



Annual Report 2017

Armenian Communities

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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 programming of the department 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; and preserving and disseminating Armenian literary heritage.



€2,975,000

The sums for the activities presented here correspond to gross costs, without profits.



Wikipedia Holiday Camp.
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Armenian Communities 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. Two new initiatives were launched in 2017: a language summer camp for children and youth in France, and a teacher training programme in Lebanon. In Armenia, a new online programme of civic education for youth was funded, while in Turkey support to civil society working on Armenian-Turkish dialogue continued. Funding for publications continued, supporting authors, universities, civil society organisations and publishers to print and circulate texts primarily in Armenian, English, French and Turkish.

Projects and Initiatives

Language, Culture and Education in the Diaspora

The department continued to directly support Armenian schools and educational programmes throughout the diaspora. It renewed its support to the Howard Karagheusian Commemorative Corporation which runs special needs education programmes for Armenian children in Lebanon, an underserved domain within the country. Hundreds of children benefit from these programmes. Part of the grant went toward the preparation of new social workers. Association Enfance et Harmonie received funding for an educational publication and CD for children that uses music as a means of language acquisition.

A major new teacher retraining initiative was launched for Armenian schools in Lebanon. Partnering with Haigazian University (Education and Continuing Education departments), a year-long programme was developed for in-service teachers. Regular interactive seminars taking place on Saturdays covered such topics as critical thinking, curriculum development, language teaching and school leadership.

The department sponsored three academic symposia. The Society for Armenian Studies (USA) organised in Washington, DC, the conference *Transmitting Western Armenian to the Next Generation*. The Association Internationale des Etudes Arméniennes' 14th general conference

was hosted by Oxford University. Finally, Haigazian University's annual conferences on Armenian communities in the Middle East continued, highlighting pioneering research on understudied topics.

Through another university partnership, the Institute of Armenian Studies at University of Southern California, co-funding was provided for a fellowship programme on research on contemporary Armenian issues.

A grant was given to Creative Armenia, a new cultural organisation established in Yerevan and Los Angeles, to enable it to deliver two programmes on "creative impact." The London based Programme of Armenian Studies continued to get support for its Western Armenian language courses for adults. Croix Bleue des Armeniens de France was supported for its lecture and seminar series on language and culture, focussing in 2017 on the topic of diasporas. The third Wikipedia Western Armenian writing camp for youth took place in France. It was attended by 55 people from seven countries.

In Portugal, the department contributed to the *Jardim de Verão (Summer Garden)* festivities. It organised 12 events on Armenian related themes, including concerts, lectures and workshops.

Support for Civil Society and Youth in Armenia

Programming in Armenia continued similar to previous years. Collaboration with the Ministry of Diaspora focussed on the integration of Armenian refugees from the Middle East, including a scholarship programme for 450 displaced university students (a programme jointly financed by the Armenian General Benevolent Union and St Sarkis Charity Trust in London).



Concert by Ara Dinkjian at the Summer Garden.
© FCG / Márcia Lessa

A grant to the Armenian Higher Education Initiative enabled it to organise an intensive summer school on the topic of "Changing Diasporas: Concepts and Approaches." Inkagir Magazine and Literary Society was supported to continue its work on producing contemporary literature, online and in print.

Civil society support expanded to include an important grant to Boon Cultural Foundation to develop an e-learning platform on civic education, delivered through a series of video lectures targeting teenage students throughout the country. This was in addition to the existing partnership with the Jinishian Foundation on civic engagement by youth.

Promotion of Armenian-Turkish Dialogue

The department's support to the Hrant Dink Foundation in Turkey focussed on digitising and cataloguing books and its archives on Armenian studies and minority rights, acquiring new books, and organising in Istanbul a series of discussions on Armenian culture with authors and publishers. A grant to Anadolu Kültür was approved to enable it to organise two exhibitions on the ancient Armenian city of Ani, one in Turkey and the other in Armenia. A grant to an Oxford academic was given to conduct research on the perception of Armenians in Turkey. In addition, a number of teachers and students from Armenian schools in Turkey were incorporated into the department's various initiatives on the revitalisation of Western Armenian.

Publications

While some printed publications were supported in 2017, particularly in Armenia, their number decreased. Instead, emphasis was put on digitisation. Three major initiatives were funded. First, the French based organisation Terre et Culture was awarded a grant to digitise photos of Armenian monuments in Turkey and in Nakhichevan. The Digilib library of the American University of Armenia published online Zabel Yessayan's complete works, making the writings of one of the most important 20th century writers available globally. The Association pour la recherche de l'archivage de la Mémoire Arménienne digitised and put online all the issues of the important Paris-based newspaper *Haratch* (published from 1925 to 2009). Support to online dictionaries also continued.

Scholarships



€884,000

in scholarships (including renewals of scholarships from previous years) awarded to 256 university students

Approximately €884,000 was distributed in scholarships, to 256 university students, including renewals. Of these, 94 were men, and 162 were women, broadly reflecting the gender ratio of applications received. 635 new scholarship applications were received. 61% of applicants had citizenship of Armenia, 8% of Turkey, 7% of Lebanon, 5% of the USA, 2% of France, 2% of the UK. Applications were received from a total of 32 countries. The amounts granted ranged from over €20,000 per year to certain PhD students, to several hundred Euros for short term travel grants. A full report on the scholarships, including the list of the recipients, is published annually on the department's website.

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 even 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.



Zarmanazan - holiday camps dedicated to the Western Armenian language.
© FCG / Vatché Dermidjian

A holiday camp for the Armenian language

Western Armenian, Calouste Gulbenkian's mother tongue, is considered an "endangered language" by UNESCO. Principally a language of diaspora, it faces the many challenges of intergenerational transfer. The Armenian Communities department invests considerable resources into the revitalisation of the language - from supporting community schools to academic research. In 2017, it extended this support to a one-of-a-kind summer camp for children and youth devoted to language acquisition in a fun environment.

The four-week long programme was called *Zarmanazan* - an Armenian word loosely translated as "marvelously diverse." It captured the mood of the camp, with 40 children between the ages of 10 to 15, coming from 10 countries, who lived, played and created together in the hills of Southern France. Through "project-based" learning, children engaged in all sorts of activities in Western Armenian: arts and crafts, music, theatre, dance, debates, video making, radio broadcasting, etc. Most importantly, an enthusiasm was created among young people for the language which they came to "own"

and use in their daily lives. Organised by Association Mille et un Mondes, the camp had the certification of the French Ministry of Youth and Sports. During the same period, and intertwined with the children's activities, a teacher retraining programme was offered to 15 teachers from Armenian diasporan schools, in partnership with Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales. *Zarmanazan* was preceded by a retreat for 38 educators' to develop language-learning pedagogic tools.



Zarmanazan - Teacher training.
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