

# Annual Report 2023 - 2024



el sistema greece



Dear  
Friends,

This year has been a period of growth while consolidating the foundations of El Sistema Greece (ESG). It has also seen a pique in national and international added credibility as an institution, with more and more new asks for collaborations, making ESG a respected and trusted actor in music for social change. We welcomed nearly 700 students, representing 40 different nationalities over the span of 2,028 hours of musical education. We could not have been able to achieve these many accomplishments without the efforts of our staff, volunteers, parents and supporters. Thank you.

Our programs are needed now more than ever. In the first half of 2024, more than 36,000 refugee and migrant youth arrived in Greece. As the population rapidly grows and diversifies amid mass migration, Greek society is under pressure as it struggles to embrace new identities while continuing to preserve and honor traditional culture, resulting in racism and social exclusion.

Social exclusion is a challenge in Greece for nationals and migrants alike. The most vulnerable are children, with one third of the total experiencing social exclusion.

At ESG, we believe music is a powerful tool in building community. We bring together children and youth of all backgrounds to provide free music education in a safe environment that promotes creativity, communication, and teamwork. We are eager to share with you our many accomplishments, challenges and student voices throughout this report.

Anis Barnat - Elisa Sologni  
Co-founders

Angeliki Georgokosta  
General Manager

# About El Sistema Greece

## Founded in 2016

El Sistema Greece (ESG) strives to promote maximum social inclusion of students to enhance safe and meaningful communication between young people from diverse social backgrounds and to provide high quality music education. Students have the opportunity to participate in group instrumental, choir, and orchestral classes where they explore self-expression, creativity, and teamwork.



# The change we are dreaming of

Through music activities we bring children together as equal members of a community that reflects the change we aim to see in the society

Our program not only unites children and youth, but also parents, caregivers, and the community that support them. Through performances, we invite everyone to come together to experience the joy of music and witness the talent and achievements of our students. A diverse musical community supports safer, stronger communities outside the classroom. Since our founding in 2016, El Sistema Greece has used music to unite young musicians from more than 40 different countries around the world.



# 2023-2024 In Numbers

# 686 Students

40

Nationalities



2,028

Hours of music



07

Action Points



06

Musical Ensembles



29   
Concerts

200+   
Instruments Provided



# Our Approach

Music has proven to be a powerful tool that has a positive impact for children and youth, their families and their communities. However, traditional music education is often taught individually and accompanied by the principles of competition, in a way that can have negative effects on young people's self esteem and does little to empower them. This is why we are applying a pioneering educational model that utilizes music to foster creativity, promote social and emotional well-being and unite a diverse population through the joy of music to create stronger, more peaceful communities.

We primarily focus on teaching in groups promoting collaboration among students and using music as a universal, unifying code. We promote the collective to honor the many cultures and traditions of our student body, so that all can contribute, thrive, and feel safe.

ESG's educational approach is inspired by El Sistema Venezuela, the social program founded in 1975 by José Antonio Abreu and afterwards adopted by more than 70 countries around the world. Among other prizes and awards, El Sistema Venezuela was recognized by UNICEF for its effectiveness in combating and preventing juvenile delinquency.





**Social Cohesion** among the various layers of Greek society by initiating an intercultural dialogue.

**Social Inclusion** through teamwork and community engagement.

**Creativity and the social and emotional Well-being** of children and youth through collective music education.

**Equality** through a culture of peace and togetherness.

**Active Citizens** of the future by stimulating critical thinking and debate.



# Our Program Overview



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El Sistema Greece directly serves youths ages 8-26 of a variety of ethnic, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds

The musical journey of the students begins with enrollment in the music initiation class. From there, they start learning an orchestra instrument or participating in the choir classes. At this stage, their learning experience is enriched through participation in beginner music ensembles through which they gain their first experiences as performers.

The journey culminates with the student's involvement in either the El Sistema Greece Youth Orchestra or the El Sistema Greece Youth Choir. These two ensembles, known for their high standards, consist of ESG students as well as other young musicians who join alongside their own musical paths, and they perform major concerts at prominent venues.



## Group Music Lessons:

- Music initiation for children 5 to 7 years old
- Orchestra instrument lessons: for children and youth 8 to 26 years old
- Choir lessons: for children and youth 8 to 26 years old



## Beginner and Intermediate ensembles



## El Sistema Greece Youth Orchestra



## El Sistema Greece Youth Choir



# Our Work In 3 Pillars

# 01 | Pedagogy



“El Sistema Greece is like our second home.”

ESG student, 14 years old from Congo



## High musicianship along with social inclusion

Students of ESG across all action points are exposed to ensemble performing outside their group lessons following the principles of El Sistema ensembles worldwide.

© Theodore Manolopoulos / Official Photographer of the Presidency of Hellenic Republic

## New Music Ensembles

Aiming to introduce our students to the joy of collaborative creation, from the very early days of their music learning in 2023 ESG has established four new music ensembles for students of all levels:

- Beginner string ensemble
- Wind & Percussion Beginner Ensemble
- Decibel Collective: Advanced Wind & Percussion
- Advanced String Ensemble

## Partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM)

ESG since 2023 has been working with IOM at the Emergency Accommodation Facility in Piraeus to provide weekly free music lessons for unaccompanied youth and children. Many of the children were found homeless and are going to live in various shelters until their adulthood. Our music lessons give them the opportunity to relax, play, learn skills, bond and explore creative outlets. We encourage the youth, who come from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, to work together and build a community amongst themselves and those around them.

## ESG students on Stage

As part of the educational process, student performances in prestigious venues offer recognition and teach principles of professionalism, while they share significant musical experiences and create unforgettable artistic moments.



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## Trusting in our own musical powers

### El Sistema Greece Youth Orchestra & Choir Sold out at the Stavros Niarchos Hall

El Sistema Greece Youth Orchestra & El Sistema Greece Youth Choir took us on an exciting Christmas journey around the world. A sold-out concert on the main stage of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center, a celebration of creativity, aiming to inspire the audience and convey the message of partnership and unity through the power of music. The concert marked the first time our students performed solo in such a prestigious music venue.

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## Advancement level of our main ensembles

For our summer concert, El Sistema Greece Youth Orchestra, El Sistema Greece Youth Choir, the Decibel Collective, and the Advanced Strings Ensemble performed at the Rematia Festival 2024 organised by the Municipality of Chalandri. The concert was an exciting journey through space and time with classical masterpieces, famous film soundtracks, and choral pieces from around the world.

# Investing in ESG teacher & staff training

## AIM Residency, Academy of Impact Through Music (AIM) / Lisbon

Our trumpet teacher, Giannis Panagiotou, has been selected for the prestigious AIM Firebird Fellowship which brings together teachers from pioneering music programs for a 15-month learning journey which will prepare them to become outstanding educators and change-makers, capable of impacting the communities they live and work in.

## Bi-annual interactive safeguarding policy training

A comprehensive safeguarding workshop was organized for the entire ESG team, providing a thorough update on the latest safeguarding policies, emerging risks and best practices, ensuring that all staff members are equipped to identify and address potential safeguarding issues effectively.



Collaborations and new synergies with international and local educators and artists aim to offer greater inspiration, foster creativity, and promote cultural exchange

**This academic year we welcomed:**

Il Pomo d'Oro Orchestra (ESG Ambassadors since 2016) & Jakub Józef Orliński

Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France & Mikko Franck

Joyce DiDonato,  
ESG Ambassador  
since 2016



Juan Carlos  
Maggiorani &  
Matosinhos Quartet



New York Youth Symphony

# 02 | Advocacy

"Music lessons change the children's mood. Cause you know, life in the camp is really, really difficult."

Farzad, ESG Community Mediator in Corinth Facility for Asylum Seekers

Advocating for the transformative power of music education



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## Young Leaders Program - Fourth Cohort

The Young Leaders Program is a transformative initiative dedicated to empowering youth through leadership and community engagement. Each year, the program supports young music students from ESG in enhancing their critical thinking, decision-making, and self-expression, preparing them for future leadership roles. Through monthly meetings, workshops, and collaborations with external experts, students build confidence, leadership skills, and social awareness. Additionally, students take an active role in various aspects of El Sistema Greece's work, including volunteering, voting, and community engagement. The Fourth Cohort of the program was hosted in 2023-2024, consisting of 14 students aged 13 to 18 from various countries.

## Welcoming Culture - ESG at the Presidential Mansion

El Sistema Greece Youth Orchestra held an open rehearsal and welcomed children residing in Accommodation Centres for Unaccompanied Minors, providing an insightful presentation of how an orchestra operates and introducing the various musical instruments that comprise it. This was an interactive music activity for children residing in Accommodation Centres for Unaccompanied Minors in collaboration with the Presidency of the Hellenic Republic and the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection of the Ministry of Migration.

Sharing knowledge and pedagogy to support others in their efforts to unify young people with music & amplifying our impact

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“Thank you for supporting our children.”

Mother of an ESG student from Poland

**The B-Me: Blending Melodies-Bridging Cultural Identities** project, co-funded by the EU and implemented by Sistema Cyprus, El Sistema Greece, and Sistema Portugal, united local composers with refugee and migrant musicians to create original music bridging diverse cultural identities. The compositions of the project are available for free for orchestras around the world.

**MAC - Music for Active Citizenship** is an Erasmus+ project implemented by El Sistema Greece and Sistema Cyprus, aiming to promote social equality and pursue social inclusion while educating about the value of social diversity. At the end of the project an online platform was created offering for free a unique training package to music educators.

**Consulting Beirut Chants El-Sistema:** Members of our team wrote the handbook for training instructors in classroom and orchestra pedagogy for the newly established organization in Lebanon.

**El Sistema Tunisia:** The Kamel Lazaar Foundation asked for the support of El Sistema Greece in the launch of a new community music project in Tunis at B7L9 center. Members of our team worked with the Tunisian team to start El Sistema Tunisia in January 2024.

**Global Cultural Districts Network annual convening:** In May, El Sistema Greece showcased its work at a panel on Processes of Migration, Integration, and Social Cohesion, in Athens.

# 03 | Community

**Fostering a supportive environment for personal growth and cultural exchange opportunities among students, their families, communities, and organizations worldwide**

## Lullaby Project 2024

The Lullaby Project is an innovative community program created by Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute, bringing new mothers and pregnant women from vulnerable social environments together with musical artists, in order to write and sing lullabies to their babies. Since 2018 ESG has implemented the Greek version of the Lullaby Project, in collaboration with Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center. This year's edition celebrated parenthood, as well as the diversity of human experience. Renowned Greek composers and songwriters narrated true stories through original music compositions, presented to the public at the Alternative Stage of the Greek National Opera on 29 May.



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## Cultural exchange opportunities and fostering a sense of belonging in the field of social action through music worldwide

1 National Seminario Ravinia: Orchestras for All, Sistema Ravinia  
Chicago

2 Il Congreso Mundial El Sistema, El Sistema Venezuela  
Venezuela

3 Workshop su José Antonio Abreu e l'esperienza de "El Sistema",  
Napoli

Sistema Europe Youth Orchestra (SEYO 2024) - Song for the Earth, Sistema Europe & Libera Musica  
Pesaro

4 International Youth Orchestra Summit & Celebration, Gustavo Dudamel & YOLA  
Barcelona

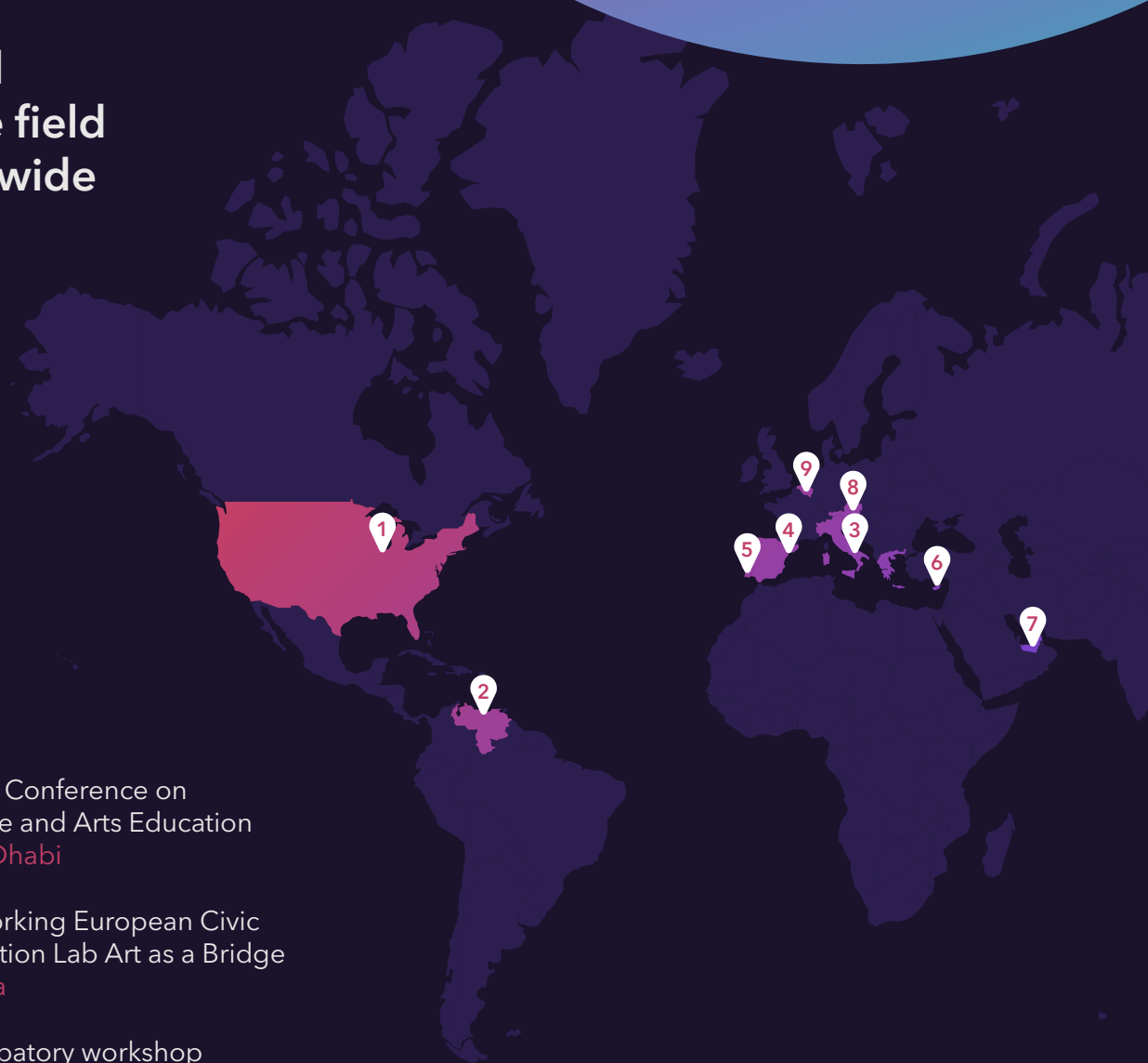
5 Academy of Impact Through Music  
Lisbon

6 ECHOS training project by Sistema Cyprus  
Larnaca

7 World Conference on Culture and Arts Education  
Abu Dhabi

8 Networking European Civic Education Lab Art as a Bridge  
Vienna

9 Participatory workshop for cultural actors ahead of the European Elections  
European Parliament  
Brussels



# El Sistema Greece in the media

**Greek Ancient Philosophers:** In 2017, ESG co-founder Anis Barnat discussed ESG, music, and philosophy in this documentary, now available on ERTFLIX.

**+people:** This documentary series featured an episode on El Sistema Greece, highlighting its mission, programs, and transformative impact on students and the community.

**Bonheur intérieur brut:** El Sistema Greece was featured in the first episode of this documentary series by Canadian filmmaker Hugo Latulippe on TV5, which introduces music as a tool for social change.

**Ladylike:** Three women from the El Sistema Greece team were interviewed and shared their experiences on how music can transform lives.

**Inside Story:** An in-depth article on El Sistema Greece, sheds light on the profound impact of El Sistema Greece's goal to build an inclusive music community.



**"Thank you so much for making my boys smile again."**

Mother of two ESG students  
in Schisto Facility for Asylum Seekers

**"My life's dream now  
is to become a member  
of a big orchestra."**

ESG student, 15 years  
old from Somalia



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"El Sistema Greece for me, is a window into a world full of possibilities, where the orchestra becomes a family and music becomes the means to dream, learn, and develop my skills, while also contributing to the creation of a more united and harmonious society."

ESG student, 19 years old from Syria



Thank you for taking the time to read our 2023-2024 Report. We are excited about the future and are grateful for your support in helping us achieve our mission. We commit to keeping you updated on all our future preparations!

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