

Position Paper

“EMpowerment through liquid Integration of Migrant Youth in vulnerable conditions” (MIMY)

July 2020

Background information

Especially since 2015, migratory flows of third-country nationals in Europe have driven EU member states to adopt different national strategies regarding integration efforts and policies. Moreover, in the context of societies with an ageing population and labour forces lacking certain professional skills, migrants, of which a large proportion are young people, may represent an important economic contribution to these countries. Therefore, European societies need to find new ways to tackle the challenges arising from the integration of young third-country nationals and to avoid social exclusion. **Successful integration will make migration an opportunity for both migrants and host societies.**

MIMY in a nutshell

MIMY is an EU-funded project, involving the **12 multinational partners** and aiming to improve the situation of young migrants throughout Europe. To derive evidence-based policy recommendations, partners will examine the effectiveness of integration policies in an interdisciplinary research endeavour. Specifically, MIMY sets out to investigate the integration processes of young non-EU migrants who find themselves in vulnerable conditions across **18 case studies**, 2 in each of the **9 countries** involved in the consortium (Luxembourg, Germany, United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, Italy, Poland, Romania, and Hungary). Each case study is meant to represent a specific local context, but may also target a specific subgroup of young migrants in vulnerable conditions.

Most importantly, MIMY will put the experiences of young migrants at the centre of its activities by directly involving them as **peer researchers** through participatory research. Young migrants in vulnerable conditions are a group that is at high risk to be exposed to exclusionary practices of individuals, local social processes, institutions, and policies.

Together, we will focus on the following central research question:

How can the liquid integration processes of young migrants (especially in the age of 18 to 29 years) in vulnerable conditions be supported, increase the social and economic benefits of and for migrants in Europe?

Migrants in vulnerable conditions can be e.g. third-country nationals who came into the European Union with their families and apply for international protection; young people who were born as third-country nationals, but obtained citizenship of the new country by now, but are under vulnerable conditions; third-country nationals who came as unaccompanied minors and apply for international protection; stateless individuals or irregular migrants. Therefore, MIMY sees **vulnerability from the perspective of the young migrants** and not from a pre-defined perspective. Vulnerabilities can also be present through challenges regarding citizenship, political participation, health, education, housing,

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social welfare, gender, sexuality, ethnic group, access to the labour market, single parenthood, risk of poverty, etc.

The main objective of the MIMY project is to better understand and support the **liquid integration** processes of young migrants in vulnerable conditions in Europe and increase the social and economic benefits of and for them. The empowerment of young migrants through a **migrant-centred participatory approach** is in the foreground of MIMY's objectives.

The specificity of the MIMY approach is its **theoretical and methodological openness**, which fosters ongoing dynamic reflections and developments of the concepts and methods used throughout the project.

Based on an interdisciplinary and multi-level approach, **MIMY aims to:**

- Analyse the social and economic effects of successful or failed integration of young migrants through qualitative and quantitative data within the EU and the nine case study countries
- Investigate social, economic and cultural integration processes of migrant youth in vulnerable conditions and the role of institutions in enabling or constraining liquid integration
- Examine factors that can foster or hinder the integration processes of young migrants within the host community
- Investigate how diverse social actors and institutions can help to strengthen resilience and resistance strategies of young migrants and empower them to become active in their host society
- Capture the interdisciplinary synergies within the consortium and provide detailed insights into liquid integration processes from a trans-disciplinary perspective
- Develop a handbook of good practices to improve integration policies providing evidence-based recommendations for stakeholders and policymakers

MIMY's mixed-methods research design

MIMY applies a comprehensive mixed-methods approach combining various quantitative and qualitative methods on **different levels of analysis**, in **different local case studies** and a specific **step by step research design**. Additionally, the project will engage actively young migrants to include their voice within migration research, mainly through the involvement of **peer researchers**.

To capture liquid integration processes MIMY applies a multilevel perspective that interrelates structural constraints at the **macro-level** (such as EU and national migration policies) and the **meso-level** (such as local institutions and networks) with individual characteristics of young migrants at the **micro-level** (such as vulnerabilities, agency and resilience strategy) and examines the interactions between them in a temporal perspective.

Moreover, MIMY's methodology is organized into **four research steps** to maximize the amount and quality of the information gathered by building on previous research activities.

1. **Desk research:** in all countries of the consortium **reviews** of the international and national scientific literature as well as governmental debates on the integration of young, migrants in vulnerable conditions and **mapping** exercises of the services and structural characteristics of the 18 local case studies of MIMY.

2. **Quantitative secondary data on migration and integration, policy and discourse analysis:** the collection and analysis of **quantitative secondary data** on the social, economic and political features of European countries as well as the main characteristics of the migrant population living in those countries are integrated with a **policy and discourse analysis** of the laws, policies and public narrative about migration.
3. **Empirical studies of qualitative research:** the main empirical data gathering and analysis of MIMY studies on the determinants, drivers, impediments, patterns, and actors of integration processes and their strategies. It includes several qualitative methodologies (**biographical narrative interviews, experts and stakeholder interviews, focus groups, participatory action research, arts based events**) and will involve different groups of participants (local stakeholders and civil servants, members of the local population and young non-migrants, members of the migrant population, including the main target group of MIMY - young migrants in vulnerable conditions).
4. **Synthesis, synergies and policy recommendations:** includes a **scoping study** to synthesize MIMY's findings and integrate them with existent knowledge on migrant integration and a **Delphi study** with a panel of experts and relevant stakeholders to translate MIMY's results in innovative evidence-based action and strategies for the integration of young migrants living in vulnerable conditions in Europe.

MIMY adopts a radically processual perspective towards the concept of Liquid Integration

The MIMY project has produced an internal *Working paper on the concept of Liquid Integration regarding vulnerable youth adjustment* under the lead of Universitetet i Bergen in Norway, which situates the conceptual framework of MIMY in the scientific discussions around the concept of integration.

MIMY takes a **broad perspective** regarding the term “young migrants in vulnerable conditions” and wants to initiate a continuous critical reflection on the concepts, such as integration, liquid migration, and super-diversity.

Given the explorative and process-oriented layout of MIMY, terms such as “young migrants in vulnerable conditions” will be kept broad to allow the project to explore different experiences of vulnerabilities with regards to young migrants. Therefore, MIMY takes the stand that the set of categories to define vulnerable conditions will be recognized as open and adjustable throughout the project.

MIMY uses the concept of sequential Liquid Integration and suggests at least three central foci for MIMY's processual research concept (Skrobanek & Jobst, 2017: 192)¹:

- a) A focus on **'relational' (simultaneous) effects**, studying the interlinkages which arise between institutional, systemic factors, and Liquid Integration practices of young migrants in vulnerable conditions and young non-migrants over time and during the young migrants' life-course.
- b) A focus on **cross-sectional stabilities and changes**, enabling MIMY to scrutinize how institutional and systemic factors, the LI practices of young migrants in vulnerable conditions and non-migrants, and the interactions between the two dimensions change over time.

¹ Skrobanek, J., & Jobst, S. (2017). Fans - Soziologische Perspektiven. In J. Roose, M. S. Schäfer, & T. Schmidt-Lux (Eds.), Fans - Soziologische Perspektiven (pp. 181-200). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

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c) A focus on **long-term effects**, casting light on the relationships which arise between institutional, systemic factors, and LI practices of young migrants in vulnerable conditions and non-migrants over time and during the migrants' life-course.²

The concept of Liquid Integration explores a **new way to define the concept of integration** by adopting a radically processual perspective. MIMY argues that to conceptualise integration, we need to consider the contemporary system, social dynamics and its complexities and distance ourselves from the definition of integration based on stability.

Today, interrelated structural shifts, increased risk, uncertainty, instability, and power asymmetries have a strong impact, especially for young people in transition to adulthood. Young migrants in particular can become vulnerable through these uncertainties and discontinuities during their migration-integration-transition experience.

Liquid Integration as a concept allows for a more **dynamic and complex understanding of integration**, where the interdependencies, contingencies, and multi-layered dynamics of the process of integration can be addressed. It challenges the idea that integration and identity are fixed, solid, static, and linear. It proposes instead a perspective, which considers integration as dynamic, open-ended, and ever-changing transformations at the individual and structural levels.

Liquid integration also opposes the teleological perspective of integration and offers instead a perspective on the dynamics of integration where both the individual and its context are in a constant transformation as a result of their interdependencies, simultaneous adjustment dynamics, and feedback effects.

Additionally, liquid integration suggests that the process of integration for young migrants in vulnerable conditions is an **open-ended process characterized by contingency and multidimensional adjustment of practices**. By adopting the Liquid Integration approach to the integration processes of young migrants in vulnerable conditions, MIMY contributes to a much-needed exploration of the multi-level, long-term, and biographical effects of the ongoing system and individual transformations through the experience of migration.

MIMY's findings suggest significant challenges for young migrants in vulnerable conditions in Europe

A macrolevel data set to describe the European picture of the migrants in vulnerable conditions has been produced providing coherent and comprehensive information on the situation of migrants in vulnerable conditions in Europe covering the period between 2010-2019. The data were collected and compiled from three types of data sources: (i) international and European data providers for macro data, mainly Eurostat (ii) microdata from the European Social Survey for developing indicators on natives' perceptions on immigrants; (iii) in the case of the nine consortium countries, primary data was requested at a national level from the authorities managing migration.

The macro data set consists of 76 indicators further subdivided into 432 different variables, included in 14 worksheets in a single Excel file. It covers a core period of 10 years (2010-2019) and 29 countries:

² Skrobanek, J., in collaboration with Jobst, S., Grabowska, I. and Ryan, L. (2020). MIMY internal working paper on the concept of "liquid integration" regarding vulnerable migrant youth adjustment. Bergen (Norway): University of Bergen, Department of Sociology, p.22.

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EU27, Norway, and the United Kingdom reporting aggregated values on the level of the European Union where available.

The data set is divided into three sections, each with several dimensions.

- Sector A - Socio-economic indicators: Description of the general context, with a focus on youth. Six dimensions: Population and development, Labor market, Education, Social inclusion, Health, Democracy, and Economic freedom.
- Sector B - Youth Migration magnitude: Description of migration flows and numbers, including vulnerable groups.
- Sector C - Young Migrants' inclusion: Indicators to describe and compare population born outside EU28 countries ("Non-EU28 born") and local population ("Nationals" – born in the reporting country, independently of their nationality). Four dimensions: Labor market, Education, Social inclusion, and Health.

Some preliminary results are:

- The statistical data provided by Eurostat allow for identifying comprehensive and relevant information on the following categories of young migrants in vulnerable conditions: asylum seekers, refugees, stateless, and accompanies minors. In such cases, indicators measuring the number and dynamics are generally available and adequate for comparative analysis at the intra-European level.
- Initial results confirm the existence of significant differences between European countries and consortium countries in particular; for instance, in terms of migration size, in 2018 Hungary has the lowest number of young asylum seekers, followed by Romania, while Germany hosts the largest number.
- Several indicators in the compiled data set can be employed to analyze the integration of young immigrants (non-EU residents) in European countries. When analyzing the integration of immigrants in education, labor market, or society, the gaps between natives and immigrants confirm that the integration process has different intensities in European countries.
- When searching for more specific, detailed data, such as those related to reasons for migrating, housing, family status, or occupational skills, the initial analysis provides a very heterogeneous picture across consortium countries, as different data are available at the country level. In this case, most of the data are lacking, and a comparative analysis is inappropriate.
- The microdata provided by the European Social Survey also demonstrate differences regarding natives' perceptions of migrants; in 2018, in Hungary, we find the highest rejection index (57%), while the lowest values are in Norway (1.9%) and Germany (5.4%).³

³ Roman, M., Cimpoeru, S., Manafi, I. & Prada, E. (2020) : MIMY D2.1 Macro-data inventory. Internal document.

Messing, V. & Ságvári, B. (2019) 'Still divided but more open. Mapping European attitudes towards migration before and after the migration'. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Budapest. <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/still-divided-but-more-open-mapping-european-attitudes-towards-migration-before-and-after-the-migration-crisis>

Expected findings

After the first six months of the project, MIMY has not yet started its qualitative empirical research. However, through the literature and the secondary data review, already some findings are available. In the future, we expect to detect more young migrants in vulnerable conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis (e.g. because of deteriorating labour market conditions or health issues). We also expect that most of the migrants included in our research will define their vulnerability not only by one vulnerable condition, but that multiple are affecting the young migrants' integration measures. Furthermore, we expect that participation e.g. through our participatory action research is empowering to young migrants and give them their voice in society. Furthermore, the MIMY project expects to find new mobile interdisciplinary methodologies in approaching the target group of the project.

The MIMY consortium expects that the findings within the project will contribute to an improved knowledge base on the socio-economic effects of migration through highly original and innovative contributions in providing solutions and offering policy recommendations to tackle the gaps in diverse sectors of integration. The project will lead to new perspectives on the advantages and innovations that young immigrants can bring to the localities, enabling their agency capacity. By developing strategies and suggesting solutions to enable a socially cohesive society, MIMY will enhance socially inclusive growth and social cohesion in Europe, within which young migrants and unaccompanied minors in vulnerable conditions can be included in all facets of daily life and their contributions to the future vision of a society can be emphasized.

Researching different European countries, MIMY will highlight the spatial variations of institutional practices relating to the inclusion of young migrants in vulnerable conditions to new contexts and collect innovative ideas and techniques adaptable to other contexts across Europe. Simultaneously, MIMY contributes to each locality independently by exploring the integration process together with local stakeholders, practitioners, and migrants, to create a public space fostering the well-being and active participation of young migrants.

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Authors:

Birte Nienaber, Amalia Gilodi, José Oliveira, Greta Szendrei, Isabelle Albert (all Université du Luxembourg), Monica Roman (Academia de Studii Economice din Bucuresti)

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Project Identity

Project name	EMpowerment through liquid Integration of Migrant Youth in vulnerable conditions (MIMY)
Coordinator	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Birte Nienaber, Université du Luxembourg, Luxembourg, birte.nienaber@uni.lu
Consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Université du Luxembourg (Luxembourg)Institut für Landes- Und Stadtentwicklungsforschung gGmbH (Germany)Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaft und Kunst Hildesheim/Holzminden/Goettingen (Germany)Universitetet i Bergen (Norway)Academia de Studii Economice din Bucuresti (Romania)Malmö Universitet (Sweden)Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Italy)The University of Sheffield (United Kingdom)Közép Európai Egyetem, Central European University (Hungary)SWPS Uniwersytet Humanistyczno-Społeczny (Poland)EURICE - European Research and Project Office GmbH (Germany)Europese Confederatie van Organisaties voor Jeugdcentra (Belgium)
Duration	February 2020 – January 2023 (36 months)
Website	http://www.mimy-project.eu

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The MIMY project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 870700.