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A Generation of Roma Specialists in the Medical Field Program

GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE

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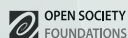


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ROMA
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ROMÂNIA



**A GENERATION OF ROMA SPECIALISTS IN THE MEDICAL
FIELD**

GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE

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Bucharest, 2013

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A Generation of Roma Specialists in the Medical Field Program Guide to Good Practice



Mircea Toma

President of ActiveWatch
Media Monitoring Agency

Engine of dreams

I was in Cluj-Napoca at a meeting to promote scholarships for potential candidates for our project supporting Roma students in the field of medicine.

One of the Roma grant-holders told us a story about what her grandmother said to her about school. “My dear, don’t go there - because there’s no point! Romanians are smarter than you.”

She didn’t listen - and disobedience was part of her successful journey, but the argument of her grandmother still exerts a powerful force on Roma communities. This lack of professional development of Roma children is a problem which our program proposes to tackle.

What answer can a Roma child give to this question: What do you want to be when you grow up?

If we want hope to exist, we need success stories to act as reference points. Do you know any Roma doctors? We could not find a single one who would acknowledge his or her Roma identity.

Is it worth for Roma to aspire to such a prestigious position of a great doctor, when not even one Roma doctor has yet to recognise their own ethnicity?

Will there be any change if a professional generation of Roma people can succeed?

Our project was born from our belief that the dreams of Roma children should have a chance of fulfilment without the struggle of uncertainty. Following the implementation of our project, today there are hundreds of young people at the threshold of achieving an impressive professional career. Two conditions are necessary for them to become professional engines of aspiration.

One is to be competent in their chosen career - that's why our program helps only students with good and excellent results.

The second condition is for them to acknowledge their Roma identity.

I am convinced that there are over one million Roma people disseminated through the entire Romanian population - Roma who became Romanians, or Hungarians, or Turks or any other ethnic group. There are also doctors who "were" Roma, but no longer recognise this in themselves.

Our hope is that our grant holders remain Roma even after they become successful in their careers and obtain an impressive status.

Children must know they can hope, and in realising their ambition, can show their grandparents that becoming a Roma doctor is achievable.



ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project **A Generation of Roma Specialists in the Medical Field** encourages young Roma to apply for courses and degrees in the health sector. Its aim is to combat prejudices regarding the perceived lack of interest from Roma in education and professions which require a high degree of qualification.

The project developed an integrated program of scholarship and personal development for Roma professionals in the medical system.

Between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, 439 young Roma from Romania, interested in studying for a medical career, have become grant-holders in the program.

The candidates were selected based on their academic results and the strength of their motivation.

Also, grant-holders from this program volunteered to give free medical services to over 1,500 members of Roma communities throughout Romania.

The project was implemented in Romania by **ActiveWatch** - Media Monitoring Agency between January 2011 - December 2013.

The partners in the project were Roma Education Fund Romania, Romanian Association of Resident Physicians, The Center of Roma for Health Policies - SASTIPEN and the Open Society Institute.

A Generation of Roma Specialists in the Medical Field Program was co-financed by the European Social Fund, which continued the activities from Roma Health Scholarship Program (RHSP), which was in action in Romania between 2008-2011 and represented a pioneering programme in Central and Eastern Europe.

Now, the managers of this project intend to identify partners in local communities to continue their activities, by developing local projects with two to five participants. Communities and local authorities involved in supporting the academic development of young Roma will also benefit from qualified professionals who now work in these communities.

The mission of the program of scholarship and personal development of Roma professionals in the medical system is to encourage high academic performance of young Roma training for a medical career. Between 2011-2013, the program supported the study needs of these Roma, in two components, depending by their stage of education:

❖ **MENTORSHIP for Roma students in medicine**

Undergraduates in medicine, students from further education in the medical field and resident doctors participated in theoretical and practical training sessions taught by mentors and doctors with different specialities. Mentors guided young Roma students through their study and offered them professional advice. In addition, young Roma participated in an advocacy camp, where they developed and carried out volunteering programs in low income communities. They received annual grants.

❖ **TUTORSHIP for future medical students**

Students in their last year of high-school and high-school graduates who could not continue their studies participated in free tutorials on biology and chemistry/physics. Courses were focused on passing an entrance exam for medical schools and were taught by scholars in the relevant subject areas. To be part of this program, selected students and graduates participated in motivation camps. They received monthly grants.

Most important results from academic years 2011-2012, 2012-2013

164 students from universities in medicine, pharmacy and dentistry, students from further education in the medical field and Roma resident doctors have become grant-holders and were tutored in theoretical and practical training by different specialist doctors.

275 students and high-school Roma graduates benefitted from scholarships and tutorials on biology, chemistry and physics, to help them pass the entrance exam for medical universities.

Over 1,400 persons from low income communities took advantage of free medical services offered by grant-holders of the project and their mentors.

MENTORING RESULTS

Mentorship 2011 - 2012

 **86**

During the first year of program, 86 candidates were accepted: high-school students, students of further education, undergraduates and resident doctors.

 **81**

At the end of the first mentoring year, 81 beneficiaries passed the Scholarship and Personal Development program.

 **1**

One grant holder finished his academic year 2011-2012 with the top grade of 10/10.

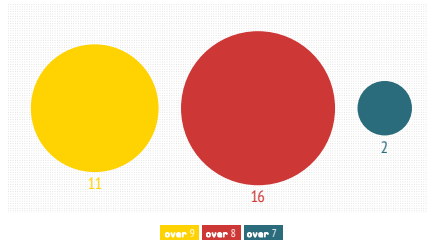
 **21**

Another 21 grant-holders had grades higher than 9.

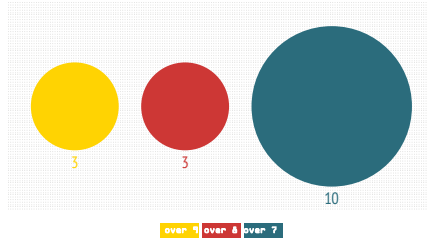
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Almost a third of grant-holders finished their studies with grades higher than 8.

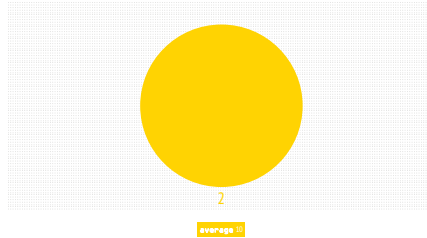
Students from further education in the medical field



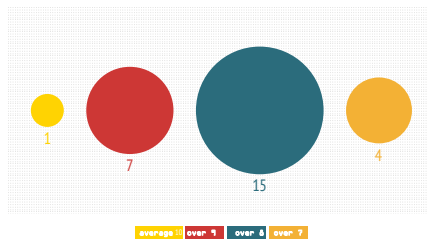
High-school graduates students



Resident doctors



Students



MENTORING RESULTS

Mentorship 2012 - 2013

 **160**

In the second year after implementing the “Program of Scholarships and Personal Development”, 160 students have been accepted in the program.

 **152**

152 of the project’s students achieved the requirements and successfully graduated from the Program of Scholarships and Personal Development

 **6**

Six grant-holders finished their academic year with the top grade of 10.

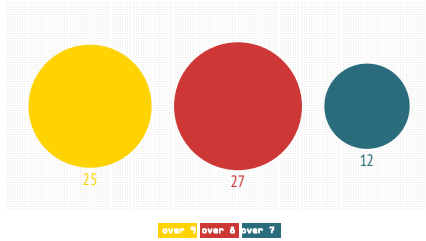
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Almost 40 grant holders finished their academic year with an average degree higher than 9.

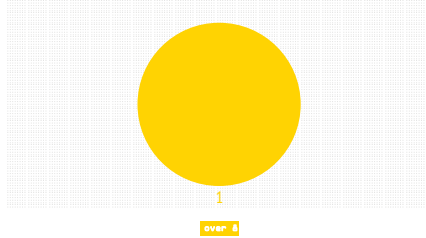
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More than a third of students obtained average degrees over 8

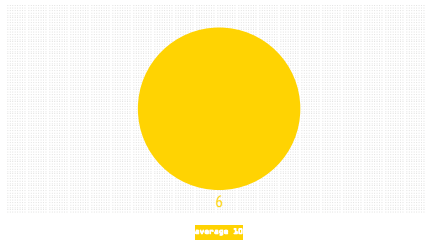
Students from further education in the medical field



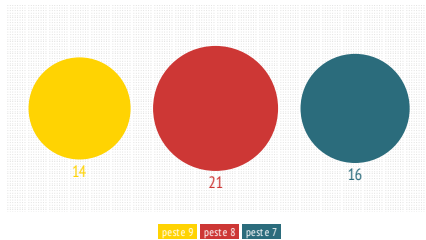
Master students



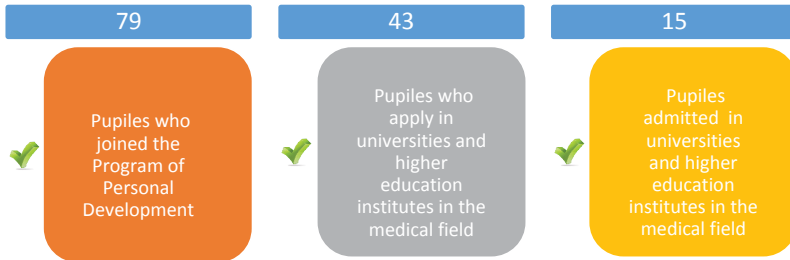
Resident doctors



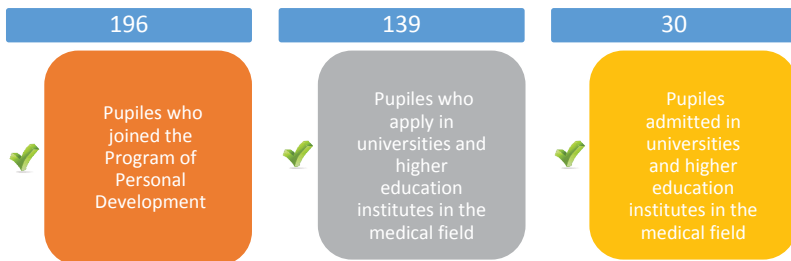
Students



Tutorship 2011 - 2012



Tutorship 2012 - 2013



Number of people trained in the qualification/ requalification program



Damian Drăghici

Romanian Senator between 2012-2014



To be human depends only on ourselves. To start your life with a disadvantage, just because you're a Roma, means that you have to prove, first of all, that you are a human being - this is a great challenge, a great honor and also a great responsibility. To have a chance to become a doctor, to double your human value with the responsibilities of saying the oath and to do all of these with pride, without carrying the burden of any disadvantageous ethnic affiliation, this is an HONOR.

I hope to guide you all in your work and I also ask you not to forget that people like me, like you, the Roma who didn't have such chances, are also humans and they also need to be RESPECTED. By respecting them, you will gain the respect you deserve from others. You already have my respect. It depends on you to keep and grow the respect of your fellows.

I only can wish the Roma on this program GOOD LUCK!



Irina Ursu

TV director at "I was also born in Romania"

In 2011 I met Corina Stanciu, a grant holder-star from the project "A Generation of Roma Specialists in the Medical Field Program". My interest was as a TV host for a show based on interviews with Roma, 'I was also born in Romania', which offered examples of good practice. I spoke to individuals to showcase their efforts and successes in Romanian society. In Corina Stanciu's case, we put the emphasis on her background as an adolescent who came from a mixed family (her father was Roma and her mother Romanian) to become student of the year 2011 in Medicine (the prize was awarded by the Volunteers for Ideas and Projects Foundation). Corina had the highest score when she was accepted for the project, as well as publishing three studies and taking part in international conferences in her specialist area.

Through Corina's story, I discovered another two grant-holders - Corina Vaduva and Florin Dumitrache. They told me about the difficulties of moving to Bucharest, their poverty and problems which they could not surmount without help - but also how they achieved a great career.

From those who practice preventive medicine to those who work in the emergency room, I heard many times that Roma patients can be a problem due to their specific behaviour. In addition, this showed a worrying percentage of the Roma population do not have medical insurance. From these two premises, we can start to argue about the necessity of Roma

professionals in the health system. Corina Stanciu recounted: “One of the hardest experiences was to be hospitalized in a room where Roma children were tied to beds. I wanted to become a doctor to help other people.” This argument is enough.



Andra Matzal

Editor, TOTB

As a coordinator at TOTB.ro, I have published many articles where we try to fight, as much as we can, racism, xenophobia and other diseases that attack the ‘immune system’ of society. I have also received a huge amount of comments from our readers which reveal how racist attitudes are persistently and deep-rooted in everyday life. Whenever we tried to show good examples or role models from Roma communities, we found that they were still fragile as an ethnicity. In my opinion, projects like “A Generation of Roma Specialists in the Medical Field Program” are extremely important to correct this perception. But I also think that these kinds of projects could be successful only if they are supported by coherent policies on many levels. The prejudices of a huge part of Romanian society are strongly consolidated and we need more efforts to make exceptional cases of Roma professional success into a normal everyday reality.

At the same time, as long the job of changing mentalities is still at a basic level, I consider that these kinds of campaigns have to go further, beyond the specialized press and NGOs. Therefore, besides supporting this and other similar projects, there is a need to inform people straightforwardly, if we consider their trust in the medical system. Considering that only 53 per cent of Romanians trust in medics, this would be a great occasion to promote the project to those who are the direct beneficiaries of the medical system, starting from a very simple message: despite prejudices, a Roma person could save your life any time.

Another subject that I would like to tackle is related to those projects which try to build up a Roma professional elite as a response to negative speech about this ethnicity. Of course, trying to change the image of Roma people is a necessary step. However, I believe that behind this strategy is a small danger that discrimination can continue to exist against Roma people who can't be part of these successful models.

However, I believe that "A Generation of Roma Specialists in the Medical Field Program" has at least two essential components: the chance of integrating Roma into high educational systems and their possibility to take part in professional structures in a medical system. I consider that education is the only way in which, with sustained efforts and patience for long term effect, we can change the "millstone" of daily racism, which continues to weigh on the character and social relations of Romania and, by extension, onto those of Europe.



Mariana Sandu

Roma Center for Health Policy - SASTIPEN

Coordinator of tutoring component between
4 March 2010 - 30 June 2012

Former history teacher

Since I was a little girl, all I heard was that Roma people can't achieve high performance. I was very ambitious and wanted to show that intelligence and hard work can offset poverty. It's a great pleasure for me to work with children and see how their work, discipline and intelligence can guide them to a higher purpose.

The tutorial component is maybe the most important in the whole project, including finding teachers who are willing to be involved. You create professionals who become empathetic with disadvantaged communities. Empathetic people return to their community and when they see a Roma patient, they know that they'll have to take care of that patient and also change the way in which other doctors perceive these kinds of patients.

My job was to organize tutor groups. After we found out the number of children who wanted to take part in coaching lessons for an entrance exam, and the places where they came from, it was a really tough job, because we had some children from villages where the distances between them were 100 km and we could employ only one tutor for a group of two to six children. Therefore we had to find a mid-point where they all could meet each other.

We had to inform every teacher that one of the employment criterion was to provide a classroom where lessons for the entrance exam could be in a formal setting. We didn't want these lessons to take place at a teacher's home.

Therefore, each group needed an active high-school teacher who, without professional qualification, had to ask a school principal for a classroom for Sundays or Saturdays.

All the teachers are great people - and some of them would cry if the children couldn't pass the exams. There was a lady from Urziceni who was teaching chemistry and she was willing to teach beyond her salary and schedule, just to be sure that one child would pass the exam. For her it was fascinating that the mother of that child was working every day just to help her son become a doctor.

The children surprised me. Some of them had a background in humanities, but they succeeded in sciences. One young man proved to me that it was possible for him to study for a noble purpose like medicine, even if he didn't have anything to eat at home. He has all my respect, especially because statistics put the bacalaureate pass rate at 45 per cent.

Many Roma children don't have anywhere to do their homework. They live in only one room with their family. Sometimes there is only one table for whole family - so they don't have a desk. In addition, many do not have a parent who can help them. I also met students whose parents were illiterate.

Additional lessons are necessary, but I don't believe the state will do anything about this as long as politicians believe that these additional hours should be included in the monthly wages of teachers and don't think about the family and social situation of these children.

Clara Matei

Association of Resident Physicians, Romania

Coordinator of mentoring activities

Scholarship without mentorship has no sense. Without a mentor who can supervise the whole academic activity of the student, the grant has no relevance. Medical school is really expensive, even if students are not Roma. But, first of all, these scholarships aren't a form of social assistance, but have a strictly academic purpose. You cannot achieve this without achieving some performance indicators like participating in international conferences, the competence to write a synopsis for a scientific article or being able to create a scientific portfolio which could ensure a continuous academic career.

The mentorship system is the innovative aspect of this program, because this system no longer exists in Romania. Now there is only the classical system of a teacher and course assistant. Most mentors were selected well - they are resident doctors who've been through all these steps before.

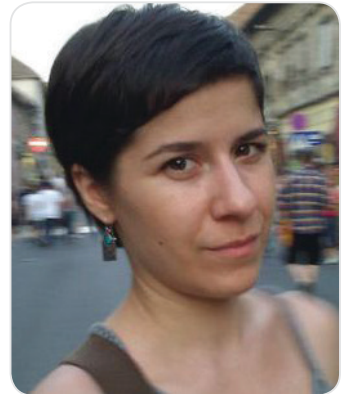
By combining Roma and non-Roma beneficiaries and mentors, we have a perfect example of a project of high quality medical education. We have plenty of examples of people who succeeded - not only from this project, but also from previous projects, supported by Open Society Institute Budapest. We have Dana Pirjol, who now is at Cambridge and Corina Stanciu, who received plenty of Erasmus scholarships. We have grant-holders who finished their residency and now are mentors. They understand how the responsibility of a mentor is important and the varied problems of students they must guide.

We will continue to promote this model, because we are trying to convince the local authorities, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education to think of a strategy and to start to build from our results. We have demonstrated that this mentorship model really works and has great

success. But without continuity, it would be a shame to stop here. We have to think about what we must do further. We have six resident doctors and people with extraordinary CVs, but what's going to happen next?

Ana Ciutu

ActiveWatch -
Media Monitoring Agency
PR Coordinator



I had been working in business communication and, with this project “A Generation of Roma Specialists in the Medical Field Program”, suddenly I was overseeing non-profit communication. This was the first time when I was involved in a campaign whose purpose was to stop discrimination, the first time I needed to communicate about Roma and also my first project using EU structural funds.

When the programme started I was afraid that I wouldn't succeed because there were a lot of jobs that I was doing for the first time. After a while I found out that it is much more interesting to talk about people than about products and that people's reactions are truthful - both in a positive and negative way. People are pleased or angry, they open their soul and their mind or they become unwilling to change. This made my job all the more difficult, but also more rewarding.

The scholarship program has now stopped for a moment, following three years of European funding. Former grant holders are today at different academic stages and most of them still have more years to finish their studies. It won't be easy for many of them to continue their studies without a grant. We knew that this moment would come so, from 2012, we started to collaborate with the public authorities. One of the greatest success was the introduction of medical scholarships and the concept of this program in the Romanian Government's Strategy for Roma Inclusion between 2013-2020. This aspect could guarantee the permanence and stability of the program, after the adoption of the strategy.

A Roma doctor in 2013 may seem strange. Does it matter if he is Roma? Making such an ethnic distinction links two opposite worlds: racists and activists for the rights of minorities. It counts for both sides. Both have different intentions, but it counts. I would like to see a time when a Roma doctor would be just a doctor. For me it would be a sign of normality, which reveals that discrimination is almost over.



Daniel Rădulescu

President of Roma Center for
Health Policy - SASTIPEN

In hospitals, the behavior of medical professionals discriminates against the Roma and low income patients. If you are a Roma and also on a low or no income, you end up praying you will not get sick.

The advocacy camps in this project had two objectives: to make Roma who choose to work in the medical system plead for a change in the behavior of their non-Roma colleagues and to encourage Roma to acknowledge their own identity. After ten days, they were leaving with more confidence and better skills at persuasion.

Courses are extraordinary and children are extraordinary. They are eager to learn, come with a little knowledge and leave with much more, which they must exploit as much as possible. We had to also change the self-image of children where were taught all their lives to be a Romanian, but when they tried to be part of a wider society, that society made it difficult for them to be a doctor.

The idea was to enter into schools and hospitals and to try to change the medics' behavior through some positive models of young people who can demonstrate they can be good professionals no matter their skin color. If you interact directly with people, you change their behavior and people come to accept diversity and multiculturalism.

I wanted young people to come with us into communities to see how we work with low income families. There is no other way to understand their problems. People need to empathize with their problems and come to their level.

“On paper” I was a trainer, but as leader of my organization, I was responsible for the success of projects made by this organization, which I developed from the bottom-up.



Cerasela Bănică

Roma Education Fund Romania

In the academic system, there is no structure to support young people from disadvantaged groups, like exempting them from tuition fees - which are very high for medical schools. Moreover, the academic system continues to focus on traditional methods of teaching and ignores innovative methods of acquiring information, which prepare students more effectively for the labor market. Added to this are other aspects which influence the low participation of Roma students in higher education. So you can see how many obstacles there are to be tackled by “A Generation of Roma Specialists in the Medical Field Program”.

This project brought a suite of services which met all the above issues, namely: support measures for young Roma with scholarships, alternative methods of learning such as mentorship, a combination of acquired knowledge and practical experience (including participation in some surgeries and patient consultation), but also volunteering for assistance in Roma communities. The main objective here was to offer medical information which could help the Roma population identify some symptoms for different diseases and give free medical advice. The last ingredient which helped to build “A Generation of Roma Specialists in the Medical Field Program”.consisted of advocacy training courses where they learned skills and amassed information to help them transform medical services accessed by Roma people from the inside.

At the beginning, the Roma grant-holder was confused, immature, anxious, stigmatized, distrustful about himself and afraid. But all they needed was to become confident in their own decisions, interested in studying, competitive and relaxed.

George Grădinariu

mentor

Graduate of Grigore Popa Medical University, Iasi and Faculty of Physics

Second year resident in cardiovascular surgery, Parhon hospital, Iasi



For me, the most important thing was to help young Roma improve their career prospects. They are role models for others in their communities.

I honestly don't think that ethnicity is an obstacle; being a woman is more likely an obstacle to becoming a surgeon, for example. There are more prejudices about gender issues in hospitals. But, if you are dedicated and well-prepared, you can overcome these barriers.

I think that among staff from hospitals, especially nurses, but not necessary doctors, someone should speak another language, including Romani, and it should be mandatory to work with at least one person who speaks an international language. There should be training in sign language - and we should at least learn the basics.



Ovidiu Mitu

mentor

Resident at Cardiology, first year

It wasn't only the students who discovered new things, I as a mentor saw what it was like to work with a disadvantaged category. What I really liked was that participants are ambitious students who really want to do a noble and difficult job. I'm sure that all of them will become doctors. The fact that they were admitted to medical school reveals something about their moral fiber and I'm sure they will be ambitious enough to graduate and later work as doctors.



Marius Rădulescu

Coordinator of tutoring component between
2012-2013

Roma Center for Health Policy - SASTIPEN

I was close to children and I went into camps and offered my support to training teams. What was good about this program was the opportunity that most of children do not have: there were free lessons, about 60 tutorials,

scholarships, and camps where the focus was on how to further your career. Also important subjects like communication, self-esteem and leadership were discussed.

Young people need our help. Any kind of help - and some really deserve this help. We wanted to train medical specialists, not opportunists. My own personal greatest achievement was that we performed our mission.

In Macedonia there was a similar project which involved the state. For Macedonia's Ministry of Education there is a big interest in supporting students in medical studies. In Romania, the Ministry of Education is dying day by day because of financial pressure, and can't support these kinds of projects.



Alina Călin

Resident doctor in surgery, St. Spiridon
Hospital

There should not be any problem with being a Roma and being a doctor. To be a Roma doctor does not seem to me to be a success. I don't want to be appreciated for this, but for my professional achievements, for what I am working on as a doctor. I want to prove that I am a good Roma doctor for both kinds of patients: Roma and non-Roma. I have adapted to the environment of the Romanian majority, but I'm still living in my world, the small world of Roma.

In the 12th grade my brother had a dangerous car accident. He was seriously hurt. He stayed for almost two months in hospital and six months at home. That was the first time when I believed I could study medicine. I prepared all by myself, I tried to learn alone, and I bought a book with entrance exams. I finished high school in pedagogy [theory of education], which had nothing to do with what I wanted to study, because it wasn't centered on biology and chemistry - the basic subjects for an entrance exam for medical school. But I was determined to succeed, so I registered and a little later found out that I passed the exam. I was ambitious enough to stay and to continue my studies at medical school, and from one year to another I was more motivated to learn, not for the grades, but because I would work with people.

Surgery is the most interesting discipline for me, I live for it, and it gives me a huge satisfaction. I really love it, but it is also really hard. Grants helped me financially to continue my studies, otherwise it would have been impossible to support myself. To develop yourself, you have to invest in courses, books and textbooks, which are pretty expensive. At first, my parents were in despair. Although they were happy, they thought it was an expensive university and I would not be able to support myself. My mother is a housewife with five children, including me, and my father was working as a truck driver, but he had a serious illness, needed an operation and he couldn't work anymore. Sometimes I did not have enough money to leave for university and to come home. From one year to another it was difficult and I had to study really hard, because I had chosen a complex specialism. Moreover, my elder sister tried to gain entrance to a medical school, but she could not pass the exam. She graduated in Journalism and worked in television for a year, but realized that she didn't like it. I was already in my third year of study and I encouraged her to try again for a medical faculty. I helped her and she did it, and is now, at 29, in her sixth year of study.

What I discovered in hospital about the perception of Roma and all those prejudices amazed and disappointed me at the same time. Most of the staff had problems with Roma patients and they had some prejudices. But step by

step, I feel they will change their opinion, and this is what I want. Regarding me, my colleagues already perceive me differently. It's tough to survive as a Roma within a majority of Romanians, especially in this domain. But I showed them that being Roma doesn't mean I am dirty, a thief or stupid.

I would like to do something to end discrimination in emergency hospitals, where Roma patients are often the last to be treated. I would accept all Roma patients who are rejected by other doctors. Different regimes for patients should not exist.

I am at a point where I think that the biggest discrimination against the Roma is happening in hospitals and most of the time I hear an illogical explanation: 'Roma people don't understand the treatment they should take and if they have any complications unrelated to treatment, they blame the doctor and develop tense relations with doctors', or 'Roma people don't understand, they overreact and they are mischievous'.

Many times over I helped doctors get on peacefully with Roma patients. I had Roma patients and I helped them to get on with the main doctor responsible for their situation, and patients trusted me even if I was just a resident doctor. If the doctor told them to take a treatment, they were waiting for my approval. Once some Roma people called "caldarari" came and I worked with them really well.

I don't know if doctors are able to understand some traditions. There were situations when Roma women came to hospital and didn't want to undress in front of the doctor because it was a man, and the doctors were getting impatient. I never tried to hide that I am a Roma woman and I won't try to do that ever. I sincerely regret that I didn't wear my traditional clothes on the first day. I believe that the medical system has plenty of Roma doctors who don't admit their ethnicity because of the work culture. I didn't live in a community, but I learned the Romani language at school, and I speak Romani with patients and they can't believe it. I would like to support Roma to build some honorable careers.

It's tough to be Roma woman in this work area because you have to fight all the time. I always have to prepare myself and to prove that we are normal people. I think that most people call me a gypsy and can't get over that first impression. I have no right to make mistakes because I could be targeted as a person who confirmed the stereotype. It is a continual fight and I hope that God will help me become what I want. I'm sure that things will change in hospitals. I want to obtain a PHD and to become a professor, why not? But it's a long way to that point.

I am thinking of studying abroad for my specialism and after that to come back to do something here. I have to improve my medical english. During university, I obtained an Erasmus-Socrates Scholarship, and I studied for one semester in Spain, at the Medical University in Valladolid.

When I was a little girl, I wanted to study law and become an Ombudsman. What stopped me from this was that, in order to make money, I would have to lie.

I didn't like that.

Usually, children learn at home that "gypsies are bad", "gypsies steal" and probably this is a reason for the distance between me and the other kids. They often told me: "Where do you think you are? In your slum?" A teacher told me that people were under my intelligence level if they resorted to offending me, rather than coming up with an argument. But I don't generalize. My desk mate was Romanian, the daughter of the principal, who finished his Master's at Cambridge, and she was my best friend. It depends very much on education, and what parents teach their children until they are old enough to see the differences. In high-school, people didn't have this view, and they called me the "little gypsy" with affection.

I didn't feel any kind of discrimination while I was an undergraduate and I never hid my ethnicity. My colleagues were surprised and really curious about our traditions, about my family and how I managed to succeed.

I work with people who are from another level, we collaborate and I don't feel any distance; on the contrary they are people who want to help me progress. I had a patient who was a "caldarar". We operated on him in our hospital and he came with all his family, with grandparents, brothers, sisters. And I really liked that they listened to me and trusted me and gave me the chance to trust myself. I told them about my brother's accident, and how my whole family accompanied him to the hospital. We were extremely concerned. I was 18 years old at that time and I wanted much more from doctors because my wish was to see my brother get better as soon as possible. I thought that he could have been better cared for.

The other doctors are more relaxed now when they have to deal with Roma patients. Another time they would have imagined that Roma are aggressive, even if they were just worried for their loved ones. That's the point. Generally, the patient doesn't have any medical knowledge and his family doesn't understand that the doctor tried his best, and from this point problems can appear. In Roma communities, there should be training and discussions about some basic medical issues. Most members of these communities are disappointed and don't know they have rights. I'm glad to show that we, the Roma, aren't just some chess pieces who can be moved around by the desire of the majority. I'm sorry that I can't do more about this, but for now I'm too young. All this negativism determined me to fight. I don't want to give up. Here I found myself, I feel that here is my purpose - for good and bad.



Doctor Alexandru Grigorovici

St. Spiridon Hospital, Surgery Section

Those who want to practice surgery have to understand that before they reach 40 years old, they can't say that they are "qualified enough". The highest level of activity for a person who follows this specialism is between 45 and 60 years. In 20 years, I have prepared more than ten resident doctors who are now surgeons of very high quality, and only one is still living in Romania. It's a sad fact. These are people in whom we have invested work, time and money, and now they take care of other people, in other places, and they're doing their job very well.

This is the first time in my career when I have the chance to work with a Roma resident and I have to say that it's a great pleasure. Alina Calin is extremely devoted to medicine, she's extremely civilized and she fights against some preconceptions which aren't correct. For sure, Alina will have a place as a surgeon in Romania.

As long as those who are part of the Roma civilization will start to learn more, and pass qualifications, I believe that the situation will change, and preconceptions that all people who are Romanian citizens of Roma ethnicity are bad must disappear. This project is excellent not only for medical system, but also in other areas in society. I believe that things will develop like a snowball.

Adina Corobuță

25 years old

Resident Doctor, First year, Nephrology

Parhon Hospital, Iasi

Since the eighth grade I have wanted to have a career in the health sector - and I wanted to choose between pharmacy and medicine. I like helping people and I gain pleasure when I do something for their health. I get along with patients, I try to be as kind as I can and to make them understand their diseases and needs. Also I try to explain why they should be flexible regarding their treatment.

I've made a lot of sacrifices to continue my studies. I gave up my free time with friends. All the other students were ending their study schedule in May or June and after that they were going to the seaside. In medicine we were studying until July. There was a lot to learn.

Sometimes you don't take care of yourself so much and you forget about it and focus on other people's health. There were a lot of lost nights to learn and a lot of stress around the exams and the residency. Finance was always an issue, because other friends were working during university, but I had to dedicate more to study. Most of my friends now are studying in the same area as me and we encourage each other to learn.

My family supported me. They understood my stress, my need for silence and space and I've been lucky. I have a younger brother and an elder sister. My sister studied IT and worked as a software engineer in a multinational and my brother studied Law and Mechanics and wants to apply for an Erasmus scholarship. My dad worked as a mechanical engineer, and now he's dead, and my mother was a teacher, but she is retired.

The Erasmus scholarship helped me move to France in the fifth year of study for six months, and it was an interesting experience. The most useful thing for me was the fact that I saw a different medical system. In Romania we don't always have medication and the necessary instruments, but there, as a doctor, you take a decision and have all you need. In our country, sometimes you can't be as good as you want because of the lack of instruments..

This schedule helped me because I had mentors who guided my knowledge. If I had a question about anything, they helped me, and it was really useful to receive this guidance. And after attending three advocacy camps, I felt more confident. I learned to support my point of view and this is extremely important, especially in medicine.

I don't know any Roma doctors with experience and I am sorry about that. I would be really interested to talk with some of those older than us. I'm sure they exist.

Acknowledging one's ethnic identity is a personal decision. I think that if you don't recognise your identity, there is a problem, and probably those who hid their ethnic identity have suffered, because they see it as something negative. However, I believe that we should admit this to ourselves. After you recognise this in yourself, you feel relieved. If there are no inner conflicts, everything is better. If you have no resentments, you can take the right decisions.

Personally, I never had to deal with discrimination. My colleagues are highly educated people who are able to think rationally. But I believe that is more tension between Roma patients and doctors in hospitals - and I don't think that there are any big exceptions. Some patients are mistreated by doctors, and also by medical staff.

I believe that this is part of the education process. Someone is allowed to think what they want, but their working day should not be influenced by their points of view. Maybe not everybody is able to keep calm, but every conflict has an impact on the working environment. And for obtaining good

results for patients there has to be an understanding between patients and doctors.

In the future I would like to keep working in Iasi. I thought about leaving for a short time with a grant to gain experience which I could use here in Romania. I'm not leaving yet because of my family and because I have a moral duty to people who helped me here.

My advice for young people who want to study medicine is to think twice, because the University will ask for a lot of energy and material sacrifices. If you don't have what you need, it's a high risk to lose so many years from your life. But if this is what you want, go for it and make your dream come true.



Alexandra Constantinescu

Second year of studying

Pharmacy University, Iasi

I don't think that another profession would be good for me. When you are a pharmacist, you are the first point of entry for a sick person and the advice you give is very important.

In the summer of the 12th grade, I found out about this project, which became a great source of support for me. I benefited from free weekly chemistry lessons and it was pretty hard to cover all of the subjects, but I was lucky because I had help from a mentor.

I also received a grant of 44 Euro per month, and when I gained an average of 9/10 on the weekly tests, the grant was doubled. I passed all my exams, was accepted into university with an average of 9.19, and ended the first year with an average of 8.20. My family helped me all the time and encouraged me. They were really happy for me because I was studying what I wanted. I am sure that if they wouldn't have supported me, I wouldn't have succeeded. My parents always taught my brother and I that education is the most important thing. They didn't have the opportunity to study at University and, instead, accomplished their dreams through us. My mother is a laboratory assistant and my father used to work at a gas installation company, but is now unemployed. My brother finished his studies last year and is an engineer in Brasov.

After I was accepted at University, I continued with the mentoring program that still helps me now. We have a mentor, Mrs. Doctor Cristina Bantu, a doctor at the St. Maria Children's Hospital in Iasi, who we meet twice a week. It's professional support, and she took care to introduce us to this world, to prepare for what's going to happen next, and gave us a lot of details about relations between patients and medical staff, introducing us to hospital life. Most of the time, when we have problems about some subjects, we ask her for help.

Also in this project we went to an advocacy camp which contributed to our professional development, because we learned from professional trainers. We had communication and leadership courses, we found out about the health problems of Roma at an international level, and we went to a Roma community near Piatra Neamt where we discovered the problems of people who we didn't see everyday.

Many Roma told us that every time they try to contact medical staff, they are rejected, and this is a reason why some people refuse to go to the doctor. We discussed with the medical staff, who told us that the Roma don't want to see a doctor. When we returned from our visits, we realized that most of these communities were at the edge of villages, didn't have access to water, to

infrastructure - aspects which make these Roma's life harder. In those visits we tried to discover what the most common medical problems are, and these seemed to be diabetes, obesity and high blood pressure. After this camp, we developed a volunteering project in other Roma communities. I organized one in a community in Braila, with my mentor and a friend. We told people about the project, we measured their blood pressure, and we explained to them about the recommended levels and what they should do when they observe changes in their pressure. We also gave them advice on healthy living and a balanced diet.

People were pretty amazed, because no one comes to ask them about their problems. No one tells them what to do when they discover symptoms of diseases. They were really happy that we came and plenty of them were from families who wanted their children to learn, and to go to school.

In my opinion, solutions exist for all problems, but we need to be patient. In Roma communities in recent years many problems have been solved and more people seem to understand that children have to go to school and must not give up.

I'm from a family where no one knows the Romani language, but I want to learn it. Recognising one's ethnic identity is important, because, in this way, we can change other people's prejudices. Most of the time we see only negative examples of Roma people who go abroad, steal and are evicted. If we tell people that we are also Roma and offer a good example, we can change the overall perception. I have seen situations where people were rejected only because of their darker skin. Some people say that the Roma are illiterate, that they all steal and I guess that's the main reason why they reject the Roma. We are trying to demonstrate that we are different and can fight against stereotypes.

I consider that we shouldn't victimize ourselves. My colleagues know that I'm studying due to a special scholarship for Roma. At first, some of them thought that we had an easier access to university than them. Afterwards I explained them that we take the same exam, with the same conditions and sometimes

there can be tougher competition. Some of them had the preconception that all Roma are the same and don't want to learn, and were surprised to find out that there are Roma who want to qualify to be pharmacists or medics. Therefore it is important for others to demonstrate that school is significant. We can't succeed any other way.



Mădălina Mihaela Dumitru

UMF Carol Davila, Bucharest

No matter their personality or individual character, the Roma are called thieves or dirty or lazy. I felt this on my first day of studying. If my colleagues didn't judge by appearance, I wouldn't have suffered. Happily, I would have told them that I studied at a professional school to be accepted into their society, and ten years of working in a barber shop backed this up. It was a time when I continued to study, at the same time as I was working, in order to pass the baccalaureate.

I married at 20 years old, and children came seven years later. After the birth of my daughters, I realized that therapeutic massage and medical recovery were extremely important and had positive consequences. Therefore, after some studies, I enrolled in the University of Nurses and Midwives.

The first step to avoid discrimination is knowledge. Therefore, participating in this project stimulated me to improve myself. Congresses and conferences in Chisinau, Cluj-Napoca and Novi Sad gave me the opportunity to acknowledge

my background. An advocacy camp in Piatra-Neamt made me feel proud of my roots and aspire “to more”.

After I participated in this project, I believed in myself and I am conscious that I can be accepted socially, and also economically, by having a job.



Gabriel Găitan

Student at UMF Iasi, second year of study

Volunteer at the Ambulance Service of St. Spiridon Hospital, Iasi

I like emergency medicine the most, I want to be where I am needed at the right moment. There was a case in my family where one of my cousins had a car accident and it took almost an hour before an ambulance came to take him away. I was so shaken up because nothing could have been done and I wanted to change this situation and to help the other people. And I wanted to prove to the Romanian majority that Roma people also have potential and can aspire to high professional office, which requires a high level of study. I would like to practice here, in Romania, because I would give Roma the chance to access high quality medical services.

I believe that this project can change lives. It gives us, the Roma, a chance and could prepare a class of Roma professionals who could change perceptions, prejudices and accusations against the Roma. It bothers me how the media reflects only the worst examples of the Roma, and never those cases where someone from a low income background succeeds to practise medicine.

Daniela Bîrsanu

4th year of study, UMF Craiova

I have wanted this job since I was in high-school. However, because the profile of my high-school was different from this job, everybody else discouraged me. I gave up on this idea, passed my teaching certificate and worked as a governess in a kindergarten, but deep down I knew I wanted to study medicine. I worked for one year and tried to learn as much as I could for the entrance exam and succeeded with an average mark of 9.35/10. In the first year it was really hard for me because I decided to keep my job to support me financially. I had no time for courses, and the exams were a nightmare.

When I won the scholarship “A Generation of Roma Specialists in the Medical Field Program” I resigned from my job because I didn’t want to miss anything anymore. I wanted to participate in courses, to practice, to be present at all working projects, and to dedicate much more time to study, and to train to be a pharmacist. This worked, as I finished last semester with a 9.80 average. I would like to have the same support in the future because if I don’t have it, I would have to make some compromises.

It was really helpful that I had a mentor who was patient and kind, and helped and understood me. I met wonderful colleagues who now are my friends and it will be a pleasure to work with them in the future.



Adrian Angiuc

Volunteer at Emergency Hospital for Children,
St. Maria - Iasi.

I am 25 years old, I studied for three years in the Radiology and Imaging department at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Iasi and now I am in my second year of a master's degree in Clinic Bioengineering, while volunteering at the St. Maria Children's Hospital. My mother is also a laboratory assistant in the same hospital and has taken care of our family since I was ten. I grew up in a poor family and since I was a kid, people told me "look at this gypsy". But during those years I changed the views of all those around me because I was an ambitious guy.

I want to work as a Radiology and Imaging Technician, because through such images the doctor can conclude which diseases his or her patients have, decide whether an operation is necessary, or if a bone is broken. I would like to work in this hospital, with children, as it's an environment to which I have got used. I get along with the medical staff and have a great relationship with the nurses and doctors. My relations with patients depends from one person to another. Some parents are difficult to deal with, because it's hard for them to see their children suffer, but we have to treat them well and help keep them calm. But most of the kids like to come, we tell them stories about the lasers and we try to keep them calm and patient, eventually letting them have fun while they are doing radiographies and to feel good. In the beginning I was afraid and I had a lot of compassion. I still have, but it is important to try to help them, to make a kid laugh, to tell him jokes and

things that can make him forget about his disease. I usually interact with 30 to 40 kids per day.

“A Generation of Roma Specialists in the Medical Field Program” is a great project for all beneficiaries of Roma ethnicity, because it includes financial support and helps us to fight against stereotypes. Of course, we can't have 100 per cent success because a lot of people still have preconceptions and bad opinions about the Roma, but I also believe that in the future, the mentality will change and the Roma will have the possibility to say what they think. When I applied for studies, I had no money to sustain me for the whole learning period, but the grant from this project help me a lot, because I have plenty of projects at University and need help with transport, textbooks, studies, and research for projects.

Public acknowledgement of ethnic identity is important, but sometimes this has its own risks, because people look at you differently. Some people see the Roma as thieves and you can be stopped in your career just for this reason. On the other side it is important for your spirituality to recognise your ethnicity and your roots and to prove that you aren't like some people think. You have to offer a good example. In the past, the Roma were treated with indifference, but now the situation is more relaxed, I have seen friendships which lasted 20 years between doctors and Roma patients. Things are getting better, the doctors are more relaxed and they don't discriminate against people at first sight.

But I have been to Roma communities, where I'd undertaken some medical tests and I met people who told me that they don't get help from the medical staff in their community. These included Roma without birth certificates, who lived in poverty in an isolated community. Most of them didn't want help, because of uncertainty and because they were rejected all their life and t have the idea that they are alone and can't trust anyone.



Mihaela Chiriac

Graduate of Dental Technical Speciality in the University of Dental Medicine, Iasi

A graduate of the University of Arts, specialized in Journalism

Acknowledging one's identity is important, and I never had any problems in recognising I am Roma, but also my appearance does not fall into a Roma stereotype. Sometimes people could not believe that I was a Roma because I did not conform to their prejudices. I felt a different attitude from some of my friends and teachers, but not as much as other Roma colleagues experienced. Professors and colleagues started to appreciate me because I was a hardworking person, who was dedicated to study, and participated in all collective activities and had good grades. It is really hard to change the preconceptions of some people, which have been ingrained over many years, confirmed by their parents and friends. To change preconceptions wasn't one of my aims, but I want to offer a different perspective and to make people understand that we are not all the same. It is very hard to change mentalities, and I probably discriminate against some people without realizing it. I try not to be so tough with those who discriminate, as you have to understand the person, and then offer them a different view.

During this project's advocacy camp, I visited poor Roma communities and, when I came back, I realized that I'm lucky to be part of a family like mine, which had so many opportunities, including the chance to study.

The most dramatic situation was the condition of children in poor Roma communities. Most of them said that they didn't want to go to school because they had no idea how this could help them. Those children can't

be blamed because if you don't know something, you don't do it, and this refusal to go to school is somehow encouraged by parents and people around them. Those kids weren't vaccinated and were in a very hard situation. I could never have imagined there could be so much poverty and it had a huge impact on me. A precedent is all you need - if only one person from that community studies at a university, that person becomes a model and, after one generation, more children will want this. I don't want to be a model, I just want to be an example for other young people and to have enough courage to try - because if one person succeeds, anyone can.



Laurențiu Oprica

Master Degree in Clinical Bioengineering
UMF Iasi

I am 34 years old and am volunteering at the Medical Clinic no. 3 at St. Spirion Hospital in Iasi because I want to get a job. I have two children, I am married, my daughter is six years old, and my son is two and a half. In my situation, this project offered me real support, because without it I couldn't continue my studies. It is hard to stay within the system. You need books, medical instruments and the Internet. After high-school, I worked as a driver for a newspaper distribution company and only after ten years did I get to realise my ambition - at a time when I was economically stable. I thought that it would be a pity if I didn't finish my studies.

I read newspapers every day and have a lot of respect for Mr. Raed Arafat - secretary of state in the Romanian Government and the founder of

emergency ambulance service SMURD. He had a great career and I see him as a model for a generation. He built the SMURD service, which is really useful, and what I like about him is that he came from a foreign country - Syria - and succeeded here in Romania.

My father works here in Iasi at a newspaper kiosk. He is 60 years old. He worked at the Nicolina foundry. When he was younger, he was a fiddler and a member of an orchestra in Cosmesti. I played the accordion and organ and I sang, but this is a tradition which is now disappearing. Now people prefer to pay a DJ for a wedding. They don't want bands anymore.

Professionally, I see myself in the health system. I would like to work abroad, because there are better conditions and I would earn a better wage. If I would have the occasion, tomorrow I would leave Romania. But I don't think that I am a selfish person and I am grateful to those who have helped me here in Romania, but I want my children to enjoy their lives and have all they need.



Aurelia Dulgheru

Fifth year of study at the Carol Davila
University of Dental Medicine, Bucharest

I chose a medical career to help the Roma population gain access to quality medical and dental services.

The decision to develop myself personally and professionally was inspired by my brother who is also a doctor (in chemistry). I learned that any educational

obstacle can be surpassed if you really want it and if you are willing to work hard.

I took the entrance exam for Dentistry in 2009 and obtained 85 points. I wanted to study in dental medicine to provide a better future for my children and for my family.

To be student at Dental Medicine require sacrifices regarding one's personal life, but I am sure that all these sacrifices will reap rewards later.

During my study, I made new friends and had the opportunity to meet new people - professors with whom I can keep in touch and specialist doctors, who can answer different questions. I developed my dexterity and learned what patience and precision mean - which are mandatory qualities for a future dentist.

I want to become one of the best specialists in dental medicine. At the end of the study period, I see myself working in a clinic with a team of specialists, where I can practice at a higher level. And, after I gain enough experience with patients, I would like to open my private dental practice.

The scholarships program "A Generation of Roma Specialists in the Medical Field Program" was my main source of my financial and moral support. So I was able to get closer to finish my studies.

If this scholarship program hadn't existed, I still would have been followed my dream to study medicine, but I wouldn't have been able to focus on theoretical and practical notions. Since 2008, when I participated in my first national camp "Advocacy for medical system", organized by a team of specialists about Health Policies for Roma (SASTIPEN), my life plan changed radically. I changed the way I thought and my aspirations and I could acknowledge my Roma identity in public. I also met colleagues who were dealing with the same "stigma" and who had life stories similar to mine. I learned to overcome my fear of speaking in public and of supporting my cause, due to the games organized by our specialized trainers in communication.

Therefore, through the program “A Generation of Roma Specialists in the Medical Field Program”, we had the opportunity to focus on intensive study and I took part in some congresses and national conferences, published scientific articles in specialized magazines, and I improved my English.

Also, I could buy teaching materials, dental instruments and was supported morally by my mentor, the dentist Andreea Oancea.

Therefore, after I finish my studies and get a job, I want to set up a project of informing, educating and raising awareness for preventing general medical problems and the importance of oral hygiene among vulnerable groups.

Cristina Căldăraru

4th year of study, UMF Craiova

Since I was a child, I dreamed about a medical career and, with a lot of ambition and perseverance, I was able to pursue this.

In 2010 I was admitted to the Faculty of Dentistry in the Craiova University of Medicine and Pharmacy with an average grade of 9.47/10 and I am proud that I was in the top 15.

I think that the first year of study was pretty hard because I woke up in a different world, with a lot of requirements and information thrown at me at the same time.

A year ago I started to practice in dentistry and I'm working with great pleasure, but also with a sense of responsibility. My relations with patients are really good and I can supply them with information when they ask.

Dento-alveolar surgery attracts me a lot. I like challenges. When I finish my studies, I want to go abroad for a better life, to a country where I am sure I will be more appreciated for my work from all points of view.



Mădălină (Magdalena) Gangal

First year of study, Sanitary Second high school

I really like the health sector and I really want to work with kids. If I know I helped save a life and a person is still alive because of me, this is a great achievement.

I hope that in my second year I will be able to access free education, therefore I could go to school more often. Now I split my time between school and a job. I work eight hours per day at a mall, where I prepare and serve salads. It's really hard for me and sometimes I can't get to school. The tuition fee is 2,300 RON [513 Euro] per year and my wage is 156 Euro per month. I work so I can learn.

In my family there are 11 brothers and sister, I am the 8th youngest and the only one who has continued studying after high-school. My little sister is only the second who is going to high-school and she wants to be a sports teacher. My parents were really happy when they found out that I was accepted at a further education college, and they hope that one day I will become an important person and have a better life.

If I can learn English well, I would like to go abroad. But I want to work for a while in Romania. At least it's my country and I am closer to my family. The only reason that I would leave is because abroad you can earn more money.



Cristian Pancu

Medical Further Education college graduate

I passed the baccalaureate, but I thought that if I'm studying in a university, it's for nothing because there are people with two degrees who cannot find a job.

I wanted to do something for the future, like being a nurse. Honestly I would leave Romania, because here the wages are small. I don't know if they can be higher than 335 Euro per month, you aren't treated in the way you deserve and people don't have any respect for your studies. My plan and my dream is to be a nurse in France in a couple of years. I am not too ambitious and a lot of things discourage me, because since I was little I had to deal with a lot of obstacles regarding my ethnic background. For example, at an interview I can never be totally relaxed. I am always thinking that the employer sees me as a gypsy, he sees that I'm dark-skinned and is reticent to employ me. Because of that, I've missed a lot of chances. If I had the opportunity to choose, I would have chosen to be born in any other country rather than in Romania.

The media only shows bad examples of the Roma. I've never seen on TV an interview with a Roma doctor. I see only news about "that gypsy who killed someone". There are many who have a purpose in their lives. They are highly educated and they work.

First of all, this project helped me financially. Wages as they are aren't enough for a good life during the study period. This project helped me finish my studies. My father is dead, and my mother earns 78 Euro per month from her pension. She has some health issues, pays for her treatment and I can't ask her for money.



Experience for partners

Methodology for selection and evaluation of beneficiaries

A diverse range of activities dedicated to young people in the program

The dedication of resident doctors, who became mentors in their turn (program of mentoring)

Training sessions for high school students (tutoring program)



Excessive and unpredictable bureaucracy

Difficulty of motivating school pupils through the tutorial program

Students who renounced the plan to start and follow a medical career

Desirable improvements

Limit the number of school pupils who can benefit from coaching for the university entrance exam to a maximum of 30.

Extend the training sessions to all mandatory disciplines for the Baccalaureate exam.

The monitoring and evaluating system should assess periodically the results and development of the project.

Involve organisations connected to medical academic field which have the competence and tools to evaluate and monitor school pupils and students



Andreea Chelaru

Project Manager

For those who were, are and will be Roma students of Medicine,

I don't know how many of you consider yourselves „students of Medicine” and how many of you are „Roma students of Medicine”. How many of you are preparing to become „doctors” and how many „Roma doctors”?

I encourage you to join the profession, using your ethnicity as an advantage, within a framework which can define you. First of all, because you are in the vanguard. The next generations will look at you and want to change the attitudes of people regarding the Roma. You will prove to all of them that performance and profession don't have anything to do with ethnic background, but with ability and determination. In the second place, without realising, you already are or will be a A Generation of Roma Specialists in the Medical Field Program. And for this, I thank you!

Ionuț Codreanu

Editor and coordinator

When I was 13 years old I was dreaming about becoming an air force pilot and I found many ways to justify my decision. The most important was that I would have the opportunity to flirt with prestige, represented by my uniform. However suddenly my neighbour, Mr. Florin, an electronic engineer, „woke me up”. In his eyes, as weak as I was, I could have aspired for the post of a mechanic at best.

„Have you seen what real pilots look like, Ionuț? They’re tall and strong, like mountains, ready to fight. Why would you want to become a pilot?”

When I was 14 years old, even though I didn’t have any aptitude for technology, I almost applied for an industrial high-school. Once upon a time, industry was a great place to work and for me this seemed to be the best option. I wasn’t so pleased to wear a miner’s overalls, but an engineer’s helmet was all right. In the 8th grade my maths teacher told me that she couldn’t live with the idea that I could be a dirty worker. She gave me homework: I had to take an exam, to pass the exam and be accepted to an IT profile in one of the top high-schools in my town. This is exactly what I did - and I was a little nervous. Two weeks later after high-school started, I went to the principal’s office to switch from Maths to Language. I knew that I had no chance to be great at applied sciences. Fortunately, I succeeded to convince „the authorities” that a good humanist is always better than a bad IT specialist.

I am 30 years old and I look at changes in my „career plan” and I am amazed by the patience and energy of people around me. They supported me unconditionally and accepted all my whims, justified by the reasoning that „it’s important to do in life what you like and let nobody judge you!”

At that moment, I had the chance to work on a three-year project, where hundreds of young Roma could realise their dreams of wearing scrubs and

taking care of our health. Some of them were already resident doctors, others had butterflies in their stomach during exams or were being trained to offer us good medical services. From some of them I found out that "A Generation of Roma Specialists in the Medical Field Program" was another chance for them to climb a few more steps in their career. But from most of them, I found out that this project was the only card they had left to play - the hope that they would have the chance to become real doctors. They couldn't change their minds because the expectations were so high.



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Asociația Agenției de Monitorizare a Presei

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Program title: European Social Fund Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007 - 2013

Invest in people!

Project title: A Generation of Roma Specialists in the Medical Field Program

Contract: POSDRU/96/6.2/S/62047

Editor: ActiveWatch - Media Monitoring Agency

Romanian version publication date: December 2013

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