

## Romania refugees and their integration

Today I am going to tell you the story of Yusuf and his family. Yusuf is a 15 years old boy coming from Syria who is our classmate now.

Before the war, Yusuf had a normal life in Syria and he imagined a bright future for him and his family. He had a wonderful family – his father was a pediatrician, his mother was taking care of the house, while Yusuf, together with his brothers and sisters were going to school.

Yet, the war changed everything within seconds. Every night, there were planes everywhere, bombarding. We could not sleep because of the noise and of the fear of bombs. The schools got closed and we ended up in going to classes once a month or even once in two months' time.

One day, when I was coming back from school together with my dad, we watched with horror how our house was becoming ruins. It got hit by a bomb and my mum and two of my brothers were killed. Anger and despair were taking control over me. Big tears were rolling down my cheeks. I looked at my dad and asked him:\*

- Dad, what are we going to do now?
- We cannot stay here anymore, that is certain. We need to leave and build a new life somewhere else – dad answered.
- But where will we go? Who will accept us? – I asked.
- I don't know. We cannot remain here anymore, son

That's how they left Syria because of the war, together with other fellows who had lost their families, houses and workplaces. They travelled by any mean of transport possible, by foot or by boat. They crossed Turkey, Greece and wanted to arrive to Germany. But, the money got to an end. Nobody helped them during this adventure without asking for money in exchange

Still, they ended up in Romania, where they decided to stay because they had no money and the perspectives of going to Germany were close to zero. Here, they were accommodated in a refugees' center in Galati. They met other families who, just like them, escaped from their country origins. Ones were coming from Iraq, Yemen and other from Pakistan, but the majority was coming from Syria.

We were very well received here, the authorities explained us all the needed formalities for the installation and integration.

Within the center I made new friends, Ahmet from Yemen Yasemin and Bahar girls of my age from Syria. I thought that I will get over the suffering and over the country alienation easier. My new friends received me with their arms open and we managed to build a beautiful relationship, based on trust and respect.

During a discussion with them, I realized that we have similar life principles and that we want to have a normal life and to be able to get over the traumas from our past.

- Yasemin, Ahmet, what do you want from your future?
- I've been thinking about this too, Yusuf. I am grateful that we've been so well received here and that the people from Romania do all the needed efforts for us to get easily integrated. I wish we had a calm life, to be able to honorably earn a livelihood here, and, why not, to build a family. Of course that half of my heart was left in Syria. – my friend said.
- That is true, Yasemin. It is impossible not to think about our country and not to wish the war gets to an end so that we can get back home one day. Yet, until that day comes, I wish I could have a decent life here, in Romania. Thank you for being my friends and for being able to share the most profound thoughts. – Ahmet answered.
- Thank you too, my dear friends. Indeed, we share the same wishes and hopes for our future. I am also happy for having you near me. I hope that together we can make our integration easier

My father found a job in a shaorma shop very quickly. Other co-nationals of ours were working here, but it was far under what his profession was like in Syria. Yet, he was not complaining. In parallel, he was frequenting the Romanian language classes together with us.

Here is the place where we met an extraordinary lady. She was a Romanian, but she was married with a Syrian. She had spent a part of her life in Syria and, just like us, she was forced to leave this country because of the war, in order to protect her family.

At our very first meeting she said:

- I am happy that you are here today and that you managed to escape the war. I hope that you will be able to find here the calm that you are looking for.
- We are also happy to know that we found here people who understand us and who can help us to overcome the tragedies we have been through. We are always thinking about our country under war and about the family we had lost and the pain and sadness overwhelm us. – Yasemin said.
- I understood that you wanted to go to Germany. Still, you chose Romania in the end. Why? – the teacher asked.

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- We chose this country mainly because there are no conflicts here, the people are calm and hospitable, but also because a lot of Syrian fellows chose to come and live here too. – Yusuf answered.

We will always be grateful to this lady who taught me not only this new language, but also offered us information about the history, geography and traditions of this new country. She wanted so deeply to help us and to make our staying here easier.

By learning the language, it was easier and easier to find a workplace. Ahmet and I got a job in a warehouse of fruits' selection, while my sister is taking tailoring classes together with Yasemin.

For certain, we will not stop here. We will continue to go to school. I want to study medicine and become a doctor, just like my father. I hope that one day I will be able to go back to Syria. I don't know when this day comes, but until then, I will try to make the best out of the opportunities which were offered to us by this new country.