

## Dear friends of Mikros Dounias,

We are very happy to be writing this letter to you, while going through our third year of operation: the third consequent year that local children of preschool age daily arrive to the small pine forest of PIKPA refugee camp on Lesvos, in order to meet their peers and spend their day all together.

## What has been going on in our intercultural learning community since September?

🕒 Interculturality finally runs through our veins! We need to admit that, before starting to operate, we had a romantic image of how the children of Mikros Dounias were going to interact: we believed that children were automatically going to play all together in the forest, proving that nothing separates human beings.

We know better now: language can be a barrier, even or especially in very young ages, when children strive to own all aspects of their mother tongue. In order to achieve solidarity and empathy within a group of children where at least four different languages/dialects are spoken, we had to intervene pedagogically, try different ideas and methods, reflect critically. We are now proud to be members of a small community, where the so-called [intercultural competence](#) is in the air.



- The culture that has been cultivated in Mikros Dounias since October 2017 now has its own roots. Full of wonder, we have observed our common habits (i.e. respectful way of communicating with one another, helping each other when needed, effort to communicate with body language etc.) automatically appear in front of our eyes after the summer pause. This has tremendously helped the adaptation of new children in Mikros Dounias – it seems that they are directly connected to a culture of mutual respect.
- Proximity to nature keeps being our strongest weapon – together with love.



### **What has been new on a practical level?**

- We have been swimming in the sea! Lifeguards from [PROEM-AID](#) have been swimming with the children residing in the camp throughout the summer. We are grateful to them for their engagement, as well as for sharing their tools with us. Two members of the pedagogical team of Mikros Dounias have a lifeguard training, which allowed us to swim safely all together till the end of September. We swim in the same waters that were crossed in order for the refugee families to reach Europe – this is our way to overcome fears and become stronger. Water is healing; water us fun!
- A lot of new constructions in the forest were waiting for the children after the summer break. Slowly-slowly and one by one, they were discovered by each child. It is nice to accompany a child in her first steps on a new construction and even nicer to observe children help one another understand how a new construction works.

◉ When we are painting in Mikros Dounias' Intuitive Painting Workshop – inside, in the big Solidarity Dome or outside, among pine trees – creativity derives from our souls. Read all about this process in Mikros Dounias' 2020 Calendar and experiment with building up your own painting workshop.

◉ We love board games! While having fun, we practice numerous skills such as patience, concentration, empathy, memory, fine motoric, logical & linguistic skills. One tip from us: Do not hesitate to test the proposed age restrictions stated on each board game yourselves. You will be surprised what kind of games young children are capable of playing – with or without minor modification of rules!

◉ Our weekly excursion to a small nearby forest has turned into everyone's favorite. We take our time on our way there: We sing; meet cats, dogs, and people; observe or collect leaves from different trees; watch the vegetables & fruit trees grow in a nearby yard. At the same time, we learn to walk safely on the street side. When we reach our destination, we play freely and climb on trees; engage into bonding group games or exciting treasure hunts; gather for our pic nic.

◉ Every Friday during November & December, the [Flying Seagull Project](#) has been sharing a great, interactive circus show with us. Children, clowns and pedagogues laughed, played, fell, got up again, sang, screamed, learnt and enjoyed. Our warmest thanks and wishes for the important work that the flying seagulls do in refugee camps and other constellations.

◉ We engaged in a beautiful art project organized by [111-days Association](#) and the sculptor Romain Langlois, who spent several days in our community and accompanied us in experimentations with several art methods. Our final aim was to print our mark on white suits/kites that fly through the wind –“the wind that knows no boundaries, can't be hurt, shot at or asked for his passport”. Stamping color and schemes on our kites required concentration and care. Gathering all together to fly our kites over sand and waves was an unforgettable experience.

◉ It has been great to welcome Stavroula and Chi in our pedagogical team. Working on a voluntary basis, each one of them contributed in their own way in making our daily life more exciting. A big thanks from our hearts.

◉ It is our honor to have Ingrid working with us in the frame of an Erasmus+ exchange program. Ingrid studied preschool education in Queen Maud University College of Trondheim in Norway, with which Mikros Dounias has a close cooperation. We are more than grateful to Ingrid for her constant loving contribution and for choosing to support us for another semester.



## How can you be part of this?

- Visit us on site! We have developed a short orientation that provides the visitor with an insight of the space and basic hints on the way we work and co-exist with children. Contact us if you are interested!
- Support us on a voluntary basis – we will need support from September 2020 and on. Stay tuned in order to learn more or contact us to already express your intention!
- Purchase our 2020 pedagogical calendar for you and/or your friends. It will be sent to your door! Send us an e-mail or Facebook message with your post address and we will get back to you for further details!
- Become a [monthly supporter](#) with 10€ per month. Permanent support provides us with a feeling of stability, which helps us move on.
- Donate through bank or [paypal transfer](#).



From Lesvos, we are sending you energy and strength for everything you do.

Thank you for standing by our side!

With warm regards,

The pedagogical team of Mikros Dounias

## About us

[Mikros Dounias](#) is an educational project on the greek island of Lesvos. Every day, young local and refugee children play and learn together in the small forest of PIKPA refugee camp, run with the contribution of the organization "[Lesvos Solidarity](#)". We, the children, [pedagogues](#), and parents of Mikros Dounias, organize our learning processes collectively, beyond any form of discrimination. We respect the rhythm, the needs and the desires of each person by encouraging freedom of choice and self-regulation. Outdoor learning brings us closer to the creatures and the elements of nature, reinforcing our relations to everything around us.

 [en.mikrosdounias.eu](http://en.mikrosdounias.eu)

 [mikrosdounias](https://www.facebook.com/mikrosdounias)

 [mikrosdounias@gmail.com](mailto:mikrosdounias@gmail.com)

**IBAN:** GR15 0110 4150 0000 4150 0415 991

**BIC:** ETHNGRAA

**BENEFICIARY:** Syllogos Mikros Dounias

