



# FREE MOVEMENT

skateboarding in solidarity



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
SEPTEMBER 2022 - AUGUST 2023

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# OUR AIMS AND VISION:

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Through skateboarding, we support and promote the wellbeing, empowerment and social cohesion of youth in Athens. Together, we push for a welcoming and diverse Athenian skate scene and society.

## WELLBEING

Skateboarding is mindful exercise, in which focus is necessary to learn new tricks, championing physical and mental health.

## EMPOWERMENT

We create spaces in which girls and women, people of colour, refugee, migrant and Roma communities, LGBTQI+ and other groups feel safe to develop their skills on and off the board.

## SOCIAL COHESION

Through the supportive, communal act of skateboarding, diverse youth share more than just space and build community.

# IMPACT

## SNAPSHOT

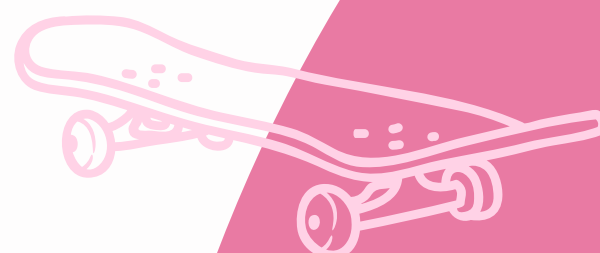


569

Unique participants

166

Total Sessions

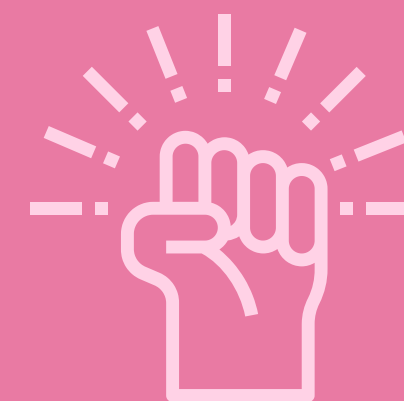


2599

Total Attendance

33%

Girl Participation

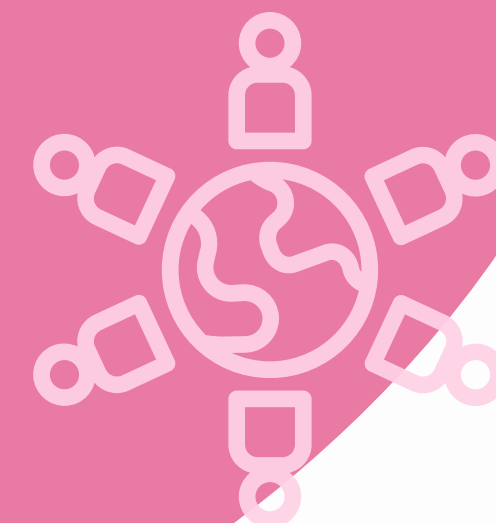


8

Different Locations

37

Different Cultural Backgrounds



13

Community Events



"That was not easy...I had to try alot. I can't believe that I did that!"

A., 10 Year Old Participant  
understanding perseverance

# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR



# EU 'BE ACTIVE' AWARDS

GREECE

One remarkable achievement of the year was that out of 97 outstanding initiatives, we were awarded the 'Breaking Barriers' award at the EU 'Be Active' Awards grand ceremony held in Stockholm. This recognition stands as a testament to our unwavering commitment to breaking down barriers that hinder people from participating in sports and the societies they live in. Winning this award positions our project as one of the best practices in our field.

As a result of the recognition, we received a grant of 10,000 euros, in order to further fuel our mission to create a positive impact in our communities. This financial support undoubtedly plays a pivotal role in expanding and enhancing our efforts to overcome obstacles and provide access to skateboarding to the youth in our city.

Following this award, it opened the door to a meeting with the Greek General Secretary of Sport, an opportunity to discuss potential future collaborations and the challenges we face in Athens.



# VANS SHOP RIOT 2022

In September, after a hiatus of two years, Vans Shop Riot returned to Athens. In collaboration with Vans, the Shop Riot merchandise featured both of our logos. These on the day were gifted to visitors for every 5 euro donation to FMS, moreover for every 5 euro donation made, Vans donated another 2 euros to support our project. Additionally, the Shop Riot lineup featured a Hippie Jump challenge for the contestants, in which Vans donated even more money to support our work in accordance to the height that was reached. One contestant succeeded in jumping 1.35 meters, resulting in the 135 euro donation. Beyond the financial support, the day served as an opportunity to reunite the skate community from across Greece after a prolonged period of time. It provided our participants with the chance to witness FMS instructors in action, both competing and skateboarding.





# THE INVINCIBLE SESSION - ROMANTSO

Community events become a lot harder to host in the winter months. However, in November with the release of our film 'The Invincible Summer' coming out online, both on Waterbear and on the Onassis platform, Onassis Foundation and our friends at Color Skates sponsored an event that was hosted at the venue of Romantso. We aimed to bring many communities and groups of people together during the event, knowing that it would be one of our last events until the warmer months.

We set up our mobile skatepark as well as some large extra obstacles brought by Color Skates. We had a 2 hour session for our participants, a cash for tricks contest with equal prize money for boys and girls. Following the skateboarding, we showed the film, and then our friends at Fade Radio hit the decks as we caught up with everyone.





# 6 YEARS SKATEBOARDING IN SOLIDARITY

We turned 6 years old in April and as always it was an excuse to gather all our community and celebrate. This year we decided to throw the party at Protomagias Square during our session. We had balloons, cake, refreshments, snacks, art activities for younger participants and Hip Hop 4 Hope joined us to provide music and a side activity for the children.



# PUBLICITY

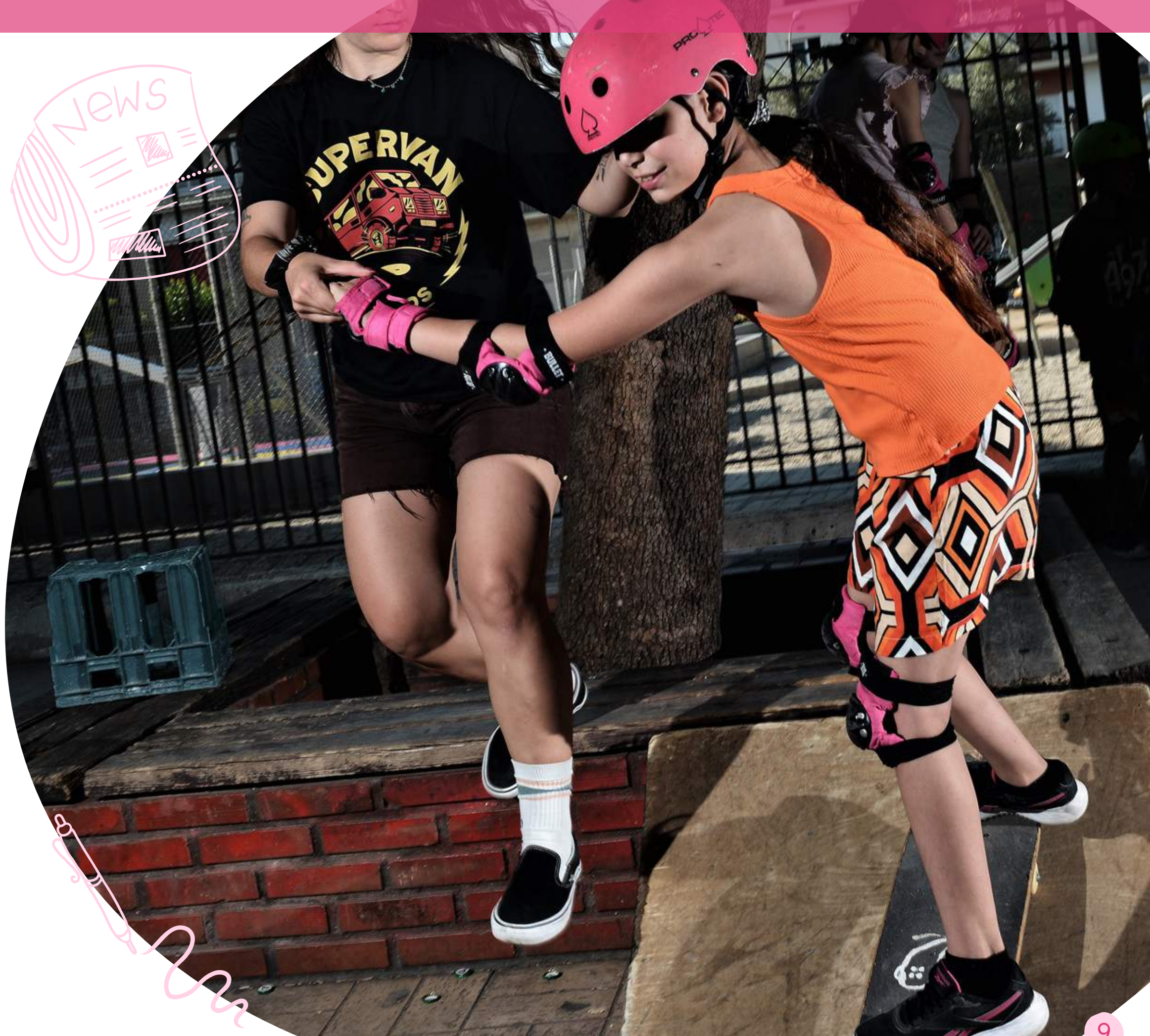
**LOVE YOURSELF MAGAZINE :** Article explores how our project brings hope to children and youth in the city.

**VAGUE MAGAZINE :** Features introduction, Interview & Photography by Aidan Frere-Smith, who visited us at sessions in 2022.

**THE GUARDIAN :** FMS and our instructor Erato were featured in an article in The Guardian by Katy Fallon. It focused on girl participation in our sessions and skateboarding in Athens.

**STUDIO 4 - ERT 1 (GREEK TV):** An interview with Denia K. and scenes filmed at one of our sessions were featured on the Ert 1 show Studio 4.

**MARIE CLAIRE GREECE :** Featured us in an article, by Georgia Karkani, based around the girls in the FMS team. We are pleased at how detailed this article was and how it really highlighted all of the work we do. It included a photoshoot by William Faithful at our sessions.



A skateboarder wearing a yellow helmet, black long-sleeved shirt, orange shorts, and black gloves is riding a wooden ramp. The ramp is made of plywood and is set against a stone wall. The skateboarder is in a crouched position, leaning forward. A shadow of the skateboarder is cast on the ramp. In the background, there is a metal gate and a tree. The scene is outdoors and appears to be a skate park or a similar recreational area.

“When I drop in on these bigger ramps it is scary, but I feel like I am flying. Can I do it again?!”

N. , 12 Year Old Participant

# DEVELOPMENTS AT FMS



# FMS TEAM DEVELOPMENTS...

In the new year, Lefteris took a step back from his role in the FMS core team. Although he remains a part of FMS in terms of providing consulting, expertise, he has ceased his everyday roles and responsibilities within the team. These responsibilities were smoothly transitioned to Denia N., who assumed the key operational tasks. Additionally, plans were set in motion to recruit a new core team member to address any gaps resulting from this change in roles and responsibilities. This strategic adjustment aimed to ensure the continued success and effectiveness of the FMS team.

We welcomed Sonia to the team in March. Her extensive experience from her previous role in another children's organisation youth center, coupled with her background as a social scientist, positioned her as a valuable asset to the team. The recruitment aimed to enhance the team's capacity to establish and operate a community space, which we aimed to open. Despite those plans, as discussed on page..., were set aside. Her addition to the team marked a significant step forward in our mission to continue providing exceptional services and support to our community, especially in terms of safeguarding and social care. We have been lucky to have her on board, and she is now heading our efforts to collaborate with schools.

The team expanded further last autumn, when we successfully recruited new volunteers, primarily from the local skate community, and actively inducted them into our team. With this influx of new members, we had new fresh energy. A few of these long term volunteers received extra training and took on extra responsibilities.



## FOCUS ON CAPACITY BUILDING AND OPPORUNITY


Our team, made up of mainly local young skaters, places a strong emphasis on supporting the youth in our city. This includes the young adults in our team, we are committed to providing opportunities for skill development, fostering valuable experiences and empowering them as per our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion action plan.

Throughout the year, we continued to ensure our team's growth through various initiatives, like trainings and open discussions organised by experienced team members and partner organisations. Notably our collaboration with the Boat Refugee Foundation has enabled us to offer specialised training in mental health first aid, tailored to the challenges we face during our sessions, as well as handling trauma in children. They also introduced our team to intervision practices, a powerful tool that promotes teamwork, enhances skills and encourages knowledge sharing, enabling us to effectively tackle challenges together.

Moreover, two team members participated in week-long training in Thessaloniki, focusing on transforming traditional games from competitive to psychosocial, recognising the importance of this shift. Another team member engaged in a professional exchange program organised in Berlin by Respect for Greece, fostering collaboration between Greek and German NGOs. In addition, other team members attended a two day safeguarding training delivered by our funders Choose Love, which resulted in an improvement and strengthening in our recruitment policies.

Furthermore, we build on our team's knowledge, experience and confidence by providing training on safeguarding practices, youth work and skateboarding instruction, sharing experiences and conducting team meetings that fuel discussion. Our commitment to the growth and well-being of our team is unwavering, and we look forward to further empowering the youth on our team in the year ahead.



A woman with long dark hair and a white t-shirt is sitting on a skateboard in the center of a group of children. The children are also sitting on the ground or on their skateboards, wearing helmets and knee pads. The setting is an outdoor skate park with paved ground and some tables in the background. The woman is looking towards the children, and they appear to be engaged in a discussion. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, handwritten-style font.

'I am so happy that she can come here and have these discussions with you. You are teaching them how to be good people.'

Mum of 9 year old girl that attends sessions, on the edu-skate discussions we have, for example about respect



# BEYOND SKATEBOARDING



# COMMUNITY EVENTS

Community events are an opportunity to bring communities together and yet another way of demonstrating skateboarding as an expression of solidarity, both on and off the board. They take our activities and impact beyond simply skateboarding:

**Improving sense of belonging:** Community events enable our participants to integrate into the local skate community, fostering a sense of belonging and strengthening their identity as skateboarders.

**Inspiration:** Collaborating on skate events and contests, allows our participants to witness exceptional skateboarding talent, including from some of their instructors, fuelling respect and admiration, while inspiring them to challenge themselves and find new role models within the skateboarding community.

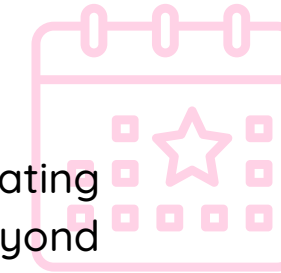
**New experiences:** Events offer opportunities to explore new activities and skills, outside of skateboarding. They also offer an opportunity for cultural exchange and learning of annual traditions. We are able to celebrate cultural traditions in an inclusive way for participants of diverse backgrounds to participate, and fuel their sense of inclusion and belonging in this country.

**Empowerment:** Listening to participants suggestions and involving them in event planning is empowering to them. For instance, responding to a request to celebrate the New Year traditionally demonstrates a sense of ownership within our communities activities. We encourage their participation and they often bring food and drinks to share with everyone.

**Promoting Non-Male Skateboarding:** We aim to empower alternative forms of skateboarding, particularly girl skateboarding, which has only emerged in recent years in the local skate scene. We have worked on hosting girl skate jams and promoting alternative skateboarding to have a place in skate contests and events, as well as equal prize money.

**Promoting Values:** An opportunity for us to promote our values within our community, to talk about and celebrate international days like International Women's Day in support of gender equity, or International Mental Health Day in support of positive mental wellbeing.

Community events promote positive interactions within the skateboarding community, addressing the need for community-building in today's divisive world.



International Women's Day

Still Ballin' Street Festival



Girl Sessions



New Year Celebration



Carnival Party



Movement Connects/ Refugee Week 2023



# CREATIVE WORKSHOPS

We introduced art activities during our sessions, initiated by a volunteer and continued by FMS team members. These side activities have become popular among children who may not be interested in skateboarding, providing them with a chance to engage in creativity within our safe and welcoming community. Additionally, it serves as a solution for participants who bring younger siblings to our sessions, allowing them to skate freely without the added responsibility of childcare. Similarly, this gives parents a break and an opportunity to run errands, for example.

To enhance this initiative, when our plans for a community center fell through, we invested in buying a table, stools, and art supplies to establish these side activities. We have also developed skate-related worksheets and aim to collaborate with others to offer one-off workshops.

Our long-term goal is to operate these activities as a mobile youth center alongside our skateboarding sessions in the coming year, expanding our impact within the community and going beyond skateboarding.



# EDU-SKATE CURRICULUM

As a part of the Concrete Jungle Foundation Edu-Skate Network, we have now been delivering Edu-Skate sessions for over a year now. Delivering these sessions has given our session structure, and by teaching our participants about themes like perseverance, respect, courage, encouragement etc., we have witnessed changes to our regular participants mindsets and behaviours. Whilst the overall the quality of skateboarding from those children has improved.

*“Our biggest take away from this curriculum was the starting circles. They gave us such structure that we didn’t have before, made the session more enjoyable for the kids, and also more doable for the instructors.”*

**Giannis, FMS Core Team Member and Edu-Skate / Session Lead**

Concrete Jungle Foundation’s Edu-Skate Network Report was released in March, gathering all the annual impact from all the projects in the network! You can read more about the impact of the network as a whole on their social media. It has been lovely seeing social skateboarding organisations working together in this network, and knowing we are part of something bigger.

In just one year of the network running the curriculum:

- 430 Edu-Skate sessions were executed
- 61 coaches worked with the programme
- 676 children engaged with the programme in 6 countries- 13 different locations!



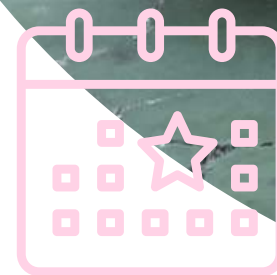
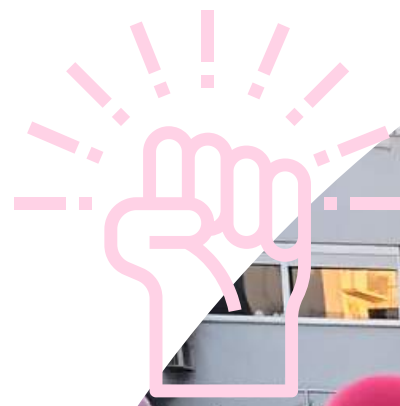
# GIRL EMPOWERMENT


Over the past year we held various events that promoted women empowerment, both amongst our participants but also amongst the local skate scene too. The number of girls who are skating in Athens has been increasing, and we are here to ensure they feel safe and are having fun on their board. Last October, we had one of our most successful events that made a great impact within the women skate scene. We worked with Color skateshop and held an event for the new Nike SB x Skate Like A Girl collaboration, where a lot of girls came to the session and skated together, had arts and crafts workshops and little prizes for everyone. In spring, we collaborated with Color skateshop again, but this time it was for the new Nike SB/Doyenne collection. We invited some Athenian girl skaters at our session where they skated with us and our participants, taking photos of the new collection. Our participants were super excited to see so many girls skating all together. Lastly, we held a girl's meet-up at Latraac skate café which was also a success.

*“Free Movement has been there for all the girls who are beginners or advanced at skateboarding, and will always be there for them. Girls empowering each other on their boards is one of the most heartfelt feelings, it's inspiring, and motivating.”*

**Denia K., FMS Core Team Member and Girl Empowerment Lead**

In the year ahead, we will continue to support women skateboarding in Athens and actively working to get more girls on boards.





“We want to do more, to be seen, we want to be supported, bringing the girls together is the start”

N. 20 Year Old Girl Skater,  
who attended events

# OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



# SITUATION IN GREECE...



Over the past year, Athens and Greece as a whole has faced challenges that have further strained its society and institutions. Despite the ongoing societal and economic struggles that have persisted for years, there have been new developments that further impact the situation.

First and foremost, the cost of living has continued to rise, making it increasingly difficult for ordinary citizens to make ends meet. This escalation in living costs has occurred with limited to no support from the state, leaving many individuals and families struggling to meet their basic needs. In such times it is the most vulnerable populations that are particularly hard-hit, as they lack the resources to cope to begin with, or face multiple obstacles in receiving any help. This is only foreseen to get worst, adding to these economic woes, Greece has experienced extreme weather conditions that have led to significant environmental destruction in the country. These events place additional strain on the government's ability to protect and support its peoples' fundamental needs and living conditions. The resources required to address the aftermath of these natural disasters divert attention and funding away from other critical areas of social welfare. Especially as this destruction is causing environmental displacement within the country, many losing their jobs, livelihoods, homes, properties etc.

Another concerning development has been the resurgence of right-wing political parties in the recent elections. The entrance of three such parties into parliament, as well as the conservative New Democracy party securing a landslide victory, has indicated once again in the country a shift in the political landscape. These election results raise questions about the direction of the country's policies and the potential impact on vulnerable populations and progressive initiatives.

Given the situation and new developments, it is unsurprising that many in Athens and across Greece still grapple with a lack of accessible and inclusive recreational activities and spaces. Equally concerning is the continued absence of comprehensive well-being and social services. Social cohesion initiatives, especially the existence of spaces shared by young people of diverse backgrounds are far from a priority in this context. This lack of community and recreational opportunities only contributes to issues of division, exclusion, isolation, and declining mental well-being and health, in the city and our society.



The withdrawal of resources from NGOs, has resulted in a reduction of their services or withdraw from Greece altogether due to funding constraints. This not only places additional strain on the remaining organisations but also makes life even harder for those living in peripheral areas where support is already limited.

## WHY WE NEED SKATEBOARDING IN SOLIDARITY?

In conclusion, Athens and Greece continue to grapple with many challenges, from economic hardship and environmental disasters to shifting political dynamics. Initiatives like ours, which focus on community, recreation, empowerment and well-being, are essential in providing support and a sense of hope to those who need it most. The work of FMS remains as relevant and necessary as ever, offering an opportunity to the youth of Athens and contributing to the resilience and cohesion of the community. Skateboarding in solidarity remains a crucial way to safeguard the mental and physical well-being of youth. Beyond the physical activity, it provides a platform to empower young individuals, build community, widen networks, and foster social cohesion. These aspects are as vital as ever, as they offer a sense of belonging and purpose in a time of increasing division and uncertainty.

## SKATEBOARDING IN ATHENS...

The interest in skateboarding in Athens has continued to increase, with growing participation from young individuals eager to embrace this dynamic and inclusive sport over the past few years. As well as, the establishment of the National Federation of Skateboarding in Greece, following the sports inclusion in the Olympics, was a significant milestone for the sport's growing popularity and recognition on a national level.

Despite the increasing interest and enthusiasm for skateboarding, the support for the sport within the Municipality of Athens remains disappointingly minimal. One fundamental issue is the absence of a skate park within the municipality, this lack of legitimate spaces and facilities is a significant challenge and disappointment for the skateboarding community and our project, which has been forced to rely on the streets, makeshift locations, and sometimes unsafe locations.



Furthermore, the situation has taken a frustrating turn with the awaited closure of the only ramp within the municipality. This foreseen closure is a direct result of a decision to allocate a public square to Attico Metro for the construction of the new Athens metro line to house its offices using containers. This decision has raised concerns and objections from the local neighbourhoods and community at large, but unfortunately, these protests have only led to a minor delay in the square's closure. The lack of sympathy and understanding from the administration towards the need and importance for open public space in over built cities like Athens is disappointing.

While there has been some interest in understanding the social impact of our project and the benefits of skateboarding, practical action and tangible support from higher up remains elusive. It remains that skateboarding, as well as our goals for social impact, is not a priority for the administration, and there seems to be an unwillingness to take responsibility for addressing the needs of the skateboarding community, and as a result, also the projects.

It is important for us to continue advocating for the recognition and support of skateboarding as a valuable and positive activity for Athenian youth. The skateboarding community and projects like ours play a vital role in fostering physical activity, positive mental health, community engagement, and social cohesion, which are essential for the well-being. As we move forward, it is our hope that the city and its administration will properly recognise skateboarding by taking concrete actions to provide safe and accessible facilities for the community and the project.





“Thank you! You have made my dream come true by letting me come learn to skate”

17 year old girl that has been attending multiple FMS sessions

# SESSION INSIGHTS



# INSIGHTS...

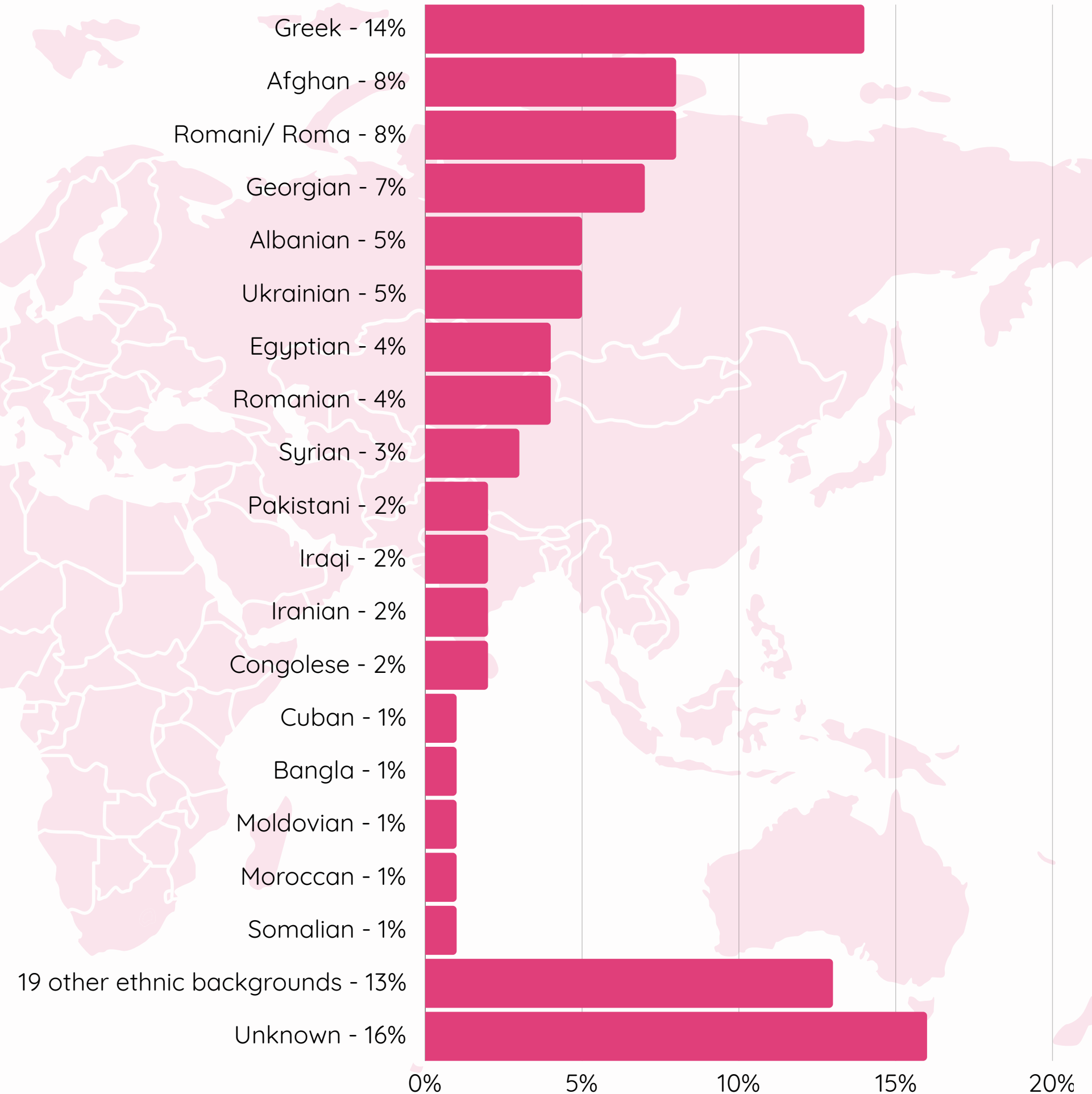
- We delivered 166 sessions to 493 participants over the past year, in 8 different locations.
- We had 458 new participants, showing a growth in our reach and engagement, but also the continuation of interest and demand in our project.
- Despite having fewer sessions, we managed to attract 2,464 attendees, demonstrating a higher per-session attendance rates.
- We saw an increase in overall girl participation to 33%, with a 36% girl participation at the end of our fiscal year, indicating our commitment to inclusivity in skateboarding.
- Despite the fewer sessions and locations, we still managed to maintain diverse participation in our activities, having recorded that our participants came from at least 37 different cultural backgrounds.
- By delivering 166 sessions in 8 locations, we optimised resource allocation while maintaining a high level of engagement and more regular participation.



# BACKGROUNDS...

In the past year, our sessions welcomed participants from 37 distinct cultural backgrounds, adding to the 61 different backgrounds represented since our inception, all residing in Athens. While Athens can at times be perceived as intimidating and unwelcoming due to issues like racism, bureaucratic obstacles, and exclusion based on differences, our community is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and accessible environment for everyone, regardless of their backgrounds. Our diverse community speaks over 25 languages and embraces a wide array of cultural traditions and perspectives, fostering opportunities for mutual learning and sharing as we come together through skateboarding.

FMS recognises the value and beauty of diversity, acknowledging the importance of fostering a sense of belonging, safety, and community. These connections, at the individual level, lay the foundation for social cohesion within neighbourhoods and the city as a whole, contributing to a more peaceful society in the future.

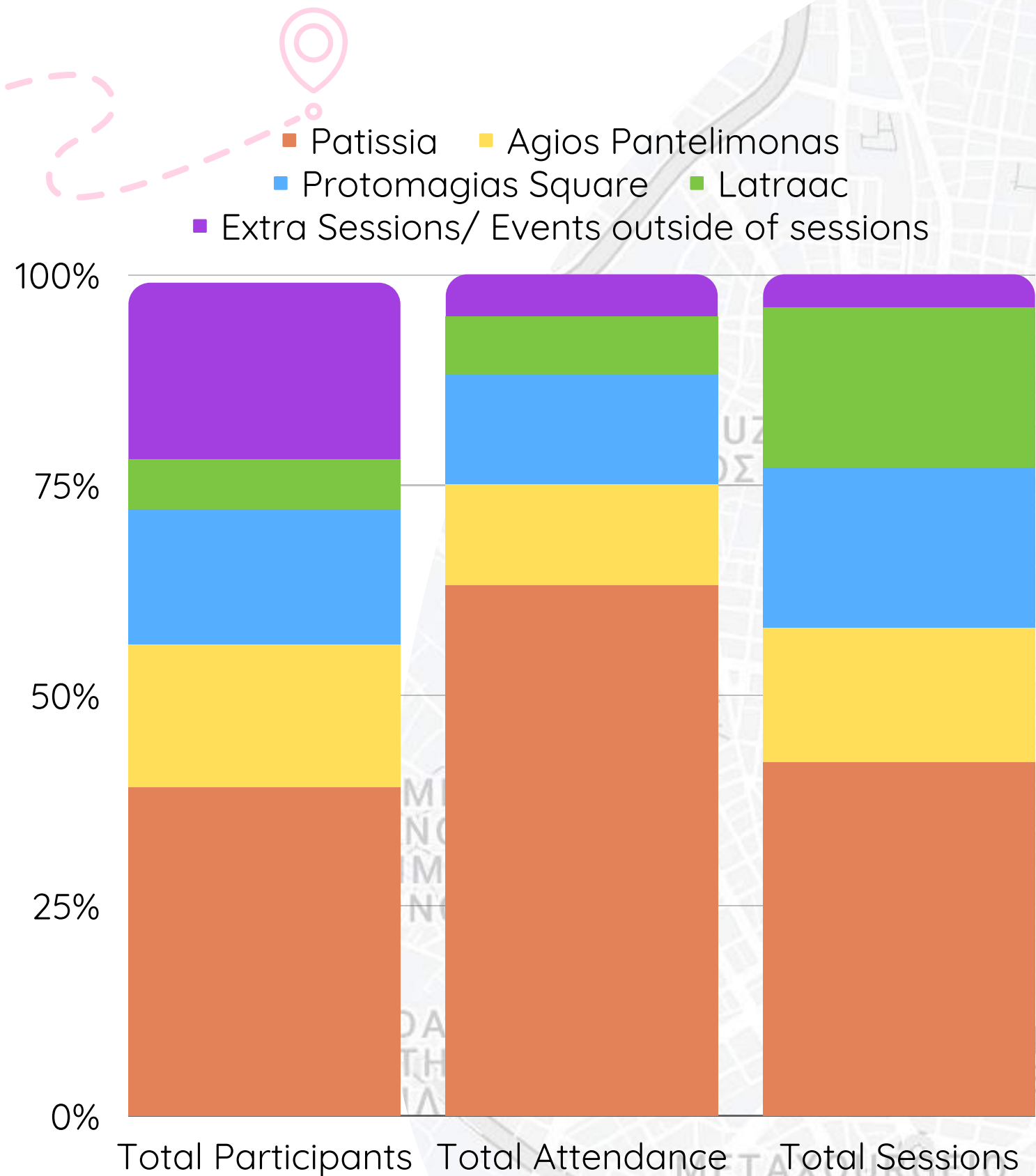


# OUR SESSIONS...

Our operations are primarily concentrated in central Athens, in multiple neighbourhoods that tend to be marginalised and underserved by the municipality. These neighbourhoods are characterised by their diverse populations, representing various cultural backgrounds. We utilise our mobile skatepark and accompanying equipment, which are housed and transported in our van. This approach enables us to effectively engage with and bring a distinctive experience to these communities.

Here are some interesting insights about our program's attendance:

- 63% of participants returned for multiple sessions.
- On average, participants attended 7 sessions in a year.
- Out of 67 regular participants, they attended an average of 18 sessions each, with some attending more than 45 throughout the year.
- 5% of our participants attended sessions at multiple locations.
- We also offered 7 sessions outside of our regular weekly program at 4 additional locations around the city.



# PATISSIA SESSION

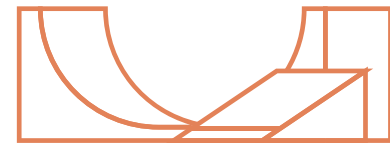
258

Unique participants



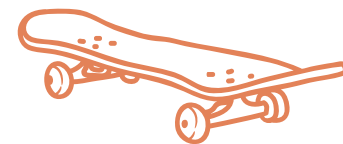
70

Total Sessions



1626

Total Attendance



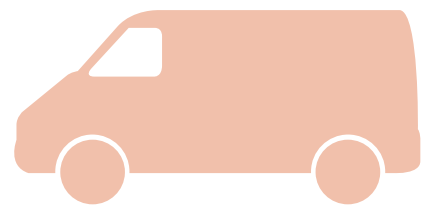
32%

Girl Participation



70%

Return Participation





This session is now our longest running, also marking it as our most impactful session to date. The dedication of our regular participants, some of whom have attended for over one and a half years, has resulted in significant positive developments. The impact has extended beyond not only their skating skills, but also their outlook, mentality, and interpersonal skills when interacting with other children. This has also been observed by some of their parents.

**EDU-SKATE CONTINUATION:**

The consistency of participant attendance has allowed us to continue delivering the edu-skate program. The repetition of the themes of the curriculum has allowed us to get creative in our sessions, encouraging in-depth discussions with the children and seeing their understanding of these concepts, but also allowing us to explore the themes relevance in multiple ways. For instance, whether it is discussing about perseverance in skateboarding or perseverance to achieve our dreams and goals, or respect in our sessions and at skateparks, or to others at the public square or to the environment.

**BUILDING A STONG COMMUNITY**

Over time, we have forged bonds and built community. This has helped us better understand the neighbourhood, the families, and the wider community. To reach more children, we have introduced additional activities alongside our main sessions and we continue to host community events, fostering an inclusive environment where everyone feels welcome.

**CHALLENGES AND ADAPTATION**

Our primary challenge in this session has been the space. The reconstruction of the courts we used, caused disruption to our sessions. Despite this setback, we adapted by using a small public square behind the courts. This creative use of space has introduced our participants to the concept of street skating, though our sessions had to remain smaller due to space limitations. We have taken the opportunity to discuss with our participants about the importance of respecting our neighbours and others sharing public space, in order not to jeopardise our use of the space and to coexist.

**YEAR AHEAD:**

In the upcoming year, our goals for this session are to secure access to a nearby school playground, allowing for larger and more dynamic sessions again. We also plan to expand our side activities once we have resolved our space challenges. Furthermore, due to the advancement of our participants' skills, we intend to introduce some of them to skateparks, opening up new opportunities for growth and excitement.

This session remains a testament to the transformative power of skateboarding in the lives of our participants and the strong sense of community it has engendered, especially the bonds and friendships we continue to observe.



# AGIOS PANTELEIMONAS SESSION

109

Unique participants



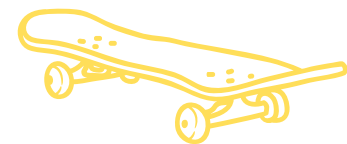
26

Total Sessions



305

Total Attendance



45%

Girl Participation



58%

Return Participation



**NEW SESSION**

In December, we introduced a new neighbourhood to our weekly skateboarding sessions, located in a public square beside a prominent church and a lively children’s playground. This addition has quickly become our second-largest and most popular session. It has attracted numerous first-time skateboarders who are eager to try it out. Many of these newcomers have returned for multiple sessions, some even becoming regular attendees, adding to the skateboarding community we are building.

**SPACE AND CHALLENGES**

There is limited space available on the square, while not ideal for our sessions, it is a challenge we have addressed due to the high demand from the neighbourhood’s children and the absence of alternative locations nearby. As a result, we bring only half the skateboards out and up to one ramp at a time. We have been creative in selecting group activities that cater to participants of all skill levels. Despite these space constraints, our participant numbers have grown. To ensure everyone gets a chance to skate, we implement a rotation system, which has been successful in managing busy and demanding sessions in the past.

**SIDE ACTIVITIES**

Incorporating side activities into our sessions has been highly beneficial. Side art activities and games, specifically, have proven to be successful in involving younger siblings under the age of 7, keeping them entertained and distracted during our two-hour sessions. On occasion, even some of the older children join in, only adding to the overall engagement and enjoyment of our sessions.

**YEAR AHEAD**

Looking ahead, our focus is on improving participant consistency at our sessions, aiming to expand our pool of regular attendees beyond just a few. Once we establish a group of regular participants, we will consider introducing the Edu-Skate curriculum in the upcoming year, further enhancing our community engagement and impact.

The high demand and enthusiasm for our sessions, even in the face of space limitations, highlights the importance of our work in underserved neighbourhoods. Many of the children in these areas spend a considerable portion of their day in the square, with limited interest in or access to school and no access to other extracurricular activities. Our sessions provide a valuable opportunity to enhance their well-being and impart crucial life skills through skateboarding, with the opportunity to make a meaningful impact on their lives.



# PROTOMAGIAS SQUARE SESSION

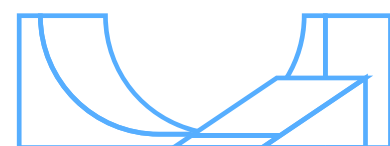
101

Unique participants



32

Total Sessions



342

Total Attendance



42%

Girl Participation



60%

Return Participation



Throughout this year, this session has attracted a significant number of regular participants. What truly stands out is the strong bond among these participants. It is not only evident in their warm greetings and mutual support during sessions but also in their continued interactions after the sessions, where they stay to play. Notably, the majority of our regular participants in this particular session are girls, unlike other sessions. Some sessions have only had girls in attendance.

### EDU-SKATE CURRICULUM

The progression, enthusiasm, consistency and bonding among the majority of the participants in this session have enabled us to gradually introduce the Edu-Skate Curriculum and themes to these sessions. This marks a step forward in this session's development.



### CHALLENGES

Our most significant challenge for this session has been the impending closure of the square. Despite initially securing an official permit for its use at the beginning of the year, the Periphery, which owns the square, revoked the permit when it was decided that the public space would be closed for the next eight years. This square was an ideal location for our public sessions, situated in the midst of numerous neighbourhoods, easily accessible, and already equipped with a few built ramps. To adapt to this situation, we have continued to use the space unofficially until its official closure, after which we plan to relocate to a nearby school playground in the coming months. Another challenge we've observed is a decrease in participants during the school term. The majority of the participants we lose during this time come from migrant families. The primary reason for this decline is the parents' strong emphasis on their children's education over physical exercise. While the children express sadness at having to stop coming, we respect their parents' decisions. However, we want to work on advocating with the children about the benefits of improved wellbeing even on studies and education.

This session is undeniably heartwarming, as it showcases the strong sense of community and the friendships that have developed among the participants. It vividly illustrates how skateboarding can contribute to social inclusion and foster connections between children from various backgrounds, neighbourhoods, schools, nationalities, cultural backgrounds, and diverse interests. It is a testament to the power of skateboarding to unite and bring together young people from all walks of life.

# LATRAAC SESSION

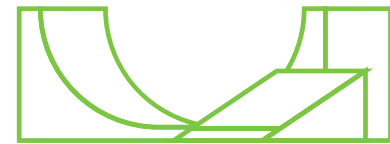
33

Unique participants



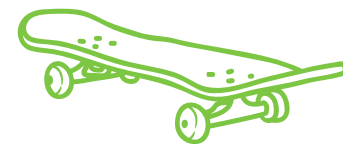
31

Total Sessions



189

Total Attendance



36%

Girl Participation



58%

Return Participation



This year, Latraac Skate Cafe continued its invaluable support for our project. They generously provided us with their space once a week, even during the winter months when the cafe was closed to the public. The participants in this session are primarily from the surrounding neighbourhood and a nearby Youth Center, run by Network for the Children’s Rights. However, we have also seen attendees from other sessions who come to experience and try the larger and more advanced ramps, adding to a dynamic mix of participants.

**PROGRESS**

The space and bowl at this session are quite advanced for participants. However, this year, we have witnessed some remarkable progress, with a few participants successfully dropping in on their own. These local children’s achievements and their evident enthusiasm have served as an inspiration, encouraging more children from the neighbourhood to join.



**CHALLENGES**

Two primary challenges contribute to our relatively small group of regular attendees at this session. First, only three participants can skate simultaneously, which can be limiting. Second, the limited skill progression available for beginners can be discouraging, potentially deterring some participants from attending this session again. For beginners, the advanced setup presents a challenge as they are limited to learning skate bowl basics, like pumping back and forth. The space is not ideal for mastering the fundamentals, like riding and turning.

Nevertheless, due to our strong desire to remain in this neighbourhood and the incredible enthusiasm of the local children, we continue. We are actively seeking a more suitable space within the neighbourhood or exploring connections with local schools to provide a flat surface for beginners, to run parallel sessions at, all with the aim of making skateboarding accessible to everyone, regardless of their skill level.

**YEAR AHEAD**

During the winter months when the cafe is closed, this session offers an excellent opportunity for side activities, and we plan to invest in this aspect during the upcoming autumn and winter. Moreover, we want to bring advanced participants from other sessions to this space. This will not only fuel their excitement for skateboarding but also provide them with opportunities to learn new skills and challenge themselves in unique ways.

# EXTRA SESSIONS

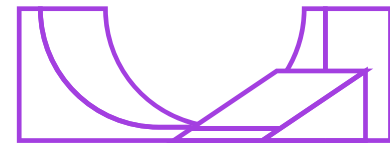
120

Unique participants



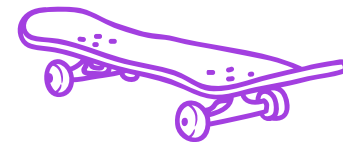
7

Total Sessions



137

Total Attendance



39%

Girl Participation



(Data includes sessions and events outside of weekly sessions)



## EASTER SESSIONS

During the school holidays in April, we organised two extra sessions at Galatsi DIY Skatepark specifically for our more advanced participants. This decision was prompted by the resounding success of similar sessions last year and the high demand from our regular participants. The Easter holidays have proven to be the perfect timeframe, allowing us to schedule sessions in the mornings and we can guarantee good weather. Unfortunately, children are only able to skate in the mornings at this skatepark and in the summer holidays it is too hot to deliver these sessions, despite our participants' desire to be able for us to deliver more frequent sessions at the skatepark.



## GIRL SESSIONS

Our Girls Jams have played a pivotal role in bringing together local girl skaters and reinforcing a sense of community. These events not only create a space for experienced girl and women skaters to connect and support each other but also offer an opportunity for girl participants from our public sessions to join and skate alongside these more experienced women skaters. This, in turn, provides inspiration, fosters a strong sense of community, and instills a profound sense of belonging among all.

## OTHER EVENTS

Offering skateboarding sessions at events and festivals is a fantastic opportunity for many children and young people to experience skateboarding for the first time. It also allows us to inform them of our public sessions, potentially leading to continued participation on a weekly basis. These events are typically held on weekends, providing our regular participants with the opportunity to skate in different locations, explore new spaces and interact with new groups of children. What is more, it can be an empowering experience for our regular and more advanced participants that join us and become the inspiration for another child to try out skateboarding for the first time. Moreover, these sessions are a bonus for them, allowing them to skate more frequently than their usual once or twice a week.





“Who wants to stay behind and play catch?”

A, 10 Year Old Participant to the other children at the session

# STORIES (CASE STUDIES)



# CASE STUDY 1 - BUILDING BRIDGES

J., 14 years old, a native Spanish speaker and recently arrived in Greece from Cuba. Equipped with basic skateboarding skills and no comprehension of the Greek language, J. first attended an FMS session in December, with his own skateboard. His experience not only enhanced his skateboarding skills but also profoundly affected his social life and language development.

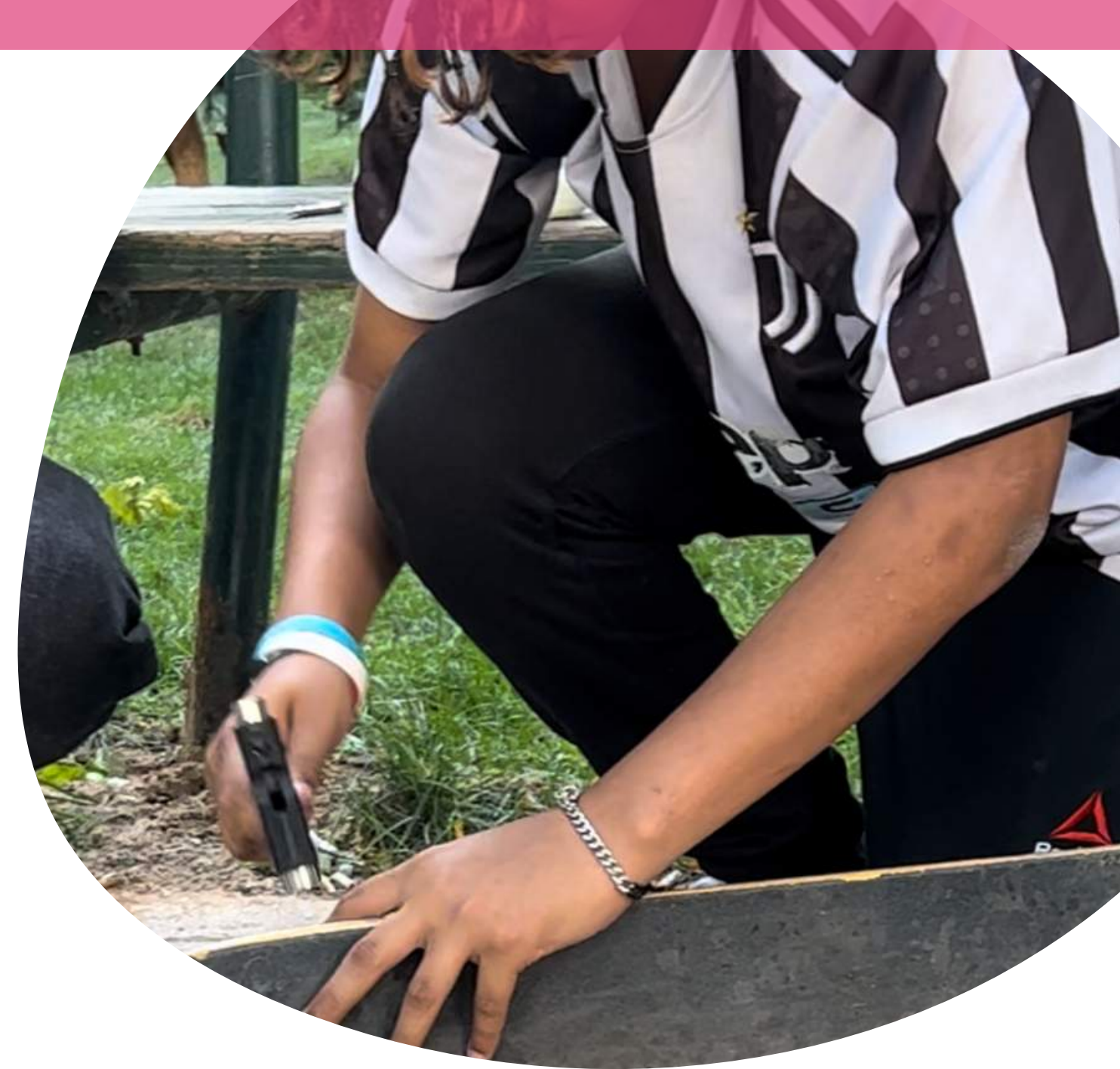
J. quickly integrated into the FMS community, displaying unwavering commitment to honing his skateboarding skills and continuously pushing himself to achieve new tricks. The sessions provided him with a safe and supportive environment to learn, experiment, and receive guidance from experienced skaters. Additionally, the FMS mobile skatepark allowed J. to practice without the challenges and intimidation often associated with traditional skateparks.

J.'s participation in FMS sessions facilitated his social cohesion as he connected with others who shared his passion for skateboarding. He has also brought others from the Cuban community to sessions, and subsequently played a role in bridging language barriers by assisting with translations, enabling participants from diverse backgrounds to engage our sessions. His dedication to the sport and his willingness to help break down communication barriers has made him an active member of our community and sessions.

One of the most notable outcomes of J.'s participation in session is his friendship with E., a 13-year-old boy living in the same neighbourhood. E., born and raised in Greece to first-generation migrant parents, had started skateboarding at FMS two years prior. Their friendship has had a profound impact on both young skaters.

E. was inspired by J.'s skills and sought to speak to J. despite knowing limited English. Their friendship became a catalyst for remarkable language development, as they spoke in English together while skating. J.'s dedication to improving his language skills was evident when he began learning Greek in preparation for attending school in September. The FMS sessions provided a supportive environment for J. to practice and improve his language skills, offering practical experience outside of a classroom. E. has also benefited significantly from FMS sessions and as a result has been gifted a skateboard from the team. His growing confidence and skills encouraged him to venture to skateparks independently. After meeting J. and discovering their similar skill levels, they started going to skateparks together. This not only enhanced their skateboarding abilities but has provided mutual motivation to challenge and improve each other's skills while building a friendship over a common interest.

J.'s experience with FMS skateboarding sessions in Greece demonstrates how a passion for skateboarding can transcend language barriers and foster friendships, community cohesion, and skill development. The inclusive and supportive environment provided by FMS has not only improved J.'s skateboarding skills but has also empowered him to navigate the challenges of adapting to a new culture and language. The friendship between J. and E. highlights our session's ability to connect individuals from diverse backgrounds and improve language skills, while fostering a sense of belonging within the community.



## CASE STUDY 2 - EMPOWERMENT

M., 7 years old, is one of our newest participants. Over the past 2 years, that we have known her, she has been waiting for her time to shred.

M. has watched her brothers and cousins enjoy skateboarding sessions, waiting for her opportunity to join them. The dedication, enthusiasm, and the support of her older brothers have now allowed her to take her own steps in the world of skateboarding, breaking stereotypes and gender roles in the process.

M. joined us at sessions occasionally, whenever circumstances allowed, where she spent her time drawing and talking with the FMS team, even helping us with small tasks like putting pads away and joining together the helmets.

M. turned 7 this year, the age where she could finally start skateboarding at sessions herself. Her transition from a spectator to a skateboarder marked a significant turning point. The FMS team and her older brothers have been offering encouragement as she begins to conquer new skills and embrace the challenges of skateboarding.

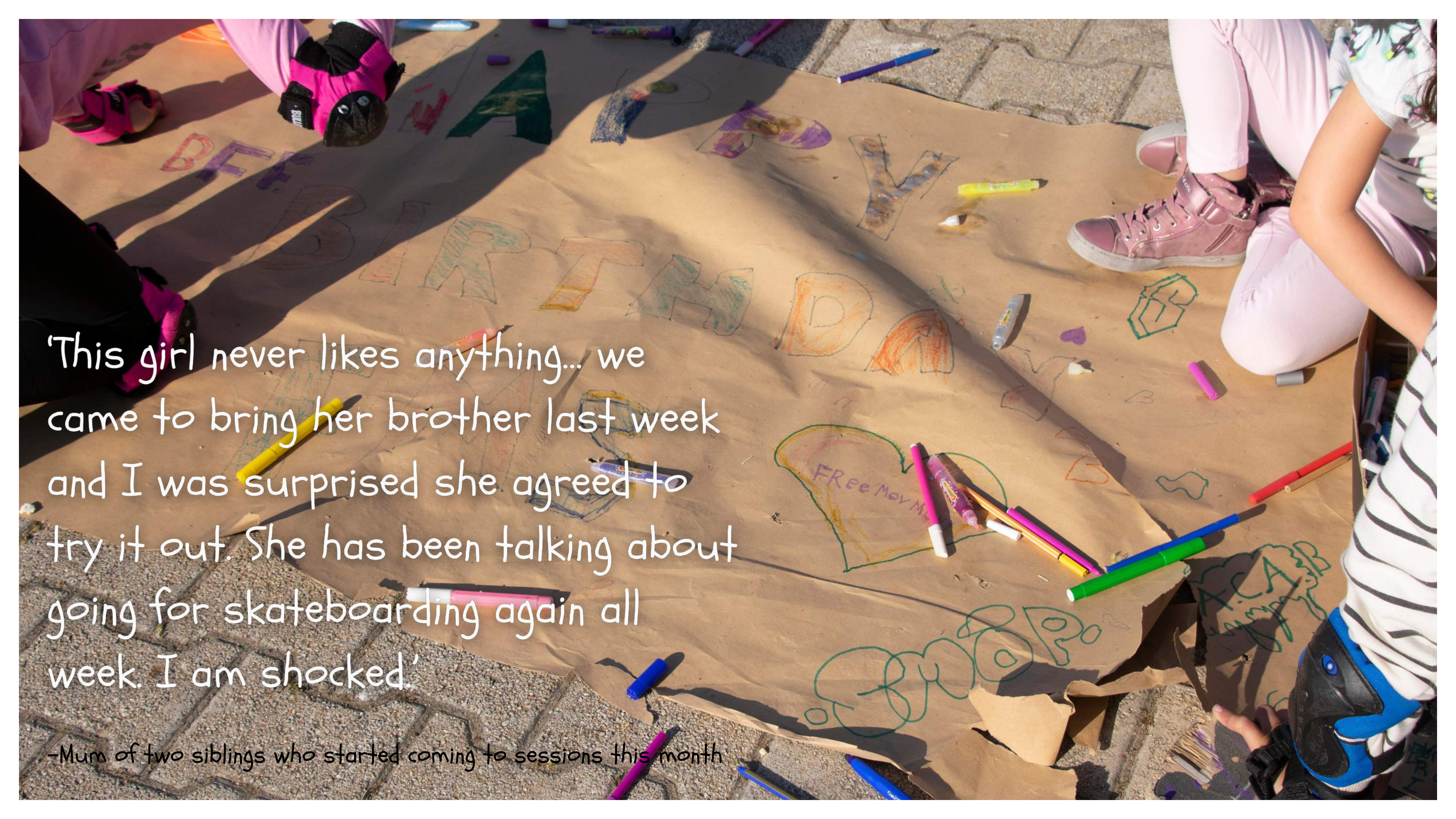
What is particularly remarkable about M.'s journey is the unwavering support of her older brothers. Despite initial reservations about skateboarding not being for girls, these two brothers have wholeheartedly embraced M.'s desire to skate. Their cultural background, which often enforces rigid gender roles and stereotypes, adds an extra layer of significance to their support for M. Demonstrating that FMS sessions have created an environment where passion and determination override traditional gender norms.

M.'s participation in FMS sessions has strengthened the bonds within her family. She now gets to spend quality time with her brothers while pursuing her passion for skateboarding. This shared experience fosters a stronger family connection.

M.'s journey, from a spectator to an active skateboarder, is a testament to the transformative power of FMS skateboarding sessions. It showcases how a supportive community, a determined individual, and the breaking of gender stereotypes can lead to personal growth and empowerment.



“When can I begin skateboarding, like my brothers”



'This girl never likes anything... we came to bring her brother last week and I was surprised she agreed to try it out. She has been talking about going for skateboarding again all week. I am shocked.'

-Mum of two siblings who started coming to sessions this month

# CHALLENGES



# COMMUNITY CENTER PROJECT

At the beginning of 2023 we were thrilled to announce our plans to create and open a new community space in Kato Patissia, made possible through additional funding from our main funders The Skateroom. This space, adjacent to our largest skateboarding session, would have represented a significant milestone for the project. Enabling us to expand our outreach in the neighborhood, deliver more sessions in other neighborhoods, and offer the benefits of skateboarding to even more youth in various areas of the city. Beyond skateboarding, we aimed to provide a diverse range of experiences, skills and support to our community, collaborating with other organisations and friends to offer workshops and activities. Including art, homework support, board games, a library, movies, and a safe space for families to spend time together. This initiative was aimed towards strengthening our community, fostering opportunities, broadening support networks and building stronger bonds.

While our aspirations to open the space remained strong, once embarking on the journey by actively searching for suitable spaces, exploring license requirements and costs, we encountered requirements that made it financially impractical for us, together with significant financial challenges, that heightened risks in going ahead with this plan. It was a tough decision for us to take, and we would love to pursue this goal in the future, perhaps collaborating with other organisations to share the costs.

In response to this decision, we focused on strengthening our ties with local schools and parent associations in the neighbourhood. We aim from the new school year to deliver session at selected schools, aiming to offer more regular skateboarding opportunities to participants. Additionally, we want to continue to invest in expanding our side-activities during sessions to create a mobile youth center. This innovative approach not only encourages non-skateboarding youth to join our community but also provides a safe and engaging space for younger children, particularly those accompanying older siblings. This further works as an initiative to alleviate some of the concerns of parents and caregivers, offering a break from responsibility while their children enjoy skateboarding and other activities. We are committed to making a positive impact in our community and look forward to the continued growth and success of our project and activities.







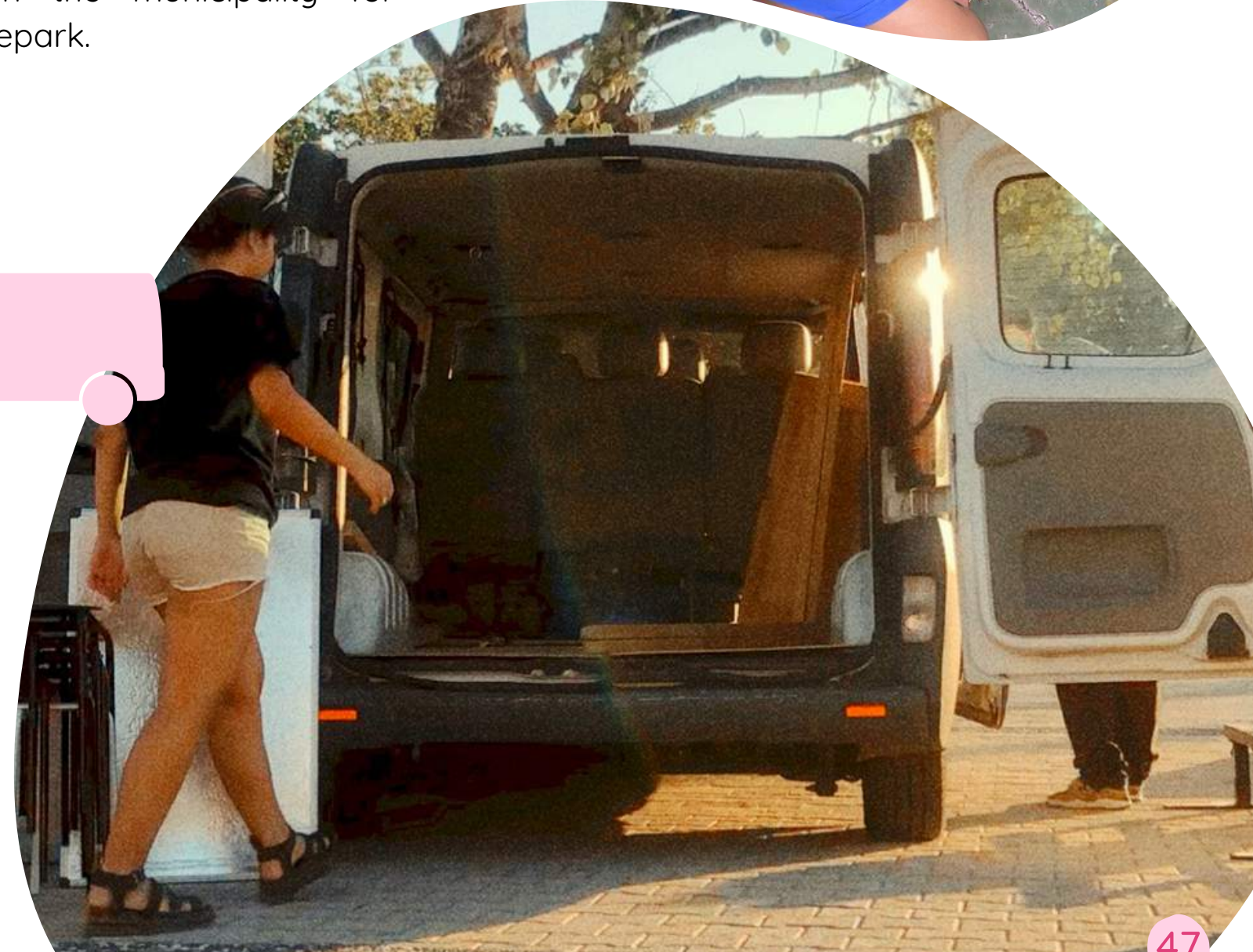
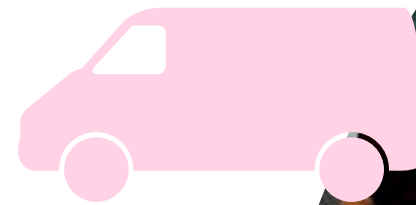
## SPACES FOR SESSIONS

Finding suitable spaces to deliver sessions in central Athens has become increasingly challenging, particularly with the loss of access to spaces we use, like the courts and the impending closure of Protomagias Square. The limited availability of suitable and accessible space in the neighbourhoods we work, and in the municipality more generally, is a massive challenge for the project. It has prompted us to reach out to schools. However, navigating the bureaucratic hurdles and procedures to access school playgrounds presents its own set of challenges. Securing space for our sessions has been a persistent issue, and it appears that this challenge will continue until there are dedicated spaces and facilities within the municipality for skateboarding, or at least allow us to set up our mobile skatepark.



## FMS VAN

In the past year, we have been grappling with a daunting reality: our old van, with recurrent mechanical issues, has become a significant source of anxiety. The constant fear of it breaking down unexpectedly, or the looming possibility of facing repair costs we simply cannot afford, has cast a shadow over our operations. The stakes are high, as the potential consequences can abruptly cease our sessions and activities, posing a substantial risk and challenge to the project.



# FUNDING SALARIES, TEAM STABILITY

There exists a common misperception surrounding the significance of funding salaries within NGOs, and regrettably, the true value of maintaining a stable and experienced team often goes unrecognised. This is important, as it directly influences the ability of an organisation to effectively and consistently pursue its aims.

Along with this issue are the challenges faced by youth in Greece, mainly the limited opportunities and employment prospects. For FMS, it is not just about running a youth-focused initiative but about playing a pivotal role in empowering, supporting, and enhancing the livelihoods and prospects of our team. Youth in Greece grow up with few professional opportunities, and whilst the cost of living crisis worsens, our young team is no exception to this.

Volunteering, though noble and we respect it greatly, is a privilege that many young people in Greece are denied, particularly when they find themselves working multiple jobs just to make ends meet. The team members and instructors we aim to attract are those who can relate to the backgrounds and challenges our participants face in this city. Yet, they are the ones most likely to be confronted by substantial obstacles, primarily in dedicating time to our project without the stability of a steady income, official contract or social insurances.

Furthermore, we highly value the well-being and self-care of those who work for FMS. These individuals not only accumulate valuable experience and a deep passion for our mission, but need the security of a stable livelihood and a promising future. Therefore, being employed with a reliable income and social insurances is not a luxury but a necessity.

Yet, securing stable funding from funders willing to finance salaries and stipends remains a challenge. These expenses might seem less appealing in comparison to skateboarding equipment, our van, or other exciting activities. Nevertheless, the critical discussion revolves around the significance of salaries in assembling the right team who will be behind driving these quality activities for our participants. The ability to ensure the long-term sustainability of our project and retention of dedicated team members depends on addressing this challenge.





"This project is a great idea, it makes  
so much sense"

Parent of 11 year old participant

# FINANCIAL BREAKDOWN



# EXPENSES (SEPTEMBER 22' - AUGUST 23')

100% of our income is spent on FMS activities, in order to deliver quality and reliable sessions for young Athenians.

Admin and fundraising costs cover necessary team working hours and fundraising costs needed for the operation of the charity, and the quality and sustainability of our activities.

Van Costs	£3,184.34
Sessions Activities	£2,583.27
Staff	£53,474.39
Fundraising/ Promotion	£697.60
Admin Costs	£1,368.59
Other	£401.94
<b>Total</b>	<b>£64,149.16</b>

Fundraising  
14%

Admin  
23%

Sessions  
63%

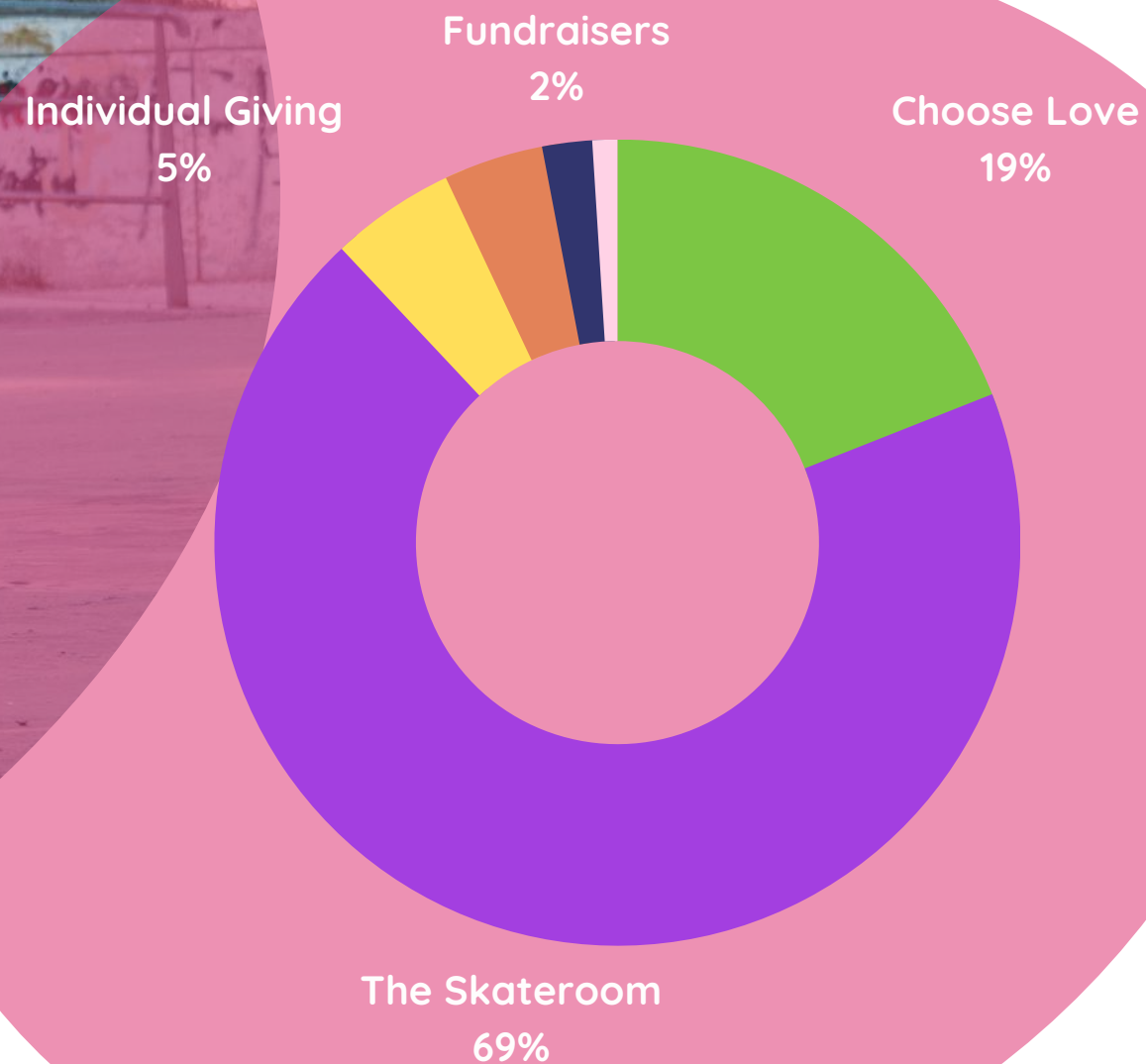




# INCOME (SEPTEMBER 22' - AUGUST 23')

It is thanks to the generous support of so many that allows FMS to do the work that it does. The chart shows the monetary income that FMS received between September 2022 and August 2023 (our fiscal year).

This year our goal continued to be to diversify our funding streams, with other grants, writing project proposals for new activities and working on many collaborations (including with CHPO, Decathlon Skateboarding and Athenian skate community).



Choose Love	£8,727.55
The Skateroom	£31,635.20
One-Off Donations	£1,042.93
Recurring Donations	£1,430.59
Collabs/ Fundraisers	£2,638.12
Other	£244.55
<b>Total</b>	<b>£45,718.94</b>

FMS also generously receives in kind donations (not represented in this information)

# COLLABORATIONS AND IN-KIND SUPPORT

**Color Skate Shop, Athens**, came to our rescue in September by generously supplying us with much-needed safety equipment, including pads and helmets. Given the extensive use of our equipment and our hygiene procedures, these items often wear out and tear. It is crucial to renew them, and any gear that still has some life left is passed on to our participants for use outside of our sessions.

**Vans Greece** showed their support for our work this year by collaborating with us during Vans Shop Riot 2022 in September, directing the profits from the sale of limited edition Vans Shop Riot x FMS t-shirts toward supporting our work and including a FMS challenge into the days program. Their generosity continued in December when they contributed shoes for our Christmas raffle.

**CHPO collaboration**, a company specialising in sunglasses and watches with a social conscience, released CHPO x FMS sunglasses, with all proceeds supporting our work. The FMS sunglasses designed in collaboration with Denia K. were released in July and are available to buy online and in selected stores.

**Amino Animo**, a Greek company, supported our work by generously donating the profits from the sale of a limited edition protein powder. They even joined us at one of our sessions, where they distributed goody bags to our participants.

Through **external fundraising** efforts, we received heartwarming support from The University of East Anglia Skate Society which organised a skate related fundraiser. Our comprehensive online fundraising pack, equipped with everything from project logos to photos, is readily available to those who wish to host fundraising events in support of our work.

**The Skateroom**, our main funders, sent us a donation of new skateboard decks, a crucial necessity as our previous skateboards were in dire need of replacement. Now, we are equipped with 20 brand new skateboard decks.

**Decathlon Skateboarding** has also played a significant role in supporting us with equipment. They kindly provided us with wheels and skateboarding parts, enabling us to complete essential maintenance and refresh of our gear.





*'I taught E. how to jump onto the board, this makes me happy'*

*-4 year old participant feeling good that she helped a friend*



# GOALS FOR 2024





## MORE COMMUNITY EVENTS

Aim to host and collaborate on even more community events this year. We value the importance of bringing people together and introducing our participants to new experiences.

## DEVELOPING EDU-SKATE AND BEING ACTIVE IN THE NETWORK

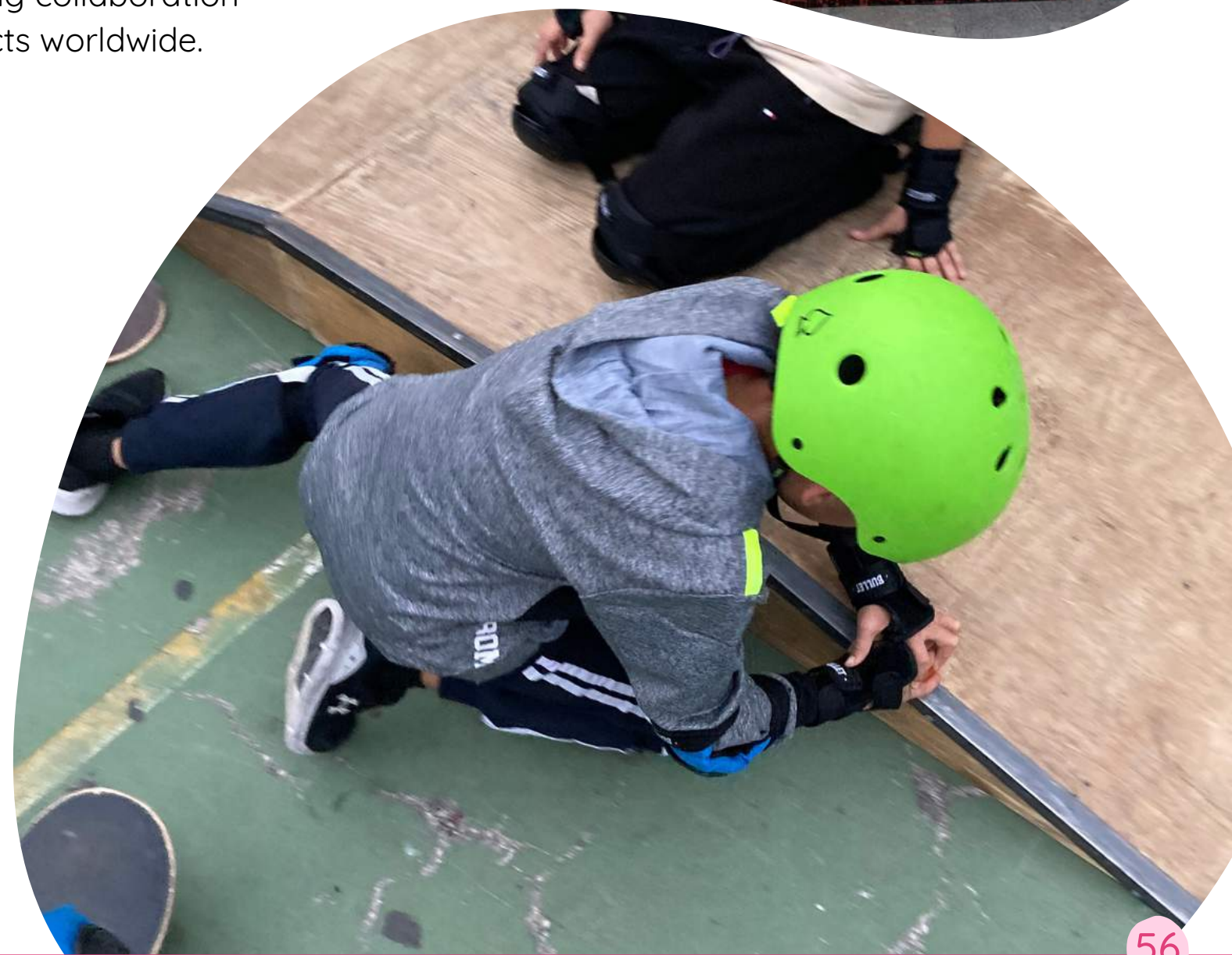
We aim to continue to develop Edu-Skate curriculum to tailor it to our specific context and sessions, essentially improving the overall quality of our sessions. Whilst being actively engaged in the Edu-Skate network, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange with other social skateboarding projects worldwide.

## ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNING

Increase our advocacy for the betterment of our community and raise awareness about the unique challenges faced. Equally important, we aim to shed light on our own struggles, particularly those related to public space and skateboarding facilities within the Athens Municipality.

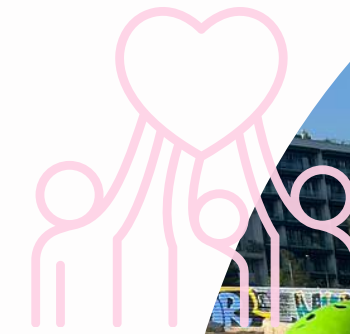
## PROJECT EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT

Establish connections and collaborations with public schools, with the intention of expanding the scope of our activities and extending our impact.



# TEAM CAPACITY BUILDING AND EMPOWERMENT

To empower our team through providing training, opportunities, and support for their ideas, fostering skill and knowledge growth. We truly value supporting all Athenian youth, including the youth in our team.



# MENTAL HEALTH AND LOCAL SKATE SCENE

We aim to support and enhance the mental well-being of the local skate community, beyond our session participants. We want to work on awareness raising activities and providing information, aimed to reduce stigma surrounding mental health and build a stronger, more supportive community in the long-term.



# FUNDRAISING DIVERSIFICATION

Diversifying our funding sources to achieve enhanced financial security and stability for our activities and work.



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[info@freemovementskateboarding.com](mailto:info@freemovementskateboarding.com)



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