



**Friends of the International English-speaking Catholic Community of  
Luxembourg asbl**

**Monoplus**

**(2016MAT73)**

Social Integration Activities for Residents of the Red Cross and Caritas  
Reception Centres for Applicants for International Protection (AIPs)  
in Luxembourg

**Activity report 2021  
(Final Report)**

Project: **Social integration activities for residents of the Red Cross and Caritas reception centres for AIPs in Luxembourg**

Organisation: **Friends of the International English-speaking Catholic Community of Luxembourg asbl (RCS F11603)**

Signatory: **Fr Michael Cusack C.Ss.R**

Coordination: **Caren Baviera-Betson, Monica Terzi  
Marcella McCarthy (Diaconia sub-committee)**

Organisers: **Monica Terzi : Language coaching**

Partners: **Chiara De Piccoli (Italian Speaking Community)  
Somto Ezike (volunteer)**

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## **MONOPLUS**

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 General framework**

The “Monoplus” project initiated by the English-speaking Catholic Community of Luxembourg in 2016 aims to help persons seeking international protection to get to know Luxembourg better and to spend the time during which their application is processed in a healthy and active way that will help them to integrate better if and when they obtain refugee status. The project is conducted by volunteers not only from the English-speaking Catholic Community, but of various faiths and origins, who cooperate closely with other initiatives having a similar aim. While aimed primarily at international asylum seekers, our activities may also include beneficiaries of international protection, as the residents of the various centres may be in either category.

2021 marks the end of the project’s existence, but not, we trust, of our commitment to refugees and asylum-seekers in Luxembourg.

### **1.2 Particular circumstances – COVID 19**

While COVID remained a factor to be reckoned with, restrictions were eased compared to 2020, and there were more possibilities of contact with residents of the centres.

### **1.3. Overall expenditure**

The overall expenditure for 2021 is 4238.11 € (see separate financial statement).

## 2. Activity report

### 2.1. Language coaching; educational support

**Language coaching:** As of March, a language teacher was available once a week at the new CPA in Strassen to give 90 minute French



initiation sessions. As usual, given the



nature of the centre's population, she had to contend with a lack of continuity among her pupils, but was undeterred in her efforts, and is determined to continue even after the formal end of our project.

**Educational support** was offered to one student, resident in a Caritas centre, consisting of one Internet recharge in order to help him to pursue his studies remotely during the closure of schools and libraries.

**Training** : We were pleased to cooperate with the Red Cross team at the Foyer Chomé in Eich who proposed helping residents to complete the theoretical part of the driving licence course. This would give residents the opportunity of practicing their language skills in an integrated context as well as putting them on the path towards obtaining the full driving licence, which is so often necessary in order to take up employment. We financed two residents under this scheme.

### 2.2.1. Life in Luxembourg: “Foyer” Eich

The Eich team also devised an interesting programme of excursions designed to facilitate integration of the residents. By



getting to know the beautiful locations in other parts of the Grand Duchy, especially in the North, the prospects of finding affordable long-term accommodation are improved (since in Luxembourg City accommodation is both scarce and expensive). These excursions, in which our volunteers were welcomed to take part, included Remich, Rumelange, Clervaux and Robberscheier.

### 2.2.2. JRS Refugee Service outings



This year, we cooperated with the Jesuit Refugee Service’s programme of summer activities for young residents of the centres and young people from Luxembourg; we financed 30 backpacks for the youngsters for use during these excursions, and, of course, later on at school.

### 2.3. Sporting activities

As reported previously, social assistants have confirmed how important it is - always, but particularly during the pandemic - to enable a maximum of physical activity outdoors. We provided 9 residents of Foyer Lily Uden/Don Bosco and one resident of Foyer Chomé (Eich) with football boots and basketball shoes.

## 2.4. Women and children

Whereas in previous years we had supported children's activities in the former Logopédie centre, unfortunately no such opportunity arose in the CPA at Strassen.

The Arabic-speaking women's group was unable to meet in the course of the year, due to fallout from the Covid pandemic.

Women's knitting groups (CPA Strassen/Lily Unden)



Support for the knitting and crochet activity involving women residents has continued. Needles, hooks and wool are in constant demand. We have been networking with other Reech eng Hand groups in the Grand Duchy to obtain further supplies and have issued appeals to our volunteer mailing-list. Like last year, we did not need direct financing from our Mateneen budget for this purpose.

## 2.5 St. Nicolas gifts

We collaborated closely again this year with the Italian-speaking Catholic



community and, for the first time, with the catechists at the European Schools, who took on

board the organization of St Nicolas' visit to the Foyer Chomé in Eich.



Together with the Italian Community we focussed on the CPA, Strassen and the Foyer Don Bosco/Lily Unden in Limpertsberg. The two centres supplied lists of their young residents, totalling 110, of which 46 teenagers. Chiara and her catechism classes prepared gifts for the children from 0 to 12 years old (frequently accompanied by personal messages from the donor children), while appropriate gifts for the teenagers were instead purchased out of Mateneen funds.

One of our volunteers, dressed in our Santa Claus costume, and accompanied by his (elderly!) elves, distributed the gifts in each centre. At Limpertsberg, this meant coming to each family in their living quarters, with a photo op for those who wanted it. At Strassen, there was space enough to organise a Covid-compliant mini party (with cakes etc) on each floor, so that each family could come individually to Santa Claus to receive the gifts. In both cases, the event was much appreciated and enjoyed by all.



Nor were the adults forgotten in Strassen, as Somto, the same volunteer employed by Amazon who provided part of last year's gifts, came up trumps again with donations of hygiene products for all.

Finally, the surplus gifts from the donations received were delivered to the Oasis centre in Wiltz, a town which, starting from a small-scale integration project, has progressed to being one of the leading municipalities in the "Pakt vum Zesummeliewen" ("Living together pact").

## **2.6 Support for a refugee's project (Dabani Community Library)**



This project came to our attention thanks to a Ugandan member of our community, who, some time ago, had herself benefited from Monoplus support for integration. She took the initiative of sourcing a large number of English-language books, fiction and especially non-fiction, (unsold due to the cancellation of the 2020

International Bazaar) with a view to donating them to the community library in her home village. We liked the idea and wanted to help with shipping costs; but realising that this project was unusual in terms of the criteria applying to our Monoplus



project, we consulted the Oeuvre before agreeing to do so. We are grateful to the Oeuvre for the flexibility shown in approving this project. The books have arrived safely and are a greatly appreciated contribution to the further education of young students there. *“We are so grateful 🙏. The children have been given a chance in life especially now that schools are closed due to Covid until January 2022.”*

### **3. Final remarks**

Over these six years, the project has moved through different stages. At the outset, there was a crisis situation which called forth a very generous volunteer response, both in terms of numbers and in terms of activities undertaken with the asylum-seekers. Over time, various reorganizations of official host structures were made, which impacted on the need for volunteers (for example, the contracting out of the meal distribution service); there was also, perhaps inevitably, a degree of “volunteer fatigue”, once it became clear that we were no longer dealing with a crisis but rather with an on-going, not to say permanent, situation of asylum-seeker arrivals. Finally, COVID-19 acted as a further brake on volunteer involvement, and it, too, looks like remaining with us for some time.

Nonetheless, our core volunteers have continued their activities as outlined in this and previous reports. At the same time, we stepped up to some extent our financial support for various initiatives proposed or organized by the Red Cross centres we have worked with, which fitted in with our project’s objectives (integration through education/training, sporting activities, familiarization with Luxembourg, social activities with women/children, etc).

Where future continuity is concerned, our core volunteers have no intention of stopping! But we were pleased to see that some activities initiated by our project have been taken on board by larger structures – for example one of this year's St Nicolas visits was organized by the European Schools, and the other with the Italian Catholic community. Involvement of young people in this way is essential to creating a pool of future volunteers to carry on the good work.

The knock-on effect that a small-scale project can have was also illustrated by the Ugandan library case: a person who benefited from Mateneen/Monoplus was inspired in her turn to be of assistance to young people in that country.

An essential aspect of our volunteer work has been our integration into like-minded structures in Luxembourg – this has been one of the great benefits to our members over the years. Being part of a wider Luxembourg project, such as Reech eng Hand – but there are many other examples – has helped us greatly in our own integration, and consequently to be more useful to the asylum-seekers or refugees we come into contact with.

We are therefore grateful to the Oeuvre Nationale de Secours Grande-Duchesse Charlotte for having enabled us to participate in this project.

For the purposes of informing our wider community, this activity report will be published on our website (<https://catholic.lu/outreach/refugee-aid/>).