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¹ **Type:** Use one of the following codes (in consistence with the Description of the Action):

- R: Document, report (excluding the periodic and final reports)
- DEM: Demonstrator, pilot, prototype, plan designs
- DEC: Websites, patents filing, press & media actions, videos, etc.
- OTHER: Software, technical diagram, etc.

² **Dissemination level:** Use one of the following codes (in consistence with the Description of the Action)

- PU: Public, fully open, e.g. web
- CO: Confidential, restricted under conditions set out in the Model Grant Agreement
- CI: Classified, information as referred to in Commission Decision 2001/844/EC



Researching young migrants in vulnerable conditions. Methodological and ethical guidelines

BASED ON THE MIMY PROJECT

Marta Jadwiga Pietrusińska, Dominika Winogrodzka, Agnieszka Trąbka

WARSAW, 2023



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Project name

EMpowerment through liquid Integration of Migrant Youth in vulnerable conditions (MIMY)

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- » The University of Sheffield (USFD, England, United Kingdom)
- » Institut für Landes-Und Stadtentwicklungsforschung gGmbH (ILS, Germany)
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- » Közép Európai Egyetem/ Central European University (CEU, Hungary)
- » Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (UCSC, Italy)
- » Uniwersytet Humanistycznospołeczny SWPS/University of Social Sciences and Humanities (SWPS, Poland)
- » Universitetet i Bergen (UiB, Norway)
- » Academia de Studii Economice din Bucuresti (ASE, Romania)
- » Malmö Universitet (MAU, Sweden)
- » EURICE - European Research and Project Office GmbH (Eurice, Germany)
- » Europese Confederatie van Organisaties voor Jeugdcentra (ECYC, Belgium)
- » London Metropolitan University (LondonMet, England, United Kingdom)
- » Kozminski University/Akademia Leona Koźmińskiego (ALK, Poland)

Project website

<http://www.mimy-project.eu>

Executive summary

The project “EMpowerment through liquid Integration of Migrant Youth in vulnerable conditions” (MIMY) studies the integration processes of young migrants (primarily aged 18-29) who are Third Country Nationals (TCNs) living in nine European countries: (England (UK), Germany, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Romania and Sweden). Acknowledging the role of locality, in each of these countries, the research was conducted in two localities: one bigger and urban, and one rural or peripheral and smaller. MIMY’s main research question may be formulated as follows: How can we support the integration processes of young migrants in vulnerable conditions in Europe? The answer to this question may be found in the report “Responsible integration of young migrants for integration. Navigating between vulnerability and resilience” (Trąbka et al., 2023), as well as in other public reports from MIMY (see Appendix 3).

In order to answer this question, the MIMY project used an innovative and comprehensive multi-method research design combining secondary data analysis with unique qualitative empirical insights. The quantitative methods, focused on the macro-structural level, enabled us to give an overview of the socio-economic conditions of the lives of TCNs in European countries. The qualitative methods and approaches inspired by participatory action research (PAR), which are in the centre of interest in this report, were especially appropriate for understanding migrants’ perspective, to better explore meanings, capture complex relational contexts, and enable in-depth analysis of the vulnerability and resilience experiences of different subgroups of young migrants. Moreover, applying a participatory approach in some of the research components was aimed at empowerment of young migrants.

The goal of this report is to provide methodological and ethical guidelines for researching young migrants in vulnerable situations. The selection of the themes we decided to focus on was driven by the assumption that, while traditional methods such as semi-structured in-depth interviews or focus group interviews are well covered in the literature, more innovative and participatory techniques still need both description and critical analysis. Therefore, we decided to choose from a rich MIMY portfolio those methods and approaches, inspired by a participatory approach, that we find promising in researching young migrants. These are the peer research approach, visual methods and art-based methods. Moreover, since we believe that while doing this kind of research methodological decisions are intrinsically connected with ethics, we dedicate the last part of the report to the ethical aspects of working with young migrants in vulnerable conditions.

The key findings may be summarised as follows:

- » **The participatory approach** has many advantages for both researchers and the researched community. Ideally, such an approach should be implemented from the very beginning of the project (e.g. creation of research aims and questions, design of the research and applying for funding) and continue until the results dissemination phase.
- » The participatory approach also provides **added value to the scientific outcomes**. This added value is related to non-academic outcomes of the research. For instance different groups involved in the project - researchers, peer researchers and research participants - might **acquire new knowledge and skills**, they can also meet new people and **build personal and professional relationships**. Additionally, researched communities may be **empowered** through participation in the study.
- » One way of implementing the participatory approach is the **peer research approach**. Peer researchers can be defined as members of the community, who undertake training in research methods and **work as researchers in their own network or community**. Peer researchers' lived experiences and their 'insider' knowledge can facilitate the research process and thus, enhance understanding of the research subject. Moreover, the peer research approach has the potential to support **empowerment of young people** by amplifying their voices and minimising power imbalances between researchers and participants.
- » Adopting the peer research approach **requires additional organisational (human, financial and time) resources**. We advise researchers to carefully plan the involvement of peer researchers in the research project design. In addition to making allowances for extra project costs, the project timetable should incorporate the time needed to recruit, train, involve and support peer researchers participating in the research. At the same time, we recommend a great deal of flexibility, based on peer researchers' diversity, in adapting the extent of the peer research role to the specific needs, expectations, and possibilities of each peer researcher.
- » When engaging peer researchers in the research project, we should keep in mind the **risk of their instrumentalization**, meaning using their personal resources (such as knowledge, competencies, and network) authoritatively to fulfil the project's goals. Researchers should be careful to **avoid tokenism** in their activities.
- » Choosing a peer research approach, we should remember that it is not only a methodological decision but also, to a large extent, an ethical one which should be based on values such as **diversity, inclusion, social justice, and equity**. Therefore, relations between peer researchers and researchers should be built upon mutual respect, trust, openness, a balance of power and established ethical symmetry, which means partnership in cooperation. If this is achieved, projects based on the peer research approach will make science and academia more inclusive, both when planning and conducting research, but also at the stage of dissemination and communication of results to a wider audience.

- » To implement such an approach researchers should manifest a **high level of competencies** that go beyond traditional research competencies like data collection or analysis. We argue that researchers should be **(auto)reflexive, open and empathetic**, which often requires going out of their comfort zone and being open for new perspectives.
- » **Visual and art-based methods** that often are present in a participatory approach allow to **get deeper and richer data**. Moreover, this kind of method provides for the participants and researchers a **“continuum of involvement”**. Contrary to traditional methods such as interviews or focus groups, visual and art-based methods offer a possibility to talk, stay silent, express oneself through metaphors or art. For younger participants those **non-verbal forms of narration might be more compelling** as due to the new technology and social media they are used to such forms of communications.
- » As we tend to indicate in this report such methods might be **flexibly adjusted** to the needs of the participants and aims of the research project. Therefore in this report we do not provide detailed step-by-step instructions on how to use them but rather explain their advantages and challenges in different contexts.
- » **Visual and art-based methods** supporting individual and group interviews have many advantages, including **fostering recall, reflection and discussion, encouraging expressing emotions and new ideas**. Moreover, some of them move away from linear or rigid chronological narrative so as not to represent or reflect bureaucratic and legalistic modes of storytelling, which is of special importance in case of young migrants, who may have experiences of being interviewed by officers or representatives of authorities upon their arrival or legalising their stay.
- » **Art-based methods** have the potential to **engage the broader public in a dialogue**. Thanks to translating the knowledge created in the project to wider audiences they support more inclusive and open dissemination and **encourage social changes**.
- » However, it should be highlighted that in order for the visual methods to bring added value to the study, they **must be very well accustomed to the context**. By context we refer to the broad spectrum of factors, including interviewers, interviewees, time and place of the interview. In the MIMY project particularly **using these methods on-line turned out to be challenging**.
- » While doing participatory and art-based research, methodological decisions are intrinsically connected with ethics. Beside **“procedural ethics”** related to the ethical approvals and formal requirements, also **“ethics in practice”** should be implemented. Such “ethics in practice” requires a specific approach that takes into account the need for the **empowerment of the researched group**. Although such a methodological and ethical approach requires more resources and competences, we are convinced that it is worth using for the sake of richer data, greater social justice and inclusion.
- » Implementation of methods inspired by participatory approach facilitates the **co-production of new knowledge**, and innovative ways of constructing meaning about migration and integration experiences. Attributing to research participants the power to participate in knowledge construction as experts can strongly stimulate a process of empowerment manifested in narratives related to their own personal experiences in which their own

strengths and capacity for action become emphasised. In this way, a more **diverse, inclusive, and dialogic knowledge** is achieved through the use of a more ethically driven and collaborative research process that opens new perspectives and knowledge construction legitimacies. This approach allows to build on a growing body of **culturally sensitive, decolonising knowledge**.

- » Finally, this approach is a way to provide a **space for emancipation** of research individuals and groups. It is important that researchers **allow participants to share their experiences in a way that is most suitable and comfortable for them**. Following this the role of the researchers in the studies that aim to support empowerment of a certain group should be focused mostly on **providing such conditions so, through participation in research, research participants can empower** themselves and their communities. We also recommend different forms of gratification from the research participation. It could be a **material or financial remuneration, possibility to gain new knowledge or acquire new skills or opportunity for networking**. It is also important to identify participants' needs and offer them the most adequate and needed gratification.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. About the MIMY project

1.1.1. Aim and rationale of the project

MIMY (EMpowerment through liquid Integration of Migrant Youth in vulnerable conditions) is a European Union-funded project aiming to improve the situation of young migrants throughout Europe. It involves 14 partners in 9 countries: Luxembourg, Germany, England (UK), Sweden, Norway, Italy, Poland, Romania, and Hungary¹. Its ultimate goal is to derive evidence-based policy recommendations, after examining the effectiveness of integration policies and investigating the integration processes of young non-EU migrants who find themselves in vulnerable conditions across 18 localities, 2 in each of the 9 countries involved in the consortium (for details see: MIMY deliverable 4.1, Shahrokh et al., 2021a).

Accordingly, the MIMY project aims to investigate the integration processes of young migrants (primarily those aged between 18 and 29) who are Third Country Nationals (coming from outside the European Union). The main aim of MIMY is to focus on the integration processes of young migrants and to understand their daily interactions with local populations. The purpose of the study is also to identify the main sources of vulnerabilities for young migrants, as well as their resilience. MIMY's main research question is thus: **How can we support the integration processes of young migrants in vulnerable conditions in Europe?** In order to answer this question, based on an interdisciplinary and multilevel research approach, the MIMY project sets the specific research endeavours that look at the role of the institutions and diverse social actors in the young migrant's integration process and their agency and resilience as well as factors that foster or hinder those processes. Moreover, research endeavours focus on the social and economic effects of "failed" or "successful" integration and provide evidence-based recommendations for stakeholders and policymakers to support the integration process.

In order to address all these complex questions, MIMY starts from a set of contextual assumptions that will now be enunciated.

» In recent decades migration has become one of the main social phenomena shaping European societies. Taking into account the economic inequalities, military conflicts and climate changes that constitute strong push factors in many regions of the world, as well as the ageing of the European population, we can assume that European countries will remain important destinations. Responding to the pressure from recent migratory flows to Europe (especially in 2015), member states of the European Union (EU) and associated countries (e.g. Norway and the UK) have been following different national interests

¹ The list of institutions and all the researchers involved in MIMY is given in the Appendix. For a detailed description of the institutions, see MIMY website: <https://www.mimy-project.eu/partners/consortium>.

and strategies with regard to integration efforts and policies. Hence, an assessment of various integration policies within the EU member states (in sectors such as the labour market, education, health, civil rights, social welfare, housing, family policies) is an urgent need. To be able to better evaluate the effectiveness of integration policies, a wide range of conditions need to be taken into account, and comparative and interdisciplinary research can offer insights from different angles. Hence, an integrative macro-meso-micro-level approach is necessary to combine the vertical (multi-level governance structure) and horizontal (sector policies) axes, underlining especially the individual perspectives of the young migrants.

- » The experiences of diverse actors affected by these integration policies – especially the neglected viewpoints of migrants themselves – should be central to this endeavour. To be able to strengthen the effectiveness of integration policies, an integrative research approach is necessary, taking into account different levels and perspectives.
- » The population age structures are changing within Europe due to increasing life expectancies and falling fertility rates (Lanzieri, 2013). Sasse and Thielemann (2005) emphasise that “in the context of an ageing population and a need for certain skills, migrants make an important economic contribution” (p. 657), especially given that a large proportion of migrants are young people. However, as the Council of Europe underlines “the youth perspective is rarely taken into account in national and international debate on migration. The needs of young migrants should be better understood and their role in European society should be acknowledged” (COE, 2017, p. 12).
- » The European Youth Forum has highlighted that young people are “particularly vulnerable and over-represented among migrants” (COMEM, 2007, p. 3). Migrant youth in particularly vulnerable positions and circumstances (e.g. through negative life events, injuries and handicaps) (Barocas et al., 1985), as well as social, cultural and economic exclusion (Bhalla & Lapeyre, 1997; Ligon & Schechter, 2003) require specific attention and concerted effort in order to minimise their social exclusion.

MIMY tackles these questions by focusing on the integration challenges of young migrants under thirty. The project provides a unique opportunity to observe dynamic integration processes in the making.

Crucially, the empirical data in MIMY were collected between 2020 and early 2022, which means that fieldwork largely finished before the escalation of the Russian invasion in Ukraine. Therefore, this report and other MIMY deliverables do not capture the changing context of this war and its consequences. However, we are very aware of the geopolitical and human reality of this conflict, in particular several millions of Ukrainian refugees arriving in Europe. This context has changed policies, services, migrant communities, and local populations' attitudes, among others. As we move forward the different MIMY research teams will apply the lessons learnt within MIMY to this new landscape. We are hopeful that this manual of replications supports continued research that engages with these dynamics providing continued support to the empowerment and integration of young people seeking safety in new societies.

1.1.2. Overall structure and the work plan of the project

The work plan of MIMY was structured in 10 overlapping work packages (WPs), each led by an experienced WP leader with the required subject and methodological expertise. This organisation allowed us to carry out the full range of tasks necessary to achieve the project goals. The WPs structure and activities ultimately aimed at actively engaging and empowering young migrants in vulnerable conditions, as well as to involve stakeholders at local, national and supranational levels. WP1, WP2 and WP3 focused on the concepts and methodology, on the analysis of the macro indicators of migration and integration, and explored the contextual, historical, political, and policy-related factors that create vulnerabilities in young migrants' lives. WP4, WP5, WP6 and WP7 encompassed the main qualitative empirical WPs centring on two localities in each of the consortium countries. WP8 synthesised the scientific results and explored possible replications of the findings for other localities in Europe. WP9 focused on the dissemination, and WP10 on project management. In more detail, the work plan was structured as follows:

WP1 “Concepts and methodology” focused on crucial concepts connected with migrants' integration, such as liquid integration, differentiated embedding, vulnerability, resilience, resistance, and survival. WP2 “Quantitative (statistical) overview on youth migration” gave the macro picture of migration and integration within consortium countries. Moreover, **WP2 aimed to “improve the knowledge base on the socio-economic effects of migration”**, giving a specific focus on young migrants in vulnerable conditions. **WP3 “Context and policy approaches for young vulnerable migrants”** produced a historical, contextual perspective of integration policies starting with the end of World War II, and taking into account MIMY target groups: young migrants up to the age of 30 who are in vulnerable conditions for various reasons (social and economic deprivation, non-integration, disintegration, having a traumatic past, forced migration, being stateless, being a refugee, being exploited, smuggled or trafficked, being exploited in the labour market etc.). **WP4 “Migrant youth between vulnerability and resilience”** encompassed interviews with young migrants in the chosen localities in each country. The contextual, historical, biographical, and policy related contexts were explored via these interviews. Peer researchers participated in this phase of fieldwork as a way to support the empowerment of young migrants, enabling greater access to the population under study and a deeper qualitative engagement than academics alone could achieve. **WP5 “Effects of local actors on migration and integration dynamics”** focused on the local actors' role and interviewed local stakeholders and longer-standing migration experienced communities to investigate integration at the local level. **WP6 “Assessing the critical role of the local population”** outlined the interaction between the local populations (both local stakeholder actors and young non-migrants) and young migrants and thus defined the main tenets of social, cultural and economic integration. **WP7 “Laboratories of reality: Participatory and action research”** discussed the results obtained in the framework of the other WPs with migrants' advisory groups and young migrants in vulnerable conditions. To facilitate the discussion and the exchange between different social actors, art-based events (e.g. LEGO® Serious Play®, Photovoice, Digital Storytelling) and Design Thinking workshops were used. This WP put a strong emphasis on results' dissemination and on the young migrants' empowerment. WP7 also provided training for peer-

researchers who, along with researchers, conducted fieldwork, especially in WP4 and WP5. WP1 to WP7 thus prepared the ground work for **WP8 “Synthesis, synergies, replications and impact assessment”** that is summarising the synergies between WPs. WP8 is also finalising the Delphi study and analysing the effect of events such as Brexit, local legislative and national contextual changes observed in Germany, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden and the UK. **WP9 “Innovation management: communication, dissemination and exploitation”** was in charge of identifying, managing, disseminating, exploiting and protecting knowledge, and coordinating internal and external communication throughout the project through the definition and implementation of an efficient dissemination and exploitation strategy, characterised by innovation-related activities targeted at the scientific community, the general public and interested stakeholders/user groups. As a prerequisite for all other WPs, **WP10 “Project management and scientific coordination”** was in charge of safeguarding optimal administrative, financial, contractual as well as technical consortium management. WP10 set the basis for adequate exploitation of scientific synergies and complementarities among partners. Additionally, WP11 was focused on the ethics (MIMY Consortium, 2019).

Taken together, the WPs collectively formed an innovative, coherent integrated strategy, for whose execution the consortium of experts contributed with its expertise to create the prerequisites and critical mass for pursuing and achieving the ambitious objectives of the project (Figure 1.1).

the structure of the MIMY project



Figure 1.1. The structure of the MIMY project
Own elaboration based on: MIMY Consortium, 2019.

1.1.3. The MIMY project's ambitions

Although this report is focused on the methodology and ethics, it is important to note that they are connected to the basic assumptions and ambitions of the MIMY project listed below.

Socio-political ambitions: The central research question of MIMY – How to support integration processes of young migrants in vulnerable conditions in Europe? – is grounded in the latest knowledge from European-wide research projects on migration. By focusing on young migrants, MIMY addresses current EU strategies on integration, aiming at supporting integration-specific approaches addressing youth among the EU member states. Therefore, the countries of the consortium were selected carefully to represent diversity within their approaches and experiences. First and foremost, on a political level migration and integration is considered as a complex, challenging societal task which is framed by heterogeneous contexts and different temporalities (especially after 2015).

Conceptual ambitions: Taking the idea of liquid integration (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019) as the starting point, MIMY builds on this priority and provides researchers, practitioners, policymakers and the general public with a new holistic framework to better understand the dynamics and openness of integration processes. By foregrounding the perspectives of migrants in vulnerable conditions (as well as those of the local population and stakeholders) and embedding them in broader meso and macro contexts, the project innovatively combines macro, meso and micro perspectives. This multilevel approach enables analyses of how young migrants perceive their contexts in general, but also how they feel about inclusionary or exclusionary practices (e.g. administrative, social and economic). Therefore, MIMY offers an important and unique contribution within migration research, while providing a trans-disciplinary approach and using a multidimensional perspective. This accounts for the micro (focusing on young migrants and their perspective), meso (interactions at a local level) and the macro level (supra-national and national structural conditions). Most importantly, MIMY aims to ameliorate the vulnerable conditions of young migrants and support them in becoming active citizens within the new hosting society. The project sets the focus on young people, with the ambition that their opinion will influence research and policy-making more strongly, and thus they are integrated throughout all aspects of the project, including dissemination and impact activities.

The ambition to support the empowerment process of young migrants: Matusevich (2016) stresses that “the lived experiences of migrants are generally discarded as irrelevant, unquantifiable and therefore of no use in a policymaking world preoccupied with quick and tangible deliverables”, and he highlights the “absence of migrant voices in the policymaking bubble”. For this reason, MIMY has put the experiences of young migrants at the centre of its concerns and takes their different needs and expectations on their own future social, economic and cultural integration into account. With its innovative research methods, MIMY aims especially to empower young migrants by giving them the possibility to be involved as peer researchers. MIMY's ambition is to enable the social inclusion of young migrants via participatory and action research and to support young migrants in presenting their perspectives to the wider audience

(e.g. through art-events which are based on their experiences and practices, through blog posts). This is especially important for those who are seldom heard in the decisions that affect their lives in terms of political participation and wider civic engagement and citizenship.

The ambition to highlight the local level and a place-sensitive approach to integration: Institutional frameworks vary regionally. Thus, the spatial dimension plays a decisive role for understanding the variations and interrelatedness of institutional and young migrants' practices as well (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2011). MIMY takes into consideration existing variations, while focusing on institutional practices regarding the adjustment of young migrants in vulnerable conditions to their new localities. Several researchers have argued that the local level is where migrants can influence the place specific characteristics of where they live, study, and work via the culture, social skills and expertise they bring to the host communities (e.g. entrepreneurial skills, languages, sport) (e.g. Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017; Plöger, 2016; Bühr, 2018). MIMY builds on this new local, place-based approach, highlighting the relevance of the local level as the context where face-to-face encounters and integration within the host society actually begin. Migrants shape the hosting community as the main participants in different acts of integration or non-integration strategies. Therefore, each receiving context – whether on the national, regional or local scale – provides specific place-based opportunity structures that shape migrants' experiences and practices. Recognising that the local level is a major point of access to socially essential resources and opportunities in general, and the main setting for concrete practices of the actors involved in particular, MIMY analyses diverse case studies, covering a wide geographical spectrum of territorial development contexts.

Acknowledging the importance of informal and formal social interactions for the integration of young migrants: By focusing on everyday social interactions and relations between diverse social actors involved in the field of integration, MIMY aims at elaborating on the complex picture of integration processes. The aim is to analyse intercultural spaces, places as well as practice related interactions in these contexts and to observe the use of discretion in difficult situations. Therefore, the different localities studied in the frames of MIMY aim at analysing the place-specific factors shaping integration outcomes – not only through regulation, but also through different means of implementation and the important aspect of individual role models. Rural integration versus urban integration, practices of segregation and their effects on migrants' and corporate actors' everyday practices are also examined, with a special focus on young migrants. Peer relations and local populations' effects on integration serve to characterise the specific sociocultural integration contexts of the localities chosen across the nine countries. MIMY also strives to identify the factors affecting young migrants' access to, and use of, informal and formal social support, geographic inequalities and gaps between integration policies and their implementation in institutional practices of corporate actors (to understand the missing link between younger migrants' needs and what is provided to them). Additionally, MIMY is able to observe how these factors influence migrants' vulnerability and their resilience.

Acknowledging the role of family and peer support. MIMY also pays attention to family and peers as central meso-level integration conditions. Family, as the primary socialisation agent, is highly important in the transmission of values and adjusting practices from one generation to the next, which is in fact a bidirectional process (Barni et al., 2013). Hence, to understand young migrant's adjustment practices, MIMY aims at capturing families' impact. MIMY is also aware that family members left behind are highly likely to consult or join peers while travelling or when they reach their destination in the receiving country (Sime & Fox, 2014). Research shows that young migrants in vulnerable conditions are negotiators between the new socio-cultural and institutional contexts and families and/or peers, especially if they speak the local language(s) (Bauer, 2016). Hence, young migrants in vulnerable conditions develop their goals, aims, skills, resources and practices as they learn in the context of family and peers. This has direct consequences for their participation in the educational system and the labour market, in their patterns of consumption and their state of health, in gaining awareness of civil rights and accessing social welfare, in finding suitable housing, and in the process of forming a new family. Therefore, both family as well as peers are of key interest to MIMY for understanding integration processes.

1.2. How to read this report

The goal of this report is to provide methodological and ethical guidelines for researching young migrants in vulnerable situations. These guidelines are drawn from the experiences of 10 research teams, which collaborated in the course of the MIMY project. In this report, we focus on the methodological and ethical considerations with regard to researching young migrants in vulnerable conditions. The selection of the themes we decided to focus on was driven by the assumption that, while traditional methods such as semi-structured in-depth interviews or focus group interviews are well covered in the literature, more innovative and participatory techniques still need both description and critical analysis. Therefore, we decided to choose from a rich MIMY portfolio those methods and approaches, inspired by a participatory approach, that we find promising in researching young migrants, and more broadly, in migration studies. These are the peer research approach, visual methods and art-based methods. Moreover, since we believe that while doing this kind of research methodological decisions are intrinsically connected with ethics, we dedicate the last part of the report to the ethical aspects of working with young migrants in vulnerable conditions.

This methodological report was created in two main steps. In the first step, all methodological reflections included in the guidelines and reports from the WPs 4, 5, 6 and 7 were analysed in order to draw main assumptions regarding their use and evaluation. Subsequently, with reference to these general results, we returned to each research team asking them more detailed questions about their experiences, reflections and evaluations of using particular methods or approaches. Specifically, they were asked what was useful and what was not useful in applying particular methods, and what kind of added values they brought to the research (in terms of the quality of collected data, the researchers, participants and broader community). They were also asked to reflect on their work with peer researchers, along with the ethical challenges

they faced throughout the project and how they overcame them. The content of the following chapters is drawn from the analysis of both the reports written in the framework of MIMY and the answers to the additional questions. The presented approaches and methods are flexible. Although we describe them in detail, their further application may be modified to different extents according to the researchers' needs.

In terms of the structure, this chapter of the report includes the most important introductory information about the MIMY project, including its aims and structure. Chapter Two is dedicated to the description of its methodology. Following these introductory parts, we describe our experiences of working with peer researchers. First, we recount how peer researchers were involved in MIMY and explain their role in the research; we analyse the advantages of engaging peer researchers, as well as the challenges that may be faced when applying this approach. Then, in Chapter Four, their own perspective is presented, based on the MIMY blog that peer researchers created, with only minor comments from our side. Chapter Five is dedicated to the visual methods used during individual and group interviews. We discuss how they can support interviews in facilitating the narrative and providing richer or more in-depth data. In Chapter Six we present selected art-based methods used in MIMY, namely digital storytelling, Lego® Serious Play®, collage work, and photovoice. Their detailed descriptions, including practical instructions on how to apply them, can be found in the appendix. The structure of the chapters Four to Six – first presenting a given method or approach, then its advantages, and finally challenges and the suggestions on how to overcome them – is intended to be reader-friendly and as practical as possible. In the last chapter, Seven, we focus on ethical considerations including the broadly understood issue of the safety and wellbeing of participants, as well as ways to facilitate empowering process and to co-produce knowledge in a more inclusive manner. We also discuss the ethical aspects of working with peer researchers. We finish the report by summarising the main conclusions.

In this report, we focus on methodological insights rather than the results of the MIMY project. Interested readers that would like to engage with the empirical findings may turn to the complementary synthesis report entitled “Responsibilisation of young migrants for integration. Navigating between vulnerability and resilience. MIMY synthesis report” (Trąbka et al., 2023). In addition, a list of public deliverables, as well as publications written by MIMY team members, can be found in the appendices of this report.

2. Overview of MIMY methodology

2.1. Research aim and objectives

The main aim of the MIMY research was to investigate the integration processes of young migrants (primarily aged between 18 and 29) who are Third Country Nationals (TCN) at risk and who find themselves in vulnerable conditions. The main aim of MIMY is to focus on the integration processes of young migrants and to understand their daily intercultural relations with the local population in order to address the main research question of: **How can we support the integration processes of young migrants in vulnerable conditions in Europe?**

To achieve this aim, the following research objectives were established:

- » To investigate the social, economic, and cultural integration processes of young migrants in vulnerable situations and the role of institutions (at the EU, national and local levels) in enabling or constraining integration.
- » To examine factors that can foster or hinder the integration processes of young migrants (considering their heterogeneity and diverse biographical backgrounds) by focusing on their formal and informal networks within the host community.
- » To investigate how diverse social actors and institutions can support the agency of young migrants by further strengthening their resilience and resistance strategies.
- » To analyse the social and economic effects of “failed” integration and the social and economic benefits of “successful” integration within the EU and the nine case study countries, with a special focus on young adult migrants.
- » To provide evidence-based recommendations for stakeholders and policymakers through the development of a handbook on good practices to improve integration policies.

2.2. Concept of the research

The MIMY project used an innovative and comprehensive **multi-method research design** combining quantitative secondary data analysis with unique qualitative empirical insights - notably by researching the macro, meso and micro levels affecting the integration process of young migrants, and providing access to the perspectives of different social actors. The study incorporated a **participatory action research approach**, frequently involving cooperation with **peer researchers** - young people with migration experience, or migration-backgrounds who took part in different stages of the research process.

The quantitative methods enabled us to give a better overview of socio-economic conditions at the macro level. Meanwhile, the qualitative methods were especially useful in centring the voice of young migrants, to better explore meanings, capture complex relational contexts, and enable in-depth analysis of conditions of vulnerability and the resilience experiences of different subgroups of young migrants in cross-national and multidisciplinary perspectives. Moreover, in the MIMY project, different perspectives - of young migrants themselves, migrants from older generations, non-migrant youth, different types of practitioners,

and policymakers - were incorporated to provide a complex and comprehensive understanding of integration processes.

Within the qualitative part of MIMY project, in order to gain a comprehensive and nuanced picture of the studied phenomenon, three main types of triangulation were applied: **Triangulation of methods**, including several types of individual interviews, focus groups, art-based methods, design thinking workshops and a Delphi study, enabled MIMY researchers to gather different insights on the complex life-situations of young migrants. **Participant triangulation** (engaging various types of migrants, stakeholders and non-migrants) made it possible to obtain data from different sources, and take different perspectives into consideration. **Location triangulation** (conducting research in two distinctive local contexts in each country) provided pertinent data related to the importance of local context in the integration process. Moreover, a **multi-disciplinary approach** was applied, combining policy analysis with demographic, sociological, geographical, psychological, discursive, and ethnographic analyses.

The research design followed a specific stepwise logic and consisted of nine work packages (WP). The first step involved desk research (literature review, content analysis and mapping exercises) (WP1). Step two consisted of quantitative secondary data analysis and policy and discourse analyses to examine how migrant integration is framed, represented, contested and discursively constructed (WP2, WP3). Step three consisted of empirical qualitative research focusing on the determinants, drivers, impediments, patterns, and actors of integration processes and their strategies (WP4, WP5, WP6, WP7). Finally, step four focused on the synthesis and synergies of all findings, and the drawing of policy recommendations to support policymakers and practitioners in achieving innovative actions and strategies in the field of vulnerable migrant young people's integration within Europe (WP8, WP9).

2.3. Research context and sample

In the MIMY research design, particular attention was paid to the spatial dimension of integration and the role of the "local". The local level is the context where national and supra-national policies are implemented, and where own policies addressing local challenges are designed (Plöger & Aydar, 2020). Acknowledging the processes that have been described as a "local turn" (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017), we posit that opportunity structures at the local level (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2011) facilitate or limit migrants' ability to participate in, and engage with, the receiving context. "Such opportunity structures range from access to different kinds of resources such as work, housing, education, social programmes, language training or networks. They may include specific services or programmes geared towards young migrants in vulnerable conditions" (Plöger & Aydar, 2020, p. 13).

In line with this approach, in each of the nine countries where MIMY fieldwork was carried out, two localities were selected and participants were recruited in those localities. Below we describe first the selection of localities, and then the sample recruited to participate in the MIMY project.

2.3.1. Research locations

It must be emphasised that the “local” is a “slippery concept, which means that it may mean different things in different contexts (the neighbourhood, the district, the city or the village etc.) and that it is extremely difficult “to propose a definition of the local that goes beyond merely using administrative boundaries” (Plöger & Aydar, 2021a, p. 5). Nevertheless, in each of the nine countries, **two contrasting localities** were identified, taking into account differences in size (larger cities vs smaller towns or villages), **socio-economic settings and centre-periphery relationships**, as well as “opportunity structures such as those related to the labour market, educational institutions, social services and the level of specialist provision to migrant communities” (Shahrokh et al., 2021a, p. 7). The selected localities are listed and marked on the map below (for a detailed description of these localities, please see: Shahrokh et al., 2021a).

England (UK)

1. Sheffield
2. Barnsley

Germany

3. Dortmund
4. Holzminden

Hungary

5. Budapest
6. Szeged

Italy

7. Milan
8. Reggio Emilia

Luxembourg

9. Esch-sur-Alzette
10. Wiltz and Diekirch

Norway

11. Bergen
12. Sogn

Poland

13. Warsaw
14. Pruszcz Gdański

Romania

15. Bucharest
16. Iași

Sweden

17. Malmö
18. Österien



Figure 2.1. The map of MIMY research localities

Source: Own elaboration based on Shahrokh et al. 2021a, p. 11

2.3.2. Research sample

To incorporate different perspectives on young migrants’ integration in the MIMY project, we used triangulation of participants. In total, **1,172² participants** were involved in various empirical activities within the MIMY project. The participants were recruited through existing networks, as well as through snowball samples. Among these participants, four research groups may be distinguished.

The main group of participants were **young migrants**. The MIMY consortium defines young as people aged between 18 and 29 years, although sometimes

² Some participants took part in more than one research endeavour (e.g. some stakeholders took part in interviews and in design thinking workshops), Thus the numbers of participants presented in Part 2.4. Research approach and endeavours does not add up to this number.

participants who were slightly above or below this age took part in the research³. This young adult age group is rarely studied in migration studies and there is insufficient knowledge about the interconnection of migration and transition to adulthood, thus this group was identified and put at the centre of the MIMY project.

Although the **term “migrant”** is broad and might indicate any person that is mobile, for the purpose of this study we followed the European Migration Network which considers a “migrant” as someone who “establishes their usual residence in the territory of an EU/EFTA Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been resident of a third country” (EMN, 2019). Moreover, we focused only on Third Country Nationals: young migrants residing in the European Economic Area (EEA), including the EU and the United Kingdom after Brexit, who originally hold citizenship from countries outside of this context (some may have double citizenship, but are first generation migrants). These countries are commonly referred to as “Third Countries” and their citizens as “Third Country Nationals”. Therefore, in our sample there were no migrants from EU countries residing in another EU country or the United Kingdom. The research group also excluded people with a migration background, meaning second generation migrants.

Within the category of young migrants, we distinguished two subcategories of research participants – **young migrants in vulnerable conditions and young migrants with positive integration experiences**. a broad definition of vulnerability was adopted for the recruitment of the first subcategory of research participants. Young migrants in vulnerable conditions, who are at the centre of interest in MIMY, are also broadly conceptualised as those who experience various difficulties, for instance social and economic deprivation, being a forced migrant, having traumatic past experiences, being in a precarious situation (MIMY Consortium, 2019). We did not want to impose the label of vulnerability on certain young people, therefore we often asked peer researchers to identify those of their peers who, in their opinion, might be in a vulnerable situation. As a result, the sample was extremely heterogeneous and varied from country to country, but certain common as well as national specific factors creating conditions of vulnerability were identified in many different areas and contexts.

The second subcategory of young migrants comprised young migrants with positive integration experiences. We identified these groups together with peer researchers, stakeholders and young migrants in vulnerable situations. We asked all of them to indicate those young migrants who had gained public visibility at a local or national level for their civic engagement and/or for leadership positions within different contexts: culture, schools/universities, professional associations, entrepreneurship, work unions, political movements or institutions, volunteer organisations, ethnic associations, and so on. The level of their social visibility and impact on the community varied from country

³ Even though the consortium agrees with the UNESCO definition emphasising that the term youth “is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood’s independence” and that the term “youth” should be seen as a fluid category rather than a fixed age-group (UNESCO, 2017), in terms of statistical comparison, an age category was considered necessary.

to country, nevertheless young migrants in this subgroup were somehow appreciated by the diaspora.

In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of integration processes in the studied localities, previous generations of migrants, who were part of the local population, were also invited to take part in the MIMY project. Including their experiences was important, because it gave us a chance to learn from the past, when the opportunity structure in many localities may have been different. By **older generation migrants** we understand persons who have resided in a given locality for at least five years, are 1st generation of migrants, and are over 30 years old. In most cases they were TCN, but some of them had already obtained the citizenship of a resident country. Among this group there were also some participants whose origins were from another EU country (e.g. Portuguese participants in Luxembourg), yet for a few of them, at the time when they came to the host country, their home country was not part of the EU/ EEA.

Another group of participants consisted of various **stakeholders**. By stakeholders we understand experts involved in a particular organisation, institution or project in the field of migration and/or youth. They include academics, policy makers, policy users (practitioners), representing both the public sector and NGOs on local, regional, national and European level. To reach this group of participants we first identified the entities in the research locations that work in the field of migrant integration. We then contacted those entities and asked them to appoint individuals who had the best expertise in the integration of young migrants. Some of the stakeholders were also young, migrants or representatives of second generation migrants, but the majority of them were non-migrants.

The last group of research participants consisted of **non-migrant young adults experiencing conditions of vulnerability**, meaning people aged 18-29 years old, who in general do not have any experience of migration. In some cases, this group included second generation migrants or Roma people, but none of the research participants from this group was a first generation migrant. Their incorporation in MIMY allowed comparison between them and young migrants in vulnerable conditions, thus non-migrant young adults were identified among those in vulnerable situations, such as NEET, people in precarious life and work conditions, members of national/ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ people.



main countries of origin of MIMY research participants

research sample

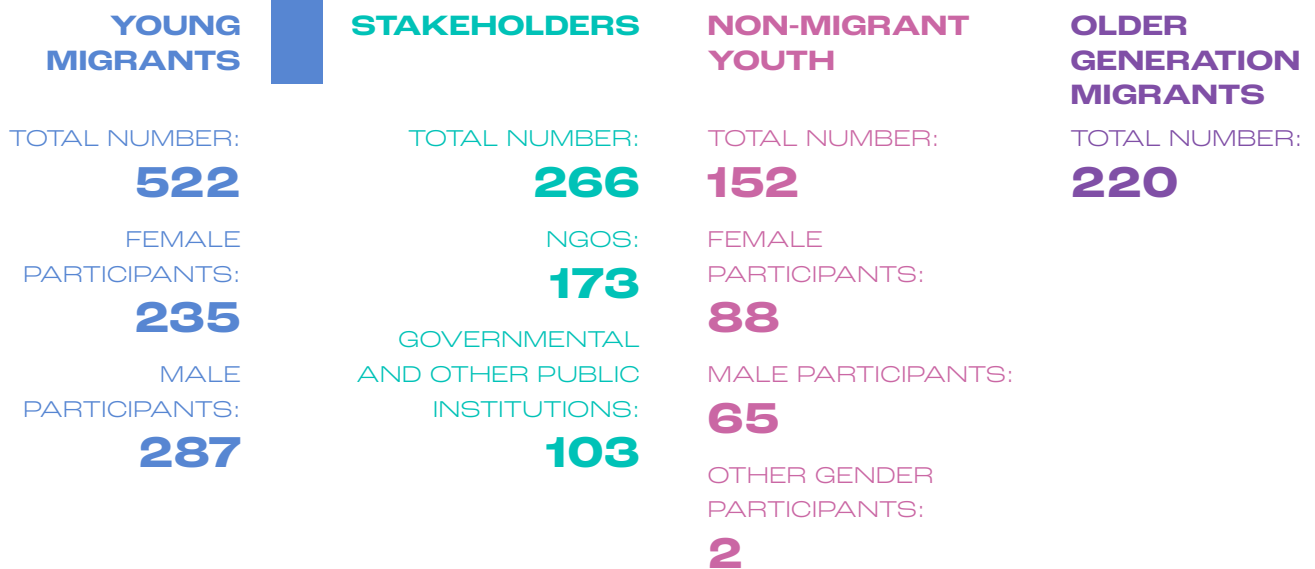


Figure 2.2. Research sample
Source: Own elaboration based on the MIMY findings.

2.4. Research approach and endeavours

In the MIMY project we used a multi-method research approach incorporating a range of quantitative and qualitative methods. The data collected from these research endeavours were triangulated to establish uncertainties, gaps and consensus in the theory, research and findings regarding young migrants' integration. The research concept incorporated a participatory action research approach, which brought young people with lived experience of migration into the research decision-making, implementation and dissemination process.

2.4.1. Participatory action research approach

Participatory action research (PAR) is an approach to enquiry that involves researchers and participants working together to build context specific understanding of social issues and drive social change. There are many different definitions of the approach, ours relied on the integration of **peer researchers** in the research endeavours and the use of **art-based events** to support processes of participation and action. In the field of migrant integration, the use of PAR may greatly improve existing individual and institutional knowledge, policies, strategies, and practices. In turn, researchers can learn from migrants themselves, practitioners and policy-makers. Among the action methodologies, art-based and peer research appeared most suited to engaging both young migrants and stakeholders in the field of migrant integration in the research process, because it stimulates collaborative action, mutual learning and the search for effective solutions to existing problems and challenges.

By using PAR, MIMY aimed to show that theory is not separate from practice and concept is not separate from reality. Within this realm, the action research aimed both to provide solutions for immediate problems and to inform best practice solutions, thus assisting institutions to improve their knowledge, strategies, and practices regarding integration policies for young migrants. Conversely, researchers were also able to learn from young migrants, practitioners and policymakers in developing new concepts and methodologies (Skrobanek et al., 2021).

In line with **respecting the agency of migrants** during the research process (Ryan et al., 2011), young migrants were trained and prepared to undertake research activities, thus positioning young migrants as researchers themselves. The peer research approach supported a space for young migrants to transform their integration experiences, **empowering their voices within the research process**. The scope of peer researchers' engagement was not fixed *a priori*, but deliberately left open. There was a continuous process of mutual learning and negotiation of peer researchers' capabilities, expectations, and goals. The catalogue of tasks that peer researchers were engaged in was comprehensive and included the following: participation in peer research training; co-creation of research tools; recruitment of participants; assisting/conducting research interviews and focus groups; preparing notes/transcripts; data analysis (including data coding and co-writing reports); reviewing reports; social media activities; participation in events within the project and active promotion of those events; and participation in dissemination activities; teaching and training other researchers in peer research methods; participating in the writing of a blog that reflected their participation experiences and learnings. By working with peer

researchers, we aimed to support the empowerment of young migrants, thus contributing to their participation and engagement in constructing narratives and courses of action that closely concern their migratory and integration experiences and trajectories.

In addition, other action research methodologies were used that relied on **art-based methods** such as LEGO® Serious Play®, Digital Storytelling and Photovoice. The use of art-based events and peer researchers opened spaces for active and creative participation in the **co-construction of new knowledge**, and innovative ways of constructing meaning about migration integration experiences. Facilitating research participants' participation in knowledge construction as experts can strongly stimulate the process of empowerment, manifested in narratives related to their own personal experiences, in which their own strengths and capacity for action become emphasised. In this way, a more **diverse, inclusive, and dialogic knowledge** was achieved, through the use of a more ethically driven and collaborative research process that opened new perspectives and knowledge construction legitimacies. Research participants and their newly acknowledged expertise were brought to the centre of the scientific inquiry using creative research practices. From passive participants in research, young migrants became co-constructors, co-creators, co-producers, and sharers of knowledge.

Finally, yet importantly, peer research and art-based methodologies allowed **new ways of disseminating scientific results**. Instead of a dry and more impersonal approach to dissemination, peer research and art-based events introduce more personal, sensory experiences, thus humanising, and giving an experiential context to the theorising procedures. Such dissemination methods are capable of impacting local communities, local authorities, and diverse actors, stimulating them to act (within their powers and practices) in order to produce the necessary changes (whether at the micro, meso or macro level) to tackle the vulnerability sources that negatively impact many young migrants' lives. An important part of empowerment was the [MIMY Youth Blog](#), an online space where peer researchers could share their experiences related to participation in the research process. They could also reflect on the stories of those who came before them to foster understanding between generations and present their personal experiences, opinions and critical insights on key themes around migration and integration.

Following the notion of the participatory approach, we implemented various research methods and techniques, briefly described below. They are presented in line with the above presented logic of the project.

2.4.2. Desk research

These methods essentially included **a literature review and content analysis** of scientific headlines and journal abstracts in order to gather, collect and systematise relevant information on integration, vulnerability and resilience. Theories and theoretical approaches were explored, documented and critically assessed. This **systematic desk-based exercise** allowed us to identify classical and new integration theoretical approaches which relate to one or more of the concepts relevant to the project: **vulnerability, resilience with integration** of young migrants from a life-course perspective. Relevant key themes were

identified, systematised and consolidated, providing the basis for further critical analysis and documentation. In addition, the mapping of local service provision for young migrants was conducted through a review of online directories as well as web-searches and telephone enquiries.

Articles published from 2008 to 2020, in the discipline of social science (including social psychology, integration and migration studies, rural society studies, social work, and sociology), social geography and psychology were investigated. In total, **341 articles** were screened and 142 closely inspected in search of terms such as “vulnerability”, “resilience” and “integration”. In addition, there was a systematic review of the literature in local languages on young migrants in vulnerable conditions concerning integration issues. The results from this study were published in the reports: “Report about the conceptualisation of integration, vulnerability, resilience and youth in the context of migration” (Dyer Ånensen et al., 2020) and “Literature review: Young vulnerable migrants” (Lind, 2021).

2.4.3. Quantitative secondary data analysis

This activity was devoted to gathering secondary macro and micro data from various sources (e.g. European Social Survey, national statistics offices), with the aim of developing an analysis of the migrants’ trajectories and the potential effects of migration. While macro-econometric analysis was used to explore the intensity of relations between youth migration and social and economic conditions, statistical micro data analysis was used to evaluate the perceptions of European citizens on migrants. For this analysis, national and European sample data on youth migration and integration was used to create a macro-data inventory, as well as carry out descriptive statistical analyses to evaluate migration flows. Econometric modelling on micro-data (including, but not limited to, linear, non-linear and panel data regression models) was used to explain the perceptions of individuals on migrants and migration. Confirmatory factor analysis was used when searching for joint variations in response to unobserved latent variables, and network analysis and clustering techniques were applied to analyse the flows of young migrants and determine their different patterns. The results of the quantitative analysis were published in two public reports (see: Roman et al., 2020; Roman et al., 2021).

2.4.4. Policy and discourse analysis

The range of dynamic discourses present in public and policy arenas were captured, as well as changes over time, using a bottom-up approach which took into account the specific cultural contexts and conditions under which they are produced. These captured narratives reveal how discourses have developed in the press and within the EU policy domain according to political and cultural events, thus shedding light on the media and EU policy discourses. A comparative analysis provided important standalone research results and contributed a high added value to the overall analysis of the project. First, the mapping of policies at the state level and a literature review were performed through desk research. Second, media analysis made it possible to compare how the issue of young migrants’ integration is framed in the media, as well as to capture the tone and nature of political debate in the different countries (see: Emilsson et al., 2021a; Emilsson et al., 2021b).

2.4.4. Semi-structured individual in-depth interviews

In order to gain young migrants' subjective perspective on their integration trajectories, on the challenges they face and resources that are helpful, semi-structured individual in-depth interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted with two subgroups of young migrants: those in vulnerable conditions and those with positive integration experiences. In both cases **visual tools aimed at facilitating a narrative** were applied (Regalia et al. 2022, p. 11; Crapollicchio & Marzana, 2022, p.10).

Interviews conducted with young migrants in vulnerable conditions were aimed at "exploring participants' personal history and migratory experiences, focusing on psychological, family and community factors that different subgroups of young migrants in vulnerable conditions perceived as opportunities and/or constraints along their integration process and trajectory" (Regalia et al. 2022, p. 11). Across the 9 countries, **288 interviews** were conducted with **young migrants in vulnerable situations**.

Interviews with young migrants with positive experiences of integration were designed to explore their migration trajectories, the obstacles and the resources that they use, the personal meaning of the social recognition they receive in host societies, as well as their understanding of the concept of integration (Crapolicchio & Marzana, 2022, p.10). Across the 9 countries, **90 interviews** were conducted with this latter group.

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with key stakeholders in the field of youth integration services. Participants were identified via desk research and mapping the provision of services in different localities (Shahrokh et al., 2021a). During the interviews they were invited "to share their knowledge of the landscape of integration within their local context, and the social relations affecting young migrants" (Shahrokh et al., 2021b). Overall, **266 stakeholders** participated in this research endeavour, including representatives of both the public and private sector, as well as youth-led organisations. Analysis of the individual interviews, both with young migrants and stakeholders, can be found in various MIMY reports (see: Plöger & Aydar, 2021b; Shahrokh et al., 2021a; Shahrokh et al., 2021b; Crapollicchio & Marzana, 2022; Regalia et al., 2022).

2.4.5. Biographical narrative interviews

This interviewing technique was used to elicit an uninterrupted biographical story from young non-migrants in vulnerable conditions. Interviewing non-migrants, as part of the local population, was aimed at comparing their experiences of resilience and vulnerabilities with those of young migrants, as well as exploring their "complex perceptions of oneself and others in a sense of belonging or foreignness, being integrated or disintegrated" (Biaback Anong et al., 2022, p. 2). Interviews were inspired by the autobiographical approach of Fritz Schütze, but not used in "its pure" form, but in combination with guiding questions, inquiring deeper into the areas of analysis being vulnerability, resilience (...) and perceptions on migration and integration" (Biaback Anong et al., 2022, p. 5; see also: Penke et al., 2021). Overall, **152 young non-migrant** persons took part in these interviews. Analysis of the biographical interviews are published in the report "I think we can all try a bit". Public report on non-migrant youth's perceptions and attitudes towards integration, vulnerability and resilience" (Biaback Anong et al., 2022).

2.4.6. Focus group interviews

This qualitative interview technique, perceived as providing a more natural atmosphere and interaction within the group, was applied among several groups of participants. As with the individual interviews, **visual tools aimed at facilitating a narrative** were used (Giuliani et al., 2022; Kilkey & Shahrokh, 2022).

First, this method was applied to focus on the individual and cultural perceptions of vulnerability (Giuliani et al., 2022). Ideas about vulnerability were investigated and explored in focus group interviews with two subgroups, composed respectively of young migrants (144 participants) and TCN migrant parents with a child/children in the host country (77 participants). Most often, the latter subgroup represented the older generation of TCN migrants, and so for the purpose of analysis, in this report both groups are combined.

Second, this method was used to examine the social, economic and emotional experiences of integration by drawing on the lessons learnt from previous waves of migrants in local areas (older generation migrants). In this case FGIs were aimed at exploring 1) participants' aspirations, plans and intentions, as well as the context of their arrival; 2) what was helpful and what hindered them building lives in a given locality and 3) what lessons can be learned from their experiences to improve the situation of young migrants today and facilitate the integration process (Kilkey & Shahrokh, 2022). Across the 9 countries, **143 persons** took part in these FGIs (see: Giuliani et al., 2022).

2.4.7. Design thinking workshops on the integration of migrant youth

Design thinking workshops were organised in eight case study countries (Germany, England (UK), Luxembourg, Romania, Italy, Poland, Norway and Sweden) where different stakeholders, migrant youth and non-migrant youth were brought together with the participation of peer researchers. The first part of the workshops involved presenting the preliminary MIMY fieldwork results of Work Packages 1 to 6. The second part was focused on design thinking (Oliveira et al., 2022; Oliveira & Nienaber, 2023), where young migrants, practitioners, policymakers and researchers gathered in different roundtable groups to jointly evaluate the research results – identifying specific integration problems/challenges and proposing and discussing possible solutions. The overall aim was to facilitate self-expression and reduce power imbalances between researchers, migrants and experts. Finally, the outputs of design thinking were elaborated by these groups in terms of their application and replicability in different localities/settings, culminating in the elaboration of “lessons learned”. Overall, **133 participants** took part in the workshops, **together with 37 peer researchers**. Some reflections from the design thinking workshops can be found in the MIMY Youth Blog (see: [MIMY Youth Blog](#), Efsane, peer researcher in Germany).

2.4.8. Art-based methods

Art-based methods such as **digital storytelling, a mixed art-based methods project, LEGO® Serious Play®, photovoice and collage work** were used to discuss with young migrants and their non-migrant peers the results obtained in the framework of the other WPs (Oliveira et al., 2022). These methods offered young people safe spaces and creative ways of retelling their life experiences. The dialogical use of creativity and active collaboration in research activities works

as a powerful tool to narratively explore, **re-create and re-enact the context-specific issues**, problems, dilemmas and challenges associated with migrants' integration trajectories in their host societies. During the art-based workshops, young migrants were thus provided with opportunities to explore what they perceived as “their vulnerabilities”, “their resiliences”, “their resistances” and “everyday negotiations” in their integration trajectories. In some cases, they could also compare their experience with the experience of their non-migrant peers.

The art-based methods were followed by art events, where young participants could present the outcomes of their work to the local community, stakeholders, as well as to their family and friends. For instance, during the MIMY final conference there was an open venue, where art-work such as [video](#), LEGO® Serious Play® models and photography exhibitions about being young migrants were presented. The MIMY Youth Blog also contains some in-sights from participation in the art-based workshops (see: [MIMY Youth Blog](#), Melda, peer researcher in Germany). In all art-based events and workshops, **114 participants** took part.

2.4.9. Delphi study

Based on the results of previous WPs, particularly on the interviews with stakeholders conducted in the framework of WP5, and with participation of the stakeholders involved in the “stakeholder platform”, **two waves of a youth-informed Delphi Study** were conducted in seven European countries between 2021 and 2022. The aims of the Delphi study were to **envisage practice-led policy** addressing young migrants in vulnerable conditions and to **make recommendations** for relevant actors, both policy makers and policy users, that are contextualised and responsive to the unique realities of young migrants in vulnerable conditions. Overall, **114 stakeholders took part** in the first wave of the Delphi study, of which approximately one third had a migratory background and one third were young (below 30). Upon completing the data collection and analysis, stakeholders received a summary of this wave of research, and this formed the basis for the questionnaire sent out within Wave 2, in which 45 participants were fully involved. The results of the Delphi study will be published in a separate report: “Report covering the Delphi study, prospects for Impact Assessment and project Road Map for the future” (Grabowska & Jastrzębowska, 2023) and will feed MIMY's policy recommendations delivered under WP9.

2.5. Overarching research limitations and experienced constraints⁴

The MIMY research team made every effort to carry out the research with the greatest diligence and reliability to provide the best possible scientific results. Nevertheless, as in every study, there were certain research limitations that are worth indicating. Here, general limitations of the are discussed and in the sections that follow, more specific reflections on the limitations and lessons learnt for different methods are shared. First of all, the project started just a few weeks before the **COVID-19 epidemic outbreak**. This fact primarily caused

⁴ In this brief methodological overview we do not discuss the ethical challenges as we provide extensive exploration of the ethical challenges related to researching young migrants in vulnerable conditions in chapter 7.

delays in the project due to the quarantine and sanitary restrictions imposed in most countries involved in MIMY, and the need to reorganise research and organisational processes. Following the implementation of new solutions, such as remote working/ home offices, the project continued. However, the new reality had a significant impact on the project. Most of the work in national teams, as well as internationally, was done online. Moreover, research methods had to be adjusted to new circumstances. Thus, the vast majority of the research endeavours in the first two years of the project were led online (e.g. interviews with stakeholders or young migrants).

Another limitation **concerns access to young migrants in vulnerable situations**. Our ethical choice was to use a broad concept of vulnerabilities, as we did not want to impose a label of “vulnerable” on any research participant. Due to this approach, it was sometimes difficult to identify and reach this research group. To overcome this challenge, we worked closely with practitioners and peer researchers to identify young migrants in vulnerable situations and to reach them. The cooperation with peer researchers was especially helpful in this matter, as there was less ethical asymmetry between them and the research participants.

The last limitation derives from the **scope of the research project**. The project was conducted in nine national contexts which differed from each other. Therefore, a systematic and comprehensive comparison between different national contexts was challenging, and sometimes it was difficult to provide comparable synthesised results that might be generalised within the whole research sample. To overcome such limitations, some results were presented on the national level, and whenever possible, they were compared and overall findings were presented. Furthermore, collaborations between national teams evolved during the course of the project, which led to comparison and exploration of data between two countries (see: Giuliani et al., forthcoming).

3. Peer research approach

3.1. Introduction

In the last decade, the Participatory Research Approach (PAR) has gained greater recognition in the field of migration studies (Mata-Codesal et al., 2020). The main aim of PAR, which consists of various methodological approaches and research techniques, is to achieve an equal distribution of power among all those involved in the research process. One way of implementing the participatory approach is the peer research approach - “a participatory research method in which people with lived experience of the issues being studied take part in directing and conducting the research. It aims to empower people to affect positive change by participating in research on their own communities” (Young Foundation, 2023). Peer researchers can be defined as “members of a community, kinship, or other social networks, who often with no prior research experience, undertake training in research methods, become trusted, equal members of a research team, and work as researchers within their own communities or networks” (Bell et al. 2021, p. 19).

Peer researchers' lived experiences and their 'insider' knowledge can facilitate the research process and thus, enhance understanding of the research subject. Moreover, the peer research approach has the potential to support empowerment of young people by amplifying their voices and minimising power imbalances between researchers and participants. As Smith et al. (2002) conclude, “participatory research is beneficial both because of its implicit values (such as empowerment and inclusion) and also because it improves our level of understanding of the substantive subject area” (p. 192).

The peer research approach is increasingly being used in research with young people in different contexts (Lushey & Munro, 2015; Kelly et al., 2020; Padilla-Petry & Miño Puigcercós, 2022). As a result, there is a growing understanding of both the advantages and challenges of applying a peer research approach in qualitative research on youth (Devotta et al., 2016, Smith et al., 2002, Kilpatrick et al., 2007, Martin et al., 2019). This chapter aims to add to that understanding by providing a reflection on the involvement of young migrants as peer researchers in the MIMY project focused on the integration of migrant youth in vulnerable situations (Trąbka et al., 2023).

3.2. Participation of peer researchers in the MIMY project

In the MIMY project, we tried to implement the peer research approach broadly and flexibly, which means that in various national teams peer researchers were engaged in different parts of the project and to different extents. The scope of peer researchers' engagement was not fixed a priori, but deliberately left open. We tried to adapt the scope of responsibilities as much as possible to the capacities and constraints of each peer researcher (their skills, time etc.) while also considering the researchers' resources and institutional requirements. Hence, the participation of peer researchers in the MIMY project was a continuous process of mutual learning and negotiation regarding peer researchers'

possibilities, expectations, and goals and the schedule and assumptions of the MIMY project. Therefore, the catalogue of tasks in which peer researchers were engaged was comprehensive and diversified within various work packages. As part of the MIMY project, a total of **40 peer researchers** cooperated at various stages and with varying intensity, bringing enormous value to the research on young migrants.

Peer researcher in the MIMY project – a young person (aged 18-29) with migration experience or backgrounds, living in a research location selected as a case study in each country.

Before the peer researchers got involved in the research under the MIMY project, they all took part in **Peer Research Training** (organised by each national team within WP7). The training concerned the methodology and ethics of conducting social research. However, the research teams had flexibility regarding the form of training, its length and detailed scope. At further stages of the project, peer researchers participated in group reflection sessions/individual mentoring during their involvement and final evaluation sessions. Below we describe the involvement of peer researchers in various components of the MIMY project.

Within **WP4 “Migrant youth between vulnerability and resilience”**, covering individual interviews (IDIs) and group interviews (FGIs) with young migrants in vulnerable situations as well as IDIs with migrants who had positive integration experiences, peer researchers participated in various research activities, ranging from **co-creating IDI’s research tools to data analysis and dissemination**. In discussing the interview scenarios, based on their own lived experiences and interests, peer researchers reviewed/revised the topic guides, proposing modifications or additional questions. Peer researchers and researchers⁵ **discussed the recruitment criteria for the research** and then actively participated in the recruitment of IDI and FGI participants. This included creating a flyer for recruitment, searching for participants among their networks and communities, and contacting various stakeholders to recruit young migrants ready to share their stories. The main research task in WP4 was **assisting and/or conducting interviews**. As most peer researchers had no prior research experience, they acted as observers and assistants during the first interviews to prepare them to work as independent researchers. If they felt ready, they could conduct subsequent interviews individually. However, it sometimes happened that peer researchers did not feel sufficiently confident to carry out research activities independently (for example, in the rich multilingual context of Luxembourg, some peer researchers could not participate in certain activities because of their language proficiency). Then, peer researchers were responsible for **preparing detailed notes or transcripts** based on recording from IDIs/FGIs. In some cases, if peer researchers conducted research in native languages (e.g. Syriac, Tajik) that were not available to the researchers, they were also asked to prepare a **translation of the interviews**.

⁵ We use terms “peer researchers” and “researchers” to distinguish those researchers who are part of the community involved in the study (in the case of the MIMY project – migrant community) – meaning “peer researchers”, from the academic “researchers” who conduct research as outsiders. Nevertheless, we want to emphasise that both are considered as equal members of the MIMY research team.

Peer researchers also actively participated in **data analysis**, although this took many different forms, depending primarily on time constraints and peer researchers' skills, but also their willingness to engage in this project stage. In the minimum version, after completing the interviews, we asked peer researchers to **share their reflections** on the research results (first impressions based on IDIs, FGIs, e.g. what they had learned, what interested or surprised them, what topics they considered important, what should be deepened etc.). In the case of some research teams, it was possible to involve peer researchers in **coding and data analysis** and then **co-creating reports**, which can be considered a great success in implementing the peer research approach. Alternatively, if peer researchers were not involved in preparing the reports, then once the draft version of the reports was ready, researchers sent it to peer researchers for **review - feedback and supplementary remarks**.

In a similar way, peer researchers played a major part in **WP5 “Effects of local actors on migration and integration dynamics”** (recruiting participants – the older generation of migrants, assisting/conducting the group interviews, preparing notes/transcription and data analysis), and, to a lesser extent, in **WP6 “Assessing the critical role of the local population”** (research on young non-migrants). Under WP5, which is the primary WP where peer research approach were involved, peer researchers were also involved in communication activities, including **writing the MIMY Youth blog**. The [MIMY Youth blog](#) is a virtual space that is part of the [MIMY project website](#), where young migrants can share their reflections within three categories: on learning lessons from the past (mainly based on their observations from the FGIs with older migrants), their opinions and thoughts on migration and integration (based on research and their own experience) and their stories on the journey of being peer researcher within MIMY (see: 4. Peer researchers' perspective...). This provides an opportunity for the voice of young migrants to be strengthened, so that they become more clearly heard by the wider community.

Peer researchers were also extensively involved in **WP7 “Laboratories of reality: Participatory and action research”**, the aim of which was to discuss the project results with migrant advisory groups and young migrants in vulnerable conditions. Apart from participation in **the Peer Research Training** mentioned above, peer researchers **took part in different art-based events** (like Lego® Serious Play®, Photovoice, and Digital Storytelling, see: 6. Art-based methods) and **Design Thinking** workshops with stakeholders and youth. They also actively supported the promotion of these events and the recruitment of workshop participants.

Importantly, peer researchers also participated in the activities carried out under **WP9 “Innovation management: communication, dissemination and exploitation”**. They were involved in creating social-media content, co-designing the internet page for the MIMY Youth Blog, or creating material for recruiting participants. They also participated in **dissemination activities**, for example, in MIMY's National Expert Committees meetings or conferences where the results of the MIMY were presented, including the 19th IMISCOE Annual Conference and MIMY final conference. Notably, during these events, we organised **MIMY Peer Research Workshops** where both researchers and peer researchers could share their

reflections on the peer research approach⁶. Some research teams have also succeeded in collaborating with peer researchers on **scientific articles**.

Working with peer researchers was built into the MIMY project from the start and formed a key part of the research work which was aimed towards facilitating the empowerment of young migrants. Within the MIMY project, young migrants were actively involved in creating, shaping and delivering the research, including analysis and dissemination, albeit to varying degrees in different national contexts. Here, based on the experience of the MIMY project, we present a number of challenges that may occur at different stages of the project involving young migrants as peer researchers. We reflect on the experiences of recruiting, training and collaborating with, whilst learning from, young peer researchers with migration experiences or backgrounds. We also discuss the possible strategies that may be adopted by researchers in order to resolve these concerns. We also show that there are real benefits to be gained from the peer research approach (both for the research process, researchers and peer researchers and, more broadly, communities involved in the study), which clearly offset the demands involved. Despite the numerous challenges posed by the peer research approach, we hope that with this publication, we will encourage you to include peer researchers in project planning, implementation and dissemination.

3.3. Value of the peer research approach in research on young migrants

» First of all, applying a peer researcher approach can **minimise the risk of methodological nationalism** occurring in migration studies (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2003). Migrant peer researchers are experts with greater access to the research field due to their lived experiences. Thus, they may, for example, refine research tools by reformulating or adding questions that are important to the studied community. The involvement of peer researchers in the contextualisation of the research tools can also ensure use of the most appropriate terminology, avoiding confusing interview moments and creating more inviting questions for participants. Similarly, peer researchers can provide invaluable practical support in terms of building cultural sensitivity and linguistic support by facilitating the research. Peer researchers can identify issues that would be excluded or underplayed because of cultural nuances, or which could be overlooked by an outsider researcher speaking a different language or from a different culture. Furthermore, as peer researchers' positionalities (insiders) differ from those of researchers (outsiders), their involvement in the data analysis can provide an in-depth, multidimensional and more complex interpretation of the research material that reduces the risk of misinterpreting interviewees' responses, resulting in better quality research.

⁶ Commentary on this event, seen through the eyes of peer researchers, is available on the [MIMY Youth Blog](#) in the post entitled "Exciting Final Conference of MIMY Project - The Peer Researcher's View".

- » Peer researchers can significantly **facilitate recruitment for the study** by engaging their networks and contacts to support this process. As insiders (members of a community), peer researchers can reach participants that outsider researchers would not be able to recruit. Good knowledge of the community and issues affecting young people with migration experiences, together with cultural awareness, enhances their ability to communicate clearly and accessibly to research participants and build a trusting relationship with them. Peer researchers can effectively motivate and encourage young migrants (as they themselves are young people with migratory experiences/backgrounds) to take part in the study, relevantly identifying barriers to participation and, importantly, finding ways to overcome these.
- » Conducting research with the help of peer researchers can **reduce the asymmetry on the interviewer-interviewee line** resulting in more balance in the power relationships between researchers and participants. In this case, equality in the research process can be achieved by factors such as conducting research in the mother tongue of the interlocutors and the possibility of facilitating more open interviews/discussions through the research relation based on shared experience. Peer researchers can understand very well the issues affecting young people with migratory experiences and the challenges and opportunities faced. Thanks to their similar age and shared experiences, peer researchers can easily interact with research participants, talking to them with empathy and in a friendly way. Thus, participants can reveal to peer researchers things that they would not bring up in contact with outsider researchers from academia. Therefore, peer researchers' participation in fieldwork can significantly enhance the depth and richness of the data collected.
- » The peer research approach creates an opportunity for **mutual reflexive learning and co-production of knowledge** between researchers and peer researchers. This consists of sharing experiences and insights, discussing different perspectives, and joint reflection on the research process. Involving peer researchers throughout the whole research process and recognising their expertise ensures ongoing co-production that improves the authenticity of data analysis and the presentation of findings and recommendations. Moreover, working together while conducting research, collecting and analysing data, and interpreting and disseminating the findings builds mutual recognition and supports migrants' agency, as their presence within the research is not instrumental and tokenistic, but forms a partnership. Taking part in the co-production and development of knowledge is empowering for peer researchers and consciousness-raising for all members of the research team.
- » Cooperation with peer researchers can bring unexpected benefits for researchers which are not immediately obvious. The peer research approach provides the opportunity for a **more reflexive approach** to research favouring reflection of the researchers' positionality and its impact on the research process and outcomes. As trust and reciprocity grow within the research group, the peer researchers can share their ideas and thoughts based on their own as well as their friends' and families' life experiences. These "true-life" reflections can provoke the researchers to reflect on their presuppositions more than if they conducted the research on their own. Thus, collaborative

research work might contribute to researchers' development. Some researchers, under the influence of cooperation with peer researchers, can reshape their attitudes, making them more open to further collaboration with young or non-academic research partners. As a consequence, academia becomes more inclusive and ready to conduct research not only "about" but also "with" the researched community. This is conducive to **participatory research with the potential to introduce social change**.

- » Of particular note are the benefits that participation in a research project as a peer researcher can bring to young migrants. Primarily, peer researchers **can learn and develop different skills**. These include research skills (conducting research, analysing data, writing reports) and other transferable skills (like teamwork or communication). The knowledge and skills acquired by peer researchers during the research project may be useful for them in many other social and professional contexts. Participation in the research project can also enable their **personal development**, boosting their self-confidence and self-esteem. Working in a research team that recognises peer researchers' expertise, and their awareness of how they contribute to the results of the whole project may have an empowering effect and enhance peer researchers' self-efficacy.
- » Taking part in the project, peer researchers also can **gain new knowledge** (especially on migration/integration topics). Listening to the varied stories of migration and integration trajectories can **broaden peer researchers' horizons**, developing their empathy and social sensitivity. Active participation in the research enables peer researchers to understand the situation of young migrants better. In-depth knowledge of their situation (both hardships and ways of dealing with them) allows peer researchers to become aware of the complexity of human stories and look at other migrants without the preconceptions or prejudices that they may have had before joining the project. In other words, being a peer researcher in migration research can **redefine earlier ideas about migrants**.
- » In addition, it can develop peer researchers' **critical thinking skills** and encourage them to treat various discourses and migration/integration policies critically, challenging the existing ones. Thus, they can realise how, and by which means, power dynamics may shape the way integration is understood and experienced. Being a peer researcher in a research project on migration can also **reframe peer researchers' own migration experiences**. They can reflect on their own position in society, recognising both their privilege and its lack, depending on the context in which they find themselves.
- » Project participation can help utilise and **strengthen the community links that peer researchers have established in the host country**. This relates to the recruitment of study participants, consisting not only of direct contact with research participants, but also with various stakeholders (e.g. NGOs) who can facilitate access to interviewees. Peer researchers can also make new friends while participating in various events organised as part of the project (in the case of the MIMY project e.g. photovoice or digital storytelling workshops, which are described in detail in 6. Art-based methods). **Social connections** (including those with researchers and other peer researchers) can be a significant added value resulting from participation in the project.

- » The peer research approach in migration studies favours **the emancipation of minority groups** as it strives for the **inclusion and empowerment of young migrants**, referring to both peer researchers and study participants. By participating in the project, peer researchers can realise how vital the **self-advocacy** of excluded groups is, and what role social research can play in this process. Both peer researchers and participants can feel their voices are heard, not only in the research process itself, but also in preparing recommendations and implementing changes to improve the situation of migrant communities.

3.4. Challenges related to the peer research approach and how to overcome some of these

3.4.1. Peer researcher recruitment and engagement

- » Recruiting peer researchers who will understand research participants through shared lived experiences is key to implementing the peer research approach (Lushey & Munro, 2014). At the same time, **the peer researcher recruitment is challenging**, especially when the project focuses on people in vulnerable situations. Equally difficult can be **sustaining the engagement** of those who initially agreed to participate. Firstly, we assume that peer researchers will have similar experiences to the participants of the study, which in this case means that they are young people with a migration background, who may be in difficult life situations, which often means living and working in precarious conditions. As young people, they may face various challenges related to combining different social roles (often new to them) related to education, work, or family. Therefore, mainly due to time constraints resulting from many other duties, they may have difficulties with involvement in project activities. Because they have no previous research experience, they may have a lot of doubts related to the peer researcher role, which can effectively weaken their motivation to participate in the project.
- » Hence, we recommend preparing a **detailed description of the project activities and the scope of the peer research role** (the level of commitment expected, including specific tasks and responsibilities, the criteria and time required to fulfil this role). In addition to the material profits of involvement in the project (such as payment for work or a certificate of participation in the study that peer researchers can use in other educational and professional contexts), we should outline **additional benefits**, e.g. related to networking, the skills and experience the peer researchers can gain from being engaged in the project. Presenting transparent and detailed rules of participation in the project will favour **peer researchers' conscious decision about participating in the project**, which can strengthen their long-term commitment.
- » We postulate **recruiting peer researchers into paid positions/scholarships**. Remuneration for the work of peer researchers, from an ethical point of view, addresses the power balance and, from a practical point of view, supports the long-term commitment to this role. Offering a payment signifies that peer researchers' contribution is valued and their rights are respected, not only symbolically. However, while engaging peer researchers, there

may be **problems related to permissions and payments** for their work (this may depend on their legal status, employment formalities in the research institution, etc.) and frustration in attempting to surmount bureaucratic obstacles. Hence, we advise researchers to carefully plan the involvement of peer researchers in the research project design, considering practical constraints posed by national laws and institutional policies (identifying who could be recruited and how they could be remunerated).

- » We advise recruiting peer researchers using various means, including through migrant support organisations and social media. When recruiting, it is worth asking peer researcher candidates not only for basic information, such as their age or country of origin, but also their life situation and motivations, so it is possible **to propose cooperation to those who have the most similar lived experiences to the research participants**. Every interested person should have the opportunity to get acquainted with the project information before sending his/her application.
- » During the recruitment process, careful consideration should be given to issues around **accessibility and inclusion to recognise peer researchers' diversity**. Peer researchers applying to participate in the project can differ in terms of levels of experience in conducting research, but also in terms of their life situations. In the case of young migrants, this applies to their socioeconomic situation and legal status. Peer researchers can have various competencies, expectations and needs regarding their participation in the project. For this reason, we believe that the project participation rules cannot be too rigid.
- » Ideally, the recruitment of peer researchers should start as early as possible, so that they can participate in the research process from the very beginning, thereby having the opportunity to develop research questions and the research design, already at the stage of preparing the grant application and obtaining funds. **Peer researchers should be involved throughout the whole project**, including developing research tools, recruitment of participants, data collection and analysis, and disseminating research findings. Such research design helps **minimise methodological nationalism**, allowing for the collection of rich and in-depth data research material and its proper interpretation, as well as communication of the project results to the wider community. It can also **equalise power relations between researchers and peer researchers**, which, in addition to the ethical dimension, has a practical aspect: the sense of partnership is a factor that can encourage continuous engagement in peer research. The involvement of peer researchers during the whole project can **empower young migrants**, thus contributing to their agency and engagement in constructing narratives about migratory and integration experiences which can contribute to positive changes for migrant communities in the future.

3.4.2. Training and peer researcher support

- » Peer researchers can differ in terms of their level of their experience in conducting research, which is desirable as it may result in complementarity and effective internal group support. Most often, **peer researchers have no** (or very little) **previous research experience**, as this is not a required recruitment criterion for this role. For this reason, an essential element of projects applying the peer research approach is to **organise extensive**

research training and provide peer researchers with continuous support (methodological, organisational, emotional) at each stage of participation in the project.

- » **The training programme should be tailored to the peer researchers' needs and skills as much as possible.** Although diversity among peer researchers is generally a benefit, in the context of organising effective and efficient research training, it can be challenging. It is important to realise that peer researchers may have varying research, teamwork, communication and language skills. They may include people who have never had any experience with academia before, so the various activities associated with the role of peer researcher may be wholly new and, consequently, stressful for them. Therefore, it is crucial to organise **comprehensive** and, at the same time, **flexible research training** that will enable all peer researchers to be well-prepared for this role. The training programme should contain not only **methodological issues**, but also **ethical** issues in the research process. It is crucial to familiarise peer researchers with more than just 'procedural ethics' but also 'ethics in practice' (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) meaning the actual ethical dilemmas encountered in the research field (with particular emphasis on research of young people in vulnerable life situations). Additionally, group training sessions, particularly those where peer researchers can **exchange their reflections and insights**, are an effective tool for building trust in the team, both among researchers and peer researchers. Such meetings can translate into having peer support at further stages of the research process.
- » We recommend that peer researchers' learning process does not end with their participation in training sessions, but encourage researchers to provide **reflective workshops and refresher training** to facilitate common learning and skills development (Kelly et al., 2020). As far as possible, we postulate **regular and close-knit exchange within the research team**. Longer "detached periods" (due to other responsibilities of the research team members and/or peer researchers themselves) can be detrimental, resulting in negative consequences, for example, a loss of motivation for engagement among peer researchers.
- » Moreover, we recommend **combining group training sessions with an individual mentoring approach**, to address the challenging issues that may arise during the work of peer researchers. We strongly recommend that peer researchers be provided with **supervision** throughout the research process, so that they feel supported at every stage of the project. It is important to give peer researchers a space to ask questions and share their anxieties and dilemmas before starting the fieldwork. We should also pay special attention to preparing peer researchers for potential challenges or difficulties they may encounter when conducting research.
- » We should ensure that peer researchers put their theoretical knowledge into practice before they start researching on their own, to ensure that they feel comfortable in their role and are ready to carry out specific tasks. In order to prepare peer researchers well for independent research, we suggest that **they first participate in interviews or group discussions as observers** so that they have the opportunity to look at the work of more experienced team members. In the next step, they can conduct the interview themselves if they feel ready.

3.4.3. Conducting research together with the peer researchers

- » When considering the stage of conducting research, primarily, we should reflect on and broadly discuss **peer researchers' positionality** (Ryan et al., 2011) recognising their **dual role – both as members of the community and as researchers** – as this can bring several challenges for them. Their closeness to the research community puts peer researchers in a challenging situation where they have to constantly **negotiate the boundaries** between the research project and their private life. Peer researchers can find it difficult to draw the line on this issue clearly, thus, the research project needs to provide support in such situations and give space to talk about it. It is worth emphasising at the outset that it is **the researchers' responsibility to work with peer researchers to overcome the occurring challenges**. By no means is it the individual responsibility of peer researchers.
- » In projects that focus on people in vulnerable situations, fieldwork can include highly sensitive and potentially disturbing situations, which can be **emotionally difficult for peer researchers**. Particularly if they share similar experiences with participants, it might be hard for them to talk about them during interviews. Hearing the stories of other migrants can reawaken peer researchers' (very often painful) memories related to their migration path which can have a retraumatizing effect. Also, the confrontation with felt injustices such as racial or country of origin discriminations that may constitute a vivid part of the peer researchers' experiences can heighten in them strong feelings of rage and helplessness in the face of often perceived ongoing unsurmountable prejudices. The possible feeling of being overwhelmed, combined with a sense of helplessness in the face of the difficulties cited, can negatively impact peer researchers' well-being or even reopen old emotional wounds that will haunt them, which may require the provision of psychological support. This may also disrupt the flow of the conversation. The reluctance to ask about troublesome issues may result in not asking some questions or not developing certain themes in the interviews (this may also happen when peer researchers perceive specific experiences as common and obvious, so they do not deepen their inquiry). Also, it can be tough for peer researchers to manage emotional involvement and stay in the role of the researcher during the interview.
- » The dual role of peer researchers can **also impact their social relations**. Other community members can withdraw their trust, being afraid that their stories will be made publicly available. Moreover, interviewees may expect peer researchers to provide favours or support in return for their participation in the study. The above examples show that **managing role boundaries related to balancing the insider-outsider status may be very demanding**. Peer researchers should be strongly supported in such situations. We recommend a high level of team-internal exchange and reflection on this issue, starting with including this problem in research training.
- » It should be remembered that **peer researchers combine the role of a researcher with many other social roles** related to education, work, family or other social activities. Hence, they may have **difficulties with full involvement in project activities**. Some national MIMY research teams report that after peer researchers' support during the initial recruitment and interview round, it became more and more difficult to keep in contact with them and thus engage

them in subsequent tasks. This was dilemmatic, since the project's main aim was to include and, therefore, support young migrants. As researchers, we should be aware that **becoming and being an active peer researcher can be a big challenge** for young people in vulnerable conditions, especially when they come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Taking into account the challenges mentioned above, we postulate **openness and flexibility in the scope of tasks offered to peer researchers** so that they can choose in what tasks and to what extent they want to be involved at different stages of the research project (considering their different needs, skills, predispositions and possibilities).

- » Moreover, as researchers, we should be prepared that different peer researchers may have **different motivations and opportunities to get involved in the project**. It may be that some peer researchers treat participation in the project more instrumentally, mainly as a means to earn money. Because of their other commitments (but also because of their disinterest in scientific work), some peer researchers may be willing to engage only in specific research tasks (such as conducting an interview, preparing a transcription), but will not necessarily be ready for additional activities, such as interpreting results, preparing publications or attending conferences, especially as these are usually unpaid but very time-consuming activities. Similarly to the examples in the paragraph above, this situation can be difficult for researchers, particularly if their premise was fully participatory research that envisaged the involvement of peer researchers at every stage of the project, including the development of results and dissemination. Again, such situations should be treated with respect, **giving peer researchers full freedom as to the type and extent of their involvement** in different parts of the project.
- » Some challenges can be minimised by providing peer researchers with **appropriate ongoing support**. On the one hand, this can involve supervision, as mentioned earlier, but on the other hand, intervision is very important. **Supervision** entails talking about the research process and related themes with more experienced team members, whose responsibility is to give practical and emotional support to peer researchers during fieldwork, and monitor their well-being during the research process. The role of mentors is crucial, but exchanging experiences with other peer researchers and their support during intervision should not be underestimated.
- » **Intervision** is a form of group supervision that is peer-led, and which does not rely on an external expert acting as a facilitator (Staempfli & Fairtlough, 2019). The primary purpose of such meetings is to discuss different research situations or challenges related to fieldwork. The general aims of the method are for peer researchers to support each other, widen their perspectives and develop shared understanding, trust and openness. Thus, intervision can be a tool for **building a peer research community** which can constitute an additional positive outcome related to their engagement in the project. It is important to create a safe and reflective space for peer researcher teams, in which they have a chance to discuss not only hardships, but also satisfactory moments occurring during fieldwork.

3.4.4. Analysis of the data and dissemination of research results

- » Co-production of knowledge is crucial for migration studies that involve migrants in all stages of the research process, from design to data collection, data analysis and dissemination activities. The fundamental basis for co-

production is **an inclusive, collaborative research process based on shared power, trust and willingness to engage in mutual learning**. Co-production requires sharing project ownership, thus, both peer researchers and researchers should have equal access to the gathered and analysed data.

- » Peer researchers should be able to participate in data analysis. **Peer researchers may have differing motivations, willingness, and possibilities** to get involved in this project stage, so it is worth planning and enabling various forms of their involvement. This may include, for example, sharing post-fieldwork reflections, participating in data coding and analysis, contributing to the writing of reports, or providing feedback and supplementing remarks within a critical analysis of the researchers' findings. However, some of these forms may require additional time to train peer researchers, for example, in using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software.
- » All-importantly, working with peer researchers requires the knowledge and experience of young migrants to be taken into consideration and treated as one of the significant and equipollent perspectives. **Recognising peer researchers' expertise might be difficult for some academic researchers** and require reframing their research position. Researchers can gain from involving peer researchers at various stages of research design and delivery, but it requires their open-mindedness and flexibility. Primarily, they should be open to having their perspectives challenged during the course of the project.
- » In general, **knowledge production within a peer research approach should be democratic and inclusive**, which means it should not be generated and prepared only by researchers for other researchers (Martin et al., 2019). Research results should serve various aims – not only for developing the research field, but also in terms of producing knowledge for the general public and providing solutions for the specific community. Hence, according to the idea of knowledge co-production, the research outcomes should be presented in a range of forms including diverse content and language use. Researchers should prepare materials using not only academic language that can hinder access to research results, but also using more inclusive methods intended for a wider audience. Moreover, while conducting research with, and on, the migrant community, it is justifiable to create some deliverables in the native language of the minority group. Adapting the presentation of outcomes to suit different audiences, particularly community members who participated in the research, is an important element of the peer research approach.
- » **Peer researchers should be actively involved in sharing research findings** and acknowledged in project results and publications. They should have the opportunity to talk about the results of the project in their language and in their own (also non-academic) way, such as in an online blog (which worked well in the case of the MIMY project).
- » **Projects applying a peer research approach should be evaluated both by researchers and peer researchers**, who should be open to sharing their experiences and lessons learned. This solution will foster the continuous development of this approach, furthering the spread of the idea of knowledge co-production in social research.

3.5. Conclusions

Summarising the above-discussed topic, we should be aware that adopting the peer research approach **requires additional organisational (human, financial and time) resources**. We advise researchers to carefully plan the involvement of peer researchers in the research project design. In addition to making allowances for extra project costs, the project timetable should incorporate the time needed to recruit, train, involve and support peer researchers participating in the research. At the same time, we recommend **a great deal of flexibility, based on peer researchers' diversity**, in adapting the extent of the peer research role to the specific needs, expectations, and possibilities of each peer researcher.

When engaging peer researchers in the research project, we should keep in mind **the risk of their instrumentalization, meaning using their personal resources (such as knowledge, competencies, and network) authoritatively to fulfil the project's goals**. When deciding on a peer research approach, we should remember that it is not only a **methodological decision** but also, to a large extent, an **ethical** one which should be based on values such as **diversity, inclusion, social justice, and equity** (Flicker et al., 2009). Therefore, relations between peer researchers and researchers should be built upon mutual respect, trust, openness, a balance of power and established ethical symmetry, which means partnership in cooperation (Pietrusińska et al., forthcoming; see: 7.5 Ethical issues regarding work with peer researchers). If this is achieved, projects based on the peer research approach will **make science and academia more inclusive**, both when planning and conducting research, but also at the stage of dissemination and communication of results to a wider audience.

To sum up, while adopting a peer research approach requires **additional time, cost and effort**, the added ethical and methodological value, alongside the **personal and professional benefits** (both for peer researchers, researchers, and eventually the wider community), make a convincing argument for involving young migrants as peer researchers. However, in order to achieve these benefits, it is vital that peer research is reasonably and flexibly planned, supported and resourced.

4. Peer researchers' perspective on participation in the MIMY project

this was a positive experience that I will carry with me for the rest of my life

Grace, peer researcher in Luxembourg

Below you will find reflections on the journey of being a peer researcher within MIMY – fragments from notes posted on the [MIMY Youth blog](#) by some of the young people with migration experiences and backgrounds involved in various stages of the MIMY researcher process. Peer researchers prepared notes in three thematic sections: on learning lessons from the past (mainly based on research with older generation migrants), their opinions and thoughts on the migration and integration process, and their experience as peer researchers. We read all the blog entries and selected those that directly relate to the experience of being a peer researcher in the MIMY project, to give space to amplify the voice of young migrants speaking for themselves. Although there are various challenges related to the role of peer researcher (see: 3. Peer research approach), here you can read about its positive and empowering side, seen through the eyes of peer researchers, as these aspects were the most emphasised by them on the pages of the MIMY Youth blog ⁷.

When sharing their experiences as peer researchers within the MIMY project, the young migrants mainly highlighted **the opportunity to gain new experience**, which also included **acquiring new knowledge and skills**. Most of them (especially among those who had no previous research experience) appreciated learning or developing **research skills**, such as conducting interviews (including active listening, and asking in-depth questions), or analysing data. Peer researchers also spoke of gaining additional **transferable skills** they can use in other educational and professional or personal contexts, such as public speaking, teamwork or work organisation skills.



On a professional level, being part of the MIMY project allowed me not only to put into practice the theoretical knowledge I had acquired, but also to apply my experience and personal expertise. On a personal level, I learned a lot from the interviews I conducted as part of the project. It sharpened my observation skills and enabled me to quickly connect with people. (Joanna, peer researcher in Germany)

⁷ As researchers working closely with peer researchers, we are aware that the peer researcher's role was associated with various challenges and difficulties (of a methodological, ethical, organisational, and personal nature), which were revealed to varying degrees during various stages of the project. We know this based on our own observations and informal conversations with peer researchers, but also from the MIMY Peer Research Workshops, which were organised during the MIMY final conference on 19th IMISCOE Annual Conference, where representatives of the MIMY peer researchers' group were present and shared their reflections. However, on the pages of the MIMY Youth Blog, peer researchers decided to share mainly the positive impact that participation in the project had on them. Firstly, despite everything, taking part in the MIMY project was probably associated more with positive experiences than with challenges that peer researchers encountered in this project journey. Perhaps this is partly due to the fact that it was easier for them to write about experiences that were educational and developmental for them than about those that were associated with some difficulties. Without a doubt, despite the time and energy that peer researchers devoted to participating in the project, they felt gratitude for this experience, which they expressed through blog entries.

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Another thing that marked this internship for me is the research work itself. Prior to it, I did not think that research work can be so complex and that there were so many things that researchers need to know and pay attention to, from different research methods to strict ethical standards and data protection. Also, all their work needs to be reported by a certain deadline, which creates additional pressure, which is, I hope, reduced by the help of us, the peer researchers. ([Bogdan](#), peer researcher in Luxembourg)

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Being a Peer Researcher in MIMY was a very instructive experience in many other ways. I was able to gain a comprehensive insight into the implementation of a European project, the processes in the background and the cooperation with the other members. I have also been show how the work of Peer Researchers can be highly valued in a research team, which is why I feel very honoured to have been able to contribute to such an important project. ([Sevda](#), peer researcher in Germany)

The peer researchers emphasised that the MIMY project was a safe space enabling them to **develop as individuals**. Various examples of this are given in the following paragraphs. Primarily, the participation in this project – the tasks and responsibilities assigned to the peer researchers, the discussions with research team members, and the feeling of being part of a socially relevant project – contributed to their **self-confidence** and **self-esteem**. As young members of national research teams, acting as a bridge between research participants and researchers, they felt valued as their voice was heard, which had a very **empowering effect**.

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The MIMY project allowed me to make mistakes, to learn from them without the typical pressure one can have on others' workplaces. Being a part of the MIMY project also gave me a boost of confidence because I needed that. For the longest time, I forgot how ambitious I am and I am glad that I found myself by witnessing how helpful, intelligent, valuable and worthy I can be. I feel happy that I have participated because the project was an eye-opening experience. (...) I learned a lot about myself, managed to hear my voice and started believing that it has weight. ([Marie](#), peer researcher in Luxembourg)

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In this project, I have felt like a link between the researchers and the participants as I have helped the researchers and the participants to understand each other, both culturally and in matters of interpretation. I have also discussed with the researchers about the different topics that emerged in interviews with the participants and how to see these topics from different perspectives. My role as a peer-researcher has made me take a step into the academic world and gained insight into what research means, and it has aroused an interest in me to immerse myself in the subject of migration and integration. ([Nada](#), peer researchers in Sweden)

Peer researchers pointed out **the opportunity for mutual reflexive learning and co-production of knowledge with researchers and other peer researchers** as the key benefits of participating in the MIMY project. Working together in conducting research, collecting and analysing data, interpreting and disseminating the findings builds mutual recognition and supports migrants' agency, as their presence within the research is not instrumental, but forms a partnership, based on equity between team members.

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We have both felt that it has been fun to be able to teach the researchers, with whom we have worked, something by contributing with our perspectives. In the project, our feelings and experiences are being listened to and it is not someone else who explains to us what integration is. We learn from each other for real and not just for the sake of appearances. ([Nada and Ali](#), peer researchers in Sweden)

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I worked in a small team at my university where my opinion was always seen as important and helpful. This made me feel responsible for the process. ([Melanie](#), peer researcher in Germany)

Among the added values of being involved in the MIMY project, peer researchers spoke explicitly about **broadening their horizons by learning about the many and varied stories** of people with migrant experiences. The opportunity to hear different stories allowed the young members of the research team **to better understand the situation of migrants in vulnerable life situations**. On the one hand, it sensitised peer researchers to the range of difficulties faced by their migrant peers and the older generation of migrants. On the other hand, it offered a chance to learn about their ways of coping and navigating everyday lives and the sources of their resilience. (Co-)conducting individual interviews and group discussions provided a good opportunity to **develop young people's empathy** and understanding of others' perspectives based on their own lived experiences. Moreover, recruiting participants for the research helped them utilise and strengthen the community links they had established in the host country. Thus, **social connections** (also those with researchers and other peer researchers) were a significant added value in terms of **social capital development** resulting from participation in the project.

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What was unexpected to me was how much, in fact, just by listening to other people's experiences, one's reflection about a certain topic can develop and expand, and I often wondered how I did not think about it myself before I heard it. This is one of the things that marked this internship for me and for which I am grateful, because I did not expect to learn so many things and to actually change the way I listen to other people, because now I think that much can be learned just by listening to them. Of course, this does not mean that I agree with everything I hear, but it is certainly important to hear a different opinion. ([Bogdan](#), peer researcher in Luxembourg)

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By attending the focus groups and listening to the perspective of the older generations, who are the same age as our parents, we were able to learn a lot. Neither of us ever had a conversation with our parents about how they arrived and grew up in Germany. That was never an issue. Thanks to the stories told by the group participants, we were able to understand our parents' growing up in Germany much better. Thus, we were able to expand our empathy and understanding towards our parents and the interviewees. ([Efsane and Melda](#), peer researchers in Germany)

Importantly, participation in the project also allowed young people to **redefine their previous ideas about migrants**, which, by their admission, contained certain prejudices or stereotypes that did not allow them to see the vast diversity and individual situations within this group. Some peer researchers admitted that they had so far looked at the topic of migration and integration

only through the prism of their personal experiences (which in some cases were very positive, especially for those with higher socioeconomic status or higher educational levels), which could distort the general picture of migrants' situation in the host country. Thanks to participation in the MIMY project, peer researchers realised how much the image of migrants is shaped by the media and public discourse, thanks to which they became more attentive, sensitive, and equipped to contest it.

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Listening to other migrants' experiences not only validated my own experience of injustice I've encountered but also challenged some of my preconceptions of what these immigrants experienced when migrating to another country. I realised that immigrants that migrated to Luxembourg weren't a monolith but a varied group of individuals with different experiences often conflicting with one another. One immigrant would have a positive experience while another a completely negative one. Another aspect which impressed me was how perceptive the migrants I talked to were on how they are perceived by the Luxembourgish population and how they navigate life with that. It certainly allowed me to confront my own bias of what an immigrant from a lower economic background was, which I realize how until now was influenced by the media. ([Grace](#), peer researcher in Luxembourg)

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I think that my experience as a MIMY researcher also contributed to my personal development, as it gave me the opportunity to hear the refugees' real stories, from their own perspectives. For me personally this created the opportunity to feel the refugees' pain and put myself in their shoes, which requires much empathy. I was happy to transfer their voices and share their stories in such an insightful project, while improving my skills in conducting and organising meetings with diverse people. ([Hiba](#), peer researcher in Romania)

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Almost immediately after participating in the MIMY project, I felt how my attitude and worldview regarding migrants, not only from my native country, but also others, had changed. It is easier for me to find a common language with people whose reasons for coming are very different from mine, and what is no less important, I have learned to conduct an interview so that the participant is as comfortable and safe as possible, and this is one of the main victories for me. After all, if a participant leaves meeting with me just a little happier and more confident in his/her future, then my participation in this project is worthwhile. ([Oksana](#), peer researcher in Poland)

The opportunity to hear the stories of people with diverse migration experiences contributed to **reframing the peer researchers' own migration or integration trajectory**. Influenced by their participation in the MIMY project, the peer researchers reflected on their own position in society (being a young migrant), recognising both their privilege and its lack, depending on the context in which they find themselves. The statements of young people prove that by participating in the project, they developed their social sensitivity.

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This topic deeply resonated with me because it allowed me to be reflective about being a migrant myself. Personally, I found and still find integrating into Luxembourg challenging since I did not know the resources available to me. (...) Being a part of this project I discovered that their stories were nuanced and more complex than I thought, that one story is different from the other, and made me reflect on my own journey. It enabled me to confront and recognize my privilege; be it the fact that I speak English or being educated in a developed country, which makes my secondary education widely recognized ([Grace](#), peer researcher in Luxembourg)

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Listening to their stories made me reflect on my own journey, acknowledge the importance of naming things and giving them a space in our timeline, as well as feeling grateful for the people who walk with me along the river and who have had to provide me with the necessary equipment to keep swimming without being carried away by the current. ([Cristina](#), peer researcher in England (UK))

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Today, people are moving for many different reasons: to escape poverty, conflict, and devastation within their own countries. During the focus group interviews with people who have longer-term experience of moving to Italy I heard unbelievable stories and those of a sad fate. Lack of economic resources and opportunities drove Brazilian, Albanian, Syrian and African young women to migrate, to leave their countries, often through illegal brokers. All participants had a lot to share about their lives, stories, families, me too! Perhaps during these interviews, you understand that people suffer more than you, that their life was more complicated than yours. ([Reida](#), peer researcher in Italy)

Active participation in the MIMY project and engaging in dialogue with other co-researchers enabled peer researchers to **develop their critical thinking skills and to gain a deeper understanding of the migrant integration concept**, taking into account the complexity and ambiguity of the term. Young migrants began to reflexively examine and contest the definitions of integration functioning in different contexts, considering the implications of these different approaches. They realised how power dynamics may shape the way integration is understood and experienced.

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I discovered a sense of pride to be Luxembourger and the need to be a part of this society and not just a bystander. While at the same time, I became a lot more critical of the ways things are set in Luxembourg. I criticize in many ways the administrative organization, the laws and restrictions in place. (...) I joined the MIMY project without understanding the complexity of the issues involved, so I found myself confronted with a pile of questions. What is the difference between immigration and migration? Is the term immigration relevant? What does the concept of integration mean? Many questions were forced upon me, but at the end of the project, I had answers. However, I keep thinking about those issues and how they shape my reality. Even after the end of my internship, new questions still linger in my brain, and I find myself having to question them and unravel them. This experience was the beginning of a journey that I believe will never end. I don't want to close my eyes to the discrimination, racial, ethnic, cultural or religious biases occurring in front of me. ([Marie](#), peer researcher in Luxembourg)

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Through my deep discussions with colleagues, I was able to mentally challenge my thoughts and opinions regarding immigration, which helped me reconcile with the term immigrant as a self-descriptor. Through listening to people's experiences and engaging in deep interesting topics with my peers I was able to foster an alternative way of looking at immigrants counteracting what I have been told by the media. ([Grace](#), peer researcher in Luxembourg)

For the peer researchers, the MIMY project's commitment to the inclusion and empowerment of young migrants was fundamental. During the project, some realised the significant role of social research in this process and understood how vital the self-advocacy of excluded groups is. They noticed that the individual and group discussions with migrants they hold within research, can have a **tangible impact on social reality as the research result can form the basis for preparing recommendations and implementing changes to improve the situation of migrant communities in various European countries.**

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[Recruitment of research participants] was a lot harder than we thought it would be. We both have large networks in Malmö among people born in Iraq (Ali) and Somalia (Nada) but none of our friends and acquaintances wanted to be involved. It felt like a lot of people didn't think it was worthwhile; that their voices would not be heard anyway. We ourselves have many times felt the same when we were asked to participate in different studies. After this project, we see more the importance of sharing our opinions and experiences and have experienced that someone is listening to us. ([Nada and Ali](#), peer researchers in Sweden)

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In my interviews with refugees, I have heard both unbelievable stories and those of sad fate. Participants had a lot to share about their flight, worries and longings. Nevertheless, they often thanked me at the end that someone had listened to them! This helped me to realise all the more how important this work is, and the need to look at life from their perspective if we want to support with integration. ([Melanie](#), peer researcher in Germany)

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And, thirdly, and most importantly, analyzing the answers, getting into the problems, experiences, fears of the participants, I could contribute to the future development and view of the support systems for young immigrants, thanks to participation in the MIMY project. Therefore, the idea of the MIMY project, the fact that migrants are also experts and researchers seems very successful to me. It gives an opportunity to look at the problem from different perspectives, as well as to participate in the attempts to reduce, as it seems to a newcomer, complex, unsolvable problems. ([Oksana](#), peer researcher in Poland)

Summarising the topics discussed above, involvement in the MIMY research has contributed to **peer researchers' empowerment and agency**. Such empowerment manifested as heightened self-efficacy, self-esteem, and migrant rights advocacy. Peer researchers, as representatives of migrants whose voices were heard and involved in the research process, felt the satisfaction that the project they participated in can contribute to improving the situation of the migrant community. For some young researchers, the stories they heard during the interviews also had a reflective and empowering value. As mentioned above, with access to the other migrants' perspectives, they could reflect on their own experiences, giving them new meanings and interpretations.

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Looking back to my experience with the MIMY project, I could say it exceeded my expectations. I was always interested in any issue related to integration, being originally from Syria. MIMY gave me the possibility to have deep conversations with refugees, to be closer to them and give them more visibility. I was happy to share their experiences, how they are living and what are their hopes, challenges and strategies to better adapt in their new home country and to overcome any obstacle that might arise along the way. ([Hiba](#), peer researcher in Romania)

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I really want to express my gratitude to the MIMY project for giving me the opportunity to take such a significant step and contribute to the development of the future of the migration theme. The very fact that migrants from different countries have been shown that they are heard, that they are important is already a huge step towards developing recommendations for the policy of programmes related to improving the situation of migrants. I myself came to Poland 7 years ago, and I understand perfectly what young people have to go through, with fears and suspicions, not always knowing what awaits them outside the walls of their native country. And that is why hope is a key component in this process, and the more people learn about our project, the more hope will appear in the young, active, promising minds of migrants. ([Oksana](#), peer researcher in Poland)

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When I started participating in the MIMY project, I had only a vague idea of what issues such as migration and integration could hide. I reduced them to my existence and my meagre knowledge. And sometimes I distanced myself from these issues because I didn't think they could reach me in the safety of my home. When I started to worry about all these issues, I remember how vulnerable, sad and above all trapped I felt. Suddenly, I felt like my ambitions and dreams didn't matter because they could never be realized in a world where, because of my skin colour, people would eventually deny me opportunities. I was down and out. Something incredible happened. My doubts were born out of all the questions I faced in the project and they dissipated in the project. The people I met and their testimonies gave me hope and the strength to believe in myself. My world, which I had started to paint in black, became colourful and alive again. As these people talked about their experiences, obstacles and perceptions of discrimination, racism, integration, migration, my perception changed. They healed me and encouraged me to be myself and to fight not to lose sight of myself. Thanks to them, I can dream again and I feel legitimate again to live and to climb to the top. Thanks to them, I have changed my inner dialogue forever. They reminded me that my nationality does not define me. Nationality cannot define an individual because, even if we know that a person is Greek, it would still not tell us what kind of person he or she is. a nationality links us to a country, a government and a legal system, nothing more and nothing less. From these exchanges, I understood that the concepts of migration and integration are very vague words that should not even be the subject of such a heated public debate. ([Marie](#), peer researcher in Luxembourg)

Despite an awareness of how demanding it is to use the peer research approach, particularly to implement it fully and appropriately both in terms of methodology and ethics, peer researcher's voices show that it is worthwhile after all. More thoughts and stories on the journey of being a peer researcher within MIMY can be found on the [MIMY Youth Blog](#).

5. Visual methods supporting individual and focus interviews

5.1. Introduction

The use of different kinds of visual methods in qualitative research has gained popularity since the last decades of the 20th century (Harper, 2002; Bagnoli, 2009). They have been used in many disciplines of social sciences and in many contexts, such as data collection, data analysis and dissemination. More specifically, “[v]isual methods in qualitative research may utilise images as a source of data, as a technique by which to collect or to interpret data, or as an output of the research process that is intended to represent the data. These visualisations can be preexisting and researcher- or participant- generated, and may incorporate a range of media” (Glegg, 2019, p. 302).

Referring to the typology of purposes for using visual methods elaborated by Glegg (2019, p. 303), we may state that in the MIMY project, visual methods were used to facilitate the relationship between researchers and participants, and among participants in the case of group interviews, enhance data quality and validity, represent the data, and enable communication and discussion of emerging themes. Such methods are often used in cross-cultural research, “when there is an assumption that participants will find it difficult to express themselves verbally” in order to explore “layers of experience that cannot easily be put into words” (Bagnoli, 2009, p. 548). For instance, it may be easier for interviewees to speak about their feelings using metaphors from photographs or by drawing something.

The aim of this short chapter is to reflect on several examples of visual methods that were applied in the MIMY project to support individual or group interviews. We by no means attempt to systematically review the discussed methods (such as using a timeline or photo-elicitation), but rather to reflect, based on the MIMY project experiences, on the advantages and challenges of applying them in a particular shape and context. It must be noted that the visual methods were evaluated differently by the different teams and researchers in MIMY. Their evaluation depended, among others, on their previous experiences with such methods, on the conditions in which interviews were conducted (on-line vs in person), on the social background of the participants, and in particular, on their language proficiency and openness to a different way of approaching their experiences.

The visual methods used in MIMY were considered as methods supporting individual and focus group interviews. They were meant to foster reflective thinking and discussion, elicit thoughts that may be difficult to verbalise and to engage participants (Glegg, 2019, p. 303), but their outcomes were not analysed on their own, independently from the interviews.

5.2. Timeline

SHORT DESCRIPTION

The timeline as a visual method supporting IDIs or narrative interviews has gained recognition and popularity, particularly in longitudinal studies (Bagnoli, 2009; Neale, 2017). It has been used to grasp the temporal dynamics of interviewees' lives: important events, triggers and turning points (Neale, 2019). In the MIMY project, this method was used in IDIs with young migrants in vulnerable conditions with the aim of facilitating the exploration of their personal histories, including pre-migration context.

In the course of the interviews, researchers “asked participants to place perceived significant events along a timeframe, using a line representing their own life course. In this task, participants are invited to use symbols, images, and dates on sticky notes and place them accordingly on a line” (Regalia et al. 2022, p. 11). So, first the researcher asks the interviewee to draw a timeline and to think about the events that according to him/her have significantly affected his/her life. The interviewee can report a sentence, a symbol, an image, a date, on sticky notes (or directly on paper/ or without using them) with different colours, which he/she spreads on the appropriate spots of the timeline. Then in a second phase, the researcher asks the interviewee to start from the timeline he/she drew and from the events that he/she mentioned and to develop a story around these events. The researcher may also ask supporting questions during this phase.

ADVANTAGES OF USING THIS METHOD

- » A timeline helps participants to put important events in their lives in temporal order and to subsequently reflect on their trajectories, on the consequences of these events and their dynamics. For researchers, thanks to this method, it is easier to understand the dynamics of interviewees' lives: what kind of important points took place in the past, what the turning points were etc. For participants, it allows them to see the relations between important events in their lives and thus form a coherent historical narrative allowing a retrospective process of construction of meaning.
- » This method is relatively easy to explain and to use. It does not require much preparation.
- » The timeline also helps to explore life trajectories in a more systematic way. It structures life events in line with a participant's perception, and allows us to see the relationship between the past, the present and the future.
- » Timeline drawing can provide a starting point in sensitive and emotional topic interviews. This visual method can facilitate participants in the process of telling their event-based stories through time, which allows for collecting deeper and richer data.

CHALLENGES RELATED TO THIS METHOD

- » Although it is relatively easy to use and explain, nevertheless it can create confusion for the participants: what kind of events they should include, how detailed it should be etc.
- » Crucially, there is an ethical challenge in using this method in research with people in vulnerable conditions, specifically with those who may have experienced traumatic events in the past, e.g. forced migrants. Asking them

to include past events, we risk their retraumatization. On the other hand, due to ethical considerations regarding the risk of retraumatization of participants, researchers might not address past events, and thus not fulfil the task completely.

- » Last but not least, this method imposes a certain way of thinking about life, namely a linear one, which may not always reflect participants' experiences and concepts. However, drawing a timeline can take a more flexible, personalised form that Neale (2017) calls "time maps", to avoid imposing the linear thinking on interviewees.
- » Using this method with young people may be challenging if they feel that they have not accumulated many experiences, or that there were few turning points in their lives. They may be confused about what they "should" draw on their timelines.
- » Using a timeline during interviews is challenging on-line, as it requires screen sharing, using an on-line whiteboard or shared document, as well as the tools for drawing or posting sticky notes on-line. It may not be common knowledge among persons who do not work on-line.

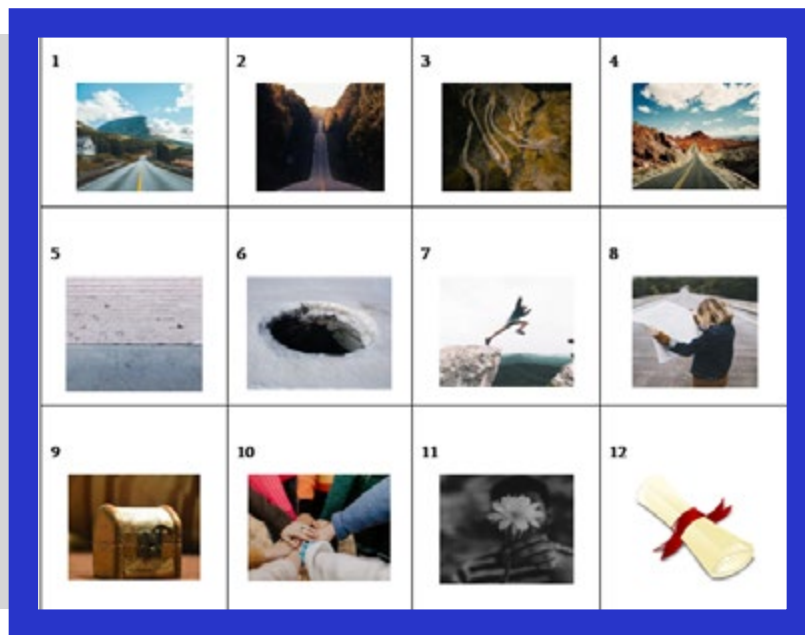
5.3. Photo elicitation

SHORT DESCRIPTION

In the MIMY project, photographs were used to elicit narratives of migrants with positive experiences of integration. The aim of complementing interviews with visual material, namely with pictures symbolising different life trajectories, was to prompt participants to reflect on the evaluation of their integration path, on the nature of challenges they have encountered, and on the resources that helped them to overcome these challenges. All the images had been pre-tested and selected through a pilot study by the research team.

During the interviews, the researcher shows some metaphorical photos (see below) to the interviewee that can symbolise a life trajectory, positive life experiences (photos 1 to 4), but also obstacles encountered (photos 5 to 8) and the available resources to overcome them (photos 9 to 12). Each group of photos had an accompanying instruction that was incorporated in the structure of the interviews. So, for photos 1-4, the interviewer asks: "Let's start with your experience. The path that led you to positive experience may have been easy, with no particular difficulty (image 1) or arduous and uphill (image 2), it may have been winding, and full of curves that sometimes blocked the view (image 3) or linear, with a clear point of arrival (image 4). How would you define the path that led you this far?" Later on, when speaking about challenges on the way, the interviewer gives the following lead-in: "In most cases, a (successful) path is characterised by moments of difficulty, fatigue, obstacles to overcome, such as a wall (image 5) that can block the passage, which can be impassable or knocked down, climbed over, circumvented; such as a hole (image 6) into which you can fall, from which you must pull yourself out; or jumps into the void/risks to be taken (image 7); or there may be moments of confusion, loss, in which you lose sight of the road or the goal (image 8). What obstacles have you encountered during your path? Which of these images most reflects the obstacles you have found on your path?". Lastly, asking about resources, the interviewer says: "People can have resources, materials or relationships that help us overcome

moments of difficulty or problems encountered along the way. These resources can be material (image 9); they can be relationships, as in the case of significant people (image 10); they can include the social recognition of one's success, as when one achieves a school goal or is promoted at work (image 11); or they can be the resources received and given, the gratitude perceived towards oneself and directed towards others (image 12). What were your resources in your path to success?" (interview guide elaborated by UCSC team, Crapolicchio & Marzana, 2022). Throughout the interview, these images are on the table and, according to the nature of experiences, the researcher will pick different pictures and ask the interviewee to relate to the ones which fit his/her experiences and talk about them (Crapolicchio & Marzana, 2022).



Source: Interview guidelines prepared by UCSC MIMY team.

ADVANTAGES OF USING THIS METHOD

- » The photographs are effective in eliciting narratives. They encourage participants to go beyond the mere description of their experiences and reflect more on how they feel, use metaphors and consider the possible reasons why they chose one particular photo and not the other. They may evoke thoughts that are difficult to verbalise and encourage interviewees to look at their lives from a different perspective. Photographs may also allow a projection effect, allowing participants to explore inner images, feelings and thoughts.
- » In the case of young migrants, particularly those who are not fluent in the language of the interview, it may help them to speak about the experiences, offering a starting point for their narrative.

CHALLENGES RELATED TO THIS METHOD

- » Similarly to the method discussed above, this technique is also difficult to use online, especially when the participants connect via their mobile phone. In such cases, photos may be very small and, moreover, if the function of screen sharing is turned on to present the pictures, the researcher and the interviewee cannot see each other, which negatively impacts communication during the interview.

- » Since we present only a few photographs, and their choice is always arbitrary to some extent, we risk imposing on participants a certain way of thinking and speaking about their experiences (e.g. comparing life to a road, or speaking about previous events in terms of success and failure). As a result, they may limit themselves to the suggested metaphors and not mention others that may reflect their experiences in a more accurate way.
- » In connection with the last point, particularly when we do a cross-cultural study, the task of choosing culturally appropriate photos may be challenging.

5.4. Using visual methods during focus group interviews

Visual methods were also applied in the course of FGIs conducted in the framework of MIMY. In this part, we describe two drawings/metaphors that were used to facilitate the narratives of the group and summarise the themes mentioned. Both methods were conceived as collective tasks, in which participants were supposed to reflect on their experiences, discuss them, and add their contributions to a common drawing.

5.4.1. A balance metaphor

SHORT DESCRIPTION

This method was used in FGIs with young migrants in vulnerable conditions and their parents. It was aimed at identifying the main sources of vulnerabilities and resilience among young migrants. Thus it was used to provide a common group response about the main difficulties and the main resources (internal and external) of young migrants in vulnerable conditions.

The facilitator shows the participants the image of a balance positioned on a moving whiteboard (or on a sheet of A3 paper, or a ppt presentation) and then asks the group to work with this image. In the first phase, the interviewer asks the participants about the main difficulties and the main resources for young migrants. In the second phase, the interviewer stimulates the group to summarise their ideas, asking them to choose five elements for each category. During FGIs conducted within the MIMY project, “[t]he visual task was introduced to facilitate the exploration of the different topics during the group discussion, juxtaposing the visual plane and the linguistic plane, allowing to overcome language barriers in multicultural and multilingual groups” (Giuliani et al., 2022).



Source: Interview guidelines prepared by UCSC MIMY team.

ADVANTAGES OF USING THIS METHOD

- » The metaphor of the balance is generally appreciated for its simplicity. It is intuitive for the participants and it facilitates the discussion.
- » It is helpful for including the voices of all the participants and for balancing the voices in the focus group. Moreover, it helps in reaching a group consensus regarding the most important difficulties and resources mentioned during the interview.
- » It also prevents participants from focusing solely on “one side of the coin”, namely only on difficulties (which may negatively impact participants), or only on resources.
- » When it is used as an introductory task, due to its simplicity, it encourages contributions from all the participants and is thus inclusive.
- » However, the majority of researchers highlight its usefulness more at the end of the interview. Used as a final task, it allows a synthesis of issues brought up during FGIs, fosters further reflection on what has already been discussed, and brings up issues not yet covered. It enables an overall evaluation of the hardships and facilitators that participants perceive.
- » Although in the instructions there is a suggestion to choose five main difficulties and resources, this method may be used in a flexible way and participants may choose more, if that better reflects their experiences

CHALLENGES RELATED TO THIS METHOD

- » The main challenge of using this method is connected with difficulties in adapting it to on-line FGIs. Participants may need to connect through mobile phones and their screens may be very small, or they may not be accustomed to using tools for interactive work, such as on-line whiteboards.
- » In comparison with other methods, this technique seems to be rather structured. Dividing a broad range of experiences into two categories may not reflect the complexity of meaning that they hold for participants.

5.4.2. River metaphor

SHORT DESCRIPTION

A river metaphor was used during interviews with the older generation migrants to explore the obstacles and facilitators of integration, as well as changes and time perspectives of participants. This metaphor is much more complex than

the weighing scale presented above, and thus required a more extensive introduction and explanation.

During the FGI, after the warm-up at the beginning, participants are introduced to the river metaphor, which is meant to represent the path of life, as well as possible representations of difficulties (e.g. rocks, heavy or light rapids), changes or feeling blocked (e.g. bends or lakes/pools, waterfalls) and facilitators (e.g. fish, bridges, streams). Participants are invited to co-construct a river together as a group using the chosen representations mentioned above as well as symbols or words of their own choice. The facilitator and participants draw different aspects of the river on a whiteboard or large piece of paper, individually or collectively, and write on key words or use post-it notes to capture pertinent ideas.

In this metaphor, the dynamic and temporal aspect is important, as reflected in the following lead-in for participants: “The river helps us to think about changes over time, but also that our lives do not move in a straight line, and sometimes there are changes of direction: we can be going in circles, or feel like we are set backwards, or that time is standing still. We are not defining the beginning or end of the river, but the aim of the river is to help us to understand the experiences that have played a role in how you have built your life in this local area.” (FGI topic guide elaborated by USFD team, Kilkey & Shahrokh, 2022).



Source: FGI guidelines elaborated by USFD MIMY team, Kilkey and Shahrokh 2022.

ADVANTAGES OF USING THIS METHOD

- » The main advantage of this method is that it provides useful cues for reflection, it encourages participants to reflect on their experiences from a new angle and inspires interesting discussions. Thanks to these aspects, it allows us to collect richer data.
- » Talking about symbols within a river metaphor, as opposed to structured binary categories of questions (e.g. barriers vs enablers) supported participants to talk about challenges, and opportunities, steps forward and setbacks simultaneously which helped to understand the complexity of integration processes.
- » In connection with the above, it encourages participants to reflect on the temporal dynamics of their trajectories, including complex and dynamic changes over time (or lack thereof), which is particularly important among the representatives of older generations of migrants.
- » Another strength of this method is that it provides focal points for the discussion and helps participants to shape the conversation in the interview, rather than being overly structured, enabling more power and control in the interview process.
- » Where participants were given the opportunity to prepare their own individual rivers and discuss these with the group, they had the time and space to think about important moments of change within their integration processes and were given a platform to share these. This not only provided an opportunity to think through what they felt comfortable sharing, it also addressed power inequalities within focus group setting, supporting every members' participation as everyone was afforded the opportunity to share something through their river, creating more inclusive knowledge.
- » Peer researchers were able to engage with how the river was narrated and explored, and supported their creativity and agency in how the method was implemented.
- » Lastly, the river metaphor also stimulated an exploration of integration process and trajectories.

CHALLENGES RELATED TO THIS METHOD

- » The challenges stem mainly from the complexity of this metaphor. It is perceived as too sophisticated, difficult and not very intuitive, both by some researchers and participants. To be successfully applied, it requires a facilitator who is experienced in using visual metaphors. Moreover, there is a risk that participants will focus on creating a nice picture and adding new elements to the drawing, instead of on their experiences, which are crucial.
- » Introducing and explaining the metaphor to participants can turn out to be more time consuming than expected and can break the flow of the conversation, particularly when participants find it hard to grasp the idea behind this visual task.
- » Some participants prefer to speak directly about their experiences, instead of describing them metaphorically through symbols. This particularly applies to participants who are not fluent in the language of the interview. Moreover, some metaphors may be specific to certain cultures and therefore they may be less clear and intuitive for some participants. Researchers were guided to

leave space in the session for different metaphors to be used, as relevant to participants.

- » During some FGIs, participants resist the metaphor because it is perceived as “infantilising”, or it is assumed that it requires artistic skills. In order to overcome this difficulty, some partners adapted the exercise providing pre-prepared symbols that could be stuck onto the river, rather than requesting participants to draw the symbols. This, however, limits participants’ creativity in inventing their own symbols.
- » The river metaphor is perceived by some researchers as too structured and too linear. It may impose a linear way of thinking, not encouraging participants to speak about detours, backlashes or loops. Again, this was dependent on how the river metaphor was explained.
- » Due to its complexity and interactive character, the river metaphor is difficult to adapt to on-line FGIs.

5.5. Conclusions

To summarise, in the light of the experiences of MIMY research teams, we may say that visual methods supporting individual and group interviews have many advantages, including fostering recall, reflection and discussion, as well as encouraging the expression of emotions and new ideas. It is especially valuable in the case of young persons, for whom generating a narrative about their lives may be challenging. Thus, visual methods inspire ways of thinking and presenting experiences that are different than purely narrative, using images or metaphors, which can help approach certain phenomena from a different perspective. Moreover, some of the visual methods move away from linear or rigid chronological narrative, so as not to represent or reflect bureaucratic and legalistic modes of storytelling. This is of special importance in the case of young migrants, who may have experiences of being interviewed by officers or representatives of authorities upon their arrival or when legalising their stay. Additionally, visual methods “may encourage thinking in non-standard ways, avoiding the clichés and ‘ready-made’ answers which could be easily used in reply” (Bagnoli, 2009, p. 566). They may also be helpful in structuring and facilitating the interview.

However, it should be highlighted that in order for the visual methods to bring added value to the study, they must be very well adapted to the context. By context, we refer to a broad spectrum of factors, including interviewers, interviewees, as well as the time and place of the interview. When it comes to interviewers, it is important that they have some experience of using a particular method, to be able to explain it properly to participants and encourage them to engage. This is particularly important in the case of more complex and collaborative methods. In a cross-cultural study context, as in the MIMY project, the metaphors or pictures should be carefully selected so that they are clear and intuitive for all the participants. When it comes to the time and place of the interview, most of the MIMY researchers reported having issues using the visual methods online. Some participants (especially if we focus on persons in vulnerable conditions) may not have their own computers and they use mobile phones to take part in the interview, which does not always allow them to see pictures properly or do online drawings using a collaborative digital method (e.g. on-line whiteboard).

Regardless of the form (on-line or in person), some visual methods (e.g. the river metaphor or a timeline) are perceived as time consuming both at the stage of explaining their aims and rules and later, at the stage of implementation. In order to successfully implement these methods, the research team and participants should probably reserve more time for an interview or explain the details of a given method during a separate meeting before the interview.

Despite the challenges analysed in this chapter, incorporating visual methods in the research process seems worthwhile, particularly when we engage young people, and in supporting participation and leadership within the research encounter. For them, a form that does not rely solely on narratives may be more interesting, engaging and inspiring, and thus it may enrich the generated data.

6. Art-based methods

6.1. Introduction

Art-based methods are “a research method in which the arts play a primary role in any or all of the steps of the research method. Art forms (...) are essential to the research process itself and central in formulating the research question, generating data, analysing data, and presenting the research results” (Austin & Forinash, 2005, p. 458-459). This method uses variety of art techniques, visual methods (e.g. photography, collages, murals, carving, quilting and painting), narrative methods (e.g. poetry, fiction, novel) and performative methods (e.g. film-making, theatre, dance) that are used to collect data and/or disseminate research results.

As some art-based methods do not require high oral competencies to express oneself or even the knowledge of a certain language, they can be used in the research with migrants or such groups that have difficulties in expressing their experiences and stories verbally. Moreover, art-based methods reduce power asymmetry between researchers and research participants (Carpenter & Horvath, 2022) as the latter become the creators of the content, creating it in a more free way than in traditional research methods such as surveys or interviews. Also the participants also take an active part in the interpretation of the outcomes of the art-based methods. All this allows empowerment of the research participants, who are transformed from being the object of the research to becoming active subjects and creators (van der Vaart et al., 2018).

Art-based methods play also an important role in building dialogue within the community that takes part in the study as well as between the community and the society as products of these methods might be disseminated and presented to the general public. Due to the art-based methods knowledge created within the research project might be translated to the wider audience through inclusive knowledge co-production (Goodson & Philipmore, 2010).

In this chapter we discuss four of the art-based methods – digital storytelling, LEGO® Serious Play®, collage work and photovoice – which were used in the MIMY project. Based on our experience from the project we discuss how these methods support research among young migrants in vulnerable conditions, and explain what challenges and limitations are related to each method. You can see the effects of art-based methods used in the MIMY project on the [project website](#).

6.2. Digital storytelling

SHORT DESCRIPTION

Digital storytelling is an art-based method that combines various digital products like photos, videos, animation, music, and voice recording to tell one's own story. Through digital storytelling, participants tell their stories from their own experiences, using reflective and creative techniques. They elaborate their stories about certain topics, write scripts, prepare story-boards and then, by using digital tools, create interactive stories - often in the form of a video or voice recording (e.g. podcast). a detailed description of the method, with step by step instructions, can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

HOW THIS METHOD SUPPORTS RESEARCH AMONG YOUNG MIGRANTS IN VULNERABLE CONDITIONS?

- » This method allows researchers to collect different kinds of data at different moments in the research process (such as observations during the workshop and screening, interviews with participants and/or audience) and of a different nature (notes of inspiration, script, story-boards, images and videos chosen, images not chosen).
- » It can also improve the researchers' understanding of the issues and life experiences of the participants, as the researcher experiences different aspects of the participants' story thoroughly and repeatedly through the process of creation. It is possible to further adapt and develop the method around the participants' needs and progress throughout the process.
- » Because participants are the creators of the content and the stories, digital storytelling provides a space for migrants' voices to be heard. They are able to construct the narration in the way they want. Compared to some more structured research techniques, such as surveys or (semi)structured interviews where the narration is imposed by the researchers, art-based methods provide the space to talk with one's own voice.
- » For young people who are used to communicating via social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok etc.) digital storytelling might be an easy and natural way to express themselves.
- » Moreover, this quite easy and familiar form allows young people to "talk" about difficult topics in a more indirect, symbolic way. This approach can provide access to some issues that are difficult to express verbally. Participants can include visual communication, like photo animation, in their digital stories. In this way they may be able to "talk" about difficult topics without needing to use direct communication.
- » As videos are an attractive and accessible way of expressing oneself and presenting one's own stories to others, digital storytelling allows young migrants to express their experiences to the general public. Compared to some other forms of researching, such as interviews, surveys, and focus groups – digital storytelling methods not only produce data, but also products like videos. Such products can be presented to other people. In this way a dialogue between research participants and wider audiences can be fostered.

- » Participants can also learn new digital and storytelling skills that they can use after the workshop for recreational, professional and even (self)advocacy purposes.
- » It may also serve as a tool to sublimate difficult experiences and thus to create a more peaceful relationship with the biographical past or even to promote a sense of closure.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF USING THIS ART-BASED METHOD AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

- » The digital storytelling method requires various resources:
 - o time: digital storytelling requires time, as the method is combined of several steps – elaborating the story; learning the techniques of video making; creating the video; screening the video.
 - o equipment: the method requires specific equipment such as: laptops/ computers; a camera; a voice/sound recorder; software for film editing; equipment for the screening (e.g. projector, speakers).
 - o competencies: the method requires a person who not only is able to facilitate the process of story creation, but also has technical competencies related to film creating and editing.
 - o space: a space for the workshop that allows individual and collective work, as well as film editing, is needed in this method.
 - o money: all the resources mentioned above require a certain amount of money.
- » Because the method is time consuming, it can prevent some people from participating, as they might not have enough time due to the professional, educational or family obligations. The duration of the method also requires constant motivation of the participants to ensure their engagement in the whole process.
- » Another limitation could be the readiness of participants to confront their own story. Not everybody is willing to do this. It might potentially trigger retraumatization due to the repetitive digging into one's own (traumatic) story. If there is a possibility that participants (e.g. forced migrants) have experienced trauma in the past, it is highly recommended to make sure that psychological support is provided in case of need, or ensured by professionals throughout the project.

IN WHAT CONTEXTS DO WE RECOMMEND USING DIGITAL STORYTELLING?

- » The method might be useful in a context where the participants have to come anyway on a regular basis (e.g. asylum seeker shelters, school), so that it is possible to plan a workshop for a longer period, and with a certain flexibility of planning.
- » The method can be used to support the empowerment of minority groups (e.g. young migrants) and facilitate their recognition in the community they live in.

6.3. LEGO® Serious Play®

SHORT DESCRIPTION

The LEGO® Serious Play® workshop is a method that uses LEGO® bricks to build metaphors and subliminal ideas and transform them into 3D models. After ideas are constructed as 3D models individually, participants collectively work to interpret the models and to find deeper meaning in them. The method has 4 stages: posing the question; building a 3D model that might be a metaphor; sharing the model and explaining its meaning; and shared reflection. The method combines play, emotional links with childhood, constructionism, thoughts, language, reflection and conceptual metaphors. For more details about this method, please see [Appendix 1](#).

HOW THIS METHOD SUPPORTS RESEARCH AMONG YOUNG MIGRANTS IN VULNERABLE CONDITIONS?

- » As LEGO® Serious Play® is a game-based method, it softens existing hierarchies between researchers and researched people.
- » This method is also more interesting than traditional research methods, such as interviews or focus groups. The “playfulness” of the method might be attractive to those participants who have childhood experience related to LEGO®. It also promotes a more tactile and image-like way of addressing the issues to be explored, as opposed to a more intellectualised approach, which may be useful to bring about ideas, connections and meanings the participant may previously never have been aware of.
- » Building and presenting 3D models of a metaphor or idea stimulates different parts of the brain, such as those responsible for emotion, communication, spatial ability. Thus, it can provide deep insights into experiences, as the particular parts of the models provide constant stimuli for narrations. Using 3D models can prompt self-reflection and collective discussion about the models, and can provide a broader understanding of certain issues.
- » The workshop can be easily organised. It only requires a set of bricks, which can be constructed in almost any venue - inside as well as outside.
- » The method might be used not only for research purposes (e.g. exploration of individual experiences), but also for the development of joint ideas/visions which can further be of interest to local communities/organisations.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF USING THIS ART-BASED METHOD AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

- » The method requires all participants to have a sufficient level of language skills, as all models that are built within a workshop are presented and discussed by the participants.
- » The method also requires a certain level of common sense to know well enough the objects they are asked to build and associated understand the metaphors. For instance during one of the workshops within MIMY projects participants from the Arabic countries manifested difficulties were not able to in building a snail with the LEGO® bricks or understanding the metaphor of “snail” as it does not seem to be a common animal in some Arab countries. Therefore, it is important to propose the building of known objects (by the participants) and possible metaphors associated with them, as well as building instructions that are understandable for all participants.

- » The “playfulness” of the method might prevent participants from focusing on the task (e.g. building a metaphor); instead, they may be more preoccupied in building anything from the bricks. To reduce the risk of this situation, workshop facilitators should structure the whole process and set a specific time for each part of the workshop.
- » Building from bricks might feel odd for those participants who had never done it as a child. Those participants might feel reluctant towards participating in the workshop for not possessing the necessary skills.
- » The documentation of data is another challenge related to this method. As bricks are reusable, the final outcome could be documented by photos; however this kind of documentation is unable to grasp the whole complexity of 3D models. Other ways of documentation are similar to those in other qualitative methods, that is, observation or taking notes from group discussions and model presentations. Furthermore, analysis of collected data may be challenging (e.g. visual analysis of the 3D models).
- » The method requires a diverse set of LEGO® bricks and other LEGO® elements that are sufficient for all participants. The number and diversity of elements should allow all participants to create everything they want in the way they want. In the case of a limited number of bricks, it is possible to ask participants to use only a certain number of elements.

IN WHAT CONTEXTS DO WE RECOMMEND USING LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®?

- » The LEGO® Serious Play is recommended in working to support empowerment in groups, where a common language exists.
- » The LEGO® Serious Play® method can be used individually and collectively. Moreover, it might be integrated as a less formal part of workshops on various topics.

6.4. Collage work

SHORT DESCRIPTION

Collage is a method that uses various materials (such as magazines, newspapers, paint, fabric etc.) and various forms to design a new piece of art. The ideal way to do this is to give participants time to familiarise themselves with the material so that they can communicate and reflect themselves through it. In this way, the material becomes a communication tool. The new artwork should express the theme of the workshop/event. The collage can be created as an individual work or it might be a collective creation. Afterwards, the collage can be used as the inspiration or starting point to discuss certain topics. Participants can explain what their collage communicates. For more details about this method, please see [Appendix 1](#).

HOW DOES THIS METHOD SUPPORT RESEARCH AMONG YOUNG MIGRANTS IN VULNERABLE CONDITIONS?

- » The collage work method does not require any special skills, thus it is an intuitive method, accessible to everybody at every age.
- » Moreover, it does not require much preparation, and the workshop can be conducted within 4 hours (the exhibition included).

- » The method is one of the simplest and most affordable art-based methods. It just requires some basic craft materials (scissors, glue, tape, sheets of paper, magazines etc.). It is also possible to use this method online. Providing the collage will not be shown to the general public, one needs a computer, internet and software that allows images downloaded from the internet to be put together. However, applying this method on-line is more challenging, due to the circumstances mentioned in the case of visual methods: participants may not have their own computers or may not be accustomed with the software that is used to create collages.
- » The collage can provide more data and more vibrant visual narration, as some issues might be expressed more readily through art-work. Especially if topics are difficult to talk about, they can be expressed by the art piece and during the art creation process. On one hand, a collage can offer participants a starting point to elaborate their own verbal narration. On the other hand, if a participant does not want to talk about certain issues, they can just omit certain aspects of their art-work or not talk about them at all.
- » The method does not require a high level of language proficiency, as the artistic expression should tell the story by itself. Therefore, this method enables the communication of feelings and ideas.
- » The method provides a space for individual reflection and self-expression, as well as the possibility to present one's artwork to the general public. Moreover, comparison of the collages among participants might stimulate group discussion about important topics.
- » The method also allows the participants flexibility, and freedom of choice on how to create their collage and which materials to use. Therefore, it minimises power asymmetry in the relationship between research participants and researchers.
- » Artistic outcomes of collage work might be presented to the general public during the exhibition. During such an event research participants can present themselves not only as “migrants” but also as creative young adults who have something interesting to say. Encounters during such events can lead to the minimalism stereotypes about young migrants.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF USING THIS ART-BASED METHOD AND HOW TO OVERCOME SOME OF THESE

- » The collage work is not an innovative or extremely interesting method, thus it might be difficult to recruit participants to take part in the workshop.
- » There is a risk that participants might focus on creating aesthetic pieces of art instead of expressing their ideas about the workshop's topic. If the goal of the workshop is to create a collage work, the explanations of the collage method need to be made clear from the start. Nevertheless, if the goal of the workshop is primarily to offer the participants freedom of artistic expression, the facilitator needs to let go and welcome every diversion from the method.
- » If participants decide not to explain what is on their collage, it may be interpreted freely. As a result, researchers risk imposing their understanding on the participants' creation. Therefore, preparation of the collage should be followed by a discussion about the workshop's outcomes.

IN WHAT CONTEXTS DO WE RECOMMEND USING COLLAGE WORK?

- » As this method is a low-threshold, intuitive method, accessible to everybody, it can be easily used in many different contexts and almost ad hoc.
- » The method is best used as a method that supports or facilitates deeper discussion or interviews.

6.5. Photovoice method

SHORT DESCRIPTION

Photovoice is a method in which participants document their daily life and experiences through photography. Firstly, participants learn how to take photos and elaborate the topic of their photo tasks. Then they plan how they want to refer to the topic and plan their photostories or photographic. When the photos are taken, participants meet to discuss the individual and group outcomes of their photo task. During the photovoice workshop, participants also have space to talk more deeply about their experiences related to the photos. Thus, participants work together to illustrate their own lived experiences instead of having their life and stories interpreted by others. In some cases, photos are later labelled and prepared in such a manner that they might be displayed to the general public during an exhibition, or published in an album. The visual representations and the stories produced in the photovoice project are also dissemination instruments that can inform community members about the lives of the photos' creators. For more details about this method, please see [Appendix 1](#).

HOW DOES THIS METHOD SUPPORT RESEARCH AMONG YOUNG MIGRANTS IN VULNERABLE CONDITIONS?

- » The method allows participants to feel an active part in the decision-making process concerning the message to be conveyed to the community. The participants take an active part as a creator in each part of the process – from elaborating the themes, taking photos, creating visual stories and deciding about their dissemination.
- » The method allows easier access to difficult topics, without the need to verbalise and talk about them directly. Participants might present photos that speak for themselves, if they do not want to talk about some aspects of their stories. Moreover, such a method is useful if participants' language skills are not high, as this method does not require much discussion.
- » Photos presented by one participant may prompt others to recall experiences or thoughts, and motivate them to open up about certain issues.
- » Traditional methods, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, are unilateral. The photovoice method provides agency to the participants, as it is an act or artistic creation that empowers participants. The agency of the participants can be also presented to the local community by exhibiting the photos. The participants (e.g. young migrants) can present themselves to others not only as members of a minority group, but also as artists.
- » Moreover, if group discussion about the photos is included, this provides similar data to that collected during focus groups (e.g. it is possible to identify power relations within the group or compare contrasting ideas). Photos can

also provide discursive data (e.g. photos might be analysed to explore if/what discourses are reproduced by participants in their work).

- » Compared to oral data from individual or group interviews, the photovoice method provides data that show what the lives of participants really look like. Thus, researchers are able not only to hear about (and interpret) different aspects of participants' lives, but they are also able to see it. This gives researchers a deeper understanding of some aspects of participants' lives.
- » Photos may be taken by mobile phone. Such a way of documenting everyday life is natural for young people, therefore this method might seem an easy and familiar way of communicating with others.
- » Participants can learn new skills that might be useful in their professional and private lives (e.g. photo editing).
- » As the photovoice method requires a certain amount of time, it fosters a more intimate atmosphere among participants and researchers. Such an atmosphere might help participants to open up more. Moreover, participants have more time to reflect on the issues they are illustrating through photography.
- » In addition, group work and discussion in pairs about the photos and stories allow participants to share their experiences with others who have a migration background. This approach allows participants to deal with sometimes really difficult experiences without retraumatization, because photos give space for a variety of interpretations. Participants can choose to leave the photos without explaining their symbolic message, but also have the opportunity to talk openly and deeply about their life trajectories.
- » Photos/exhibitions that are the product of the photovoice method, with the consent of the participants, may be reused further. For instance they might serve as a tool in visual methods or be included in academic articles to make their content more inclusive.
- » Similarly to the collage work exhibition, photovoice exhibition might serve as an opportunity to present young migrants stories to the general public and as an opportunity to overcome stereotypes between research participants and local community.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF USING THIS ART-BASED METHOD AND HOW TO OVERCOME SOME OF THESE

- » The method requires resources - photographic equipment, software for photo editing, an expert - a photographer who can teach participants how to take photos, create a photo story, edit photos and present them. All this makes this method quite expensive. Furthermore, exhibiting the photos also requires a specific venue to make the display visible to the widest possible audience. Similarly, publishing a photo album also entails additional costs.
- » Moreover, this method is time consuming and requires engagement over a period of a few weeks. Therefore, those people who have limited amounts of time due to other commitments might be reluctant towards participating in the workshop. Furthermore, some participants may drop out during the course of the project. For this reason, keeping people engaged is another challenge of this method.

- » Because this is an artistic method, some people might feel intimidated. They may think that they are not “real” artists and therefore might be ashamed. Moreover, participants may compare their photos with others’, possibly judging their own as inferior. To overcome this challenge it is important to emphasise that the main aim of the method is to tell the story of one’s life. Not to create a work of art.
- » Due to the fact that in this method participants work with the photos, they risk becoming retraumatized. Visual communication about difficult life experiences can trigger stronger emotions than verbal expression, therefore it is easier to recall trauma when using visual tools.
- » The visual data (photos) collected using this method require visual analysis skills. In order to make full use of this method, researchers not only need to do a visual analysis, but also come back with their interpretation to the participants to avoid misinterpretation. Such analysis is more time consuming than analysis of interviews and requires special analytical skills.

IN WHAT CONTEXTS DO WE RECOMMEND USING PHOTOVOICE?

- » The method might be useful in a context where the participants are present anyway on a regular basis and have more time to participate in extended activities, so that it is possible to plan a workshop for a longer period, and with a certain degree of flexibility in planning.

6.6. Conclusions

Compared to traditional methods (e.g. surveys, interviews, focus groups), the use of art-based methods has the potential to provide varied and more in-depth data. This is because participants are not exposed to specific questions or structured narratives, but are asked to reflect through the medium of art, and create their own way of describing and perceiving reality. Art-based methods can therefore be an important element in supporting traditional research methods, allowing for a deeper exploration of the issues under investigation.

Moreover, this method can have several positive impacts on participants, ranging from enabling a deeper understanding of their life and their relation to others, improving their self-esteem, and in certain cases even triggering a “therapeutic effect”. In addition, art-based methods combined with action research can be used to raise awareness in communities by presenting issues through accessible artwork such as photos, movies, and paintings. Such “emotional channels” provide a powerful medium for raising awareness and prompting discussions in various contexts.. During artistic events research participants can present themselves not only as “migrants” but also as creative young adults who have something interesting to say. Encounters during such events can lead to the minimalism stereotypes about young migrants and foster the dialogue between local communities and young people.

There are, nevertheless, some limitations and ethical challenges related to art-based methods. While using these methods it is important to address the issue of ownership of the produced material – it is necessary to explain to participants how their artwork might be used. Moreover, there should be a clear process of consent giving that can be negotiated throughout the process. The consent should not only concern collected data, but also participation in the research

process and eventual future presentations and exhibitions of the art products. An effort should always be made to ensure that participants are comfortable with the activities being implemented and the way participants are being supported in sharing their experiences. As many art-based methods involve lengthy processes it is important that participants are given multiple opportunities to give consent. Art-based methods also limit the privacy and anonymity of the participants. It is important to make participants aware of these limitations. There should also be some kind of safeguarding process in place.

As art-based methods often stimulate emotions, they can be triggers that cause retraumatisation. It is important that researchers and/or facilitators (artists) have a good understanding of the support and referral systems that can help participants, should any mental health, rights or wellbeing issues arise during the process. Such an approach should be built on ethics of care - ethical commitments to “care” between facilitators and participants.

7. Ethical considerations in researching young migrants in vulnerable conditions

7.1 Introduction

At the centre of our research in the MIMY project were young migrants in vulnerable conditions. Working with such a group poses ethical challenges and requires special ethical measures that go beyond regular ethical solutions. In the MIMY project, we fulfil the **“procedural ethics”** (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) requirements concerning research with humans, but we also introduce deep ethical (auto)reflexiveness related to **“ethics in practice”** (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) to address specific challenges involved in researching young migrants in vulnerable conditions.

MIMY operated in full compliance with the existing national legislation of the consortium members as well as the EC directive and rules/EU law on ethical issues that are relevant to the project. The consortium of MIMY saw it as an obligation to comply with the **highest standards of research integrity in line with institutional, national and international legal requirements**, and therefore a strong ethical culture supporting good scientific practice (GSP) in research was important. Each partner obtained an ethical approval from the relevant ethics committee. In MIMY, we followed the guidance note of the European Commission **“Research on refugees, asylum seekers & migrants”** (COM, n.d., p.1) and therefore we made sure that the research was relevant to the communities involved. Additionally, MIMY partners assured that the involved participants were protected and that researchers were not jeopardising their safety nor increasing their vulnerability. Beside such formal requirements, we also tried to address more practical and ad hoc ethical challenges that occurred during the research process.

In this chapter, we discuss in detail the ethical challenges related to the safety and wellbeing of the participants, their empowerment, inclusive knowledge production, as well as work with peer researchers. We also share how we managed to overcome such challenges and explain why it is important to go beyond “procedural ethics” to address issues related to ethical (a)symmetry (Christensen & Prout, 2002), power imbalance or participant empowerment.

7.2 Safety and wellbeing of the participants

7.2.1. Care and trust as important principles

The challenges related to safety are especially important in the case of researching participants in vulnerable conditions, or those who might have experienced traumatic situations (e.g. forced migrants or migrants in precarious

life and work conditions). Therefore, in the MIMY project, we carefully investigated challenges related to participants' well-being and tried to elaborate solutions to ensure their safety and comfort. Our approach was based on the **“ethics of care”** (Barnes et al., 2015). Ethics of care imply shared and contextualised ethical commitments to “care” between researchers and participants. This approach, which we recommend in researching groups in vulnerable situations, is established from feminist principles and decision-making grounded in care, **compassion, attentiveness**, and a **commitment** to acting in the **best interests of the individuals or groups** involved in the process, not only in favour of the researchers and research process.

Another important principle that was at the core of our research project was **trust** - between researchers and peer researchers, between participants and researchers, and among participants. We took care to build such relationships between researchers and participants involved in the research, so that participants were sure that we would not reveal information leading to their identification. Moreover, we recognised the importance of analysing and interpreting data in such a manner that, while maintaining research integrity, the results would not contribute to the stigmatisation of the individuals and groups. We put great effort into ensuring that our research supported the studied communities rather than using them for scientific purposes. The trust between peer researchers and researchers was also related to the issue of not using the former as a “tool” to conduct the research (e.g. as gatekeepers or interpreters), but to respect their expertise, voices and perspective and treat them as equal team members.

7.2.2. Informed consent

One of the most important tools, besides the researchers' approach based on ethics of care, was **informed consent to participate in the study**. When recruiting participants who are potentially in vulnerable situations, such as asylum seekers with little knowledge of the language, it is important to take special measures to implement the principle of informed consent. With the support of peer researchers we **translated consent forms and information about the research** into the different languages used by participants. Participants who agreed to take part in the research were provided with the information and a form before an actual research activity with the peer researcher/researcher, so they had enough time to familiarise themselves with the study and ask questions about it. We recommend **spending extra time on talking with participants in advance**, to ensure they fully understand the implications of being involved in a project, to explain the informed consent forms and provide participants with the opportunity to ask questions. We found this increased effort to be worthwhile, as it allowed us to take into account the **principles of care and sensitivity, and in particular transparency**.

Moreover, we explained to participants that taking part in the study was voluntary, and that they could change their mind at any point, until the very end of the research project. It is important that consent is not just seen as a one-off process at the beginning of the project. As the process is emergent, it is important that participants are given **multiple opportunities to give consent**. The notion of **continuous consent** – meaning that participants might change their mind about how or whether they engage with the project at any point -

was extremely important to us, because some research endeavours required more systematic participation and contact with the researchers (e.g. some art-based methods; see: 6. Art-based methods). We argue that such an approach leads to greater recognition of participants' power and agency. This is especially important in researching young adults, because they are not used to having their voice acknowledged by anyone. In their childhood and adolescence, some of them had limited opportunity to experience this approach to their agency and decision-making. Therefore, informed consent and continuous consent may constitute an important tool in participants empowerment.

In some cases, we decided to use **verbal instead of written consent** to reassure participants of the complete anonymity of the interview process. This is particularly important for those participants who may feel wary of signing formal documentation, given the uncertainty of their legal status, and also where literacy levels are low. In such cases, instead of signing documents, we recorded the consent using a pseudonym and stored it in a digitalised version. Participants were given a copy of the information leaflet and a consent form to keep, and the confirmation that the participants had provided informed consent was signed by the researcher and an independent witness.

7.2.3. Anonymisation and protection of data

The anonymisation of data and pseudonymisation of participants were other ways of providing greater safety and comfort to the participants. All participants were granted pseudonymity and were not referred to by their real names in the interview transcriptions, interim reports and/or final reports. Personal information was recorded to allow follow-up contacts for further research activities, and details were kept safely apart from the rest of the interview notes/transcripts. However, we encouraged participants to state whether they wanted their data to be pseudonymised. In the MIMY project, we offered stakeholders the option to appear under their own name. Although not many of them decided to do so, having this option available, and being able to make informed decisions about it, provides a degree of agency. Especially in the case of people whose voice is not generally heard, **appearing under their own name might be a form of emancipation**. However, in offering them the possibility, it is necessary to present the advantages and consequences of such a choice in detail to the research participants. In the case of peer researchers, there was also an option on how to sign: They could provide their name and surname, or first name only, or use pseudonyms according to their own decision.

Beside the pseudonymisation of participants, we also implemented other procedures of data **anonymisation**. Since in many cases the research was undertaken in small communities (see: 2.3.1 Research locations), it was extremely important to make sure that the narratives provided by participants were safely guarded, not given out for any public use, and that data which emerged out of these conversations was strictly anonymized. Moreover, we decided that data collected during the fieldwork should be published at an **aggregated level** to prevent the identification of personal data. It is especially important in an international project to ensure data protection. We decided not to share "raw" data between national teams, as this would entail online and cross-country data sharing which is not fully secure. Therefore, to provide a higher level of data protection, only aggregate data in the form of national reports were shared among national project teams.

The **art-based methods posed a challenge to the anonymity** of the data. In particular the visual outputs from this research (such as documentary films or photos) had implications in terms of the visibility of young participants and their anonymity. In the case of these research endeavours, we provided the space for the young people to make an informed decision, over time, about whether or not they wanted to share their visual stories in different “public” outlets. Where anonymity was requested, we also took steps to ensure anonymity. This decision-making throughout the process resulted in images and stories for internal purposes, from which only anonymous data can be drawn, and for external purposes, which share more information about the young people’s lives. In dialogue with the young people, levels of consent were agreed as to where and how the stories could be shared. An important part of this discussion was related to **protection and representation** (i.e. the construction of stereotypes if people’s faces were to be blurred or pixelated, which can infer criminality).

7.2.4. Participants’ wellbeing and prevention of retraumatization

We conducted research among people who may have experienced difficult and traumatic situations in their lives, and the fact that the research conducted (e.g. interviews) might contribute to the **re-enactment of traumas**, or other difficulties, was a topic that had to be handled with particular care, to prevent the interview from **triggering, harming, or re-traumatising participants**. Asking in-depth questions can be harmful, or even traumatising, for people with experience of past or current vulnerable situations, therefore we were extremely cautious when asking questions about personal experiences and about individual life episodes. We also made it clear at the beginning of each interview that if the interviewee felt uncomfortable with any question in particular, or with the direction the conversation was taking, they had the **full right not to give an answer to the question, or to withdraw from the entire conversation without giving a reason**. Moreover, we deliberately avoided focusing extensively on the past experiences of participants, particularly those relating to their reason for fleeing their origin countries. We also created some research tools (i.e. interviews scenarios) in cooperation with peer researchers. Their knowledge drawn from lived experience was helpful in identifying those questions that were potentially triggering. These methodological choices were dictated primarily by ethical considerations, including the risk of re-traumatization of participants through detailed descriptions of past traumatic experiences, and the risk of stigmatising the group through questions on their traumatic experiences. Moreover, part of the interviews with young migrants was devoted to talking about their coping resources. This approach allowed us to balance negative experiences with positive experiences in the interview.

In order to prevent the retraumatization of subjects, we also propose taking the time to adequately **prepare researchers and peer researchers for working with difficult topics**. At MIMY, we took the time to adequately train peer researchers and researchers to **prepare** them **cognitively and emotionally** for interviewing people in vulnerable situations. Interviewers were trained to prevent interview situations which could pose a threat to the integrity of participants or violate their privacy, and were made particularly sensitive towards the specific risks faced by vulnerable target groups.

If a participant required further consultations, an **appropriate source of professional advice** was recommended. a good solution in such a case was to prepare **a list with services for migrants** in each country/context where they could get psychological or social support, and to contact people at these organisations to facilitate access. We were also in **constant contact with NGOs and public institutions** that, in case of further problems, might provide assistance to the interviewees. The researcher spoke to the participant after the audio recording had finished to **talk about how the participant experienced the interview** and if they had any questions or concerns, thus not abandoning them immediately after the interview without any **debriefing**. Participants seemed to respond well to this type of approach, with some explicitly stating their appreciation during the debriefing at the end of the interview.

Furthermore, we argue that regular **supervision and intervision** of the research team can provide a possibility to discuss challenges that occur during the research process. Such team meetings can help less experienced members to **learn skills** that might help them during subsequent interviews. As some research endeavours might also be **emotionally triggering** to the researchers (especially for peer researchers whose stories may be similar to participants' experiences) supervision/intervision offers a **safe space** to address such triggers and discuss them within the team. In our view, supervision/intervision not only **supports researchers' well-being**, but also **indirectly influences participants' safety**, as better emotionally prepared researchers are more likely to be able to support participants if they need it.

7.2.5. Research methods, tools and procedures that support comfort and safety

The **research framing and tools** constructed in a certain way may either pose a risk to participants' safety or foster it. Therefore, we take care to work with the peer researchers to create **tools that support participants' wellbeing**. For instance, some peer researchers suggested that an open conversation starting with their everyday life was a safe place to begin. It allowed some participants to naturally connect the present reality to their past experiences, and where this did not happen, the researchers guided the process, if it felt comfortable for the particular participant. Thus, when necessary, we used the interview scenario more flexibly. This approach facilitated more free associations, offering respectful space to these associations and affording them significance in the research encounter. Furthermore, the involvement of peer researchers in contextualising the research tool helped ensure the **most appropriate terminology** was used, and that consistency between interviews was maintained. Peer researchers also suggested that we ask for more examples during the positive experiences interview, so that we could encourage the participant to speak from their lived experience. Examples help us better understand the meaning someone is trying to get across, otherwise we may interpret their comments or experiences incorrectly.

Besides the safeguards related to conducting the interviews, another way of ensuring participants' wellbeing was to conduct interviews or focus groups in spaces that were comfortable for the participants. In some cases, online interviewing was used, as often the **online sphere provided more safety** and

a sense of a comfortable space for these young people. **Not turning on the camera** was a solution in some cases, when people were extra cautious about their invisibility and anonymity.

7.3. Empowerment of young migrants in vulnerable conditions

In the MIMY project, we presumed that we would not only avoid “using” the researched groups for scientific reasons, but we would also work to support their empowerment. Therefore, our standing point was that we would conduct research not “about” but “with” young migrants in vulnerable conditions, meaning that the participants would be the subject, not the object of the research. Moreover, we put special measures in place to enhance participants' empowerment.

7.3.1. Avoidance of participant stigmatisation

Empowerment starts with the **reduction of stigmatisation and marginalisation**. Therefore, one of the most central challenges of the project was how to address the young migrants in question. For instance, instead of using the term “vulnerable young migrants”, we used “young migrants in vulnerable conditions/situations”, to show that there are external factors that produce vulnerable situations (Gilodi et al., 2022). We used the broad definition of “vulnerable conditions” to minimise the risk of imposing a label of “vulnerability” to the respective young , not knowing if the young person would ascribe this to themselves or if being “vulnerable” could be taken as a definitive part of being young. Recruiting participants according to the narrow, strictly operationalized definition of “vulnerability” imposed the risk of ascribing this label according to researchers' own knowledge, stereotypes and prejudice. To overcome these challenges, we often asked peer researchers to identify those of their peers who, in their opinion, might be in a vulnerable situation. Moreover, we tried to solve the dilemma through cooperation with institutions already working with young migrants or providing services to them. This helped us to circumvent any ascriptions in selecting young people, since they had already been selected by institutional definition or service selection.

We further avoided use of the word “vulnerable” during the recruiting process (e.g. in announcements about the research) and during the interviews, but rather looked out for hints during communication/interview which indicated aspects of disadvantage and challenges the young people had been facing during their life course. Here we attached great importance to the young people's own reflections on challenges, issues, subjective problems and “vulnerability” definitions. This allowed us to prevent ascription and helped us to reconstruct “vulnerabilities” or “non-vulnerabilities” ex post based on young migrants' reflections.

Further issue related to migrant stigmatisation relate to participant recruitment. We reflected carefully on the term “migrant”. We did not want to recruit participants based on our “image of an ideal migrant”, which may have led to the stigmatisation. We left recruitment as open as possible in order to have as heterogeneous a research group as possible, not only due to the origin of the participants, but also their social status, legal status, education level, gender and so on.

7.3.2. Ethical (a)symmetry and power imbalance

The set of challenges that hinder the empowerment of young migrants includes **ethical asymmetry** and **power imbalance**, which are ascribed features of academic research (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). To make the relations between researchers and participants more equal, it is important to conduct the research with a certain approach. Firstly, it is important that researchers are able to **acknowledge other sources of knowledge** than academic ones. For instance, in MIMY, we spent a lot of time discussing the results of the research with peer researchers, treating their lived experiences as important reference points for analysis. Some members of the MIMY research team indicated that, in the beginning, it was difficult to recognise peer researchers as equal team members, as often there were at the age of the researchers' students. Researchers who have previous experience of teaching young adults may be accustomed to being a source of knowledge for them. However, autoreflexive researchers are able to reshape their attitudes and, through emotional labour, open up to further collaboration with non-academic research partners.

Secondly, using non-stigmatising and empowering language during the research, as well as during dissemination, is crucial for the reduction of power imbalance. Therefore, we also paid special attention to the **languages** that we used within the study. Firstly, thanks to the cooperation with peer researchers, in many cases we were able to conduct **interviews in the native languages of participants**, which also reduced ethical asymmetry. Peer researchers also provided practical support in terms of building cultural sensitivity and linguistic support into the facilitation of the interviews and focus groups (see: 3.3. Value of the peer research approach in the research of young migrants). Regarding peer researchers we also noticed that there was a tension when we used terms "vulnerability" or "migrants" in their context. We got feedback from them that in some cases they felt as if their identity would be limited only to those terms. Therefore, we recommend to pay attention not only to the language used in contact with the research participants, but also to be aware of the communication within the research team.

Thirdly, we also **did not want to impose a certain method of narration on young migrants**. In some cases, we were working with young people who had had to "tell their story" a number of times within a framework determined by other people, often in positions of authority and power. In order not to hinder young migrants' agency, we tried not to approach them with a predefined interview schedule, but rather keep it open and flexible. Given that, it was important to find a way of approaching the young people that was different from the dominant nature of their encounters with authority - one that gave them more power in the process and was more participatory.

7.3.3. Empowerment of the individuals and groups

As support of young migrants' empowerment was an important aim of the MIMY project, we took care to construct research in a way that provided **a space for the emancipation** of research individuals and groups. We tried to use an approach that makes a commitment to social justice, inclusiveness and equity and agency. a strength-based approach is important for **building personal power**. This strength is often established in the framing of **own narration** or **artistic expression** (see: 6. Art-based methods) and in how participants are supported when entering into the sharing of experiences and ideas. Therefore,

it is important that researchers **allow participants to share their experiences in a way that is most suitable and comfortable for them**. Accordingly, the role of researchers in the studies that aim to support the empowerment of a certain group should be focused mostly on **providing conditions** by which, **through taking part in research, research participants can empower** themselves and their communities. Implementing an approach that is inspired by participatory action research allows for researchers engaging in this way (see: 2.4.1. Participatory action research approach).

Another important issue related to the empowerment of the research group concerns the way in which the produced knowledge can be given back to the research community. “Return” of the knowledge in the form of accessible research results also limits the risk of taking advantage of research participants, as in return they receive certain solutions that they can use to strengthen their community. We recommend different forms of gratification for taking part in the research. This could include **material or financial remuneration, the possibility to gain new knowledge or acquire new skills** (see: 6.5. Photovoice method) or the **opportunity for networking**. It is also important to identify participants' needs and offer them the most adequate and beneficial form of gratification.

7.4. Inclusive knowledge co-production

Knowledge production within a participatory approach should be democratic and inclusive – meaning that it should not be elaborated only by researchers for other researchers (Martin et al., 2019). In the MIMY project, we took care to implement numerous participatory activities to help empower participants. Within the notion of inclusive knowledge co-production, we put special emphasis on limiting methodological nationalism and the decolonisation of knowledge, providing adequate ownership of the research products and implementing inclusive analysis and dissemination of results .

7.4.1. Limiting methodological nationalism and the decolonization of knowledge

Methodological nationalism is a phenomenon that often appears in migration studies (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2003) together with neocolonial knowledge production (Bhambra, 2021). The implementation of methods inspired by the participatory approach allows open spaces for active and creative participation in the **co-construction of new knowledge**, and innovative ways of constructing meaning about migrant integration experiences. In the project, attributing research participants with the power to participate in knowledge construction as experts strongly stimulated a process of empowerment, manifested in narratives related to their own personal experiences in which their own strengths and capacity for action became emphasised. In this way, a more **diverse, inclusive, and dialogic knowledge** was achieved, through the use of a more ethically driven and collaborative research process that opened new perspectives and knowledge construction legitimacies. In particular, the use of creative and visual methods built on a growing body of **culturally sensitive, decolonizing**, participatory work that took an adaptive and **responsive approach** to supporting the visibility of the voices and ideas of young migrants in vulnerable conditions.

Moreover, methodological nationalism was minimized, as peer researchers identified issues that were underplayed because of **cultural nuances**, and which would be overlooked by a researcher speaking a different language or from a different culture. This greatly enhanced the depth and richness of data collated.

7.4.2. Ownership of the research products

An important issue that needs to be addressed while talking about democratic knowledge production is the issue of **ownership of research products** – especially those created during art-based methods, but also including research results. It is important that participants have a clear understanding from the outset of how their artwork or research results might be used, and that there is a clear process of consent giving that is negotiated throughout the process.

Besides the art-based methods that allow the creation of specific art pieces, we also conducted several **Design Thinking workshops**. Such workshops were an opportunity to bring together researchers, peer researchers, stakeholders, young migrants, and young non-migrants in order to collectively discuss integration challenges and explore possible solutions based on the research results. “The creation of a trustworthy communicational environment was also a key factor in stimulating the power-balanced participation of everyone involved. Special care was taken to facilitate the self-expression of young migrants and reduce power imbalances between researchers, stakeholders [non-migrant youth, author’s note] and migrants, so that they would not feel apprehensive in communicating in the presence of researchers and other experts” (Oliveira & Nienaber, 2023, p. 7).

7.4.3. Inclusive data analysis and results dissemination

Both peer researchers and researchers should have **equal access to analysed data**. We argue that joint analysis builds **mutual recognition and supports migrants’ agency**, as their presence within the research is not instrumental and limited only to conducting or translating interviews. Additionally, as peer researchers’ positionalities differ from those of the researchers, their involvement in the data analysis introduces a new interpretative perspective. This can lead to in-depth analysis and discoveries of unexpected research results (Goodson & Phillimore, 2010). Moreover, willing **research participants** should also have the possibility to **be engaged to some extent in the interpretation of results, or at least have an opportunity to give feedback** about them.

Inclusive knowledge production requires **deliverables that serve various aims** – development of the academic field, providing solutions for the community, explanation of the research issues that are accessible to the general public. The **deliverables** should also be **developed in different forms**. In co-production of knowledge, not only diversity of content and form, but also of language should be taken into consideration. While conducting research with the migrant community, it is worth creating some deliverables in the native language of the minority group. Moreover, researchers should be careful **not to use only academic language that limits access to some research results**, as they are presented in a difficult manner.

At the core of the MIMY project was the **strengthening of the young migrant voices**. Within the project, we provided different opportunities for their voices to be heard. For instance we used **art-based methods** that allowed us to invite young migrants into the knowledge co-production process (see: 2.4.1. Participatory action research...). An integral part of the project reports were **direct quotations** from the interviews with research participants that presented their narration in an unmodified form.

Furthermore, we tried to support young migrants in building a platform for their voices by including their **perspective in different academic and non-academic project endeavours**. Some peer researchers were involved in preparing notes on learning lessons from the past, on their experience as peer researchers and on their opinions and thoughts on migration and integration. They also took part in workshops, attended conferences, and co-wrote reports. Thanks to this approach, it was possible not only to reach diverse audiences, but also peer researchers could find a way to get involved in the development of some deliverables - in some cases such involvement was empowering. Additionally, the MIMY Youth Blog provided a space where peer researchers could provide their reflections about the MIMY research, but also introduce topics that are important for young migrants in different European countries (see: 4. Peer researchers' perspective...).

7.5 Ethical issues regarding work with peer researchers⁸

In Chapter 3. *Peer research approach* we explored the challenges and values of the peer research approach in the research of young migrants. Thus, in this part we will focus only on the main ethical challenges related to cooperation with peer researchers. While collaborating with peer researchers during the MIMY project, we acquired new experience and knowledge related to the peer research approach. We spent a lot of time discussing this method and the ethical considerations related to it. We **exchanged our reflections and discussed them with peer researchers** – obtaining rich and meaningful feedback from them. Over time, we began to find that working with peer researchers required us to think about every element of the research process, so that the values described above were not empty slogans. As a result, our awareness of particular methodological and ethical challenges became greater over the course of the research.

We argue that implementation of the peer researcher approach is **not only a methodological decision, but also an ethical choice**. If the peer research approach is implemented without this consideration, it may cause the **instrumentalization of peer researchers**. For instance, due to limited resources (knowledge, time, money, competencies) peer researchers can be “used” only to collect data for researchers, thereby excluding them from the analysis and dissemination stages of the project. We argue that such a tokenistic approach does not embody the actual and ethical peer research approach, that is based on such values as **inclusion, power balance, respect, recognition and empowerment**.

⁸ This subchapter is based on the article Peer research methodology and its ethical considerations (Pietrusińska et al., forthcoming).

Moreover, involving community members as gatekeepers, translators, facilitators or interviewers, but still **doing research about and not with them, reinforces ethical asymmetry**, power imbalance and leads to the instrumentalization of the research group. Although such an approach facilitates the research process, and provides easier access to the research community, it also reinforces only the academic researchers' agency and makes members of the community silent objects of investigation rather than active subjects. What is more, it has to be mentioned that peer researchers have to **negotiate their dual role** – as members of the local community and as members of the research team. In some cases, this negotiation may cause some tension and be stressful, as both groups can have different expectations towards peer researchers.

We argue that an **ethical (meaning not tokenistic)** peer research approach is based on such values as **diversity, inclusion, social justice, and equity** (Flicker et al., 2009). Relations between peer researchers and researchers are built upon mutual **respect, trust, openness, partnership, balance of power and established ethical symmetry**. Both peer researchers and researchers gain agency within the research process. In case of peer researchers, involvement in the research also serves as a tool for advocacy and empowerment (Kellett, 2011). Migrants' complex positionality is recognised and appreciated - meaning they are not limited to the label of "migrants" but other elements of their identity are recognised and appreciated. Migrant peer researchers are seen in this approach as experts who have greater access to the field due to lived experiences and their 'insider' knowledge.

It is also important to note that peer researchers should have **equal access to the research data**, be involved in the data analysis, as well as be able to share and use the collected data in the same way as other team members. Besides equal access to data, peer researchers should also have equal **access to other resources related to their participation in the project**. For instance, if they wish, their conference fee should be paid from the project money.

7.6 Conclusions

Researching young migrants in vulnerable conditions entails many ethical and methodological challenges. As we aimed to demonstrate in this brief discussion, besides "procedural ethics" related to ethical approvals and formal requirements, "ethics in practice" should also be an important area of ethical considerations. The ethics guides provide a framework, but these "informal ethics", together with the decisions that sometimes need to be taken ad hoc, play an important role in research like MIMY.

Such "ethics in practice" require a specific research approach that takes into account the need for the empowerment of the research group. Moreover, this approach requires a high level of (auto)reflexivity and research awareness among researchers, and their openness towards different non-academic perspectives. It is also important to be aware that participatory and empowerment approaches should not be implemented partially. They should start with inclusion of the research community from the very beginning of the project (e.g. creation or research aims and questions) and continue until the results dissemination phase. Although such a methodological and ethical approach requires additional resources and competences, we are convinced that it is worth using for the sake of greater social justice and inclusion.

8. Conclusions

Ethically and effectively researching young migrants in vulnerable conditions presents an important set of **methodological and ethical challenges** that should be preceded by deep reflection. Drawing on the experiences from the MIMY project, we believe that such research should be based on a participatory approach that aims both to scientifically explore this community, but also to support its empowerment. Combination of **peer researcher approach, visual and art-based methods together with deep ethical consideration** can provide more power balance, empowerment and social justice into the study as well allowing for greater scientific effects that can be shared not only with academic community but also with the general public through inclusive knowledge co-production. Although in some cases in the MIMY project we were not able to achieve a full **participatory approach**, we strongly believe that in further research about young migrants in vulnerable conditions such an approach should be implemented from the very beginning of the project (e.g. creation of research aims and questions) and continue until the results dissemination phase.

To implement such an approach, researchers should manifest a high level of competencies that go beyond traditional research competencies like data collection or analysis. We argue that researchers should be **(auto)reflexive, open, and empathic, and committed to collaboration and participation**. They should also be ready to **go out of their comfort zone, and decentre their own power**. Moreover, art-based methods inspired by the participatory approach pose a greater risk of participants' **retraumatisation**, as they are more likely to trigger emotions than traditional methods. Therefore, researchers should have additional competencies that allow them to react in such challenging situations.

Researchers who want to follow this research approach should reflect on their attitudes to the research participants, as well as to the peer researchers. **No one in these groups should be instrumentalized** for scientific purposes. Moreover, researchers should **avoid tokenistic treatment** of peer researchers and participants. Additionally, it should be emphasised that not only **peer researchers can gain new knowledge and skills** when involved in the research project – **researchers can also gain new experiences and competencies** in cooperation with peer researchers.

Visual and art-based methods that are often present in the participatory approach allow the collection of **deeper and richer data** because they go beyond only verbal communication and provide participants and researchers with a **“continuum of involvement”**. Contrary to traditional methods, such as interviews or focus groups where participants can only speak or not, visual and art-based methods offer the possibility to talk, stay silent, express oneself through metaphor or artwork. For **younger participants**, these **non-verbal forms of narration might be more compelling** as, due to new technology and social media, they are used to such non-verbal forms of communication. As we try to indicate in this report, such methods can be **flexibly adjusted to the needs of participants and the aims** of the research project. Such flexibility allows researchers to adjust them to the specific academic needs and research questions. Moreover, the data collected during those methods are more varied (e.g. voice recordings, notes, visual data of different sorts).

The participatory approach also provides **added values to the scientific outcomes**. This added value is related to non-academic outcomes of the research. For instance, different groups involved in the project – researchers, peer researchers and research participants might acquire **new knowledge and skills**, they can also meet new people and **build personal and professional relationships**. Additionally, researcher **communities may be empowered** through participation in the research. Furthermore, **democratisation of knowledge and inclusive knowledge** co-production make it possible to reach both academic and non-academic audiences.

Participation in the MIMY project has made us aware that implementation of a full participatory approach is challenging and **requires considerable resources** - knowledge, skills, time, funding - and it is difficult to implement it fully straight away. Since the participatory approach should respond primarily to the **needs of the specific research group** it is challenging to provide detailed guidelines of this approach and step-by-step instructions. However, we are convinced that reflections from our experiences can be an **inspiring starting point** for those researchers who want to learn and develop in using this approach. Although this approach requires a lot of reflexivity and ethical consideration, we believe that it is worth it. Nowadays, researchers should participate in developing the **inclusivity of academia**, research should be undertaken **not only for scientific purposes**, but also for the **sake of society** and researchers should become **responsible for social justice and social change**. We believe that the participatory approach allows all these goals to be achieved.

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Appendix 1.

Chosen art-based methods used in MIMY

Digital Storytelling

Author: Thea Shahrokh

Name of the ABM	Digital storytelling
MIMY Partner who used this ABM	University of Sheffield (USFD), England, UK University of Luxembourg (UL), Luxembourg
Brief description	<p>Digital storytelling is a learning, creating and sharing experience supported by technology, allowing participants to share aspects of their life story through the creation of their own short digital media production. Through digital storytelling young people tell their own stories from their own experiences through reflective and creative techniques. It is an approach that combines a participatory, collaborative methodology with the creative use of technology to generate stories aimed at catalysing action on pressing social issues.</p> <p>Examples of digital storytelling: Welcome young refugees, Migration Yorkshire, England: https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/?page=wyr-hear-from-young-people Young migrants' storytelling, Adonis Musati Project, South Africa : https://www.adonismusatiproject.org/storytelling</p>
Goals	<p>Young people's digital stories address gaps and silences associated with marginalisation/multiple forms of exclusion that young people face. The approach helps people to articulate deeply-held experiences of exclusion and resilience and allows for young people to 'take control' of narrative.</p> <p>The process supports new forms of solidarity and group identity through the relational experience of telling stories, which can lead to new possibilities for learning, finding points of connection across diverse lives and facilitating collective action.</p> <p>Digital storytelling has the potential to prompt a different quality of debate and discussion on pressing issues. This is because the approach can help build knowledge of experiences made invisible by power inequalities. By connecting research communication to personal stories, empathy can grow and open the door for other evidence.</p>
Relevance to MIMY	Digital storytelling supports the sharing of stories of the young people at the centre of the research, facilitating a connection to the humanity of young people with migration experiences, and their aspirations for change. The knowledge created within the story provides important insight into young migrants' and young people's lived experiences. Digital stories can spark dialogue on the issues affecting young people, and create an entry point for engaging with the wider evidence generated in the project.

Duration	<p>Each digital storytelling process is unique and must be contextually defined. The following provides guidelines to work through in relation to the particular storytellers, thematic issue, and wider research process being developed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 60 hour process (preparation, workshop process, editing, public event) • Paired facilitators • Can be intensive (e.g. 5 days workshop) or over-time (week by week), complemented by other activities such as diaries/journaling.
Number of participants	<p>Small groups: Depending of skills and experience of the facilitator, between 4-10 participants at a time. It is important that there is some peer reflection and support from other participants in the group. Preceding steps/ Preparation of the event</p>
Materials/ Tools/ Instruments/ Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venue – space and location <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakout rooms for sharing circles • Quiet rooms for recording • Any power dynamics related to the space that may impact whether it feels like a safe place of self-expression • Counsellor available or within the process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital tech • iPad or Laptop or Phones • Applications for creativity and editing • Microphones/headphones • Laptop/Projector/Scanner/Printer • Arts materials • Translators • Catering
Methods/ Techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements can be done on their own but more effective as a whole • Reflection and evaluation throughout • Need to be adapted to specific young people involved
Procedure/ Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparatory work with participants ahead of the digital storytelling process involves: • Participants are told about the process before the workshop itself. • They are given space to understand the purpose of the workshop and the issues that are being explored. • Workshop design and planning is supported by facilitators learning more about the technical skills of participants, and their emotional preparedness in advance of the workshop. • In terms of technical skills, longer workshops should be considered where participants have less experience. • This preparatory work also helps facilitators understand what support structures are available to participants once the workshop ends, and which spaces they may want to take their stories into.

Lenette (2019: 116) outlines that the broad workshop process of crafting a digital story involves tasks such as:

- thinking about one's story, and choosing what aspects to focus on;
- working on a story-board to prepare what information they want to represent and recount for themselves or for others;
- writing (and rewriting) scripts;
- recording scripts as audio files;
- choosing and/or creating photographs, artwork, drawings, videos and music;
- working on animations,
- providing input on a draft version and
- working collaboratively towards finalising the story.

Sharing the digital stories involves:

- A film screening for participants of their own stories, celebrating their achievement, and validating the value of their own learning process.
- Preparation for whether, why, when and how stories will be shared with public audiences.
- Co-design of public screening event and dialogue process with target audience.
- Follow up actions to drive change.

Expected results

- Participants are active storytellers and media producers meaning that audiences hear their perspectives and narratives.
- Storytellers have power and control over the presentation of their lived experiences, deciding what the story is about and why. This can have positive wellbeing effects for participants.
- New meaning and understanding about personal experiences can be formed, and awareness and empathy for others can be built.
- Can support the expression of knowledge that is otherwise tacit.
- Researchers learn from the process and understand more about participants and their lives by how they have crafted their story, and the needs and concerns being highlighted.
- Harmful and negative stereotypes can be challenged within communities and public/policy discourse.
- When multiple digital stories are shared together the diverse voices of a community can be heard together as a collective.

Ethical concerns and precautions taken

Process versus product: question of whether participants should focus on achieving the highest possible aesthetic standards in their visual storytelling or whether the process of interaction should take centre stage irrespective of quality. It is important that the complexity of people's stories and experiences are retained, so as to retain personal ownership and identity of participants.

Representation and audience response: researchers may not always foresee the full ethical implications of sharing identifiable information in a digital format (especially online) for wider dissemination, nor can they control whether others will use the stories in ways that contradict the intention of the participant or the researcher (Lenette 2019). There is a need to consider the complexity of online publication of digital stories versus being shared in closed spaces.

Time, energy and experience: engaging in digital storytelling involves significant time and effort on the part of storytellers and researchers, including in terms of supporting the wellbeing of participants and holding a safe space for self-expression. Factors such as lack of experience with media production and having to come up with ideas for stories can hinder progress in the development of digital stories, causing difficulties for both storytellers and facilitators (Lenette 2019).

Anonymisation of respondents, informed consent, and confidentiality:

- Central issue raised by participants concerned the vexed issues of anonymity and identification of visual materials' (Wiles et al. 2008: 4).
- The concept of anonymity is complicated by the fact that individuals, particularly young children, appear commonly to want to be identified in their visual images (Wiles et al. 2008), also to be recognised as artists.
- Ethics of recognition and visibility – sensitive issues, who decides?
- Rethink informed consent as ongoing/negotiated rather than fixed.

Eurocentrism and decolonising the methodology: Digital storytelling has been criticised for using a fairly standard, western-based storytelling model. Relationships of trust are needed to build a process that is culturally sensitive and decolonising for the participants involved (Lenette 2019: 119).

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References and links

Case study: Silence Speaks surfaces first-person narratives of struggle, courage, and transformation and works to ensure that these stories play an instrumental role in promoting gender equality, health, and human rights around the world. We use participatory media, popular education, and testimonio practices to support the telling and witnessing of stories that all too often remain unspoken and unheard. See: <https://www.storycenter.org/silence-speaks>

LEGO® Serious Play®

Author: Birte Nienaber

Name of the ABM	LEGO® Serious Play®
MIMY Partner who used this ABM	University of Luxembourg (UL), Luxembourg Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaft und Kunst (HAWK), Germany
Brief description	The LEGO® Serious Play® method is a “playful” tool of communicative co-creation of fostering equality also in groups with different backgrounds, e.g. cultural, religious, age. It combines play, emotional link with childhood, constructionism, thoughts, language, reflection and conceptual metaphors. LEGO® Serious Play® is used to support individual coaching, workshops and processes on visions, values and behaviour of teams or larger groups/ communities as well as strategies and scenarios of businesses, communities or local/regional development. By using LEGO® bricks as metaphors, subliminal ideas are put into 3D models- first individually, then of all who take part as a last step also external factors and their input can be simulated.
Goals	The goal is (besides others) to build up future strategies and scenarios in a very plastic way where a diversity of people (with different language skills, different socioeconomic backgrounds, different education (levels) etc) can easily participate and express their ideas.
Relevance to MIMY	To reflect and build up integration scenarios and challenges, as well as possible strategies to overcome them.
Duration	2-8 hours (depending on which steps are made)
Number of participants	Ideally a minimum of 2 participants and a maximum of 12 participants.
Preceding steps/ Preparation of the event	A preparation meeting takes place before the event with all participants, where the principles and methods of LEGO® Serious Play® will be fully outlined. A full explanation will be given on how the activity will be structured and will unfold.
Materials/ Tools/ Instruments/ Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LEGO® bricks (either the official LEGO® Serious Play® sets, or many (!) old LEGO® bricks that you have at home)• Tables (if in person)• a facilitator
Methods/ Techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building with LEGO® bricks

**Procedure/
Performance**

- 1. Make clear what is the reason for the workshop and define a main question that will be targeted (e.g. how you expect this local community to look like in 10 years? What you think integration is? How could young migrants in vulnerable conditions be integrated?)
- 2. Skills building exercises (how you would build a tower; What can be the meaning of a white brick? (e.g. snow, cold, icebear, ice, strength,...); explaining a model)=> so everybody is on the same knowledge on how to use the LEGO® bricks and that they are metaphors
- 3. Building an individual model (letting the hands “think”; tacit knowledge)
- 4. Explaining this to all participants
- 5. Combining the different models and coming up with a joint model by discussing the elements of the different models
- 6. Thinking of an external threat (“Heading of a newspaper”) and rebuilding the model to be resilient to this threat
-

Expected results

- Participants are active storytellers and media producers meaning that audiences hear their perspectives and narratives.
- Storytellers have power and control over the presentation of their lived experiences, deciding what the story is about and why. This can have positive wellbeing effects for participants.
- New meaning and understanding about personal experiences can be formed, and awareness and empathy for others can be built.
- Can support the expression of knowledge that is otherwise tacit.
- Researchers learn from the process and understand more about participants and their lives by how they have crafted their story, and the needs and concerns being highlighted.
- Harmful and negative stereotypes can be challenged within communities and public/policy discourse.
- When multiple digital stories are shared together the diverse voices of a community can be heard together as a collective.

**Expected results
(esp. for
participants)**

- A joint (3D) vision how integration should look like in the local setting
 - Pictures can be taken during the process and then put together in a photo book for the participants as well as e.g. for the stakeholders
 - On a short film can be produced during the workshop
-

Ethical concerns and precautions taken

Overall, no negative socio-emotional impacts are expected.

Yet, it cannot be excluded that sensible or emotionally impacting issues may emerge. However the risk is quite low as the playing character rather supports an atmosphere without socio-emotional impact.

A warm and empathic context is to be created favouring the generation of a relationship of trust between researchers and participants, apt to accommodate situations where the task may induce an out of the ordinary socio-emotional impact.

If needed, participants will be referred to appropriate psychosocial services in order to obtain support/ specialised assistance.

References and links

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Collage Work

Author: Zeynep Aydar, Jörg Plöger

Name of the ABM	Collage Making
MIMY Partner	ILS Research, Dortmund/Germany
Brief description	Collage is originally a technique that is mainly used in applied arts. Through using various materials, such as magazines, newspapers, paint, fabric and so on, various forms are created, designing a new piece. The technique has been a common method to use in youth work too, due to its potential for artistic expression and reflection. Although there is no one single aim or certain steps to be followed, the ideal way is to give time to participants to get to know their materials, in order to communicate and reflect themselves through these materials. In this way, the material becomes the tool of communication.
Brief description	The method also provides flexibility to the participants, and freedom of decision of how to and which materials to use. Using various colours, textures and visuals do provide participants a space to reflect on the theme of the workshop/event. It is, therefore, a method that enables communication of feelings and ideas. Collage making can be both individually and collectively take place, according to the theme and aim of the event.
Goals	The main goal was to provide youth living in Dortmund space to reflect their experience regarding the city, focusing on the barriers, challenges and resources. Such reflection is aimed to be followed by an exchange, where youth with diverse backgrounds can come in dialogue for further elaboration.
Relevance to MIMY	To reflect on individual experiences such as barriers, challenges and resilience in the city of Dortmund, thus possibly create a dialogue between peers regarding these issues.
Duration	3 hours
Number of participants	10-12
Preceding steps/ Preparation of the event	2 preparation meetings took place with Train of Hope Dortmund (our partner organisation) and the facilitator, who is an art pedagogic. The meetings firstly focused on logistical issues such as venue and schedule; the last meeting then was held with the facilitator to agree on the details of the event such as the steps, inclusiveness, method and materials. One final meeting will take place for organisational matters, the week before the event.
Materials/ Tools/ Instruments/ Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Magazines, newspapers, various paper materials• Canvas for each participant to work on• Scissors, glue, other craft materials• Tables (in person workshop)• Facilitator

Methods/ Techniques	Creating an art piece through provided materials
Procedure/ Performance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make clear what is the reason for the workshop and define the main goal (e.g. how is your experience in Dortmund? What are the biggest barriers? How do these barriers influence your daily life?) 2. Explaining the material available to all participants – Facilitator makes sure to emphasize that it is a “safe space” 3. Participants work on their individual collage work, reflecting on their lived experiences. 4. Each participant will verbally explain their final product, leading to a dialogue between participants. 5. With the consent of the participants, their final works will be presented at the exhibition, right after the art event. This exhibition will bring youth and stakeholders together, creating a second space for dialogue regarding challenges and potential resources for youth.
Expected results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An art exhibition of youth’ experiences in the city of Dortmund • The event has a possibility to take place in the local newspapers • Dialogue and encountering possibilities among diverse youth, and with the stakeholders
Ethical concerns and precautions taken	No major risk is expected. Due to the barriers and challenges that youth will reflect on; emotional moments might occur. This risk is not too high, as arts and being with peers in a creative environment creates a positive atmosphere. Thus, a professional facilitator educated in pedagogy is present at the event. If needed, further support can be provided to the participants. (Our event partner Train of Hope e.V. is an organisation that regularly support youth in such matters, and are experienced with supporting them emotionally.)
References and links	<p>Challis, S. (2014), College in evaluations: exploratory ideas about value and resistance. https://tactileacademia.com/2014/06/16/collage-in-evaluations-exploratory-ideas-about-value-and-resistance-2/</p> <p>Denzin N. K., Lincoln Y. S. (Eds.), <i>Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials</i> (pp. 95–113). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.</p> <p>Driessnack M., Furukawa R. (2012). Arts based data collection techniques used in child research. <i>Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing</i>, 17, 3–9.</p> <p>Nomakhwezi Mayaba, N., & Wood, L. (2015). Using Drawings and Collages as Data Generation Methods With Children: Definitely Not Child’s Play. <i>International Journal of Qualitative Methods</i>, 14(5). https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406915621407</p>

Photovoice

Authors: Daniela Marzana, Monica Roman, Smaranda Cimpoeru

Name of the ABM	Photovoice
MIMY Partner who used this ABM	Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (UCSC), Italy Academia de Studii Economice (ASE), Romania Uniwersytet Humanistycznospoleczny (SWPS), Poland
Brief description	<p>Photovoice is a type of participatory action research method in which participants document their daily life and experiences through photography. The photographs are then discussed in small groups to engage participants in critical reflections regarding the topics of concern. One of the methods' strengths is that it empowers participants, by turning them in the documents, shifting the focus towards their cares and concerns. Thus, participants can work together to illustrate their own lived experiences instead of having their life and stories interpreted by others.</p>
Brief description	<p>The visual representations and the stories produced in a Photovoice project are also dissemination instruments that can inform key stakeholders and policy decision makers in the interest of community improvement.</p> <p>Photovoice was elaborated and developed by Caroline Wang (1994).</p> <p>It has the overall aim of helping participants to document their condition and become agents of change.</p> <p>Photovoice enables people to become aware of what is worth keeping and what needs to be changed about their community and to pass this on to others, including politicians.</p>
Goals	<p>The general aim is to "give voice" to the young peer researchers about the community in which they live. Through photography, the peer researchers can narrate the space from their point of view and point out the aspects for which they feel integrated and belonging, and those of greater difficulty (strengths and weaknesses).</p> <p>So, the main goal is to empower young migrants to document the challenges and strengths of their life in the host country by photographing daily life. A second objective is to facilitate group discussion in order to identify specific problems faced by young migrants that could be further addressed to policy makers.</p>
Relevance to MIMY	Empowering young migrants, identify potential integration barriers and recommend strategies to approach them.
Duration	Approximately 2-4 weeks for the photo assignment 2-6 hours for the group discussion Public exhibition of photos
Number of participants	Minimum 2 and maximum 10 participants.

Preceding steps/ Preparation of the event	A meeting will be held with the participants before the start of the project. Participants are introduced to the Photovoice project and to the way it will unfold. A short training course is provided regarding the basics of photography taking and nature of photography. Photo assignments are also presented during the meeting.
Materials/ Tools/ Instruments/ Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place: University • Cameras or mobile phone to make pictures (to be provided if participants do not owe one) • Powerpoint presentation • Peer researchers as facilitators • The group discussion could be online or in person
Methods/ Techniques	<p>Photographic task for group discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo assignments • Group discussion
Procedure/ Performance	<p>In summary:</p> <p>Session 1</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Preliminary information on photovoice b) Presentation of members, establishing working arrangements c) Use of the camera, privacy and disclaimers d) assignment of the photographic task, discussion of the theme, handing over of cameras and other material <p>Session 2</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) presentation of images with captions b) critical dialogue c) selection of photos <p>Session 3 - Photographic exhibition</p> <p>More specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary meeting – introduction to the project, purpose, instructions. • Short training regarding basic photographing skills but also ethical issues (informed consent, privacy, confidentiality). Explain the assignments. • Photo assignment. Participants receive several photo assignments (3 to 5). For instance, take photographs that show what it is like to be a young migrant in Bucharest/ Romania. Other assignments could be related to – take pictures that show what is like to live in Bucharest; things you like and things you don't like, etc. The fieldwork for the photo assignment is about 2 to 4 weeks.

Procedure/ Performance

- Group Discussion. A facilitator leads a discussion with the group of participants about the photographs. A slideshow with the images received from the participants is presented at the beginning. The conversation is guided with questions, such as: “What do you see in this photograph?”, “How does it relate to your life?”, etc. Some other activities could be done to stimulate the participation, like suggesting titles for various photographs.
- Reflection (optional). Each participant is asked to write a short story based on the photographs taken (for instance describe their favourite images or images that show what it is like to live in Bucharest, etc.)
- Dissemination through exhibition and/or collections of photographs.

Expected results

Tasks Results:

- A collection (album) of photographs taken during the project accompanied by the underlying stories built in the group discussion.
- The album could be given to participants but also to key stakeholders as an evidence of young migrants' voice in Romania/Bucharest.
- Organise an exhibition in order to involve participants beyond the collection of data, raising young migrants' visibility in the wider community.

Expected results

Overall aims:

- To favour personal relationships through intergroup contact between migrants and no-migrants in a common task;
- To elaborate a shared vision of integration through the photographic task;
- To capture the integration representations considering obstacles that hinder a positive experience and resources/opportunities provided by the context.

Ethical concerns and precautions taken

- No negative socio-emotional impacts are expected.
- During the group discussion, there is a risk that emotional issues may arise. The facilitator will create a friendly/pleasant context, favouring the trust between participants in the group discussion.

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- Lopez, E., Eng, E., Robinson, N., & Wang, C. C. (2005). Photovoice as a community-based participatory research method. *Methods in community-based participatory research for health*, 326-348.
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Appendix 2.

Institutions and researchers engaged in MIMY, including *peer-researchers*⁹



Université du Luxembourg (Luxembourg): Mathis Osbung, Amalia Gilodi, Jutta Bissinger, José Oliveira, Greta Szendrei, Isabelle Albert, Birte Nienaber, Constance Jacquemot, Catherine Richard, *Marie Chenet, Saskia Knottenbelt, Bogdan Palocevic, Grace Mpyoi*

Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaft und Kunst Hildesheim/Holzminde/Goettingen (Germany): Dorothea Biaback Anong, Agnes Kriszan, Swantje Penke, Leonie Wagner, Julia Yildiz, *Sevda Boran, Efsane Büyük, Melda Gökbulut, Melanie Kanzy, Dorina Kurta*

Közép Európai Egyetem (Hungary): Zsuzsa Árendás, Vera Messing, *Ronald Ronnie, Amirul Haqqi, András Balázs*

Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Italy): Camillo Regalia, Laura Zanfrini, Cristina Giuliani, Eleonora Crapolicchio, Daniela Marzana, Marta Rivolta, Marta Matuella, Giulia Carones, Francesca Mungiaridi, Paola Caterina, Camilla Salvatori, *Malamine B, Reida Goberja, Denisa Irina Paul, Boutros Sayegh, Musa Mballow*

SWPS Uniwersytet Humanistycznospoleczny (Poland): Dominika Blachnicka-Ciacek, Agnieszka Trąbka, Marta Jadwiga Pietrusińska, Dominika Winogrodzka, Magdalena Łuźniak-Piecha, *Ivanna Kyliushyk, Kseniya Homel, Madinai Khikmatullo, Farangiskhon Qodirova, Olga Beskrovnova, Oksana Breitkreits*

Universitetet of Bergen (Norway): Jan Skrobanek, Rebecca Dyer Ånensen, Helene Vestre Alcott, Yannet Gudeta Urgessa, Joakim Jensen, Stine Thue Nordal, *Mona Jannati*

Academia de Studii Economice din Bucuresti (Romania): Monica Roman, Smaranda Cimpoeu, Elena-Maria Prada, Ioana Manafi Vlad I. Rosca, Dorel Paraschiv, Laura Muresan, *Hiba Mohammad, Amira Kobeissi, Ina Nimirenco.*

Malmö Universitet (Sweden): Henrik Emilsson, Nadeen Khoury, Christina Hansen, Mona Hemmaty, Jacob Lind, *Nada Awes, Ali Chahine*

Institut für Landes-Und Stadtentwicklungsforschung gGmbH (Germany): Jörg Plöger, Zeynep Aydar, Bianca Martini, *Joanna Deeb, Sherin Ibesh, Zarah Westrich, Vanessa Szemely*

The University of Sheffield (England, United Kingdom): Majella Kilkey, Thea Shahrokh, Ryan Powell, Hannah Lewis, Maria Teresa Ferazzoli, Jose Marquez, Rebecca Murray, *Muetesim Ahmed, Cristina Blumenkron, Abdallah Sherif Farrag, Asma Kabadeh, Kutlo Toya Morei, Selam Habtom Tekle, Amanuel Tesfay*

London Metropolitan University (England, United Kingdom): Louise Ryan

Uniwersytet Leona Koźmińskiego (Poland): Izabela Grabowska, Agata Jastrzębowska

European Research and Project Office GmbH (Germany): Nadine Drechoux, Vera Schneider, Stefanie Weber, Nina Weiler, Svenja Tregel, Christopher Yepmo, Andreas Gothe, Andreas Wagner

Europese Confederatie van Organisaties voor Jeugdcentra (Belgium): Rares Craiut, Rebecca Alfred, Alice Ntoya, Simon Lafontaine

⁹ Peer researchers are written in italics.

Appendix 3.

List of the public deliverables of the MIMY project

Public deliverables are published on [MIMY website](#) (section Outcomes). Please follow the MIMY website, where forthcoming deliverables due at the end of the project or later will be published.

- D1.3: Skrobaneck, J., Dyer Ånesen, R., & Jensen, J. in collaboration with Blachnicka-Ciacek, D. & Trąbka, A. (2021). Report on action research methodology and innovation in youth related migration and integration research with focus on vulnerability and resilience. Bergen (Norway): University of Bergen, Department of Sociology.
- D2.2: Roman, M., Messing, V., Cimpoeu, S., Manafi, I., & Ságvári, B., (2020). MIMY Public report on describing and comparing the dimension, characteristics and dynamics of youth migrants in European countries. Bucharest (Romania): Bucharest University of Economic Studies.
- D2.3: Roman, M., Cimpoeu, S., Manafi, I., Prada, E., & Messing, V. (2021). MIMY Public Report on the influence of youth migration on macro-economic and social development in main receiving European countries, Bucharest (Romania): Bucharest University of Economic Studies.
- D3.3: Lind, J. (2021) Literature review: Young vulnerable migrants. (Sweden): Malmö University
- D5.1: Shahrokh, T., Lewis, H., Kilkey, M., & Powell, R. (2021). Service provision for migrant youth in Europe: an emerging picture. Sheffield: University of Sheffield.

Public deliverables to be published after being reviewed by the EC:

- D6.3: Plöger, J. & Aydar, Z. (2021): The role of the local population for migrant integration. Dortmund: ILS.
- D6.5: Biaback Anong, D., Wagner, L., Kriszan, A., Penke, S., Yildiz, J. (2022). „I think we can all try a bit”. MIMY Public report on non-migrant youth's perceptions and attitudes towards integration, vulnerability and resilience. Holzminden (Germany): HAWK.
- D6.6: Plöger, J. & Aydar, Z. (2022): Working Paper. Dortmund: ILS.
- D7.3: Oliveira, J., Gilodi, A., Nienaber, B. (2022). Workshop on integration of young migrants. Luxembourg: University of Luxembourg.
- D7.4: Richard, C., Nienaber, B. (2022). Empowerment through transformative art-based events at the local level. Luxembourg: University of Luxembourg.
- D8.1: Trąbka, A., Pietrusińska, M. J., & Winogrodzka, D., in collaboration with Oliveira, J. (2023). Responsibilisation of young migrants for integration. Navigating between vulnerability and resilience. MIMY synthesis report. Warsaw: SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities.
- D8.2: Grabowska I., & Jastrzebowska A. (2022). SYNERGIES in RESEARCH & INNOVATION. Brief report supported by knowledge & projects' bank and knowledge sharing: framework grids. Warsaw: Kozminski University.
- D9.5: Jacquemot, C., Bissinger, J., Gilodi, A., Nienaber, A. and Richard, C. (2022). Handbook on promising integrative practices. Luxembourg: University of Luxembourg.

- D9.6: Bissinger, J., Gilodi, A., Nienaber, B., Oliveira, J., in collaboration with Skrobaneck, J., Roman, M., Messing, V., Lind, J., & Grabowska, I. Policy recommendations – D9.6.
- D9.7: Craiut, R., Nienaber, B., Jacquemot, C. (2023). Report on the final conference.

Other MIMY public products:

- D5.3: Blog by peer researchers on learning lessons from the past (Shahrokh, T., & Gilodi, A.) available here [MIMY Youth Blog | MIMY \(mimy-project.eu\)](#)
- D5.6: Stakeholder platform available here [MIMY Stakeholder Platform](#) | Authors are Thea Shahrokh, Hannah Lewis, Majella Kilkey, Ryan Powell (University of Sheffield, USFD), Thuy Duong Bui, Nadine Drechoux, Stephanie Weber (EURICE)
- D9.1: MIMY website available here [Migrant Youth Integration & Empowerment | MIMY \(mimy-project.eu\)](#)
- D9.3: Audio-visual material (authors: Efsane, Melda, Kriszan, A., Drechoux, N., Weiler, N., Tregel, S., & Yepmo, Ch.)

Appendix 4.

List of the publications from the MIMY project as of January 30, 2023

- Aydar, Z. (2022). The Life Opportunities of Young Refugees: Understanding the Role, Function and Perceptions of Local Stakeholders. *Social Sciences*, 11(11), 527. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11110527>.
- Blachnicka-Ciacek, D., & Trąbka, A. (2022). 'Football was the key': the role of sports in facilitating migrants' belonging and inclusion in Poland. *Leisure Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2022.2088834>
- Cimpoeru, S. (2020). What Triggers Poverty of Young Nationals and Young Migrants? A Comparative Macroeconomic Approach. *Journal of Social and Economic Statistics*, 9(2), 13-29. <https://doi.org/10.2478/jses-2020-0010>
- Cimpoeru, S. & Prada, E. (2021). Governance indicators' influence on young asylum seekers decision to migrate. A panel data approach for EU countries. *Proceedings of the 37th International Business Information Management, Association (IBIMA)*, Cordoba, Spain, ISBN: 978-0-9998551-6-4, ISSN: 2767-9640
- Gilodi, A., Albert, I., & Nienaber, B. (2022). Vulnerability in the context of migration: a critical overview and a new conceptual model. *Human Arenas*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-022-00288-5>
- Jobst, S., & Skrobanek, J. (2022). Researching 'liquid integration': breaking new ground for processual and contingent methodology. *Conflict & Communication online*, 21(2).
- Manafi, I., & Roman, M. (2022). A Way to Europe: New Refugees' Migration Patterns Revealed. *Sustainability*, 14(2), 748. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14020748>
- Prada, E. (2021). Immigration in Romania and Romanian in-Migration in Times of Covid-19. A Panel Data Analysis. *Journal of Social and Economic Statistics*, 10(1-2), 43-55, <https://doi.org/10.2478/jses-2021-0004>
- Skrobanek, J., in collaboration with Jobst, S., Grabowska, I., & Ryan, L. (2020). "Liquid integration" of vulnerable migrant youth. Some general considerations. *Bergen Studies in Sociology*, No. 15/2021, Research paper.

