



Newsletter No. 8 – November 2024

UPDATES FROM SELF.M.AID

from Julia Minder (co.-founder & director)

Dear selfm.aid - community

Another year draws to a close, and it feels like it has just begun. 2024 has flown by, likely because selfm.aid has been immersed in the ambitious journey of relocating, restructuring, reopening, and expanding both the new SKILLS FACTORY and our Phones Without Borders project.

The world has become even darker this year, with war and hostility pushing more people to flee and seek safety in Europe. While our goal has always been that SKILLS FACTORY would no longer be needed, the harsh reality is that it is today more crucial than ever before.

I am proud to say we have made the best of it: Today we stand in a vibrant, thriving SKILLS FACTORY 2.0, powered by a dedicated team of coordinators, community volunteers, and partners. Together, across seven departments, we serve up to 1,000 people every month, spreading the spirit of empowerment and self-made aid.

For me personally, this is the perfect moment to hand over the leadership of the SKILLS FACTORY to Alexandra Stadler, our new project manager. A tremendous asset to the selfm.aid team, Alexandra will, with the support of our coordinators, continue and further develop our vital work on Samos. As I prepare to welcome my first child, this transition allows me to focus on new priorities, including the "Phones Without Borders" project and the strategic development of selfm.aid after maternity leave.

Many of you have been with us from the beginning, while others have joined along the way. Together, you have helped us build a strong and inspiring selfm.aid community that has enabled all of this work. We could never have come this far without your support. Thank you!



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SELF.M.AID

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DO YOU SHARE OUR VISION AND WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

There are many options to support us...

selfm.aid

[@selfm.aid.ch](https://www.facebook.com/selfm.aid)

www.selfm-aid.ch

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SAMOS IS THE NEW HOTSPOT

THE BIGGEST HUMANITARIAN CRISES IN EUROPE



The Greek island of Samos has become the primary entry point for people on the move entering Greece, now registering double the arrivals seen on other key islands such as Lesbos, Leros, and Kos.

In October 2024 alone, Samos recorded 1'389 new arrivals, bringing the camp's population to 4'105 - a 100% increase compared to other Aegean islands. This surge mirrors a broader trend, as overall arrivals across the Aegean islands have risen in 2024 by 26% compared to 2023.

The rising influx of people on the move has put severe pressure on Samos's infrastructure, worsening already strained humanitarian conditions as reception centers and local services struggle to meet growing needs for shelter, medical care, and essential supplies.

Overcrowding has led to serious health and safety concerns, further exposing vulnerabilities among new arrivals and intensifying calls for additional support.

WAR ON GAZA AND LEBANON

HOW THE WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST IMPACTS THE SITUATION ON SAMOS

By the end of October, the first boats carrying people on the move from Lebanon began arriving on Samos, with numbers increasing rapidly as the crisis deepens.

The escalation of tensions in the Middle East has brought new waves of arrivals to Samos and other Greek islands, highlighting the link between conflict and forced migration. This influx is particularly concerning as Lebanon currently hosts around 2.5 million refugees, primarily from Palestine and Syria, sparking fears of regional destabilisation.

As European countries continue to fund military actions in the region, they must also be prepared to offer sanctuary to those forced to flee the consequences of war.



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“IT’S CLEARLY ILLEGAL”

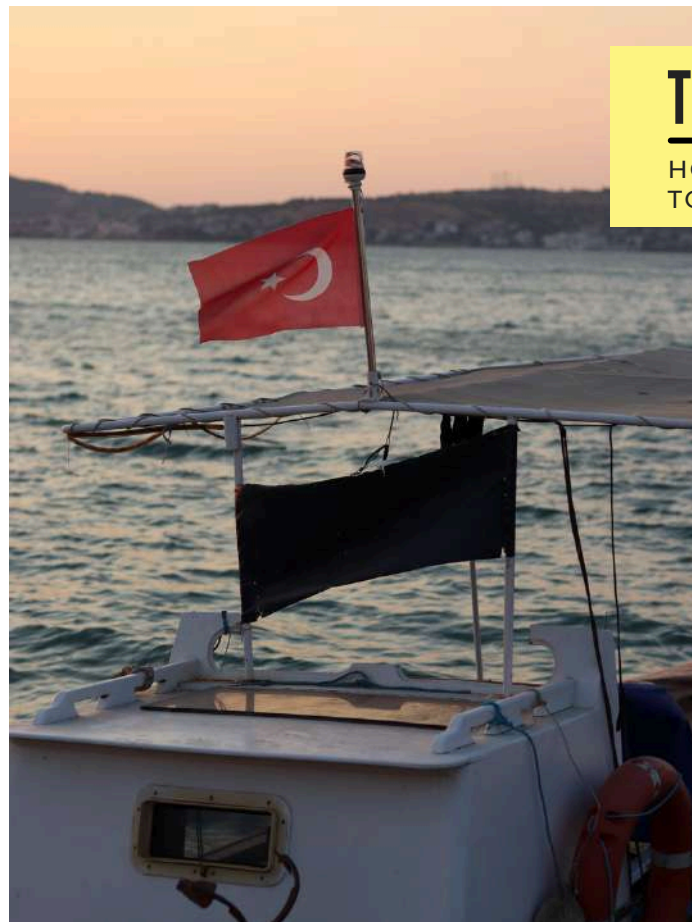
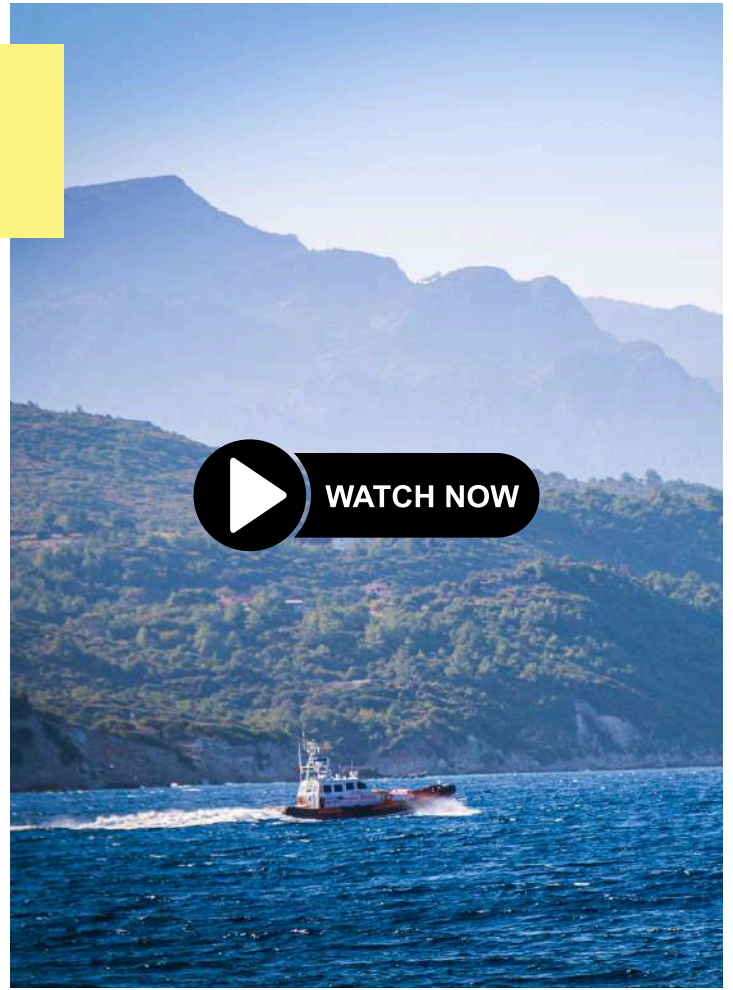
NEW BBC DOCUMENTARY INVESTIGATES THE CONDUCT OF THE GREEK COASTGUARD

The BBC documentary *“Dead Calm: Killing, in the Med?”* released in June of this year, sheds light on alleged abuses by the Greek Coastguard against asylum seekers crossing the Aegean Sea.

What we have witnessed on Samos for years is now uncovered: disturbing footage shows asylum seekers being transferred to Greek coastguard boats, only to be abandoned on small boats at sea.

Former Greek coastguard officer Dimitris Baltakos, initially defending the actions, later calls them “obviously illegal” and an “international crime.” Despite Greek authorities denying the claims and asserting their operations are lawful, survivors’ accounts tell a different, harrowing story.

European border policies are killing people - and they do so intentionally.



TURKISH TOURISM ON SAMOS

HOW THE TURKISH VISA POLICY CHANGED TOURISM AND THE TOWN OF SAMOS

More than 70,000 visitors in Samos Town, until the end of August - a new visa policy between Turkey and Greece changes the face of tourism.

With fall approaching, the tourist season is coming to its end. This year has been the busiest season since COVID-19, but what stood out this year was the increase in Turkish tourists arriving daily by ferry to Samos Town.

Hotels and restaurants were fully booked, streets were packed with rental cars and buses picking up tourists from the port, and crowds filled the town from around the world.

This shift in tourism has impacted the local economy significantly, with many of our volunteers finding work in local businesses - an interesting change also for our community, how Kate will explain on page 9.

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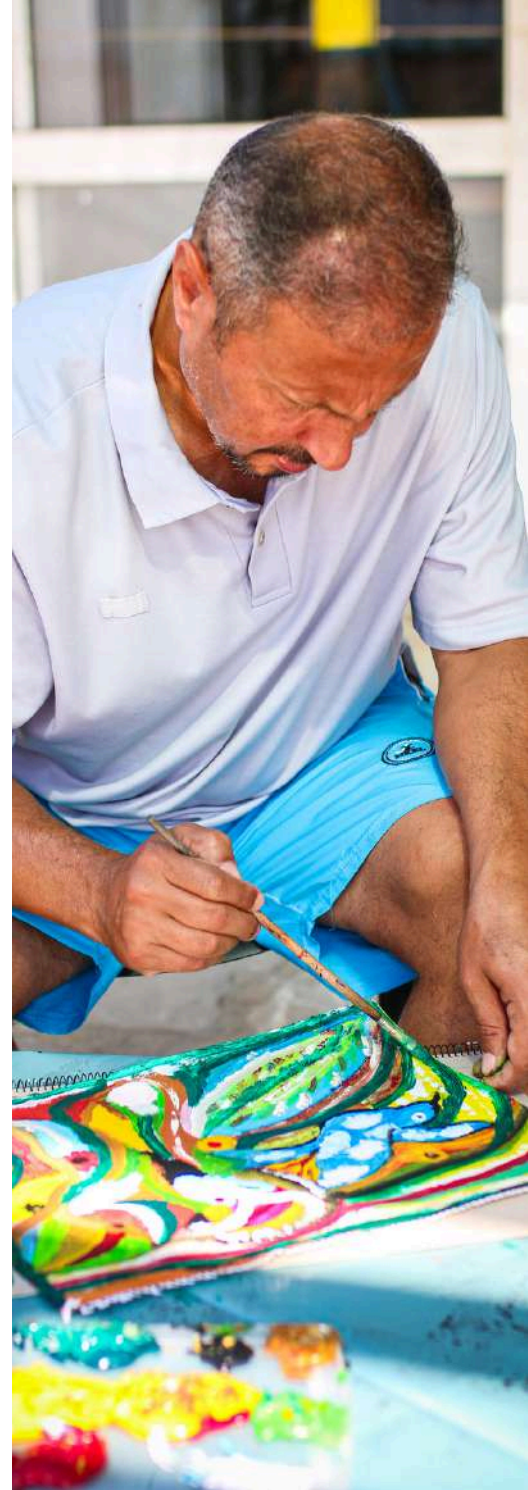
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SKILLS FACTORY 2.0

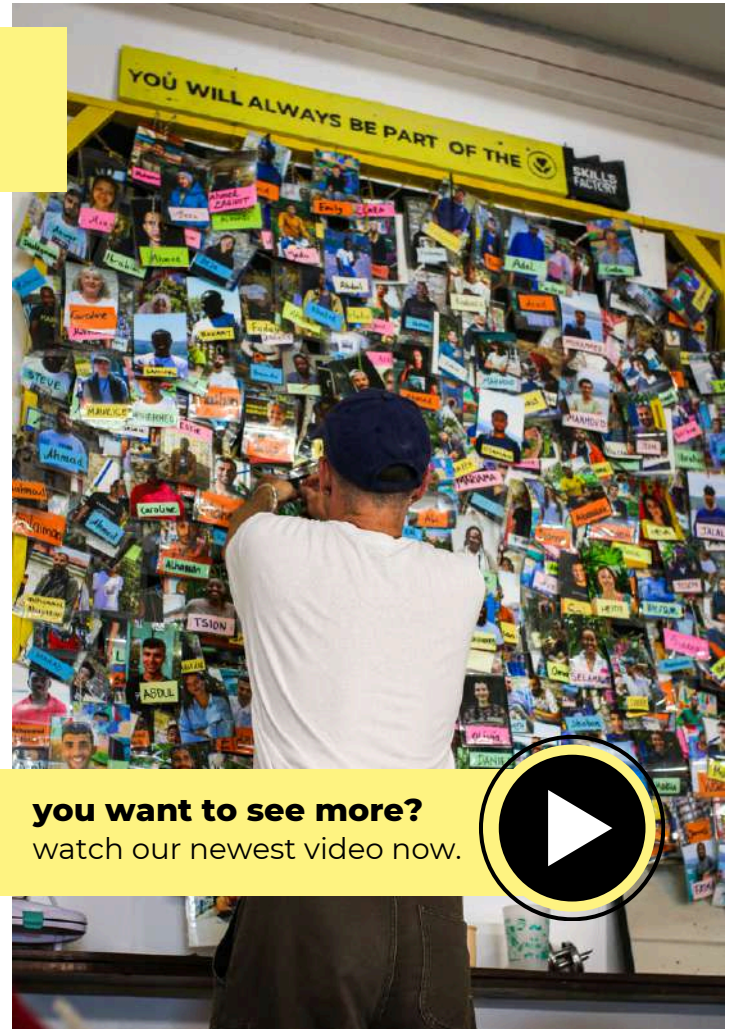
REACHING UP TO 1000 PEOPLE A MONTH

Transforming SKILLS FACTORY into its new premises and upgraded structure has been an incredible effort by the team on the ground - and the hard work is starting to pay off. In August, we reached over 1,000 people with our services!

Following the relocation and rebuilding, the new SKILLS FACTORY operated at full capacity this summer, reaching a broad audience with our diverse services.

From immediate emergency aid amid humanitarian crises to sustainable, long-term support, SKILLS FACTORY provides a wide range of services, placing people on the move at the center and addressing their unique needs and skills. This holistic approach makes SKILLS FACTORY both unique and complex, but ultimately, successful.

We are incredibly proud of how far we have come and thank you all for your invaluable support.



you want to see more?
watch our newest video now.



IMPACT IN NUMBERS

UP TO 1000 PEOPLE EVERY MONTH

Over the past months, SKILLS FACTORY has been busier than ever, responding to escalating community needs.

In September, the camp was near full capacity with 2,853 residents; by November, it exceeded 4,600, with daily arrivals continuing. Life in the Closed Controlled Access Center (CCAC) is harsh, with little space for dignity, joy, or even basic necessities.

SKILLS FACTORY is more vital than ever, offering a space outside the camp where individuals can learn, create, and contribute to humanitarian aid, rediscovering a sense of purpose.

This is reflected in our 2024 numbers: 1,589 haircuts provided, 1,147 laundry washes completed, 239 clothes repaired, and 130 phones processed - a powerful testament to the resilience of those we serve and the dedication of our team.

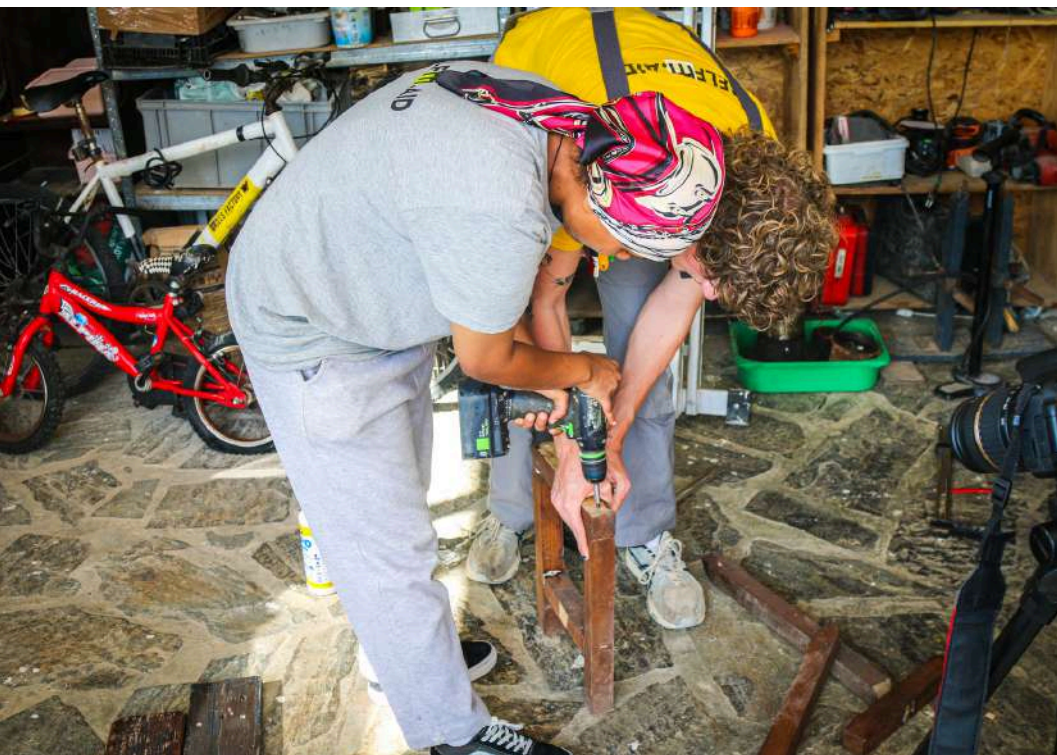
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WELCOME ALEXANDRA

NEW PROJECT MANAGER SKILLS FACTORY

We are delighted to introduce Alexandra Stadler as the new project manager of SKILLS FACTORY, starting in November 2024.

Alexandra began her journey with selfm.aid in 2023 during her field practice module from the University of Social Work at HSLU. Since then, she has remained actively involved as a member and co-president of the board.

With her strong background, valuable experience, and dedicated work ethic, we are confident that Alexandra is the perfect fit to lead SKILLS FACTORY and build on its success.

We look forward to seeing her continue and enhance the impactful work of the project.

Welcome to the team, dear Alexandra!

TAILOR WORKSHOP

DEPARTMENT UPDATE

In the sewing department, our team is working tirelessly and with dedication to produce essential clothing that meets the urgent needs of the camp.

More than 4,000 people stuck in the overcrowded Samos camp face a severe shortage of men's clothing, particularly underwear. Men make up the majority of the camp's population, and the lack of these basic necessities is dire.

In August alone, thanks to our partnership with Samos Volunteers, we distributed 134 vests and 95 pairs of boxers to those most in need.

With winter fast approaching, we refuse to stand by. Our team has already started producing warm jumpers and trousers to help residents face the harsh winter months.

Your support can empower us to create more essential, dignified clothing - made by the people, for the people.



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KITCHEN DEPARTMENT

DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Over the past six months, the kitchen department has thrived, thanks to an influx of volunteers sharing diverse experiences and culinary traditions.

This vibrant exchange has created a dynamic space for learning and collaboration, united by a passion for global cuisine. Our certification system, introduced earlier this year, has been a success: six volunteers achieved Level 1 – Kitchen Basics, and one long-term member earned Level 2 – Kitchen Confidence. Through our Local Outreach program, several team members secured paid jobs on the island in kitchens and hotels.

A highlight was the introduction of Eritrean cuisine, led by volunteers like Meron, who spent three transformative months with us. Reflecting on her time, Meron said:

“Skills was home for me, and the people were like family. I never felt alone.”

We thank Meron and all our volunteers for their dedication and look forward to the opportunities ahead in 2025.

SKILLS CONNECT

LABOUR INTEGRATION ON SAMOS

Building Bridges to Employment: Our Skills-Connect team is working tirelessly to see our community seamlessly integrating into the local job market on Samos.

The summer influx of thousands of holidaymakers from Turkey has greatly impacted local businesses and the economy. With English lessons, prior knowledge of Turkish, and skills honed at SKILLS FACTORY, our participants find it easier to secure jobs and expand their employment opportunities.

This rise in daily visitors has created more job opportunities, especially in hospitality. Local business owners and hoteliers have warmly welcomed the extra help, with SKILLS FACTORY placing over 30 community volunteers into jobs during the 2024 season.

Prospects for summer 2025 look even brighter, allowing us to continue supporting individuals in applying their skills and knowledge within this community.



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WASH-DEPARTMENT

DEPARTMENT UPDATE

4,600 people in the camp and no place to wash laundry: The situation in the CCAC remains dire.

Laundry facilities have been out of use for over 1.5 years, with authorities refusing responsibility. With a growing camp population and rising cases of scabies and skin infections, our WASH and laundry project is more critical than ever.

To meet rising demand, the WASH team has expanded to four members, managing up to 100 washes weekly to provide dignity, health, and safety. Beyond clean laundry, the project now includes training in machine operation, organization, and management, equipping the community with valuable skills.

While WASH isn't one of our main departments, it is busier and more impactful than ever - addressing urgent needs while offering people the chance to learn skills and find purpose amid unbearable camp conditions.



MEET HATEM

CO-MANAGER OF THE WASH DEPARTMENT

My name is Hatem, I am 19 years old, from Homs, Syria. I left home when I was just seven and spent 12 years in Lebanon, where I went to school and worked on a farm. I loved farming - it's hard work, but it feels amazing to see what you can create in nature. After Lebanon, I made my way to Turkey and eventually arrived in Greece.

I heard about SKILLS FACTORY from a friend and joined the WASH project. At first, I didn't think this would be my place, but now I love it. Laundry might seem small, but it's one of the most important things for people in the camp, where washing clothes is so difficult. I've learned how to use washing and drying machines, manage a busy schedule, and stay organized with the laundry bags. Now, I'm confident in my skills and proud to support people from the camp have clean clothes, which is essential for dignity and health.

My dream is to leave Greece, go to Germany, and study. Maybe I'll become a car mechanic or open my own coffee shop, "The Centre of the Dream." Everyone has a dream and this is mine.



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ART EXHIBITION / SUMMER PARTY

CELEBRATING 6 MONTHS SKILLS FACTORY 2.0



September 2024 marked six months of SKILLS FACTORY 2.0. To celebrate, we hosted a summer party and art exhibition featuring talent from our summer art workshops.

These workshops fostered creativity and emotional healing, allowing participants to express themselves through hands-on techniques. The exhibition also featured artwork from past volunteers, celebrating our community's creative spirit.

The event highlighted department growth: sewing production expanded, media workshops thrived, new barbers were trained, the wash department excelled, and the kitchen became a hub for global cuisines.

We thank our volunteers for their courage in sharing their stories through art, making this anniversary a meaningful reflection of our community's progress.

EXHIBITION IN GRENOBLE

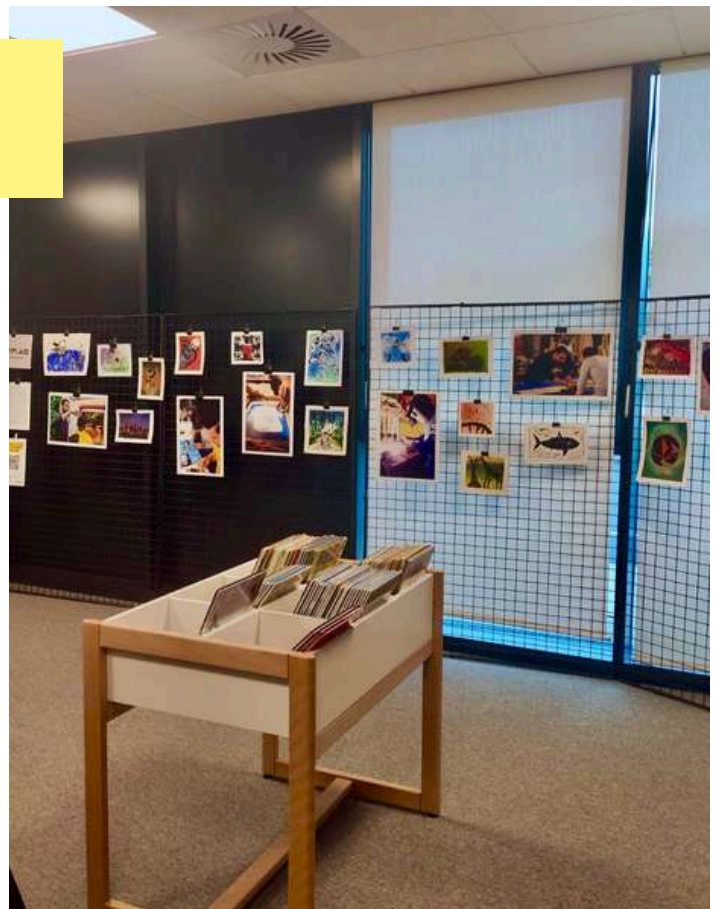
SELF.M.AID ART IN ARTELIA FOUNDATION

In October, Humacoop-Amel France hosted another successful exhibition at the Artelia Foundation in Grenoble, highlighting photos and prints from our project and introducing selfm.aid to a wider audience.

The event was a great success, providing an excellent opportunity to showcase the impactful work we're doing.

As part of this collaboration, an online donation page was set up, allowing visitors to support our work and contribute to the continuation of the art initiatives. This partnership has proven to be a valuable one, providing increased visibility for our project and helping us promote the incredible efforts of our community.

We are truly grateful for the ongoing support from Humacoop-Amel France.



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VOLUNTEER WITH US

EXPLORE OUR OPPORTUNITIES

We are always seeking skilled and motivated individuals who can commit to at least 2-3 months to join our team on Samos.

Open Positions:

- Reception Manager
- Media Manager
- WASH Manager
- Maintenance Volunteer
- Facilitator for Phone Workshop
- Facilitator for Barber Workshop
- Facilitator for Kitchen Workshop
- Facilitator for Tailor Workshop

For more information and to apply, please visit our [website](#) or email us at volunteer@selfm-aid.ch.

Did you know?

We are proud partners of **Workaway** and **Indigo Volunteers**, and our work is recognized by **Erasmus+**.

Join our dedicated team on Samos and make a meaningful impact!

HAPPY ANNIVERSERIES

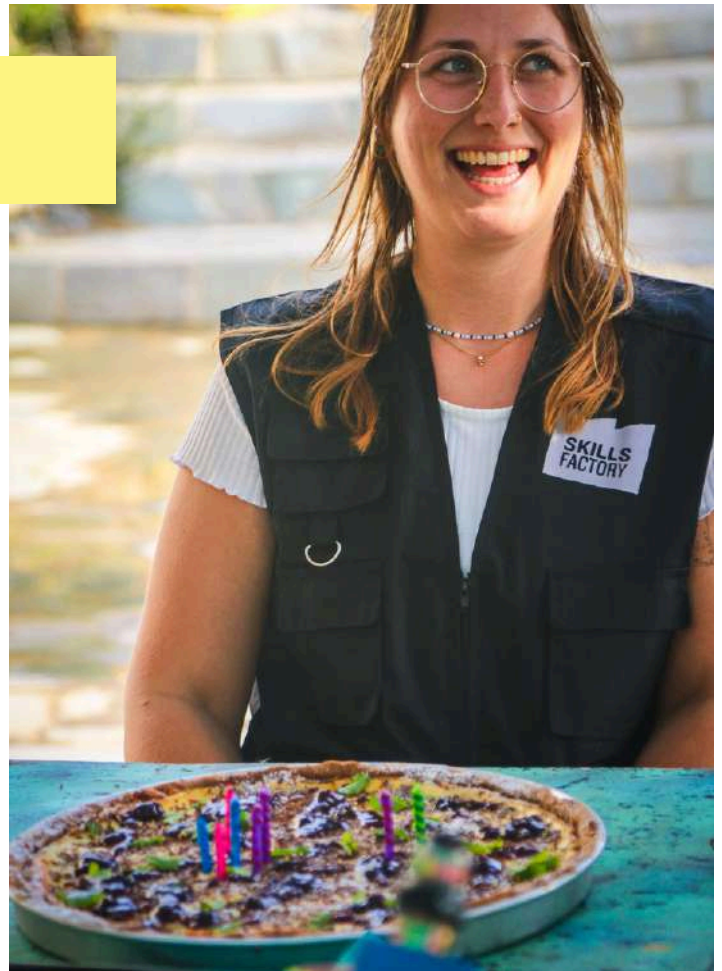
TO OUR INCREDIBLE COORDINATION TEAM

Sustainability within selfm.aid is also defined by a committed, skilled, and motivated coordination team with a long-term focus.

At selfm.aid, we invest significantly in the training, support and well-being of our coordination team. These team members are the driving force behind our ideas, concepts, and culture, working toward greater stability, trust, and reduced turnover.

This fall, we celebrated the one-year anniversaries of our coordinators Maria, Rafiq, and Katharina, as well as the two-year anniversary of Mohammed, our project manager for Phones Without Borders.

We thank each of you from the bottom of our hearts for your dedication and hard work. Thanks to your commitment, the SKILLS FACTORY has grown into what it is today.



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PHONES WITHOUT BORDERS

SELF.M.AID'S NEW PROJECT IS OPEN

In August, we proudly opened the doors to our new project, Phones Without Borders.

It is so exciting to see the workshop come to life, equipped with a professional setup, dedicated workspaces for teachers, desks for students to learn this unique skill, and even a space for software. Most importantly, it's been filled with a passionate team of talented individuals driven by motivation and dedication.

Our team now includes five community- and one external volunteer, each contributing at different skill levels. So far, they have repaired over 100 phones and prepared 216 phones for distribution to our partner organizations. Together, we also developed guidelines, established safety protocols, and built a structured three-level training program.

We are incredibly proud to see this new branch of selfm.aid thriving and can't wait to watch it reach its full potential in 2025.

BEHIND THE SCENES

HELLO, MY NAME IS BRICE.

I'm 23 years old and from France, with a background in IT, networks, and telecommunications. While I have been actively involved with various French associations over the years, joining SKILLS FACTORY marks my first step into the field of migration support.

In the SKILLS FACTORY, I am proud to be a facilitator in the phone repair department. My job is to ensure that every phone entrusted to us is tracked, managed, and returned safely to its owner. I oversee orders for spare parts, coordinate repairs, and serve as the bridge between our repair team and customers.

This role is crucial to providing a reliable service. By managing these tasks, I help maintain trust and keep the repair team focused on their expertise - repairing phones - without the added distraction of administrative work.

I am excited to bring my technical skills and passion to a cause that supports people in meaningful ways.



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PWB - UNIVERSITY PROJECT GROUP

SWISS SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS CREATE DONATION FRAMEWORK

A group of students dedicated an entire semester to developing a sustainable donation strategy and network for used phones within Switzerland.

Since 2021, we are partnering with the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSLU) in the Social Work department.

A student group has dedicated their last semester to Phones Without Borders and has created a comprehensive strategy and framework for collecting donated phones across Switzerland, designed our unique, eye-catching donation boxes, and established key new donation locations.

Donation Locations:

There are multiple donation drop-off points across Switzerland and Germany. Find the one closest to you here: [PWB-Locations](#)



10 YEARS REPAIR NETWORK

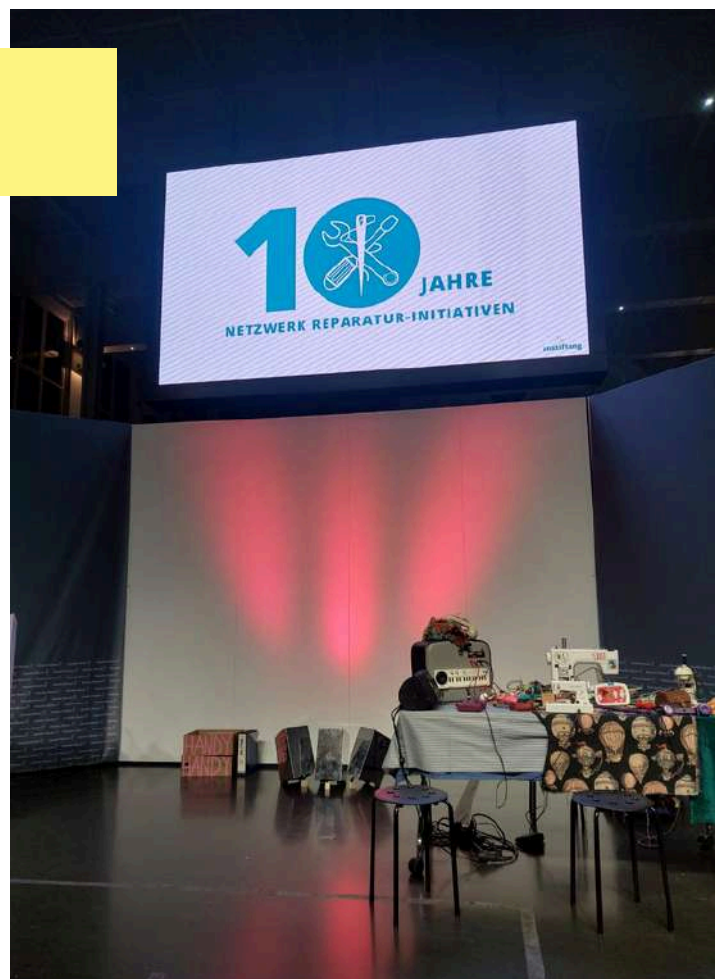
CONFERENCE IN MUNICH, GERMANY

Ten years ago, the network for repair initiatives was founded, growing into a substantial network of over 1,000 initiatives across Germany and beyond - including selfm.aid.

This year, we were honored to step beyond our small island to participate in the national conference for repair in Munich, organized by our outstanding partner organization, Anstiftung.

We attended trainings on work safety for repairing electrical devices, connected with numerous colleagues and project leaders from other workshops, and had the opportunity to present our work on Samos at the evening event at the Deutsches Theater. It was inspiring to share and exchange our vision for inclusion in repair with such a diverse audience.

Thank you for this incredible opportunity and for the strength of this network. We look forward to meeting again in another ten years.



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NEWS FROM THE BOARD



Our board has undergone a significant transformation following the retreat we held a year ago. With the growth of our NGO and its projects, new demands emerged, prompting many of our long-standing, trusted members to step down and make space for a new generation, as their personal circumstances also evolved.

Since then, we have dedicated substantial time to recruiting, evaluating, and facilitating the transition of responsibilities. A new generation of board members has now taken shape. While we are still refining our workflow to ensure smooth operations, we are enthusiastic and committed to establishing this fresh spirit and energy within selfm.aid's board.

We are delighted to welcome our new team members (to be elected for the board on the annual membership assembly 2025): Noor, who will support in fundraising; Alexander, overseeing IT; Anna, managing finances; and Manar, contributing as our mental health expert.

We look forward to this new chapter!

LAST BUT NOT LEAST

NEW GENERATION OF SELF.M.AID

New beginnings are not just happening within our board - this year has been especially meaningful for the future of selfm.aid also on a very different level:

We are thrilled to celebrate and congratulate Maria, our local project coordinator, and her husband Rudhir on the birth of their beautiful daughter, Naya. We wish their family all the best for this new chapter.

We also congratulate Julia and Mohammed on their wedding and the exciting arrival of their first son, expected in January 2025. Joining them soon after, our board member Linda and her husband, Abdo, are expecting their first child in February.

Welcoming these three new lives into the SKILLS FACTORY and the wider selfm.aid community is incredibly special. Congratulations to all!



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CHRISTMAS WITH SELFMAID

MEANINGFUL GIFTS

Join Our Annual Crowdfunder: Help us to keep SKILLS FACTORY open in 2025 by participating in our annual crowdfunding campaign!

From the 28th of November until the 31st of December 2024, we are raising funds for the new year of SKILLS FACTORY.

This year, you can also purchase meaningful perks and make donations in the name of your loved ones. A donation certificate makes the perfect Christmas gift - spreading the spirit of giving while supporting a worthy cause.

[Join us in making a difference!](#)

Donation Certificate

COOK BOOK

FOOD IS READY

If you are looking for a meaningful, tangible gift for your loved ones, consider bringing the spirit, stories, flavors, and aromas of SKILLS FACTORY into your home with our Food is Ready cookbook.

Food is Ready is a unique collection of recipes from near and far, capturing dishes from home and from journeys into the unknown.

It's available in both German and English.

Order NOW!



Impressum

This newsletter features contributions from our dedicated team: Linda Wanklin (Board Member, Fundraising & Events), Katharina Scholle (Media Coordinator), Alexandra Stadler (Project Manager, Skills Factory), Rafiq Albayya (Sewing Coordinator), Luca Marrone (Kitchen Coordinator), Kate Knott (Local Relations Coordinator), and Brice (Department Facilitator, Phone Repair). Thank you for your efforts and for sharing your passion!

Verein selfm.aid **SELFMADE-AID-MKO**

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