

Under the patronage of Slovak President Peter Pellegrini  
and Public Defender of Rights Róbert Dobrovodský,  
Roma Spirit held its 16th edition.



24th of November 2024  
the Slovak Radio  
Bratislava

— *values* — *inspires* — *connects* —

## PROGRAM OF ROMA SPIRIT 2024



**MAGDALÉNA ROTHOVÁ**  
evening presenter



**STANO DANIEL**  
evening presenter



**RICCO ŠARKÖZI**  
singer and finalist of Roma Spirit  
2018 in the Category of Culture



**BARBORA BOTOŠOVÁ**  
violinist, music producer and composer,  
laureate of the Roma Spirit 2023 Award  
in the Category of Culture



**KATKA KOŠČOVÁ  
& DANIEL ŠPINAR**  
singer and pianist, two performers  
and musical co-creators



**LUCIA HURAJOVÁ**  
Slovak actress  
and presenter



**AGATA SIEMASZKO**  
Polish singer



**DIVÉ MAKY**  
exceptionally gifted Roma children  
of the scholarship program



**JAN BENDIG**  
Czech singer



**ANASTASIJA MELENCOVA**  
artist, educator, and leading  
representative of the Kharkiv School  
of Sand Animation.



**MICHELLE BOBEKOVÁ**  
Slovak singer

and Ernest Kováč, Alexandra Bartošová, Timea Kóšová, Patrik Šarkozi, Eugen Botoš,  
Pavol Bereza, Drahoslav Bango, Juraj Raši, Marcel Comendant and others.

Slovak Television will broadcast Roma Spirit 2024 at **8:10 PM on December 5th** on the channel **:2**



### Support Roma Spirit!

Roma Spirit is possible through your generous support and collaboration. Your contributions promote courage, inclusion, and coexistence. Scan the QR code to join those who make a positive difference through their actions.

Thank you for being part of Roma Spirit!

[www.romaspirit.sk](http://www.romaspirit.sk)



PAY by square



Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, Dearest friends,

We are delighted to welcome you to the 16th edition of the Roma Spirit Awards, which each year establish a special forum for the public to honour bravery, tenacity, and courage. Roma Spirit was established as a celebration of actions and initiatives that demonstrate the seemingly limitless potential of belonging and a sense of shared responsibility in the pursuit of a better world.

We are more in need than ever of understanding one another and demonstrating humanity in day-to-day interactions. Roma Spirit is about having the will to take action, the bravery to keep trying, and the fortitude to keep going. Concrete actions demonstrate that people's humanity cannot be suppressed.

For this reason, I am incredibly grateful and proud that we are working together to create a tradition that inspires and sets a good example for our society.

This year's Roma Spirit, in my opinion, will once more highlight our best qualities—the desire to work together to comprehend and better the society in which we live. Only we are capable of doing this.

We appreciate your support and contributions to the accomplishment of this mission.



Regards,  
Lubomíra Slušná - Franz

author of Roma Spirit,  
Founder and President of the Association for  
Culture, Education and Communication (ACEC)

**We thank everyone who, through their actions, helps to bridge understanding gaps, foster mutual respect, and strengthen community bonds. Their efforts contribute to the development of a more inclusive and prosperous society.**

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**CATEGORY OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION** (p. 4)

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An award for the activities of a civic association, foundation, non-profit organisation, interest group, or other non-governmental organisation.

- ALTERNATÍVA – CENTRUM NEZÁVISLÉHO ŽIVOTA, N. O. (ALTERNATIVE – CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING, NPO, LUČENEC)
- GAŠTANOVÝ KONÍK (CHESTNUT LITTLE HORSE)
- POTRAVINOVÁ BANKA SLOVENSKA, O. Z. (SLOVAK FOOD BANK, CIVIC ASSOCIATION)

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**CATEGORY OF COMPANY AND EMPLOYER** (p. 7)

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An award given for activities performed by a company, business entity, organisation, or institution, such as a kindergarten, university, or research centre.

- DEF GROUP S.R.O., VEĽKÝ KRŤIŠ
- DUŠAN DEME, LUČENEC
- PRIMARY SCHOOL ZLATÉ KLASY

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**CATEGORY OF VILLAGE AND TOWN** (p. 10)

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An award for municipalities, cities, and territorial units that, through self-government, have contributed to the Roma community's honour and peaceful coexistence.

- BÔRKA
- BUDIMÍR
- KESOVCE

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**CATEGORY OF PERSONALITY** (p. 13)

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An award given to an individual who has made a long-term contribution to improving the Roma community's situation and developing intercultural dialogue.

- ANNAMÁRIA KALOČAIOVÁ, BRATISLAVA
- JÁN DEME, RIMAVSKÁ SOBOTA
- RENÉ LUŽICA, BRATISLAVA

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**CATEGORY OF MEDIA** (p. 16)

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An award given to a journalist, mass media, or other form of mass communication that publishes objective, balanced information or contributes significantly to the social understanding and respect.

- TOMÁŠ CSICSÓ, BRATISLAVA
- PRIMARY SCHOOL DRIENOVEC
- ZUZANA UHALOVÁ, POZDIŠOVCE

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**CATEGORY OF CULTURE** (p. 19)

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An award given to an individual or organisation in recognition of a lifetime of active effort and/or the implementation of activities that contribute to the positive presentation, preservation, or development of Roma culture and identity.

- MONIKA VONTSEZEMÜNOVÁ, BRATISLAVA
- OL'GA BODOROVÁ, RIMAVSKÁ SOBOTA
- TRIO PATKOLO, BRATISLAVA

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**CATEGORY OF THE ACT OF THE YEAR AWARD** (p. 22)

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The Act of the Year award is a special recognition for a worthy act that has saved a life, improved the quality of life of an individual or community, or is otherwise outstanding.

- DANIELA BERNATOVÁ, KAMENNÁ PORUBA
- JÁN POLHOŠ, HUNCOVCE
- ACTIVISTS FROM JAROVNICE AND HERMANOVCE

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**PANEL OF EXPERTS** (p. 25)

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**PANEL OF THE ACT OF THE YEAR AWARD** (p. 27)

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## Alternatíva – centrum nezávislého života, n. o. (ALTERNATIVE – CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING, NPO, LUČENEC)

LUČENEC

**Nomination for long-term support for young people with disabilities transitioning to active social and working lives. As part of the From School to Life program, the organisation offers comprehensive assistance through education, job placement, and collaboration with employers.**



The organisation's primary mission is to help young people transition from isolation to active social and working lives and to support their successful integration. The activities are aimed at helping young people with health and social disadvantages, with a particular emphasis on Roma youth aged 17 to 29.

As part of the Transit Program from School to Life, the organisation provides comprehensive support, which includes non-formal education, direct assistance in the workplace, and close collaboration with employers. The program helps clients develop work habits, improve social skills, and navigate the job market. Assistants provide direct support at work, assisting with adaptation, gaining work experience, and ensuring a safe environment for growth. Legal advice and financial literacy training are among the activities that significantly increase clients' chances of long-term employment and improve the quality of life for them and their families.

The organisation has received numerous awards for its pioneering work, including the National

Career Award. Career counselling confirms the Transit Practice - Path to Employment program's success as a model for supported employment. The organisation is a key partner in projects that promote the employment of disabled people, such as Profesia Lab.

In the future, the organisation hopes to establish the Transit Program as a social service and strengthen its sustainability by expanding partnerships and launching new projects. Its activities provide disadvantaged youth with new life perspectives, stability, and the opportunity to become full members of society.

*„It is crucial that our clients avoid being negatively evaluated and judged. In life, they need people around them with whom they can be real. We provide a confidential environment for them through a genuine, humane approach and interest.“*

– Ivana Šufliarska, Team Leader

## Gaštanový koník (Chestnut little horse)

SNINA

**Nominated for long-term systematic activities in early care, such as running a day care centre for children and their parents. The organisation raises awareness about early childhood development and provides practical knowledge for parents, including those from marginalised communities.**



Since 2015, the association has focused on providing high-quality early care to children under the age of seven and their families. It prioritises support for socially and health-disadvantaged groups, with a focus on marginalised communities in the Snina district.

The organisation began with extracurricular activities for children from socially disadvantaged families. Over time, the activities expanded to include community and school gardens, creative workshops for children and seniors, and comprehensive early intervention services.

Since 2020, they have worked tirelessly to provide early childhood care to families from marginalised communities, as well as to assist children and families fleeing the conflict in Ukraine. The activities involve local residents, employ Roma women, and help them integrate. Their inclusive projects create dialogue and mutual assistance among diverse generations and communities.

Currently, the Chestnut little horse employs ten people and works with Roma women as early care

assistants, providing new role models for children from generational poverty. Their activities primarily benefit children, people with health disabilities, and families in need, regardless of age or origin. They connect various groups of people, including seniors, children, Roma, and non-Roma. Volunteers also participate in the association's programs; in 2024, over forty of them assisted at one event.

They offer early care and intervention not only in Snina but also in nearby villages like Stakčín, Ubča, and Ulič. The association offers assistance on an individual basis, with a strong emphasis on inclusion.

*„The activities we engage in bring life to themselves. They are genuine; we do not create mindless and unfulfilling actions. The actors are everyday individuals from the surrounding area. We do not work with expensive tools; instead, we make them ourselves. In every job, we try to teach people how to bake bread rather than just providing it.“*

– Jana Karľová, founder of Chestnut little horse

## Potravinová banka Slovenska, o. z. (Slovak Food Bank, civic association)

LIPANY

**Nomination for many years of storing and distributing donated food to organisations that assist those in material need. In particular for organising food collections and raising awareness about reducing food waste.**



The organisation, founded in 2005, is now a major player in Slovakia's fight against food waste and support for those in need. The organisation collects surplus food from various sources, including retail chains, restaurants, public canteens, and farmers, through donations and volunteer efforts. The food is then distributed through partner organisations to those who require it most.

The organisation's logistics network extends across the entire Slovak Republic. Distribution points in cities like Košice, Nitra, and Lučenec enable us to quickly respond to donation requests and deliver them within three hours to ensure the transportation of food throughout the country. Collaboration with 650 businesses, 140 volunteers, and local communities has resulted in successful outcomes, the food bank effectively solves the complex challenges associated with aid distribution.

The organisation is also involved in legislative matters, where it has achieved significant success, such as the elimination of VAT on donated food.

This not only simplifies food donations, but it also supports environmentally friendly solutions that help reduce food waste.

In 2023, they distributed over 7.6 million kilograms of food, worth more than 6 million euros. Since 2011, this represents more than 39 million kilograms of safe food that would otherwise have gone to waste. The organisation's activities not only alleviate hunger but also strengthen the solidarity of society and contribute to environmental protection, resulting in a sustainable model of assisting those in need. Although the organisation's activities benefit thousands of people, it faces the challenge of securing ongoing financial resources to maintain its infrastructure and warehouses.

*„The Slovak Food Bank's activities attract hundreds of volunteers, donors, and supporters. This project would be unable to function without them.“*

– Marko Urdzik, founder of the organisation.



## Deaf Group s.r.o.

VELKÝ KRTÍŠ

**Nomination for the activities of a social enterprise that helps people with low qualifications and disabilities find work in a high-unemployment region. The company's management, along with the team, provides the necessary welcoming and supportive work environment.**



The company focusses its efforts on creating job opportunities for people with disabilities, such as the deaf, Roma, and those with limited qualifications or no prior work experience. It promotes long-term inclusion and employment in the Velký Krtíš district, one of the regions with the highest unemployment rates.

The company began as Deaf Kebab and primarily employed deaf individuals, inspired by the co-founder's personal experiences. Over time, the company expanded into other operations, such as pizzerias and food delivery services, attracting more employees from marginalised groups.

Working with Roma and the disabled requires patience and creative thinking. They help employees develop work habits and offer advice to help them integrate into both their professional and personal lives. They contribute to addressing issues such as debt. They actively invest in long-term education, such as sign language courses for coworkers and clients.

The company currently employs around 100 people, about 20 of whom are Roma. Despite challenges such as customer protests over Roma service, the company strongly promotes inclusion values and actively works to change societal perceptions of disadvantaged communities.

They have received numerous awards for their work, including Good Entrepreneur of the Year and Employer without Prejudice. The company intends to continue expanding its activities to support the integration of health and socially disadvantaged people, as well as to create an inclusive environment in which people can reach their full potential.

*„We give everyone an equal chance. „Whether they work for us is entirely up to them. Some stay, while others leave well-prepared for new opportunities. We like hearing when a former employee is praised in his new position.“*

– Ľubica Šarinová, mother of the company owner



## Dušan Deme

LUČENEC

**Nomination for actively employing low-skilled and long-term unemployed people from marginalised communities, which significantly contributes to improving their standard of living. For persistently motivating employees to develop work and social skills.**



Dušan Deme is an entrepreneur who specializes in gastronomy, bakery and confectionary production, with an emphasis on traditional handmade processes and quality. His company has become known not only for its products, but also for its support in employing low-skilled and long-term unemployed people. It provides a stable working environment and a regular salary to 35 workers.

The company's three main operations - confectionary production, bakery production and a kitchen - are dedicated to the handmade production of confectionery, pastries and food preparation for restaurants and households in Lučenec. The products are also distributed directly to customers, thus ensuring local access to fresh and quality food. Thanks to low turnover, a large part of the employees has been working in the company for a long time, with some of them being part of the team for more than 13 years.

Dušan Deme emphasises the importance of work discipline, which allows employees to develop not only their professional skills, but also to improve their social status. More than a decade ago, Dušan

Deme started with the production of products with his own hands. Originally a musician, he gradually became a successful entrepreneur. From a small production facility, he built a stable company that is today one of the most important employers of marginalised groups in the region.

The long-term goal of his company is to maintain stability and jobs despite challenges such as rising costs and changes in the economic environment. Dušan Deme emphasises the importance of being responsible to its employees, providing them with fair incomes and stable working conditions. He believes that their dedication to the company, together with his own perseverance and commitment, are the basis for the company's success and long-term prosperity.

*"I dedicate a lot of time and energy to make it all run and get it done. It doesn't work by itself. I'm in the company from six in the morning, I finish at seven in the evening, I can't even go on holiday. If I slack off a little bit, then it catches up with me. I have to be there."*

– Dušan Demeš, entrepreneur

## Primary school Zlaté Klasy

### ZLATÉ KLASY

**Nomination for innovative activities and an open multicultural approach that benefits pupils, parents, and staff. For building an inclusive environment that fosters collaboration in education between pupils, teaching, and non-teaching staff.**



The primary school is located in an ethnically mixed area and stands out for its innovative approach to education and promoting inclusion. The school management strives to create a safe environment that accepts diversity and respects the individual needs of all pupils. The school actively works to develop mutual tolerance and understanding between different communities, with an emphasis on forming an inclusive team of teaching and non-teaching staff.

Zlaté Klasy Primary School is unique because it is the only state school that has participated with an unusually high number of up to 18 staff members in an educational programme in the field of Roma history and language, with the aim of promoting inclusive education. The school's activities, such as sport events, cultural events, Christmas markets and Earth Day, serve not only to educate, but also to foster solidarity and cooperation between pupils, parents, and the wider community.

The positive changes that Primary School is bringing can be seen not only within the school, but also

outside it. Regular team-buildings, workshops and educational activities support not only the professional growth of the teachers but also the improvement of relationships between the staff. Involving parents and the public in school activities is also an important part of the school's work, promoting the building of mutual respect and cooperation.

Through these activities, the school not only educates but also shapes the future generation, teaching them to think critically, analyse and solve problems. Zlaté Klasy is an example of how an open and inclusive approach to education can contribute to positive change in society.

*"All the activities we organise are connected to everyday life and prepare our pupils for life. They shape their critical thinking, social skills, character and will qualities. The variety of activities offers opportunity to every child. The joy that children experience through these activities is meant to be a stimulus to learning and forming responsibility towards themselves and their surroundings."*

– Eva Danišová, School Director

## Bôrka

**Nomination for active efforts to improve conditions for all residents, with a focus on the integration of the Roma community. By participating in various projects and combining spiritual values with modern challenges, the municipality is creating a working model that continues to inspire.**



The municipality, located in the heart of the Slovenský kras National Park, is a perfect example of effective integration of diverse communities and improvement of the living conditions of its inhabitants. With a population of 650 people, 80 % of whom are Roma and the rest Hungarians and Slovaks, it proves that inclusion and cooperation are the keys to success.

Working on inclusive projects in the municipality started in 1990, with the local government and the community working together to overcome social and economic barriers. One of the most significant achievements is the construction of a new kindergarten pavilion, which increased the capacity by 22 places and enabled more children to access education. At the same time, in cooperation with the organisation Projekt DOMov, the municipality has launched a programme for the construction of family houses, which improves the accessibility of housing for residents. By 2024, three houses had been completed and two more are in the process of being built.

An important pillar of development is the promotion of employment and the development of skills for residents. In 2024, the municipality launched

the Development Teams project, which provided employment opportunities for six residents.

The municipality is continuously striving to upgrade its infrastructure and improve the quality of life of its residents.

Its future plans include continued housing development, building a sewer system, establishing a primary school for the lower school classes, and improving services for the elderly. The municipality is funding these ambitious activities with a combination of local resources and support from the Government Office of the SR, ministries, and non-profit organisations.

Thanks to its welcoming approach and willingness to face challenges for the benefit of the whole community, Bôrka has become an inspiration for other municipalities in Slovakia.

*"We consider it very important that every person in our municipality has equal treatment and equal opportunities in life, because we realize that only in this way can we ensure peaceful coexistence of our citizens."*

– Vojtech Ičo, Mayor of Bôrka

## Budimír

**Nomination for an inclusive approach to improving living conditions, from building a school to running a social enterprise. The municipality shows that consistent inclusion and coexistence are a possible way forward for any community and an inspiration for other municipalities.**



The municipality of Budimír can be proud of its innovative and proactive approach to improving the living conditions of its residents. It uses the social enterprise Budimírske služby, s. r. o., which was established in 2018, for this purpose. This enterprise is one of the first municipal enterprises in Slovakia and its activities contribute to the employment of people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, especially Roma from the surrounding area. It employs a number of people who previously faced long-term unemployment and enables them to gain a stable income and job skills.

The company participated in the realization of several important projects in the municipality, such as construction and reconstruction of public buildings, revitalization of monuments, construction of sports and cultural facilities. This has led to the improvement of infrastructure and the quality of life of all residents. At the same time, the company's employees began to use the skills they had acquired to improve their own living standards, thus strengthening their economic and social integration.

Through the social enterprise, Budimír not only provides employment opportunities but also improves coexistence between the majority and the Roma community. The municipality creates an atmosphere of inclusion where all residents, regardless of origin, have the opportunity to participate in building a better society. This approach shows that even smaller municipalities can play a key role in building cohesive and inclusive communities and serve as an example for other municipalities.

*"The municipality also employs Roma for services such as taking green waste to the recycling yard, trimming trees in gardens, mowing plots and various jobs to help elderly citizens maintain their homes. In the beginning, Budimír residents looked at the employment of Roma through raised eyebrows. There was distrust. But today they know our Roma by name and have a trusting relationship with them. They don't just come to our village to work. They also take part in various events where they can have fun and be part of a community other than the one where they live."*

– Vojtech Staňo, Mayor of Budimír

## Kesovce

**Nomination for a determined approach to tackling economic challenges through rebuilding local infrastructure using its own resources.**

**The municipality proves that systematic small steps lead to visible improvements. It is becoming an inspiration for other municipalities on how to improve living conditions with minimal resources.**



The municipality, located in the Rimavská Sobota district, is an example of how small steps can change a community.

With a 90% Roma population and only 300 residents, the municipality has faced a difficult economic situation for a long time. Since the mayor took office in 2022, however, they have embarked on a path of renewal and development. Thanks to the support of the Labour Office projects and the active involvement of citizens in their own work, the village has undergone a significant transformation.

Key projects included the renewal of local infrastructure, cleaning of public spaces, renovation of houses and social flats, and the construction of a new bus stop. The municipality also focused on aesthetic improvements, such as painting the facades of cultural buildings, repairing bridges and improving public spaces with flower beds. Traditional community events have become part of the transformation, contributing to strengthening the cohesion of the residents.

In 2024, Kesovce celebrated a significant milestone – the opening of the bell tower and the first year of the ROMA FEST, which have become symbols of a renewed identity and active community life.

However, the transformation of the village is not just about infrastructure. The main benefit is the improvement of the quality of life and the increased self-confidence of the local population. Working together on projects has strengthened mutual relations and supported inclusion, with local government members, all Roma, playing a key role in the development of the village. Kesovce is thus a model of successful coexistence and inclusiveness.

In the future, the municipality plans to build a public water main, a sewer, a new sport playground, a kindergarten, and a funeral home. The efforts of the citizens of Kesovce have brought new energy, restored local pride in their roots and become a symbol that even small steps can lead to big changes.

*“Human dignity has returned to our residents. Kesovce was a neglected village, it was a shame to say that I was from Kesovce. Now we have come to the point where they are not ashamed to say where they come from. They are rightly proud of their origins.”*

– Ján Szajkó, Mayor of Kesovce



## Annamária Kaločaiová

BRATISLAVA

**Nomination for a distinctive approach to social counselling and support for people in need. With the utmost commitment and empathy, she creates a safe environment in which clients find refuge and support. Her work makes a fundamental contribution to the fight against poverty and prejudice.**



A social worker and coordinator of a low- threshold centre for homeless people in Bratislava, she provides professional social counselling, with an emphasis on humanity and professional ethics. She sees her work not only as a profession, but as a life mission - to help people on the margins of society and to offer them a sense of security, respect and acceptance.

Coming from the region of Veľké Teriakovce, where social services are almost non-existent, she found her place after graduating from the Comenius University in the civic association Vagus. Since 2019, she has been working at the centre, which shelters around 130 people daily. Thanks to her sensitive and empathetic approach, she can guide clients through difficult life situations and motivate them to build a dignified life.

Her working methods include not only social counselling, but also creative activities and support groups to help clients find a new perspective. In addition to working directly with homeless people, she is actively involved in educating colleagues and contributes to professional discussions where she

highlights the needs of marginalised groups. She considers her greatest achievement to be building trust and relationships with her clients, who perceive her as a reliable support.

Her work represents a significant contribution to the field of social work, working to eliminate prejudice, build understanding and implement real integration actions for marginalised people. She plans to undertake further training in the therapeutic field to provide clients with deeper psychological support and to help them overcome their life challenges more effectively.

*"I work with people who have not experienced acceptance, have experienced trauma, and are functioning in their lives with a label that they cannot unstick themselves. Helping them means a shift for me - and that's a job well done, professionally. When clients come to me and tell me the real reason why they didn't show up for an appointment, that's when I tell myself I'm doing my job right. Because that's exactly where the space to build acceptance begins."*

– Annamária Kaločaiová, social coordinator



## Ján Deme

### RIMAVSKÁ SOBOTA

**Nomination for his inspiring personal story and perseverance that led him to the profession of ophthalmology. His work builds bridges between people and breaks down prejudice. His life story gives hope and is proof that success is about overcoming challenges and being determined to pursue your goals.**



Ján Deme is an inspiring young doctor who, through his personal story and professional success, is opening new possibilities for people from marginalised communities and helping to break down stereotypes about what an individual can achieve. He comes from the village of Klenovec, where his family background and role models, especially his relatives working in medicine, supported him in his quest for a better life. Thanks to his own efforts and the support of the community, he became one of the few physicians with a Roma background in Slovakia.

He started his education at the Faculty of Medicine in Košice and today he works as an ophthalmologist in Rimavská Sobota, where he is preparing for his attestation. Alongside his work, he is involved in the activities of the Divé Maky organisation, which supports talented Roma children and passes on its experience to young people to encourage them to pursue their dreams despite adverse conditions. He believes that anyone, regardless of social background, can achieve significant success if they have support and motivation.

Deme's work and his approach to patients show that healthcare should be accessible to all and that understanding individual needs is key to building trust between the majority and minority. He believes that the perception of the Roma community can be changed through positive examples. Through his professional work, participation in workshops and activities for young people, he proves that success is achievable even for those who have to assert themselves in society through their own efforts.

In the future, he has the ambition to develop his professional skills, to complete his specialisation in ophthalmology and to continue to help not only in the healthcare sector, but also by motivating and educating young generations, whether Roma or non-Roma. Deme's life story is proof that purposefulness, the courage to go beyond one's comfort zone, and determination can change not only individual lives, but entire communities.

*"My profession can serve as a role model that even a person with a Roma background can achieve good results in life and integrate into the non-Roma community."*

– Ján Deme, ophthalmologist

## René Lužica

BRATISLAVA

**Nomination for long-term research and publication activity on Roma communities in Slovakia. Professional ethnological work and publications help to destigmatise the Roma and eliminate prejudices, thus significantly contributing to an authentic and truthful image of this minority.**



René Lužica is a prominent personality with many years of scientific and research activity, who has focused fundamentally on Roma issues in Slovakia. His work represents a key contribution to a deeper understanding of the culture, history and social status of the Roma community.

His interest in Roma issues was formed during his studies, when he came across the literature on Roma and realised the significant lack of knowledge and the many stereotypes. This interest grew into a personal commitment, which manifested itself not only in the scientific sphere, but also in practical activities. As co-creator of the Romale programme on television, he brought the life of the Roma community to the wider public.

After leaving the media, he returned to the academic sphere, where he devoted himself fully to teaching and research. He worked at the University of Trnava under the guidance of Professor Krčméry and taught as an external lecturer at the Department of Roma Culture in Nitra. He replaced his scriptwriting work with writing professional articles, studies, textbooks and monographs that help students to understand more deeply who the Roma are. He also faced dis-

approval, which he perceived as evidence of firmly entrenched cultural stereotypes passed down from generation to generation.

René Lužica's work focuses mainly on the history and culture of the Roma, with a particular emphasis on the topic of the Roma Holocaust during the Second World War. An important part of his career has been supporting Roma students and working to educate them.

Through his work, he influences students, teachers and the Roma communities themselves. Through his personal commitment, he contributes to alleviating negative stereotypes and supporting the social integration of Roma, thus making a significant contribution to building a more tolerant society.

*"At the Department of Roma Culture, we have promoted equal relations and drawn attention to the negatives of cultural stereotypes. In my lectures I presented intercultural dialogue, ethical principles. And today we have a new PhD student at the university - a Roma woman. I lecture on ethics; she conducts a seminar."*

- René Lužica, ethnologist

## Tomáš Csicsó

BRATISLAVA

**Nomination for sensitively raising important social issues, including cultural diversity, through its own video channel Equal Meter, thus contributing to the popularisation of valuable content to a wide audience on social media.**



Tomáš Csicsó creates content on social networks, his most significant project being the video channel Equal Meter, which he launched in 2021 on the TikTok platform. For his more than 170,000 followers, he creates content that addresses social issues such as education and cultural diversity. His work is characterised by authenticity and breaking down stereotypes, especially those associated with the Roma community.

The focus of his work is on the young generation, especially pupils and students. Through videos, he helps them prepare for important exams such as Testing 9 and school leaving exams. The content is inclusive – it does not separate Roma and non-Roma children but addresses the whole of society. The aim of his work is to promote understanding between different communities and to contribute to improving the status of Roma communities through education and raising public awareness.

Tomáš's activities have a significant impact on the young generation, showing them that education is the key to success and a fulfilling life. Its content is oriented not only to teaching, but also to motiva-

tion and support of self-realization. In the future, he plans to expand his work to include interviews with young people from different backgrounds to further deepen the discussion on the possibilities of education and understanding.

His persistence and clear focus on improving relations between Roma and non-Roma builds bridges between communities. Although its content is not commercial, its reach is extraordinary. Millions of views and hundreds of thousands of interactions prove its impact.

In the last 365 days, its content has reached 29 million views, 2.1 million likes, 233 thousand shares and 143 thousand comments, significantly shaping the public debate and inspiring positive change.

*"I am working to show the younger generation that education is something they can build on. That being an influencer can have a whole different dimension than we are used to. I realize that words have weight and impact. And the more people follow me, the more responsibility I have."*

– Tomáš Csicsó, videoblogger

## Primary school Drienovec

### DRIENOVEC

**Nomination for the school TV project VIP TV Drienovec, which engagingly develops creativity and media skills of pupils. The school's innovative approach enables children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds to gain knowledge and valuable experience and skills in an engaging way.**



The innovative project of the school media channel VIP TV Primary School Drienovec was created in a primary school in a small village in the Košice-okolie district. The project, which started in January 2024, offers a unique approach to education and media skills development for pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The school has 273 pupils, many of whom are of Roma nationality. Within the project, they learn content creation, technical implementation, and media communication, gaining valuable practical experience.

The aim of VIP TV is to improve pupils' ability to work with information, develop their creativity and strengthen their self-esteem through working with the media. The TV programme structure includes news from school life, reports from events, educational materials and the popular "Where to go on a trip" programme, which introduces pupils to their surroundings. The project also creates a space for pupils from the Roma community to express their enthusiasm for culture, art, and sport.

The television, which broadcasts monthly, has received a positive response not only from pupils but also from parents and the wider community.

Pupils have learned the practical skills needed to report responsibly and to convey their own view of reality while filming reports. In doing so, they also understood the demands and responsibilities of working in the media, which motivates them to further their personal development.

VIP TV Primary School Drienovec has ambitious plans. It plans to expand its cooperation with experts, the local kindergarten, and other educational institutions in the region, thus deepening the media education of its pupils and providing them with new opportunities to develop their skills.

*"Although pupils perceive us as authorities, when the VIP TV crew of Drienovec Primary School meets after school, we become equal partners. Together we have one goal - to create entertaining, engaging and high-quality broadcasts, which requires a responsible approach, perseverance and building a work ethics."*

- Henrieta Lenková, School Digital Coordinator

## Zuzana Uhalová

POZDIŠOVCE

**Nomination for the project Ars Povertica, which is inspired by the handwriting of children from marginalised communities. This unique idea highlights the need to support the education of children from disadvantaged backgrounds and the importance of developing fine motor skills from an early age.**



Zuzana Uhalová is a graphic designer and a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Bratislava, where she specialized in visual communication and type design. While working in the Teach for Slovakia program, where she taught for two years in a primary school with predominantly Roma pupils, she gained unique experiences that inspired her to connect design with social issues.

Roma spirit 2024

Ars Povertica is a written font inspired by the handwriting of children from marginalized Roma communities. This project is not only a visual experiment, but also a reflection on the obstacles that prevent children from developing basic skills such as fine motor skills, essential for the acquisition of literacy. The font brings the experience of children from disadvantaged backgrounds to a wider audience and stimulates discussion about promoting learning, creativity and inclusion.

The project has gained the attention of professionals and the public, which gives Zuzana the motivation to continue her mission. As well as designing typefaces,

she runs creative workshops with elements of art therapy in local communities. She combines her experience in design and education and sees design as a tool that can change the way education is delivered in Slovakia.

Ars Povertica was created as a personal project based on her experience in a school with a high number of Roma pupils. A direct confrontation with generational poverty motivated her to raise the topics of inclusion, creativity and education through design.

Although she did not initially expect the project to gain much traction, Ars Povertica has found wide support, including funding from the Fund for the Support of the Arts and the Tatra banka Foundation. For Zuzana Uhalova, it is crucial that the font finds practical use and continues to stimulate discussion about the problems and needs of children from marginalised communities.

*"It is important to convey the stories of the minority to the majority. To open their eyes. Because empathy is the path to inclusion."*

– Zuzana Uhalová, graphic designer

## Monika Vontszemüová

BRATISLAVA

**Nomination for innovative contribution in fashion and fine arts. She has strengthened inclusive design in Slovakia with her collection for plus-size women. Inspired by Roma culture, the fashion designer's work actively represents and popularises this rich cultural heritage.**



Thanks to Monika Vontszemüová's unique approach, fine art and fashion design have been enriched with significant works that go beyond the borders of Slovakia and resonate on the international scene. Her work not only popularises Roma culture, but also raises important social issues. As a pioneer of inclusive design in the Slovak fashion industry, she presented a collection for women with larger clothing sizes, thus sparking a discussion about body diversity and self-acceptance.

Her work, strongly influenced by Roma traditions, represents the cultural heritage she is trying to bring to the public. Monika Vontszemüová's jewelry is both an expression of her personal identity and a way of spreading a cultural message. A significant milestone in her career came with the Romade project, which combined her passion for fashion with the aim of supporting the Roma community and providing job opportunities for Roma dressmakers.

In addition to her artistic work, Monika is actively involved in social projects. In 2019, together with

Katarina Castrovilli, she founded the PRO VOBIS civic association and created the 18ON project, aimed at supporting children from Child Care Centres. Through creative seminars and workshops, they help these children acquire the skills necessary to successfully transition to independent living.

Monika's work not only improves the quality of life of young people but also builds bridges of understanding between different cultures.

Through her activities, Monika has crossed the boundaries of art and fashion, making her a prominent personality in the social sphere. Her work contributes to positive change and development of the Roma community, while inspiring the public to embrace diversity.

*"Art has the power to change lives and contribute to social change."*

– Monika Vontszemüová, fashion designer



## Ol'ga Bodorová

### RIMAVSKÁ SOBOTA

**Nomination for lifetime contribution to museology and ethnography, especially for the documentation of Roma culture in Gemer. Her publications and efforts to preserve cultural heritage are of inestimable value for future generations.**



She dedicated her life to the preservation of the cultural heritage of the region of Gemer and Malohont, and with precise professional care, she was devoted to the documentation of the cultures of the Roma, Hungarian, Slovak and Jewish communities. After graduating in ethnology

and folklore studies at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava, she joined the Gemersko-Malohontské Museum in Rimavská Sobota in 1975, where she worked for 47 years, 23 of them as director.

Under her leadership, the museum gathered precious collections documenting the traditional way of life in the region, and since 1996, under her initiative, the museum has specialised in the documentation of Roma culture. During this period, more than 700 artefacts from the Roma environment have been acquired for the collections and a photo archive with more than 5 000 photographs has been created. Among its most important projects was the exhibition Folk Architecture and the Way of Life of the Roma in Gemer-Malohont, presented both in Slovakia and abroad.

An important part of her work was the organization of thirteen editions of the Romano jivipen competition, which encouraged Roma and non-Roma children to create art and to take an interest in their own cultural roots. Her professional papers, such as Roma Culture in Gemer-Malohont and Pottery in Šivetice, have enriched museology and contributed to a better understanding of regional cultural traditions in Slovakia and abroad.

She has received several awards for her life's work, including the Andrej Kmet's Award and the Rimavská Sobota Mayor's Award. Through her perseverance and expertise, she has contributed to the recognition of minority culture as an integral part of our cultural heritage.

*"During my work in the museum sphere, I have gained a lot of experience, which I have passed on to my colleagues and museum visitors. For the first time in the history of the museum, since 1985, Roma have been participating in exhibitions, especially those that present their own culture. I appreciate this milestone immensely and I believe that this trend will continue."*

– Ol'ga Bodorová, Museum Historian

## Trio Patkolo

BRATISLAVA

**Nominated for their debut album Astor Piazzolla, which stands out due to its unconventional instrumental composition, artistic interpretation, and exceptional technical skill. Particularly for their extraordinary artistic contribution and representation both domestically and internationally.**



Trio Patkolo, a family musical ensemble, delivers unique interpretations of classical music that resonate with audiences not only in Slovakia, but also abroad. Founded by talented musicians Anabela, Anikó, and Roman Patkolo, the trio combines violin, piano, and double bass, bringing a new dimension to classical compositions through their virtuosity and artistic precision.

Their most notable achievement is the debut album *Astor Piazzolla*, which features chamber arrangements of iconic works by the Argentine composer renowned for his *nuevo tango* style. Released in collaboration with Pavlík Records, the album showcases technical mastery and interpretations that appeal to a wide range of listeners. The project also involved collaborations with notable artists such as guitarist Miriam Rodríguez Brüllová and double bassist Robert Vizvári, enriching the album's quality and execution.

The members of the trio – Anabela, a student at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava (VŠMU) and a member of the Slovak Philharmonic; Anikó, an acclaimed accompanist and founder of the Patkolo Ensemble; and Roman, a double bass virtuoso and

professor at the University of Basel – are inspired by their family tradition and mutual support. Their collaboration began with recordings of two works by Piazzolla, which received positive acclaim and motivated them to create an entire album. The album was introduced at a concert in Zichy Palace, with Slovak Philharmonic General Director Marián Turner as the album's godfather.

Trio Patkolo believes in music as a universal language that connects people. Without the support of sponsors, they managed to record the album independently, demonstrating their dedication and professionalism. With their unique approach to classical music interpretation and their inspiration for young artists, they continue to contribute to the development of Slovak culture and musical heritage.

*"As representatives of the Roma minority, we represent and spread our music worldwide. We make no distinctions between Roma and non-Roma. We believe that music is an international language that everyone understands and that unites people all across the world."*

– Anikó Patkolo, pianist

## Daniela Bernatová

KAMENNÁ PORUBA

**Nominated for extraordinary selflessness and care provided in a crisis situation involving five siblings with mental disabilities. Going beyond her job responsibilities, she offered the family a helping hand, providing food and care, ultimately securing their safe placement into institutional care.**



Social worker Daniela Bernatová from Kamenná Poruba demonstrated exceptional empathy and dedication when she spontaneously stepped in to help five siblings with mental disabilities from a Roma settlement. These siblings, all diagnosed with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities, were left without any support after their father's death and lived in inhumane conditions – isolated, without food, financial means, or basic necessities.

When Daniela discovered the conditions in which they lived, she acted immediately. At first, she brought them food for the weekend, but her assistance quickly turned into systematic and continuous care. Daily, after work, she delivered hot meals, bought groceries, clothing, and personal hygiene items. Initially, she covered all the expenses from her own funds, later receiving support from the local government. Daniela cleaned their home regularly, organized disinfection, and, together with her colleagues, modified their living space to make it habitable.

Simultaneously, she initiated all necessary steps to secure a dignified placement for the siblings

in a social services facility (DSS) where they could receive permanent care. During this process, the siblings became like “adopted children” to Daniela. She cared for them with love and devotion, alleviating their hardships until the formalities for their placement were resolved.

In just six months, Daniela achieved what seemed impossible – ensuring the siblings were placed in a social services facility, where they now live in safe, clean, and warm conditions. Her selfless efforts fundamentally changed their lives and gave them hope for a better future. Through her work, Daniela Bernatová demonstrated that one person can profoundly impact the lives of others by acting with empathy, love, and unwavering determination.

*“I was afraid they might reject my help. Our first contact was marked by fear and distrust, but the daily interactions we had gradually changed our lives. My experience with these ‘children of mine’ enriched my perspective and confirmed to me that love towards people comes in many different forms.”*

– Daniela Bernatová, Social Worker

## Ján Polhoš

HUNCOVCE

**Nominated for the creation of a community space for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, where they can play and develop in a safe environment. He transformed his own garage into a low-threshold center for children's activities, creating a secure and inspiring space for the most vulnerable.**



Ján Polhoš, an employee at a company in Kežmarok that manufactures hoses for household appliances, decided to dedicate his free time and resources to support his wife and the children from the local Roma community. Solely with his own hands and finances, he transformed his garage into a safe community space that now serves as a venue for educational and developmental activities for children and their mothers from the Roma settlement. This newly created space provides crucial support for activities aimed at improving parenting skills and promoting integration. The center is run by his wife, a midwife who works directly in the settlement and has long been dedicated to supporting local families.

Ján's project was motivated by his belief that families affected by generational poverty deserve the same opportunities as others. He recognized that children from marginalized communities need positive role models and a safe environment that fosters their development and provides opportunities they might otherwise lack. The space, which he created, allows these children to engage

in activities that develop their social skills and prepare them for a better future.

Reconstructing the garage was a challenge Ján tackled entirely on his own, without any external assistance. Although this initiative reduced his family's private space, Ján firmly stands by his decision. He is convinced that mutual help and solidarity are essential for building a better society. This initiative represented not only practical support for the local community but also an effort to break down prejudices against Roma people and promote understanding between different communities.

Ján's work is an example of how even small individual actions can lead to significant societal changes. His efforts highlight that willingness to help and build bridges between communities are key tools for improving coexistence and achieving positive changes in society.

*"I want to establish equality between Roma and non-Roma and eliminate prejudices."*

– Ján Polhoš, Activist

## Activists from Jarovnice and Hermanovce

### JAROVNICE, HERMANOVCE

**Nominated for their persistent fight for justice and compensation for victims of illegal sterilizations. In collaboration with the Center for Civil and Human Rights, their efforts led to the introduction of the requirement for informed consent in medical procedures and continue to strive for fair compensation for women.**



A group of female Roma activists from Jarovnice and Hermanovce has spent over 20 years tirelessly advocating justice for women who were illegally sterilized in Slovakia. Throughout their journey they have collaborated with the Center for Civil and Human Rights, which provided them with a platform for collective meetings and support in raising awareness about this issue. These activists achieved significant milestones toward justice, including the historic adoption of informed consent legislation in 2004 and successes at the European Court of Human Rights. Despite these victories, they continue to fight for compensation for all illegally sterilized women through the passage of a compensation law.

In May 2023, their efforts reached another historic moment when the Slovak parliament approved a draft of the compensation law in its first reading. The activists personally lobbied for its passage in parliamentary committees, but early elections delayed its final approval. Despite this setback, they remain committed to their fight, advocating for the adoption of the law. Additionally, they campaign against the segregation of Roma

children in schools and Roma women in maternity wards, striving to ensure equal opportunities for their communities.

These women have overcome numerous obstacles and prejudices to send a clear message: it is possible to stand up for your rights, bring about change, and fight against discrimination. Their brave efforts inspire not only other women but also highlight the need for mutual tolerance and understanding between Roma and the majority population. Their nomination for the Roma Spirit award is a symbolic recognition of their long-standing commitment to justice and dignity, making them role models of determination and perseverance.

*"Roma women face discrimination, especially in healthcare and education. Our children are often placed in segregated schools without access to quality education, which hinders their chances for a better future. It's important to stand up for our rights and show that we are equal people living in the same country."*

– Agáta Duchoňová, Center for Civil and Human Rights



**DALIBOR JÍLEK**

**Professor of International Law  
(Czech Republic)**

Dalibor Jílek is a distinguished academic in the field of international human rights and humanitarian law. He has lectured at Masaryk University, the University of Defence in Brno, Palacký University in Olomouc, Pan-European University in Bratislava, and other international institutions.

His career uniquely combines theory and practice. At the national level, he served on the Government Council for Human Rights in the Czech Republic, contributing to the development of policies in this area. Internationally, he was a member of the Council of Europe (CoE) in Strasbourg, where he served two terms on the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. From 2002 to 2017, he was a member of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), a prominent human rights body of the Council of Europe.

Jílek devoted significant attention to issues concerning the Roma minority, including the discrimination they face and their access to education, employment, and healthcare. These topics were key points of discussion within Strasbourg institutions. ECRI contributed to updating General Policy Recommendation No. 13, revised in 2020, focusing on combating antigypsyism and discrimination.

Jílek's work is an invaluable contribution to the promotion of human rights, the protection of national minorities, and the strengthening of inclusive policies at both the national and international levels.



**CHRISTINA CHALILOPOULOU**

**Legal Advisor Specializing in Social  
Policy (Greece)**

Christina Chalilopoulou is the co-founder and CEO of ALYSOS Alert, a Greek institution dedicated to ensuring social equality and empowering vulnerable groups. She graduated from London Metropolitan University with a degree in European Studies and Ethics and completed specialized training in Leadership for Gender Equality through the British Council. She has held significant positions in Greek governmental institutions, leading projects focused on social responsibility, human rights, social inclusion, and sustainability. She also served as an advisor to the president of the Central Union of Greek Municipalities, contributing to strategies in education and social integration of Roma communities.

Christina has extensive experience in policy development for civil society and building strong partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations. While working in the General Secretariat for Adult Education and Lifelong Learning at the Ministry of Education, she designed, planned, and implemented nationwide educational programs providing basic education to vulnerable populations and individuals at risk of social exclusion.

As the leader of ALYSOS Alert, she promotes the protection of human rights, equality, and dignity. The organization focuses on equal opportunities and integration, contributing to an inclusive society where everyone can fully develop their potential.





**REDJEPALI CHUPI**

**Director of the Roma Education Fund for the Western Balkans (North Macedonia)**

Redjepali Chupi is an expert with over 20 years of experience in the governmental and non-governmental sectors, focusing on advocating for minority rights and promoting inclusive education. As the former Director of the Directorate for the Languages of the Minorities in the Educational System at the Ministry of Education and Science of North Macedonia, he led initiatives aimed at implementing constitutional minority rights in the areas of education and language rights.

With expertise in law, political experience, project management, legal representation, research, and training, he has contributed to policymaking and initiatives that support minority integration and community empowerment. His work includes active participation in national and international projects designed to improve conditions for minority groups and ensure their full inclusion in society.

Since March 2019, he has been working at the Roma Education Fund (REF) as a network coordinator. In 2020, he assumed the roles of Interim Director and Director for REF countries in Serbia and North Macedonia. Through his work at REF, he strives to enhance educational opportunities for Roma communities and to create an inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background.



**YECHIEL BAR-CHAIM**

**Philanthropy Consultant (USA/Czech Republic)**

Yechiel Bar-Chaim, originally from Washington, D.C., is a prominent figure in the field of international humanitarian aid and support for marginalized communities. After earning a degree from Harvard University, he pursued further studies at the Sorbonne in Paris and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He began his career as an officer in the U.S. Army, where he achieved the rank of captain.

From 1985 onward, he served in various leadership roles at the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). Between 1989 and 1991, he directed JDC operations in Vienna, focusing on aiding Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union. During the war in the former Yugoslavia, he coordinated the evacuation of Jewish communities from Sarajevo and provided humanitarian aid to all residents, regardless of ethnicity.

Currently residing in Prague, he works as an independent consultant with Bader Philanthropies, Inc., based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His efforts are centered on supporting marginalized groups, particularly Roma communities in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Since February 2022, he has been coordinating Bader Philanthropies' efforts to assist vulnerable individuals directly affected by the war in Ukraine.

His extensive experience and dedication to humanitarian work make him a leading expert in philanthropy and intercultural dialogue.



**LOLA CABRILLANA**

**Teacher, Writer, and Roma Activist  
(Spain)**

Lola Cabrillana is a prominent writer, preschool teacher, activist, and mediator dedicated to promoting and supporting Roma culture. With over 20 years of experience, she works in Málaga, educating children from diverse communities and fostering an environment of respect and pride in cultural identity. Her innovative teaching methods challenge stereotypes and encourage inclusion in classrooms. Additionally, she trains teachers and mediators on inclusion, antigypsyism, and Roma culture.

Alongside her educational work, she is the author of *Voces colour canela*, *La maestra gitana*, and *Las cuatro esquinas del mar*, works, which explore the challenges faced by the Roma community in modern society. Her literary contributions have garnered critical acclaim, establishing her as a significant voice in cultural and educational spheres.

She has received numerous prestigious awards, throughout her career, including the Prize for Promoting Roma Culture at the Andalusian Romany Awards and the Solidarity Award from Fundación Secretariado Gitano for her contributions and advocacy of Roma values. She was also honored with the Social Leadership Award in Málaga for her commitment to equality and defense of the Roma community.

Despite her success, Lola remains humble and deeply connected to her roots, helping her family at flea markets on the Costa del Sol every weekend. She is also active on social media, inspiring educators to build inclusive educational environments.



**MARIANA KLOBUŠICKÁ**

**Regional Director at Marius Pedersen, a.s., Representative of the Roma Spirit 2023 Finalist in the Company and Employer Category**

Mariana Klobušická, a native of Banská Bystrica and proud mother of an adult daughter, serves as the Regional Director at Marius Pedersen, a.s., a role she has held since 2021. After completing her education in economics, she began her career in banking, but for over 17 years she has dedicated herself to the field of waste management. She has held various positions during that time – from sales representative to transport manager – building a reputation as a professional actively contributing to reshaping perceptions of this essential yet often overlooked sector.

Mariana takes pride in working for a company that values decency, respect, and strong interpersonal relationships. At Marius Pedersen, there is a strong emphasis on mutual understanding among employees, particularly on a human level. The diversity of colleagues – regardless of skin color, nationality, or religion – never impacts the value of their work. This principle also guides her approach to hiring new employees, as she believes that quality results depend not on who performs the work but on their dedication and professionalism.



**MARTIN DANIEL**

**Athlete, Roma Spirit 2017 Finalist in the Personality Category**

Martin Daniel, born in Skalica, has dedicated his life to sports, particularly hockey and ball hockey. He started playing hockey at the age of six, and after concluding his youth hockey career, he seamlessly transitioned to ball hockey, where he achieved his greatest athletic successes. As a two-time Slovak champion and winner of the Czechoslovak Super Cup, he has established himself as a prominent figure in the sport.

Today, Martin plays amateur hockey at a local level. His athletic achievements are particularly remarkable, as he has accomplished them in spite of a health condition. Since a young age, he has lived with Type 1 diabetes and relied on an insulin pump throughout his entire career. His determination and perseverance inspire not only athletes, but anyone facing the challenges of life.

In 2017, Martin was nominated for the Roma Spirit award in the Personality category, underscoring his role as a role model for the Roma community, as well as for the broader society. Through his dedication to sports, perseverance, and positive attitude, he demonstrates that health challenges or other obstacles need not stand in the way of achieving goals and dreams.

*"In sports, performance is most often celebrated, but I have always appreciated awards for fair play or trophies for players with the least penalties. I see the Roma Spirit award as a similar type of recognition, where an athlete, scientist, or fashion designer is not only honored for their work but also for going the extra mile. It's great that someone acknowledges this,"*



**MICHAELA MIHOKOVÁ**

**Writer and Editor, Roma Spirit 2022 Finalist in the Personality Category**

Michaela Mihoková, born in Trnava, is a journalist, writer, and prominent personality who addresses complex societal issues. As an editor for Hospodárske noviny, she specializes in healthcare, but her passion lies in literary creation. Michaela is the author of five books, in which she boldly highlights the dangers of racism, the destructive force of hatred, and the healing power of hope.

One of her most notable works is the novel Poškvrnená (Stained, 2017), which won 2nd place in the Debut of the Year 2017 category, as ranked by Knižná revue. Her literary works demonstrate that prose can be both an artistic and a societal tool for fostering understanding and addressing pressing issues of today.

Michaela is also active beyond the literary scene. For two years, she has hosted the podcast Na káve s Mišiel (Coffee with Mišiel), through which she shares her faith in God and inspires listeners to deeper reflections on life.

Her work bridges the worlds of literature, journalism, and spirituality, proving that the written word has the power to transform lives and society for the better. While the future presents new challenges, Michaela is confident that writing will remain an inseparable part of her life.



### MIROSLAVA RYCHTÁŘECHOVÁ

**Manager for Central Europe, Tesco Stores, Representative of the Roma Spirit 2022 Laureate in the Company and Employer Category**

Miroslava Rychtářechová serves as the CE Market Services Manager for Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary at Tesco. She leads an international team that provides services for over 22,000 employees in areas such as compensation, organizational design, recruitment, training, and education. Throughout her career, she has held several managerial roles, including leadership of the HR department for Tesco Slovakia.

Her professional philosophy emphasizes creating an environment where everyone feels welcome and respected, regardless of their differences. Miroslava believes that team diversity – regardless of nationality or religion – contributes to better outcomes and healthier relationships.

As a member of the Tesco Foundation's board of trustees, she supports sustainability and community assistance projects. She is also on the boards of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) organization, which develops the potential of young people, and HRcomm, an association of HR professionals.

She actively advocates for changes that break down prejudices and promote inclusion in society, stressing the importance of equal opportunities for all.

*"My main motivation is the belief that everyone has the right to a dignified life and the opportunity to grow."*



### PETER JENDRÁL

**Manager, Finalist of Roma Spirit 2020 in the Act of the Year Category**

Peter Jendrál, born in Hrabušice, is a well-known figure in the field of community work and the support of marginalized Roma communities in Slovakia. As a proud father of two children, Filipko and Petka, and the partner of Zuzana, he combines his family values with a commitment to helping those in need. He is also a strong supporter of sports events.

After graduating from the Secondary Industrial School in Poprad, he studied Social Work at the St. Elizabeth University of Health and Social Work. During his studies, he began working at the The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities as a regional coordinator, and later as the head of the regional coordination department. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he played a key role in organizing quarantine measures in the municipalities of Žehra, Krompachy, and Bystrany, facilitating communication between communities, the army, and the police.

Peter has been involved in community work since 1999, starting as a police officer and later serving as a community specialist in the Poprad district. His career also includes work in non-profit organizations focusing on Roma issues. Currently, he is working on a project focused on employment and housing, which is supposed to bring about positive change and support social inclusion.

Known for his tireless dedication, direct approach, and belief in change, Peter demonstrates how individual commitment can profoundly impact the lives of many. Everything he does is driven by humility and heart, aiming to help and to contribute to the creation of a fairer society.



**Author of the project:** Ľubomíra Slušná-Franz  
**Producer:** Magdaléna Rothová (ACEC)  
Tibor Horváth (STVR)  
**Director:** Viktor Csudai  
**Screenwriter:** Magdaléna Rothová  
Stano Daniel  
**Dramaturgy:** Miki Michelčík  
**Musical dramaturgy:** Barbora Botošová  
**Production Manager:** Jana Mroščáková (ACEC)  
Ján Jurga (STVR)  
**Production:** Peter Bestvina  
Judita Marčoková  
Tomáš Ondačka  
**Lighting and Sound Production:** Hurricane  
**Voice-over:** Miki Michelčík  
**Principal Camera:** Jozef Guláš  
**Visual Identity Project:** Róbert Szabó  
**Graphic design:** Dve Lamy  
**Audiovisual Graphics:** Dve Lamy  
**Documents:** Ján Dobranský  
**Photography:** Barbora Haviarová  
Ján Dobranský  
Matúš Lago  
Zdenko Hanout  
**Author of the award:** Miloš Rác

The Roma Spirit team expresses its sincere thanks to all partners, artists and friends for their support and valuable cooperation.

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# VYHLASOVATELIA



**SLOVENSKÁ TELEVÍZIA  
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REALIZOVANÉ S FINANČNOU PODPOROU MINISTERSTVA SPRÁVODLIVOSTI SR  
V RÁMCI DOTAČNÉHO PROGRAMU NA PRESADZOVANIE, PODPORU A OCHRANU  
ĽUDSKÝCH PRÁV A SLOBÔD A NA PREDCHÁDZANIE VŠETKÝM FORMÁM DISKRIMINÁCIE,  
RASIZMU, XENOFÓBIE, ANTISEMITIZMU A OSTATNÝM PREJAVOM INTOLERANCIE.

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