

"Ikarian Days in Brussels" - together we did it and we loved it!

During the last weeks we talked a lot about the "Ikarian Days in Brussels" and now we have done it. The "Ikarian Days" took place and we had a lot of joy and fun in preparing them and making them happen. From the idea to realisation was a long way to go, but looking back, it was a wonderful experience and the memory of it will be kept by all, who participated at for a long time.

In total four different events took place in Brussels. They were mainly based on the idea to collect money to support two socio-economic projects on the island. In order to do so, the very spirit of an Ikarian Panigyrie - to act together on a volunteer basis and to do something for the community - was the driving force for the activities started. It started as a vague idea, but very quickly it was supported by various people, who might be called the "friends of Ikaria". They are Ikarians and people living in Belgium and Greece, who are linked to the island in one way or another. We are sharing the idea to work together and to do something for the island; so we are like-minded persons. The group is neither linked to a political party nor to church. The people act on a volunteer basis and are not touching any money out of the activities described. The group has a high respect for the people on the island, the way they are living and what they are doing. We hope that with our activities in Brussels, we have acted in that spirit.

On this background, we were able to realize four different events with different official partners. The events were the following:

- 04 - 05 November 2015 - Ikarian Recipes (around 100 people attended)
 - 06 November - Art-Base, Brussels. Presentation of the documentary film "pure island" by Adonis Glaros, the director of the film (around 90 people attended).
 - 07 November - Panigyrie at Community hall, Place St. Catherine, in the very center of Brussels (around 130 people attended)
- AND: due to the succes of 07 November - an additional Panigyrie on Sunday, 08 November, took place (around 90 people attended).

We were happy to welcome so many Ikarians, who found their way to Brussels, namely:

- Eleni and Yorgos Karimalis - Eleni was cooking for 2 days at a known restaurant in Brussels, called "Philema" (<http://www.brusselsslife.be/en/address/philema>). Both days had been fully booked, that means around 100 people had a chance to taste Ikarian food and recipes; Eleni brought even some of her ingredients directly from her garden on Ikaria. It was a success, people enjoyed. Congratulations to the chef, Manos Makrygiannakis, and his team, who made this possible. A big effort, but worth and successful.
- In addition to the restaurant-cooking, Eleni volunteered in the preparation of the food for the two Panigyries and was a constant source of inspiration.
- Yorgos Karimalis brought his wine, the "Praminian Odyssey", which he sold to the organizers of the different events.
 - Nikos Plakas and his wife Kathy, the musicians Kostas Kalogridis and Charis Karapetis, who brought over the typical Ikarian Panigyrie feeling in form of music, music and music.
 - Adonis Glaros, who presented his documentary "Pure island".
 - Joey Brown from Fytema, where she has created a "writers retreat" to teach writing (<http://www.manamahouse.com/home-2/>); she acted as a volunteer in preparing the food for the feasts. For her the Ikarian Days in Brussels had been a very special event: As she is from Belgium and now living on Ikaria, Fytema, she had a chance to link her two "homes": Belgium and Ikaria. A lot of her friends from Belgium were coming to the events to celebrate with her this unique moment.

This group of Ikarians met the Ikarians in Brussels. The family Loizidou, with roots in Agios Kirikos, who gave an enormous amount of volunteer work to the "Ikarian Days". Further "Friends of Ikaria" - from France, Belgium and Greece - joined the Ikarians for cooking, cleaning, transporting etc. for nearly three days. But above all, we enjoyed the eating, drinking and dancing and the feeling of being together.

All this would not have happened without the professional help of official collaborators, like Art-Base, a famous music club in Brussels. Frans de Clerque, the owner, organised the rooms for the Panigyrie and also offered his music club for the presentation of the documentary of Ikaria. The same goes with Fanouris Dance school, who was the official co-organiser of the Panigyrie together with Art-Base.

In addition to all that it was a very impressive to experience the enormous support the Greek community in Brussels has given to the individual projects. Considerable donations were given. Furthermore the restaurant "Philema" offered to cook for free the meat for the Panigyries; the restaurant "Les enfants du Pirée" in Brussels offered for 2 days their mobile electric oven to keep the plates warm.

Substantial support came also from the "A Discovering Network", which is a Network of Greeks in Belgium, with the aim to promote Greek products in Belgium. They put **Ikarian recipes on their website** (<http://www.adiscoveringnetwork.eu/content/ikarian-recipes>) as well as a little overview on Ikarian local producers. Furthermore they made little paper folders with these recipes and information, which were distributed at the different events. They also were good promoters of the Ikarian days. The recipes quoted were given by Eleni Karimalis, Topsy Douris (who has collected a number of recipes on the island) as well as Toula Tsiantis, who is the owner of the restaurant "Kalyпсо" in Fytema.

Who were the people participating at the events ?

The public, that participated at the "Ikarian Days" was a mixed group (of course many people of the Greek community in Belgium and Brussels joined the event), not only to show solidarity, but knowing that Ikaria has something special to offer and they wanted to be part of it.

The projects to be supported are the following:

(Please note: It has to be underlined that only a certain sum of the entrance fee could go to the social projects. The reason is, that it was not possible to organise the Panigyrie on a 100 % volunteer basis.)

a) *Support the buying of a medical device for the hospital in Agios Kirikos:*

A considerable amount of money was collected at the event "Presentation of the documentary" - 06 November 2015 -. It will be invested to partially finance the buying of a mobile ultrasound for the hospital in Agios Kirikos. Via contacts to a German Association "Freundes- und Förderkreis Helleniko, Hamburg", which is collecting money to buy medicine and clinical devices for community clinics in Greece (<http://mkie-foreign.blogspot.be/>), it was possible to find the ultrasound needed in Hamburg. As the money collected in Brussels is by far not enough to buy the material, it will be topped up by the German Association. Transport to Ikaria will also be organised and paid by them. The Ikarians, who participated in the Brussels event - most probably Nikos Plakas and Adony Glaros - will transport the material to Ikaria. It might be, that the ultrasound may be delivered to Agios Kirikos within the next two weeks.

This ultrasound is practically new, as it was only used for a short time. The material consists of the mobile ultrasound + an additional device to examine the pancreas.

Furthermore: the mobile ultrasound was on a list, that was given to presented by the doctors of the hospital in Agios after a visit during summer. List consists of devices badly needed to run the hospital smoothly.

Links: Freundes- und Förderkreis Helleniko, Hamburg - <http://engagement-ohne-grenzen.de/verein/foerder-und-freundeskreis-elliniko-e-v>
Metropolitan Clinic Athens - <http://mkie-foreign.blogspot.be/>

b) *The "making-of" a map for the hiking trails on Ikaria as part of a long term tourism project, that enhances business and the possibilities to prolong the tourism season in Ikaria*

Money from the Panigyries (07 and 08 November) will be given to this project.

Description of the project: the fund-raising will be dedicated to a hiking and eco-tour project on Ikaria, starting with the designing and making of a detailed hiking map. In times of crisis, where no private or public capital is available, this project is aiming at developing sustainable tourism and encouraging local entrepreneurship. As a first step the hiking trails have to be maintained and enlarged, so that the entire surface of island will be covered. On this basis a map has to be drawn and printed, which will provide solid

information and guidance - not only to the amazing natural and cultural wealth of the Ikarian island, but also to the local producers and accommodations. Despite google-maps-tools, a "real" map - as described - will present the necessary "kick-off" to various local economic and touristic activities, which will generate income. The map illustrates the hope, that an extended tourism season on Ikaria will be based on sustainable and environmental friendly activities, that involve local actors, create jobs and will help, that people will remain on the island. The donation of the Brussels event will finance the different milestones of the "making-of" the map. *The money will **not** be transferred to a bank account, but will be given, when a mile-stone is achieved.*"

Reason for the decision: The idea of this project is in the air for a long time. It is considered to have a brought impact not only on the tourism season on Ikaria, but also on the society, as it will enable people - especially younger ones - to stay on the island and to make a decent living. Via our humble financial contribution we hope to support a broad impact of the project on the island.

Who decided on the projects selected? The above mentioned « Friends of Ikaria ». To make it very clear : nobody on Ikaria has asked us for this donation. It was our proper wish to support the cases described above.

Why were the projects described selected ?

The projects were known to us and are ready for an instant implementation, so that results will be achieved in the very near future. There was no "call for proposals"; the choice was simply done on the basis of what we knew and where we knew the people. Nobody or no project was excluded.

Results

With the Ikarian Days in Brussels, we had a chance to achieve our goals: Now we are able to make a humble contribution to projects on Ikaria. We are more than happy, that with the community approach, which we have learned on Ikaria and which was our inspiring force, it was possible to make the events happen AND we were able to give something back the island we love.

We had a very good time during the "Ikarian Days in Brussels", an unique experience, we could enjoy the Ikarian music, the food, the dance we were even dancing the Ikariotico in the streets of Brussels, causing traffic jams ... which the drivers commented with a smile, because they liked the atmosphere presented.

Outlook:

There are ideas to have another "Ikarian Days in Brussels" in 2016. If people on Ikaria and in Brussels would like to work together in the Ikarian spirit, 100 %-volunteering, sharing and acting for a socio-economic project you don't know, what might happen.

Special thanks:

Apart from the people mentioned above, there was a big group of people on Ikaria and in Brussels, who were working in the "background", but of tremendous help for the making of the events. They organized Tel-No. and addresses, translated texts, etc.. Thank you.

Birgit Urban