



## The third webinar of Digital Autumn: Voices of Young Refugees in Europe (VYRE) & Klub Studencki Pomorania

YEN hosted the third episode of “Think United!” webinar series on January 26, 2021. Chougher Maria Doughramajian from [Voices of Young Refugees in Europe \(VYRE\)](#) and Ewelina Stefańska from [Klub Studencki Pomorania](#) shared main prejudices and discrimination that they face as members of a minority group and they gave concrete examples of their work and how they empower the young communities that they work with.

Chougher listed examples of structural discrimination that young refugees have been facing: Young refugees have challenges to access education, especially higher education. When young refugees arrive in a new country, most of the time, their previous education is not recognized. This lack of recognition prevents them to access higher education. Moreover, young refugees are often forced to restart the education process and they are put in segregated classrooms. Chougher said that the curriculum should be adjusted according to the needs of refugees and segregation should be averted in order to be credible and sustainable in the inclusion process.

The lack of recognition of previous education and work experience is also creating challenges to access work. This structural denial of recognition, the structural denial of the whole past, creates both mental and economic consequences for the young refugee community.

The refugee community is also facing challenges to be able to travel. Due to bureaucratic obstacles or even restrictions the majority of young refugees cannot be mobile and join events that would enable them to be part of the decision making process, mostly on European level. Additionally, bureaucracy and complicated paperwork has effects on almost every detail in daily life from opening bank accounts to buying tickets.

Within this frame, VYRE promotes the importance of direct involvement of young refugees in decision making processes. Direct involvement can be a way to highlight structural challenges that the majority might not be aware of. For example, through



the advocacy work of VYRE, unaccompanied minors in transition to adulthood has been recognized as a specific group and the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States [CM/Rec\(2019\)4](#) “SUPPORTING YOUNG REFUGEES IN TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD” has been formulated and adopted by the CoE in 2019.

In her presentation, Ewelina Stefańska from Klub Studencki Pomorania highlighted the main prejudices that the Kashubian community is facing: Kashubians are seen as poorly educated separatists. The support for Kashubian language has been cut and the activities to promote Kashubian culture and heritage are not well supported. The presence of Kashubian culture is not seen as a richness that promotes diversity but it is labeled as a potential threat to the “national polish unity”. Subsidies allocated by local governments for supporting the Kashubian community are not often not used for empowering the community but are diverted to other projects.

The Kashubian community is also facing internal problems: Women are less visible in decision making. There is a divergence in approach to identity. Some groups see Kashubian as a language but not as an ethnic identity. Young people are seen as inexperienced and are mostly excluded from decision making systems.

Klub Studencki Pomorania is actively working to overcome these challenges. They are collaborating with public figures and politicians to maintain the legal status of Kashubian language. They are initiating campaigns to promote Kashubian culture but also incite young people to be more active in monitoring the local budgets of the cities that they are living in. **Both organizations also highlighted that when young people are in touch with youth from diverse backgrounds they are more open minded. With the impact of Think United! Webinar series both organizations are even more motivated to collaborate with different minority groups.**

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