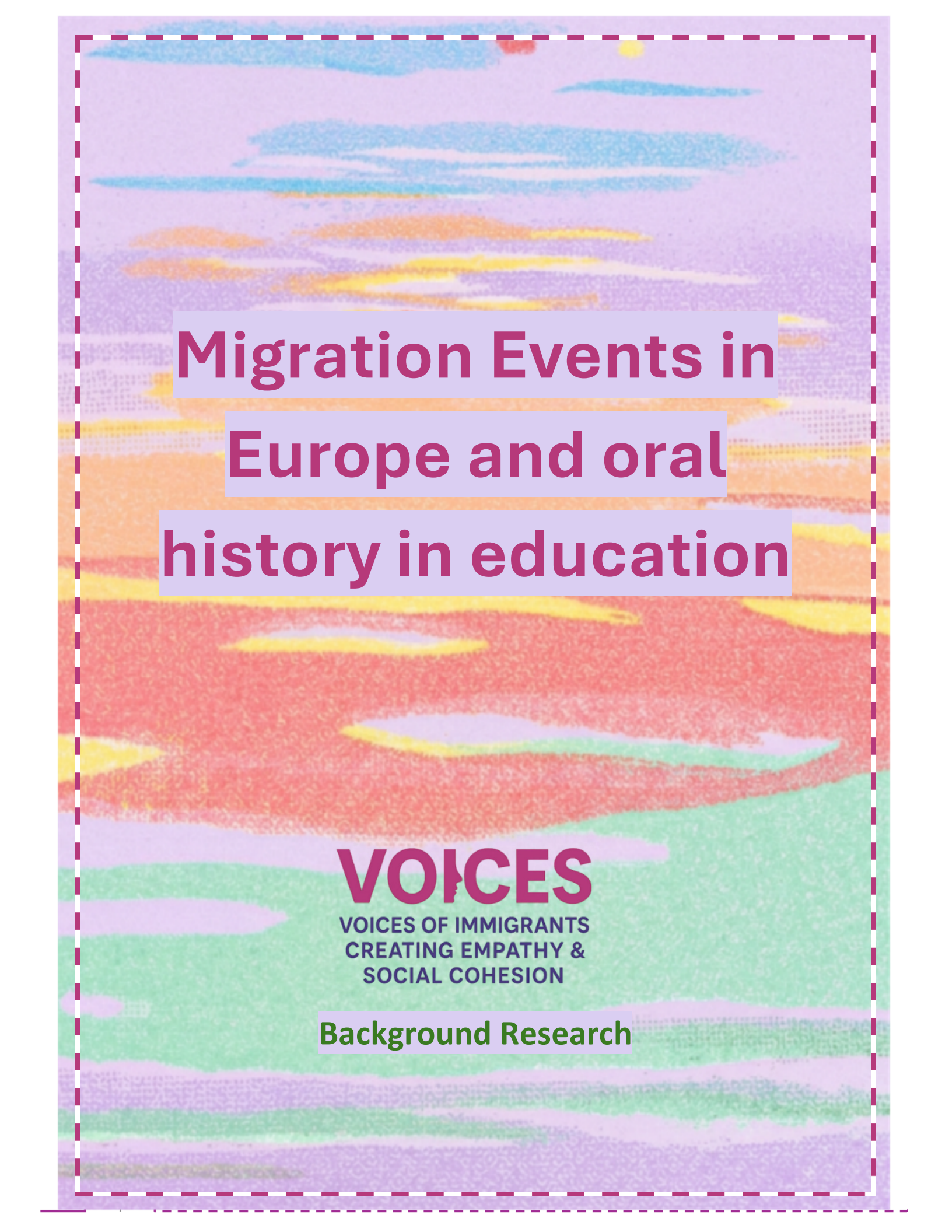




Migration Events in Europe and oral history in education

VOICES

VOICES OF IMMIGRANTS
CREATING EMPATHY &
SOCIAL COHESION

Background Research

Publication information

Migration events in Europe and oral history in educations –
Background research

by VOICES (Voices of Immigrants Creating Empathy & Social
Cohesion) Erasmus+ partnership – April 2026



Editor: Susanne Klingseis (lernraum.wien / VHS Wien)

Contributors: Dilek Taşdemir (lernraum.wien / VHS Wien), Larisa
Sioneriu (AONTAS), Angeliki Giannakopoulou (EAEA), Vasiliki Tsekoura (DAFNI KEK),
Giovanna & Paola Maciariello (SOLIDARCI), Lynette Weber & Imela Bajra (SVEB)

Coordinated by lernraum.wien (VHS Wien) - Austria



AONTAS – Ireland



EAEA – Belgium



Dafni Kek – Greece



Solidarci – Italy



SVEB - Switzerland



This Report is released under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. You are free to:
Share: copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format.

Adapt: remix, transform and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially.

The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

Under the following terms:

Attribution - You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

Share Alike - If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original.

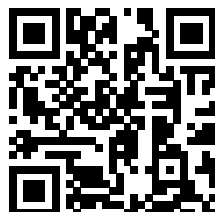
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed
are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily
reflect those of the European Union or OeAD-GmbH. Neither

the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them. [Reference number of
the VOICES Project: 2025-1-AT01-KA220-ADU-000358547]



Check out the VOICES platform
and our counter-archive

Website: [www.voices-
archive.eu](http://www.voices-archive.eu)

Contact: lernraum.wien – VHS
Wien, Address: Arthaberplatz 18
1100, Wien

Table of contents

Introduction

[page 4](#)

Common definition of „Oral History“

[page 5](#)

Migration events in Europe

[page 8](#)

Desktop research on best-practice examples

[page 14](#)

Summary

[page 20](#)

Literatur

[page 21](#)

VOICES

Introduction

The VOICES project (Voices of Immigrants Creating Empathy & Social Cohesion) develops methods and materials that integrate migration experiences and the perspectives of migrants into language learning and basic education courses. The aim is to create a learner-centered and participatory approach that focuses on oral history-based methods, digital tools, and interactive methods. By addressing topics closely tied to the learners' lived realities, the project aims to strengthen their intrinsic motivation and, above all, ensure that their voices—both those of the interviewees and the learners conducting the interviews—are heard. By focusing on the perspectives of migrants, the project promotes intercultural understanding and seeks to break down stereotypes. It stimulates dialogue between different generations and communities through the shared experience of migration. The “Counter-Archive” resulting from the interviews aims to place migration in a different context, focusing on a personal and emotional perspective.

To establish a common foundation for further work on the project, this report presents the results of preliminary desk research. The joint definition of oral history agreed upon by all partners for the project serves as the conceptual basis; subsequently, migration-related events relevant to the partner countries were researched. Last but not least, best-practice examples of working with oral history in an educational context were collected, and the aspects relevant to VOICES were identified. This report is intended to provide relevant insights and findings for the development of the workshop methodology and to serve as a foundation for further work.

Common Definition of „Oral History“

The first steps to establish a common definition of “oral history” within the project consortium were taken during the first transnational partner meeting (TPM) in Vienna in November 2025, in order to work on a shared foundation, and to clarify for ourselves the starting point from which we would consider the methodology and implementation in the workshops.

From among the definitions provided by historians and researchers working in the field of oral history, we selected and discussed those that seemed most relevant to the project’s content. In a workshop-like process, during which we discussed the quotes within the consortium and identified the most compelling statements on oral history in education—particularly in adult education and basic education—we finally arrived at “our” shared definition. To make this process transparent, the original quotes are listed here once again.

One definition of oral history, as a relatively new method of historical research, aims to give voice to minorities and marginalized groups. The definition comes from Lynn Abrams, a historian at the University of Glasgow and president of the Scottish Institute of Modern History and the Society for Social History:

“By the 1980s, Oral History had become the methodology of choice (and necessity) amongst scholars of the twentieth century seeking to uncover the experiences of a number of groups who had traditionally been disregarded by conventional histories: women, gays and lesbians, minority ethnic groups and the physically and learning disabled to name the most prominent. These were important developments (...) essentially marking the beginning of the Oral History discipline we recognise today. (...) It is also a popular research tool deployed in community and educational projects, practised by young and old, volunteers and paid researchers, and is to be found in use in most countries of the world. Oral History has become a crossover methodology, an octopus with tentacles reaching into a wide range of disciplinary, practice-led and community enterprises. It is used by academics, by governments and during regime change (...). It is thus widespread and highly adaptable, being practical, political or historical in aim.” (Abrams 2016: 2ff)

Abrams also quotes the renowned literary scholar and oral history theorist Alessandro Portelli, who emphasizes in particular the “fluidity” of oral history, which in some cases makes it difficult to grasp with any certainty:

“As a research practice, Oral History is engulfed by issues which make it controversial, exciting and endlessly promising. These are well spelt out by the oral historian Alessandro Portelli who starts one of his studies by noting that he is trying to:

‘convey the sense of fluidity, of unfinishedness, of an inexhaustible work in progress, which is inherent to the fascination and frustration of Oral History – floating as it does in time between the present and an ever-changing past, oscillating in the dialogue between the narrator and the interviewer, and melting and coalescing in the no-man’s land from orality to writing and back.’”(Abrams 2016: 1)

From the perspective of critical adult education, Fuchs and Slapansky (2025) ultimately arrive at the following definition:

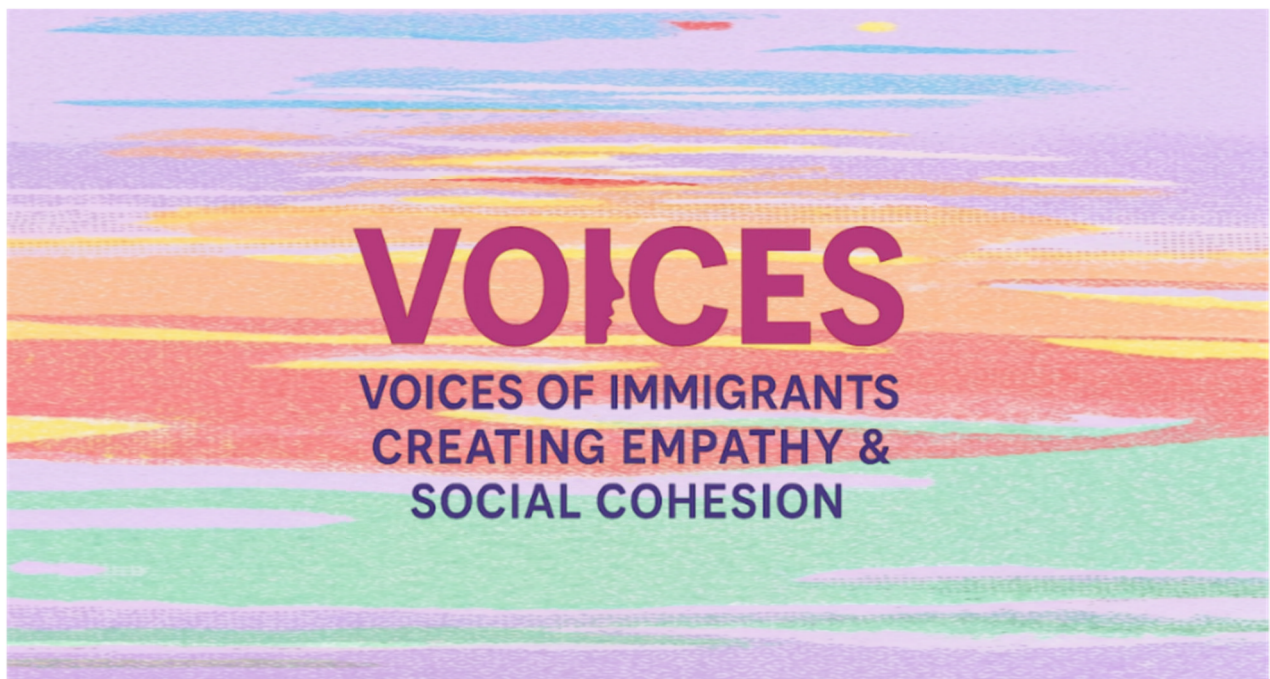
“The boundaries that academia has erected over decades and largely continues to uphold—namely, those between researchers and research subjects, teachers and learners, between academia and everyday life, between theory and practice, between those unaffected and those affected, between the top and the bottom—must be dismantled in the interest of a self-reflective academia and emancipatory educational work. Those who have not yet been able to articulate their lived history must be understood as autonomous agents within the historical context. (...)”

In addition to the significance of oral history for historical writing, Fuchs and Slapansky also emphasize the emancipatory value of “doing” oral history:

“It can contribute to public education and enable a new form of expression (...). The experience of subjective access to and the malleability of history can foster the development of a new sense of self-awareness among those affected and empower them to play a more conscious role in shaping their everyday lives. In this way, oral history can contribute to the social emancipation and empowerment of individuals.”(Fuchs/Slapansky 2025: 13ff)

A shared definition of oral history

Oral history is the practice of recording lived history and personal stories, collecting underrepresented memories, and engaging in emancipatory educational work. It is the fluid, unfinished process of passing on and preserving memories—from the interviewee to the interviewer to the collective—filtered through values and ideas.



Migration Events in Europe

In a subsequent step, we researched historically significant migration events, noting that some of these events overlapped or intersected, and that a few had Europe-wide repercussions.

Conversely, regional differences emerge from country to country, which will also become apparent in the selection of interviewees. In the context of our search for eyewitnesses, we limited the scope of our research to the (early) 1950s, though it is worth noting that Greece, Ireland, and Switzerland historically evolved from countries of emigration to countries of immigration.

Emigration and (post-)war period

For historical context, we will begin in Ireland with a description of emigration before we can speak of Ireland as a country of immigration. From 1845 to 1849, Ireland had already experienced a devastating crisis known as the “Great Famine,” which led to a massive wave of emigration and the spread of Irish communities abroad. About two million people were forced to leave Ireland and settle mainly in Great Britain, Canada, and the United States.

Further waves of emigration occurred in the 1950s and 1980s. The main reason for this large-scale emigration was the lack of jobs, particularly in rural areas, where small farms were no longer able to support entire families. Emigration became so widespread that it was viewed as a normal part of life, especially for young people seeking better opportunities abroad.

Until the mid-19th century, also Switzerland was primarily a country of emigration. Poverty, famine, and a lack of industry drove many Swiss people abroad. Between 1798 and 1914, around half a million Swiss left the country. Toward the end of the 19th century, however, the situation changed as industrialization and the construction of railways attracted foreign workers. Following the liberal revolutions and in the wake of railway construction, politically persecuted individuals (e.g., Hungarians after 1848) and skilled workers also came to Switzerland. In total, an estimated 100,000 to 105,000 foreigners immigrated to Switzerland between 1850 and 1880. Many of them were seasonal or

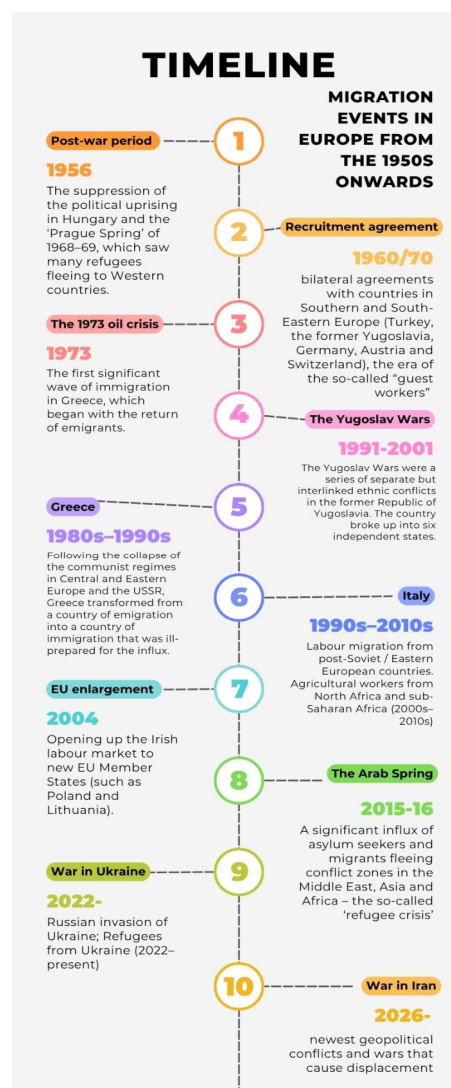


Figure 1 Timeline of migration events examined - Developed by VOICES partnership

annual workers employed, for example, in railroad construction, the textile industry, or mechanical engineering.

World War II uprooted and dislocated an unprecedented number of people—around 55 million in Europe alone. When the war ended, there were approximately 11 million displaced persons (DPs) in Europe. They included about six million civilian volunteer and forced laborers, two million prisoners of war, and 700,000 surviving concentration camp prisoners. Additionally, thousands of anticommunists and former Nazi collaborators from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia fled the Red Army as it reconquered Eastern Europe. By 1951, the majority of these displaced persons, often referred to as “the last million,” had immigrated to the United States, Canada, Australia and other parts of the world. Their refusal to return home, however, caused international debate concerning the status of refugees. It also had an impact on the development of international refugee protection and led to the first comprehensive definition of a refugee.

The Special Case of Greece

Historically speaking, Greece was also a country shaped by emigration. In the 1950s and 1960s, a significant portion of the Greek population emigrated, primarily for economic reasons.

Migrants generally chose Western countries, particularly Germany, which was open to foreign workers during its post-World War II reconstruction. The Greek government viewed migration as an opportunity for economic growth. During this period, migration to countries overseas and in Western Europe was a mass phenomenon.

Following the fall of the military junta in 1974, Greece experienced its first significant wave of immigration, which began with the return of emigrants. Many who had emigrated for economic reasons returned around 1971, often prompted by factors such as the oil crisis. Political refugees began returning after 1974, a process that was further facilitated after 1981.

In the early 1980s, a relatively systematic presence of people of non-Greek origin was first recorded, beginning with Pakistani and Filipino communities, followed by smaller communities from other Asian (Indian, Bangladeshi, Chinese) and African countries (including Ghanaians, Nigerians, Ethiopians, and Congolese). Some African migrants initially immigrated to study as part of formal exchange programs. Some Asian communities began to establish small businesses. Migrants typically occupied low-skilled, low-paying jobs and worked primarily in agriculture, construction, and domestic service—that is, in sectors in which the local population had limited interest. These population groups were initially small relative to the total population. At that time, the naturalization of *Omogeneis* (members of the same ethnic group) and *Pallinostountes* (returnees), particularly from regions such as the Black Sea and Northern Epirus, was

widespread due to historical ties to Greek culture; however, many of them had no knowledge of the Greek language, which made their integration difficult.

The period from the late 1980s to the early 1990s was marked by Greece's transformation from a country of emigration to an unprepared country of immigration. This development was triggered by the collapse of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe and the USSR. The first major waves came primarily from the neighboring Balkan states and the former Soviet republics, particularly Albania, and began around 1991.

The 1956 Hungarian Uprising and the Prague Spring of 1968

During this period, Austria, as other European countries, experienced two major waves of refugees resulting from political unrest in the former communist countries. In 1956, following the suppression of the political uprising in Hungary, over 180,000 refugees from that country arrived in Austria. While the vast majority of these people were quickly resettled in other Western countries, approximately 20,000 were granted asylum and remained in Austria.

Following the “Prague Spring” of 1968, approximately 162,000 people from what was then Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic and Slovakia) came to Austria, most of whom later traveled on to other Western countries; for the vast majority of Czechoslovak refugees, Austria served merely as a stopover. Many return after some time or emigrate to other Western countries. Only a few thousand refugees remain in Austria for longer. Many refugees emigrate via Austria to other Western countries or return to Czechoslovakia. About 2,000 to 3,000 Czechs and Slovaks settled in Austria.

In Switzerland, the Hungarian uprising also led to the arrival of some 27,000 Hungarians. In 1959–60, Tibetan refugees arrived (following the Chinese occupation of Tibet), and in 1968, refugees from Czechoslovakia arrived after the suppression of the Prague Spring.

Recruitment Agreements

Recruitment Agreement with Italy

Switzerland recovered quickly after 1945. Starting in 1947–48, there was a labor shortage, particularly in railway construction and the resurgent industrial sector. In 1948, as one of the first countries, Switzerland signed a recruitment agreement with Italy—this marked the beginning of a large-scale migration of temporary workers. In the 1950s and early 1960s, Italians migrated to Switzerland in large numbers (by 1961, over one million Italians were already living in the country). The largest wave of immigration took place between 1951 and 1970 (a total of approximately 2.68 million annual and permanent residence permits, plus an additional 3 million seasonal residence permits). In later years Switzerland attracted workers also from other countries, most notably the former

Yugoslavia, Turkey and Portugal. It was not until the 1960s that it was recognized that guest workers were needed on a permanent basis, and family reunification as well as the issuance of long-term residence permits (C permits) were made easier. Foreigners were now increasingly viewed as an “indispensable part” of the economy.

Recruitment Agreements of the 1960s and 1970s

Following the example of Germany and Switzerland in the 1950s, Austria began concluding bilateral agreements with countries in Southern and Southeastern Europe in the 1960s. These agreements were intended to recruit so-called guest workers. The agreements with Turkey (1964) and Yugoslavia (1966) were quickly followed by the establishment of recruitment offices in these countries, which over time led to a considerable number of these workers and their families settling in Austria. In 1969, the number of foreign workers from Turkey and Yugoslavia stood at 76,500. By 1973, this number had nearly tripled to 227,000, of whom 178,000 were from Yugoslavia and 27,000 from Turkey.

The oil crisis and the ensuing recession in 1973 led to a drastic decline in demand for guest workers, a phenomenon that repeated itself following the second oil crisis in 1981. In response to the recession in the early 1970s, recruitment was suspended, access to the labor market for foreigners was restricted, and a new law—the Foreign Workers Act—was passed in 1975. As a result, the number of foreign workers (and residents) fell so sharply that by 1985, the employment of Yugoslav and Turkish citizens in Austria was only half as high as in 1973. As the economy recovered, many former migrants from Yugoslavia returned. While active recruitment of workers was discontinued, other forms of migration—family reunification, spontaneous labor migration, and, in the late 1980s, flight and asylum—gained prominence. However, labor migration, which began in the 1960s, had a lasting impact on the resident population in Austria as well as on subsequent migration flows. In 2001, 62.8 percent of the total foreign resident population came from the two recruitment regions, the former Yugoslavia and Turkey.

Labor migration from post-Soviet / Eastern European countries

In Italy, labor migration from Eastern Europe (primarily from Romania and Ukraine) began to develop in the late 1990s and, in particular, during the 2000s. A large proportion of them found work in the informal sector—in domestic care, construction, and retail—in Naples and the surrounding urban areas. Over time, many of these migrants settled permanently and have since formed well-established communities.

War in Yugoslavia in the 1990s

The Yugoslav Wars were a series of separate but interconnected ethnic conflicts, wars of independence, and uprisings that took place from 1991 to 2001 in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFR Yugoslavia). The conflicts led to the breakup of Yugoslavia, which began in mid-1991. The country disintegrated into six independent states corresponding to the six entities that had previously made up Yugoslavia: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and Macedonia (now North Macedonia).

In total, around 100,000 war refugees from the former Yugoslavia found refuge in Austria in the early 1990s. The largest group consisted of 85,000 asylum seekers from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Approximately two-thirds of them settled permanently in Austria.

Switzerland also took in many refugees from the Yugoslav Wars. Between 1991 and 1999, hundreds of thousands of refugees fled the disintegrating Yugoslavia (Bosnian War, Kosovo), many of whom sought protection in Switzerland. At the same time, Switzerland remained a popular destination for migrant workers from previously recruited countries (former Yugoslavia, Turkey, Portugal). In the late 1990s, Switzerland and the EU benefited from their growing rapprochement: the new agreements on the free movement of persons and Schengen-Dublin entered into force in 2002. In social policy, an asylum law was passed for the first time in 1981; in the following years, asylum law was tightened on several occasions (including through mass fast-track procedures starting in 2016).

The 1980s and 1990s were marked by diverse refugee flows. 1980s: Asylum applications from crisis regions (e.g., Sri Lanka, Iran, Turkey) increased; between 1985 and 2002, a total of around 417,000 asylum applications were registered.

EU Enlargement and bilateral agreements

A turning point in Ireland was the opening of the Irish labor market to new EU member states (such as Poland and Lithuania), which led to a peak of over 150,000 immigrants in 2007. According to census data, the number of EU nationals living in Ireland rose from about 10,000 in 2002 to 120,000 in 2006. Data on immigration flows suggest that this number may have risen to 200,000, or 4.5% of the population, by 2008.

Bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the EU have led to massive migration. In 2002, Switzerland achieved full freedom of movement with the EU-15 states¹, in 2006 with the eastern EU states, in 2009 with Romania and Bulgaria, and in 2017 with Croatia. This primarily encouraged immigration from EU/EFTA countries—75% of all foreigners in Switzerland today come from EU/EFTA countries (mainly Italy 15%, Germany 14%, Portugal 11%). The total number of foreigners reached a record high: By the end of 2023, approximately 2.37 million foreigners were living in Switzerland (about 24% of the

¹ [Member state of the European Union - Wikipedia](#) (see Abbreviations)

population). The once-dominant Italian group (316,000) has since been surpassed: The largest groups today are people from the former Yugoslavia (≈350,000) as well as from Turkey and Portugal.

Agricultural workers from North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa (2000s–2010s)

Migrants from Morocco, Tunisia, and several Sub-Saharan African countries increasingly provided seasonal and permanent labor for the agricultural sector in Italy, particularly in the Campania region (provinces such as Caserta and Salerno). This pattern is linked to the demand for agricultural and food products in Italy and the seasonal harvest cycles and exposes many workers to irregular hiring practices and exploitation (the so-called “caporalato”).

Migration flows and asylum seekers (2010s – present)

Since the 2010s, people fleeing conflict and instability (in the Horn of Africa, West Africa, and the Middle East) have arrived in southern Italy and Greece via the Central Mediterranean route. Campania established reception centers and shelters within the national reception network (SAI / SIPROIMI and other structures) to accommodate asylum seekers and refugees. Legal and political changes at the national level shaped the way reception worked on the ground.

Recent Migration Events

2015 was a year in which the number of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe—primarily from the Middle East—increased significantly, leading to a substantial rise in asylum applications compared to previous and subsequent years. The highest number of applications came from people from Syria, but there were also a considerable number from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Eritrea, and “the Balkans.”

Desktop Research on Best-Practice-Examples

The project partners were asked to search projects relevant to the project's main focus—namely, to spark learners' interest in oral history, specifically the history of migration in Europe; to encourage them to seek out interviewees and historical eyewitnesses; conduct interviews, and produce audio/video material—with the ultimate goal of developing a methodology and guidelines for oral history-based teaching and learning methods in adult and basic education.

Below is a description of the most compelling examples of oral history-based methods in an educational context.

Projects with focus on working with migrants/second language learners

Projekt: Archive of Migrant Memories, (IT / EN)

The Archive of Migrants' Memories is a physical and virtual space for stories, personal narratives, and dialogues between people who have experienced migration and wish to share their stories, and those interested in learning about their experiences and reflections. AMM is a “community of practice” composed of people who pursue common goals from diverse and varied perspectives: from collecting testimonials to creating personal narratives, from producing audio and video materials to developing teaching resources to bring migration experiences to life in schools. For anyone interested.

Why is this project relevant?

Examples of oral history / storytelling, the Migration Archive, further links to literature and texts on memory work, voices of migrants, and other relevant projects.

Link/Ressource: [AMM – Archive of Migrant Memories](#)

Projekt: Asylum Archive (EN)

The main goal of Asylum Archive was to collaborate with asylum seekers, artists, scholars, and civil society activists to create an interactive, cross-platform online documentation project that critically conveys accounts of exile, displacement, trauma, and memories. A selection of images—lost toys, drawings on walls, and nature—reflects childhood experiences as lived within these confined spaces.

Why is the project relevant?

The main goal of “Asylum Archive” was to collaborate with asylum seekers, artists, scholars, and civil society activists, among others, to create an interactive, cross-platform online documentation that critically highlights narratives of exile, displacement, trauma, and memory.

Link/Ressource: [Asylum Archive - Vukašin Nedeljković - IMMA](#)

Projekt: We are here. HEAR

The “We are here, HEAR” project is a collaboration between MU, DCU, College Connect, the Irish Refugee Council, and Dublin Castle

The project aimed to raise awareness of the barriers refugees face in accessing higher education, strengthen their sense of belonging, give visibility to the experiences and voices of an “invisible” community, and shift research from the academic sphere into the public domain.

Why is the project relevant?

The Photovoice method is a participatory feminist approach originally used to balance the power dynamic between researchers and research subjects. What makes it unique is that Photovoice offers participants the opportunity to actively engage with their own narratives. Participants are asked to bring photos that represent their experiences and stories. The exchange that arises from using the photos to stimulate conversation is more emotional and vivid. Based on the photos taken and selected by the participants, one can reflect on the contexts, emotions, and experiences and explore the reasons behind their image selection.

Link/Resource: [Community Needs Analysis with Refugees - College Connect : College Connect](#)

Projekt: Yes. I’m Irish. (EN)

“Yes, I’m Irish” is a video series focusing on the experiences of mixed-race Irish people. They shared their perspectives on how today’s Ireland compares to the one they grew up in.

Why is this project relevant?

The project straddles the line between oral history and storytelling—sharing one’s own story—and video interviews.

Link/Ressource: ['Yes, I'm Irish': Meet Oona Colin](#)

Projekt: Oral History Archiv (Francesca Falk) (DE)

This archive, currently under development, comprises biographical and thematic oral history interviews conducted in Francesca Falk’s courses. A particular focus is placed on migration experiences.

Why is this project relevant?

Biographical oral history interviews about migration experiences;

Link/Ressource: [Oral History Archiv](#)

Projekt: REWIND

A collection of migration stories, both from Italians in the past and from foreigners today, aimed at normalizing the topic.

Method: Interviews in schools; students explore migration within their own families and transform the topic from an abstract issue into a shared experience. This shifts the discourse from “them” to “us,” and stereotypes are broken down through lived experiences.

Why is the project relevant?

It is a replicable format that has a high educational impact at low cost.

Link/Ressource: [REWIND. A multimedia suitcase for migrants of yesterday and today - dedalus](#)

Projects with focus on working with contemporary witnesses

Projekt: erinnern.at (DE/EN)

The OeAD develops teaching materials and lesson plans, as well as educational websites and apps, that are suitable for use in the classroom, in distance learning, and in extracurricular youth education. In addition to training on the use of specific teaching materials and platforms, the OeAD also provides training on integrating interviews with eyewitnesses into the classroom and supports teachers and Austrian eyewitnesses in their preparation and implementation.

Why is this project relevant?

The project showcases examples of video and audio interviews with eyewitnesses and can serve as a template for life story/narrative interviews or as a source of inspiration. It presents a collection of interviews with “ordinary people” and their life stories and is available online for reuse in your classroom.

Link/Ressource: [erinnern.at](#)

Links:

- [Fluchtpunkte](#)
- [Sammlung MenschenLeben | Mediathek](#)

Projekt: IWitness (EN)

By engaging deeply with personal accounts from survivors and witnesses of genocide, students around the world develop empathy, understanding, and respect while simultaneously deepening their knowledge across all subjects.

Why is this project relevant?

A wide range of activities, guidelines, and suggestions for preparing for and following up on work with eyewitnesses; interesting templates for workshops and training sessions.

Link/Ressource: [Educator Resources | IWitness](#)

Brainstorming Tool: [GO Locating and Analyzing Textual Evidence.pdf](#)

Analysetool vor und nach dem Interview: [GO Testimony as Primary Source Critical Analysis.pdf](#)

Für Beobachter*innen: [See Wonder Connect.pdf](#)

Projekt: Oral History Groups (GR/EN)

The founding and activities of the HCOs are directly linked to a crisis situation. The founding of the first HCO in Athens, OPIK (Kypseli), coincided with the “squares” movement (2011), but also with the almost simultaneous emergence of major movements outside Greece: Occupy Wall Street, the Arab Spring. The social impact of its founding was impressive. OPIA (Athens, 2013) was founded in the wake of the aforementioned events. The increase in the number of HCOs and individuals collecting oral testimonies reflects Greek society’s need to come to terms with its past, but also the power of oral tradition to mobilize people, generate new ideas, and shed light on the future. In the new historical context, the collection of oral testimonies forms the foundation for shaping the future.

Why is the project relevant?

Guidance and insights into oral history methods in schools and the impact of the results on social movements.

Link/Ressource: [Oral History Groups – Oral History Groups](#)

Projekt: Oral History – Archiv für Zeitgeschichte (DE)

Oral history is a key focus of the Swiss Archives of Contemporary History, which collects interviews with eyewitnesses and provides practical guidance.

Why is this project relevant?

Important suggestions and tips for conducting interviews with eyewitnesses, as well as templates (e.g., a template for the consent form / agreement on the reuse of interviews (German)); further links.

Link/Ressource: [Oral History – Archiv für Zeitgeschichte | ETH Zürich](#)

Projects with focus on teaching

Projekt: Lichtblau, Albert: Oral History lässt sich nicht Unterrichten? (DE)

A reflective article on practice and teaching in the field of oral history research. Key message: Oral history cannot be taught directly; rather, it is learned primarily through guided practice and conducting one's own interviews. University courses can facilitate this practice despite time constraints if students conduct interviews themselves and engage in intensive preparation, reflection, and follow-up.

Why is this project relevant?

A brief but incisive report on experiences from university practice that includes important practical tips and can also be adapted to adult education; experiences in dealing with difficult interview situations (particularly grief or trauma, technical difficulties, etc.), as well as guidance on preparing for the interview, providing support during the process, and concluding the session.

Link/Ressource: [Anzeige von Oral History lässt sich nicht unterrichten?](#)

Projekt: Oral History Methodology (EN)

This paper is intended for graduate students and provides an overview of oral history methodology as well as guidance on conducting interviews and field research. It is also specifically designed as an educational supplement to a series of multi-day workshops held in 2007 with students in Vietnam and the Philippines.

Why is the project relevant?

Significance for adult education: particularly relevant for migrant, refugee, or multilingual adults, whose life stories are often marginalized.

On the one hand, it presents a scholarly oral history methodology; on the other, it offers detailed guidance on conducting interviews, planning, and implementation, as well as tips for dealing with potential difficulties. It does not provide direct teaching instructions and must be adapted for adult education.

Link/Ressource: https://sephis.org/wp-content/uploads/tainacan-items/4273/4367/LT17_Field_2007_Oral_History_MethodologyEN.pdf

Projekt: Oral History Projekte in der Schule. Unterlagen für den Unterricht (DE)

“Oral History Projects in Schools” does not have a direct focus on German as a Second Language (DaZ), but its methods are highly applicable to the DaZ field and adult education, particularly with regard to oral history as a learning and research method.

Why is this project relevant?

Important suggestions and guidance on the topic and on implementing oral history in classroom practice.

Link/Ressource: [Dossier_OralHistory.pdf](#)

Projekt: Oral History - Buone Pratiche (good practice) (IT)

The document “Good Practices of Oral History” provides information and raises awareness. It does not aim to prescribe standards for research, but rather to recommend best practices that assist field researchers in their work. It helps fill a gap by adequately preparing researchers to reflect on certain fundamental critical issues in historical research.

Why is the project relevant?

Its activities primarily include training in the practice of oral history (both initial and continuing education) and raising awareness of the ethical considerations specific to this methodology.

Link/Ressource: [RISORSE – Aiso Italia](#)

Projekt: Novecento.org (IT/ EN)

The collection of oral traditions in Italy involves both academic initiatives and civil society, with the aim of documenting and preserving collective memory through eyewitness accounts. The Italian Association for Oral History (AISO) plays a central role in this effort by bringing together and coordinating the numerous research and archiving initiatives across the country, including through training programs, workshops, and special projects. Oral histories are collected through interviews with eyewitnesses and memory bearers and offer unique perspectives that complement or challenge official narratives.

Why is this project relevant?

Materials and examples for working with eyewitness accounts in school lessons, adaptable for language instruction.

Link/Ressource: [Alcune buone pratiche per la storia orale a scuola - Novecento.org](#)

Summary

Oral history focuses on people’s lived experiences of history and their perspectives on it. The narratives are not value-neutral or “objective”; rather, they reflect what has shaped and defined the lives of the individuals involved.

Interviews are usually recorded (audio or video), and questions are open-ended to encourage free and detailed responses. The narratives are transcribed and analyzed. In the case of VOICES, the goal is to develop and apply a methodology that can be adapted and expanded for use in adult education, specifically for work in second-language courses and basic education.

The project therefore places a special emphasis on the method’s accessibility, particularly in light of the unique challenges posed by linguistic or cultural barriers—supportive methods must be incorporated into the preparation phase to help overcome these obstacles. Furthermore, as is generally the case with oral history-based methods, a particularly sensitive approach is required when dealing with both the learners and the interviewed eyewitnesses, as the topics of flight and migration require special tact due to the risk of potential (re)traumatization on both sides.

In contrast to other oral methods such as storytelling—which focuses on telling a story as engagingly as possible using various aids—oral history is limited to the personal perception and interpretation of one’s own history, although narrative aids such as photos or objects may also be used here. The goal of the VOICES project is to strengthen learners’ awareness of history, foster a sense of self-empowerment through the experience of conducting interviews, develop proficiency in technical tools, promote intergenerational learning, and facilitate learning from historical experiences. The collection of projects and tools is intended to assist in creating the materials specifically needed for the project and to provide guidance. Some resources, such as [IWitness](#), can be used directly, while others serve as inspiration or provide information and must be adapted.

Specific recommendations for addressing the aforementioned obstacles and challenges will be developed and provided as part of the workshop methodology.

Abrams, Lynn (2016): *Oral History Theory*. Routledge. London

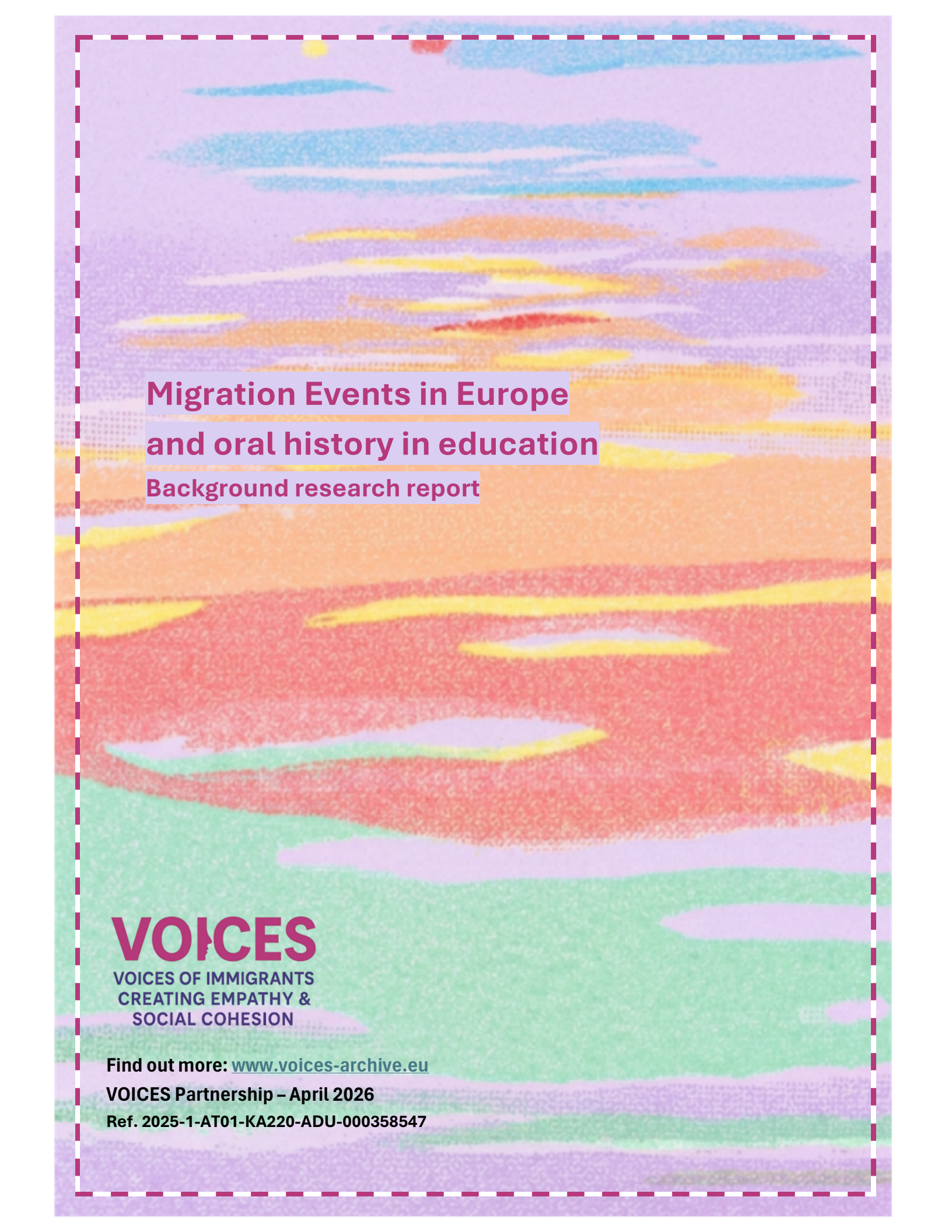
Fuchs, Ulli / Slapansky, Wolfgang (2025): *Trümmer und Träume. Alltag in Favoriten 1945 – 1955*. 2. Auflage. Edition Volkshochschule.

Portelli, Alessandro (2010): *They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History*. New York, NY: [Oxford University Press](#).

Portelli, Alessandro (1997): *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*. Madison, WI: [University of Wisconsin Press](#).

Portelli, Alessandro (1994): *The Text and the Voice: Writing, Speaking and Democracy in American Literature*. New York, NY: [Columbia University Press](#).

Portelli, Alessandro (1991): *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*. Albany, NY: [SUNY Press](#).



Migration Events in Europe and oral history in education

Background research report

VOICES

VOICES OF IMMIGRANTS
CREATING EMPATHY &
SOCIAL COHESION

Find out more: www.voices-archive.eu

VOICES Partnership – April 2026

Ref. 2025-1-AT01-KA220-ADU-000358547