

Call for applications: Scholarship Support for the Next Generation of Roma Health Professionals for the 2018 – 2019 academic year

In the framework of the Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria under the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014 – 2021

Call for Applications and Application Guidelines

1. Introduction

The present call for scholarship applications in support of Roma students enrolled in medical studies is organized within the framework of the Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria under the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2014 – 2021. Donor states Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway have awarded EUR 15 500 000 to the Active Citizens Fund in Bulgaria per a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Republic of Bulgaria. The objective of the Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria is: *“Civil society and active citizenship strengthened and vulnerable groups empowered”*. The fund is operated by Open Society Institute – Sofia in partnership with the Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation and the Trust for Social Achievement Foundation (TSA). The budget of the Roma scholarship component (scholarship program) administered by TSA amounts to EUR 600 000. A complementary project “Mentorship support for the next generation of Roma health professionals” will be implemented by TSA under the Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria in connection with the Roma scholarship component. The call contributes to the outcome “Vulnerable groups are empowered”, output “CSOs promote educational inclusion and achievement of vulnerable groups” under which a total of 54 unique beneficiaries of scholarships and mentoring are expected to be supported.

2. Program overview, goals and expected results of the scholarship program

The scholarship program aims to contribute towards the creation of a community of qualified health professionals who are not only motivated to contribute to solving the health issues surrounding the Roma communities, but will also become role models for aspiring Roma youth.

The beneficiaries of the program will receive financial support for the period of one academic year as well as mentorship support from experienced health professionals.¹ Additionally, the scholars will have the opportunity to apply for financial support to implement their own small projects, such as campaigns to raise awareness of common diseases or to improve the health situation of the Roma.

The scholarship program will start in the 2018-2019 academic year and will have a duration of six years. Approximately 240 annual scholarships will be awarded within this six-year period. Each individual scholarship will amount to between EUR 2350 and EUR 2650 depending on the discipline of the studies. The total budget for the 2018 – 2019 academic year is EUR 47 500.

3. Who can apply for a scholarship

Eligibility criteria:

In order to be considered eligible in the competition, applicants must fulfill the following two eligibility criteria:

- 1) The candidate is a Bulgarian citizen or a legal resident in the Republic of Bulgaria and openly declares his/her Roma origin.²
- 2) In the 2018-2019 academic year the applicant will be:
 - a) pursuing tertiary studies in an accredited higher education institution in Bulgaria for a Bachelor's or a Master's degree in one of the following disciplines:
 - ✓ Priority disciplines: **medicine, dental medicine, pharmacy, nurse, midwife.**
 - ✓ Other eligible disciplines: lab technician, assistant-pharmacist, rehabilitation, X-ray lab technician, dental technician, speech therapist, physiotherapist, geriatric care.
 - ✓ Applicants in the disciplines health management or management of health care will also be considered eligible provided that the applicant has already obtained a tertiary degree in one of the abovementioned disciplines

or

 - b) a doctoral student at a medical/health faculty of an accredited higher education institution in Bulgaria.

Applicants who will be first-year students in their respective degree programs during the 2018-2019 academic year will be considered with priority.

¹ In the framework of a pre-defined project "Mentorship support for the next generation of Roma health professionals" which will be implemented by TSA under the Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria.

² For the purposes of the scholarship program, in accordance with the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and the National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria, the notion "Roma" is employed as an umbrella term, which includes both Bulgarian citizens in a vulnerable socio-economic condition who identify themselves as Roma, and citizens in a similar situation, defined by the majority as Roma, regardless of their self-identification, including representatives of the groups Yerlii, Kaldarashi, Kalaidjii, Rudari, Vlah, Millet, and others.

Non-eligible applicants will not be considered.

4. Submission of applications, required documents and application deadline

The applicant must attach the following documents to their application:

1. A **letter of application** signed personally by the applicant (in accordance with the attached template)

2. **Letter of motivation**

Clarification: All applicants must submit a letter of motivation. It should focus on their motivation to participate in the program, the reasons why they have chosen the discipline of their studies, and how they imagine their future professional realization. The letter should not exceed two pages or 4500 characters.

3. For students in the first year of their respective degree programs and doctoral students: **a copy of a diploma for secondary or tertiary education**

Clarification: Applicants who will be first-year students in their respective degree programs during the 2018-2019 academic year must submit a copy of their diploma for secondary education containing the applicant's grades in each subject, including the results of the final exams. Alternatively, if the applicant has already obtained a diploma for completing tertiary education (e.g. the applicant already has a Bachelor's degree), he/she can choose to submit a copy of this diploma instead of the secondary education diploma.

This requirement also applies to all doctoral students regardless of the year of the doctoral degree program they are in.

4. For students in the first year of their respective degree programs and doctoral students: **a document proving their acceptance at the medical university/college** in the respective discipline and degree

Clarification: Applicants who will be first-year students in the 2018-2019 academic year must provide a document certifying that they have been accepted or enrolled in the university/college in the discipline indicated on the application form. The document must be issued by the relevant university or college and indicate the discipline and degree.

This requirement also applies to all doctoral students regardless of the year of the doctoral degree program they are in.

5. For students in the second or higher year of their respective degree programs: **Transcript of records for the last completed academic year**

Clarification: Applicants who will be in the second or higher year of their respective degree programs in the 2018-2019 academic year must provide a transcript of records containing the results of all mandatory exams from the last completed academic year. Only transcripts of records which have been signed and stamped by a representative of the issuing university/college will be considered valid.

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6. **A reference letter** issued by a teacher, professor, mentor or employer of the applicant or by a representative of an NGO where the applicant has been actively involved
Clarification: All applicants must submit a reference letter issued by a teacher, professor, mentor or employer of the applicant or by a representative of an NGO where the applicant has been engaged. The reference letter must be detailed and focus on observations of the candidate's qualities. It should contain the name, signature, position and contact details of the author, including a telephone number on which he/she can be reached. The letter must also indicate the date on which it was issued. Only reference letters, issued during the six months prior to the application submission will be considered valid. The letter of reference does not have to be written specifically to serve the purpose of applying to this scholarship program.
7. **For applicants under the age of 18:** a declaration signed by a parent or guardian, indicating their agreement that the minor can participate in the program (in accordance with the attached template)
8. **Optional: Proof of engagement in volunteer activities or other active engagement on local level**
Clarification: Applicants may choose to submit a document certifying their engagement in volunteer activities or another active engagement at the local level. Only documents which have been signed by a representative of the organization or institution where the applicant has volunteered and bear the stamp of the organization/institution will be considered. Applications which contain such proof of participation in voluntary activities will be awarded additional points in the evaluation phase.

In order to apply, candidates must submit an online application form to which they must attach scanned copies of the required documents.

The online application form is available at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/S3TDGTB>

All scanned documents attached to the online application must be clearly legible.

The deadline for submission of the application including all required documents is: **27.09.2018, 6 PM**

Attention: We strongly advise all applicants not to wait until the last moment to submit their applications. TSA is not responsible for the quality of the candidate's internet connection!

Administrative compliance of the received applications:

Applications which do not meet the following administrative criteria will not be considered:

- 1) The application must be submitted electronically by filling in the application form in Bulgarian language and in Cyrillic characters prior to the application deadline;
- 2) All required documents listed above in the current section must be attached, completed according to the requirements, and legible.

TSA will notify each applicant of the result of the administrative review of his/her application by sending an e-mail to the e-mail address indicated in the respective application form within 3 working days after the application submission deadline has expired.

If the application does not comply with the administrative requirements of the program, the respective applicant will be given the opportunity to send additional documents within 5 working days as instructed by TSA.

Applicants, whose documents have been deemed noncompliant with the administrative criteria after the expiration of this additional period, may require a review of this decision within 5 working days after they have been notified of the result of the administrative review. To do this, they must send a message to complaints@tsa-bulgaria.org entitled "Request for application review".

5. Evaluation, selection and ranking of the candidates

The application review will follow a three-stage process: 1) Administrative review, 2) Evaluation of the submitted applications and 3) Interview.

✓ Stage 1

The first stage of the review will examine whether the applicants comply with the administrative and eligibility criteria listed in section 3 and 4 above. Only applicants who are in compliance with these criteria will be admitted to the next stage of the selection procedure.

✓ Stage 2

During the second stage of review, the applications will be evaluated by a Selection Committee composed of five experts according to the following scoring system:

Criterion		Score
1	Average grade of the diploma for secondary education/transcript of records/diploma for tertiary education	Maximum score: 45
2	Letter of motivation (content, structure, language/writing skills)	Maximum score: 20
3	Reference letter	Maximum score: 15
4	Bonus points for volunteer activity or other active engagement at the local level attested by a valid document	Maximum score: 15
5	Bonus points for applicants in the disciplines: medicine, dental medicine, pharmacy, nurse, midwife	20 points
6	Bonus points for applicants who will be first-year students of the chosen degree program in the 2018-2019 academic year	20 points
Maximum score from Stage 2: 135		

Based on the awarded score, the selection committee will decide which of the applicants will be admitted to the next stage of the selection process. The applicants who continue to the next stage will be invited to an in-person interview with the Selection Committee.

✓ **Stage 3**

In the third stage of review, the selection committee will evaluate the applicants’ performance in the interview according to the following scoring system:

Criterion		Score
1	Motivation to participate in the program	Maximum score: 20
2	Engagement with issues surrounding the Roma communities	Maximum score: 10
3	Communication skills	Maximum score: 5
Maximum score from Stage 3: 35		

The overall score of the applicant is the sum of his/her score from Stage 2 and Stage 3. The final ranking of the candidates will be prepared based on this score.

The applications will be divided in three groups: approved, rejected and waiting list. The approved candidates will receive an official notification and a scholarship agreement which they will be required to sign and send back within one week. If the selected applicant does not comply with this requirement, an application from the waiting list will be approved in his/her place. The decisions of the selection committee are final and not subject to appeal.

Timeline

- Application submission deadline: **27.09.2018, 6 PM**
- Notification of the results from Stage 1: **2.10.2018**
- Notification of the results from Stage 2: **19.10.2018**
- Interviews: **20-29.10.2018**
- Final selections announced: **30.10.2018**
- Waiting list selections announced: **until mid-November 2018**

TSA reserves the right to make changes in the notification deadlines. Any modifications of the deadlines will be published on www.socialachievement.org.

The final results of selection will be announced on the webpage of the Active Citizens Fund www.activecitizensfund.bg and on the webpage of TSA www.socialachievement.org.

6. Contracting and conditions for remaining in the program

Prior to signing a scholarship agreement, the applicant must provide all documents attached to the electronic application in paper form by sending them per post, per courier or by submitting them personally to the following address: "Trust for Social Achievement", bul. "Patriarh Evtimii" 64, Sofia 1000.

When signing a contract, **the applicant is required to declare that he/she will not receive scholarship support from another source for the 2018-2019 academic year** by marking the respective field in the contract form. The regular scholarships that are awarded by higher educational institutions to their students based on achievement, do not need to be declared.

The selected candidates will receive scholarship and mentorship support for the period of one academic year. Once this period has expired, the beneficiaries of the program will have the opportunity to remain in the program for the following academic year *without having to reapply*, provided that they comply with the following criteria:

1. An average grade of
 - 4.00 for the previous academic year for beneficiaries in the disciplines medicine, dental medicine and pharmacy
 - 4.50 for the previous academic year for beneficiaries in the other eligible disciplines
2. Passed at least 50% of the exams due for the previous academic year;
3. Regular participation in mentorship meetings;
4. Participation in at least one of the program events organized during the academic year;
5. Continuing to pursue the same degree in the same discipline and at the same medical school during the following academic year;
6. Submission of the requested form confirming the wish of the beneficiary to remain in the program.

Beneficiaries who do not comply with the criteria listed above will have the opportunity to re-apply in 2019 for the 2019-2020 academic year by submitting a full application including all required documents per the application guidelines.

7. Scholarship payment

The payment of each annual scholarship will be made in two equal disbursements. The first disbursement will be made at the beginning of the first semester, after signature of the scholarship agreement. The second disbursement will be made at the beginning of the second semester after submission of an interim report by the beneficiary. Further details are set out in the scholarship agreement.

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8. Questions concerning the application process

Questions concerning the application process may be sent via email at **med_scholarships@tsa-bulgaria.org** until **19.9.2018**. The team of TSA will send a response to the sender within three working days after the inquiry has been received. A list with the answers to the received questions will be published on www.socialachievement.org.

9. Attachments

1. Letter of Application (template)
2. Declaration of consent from a parent/guardian for applicants under the age of 18 (template)
3. Information regarding the administration of personal data of the scholarship applicants
4. Scholarship contract (template)

For more information:

For more information on the program, follow www.socialachievement.org

E-mail: med_scholarships@tsa-bulgaria.org

Facebook: [Next Roma Med](#)

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