

A close-up photograph of two hands shaking. The hand on the left is wearing a red sweater cuff and a black wristband with white text. The hand on the right is wearing a dark jacket. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue and white. Several large, semi-transparent orange circles are overlaid on the image, partially obscuring the hands and text.

# Booklet with the success stories of migrants

The RISING project aims to integrate the motivational benefits of mentoring into the training and educational curriculum offered to migrants.

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## Short description of the project

The project “Rising – mentoring to raise motivated migrants”, short name “Project Rising”, is intended as a help in developing good solutions for better integration of migrants in their host countries in Europe.

The overall objective of Project RISING is to address the lack of motivation of migrants in taking part in further education and training. To achieve its overall goal, the project will train migrants and mentors. Especially the latter group will be trained how to work with migrants to motivate them well, build mutual relations by understanding the needs of the other party. This model seeks ways of increasing learners’ motivation and as a consequence developing more successful integration processes. We hope that the Rising mentoring method described in the handbook will work as a problem solver in order to achieve for migrants the main outcomes of attitudinal, cognitive or motivational change, including positive changes in coping and other psychological skills. Such a change of mindset can be the turning point in achieving social inclusion.

The handbook being prepared will be a tool for mentors in the 6 countries participating in the project. The mentoring tasks will be supervised by the organizations’ staff and volunteers who will provide support. The training value for project staff is also important. Better skills of partner and volunteer staff will enable them to provide alternative support to migrants and / or their mentors.

The following Booklet was prepared as a part of the project, and will be a part of the handbook, in partnership of six non-governmental organisations from six European countries. These are: Aproximar – Cooperativa de Solidarieda de Social in Portugal, Kentro Merimnas Oikogeneias Kai Paidiou in Greece, San Giuseppe Onlus in Italy, Asociatia European Association for Social Innovation in Romania, Kadin ve Genc Girisim Merkezi Dernegi in Turkey and Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej in Poland.

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## CHAPTER 1

# Introduction to the conversational interviews

## Introduction to the conversational interviews

This Booklet of success stories and resultant conclusions is compiled as an outcome of conversational interviews carried out with people of a diverse migration background, who are currently residing in Portugal, Greece, Romania, Turkey, Italy and Poland.

In order to implement this activity, each partner organisation carried out 5 interviews with people of migrant background residing in their country. The conversation interviews focused on their success stories after migration. The interviewees were asked to tell about their broader migration background, difficulties, work and goals. Thanks to the collected information, it is possible to outline the stories of migrants, but also to notice certain regularities and common turning points in their stories. It should be emphasized that the interviews were conducted in order to identify the motivation and involvement of migrants in the integration process, as well as to better understand the factors that influence this process. We hope that the collected data will help to develop effective tools for trainers who will later work with migrants. The migration stories will also directly help other migrants as examples on how to integrate better in the new environment and to achieve their own success stories.

The interviews were conducted by Tatiana Morais from Aproximar – Cooperativa de Solidarieda de Social in Portugal, Natasha Alexopoulou from Kentro Merimnas Oikogeneias Kai Paidiou in Greece, Giovanni Papagni from San Giuseppe Onlus in Italy, Laura Tencaliuc from Asociatia European Association for Social Innovation in Romania, Yusuf Yildirin from Kadin ve Genc Girisim Merkezi Dernegi in Turkey and Daria Mikulska from Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej in Poland.

A photograph of a meeting room. In the foreground, a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a black top and a gold necklace, is writing in a spiral notebook with a grey pen. To her right, a man with short grey hair is looking at the notebook. In the background, a woman in a brown sweater is standing and talking to another person. An 'EXIT' sign is visible on the wall. The image has a decorative overlay of overlapping circles in shades of orange and purple.

**CHAPTER 2**  
**Summaries of the conversational  
interviews**

## Summaries of the conversational interviews

In the framework of the project, a total number of 30 people from twenty countries were interviewed, 14 women and 16 men. Each partner organization conducted an equal number of interviews - 5. Three of the interviewees were from Syria, two each from the following countries: Cape Verde, Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia, Pakistan and Georgia, and one from each of the following countries: Angola, Brazil, Mozambique, India, Guinea, Senegal, Bangladesh, Iraq, Chechnya, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Peru, Philippines and Turkey. Some of them were able to achieve citizenship of the country they are currently residing in. The interviewees have been residing in the current country an average of 10 years - but the length of individual stays varies from half a year to 40 years. Nearly half of them have resided in the current country for more than a decade.

The conversational interviews were carried out in March and April 2021. Due to the Covid-19 emergency measures most of the interviews were conducted online (via Zoom or other platforms), except for 2 interviews in Italy and 3 in Turkey that were conducted face to face, in full compliance with the Covid-19 restrictions. In general, the interviews went according to plan. Before each interview, participants were informed about the project, its goals, the interview protocol, and the interviews' aim. After this initial information, participants provided the consent through the online consent form.

The success stories are distributed in an anonymized format (using numbers or capital letters or fake names) to respect and safeguard the personal data of the participants. During the interviews, the interviewers used the "Interview Template", which contained a set of questions prepared especially for the occasion. This made the interviews more uniform and easier to compare.

Most of the partner organisations did not face difficulties with recruiting the interviewees, as their activities are addressed to migrants and therefore they have connections among migrant communities in their country. Some of the participants have already participated in other activities of the partner organisation, so they were familiar with the work of the organization, some were former beneficiaries, volunteers, some were recruited through the NGO's connections.

In most of the cases, the participants were willing to share their stories and some of them were looking for spaces in which to highlight and make known their personal history of migration and entrepreneurship.

Three organizations reported problems with recruiting for interviews EASI, due to the pandemic and therefore difficult contact with the migrant community, and had problems with recruiting five people for interviews. SIP also had to look for one additional person because the interviewee did not agree to publish the story at the end.

Our Turkish partner had the most serious difficulties. KGEM reported that they faced difficulties with recruiting migrants to participate in the interviews, because most of the people they asked to participate,



did not want their stories to be published. Most probably, the issue was caused by fear and lack of trust. As a result, KGEM had to contact 38 people, in order to interview 5 of them.



**CHAPTER 3**  
**Main findings from the  
conversational interviews**

## Main findings from the conversational interviews

Most of the participants seemed to find it easy to respond to the questions and appeared to enjoy the conversation. According to the reports of the partner organisations, the participants were willing to share their stories and seemed to be satisfied with this opportunity. At the end of the interviews, some participants expressed the view that they appreciate having been given the chance to share their life experiences and to think through key moments of their life and how they overcame such difficult moments. However, some of the participants found some questions challenging and needed a while to reflect on them. As the Turkish organisation, KGEM noted, some of the interviewed people had difficulties with understanding the questions.

The **main findings/conclusions** from the interviews included that the reason for migrating very often is the need to increase one's educational and professional perspectives and to have access to better education, hence a better future: whether their own education or their child's education.

The **understanding of success** varies among the participants. For many of them, their success is related to their education and professional life, but above all, it is about being economically independent, socially redeeming themselves and being able to support their family members in their countries of origin. For instance, it was a success for one participant to provide a better education for her daughter, hence, to ensure her a better future. It was a success for another participant to see her professional value and commitment recognized, thus, becoming part of a well-known institution that assured a stable financial income. Another person felt that her success was to be able to make a living from art and to be a part of the community of artists in her new country. For some of the participants, success was to graduate from college. One of the participants became the first person in her family to have a degree, which, in her opinion, was her success. Some felt satisfied that they were able to deal with the obstacles, while pursuing the dream to have their own business, to have a balanced life with an optimal mental health, to be satisfied with the success of their children at school and with the professionalism in the teachers, and the possibility to do the best in their job. Some of them had to reflect for a while on that question - although they felt that learning a new language and finding a job were big achievements, they did not consider it as a huge success.

It is crucial to note that all interviewees faced **obstacles** during their migration journeys, none of them considered that process as smooth sailing. Most common barrier obviously was a new language which did not allow them to truly express themselves. Inclusion is harder to be achieved if the language barrier is not lifted. The skill that was indicated as crucial at that stage was discipline - being consistent and true to one's obligations.

The bureaucracy related to obtaining most of the documents was another barrier, followed by probably most discouraging and hurtful ones – prejudice and discrimination, social and professional devaluation and

invisibility.

Encountering so many difficulties often required a spirit of adaptation and problem-solving skills as well as patience. Many interviewees are convinced that it was critical to always have hope, never surrender to adversity and face everything with a positive spirit.

The common pattern among the participants was that they were **supported throughout their journey**; most of them relied on their families - some of them relied on the support of relatives living in the country that they are currently residing in, while other participants' family members were still in the country of origin. Some participants have also reported receiving support from friends, acquaintances, compatriots or migrant communities, who helped them to start up businesses or look for a job. Other respondents said that they received support and help from educators in the communities they lived in, from the university or NGOs. They appreciate it, as the language barrier and financial problems are the most common challenges they had to face.

The interviews highlighted the **need for mentorship programs**. Many of the participants try to support and help newcomers because they can relate to what they are going through, having gone through related events themselves. Most of them pinpointed that access to information is crucial and that most of the information provided by the state is not clear for people with a migration background. Migrants and refugees need to be informed about the local culture and habits and be encouraged to engage themselves in social interaction. It is critical that migrants who have recently arrived to a new country are supported by someone who has been through the same experience, so that they avoid mistakes that those before them did. Informal mentorship is considered to be one of the best ways to support newcomers and provide them with information and guidance. Their mentor should be able to give them hope, "a piece of light in their lives", but also encourage mentees to get outside of their comfort zone, try new things, discover new hobbies, activities and develop new skills. It is common that newcomers may feel very lonely as they are away from their families – their mentors may give them the support that they did not have.

It is however important to indicate that there were **additional abilities** discovered by migrants in themselves during their integration process - enhancement of one's personal resources, for example trust, responsibility, resilience, persistence, self-esteem and the ability to believe in oneself. These were elements that have been found to be fundamental for the achievement of success and a further result that emerged was the importance of training in their path. Building self-confidence and persistence and strengthening skills by education programs, trainings and personal commitment is of major importance in order to be able to find a job and achieve inclusion.

All in all, it seems that combination of mentoring and enhancement of one's personal resources and abilities such as resilience, responsibility, trust and healthy self-esteem will always work the best. As one of the successful migrants concluded: *"If you would like to stay and live here you need to have courage and dare.*



*Here you will be given the opportunities but you need to be willing to develop and to qualify yourself. The society is becoming more and more inclusive towards migrants and if you take steps towards the right direction, you will feel a part of this society like I do”.*

A photograph of two men in a meeting room. The man on the left, wearing a dark blue jacket and glasses, is pointing at a laptop screen. The man on the right, wearing an orange shirt and glasses, is smiling and looking at the screen. The room has posters on the wall and a light fixture is visible in the background.

## CHAPTER 4

### Description of 12 success stories

## Description of 12 success stories

### Success stories nr 1 - Portugal

**Age:** 51

**Gender:** Female

**Nationality:** Cape Verde and Portuguese

**Professional status:** employed

**Place and time of stay in a foreign country:** Participant#1 arrived in Portugal in 1989 (over 30years)

#### Summary of the success story:

Participant#1 arrived in Portugal over 30 years ago, and she does not consider herself an immigrant. She feels fully integrated into the Portuguese society; she considers Portugal her home: *"I do not consider myself an immigrant. I consider Portugal my home country. I feel I belong here. In my first ten years, I was still considering going back to Cape Verde, but not now, in the last 20 years I consider Portugal my home"*.

Participant#1 acknowledges that having a strong social network, being surrounded by family and friends, and living near friends in Portugal was very helpful. Therefore, she firmly relied on friends and acquaintances who were very supportive and helped her to feel integrated at school and in the workplace: *"I was fortunate to have had the chance to build the life I have. To have a family, to be surrounded by friends, who live near me, and to have a stable job and income herein Portugal. I feel very blessed"*.

Participant#1 considered as her success coming to Portugal and graduating from international relations. That was the primary reason she moved to Portugal in the first place, since, back then, Cape Verde did not have a university. Therefore, to pursue a degree was her major success for her: *"My success was also to finish my degree, finish the faculty, and establish myself here in Portugal"*.

Getting a degree was especially significant, not only because it was her primary reason to move to Portugal, but also because the most challenging moment was studying while having a small child. Back then, her friends were her significant support: *"The most difficult moment was to have a child and to finish my degree. The fact that I have a lot of friends was significant to overcome the difficult moments. In the workplace, it was essential to have friends close and people who supported and helped me integrate into the workplace"*.

Participant#1 considers that the most important qualities that helped her go through the most challenging times: resilience, persistence, not giving up, being stubborn.

Considering that she relied on so many people who helped her through her journey, participant #1 mentioned she likes to support others. And she thinks mentorship is crucial and valuable to integrated and welcome newcomers. In her view, a mentor must be well aware of the country's reality and must feel the desire to support and help the mentee all the way. She also stressed it was essential to have people who



have gone through a similar situation to support newcomers, even people from different nationalities, to ensure representativity. In the end, participant#1 said she was thankful to speak and share about her life experience. She said she liked it very much and that she enjoyed it a lot.

## Success stories nr 2

**Age:** 32

**Gender:** Female

**Nationality:** Cape Verde and Portuguese

**Professional status:** employed

**Place and time of stay in a foreign country:** participant#2 arrived in Portugal in 2008.

### Summary of the success story:

Participant #2 arrived with her twin sister in Portugal to go to the faculty. Their primary goal was to enroll in a Portuguese university and have a different life than the one Cape Verde could offer to both of them. Participant #2 mentioned in her interview that the Cape Verdean community is very patriarchal. She added that the life she would expect to have in Cape Verde ...

*"I did not want that for me. I never wanted that life for me. I knew I had to get out of there to have a different lifestyle, to be free. And I knew I had to do it through education, enroll in a university, make my own choices, and not follow what others – society – expected me to do. Therefore, my sister and I applied to the university in Portugal".*

She enrolled in Évora, and her twin enrolled in Lisboa. Both were granted a scholarship. They both manage to meet during the weekends, and participant #2 relied on her twin and one of her colleague and friend from the university. They supported each other. Therefore, participant #2 considered it was a success to complete the degree, especially because she was the first person in her family to get a degree, making it even more special, mainly because she is a woman. She stressed, *"my success is my degree. It was a challenge to do it all by myself. I had to keep pushing myself to the finish line. I needed to keep myself motivated, overcome the obstacles and go after my dreams. Throughout my entire life, I needed to keep pushing myself and pursue my goals".*

According to participant#2, her qualities and skills that helped her overcome the most difficult times are: to be a determined person, to be aware of her limits, and aware of her potential. She always tries to overcome difficulties from a positive angle. She always believed in herself.

Participant#2 also stressed that mentorship is essential for newcomers. She adds that no access to information is problematic, and a mentor is crucial to guide newcomers and support them. She carries on by highlighting that mentors need to think out of the box to show a 'new world' to mentees. For instance, participant #2 mentioned that mentors must encourage mentees to get outside of their comfort zone, try new things, discover new hobbies, activities and develop new skills.

### Success stories nr 3 - Poland

**Age:** 35

**Gender:** Female

**Nationality:** Iraqi and Polish

**Professional status:** medical doctor

**Place and time of stay in a foreign country:** Warsaw, 14 years

#### Summary of the success story:

As a child of a Polish woman and Iraqi man, she had double citizenship since she was born. She spent her childhood and teenage years in Iraq, where she also started medical studies. *“We had good and stable conditions in Iraq”* - she recalls. Poland was a place where she would come to visit her relatives, but never thought of moving until the armed conflict erupted in 2003.

She and her sisters were studying or attending school, while every time they were leaving home they felt that it's risk of being kidnaped, wounded or killed. The family decided not to wait for themisfortune. Since Poland was a second home for them and they had citizenship, it was anobvious choice for them. She is sure that migration was easier for her (she didn't have to legalize her stay), though it doesn't mean that everything was easy. The biggest challenge was language –though her mother is Polish, she also knows Arabic.

Before, when she and her family came to Poland to visit grandparents, they (the grandparents) were the ones that took care of everything. After moving in, the family had to be responsible for their own life and in an - after all - foreign country, some small things, such as grocery, become challenges – everything was different, she has to check whether the yogurt contains pork gelatin etc. Moreover, her mothers family is not from Warsaw, so in the beginning they were alone in thecapital.

*“There was a war in Iraq and of course that was an abnormal state, but we get used to it. In Poland we had to get used to this strange normality. It was quiet when we woke up in the morning, while in Iraq you could always hear some helicopters. And silence could be the sign that something worse will come. So in Poland I had to learn that silence can be a good thing”* - she recalls.

*“I've met so many good and empathetic people. So many people have helped me at the university”*

In the beginning, she was learning things by heart at the university, not understandingthe words. With time she started understanding more and more. *“I was lucky that my professors understood that if I don't know something, it doesn't mean that I'm lazy, but it's just a bit harder for me than for most of the students”*.

She considers graduating from med school, despite studying in Polish, her biggest success. There were moments when she doubted that she is able to do that. She was also admitted for a specialisation of general surgery. After some challenges, she finally feels that Poland is her home. At first she was afraid to make plans in Poland – she already had some plans in Iraq and suddenly everything collapsed. *“Now I feel that I have the right to make plans for the future, even the distant future – my child going theuniversity, me getting old here”*.

She found out that her passion is multicultural and multireligious dialogue, she was in the TV telling about islam. She also feels that:

*“In Iraq we only had two channels in the television, at the time there was not much accessto the internet. And I know that if you are bombarded by one point of view, for example about minorities, it will affect you. Poland gave me the chance to meet different people belonging to the groups which I never met in Iraq – people of different religions, different sexual orientations, and I appreciate this opportunity. I understood that you need to meet a person and labels we give people are not the whole definition. It also gave me motivation to speak about my otheness – being muslim.”*

Her son is 7 and he started to feel the need to tell people that he's a muslim. Once they were playing Christmas carols at school and he said he didn't want to.

*“After the lesson one of the parents called me to tell me that the teacher was forcing him and my son just kindly asked, he wasn't rude. If that situation happened after my arrival to Poland – I wouldn't do nothing, because I felt that I don't have a right to react. I feltthat I'm a stranger here and the majority have more rights than me. But I realized that it changed. So I wrote the letter to this teacher and explain to her that we are not against any religion and I never forbidden my son to learn about Christian traditions, we just have ours. So the teacher suggested that he make a presentation about muslim holidays. After that many parents thanked us”.*

*“Of course I don't mean to inforce your own rules, you have to adapt. But you also have the right to be yourself, know your rights and duties. I don't like when somebody migrates and then tries to change the country. But I believe that we, migrants, can add something positive to the society”.*

*“I appreciate that in the hospital, my colleagues accepted my difference, for example that I cover myself”.*

Although she had also experienced some racist incidents and that was hard for her. Fortunately, it happened after some time.

*“If it happened shortly after I arrived, I wouldn't have been able to face it. After some time I realized that racism is just a problem with a mentality and that person probably hated also other groups that are different from him. It's a problem with him, not with me. I know people who were attacked on the street or had problems with renting a flat because of racism. That people often become oversensitive”.*

*“My family helped me a lot, for example with Polish. I've also met a lot of good people”.*

*“Currently I believe that migrating to Poland was the best decision we could make. Though I have nice childhood memories from Iraq, I'm aware that it's not a country to live. Here I have a chance to develop myself and make my dreams come true”.*

*“If I could tell something to myself from the past, I would tell myself not to give up and learn more. I would also like to tell other migrants that they should learn about their hosting society and forget*



*the stereotypes. We all have it. There are positive and negative stereotypes about Europeans, for example, when I tell my friends that as in Iraq, there are also people in Poland who are against vaccines, my Iraqi friends don't want to believe that. Some not educated people in Iraq use the same arguments, so Iraqis cannot believe that somebody in Europe also think that way. It's good to understand what people think and what is happening in the politics, the law, for example traffic law, of the country you live in. You also need to be aware that you cannot change this place, you cannot force your surrounding to adapt to you. You need to learn to discuss, without arguing. To state your opinion, without forcing everybody to have the same. It's also good to know the history, the most important holidays, it can help to understand the mentality”.*

*“While speaking with migrants I often have the impression that they don't know their basic rights or they don't know how the educational system is functioning. It can be a surprise that you need to enroll your child to kindergarten half of a year in advance, while to PHD studies 2 months is enough. There are so many simple things that you need to know in order to be able to live in some country. But the good thing is that school is often supporting – or at least it was in my case”.*



#### Success stories nr 4

**Age:** 27

**Gender:** Female

**Nationality:** Belarusian with Polish roots

**Professional status:** she's an artist receiving ministerial scholarship and completing PHD studies

**Place and time of stay in a foreign country:** Warsaw, since 2010

#### Summary of the success story:

She decided to migrate in search for better education. Poland was an obvious choice for her, due to her Polish roots. She was preparing herself to leave her country since she was around 10 y.o.

She came to Poland by herself, which – in her opinion – was a positive thing, as it helped her to assimilate in Polish society. She didn't have a possibility to become part of a Belarusian enclave, integration was the only choice for her. She was studying here with Poles and it gave her the impression that she is here on the same rules as Poles.

*“I was living in a dorm and I was speaking Polish with my fellow students, because I did not have other choice. But of course I'm aware that the situation of Belarusians who are fleeing the country now out of political reasons is not the same. When I came to Poland, the attitude towards Belarusians and Ukrainians was different. In 2016, when so many people had to flee Syria, the prejudice towards “the other” were growing in Polish society. I felt the strange atmosphere around me. When my family visited me and we just went to the shop, I've heard somebody saying <<Russian invasion>>.” She encountered situations when she felt that she is treated inferior in Polish offices when she showed her Belarusian passport. “But those kind of situations were just small things, so I tried to forget them. And as a movie director I am aware that even the bad character has good intentions”.*

*“It happened to me that I went to some office and the clerk told me that something is impossible, even though it was not true. Now I understand my mission, and I do my best to help those who had to flee from Belarus”, she says.*

*“Because the average person with our mentality in this situation would just walk away. And I've learned in Poland that sometimes we need to fight for our rights. Today I registered to persons to get national identification number. At first the lady in the office refused, because they do not have a registration. I showed her the article proving that this is not true and only after that she gave them the number. But most of the migrants wouldn't fight for their rights, they would just hang up and rising. Poles get used to fighting for their rights, but when you live in the country where the law doesn't work, you will easily believe a person who tells you that you don't have some right. If somebody stayed in a prison for more than 6 months, he or she will consider this situation as*

*normal”.*

She believes that good communication between mentor and mentee is essential. Mentee should state openly what is good and what is not. In many cases people do not say everything. For example: somebody is applying for international protection but after some time it turns out that he has German visa. *“It may be something in a mentality”,* she says. *“Maybe those people were intimidated in their countries, interrogated by OMON. In countries such as Belarus, you can feel the fear in the air”.*

She still considers Belarus as her home and currently she cannot visit it for too long, because being there for a long period would make her miss it more. She became more patriotic as Belarussian after leaving her country. As her success she consider getting into Academy of Fine Arts and receiving many awards. *“I receive the Ministerial Scholarship and I make my living from art”.* Moreover, she is invited to many art exhibitions around the world as Polish artist – in the art community she is considered as Polish artist, not Belarussian.

While working on her Masters diploma, she tried to she wanted to help in a non-material way the people who had to flee from their countries and came to Poland. She noticed how the situation of migrants have changed since she arrived to Poland. She made over 80 interviews in the aliens center.

*“I met there a boy from Chechnya and I asked him how can I help here. His answer was: please don't call me a refugee. He told me that when in his school a Polish boy draw a rifle and there was no problem, but when he, as Chechen, draw the same, the teacher called a psychologist”.*

After that she started asking people who fled their countries what they think about Polish word “refugee”. Many people said that it's hard to pronounce.

*“The etymology of the word is also important. It influence the way people think about themselves. So I invited 13 people from Chechnya, Kongo, Nigeria as well as some artists. Together we were thinking about new word to replace it. We came up with a word <<newmen>>, <<new women>>, which is a homonim of a popular polish surname. It turned out that this name came from the Middle Ages when a serf runaway from one master to the other, so in some way he was also a refugee. And we are all <<newmen>>, <<newwoman>>, because our ancestors were moving. Only after people started settling, being on the move became something strange. Some people just simply feel that in other country they would feel happier, but statistical Pole doesn't understand that”.*

When asked what motivate her to keep going in the hard moments, she says that she was looking for role models – people with migration background who succeeded in some field, created their own businesses etc. Her skills that made it easier for her? Curiosity about other people, communicativeness and that she is not focusing on negative things. She believes that the migrants have to learn to be insistent when it comes to their rights. Some people do not want to complain. In Belarus we were not taught to speak up when something doesn't work, everybody is afraid. But feedback can make things work better for all of us, so it's actually a positive thing.

### Success stories nr 5 - Greece

**Age:** 29

**Gender:** Male

**Nationality:** Moroccan

**Professional status:** Interpreter in the Reception Centre of Elaiona, Athens, Greece

**Place and time of stay in a foreign country:** Greece since 2016 (5 years)

#### Summary of the success story:

Abdel is 29 years old and he comes from Morocco. He arrived to the island Chios, Greece in 2016 on his own. He was 24 years old at the time. He is currently studying Economics and Business Administration in the "Webster University" in Athens with a scholarship of the institution. He is also working as an interpreter in the Reception Centre of Elaionas in Athens, Greece in cases of psychosocial, legal and medical support to migrants.

Abdel decided to leave Morocco in order to study in a University that would enhance his professional opportunities and help him find a good job. He aimed to migrate to Luxembourg but he could not pass the borders so he decided to stay in Greece. The biggest challenge he faced at the beginning was the language, as he could not communicate at all and for all the procedures he needed to be supported by an interpreter. The conditions in the camp at Chios were adverse; for a period of time, they didn't even have electricity in the facility they were staying. Luckily, he stayed in the camp for only (?) 5 months. He also faced difficulties in attaining the necessary permit to move.

Abdel stated that in comparison to his former life in Morocco, now he felt more satisfied with his job, as he earns enough and he is able to study in the field of his interest. This is also what Abdel considers his personal success; the fact that he is studying and at the same time working in an area where he can use his language skills (he speaks 6 languages). He hopes that in the future his studies and language will help him get a job at an Embassy.

Abdel explained that at the beginning he faced many difficulties; he did not have money or a place to sleep; he could not communicate because he spoke only English; receiving permit and other legal documents was hard. He also had to deal with not having means of communication with his family back in Morocco, especially his mother who was extremely worried about him. But despite all these, he managed to pass the exams and receive one of the few scholarships provided by "Webster University". Abdel stated that he feels this was an important success. In addition to that, he feels that finding a job despite the language barrier is significant. His first job was as an interpreter of the French language for an NGO (Ankaa Project). His colleagues and friends there supported him a lot during this hard period of time. Then he worked for another NGO (Help) and the last 11 months he has been working in the Reception Centre of Elaionas in Athens.

Abdel states that he was motivated to overcome the difficulties because he needed to support his family back in Morocco and especially his 2 brothers that were studying there.



Regarding the skills that he found more useful in overcoming the initial obstacles, Abdel said that being multilingual was very helpful but also setting goals and working to achieve them while being social and open to communicate. Abdel believes strongly that self-confidence and persistence are the keys:

*“You need to believe in yourself and you can achieve anything you wish. It might look hard at the beginning, so you need to keep on fighting. I am an example that a migrant here can succeed. I also faced difficulties coming here but now I have a home, a job and a car and I feel good with myself. Nothing is impossible”.*

The moment that he felt that migrating and staying in Greece was the right one was when he managed to get a scholarship for “Webster University” to study and at the same time have a job so as to be able to provide all that was needed for his family in Morocco and himself here.

Abdel says that it is crucial that migrants who have recently arrived in Greece are supported by someone who has been through the same experience. He states that he can share with them examples so that they avoid mistakes that he did. A mentor would also need to be willing to help, honest with the people he/ she supports and to inspire them to be persistent and work to achieve their goals. The mentor should give them hope, “*a piece of light in their lives*”. The mentor should also emphasize on the importance of learning to speak the local and other languages, otherwise the migrants will not be able to get a job and will stay dependent to other people.

### Success stories nr 6

**Age:** 48

**Gender:** Female

**Nationality:** Lebanese and Greek

**Professional status:** Cultural mediator and teacher of the Arabic language in Iraklion Crete, Greece

**Place and time of stay in a foreign country:** Greece since 2000 (21 years)

#### Summary of the success story:

Aleyna is 45 years old and she comes from Lebanon. She first came to Greece in 1989 to study, then returned to Lebanon and moved permanently to Greece in 2000 with her husband who is Greek. She has studied Glossology in the University of Thessaloniki, Greece and Special Needs Education in the University of Lebanon. She has been working for years as a cultural mediator / interpreter in Iraklion, Crete, Greece and she is also a teacher of the Arabic language.

When she moved to Crete with her husband in 2000, she had no friends or social interactions and it took some time to get to know the place, the local habits and way of life. Back in Lebanon, she had a very good life with her family, friends and work. She feels as a success the fact that she became familiar with the life in Greece rather quickly. She says that she feels confident and she participates actively in all social circumstances such as the Parents' Council in the schools of her children. She is known and respected for her work as a cultural mediator in Iraklion. She has friends and very good relationships with her neighbors. She says: *"Being kind and positive, you will never see closed doors"*.

Of course, at the beginning she had difficulties because she was entirely dependent to her husband.

Her husband encouraged her to take initiatives; he suggested that she was often driving to get to know the place. At the beginning she worked together with him in the family business, however that was not something that related to her preferences. In 2009 by chance, she came to support as an interpreter a Syrian before the police in an asylum case. At the police station she was informed that they needed interpreters. So, she started working as an interpreter for the Greek police occasionally. She also attended a capacity building training on Interpretation of the Greek NGO "METAdrasi". Since then, she has been working as an interpreter for several authorities and organizations (Greek police, courts, airport, METAdrasi) and since 2017, she has been working for "Anaptixiaki Irakliou" in Iraklion. Using her language skills to support people in need gives her satisfaction. It reminds her of the first period here in Greece that she needed help. She always tries to get better and better in her work and to effectively support them overcome their problems.

Aleyna says that her family (her husband here and her siblings in Lebanon and later her children), a Lebanese friend who lives in Crete, her faith in God and her confidence were motivating factors to overcome her difficulties at the beginning. Regarding skills that she found useful, Aleyna referred to language skills and also being willing and thinking positively. She says that she knew right from the start that she had made the right



choice moving with her husband to Greece because back in Lebanon there were conflicts and bomb attacks and she would not feel safe to raise her kids there.

Aleyna said she would gladly support a newcomer migrant by sharing her experience and guiding him/ her do the right choices according to their profile and goals. She says that it is crucial to help them set goals. A mentor should first be informed about the mentees' background, wishes and goals in an open discussion. Then the mentor should try to create trust between them, learn their needs and guide them accordingly. First and foremost, the mentees should be encouraged to learn the local language. The mentor should give the mentees incentives and support them to chase their dreams and goals.

### Success stories nr 7 - Turkey

**Age:** 32

**Gender:** Male **Nationality:**

Syria

**Professional status:** Professional Film Maker

**Place and time of stay in a foreign country:** 4 years Ankara and 4 years stanbul

#### Summary of the success story:

He was born in Damascus. He is one of the millions of Syrians who had to flee their homeland to save their lives. He is happy to remember his childhood and school years because he discovered his greatest passion in those years. *"I've had a special interest in cinema and movies since I was akid," he says. "I loved making short films with my friends"*. While at school, he set up a website where he categorized movies and spent most of his time at a movie rental shop run by his uncle. *"I used to watch how my uncle described movies when selling or renting them to customers,"* he recalls. His filmmaking experience goes way back than the definition of video known to today's children. *"Our whole high school life with my best friend was spent making short movies with the camera of our cell phone and distributing them over Bluetooth when there was no YouTube available,"* he says. He knew from then on that his dream was to make movies all his life.

He started his university education in 2010, just one year before the conflict broke out. Since there are no filmmaking or cinema departments at Damascus University, he studied pharmacy, which is his next passion. He passionately explains how much he has an interest in chemistry, how enormous are the changes that matter goes through and the endless reactions that make up life. *"I loved to watch them mix and react with chemicals, create new colors, crystallize and undergo change. Change would excite me. I would long to watch this change"*, he says, revealing his unique perspective on the world and objects. He spent most of his youth enjoying reading and learning new things. He has learned to self-design graphic design and video editing, which will come in handy in the future. His studies in art and sociology helped him develop a unique perspective of the world, while his chemistry education helped him learn how to cope with changes in life and difficult conditions. He was still a student when the conflicts broke out in Syria in 2011. Despite all the difficulties, he managed to graduate from the Faculty of Pharmacy of Damascus University. *"I had to go after 5 years of fear and uncertainty"*, he explains, explaining that difficult decision he had to take, *"but after arriving in Turkey in 2013, I had much greater opportunities. I had the chance to get education about the field I am devoted to. After learning Turkish, I started university again. This time I was safe, away from the war"*.

While in Damascus, it was not possible for him to study filmmaking, to dream of making movies for life. But after coming to Turkey, he had the chance to study in the cinema department, which is his real passion. He started his cinema education after a year in the Turkish preparatory class. But since he also had to

support his family, he went to school during the day and worked as a graphic designer in the evenings. *"I was exhausted, but it was worth it! "Doing what I was passionate about and working in the field that entered my dreams gave me enough energy",* he says. While he strives to make his dreams come true, he thinks it is a great blessing to be with his family and loved ones. He felt very happy when he bought his first semi-professional camera after saving for a long time. *"I was like crazy with my camera. I was like a kid with his toy back,"* he says excitedly. *"I shot videos every day but every day for a year. I edited what I shot as a video diary and was able to make my first short film".* He talks about the short film *A Year in Exile*, about the first year of a refugee who left his small country and took refuge in a metropolis in a neighboring country. The shock and emotional chaos our hero went through in a year in the film; it is conveyed through sounds, thoughts and moving images. The film, whose national premiere was made in the 57th Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival in October 2020, was chosen as the best short documentary at the 8th Bosphorus Film Festival. Now it competes in various international film festivals in Europe and Asia. *"As a Syrian living in Istanbul, it was both a social and an artistic responsibility for me to implement this project. I shot this film independently, with my own camera at my own expense,"* he says proudly.

Today, while studying Radio, TV and Cinema at Marmara University Faculty of Communication, he is doing a double major with the Department of Film Design at the Faculty of Fine Arts. His next goal is to graduate and, if possible, get a master's degree. He states that he has many project ideas in mind, although it is not possible to say anything about the near future since he is faced with many unknowns including the pandemic. *"I am currently preparing for my first feature documentary; I work on some ideas and scenarios. I never stop making plans, and I am making changes to those plans over and over again"* he says.

### Success stories nr 8

**Age:** 53

**Gender:** Male

**Nationality:** Georgia

**Professional status:** Sculptor

**Place and time of stay in a foreign country:** In Ankara since 7 years

#### Summary of the success story:

His story is based on art, resistance and commitment. He is one of the thousands of people who had to flee their homes in Georgia due to the Russian pressure from Abkhazia. He tries to define what "home" means to him as an artist. He comes from a family of poets and artists. He started sculpting and painting at a young age. He tells that he won the art competitions at the school and opened his own art gallery when he was 10 years old. He was already a recognized artist when the clashes broke out in Georgia. Then his life was turned upside down. In the past, he thought of staying in his house in order not to abandon the works of art he had brought to life with all his efforts. But in 2016 he had to flee and came to Turkey illegally, and in 2017 his daughter and two sons joined him. Feeling that he could never return to Georgia again, he had to leave all his studies behind. He buried some of his paintings so that no one could find them. Later, he learned that the art gallery was demolished and all his works were confiscated. He is thankful he is alive. He says he can always continue to practice his art as he lives. Immigration from Georgia to Turkey has not been easy for him and his family. Although they had a good and orderly life in Georgia, they had to start from scratch here. *"Life started from scratch for me after I came to Turkey"*, he says. *"In the beginning, I wanted to go to France and continue my art there. However, I started to live in Turkey and I saw that I could work freely and build what I love with my own hands"*.

He says he found his inspiration again in Turkey and felt that he could find a place among many Turkish artists. He says that although he has the skills and opportunities required to live as an artist in Turkey, above all, he also has the freedom to produce. Nowadays, he works in Turkey without a break. Thus, she both makes a living and continues to perform her art. Their efforts have also begun to bear fruit. He received an invitation to meet from the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Turkey. He tells that he has exhibited her works in four highly successful exhibitions since he came to Turkey, with a voice that reflects his pride in his success. He proudly tells the positive feedback he received from Turkish artists. *"I feel supported, valued and most importantly, my work is appreciated"* he says. *"These nice reactions of Turkish people motivated me to work even harder and continue to produce as an artist"*. He also works as a sculptor. His sculptures are exhibited in some art galleries and public buildings in Turkey.

Through his sculptures, he describes how the civil war in Georgia affected his and many others' lives. *"I don't see sculpting as a profession, it's my way of expressing myself as an artist"*, he says. He talks about what

inspired his work.

*“When I am amazed or admired about something, I try to amaze other people. If something affects me, if it touches my soul, I try to reflect it in my art. I'm not doing all this just because they call me an artist or just to make art. I do it to describe what happened to me, my people and my people, to tell the story of the suffering. I feel the sadness of those who live in the camps and need a bowl of food. And I'm trying to reflect this in my art”.*

As a realist, he says, he has little hope for his country's future. He thinks the tension will not end soon. He brought a pot of soil from his homeland and tells that whenever he longed for the house, he opened the lid of that pot and absorbed the smell of his homeland, which he held in his palms. *“I am 53 years old”*, he says, *“I do all kinds of artistic production and I don't turn down any offer as long as I have the energy and desire to work when any job or project is offered”.* *As refugees, we have no choice but to work hard to survive*”, he adds. Despite the dreadful situation of being displaced, he is hopeful for the future; He thinks that this hope stems from freedom. He says that he wants to travel all over Turkey and exhibit his works in art galleries, make installations in Turkey, maybe even in Europe. He wants to create a message for humanity through his art and share this message with the whole world. Using his art, he wants to tell not only his peers destroyed by war, but the tragedies and hardships of lives around the world.

## Success stories nr 9 - Romania

**Age:** 43

**Gender:** Female

**Nationality:** Filipino

**Professional status:** Training manager

**Place and time of stay in a foreign country:** Braşov, Romania, 1 year and 1 month

### Summary of the success story:

Anastasia decided to move to Romania without hesitation. When she was asked if she would like to come to Romania she said “yes” not allowing herself extra time to think about it. After having a career as a training manager for wellness in some luxury locations (Maldives, Seychelles, Dubai) considered that Romania has something to offer. She received a job offer in a touristic area from Romania and she enjoys the benefits of living a quiet life, with fresh air, in a city surrounded by mountains while benefiting of affordable prices and facilities. Anastasia didn’t face some major challenges, but she admits that the language was a problem: *“It is actually a language barrier, it’s a difficult language, not every Romanian speaks English, so I have to adapt. This is one of the biggest challenges.”*

Anastasia has been working in a hospital 20 years before and she found that environment a toxic one, so she started to learn different kind of healing which is alternative medicine, being more preventing and this shift brought her path to wellness industry. The whole experience was full of challenges with people not believing in what she was able to mentor them, but she thinks it is important to believe in yourself in order to make people believing in you, then you have to build trust to people you work with and finally all these people will lean and then you will be able to influence them. Her life mantra is: *“Learn as if you are going to live forever and live as you are going to die tomorrow.”* For this reason, she goes all over the world for connections, for social networks, for friends, for clients.

Anastasia considers herself successful by being able to diversify, to move to different places to teach, to train, to mentor and to be mentored and to see the world in different angles. For this reason, she chose Romania, considering that every country has something unique from which you can learn. To be a mentor is something very inspiring and knowing this is her life calling, looking after a team, helping them to become the best version of themselves it is fulfilling. Once her team becomes better and better, she also feels happy. Passing through different experiences Anastasia has some advice:

*“You have to do things that make you happy before it’s too late. Knowing earlier your life passion will lead you to success”. “Nothing is impossible, impossible it’s an opinion, you can do whatever you want, the only limit is what you think it is”.*

Also, she advises the migrants to accept the uncertainty and to find friends, to be active on social network, to connect with other people, to find support groups. Anastasia wants to do mentoring for migrants, to teach them and be more inspirational.

## Success stories nr 10

**Age:** 49

**Gender:** Male

**Nationality:** Turkish

**Professional status:** Freelance journalist

**Place and time of stay in a foreign country:** Bucharest, Romania, 17 years

### Summary of the success story:

George arrived in Romania with a work contract, it was accidentally, but he was delighted to see that the family is an important value in the Romanian society, to see a movement in society, in the city, and compared to other countries, Romanians seemed to have much more positive people.

George considers that:

*“If I were in the West, I wouldn't feel well. In Romania, the respect of Romanians towards Turks is very special. If I were in Germany, England, I would be considered a foreigner, from a secondary category. Here I felt like a neighbor, respected, and I learned the approaches necessary to be this man”.*

For moving to a new country with the wife and two children it was important to find some shops, butcheries, and facilities. It was a good surprise to see that all these things were available here. George appreciates the green zone from Bucharest, since in Turkey to get in a park it takes a lot of time, and here, even between buildings you can find small parks, so it is great for walking with kids outside.

George has a good experience with the process of learning Romanian language, he could understand some words that are common with Turkish words and in 3 months, after pursuing some language courses he could speak and understand Romanian language at a basic level. He had a dictionary in his pocket and while walking on the streets he stopped at some shops, restaurants, posters, or banners and translated the words. After years, he participated in an intensive course for 3 weeks and corrected some mistakes. Now, the Romanian language became his favorite language. The most important achievement, from George experience is that he learned from Romanians that:

*“Life must be lived healthily, we must rest. The Turks are too hardworking, they do not have time for themselves, it was a pride to be this way, and it still is. But if you do not have health and mental health, if you do not have spiritual benefits, it is all in vain. You cannot replace mental health with money. [...] In Turkey there is agitation everywhere, and in this competition, you do not feel good, that you are forced to compete with others”.*

The hardest moments were when he could not go back for the funeral of his mother because he is a journalist opposed to the Ankara regime and for 5 years he could not go back to Turkey; there was a risk of arrest and extradition, but he knows that Romania it is a state of law that respects EU values and the Romanian state never extradited him to Turkey.



For George, it was important to feel safe in Romania, to be able to do his job without fear and be supportive with those persecuted in Turkey. Being able not to worry about his personal life, he could dedicate his energy to people whose rights are being violated. Lately, George have obtained Romanian citizenship and he feels more courageous to write the truth.

George is a mentor for the migrants and refugees coming to Romania:

*“There are people from Turkey or migrants in Romania who do not know the Romanian language and I guide them. For example, the topic of the day is vaccination, I let them know, for example, what is the process, that it can be done at the family doctor, they need to register, etc. I am an open man, if I know the solution, why not say? Recently, about 20 people came from Turkey because of the persecution, they needed more help, and I was a translator and tried to help them. It is very satisfying to help people in such situations. Knowing the persecutions in Turkey, I have an additional motivation to mediate the connection with the lawyers, during the courts, to mediate the contact with the translators for the documents and so on.”*

### Success stories nr 11 - Italy

**Age:** 24

**Gender:** Male

**Nationality:** Guinea

**Professional status:** worker in a winery

**Place and time of stay in a foreign country:** In Italy for 7 years, now in Cerignola (Foggia)

#### Summary of the success story:

M. arrived in Italy in 2014 with a desire: to leave his country to be reborn. In Guinea his family is so poor that he cannot afford to keep him in his studies and therefore M. independently decides to want to build a future in Italy. His relationship with his family is rather "silent": a relationship made of respect but also of undeclared love. Despite his desire to stay in Italy, M. returned to Guinea last year to say goodbye to his mother who died in hospital in Africa after a few months. His journey is made up of hostility and a lot of suffering. A welcoming center for migrants in Cerignola, in southern Italy, helps him to enter the territory by supporting his enthusiasm, his intelligence and sporting skills. He often reiterates that training and school helped him become a "well integrated" citizen and that sport was a very useful link: many young people invited him to play football. He attended middle school and got his middle school certificate with good results. His ability to dialogue leads him to do the universal civil service for a year, where he met an Italian girl who has accompanied him in his life in the new country for 5 years. His adaptability and his marked intelligence lead him to sometimes be a linguistic mediator in the courts.

However, over the years he has tried to move to other countries, but he always wanted to return to Italy where he found his certainties about him: work and love. Today he claims to have achieved his goal: economic independence. After a year of testing, today he works as a worker in a winery where he is treated with respect and above all with trust. Even today he remembers well what were the main difficulties: language as a barrier that did not allow him to truly express himself; the bureaucracy to obtain and renew the residence permit and the difficulties in making an insurance for the car, as a BLACK boy.

M. still has two dreams in the drawer: to continue his studies and maybe be a professional footballer.

The interview ends with a sentence from him: NEVER GIVE UP and with a beautiful smile remembering that as a good immigrant he appreciates our Italian cuisine, so much so that the owner of the house where he currently lives, every Sunday brings him "baked pasta" strictly without pork!



### Success stories nr 12

**Age:** 44

**Gender:** Male

**Nationality:** Senegal

**Professional status:** intercultural and linguistic mediator

**Place and time of stay in a foreign country:** In Italy for 13 years, now in Cerignola (Foggia)

#### Summary of the success story:

P. comes from Senegal and is 44 years old, he arrived in Italy in 2003. His desire was mainly to leave Senegal to become an independent person, especially from an economic point of view. He knows the word sacrifice well: "the spirit of sacrifice" has always been his motto; working with perseverance and achieve these long-awaited goals. He reiterates that his social integration process in Italy was not easy, there were not a few difficulties that he had to face from 2003 to today. One of the greatest difficulties that P. encountered was the language barrier: he was unable to communicate with others, but it was only thanks to his studies and good training that he was able to make himself understood. P. is a man of great responsibility, his greatest success was not only that of becoming independent socially and economically, but above all that of being able to set up an association of Senegalese on his own on the territory and it works to favor the integration process, as he says: "*by removing people from the streets*". P. admits that in his journey he did not feel alone, as the training teachers, friends, and some institutions he turned to supported him. P. is a successful man because thanks to his seriousness and determination he also managed to obtain family reunification. Today his wife lives with him in Italy happily.

In addition, he earned a diploma as a cultural mediator, taking the opportunity to work and interact in the social and local context. P. does not deny having encountered so many difficulties in this long journey which often required a spirit of adaptation and problem-solving skills, patience in facing enormous problems such as racism and distrust. P. is convinced that we must always have hope in the heart, never surrender to adversity and face everything with a positive spirit.



# CHAPTER 5

## Conclusion

## Conclusions

The stories gathered in this booklet showed many common patterns among the participants. Above all, they showed that in most of the cases migration is not an easy choice and integration is a challenging achievement. Although people who were interviewed in the framework of this project have achieved success, they had to overcome numerous obstacles in order to do so.

The difficulties that the participants encountered during their migration and integration journey included in particular:

- I. legal and administrative obstacles,
- II. financial problems,
- III. language barrier,
- IV. cultural differences.

The barriers and obstacles that the interviewed migrants have encountered are described in more detail below.

### AD I. Legal and administrative obstacles

Legal and administrative obstacles also include problems with arriving in the country of one's current residence. Such problems have not been experienced by people who came to the country for work, such as a Filipina in Romania working as a masseuse, or another person who came as a bank employee. Some of the paths and events involved in reaching the country of destination are extremely dramatic, as are the stories of the Syrians now living in Turkey. The stories from the interviews show very sharply the problems faced by migrants at different stages of their journey, at the border, or with the legalization of stay, differently for each country.

Some of the interviewed migrants encountered difficulties with legalizing their stay in the new country. As an example, Ruslan, a 37 year old from Chechnya fled to Poland because of the violent conflict in his country, yet he was not granted refugee status, but only a tolerated stay and therefore he was not allowed to work and yet he also did not get any support from the state. The turning point in his life was when the law changed, and he was granted the possibility to change his status to subsidiary protection. Only then did he get some support from the state.

Migrants not only struggle to legalize their stay, but oftentimes they have to fear being deported from their new country. As an example, Tatiana, a 49 year old woman from Ukraine living in Poland was deported, because of missing documents (the work agency was supposed to provide them, but they didn't).

She recalls:

*“Once when me and my friend were coming back from work late in the evening, three cars blocked the road. Some strangers stopped us and asked for our passports. We were two women and we were terrified. The first thing that came to my mind was that they want to take us to a brothel... But then I realised they are Border Guards. They took us into custody for 24 hours, 70 people on 40 square meters. We said that we need a translator and they brought somebody, but he fooled us. He wrote that we were offered an assistance of an attorney and we refused, which is obviously not true...”*

Nevertheless, she decided to migrate once again, because of the unstable situation in her country. Yet, this story shows how important it is to offer migrants support.

A 24-year-old man from Guinea, currently living in Italy mentioned as one of the main difficulties the bureaucracy needed to obtain and renew a residence permit and further the difficulties in obtaining insurance for his car, especially because of his skin colour.

#### AD II. Financial problems

Most newcomers start from scratch. Financial problems were usually linked to other difficulties, such as the lack of a work permit mentioned below. However, it should be emphasized that all interviewees achieved full success and are extremely aware of it. Now they have a job, a home, some a family and children. Financial problems as acute and difficult as emphasized by interviewees are over. And the painful past and the awareness of not having had anything has sensitized them to the needs of others.

Some of the migrants interviewed had to struggle to earn a living at the beginning of their migration journey. In some cases, they did not even have work permit, so they had to work for low wages and without workers' rights. For Tatiana it was not easy at the beginning, especially that her husband had an accident that resulted in eye injury. He could not work for one year, he could not even partake in education. Therefore she needed to find a job as soon as possible, and the job of a cleaner was the easiest to find. Paying for rent and food was a huge expense for her. She says: *“I wanted to give my son some money so he can buy himself something to eat, some notebooks to school at least... I'm not even talking about giving him money for a ticket to the cinema.”*

The Georgian sculptor was forced to leave his country for political reasons: *“Immigration from Georgia to Turkey has not been easy for him and his family. Although they had a good and orderly life in Georgia, they had to start from scratch here.”*

### AD III. Language barrier

For many migrants, learning a new language is a very big hurdle among those that they have to overcome in order to adapt to a new country. The histories also show that motivation is strong to overcome the initial inability to speak the local language. Because knowledge opens the door to study, work, a better, dream life. The initial language barrier and the difficulties associated with it appeared as an important feature in most of the interviews. However, none of the interviewees even mentioned that they would not like to learn the language. It was an obvious move to learn the language as a step towards building independence and stabilization in the new homeland. Here is how the need to learn Italian was explained during the interview by a migrant from Pakistan. *"I studied very hard because I strongly wanted to learn the Italian language to be able to enroll in driving school"*.

George, originally from Turkey now living in Romania, has a good experience with the process of learning Romanian language. After pursuing some language courses he could speak and understand Romanian language at a basic level. He had a dictionary in his pocket and while walking on the streets he stopped at some shops, restaurants, posters, or banners and translated the words. After years, he participated in an intensive course for 3 weeks and corrected some mistakes. Now, the Romanian language became his favorite language.

One person who migrated from Tunisia recalls that in the beginning he was communicating using sign language and a bit of English. It was not easy for him to communicate in the bank or post office. In his opinion, it is possible to communicate with most of the people using sign language, though not with everybody – there are some people who just do not want to communicate when they see a foreigner and therefore the willingness to communicate is needed on both sides. He believes that the better a migrant knows the language of his new country, the better he or she will integrate, so he did his best to achieve it. At first he was terrified – he thought that he will never learn it and wanted to go back. Nevertheless he decided that he can do it and he cannot give up.

### AD IV. Cultural differences

Cultural differences are seen by migrants as part of a new other world, such as language or different laws. The differences depended on the level of ties with a given culture. A Moroccan living in Turkey who was in a relationship with a Turkish woman told about the relationship very personally. Involvement and contacts with the family of his chosen partner actually served to highlight the differences. The geographical and cultural proximity of the homeland and the country of choice facilitates integration for obvious reasons. The Syrian living in Turkey felt a relatively smaller difference, just like other Slavs who came to Poland. Migrant women from Cape Verde, despite their cultural and linguistic closeness to Portugal, received racist remarks due to differences in appearance, as they mentioned in interviews.

For some, the cultural differences were not easy at the beginning. Sometimes they even needed to adapt in surprising ways to some of the changes, as in the story of a Polish-Iraqi woman, who fled from Iraq – the silence was uncomfortable for her at the beginning of her stay in Poland, as in Iraq silence was a sign that something bad will happen.

According to a person of Tunisian origin, *“The country you migrated to may not meet your expectations.*

*Many people think that they will make it somehow, but it's not so easy. My first salary was 800 złotych [currently around 200 EUR – author's note] and I was surprised, thinking that even the salaries in Tunisia are bigger. You have to accept the other culture, the other climate etc.”*

The interviews showed some factors that can help migrants to succeed in the new country. We can enumerate among them:

- a) personal characteristics
- b) knowing one's rights
- c) setting goals
- d) receiving support

#### AD a). Personal characteristics

The interviewees radiate a great deal of positive energy and strength of character. They owe their success to a large extent to their steadfast attitude and pursuit of goals. Although not all of the interviewees ended up in their desired place after leaving their country of origin, it did not affect their current perception of their situation as extremely successful. It should be remembered that almost all interviewees are economic migrants or those looking for a safe place who, thanks to their intelligence and persistence, learned the language, found a job and, in most cases, found their place in the new country very well. Some of the interviewees came to Europe with the intention of obtaining an education and getting a profession, and this did not change after reaching the place.

A woman from Cape Verde, who currently lives in Portugal and was able to achieve citizenship considers that the most important qualities that helped her get through the most challenging times are: resilience, persistence, not giving up, being stubborn.

When it comes to resilience it can be demonstrated by the words of a Syrian national living in Turkey: “I was exhausted, but it was worth it! Doing what I was passionate about and working in the field that entered my dreams gave me enough energy”.

Abdel from Morocco (residing in Greece) also believes strongly that self-confidence and persistence are the keys: *“You need to believe in yourself and you can achieve anything you wish. It might look hard at the beginning, so you need to keep on fighting. I am an example that a migrant here can succeed. I also faced difficulties coming here but now I have a home, a job and a car and I feel good with myself. Nothing is impossible”.*

As Anastasia (coming from the Philippines, residing in Romania) concludes - *“it is important to believe in yourself in order to make people believe in you (...).”* Another interviewee from Angola, also living in Portugal, recalled: *“Regarding the most difficult moments that she has faced, which include being “invisible”, not acknowledged, she overcame such difficult times due to her humble nature, perseverance, integrity, responsibility and courage.”*

The Tunisian man, living in Poland, believes that it is essential for migrants to be open and not to try to enforce their rules. *“They have to understand and accept the other culture”* - he says.

*“They cannot expect that somebody will do anything for them. He would tell other migrants who do not feel good in their situation that maybe they should try to live in another country. But if they did and they always have a lot of difficulties then maybe there is something wrong with them, not with the place.”*

But, as he says, *“it is never 100% good, so maybe if it's just 60% it's still okay.”* He believes that a positive attitude is essential.

#### AD b). Knowing one's rights

The Polish-Iraqi woman stated that: *“While speaking with migrants I often have the impression that they don't know their basic rights or they don't know how the educational system is functioning. It can be a surprise that you need to enroll your child to kindergarten half of a year in advance, while for PhD studies 2 months is enough. There are so many simple things that you need to know in order to be able to live in some country. But the good thing is that school is oftensupporting – or at least it was in my case.”*

Oftentimes the hosting countries do not support the migrants with good information and mentors could fill this gap.

#### AD c). Setting goals

One of the common patterns that could be observed in many of the success stories was that many of them arrived in their new homelands having some dreams and goals. For many of them it was getting education,

for others getting a satisfying job. Among the people who were interviewed, there were some, for whom graduating was the primary reason for migrating. An example is a woman from Cape Verde, who moved to Portugal at the time when her country did not have a university.

The stories mentioned in this booklet prove that setting a specific goal helps to achieve it. According to Ahmed from Tunisia, *“it's best to decide before migrating what you want to do after*

*– studies, work. It's good to have a plan A and plan B. For example: I'm going to study, but if it won't work out, I will do something else. You have to plan, because it won't always be perfect. The country you migrated to may not meet your expectations.*

Abdel from Morocco states that he was motivated to overcome the difficulties because he needed to support his family back in Morocco, especially his two brothers who were studying there. Even though at the beginning he did not have any knowledge of the language, any money or place to sleep, he now speaks six languages, has a satisfying job and earns enough to be able to study in the field of his interest and support his family at the same time. The gravity of the goal he had in mind made it easier for him to achieve all that.

Having a valid and significant goal may lead to great achievements. In the words of a Georgian sculptor now living in Turkey: *“As refugees, we have no choice but to work hard to survive”*. Despite the dreadful situation of being displaced, he is hopeful for the future. He thinks that this hope stems from freedom. He says that he wants to travel all over Turkey (...) maybe even in Europe and to create a message for humanity through his art and share his anti-war message with the whole world.

#### AD d). Receiving support

Above all, the support that migrants received cannot be overestimated. It is fair to say that in most of the cases, the interviewed people would not be in the place where they are right now, if it were not for the support that they received from their families, friends, other migrants, organizations etc.

Some of the migrants benefited from language and other training courses organised by NGOs in order to develop their skills and improve chances of getting a job. One of the participants arrived to the new country as a scholarship holder, which – in his opinion - was a good opportunity, because many things were organised: somebody was waiting for him at the airport, a room in the dorm was waiting for him, there was food, they showed him how to get from one place to another. That was a big advantage of his situation compared to other migrants. He also had a 5 months language course, after which he should choose his studies. For the first 5 months he had a mentor, who supported him and other migrant students in daily life situations, such as creating a bank account. After that time he had to deal with obstacles by himself, though he also had support from other Arab migrants in Poland, who share their experiences with each other. When he arrived

there were fewer initiatives and organizations supporting migrants, he didn't hear about free language courses for migrants organized by NGOs. He believes that right now there are more opportunities for migrants to get support.

Some of the interviewed people regretted that they did not receive support from the state. Tatiana from Ukraine attended a 6-month language course organized by an NGO, though she thinks that there should be much more support from the state, especially that Poland needs employees. In her opinion, the country can gain from supporting migrants. She had to wait one year for the language course, because she was working in the evenings, so she could only attend it in the morning classes.

The woman from Cape Verde was able to achieve Portuguese citizenship acknowledges that having a strong social network, being surrounded by family and friends, and living near friends in Portugal was very helpful. Therefore, she firmly relied on friends and acquaintances who were very supportive and helped her to feel integrated at school and in the workplace: *"I was fortunate to have had the chance to build the life I have. To have a family, to be surrounded by friends, who live near me, and to have a stable job and income here in Portugal. I feel very blessed"*.

Getting a degree was especially significant, not only because it was her primary reason to move to Portugal, but also because the most challenging moment was studying while having a small child. Back then, her friends were her significant support: *"The most difficult moment was to have a child and to finish my degree. The fact that I have a lot of friends was significant to overcome the difficult moments. In the workplace, it was essential to have friends close and people who supported and helped me integrate into the workplace"*.

Many of the interviewed persons are currently supporting other migrants, as they are able to relate to their experiences. One example is the woman from Cape Verde. Considering that she relied on so many people who helped her through her journey, she mentioned that she likes to support others. And she thinks mentorship is crucial and valuable to integrate and welcome newcomers. In her view, a mentor must be well aware of the country's reality and must feel the desire to support and help their charges all the way. She also stressed it was essential to have people who have gone through a similar situation to support newcomers, even people from different nationalities, to ensure representativity.

Aleyna - a Libanese woman living in Greece - states that it is crucial to help migrants in setting their goals. A mentor should first be informed about the mentees' background, wishes and goals in an open discussion. Then the mentor should try to create trust between them, learn their needs and guide them accordingly.

According to Ahmed from Tunisia, *"Mentors should ask migrants what do they want to do. If the immigrant lets themselves be helped, it's half of the success."* He adds that it is also important to know something about the new country prior to making the decision about migration.

*“Before migrating it's good to read on the Internet about the destination. The most important, in his opinion, are language and profession. “The migrants shouldn't waste time, he or she should learn the language from the beginning.”*

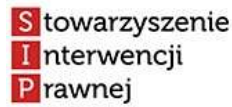
To sum up, the stories gathered in this booklet are showing the importance of offering support for migrants. In many countries the state fails to do so and therefore NGOs have to fill this gap. It appears that offering them the individual support of a mentor, who knows them and can assist them throughout the process of building a new life in the hosting country, would be the best solution.

Although the people who were interviewed in the frames of the project achieved success, they had to struggle a lot in order to do so. Often, the role of mentor was fulfilled by their family, friends and other people who they met on their path. Having a mentor would be invaluable support for them and at the same time would help the hosting societies to raise motivated new inhabitants and possible future citizens.

While the people interviewed for the project did achieve success, they had to struggle a lot. Often the mentor was family, friends and others they met along the way. Having a mentor would be an invaluable support for them, while at the same time helping the host society raise motivated new residents and potential future citizens. There are clear turning points in each migration history. In the author's opinion, only the most important are presented below, while many smaller stages can be distinguished between. The first is the decision to leave, usually a very difficult decision. We should recognise what factors affect it, and this is usually the economic and political situation in the country of origin. The second is learning the language in the host country. The possibility of communication and, consequently, the improvement of one's material and living situation determines further success. Coupled with this, legalisation of the stay is a major turning point if it is initially lacking, because a lack of legalisation hinders a migrant at almost every move. A third turning point is achieving the stage of feeling good in a new country, which translates into building one's own micro-environment, making friends, starting a family, and helping other migrants.

Finally, it should also be emphasized that the stories described above are only a fragment of the broad phenomenon of migration and the interviewees do not constitute a representative group. The thirty interviewees are an exceptionally active, self-confident group of migrants who, thanks to openness, determination and persistence, have a successful life today. One of the interviewee's slogan "to want is to be able" can be used as a motto. Thanks to The Rising project, their success stories will be spread as a good example of successful integration in European countries. The interviews and stories were collected by all partners and compiled by Dalia Mikulska, Ewa Grzegorzówka and Maria Maleky-Deuar.

## Project consortium



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