



ROMA  
VERSITAS  
FOUNDATION

2022

# ANNUAL REPORT

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## GREETINGS

Dear supporters, students and friends!

2022 has been an exciting and challenging year, but I am certain, many of us will remember it more for its negative aspects. War in Ukraine, climate catastrophe, the energy crisis – just a few words that will be remembered decades from now. In this year of hardship, the aim of Romaversitas has become even more relevant: to grant support to young Roma people who show potential to take action in different fields and respond to these threats that affect all of us, better than we have done as Roma intellectuals in the past decades.



From January 2022, I took over the position of Director from Dr. Henriett Dinók after her 5 years of work, and I started coordinating the day-to-day running of Romaversitas. Heni has strengthened the organization during the year as Chair of the Board. In this report you can read about the details of our work in 2022 and our plans for the future.

Before presenting what happened this year, I would like to share some personal reflections. I've been working at Romaversitas for over a year now, and in that time I've tried to spend as much time with our students as possible. From these conversations, it is clear to me that it is much harder for a young Roma person to get a degree today than it was for me more than 10 years ago: there are fewer state-funded opportunities, scholarships available, and this is compounded by a housing and livelihoods crisis and the collapse of the state education system right in front of our eyes. The mental health difficulties facing young people are also multiplying: in addition to the burdens of being a minority and living in poverty, climate change, pandemics of mental and psychosomatic illness, the lingering effects of COVID-19 are all daily threats.

In light of these, I am proud that we have supported more than 50 students this year, many of whom have been offered paid internships, and we have seen a threefold over-enrolment in our high school programme, with 21 students starting in September 2022. Through our networking programme, we also helped Ukrainian Roma refugees: our NGO partners have involved more than 90 children in informal and inclusion programmes. And most importantly, we have created a safety net and community for Roma students and NGO activists that is invaluable.

Thank you for following and supporting our work and we hope to see you again in 2023!

With friendship,  
Bogi Fedorkó and all the colleagues of Romaversitas

## THE TEAM



**BOGI FEDORKÓ**  
Managing Director



**ILDIKÓ PASKÓ**  
Director of Education



**MÁRIA JAKAB**  
Financial Coordinator



**ZSOLT HORVÁTH**  
Communications  
Manager



**LILLA EREDICS**  
Project Coordinator



**BETTINA POCSAI**  
Office Manager



**FANNI TRENDL**  
Programme Manager



**GYÖNGYI KÖTELES**  
Mentor and Coach



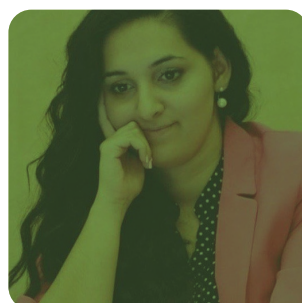
**TÍMEA SÓFALVI**  
Mentor and coach



**KATA TÖRLEY**  
Education Counsellor



**CSABA OLÁH**  
Project Coordinator

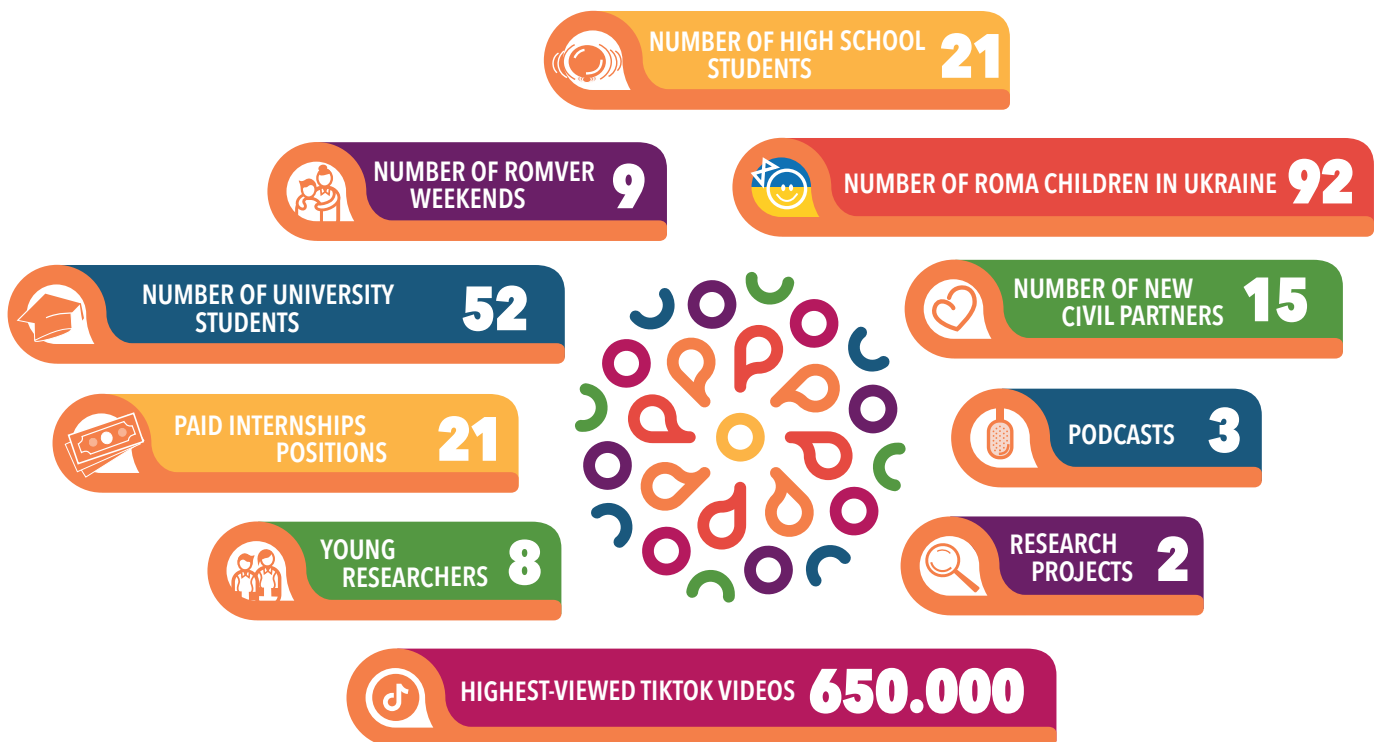


**MELINDA VAJDA**  
Project Coordinator



**DÁNIEL SZÓCSI**  
Intern

## 2022 IN NUMBERS



## UNIVERSITY STUDENT PROGRAMME

The vision of our organization is a strong Roma intellectual base that can shape the narrative about Roma communities. For more than 20 years, we have been supporting Roma students to become successful in their professions, whether they want to become doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers or NGO activists or as a civil society activist.

For decades, we have focused on helping our students to finance their studies, achieve academic success and learn languages. But we believe that, for a number of reasons, we need to focus on other areas too. We find that many Roma students are finding casual work outside their profession to support themselves and even their families during their university years. So they have little time for their studies and for gaining relevant work experience in their profession, which will facilitate their employment after graduation.

In response to these trends, in recent years we have launched internship programmes, where university students can gain work experience related to their degree and therefore earn a decent salary. Several companies and institutions have partnered with us: a total of 8 students have done an internship at AMC, Mazars, Inflexion, OSA Archive and HelloParks in the year of 2022. In addition to the partnership with companies, we have also launched a pilot, larger-scale programme with the General Assembly of Budapest: in September 2022, 13 trainees were placed in the Assembly and its institutions in a variety of fields. The students were trained in a personalised way, they received personalised mentoring and skills development during their traineeships, as well as labour market training from our partner Deloitte.

The initial experience of the now expanded programme is promising: students feel valued as employees, are given professional tasks, while host companies and institutions are positive about the presence of these young people and clearly support the continuation of the programme.

**In addition to the traineeship programme, during the year we also involved other students in our leadership training programme series, who worked and reflected on how to change the discourse on Roma based stereotypes created by non-Roma people at the Romaversitas Sundays. In a total of nine Romaversitas Sundays, 52 young people took part in courses on citizenship, Roma representation, Roma activism and the culture of debate. During the year, 16 students were also supported by the Roma Education Fund, to successfully complete their studies.**



## Fanni Iváncsik – AMC intern

“I joined the Romver community back in 2018, however, I had a year’s absence from the life of the organisation and I felt that the Leadership Development Programme was an amazing opportunity to get to know myself even better, as well as to strengthen the skills that make a good leader. The team is great and it’s good to be part of a community where I can be myself and where I know I’m loved. I think there is a big advantage of the student programme, that not only do we talk about what it’s really like to be a leader, but the foundation gives us the opportunity to experience it in practice.”



News portal article translation (headline)  
*“I HAVE REGISTERED ROMA DANCING AS A HOBBY, SO THAT I DON’T ACCIDENTALLY END UP IN A PLACE WHERE I AM NOT WELCOMED.”*

Excerpt from the continuation of the article

*“Roma young people who have graduated from university or are still in university find it much easier to integrate into the for-profit sector than into the public sector; at least in our experience” – Boglárka Fedorkó Fedorkó, of the Romaversitas Foundation for Roma Youth in Higher Education, founded in 1996, answers the question about Roma young people who are trying to find a job in the multinational world – “And that’s also because most of them are mainly in international jobs.”*

source: qubit.hu

## Dezdemóna Kovács – Trainee at Budapest Municipality

“Last year’s Romver programme was very good, in which I took part in. I loved the community, I feel that it gives me a lot of things as a person, like values. I am learning new ideas, it also gives me a connection to my emotions. I wanted to try myself in a practice- oriented training, where you don’t just go to a theoretical course, but also gain experience.”



## SECONDARY SCHOOL PROGRAMME

In addition to schools, other initiatives are available in Hungary to support disadvantaged primary school children, but free support programmes for young people of secondary school age are rare. This is confirmed by our 2021–22 survey of non-profit organisations involved in the education of Roma children and young people, carried out in cooperation with the Badur Foundation and Central European University.

However, ensuring that young people have access to the highest quality education and support to successfully complete their secondary education is crucial for their future. We launched our secondary school programme six years ago with the aim of helping more well-prepared Roma young people to start higher education. It's hard to get into university, but it's even harder to stay in and overcome the obstacles. Strong subject knowledge is a prerequisite, but so much more is needed - determination, planning, perseverance, stress tolerance, self-confidence - in the complex programme of Romaversitas we support young people in these areas.

Romver Sunday is the heart and soul of the programme: it brings together high school and university students, Romver alumni and previous generations of the Roma movement. The group training sessions include self-awareness, learning methodology, long-term thinking and planning.

In addition to subject and language training, students also receive further learning advice, and weekly one-to-one mentoring to help them overcome learning difficulties.

This school year we are working with 22 young people who will become social workers, economists, doctors, teachers – the Roma intellectuals of the future.

Students from our secondary school programme on Romver Sundays:

“One thing I learned today at Romver Sunday is that courage means, when I’m afraid of something and I do it anyway.”

“This training today has helped me a lot with knowing what I’m really good at.”

“I have never had such an accepting team in my environment.”

“I really liked talking to the students over lunch. You could ask them about a lot of things, like what a dissertation is or how to take the subjects.”

“I would like to have more opportunities like this because it gives me peace of mind and knowledge.”



“I have never had such an accepting team in my environment.”



“This training today has helped me a lot with knowing what I’m really good at.”



## NETWORK PROGRAMME

At Romaversitas, we believe in the importance of solidarity and that it is worth listening to each other's work and achievements and working together. Small steps often result in big and profound changes. We work with a range of educational and Roma organisations to support Roma youth in building their communities, strengthen their identity and develop their skills from the very beginning.

In recent years, we have felt the need to focus more attention on networking due to unfavourable educational trends, including the increasing early school leaving amongst Roma students. Therefore, in 2022, we conducted a research in cooperation with the Badur Foundation, Absolute Giving Nonprofit Kft. and the Romani Studies programme of the Central European University, in which two of our students, Irén Godó and Katalin Godó, participated, to collect and analyse the largest possible number of education-related non-profit initiatives that support Roma students and young people in Hungary and work to reduce their disadvantages.

The research had not even been completed when the Russian war against Ukraine made us feel the need to start active coalition building. Therefore, in June 2022, we convened a meeting of those helping Roma refugee families to jointly assess the situation and identify points of intervention. Subsequently, we supported a total of 6 partnership projects through an open call for applications to support civil coalitions to promote the inclusion of Roma refugee children, for a total of 15 million HUF. And in the autumn, we organised meetings for people working in the field to facilitate the exchange of information and experiences.

During the summer, we also involved our (former) students in a community action research project to visit Roma refugees living in Hungary, on the one hand to share information about their status, schooling and available support, and on the other hand to assess the social situation of Roma families in both Ukraine and Hungary. In two months, six of our young researchers visited more than 160 families in the country, providing a unique insight into the difficulties faced by Roma refugees and the educational situation of their children.

The results of the study were presented live, which was also attended by the Romaversitas crew, and students involved in the research (Jenifer Balogh, Dániel Szócsi, Lilla Eredics, Virág Ádám and Orbán Oláh) also spoke at the event. Our guests were also our civil society partners, who are working on the issue of school admission successes and difficulties with enrolment. The event attracted huge media coverage.



The image is a screenshot of a news article from Jelen. On the left, there is a text excerpt in blue italics: "Excerpt from the article While the government claims that the country has done a great job in accepting refugees from Ukraine, a recent survey shows that Roma families from Transcarpathia are being severely discriminated against. A significant proportion of children are not in school and women are effectively unable to find work." Below the excerpt is the source "source: jelen.media". On the right, there is a photograph of a woman standing at a podium in a room, addressing an audience. A screen behind her displays the text "A KÁRPÁTALJAI ROMA CSALÁDOK HEVETTS" and the Romaversitas logo. Below the photo is a caption in Hungarian: "Bár a kormány azzal hangozik, hogy a magyar állam nagyszerűen teljesített az Ukrajnából érkező menekültek befogadásában, egy most készült felmérés szerint a Kárpátaljáról származó roma családokat súlyosan diszkriminálják. A gyerekek jelentős része nem jár iskolába, a nők lényegében képtelenek elhelyezkedni."

!!!444!!!

## Sok munkába telik, mire a kárpátaljai menekült gyerekek eljutnak a magyar iskolába

Szövevesztés  
 OKTATÁS · 2022 november 4., 10:21 · 5

- A bizonytalanságtól való félelem és az ismeretlen bürokrácia akadályozza a Kárpátaljáról menekült roma szülőket, hogy iskolába írassák a gyerekeiket.
- Ha sikerül, akkor jön a neheze: hiányzó fejlesztőpedagógus, bántalmazó osztálytársak.
- Közben a szülőknek valahogy ki kellene törniük a tömegszállásról, munkát viszont nem egyszerű találni. Különösen a nők szenvednek ettől.
- A Romaversitas megvizsgálta, mi történik azokkal az ukrainai menekültekkel, akik a legnehezebb sorsból érkeztek.

FRISS

Szrijártó: Világszerte köztudott a magyar felsőoktatás színvonalának javulása

News portal article translation

*It takes a lot of work to get Transcarpathian refugee children into Hungarian schools*

*Fear of uncertainty and unfamiliar bureaucracy prevents Roma refugee parents from Transcarpathia from enrolling their children in school.*

*If they succeed then comes the hardship of missing developmental teachers and bullying classmates.*

*In the meantime, parents would have to find a way to break out of the crowded shelters and find work, which is not easy to find, especially for women.*

*Romaversitas has looked at what happens to refugees from Ukraine who come from the hardest of the lot.*

source: 444.hu

News portal article translation

### *Sunshine instead of signatures*

*Last week, the Romaversitas Foundation, which fights against the educational underachievement of Roma youth, presented the results of three months of research with young Roma students. The extensive research explored the landscape of Roma integration into education in Transcarpathia, with students visiting refugee shelters, campsites and apartments offered to Roma refugees, and conducting more than 160 interviews with Roma refugees about the circumstances of their arrival and current difficulties.*

*A significant number of Roma people in Transcarpathia interviewed by Romaversitas had previously lived in rather difficult living conditions. Almost half of them had no running water, 38% had no electricity for some reason, and although there is insufficient data on this, RomaVersitas assumes that a large proportion of them came from the Roma camps, i.e. from segregated and sometimes almost completely fenced-off areas on the outskirts of towns and villages.*

source: atlatszo.hu

TÁMOGATOM

### Aláírás helyett napocska

A roma fiatalok oktatási lemaradása ellen küzdő Romaversitas alapítvány a múlt héten mutatta be fiatal roma egyetemisták segítségével végzett három hónapos [kutatásának](#) eredményét. A kiterjedt kutatás a kárpátaljai romák magyarországi oktatásba való integrációjának nehézségeit vizsgálta. Keretei között az egyetemisták menekültszállókát, kempingeket és a roma menekültek számára felajánlott lakásokat járták végig. Összesen több mint 160 interjú készítették a roma menekültekkel az ideérkezésük körülményeivel és a jelenlegi nehézségeikkel kapcsolatban.

A Romaversitas által megkérdezett kárpátaljai romák jelentős része meglehetősen nehéz életkörülmények között lakott korábban: közel felük lakóhelyén nem volt bevezetve a folyóvíz, 38%-uknál nem volt elektromos áram. Habár ezzel kapcsolatban nem áll rendelkezésükre elegendő adat, a Romaversitas azt feltételezi, hogy nagy részük az úgynevezett "cigánytáborokból", vagyis városok és falvak szélén található, olykor szinte teljesen elkerített szegregátumokból érkezett.

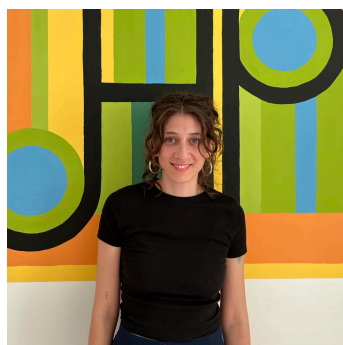
2023. január 27.  
 Mérésködtek ugyan decemberre a lakáspiaci árak, de az EU-n belül így is nálunk volt a legnagyobb a drágulás

2023. január 27.  
 Házon belül osztogatják a pénzt és a megbízásokat az EKf 2023 beruházásoknál

2023. január 26.  
 Idén február 26-ig lehet nevezni a Szegénységgről Méltósággal Sajtódíjra

2023. január 26.  
 Rammstein: Deutschland - német Realpolitik Brandtől Scholzig, és a beadott derek leopárdjai

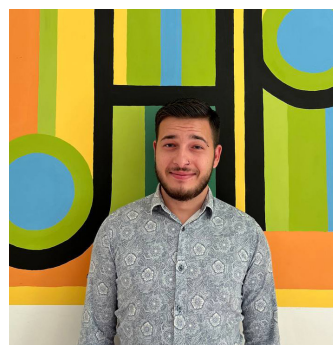
## NETWORK PROGRAMME – OUR RESEARCHERS



LILLA EREDICS



ERNŐ KADÉT



ORBÁN OLÁH



JENIFER BALOGH



ÁDÁM VIRÁG



DÁNIEL SZÓCSI

## OUR PLANS FOR 2023

Despite the difficulties, thanks to the perseverance and hard work of our staff, our Board of Trustees, our students and our professional partners, we have had a successful year: we will start 2023 with 13 colleagues. Last year we spent 128 million HUF on our organisational operations and programmes, a significant increase compared to 2021. A more detailed budget will be made public in April 2023, in line with Hungarian accounting laws.

We have also made great progress in the field of communication: in addition to our Facebook and Instagram presence, we have on TikTok and LinkedIn, and on Youtube we launched our podcast series Romaként, in which we talk to Roma intellectuals working and creating in different fields about their identity, their views on the world and their profession. In this spirit, we want to continue to build in 2023 the Roma community's own narrative. The importance of this cannot be overemphasised in a society where we rarely see Roma actors in the media. In April, organized by our university students, we will launch the first Roma History Month campaign, giving them the opportunity to help us shape Hungarian society's opinion on the Roma community and to get closer to Roma history - if formal education does not give them the opportunity to do so.

What are we planning in our programmes for secondary school and university students?

A scholarship programme in December 2022 with the Roma Education Foundation in Romania, to help young people who are studying to become teachers or are already active in the field, and we are running an internship and leadership training programme in the first semester. After the end of the school year, we would like to launch a new internship programme for young university students, learning from the experience and feedback of our students. We also want to put a strong emphasis on leadership skills and social opinion making. And we will strengthen our secondary school programme to as many Roma students as possible to help them get into university.

And our work to help Roma families who have fled from Ukraine is not over: this year we want to organise summer camps and workshops with NGO partners and our university students. Our priority is to disseminate good practices in this field to as many state and civil actors as possible, as we believe that their knowledge and application would improve the education not only of the refugee Roma children, but also of the Roma children born or raised in Hungary.

Unfortunately, it is not only Transcarpathian Roma children's education that is a burning problem in our country, so from September 2023 we would like to launch a networking programme focusing on drop-outs of Roma students in secondary schools, in which we can work with NGOs to combat this phenomenon.

We will continue to count on our allies in this effort. If you can, please support our work in the following ways:

- donations
- by spreading the word on Facebook, LinkedIn, TikTok or on Instagram

Thank you!



