



THINKING AND TALKING ABOUT YOUTH AND MIGRATION

A youth friendly brochure for the use of young people, youth workers and anyone caring about migration





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Skrobanek, Jan, in collaboration with Solvejg Jobst, Izabela Grabowska, and Louise Ryan (2020), *On the concept of “liquid integration” regarding vulnerable migrant youth adjustment*, Bergen (Norway): University of Bergen, Department of Sociology.

Regalia, Camillo, Cristina Giuliani, Giulia Carones, and Marta Matuella (2022), *Local reports and final report on vulnerability and resilience of groups of young migrants in condition of vulnerability*, Deliverable no 4.2

Biaback Anong, Dorothea, Leonie Wagner, Agnes Kriszan, Swantje Penke, Julia Yildiz (2022), *“I think we can all try a bit”*. *Public report on non-migrant youth’s perceptions and attitudes towards integration, vulnerability and resilience*, Holzminden (Germany): HAWK as these materials allowed participants from the “Migrant Youth research and policy Network” - MYN to exchange and express the reflections presented in this brochure. Based on these materials MYN participants have prepared a series of reflections on different topics and for each topic we have also included questions that allow for further reflection.

Foreword

The Youth-Migration Crisis

What is migration for young people today? Young migrants, particularly those in vulnerable conditions, face a wide range of challenges. They are at a high risk of ending up in asymmetrical exchange situations, such as detention camps and facilities in Europe, subject to border control measures and immigration policies. Later on, in the destination countries, they are confronted with xenophobia, discrimination, and harassment. Young migrants often lack adequate support or guidance to navigate complex and confusing bureaucracies, often waiting for extended periods of time without due process.

Smooth and risk-free transition from country of origin to destination is fairy tale for many. Lack of status and documentation exposes to violence and abuse. Young migrants are at high risk of being denied access to healthcare, social services, and education. They may be compelled to live in unsanitary conditions and to rely on underground economies for survival. The limbo spreads out far beyond arrival to the destination countries.

A Broken World

Integration has inspired desires for and illusions of stability. It is believed that over time, different groups will eventually resemble one another and become integrated into a stable social body. Yet, when economic or political power dynamics come into play, the integration of different cultures becomes a one-way assimilation. This can lead to a suppression of cultural diversity and individuality, and can also perpetuate existing power imbalances and marginalization.

The achievement of European integration in 1993 is often assumed to have facilitated smoother youth migration. While promoting migration within its borders, the Europe controls the flows of migrants through its economic and political power and cultural hegemony over other regions and countries around the world. Closed borders and tightened immigration policies in some EU countries have increased risks in transition for many young migrants, especially asylum seekers, refugees, and unaccompanied minors from non-EU countries. Young migrants today face higher threats of declines in access to education, job prospects, family formation, and living standards.

A Life in Limbo?

While the idea of globalization promises more interconnectedness and reciprocity between economies and cultures, the reality is far more complex and not always a positive force. Globalized culture and economy in Europe, with the help of its former colonies in North America and the Global South, often dominate less privileged regions. Moreover, borders are still important to maintain the power of empire. The global crises of authoritarianism, climate change, health insecurity, and the aftermath of September 11, 2001, have shown that the world is not as borderless and interconnected as it may seem, and that nation-states remain powerful forces in shaping global politics. Most societies in Europe remain based on monocultural and/or monolingual models of policy-identity.

It is important to recognize that migrants, and especially young migrants, are not just passive recipients of integration policies but active agents in the integration process. This means that they are actively shaping and reshaping the social connections and relationships in the host society, and not only adapting to pre-existing norms and expectations. If young migrants are able to form strong social connections and relationships with members of the host society, they might be able to exert more influence on local institutions. They might impact on the power balance in favor of a renewed model in policy-identity.

OTHERNESS

Yuri, a young trans asylum seeker that recently escaped North Korea, has signed up for a football activity at the local youth club, as did many other kids with a migration background in the neighborhood. When the time comes to make the teams, two bullies do not let Yuri participate and force them to stand in reserve.





Otherness is experienced in the painful and lonely feeling of ‘standing out’. The situation Yuri is going through at the youth club reveals how life-stage, social status, race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality intersect with migration. All these issues can compound each other, creating a complex and unique set of experiences and challenges for migrants. A young, LGBTQIA+ person of color who is an asylum seeker will face a different set of challenges than a middle-aged, cisgender, straight person of the same ethnicity who has a legal status in the host country.



LATER ON...

The game just started and one of the bullies is being disrespectful of Wauters' football skills. As he tries to take the ball away from Paula, the situation quickly escalates. The bully makes negative judgments about Wauters' weight too. Like Yuri, Wauters is not offered opportunities and support. He is denied recognition as a member of the club, which makes him feel lonely and lost. Integration is not just a task for migrants, but is something that all young people may have to navigate as they grow and mature, make new friends, and adapt to different norms and expectations.





Discrimination or bullying based on weight, capacities, or any other characteristics should not be tolerated. These challenges can make it more difficult for young people to feel like they belong. Integration is not just a task for migrants, but is something that all young people may have to navigate as they grow and mature, make new friends, and adapt to different norms and expectations. It's important for society to provide opportunities and support for all young people to integrate and feel included, regardless of their background.

TO GO FURTHER...

Why do you think the two kids bully Yuri and Wauters?

Imagine being caught up in a similar situation. How would you react?

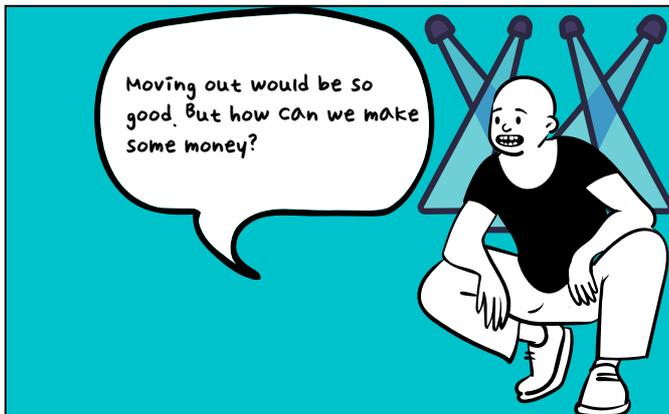
How could the teacher step in when Yuri is being excluded by the two bullies? And in the case of Wauters?

YOUTH

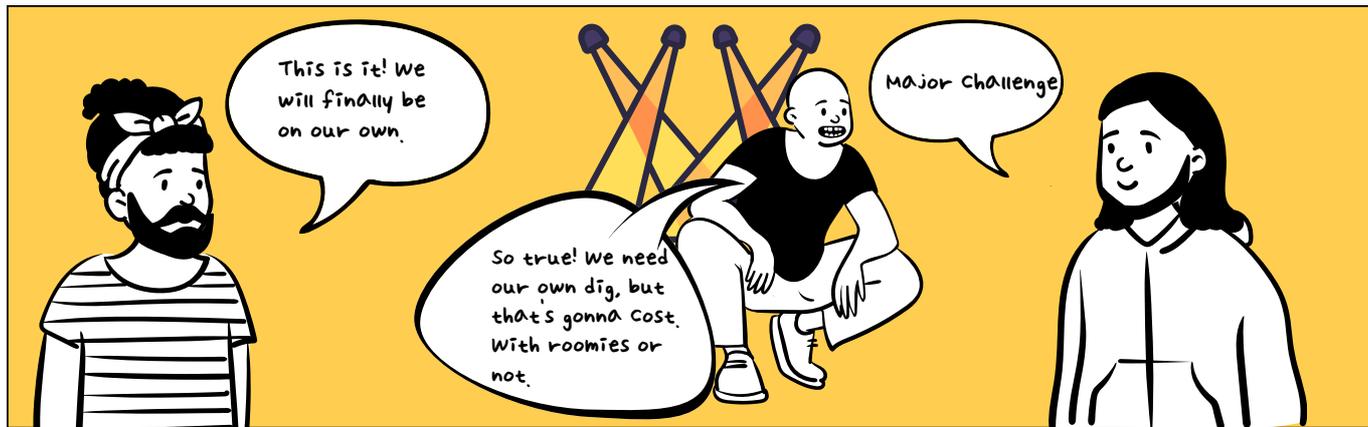


Three kids with a migration background are chatting at a party organized by the neighborhood youth club, sharing their concerns about living with their parents and their insecurities regarding the path to independence. one of them starts the conversation as follow.



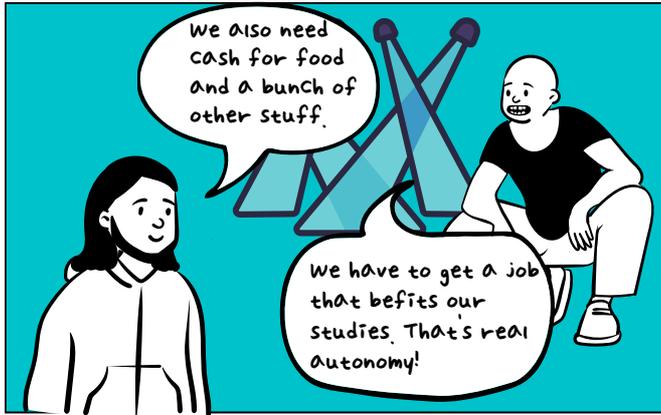


Growing up and becoming independent can be tough for anyone, but it can be especially challenging for teenagers with a migration background. One of the biggest obstacles to moving out and living on your own is money. It's not just about having enough money to pay for rent and bills, but also about figuring out how to manage your finances and make sure you can take care of yourself.



For many young people, becoming financially independent is a big step towards feeling like they've grown up and become adults. It means taking on more responsibility for themselves and not relying on their parents as much. But it can be hard to know where to start and how to make it happen. Young people with a migrant background may also face financial challenges, such as limited access to credit or lack of savings due to a history of economic insecurity. Additionally, they may be expected to provide financial support for their families, which may make it harder for them to become financially independent and move out on their own.

While money is certainly a significant obstacle to moving out and living on one's own, it's important to recognize that it is not the only obstacle, and it may not even be the most important one. There are other factors that make it difficult to become independent, such as lack of access to affordable housing, lack of support from family or friends, or lack of resources to help them navigate the process.



For teenagers with a migration background, the aspiration to independence and the desire to move out and have their own place to live may be complicated by a number of factors related to their background.

First-generation migrants may face additional challenges in terms of language barriers, cultural differences, and navigating unfamiliar systems and processes in their new country. They may also feel pressure from their families to maintain traditional cultural values.

Second-generation migrants, on the other hand, may face different challenges related to their identity and sense of belonging. They may struggle with feeling caught between two cultures, and may feel pressure to conform to the expectations of both their parents and their peers. They may also face discrimination or prejudice based on their background, which can affect their self-esteem and sense of belonging. They may be less likely to have access to the same resources and opportunities as their non-migrant peers.

TO GO FURTHER...

How may an event like a party at a local youth club help young kids with a migration background?

What would you do if you were in these kids' situation?

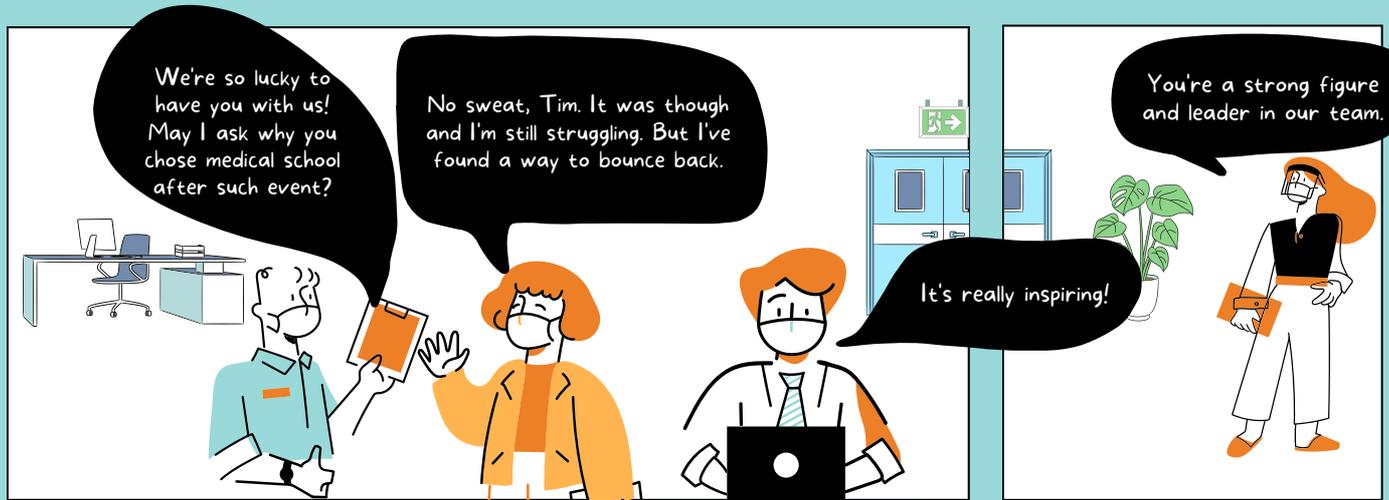
How could local organizations help young kids with a migration background gain their autonomy?

RECOGNITION

After helping out her new co-workers, a young war refugee from Ukraine is congratulated by her supervisor. Throughout a conversation, she throws light on what drives her strength and motivation, opening up about the troubling life events of the past months.

The capacity to adapt to new environments and participate in public and professional life can be particularly challenging for refugees, especially those who have experienced negative life events such as war, traumas, pain, injuries, or handicaps. This is particularly true for Ukrainian refugees who have been forced to flee their homes and communities due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.





War refugees face a multitude of challenges that can make it difficult for them to adapt to their new surroundings and rebuild their lives. They may have lost everything they owned, including their homes, possessions, and personal identification documents. They may also have lost loved ones and be dealing with the trauma of violence, injury, or displacement. In the case of Ukrainian refugees, they may have to deal with additional challenges such as the lack of recognition of their status as refugees, lack of access to basic services, and limited opportunities for employment, education, and integration.

The ability to rise above adversity is not just about individual characteristics, but also about the resources and support that people have in their lives. Families, groups and communities can all play a role in helping individuals to cope with difficult situations and rebuild their lives. Additionally, government institutions have a key role in recognizing the rights of refugees and migrants, providing them with legal protection, access to services and support and promoting policies that foster their integration and participation in society.

TO GO FURTHER...

Based on your personal experience and opinion, how realistic or not is the experience of this war refugee?

Apart from Ukraine, can you think of other countries that have experienced or are experiencing similar situation with respect to war?

How could local organizations help refugees get more recognition?

Resilience

Two young girls have befriended each other after their families moved to Belgium. They share similar concerns and often speak over the phone. One day they decide to meet at the local coffee shop to discuss their anxieties about their parents, who are currently unemployed.

Language barriers can be particularly challenging for families with a migration background. For these young girls' parents, the inability to speak the language of the host country can make it difficult for them to find and maintain employment, which can have a significant impact on their financial stability and overall well-being. This can lead to feelings of frustration, stress, and isolation, which can be passed down to their children.



Despite these challenges, the young girls also recognize the sacrifices and support of their parents, which have allowed them to pursue their education. This highlights the role of resilience in the face of adversity and the importance of family support in helping young second-generation migrants navigate the challenges they face. The girls' conversation over a cup of coffee shows the power of social support in building resilience.

Through mutual affirmation, the two young girls are able to validate each other's experiences and feelings. They are able to acknowledge and accept that these challenges are real and valid. The conversation provides an opportunity for self-actualization. By sharing their experiences and feelings, the two young girls are able to gain a better understanding of themselves and their situation. They are able to see that they are not alone in their struggles.



Taking on parents' responsibilities lead to a phenomenon called parentification, where young people feel pressure to support their parents in overcoming language barriers and finding work. This can have a negative impact on their well-being, such as physical and emotional stress, depression, anxiety, and a lack of time and resources to pursue their own development and interests.

However, parentification may have a constructive impact on young people. On one hand, taking on adult responsibilities can lead to a sense of maturity and self-reliance, and can also foster a strong sense of responsibility and compassion towards others. It can also help young people develop important life skills, such as problem solving, time management, and communication.



TO GO FURTHER...

Have you own parents experienced a similar situation to the two girls' parents?

What are your thoughts on the girls' view on parentification?

In your opinion, what could be done by youth migrants' network and/or by local organization to foster the development of life skills in the context described in the comic? And with respect to your own situation?