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- R: Document, report (excluding the periodic and final reports)
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- DEC: Websites, patents filing, press & media actions, videos, etc.
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Responsibilisation of young migrants for integration. Navigating between vulnerability and resilience.

MIMY SYNTHESIS REPORT

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MIMY

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

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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 (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?**

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 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. All the results, including this report, are the basis of policy recommendations aimed at supporting the integration of young migrants in European countries.

Thus, our goal in this report is to synthesise the findings from different components of the MIMY project (work packages 1 to 7), and to draw conclusions regarding the integration of young migrants, including the factors facilitating and hindering this process. Specifically, we aim at integrating the voices of different social actors participating in the research, namely young migrants themselves, representatives of older generations of migrants, stakeholders and young non-migrants. Based on the interdisciplinary and multilevel research approach (macro, meso and micro levels), we have explored in-depth how vulnerability and resilience manifest in the lives of young migrants, how they and other social actors understand integration, and which factors foster and hinder integration, taking into account spatial and temporal dimensions.

The key findings may be summarised as follows:

- Challenges such as financial insecurity; difficulties in navigating complex legal systems; lack of access to healthcare, education, and other services; housing problems; limited employment opportunities; or exposure to discrimination based on gender, country of origin or religion; can interact with each other in a way that amplifies migrants' vulnerable situations. **The intersectional character of the above-mentioned macro, meso and micro factors puts young migrants in particularly vulnerable situations as they overlap and reinforce each other.** The range of overlapping vulnerabilities that young migrants may face, especially at the beginning of their migration trajectory, negatively impacts their well-being, and, in consequence, hinder broadly understood opportunities.
- Vulnerability is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon influenced by various intersecting factors, including the socio-political, cultural and familial context, that change over time. Many vulnerabilities that young migrants face

stem from macro-structural factors, but they may be either exacerbated or mitigated by factors from meso and micro levels, such as family situation, social networks or personal characteristics. **Thus, vulnerability is not a fixed and permanent state, but may change with time and context.**

- **Experiences of vulnerability are gendered**, and even if it is not the direct cause of vulnerability, gender seems to be the significant mediator in interaction with other factors, particularly with race, ethnicity, religion and family situation. For instance, young men (particularly from Africa and the Middle East) are more often perceived as aggressive, hostile and **posing a threat** by populist politicians and the media. As a result, they are exposed to even greater discrimination in the domain of housing, the labour market and social contacts. Young women, on the contrary, are often labelled as vulnerable "victims". One of the most prominent vulnerabilities is their **enclosure within the domestic sphere** and limited opportunities for participating in education, the labour market and the public sphere in general.
- **Migration influences the temporal dynamics of young migrants' transitions to adulthood.** Generally, it disrupts this process, but its impact may differ depending on the circumstances. On the one hand, migration may accelerate transition to adulthood by imposing various challenges connected with independence and adult life. On the other – it may slow down transitioning by creating conditions of vulnerabilities that are connected with the prolonged waiting time for a decision on legal status or on international protection. Such episodes of limbo result in a sense of temporariness, uncertainty and inability to plan one's life. At the same time, young age is perceived, particularly by the representatives of the older generation of migrants, as facilitating integration because of the assumed ability to learn faster and adjust to new circumstances, as well as freedom from obligations, such as familial.
- Despite the challenging and complicated situation, **young migrants resist labels associated with vulnerability.** They do not want to be seen as weak or needing help, distancing themselves from the victimhood image. The rejection of the vulnerability label proves that they want to maintain a sense of agency and control over their own lives, being aware that vulnerability is a transient condition dependent on time, place, and context. Thus, they tend to **use proactive strategies to turn risks and challenges into resilience.**
- The stories of young migrants show that **resilience is a dynamic process** that involves three interrelated capacities: short-term **coping** with current adversities; longer-term adapting through learning from past experiences, as well as adjusting to future challenges by applying preventive measures; and **transforming** one's situation. Resilience is not a fixed trait, but rather something that **can be developed and strengthened over time through experience and learning,** shaped by various individual and contextual factors. Therefore, resilience can be an individual's capacity to **"bounce back"** (return to the state from before the adversity) as well as **"bounce forward"** (adapt and grow as a result of the adversity).
- When it comes to young migrants' resilience, they **rely heavily on their personal resources** to navigate the challenges they face. These resources cover **individual characteristics** (like determination, having a strong sense of purpose and goals, self-esteem), **skills** useful on the migration path (such as flexibility, communication skills), as well as various **coping strategies** (e.g. taking up different activities). These personal resources are rooted in a relational

milieu, which means they may be strengthened by the **family, friendship, and community relations.** The family provides young migrants with emotional, cognitive, and instrumental support, which, together with the personal resources, seem to be the core sources of young migrants' resilience. At the same time, young migrants **deem structural resources insufficient.** They are aware of the relevance of broader social and institutional sources of resilience, but they are critical of the lack or insufficiency of such support, as well as of lack of reliable information on the available support.

- **Integration should be analysed taking into account the local context. It is at the municipal or local level** that young migrants interact with members of the host society, negotiate access to crucial resources such as work, housing, education and so on. At the same time, policies created both at the EU and national level are implemented locally. The locality itself is obviously shaped by various historical and socio-political factors, and thus it creates a unique constellation of factors fostering and hindering integration. These elements play out differently in larger cities and in smaller or more peripheral localities.
- In the context of **bigger urban localities**, young migrants appreciate a well **developed network of institutions and services, educational, professional and recreational opportunities**. In **smaller localities**, on the contrary, it is their **peacefulness and security, along with their compact and manageable size**, making it easier to get oriented, that are reported as the main assets. When we add the temporal dimension to this analysis, we can see that migration history in a given locality, which is often connected with diversity, the presence of migrant communities and a denser network of services targeted at migrants, is perceived as factor fostering both a sense of belonging and integration.
- Young migrants' **sense of belonging** depends on a multitude of factors, including a sense of safety and stability; economic, educational and recreational mobility; but above all the quality of social relations in a locality. Here, friends and community support (especially migrant-to-migrant informal support) emerge as crucial.
- **Different forms of participation in a community, be it leisure activities, sport, cultural events, voluntary organisations or churches** facilitate developing a sense of belonging. Across countries, young migrants name civil society organisations and clubs (mostly football) as places where they feel they belong and as safe spaces where they can "be themselves". These informal sport and leisure activities provide participants with a sense of connectedness and agency, stemming from being an active member of a community and pursuing one's interests.
- However, in terms of their social relations, young migrants are **more likely to interact with other migrants than with their non-migrant peers**. Interviewees indicate that there are limited opportunities for non-migrants and migrants to meet and spend time together, which negatively impacts social cohesion and integration.
- Analysing integration from the perspective of both **discourse and practice, and taking into account the power relations interwoven in them** is worthwhile, as it allows us to grasp discrepancies between these two perspectives. In the discursive dimension, integration is presented as a two-way process. In contrast, integration programmes and measures apply a rather one-way concept of integration. These criteria are produced on an international or national level, reinforced by general public discourse and implemented

by local authorities and NGOs. The majority of these policies define what is considered as **"integration success"** and **"integration failure"**, thus they impose on migrants certain criteria they must fulfil to be seen as "integrated". They also create the profiles of "welcome" or "deserving", and "unwelcome" or "undeserving" migrants - those who deserve to stay and those who should be removed.

- Crucially, the above **discrepancy between the discourse and practice is reflected in assigning responsibility for the integration process.** While in discourses promoting integration as a "two-way" process it is both migrants and host societies who share the responsibility for its outcomes, in practice this **responsibility is shifted and lies primarily on migrants individuals, who are expected to fulfil the criteria of "being integrated".**
- Such individualisation goes hand in hand with the **neoliberalisation of integration,** which makes migrants responsible for their integration process, and limits the influence of structural and communal factors. In this context, we speak about the responsibilisation of young migrants for integration, which is also reflected in how they speak about their resilience, based above all on personal resources.
- **Neither migrants nor non-migrant local communities are sufficiently included in the discussion** of what integration is, how it should be implemented, by whom and what its goals and outcomes should be. This leads us to the conclusion that many young migrants – especially those who have access to social, economic and cultural capitals, and who are thus empowered to be more critical – might see integration as an oppressive social construct which "tells them how to live".
- There are **almost no policies or measures targeted at young migrants** in general. In the researched countries, targeted measures are most often intended for asylum seekers, migrants with different types of international protection (mainly refugees and unaccompanied minors), migrants with disabilities or female migrants. This **inflexible catalogue of vulnerabilities** does not sufficiently take into account that vulnerabilities are situational and intersecting. As a result, programs may not adequately address the needs of particular migrants if they do not fall into one of the categories of vulnerability. This lack of flexibility is perceived by those who implement policies and create integration programs, mostly within NGOs.

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1. Introduction

1.1. About the MIMY project

1.1.1. Aim and rationale of the project

MIMY (E**M**powerment through liquid **I**ntegration of **M**igrant **Y**outh 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, United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, Italy, Poland, Romania, and Hungary [*]. 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: Shahrokh et al., 2021a).

Accordingly, the MIMY project aims to investigate the integration processes of young migrants (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) have been following different national interests 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 needs to be taken into account, and only 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 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.

- 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 2021, which means that fieldwork finished before the escalation of the Russian invasion in Ukraine. Therefore, this report and other MIMY deliverables analyse the reality before the 24th of February 2022. Although we are aware that this war and its consequences, in particular several millions of Ukrainian refugees arriving in Europe, have changed policies, services, migrant communities, local populations' attitudes, among others,we are able to analyse it in the framework of the MIMY project.

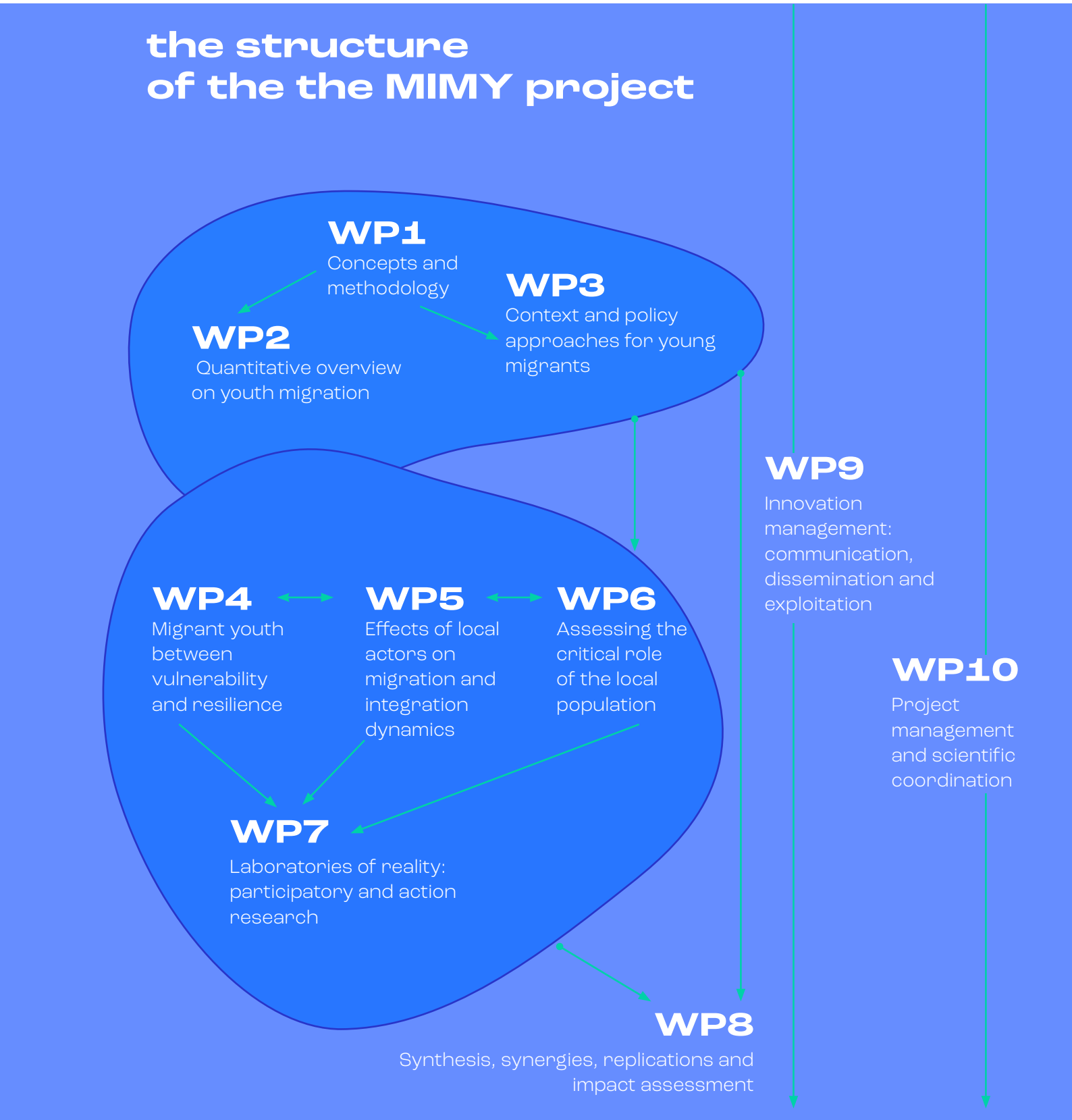
1.1.2. Overall structure and the work plan of the project

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 carrying 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 empower 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 to investigate integration at the local level. **WP6 "Assessing the critical role of the local population"** outlined the interaction between the local populations (both young non-migrants and older migrants' generation) 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.

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).

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



1.1.3. The MIMY project's ambitions

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 situation 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 empower 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 make young migrants' voices heard on a wider level (e.g. through art-events which are based on their experiences and practices, through blog posts). This is especially important for those who are vulnerable 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 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 synthesise the findings from work packages (WPs) 1 to 7 and to draw conclusions regarding the integration of young migrants and the factors facilitating and hindering this process. Specifically, we aim at integrating voices of different social actors involved in the integration process, namely young migrants themselves, representatives of older generations of migrants, stakeholders and and young non-migrants researched in the frames of WP 4-7. The context for their narratives was set by the results of the work packages 1-3.

The report is focused on the three main concepts of the MIMY project: vulnerability, resilience and integration. While the first two concepts are broad and relate to different spheres of people's lives, here we analyse them in relation to being a young migrant and the integration process. Although we focus on those aspects, we do want to reduce young migrants' identities to their migratory condition. Additionally, as spatial dimension was taken into account in the project and the local scale was assumed to be the one where integration takes place, locality and belonging is another important theme.

This synthesis report was created in two main analytical steps. In the first one, all the reports from WPs 1-7 were analysed in order to identify the consensus, differences and gaps between the perspectives of different groups of participants and draw main conclusions. Subsequently, with reference to these results additional, more analytical and interpretative questions were created and each partner' team answered them. The main purpose of this step was to analyse and interpret in a more in-depth way the relations between data from different research tasks (e.g. different understanding of integration by different social actors) and to reflect in a more systematic way on the cross-cutting themes such as intersectionality, locality or the role of being young in the integration process. The content of the following chapters is drawn from the analysis of both - the reports written in the frames of MIMY and the answers to the additional questions.

There are three ways in which we present the results in this report. The first one is the text in which we present the main results of the analysis. Some of those results are also visualised - this is the second way. Last but not least, as MIMY was aimed at empowering and "strengthening the voice" of young migrants, the third way of presenting the data are quotations of participants. The main group of cited interviewees are young migrants themselves, but their voices are sometimes accompanied by stakeholders, young non-migrants or representatives of older generations of migrants. In line with MIMY's conceptual

framework, there are three intertwined levels of analysis: macro, meso and micro. By macro level we understand supra-national and national structural conditions, whereas by meso level we mean interactions at a local level. Finally, on a micro level we analyse individual factors.

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 present in chapter three the most important factors shaping the conditions of vulnerability for young migrants. Having presented these factors on macro, meso and micro level we emphasise that their intersectional character puts young migrants in particularly vulnerable situations that are difficult to overcome. In the fourth chapter we analyse in-depth various sources of young migrants' resilience, that we call "resilience portfolio". We begin by characterising personal resources, which emerge as the most important asset for young migrants. Subsequently we describe community and family resources to finish by presenting somewhat limited structural sources of support. Chapter five is dedicated to the role of locality in shaping migrants' life situations and its impact on the process of integration. Comparing the narratives of participants from two types of localities (large cities and in more peripheral regions or smaller localities), we identify factors fostering and hindering integration in those places. Then we focus on young migrants' sense of belonging, specifically on the circumstances in which it tends to develop. The last chapter of this report is dedicated to integration. We begin by introducing the theoretical framework connected with this concept and its critique. In the next part we focus on the discourse around integration in the context of power relations to scrutinise how and by whom this discourse is constructed, then we analyse different understanding of this notion by different groups of participants in MIMY. Afterwards we discuss factors supporting and hindering integration to finish by positing that we observe the process of responsibilisation of migrants for the integration process, which is a part of a larger phenomenon that we call neoliberal approach to integration. We finish the report by summarising main conclusions. Readers willing to know more about MIMY's results will find a list of public deliverables as well as publications written by MIMY team members in the appendices.

1.3. Main concepts used in this report

In order to pursue its goals, the MIMY project assumes a set of guiding principles and assumptions regarding the following main constructs used to address the research endeavour:

- **Vulnerability.** MIMY uses a broad concept of vulnerability, including dimensions like negative life events, adverse childhood experiences, illness, injuries and disabilities (Barocas et al., 1985), as well as social, cultural and economic exclusion (Bhalla & Lapeyre, 1997; Ligon & Schechter, 2003). Thus in MIMY we do not speak about "vulnerable migrants", but rather analyse different factors that can contribute to creating vulnerable conditions for young migrants. When analysing the situation of young migrants in vulnerable conditions, MIMY does not depart from an a priori strict definition of vulnerability. Rather, migrants are given the opportunity to define themselves in which area (e.g. health, the labour market, education, political participation etc.) they have felt

vulnerable. This makes it possible to accommodate different experiences and perceptions of vulnerability without being, from the start, rigidly bound to existing considerations and measures of vulnerability (see: 3.1. in this report).

- **Intersectionality.** The MIMY project applies a gendered, intersectional, "race, class and culture" focused lens (Durham, 2004) to see how different vulnerabilities of young migrants , asylum seekers and refugees intersect creating distinct barriers on the way to successful adjustment. On the one hand, being young, female and excluded from legal status, institutional support, education, proper housing, social networks or from the labour market, drastically increases the risk of exclusion and exploitation. On the other hand, young male migrants are often criminalised and discriminated against on this basis. Thus, applying an intersectional approach in MIMY will enable analysis of various combinations of intertwined vulnerabilities that impede young migrants' strategies for adjustment (see: 3.3.5. in this report).
- **Resilience.** In the MIMY project, resilience is defined as "an ability to cope with shocks, malfunctioning and challenges before, during and after migration episodes" (MIMY Consortium, 2019: 10). This understanding provides a broad concept of possible resources that can be used to cope with adversities, including both individual capacities and opportunity structures at the meso and macro-level. In this report, we do not focus on resilience in the psychological sense, as a singular feature of the individual, but follow an approach that identifies different resources for resilience that young migrants use in navigating everyday life. We analyse resilience by considering its multidimensionality, and multidirectionality, taking into account its multiplicity of levels: personal (micro), community (meso) and structural (macro) (see: 4.1. in this report). While both vulnerability and resilience have been applied to analyse migrants' life situations, they have rarely been applied together. We argue that looking at vulnerability and resilience at the same time may give a more nuanced and in-depth picture of the constraints and negotiation, resistance or survival practices of young migrants in vulnerable conditions adjusting to varying and fluid macro and meso contexts. Along these lines, MIMY argues that resilience may play a buffering role in reducing the negative consequences of young migrants' vulnerabilities.
- **Integration.** In its Handbook on Integration, the European Commission sets out the common basic principles for immigrant integration policy in the EU. The first principle underlines that "integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States" (COM, 2009, p. 160). However, some national and local integration policies still aim to assimilate migrants within the host society (Phillimore, 2012; Joppke, 2007). In recent years, deservingness (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014) and restrictions to the intake of refugees (Jakulevičienė, 2017) have started to dominate the discourse of migration and integration policies. It is therefore crucial to assess the positive long-term impacts of integration policies and strategies, and to analyse the circumstances and conditions which can empower young migrants. The project thus aims to better comprehend the needs of migrant youth (18-29) in vulnerable conditions. In contrast to understanding integration as a process in which migrants adjust to the social-cultural and economic contexts of receiving countries, MIMY aims to enhance the multi-faceted complex nature of migrant youth integration by applying the concept of 'liquid integration' (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019). The aim is to go beyond the two-way-process of integration to show the complexity of

integration and shifting interdependencies at the macro-, meso- and micro-levels.

- **Migrants.** As there is no universally accepted definition of 'migrant' at the international level, the MIMY consortium applies the definition of 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). Focusing on Third Country Nationals (TCN), the project does not include intra-EU mobility of citizens or residents.
- **Third Country National (TCN).** In this project we research the experiences of 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; these countries are commonly referred to as "Third Countries" and their citizens as "Third Country Nationals".
- **Young migrants.** The MIMY consortium defines migrants as aged between 18 and 29 years. 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. Therefore, MIMY applies the age definition most commonly used within EU strategies (such as the EU Youth Strategy and Erasmus+), as well as applied by Eurostat and the Eurobarometer surveys. Although MIMY examines the experiences of migrants under the age of 30, the consortium is aware that youth is a culturally specific and socially constructed concept (Bloch et al., 2011). For this reason, in a few situations, migrants several years older are included in the study.
- **Young migrants in vulnerable conditions (V).** Taking into account the broad definition of vulnerability, young migrants in vulnerable conditions, who are at the centre of interest in MIMY, are also broadly conceptualised as those who experience various difficulties, e.g. social and economic deprivation, being a forced migrant, having traumatic past experiences, being in a precarious situation (MIMY Consortium, 2019).
- **Young migrants with positive integration experiences (P).** Migrants who have 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, etc. (Crapolicchio & Marzana, 2022).
- **Local population.** Local population refers to all the residents of a city or a region. This term does not exclude migrants or people with a migration background, yet aims at including individuals who are living in that local area and participates in everyday life (Plöger & Aydar, 2021b). Thus, when we refer to the members of the local population without an experience of migration, we use the term **non-migrant local population**.
- **Stakeholders.** By stakeholders we understand experts involved in a particular organisation, institution or project in the field of migration and/or youth. They include both policy makers and policy users, representing both the public sector and NGOs.

- **Non-migrants.** Non-migrants in MIMY are members of the local population, who do not have any experience of migration. For the sake of the research, the same age frames as in case of migrants are applied, namely 18-29 years.
- **Older generation migrants.** In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of integration processes in the studied localities, previous waves and generations of migrants, who are part of the local population, were also invited to take part in the MIMY project, particularly in WPs 4 and 5. By older generation migrants we understand persons who have resided in a given locality for at least five years and are over 30 years old. Including their experiences is important, because it gives us a chance to learn from the past, when the opportunity structure in many localities may have been different.

2. Overview of MIMY methodology

This chapter provides a short description of the MIMY methodology. For more information on the methodological approach of MIMY see report: "Researching young migrants in vulnerable conditions – a methodological and ethical guidelines" (Pietrusińska et al., 2023).

2.1. Research aim and objectives

The main aim of the MIMY research was to investigate the integration processes of young migrants (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 which leads to the main research question of: **How to support the integration processes of young migrants in vulnerable conditions in Europe to increase social and economic benefits of and for migrants?**

- 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 perspectives of different social actors. The study was based on a **participatory action research approach** and incorporated in many parts cooperation with **peer-researchers** – young migrants, who took part in different parts of the research process.

The quantitative methods enabled us to give a better overview of socio-economic conditions at the macro level. Qualitative methods were especially adequate in empowering the voice of young migrants, to better explore meanings, capture complex relational contexts, and enable in-depth analysis of vulnerability and 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 the integration process.

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 Delphy study, enabled MIMY researchers to shed slightly different light on the complex life-situations of young migrants. **Participants' triangulation** (engaging various types of migrants, stakeholders and non-migrants) allowed obtaining data from different sources and taking different perspectives into consideration. **Locations' triangulation** (conducting research in two distinctive local contexts in each country) provides interesting data related to the importance of local context in the integration process. What is more, a **multi-disciplinary approach** was applied, combining policy analysis with demographic, sociological, 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 to achieve innovative actions and strategies in the field of vulnerable migrant youth 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 one where national and supra-national policies are implemented and where own policies addressing local challenges are designed (Plöger & Aydar, 2020). Acknowledging processes that has been described as a "local turn" (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017) we posit that opportunity structures at a 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 that has been 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), in socio-economic settings and centre-periphery relationships as well as "opportunity structures such 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 the 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. Österlen

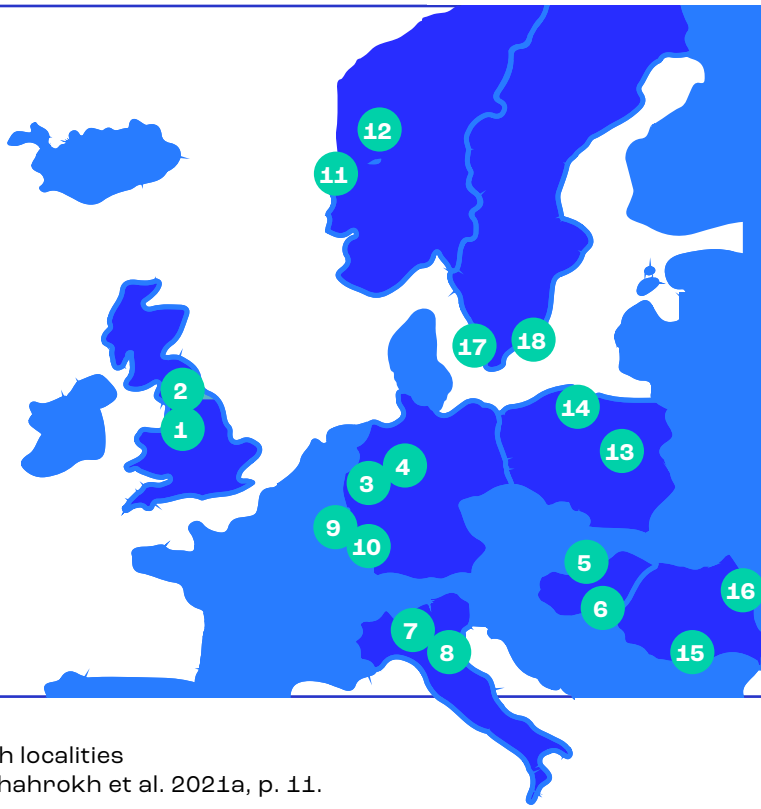


Figure 2.1. The map of MIMY research localities
Source: Own elaboration based on Shahrokh et al. 2021a, p. 11.

2.3.2 Research sample

To incorporate different perspectives on young migrants' integration in the MIMY project, we use triangulation of participants. In total **1172*** **participants** were involved in various empirical activities within the MIMY project. The participants were recruited through the existing networks as well as through snowball samples. Among these participants, four research groups may be distinguished.

The main group of participants are **young migrants**. The MIMY consortium defines young as people aged between 18 and 29 years, although sometimes participants who were slightly above or under this age took part in the research**. This age

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

** 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.

group is rarely studied in migration studies and there is not sufficient knowledge about interconnection of migration and transition to adulthood, thus this group was identified and put in 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 follow 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 focus on the project only on Third Country Nationals. Thus, young migrants who reside 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 (however some of them can have double citizenship, but be 1st generation migrants); these countries are commonly referred to as "Third Countries" and their citizens as "Third Country Nationals". Therefore, in our sample there are no migrants from EU's countries residing in another EU country or the United Kingdom. Moreover, also from this research group are excluded people with migration background, meaning 2nd generation migrants.

Within the category of young migrants we distinguished two subcategories of research participants – **young migrants in vulnerable conditions** (marked with V in the quotations) **and young migrants with positive integration experiences (P).** 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, e.g. 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 often we asked peer researchers to identify those of their peers who, in their opinion, might be in the vulnerable situation. As a result, the sample was extremely heterogeneous and varied from country to country, but certain factors creating the conditions of vulnerabilities were identified in many different contexts.

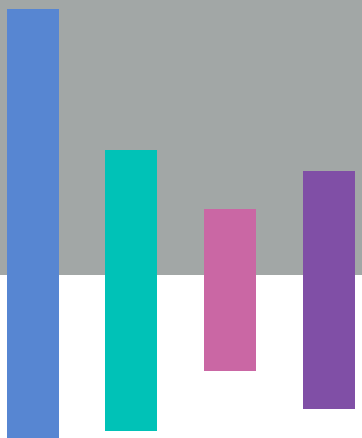
The second subcategory of young migrants was young migrants with positive integration experiences. We identify these groups together with peer researchers, stakeholders and young migrants in vulnerable situations. We asked all of them to indicate those young migrants who have gained public visibility 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, etc. The level of visibility and impact on the community varies from country to country, nevertheless young migrants in this subgroup are 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 are part of the local population, were also invited to take part in the MIMY project. Including their experiences is important, because it gives 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. Moreover, among this group there were also some participants whose origins were from another EU country (e.g. Portuguese participants in Luxembourg), but at the time when they came to the host country their country was not part of the EU/ EEA.

Another group of participants consists 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 academicians, 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 first we identified the entities in the research locations that work in the field of migrants' integration. Then we reached those entities and asked them to appoint individuals who have the best expertise in integration of young migrants. Some of the stakeholders were also young, migrants or representatives of 2nd generation migrants, but the majority of them were non-migrants.

The last group of research participants consist of **non-migrant young adults**, meaning people in the age of 18-29 years old who in general do not have any experience of migration. In some cases this group included 2nd generation migrants or Roma people, but none of the research participants from this group was 1st generation migrant. Their incorporation to the MIMY served comparison between them and young migrants in vulnerable conditions, thus non-migrant young adults were identified among those in vulnerable situations: eg. 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

YOUNG MIGRANTS

TOTAL NUMBER:
522

FEMALE PARTICIPANTS:
235

MALE PARTICIPANTS:
287

STAKEHOLDERS

TOTAL NUMBER:
266

NGOS:
173

GOVERNMENTAL AND OTHER PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS:
103

NON-MIGRANT YOUTH

TOTAL NUMBER:
152

FEMALE PARTICIPANTS:
88

MALE PARTICIPANTS:
65

OTHER GENDER PARTICIPANTS:
2

OLDER GENERATION MIGRANTS

TOTAL NUMBER:
220

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 into the research various types of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Data collected from various research endeavours were triangulated to establish uncertainties, gaps and consensus in theory, research and findings of young migrants integration. The research concept was based on a participatory action research approach.

2.4.1. Participatory action research approach

Our participatory action research (PAR) approach relied on the integration of **peer researchers** in the research endeavours and the use of **art-based events**. In the field of migrant integration, the use of PAR may greatly improve existing individual and institutional knowledge, policies, strategies, and practices. In their turn, researchers can learn from migrants themselves, practitioners and policy-makers. Among action methodologies, art-based and peer research may be most suited to engage both young migrants and stakeholders in the field of migrant integration in the research process and stimulate collaborative action, mutual learning and the search for effective solutions to existing problems and challenges. Using PAR MIMY aimed at showing that theory is not so separate from practice and concept is not separate from reality. Within this realm, action research aimed both at providing solutions for immediate problems and to inform best practice solutions, thus assisting institutions to improve their knowledge, strategies, and practices of integration policies for young migrants. Conversely, researchers could also 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, 2011), young migrants were trained and prepared to undertake research activities bringing the agency of the young migrants as researchers themselves. Peer research approach allowed a space for the transformation of the integration experiences of these young migrants **empowering their voices within the research process**. The scope of peer researchers' engagement was not fixed a priori, but deliberately we left it open. It 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; participants recruitment; assisting/doing research interviews; 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; participation in dissemination activities. By working with peer researchers, we aimed to empower young migrants, thus contributing to their participation and empowerment in constructing narratives and courses of action that closely concern their migratory and integration experiences and trajectories.

Moreover, other action research methodologies were used that relied on **art-based methods** such as Lego Serious Play, Digital Storytelling and Photovoice. The details of the innovative art-based and participatory methods as well as reflections and good practices regarding working with peer researchers are covered in a detailed way in the "Researching young migrants in vulnerable

conditions – a methodological and ethical guidelines" (Pietrusińska et. al., 2023). 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. 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** was achieved through the use of a more ethically driven and collaborative research process that opens new perspectives and knowledge construction legitimacies. In this way, research participants and their newly acknowledged expertise were brought to the centre of the scientific inquiry using creative research practices. From mere 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 drier and more impersonal approach to dissemination actions, peer research and art-based events introduce more personal, sensory experiences, thus humanising, and giving an experiential context to the theorising procedures. Such dissemination procedures might have the effect of superiorly impacting the local communities, local authorities, and all kinds of actors and stimulating them to act (within their powers and practices) in order to produce the changes (whether at the micro, meso or macro level) needed to tackle the vulnerability sources that negatively impact many young migrants lives. 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 participatory approach we implemented various research methods and techniques, that we briefly describe below. They are presented in line with the above presented logic of the project.

2.4.2. Desk research

These methods essentially included **literature review and content analysis** of scientific headlines and journal abstracts for gathering, collecting and systematising relevant information on integration, vulnerability and resilience. Theories and theoretical approaches were explored, documented and critically assessed. This **systematic desk-based exercise** permitted identifying classical and new integration theoretical approaches which incorporate/interlink/relate 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 such terms as "vulnerability", "resilience" and "integration". Moreover, there was also a systematic literature review in local languages on young migrants in vulnerable conditions in relation to issues of integration. 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 with the aim of developing an analysis of the migrants' trajectories and the potential effects of migration. Whereas 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 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 for analysing the flows of young migrants and determining their different patterns. The results of 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 the public and policy arenas were captured, as well as changes over time using a bottom-up approach taking into account their specific cultural contexts and conditions under which they are produced. 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 on the state level and literature review was done through desk research. Second, media analysis allowed comparisons on how the issue of young migrants' integration is framed in the media, as well as capturing the tone and nature of political debate in the different countries (see: Emilsson et al., 2021a; Emilson et al., 2021b).

2.4.5. 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 (see: 1.3. Main concepts...). In both cases **visual tools aimed at facilitating a narrative** were applied (Regalia et al. 2022, p. 11; Crapolicchio & Marzana, 2022, p.10; see also: Pietrusińska et al., 2023).

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 9 countries **288 interviews** were conducted with **young migrants in vulnerable situations**.

Interviews with young migrants with positive experiences of integration had a goal of exploring their migration trajectories, the obstacles and and the resources that they used, 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 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 in the frames of desk research and mapping the provision of services in different localities (Shahrokh et al., 2021a). During 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 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's reports (see: Plöger & Aydar, 2021b; Shahrokh et al., 2021a; Shahrokh et al., 2021b; Crapolicchio, & Marzana, 2022; Regalia at 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 a part of 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 autobiographical approach by 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. Similarly to the cases of individual interviews, **visual tools aimed at facilitating a narrative** were used (Giuliani et al., 2022; Kilkey & Shahrokh, 2022; for more information about using visual tools in interviews see "Researching young migrants in vulnerable conditions – a methodological and ethical guidelines" (Pietrusińska et. al., 2023).

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 with focus group interviews with different subgroups, respectively composed of young migrants (144 participants) and with TCN migrant parents with a child/children in the host country (77 participants). Most often they represented the older generation of TCN migrants so for the purpose of analysis in this report both groups were combined.

Second, this method was used to examine the social, economic and emotional costs of "failed" integration by drawing on the experiences of 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 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 9 countries, **143 persons** took part in these FGIs (see: Giuliani et al., 2022).

2.4.7. Design thinking workshops on integration of migrant youth

Design thinking workshops were organised in six case study countries (Germany, United Kingdom (UK), Luxembourg, Romania, Italy, Poland) where different stakeholders, migrant youth and non-migrant youth were brought together with participation of peer researchers. In the first part, the workshops involved the presentation of preliminary MIMY fieldwork results of Work Packages 1 to 6. The second part of the workshops were based on design thinking (Oliveira et al., 2022), 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, 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 cloud be found in the MIMY Youth Blog (see: **MIMY Youth Blog**, Efsane, peer-researcher in Germany).

2.4.8. Art-based methods

Art-base methods such as **digital storytelling, 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 frame of the other WPs (Oliveira et al., 2022). By using various of art-base methods we opened the possibility for renewing forms of storytelling of their life experiences by creating safe spaces where the dialogical use of creativity and active collaboration in research activities works as a powerful tool to narratively explore, **re-create and re-enact context-specific issues**, problems, dilemmas and challenges associated to migrant integration trajectories in their host societies. During the art-base workshops young migrants were thus provided with

* In the report "Researching young migrants in vulnerable conditions - a methodological and ethical guidelines" (Pietrusińska et al., 2023) we provide an overview of the art-based methods used in the MIMY and evaluate them.

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.

Moreover, art-based methods were followed by the art events, where young participants could present the outcomes of their work to the local communities, 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** and photography exhibitions about being young migrant were presented. Also at the MIMY Youth Blog some in-sights from the participation in the art-base workshops can be found (see: **MIMY Youth Blog**, Melda, peer-researcher in Germany). In all art-base 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 frames of WP5, and with participation of the stakeholders involved in "stakeholder platform" **two waves of youth-informed Delphi Study** was 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, contextualised and responsive to the unique realities of young migrants in vulnerable conditions. Overall, **114 stakeholders** took part in the first wave of Delphy study, out of which approximately 1/3 had a migratory background and 1/3 were young (below 30). Upon completion of data collection and analysis stakeholders received a summary of this wave of research, which formed a basis for the questionnaire sent out in the frames of wave 2, in which 45 participants were fully involved. The results of the Delphi study will be published in the separate report: "Report covering Delphi study, prospects for Impact Assessment and project Road Map for the future" (Grabowska & Jastrzębowska, 2023) and will feed MIMY's policy recommendations delivered in the frames WP9.

2.5. Research ethics and limitations

2.5.1 Ethical challenges related to MIMY project

Ethical issues are an important part of our methodological work within the MIMY project as in the centre of our research were members of minorities, who have limited access to the power. Therefore ethical considerations were crucial for this project. In this part we briefly discuss the main ethical challenges and research limitations related to the MIMY project. However in the report "Researching young migrants in vulnerable conditions - a methodological and ethical guidelines" (Pietrusińska et. al., 2023) we provide a comprehensive overview of ethical challenges associated with research on and with young migrants and outlines ways to deal with these challenges.

MIMY operated in full compliance with existing national legislation of the consortium members and 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 and in line with the institutional, national and international legal requirements**, and therefore a strong ethical culture

supporting good scientific practice (GSP) in research is important. In MIMY we followed the guidance note of the European Commission **"Research on refugees, asylum seekers & migrants"** (COM, n.d.: 1) and therefore in MIMY we made sure that the research is relevant to the communities involved. Additionally, MIMY partners assured that the involved participants are protected and that they are not jeopardising their safety nor increasing their vulnerability. All the empirical endeavours with humans were preceded by obtaining informed consent from all the research participants. All data were **anonymised**, participants **pseudonymised** and final **data published at an aggregated level** not allowing the identification of personal data. **Data protection procedures** were implemented in each consortium team to secure digitised data.

As the focus of our study was young migrants in vulnerable conditions from a disadvantaged group we were particularly careful **not to increase the asymmetry in power relations** between the researchers and the research participants. To limit ethical asymmetry we used PAR approach and collaborated closely with peer researchers who also were young migrants. We also work with some stakeholders – mainly practitioners from NGOs – who served as gatekeepers. This cooperation allowed us not to impose the label of "vulnerable" on certain young migrants (eg. NEET), but to identify potential research participants without labelling them.

Moreover, as many interviews were conducted with young people in vulnerable situations (e.g. forced migrants) we were extremely careful not to retraumatize them. Interviewers were trained to prevent interview situations which pose a threat to the integrity of interviewees or violate their privacy and to be particularly sensitive towards the specific risks. We also understood that asking intrusive questions might be harmful for people in 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 in case the interviewee feels uncomfortable with any question in particular, or with the direction the conversation takes, they have the full right to not give an answer to the question, or to withdraw from the entire conversation. We also were in constant contact with NGOs and public institutions that in case of further problems might provide assistance to the interviewees.

We also pay special attention to the **languages** that we use within the study. Firstly, thanks to the cooperation with peer researchers in many cases we were able to conduct **interviews in native languages of participants** which also reduced ethical asymmetry. Secondly, we were extremely **careful with the language that we use**. 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 (see: 3.1 Introduction; Gilodi et al., 2022). The first term imposed the risk on us to ascribe – according to our own knowledge, stereotypes and prejudices – "vulnerability" to the respective young without knowing if they would ascribe this to themselves.

Last but not least, in the core of the MIMY project was the **empowerment of the young migrants** and strengthening their voices. To do so we implemented the aforementioned PAR approach – mainly cooperation with peer researchers who were also young migrants. Moreover, we used art-based methods that allowed us to invite young migrants into the knowledge co-production process (see: 2.4.1.

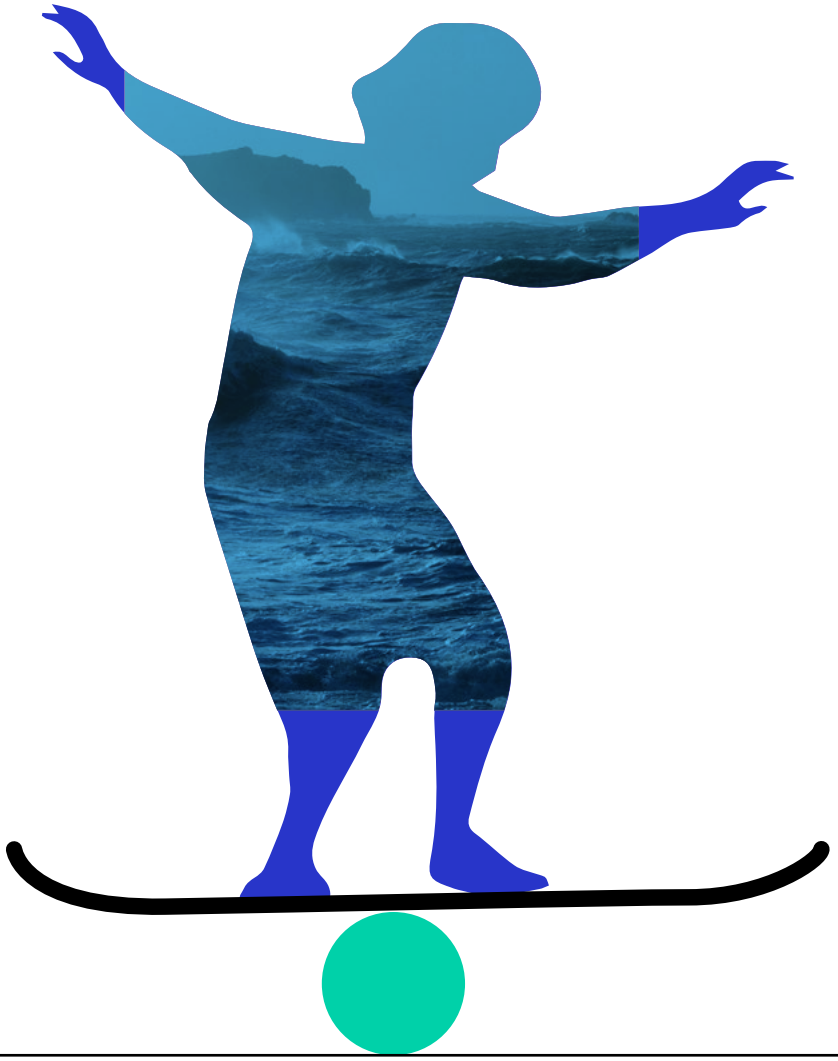
Participatory action research...). Also in this report we provide the platform for young migrants' voices by including their perspective in the form of direct quotations. Additionally, **MIMY Youth Blog** is also a space where peer researchers could provide their reflections about the MIMY research but also introduce topics that are important for young migrants in different European countries.

2.5.2 Research's limitations

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. First of all, the project started just a few weeks before the **COVID-19 epidemic outbreak.** This primarily caused delays in the project due to the quarantine and sanitary restrictions imposed in most countries of the MIMY project and the need to reorganise research and organisational processes. Following the implementation of new solutions, e.g. remote working/ home office 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 adjust to a new reality. 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 is related to **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 such an approach it was sometimes difficult to identify and reach this research group. To overcome this challenge we worked closely with some practitioners and peer researchers to identify young migrants in vulnerable situations and to reach them. Especially the cooperation with peer researchers was helpful in this matter, as there was less ethical asymmetry between them and research participants.

The last limitation derived from the **scope of the research project.** The project was conducted in nine national contexts which differed from each other. Therefore systematic and comprehensive comparison between different national contexts was challenging. Therefore sometimes it was difficult to provide 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 it was possible they were compared and overall findings were presented. What is more, within the MIMY project collaborations between national teams evolved which led to comparison and exploration of data between two countries (see: Giuliani et al., forthcoming).



3. Intersecting factors creating conditions of vulnerability

3.1. Introduction

The notion of vulnerability – one of the central concepts in the MIMY research project – has gained significant popularity in social sciences and policymaking in recent decades (Gilodi et al., 2022). However, as many authors indicate, it is often used as a self-explanatory label, without proper conceptualization and critical reflection on the implications. Thus numerous voices of critique have been raised, pointing to the fact that it may have a stigmatising, disempowering and exclusionary character (for a detailed analysis of the conceptualization and critique of vulnerability see: Gilodi et al., 2022). Acknowledging the critique, in this report we do not speak about vulnerable migrants, but rather analyse different factors from macro (structural), meso and micro (individual) levels that can contribute to creating vulnerable conditions. Conceptualised in this way, vulnerability is a notion that allows us to grasp circumstances in which various challenges and risks are intertwined and accumulated, without being treated as a "once and for all" characteristic of a person or a group, but as a transient condition. Following the conceptualisation of Gilodi et al. (2022) we assume that "each individual experience of vulnerability is always situated in a specific context, time and developmental phase, and is a product of interrelating structural, situational, social, biographical, and psychological characteristics" (p. 16). Moreover, we highlight that it has experiential character, namely that one personally experiences a certain configuration of various factors and therefore defines or constructs one's situation individually. We analyse the vulnerable conditions of young migrants in order to see how they impact the integration process, and posit that they hinder it (see: 6.4 Factors that support and hinder integration).

Thus, in this chapter, we begin by summarising the main structural and situational factors creating vulnerable conditions, and continue with a more intersectional reflection. We aim at showing how different structural factors may be intertwined with each other and with one's individual characteristics (such as gender), as well as a particular moment in one's life-cycle, namely transition to adulthood. We finish by demonstrating how young migrants perceive their own life-situation and identify strategies of resistance towards the "vulnerability label".

factors creating conditions of vulnerability

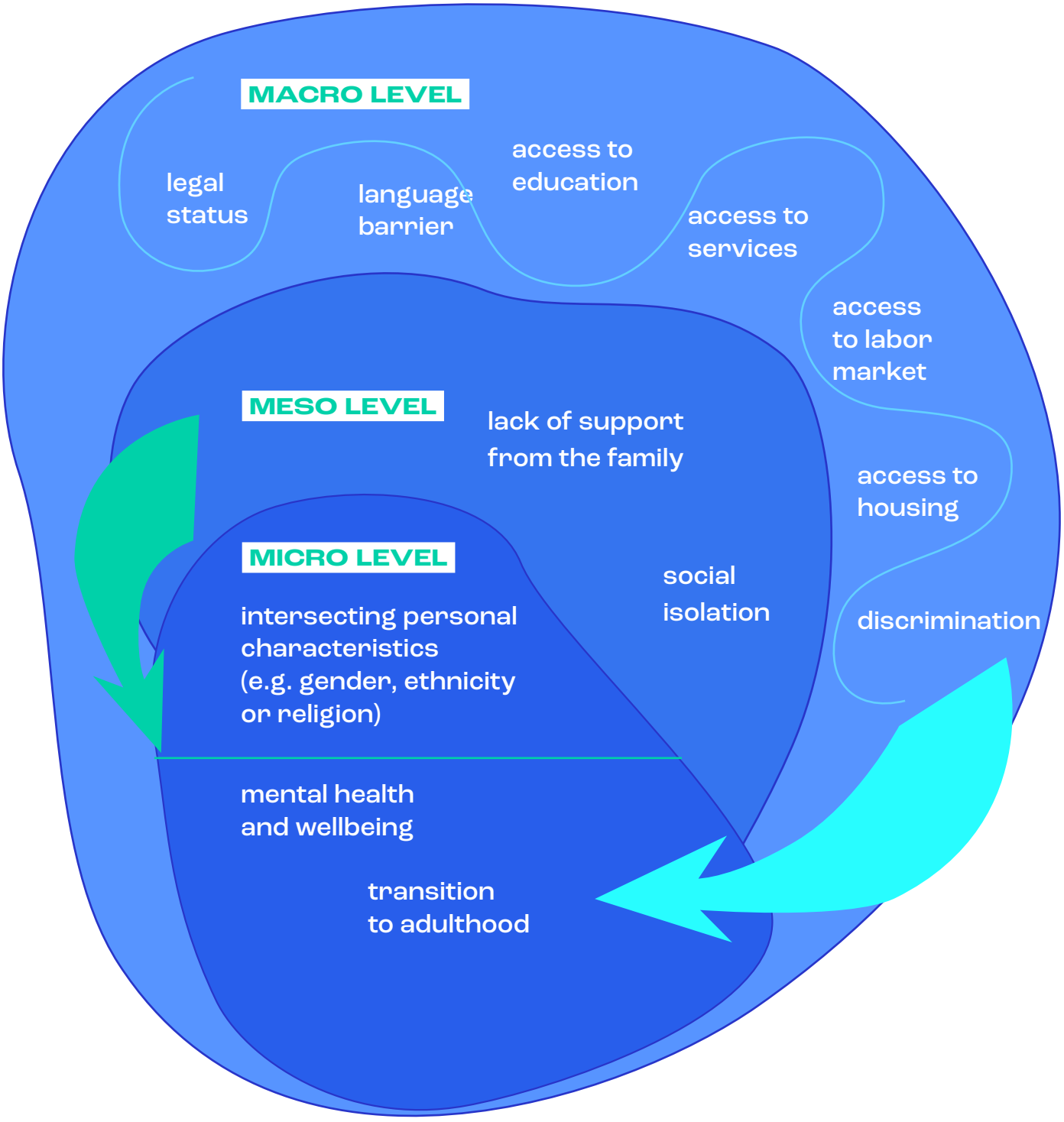


Figure 3.1. Factors creating conditions of vulnerability
Source: Own elaboration based on the MIMY findings.

3.2. Structural factors

3.2.1. Problems with legalisation of stay and access to equal rights

Legal status emerged as the most important factor shaping the vulnerable conditions of young migrants from outside the EU in all the studied countries. Several issues in this domain are particularly challenging.

First, the process of **legalising one's stay in itself**. Many interviewees complain about the complicated bureaucratic procedures and rigid regulations relating to residence permits. In some cases, information on these procedures is not sufficient or not available in languages other than that of the host country.

Second, a common problem is **the long waiting time for the decision**, both in the case of asylum seekers applying for international protection and in the case of migrants applying for (temporary/permanent) residence permits. The uncertainty about the decision results in fear of deportation and numerous difficulties in realising one's plans or even making longer-term plans. Moreover, in some cases migrants are not allowed to leave the country of residence while waiting for the decision, which makes visits to the home country impossible. Legal status is not only at the core of opportunities to access work, education or social and health services, but is also a prerequisite for accessing some services in the private sector, such as opening a bank account. Interviewees talk about a **prolonged state of limbo**, which both hinders their integration process and may also impact on their decisions connected with their transition to adulthood.

> I have friends who are waiting for residence cards and working on very strange jobs somewhere near Warsaw. (...) The waiting process puts you in a state of don't know what. You work because you took a job there, but you no longer understand why you work there. You work automatically because you don't know what will happen if you lose your job. I know people who couldn't stand it, they returned to Ukraine, to their parents. They are often young people.
>
> [V, Poland, m, Ukrainian, 29]

Moreover, obtaining a decision on international protection or a residence permit does not mean the end of legal and bureaucratic problems, as very often it is temporary and needs to be extended every few years. **Different statuses also have distinct temporalities and rights** connected with them granting (or not) migrants access to various services, which significantly impact their integration process. For instance, there are persons who have been denied refugee status, but whose deportation is delayed for the time-being as they have obtained 'tolerated stay', which, depending on the country's regulations, entails severely reduced or no access to any kind of integration services. Without any kind of systemic support, such as language courses, education and with very limited chances of finding a job, such migrants are often **'stuck' in precarious situations**. In other cases, the basis for a residence permit may change or expire: it may be granted only as long as one remains in the education system, or as long as one is the spouse of an EU citizen; alternatively, it is tied to a particular job and employer.

> I was applying to jobs, but they wouldn't take me, as they were reluctant to struggle though the whole – several months' long – legal process of work permit. They couldn't wait that long, they rather employ someone with a stable status.

[V, Hungary, m, Ghanian, 30]

All the above-mentioned nuances and uncertainties hinder migrants' sense of stability and safety and, in turn, their sense of belonging and the process of integration. The quantitative analysis, based on the European Social Survey (ESS) conducted within the framework of MIMY, confirms the relationship between legal status (citizenship) and vulnerability (see more in: Roman et al., 2020, pp. 60-61). While among citizen TCN youth 51% struggle with one- or multi-dimensional vulnerability, among those who do not hold the citizenship of their host countries, this share is 62%. In line with what Ager and Strang (2008) suggest in their framework, legal status, rights and citizenship are the foundations on which the process of integration is built. As we will demonstrate below, they are indeed closely intertwined with other dimensions and forms of vulnerability.

3.2.2. Language barrier and access to language courses

Amongst the difficulties faced by young migrants, the vast theme of language appears to be very prominent. The importance of language is confirmed by the fact that it is mentioned by both migrants and stakeholders across different parts of the study and across all case-studies and countries participating in the project. Issues connected with language permeate macro, meso and micro levels, which are closely interconnected. Thus, although they are discussed here under macrostructural factors, with the emphasis on ways in which they create the conditions of vulnerability, some aspects from the meso and micro level are mentioned here as well. Familiarity with the language is perceived as a gateway and vehicle to more effective integration, while **lack of language competencies combined with no access to language courses may produce or worsen the conditions of vulnerability.** What must be highlighted here is the fact that a language barrier is not easy to overcome, as it takes a long time to learn a language fluently, though there are significant differences in this domain across the researched localities.

Both stakeholders and migrants emphasise the insufficient number and length of language courses for migrants, the prolonged waiting time for places on these courses, lack of information about free or subsidised courses organised by NGOs, and so on. At the same time, similarly to legal status, host country language competence is a factor conditioning, or at least strongly influencing, access to crucial resources and services such as education or the labour market. Not only is knowledge of the local language(s) (or help from an interpreter) necessary in institutions such as offices or health care facilities, it is also crucial in making contact with the local population. On the one hand, lack of fluency in the local language(s) constitutes a barrier in contacts with non-migrant members of the host society, on the other,lack of such contacts – as many migrant interviewees highlight – means that they have few opportunities to practise this language.

> ...since I began to be afraid, even with the lockdown, when I had my daughter, even not having friends, no one, even with the child, I would have liked to interact with someone, I said to myself: what can I do if I don't speak the language? What if something happens to my daughter? This creates enormous difficulties for me. When I was at home alone I said: ok there is no problem; but since my daughter began to grow up... so I see my fragility also in the fact of being a mother and not having the tools to get by.

[V, Italy, f, Moroccan, 27]

> In terms of befriending a community [...] that's one of the barriers and that barrier is basically a language barrier.

[England (UK), project coordinator]

3.2.3. Difficult housing conditions

Housing-related difficulties emerged as an important aspect of vulnerable conditions, a structural barrier that is hard to overcome. These difficulties took on various forms, depending on the country, locality and the type of migration. Below, we shortly summarise the main issues mentioned by migrants and stakeholders.

First, in countries where there is a relocation system for asylum seekers and people with international protection (UK, Germany, Luxembourg), migrants have **limited opportunity to choose their place of residence**. They may be obliged to move several times before being directed to their "final" centre (Luxembourg), or they are dispersed within asylum seeker housing depending on the availability of places and not on their preferences. This may prevent them from settling in their city of choice that they know or where they would have some social networks, which of course impedes the process of embedding in a locality (Shahrokh et al., 2021b).

The second issue related to housing concerns the **living conditions in reception centres.** Young migrants complain about overcrowding and lack of privacy (e.g. shared rooms and bathrooms), which makes it difficult to invite friends, have intimate time with partners, find a quiet place to study or have a conversation). Persons living in the reception centres are often waiting for a decision regarding international protection, which may mean they have limited entitlements during this period, for example, no access to the labour market. The policy of locating reception centres in small towns or in the suburbs significantly limits opportunities to participate in activities available in bigger localities, as well as to access services (see: 5. The role of locality). All these factors lead to a sense of temporariness and isolation from the host society, aggravating the above mentioned state of 'limbo'. On the other hand, leaving a reception centre also poses significant challenges, as it means finding an affordable apartment and facing all the problems on the housing market. In some countries, stakeholders report that, for economic reasons, people cannot move out from the centres for risk of homelessness (Shahrokh et al., 2021b).

Access to decent accommodation is the third issue mentioned in reference to housing. Particularly in bigger cities, migrants highlight spiking prices on the housing market, resulting frequently in the necessity either to move to areas that are distant, have a bad reputation or are considered dangerous, or to live in overcrowded flats. Moreover, the **quality of the flats** is sometimes very low, often lacking facilities, very old and in need of renovation. On top of that, some landlords adopt **discriminatory practices**, either refusing to rent their place to foreigners or exploiting migrants' housing difficulties to impose excessive prices or dire conditions (see: 3.3.3. Everyday experiences of racism...).

> Everyone was just afraid of refugees. They could see refugees as a threat. L. [a stakeholder in one of the NGOs] called flats on a daily basis, dozens of them. As soon as she mentioned that it would be for refugees they hang up the phone.
>
> [V, Hungary, m, Ugandan, 29]

> Similarly, it is hard to find a flat in Dortmund now. When your name sounds Arabic or Turkish, it becomes even harder, so only certain areas are left for you to live, and this makes integration more difficult.
>
> [Germany, language teacher]

The quantitative analysis demonstrates that young TCNs are particularly prone to experience these kinds of vulnerable conditions. As Roman et al. found out, "the share of youth living in bad housing conditions including the state of the building, the amount of litter and vandalism in the direct environment is significantly higher among TCN immigrants (16%) than among non-immigrants or EU mobile people (9 and 10%))" (Roman et al., 2020, p. 53). At the same time, stakeholders in several countries emphasise that there is not enough social accommodation and insufficient programs helping migrants to find a decent place to live.

3.2.4. Limited access to education

For young people, migration, in particular forced migration, often means disrupting their educational path. Young adults may not be able to complete high school or university studies and obtain a diploma in their country of origin. Furthermore, in host countries, TCNs have to deal with significant difficulties regarding **recognition and conversion of qualifications and work experience obtained abroad**. This results in significant delays and "detours" in entering one's own professional field of expertise, or accessing age-appropriate further education. As the condition to obtain a white collar job is having formal recognition of qualifications and previous work experience, many highly skilled, particularly forced, migrants who are not able to present it are forced to accept jobs beneath their qualifications. Among MIMY participants, there are journalists, economists or health care professionals who perform the **so-called 3D (dirty, dangerous and difficult)** jobs, being part of the secondary labour market (Piore, 1979).

Sometimes, access to (free of charge) higher education is restricted to holders of certain legal statuses, while school authorities or teachers sometimes discourage migrants from pursuing education, sending them to vocational

schools despite their ambitions and aspirations. Frequently, it is the language barrier that impedes further education in a host country.

> But I thought it was awful, awful for my oldest son who had skills, who had means, but simply because he didn't speak German and was a native French speaker, ended up in the vocational training [...] when I saw the level of the class and what they were being prepared for, for me it was out of the question!

[Luxembourg, f, West Africa, 48]

In the domain of education, the age of young migrants plays a decisive role. While for those under 18 attending school may also provide them with a support system within educational institutions and help facilitate inclusion into a broader society, young adults describe their situation as a vacuum, in which they are lost, not knowing what kind of path they should take. For young migrants, schools or universities are also one of the main places where they can meet their non-migrant peers, and therefore lack of educational opportunities negatively impacts their social integration.

3.2.5. The vulnerable situation on the labour market

A combination of the above-mentioned barriers and constraints translate into a very precarious position of migrants on the local labour market. Throughout the countries studied we can observe remarkable similarities in experiences of discrimination and concentration in low paid and precarious work.

> Yet, the labour market is almost closed to immigrants. Many try and apply for work and they experience not being called in for interviews.

[Norway, municipal advisor]

Labour market segmentation is pervasive and enduring, and some areas are clearly constructed as 'migrant work'. They are **blue-collar, manual jobs** in sectors such as construction or manufacturing in the case of men and cleaning or care work in the case of women. Participants share their work experiences in factories, warehouses, in shops as cashiers or storemen, or in gastronomy. These jobs on the secondary labour market imply a risk of working in **harsh conditions for a relatively low salary.**

> You get some money, so you keep this job, but there is no life in this kind of job (...) all we have is 12 hours of work per day, afterwards I come back home and go to sleep, everybody here work like this.

[V, Poland, m, Belarusian, 24]

As a result, **feelings of being overworked,** tired and not able to pursue any activities apart from work are often reported by participants. Some also stress that **working on different shifts** (including night shifts) is exhausting, as it ruins your lifestyle, your daily routines, and your social life.

Many young migrants, particularly at the beginning of their stay in the host country, perform **jobs beneath their qualification level and below their ambitions**, hoping that in the future their professional situation will improve. In many cases these jobs are perceived as temporary, but due to the fact that they are extremely time and energy consuming, many migrants find it hard to pursue education or gain extra qualifications at the same time. This, in turn, aggravates the risk of being 'stuck' in these precarious positions.

On top of that, participants often voice that the effort required from them is much greater than what is expected of their local counterparts and peers. They emphasise that the competition for better work positions is unfair: in order to get the job, people with migrant backgrounds have to "do more" and "work harder". Such instances of discrimination and exploitation are reported in different countries: migrants are pushed into the grey zone, forced to work without contracts or under very disadvantageous ones, or to take extra hours without remuneration.

> For most refugees only the lowest, most precarious segment of the job market is accessible. Even these stay frequently unreported, or only a minor part is reported. For example, one works in a buffet and is registered for 4 hours/ day, but in reality works 12 hour shifts. This is how they save social and health insurance costs.
>
> [V, Hungary, m, Egyptian, 24]

3.2.6. Racism and other forms of discrimination

Discrimination in its different forms is another theme that emerged in interviews with both stakeholders and migrants. Quantitative analysis based on the ESS shows that 22% of young TCNs in Europe experience discrimination, and this ratio rises to over 30% for those TCNs who face multiple vulnerabilities. These shares are much lower among EU migrants and non-migrants: 10 and 15 % for EU migrants and 3 and 7% for non-migrants (Roman et al., 2020, p. 56).

Discrimination can be traced at the level of discourse and practices in many areas. While discourse constitutes one of the structural factors from the macro level, practices will be discussed in the next part of this chapter regarding vulnerabilities at the meso level. On the level of **discourse** (see: 6.2.3. Discourse about integration...), **migrants are constructed as a threat** in various areas of social life: in the domain of access to resources such as work or social services, in the domain of safety because of their assumed propensity to criminality, and in the domain of social cohesion, as they are portrayed as a threat to European culture and values. This problem is particularly visible in countries, where governments create or support such **hatred or scapegoating campaigns**.

Qualitative data from the interviews confirm the implications drawn from the quantitative analysis presented above. In the discourse about migration we can trace hierarchies of various categories of migrants and divisions into more and less deserving and more or less welcome. Regardless of the arguments used in this discourse (being a "good" migrant, contributing to the economy, working and paying taxes etc.), we can see how ethnicized these hierarchies are and how non-white migrants are considered less welcome.

3.3. The meso level and individual factors

3.3.1. Lack of support from the family of origin

Family (of origin) is generally perceived as a source of support (see: 4.3.1. Family support), although in some instances its role is perceived as ambivalent, while in others it contributes to creating or aggravating young migrants' vulnerability. We will focus here on these negative influences. It should be pointed out from the start that the **family's socioeconomic status and socio-cultural capital** transmitted to children seems to be of paramount importance, both in light of the quantitative (see: Roman et al., 2020, p. 58) and qualitative analyses. Focusing here on the latter, we can see how young people are obliged to start earning their living and cannot pursue education, or how their life choices are contested by their parents. The main themes reported by participants about their relations with family of origin are slightly different in the case of those who migrated alone and those who came to a host country with their parents.

In the first case, sometimes **troublesome relations with parents** constituted one of the push factors. In such cases, infrequent in our study, young migrants usually have **no contact** with their family and **cannot count on any kind of support** from their side. More often, particularly forced migrants, talk about being worried and anxious about the life-situation of their family members left behind, often in conflict zones or in extremely harsh conditions. Such circumstances contribute to the "vulnerabilization" of young migrants, as they feel the **pressure to remit** (either expressed directly by the family or not) and to bring family members to Europe by **applying for family reunification**. These responsibilities put them in vulnerable conditions as they are forced to maximise their income in the short term, which usually means entering a low skilled labour market with all the risks and negative aspects described above. Obviously, being a young and unaccompanied migrant implies not only economic pressure, but perhaps above all, a psychological burden affecting their mental health in terms of **chronic stress, anxiety, depression and sense of guilt**. It must be noted however, that young people usually resist to perceive themselves as vulnerable (see the last part of this chapter); on the contrary: they derive a sense of satisfaction and self-efficacy from being able to cope with these responsibilities (see: 4.2.1. Self-efficacy, self-reliance...).

> It was not heavy for me to say that I am helping (my family). It was my choice because I saw how things were... We grew up poor, so it was my choice to say 'I am going out, I am helping my family'. Once they are settled, then I will be settled. I'll be a certain age, in a while, I'll have time to settle down. And anyway, you help your family, they are the ones who made you and brought you up. I was brought up in that way, that anyway... but even now, it will be like that forever, if I eat, they will eat too, if not, nobody eats. It's not something that's heavy, on the contrary, it's something that makes people happy. Maybe many, I am sure that all of us here ... we who are here, who have come here for the same reason, the first salary you are very happy you send it all to the father, I the first salary I took I went immediately to send it over there. So you feel, you feel then more one that... that you can help your family and you feel a pillar of the house.
>
> [V, Italy, -, -, -]

In some cases, parents contest the life-choices of their children, for instance their decision to migrate. This parental attitude effectively **discourages young migrants from asking them for any help**. Moreover, it prevents young people from sharing with their parents the various difficulties related to migration.

> There was also constant pressure from my parents, they constantly told me to come back. You can't complain to them how hard it is because they would reply that "no one was waiting for you there. What did you expect?" (...) That's why I've never counted on any support from them. They always say: "You can always come back". I always react quite sharply saying that I'm not coming back.

[P, Poland, f, Belarusian, 27]

In the case of the second scenario, when young migrants migrate with their families, the main sources of vulnerability are connected with **intergenerational relations.** First, sometimes children adapt quicker or better to a new environment than their parents and therefore take on some 'adult' responsibilities. We can speak about **parentification** here, both in terms of dealing with the practicalities of life in a new country and in terms of emotional support for other family members, be it parents or siblings.

> I matured quickly and became so responsible. It was really hard for me, just to get there, I used to encourage my mom and sister to be strong, and reassure them.

[V, Sweden, f, Syrian, 23]

> The thing that I found hard is that in the time that I was growing and developing my personality, my older siblings were not with me [...] I think it is important that they were with me, to notice the stages of my development.

[V, Romania, f, -, -]

Another arena of intergenerational tensions mentioned often across countries are conflicts resulting from the necessity to navigate between the cultural influences of family of origin and host society. They revolve around values and beliefs, gender and family roles and expectations, lifestyle choices and leisure as well as educational and professional careers. Some young people have the impression that **they and their parents are "two different worlds"**, between which there is no possibility of communication, due to the difference in interests and the broadly understood mindset. One particular pattern that emerges in different contexts is the conflict between a more conservative generation of parents and a more liberal younger generation. The former sometimes discourages their children from integrating with the host society.

3.3.2. Transitioning to adulthood as a migrant

It follows that, for many young people, migration marks the **beginning of their independent life,** and so the challenges connected with migration overlap with

those connected with the transition to adulthood. Of course, their specificity depends on many structural and individual variables and how they interact with the exact age of migration. The challenges faced by an 18 year old will be different from those met by someone approaching 30. It also needs to be stressed that it is not age itself that is a risk factor, but its intersections with other factors such as gender, ethnicity, family situation and so on. We have managed to identify some patterns of vulnerabilisation in migrants' transition to adulthood.

First of all, **migration may interrupt** the process of building a career **and independent living** in the country of origin and thus fracture an individual's **developmental path**. This is the case of many, particularly forced, migrants who had to interrupt their studies or quit their jobs to flee the country. In the host country they often feel that in terms of realising their life projects (be it education, independent housing, starting a family etc.) they have had to **take a few steps back**, because they are absorbed by the here-and-now process of adaptation to a new environment.

This is another frequently mentioned theme, specifically by those who migrated on their own. Starting independent living: dealing with housing, work and financial issues, with the practicalities of everyday life and making decisions on one's own, namely the tasks that the majority of young adults face, is far more strenuous, because it is supplemented by all the above described challenges connected with adaptation to a new place of residence. Thus we can say that young migrants experience a **double and interconnected transition: to a host country and to adulthood** simultaneously. At the same time – as indicated in the previous part – sometimes they are deprived of the support of their family of origin or even become the supporters themselves. As some of them emphasise, it makes them more experienced and mature than their peers, both with good and bad consequences.

Lastly, migration also impacts the process of **identity construction**, which is perceived as one of the fundamental processes of late adolescence and early adulthood. In the face of piling up challenges, young migrants mention feeling confused in navigating between different cultural worlds and value systems (e.g. family and peers, country of origin and host country).

> (...) to fit in I had to forget I had this other side.
>
> [V, England (UK), f, Albanian, 29]

> For young minds it is important to keep up with mental health help... When you're a young student and you are a young person, you feel like you're in the middle of the ocean and you don't know which way to swim, because you don't know who you want to be or which path you want to choose. So you know there are a lot of questions that appear in your mind.
>
> [V, Poland, f, Belarusian, 21]

Moreover, some of them experience **nostalgia and homesickness** and feel uprooted in their host country, particularly if they have neither family nor friends nor community support there. These experiences may in fact postpone their transition to adulthood in dimensions such as commitment to a life project or social participation.

3.3.3. Everyday experiences of racism and other forms of discrimination

The discriminatory discourse described above (see: 3.2.6. Racism and other forms...) shapes the attitudes of hostility that penetrate everyday contacts and everyday feelings of safety among migrants. We have already seen how these attitudes manifest in the area of housing, education and the labour market.

> Now this is normal in all societies around the world, people do not like anything new. People are scared, which is natural. Not everyone accepts what is new, especially when there is a lot of negative promotion through the media, or racist entities which do not want this diversity in society. It views this diversity as a threat to society, and claims to own society, and that it should not change. I believe that the main barrier is the rejection of the host community of the new culture.
>
> [Sweden, NGO founder]

The instances of racism or discrimination experienced by young migrants in everyday life span **from hate speech to verbal or physical harassment.** These forms of discrimination particularly affect those who **"look different"** and who are therefore often singled out by members of the host society, as well as by the police, ticket controllers and so on. Speaking one's native language in public spaces is sometimes also enumerated by stakeholders and migrants as an excuse for discriminatory behaviours. For this reason, some interviewees declared that they avoid using their native language in public. It must be noted here that the scale of the problem depends on the level of homogeneity of the host society and the history of multicultural contacts. Moreover, some stakeholders suggest that these **instances of discrimination and hatred are rarely reported** out of fear of being on police records, or of being deported.

One specific form of prejudice and discrimination that emerged as a problem in many countries is **islamophobia**. Here the experiences of men and women are different and they will be covered in more detail in the section about gender below. Among the more subtle forms of exclusion, but still having a very negative impact on young migrants, are various **othering practices** that they have encountered. During interviews and focus groups they explain that no matter if they have spent the majority of their life in the host country, have a host-country passport, and speak the language – they feel they are always treated like foreigners. Although not openly hostile and sometimes unintentional, these "othering practices" hinder their integration and sense of belonging.

> I still remember those heated debates with my classmates because we spoke about Ius Soli [a bill to provide citizenship to foreign citizens born in Italy] and about other bills. The debates that were going on were really disconcerting, to the point where people would say to me: 'You can't feel Italian because you're not! So how can you say you are Italian?'. And of course in the adolescent period this leads to particular moments of discouragement, moments when you carry those boulders in your heart, when you know you simply want to be yourself, but society somehow limits and blocks you.
>
> [P, Italy, f, Moroccan, 29]

3.3.4. Problems with (mental) health and wellbeing

While in migration studies issues connected with mental health and wellbeing are discussed primarily with reference to forced migrants, in the MIMY project they emerged as prominent in many migrants' narratives. While the state of physical health is mentioned only occasionally (probably because young migrants are generally in a relatively good condition), psychological problems are far more common.

In order to understand them, it is necessary to consider the pre-migratory context of these young people. A lot of **distress**, reported particularly by forced migrants, is connected with dramatic or even **traumatic events in the past**: memories of war, of the arrest or persecution of family members or oneself, or an extremely difficult economic situation that pushed them to migrate. In some cases, these experiences are followed by a long and **dangerous journey to Europe**, as some interviewees travel in very harsh conditions, crossing borders on foot or taking boats. Even after they finally manage to get to Europe, they are often still **anxious about close relatives left behind**. Sometimes, these traumatic experiences coupled with stress, overwork, and lack of social support particularly in the initial adaptation period, culminate in **depression, anxiety or other mental health issues**.

However, even among those who have not experienced pre-migration traumas, the process of integration, with all the challenges described above, constitutes a source of chronic and intensive stress that may lead to a worsened psychological condition. Often the reasons behind a deterioration in mental health are multiple and complex. In some cases psychological problems are not directly connected to migration experiences. Young migrants, like any other young people, may suffer from mental illnesses or disorders, and the Covid-19 pandemic may have only exacerbated these problems.

> It was worth it to move here, but it took out the spark from my eyes. I was really optimistic and happy and right now I don't care about anything, and I'm doing therapy for a year. I'm not the same person, even my friends noticed it. This environment is killing me. I think it also has something with climate, especially in winter. The diet, temperature, light, cold – things that I'm not get used, my body is not get used. Same way the pollution. I've never experienced something like that. Also, it's hard to me culturally, there is a distance between people, it's hard to make friends here. Nobody cares about me here; nobody would even notice if something happens.
>
> [V, Poland, m, Brazilian, 31]

The second important point is the availability and **access to culturally adjusted psychological help**. First, due to legal issues (e.g. prolonged waiting time for the decision or being undocumented) people may not have access to psychologists. Second, due to the **language barrier**, they may not be able to communicate their needs. Third, some migrants may not be willing to engage with the support available, if in their regions of origin the idea of psychotherapy or psychiatry in the western sense is unfamiliar, or there is **stigma** attached to using such services. As a result, some participants take part in psychotherapy, which helps them to overcome their problems, while some wait for things to get better and try to cope with difficulties on their own. Fourth, the services may not be culturally adjusted, even if a psychotherapist and a client speak the same language.

Finally, it should be emphasised that migrants' mental health, shaped by current and previous difficulties, impacts the process of integration. It **undermines their self-confidence and hope for the future**, and their engagement in everyday activities, aggravating their social exclusion and isolation. Therefore, it is important to break this cycle by focusing more on the issues of mental health and wellbeing and not only on the functional domains of language, education, housing and work. Stakeholders emphasise that there are significant gaps in psychological and mental health services: an absence of services focusing on subjective and relational wellbeing, on cultural activities, and the facilitation and fostering of "safe spaces".

3.3.5. Gendered and racialized experiences of vulnerability

When we look at the quantitative data from the ESS, we can see that gender is not a significant predictor of vulnerability (see: Roman et al., 2020, p. 57). However, when we analyse the qualitative data, a more complex picture emerges. It seems that while both men and women share some challenges, in some domains the **experiences of vulnerability are gendered**. Moreover, even if gender is not a source of vulnerability as such, it becomes significant in interaction with other factors, particularly with race, ethnicity, religion and family situation.

This becomes apparent when we see how the image of migrant men and women are reproduced in public discourses. While both genders experience persistent stereotyping, intersections of gender and race play out differently in each case. Specifically, young men (particularly from Africa and the Middle East) are more often perceived as aggressive, hostile and **posing a threat** by populist politicians

and media. As a result, they are exposed to even greater discrimination in the domain of housing, the labour market and social contacts. Young women, on the contrary, are often labelled as vulnerable "victims".

At the same time, when we look at gendered norms and expectations, **men are expected to become breadwinners**, economically responsible for the family. We have already demonstrated how young men are pressured to migrate and take over these responsibilities for their close relatives, either left behind or living with them in a host country. It is worth noting how these two images: of racialized hostile masculinity and caring breadwinner remain in sharp contrast and how young migrant men are forced to navigate between them. No wonder that many feel isolated, confused, and overwhelmed. On top of that, since their image is aggressive or hostile and not vulnerable, they are not perceived as needing particular help and, often because of cultural expectations, find it more difficult to reach out for help. Thus, whereas there are services targeted at women, there are almost no similar programs for men.

Women are generally perceived as more vulnerable than men, but their vulnerabilities stem from other sources. One of the most prominent vulnerabilities is their **enclosure within the domestic sphere** and limited opportunities for participating in education, the labour market and the public sphere in general. This may be a result of conservative and patriarchal norms regarding gender roles and the division of labour in the family. These norms may hinder women in establishing connections with the local population, as they are likely to be attached to domestic work, and have less opportunities to interact with locals, take up language classes or join social activities.

Quantitative analysis suggests that having children is a very significant factor of vulnerability (Roman et al., 2020, p. 59). Qualitative analysis suggests that young mothers, and particularly single and **stay-at-home young mothers**, are in a particularly challenging situation. They have limited contacts with the host society, **limited options to learn the language and to perform a full time job**. In consequence, they are dependent on their partners or must rely on social services. In addition, landlords are reluctant to rent flats to families with children, and employers are rarely considerate about employees' family situation when scheduling shifts, irregular working hours and extra time spent at work.

Difficulties in managing a full time job with childcare commitments forces women to look for part-time jobs, often in a low-paid secondary labour market. Many of them work in care or cleaning, often without a proper contract. Women are believed to experience **violence in both public and private spheres**. Instances of hate speech or harassment on the street are reported by interviewees, and stakeholders also highlight that many young migrant women also experience domestic violence. Moreover, these cases are rarely reported to the police.

One specific group of women that are particularly often indicated as vulnerable are **young female Muslim migrants wearing a *hijab***. They experience 'hostile looks' on the street or in public transport because of their visible difference. Beyond distant, silent fear, some face negative comments on the street too. The intersection of gender, ethnicity and religion is often the reason for discriminatory behaviour in the labour market, particularly when young women apply for white-collar jobs. As a result, women feel that they have to navigate and choose between the contradictory norms and values of the host country

and the ones that they were socialised in. It should be added that they are often pressured and controlled by their families to choose the latter.

> Yes, I felt vulnerable when I arrived here, especially at the beginning. Because you don't know the language, you don't have friends, you don't know anybody. You don't know who to trust. It changed me a lot. Before I also wear hijab, I had to take down the hijab.

[V, Romania, f, -, -]

All the above-mentioned challenges may hinder the integration process of young women. However, to counterbalance their exclusion from the public sphere, where migrant services are gender specific they are targeted at women and girls, who are sometimes constructed as in need of saving or protecting by stakeholders.

> Racism to be honest. To be a vulnerable person here, and that if I will enter the job market, I have to abandon my values and culture to get a job. Or get promoted. Since I am wearing the hijab its known that I am Muslim, maybe they won't hire me when I do the interview, maybe they hire someone who is a no Muslim. I don't have experience in this so I'm not really sure. But that's what people are saying.

[V, Sweden, f, Syrian, 22]

3.4. Resistance towards the vulnerability label

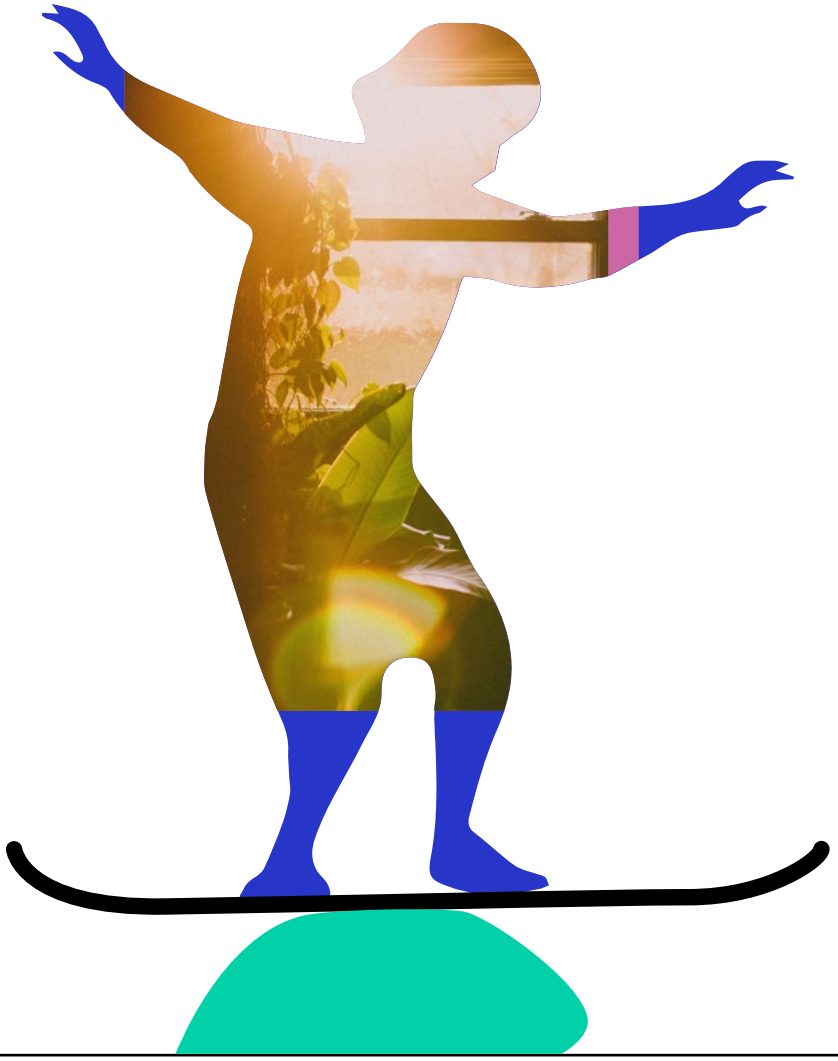
The vast majority of young migrants in all the countries do not perceive themselves as vulnerable and distance themselves from the images of weakness and victimhood. They speak about the problems they experience and injustices listed above (e.g. procedures tied to obtaining residence cards or international protection, problems with access to the labour market or education), but they see them as external, produced by the state or 'system'. In many narratives vulnerability is perceived as a **transient condition.** Young migrants declare that they have felt vulnerable at some point, often in the initial integration phase, when they did not know the language, their rights, and had not built a network of support.

> It was a year of a lot of anxiety [...]. I was depending a lot on that job [...], at the same time I didn't like it a lot, I was not a big fan of the style of the people I worked with but I was like 'I have to stay on this'. As an immigrant I struggled to deal with the idea that I have no safety net... I felt like 'if I drop here, nobody can help me, it's gonna be a free fall'... [I felt] super vulnerable... and it's like you go to work and you know when you are in a vulnerable position... you lower you head to whatever shit they say... so I remember like eating a lot of crap that... a few years later, I would have hit back but I was just like 'no, you have bills to pay, your girlfriend is coming to live with you... so you lower, you play the stupid guy... you say 'yes, yes, yes, you are right...

[V, Luxembourg, m, Brazilian, 29]

Speaking about their life-situation, young migrants often compare it to those of others, and come to the conclusion that there are people who are even more vulnerable and find themselves in more difficult conditions. In these relative terms, they do not feel that they should be considered vulnerable. Thus, vulnerability is more readily recognised in other people, such as parents or other migrants in more precarious situations, and it is associated with being stuck, having no future perspective and with a sense of helplessness. Perceiving oneself as vulnerable may have a stigmatising effect that prevents people from assuming it. Instead, they may tend to resist that label and focus on their personal resources, allowing them to cope with challenges. Indeed, the themes of strength, self-efficacy and determination to overcome vulnerable conditions is conveyed in the interviews and demonstrates a great motivation to maintain positive self-image and self-esteem (see: 4.2.1. Self-efficacy, self-reliance...). Summing up, we can say that the **vast majority of young migrants resist the label of vulnerability and instead use proactive strategies to turn risks and challenges into resilience.**

> I don't want to join to this social [welfare system], always sit in a room and they give you 450 [Euros], that's not my plan. I want to do something for myself. I'm young and have the power, I'm too strong, I want to work for me for good; I am too strong; so I want to use this strongness, to do something for my future; I really want a better future; but the problem is, you know, we blacks, it is difficult for me here; it's not easy at all.
>
> [V, Germany, m, Ghanian, 29]



4. Resources for young migrants' resilience

4.1. Introduction

In the MIMY project, resilience is defined as "an ability to cope with shocks, malfunctioning and challenges before, during and after migration episodes" (MIMY Consortium, 2019, p. 10). Such an understanding provides a broad concept of possible resources that can be used to cope with adversities, including both individual capacities and opportunity structures at the meso and macro-level. In this report, we do not focus on resilience in the psychological sense, as a singular feature of the individual, but follow an approach that identifies **different resources for resilience that young migrants use in navigating everyday life**. We analyse resilience by considering its multidimensionality, and multidirectionality, taking into account its multiplicity of levels: personal (micro), community (meso) and structural (macro). **Personal resources** refer to young migrants' individual characteristics, the skills they find useful on the migration path and the different coping strategies they adopt. **Community resources** mean the support that participants get from their family, friends, and (both non-migrant and migrant) community. **Structural resources** refer to the sources of support that are provided by society, such as access to education, employment, and other social services. All the above-mentioned factors (hereinafter referred to the **"resilience portfolio"**) can build resilience and help young migrants in navigating the challenges they face.

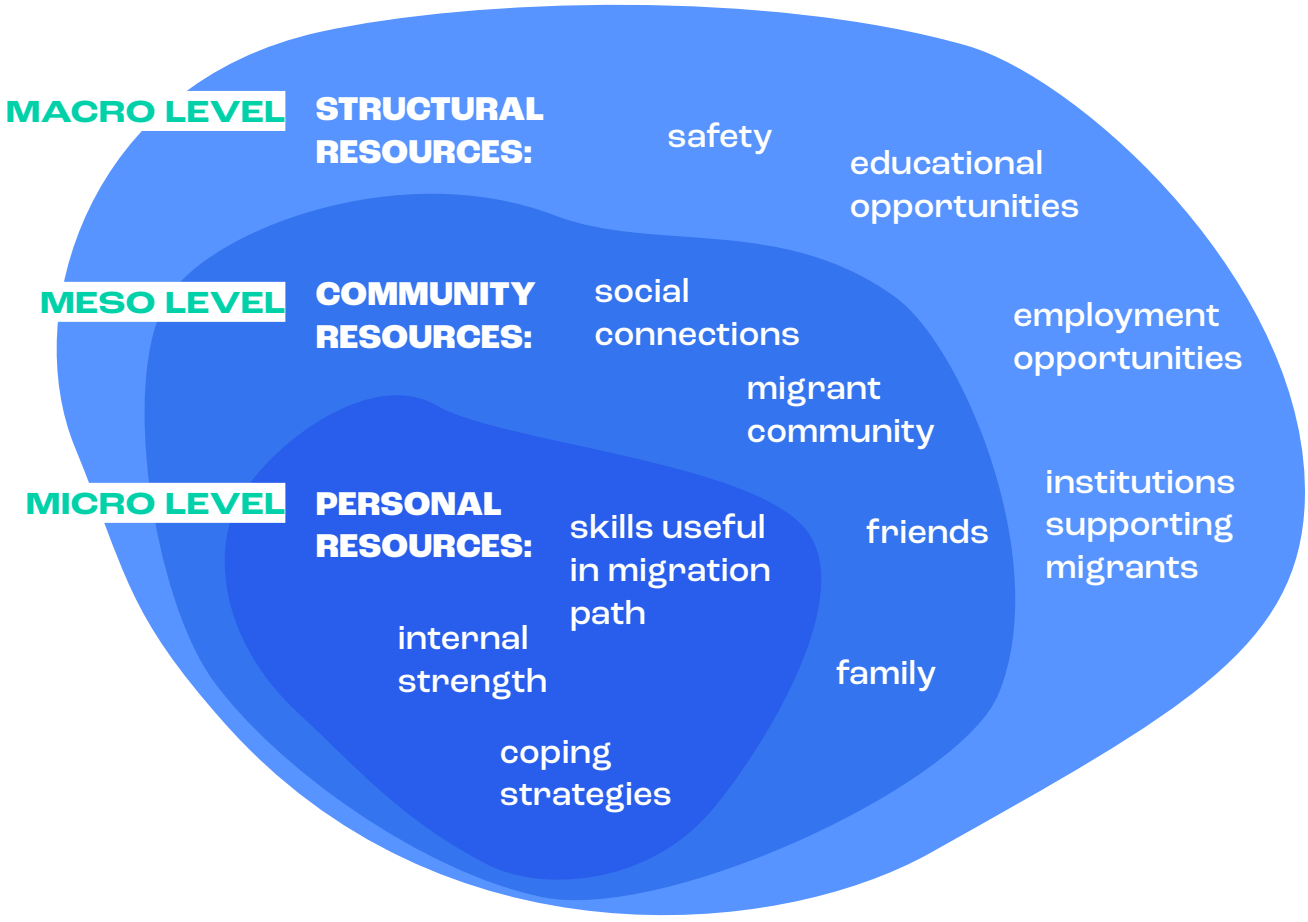


FIgure 4.1 Multi-dimensional resilience portfolio
Source: Own elaboration based on the MIMY findings.

4.2. Personal resources as the basis of young migrants' resilience

Young people facing migratory challenges rely mainly on their **personal resources as their means of resilience.** These personal resources include a variety of factors, covering **individual characteristics** (like determination and motivation, having a strong sense of purpose and goals, and self-esteem), **skills** useful on the migration path (mainly soft skills like adaptability, flexibility, communication skills), as well as various **coping strategies** (e.g. practising self-care and striving for well-being through taking up different activities).

4.2.1. Self-efficacy, self-reliance, and other internal strengths

Referring to personal sources of resilience, young migrants mention the crucial role of their internal strengths, such as **self-determination and not giving up, consistent pursuit of a goal, and persistence in attempting to implement their plans**. Character strengths and personality traits, such as **perseverance, resistance, optimism, hope, and openness to new experiences,** dominate young migrants' narratives (Crapolicchio & Marzana, 2022; Regalia et al., 2022). Relying mainly on personal resources in the context of building resilience is a factor that is also present among representatives of the older generation of migrants (Kilkey & Shahrokh, 2022). This may indicate the phenomenon of responsibilisation of migrants for their integration processes that means that they need to take individual responsibility for their development in the host country (see: 6.5.2. The responsibilisation of migrants...).

> I would like advice to new migrants not to give up, and not to pack luggage to go back. Many people are tempted to do that when difficulties start. This experience, even if it's not pleasant, it's very useful. Give yourself time.
>
> [V, Poland, f, Belarusian, 27]

One personal resource mentioned by participants is their experiences of difficult living conditions in their countries of residence, which, in their opinion, significantly increased their **self-efficacy.** Treating difficult experiences (both past experiences in the country of origin and present experiences in the host country) as a lesson and an opportunity to grow is considered as a crucial aspect of individual strength. Despite their harrowing experiences, participants share a **great sense of agency and independence,** not seeing themselves through the prism of "vulnerability" (see: 3.4. Resistance towards the vulnerability...). The fact that young migrants manage to cope with difficult migratory challenges helps them build their **self-confidence**, which also positively affects their resilience. They also invariably mention **self-reliance** as resulting from having overcome hardships along their migration trajectory.

> We [refugees] grow faster than others. We see... we see the problems, we become responsible at a very young age, 14, 12 years old. At these ages, in this country - in Luxembourg, they're playing games with their PlayStation and all this stuff, they play in the park and enjoy their life. And at this age we take the responsibility of supporting the family, we take the responsibility of leaving the family, we learn how to survive in society... And therefore, we become mature several years earlier. [...] That doesn't mean that we are stronger, but we have the capacity, we have the ability. If there is some obstacle, we will really fight! Because we are used to fight, we always have obstacles in our way, and we always passed them - so far, so good. And it helped us to become a bit more aware of those obstacles and how to solve them, how to pass them.

[V, Luxembourg, m, Central Asia, 22]

Personal strengths very often stem from, and are strengthened through, the family, friendship, and community relationships the young migrants can rely on (see: 4.3. Community resources...). Young migrants directly indicate that their personal resources result from shared experiences and how they feel supported by others.

4.2.2. Skills useful on the migration path

Patience, and an awareness that achieving one's goal may take some time and sacrifices, are prominent in the young migrants' narratives. This is also related to the capacity to take **small, consistent steps within a long-term vision and plan for the future**. The source of migrants' strength also lies, to some extent, in **accepting** their situation "here and now" while **hoping for improvement in the future. Having dreams** cannot be underestimated as a strong motivational driver and source of resilience in challenging situations. Drawing on these individual resources, young migrants try to navigate and overcome the various difficulties encountered.

> We are young, and we have to fight... I came from Brazil to Portugal [before coming to Luxembourg], but I didn't leave my country to remain in the same situation... to leave implies a change in mindset... We leave to achieve our goals and to sacrifice ourselves... to make that exit worthwhile... It doesn't matter if it takes 2 or 5 years... we have to see the evolution, we cannot stand still in the same place.

[V, Luxembourg, m, Brazilian, 23]

> Those who don't have a dream struggle the most. They go so randomly because they don't have a dream for the future. I'm working because I have a dream.

[V, Italy, m, Egyptian, 21]

Most young migrants also draw attention to the role of **preparing for migration** (if possible) which also requires **planning and strategic thinking skills**. Preparing in advance buffers young migrants against possible vulnerabilities arising from not knowing what the first steps to settling in the host countries are, or not knowing what kind of support they can count on and where. This strong emphasis on preparing for migration may be the result of the disappointment experienced by many young people in encountering a reality that is usually more hostile than they expect.

> In my opinion, first of all, a person to come here must be ready and prepared. Don't do like I did, coming here, my first time in Europe. (...) so try at least to prepare for the event before leaving the country or to come at least with some extra help, with some money, with an extra person, to come alone, that is a struggle. I came here with a friend, and in the end, I was the only one left here, so all that work of learning Italian, all that work. So first of all, the person should be prepared because there are so many things that happen. It wasn't so bad for me. But I have seen people struggle too much, so being prepared.
>
> [V, Italy, m, Brazilian, 23]

According to young migrants, it is important to be aware of the resources that one has and not be afraid of using them. At the same time, they underline that it is crucial to **"be prepared to get out of one's comfort zone"**, not to be afraid to make mistakes and develop specific skills (e.g. language skills, social skills). Migrants speak directly about the importance of "migration competencies" such as **adaptability, flexibility, openness to new experiences and people** that facilitate communication and adaptation to a new place. Many of them emphasise the role of **education**, which proves **the importance of both intangible and tangible capital for resilience**.

personal resources of resilience

Source: Own elaboration based on the MIMY findings.

4.2.3. Self-care and well-being

Young migrants, talking about the difficulties they face, highlight the need for **self-care** and **well-being** in the adaptation process, which they achieved in many different ways such as engaging in hobbies or volunteering, but also participating in various social and religious practices.

Pursuing **hobbies or leisure activities** is considered by young migrants to be the key to staying in good shape, both physically and mentally. Engaging in their favourite activity (e.g. running, cooking, watching movies, listening to music) can be interpreted as a one of the **coping strategies**, providing positive emotions and allowing them to relax and forget about their daily struggles.

A common example of taking care of one's well-being mentioned in the interviews is **attending different social activities** – educational (e.g. language cafes), cultural or sport-related, including joining groups related to one's own interests and preferences (e.g. social clubs, sports associations, or religious organisations). Spending free time in this way is very conducive to engaging with the local context and establishing new local contacts and relationships, including friendships, which, in the long run, could be a vital social resource, significantly boosting youths' resilience (see: 4.3.2. Social connections, friends...). It also translates into the young migrants' sense of belonging (see: 5.3. The sense of belonging...).

> [I would advise other young migrants] that they also get involved [...] whether it's a football club, tennis, volleyball, sports clubs, or anything else, for example, theatre or whatever, that they simply sign up for something in their interest, that they just go there and, yes, achieve personal goals and so on. In the end, they will be happier, they can also get along better with other people.

[P, Germany, m, Afghan, 24]

> I just forced myself to try, so then... I feel great, there is like in my second school, second home so... yeah, I would say finding the groups of interests of yours, even if they don't speak English, it's a good thing because then you know that you share the same interests, the same connections.

[V, Poland, m, Ukrainian, 21]

One of the popular activities is **volunteering**, which strengthens young migrants' resilience on many levels including the enhancement of human, social and cultural capital. Through their voluntary commitment, young migrants improve their language, learn new skills (such as work organisation or teamwork) and gain some work experience, sometimes treating this activity as a means of résumé building. Volunteering provides opportunities for greater social connections both with members of the local population and the migrant community, enhancing bridging and bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000). Volunteers also develop a feeling of belonging and a better understanding of the host country's culture. From the narratives of young migrants with volunteering experience, it appears that such activity can be a stepping-stone to integrating with the host society.

> It [volunteering] helps me fit into the community more. Fit in, and have more of a life here. Adapt more here... How do I say it? It's basically adapt more here, fit in, adapt more, embed myself into the community here, a life here... because doing something more recognized in the community, so.. it helps. It actually even helped with my CV for work placements. So, things go around. That's what it is, really, being part of community connections – opportunities.

[V, England (UK), m, Albanian, 16]

> [I would advise other young migrants] that they are integrated into society, they should dare to participate, try to participate, uh, not allow them to be seen as inferior, become active as volunteers. Volunteering is the most important thing to gain experience. Otherwise, it takes too long and is much slower, uh if you, so they should try to help others, then they themselves will be helped.

[P, Germany, m, Syrian, 27]

When talking about various factors supporting well-being, some young migrants also mention **religious beliefs and practices**, sustaining them through challenging events and moments. Some participants refer to religion as something that provides life orientation and can be a source of education and knowledge. Praying is treated as a coping strategy in difficult and stressful situations. Religious affiliation also constitutes a source of resilience at the community level for both Muslim and Christian participants (Regalia et al., 2022). However, interviewees also refer to religion as a potential cause of their difficulties, particularly when they feel that they are discriminated against because of their beliefs (see: 3.2.6. Racism and other forms...).

Being involved in various activities allows young people to **free themselves from the role of being only and exclusively a "migrant"**, to get involved in a new context and look at themselves from a different perspective. **The sense of being part of society** has a powerful impact on young migrants' well-being, their sense of agency and self-efficiency. However, it should be taken into account that the attitude and openness of the host society plays a major role here.

> When you come to Norway, you are marked as a refugee, asylum seeker, a stranger, someone who doesn't know the language, culture, and code necessary for being seen as somehow Norwegian etc. You are always under a label. But you must remember that you are not just a label - you are more than that. You are a sister, you are a mother, you are a friend. You have other things that describe you. You have to see yourself as a resource - that's important.

[Norway, V, -, -]

4.3. Community resources as a reinforcement of young migrants' resilience

4.3.1. Family support

Family is one of the **ambivalent factors** that can be both a source of young migrants' vulnerability (see: 3.3.1. Lack of support...) and resilience, depending on family relations and different family expectations related to migration. However, it is worth noting that family (both of origin and one's own family) is **more often presented as a source of strength than weakness** by young migrants. Sources of resilience at the family level span several types of support, varying **from emotional and cognitive support to more instrumental assistance** (Regalia et al., 2022).

Among the community resources that strongly contribute to resilience, young migrants speak primarily about the role of the family, which they see as a source of **unconditional emotional support**. They emphasise that parental support is crucial to them and appreciate it very much. Apart from supportive **parents,** some participants mention valuable and positive relationships with **siblings**, highlighting their role as mentors and a source of continuous support. The conversations with young migrants reveal their **enormous gratitude towards relatives.** Participants emphasise that they can count on their families regardless of the circumstances, including in crisis situations, when they especially need their care. Despite difficulties and complicated relations that can occur, mainly when young migrants and their families live together, the value of family support is unquestioned. Words such as 'grateful', 'together', 'support', 'always', 'happy', and 'proud' were very common when young people talk about their loved ones. The familial emotional support (if available) provides a **sense of security** that nurtures the young migrants' motivation to persist and succeed.

> The most important thing for me is my family. We have a very strong relationship. I have no real friends now, I realised that friendships don't last, what lasts is your family. We are four girls and two boys in the family. My sisters are my friends. And I really like that. When I'm upset, they help me.
>
> [V, Sweden, f, Syrian, 21]

Oftentimes, the decision to migrate derives from a family's shared sense of purpose and becomes a shared family endeavour, further infusing the young migrant's determination to persist in his/her integration efforts. In these situations particularly, the family is very supportive in the migration journey. Even when migration is not a family project, some interviewees note that their **parents are happy with their decision to migrate to another country**. Despite longing for their children or initial lack of understanding, they ultimately support the migration decision, as they strongly believe that moving abroad will support the development of their young adult children, giving them a better future than they would have in their country of origin.

Regarding the **cognitive dimensions** of family support, young migrants talk a lot about how the family shaped them in the socialisation process, instilling essential values in them. In this context, interviewees also speak about general life knowledge, including overcoming difficulties, as something they learned from their parents. Many of the personal qualities that allow young migrants to face challenges, such as open-mindedness, courage, and determination, are perceived by them as transmitted intergenerationally. In this sense, the values transmitted by the family of origin are a salient resource in the psychological dimension, as they are often seen as "grounding" individuals and as a compass offering orientation in problematic situations. Several young migrants see these **personal characteristics as gifts their families of origin have passed on to them**. Participants explicitly admit that parents build their self-esteem and act as role models.

> Well, the first and most important thing that comes to mind is upbringing, drawing conclusions from some difficult situations. They [my parents] gave me awareness and knowledge about how to function properly in society, how to deal with difficult life situations, and where to go to learn. (...) The biggest thing I took with me from my family are family values, ways to build relationships and so on.
>
> [V, Poland, m, Ukrainian, 24]

In this context of familial support, young migrants also talk a lot about the **cultural messages and different traditions** that their parents taught them. Nurturing family traditions (e.g. cooking traditional dishes or gathering with the family during festivities) is perceived by interviewees as a way of maintaining a bond with their country of origin.

Young migrants make it plain that they can also count on **various advice based on their parents' experiences**. Many appreciate that their parents do not force them to do anything, but are willing to provide guidance, leaving the final decision to them. According to interviewees, it signifies a healthy, supportive family relationship.

Participants also highlight the importance of the **instrumental support** received from family members already residing in the host country, often with a more established network and their own support system. Young migrants living with their families report vital family support regarding **housing arrangements, financial assistance,** and **mediation in the social context.** These types of instrumental help are substantial for migrants, especially while they are finding their way in new places.

> I was lucky that my sister was already here [in Germany] three years ago when I came, and she just helped me with everything. So job centre things, translations. I didn't need any [further] help.
>
> [V, Germany, f, Syrian, 21]

Some young migrants (although more commonly among the older generation of migrants, due to the fact that they have already started their own family), apart from supporting family-of-origin relations, also talk about the important role of their **own families – children and life partners**. A supportive family background – having a child to take care of and a partner with whom one gets along very well – may positively influence one's resilience and can act as a strong motivator for integration efforts. Being in a relationship with someone who has a long experience of living in a host country, or who is a native of this country, brings additional added value in the form of support in integration (e.g. learning the language and getting to know the local area). Benefitting from the advice and support from a native or a person who has already obtained citizenship or permanent residency in the host country can also facilitate and accelerate the legalisation procedure.

> I always say that I have to learn forward because there are two children who live here in Italy. When I look at my children, I get a lot of strength. It's okay for them because you live here for me, so I'll move on. This maybe gives me the strength to go on.

[V, Italy, f, Tunisian, 29]

> With my son, I felt an assurance that I didn't have before... a purpose in life perhaps. For me, before, staying or leaving the country was the same. I had no roots here. And my son, he gave me that.

[Luxembourg, f, Portuguese, 53]

4.3.2. Social connections, friends and community

Many young migrants make their journeys without immediate family, setting out independently. Along those journeys, especially during the early adaptation period in host countries, **social connections** are described as an essential resource for young people's resilience. Several participants mention **interaction with local people** as a meaningful factor because these people offer them social relations and, furthermore, information and knowledge about the host country, which helps them navigate in an entirely new context. Support from **important individuals** (a significant person, with whom the young migrant establishes a strong bond), such as school teachers and study colleagues, are considered very important. Early positive relationships in the host country help restore young migrants' sense of belonging and can increase their level of social participation (see: 5. The role of locality...). Moreover, through these connections, they can access important integration resources, such as opportunities to participate in wider community activities.

> Also helps when you know people, when you are moving not to complete emptiness. I was in such a situation when you are in a foreign country, you don't speak the language, and you are completely alone, it's very sad. Such situations happen, I think everyone should live through this once. But it's always less stressful when you have someone to contact. It also helps if you move not alone, it's the same as if you are scared of darkness, but when you are together in this, it's not that scary. It is always easier when you have someone from a new country whom you can ask about anything. The most important thing is to have not money but friends and connections. I think people are the most important, they are the biggest support. It's good if it's acquaintances, not bad if it's a group on social media, and amazing if that's your friends.

[V, Poland, m, Belarusian, 30]

> My teacher was the only person who said, "you can do this".

[P, Sweden, m, Afghan, 22]

The role of **everyday encounters and interactions between migrants and the local population** is also emphasised by stakeholders as a potentially important (but still not very accessible) community resource for youth resilience. They indicate that bridging the distance between groups can significantly increase the likelihood of sharing information and thus facilitate migrants' access to networks, services, and institutions. Moreover, it may decrease hostility against migrants, which is very often related to lack of contact or cultural distance.

> I think that we as associations do a good job, because we always try to bring people together, to exchange ideas, to encounter people who might otherwise never meet. (...) So that prejudices can be reduced and that people are not only thought of in groups.

[Germany, NGO co-worker]

Friends are another source of community support that can boost migrants' resilience. They provide important assistance as well as relationships that feel "like family". These relations function as sources of motivation, encouragement and knowledge that allow young adults to continue their way or endure their predicament. In the initial stages of the integration path, these are usually **co-ethnics or other international friends with a longer experience of living in the host country**. Friendships provide a **listening ear** and **emotional support**, but also broadly understood **guidance and "practical support"**, which helps young migrants navigate the challenging reality of the host country. Friends help young migrants, for example, with logistics, such as offering a place to stay temporarily until they are able to find more permanent housing or helping them practise and improve their language skills. Friends offer assistance with different tasks associated with getting established in a new environment or connecting migrants with organisations that can help them.

> There was one person who was like family, a roommate of mine while we were seeking asylum... He's a professional from another African country, and he's educated and has a lot of experiences during his life. And also, he has been living here for a long time ago. So, during our daily activities, he just usually gave me advice from his experiences and how to interpret my life while I'm living in the UK. And it was also a long time, so we used to stay at home. So, we have a lot of plenty of time to spend together at the time. So I have got a lot of experience and knowledge for him, including how to communicate myself, even of different organisations that are to support and who stand for the refugees.

[V, England (UK), m, Eritrean, 24]

> I met two acquaintances who are my friends to this day. We became very close friends. They became like siblings to me, this fact helped me a lot in exile. Yes, we are friends, but like siblings, that means if we have to decide something, we decide it together.

[V, Germany, f, Syrian, 28]

Young migrants report having close friends from whom they can receive significant support, describing them as "always being there for me". They also express a strong sense of reciprocity in friendships stating that "we are there for each other" and "we take care of one another" (Crapolicchio & Marzana, 2022). The possibility of **having contact with people with similar migration stories** proves an especially relevant source of resilience. Several participants emphasise the importance of **migrant-to-migrant** support in accessing crucial information and services.

> And not the network of those people who maybe offer you something in particular, but maybe having... knowing people who have faced the same difficulties, who have overcome them; and so for me, it was also an inspiration.

[P, Italy, f, Venezuelan, 29]

> Even if you think you are all alone, you definitely are not, and you can try to find some people who can help, no matter who they are... maybe other migrants. Try to look for communities with which you can identify yourself somehow, because there are many things that connect, for example, work or interests.

[P, Poland, f, Ukrainian, 27]

Therefore, some migrants mention the invaluable role of **informal groups** - through the exchange of migratory experiences, people gain new insights into tackling their challenges and can count on mutual support. Meeting together to address common problems, apart from enabling practical assistance and

information exchange, promotes youth empowerment. Such encounters encourage young migrants to open up and discuss issues that affect them, which is sometimes vital in improving their well-being. It is worth noting that migrants themselves (especially those with positive integration experiences) are often the originators of such initiatives. In these cases, meetings are based on **"self-help and a need to be supported and to support other migrants at the same time"** (Crapolicchio & Marzana, 2022, p. 17).

> I established a group, like a mentoring group of like Somalis and we meet up open monthly and yeah, and it's just like my little family. So yeah, it's actually with them as well. With the support question, I'd say it's a massive source of support.

[P, England (UK), f, Somalian, 29]

> We just started meeting up and to be honest and then we started talking. We just realised what we're going through. We need help. And we started helping each other, like once I just go to this organisation and I would just say 'Oh, I have a lady who knows the lady who can help you'. And then we just decided to form a local support group such, and since then we've been helping each other, you know.

[P, England (UK), f, South Africa, 25]

Social connections between migrants and members of **diaspora communities** seem to be particularly important. Reconnection with the **migrant community** assists them in maintaining their cultural integrity while building a new life in the host country. In particular, interviewees mention the importance of networks formed with co-ethnics or people of similar descent (Regalia et al., 2022). Existing communities and support networks of migrants from the same country of origin constitute a further considerable resilience resource available to young migrants. At the same time, some migrants do not seek contact with the migrant community. One of the reasons is the fear of being locked in a "cultural bubble" instead of learning a new culture and language.

> I think what difficulties me, is to be alone. To be distant from my family and friends. One thing that I would like to say that helped me to deal with all the pressure, with the corona and all the difficulties that I one faces, is to have a very strong community of my nationality. People that can remind me who I am, or where I belong to.

[V, Hungary, -, -, -]

> There is a community of migrants from the Republic of Moldova. There are some small communities, and we help each other, there is somebody who understands your life, and your roots.

[V, Romania, Moldavian, f, -]

The emotional, cognitive and instrumental support from family, friends and other actors in the receiving society (both the non-migrant local population and migrant communities) can boost young migrants' self-esteem and self-efficacy. Such relational resources not only help to manage practical challenges, but are a vital **source of mental stability**, which is crucial for youth resilience. Relations can have a buffering effect, reducing the impact of migration stress on psychological well-being.

> I think that happiness depends very much on human relations, on friends. And they are difficult to make. You know, at the end of the day, loneliness impacts mental balance. There is a psychological cost of being an immigrant.

[V, Hungary, m, Ghanian, 30]

"Even if all relational resources pave the way to increasing participants' resilience, it seems that **a positive bond with the family plays a pivotal role in enhancing inner positive feelings"** (Regalia et al., 2022, p. 78). This is related to emotional closeness, the acknowledgement of values received, and the validation of the self by own family members. Altogether, these elements constitute one of the main resilience resources helping young migrants to face challenges in the host country.

4.3.3. Self-advocacy and migrant community participation

Regarding the resilience flowing from the meso level, special attention should be paid **to migrants' community participation**, which oscillates between personal and community resources and is associated with values such as **self-organisation and self-advocating.** Some young migrants look for the opportunity to get involved directly in the **"promotion of integration"** in the host society by undertaking, as mentioned above, voluntary work for organisations engaged with these issues (Giuliani et al., 2022). Such involvement represents a strong resilience resource for young migrants, as it increases their self-efficacy and self-worth.

> A lot of people talk about you and on your behalf, but not with you. The whole situation made us start this association that we exist and that we can speak for ourselves.

[V, Sweden, m, Afghani, 25]

> I understood from the very beginning that this was a f@cked up situation – sorry for my language – and that's why we chose to initiate a solidarity group. It is not an aid. We don't give food. The goal was to raise the issue of immigrant integration to a political level in Hungary. And we need to work together to fix it.

[P, Hungary, m, Sudanese, 34]

The analyses show young migrants' capacity to make significant changes in their life circumstances and their attempts to transform social structures within which the different challenges are often embedded. Mainly in the case

of interviewees with positive integration experience, we can observe **many activities for migrant communities focused on overcoming hurdles related to integration.** Young people's motivation and determination to remove barriers for newcomers and, consequently, to improve the quality of their life, often stems from individual struggles they experienced in host countries during their adaptation phase. They empathise with other migrants' experiences and want to ensure that they are able to provide support to access their basic needs, such as housing, education, healthcare, and legal advice (Crapolicchio & Marzana, 2022).

> I really want to help others. Especially the vulnerable. I want to help others who are in the same situation as I have been in.

[V, Norway, -, f, -]

> I mean, I've been through it. Let me just step into it, and I know the feeling of what they've been through, I've been homeless, I've been hungry, I've lost people, I've met people who lost them to death and not just only death, but I'm living my life just that us being kicked out of a house. Gosh, I've lived outside for the whole week, so I know the feeling. I mean, I know the pains. Yes, that's it. That's what inspired me. I know what I know. I know what they're going through.

[P, England (UK), f, South African, 25]

In some sense, through community participation, one's individualised resources become external resources for others in a "dynamic, ongoing exchange of giving, receiving, and reciprocating" (Regalia et al., 2022, p. 78). A strong support network is created that, to some extent, compensates for deficiencies occurring at the structural macro level, rooted in a system that neglects migrant youth needs.

> And make a good vision for yourself, and make a good plan for your future, your plan has to also contribute to the betterment of society as well. Think about how to grow with society, think how to grow with the community because we need to grow together. We cannot grow just only one person! If I want to grow, I cannot grow individually I need to grow with the community.

[V, Luxembourg, m, Central Asia, 22]

> Our initiative started from the idea that refugee women are really suffering from personal issues, like identity, religion because they don't want to be involved with a community where there are men. They don't feel comfortable to share their story or needs with men. Or even some families don't allow women to go to communities where there are men. Mostly Muslim families. So, this is how we realised that there is a need for an organisation only for women.

[V, Hungary, m, Ghanian, 33]

Stories of involvement in self-advocacy and migrant community activities show that the power of resilient people relates not only to the ability to transform their own lives, but also the life of their community, building something that can be called **"community resilience"** (Landau, 2007). The potential influence on strengthening integration processes and socio-political inclusion of migrants is the important spiritus movens for interviewees' activities. Crucially, **supporting others and feeling like one is contributing to society** is perceived as a very powerful factor of individual resilience (Crapolicchio & Marzana, 2022). It is worth adding that the migrant diaspora provides good conditions for young migrants to feel empowered, especially if the host society is not a friendly environment that ensures young migrant's equal access to participation in society.

> I have my blog on Instagram and TikTok to share my knowledge about legalisation in Poland and how you can develop your career in Europe and in Poland as well. Also, some part of the blog I'm dedicating to the interviews with people who moved from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus and about their experience in Poland and as it happens, the reality and expectations. (...) I am also a volunteer. I'm volunteering for more than five years in different organisations. Currently, for almost two years, I'm volunteering in the [name of NGOs supporting migrants]. This foundation helps refugees and immigrants from all across the world, living in Poland and coming to Poland. (...) I can help a person who needs some help and support, and I can give this help and support and see the result of my work. It's a fantastic feeling.
>
> [P, Poland, f, Ukrainian, 26]

Self-advocacy and supporting the migrant community allows migrants to regain a sense of 'importance', particularly relevant for young people in vulnerable conditions. Some migrants, especially those with positive integration experiences, emphasise the desire to "give back to society" what they have received in terms of different kinds of social support (Crapolicchio & Marzana, 2022). Community participation (both through civic engagement and, in some cases, through work) allows them to **build and maintain hope for a better future for themselves and their communities.**

4.4. Structural resources as a gap in young migrants' resilience portfolio

The analysis of dimensions creating conditions of vulnerability shows that what may weaken the resilience of migrants are primarily structural factors such as discrimination, lengthy legalisation procedures, difficulties in accessing education, the labour market or housing (see: 3.2 Structural factors). This subsection focuses on which aspects from the structural-state level can support the resilience of young migrants the most and, thus, contribute to their positive integration experiences (see: 6.4.1. Factors which support integration). However, it is worth highlighting that **structural factors turn out to be far less powerful in fostering resilience** than the personal or community resources that are described above.

4.4.1. Different opportunities in the host country

Regarding resources provided by the state, migrants highlight that one of the most significant resources available to young migrants in the host country is the generally **increased feeling of safety** and **greater educational and professional opportunities** compared to those available in their countries of origin. As for opportunities, **stakeholders and non-migrant youth also emphasise that the receiving countries offer migrants more opportunities** in terms of education, social welfare, health care and economic perspectives. They notice that in host countries, they have more freedom than in their home countries (Shahrokh et al., 2021b; Biaback Anong et al., 2022). However, it should be kept in mind that within each of these areas migrants face a vast repertoire of difficulties (see: 3. Intersecting factors...).

As opposed to the extreme vulnerability felt in the origin country, **feelings of being safe** and development opportunities provide some young migrants with a sense of stability, thanks to which they are able to embark on building their future. Especially people with international protection, but also older generation migrants, describe their destination countries as 'safe' compared to the situation in their countries of origin (Kilkey & Shahrokh, 2022).

In terms of a sense of safety, **receiving legal status** (for example, obtaining a positive decision on refugee status) is a key life event for all participants who have received one, enabling new possibilities. The research shows a clear and direct relationship between gaining secure residency status and the ability to plan and envisage oneself in the future (Regalia et al., 2022). On the other hand, we described in the previous chapter how legislative difficulties can cause a sense of instability and trap young migrants in limbo (see: 3.2.1. Problems with legalisation of stay...).

> When we got the refugee status, we were in the foundation [name of the foundation], and our lawyer said, firstly, 'you already have refugee status', and secondly, 'you have all the rights that Poles have, only you can't go to the polls'. Since then, I say, "okay, I'm already a Varsovian".
>
> [V, Poland, f, Tajik, 29]

> It was a great honour for me that I received Romanian citizenship. This has opened all the doors, and it has meant having equal rights to any Romanian citizen.
>
> [Romania, -, -, -]

Among the structural resources that contribute most to a migrant's own resilience and perceived "successful integration", some participants (both young and older migrant generations) mention broadly understood **education**, both at the level of higher education and at the school level. Although some migrants experience difficulties in accessing education (see: 3.2.4. Limited access to education), for some of them, **educational institutions** have eased the migration journey, e.g. by providing a residence permit based on their student status. Through participation in the education system in the host country, MIMY participants can gain and develop cultural and social capital (e.g.

providing information, social networks, and space for interaction) as well as specific knowledge and skills needed in the labour market. The phenomenon of **"integration through education"** is also indicated by stakeholders taking part in the study (Plöger & Aydar, 2021b).

> I really think it depends a lot on if they [migrants] could be educated in Luxembourg. From the moment on when even an undocumented migrant entered an institution like a school, to some level, the person has managed to integrate and create networks.
>
> [Luxembourg, NGO social worker]

In the context of broadly understood education, young migrants also appreciate all **the opportunities to learn the language.** Several participants highlight that attending language courses proved invaluable for their language learning progress but also added value, such as meeting new people and obtaining useful information from them (Giuliani et al., 2022). Stakeholders also regard host country language proficiency as key for integration, arguing that it facilitates access to different resources and services, such as formal education or the labour market (Plöger & Aydar, 2021b). Therefore, **the availability of language courses** is emphasised as an important structural resource that young migrants appreciate.

> I think there are a lot of places where we learn Italian, where we take training courses and I think there are a lot from the government. I know other places where there is education and, like this one, there are many places where there are courses. And, in my opinion, the government is doing a lot to integrate us.
>
> [V, Italy, f, -, -]

Among elements contributing to young migrants' integration, work is also very important. According to stakeholders, much attention of **state and structural provision focuses on employment support** and what might be considered 'employability' training to prepare migrants for work (Shahrokh et. al., 2021b). Coping with the foreign labour market and finding a satisfactory job is very empowering for young migrants who manage to achieve this (see: 3.2.5. The vulnerable situation on the labour market). Finding a job that meets their expectations and matches their education and skills brings a sense of pride that boosts self-esteem, also contributing to the strengthening of resilience (Regalia et al., 2022).

4.4.2. Support structure for integration

Some stakeholders, when asked about the main resilience resources for young migrants, indicate the **support structure for integration that exists in a host country.** Resources provided by institutions and services to support migrant integration, and the state's financial aid, are reported as relevant factors in assisting young migrants in their integration trajectories (for example, in Norway and Germany). At the same time, some stakeholders are critical of them, pointing to the gaps in the system and the need to develop a support system for migrants (for example, in Poland or Hungary) (Shahrokh et al., 2021b).

> I think that everyone in the new municipality leadership agrees that we need to deal with the refugee issues, but we are not there yet. There are many refugees in our district and also institutions that deal with them. But, there are municipal institutions, such as the family support service, which would need to serve refugees ex officio... but... Only because someone speaks another language, they refuse to deal with their problems. At this point, our task is to humanise our social service institutions. [...] We first need to have at least one colleague in the family support service who understands and communicates in English and this would still not be sufficient

[Hungary, -].

Although language learning, education and employment are universally recognized as fundamental to migrant integration for their sense of stability and autonomy, access to these learning and work opportunities is often limited. Looking at structural resources, young migrants also recognize the importance of formal support, but, at the same time, they also strongly highlight its insufficiency or lack of migrant support by institutions. Sometimes, on the contrary, when talking about what they have achieved, **they deny the role of structural factors, focusing all their attention on individual responsibility and efforts** (see: 4.2.1. Self-efficacy, self-reliance...; 6.5.2. The responsibilisation of migrants...).

> Of course, it's not enough [talking about the social inclusion income he receives from the state], but... [...] if they don't give that to me, then I don't have anything. [For] now it's better than nothing.

[V, Luxembourg, f, na, 19]

> I have fulfilled my dreams. Everything. I'm not grateful to Sweden for giving me a residence permit. I have claimed it myself. I am not grateful to anyone else for having bought an apartment. It's me who have struggled. I've paid taxes. I've gone to work every day, gone 100 percent to school, worked 50 percent, I've bought an apartment. It's not something I'm grateful for. It's because I've done it myself. I'm grateful to myself for having fought like that.

[V, Sweden, m, Afghan, 22]

Regarding resources provided by society, among those who identify them, most migrants, rather than formal, mentioned **different kinds of informal support** that have been important resources in their migration trajectories. Some participants deem informal support more conducive to finding solutions than other, more institutionalised types of help (Regalia et al., 2022). Such support is provided mainly by different **international, national and local NGOs who seem to be** far and away the most important drivers of migrant support (see: 6. Integration). Although some participants assess this support as insufficient and inconsistent, it is still crucial, especially when migrants cannot count on structural support at all. Similarly, most stakeholders highlight **the critical role**

of third-sector organisations. A key conclusion from discussions with them is the extent to which the **states have outsourced responsibility for migrant integration** (Shahrokh et al., 2021b) which is confirmed by the perspective of both young and older migrant generations (see: 6.5.2. The responsibilisation of migrants...).

> I went to one bank in town. I went there, and the way she treated me made me feel very sad. They wouldn't open a bank account for me, even though I have the right to work, and so I had to go to Doncaster, and they did open it for me. At the migrant support organisation, though, if you have a lawyer problem or work problem or Home Office problem, that's from that moment they can help you. Yeah. And for anything like if you feel sad, you will not feel alone, you know they sit with you.

[V, England (UK), f, Eritrean, 28]

> We try to create shared flats for young people who do not manage to leave from the reception centres [because they cannot find flats to rent]. We did in [multiple municipalities in the south]. [...] There was a super positive dynamic that was created, with a dynamic of helping each other. [...] And actually, all of them progress enormously. They are in school, they help each other, [...] They do not remain in their group because they go to the handball club, and they get along super well with the neighbour. They make food together with the neighbour [...] It's important to say. To overcome the fear and to go towards the others, they will go in a group, we also are in groups, and them also, they need this confidence.

[Luxembourg, branch director of a large national NGO]

Young migrants participating in the MIMY project largely highlight **the support that should be available to young migrants from the beginning of their life in the host countries,** pointing to the potential causes of these deficiencies (Regalia et al., 2022). Their opinion on the (un)availability and (in)sufficiency of support from NGOs coincides with what stakeholders say, paying attention to issues such as lack of financial stability, short-term funding models, staff shortages, limited co-ordination and strategizing, and an over-reliance on volunteers (Shahrokh et al., 2021b).

> I just wish that there would be an organisation that would help people, especially young people, once they are entering the country because young people... they have a lot of energy. And that they have a lot of hope and achievements, sorry, goals to achieve and nobody is using this part from the young people, they will just say you are an asylum seeker, that's it you are not allowed to do anything. We will give you condition support, and we will give you financial support, and that's it.

[V, England (UK), m, Egyptian, 25]

> A lot of projects are short-term, because they don't get the money to carry on [with the project]. Because it's called a project and it has a start and an end date. Perhaps the problem is already at where you apply for money for the project, that you need to have an end date, which may create problems for the people who need to be integrated. It takes a lot of time to integrate.

[V, Sweden, m, Afghani, 29]

4.4.3. Significant persons in the structure

As mentioned above, compared to personal and community sources of resilience, young migrants see **much less support in macro-social factors**. Even then, the factor that makes the difference is still **relational**. Young people emphasise **the role of individuals – significant persons** who believe in them, from whom they can receive "tailor-made support". Most interviewees are grateful to specific people – such as social workers or NGO representatives - whom they met along their migration trajectory. Firstly, the significance of key individuals within organisations providing support in accessing initial services and immediate troubleshooting of problems faced is clearly visible. Secondly, the type of relationship the young migrant forms with these people sometimes is reminiscent of family bonds, as these people take care of migrants, meeting their practical and emotional needs. This can suggest that, to some extent, young migrants' resilience is strongly linked to **subjective types of support** (emotional support, personal advice) that stem from **relational bonds with people from the host society.**

> I always say that he is my social assistant [referring to a social assistant with whom she established a strong relational bond], he gives me a lot of strength... I think that without him, I couldn't do many things. Whenever I have a problem, he helps me [...]. He always says 'don't give up, you'll manage to do that...' so I always count on him because he helps me every time I need.

[V, Luxembourg, f, Cape Verdian, 25]

Whereas formal public services can be inflexible, rigid, and difficult to navigate, many third-sector organisations operate very differently from the state's approach to integration. For NGOs, it is important to listen to migrants and be responsive to specific individual needs, so they put emphasis on more personalised support (Shahrokh et al., 2021b). Within the realm of broader social resilience resources, creating a bond with a significant person from the host community can have an overwhelmingly positive impact on the integration process, **helping the everyday navigation of a hostile and complex host country environment and conveying a sense of care, connection and welcome.** Such a bond may not only assume a similar relevance to that of family support, but can be a "door opener" to other significant relationships with members of the host community, thus developing and strengthening the young migrants' social capital. This process may in itself have the potential to enhance a migrant's overall multidimensional resilience capacity and favour positive and successful integration experiences. According to some stakeholders, engaged professionals

in structures (e.g. social workers or counsellors) can be crucial for integration outcomes (Plöger & Aydar, 2021b).

> I would say that the biggest opportunity is to get a social worker that is very motivated and does everything for you to help you get integrated because the government is not doing much.
>
> [Luxembourg, NGO social worker]

4.5. Differences in perceiving the sources of resilience of young migrants

Of particular note are the **differences in how sources of resilience are perceived by young migrants themselves and by the non-migrant local population**. As it has been shown, migrant youth build their resilience mainly based on personal and community resources. In contrast, representatives of the non-migrant local population (both young non-migrants and stakeholders) see the sources of young migrants' resilience in macro-level structural factors, such as access to education, opportunities in the labour market, etc. There are several possible explanations as to why these two perspectives differ.

Macro factors, such as **institutional structural support, are more outwardly visible** and are usually associated with core social and political structural integration processes. They refer to the access migrants have to common resources and main institutions of society, such as education, the labour market, housing, and health. They are more instrumental and transformed into support services for migrant integration. From an external point of view (non-migrant local communities), **they are easier to grasp and operationalize.** Young migrants, in their turn, have a **lived migration experience,** facing different migration challenges and difficulties in their integration trajectories. Often, **the resilience tools most directly accessible to them are their personal resources** – inner strengths such as determination, courage, and self-efficacy. Closely associated with these resources and very much linked to the young migrant's lived experience are **community resources, especially family support** that (when available) can be immediately and easily accessible, from emotional to instrumental support. In this sense, self-reliance and family reliance are the most "within range" resources: they provide direct, readily available, and often interrelated sources of resilience for young migrants. From an outsider's standpoint, they are harder to observe and more difficult (sometimes impossible) to provide instrumentally.

As mentioned above, young migrants' perspective on resilience strongly focuses on the micro and meso levels. They pay less attention to the macro societal level, and even then, **the factor that makes the difference is still relational.** Migrants who recognize the support they received from migration-integration services, in most cases, refer to the specific people who support them. This last statement seems to partially coincide with the point of view of stakeholders, who are often **in the assistive role mentioned by young migrants.** It can be assumed that **stakeholders recognize the usefulness of their work and see the positive results it brings.** Stakeholders are much more likely to consider the assistance and support

offered as relevant because it is their job. They look at the migration phenomenon from a **professional point of view as workers-providers** and not as users of a service. This may explain why they focus more on the usefulness of social and partially relational resources, whereas migrants focus on individual ones. Mostly, stakeholders are overwhelmed by their workload, as there is much demand for their work and service, less capacity to provide this, and difficulties in overcoming the legal limitations related to it, which may also influence their point of view. The professional experience of many stakeholders indicates that, in many cases, **even the most determined young people could be "defeated" by structural-systemic constraints.** This experience may also be the reason why they emphasise the importance of the structural and systemic factors that can foster or undermine young migrants' resilience.

It could be argued that the focus on individual responsibility among the participants may express migrants' experiences of a lack of social support. The fact that young migrants, especially those in vulnerable conditions, often rely on themselves as the major resilience source can stem from **their restricted access to support structures** – they find **no access to all-encompassing service provision**, or they are subject to an **exclusionary integration governance system**. The existence of projects, programs, and instruments for young migrants does not always mean that these are equally available to all. Migrant youth who are excluded from the system, for example, due to their legal status, have **very limited even informal support,** mainly from the third sector. Moreover, existing services might not address the young migrants' most pressing problems (waiting for decisions and creating a living for themselves). The absence of state support and, in many cases, the hostility of state structures and processes means that young migrants feel there is no alternative but to rely on themselves and their immediate surroundings. Even in some countries where there is a lot of societal support (e.g. in Sweden, which ranks first in the MIPEX ranking that measures policies to integrate migrants), there is still a large gap left for the individual to fill after receiving the support that exists. At the end of the day, the outcome of the whole integration process is closely connected to the individual capabilities young people bring with them as they arrive in a new country (see: 6.5. The neoliberal approach towards integration).

4.6. Multi-dimensional resilience portfolio – summary

Resilience is a multifaceted process that involves both individual capacities and opportunity structures at the meso and macro-level; these include personal, community and structural resources that together constitute a young migrant's **"resilience portfolio"**.

Research within the MIMY project has shown that **young migrants rely primarily on their personal and community resources to build their resilience and navigate the challenges they face.** Individual resources refer to young migrants' individual characteristics, the skills they find useful on the migration path and different coping strategies they use. Within an array of resilience assets at the individual level, the **determination** to persist with integration efforts and reach their **goals** seems to be a critical factor that motivates young migrants to search for ways to overcome integration adversities. Self-reliance, related to independence

and self-sufficiency, is an important factor in helping individuals adapt to new environments. **Self-efficacy beliefs** also seem to play a key role, along with a young person's **hope** that their migration project will eventually turn out fine and give meaning to their decision to migrate. **Individual responsibility and personal engagement** in constructing one's future are considered the most needed qualities. Additionally, when it comes to micro-level resiliency resources, young migrants emphasise **the importance of mental health** in the integration process. Engaging in self-care through taking care of oneself physically and mentally (finding ways to relax and de-stress) helps young migrants maintain their well-being and build resilience. Young migrants rely heavily on their personal resources in the context of integration for several reasons. First of all, they may not have access to structural resources or may not be aware of how to access them. They may also face language barriers or social isolation, making it more difficult for them to access support from the community or the host society (see: 3. Intersecting factors...). Cumulative factors that have a vulnerabilizing effect on young migrants mean that, to some extent, **young migrants are forced to cope based on the personal resources that are most readily available to them.** The heavy reliance of young migrants on their personal efforts has implications for integration processes. It seems to correspond with the **neoliberal approaches to migrant integration** that are present in many European countries (see: 6.5. The neoliberal approach towards integration).

Research results indicate that individual resources are rooted in a relational milieu. Personal strengths very often stem from, and are strengthened through, **family, friendship, and community relationships which the young migrants can rely on.** The family (although it can also be a source of weakness) provides young migrants with vast amounts of support in the emotional, cognitive and instrumental dimensions, ensuring the sense of security necessary for them to face various migration and integration challenges. **Family and the personal resources described above seem to be the core resilience sources for a young migrant.** They are the ones that give the migration project purpose, meaning, and strength, from which a determination to persist in the face of obstacles and difficulties arises. However, other relational resources resonating with the life experience of young migrants are also important for their resilience. **Friends**, frequently treated on an equal footing with family, provide young migrants with a sense of connection, companionship, and practical support in navigating new environments. **Community support,** especially **migrant-to-migrant informal support**, has a very significant positive impact on integration processes. **Participating in diaspora community activities** helps migrants build relationships with other community members and provides a sense of purpose and belonging – one of the key ingredients for integration (see: 5.3. The sense of belonging...). Apart from invaluable emotional support, all the described community resources of resilience are also providers of guidance and advice for young migrants trying to build a new life in their host country. According to stakeholders, when it comes to sources of young migrants' resilience at the meso level, **interactions between migrants and the non-migrant local population** is crucial for positive integration effects (especially if we understand integration as a two-way process, see: 6.5.3. Factors that support the neoliberal approach...). At the same time, they recognize that opportunities for this type of interaction are lacking. This is confirmed by the perspective of young migrants who **rarely mention the non-migrant local population as a key component of their resilience portfolio**.

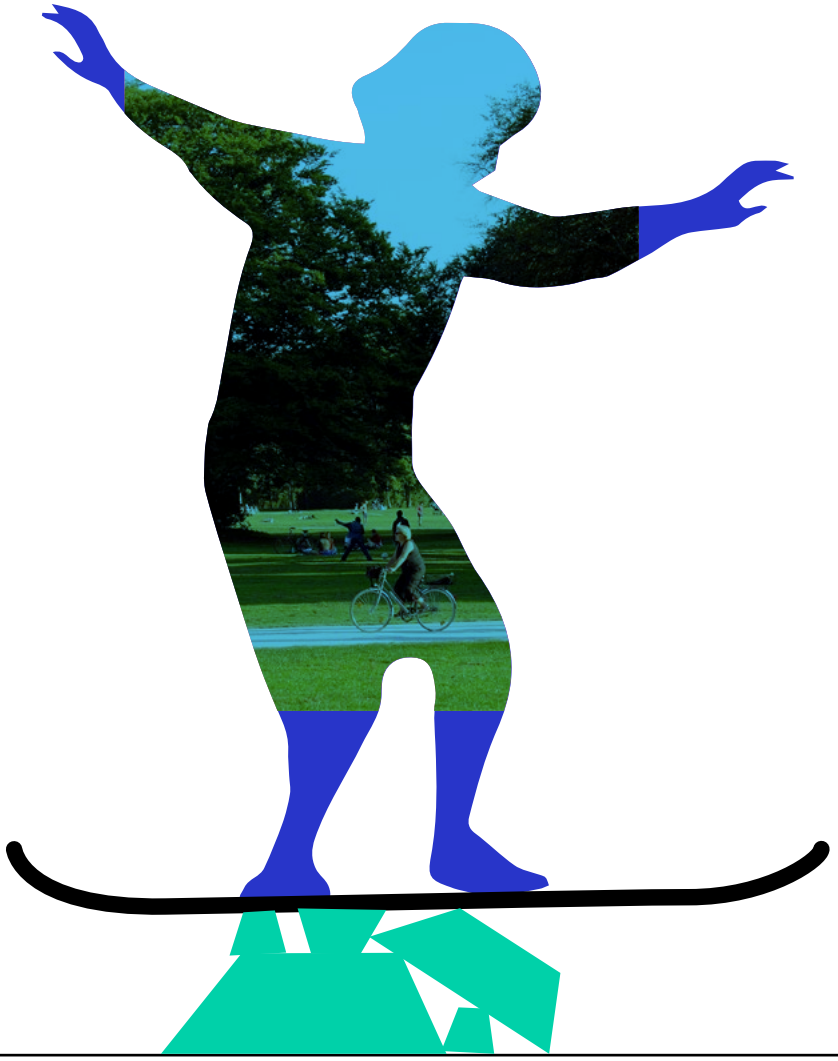
While personal and community resources are an essential source of resilience for young migrants, it is also important to recognize that **structural resources and support are equally important and necessary for integration to succeed.** Structural resources are the external factors influenced by the larger social, political, and economic structures within which individuals live. Examples of structural resources identified by young migrants in the context of building their resilience include primarily: access to education and opportunities for learning a language; a general sense of security including legal protections; and economic opportunities consisting of access to work and general professional development opportunities. Broader social and institutional sources of resilience tended to be mostly instrumental and served specific purposes. Migrants are aware of their relevance, often **being critical of the lack or insufficiency of such support** in specific domains. Concerning sources of macro-level resilience, **young migrants recognize the most significant role of non-governmental organisations in supporting migrant integration.** This confirms the perspective of the stakeholders who draw attention to the gaps in state integration and migration systems, which are replaced by the activities of NGOs. Compared to personal and community sources of resilience, young migrants see **less structural support**. Even then, the factor that makes the difference is still **relational.** Young people emphasised the **role of individuals – significant persons** who support their integration efforts. It is important to recognize that all three resources – personal, community and structural - can contribute to young migrants' resilience. Combining these resources can be most effective in helping them overcome challenges and succeed in new environments.

The MIMY project results confirm that **resilience is a dynamic developmental process:** not a fixed individual trait, but a multidimensional systemic process that can be developed and strengthened over time through experience and learning (Masten, 2019). Resilience involves three interrelated capacities: 1) short-term, reactive **coping capacities** for dealing with current adversities that are geared towards maintaining the status quo by restoring the level of well-being; 2) longer-term and proactive **adaptive capacities** relying on learning from past experiences and adjusting to future challenges by applying preventive measures to secure future well-being, and 3) **transformative capacities** that mean taking action using access to broader socio-political support to foster individual welfare and strengthen resilience towards future adversities (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013). Depending on what resilience resources and capacities young migrants use, resilience can be demonstrated in their ability to **"bounce back"** meaning returning to the state from before the adversity, as well as **"bounce forward"** meaning adapting and developing as a result of the adversity, often leading to personal growth and development.

It is worth noting that **individual young migrants' resilience capacities can vary** depending on their previous (also migratory) experiences, socio-economic and cultural capital, the challenges they have faced and the resources and support available to them. **Young migrants in vulnerable conditions do not always use the whole spectrum of resilience resources** (individual, community, and structural) because it is not always fully available to them. Experiencing poverty, discrimination, and lack of access to education, the labour market, healthcare, and lack of social support, many of them feel that **they have to rely solely on themselves** and that if they "fail", they don't have a safety net to fall back into. The absence of broader sources of resilience (beyond the personal level) forces them to **focus on the present, urgent challenges of ordinary living** to which they

respond using the various coping strategies available to them. However, the capacity to plan for the future is sometimes beyond their scope due to the lack of broader resources that would enable them to have greater control over their future. Contrary to young migrants with positive experiences of integration, for these young migrants, resilience takes a more immediate, urgent flavour, relying on the capacity to overcome present obstacles, difficulties, and hurdles. Coping capacities help them to persevere despite setbacks and challenges, and to continue to function effectively in the face of adversity (**"bounce back"**). With the passage of time and acclimatisation to the host country, they develop adaptive capacities, which allow them to introduce gradual changes aimed at improving their future situation.

Young migrants with positive stories of integration tend to draw on a wider repertoire of resilience sources. These include relational and social resources with a very strong emphasis on community participation and self-advocacy that is not as prominent among those in vulnerable situations. The ability to draw on an extensive portfolio of resilience is mainly possible due to their starting educational, sociocultural and economic capital that they can capitalise on and transfer to their integration trajectory. Using different resilience strategies, they are not only able to introduce **transformational changes** to improve their own situation, but they also try to introduce positive changes in the migrant communities, strengthening those communities' resilience. The resilience of these young migrants is strongly linked to the **capacity to construct their life project and desired future selves ("bounce forward"**). Differences between the resilience of migrants in difficult situations and migrants with positive integration experiences, to some extent **correspond to how they perceive integration** (see: 6.3.4. Similarities and differences in the understanding...).



5. The role of locality and belonging

5.1. Introduction

Over the last decades in migration studies there has been more and more interest in the local scale as the level where integration takes place (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2011; Plöger & Aydar, 2022). Within the MIMY project this approach was also adopted, assuming that it is at the municipal or local level that young migrants interact with members of the host society, negotiate access to crucial resources such as work, housing, education and so on. At the same time, policies created both at the EU and national level are implemented locally. Thus, "within the multi-level analysis of MIMY, considerable analytical significance is therefore given to the local level as a site of potential solidarity, inclusion, new collectives and care, but also as a site of antagonism, exclusion and neighbourhood/group conflict" (Plöger & Aydar, 2022, p. 9).

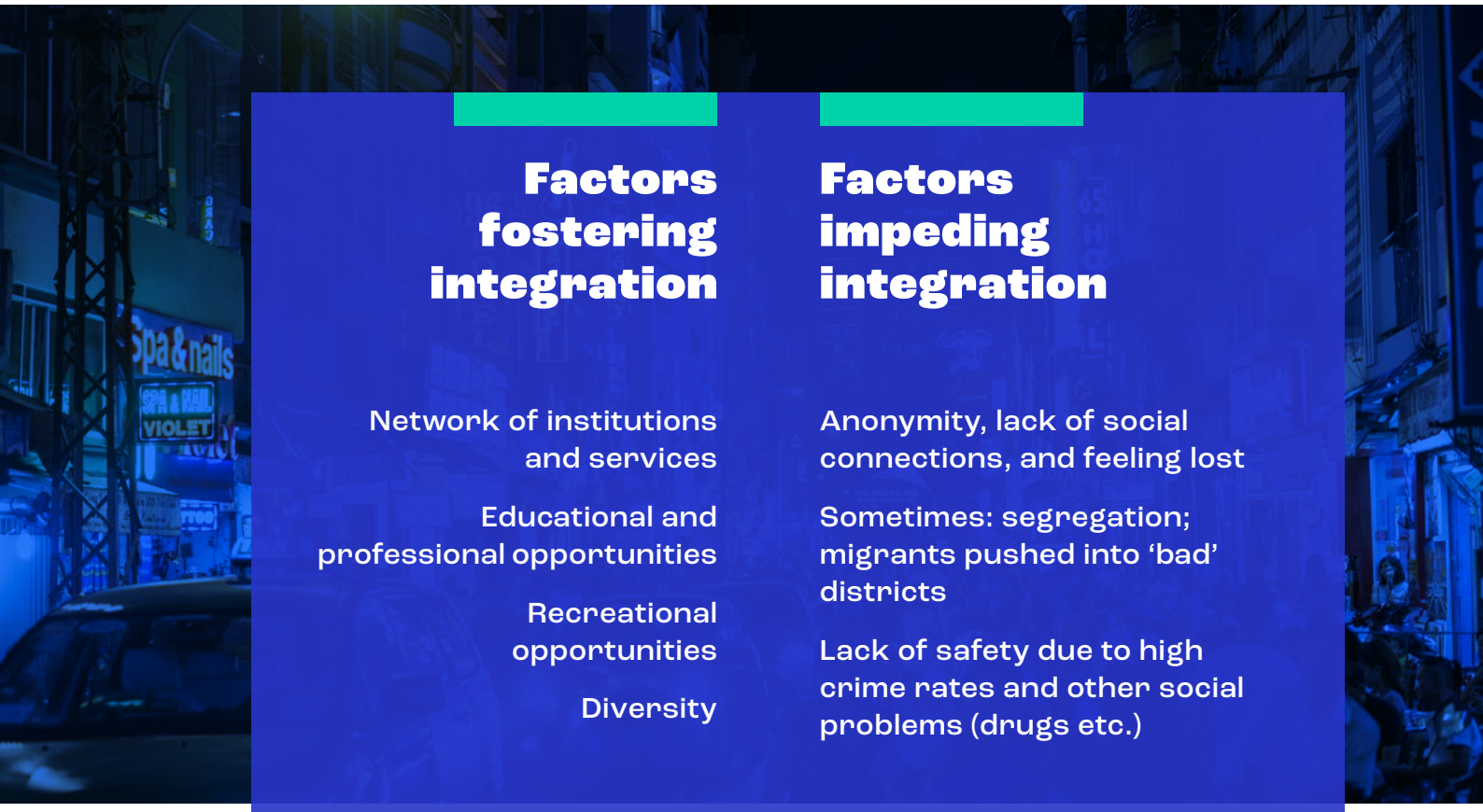
We argue that localities create certain opportunity structures, and thus shape more or less vulnerable conditions for migrants, while at the same time providing various resources that constitute their resilience.

As outlined in the introduction, to analyse the role of localities in each country participating in the project, two localities were studied: one representing large cities and one representing smaller and peripheral areas (for details see: Shahrokh et al. 2021a). However, it must be emphasised that our goal was not to draw conclusions on which one better facilitates integration. On the contrary, we adopted a more nuanced approach and assumed that "localities provide distinct opportunity structures for migrant integration, which are shaped by local economic development paths and by migration histories. Thus, local contextual factors can result in significant variations between places, even when these appear similar based on statistical indicators" (Plöger & Aydar, 2022, p. 1). Indeed, it turns out that different historical, political, economic and social factors shape the unique character of each locality and they may form different constellations. What we were able to do was to identify, in both types of localities, factors that were perceived by different groups of participants as fostering and impeding integration, and these are discussed in this chapter.

However, the characteristics of the localities and the opportunity structures that they provide cannot explain the integration process without taking into account the subjective perspective of migrants and their needs. In this context, the concept of belonging appears to be useful, as it allows us "to understand who is related (to a place) in what ways" (Plöger & Aydar, 2022, p. 12). Like many other concepts in social sciences, the notion of belonging is not easy to define. In conceptualising belonging we follow Yuval-Davis (2006) and Antonsich (2010), who posit that it is a multidimensional concept, defined as "a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place" (p, 645). Applying the framework provided by Mulgan (2009), we analyse in what contexts people tend to develop a sense of belonging to the locality. At the same time, we acknowledge that "one's personal, intimate feeling of belonging to a place should always come to terms with discourses and practices of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion at play in that very place" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 649). For this reason we also analyse the attitudes of the local population towards migrants, discrimination, and the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion inscribed in the discourse around integration (see: 6. Integration).

5.2. Urban vs peripheral localities as arenas of integration

5.2.1. Factors fostering and impeding integration in the context of large cities



Factors fostering integration	Factors impeding integration
Network of institutions and services	Anonymity, lack of social connections, and feeling lost
Educational and professional opportunities	Sometimes: segregation; migrants pushed into 'bad' districts
Recreational opportunities	Lack of safety due to high crime rates and other social problems (drugs etc.)
Diversity	

Source: Own elaboration based on the MIMY findings.

In general, young migrants seem to prefer larger urban settings than more peripheral ones, principally because of the wider opportunities they offer. First of all, they usually provide a much more developed network of public institutions and services for migrants and/or youth. In the majority of researched countries, NGOs working in this field are also located in bigger cities. Their presence does not always equate with accessibility to migrants, as in some cases both migrants and stakeholders report poor coordination between different organisations, lack of information about their activities among migrants and so on, but in many cases they nevertheless form the core of the help system for migrants.

Second, in larger cities, in which colleges and universities are located, educational opportunities are broader. The same goes for professional opportunities: the possibility of choosing among a range of jobs, changing one's occupational path and/or seeking different ways of improving one's qualification through internships or volunteering strike as very compelling for interviewees.

Another important asset of bigger cities is connected with their diversity and the presence of migrant communities. On the one hand, migrants speak about the role of the diaspora and of the support of co-ethnics already settled in a given locality, which constitute an important source of resilience (see: 4.3. Community resources...). It also made it more likely that they will be able to practise their culture of origin (religion, daily life rituals). On the other hand, they mention the role of other migrant communities and the history of migration in a locality. In more multicultural settings, it is easier to blend in and not to look different, while local populations tend to be used to the presence of foreigners and thus are less prone to prejudice and discrimination. However, this is not the rule everywhere, as in several case countries it is in big cities (e.g. Milano), where more instances of discriminatory behaviours are reported by interviewees.

> In Debrecen, no one wanted to sit next to me on the bus. People moved away from me as far as possible. This is not the case in Budapest. Maybe, I am lucky but I didn't have such an experience in Budapest.
>
> [V, Hungary, m, Ugandan, 29]

The last reason why bigger cities are the preferred type of locality by participants of the study are the recreational opportunities available there. The array of leisure, sports and cultural activities, as well as places to hang out with friends, is much broader in larger municipalities. It should be highlighted that for young adults, having access to a larger network and more activities, apart from school and work, makes them feel more integrated and more engaged (see more in the following chapter on belonging).

> I feel that I want to be here, even others who live outside Malmö, they come here, it is an inclusive city, and as long as my parents are here, I wouldn't ever think of moving away.
>
> [V, Sweden, f, Syrian, 22]

Although the above described preference for bigger urban localities is a general pattern, there are some voices of scepticism. A number of participants, particularly those who originally come from smaller localities, feel lost, disoriented and overwhelmed by the size of European metropoles. Institutions and services are dispersed and sometimes hard to find, which forces people to spend a lot of time in public transportation. In big cities it is hard to get to know all the whereabouts and to feel at ease. As a result, young migrants sometimes express a sense of comfort and belonging only in reference to their neighbourhood or district.

Migrants from older generations, and particularly parents, express concerns about safety in the city, complaining about the crime rates, drug dealing and so forth. They emphasise how they worry that this is not a good environment for their children to grow up in. The latter concern is often directed in particular towards certain neighbourhoods or districts, which have a reputation of being "bad". Unfortunately – that is the case in several studied cities – where, for economic reasons, migrants are sometimes forced to live in such neighbourhoods.

5.2.2. Factors fostering and impeding integration in the context of smaller localities

Factors fostering integration	Factors impeding integration
Peacefulness and security	Lack of services targeted at migrants/youth
Compact and manageable in size (easier to get to know the place)	Lack of educational and professional opportunities
Easier to feel a member of the community (though often at the price of assimilation)	The necessity to travel to bigger cities and spend a lot of time commuting
Easier to locate and coordinate the existing services	Often a more homogenous community

Source: Own elaboration based on the MIMY findings.

Smaller or more peripheral localities are appreciated by participants in the first place for their tranquillity and safety. Connected to that, interviewees also emphasise the role of their more manageable size and scope: it is easier to get to know the place better, to locate important points, which are often in closer proximity. As a result, it is easier to feel "at home" there. Participants from smaller localities often declare that they "have everything they need there" and appreciate that facilities are within walking distance or relatively close from where they live.

> I feel good in Pruszcz [Gdański] right from the beginning. We wanted to live in Gdańsk initially, but it was difficult to find an accommodation, so we found a place in Pruszcz and we immediately liked it. And it's just 10 minutes to Gdańsk and 3 minutes to the train station. In Pruszcz, I can do everything by foot, all the errands are within walking distance - shops, kindergarten, school. Now our child attends ballet classes and it's also close, like everything. In all honesty, I do not even travel to Gdańsk, maybe to enjoy the old town, but it's lovely and quiet in Pruszcz.
>
> [P, Poland, f, Ukrainian, 29]

In terms of social life, the evaluations of smaller and peripheral localities are somewhat more nuanced. Some migrants (also representatives of the older generation) declare that in smaller communities it is easier to form at least weak ties: to get to know the neighbours, people in local shops or services and thus to be recognized as someone from the locality (Granovetter, 1973). Stakeholders add that in smaller localities there are no segregated areas, which hinder integration in larger cities. However, there are also voices stating that in order to actually become a member of the community, one has to adjust to the social expectations and thus that the pressure to integrate, or even assimilate, is stronger in smaller localities.

> I think it's actually smaller, it's more rural, everyone knows everyone, it's a village with all the infrastructure you need. I also worked in the south and in the center, and it's a different dynamic. Here you go out and you know the people, it's different.
>
> [Luxembourg, f, Serbian, 38]

Along these lines, some young migrants complain about social control, limited opportunities to practise their cultural heritage, and less freedom in general. This corresponds with statements about the homogeneity of local populations in more peripheral areas and the impression that they are rather closed.

By far the most important limitation of these localities is lack of broadly understood opportunities. Interviewees refer here to the absence or underdevelopment of services targeted at migrants or youth, as well as the lack of educational and professional opportunities. In order to access them, young migrants have to travel to bigger cities and spend a lot of time commuting, which in turn makes it harder to build social networks in their place of residence.

> The place where I used to live is a little town, a very very little town. No one lives there. They moved me there and I wasn't happy, and I said that we can't live here because we are young and we want... we need a future.
>
> [V, Italy, m, Gambian, 24]

5.3. The sense of belonging to a locality

The opportunity structures in a given locality play a pivotal role in fostering migrants' sense of belonging. Following the framework put forward by Mulgan (2009), we discuss the areas that inform young migrants' belonging to a host society. **One of the preconditions for a sense of belonging to emerge is the sense of safety and stability in a place.** We refer here to broadly understood safety: physical, legal and economic. The role of legal status (see: 3.2.1. Problems with legalisation of stay...) is fundamental to ontological security and a key factor in homemaking and belonging (Easthope et al., 2020). Being in a legal "limbo", and not knowing if one may stay in a given locality, has a detrimental impact on the sense of belonging. The same applies to a precarious economic and housing situation. With reference to the latter, owning a house or an apartment, or having a longer

term rental contract, fosters a sense of belonging. Enjoying a sense of security in a city or neighbourhood also plays an important role, as we have seen in the previous part. Smaller, more peripheral localities provide this sense of security more often than big cities.

Another factor, whose role cannot be overestimated, are strong family ties and friendships. The existence of **social networks** in a given place, often within one's ethnic community, is **crucial for building a sense of belonging**, particularly shortly after arrival. Importantly, young migrants mention **both strong and weak ties** (Granovetter, 1973). Some declare that it is not the physical place that they are attached to, but the people who create this place. It must be mentioned here that different groups of participants declare that there are **too few opportunities for meaningful contacts between migrants and non-migrants**, which may hinder the former's belonging to a locality. Nonetheless, with time, the majority of our interviewees manage to build their networks, composed usually from members of migrant communities, family and friends (see: 4.3. Community resources...). Some participants acquire a sense of belonging faster if they are in a relationship with someone brought up in a given locality or having spent enough time there to get to know it well. Similar strong ties contributing to a sense of belonging can also be formed with friends and significant persons.

In a similar vein, a subsequent factor facilitating a sense of belonging, called by Mulgan (2009) "ties of association", refers to **different forms of participation in a community**, be it **leisure activities, sport, cultural events, voluntary organisations or churches**. This aspect emerged as pivotal in our study. Across countries young migrants name civil society organisations and clubs (mostly football) as places where they feel they belong and as safe spaces where they can "be themselves". These informal sport and leisure activities provide participants with a sense of connectedness, and thus help them to build longer lasting social bonds (see: 4.3.2. Social connections, friends...).

> Going to training and finding a coach and your teammates makes you feel less alone and plays a big role. Instead of putting myself down I always thought: I have someone, I have my coach and my teammates waiting for me, I have to go back to training and I have to build myself up through sport.
>
> [P, Italy, m, Libyan, 28]

> For me, integration, how can it advance the quickest possible? When you have something in common. Sport is the cheapest. Football is the widest known. You can bring together people from here who are interested in this and people who arrived here [immigrants]. That's why, for me, sport in general is the best, easiest, quickest and cheapest option to integrate people from other cultures, [...] and also to get to know their cultures.
>
> [Luxembourg, volunteer in a sports club]

Another means of participation in a community that fosters a sense of belonging is **volunteering and supporting other migrants**. This occurs particularly often in the narratives of migrants with positive integration experiences, who feel that engaging in local issues and supporting new arrivals is a way to **"give back" and "contribute" to the community**. Many of them focus on helping newcomers to navigate in the system by providing information regarding access to basic needs such as housing, education, healthcare, and legal advice (see: 4.3.3. Self-advocacy and migrant community participation). Others, for instance persons with their own businesses, try to employ other migrants who might otherwise have problems with finding a job. In their narratives the themes of **caring for each other**, as well as being able to transmit their knowledge and gained experiences, play a pivotal role in their sense of belonging to a community.

The third factor enumerated by Mulgan (2009) is connected to the economy. People feel like they belong to a place, where there are **professional and educational opportunities** and where they can both realise their ambitions and earn their living (see: 4.4.1. Different opportunities in the host country). The above mentioned example of persons who manage to establish their business in a new country may serve as a good illustration here. In this respect, big cities are perceived as offering greater professional and educational opportunities.

According to Mulgan (2009), the broadly understood political system of the host country is a factor shaping a sense of belonging. Indeed, some young migrants emphasise how they identify with values such as freedom, democracy, among others, that are not respected in their countries of origin. However, political participation did not emerge as crucial for the majority of our interviewees. What seems more important is the **freedom of cultural expression and the social recognition of one's history and culture** by the local population. As suggested in the previous parts, this is easier to achieve in urban, more diverse localities. For instance, many NGOs organise multicultural events aimed at getting to know various aspects of migrants' culture, e.g. music, cuisine or traditions. Although they are sometimes criticised for putting too much emphasis on folklore or exoticising migrants, they may nevertheless contribute to forming social networks in a locality.

Last but not least, the **quality of the physical environment** is very important for young migrants' sense of belonging. Beautiful architecture, historical buildings, but above all the presence of trees and **green spaces like parks or gardens,** can make people feel at home (Mulgan, 2009). They are not only areas of leisure and recreation, which improve mental health and well-being, but they may also play a vital role in migrants' sense of inclusion in the locality through facilitating encounters and communication with other members of the community. In order to perform this role, public places should be open and freely accessible.

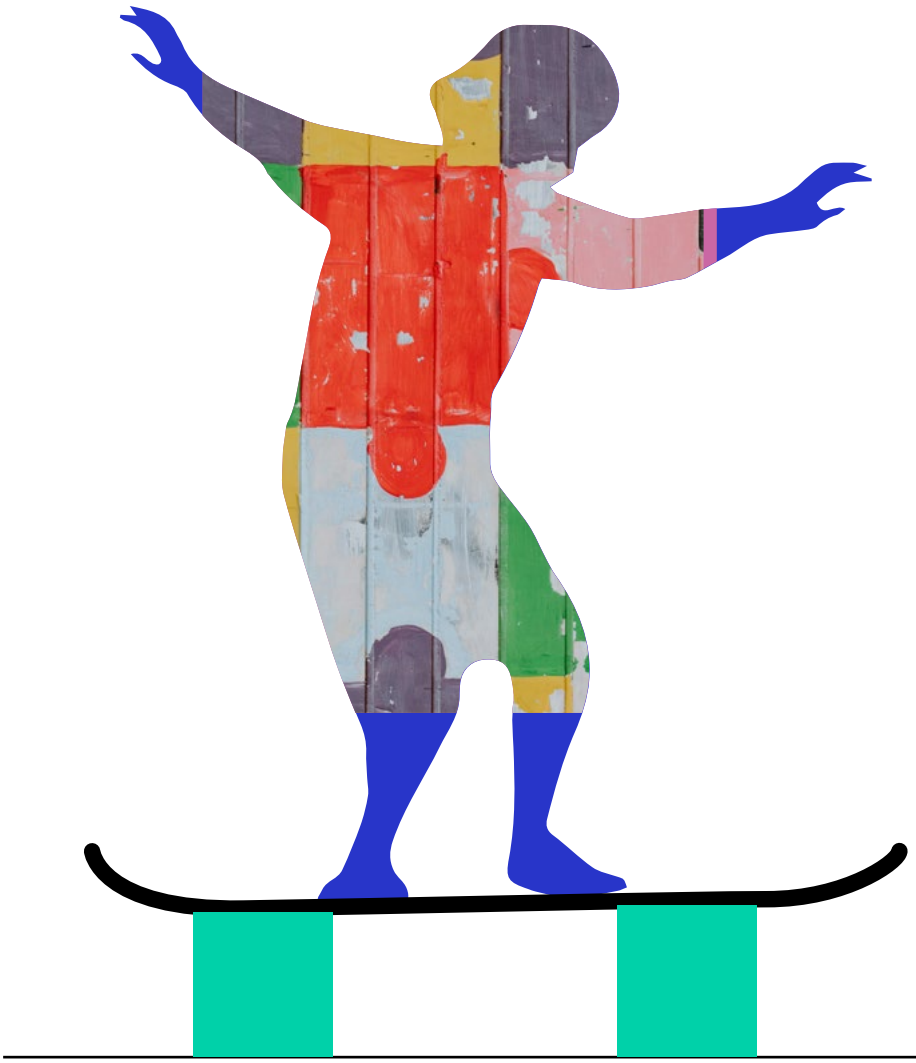
> There is a river, a little river called Radunia. And we really like hanging out with our child there or going for a picnic, in the summer, we swim there. There is also a nice park in Pruszcz [Gdański].
>
> [V, Poland, f, Ukrainian, 31]

5.4. Belonging and integration

Although "local" is a difficult concept to grasp, taking the spatial dimension into account and analysing the role of a certain locality in terms of the opportunity structures it provides contributes to understanding the process of integration in its complex and nuanced character. **Integration is always emplaced.** The place itself is obviously shaped by various historical and socio-political factors, and thus it creates a **unique constellation of opportunities and characteristics fostering and hindering integration.** These elements play out differently in larger cities and in smaller or more peripheral localities, and therefore we were not able to create a typology of localities or indicate which ones support integration the most.

Among factors that can be identified as facilitating integration in **bigger localities,** a well **developed network of institutions and services, educational, professional and recreational opportunities** are mentioned most often. In **smaller localities** on the contrary, **it is their peacefulness and security, along with their compact and manageable size** which makes it easier to get oriented, that are reported as the main assets. When we add the temporal dimension to this analysis, we can see that migration history in a given locality, which is often connected with diversity, the presence of migrant communities and a denser network of services targeted at migrants, is perceived as factor fostering both a sense of belonging and integration. When we consider the life-course perspective and **the role of educational, professional and recreational opportunities for young adults,** it comes as no surprise that the majority of participants prefer bigger localities.

Last but not least it must be emphasised that, in all the localities, people highlight the **role of social networks** in their diverse forms. On the one hand, this refers to strong ties, often within one's family or ethnic community, and on the other – weaker ties: encounters and everyday interactions with local people. Many interviewees highlight the opportunity to **become an active member of the community** by volunteering, playing in a local sports team or participating in cultural activities as the key to their sense of belonging.



6. Integration

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter we present the critical analysis of the integration concept based on the results of MIMY project. We explore: how integration is understood by various social actors; how it is implemented through social practices; and how it is entangled in power relations that empower the voices of some groups and exclude others. Knowledge about perceptions of this concept as well as its implementation is crucial to understanding the migration trajectories of young people as well as the intercultural relations between them and non-migrants, as well as with migrant communities. To address these aims, we first provide a brief overview of the current discussion about the term integration and an outline of integration policies in the EU, as well as discussing critical and alternative approaches towards this concept. Then, we explore who has the power to produce and reinforce discourse about integration, and who is excluded from that narrative process. After drafting the discursive landscape of the term integration, we provide an overview of its understanding among research participants – young migrants, stakeholders and non-migrant youth. Afterwards, we explain which macro, meso and micro factors have an impact on integration, and how they facilitate or hinder the integration process. We conclude this chapter by drawing attention to the responsibilisation of migrants for integration by placing it in the context of the neoliberalisation of migration.

In contrast to understanding integration as a process by which migrants adjust to the social-cultural and economic contexts of receiving countries, and inspired by the concept of "liquid integration" (see: Skrobanek, 2020) MIMY aims to go beyond the two-way-process of integration to show its complex and multifaceted nature and the shifting interdependencies at the macro-, meso- and micro-levels (Skrobanek, 2020; Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019). We postulate that integration must be conceptualised as a dynamic, never-ending and open process of change and accommodation during the course of a lifetime (Urry, 2000; Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019) that includes exchange and interactions between migrants and non-migrants.

6.1.1. Current discussion about integration

For centuries, the predominant terms relating to migration in sociological, social-psychological and psychological theory and research have offered a one-sided concept of the functioning of migrants in the host society, namely acculturation and assimilation. Acculturation refers to the psychological and cultural changes that happen when different cultural groups come into direct contact. Change might occur both in the group of migrants as well as in the receiving culture, although it is generally assumed to be stronger in the non-dominant group (Berry, 2017; Landry & Bourhis, 2016). The term assimilation was introduced by the Chicago school in its research on racial relations in America, and meant the full acceptance and adoption of the values and culture of the dominant group (Park, 1928). It is always a one-way process, within which migrants aim to become a part of the majority community. For many years, assimilation was acknowledged as the desired outcome of migrants' presence in the host society.

Over time, the concept of acculturation has been replaced by the concept of integration, that is, a bi-dimensional, two-way process, whereby migrants and established population negotiate their own norms, rules, beliefs, values, and practices, adjust them in the course of interaction and exchange with each

other, and reach a new common understanding (Berry, 1980). This process of mutual adjustment does not necessarily mean that either immigrants or the established community have to reject the beliefs, values, and practices of their native culture. These integrational perspectives have been highly influential, but have also come under critical scrutiny (see e.g. Rudmin, 2003).

Although many authors acknowledge the two-way notion of integration, the classical, structural understanding of integration developed by Ager and Strang (2008) is often used in the analytical framework and practical implementation of integration measures. They introduce four hierarchical, interrelated categories and ten dimensions of integration. They enumerate rights and citizenship as the "foundation" for integration, then language and cultural knowledge, and safety and stability as "facilitators" of integration. Subsequently, they identify 'social connections', including bridging and bonding social capital as well as social links, that can be understood as contacts with institutions. Finally, in the category of "markers and means" they list employment, housing, education and health.

In the MIMY project, these dimensions are recognised, but we go beyond them. To capture the complexities, dynamics, relational and temporal aspects of integration processes we use a multi-level, socio-ecological, macro-meso-micro perspective which incorporates societal, institutional, family and individual factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Coleman, 1990; Skrobanek & Karl, 2016), and where dynamics between the different layers, as well as developmental processes, are taken into account (Titzmann & Lee, 2018).

6.1.2. Critical approach towards integration

In writing about migrants' integration, we acknowledge the critique of this concept in social sciences (Grzymała-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018; Spencer & Charsley, 2021; Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019) which focuses on several main points. Firstly, the term integration lacks a shared and precise definition, and therefore is hard to distinguish from similar concepts, such as adjustment, adaptation or acculturation (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019). Additionally, it is often politicised and used in a normative way implying "the desired end goal" (Spencer & Charsley, 2021, p. 5) and not the description of the actual process. Some authors indicate that the term integration is a social construct imposed by Europeans on migrants (Schinkel, 2018). Thus, it reproduces colonial power relations by providing the scope in which non-Europeans are allowed to function. For instance, in recent years, deservingness (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014; Pietrusińska, 2022) and restrictions to the intake of refugees (Jakulevičienė, 2017) started to dominate the discourse on migration as well as integration policies drafting the quotas of "welcome" and "unwelcome" migrants (Blachnicka-Ciacek et al., 2021; Kotzur et al., 2018). This politicised concept is also entangled with the process of individualising migration, meaning that "integration ceases to be the property of the social whole, and becomes individualised by turning into the property of individual people. (...) Integration' thus changes from a system state to the state of being of an individual. Lack of immigrant integration turns out to have to do with the being of immigrants" (Kotzur et al. 2018, p. 3). Such individualisation goes hand in hand with the neoliberalisation of integration, which makes migrants mainly responsible for their integration process and limits the influence of structural and communal factors.

Moreover, authors indicate that the notion is based on the "outdated imaginary of society" (Spencer & Charsley, 2021, p. 6), and that it does not allow us to grasp the processes of migrants' functioning in "in the context of increasingly super-diverse, complex, changing, fragmented and transnationally linked communities where the social cohesion as well as internal integration of societies is perhaps now more questionable than ever" (Grzymała-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018, p. 3). As a result of this critique, some authors suggest discarding this term and replacing it with notions of inclusion, anchoring (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2018) or embedding (Ryan, 2018). Others are inclined towards addressing the above limitations and reframing the troublesome concept (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019; Spencer & Charsley, 2021).

6.1.3. Integration policies

Integration is implemented by international, national and local policies as well as certain integration programs. The European Commission sets out in its Handbook on Integration the common basic principles for immigrant integration policy in the EU. The first principle underlines that "integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States" (COM, 2009, p. 160). However, some national and local integration policies still aim to assimilate migrants within the host society (Phillimore, 2012; Joppke, 2007). In this second approach, integration is equated to either adaptation, acculturation or assimilation, thus a one-way form of migrant interaction with the host society.

In MIMY research countries, integration policies are created on different levels and implemented by different social actors - international organisations such as EU, UNHCR, IOM, national/ governmental institutions, municipalities and local institutions, NGOs, faith communities and local communities. Based on different approaches towards the governance of integration, policies may be either targeted or mainstream. In the first type of measure, a specific group of migrants that need assistance are identified (e.g asylum seekers, Afghans, Syrian, migrant women who experienced abuse, migrants with disability) and certain measures that target their specific need are implemented. In the mainstreaming approach, policies are intended to overcome the limitations of targeted policies by being directed at the whole of society rather than at specific groups (Scholten et al., 2017). In the latter approach, terms such as inclusion or social cohesion play an important role.

6.2. Discourse around integration in the context of power relations

6.2.1. Definitions of discourse and integration

Words are not only used to describe reality, they also create it. This is why it is so important to deconstruct the symbolic world of meanings (discourse) that influences the social reality around us. In this part of the report we want to look at the discourse on integration. We do not intend to analyse in detail the discourse on integration in each country. It is more important for us to understand how the discourse is created by different social actors – international institutions, politicians, media, practitioners, migrants and non-migrants inhabitants – and identify who has the power to define the term integration and whose voices are absent.

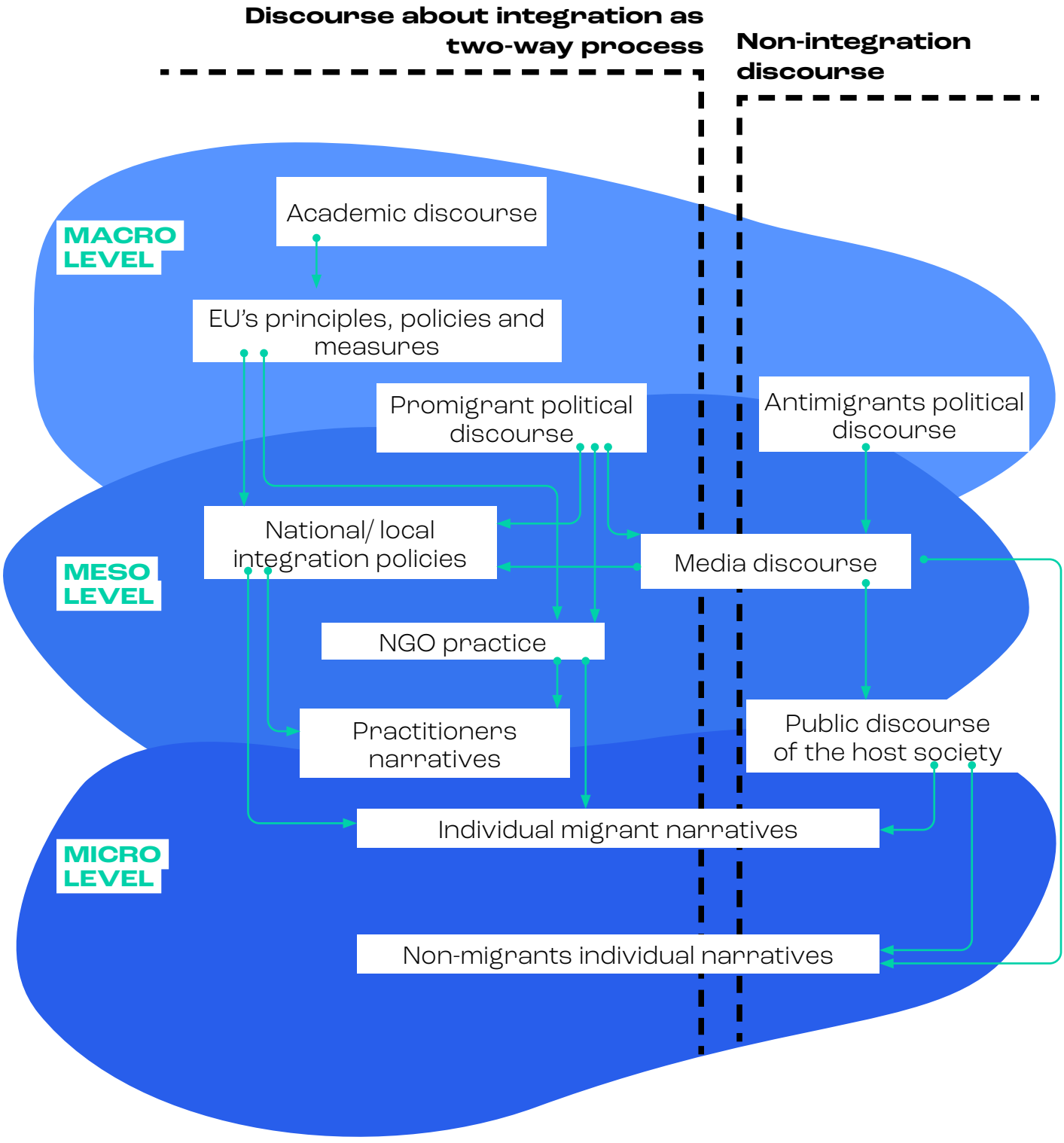
In our analysis, we follow Michael Foucault's understanding of discourse as "a collection of statements belonging to a single discursive formation"[5*] (Foucault, 1977, p. 150). Similarly to Foucault, we assume that: "Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of 'the truth' but has the power to make itself true. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has effects, and in that sense at least, 'becomes true'. Knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practice. Thus, there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations" (Foucault, 1977, p. 27). In foucauldian philosophy, it is the discourse that serves to maintain power-knowledge, and thus social order. The way in which different social actors – especially those with access to a wider audience – construct narratives about the world has a real impact on the reality around us by influencing the cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects of individuals' functioning. Social practices have a source in the discourse, and are also described and explained by the narratives of those who have the power. Thus, in this part of the report, we first provide a brief overview of two discursive formations about integration, and then explain which social actors and narratives are empowered to talk about integration as well as who is r excluded from this empowerment.

The term **integration is socially constructed on macro, meso and micro levels.** In the researched countries there are **two discourses** about integration. In the first discourse, integration is defined as a "two way process". This "two way process" can mean that: 1) the state offers support, training and job opportunities to foreigners, but also requires efforts in return by highlighting migrants' duties, or 2) it is a "process of mutual adaptation of immigrants and the host society" (Emilsson et al., 2021, p. 27), with the aim of living together and social cohesion. Although these definitions of integration as two way processes are slightly different, both emphasise the **mutuality of interactions between migrants and the host society,** understood in a more institutionalised or commune sense. In the commune sense, it is not only migrants' responsibilities to adapt, but the receiving environment also needs to be open and receptive.

In the second type of discourse, integration does not appear in the public narratives at all, or the narratives are mainly **anti-integration and anti-migrant**, thus we refer to it as "non-integration discourse". In the latter approach, the assimilation of migrants rather than their integration is the desired aim of their adaptation process. It is the migrants who have to make an effort to adapt to the norms of the host society. This shifts the responsibility for maintaining social cohesion to newcomers.

* Discursive formations are "rules of discourse, i.e. the conditions for the occurrence of objects, modes of expression, concepts or thematic thematic choices in their interrelatedness" (Czachur, 2020, p. 117, own translation).

discourse about integration in the context of power relation



Source: Own elaboration based on the MIMY findings.

6.2.2. Discourse about integration on the macro level

Interestingly, in many countries, these **two discourses** concerning integration **coexist,** supported by different social actors. On the macro level, the integration as a two way process is **reinforced by EU policies, recommendations and the European framework** of many funding programs (e.g. EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund), as well as narratives created by international organisations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) or United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Although, in the EU's common basic principles regarding integration (see: Council of the European Union, 2010; Carrera & Atger, 2011) it is often emphasised that integration is the common responsibility of migrants and members of the host societies, in practice, Funds that supports migrants' integration in the EU use measures that rate the efficiency of integration only on the migrants' side. The language that is used in such programs is often technical, describing indicators that have to be fulfilled by "program beneficiaries", meaning migrants. Most of the time they measure integration in such areas as: employment, education, housing, healthcare, cultural competence and language, and sociocultural participation (Emilsson et al., 2021). Narratives that are based on the indicators reinforce the **boundary between "people who integrate" and "people who do not integrate"**. This causes a symbolic shift in the understanding of integration towards "one-wayness" and a shift in responsibility for integration mainly to migrants. It becomes a matter of individual responsibility. Therefore, in this discourse, there are inconsistencies between the proclaimed values and their implementation.

Another discourse that supports "two-way" integration is the **academic** one. In this discourse, there are many concepts of integration, such as integration and multiculturalism (Berry, 2011), liquid integration (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019), or concepts alternative to integration like embedding (Ryan & Mulholland, 2015) and social anchoring (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2018). Recent scientific publications emphasise that integration cannot take place without the active participation of the host society. From the wide and varied academic discourse on integration, international organisations and institutions select and mainstream understandings of integration that support their political agenda and fit with the values they promote. Narratives of researchers and scholars are used to **lend credibility to the discourse produced by international organisations.** Discourse created by politicians on the national level plays an important role in reproducing narratives about integration as a "two-way process" or creating a "non-integration" message. Notably, there is **not always a correlation between political discourse** in a certain country and **integration policies**. In some countries, political discourse and integration policy are consistent, in others they are contradictory. For instance, in countries like Poland and Hungary, non-integrational regimes follow the anti-integration discourse. On the contrary, in Swedish political debates, the main narratives focus around the failure of the idea of integration, while policies support equal rights and opportunities as well as social cohesion. Political discourse in favour of integration is strongly visible in Luxembourg and Germany - countries that also implement measures to support integration as a "two-way process".

Whether there is a pro-integration or non-integration discourse in a country, narratives about integration are part of the political struggle for power. In such political struggles immigration, migrants and integration are often instrumentalized, simplified and involved in power gaining processes such as electoral campaigns. Right-wing populist parties, in particular, use issues

related to immigration as a tool of fear-based management (Davis & Deole, 2017). Moreover, nationwide authorities such as, inter-ministerial committees, ministries of the interior, Asylum Seeker Commissions, governmental institutions, think tanks, and some e NGOs that work closely with governments, play an active part in the creation of the (non)integration regimes.

6.2.3. Discourse about integration on the meso level

As we mentioned above, sometimes political discourse and instrumentalization of integration do not follow **policy** measures. This variation at the level of integration policies is due, among other things, to the overlap of different narratives on integration created by different social actors. Analysis of national policies (Emilsson et al., 2021) reveals that integration understood as a "two-way process" is present in German, Luxembourgish, Swedish and English political discourse. In other other countries, there is sometimes no clear policy (Italy and Romania), or anti-integration discourse is present – in Poland as the basis for an assimilationist approach*, and in Hungary as a hostile environment for any kind of migrants' integration.

Integration policies are created by national or **local authorities**. However, due to EU funding they often **reproduce the EU jargon** that appears in funding programs. Moreover, due to the developed autonomy of local authorities, federalisation or lack of a coherent national integration policy, local authorities in a country understand integration differently, and thus implement different measures. As a result, local integration **policies and services can vary greatl**y – both in terms of quantity and quality.

On the meso level, discourse of integration is also created by **NGOs** which **implement certain programs or measures.** As we mentioned above, they use an "indicator-centred" definition of integration that is derived from a one-way understanding of integration. The way they operationalise integration is closely linked to the guidelines from their donors. Depending on whether it is EU funding, or funding from other international, governmental or local organisations, NGOs, foundations and associations end up contributing the most to the construction of sometimes different (even divergent) conceptions and operationalizations of integration. As a consequence, NGOs and practitioners who are closest to migrants and have the competence to recognise their needs, reproduce a top-down discourse instead of creating a bottom-up narrative that is closest to the migrant perspective on integration.

> In North Rhine-Westphalia, there is a dual strategy. On the one hand, there is talk about integration, "we are the greatest, we're pouring lots of money into integration". But only for those who are here in the municipality, everyone else is kept outside.
>
> [Germany, advisor for unaccompanied minors in an NGO]

* Although the general integration notion in Poland created by the Polish government leans towards assimilation, there are important exceptions – metropolises – which create a more integrationist approach towards migrant inclusion. As in Poland there is no national integration policy, these cities play an important role as trendsetters. Nevertheless, if we take an overall look at Polish integration policy implemented by government institutions, it is more assimilationist in its approach.

Another actor that plays an important role in the reproduction of (non)integration discourse is the **media**. No matter whether they create narratives that support integration, or those that are against this concept, the vast majority of media provide a simplistic and limited understanding of the term integration. Whether they portray integration as a process of building social capital, an individual's responsibility or a burden on the state, media messages are **stereotypical** and do **not allow for a nuanced understanding of the integration** process. Moreover, they do not allow for the individual voices of migrants themselves and their perceptions of integration to be heard.

Media have a direct influence on **public opinion**. Interestingly, in almost all research countries - no matter if policy discourse and NGO narratives support integration as a "two-way process" or reproduce a non-integration regime – host societies present a more **assimilationist approach** towards integration. According to this approach, migrants bear the main responsibility for the integration process (e.g. they should acquire language skills, find a job, find a house, get acquainted with the culture of the host country, establish a social network). Members of the host society are exempt from responsibility for building mutual acceptance and understanding. The migrants are the ones who should adapt and transform to fit into the new culture and society.

6.2.4. Discourse about integration on the micro level

The micro level – thus particular non-migrant and migrant members of society – is rather the receiver than the constructor of a discourse about integration. Notably, the bottom-up reproduction of the integration concept is almost non-existent. How migrants themselves perceive integration, what it means to them, is hardly relevant. Their lived experience is not taken into account. Often, if migrants' perspectives (especially of those in vulnerable conditions) do not fit into institutionally defined integration patterns or do not conform with contextual constraints, they are dismissed or seen as unrealistic. **Migrant's voices are absent** in the public debate as they do not have enough social and cultural capital to be able to share their perceptions on what "integration" is or should look like. Instead, power structures like the EU framework, policies and institutions oblige them to meet certain requirements to become "integrated".

> "Many people up there [politicians] decide over the heads of those sitting down there [immigrants].. .they talk about numbers.. .but not about people, about this or that individual sitting there. ...That is very sad.
>
> [Germany, head of an NGO]

In a few research countries, some migrants who are policy-makers are also actively creating discourse about integration. This is only possible due to the fact that they have been able to gain discursive power by becoming local politicians. This is the only way in which the migrants' perspective on integration can enter the discourse and be recognised.

It is worth noting that non-migrant members of the community are also not creators of the "integration" discourse. They are excluded from the debate about "integration" as even in "two way" narratives, in practice, integration is seen as migrants' individual responsibility thus, non-migrants shouldn't be bothered about it. The **voice of individual practitioners is not taken into account**. Following an "indicator-centric" approach, some practitioners claim that a migrant should be integrated on various or all levels indicated in local, national or EU's policies. Many integrationaly funded projects need to fulfil certain measures, and due to their external funding, practitioners are not able to implement other approaches to integration (or use other narratives), as they have to follow top-down principles - even if they are aware that certain changes would be more beneficial in terms of better cooperation between migrants and the host society. The interviews show that stakeholders are aware that blindly following indicators is not the best solution. They would like to be able to have a more nuanced way of working, tailored to the needs of specific migrants. Unfortunately, they are limited by a rather rigid institutional or grant framework. Although we also know from the interviews with stakeholders that some practitioners (meaning policy users) consider the integration concept as overused and practically meaningless, due to the difficulty in finding useful criteria to operationalize and measure it, their perspectives are not taken into account.

6.2.5. Integration as an oppressive social construct

An analysis of the creation of narratives around integration at different levels, and by different social actors, leads us to the thesis that **integration is a social construct** created through the discourse of power. Although the values dimension often promotes an approach to integration as a "two-way process", based on dialogue and mutual acceptance, in which both migrants and the receiving society are equally responsible for the outcome, the concrete practices are marked by hegemonic and more one-way than two-way exchange relations. This one-way process produces outcomes that distinguish "integrated and non-integrated migrants". Therefore, the concept of integration imposes on migrants external ideas on how to build their life. Such narratives might often be seen as **oppressive**, but also **disempowering and recolonising.**

> "This is why I think the representation of the "perfect immigrant" can be harmful: it can be used as a weapon to criticise other migrants that may not have had the beneficial opportunities that the "perfect immigrant" may have had. In other words, celebrating the stories of the "perfect immigrant" maybe just be a deflection technique used to justify the lack of support given by the host country's institution to immigrants overall. Yes, we should not ignore and underestimate personal responsibility in our lives but we need to understand that meritocracy can be seen as a fallacy orchestrated by institutions to deflect their neglect.
>
> [MIMY blog, Grace, peer-researcher in Luxemburg]

There are, therefore, discrepancies between the discursive understanding of integration in the context of a "two way mutual responsibility" and implementation of these values. As we intend to prove, indicators and measures used in practice by practitioners are more focused on migrants' integration (meaning their adaptation and acculturation) rather than on building social coercion that requires responsibility from all members of the community. As a result, in the discourse, a **neoliberalization of migration and integration** is present. By neoliberalization of integration we understand that integration becomes a matter of migrants' individual responsibility (Van Houdt et al., 2011). Because the idea of an "integrated migrant" is defined top-down, the discourse around integration becomes a tool for **symbolic violence** used by the host society against migrants. Since practitioners who are closest to the needs of migrants reproduce the narratives of international, national or local donors on whom they are financially dependent, the migrant perspective has no means of entering the discourse.

6.3. Understanding of integration among research participants

As we have shown, the term integration is a social construct entangled in power relations. Narratives about the term, in turn, translate into how integration is defined by different social actors, including the groups we studied. In the MIMY project, we are interested in how young migrants, non-migrant youth and stakeholders talk about and understand integration. These definitions not only make us aware of the perspectives of different research groups on integration, but help to understand what factors might create one or another approach towards integration. Moreover, by comparing different perspectives, it is possible to catch discrepancies in the expectations of different social actors regarding the outcomes of integration. In turn, these discrepancies can contribute to social tensions and lack of understanding between different social groups. It is therefore important not only to describe how the different research groups participating in MIMY see integration, but also to compare these perspectives. The following table synthesises the perspectives of the various groups studied, and the following subsections provide a detailed discussion.

Figure 6.2.Understanding of the term integration among different research groups
Source: Own elaboration based on the MIMY findings.

6.3.1. Young migrants' understanding of integration

Analysing how the term integration is understood among young migrants, we notice some **differences in its understanding** between migrants in vulnerable situations and young migrants with positive integration experience. Members of the former group identify integration primarily with **assimilation**. They associate it with the acquisition of new competences (e.g. learning the language), adapting to the norms of the host society, and integrating into the labour market. This perspective is very practical, operationalized (ending in certain outcomes) and action-oriented. Some people speak of integration as something that **ensures survival on the basic level** in a new living situation. For instance, for some forced migrants' integration involves the legalisation of status, finding a job, and a place to live, thus ensuring basic survival conditions. Integration understood in this way is therefore a very important goal for these people. Nevertheless, some

migrants in vulnerable situations, who also present a more assimilationist perspective, "show a concept of integration more marked by **notions of well-being**, rather than survival. Overall, they seem to think of being integrated as feeling at home, delving into the cultural and historical aspects of the host country, and feeling good" (Regalia et al., 2022, p. 79). Nevertheless, whether integration is seen as a matter of survival or more as the maintenance of well-being, overall it seems to be an endeavour that falls tendentially on migrants themselves and is more **individual in nature**, linked with the personal goals associated with their migration trajectory.

Integration is seen as the **individual responsibility of migrants**, who have to adapt to certain conditions imposed by society, which may result in some people being unable to fulfil these conditions and remaining **"unintegrated" or "not sufficiently integrated"**. Since, in this perspective, it is the host society that judges the end result of integration, some migrants will never be able to feel at home, because they will not meet the conditions set by the society in which they live. This may lead to the exclusion of some migrants who, failing to meet the criteria, will not want to expose themselves to discrimination.

> I think that anyway for the rest of my life, I will always remain a foreigner, a stranger, if I didn't try, what I wouldn't do, if I didn't know Polish, even if there was no accent, I won't feel integrated anyway. So far I don't understand their mentality, their way of thinking, why they do this. I don't understand their jokes. I've watched their cabarets, but I don't understand them.

[V, Poland, f, Ukrainan, 26]

Young migrants with **positive integration experiences** conceptualise integration as a **bidirectional process** and as an **individual and social responsibility**. They are convinced that both migrants and non-migrant members of society need to make some effort to live together. For this group, integration is linked closely with cultivation of relationships and networks with non-migrants and migrants. They also claim that integration is possible when everybody has equal access to rights and opportunities, thus enabling them to participate in social, cultural and economic activities on the same basis.

> They [local population] can also integrate with the migrants; they can also learn something from migrants. So they can build a new Germany together. They can work together; so get to know different language; and yes there are; so many migrants here are young men and young women they can build beautiful Germany together.

[V, Germany, f, Syrian Kurd, 29]

This group of research participants is **more critical towards the concept of integration** than migrants in vulnerable situations. They are aware that in public discourse integration is presented as a two way process, but when it comes to **practice, migrants are expected to adapt to the rules imposed**, not jointly negotiated, by the host society. Thus, some of them perceive integration as an oppressive concept (see: Schinkel, 2018). They also criticise society's

expectations of migrants to adapt and claim acceptance for themselves as full members of society, without society adapting to migrants' needs as well.

> Integration... I'll tell you it's a word that is, as it is understood... I've never seen it so positively, I mean what in the end does integration mean: adapting to other cultures? It seems to me a bad stretch, in the end it should be in a relationship when you are in a society, you should accept each other, i.e. take the positive or negative sides of everything. Not me as the majority forcing the minority to accept my culture. That is what integration actually means underneath, that is, it means the minority that comes from outside must adapt to our culture.
>
> [P, Italy, M, Senegalese, 23]

6.3.2. Integration in the stakeholders perspective

In comparison to the young migrants' perspective on integration, most of the stakeholders reject assimilationist ideas and talkabout a **"two-way process".** in a number of contexts (Germany, England (UK), Poland, Sweden). However, due to diverse perspectives and ideologies within different service provision, in some contexts (Sweden, Luxembourg, Hungary) a number of stakeholders reinforce a **"one-way"** approach towards integration. Meanwhile, other stakeholders offer alternative concepts to integration such as: equality, rights and public participation; acceptance of diversity; openness; social inclusion, migrants' independence and autonomy; or belonging.

In the Norwegian context, integration understood as structurally-oriented processes also appears in interviews with stakeholders.

When asked about the definition of integration, most of the stakeholders refer to it as a two way process. However, when describing what they are doing **in practice** in the area of integration, their activities are exclusively related to **integration understood as a one-way process**. They indicate that migrants should learn the language, legalise their stay, find a job or enter the education system, and find a house. In practice, integration rarely involves any kind of responsibility on the part of non-migrants. Only some stakeholders mention that they work with local communities and non-migrant inhabitants to change their attitudes towards migrants or encourage non-migrants to get actively engaged in the process of inclusion. When we compare the stakeholders' understanding of integration with its practical implementation, we can see that at the level of stakeholders' values integration is related to mutuality, but on the level of actual actions it **is very difficult to transfer these values into practice**.

> What is understood by integration generally, it's rather the logic of assimilation, which is in the laws and which is a little bit the practice. So become a little bit like a Luxembourgish, and you will be integrated. It is a little bit the logic of the system.

[Luxembourg, spokesperson of a large national NGO]

Moreover, although integration as a "two-way process" often appears in stakeholders narratives on being asked to define integration, when they talk about their daily experiences of supporting migrants' integration, they often **criticise the concept of integration**. "Many feel discomfort with the term (Sweden, England (UK)) which they relate to assimilationist expectations (Germany, England (UK), Poland, Sweden), the responsibilisation of migrant communities (Sweden, Luxembourg), ethnicisation (Sweden), and the irrelevance of the concept in contexts where non-integration is the dominant policy and discourse (Hungary)" (Shahrokh et al., 2021b). Tension also arises from **integration being constructed as an individual responsibility** in some contexts. Some stakeholders are aware that there are disparities between the "mutual understanding and responsibility" approach towards integration and the things they are doing in practice due to the donor requirements.

6.3.3. Non-migrant youth's understanding of integration

"Migrants' >>adaptation<< as the main pathway for integration is a recurrent theme in the non-migrant youth's in vulnerable situation conceptualization of integration. This includes first and foremost to learn the language, know and follow >>the rules<<, actively get into contact with the local society and adapt to values and culture" (Biaback Anong et al., 2022, p. 24). Non-migrant youth believes that the **responsibility for integration lies with the migrants**, and that it is up to them to do their best to adapt and build bonds within the new society. Migrants should therefore learn the language, adapt to cultural norms, find work and behave in such a way that they do not become a burden on society. Young non-migrants, therefore, present a one-way approach to integration, in which it is a goal to be achieved by migrants themselves in terms of cultural adaptation and economic integration into the labour market. It is their responsibility to integrate and survive.

> Maybe these people need some kind of clash [with reality], that things will not look like the way you want it, but the way they are and you need to adjust. Because it is not the world that changes for you, but you change for the world.

[Poland, m, Polish, 20]

Although many young non-migrants have heard about the concept of integration as a two-way process, in their narratives on integration, **society is supposed to not hinder migrants in their adaptation efforts rather than actively support them.** In such narratives, the role of public institutions and NGOs remains limited to giving the opportunity to integrate. Interestingly, the role ascribed to non-migrants within the integration process is welcoming migrants and being open towards them. In this approach, the host society allows migrants to adapt and

create a new life rather than actively engaging in a two-way process of building bridging social capital.

> (...) Society also allows the individual to do so. It is a street in two directions.

[Sweden, f, Swedish, 23]

There are some young people – mostly second generation migrants - who think of integration in terms of rights and discrimination. They point out that **integration entails equal access to participation** in social, cultural and economic life regardless of the country of origin. This requires non-migrants to share their resources and actively engage in building bridging capital. Moreover, this approach requires non-migrants to make some concessions, to allow migrants to co-decide on many issues.

6.3.4. The understanding of integration among various research groups

As we have shown above, different research groups understand and describe the concept of integration in distinct ways. Although all the groups interviewed are familiar with the concept of **integration as a two way process** requiring the involvement of migrants and the host society, in practice only some migrants with positive integration experiences propose this understanding of the term. Most often, integration is understood as assimilation or adaptation, that is the adaptation of migrants to new social and cultural conditions. This approach towards integration is present among stakeholders, young non-migrants and young migrants in vulnerable situations. Integration, understood as adaptation/ assimilation by migrants in vulnerable situations, is a reflection of the public discourse on integration, which is also revealed in how non-migrant youth understand this process.

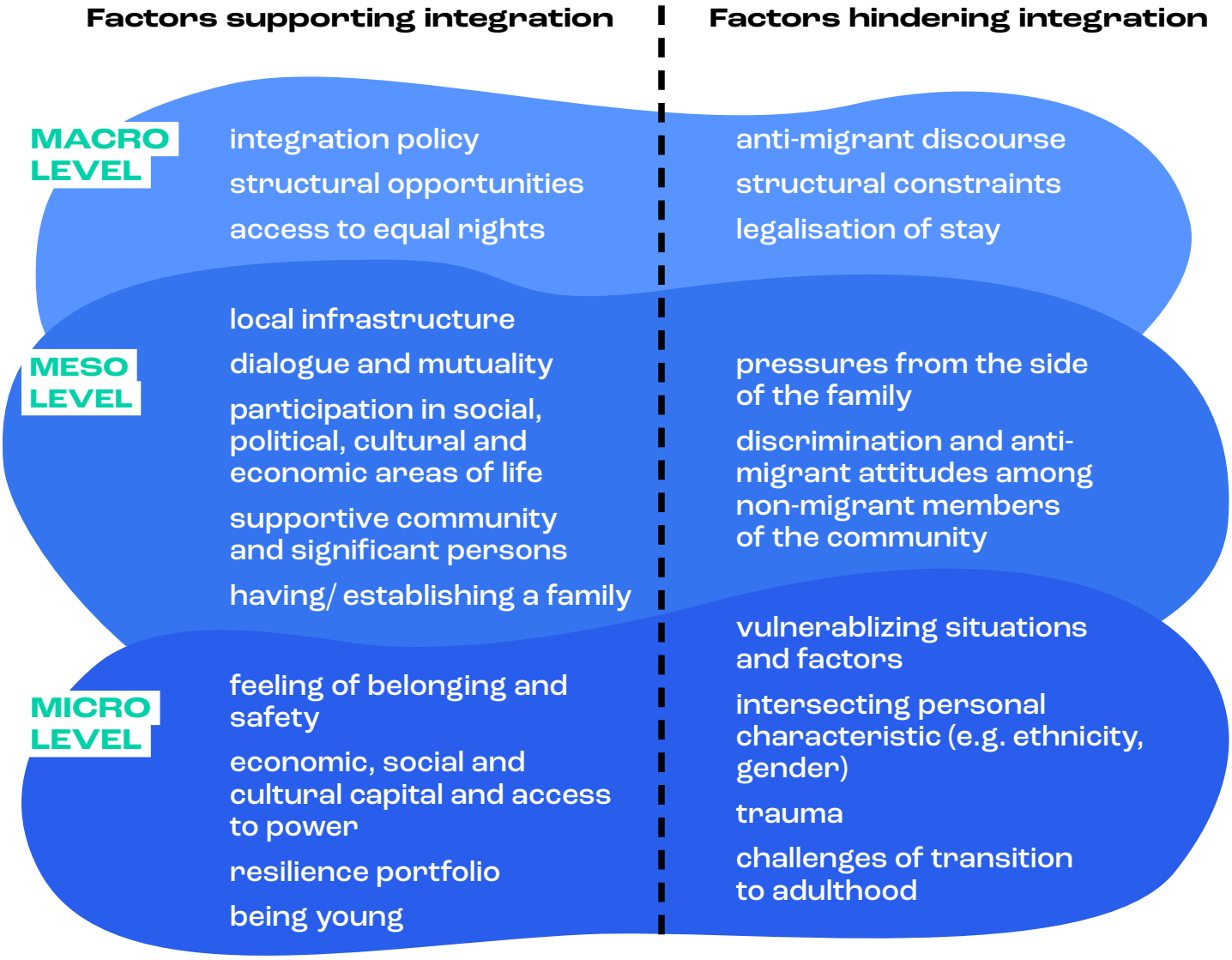
There is a visible difference in the understanding of interaction between young migrants in vulnerable situations and those with positive integration experiences. The first group considers integration as a matter of existing in the new society, while the latter group claims that it should be a process of living together. We argue that these differences stem from varying **levels of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital.** These multiple forms of capital enable the migrants with positive integration experiences to take a more critical stance towards "integration" and resist some assimilationist tendencies. Possessing a certain amount of power allows them to actively negotiate their integration process. Moreover, migrants with positive integration experiences have a narrative of success. They are able to overcome barriers, thus by reflecting on their own methods they are able to conclude that not having access to the social arenas or social community often leads to feelings of insecurity, discrimination or exclusion.

Integration, understood as the individual responsibility of migrants, is present in the interviews with young migrants in vulnerable situations and stakeholders. These interviews reveal that, although on the level of values, stakeholders' understanding of integration as a two-way process resembles the understanding of integration among migrants with positive integration experiences, in practice,

stakeholders require only migrants to integrate. This dichotomy between the values dimension and practical dimension regarding integration may cause especially migrants with positive integration experiences to be distrustful of stakeholders, as their **values are not followed in the practice.**

6.4. Factors that support and hinder integration

Based on the data collected from all participants, we have created an overview of the factors that support and hinder the integration process. In the table below factors are divided into macro, meso and micro levels. The table combines the results explained in detail in chapters 3, 4 and 5. Where necessary we have added some additional factors that appear within the MIMY project. Although most of the discussed factors support or hinder the integration of migrants in general, the table provides an overview of the factors important specifically in young migrants' integration, taking into account that this group is in a certain phase of their life.



Source: Own elaboration based on the MIMY findings.

6.4.1. Factors which support integration

Structural opportunities are crucial in establishing one's life in a new country: Access to the labour market, education, housing, social services, and healthcare provide a basic sense of security and enable migrants to live a dignified life. Participation in these areas of life also provides a space for interactions with non-migrants. Access to equal rights further fosters integration processes. Legal provisions not only ensure equal rights, but also make it possible to act if these rights are violated, an important factor in enabling migrants to participate in various areas of society

Another important factor on the macro level is integration policy. Analysis of integration policies in each country reveals that **young migrants in vulnerable situations are not targeted by integration policies** (Emilsson et al., 2021). However, even in countries like Hungary or Poland, where there are no national integration policies for any migrant group, the EU framework and measures are used to some extent and EU funded international programs are implemented to support migrants' adaptation.

On the meso level, there are various factors that enable integration. In terms of adaptation, **assistance from various types of public institutions and NGOs is important**. The amount, quality and availability of local infrastructure that support the integration process is crucial. For instance, even if integration policies are developed in a country, in certain locations (e.g. smaller towns) access to institutions such as job centres, mental health centres or language schools might be limited.

> There were NGOs, I was in touch with them. [Organisation] social workers helped with any problem I had, such as opening a bank account and making insurance. They would come with me, translate, and help. They came helping to find a flat... not just one of them. All of them were so nice and helpful. But others helped too, in legal matters, with mental health issues they all.

[V, Hungary, m, Iranian, 36]

A further facilitator of integration is the **existence and quality of the dialogue between migrants and non-migrant communities.** Openness to fruitful dialogue can preclude the emergence of radical social and political attitudes on migrants and their integration. In this respect, the role and expectations of the local population can play a decisive role. The development of mutual knowledge can have a powerful impact on deconstructing stereotypes and related prejudices, as well as on transforming local expectations regarding migrant integration.

> I don't like integration as a word, can I say? I like interaction therefore removing that G5 because I believe that it is important in this process of interaction that the two parties, the two subjects that meet, are both active, therefore both take action towards each other, to get to know each other, to interact, to dialogue, simply to respect one and the other. Because for me interaction is also inclusiveness.

[P, Italy, "-", f, na]

The possibility to fully participate in different areas of life not only provides access to resources, but also strengthens migrants' sense of belonging and agency. For instance, by volunteering, they can feel useful and help others. Moreover, participation creates a space for interaction not only with other migrants, but also with non-migrant members of the community. Such interaction helps to establish bonding social capital with one's own migrant group and bridging social capital with other migrants and non-migrants. The friendships that may emerge from such interactions further support integration.

> In general, I would say that you are well integrated when you are in a way … maybe a participant in something, whether it is the labour market, volunteering, school - something that can help society and oneself of course", while MYPE5 explains that "being included, having a voice, being a part of what's happening around you. You have to do something. You cannot sit at home, because you have to talk to people and also bring some value to society.

[P, Norway, f, Eritrean, 31]

Although participation is an important factor that fosters integration, it is not possible without an open and accepting community. **Significant persons** like teachers, community leaders or other role models play an important role in young migrants' integration. They can introduce them to the new society, help in networking or finding a job. Significant persons can also be "cultural gatekeepers", thus they can help in acculturation (see: 4. Resources for young migrants'...).

> A social worker [that] helped us with the papers […] we stayed in touch with this social worker. And she always helped us. Either to find another house, or to find work for my mother, or to put me in Luxembourgish clubs and in a choir […], that social worker was the key to my integration.

[Luxembourg, f, Portuguese, 56]

The family is one of the **ambivalent factors** that can support integration (see: 4.3.1. Family support), but also be a limitation to it (see: 3.3.1. Lack of support from ...). Family can provide emotional, cognitive and economic support for young migrants who are starting life in a new country. Family can play an important role in **housing arrangements, financial assistance, and serve as a mediator in the social context.** Moreover, establishing one's own family is a motivating factor for taking on new challenges.

One of the most important factors on the micro level is **a sense of belonging** (see: 5.3. The sense of belonging...) understood not only as an attachment to a place, but also as a feeling of being safe and comfortable to such an extent that one is not afraid to take action for social change, for instance, by engaging in political activities or volunteering. Over time, a deeper sense of being at home may emerge, which seems to be important for consolidating the integration process. Conversely, a lack of a sense of being at home may signal the existence of integration difficulties.

Having economic, social and cultural capital is crucial for integration. Such capital may help to plan and prepare migration in advance, be prepared for different circumstances and cope with unexpected situations. Possessing a certain amount of power that allows migrants to actively negotiate their integration process (instead of being passive victims of integration constraints and obstacles). Resilience is another extremely important factor that supports integration (see: 4. Resources for young migrants'...). Moreover, migrants who manifest high "migration competencies" (e.g. they adapt fast to new cultural environments, have language skills, make friends easily) also integrate faster.

The last important factor regarding integration in the case of young migrants is **being young.** For instance, the participants of focus interviews with the older generation of migrants indicate that young people, in general, integrate faster. They are more flexible, have better "migration competences" than older people and, thanks to IT competences, are able to adjust to the new culture and make friends faster. Moreover, some young people in this period of their life do not have so many family and professional commitments, thus they can spend more time meeting new people and learning about the new culture.

6.4.2. Factors which hinder integration

Structural constraints can have severe implications for migrant integration, especially in countries where there is limited institutional support. This is especially visible in the case of asylum seekers, who in many research countries cannot work while their asylum application is pending. Without access to the labour market or educational facilities, they are dependent on institutional assistance.

Another hindering factor on the macro level is related to **legalisation of stay**. We consider this to be an extreme barrier to integration. Most of the time, without a residence permit, it is impossible to access the labour market or social and educational services. Meanwhile, our research shows that it takes a lot of time and resources to receive any form of residence due to long bureaucratic procedures. This is the case of educational, economic migrants, but also forced migrants. Waiting for status is associated not only with the impossibility of work or education, but also with great uncertainty. Moreover, the lack of a residence permit makes visiting their home country impossible, as it usually involves reapplying for a residence permit on return (see: 3.2.1. Problems with legalisation...).

> "I feel very, very strong. But problems related to documents make me stop as... as I had a handicap. As if I didn't have a leg or an arm.
>
> [V, Italy, -, -, -]

The anti-migrant discourse created by politicians and the media that penetrates general public narratives not only hinders integration, but makes it extremely difficult. The consequences of its use in public spaces can be seen on the meso level in the form of hate speech, racist behaviours or other forms of discrimination (see: 3.2.6. Racism and other forms...). Furthermore, anti-migrant discourse influences the creation and implementation of integration policies. Such discourse creates stereotypes and reproduces the labels of "deserving/ undeserving" and "integrated/ unintegrated" migrants.

Anti-migrant attitudes among non-migrant members of the community are an important hindering factor for integration, understood as a two-way process. Without an open and accepting approach from non-migrants, no positive social interaction between them and migrants is possible. Although a positive attitude alone is not a sufficient condition for successful integration, it is a necessary condition.

As we have indicated above, **family** is an ambivalent factor. In general it provides different types of support, but family bonds that are too tight can be devastating for young migrants' integration. The conservativeness of the family can limit social contact between migrants and other members of the community. Meanwhile, if the family remains in the country of origin, longing for them can lead to isolation and the emergence of psychological problems. In extreme cases, the family may demand in various ways that the young migrant be returned to his or her home country (see: 3.3.1. Lack of support...).

On a micro level, there are a number of factors, discussed in chapter 3 in detail, that hinder integration. Various vulnerablising situations and conditions, such as limited access to employment, housing or education, discrimination, and lack of social bonds, may negatively influence the integration process. Similarly, certain personal characteristics like gender, ethnicity, religion, nationality, age, and (dis) ability, that intersect with each other, can in certain contexts hinder integration (see: 3.3.5. Gendered and racialized experiences...). For instance, non-white male migrants express that they experience discrimination on the labour market. At the same time, female migrants who wear a hijab share that in everyday social interaction they feel excluded.

Another factor that hinders integration is related to **mental health issues** (see: 3.3.4. Problems with (mental) health...). Our research reveals that many young migrants struggle with mental health problems. Sometimes such problems appear as a result of "failed" integration, but sometimes they occur independently, without any relation to the migration trajectory. In the case of forced migrants, trauma suffered in the country of origin as a result of experiences of violence, is transferred to a new country. Unfortunately, in many research locations, access to mental health facilities and specialists is limited, which only deepens the mental problems of young people.

Last factor that may hinder the integration of young migrants are challenges related to their **transition to adulthood** (see: 3.3.2. Transitioning to adulthood...). During this period, when a person develops their mature identity, navigation between two or more cultures may be challenging. Moreover, migration may interrupt one's process of building an independent life. Double transition: to a host country and to adulthood, may be particularly challenging.

6.4.3. Service provision that supports integration

Among factors that facilitate or hinder integration, access to services on the macro level, and the quality and quantity of local infrastructure related to integration on the meso level, play an important role. Thus, in the MIMY project we were interested in which actors are involved in the provision of services related to the integration of migrants, how these services are organised and for whom they are intended.

As we have indicated above, integrational services for migrants are provided by **NGOs and local** (mainly municipal) **institutions.** Both types of institutions are dependent on international (mainly EU) actors and external sources of funding. This link to external funding is associated with reduced flexibility and adaptation of services to the needs of specific communities, including particular migrants (Shahrokh et al., 2021b). Most of the integration policies and measures targeted at migrants are connected to their migratory status (asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors, migrants with international protection), or **attached to certain conditions** (e.g. being a woman entering the labour market; having a disability). There are not many services that directly target young migrants, but rather, certain groups of migrants are labelled as vulnerable. As we indicated in earlier (see: 3. Intersecting factors...) vulnerability is situational and created by intersecting factors. Thus, policies that target only one assigned feature are not sensitive to this complexity of vulnerability and might be not efficient, or might exclude certain migrants.

Interviews with stakeholders also reveal that they are aware of integration as a two-way process which requires the mutual engagement of non-migrants and migrants. Nevertheless, in their daily work, practitioners responsible for integrational measures and programs move towards an understanding of integration as a one-way process. Thus, they mainly focus on areas of integration such as housing, health, immigration advice, education, employment and language learning, rather than on building social cohesion by also working with non-migrant communities.

> [Integration] it's like asking someone to enter a room and leaving the door closed. I mean, it doesn't make sense.
>
> [Luxembourg, project coordinator in the national government]

> Integration is [...] participating in various areas, it is getting the opportunity to be equipped with everything I need, in order to participate comprehensively, [...] to contribute in shaping the urban society, the social togetherness.
>
> [Germany, head of NGO]

Non-migrants are not seen as a group that should be included in integration programs. They are not gatekeepers or guides to the new host society; their role is reduced to being passive bystanders of migrant integration, who are open towards migrants and do not discriminate against them, but do not do much more. Moreover, there are not many possibilities provided by the services to foster intercultural interactions between migrants and non-migrants. These two groups have the chance to meet mainly through sport, arts and leisure, with an emphasis on cultural events. This last type of social event is often reduced to folkloric representations of migrant cultures, presenting them in a simplistic and orientalising way (Barzoo, 2013). Furthermore, grassroot events may need a certain level of curation to ensure "diversity and inclusion for those migrants and refugees who might not have enough confidence or resources to do so otherwise. The 'curated' approach is needed, therefore, to make those initiatives more visible and thus accessible to people" (Blachnicka-

Ciacek & Trąbka, 2022, p. 12). Thus, sometimes, if not animated, grassroot integration initiatives might be counter-effective*.

6.5. The neoliberal approach towards integration

We understand the neoliberal approach towards integration as seeing integration as an individual responsibility – meaning **migrants are mainly responsible for the outcome of their integration** process. It is less the responsibility of institutions, NGOs or the non-migrant local population. The neoliberalization of integration is present in policies and measures, as well as in the public discourse and non-migrant attitudes towards migrants integration. This approach can be observed in most of the research countries, with the exception of Germany and Norway, where not only the formal institutions, but also NGOs and other third sector organisations follow a two-way understanding of integration and try to implement similar measures. Hungary is also an exception, since it maintains a non-integration regime. The state and its institutions do not offer any integration support or scheme to any of the immigrants. It is a "regime of integration" through abandonment, therefore migrants are not even expected to integrate.

6.5.1. The discourse of neoliberalization

In chapter 5.3 concerning the discourse on integration, we argued that while integration understood as the mutual responsibility of migrants and non-migrants is present at the level of values, in practice its implementation **shifts the responsibility to migrants.** Especially when the concept of integration is used in context of political struggle, migrants are increasingly blamed for their own sufferings, while there is no critical discussion on the structural conditions that impede migrants from living well. Migrants are expected to integrate in certain areas of life, but at the same time, they should only integrate to such an extent that they do not disturb non-migrant members of society. This kind of approach is especially visible when we talk with non-migrant youth. They are convinced that when an individual comes to a new country it is up to their perseverance, internal strengths and ability to adapt quickly and efficiently. These young people almost never talk about the role of structural barriers and opportunities, public institutions or NGOs in migrants integration. **The role of the non-migrant** members of society in this process is limited only to being open and accepting migrants. Having **positive attitudes towards newcomers** is sufficient in terms of the non-migrants' responsibility.

A vast number of migrant participants reproduce such perspectives in their narratives. From those narratives, it emerges that the word integration is often meant to coincide with **"acculturation"**, where the migrant is expected to make an individual effort. As we have mentioned above, only those migrants with positive integration experiences, who have more economic, cultural and social capital,

* We acknowledge that grassroot initiatives have great potential in the integration of migrants and non-migrants. They make it possible to overcome the rigid framework of indicator-based projects. Moreover, because they are organised by grassroots participation, they respond to the actual needs of those involved in them. Nevertheless, we want to also point out that such bottom-up integration activities require a great deal of awareness, reflexivity, and openness on the part of those involved in order to circumvent the challenges of intercultural contact.

are able to require more than an accepting attitude from the host society. This is the only research group that openly spoke of not only wanting equal access to rights and equal participation, but also **requiring non-migrant members of society to actively engage in interactions** with migrants. Stakeholders support such an approach, but in general they do not do much to incorporate non-migrants into their integration practices. This results from a lack of flexibility in funding and **narrow funding requirements**, as well as lack of spaces, contexts and opportunities for migrant youth to engage non-migrant counterparts beyond formal educational settings and sports activities.

> The optimal thing would have been if one could get to some middle point, where the Swedes open their bubbles, and then Arabs learn a little more about Swedes, that you reach a middle ground where I don't let go of my identity, because I don't want to become Swedish, and I don't want the Swedes to become Arabs either. Some kind of collaboration, if you know what I mean.
>
> [P, Sweden, f, Syrian, 26]

6.5.2. Integration as migrants' individual responsibility

Interviews with stakeholders reveal that, while they are aware of the concept of integration as a two-way process, in their practice the group that should make an effort to integrate are mainly migrants. Members of the host society are not burdened with this responsibility and are not required at the level of actual action to integrate with migrants. We called this process the **responsibilisation of migrants for integration.** "Most stakeholders advocate a holistic approach beyond core domains like education, employment and language, which includes well-being and making the space for conversation and dialogue with young migrants" (Shahrokh et al., 2021b, p. 50). However due to lack of flexibility in many funding requirements, which limits the scope of their actions, they focus on integration in certain areas such as: housing, education, employment, and language. They often expect migrants to perform well in these areas without addressing migrants' actual needs. This approach requires integration to be a process that ends with a specific outcome, that is top-down imposed. Usually, stakeholders define successful integration as the attainment of the migrant's complete autonomy in the host country.

Many young migrants (especially those in vulnerable situations) feel that they need to take individual responsibility for their development. This applies both to young people who are on their own, and those within families. However, they invariably recognise that they have some degree of support. There is some suggestion from the data that this individualising of problems and barriers to overcome, coupled with policies and practices which disperse and disrupt, may **work against collective identifications** and hinder the creation of bridging and bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000). As a result, young migrants rarely rely on formal institutional resources in their navigating strategies, emphasising the pivotal role of their own agency, personal traits, and support from family and friends.

> Integration is just the way people manipulate words. It puts a lot of responsibility on the people that arrive here without giving them the tools to connect with the community or putting them in communities who have been manipulated against them. So there's a lot of doors that are closed that however much a person tries, if they're not being welcomed in, how are they going to be able to integrate if there's not enough English classes available? If the waiting list is really long, how can they begin to integrate? If we don't allow them to work, we take away their opportunities for finding a community.

[England (UK), artistic director in one of the museums]

6.5.3. Factors that support the neoliberal approach towards integration

We have noticed that there are **certain groups of migrants** who are expected to be more independent in their integration process than others, and groups who gain more support from institutions and NGOs. This is closely related to the category of **deserving and undeserving migrants**. In general, economic migrants are expected to be more independent in their integration. There are fewer measures targeted at this group than at forced migrants, especially those who have already been granted some kind of international protection. There is less institutional support for them and they have to deal with more structural barriers which may lead to their vulnerability (see: 3.2. Structural factors). In contrast, asylum seekers or migrants with different kinds of international protection are groups that are seen as more "helpless", and thus "deserve" support. The "deserving" migrant is depicted as a forced migrant who exhibits gratitude, does not complain and is obedient. Interestingly, the presumed lack of agency among this migrant group is linked to greater institutional support. This is a further dimension of the responsibilisation of migrants for integration. It also contributes to the construction of those who dissent, as "failing" to integrate.

> (...) the aim of integration for us immigrants is not simply to navigate life but to appease and validate our consistent presence in the host country. The constant need to be exceptional to be tolerated is something that has been echoed in my life and the lives of other immigrants that I know. The immigrant mentality is something I'm familiar with: the need to hustle and grind for the betterment of your family and be opportunistic in your pursuit to elevate yourself, and in its extreme manifestation, becoming the "perfect immigrant". As an immigrant, there is a lot of pressure to fulfil these expectations.

[MIMY blog, Grace, peer-researcher in Luxemburg]

Hungary is the only country in which forced migrants are considered as the undeserving ones, thus they are not seen as an object of integration policy.

Another group of young migrants who are given a certain amount of support are migrant students. They are supported by educational institutions as they do not represent a threat, either in terms of the labour market or in terms of **overburdening the social system**.

Belonging to a group perceived as undeserving of support therefore translates into integration policies and programmes. In turn, restricting some groups' access to resources that facilitate integration can lead to inequalities among migrants and increased competition for these resources. Moreover, such practices can also result in an increased sense of injustice and feelings of being discriminated against among "undeserving" migrants. This social segmentation and lack of sufficient social inclusion and cohesion add additional hurdles to migrants' integration. Integration often tends to be **segmented in nature** (e.g. according to social class, ethnicity, race, country of origin). Those migrants, who are perceived as "undeserving" are forced to find their own way of becoming part of society. Even if there are structural opportunities that might support their integration, migrants are sometimes reluctant to use them because it is not viewed well by non-migrant members of the host society.

We argue that one of the most important factors related to the responsibilisation of migrants for integration, beside targeted policies for "deserving" migrants, is derived from th**e individualization of European societies** (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Western societies often endorse and foster the neoliberal idea that people are masters of their own destiny, and worship the self-made individual. Independence, agency, self-efficacy, self-reliance, and other internal strengths are extremely valued in modern European societies, as well as among most of the research participants (see: 4.2.1. Self-efficacy, self-reliance...). For instance, many young migrants describe the **personal strength** and determination they need to build their lives. However, the individualisation of this process also **creates pressures and uncertainties**, since young people do not always know or feel confident about their ability to navigate the structural possibilities towards their future. The perception of integration as relying on **individual merit** is most pronounced in the focus groups with the older generation of migrants, who compare how they themselves worked hard for what they have achieved, to current migration with wide support from authorities. Some migrants from the older generation argue that today's migrants passively wait for the support they receive rather than actively working towards their own integration.

Moreover, some stakeholders, when talking about their work with migrants, express their view of integration as an individual responsibility pointing to migrants' own **"willingness to integrate" or lack of "willingness to integrate"** as a major barrier to integration. The **economic transformations** of recent decades in countries such as Poland, Romania and Hungary have also reinforced the discourse of individual strength as the main resource for coping with a new reality. This discourse is evident in the narratives of non-migrant youth, who also emphasise that integration depends primarily on the self-denial, motivation and perseverance of young migrants.

> When you move to another country, you have to make efforts to adapt.
>
> [V, Poland, m, Belarusian, 26]

> Stakeholder when asked „What do you consider a successful integration? When is the moment that somebody is well-integrated?"] 'For me, it's really the moment when the person doesn't need to come to see me anymore at the office to do a call or fill in a form, update something. Even if the person is still in the reception centre, because we know it's difficult to find housing, but from the moment when the person does not need me anymore to do all his or her procedures, I estimate that the person is really in a process of integration.
>
> [Luxembourg, manager of a reception facility]

> [I observe] shifting responsibility, [the statement] that if someone comes to some country, it is his conscious decision, so he is responsible himself how he lives from A to Z – such indifference [on migrants].
>
> [Poland, project coordinator]

Another factor closely related to the individualisation of integration is the neoliberal **capitalist labour market**. Here, the main focus is placed on structural, rather than social integration, including structural integration into the labour market, and how the workforce of labour migrants can be used best. There is an explicit expectation that labour migrants will not stay permanently, but will move back if there is no longer a demand for their labour. Thus, they need only to integrate to an extent that allows them to be efficient workers. In this understanding of integration, which results in the 'production' of the most efficient workforce, there is no space for inclusion, for building reciprocal relations between migrants and non-migrants, or for strengthening migrants' competences to enable them to participate in society. In order to maintain a position in the capitalist labour market, based on **competition for resources** such as money, power or prestige, each individual must ensure that they adapt as well as possible (e.g. by learning the language or legalising his or her residence). Due to structural competitiveness, everyone is on their own.

Overall, the majority of participants – stakeholders, young migrants and non-migrant youth talk one way or another about the individual's responsibility for the integration process. This is an upsetting finding, as it points to a somewhat deterministic view on integration, where the capabilities enabling resilience that individuals bring with them to the new country is the most important aspect for how the integration process progresses. It also shows that, regardless of whether a country has structural forms of support for migrants or whether they are insufficient, the role of non-migrant members of society in the integration process is marginal.

7. Conclusions

The purpose of this report was to synthesise the main results from the three year MIMY project. We aimed at integrating the perspectives of different social actors participating in research, namely young migrants, stakeholders, non-migrant youth and the representatives of older generations of migrants to get a better and nuanced understanding of the integration process of young Third Country Nationals living in Europe. Based on the interdisciplinary and multilevel research approach (macro, meso and micro levels), we have explored in-depth how their vulnerability and resilience manifests, and how different aspects of their life-situations hinder and foster integration.

Young migrants experience various challenges as they navigate the complex environment in host countries. Many vulnerabilities that young migrants face stem from macro-structural factors and include problems with the legalisation of stay and limited access to equal rights, language barriers, difficult housing conditions, limited access to education and the labour market, racism and other forms of discrimination. The reasons why young migrants find themselves in difficult situations also lie in the meso and micro level, such as lack of support from the family of origin or individual problems with mental health and wellbeing. What may also make the situation of young migrants difficult is the phase of transition to adulthood they experience, which is associated with specific challenges related to this period of youth accompanied, in their case, by integration and migration challenges. Moreover, experiences of vulnerability are gendered, and even if it is not the direct cause of vulnerability, gender seems to be the significant mediator in interaction with other factors, particularly with race, ethnicity, religion and family situation. **The intersectional character of the above-mentioned macro, meso and micro factors puts young migrants in particularly vulnerable situations as they cross and reinforce each other, creating additional vulnerabilities or exacerbating existing ones that are difficult to overcome.**

The various vulnerabilities that young migrants experience overlap, creating multiple precarities. These vulnerabilities are strongly interconnected and interdependent, thus, it is hard to address or mitigate them. The range of overlapping vulnerabilities that young migrants face, especially at the beginning of their migration trajectory, when they do not yet have an extensive resilience portfolio, can negatively impact their well-being, and, in consequence, hinder broadly understood opportunities. Difficulties such as lack of access to healthcare, education, and other services; housing difficulties; limited employment opportunities; financial insecurity; difficulties navigating complex legal systems or exposure to discrimination based on gender, country of origin or religion, can interact with each other in a way that amplifies migrants' vulnerable situations. For example, the experience of discrimination, when coupled with feelings of social isolation and loneliness due to the lack of contact opportunities with the local population, enhanced by being a single mother and the need to care for a child, leads to an experience of social segregation, rendering vulnerability more severe, especially for those whose families of origin live abroad. The social lockdowns during the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated this type of experience and made them common among young people, especially migrants.

The research results demonstrate that vulnerability is a complex and multi-dimensional concept influenced by various intersecting factors, including the socio-political, cultural and familial context, as well as young migrants'

individual characteristics. These are compounded to create unique experiences of disadvantages and privileges. Similar to the resilience described below, **vulnerability is not a fixed and permanent state, but changes over time and context:** a young migrant can feel vulnerable in one situation, but less in another situation, or more or less vulnerable at a different point in his/her life. This proves that vulnerability has temporal and spatial dimensions and is very situational.

Despite the challenging and complicated situation, **young migrants resist labels associated with negative connotations, such as vulnerability,** feeling that, to some extent, these labels are imposed upon them. They do not want to be seen as weak or needing help, distancing themselves from the victimhood image. Young migrants make it plain that they are highly aware of the challenges and injustices they experience, but, at the same time, they do not treat them as a result of their failure, arguing that they are external to them, caused by structural factors. The rejection of the vulnerability label proves that they want to maintain a sense of agency and control over their own lives, being aware that vulnerability is a transient condition dependent on time, place, and context. Young migrants avoid the stigmatising label of being vulnerable, recognising the risk that this categorisation itself can be a contributing structural factor driving processes of vulnerabilisation. Instead, they **strongly emphasise their personal resources and individual strength, allowing them to cope with challenges by taking proactive strategies to turn vulnerabilities into resilience.** The necessity of negotiating one's position and image as a migrant in the host country is reinforced by the discourse that distinguishes categories of "deserving" and "undeserving" migrants. This distinction creates **pressure to conform to certain expectations in order to be seen as "deserving"**. At the same time, the category of the "deserving" migrant is often linked to a lack of agency and helplessness*. These personal characteristics stand in contrast to the notion that migrants are responsible for their integration. Thus, in some contexts young migrants tend to present themselves as individuals with less agency, and in others, with more agency.

In the face of numerous migration and integration challenges, young migrants draw from a broad resilience portfolio, including personal, community and structural resources consisting of both individual capacities at the micro level and opportunity structures at the meso and macro levels. Using a combination of these resources supports young migrants in overcoming challenges and succeeding in new environments. However, MIMY project results indicate that **young migrants rely heavily on their personal resources** (individual characteristics, "migration skills'' and individual coping strategies) **to build their resilience and navigate the challenges they face.** Cumulative vulnerabilising factors mean that, to some extent, young migrants are forced to cope based on the personal resources that are most readily available to them. This strongly affects their integration, contributing to the responsibilisation of young migrants for this process.

Interviews with young migrants show that personal resources are rooted in a relational milieu, which means they are strengthened through the **family, friendship, and community relationships the young migrants can rely on.** The family provides young migrants with emotional, cognitive, and instrumental

* There is also another profile linked to "welcome" migrants: Since migrants are part of a racialised, capitalist labour market, they should be efficient and not a burden to the host society.

support, which, together with the personal resources described above, seem to be the core sources of resilience. Similarly, friends and community support (especially migrant-to-migrant informal support) have a significant positive impact on integration processes. Participating in diaspora community activities helps migrants build relationships with other community members and provide a sense of purpose and belonging - one of the key ingredients for integration. Although interactions between migrants and the non-migrant local population are treated as crucial for positive integration effects, the opportunities for this type of interaction are limited, hence they are rarely identified in the resilience portfolio.

While personal and community resources are an essential source of resilience for young migrants, they **deem structural resources insufficient.** Among the sources of macro-level resilience, young migrants primarily indicate having access to education and opportunities for learning a language; a general sense of security including legal protections; and economic opportunities consisting of access to work and general professional development opportunities. Young migrants are aware of the relevance of broader social and institutional sources of resilience. At the same time, they are critical of the lack or insufficiency of such support in specific domains, as well as of lack of reliable information on the available support. The factor that makes the difference is relational – young people emphasise the **role of significant individuals from non-governmental organisations supporting their integration efforts.** The research results show that NGOs fill the gap in state integration and migration systems. It is worth highlighting that **opportunity structures and access to different services vary depending on the type of location.** This creates a configuration of factors fostering and hindering integration that play out differently in larger cities and smaller, more peripheral localities. The former type of location, usually with a well-developed network of institutions and services, better educational and professional opportunities affords migrants greater freedom to choose their integration path and implement their life plan. In smaller locations, which are appreciated for their tranquillity and safety, people declare that it is easier to become a member of the community. However, sometimes it is only possible at the price of adjusting to the local norms and lifestyles. Thus, in some smaller localities, young migrants mention a lack of diversity and "integration pressure", which limits their freedom and opportunities for individual development.

The stories of young migrants show that **resilience is a dynamic process** that involves three interrelated capacities: short-term **coping** with current adversities; longer-term **adapting** through learning from past experiences, as well as adjusting to future challenges by applying preventive measures; and **transforming** one's situation (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013). Resilience is not a fixed trait, but rather something that **can be developed and strengthened over time through experience and learning,** shaped by various individual and contextual factors (Masten, 2019). Therefore, resilience can be an individual's capacity to **"bounce back"** (return to the state from before the adversity) as well as **"bounce forward"** (adapt and develop as a result of the adversity, often leading to personal growth and development). **Individual young migrants' resilience capacities vary** depending on their previous (also migratory) experiences, socio-economic and cultural capitals, the challenges they have faced and the resources and support available to them. Young migrants with an extensive socio-economic background and high level of capital, which often translate into positive migration experiences,

are not only able to develop their individual resilience, but are also able to take actions to support the resilience of migrant communities.

In this report we have looked at integration from the perspective of discourse and practice. In the discursive dimension, integration is presented as a two-way process. In contrast, integration programmes and measures use a rather one-way concept of integration that is closer to adaptation, acculturation or assimilation. Non-migrants are not subject to these programs, but they are included as bystanders, whose main role is to be open and accepting towards young migrants and not to discriminate against them. As we have indicated, non-migrant youth also follow this approach. They believe that migrants should adapt to the new society, and that it is the migrants' responsibility to build relations with non-migrants.

This passive approach among non-migrant members of society is reinforced by integration programs and policies that focus mainly on areas of integration such as housing, health, immigration advice, education, employment and language learning, and not sufficiently on building social cohesion. Such measures, though crucial for migrants, provide limited opportunities for non-migrants and migrants to meet and spend time together. For many young migrants, the main space where they can interact with non-migrant peers are educational institutions. However, those young migrants who for certain reasons remain out of the education system (e.g. due to insufficient knowledge of the language, lack of possibility to recognise the level of their education or problems related to the legalisation of residence) have limited possibilities to interact with non-migrants. The results of our project confirm that they sometimes meet their peers while doing sport or during their leisure time, but such activities are rarely animated and facilitated by local institutions or NGOs, though this of course varies in different localities. They are more grassroot and informal, thus there is less chance to facilitate the integration process and intercultural relations and as a result they might be distorted by exclusion or discrimination practices. Moreover, young migrants are more likely to interact with other migrants than with their non-migrant peers. The results of the MIMY project indicate that, when young migrants volunteer, they engage more often in actions that support other migrants or diaspora than non-migrant organisations or individuals. This is due to the fact that acting for other migrants is safer and more comfortable because: 1) they do not have to worry that they do not speak the language well; 2) they act for people similar to themselves with whom they share the experience of migration; and 3) the risk of experiencing discrimination is much lower (see also: Markowska-Manista & Pietrusińska, 2021).

Besides the quality of interactions between migrants and non-migrants, structural opportunities or constraints further shape integration. Due to the responsibilisation of young migrants for integration and the neoliberalisation of this process, young migrants indicate (and they are also expected to indicate) that structural factors are important. However, they state that, even if for some reason structural factors hinder integration, it is possible to integrate relying mainly on individual resources. This is particularly evident when young migrants speak about relying primarily on their personal and community resources to build their resilience and navigate the challenges they face within their migration trajectories.

Discourse about integration as well as integration policies and measures play an important role in the integration process. It has to be emphasised that most of these policies define what is considered as "**integration success**" and "**integration failure**", thus they impose on migrants certain criteria they must fulfil to be seen as "integrated". They also create the profiles of "welcome" and "unwelcome" migrants – those who deserve to stay and those who should be removed. These criteria are produced on an international or national level, reinforced by general public discourse and implemented mainly by local authorities and NGOs. This is a result of the so-called "local turn" in migration governance (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017) in many research countries. Even though in some MIMY countries, such as Romania, Luxembourg and Sweden, there are national integration policies, municipalities and non-governmental organisations are the main social actors that create the final shape of policies and practices related to integration. It is significant that **neither migrants nor non-migrant local communities** are sufficiently included in the **discussion** of what integration is, how it should be implemented, by whom and what its goals and outcomes should be. This leads us to the conclusion that many young migrants – especially those who have access to social, economic and cultural capitals, and who are thus empowered to be more critical – might see integration as an oppressive social construct which "tells them how to live".

What is more, MIMY results indicate how such **exclusion influences integration programs**. Most of them are based on targeted policies, rather than on mainstream approaches towards integration which facilitate social cohesion. Moreover, there were almost no policies or measures targeted at young migrants in general. In the researched countries, targeted measures are most often intended for asylum seekers, migrants with different types of international protection (mainly refugees and unaccompanied minors), migrants with disabilities and female migrants (mainly those who have experienced violence). This **inflexible catalogue of vulnerabilities** does not sufficiently take into account that vulnerabilities are situational and intersecting. As a result, programs may not adequately address the needs of particular migrants if they do not fall into one of the categories of vulnerability.

As we have seen in the presented findings, time emerges as a cross-cutting theme in many different contexts. The liquidity of integration (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2019) urges us to "take time seriously" (Adam, 2000) and to acknowledge its processual character. Analysing the dynamics of integration allows us to see that it may take a varying pace, it is not unidirectional and depends on socio-political and historical conditions. In reference to the latter, interviews with stakeholders and older generation migrants demonstrates how the migration histories of particular localities shape opportunity structures for young migrants. For instance, countries or regions that have a long history of immigration tend to have a more developed network of institutions and services targeted at migrants. Their populations are also more likely to be accustomed to diversity and open to intercultural contacts. Recent events have also influenced the development of integration infrastructure, e.g. in Germany after 2015, in Poland after the escalation of the Russian invasion in Ukraine in 2022 (which is beyond the scope of this report).

On a biographical level, time also emerges in several contexts. First, youth is perceived as a period of life facilitating integration: young people learn faster, which is crucial in the context of acquiring a new language; they tend to be more

flexible and open to new experiences. At the same time, migration influences the temporal dynamics of young migrants' transitions to adulthood. Generally, it disrupts this process, but its impact may differ depending on the circumstances. On the one hand, migration may accelerate transition to adulthood by imposing various challenges connected with independence and adult life. On the other – it may slow down transitioning by creating conditions of vulnerabilities that are connected with the prolonged waiting time for a decision on legal status or on international protection. Such episodes of limbo or "waithood" (Kilkey et al., 2022) result in a sense of temporariness, uncertainty and inability to plan one's life. Therefore, young migrants are exposed to tensions inherent to the non-linearity of their transitions.

Second, time spent in a host country generally seems to facilitate both accumulating different forms of capital and building resilience, and a sense of belonging to a locality, and thus fosters integration. However, we have also observed that turning points in young migrants' life course (e.g. leaving school, becoming a parent, unemployment) and socio-historical events (e.g. economic crisis, political shifts) unsettle their integration trajectories (Kilkey et al., 2022). This only confirms its processual and non-linear character.

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Appendix 1.

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

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

Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaft und Kunst Hildesheim/Holzminden/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 Mungiardi, Paola Caterina, Camilla Salvatori, *Malamine B, Reida Goberja, Denisa Irina Paul, Boutros Sayegh, Musa Mballow*

SWPS Uniwersytet Humanistycznospołeczny (Poland): Dominika Blachnicka-Ciacek, Agnieszka Trąbka, Marta Jadwiga Pietrusińska, Dominika Winogrodzka, Magdalena Łużniak-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 Cimpoeru, 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

* Peer researchers are written in italics.

Appendix 2.

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: Skrobanek, 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., Cimpoeru, 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., Cimpoeru, 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.
- 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.
- D9.6: Bissinger, J., Gilodi, A., Nienaber, B., Oliveira, J., in collaboration with Skrobanek, J., Roman, M., Messing, V., Lind, J., & Grabowska, I. Policy recommendations – D9.6.

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)**
- 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 3.

List of the publications from the MIMY project

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.