



European  
Commission

# INCLUSION OF REFUGEES IN CULTURAL HERITAGE AND PRODUCTION

Courtesy of the project (BMPEU)

## Project name:

Specially Unknown EU, Cultural contributions of refugees to European cities (BMPEU)

## Purpose:

Collecting, saving and presenting the untold stories of refugees and exploring their contribution to the cultural life of European cities

## AT A GLANCE

### Geographical coverage:

#### Research in 9 countries:

the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Greece, Hungary, Portugal and Sweden

#### Interviews and artistic productions

in 4 cities: Antwerp, Paris, Bochum and Turin

### Project coordinator:

Stichting Bevordering  
Maatschappelijke Participatie  
(Stichting BMP)

### Estimated budget:

€ 813 624

### EU contribution:

90 % co-funded by the  
European Union

### Type of funding:

Asylum, Migration and Integration  
Fund (AMIF)

### Start date:

October 2017

### End date:

September 2019



## Preserving oral history and promoting cultural participation

The Specially Unknown EU project aims to collect 160 life stories from refugees in four European cities: Antwerp, Bochum, Paris and Turin. The stories are recorded on video by interviewers who have been trained in oral history by the project and have a refugee background themselves. After transcription the stories become part of the city archives and museums, and an English version is kept on a European database.

These stories – about the refugees' life in a city and what they could contribute to it, or about their journeys – are meant to inspire creative co-productions by refugees, local artists and cultural institutions for presenting to the local public.

In parallel, the project is carrying out, in nine EU countries, a future-oriented Delphi study into refugees as consumers or producers of culture (cultural participation). The aim is to raise awareness, exchange experiences, challenge expectations and explore ways to promote this participation.

The interviews, artistic productions and study will be presented at the closing conference 'Oracle of Amsterdam' on 28 June 2019. The project hopes the participants will be inspired to include refugee stories in the cultural life and policies of their own city or organisation.

The project will enable the comparison of integration processes and cultural participation of refugees across Europe and produce recommendations to local, national and European policy-makers.

## Changing perceptions of migrants

Refugees form a part of the economic, social and cultural fabric of the European cities they live in, but a marginalised and undocumented one. Their experiences are rarely taken into account in the development of policies that concern them, media and politicians often representing them in a negative light.

Specially Unknown wants to change these representations and perceptions. It believes that collecting and creatively sharing refugees' life stories will build compassion and understanding for them, and that involving the newcomers in the production of culture will make them feel more appreciated and welcome. At the same time the project hopes to shine a light on historical migration flows in Europe.

## Results

The project is still ongoing but some outcomes have already been published, including a [manual](#) for conducting and transcribing oral history interviews. The partners in Paris are the first to translate the stories into art: the *Cité internationale des arts* will host a [screening/dance performance](#) followed by a debate. The next city to present an artistic production based on the interviews will be Bochum on 6 April. The [Red Star Line Museum](#) in Antwerp is planning interactive workshops and an installation, while in Turin, a fairy tale will be the basis for a story-telling performance in May.

## TESTIMONY FROM AN INTERVIEWER IN BOCHUM

"I like to remember the time of the training. We developed a sense of togetherness. I learned a lot about people from different cultures who are also socially committed and stand up for others. I also learned a lot about myself, and at the end of the training I told myself: 'You are not alone'."

## TESTIMONY FROM A REFUGEE LIVING IN PARIS

"I have lived in this city for several years now. I try my best to be part of society. But it is only since I was interviewed for Specially Unknown and able to tell my life story in my own words that I feel recognised. Because I know my story will be kept in the city archives, I now feel part of the heritage of Paris."

## MORE INFORMATION

**Project reference:** AMIF-2016-AG-INTE 776091

**Title:** Specially Unknown EU, Cultural contributions of refugees to European cities

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