

Lesvos, Greece, April 2020

Dear friends & supporters of Mikros Dounias.

In these crucial times, there is a common, threatening challenge on a worldwide scale. We are trying to remain calm and creative, each one alone and all together, communicating and sharing memories of the past, feelings of the present, dreams for the future...

Mikros Dounias is connected and active; we sustain the feeling that we can change the world.



Here is a brief description of what happened in our community during this turbulent new year!



January – February

In the heart of the winter, **five new families from Afghanistan find hospitality and refuge in PIKPA camp. Six new children find friends in Mikros Dounias.** Our community grows; every day new stories are written in the small pine forest.

This winter it doesn't rain so much, but the wind coming from the North makes our kites fly in the sky. **In our outdoor kitchen**, we can make our own Arabic bread, the so-called "nan". **In the hug of our yurt**, i.e. our Mongolian tent, we can read stories close to the fire. **In the big magic "Solidarity Dome"**, we have the chance to weekly experience yoga and mindfulness guided by Rebecca Savage, pre-school educator and yoga instructor. Rebecca has been conducting her internship in Mikros Dounias in the frame of her masters in Children's Rights.

On 30th of January, the French Institute of Greece organises the **"Night of Ideas"**, an annual event that simultaneously takes place in 89 countries, with the purpose of sharing ideas between different humans, cultures, projects, countries. There, we get the chance to publicly discuss on **how we can live together** with the French architect Patrick Bouchain, with Eleftherios Kehagioglou from the project "Le plus petit cirque du monde", as well as with Joaquin O' Ryan and Kostas Korozis from "Mosaik Support Center". We all agree on the **importance of education, of nature, of art.**



In the middle of February, one of Mikros Dounias' pedagogues needs to get operated; she has to stay away from our community for a while. We get the chance to **welcome a new treasure in our team: Konstantina Papaioannidou, an experienced psychopedagogue with knowledge on trauma**, who shares with us scientific tools on solving conflicts, cultivating empathy, and exploring our feelings. Every time a new member joins our community - be it a parent, a colleague, a volunteer, or simply a visitor - we share precious experiences, knowledge, ideas and feelings. This reminds us that we need to remain an open community, which runs internships and accepts volunteers.

In the meanwhile, life isn't so calm in the big Dounias - world, as conflicts start taking place on a daily basis. Lesvos island is transforming into a war setting. The violence escalates between the police and residents of the island, on the topic of whether a new, closed facility for asylum seekers should be built by force. Aggressive, racist behaviours of locals towards migrants and N.G.Os that support them follow. New attacks happen every day; the School of Peace of One Happy Family is burnt down. **Threatened and disappointed, we try to protect PIKPA camp.** Residents and workers patrol the camp during day and night. The children feel nervous and scared; parents and pedagogues are coming up with emergency plans in case of an attack. PIKPA camp used to be a safe space with open doors. Now, a security guard is necessary and the doors have to remain closed.

March - April

Despite all that, Mikros Dounias continues to operate with love and solidarity, to support the families, to accompany the children in their daily process of exploring life in the woods - **until the new virus COVID-19 arrives in Greece**. On the 11th of March, the Greek government announces that all schools and educational projects need to temporarily stop operating. Our beloved Erasmus+ trainee Ingrid Osen has to return to Norway – our huge gratitude for her contribution in Mikros Dounias' life shall accompany her. In this sad situation, we have the chance to continue supporting the families of Mikros Dounias with the help of Konstantina, who offers psychological support sessions to them. We are currently experiencing a lockdown all over Greece, which does not allow to most NGOs to operate within refugee camps.

The technology brings us together; we can communicate with parents and children with songs, smiles, and the words that we have in common. We encourage them to be outdoors as much as possible; the children can teach to their parents the essence of outdoor pedagogics. At the same time, we are self-educating ourselves by reading pedagogical books, writing pedagogical texts, inventing new games and learning new songs.

We are dreaming that we will soon meet in the small forest of PIKPA camp, open the yurt, swing between the trees, cook with the mud, sing with the birds, undertake our beloved excursions.



May you all remain strong, positive and creative.

*There are treasures inside us, in our inner refuge,
we now have the time to explore them.*

With love and solidarity,

The pedagogical team of Mikros Dounias