



Annual Report

Circus Lesvos

**CIRCUS
LESVOS**

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What's Inside

- 3** Our goals and vision
- 4** Our services
- 5** The team
- 6** Some of our partners
- 8** Other partners
- 9** Circus Lesvos and Schools
- 10** People have said about us
- 11** Stories that have been experienced
- 13** Photos
- 16** Some info about immigration in Lesvos
- 18** What's next
- 20** Partner's links

Our goals and vision



Since 2021 the project is successfully running in Lesvos, and thanks to your support and trust we could offer more than *1000 classes and workshops!!!*

We are strong believers in the positive impact and change that circus has for all people, so we make sure that access to our activities is inclusive for **EVERYONE**– locals and refugees.

Learning circus skills leads to a better :

- Strengthening of the physical condition, motor-sensory skills, and the brain activity
- Activation of creative behavior
- Strengthening the self-confidence, self-esteem, and social relationships
- Self-Trust
- Understanding of equality and respect for diversity
- Psychological resilience
- Joy through fun educational activities



"Circus can be a powerful tool for positive personal and social change"

Our services



Social Circus is the implementation of circus art, skills, and culture, to address social needs such as social isolation, the impact of trauma, violence in communities, and lack of access to arts and cultural activity.

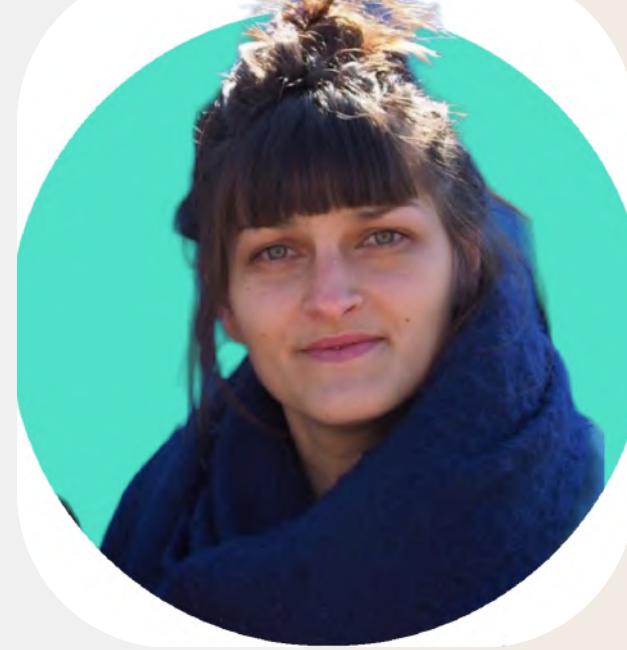
It cultivates a creative and safe environment where participants can access quality art education, learn how to share these skills in their community, benefit from social support, and develop their creativity and life skills!

Psychosocial and artistic activities for all ages:

- Circus Classes (juggling/balancing/acrobatics)
- Family Circus
- Theater and Self-Expression activities
- Human Rights Education
- Training for Staff

The team

in Lesvos



A group of experienced artists and trainers with specializations in Social Circus, Non-Formal Education, Social studies, and Mental Health have provided artistic and psychosocial activities for children and adults!



Some of our partners



Paréa Lesvos is the old One Happy Family community area, operated by Europe Cares, that provides a safe space for refugees and is a home for 11 other organizations. The center is located near the camp in Kara Tepe, Lesvos, and is visited daily by camp residents. It offers space to stay in a positive & safe environment, including free drinks and lunch.

Circus offers weekly classes for all ages, from the young to the very old. Everyone is welcome to join open-space training!



MVI is located inside PAREA community area and provides Psycho-Social Support to children up to 18 that are facing behavioral, cognitive, and emotional challenges.

Circus is working with Mental Health trained staff, for better and holistic interventions!

#LeaveNoOneBehind

#LeaveNoOneBehind stands for a solidarity movement at the European borders and beyond. We offer a platform for solidarity projects, create a critical public, support aid organizations, and step in wherever people would otherwise be left behind.

Circus had a strong relationship with them, helping to reach and to maintain a social network on the island, both for local and non-local populations!



Through sport, YOGA AND SPORTS bring people together and foster hope. Sports can break ethnic and religious barriers, thus creating a safe meeting space for cooperation between cultures where everyone participates and becomes a family.

Circus is provided weekly classes in their gym, mainly focused on high physical and mental activities such as floor acrobatics, aerials, trampoline, etc. The groups are either mixed gender or only for women and young girls.

WWBT's Sports, Arts and Wellness Center For Humanity: This center is a sanctuary, where women and children can step out of the daily stress of the refugee camp into a peaceful physical space, free to cultivate mind and body!

Circus is offering weekly classes/activities for children, mainly preschoolers, and their mothers/caregivers!

STAND BY ME LESVOS works under empowerment, self-help, and education principles. Founded in 2017, SBML has spent the last years fully integrating into the refugee community inside the camp, and learning how to best support the needs of people.

With their help and trust, we managed to be in contact with local schools and to get access to the refugee camp of Kara Tepe where we implemented weekly courses for about 2 months!



Other Partners



LESVOS SOLIDARITY/MOSAİK offers language classes (Greek, English, Farsi, and Arabic), educational activities for children, computer classes, guitar lessons, yoga classes, literature workshops, human rights workshops, poetry nights, and cinema screenings, and has two choirs



MIKROS DOUNIAS is an intercultural pedagogical project on the Greek island of Lesvos. Every day, local and refugee children of early childhood age play and learn together in nature.



In cooperation with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF, ILIAXTIDA provides accommodation shelter and support to unaccompanied children of Lesvos.



Poliana is a non profit art and culture organization founded by artists living on the island of Lesvos.

The choir Cantalaloun was created at a historic moment when the local community of Lesvos was once again experiencing a reshuffle of its population. 2015-16 was a year when both refugee flows and thousands of volunteers and NGO workers changed the island's "anthropogenic" map.



The purpose of the club is to support children-adolescents-adults with autism and to raise awareness and inform society.



Circus Lesvos is Active with the Local Community as Well !!



- During our one year on the island, we have created an extensive network with the local schools, placed either inside the capital of Lesvos or in the isolated villages of the island.
- School based-circus workshops, were often short-term and intense, giving a chance to the children to obtain a touch of circus life and to implement a final performance in front of the rest of the circus community.
- Afterschool activities are offered continuously for the local and nonlocal populations of Mytilene.
- Weekly collaborations with kindergartens and elementary schools in Mytilene were also on our weekly schedule!
- Outdoor activities in the parks of Mytilini were also an effective outreach with a significant impact! The public parks are the places where Roma, refugees, and local communities meet each other, and what could be a better way for intercultural education and integration activities, than the circus?
- Circus Lesvos was also collaborating with the local organization for people with autism and implementing group and individual sessions!

People have said about us...

"It's amazing what you do...
The moment you arrive in
our place, you are adults,
but
once you start playing you

become
so energetic and
enthusiastic like the
children!

During the class, you are
so involved and connected
with the kids !"

*-Marisa, psychologist in
WWBT*

"I always wanted to do
circus,
and when I saw you
coming to my
school, i said << at last, my
people came!>>"

-primary school student

"Giving children
the chance to
practice
circus, before
their
psychological
sessions, help
them to be more
focused and
concentrated
afterward."

-psychotherapist

"The days and the
hours that circus is not
there, something is
missing.

You really bring "color"
to our place!!! "

*-Lisa, Field Coordinator
of Parea*

Stories that have been experienced



Saint Eirini park

It is a central park famous as a meeting point for people of all ages. Unfortunately, not only nice things are taking place there. Our team has spotted inappropriate physical contact between an old man and a Roma minor girl. Immediately, we tried to convince the child to join our activities, and

a denunciation of the incident to an NGO specialized in human trafficking followed.

In the upcoming days, because of the same person, we have called the police. Unfortunately, they were already informed about him, thanked us for the call, and confirmed that we are right to be suspicious about the situation we have noticed, but there is nothing that they can do since there is no effective social system for the protection of children, in Greece.

We, as a team, know that we can't change the situation, but we can try to re-occupy the park by implementing weekly visits and bringing fun and joyful moments.

So, we did!

When We Band Together (WWBT)

The first time we arrived at this place, we met around 20–25 kids. Most of them were new arrivals on the island. Some of them were very social, some difficult to approach, some crying and were attached to their caregivers, and some were often fighting with each other. While days and weeks were passing by, the patience, love, and knowledge of the WWBT staff and ours, gave them a safe environment to accomplish important behavioral changes. Participation, sharing, respect, more autonomy from the parents, and fewer trouble-making actions were their main attitudes of them!

Until, one day, we realize that those kids have left the island and gone on with their travel...

But, many new faces were waiting for us in the place of WWBT!

PAREA & MVI

Parea is a big, colorful community center that offers plenty of activities suitable for all ages. There, we also have a central spot where we practice circus skills with everyone interested.

A young boy from Somalia, a regular visitor of Parea, a patient/client of MVI (providing MHPSS group sessions to children), and a "friend" of the circus, was just arriving in the place, for attending his psychosocial sessions. But the circus was more interesting for him at the moment, and by facing difficulties to be convinced by his psychotherapist, the specialist came to us and said: "let him play with you for a while, and please, can you make your 'magic' and bring him soon inside?!"

Working together, for the benefit of the children, is our priority!

Photos







Some info about the immigration in Lesvos

In 2015 the residents of the small island of Lesvos, together with NGOs, were providing humanitarian first aid help to approximately half a million refugees and immigrants(<https://www.pcc4refugees.org/cpages/overviewrefugee>). During those years many changes had been taking place in the political scene of Greece and Europe in general, and as a result, there was a reduction of the numbers, with the population of refugees on the island dropping to 1.605 in November 2022. (www.aegeanboatreport.com).

Nowadays, there is one refugee camp (Kara Tepe) with approximately 1.500 residents, located just 2,5 km away from Mytilene.

The entrance to the camp is fully supervised and controlled by police-security, and since 2020, all the camps are surrounded by high concrete walls (a project that was implemented by International Organization for Immigration/IOM).

Greece, with the help of Europe and Frontex, is trying to further reduce the number of asylum seekers, with different political strategies, both on the land(interviews with no interpreters, fast denial answers, etc) and in the sea. Pushbacks are deadly tactics that are finally recognized not only among the refugees, and humanitarian workers and allies, but a public discourse is taking place in the European Parliament thanks to the OLAF scandal.

Thanks to some NGOs (MSF, PRAXIS, etc) there is a big and fast response for help when boats arrive on land. Police on the one hand must be informed by the NGOs, but on the other hand, they are the ones that must find the people first (often hidden in the forest) in order to stop a possible repositioning of the refugees back to the boat and the sea.

Once the refugees have managed to be registered, they are moved to the other side of the island, for 10 days of isolation/quarantine. Then they are moved back to Kara Tepe.

Unfortunately, a new camp is on the fast track of being built, despite the concerns of NGOs and the locals about environmental raids, and violations of human rights.

The new location is going to be in the Vastria area, a woodland in the middle of nowhere, 6h away by foot from Mytilene, totally isolated and far away from any supermarket, school, cultural life, etc. The camp will have high security, with Xrays and double control at the entrance (fingerprint and ID), and inside they are planning to "serve" all the facilities that a human supposedly needs. A modern asylum, a prison, with the blessing of the Greek government and Europe, is ready to be built in Lesvos. Unfortunately, it is not the first one (Samos, Chios) and that's because it seems to be a successful way to please the Greek voters (minimize immigration, 'safety' for the Greeks, fight against the brutality of the "NON-REAL REFUGEES" as the minister of migration has said).

New elections are coming soon, and the desires of Europe and Greece are quite clear.
But the desire to have a better life is more than the fear of the imprisonment and death!

what's next

The project is about to continue on the island, together with the support of Parea Community Center!

At the same time, we are planning to fully go on the collaborations with the valued network that we have created!

We are getting bigger and stronger, providing and receiving support and knowledge from partners further away from the island as well.

Fellowship with MONOKYKLO circus school in Thessaloniki/Greece is another example of the unlimited power that social circus has!

We couldn't do this without you!

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND TRUST!

Do you want to know more about our partners?

Here you can find their links!



<https://www.parea-lesvos.org>

<https://medical-volunteers.org>

<https://yogasportwithrefugees.org>

<https://www.wwbt.org>

<https://lesvossolidarity.org>

<https://www.mikrosdounias.eu>

<https://iliaktida-amea.gr>

<https://standbymelesvos.gr>

<https://lnob.net>

<https://www.cantalaloun.org>