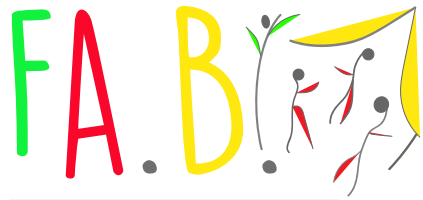




Co-funded by  
the European Union



FAMILY BASED CARE FOR CHILDREN IN MIGRATION

EVERYONE DESERVES AFFECTION AND SUPPORT TO GROW INTO ADULTHOOD



## MINORS TRAVELLING ALONE

Sadek from Bangladesh to Malta  
Selim from Marocco to Malta  
Ahmad from Syria to Malta





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Project partner



“The content of this publication represents the views of the author only and is his sole responsibility. The European Commission assumes no responsibility for any use that may be made of the information contained therein ”.

## WHY THIS BOOKLET

Who are the boys and girls of different ages, leaving their countries of origin and arriving in Europe alone without their family?

What drives them to leave their country and seek a new life in a new country?

How do they travel, how do they arrive?

What do these young migrants dream about? What are their future plans?

Learn more about the journey of Sadek, Selim, Ahmad three among them willing to tell us more about their journey.

The booklet offers an insight to better understanding who are the so called unaccompanied foreign minor and what are the challenges awaiting them once they reach Europe.

Why we do this? We believe in and promote new and different forms of welcoming these young migrants.

Why not open the doors of our home and our family and provide an alternative to reception centres?

What can be offered to guarantee young migrants alone study opportunity, sport, a life prospect, the hope of achieving their dreams?

The FAB European project offers families, singles and couples various opportunities for participation and collaboration in welcoming and hosting young migrants. It ensures information, training and support to anyone interested.

Read this booklet, find out more, contact us on the FAB platform and get involved.

As recently avowed by the European Union in Article 2 of Directive 2011/95/EU, an unaccompanied minor in the European Union is a "minor who arrives on the territory of an EU Member State unaccompanied by the adult responsible for him/her by law or by the practice of the EU Member State concerned, and until he/she is effectively taken into the care of such a person; or who is left unaccompanied after entering the territory of the EU Member State".

It should be mentioned, however, that UAMs are considered a special case in relation to migration, the asylum process, and other forms of international protection once they have arrived in the EU. They are included in the "most vulnerable" category, along with individuals such as minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, and victims of human trafficking. Due to their unaccompanied minor status and the lack of protection, unaccompanied minors are extremely vulnerable to threats (such as sex trafficking, physical violence, mental illness, smugglers, etc.) when they enter a new country.

As a 'vulnerable person', an unaccompanied minor receives, by law, special treatment and protection in the asylum process by the Member State. It is important to set the status of vulnerability above that of 'migrant', in order to grant proper legal interest to unaccompanied minors.

It should also be noticed that while the European Union has shaped several directives and regulations concerning the migration and asylum processes of unaccompanied minors with the aim of an alike application within the continent, individual Member States have interpreted the directives or regulations in very different ways. In 2010, the European Commission produced a document named 'Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors (2010-2014)' as an effort to design a complete and flexible framework for EU Member States that focused on the protection necessary for unaccompanied minors entering the EU. The plan sketches out the idea that an unaccompanied minor should be taken in charge by the competent authorities within an appropriate timeframe from the moment the minor is found on EU territory or at EU borders. It is built around ten principles to support EU institutions and Member States in their approach to unaccompanied minors as they arrive in the future. As the Action Plan is not a binding act, but a starting point for further discussion by EU institutions and Member States, almost all EU members do not yet have specific laws or a comprehensive framework that openly sketches the special protection needs of unaccompanied minors.

According to Eurostat data, 13,800 unaccompanied minors applied for asylum in Europe in 2019. This represents 7% of all asylum seekers in Europe in 2019. The figure is down sharply compared to previous years and has returned to levels prior to the so-called migration crisis that started in 2014.

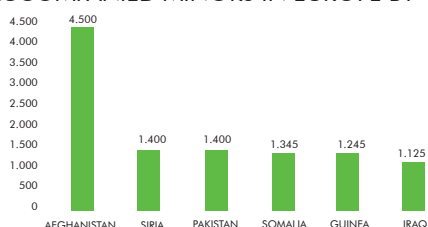
The profile of the unaccompanied foreign minor in Europe is that of a 16-17 year old male. In fact, males represent 85% of Unaccompanied minors who applied for asylum in Europe in 2019, while 16-17 year olds represent 67%.

Unaccompanied minors in Europe come mainly from Afghanistan (about four thousand people, 30% of the total of unaccompanied minors), Syria and Pakistan (about 1.4 thousand, 10%); followed by Somalia, Guinea and Iraq.

The countries of origin are similar to those of 2018 with the exception of Eritrea, which in 2018 was the second country and which instead saw a drastic drop in applications in 2019. In general, however, all countries recorded a decline compared to the previous year. See Graphic n. 2.

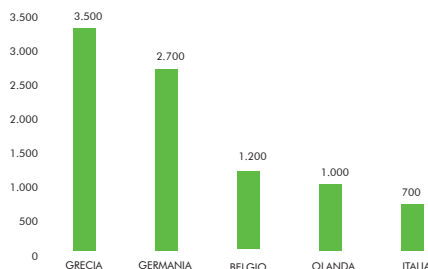
In 2019, most of the asylum applications of unaccompanied foreign minors were made in Greece, which received around 3,300 applications, 24% of the total. Followed by Germany (2,700, 19%), Belgium and the Netherlands. Italy, with about 700 applications (-83% compared to 2018), has emerged from the list of countries with the most questions; think that in 2017 it was in first place with about ten thousand questions. See Graphic n. 2.

## UNACCOMPANIED MINORS IN EUROPE BY CITIZENSHIP



Graphic n. 1- Source EUROSTAT

## ASYLUM APPLICATIONS FOR UNACCOMPANIED MINORS BY COUNTRY



Graphic n. 2- Source EUROSTAT

IN ENGLISH



Petrit from Albania to Perugia



Amil from Bangladesh to Naples



Marouane from Tunisia to Naples



Mohammed from Somalia to Cyprus



François from Cameroon to Cyprus



Raed from Syria to Cyprus



Dijibril from Guinea to Barbate



Mousa from Ivory Coast to Fuerteventura



Hamza from Morocco to Melilla



Hazan from Afghanistan to Moria



Ali from Pakistan to Evros



Hussan from Syria to Samos



Sadek from Bangladesh to Malta



Selim from Morocco to Malta



Ahmad from Syria to Malta

Funder

The claim

The young migrants wearing glasses to protect identity and look very cool

The partners



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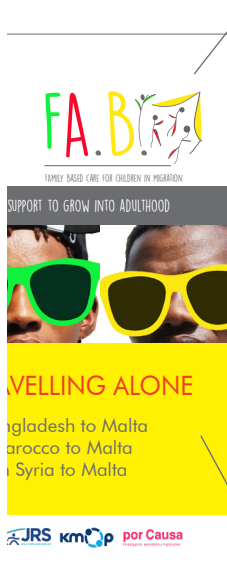
## IN ITALIAN

Petrit dall'Albania a Perugia 

Amil dal Bangladesh a Napoli 


Marouane dalla Tunisia a Napoli 


## The European project




Three different stories  
of unaccompanied  
foreign minors

## IN GREEK


Το ταξίδι του Μοχάμεντ από τη Σομαλία  
στην Κυπριακή 

Το ταξίδι του Φρανσουά από το Καμερούν  
στην Κυπριακή 

Το ταξίδι του Read από τη Συρία στην  
Κυπριακή 

Το ταξίδι του Hazan στη Μορια 

Το ταξίδι του Ali στον Εβρο 

Το ταξίδι του Hussan στη Σαμο 

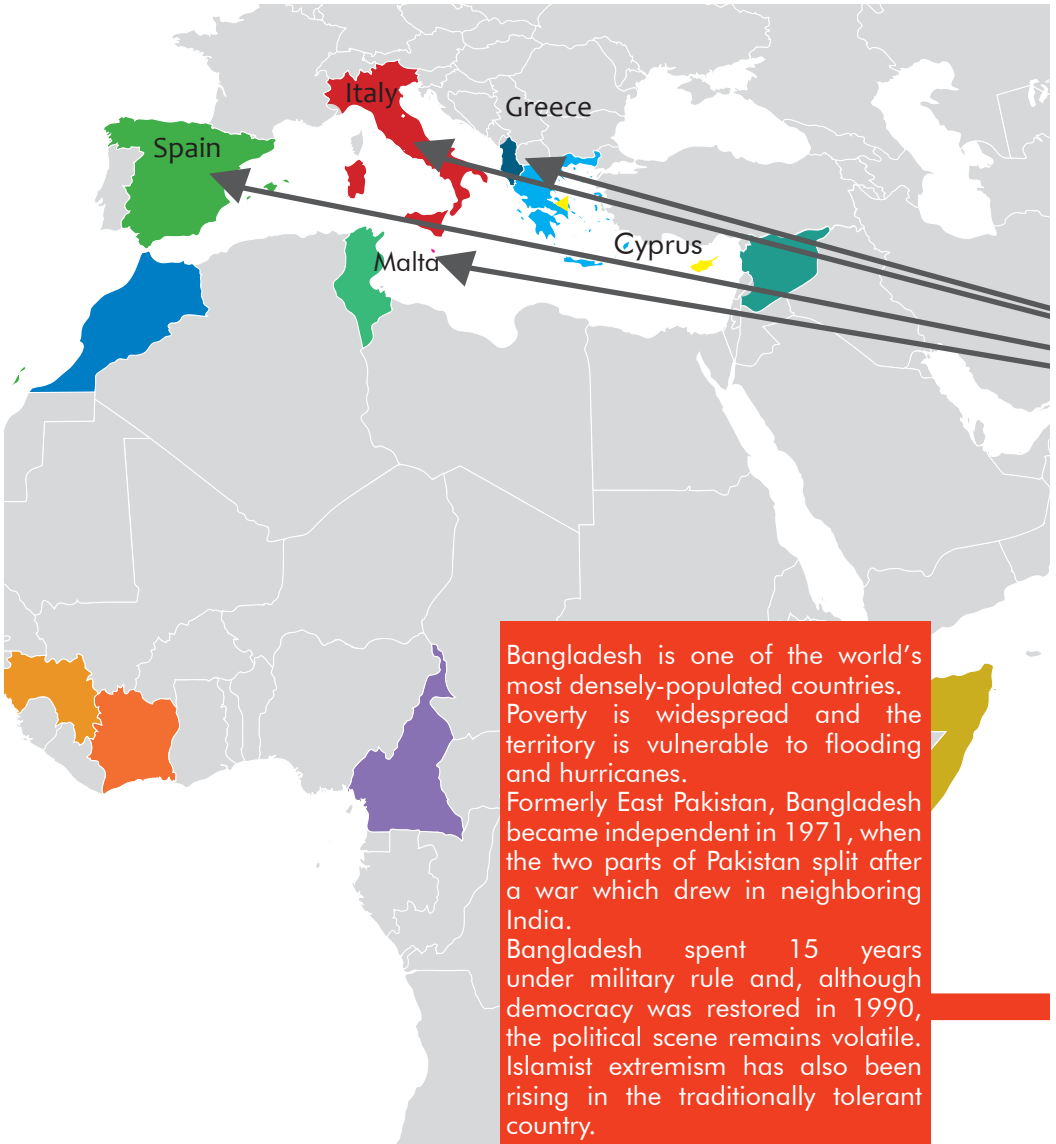
## IN SPANISH

Dijibril de Guinea a Barbate 

Mousa de Costa de Marfil  
a Fuerteventura 

Hamza de Marruecos a Melilla 

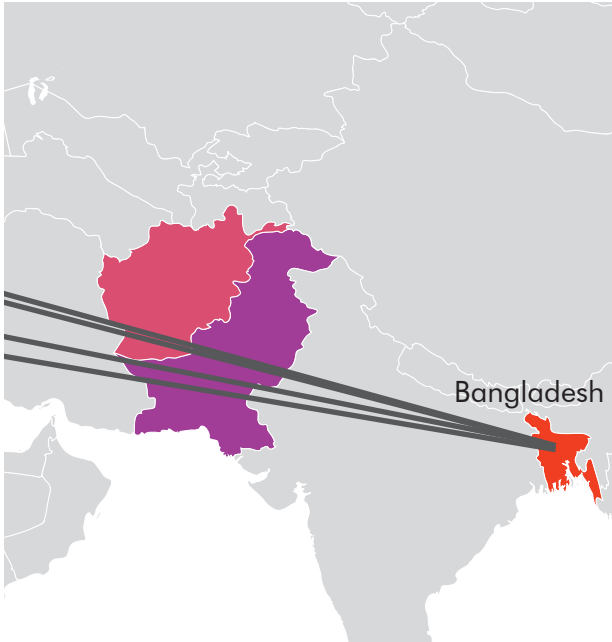
# BANGLADESHI UNACCOMPANIED FOREIGN MINORS IN THE FA.B! COUNTRIES



Bangladesh is one of the world's most densely-populated countries. Poverty is widespread and the territory is vulnerable to flooding and hurricanes. Formerly East Pakistan, Bangladesh became independent in 1971, when the two parts of Pakistan split after a war which drew in neighboring India. Bangladesh spent 15 years under military rule and, although democracy was restored in 1990, the political scene remains volatile. Islamist extremism has also been rising in the traditionally tolerant country.



# BANGLADESH




Full name: People's Republic of Bangladesh  
Official languages: Bengali  
Other languages: English (de facto co-official)  
Capital: Dhaka (15.000.000 inhabitants / 2013)  
Form of government: Parliamentary republic  
Surface  
Total: 147.570 km<sup>2</sup> (91<sup>o</sup>)  
Population  
Total: 165.953.360 [2] inhab. (10-04-2021) (8<sup>o</sup>)  
Density: 1.265 inhabitants / km<sup>2</sup>

The Bangladeshi economy relies a lot on emigration, and emigrant workers sending money back home. In fact, a large portion of the population migrates to North Africa and Gulf countries as well as taking the Mediterranean route towards Europe.


In 2020 approximately 14,000 people fled from Bangladesh and applied for asylum in other countries. The main countries of destination have been France, Italy and Greece. Overall, 94 percent of the asylum applications have been rejected.

# THE JOURNEY OF SADEK FROM BANGLADESH TO MALTA



 **DEPARTURE**

Sadek lived with his family in a rural area. They were struggling to make ends meet, but he still managed to combine school and work. His parents were worried for their children’s future, and when a dispute over land put them at risk of retaliation, they decided to send Sadek abroad to work. He was excited about the idea of discovering new places, although he was scared to leave his family. Sadek was 14 years old when he left.

 **JOURNEY**

Sadek took a flight to Dubai, and a second one to Egypt, where his family was promised a safe job for Sadek. However, when he arrived, he quickly realised that the conditions were far worse than what he had been told. He had to work 12 to 14 hours a day on a



## ARRIVAL

After having spent several months in a detention centre in Libya and then crossing the sea, Sadek disembarked in Malta. Here, although he declared to be underage, he was placed in a detention centre together with many single adult men. After several months he received the result of his age assessment procedure which recognised him as a minor, and he was transferred to a smaller open centre where only minors under 16 are accommodated. There he finally found some kind of security, and started to study English by himself.



## THE STORY

Sadek was deeply traumatised by the journey he went through, and the first months in Malta were quite difficult for him. Through the counselling services of an NGO, Sadek slowly started to feel better, although he still felt hopeless for the future. Bangladeshi are almost never granted protection in Malta, and because of pending issues with the guardianship procedure for unaccompanied minors, he was unable to access formal education and employment at the time.

Dubai

Bangladesh

construction site, and was living in an overcrowded room with twenty other migrants. Abuses were a daily occurrence, and food was scarce. After few months, Sadek could not bear the conditions anymore, and wanted to go back home. His employer told him that this was not an option, and threatened him after the request. Unable to fly back home, Sadek saw trying to reach Europe as his only way out.



## REASONS FOR MIGRATION

### THE FAMILY

To support the family and better themselves many young people migrate. Bangladesh is a poor and overpopulated country with an economy which is heavily reliant on agriculture. Rural areas are at greater risk of social and economic deprivation which is aggravated by flooding and pollution. The precarious conditions push families to move and to send their children abroad so that they can work and send money back home.

### VIOLENCE AND EXCLUSIONS

The scarcity of economic resources and lack of access to basic services on top of already existing conflicts amongst communities, leads to violence and exclusion. Especially in the more peripheral areas of the country radical nationalist propaganda is widely spread which leads to persecution against Hindu minorities as well as Buddhists and Christians.

New generations try to come out of their conditions of social marginalization and religious exclusion by looking for new life perspectives outside the country.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Poverty has been aggravated by recent climate changes in the southern coastal area of the country, where the great rivers of the region (Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna) flow together creating a vast system of floodplains. Moreover, there has been an increase in storms and hurricanes that disrupt fresh water resources and coastal fertile lands. This volatile ecosystem, with its frequent floods, forces many inhabitants to move for periods of time. Many do not return and remain in the host country, trying to create a life for themselves and support family back home.



## THE DREAMS OF SADEK

Sadek wanted to study Web Design and build a career for himself in Europe. Today Sadek is 16 years old, and he is taking a course in Web Design, as well as preparing for his ECDL exam. He also just found a part-time job in a restaurant, since he will soon be transferred to a bigger open centre where he will receive less support. He enjoys his job, as it reminds him of the family restaurant he used to work in back home.

Sadek misses his family a lot, and calls them whenever he can. He would like to move to Italy, because he believes that as a person from Bangladesh, his chances of building a stable life in Malta are very poor. While awaiting his asylum decision he is focusing on his studies and trying to find stability in the unavoidable uncertainty.

STUDY  
WEB DESIGN

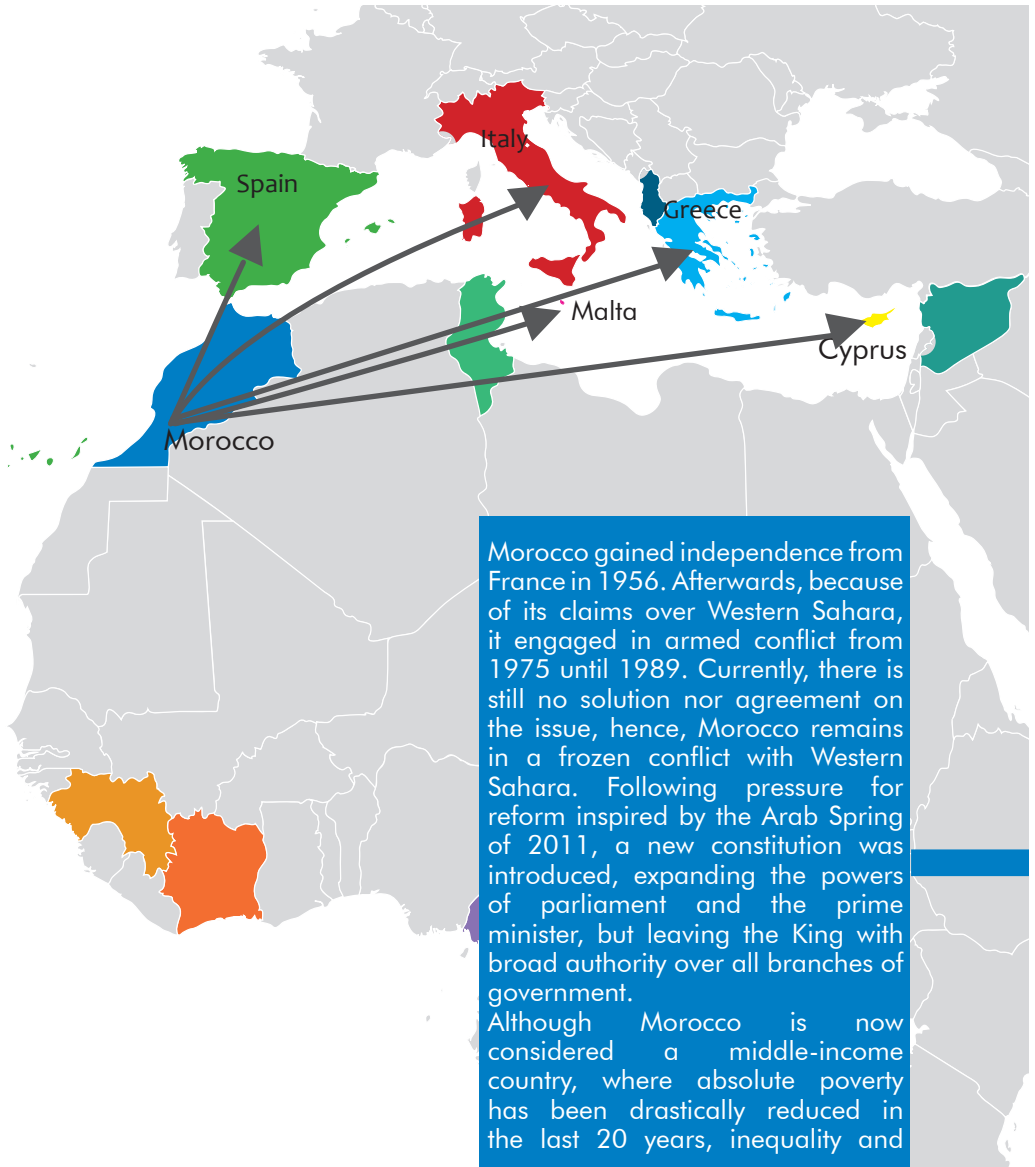
FURTHER  
THEIR  
EDUCATION

A SAFE PLACE  
WHERE THEY CAN  
FIND A JOB

HAVE THEIR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS GUARANTEED

Young Bangladeshi who leave their country dream of a safe place where they can find a job, further their education, and have their social and political rights guaranteed. However, once they arrive in Europe, the reality can be very different from what they have hoped for. Strict asylum procedures, a generally hostile climate, and in some cases prohibition to work and study, make it very hard for young Bangladeshi to achieve their dreams.

# MOROCCAN UNACCOMPANIED FOREIGN MINORS IN THE FA.B! COUNTRIES



# MOROCCO



Government: Unitary parliamentary semi-constitutional monarchy  
Capital: Rabat  
Language: Arabic and Berber  
Area: 446,550 km<sup>2</sup>  
Population: 37 million (2020 data)  
Density: 50/km<sup>2</sup>  
Major religion: Islam  
Monetary Unit: Dirham

vulnerability rates remains very high in rural areas.

In 2020 approximately 8,000 people fled from Morocco and applied for asylum in other countries. The main countries of destination have been Spain, Germany and Slovenia. Around 80% of Moroccan unaccompanied minors who applied for international protection in Europe were rejected, and the rest were granted either refugee status or subsidiary protection.

There are two main routes through which unaccompanied minors reach Europe - either by crossing the land border and entering Ceuta and Melilla (Spanish enclaves located in North Africa), or by crossing the Mediterranean Sea and reaching either Italy or Malta.

# THE JOURNEY OF SELIM FROM MOROCCO TO MALTA



## DEPARTURE

Selim was 16 years old when he decided to leave Morocco. He was living in a rural area with his parents and sisters, and they were struggling to make ends meet. In fact, he stopped going to school when he was 11 years old to help his father in his job as street vendor. One day a family friend approached them saying that he knew someone who could get Selim to Libya and then to Italy. After few months of thinking about it, Selim decided to start the journey in the hope of finding a better future for himself and his family.



## JOURNEY

Once Selim arrived in Libya the conditions were very different than what he and his family had been told. He did not have a place to stay, and the smuggler doubled the agreed price to cross the sea. He therefore had to stay in Libya for a few more months, and work different jobs in order to get enough money. After Selim managed to pay, he was put in an overcrowded room to wait for a few days. One





night the smuggler came to pick them up, pushed them in the back of a truck, and after a short drive they were told to get into a small rubber boat with no supplies nor lifejackets. Again, this was not the agreement. They were promised a bigger boat and safer conditions, but at this point there was no going back. After two days at sea the motor of the boat broke, but they were rescued by an NGO and disembarked in Malta.



## THE STORY

Selim wanted to go to Italy as some of his friends had gone there years before and found a job while studying. Indeed, it took Selim several months to accept that he had to stay in Malta, especially because of the very few opportunities he saw for himself, and the way he had been treated. Eventually, with the support of an NGO he managed to enrol in courses in order to finish his secondary education, and he found a job in a local convenience shop.



## ARRIVAL

Once Selim disembarked in Malta, although he declared to be underage, he was placed in a detention centre together with many single men who were on the same boat. After several months he was released and transferred to an open centre. There he received the result of his age assessment procedure which did not recognise him as a minor. He decided to not challenge this decision, as unaccompanied minors in Malta are not legally allowed to work until they have a legal guardian. In Malta, this is currently a very lengthy procedure, with no end in sight.



# REASONS FOR MIGRATION

## ECONOMIC REASONS

Poor employment opportunities, low salaries, precarious work conditions and a general lack of opportunities are amongst the main reasons that push young Moroccans to leave the country. Eighty percent of the country's unemployed fall between the ages of 15-34. Moreover, poverty, and a low quality of access to education, especially in rural areas, contribute to a high school dropout rate, which results in a large number of low-skilled young people.

## SOCIAL FACTORS

Many young people experience that despite having school certificates and trainings, they lack the required social connections to get good jobs. Moreover, many young people feel deprived of their political rights, and do not feel they can freely express themselves without retaliation. Furthermore, violence within the family and extended family is also a factor that pushes young people to leave, together with gender-based violence and discrimination towards members of the LGBTQ+ community.

## FOLLOW THE FOOTSTEPS OF THOSE WHO MIGRATED

Driven by examples or advice from other family members/friends who have already emigrated, young Moroccans see migration as the only way forward in order to access better education and get a good job. Inspired by what other Moroccans have achieved abroad and feeling helpless in their current situation people, decide to undertake the journey themselves.



## THE DREAMS OF SELIM

Selim wanted to further his studies and become a rapper. Music has always been his passion, and he dreams of making his own songs. Today Selim is still taking classes, and decided that after secondary school he would like to further his studies and specialise in music production. He met other young people who want to make music, and they are currently in the process of creating a YouTube channel to share their music. They have already recorded a few tracks and played at some events. Through music, Selim found people he can relate to, and now feels he is part of a community. Selim is still in contact with his family and keeps supporting them through his job. He hopes to one day see them again.

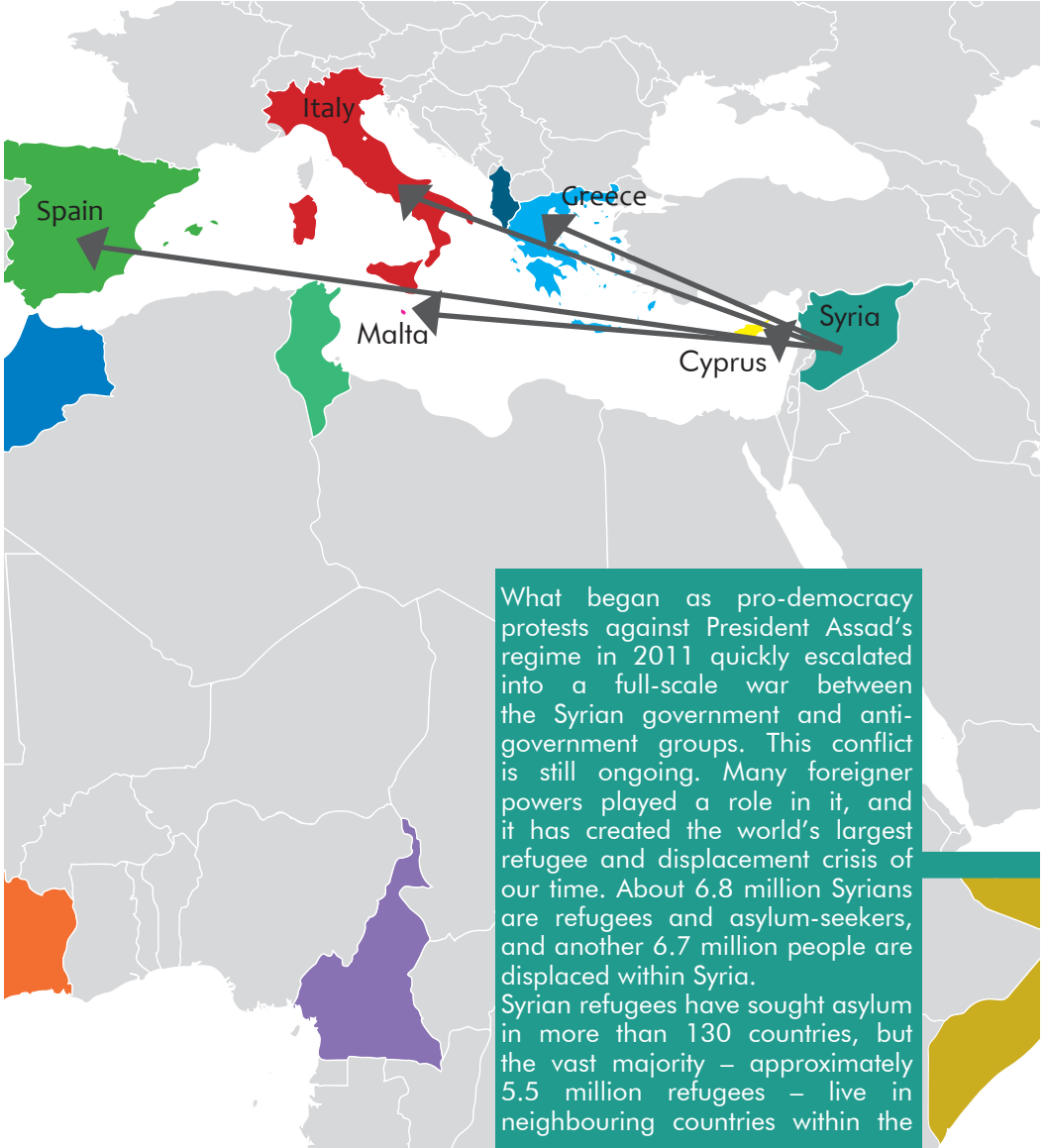
FURTHER  
HIS STUDIES

BECOME  
A RAPPER

MAKING HIS  
OWN SONGS

Young Moroccans who leave their country dream of a safe place where they can find a job, further their education and have their social and political rights guaranteed. However, once they arrive in Europe, the reality can be very different from what they have hoped for. Strict asylum procedures, a generally hostile climate, and in some cases prohibition to work and study, make it very hard for young Moroccans to achieve their dreams.

# SYRIAN UNACCOMPANIED FOREIGN MINORS IN THE FA.B! COUNTRIES



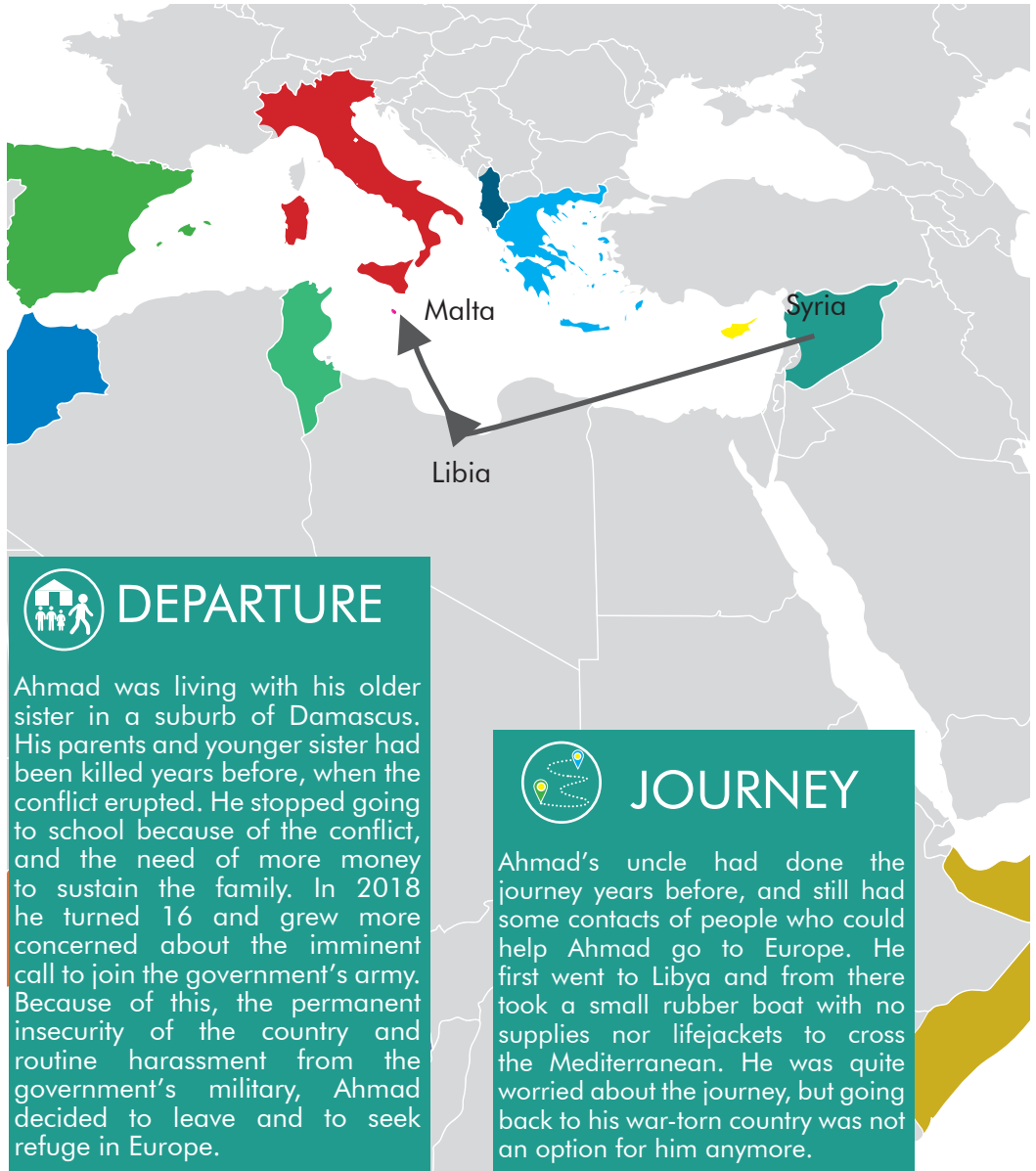
# SYRIA




Institutional form: Unitary multiparty republic with one legislative house  
Capital: Damascus  
Population: (2021 est.) 26.908.000  
Density (person per km): 95 per Km<sup>2</sup>  
Surface: 185.180 km<sup>2</sup>  
Monetary Unit: Syrian pound  
Regions: 14 governorates divided into 65 districts  
Official language: Arabic  
Official religion: none


region, such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. European countries host over 1 million Syrian asylum-seekers and refugees, with 70 per cent being hosted in two countries only: Germany (59 percent) and Sweden (11 percent). Austria, Greece, the Netherlands and France host between 2 to 5 percent, while other countries host below 2 percent. Across Europe, Syrians have been consistently afforded an international protection status, with the vast majority either being granted either refugee status or subsidiary forms of protection, with the minority benefiting from other humanitarian statuses.

# THE JOURNEY OF AHMAD FROM SYRIA TO MALTA



 **DEPARTURE**

Ahmad was living with his older sister in a suburb of Damascus. His parents and younger sister had been killed years before, when the conflict erupted. He stopped going to school because of the conflict, and the need of more money to sustain the family. In 2018 he turned 16 and grew more concerned about the imminent call to join the government's army. Because of this, the permanent insecurity of the country and routine harassment from the government's military, Ahmad decided to leave and to seek refuge in Europe.

 **JOURNEY**

Ahmad's uncle had done the journey years before, and still had some contacts of people who could help Ahmad go to Europe. He first went to Libya and from there took a small rubber boat with no supplies nor lifejackets to cross the Mediterranean. He was quite worried about the journey, but going back to his war-torn country was not an option for him anymore.



## THE STORY

Asylum seekers are not offered English classes by the Government, but Ahmad managed to get in contact with some NGOs and through them he quickly learned English and started translating informally at the centre for other persons who did not know the language. He also found a job as assistant electrician, and with that he managed to save enough money to move out of the centre and share an apartment with other young asylum seekers. Moreover, he took part in a local NGO led project called 'Communities of Hospitality', where he met a Maltese family with whom he spent his time off, and he got the chance to create genuine connections and be in a family-like environment.



## ARRIVAL

Once Ahmad disembarked in Malta, although he declared to be underage, he was placed in a detention centre together with many single men who were on the same boat. After several months he was released and transferred to an open centre. There he received the result of his age assessment procedure, which did not recognise him as a minor. Together with the support of non-governmental legal aid he challenged this decision, but without a birth certificate, long ago lost in the war, nor any other documentation to prove his age, Ahmed was not recognised as a minor by the state.



## REASONS FOR MIGRATION

### VIOLENCE AND PERSECUTION

Since the Syrian civil war began, nearly 585,000 people have been killed, including more than 21,900 children. Arbitrary detention and killings, harassment and persecution are widespread, and the humanitarian response struggles to keep up with the challenging environment. Warring parties often also forcibly recruit children to use as fighters or human shields, and military service is mandatory for every man once they turn 18 years old.

### POVERTY AND LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES

Due to over a decade of war, services and infrastructure collapsed, only 53% of hospitals are fully functional, and more than 8 million people lack access to safe water. Conflict has shattered the economy, and more than 80% of the population lives in poverty. Millions have lost their livelihoods, and are increasingly unable to meet their basic needs. The economic downturn has also exposed them to multiple protection risks, such as child labour, gender-based violence, early marriage and other forms of exploitation. Moreover, an estimated 2.4 million children are out of school. Many classes are suspended because buildings were destroyed or are occupied by military groups or displaced people.





## THE DREAMS OF AHMD

Ahmad wanted to become a doctor and reunite with his sister in Malta. He took Maltese and Math lessons with the family who hosted him few afternoons a week, and he completed a part-time healthcare course. Ahmed realised that it might take many years before he can get into medical school and decided that in the meantime, he will keep furthering his education in the healthcare sector. He is currently taking part in an advanced course in healthcare and looking for jobs as a carer.

The deteriorating situation in Syria worries him a lot. He misses his home country but knows that very likely he will never be able to go back. His sister sought refuge in Jordan and he hopes to see her again soon.

BECOME  
A DOCTOR

REUNITE WITH  
HIS SISTER

Young Syrians who leave their country dream of a safe place where they can find a job, further their education and have their social and political rights guaranteed. However, once they arrive in Europe, the reality can be very different from what they have hoped for. Strict asylum procedures, a generally hostile climate, and in some cases prohibition to work and study, make it very hard for young Syrians to achieve their dreams.





# LEARN MORE ABOUT FAMILY BASED CARE FOR YOUNG UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANTS AND FA.B! ACTIONS



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#MigrationEU  
#AMIF

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