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Storytelling for Empowering and motivating adult migrants

Success Stories

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INDEX

MUFOCOM PROJECT	3
1. Interviews	3
2. Interviews presentation	4
CONCLUSIONS	23
Language Barriers	23
Adapting to a New Culture	23
Finding Employment	23
Accessing Education	24
Financial Instability	24
Family Support	25

MUFOCOM PROJECT

The MUFOCOM project - Mutualizing generational competencies for training migrants in Europe: Pathways for social mobility, autonomy, and welfare of vulnerable individuals - aims to tackle from a multidisciplinary approach the issues of immigration, integration, training, personal development, and employment of the disadvantaged. One of the objectives of this project is to encourage innovative training programs based on the identified needs of adult migrants in the participating countries and by doing so, contribute to the quality of adult learning at a European level. Through the various activities of the project and the training modules that will be made available to training providers in Europe, we hope to promote the transfer of intergenerational skills thanks to mentoring activities, develop the potential of adult learners, help them improve their linguistic, digital, intercultural, socio-professional and entrepreneurship skills through meaningful ways, and facilitate the social and professional integration of migrants. All this will in return impact their financial situation, strongly contribute to their quality of life, give them the necessary keys to support their children's education, and improve their self-image and overall well-being.

1. Interviews

This booklet is a compilation of real-life stories of migrant people living in Luxembourg, France, Italy, Greece, and Portugal who have through their activities created an impact in their society. We believe that true facts about people's lives can help the disadvantaged reshape their mindset over certain matters. Regarding our target, who are people from disadvantaged backgrounds and sometimes discouraged by the constraints around their integration and success in the host society, there is a need for them to hear, read and meet people from different angles, there is a need for them to know how these people succeeded in they different pathways.

Summary of the interviews

13 people from 5 countries were interviewed. The conversational interviews were carried out in May and July of 2023. None of the partner organisations had difficulties with recruiting the interviewees, as their activities are addressed to migrants and therefore, they have connections among migrant communities in their country.

2. Interviews presentation

Partner Country: France

Age:31

Gender: Male

Nationality: Togo

Professional status: Railway engineer

Place and time of stay in a foreign country: 4 years in Italy and since 2017 in France

Summary of the success story:

Honoré came first in Italy with a student visa and a scholarship from Togo. When he arrived in Italy his first barrier was the language as he didn't speak Italian before coming to Italy except for some classes taken for his scholarship. He also discovered a new method of teaching at the university that he was not used to. And in Italy at the university, there is another way of control that is not the same in the French system that he was used to in Togo. Above this, as a foreign student he has to prove money sufficient to renew his student visa every year but the money from the scholarship was not enough so he has to do a lot of little jobs to face his needs and renew his visa every year. In 2017 he has the opportunity to go to France, as a French speaker it was easier for him to continue his master degree in Strasbourg in France, because the school system was better for him than Italy and job opportunities as engineer are more interesting in France than Italy. He spent 2 years studying for a Masters in Mechanical Engineering in Strasbourg, France. After his diploma in Mechanical engineering, he worked as a cashier in a supermarket as he couldn't find a job just after his diploma. But as he likes to say, he never gave up on his dream and even though there was a tough moment he focused on his goal. And whatever experience he's had, he's always benefited from it, because his experiences have helped him in the future. He gained his first job as consultant in a consulting enterprise. But like he liked to say it, his personality as an easy going person helped him a lot to integrate both the Italy and France society. He learned too much by asking questions, he was never shy to ask a question if he didn't have the answer. Today as an engineer of railway for the most important transport society in France, he likes to use his experience for newcomers, and his advice is to not give up on their dream. Moments can be hard but they have to focus on their goal. And also in a foreign country, there are many

situations that are new, so asking questions is a good way to learn and make contact and be integrated in the new society.

Partner country: France

Age:31

Gender: Female

Nationality: Albania

Professional status: English teacher and volunteer in associations

Place and time of stay in a foreign country: 4 years in France.

Summary of the success story:

Ermira was a secondary school English teacher for 27 years in Albania. As well as her job, she was very active in humanitarian associations, working with associations like the Red Cross and women's rights associations. When she emigrated to France in 2019 for family reasons, Ermira thought she would return to her teaching career. But it wasn't a foregone conclusion. When she wanted to work with humanitarian associations as a volunteer, it wasn't easy there either, because she absolutely had to speak French properly before applying as a volunteer in an association. So she set about learning French, but with the year 2020 and the Covid her plans were also turned upside down. But she was able to count on people to help her learn French, despite the situation at that time. Through her own determination, she learnt French very quickly, which enabled her to join more associations. Actually Ermira is the secretary general of a human rights association which is working with the Council of Europe. Ermira also teaches French and she interprets for Albanian immigrants when they need support in their administrative procedure.

Although she is now fully qualified to teach English in a French school, the fact that she is awaiting her refugee status means that she does not yet have this right. It's a constant struggle for her and her family. But her ability to build relationships and reach out to others has enabled her to create a real network of friends and fellow teachers on whom she can rely. Today she is a great support to the Albanian community in Strasbourg through her administrative support. Her advice to newcomers is to keep believing and never give up, and she uses her own case as an example.

Partner Country: France

Age:48

Gender: Male

Nationality: Ivory Coast

Professional status: Quality pharmacist

Place and time of stay in a foreign country: 18 years in France.

Summary of the success Story:

Germain already had a doctorate in pharmacy before coming to France. His idea in coming to France was not to stay and live in France. Germain came to France as part of a training course specialising in pharmaceutical industry, to complete his training and return to work in Ivory Coast. As part of his training, he had to do a work placement in a company, because of the good job he had done during his training the company proposed to recruit him so he was taken on and stayed in France. But it wasn't easy at all, because neither the company nor Germain knew what administrative formalities were required to be taken on in France, and what's more, his pharmacist's diploma was not recognised in France. Because if an enterprise needs to recruit someone who doesn't have French nationality the society has to prove that it didn't find any French guy who is suitable for this job and also the enterprise needs to pay taxes for recruiting a foreign worker. It takes more than 1 year before he gets all the documents he needs. All these obstacles enabled him to get out of his comfort zone. Sometimes had to start all over again in order to change his status from that of a foreign student to that of an immigrant employee. Not an easy task. Today, Germain has French nationality. He is head of the quality department in a pharmaceutical industry and he manages around ten people. Even though he has overcome many obstacles to get where he is today, Germain's advice to young people arriving in France today, especially as part of their studies, is to work hard, sometimes twice as hard as you need to in order to get back on track. For Germain, immigrants don't have the same opportunities at the outset, but they have to put every chance on their side.

Partner Country: France

Age:50

Gender: Female

Nationality: Togo

Professional status: Sales Manager

Place and time of stay in a foreign country: 37 years in France.

Summary of the success story:

Chantal arrived in France at the age of 13, while still at secondary school. For the teenager that she was, it wasn't easy to leave her family in Togo and come to a country where she didn't know anyone. Her first barrier was the French language. Even Togo was a French country. Her level in French doesn't allow her to continue the school at the level she left in Togo, which meant she had to go back a class to catch up. It was until she started doing odd jobs at the age of 16 that she met other migrants like herself, including other Togolese, who helped her integrate by advising her on French and foreign associations that could help her integrate. The problems Chantal encountered were administrative, as she didn't always have the right advice on what to do. But despite all that, looking back on her career today, she is grateful to France for having given her the chance to be at the place she is today. After a double degree in business and accountancy, she worked as an accountant in an accountancy firm. She then became an accountant in an industry specialising in the manufacture of furniture. When she was given the opportunity in this new field, Chantal immediately seized it to put her new diploma to good use. She was recruited in the sales department and began a job as a purchasing assistant. 7 years after entering the sales department, Chantal now has a portfolio of clients in various European countries, which have taken her all over France and Europe. Chantal's advice to migrants is to always keep a positive attitude, whatever the situation. Even though she would like to start her job in international business, she took first the accountancy to be sure to have a job and finally she works in international business. She never gives up her dream.

Partner Country: France

Age: 44

Gender: Male

Nationality: Syria

Professional status: Restaurants owner

Place and time of stay in a foreign country: 19 years in France.

Summary of the success story:

Gilles was born to a Syrian father and a South African mother. He studied between Syria and South Africa and came to France at the age of 23 with a degree in logistics management. He started work as a logistics manager in Johannesburg before and joined his mother in France in 2004. With his experience in logistics, he first worked as a logistics manager in Paris for several years. Then, attracted by the idea of his mother, who was a chef in a top Parisian restaurant, Gilles went into partnership with his mother to open a restaurant in Paris. Very quickly, with a more academic vision of management, he opened their first restaurant in Paris. This restaurant, which combined all kinds of Arab-African and European culture, immediately attracted crowds. This prompted him to open a 2nd restaurant in Strasbourg, which was also a great success. Today Gilles owns 3 restaurants and is thinking of creating a restaurant chain. Gilles describes himself as a lucky man. Although he doesn't see himself spending his whole life in the restaurant business, he believes he seized his chance when it came. His advice for people in general is to seize opportunities when they arise, and for migrants, Gilles believes that having a different cultural background to the country in which you live is an asset that you should be able to share.

Partner Country: Portugal

Age: 31

Gender: Female

Nationality: Brazilian

Professional status: Chef and micro-entrepreneur at “Matuta”, Lisbon, Portugal

Place and time of stay in a foreign country: Lisbon, Portugal, since 2017 (6 years)

Summary of the success story:

Eduarda, a 31-year-old woman from Patrocínio, Minas Gerais, in the Triângulo Mineiro region of Brazil, graduated in advertising and propaganda. She began her career working in advertising agencies, specifically in client services. However, she soon realized that working in an agency was not her lifelong dream and sought something more meaningful. In 2017, Eduarda decided to leave her familiar surroundings and moved to Lisbon, Portugal, in search of new opportunities. She started studying marketing and later decided to take a course in pastry production and management at the School of Hotel and Tourism of Lisbon. Her passion for cooking, particularly baking, had always been profound, and this course provided her with the technical skills and knowledge needed to excel in her passion. However, Eduarda's enthusiasm for baking was not merely a result of formal training; it was deeply rooted in her family's culinary traditions, particularly those of her grandmother and aunts. She fondly remembered her childhood days spent baking and cooking alongside them, learning cherished recipes that were passed down through generations. After completing her studies, she returned to Brazil but faced difficulty finding a job in her field due to the economic crisis at that time. During a visit to her mother in Fortaleza, Ceará, in a small fishing village where she had retired, Eduarda saw an opportunity to start her own business, as the village lacked a variety of food options. She decided to open a coffee shop that offered traditional Brazilian treats like pão de queijo (cheese bread), cakes, and other homemade delights. With determination and the support of friends, she returned to Portugal and opened her coffee shop called "Matuta," a term used to describe people from the Brazilian countryside. Eduarda chose this name to honor her roots and the simple, flavorful foods she grew up with. Starting with limited resources, she utilized her own kitchen appliances, procured basic ingredients, and put to use the cherished recipes passed down from her family. Matuta quickly gained popularity, especially within the Brazilian community in Lisbon. However, being an immigrant and a

Brazilian in Portugal came with its fair share of difficulties, as Eduarda acknowledges. Xenophobia and prejudices posed their challenges, but she found solace in the supportive and tight-knit market in Lisbon. Along the way, she became a part of a growing network of female entrepreneurs, a sisterhood of like-minded women empowering and helping each other to succeed. Today, Matuta stands as a testament to Eduarda's unwavering spirit and the power of embracing one's culture and heritage. Her success story not only brought the flavors of the Brazilian countryside to Portugal but also served as an inspiration for other immigrants to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams. When asked about advice for migrants and aspiring entrepreneurs, Eduarda emphasized the importance of self-belief and the willingness to take risks. She urged them to stay true to their passions and strengths and to seek support and mentorship from others. She also highlighted the significance of nurturing a network of like-minded individuals who can encourage and guide them on their journey. As for the future, Eduarda plans to expand Matuta by opening a physical space and exploring new opportunities to share the flavors of Brazil with a broader audience. Her success story serves as an inspiration to migrants and aspiring entrepreneurs, demonstrating that with determination, passion, and a supportive network, one can achieve their goals even in a foreign land.

Partner country: Portugal

Age: 36

Gender: Female

Nationality: Brazilian and Portuguese

**Professional status: Pastry chef and micro-entrepreneur at “Dona Helena Atelier”,
Lisbon, Portugal**

**Place and time of stay in a foreign country: Coimbra, Portugal from 2013 to 2017,
and Lisbon, Portugal, since 2017 (10 years)**

Summary of the success story:

Milena is a 36-year-old woman originally from João Pessoa, Paraíba, Brazil. She completed her law degree in Brazil and moved to Portugal to pursue her master's degree in Law. She intended to stay in Portugal for a year or two, but she ended up staying longer after meeting her ex-husband during her master's program. She transferred her legal practice to Portugal but found it unsatisfying as her real passion was teaching, an opportunity she couldn't find in Portugal. Instead, she discovered her passion for baking and decided to shift her career in that direction. Milena had always enjoyed baking and desserts since her childhood, inspired by her grandmother, Dona Helena, who was an excellent cook. Initially, baking was a hobby for Milena, but she started receiving more requests from friends and acquaintances, prompting her to take baking more seriously. She invested in professional baking courses in Portugal and Brazil. In 2016, she launched Dona Helena in Coimbra, Portugal, while still practicing law. But the demand for her baked goods grew to a point where she had to choose between the two, and she chose baking. She relocated to Lisbon in 2017 for better business opportunities. Milena relied on her previous legal knowledge, baking courses, and support from her ex-husband to establish her business. She used social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook to promote her products and took advantage of word-of-mouth referrals. Additionally, she also started a property rental business in Lisbon to maintain a steady income while transitioning her career. The main challenge for Milena was the bureaucratic part of setting up a business in a new country. She also had to make the difficult decision of leaving her legal career despite years of study and investment. Moreover, moving her business from Coimbra to

Lisbon was challenging as she had to build her clientele from scratch. Milena's achievement has indeed influenced the society around her, especially aspiring entrepreneurs and bakers. She regularly receives messages from people seeking advice and guidance on how to start or expand their businesses in the baking industry. Many of them are individuals who have practiced baking in Brazil and wish to do the same in Portugal. Milena always takes the time to help these people, as she remembers how hard her own beginning was without anyone to ask for help or advice. One of her most vivid memories is of a woman who had recently moved to Portugal and was trying to continue her baking business. This woman asked Milena for advice on where to buy baking supplies and utensils, and Milena responded by providing a list of resources and offered continued support. She also contributed to society by teaching and being an assistant in baking classes, possibly influencing students to continue in the field. Milena believes that by improving the profession and the quality of professionals in her field, she also improves herself. As for advice to other immigrants, Milena emphasizes the importance of investing in knowledge and perfecting one's work for credibility. She also strongly advises staying legally in the host country as much as possible, as the insecurity of being illegal can hold one back. Additionally, she recommends seeking help to navigate the bureaucratic processes in Portugal, doing everything properly and legally, and to never give up despite the difficulties. Her belief is that there's a market for everyone, and every baker can cater to a specific audience. She doesn't see others in her field as competitors, but as fellow professionals, enriching the industry with their unique products and services.

Partner country: Greece

Age: 50

Gender: Female

Nationality: Ukraine

Professional status: employee – client manager

Place and time of stay in a foreign country: 10 months in Athens, Greece

Summary of the success story:

My name is Olena and I come from Kiev, from Kiev. I have studied sociology and economics at university. I am working now online as a client manager and in the past, I have undertaken various positions such as policy analysis and project management. I have been in Greece for 10 months and I came here not by choice but because of the war in Ukraine. I faced a lot of difficulties and the transitional period was not easy but I managed to learn the language and I was able to communicate with people and I learned the habits of the Greeks and how the society works. It is not easy to accept the situation and to move on because your mind is still in your country. But I managed to find a balance and enjoy my life here in Greece. Throughout this journey I have been helped by various programs and organizations here in Greece in order to learn the language and develop skills I needed like the ability to prepare my legal documents. The most important aspect was that I was able to keep my job and work online so that I still have a salary. Apart from the fact that I couldn't speak Greek, my difficulties were also psychological and emotional and financial and it's something that only with time and acceptance you can only overcome. I learned the language. However, I still have a lot to learn, and I did the best I could to get through the difficulties I faced, with small steps at a time. I don't know if my own journey has influenced anyone, but maybe stories like mine give strength to people who are experiencing such situations. The advice that I would give to other refugees is that if you know what you expect from your future and you try hard to cope with the difficulties you face and accept the help of others, then it doesn't matter which country you're in and you will find your way.

Partner country: Greece

Age: 46

Gender: Female

Nationality: Ukraine

Professional status: employee – waitress

Place and time of stay in a foreign country: 1,5 years in Athens, Greece

Summary of the success story:

My name is Natalia and I am from Ukraine. My life changed when I found myself in Greece due to the ongoing war in my homeland. While the journey has been challenging, I've managed to start a new life in Greece. Back in Ukraine, I pursued a degree in accounting and I had a part-time job as an accountant. When I arrived in Greece, I faced the daunting tasks of finding a home, a job and learning a new language. At first, it felt like it was impossible, but I was determined to overcome all the problems. I found somewhere to stay with the help of other Ukrainians who were already in Greece and later I enrolled in language courses. Finding a job was quite difficult, but I was determined to support myself and rebuild my life. I started working as a waitress. It was not easy because I haven't learnt the language yet, but it was a step towards independence. During my time in Greece, I received invaluable support from various programs and organizations and mainly from other Ukrainians who came to Greece many years ago. They not only helped me improve my language skills but also guided me in every issue I faced. I am grateful. Emotionally it was not easy to cope with the situation. I often felt a deep sense of homesickness, missing the familiar sights and sounds of Ukraine. Financially, there were challenges, but I learned to manage my expenses and budget wisely. What kept me going were the connections I made with fellow refugees and locals. I learned about Greek culture, made friends, and found a sense of belonging in this foreign country. If I could offer advice to other refugees facing similar challenges, it would be this: never give up. If you try hard you will have the chance to overcome the challenges and succeed. Don't be afraid to ask for help and accept the support. While I may not know if my story has influenced anyone, I hope that by sharing it, I can inspire others on a similar journey. You can always find your way and build a new life.

Partner country: Italy

Age: 30

Gender: Male

Nationality: Guinea

Professional status: Intercultural mediator

Place and time of stay in a foreign country: Cerignola, since 2014

Summary of the success story:

My name is Mohammed, I'm 30 years old and from Guinea. I arrived in Italy in 2014 when I was still a minor. In my country I attended school, but I never got the diploma because my family was too poor to support my studies. When I arrived in Italy, I was a guest of a community of unaccompanied foreign minors and could attend school again there. This was exactly my goal when I left: to leave my country to be reborn. My motivation has always been strong because I wanted, at all costs to finish my studies and obtain a degree. And so it was. The road was really winding and filled with suffering and hostility, I missed my family, but I knew I was doing the right thing. In Cerignola I found people who have become my second family, who have helped me feel less alone, but above all to integrate into the area by learning to exploit my strengths. Some of these people have also supported me in working on my sporting skills. In general, I can say that if I had been left alone, I would not have reached the levels I am at today. Thanks to voluntary organisations and their operators, to sensitive people, I have been able to make my way in a new country. For example, they helped me apply for the civil service and then slowly start entering the world of volunteering. In general, without a network of local people, the life of a migrant is more difficult because you have to deal with distrust, sometimes racism due to the colour of my skin and with inevitable language and communication problems. But another big obstacle was the bureaucracy, which made everything more difficult, even finding a home. I think I was very lucky, but the advice I can give to someone like me who arrives in a new country is not to give up, persevere, and be patient. Giving yourself time to get to know the area and the people and to make yourself known is also essential to try to remove the spectre of distrust. Today I feel accomplished, I'm an intercultural mediator, I help kids like me who need support and guidance, and I've achieved financial independence.

Partner country: Italy

Age: 34

Gender: Male

Nationality: Senegal

Professional status: Intercultural mediator

Place and time of stay in a foreign country: Cerignola, since 2015

Summary of the success story:

My name is Keita, I'm 34 years old and come from Senegal. I arrived in Italy in 2015. I decided to leave my country for the poor living conditions, for the danger of my life and to improve my life. There is officially no war in Senegal, but unfortunately, a civil conflict is being fought there for a region called Casamance, and the anguish of being killed at any moment is strong. Before leaving, I attended a language university in my country, which I liked very much. Then the intensification of the clashes and the increase in danger made me decide to leave for a future unknown to me. The journey was really difficult and, in my heart, I regretted having left my loved ones and my land, but life is more important and I was very determined to build a new one in Italy. I arrived full of hope but also of fear and bewilderment. Although I had a high level of knowledge, since I had studied in Senegal, in Italy I felt the most useless of the useless. Thanks to some compatriots who had arrived months before me, I started working in the fields with great difficulty as a seasonal worker in the tomato harvest. I am very grateful to Italy, but I do not deny having faced very dark moments in which I did not have enough money for accommodation or food; I have dealt with racism and discrimination and had to work hard to bridge the language barrier. I also strongly felt the weight of the difference in skin colour, traditions, culture and customs. It is thanks to the volunteers of the parish Caritas and to a volunteer centre for migrants that my life has undergone a turning point. I started dating them and getting to know them, they got to know me. When they learned that I was attending university in Senegal, they first made me enrol in an Italian course (without knowing the language, it is impossible to integrate). Then they helped me enrol in a school for intercultural mediators. The volunteers have been a real point of reference for me, without which I would not have managed, not even to regularize my position in terms of documents. Today I feel integrated, I have acquired the title of linguistic and intercultural mediator and I work at the police headquarters and information desks for migrants. I think my achievement has had a

positive impact on society, because I have also opened an association of Senegalese people whose goal is to provide the kind of support and assistance that I in turn have received and without which I would not be here today. My goal today is to help these people, get them off the street and not make them feel alone. Without the volunteers, the teachers and the good people along my way, I would not have been successful. The advice I would like to give to my migrant brothers is to be serious and determined, to have a spirit of adaptation, but always remain aware of where we started from because it has made us what we are today. Finally, it is important never to give up in the face of adversity (and there are so many in the life of a migrant) and always maintain a positive spirit.

Partner country: Luxembourg

Age: 43

Gender: Male

Nationality: Cape Verdean

Professional status: A Researcher

Place and time of stay in a foreign country: Lisbon, France, Luxembourg

Summary of the success story:

Bonarino, 43 years old, comes from Cape Verde. In 2006 he left his country with the dream of pursuing his education. After overcoming several challenges he has managed to lead the life he dreamed of. He has a bachelor's and master's degree from the University of Coimbra in Lisbon; and he got his PhD from the University of Luxembourg where he is now working as a researcher. However, the journey to get to where he is now has not been easy for Bonarino. He analogizes life to a 'zigzag path' as opposed to a 'straight line' and he stresses that one must hold the steering wheel very firm. Bonarino's ambition in life was to further his education in America, as he was an English teacher in Cape Verde. Although he was granted a five-year visa to the United States, at the time he did not have any relatives or social network that could receive him there. Instead, he went to Portugal where he had his sister and other relatives in hopes of finding connections to America. While in Portugal, he had the opportunity to join the University of Coimbra where he did his bachelor's degree in Linguistics and Literature and his Master's degree in Anglo American Studies. However, he had to interrupt his Master's studies for a year because he had to work to sustain his family. His persistence was immense as he explained how he managed to change his visit visa to a student visa in Portugal. During his stay in Portugal, he was admitted to the University of Coimbra. Hence he was required to go back to Cape Verde and apply for a student visa to Portugal from there. However, he had a colleague who passed through a similar experience processing a student visa from Cape Verde to Portugal and was nearly denied. Knowing this, Bonarino stopped by the immigration office in Portugal every day, asking them to give him the visa while he was still in the country. For a long time, they told him that it was the regulation and he needed to apply for it from Cape Verde. In the end, they got tired of him and granted him the student visa while he was still in Portugal and told him that he was lucky as he was the first one to receive the student

visa while still in Portugal. On the contrary, he says it was his persistence that got him the visa and emphasises the importance of perseverance and not giving up on achieving one's goals in life. His perseverance, humility, and firm focus on his dream have helped him overcome the obstacles he faced throughout his life journey. In Portugal, he had been working and studying at the same time to sustain his family – his wife and their two children – who were living with him. During his PhD studies in Luxembourg, he had been living off the scholarship money and after finishing his study it was very hard for him to find a job for almost two years. It was a very challenging time and he encountered many people who looked down at him whilst searching for a job and making his job applications in person. He took a postdoc position in Switzerland supported by the government of Switzerland for a year and had to go there leaving his family behind. After finishing it, he came back to Luxembourg and once again could not find a job in his area of expertise. After completing his PhD, he couldn't find a job for almost two years. He made several job applications but could not get a single reply. Whenever he went in person, people would look down at him, which he found a very challenging time but he persisted and he refused to give up, even when it was not possible to get his teaching diploma accredited. Although he had all the required documents in hand, when they saw him in person they did not accept it. He was shocked when the same documents got approved when he sent them by post. He says, "The gate-keeping is in the small encounters, when people see you, how they perceive you, your origin, ...you are a migrant...". After being unemployed for some time, he applied for a security guard position and was hired by Amazon. He worked as a security guard, with a PhD, for 8 months. While still working as a security guard, he was writing a project to apply to the University of Luxembourg. Once he was accepted, he joined the university as a researcher. He mentions that if one persists they can achieve their goals. He says it is difficult but it is not impossible... "Especially us migrants who come from the global south, we need to persist and never give up in order to get our way." Bonarino mentions that he has learned a great deal from his PhD, particularly from the research field interaction of his participants. The main conclusion of his PhD thesis is that language diversity or multilingualism is robust in Luxembourg; and while this is romanticised in the country, it creates a kind of social inequality in the society. Even when the language is diverse, some people still feel excluded. He experienced this during his job search when some companies put languages as a requirement even though they were not necessarily useful for the position.

Bonarino acknowledges the support he got from his family and colleagues throughout his journey to get to where he is now. During his study in Portugal, his brother had been paying for his tuition fee as Bonarino's part-time job could only cover his rent. Moreover, after finishing his Master's degree, he could not find a job in Portugal as there was an economic crisis in the country. During this time, his mother-in-law who lived in Paris took him in with his wife and their two children. Around then, he found a part-time teaching job in a University in Cape Verde and left his family behind to go back home. While he was working there, his former professor from the University of Coimbra contacted him with information about a PhD project in Language and migration at the University of Luxembourg, which is how he came to Luxembourg. All of these networks have been crucial throughout his journey. For Bonarino, success is different for every person in differing circumstances. For him success is really success when one has a humble success and not an arrogant one. He says, "Success is how happy you feel for yourself". He believes he has managed to achieve many goals and things that he has enjoyed doing from the time he was a child and he says that he will keep on dreaming. He adds that there are still challenges and he still keeps persevering. He emphasises that "for migrants and refugees from the south, we have to hold the steering wheel firm, as the path we move on is a zigzag one."

Partner country: Luxembourg

Age: 35

Gender: Male

Nationality: Eritrean

Professional status: A Painter

Place and time of stay in a foreign country: Ethiopia, Sudan, Italy, France and Luxembourg

Summary of the success story:

I am of Eritrean nationality. I arrived in Luxembourg in 2015. My migratory journey began in Ethiopia, Sudan, Italy, France and finally Luxembourg. My journey only lasted 3 months. I was lucky, because some people take 3 years to reach their final destination. When I arrived in Luxembourg, it was a bit difficult for me, because I didn't know anyone apart from the people we arrived with in Luxembourg. The procedure to obtain refugee status took 15 months. In the meantime, I was learning French and when I had the necessary level to go to a reception class for young adults, I was directed to the reception classes. By the end of those classes, I had obtained a grade that gave me access to vocational training. I had a choice of several courses, but my preference was for the painter's trade, because I had worked as a painter before leaving my country of origin. I'd been looking for a company for an apprenticeship for a year, but it was to no avail. Then I enrolled on a B1 level French course to improve my language skill. In the meantime, I was applying to companies for work, as I couldn't find an internship program anywhere. One day, a company contacted me to offer me a two-year fixed-term contract in painting, as I was a painter, and I accepted the offer. I'd like to point out that I didn't benefit from the support of a service in my search for a supervisor for an apprenticeship or a job. At first, I was in contact with someone who did coaching, but the person didn't have much time, and I was also looking for work. In the end, I gave up coaching and started looking for work myself. I did everything myself. Before joining the company where I worked as a painter for two years, I worked in several areas in Luxembourg, including woodwork, catering and gardening. But one day during my break, I was talking to one of my colleagues about finding a supervisor for an apprenticeship, and he mentioned it to his uncle who had a

painting and decorating business, and he contacted me to offer me an apprenticeship. I started my apprenticeship in September 2019 and it lasted 3 years and I qualified as a skilled worker. When I started the apprenticeship, I had a lot of problems with the French language, because professional practice is different from the language that the teachers taught us in class. Despite this difficulty, I still did my training and got my diploma. In September 2023, I'm going to start my brevet de maîtrise (High level of qualified training) . This new professional training will last 3 years and at the end I'll have a better salary and I could even open my own business. If I don't manage to set up my own business, I could rent out my certificate to someone who has the necessary skills to open a business. I have the right to rent out my diploma. Today, I love my job because what I earn allows me to live here and help my family in Africa. My greatest satisfaction is the joy of my customers at the end of my work in their homes. I see them satisfied and that gives me the joy of having brought something to someone. I love this job because I'm in contact with people and that allows me to be creative, to express myself by advising customers on the choices they can make for their painting. At work, I speak French and a little Luxembourgish. It helps me a lot to learn French. I think that if you want to find your way around Luxembourg easily, you need someone to help you at work and even in everyday life. My advice to newcomers is that you need to be in contact with people who speak the language you're learning. You have to get out of your own community and mix with others. Staying in your own community and always speaking your mother tongue doesn't help much with learning a foreign language, especially as there are so many nationalities in Luxembourg and it's important to speak the languages of the country. I also believe that if you want to have a good job, you have to avoid absenteeism at work, because that gives a good impression and you have to be motivated. With motivation and patience, you can achieve your goals here in Luxembourg. In Africa, you have your family, you stay with your family. Here we hardly have any family and that's what makes life a bit difficult. By reaching out to others, you increase your chances of making good friends in the country. I think you have to have a sense of time, because here in Luxembourg, everything is calculated on the hour and time goes by very quickly. The notion of time is very important here. If you're learning French, you have to listen to music and watch TV in French.

Conclusions

The interviews conducted revealed some similarities between them. The interviewees mentioned some of the biggest challenges they faced in the host country, and these are common, as we can see, to many migrants and refugees in countries all over Europe.

The following were mentioned:

Language Barriers

Language barriers can be a frustrating obstacle for those who struggle to understand the host country language and can make it difficult to access important resources. Fortunately, as referred there are many resources available to help individuals overcome these barriers, such as language learning apps, classes, and online communities and local communities. By taking advantage of these resources and working hard to improve their language skills, individuals can break down language barriers and open new opportunities for themselves.

Adapting to a New Culture

Adapting to a new culture can be an exciting yet challenging experience. It means immersing yourself in a new world, full of different customs, practices, and norms. Learning about the culture's values and beliefs can help you better understand the locals and build relationships. However, adapting to a new culture can also pose some difficulties, especially when it comes to food and clothing customs. Trying new types of food and wearing different clothing styles can take some time to get used to, but it's all part of the experience. Ultimately, adapting to a new culture means being open-minded, respectful, and willing to learn.

Finding Employment

In today's job market, finding employment can be a daunting task. However, one way to increase your chances of success is by looking for job opportunities that require language proficiency or a specific skill set.

Being bilingual or multilingual can give you an edge in industries such as tourism, customer service, and translation. On the other hand, possessing a unique skill set such as programming, graphic design, or marketing can make you an asset to any company.

When searching for job opportunities, consider what sets you apart from other candidates and tailor your search accordingly. Don't be afraid to showcase your strengths and highlight how they can benefit a potential employer. With a bit of persistence and the right mindset, you can find your dream job in no time.

Accessing Education

Acquiring an education is one of the most crucial steps a person can take towards their future success. However, for parents and students, navigating through the local school system and understanding the requirements for admission can be quite daunting.

It is essential to understand the admission process, from the application process and admission requirements to deadlines, to achieve success. Finding relevant resources such as the school website or speaking with a school representative will prove to clarify the process better.

Being aware of the different programs and extracurricular activities schools offer will also help in choosing the right school for the student. Understanding the education system is challenging, but with the right tools and resources, it can be a smooth and enjoyable experience.

Financial Instability

Financial instability can easily take a toll on one's mental and physical health. With common expenses such as rent, groceries, and medical bills, it can be overwhelming to keep up with monthly payments.

The stress of choosing between paying rent or buying groceries can lead to a sense of hopelessness and anxiety. However, it is important to remember that there are resources available to help alleviate the burden of financial strain.

Taking advantage of government assistance programs, negotiating payment plans, and seeking financial counselling can provide support in times of need. It may take some effort

and patience, but with determination and a little bit of help, it is possible to overcome financial challenges and find stability.

Family Support

Being away from loved ones is never easy, and even more so when the distance is measured in thousands of miles. Long-distance relationships can be difficult, especially when it comes to family members.

The feeling of isolation can be overwhelming, as we miss out on the daily happenings in each other's lives. It's important to maintain communication and make efforts to stay in touch, no matter how far apart we are.

Go to a new country can be an incredible journey, but it is also accompanied by many challenges and adjustments. These include language barriers, adapting to a new culture, finding employment opportunities, accessing education, facing financial instability, and absence of family support.

Each migrant and refugee has their own unique story and faces their own struggles. But despite all the obstacles they may face, they continue to make immense contributions to society. By providing us with unique perspectives and invaluable skill sets, these individuals make our communities stronger. They serve as an inspiration to persevere and remind us that anything is possible with courage and hard work and that's the common word they all refer to in their interviews.

Main advice for other migrants and refugees

"Never give up!"

"Focus on goals!"

"Search for dreams!"

"Ask for advice!"

"Make questions!"

"Ask for help!"

"Look for local support organisations and networks"



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