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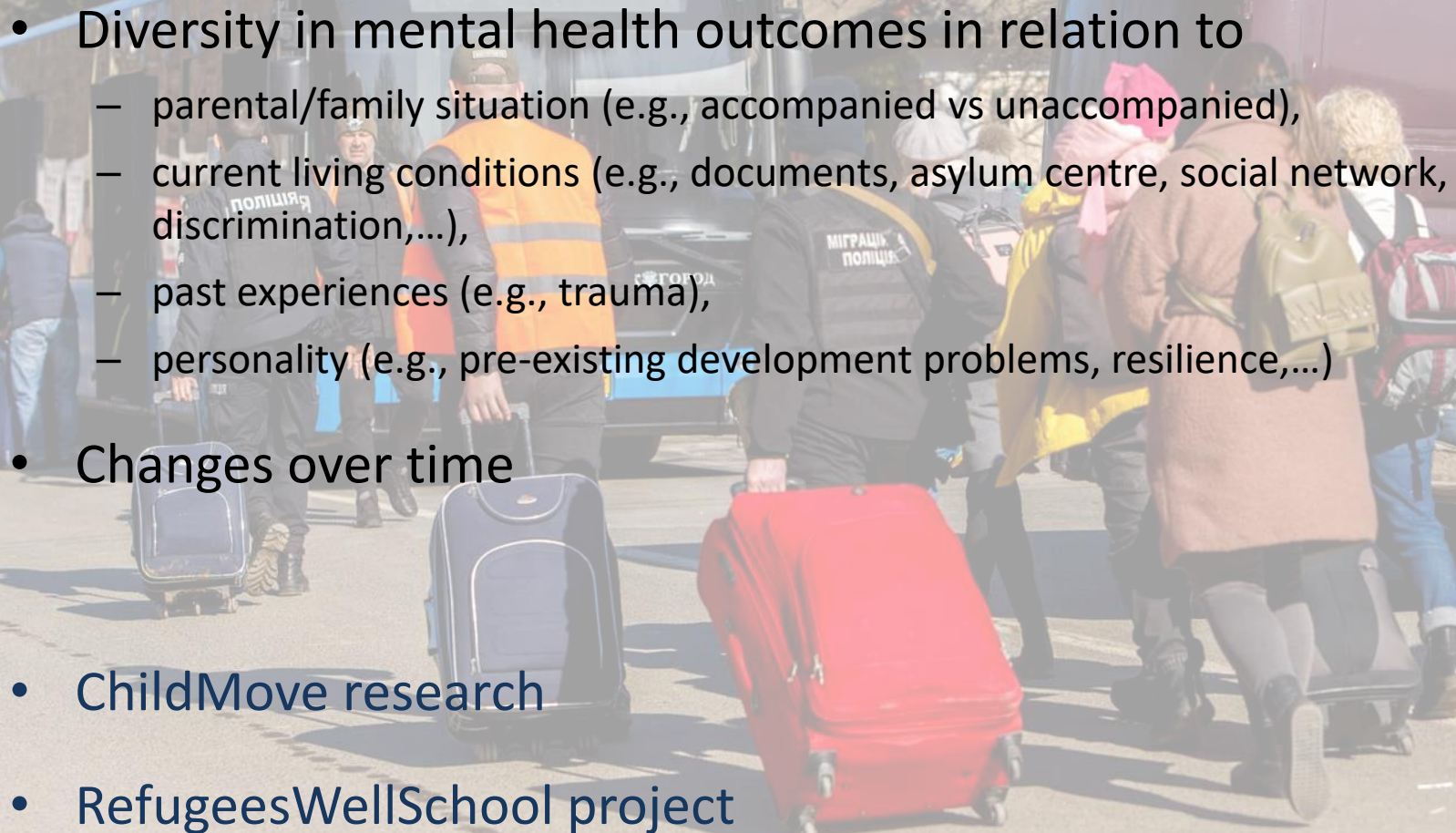
**Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy**

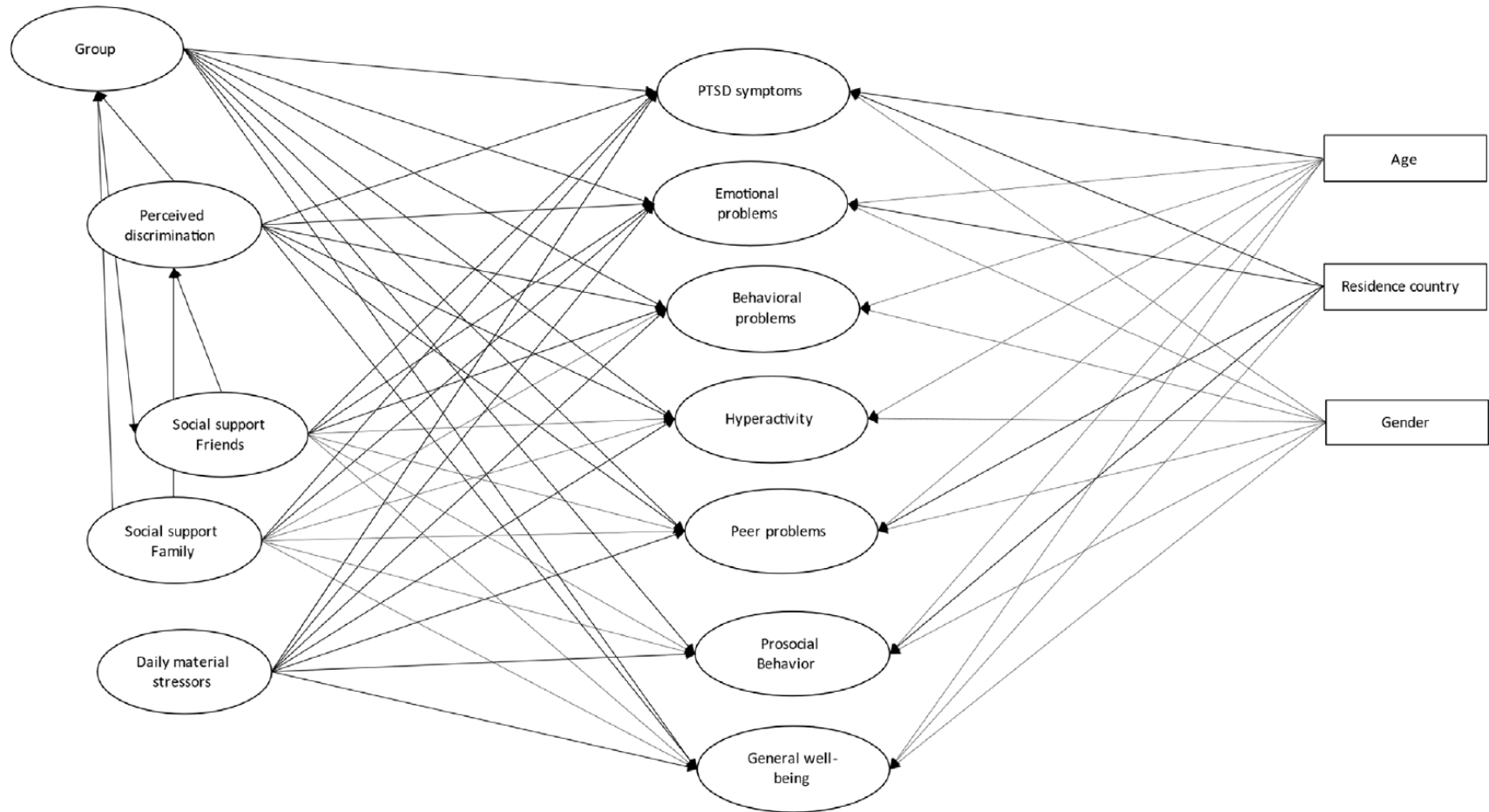
**Ghent University - Belgium**



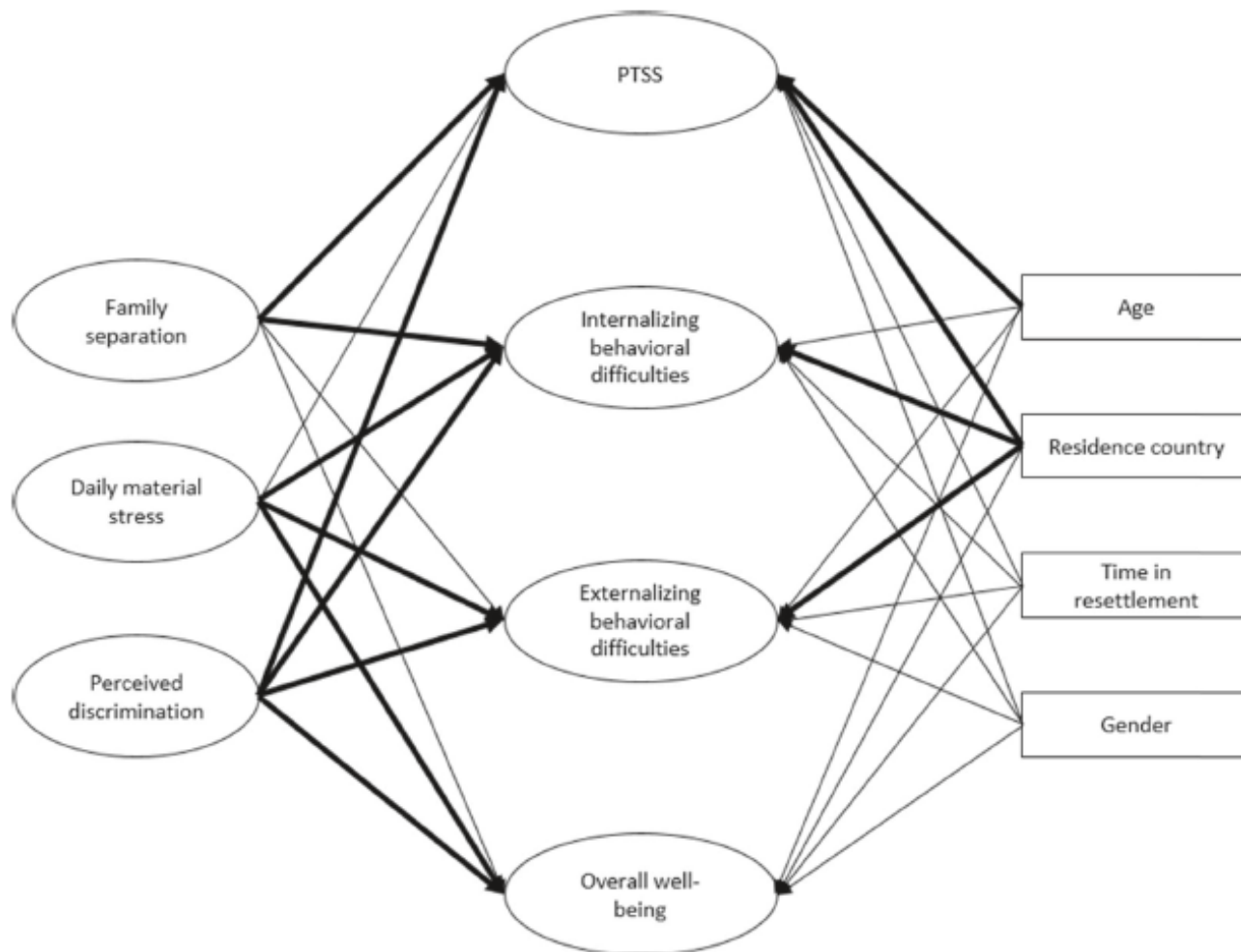
**The wellbeing of young refugees**

# Wellbeing of young refugees

- Diversity in mental health outcomes in relation to
    - parental/family situation (e.g., accompanied vs unaccompanied),
    - current living conditions (e.g., documents, asylum centre, social network, discrimination,...),
    - past experiences (e.g., trauma),
    - personality (e.g., pre-existing development problems, resilience,...)
  - Changes over time
  - ChildMove research
  - RefugeesWellSchool project
- 



**Figure 1.** Model relating age, residence country, gender, group, daily material stress, perceived discrimination and social support (family and friends) to mental health measures.



## Mental Health of Refugee and Non-refugee Migrant Young People in European Secondary Education: The Role of Family Separation, Daily Material Stress and Perceived Discrimination in Resettlement

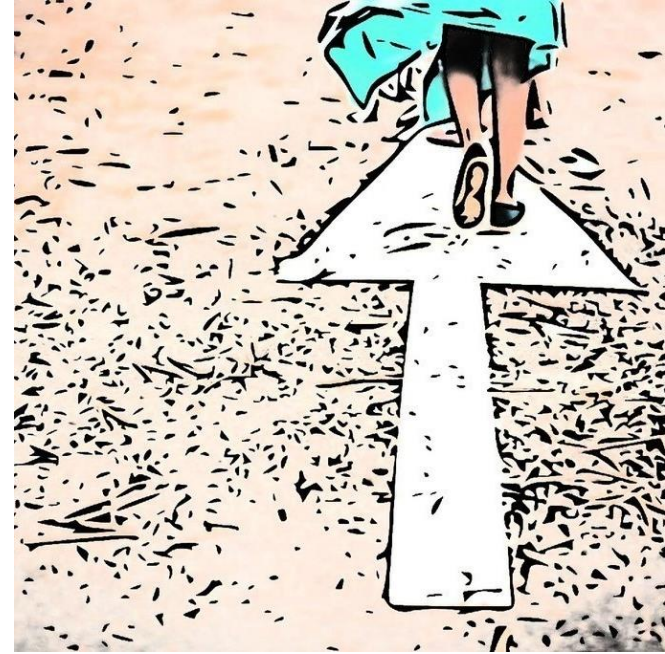
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## The experiences of unaccompanied young refugees on the move

ChildMove Project



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# KEY FACTORS

The image features a white brick wall background. At the top, the text 'KEY FACTORS' is centered. Below it, three black pendant lights hang from the ceiling. Each light casts a wide, white, conical beam of light onto the wall. The leftmost beam is labeled 'PRE-FLIGHT EXPERIENCES', the middle beam is labeled 'FLIGHT EXPERIENCES', and the rightmost beam is labeled 'POST-FLIGHT EXPERIENCES'. The floor at the bottom of the image is made of light-colored wooden planks.

**PRE-FLIGHT  
EXPERIENCES**

**FLIGHT  
EXPERIENCES**

**POST-FLIGHT  
EXPERIENCES**

# MAIN OBJECTIVES

- 1 Which flight experiences?**
- 2 Psychological impact of flight experiences & impact of racism, detention, reception conditions**
- 3 Differentiation past trauma (home) – flight experiences – current stressors (host country)? Theoretical alternative?** (Herman 1992; Miller & Rasmussen 2010; V. Turner 1967; S. Turner 2015)
- 4 Beneficial types of care & support?**

## STUDY METHODOLOGY

Libya

Detention centres

Participant observations  
 Visual ethnography  
*Graffiti analysis* Derluyn et al 2014

Greece

Detention centre

Centres URM

50-100 URM/country (*n*=250)  
 In-depth interviews  
*Experiences past, present, future*

Italy

Centres URM/victims

Informal setting

Self-report questionnaires  
Bean, Derluyn et al 2006, 2007  
*Mental health, coping, social support, trauma, stressors*

Belgium

Centres URM

(Police station)

Ethics Vervliet, Derluyn et al 2015  
*Interpretors; referral network; informed consent*



STUDY 2

Greece

Centres URM

Detention centre

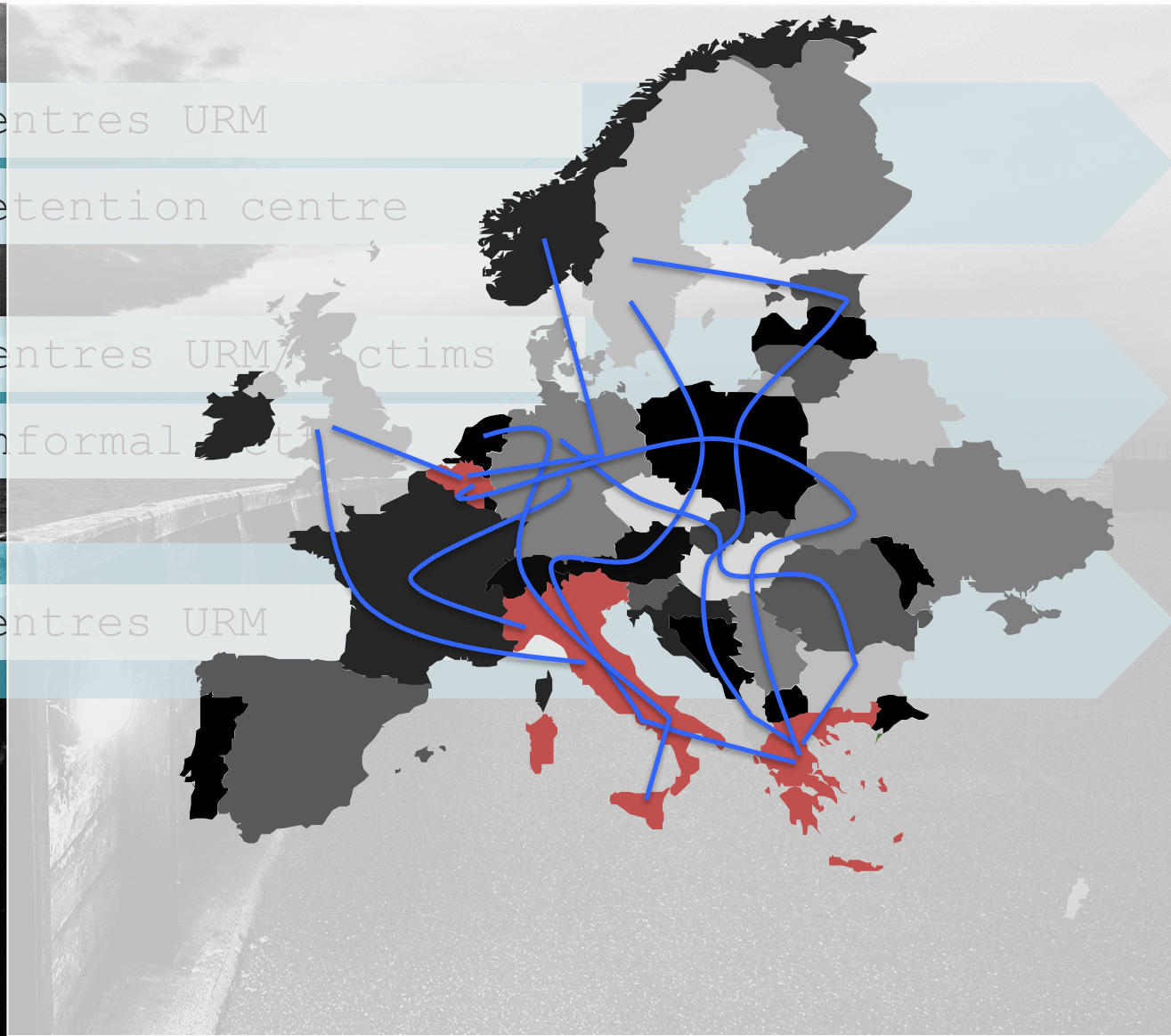
Italy

Centres URM/victims

Informal structures

Belgium

Centres URM

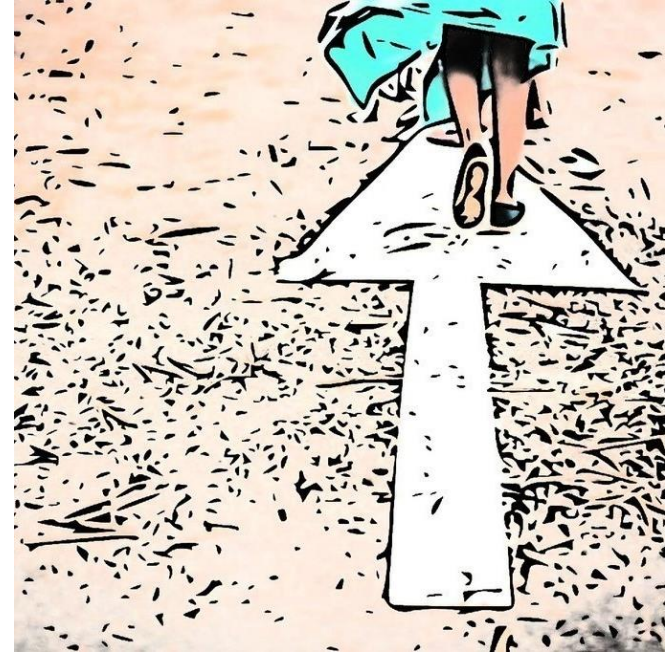


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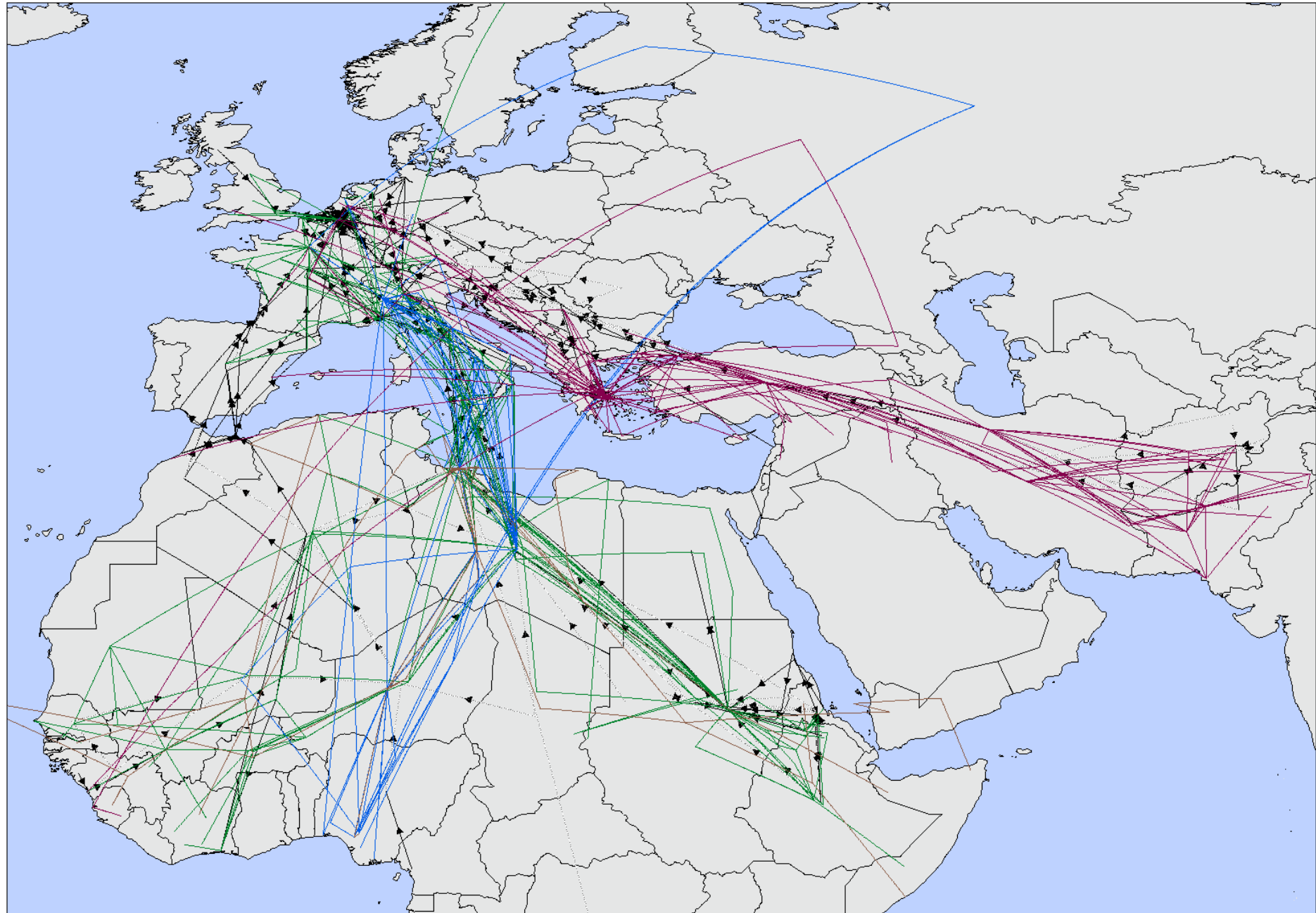


## I. Trajectories & Mobility



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## GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY: FURTHER ON THE MOVE

“Direct” trajectories vs interrupted trajectories

Interrupted trajectories – documents & care structures

*Upon my arrival, they promised to proceed with my documents, but they didn't keep their promise. The shower is once a week and the food is not good [...] The pocket money was given every two weeks. [In the centre] you have to accept the situation, you have no right to claim anything. (Jihed, Tunisian – M1 in Italy)*

Impact of familial networks

*I have some family in Germany and in Spain. My uncle in Germany refused to help me and I received no answer from my uncle in Spain. He stopped all contact when I told him I was going to France. (Idriss, Guinean boy, M1 in Ventimiglia)*

## SOCIAL MOBILITY: TRYING TO SETTLE



Documents

Better lives – efforts to integrate – also to obtain documents

When I'm at the [football] field (...), the White children, the little ones, many of them come and call me (...). Because when I go there, I have fun with them all . So when I come there (...), they run, we play together, we do everything together, and (...) often even the mothers come to look at us: "Ah it's you, my child, he comes to play with you here. They often talk to me about you at home". (Seydou, Ivorian – M1 in Italy )

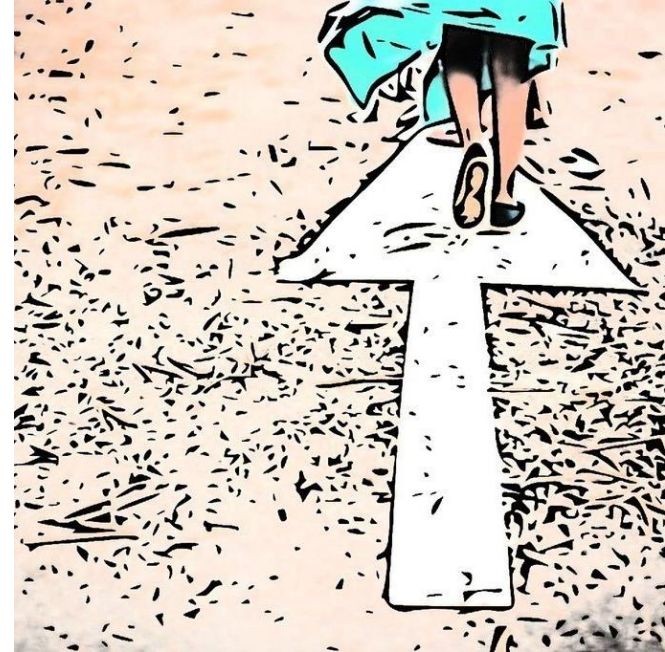
Impact of familial networks

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## II. Difficult experiences



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## LOOPS OF VIOLENCE



### Detention - Police violence - violence at the borders

“When we were in prison a policeman came with smugglers: we were five, three of us were women and two of them were pregnant. They beat and raped them, all of them died and only me with another man [survived so that] they asked us to pay 2.000 dollars... When we [told them] that we [did not] have any money they started

### Sexual violence & stigma

“Once they see you are black and if they hear that you are from Nigeria, it is even worse! They will beat you, rape you, shoot the boys and nothing will happen!” (Adult female, Italy)

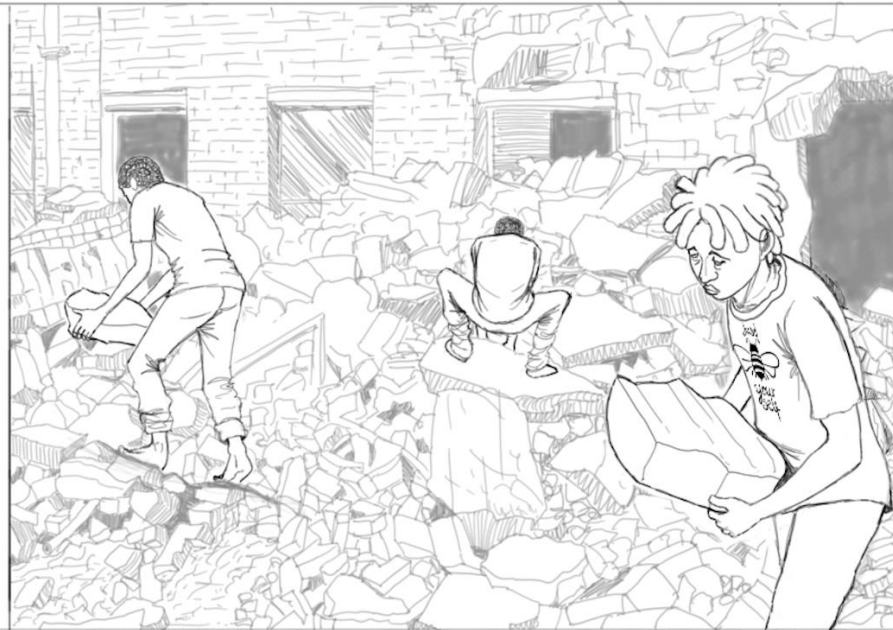
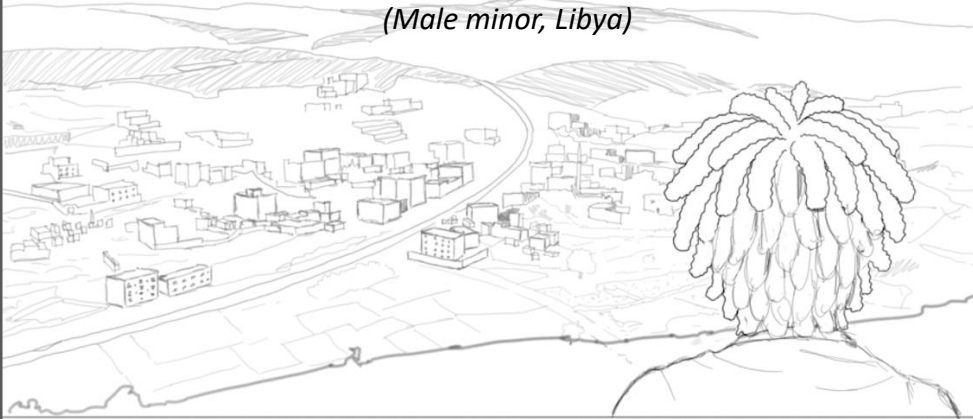
### Even in reception centres

“Our container has no door, no windows. In the night drunk men are coming to the minors’ section and they hit the containers with sticks to scare us. I’m always afraid to sleep”

**BANI WALED**

*"In Bani Waled, we worked against our will... They forced us to... We worked in carrying rocks in house building... and they did not pay"  
(Male minor, Libya)*

@ Antonis Foradis





## LOOPS OF VIOLENCE: WAITING - PROCEDURES

**“I am very tired and stressed, because I am here for two years now and I still haven’t got an interview... That’s what I’m thinking about and it makes me cry.” (Boy 18 y/o)**

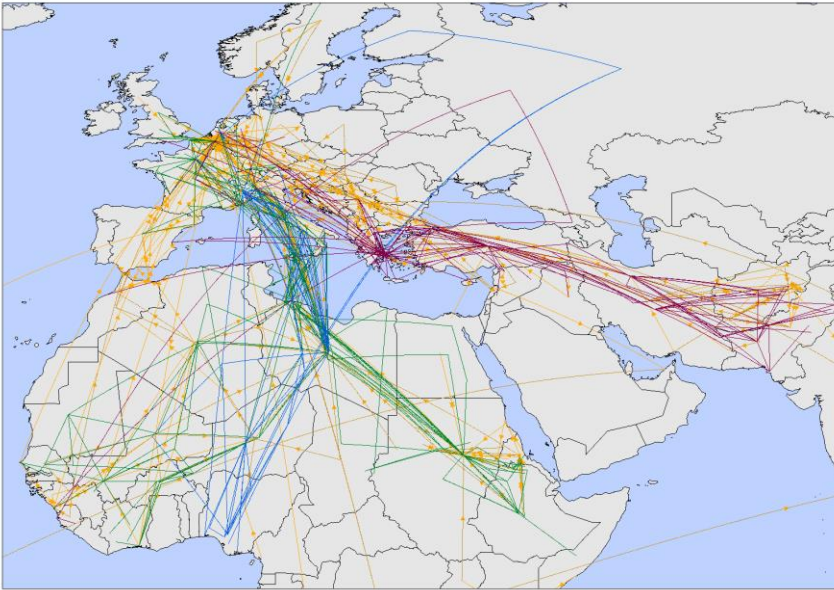
“I just don’t see the point. I think I did everything right, but Greece doesn’t want me to stay here... No, I don’t want to go to another country. What’s the point? I’m only afraid that they will send me back. And then I will have to end my life.” (message via social media).” (Boy 19 y/o)

“Our case has been dismissed for a third time by the asylum committee, and we are about to go to the court. I don’t know why it keeps happening. I’m living here for more than two years now and I’m still invisible. I’m tired of waiting, we only wait.” (Girl, 19 y/o, text message)

“I feel like I’m in a waiting room for the doctor. Although I need to see the doctor, every time it’s my turn, somebody else is going in. And I’m just there waiting and waiting and getting more tired, more sick” (Boy 17 y/o)

“Now they told me I have to wait for two years more... They are saying we can't do anything with this situation. I go everywhere where I can go, like every office, every social worker, but I'm tired now, I'm mentally upset.” (Boy 19, y/o)

# *Stressful life events*



84.9%



29.5%



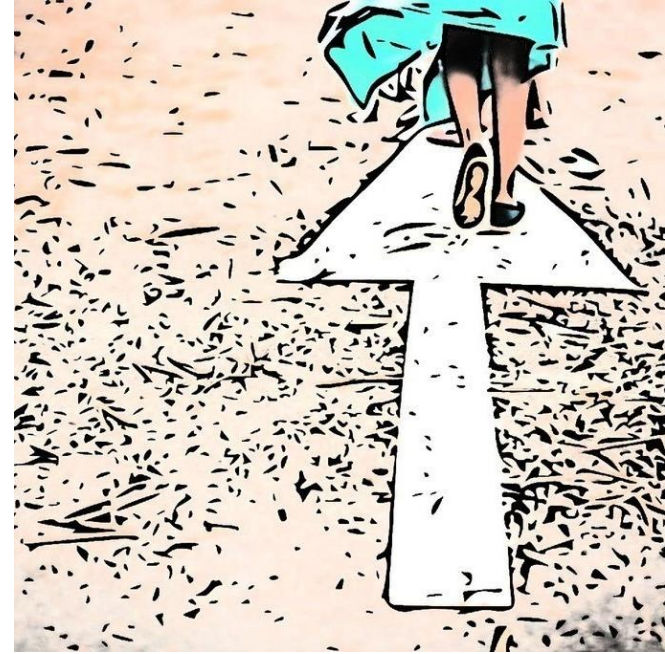
78%

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### III. Impact of daily stressors & traumatic experiences on mental health



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# Impact of daily stressors & traumatic events on anxiety and depression

**Table 5**

*Descriptive Data on All Variables Across All Measurement Time Points*

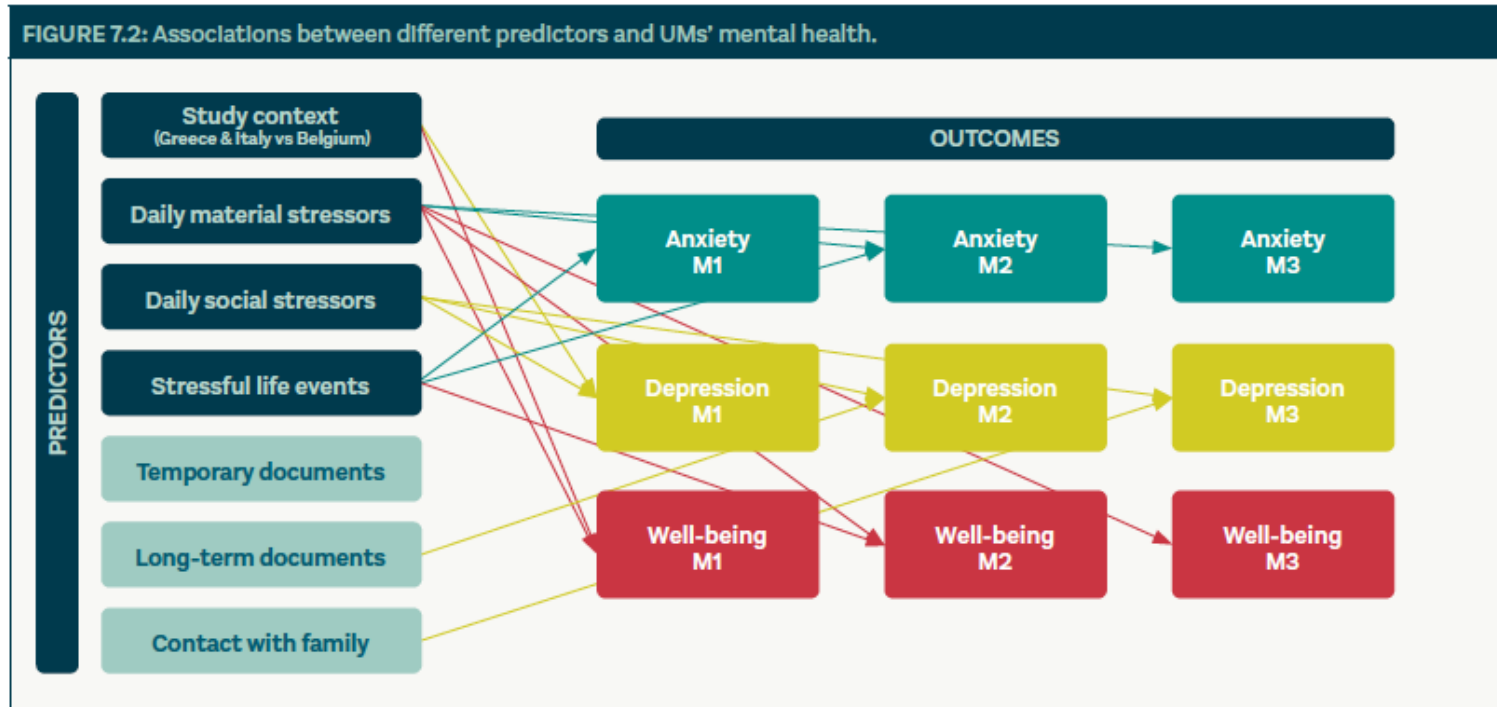
Variable	M1	M2	M3
Anxiety symptoms <sup>a</sup>	20.35 (6.15; 11–40)	18.93 (6.02; 10–38)	18.34 (5.69; 10–32)
Depression symptoms <sup>a</sup>	29.64 (7.68; 15–51)	27.81 (7.96; 14–54)	26.52 (7.87; 14–51)
Well-being <sup>a</sup>	3.21 (1.20; 1–5)	3.58 (1.12; 1–5)	3.59 (0.99; 1–5)
Material stressors <sup>a</sup>	1.99 (0.74; 1.00–4.00)	1.73 (0.65; 1.00–3.67)	1.61 (0.58; 1.00–3.33)
Social stressors <sup>a</sup>	2.11 (0.60; 1.00–3.71)	2.03 (0.65; 1.00–3.57)	2.05 (0.71; 1.00–3.80)
Stressful life events <sup>a</sup>	9.11 (3.69; 1–23)	8.12 (4.29; 0–23)	8.89 (3.92; 0–18)
Temporary documents (yes) <sup>b</sup>	155 (82.0)	79 (69.3)	19 (26.0)
Long-term documents (yes) <sup>b</sup>	6 (3.2)	30 (26.3)	43 (58.9)
Participants reporting contact with family (yes) <sup>b</sup>	79 (55.6)	65 (73.0)	42 (87.5)

*Note.* Stressful life events include all events before, during and after migration. M = measurement moment. Temporary documents = less than 1 year, long-term documents = more than 1 year.

<sup>a</sup> *M* (*SD*; range). <sup>b</sup> *n* (%).

Behrendt, M. Pfeiffer, E. Devlieger, I. Adeyinka, S. Rota, M. Uzureau, O. Lietaert, I. & Derluyn, I. (2022). The impact of daily stressors on unaccompanied young refugees' mental health: A longitudinal study. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. Advance online publication. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1037/ort000644>

FIGURE 7.2: Associations between different predictors and UMs' mental health.



Note. M1= first measurement moment 1; M2 = second measurement moment; M3 = third measurement moment.

## ***Impact on anxiety & depression: results***

- ✓ On anxiety: material stressors: not on M1, impact on M2 & M3 – increasing over time; social stressors: on all MM, decreasing over time; SLE: M1 & M2
- ✓ On depression: material stressors: no impact; social stressors: three MM, increasing over time
- ✓ Traumatic events (pre+peri+post): important impact on anxiety and depression in the beginning; decreasing over time
- ✓ Over time: impact of daily stressors (especially social stressors) > impact of traumatic events
- ✓ Long-term documents (M2) & contact with family (M3) alleviate symptoms of depression

# Impact of daily stressors & pre-trauma on PTSD

**Table 3** Descriptive data on pre- and peri-migration trauma, daily stressors, and PTSS across all measurement time points (M1–M3) (N = 187)

	M1 M (SD), range	M2 M (SD), range	M3 M (SD), range
Pre-migration trauma	3.43 (2.50), 0–9	n/a	n/a
Peri-migration trauma*	5.98 (3.04), 0–14	5.98 (3.68), 0–15	6.50 (2.85), 0–12
Daily stressors	41.72 (9.00), 21–78	38.58 (9.37), 21–72	37.05 (10.80), 20–66
PTSS symptoms	24.55 (5.91), 11–39	23.92 (6.44), 10–38	22.38 (6.37), 10–39

n/a indicates no data available. Since all participants were on the move during the study, traumatic events prior migration (pre-migration) are only reported at baseline

M1 baseline, M2 6–12 month follow-up, M3 18–24 month follow-up, PTSS posttraumatic stress symptoms

\*peri-migration and host-country combined, see GCM model

Daily stressors & PTSD: decreased over time; no significant impact of pre-migration trauma (at M1) and daily stressors (= material + social) (at M1) on PTSD over time

Pfeiffer, E., Behrendt, M., Adeyinka, S., Devlieger, I., Rota, M., Uzureau, O., Verhaeghe, F., Lietaert, I. & Derluyn, I. (2022). Traumatic events, daily stressors and posttraumatic stress in unaccompanied young refugees during their flight: a longitudinal cross-country study. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 16(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-022-00461-2>



“All of...[the] guys [here have] like psychological problems. All of them. Like they stand, they sit, they cut themselves, one took too much pills to kill himself, one is jumping...the fence, one put in the window to cut his head”

(Boy, 17y, Moria)

*“Every night I have bad dreams... I dream about my family. For me it’s difficult to go to bed and sleep, still I think and that’s...the problem I have and this...thing is...in my mind.”*



*“I don't need the psychologist. I know I have problem and this and that, but the only thing can heal me, my family is (yeah), with me.”*

*“I wish my mom was here even for one day...”*

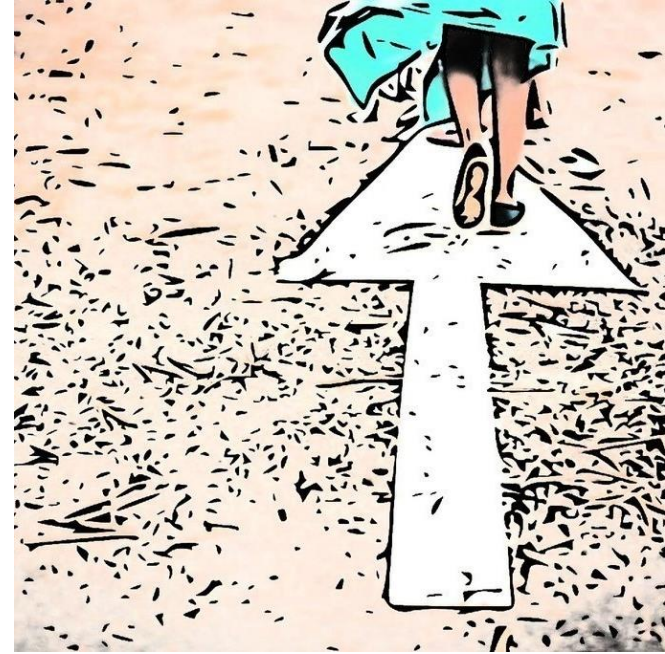


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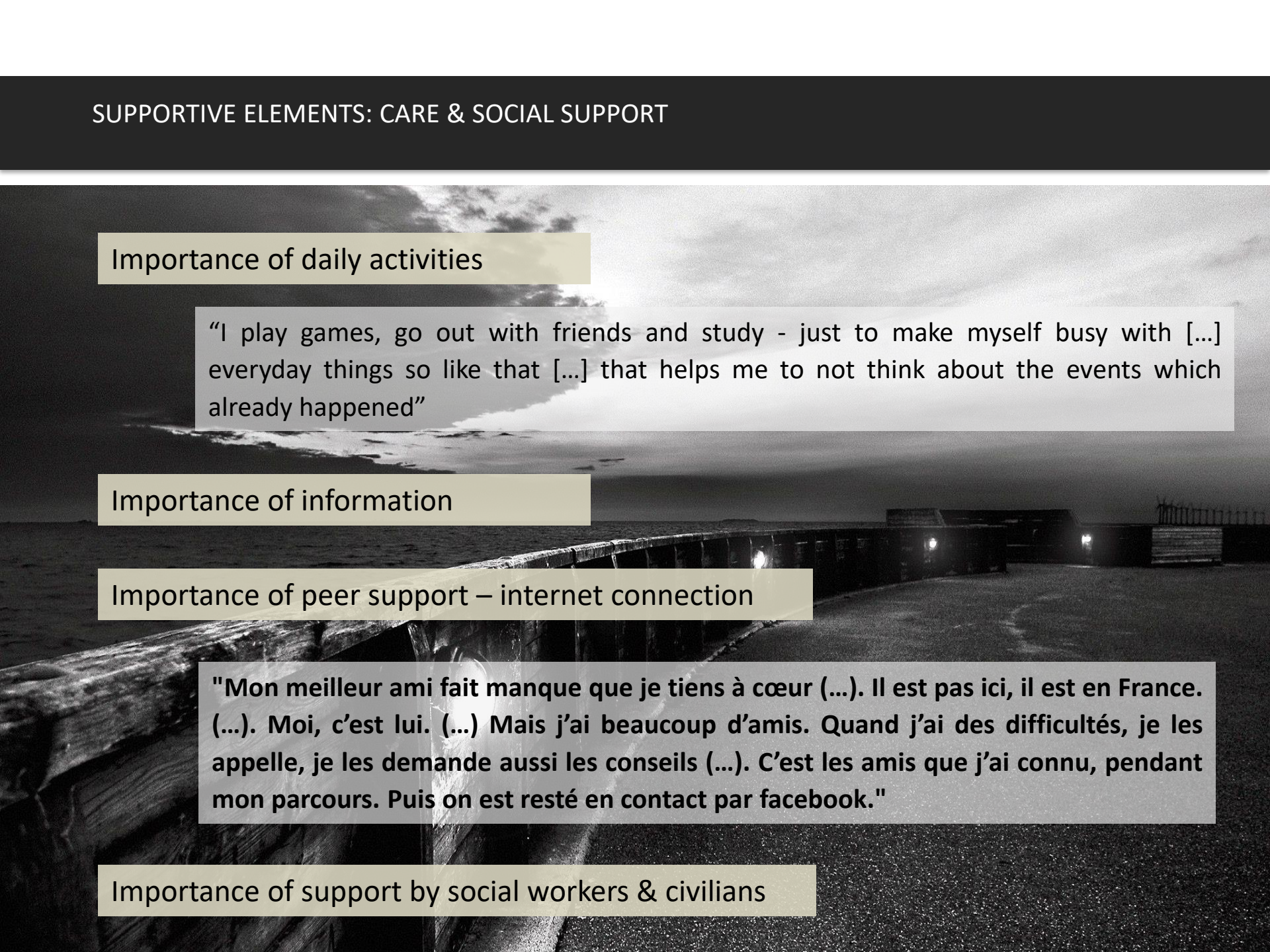
#### IV. Supportive elements



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## SUPPORTIVE ELEMENTS: CARE & SOCIAL SUPPORT



### Importance of daily activities

"I play games, go out with friends and study - just to make myself busy with [...] everyday things so like that [...] that helps me to not think about the events which already happened"

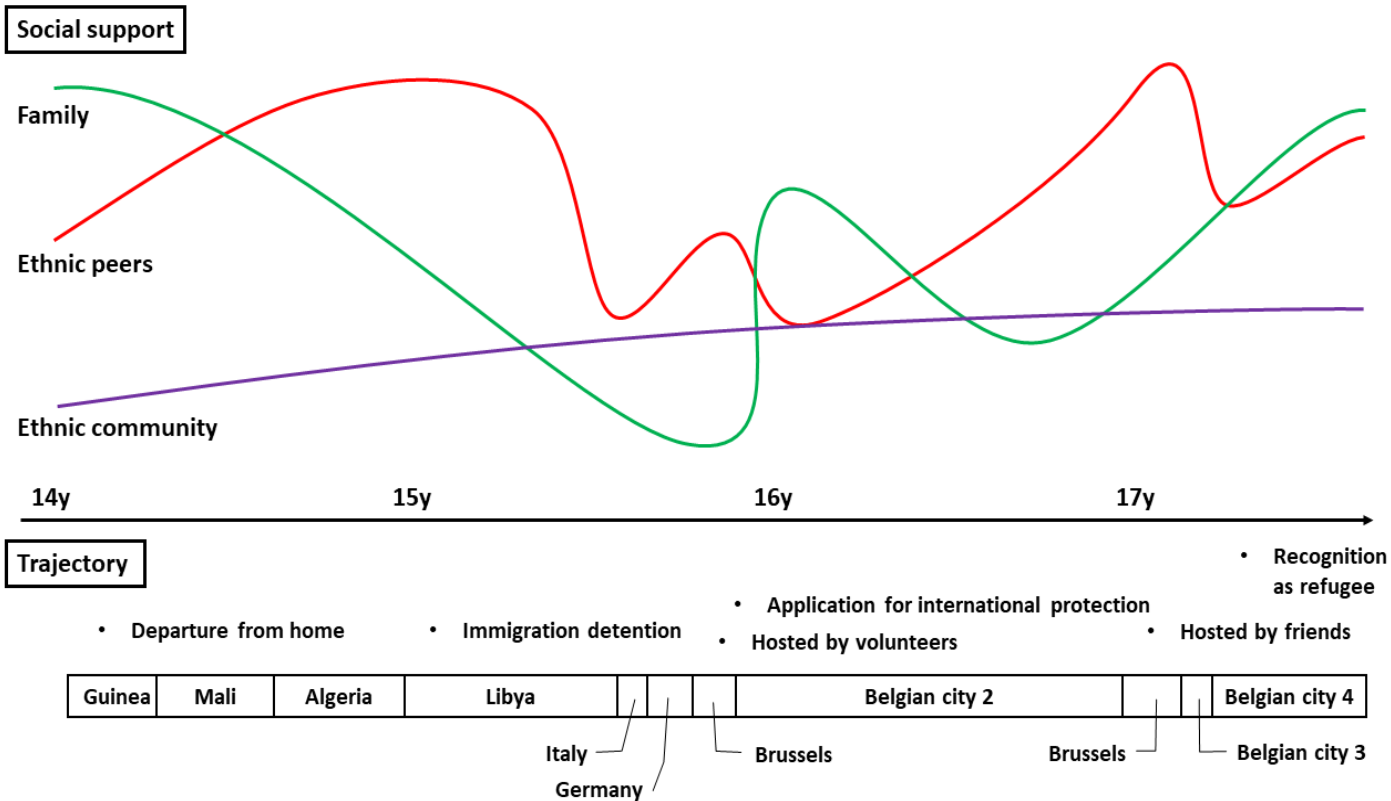
### Importance of information

### Importance of peer support – internet connection

"Mon meilleur ami fait manque que je tiens à cœur (...). Il est pas ici, il est en France. (...). Moi, c'est lui. (...) Mais j'ai beaucoup d'amis. Quand j'ai des difficultés, je les appelle, je les demande aussi les conseils (...). C'est les amis que j'ai connu, pendant mon parcours. Puis on est resté en contact par facebook."

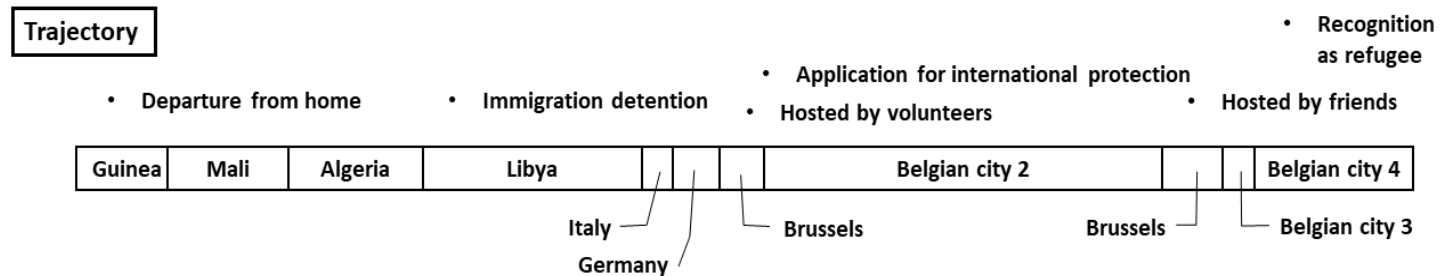
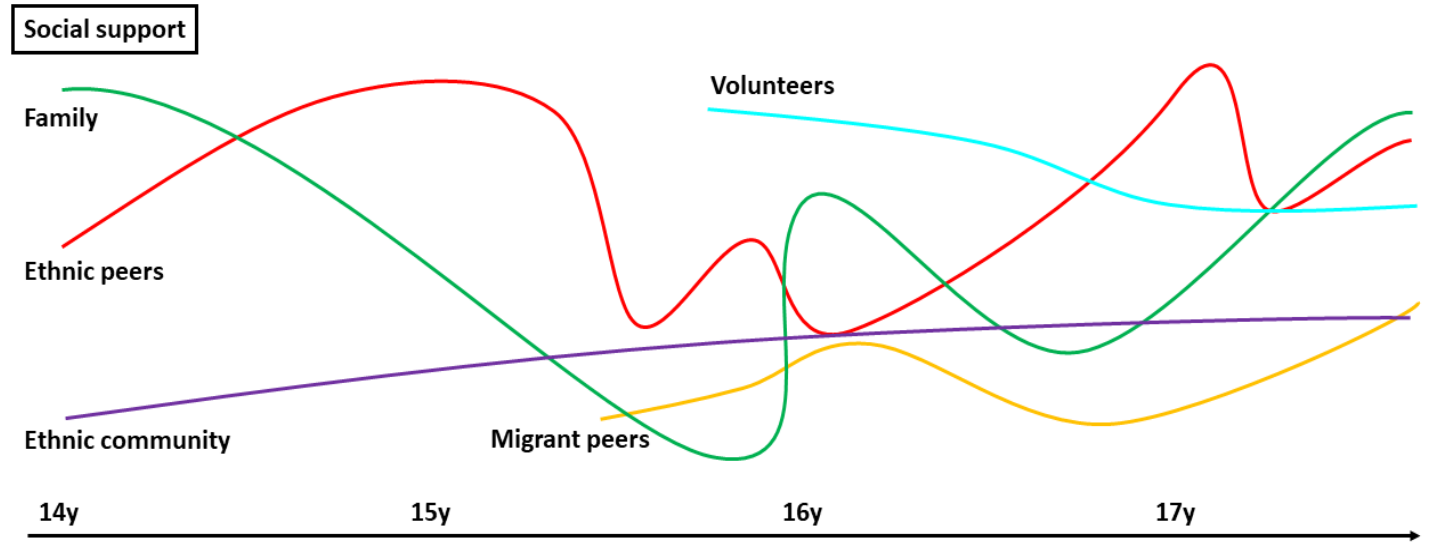
### Importance of support by social workers & civilians

# Social support

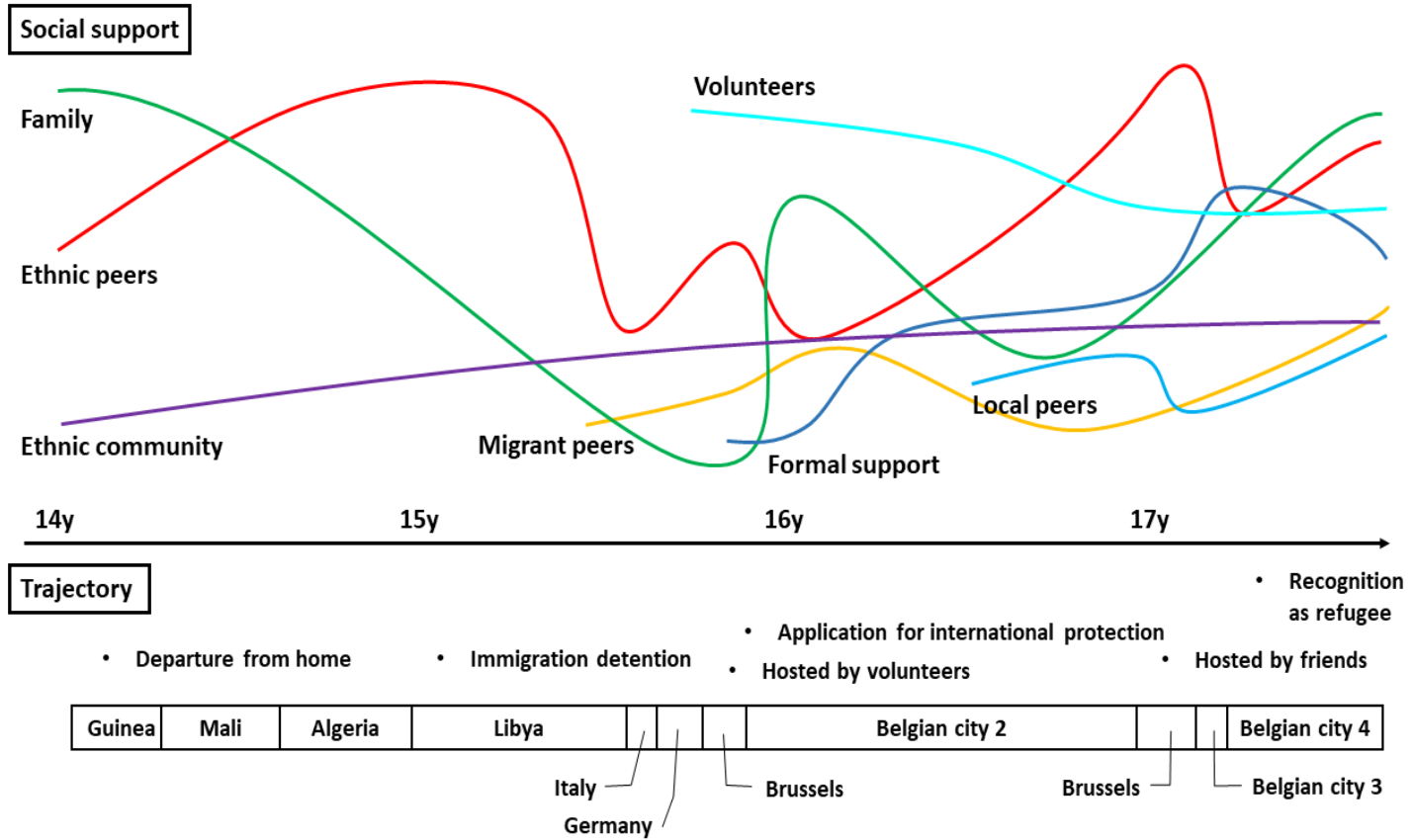


Behrendt, M., Lietaert, I., & Derluyn, I. (2021). Continuity and Social Support: A Longitudinal Study of Unaccompanied Refugee Minors' Care Networks, *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2021.1930322>

# Social support



# Social support



# To conclude

- High levels of traumatic experiences, pre-, peri- and post-migration – mostly interpersonal trauma
- High levels of daily stressors; material and social (incl. discrimination)
- High levels of mental health problems
- Trauma & daily stressors both impact mental health
- Mental health problems last for long
- Interrupted trajectories & related dangers



# What helps?



- Protection – no detention
- Legal travelling
- Documents
- Information (incl sexual health)
- Daily activities
- Material support (daily stressors)
- Stigma & discrimination
- Social support - contact with peers, volunteers,...
- Contact with family & Family reunification
- Mental health support (en route & in settlement)

# RefugeesWellSchool



[www.refugeeswellschool.org](http://www.refugeeswellschool.org)



A European Horizon2020 Research project

[Refugeeswellschool.org](http://Refugeeswellschool.org)



NORWEGIAN CENTRE FOR VIOLENCE  
AND TRAUMATIC STRESS STUDIES



This project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 754849.



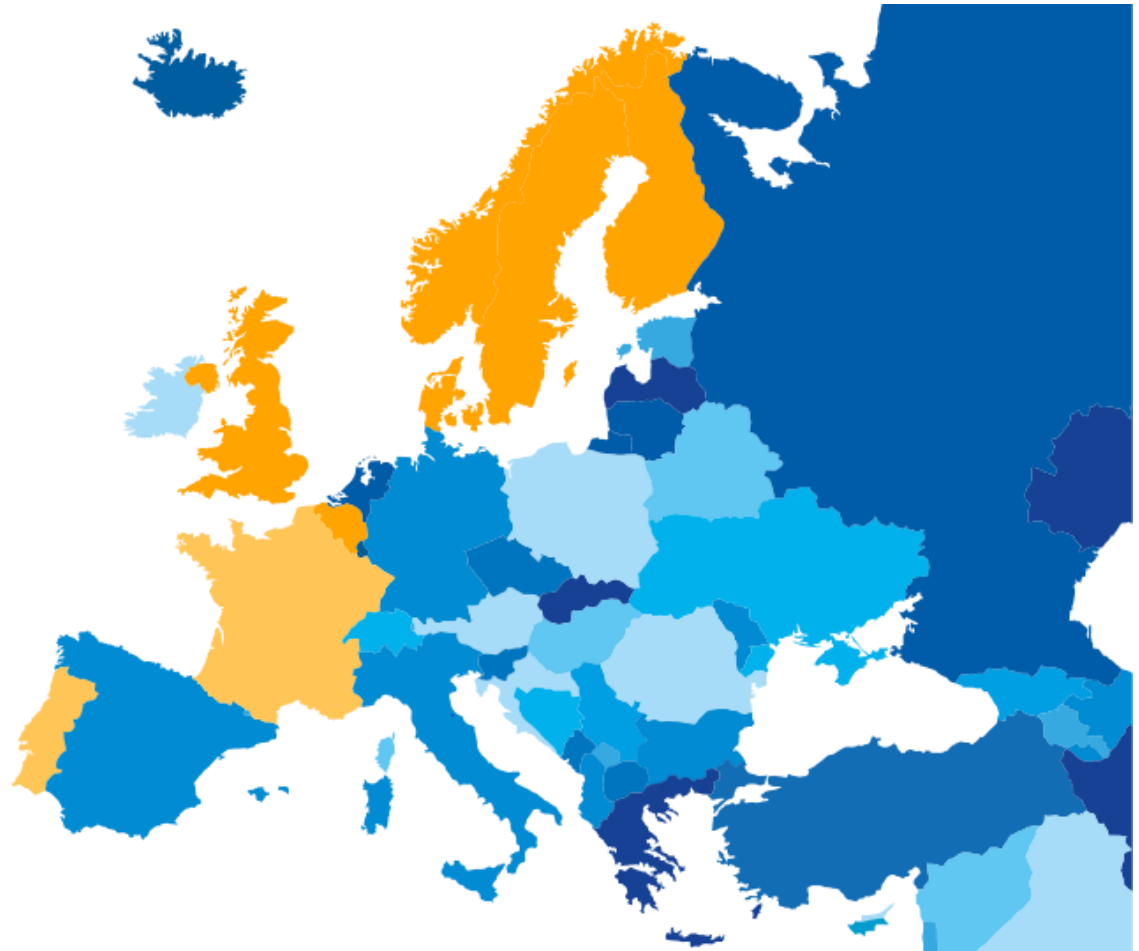


# The interventions

- Classroom Drama (CD) workshops
- Welcome-To-School (WTS)
- Peer Integration and Enhancement Resources (PIER) programme
- In-Service Teacher Training (INSETT)
- In-Service Teacher Training + Teaching Recovery Techniques (INSETT + TRT)

## Implemented in 6 European countries:

- Belgium
- Denmark
- Finland
- Norway
- Sweden
- United Kingdom



Manuals – choice-tool – assessment – effectiveness  
– and much more...

<https://refugeeswellschool.org>



**Refugeeswellschool**



**RefugeesWellSch**



**RefugeesWellSchool**



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## The wellbeing of young refugees

*They connect our lives and our families*

[www.childmove.eu](http://www.childmove.eu)

[www.refugeeswellschool.org](http://www.refugeeswellschool.org)



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