the Bulgarian Government approved funding for seven school desegregation projects that were initially supported by the REF. The projects were funded from the Operational Programme for Human Resources Development (OP HRD), financed jointly by the European Social Fund of the European Union and the national budget, for the period 2007-2013. This support for school desegregation through the EU Structural Funds marks a crucial step for these initiatives from grassroots to state-supported action.

In **Hungary**, school desegregation has been spearheaded by authorities at the central level of government. In the school year 2003-2004, the Ministry of Education introduced a number of legal and financial instruments that paved the way for many disadvantaged and Roma children to reach the level of education desired in Hungarian society. New forms of financial and methodological assistance for schools and educators are aimed at advancing the integration of children with different social and cultural backgrounds. Institutions undertaking to implement new approaches launched integration programs for children in the first, fifth, and ninth grades. In Hungary's highly decentralized education system, the decision to implement such programs lies entirely with the local authorities/school management. The REF supports them and their Roma NGO partners with seed money to start desegregation activities.

² Six of the school desegregation projects were supported by the Open Society Institute's Roma Participation Program in the period 2000-2005.

In 2007, the REF funded two projects of local authorities in collaboration with Roma NGOs. In Hódmezővásárhely, REF financing has been matched by local authorities with funds from the EU Structural Funds, through the Operational Programme for Human Resources Development. As a result of the project, a Roma ghetto school was closed and the Roma children were enrolled in all 6 schools in town. The municipality in Hódmezővásárhely provided transportation for Roma children to their new schools, and a community-based learning center (tanoda) was opened in the town. In Szeged, local authorities also undertook to close down a Roma ghetto school and to enroll the children in 13 other schools in the town. With REF support, pre-service teacher trainees from the local university were trained to be mentors to the Roma children who entered the mainstream schools.

In **Macedonia**, a project initiated by a Roma grassroots organization in Kumanovo received support from the REF to carry out motivational campaigns among Roma parents to enroll their children in integrated schools and to provide transportation for Roma children to mainstream schools in town. The Roma NGO works with local educational authorities, including the Ministry of Education and Science and its State Inspectorate Department, and school management to develop strategies for the gradual elimination of segregated Roma classes in schools located in Roma settlements. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is also implementing a REF-financed project that seeks to enroll Roma children in integrated pre-school education facilities with the support of local Roma organizations.

In **Romania**, the REF supported a Roma grassroots organization that initiated desegregation in two schools in Salaj County. Initially, the process of desegregation started in two locations but whilst the organization was trying to initiate activities for desegregation for one school situated in the center of the town and to mix the Roma children who were separated, the county inspectorate built a new school in the middle of the Roma community. The desegregation process, thus, stopped since all the Roma children started to go to the new residential segregated school. Nevertheless, the desegregation process continued in the other location. The activities financed included launching an information campaign among Roma parents whose children attended segregated classes; providing intercultural training for teachers, school directors, local educational authorities, Roma and non-Roma parents; establishing a community center to provide tutoring for Roma children and extra-curricular activities; integrating Roma children with non-Roma children; and giving transportation for Roma children from their community to the school, located at the center of town.

In addition, the REF is in the process of contracting a comprehensive project of the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research, including activities to promote school desegregation. The project involves gathering data for cases of school segregation in 42 localities throughout the country; developing a school desegregation methodology in collaboration with Roma organizations and educators; and producing a guidebook with best practices of Roma NGOs in Romania.

As a result of REF grantees' active involvement in negotiations with the Ministry of Education and Research, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between the Ministry and Roma NGOs concerning desegregation of the school system and increasing the quality of education. REF grantees in Romania, among other Roma NGOs, played a significant role in designing ministerial order 1540/2007 regarding school desegregation, as well as the methodology for its implementation. REF staff also provided feedback on the design of the ministerial order regarding desegregation.

In **Slovakia**, the REF continued supporting a civil society organization's initiative, which was the first attempt at large-scale desegregation of Roma children in special schools and classes. The project targets 215 Roma primary school students in special education in Trnava. The REF, among others, supports: a motivational campaign among Roma parents to enroll their children in mainstream education; transfer of Roma children to mainstream schools; academic assistance for children on a daily basis; transportation of children to schools; regular assessment of Roma children's achievement in mainstream schools; and extra-curricular activities for Roma and non-Roma children.

In addition, the REF supported the Ministry of Education of Slovakia with a large project, including, among other activities, training of primary education teachers who work with Roma students in mainstream schools and targeted enrolment of Roma children in each of the eight regions in Slovakia in kindergartens – to ensure their preparation for primary school and thus prevent their placement in special education facilities.

Overview and Lessons Learnt in 2007

The focus of REF activities in 2007 was on monitoring of projects, including setting up all the procedures for monitoring, evaluation and capacity building, and on creating a stronger link between implementing projects and providing policy advice and advocacy toward the government and general public in the countries where the REF is active.

The REF has projects in 12 countries, the nine Decade of Roma Inclusion countries and Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Moldova. The REF also financed a workshop involving Roma NGOs, the Government, and the EU in Turkey, and it participated in some meetings in Ukraine to identify potential entry points to start a program if financing becomes available.

In 2007, the number of monitoring missions by REF staff has increased considerably, as the REF portfolio increased in terms of the number of projects and rate of disbursement. In 2007, REF project disbursement showed a significant rise (EUR 4.8 million) compared to 2005 (EUR 975,000) and 2006 (EUR 3.7 million). The number of projects under implementation increased as well. While in 2006, there were 22 projects monitored, in 2007, 50³ projects had undergone monitoring supervision – many of them two or three times. About 100 project visits were undertaken in 2007. In addition, 14 projects got externally evaluated.

The strong focus on monitoring of projects has been largely successful. It is demonstrated in part by the very small number of projects that were unsatisfactory and the very good track record in terms of uses of REF funds and accountability. Among the projects monitored, four were rated best practices. Forty-two projects were rated satisfactory. Five projects were rated unsatisfactory and momentarily suspended following monitoring visits, but only one was cancelled. Three of these projects were rated unsatisfactory for financial reasons and two for not meeting their development objectives and being poorly implemented.

³ Some of these projects had started in 2006.

The monitoring of the projects revealed some important lessons about what makes for more successful projects, with medium-sized programs and those run by NGOs being more successful. The most successful projects are those developed at the local level, with strong involvement of the local government and strong participation of Roma NGOs, in most cases as the main implementers. A combination of solid policy dialogue, well-documented pilots or local level projects, advocacy that reaches agencies managing EU Structural Funds, and a strong REF presence in the field will probably contribute more to scaling-up programs to support Roma inclusion in education than giving financing to large government-managed programs.

Countries where implementation has been seen to be the most effective are Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia and Romania. In these countries, there is a relatively large Roma civil society sector, and, even if Roma issues are controversial, they are at least on the political agenda, so there is a positive environment for project implementation. For example, with some notable exceptions, government projects are not doing as well as NGO-implemented projects. But projects by governments might still have an important and positive impact, because they tend to have more involvement of policy makers and be more visible in the concerned sectoral ministries. Government-run projects are often late in implementation and have problems with coordination, and they usually suffer from a lack of commitment by middle management for the goals of the projects.

Another important finding of the monitoring missions demonstrated that the increasing ability of Roma NGOs to access other financing, such as EU Structural Funds, has been a direct outcome of both capacity building activities and strong advocacy with in-country organizations managing Structural Funds.



Given the focus of REF staff in 2007 on monitoring its growing portfolio, outreach for new projects had to be proportionally reduced. Therefore, it is not surprising that, in 2007, the demand for grants slightly decreased. The number of project applications dropped from 130 to 107. The number of projects approved went down from 49 to 34, and their overall amount (committed) from EUR 6 million to EUR 4.5 million. A major reason behind the fewer grant applications received in 2007 is that NGOs with solid institutional capacities and the most committed departments working on Roma issues in governments are already implementing REF-funded projects. Also, unfortunately, a number of large-scale governmental programs funded by REF are delayed and taking more time to implement than originally expected. This reduces considerably the potential to design and propose new projects to the REF. The REF is involved in active capacity building of Roma NGOs, but this takes time and requires a progressive approach.

The REF strives to learn from its grant activities and to disseminate these lessons. This is essential to improve REF's performance and approaches, to ensure that good projects, ideas and practices can be scaled-up, and that lessons are informing policy development and design of programs at the national and regional levels. Information is collected by the implementing organizations, through their monitoring and evaluation process, and by the REF, through its monitoring visits, external evaluations, and special studies. The REF has been sharing the important lessons it has learnt on integration of Roma children into mainstream mixed schools; scholarship programs for secondary education students; support for Roma children in pre-school and primary education, to reduce drop-outs and attendance problems; and support for students in universities.



Promoting Pre-School Education in Macedonia: The Importance of Partnerships and Cooperation

The Roma pre-school program of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy of Macedonia, financed by the REF and the Ministry, is a good example of a project bringing together a wide range of stakeholders to design a model for including Roma children in pre-school education nationwide. The project's objective is to support Roma children in accessing primary education with the same level of preparedness as children from other ethnic groups.

Fifteen kindergartens in 15 different municipalities across the country have been participating in the program. After more than a full year of implementation of the program, the REF monitoring team has found that the project has had very positive results. Roma children, having attended pre-schools, are confident in using the Macedonian language. They also tend to mingle well with other students; they are actively involved in different school activities; and, most importantly, they regularly attend classes.

The project has benefited from the contribution of the Confidence Building Unit of the Skopje branch of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which provided two training sessions on "Multiethnic pre-school education" for teachers and teachers' assistants working at public kindergartens in seven cities.

In addition, the local UNICEF office contributed to the success of the project by supporting the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy with three seminars for training Roma teachers' assistants. Altogether, 90 Roma and non-Roma teachers and assistants were trained during the first year of project implementation. The outreach to Roma parents and support to Roma children in the classroom was carried out in collaboration with local Roma NGOs, and the municipalities were closely involved.

box 2

Project Overview in 2007

Since its establishment in 2005, the REF has received 304 project proposals out of which the REF Board approved 96 and rejected 164. Of the total number of approved projects, 92 were contracted, and the funds were partially or totally disbursed. In December 2007, the REF had three projects that were in the Project Implementation Plan (PIP) phase of development-approved by the Board but not yet contracted. These will be contracted in 2008. On December 31, 2007, a total of 39 of the contracted projects were under implementation. Twenty-four projects had been completed during the year: BU 013, BU 031, BU 032, BU 039, BU 041, BU 046, BU 048, BU 049, CZ 001, CZ 002, HU 015, HU 017, HU 018, MAC 023, MAC 027, MAC 014, RO 002, RO 004, RO 005, RO 018, RO 026, SER 005, SER 008, and SLO 005. 45 projects remained active (under implementation) after December 2007. The average project amount was EUR 139,000 and the average project length was 1.7 years.

Number of Projects Approved Between September 1, 2005 and December 31, 2007

Country or Territory/Project	BU	CR	CZ	HU	KO	MA	MON	RO	SE	SK	Other ⁴	Total
# of Projects Received	102	6	7	21	3	38	5	43	38	20	21	304
# of Projects Rejected	52	4	3	11	1	26	2	22	19	12	12	164
# of Projects Approved	33	2	2	10	1	8	2	14	12	8	4	96
# of Projects Contracted	33	2	2	10	1	7	1	13	12	7	4	92

In total, the REF committed EUR 4,543,829 (these are the projects approved by the Board), contracted EUR 4,737,799 and disbursed EUR 4,852,302 during 2007.

Annual Project Financing: 2005-2007

Year	2005	2006	2007
Amount committed (EUR)	2,651,314	6,006,836	4,543,829
Amount contracted (EUR)	2,208,856	6,190,978	4,737,799
Amount disbursed (EUR)	975,256 ⁵	3,779,633	4,852,302

⁴ Consists of 14 international projects, in addition to two from Albania, four from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and one from Moldova.

⁵ Includes EUR 804,817 which covers 11 projects transferred from OSI in 2005-2006.

Project Funding for Period of September 1, 2005 to December 31, 2007^{6,7,8}

Country/ Territory	BU	CR	CZ	HU	KO	MA	MON	RO	SE	SK	Other ⁶	Total
Amount committed (EUR)	2,796,586	585,690	234,023	955,786	11,050	1,721,457	448,734	2,628,571	2,402,788	1,035,933	381,361	13,201,979 ⁷
Amount contracted (EUR)	2,516,586	585,690	234,023	879,786	11,050	1,721,457	348,734	2,256,271	2,361,925	1,035,933	381,361	12,332,816
Amount disbursed (EUR)	2,341,086	203,000	194,023	834,786	11,050	1,344,033	269,275	1,421,436	1,164,247	660,558	364,162	8,807,656

Number of Projects for Period of January 1 to December 31, 2007⁹

Country or Territory/ Project	BU	CR	CZ	HU	KO	MA	MON	RO	SE	SK	Other ⁸	Total
# of Projects Received	40	1	3	8	1	11	2	12	16	5	8	107
# of Projects Rejected	15	0	2	3	0	6	0	7	5	1	5	44
# of Projects Approved	13	1	0	6 ⁹	0	2	1	2	4	4	1	34
# of Projects Contracted	11	1	2	4	0	1	0	4	4	2	1	30

⁶ Consists of 14 international projects, in addition to two from Albania, four from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and one from Moldova.

⁷ Excludes EUR 804,817 which covers 11 projects transferred from OSI in 2005-2006.

⁸ Consists of 4 international projects, in addition to two from Albania, four from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and one from Moldova.

⁹ Includes HU 021, phase 1+2, considered as one project.

Project Funding for Period of January 1 to December 31, 2007

Country/Territory	BU	CR	CZ	HU	KO	MA	MON	RO	SE	SK	Other¹⁰	Total
Amount committed (EUR)	1,293,902	34,440	0	250,785	0	252,950	100,000	980,600	1,165,269	400,093	65,790	4,543,829
Amount contracted (EUR)	1,232,153	34,440	0	174,785	0	273,905	0	1,007,337	1,491,076	400,093	124,010	4,737,799
Amount disbursed (EUR)	1,394,299	163,000	66,000	554,332	0	480,609	115,657	876,062	526,740	442,243	233,360	4,852,302

¹⁰ Consists of 4 international projects, in addition to two from Albania, four from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and one from Moldova.

Projects Approved in 2007, by Education Levels ^{11 12}

Country or Territory/ Category	BU	CR	CZ	HU	KO	MA	MOL	MON	RO	SE	SK	Total number	Total in EUR
Preschool										1		1	134,978
Primary school	9			2		1					3	15	1,477,430
Secondary									1	2		3	1,815,190
General education¹¹	2			1				1	1	2		7	411,675
Vocational and adult education	1											1	30,000
University (tertiary)	1		1	1		1						4	557,872
Policy development projects¹²		1		1			1				1	3	205,040

The REF's Impact Monitoring and Evaluation

In 2007, the REF improved its system to assess the impact of the projects it finances. The system has three components:

- ⇒ A mechanism to collect and compare the information of monitoring visits and the information sent by implementing agencies, all of which is entered in the REF Management and Information System.
- ⇒ A system of 10 indicators that are systematically monitored by REF staff.
- ⇒ The analysis of external evaluations, which are undertaken for the most important projects.

¹¹ The General education category indicates that the projects cover more than one level of education. Among the seven projects under this category all have primary education components, four have secondary education components and five have pre-school components.

¹² The policy development projects address only policy reforms through advocacy, studies, and policy documents, or preparation of laws and regulations.



Pre-School Education is Key to a Better Life: A Nationwide Campaign for Education in Macedonia

Given the success of the first phase of its program, the National Roma Centrum in Macedonia has extended its REF-financed educational project, "Campaign for Roma Education," for another year. The project has advocated for increased pre-school attendance, and worked with Roma parents and communities, school inspectorates, local self-governments, Roma mediators, and the media in Macedonia to support parents in enrolling their children in pre-school and primary education.

After the first year of the project, the number of enrolled pre-school and first grade Roma children has doubled, to more than 1,758. The evaluation of the first year of activities showed that the project successfully reached out to Roma communities in a very cost-effective way. It has mobilized intense media-coverage, not only in the country but in the overall region.

A major achievement of the project was the recruitment and training of Roma mediators, whose role was essential in getting various partners to communicate and collaborate. Roma mediators soon became the direct link between the community and the school. They are in daily contact with the families, the children, the institutions, teachers, school principals, different branch offices of the Ministry of Education, and the inspectorates of their region. Roma mediators have greatly contributed to the success of the project by setting the conditions for efficient communication, which helped them tackle and resolve any issues that rose during the implementation of the project.

Meanwhile, the National Roma Centrum has developed an extensive database, with all important information on the Roma families living in the target area of the project. Thus far, 6,304 Roma families were visited and included in the database. The database will soon be made available to the Ministry of Education, the different local self-governments, the association of local self-governments (ZELS), schools, and all relevant institutions in the sphere of education. Such a database is important because the Ministry of Education, and many schools, claim to have no information about the exact number of school-aged Roma children.

Working with the media has also contributed greatly to the success of the project. Via regular cooperation with media outlets, the project implementers have ensured that their operations are transparent and well-presented in Macedonia.

Pre-school education in Macedonia is non-compulsory and fee-based. In addition to the cost, the lack of necessary documentation represents another significant barrier for pre-school enrolment. In order to facilitate pre-school enrolment, the National Roma Centrum has been offering some legal services and help to Roma parents who are seeking the necessary documents for registration.

Pre-school attendance is key for Roma children in entering primary education and performing well in mainstream schools. This project has introduced some efficient measures for increasing pre-school enrollment, involving different interest groups, building bridges among them, and relying fully and effectively on the media.

box 3

Monitoring Visits: The main findings of the monitoring visits have been summarized in the previous section.

Education Indicators: In 2007, the REF's main education indicators were developed, and a survey of 80 projects¹³ was conducted,¹⁴ to assess the number of beneficiaries reached by REF financed projects in some of the Decade of Roma Inclusion countries. For each relevant project, information was collected systematically. In 2007, the system only allows the REF to assess the number of beneficiaries and receive some qualitative assessment of the policy impact, but it is hoped that, in 2008, the contribution of each project to a number of national indicators will be calculated. This requires an important data collection program for each of the countries to know how many Roma compose the various age cohorts and are enrolled at various levels of education.

The indicators measuring access to, and participation in, education include:

- ⇒ Participation in pre-school education.
- ⇒ Prevention of early school leaving.
- ⇒ Completion rate of upper secondary education.
- ⇒ Graduation from tertiary education.
- ⇒ Parents' school participation.

Indicators on Access to and Participation in Education

Indicator/country	Bulgaria	Hungary	Macedonia	Romania	Serbia	Slovakia	Total
Inclusion in pre-school/No. of Roma pupils	155	279	1,514	650	1,400	150	4,148
Prevention of early school leaving/No. of Roma pupils	2,578	1,208		852	1,184	324	6,146
Completion of upper secondary/No. of Roma pupils	816	85	680	1,975	1,722	34	5,312
Participation in tertiary education/No. of Roma students	569	160	70		50		849
Parent participation/No. of parents involved	6,463	6,035	14,667	4,300	6,838	2,104	40,407

¹³ Eighty projects in six countries were analyzed during 2005-2007, including Bulgaria (31 projects), Hungary (eight projects; the Hungarian Revolving Fund project was considered as one project, containing 12 independent projects), Macedonia (eight projects), Romania (14 projects), Serbia (11 projects), and Slovakia (eight projects).

¹⁴ The RMUSP program has not been included in the survey.

The activities covered by projects that aimed at facilitating access of Roma children to preschool education included the following: facilitating Roma students' enrolment in regular kindergartens by negotiating with schools and local governments; providing limited financial support so that disadvantaged Roma parents can meet the cost of schooling; organizing short-term kindergartens for Roma pupils who never attended kindergarten; designing an educational curriculum for short term kindergartens; employing Roma teaching assistants; providing lunch for Roma children enrolled in kindergarten; organizing regular meetings with parents whose children attend kindergarten; organizing transportation when the kindergarten is far from the settlement; providing educational materials for preschool children. The combination of these various activities needs to be adapted to each country case, but the most successful projects are the ones that fuse a number of these components.

The most successful activities preventing early school leaving are: additional after-school classes on various disciplines; second-chance type education for those who abandoned school (these are accelerated programs delivered in normal schools to help students obtain their diploma for the end of primary school or early secondary school, so that they can enroll for subsequent study cycles); employing well-trained Roma teachers' assistants, who also work closely with parents.

The specific activities contributing to ensuring completion of upper secondary education include: scholarships and mentorship for Roma students attending upper secondary education; special targeted preparation courses for Roma students, to help them pass the exam for entering upper secondary education; and after-school educational support for Roma pupils enrolled in upper secondary education.

Merit-Based Scholarship and Mentorship Program in Macedonia, Romania and Serbia

Based on the good results of the scholarship and mentorship program in Macedonia, the REF has decided to finance further projects using the same methodology to attract and retain Roma children in secondary education in Romania and Serbia.

The Alliance for Inclusion of Roma in Education is a four-year program of Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia, implemented in cooperation with Macedonia's Ministry of Education and Science. The objective of the project is to improve the retention and achievement rate of Roma secondary school students and to provide adequate support for their successful transition from secondary to tertiary education. Secondary school Roma students, i.e. the project's beneficiaries, receive merit-based scholarships and school-based mentorship. The project runs in 22 cities of Macedonia, involving 57 secondary schools with their 64 specially trained mentors. Stipends and school-based mentoring support is provided to one cohort of about 500 Roma secondary school students, as well as an additional 180 students in the third or fourth year of secondary education. The program is supported by the REF.

Since 2006, similar programs have been designed in Romania and Serbia, with the help of the REF. "Support for High-School Roma students in Romania," implemented by the Resource Center for Roma Communities has been successfully running for more than a year now. The grade point average of the students has increased by an average of 0.5 during this short period. Working through the recently adopted Romanian Government "Quota Based Affirmative Action" program, which assumes two seats for Roma students in each vocational and secondary school class, a total of 275 Roma will be provided with financial support and tutoring for the period 2007-2011 in Romania.

In Serbia's region of Vojvodina, the "Inclusion Of Roma Pupils In Secondary Schools" project was launched in 2007, to expand access to secondary education for Roma students. The project is co-financed by the Secretariat of Education and Science of the Province of Vojvodina. Students are provided school mentorship to improve their academic performance during secondary education. Parallel to guiding and motivating students of secondary education, the project focuses on motivating primary school students and their parents to continue their studies to higher education. To raise awareness, an intensive media campaign was launched to attract children of high school age. Information on scholarship opportunities were sent out to all secondary schools of Vojvodina with the help of Roma NGOs and the local and Roma media (RTV Novi Sad). The results are promising, and already far more Roma students are enrolled in competitive secondary schools than in the previous school years.



The specific project activities most successful in ensuring participation in tertiary education are: scholarships granted for regular attendance and school performance; mentorship of Roma students who received a scholarship; and additional skills development trainings.

The activities that have the most success in ensuring parent participation in the education of their children are: motivation and direct awareness-raising campaigns among Roma parents, to convince them of the importance of education; organization of regular meetings with parents whose children attend schools and facilitation of general communications between parents and school management; and supporting parents' participation in school boards and parents associations, as well as their involvement in classroom and after-school activities.

The next stage of the REF's evaluation of successful implementation strategies will be to measure the cost of the successful outcomes. This will help decision-makers assess the cost of expanding successful programs to tackle all or significant proportions of the Roma population. This will provide the foundation for applications for Structural Funds and other resources.

The REF is monitoring three indicators measuring the quality of education, including:

- ⇒ Desegregation of Roma schools/classes.
- ⇒ Integration from special classes/schools into mainstream schools.
- ⇒ Training provided for educational staff on teaching in an integrated and multicultural setting.

According to REF studies and monitoring, the quality of education received by Roma enrolled in segregated classes or schools proved to be overwhelmingly inferior to that received by students in mainstream schools.¹⁵ Segregated classes and schools are inferior in the curriculum taught, the school infrastructure, the qualification of teachers, and school culture and atmosphere. Consequently, the achievement of students is low, and the illiteracy level is high, in segregated settings. High drop outs rates and serious attendance problems are also more common in segregated education.

¹⁵ See *On the Road to Maturity: Evaluation of the Non-governmental Desegregation Process in Bulgaria*, REF 2007, Surdu, Mihai; and "Segregation and Desegregation in Romania" in *A School for All*, REF Magazine, Budapest, 2007. See also articles in the special issue of *A School for All*, published by the REF in 2007.

Indicators on Quality of Education

Indicator/country	Bulgaria	Hungary	Macedonia	Romania	Serbia	Slovakia	Total
No. of Roma children integrated from Roma only schools/classes to integrated schools	2,563	4,324		35		400	7,322
No. of Roma children integrated from special schools/classes to integrated schools		224				273	497
Training of education staff/No. of trained education staff	1,061	121	314	679	287	1,476	3,938

The components of projects that help with integrating children in integrated settings include: providing information to parents on the negative impact of segregation and explaining the benefits of integrated education; helping parents in completing the administrative procedures necessary for enrollment of children in mainstream schools; providing transportation, if needed; providing targeted social support to meet the cost of integrated education (clothing, textbooks, educational material, etc.); maintaining active and regular contacts between the parents and the school; and, providing extracurricular education support for those children who have no home support to do their homework. In the case of transferring students from special classes and special schools to integrated education, the project components are very similar, but parents also need solid support when negotiating with special schools about the transfer of their children and, in most cases, children need additional educational support to catch up with their new classmates.

Training of education staff is a very important activity to ensure quality of education. The training needs to be organized by professionals, it is better if it is organized as part of the core training provided by the ministry of education, and it is very important that the school inspection staff be involved. The training should be interactive and should also include management of the relationship between teaching staff, Roma teachers' assistants, and community facilitators. The most common components of the training are intercultural education and pedagogy, Roma culture and tradition, student focused pedagogical methods, school development plans, and communication with parents.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, policy change in education is essential in the region where the REF is working to support sustainable inclusion of Roma children in the school and university system. Therefore, a number of REF projects are contributing, through a variety of actions, to education policy development. The usual components of projects aiming at influencing the policy development process are: awareness raising with the public and policy makers (e.g. a project of the National Roma Center in Macedonia – MAC 023); networking (e.g. the Roma Education Network project in Macedonia – MAC 014); lobbying and advocacy (e.g. the project of the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) in Bulgaria – BU 055); and setting models with a program of dissemination

and information (e.g. the Desegregation projects in Bulgaria and the Functional basic education project in Serbia – SR 005).

In order to capture the contribution of REF projects to education policy, the REF has developed a set of policy indicators and a rating scale. Three indicators are used to measure the REF's impact on Education Policy Development:

- ⇒ The engagement of the REF in educational policy development.
- ⇒ The openness of decision-making authorities to REF-supported education policy development.
- ⇒ The type of approach to policy development in REF projects. The rating scale uses five levels: 1 – No success; 2 – Partial success (contribution to the formulation of an education policy document in the form of a strategy, an action plan, legislation, a by-law, a founding act for the creation of a new institution, adoption of administrative procedures, legally regulated financial mechanisms, etc., which are not yet adopted), 3 – Success: a document like the ones listed in No. 2 adopted by an authority at any level (municipal, regional/county, national); 4 – Success +: securing regular financing for implementation of the adopted act; 5 – Success ++: implementation of the document started on a regular basis (not only as pilot).

The REF is in the process of rating its policy development projects and will have the indicators fully updated in 2008.

External Project Evaluations: Fourteen external project evaluations have been conducted in 2007. The most comprehensive evaluation was conducted for eight school desegregation projects in Bulgaria. The evaluation included a detailed review of each project's implementation, an analysis of the results from tests of mathematics and Bulgarian language and literature, and a survey of the Roma students who took part in the test in both integrated and segregated schools. This evaluation also included an estimation of the feasibility and cost of introducing the desegregation approach implemented in these projects at the national level. The study was only available in draft form by the end of 2007. The other evaluations were less comprehensive and have been conducted in Slovakia, Serbia, Hungary, and Macedonia. The evaluations have covered the following project types: 10 evaluations covered desegregation projects in primary education, one covered support to enrollment in pre-school, one covered technical education, one covered community involvement in the school system at the municipal level, and one, covered teachers' training. All the evaluations were overall positive and indicated that the projects met their objectives.

REF Evaluation Reports on Projects Closed in 2007

Country or Territory/Project	BU	CR	CZ	HU	KO	MA	MO	RO	SE	SK	Other	Total
Completed	13	0	1	4	1	4	0	4	4	2	0	33
Externally Evaluated	10	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	14

The evaluation of the eight desegregation projects showed that all projects were implemented successfully but that one project in Plodvív had been experiencing implementation difficulty and management problems and required specific attention. The others had all been progressing satisfactorily, expanding their activities over time and introducing innovations. The evaluations also identified the cost per child of successful integration, which varies according to location to somewhere between EUR 130 and EUR 250 per child. It showed that the drop-out rates of Roma children served by these projects are much lower than in neighborhood segregated schools. It confirmed the importance of having been enrolled in pre-school education for succeeding in integrated education. And it showed the importance of the family environment. For example, there was a much larger proportion of children with unemployed parents in segregated education than in integrated education. This fact also indicates that the projects tend to work with parents who are slightly better off.



Roma Education Center in Oradea, Romania

More than 40,000 Roma living in Bihor County, Romania, suffer from massive inequalities in educational access and outcomes. School segregation between Roma and non-Roma is only making the matter worse. Despite legislation that is relatively supportive of Roma inclusion in education, Roma in Bihor have a low level of school participation and performance, a high drop out rate, and a correspondingly low level of socio-economic standards.

Recognizing the unfavorable situation, the Ruhama Foundation in Romania set-up a "Roma Education Center" (REC), which seeks to improve and monitor educational access and outcomes for Roma children. A network of Roma leaders, other community key persons, activists, decision makers, school staff, and local, county and central public authorities was established, to increase direct participation of the Roma in community development activities, especially those focused on education. The network circulated information on training offered by the Center in the fields of inclusive education, community development, and non-formal education opportunities – such as a summer kindergarten for pre-primary school preparation. Ruhama also set up supportive informal structures such as the County Network of School Teachers on Inclusive Education, Local Initiative Groups, Local Support Groups and the Roma Youth Forum.

The results achieved by the Center have exceeded expectations. The overall aim of the project is to ensure full enrollment of Roma children in primary schools, and ensure that they do not drop out (through direct assistance of the pupil from kindergarten to fourth grade), by improving the educational system in the country. Thus far, 295 Roma children, practically all Roma children in the concerned age group from 10 target communities, have enrolled in the "Summer Kindergarten" pre-school program. A total of 177 of those who finished the summer kindergarten program (all children of enrollment age) are enrolled in the first grade, though one third of these were enrolled in segregated classes. In the second year, in 2007, 520 Roma children from 23 communities have enrolled in the "Summer Kindergarten" pre-school program and a number of 316 of them have been enrolled in school.

The project initially started with the support of the School Inspectorate of Bihor County and the Prefect Institution, through the County Office for Roma, but in the meantime a third partner joined in – the University of Oradea, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences. The university added an extremely important contribution to the project, namely the building where the Roma Education Center was finally established. The main stakeholder, the School Inspectorate of Bihor County, understood the importance of the initiative and collaborated with the Ruhama Foundation on a wide range of educational issues, taking constructive action on proposals and requests made by the NGO.

As a result of the project, hundreds of Roma families received information and counseling in education issues, and dozens of school staff have benefited from the training and information sessions offered on the importance of education of Roma children in a non-segregated and non-discriminative environment.

Overall, children in integrated education tend to do better in the scores of the national exams. However, some problems with the way the national tests seem to have been conducted in segregated environments permits doubts about the validity of some of the scores.

The study also established that the cost of scaling up existing projects to cover all the education institutions where the political will exists for desegregation would cost between EUR 4.3 million and EUR 8.3 million per year. This is clearly within the reach of the Bulgarian government in view of the Structural Funds available for Bulgaria in the coming years.

2. POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

This program covers specific studies, evaluations, policy analysis, technical support, and training, on policy and program related issues, for REF partners and public institutions. In 2007, the REF scaled up its policy development and capacity building activities. The main focus of the activities are: strengthening institutional capacity for directing EU Structural Funds to support Roma communities and NGOs in the field of Roma education, providing technical support to NGOs and local governments implementing REF projects, and carrying out strategic studies with strong policy relevance for the region and governments with which the REF is engaged in policy dialogue.

In Hungary, the REF is financing a consultant who works in the Human Resources Development Managing Authority. The consultant provides input that all applicable programs managed by the authority are designed, to ensure equal opportunity to all, so that Roma communities and NGOs have an opportunity to access these funds. The applicants, such as local governments and school maintainers, have to design an equal opportunity plan as part of their application to ensure quality public education for Roma children. In Romania, the REF is financing a consultant who works for the Managing Authority of the Operational Programme on Human Resource Development, to help with the development of programs that could benefit Roma communities in that country. Both consultants have also initiated information campaigns to explain to Roma NGOs how to access EU funds. The REF is holding discussions with the governments in Slovakia and Bulgaria about starting similar technical assistance programs in those countries. In Bulgaria, the REF had intensive interaction with the agency managing Structural Funds in the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. As a result of this active lobbying, as well as pressure by NGOs and the European Commission, the first call for proposals under Bulgaria's Operational Programme for Human Resources Development, announced in October 2007, includes two priority areas related to Roma Education: "creating a favorable multicultural environment for the practical application of intercultural education and training" and "making the school more attractive to young people." The REF has also undertaken a number of training sessions on designing programs for EU Structural Funds, so that Roma communities can have better access to these funds. The training sessions involved staff of the agencies managing Structural Funds, Roma NGOs and representatives of the ministries of education.

The REF also provides capacity building through the REF network of country facilitators, who are now active in five countries: Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia. These facilitators assist organizations that the REF supports at the local level. The intensive support provided by the country facilitators to REF implementing agencies is one reason for the very high rate of satisfactory projects and overall satisfactory approaches to project financial management and procurement. The country facilitators have also been essential in continuing a dialogue with governments, and especially the ministries of education, and in lobbying the agencies managing Structural Funds.

The program of studies and policy advice has been expanded in 2007. It is an important part of the REF's activities, and the REF has become the main "think tank" on Roma education.

In 2007, “Country Assessments and the Roma Education Fund’s Strategic Directions” were published for eight Decade countries.¹⁶ The positive reaction that the publications received in the partner countries, in government, academia, and civil society, demonstrates the professional quality of research and policy analysis the REF provides. The Country Assessments are also important tools for pushing ahead policy reforms that will make education systems in REF partner countries more inclusive of Roma.

REF Country Assessment Series

In 2007, the REF published a series of studies entitled “Country Assessment and the Roma Education Fund’s Strategic Directions.” The Country Assessment series provides an analysis of the education systems and ongoing education reforms – from the perspective of the inclusion of Roma children – in the countries taking part in the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The study series also reviews the different programs and activities the REF has carried out since its establishment in 2005, and highlights the thematic and program areas the REF is planning to concentrate on during the coming years.

The REF hopes that these studies can offer a useful instrument for:

- ⇒ Policy-makers seeking to improve education policies that address the education outcome gap between Roma and non-Roma.
- ⇒ Civil society representatives who wish to improve the effectiveness of their educational programs by making them more relevant to the overall education reform of their country.
- ⇒ The overall development and donor community, which needs to understand better the situation that Roma children are facing, so donors can identify niche areas where support and contributions would be most needed and valuable.
- ⇒ The REF, which needs to define the areas of policy change upon which it will focus.

The information presented in the documents was discussed with representatives of governments and civil society through various consultative meetings, in order to ensure that the documents realistically reflect the actual situation, and that the recommendations made are viable. Because of the constantly changing situation, the REF plans to update these assessments on a regular basis. Each study has been published in both English and the local language.

Source: REF Magazine, Issue No.1, December 2007



¹⁶ Country assessments and strategies were produced for Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and the Slovak Republic.

In 2007, the REF launched an exercise for joint learning. This involved the initiation of two networks, one linking university centers working on Roma issues and the other on access to pre-primary education for Roma children.

The launch of the Roma University Centers network took place in Venice, as part of the events organized in the framework of the first Roma Pavilion at the Venice biennale. A two-day seminar was organized on October 14-16, 2007. The seminar brought together about 30 representatives of universities and research centers, and students associations involved in Roma issues, as well as some Roma leaders. Some of the most well-known universities and research centers were represented, including the Sorbonne University, Manchester University, Grenada University, Bulgaria Academy of Science, Budapest National University, etc. Participants discussed ways in which stronger synergies and coordination could be encouraged, and ways to orient programs of research and studies to better serve the needs of the Roma communities. Participants also adopted a joint declaration supporting the idea of a network that could facilitate exchange of students and establishment of strong joint research programs. It was agreed that development of the network would start with a survey of all university and research centers working on Roma issues. It was also agreed to plan a follow-up meeting in 2009, to explore in more detail the precise activities of this network.

The REF has started contacting a number of organizations in Europe to be part of a network on pre-primary education. Lack of access to pre-school by Roma children is one of the most serious issues for the education of Roma in Europe. On one hand, Roma are dramatically under-represented in the pre-school systems; on the other hand, NGOs have experience with very successful activities, some of them financed by the REF and some municipality-run programs, to integrate Roma children into pre-school. There is an urgent need to learn from these experiences and to try to identify local strategies to scale up programs, including seeking policy changes and campaigning for advocacy.

The REF has also launched a number of strategic studies:

Educational Needs of Roma Children from the Republic of Moldova

The research was launched in September 2007 and is carried out by IMAS, a well known consulting firm in Moldova. The main objective of the research is to provide basic data on the status of the education of Roma in the Republic of Moldova. The research will provide background information for the preparation of an education Country Assessment, which will guide the REF's further interventions in Moldova. Moldova has no reliable information on the social and economic status of the country's Roma, and this research includes undertaking the first comprehensive survey of Roma settlements ever done in Moldova. It therefore has enormous strategic importance. The data gathering process took place between September 29 and October 30, 2007. It is expected that the final report will be released in the first half of 2008, and it will be published and disseminated in the middle of 2008.

A Comprehensive Education Needs Assessment Conducted in Moldova

Orgada Noastra, one of the most important Roma NGOs in Moldova is implementing, with REF financial and technical support, the first needs assessment of the education situation of Roma in Moldova. In doing so, it has also completed the first field-based estimates of the size of the Roma population and of the number of Roma children attending schools.

Within the project, a team composed of NGO representatives, sociologists, and experts of the Institute for Marketing and Sociological Studies, conducted research to assess the number of school-aged Roma children in Moldova. Researchers also documented the main problems Roma face in enrolling and continuing their studies. This effort was conducted in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the local administration. The findings of the survey will be discussed with the government, civil society, and development organizations present in Moldova in early 2008. It is hoped that the survey will help in the identification of policy changes and specific programs to be financed by the REF and other donors, in particular the EU.

To raise awareness and build tolerance, Orgada Noastra, in collaboration with a consortium of other Roma NGOs interested in education, elaborated promotional materials (brochures and posters) and ran a country-wide campaign, directly targeting Roma parents, motivating them to enroll their children in school. The promotional campaign included a series of TV debates and talk shows entitled "Perspectives and Alternatives of Roma Education in Moldova," and also an informative monthly radio program called "Roma in a modern Society." In addition, door-to-door visits to Roma families, national conferences, and discussions ensured a smooth information flow.

It is hoped that this project will provide a basis for designing and implementing broader programs in the country, one of the poorest in the region, and start a constructive dialogue with the Ministry of Education.

box 7

Evaluation of REF-Financed Desegregation Programs in Bulgaria and Options for Scaling Up at the National Level

The goal of this research is to evaluate the eight different Roma school desegregation programs currently implemented in Bulgaria with REF financing, and to assess the potential for scaling up their work to develop a national desegregation program. The study aims at providing information necessary to prepare a reliable and meaningful national program for school desegregation in Bulgaria. It will be the first time that a national program for integration of Roma children will be fully elaborated and the first time that a methodology for such scaling up will be presented. The research was started in September 2007 and is being carried out by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee. The findings of this research will also be used as an input in the comprehensive REF evaluation planned for 2008.

The Use of Conditional Cash Transfers to Increase Roma School Enrolment, Attendance and Results

The main objective of the study, started in November 2007, is to provide an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of conditional social assistance benefits linked to the participation of children in the education system. The study will be based on an assessment of the impact of existing programs in Romania, Slovakia, and Hungary. The policy paper will review economic, institutional, and social issues related to such a scheme. It is expected to be released in the first half of 2008 and will be used for active policy dialogue with governments of the region.

Study of Affirmative Action for Roma in Universities, High Schools, and Vocational Schools in Romania

Romania was the first country to introduce affirmative action for Roma in the field of education. Since the 1990s, the Romanian government has progressively introduced a system of quotas for Roma students in high schools, vocational training, and universities. In 2005, the number of Roma admitted to reserved places in universities reached more than 400. For the time being, there is no comprehensive research to evaluate the impact of these affirmative action policies. The REF aims to find out how effective the actual quota system is and how it could be improved. The qualitative research was started in October 2007, and it involves focus groups and semi-structured interviews with the beneficiaries of affirmative action measures, as well as with Roma NGO leaders, and educational staff from the school inspectorates and education units. The quantitative part of the research, consisting of a questionnaire survey addressed to all 42 school inspectorates in Romania, will be launched early 2008, and the survey on a representative sample of beneficiaries is expected to start in March-April 2008. The final report of the research is expected to be released in May 2008. It is hoped that this study will provide insight that will enable the REF to improve the advice it gives to governments about the introduction of affirmative action in education systems throughout the region.

Study on Special Schools in Slovakia

The special school system is one of the most discriminatory systems in Europe. The system of special schools for children with learning disabilities is most extensive in Slovakia, where it is estimated that 80 percent of the country's Roma children are in special classes or special schools. The REF is preparing a study on Slovakia's special schools, to improve understanding of the real cost this approach to Roma education has for the country. The study will be carried out during 2008 and will provide the information necessary to support a solid advocacy campaign in Slovakia.

3. COMMUNICATIONS AND CROSS COUNTRY LEARNING

The year 2007 was an intense one for the Communications and Cross Country Learning Program. The major pillar of the program was the international conference organized by the Roma Education Fund

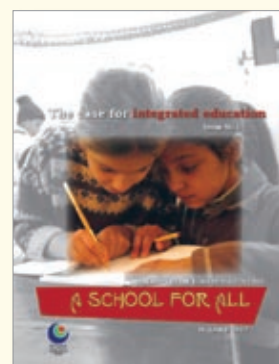
jointly with the Hungarian Government. The conference was held in Budapest on April 2-3, 2007 and attended by more than 450 participants and approximately 50 journalists. Participants came from more than 30 countries. It was most probably the largest conference ever organized on the education of Roma children in Europe.

The most important objective of this large event was to bring together all key stakeholders, to have them share positions and opinions, and to let them discuss their experiences – including successes and failures. Most of those individuals who may have an influence on Roma education in Europe attended the event. These included representatives from government, development agencies, bilateral donors, non-governmental organizations, human rights activists and, most importantly, Roma civil society. In fact, Roma civil society was very well represented and a lot of grassroots leaders also attended. The second most important objective of the conference was to lend a sense of urgency to the issue of Roma inclusion in the educational systems, and to increase the visibility of the issue, but without the usual pessimism.¹⁷ The conference was a great success, encouraging intense cross-border learning. In addition, the REF enjoyed a lot of visibility in a number of local (Hungarian) and international media, including the BBC, Le Monde, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Alliance Magazine, etc.



Photos: International Conference on “Education Reforms in Central and Eastern Europe and Roma Inclusion,” Budapest, April 2-3, 2007, REF Magazine, Issue No. 1, December.

In the Fall of 2007, the REF developed its Communications and Media Strategy with the objective of increasing visibility and reaching out to further audiences. Alongside the traditional means for communication such as a brochure, Annual Report, country assessments, the website, etc. – the REF published its first bi-annual magazine, titled “Education for All: The Case for Integrated Education,” at the end of 2007. The magazine included 21 articles from REF specialists and external experts all over Europe. The magazine has proven to be a valuable tool for presenting various views and lessons on Roma education, and for stimulating debate and discussion.



¹⁷ Source: REF Magazine, Article by Alexandre Marc, Issue No. 1, December.

Major Conferences/Events with REF Participation

#	Conference	Date
1	World Bank Human Development Conference.	January-February 2007
2	Workshop organized under a REF-financed project in Podviv on "Desegregation and the Integration of Minority Children in Education: An Educational Investment in the Future."	January-February 2007
3	Conference on "Strategies for eradication of School Segregation," organized by Romani Criss, as part of a project called "Education without Segregation for Roma children," financed by UNICEF Romania.	January-February 2007
4	REF Conference on Education Reform and Roma Inclusion; Budapest.	April 2-3, 2007
5	EU Peer Learning Activity of the Cluster on Social Inclusion of DG Education.	March-April, 2007
6	"Towards Multicultural Education in the Balkans" at the Faculty of Philosophy; Skopje.	March-April, 2007
7	Pakiv European Network Conference in Budapest on "Roma Active Citizenship."	March-April, 2007
8	Conference on Roma inclusion organized by the Project on Ethnic Relations in Mures County in Romania.	March-April, 2007
9	Meeting of the Informal Contact Group of Intergovernmental Organizations and Institutions on Roma, Sinti and Travellers.	June 11, 2007
10	Conference on Youth Inclusion in Europe, from Policy to Action, organized by the World Bank; Rome.	May-June, 2007
11	Conference on "Internship of Roma Children in Ukrainian Society: Roma Inclusion in Ukraine", organized by the Roma Women Fund of Ukraine.	May-June, 2007
12	EFC Annual General Assembly on the "New Challenges for Global Philanthropy"; Madrid.	June 2-3, 2007
13	Meeting to establish a Network on Roma Community and Social Inclusion to ensure that more EU financing is directed at activities supporting Roma inclusion; Madrid.	May-June, 2007
14	Meeting to launch the European Training Foundation project, Torino.	May-June, 2007
15	The REF seminar on "Embracing the future: Identity, culture and artistic expression in education of Roma children. The Role of University centers," organized by REF in the framework of the Venice Biennale of Contemporary Arts. The seminar coincided with the establishment of the first Pavilion of Roma artists; Venice.	October 14-16, 2007
16	A day-long seminar for joint learning, organized by REF along with its partners, about how to make EU funds available for Roma education; Budapest.	October 31, 2007
17	Conference on "Towards Quality Education for Roma Children, Transition from Early Childhood to Primary Education." Organized by the REF, UNESCO, and the Council of Europe; Paris.	September 10-11, 2007

18	International symposium to discuss successful examples of public and private cooperation in the field of integration of education, with the objective that these examples may serve as models for development in Germany and other OECD countries; Berlin.	October 16-17, 2007
19	Meeting of the international steering committee of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and presentation by the REF on "reducing discrimination of Roma in education systems"; Budapest.	October 3, 2007
20	Conference on education reform organized by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.	October, 2007
21	Seminar on "How to make EU funds available for the education of Roma"; Budapest.	November, 2007
22	Visit of the European Commission: Presenting the most recent findings from the REF's analysis; discussing access by Roma NGOs to Structural Funds and discussing the process of reforming education systems.	November 5-7, 2007
23	Conference on "Equity and Development" and REF presentation on "Roma school segregation and social reproduction of inequities," organized by the French Government.	November, 2007
24	Meeting of all heads of SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) for South East Europe, discussing the operations of REF in the Balkans and coordination with further donors; Stockholm.	November, 2007
25	Meeting of the Experts on Ethnic Minorities and Social Inclusion organized by the European Training Foundation; Torino.	November 4-7, 2007
26	Decade Indicator Working Group Meeting organized by the Hungarian Presidency of the Decade of Roma Inclusion; Budapest.	November 4, 2007
27	Working Group meeting organized by the Romanian National Agency for Roma with the consultative group for Roma Inclusion; Bucharest.	November 9-10, 2007
28	Technical consultation on poverty and health care organized by the World Health Organization; Venice.	November 29-30, 2007
29	Seminar on "Poverty and social exclusion in rural areas," organized by Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini with the support of the European Commission's DG Employment; Bucharest.	November 22-24, 2007
30	Conference on "Equal access to education in the frame of the Decade of Roma Inclusion: improving policies," organized by the Pakiv European Network; Budapest.	December 18-19, 2007

Two important articles were published by the REF in 2007. The first one, written by Alexandre Marc and Costel Bercus and titled "The Roma Education Fund, A New Tool for Roma Inclusion," was published in the academic journal *European Education*, in a special edition on "Roma Education and Public Policy in Europe, A challenge and a Paradigm" (Vol 39. No. 1). The other article was on "Reassessing the Role of Grant-giving in a Foundation's Strategy: The Case of the Roma Education Fund," published in *EFFECT*, the magazine of the European Foundation Center and Alliance Online, in June 2007.

On November 14, 2007, a remarkable decision was made by the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights. The court ruled “segregating Roma students into special schools is a form of unlawful discrimination that violates fundamental human rights.”¹⁸ The decision was the culmination of an eight-year legal battle during which the plaintiffs challenged the practice of forcing Roma students – regardless of their intellectual abilities – into schools for children with learning disabilities. The case was informed by an amicus brief prepared in October 2006 by the REF, along with the Step by Step International Association and the European Early Childhood Research Association. The REF was referred to in the final judgment several times – an indication of the increased level of acknowledgment of the organization among international professional bodies.

4. DIRECTLY IMPLEMENTED STRATEGIC PROJECTS

The year 2007 was one in which the REF started to work on submitting applications to several calls for proposals, principally by the EU and similar funding mechanisms (e.g. Swiss and Norwegian funds).

When considering submitting an application for any funding opportunity, the REF always ensures that it does not enter into competition with Roma NGOs for funds. The REF only applies when it can help Roma NGOs access funds that they would not be able to access by themselves. More specifically, the following criteria are followed by REF when applying for the call for proposals:

- ⇒ The proposal must be in line with the REF’s mandate and objectives, and its strategic directions in the concerned country.
- ⇒ The REF ensures the participation of Roma NGOs and, as much as possible, presents the proposal in association with local Roma NGOs or sub-contracts Roma NGOs for implementation.
- ⇒ The proposal does not represent any risks for the reputation of the REF.
- ⇒ The REF does not enter in competition with Roma NGOs for accessing to funds.

Under its Directly Implemented Strategic Projects, the REF launched an exercise for joint learning in 2007. Two networks have been initiated by REF, one linking university centers working on Roma issues and the other on access by Roma to pre-primary education. The European Roma/Migrant Pre-Primary Learning Network includes 13 civil society organizations from 12 countries in the European Union, dealing with pre-primary education. The REF will apply for financing of the network to the European Commission’s Life Long Learning Program through the call for proposal under the Comenius Program. More information on the network and the different grant applications submitted in 2007 can be found in this report, in the section on Donors and Partnerships.

5. REIMBURSABLE GRANTS FOR ACCESSING STRUCTURAL FUNDS

In order to support Roma in accessing EU Structural Funds and other associated funds available in their country of residence, such as the EEA financial mechanism, the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and the Swiss Funds, the REF created in 2006 a reimbursable grant facility. The Grant Program provides NGOs with an advance that allows applicant organizations to start activities

¹⁸ Source: www.errc.org.

before actual financing from the EU becomes available. The reimbursable grant is set up as a temporary facility for a few years. Meanwhile, the REF will continue lobbying the EU and the respective national agencies managing Structural Funds, so that they introduced procedures that allow NGOs easier access to these funds.

2007 was the second year of the Reimbursable Grant Program. Compared to 2006, the number of projects has increased (6 vs 9) and the amount committed grew from EUR 87,465 to EUR 113,785 in 2007. Now, there are projects running in three countries, i.e. Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic. This is a convincing sign that there is a demand for the program and the REF envisages that more applications will be received during the coming year.



The Reimbursable Grant Program: Projects Approved in 2007

#	Country	Title of Project	REF Grant Amount (EUR)	Amount generated with the help of REF Grants (EUR)
1	Czech Republic	Karlovy Vary: Promote Roma students to complete secondary school.	18,785	93,926
2	Hungary	Reintegration of Roma women in the field of employment.	20,000	117,826
3		Khe" Tanoda program: Support 25 disadvantaged students to complete secondary school.	10,000	69,579
4		Integration network to mediate problems and help the integration of the Roma community in Borsod County.	13,000	68,080
5		Pro-Ma Tanoda: Support disadvantaged students to complete secondary school in Budapest District XIII. – HU011	10,000	76,000
6		Tanoda by BHIM RAO Association: Support the integration of Roma students into mainstream education.	10,000	74,000
7		S.Ü.N.I Tanoda project: To increase the educational indicators of the local Roma community. – HU014	12,000	72,000
8		Tanoda by AMRITA Association: To increase the educational indicators of the Roma students.	10,000	60,000
9		Vadrozsa – Tanoda: To increase the educational indicators of state-cared Roma students.	10,000	69,800
TOTAL			113,785	700,911

6. REF SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

In 2007, there were important changes to the REF's Scholarship Program. The Program was restructured in a major way, and its size nearly doubled. It was also fully integrated into the REF structure. Now, the REF Scholarship Program consists of four components:

1. Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP)
2. Interregional Scholarship Scheme
3. Supplementary Scholarship Scheme
4. Law and Humanities Program (LHP)

In addition, the Health Scholarship Program, a fifth program, will start in the spring of 2008. The shift of RMUSP management to the REF involved a number of important steps:

- ⇒ A REF/RMUSP working group was created to start elaborating recommendations for the new strategies of the Program, project plans, and activity timeframes.
- ⇒ Decentralization of the Program: In-country coordinators and coordination units were established in seven larger Scholarship Program countries. An Advisory Board, to assist in initial selections, was developed in Program countries. The In-Country Coordinators Workshop was established as a coordination event for the program.
- ⇒ Policies and Procedures: This involved developing criteria and guidelines on programming and administration, new timeframes for program administration, reporting (narrative and financial), and eligibility and selection for Core and Interregional Programs.
- ⇒ Grant and Information Management systems were set up under the REF Scholarship Program.
- ⇒ The “Grant and Information Management systems: New Grant disbursement systems” was introduced.
- ⇒ Data transfer from GSQL to GMS was completed.
- ⇒ Program Management and Administration project plans were developed after the working group meetings.
- ⇒ New schemes for the Scholarship Program are being introduced and the Health Scholarship Project is being developed.

The following paragraphs give further details on the various aspects of the Scholarship Program.

Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP)

In 2006, when the management of the Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP) was transferred to the REF, a special working group was set up to review RMUSP and prepare its reform. The goal of the new RMUSP was redefined and made broader. The program is designed to help educate more Roma to take on visible positions in society – particularly in the business and civil spheres.

The RMUSP supports Roma students at the tertiary education level in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe to pursue education in their countries of residence. For the 2007-2008 academic year, the RMUSP has granted support to 701 out of 1,363 applicants. Among the 701 selected scholars, 376 are female and 324 male. Scholarship recipients are full-time students and study at state-accredited and well-established universities in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Turkey. For the 2007-2008 scholarship years, USD 887,472 was allocated for RMUSP Scholarship Support.



#	Country	Number of applicants	Grants Assigned	Total amount assigned/USD
1	Bulgaria	344	180	233,380
2	Croatia	3	2	2,650
3	Czech Republic	20	12	13,000
4	Hungary	165	114	133,150
5	Kosovo	29	12	12,870
6	Macedonia	233	115	159,630
7	Montenegro	10	6	6,000
7	Romania	482	160	187,672
8	Serbia	138	55	60,900
9	Slovakia	39	26	26,000
10	Turkey	8	6	7,220
11	Supplementary	9	6	44,300
12	Interregional	8	7	6,700
	TOTALS	1,488	701	893,472

Interregional and Supplementary Scholarship schemes

Other components of the REF Scholarship Program are the new Interregional and Supplementary Scholarship schemes. In the 2007-2008 scholarship year, the Interregional Scholarship Program supported seven applicants from Bulgaria and Romania to study in each other's countries. Six scholarships were offered to Roma Supplementary Scholarship applicants from Macedonia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania. The Supplementary Scholarship recipients are currently enrolled in well-established tertiary education institutions, pursuing MA degrees in the United States, Germany and France. In total, USD 51,000 was allocated under these programs, to support students to study in foreign countries towards their BA and MA degrees.

Law and Humanities Program

The Law and Humanities Scholarship Program has been operating in Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine since 2004. In the 2007-2008 scholarship years, 83 applicants out of 111 were selected for the Program. Fifty of these 83 scholars are supported through the funds of the Remembrance, Responsibility and Future Foundation, while 33 scholars receive scholarships from the REF's Core Program funds. Out of the 81 selected scholars, 45 are female and 36 male. Their ages range between 18 and 35, and the majority of the applicants are in their 20s. Out of the 81 scholars, 33 are renewal students. Four students are pursuing MA degrees in education; one is studying towards a PhD; and the rest are pursuing BA or specialist degrees. Since Moldova and Ukraine will join the Bologna Process, these

countries will also benefit from the program in the 2008-2009 academic year. The transfer to the European Credit System will allow more than 50 percent of the program's scholars to be considered as MA degree students.

Health Scholarship Program

In 2007, the REF developed a new program called the Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP). The scholarship will become available for students in the Spring of 2008. RHSP is designed to provide support for health education, mentorship, and advocacy training for Roma minorities in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, with a pilot project in Romania.

The project will respond to the needs of educating professional medical staff among the Roma minority, by offering scholarships for Roma students pursuing degrees as nurses or medical doctors at state accredited/recognized medical and medical-vocational schools in the countries of their residence.

Law and Humanities Program: Tutoring Program in 2007-2008

The need for language training was first raised in 2006 in the Annual Students' Conference, where Roma scholars had a chance to discuss academic and career challenges in a group. Based on the requests from the students, tutoring was offered in foreign languages, in addition to standard curricular subjects, for the 2007-2008 academic year. In total 10 students from Moldova received support for language courses (one in Romanian and nine in English) held in universities, private language courses, standardized language exam courses, etc. Seven students in Ukraine (from the Uzhgorod and Zolotonosha Regions) have started group training in languages in British Council branches. Four students from Russia started English-language training in December, 2007, with three-month language courses.

In-Country and International Internships

The In-Country Internship Program supported motivated scholars to undergo a two-month summer legal internship in an NGO, legal firm, or government office from Moldova. Out of 56 scholars, 15 scholars from Moldova and Ukraine were selected for the Program. During the term of the Internship, the scholars were given a \$200 stipend for the two month period.

International Internships were organized at the European Roma Rights Center (Budapest) and Romani CRISS (Bucharest). Two scholars were selected for the program in Moldova. While one of the scholars succeeded in the Internship, the other failed to perform well due to lack of language skills. To ensure better quality support in the International Internship program, RMUSP will conduct an orientation session for Interns, within the framework of Annual Students' Conference, starting from 2008.

Annual Students' Conference

The Second Annual Students Conference for Law and Humanities Program scholars in academic year 2006/07 took place from June 30 to July 1, 2007 in Kiev. As suggested by the majority of the

participants at the First Annual Conference last year, the topic of this year's conference was Job Search and Employable Skills Development. The conference was organized in cooperation with Gestalt Consulting Group.

The training gave an overview of the labor market, and skills and knowledge requirements for starting jobs in Ukraine, Moldova, and Russia. Participants received information regarding the possible job search sites and resources in their countries, and received help to prioritize their preferences and adapt them to their own skill sets.

The interactive part of the training focused on development of interview, resume-writing and presentation skills of the Law and Humanities Program Scholars. For the majority of the scholars, it was their first opportunity to attend/participate in training, while several of the scholars managed the training processes themselves. Despite the varied level of the groups, the training had a very high involvement of all participants. There was a great deal of interest in practical role playing and analysis of activities.

The initiatives following the Conference were:

- ⇒ Creation of the first Law and Humanities Program student web-page.
- ⇒ Replication of the career training, by students, within peer groups.
- ⇒ Creation of a students' career advising group in Moldova.

Law and Humanities Program: Administration in 2007-2008

To enhance the Law and Humanities Program, RMUSP conducted Orientation Sessions for the students who applied for the program in 2007-2008. RMUSP staff traveled to the program countries to deliver four-hour interactive sessions on roles and responsibilities of the applicants and the program, program expectations, eligibility and selection criteria, networking and extracurricular components in the program, etc.

7. REF ADMINISTRATION AND OFFICE

The REF office in 2007 underwent some important changes. Six people were hired, including two new staff in the scholarship unit and a new Country Facilitator for Slovakia. By end of 2007, the REF was fully staffed with 21 permanent employees, of which 15 are Roma.

In addition, the Operational Guidelines were entirely revised based on the first two years of experience with REF implementation. The revision of the manual was approved by the REF Board in November 2007. The entire Monitoring and Evaluation system for projects was modified and scaled up, in order to have an improved understanding of the impact of projects. The Management Information System has been finalized and is now fully operational.

The RMUSP team was incorporated into the REF, a change that included renting new office space, recruiting new staff and introducing a new management system (GMS). This was a major challenge, since the operation of the scholarship program could not be interrupted during the transition.



NEW PARTNERSHIPS AND DONOR SUPPORT IN 2007

*T*HE REF RECEIVES FINANCING from its main founding agencies, the World Bank and the Open Society Institute, as well as 11 bilateral donors, the Network of European Foundations, and some private individuals and companies. In 2007, the REF committed EUR 4.5 million in grants to support projects in 12 partner countries. In addition, it spent EUR 1,317,035 on its other programs, which breaks down as EUR 153,385 for reimbursable grants, EUR 461,208 for capacity building (communications and policy development), and EUR 702,442 for scholarships.

To maintain this level of commitment, the REF will have substantial financing requirements for 2008. Given that bilateral funds, which cover one third of the REF's budget, finance activities in countries that are not European Union member states, donor funding has become a particularly serious issue for the new EU member countries of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. Therefore, in 2007, the REF initiated efforts targeting the private sector and the European Commission, with the goal of attracting sufficient funds to enable the REF to maintain its commitment level for the new EU member countries in the coming years. At the same time, the REF is developing a strategy that will emphasize advocacy, policy advice, and technical support over direct financing of grants in EU member countries. It is known that substantial EU funding is available in these countries, and this money could be tapped into and directed toward Roma inclusion.

1. BUDGET 2007-2009

The REF closed 2007 with a positive balance. This was principally due to the increased income received from REF donors, including the Open Society Institute, the German, Hungarian, Swiss and Spanish Governments, and some private donors. Looking to the near future, a financing requirement of EUR 2.3 million is projected for 2008, and around EUR 7.1 million is needed for 2009. Negotiations are underway with a number of donors and there are good prospects for closing the year 2008 with a positive balance.

Budget 2007 – 2009 (Actual and Forecast)¹⁹

		2007	2008	2009
I.a	Estimated Income from donors ¹⁹	6,968,631	5,948,956	4,166,906
I.b	Reimbursement of grants		100,000	100,000
I.c	Interest income	165,300	150,000	150,000
I.d	Refunds from grants	17,577		
I.e	Available balance from previous year	427,022	578,851	-2,396,817
I.=I.a+I.b+I.c+I.d+I.e	Total available	7,578,530	6,777,807	2,020,089
II.a	Administrative expenses	944,845	997,639	997,639
II.b	Contracted projects, approved by the Board	4,737,799	5,000,000	5,000,000
II.c	Funds committed for other activity			
	– Communications	123,711	250,000	250,000
	– Policy development & technical assistance	337,497	497,250	500,000
	– Scholarship Program	702,442	2,179,735	2,179,735
	– Reimbursable Grant Mechanism	153,385	250,000	250,000
II.=II.a+II.b+II.c	Total budget commitments	6,999,679	9,174,624	9,177,374
III=I-II	Financial Surplus (+) or Gap (-) at year end	578,851	-2,396,817	-7,157,285

Given the amount of new financing required for 2008 and 2009, REF management has decided to develop a more comprehensive approach and strategy for the REF's fundraising efforts in 2007-2009. In June 2007, the REF's Fundraising Strategy and Action Plan was developed and approved by the Board. It was agreed that the REF should diversify its sources of financing, by:

- ⇒ Further strengthening its relations with existing bilateral donors and initiating bilateral donor relations with potential new donors.
- ⇒ Targeting more intensively the private sector, including private foundations, corporations and individuals.
- ⇒ Making more use of the different EU funds and similar sources of financing by responding to calls and tenders. It was also agreed that more attention and efforts should be placed on strengthening the REF's communications and media relations to increase visibility.

¹⁹ Including firm donor commitments only.

Therefore, in 2007, the REF initiated intense outreach to existing and new donors, in order to bridge the gap in financing expected for 2008. Some preparation work has already brought results (see below) while some ideas are still under discussion and development. In 2007, the REF also started to respond to different calls for proposals, principally those published by the European Commission, that are in line with the REF's mission and scope of activities. These projects would enhance the REF's technical and professional knowledge base, enable it to exchange experiences, and improve general knowledge on issues related to Roma education.

Also in 2007, many professional partnerships were created with non-governmental and multilateral organizations, to help the REF intensify its impact on the Roma communities, by joining forces and coordinating efforts with other stakeholders dealing with Roma education.

2. BILATERAL DONOR RELATIONS

The year 2007 was a good one for attracting further donations, especially bilateral funding. The table below shows firm donor commitments between 2005 and 2009.

In 2007, new donor pledges were acquired from:

George Soros, Open Society Institute (OSI): USD 1 million/year

In 2007, an additional USD 1 million per year for 2008-2012 was granted to the REF for its Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP). The funds received from OSI for scholarships now consist of the following components:

- ⇒ RMUSP main 2006-2012: USD 1 million/year (management of the program was shifted to REF in 2006).
- ⇒ RMUSP 2008-2012: additional USD 1 million/year for RMUSP available starting 2007.

German Government (EUR 450,000)

In 2007, Germany granted EUR 450,000 to the REF. This was part of a larger commitment which is condition of REF's ongoing insitutional assessment.

Hungarian Government (EUR 152,000)

In 2007, the Hungarian Government granted EUR 152,000 to the REF. These funds were to cover local taxes, social security, and other fees paid for the REF's permanent staff working out of the Budapest Office.

Spanish Government: EUR 80,000

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain, Directorate General for the United Nations, Human Rights and Multilateral Organizations, provided a grant of EUR 80,000 to the REF for 2007 under its extraordinary budget line. This contribution is of high importance to the

REF since Spain has vast knowledge and experience in successful social inclusion policies and programs. Thus cooperation between the REF and Spain is of strategic importance. There are indications that there is a chance of an additional grant from Spain for 2008.

Swiss Government: EUR 645,000

In 2007, the Swiss Government provided the REF with a grant amount that is almost double the size of its commitment for 2007.

World Bank Staff: EUR 5,503

Via the World Bank's annual Community Campaign, collections from World Bank staff contributed to various causes and organizations, the REF being one of them. This contribution from the Bank's staff shows their own commitment to development in general, and the REF is grateful for this additional Bank support.

Putumayo World Music Company: EUR 1,229

Cooperation with Putumayo is one of the REF's first partnerships with the private sector, and it therefore has special value. A portion of Putumayo's proceeds from its new release called Gypsy Groove has been donated to the REF.



Roma Education Fund – Donor Commitments 2005-2014²⁰

Donors	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total (EUR)
Canada: Canadian International Dev't Agency	700,574					700,574
Finland via CoEDB	60,128					60,128
Germany: German Government			450,000	1,500,000		1,950,000
Greece: Hellenic AID	109,890					109,890
Hungary: Government			152,000			152,000
Ireland: Development Cooperation Ireland	100,000	100,000				200,000
Netherlands: Ministry of Foreign Affairs	700,000	300,000	710,000	90,000		1,800,000
Slovenia: Ministry of Foreign Affairs	10,000			10,000		20,000
Spain: Ministry of Foreign Affairs			80,000			80,000
Sweden: SIDA		423,112	431,544	639,240	639,240	2,133,136
Switzerland: Swiss Agency for Development	404,819	400,000	473,313	182,050		1,278,132
United Kingdom: DFID	290,660					290,660
Open Society Institute (OSI)	1,661,000	1,661,000	1,430,799	1,661,000	1,661,000	8,074,799
Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (OSI)	833,000	833,000	1,488,982	1,666,666	1,666,666	6,488,314
World Bank	833,000	1,666,000	1,545,261			4,044,261
Council of Europe Development Bank	500,000					500,000
Network of European Foundations²¹	100,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	900,000
James D. Wolfensohn Roma Scholarship Grant		7,958				7,958
Private Individuals and Companies	19,107		6,732			25,839
Total	6,322,178	5,591,070	6,968,631	5,948,956	4,166,906	28,815,691

²⁰ Includes firm donor commitments only.

²¹ Contribution of the Network of European Foundation consists of funds received from the Evens Foundation, the Freudenberg Foundation, the Barrow Cadbury Trust, the Charles Steward Mott Foundation, and the Remembrance and Future Fund.

The year 2007 was one of active engagement with donors. The REF initiated various donor discussions that have strong potential to attract substantial additional financing for 2008. The following are some highlights of these discussions.

British Government – DFID

Cooperation with DFID has been excellent in 2007, and a new project proposal was submitted for potential additional support for South Eastern Europe and Moldova. The amount envisaged is around EUR 500,000.

Dutch Government

In November 2007, discussions were started to explore possibilities for continued financing from the Dutch Government. Recently, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' development program went through decentralization of its administration. The REF will submit a project proposal to the Belgrade Embassy for a new program for the Western Balkans.

German Government

Depending on the outcome of REF's institutional evaluation which is to be completed in early 2008, Germany is envisaged to extend its support to the REF for 2008 and beyond.

Hungarian Government

Discussions are underway to extend the Hungarian Government's contribution for 2008. As in 2007, these funds will cover local taxes, social security, and other fees to be paid for the REF's permanent staff working out of the Budapest Office.

Romanian Government

Romania, as a Decade of Roma Inclusion Country and a new EU member state, might become the REF's new bilateral donor. There are three different potential sources of financing with the Romanian Government:

- ⇒ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under its Official Development Assistance budget, might provide funding to its strategic partners, i.e. the Republic of Moldova and Serbia.
- ⇒ The Prime Minister's Office envisages a grant to the REF as a matching contribution for its Romanian projects.
- ⇒ The REF has applied, together with the National Agency for Roma, for EU Structural Funds' financing to implement a EUR 5.6 million scholarship program in Romania for Roma students in secondary education. If successful, the case of Romania as a new "donor" country could serve as a model for a new type of collaboration with the REF – including financing of some REF activities – for other Decade Countries that are members of the EU.

Spanish Government

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain, Directorate General for the United Nations, Human Rights and Multilateral Organizations, has indicated the possibility of an additional grant to the REF for 2008.

The World Bank

The REF is working on extending support from the World Bank, via the Bank's Development Grant Facility, for an additional USD 1 million per year for seven years.

Potential New Partners

Relations have been established with the governments of Italy and Portugal, countries that have not yet been contributing to the REF.

3. EUROPEAN UNION AND OTHER FUNDS

In 2007, the REF also scaled up its activities for accessing EU funds by responding to different calls for proposals, principally financed by the EU and the Norwegian Funds in Hungary. The role of the REF in these calls varies from being the lead applicant to a consortium member. The table below summarizes all the actions the REF has participated in concerning application to calls and tenders in 2007. It is also important to mention that the REF is working on setting up the first REF field office, on a pilot basis, in a Decade of Roma Inclusion country. REF Romania is expected to open in 2009, and it will facilitate the work of the REF in accessing EU structural funds in Romania. If successful, similar initiatives could be launched in other EU member states as well.

Applications Submitted by REF in 2007

#	Call for Proposal	Funding Agency	REF's Role	Project Objective	Amount	Status
1	Call for proposals for study visits 2008-2009	European Commission/ DG Education and Culture	Lead applicant	To be included in the inventory of hosts for professional study tours covering best practices in life-long learning programs and educational initiatives in the EU.	N/A	Winner.
2	iyowe – SHARE THE WORLD	European Commission/ DG Education and Culture: Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008	Consortium member, along with: MUS-E Italia, Menuhin Association Portuga, MUS-E Hungary, MUS-E Scotland, MUS-E Belgium, MUS-E France, Yehudi Menuhin Stiftung Deutschland, La Maison du Conte de Bruxelles (Belgium), IRFAM – Institut de Recherche, and Formation et Action sur les Migrations (Belgium). Project leader: International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation.	To carry out interactive work in several European schools. Storytelling artists work with children from different cultures, in order to identify their common imagination and creative vision and share it as widely as possible through art.	~ EUR 200,000	Winner.
3	Norwegian Fund	Norwegian Fund Mechanism in Hungary	Lead applicant	To spread an extra-curricular study group methodology, by setting up mobile extra-curricular study groups in the most disadvantaged micro-regions, as part of the effort to reduce school drop-outs and to reinforce further education opportunities for cumulatively disadvantaged Roma children and children with disabilities.	~ EUR 860,000	Submitted. Phase 2.
4	Improving access to education and employment opportunities for the Roma minority in Croatia	European Commission/ EuropeAid	Lead applicant	To improve access to education and employment opportunities for the Roma national minority in Croatia.	N/A	Rejected.

5	Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development (for Moldova)	European Commission/ EuropeAid	Contributed to project design. Applicant organization is Romani CRISS (Romania), with Ograda Noastra, Tarne Rom, and the National Center for Roma as partners from Moldova.	To increase and improve cooperation between Roma NGOs and authorities, at all levels in the Republic of Moldova, in addressing the problems faced by Roma in accessing mainstream services and resources. The project envisages a series of activities aimed primarily at strengthening the capacity of Roma NGOs and facilitating coordination among them.	~ EUR 350,000	To be submitted in 2008.
6	Consolidating Partnership Between Civil Society Organizations and Public Authorities for Raising Minority Rights in the Region	European Commission/ CARDS	Lead applicant	To establish a European Roma/Migrant Pre-Primary Learning Network, bringing together relevant actors from 10 EU member states to collect, analyze, and apply experiences in supporting pre-primary education for Roma and migrants in South Eastern Europe.	~ EUR 300,000	To be submitted in 2008.
7	Life-Long Learning Program: Comenius	European Commission/ DG Education and Culture	Lead applicant	To establish a European Roma/Migrant Pre-Primary Learning Network, bringing together relevant actors from 10 EU member states to collect, analyze, and apply experiences in supporting pre-primary education for Roma and migrants in the EU.	~ EUR 350,000	To be submitted in 2008.
8	Strengthening the capacities of Roma civil society for more efficient delivery of after-school education services	Swiss Fund Mechanism in Hungary	Lead applicant	To contribute to strengthening the capacities of Roma civil society in Hungary to more efficiently deliver after-school services to the most disadvantaged Roma children, in order to help them achieve better performance in school.	~ EUR 800,000	To be submitted in 2008.



Two REF Programs Included in the 2008-2009 EU Study Visit Catalogue of the European Centre for Development of Vocational Training

Two REF programs were included in the EU Study Visits Catalogue, 2008-2009, as best practice examples. The catalogue describes case studies of successful efforts in education and lifelong learning programs and initiatives. The CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) selected the REF's two school desegregation programs, one implemented in Hungary and the other in Bulgaria. Both programs provide quality desegregated education for Roma students.

The Bulgarian project provides equal opportunities for more than 700 Roma students by desegregating seven schools and following up the change with a multi-pronged approach, which includes transportation, catch-up classes, efforts to motivate parents, multicultural teacher training, promotion of the role of mediators, and awareness-raising campaigns. This Vidin model is considered to be one of the most successful projects of its type in the Central and Eastern European region and has served as a model for several other projects in Bulgaria and other countries.

The Hungarian program includes the education systems in two towns where the municipalities were able to successfully desegregate schools with the assistance of Roma NGOs and the REF. The integration of the students was supported by university-student tutors in Szeged and in an after-school study center in Hodmezovasarhely. REF experts monitored the process and mentored the participants in both programs.

These two programs are listed in the catalogue. Interested educators and local administrators may apply to the national Tempus foundations to visit these projects.

(Read more about the Study Visits Program at <http://studyvisits.cedefop.europa.eu/>)

box 8

4. NEW PARTNERSHIPS

The year 2007 was an important one for initiating new partnerships with various organizations, including international development agencies, bilateral donors, and NGOs. The type of partnerships varied, from participating in joint projects, to joint research and studies (i.e. with the Brookings Institution), to entering into new donor relations (i.e. with Romania and the United Kingdom). Some of the more important examples are described below.

The European Commission

In 2007, the REF has further strengthened its cooperation with the European Commission. During November 5-7, a team of REF experts visited the Commission to present the most recent findings of the REF's analysis, to discuss access by Roma NGOs to EU Structural Funds, and to discuss how the Commission can put more pressure on governments to accelerate the process of reforming their educational systems. The team met managers and staff of the Commission's DG Education (EAC), DG Enlargement (ELARG), and DG employment (EMP), and EuropeAid, as well as the coordinator of the Study Group on Integration of Minorities at the European

Economic and Social Committee of the European Parliament. The team also discussed the REF's proposal to create two European-wide networks of joint learning, one on preschool education and one on university centers. Partnership with the European Commission's various technical bodies is of strategic importance to the REF, and efforts to tighten these relationships will continue during 2008.

UNICEF

In 2007, the REF financed a UNICEF project in Albania and Macedonia. In November 2007, the REF visited UNICEF offices, and as a result of the meeting, a joint program was prepared and circulated to the REF Board. The proposed program entails the preparation of two joint studies, two joint projects and UNICEF's participation in a REF conference. In 2008, the REF and UNICEF envisage a detailed plan for collaboration and co-financing, including a possible memorandum of understanding, to set the modalities for cooperation.

Council of Europe

The partnership with the Council of Europe includes the REF's participation in the twice-yearly Steering Committee meetings for the Project on the Education of Roma/Gypsy Children in Europe. The REF also works with individual experts on the Committee.

Fundacion Secretariado Gitano

In 2007, the REF established close technical cooperation with Fundacion Secretariado Gitano (FSG). Experts of the two foundations exchanged experiences and knowledge via different meetings and conferences. The REF is part of FSG's projects on EU Structural Funds and Roma programs. FSG contributed an article to the REF's magazine, titled Integrated Education and School Segregation in Spain: The Situation of the Romani Community. FSG has become a member of the REF's new Network for Pre-school Education. Partnership with the FSG is very important because it is the largest organization working on Roma inclusion in Europe and it has excellent knowledge of the different European actors involved in Roma inclusion. The REF can offer to the FSG extensive experience in, and local knowledge of, Central and Eastern Europe and South Eastern Europe.

Wolfensohn Center for Development: Brookings Institution

The REF has established a partnership with the Brookings Institution to review strategies for scaling up. During 2007, a brainstorming session was organized in Budapest and a field trip to Bulgaria and Serbia was arranged. The REF's experts are providing technical input to a Brookings Institution study. The study will be completed in April 2008.

OECD

The REF's partnership with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development still needs to be developed. Negotiations have been started on a staff-exchange learning visit, REF participation in the One Laptop per Child program, common initiatives on improving Roma students' information and communication technology skills, and possible support on data gathering.

Network of European Foundations

The REF has good cooperation with the Network of European Foundations (NEF). The NEF is managing the contributions of individual foundations to the REF. They have also helped in the past in connecting the REF with people in the EU and in other projects or programs. A Steering Committee meeting is organized twice a year, to bring together REF representatives and all foundations supporting the REF. This partnership is very important to the REF, and, hopefully, it can be even further strengthened during 2008.

European Training Foundation

The REF is a member of the European Training Foundation's group of experts on ethnic minorities and social inclusion. The REF hopes to strengthen its partnership with the Foundation during 2008, potentially through joint projects.

UNESCO

The REF has been invited as member of the group of experts for the preparation of UNESCO guidelines on intercultural education. UNESCO also participated in the REF's conference on education, held in April 2007 in Budapest. This partnership could be strengthened during 2008, with more active REF involvement in UNESCO's activities.

International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation

This is a new partnership that can provide the REF with visibility and potential new contacts in Europe. The Yehudi Menuhin Foundation (IYMF) attended the REF's April 2007 Conference on Education on the advice of Jan Figel, the European Commission's Commissioner for Education and Culture. The REF is IYMF's partner in the U-Muse Program, for which IYMF has received EU funds as part of the 2008 Year for Intercultural Dialogue. The REF helps IYMF implement the EU program and also helps expand IYMF's activities with Roma children in schools in Eastern Europe.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE ROMA CIVIL SOCIETY AND ACADEMIA: AN EXERCISE FOR JOINT LEARNING

In 2007, the REF initiated a joint-learning exercise that involved the establishment of two networks – one on Roma-focused centers of higher education and the other on pre-primary education. The networks are described below.

Network of Roma-Focused Centers of Higher Education

As the EU becomes an increasingly relevant force, not only in its member states but also throughout the European continent, the Bologna Process goal of creating a European Higher Education Area combines with the Lisbon Agenda's ambition of establishing a European Area of Lifelong Learning to create favorable conditions for Roma-focused centers of higher education in Europe to join forces. The REF expects that the network of Roma-focused centers of higher education could uncover best practices for emulation and adaptation, allowing them in turn to:

- ⇒ Become integral and sustainable parts of their respective host institutions, gearing their activities to the needs of Roma students.
- ⇒ Act as catalysts for social change, forming lasting partnerships with government institutions on the one hand and Roma communities on the other.
- ⇒ Function according to the principles of the Bologna Process, helping to accomplish the Bologna indicators.
- ⇒ Provide government bodies with expert advice on the development of more inclusive education policies.
- ⇒ Strike a balance between research and taking steps to preserve Roma identity while preparing future Roma leaders.
- ⇒ Play an increasingly active role in policy making at national and European levels.

This network is currently under development, through a professional dialogue initiated among several interested academic organizations in Europe.

A Seminar In the Framework of the 52nd Art Biennale of Venice, October 14-16, 2007

For the first time, a Roma Pavilion was part of the Biennale of contemporary art in Venice. The pavilion hosted nine Roma contemporary artists. This event was a significant step toward giving Roma contemporary art the audience it deserves. A pavilion at the premier international art platform sent a message of inclusion that has so far avoided the Roma communities, making it clear that Roma have a vital role to play in the political and cultural landscape of Europe. It is hoped that this exhibition, organized by the Open Society Institute with the collaboration of Alanz Kulturstiftung, the European Cultural Foundation and the Swiss Cultural Program, constituted a historic move toward reducing the stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding an entire culture.

Building on this exceptional event, the REF organized a two-day seminar. The seminar touched on the important issues of culture and artistic expression in the education of Roma children as a way of building a positive cultural identity for Roma. Many REF projects, and other initiatives focusing on education of Roma children, include activities dedicated to building Roma children's' positive identity through art and culture.

The objectives of the REF seminar were to:

- ⇒ Broaden the approach to building a positive Roma identity, an area that is currently mostly limited to history, language and folk art.
- ⇒ Raise awareness of the importance of exposing Roma children and adolescents to Roma contemporary creation in art, music, dance, literature, and new media.
- ⇒ Discuss how governments, Roma university centers and research centers can take this broader perspective into account and how much has already been done.
- ⇒ Help strengthen coordination and communication between these centers, to ensure a better flow of information during the research and the development of methodologies.
- ⇒ Encourage students and researchers to broaden their perspectives by increasing the potential for exchange between universities and centers and improving opportunities for undertaking joint projects.
- ⇒ Set up an international network that would prepare concrete proposals in this area.
- ⇒ Identify criteria for REF involvement in this area.

The seminar brought together about 40 participants, including leading figures in the field of Roma culture, heads of Roma university centers and representatives of governments involved in developing methodological tools and approaches for introducing Roma culture in the classroom.

One of the outcomes of the seminar was agreement on, and definition of, the first step for the creation of a network of university centers. During the seminar, the participants endorsed a four-page document that contained the objectives, the possible participants, the activities, and the issues to be discussed with respect to such a network. The participants also agreed that the REF will start a survey of all centers and university departments involved with the education of Roma in Europe and will organize a follow-up conference next year.

Source: REF Magazine, Issue No.1, December 2007



European Roma/Migrant Pre-Primary Learning Network

While Roma are concentrated in Central and Eastern Europe and migrants (some of whom are Roma) are concentrated in Western Europe, both groups face a common set of obstacles in education. Among both, enrolment in pre-primary education is low, and late primary school enrolment is common. Once enrolled in school, Roma and migrant children often encounter language barriers and negative attitudes from peers, teachers, and peers' parents. These attitudes negatively affect the children's scholastic performance, and sometimes result in their being channeled into special education. Even for Roma and migrant children who remain in the system of mainstream primary education, high drop-out rates and resulting low levels of work qualification remain significant problems.

While the problems faced by Roma and migrants in education are similar enough to be addressed by similar methodologies, comparative analysis is lacking. By establishing a European Roma/Migrant Pre-Primary Learning Network, this project will bring together relevant actors from 11 EU member states to collect, analyze, and apply experiences in supporting pre-primary education as the ultimate basis for success in subsequent schooling and employment. In order to effect positive and sustainable improvements in policy and practice, the Network will produce, among other things:

- ⇒ A compendium of scaleable good practices, treating topics including legislation and effective use of EU funds for pre-primary education.
- ⇒ A concise set of compiled policy recommendations for distribution to EU, national, and regional governments, education-focused NGOs, and Roma/migrant NGOs.
- ⇒ A series of seminars bringing together representatives of the Network and key stakeholders from the sphere of policymaking for interactive discussion of the Network's findings as they can be applied throughout Europe.

This Network includes the REF plus 13 civil society organizations, dealing with pre-primary education, from 12 European countries. The network will seek financing from the European Commission's Life Long Learning Program's call for proposals under the Comenius Program.

Network on Pre-Primary Education

#	Country	Organization
1	Austria	Zara – Civil Courage and Anti-Racism Work
2	Belgium	De Acht vzw – Centre for Minorities in Antwerp
3	Bulgaria	Foundation for Regional Development “Roma-Plovdiv”
4	Czech Republic	Association of Roma in Moravia
5	Greece	CEHUR: Centre of Human Rights, University of Crete
6	Hungary	Southern Great Plains Regional Social Research Association (Dél-Alföldi Regionális Társadalomtudományi Kutatási Egyesület: DARTKE)
7	Hungary	Roma Education Fund (REF)
8	Germany	The Regional Centre for Education, Integration and Democracy – RAA Berlin
9	Netherlands	International Step-by-Step Association (ISSA)
10	Portugal	Centro de Estudos para a Intervenção Social (CESIS)
11	Romania	Ruhama Foundation
12	Slovakia	Country Association of Roma Initiatives
13	Spain	Fundacion Secretariado Gitano (FSG) (Associate Partner)
14	Spain	Unit of Attention for the Roma Community (Unitat d’Atenció a la Comunitat Gitana)

5. OUTREACH TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR

In line with the Board’s decision to focus the REF’s fundraising efforts more intensively on the private sector – including private foundations, corporations, and individuals – the REF has recruited a Senior Fundraising Specialist, who will set the ground for launching some private sector activities. The Specialist will work in 2008 to initiate some major projects targeting large private foundations and corporations.

6. CONCLUSION

The REF has closed an intense year of working with different donor agencies. It has become clear that the organization must diversify its sources of financing in 2008, in order to adjust to the shift in strategic and geographic priorities by its (principally bilateral) donors. Involving further sectors of society, including the private sector, in supporting REF activities has become essential. Private funds will not only increase the financial base of the REF but will also give credibility to its mission and goals. People and organizations who decide to support the REF will eventually become advocates for its cause. Therefore, the REF will continue engaging the private sector in supporting its projects and programs, in 2008 and beyond.

Another priority for the REF for 2008 will remain accessing different EU and government funds, by applying for calls for proposals (like the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance's Civil Society Facility for the Western Balkans) and by seeking Structural Funds and Official Development Assistance funds in the EU member countries. As the case of Romania shows, a country that belongs to the Decade of Roma Inclusion and is also a new EU member has available significant national resources, including EU funds that could be tapped into to cover Roma education support programs. The REF intends to encourage other EU member countries that are also Decade countries to devote some of their own national and EU resources to co-financing programs with the REF.



*T*HE REF HAS EXPANDED VERY QUICKLY, both geographically and in the type of activities and programs it supports. It has also gained broad-based recognition across Europe, for its direct support of the Roma community, its ability to engage a very wide group of stakeholders and its knowledge of education policy and program issues. It is, however, facing a number of challenges in the year to come, and it will need to adapt, as it did in the past, to the changing environment for Roma inclusion in Europe. The REF will continue to focus on ensuring that an increasing level of resources from government budgets, EU Structural Funds, and other sources are channeled to support effective programs for Roma inclusion in education systems. It will build on the early success of the last two-and-a-half years by continuing to work through a combination of advocacy, capacity building, and policy advice, as well as employing more specific instruments, like reimbursable grants, which facilitate the ability of NGOs to design eligible projects for EU financing.

The REF will need to scale up the evaluation of projects it finances and of government policies, in order to improve the knowledge of what works and what does not when seeking to close the educational outcome gap between Roma and non-Roma. The REF has already accumulated an impressive body of knowledge and information, but it needs more in-depth analysis of these findings. It has prepared a very ambitious program of studies, evaluations, and dissemination for 2008. It should also innovate in the way it disseminates information and create a cross-border network of knowledge sharing and support. To this end, the REF launched a number of important initiatives in 2007, such as the network on pre-school education. These efforts need to be replicated and scaled up. Hopefully, the REF will receive direct financial support from the European Commission in the area of knowledge transfer and sharing of experience.

There is also a serious problem with the limited capacity of non-EU countries to design and implement projects. Most of the organizations that have sufficient capacity are now implementing REF projects. In countries like Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia, the lack of reliable implementing agencies is one of the main bottlenecks preventing expansion of programs supporting Roma inclusion in education systems. The REF will need to move actively in the field of capacity building of Roma NGOs and local governments in these countries. Establishing partnership with organizations such as UNICEF will be very important for this purpose.

Advocacy continues to be essential in Europe. It must be a well-informed advocacy, using the result of solid studies and evaluations to prove that projects work and are being implemented effectively, and that education policy changes are bearing fruit. The idea that the large gap in education outcome between Roma and non-Roma is entirely a problem of the Roma community, and that programs to support Roma inclusion are not effective, is still widespread in Europe. The

experience of the REF shows a very different story, but it needs to be explained and disseminated more broadly, including in Western Europe.

In terms of fundraising, the REF is now facing another challenge: the reduction of donor financing in Europe. The most immediate answer in countries that are part of the EU is to focus on leveraging EU funds and government budgets. In non-EU countries, the REF still benefits from support from bilateral donors. In this respect, the REF needs to lobby new EU members that are starting to design foreign assistance programs. Romania might be one of the first new EU donors to channel Official Development Assistance funds through the REF. The REF also needs to encourage increased financing from the private sector and foundations, but Roma are rarely on the agenda of these organizations. Addressing this situation will require important efforts in terms of advocacy and fundraising. For this purpose, the REF needs to work closely with the Decade of Roma Inclusion secretariat and other organizations that are based in the EU and have access to the private sector.



REF staff as of December 2007.

Alexandre Marc
Director



Alexandre Marc, a French National, holds a Doctorate in Political Science from the Paris Institute of Political Science (Science Po). Before joining the World Bank in 1988, Alexandre Marc undertook research and consulting on Africa in Oxford University (St Antony's College) and for The Societe D'Etude Economique et Sociale (Paris). His work for the World Bank began in the Social Dimension of Structural Adjustment unit, where he worked on methodologies to assess the impact of the structural adjustment policies on the poor in Africa. This took him to work on social mitigation and community development programs, in particular social action programs and social investment programs. He supported the design of such programs in Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and Central Asia and authored a number of studies on design of community programs to reach the poor. He then joined the Human Development Department of the Europe and Central Asia Region and managed projects in health, education, and social protection, as well as poverty studies and social assessments. In 1999, he was appointed Sector Manager for the Social Development Unit in the Europe and Central Asia Region of the World Bank. In 2005, he spent eight month as a visiting fellow at the CERI (Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales) in Paris, where he directed a study on "cultural diversity and service delivery." In December 2005, he was appointed Director of the Roma Education Fund in Budapest where he served until December 31, 2007, when he returned to the World Bank.

Rumyan Russinov
Deputy Director



Rumyan Russinov, a Roma from Bulgaria, holds an MA in Economics. He has been an active participant in the Roma rights movement since 1993. Until 2000, he worked with the Human Rights Project, a Sofia-based Roma rights advocacy organization. In 1997, he initiated and led a national campaign for the adoption of government policies to combat discrimination against Roma. Following this campaign, in 1998, the government of Bulgaria adopted the Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society – a policy document developed and widely supported by Roma in Bulgaria – which provided a basis for the policies on Roma of several governments in the following years. In 2000-2005 Rumyan Russinov was Director of the Open Society Institute's Roma Participation Program, based in Budapest. In this position, he initiated and supported Roma-led actions for school desegregation in Central and Eastern Europe.

Judit Szira
Senior Advisor



Judit Szira, a Hungarian National, was a teacher in mathematics and chemistry and holds an MA in Public Education. Since 1998, she has been a member of the School Board of the Budapest City Council. Between 1994 and 1997, she was Program Director of the Public Education Development Program at the Soros Foundation Budapest. Previously, she was chief advisor to the Roma Commissioner in the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture. She is a member of the board of the Hungarian Tempus Foundation. She has been working on Roma inclusion issues in the field of public education since the beginning of her career. She has published articles in professional journals and newspapers on equity issues, active citizenship, and social cohesion.

Tünde Kovács-Cerović
Senior Advisor



Tünde Kovács-Cerović is from Serbia and has a PhD in Educational Psychology. Throughout her professional career, she combined her university work, conducting research in education and teaching Educational Psychology at Belgrade University, with active participation in civil society and the anti-war movement in Serbia – initiating peace education and working on multicultural issues, mediation, and conflict resolution. Before joining the REF, she had served as Deputy Minister of Education in Serbia (2001-2004), where she was engaged in designing and implementing the country's education reform process. During 2004-2005, she was Head of the Roma Secretariat in the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, Belgrade, where she was in charge of coordinating the development and adoption of the Action Plans for Roma inclusion in all priority areas. She was also Higher Education Fellow at OSI-Budapest, had a study sojourn at Harvard University, participated in academic exchange and international research programs, and served as education consultant on a variety of education development topics in several countries. Ms. Kovács-Cerović has become a REF Consultant working from Belgrade since the Summer of 2007.

Mihai Surdu
Capacity Building and Policy Development Manager



Starting in 1995, Mihai Surdu worked with the Research Institute of Quality of Life in Bucharest, Romania. In 2007 he joined the REF as Capacity Building and Policy Development Manager. Mihai Surdu has a doctorate of Sociology from the University of Bucharest. He has written extensively on issues related to Roma Education, and has published extensively on segregation as well.

Jenő Zsiga
Finance and Administration Manager



Jenő Zsiga, a Hungarian National, comes from the private sector. From 2001 to 2006, he managed an international advertising agency as deputy director. He holds a BA from the Budapest Business College and holds an MA in Economics from the University of Pecs. As a young Roma activist, he was a student leader at Romaversitas, Hungary, and he was one of the founders of one of the first Hungarian associations for young Roma, the Bronz Klub.

Beata Olahova
Manager of Grants Program



Beata Olahova is a Roma from the Slovak Republic. She holds a BS/BA honors degree in Business Management. She is currently a graduate student of MBA at CEU's Business School. Beata is a trainer in human rights and a devoted human rights activist. As a project coordinator of the League of Human Rights Advocates, she specialized in advocacy for the rights of Romani people in Slovakia and has experience with education programs in Slovakia. Beata is also a member of the Management Board of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).

Marius Taba
Monitoring and Evaluation Officer



Marius Taba is a Roma from Romania. He graduated with an MA in Public Administration, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest. Currently he is a PhD student at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest. Marius Taba has been very active in civil society in Romania. He has worked for more than five years for Romani CRISS-Roma Center for Social Intervention and Studies, where he was implementing projects dealing with education and public awareness campaigns. Marius Taba is founder and Board member of the Romanian Students Organization from Hungary.

Valéria Bodoczky
Administrative Assistant (until November 2007)



Valéria Bodoczky holds an MA degree in Foreign Language Education from Hungary. During 2002-2004, she was working at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Geneva as an international civil servant. In 2005, she worked as claims process advisor at the Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC) in London. She joined the REF team in October 2006 as an administrative assistant and worked for REF until November 2007.

Bernadett Varga
Administrative Assistant (since December 2007)



*B*ernadett Varga is a Hungarian Roma who started her NGO career at the Kalyi Jag Roma Association. She worked for the Roma Civil Rights Foundation and also participated in the internship program of the European Parliament at the office of MEP Viktória Mohácsi.

Erzsebet Bader
Communication Assistant



*E*rzsebet Bader is a Hungarian Roma, currently pursuing BA in English studies. She started off as international coordinator for the Roma Press Center in Budapest, 2003-2005. Erzsebet participated as researcher in one ERRC projects. In 2007, she was press coordinator of the Chachipe Roma Photo Contest organized by the OSA and OSI, Hungary.

Anasztázia Nagy
Intern



*A*nasztázia Nagy is a Roma from Hungary. She studied at the Corvinus University in Budapest and holds a BA in Public Administration. She took part in the Central European University – Roma Access Program and specialized in human rights. She was an intern in the Office of Livia Jaróka of the European Parliament and in the European Roma Rights Center. She is an applicant to the Public Policy Department of CEU for a master's degree.

Shemsi Shainov
Country Facilitator – Macedonia (until December 2007)
Senior Program Officer (since January 2008)



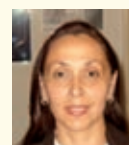
*S*hemsi Shainov is a Roma from Macedonia and holds a BA in Economics. Before joining the REF, he worked as a freelance consultant, mainly on small and medium-scale enterprise development, training programs, land tenure issues, and environmental protection projects. As of 2001, he was National Program Officer of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation within the Swiss Embassy in Macedonia. For more than three-and-a-half years he had various assignments, working in the Czech Republic, and occasionally in Poland, for The Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum, a UK charity, in the development of Romany Youth Entrepreneurship Programme. In 1995, the Government of North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany appointed him as a local partner consultant for the project on Economic Reintegration of Rejected Asylum Seekers, and one year later he was appointed as Director of Department Entrepreneurship Development. He has worked for three years as a journalist for the Macedonian Television Corporation. Since December 2007, Mr. Shainov joined the Budapest REF Office as a Senior Program Officer.

Florin Nasture
Country Facilitator – Romania



Florin Nasture is a Romanian Roma. He graduated from the faculty of Theology and Philology, Bucharest University, and has an MA in strategic management and social development. Since 1997, he has been actively involved with Roma civil society, working as a program coordinator for Romani CRISS and later as a country coordinator for the Pakiv European Roma Fund. He managed programs dealing with education, culture, and income-generating activities. He has extended training and practice in community development.

Natasha Kočić-Rakocević
Country Facilitator – Serbia



Natasha Kočić Rakocević is a Roma with Serbian citizenship. Since 1999, she has been actively involved with Roma Civil Society, working as a program manager for the Roma Children's Centre. She managed numerous programs dealing with education, health, civil participation, and gender issues. Natasha took part in the Serbian Roma rights movement. As a Roma National Consultant engaged by UNICEF, she participated in development of a Sub-regional Study on Exclusion of Roma in South-East European Countries, with a particular focus on Roma children and women. She has inclusive training in project and financial management, project development, monitoring, fundraising, and strategy planning.

Toni Tashev
Country Facilitator – Bulgaria



Toni Tashev, a Roma from Bulgaria, holds an MA in Law from Sofia University, Bulgaria, and a diploma for Professional Qualification in Political Management from the Balkans School of Politics, Bulgaria. He also completed an International program in NGO Management, Advocacy, and Public Campaign Facilitation at the International Peoples College in Helzingor, Denmark. He was an International Advocacy and Legal Adviser and later Community and Litigation Development Officer at the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) in Budapest. He was also an external lecturer in Human Rights and Conflict Resolution at the National Police Academy, Bulgaria, and the Legal Director and later Executive Director of the Sofia-based Roma rights advocacy organization Human Rights Project (HRP), which initiated and led in 1998 the elaboration of the Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society – the basic policy document on Roma issues in Bulgaria.

Lydia Bariova
Country Facilitator – Slovakia



Lydia Bariova is a Slovakian Roma. She graduated from the Social Faculty of Constantine Philosopher University and has Magister degree in social work. Since 2003, she has been actively involved with Roma Civil Society, working as a programme manager for Slovakia Family Planning Association. She has managed numerous projects dealing with young Romani leadership, combating socio – economic exclusion at the grassroots level, building strategic partnerships among local Roma and authorities and fostered national and international networking to promote shared learning, strategic thinking and join actions, including gender issues. She has had one year of training in leadership, fundraising, project development, strategy planning, and program monitoring evaluation system through PAKIV European Roma Fund.

SUMMARY OF PROJECTS APPROVED IN 2007

No. & Date of Approval	Country or Territory & Project	Amount	Implementing Agency (IES)	Basic Activities
BU 056 14/07/07	Bulgaria Educational Desegregation of Roma Children in Pazardjik	EUR 110,911	Napredak Foundation for Multiethnic Cooperation – Pazardjik	Initiating a process of educational desegregation in Pazardjik through enrolment of Roma children from segregated schools into mainstream schools. Providing support to 150 Roma children who would like to study in an integrated environment. Involving local authorities in the implementation in practice of the 2004 Strategy of the Ministry of Education and Science for the educational integration of Roma children. Advocating the development of regional policies to balance the ethnic diversity of the student body in all schools in Pazardjik. Motivating parents to send their children to integrated schools.
BU 069 15/04/07	Bulgaria Roma High Education Support Initiative (RHESI)	EUR 219,800	Student Society for Development of Interethnic Dialogue (SSDID), a Roma students’ organization, and Studii Romani, a minority studies society	Establishing a model for promotion of Roma participation in higher education that can be replicated at the policy level. Activities include: preparing Roma specialists; increasing the qualifications and specializations of Roma students; undertaking research of Roma history, language, and culture; establishing a database of young Roma, to create a career center; undertaking advocacy and policy development actions; preparing Roma students for entrance exams; developing a Roma Studies Center of Excellence; and setting up a Qualification Fund to support organization of additional courses, practical sessions, apprenticeships, language courses, etc. for Roma students.

BU 071 15/05/07	Bulgaria Vidin Desegregation and Advocacy	EUR 90,500	The Drom Organisation, an NGO	Ensuring access to integrated education for 750 Roma children from the all-Roma neighborhood in Vidin. Engaging in advocacy at the local and national levels, in an effort to motivate authorities to undertake school desegregation actions. Working with Roma NGOs in other parts of the country, to share experiences with them and to support their efforts to advocate for school desegregation in other municipalities.
BU 073 15/05/07	Bulgaria Desegregation in Sliven	EUR 78,338	Roma Youth Organization (RYO)	Ensuring access to integrated education for 400 Roma children from the all-Roma neighborhood in Sliven. As a result of the RYO's project activities and lobbying this year, the Sliven Municipality adopted a plan for school integration.
BU 075 15/05/07	Bulgaria Equal Access of Roma Children to All Schools in Berkovitz	EUR 60,917	FRCD "Nangle - 2000"	Drafting "The Municipal Program for Integration of Roma Pupils" for the Berkovitz Municipal Council, through active collaboration with the Municipality of Berkovitz and the Regional Educational Inspectorate. Lobbying institutions at the local, regional and national level, to convince them of the need to desegregate Roma schools and to multiply good practices in desegregation in Bulgaria. The project will include activities targeted at supporting the educational process in schools receiving Roma students, such as: organizing extracurricular activities; encouraging attendance in extracurricular activities; providing extra classes for children who are falling behind; conducting consultancy and parental meetings with parents of Roma and non-Roma children; and supporting talented children.

BU 076 14/07/07	Bulgaria Desegregation project among segregated schools and Peyo Yavorov Ninth Elementary School	EUR 21,960	School board of parents of Peyo Yavorov Ninth Elementary School	Providing free access of Roma children to Peyo Yavorov Ninth Elementary School – especially into pre-primary and primary non-segregated classes. Investigating the status of students in the special education school, to make sure that Roma children without disabilities are not sent to this school. Enhancing motivation of Roma families for school education. Enhancing the qualifications of teachers in the Ninth Secondary school in the field of Roma integration. Creating a friendly school environment for every child.
BU 078 14/07/07	Bulgaria New Future for the Roma Children from the Town of Plovdiv	EUR 77,950	Roma – Plovdiv Foundation for Regional Development	Supporting the continuation of the desegregation process in Bulgaria through desegregated education for 220 children. Increasing knowledge and parents' motivation to promote desegregation. Increasing teachers' and supervisors' skills in addressing desegregation. Increasing the capacity of the relevant institutions and motivating their representatives for effective participation in the process of integration.
BU 081 14/07/07	Bulgaria Free Access of Roma Children to All Schools in the Town of Pleven	EUR 82,908	Amala – R Foundation – Pleven	Supporting the continuation of the desegregation process in Bulgaria by providing quality education for 230 Roma children and students in Pleven. Increasing the level of attendance of Roma pupils in schools. Increasing the level of educational performance of young Roma in Pleven. Overcoming negative stereotypes and prejudices against Roma in school. Increasing the number of Roma children who continue on to the next educational level of secondary school.

BU 083 15/05/07	Bulgaria Education of Roma Children in the Bulgarian Schools	EUR 94,698	The Lozenetz Foundation	<p>Ensuring 300 Roma children from the all-Roma neighborhood in the town of Stara Zagora have access to integrated education in mainstream schools.</p> <p>Following project activities, the town adopted a municipal plan for educational integration of Roma living in Stara Zagora.</p> <p>At the national level, the project aims to initiate a working group on law reforms targeting desegregation of Roma education and to suggest changes in the Strategy for Educational Integration of School Children from Ethnic Minorities – including the national action plan that is part of that strategy.</p>
BU 084 15/05/07	Bulgaria New Future for the Roma Children from the Town of Montana	EUR 78,241	Sham – Montana Foundation Resource Center	<p>Improving access to quality education in local kindergartens and schools, using innovative alternative training methods and children's clubs that will help participants master the Bulgarian language, so they can make a good start in school and build permanent skills.</p> <p>Providing opportunities for achievement of qualitative education of Roma children, so that they will become competitive on the labor market. Improving the motivation of Roma children and their parents to strive for quality education. Suggesting changes in the Strategy for Educational Integration of Schoolchildren from Ethnic Minorities – including the national action plan that is part of that strategy. Participating in a working group for preparation of a law for desegregation of Roma education.</p>

BU 085 14/07/07	Bulgaria Desegregation Project in Faculteta District in Sofia	EUR 97,770	Romani baht Foundation	<p>Continuing the desegregation process in Bulgaria by preparing 70 children, aged 6, for regular school in summer classes. Increasing the number of children covered by the project during the school year to a total of about 300 children in grades one through six. Working to reduce the number of dropouts and of pupils repeating a grade. Increasing the motivation of parents and children to seek education. Increasing the commitment of local and state authorities to the education of Roma children.</p> <p>In addition, the project works toward enhancing socialization and integration of the children by: addressing relations between children from the majority and the minority; addressing teacher–pupil relations; working to ensure there are no racist or discriminatory acts in school.</p>
BU 094 12/10/2007	Bulgaria Desegregation of Roma Education in Bulgaria	EUR 250,000 12 months	Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities, at the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science	<p>Implementing the government policy of school desegregation through the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science's Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities, which supports projects of nongovernmental organizations and state institutions aimed at desegregation of Roma education.</p> <p>The project's objective is to scale up the process of school desegregation in Bulgaria by providing support through grants to educational institutions, local authorities and non-governmental organizations for the integration of Roma children in mainstream schools.</p>

BU 095 12/10/2007	Bulgaria Integration through adult education	EUR 30,000 12 months	Stolipinovo Coalition of Civil Organizations, Plovdiv	<p>Contributing to effective integration of Roma adults into Bulgarian society by increasing their education and eradicating illiteracy and by increasing their engagement in the desegregation processes and the education of their children.</p> <p>The project seeks to achieve these results through education according to the Second Chance education system and the program for liquidation of illiteracy of people with secondary illiteracy. The project is a continuation of a satisfactory first phase that was supported by the REF.</p>
CR 006 15/05/07	Croatia Research on the position of Roma women in Croatia, regarding their access to fundamental rights, with emphasis on access to education	EUR 34,440	The Better Future Roma Women's Association, in cooperation with these Croatian Government institutions: the Office for National Minorities; the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports; the Gender Equality Office; and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare	<p>Influencing government policies on Roma integration by supporting the voice of Roma women, the most marginalized group in Croatian society.</p> <p>The project will produce a research paper on the preconditions for better educational status of Roma Women in Croatia and a list of policy recommendations, both of which will be shared with the Office for National Minorities, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, and the Gender Equality Office. The project is expected to strengthen a countrywide network of initiatives promoting access of Roma women to education and other rights and services.</p>

HU 015 20/02/07	Hungary Seminar on cooperation between local self-governments and local Roma minority self-governments in local educational reform, focusing on desegregation	EUR 24,000	Amalipe Association	<p>Raising awareness in 21 localities on the opportunities provided by new legislation that creates a system of lotteries to access good schools in those localities. This work will involve: meetings with representatives of local government, schools and parents of Roma children; a conference on good practices regarding desegregation and the use of lottery system; monitoring of the implementation of the existing legal provisions in the 21 localities.</p>
HU 017 20/02/07	Hungary The Schools Belong to Everyone	EUR 25,985	Borsod County Organization of the Roma Civil Rights Movement	<p>Increasing the number of disadvantaged children in elite schools by application of the lottery system, which is a new Hungarian government policy aimed at ensuring more equal access to quality education.</p> <p>The project, which targets 600 Roma children in Borsod County, involves: developing a parents' guide on how to benefit from the lottery system; surveying the demand for quality education (by identifying parents of disadvantaged children and monitoring intention of participation); sensitizing schools and local governments to the relevant issues; and assisting those willing to participate in the lottery during the enrolment process.</p>

HU 018 15/05/07	Hungary School for multiply challenged low social-status children	EUR 16,200	Multi purpose Association for Quality of Life	<p>Supporting a municipality's desegregation plan through an additional educational program.</p> <p>The project will provide assistance to 32 Roma students in an after-school program that is designed to help children successfully complete primary school and be well-prepared to continue their studies in standard secondary schools. The association implementing the project took part in designing the local government's desegregation plan, and the project has local government support. It could become a model for implementation of a desegregation program nationwide.</p>
HU0 19 14/07/07	Hungary Student Mentoring Program in support of the Szeged desegregation measures	EUR 32,600	Social Science Research Association in the South-Alfold region	<p>Helping integrate 130 Roma children from the recently closed ghetto school into new classes.</p> <p>This was achieved through the volunteer work of pre-service teacher trainees, acting as student-mentors in the 2007/8 academic year. Student-mentors contributed to easing the reception of the new pupils through such means as providing an essential link to Roma parents by regularly meeting with them and keeping them informed.</p>
HU 021 -2 12/10/2007 (18/12/2007 grant amendment)	Hungary Romaversitas phase II	EUR 152,000 12 months	Romaversitas Foundation	<p>Continuing a successful initiative that has been running in Hungary since 1998 by working to: create equal opportunities for young Roma to succeed in higher education; help develop a Roma middle class; motivate Roma students to embrace their Roma identity; increase the potential of Roma students among mainstream students; prepare some Roma students for Ph.D. programs; increase the capacity of Roma students to fully meet the requirements for enrolment in schools and become skilled professionals.</p>

MAC 028 12/10/2007	Macedonia Romaversitas Macedonia II	EUR 97,000 28 months	Romaversitas – Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia/FOSIM	<p>Increasing the retention rate, capacities, academic achievements and personal skills of Roma university students. This will be achieved by: increasing the retention rate of Roma students participating in the personal tutoring scheme (PTS); increasing personal capacities, skills, self-esteem, and motivation of students benefiting from the educational services, training programs, and courses offered.</p> <p>This is a continuation of the Romaversitas project implemented by FOSI-Macedonia since 2001. The project is meant to synthesize OSI programming intended to support Roma university students in Macedonia. The project will offer services for all Roma students, not only for the recipients of the Romaversitas stipends program.</p>
MAC 029 14/07/07	Macedonia Campaign For Roma Education (Enrolment and continuity in the education process)	EUR 155,610	National Roma Centrum (NRC), in cooperation with 10 NGO partner organizations	<p>Enrolling 3,000-4,000 Roma children in the compulsory first grade of primary education. Training 15 Roma mediators, who will help bridge the gap between the project stakeholders – the community, schools, and the municipality. Creating a database of information regarding Roma participation in elementary education. Engaging primary schools in facilitating enrolment of Roma children in Kumanovo, Prilep, Skopje, Kavadarci, Bitola, Tetovo, Kriva Palanka, Kocani, Vinica, Veles and Stip. Ensuring support of national and municipal authorities in the process. Applying the desegregation approach piloted in Kumanovo.</p> <p>The project is a scaling up of the model that has been developed by the implementer over the last two years.</p>

MD 001 20/02/07	Moldova Needs assessment on the situation of Roma in the field of education	EUR 65,790	Ograda Noastra, an NGO	Supporting a needs assessment on Roma education in 38 locations populated by Roma. Supporting the creation and development of a working network consisting of nine Roma NGO representatives, from the Coalition for Roma Education, to start a dialogue with the Ministry of Education and Youth and other relevant stakeholders on improving Education of Roma from Moldova. Helping NGOs in the network to develop capacity to prepare good education projects. Supporting an awareness campaign among Roma and non-Roma about the importance of inclusion of Roma children in the education system.
MN 004 18/12//07	Montenegro Durable Solutions: Integrating Roma children who are displaced persons into mainstream education	EUR 100,000 18 months	Danish Red Cross	Supporting enrolment of Roma children who are displaced persons into primary schools from Podgorica's Konik area. The project has three main components: 1. Preparing Roma children, within and outside of the local displaced persons camp, for enrolment into the mainstream school system through mentoring classes for 4-to-6-year-olds; and supporting enrolment of these children in the public school system's pre-school courses. 2. Offering support with homework and other challenges children meet in school for students in grades 1-4. 3. Raising awareness about the problems faced by Roma and Roma displaced persons and advocating in the government for their right to integrated education.
RO 031 19/07/2007	Romania Together we will succeed	EUR 72,300 2 years	Tudor Foundation	Increasing participation of Roma children in schools and increasing the quality of their education by: improving school achievements and results; decreasing the level of school abandonment; increasing the number of Roma children attending kindergarten; increasing the number of Roma in high schools and faculties; and contributing to decreasing the educational differences between Roma and non-Roma children in Romania.

RO 033 20/02/07	Romania Support for Roma high school students in Romania	EUR 908,300	Resource Center for Roma Communities	Supporting excellence in education of Roma students and improving the retention and achievement rate in upper secondary education of the targeted Roma students. Piloting a new method for provision of scholarships combined with tutorial help and other targeted support. Using positive discrimination effectively with regards to the secondary education policy that has been recently introduced by the government. Providing 275 Roma students with financial support, tutoring and individualized mentoring for the period 2007-2011. Working to increase the number of Roma students who seek further education, in high school and beyond the compulsory education level.
SER 020/1, 020/2, 020/3, 020/4, 020/5, 020/6, 020/7, 020/8, 020/9,13 18/12//07²²	Serbia Expanding access to preschool education	EUR 134,978 7 months	Mali princ childrens' center, Association for Roma Education, Roma Students Association, Roma Resource Centre, Educational Roma Centre, Nasa radost Preschool institution, Stablo and Romanipen, Roma Centre for Democracy, Roma women of Vojvodina, Sloga and PSI "Poletarac"	<p>Ensuring better preparation of Roma children for mainstream primary education through enrolment and support for sustained participation in the preschool preparatory program.</p> <p>Outcomes of the project will include: increased enrolment and full participation of Roma children in Serbia's compulsory preschool program; full enrolment of preschool program participants in mainstream education; and the creation of a database of Roma children reaching preschool and school enrolment age during 2008/9 in selected locations.</p>

²² SER 020 has been divided into 19 smaller projects in 2007.

SER 024 20/02/07	Serbia Establishing systemic solutions for Roma history, traditions, and culture in the educational institutions	EUR 55,054	Roma Information centre/RIC, Kragujevac	Introducing Roma culture and tradition in mainstream curricula and teacher training, and supporting the development of a positive attitude for Roma integration in the educational institutions, through advocacy and dialogue. Opening the mainstream curriculum for introducing Roma history, tradition, and cultural values in the educational system in Serbia. Getting accreditation for the “Roma through time” teacher training program, which covers Roma history, traditions, and culture. Lobbying at the local municipality in Kragujevac to officially adopt in the city’s budget a line for financing the implementation of the “Roma through time” program in educational institutions.
SER 031 14/07/07	Serbia Roma children IDPs/returnees: From language barriers to social capital	EUR 67,920	Forum of Roma IDP	Creating the models for teaching Serbian as second language to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees. Preparing a flexible model for an enriched introduction of Serbian as a second language throughout the regions where IDPs and returnees are located. Upgrading procedures and legislation for nostrification of school records and diplomas, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. Creating a database of the number of Roma returnee/IDP children and Roma children who are out of school due to a language barrier.
SER 032 14/07/07	Serbia Inclusion of Roma pupils in secondary schools in Vojvodina	EUR 850,000	Provincial Department of Education and Culture, Council for Roma Integration in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, and Roma Students Association	Expanding access to secondary education for Roma students in Vojvodina—so that there is an increase in the number of Roma who enroll in and finish secondary schools, especially four-year programs — and improving these students’ achievement rate in secondary education. This will be done by: providing financial and mentorship support to Roma students attending secondary schools in the territory of Vojvodina; motivating and assisting secondary school students to continue on to tertiary education; and motivating primary school students and their parents to enroll in secondary schools.

SER 033 14/07/07	Serbia Creating conditions for expanding of access and success of Roma children in secondary education	EUR56,890	Roma Education Center Nis (REC)	Researching and creating a database that contains information on: the number of Roma pupils in Nis and Belgrade, their attendance rate in secondary school in different grades, their drop out rate, their achievements, their eligibility for further education, and their professional development. Supporting approximately 150 Roma students through additional and preparation classes – covering Serbian language and mathematics and provided by teachers and NGO educators who will also act as mentors/supervisors for the students – in 15 schools and two NGOs. Raising motivation for education and raising the trust of the Roma community in educational institutions and in the suitability of secondary education, through workshops for parents.
SK 016 20/02/07	Slovakia Roma community against segregation in schools	EUR 80,850	Roma Civil Alternative Initiative	Providing extended public education, communication, and advocacy, at the local community level, to change the attitude of members of the Roma community about segregated schools and to ensure that they understand the serious problems of the low quality of education in special schools.
SK 018 14/07/07	Slovakia Direct work with Roma communities on: What are the special schools?	EUR 119,000	County Association of Romany Initiatives	Involving Roma parents in reducing segregation of Roma children in special schools. Preventing mistaken classification of Roma children sent to special schools, and working with Roma communities to motivate them to enroll their children into standard schools. Establishing a Roma NGO network to promote project objectives, including giving training to 25 Roma NGO leaders. Assisting Roma families during enrolment of children to pre-schools and to standard primary schools.

SK 019 12/10/2007	Slovakia After school model in Rimavska Sec for the educational success of Roma children	EUR 45,183 10 months	Ternipe – For Slovak & Hungarian Roma	Providing after-school support to 60 disadvantaged Roma children – from Rimavska Sec, Cakó Lénártfalva, Hanva, Orávka, Botovó, Csíz, and Velkenye counties – in order to decrease grade repetition, transfer to special schools, and early drop out of Roma children from elementary schools.
SK 020 10/12/2007	Slovakia Integration of Roma children from special schools and classes to mainstream schools and classes in Trnava region – phase II	EUR 155,060 14 months	League of Human Rights Advocates	<p>Continuing the second phase of a successful project to help Roma children from two disadvantaged communities in the Trnava region move out of special classes and into mainstream classes.</p> <p>The project's objectives are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advocate for integration of Roma children from special schools and classes into the regular school system in Slovakia. 2. Continue to assist Roma children to have access to quality education in the mainstream schools and classes. 3. Provide Roma children with after-school support and Roma teachers' assistants and work closely with Roma parents. 4. Contribute in encouraging and pressuring the government to abolish legislation that encourages segregated schools. 5. Contribute in promoting intercultural interaction and understanding between Roma and non-Roma children and their parents in the mainstream schools.

ROMA EDUCATION FUND – REIMBURSABLE GRANTS IN 2007

No. & Date of Approval	Country or Territory & Project	Amount	Implementing Agency (IES)	Basic Activities
RF CZ 001 04/2007	Czech Republic Karlovy Vary	EUR 18,785	Roma Civil Association – Karlovy Vary	Providing mentoring and assistance to 45 Roma children, to help them enroll in secondary school, to motivate them to finish their studies, and to help them get a job after completion of their studies.
RF HU 008 04/2007	Hungary Reintegration of Roma women in the field of employment	EUR 20,000	Hungarian Roma Parliament	Providing professional training and an educational background for Roma women, in order to facilitate their employability on the work market. Giving these women the opportunity to extend their skills or acquire additional skills, which they could not receive during their studies. Ensuring practice or a work place for the participants.
RF HU 009 06/2007	Hungary "Khe" Tanoda program	EUR 10,000	Khetanipe for the Roma Unity Association	Supporting 25 disadvantaged pupils, aged 10-14, by allowing them to take part in extracurricular activities with the assistance of six teacher-mentors. This includes: individual and group activities, in order to improve the skills of pupils; individual training for grade repeaters; summer camps and computer training during the summer; and moderation between the children, schools and parents, accomplished through regular meetings.
RF HU 010 06/2007	Hungary Integration network	EUR 13,600	Borsod County Organization of the Roma Civil Rights Movement	Training 30 professionals and volunteers working in the social welfare sphere in EU knowledge, communicational, vocational and entrepreneurial skills. Organizing a conference tour to share experiences with local social welfare institutions, local authorities and local minority self-governments. Publishing professional newsletters with training materials. Establishing a regional network with the involvement of local organizations, in order to mediate problems and work out programs facilitating the integration of the Roma community.

RF HU 011 06/2007	Hungary Pro- ma Tanoda	EUR 10,000	Pro-Ma Future Association	Helping multiply disadvantaged 12-15-year-old Roma students in Budapest to achieve more in school, integrate into mainstream society, and transition to secondary education.
RF HU 012 08/2007	Hungary Tanoda	EUR 10,000	BHIM RAO Association	Supporting the integration of Roma children into mainstream education through extracurricular activities – focusing mainly on primary school students but also supporting secondary school students. Offering lessons and activities for students in the pre-service teacher program at Miskolc University to help improve future teachers' attitudes toward Roma.
RF HU 014 07/2007	Hungary S.Ü.N.I Tanoda" project	EUR 12,000	Sani Luludyi Közhazsnú Érdekvédelmi Egyesület	Increasing the educational indicators of a local Roma community by offering lessons in Roma folklore and culture to disadvantaged primary and secondary school students, most of whom are Roma.
RF HU 015 08/2007	Hungary Tanoda	EUR 10,000	Amrita Association	Increasing the educational success of Roma students in order to combat the high level of drop outs from secondary education and increase the number of Roma students attending tertiary education.
RF HU 016 10/2007	Hungary Vadrozsa -Tanoda	EUR 10,000	National Association of Former Children in State Care	Increasing the educational success of Roma students under state care in order to: 1. compensate for their multiple disadvantages; 2. combat the high drop-out rate; 3. increase the number of Roma students attending secondary schools; 4. ensure equal opportunities in education and employment for disadvantaged students.