The Your Journey Foundation Bricks

Your
journey

The Your Journey Foundation Bricks explores the experiences and outcomes of workshops designed to support local and newcomers youth in feeling at home in their host countries and fostering social inclusion. The workshops incorporated interactive and creative elements such as storytelling, picture-taking, and group activities to encourage creativity and connection. In the theoretical framework we elaborate on various concepts such as feeling at home, social inclusion, ingroup-outgroup dynamics, and empathy. In addition, the use of arts, particularly photovoice and storytelling, are explained as they were central to the workshop approach. The results indicate that participants found the workshops to be positive and enjoyable, with a majority expressing satisfaction and a sense of connection. We hope to provide insights into the value of creative and interactive approaches in supporting feeling at home and a sense of belonging of local youngsters and youngsters with a refugee background (newcomers).

PARTNERS

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1 Introduction Foundation Bricks Your Journey

The Soul is a stranger trying to find a Home somewhere that is not a where- Rumi

Every journey is a story and every story is a journey. But not every journey is the same. The only similarity between each journey is that the main character went to a variety of experiences and has gained wisdom and insight at the end of it.

At least 89 million people around the world have been forced to flee their homes, they had to go on a journey and created, each of them an unique story. Among them are nearly 27.1 million refugees, around half of whom are under the age of 18 (UNHCR - Figures at a Glance). Youngsters arriving in new countries, already with so much experiences that some of us might never gain. They need to start a new life in a new country. They need to create a new home for themselves, but what is feeling at home to them?

The aim of this project is to explore different perspectives on what is needed to 'feel at home' through creativity, especially photography and storytelling. From the idea that everyone has made a journey to get into the here and now and the wisdom and insight gained during that journey is the basis for everyone's present state of being, it is interesting to put different perspectives side by side. Is the 'what is needed to 'feel at home' different when you have come from far away and fled a situation that was threatening than when you have left the parental nest and are shaping a new life within the same country/city?

There will be differences, but most likely there will be many similarities as well. How do these relate to each other? What happens if you share the stories and start looking for a new story together? And how do you imagine a new story, individually and/or collectively, so that you can share it with others?

The aim of Your Journey – is to offer (youth) professionals „theoretical bricks" to think about and develop workshops to connect youth with a local and refugee backgrounds in order to build strong peaceful communities where everyone feels included and at home. On the Your Journey website - https://yourjourney.nu/ - you will find the toolbox with all the exercises and the tools and you will find the theoretical foundation bricks. All the exercises can be selected and used for specific contexts about feeling at home.

The Your Journey Toolbox is aimed at:

Youth workers, teachers, artists, young leaders, social workers, volunteers, social entrepreneurs:

1.   who work with groups of youngsters with different backgrounds, especially a refugee background but also other migrant backgrounds;

2.   who work in training/ education institutions with students or pupils with diverse backgrounds; especially refugee backgrounds

3.   who are involved in community art projects facilitating social cohesion among youth;

4.   who have their own organization that attempts to have youngsters feel at home and be connected with each other.

This list is not exhaustive, so other professionals might find other contexts in which the toolkit is useful, but these contexts give the reader an idea of where and when to use the Your Journey Toolkit.

Outline of the Foundation Bricks:

In the second chapter, we elaborate on the term "Newcomers" in the context of the global refugee crisis, emphasizing the vulnerability of those who have fled their homes. We discusses variations in European countries' approaches to welcoming newcomers and the distinction between asylum seekers and refugees. In addition we explore the significance of feeling at home, comparing the experiences of young people who have fled their homes with those who have lived in the same location their entire lives. We also focus on shifts to social inclusion and the Capabilities Approach, aiming to foster empathy and narrow the ingroup-outgroup gap. Section 2.4 we the challenges of ingroup-outgroup dynamics and the importance of interaction and empathy. And we conclude by addressing the role of empathy in fostering positive attitudes and reconciling differences is discussed.

 In Chapter 3 we elaborate on the use of arts, including pictures, photovoice, photo elicitation, and storytelling, as tools for exploring subjective differences, and promoting social inclusion and feeling at home as possible outcomes of interventions.

In Chapter 4 provide a brief overview of the local situations in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and Greece concerning refugees and newcomers. It covers various aspects such as the legal framework for asylum, public sentiments, the number of refugees, economic and social characteristics, governmental perspectives, support systems, main challenges faced by refugees, tensions between local and newcomer youth, and the capabilities, hopes, and dreams of young refugees. The toolkit's potential value in each country is also discussed, emphasizing its role in fostering positive interactions and communication between local and newcomer youth.

In Chapter 5 a brief overview of the method is given, in Chapter 6 the results are mentioned. The chapter delves into general outcomes and country-specific outcomes and in the final chapter some conclusions are made.

2   Theory

2.1   Newcomers

As mentioned least 89 million people around the world have been forced to flee their homes, Among them are nearly 27.1 million refugees, around half of whom are under the age of 18 (UNHCR - Figures at a Glance). An asylum seeker is someone who, for various reasons, has left his or her country of origin to seek protection in another country by applying for asylum. When someone applies for asylum, they want to be recognized as a refugee. As long as the decision on the asylum application has not been made, this person will remain an asylum seeker.

Usually it is checked whether the asylum seeker falls under the United Nations Refugee Convention and is therefore recognized as a refugee. Not every asylum seeker is therefore a refugee. According

to the UN Refugee Convention of 1951, a refugee is someone who has 'well-founded fear' in his country of origin of persecution on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group.

In the Netherlands when an asylum seeker is a refugee he or she will receive a temporary residence permit for a period of five years. A refugee with a residence permit is called a 'status holder' or 'permit holder'. Because of the negative connotation of the words refugees (and migrants) the term 'newcomers' has been introduced. Newcomers are not born in the new home county but have come here with the aim of staying for a longer period of time. The term newcomers therefore also includes refugees and status holders, as well as other persons who have come the new country for, for example, family reunification, study or work (https://www.mycoa.nl/nl/content/asielzoeker-vluchteling-statushouder-en-nieuwkomer-wat-het-verschil).

In recent years, the European countries have varied in the way they welcome newcomers. We can very well imagine this has an influence in the perception of refugees and whether or not they want to stay in the country. For example, in some counties the waiting time for family reunifications have been prolonged, some have cut refugee benefits, some have pushed more towards resettlement, but for example Germany has accepted nearly all asylum seekers that were found to be legitimate refugees (Abdelaaty & Steele, 2022).

In 2021, asylum seekers came from around 140 countries to Europe. Most first time applications were lodged in: Germany (148,200), France (103,800), Spain (62,100), Italy (43,900) and Austria (36,700)(https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/statistics-migration-europe_en#overall-figures-of-immigrants-in-european-society). Therefore this project is done in 4 European countries, Germany the Netherlands, Greece and Italy. We can imagine the more Nordic countries, Germany and the Netherlands may be more popular for resettlement than Italy or Greece, and therefore the perception of home might differ.

We can image that the people who have fled their houses are exposed to many risks pre-flight, during their flight, and upon arrival, which make them vulnerable for the development of mental health problems, therefore we decided that this project is not for those who have just arrived, but those who have been here, have settled a bit and for whom feeling at home starts to get relevant for, the Newcomers.

2.2   Feeling at home

The concept of home is a vital aspect of human life, with warmth, safety, loved ones, and a roof above one's head being among the words that come to mind when thinking of home. The importance of home is becoming increasingly significant when discussing theory and implementing solutions to address the global humanitarian crisis (Kale et al., 2019), which is still growing. All refugees share the primary characteristic of losing their homes, and they are defined as individuals who have been displaced from their homes (Papadopoulos, 2002). Such individuals often have a difficult journey, being forced into exile and sometimes realizing that they can never return home, resulting in emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physical difficulties (Dieterich-Hartwell & Koch, 2017).

Research on migration frequently notes that home, identity, and belonging are connected to a specific geographical location. When someone is forced to leave, they lose their home and become "rootless" (Perez Murcia, 2019). However, according to Perez Murcia (2019), home is more than just a physical place. Home can be better viewed "as a particularly significant kind of place with which,

and within which, we experience strong social, psychological and emotive attachments" (Easthope, 2004, p.135). It can be a positive place for stimulation and ease, but it can also be a negative place of disappointment and unease.

Regardless of whether the experience is positive or negative, all individuals have a sense of home, even if it is not an actual experience of one home. Being at home can be a privilege, where one feels safe and special, but it can also be a place of insecurity, violence, and terror (Blunt and Dowling, 2006 in Kale et al., 2019). Home is not only a physical space where one has a roof over their head and their biological needs are met. It is also a "social, cultural, political, and affective space where individuals give meaning to their everyday life experiences" (Perez Murcia, 2019, p. 1516).

Research shows that even for those who associate home with a single, fixed place, it remains dynamic. When conflict and displacement are part of the journey, home becomes a space that continually transforms (Habib, 1996; Korac, 2009; Perez Murcia, 2019). Thus, depending on the circumstances, home can be "lost and experienced nowhere," but it can also be "mobile and experienced on the move" (Perez Murcia, 2019).

In our project, it is interesting to explore whether young people who have fled their homes and those who have lived in the same village or city their entire lives experience feeling at home differently. Do they have more in common than one might initially assume? Identifying commonalities can evoke empathy, narrow the ingroup-outgroup gap, and promote inclusion among professionals working with such individuals.

2.3   Social inclusion

Research shows that it is difficult for young refugees to really find their place in society. We know from experience in other national and transnational projects that this type of projects can contribute greatly to building contacts between refugees and other groups in society, increasing inclusion. With social inclusion we mean the right of persons to live the kind of lives that they have reasons for to value and to have the capability to construct meaningful lives (Sen 1999; Andrade & Doolin, 2016). Capabilities really entail all the aspects that we need to live a meaningful life (Nussbaum, 2011).

The Capabilities Approach mentions that well-being is about real freedoms (capabilities) people have to achieve valuable 'beings and doings', known as 'functionings' (Austin, 2018). Capabilities are the things that we all need to live a flourishing life. In this project we want all youngsters to be socially included. Therefore the aim of the workshops is not only to see what feeling at home means but also to stimulate similarity and consequentially inclusion. When we focus on similarities, the differences diminish which we will explain in the following section.

2.4   Ingroup-Outgroup

The world has divided land into territorial segments, creating cultural and national boundaries that have proven to be detrimental for refugees. As they lack a national homeland, refugees have been portrayed as a "problem" (Taylor, 2013), implicitly or explicitly. This critique is particularly relevant

when considering the question of home and its meaning for refugees. When we view the 'other' group as a 'problem,' we tend to see them as separate from 'us,' perpetuating the 'us versus them' mentality that is all too common in human behavior (De Kreek et al., 2020).

This tendency to view others as separate from ourselves is explained by several theories, such as social identity theory, which suggests that people's self-definition is partly influenced by their group membership, contributing to their self-concept and self-esteem. We tend to categorize ourselves and others based on various features, such as age, gender, ethnicity, religion, economics, politics, beliefs, norms, and values, and develop a personal sense of identity based on the groups we belong to (Turner, 1987). This shared identity with the group is a crucial source of social identification (Brewer, Gonsalkorale & van Dommelen, 2012), leading to a similarity bias that favors similar in-group members and biases against out-group members.

This similarity bias is also in line with the similarity-attraction paradigm, which posits that the more similar people are, the more they tend to like each other. Numerous studies have provided evidence for this paradigm (Byrne, 1997). Youngsters with a strong group identification tend to enhance group formation, self-esteem, and the ability to cope with developmental issues and feelings of insecurity while growing into adulthood (Tanti et al., 2011).

Based on the above-mentioned theories, it is clear that people tend to classify themselves and others into categories, leading to in-group and out-group formation. As people tend to favor their in-group members and hold biases against out-group members, those without a group to belong to may lose their sense of belonging and self-awareness, especially when others perceive them as "different" (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002).

Self-awareness is all about our consciousness. Identity tends to reside in this moving flow and is one of the most stable, integrated, and constant elements of self-awareness (Costalat-Founeau & Lipiansky, 2008). Identity can be viewed at different levels, such as personal identity, relational identity, and collective social identity, which exists through shared cultural values. When arriving in a new country, refugees may face threats to their identity, as intercultural adjustment cannot take place while leaving their whole identity intact. These threats may include difficulties in validating their diplomas, being perceived as foreigners, and encountering different cultural etiquettes (Crozet, n.d.). Therefore, interaction is crucial. People need to learn from one another, feel safe, acknowledge similarities and differences, understand where they need to adjust and where they don't, and develop empathy towards one another.

2.5   Empathy

Effective communication and acceptance of others are dependent on emotions. Research shows that people are more likely to recognize emotions in members of their in-group than out-group (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002). However, empathy can reduce this bias. When we empathize with people from an out-group, it leads to improved attitudes towards the entire group (Batson et al., 1997). Empathy is the ability to recognize emotional experiences in others, experience matched sensations and emotions, and are motivated to alleviate those others' suffering (Cikara et al., 2011 p.149).

To increase positive attitudes towards a group, we should view individuals from their perspective and imagine how their situation affects them. This increases empathic feelings, valuing their welfare, and generalizes to the whole group, resulting in positive beliefs, feelings, and concern for the group (Batson et al., 1997). Therefore, empathy can change our perception of others. It is important to be aware that our point of view is not necessarily shared by everyone, and there may be differences, but are they irreconcilable?

3   The use of arts

Using arts is an effective way to highlight subjective differences as it allows us to delve deeper into our minds, where emotions come into play. Engaging in arts can lead to a state of 'flow', where we become completely absorbed in the present moment, resulting in increased creativity and productivity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Recent research suggests that the arts can also be used as effective tools to trigger positive emotions (Sloboda & Juslin, 2000; Scherder, 2015), provided that people engage in art activities they enjoy.

When engaging in arts activities, people tend to better retrieve and process memories, as it enables them to express their emotions and feelings in a non-linear manner, disrupting automatic thinking. For individuals with limited verbal command, such as those who have recently arrived in a new country, the linear discourse of verbal communication can pose barriers to self-expression.

On a community level, using arts can facilitate multiple understandings, excavate silent voices, and enhance a sense of community and tolerance (Abu Ghazaleh, Heredia & Bos, 2024). The use of creative arts can also provide a temporary home for refugees in the social inclusion process, as it creates a safe and interactive atmosphere (Dieterich-Hartwell & Koch, 2017).

3.1   The use of pictures

Perception is the process by which individuals organize and interpret sensory information to give meaning to their environment. Our frame of reference strongly influences what we see, and people's behavior is often based on their perceptions rather than objective reality (Robbins & Judge, 2015). The use of pictures is a powerful tool for exploring perception, as a picture created by an individual reflects their interpretation of the subject matter. Additionally, the brain areas involved in processing visual information are evolutionarily older than those involved in processing verbal information, allowing pictures to access deeper, more unconscious levels of the brain (Harper, 2002).

Pictures are an effective way to illustrate and explain complex subjects and can promote a deeper understanding of a particular topic. They enable participants to express their emotions, perspectives, and values, and facilitate communication by reducing misunderstandings and improving memory (Collier, 1957 in Fleron & Pedersen, 2010). Taking pictures of things that make individuals happy has been shown to increase well-being (Kurtz, 2015), and teaching participants to take their own pictures fosters ownership of the images and can reveal aspects of the subject matter that might not be immediately apparent to others (Oliffe & Bottorf, 2007 in Kong, Kellner, Austin Els & Orr, 2015).

The use of pictures also has potential benefits at the community level. Pictures can act as a bridge for cultural diversity, allowing participants from different cultural backgrounds to look at the same picture and perceive different things. These different perceptions can be defined, understood, and compared by the participants from different cultural groups when looking at the same picture (Harper, 2002). There are two popular ways to use pictures in this context: photovoice and photo elicitation.

3.1.1 Photovoice

Photovoice is a process in which people use photo images to capture aspects of their environment and experiences and share them with others (Communitytoolbox, n.d., Section 20. Implementing Photovoice in Your Community). Photovoice is mostly used as a collective visual research method where photos are taken by participants and are used to explore and address community needs, stimulate individual empowerment, and create a critical dialogue to advocate community change (Hergenrather et al., 2009; Sanon, Evans-Agnew & Boutain, 2014). Additionally, participants are often involved in the analysis and conclusion of the report, making it more of a co-learning process (Wang and Burris, 1997 in Kong, Kellner, Austin Els & Orr, 2014; Migliorini & Rania, 2017)

3.1.2 Photo elicitation

Photo elicitation is often used in interviews to guide and stimulate discussion. This adds an extra dimension compared to a typical conversation and can increase the validity and reliability of the information gathered (Harper, 2002). There are two options for using photo elicitation: (1) preselecting pictures and asking participants to evaluate them, or (2) allowing participants to choose the pictures that start the discussion. The latter option often leads to better involvement, interaction, and collaborative knowledge (Bessell, Deese, & Medina, 2007). Additionally, there is a psychological therapeutic method that uses pictures known as "phototherapy" or "therapeutic photography" (Loewenthal et al., 2017). In this method, a set of picture cards is used, and the client chooses one to start the therapy, which is similar to the process of photo elicitation.

3.2 The use of Storytelling

Sharing stories is a unique characteristic that not only reflects reality but also constructs it (Czarniawska, 2004; Spector-Mersel, 2010). Every individual constructs a story about themselves and their lives, and the type of story they create can assign either a positive or negative value to their life and activities, providing either empowerment or not (Rappaport, 1995). Rappaport distinguishes three types of narratives: individual stories, community narratives recognized and shared by a group, and dominant cultural narratives distributed through mass media or institutions that communicate stereotypes and serve as an influential backdrop against which more localized community narratives and personal stories are told.

Empowering settings are places where various personal stories and community narratives are shared and valued open-mindedly (Kreek, 2014; Rappaport, 1995). Storytelling is an important tool for creating a positive story about oneself, especially for young people who have experienced negativity in their lives. It provides social and emotional support and an opportunity to think about oneself in new ways (Rappaport, 1995), ultimately helping individuals see their future in a positive light.

Storytelling involves sharing one's own life story, which creates a memory, gives meaning to events, and gives individuals a sense of identity (Rappaport, 1998). Authentic experiences are the

foundation of these stories, which have a beginning, middle, and end, and often have a clear point (Rappaport, 1995). Sharing one's story creates a sense of empowerment, which is defined as an intentional and continuous process involving mutual respect, critical reflection, and caring participation, enabling people to better utilize valuable resources and resources within themselves and their environment (Rappaport, 1998; Saleeby, 1996).

Storytelling creates a safe environment where young people feel comfortable sharing their stories, often through game elements. Research shows that this positive social group experience helps young people develop a more positive self-image and gain confidence, which is essential for their future development and ability to cope with adversity (Tsang, Hui & Law, 2012). It also provides an opportunity for practicing social skills and learning about people from different cultures in a safe setting, which can be applied in different environments (Nelson et al., 2008). Overall, storytelling can be a powerful tool for personal growth and community building.

3.3 How the workshops connect

With previous international projects we already gained some knowledge how pictures and stories facilitate interaction, and can further deepen out a certain subject. In this project the focus will be on 'feeling home', but the process remains the same. We want to achieve social inclusion and every one to be able to feel at home, wether in a new country or not. Figure 1 gives an overview of this logic of change on individual and group level, and how these levels are interconnected in five phases which a workshop can contain. This is based on a previous PiCs project (De Kreek et al., 2020)
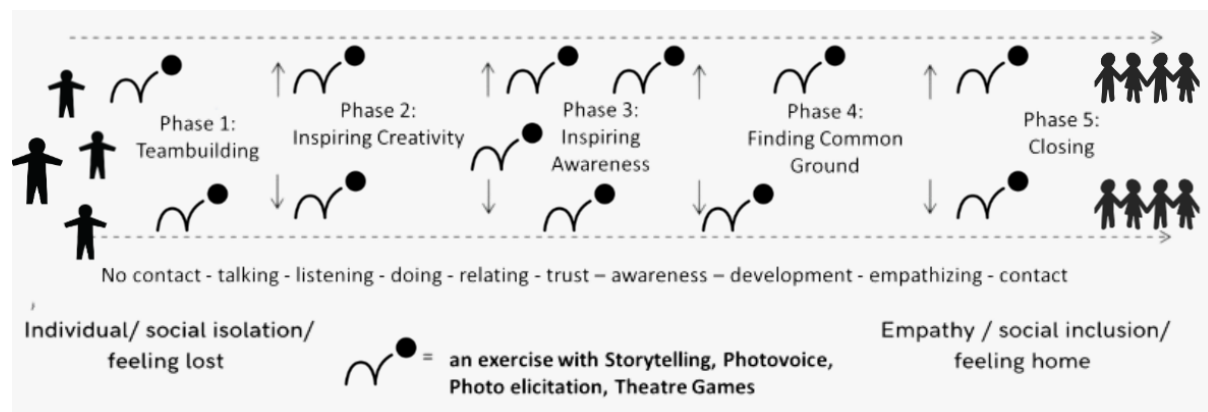

Figure 1: Workshop phases incorporating the group changes to find a common ground to increase social inclusion and feeling at home

4 Local situation [1]

[1] Sources for the different countries:
https://refugeeobservatory.aegean.gr/; Situation Mediterranean Situation (unhcr.org); Document - UNHCR Greece factsheet - September 2022; https://migration.gov.gr/meiomenos-kata-54-o-arithmos-ton-synolika-diamenonton-se-schesi-me-perysi/; Πρόγραμμα ESTIA | Υπουργείο Μετανάστευσης και Ασύλου (migration.gov.gr); https://www.facebook.com/KEANShelter/; https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/italy/#:~:text=As%20of%20June%202021%2C%20UNHCR,57%25%20of%20them%20were%20rejected
https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/minori-stranieri/Pagine/Dati-minori-stranieri-non-accompagnati.aspx;
https://www.ipsos.com/it-it/ciak-migraction-indagine-sulla-percezione-del-fenomeno-migratorio-italia; De Leo, Cotrufo, Gozzoli "The Refugee Experience of Asylum Seekers in Italy: A Qualitative Study on the Intertwining of Protective and Risk Factors"

4.1 General Situation/Perspective

In Germany, asylum is constitutionally protected, offering four forms of protection: asylum, refugee, subsidiary protection, or deportation ban. People fleeing violence, war and terror from other parts of the world are supposed to find protection in this country. Based on the German Asylum Act, an applicant for asylum may receive one of the four forms of protection – entitlement to asylum, refugee protection, subsidiary protection, or a ban on deportation, or none of the above. Despite a fair process, challenges like biased interviews and regional policy variations exist. Media influence, exaggerated statistics, and emotionalized discussions shape public opinion.

In the Netherlands, public sentiment on newcomers is divided. While surveys suggest support for refugees fleeing war, there's a housing shortage causing prolonged stays in refugee centres. Governmental efforts to address this are perceived as insufficient, fuelling resentment with locals who need housing as well.

In Italy WeWorld's research reveals that immigrants and refugees often feel marginalized in society, leading to a lack of trust in political institutions. Misperceptions exist, such as Italians overestimating the foreign population. Immigration ranks as the fourth major concern after unemployment, economic crises, and taxes. Trust in media reporting on immigration is low, and opinions on its societal impact are polarized. Overall, most Italians declare to be in favour of welcoming newcomers. A certain percentage of citizens believes that the country cannot host any more newcomers, since the numbers are perceived to be way bigger then what they really are.

Greece grapples with the dual challenge of managing maritime borders and handling the influx of refugees. Allegations of pushbacks by the Coast Guard add complexity to the situation. Public opinion is divided, with a majority supporting border protection, emphasizing national sovereignty. However, a significant number actively defends refugee rights and advocates for humane conditions. NGOs, organizations, and human rights committees express concerns over obstacles to filing asylum claims.

4.2 Number of Refugees

Germany's commitment to supporting refugees is robust and diverse. Not only does it stand as the second-largest donor to UNHCR, but it has also earned the distinction of being the world's third-largest host for refugees, accommodating 2.2 million individuals. Furthermore, Germany plays a significant role as an essential resettlement country. The demographic composition of asylum seekers in Germany is broad, with individuals from nearly all age groups seeking refuge. In the year 2023, approximately 71.9 percent of applicants were under the age of 30. Among them, children and

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https://cild.eu/en/2018/09/25/the-salvini-decree-has-been-approved-legislative-changes-on-immigration/;
https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/italy-new-system-reception-and-integration_en
SAI (Sistema accoglienza e integrazione). English litteral translation "welcoming and integration system"
https://www.openpolis.it/parole/come-funziona-laccoglienza-dei-migranti-in-italia/; Refugee work: www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl
https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2022/07/29/opvangcapaciteit-vluchtelingen-uit-oekraine-onder-druk;
https://www.frankvantubergen.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/De-Vroome-and-Van-Tubergen-2010_-The-employment-experience-of-refugees-in-the-Netherlands-1.pdf; https://amalhamburg.de/de/ https://www.tagesspiegel.de/gesellschaft/medien/themen/stimmen-des-exils https://www.kohero-magazin.de/; https://www.wir-zusammen.de/ Here is a page with success stories about the job integration of refugees. https://www.wir-zusammen.de/integrationsarbeit/erfolgsgeschichten/

adolescents under 16 years constituted the largest group, accounting for around 26.5 percent, followed by individuals aged 18 to 25 years at 24.8 percent. Notably, the majority of asylum applicants were male, making up 71.6 percent of the total.

Approximately 99,586 refugees reside in the Netherlands, with 17,117 awaiting asylum decisions. In 2021, around 10,000 people joined family members with existing permits. Dominantly from Syria, Afghanistan, and Turkey, Ukrainian newcomers numbered around 71,750 in 2022.

Italy, a geographical bridge between east and west, has a history of significant immigration. As of June 2021, there were 134,500 refugees and 53,686 asylum seekers. The first half of 2021 saw 20,600 new asylum requests, double the previous year, with a 57% rejection rate. Additionally, there were 3,000 to 15,000 stateless people, mainly Roma from the former Yugoslavia.

The current number of refugees and asylum seekers in Greece is challenging to measure accurately due to ongoing arrivals, many without seeking legal registration. As of June 30th, 2022, UNHCR estimates over 173,000 people. However, more than 1,200,000 refugees arrived in Greece between 2015 and 2021. Bureaucratic hurdles make it challenging to determine how many remain within Greek territory.

4.3 Economic and Social Characteristics

Germany acknowledges the need for immigration due to demographic shifts. Businesses advocate for refugees, emphasizing their role in economic growth. Whether or not people who immigrate to Germany in general have access to good opportunities depends on the refugee status granted to them by the authorities and the connected rights, on their ability to learn the language, or to speak a language understood in Germany such as English, and no doubt their social and survival skills and prior education levels as well as their access to support e.g. from family and their ability to build alternative networks e.g. friends, business contacts, new family structures. Knowing the German language increases the chance of finding employment. However, varying treatment for different nationalities, precarious statuses like "Ketten-Duldung," a precarious chain of bans on deportation, which leaves people from young to old living in a situation of uncertainty and inability to plan. Their children who grow up here also have the same status. They may not own a passport. In addition, challenges in recognizing qualifications affect refugees.

In the Netherlands newcomers' economic and social prospects vary based on origin, socio-economic backgrounds, and government regulations. For instance, Ukrainians are permitted to work immediately, while others endure extended stays in refugee centres, exacerbating trauma from their home countries.

Newcomers in Italy commonly face economic challenges, with men often employed in agriculture or construction, while women work as caregivers. Charitable organizations, like Caritas, assist many newcomers. Integration is influenced by employment, with age playing a role, making it easier for youngsters to integrate, particularly through the schooling system. While isolated incidents of racism occur, the society is cohesive in combating such cases.

Refugees in Greece exhibit diverse socio-economic profiles, contrary to the public perception of a homogeneous, low-class group. Varied backgrounds, financial resources, and education levels characterize this population. While some embark on their journey with significant resources, challenges such as robbery and shipwrecks can alter their fortunes.

4.4 Governmental Perspective

Former Chancellor Angela Merkel will go down in history for the policy of her government towards Syrian refugees in autumn/winter 2015-2016, when around 1 million asylum seekers were accepted into the country. This policy was then subject to criticism across party lines, also from within her own party, and from individual MPs and cabinet members, using the emotional nature of the subject for their own political gain. The political administration has remained under pressure from the right and their supporters in the population to ensure that asylum numbers are kept low. The media's focus on the so-called "refugee crisis" and populism further impact public opinion. While the government claims to align policies with public wishes, opposition to refugee intake has disproportionately influenced asylum policies.

Governmental perspectives fluctuate in the Netherlands; verbal support for equal treatment often contrasts with actions. Measures like hindering family reunions, deals with Turkey to deter refugees, extended waiting times, and work restrictions reveal discrepancies.

In Italy the Security Decree of 2018 aimed to reduce refugee numbers, altering procedures and abolishing humanitarian protection status. The government sees immigration control as vital to combat organized crime and terrorism In the political debate the topic has became quite divisive, often resulting in slogans filled with stereotypes used as a battle cry especially by right wing parties. With the recent results of the last elections, the status of the current legislature regarding this particular topic seems to be quite uncertain. The immigration matter continues to be exploited by media, therefore creating a massive debate, especially when the Italian coastline is reached by ships carrying hundreds of immigrants and refugees.

The government's stance in Greece is encapsulated in "less is more." While officially claiming to welcome newcomers, the emphasis is on minimizing their time in Greece. Inclusion efforts within Greek society receive little attention, and success is measured by expedited departure rather than improved living conditions. They often measure their efficacy not by the quality of living conditions and access of newcomers to services important for long-term residents, but rather by the minimization of the time they spend in our country. Almost no state efforts are made towards the inclusion in Greek society and the increase of motivation to stay here.

4.5 Support Systems

Numerous NGOs in Germany provide services for refugees, offering advice centers, language courses, and mentorship programs. Regional and national initiatives, such as the Refugee Council, play a vital role. Tandem programs, like Start with a Friend, support integration.

In the Netherlands too numerous NGOs provide commendable support, offering health care, education, housing, and pocket money. Organizations like De Vrolijkheid, BOOST, and Refugeeforce contribute to the well-being and integration of newcomers.

Italian laws on immigration have undergone changes, with the Decree 130 reforming the Security Decree. First reception centres initiate asylum requests, and the SAI (Integration and Reception System) facilitates newcomers' structured integration. Various reception centres offer legal aid, work guidance, psychological support, and language lessons. Charitable organizations, including Caritas, assist newcomers struggling with economic challenges.

The ESTIA program, backed by the EU Commission, offers housing, meals, and support services to a

small percentage of refugees. Non-Greek NGOs play a crucial role in reception procedures, especially in large camps. Smaller NPOs and local initiatives provide facilitation, healthcare, and non-formal education services, focusing on the Aegean islands and Athens.

4.6 Main Challenges for Refugees

The challenges faced by newcomers in Germany, including administrative complexities, financial struggles, and the stress of integration, particularly for refugees, are significant. Mental health concerns arise from experiences of devaluation, discrimination, and the oscillation between two cultures. While newcomers offer each other support, there's a risk of isolation from the broader community. Prejudices are common, often rooted in language barriers. Young refugees aspire to learn, work, and build their lives quickly, facing hurdles and disparities compared to local youth. Family expectations play a crucial role, and those with recognized qualifications tend to progress faster. Unequal treatment leads to tensions, segregation, and resentment among refugees from different countries. However, both young refugees and local youth seek acceptance, personal growth, and the establishment of their identities.

Refugees in the Netherlands face various challenges in their quest for a new life. The legal and administrative processes surrounding asylum can be intricate, making the attainment of a legal status a challenging journey. Additionally, integration into Dutch society poses a significant task, involving hurdles such as language barriers and understanding local norms and values. Access to the job market is hindered by language issues, recognition of foreign qualifications, and discrimination. Housing often proves to be a bottleneck, with challenges related to finding suitable and affordable accommodation. Healthcare, both physical and mental, may have limited accessibility, while many refugees grapple with traumas and psychological challenges. Building social connections and integration into society are complicated by prejudices and social isolation.

Refugees in Italy face mental health challenges and uncertain statuses. Most of the refugees coming to Italy have to endure a very hard journey across the see or the Balkan route where they are often victims of violence. A refugee is, by definition, someone forced to leave the home country without a plan. This unplanned migration, characterized by uncertainty, also affects their mental health resulting in the inability to stabilize their new life and integrate in the society.
Refugees tend to have an idealize image of the country they aim for, which is in most cases just an illusion. Regarding Italy most of the reception structures are not prepared to host as many refugees as there are. Thus, their living conditions are often miserable and nothing liked they hoped.
These factors leads to exploitation by criminal organizations especially in human trafficking and agriculture.

In Greece, bureaucracy poses a significant challenge for refugees aiming to move to other European countries or stay in Greece. The legal procedure to do this is really time consuming, which is why some choose the illegal route. Moreover, while they are staying in Greece and for those who wish to stay here, again, the bureaucratic procedures for many of the things they need (e.g. legal papers, health care, work) are time-consuming and distressing. Finding a job is also a major challenge for many of the refugees. In addition, depending on the context and the place where they live, they face other challenges such as possibly hostile treatment of the locals, hostile relations between them (between different races), problems with the law, physical and mental health problems.

4.7 Tensions Between Local and Newcomer Youth

It is mentioned that in Germany youth their exploration of identity can lead to tensions, fuelled by prejudices and discrimination. Lack of knowledge, media biases, and parental influence can result in misunderstandings and rivalry. Asylum status disparities among newcomer youth contribute to frustration and envy. Lack of knowledge, rumors, and media bias contribute to inaccurate views of newcomers. Positive contact with "the other" can challenge prejudices, but organized efforts and intensive activities are needed where prejudices persist. Tensions among newcomers can arise based on rights and privileges linked to asylum status, creating disparities and fostering frustration and resentment between groups.

In the Netherlands tensions vary by location; Amsterdam, with its cultural diversity and left-wing government, generally fosters a welcoming environment. Dynamics may differ in other regions.

In Italy, overall, there appears to be minimal tension between local and newcomer youngsters due to shared spaces and interests. Segregation is avoided through common activities. Prejudices are more noticeable among young immigrants and middle-aged individuals. Economic disparities can cause tensions, but the schooling system plays a crucial role in promoting diversity and eradicating racism.

Interaction between local and newcomer youngsters in Greece also varies based on living contexts, with for example, closed camps limiting social interaction. Refugee minors may face obstacles in accessing education, leading to a lack of interaction with local peers. Incidents of racist treatment exist, but there are instances of local youth defending and assisting refugee youngsters. For example minors sometimes share problems for example with the teachers at school, where they were defended by their classmates.

4.8 Capabilities, Hopes, and Dreams

In Germany young refugees aspire to learn the language, obtain education, secure employment, and build their lives. Initial enthusiasm is often followed by realistic expectations and a desire for recognition. Family expectations, guidance, and role models play crucial roles in shaping their paths.

Youth in the Netherlands, both local and newcomers, exhibit diverse capabilities influenced by social capital and country of origin. Elevated living costs make them pragmatic, requiring hard work and connection to Dutch society to realize their dreams.

Young refugees once saw Italy as a place to build a new life, but now it's often viewed as an intermediate stage before aiming for other countries. Efforts by associations promoting multicultural dialogue create opportunities for integration. Youngsters engaging in integration efforts enrich their knowledge, while newcomers, often multilingual, find opportunities to prove their capabilities.

Dreams and hopes of both refugees and local youth commonly involve a future outside of Greece. A documentary illustrates that the aspirations of children from diverse backgrounds, both local and refugee, envision futures abroad. The capabilities of these youth vary, but proficiency in technology, IT, and social media is a common strength.

4.9 Toolkit's Value in the Country

The toolkit offers a structured framework for communication, creating a safe space to transcend prejudice. Through artistic play and shared experiences, it facilitates multilingual, intercultural

journeys, fostering positive memories for both local and newcomer youth. The toolkit, if widely applied, could support similar experiences across Germany and Europe.

The toolkit aligns with the call for extensive research on bridging social capital in the Netherlands. By connecting newcomer and local youth through cultural media, it aims to address trauma, formulate shared perspectives, provide encouragement, and enhance storytelling skills, contributing positively to their shared future.

In Italy, the toolkit can aid facilitators in organizing multicultural workshops. Associations expressing interest in such workshops could benefit from the toolkit's diverse exercises. Structured guidance ensures more efficient activities catering to various facilitators and participants.

The toolkit in Greece is anticipated to offer youth workers a creative approach to engage mixed population groups, including refugees. While other training tools exist, YOUR JOURNEY toolkit's unique perspective on visual creativity and storytelling aligns with the core interests of the youth. It has the potential to facilitate expression and collaboration between locals and newcomers, contributing to a better understanding of their shared temporary home.

In summary, the refugee situations in Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, and Italy are complex, marked by diverse challenges and varying approaches.

Refugees across these countries face disparities in treatment, challenges in recognizing qualifications, and varied prospects. Tensions exist between local and newcomer youth, influenced by prejudices, economic disparities, and the schooling system. The presented toolkit offers a promising solution for fostering positive interactions and communication between local and newcomer youth, aligning with the call for research on bridging social capital. If widely applied, it could contribute positively to shared experiences across Europe.

5 Method

In total 46 exercises where developed during the Your Journey project. The evaluation process for the "Your Journey" toolkit workshops involved a structured and comprehensive approach, integrating feedback from both facilitators and participants. The primary goal was to assess the usability and effectiveness of the exercises and guidelines included in the toolkit but also to investigate the 'feelings of home' of the participants and to gather insights and feedback to enhance the overall workshop experience. The entire evaluation process was conducted using Google Forms, ensuring a standardized and accessible platform for all participating organizations. The use of a digital format facilitated efficient data collection, analysis, and subsequent adjustments to the toolkit based on the feedback received. Two forms were developed one for the facilitator to fill in about the tools and the workshop and one for the participants to fill in after the workshop.

Facilitators were required to complete the evaluation form for every exercise conducted in the workshop. This form covered aspects such as the exercise's title and positive feedback received from participants. An observation grid was utilized as a tool to assess the exercises comprehensively. This involved assessing whether the correct categories, phases, and objectives were selected for each exercise. Duration and material requirements were also scrutinized for accuracy. Facilitators provided comments on necessary adjustments and whether the exercise descriptions were clear and accurate. Based on these descriptions, and the experiences of the facilitators the tools for the final

toolkit were adjusted, chosen, and spin offs of exercises where added, and can be found on
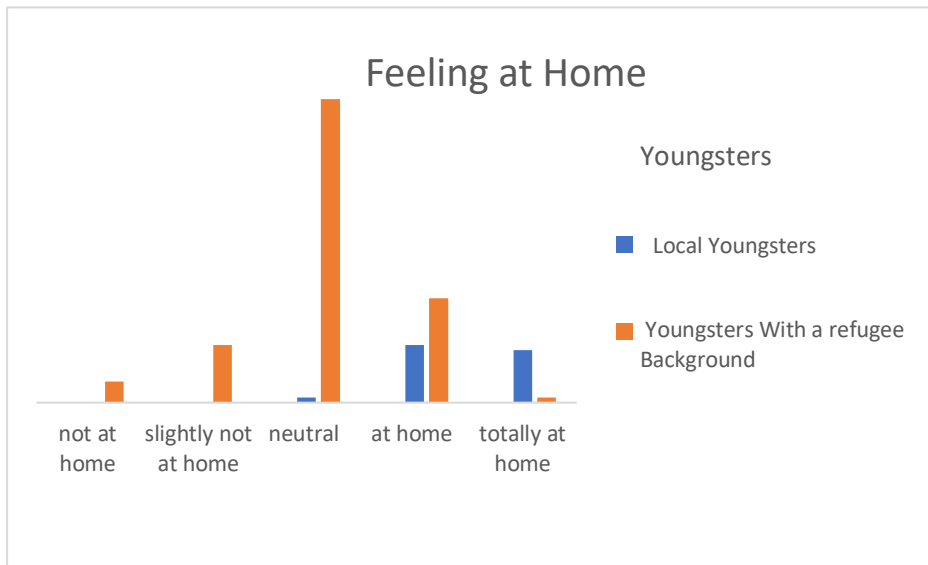https://yourjourney.nu/.

The outcomes of the participant evaluations where analyzed with the software program SPSS. In the participant evaluation we asked participants' motivations, satisfaction levels, emotional engagement, feelings of home and the transformative impact of the "Your Journey" workshop.
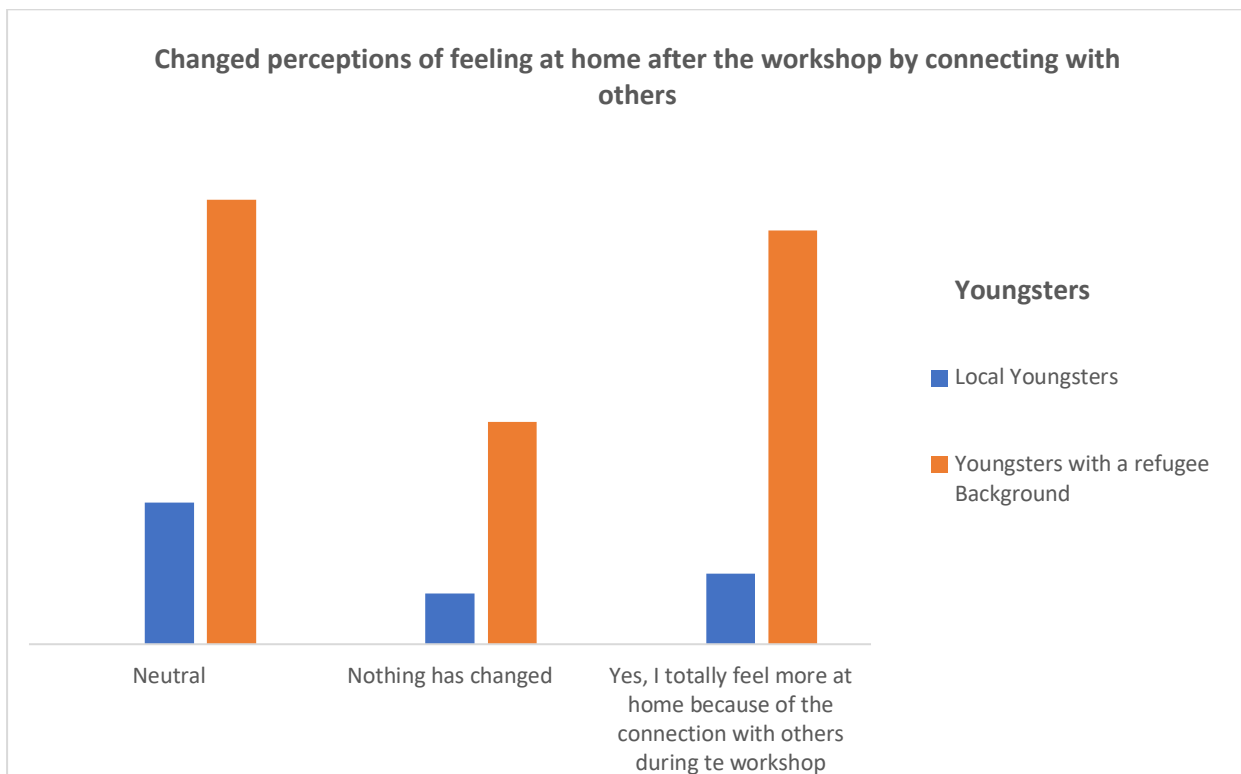
6 Results

In total 145 participants joined the workshops and filled in the questionnaire in the 4 countries. Please not that in the workshops 19 participants filled in the questionnaire in Germany , constituting 13.1% of the total sample, Greece 32, making up 22.1% of the total, Italy 20 participants, representing 13.8% of the total and the majority 74 in total filled in the questionnaire in The Netherlands, making up 51% of the sample. This should be kept in mind when interpretating the results. The mean age was 25, 80% had a refugee background, and 51% was female, 48% male and 0,8% non-binary.

To start with some general information, overall, most participants found the workshops satisfying (28%) to very satisfying (62%). When looking at how much the participants feel at home, 51% indicated they feel neutral, 27% feel at home and 9% feels totally at home. When asking about changed perceptions on the subject 46% feel neutral, 19% indicated nothing had changed and 35% indicate they feel more at home because of the connection with others during the workshops.
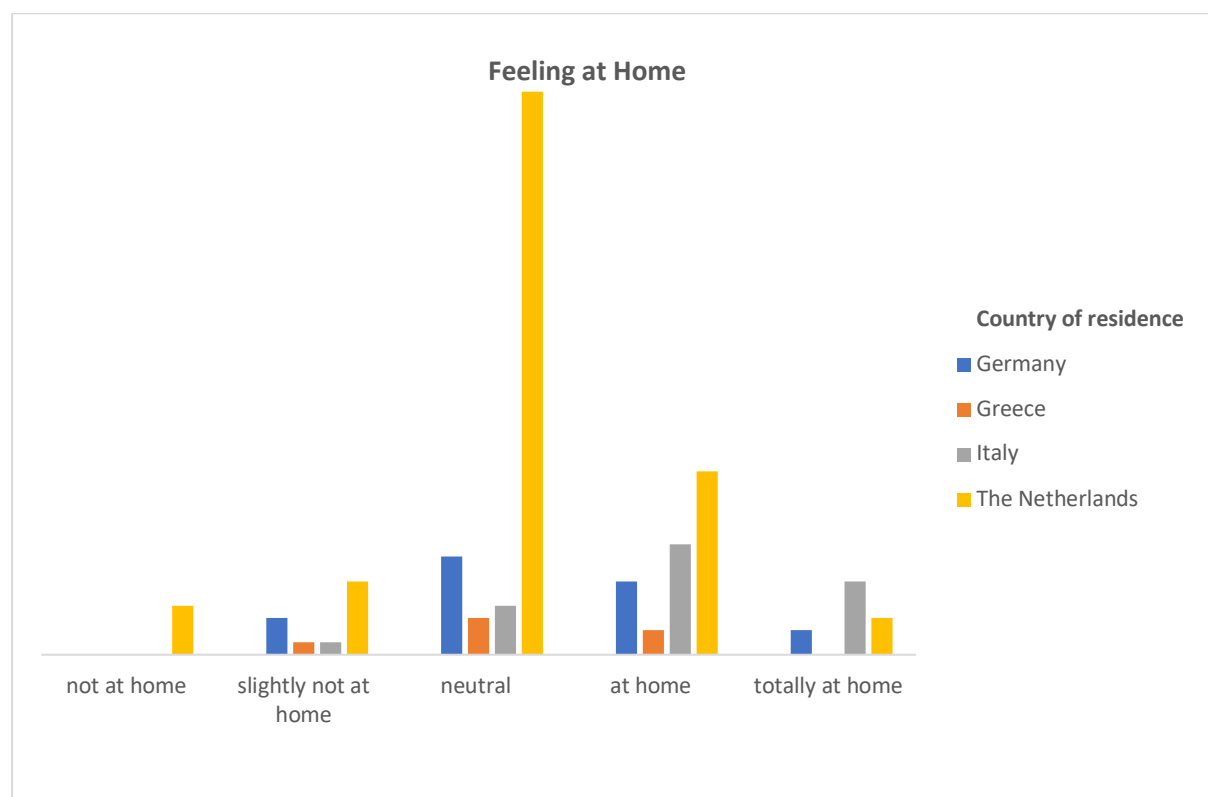
Below graphs indicate the feeling at home and changed perceptions divided by local youngsters and youngsters with a refugee background. Notably, all local participants expressed feeling either at home or totally at home, with a total of 21 respondents in these categories. In contrast, youngsters with a refugee background had a more varied response, with large number (58) indicating a neutral stance and 20 participants feeling at home. This suggests that youngsters with a refugee background may have a more diverse range of experiences and feelings about their sense of belonging in the country. Additionally, a small number of these youngsters (4) mentioned feeling slightly not at home, highlighting a nuanced range of sentiments within this group.

Feeling at Home

The graph below suggests that participants' perceptions of feeling at home did vary after the workshop, depending on their local or refugee background. The majority of respondents (48) reported that they totally feel more at home due to the connections made during the workshop. However, a significant number (27) mentioned that nothing has changed in terms of their perception of feeling at home. Interestingly, a considerable number of participants with a refugee background (41) reported a positive change compared to their local counterparts (7). Additionally, a higher number of local participants (44) expressed a more neutral stance. This suggests that the workshop had a notable impact on participants' sense of belonging, particularly for individuals with a refugee background who may have experienced a more significant shift in their feelings of being at home.

When looking at the relationship between participants' feelings of being at home and their respective countries of residence (Germany, Greece, Italy, and The Netherlands), the majority of participants in Germany and Italy reported feeling either at home or totally at home. In contrast, participants in Greece and The Netherlands exhibited a more varied response, with a significant number expressing a neutral stance. The data suggests that participants in Germany and Italy may have a stronger sense of being at home in their respective countries compared to those in Greece and The Netherlands. This is not in line with wat we expected that Italy and Greece and be perceived as driving though countries to reach the more Nordic countries such as Germany or the Netherlands. However, it's important to note that individual experiences and perceptions of "feeling at home" can be influenced by various factors beyond just the country of residence. The nuance in responses across different countries highlights the complexity of the relationship between one's sense of belonging and the country they live in.

Feeling at Home

Country of residence
- Germany
- Greece
- Italy
- The Netherlands

Categories: not at home, slightly not at home, neutral, at home, totally at home
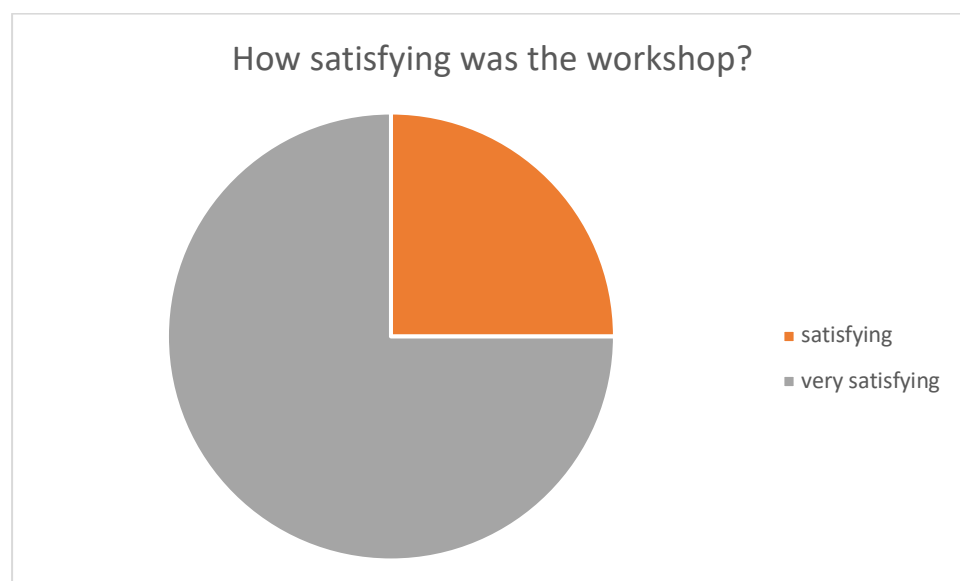
6.1 Greece

6.1.1 Workshop experience

Overall, the participants enjoyed participating in the workshops. Over 80% felt comfortable during the workshops, 97% felt they learned something new *''I understood a lot of things in this experience''.* Participants found the experience to be highly valuable and satisfying. They expressed happiness and enjoyment. Specific elements, such as making their own stories, being in groups, and creating stories from photos, were highlighted as creative and clever, contributing to the overall positive experience. The creative and clever elements of storymaking from photos were appreciated, although some felt that more time was needed for the final part. They liked for example, communicating with foreign people, learning about other peoples' culture, interest and learning new concepts, to use their imagination and get out of their heads. The opportunity to express themselves

in different ways and meet new people was appreciated by some. Additionally, participants expressed satisfaction because they learned new things and felt a sense of belonging. Overall, the feedback suggests that the workshop was well-received, providing a positive and enriching experience for the participants.

Participants felt they learned a lot, and the workshop was described as very satisfying, enjoyable, and beneficial. All the participants would suggest this workshop to other people: they expressed positive learning experiences and personal growth during the workshop. Many mentioned learning about new cultures and concepts, broadening their understanding of different perspectives. The workshop provided a platform for participants to freely let their imaginations roam and express thoughts without overthinking, fostering creative and uninhibited self-expression e.g. *"It's an interesting chance to meet people and exchange ideas and stories, as well as express artistically through storytelling and photographs "*.

The opportunity to learn about others' interests and viewpoints was valued, promoting a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives in life. Participants felt that they had expressed their feelings through the workshop and some wished for more time to work with pictures and create additional stories. While not all explicitly mentioned learning, some indicated that the workshop prompted them to think about certain subjects from different perspectives. Engaging with people from different cultures was highlighted as a valuable aspect of the experience, contributing to improved communication skills. Overall, the workshop was viewed as a new and enriching experience*" I really think people need to know about such things"*. , with specific emphasis on learning about photography and a willingness to continue learning in this field

How satisfying was the workshop?

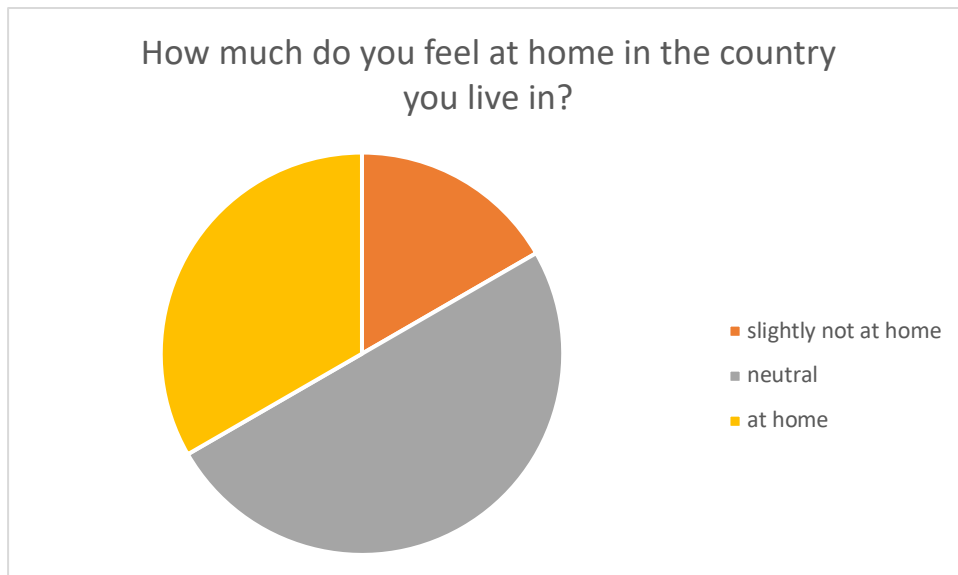- satisfying
- very satisfying

Various exercises were really appreciated. Participants in the workshop expressed satisfaction with various activities, emphasizing the positive impact on their experience. Many enjoyed storytelling exercises, such as creating stories, inventing narratives, and recalling a collaborative story made in a circle on the first day. e.g. *"I liked the exercise where we were asked to create a story. Because this exercise made us think of a story we would love to live"*. The exercise involving taking pictures and expressing emotions creatively resonated with some, providing relaxation and room for expression e.g. *"The photo shooting, I think because it makes us bond as a team and co-create beautiful photos"*, which indicated that this mixture really works. *"I really liked the part of making our own*
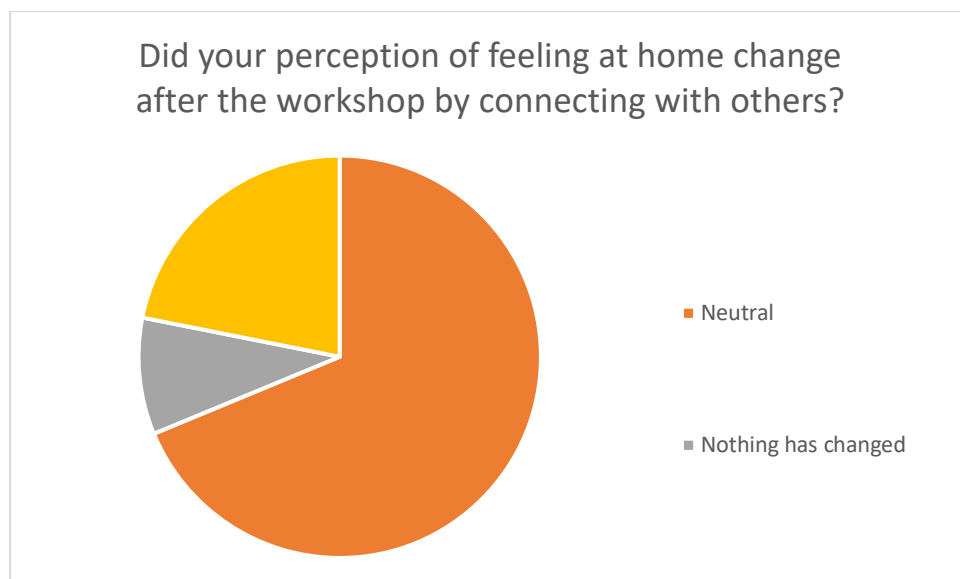
stories and being split into groups, and also the story making out of photos it was creative and clever…''. Cutting pictures and creating stories from them were particularly liked, as these exercises encouraged creativity without imposing too many limitations. Some participants found meaning in exercises like removing a part of a whole picture, viewing it as a metaphor for seeing things from different perspectives. Overall, the workshop's interactive and creative elements, including storytelling, picture-taking, and group activities, contributed to a positive and memorable experience for the participants, fostering connection, hope, and learning.

6.1.2 Feeling at home

The main purpose of the workshops was for participants to feel more at home in the country they are residing in. We asked them how much they feel at home in the country they live in. 16,7% felt slightly not at home, 50% felt at neutral and 33,3% felt at home.

In addition we asked if their perception of feeling at home changed after the workshop by connecting with others.

Did your perception of feeling at home change after the workshop by connecting with others?

- Neutral
- Nothing has changed

Although the majority felt neutral, 22% felt more at home because of the connection with others during the workshop and for example explained *'I was welcomed like it was home'.*
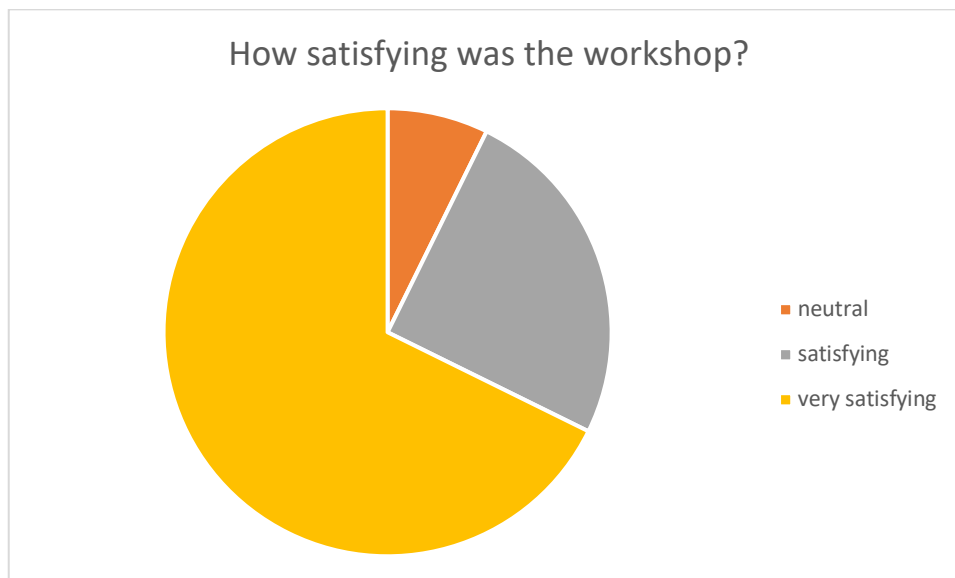
6.2 The Netherlands

6.2.1 Workshop experience

Overall, the participants enjoyed participating in the workshops. 72% felt comfortable during the workshops and 23% felt slightly comfortable, 89.6% felt they learned something new ''*New stories behind other people''* or *'' Very nice to work on pictures and stories with refugees''.* Based on the open question answers, participants learned to use light from different angles for simple and portrait pictures, combining photography with storytelling. They found it enjoyable sharing stories with refugees, and expressing themselves through pictures and stories. The surprise element of light in pictures was highlighted, along with the ability to connect and express through this combination. The workshop provided a platform for making portraits with smartphones, incorporating storytelling, and discovering new storytelling exercises. The collaborative nature of the workshop, team dynamics, and the interactive elements were appreciated. Additionally, they engaged in activities such as painting, creating installations, and building 'historical houses', gaining insights into how newcomers think. Overall, the experience was described as fun, mind-opening, and creatively stimulating.

92% the participants would suggest this workshop to other people ''*Being in a positive atmosphere for a few hours makes me feel better!*''. `Participants found the workshop to be a nice way to meet new people and have a good time. They described it as fun, interesting, and enjoyable, emphasizing the positive atmosphere, good workshops, and the opportunity to exchange pictures, stories, and music. Some highlighted the importance of having a nice day outside the AZC, with nice people and a pleasant lunch. While there were considerations about travel expenses and busy schedules, many expressed interest in organizing such a day for themselves or their friends at the AZC, noting that it

would be appreciated but might require addressing logistical challenges. Overall, participants had a positive and enjoyable experience during the workshop. 68% found the workshop very satisfying and 25% satisfying.

How satisfying was the workshop?

- neutral
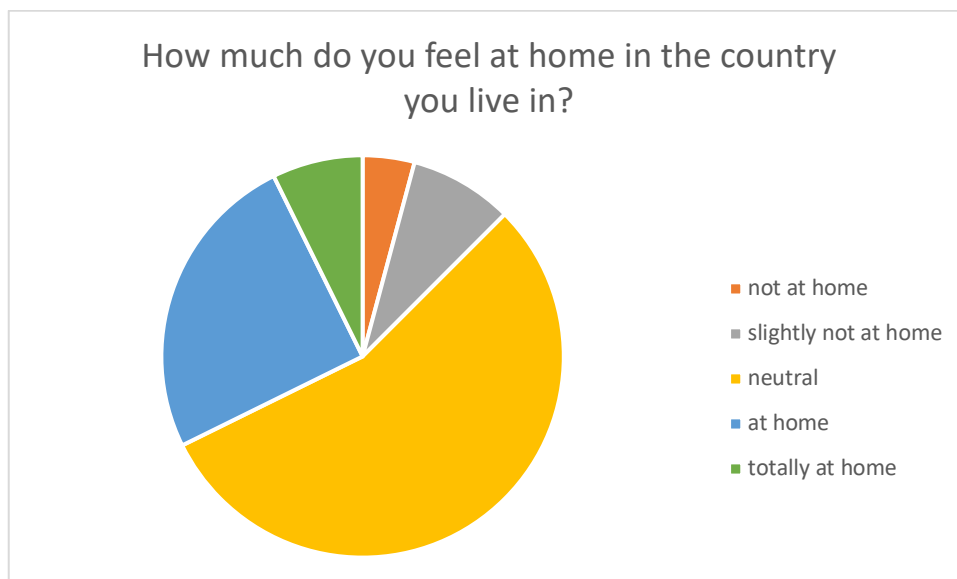- satisfying
- very satisfying

Overall, participants had a positive experience with the workshop. They appreciated the warm welcome, interesting introductions, and the opportunity to try new things. There were positive comments about the nice group dynamics, pleasant venue, and the intercultural interaction. The workshops were generally seen as interesting, although some found them a bit complicated or felt the need for more time for explanation. The informal environment and the opportunity to meet diverse people were highlighted as positive aspects. Participants enjoyed various activities, storytelling, brainstorming, and painting. Some participants expressed high expectations, and others found the workshop inspiring and creative. A few mentioned feeling a *''bit nervous''* or *''experiencing moments of boredom, suggesting potential areas for improvement''*. Overall, the feedback indicates a mix of overall positive experiences and some constructive suggestions for enhancing the workshop.

The answers indicate that the "Share the Light" exercise and the "Mutual Visual Storytelling" activity were generally well-received. Participants found the visual storytelling exercise to be diverse, challenging, and connecting. The group work aspect was appreciated, and some participants mentioned it as their favorite. The "Urban Photostory" exercise also received positive feedback, with participants enjoying the process of taking pictures with the group. "Music and Storytelling" and "Cut and Frame" were mentioned as enjoyable exercises, with some expressing surprise at finding them interesting. Additionally, the "5 Views on Home" activity, particularly the part involving building a dream house, received positive comments. Overall, participants seemed satisfied with the variety of exercises and appreciated the different perspectives offered in the activities. There was also a positive mention of the museum tour and the experience of interpreting Van Gogh's paintings.
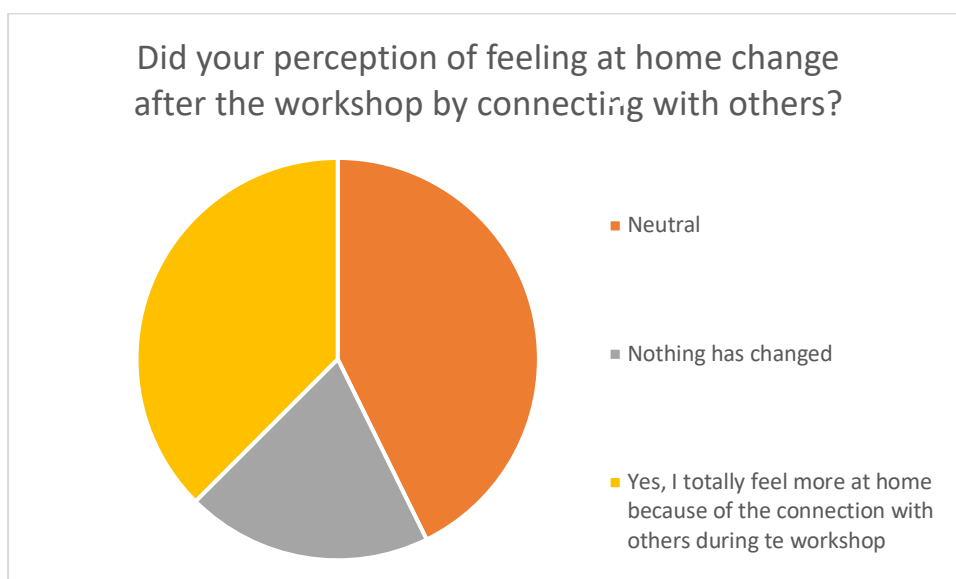
6.2.2   Feeling at home

The main purpose of the workshops was for participants to feel more at home in the country they are residing in. We asked them how much they feel at home in the country they live in. 8,3% felt

slightly not at home, 55% felt at neutral, 25% felt at home and 7,3% felt at home. Please note that there were also native Dutch participants in the workshop.

How much do you feel at home in the country you live in?

- not at home
- slightly not at home
- neutral
- at home
- totally at home

In addition we asked if their perception of feeling at home changed after the workshop by connecting with others.

Did your perception of feeling at home change after the workshop by connecting with others?

- Neutral
- Nothing has changed
- Yes, I totally feel more at home because of the connection with others during te workshop

Participants in the workshop expressed a diverse range of sentiments about their experiences: a minority of 20% felt nothing has changed, 43% felt neutral, 38 % felt more at home because of the connection with others during the workshop. Some individuals conveyed feelings of happiness and hopefulness in the country, while others, especially those born in the Netherlands, described a sense of being at home and enjoying life in Amsterdam. For asylum seekers residing in an Asylum Seeker Center (AZC), uncertainty about their stay in the Netherlands was evident, yet they felt a welcoming atmosphere within the group. The workshops were seen as an opportunity to connect with new people and explore creative expressions. However, challenges included concerns about the
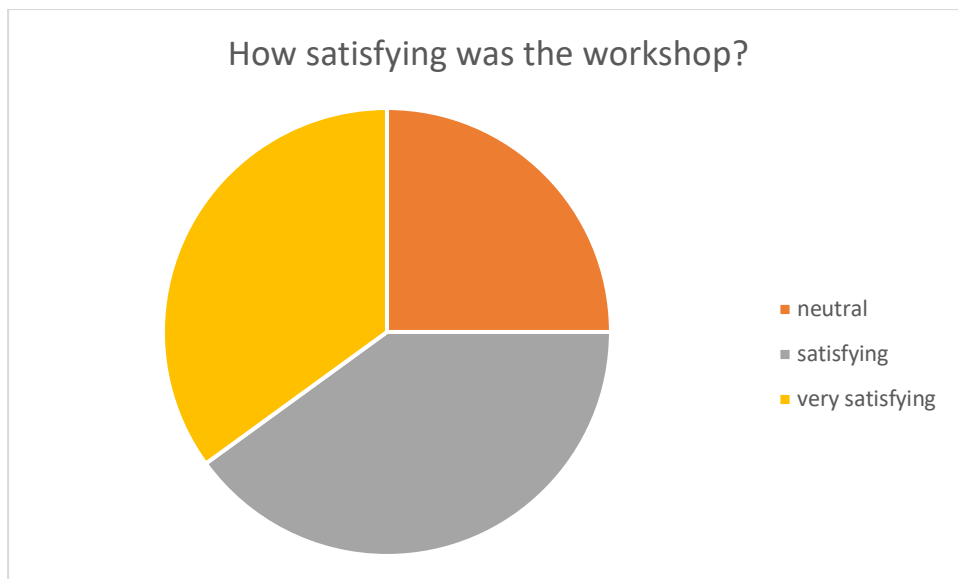
extensive information requested for administrative purposes. The diversity and interaction in the group were valued, with some participants actively involved in political activism for more inclusivity. The workshops prompted reflections on privilege, with a Dutch participant realizing their fortunate living situation. The museum visit and creative exercises were generally appreciated, fostering a positive and comfortable group dynamic. Overall, the experiences ranged from hopeful and enriching to challenging, reflecting the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of the participants.

6.3 Italy

6.3.1 Workshop experience

Respectively, 40 % and 35% found the workshops satisfying to very satisfying ''*it was a new experience, I learned new things that can be useful*''. In addition, 40% felt comfortable during the workshops and 40 % felt slightly comfortable, 75 % felt they learned something new ''*good exercises to tell stories, some new tricks for taking photos, I don't know if I will use all of them, but were surely interesting''* or '' *I know every person coming from abroad has a story, it was good to learn some of them''.* Participants in the workshop expressed a diverse range of sentiments regarding their experience. While some individuals enjoyed the exercises, found them engaging, and even learned valuable new skills, some felt that the learning aspect fell short of expectations. However, many participants highlighted the enjoyable and fun aspects of the workshop, emphasizing the value of the social interactions and the discovery of new things. Overall, while some participants felt that something was missing, the workshop provided a positive and engaging atmosphere.
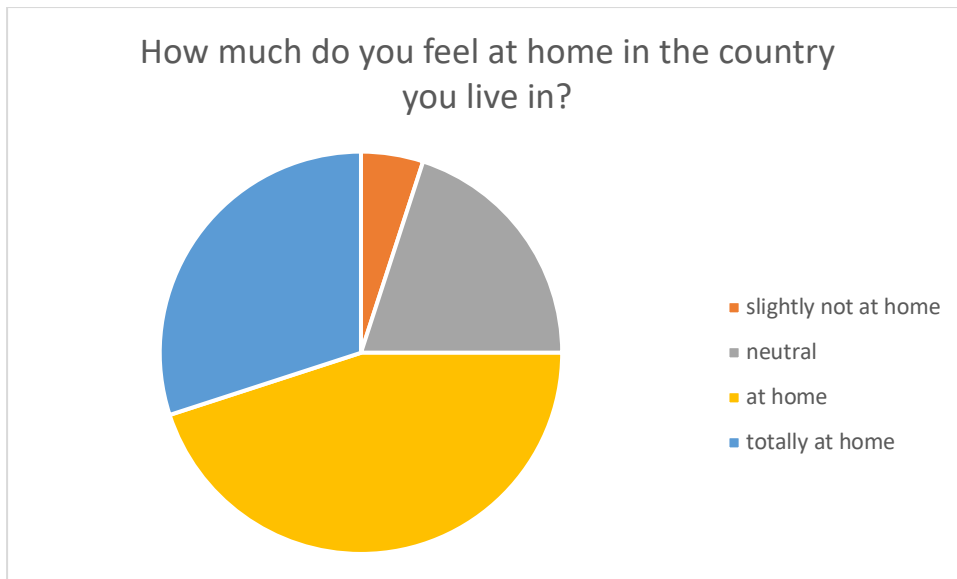
95% the participants would suggest this workshop to other people ''*there is much to learn from spending time with other people, even more when we are so different*''. Participants appreciated the pleasant atmosphere and enjoyable exercises, with some expressing that it could be a fun experience for others. The value of spending time with diverse individuals is highlighted, emphasizing the learning potential from such interactions. While participants generally had a good time, some desired the activities to be shorter. The recognition that the workshop could teach new skills, usable freely, adds a positive dimension. Some mentioned that their expectations did not fully aligning with the experience, but the importance of coming out of one's own bubble and understanding different perspectives is acknowledged, contributing to an overall positive impression, with many expressing a desire to participate again.

How satisfying was the workshop?
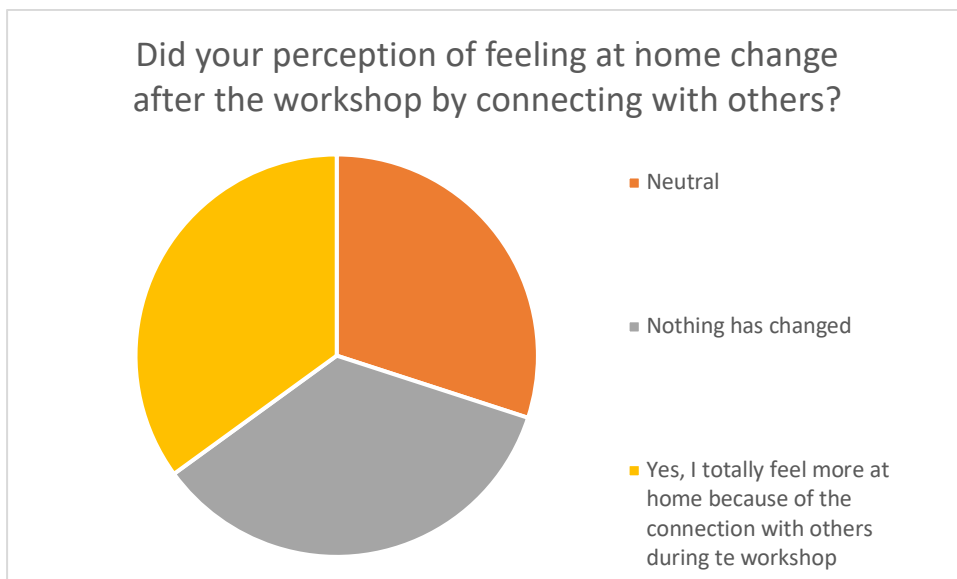
- neutral
- satisfying
- very satisfying

Participants in the workshop expressed a wide range of preferences for specific exercises, emphasizing the diversity of interests within the group. Some enjoyed sensory experiences, like the blindfolded exercise in the park, relishing the opportunity to perceive their surroundings through smell and sound. Collaborative activities, such as drawing together or creating group statues, were praised for their fun and interactive nature. The photography exercise with different lights appealed to those with a visual creativity inclination. Storytelling exercises were a hit, especially when conducted in a group setting, fostering a sense of shared creativity and reducing individual pressure. Conversations around personal and cultural narratives, like memories and favorite foods, were appreciated. Noteworthy was the emotional complexity experienced during exercises that delved into personal histories, showcasing the workshop's potential for deep introspection. The responses collectively illustrate the diverse ways in which participants engaged with and valued various workshop activities, showcasing the workshop's ability to cater to a broad spectrum of interests and preferences.

6.3.2 Feeling at home

Participants were asked how much they feel at home in the country they live in. 5 % felt slightly not at home, 20% felt neutral, 45% felt at home and 30% felt totally at home. Please note that there were also native participants in the workshop.

How much do you feel at home in the country you live in?

- slightly not at home
- neutral
- at home
- totally at home

In addition we asked if their perception of feeling at home changed after the workshop by connecting with others.

Did your perception of feeling at home change after the workshop by connecting with others?

- Neutral
- Nothing has changed
- Yes, I totally feel more at home because of the connection with others during te workshop

35 % felt nothing has changed, 30 % felt neutral, 35% felt more at home because of the connection with others during the workshop. The responses reflect varied sentiments regarding the impact of the workshop on participants' sense of connection and belonging. Some individuals, born and raised in Bolzano, found joy in discovering camaraderie with strangers, forming new friendships, and feeling a sense of inclusion within their groups. Others expressed satisfaction with the company and activities but noted that their overall situation or feelings hadn't significantly changed. There's acknowledgment of privilege in feeling welcomed and comfortable. For those from outside Bolzano, the workshop elicited a range of emotions—from a newfound sense of home to a strengthening of connections with fellow participants. Open communication and shared activities were appreciated, fostering a feeling of group belonging. However, a few participants mentioned not feeling a profound connection or significant change in their situations despite learning about others. Overall,

the responses underscore the workshop's influence on social dynamics, with varying degrees of impact on participants' sense of home and connection.

6.4 Germany

6.4.1 Workshop experience

In Germany the participants indicated that they found the workshops satisfying (37%) to very satisfying (47%) '' *It was very creative. The teachers were wonderful. I always had photography, now I also have storytelling as a way of expressing myself.*''. They appreciated the kindness and inspiration of everyone involved. The learning aspect extended beyond photography, with storytelling becoming a newfound mode of self-expression for some. The exhibition was notably appreciated, described as ''*the coolest thing*''. The creative atmosphere and good teachers fostered an environment where individuals could share and develop their stories. Collaboration in photography sessions, where participants learned about light, shadow, frame, and aperture, was praised, along with the multicultural setting that allowed for interactions with people from diverse backgrounds, including refugees. The storytelling component, though familiar to some, provided a unique perspective akin to theater. Challenges such as time constraints and work commitments were acknowledged, but overall, the workshop exceeded expectations, offering not only personal growth and professional inspiration but also the opportunity to forge meaningful connections with like-minded individuals. The therapeutic and satisfying nature of the experience was emphasized, with participants expressing gratitude for the chance to share stories and explore common interests.

In addition, all the participants felt they learned something new ''*I learnt that many people like telling stories even if they are not prepared for it. I saw it with the others and felt their joy.''* They expressed valuable insights and personal growth through their experiences. Even confidence emerged as a theme, emphasizing the understanding that art and creativity are highly individualistic, with each person harboring unique abilities but also in sharing their stories and presenting photos like artists.

While some participants already possessed knowledge about photography, they found new perspectives through storytelling, learning to use photos as a means to narrate stories. Learning to use light effectively and gaining a deeper understanding of photography, storytelling, and their combined potential were significant takeaways. Overall, the workshop contributed to enhanced confidence, a willingness to share feelings, and inspired creativity among the participants. All of the participants would suggest this workshop to other people ''*You can meet cool people and learn about storytelling, or deepen what you know*''. They mention that those who enjoy photography or theatre would likely benefit. In addition it is mentioned that the sense of freedom to express oneself, learning about photo art, taking part in an exhibition, and feeling like an artist were noted as valuable aspects. The overall experience was described as fun, and participants found it to

be a creative space conducive to personal and artistic growth.

How satisfying was the workshop?

■ neutral　　■ satisfying　　■ very satisfying

Participants in the workshop expressed a diverse range of favorite exercises, each highlighting unique aspects of the experience. Some favored the storytelling exercise, appreciating the creative and collaborative aspect of continuing others' stories. The photography exercise that involved searching for light resonated with others, emphasizing the importance of light in photography. The "Art Remake" exercise was popular for its creative expression and the opportunity to convey personal stories through artistic means. The exercise "To the present," where a photo was used to write a story, stood out for its emotional impact and ease of story generation. The "Urban photo story" and "Share the Light" exercises were particularly enjoyed for their personal and collaborative nature.

"Paint your story" was praised for its unique approach, utilizing body movements to convey a narrative. The exercise involving sharing stories about favorite food garnered enthusiasm, creating an enjoyable and *''hunger-inducing''* atmosphere. Various photography exercises, such as "Art Remake" and "One symbolic photo," were appreciated for their creativity and the opportunity to share ideas. The exercise "5 views of home," which involved making an installation with objects and photos, was singled out for its uniqueness and artistic engagement.

Overall, participants valued exercises that encouraged creativity, personal expression, collaboration, and the intersection of storytelling and visual arts.

6.4.2　Feeling at home

Participants were asked how much they feel at home in the country they live in. 15,8% felt slightly not at home, 42% felt neutral, 32% felt at home and 10% felt totally at home. Please note that there were also native participants in the workshop.
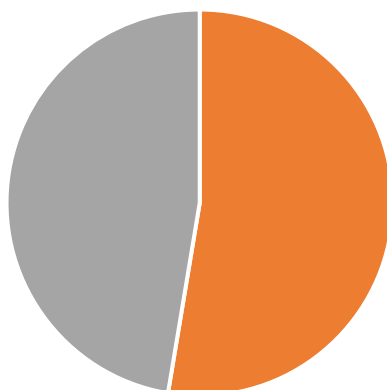
How much do you feel at home in the country you live in?

■ slightly not at home ■ neutral ■ at home ■ totally at home

In addition we asked if their perception of feeling at home changed after the workshop by connecting with others.

Did your perception of feeling at home change after the workshop by connecting with others?

■ Neutral

■ Yes, I totally feel more at home because of the connection with others during te workshop

53% felt neutral, 48% felt more at home because of the connection with others during the workshop. While some acknowledge changes in their perspectives, there are the challenges associated with them *'I am more clear about what I miss about my former homeland. Here we are safe but there is discrimination'*. The multicultural nature of the group in the workshop seems to have a positive impact, fostering a sense of belonging in some participant *It didn't actually change my feelings about "feeling at home". However, it was an amazing experience to talk about it and share the stories each other.* Overall, the responses convey a mixture of emotions, the discussion of the feeling at home subject made most participants think about the subject and the different

perceptions of feeling at home. However, it did not necessarily increase de feeling of being at home for half of the participants.

7 . Conclusion

In our Your Journey project we used creative methodologies to explore and enhance the sense of home and belonging among youth with a local background and including a substantial proportion of youth with refugee backgrounds. The results should be interpreted with caution due to the fact that that the majority of participants had a refugee background and the amount of participants in the Netherlands was higher than in the other countries.

The workshops demonstrated high participant satisfaction, with a majority expressing not only contentment but also a sense of personal growth. The creative elements, storytelling and photography, provided a platform for individuals to share narratives, fostering connections and understanding among participants. The positive reception underscores the potential of creative interventions to transcend cultural and linguistic barriers, enabling diverse individuals to find common ground.

The cross-country variation in participants' feelings of being at home challenges preconceived notions. Germany and the Netherlands, often perceived as destination countries, did not show a stronger sense of home among participants while participants in Italy, perceived as a passing though county, did indicate a sense of feeling at home. This unexpected finding highlights the intricate relationship between one's sense of belonging and the specific context of their country of residence. Further research could explore the nuanced factors influencing these variations as the number of participants in this research in the Netherlands was much larger dan in the other countries.

The project's success in promoting a sense of community and understanding among participants aligns with previous studies emphasizing the role of storytelling and creative expression in building connections. One noteworthy aspect is the influence of the workshop on participants' perceptions of home. The majority reported a positive change, particularly among those with a refugee background. This suggests that the creative interventions facilitated by the project play a crucial role in shaping a more positive and inclusive sense of home, especially for individuals who have experienced displacement. Therefore we strongly recommend the use of our toolkit for youth workers, teachers, artists, young leaders, social workers, volunteers, social entrepreneurs and other people working with people with a refugee background.

In conclusion, the Your Journey project represents a promising approach to addressing the multifaceted dimensions of home and belonging among diverse youth. As future iterations of such projects are developed, a comprehensive evaluation of long-term impacts and an exploration of additional contextual factors will be crucial to refining and optimizing interventions aimed at fostering a sense of home and community among individuals with diverse backgrounds.

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