

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

ASOCIACIÓN ESPAÑOLA HABIBI CENTER

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THE TEAM

WHAT HABIBI CENTER REPRESENTS FOR THE TEAM

MESSAGE ABOUT THE YEAR

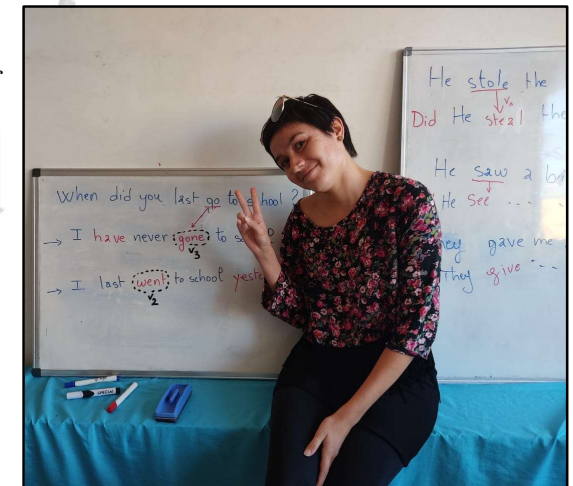
During this year, 2021, the team at the Habibi Center has continued to be formed by Stephanie and Alex. The Habibi Center represents something very special for each of them:

STEPHANIE (30 years old, Santiago, Chile)

I grew up in a family in which empathy, generosity, and helping others have been taught and cultivated since my childhood. Volunteering is part of my life and my values. When I was 16, I had a dream in which I created a school for young refugees and victims of trafficking who came from different parts of the world. This dream became my life purpose, although at that age I had no idea how I would do it.

In October 2015, while I was moving back to the US to start a new job, friends, who were working in Greece during the peak of this continuing humanitarian crisis, made an emergency call to volunteers. Although at that time I had decided to come only for a month, the plan has been lengthening to 6 years. The best years of my life!

After traveling through Europe, working in different refugee camps, I returned to Greece with the purpose of working with young refugees. I had the opportunity to work with some of them in a community kitchen in Katsikas refugee camp, in north-western Greece, for several months. Later, Toby (a friend and volunteer) and I decided to create an educational center for young people, called Habibi Center. The doors of the Habibi Center first opened on August 8, 2016, and since then the project has become my life. Without wanting it to sound cliché, honestly, it has become a dream come true. Every day, this dream continues to evolve and transform itself into something more and more beautiful and special, not only for me, but for all the young people who become part of it. It is a great blessing and privilege to be able to see its evolution day by day and I am very excited to think about the future of this little-big dream, starting with this coming year.



THE TEAM

WHAT HABIBI CENTER REPRESENTS FOR THE TEAM

MESSAGE ABOUT THE YEAR

ALEX

(35 years old, Barcelona - Spain)

In January, 2018, after 11 years of working as a draftsman for various architecture firms and civil engineering companies, I decided to put a full stop, or end, to my professional career so far and move from Edinburgh (Scotland) to Athens (Greece), to focus on the Habibi Center full time. These 4 years at the helm of the project coordination have changed my vision of so many aspects of my life.

Being in charge of this project has made me change my idea about NGOs, since it has shown me that it is not necessary to be part of a large organisation to help improve a social problem and that, sometimes, it is more worthwhile betting on small and independent projects that have no other interests apart from those described in their objectives.

Since the first time I took part in the project on a temporary basis as a maths teacher in late 2016, I was fascinated by the rewarding power of teaching and it changed my view on education. In January 2018, indefinitely, I arrived very eager to be able to teach English, although I didn't really know how. Thanks to the hunger that young people showed and my personal effort to learn, I managed to improve my methodology and, at the beginning of 2019, I decided to continue my training obtaining the Cambridge certification to teach English as a foreign language (CELTA). From my first day, I try to teach my classes in a motivating way, offering different tools for young people so that they learn how to learn by themselves, thus making them grow into independent and empowered people.

On the other hand, dealing with such vulnerable young people has pushed me to train in the psychological field, taking several courses where I have acquired tools to detect, analyse and handle different situations that occur daily in the centre. In addition, thanks to this experience, my interest in dedicating myself professionally to the social field has been awakened. For this reason, I am currently studying some vocational studies called "Social Integration".

Although I do not know where all this will take me, all my previous training forms a part of the dream of opening a similar educational centre in Spain. For this reason and thanks to my new love for teaching, I am also training as a Spanish language teacher. Although I don't have time to teach and thus gain more experience, since last October I have been able to obtain the "ELE certificate" as a Spanish teacher, which has helped me acquire countless useful tools.



THE TEAM

WHAT HABIBI CENTER REPRESENTS FOR THE TEAM

MESSAGE ABOUT THE YEAR

One more year at the helm of this beautiful madness! A year, for everyone, full of uncertainty, fear and instability due to the whole situation that we have been living since March 2020. Imagine what that uncertainty, fear and extra instability means for the Habibi Center, when in a stable situation, these 3 factors were already overflowing previously before the arrival of the pandemic.

Last August we celebrated our 5th anniversary. Five years since that distant August 2016, in the middle of a great migration crisis, with all eyes on it. Unfortunately, this crisis has been out of fashion for quite some time and the focus is no longer on this desperate migration. During all this time we have witnessed the beginnings of a large number of projects around us that ended only a few months later when the tap of European financial aid was cut off. The Habibi Center, on the other hand, remains strong, rethinking objectives according to new needs, keeping the budget as limited as possible in order to survive and, all this, while carrying out the work with the same responsibility and humility as the first day.

This great success is thanks to the immense effort and solidarity, not only of those of us who are at the frontline in Athens, but of each and every one of the people who trust in this small educational project and support us, in one way or another, from many parts of the world. We feel a tremendous excitement to see that a few ordinary people, without apparent power and many times ignored, can be direct participants in a change as precious as that of supporting the education of a vulnerable group, as is the case of the young people who are part of our family.

Today, although without cameras around, they still need us. Thanks to your support, we are getting many young people to participate actively and independently in our society. At the same time and without realizing it, we are destroying the old script of those who take miserable advantage of this vulnerable group and use them negatively for their propaganda purposes.



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.

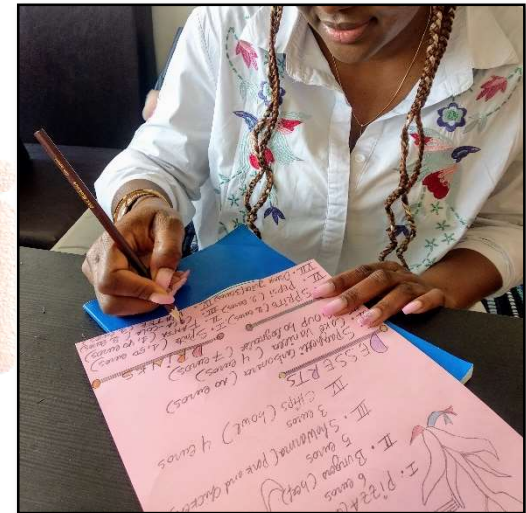
PROJECT OBJECTIVES

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 all 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 have lived displaced from their homes and not attended any schools for years. For that reason, there is a high number of them who 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. One more year, we see that the number of illiterate young people keep raising alarmingly, not only in the ones who get interested in joining the Habibi Center but also the ones we can see spread around the city with a lack of optimism and future goals.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

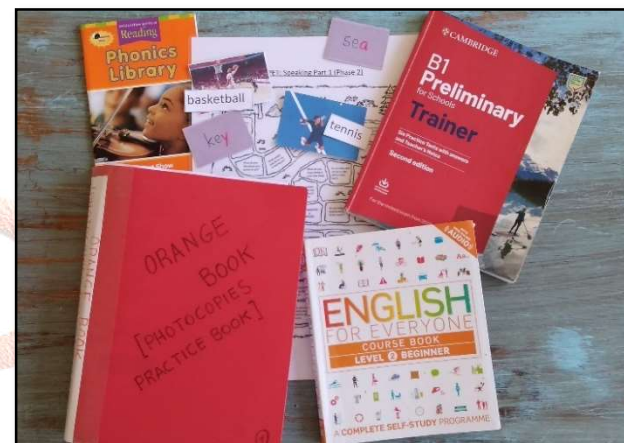
ENGLISH LEARNING ON AN ACADEMIC LEVEL

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 5+ 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.



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 aspects which makes us unique in Athens: **the preparation of official Cambridge exams**. Since July 2017, 107 young people have taken at least one of these exams and, among these, 1 have achieved the B2 level certificate, 21 the B1 level certificate, 49 the A2 level certificate, and 17 the level A1 certificate (11 more are still waiting for the results of the latest exams in December 2021). 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 one more Cambridge exam candidate. In addition, many students who have

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

ENGLISH LEARNING ON AN ACADEMIC LEVEL

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

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.



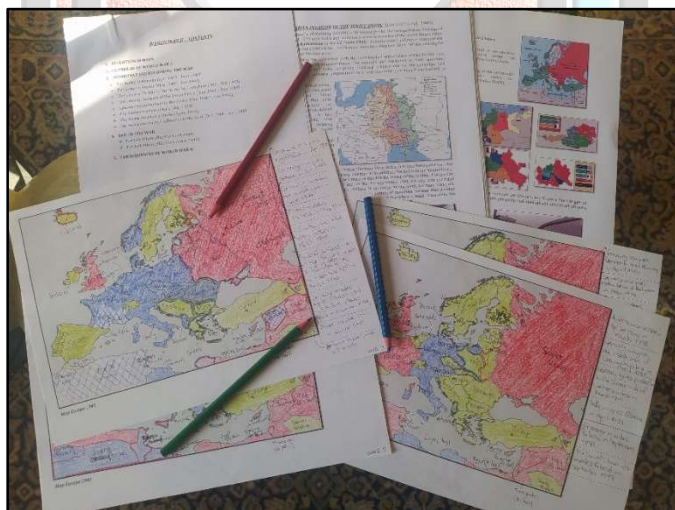
The project makes a great effort to provide them, on a daily basis, with **values and tools** to help them increase confidence and self-esteem, necessary to achieve any objective that they set, thus becoming independent people of society. Therefore, a great deal of energy and time is also invested in 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.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

ENGLISH LEARNING ON AN ACADEMIC LEVEL

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

The **short-term workshops**, which are usually prepared during the year and help our students to experiment hidden skills and learn new knowledge, were disrupted during this 2021 due to 2 main reasons: firstly, due to the pandemic we are immersed in and the lack of stability to set dates with specialised volunteers living abroad: and secondly, because the situation of our students have slightly changed in the last years. For example, since our students have to attend the official Greek school in the mornings and their routines are tighter, many of them refuse to participate in more activities during the summer. Moreover, their organisations have increased the number of educational programmes in comparison to previous years and that makes it more difficult for us to run certain workshops for specific groups.



Despite the previous difficulties, Alex spent 2 weeks of June to carry out again a **geography** workshop, where 6 students learnt some geographical information, such as the different continents and oceans, the location of a long list of countries around the world and their flags, as well as all the European capital cities.

In addition, Alex spent 7 more weeks during summer to show 4 students with a B1+ level some information about **world history** (World War I, Interwar Period, and World War II). This workshop wasn't meant to be only to provide the students with information about the most important events of our most recent history but also to help them develop their critical thinking by making them reflect on the origin, course, and consequences of past, present and possible future events.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

ENGLISH LEARNING ON AN ACADEMIC LEVEL

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

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.



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

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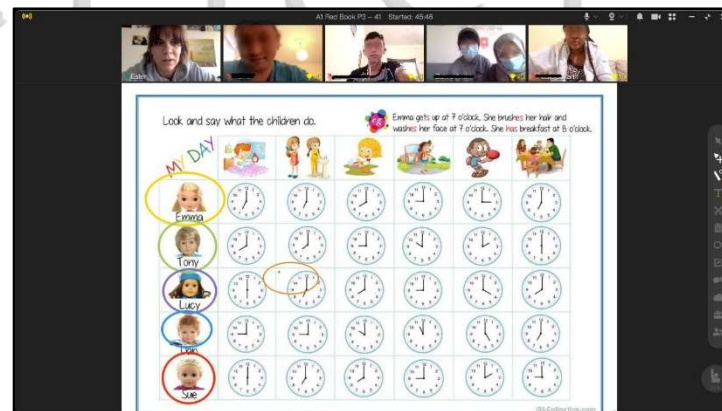


The year 2021 began as it had ended: with all of Greece confined. For this reason, we had to continue teaching classes online through the **ClassIn** platform, which had given us the best results previously. Furthermore, this time, we not only continued to provide classes to students who were already part of the Habibi Center before the start of

the 2nd lockdown and who, therefore, already knew about our rules and principles, but we also decided to open 2 groups with totally new students. There were also 3 new teachers joining us, but, unfortunately, they only had the opportunity to teach the classes online until the end of their stay.

This period of time was especially hard for several reasons: nobody understood the strict lockdown that was being carried out again (in Greece, even the official schools closed for 7 long months); the mental health of some students deteriorated as their jobs, their educational programs and all the bureaucracy regarding their legal status came to a complete halt; some other students and teachers lost part of their enthusiasm in the classes because of the bad conditions we had —poor internet connection, problems with the audio and the camera, students doing their classes on their beds with noise from conversations, music or babies crying all around.

Even so, we are happy to have been able to provide part of our activities online as we became the only educational option for many of our students from November 7, 2020 to May 10, 2021



PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

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Although the Habibi Center is a small project with a low budget, compared to others around it, it is not at all easy to carry out its activities in the independent way that it wants and that is sustainable over time. In order for the project to retain the stability it deserves, we must first retain the support of the individual people who already help us from many parts of the world. In addition, with these more than 5 years of experience, we have realized that there are more people than we think who would like to contribute their little grain of sand in a social project, but they do not know exactly which one. For this reason, we believe that if each of us who are part of this project spreads the information about the Habibi Center, many more people will join the family.

In addition to the very important help that comes to us through individual people, we pay the same attention to the different groups that support us in various ways, be it by carrying out cultural events, collecting material or financial aid from the members of the group themselves, or simply spreading the word about our activities. Something similar to what happens with that large number of people who want to join a project but do not know which one or how, it happens with different support groups. Therefore, we must also try to search for and find a greater number of them and invite them to join the Habibi Center's family.

This search represents an investment of extra energy for the 2 members of the team, who already have enough tasks upon them to ensure that all other aspects of the project work properly. Fortunately, many volunteers who have to return to their countries, after having lived their experience at the Habibi Center in person, continue to **help us from a distance**. Among them is Edward, a volunteer from the United Kingdom who helps us from there, to search for new groups and foundations with principles and values similar to those of the Habibi Center.

Thanks to this great work, a charity in the United Kingdom, called **ForRefugees** (formerly Donate4Refugees), accepted our proposal and joined us in February, granting us funds with which we were able to cover part of the cost of renting the center and school supplies. In addition, this organization has given us a space on its Facebook platform to carry out different fundraisers throughout the year. Finally, thanks to their wide network of contacts, they have also helped us to establish connection with other people who were interested in supporting educational projects like ours.



PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

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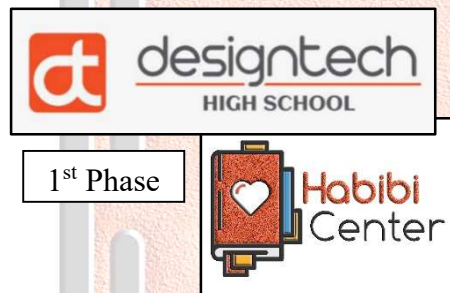
Since the end of January, Stephanie and Alex have been part of a program called *Trauma Healing & Community Resilience Development - focusing on Secondary Trauma Stress*, co-financed by **Erasmus +** and organized by the British charity **Feminenza**. From the end of January 2021 until the spring of 2022, the 2 members of the team will carry out 17 online seminars, together with people from countries as diverse as the United Kingdom, Denmark, France, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Croatia, or Greece, and they will acquire important tools to be able to identify, manage and analyze possible secondary traumas caused by the daily exposure of traumatic experiences of other people around them. This long process will culminate in a week-long retreat in Greece with the other members, in order to put into practice everything learned during the online sessions.

Stephanie and Alex offered a session to **King's College London** students on March 9 within a *Health Professionals Education* course under the title *Education and Conflict*. During the almost 2 hours of talk, the Habibi Center's team explained the reasons why certain aspects of the project were carried out in such a specific way. For example, the assessments that we do to each young person to know their previous educational knowledge, learning speed and commitment; the need to have volunteers for a minimum of 8 weeks; how we create a safe and friendly space; or our commitment to teaching the English language at an academic level with a constant curriculum and preparing young people to take official Cambridge exams. In addition, at the beginning of the session, the participants were told a fictional story so that they could put themselves in the shoes of some of our students and learn some information about their trips that often escapes our imagination.



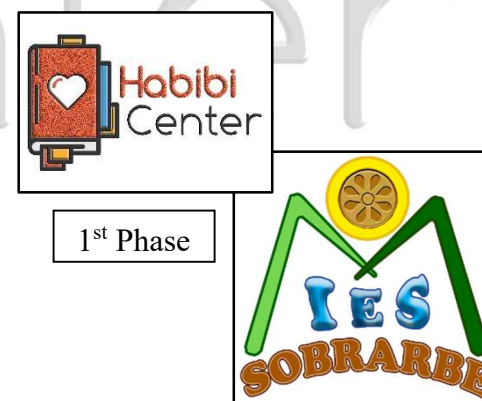
PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

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At the beginning of March, a program began between students of the Habibi Center and those of the *Design Tech High School*, located in Silicon Valley, California (USA). This consisted of grouping 5 pairs of students from each collaborating party to practice English orally through video calls. The main objective of the program was to create a lasting cultural interaction. In addition, there were other different objectives for each part: on the one hand, our students were able to practice and improve their oral English skills with native speakers; and on the other hand, the young people of *Design Tech High School* had the opportunity to increase their empathy and learn to develop their thinking skills, adapting to the lower level of English of their partners. Although the program had its difficulties to square the schedules of all the couples during the 10 weeks that this lasted, the results were positive and we look forward to collaborating with *Design Tech High School* again in the near future.

On March 22, and for 4 weeks, a **pen-pal program** was carried out between students from the Habibi Center and those from the *IES Sobrarbe*, a secondary education school located in Aínsa, Huesca (Spain). This consisted of matching 6 students from each collaborating party to engage in written conversations via email on a series of previously agreed topics —for example, where do you live?, routine and activities, education, pros and cons of online lessons, pros and cons of social network. For Habibi Center's students, this program gave them the opportunity to practice and improve their level of written English with a person of a similar age and level of English; open up to meet people with nationalities and cultures different from theirs; and learn first-hand thoughts and experiences of young people from Western cultures. On the other hand, for the students of the *IES Sobrarbe*, this program served to develop different competences: linguistic and communicative, social and civic, digital, learning to learn and cultural expression; promote Interpersonal Intelligence; and enter into a relationship outside of their usual contexts.



PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

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At the beginning of April, after many months of effort, the book *There's More To Me* was officially published. This collects all the information from an artistic project that was carried out at the Habibi Center in the summer of 2019. With Anne, a Finnish friend and volunteer, at the helm, 7 students created 2 self-portraits using the collage technique. One of them represents the outer part, as they show themselves to the world. The second one represents their inner part and show their experiences, current situations, fears, dreams of the future, etc. In addition, each participant explains the information shown in the inner portrait in a written text.



Although this first part of the year under the 2nd nationwide lockdown in Greece disrupted much of our plans, we would like to sincerely thank all the volunteers who tried to do their best, taking into account the great difficulties of communication and technology. It was not easy to see how some of them had to return to their countries of origin without having been able to enjoy 100% of the company and the real activity of the center.



PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

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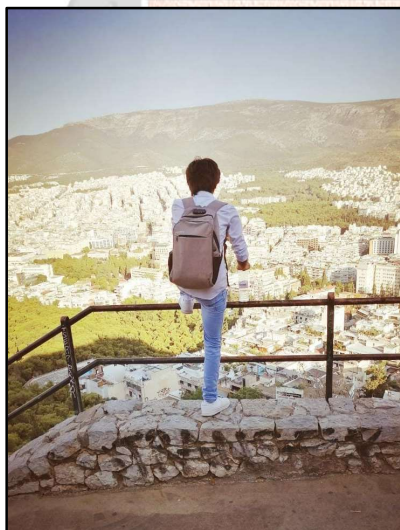
On May 10, the 2nd nationwide lockdown was lifted in Greece and we were finally able to open the center again and forget about online classes in order to focus again on **face-to-face lessons**. We realized that since the beginning of the lockdown, 7 months before, there had been quite a few changes, as many students had stopped attending the online lessons for different reasons —poor internet connection, lack of motivation, lack of privacy, psychological issues. For this reason, we had to restructure the existing classes and start doing assessments to incorporate more youngsters who remained on our waiting list. Fortunately, restrictions were also relaxed at the European level and the opening of borders helped several volunteers to join the project.

Due to the 2nd lockdown in Greece, the dates of the **Cambridge exams** were also affected, as the December 2020 session had to be postponed to February. In February, with the lockdown still in force, the organization responsible for the exams (*British Council of Athens*) decided to cancel them permanently. In the hope that the Greek authorities would lift the movement and assembly restrictions in May, we registered our young people for the new test dates at the end of that month. Finally, the exams were held on May 29 and 30. Although we were happy for the exams, we were also quite sad since several students who hoped to carry out this enriching experience in December, lost their opportunity for various reasons —moving to other countries; lack of internet connection; psychological issues due to the restriction of movement and the cancellation of all school and extracurricular activities.



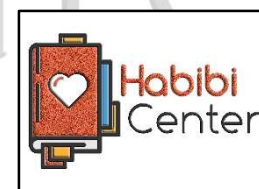
PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

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The Cambridge exams at the end of May also brought another very special event, for the project in general and for one of our students in particular. For the first time since the Habibi Center started preparing Cambridge exams in mid-2017, we have registered one of our young people to take the **B2 level exam**. Until now, we had not had the opportunity to get to prepare this level since most of our youngsters usually reach level B1 after they have turned 18 years of age. Unfortunately, adulthood adds a new headache for many of them as they must become independent and take over many more responsibilities, thus having to stop attending the Habibi Center in order to focus on finding a job or trying to finish their studies in the official Greek school. However, this particular young man was lucky enough to start attending our center when he was 15 years old and has had more time to improve his level of English. Not for this reason has it been an easy road. There have been many times when tremendous personal frustration and his unfair legal status have pushed him to throw in the towel and make the wrong decisions. We are extremely happy to see a mature person in front of us, with a very high self-confidence and self-esteem to face new challenges in life. This person deserves a lot and now he knows that he can achieve whatever he sets his mind to.

After the success of the 1st Phase, on June 7, the **2nd Phase of the pen-pal program** between the students of the Habibi Center and those of the **IES Sobrarbe** began. Given the affinity of the previous couples, we decided to keep them and add different topics of conversation—for example, cinema and movies, music, environmental issues, racism. This time, thanks to the feedback received by all the participants at the end of Phase 1, both collaborating parties agreed to create a more relaxed calendar to give the participants more time and thus better develop their ideas and opinions. Unfortunately, although this 2nd Phase was agreed upon until July 12, the emails from some participants stopped following the stipulated delivery dates after the school holidays arrived in Spain.



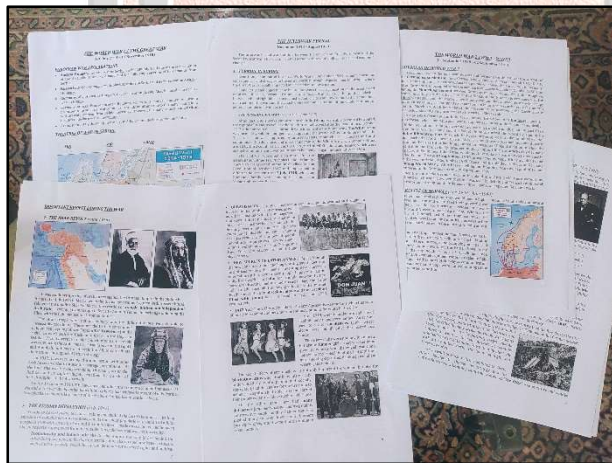
2nd Phase



PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

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Just a couple of weeks after the A2 level exam, we spoke with each of the students to find out who was willing to continue working hard as we would shortly begin the **new preparation for the B1 level exam in December**. All the group except 3 of them accepted the proposal —2 of them declined because they would soon have to travel to other European countries and the third because he had to focus on his studies and work. In addition, we had one more student to join the existing group since we thought that this experience could be positive for her and, although she had not had the experience of the A2 level exam, she had the right foundations to begin the preparation. There was a lot to learn and, as usual, little time, so we quickly got down to business.



Since June 21 and for 7 weeks, 3 of the students who took the B1 exam and the only student who took the B2 exam focused on learning about our recent **world history**. They began in the First World War, analyzing the European situation in the months prior to the start of the conflict, knowing the most determining events of the more than 4 years of war and its consequences worldwide. Later, they focused on the Interwar Period and were able to learn about the great political, social and economic changes of that time to be able to analyze some of the problems that affect us today. Finally, they learned about the triggers of World War II, its most significant events, and analyzed its dire consequences. During these 7 weeks, the students had the opportunity to critically analyze our recent history and link the origins of these conflicts with other secondary events and situations that school books tend to ignore.

PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

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On Friday, August 6, all the volunteers and students celebrated the **5th anniversary of the Habibi Center**. It was an interesting day for many of them, since they could not quite believe that we have been active for 5 years. Some even told us: "What a shame not to have known sooner that this school was open!" This time, we mixed students from different classes and organized different skill and speed games. We even took this festive day to the educational field, since, as it's normal at those ages, we all want to win regardless of how, and that can create certain situations of unnecessary rivalry and heated discussions. Luckily, there were not too many situations of this type and we all were able to enjoy a different day, without books or notes, but with the same laughs and good company.



Thanks to the reopening of flights to Greece from other countries and the reduction of restrictions, several volunteers were able to join the project, as we had previously agreed at the beginning of the year. We were especially happy to see that some of them decided to **extend their initial stay** as they felt comfortable both in the city and with the work they were doing at the Habibi Center.

Although there were quite a few new additions once the 2nd lockdown ended, due to different factors, **several spaces were still left empty** —the renewal of the activities at the asylum offices and the obtaining of corresponding and necessary papers to be able to travel, an increase in irregular departures from the country, and the strict and intense schedule of the Habibi Center. For this reason, new young people who remained on our long waiting list were again seen and several of them were able to join.



PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
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El Habibi Center analiza detenidamente sus actividades de forma continua e intenta adecuarse a las nuevas necesidades que ve a su alrededor. Todo esto, por supuesto, siempre teniendo en cuenta sus recursos limitados.

The Habibi Center continuously analyzes its activities carefully and tries to adapt to the new needs that surround it. All this, of course, always keeping in mind its limited resources.

Since 2019, we realized that several of our students wanted to stay in Greece once they got their documentation, but they quickly gave up on that idea and decided to travel legally, with their new passport, to other European countries in search of better educational and professional conditions. One of the main reasons that pushed them to leave Greece was the great economic instability and fear due to the lack of support during their independence process once they obtained asylum and reached adult age (18 years). Thus, to survive, they had to quickly find a job and put aside their education. This situation not only meant that they stopped attending classes at the Habibi Center but, much more importantly, gave up their pursuit of obtaining their high school diploma at the official Greek school. Therefore, we set out to find a way for these youngsters to be able to work part of the day and, somehow, they could also obtain such a crucial diploma.

After thinking a lot, considering the great difficulties that most of our students have with the Greek language, Stephanie came up with a viable option to obtain a long-awaited certificate in English: the **GED program**. This program provides an alternative to the high school diploma in the US and Canada and gives access to a multitude of universities both in those countries and in many others worldwide. To obtain this certificate, students must pass 4 subjects: mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies.



** information about the GED continues in the following page*

PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
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Due to the crisis that we have experienced since 2020, we had not been able to carry out this new challenge until this year 2021. Thanks to the help of Matthew, a British volunteer and mathematics teacher, one of our students, who due to his age and level of Greek was not going to get his high school diploma through the official Greek school, started to prepare the **mathematics** exam in August and he managed to pass it last November. The following objectives will be for this next year 2022, when 2 new specialised volunteers prepare him for language arts and science. For the history part, we are still trying to find the right person with that knowledge in order to help him.

Like all our activities, this new challenge is not aimed to any student. Only those who have been part of the school for a long time and have, at least, a B1 level in English, those who have shown commitment to the project and those who have an interest in residing in Greece for a long period of time will have the opportunity to receive this support.

In October, we began the **2nd Phase of the program between students of the Habibi Center and those of the Design Tech High School**, located in Silicon Valley, California (USA), where new pairs of students from each collaborating party make different video calls to practice their English and create a cultural interaction between them. This new phase, which is still underway at the end of the year, has brought some changes. One of the most important ones has been that one of our students, who previously participated in Phase 1, agreed to be in charge on the Habibi Center's side of the organization and coordination. We believe that this experience will help him to know what it means to carry out a program of this type and to experience in first person certain difficulties that usually occur, such as the lack of seriousness of some members when communicating or low commitment of some others.



PROGRESS OF THE YEAR

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
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Volunteers' training and formation is fundamental for the Habibi Center to continue to improve. For this reason, on November 10, five of the six volunteers in Athens carried out an educational program, provided by the organization **Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF)** in Greece, called **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence for Humanitarian Workers**. During 6 sessions, several important and necessary topics were analyzed, for example, sexual violence and consent; stigma and preventive measures against all types of individuals and groups; sexuality and reproductive rights; and sexually transmitted diseases and infections as well as different contraceptive methods. In addition to acquiring new knowledge and information personally, it will also help us to better manage any situation on the subject that arises in the center.

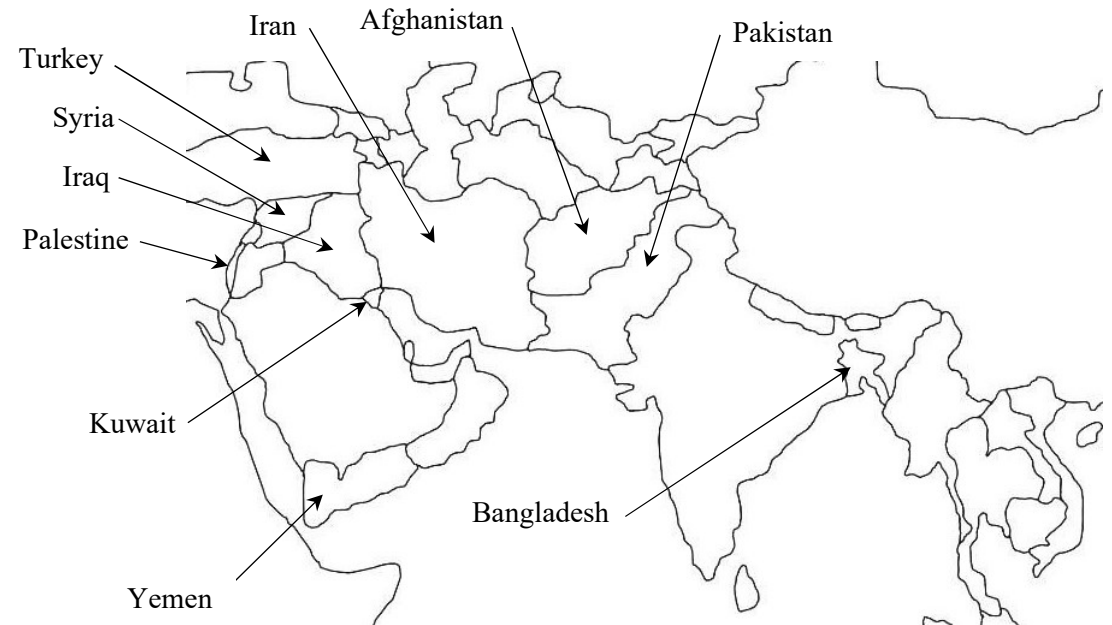
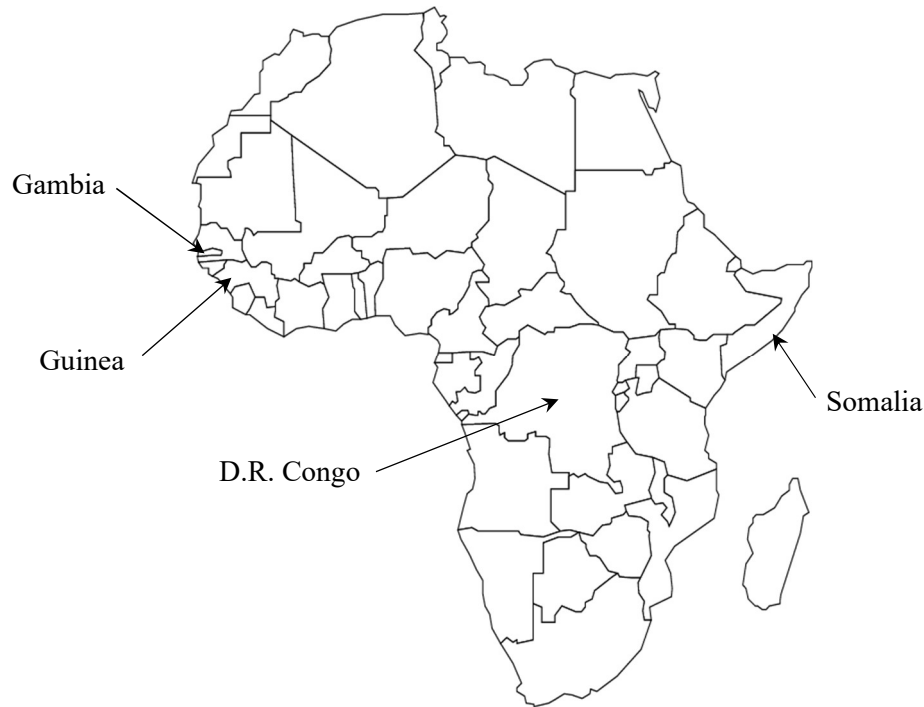


After long weeks of preparation, more **Cambridge exams** dates arrived in early December. The same student who did not reach level B2 last May, by only 3 points, tried his luck again and we hope that this time he can achieve it. In addition, 5 more students (4 girls and 1 boy) faced the B1 level for the first time. This group has reminded us once again of the difficulty of carrying out medium-term challenges with this group of young refugees. The lack of consistency due to different types of instability, be it emotional, health or professional, may have worked against them. Even so, we hope that they have obtained good results and we are happy with the effort made by all of them. Finally, 5 more students (all girls) took the A2 level exam. All of them did a great job during the preparation and were satisfied with the experience.

STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

14

different nationalities of students have lived together at the Habibi Center



STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR



19

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

Among them:

8

boys

11

girls

60

unaccompanied students have been part of the Habibi Center.

Among them:

36

boys

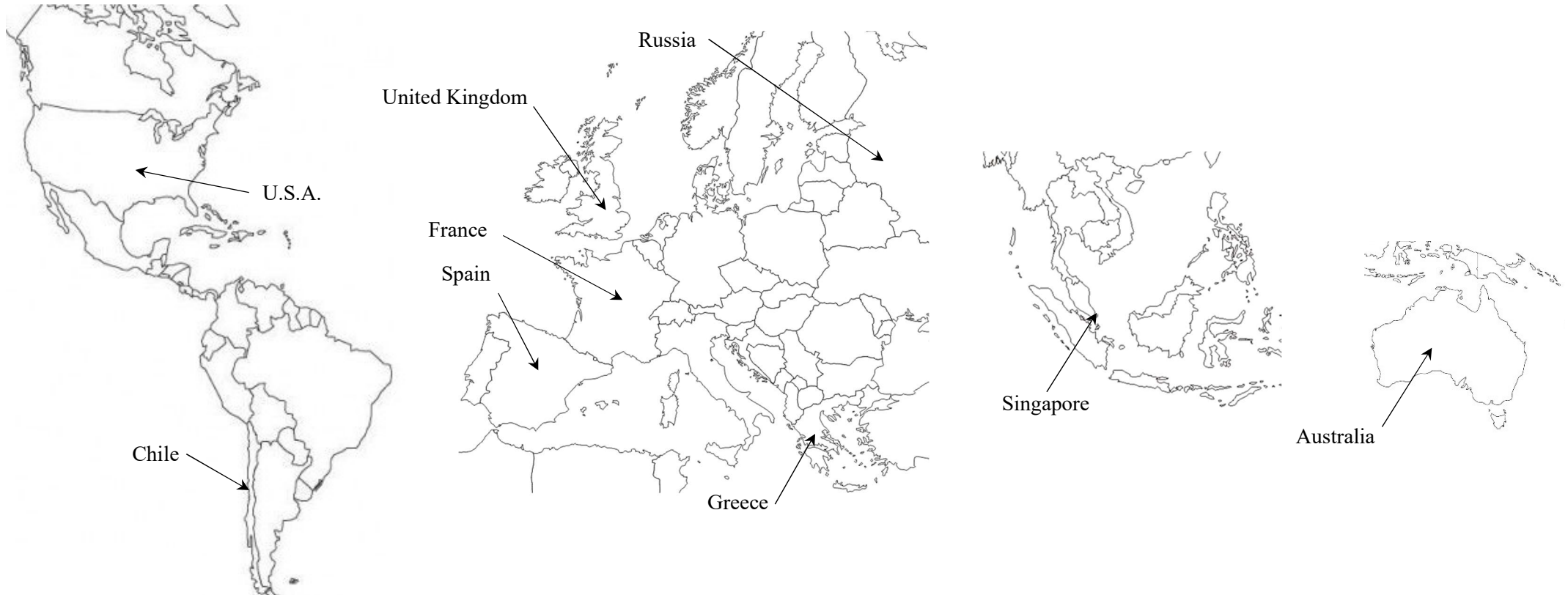
24

girls

STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

16

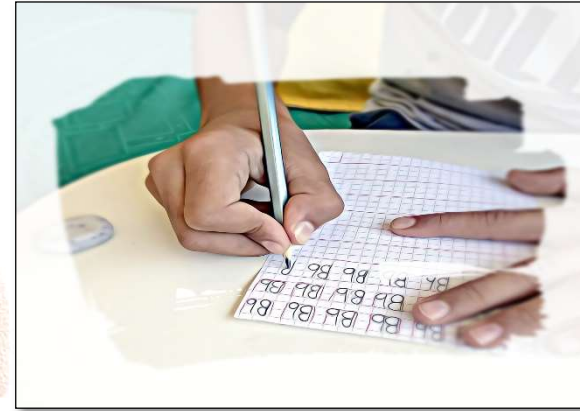
volunteers of different nationalities have been part of the Habibi Center



STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

11

students learned to read and write at the Habibi Center



22

students were prepared to take some official Cambridge exams



STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

18

students reached adulthood while being part of the Habibi Center



14

different shelters for unaccompanied youngsters are behind our 60 unaccompanied students and most of them coordinate efforts with the Habibi Center



STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

34

students stopped attending the Habibi Center due to:

9

family reunifications in other European countries

6

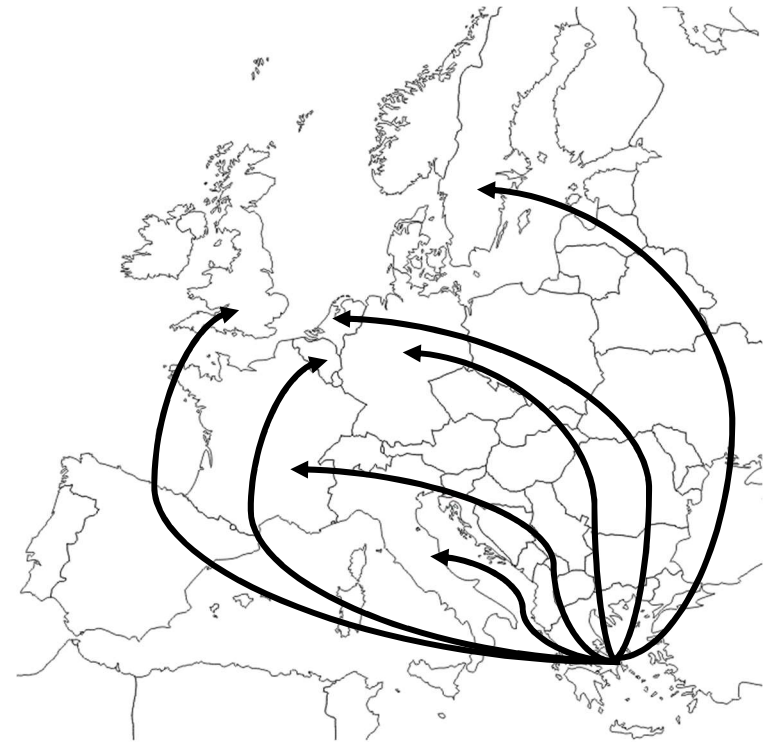
legal movements to other European countries, once they received their documents, to find better opportunities (all of them were unaccompanied youngsters)

7

illegal movements out of the country (5 were unaccompanied youngsters)

12

had to focus on their jobs or studies once they became adults (all of them were unaccompanied youngsters)



STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

7

private donors have made financial contributions on a monthly basis

4

groups from Spain and the United Kingdom
have supported financially the Habibi Center

22

private donors have made financial contributions in a timely manner

40

private donors have made financial contributions through Teaming, donating 1€ monthly

STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

4

short-term volunteers decided to personally cover the expenses of the photocopies used by their groups during their stay



former students have made a financial contribution to the Habibi Center, following their will to support the project that previously gave them so much

5

1

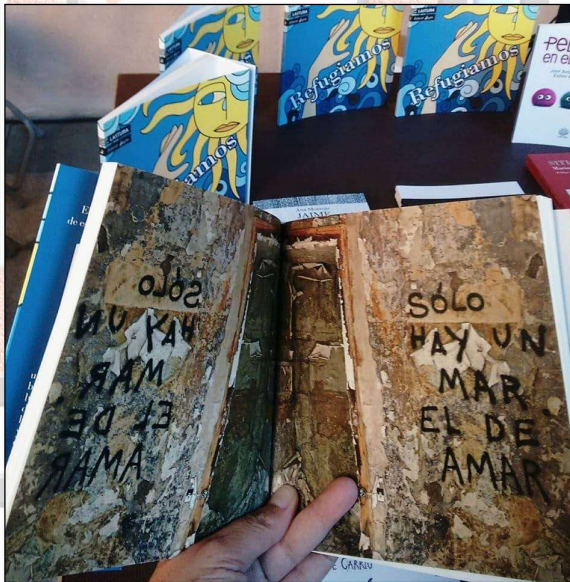
private donor has made a material contribution to the Habibi Center



STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

2

people, one more year, donated their craft and artwork to support the Habibi Center with their benefits



STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

12

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

sports challenges
fundraisers

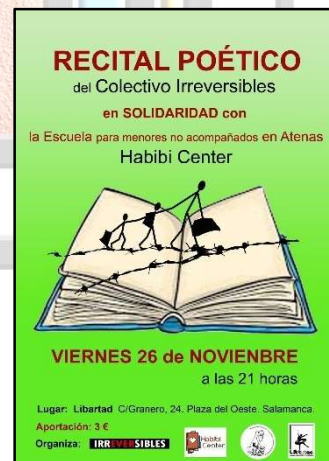
5th Anniversary Celebration
of Habibi Center

donation from a
birthday fundraiser

cultural events to support
the Habibi Center

barbeque fundraiser

fundraisings for preparation and
registration of official Cambridge exams



TESTIMONIALS

STUDENTS

VOLUNTEERS

All the testimonials of both students and volunteers can be read to their full extent on our official website www.habibicenter.org, going through the tag **Stories of Hope**. Below, we show a summary of all the received testimonials throughout this 2021.

“Being in Greece as a refugee was hard and it is harder without any communication skills.

Although the official language is Greek, being able to speak a good level of English can decrease your problems.

Since there operate many international organizations and a wide network of volunteers from abroad, English can open many doors for you with new connections.”

Chamran (Undisclosed) – from March 2018 to June 2018



“Now I am in Switzerland and have opened a new page of my life I can speak English and communicate with people only because of Habibi center and I owe this to Habibi center and our teachers. As all of us know when you move to another country language is the most important thing you probably have to deal with and if you don’t know the language you are kind of dumb (mute or speechless).”

Arash (Afghanistan) – from February 2019 to January 2020



“I joined in Habibi Center because I really wanted to learn English and have experience with different people. After a few weeks my English was improving day by day and sometimes I was going with refugee to translate and help them in some office and hospital. Alex and Stephanie tried very hard to get the guys to learn English. They taught us with out us paying money. Also Alex and Stephanie weren’t just teachers they were also friendly and were like part of my family. I learned from Habibi Center humanity respect and I can’t describe it, how good they are and everything was perfect. In new country that I live at the moment, I can’t speak very good German but I solve my problems with English.”

Mustaeed (Afghanistan) – from January 2019 to March 2020



TESTIMONIALS

STUDENTS

VOLUNTEERS

“Habibi Center wasn’t anymore just a language class for me, it was a school of life that taught me how to live in Europe. Habibi Center taught me how to harmonize with European society, and to realize that I’m an equal, they aren’t better or smarter than me. Taught me to help others with my knowledge or my activity, not just money. Habibi Center gave me a tongue so that I can speak. I can make many friends from all over the world, find work, and travel easily.”

Sahar (Afghanistan) – from January 2018 to January 2020



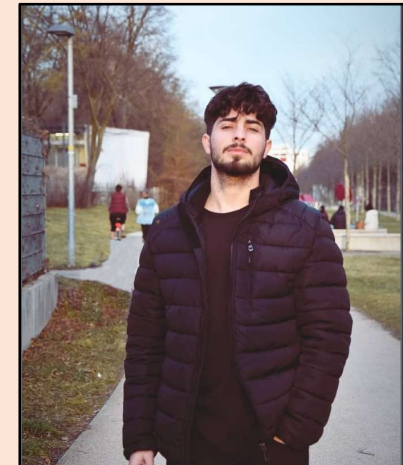
“Staying in Greece was very difficult and stressful for me, especially in the beginning. It was a whole new experience for me. Also, I was looking forward to reunify with my brother in Germany and the legal procedures made me very nervous. Habibi Center helped me during all this procedure. I learned how to be patient and living in the moment, although I was thinking all the time about my future. I really improved my social skills, as I said before, because I could finally communicate with others without looking strange to them. The most important thing, though, was that my education there gave me a sense of independence. I could finally move outside alone in the center of Athens, without needing anyone to translate for me or talk instead of me. I could read, I could ask for whatever I needed and for sure I could live better in the shelter, as I started communicating more efficiently with the staff.”

Mohamad (Iraq) – from January 2020 to May 2021



“As one of the first students of Habibi Center, I think that place is extremely the best thing I have experienced in my life. For me Habibi Center is not a school, for it is a home that I was raised in during the time I was there. Habibi Center gave me the hope I lost after I moved out from Iraq because of the war there.”

Maher (Iraq) – from August 2016 to December 2017



TESTIMONIALS

STUDENTS

VOLUNTEERS

"I was happy to be able to go to Habibi Center and learn English and be able to connect with the community.

After a while, I felt good that I could more or less do my own thing and participate in discussions (My self-confidence had risen).

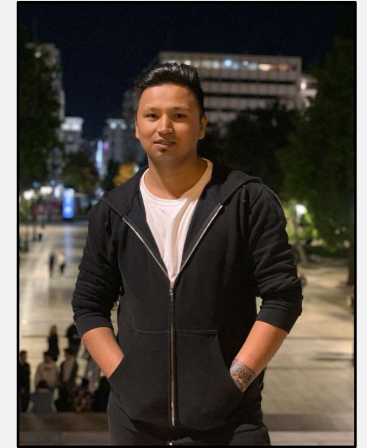
In Habibi Center, there are students with different nationalities, customs and languages but, we all spoke the same language and we followed the principle of humanity and equality."

Fatemeh (Afghanistan) – from October 2020 to May 2021



"...this place, these people helped me to be sociable! I remembered that when I came in Greece I couldn't even have a short and simple conversation with people because of my language! Of course, not in Greek, I'm talking about international language! English!! And right now I can even write enough and easily read and speaking!"

Mehdi (Afghanistan) – from November 2020 to November 2021



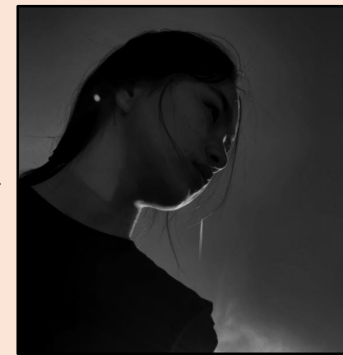
"I joined at Habibi Center to improve and strengthen my English.

I felt embarrassed the first day (because I am a shy person by nature) until Stephanie started teaching and by the end of the class I came to the conclusion that she was very good and fluent in explaining the lesson and I felt better. And every day I felt better about the classroom environment, the excellent way they were taught, and most importantly the friendly and patient behavior of Alex and Stephanie.

Apart from English, the best thing I learned there was that by being kind, you can have the best moments of life and best friends without any expectations.

Habibi Center helped me a lot. In the days when I did not feel good, I forgot everything for all the hour and a half that I was there,"

F.H. (Afghanistan) – from March 2019 to July 2020



TESTIMONIALS

STUDENTS

VOLUNTEERS

"I got to know this lovely organization from my friend. I remember her saying how much she could improve her English in a short period of time. Her compliment about this mysterious Habibi Center encouraged me to ask my social worker to register me there if it's possible.

After a while of studying there, I couldn't part ways with this rewarding and nurturing organization even though my whole days were fully covered by the school and extra classes."

Fahimeh (Undisclosed) – from January 2020 to August 2021



"Joining the Habibi Center was a big leap for me and helped me to expand and improve my English skills a lot. In addition, I have learned some things which are quite valuable for me. I saw my teachers trying hard to help us and make a better educational day for us without getting any payment. In the Habibi Center, we were all from different countries like Spain, Afghanistan, and Syria and we were like a big and happy family. And they helped me a lot with my living in Greece. I felt like a member of a family since I had started going there. I was happy and I felt good."

Mahdi (Afghanistan) – from September 2020 to May 2021



TESTIMONIALS

STUDENTS

"I had the opportunity to have three free months during my studies, and I knew I wanted to use them to contribute to a social project. I contacted lots of non-profit organizations around the world. But as soon as I had my interview with Steph and Alex, I knew it was the perfect project. If you're searching for a serious teaching place with an extraordinary environment, it is HABIBI CENTER!"

Israe (France) – from October 2020 to December 2020



VOLUNTEERS

"When I arrived in Greece, the country was under lockdown but expecting to reopen in a few weeks as the covid cases were decreasing. Schools like Habibi Center were closed and we only could teach online. Teaching this way was quite challenging as the students have many difficulties (lack of good Internet connection, a lot of noise coming from their rooms...) but Alex and Stephie always tried to find a solution by buying SIM cards for them or speaking to the students' social workers to improve the learning environment. I was surprised to see how motivated the students were and how they really want to learn. There were many issues during the lessons but still, they were trying to join the class again and again."

Ester (Spain) – from January 2021 to March 2021



"I would usually start by talking about how I found the Habibi Center, but in actual fact it found me. The welcoming world of volunteering Facebook groups allows for spontaneous connections and as soon as Steph popped up in my messages, it felt like fate. The friendly skype call included a tour of the school with the fabulous artwork scattered across the walls and heart-warming decorative messages. I was enticed and booked my flight instantly. My first team meeting introduced me to the professional but flexible process of the teaching schedule. It was the perfect balance between experienced structure and the freedom to direct lessons in the best way a teacher sees fit."

Jake (United Kingdom) – from October 2020 to March 2021



TESTIMONIALS

STUDENTS

VOLUNTEERS

“Initially I was expecting to just help with some support projects, but Steph encouraged me to take on a class and I have had a very rewarding experience helping a beginning student learn English. Everyone was incredibly supportive in helping me get started despite my lack of background in teaching. The more I learn about Habibi Center, the more impressed I am with the organization, but more importantly, the community of students and teachers that they have built.”

Tim (Australia) – from January 2021 to March 2021



“From the very first day it was a pleasure to teach the students, who are in some ways ordinary teenagers but in many other ways extraordinary people. I was constantly impressed by their maturity, generosity and commitment to learning, all in spite of the injustices they’ve faced at such a young age. It was also really nice to see the students come together and find common ground in spite of their differences in language and culture.”

Anita (United Kingdom) – from April 2021 to July 2021



“Shortly after leaving my job, I had an “itch” to combine my love for world exploration and my ongoing desire to engage in meaningful community work. Habibi Center was the first organization that I found on my search, and I felt an immediate connection with its mission and vision for refugee youth. While I had never worked with refugees before, let alone volunteered abroad. Neither held me back in reaching out and expressing my interest in the opportunity.”

Steven (United States) – from July 2020 to September 2021



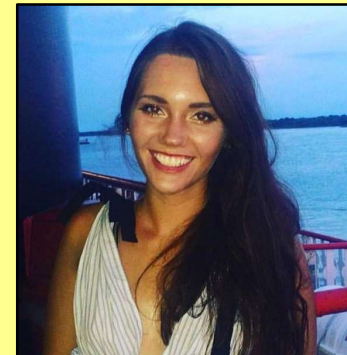
TESTIMONIALS

STUDENTS

VOLUNTEERS

"The Habibi Center is unique in that it is not only a school but it is a family. Students are taught to love and respect one and other regardless of background and this really demonstrates itself in the classes. I loved watching friendships develop between my new students! I was also surprised with how strong a bond I personally created with my students in such a short space of time, I know we will stay in touch and I hope to see many of them in the future!"

Chloe (United Kingdom) – from July 2021 to August 2021



"I started off by teaching three classes and I was nervous about it. I thought I wouldn't be able to handle 4,5 hours of teaching per day, I doubted I'd have enough energy for that. After my first day teaching, however, all my fears disappeared, as I got to teach the most incredible students. Every day they'd give me tons of positive emotions, their motivation to study sparked my motivation to teach. And no matter how hard my day was, my students would always light it up for me. It wasn't always easy, but it was worth it."

Alena (Russia) – from August 2021 to October 2021



TESTIMONIALS

STUDENTS

VOLUNTEERS

"I came to the Habibi Centre so that I could gain some teaching experience after graduating. However, after volunteering for only ten weeks, I feel as though I have gained so much more. Working at the Habibi Centre has taught me that school provides students with a place to make friends, be safe and learn the importance of structure, discipline and respect as well as just being an institute for academic achievement. The positive impact of the school was regularly explained to me by my students, who felt grateful for such a welcoming space and continued to attend despite the endless spelling tests and worksheets I gave to them."

Emily (United Kingdom) – from September 2021 to November 2021



"I wasn't sure how good I would be at teaching as this was my first experience of it, however with the support of the other teachers I felt comfortable in the role very quickly. The students are truly inspiring people who are so friendly and eager to learn. They always seemed to understand the importance of school and would often tell me how thankful they were of the opportunity to study at the Habibi Center. They would always keep me on my toes with the questions they would ask, and also asked for lots of different examples of how to use what I was teaching them in real world settings."

Alex (United Kingdom) – from September 2021 to December 2021



FINANCIAL BALANCE

EXPENSES	
TYPE OF EXPENSES	AMOUNT (€)
Rent centre	8,450.00
Rent flat long-term volunteers	7,150.84
Materials (pens, ink printer, paper, books, etc.)	507.19 *
Photocopies (regular classes)	552.10
Activities (farewells, celebrations, sport, etc.)	196.20
Equipment centre (decoration, furniture, etc.)	50.40
Maintenance centre (reparations, cleaning products, etc.)	246.24
Short-term workshops	55.30
Online teaching (platform, equipment, SIM students)	1,007.72 *
Private health insurance long-term volunteers	1,208.33
Administration association (posts, bureaucracy, SIM phones, awareness talks, etc.)	533.22
Long-term volunteers' formation	455.00
Fundraising activities (postcards, art book, events)	1,124.86
Cambridge & GED exams – Registration	1,742.63 *
Cambridge exams - Photocopies	156.40
Covid-19 measures (tests, cleaning products, hand sanitizer, etc.)	56.20
TOTAL	23,492.63

INCOME	
TYPE OF INCOME	AMOUNT (€)
Excess from 2020	1,349.51 *
Monthly donations	2,495.64
Timely donations	3,249.75 *
Support Groups donations	10,014.34
Event donations	4,738.16 *
Object donations	205.00
Fundraising activities	1,189.91 *
Specific expenses covered by others (Art Book shipping costs, website, etc.)	64.72
Stay short-term volunteers	150.00
Refunds	247.95
TOTAL	23,704.98

EXCESS FOR 2022	
TOTAL	207.99

* these line items spent or received *American dollars* or *Pounds Sterling* and were converted and added to the total in Euros on the 28.12.2021 (www.xe.com) to simplify the financial balance.