



# NATIONAL INDEX

## SHARED SPACES

CO-CREATING INCLUSIVE  
ENVIRONMENTS FOR MIGRANT AND  
LOCAL COMMUNITIES





Co-funded by  
the European Union

National Index - Spain

**Shared Spaces:**  
**Co- creating inclusive enviroments for migrants and local communities**

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# INTRODUCTION

According to official sources like Eurostat (2024), the Spanish Statistical Office (2024), and the Municipal residential registration (2023), 27.3 million individuals residing in the EU were born outside the EU, constituting 6.1% of the total EU population. In Spain, this figure stands at 8.8 million people, comprising 18.1% of the population. Similarly, in Barcelona, 519,066 individuals (including EU citizens) were born outside Spain, making up 31.3%.

“These statistics represent far more than just numbers: they show diversity”

Effective community practice depends upon society's ability to welcome people from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Young migrants face several challenges, and it's essential to implement positive actions to reach them and invite them to participate as active citizens, avoiding paternalistic attitudes.

Third Sector organizations play a critical role in fostering youth development and promoting community action and social change. However, promoting youth participation and commitment to local activities and events represents a challenge for these organizations, even more so when talking about young migrants.

Recognizing the challenges young migrants face, it becomes evident that targeted initiatives are necessary to address their needs. This brings us to the introduction of the 'Shared Spaces' project, which aims to provide solutions and support to young migrants.

Our project primarily targets individuals between the ages of 18 and 30 who have relocated from one country to another for various reasons, including seeking better economic opportunities, fleeing conflict or persecution, or pursuing education and career goals, along with professionals such as social workers, youth workers, and educators involved in migrant support. Funded by the European Union, our project operates within the contexts of Germany, Sweden, Poland, and Spain, where our consortium partners are based: Goodness of People (Sweden), Logos (Poland), Culture Goes Europe (Germany), and FEDELATINA (Spain).

The initial phase of our project was dedicated to comprehensive research aimed at understanding the complexities of the issues and the specific needs of our target groups. This involved conducting focus groups with young migrants and educators, distributing surveys to gather insights from young people, and interviewing youth workers aligned with our project's objectives. This report presents our research in Spain, highlighting our methods and findings.

# FOCUS GROUP WITH YOUNG MIGRANTS

## METHODOLOGY

As part of the Shared Space project, the FEDELATINA Research Team conducted an 84-minute focus group in Barcelona on December 19th, 2023 with four young migrants from diverse origins, cultural, and social backgrounds.

Our team developed a series of questions aimed at understanding the perspectives of young migrants. From this set, we chose a subset to delve into during the discussion. These topics included barriers to accessing community activities, ideal inclusive events, desired activities, essential information for event communication, and strategies to improve outreach to young migrants.

### Participants profiles:



**H. (Male, 25 years old, born in Morocco,**  
23 years living in Barcelona)



**M. (Female, 30 years old, born in Argentina,**  
one year living in Barcelona)



**B. (Female, 25 years old, born in Paraguay,**  
six years living in Barcelona)



**E. (Female, 24 years old, born in Colombia,**  
two years living in Barcelona)

## KEY FINDINGS

Understanding why individuals leave their countries is crucial as it shapes their perception of the host society. Factors such as whether they migrated out of choice or necessity, their access to emotional and financial support, and their existing securities like approved visas or housing significantly influence their experiences. For example, during the focus group, M. highlighted that she chose Barcelona primarily because she could obtain a residence permit faster than in other cities. Therefore, it's essential to recognize the diverse profiles of young migrants and their sense of belonging within the community.

A critical question arises: Is the hosting society actively fostering a sense of belonging among these youth?

Young migrants, especially the newly arrived, face several barriers. Initial settlement challenges such as visa applications, finding accommodation, and employment, often feel overwhelming. Emotionally and psychologically, they grapple with frustration, stress, and the need to adapt to a new environment and culture. Many participants expressed fears of rejection from locals and a sense of being unwelcome.

Additionally, they face social obstacles like racism, xenophobia, and discrimination, exacerbated by cultural and linguistic differences. Stereotypes, prejudices, and rumors further hinder their integration, impacting both how they perceive the host society and how they are perceived by others. Consequently, participating in community events may seem unsafe or uncomfortable, especially for newcomers striving to establish stability.

**Achieving stability is a gradual process that can span years.**

**Participants shared varied experiences regarding their involvement in community activities. For instance, M., who recently moved to Barcelona, prioritizes settling in and forming connections with fellow countrymates. Conversely, E. actively seeks out community engagements, intentionally stepping out of her comfort zone to foster integration. In the case of H., it was not until he finished his studies that he could become a more active member of the community. Nowadays, he runs an association of young people, most of them from diverse backgrounds. Such transformations underscore the importance of tailored support and opportunities for young migrants at different stages.**

Integration of young migrants into community activities requires taking positive actions and setting strategies both from the organization's and institutions' side and from the migrants. All participants agreed that it is difficult to access information about community activities and participation relies on young migrants who actively search for it, make calls, or go in person to ask what activities they can join. However, a significant barrier remains: many young migrants feel hesitant to attend activities where they don't see themselves represented. Therefore, fostering a sense of inclusivity and belonging within community spaces is crucial for enhancing participation among young migrants.

# FOCUS GROUP WITH EDUCATORS

## METHODOLOGY

We conducted a focus group with educators working with young migrants on March 5th, 2024, lasting 49 minutes and 12 seconds. The discussion revolved around communication channels, identified barriers, and strategies to overcome them when engaging with migrant populations.

### Profiles of the educators involved:



**E.E., female from Argentina,**  
a coach offering courses to migrant women.



**A.T., female from Argentina,**  
a psychologist providing mental health courses to migrant youngsters.



**A.B., female from Argentina,**  
a lawyer offering courses for young migrant entrepreneurs.



**P.M., female from Colombia,**  
an art teacher working with migrants.



**B.P., female from Guatemala,**  
a social communicator and youth worker engaged with migrants.



## KEY FINDINGS

The primary communication channel used is social media, especially Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp. B.P. reported successfully mobilizing over 700 volunteers for beach cleaning activities by WhatsApp Broadcast List. Twitter and LinkedIn are also frequently used. Additionally, Twitter and LinkedIn are frequently leveraged. Participants highlighted the effectiveness of these platforms for crowdfunding and engaging young individuals entering the job market. While TikTok is recognized as a valuable tool, not all participants use it.

In terms of communication, all participants underscored the importance of the human element. When working with youngsters, especially with migrants, it is crucial to empathize with them. Fact-checking is critical to avoid spreading fake information. Educators and organizations must be mindful of the emotional impact of fake news or misleading messages on young migrants, particularly when discussing migration status, paperwork, and legislation.

The educators identify several challenges, aligning with those highlighted in the focus group with youngsters, with an emphasis on the linguistic, cultural, and bureaucratic barriers. Disinformation was also perceived as a barrier and they linked it to the importance of fact-checking.



## RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY STRATEGIES

Employing a dual-focus group approach allowed us to gain a comprehensive understanding of the environment encompassing young migrants and their engagement with community spaces and activities.

**In the focus groups, we could help organizations and institutions take positive actions:**

### **Foster Intercultural Spaces:**

Reach out to places, both physical and online, frequented by migrants and perceived as safe. This can be achieved through networking with migrant associations, visiting local migrant-friendly venues, and utilizing online platforms like Facebook groups, Telegram, WhatsApp, and dedicated migrant-focused websites.



Some participants mentioned advertising activities in places to send money abroad since many migrants have to support their families in their home country.

### **Ensure Representation:**

Ensure that young migrants feel represented in community activities by hiring staff from diverse backgrounds, actively involving them in organizational decision-making, and soliciting their input on activity preferences through surveys. Directly addressing invitations to young migrants and involving them in event planning can enhance their sense of belonging.



Contacting them directly and giving them small tasks could also increase their sense of belonging to the event.

### **Humanize Social Media Content:**

Recognize the challenges faced by migrants and adopt an empathetic tone in social media communication. Avoid imposing unnecessary requirements such as legal residency when it's not mandatory for the activity and be mindful of language to ensure inclusivity.

It is critical to be extra careful with words to avoid stereotyping or condescending language.

Translate content into multiple languages and adapt messaging to resonate with diverse audiences. Provide a brief introduction of the organization and highlight activities related to initial settlement needs, socialization, and community building. Establish a monthly activity calendar for easy participation.



Avoid expressions such as “people like you” as they might be perceived as discriminatory.

### **Co-create Shared Spaces:**

Encourage migrant participation in decision-making processes, not only in community activities but also in administrative roles. Address the underrepresentation of migrants in municipal employment to foster a sense of belonging and agency among young migrants in the hosting society.

**“In Barcelona, people born outside Spain represent just 1.38% of the municipal employees (Gerència de Persones i Desenvolupament Organitzatiu. Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2022). This affects how young migrants perceive themselves and their role in the hosting society”**

# INSIGHTS FROM CASE STUDIES

## INTRODUCTION

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This chapter explores interviews with youth workers and educators, offering insightful case studies that showcase shared spaces in action. We analyzed these discussions to present key insights, including practices, challenges, and successes within diverse community settings. Topics included activities, communication strategies, overcoming challenges, and ensuring inclusivity. We also examined the benefits and impact of shared spaces on individuals and communities.



## **1-Hatim Azari** **Joves Units del Poble Sec**

Hatim, as the president of Joves Units del Poble Sec Association, spearheads a dynamic youth-led nonprofit founded in 2019 in Barcelona's Poble Sec neighborhood. Its mission revolves around fostering integration and nurturing a sense of community belonging. Notable initiatives include establishing community gardens and organizing sports events during local festivities. They actively advocate to the local government for improved public facilities and specific neighborhood needs, such as extended library hours.

A cornerstone of their efforts is the Calisthenics for Youth program, attracting participants from diverse backgrounds, and offering them a avenue for free sports engagement and social connection. For two years, Joves Units has been claiming to local authorities to recover the Poble Sec Popular Gym, a large facility that had been closed to the public. Thanks to their campaigning, the gym was rehabilitated and made available to the community for sports and cultural activities.

Through effective communication channels like Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp broadcast groups, they extend invitations to youngsters, ensuring their active involvement in the organization's activities.





## 2- Jessica Soder Club social Albirrojita de Cataluña

Jessica Soder serves as the Cultural Coordinator of Club Social Albirrojita de Cataluña, an association dedicated to promoting Paraguayan culture since its establishment 12 years ago.

The club actively engages in both sports and cultural endeavors, boasting a football team that competes in the Catalanian Third Division. Additionally, on the artistic front, the club hosts dance groups that pay homage to Paraguay's cultural traditions, welcoming participants of all ages, including children, youth, mothers, and seniors.

Annually, the club organizes the "Tereré" Festival in Barcelona, celebrating Paraguayan culture and the Tereré National Day, a traditional cold yerba mate infusion. This festival, now in its 8th edition, has become increasingly popular.

While the club primarily relies on word-of-mouth promotion, it also maintains a presence on social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook.





### 3- Mafe Montilla El Mundo de Puppy

El Mundo de Puppy (“Puppy’s world”) is the personal project of Mafe Montilla, a 27-year-old Colombian living in Barcelona. Motivated by the great difficulty she faced arriving as a migrant in Barcelona she started a TikTok account (De viaje con Puppy) to support newly arrived immigrants from Latin America in Barcelona, helping them overcome the challenges of leaving home and arriving in a new setting.

Building on the success of her TikTok, she recently launched “El Mundo de Puppy”, an active community of people living in Barcelona, who have identified with Puppy, and who now meet to make plans, travel, and even do business, all with the overarching goal of fostering a sense of belonging for Latin American newcomers in Barcelona.

Mafe is a marketing expert who has designed an effective communication strategy to build her community. Her primary communication channels are social media – TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp – where she has built a community with several groups catering to everyone's preferences: parties, plans, dance, fitness, girls' meetups, business meetings, and even a Tinder. This multifaceted approach ensures that El Mundo de Puppy remains inclusive and accessible to all, furthering Mafe's mission of making Barcelona feel like home for Latin American newcomers.





## 4- Divaika Centre Euro Africa

Centre Euro Africa, a non-profit organization founded in 2010 by Divaika Kiemba Dina, operates out of Barcelona with a mission to foster connections between Africa and Europe, primarily focusing on empowering youth and women. Beginning with an extensive in-field research project conducted between 2007 and 2010, Centre Euro Africa identified a concerning trend: many young individuals born in Spain to migrant African families lacked ambition and felt disadvantaged compared to their local peers. Recognizing the need for intervention, the organization embarked on a mission to inspire these youth to aspire to higher education and better opportunities, challenging misconceptions and stereotypes along the way.

In their communication efforts, Centre Euro Africa adopts a multifaceted approach, directly engaging with young people through personal invitations, social media platforms, and maintaining an informative website. Divaika emphasizes the importance of reaching out to young individuals in unconventional settings, such as hotel lobbies, to expand their horizons and instill a sense of possibility in those who may have never experienced such environments before.





# QUESTIONNAIRE

## METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire serves to complement the insights gathered from focus groups by providing qualitative and quantitative data on the preferences and level of participation of young migrants in community activities, as well as their engagement with local associations. Categorical variables were recorded through both open-ended and category questions, while quantitative variables were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale.

The survey collected responses from 15 participants, all of whom were young migrants (M: 33.3%; F: 66.6%) between the ages of 18 and 30 (18-21: 7%; 22-25: 47%; 26-30: 47%) currently residing in Spain. The majority of participants came from Latin American countries (Argentina, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru), with additional representation from Europe (Belarus, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom) and North Africa (Morocco). Notably, 73% of the respondents had resided in Spain for less than 5 years.

**To what degree are you active in your local community? (e.g. sports, political, participation, culture, arts, youth work, activism, informal groups)**



1	0 (0 %)
2	4 (26,7 %)
3	5 (33.3%)
4	5 (33.3%)
5	1 (6.7%)

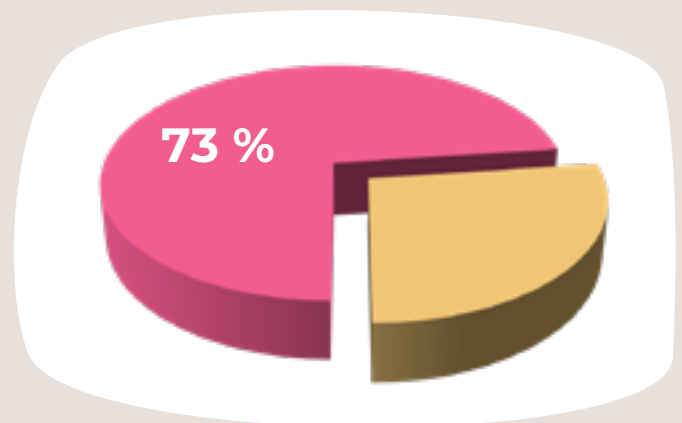
## COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

Participants generally reported a moderate to high level of integration into their community, alongside a moderate perception of accessibility to community spaces. The degree of participation in community activities among young migrants was described as moderate, with 73% allocating only one day per week to such engagements. These activities spanned various categories including recreational pursuits (e.g., tourism, board games, art), social interactions (e.g., informal meetings, debates, integration), educational endeavors (e.g., museums, libraries, cultural tours), sports activities (e.g., skating, yoga, calisthenics), and volunteering.

Participants were also surveyed on their level of interest in specific categories of activities. Overall, preferences ranged from highest to lowest interest as follows: sports, language exchanges, cultural exchange, networking, free tours, cultural activities, podcasts and content creation, culinary events, entrepreneurship sessions, civil rights workshops, art, Catalan language exchanges, and practical workshops. Additionally, based on participant feedback, suggestions were made for events focusing on environmental activism, mental health, and cultural integration (e.g., a 'welcome kit' for Barcelona).

### 73 % Activities:

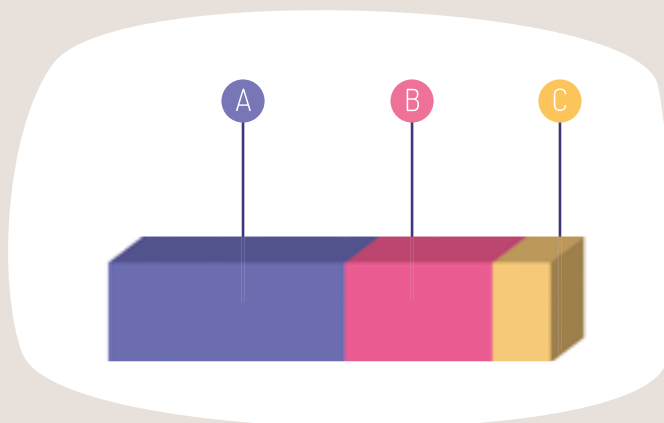
- Recreational
- Social
- Educational
- Sports



## COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

Over half (53%) of the respondents reported personal involvement with community associations, while 33% followed such associations on social networks, and only 13% had no affiliation with these entities.

Notable organizations included Afev, Som Sant Antoni, Consorci per la Normalització Lingüística, Stop NGO, ACATS, Deviajeconpuppy, Movi Perú, Hockey club Torrelles, Palma esports, ROEX Barcelona, Badiu Jove Badalona, Terrassa libre de plásticos (Plastic-free Terrassa), Ateneu del Raval, AlterNativa Intercanvi, L'Occulta, and FEDELATINA, in addition to unspecified sports associations. When asked about their willingness to organize activities for such entities, 40% of participants indicated they would not have the time to do so. In comparison, the remaining 60% expressed interest in organizing activities ranging from free dance lessons to marketing courses, reading or film clubs, entrepreneurship or social networking events, assistance for animals, board games, cooking, tourism, or healthy habits events.



- A** 53% are involved in some association community
- B** 33% follow them on the networks social
- C** 13% have no relationship with this type of organizations.

## COMMUNICATION

Regarding communication channels and methods preferred by participants for community associations, 60% indicated that contacting them through social networks such as Instagram would be the most convenient. Meanwhile, 20% preferred communication via channels like WhatsApp or Telegram, 13% relied more on email or SMS, and only 7% favored word-of-mouth communication.

## CONCLUSION

This report has shed light on the multifaceted experiences of young migrants, revealing both challenges and opportunities in their integration into European communities. It is evident that improving communication strategies and fostering inclusivity are crucial steps towards addressing the barriers young migrants face and creating a more welcoming environment.

The findings underscore the importance of creating 'Safe Spaces' where young migrants can feel comfortable, accepted, and connected. To achieve this, organizations and institutions should actively engage with migrant communities, network with relevant associations, and ensure that their staff are sensitive to the challenges faced by young migrants.

Inviting young migrants to be active participants in community initiatives and celebrating diversity are essential for promoting inclusivity and fostering a sense of belonging. By recognizing migrants as equal members of our community and embracing their contributions, we can move towards building a more egalitarian Europe.

Stakeholders across sectors must collaborate and take proactive measures to implement the recommendations outlined in this report. By working together, we can create a more inclusive society where all individuals, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to thrive and contribute positively to our communities.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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