



Funded by
the European Union

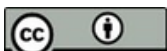
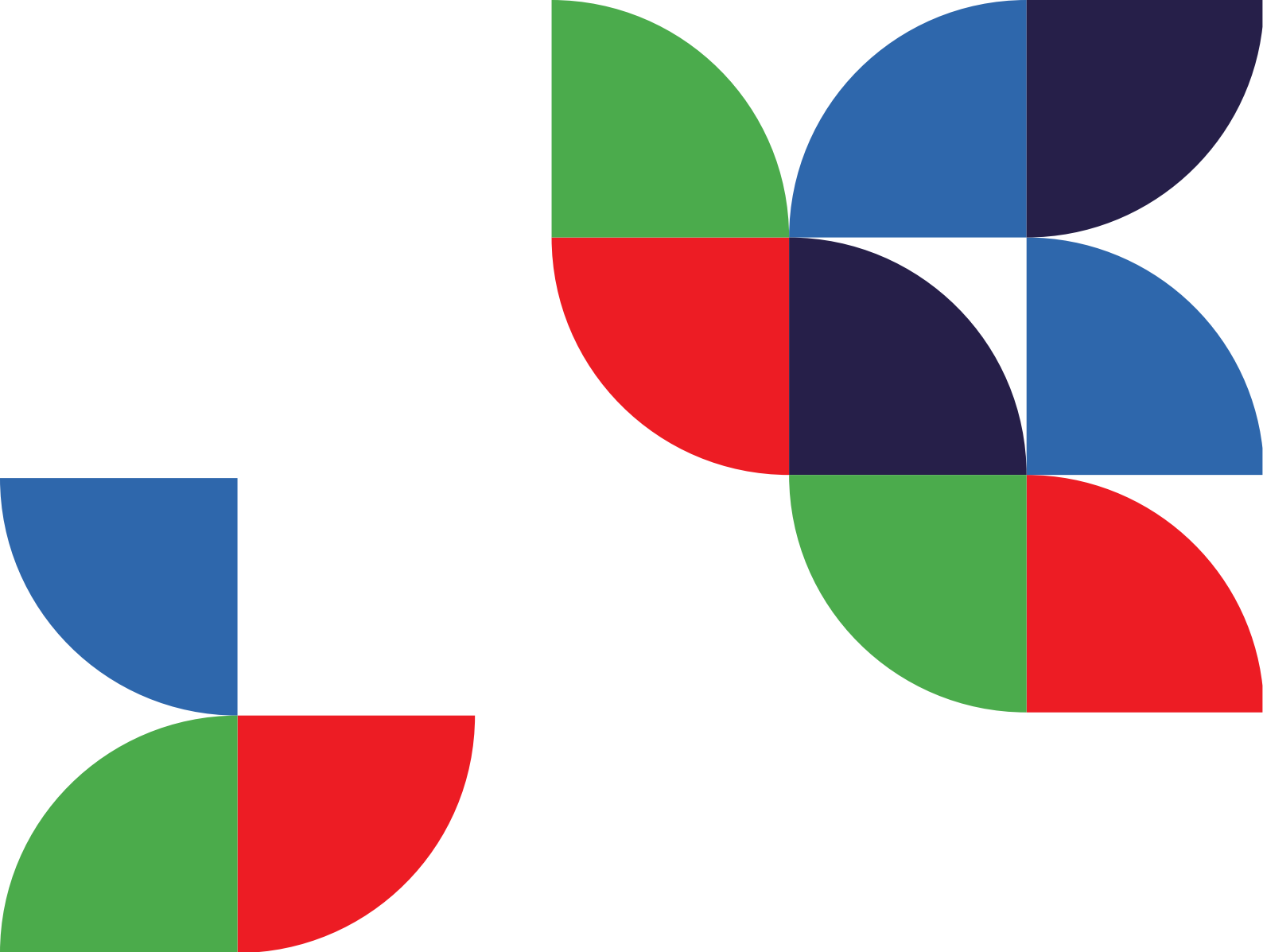


Implemented by
Roma Active
Albania



2025 EU award for
ROMA
INTEGRATION
in the Western Balkans
and Türkiye





The European Commission is not liable for any consequence stemming from the reuse of this publication.

Brussels: Directorate-General for Enlargement and the Eastern Neighbourhood, 2025

© European Union, 2025

The reuse policy of European Commission documents is implemented by the Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39). Except otherwise noted, the reuse of this document is authorised under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY 4.0) licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). This means that reuse is allowed provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated.

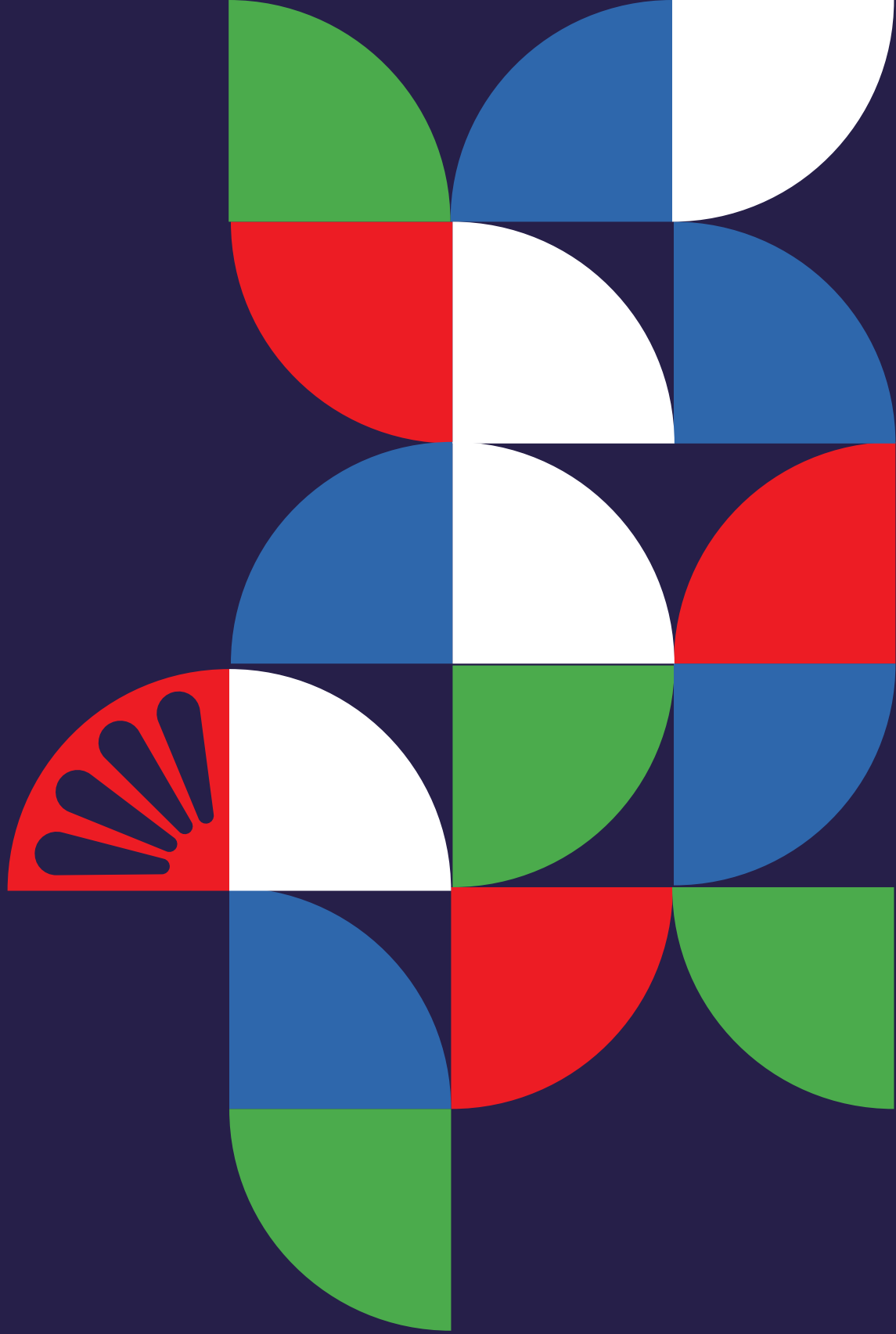
For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the European Union, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective rightholders.



Contents

Foreword	5
Roma Women Rights Centre – Albania	6
Latif Kazanxhiu – Albania	8
Romska djevojka – Romani Ćej – Bosnia and Herzegovina	10
Mujo Fafulić – Bosnia and Herzegovina	12
Roma Versitas Kosovo – Kosovo	14
Orhan Butic – Kosovo	16
Balkan Sunflowers Kosova (BSFK) – Kosovo	18
Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation – Montenegro	20
Sebastijan Baftijari – Montenegro	22
Senada Sali – North Macedonia	24
Doan Sulejmanoski – North Macedonia	26
Center for Youth Integration (CYI) – Serbia	28
Music Art Project (MAP) – Türkiye	30
Şişli Municipality – Türkiye	32
Tugay Aslım – Türkiye	34





Foreword

The EU Award for Roma Integration in the Western Balkans and Türkiye, now in its sixth edition, remains dedicated to recognizing and honoring individuals and organizations making a meaningful impact in advancing Roma inclusion.

This year, the focus of the award is on education—a sector that shapes futures more profoundly than any other.

Education is much more than just attending school. It is the foundation of dignity, opportunity, and full participation in society. It is where exclusion begins and where inclusion takes root.

The European Union and Roma Active Albania are honored to present the winners of this year's award. Your perseverance and commitment to uplifting your communities have been truly inspiring. Your actions and achievements show that Roma people have the potential to play an integral role in society.

The winners of this year send a powerful message: individuals from all backgrounds can contribute to meaningful and lasting change—a message that we can all embrace.





Roma Women Rights Centre

Albania

The Roma Women Rights Centre (RWRC), founded in 2012 and led entirely by Roma women, focuses on improving access to education and justice for Roma children and women. In 2024, the organization played a key role in helping close two segregated schools in Berat, while supporting 63 Roma and Egyptian children to transition to mainstream education.

Beyond formal education, RWRC helps adults return to school, offering part-time learning opportunities and support with certification. In the past year, over 600 adults have been supported in continuing their education, and 16 Roma women were able to start their own small businesses after receiving vocational training and mentoring.

RWRC's ongoing efforts focus on empowering Roma women to become active participants in social and institutional life. The organization is also working to strengthen accountability in the education system and push for stronger protections against school segregation.



“Education begins with dignity.
When Roma girls walk into
inclusive classrooms, they carry
the hopes of entire
generations.”
— The Roma Women Rights
Centre





Latif Kazanxhiu

Albania

For almost thirty years, Latif Kazanxhiu has been a driving force for Roma education in his community. In the 1990s, when Roma children were left out of the school system, he took the initiative to open a Romani-language school in his own home. He was also part of regional efforts to standardize Romani writing, helping preserve and strengthen Roma cultural identity.

His recent work has focused on bridging digital and educational gaps. Over the past year, Latif's center has supported returnee children with Albanian language classes, trained 60 Roma youth in vocational skills, and led awareness sessions for over 200 community members—many of them women. He also promotes digital literacy as a crucial tool for Roma youth in today's world.

Looking ahead, Latif plans to turn his center into a digital learning hub, where young people can access training, tutorials, and online tools to strengthen their skills and improve their career prospects.





“When you teach a child
to read in their mother
tongue, you give them
the power to write their
own future”

— Latif KAZANXHIU



Romska djevojka — Romani Ćej

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Since 2010, Romska djevojka – Romani Ćej, led by Roma women, has worked to improve educational access for Roma children, with a strong focus on girls. The organization emerged as a response to low school attendance and high dropout rates among Roma students in Prnjavor.

Through consistent community engagement, the organization has helped secure free school supplies and scholarships, provided mentorship, and offered creative and digital learning activities. Their cultural mediators have built trust between families and schools, helping to increase parental involvement and reduce dropout rates.

Looking forward, Romani Ćej plans to expand their work in civic education and support for Roma women, including in health and employment. Their approach centers on building confidence among Roma girls and ensuring their inclusion in education and public life.



“We don’t just hand out school supplies—we open doors for Roma girls to become students, leaders, and creators of change.”

— Romska djevojka-Romani Ćej





Mujo Fafulic

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mujo Fafulić has spent over 20 years working to improve access to education for Roma children in the municipality of Kakanj. His grassroots efforts have contributed to a steady increase in enrollment, with the number of Roma students rising from 54 in 2013 to 146 in 2024.

His approach combines preschool preparation, distribution of school materials, and strong family outreach. In the past year, he supported over 200 children with supplies, worked with 50 preschoolers through a Toy Library initiative, and organized workshops for more than 100 parents to raise awareness on the importance of education.

In his role as a local councillor, Mujo continues to advocate for systemic improvements in education while keeping close ties to the families he works with. His work shows how long-term community engagement can build trust and create lasting change.





“Real transformation happens when families trust schools, and schools believe in Roma children.”
— Mujo FAFULIĆ



Roma Versitas Kosovo

Kosovo*

Since 2017, Roma Versitas Kosovo (RVK) has worked to support Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian youth in higher education. Through academic mentoring, scholarships, and vocational training, they've built a strong foundation for youth to pursue professional paths and leadership roles.

In the past year alone, RVK held over 500 mentoring sessions, supported 30 students with internships, and trained 60 Roma women in employment-oriented skills. Their study visits and public awareness events have helped inspire young people to view education as a tool for change.

RVK's future work includes scaling their Win4VET project and launching new initiatives to support early childhood development and educational access in marginalized communities.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999n and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence .



“When Roma youth take pride in who they are and what they can become, education becomes unstoppable.”

— Roma Versitas Kosovo





Orhan Butic

Kosovo

Orhan Butic has spent nearly two decades working to support early childhood education among Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities in Kosovo. He focuses on helping children who return from abroad to reintegrate into the school system, often starting with basic language and literacy support.

In 2024, he mentored 20 children, created individual learning plans for 80, and assisted 50 families with school enrollment. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he coordinated the donation of more than 60 computers, helping children continue their education from home. His work bridges the gap between schools and families who often feel excluded from institutional support.

Looking ahead, Orhan plans to increase support for Roma girls and expand collaboration with schools and local authorities to ensure Roma children receive consistent, long-term educational support.





“The earlier we start, the stronger we build. Every Roma child deserves support from their very first steps.”

— Orhan BUTIC



Balkan Sunflowers Kosova

Kosovo

Balkan Sunflowers Kosovo (BSFK) is a long-standing organization supporting community-based education through five Learning Centers across Kosovo. Every day, over 600 Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian children benefit from tutoring, preschool activities, mentoring, and digital learning resources.

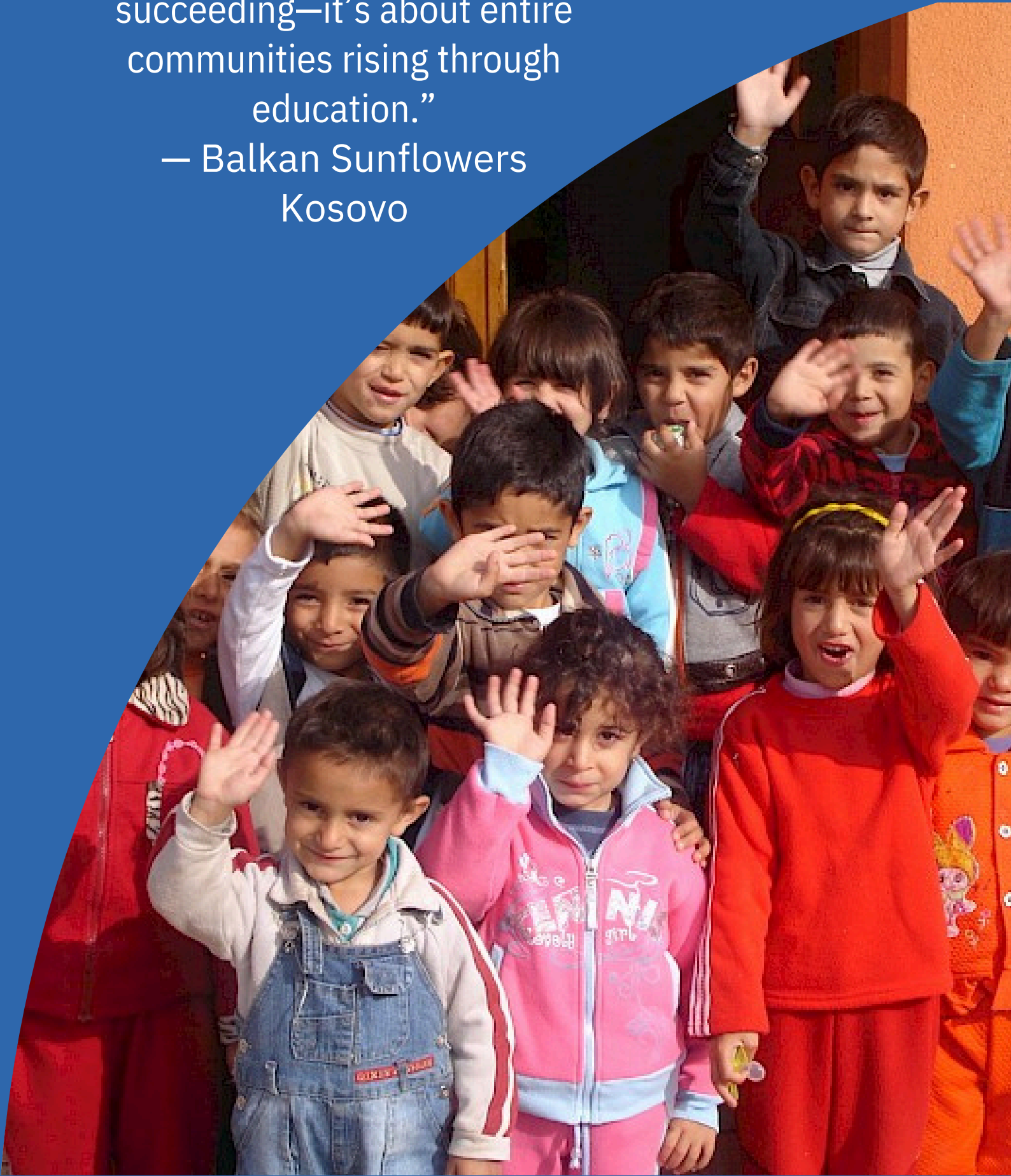
In 2024, BSFK supported 80 preschool enrollments, helped 120 students transition to high school, and trained 90 youth in vocational and digital skills. Their peer tutor model and parental engagement sessions have proven to be key components in increasing school completion rates and reducing dropout.

BSFK plans to expand their digital literacy programs and strengthen collaboration with public institutions, ensuring that community-driven education continues to shape opportunities for Roma children.



“It’s not about one child succeeding—it’s about entire communities rising through education.”

— Balkan Sunflowers
Kosovo





Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation

Montenegro

Montenegro's Ministry of Education has developed national programs aimed at improving access to education for Roma and Egyptian students. Their approach includes early childhood education, school transport, and financial aid to support inclusion at all levels.

In 2024, the Ministry provided literacy support for 99 adults, distributed over €500,000 in scholarships, and invested in teacher training and antigypsyism awareness. Rural areas now benefit from mobile kindergartens, and schools have additional support from trained Roma mediators.

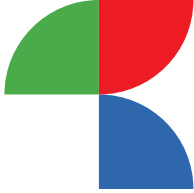
Looking ahead, the Ministry aims to improve access to digital education and expand the number of mediators working in schools. Their long-term goal is to ensure that every child in Montenegro has an equal opportunity to succeed in school—regardless of their background.





“Access means opportunity. Our goal is that no Roma child ever feels school is not meant for them.”

— Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation



Sebastijan Baftijari

Montenegro

Sebastijan Baftijari is a young activist who is building support systems for Roma and Egyptian students through peer mentoring and environmental education. As a high school student, he launched a school club that offered tutoring, academic mentoring, and motivational activities for more than 120 Roma youth.

In addition to supporting students in secondary education, Sebastijan has worked as a Roma mediator in primary schools, helping younger children overcome language barriers and strengthen their learning outcomes. In 2023, he founded the NGO RE Green, which links education to environmental awareness and digital literacy.

Sebastijan is now focused on expanding RE Green into a broader platform for youth-led action. His goal is to create safe spaces where young people can gain skills, speak up, and shape the future of their communities.



“We’re not just tutoring students—
we’re building bridges between
identity, knowledge, and self-
belief.”

— Sebastijan BAFTIJARI





Senada Sali

North Macedonia

Senada Sali is a Roma lawyer whose groundbreaking legal work has pushed forward the fight against school segregation in North Macedonia. In 2023, she led a case before the European Court of Human Rights that ruled in favor of Roma children who had been placed in separate classrooms based on ethnicity.

Since that decision, Senada has focused on making sure the ruling leads to real change. She works with families, teachers, and institutions to raise awareness about the right to inclusive education, while training Roma youth and parents on how to advocate for their rights.

Her future work will build on these efforts through strategic litigation, community engagement, and public campaigns that ensure Roma children are treated equally and with dignity in the classroom.





“A legal win is only the beginning. Real change happens when Roma children see that school is a place for them.”
— Senada SALI



Doan Sulejmanoski

North Macedonia

Doan Sulejmanoski is a high school principal, lawyer, and long-time advocate for Roma youth. Leading a school where the majority of students are Roma, he focuses on creating a safe and encouraging learning environment where students can develop leadership skills and civic awareness.

In 2024, Doan mentored more than 100 students and trained 150 young Roma in public speaking, human rights, and active citizenship. His support doesn't stop in the classroom—he also helps youth implement their own advocacy projects and participate in community life.

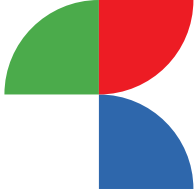
Doan plans to expand educational programs that connect Roma students to opportunities in law, media, and public institutions. His mission is clear: to prepare the next generation of Roma youth not only to succeed—but to lead.



“We teach law, but also how to speak up. Roma students are not just participants—they are future advocates.”

— Doan SULEJMANOSKI





Center for Youth Integration

Serbia

The Center for Youth Integration (CYI) has been working with Roma children in street situations for over 15 years. Through its Drop-In Shelters, CYI provides daily support including tutoring, meals, hygiene services, and psychological care—reaching more than 500 children each year.

In 2024, CYI's model led to a sharp reduction in dropout rates among its beneficiaries, from 70% down to 20%. The center also helped 112 Roma adolescents develop skills and find jobs or internships, connecting education with long-term stability.

CYI plans to expand its work through mobile outreach units and stronger coordination with public institutions. Their holistic approach ensures that even the most vulnerable Roma children have a path to education and support.





“When we meet children
where they are, education
becomes a right—not a
privilege.”

— Center for Youth
Integration



Music Art Project

Serbia

Music Art Project (MAP) has spent more than a decade using music as a way to bring Roma and non-Roma children together. Through its Music of Hope program, MAP has helped over 2,500 children build confidence, discipline, and a sense of belonging by performing in orchestras and choirs.

In 2024, the organization developed a new diversity-sensitive curriculum and trained 120 teachers to implement it in inclusive learning environments. Roma children who were once isolated or disengaged now perform in major theatres and cultural events, showing what's possible when talent is supported.

MAP plans to expand its reach across Serbia by partnering with schools in underserved areas. By combining artistic expression with structured learning, it continues to prove that education can be creative, inclusive, and transformative.



“Music gives Roma children the stage they were denied—and the confidence to never leave it again.”
— Music Art Project





Şişli Municipality

Türkiye

Şişli Municipality has introduced targeted programs to support Roma inclusion through education, nutrition, and community services. In the neighborhoods of Kuştepe and İzzetpaşa, they provide tutoring, creative workshops, and hot meals to more than 50 Roma children every day.

In addition to working with children, the municipality runs literacy and vocational training for Roma women, and provides families with school materials and winter essentials. A mentorship program launched in partnership with universities has helped build bridges between Roma and non-Roma youth.

Looking forward, Şişli Municipality plans to open a dedicated study center and expand vocational and early learning programs. Their work shows how local governments can lead the way in supporting Roma families with practical, sustained efforts.





“Local action can change lives. Education is not charity—it’s justice, and it starts in every neighborhood.”
— Şişli Municipality



Tugay Aslım

Türkiye

Tugay Aslım is a Roma educator and researcher who has developed community-based programs that support Roma children—especially girls and returnee families—through mentorship, education, and sports. His work focuses on creating safe, motivating spaces where children are encouraged to stay in school.

Since 2017, he has helped hundreds of Roma students through projects like Sister, Brother, Sibling, where Roma youth receive mentoring from peers and role models. In 2023, he co-founded local sports clubs that tie participation to school attendance, using sports to keep students engaged in education.

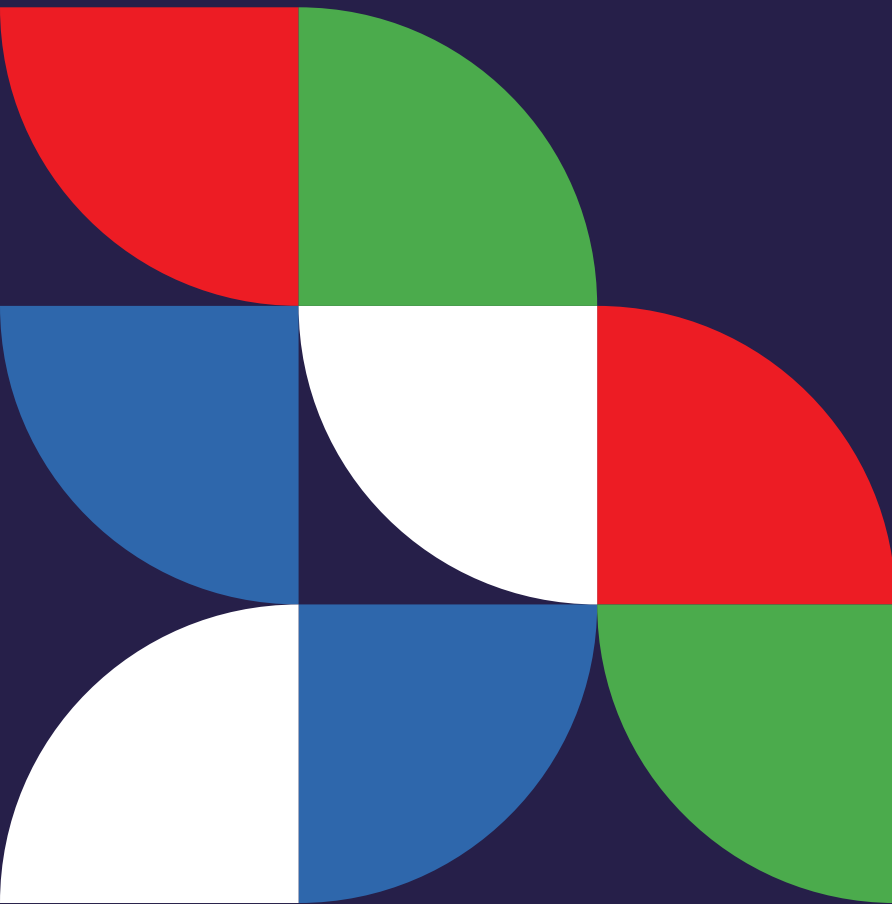
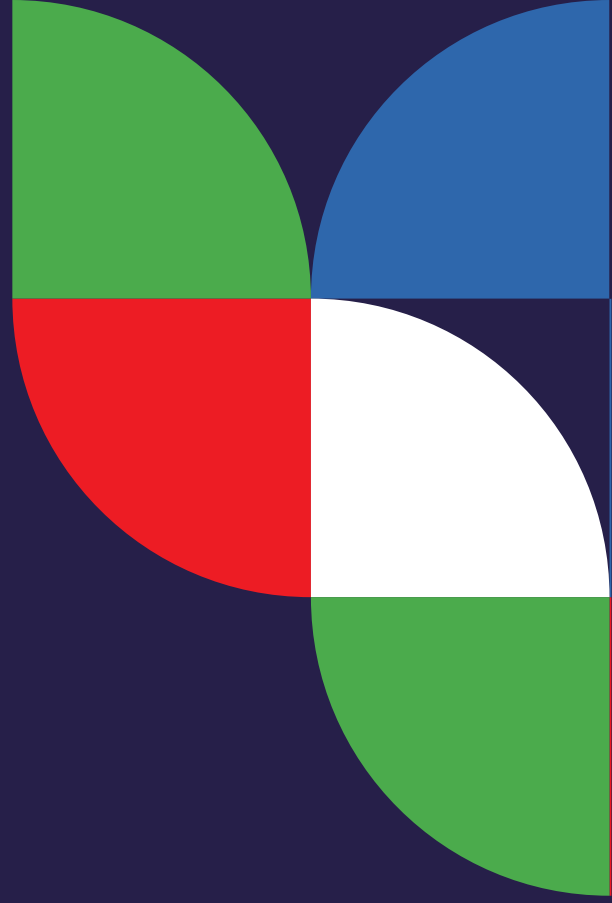
Tugay plans to establish a Roma Coordination Center that will offer mentoring, early education, and digital access. He is also developing a platform that connects Roma youth to scholarship and employment opportunities, bridging education with real-life prospects.

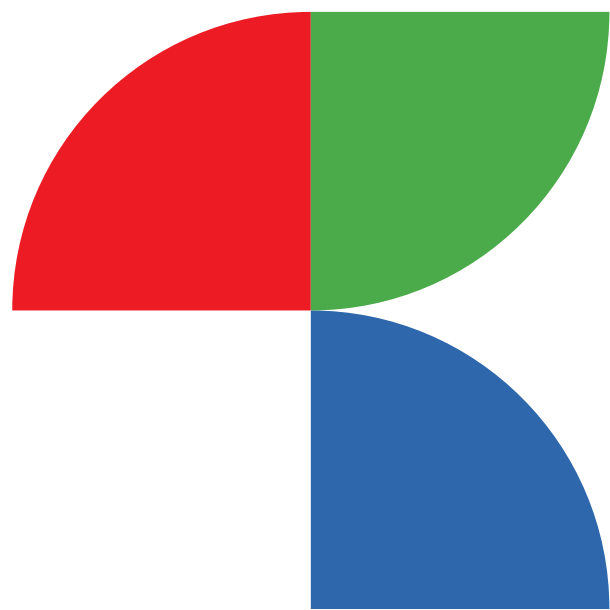
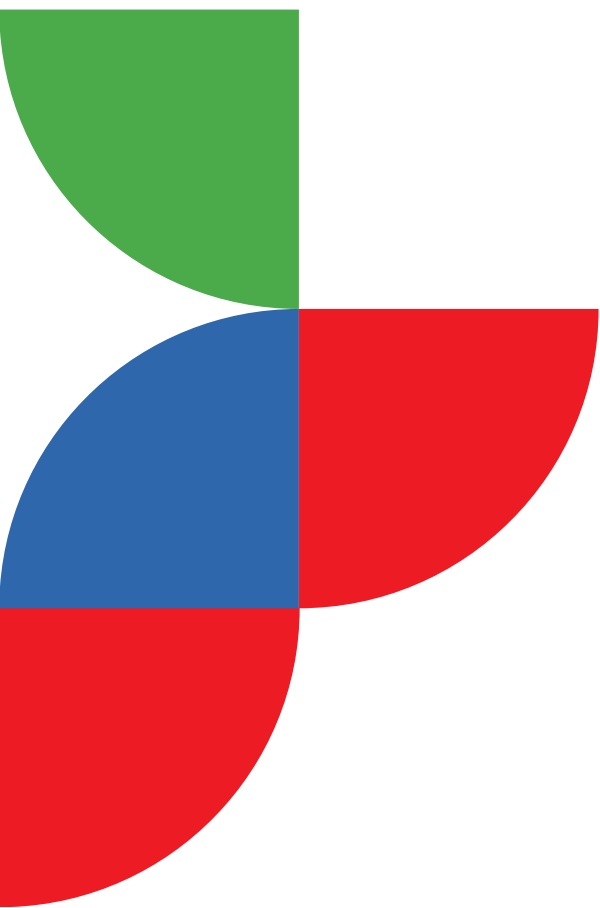
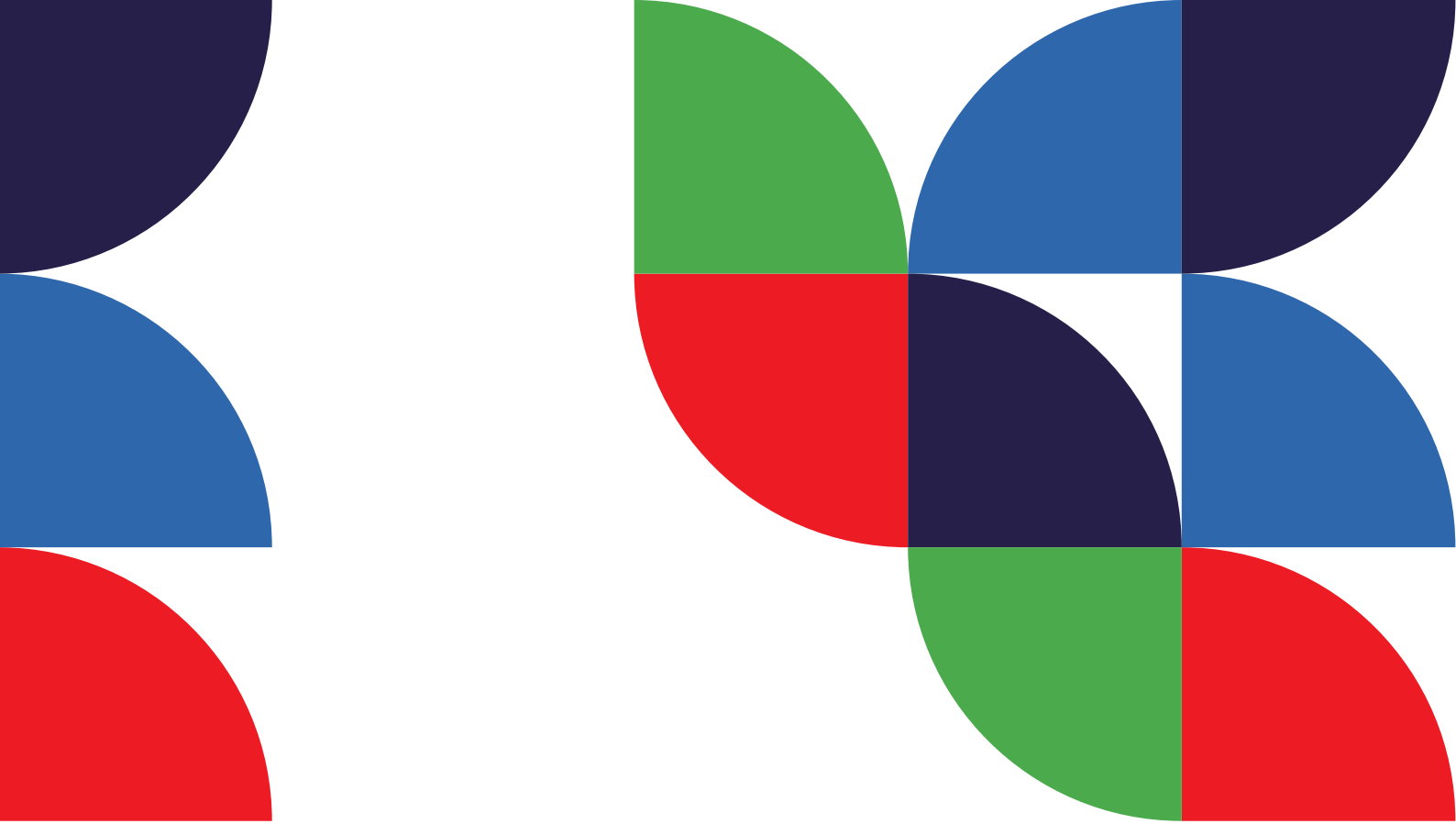


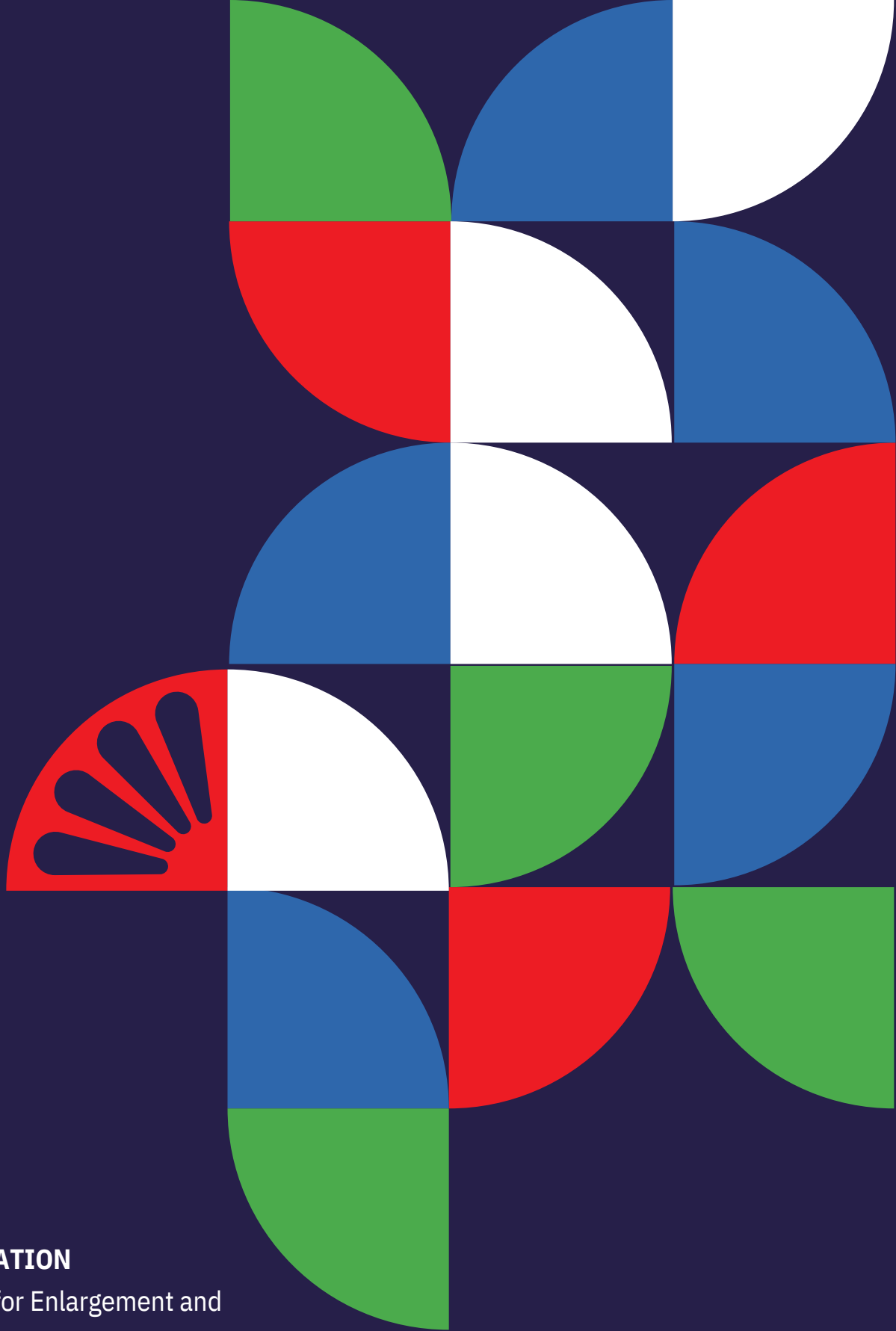
“We show Roma children they belong—in school, in sports, in society. And once they believe it, they soar.”

— Tugay ASLIM









FOR MORE INFORMATION

Directorate-General for Enlargement and
the Eastern Neighbourhood (DG ENEST)

European Commission

Rue de la Loi 15,

1040 Bruxelles/Brussels,

Belgium