

2023–2027 Five-Year Programming Plan



**Armenian
Communities
Department**

2023–2027 Five-Year Programming Plan



**Armenian
Communities
Department**

2023–2027

Five-Year Programming Plan

Armenian Communities Department
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

Հնգամեայ ծրագիր

Հայկական Համայնքների Բաժանմունք
Գալուստ Կիլպէնկեան Հիմնարկութիւն

Plano de Atividades

Serviço das Comunidades Arménias
Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian

2023–2027

Five-Year Programming Plan
Հնգամեայ Ծրագիր
Plano de Atividades

Lisbon | Լիզպոն | Lisboa 2024

Armenian Communities Department
Հայկական Համայնքերու Բաժանմունք
Serviço das Comunidades Arménias

Table of contents

1. Preface

2. 2023–2027

Five-Year Programming Plan

- Introduction
- The Western Armenian Language
- Cultural Creativity Support
- Research and Critical Engagement in Armenia
- University Scholarships
- Important Opportunities Fund

3. Conclusion

Preface

When I joined the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 2013, the first task entrusted to me was to develop a five-year strategic plan for the Armenian Communities Department. The 2014–2018 Plan was to help us devise and animate our project-based programming, the heart of which was the revitalisation of Western Armenian, as well as our university scholarship programme. More specially, our first Plan had four priority areas:

- Preserving the Armenian language and culture, developing the Diaspora, and investing in education;
- Developing a viable Armenia through investing in its youth and their commitment to civil society;
- Improving Armenian-Turkish dialogue and encouraging a common understanding of history;
- Preserving and making Armenian literary heritage available.

The second Five-Year Plan, 2019–2023, continued with the priorities of the previous Plan but made some adjustments. Notably, the Department's Scholarship programme readjusted its categories, putting more emphasis on Armenian Studies. One million Euros per year, approximately 30 percent of the Department's budget, is spent on university and research scholarships – something we have done, in differing proportions, since the inception of the Armenian Department in 1957. In the 2019–2023 Plan we awarded scholarships in the following categories:

1. Armenian Studies at the graduate level;
2. Short term research grants for Armenian Studies;
3. Short term conference and travel grants to young researchers in Armenia;
4. Undergraduate studies scholarships in developing countries;
5. Support to Armenian students in Portugal;
6. Emergency scholarships in unforeseen situations.

Between 2014 and 2023, the Department accomplished significant success both in its grant-making and scholarships. It invested in projects and partners that implemented meaningful initiatives, and invested in the preparation of future professionals and skilled people through its scholarships. During the 10-year period, around 1000 projects were supported in total, for a total of 16 million Euros in forty countries, and 1800 scholarships were given for a total of 9.3 million Euros, amounting to 25,250,000 Euros awarded to projects and scholarships.

The main accomplishments of the Armenian Communities Department between 2014 and 2023 can be distilled into three key takeaways.

First, thanks to the Department's cumulative efforts and targeted funding, the Western Armenian language has been reinforced. While the dangers facing the language are clear and commonly discussed, the Foundation actually puts considerable resources into ensuring its vitality. For example, the *Yertik.com* educational videos for children have had nearly 300.000 views from 57 countries, while hundreds have participated in person in the *Zarmanazan* summer programme in France; the *Oos Hartag* online teacher development programme has connected nearly 500 teachers from 16 countries through its biweekly meetings; the dynamic *Zndoog.com* platform contains 1200 pedagogic items for educators, all in Western Armenian, and is used by thousands of people from 45 countries. In addition, we have provided funding to scores of Armenian community schools in various countries, invested in spellcheckers and other language related technology, including large-scale digitisation efforts, and finally supported Armenian-language authors, translators and publishers to make available Western Armenian texts in various genres.

Second, through its research and translation related grants, the Department has played a key role in modernising the field of Armenian Studies to cover more contemporary subjects, and to bring new thinking and approaches to Armenia through the translation and dissemination of important international texts. Books that have had a global impact on the social sciences are now available in Armenian (both Eastern and Western), PhD topics funded put more emphasis on current issues, and research sponsored covered topics such as contemporary Armenian-Turkish relations, the Karabakh war and Diaspora Studies.

Finally, The Department's scholarship programme has benefitted thousands of students around the world in various fields, but especially in Armenian Studies, and helped to produce educated Armenian youth, skilled professionals, and future leaders, intellectuals and changemakers. More specifically, during the 2014–2023 decade, we have awarded 1800 scholarships of various sizes, of which 130 were in Armenian Studies at the

graduate level (MA, PhD) at internationally recognised universities, nearly 500 were short term grants for research in Armenian Studies, over 400 were to undergraduate students in developing countries (all subjects), and 650 were to young scientists in Armenia to attend conferences or trainings abroad. Some 160 scholarships were granted in other categories.

In this short publication, we present our 2023–2027 Five-Year Plan, with 2023 being a year of transition. The new Plan reflects both continuity and change. The revitalisation and reinforcement of Western Armenian, as well as university scholarships, remain at the core of our activities. But there are important adjustments elsewhere: a new accent on contemporary Armenian cultural creativity, and further emphasis on research on contemporary issues and advancing critical thinking in Armenia. A special “Important Opportunities Fund” has been created for unforeseen initiatives and humanitarian aid.

The details of our yearly activities can be found in the Foundation’s annual reports, as well as in the lists of the projects we have supported and the scholarships we have awarded; these are posted on our website on a yearly basis.

Razmik Panossian, Director
Armenian Communities Department
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

December 2024, Lisbon

2023–2027 Five-Year Programming Plan

**Հնգամեայ ծրագիր
Plano de Atividades**

Introduction

In 2023, a new strategic plan for the entire Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation was launched. The Foundation underwent a process of strategic redevelopment and planning in 2022, and after a rigorous process led by its new President, Professor António Feijó, the new Strategic Plan was adopted. *Sustainability and equity*, two themes of global consequence, were selected to guide the activities of the Foundation.

For the Armenian Communities Department this was year of transition too. It concluded the 2019–2023 programming plan and embarked on a new five-year plan that offered both continuity and change. The programming of the Department remained focussed on language and education, but also brought in new elements that are crucial to the Armenian world, such as an innovative Western Armenian contemporary culture programme, and further emphasis on solid social science research, critical thinking and analytical engagement.

The mission of the Armenian Communities Department for the 2023–2027 period is:

To strengthen Armenian language, culture and education in the Diaspora, and foster research and critical thinking in Armenia.

The current Five-Year Plan addresses two fundamental problems: the sustainability of the Western Armenian language and culture in the Diaspora, and the lack of good research on current issues, based on critical engagement, in Armenia.

The goal of the Department is to have sustainable diasporan communities, where Armenian culture, identity and education are stronger, and to enhance open-minded critical engagement on national issues in Armenia. To reach this goal, the Department supports various cultural, educational, research and philanthropic projects that have a positive impact on the Armenian world, reflecting its duality: Diaspora and Armenia.

More specifically, the programming of the Armenian Communities Department is delivered through the following four pillars or core priorities:

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

In addition, the Department also administers an “Important Opportunities Fund.”

Sustainability and equity are woven into all priority areas, which are thematically driven without geographic distinctions to reflect the interconnected nature of Armenian communities worldwide.

Mission

To strengthen Armenian language, culture and education in the Diaspora, and foster research and critical thinking in Armenia.

Goal

To have sustainable diasporan communities, where Armenian culture, identity and education are stronger, and to enhance open-minded critical engagement on national issues in Armenia.

Means

To support various cultural, educational, research and philanthropic projects that have a positive impact on the Armenian world, reflecting its duality: Diaspora and Armenia.

Priority 1

The Western Armenian Language



Objective

To ensure the vitality of the Western Armenian language by investing in teacher development programmes and pedagogic tools, supporting language acquisition initiatives for all ages, providing targeted aid to diasporan schools, contributing to the creation of essential technology-based language tools or platforms, and financing relevant print and electronic publications.

The Armenian Communities Department invests significant funds to ensure the vitality and long-term sustainability of the Western Armenian language and culture. UNESCO has declared Western Armenian – primarily a diasporan language – “definitely endangered.” The first pillar of the Department’s programming addresses this challenge, adopting a holistic approach.

The Department’s grants are open to all, provided that the proposed initiatives are in line with its set priorities, are designed to have impact, and bring an element of innovation. Curriculum development, teacher training, the use of technology for language reinforcement, publications and children’s programmes all fall within the purview of this Priority. Support can be given to Armenian-language authors, translators, and publishers enabling the publication of new texts in various genres,

from children's literature to 20th century classics, and contemporary novelists, along with digital and multidisciplinary publications.

The Department's strategy intends to generate more robust, engaged and sustainable diasporan communities with a vibrant and unique culture and education system in which language, Western Armenian, is central. The programming casts a wide net in terms of age groups and types of projects supported. Revitalising a language is a multi-vectored process requiring intervention at various levels, in multiple domains, and with numerous partners around the world. The Department achieves this by working with different stakeholders, engaging more actively and openly with varied concerned groups and individuals. It ensures a balance between continuing and new project partners, giving different people the opportunity to work in and with Western Armenian.

Through this programming pillar, the Department implements a holistic approach, incorporating innovative and contemporary approaches to education, culture, and language vitality.

Priority 2

Cultural Creativity Support



Objective

To produce cultural content in Armenian while critically engaging with the world, thus giving a central position to culture as a means for creativity, language enhancement and social transformation that could lead to positive change; culture plays a vital role in the construction of cohesive, equal and sustainable societies.

The Armenian Communities Department supports initiatives that enhance cultural production in Western Armenian. The approach to culture goes beyond preservation and repetition. Rather, it focuses on creativity, innovation and the generation of new culture, taking into account its transformative power, and paving ways for progressive cultural practices. As language and culture are inexorably linked, the aim is to use both to build stronger and wider frameworks promoting long-term, people-centred and resilient development paradigms.

The Cultural Creativity pillar encourages novelty and contemporaneity to stimulate alternative imaginaries based on democratic values and sustainable practices, including environmental sustainability. It aims to connect the Armenian past, present and future on the one hand, while on the other, it seeks to link the Armenian experience to international settings and practices. One example is the *արդ ես* *in view* initiative, which was launched in response to the great need to bring contemporaneity

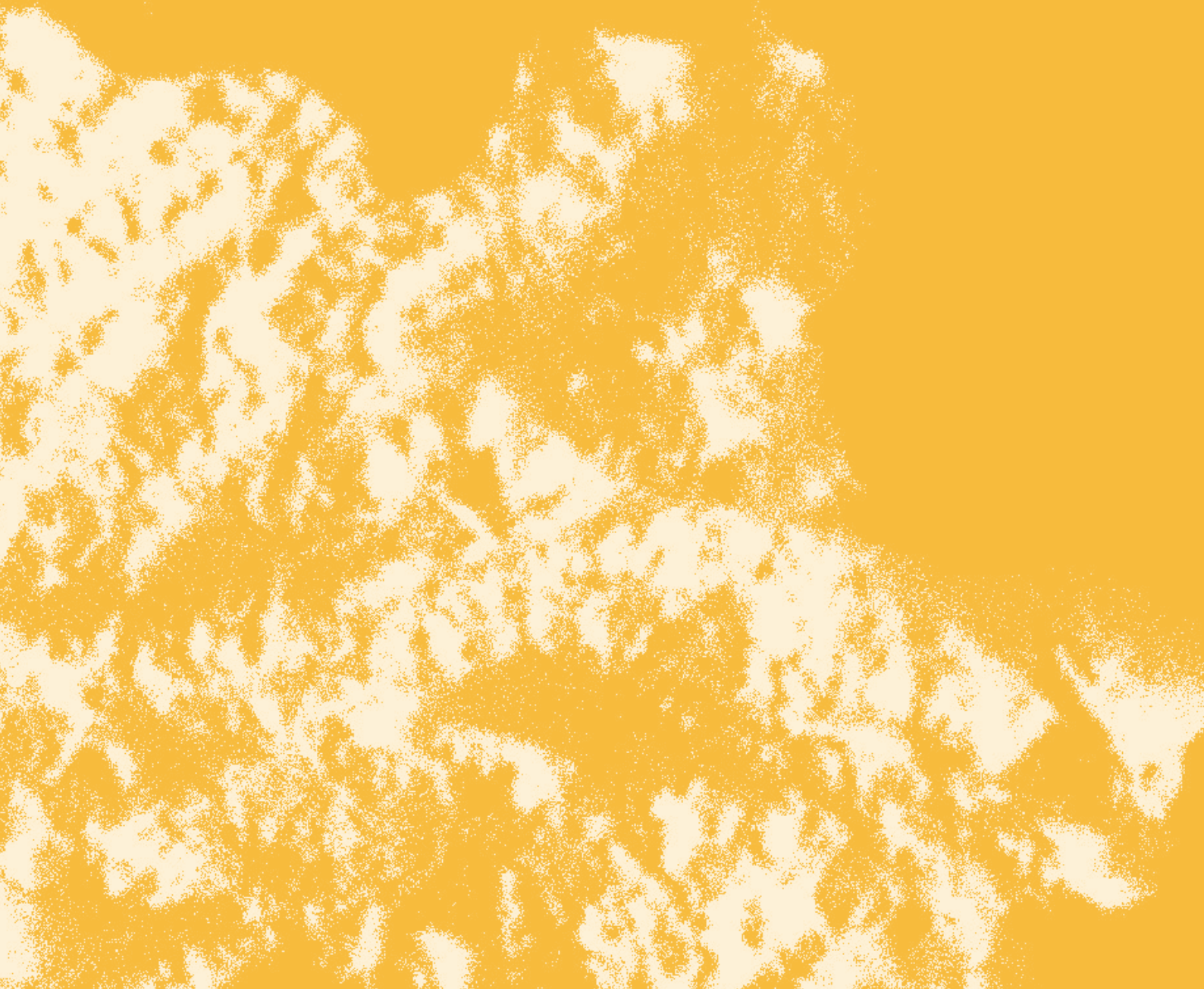
to Western Armenian and Armenian culture in general. The grant programme seeks to support various projects dealing with universal themes, while at the same time striving to make Western Armenian forward looking, original and cutting-edge.

In short, the Department's approach to culture addresses two specific lacunae in the Diaspora: first, to encourage creativity in Western Armenian that builds on the past but is not trapped in the past. And second, to help bridge the gap between Western Armenian culture and current global issues or trends – to encourage the language to be in conversation with the world.

Through this programming pillar, the Department aims to reinvigorate the Western Armenian language and enhance contemporary cultural creativity through a regenerative approach that is people-centred, strives for long-term results, and is based on universal values.

Priority 3

Research and Critical Engagement in Armenia



Objective

To strengthen research and critical engagement with current issues that are of paramount importance to the Armenian world by identifying and funding major policy-oriented research projects, providing institutional support to research centres, and sponsoring translations of noteworthy international publications into Armenian.

Intellectual advancement in Armenia, particularly in the social sciences and humanities, constitutes an important programming area for the Armenian Communities Department. It focuses on strengthening research on and critical engagement with fundamental current issues that Armenia and Armenians face. Serious, balanced and evidence-based research, as well as the availability of internationally important texts through Armenian translations, lead to greater ability to address key national problems, broaden critical approaches, encourage intellectual creativity, and prepare a solid basis for policy development. Moreover, doing so in the Armenian language assures a broader readership within the country and contributes to the development of the language.

One leading example is “The Calouste Gulbenkian Translation Series.” The Department invests in the publication of numerous significant works in the Armenian language. The focus is on the translation of the most influential contemporary academic texts from the 20th and 21st centuries that have had a significant impact on the thinking

of philosophers, social scientists, researchers and students in what is broadly called the West. These important books have not only influenced the evolution of social science disciplines and analytical frameworks, but have also redefined how the world is interpreted or understood by a wide range of intellectuals, opinion leaders and policy makers.

The Department also supports specific research and learning projects, in multiple languages, related to Armenia and the Diaspora. These range from short documentaries and educational TV programmes to multiyear public opinion surveys, academic articles and books on contemporary issues.

Through this programming pillar, the Department aims to enhance first-rate research and augment critical thinking, which are the bedrock for solid policy development.

Priority 4

University Scholarships



Objective

To support Armenian students to pursue higher education, and to advance the field of Armenian Studies by investing in specialists and researchers, with a particular focus on contemporary subjects.

Providing university scholarships to Armenian and Armenian Studies students around the world has been a core activity of the Armenian Communities Department since its inception in 1957. Many prominent Armenians in leadership positions have received scholarships from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation when they were university students. Thanks to these scholarships, thousands of students around the world have been able to pursue higher education. Scholarship recipients from the Armenian Department include two Nobel Prize winners, demonstrating the tremendous impact that scholarships can have.

Scholarships are in their essence instruments of equity. They enable students to seize the opportunity of higher education and realise their full potential. Scholarships focus on ensuring access to education, particularly for individuals in countries where university education is underfunded. The Department's scholarship programme focuses on Armenian Studies at the graduate level, a field in which funding opportunities are limited. It also privileges Armenian undergraduate students in or from developing countries to major in any topic. Two short term scholarship programmes, for Armenian Studies and for conference travel grants for young researchers in Armenia, are meant to address specific needs: enhance knowledge of Armenian subjects, and to offer opportunities to obtain international experience, respectively.

The four main categories through which the Department grants scholarships are:

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

The Department also provides a limited number of scholarships to Armenian university students studying in Portugal.

Through this programming pillar, the Department invests in the future leaders and intellectuals of the Armenian world, supports scientific excellence, and reinforces original research in the field of Armenian Studies.

“Important Opportunities Fund”

In addition to the four priority areas, the Department also has an Important Opportunities Fund to deal with unexpected developments such as humanitarian assistance at times of crises, as well as initiatives that are not foreseen but broadly in line with the set strategic objectives. This Fund allows flexibility in an ever-changing world, to address needs and prospects as they emerge. The Fund is a “reactive” tool allowing the Department to be more responsive as per need.

Conclusion

As a grant making institution, the Armenian Communities Department provides funds to initiatives that are in line with its stated priorities and lines of action. It works with different people and organisations in the Diaspora and in Armenia that develop and implement projects addressing clearly identified needs. The Department gives preference to original and progressive initiatives that strive to solve a problem. It additionally develops new initiatives itself and seeks partners to implement them.

Grant making also entails exit strategies, which means ensuring the sustainability of important projects after funding comes to an end. Hence the Department's emphasis on institutionalisation and other mechanisms of project continuity. This enables the development of new directions and initiatives based on achievements and lessons learned.

Armenians are faced with multiple challenges, both in the Diaspora and in Armenia: from the demise of communities due to war and severe economic crises, to language vitality, intellectual stagnation, and the difficulties associated with emerging diasporan communities. Global issues such as the climate crisis and major geopolitical shifts have a disproportionately negative impact on small countries and peoples. It is in such a context that the Department operates and seeks to strengthen Armenian communities and identity internationally. There is considerable emphasis on youth, innovation and positive impact, both on the individual and societal levels.

In sum, the core idea that animates the work of the Armenian Communities Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is to support Armenians throughout the world. It does this through project grants, scholarships and other philanthropic activities. Its funding spans from humanitarian aid to children's programmes and artistic creation. It accompanies communities at times of crises, and it works with people and organisations to enhance resilience. As such, continuity and change are essential, and both can be found at the heart of its Five-Year Plan.

