

A Changing Philanthropy

2014 · 2023 · 2027



CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN
FOUNDATION

**Armenian
Communities
Department**

A Changing Philanthropy

The Calouste
Gulbenkian Foundation

2014 · 2023 · 2027

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“The Armenian Communities Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation focuses on issues to which it can bring a substantial value-added in the Armenian world.

The value-added is rooted in the Department’s unique diaspora-centric approach, while the mission statement and programming reflect the duality of the Armenian world: Diaspora and Armenia.”

Razmik Panossian

Director of the Armenian Communities Department
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

How it all began

The great Armenian businessman and philanthropist, Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian, was born in 1869 in Scutari near Istanbul. Throughout his life, Gulbenkian was involved in philanthropic activities, including the establishment of the Armenian library in Jerusalem, the Saint Sarkis Church in London, aid to schools and humanitarian assistance. He paid special attention to the Armenian communities dispersed throughout the Middle East.

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation was created in 1956 by his bequest and continues to promote arts, education, science and charity throughout the world, as per the Founder’s will. The Armenian Communities Department, formerly named the Department for the Middle East, was set up at the inception of the Foundation.



Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation © Ricardo Oliveira Alves

The Trustee responsible for the Armenian Communities Department has always been a member of the Founder’s family. Presently, the Trustee responsible for the Department is Martin Essayan, Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian’s great-grandson.

Mr. Essayan is also responsible for the Foundation’s UK Branch in London, along with the grant making area of the Foundation. He is a Western Armenian enthusiast, and he is also at the forefront of climate and biodiversity defence efforts at the Foundation.

The Armenian Communities Department: A Summary



Sunrise Stepanakert 2022, cultural event, Stepanakert

The Armenian Communities Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is a grant giving unit. It provides project grants and individual scholarships.

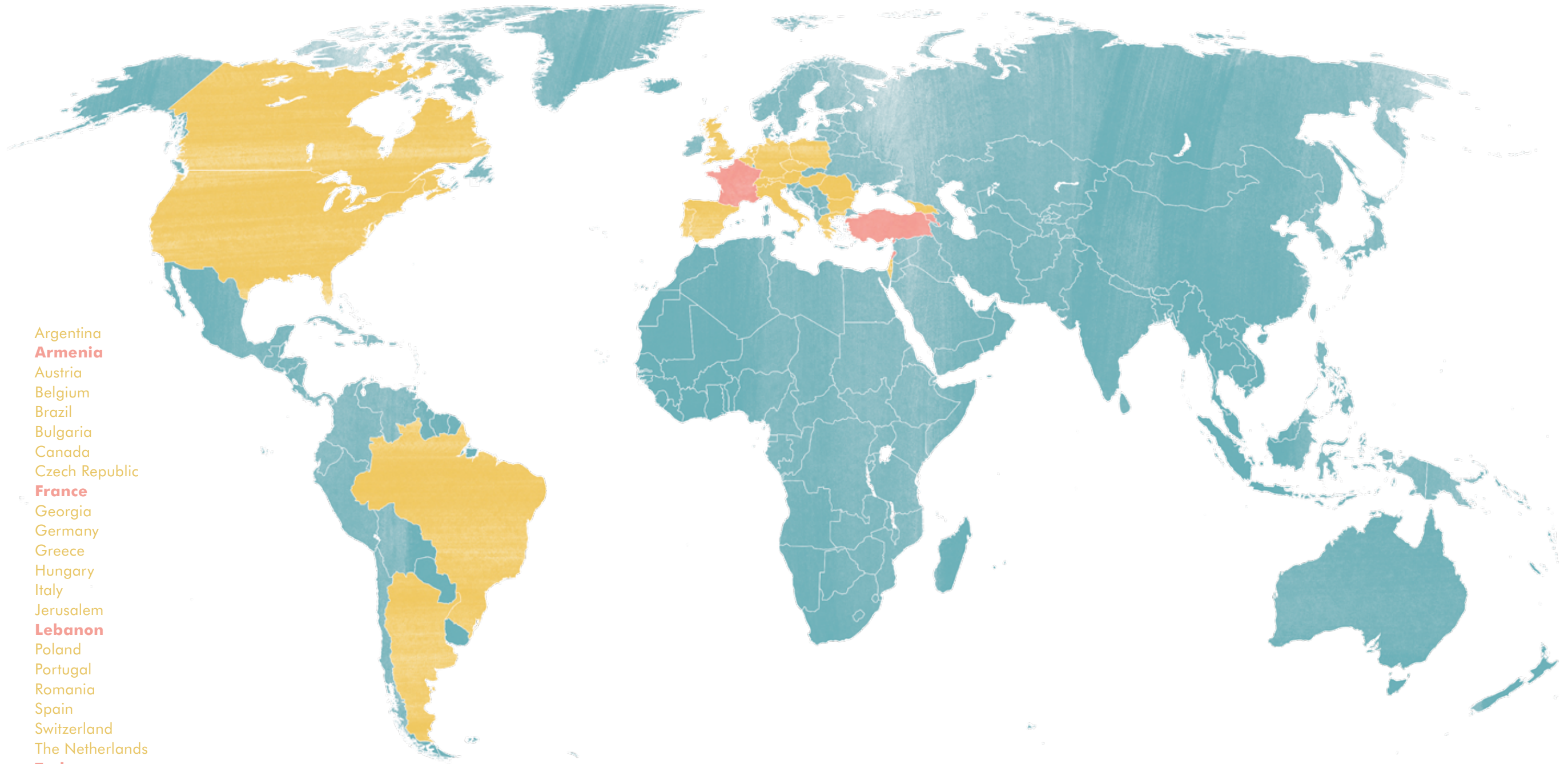
Since its inception in 1956, initially as part of a broader unit on the Middle East, the Department has been giving higher education scholarships. This scholarship scheme is one of the main tools through which the Department aims to bring positive impact on the Armenian world, by investing in an educated youth. Scholarship recipients include globally recognised scholars and many Armenians in leadership positions today.

The Department also has a track record of aiding Armenian schools, enhancing culture and language, sponsoring publications, and working actively in Armenia in different domains, including civil society, research and critical thinking.

Since 2013, Dr. Razmik Panossian has been the Director of the Department. Under his leadership, the Department has focused on ensuring the vitality of the Western Armenian language; it has helped to modernise the field of Armenian Studies through its scholarship scheme; and it has strengthened civil society and social science research in Armenia through its various project grants.



Zarmanazan summer language programme, France © Samuel Buton



- Argentina
- Armenia**
- Austria
- Belgium
- Brazil
- Bulgaria
- Canada
- Czech Republic
- France**
- Georgia
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Italy
- Jerusalem
- Lebanon**
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Spain
- Switzerland
- The Netherlands
- Turkey**
- United Kingdom
- United States of America

What are the Department's current priorities?

The mission of the Department is:

To strengthen language, culture, and critical thinking in the Armenian world.



Exchanging views with youth, Lebanon, 2023.

Through its funding priorities, the Department aims to achieve transformative change, particularly in the Diaspora, based on its:

- 1. Innovative and consistent grant making;
- 2. Experience in the Armenian world;
- 3. Track-record of philanthropic work over many decades;
- 4. Broad network of partners;
- 5. Financial and political independence.

The Department's grant making is driven by its desire to have a positive impact. It aims to make diasporan communities more sustainable, where Armenian culture, identity and education are stronger, and to work towards an open-minded and critically engaged Armenia.

In the Diaspora, the focus is on the Western Armenian language and on cultural creativity, which are essential for sustainable communities. In Armenia, the focus is on research support, translations, and enhancing critical thinking and engagement on national issues.

These are the Department's current strategic pillars that constitute its key areas of intervention:

- 1. The Western Armenian Language;
- 2. Cultural Creativity Support;
- 3. Research Support and Critical Engagement;
- 4. University Scholarships.

The Department's direct beneficiaries range from schoolchildren to established intellectuals, and from civil society organisations to universities. In any given year, over 50 new projects and nearly 200 individuals are supported in 15-20 countries. The ultimate beneficiaries are Armenians throughout the world who care about the language and the culture of the Diaspora, who want to maintain their identity as Armenians, and who want to work for and live in an open and democratic society in Armenia.

How does the Department achieve this?

The Department has identified four main areas of focus and channels its funding to four priorities. *Sustainability* and *equity*, the two core strategic directions at the heart of all Gulbenkian activities, are woven into the four priority areas of the Armenian Communities Department.

I. The Western Armenian Language

Significant funds are granted in order to ensure the vitality and long-term sustainability of the Western Armenian language and culture.

The Department invests in:

1. Language acquisition programmes for all ages;
2. Teacher development programmes;
3. Pedagogic tools;
4. Targeted aid to diasporan schools;
5. Relevant publications (with an emphasis on digital publications) and their dissemination;
6. Technology-related language initiatives such as spellcheckers and translation tools.



Exhibition on the ancient city of Ani, Kars, Turkey

“Gulbenkian has been instrumental in putting Western Armenian on the map.”

Razmik Panossian

II. Cultural Creativity Support

Culture is given a central position as a tool for creativity and social transformation. Emphasis is put on younger people to create cultural content in the Armenian language while critically engaging with the world.

The Department invests in:

1. Creation of new culture in Armenian that is innovative, regenerative and forward-looking, connecting the past, the present and the future;
2. Social transformation, which entails supporting cultural changemakers who challenge current realities and stimulate alternative imaginaries;
3. Sustainable shifts and futures that use arts and culture in addressing the climate and other crises.

III. Research and Critical Engagement in Armenia

Projects are supported which strengthen research and critical engagement with current issues that are of paramount importance to the Armenian world. This entails funding major policy-oriented research initiatives, as well as providing institutional support to research centres. The translation of noteworthy international publications into Armenian is also an important element of programming.

The Department addresses intellectual needs in Armenia through:

1. Armenia and Armenian-related research projects and publications;
2. The Armenian translation and dissemination of key social science and humanities texts written in various languages;
3. Events and initiatives, including conferences, seminars, courses and summer schools, as well as other relevant academic undertakings, that emphasise critical thinking and innovation.

IV. University Scholarships

Support is given to Armenian students, as well as specialists and researchers in the field of Armenian Studies, with particular emphasis on contemporary issues. Scholarships are in their essence instruments of equity. They enable deserving students to seize the opportunity of higher education and realise their full potential.

Every year, the Armenian Communities Department grants one million euros in scholarships.

It has the following four scholarship categories:

1. Armenian Studies graduate degrees;
2. Short-term research grants for Armenian Studies;
3. Higher education for Armenian students in/from developing countries (undergraduate);
4. Short-term conference and travel grants to students and young researchers in Armenia (all subjects).

Every year approximately 150 new scholarships, in varying amounts, are granted in some 15-20 countries.

€ 25,250,000
spent between 2014 and mid-2023

€ 9.3 M Scholarships

€ 16 M Projects

+1,800 Scholarships given in 40 countries

+980 Projects supported in 28 countries

+275 Publications supported (in different languages)

Finally, ad hoc humanitarian aid is provided by the Department at moments of crises. At every major humanitarian crisis in Armenia and the Middle East, the Foundation has made a contribution and has formulated an emergency response.

The Department makes its annual reports public through its bilingual website, where scholarship reports, supported projects and publications lists are also available for consultation.

Driven by the guiding principle of securing impact, the grant making of the Armenian Communities Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation focuses simultaneously on continuity and change, strikes the right balance between new and long-standing partners, takes risks while reinforcing gains, and funds both large and small projects, as well as individuals. Finally, the Department's programming reflects a mix of its own initiatives executed by partners and funding projects received through an open call for proposals.

The annual budget of the Armenian Communities Department is 3.3 million euros (excluding staff salaries).

For more information visit the Department's website, subscribe to the newsletter, and follow the Department's official Facebook page.

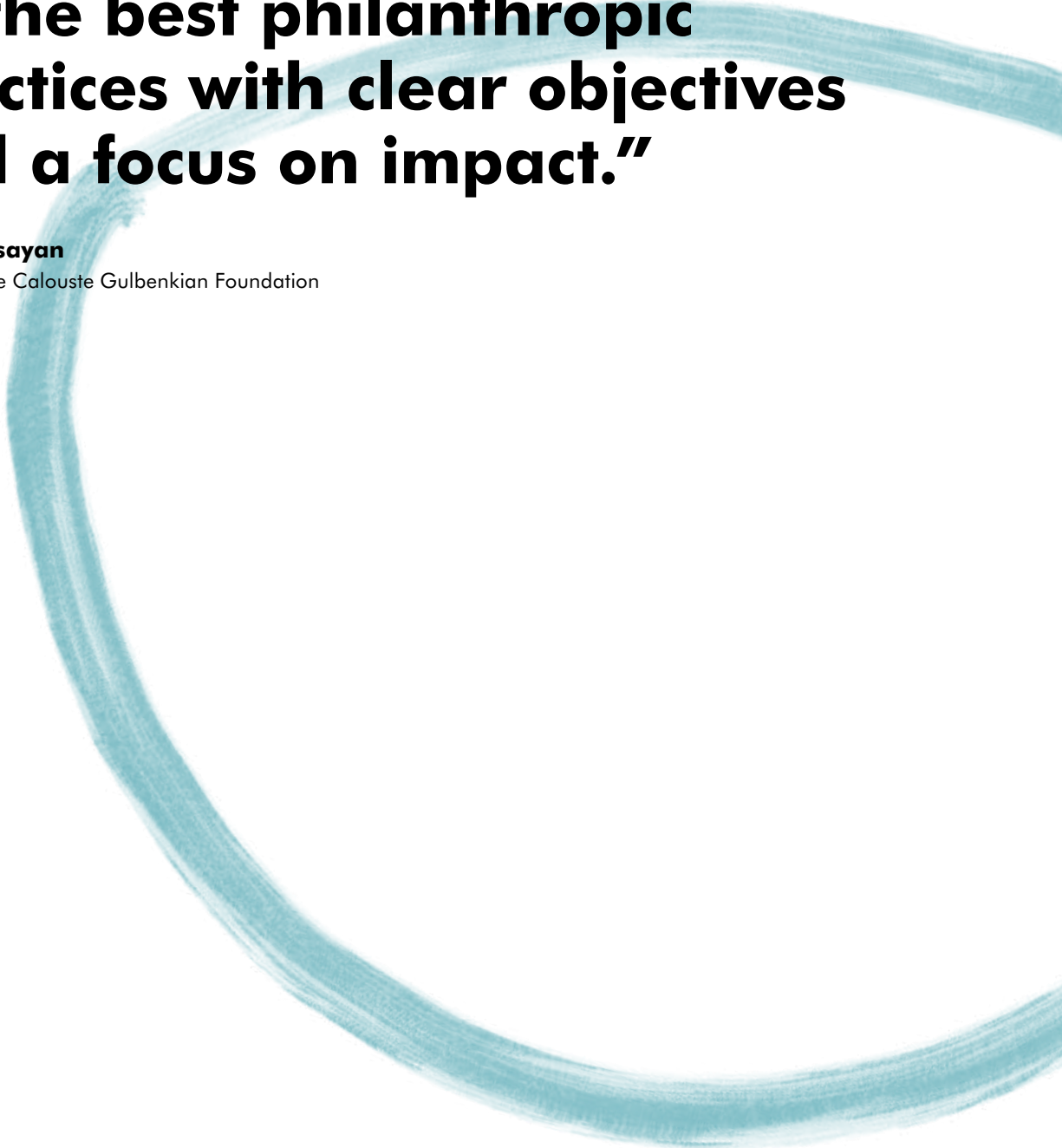
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“The Armenian Communities Department is guided by the best philanthropic practices with clear objectives and a focus on impact.”

Martin Essayan

Trustee of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation