



European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards (2024)

551-Education, Training and Skills 3. Education, Training & Skills



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"Creative Haven: Empowering Nagorno- Karabakh Refugees through Artistic Endeavors in Armenia"

Entry details

General information

Main country of application

Armenia



Registration number

HA2024-AR-01

In case there are other official partners involved in the project, please list the country(ies) they come from

Megerian Carpet ,Smithsonian Institution are official partners involved in our projects

Brief description of the project

Teryan Cultural Center is committed since 2002 in the study, preservation and promotion of Armenian arts. Through modern technologies, it empowers beneficiaries socially and economically.

In the wake of the devastating conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, we have become a beacon of resilience, aiding refugees with essentials, empowering them with skillsets, pivoting tragedy into a testament of human spirit. Now, with over 100,000 newly displaced individuals, we're expanding our mission.

A strong cultural tradition, our experience in the industry have been at the center of real-world workshops, where students learn, create and earn, giving hope and real work to the displaced people.

Start date of the project

2020-09-29

Completion date of the
project/initiative

Ongoing

Website(s) of the project/nominee	https://teryanculturalcenter.com/
Facebook page of the project, if any	https://www.facebook.com/Teryan.Cultural.Center/
Instagram page of the project, if any	https://www.instagram.com/teryan_cultural_center/?hl=en
Does the site or heritage in question have national/regional/local cultural heritage designation or protection status in its country?	Yes
If yes, please specify:	
The projects are committed to the preservation of Armenian and Artsakh cultural heritage (national costumes, carpets and rugs, patterns, Khachkars, food)	
Is the site or heritage in question included on the UNESCO World Heritage List, either as a single World Heritage Site or as part of one larger site?	No
If relevant, is the site/heritage accessible to the public?	Yes
If relevant, is the site/heritage accessible to people with disabilities?	
Teryan Cultural Center prioritize accessibility, hosting festivals and workshops for individuals with disabilities, disabled War veterans and forcibly displaced people to showcase their crafts.	

Contact details

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Entrant's position	CEO and Founder
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Project leader's position	Art Director
Organisation of the project leader	Teryan Cultural Center
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Other relevant participants

Anush Khojumyan- Educator of Embroidery
 Ashkhen Khudaverdyan- Educator of Art Management
 Anna Sandoyan- Educator of Graphic Design Program
 Lilit Melikyan- Educator of Design and Packaging
 Ovsanna Margaryan- Educator of SMM
 Haykuhi Karapetyan- Educator of Photography
 Narine Abelyan- Educator of Finance and Economics
 Anushik Ghuzanyan- Educator of Innovation Technology and AI in Design and Art

Concise summary

Concise summary

"The 'Creative Heaven' project exemplifies resilience in the face of adversity. Since 2002, the Teryan Cultural Center started to be committed in studying and preserving Armenian and Artsakh culture, conducting extensive research, cultural workshops, and exhibitions. In 2016, we partnered with the Smithsonian Institute to launch 'My Armenia,' training 55 artisans from Artsakh and Armenia, enabling them to share their crafts with local and international audience.

Following the invasion of the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) in September 2020, our center swiftly transformed itself into a beacon of hope, offering humanitarian aid to Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh refugees. As the people was traumatized by what was happening, we deemed that culture was the most powerful tool to come to the rescue and to give to the displaced people proud for their past and hope for their future. Forcibly displaced women received education and sewing training to start their businesses, we initiated 'The Taste and Smell of Artsakh,' supporting them in establishing traditional food businesses, sell food typical to Artsakh. We soon expanded into makeup artistry, hairstyling, ceramic art, aiding displaced individuals in adapting to Armenian life.

Recently, a new conflict erupted, forcibly displacing over 100.000 Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh residents who suffered immensely during the prolonged blockade and starvation which started in December 2022. Today, our center supports them by providing food, hygiene items, cloths, as well as by helping them in integrating to the society, offering psychological support, education, and job assistance in order to make them able to restart their lives with dignity.

Drawing from our experience, we believe in establishing classrooms/workshops where people can both learn and work, serving clients and getting orders which will be a learning-by-doing platform This approach addresses gaps in the Armenian job market and leverages the unique talents of Artsakh Armenians.

As a volunteer organization deeply connected with marginalized individuals, we see this a pivotal part of our mission. While the long-term financing for these classes remains a challenge, we are initially focusing on the first group registered at our Center. Our goal is to empower them to become teachers and mentors for their fellow countrymen after finishing their courses, compensating them for their efforts. Our center, which includes computers and a ceramic studio, will function as a teaching area. However, there is an importance of funding in purchasing equipment for the new forcibly displaced people we aim to assist and paying the mentors.

Objectives and work undertaken

Aims and objectives of the project/initiative

Our primary goal is to promote inclusion and empower displaced individuals from Artsakh by providing a platform for them to showcase their abilities and foster a sense of belonging.

Moreover, we aim to eliminate social barriers, demonstrate resilience, and promote equal opportunity for all, to increase community awareness and education regarding accessibility, equal opportunity, and the preservation of cultural heritage. We organized and coordinated festivals and workshops that encourage participants' creative self-expression.

Another essential objective is to recognize the exceptional mental abilities of War veterans who possess unique talents although may have physical disabilities provoked by the war. To assure the continued relevance of cultural heritage in contemporary society, we advocate for its preservation.

Our initiative is centered on the understanding of the deep connection among social and cultural assets and on community development, which fosters long-lasting connections between participants. Prioritizing education and advocacy, we aim to raise awareness of the challenges faced by forcibly displaced people and to advocate for their rights, dignity and social inclusion.

These objectives and goals define the vision of our initiative, reflecting our unwavering commitment to integration, empowerment, cultural preservation, and community engagement.

Any historical and technical research undertaken for the project/initiative

As part of our commitment to preserving and commemorating the cultural heritage of Armenia, we have conducted extensive historical research. This exhaustive endeavor required extensive research in the historical archives of Artsakh, consultations with local historians and ethnographers, as well as community members, and a meticulous examination of historical documents, artifacts, and visual documentation. We intend to ensure that our endeavor accurately reflects the traditions and legacies that define our community by immersing ourselves in the region's rich historical tapestry.

Activities carried out and stages of implementation of the project/initiative

To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the cultural heritage to be preserved, historical research findings were incorporated into the needs assessment phase. Utilized historical research findings to inform the strategic plan for the project, ensuring that it corresponds with the community's cultural traditions and legacies. Developed educational materials and content that incorporate historical information, enabling participants to connect with and comprehend the cultural significance of their craft or abilities.

As directed by the research findings, ensured that studio-created art and craft products are rooted in historical traditions and cultural significance. After having all these researches done, in the first stage in carrying out our initiative was to recruit and register persons forcibly displaced from Artsakh based on their professions and their desire to acquire new professions. We acquired the essential classroom materials and equipment. Intensive seminars and lectures were organized for the people, as the educational system and labor market in Artsakh differed from those in Armenia, and residents must acquire the appropriate education and skills.

At the end of the course, our professionals evaluated trainees' knowledge and experience to ensure they were prepared for employment. We found new employment opportunities in various organizations for individuals who had been trained to serve as mentors for their countrymen, train them in similar professions, and earn money at the same time. Our team created new online platforms people could display their products and sell them. In the final phase, a reporting exhibition was conducted, as we believed that everyone should be able to see the rapid progress we had made.

Challenges or problems encountered and solutions found to overcome them

It is extremely difficult to conduct research because the history of Nagorno Karabakh region and of its cultural heritage is always at risk of being distorted for political reasons. To be certain of the results of our research, comparisons with other nations are required at all times, as different nations may assert that your heritage is theirs. It has always been a challenge to find evidence of our rich heritage. Therefore, a large team of experts must examine all artifacts, historical documents, and conduct meticulous research to ensure that educational materials and research findings are consistent with the region's history and reflect its multiform layers of cultural development. Our team has always been devoted to conducting thorough and scientific investigation and to uncovering evidence of our rich heritage.

Results and impact

Summary of the main results achieved and knowledge that has been gained. List the ways that the project/initiative contributes to the preservation and/or enhancement of the historical, cultural, environmental, educational and/or social values of the heritage in question. Mention the project's impact on conservation policy and practice, if any.

For more than two decades, our mission has been to study, to preserve and to revive material and intangible Armenian culture in order to create material items based on its concept. We studied Armenian traditional costumes, customs, traditions, and the fine and applied arts during the first ten years. We developed design teams to digitize Armenian ornaments, rug patterns, textiles, and landscapes, in addition to educating the public about Armenian embroidery and craftsmanship.

Today we work as an intermediary between tradition and modernity, helping to preserve the Armenian cultural inheritance, conserving our legacy and empowering future generations through our huge efforts, and for that, we urgently need funding support. This funding grant will be instrumental in advancing our mission and contribute to the safeguarding of Armenian and Artsakh cultural heritage. With your support, we can purchase the most important equipment to train and help forcibly displaced people adapt in to Armenian life and make their living."

Because our courses are intended to be at a very high level and are aimed to provide the learners with professional skills, the number of learners should be kept to a minimum. After extensive work on Armenian artifacts, we started digitizing also Artsakhian rugs and carpets, national costumes, jewelry, embroidery, and Khachkars, as well as Artsakh's endangered heritage, this have the double aim to promote the advancement of scientific studies and to safeguard an heritage which is endangered by the efforts of the Azerbaijan regime of rewriting the history of the area. We strongly believe that a in-depth and scientifically conducted research should be at the base of a peace building and reconciliation process which we hope could start in the next months/years.

Aspects of the project that can be considered innovative within its area or field.

Our innovative approach involves utilizing cutting-edge technology and AI to digitize heritage, using online platforms to showcase products globally. This initiative combines cultural preservation with empowerment. Through graphic design, handicraft and other professions, individuals both earn a living and preserve their culture, bridging the past and future. It fosters social cohesion as diverse individuals collaborate, nurturing a sense of community and heritage. The project recognizes the emotional impact of cultural displacement, offering psychological support alongside material aid. A unique feature is our emphasis on building a community of educators among the displaced population. The initial beneficiaries become mentors, ensuring the continuity of cultural preservation efforts.

Measures to ensure the sustainability/future viability of the project (in terms of future plans and funding).

To ensure the long-term viability of our project, we are committed to diversifying our funding sources, establishing an endowment fund, and exploring social enterprise initiatives. Collaborations and partnerships with like-minded peer organizations both local and international will expand our reach and resources, while our project's sustainable business models will generate revenue.

Continued support will be secured through long-term planning, documentation of success stories, advocacy efforts, and public awareness campaigns throughout the world. In addition, we acknowledge the significance of grant writing and fundraising expertise, diverse revenue streams, regular reporting, and risk management. Lastly, legacy planning guarantees the continuation of our mission and the preservation of our cultural heritage for future generations.

Dissemination of the project's results and knowledge gained and any outreach or educational activities.

The project activities and results are documented on video and in photos. First, we needed to provide mentors with detailed statements and the appropriate guidelines and materials. The participants from Artsakh and different regions of Armenia were taught all the essentials skills and started creating their own art. The videos of the final result were uploaded to social media platforms and our YouTube channel.

To publicize the initiative, we invited different media outlets, influencers and as a report, an exhibition was held at the initiative's closing, where participants displayed their new skills, the outcomes of the master class, and were able to sell their products. The project will have the most impact if it goes on, so we are asking funding for the first group of the project, which last around ten months and train 140 people.

Participation in the initiative (number of participants/audience/users per year and/or, in the case of websites and digital platforms, information regarding visitor numbers and online interaction).

Our initiative has attracted a diverse and inclusive participant pool, with annual participation ranging between 40 and 55 people. Notably, nearly 29 of these participants were female, highlighting our dedication to gender equality. In addition, we are pleased to have included individuals with disabilities, ensuring that our initiative remains accessible and accommodating to a wide variety of participants. This approach demonstrates our commitment to fostering a diverse and supportive community for the promotion and preservation of Armenian cultural heritage.

Involvement of youth, community and/or non-traditional audiences.

We encourage youngsters, the local community, and non-traditional audiences to feel included and empowered in "The Future of The Past" program, as well as forcibly displaced people, refugees, and veterans with disabilities. Accessible arts & crafts, modified technology, and jobs may all be covered in class. Establish class peer support groups to provide a community for students with similar challenges. Provide displaced, refugee, and disabled servicemen with individual support and encouragement from local youth mentors.

Young people and program participants can exchange skills and experiences in workshops to build trust and respect. Provide community people, including local companies, with volunteer or internship opportunities to help program participants integrate in the local labour market. Make program materials and information accessible to visually and auditorily impaired people. Cultural exchange events allow refugees and displaced people to share their traditions with the local population, promoting intercultural understanding.

Contribution to intercultural dialogue and to the protection of cultural diversity.

Our grant program for displaced individuals is created with transferability and scalability in mind. The initiative's adaptability is demonstrated by its adaptable curriculum, cultural sensitivity, and collaborative approach with local partners, ensuring that it can be effectively implemented in a variety of displacement contexts.

To maximize scalability potential, we have capitalized on the success of pilot programs, standardized the curriculum, and developed a "Train-the-Trainer" model for local leadership. In addition, we are investigating the integration of digital

platforms and maintaining a robust evaluation and feedback loop in order to continuously enhance and expand the initiative.

These strategies demonstrate our dedication to empowering displaced people in a variety of contexts and emphasize the potential for long-term impact and sustainability.

Transferability of the initiative to other contexts and its scalability potential.

The "Creative Heaven" project at the Teryan Cultural Center is a pioneering model for inclusivity and empowerment with European significance. In line with Europe's commitment to equal rights and opportunities, it demonstrates methods for removing societal barriers and ensuring the active participation of refugees and individuals with disabilities. In addition, the project's commitment to preserving cultural heritage and traditions resonates with Europe's respect for cultural diversity and heritage preservation. Its tenacity and flexibility in accommodating soldiers with disabilities and displaced people reflect Europe's history of overcoming obstacles and fostering innovation. By fostering community engagement and intergenerational connections, the project aligns with the European spirit of solidarity and cohesion, highlighting the significance of diversity, cultural preservation, and empowerment in a pluralistic society.

European and international dimension

European significance of the project/initiative/nominee.

The "Creative Heaven" project at the Teryan Cultural Center is a pioneering model for inclusivity and empowerment with European significance. In line with Europe's commitment to equal rights and opportunities, it demonstrates methods for removing societal barriers and ensuring the active participation of refugees and individuals with disabilities. In addition, the project's commitment to preserving cultural heritage and traditions resonates with Europe's respect for cultural diversity and heritage preservation. Its tenacity and flexibility in accommodating soldiers with disabilities and displaced people reflect Europe's history of overcoming obstacles and fostering innovation. By fostering community engagement and intergenerational connections, the project aligns with the European spirit of solidarity and cohesion, highlighting the significance of diversity, cultural preservation, and empowerment in a pluralistic society.

Costs of the project/initiative

Costs of the project (in euro), financial and management arrangements, funding partners and/or the type of funding.

The annual total cost of the "My Handmade Armenia" project, undertaken in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution and generously funded by USAID, was 11,055 euros. By empowering artisans and preserving traditional handicrafts, this collaborative effort aimed to preserve and promote Armenian culture.

On a parallel note, "The Taste and Smell of Artsakh" project was made possible through financial support from the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Armenia, with a budget of 868 euros. This initiative sought to empower displaced people by assisting them in establishing traditional food businesses, thereby promoting economic sustainability and cultural preservation.

Both projects demonstrate a dedication to transparent financial and management structures, ensuring the efficient use of funds. They exemplify a commitment to engaging diverse funding partners and funding types to advance the preservation of Armenian heritage, bridge tradition and innovation, and support communities in times of adversity.

Funding provided by the European Union or the EEA/Norway Grants (including programme, year and amount of the Grant), if any.

The initiative has not received funding from the European Union or the EEA/Norway Grants to date.

Additional information

How would winning the European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award benefit you, your project and/or your organisation?

The European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award would provide invaluable recognition and visibility for our organization's commitment to preserving Armenian and Artsakh cultural heritage, thereby opening doors to vital networking opportunities and potential funding sources. It would increase our educational impact, inspire our team and beneficiaries, and reinforce our commitment to cultural preservation and empowerment, thereby enhancing our mission.

In case this submission is the winner of the Grand Prix, what will the monetary award be used for?

If this entry is selected as the winner, the monetary award will be used to purchase essential materials and equipment for forcibly displaced people, such as laptops, sewing machines, ceramic art supplies, etc., to hire professional specialists to train them, as well as for marketing and advertising purposes.

In case this submission is the winner of the Grand Prix, who will be the recipient of the monetary award?

If awarded the Grand Prix, the CEO of the Teryan Cultural Center will receive the monetary award and ensure it furthers the project's goals.

How did you find out about the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards? Word of mouth

Is this the first time that this entry has been submitted to the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards? Yes

On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with this online submission form? ✓ 10

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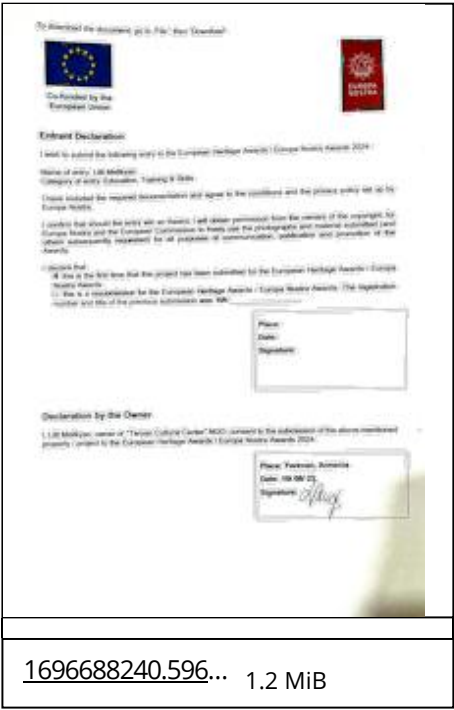
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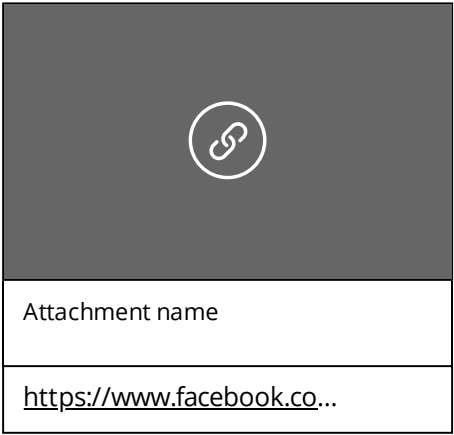
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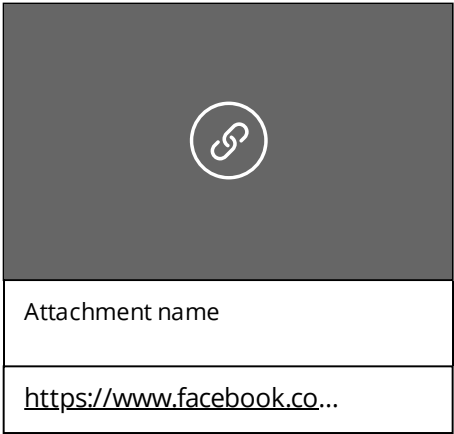
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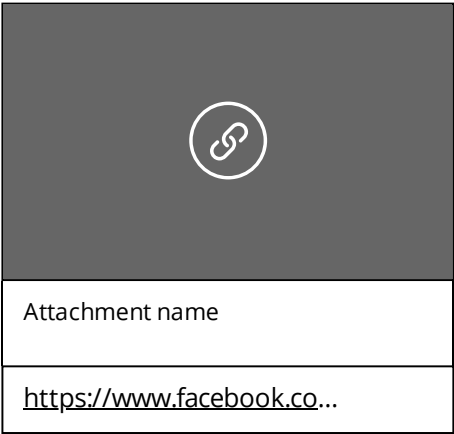
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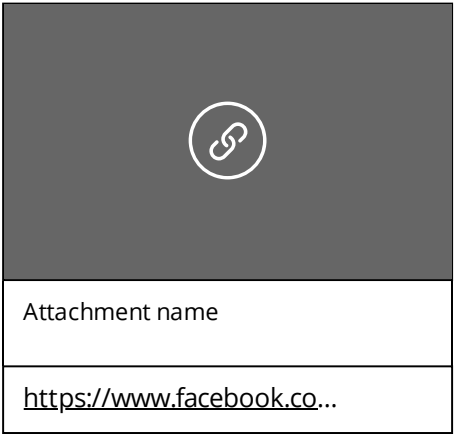
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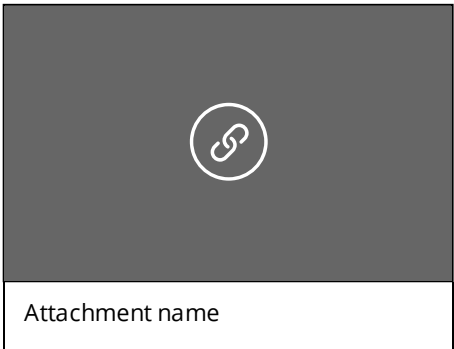
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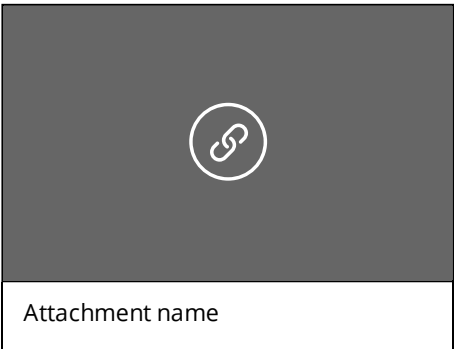


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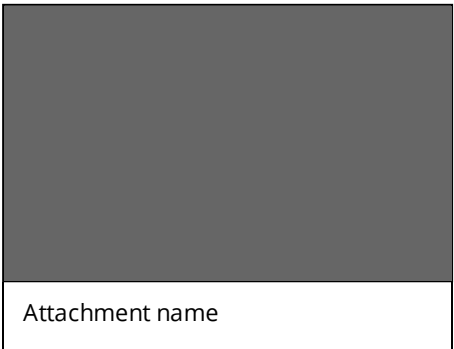
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