



STORY BOOK ON MIGRATION



**REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS SEEKING FOR THEIR
FUTURE IN THE UNITED EUROPE
(PAST-PRESENT-FUTURE)
Project Erasmus+ KA2
2016-1-CY01-KA219-017309**



Migration, so old as the human existence on earth.

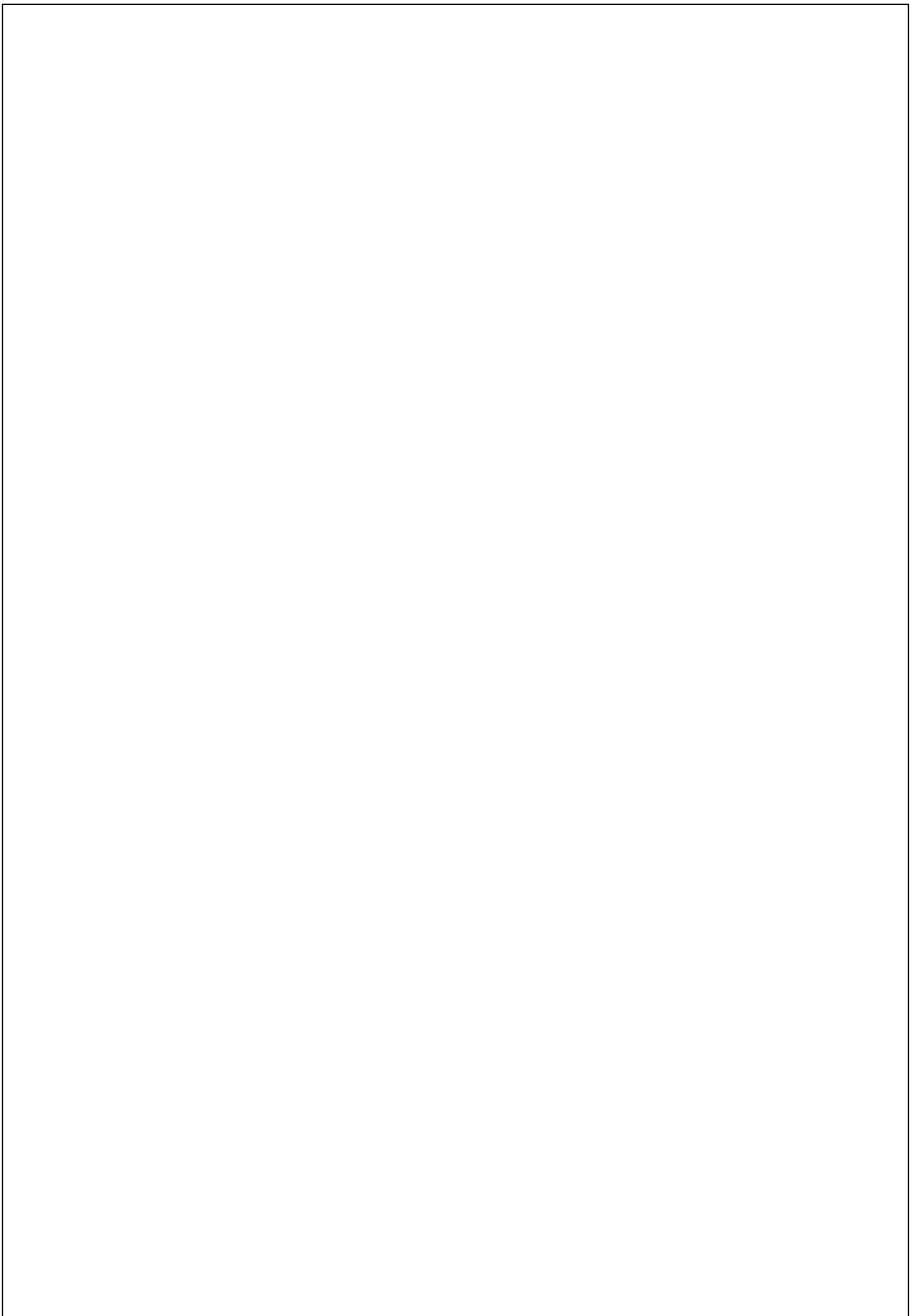
Behind this world there are people who write their own stories with sadness, fear, hardship, nostalgia for their homes and hope for a better life.

These people we would like to present, sixteen human stories, two of each partner school country.

The activity was carried out in the framework of the Erasmus+ project " REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS SEEKING FOR THEIR FUTURE IN THE UNITED EUROPE (PAST-PRESENT-FUTURE)" by schools from Cyprus, Bulgaria, Romania, Italy, Portugal, Slovakia, Turkey and Greece.

1st Gymnasium of Mytilene

GREECE, APRIL 2019



Things We Carry on the Sea

We carry tears in our eyes: good-bye father, good-bye mother

We carry soil in small bags: may home never fade in our hearts

We carry names, stories, memories of our villages, fields, boats

We carry scars from proxy wars of greed

We carry carnage of mining, droughts, floods, genocides

We carry dust of our families and neighbors incinerated in mushroom clouds

We carry our islands sinking under the sea

We carry our hands, feet, bones, hearts and best minds for a new life

We carry diplomas: medicine, engineer, nurse, education, math, poetry, even if they mean nothing to the other shore

We carry railroads, plantations, laundromats, bodegas, taco trucks, farms, factories, nursing homes, hospitals, schools, temples...built on our ancestors' backs

We carry old homes along the spine, new dreams in our chests

We carry yesterday, today and tomorrow

We're orphans of the wars forced upon us

We're refugees of the sea rising from industrial wastes

And we carry our mother tongues

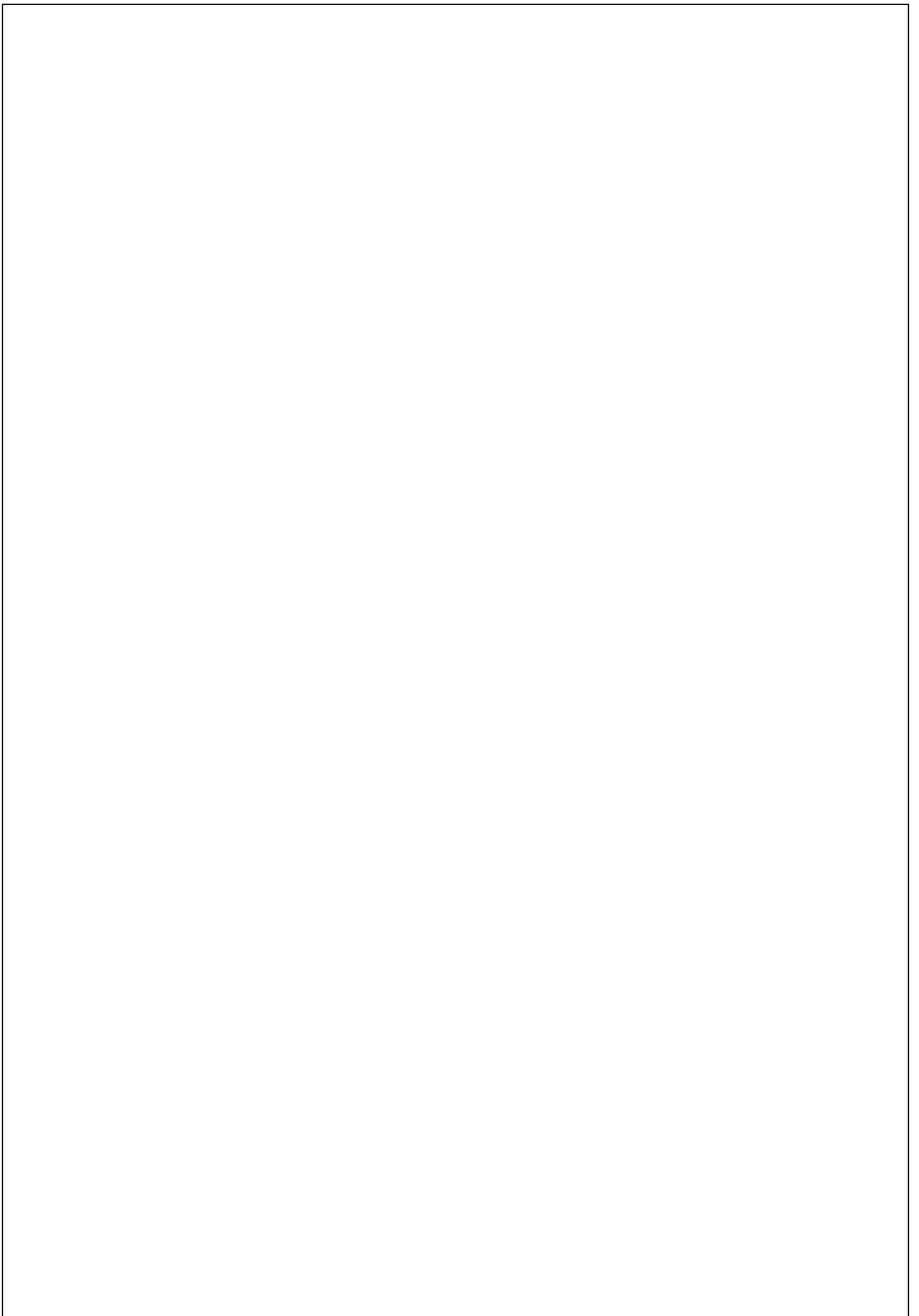
爱(ai),) حب hubb),) ליב libe), amor, love

平安 (ping'an),) سلام salaam), shalom, paz, peace

希望 (xi'wang), ') أمل amal), hofenung, esperanza, hope, hope, hope

As we drift...in our rubber boats...from shore...to shore...to shore...

Wang Ping



CYPRUS

My parents story

My parents are from Egypt, my dad is from Alexandria, whilst my mum is from Cairo. My dad Paul, first came to Cyprus to visit a friend. While he was having lunch with some friends he had a job opportunity to work at a company dealing with electric curtains, since he knew a lot about technology. He then decided to work for them for about a year. At first it was very difficult for him since there was a language barrier. But days past and he got to meet more people from different walks of life and learn more about the beautiful culture here. Unfortunately, this was not his dream job, he wanted to work at a radio station. Luckily, doors opened for him at a Swedish Christian radio station. He took his dream job and worked for them from 1991 until 2015.

In 2001 he visited his country again and attended a seminar where he met my mothers' father. Her father who is now my grandpa, introduced them to each other and after some time, they got married in Egypt. They came to Cyprus seeking a better life for their future family.

Moreover, my mother had some difficulties too. It was her first time away from her family, without knowing anyone in her town and that was distressing for her. Additionally, step by step she became familiar with the language and broadened her horizons. She started watching Greek and English movies in order to enrich her vocabulary to be able to communicate with others. My mother learnt the Greek language all by herself and was able to get a job as an accountant.

They had the chance to visit many tourist attractions and experience breathtaking views. In contrast with Egypt where they lived and could not get any of these once in a lifetime experiences. In Cyprus there is an entirely different way of living, the sense of community is strong but on the other hand individualism prevails in meant aspects of Cyprus society is not absent.

Martina Tawadros B32

SLOVAKIA

Life of an Iraqi Refugee in Slovakia

Only few people can imagine the miseries the Christians in Iraq had to go through. ISIS fighters drew the letter N as a Nazarene on their dwellings. Terrorists thus knew who would be the first victim. So these innocent people had only three options if they wanted to survive. They had to either convert to Islam, pay huge taxes, or await death. Since nobody was willing to accept these inexorable conditions, most of the Nazareths chose to run away.

“In August 2014 we were forced to leave our homes.” ISIS invaded the town which was threatening. We escaped to Ankawa town. There was no hospital, neither any health care. People slept on the streets, in the churches or tents without any protection or medicaments. Some of them were even dying. Fadi describes dramatic moments. Those who fought against ISIS missed the weapons to defeat them. "I was worried about what would happen to me and my family. We did not know what was happening. We had no hope," he says about the causes of his escape from Iraq. Nowadays, he continues to keep track of the situation in his homeland.

The rescue came

Fadi and his family flew to Slovak airport in Košice from Iraq airport in Erbil. Trying to escape from death with their friends, they travelled to retaining camp in Humenné. However, some Fadi's friends weren't that lucky. **They escaped to Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and they are still waiting for the right time to leave the country,** he said. Fadi's family finally settled in the village Zbehy, from where they continued their way to Nitra town. Fadi's parents used to live in the camper van, and Fadi used to work in the capital city of Iraq, in Bagdad, as a male nurse. He was thinking about living in Germany, but he wants to settle down in Slovakia at the moment.

„I don't want to live here for one year and the other there. I like it here, people are very nice, they helped us a lot and we are very thankful for that,” says humbly. He adds that many of his friends have come across some attacks a few times. Fortunately, only the verbal ones. However, I've got a clear message for them: **„They should know us before judging.“**

He likes Slovak language

Fadi is not bored in Slovakia at all. Dúbravka in Bratislava has become his temporary home. It is because he has studied Slovak language and culture in Bratislava. „**Your language, especially grammar, is similar to Arabic. It’s hard but it can be learnt,**“ adds with smile. He would like to continue in his job of a male nurse when he graduates. But according to him, our salaries are very low.

„**I will follow other job offers as well,**“ he admits. Apart from that, he sings in church every Sunday, helps homeless people and is part of a football team. Even before coming to Slovakia he knew our football players Vladimír Weiss and Marek Hamšík. He also knows Peter Sagan. The thing he enjoys the most about Slovakia is the weather. „**It is almost 50 degrees in Iraq now. Yours 35 is ideal, except for heavy rain**“ concludes with smile.



TURKEY

It's good to find home again.

Isaac, his name, my great grandfather, in the year 1864, he flee with his family the war with Russia from his home country in the USSR, along with many politicians and aristocrats, leaving all of their possessions behind. Some sailed the Mediterranean Sea provided by the Ottomans Empire, others flee by foot and carriages which they arrived to Turkey. Lots of families rode the sea and set sail to Europe, while some sailed to Palastine and Lebanon's havens where my grandfather went, then continued to Sham Sherif (known now as Damascus the capital of Syria), Sham was considered a holy city so, upon arrival they took off their shoes to showed respect. The war ended eventually, but half of the country's population have died during the war, now only three million residents remain in Kabardino Republic.

It's ironic that the history keeps repeating itself, and we found ourselves immigrating, fleeing another war once again, after a number of years.

At the beginning when you reach your destination refuge there's a lot of confusion, the Turkish Government and Circassian community organizations helped many of our Syrian families settle temporarily in Istanbul and other states in Turkey, and built refugee camps on borders. Me and my Mom went through Beirut then by airplane to Istanbul, where a stranger family welcomed us to their home, it was hard to do everyday things, we didn't speak the language nor were able to understand the new different culture, everything seemed foreign, even going to the supermarket was a challenge.

That family's apartment we stayed at, was close to the airport and I remember every time I looked through the window I expected the airplane to throw bomb shells as I got used to witness back in Damascus. Two months later we were able to find jobs and rent an apartment, so our new Turkish friends made us a surprise by furnishing our house for us, it was a precious moment, you never expect such a generous gesture out of strangers, we felt we were not alone. My dad then arrived after he sold our car, but left our other properties and belongings hanging to an unknown fate.

Our job's manager wasn't too honest with us about our salaries, and because we were not registered employees, he was taking advantage by paying us according

to his liking. Eventually we couldn't stay in Istanbul, and we were invited by our extended Circassian but Turkish family in Kayseri, they promised us support, even that we had never met before.

Kayseri seemed to be in the middle of nowhere, and we're used to live in crowded big cities, at the same time it seemed big enough and everything was available, I didn't like it at first but it's weird how a person can make roots in after a while.

When we first came to Kayseri we stayed at our relatives' house, they were so good with us even that we have just met. I remember peeking through the window back in 2014, and I heard music, I looked down and there was a nice building with orange walls, I saw few students going inside, for no apparent reason my heart fell for it, and I said to myself; if only I can work in such a school!

We struggled for a year in Kayseri, I started working in a low paying job, as an English teacher in an institution for languages, back in Syria I was in a managerial position and teaching is so different from office work.

I met lots people here in Kayseri, we have seen so much generosity and welcoming hands, nonetheless there were some closed-minded people who made things a bit hard for us, it's not easy to explain the amount of struggle a family faces in order to start a new life in a foreign country.

It's been five years, living here in Turkey, I'm working in a private school as an English teacher, it had been 4 years by now, and for the first time we managed to settle. Do you remember that orange walled school I wished for; well I'm working there now and it was totally a coincidence, it's exactly the job I wanted, I can't forget what that gentleman said, who I first met for my interview at the school, and later sort of become my mentor, he said to me; "you're one of us now!"

Written by Sasha Isaac



BULGARIA

Nur and Bilal

Nur and Bilal have been in Bulgaria for several years with their mother. They flee Syria because of the war. Nur is 16 years old, and her brother is 13. They live in Harmanli, the mother works in two places and the children attend a Bulgarian school - in the village of Ivanovo.

This is the first school, whose principal and teachers "dared" to accept refugee children. They dared - because in 2015 all schools in the Harmanli district refused because of parents' reluctance, negative public attitudes and lack of practice and normative arrangements.

The two children have a older sister who is married in Turkey, and their older brother and father remain in Syria.

The school bus for Ivanovo leaves daily at 7.30 am from Harmanli. Nur always chooses the rear seats. The teachers sit in front. Greek music is thundering when the bus starts its journey. Nur uses her headphones to listen to what she wants. The distance from the town to the village is 10 km. By the time it gets to school the bus is half filled with students and teachers.

In the school, the mobile phone range is lost, as does the mobile internet, there is no wi-fi , but it is not necessary - during the break the children run to the yard or play in the corridors.

After the regular hours, the students have some after class activities, and afterwards, Nur would wait for the bus to take her to Harmanli.

She smiles all day. In a good Bulgarian language she tells that she likes it very much in Bulgaria. They are glad they stayed here. Everyone at school behaves well with her and the only thing she misses is her girlfriends already in high school in the city.

The communication with the two Syrian children at first was not so difficult because they spent some time in Turkey and knew Turkish, and "we have children from the Turkish ethnicity." The principal of the school added that trying "on the principle of probation-error" had succeeded in bringing them together. Bilal advanced much faster than other foreign children (there were other Syrian and Afghan children in the school, but they went to Germany or Turkey).



They used Bilal as a translator. And on the principle of mutual learning we did, as in the Renaissance, says the principal.

Today Nur and Bilal are the only refugee children in the school. The boy's love for football and Nur's dance helped incorporate them in the school. She likes many Bulgarian people and wants the principal to play folk music in the breaks, as well as in the afternoon when they have a kindergarten.

The principal also remembers a difficult moment after the arrival of the two Syrian children, in which the parents of the Bulgarian students reacted. "Bilal was quite naughty and conflicted, it was not conflicts, it was a confrontation - for kids, for the ball, for example, and the children complained to their parents. We discussed with teachers and parents, and emphasized that when there is such a "conflict" between children from one ethnicity or between a Roma and a Turkish child, things are overcome and do not reach the parents, but when Bilal intervened, it was another matter. Literally two or three parents arrived in the school after a lot of conversations and an explanatory campaign - that we could not put a sign of equality between a Syrian and a terrorist, the things were reassured"

Today, Syrian children have many friends among their classmates.

ROMANIA

A foreigner in Romania

I came in Romania because my brother had a developed activity in the agricultural domain. I wanted to open a restaurant in the city centre of Bucharest (which was the activity that I previously had in Tirana).

Talking about the 1998-2000. Time in which Romania wasn't developed or has just started developing. There wasn't any security for foreigners and because of that, after a successful period of time, the restaurant had to be closed because of the local thieves. Right after this adventure, I founded a company which made internet sites, in Romania being the moment when everybody needed that service. This activity lasted 4-5 years in which I had a discreet success with approximately 26 employees. At the time, foreigners were seen by the Romanian citizens, no matter the activity they were doing, as people with infinite economic possibilities. And thus, people that could be exploited from this point of view... considering that the average salary in Romania at that time was 190-250 euros per person. That way, foreigners that were making 2000-3000 euros per month were considered very rich by the population, that didn't even know their standard of living and their expenses that they had to sustain in their countries.

All foreign entrepreneurs that came to Romania in those years had to face some reckoning with the workers, from any level, with university or not, which weren't competitive on the international field. This situation provoked a slowdown in the development of the activity and in the end it transformed in economic damages, in a lot of cases very severe.

It has to be told that in those years the Romanian fiscal policy was favorable to attract foreign investors. After approximately 10 years the fiscal pressure became bigger and many investors have gone to other more favorable countries.

After the site marketing activity, I was asked in the capacity of a designer architect to develop a managerial activity in a big national furniture factory. At the moment, the factory needed a general reorganization from the product catalogue to the production technology and then to the marketing system. I have entered a productive system made up of 1200 people who worked in an outdated concept with severe problems of production. Every change that was proposed or placed to

improve the productivity and the competition was met with hostility at all the levels. It's impossible to bring radical changes without bringing dissatisfaction in such a numerous group.

I have worked especially as a designer to improve the products and to create new models for a bigger market. I started a design office with an improved informatics system and a workshop to develop prototypes and in this sense I started an interior design activity based on the furniture production by order with personalized specs according to the clients' request. This was my first concept developed in this way in the country and it was my most interesting activity, full of professional satisfactions. The start was very hard but the youth that were employed in the projection activity were full of willingness and determination. In a short period of time they learned the informatics programs and we got along perfectly.

On the other hand, for what the workshop was concerned, we collected a group of 30 competences, starting from a simple carpenter with high professional skills to a sculptor and then to a finishing specialist.

Many have learnt to read a technical drawing but I have learnt a lot from them, too, such as the wood technology and more importantly, working daily together, I learnt a lot about Romanian culture and the traditions that they were considering the most valuable.

From a professional point of view, the things started to do well, but from a human point of view, the relationships didn't leave me very enthusiastic. I was feeling some sentiments of envy and grudge which probably have prevented the relations to go deeper. I helped and followed the personal problems of everyone, using not only the factory resources but also my personal ones. This effort wasn't understood and it was received as an obligation of mine towards all of them, when I could only treat them all as simple workers following only their professional work and nothing else. At some point, I realized that a stranger I was welcomed in the first days and a stranger I kept being. That doesn't mean that I could have friendship relations with many families in Romania. But in my opinion, as it's happening in many cases, a history is missing that binds only those who lived together from the teenage to the old age.

Romania isn't what it used to be 20 years ago, the changes are deep, on the value level of things and the social texture, here we can open a new chapter which in this context is not necessary.

In conclusion, I can say that I live in this country for 20 years and this is a very important part of my life that allowed me to develop my personal life. I was a wandering and solitary wolf. Here I met the love of my life, who gave me a child, who is writing this report and who is now 15 years old and the love of my life.

“All Americans have something lonely about them. I don't know what the reason might be, except maybe that they're all descended from immigrants.

Maybe it's the instinct of every immigrant, born of necessity or of longing: Someplace else will be better than here. And the condition: if only I can get to that place.”

Cristina Henriquez, 2014

The Book of Unknown Americans

ITALY

Two times immigrant

Sonia's father was forced to leave Italy and to move to Canada to look for a job when she was two and one year later she and her mother followed him. Her parents found soon a job but their integration in Montréal wasn't easy enough, as the natives spoke both French and English but not Italian...! Thanks to school Sonia started studying English and she could talk to the people living there.

After ten years her father decided to come back to Italy and Sonia's integration started again...!



PORTUGAL

Job Lek Lheveia from Mozambique

"Job Lek Lheveia arrived at our school 3,5 years ago. He came to Portugal from Mozambique under an international Agreement and a Portugal-África Foundation scholarship. He had to work hard in studies to obtain the scholarship, but he had green light to study abroad for 3 years.

Job at first didn't felt very cozy outside of the mozambicans students group, however, little by little he was conquered by the easy-going mood of his portuguese colleagues, he made plenty of friends and reached the final year of the course with good results. He was never bullied nor discriminated in Portugal. Portugal had a distant past as colonial power in Africa that never faded away, thus portuguese speaking africans aren't quite foreigners here. Once, in a not very distant past, they were part of Portugal.

Due to the feelings he developed towards Portugal and his portuguese friends he felt confused at the end of the course, either he stayed and worked in Portugal either he returned to homeland to his family. As Job declared in the interview he decided to return to Mozambique to apply the knowledge he acquired, to be close to his family and to contribute to his country's growth and development.

Rute, another Mozambican student, returned to her home country and is now working in training and appeared recently in a portuguese tv news report, it was good to acknowledge her working status."

GREECE

The story of Mohammed

My name is Mohammed and I am 12 years old. I am a refugee from Kompania Syria from where I left before about 6 months ago with my siblings, my 14 years old sister Adala and my 22 years old brother Ahmed, because of the bombings that claimed the lives of both my parents. My brother took me and my sister to save us, and he planned to get us to Germany via Greece.

He put my sister and me in a boat to pass from Turkey to Greece, knowing that as unaccompanied minors we would have special treatment.

The moment that I separated him when he put me in the boat I felt like losing my parents again. Insecurity and fear conquered me once again. We cried with my sister, and we tried to hold on to the words of our brother and his promise that when he arrives in Germany he will find us and take us with him. Today I live with my sister in one of the hostels for minors in Mytilene and I go to the special integration class for foreign students at the 11th Elementary School, with other refugee children. I learn the Greek language and I love it.

In the guest house we are like a big family. I am grateful for all that are given to me here in Greece but I want to go to Germany as I have promised my brother. For 5 months we did not know what had happened to my older brother Ahmed. Now I am happy because we know that he is in Berlin, he had found us and he started the process of reunification our family.

I know that my life will be in Germany with my siblings. I believe I would be able to do important things in my life, to study, and eventually to be able to help others in need as some people helped me when I was in need.

We Refugees

*I come from a musical place
Where they shoot me for my song
And my brother has been tortured
By my brother in my land.*

*I come from a beautiful place
Where they hate my shade of skin
They don't like the way I pray
And they ban free poetry*

*I come from a beautiful place
Where girls cannot go to school
There you are told what to believe
And even young boys must grow beards.*

*I come from a great old forest
I think it is now a field
And the people I once knew
Are not there now.*

*We can all be refugees
Nobody is safe,
All it takes is a mad leader
Or no rain to bring forth food,
We can all be refugees
We can all be told to go,
We can be hated by someone
For being someone.*

*I come from a beautiful place
Where the valley floods each year
And each year the hurricane tells us
That we must keep moving on.*

*I come from an ancient place
All my family were born there
And I would like to go there
But I really want to live*

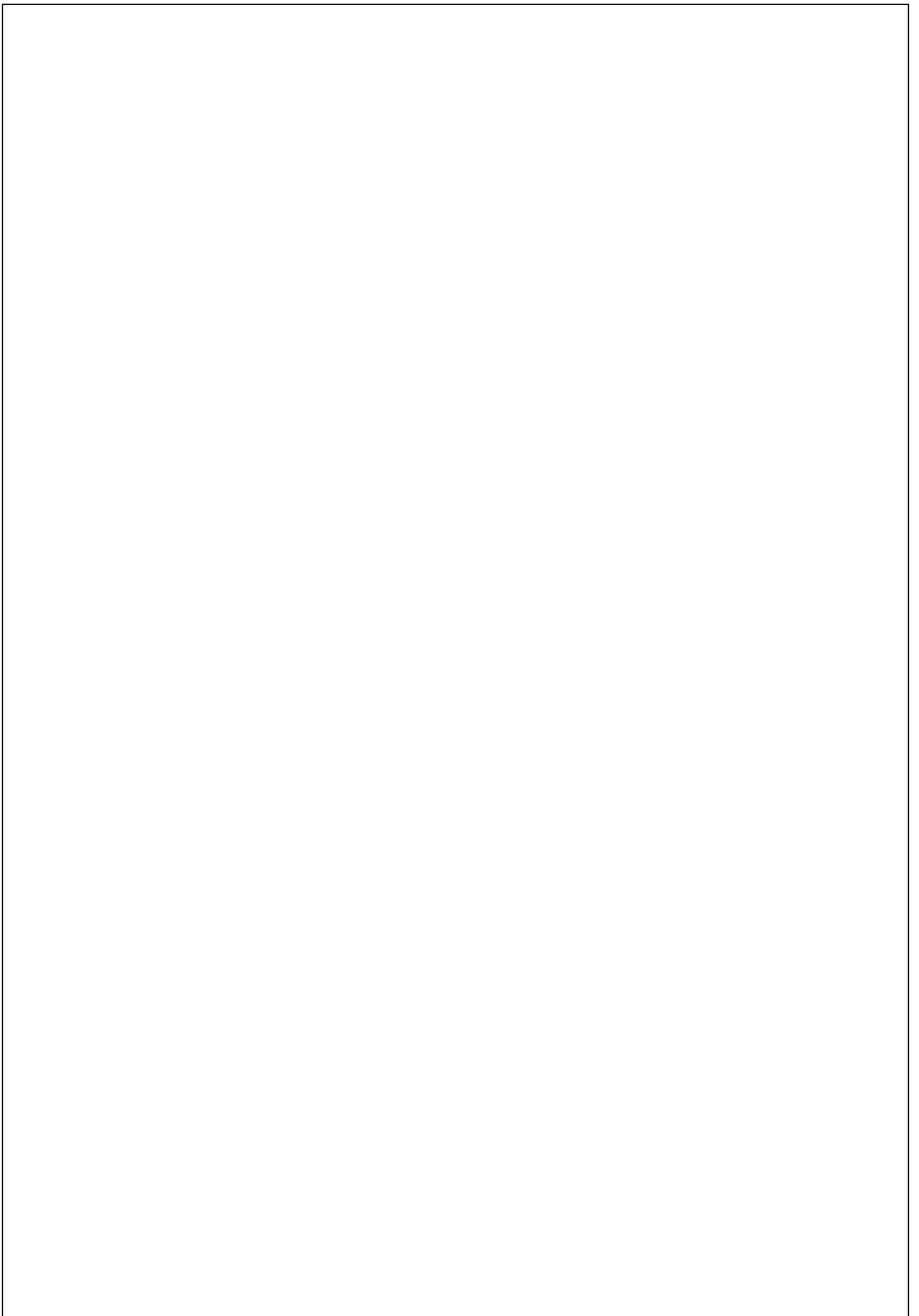
*I come from a sunny, sandy place
Where tourists go to darken skin
And dealers like to sell guns there
I just can't tell you what's the price.*

*I am told I have no country now
I am told I am a lie
I am told that modern history books
May forget my name*

We can all be refugees

*Sometimes it only takes a day,
Sometimes it only takes a handshake
Or a paper that is signed.
We all came from refugees
Nobody simply just appeared,
Nobody's here without a struggle,
And why should we live in fear
Of the weather or the troubles?
We all came here from somewhere.*

Benjamin Zephaniah



TURKEY

We came together in the garbage dump

In Syria, we were living with prejudice towards other communities, races, religions...

We started to discriminate each other.

Conflict was getting worse and worse.

The Shias were overly critical since they were in power.

Sunnis didn't have a good word to say for the others since they were the majority. Since the Christians were the richest, they didn't like the Kurdish, the Arabs or the Turkmen.

Everybody was gossiping and swearing at each other.

Everybody inclined from each other.

Everybody pretended to knowledge or cleverness.

Everybody claimed that they are the most honourable, the most honest, the most morally justified, and the most religious is himself or herself.

Then one day,

We found ourselves in Turkey.

Now we started living in the garbage dumps and started collecting garbage in order to earn a living.

After falling into the dumpsite we have no conflict with each other.

We have learned to unite in the garbage dump.

In short we reunified in the garbage dump.

A young Syrian refugee



CYPRUS

My dad comes from Serbia

My dad decided to come to Cyprus after an invitation from his sister.

His sister left Serbia because there was poverty and war in Serbia at that time. Together with her husband decided to come to Cyprus because they knew some people in this country. They were introduced to a man who provided them with work. In short, they left the poor Serbia for a better future.

After some time they proposed to my father to come to Cyprus as it is a hospitable country. So after a lot of thought, he agreed to leave his homeland and family in order to come temporarily and see if things are really as easy and nice as his sister described.

My dad settled in an apartment right next to that of my mother's and after a while they met and became acquainted with each other.

My mother was the reason why my father stayed in Cyprus. When my father settled in Cyprus and met the woman who stole his heart, he told his family that he would stay in Cyprus forever but he would visit them wherever he could. Although my dad was not originally from Cyprus he felt welcome and accepted perhaps because he had the same religion, color and similar habits as Cypriots.

So my father remained in this wonderful country where which I was born.

BULGARIA

Seeking a safer place for her children

"It's not my home town anymore, it's really scary ..." - tells Sana, surrounded by her husband and three of her five children. Seeking a safer place for her children, Sana shared herself with her parents, her three brothers and her four sisters, three of whom remained in Al-Qamishli, and one living in Germany.

With her husband they make the difficult decision not only for the security they are looking for, but also for the inability of Sanna to continue. "Four months ago, I was operated by a disc herniation. I went to different procedures to be able to recover, but this is no longer possible. We want to go to my older sister in Germany so that my treatment can continue. "

We asked them - How did they get to Bulgaria? - "We crossed the Turkish border, from there we have long traveled to Istanbul. There we slept for a week in a mosque until we found an intermediary who helped us to arrive in Bulgaria, of course, for a fee of \$ 300". At the camp in Harmanli they are from October 2016. For her she only asked for painkillers and an electric stove with reotans to warm up. - "There is electricity in the wagon, cooking gas, but there is no stove on which to heat up but we really hope to leave for Germany as soon as the papers are ready".



GREECE

An interview with a Greek immigrant in Australia

I am Irene (Rinoula as they call me) H.*, and I am 76 years old.

My story begins in 1964. I was 23 years old, when my parents told me that I would go to Australia and actually in Sydney, in order to marry someone through matchmaking ("proxenio") a Greek man who lived there. There was a lot of poverty at that time in Greece and many other parents decided to allow their children to change country in order to have a better future, but also to get married. I belong to the second case.

This is how I set off for Sydney from my village (Papados, Yeras) in Mytilene. I took all my belongings (dowry), local products like oil and many others such icons of saints and some photos of my family for my new home. My family who stayed back was very sad because I left, but they were also happy because I was going to have a better life.

The trip was by ship and lasted many days. During the voyage I was thinking with nostalgia what I had left behind. Fortunately, some good friends were travelling with me in order to help me with the marriage. When we finally arrived, I was astonished (amazed) to see how big the ship was. At the port my future husband and his family were waiting for me. I was embarrassed for a few minutes because I realized that this is the person I was going to live with the rest of my life, someone I wasn't familiar with, but as soon as we started talking, I understood that my fears had already disappeared.

The first thing that happened was meeting the whole family and then, came the wedding. After the marriage we moved to our new home and I started to getting used of my new way of life. I didn't know the English language and I learned a few words from a small English dictionary and from shopping because I used to read the labels of the products.

Sydney surprised me in two ways. First it wasn't very different from my country because many Greeks were living there. The second was that we were better financially and this only from my husband's job (salary). But I never considered Sydney my hometown because it wasn't my home.

After seven years we returned to Greece with our daughter who she was born in Australia, but my husband and I decided we wanted her to grow up in Greece, our beloved country. However we will never forget the experience of years we had lived in Australia.

PORTUGAL

An interview

Name: *Belito Júlio*

Age: *21*

Capacity: *Migrant*

Origin: *Mozambique*

Destination: *Portugal*

Time of movement: *2016*

Age of the person at the time of the beginning the journey: *19*

Reasons of movement: *Studies*

Are there people who wait you, when you reach your destination? *Yes. Since I came through an agreement between my country and Portugal-Africa Foundation*

What were the feelings of the relatives who stayed back? *They know I came to be a better professional*

Did you move with your family, a friend, someone you know or alone? *With other colleagues under the same scholarship system*

Was your destination specific from the beginning? If not was your choice guided of free? *Yes. We were distributed by schools in Portugal.*

The decision to leave was your own or somebody else's? *Mine*

How did you feel when you arrived at Portugal? *At first I felt alone and a foreigner, but that was only at the beginning. We all speak Portuguese as first language and Portugal is a very welcoming towards Portuguese speaking countries so it was easy to integrate, and shortly after i didn't felt a foreigner at all.*

What have you taken from home? *A Big suitcase and its filing*

Have you felt at some time the need to go back? If yes when had this happened? *No, not at all. I knew I would improve my skills.*

Do you like being here? *I love being here, I feel at home. Everyone is so welcoming and helpful.*

What are the problems you have faced during your stay? *Well at first I thought it would be harder to adapt but it was really easy.*

Would you like to stay or prefer to return your country? *I will stay to proceed studies. My aim is to obtain Pedagogical certification and return Mozambique as a teacher.*

ITALY

Foreigners at home

Alessandro's mother came from the present Slovenia and exactly from POSTOJNA which belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire until it was given to Italy after the First World War and later occupied by the Germans until 1945. After the 1947's peace treaties the Italians had to choose whether to remain in Yugoslavia, losing their Italian nationality, or leaving the country but remaining Italian. That's why in 1949 Alessandro's mother decided to move to Italy with her family.

They settled in Catania's refugee camp where they had to face up a lot of integration problems, since they were regarded as 'foreigners at home'. However they shared with the Sicilians the same language, religion and hard work which helped their gradual integration in the local community.



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SLOVAKIA

From Slovakia to Norway

Hello. My name is Rene Marko Tkáč. I am 16 years old and I am living in Norway at this moment. However, I was born in Slovakia. I grew up there only with my mother and brother, because my father was always working abroad. Firstly in Austria, later in Norway. He has been working in Norway for 10 years. We didn't see our dad very often, just for a few days at Christmas, Easter and summer holidays. We wanted to spend more time with him, so it was the first reason why we started to think about moving there. Another fact which made us to move to Norway was that there is higher standard of living and people are better paid for their work. All in all, we decided to move to Norway.

I enjoy living there. Norwegian people are nice and polite, they aren't in such a hurry as people in Slovakia. They enjoy their free time more than Slovaks do.

As I have already mentioned, there is higher standard of living, so people have everything they need and want. Electronics are of the same price, so I can buy it easily.

However, living there also has got some disadvantages. The food here is much more expensive than in Slovakia. Slovak cuisine was excellent with a lot of tasty and delicious dishes, so I miss it a lot. Another difficulty I had to face at the beginning was the language. When we came there, I didn't have any friends, because I didn't know the language. Even if I met somebody during the first year, it was difficult to get closer because of language barrier. So I had to learn a new language.

The beginnings are always tough but now my social life is getting better and I am happy to say that I have a lot of good friends here. I enjoy living there because I am with my mum and dad, and that is all that matters.

ROMANIA

A mixed family

Some people may think mixed families are something unique and an interesting environment for a child to grow in, and it is actually an experience that people would die for. Nobody can narrate better the experience than an actual child of two parents each of other nation, so here i am. My name is Elisa, i am the daughter of a Romanian-Italian family, and i am proud of it.

My parents met at work, my mom was born in Romania and went to Italy to learn how to work with a sewing machine, later on she came back to Romania and got a job at a sewing factory where she met my dad. He was born in Italy and as many traditional families back then he grew up with a lot of siblings. He had a first marriage in which he experienced being a father for the first time. My dad moved to Romania due to work and he got a job where my mom worked. They met when my mom was 20 and my dad 35. They had a wonderful time enjoying each other for 9 years, time in which they travelled all over Europe. They took pictures that they still have and look back at the beautiful times they had together. . My grandparents were really open minded about their relationship and didn't care at all about the age gap or about their different nationality and culture.

My mom's name is Nicoleta Mangu and my dad's is Renzo Bolzonella. They are not married because they don't feel that marriage defines true love. They want to show people that even if they are not married they can still love each other for a lifelong time. My complete name is Elisa Bolzonella, and as you can tell I got it from my dad.

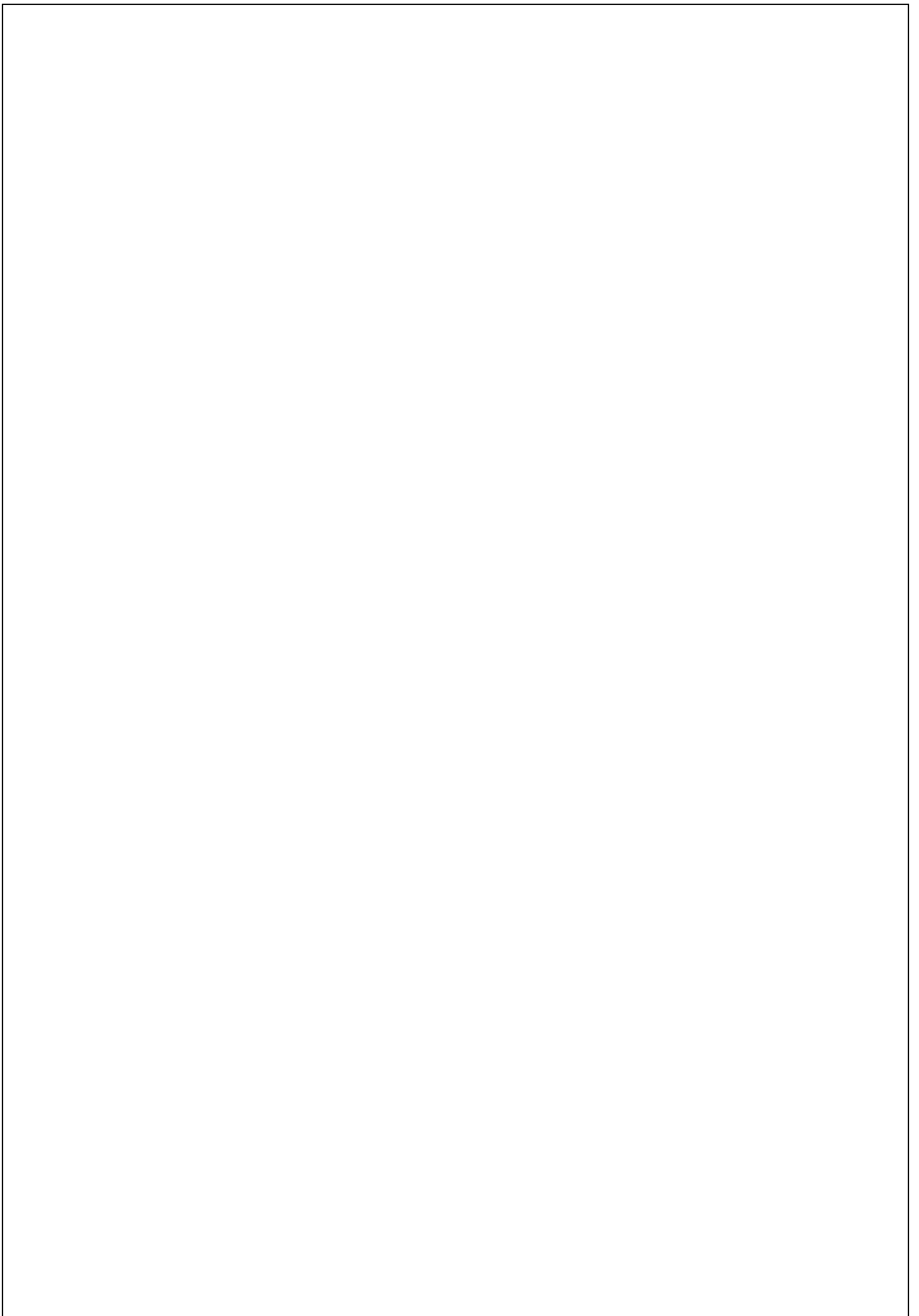
When I was growing up and learning how to speak, my dad thought me Italian and my mom talked to me in Romanian. My parents don't remember the exact first word that I said, but my parents told me that when I started talking I knew both languages. So when my dad would ask me something in Italian I would be able to respond in Italian and so with my mom when she asked me something in Romanian. Growing up wasn't a problem for me. I got accepted by other kids even though some of them made fun of my unusual name, I didn't really care. Some people laugh at my name because of how strange it sounds. I can tell you that it is not a common name but it is pretty normal in Italy. I can get kind of nervous when people ask my full

name because I know for sure they are going to make me spell it and tell me about how strange it is and how they never heard it before.

My dad got integrated pretty easily in society, even though when he came to Romania he did not know a single word, but day by day, he learnt the language pretty easily, with some help from my mom and from the friendly neighbors. His Italian accent is really strong but you can easily understand what he says. At first he didn't really want to learn the language as he thought he wasn't going to stay that much in this country, but as he met my mom, he realized that he might spend the rest of his life with her.

My mom learned Italian in the time she was in Italy with the help of her friend who went there with her. It wasn't easy for her but she was motivated to at least gain an understanding of the language. After a few weeks of persistently bringing her little Romanian-Italian dictionary with her wherever she went, she was able to speak Italian pretty well, even though her Romanian accent has always been strong.

My opinion is that nowadays people judge others pretty easily, and that can affect many relationships, some people make it through the rough times and stay positive, some don't, and the ones that don't are being pulled apart by the comments of others. Nobody should ever let other comments affect their lifestyle, or choices. My parents got judged by many people at first as back then it wasn't seen as a nice relationship because of my dad's different nationality, but as people realized that they feel happy together and how well they get along, they started encouraging their relationship.



Home

*no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark
you only run for the border
when you see the whole city running as well*

*your neighbors running faster than you
breath bloody in their throats
the boy you went to school with
who kissed you dizzy behind the old tin factory
is holding a gun bigger than his body
you only leave home
when home won't let you stay.*

*no one leaves home unless home chases you
fire under feet
hot blood in your belly
it's not something you ever thought of doing
until the blade burnt threats into
your neck
and even then you carried the anthem under
your breath
only tearing up your passport in an airport toilets
sobbing as each mouthful of paper
made it clear that you wouldn't be going back.*

*you have to understand,
that no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land
no one burns their palms
under trains
beneath carriages
no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled
means something more than journey.
no one crawls under fences
no one wants to be beaten
pitied*

*no one chooses refugee camps
or strip searches where your
body is left aching
or prison,
because prison is safer
than a city of fire
and one prison guard
in the night
is better than a truckload
of men who look like your father
no one could take it
no one could stomach it
no one skin would be tough enough*

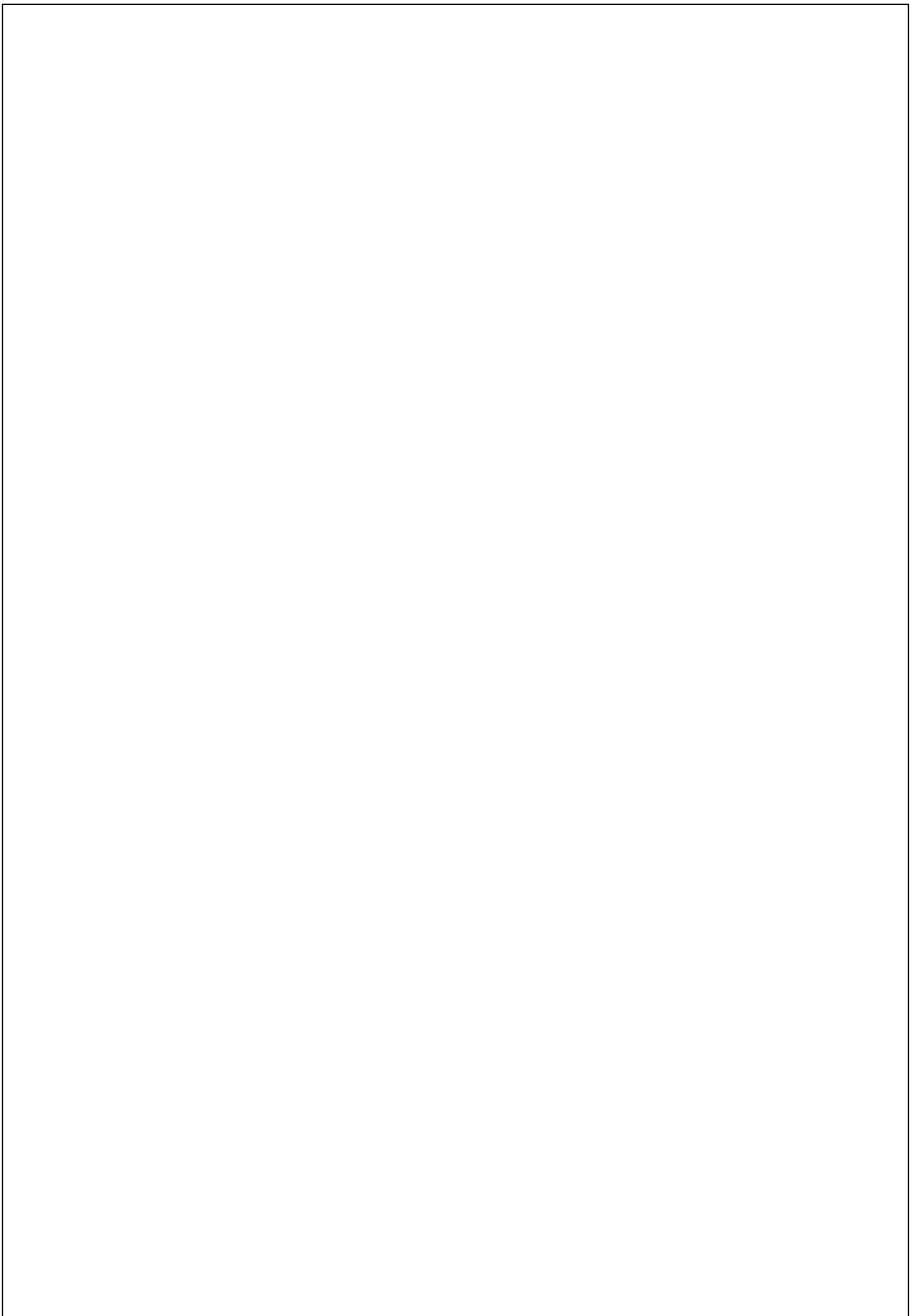
*the
go home blacks
refugees
dirty immigrants
asylum seekers
sucking our country dry
niggers with their hands out
they smell strange
savage
messed up their country and now they want
to mess ours up
how do the words
the dirty looks
roll off your backs
maybe because the blow is softer
than a limb torn off*

*or the words are more tender
than fourteen men between
your legs
or the insults are easier
to swallow
than rubble
than bone
than your child body*

*in pieces.
i want to go home,
but home is the mouth of a shark
home is the barrel of the gun
and no one would leave home
unless home chased you to the shore
unless home told you
to quicken your legs
leave your clothes behind
crawl through the desert
wade through the oceans
drown
save
be hunger
beg
forget pride
your survival is more important*

*no one leaves home until home is a sweaty voice in your ear
saying-
leave,
run away from me now
i dont know what i've become
but i know that anywhere
is safer than here*

Warsan Shire





REFERENCES

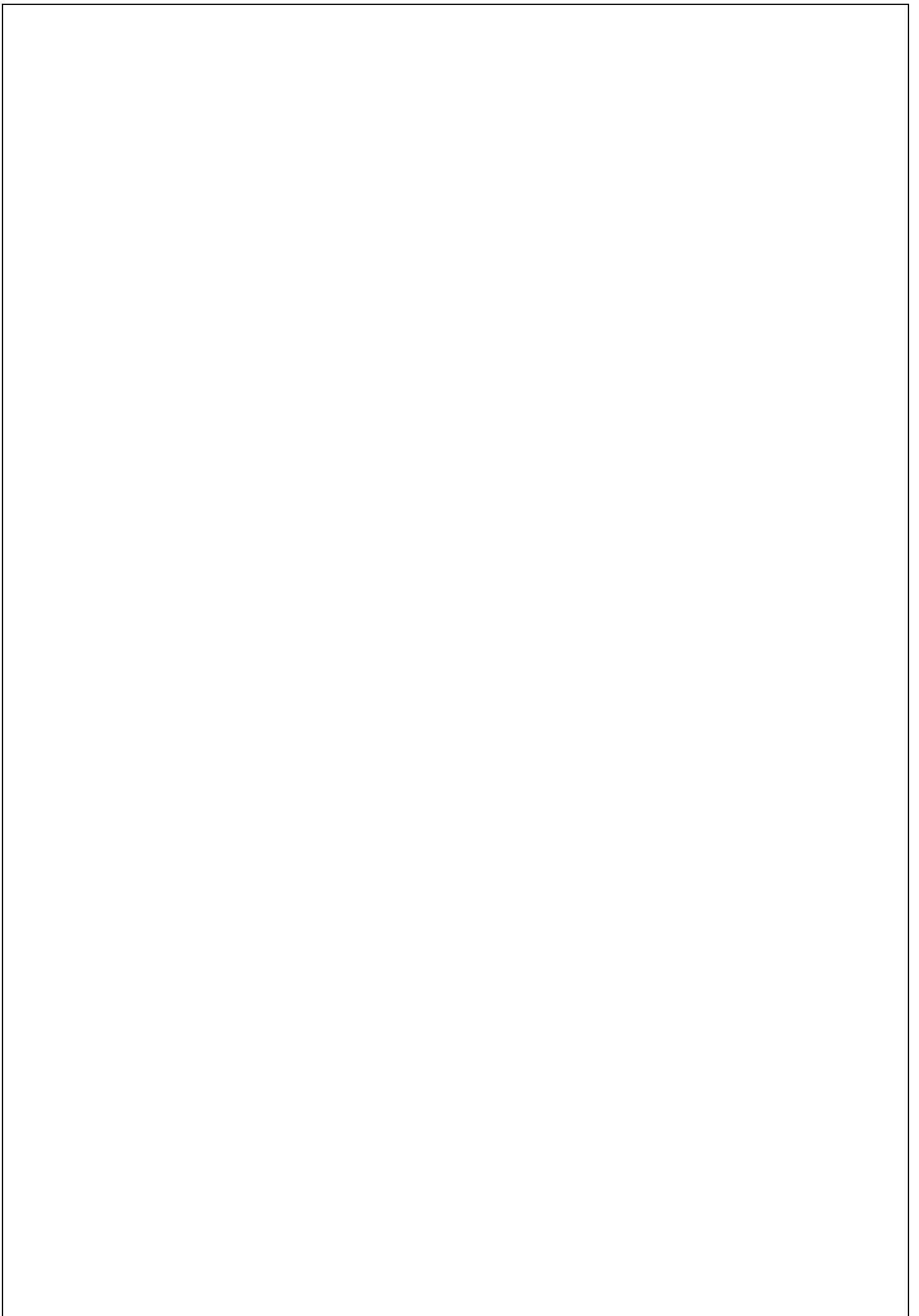
- The stories are written by the Erasmus+ partner school teams after interviewing migrants or refugees.

- The poems :
 - ***“Things We Carry on the Sea”*** by ***Wang Ping***
 - ***<https://www.poets.org>***
 - ***“We Refugees”*** by ***Benjamin Zephaniah***
 - ***<https://benjaminzephaniah.com>***
 - ***“Home ”*** by ***Warsan Shire***
 - ***<https://www.poemhunter.com>***

- The text of ***“ The Book of Unknown Americans”*** by ***Cristina Henriquez,2014***
 - ***<https://www.cristinahenriquez.com>***

- The images:
 - ***<https://www.danielgarciaart.com/immigrats>***
 - ***<http://media.istockphoto.com/illustrations>***
 - ***<https://www.shutterstock.com/>***

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