

Annual Report 2016



CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN
FOUNDATION

**60 Years
of the Calouste
Gulbenkian
Foundation**



Armenian Communities Department

THE MISSION OF THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT is to create a viable future for the Armenian people in which its culture and language are preserved and valued. The Department's programming is structured around four priorities: promoting the preservation of Armenian language and culture by investing in the education and development of the Armenian diaspora; investing in youth and its commitment to civil society in Armenia; improving the Armenian-Turkish relationship through the support of projects that encourage mutual understanding of a long shared history; preserving and disseminating Armenian literary heritage.

€142,454
OWN INITIATIVES

€2,359,241
GRANTS AND SUBSIDIES

Collectif Medz Bazar
presentation at the
Summer Garden event.
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THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT continued to provide university scholarships, fund Armenian schools in the diaspora, support civil society and academic exchange in Armenia, encourage Armenian-Turkish dialogue, and support publications. Particular emphasis was put on the Fourth priority area, “to preserve and make available the Armenian literary heritage”, interlinking it with the other priorities of the Department.

Several initiatives during 2016 were particularly significant. The Armenian community of Lebanon opened a new school in Beirut and the Department, following its long tradition of supporting schools in the diaspora, made a contribution toward it. In Armenia, support was given to the Ministry of Diaspora to establish a secretariat to support the integration of refugees from the Middle East into Armenia.

The Department’s co-sponsorship was instrumental in the organisation of a major conference in Istanbul on Armenian Identity. And publication support extended to authors, universities, civil society organisations and publishers to print and circulate texts in Armenian, English, French, Turkish and several other languages in at least seven countries: Armenia, Turkey, Lebanon, France, Portugal, UK and USA.

WikiCamp Portugal 2016.



Activities

Scholarships

Almost €800,000 was distributed in scholarships, to 234 university students, including renewals. The amounts ranged from over €20,000 per year to certain PhD students, to several hundred euros for short term travel grants. In total, 701 applications were received in 2016, slightly less than 2015. More specifically, 10 scholarships were granted in the Global Excellence graduate research category, 27 in Armenian Studies graduate research, 39 in Armenian Studies short term grants, 66 in short term travel grants to young scholars and students from Armenia, 80 Undergraduate scholarships were given, and 12 Armenian students studying in Portugal were supported. A full report on the scholarships, including the list of the recipients, is published on the Department’s website.

School Support and Language Acquisition

Support to Armenian schools in the diaspora, particularly in the Middle East and Europe, continued, incorporating all the denominations and education boards of the community. There was €700,000 allocated to 72 schools and special education establishments in eight countries, plus a one-off grant was given to the new Armenian school in Lebanon.

In addition to supporting schools, the Department embarked on a number of other significant initiatives to preserve and revitalise Western Armenian. Continuing from its 2015 *Innovation in Education* conference in Paris, it organised a workshop, in Colares Portugal. 41 educators and creators in Western Armenian from nine countries participated. The group collectively identified seven initiatives that began to be implemented. These include teacher training through intensive summer programmes, development of curricula and learning tools for language acquisition, translation of global children’s literature into Armenian, use of games and music in learning, a web portal to disseminate the tools around the world, and engagement with education leaders.

Following the successful Wikipedia Western Armenian writing camp in 2015 in Lebanon, another week-long “camp” was organised, this time in Portugal. It was attended by 50 youth, 16 to 23 years old, coming from five countries. It was quite remarkable to see the excitement generated about the language among the younger generation. The secret to the success of the initiative was its ability to mix fun with improving language skills, making learning Armenian a pleasure instead of a burden for young men and women.

The Department also collaborated with Oxford University in the hosting of an important workshop entitled *Western Armenian in the 21st Century*. 28 experts representing different fields, from media and publishing to writers and professors, discussed the challenges facing the language and strategies that could overcome them. As such, the Department’s contribution to the revitalisation of Western Armenian spanned different generations, levels of knowledge and institutions: students and teachers, young and established writers or academics, schools and universities.



Support to Cultural and Academic Initiatives

The Armenian component of the *Jardim de Verão (Summer Garden)* celebrations, commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Foundation, was the highlight of the Department's contribution to Armenian cultural events in 2016. It organised 17 events in 10 days including classical and popular music concerts, traditional and modern dance, lectures and children's workshops – all within the premises of the Foundation.

The Department also supported the exhibition in France, at Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris, on the life of the Founder and the activities of the Foundation. One part of the exhibition was held at Maison des Étudiants Arméniens and the other part at Maison du Portugal.

The *Armenians in Jordan* academic conference took place at the Haigazian University in Lebanon with the Department's support. This was part of an annual series of conferences at Haigazian about various Armenian communities in the Middle East. In the USA, the Department funded the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) to establish the *Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues*.

Activities in Armenia

The Department was instrumental in the organisation of an important policy meeting in Yerevan devoted to the integration in Armenia of refugees fleeing the violence in the Middle East. The gathering in February, *From Humanitarian Response to Sustainable Solutions* brought together government ministries, NGOs, international organisations, potential donors and the UNHCR to discuss problems and devise solutions. One of the important recommendations was the establishment of a secretariat within the Ministry of Diaspora to develop a strategic plan for the integration of refugees, funded by the Department.

Activities related to Armenian refugees was an important component of the Department's programming in Armenia. A contribution was given to the Ani & Narod Memorial Fund, a US-based charity, to support its housing subsidy programme for newly arriving refugees.

Who are the Armenians? Educational activity led by Maral Kerovpyan and Ana Madureira as part of Summer Garden.
© FCG / Márcia Lessa

The support to refugee students studying at universities in Armenia continued. 448 students received a subsidy toward their tuition fees. This programme is jointly sponsored with the AGBU, the St. Sarkis Charity Trust in London and the Government of Armenia.

The organisation of an important academic conference hosted by Yerevan State University's Diaspora Studies Centre was financed. It focussed on Armenians in Russia, the largest diasporan community in size, but also one of the least studied. It brought together experts and community representatives to analyse dynamics and challenges. The conference was the first in its kind.

Finally, the grant to the Jinishian Memorial Foundation was renewed. It supports youth civic education through capacity development, public discussions and micro-grant schemes for local projects. The objective of the initiative is to strengthen civil society in Armenian by training youth so that they can engage in their communities to improve society.

Armenian-Turkish Dialogue

2016 was a challenging year for Turkey. The Department continued with some of its activities. It supported a conference devoted to analysing Armenian identity, organised in Istanbul by the Hrant Dink Foundation and the Hamazkain Cultural Association. In nine panels, involving some 30 experts, topics were covered ranging from intra-community perceptions to diasporan literature. The Department not only contributed toward the expenses of the conference, but it also served on the scientific committee and took part in the proceedings.

The Department's support to Armenian schools extended to ten schools in Turkey. It also incorporated teachers and students from Istanbul in a number of its Western Armenian activities such as the Wikipedia writing camp and the Colares workshop. Moreover, it supported the Western Armenian language courses for adults provided by the Hrant Dink Foundation, and subsidised publication of a number of books in Turkey by Aras Press.

Partnerships

THE DEPARTMENT'S ACTIVITIES are carried out throughout the world in partnership with various civil society organisations, universities, philanthropic organisations, schools, the Church and government ministries. Our mandate, to preserve and advance Armenian culture and learning, necessitates a wide range of partnerships and networks, while maintaining strict neutrality in terms of community politics.

Evaluation

IN 2016 an important survey of partners was undertaken to ascertain perceptions of the Department and to identify areas to improve. While the majority of partners are pleased with their collaboration with the Department, there are areas which can improve such as ongoing project monitoring, increased interaction with partners and quicker decisions on submitted proposals. The results are posted on the Department's website.

Publications in Armenian and on Armenians

SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN THE 1950S, the Department has been supporting the publication of books. Currently, it also supports electronic publications and related activities. Through its publications the Department seeks to build cultural bridges, encourage critical thinking, and of course promote reading and research in Western Armenian.

A number of grants were given to increase the electronic “footprint” of Armenian in the digital age, and as such making publications available to a larger audience. One important initiative, led by Technolinguistics Cultural Association, is the digitisation of 175 important Armenian books from the 19th and 20th centuries, and placing them online for free. Support to Armenian language news and literature websites, as well as electronic dictionaries, continued in 2016. A grant was also given to an initiative in France to create original animated learning tools in Western Armenian for children three to ten years old. Seven “cartoon” versions of successful printed books are being prepared to be freely available online.

The IT and language initiative launched in 2015 advanced further in 2016. A call for proposals was issued and out of the 17 submissions received four were chosen by a committee of experts. They include spell-checkers and text corpus development, a French-Armenian thematic online lexicon-dictionary, an online platform for classical Armenian and OCR for manuscripts, and the writing of a graphic novel by young men and women from around the world using online tools.

Early in the year, the Department launched its strategic report *Armenians in 2115* simultaneously in London, Los Angeles and Yerevan, in partnership with the American University of Armenia and University of Southern California's Institute of Armenian Studies. IDeA and CivilNet, two important organisations in Armenia, provided valuable social media and online broadcasting assistance.

In terms of printed books, seven modern Armenian classics are being published in Turkish in Turkey with the assistance of the Department. 2016 also saw the publication of *Who are the Armenians?* children's book in Turkish.

In the Armenian language, the Department's support ranged from a manual on Western Armenian spelling rules (also available electronically) to an introduction to philosophy textbook for university students in Eastern Armenia. Two of the oldest journals in the Armenian world, *Pazmaveb* and *Hantes Amsorya* are supported by the Department, as are important books on western literature and literary criticism. Significantly, the publication in Lebanon of six math and science textbooks for grades one to three was funded. A trilingual (Armenian, French, English) book of lullabies, accompanied by a CD, also merited the Department's support.

Some examples of books in English or French supported include: an anthology of contemporary Armenian literature; a historical atlas for teaching purposes; an academic book on Armenia's and Georgia's relations with Europe, the vocal art of 20th Century Armenian composers; a fact book on Armenian culture and history; and a study of the historical monuments of the Kesab district. Also the book *Armenia: Masterpieces from an Enduring Culture*, the catalogue of the Bodleian Library's exhibit in Oxford on Armenian manuscripts and ancient books, was supported.

Finally, the Department publishes a short biography of Calouste Gulbenkian, in six languages.

