

## Educational Program *Educate without Borders in Guinea Conakry* Report 2021



### Introduction

Educate without Borders is an educative course promoted by the **Cooperative Sophia - Social Enterprise** that aims to increase awareness of the migration phenomenon in students aged between 11 and 19 years. The project stems from "Borders", **which since 2015 has educated more than 8,000 young people in Italy on the topic**. In addition to this project, in Italy, Sophia is following the path of integration of numerous migrants. Many of them arrived in Italy irregularly and admitted that, knowing certain dynamics before, they would have behaved differently. Therefore, since 2019 Sophia has decided to launch the project "Educating without Borders", **whose purpose is to increase awareness of the migration phenomenon and the risks associated with irregular migration among students from third world countries where the push to migrate illegally is strong**. The first edition of the project was held in Dakar, Senegal in 2020, and involved 743 students from 4 high schools. In view of the good results obtained, in 2021 Sophia launched its second edition in Conakry, Guinea.

## Target audience and working methodology

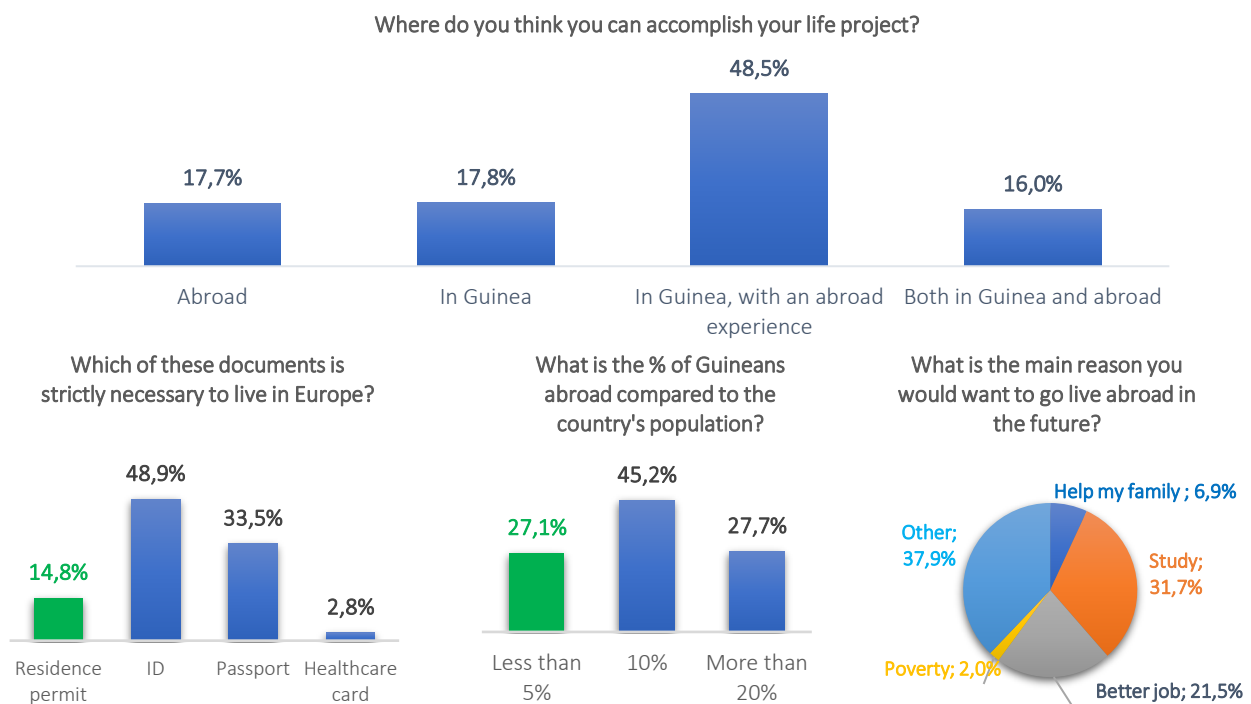
The project, which took place between **April and May 2021**, involved **approximately 673 students from the Lycée de Bonfi in Conakry** and was structured in **three phases of work**:

- 1. Research questionnaire:** Sophia administered to students a questionnaire of 25 questions, 18 closed-ended and 7 open-ended, to investigate their knowledge of the migration phenomenon, where they draw information from, their desire to migrate and how they see their future.
- 2. Training workshop:** Sophia trained students on the main numerical, legal and economic aspects of the migration phenomenon in Africa and the world.
- 3. Testimonial meeting:** a Sophia trainer, of Guinean origin, told the students about the drama of his own experience of irregular migration which, after countless difficulties, brought him to Italy, and answered questions from the students.
- 4. Post-project interviews:** Sophia met with the teachers involved to discuss with them the impact of the project in the classrooms and to explore new opportunities in view of the next edition.

In the following paragraphs, the main results that emerged from these activities will be illustrated.

## The research

**Analysis of the responses highlighted students' misinformation on the topic and their desire to migrate.** Almost all of them overestimated the number of migrants, Guinean and non-Guinean, in the world, the role of Africa as a generator of migratory flows and Europe as a destination point. At the same time, 86.9% of them have already thought about going to live abroad in the future and 63.6% said they had begun to find out about how they could emigrate. The basic idea, in most cases, is that of a temporary migration that will allow them to have a good education abroad - two out of three students wish to undertake university studies - and then return to Guinea to work. Nonetheless, a large part of the students showed that they did not even know the documents needed to live abroad, although only 4.9% of them said they had no close acquaintances outside of Guinea. Below are graphs of four significant responses. The first concerns where the students imagine they could realize their life project, the second and third concern the numerical and legal aspects of the phenomenon - the green bar indicates the correct answer - while the fourth concerns the reasons that would push students to migrate in the future.



## Laboratory and testimony meetings

These meetings allowed students **to increase their awareness of the phenomenon of migration and irregular migration**. In particular, thanks to the workshop they were able to know the following aspects:

1. The numbers and motivations behind the phenomenon of migration in the world, in Africa and Guinea.
2. The laws of immigration.
3. The economics of immigration.

Thanks to the second meeting, however, students were able to meet Mamady Camara, a young migrant born and raised in Conakry who, after studying at the Lycée de Bonfi, decided to secretly undertake the irregular journey that, after two years of vicissitudes, led him from Guinea to Libya and, finally, to Italy. Here, after 7 years of work as a cultural mediator, he decided to return to his country to explain to the students everything that he and many other people were never told before leaving.

At the end of the meetings, students had the opportunity to ask the trainers questions and curiosity. The boys showed a limited knowledge and a great interest in this topic, especially the difficulties encountered by Mamady during the journey and the residence permits, which they did not know.

## Post-project interviews

The importance for students **to know the migration phenomenon and the risks of irregular migration** emerged strongly from all the interviewees. In fact, misinformation is a problem that teachers often find among young Guineans and that, combined with poverty and lack of work, does not help them to have an objective view of the phenomenon, in particular of irregular migration. This is why they enthusiastically joined "Educating without Borders". None of them, in fact, had ever received similar proposals in a school setting.

As far as the project itself is concerned, all the teachers expressed great satisfaction with how it went and the desire to be able to repeat this experience soon, starting from the beginning of the next school year.

## Conclusions e Next Steps

The second edition of "Educate without Borders", the first one carried out in Guinea Conakry, allowed Sophia to deepen her understanding of the socio-cultural context of the country and to verify the effectiveness of the working method, already successfully tested the previous year in Dakar, Senegal. The administration of the questionnaires and the interviews with the teachers brought out the importance of migration for the local population and the need to **help the students develop an adequate and realistic perception of this issue**, which they showed they were not familiar with at all. In fact, in the opinion of the teachers, the widespread poverty and unemployment in the country can generate, especially among young people, a distorted perception of migration, especially irregular migration, blurring them from all the dangers it entails. On the other hand, the course of the project made it possible to **ascertain the interest that these themes arouse among students and teachers**.

On the basis of these findings, Sophia intends to strengthen activities in the area through the following actions:

1. Train teachers interested in working in classes on this topic in order to extend the number of recipients of the project and create a true educating community in the area.
2. To this end, create a dossier to help teachers explore with students the main issues related to the migration phenomenon in Africa and Guinea and the laws that regulate it.
3. Launch new editions of the project in other countries to create, over time, a network of communities capable of educating more areas that are "generators of migration" to an objective and informed view of the phenomenon.