

## Civil society with the refugees

# Official launch of the financed projects issuing from the *mateneen* call for projects

Launched in late December 2015 by the Œuvre Nationale de Secours Grande-Duchesse Charlotte in response to the migrant crisis and the huge wave of public solidarity, *mateneen* is a call for projects that is unique in Europe. With the selection process having ended in July 2016, the call for projects with 12 million euros at its disposal will enable 80 project holders from the public to implement projects designed to bring the people of Luxembourg and the new arrivals together, and to facilitate the latter's integration.

## 80 socially inclusive projects that cover nine sectors

More than 80 projects have been selected during a process that lasted from March to July 2016 and was guided by an independent panel composed of Emile Eicher, Jean Feith, Mariette Goniva, Claudia Hartmann, Bertrand Meunier, Yves Piron, José Piscitelli, Karin Pundel and Carlo Thelen.

Pierre Bley, president of Œuvre, specifies that, *"the project selection was rigorous and based on criteria of relevance, feasibility and durability, without forgetting the extent of the social links created. It was our wish that the study and appraisal of the projects were carried out by an independent panel. Composed of members of the Œuvre's board of governors, representative institutions and independent experts, the panel submitted its completed assessments and proposals to Œuvre. The number of projects proposed, their ambitions, innovative approaches and actuality are remarkable. Luxembourg's civil society (NGO's, asbl's, private individuals) is at the ready. Without wishing to take the place of the public measures implemented to welcome and integrate migrants, civil society has a fundamental role to play when it comes to social integration. In addition to those project holders who are already active in the welcome and social integration of displaced people, a whole series of new players have offered their services following the call for projects, we particularly appreciate that."*

In the end, more than 80 projects may be implemented in the following nine sectors: culture, education/training, employment, health/psychological support, housing, information/coordination, material support, mingle and meet, sustainable development.

## Encouraging face-to-face encounters

Pierre Bley, president of Œuvre, says: *"One of mateneen's ('mateneen' is Luxembourgish for "together") most important goals is to promote the creation of projects that encourage the face-to-face encounters of residents, asylum seekers and those who have already been granted asylum. The commitment, openness and welcome of residents are the most important conditions for new arrivals to be properly integrated into our society. Integration is not simply the result of a few language courses. It also takes the form of assistance in terms of schooling for children, housing and work, for which the network of associations and public engagement are fundamental. Integration of the new arrivals is impossible if it is just one-way: it occurs above all through face-to-face encounters."*

## Planning and building tomorrow's society together

The *mateneen* programme has not been conceived exclusively for refugees. In placing emphasis on making displaced people self-sufficient and on social cohesion in the broadest sense, it intends to be actively engaged in forging the society of the future. Martine Neyen, the director of the call-for-projects initiative, states, *"It is not simply about launching projects for such-and-such a group but with them. Both residents and the new arrivals are invited to take part and play their part in building the society they wish to live in. A proportion of the projects selected will be started and directed by the refugees themselves. This approach substantiates what wide-ranging studies on migration have demonstrated: that the countries which invest in welcoming and integrating their new arrivals – rather than confining them in ghettos and preventing them from being active – are those that will benefit in the future, not only from the refugees' gratitude but also from the talents and creativity of these new citizens. Thus, in contrast to widespread fears of a negative fallout, society as a whole benefits from increased socioeconomic wellbeing."*

### **Projects for society as a whole**

*"It seemed important to us to support projects that focus on issues that are not necessarily exclusive to the newly arrived members of society. The major challenges faced by refugees are typically schooling, employment and housing...but these are concerns that also strongly affect many established residents of Luxembourg. Thus, many of the projects are addressed to the whole of the Grand Duchy's population. This is particularly the case for projects revolving around housing as finding and paying for accommodation in Luxembourg today is a serious issue for many inhabitants, refugees included!"*, comments Jean Feith, president of the selection panel and a member of the Œuvre's board of governors.

### **Stimulating a collective nationwide spirit of emulation**

The myriad schemes proposed by a large number of project holders place the *mateneen* programme at the heart of the question of the integration of refugees and, more generally, social solidarity in Luxembourg. *"The goal proposed by mateneen is to unite all those involved in the call for projects so as to boost the visibility of each individual project and generate synergy between them, and to build and support a collective nationwide spirit of emulation by bringing together and connecting associations and residents to debate and take action on the integration of refugees. Last but not least, it is advisable to raise the public's awareness of issues relating to the inclusion and collective construction of a welcoming and supportive society. The Œuvre aims to help curb the 'anti-refugee' sentiment that is now found pretty much all around Europe. More than ever, it is important to mobilize ourselves and move beyond the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy. The smooth integration of the new arrivals in our society will largely be a function of the human and financial resources devoted to it from the moment of their arrival"*, points out Pierre Bley.

The *mateneen* programme was launched on 30 September 2016 at the Philharmonie before representatives of civil society, in the presence of Her Royal Highness the Grand Duchess, and with the participation of the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Mr. Mars Di Bartolomeo, and of the Prime Minister, Mr. Xavier Bettel.

During the event, nine of the 80 projects, each covering one of the specific domains of activity, were presented to the general public.

To learn about the programme's projects, visit:

[www.oeuvre.lu/mateneen](http://www.oeuvre.lu/mateneen)

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The **Œuvre Nationale de Secours Grande-Duchesse Charlotte** is a public institution that operates under the supervision of the State Minister. It manages and runs the National Lottery. Its mission is to help philanthropic organizations achieve their goals. Thus, Œuvre plays a leading role in the organization and financing of social and philanthropic concerns in Luxembourg. In order to satisfy needs not covered in our society, it carries out investigations on a regular basis with key partners of the voluntary sector, and launches calls for projects to overcome the lacks. Its original objective, which was to provide aid to victims of World War II, has been broadened over the years to support the multiple philanthropic activities and projects run by organizations in the spheres of social work, environmental protection, culture and sport.