

2017

# Migrants perspectives 2



*"This publication has been produced with the financial support of the URBACT Programme and ERDF Fund of the European Union. The contents of this publication are at sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission".*



**F**ollowing the intention of giving the migrant perspective of the migration phenomenon we will tell the story of other three LSG members. The three stories that we are going to present have a lot in common, they are three women coming from Cape Vert, Cuba and Guatemala who came to Portugal, France and Germany to join their families who already lived there. What we remark in collecting migrants stories is that on the contrary of what the media and the public opinion show, most of the foreign nationals that come to settle in Europe arrive with a regular permit, mostly by plane. These stories confirm a trend that we are registering since the beginning of our research; indeed the three ladies interviewed have relatives in Europe and could count on them and their network as a support to settle and integrate in the hosting country.

Adira, Litz and Celia<sup>1</sup> arrived in Europe for three different reasons, Adira who comes from Cape Vert had her family already living in Portugal, she went there to continue her studies and to have better professional opportunities, Liz from Guatemala went to Germany to join her husband and Celia from Cuba went to France to join her family who was already living there and looking for better job opportunities.

The three of them arrived with a regular visa and could benefit of a regular permit, nonetheless the impact with the new society with different language, habits and social rules hit them a lot.

Alina tells that the first time she went alone in the City to deal with her permit documentation, she was disoriented and could not find the way back, and only after having asked to several people she managed to receive some help: *“It is a very different reality compared to Cape Verde, where people are more willing to help and listen to others and where everything is simpler.”*

Both Liz and Celia identify the language as the main obstacle for their integration, until they managed to speak the hosting country’s language they felt isolated, with no possibility to work or interact with people: Liz says *“I didn’t have friends and in my professional life I had to start all over. I was dependent of my husband”* the only support received was *“the love and moral support of my husband. I had to start studying German very hard every day and I am still doing it.”*

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<sup>1</sup>Some of the names have been changed to protect the identity of the three individuals.

As underlined by OECD, there is a need of *counteract brain waste of migrants resident in the EU Member States*<sup>2</sup>, this aspect that also emerged from the consultation process within our network, one of the main challenges for integration is providing the recognition of qualifications (formal and informal) and the inclusion of migrants in the cultural life of the City. The isolation is one of the most common problems faced by migrants in arriving in a new country and this is the reality of many migrant women that often face more difficulties in going out from the home comfort zone.

The arrival process and more the integration one were difficult for the three of them, even if they were regularly resident the access to health care and social services, has not been easy. Celia for example identify in the paperwork for administrative procedures and the delay in getting a medical appointment the aspect that least likes in the host country. On the other hand she is the only one that affirms that she received support by local public institution for her integration: *“I have been supported by my husband and family and the work placement and professional traineeship offered by the Municipal Migrants Office”* which has been crucial for her to find a job.

Concerning the challenge to find a job, both Celia and Aleida received support from local associations who helped them in the process of

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<sup>2</sup> “Recognition of Qualifications and Competences of Migrants”, OECD 2013, edited by Anke Schuster, Maria Vincenza Desiderio and Giuliana Urso.

entering in the labour market. After the school Aleida received support from a youth association that helped her in the process of professional insertion, she said that the sole obstacle at the moment for her to find a job was the long wait for her long stay residence permit: *“At the moment I find myself unemployed, being difficult to get a job. However I do not feel that I am discriminated because I am immigrant in relation to the labour market, which I think is very positive. The main difficulty I have is in relation to my documentation, which has expired since 04.2016, the renewal process is very time consuming, and only in January 2017 I was able to deliver all the documentation that was requested. I have been waiting for my document since then. This is a fact that greatly affects my professional integration.”*

Anyway for the three of them the support of their families was crucial. At the time when Aleida arrived she was going to school and she did not have any specific support to integrate in the system: *“Adapting to school was the main difficulty I had. My Colleagues usually made fun*

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This publication has been realized with the support of the ULG Members of the Municipality of Oldenburg, Amadora and the Conseil Départemental du Val-de-Marne, who conducted the interview which inspired the stories.

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*of me, and I had no specific support. It was a very difficult time.” “I did not receive any particular support from services, only from the family and the social network, which greatly facilitated my integration.”*For Liz the presence of her husband and its family was crucial, even though she said: *“I missed my family, my friends and my old way of life”*. In this process of adaptation to the new life she found very useful the participation to the Integration Courses that gave her the possibility to meet people and to learn the language.

Now, after more than 6 years living in Europe the three of them overcame most of the difficulties and adapted to the host Country, they also appreciate it and see the positive side of living there.

Aleida says *“I like Portugal very much, it has better living conditions and opportunities than Cape Verde”*; Celia appreciate the sense of freedom and equality that French society gives to her and Liz likes Oldenburg *“because it’s not too small and not too big”* and because *“it’s a very clean city.”*