



THE STORYTELLING BOOKLET

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INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

This booklet is part of the Youth Connections project. Youth Connections is a project co-funded by the Erasmus+ that aims to create a strong link between young refugees, asylum seekers and migrants and EU youth through creative work and cultural activities aimed at fostering social inclusion.

This booklet is the result of workshops and activities that partners have organized with local young people and migrants. It is a collection of **stories** about the personal experience of participants in their process of inclusion and adaptability to the new country.

The partnership has adopted the methodology of storytelling. Storytelling creates a playful environment where people from different background can express themselves and represent their culture and beliefs, mostly in a non-offensive way. In such environment, it is easier to bring migrants and the host community together for the purpose of getting to know each other, sharing the cultural values and listening to each other's life stories.

During our workshops, young refugees, asylum seekers and migrants were invited to share their life journey and the changes they have experienced. These workshops led to open dialogue and storytelling about migration journeys to Europe, focusing on expectations, first impressions of the EU host country and the social inclusion challenges they faced.

On the other side, young Europeans shared the trajectory of their life in their own country, their personal perceptions, opinions and feelings.

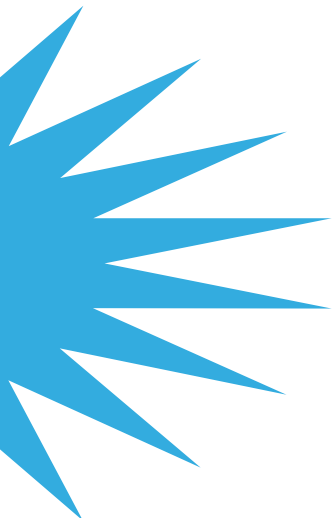
Participants shared their stories in several ways, by drawing, talking and writing. This booklet collects the main results emerged from the workshops in the partner countries.

The storytelling collected in this booklet have been divided into topics:

- Cultural shock
- Personal development
- Challenges
- Experiences
- Discrimination
- Migration
- Dignity
- Tolerance
- Inclusion
- Covid-19



CULTURAL SHOCK



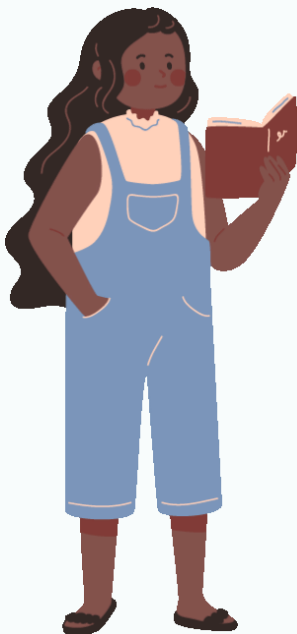
The main character is a young person who decided to move to another country for study .He moved from Azerbaijan to Italy and there are many cultural differences between these countries. So first at the airport he was hearing beautiful Italian language such as words Avanti,permeso and etc.It was different and interesting for him as it was totally different language from his natural one.Then people is so close each other especially from girl side ,you see that everyone is kissing and hugging each other ,in Azerbaijan only if you close that person(especially girl)you can be so open like it.Apart from people and language I can say that meals also is different and at the certain period he missed his local cuisine.



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT



A story of a young woman living in another country. It was her first time living in another country, alone, without her family and friends, in another language and with another culture. She has matured a lot during this period. She got to know herself a lot, she rediscovered a person she didn't know. She is now independent in almost every aspect. In addition, she has met new and wonderful people that she will take with her forever when the experience is over. They have cared about her and trusted her from the beginning, she has learned a lot from them and with them. It has literally been a personal growth. This experience has helped her to increase her confidence, to overcome her fears, to know her strengths and weaknesses, and to know how to overcome them. Who would have thought she would even live through a global pandemic away from home!



A story about a young woman going to the UK to do an ESC. It was quite a challenge; lots of deadlines, lots of projects, but it is also rewarding when you work with the community. In fact, feeling like she can make a difference to something and someone other than herself is rewarding. You have discovered a passion for the work. Being with people who work to help others and it really shows in the way they work. She has learned a lot from her colleagues and their experience. Living in this multicultural environment opens your mind and enriches you a lot. The key to the fact that she has learned so much is that they have trusted her from the beginning, because they have allowed her to have responsibilities. They have taken away her fear of speaking English. She loves that communication with people is so important. She has learned new skills and qualities that she didn't even know she had. All of them are helping her to clarify her ideas about her future career. She still has a lot of room for improvement but she hopes that the time she has left she can and will make the most of it. She hopes she has made the best of it, as they have done with her.



"Overall I am a lucky and privileged person. One of my lowest moments was a disease, fortunately I was able to overcome it. One of the highest moments in my life was my grant as a Benjamin Franklin Fellowship. Another lowest moment was the recent lockdown due to the covid, that has had a major impact in social interaction".



"I am from Cape Verde and came to Portugal to pursue my bachelor degree."



"My lowest point was at 17 years old, when I changed schools and had to leave my schoolmates behind. Another low point was at 18 years old I didn't make it to my final exams and could not enroll in the university I wanted. The following year was my highest moment in life, I was successful in the final exams and managed to enroll in the university I wanted. Recently, the pandemic and lockdown represented the most recent lowest moment in my life".



"One of my lowest moments was when I entered a university I didn't want to, when I was able to change I was feeling at the my highest point"



"My first high moment was when I joined scout girls, another high moment was at 15 years old when I entered high school. My lowest moment is the difficulty to develop the career of my dreams, it is a bit difficult in Portugal. Another high moment was when I met my boyfriend"



"When I moved to Italy, I was in the period that I got my biggest achievement as after Italy I started to do a lot of things in my career .First getting admissions from Sapienza University and later winning scholarship made me so happy at the moment."



Amina, 18, originally from Nigeria, travels to France to develop her painting skills, study in a prestigious academy and be the star of an exhibition! In her head, many thoughts: the desire to fulfil herself as an artist and to achieve economic independence, but also uncertainty, fear of the future, the awareness of having to face linguistic and social barriers, as well as bureaucratic obstacles. However, Amina is an enterprising, independent, courageous person (as she left without family and without reference points) and she has faith in new opportunities: she intends to find a job with which to pay for her studies, and also to find new friends who share her passions and interests. She hopes to find support as she lacks the familiar one and to find understanding in the peer group.

CHALLENGES

FINANCIAL



"Before moving Italy I had problem with my family as they did not want send me to there especially mom although I was saying I won scholarship. So finally I convinced them and took flight to Italy. At the first days I had problems as it was first time and my scholarship was late. So I needed to live by myself and that is why I supported by my family (they were complaining). When you are abroad it could be difficult to manage budget but I learned how to deal with after such period. Nowadays, I don't get any support from my family and I am happy that I can stand by my own foot. I write my expenses on somewhere for remembering then and creating budget for travel, accommodation, food and etc."

"I am from Angola, and I am currently living in France. My parents migrate to Portugal to pursue a better life for me and for my sister. With the economic crisis we came to France, again to pursue a better life with more quality. If I could chose, I would chose to go back to Angola, to work in a NGO in human rights - in specific right to education".

WORK



"In my faculty some of our Brazilian colleagues say they face greater difficulty to access the labour market. I also would like to pinpoint other forms of discrimination who also have an impact in everyone's life, I have witnessed people being discriminated against due to ableism, ageism, mental health, among others".

BEREAVEMENT



"In 2010 I had the first lowest point of my life: I lost a friend of mine who passed away with cancer. This low point was followed by the highest moment in my life, when I got my dog. Afterwards I had another low moment in my life: my grandfather passed away. Followed by another lower moment in high school I was not feeling alright and in that moment I lost my grandmother. My entrance into the university didn't feel like it was a high or low moment. In 2019 was one of the best moments in my life, I was in Lithuania with Active Youth in a project and afterwards I went to Poland, as an erasmus student, and then I returned to Portugal to a lockdown".

HEALTH



"My first low moment in life was a disease of a close family member. Followed by a high moment, when I entered high school and met a great group of friends. Another high moment was a grant that I was awarded. This moment was followed by my entrance into the university, which was also the highest moment, followed by the lowest point: a crisis of anxiety. Recently I had a great moment which was the publication of my first scientific article".

STUDIES



"The lowest point of my life was at 19-20 years old when I was trying to enroll in the university, and the exams were so demanding and I was feeling a lot of pressure from my parents. The entrance in the university was also challenging because I had issues to adapt and adjust".

EXPERIENCES



"I did my first Erasmus student exchange in Austria and it was second country I moved after Italy and it was different from Italy. Before going to there I searched people who are living in there to get help as I needed to find accommodation (especially for my budget), city was Salzburg and it is not so big city like Vienna but houses was expensive .So in this case I found and contacted through Facebook with girl who was doing her Erasmus in there also like me. She was soo helpful and before coming she sent me sites, places that I can stay and rent house, informed me about prices and etc. After coming to Austria I stayed house that she rented one month approximately the I moved to campus".

"One of the lowest points of my life experience is the difficulty in feeling included in the faculty. I began university this year and the second semester under the lockdown is very difficult. Not only because I do not know anyone in my university and in my class, but also because I work and study at the same time and therefore, it is not easy to feel included in the groups of my class. I feel excluded from existing groups within the faculty. The social part of my academic life is definitely the lowest point. Hopefully next year will be face to face and I will be able to interact and to get to know my colleagues".

DISCRIMINATION

The main character is a young Hijabi girl who decided to move to another country. It was her first time to get a flight and having a connection in one big airport, she was queuing with different people and out of nowhere an officer appeared and he asked her to get into a small room to be checked. She felt afraid and discriminated against because he chose only her from the passport check queue because of her headscarf. She got into a very small kiosk and a female officer came to ask her to take off her headscarf and she started to check through her hair as well.

She couldn't say no or debate with the officer because she might miss her flight. However, after a few years of this situation she started to work with vulnerable people and minorities and supported them to speak up and raise the awareness about acceptance and feeling safe far away from home and culture.



"I am very sociable person and really love to get know new people. So that is why during the living the different countries I tried to know new people and for it participated in Erasmus Youth Exchanges, Training courses. I learned a lot of things from them but at the same time I faced some discrimination by people during the projects. I was representing Italy but I am not originally from Italy so, that is why sometimes people was saying you are not from EU or Italy and etc."

"In 2017 I experienced a lowest point in my life, I arrived in Portugal, I left my grandmother behind (I love her so much, I miss her so much). Here in Portugal I was not welcomed in the class at school, I was bullied. So that was the lowest moment. One of the best moments of my life was when I was working and studying at the sametime (in 2015), and I discovered my calling: to be a chef. The lowest moment was when my employer had to close the restaurant and I was left with no job. Then I moved to the UK, that was one of the best moments. After a while I returned to Portugal and enrolled in the faculty, I was also working and studying. A few months later I discovered I was pregnant, that was the best moment in my life. I am so happy to be a Mom of a 1 year-old toddler, definitely my highest moment in life".



Microaggressions

"I also feel microaggressions everyday. It used to be worse but nonetheless still exists, although is more subtle. But I can identify it easily because of certain comments".

Prejudices

This group chose to tell the story of Kirikou to show that prejudices can also happen inside a community. Kirikou is a very small kid. He is by far the smallest in his village. Because of that, he is marginalized by the other kids. Anyway, he stays tolerant and he is very curious. He wants to understand why Karaba, a witch kills all men and hassles the village. He crosses the mountain to see his grand-pa and asks him why Karaba is mean. His grand-pa told him that Karaba suffered a lot. She was abused and raped by men. Kirikou did not stop at the facts and try to understand the cause of her actions. He saves the witch and the village.

Sexism

A story about a woman coming to the UK from Canada. As a Canadian who is also black, I find myself in this curious area of the Venn diagram of immigration. No one complains about Canadians coming here to take their jobs, is it because we are usually white? People are always nice to me when they hear my accent. I can't help but feel that my Canadian upbringing is welcome, but my brown skin is not. I've been called "Paki" and made monkey noises. But I can't talk about these things with friends because they want to pretend Britain doesn't have a racial problem. So I basically stopped going out. The hardest thing about living in Britain for me has been the sexism. I wasn't used to sexual harassment in public places or sexual banter as a sort of acceptable norm, but there are topless women in newspapers, lads' magazines, the pay gap, lack of promotion, discrimination against pregnant women, as well as high levels of rape and sexual assault. I feel very uncomfortable and unsafe.

Safety

A story of a Romanian migrant in the UK. I am Romanian with dual nationality. Earlier this year, Romanians got full rights to work in the UK. I first came to this country with a work permit in the late 1990s. Since then, a letting agency asked me for a British guarantor, a GP's secretary told me flatly "we don't accept Romanian patients" and a bank clerk told me "we don't accept Romanian customers". I have contributed to this society, which I have begun to regard and love as my own. I have British friends who respect me for the person I am, but for the first time I fear for my safety in this country because of my national origin. The way Romanians are portrayed to the public by officials and the media - as benefit scroungers coming here and creating a housing crisis - only stirs up hatred and xenophobia.

MIGRATION

The main character is an Egyptian girl who is seeking asylum in the UK. The moment she decided to flee her country and come and seek asylum in another safe country when she will be able to live freely without any judgment was the most difficult situation she ever had in her life, as she is going to leave behind family, friends and all her beloved ones to start another life without having any idea about the process she will pass through. Once she arrived she was afraid, fearing to lose her battle, however she was very eager to be socially involved in the new place and she found many people welcoming her across the whole country sending her love and support. So she learned that life is hard yes but there are many things that can fill the gap of missing home. She started volunteering with different organisations to help people from her community and to learn from other experiences and now she is going to have her dream of starting university soon.

A story of a 24 year old Spanish girl who emigrates to another country. I was a person interested in communication and human and social relations and had always been attracted to issues related to Europe and the links between people, countries and communities. When she finished her law degree, she was awarded a scholarship to do an internship abroad. She wanted to challenge herself, to do something that would give her the opportunity to improve her job skills and her English, to gain some experience but also to grow from a personal point of view. She had always wanted to live abroad and experience new cultures, environments and meet new people. She loved the exchange of ideas, opinions and customs, because it helped her to think more about herself and to have a different perspective on the world. Her final decision took her to the UK, specifically to Liverpool, a city full of things to do, multicultural and with very friendly and easy to talk to people, even if sometimes it is impossible to understand them because of their Scouse accent!

"One of the lowest points after arriving here in Portugal was experiencing xenophobia, and in school I did suffer a bit. The school in general is a bit hostile. My experience is not the same as the experience of a German student here in Portugal. In general I felt like my teachers did not expect much from me. I still experience some microaggressions everyday. For instance, my Portuguese teacher pretends she does not understand my Portuguese and asks my colleagues to 'translate' what I say. Worthy of note that my experience is not as severe as compared to the experience of some Brazilian women who are women of color. Their experience is worse than mine. One of the highest points since arrival from Brazil is the security, being able to walk in the streets without fear".

"I am from the countryside of Portugal, there are not many migrants. However, I did witness a small group of Portuguese men making comments about workers, they were saying that they would prefer to 'hire workers from Africa because they work well but not Brazilians because they are lazy. They don't like to work only to sleep'".



"I am from the North of Portugal, regarding the issue of migration (including forced migration) I think it is crucial for the international community to host and support migrants and refugees".



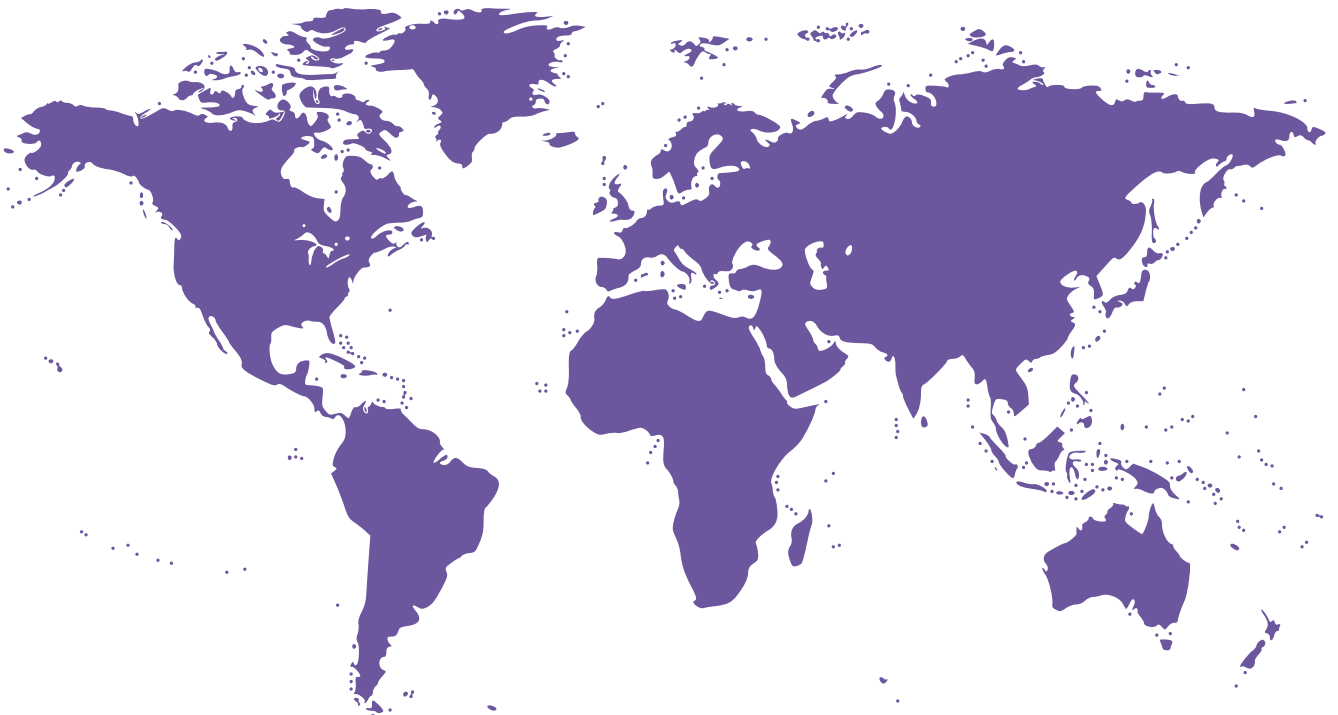
"I am from Venezuela but my parents are Portuguese. I arrived in Portugal at 18 years old. When I was in Venezuela I was 'the Portuguese'/'the foreigner' and here in Portugal I am still the 'foreigner'/'Venezuelano'. Feels like I am in a limbo, all the time, not belonging anywhere".



"My lowest point was when arriving in Portugal. I faced some challenges as a migrant, some microaggressions but fortunately I was able to overcome them".



"I am from Guinea Bissau, I have been studying in Lisbon in the Law School for 2 years now. I think one of the advantages of migration is to assure a better life, with more quality, and access to education".



DIGNITY

The main character of this story is an asylum seeker during the pandemic. She fled her country in south America to europe 5 years ago and she is still waiting to get a decision to live normally and work in the new country, during the past 5 years she was not able to buy stuff she needs because she was not allowed to work and that affected her mental health, especially when the pandemic started and she couldn't be able to buy the basic stuff. She started to speak to people she knows if they can help her getting shoes and the lady friend she posted on facebook to ask her friends and surprisingly she found hundreds of people who wanted to donate personal items they don't use. So the friend got an idea to start an initiative sharing the pictures of those items and people who are in need can choose what they like and not to wait for supporting organizations if they can send them any available items they have. Our main character was an inspiration for a new space where people can feel their dignity while having difficulties in their life and feel positive and welcomed.

TOLERANCE

It's a story about a case of intersectionality. The main character is a black muslim woman, disabled and wearing a headscarf. So she is a victim of multiple discriminations. She starts a new job in a great business where the boss values tolerance and fights discrimination. But her co-workers hassle her constantly, when it is not a sexist remark, it's on her religion, etc. It became for her a real hell whereas she loves what she is doing. Her boss realised that she wasn't well and decided to take action. He made a public announcement to all the employees. He underlines the values of the business and asks for an immediate change of behaviour. He created a dilemma for the employees that were hassling this woman: stay and change or don't change and leave. At the end, the employees changed their behaviour and the work atmosphere greatly improved.





INCLUSION

"I am from Guinea Bissau. I arrived in Portugal to continue to study. I arrived in 2016. In 2019 I finished my first bachelor's degree, in Alentejo. And I am now finishing my second bachelor's degree in Lisbon. My integration in Alentejo was easier than here in Lisbon, the town was smaller and people were paying more attention to our needs and difficulties. The inclusion process in Alentejo was definitely far more pleasant. In Lisbon there are so many people, it is more difficult to have access to certain services".

”

The main character is an obese woman. She suffers a lot of discrimination linked to her weight and from the others' judgement and glances. She loves fashion but does not dare to dress as she went or even creates a career in this area. One day, she woke up feeling really bad. Her stomach is terrible and it lasts. As she starts to worry, she decides to see a doctor. Her usual doctor is not there, she goes to see a locum. He does not take her seriously. He diminished her pain and talked only about her obesity. She leaves the appointment feeling totally marginalized and unheard. After the appointment, she starts to cry in the street. Her pain and humiliation were just too much to handle. A man in the street comes to her and asks her what happened. She told him her story: the recent appointment but also all the other discriminations. This man is the director of an association. He asked her if she wants to help him raise awareness on this issue. They organize demonstrations against weight stigma. At the end, she decides to start a career in fashion and open her own brand. At the same time, she goes on fighting for more clothing size for all men and women. She becomes an example!

”

COVID-19

“

“One of my lowest was during Covid. Although I do acknowledge we live privileged lives and I have not been through very challenging moments throughout my life, Covid and the lockdown have been a challenge and definitely a lower point throughout my life.”

“

“One of my highest moments was at 5 years old when I entered school, followed by a lower moment at ten years old when I changed schools. At 18 years old I experienced another high moment when I entered university and arrived in Portugal. The most recent low point in my life is linked to the covid and the lockdown”.

“

“My highest moment in life was the birth of my brother at 7 years old. My childhood was very happy. My teenage years were a bit low, but things got lower when I did not succeed in entering the university I wanted. My highest moment was my first year in the university I wanted to go to in the first place. Covid and the lockdown represent a lethargic moment”.

“

“One of my lowest points is definitely the Covid and the lockdown, all the internships were cancelled, therefore, I was not able to start my own internship”.

“

“I am from Lisbon, from Portugal, I find this workshop very useful and interesting because it is essential for social work, my course at the University. The Covid situation has had a major impact on social interaction, I feel like my classes are so much better face to face than online.”



CONCLUSIONS

Migration is, first and foremost, a normal human activity. Human beings have always moved from one country, locality or place of residence to settle in another. People migrate from the homes of their families to new places and countries. The stories collected in this booklet are a testimony of the challenges faced by the young participants during their life experiences.

What we have learnt from their stories is that people have migrated and continue to migrate for a variety of reasons, but the main motivation is the desire for a better life.

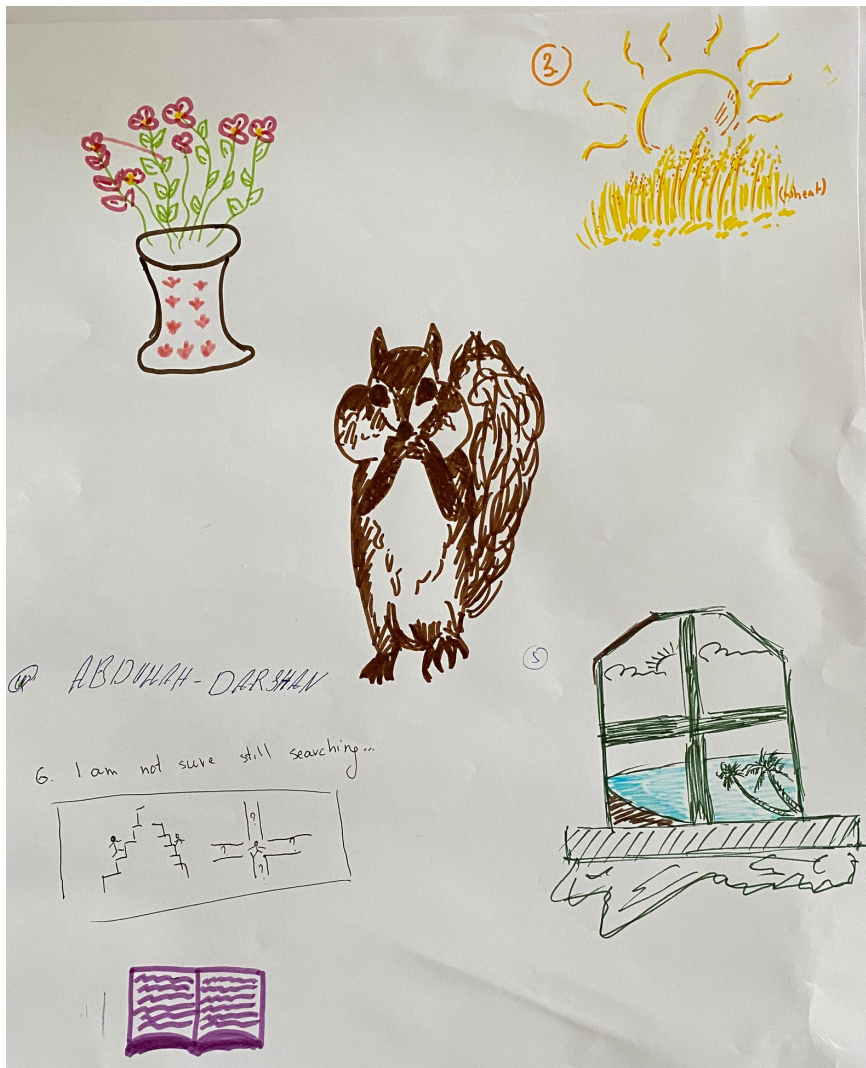
As these stories reveal, migrants from one country to another often have the same motivations as those who move from one region to another, from one city to another or from one village to another within their own country. People move hoping to improve themselves, to find a better job and to create a better life, while other times they are forced upon other and extreme circumstances.

Through the storytelling it also emerged the struggle that migrants and refugees face when they arrive in the new country: discrimination, cultural shock, economic challenges, linguistic barrier.

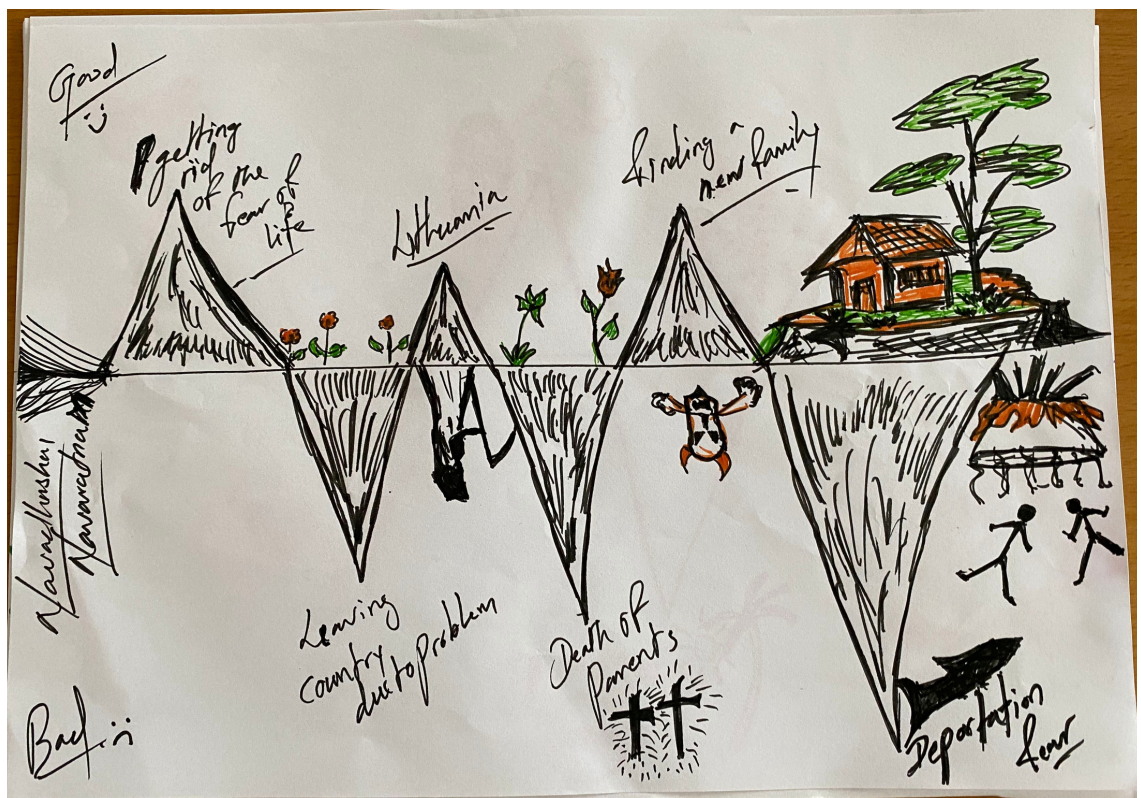
The main aim of this booklet was to give voice to young migrants and young Europeans, by understanding their feelings, their opinions, their fears, and their stories.

In order to support migrants and refugees in the new country, it is important to make them feel welcome and encouraged to share their experiences and cultures. At the same time, it is essential to provide to local young people strategies that help them understand and empathize with peers who are experiencing extreme upheaval physically, socially and psychologically.

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THE SEARCH MISSION

Once upon the time Abdullah the squirrel was home alone looking through his mom's stuff. Suddenly he noticed a diary! At first Abdullah was getting bad thoughts about reading his mom's diary, but at the end he couldn't resist. So he started looking through the diary and what he found out was shocking! It turns out he has a twin brother named Darshan. Abdullah wanted to meet him so he started his Search Mission.

The first search point was Thailand beaches. Unfortunately he ~~didn't~~ couldn't find his brother there. So he flew to Netherlands and searched through the flower fields - no results. In the end

he lost all his hope and returned ~~to~~ back home. The same day he was wandering ⁱⁿ the wheat fields in his home town. He was so devastated, he was walking with his head down.

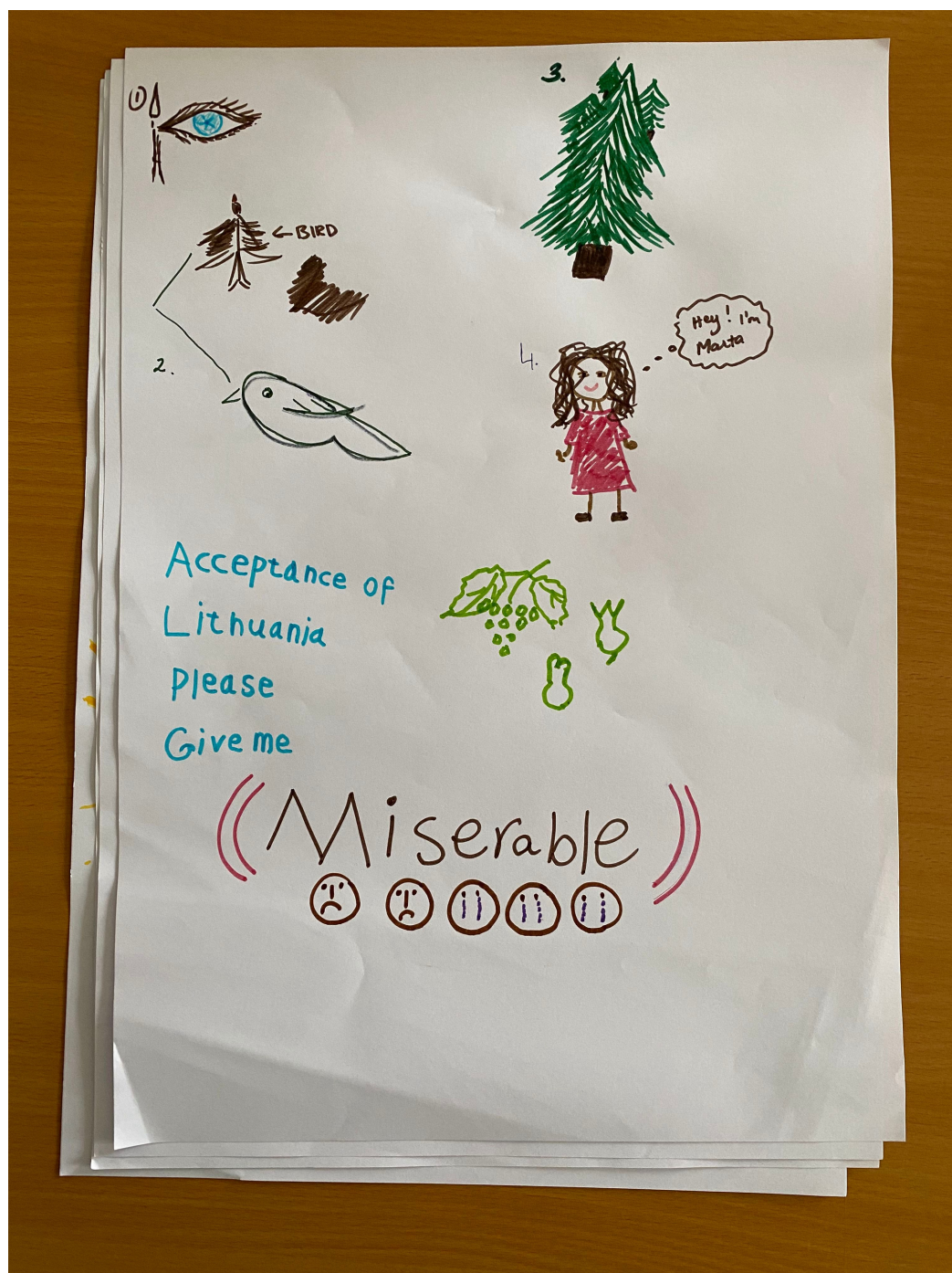
But when Abdullah finally looked up - he could not believe his eyes - it was like he was staring into the mirror. Darshan was standing right in front of him.

After this long journey Abdullah learned to never give up on his goals and keep searching.

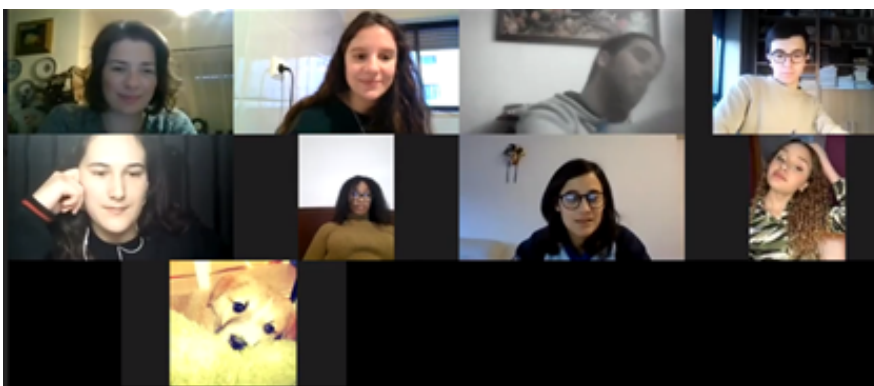
The End

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LISTEN HERE TO THE FRENCH STORYTELLING



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Thank you!

We would like to express our sincerest
gratitude to:

DHARSHAN NAVARATNAM
SAYED KAZAME
VASSIL SIMEONOV
ORNELLA BASILE
DAFNE MODAFFARI
SIMONA CORONA
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