

Research paper 2024

# Invisible Stories

Shaping common narratives  
of recent European migrations

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# Introduction

1.

# Introduction

Migration forms part of Europeans' everyday reality, with there being a pervasive expectation that migration flows will increase. The same goes for the internal movement of people within the European Union. The Institute for Economics and Peace (09, 2020) predicts that due to climate change and the conflicts arising from it, 1.2 billion people will be forced to migrate by 2050. All of this is leading to an expectation that today's teenagers are likely to live in a Europe whose society has been profoundly altered by what is going on. The fact that the pace of change (in social, ethnic and cultural structures, among others) has dramatically accelerated across Europe, makes the need to provide young people with the knowledge and tools to understand this evolving reality an even more pressing one.

The Invisible Stories (INVIST) project aims to do just that by helping to furnish history, geography and social sciences teachers with the knowledge and skills required to teach engaging and fruitful remote and hybrid lessons about the key issue of contemporary migration in today's Europe, against the backdrop of armed conflict on the European continent, meaning that there is a need, cutting across borders, to improve the level of understanding of the current situation, to build a sense of community and to combat the biases on which – among other things – the information war on the internet is based.

The project explores whether it is possible to offer a single narrative for Belgian, Polish and Spanish teachers or to use a common approach focused on invisible stories to put the phenomenon of migration into perspective. The story of migration is about experiencing life in different countries and by its very nature has a transnational perspective. The common denominator is the perspective of migrants, who rarely feature in the teaching of history or social studies. In addition, the project investigates the question of what it means to be European, as well as knowledge about who the migrants joining European society actually are, given that a shared understanding of the latter is essential with a view to forging a common identity for future European citizens.

This study reflects the research conducted by the partners in the initial stages of the project. This research serves as a potential starting point for the development of educational tools. In the report you will find the results from research on (1) the narratives regarding migration and European identity used that can be found in the media, in particular on social media; (2) school curricula; and (3) teachers' experiences of teaching about migration and European identity. The research partners spoke, too, to a wide range of experts to gain a deeper understanding of the issues at hand. These insights are presented in this research report as well.

INVIST aspires to offer an educational response to teachers' needs when teaching about migration and European identity that is shared by more than one country. The aim is to shape this response by adopting a unique methodology, looking through the lens of invisible stories. This should lead to a toolbox which offers fresh insights and approaches, instead of one simply replicating initiatives that already exist. As you will see in this report, the research partners have high hopes that they will manage to develop such an educational toolbox.

# **Teaching pupils about migration and European identity**

2.

# Teaching pupils about migration and European identity

2.1

## Contextual outline

Young people come into contact with issues related to migration and Europe (and European identity) in various ways, with narratives about these topics being conveyed by, for example, traditional media, social media networks, the education system and personal experiences (e.g. travel or social contacts in their everyday lives). Therefore, before developing educational tools, it is important to see which narratives are reaching school pupils and to explore how they are doing so. In this way we can get an idea of the dominant perspectives young people may have regarding migration and European identity.

In order to appreciate the results presented below, it is worth understanding the situation in the three countries (Belgium, Poland and Spain) where the research was conducted. Pupils in these countries live in different circumstances and in different social and societal contexts, all of which affect their views on the topics covered by the INVIST-project. For this reason, this chapter starts with a short contextual outline for each country.

2.1.1

### Belgium

The latest data regarding pupils with a migration background in Belgium's education system comes from the academic year 2022–2023.<sup>1</sup> Given that education in Belgium is organised differently depending on the part of the country, the data will be presented separately for different parts of the country.

#### Flanders

In Flanders, a total of 131,646 pupils had a nationality other than Belgian, while 1,033,986 pupils had Belgian citizenship. Non-Belgian nationalities accounted for 11% of the total number of enrolled pupils in the school population, with more pupils holding the nationality of another EU Member State than nationalities from outside the European Union (72,988 and 58,658 respectively).

1. Source of data for Flanders and Brussels: [www.onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/](http://www.onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/) (Flemish Ministry of Education)



In terms of percentage distribution, the following picture emerges:

<b>Province</b>	<b>Percentage of pupils with a non-Belgian nationality</b>
Antwerp	14.7%
Limburg	13.4%
East Flanders	9.9%
West Flanders	8.6%
Flemish Brabant	8.1%

Antwerp and Limburg are border provinces, and so it is perhaps no surprise that they have the highest percentages of pupils with a non-Belgian nationality, given that there is often a lot of cross-border mobility between these areas and the neighbouring countries. This assumption is backed up by the fact that the percentage distributions are different if we only consider pupils with a non-EU nationality. This distribution is as follows:

<b>Province</b>	<b>Percentage of pupils with a non-EU nationality</b>
Antwerp	6.7%
East Flanders	4.7%
West Flanders	4.4%
Limburg	4.1%
Flemish Brabant	3.9%

The provinces of Antwerp and East Flanders emerge as the main geographical areas in this regard. This could be due to Flanders' biggest cities being there and – as you will find later in the report – migrant populations tending to be concentrated in such cities.

## Brussels

In all, 52,760 pupils were enrolled in the metropolitan region of Brussels, of whom 12% held a non-Belgian nationality and around 7.5% of pupils had a non-EU nationality, meaning that schools in Brussels were more diverse than those across Flanders or Wallonia.

## Wallonia

It proved difficult to obtain data on the number of pupils with non-Belgian nationalities enrolled in Wallonia. The Belgian statistical office (Statbel) could not supply this data because it only gathers data on those aged 15 and over. While detailed relevant data was available for Flanders and Brussels, the desired data could not be provided by the Walloon sources consulted either. Therefore, more general statistics are given for the situation in Wallonia.<sup>2</sup>

2. Source of data: [www.iweeps.be/](http://www.iweeps.be/) (Walloon Institute for Evaluation, Prospective and Statistics (IWEPS))

Wallonia, like Flanders, consists of five provinces. There are significant differences between these provinces when it comes to the share of inhabitants with non-Belgian citizenship (on 1 January 2023), as can be seen in the table below:

Province	Percentage of residents with non-Belgian nationality
Hainaut	12.6%
Liège	11.4%
Walloon Brabant	10.8%
Luxemburg	9.8%
Namur	5.8%

Most migrants in Wallonia are of European origin. The leading countries of origin are Italy (90,728), France (86,679), Romania (18,149) and Spain (17,667), with the main non-EU countries being Morocco (17,423) and Ukraine (11,444).

Between 2018 and 2023, there was positive net migration (i.e. there were more people arriving than leaving) in all the major cities and sparsely populated rural municipalities hosting refugee reception centres. Only 39 of the 262 municipalities have negative net migration. This is not to say, though, that the impact of migration is felt to the same extent everywhere. The differences between municipalities remain substantial, with only slight increases in migrant populations in many locations, and major rises in a few others.

To conclude, it is likely that pupils in areas with a higher proportion of migrants are in contact more often with people from different backgrounds than pupils in areas with low or moderate net migration. We can assume that this is also the case for the school context and for their social contacts at school and in the classroom.

## 2.1.2

### Poland<sup>3</sup>

In Poland, according to data from the Educational Information System (SIO), 222,500 foreign children were attending public (i.e. state) and private schools in 2022–2023. This number increased almost fivefold in the space of two school years, as you can see in the table below:

School year	Number of foreign pupils
2020–2021	48,500
2021–2022	67,000
2022–2023	222,500

A vast majority (around 71%) of these pupils attended secondary school. Given the Russo–Ukrainian war which broke out in February 2022 and that Ukraine and Poland are

3. Source of data: [www.nik.gov.pl/en/](http://www.nik.gov.pl/en/) (Supreme Audit Office)

neighbouring countries, this data obviously indicates that there are large numbers of Ukrainian pupils enrolled in Polish schools. However, even before the war started, Ukrainians were the biggest group of foreign pupils in Poland.

The table below sets out the leading countries of origin in terms of percentages of foreign pupils attending Polish schools:

<b>Country of origin</b>	<b>% of foreign pupils in 2020</b>	<b>% of foreign pupils in 2021</b>	<b>% of foreign pupils in 2022</b>
Ukraine	74.8%	73.5%	88.3%
Belarus	5%	8%	5%
Russia	3%	3%	1%
Vietnam	2%	1%	0.4%
Bulgaria	1%	1%	0.3%

According to the Service of the Republic of Poland (the website of government agencies in Poland), the largest numbers of pupils from Ukraine can be found in schools in the voivodeships, i.e. provinces, of Mazowieckie (by a substantial margin), Śląskie, Dolnośląskie and Wielkopolskie; the fewest are in Podlaskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie and Świętokrzyskie (status in April 2024):

<b>Voivodeship</b>	<b>Total number of pupils from Ukraine</b>
Mazowieckie	32,208
Śląskie	20,563
Dolnośląskie	20,103
Wielkopolskie	19,231
Małopolskie	15,846
Pomorskie	13,653
Łódzkie	11,847
Zachodnio-pomorskie	9,213
Kujawsko-pomorskie	7,387
Lubuskie	6,807
Lubelskie	5,308
Opolskie	4,485
Podkarpackie	4,370
Świętokrzyskie	3,253

<b>Voivodeship</b>	<b>Total number of pupils from Ukraine</b>
Warmińsko-mazurskie	3,172
Podlaskie	2,572

This data offers an insight into the distribution of the main group of young people of a foreign origin in Poland, but for administrative reasons it should be interpreted with some caution. The records may not be complete due to various administrative problems relating to age and citizenship data. On top of this, it should be remembered that some Ukrainian children of school age – and it is not known how large this actually group is – are not enrolled in Polish schools because they are continuing their education in a Ukrainian school remotely from Poland. This is a group of children who, by design, are not part of the Polish education system and whose number cannot be estimated.

2.1.3

## Spain

At the time of writing, the latest data from Spain comes from the academic year 2022–2023. That year, 999,781 foreign pupils were enrolled in Spanish schools. Following a noticeable increase in the number of pupils from Africa there, they accounted for 30% of the total, making it the primary region of origin. Other major regions of origin included other EU Member States (24%) and South America (21%), which is maybe unsurprising given Spain's membership of the European Union and the country's close ties with a number of nations in South America.

On average, migrants made up 10.4% of pupils in Spanish schools. The regions with the most foreign pupils were as follows:

Balearic Islands	17.6%)
Catalonia	15.7%
Valencia	15.5%
Aragon	15.1%
Murcia	15.1%
La Rioja	14.1%
Madrid	13.3%)

Comunidad Foral de Navarra (11.9%), Melilla (11.4%) and the Canary Islands (10.9%) were also above the national average.

The big differences between the various regions also seem to be leading to differences in attitudes of Spanish pupils towards their peers with a migration background. Studies suggest a higher level of negative attitudes in regions with lower migrant populations (e.g. Salamanca: 14% of pupils) than in regions with a larger migrant community (e.g. Murcia: 6% of pupils). Therefore, this difference in attitude might be due to fear and apprehensiveness of the unknown.

## 2.2

## Gathering data

The material in this report was collected in two ways: by desk research and by focus groups or individual in-depth interviews.

## 2.2.1

### Desk research

The desk research consisted of several elements:

In all three participating countries (Belgium, Poland and Spain), a media analysis was conducted to identify which narratives on migration and European identity reach young people. The analysis focused both on social media content on platforms frequently used by young people and on traditional media.

School curricula in the three countries were analysed. The partners examined which events and contemporary migration processes are mentioned and addressed in these curricula. They also looked at how and the extent to which European identity features in these curricula.

Market research was conducted to take stock of the tools for migration and European identity already in place for teachers in the three countries.

## 2.2.2

### Focus groups and individual in-depth interviews

In each participating country, in-depth interviews were conducted with teachers identified in the analysis of school curricula as addressing migration and European identity. To get a representative picture of teaching experiences for these subjects, the Belgian, Polish and Spanish partners each applied the following criteria when selecting respondents:

- Participants teach a range of school subjects. There must be a representative distribution across at least geography, history and citizenship/social studies.
- Participants come from various regions and teach at different schools.
- Participants teach pupils of different ages (preferably the third grade of primary education or across the various grades of secondary education).
- Participants have varying levels of experience in the education sector. Therefore, preferably both very experienced teachers and teachers who are still new, or relatively new, to the field will participate.

A list of the questions asked can be found in **Annex 1**.

In **Belgium**, 15 teachers (10 from French-language schools and 5 from Dutch-language schools in Belgium's various Communities/Regions) participated in the survey. The research team held individual interviews with each of them in November 2023. An overview of the subjects which the various teachers teach and specialise in is given below. One of the participants no longer works as a teacher but as a geography teaching inspector. For convenience, though, they are still included in the overview of geography teachers below.

Subject	Number of teachers*
Citizenship	4
Dutch	1
Economics	1
Geography	6
History	5
Human Sciences	3
Philosophy	1
Religious Education	1
Social Sciences	1

\* The participating teachers often teach more than one school subject. This explains the discrepancy between the numbers mentioned in this table and the total number of surveyed teachers (15).

The participants teach pupils of different ages. The Belgian research team only interviewed teachers working in secondary education: of the 15 teachers, 5 teaching the first grade, 3 teaching the second grade and 11 teaching the third grade. As you will have noticed, there is a slight discrepancy between the number mentioned here and the total number of surveyed teachers. This is due to the fact that the participating teachers sometimes teach more than one grade of secondary education.

In **Poland**, nine teachers in all participated in two separate focus groups, held on 14 and 17 November 2023. The teachers come from various parts of Poland, namely Warsaw, Mińsk Mazowiecki, Gdynia, Cieszyn, Kościerzyna, Władysławowo, Pisz, Chełmek and Trzebnica. The table below sets out the various subjects that these teachers teach and the number of teachers for each subject who participated in the focus groups.

Subject	Number of teachers*
Geography	5
History	5
Social Studies	5

\* The participating teachers often teach a combination of the subjects mentioned. This is why the numbers in the table add up to 15, while there were 9 teachers in the focus groups.

In **Spain**, the research team held in-depth interviews lasting between 40 and 60 minutes with a total of six teachers. All these teachers teach geography and history. Some of them also teach additional subjects, such as social studies, art or languages. The interviewed teachers work at both primary (1 teacher) and compulsory or post-compulsory secondary school levels (5 teachers).

The table below also distinguishes between the types of schools where the Spanish teachers work.

<b>School type</b>	<b>Number of teachers*</b>
Public (i.e. state) school	4
Colegio concertado (semi-private school)	2

As the teachers predominantly come from smaller towns and villages, the assembled knowledge says something not only about the educational context in cities, but also about that of other regions.

## 2.2.3

### Methodological remarks

As regards the data in this report, we should make the following methodological remarks:

1. The research teams are aware that no definitive conclusions concerning migration and European identity can be drawn from the research presented here. For practical reasons, the number of interviewed teachers is limited and therefore may not be fully representative. However, the findings can be seen as key indicators to guide the teams in developing an educational toolbox for the topics already mentioned.
2. Any consideration of education, politics and in some cases even views on societal challenges in Belgium has to take account of the country's federal structure. Belgium has a number of Communities, foremost among them the (Dutch-speaking) Flemish Community and the (French-speaking) Wallonia-Brussels Federation. At several points in this report, a distinction will be made between these Communities in order to address possible differences within Belgium. This will only be done where relevant (e.g. for the analysis of the curricula). When no specific reference is made to one of the Communities, the Belgian data refers to the whole country.

## 2.3

## Media analysis

An extensive media analysis was conducted by all the research teams with a view to establishing which narratives on migration reach young people and pupils who will be making use of the tools arising from the INVIST-project. From this analysis, the teams found that, in line with global trends, the young people in all three countries are intensive users of social media. TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube are among the most widely used social media networks among young people. Social media are a key source of information – indeed one that is much more important than traditional media – for young people in Belgium, Poland and Spain alike. Information on social media is regarded as more authentic than official news and also more attractive. It is more tailored, in terms of both content and format, to many pupils' communication needs. Therefore, the media analysis focused in particular on these platforms. However, as you can see below, some insights can also be gleaned from other media outlets or communications (whether involving text or images).

Given that there seems to be a lot of overlap in the findings from the various participating countries, the results are grouped thematically, albeit accompanied by any country-specific remarks where appropriate.

## 2.3.1

## Two dominant narratives

Migrants are talked about in any many different ways across media outlets, but bringing all the data together, it is clear that two dominant narratives appear to occur more frequently than others.

On the one hand, there is often a **focus on the negative aspect of migration. Migrants and refugees are presented as a great danger.** They are perceived as a danger to the economy and the welfare system, for example because they are seen as taking the jobs of people from the host country. The narrative here is that migrants receive preferential treatment, with the government supposedly giving them the earth, so to speak, while neglecting other members of society. Anger, a feeling of injustice about the supposed benefits and privileges being granted to asylum seekers and concerns about population growth as a result of migration are key issues for those who propagate this narrative.

In addition, there is often talk of a security issue posed by the large influx of migrants, who are perceived as a danger to the stability of the country in question. This negative narrative, which is often used in, and spread by, radical-right political messaging, can also be seen in the terminology for discussing immigration, with the frequent use of military terminology and an accusatory discourse fuelling prejudice and the formation of stereotypes, as words like 'invasion' and 'conquest' and other negative terms are often bandied about to describe the phenomenon. In addition, the research from Spain shows that the word 'immigration' is associated with approximately 60 words carrying negative connotations, including 'battle', 'crisis', 'exploitation', 'war', 'hostility', 'problem' and 'worry'. This reinforces the negative framing of immigration in a substantial swathe of the media.

On the other hand, the second dominant narrative seems to be diametrically opposed to the one described above. In this narrative, **migrant groups are portrayed as passive agents, victims of criminal organisations and people smugglers, or recipients of assistance.** It is the narrative of the 'vulnerable migrant', which tries to evoke compassion for migrants and which aims to raise awareness of the conditions they face. Shocking images may be used and the dangers of the migrants' journey, their courage and determination and the need for solidarity and humanitarian aid are often emphasised in communications from this perspective. This narrative frequently puts African migrants centre stage. This focus on migration between Africa, on the one hand, and the Mediterranean region, continental Europe and the United Kingdom, on the other, is a recurring theme across various media outlets. However, the driving forces behind migration are often neglected.

## 2.3.2

## Other narratives

There are also other, less frequent narratives. A few examples of these narratives are given below. This is by no means designed to be an exhaustive list, but aims to simply reflect the findings of the research teams during the media analysis.



A positive narrative encountered by the Polish research team involved several examples on social media of a narrative in **which migration was discussed in a light-hearted and entertaining manner, for example by highlighting the difficulties in learning a language or amusing cultural differences**. This humorous way of talking about migrant or refugee experiences is particularly popular with the Polish public, and people who do not take themselves too seriously are seen as 'normal' and 'one of us'. Migrants or refugees who are popular online and whose profiles are widely followed are often people who have 'made it' economically. Social media channels of those talking about their economic travails or underprivileged circumstances attract fewer comers.

The Belgian and Spanish teams identified a narrative focusing on the 'reality of migrants' lives'. Rather than being light-hearted or entertaining, this **deals with the supposed 'reality' of migrants facing difficult conditions and reactions of activists from the radical right**. Some videos also reveal the disillusionment that some migrants feel about Europe. These videos, which often get a lot of views, explore in particular the difficulties of feeling out of place, working in low-paid jobs, encountering racism and longing for one's home country. Many of the comments on these videos feature praise for the speakers' resilience. However, it is important to note that these videos only show a small part of the reality and are not representative of the full range of migrants' experiences and challenges in Europe.

Some more nuanced or 'neutral' narratives also appear to be circulating. In Spain, for example, a substantial proportion of posts offer practical advice. These posts include content created by migrants themselves and legal experts delving into Spain's immigration laws. They serve as a valuable resource for individuals from Latin America considering a move to Spain. In Belgium, this type of content addresses the complexity of the migration issue, looking at many dimensions, ranging from the difficulties faced by national and European policymakers in coordinating the approach to migration through to the ethical dilemmas that can arise when making decisions on whether to accept or reject migrants' asylum applications. Sometimes this content also provides a platform for the voice of those involved to be heard, as in the case of a migrant from Senegal who provides a critical reflection on youth migration from their country.

Some educational content is also available on YouTube, albeit less commonly. This offers, for instance, a factual explanation of migration flows, drawing on maps, tables and references to European history. The aim here is to put migration trends into perspective. Population ageing in the European Union is also mentioned, with migration being flagged as a potential positive contributor to resolving this problem, and these more detailed analyses sometimes raise concerns about certain developments. However, it is worth pointing out that some educational content only reaches a very limited audience, precisely because of it being fact-based.

### 2.3.3

## A one-sided picture of migration

Apart from the narratives used, it is striking that the diversity of the various forms of migration is not always discussed. Take for example the traditional media: although they frequently discuss migration in a neutral, factual way and from a human-interest

perspective, this information is often limited to transit migrants, forced migration, illegal migration and the reception of asylum seekers and the political discussions surrounding the migration crisis across Europe and in the individual EU Member States. Other forms of migration, such as legal and voluntary migration or migration for study purposes, are hardly discussed.

As already mentioned, there also often seems to be a focus on migrants who come to Europe from Africa (particularly North Africa)/countries in the Global South. It remains the case that too little attention seems to be paid to migration between and to other regions (such as the United States, Southeast Asia and Saudi Arabia).

Moreover, the vast majority of content about migrants does not involve them getting a say of their own. Migrants rarely seem to be given a platform to tell their own stories, which means that not much space is afforded to their personal stories and eyewitness accounts of migrants and those of other people directly involved. Their absence from the relevant media limits others' understanding of the experiences and perspectives of migrants, particularly women and children.

#### 2.3.4

### **An anecdotal and businesslike approach**

The media analysis reveals that a lot of the media (in particular, the traditional media) use an anecdotal approach when it comes to migration. That is, they mainly link their reporting to events, e.g. migrants being intercepted on the Moroccan coast, the deaths and injuries following two boats capsizing near Lampedusa, a baby's body being discovered on a beach, and migrant women dying in forest fires in Greece. Their approach is not only anecdotal, but sometimes also businesslike. The reporting tends to focus on actual events and some journalists even construct a utilitarian vision of migration, focusing on its benefits, or lack of them, for the host country.

This method of reporting could be one of the reasons for the frequent lack of attention given to certain critical migration-related issues in the media. Examples include the underlying inequalities and problems related to colonisation, neo-colonialism, ecological disasters and wars that contribute to migration – but also, for instance, the experiences of women domestic service workers, allegedly discriminatory and racist police action or information on the economic contributions of migrants. In other words, the reporting is incidental and does not investigate in more depth issues such as racism or inequality.

#### 2.3.5

### **Hashtag analysis**

The above impressions all come from analysing the content of media communications. However, it is also worth looking beyond only the content of videos and articles, which is why, in addition to the content analysis, the Polish and Spanish research teams conducted an analysis of popular hashtags that are often used for content about migration and refugees. With these hashtags, social media users can quickly attract attention to large amounts of individual content and thus influence how the issue is discussed online.

In **Poland**, the hashtags used on TikTok (and similar hashtags on Instagram) were examined. The most commonly used terms there were as follows:

Hashtag	Number of views
#border	442.4 million
#bialorus (= #belarus)	1152.9 million
#immigrants	128.6 million
#refugees	70.7 million
#ukraincywpolsce (= #ukrainiansinpoland)	54.2 million
#migrants	47.5 million
#ukrainians	23.8 million
#greenborders	22.3 million
#10.8 million	10.8 million
#crisismigration	4.6 million
#borderazbialorus (= #borderwithbelarus)	6.1 million
#murnagranica (= #borderwall)	532,500

Most popular hashtags on migration-related issues on TikTok in Poland – 2023

The hashtags on TikTok seem more reliable, because on Instagram the tagged content is not always related directly to what is indicated in the hashtag. The content found using the hashtags illustrates the polarised nature of the issue. An example of this is the hashtag #ukraincy (= #ukrainians). There is a lot of content showing compassion for Ukrainians in Poland, but the material posted under this hashtag mainly perpetuates stereotypes and preconceptions/prejudices. This reinforces existing divisions and makes the hashtag a magnet for disinformation.

In **Spain**, migration-related hashtags do not dominate the list of 100 most-used hashtags, but the Spanish team managed to create a list of hashtags that are most often linked to words such as 'migration', 'migrant' and 'immigrant'. The research revealed that the most popular hashtags were as follows:

TikTok	Instagram
#immigrantlife, #immigrantroute, #europeanunion, #stopimmigration, #legalimmigration, #irregularimmigration	#venezuela, #madrid, #lawyers, #passport, #legaladvice, #venezolanosenmadrid (= #venezuelansinmadrid), #rights, #nationalities, #bolivia, #caracas, #violence, #escape, #siria (= #syria), #refugees, #startingfromzero

Most popular hashtags on migration-related issues on TikTok and Instagram in Spain – 2023

These hashtags can be divided into three overarching themes, of which we have already seen the first two above:

- Practical guidance on migration
- The reality for migrants
- Viral content and sensationalism

The content that goes viral is frequently about more than just practical advice and personal stories. Some videos provide impartial updates, but there are also populist videos that are clearly designed to be sensationalist. This content seems to focus mainly on those arriving in Europe from Africa.

2.3.6

### **Misinformation**

Misinformation remains a major challenge, and there is still a real need for critical analysis of any information. A lot of content is posted online and much of this is based on fear of and aversion to refugees or migrants, despite the fact that social media also feature activist, educational and positive content and them being a potential public forum for migrants to talk about their circumstances.

Moreover, stories told first-hand by migrants and refugees reveal an extremely diverse picture when it comes to these individuals, viewed from various angles. It is thus worthwhile to draw pupils' attention to the complexity of migration as a phenomenon, in contrast to the one-sided approach which is often applied by the media (see section 2.3.3).

2.3.7

### **Migrants on television and in streaming series, films and books**

While the main focus of the media analysis was on social and traditional media, the Spanish research team also had a look at the portrayal of migrants on television and streaming series, films and books. Here is a brief rundown of the findings:

- On Spanish television and in series on streaming platforms, migrants are more frequently associated with illegal work and crime than Spanish characters.
- The majority of migrant characters on television and in series tend to represent existing social stereotypes. Their nationality or race is typically the primary – and often the only – character trait emphasised as important to the plot. This results in characters lacking the depth of non-migrant characters.
- While themes related to migration and European identity are not prominent tropes in contemporary literature for young people, a few books do deal with these topics. In these books, a migrant is often the main character, with the narrative frequently unfolding from their point of view. Whether it is an Afghan refugee or a Spanish teenager in Paris, the stories evoke universal feelings of uncertainty and homesickness and the sense of being an outsider in a new environment. The stories often portray a transformative process, touching on themes such as acceptance and the discovery of a new-found sense of belonging. In short, authors frequently depict migration as a process of looking for a better life. In some works, history and historical migration also play a key role.

2.3.8

## Conclusion

In general, the media that target – or are used by – young people offer a highly stereotypical and superficial image of migration. The media used by this target group tend to focus on short, light-hearted content and so do not familiarise their audience with the ins and outs of this issue. The image of migration that young people encounter in the media and through social media is often (but not always) negative and full of stereotypes, anti-immigration sentiments and politicised discourse. This can feed preconceptions/prejudices and misconceptions about migrants and their experiences.

Most conspicuously, this all shows that young people can easily be exposed to caricatures, superficial content and even narratives involving fear and rejection, although there are also other less prominent (less negative or more informative) narratives.

2.4

## Curriculum analysis

Developers of tools on migration (and European identity) need to take into account the target group that will use these tools. This means looking at what they want and need. A curriculum analysis was carried out to identify which teachers will use the new tools. The research partners examined which events and contemporary migration processes are mentioned and addressed in these curricula, as well as when this is done and by whom. They also examined how European identity is covered by these curricula and how much attention is paid to it there.

2.4.1

### Age of the pupils

The first conclusion to be drawn from the analysis is that teaching about migration and Europe seems to mainly take place in secondary education. Although there are significant differences between Belgium, Poland and Spain in terms of how the education system is organised, in each of these countries pupils aged between 12 and 16 (or even 18) years old are taught about these matters.

In **Belgium** (Flanders), there is specific migration-related content for those aged 14–16, but migration- and European identity-related issues are addressed at several other key junctures as well. For example, in Wallonia and Brussels (French-speaking education), pupils are taught about these topics in the second, fifth and sixth years of secondary school (pupils aged 13–14, 16–17 and 17–18 respectively).

In **Poland**, there are migration-related materials for pupils of different ages, at least for those in the final years of primary school (namely those aged 12–14) and for pupils throughout secondary school (pupils aged 15–19).

Finally, in **Spain**, the curriculum is flexible in nature, rather than being strictly defined with substantive goals set in stone that have to be achieved by the pupils. Teachers in secondary school (pupils aged 12–16) have the most flexibility (and therefore scope) to teach about migration, while post-compulsory secondary education (pupils aged 16–18) provides the

opportunity to really delve deeper into the subject. However, this can be challenging due to the limited time available, as everything in this type of education is geared towards preparing for the final examinations, meaning that there is less scope to cover this issue in that part of the system.

While most of the teaching about such matters is found in secondary education, migration- and Europe-related issues are also addressed at primary school level. In Belgium, in both Dutch- and French-speaking education, pupils are introduced to these topics at an early age. In Poland, primary school pupils learn about national and ethnic minorities and migrant groups living in Poland (including refugees), about where migrant groups are concentrated and about the rights of ethnic minority groups.

## 2.4.2

### **School subjects**

In the section above, we established the ages at which pupils are taught about migration, but the curricula also indicate the school subjects where this topic is covered. In this, there are a lot of similarities between the three countries.

In each country, teaching hours are dedicated to migration in the geography curriculum. In fact, in Poland, most of the migration-related content can be found in geography teaching material. The issue is addressed in sections on socio-economic geography (including the diversity of demographic structures) and in a discussion of contemporary global issues.

The second school subject that covers migration is history. Historical aspects, such as migration flows through time and country-specific historical events linked to migration, are examined there.

The third major thematic area dealing with migration is social sciences and citizenship education. Moral and ethical aspects (such as openness to other cultures, stereotypes and discrimination) and social aspects (challenges of migration from a social perspective) are examined, as are the causes of migration flows and the direction of these flows in the contemporary world.

As well as being addressed in the school subjects mentioned above, migration is covered in other classes in particular countries. For instance, in Belgium, the moral and ethical aspects are also broached in philosophy/ethics lessons and the economic perspective on migration is covered in economics (an optional subject). In general, though, the curricula on migration are multidisciplinary and the theme is incorporated into a variety of school subjects, including languages and sustainability. Yet another approach can be found in Spain, where teachers have the ability to cover topics of interest in additional teaching hours, known in Spanish as *tutorías* (tutoring sessions). Teachers can choose to devote some of this time to migration if they think that this is an important issue for their pupils.

## 2.4.3

### **Different approaches**

It is important to underline the different approaches adopted by the curricula in the various educational systems.

In **Belgium**, as we have seen above, the curricula encompass content-related guidelines. In addition, they cover social skills. Key components include promoting respect for diversity, constructively discussing social issues and nurturing a sense of identity that takes into account multiple layers, such as biological and cultural influences, among others. However, given that the programmes are not very detailed, it seems that migration is often discussed alongside many other topics in different school subjects, rather than being explored in depth as a standalone issue. This approach may leave students with a superficial understanding of an important global issue.

In **Poland**, too, the curricula include guidelines on content. Additionally, though, the previous Polish Minister of Education and Science recommended certain publications discussing the migration issue for a subject called 'history and the present'. These schoolbooks issued by publisher Nowa Era were quite controversial, as they describe the phenomenon from a sceptical – and sometimes selective and often critical and subjective – viewpoint. However, schools were free to use other available teaching material. Subsequently, the new Minister of Education announced that the subject would be replaced by 'civic education', with the textbooks being changed accordingly.

As mentioned above, **Spain** has a very flexible curriculum. It is mainly focused on the acquisition of skills, and teachers are responsible for working towards developing these competencies in their pupils. They often compile their own teaching materials (with the assistance of their school where applicable).

## 2.4.4

## The place of European identity in the curricula

European identity is not a central issue in the various countries' curricula. In fact, it is only touched upon rarely or to a very limited extent. If and when there are lessons on European themes, the focus is more on (factual) knowledge of the EU instead of discussing European identity.

In Dutch-speaking schools in **Belgium**, teaching about Europe starts in the third grade of primary education (pupils aged 10–12). Pupils are provided with basic knowledge about what the EU is and how it affects Belgium and learn about Belgium's place in Europe. In Flemish secondary education, lessons on Europe are mainly linked to the subjects history and geography. While Europe is addressed, this only happens in a fairly limited way. Whether or not it is discussed extensively depends on the teachers' interests, current events and whether the school has a culture that is oriented towards European matters.

There are few references to Europe or the EU in the curricula/programmes of Belgium's French-speaking education system. In primary school, only the geographical dimension of Europe is explored. During secondary education the themes are discussed mainly in history and geography, but some more specific areas (the construction of the EU, political institutions, etc.) also feature in subjects like economics, social sciences, philosophy and citizenship.<sup>4</sup>

In **Poland**, European themes are not a significant part of the curricula. From the core curriculum it does not appear that pupils are expected to develop a European identity and

4. European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2021). *Learning about the EU: European topics and school curricula across EU Member States*, pp. 38–44.

citizenship at school; primary schools focus on the communities closest to the pupils, such as family, peer group, small homeland, region and country. Although there is content about Europe and Poland and about Poles in Europe at secondary school, it only features sporadically in the curriculum, and this content is limited. In practice, some of the content is not even implemented. In the curriculum, European content can be found mainly in the programmes for geography, history, and knowledge and society. There are some other institutions and organisations who use non-formal educational tools to teach about European issues, but these initiatives are not compulsory or a frequently feature of teaching in Polish schools. This all results in an approach to teaching about Europe which might be considered anachronistic and uninvolved. The fact that it is not a core theme in the school curriculum leads to different numbers of lessons on this topic from one school to another, and so young people leave school with different levels of knowledge about Europe and the European Union.<sup>5</sup>

In **Spain**, not many of the skills that pupils are meant to acquire seem to be related to Europe or the European Union. An example of this is the requirement that an evaluation should be made of whether pupils understand the evolution of the EU and whether they are able to discuss the development and future of the European Union. Other examples include pupils being able to summarise the role of the EU as a political actor and pupils being asked to comment on news and essays on Spain's position in the EU. Notwithstanding these requirements, there is no EU dimension in current teaching and learning practices.

2.4.5

## Conclusion

From the analysis of curricula we can say that the target audience for the tools to be developed are mostly citizenship, history and geography teachers, and in particular within this target group, teachers who teach about migration to the second and third grades of secondary education (pupils aged 14–18). However, given that there are signs that this is sometimes discussed earlier, teachers must also have the opportunity to use materials about Europe starting from the first grade of secondary school and the third grade of primary school. Given that the few references to Europe also seem to be concentrated within the same range of subjects, this conclusion also applies to the tools to be developed on the subject of European identity.

2.5

## Market research

In addition to the research, market research was carried out to explore existing tools and educational initiatives about migration and European identity available to teachers.

The results of this research show that many tools about migration and migrant stories are available. Some tools are used by the interviewed teachers in their classrooms, as will be mentioned later in this report. There are already board games, role-playing games, structured debate formats and even digital tools developed by professionals in the field. It is challenging to compete with this offering, given, among other things, the quality of

5. SOS network of social organisations



the existing tools. This is particularly the case in Belgium and Spain. In Poland, there currently appear to be fewer tools available to teach about migration, although teachers there do already have some resources they can use in this regard.

In terms of European identity, the reality is very different. Here it is very striking that there seems to be a lack – or even an absence – of educational tools in Belgium, Poland and Spain that specifically deal with this Europe-wide issue.

These findings emphasise the importance of finding a way of combining migration and European identity in the same toolbox. In this way, the INVIST-project can provide a fresh perspective and complement the existing range of educational tools regarding migration.

2.6

## Teacher focus groups and in-depth interviews: results

Based on the curriculum analysis, the research teams interviewed several teachers who are among the toolbox's potential target audience. Given the results, the group of interviewees mainly consisted of citizenship, history and geography teachers. More information on these potential future users can be found in section 2.2.2 above, explaining how data was gathered in this stage of the project.

2.6.1

### Approaches of teaching on migration

The ways in which teachers approach the issue of migration in their classes varies greatly from country to country. To address and acknowledge these differences appropriately, the results will be presented for each country separately in this section.

#### Belgium

Migration is addressed in different ways in different school subjects. In history and geography lessons for example, how this issue is discussed depends on the curriculum. History lessons adopt an approach where migration is linked to events in the past and not specifically to current developments, while geography lessons focus on socio-spatial inequalities and current case studies. A similarity between the two subjects, though, is that teachers often rely on textbooks. However, these books are inadequate to be able to properly discuss migration: they are described as inflexible and out of date. As a result, some teachers also look for theoretical information on the internet. Geography also requires a wider variety of sources, including statistics, maps and news stories.

Despite the above remarks, there are sometimes substantial differences between the approaches used by individual history and geography teachers. They each involve their pupils in a different way. Thus, some teachers – especially in history lessons – simply address the points about migration given in the official curriculum, without starting a debate on the issue. Meanwhile, others, such as a geography teacher who took part in the study, watch documentaries, work with cartoons or analyse press articles with their pupils. Finally, a third level of involvement was identified in which teachers place an emphasis on the personal stories of their pupils by encouraging them to interview their grandparents if they have a migration background.

In citizenship-related subjects, discussions about migration are explicitly addressed in connection with norms, values, stereotypes and prejudices/preconceptions. Migration is looked at as part of multifaceted issues such as 'culture and freedom' and 'the political system'. A philosophical approach is expected in the debates that take place. Some teachers do not explicitly talk about migration, but do cover themes such as universal human rights, democracy and politics.

The survey revealed an instructive approach taken by one teacher which involves using personal examples to address societal racism. Pupils are encouraged here to see people first and foremost as individuals. Meanwhile, another teacher introduces the subject of migration in a very adult way, drawing on complex data and on political speeches to target pupils who feel that this issue is not relevant to them.

## Poland

In the focus groups with Polish teachers, specific questions were asked about experiences with teaching about migration. The focus groups addressed how migration relates to the core curriculum, with it being apparent that teachers often approach the issue through the lens of the content of this curriculum. They do not go beyond this framework except for very topical subjects, such as the Israel–Palestine war or the situation at the Belarusian border.

Teachers take on the role of 'explaining the world'. They describe the issue as broadly as possible so that pupils understand the reasons for migration. In this connection they generally show empathy and understanding and a negative attitude towards discussions that are critical of migrants. Although teachers believe that it helps to also cover the emotional aspect of migration, this is not included in the core curriculum. Nor are they sure whether the pupils are ready to deal with 'emotional material'. However, working on emotions and storytelling often go hand in hand, as well as providing a good basis for explaining current events. Historical material, on the other hand, evokes less emotion.

## Spain

Spanish teachers, too, acknowledge that migration is a recurring theme. Among school subjects, this is especially the case for history, where the issue is indirectly mentioned at various times. However, in the second or third year of secondary education, there are also a number of teaching hours within the geography curriculum that are specially dedicated to migration.

As is characteristic of the Spanish education system, these hours are not filled with any particular fixed content. Teachers are not required to talk about certain migration issues; they have complete autonomy and only have to work towards ensuring that the pupils have a number of competencies following these classes. Examples of these are understanding the definitions of migration and refugees or being able to give the reasons for migration. Due to this approach, there are key differences (depending on the character of the teacher, their motivation and the ability to adapt to certain groups of pupils) in what is covered by these lessons. This is typical of the flexibility of the Spanish curriculum, which was discussed in section 2.4.1 above.

When teaching about the issues addressed in this project, teachers use a variety of age-appropriate materials to make their lessons more dynamic. In many Spanish schools, pupils do not have traditional textbooks. Teachers create their own teaching materials, using, for example, aids provided by their school. However, all the surveyed teachers think that it is essential to introduce students to real stories, for example through films, interviews or newspaper headlines. They watch films with their pupils and then have a discussion about them; conduct interviews with people with a migration background; or analyse news stories about migration. Other examples of classroom activities include creative tasks such as making posters or writing a diary from a migrant's perspective.

2.6.2

### **Experience of discussing migration with different age groups**

Among the interviewed teachers, there is no clear consensus about the best age for pupils to be taught about migration. Some teachers indicate that young children and young people who are involved themselves are more receptive. They also think that it is easier to teach about this in primary education, as then you can still shape pupil behaviour.

■ ■ *'Younger pupils are spontaneous, but as they move on to secondary education, they become more prejudiced and are influenced by the 'group effect'.'*

Remark by a Belgian citizenship teacher

However, other teachers think that incorporating the emotional aspect into lessons for this target group is more of a challenge. The curriculum for primary education in Poland, for example, does not include much information, but only some basic details. Moreover, it is also harder to talk about political migration than economic migration with this target group.

Teachers generally seem more comfortable addressing the topic with older groups. It was mentioned by a Belgian teacher of history and geography that the older pupils get, the more receptive they become, with the oldest demonstrating a broader and more developed outlook. Additionally, in Spain, teachers in secondary education (pupils aged 12–16) have the most flexibility (and therefore scope) to teach about migration. As well as the teaching hours dedicated to migration in the geography curriculum, teachers have the chance to cover interesting topics in the additional teaching hours known as tutorías. In post-compulsory secondary education for pupils aged 16–18, there is the opportunity to really delve deeper into the subject. However, this can be challenging due to the limited time available, as everything in this type of education is geared towards preparing for the final examinations, meaning that there is less flexibility here.

2.6.3

### **Prejudices and negative comments**

All this is not to say that teaching about migration in secondary education is always easy. It seems that sometimes the older the pupils, the more negative comments teachers face. This became clear in particular during the focus groups of Polish teachers. They talked about negative comments in this regard already making an appearance from the fourth grade of primary school on, but being more common in grades 6–8. While some of these are made in the classroom, most of them occur in the corridors and in more informal locations. When discussing basic knowledge about migration, there are no negative remarks, but the more

the subject is explored, the more of these there are. The comments can be roughly divided into remarks about skin colour, those about supposed poverty, calls for violence against migrants, and comments about the psychological and physical state of migrants and the reproduction of migrant groups.

Belgian and Spanish teachers, too, come across prejudices among some pupils (usually a minority of the class). According to them, pupils in their countries seem to hold a lot of stereotypes that make it difficult to tackle the issue of migration in class. In Belgium, pupils appear to hold multiple stereotypes and misconceptions: from the supposed economic burden of migration and the image of migrants as competitors for jobs or profiteers to misconceptions concerning the direction and extent of migration flows.

■ ■ *'Ma'am, but they've got phones!' 'They breed like rabbits.'*

Examples of negative comments (a comment about a migrant group's supposed poverty and a remark about the reproduction of such a group) encountered by Polish teachers in their lessons

■ ■ *'They can't empathise because they don't understand why these people are doing what they're doing. When confronted with the idea that they, too, could be a migrant, they laugh: "What, me? No way, I'm staying here!"'*

Remark by a Spanish teacher

In Spain, teachers report that negative comments by pupils can involve open xenophobia or racism in some cases, while in others the latter reflects fear previously expressed by adults around them. While their perspective is not openly negative, **some pupils find it difficult to understand migrants' motivations and humanise their experiences**, as they feel like migration is something abstract that could never happen to them.

Notwithstanding these experiences, it was said that these negative comments are not the fault of the young people themselves, but a result of what they hear at home and in the media. In addition, it was mentioned that it is easier to make negative remarks than positive ones.

#### 2.6.4

### Other challenges in addressing migration

Negative sentiments are mentioned as the main challenge for teachers when addressing migration, but teachers identified some other challenges as well in response to the questions posed by the research team. These challenges relate not only to some more or less 'practical' challenges, but also to the country-specific context in which the lessons on this issue happen.

To start with the most practical issues, teachers mention that finding up-to-date data and material on migration is difficult and time-consuming. While this does represent a real challenge, a much more striking problem is the disinterest that teachers encounter among pupils, and then there are also the difficulties in evoking empathy and managing sensitive issues. The complexity of the migration issue, including the fears and stereotypes associated with it, means that teachers must tread carefully. This cautious approach also comes to the fore when facilitating debates: this can be challenging for teachers, particularly when pupils

express radical views in the presence of members of a marginalised group. One or two Belgian teachers find that in some cases it is more awkward to raise certain issues in a diverse class. This causes them concern when discussing migration and makes them want to avoid potential sensitivities and to keep order in their class. The teachers intentionally avoid migration topics in polarised classes to maintain harmony. However, in other diverse classes, the inclusion of various perspectives can promote mutual learning and mean that stereotypes are dispelled more rapidly. In addition, teachers mention the importance of making clear the distinction between beliefs and facts: to increase nuance and avoid extreme opinions, they think that it is crucial to teach that opinions are beliefs without supporting evidence, particularly against the backdrop of social polarisation. In all this, it sometimes seems a challenge to address information from social media, as migration is also a hot topic online. Some pupils blindly accept information from social media, even though fake news is often spread through these channels. Teachers attempt to counter this, but they do not feel equipped to provide media education and find it difficult to confront misinformation.

Challenges regarding the country-specific context are mentioned in particular by teachers from Poland. As is possibly understandable given the European security situation, the focus groups organised in Poland often digressed to cover Polish teachers' general experiences dealing with migration and working with Ukrainian students. The migration narrative was also often viewed in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war. There was a remarkable change after this war broke out, with teachers focusing their narrative entirely on comparing what things were like before and after the outbreak of the war. Since the conflict began, teachers appear to have:

- discussed migration-related themes less often;
- used modified or more appropriate language to avoid traumatising pupils;
- referred to emotions more often;
- focused on the emotional aspects of migration;
- found it harder to teach about migration.

As a result of the new situation, teachers say that they have to get used to the fact that classes are no longer homogeneous. They feel that they must make a careful assessment of the situation of the pupils they are teaching to ensure that they do not offend anyone. This can be a challenge, given that the interviewed teachers feel that they need to use the right words around migrants. Some words (such as 'war') can evoke negative reactions, which they want to avoid.

Another challenge in Poland is that pupils reportedly find it easier to foster good relations with Ukrainians, Russians and Belarusians than with Muslims or people of another (non-white) skin colour, because of the former groups' cultural and interpersonal proximity (they are often also classmates). However, this impression is not shared by all of the interviewed teachers. Indeed, some have a feeling that the Ukrainians are not always viewed in a positive light. For example, one teacher said that they believed that people from Ukraine and Russia would not get along, and this affected their own behaviour. Other examples of this include:

- the idea that Ukrainian pupils do not get into better schools and do not have the right qualifications (for example, they go to technical schools);
- teachers patronising Ukrainian pupils and also not including them among their 'own' pupils. This is also reflected in how they are spoken about, with, for example, references to 'my Ukrainians' and 'our (Polish) children'. These groups are placed in opposition to each other and indeed the teachers also say that Ukrainian pupils do not integrate and so Polish pupils therefore view them askance.

2.6.5

## Teaching on European identity

While the interviewed teachers have plenty of experience in addressing migration during their classes, the situation seems to be different for European identity. When this theme was brought up during the interviews or focus groups, teachers from the three countries said that European identity is:

- often overlooked in subjects that mainly deal with Europe in a factual way (Belgium);
- not a migration-related issue at all (Poland);
- not something they ever specifically included in their teaching (Spain).

Other aspects regarding Europe are addressed more frequently: lessons about the European Union in general, the rule of law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions or activities related to the International Charlemagne Prize are some examples.

European identity thus does not seem to be a very prominent theme in secondary school lessons. Although it is part of the history curriculum for the sixth year of secondary education, Belgian history teachers normally leave this subject to their geography counterparts. European values should then be addressed in philosophy and religious education lessons. Some teachers also talk about European identity in lessons about superiority and historical leadership. This indirect way of addressing European identity can also be found in Spain: there, teachers recognise that Spanish education has a strong Eurocentric influence, but at the same time they mention that the concept of European identity is only touched upon in various contexts. Last but not least, in Poland, the topic does not seem to be discussed frequently and when it is, it is predominantly in the context of foreign holidays. In rare discussions about this subject, pupils sometimes say that they have experienced some kind of identity conflict between feeling European (saying, for example, 'Me, European?') and Polish at the same time. In addition, teacher themselves tend to refer to European identity as EU identity.

Interestingly, the Spanish research team encountered different views on whether there should be specific lessons about European identity. Some of the Spanish teachers think that there should, because they now share experiences (such as European exchanges) of their own accord, as a way to discuss European identity. One of the teachers is more sceptical and does not consider this feasible on the basis that, in their opinion, European identity does not exist.

■ ■ *'I think we need to consider this, to open pupils up to Europe. I often tell them about my two years in Poland, and I believe that teaching about identity should be based on these exchanges of experiences.'*

Spanish teacher on addressing European identity

■ ■ *'There's no such thing as European identity, so I don't know what such lessons would entail. Europe stands for diversity, and insisting that Europe isn't diverse leads to problems later on.'*

Another Spanish teacher on addressing European identity

2.6.6

## Expressed needs and expectations

Apart from asking teachers about their experiences regarding teaching on migration and European identity, questions were asked to find out what needs they have (with a view to providing the appropriate support) and what expectations when it comes to future educational tools on these subjects.

A frequently mentioned need, expressed across the borders of the various countries, is the need for authentic information. Teachers in all three countries want to refer to real stories and experiences of those involved. Audio testimonies, audiovisual material or people with a migration background sharing their stories in person are mentioned as examples of ways to meet this need. However, care must be taken to ensure that there is no epistemic exploitation, where these people are compelled to educate the 'privileged' group about their experiences. According to some teachers, another way of meeting this need is providing details of asylum-seeker issues. The questions asked by the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons were explicitly mentioned, given that they are thought to help with making things as concrete as possible.

The teachers stress that it is important not only that information is authentic, but also that it is of immediate relevance to the pupils. The teachers seek examples involving pupils' families or country, for instance. The local or regional context is viewed as promoting pupil engagement. The empathy they have for matters close to home was mentioned several times as something that helps to break down barriers. Personal stories and experiences of the pupils themselves, whether or not they are migrants, can make the teaching method an 'activator' and help bring migration closer to their lived experience. The following suggestions for exercises would be relevant here:

- interviewing parents with a migration background;
- pupils researching their own family history in terms of nationalities;
- pupils estimating the percentage of migrants in their own municipality.

■ ■ *'If they see it as something abstract, it won't work. It's like everything in history. Students need a connection. Who wants to learn history? No one. Who wants to learn what their great-grandmother was doing on a school morning? Everyone – or at least some people!'*

Spanish teacher on the need for examples with immediate relevance

To be able to reach pupils who seem resistant to an emotional approach, it is suggested that both specific information and digital media material be provided. Access to topical documentaries, statistics, maps, news, political speeches and cartoons is deemed necessary to make this happen. In Spain, the teachers go even further, asking for the following information to be collected:

- a database of materials and lesson plans;
- an app or a collection of maps to check current or past migration movements;
- a database of freely accessible news stories;
- real-life eyewitness accounts about migration.

The above suggestions are part of what Polish teachers seem to label the 'need to personalise the learning process around migration'. Other elements of this personalised process are the careful assessment of the situation of the pupils and the personalisation of the language used, both of which were mentioned earlier.

In addition to these commonly expressed needs, the teachers from the countries separately came up with some other suggestions. These seem to relate, at least in part, to the education systems the teachers work in. The suggestions are set out for each country, as they will not always be applicable to the context in other countries.

## Belgium

In Belgium, teachers of different subjects often work together during 'project weeks', in which interdisciplinary work is central. Maybe this is the reason why the Belgian interviewees indicate a need for an interdisciplinary approach which will prevent repetition and therefore provide more scope.

Furthermore, they ask for the development of thematic modules which can be used flexibly. They should be adaptable, for example, to different durations (one lesson, with potential follow-ups for interested teachers) and different group sizes. Moreover, the materials should give teachers the chance to respond to pupils' spontaneous needs.

Lastly, the Belgian teachers mentioned what they call the 'ongoing failure' to sufficiently address migration at European level. In many cases, they think that European identity also continues to be overlooked due to a lack of suitable materials and the fact that teachers expect their colleagues to deal with this topic. This might be seen as a call for clearly designed teaching materials on these issues.

## Poland

From the focus groups, it is clear that Polish teachers also seek support with broaching sensitive or complex issues with their pupils. Examples of such issues, mentioned by the teachers themselves, are the war in Syria,<sup>7</sup> the 'Great Emigration',<sup>8</sup> the population boom

7. The war in Syria, often referred to as the 'Syrian Civil War', is a multifaceted and prolonged conflict that began in March 2011.

8. The Great Emigration, also known as the 'Great Polish Emigration' (*Wielka Emigracja*), refers to the significant wave of political emigration from Poland in the 19th century, particularly following the failure of the November Uprising of 1830-1831 against the Russian Empire. This movement primarily involved Polish political, intellectual and military elites who fled the country to avoid persecution and continue their struggle for Polish independence from abroad.



in Africa and the Volhynia Massacre.<sup>9</sup> The last of these is an interesting case in that it is not directly related to migration and yet it is seen as a difficult topic due to the multicultural classes.

Besides this, Polish teachers feel that some topics are not covered in existing educational tools. Issues they mentioned include migration flows from African countries to Europe, the Jewish history of migration, Polish immigrant groups in the United States, Poles in exile (making a link with the current situation), the geography of their own region (which groups were there) and genealogy.

## Spain

In addition to the common points, a majority of the interviewed Spanish teachers agree that a game or a 'fun' solution would be especially useful to address migration and European identity in secondary school classes. When it comes to games, they seem to prefer games where pupils have to make decisions and consider their consequences, such as strategy and role-playing games. In this way, pupils are encouraged to think for themselves about migration, given that this is the most effective way to memorise the material.

2.6.7

## Recommendations for concrete exercises

The Belgian research team also received some recommendations for concrete exercises from the teachers who took part in the survey. Although these recommendations do not exactly qualify as 'needs' (and are therefore not accompanied by a list of similar recommendations from Poland and Spain), they are too interesting not to be mentioned in this report. The types of exercises the teachers would be interested in are:

- assignments and lessons that connect migration with human rights issues and the Geneva Conventions;
- exercises that specifically address challenges related to disinformation and fake news about migration;
- teaching materials about the legislative context, so that teachers can explain migration/immigration legislation and elaborate on the reasons why some migrants stay after their application has been rejected;
- exercises on media literacy, with the emphasis on critical skills and differentiating between beliefs and facts; this media education can be integrated into the citizenship curriculum covering ethics, technology and responsible behaviour;
- exercises about social media and their 'reality';
- exercises about the political context, such as analysing the voting patterns of those supporting the radical right and the rise of the radical and far right in Europe;
- teaching aids that address the lack of empathy, the latent racism and the difficulty that young people experience in expressing themselves critically (but not emotionally);
- games, such as role-playing games, that personalise the issue and make dealing with the subject easier and more light-hearted;
- teaching material into which teachers can incorporate personal examples to address racism in society.

9. The Volhynia Massacre, also known as the Volhynian Slaughter or Volhynia Genocide, refers to a series of brutal and systematic mass killings carried out by Ukrainian nationalists against the Polish population in the Volhynia region (now in Ukraine) during the Second World War. This tragic event was part of a broader campaign of ethnic cleansing aimed at removing Poles from the area and took place against the backdrop of the wider ethnic and political turmoil of that time.

# **A broader view of migration and European identity**

3.

# A broader view of migration and European identity

To be able to develop a theoretical basis which can serve as a starting point when making decisions about the methods and tools to be used for this project, it was necessary to gain a better understanding of the concepts of migration and European identity. Additionally, taking a broader view makes it possible to select issues and focus areas to be covered in the toolbox that will be developed for this project and to acquire an overview of invisible narratives, on the basis of which recommendations can be made for creating a common European vision on teaching about migration.

3.1

## Gathering data

This broader view was derived from interviews and conversations with academics and other experts from a wide range of research areas and (professional) backgrounds. The research teams deemed input from academics and experts necessary to underpin the project and future educational tools with scientific theories and evidence.

3.1.1

### Method of questioning

In order to arrive at an input that is consistent, complementary and comparable across the various countries involved, a joint questionnaire was developed that was used by the Belgian, Polish and Spanish research teams for the interviews and conversations. The questionnaire covered 31 questions, spread across various sub-themes, listed below:

- Migration
- European identity
- The link between migration and European identity
- Pedagogical/didactic approach

An overview of the whole questionnaire can be found in **Annex 2**.

It was not stipulated in advance which expert would be asked which questions. This gave the research teams the scope to ask experts questions about several of the sub-themes mentioned. Where justified, this also allowed for relevant answers from the various experts to be asked in a flexible – yet targeted – way.

An interview report covering each interview or conversation was drawn up. For data privacy reasons, such reports are not provided in the annexes to this research study. However, they are available from the various research teams upon reasonable request.

## 3.1.2

## Data collection in Belgium

The Belgian research team spoke to eight academic experts and conducted an in-depth interview with each of them. The interviews were held in the period December 2023 – January 2024. All the interviews lasted 30–60 minutes and were conducted either face-to-face or via online meetings.

The Belgian team drew up an overview of relevant researchers and academic personnel for each field in order to identify which individuals should be interviewed. As with the survey of teachers, attention was paid to making sure that the experts came from the country's various Regions (Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia) and different language groups (Dutch and French). One or more experts for each field were then approached and asked to participate in the research. Depending on the amount of input provided by the various experts (or any gaps in this), a decision was made to contact, where needed, further experts for additional information.

The final selection of academic experts who were interviewed was as follows:

Name	Organisation	Field(s)	Research area(s)
Anne Morelli	Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)	History	History of minorities; contemporary Christianity and social movements; migrant women
Annie Niessen	University of Liège (ULiège)	Political science	European integration and cooperation; EU law; European politics
François Foret	Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)	Political science	Political sociology; European studies; comparative politics
Imke Brummer	University of Antwerp (UAntwerpen)	Training and education sciences	(Sub-)national and supra-national identity processes
Laurent Licata	Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)	Social and intercultural psychology	Intercultural relations; links between collective memories, social identities and intergroup relations
Marco Martiniello	University of Liège (ULiège)	Sociology	Ethnicity and migration; social sciences; political sociology; urban sociology; sociology of leisure, art and culture

Name	Organisation	Field(s)	Research area(s)
Sabine Henry	University of Namur (UNamur)	Geography	The link between migration and environment
Thierry Eggerickx	Université Catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain)	History and demography	History of the populations of Belgium and its regions; internal migration; social and spatial inequalities of mortality rates; demography at the local level

For the sake of completeness, it is worth mentioning that the Belgian research team also had a telephone conversation with Dr Johan Wets (Social Sciences), migration research manager at the Université Catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain) and lecturer in Political Sociology at the Université Saint-Louis – Bruxelles. Some general questions about migration were broached with Dr Wets, but no extensive in-depth interview was conducted with him for practical reasons. Therefore, input from this conversation will not be included in the results discussed in this research study, nor will an interview report covering this telephone conversation be included in the annexes to this study.

## 3.1.3

### Data collection in Poland

The Polish research team interviewed a total of four experts from different backgrounds. As with the Belgian team, the focus of these interviews was on gathering information about all the aforementioned sub-themes. It was also challenging to find someone in Poland who could speak about European identity, but the research team did manage to ask someone about this.

Below, you can find an overview of the interviewees:

Name	Activity(ies)	Notes
Dominika Blachnicka-Ciacek	Visual sociologist	Conducts research focusing on the link between settings, space and memories in a multicultural, migration and refugee context and investigates how urban locations make migrants feel at home
Dominika Cieřlikowska	Psychologist; anti-discrimination skills trainer; author	Wrote the book <i>From Multicultural to Intercultural Class</i>
Ludwika Radacka-Majek	Education expert	Works at the Emigration Museum in Gdynia
Piotr Kaczyński	Speaker; writer; trainer; consultant on political developments in the EU	Writes about European and international topics

Three out of four of the above experts were interviewed in separate Zoom calls. The interview with Piotr Kaczyński was conducted face-to-face.

3.1.4

### Data collection in Spain

The Spanish research team interviewed a total of five experts, again from a wide range of backgrounds. Also in this Spanish context, information was gathered on all the sub-themes addressed above. Beforehand, it was expected that the focus of the Spanish interviews would be on the pedagogical/didactic approach to be followed. However, finding relevant people who could say something about this topic in the context of migration and European identity turned out to be harder than anticipated. Despite this, one expert was found who could provide input on this specific sub-theme. This means that the focus of the interviews conducted in Spain, as for those in Belgium and Poland, is fairly evenly distributed across all the sub-themes mentioned on page 35.

The final sample of academic experts who were interviewed for the part of the research conducted in Spain was as follows:

Name	Organisation	Field(s)	Research area(s)
Anna Calvete	United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)	Local governance; international and decentralised cooperation	Migration policy
Anna Enrech	Various newspapers and print media	Journalism	Human rights; conflict; peacebuilding
José Manuel Gil Sánchez	Colegio Sagrada Familia PJO	Education	Trainer in active methodologies, assessment and digital skills
Josep Guardiola Salinas	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)	Applied pedagogy	Diversity and inclusion in complex societies (as a member of the ERDISC research group)
Lorenzo Gabrielli	Universitat Pompeu Fabra; Centre Emile Durkheim (Sciences Po Bordeaux)	Political science	Migration processes; effects of migration; governance of migration

3.1.5

### Methodological remark

The research teams would like to make the same methodological remark as was the case for the teacher survey: due to the limited number of academics and experts they spoke to, this report does not claim to provide the last word on the matters it has investigated. Irrespective of whether that is possible at all, the aim of the research teams was not to be exhaustive. Rather, the academics and experts acted as a scientific committee, guiding the partners in the INVIST project with insightful (scientific) information on crucial questions that needed to be answered. The contributions of experts from different countries indicate

where views overlap and where the partners need to be aware of any important differences. The views supplied form part of the puzzle of trying to find a sound theoretical basis, but eventually it will be up to the research teams to ensure that appropriate materials are provided to teachers. This could mean that additional research is needed on some points or further input from academics (either those listed here or others) will be sought. However, this depends on the actual educational tools to be developed. Therefore, decisions regarding these activities will be part of the next phase of the project and fall outside the scope of this report.

3.2

## Migration

3.2.1

### What is migration?

It became clear during the research conducted for this report that the apparently straightforward question 'What is migration?' is actually quite difficult to answer. In the academic world, and by extension in general, there is no consensus on a single definition of this phenomenon. However, the experts interviewed by the Belgian and Polish teams gave some suggestions on how we can understand this term.

According to the Belgian experts, the term 'migration' can mean different things. However, they emphasise the fact that the word mainly refers to **international migration**. This relates to the movements/relocations of people from one country to another. These individuals are not nationals of the country they are going to. The change of residence must be of sufficient duration (the definition of which varies from country to country) to be considered migration. Another form of migration is **internal migration**. This type refers to the movements of people within a country, for example from one town or city to another. The Belgian experts stress that migration is not just about asylum seekers and refugees.

In **Poland**, experts also point out the form(s) of **national or transnational movement** entailing a change in place of residence and function. According to them, migration is about mobility and life changes and most of these experiences happen within a country. Like their Belgian counterparts, the Polish experts indicate that research has shown that there is often a wide range of reasons for migration. Other ways in which the experts describe migration are as a '**story of belonging**' and as an **expression of a world in motion**.

■ ■ *'People flee not only because they have to, but also because they have nothing to live on, the situation in their country is difficult because of their gender or sexual orientation and they're willing to leave.'*

Examples of reasons for migration, given by a Polish expert

3.2.2

### A complex issue

In all three countries, migration seems to be a complex issue to discuss, albeit for different reasons in at least some cases.

In **Belgium**, one major difficulty in discussing migration lies in the highly politicised context surrounding this issue. This politicisation is mainly due to the rise of populism and of radical-right and far-right parties. These parties appear to be creating a lot of confusion among the general public, leading seemingly to a great deal of misunderstanding around migration. This is giving rise to a difficult climate in which there is also a lack of political will to turn migration into a positive story. Thus, for example, in Belgium there is no clear integration policy, and getting qualifications from another country recognised as equivalent to Belgian ones takes a lot of effort. One expert even goes so far as to say that although migration to Belgium has been going on for 150 years, it has been consistently rejected, despite the fact that without it the country would never have become the prosperous nation it is today.

As we saw earlier, the migration narrative in Poland seems often viewed in the context of the Russian invasion in Ukraine and the ongoing war there. The sensitivities associated with this make it more difficult to have a frank discussion. Moreover, this comes on top of already existing challenges such as the effort needed to integrate and live side by side (this effort should, according to the experts, come from both sides), the expectations vis-à-vis migrants (people in the destination country want migrants to share their culture, food and customs with them, even when migrants themselves do not always feel the need to do so) or the pressure put on public services and amenities (such as education or healthcare).

In **Spain**, people's perceptions of migration do not always seem to reflect reality. Migration flows by sea dominate the headlines, while in fact a much larger share of migrants arrive in Spain by plane, for example as part of its family reunification programmes, illustrating the fact that there are various ways to get to Spain that are less well publicised than the maritime route. People's perceptions also seem to be coloured by the significant influx of underage migrants, mainly from Morocco. Another challenge identified by the Spanish experts is the growing tension between migrant and radical-right groups, resulting in increasing social divisions. Economic problems, limited resources and socio-political tensions are complicating integration efforts yet further.

These complexities should be taken into account when developing the educational tools. They shape the context in which pupils form their opinions on the matter and therefore must be addressed, whether implicitly or explicitly.

### 3.2.3

## Putting migration into perspective

Although one expert reports that the number of migrants in Europe has been increasing sharply over the past 10 years, other experts emphasise the fact that migration to Europe is actually not a very substantial phenomenon. In fact, in total, only 4–5% of the world's population are migrants. The often Eurocentric way of thinking about migration in Europe does not necessarily reflect actual worldwide migration flows. Europe does not take the majority of the world's migrants and most migration movements seem to be south–south. The majority of migrants do not actually come from North Africa but from mobility between EU countries. Therefore, it is worth looking at this phenomenon from a global perspective and to realise that Europe only makes up a small part of the picture. Thus, for example, some countries in East Africa and the Middle East receive the largest numbers of refugees.



Migration needs to be placed into perspective not only geographically but also historically. People have always migrated in search of better living conditions. This has led to several waves of migration, past and present. To understand the phenomenon, the experts suggest acknowledging that this is not something new and therefore should instead be presented as a timeless story.

This is not to say that migration patterns were always the same. A good example of this is Belgium: it had negative net migration until 1918, as a result of more people leaving than arriving in the country. A few decades later, there was a very large influx, with the numbers of incoming migrants indeed being consistently higher than is the case today. This is because there was an active policy intended to attract large groups of workers from Southern European or North African countries and Turkey to Belgium for economic reasons. Nowadays, there are fewer very specific regions of origin of migrants coming to Belgium, and the Belgian government is in fact pursuing a policy of discouraging immigration. Something similar could be said of Spain: in the mid-20th century, workers from this country emigrated, e.g. for economic reasons, but nowadays Spain itself hosts significant migrant groups. However, this does not mean that emigration is no longer an issue for Europe: Europeans have never stopped leaving their country of origin and indeed every year thousands and thousands of Europeans continue to depart their country either for another European country or for another region of the world – a fact that young people may not always know about.

3.2.4

### **Reasons for migration**

Research has shown that there are often a wide variety of reasons for migration. This diversity contrasts with migration 50–60 years ago, when economic incentives were the main reason for migration. Nowadays, family reunification and studies are other common motivations to come to Europe. There are also the people who flee their homes because they have no other choice, and also because they no longer have any means of subsistence where they are living. Another example of a possible reason is that an individual decides to migrate because they are finding life in their country of origin difficult due to their gender or sexual orientation.

As already mentioned, it is important to remind ourselves that migration is not just about asylum seekers and refugees, because there are many reasons for this phenomenon. Instead, often several factors contribute to migration flows.

3.2.5

### **The impact of migration**

As some migration (in fact, maybe a significant portion of it) seems to be, or have been, driven by economic incentives, it is not surprising that its impact can be seen clearly in the economy. The experts point out that there has always been a demand for low-skilled workers and that there still remain many jobs for which there is a worker shortage. Migrants seem to continue to be needed to fill these vacancies. Despite these clear economic benefits, the Spanish experts think that it is important to look beyond just this narrative. Indeed, one of the experts, Anna Calvete, believes that it would be wrong to focus on 'benefits'. In her view, we should be concentrating solely on human rights, because they should provide

reason enough for allowing safe migration and asylum.

The impact of migration can also be seen in other domains. It fosters intercultural exchanges, social resilience and the growth of the democracy familiar to us today. The phenomenon also has a cultural and artistic influence, for example on music, cinema and literature. The experts say that migrants always enrich the heritage of the country or continent where they end up. We need to look no further than culinary habits for an example of this, given that what Europeans eat today is not at all the same as it was 50 years ago. Here, the contribution of the various migrant populations is fundamental.

■ ■ *'Nowadays in Germany, one of the national dishes that's often mentioned is kebabs. However, originally kebabs weren't really German.'*

Expert on the cultural impact of migration

However, we should also not overestimate the influence of migration on changes in daily life. The increased opportunities to travel and the emergence of multinationals have also been a contributor here. At the same time, though, it should not be forgotten that migration can be a traumatic experience and that by no means every migrant manages to find their place in the society of their host country. In other words, the impact of migration is not only positive.

### 3.2.6

## Future migration flows

The past decade has seen the tightening up of EU migration policy. Although this has not yet changed much from a legal perspective, the challenges faced by Mediterranean countries (Spain, Italy and Greece) in terms of migrant inflows have now become shared challenges that affect all European countries. In addition, new migration routes have emerged. An example of this is the Balkan or Eastern European route, which also has branches in the Scandinavian countries. Looking to the future, developments and further changes in migration (and migration flows) are expected, for example as a result of climate change, but to what extent remains to be seen and is a point of discussion between the experts in the various countries.

The Polish interviewees expect migration between cities as a result of the changing climate, including in Poland. Within 10 years, some villages could experience a major drought, leaving them without enough drinking water, which could trigger such migration. Looking more widely at the world in general, 'climate migration' is already happening, according to a Polish expert. They point to some places in the world, for example South Asia and Central Africa, where people are already migrating for this reason. It is no longer possible to farm there and there are, for example, mudslides in the areas where they live. More and more people seem to be leaving their homes, not only due to extreme weather conditions but also because of gradual changes that, for example, are leading to a lack of access to water, and Europe is a safer part of the world than some others in this respect.

Looking ahead, the Spanish experts emphasise the fact that forecasting future immigration flows remains a challenge. For example, they think that there is a lot of uncertainty surrounding the effects of climate change: migration is expected to increase as a result, but it remains unclear to what extent and what the impact of this will be. In this area too,

the media seem to help to increase the focus on this type of migration, with sensationalist reporting branding climate refugees a hot topic while failing to acknowledge the complexity of the issue. For example, according to the Spanish experts, it is much more significant and telling that often existing legislation and agreements do not yet recognise climate change as a valid reason for applying for asylum, leading to ethical concerns in terms of refugee protection and rights.

Lastly, according to the Belgian experts, the climate is hardly ever mentioned as a direct cause for migration. Although climate plays a role in some migration decisions, they expect people to continue to migrate over a short distance (south-south) and not all the way to Europe.

3.2.7

### **Recommendations for developing tools on migration**

The recommendations and needs brought forward by the teachers participating in the teacher survey were set out earlier in this report. To gather as much input as possible with a view to developing the future tools, the research teams also asked the academics and experts for their recommendations on this issue. The various experts provided differing advice on the pedagogical approach to the topics to be covered. The key pieces of advice relating to discussing migration are as follows:

- Involve pupils with a migration background in the project narrative.
- Write from the migrants' perspective.
- Explore the opportunity to collaborate with people who are migrants themselves and can share their first-hand experiences, for example by conducting interviews with these groups.
- Use authentic stories. These stories can be communicated through film and video, interviews with migrants or, for example, articles from reputable news outlets.
- When discussing migration, draw parallels with other situations that we encounter in our daily lives. We are always looking for better conditions, so the desire to move around would be a good starting point for this. This could include discussing travel or migrating animals.
- Use actual objects to illustrate your story, and talk less. For example, use brochures that were given to Belgian migrants leaving the country in the past.
- Bring a story to life by using objects. Objects also have a story. Take, for example, food (the potato) or animals (the crab).
- Bring a story to life by telling life stories and doing so in a special location, such as a theatre. Ensure that you make things as tangible as possible for young people.
- Teach the competencies of inclusion and solidarity. Don't force children, for example, to go to performances of Ukrainian culture; instead, organise activities where Polish and Ukrainian children can do things together.
- Map current migration routes.
- Visit a migration museum (for example the Emigration Museum in Gdynia).
- Tell the story that migration is not just a contemporary phenomenon.

- Use critical analysis to understand the context. Use, for example, visual tools, such as a photo frame analysis. Examine who the characters involved are, whose voices are featured in reporting and what perspective is used. Another approach is discourse analysis, in which you look at what a given concept means and how you could talk about it differently.

Apart from these specific recommendations, the experts offered some more general suggestions. They suggested making use of all the modern communication tools available today, like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and TikTok. They also recommended using visually appealing materials and telling the story in a way that it has a contemporary feel. With a view to developing engaging and interactive lessons, they also proposed using diverse and age-appropriate materials.

Josep Guardiola Salinas, one of the Spanish experts and an experienced educator on migration-related issues, emphasises that in the classroom, account must be taken of the changes that have taken place in the discourse surrounding this subject. Today, xenophobia and racist comments are much more common than a few years ago. According to him, the tools being developed in the context of this project should challenge them and give rise to debate. Here teenagers need to be guided through a 'cognitive conflict'. This means that they must see, hear or read something that prompts them to reconsider and maybe change their own views. At the same time, he believes that a teacher should not appear too *buenista*. By this he means that the teacher should not be seen as an eternal 'do-gooder' who only shows the good side of the story. Young people will not be taken in by naïve or one-sided stories about migrants; the subject should be presented in all its complexity, and negative aspects should also be mentioned.

The last point the experts wanted to emphasise, seemed to be the most important of all: the teacher must be aware of their own beliefs and limitations in terms of embracing diversity. According to the experts, it would therefore be useful to develop tools that enable reflection.

### 3.3

## Invisible migration

In this project, we are looking at recent European migrations through the lens of invisible stories. Therefore it would be worth making clear what the term invisible migration actually means.

Having consulted the experts on this subject, the research teams conclude that invisible migration can in fact refer to a number of forms of migration. Firstly, it can relate to migration flows which are talked about very little. In other words, invisible migration can pertain to migrants' stories which are only rarely told (for a variety of reasons). Secondly, the term can refer to migration flows and migrants who are invisible to the State. An example of this can be irregular migrants.

In any case, these definitions show that invisible migration is about migrants, migrant groups, migration flows or migration-related issues that are not very prominent in the public consciousness. If we understand it in this way, there seems to be a vast array of stories

which can potentially be explored. As already shown during the media analysis, there are only two narratives on migration which are particularly dominant. It was also noted that critical migration-related issues are often absent and that not much space is afforded to personal stories and eyewitness accounts of migrants and other directly involved parties. The stories that have remained invisible up to now could fill this void and thus could alter the image of migration and how it is perceived. The INVIST-project has a special role to play here. As mentioned in the introduction to this report, its goal is to address migration (and European identity) in a new way and to propose fresh perspectives and approaches. Understanding the various kinds of invisible migration and the diverse points of view from which it can be examined, reinforces the research teams' belief that invisible stories provide a useful springboard to achieve this goal.

However, it is difficult to determine at European level which migrants' stories are not or are only rarely told or which groups are 'invisible' to the State in the various individual countries. This is due to the very diverse historical migration flows and the different migration situations of the respective countries. However, during the research for this study, the experts and academics mentioned some examples of invisible migrant groups for Belgium, Poland and Spain.

### 3.3.1

## Belgium

Nowadays, the typical migrant profiles in Belgium are migrants from neighbouring countries (the Netherlands and France), migratory chain migrants (family and friends who travel to Belgium following previous migrants), European Union officials and single women (for example from Thailand, the Philippines, Morocco and Turkey; they do not migrate for family reunification but come on their own – this appears to be a new and growing phenomenon). In contrast, scant attention seems to be paid, among others, to the following migrant groups:

**Migration flows from Southeast Asia, China, Korea and Japan.** Some – but by no means all – of these migration flows (mainly from the mid-20th century on, but sometimes earlier) are associated with the port of Antwerp, one of Belgium's largest cities. Take the Chinese, for example: from the Hong Kong Crown Colony they migrated to the United Kingdom in the 1950s because of the colonial ties with that country. From there, some of them made their way to the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium, where they found work in the catering sector. The Chinese restaurant sector had a pull effect on new migrants via chain migration, social network migration and family reunification. From 1980 onwards, migration flows from China cannot be separated from political, economical and social cultural developments in China. Belgians are largely unaware of stories about these migrants. There has also been little research into the Chinese community in Belgium, although its presence goes back a long way. The presence of these Asian migrant groups is not considered a problem and is therefore not centre stage of public debate.

**Migrants from India and Pakistan.** Instead, the debate almost always focuses on people from Sub-Saharan Africa and migrants from Muslim countries geographically closer to Europe (such as Syria in 2015). Smaller migration flows such as these are seen as too small and insignificant and so are often not considered a problem.

**Extra-European migration as a result of colonialism.** This involves migrants from former colonies coming to the country of the former coloniser. In the Belgian context, this specifically means migrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Simplistic representations, flawed information and untruths relating to the colonisation period have been common currency, and conflicting information can be read and heard. Belgium's time in that country was a difficult episode in Belgian history that was – and still is – a sensitive discussion topic, which may have contributed to the invisibility of this particular migrant group.

## 3.3.2

## Poland

The Polish experts stress that invisible migration is, in their opinion, also about who is seen to be 'deserving' to be a migrant and to 'belong'. Thus, there is apparently a hierarchy involved here, with the ideal image of the refugee often being looked at.

■ ■ *'Ukrainian women with children are the perfect image of a refugee. Such an image may be reminiscent of Christian images of the mother of [Jesus Christ] with her child. A refugee who isn't a threat is passive, silent and grateful. And men are fighting a war for their freedom.'*

Remark on the 'ideal image' of refugees by a Polish expert

Other refugees, on the other hand, are viewed with less sympathy, especially if they are groups of only men. Class and origin are also very important. Thus, French, German and British people working in Poland are seen as 'expats', but Ukrainians are regarded as migrants.

In terms of invisibility in the sense of 'not being talked about', the following groups are identified:

- **Roma migrants from Ukraine;**
- **Polish migrants moving to the UK;**
- **Turks;**
- **Afghans;**
- **LGBT people** who need to migrate in search of dignity and respect;
- **lifestyle migrants:** these migrants came to the fore during the pandemic, when suddenly many Poles started buying apartments in Spain; they do not identify themselves as residents of the country they are going to, but simply like the lifestyle there.

Unlike the experts from the other two countries, the Polish experts not only mentioned invisible groups, but also a number of issues that in their opinion have received too little attention in the debates surrounding migration. These 'invisible' issues are:

- the stories of minorities within migrant communities;
- remigration;
- the stories of post-emigration problems – these often involve success stories and reports of people who made it, while other experiences are not relayed;
- the role of human rights.

## 3.3.3

## Spain

Finally, the Spanish experts, too, discussed the question of what 'invisible migration' means and which groups can be labelled as invisible in their country. According to them, invisible migration relates to various facets that are normally overlooked in mainstream discourse, leading to the following invisible (migrant) groups being identified:

**Irregular migrants.** These migrants are deemed invisible because of their legal status. They lack legal documentation and residence permits – reasons why they often live in the shadows, afraid of the authorities and reluctant to access essential services such as healthcare and education. Irregular migrants are also more likely to avoid interacting with government institutions and law enforcement agencies out of fear of deportation. Not wanting to be detected and deported, irregular migrants shy away from seeking assistance or reporting abuse. They may avoid seeking medical care, reporting crimes or asserting their labour rights for fear of being discovered by authorities. This fear reinforces their invisibility within society as they try to avoid any interactions that could draw attention to their undocumented status.

**Migrants just before and just after crossing the border,** for example at Melilla, the Spanish city on the North African coast. The experiences of migrants at these times often stay under the radar. As a result, there is frequently a lack of understanding of the situation in which these people are living. Popular media often turn the spotlight on migrants only when they are making their border crossing, but this snapshot does not capture the rich tapestry of both their past and future lives.

**Women from North and Sub-Saharan Africa.** This group faces a unique form of double invisibility. Not only do they enter countries irregularly, but cultural norms often force them into the shadows, confined to their homes and isolated from society. This double invisibility deprives them of social integration and economic opportunities, exacerbating their marginalisation. They face not only the challenges associated with being women but also the additional layers of discrimination and marginalisation associated with their ethnicity and migration status.

**Expats.** These migrants are not often called 'migrants' due to their socio-economic status and migration patterns. This further perpetuates misconceptions about migration – when we talk about problems with migration, we rarely talk about this privileged group.

**Migrants from East Asia.** Just as in Belgium, this mainly involves Chinese migrants. In Spain, they make up a significant minority of around 230,000 people. While this group can be seen on the streets of Spanish cities, they are often overlooked when politicians and the media talk about migration (whether positively or negatively). Instead, the focus tends to gravitate towards migration from regions such as North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, which can overshadow the unique experiences of East Asian migrants. Articles suggest that they face their own set of challenges, including racism and discrimination (for example, shops selling a host of low-cost items are called *el chino* (literally meaning 'Chinese') as they are often run by a person of Asian descent). Second-generation Chinese often say that they feel Spanish but Spanish society does not view them as such.

**Tourists.** While they might not be migrants, there are large numbers of tourists. Relatively little attention is paid to them compared with migrants, although obviously tourism, too, might have negative consequences. This group may not be the focus of the INVIST-project, but given that it was mentioned by the experts, it has been included in this research study for the sake of completeness.

3.4

## European identity

3.4.1

### A definition of European identity

As will become clear below, it is difficult to propose a common definition of European identity. However, the experts interviewed by the research teams seem to agree on at least the fact that European identity is seen as meaning having an interest in what is happening in other countries and feeling connected to it. In this regard, a majority of the experts are of the opinion that European identity is often equated with the identity of the European Union. Academics from Belgium even refer to the values of the European Union, as laid down in Article 2 on the Treaty of the European Union. These values are as follows:

- respect for human dignity;
- freedom;
- democracy;
- equality;
- the rule of law; and
- respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

■ ■ *'So I think [that] the definition of the European Union [...] is one of the definitions of European identity.'*

Belgian expert on the definition of European identity

Seen from this angle, one could say there is a consensus at institutional level about European values and what European identity is. Still, it took a long time to arrive at this institutional consensus. The first time that a definition of this was attempted in a treaty was in 1973 in the Declaration on European Identity. The countries that were cooperating on the European project at that time, in the years before this crystallised as the European Union, felt the need to draft this definition to determine which countries could and could not participate in this project. However, they also made clear there that any definition provided would always be provisional and would evolve with the passage of time. In other words, they were already talking about a fluid identity that should be able to adapt as new Member States joined the European project. While the Declaration and subsequent treaties always referred to 'principles' (emphasising the word 'identity' was considered too sensitive), this has changed to 'values' since the revision of the Treaty on the European Union signed in Lisbon in 2009. This can be seen as an important step in the process of defining a European identity. At the same time, there is also the narrative of a common European heritage, cultural homogeneity and a European way of life, because these topics seem to be easier to discuss.



## 3.4.2

**Only institutional consensus**

While there may be a consensus between (European) institutions, this consensus cannot be found in the world outside. The experts from all three countries underline the fact that the interpretation of European values varies from one country to another. Although from outside they appear to be a clear set of values, there is less agreement among the EU Member States about their precise meaning (even though the visions appear to be coming ever closer together). After all, every country has its own culture, its own idea of identity and its own vision arising from different lifestyles and different political and economic visions. Regardless of the institutional definition, this makes it difficult to arrive at a definition of European identity at the level of individual citizens.

The association of European identity with European values is even seen as hypocritical by some. The Spanish experts point in this regard, for example, to the value of solidarity. They argue that European identity is presented as the embodiment of this, but that at the same time this solidarity only seems to apply to the privileged groups within the EU. The treatment of Greece during the economic crisis of the late 2000s was cited as an example. In their view, wealthier EU Member States showed the country little sympathy and provided it with scant assistance. They see something similar happening in the current migration crisis, where a number of European countries seem to be having to cope on their own. These types of situations call European solidarity into question. This critical stance regarding the European values (as a base for a European identity) can also be found in Poland. Experts from this country say that in the period before Poland became an EU Member State, there was talk about joining a community, about common values and about the desire to be an equal to Western countries. The most recent parliamentary elections also made it clear that Poles want to be part of the EU and the West and share their values. However, not everyone in Poland is convinced that the fruition of the European Union as a political community is a good idea.

What all this seems to make clear is that the 'identity' constructed by the EU may highlight what its citizens have in common, but subjective feelings about feeling 'European' or part of a nation or region remain very personal. However, the European values are expected to continue to play an important role in the story of European identity: after all, while experts agree that European identity cannot be seen as something set in stone that does not evolve, there should continue to be a core of unchanging values, otherwise European cooperation would no longer be based on anything. Despite this fixed core, adjustments in the narrative – for example, as a result of the accession of new Member States to the EU – should certainly be possible.

## 3.4.3

**Other ways to define European identity**

As indicated by the quote on page 48, defining European identity in terms of European values and the European Union is just one way to look at the question of what a European identity might look like. There are also alternative strategies in this regard.

The concept of identity can refer to a variety of things. As one interviewee said, identity can be about foundations, origins and the overarching structure, all at the same time.

An awareness that different aspects are involved is shared by a number of experts.

In response to the questions of the research teams, they indicated that there is also no consensus about European identity among academics, because of the various aspects that can be taken into account when talking about this identity. These aspects include history, traditions, culture and geography. All these have one thing in common: they are all quite vague. The same applies to any answer to the question of exactly where the frontiers of Europe lie, making it difficult to be specific about what should be part of a European identity and what should not.

3.4.4

### European identity is better left undefined

■ ■ *'[...] this narrative should be something that people feel recognised by and can project themselves onto this identity. Otherwise you would have some people identifying with it, but not all, and that could lead to tensions between groups.'*

Belgian expert on defining European identity

One of the Belgian experts says that trying to draft a definition of European identity would be the wrong thing to do. It is difficult not to have a definition, but if you do provide one, you have to be careful to avoid taking certain characteristics that define some countries and peoples more than others. An example of this is describing Europe as 'Christian', because the EU also has many Muslim citizens. In fact, if you were to add them all together, the number of Muslim EU citizens would be larger than the population of some EU countries. In other words, you must take care not to exclude people. It must be ensured that people feel they are being recognised in the concept of European identity and that they can feel connected to it. If this does not happen, it will apply to some groups and not to others. This will then lead to tensions between different groups.

3.4.5

### European identity remains vague

Given the above, it is maybe not surprising that European identity is seen as something that remains vague and abstract at the moment. The experts say that the vast majority of the time, European identity is viewed as a superficial and insubstantial connection with Europe. Individuals appear to have difficulty identifying with it – seemingly even more so in fact than is the case with national identity, since the concept is too vague and too far removed from the lives of European citizens.

This is not to say that they do not identify as European at all, or that all things European are far removed from ordinary citizens. The single currency (the euro), for example, ensures a strong connection with European identity. It is not only something tangible that people come across in their wallets or purses on a day-to-day basis, but also a set of rules and regulations that are the same for everyone (such as not paying extra fees when withdrawing money). However, not everyone identifies themselves as European in the same way or to the same extent. An example from Poland illustrates this: there, it seems that people who do not travel and therefore do not come into contact with Europe much, identify themselves less with Europe. People who speak other European languages and participate in Erasmus programmes as well as the social elite, on the other hand, seem to identify more with Europe.

There are also differences between countries in the degree of identification with Europe. For newer EU Member States, European identity seems further removed than for the traditional 'core countries' of the European project (the six founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC): Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands). However, also these core countries most likely encounter their own struggles: every expansion of overarching identities like the European identity always brings with it a challenge to merge the different identities. Each nation projects its own national identity onto European identity. While this is good for the identification process, it can also lead to prejudices and discrimination. This can even happen in the case of 'old' EU Member States, who need time to get used to the changing identity and to come to terms with the idea that the new Member States are as European as they are.

A way still needs to be found to make citizens realise that European identity has a meaning and affects their daily lives and that they can also be involved in shaping it. This obvious hurdle does not discourage the INVIST-project partners. After all, one of the aims of this project is to ensure a common understanding of who the people who become part of the European community of nations are – which seems an essential element to be able to build a common identity for future European citizens.

3.4.6

### **Recommendations for developing tools on European identity**

As was the case for migration, the research teams asked the academics and other experts for recommendations related to discussing the issue of European identity. The main recommendations are as follows:

- Show young people to what extent the concept of European identity can have various meanings. This concept can be shaped by political and other institutions and this identity is not necessarily something that comes from our own experiences. The young people should be made to understand that there is not just one correct definition. If they could question this concept, they might also think more freely about migration. If they can accept that everyone has their own view, this could lead to the belief that their own view is not the only correct one and that beliefs can change as a result of various factors.
- Adopt a bottom-up approach, where young people should be able to work out for themselves what European identity and Europe mean for them.

3.5

## **The link between migration and European identity**

As migration and European identity feature side by side in the INVIST-project, it is worth exploring what links exist between these two subjects. At the start of the project, there was sometimes a little doubt among the research partners about whether there was enough of a link between migration on the one hand and European identity on the other. However, delving deeper into these themes made it clear that both issues are indeed closely (and intricately) linked to each other in a number of ways.

3.5.1

### **The identity of pupils with a migration background**

Pupils with a migration background seem more likely to have a connection with European identity than young people without a migration background, who have more of a connection with national identity. National identities are often based on ethnic and cultural grounds and are frequently very 'white' and 'Christian' in nature. European identity embraces different languages and cultures and is therefore, as mentioned previously, a fairly vague concept. This makes this identity less exclusive and therefore more accessible. Therefore, when we strive for social cohesion, it would be good to promote European identity. These findings stem from research conducted by one of the interviewed experts in 2022.<sup>12</sup> She is curious whether these findings would be replicated if the research was repeated now. She thinks that it is possible that key events like the Russo-Ukrainian war and the Israel-Palestine war will have an impact on how young people view Europe and the EU's position in it. The way that European identity is viewed could be impacted by this.

3.5.2

### **Migration as a key plank of Europe's definition of itself**

The Spanish experts suggest in their interviews that migration is often seen as a key plank of Europe's definition of itself. Here Europe normally sets itself apart from 'the other'.

This opposition to 'the other' underlines the European Union's ongoing efforts to define its identity. In this connection, Lorenzo Gabrielli, one of the interviewed experts, refers to the concept of 'imagined communities' developed by Benedict Anderson. 'The 'other' is used as a mirror, allowing us to make quick judgements on what differentiates 'us' from 'them' and what therefore forms part of our European identity. Europeans' own identity would remain unclear if there was nothing to compare it with, and yet Europe itself has never actually been homogeneous and has always been diverse.

3.5.3

### **Developing a closed form of European identity**

Experts in all three countries clearly see a link between migration and European identity when it comes to the border policy of the European Union, albeit not one that can be described as positive. Despite the fact that European identity is presented as a concept that values tolerance and diversity, the European Union is increasingly closing its borders in an attempt to deal with migration to and within Europe. The interviewed experts suggest that the EU seems to be afraid of the influence that migration might have on the European way of life. As a result, border policy appears to have become disconnected from the values that the European Union claims to promote, especially in the arena of human rights. Some interviewees even go so far as to brand Europe's attitude and self-image hypocritical.

The European approach to border policy and migration seems to place economic interests ahead of humanitarian motivations and there appears to be a discrepancy between European policy in theory, on the one hand, and in practice, on the other. In theory, there is promotion of values, identity and progress, while in practice, other countries' resources are exploited and obstacles are put in the way of migrant mobility. Even where migration is

12. Brummer, E. C., Clycq, N., Driezen, A., & Verschraegen, G. (2022). European identity among ethnic majority and ethnic minority students: understanding the role of the school curriculum. *European Societies*, 24(2), 178–206.

welcomed, this is mainly motivated by economic considerations rather than human rights. This reduces migrants to economic commodities. As an example, the agreements with Morocco are cited, with controlled migration mainly serving European interests. According to the experts, this once again underlines the shift from an ethical to a pragmatic and profit-based approach to the migration debate. The experts expect a situation to arise in which the North will prove increasingly difficult for migrants to get into (Fortress Europe). There will be stricter screening, with individual countries looking for migrants with specific competencies. There will be a growing tension, both politically and otherwise, between the need to migrate and the ability to receive migrants, meaning that the conflict in this regard will become even more intense.

This evolution and a stricter border policy could lead to the creation of a closed, exclusive and privileged form of European identity. The Belgian experts clearly indicate that this development concerns them. While this may encourage people inside the EU to identify as European, it will also create tensions, prejudices and discrimination against people outside the European Union and against migrants who came to the EU from other parts of the world. This is why, according to them, European leaders should think carefully about the discourse and narratives they use – European identity is something that can connect people, but at the same time it is also something that can set them against each other.

Yet all the while, the institutional definition of European identity (European values) remains virtually unaffected by migration. At most you could say that the focus on multiculturalism has increased. Looking to the future, European identity could continue to evolve along the dividing lines discussed here if migration policies continue to be tightened up. This would maintain the 'us' versus 'them' narrative. According to the Spanish experts, this runs the risk of further fuelling the discourse of the radical right and delegitimising migration as a natural process. However, they suggest this can be prevented by reviewing European values and pursuing an inclusive migration policy in the future that centres on human rights.

# **Perspectives on migration and European identity**

4.

# Perspectives on migration and European identity

The information has so far been presented as a single coherent story wherever possible, despite the fact that it originates from three teams, each of them in a different country. This stems from a desire to provide common narratives and educational tools on recent European migrations. However, this does not mean that the fact that the various countries are sometimes very different has been overlooked, as the reader will have already noticed above. Each country that participated in the research can be described in terms of how it views migration and European identity. To take into account these differences while keeping a close eye on shared characteristics, the individual visions of each country will be set out, followed by a transnational perspective in which these views are combined into one narrative. Clearly articulated perspectives make clear why certain choices in the development of the educational tools will be made, and the transnational perspective can act as a common reminder of views to bear in mind in the next steps of the INVIST-project.

4.1

## The Belgian perspective

In Belgium, the issue of migration is highly politicised due to the rise of populism and radical-right parties. This has created a lot of confusion and a difficult context for shedding light on this subject. However, Belgium introduces young people to the concept of migration and 'Europe' at an early age. The issues are addressed at various times during a pupil's school career, although not always that extensively. It could be said that this sometimes results in pupils having only a superficial understanding of these themes.

The results of the Belgian research emphasise the complexity and diversity of migration. International migration is central here. Attention is paid to a wide range of reasons for migration, looking beyond just asylum seekers and refugees. A focus is placed on the fact that migration is nothing new for Belgium; the country has a rich history of migration, which has played a key role both economically and socio-culturally. At the same time, it is also recognised in Belgium that (among certain groups) there is persistent political and social resistance to migration, which is expressed, for example, on various social media platforms. This is despite the economic and demographic benefits that migrants can provide, such as filling jobs in sectors where there are shortages and counteracting the effects of an ageing population.

From a Belgian perspective, European identity is not seen as static, but as a concept that evolves over time. European values are accepted as the core of what European identity should represent, but at the same time there is a recognition that it must be flexible enough to adapt to changes, such as the enlargement of the EU to include new Member States. The fact is also underlined that while there is an institutional consensus on European values, many other definitions of European identity can be given.

Although it is difficult to provide a clear-cut definition of European identity, the situation in Belgium indicates that trying to come up with an overly rigid definition of European identity is a risky business. It points to the need to guard against making this an exclusive identity through a strict migration policy and by stressing certain characteristics that are not necessarily representative of all EU citizens. In Belgium, experts therefore advocate an inclusive approach that leaves scope for diversity and a personal connection with the European identity.

The Belgian experts advocate reflecting on the discourse surrounding European identity and migration. They emphasise the importance of Europe showing a hospitable attitude and question the future of European migration policy. As far as they are concerned, an EU that is increasingly closing its borders contrasts with the fundamental European values of tolerance and diversity.

## 4.2

## The Polish perspective

Migration is seen as an expression of the desire to belong somewhere and a result of a world in motion. It is recognised that there may be a number of reasons behind any migration decision. In the Polish view, a global perspective should be pursued: Europe is only part of the story, as other regions host more refugees.

However, in Poland a lot of attention is also paid to the challenges posed by migration. The situation in Poland points to new migration routes that have emerged, to the shared challenges that EU countries face in terms of migration and to the growing tension (political or otherwise) between the need to migrate and the capacity to receive migrants. It is expected that conflicts surrounding migration will become even more heated in the future. These will come on top of existing challenges, such as the effort it takes to live together in society, the expectations that migrants must meet and the challenges for public services such as education and healthcare.

This dual view of migration is also reflected in the two dominant discourses on Polish social media: on the one hand, the issue is addressed in a light-hearted and positive manner, while at the same time content is also created in which migrants and refugees are portrayed as a great risk.

School teaching was greatly affected by the war between Russia and Ukraine. For teachers there is clearly a difference between the situation before and the situation after the outbreak of the war. This context makes it more difficult for them to teach about migration, leading them to report addressing migration-related issues less often. They also indicate that they



take more account of the emotional aspects of migration and that, given the sensitivities around this subject, they pay attention to what they say and how they say it.

Poles seem to value the EU mainly for its economic benefits, while their sense of European identity remains only superficial. Some even see it as antithetical to Slavic identity. Although both previously and in the most recent parliamentary elections it became clear that Poles want to be part of the EU and the West and share their values, for some people Europe remains something that is far removed from them. This is also reflected in education: teachers see European identity more as the identity of the EU and not at all as a migration-related subject. They do not address the issue much in the classroom and, if it does come up, some pupils are said to have no deeper sense of European identity. The connection with Europe does seem to be there, but at the same time, Europe is viewed with scepticism.

## 4.3

## The Spanish perspective

While migration is definitely an issue that plays out in the Spanish context, it does not seem to feature prominently on the social media platforms used by many young people. In general, the issue is dealt with in a sensationalist manner and matters are presented – including by the media – in a fairly one-sided way. Thus, much attention is paid to hot topics, such as maritime migration flows, the significant influx of underage migrants, and climate refugees. Here the complexity of all this is often not acknowledged and other examples, such as legal migration flows, stay under the radar. This colours perceptions among the general public.

There is a lot of uncertainty about what the future holds in terms of migration, but experts in Spain are clearly concerned about the policy being pursued in this regard. Existing legislation and agreements, for example, do not yet recognise climate change as a valid reason for an asylum application, which can lead to ethical dilemmas regarding the rights of refugees. As the Spanish see it, a migration policy is being pursued at European level that is mainly based on economic interests, with controlled migration mainly serving European interests. This is seen as hypocritical and it is pointed out that this reduces migrants to economic commodities. From the Spanish perspective, humanitarian motivations and human rights should be made a much more central part of an inclusive migration policy.

In Spain, European identity is often equated with the identity of the European Union. It is viewed as a vague concept that is at most about a superficial and insubstantial connection with Europe. Individuals find it difficult to identify with Europe. In addition, there is a feeling that some Spaniards question European identity. This group might think that it was mainly devised by the most influential countries in the European Union and, as a result of this, mainly serves these countries' interests. In their opinion, a value such as solidarity only applies to privileged groups within the EU and not to countries like Spain. The Spanish experts also warn that national or European values should not be seen as more important than the rights of, for instance, migrants.

The Spanish education system follows this general pattern, with specific attention being paid to migration and minimal attention to European identity. Both issues remain abstract for the pupils, although teachers – especially in the field of migration – try in their own individual way to delve deeper into the subject. However, they often encounter a lack of empathy and, in a minority of pupils, prejudices, xenophobia and fear that seem to be based on the opinions of adults in their environment. However, this does not mean that teachers shy away from the issue of migration. They look for appropriate supporting material to prepare lessons where their pupils are given the chance to reflect on this subject for themselves. On the other hand, opinions about teaching European identity vary from 'desirable' to 'impossible'.

## 4.4

## A transnational perspective

The perspectives of Belgium, Poland and Spain show that different countries view migration and European identity differently. Despite the differences, there are common themes that provide a basis for a transnational perspective on the issues covered by this project.

First of all, the complexity and diversity of migration is recognised. Attention is drawn to the historical dimension of migration and to the various reasons why people migrate. This explicitly looks beyond the category of asylum seekers and refugees. There seems to be a particular focus on the economic and demographic effects of migration, with the positive consequences for Europe being emphasised, although this is not always to the satisfaction of everyone.

However, at the same time there is political and social resistance to migration. This is reinforced partly by populist and radical-right parties and partly by one-sided media attention with predominantly sensationalist or negative discourse. This resistance is reflected in debates and discussions on social media and sometimes also in education, where it can be a challenge for teachers to deal with the stereotypical and negative image that some of their pupils have of migrants.

As far as European identity is concerned, there is a consensus that this is a vague and evolving concept that is only clearly propagated by the European Union, referring to European values. However, this institutional definition seems far removed from ordinary people, making it difficult or impossible for them to connect with this European identity. There is an acknowledgement that the vagueness of the concept is reinforced by the differences in interpretations that EU Member States give to European values and by the fact that there are other ways of defining European identity. In addition, the question is explicitly asked whose vision is actually being followed when building an overarching identity: that of all EU countries or mainly that of the 'old' Member States?

Moving forward, an evolution towards an inclusive European identity that people can connect with is advocated. This is an identity that allows for diversity and recognises the characteristics of different groups. However, there are fears about the emergence of an exclusive European identity, on the basis of which Europe will set itself apart both from

others outside the European Union and from EU citizens with a different background within the Union.

This development is related to the European migration policy, which it is expected will be pursued in a stricter form in the future. It is felt that the EU seems to be afraid of the influence of migration and this 'outside threat'. The resulting border policy is seen as increasingly disconnected from the values that the EU claims to promote, especially in the arena of human rights. Experts from the participating countries call for a policy that is more focused on humanitarian motivations and human rights. They argue that attention should be paid to something more than just serving the interests (in particular, economic interests) of European countries.

**Conclusion: practical  
recommendations for  
tool development**

5.

# Conclusion: practical recommendations for tool development

Given all of the above, some practical recommendations can be made for the tools that will be developed for education, as part of this project. These recommendations form the closing remarks of this joint research report and will be systematically discussed below. As was the case for the preceding chapters, this conclusion is subdivided into thematic sections. The chapter – and hence this report – concludes with recommendations on using the invisible stories at the heart of the INVIST-project.

5.1

## Practical recommendations for addressing migration

### **Place migration in a historical perspective**

Present it as a timeless story and emphasise the fact that immigration and emigration – for a variety of reasons – have always existed.

### **Place migration in a geographical perspective**

Present European migration as part of a broader phenomenon. This is not a Eurocentric view, but an approach that presents migration as the global phenomenon it is. This involves paying attention to different migration flows to and from different areas, including intra-EU mobility.

### **Address a wide variety of migration types**

Focus not only on economic migration, but also on migration based on other motivations. It could also be interesting to look at the remigration of people who have emigrated but have returned to their country of origin.

### **Provide a balanced view of migration**

Don't reproduce only the dominant, often negative, discourses. Migration also has positive aspects that should be highlighted. In this connection, it should be noted that young people do not need a completely positive story that does not discuss the negative aspects of migration. They want to see the world as it is and there is no point in trying to win them over to the theme by using positive imagery.

## **Distinguish different forms of invisible migration**

On the one hand, there is irregular migration, where the government has no insight into the migration flows. This is because, for example, the migrants do not have legal residence status and/or papers. On the other hand, however, there are groups that feature less often in public discourse or do not feature there at all. Take, for example, groups that are not seen as a 'problem'; expats; and migrants who come to Europe for family reunification. In other words, invisible migration is not just illegal migration, and this must be clearly expressed.

## **Don't provide a clear-cut definition of the term 'migrant'**

Instead, raise questions such as 'Who are migrants?' or 'What are the criteria for being considered a migrant?'. In this way, teachers and pupils can investigate these questions themselves and view them from multiple perspectives. These may also be very personal questions for the pupils. A gaming concept could be developed within which these discussions can be held.

## **Address the difference between migrants and refugees**

This can be done by simply mentioning the official distinction, and also – and preferably – by asking the question on what grounds we make this distinction and whether it is fair to do it that way. Here we need to provide background information for teachers in the form of tools that they can use to critically discuss the subject in the classroom. In other words, the project itself should definitely not steer pupils towards a particular distinction.

In summary, it is recommended that the issue of migration be based on support for teachers and their pupils in taking a critical attitude, in reflecting on the issue, in addressing dominant or 'official' perspectives on migration and in comparing them with reality or with what they themselves think. This could, for example, be done through a format in which pupils find themselves facing certain situations in a role-playing game. They should think for themselves about questions such as the following:

- Am I a refugee?
- What should I do now?
- What implications does this have?
- How does this work?

It is equally important to ensure that the complex material is presented in a comprehensible way, so that pupils really understand it. One option in this regard is to draw parallels or tell the migration story using objects and metaphors (for example through food or other objects).

## **Practical recommendations for addressing European identity**

### **Use a bottom-up approach to address this issue**

There is no agreement on the term, and experts from the various countries also seem to be critical of how European identity is handled. Moreover, it can refer to both the EU

(identification with the political union) and to Europe (identification with the cultural and geographical space). There could be an exercise that addresses how people can feel European in different ways. Here teachers can discuss with their pupils, for example, the questions 'What makes us European?' and 'To what extent do I feel European?' .

### **Address the discussion about the development of European identity**

There are clearly two sides to the discussion. On the one hand, there is the focus on official European values (solidarity, human rights, diversity, etc.), while, on the other hand, there is the construction of Fortress Europe with increasingly closed borders and a supposed lack of solidarity.

### **Examine how identities are constructed**

There is also the option of paying attention to the question of how identities arise and whether it is possible to have multiple identities at the same time. This addresses any tension that exists between national and European identities.

5.3

## **Recommendations for using invisible stories**

By way of reminder, the title of this project is Invisible stories – shaping common narratives of recent European migrations. Therefore, it is worth concluding this report with a brief initial response to the question which direction we can take to discover invisible stories that can be highlighted in the project.

The experts expressed the expectation that invisible stories about migration will not be the same for all European countries. This is due to the different historical migration flows in the different countries. This expectation seems to be supported by the results of the research. This becomes clearly apparent when we provide a schematic overview of the groups that were classified as invisible in the research in the various countries.

<b>Belgium</b>	<b>Poland</b>	<b>Spain</b>
Migrants from Southeast Asia	Roma migrants from Ukraine	Migrants from East Asia
Migrants from China, Korea and Japan	Polish emigrants leaving for the United Kingdom	Migrants just before and just after crossing the border
Migrants from India and Pakistan and similar small migration flows	Migrants from Turkey	Irregular migrants

Belgium	Poland	Spain
Extra-European migration as a result of colonialism, such as migrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo	Migrants from Afghanistan	Women from North and Sub-Saharan Africa
	LGBT people who emigrate in search of dignity and respect	Expats
	Lifestyle migrants	Tourists

This will have to be taken into account when developing tools for this project. Groups that are overlooked in one country are not always that relevant to countries in other parts of Europe. The tool must be flexible enough to respond to this, in order to avoid becoming too far removed from certain parts of the target group.

Academics, experts and teachers alike also emphasise the need to involve people from these invisible groups themselves in developing the tool. Teachers are looking for first-hand stories, and also from an ethical perspective it is essential for developers of tools (educational tools in particular) to involve representatives of the different groups that will be part of the project. Talking about these groups without working together with them would send out the wrong signal.

The groups mentioned in the schematic overview do not constitute an exhaustive list (at least not yet). It may be necessary to look for more invisible stories if this proves necessary in the rest of the development process.



# Anex

# Guide for teacher survey

## Introduction

Thank you for participating in this interview. We would really value your experiences and feedback as we try to develop a new educational tool to teach migration and European identity in schools. This interview is designed to provide an insight into your current teaching style, the challenges you face and your teaching needs. If you need any clarification during the interview, don't hesitate to ask.

## Understanding existing teaching methods

1. Do you currently have classroom discussions about migration and European identity?

The teacher talks about migration and/or European identity

- What teaching methods, materials or resources do you use to teach these topics?
- Are there specific learning objectives you want to achieve when teaching about migration and European identity?

The teacher doesn't talk about migration and/or European identity

- For what reasons do you not talk about these topics in the classroom?
- Are you open to including these topics in your curriculum in the future?

2. Do you currently include European values, such as respect for diversity, solidarity and human rights, in your teaching? How? If not, why are these values difficult to introduce into the classroom?

## Determining the appropriate age group

3. Which age groups are you currently teaching and which are most receptive to discussions about migration and/or about European identity and values?

## Understanding the concept of migration

4. What aspects of migration do you find difficult to understand or do you have questions about how to teach?

If the teacher talks about migration

- What do you have in mind when you talk about migrants?
- What do your pupils have trouble understanding about migration in your lessons?
- What stereotypes about migration are difficult to refute among students?

## Becoming aware of teachers' challenges

5. Have you encountered any specific challenges or obstacles when teaching about migration and European identity?

6. Do teachers have sufficient resources and materials to support teaching about these topics in the classroom? If not, what is missing?

If the teacher talks about migration and/or European identity

- How often (how many hours or lessons) do you teach about migration and European identity?

### **Understanding teachers' educational needs**

7. What do you think would be the ideal length of time for a teaching aid to help you teach topics related to migration and European identity?

8. Social media have a strong influence on migration stories. Do you feel ready/equipped to tackle media education with your pupils?

# Survey of academics and experts – questionnaire and interview reports

## Questions for experts V2

Definition of the concepts of the project

### Migration

- How can migration be defined?
- What are the founding texts defining migration?
- What are the key trends in migration in Europe in recent years?
- What are the main nationalities (migration flow) coming to Europe?
- What is the specificity of the current migration context in Europe/global trend?
- Are there specific historical events or policies that continue to shape the migratory landscape today?
- What are the next (in the near future) flows of immigration that you expect for Europe? Why?
- How will climate change impact migration in general?
- How do the migrants spread in Europe? Why?
- In what ways has migration contributed to cultural diversity in our region?
- What are the positive or negative impacts of migration in Europe (cultural and sociological impacts)?
- In what way(s) can invisible migration be defined?
- What are the types of migrants less talked about in Europe (Invisible migration)?

### European identity

- Can we speak of a European identity? Why?
- How would you define European identity? How has this concept evolved over time?
- What are the founding texts defining European identity?
- Can citizens have a European identity or are we talking about an identity at a higher level (states, EU, Europe as a whole, ...)?
- If citizens can have a European identity, which groups are more likely to identify themselves as such? Why?
- What is the correlation between national identity and European identity?
- How is migration influencing the formation of a European identity? How does it question it?

### Link between European identity and migration

- Is there a link between migration and European identity? If so, what is it? Please explain.
- How will European identity evolve with future migration flows?

- What does Europe's border control policy say about European identity?
- What are the concerns around the EU's expansion? How common is the concern about the preservation of national cultural distinctiveness in our country?

### **Pedagogical approach**

- What is the most appropriate teaching approach for introducing students to the construction of a European identity through migratory flows?
- What teaching tools do you recommend as part of this approach?
- In the framework of history or geography course, which current case study could we analyze with students about migration in our country? With which tool?
- Do geographical maps contribute to understanding the migration process? In what way?
- What are the most appropriate teaching tools for taking a historical approach to migration?
- How do young people construct their identity? What are the main factors?
- If you had to promote European identity among young people, how would you proceed?