



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

ASOCIACIÓN ESPAÑOLA HABIBI CENTER



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# MESSAGE FROM THE TEAM

During this year 2020, the Habibi Center Team has continued to be led by Stephanie and Alex. This is their message:

*Since Habibi Center was founded in 2016, each year has been different. This year 2020, although it seemed to be a year in which we had a large part of the organization under control, at least in relation to teaching English, has once again brought us surprises.*

*The situation of fear and uncertainty that we have been living since February with the measures adopted by the authorities regarding Covid-19 has affected the whole world, but even more so the different groups of vulnerable populations, such as the one that Habibi Center represents. Many asylum interviews and the legal situations of young people have been affected and delayed in many cases. In addition, unaccompanied minors living in the shelters were totally deprived of freedom of movement, without even being able to set foot outside of the shelters during the first lock-down which lasted from March to June. Furthermore, many of them have experienced this same situation again during the second lock-down from November to December. All of this has further destabilized their fragile situations and we have noticed an increase in depressive cases and other behaviors related to the fear, frustration and uncertainty that they experience daily.*

*As for us, one of the most difficult aspects to face has been the closure of the center, with the consequential loss of physical contact with the students, in addition to having to carry out online classes for most of the year. The set up for this type of class has meant a very important extra effort in addition to everything that the management and organization of the project already entails. On the other hand, the positive side of this new challenge as teachers is that it has made us discover different platforms and tools and has allowed us to improve our methods and foster the creativity that this form of distance learning requires.*

*Other positive aspects of the year have been the participation of new volunteers, in spite of everything including complications related to international travel; some students were able to obtain asylum or family reunification in other European countries; and, after 3 years living and sharing the same space in which we gave classes in the afternoons, we staff members have managed to move into our respective houses, giving each of us fresh air to enjoy our private space and thus separating work and personal life in a healthier way.*



# ABOUT US

Habibi Center is a **non-formal education project** established in Greece since August 2016 and officially registered in the National Association Registry in Spain under the name *Asociación Española Habibi Center* (Nº 616525) since October 2018.

## MISSION

Offer **support at different levels** to young refugees from different countries who have been forced to stay in a temporary or indefinite form in Greece, while contributing to their **education**, and providing them with **useful tools** to build their future and empower them through education and life values.

Spread **positivity and hope** to young people who have a high degree of vulnerability, anger, frustration and uncertainty so that they obtain the **self-esteem, confidence and independence** necessary to build a dignified future and quality well-being within our society.

## VISION

**Education** is the essential tool for the development, transformation and change of society.

**Equal opportunities** for accessing resources are essential to create a just society.

**Youth empowerment** is necessary to build a positive future.

**The socio-emotional support** for vulnerable young people is vital for their integration and active participation in society.

## VALUES

**EDUCATION:** Habibi Center has created its own educational methodology and puts it in practice in the broadest meaning of the word education: tolerance, diversity, creativity and determination.

**VOLUNTEER:** Volunteering is the starter motor and what runs Habibi Center. Without it, nothing that has been achieved so far would have been possible.

**COMMUNITY:** Habibi Center is a project created, supported and coordinated by ordinary people. Together in unity we can create change in our environment.



# PROJECT OBJECTIVES

## ENGLISH LEARNING ON AN ACADEMIC LEVEL

## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

**Learning the English language** is a communicative tool that represents a very important part to our youth. With it they can begin to communicate with their environment and feel safer and more independent, without the need for interpreters.

Although the main essence of a language is to give us the possibility to communicate with other people, with greater or lesser quality, this project focuses on their learning in a very **structured** and **academically-based** form. The main reason is the need that these vulnerable young people present to reach their actual school level as soon as possible and, thus, enable to attain the same opportunities as any other young European person.



Many of our students come to the center with a high level of **illiteracy**, not only of the English alphabet but even that of their own mother tongue. Although all of our classes are separated by levels and working in the most personalized way possible, this initial level requires a special adaptation to the unique needs of the student and a higher investment of energy. The project considers this first stage crucial since, if these young people do not reach a minimum level of literacy, they have a high probability of not being able to enter any educational program, be it formal or informal. In fact, in 2020, a significant number of young people who needed this type of initiation class were unable to be helped due to lack of volunteers and space.

# PROJECT OBJECTIVES

## ENGLISH LEARNING ON AN ACADEMIC LEVEL

When young people begin to acquire minimum levels of literacy, they are provided new vocabulary and grammar following a **specific curriculum** created based upon the 4+ years of experience of the Habibi Center team. This curriculum, a hybrid of the material included in several self-study books, the material personally created by the team since the organization's inception, as well as the creativity unique to each volunteer, helps us to give a structure to both students and various teachers. For example, on one hand, each new volunteer starts with the assurance of a structured syllabus that they will be required to teach during the following weeks. On the other hand, students benefit from the structure and consistency of learning since they will follow the agenda that corresponds to their level, without repeating material or taking a disproportionate leap into advanced material.



one more Cambridge exam candidate. In addition, many students who have received this certification have been able to utilize it for important matters such as routine asylum interviews, and once they have transitioned to other European countries, English level assessment interviews, as well as to qualify for and obtain higher-entry jobs.

## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT



This academic learning approach culminates with one of the dreams and goals that the project has set from the beginning: **the preparation of official Cambridge exams**. Since July 2017, 85 young people have taken at least one of these exams and, among these, 16 have achieved the B1 level certificate, 44 the A2 level certificate, and 17 the level A1 certificate. From the earliest stages of arrival, the overall development of these young people has been of high importance, but with the preparation of these official exams it causes them to take an immense, measurable leap both in quality and their level of English, and even more importantly in their personal attitude and confidence levels. This experience gives them the opportunity to mingle with other young Greeks and their exams are scored without any favoritism or consideration of their legal situations and status, but simply as



# PROJECT OBJECTIVES

## ENGLISH LEARNING ON AN ACADEMIC LEVEL

Although learning English is the reason why most students are interested in attending the center, the main mission of the project is really to fully empower these young refugees. This empowerment is a key element for their **development**, to **cultivate and sustain their independence and autonomy**, as well as integrating their **social and professional skills**.

Habibi Center believes that it is of utmost importance that young people learn to **recognize and strengthen their own skills** actualizing a feeling of fulfillment and satisfaction, as well as learning to **manage weaknesses and fears** by confronting them instead of avoiding them.

The project makes a great effort to provide them, on a daily basis, with **values and tools** to help them increase confidence and self-esteem, necessary to achieve any objective that they set, thus becoming independent people of society. Therefore, a great deal of energy and time is also invested in the **education of practical knowledge through education**, such as the use of different basic tools such as computer programs, typing speed and accuracy, and the creation of a Curriculum Vitae.



During the rest of the year, other activities were also conducted to create a stronger bond among group members in addition to cultivating creativity. In one activity for example, 6 students were divided into 3 groups, and had to create their own **clothing store** taking advantage of all the vocabulary they were given on the subject. When each group organized their store after searching, downloading and printing images from the internet, they had to present it before their classmates, simulating different situations that could occur in their daily lives.

In another activity, several students showed off their **cooking skills** after having learned vocabulary about food and different verbs that are often used when cooking. For a week, each young person had to create their own fictitious restaurant, present a cooking recipe to practice all the material acquired in class, and finally cook the meal. During the time they cooked, each class member had their own role in the fictitious restaurant. Thus, on a rotating basis, while some cooked, others were responsible for serving and others for washing and cleaning.

# PROJECT OBJECTIVES

## ENGLISH LEARNING ON AN ACADEMIC LEVEL

## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT



The **short-term workshops** that are usually prepared during the year have been affected by the global situation we have been experiencing since March. However, in February, thanks again to Anne, it was possible to implement an **artistic project** in which 9 young people had to identify themselves with a season of the year and create a landscape and its respective self-portrait with watercolors. As in the past, students were asked to create a poem that accompanied their artistic abilities portraying themselves in their season of the year.

In addition, Alex was able to dedicate one week at the year's beginning to present information about the **anatomy and physiology** of the human body to an advanced group of 5 students.

Finally, in mid-June, Alex conducted a **geography** workshop, where 2 students learned different geographic information, such as continents, oceans, and a large number of countries worldwide, as well as European capitals.



To achieve this goal and equip young people with knowledge and competencies, Habibi Center has created a **safe space, with freedom and coexistence** that brings the youth and adults together on a daily basis, a place to start building a better future, through education. Since 2017, this physical space is located in the center of Athens. Habibi Center opens its doors from 3.30 p.m. to 8 p.m each weekday. This schedule allows the students to attend the official Greek school in the mornings and attend the Habibi Center's program in the afternoons.





# PROJECT OBJECTIVES

## ENGLISH LEARNING ON AN ACADEMIC LEVEL

## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT



Although originally equipped as an apartment, the Habibi Center has been adapted over time to now be a “homey” set of classrooms functioning as a community center. Educational supplies, such as tables, whiteboards, and a library, are simple yet functional, and **decorations** of most of the walls comprise, motivational phrases and quotes, project displays, past art projects, as well as photos of students and teachers. This eclectic and colorful collection has helped young people feel comfortable and relaxed within the **learning space**, while **maintaining the comfort and warmth of a home**.



# PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
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The year 2020 started with notion of seeing the students who had already been a part of the center the previous year. Because there were only two volunteers available after the Christmas break, the team could not begin to incorporate new youth into the program until early February.



Furthermore, at the end of January it was decided that 2 of these groups, who had already been in the Habibi family for several months and were at the right level, could start preparing for the official Cambridge exams in May and June for the levels A2 and B1.



In February, we said goodbye to one volunteer, but we were able to confirm the incorporation of 3 more volunteers by the end of February and the beginning of March. Therefore, for the first time in many months, in anticipation of being able to count on 4 new volunteers, plans were made to accept new students and to open new groups, increasing the number from 6 to 9 students.



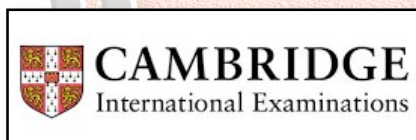


# PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
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The stability and structure that Habibi Center strives to provide to the students on a daily basis was severely affected in March, as the Greek authorities decided to enforce an unexpected and strict confinement for the entire population at the state level. Due to the restrictions that lasted until June, the project was significantly affected and the team had to modify its strategy in several aspects. For example:

**Incorporate teaching / learning platforms that would adapt to the needs of the young people through online classes.** Unfortunately, during those weeks of confinement we were only able to offer online classes to half of the students, through the **Zoom** platform, for 2 main reasons: firstly, many of them did not have a sufficiently stable internet connection; secondly, the language barrier and virtual learning environment were challenging for students with a still limited grasp of English.



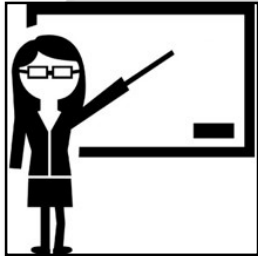
**Cancellation of the May and June appointments for the official Cambridge exams** (levels A2 and B1), since without a stable platform to carry out classes online and with a weak internet connection, it was practically impossible to prepare them successfully.

**Cancellation of the summer workshops.** Although many of the young people were permitted to mobilize starting in June, the volunteers in charge of these workshops, who had to travel from third countries, were unable to come to Greece due to flight restrictions.



# PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

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**Postponement of new volunteer arrivals.** One of the main battles of the project during its more than four years of existence has been the incorporation of volunteers for a minimum requirement of 8 weeks. Therefore, Habibi Center had only been able to count on 2 permanent volunteers and a third at specific times. When at last, after a lot of persistent work, the project was able to count on 4 volunteers simultaneously, all plans were undermined after governmental restrictions and confinement were enforced.

**Postpone and / or cancel various fundraising activities.** This is the main reason why the annual budget has been significantly limited for this fiscal year, as the project depends largely on these types of events.



**Lost attendance of some students.** Some accommodations of unaccompanied minors decided to continue imposing movement restrictions even after the Greek authorities lifted confinement. These measures seemed to have worsened the psychological state of some of the youth, as this led to some no longer attending lessons, even as they had been part of Habibi Center for more than a year and had received significant investment from the center. Due to the environmental circumstances, many students also feared enclosed public spaces, virus contraction, and then further confinement.



# PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

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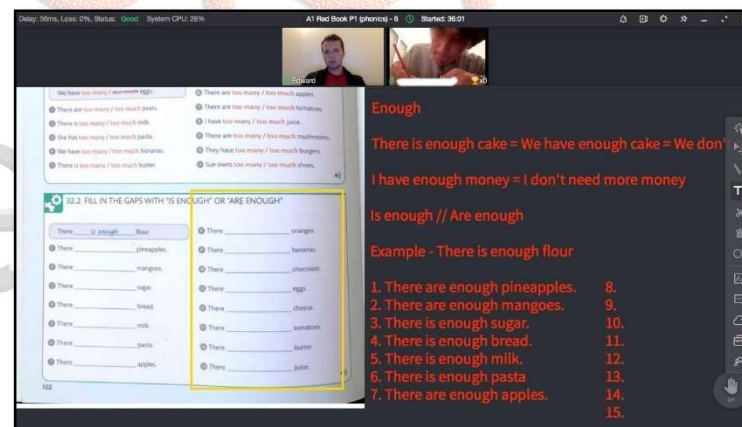
In-person classes were resumed in June. Even so, the new restrictions continued to affect the project considerably, such as not being able to gather with more than a certain number of people in the same space or having to wear masks constantly, compounding challenges when teaching and learning a new language. Furthermore, any positive case in a single person in any of the shelters of unaccompanied minors caused the entire living space to be confined for 15 days. Therefore, to give the opportunity to these confined students to continue their learning (there were weeks when 90% of the classes had at least one of their students confined preventively) and anticipating future setbacks caused by Covid-19 and its movement



restrictions, starting June 2020, the Habibi Center team once again adapted and prepared **to carry out virtual and in-person classes simultaneously**. To do this, the team again invested large amounts of energy, funds and training time to be able to successfully use **ClassIn**, a platform that allows a better adaptation to the needs of

Habibi Center's students, as it offers improved student-teacher interaction and a more dynamic and visual teaching approach. Thanks to ClassIn, it has been possible to give the opportunity for online

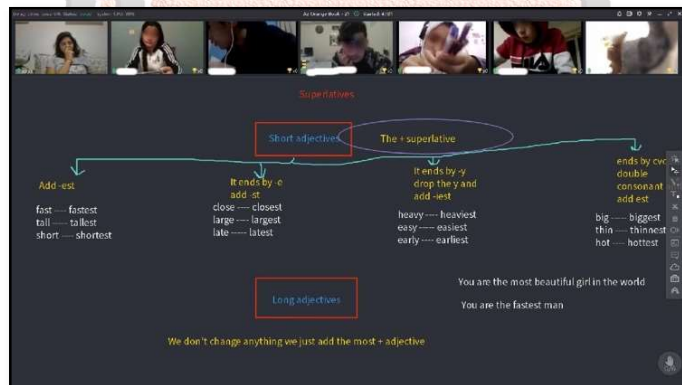
lessons as well as continued activities in the center to all students, from the literacy level to those preparing to take official Cambridge exams.



In addition, 2 new groups of students were formed to begin the preparations of the Cambridge exams level A2 and B1 in **December 2020**. Due to the preventive confinement of some of these students during this period of time, this interrupted the pace of the group, the quality of the classes and the preparation schedule, making this period of time difficult for the students and the teachers alike.

# PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

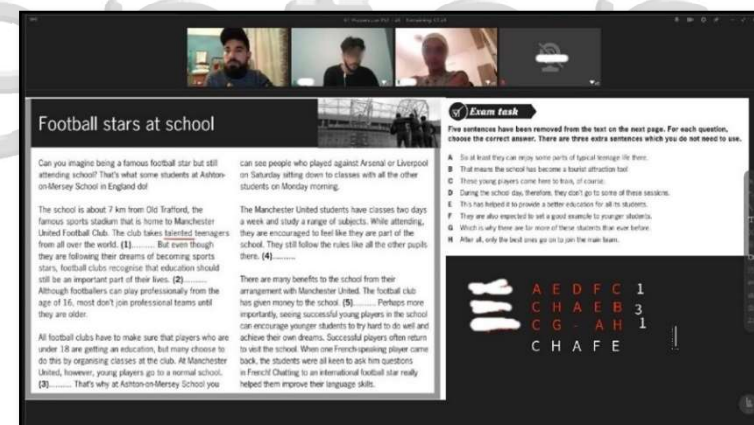
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The Greek authorities again enforced a total confinement at the state level in early November. This, again, put a stop to in-person activities at the center. Unlike the lock-down in March which caught the team unprepared, Habibi Center this time was able to offer the highest quality classes to the majority of the students through the ClassIn platform. Still, there were different obstacles along the way. One of them, once again, was the quality of students' internet connections. For this, different SIM cards with data were given to those students who did not have any kind of connection. Another obstacle was the lack of commitment and consistency of some of the students due to the lack of in-person staff maintaining the structure, discipline and routine necessary to keep them committed and engaged.

Regarding the official Cambridge exams, the 2 groups continued studying diligently for the December appointment, even with the enormous uncertainty of knowing that the exams could be canceled once more.

Unfortunately, due to restrictions and legislation related to Covid-19, the exams finally had to be postponed to 2021. This decision was followed by enormous frustration because, although some of the students will have a new opportunity in a few months, others may not have that, since they will have been relocated to other countries or will have had to stop attending the center for work reasons.

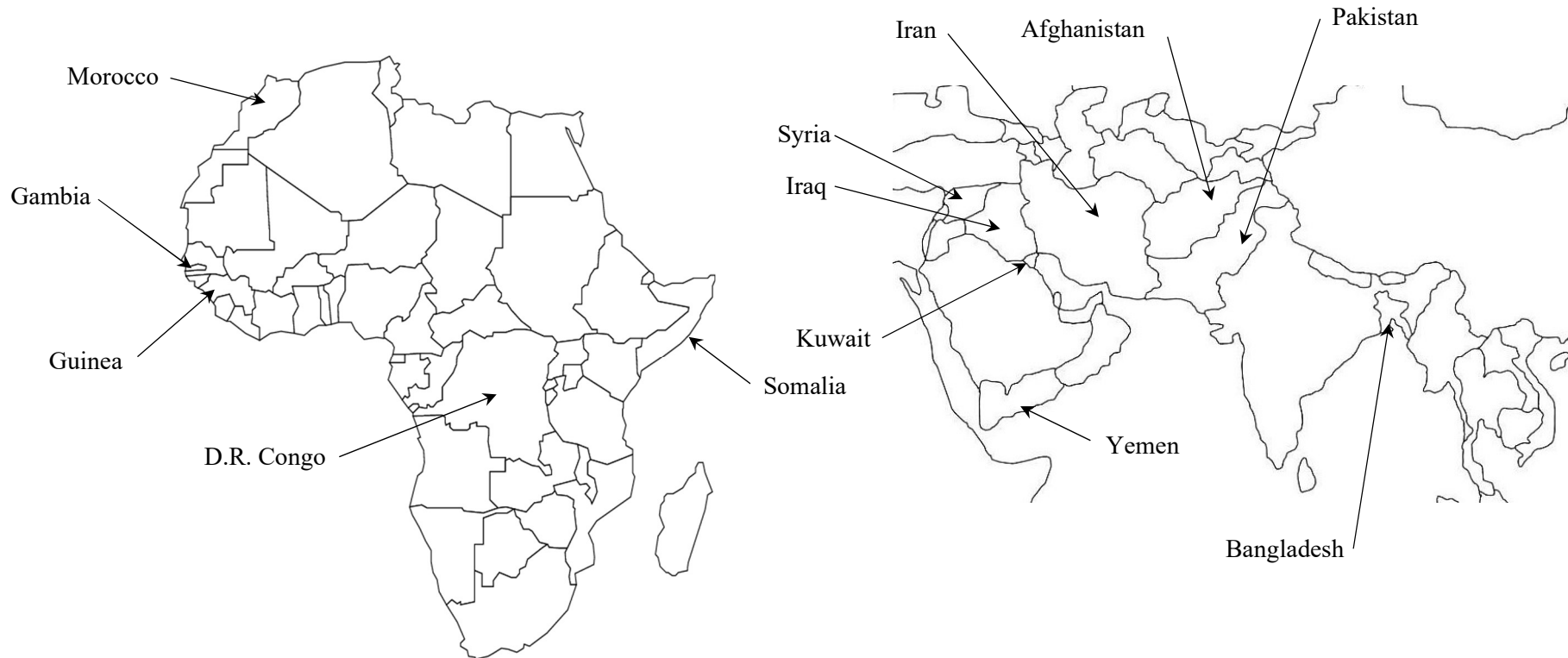




# STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

13

different nationalities of students have lived together at the Habibi Center



# STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR



14

students accompanied by at least one family have been part of the Habibi Center.

Among them:

6

boys

8

girls

50

unaccompanied students have been part of the Habibi Center.

Among them:

39

boys

11

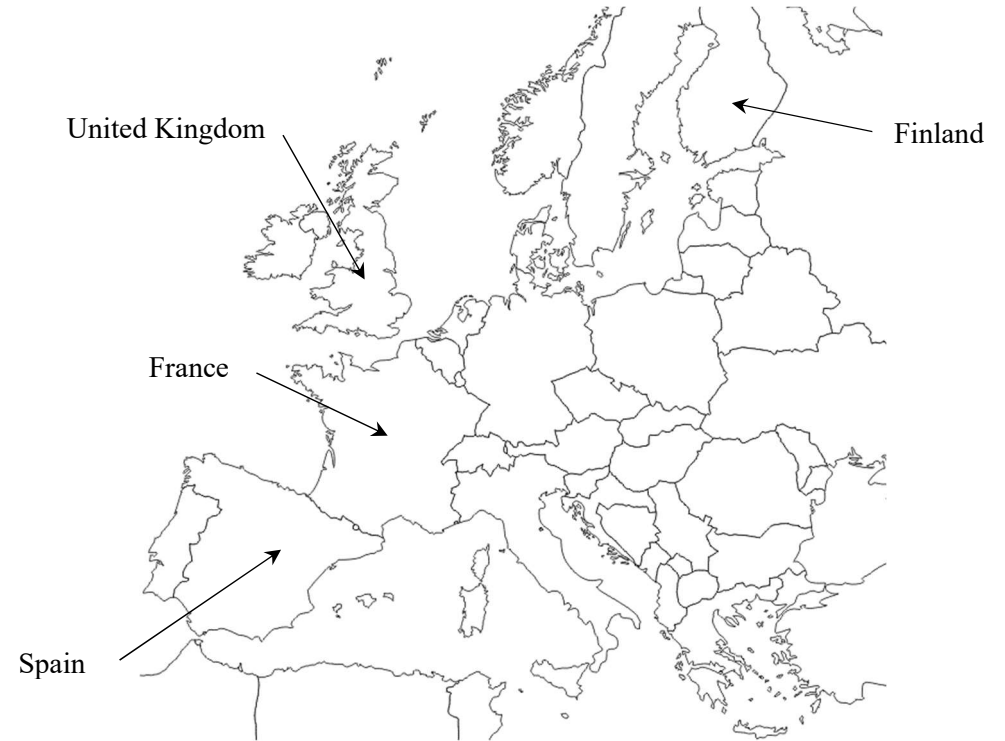
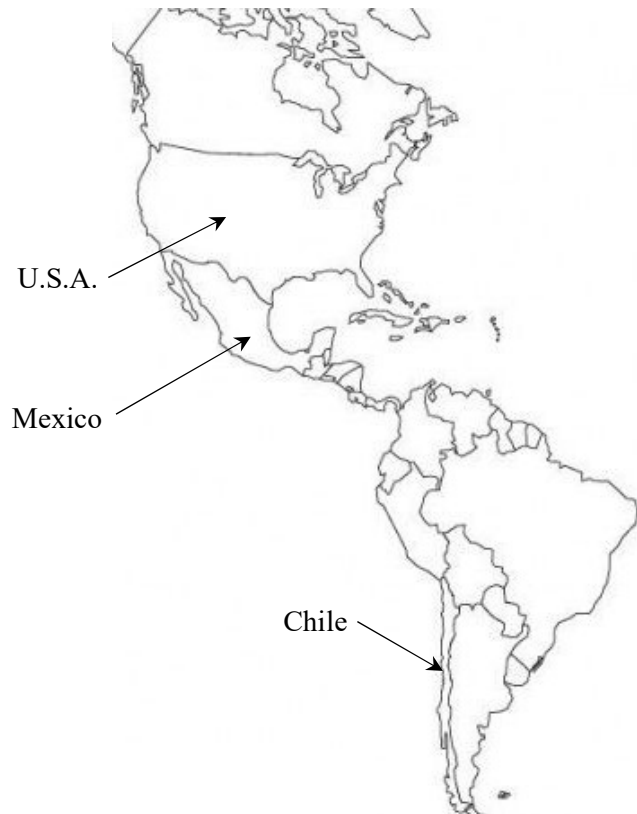
girls



# STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

10

volunteers of different nationalities have been part of the Habibi Center



# STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

7

students learned to read and write at the Habibi Center



19

students were prepared to take the official Cambridge Exams





# STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

19

students reached adulthood



16

shelters for unaccompanied minors have accepted participation of their youth and have coordinated efforts with the Habibi Center

# STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

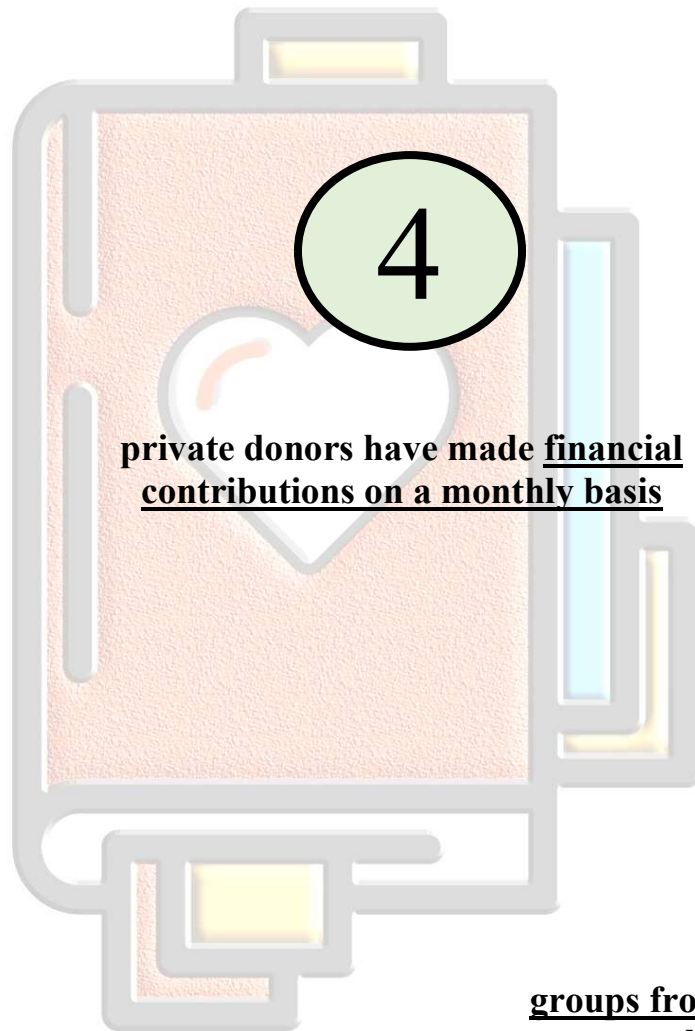
11

students were relocated due to family reunifications or in search of better opportunities in other European countries





# STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR



private donors have made financial contributions on a monthly basis

15

private donors have made financial contributions in a timely manner

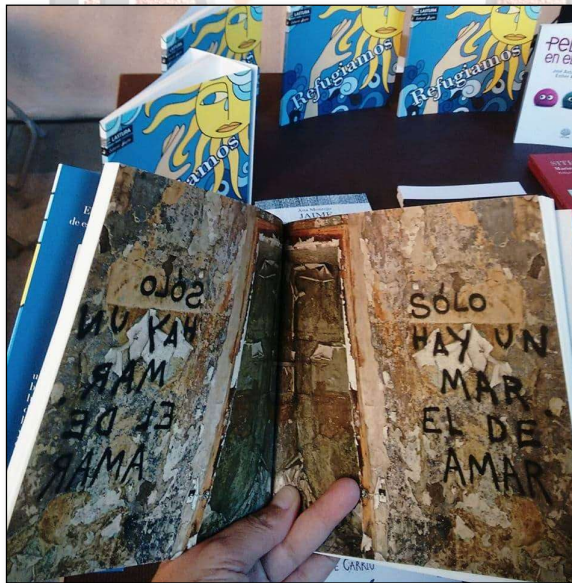
2

groups from Spain have helped financially support the Habibi Center one more year

# STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

3

people donated their crafts and artwork to support the Habibi Center with their benefits





# STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

**7**

events were held in Spain, the United States and the United Kingdom to raise funds for the Habibi Center

**day of group  
yoga**

**fundraisings for preparation and  
registration of official Cambridge  
exams**

**Donation from a  
birthday fundraiser**

**sale of Chilean food in the  
neighborhood taking advantage  
of their National Day**

**4<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Celebration of  
Habibi Center**

**awareness day and  
introduction about Habibi  
Center**

# ANECDOTES AND REFLECTIONS

Since March 2017, when we moved to Athens, there had only been mostly young volunteers between 25 and 35 years interested in supporting Habibi Center. However, this year, **several older people have contacted the center** —for example, 2 volunteers who are in the process of retirement who would like to move to Greece and also help in an educational project such as ours.

It gives us great joy to see that these people with so much experience want to join us and trust a project coordinated by 2 people much younger than themselves.

A class of 4 students was preparing to carry out the Cambridge exam B1 level for last December. The conversations in this group were not distinct merely because communication was more effortless with higher levels of English fluency, but also **for the interpersonal changes they have undergone in their mentality since they arrived**, as well as the interesting connections that were fostered among them even though they come from such different origins —a conservative Sunni Muslim Syrian boy, an Afghan girl born and raised in Iran in a more liberal family, and two Shia Muslim Afghan boys of the Hazara ethnic group. They are now able to respect and listen carefully to the opinion of others on such complicated issues such as their own personal experiences and challenges, religion, human rights, the role of women in society, science, and, in most recent news, Covid-19 and its consequences.

**The hallway that leads to two of the classes in the center is full of photos** that we have been collecting since our beginnings. In them you do not see numbers, graphs or statistics of our successes, but the faces of many of the protagonists who have passed through the Habibi Center and who are part of our short but intense history.

Some of the young people are surprised to learn that the school has been open for more than four years. Some students, despite having been with us only a few days, already ask us when we will put a photo of them on the wall. For all of us who have spent time within those four walls, those photographs have been turned into something like a family album. A family that many of us miss.



# ANECDOTES AND REFLECTIONS

Those of us in charge of the project **feel a huge responsibility**. It's not easy to feel the pressure of people we know who wake up at 6 a.m., spend 8 hours a day outside of their homes, have families to take care of and even still they have decided to trust us by donating their time, money and expectations.

Since the organizations that support the majority of the students are financially supported by well-established companies or governmental organizations, it is not easy for students to understand that the space they enjoy daily is thanks to people who could be their own families, with their same problems, sacrifices and challenges.

Therefore, we do not stop reminding them that they should try to give their maximum efforts since those who are helping them could easily be ordinary people, they could one day meet on the street.

Thanks to the volunteers we had available from September to the end of the year, we were able to open a new class. 5 students from **5 different nationalities —Iranian, Yemeni, Kuwaiti, Bangladeshi and Guinean—** started in it. It has been another of the positive surprises of this year since we had not seen before such a diverse group create a bond of friendship so close and positive in such a short time.

In the previous annual report of 2019, we talked about **the history and development of the first unaccompanied minor female who joined the Habibi Center in 2017**. This year she has finally managed to enter a professional training school and began her nursing studies that she had wanted to start in 2019 but had to postpone for work reasons. In her current job that she is combining with her studies, she cares and helps with household chores in the house she used to live in while she was a minor. However, we do not think that the most important tasks she performs are the above, but more importantly, it is the way she contributes to the peaceful atmosphere in the house and the mediation she provides for different situations. She has shared with us that her development and successes are largely thanks to the support that she received at the Habibi Center, where she, in addition to learning a language, realized that new opportunities would appear if she continued to apply the values that she learned and practiced during her time there.



# ANECDOTES AND REFLECTIONS

Two of the young people we miss the most in the center have been in different cities of the United Kingdom for the last few months. Although they are still pending new asylum interviews to resolve their legal situation, there they have achieved the stability and security necessary for being able to focus on **the only thing they had in mind: studying**.

This opportunity to study in a high school, even in their precarious legal situation, is thanks to the measures that different British institutions are conducting in the recent years. We understand that providing education is not just sitting students in a classroom for 6 hours a day just to fulfill educational quotas, but instead offering them the suitable material in the right environment, as well as adapting to their unique needs as much as possible. All this costs a lot of resources, but these two fighters, who continue sharing with us their experiences, show us that these institutions have all the tools necessary to carry out this type of program.

From the first confinement that ended in June to the second that began in November we conducted in-person and simultaneous online classes since, although the doors of the center were opened again to follow the classes in person, several unaccompanied minor students had to be in preventive quarantine since another member of their shelter had tested positive for Covid-19. It was very emotional to see how **the in-person students expressed their joy, affection and longing for the student who had to follow the class virtually from their room through the phone screen**.



At the end of the first lockdown of the year, which ended in early June, we were saddened when we knew that two unaccompanied minors who resided in the same shelter and who had been with us for several months had decided to stop studying with us. We do not know exactly what made them make this decision, but one of their first comments was that **they were afraid to come and get together with more people** since at their home, although they had been given freedom to carry out other extracurricular activities, they had been warned that if any member tested positive for Covid-19, absolutely all the people in their home would have to be confined again 24 hours a day. Luckily, we know that both of them have continued their education in other ways, and for that we are happy.

# ANECDOTES AND REFLECTIONS

A 16-year-old unaccompanied minor Afghan girl began attending the Habibi Center in late June. It was not easy for us since she **was not able to follow the basic rules of the center**—attend 5 weekdays of classes, be punctual, make an effort and do the homework to keep the same pace as the rest of the group. We utilized different students as interpreters to help us communicate with her since her oral communication in English was nil. The last thing we wanted was to exclude her from the center and destabilize her even more since we knew that she had personal issues—recent cuts on her arms gave us some sign—as well as problems at her shelter for continually breaking the rules. In spite of all this, we continued to invest into her, hoping for a change in her way of thinking until one day, in mid-September, her social worker informed us that she had left the home. Although we are used to this kind of sudden disappearance, we felt a particular disappointment, possibly because of all the effort we had invested. We hope she does well in the future and is safe wherever she is.

A young Syrian boy from the outskirts of Deir Ez-Zor has been with us for about 2 years. When he started class, he knew how to read and write in our alphabet, but his level of English was very basic. Although he was an intelligent and dedicated student, **what struck us the most about him was that he was very closed off, cold and curt with others**. Little by little he has shown us what he was hiding inside and, apart from becoming the longest-standing student today, he has also become an outgoing and confident person, interested in sharing experiences with people of different cultures, and loved by peers and staff. He is about to take an official Cambridge exam to get his B1 level and his grades show that he is at the ideal level to obtain it.

The team repeats many times that the **Habibi Center is not for everyone**. On more than one occasion we have come across young students who come to get assessed and when informed that they have to come 5 days a week, they quickly say they can't commit because the school is too far away. However, other youth living in the exact same house are not deterred by the almost 2-hour round-trip commute time in order to have the opportunity to be a part of the school and learn English. Obviously, we prefer to invest our energy into the latter group since we believe that students also have to invest their time and energy to make the Habibi Center the flourishing space that it is.

# ANECDOTES AND REFLECTIONS

Any prospective student is required to first send us a private message to schedule an assessment during hours that do not conflict with class schedules. One day when opening the door to start a new class we saw a new face, which was certainly against protocol. Despite our frustration for his sudden appearance and his remorse, without him fully understanding our frustration, we decided to include him on our long waiting list as we felt that there was something special about him.

From his first lesson, we realized that we were right. **His gait and intimidating appearance just tried to hide his sweet demeanor.** In just a few days we realized that all he needed was to have the opportunity to belong to a friendly and thriving group where he could relate without any fear and feel motivated by learning so he could improve his low self-esteem and self-confidence. This young Afghan has been one of the gifts of this strange 2020.

A 17-year-old Guinean boy —on paper, although his features denote an older age— began his English classes at the center last October. **His broken oral English was the only tool he had to communicate since he could neither read nor write.** A few days later, he was already gaining confidence with his handwriting and identifying more fluently the letter sounds. For each word read correctly, he would smile, a smile of hope that despite his current unideal legal situation, it was his time to learn to read and write and be able to live with dignity in the future. Also, there was a moment in each class when he disconnected for a few seconds. He always broke his silence cursing the year and a half that he felt he had lost while he had to stay on the Greek island of Chios.

After teaching and reviewing different vocabulary about food and the kitchen, the teacher decided that each student would create a fictitious restaurant and prepare the recipe that they wanted. For a week, the class had divided restaurant tasks: **while some shopped and cooked, others served and the rest washed and cleared the dishes.** It was a different week where everyone had the opportunity to show their other skills. Now we have a "problem" since other student groups found out about this culinary activity, they do not stop asking when their turn will come. What a lovely problem!





# ANECDOTES AND REFLECTIONS

The two statewide lockdowns experienced in Greece during 2020 have psychologically affected many people. Many of our students are still struggling with these negative effects, even more accentuated because of their fragile and precarious psychological condition. The time that each of them spends in the center not only serves to learn a language but to be able to focus on something positive and productive, leaving aside other problems and the headache of thinking about their troubled past, frustrating present and uncertain future. Also, **many of them need someone by their side to guide them and give them a boost of daily motivation.**

Due to the interruption of the activities of the project and having to stay long periods of time confined in their homes, among other reasons, we have noticed a significant lack of concentration in many of them, in addition to certain negative behaviors that, unfortunately, has meant for some of them the end of their experience in the Habibi Center.

Many of the young people who attend the Habibi Center **lack basic notions about various essential household tasks, such as cooking, grocery shopping, or cleaning.** In our society it is understandable that most young people do not take charge of certain types of household chores, as long as there is at least one parent or guardian in the home. However, when it comes to unaccompanied youth who will be forced to be independent when they turn 18, we think that the organizations that support them and give them shelter should especially encourage these types of activities as a fundamental part of their education and empowerment. If not, as we have experienced in more than one occasion, we meet young people, mainly boys, who have never washed a cup in their life or have a difficult time trying to cook something as simple as rice or pasta.



# ANECDOTES AND REFLECTIONS

During 2020, despite continued preparation by students to carry out official Cambridge exams, unfortunately, the year ended without any of them being able to take the exams because of different restrictions imposed by the Greek authorities.

Although the May and June appointments ended being postponed to different dates after summer since the first confinement took everyone by surprise, we do not quite understand, seeing that this situation could repeat itself at the end of the year, why there wasn't any special planning done so the December exams could be held.

Although these alterations have affected an enormous amount of young people, the most vulnerable, once again, have been affected in a more severe way. Contrary to many young people with a more stable life that will have another chance in the near future, **for some of the youth of the Habibi Center this was a unique opportunity** that they totally lost because they either will have to stop coming to the center for personal reasons, work, or because they might be relocated to other countries.

Both students and long-term volunteers feel sadness every time one of the temporary volunteers finishes their volunteering and returns to their country. Despite that, **we feel an enormous joy knowing that some of them want to continue supporting the project** either by carrying out different specific tasks or becoming a kind of ambassador for the Habibi Center and making known our work and principles in their community.

And it is that supporting the Habibi Center does not only mean doing face-to-face volunteering or donating money, but also working to bring awareness of our work to others around, the ones who usually feel the consequences of most of the issues of our society, making them aware that we do not have to depend on large organizations or powers to carry out certain types of activities to improve the quality of life of our humble communities.

This year we **have noticed the presence of a greater number of Sub-Saharan people in the city**. People from countries as far away as Gambia, Guinea, Somalia, or D.R. of Congo. People who have probably been away from their countries for years trying to find a better place where they can live in peace, with dignity and security.

What would all those places be like if there was a more ecological and equitable education, where tolerance reigns among ethnicities, religions, people of different genders and the environment where they live, without foreign powers plundering their rich natural resources thus destabilizing each of the pillars of society?

What could each of us do to change these situations?

# ANECDOTES AND REFLECTIONS

During 2020, because of the new and incoming government in Greece, it was announced that **all Foreign NGOs that were carrying out humanitarian activities in the country should register in the Ministry of Migration and Greek Asylum**. We had to invest about 400€ for several documents, apostilles and sending these documents to be officially translated. After investing these monies and doing all of this paperwork, it was announced that in reality these measures were only aimed at foreign organizations with activities inside refugee camps but that could be extended to all the others, like ours, working outside the fields.

To this day, our registration is still unnecessary and, although we want to finish the registration process to prevent possible complications in the future, we feel immobilized as the authorities ask for certain documents which target larger organizations and that is practically impossible for us to obtain because of having such a small financial balance as we have.



We are impressed by the large number of young Afghans both in the school and in the city in general. **We are also impressed by the immense number of unaccompanied minors with this nationality.** Some of them have escaped from the poverty and insecurity of their home country. Others, on the other hand, even having that nationality, have never set foot in Afghanistan since they were born and raised in Iran. Therefore, for many of them, being a refugee or illegal person without papers is not something new, as they have lived their entire life experiencing this.

We should take time to reflect on how we would feel if we ourselves were suffering this same situation. Reflect on whether we would like to be treated in the same way that we are currently treating them.



# ANECDOTES AND REFLECTIONS

Stephanie invested a great deal of time and effort during and after the first confinement that took place in all of Europe to analyze and choose an online platform that would adapt to the needs of our students in case of another confinement which was likely to happen throughout the year.

On the contrary, **a large number of formal primary, secondary or even college centers** that during that first confinement were overwhelmed, just like us, due to the speed of these events, **did not want to invest the time and effort necessary** to be able to adapt to the needs of their students and to be able to offer them quality education in the new course starting in September.

It produces some frustration in us to know that a simple volunteer could carry out this difficult task for a project and that certain schools with a much greater responsibility have done nothing to accommodate this difficult situation that we are experiencing.

We are not sure if the reason is because they cannot or actually because they do not want.

We sometimes reach a point at which we think that the authorities inadvertently convince young people to arrive in others countries illegally. In previous anecdotes we mentioned that a couple of former students had arrived in the U.K. illegally and that within a few weeks they already started school and had an established routine, **while 2 other ex-students who were relocated more than a year ago in that same country, following all the legal family reunification protocols, have not yet received any type of educational service or integration.** They are 2 youngsters who had a much more active and optimistic life in Greece and once again, unfortunately, those who are supposed to provide them more stability and protection, are the ones creating these dependent, depressed and vulnerable youth.

These are just 2 examples of some that we know of. The inexplicable is that later it will be said that the bad guys of this story and those who are illegally trafficking people are the organizations that are rescuing lives at sea.



# ANECDOTES AND REFLECTIONS

A 14-year-old unaccompanied minor student, for whom we have a special appreciation, decided a few months ago to try his luck and cross the border to reach another European country. Once there, he had to start the whole process for obtaining asylum all over again.

After a few months and several interviews, a test to know his real age was done, according to the characteristics of various structures of his body. **It was a shock to him that overnight, his legal status would change from being a 14-year-old to an 18-year-old.** His desires to be able to concentrate on studying and preparing himself as much as possible to be able to fend for himself when he would reach that fearsome adulthood faded in just a few hours.



Many of our students moved to other countries due to cases of family reunification. Some of them were lucky and could stay with family members from day one and start learning the corresponding language in official schools within weeks. On the other hand, others have not had it so easy since, **although they were transferred to different countries such as Germany and Holland so that their relatives could take care of them, they had to remain in other homes away from their loved ones and could not be accepted into any school until the authorities of those countries accepted their asylum cases.** One of the students suffered from this situation for more than 2 years in Holland and another of them continues to experience this frustrating situation in Germany.

We cannot understand why this type of situation occurs in countries who also claim to be at the forefront of human rights. We cannot understand why their emotional stability and dignity has been disturbed once again, after the Habibi Center tried to instill these qualities in these young women for so many months.

Camille, a French volunteer, joined the project in February. She studied to become an English teacher some years ago, but, according to her, her enthusiasm waned due to the weak educational system of her country.

She thought that she would always have to teach French teenagers who had a low interest in learning. When she came to the Habibi Center, her view turned 180 degrees.

According to her: **“When I found you, I saw that another way of teaching was possible.** There was an opportunity to carry out something meaningful and help vulnerable youth who were hungry for learning and improving daily. As a teacher, to be able to teach committed students is much more rewarding”.

# FINANCIAL BALANCE

<b>EXPENSES</b>	
<b>TYPE OF EXPENSES</b>	<b>AMOUNT (€)</b>
<b>Rent centre</b>	6,300.00
<b>Rent flat long-term volunteers</b>	1,650.00
<b>Materials</b> (pens, ink printer, paper, books, etc.)	483.41
<b>Photocopies</b> (regular classes)	379.65
<b>Activities</b> (farewells, celebrations, sport, etc.)	183.84
<b>Equipment centre</b> (decoration, furniture, etc.)	167.00
<b>Maintenance centre</b> (repairs, cleaning products, etc.)	402.30
<b>Short-term workshops</b>	211.71
<b>Online teaching</b> (platform, equipment, SIM students)	779.59
<b>Private health insurance long-term volunteers</b>	565.65
<b>Administration association</b> (posts, bureaucracy, SIM phones, awareness talks, etc.)	1,163.33
<b>Long-term volunteers' formation</b>	300.00
<b>Fundraising activities</b> (postcards, art book, events)	533.15
<b>Cambridge exams – Registration</b>	642.20
<b>Cambridge exams - Photocopies</b>	284.35
<b>TOTAL</b>	14,046.18

<b>INCOME</b>	
<b>TYPE OF INCOME</b>	<b>AMOUNT (€)</b>
<b>Excess from 2019</b>	1,182.34
<b>Monthly donations</b>	1,080.00
<b>Timely donations</b>	2,662.65
<b>Support Groups donations</b>	6,200.00
<b>Event donations</b>	2,588.14
<b>Object donations</b>	665.00
<b>Fundraising activities</b>	500.00
<b>Maintenance association / Error</b>	0.01
<b>Stay short-term volunteers</b>	461.50
<b>TOTAL</b>	15,339.64

<b>EXCESS FOR 2021</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	1,293.46