



Cultural learning experiences and experiential learning paradigms for social and labor integration of disadvantaged young migrants:

Report #1 Group discussion with young migrants

Institute for African Studies, Slovenia



Funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

1.Group Discussion: Young Migrants

General Description of the activity:

The Youth was approached at 3 locations of asylum home in Slovenia, to implement volunteer activities to gain trusted environment to ensure further quality results. The Group 1 was specific and asked for anonymity of their identities. This is many times the case when working with asylum seekers, since they are not secure the answers given will influence outcomes of asylum procedure, despite clear and repeatedly explanation that their answers are very important for recommendations for improving pre-integration and integration programs and policies as well. Moreover, the participants do not want that their personal situation is recognizable and public.

Group 1: a group of young migrants (16 - 25years), implemented by Hana Alhadi and Hanna Y. Tefera

Agenda 25.2.2023:

9:45 - 10:00 arrivals and invitation to activities

10:00 - 11:15 getting to know each other, ice-breaking games

Agenda 26.2.2023:

9:45 - 10:00 arrivals and invitation to activities

10:15 - 10:30 ice-breaking games

10:30 - 11:15 introduction - presentation of the project Life in EU, short presentation of the focus group timeline

Agenda 26.2.2023 at IAS office:

14:00 - 14:15 arrivals

14:15 - 14:30 short aim of the focus group with presentation of ERASMUS programs

14:30 - 16:30 group discussion following the 15 questions (a short break of 5 minutes in between)

16:30 - 17:00 reflection

Participants:

8 participants, due to asylum status no photos and no signatures were allowed:

L. M. (17), M;

O. D. (21), M

K. S. (18), M

M. D. T. (23), M

R. M. (20), F

K. J. (18), M

I. L. (17), M

A. B. (22), M

1. Before leaving your country, what did you expect from your arrival and life in a new country?

Four participants stated that they expected better life - being able to go to school and to be able to have a job. One participant said he expected to be safe in a new country - not to be called in the army as he was in his home country. Another participant said he wanted to find "peace", he said that means that would not be looked down on because of his religion and to be able to have "normal life" - to have work, friends and family. One participant said he had no expectations, and the last one said just to continue education and stay with the family, with whom she came.

The majority of the participants mentioned that they expected to find in a host country "better life" or "normal life" compared to the home country. That was connected to work (financial stability and financial family support), education, social network, not being discriminated as religious minority, having stable mental health, and creating a family on their own.

2. What was it like when you arrived (Where did you arrive and who did you meet?)

Four participants said that they were caught by police when they were walking in the forest or on the road, or hiding in a smugglers car, while trying to reach their final destinations - Italy, Germany and Belgium. Then they were brought to Asylum Home in Ljubljana where they had interview - they met social workers there - and then they were accommodated either in Asylum Home Ljubljana or in Department for Unaccompanied minors in Postojna. One participant said that he arrived by plane and he first met his brother who was living here already, his arrival was legal, because he still had three-month visa. Two participants came together with their families - one legally, another illegally.

Six out of eight participants had the first interaction in this country with the police, as they arrived illegally. Two were greeted by their family members who were residing in Slovenia prior to their arrival.

3. What surprised you most about European society in the first few months of your arrival? Can you tell us about something you saw or that happened?

The majority of participants (six out of eight) said that people in Europe are very nice in general, friendly and helping, however, in some countries more than in others (they especially mentioned Bosnia and Slovenia). One participant said he does not want to comment; he has nothing to say about that.

The specific comments were that people are more quiet than they are used at home, one participant specifically mentioned that he had to get used to the toilets in Europe (which have no water to wash), another participant mentioned he noticed how police was being very nice, and another that he was surprised that women dress short skirts and shorts.

4. Do you remember any episodes where you felt welcomed or unwelcome as an immigrant?

Two participants said that they felt unwelcome just when they crossed the border - when Slovenian police wanted to take them back to Croatia. Another participant said that he does not feel good when people look at him because of his skin colour, and other participant said he felt unwelcome in Slovenia when he got the official document that his international protection application was rejected.

Participants sensed the feeling of being welcome when people are nice to them, smile at them or talk to them. One participant mentioned that she felt welcome when she was part of the workshop for women where they were making toys from the clothes and bracelets. Another participant mentioned that he felt as he should stay in Slovenia when one kind person bought him a ticket from Ljubljana to Postojna, where he is residing, when he did not have money.

5. How did you handle the paperwork? Did you get any help (including digital tools)?

Four participants said that their paperwork and administration was handled by social workers, and three of those four said that the procedures with paperwork was sometimes very slow and that for example for too long they did not have the answer about their international protection procedure.

One participant had problem with translator at the hospital, as they were no one to help him with the doctor and with paperwork there as they did not speak the same language, another participant said that he had the translator in the medical centre, and that he helped him fill in some paperwork.

Three participants mentioned that at some point they received free legal support regarding some issues about documents, one participant said that the social workers arranged everything, another one that his legal guardians took care of all the paperwork, and two said that their parents mainly took care of all the paperwork with the support of social workers in Asylum home, and two participants received help by employees of local NGO.

Regarding digital tools - one participant mentioned that a person in local NGO help him to fill in a form digitally, no other digital tools were mentioned by participants.

6. What is/was the most difficult aspect of integrating into a new society? Do you have any examples of what happened to you?

Three participants said that most difficult is to not be able to find a job or not being allowed to work. One participant said that big difficulty is with schooling (he has problems with the documentation for the faculty enrolment).

Two participants said that most difficult was not being accepted by people, one again highlighted that his implies to the colour of his skin, another one mentioned that it is very difficult to learn the language, that Slovenian language is very different from their mother tongue and that it takes long to learn it. Three participants mentioned also that very difficult is not be able to be with their family members, especially close family members.

7. How would you rate your level of knowledge of:

For the easier scaling and evaluation, we used the scale from 1 to 10 (1 meaning the lowest level of knowledge and 10 the highest). Each participant chose the number which describes the best his level of knowledge of specific topic.

-of EU rights and institutions?

1, 3, 2, 4, 1, 2, 2, 3.

-the national legislation of the host country?

3, 3, 2, 4, 1, 2, 3, 2.

-the culture of the host country (history, customs etc.)

5, 6, 4, 2, 7, 4, 5, 6.

By looking at the averages (mean) of level of knowledge for each topic, we can conclude that participants have the lowest level of knowledge about EU rights and institutions and the highest level about the culture of the host country.

Have you had any courses or explanations on these topics (especially via technological tools)?

Four participants said that they learnt about that through activities (trips to cities, lecture/workshops), three mentioned that they learnt about the costumes at language classes, and two said that they received no courses or similar activities.

Technological tools used in above mentioned activities are PPT presentation, and using Youtube application on stationary computers and via projector, for showing music and dances of Slovenian culture and landscapes of the country.

8. How was it to learn our language? Did someone, something (app, platform) or an institution help you?

Six participants said that they had support in learning Slovenian language. They said they received help from social workers at Asylum Home or at Department for Unaccompanied minors, workers at local NGOs, and from official teachers at School for Adults where the participants have language courses (Ljudska Univerza in Postojna - for unaccompanied minors, and Cene Štupar - for adults in Ljubljana).

Two participants said that they have not yet receive to any language class (both of those participants are newly accommodated asylum seekers).

Four out of all eight participants said that they were, or still are, learning Slovenian language through Youtube app (learning letters, words, sentences), TikTok app, and that they are helping themselves by using Google translate.

Two participants said that what helped them to learn the language was talking to locals, through Instagram app or TikT

ok app. One participant said that job (student work in hospitality field) helped him to learn the language, and another one said that he learnt the language faster because of his girlfriend who is local.

9. Did you have any work experience? How did you get into the job market?

Six participants said they have work experience - they worked in their home countries and three of them also in other countries than home countries (Turkey, Greece, Iran). They got those jobs through friends, family (helping family business as children and teenagers), or through spoken word.

Two participants are also currently working in Slovenia, one of them got their job through a friend who was already working in industry company, another one got connected to his employee through local NGO event / market.

10. Do you remember the first time you felt integrated in a new community? Can you tell us why and what happened?

One participant said that he started to feel more integrated through connecting with co-workers where he also learnt the language better and started to get his own income which was very important for him as he felt "more equal". Another participant said that he felt more integrated to the society through relationship with his girlfriend, a special moment for him was, when the parents of his girlfriend invited him to lunch and he was sitting and eating with them.

The rest of the participants said that they do not remember specific moments when they felt more integrated, two of the participants said they do not feel yet integrated.

11. What situations make you feel included or excluded in the community? Can you give examples? Can you explain what "inclusion" means to you by telling us something that happened to you?

Participants said that what makes them included is: being able to make money to live, having "status" - having international protection, to go to school/being able to be in education, to have friends here. Excluded for them means: not being able to work, being look badly on, not have friends.

12. After all this time in the host country, what impresses you most about the way people live? If you were to choose one or two things and describe them to a friend in your home country, what would you tell them? Can you think of a situation or episode in your life that speaks volumes about these aspects?

The aspects of Slovenia as the host country that impressed participants were nice and friendly people, pretty girls (laughter), that police was kind, that some people are very helpful. The participants mentioned things at this questions which are already described before under various questions.

13. Have you used any technological/digital tools to facilitate your integration? If so, which ones?

Six participants said that they used several apps (as mentioned above): Youtube, TikTok, Instagram, Google translate, for the purpose of getting to know Slovenian culture, people, or to learn the language. Two participants said they are not using those tools (yet) to facilitate the integration.

14. what are the typical situations you would like to be prepared for? in what language(s)? and in what form - written, audio/video, online?

Participants said that mostly they would like to have the information about work possibilities, about apartments available for them, about learning the language, and to contact legal help online about their procedures for getting international protection.

15. What would you like to know about the host country in terms of culture, lifestyle and history? What do you think is missing?

Four participants here mentioned that they would like to have more practical examples in learning about Slovenian culture, habits etc. For example, how to go to the store, to the centre for social affairs, to the gas station...

One participants said he wants to learn the new culture but also show others his culture, so he would for example like to invite Slovenian people to his cricket matches.