



Policy Recommendations EU Report

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The partnership



Merseyside Expanding Horizons helps different groups facing social exclusion in the community and suffer from isolation. They have been dealing and addressing specific barriers and particular needs. They believe in a more socially inclusive society.



Active Youth is an association that unites young leaders, doers, and thinkers to create impact and opportunities for the youth and communities in need to create a more developed and integrated society.



ANI-International is an association invested in the fields of citizenship, education, the promotion of interculturality, identities and professional integration and international solidarity. It aims to help all vulnerable audiences, in particular young people, women, migrants, individuals from suburbs in France, Europe, and Africa.



Aproximar is a cooperative created in 2006 by a group of professionals. The cooperative aims to work to enhance social inclusion. They believe in equality of opportunities, in acquiring new competences for human development to create innovative societies.



ICEP stands for European Institute for the Certification of Personnel. They contribute to the European certification to legitimate the experience of volunteering experience and credibility to the job market system by providing certificates.



Promimpresa, as a training center, aims to enhance one's capacities so that individuals can enrich their lives. It integrates environmental, ethical, consumer, and human rights concerns into its business strategy, disseminating good practices, through the integration of CSR into education, training and research activities.

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1. Introduction to the project and aim of the policy recommendations EU report

This Policy Recommendations Report is part of **Youth Connections project**, an Erasmus+ KA2 project started in November 2019 and that reunites 6 partner countries from the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Portugal, Lithuania, and Slovakia.

Youth Connections aims at creating strong links between young refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and EU Youth through creative work and innovative cultural activities aimed at fostering social inclusion. The objective of Youth Connections project is to contribute to more equal, intercultural, and inclusive youth local communities through new approaches and transnational initiatives.

Throughout the project activities and tools produced, we are aiming at tackling discrimination, segregation, and racism, and at contributing to prevent acts of extremism and violence between young resident refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants, and EU citizens.

This EU Policy Recommendations report aims to provide clear policy recommendations to encourage and to promote the effective integration of young migrants and quality youth work in the field of social inclusion.

As a result of this Policy Recommendations Report, a Youth Connections Charter for social inclusion and quality youth work will be produced by partners, based on the perspective of both youth workers and migrant youth. The Charter will contain key recommendations common to all the member states. Those organisations, stakeholders and institutions that will embrace and sign the Charter will be awarded the “Golden Flag”, a symbol that they are compliant with the charter and deliver best practice in their work, fostering social inclusion between young resident refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants and young EU citizens.

Aim and structure of the report

The aim of these policy recommendations is to foster and promote effective integration of young migrants and quality youth work in the field of social inclusion.

These Policy Recommendations resulted from a consultation with youth workers and young people with migrant background in order to understand their needs, challenges and experiences. The Policy Recommendations are also based on success factors of good practices projects or approaches identified around Europe.

The **first part** of the report focuses on the consultation phase delivered in each partner country (UK, France, Lithuania, Portugal, and Italy), where partners analysed the situation faced by both young people and youth workers.

The **second part** focuses on the Policy Recommendations based on the findings of the consultation and on the conclusions.

This report is addressed to policy makers, EACEA, local institutions and stakeholders (associations, schools, public authorities), organisations working with migrants.

An ANNEX with a good practice example is provided at the end of the report. The initiative mentioned is called “Arte Migrante” and it is currently active in many cities in Italy and in other European countries.



2. Methodology Adopted

This report has been created from the perspective of young people and youth workers in order to bridge the gap between policy and practice. The Policy Recommendations are based both on the findings of IO1 and IO2, where the partnership collected information about the situation of young migrants in the local communities, challenges and barriers encountered in their life, and on a consultation phase delivered in each partner country analysing the existing legislation and support in place to promote integration in the local communities.

The consultation was carried out following the methodology of semi-structured interviews, by using various ways: face to face meetings, phone calls, video calls, etc.

Each partner has involved **10 youth workers** and between **10 and 20 young people for the interviews**.

We have asked approximatively 14 questions each target group, in order to understand their current situation, the challenges/barriers faced as migrants or as youth worker with multicultural groups and their opinion on improvements to make.

The aims of this consultation phase were:

- To explore migrants' experiences on integration
- To identify and explore factors that may influence and affect migrant's integration process
- To gather information and material for the creation of Policy Recommendations

Based on this Policy Recommendations report, the partnership will create a Check list compliance Charter to distribute to the local organisations and stakeholders. Institutions who will recognise and put in practice the check list based on Policy Recommendations will then be awarded with the Golden Flag. To have passed/failed in an important exam.



3. Consultation Phase

3.1. Overview of the participants

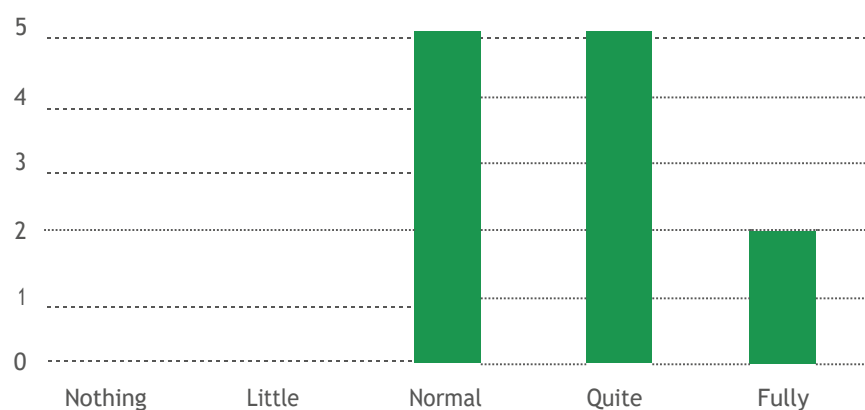
The partnership has collected a total of **78 interviews** with young people and 50 interviews with youth workers, from 47 different countries:

UK, Spain, Italy, Colombia, Egypt, Venezuela, Ireland, Turkey, China, Morocco, Tunisia, Nigeria, Senegal, Moldova, Iraq, Russia, India, Congo, Mauritius, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, France, Portugal, Lithuania, Slovakia, Brazil, Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Angola, Cape Verde, Bulgaria, Germany, Denmark, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Nepal, Sweden, Slovenia, Hungary, Luxembourg, Romania, Libya, Albania, Pakistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and North Macedonia.

Youth workers can contribute to ensuring greater gender equality in society through educating youth from a young age: recognizing and evaluating stereotypes and moving towards changing them.

3.2. Young people experiences

Integration in the community

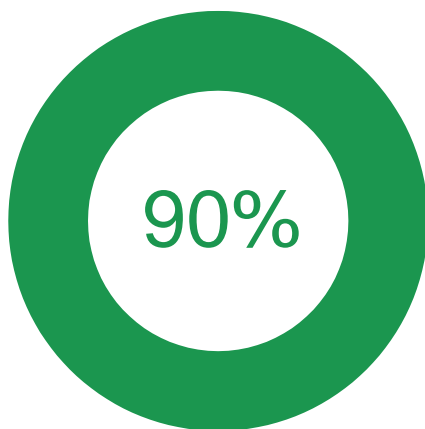


We have asked young people if they feel integrated in their community. On a scale from 1 to 5 most of the participants felt quite integrated in the community, on average, young migrants valued their integration at around 3,5. Their level of integration seems to be strictly depending on the size of the community in which they live and their participation in social activities open to everyone is a relevant factor that contributes to their integration process.

According to the participants, speaking fluently the language of the hosting country is necessary to consider themselves integrated in the community they live in. Being socially involved with the local community, joining clubs, or participating to local projects helped them to feel more integrated and to get to know the new culture. Indeed, what emerged from participants is that not understanding the culture or not knowing the local people are the key factors for not feeling integrated. This is very important especially for those young people who are living in another country without family or friends.



Participation in local community groups:



Barriers faced:

There are various barriers faced by migrants during their period abroad that have been mentioned by participants. The most common are language barriers and understanding properly the legislation of the new country.

Many testimonies have been provided by participants in relation to the challenges that they had to overcome in their life, for



instance: finding a job, accessing health care, accessing education, lack of support from the institutions, discrimination, racism, and prejudice. Moreover, the bureaucracy of the country can appear confusing if there is no support.

Support received

We have asked participants **what kind of support they have received** while being in the new country, and the majority has mentioned accommodation, education and language support from privates. Other kind of support received from participants was: linguistic support from private and from charity and health. Nobody mentioned employment.

We have also asked what kind of support they would have liked to receive in order to feel more integrated in the local community and improve their lifestyle.

Here below some examples of the support mentioned by participants

- **Free language classes**
- More support from local organisations that could involve them in local activities with the community.
- More options in the local community in terms of activities and free places where to meet other people.
- More guidance and mentorship
- Individual support (i.e. having a tutor)
- Emotional support
- Ensure equal access to public services, including education, health care, employment, and entrepreneurship.
- Promote good community relations and combat intolerance, discrimination and hate crimes.
- Organization of volunteering activities and events, in which locals and migrants can participate and get to know each other.
- More promotion of scholarships and financial support available for migrants
- Support for VISA process and for entering the labor market.

We have also asked participants what kind of support local authorities should have provided in order to help participants to feel more integrated.

It has emerged that it is very important that the local authorities establish measures to facilitate the initial stages of integration (civic orientation, arrival information and learning the host society's national language/s). Those measures should be promoted among the local community, organisations, and institutions that support migrants, in order to make them aware of all the support provided and where to find that information.

Another idea mentioned by participants is related to the need to inform, educate, and support the local population to deal with and benefit from changes in their national and local communities resulting from migration.

Support they need at the current stage

Based on their testimonies and on the challenges encountered during their life in a new country, we have asked young people what kind of support they would like to receive and would be useful at this stage of their life. Below we have reported some of the answers provided:

- Provide more civic orientation and language support. This would help them to become with time more independent and feel part of the community.
- Provide more information about the local and national opportunities (social activities, sport, job offers, etc).
- Ensure equal access to public goods and services, including education, health care, employment, and entrepreneurship. More support should be provided in terms of accessing the labor market through volunteering, internships and trainings, as well as social care, housing, finance, scholarships etc.
- Promote integration in the community not only to the migrants but also to local people (i.e. activities aiming to foster integration, workshops etc.)
- Regularly monitor the local context in terms of opportunities and challenges resulting from migration flows.
- Individual support (having a tutor) and psychological support.
- Support with VISA process.
- Access to clearer information.
- VISA application process should be easier to access.

It is important to mention that the COVID-19 pandemic has been very challenging for migrants, not only affecting their integration in the community, but also slowing down all the bureaucratic practices, as well as finding a job or doing activities. This has impacted even more those who did not have connections in the new country prior to the lockdown.

Many participants expressed their concerns about the pandemic restrictions, about how they were not able to participate to any social and cultural activity, and how those events and initiatives organized by Youth Connections helped them.



Image of migrants portrayed by media and its influence on political decisions

Migration has been dominating media and political discourses in Europe in recent years. Migration-related party communication on social network sites has been largely neglected. Migration is a more prominent topic in countries with positive net migration

(‘receiving countries’) than in countries where net migration is neutral or negative. Political actors from parties of the extreme left and the extreme right of the political spectrum address migration more frequently and more negatively than more moderate political players. To understand public opinion about immigration in Europe, it is necessary to understand the media's role in it. Despite differences in the way immigration and migrant groups are represented in European media, we can observe common patterns. Migrants are generally under-represented and shown as delinquents or criminals. Although, media framing differs based on specific migrant groups the discourse is focusing on, immigration coverage is often negative, and conflict centered. Frequent exposure to such media messages leads to negative attitudes towards migration, may activate stereotypical cognitions of migrant groups, and even influence vote choice.

We have asked **young participants** to share their **opinion about** how media portray **migrants** and if that news have an impact and influence political decisions.

Participants have mentioned that in their opinion the image that media want to portray about migrants is usually negative, mainly focusing on the cultural differences and promoting the difficulty of adaptation for both sides.

Media sometimes describe migrants as a threat, as they come to the country to take benefits from the country and steal jobs from local people.

This kind of fake news are given mainly from certain political parties that nurture their discourse by creating conflict between societies and migrants. Moreover, spreading to the community a negative opinion about migrants and its effects, affects the political decisions.

3.3. Youth workers experiences

We have consulted 50 youth workers from the UK, Italy, France, Portugal, Lithuania, and Slovakia. They have shared about their experience with young migrants, the importance of their role for the integration of migrants and refugees, the barriers they face in their position and about their views on countries' regulations in relation to migrants.

Role of youth workers

Youth work aims at the personal and social development of the young people, while trust and mutual respect between young people and youth workers are at the hearth of youth work.

Youth workers should be mediators, friends, source of inspiration and motivation for young people. They should be a positive role model in promoting youth support events and services, developing workplace policies and procedures that promote wellness, and providing a family space that welcomes children, youth, and parents.

In addition to the skills of youth workers that allow them to perform regular youthwork activities, they have to be empowered and trained to recognise and meet the needs of young migrants.

Integration of young migrants in the community

We have asked participants their opinion about what **factors** show whether a **migrant is integrated in the local community**. Most youth workers have answered that integration is a complex process containing functional integration (covering basic needs), moral integration (gather into community with locals) and expressive integration (realization in the country).

According to the experience of youth workers, the most relevant ways to measure the level of integration of young migrants are: access to basic services provided by the host country (i.e. education, medical care, employment and professional counselling, etc), their social involvement in the new context, having a strong social network, being an active volunteer or participate in education / training / employment / job search, family role, community events, fundraising and working with local businesses, new hobbies and personal development, speaking the language of the hosting country and having a circle of friends, especially locals.

Barriers faced working with young migrants

Youth workers have identified the main barriers that affect their daily work with young migrants:

- Language
- No knowledge of the new host culture, customs, and traditions for the young migrants
- Absence of family and friends
- Stigma of mental health
- Lack of professionals teaching in schools concepts such as multiculturalism, and cultural diversity
- Respond to psychological needs of young migrants
- The legislation does not always support youth workers and their qualifications

Other barriers discussed and mentioned by youth workers were prejudice and stereotypes, isolation, discrimination, lack of understanding, ignorance, lack of financial resources, fear of leaving the comfort zone, lack of network between different institutions, organisations and services. Local authorities and local institutions do not always offer support for youth work initiatives. The lack of clarity and agreement on national and local priorities is challenging as it does not provide a clear framework for young workers.

Another relevant aspect is that young workers feel **overwhelmed by overwork**. In addition, most identified the need for psychological training on how to work with critical groups (people coming from war zones, people with psychological trauma, etc.).

Competences needed to improve skills and knowledge

Youth workers reflected on necessary competences for their daily work with young migrants. Based on their daily experience with migrants, the competences that youth workers consider more important to improve are the following:

- Communication: Importance of listening, understanding the needs of young people and empathizing with them
- Self-confidence
- More knowledge on how to deal with multiculturalism and cultural shock
- Intercultural competences
- Training on how to manage large groups of young people from different cultures
- Flexibility and continuous availability
- Emotional intelligence
- Being creative and having a good network of people to work with

Youth workers working with multicultural groups of young people have to facilitate individual and group learning in a nurturing environment by establishing dialogue and ensuring cooperative mechanisms. They have to be able to organise and manage resources, understand the values and working culture of youth projects and youth organisations and collaborate successfully in teams contributing to teamwork and maintain good working relationships with all those involved in the project. Communicating meaningfully with others by building positive relationships with individuals and the group is one of the most important competences showing intercultural competence by supporting successful communication and collaboration between people from different contexts and cultural backgrounds and developing and managing partnerships with other relevant actors.

Effectiveness of countries regulations to support migrants

Immigrant integration is seen as an awkward political issue, which has never been at the center of public and political discourse, but is conceived as a de facto process, essentially labor market participation.

Integration policies have been implemented more at the local level than at the national level and some initiatives should be launched in the labor field, in particular assistance services to help immigrants to cope with the labor market.

We have asked participants if they think that the community and the regulations of the country are sufficient to provide effective support for the migrants.

What has emerged from their answers is that in general, the law has an inclusive approach, the problem is the practice: there is a **lack of flexibility**, and the **implementation of the law fails to meet the expectation and human rights' standards**. Moreover, although the law provides for protection, there is a lot of bureaucracy, and bureaucracy is an obstacle. For example, bureaucracy makes it difficult to access the labor market. There are many

3. Consultation Phase

services and mechanisms foreseen in the law, but a lot of bureaucracy and formal language is an obstacle for young people, it makes the whole process less transparent and difficult to understand. There are also some legal loopholes that make it difficult.

The role of the **media** is very important in this area. The media have homogenized migrant groups, so that people do not know how to distinguish between asylum seekers, migrant workers, illegal immigrants and refugees. Fake news and misinformation have led to negative views of migrants, who have been blamed for taking resources and finances away from Europe.

The community as a whole needs to work on becoming more tolerant and open. This can be improved by matching locals with immigrants, while finding that "meeting" point that has not yet been discovered. Politicians should encourage the community, as there is a lack of education and openness towards refugees and their culture.

Language barriers need to be removed and more opportunities offered to immigrants. In addition, the government should include literacy for foreigners in formal and non-formal education. There should be more social, psychological, and school support in schools. There should be a sharing of the workload between different public institutions and NGOs (Employment Service versus Caritas, for example) and professional confederations should work with employers, to teach them how to work with migrants.



4. Policy Recommendations & Conclusions



The Policy Recommendations below are the result of national research and findings in each of the partner countries (UK, Portugal, Italy, France, and Lithuania).

These Recommendations are addressed to policymakers at all levels, from the very local to the European, to the European Commission and other relevant stakeholders, as well as local organisations working in the field of migration.

Policymakers should be informed about the living circumstances of young migrants and make improvements according to the needs.

In this field the youth sector covers a very important role in the integration process of young migrants as it can give insights on the views and needs of young migrants that other sectors might not be able to give. Youth workers in particular can help young migrants to acquire skills and competences through non-formal learning.

4.1. Recommendations:

1. **Policymakers should invest more in providing trainings** to support youth workers to build up their skills.
2. **The youth sector should be supported to build up its competences.** In addition to the skills of youth workers that allow them to perform regular youth work activities, they have to be empowered and trained to meet more complex needs when dealing with the integration of young migrants. The trainings should include topics such as local migration, human rights, asylum seekers procedures and who to contact locally in case of need, legal issues and European law. The trainings should be developed both at local and European level. This would allow youth workers to meet different realities and to learn from other good practices.
3. **Create safer and youth-friendly spaces with the receiving structures of migrants and encourage the access of youth workers in them,** in order to promote non-formal education and intercultural exchange.
4. **More promotion of local existing activities involving both the local community and young migrants.** This is an opportunity to promote multiculturalism and to help the community embrace different cultures.
5. **Provide accessible mental health support for youth workers who might be overwhelmed by their work.**
6. **Legal recognition of the role of youth worker**
7. **Work on integration of young migrant since their first day of arrival.** This is a good strategy to develop their skills and competences from the beginning. It is also essential to support and give space to self-organised initiatives of young refugees and strengthen their voice in relevant policy debates.
8. **Legal processes and bureaucracy should be shortening up and have an easier access for those coming from another country and not familiar with the legal system of the hosting country.**
9. **Policy makers should examine asylum claims within a reasonable time period and implement family reunifications.**
10. **European refugee housing policies should be designed, as well as provide more specific courses for migrants to access the labour market.**

Annex: Good Practice

Arte Migrante Experience

What is *Arte Migrante*?

Arte Migrante is a long-term project that started in Bologna in 2012 from an idea of Tommaso Carturan, an anthropologist and songwriter, and it is active today in 23 cities of Italy and 2 cities in Europe. It is managed on voluntary basis by groups of young people and adults who share goals and aims.

Activities

The activities included in Arte Migrante's (AM) initiative aim to:

- facilitate an open-minded attitude towards human diversity, especially for the social inclusion of marginalized people which are victim of xenophobe speeches, racism, and human rights violation (asylum seekers, homeless, refugees)
- fight against racism, discrimination and prejudice against migrants and refugees through collective participation in any kind of artistic performance.
- raise awareness among receiving communities - including local authorities and service providers about the reality of third-country nationals.
- facilitate inclusion of migrants and refugees through free language courses, art, and technical workshops.

Weekly or monthly meetings are organised by migrants, refugees, homeless people, students, young and retired workers, and street artists coming from different nationalities and cultures. The meetings are based on spontaneous participation. Arte Migrante meetings are an open space where everyone is welcome and can participate by sharing something (such as art, music, poetry, a story, etc) or just listen to the others.

Structure

Participants sit in a circle. The individual performances can also become collective when the audience get involved (singing, dancing together) thanks to the spontaneous and inclusive spirit of the group. The meetings are facilitated by random groups of volunteers willed to take the responsibility and contribute to the meeting which are structured in 3 distinguishable moments

1. **Getting to know each other through easy, short, and non formal activities:** The facilitators propose non-formal activities/games with varying levels of structure, depending on the number of participants. The objectives are to “break the ice”, get to know the participants and to create a welcoming atmosphere. The initiation part set the frame for the meeting which is based on mutual respect and openness.
2. **Social dinner:** Everyone contributes to the dinner with the preparation of typical dishes of their own tradition, and therefore this becomes an opportunity for exchanging and deepening knowledge between each other. Participants are asked not to bring alcoholic beverages to avoid risky situations and maintain the total authenticity of the experience.
3. **The artistic-cultural sharing (performance):** Spontaneity is a central aspect that enhances the beauty of the meaning and not the aesthetic beauty of an exhibition. In Arte Migrante artistic and cultural performances are carried out under verbal (poetry, stories, testimonies) and non-verbal (drawing, dance, theater) forms.

Arte Migrante is a special space of social inclusion itself because it doesn't focus on the involvement of a single specific target group, but the aim is to involve “people”, especially new comers and the ones who are at risk of exclusion.

The uniqueness of Arte Migrante lies on its weekly meetings, where refugees, migrants and homeless people build up more fair human relations among them and with other members of civil society, which makes possible to tear down the human barriers and prejudices which western societies tend to set up. As mentioned above, individuals are equally treated and considered, no matter their condition, geographical provenance or artistic quality, which is correspondingly genuine. This enhances the active involvement of any participant present at the meeting because the only thing that counts is the will to share with the others, the particularities of his/her vital experience.

SOURCES:

Artemigrante_national (Bologna - Italy)

Arte migrante Palermo_presentation

Arte migrante facebook page



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