



Annual Report 2020

Armenian Communities

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation aims to create a viable future for the Armenian people, in which their culture and language are preserved and valued. In this sense, the Foundation gives grants and scholarships to individuals and organisations around the world, in over twenty countries. The strategy is structured around four priorities: to revitalise and promote Armenian language and culture in the diaspora; to provide academic support to Armenian and Armenian Studies university students and researchers; to support civil society and intellectual creativity in Armenia in order to consolidate democratic culture; and to assist cultural and educational institutions in Istanbul and elsewhere that valorise the Armenian presence in Turkey.

GROSS OPERATING COSTS

3,0 M €



Support for Western Armenian

While many of the language support activities continued throughout the year, the Foundation's focus was on Lebanon during most of 2020, given the severe economic, health and security crises in the country.

A good part of the new strategy on education and Armenian language was implemented. As planned, three Armenian schools were selected through an open call for proposals to instigate major pedagogic initiatives. The teacher training programme could not start, given the pandemic. Instead, 700 tablets and computers were purchased for needy students to enable them to follow classes online.

The Lebanon strategy also included a programme to encourage young people to create culture in the Armenian language. This too was launched, and the number of prizes increased from the announced five to ten. Humanitarian aid – which was not initially planned – was also provided to three charitable organisations to deal with the most vulnerable in the community.

To deal with the lockdown in the spring, two new prizes were initiated globally. The first was to encourage Armenian language teachers to develop online teaching materials; the second was to encourage all Armenians around the world to express themselves about current issues in the Armenian language. Nearly 300 applications were received, about one-third of which received a prize of 500 dollars.

The “Zndoog” website with Armenian language pedagogic materials – with some 130 items to start with – was completed but its public launch postponed until the first quarter of 2021. Similarly, the project to create a Western Armenian treebank started and it continues.

The digitisation of the Mkhitarist collection of Armenian periodicals continues unabated, and the material is being transferred to the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia. A dedicated website is being created and should be ready during the first half of 2021.

Five children's books in Western Armenian (translated from other languages) have been published as planned. It should also be noted that the Foundation supported for the first time the production of an Armenian-language cartoon series, “Treasure Island” was translated and offered online to children around the world.

Seven books in literature, the social sciences and humanities were published.



Armenian Diaspora Survey

The findings of the Armenian Diaspora Survey were published as scheduled and presented to the public and the leadership of important organisations through a series of online seminars. The 2020 survey – in London, Paris, Detroit, and Rostov-on-Don (Russia) – has been prepared, but its actual start had to be postponed due to Covid-19 and the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The survey will take place during the first half of 2021.



Projects in Armenia

It was a very difficult year for Armenia. To cope with the pandemic, the Foundation provided humanitarian aid for medical equipment in the spring, in partnership with the Armenian government and international organisations.



The situation got much worse with the start of a major war with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh in Armenian) on 27 September. Additional humanitarian aid was sent to deal with refugees.



The war and Armenia's defeat completely changed the Armenian public agenda globally, in addition to leading to a severe political and economic crisis. Because of the situation, initiatives supported by the Foundation for civil society and short-term travel scholarships to young academics in Armenia were put on hold.



The publication of the social science translations continued, with three books already out, and another two due in two months.



Support for the Armenian-Turkish Dialogue

Due to the pandemic, the Armenian Studies fellowship at Bogazici University will start in September 2021 instead of 2020, although the selection process of the Fellow was completed. The “KarDes” app for Armenian and other minority places in Istanbul was successfully launched and is in full use.



However, the initiative of joint artistic projects and exchanges between Armenian and Turkish artists was cancelled, partly due to Covid-19, and partly due to the current political environment. Initiatives on the Armenian language – courses and website – continued, with the language courses being moved online.



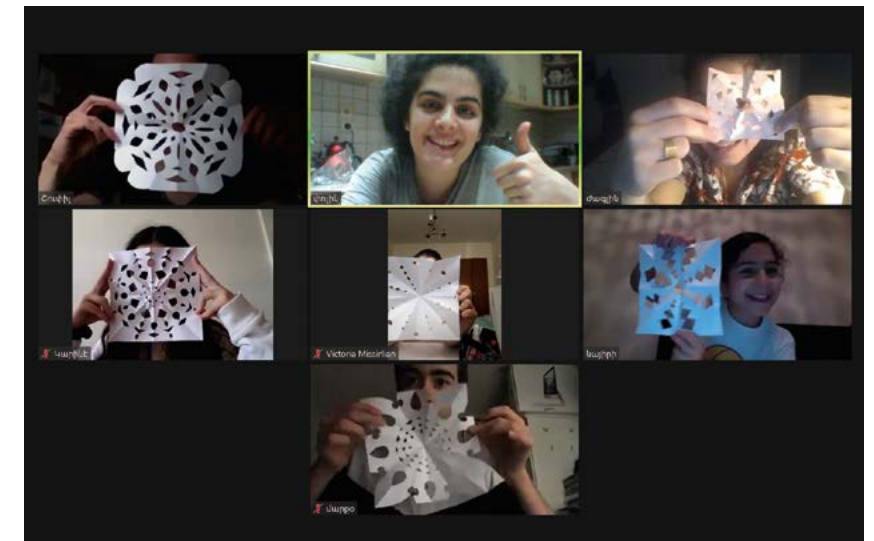
Support Grants for the Armenian Community

Throughout the year, the programme of grants to support the Armenian Community continued, with some modifications. Ninety-three scholarships were given to students from developing countries, twenty-four Armenian studies scholarships were given, and thirty-six short term Armenian Studies grants were made. However, the conference and travel grants were not utilised much this year due to travel restrictions. Instead, more grants were given in other categories.



Educational Activities in Armenian Communities

Due to the pandemic, the annual “Zarmanazan” summer camp devoted to Western Armenian immersion for students and youth (from 10 to 24 years old) had to be cancelled. In its place, an online camp (“Zartsants”) was organised over a period of one month, bringing together nearly eighty children, teenagers and facilitators to spend creative time together virtually. Workshops, cultural activities and even end-of-the-day “assemblies” were all moved online, in a secure environment exclusive to the participants.



One of the “Zartsants” workshops with Armenian communities, carried out online. © ARR