

## Educational Program *Educate without Borders in Senegal* Report 2020



### Introduction

Educate Without Borders is a training 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 7,000 young people in Italy on the topic. In addition to this project, 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, starting this year, Sophia has decided to launch new versions of the project in those countries that are "generators of migration" **whose citizens too often, out of desperation or lack of information, have fallen into the trap of irregular immigration**. This is how the project "Educating Without Borders" was realized, whose purpose is to increase awareness of the migration phenomenon and the risks related to irregular immigration among students in Dakar, Senegal. The choice of the country was motivated by the presence of a political refugee who, after years of work in Italy with the "Confini" project, decided to use his professional experience to start with Sophia a new educational program for the students of his country.

## Target audience and working methodology

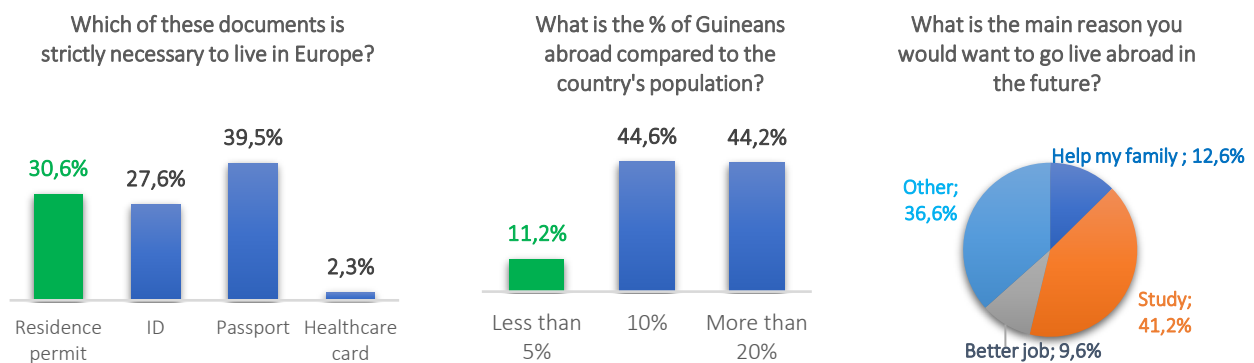
The project, which took place between **February and June 2020**, involved **approximately 743 students from 4 high schools in Dakar** and was structured in three phases of work:

1. **Research questionnaire:** Sophia administered to students a questionnaire consisting of 20 questions, 14 of which were closed-ended and 6 open-ended, in order to investigate their knowledge of the migration phenomenon, where they draw information on the topic and their desire to migrate.
2. **Training workshop:** Sophia trained students on the main numerical, legal and economic aspects of the migration phenomenon in Africa and the world. The risks of irregular immigration were dealt with through the video-testimony of two young Africans who traveled the Libyan route to Italy.
3. **Post-project interviews:** Sophia met with all of the teachers involved to discuss with them the impact of the project in the classrooms and explore new opportunities in view of the next edition.

The following paragraphs will illustrate the main results that emerged from these areas of work.

## The research

**Analysis of the responses highlighted the misinformation of students on this topic.** Almost all of them overestimated the number of migrants, Senegalese and non-Senegalese, in the world, the role of Africa as a generator of migratory flows and Europe as a destination point. In addition, many of them showed that they did not know the documents needed to live abroad. Nonetheless, most of the students said they knew at least one person who had emigrated, in most cases even a parent or sibling, and expressed the intention of following in their footsteps in the future, preferably in a European country. Below are the graphs of three significant responses. The first two concern the numerical and legal aspects of the phenomenon - the green bar indicates the correct answer - while the third concerns the reasons that would push students to migrate in the future.



## Laboratory and testimony meetings

The meetings held allowed students to increase their knowledge of the phenomenon of migration. Specifically, the workshop focused **on 4 themes**:

1. The numbers and motivations behind the migration phenomenon in the world, in Africa and Senegal.
2. Immigration laws.
3. The economics of immigration.
4. The living conditions of Senegalese abroad and the risks of irregular travel.

The first three topics were addressed through the exposure of graphs and statistics, the fourth through the video testimony of two young migrants who have traveled the Libyan route to Italy.

After each topic, students had the opportunity to ask the trainer questions and curiosity.

During the meetings, the students showed at the same time a limited knowledge and a great interest in the phenomenon. Two factors that led them to ask the trainer numerous questions on all the areas covered, especially the legal aspects of the phenomenon and the living conditions of Senegalese abroad.

Below are some of the **most significant questions**:

- *What is the percentage of irregular migrants who arrive at their destination? How long does the journey by sea last?*
- *What type of permit can a Senegalese migrant obtain? If he/she is irregular?*
- *How does one live in Italy as a black man? How is one treated? If you are illegal?*
- *What is the impact of immigration on the labor market?*

## Post-project interviews

**The importance of knowing the migration phenomenon as a tool for students' growth emerged strongly from all the interviewees.** In fact, misinformation is a problem that teachers often find among young Senegalese and that, combined with poverty, lack of work and an adequate educational offer, does not help them to have an objective view of the phenomenon. This is why they enthusiastically joined "Les Frontières". None of them, in fact, had ever received similar proposals in the school environment.

As far as the project itself is concerned, all the teachers expressed great satisfaction with how it went, pointing out that each meeting generated constructive debates among the students, the desire to learn more and to confront themselves with people who have lived the experience of migration.

As a result of these considerations, they said they would like to continue this experience, making themselves available to be trained to become an active part of the project and sensitize other classes on the issue.

## Conclusions e Next Steps

The first edition of "Educate without Borders" allowed Sophia to deepen her understanding of the socio-cultural context of the country, confirming what emerged during the project and opening up new perspectives for future work. The administration of questionnaires and interviews with teachers brought to light the difficulties of the Senegalese school system in guaranteeing all students an adequate education. **In particular, the critical points noted concern the lack of teaching materials, study rooms and other places of aggregation for young people.**

Even the phenomenon of migration is not the object of specific studies despite the fact that the country is experiencing a serious emigration crisis among its young people in recent years. On the other hand, the course of the project made it possible to ascertain the great interest that these issues have aroused 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 classrooms on this issue in order to extend the number of recipients of the project and create a true educational 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 Senegal and the laws that regulate it.
3. Organize video conferences in all classes with Senegalese immigrants in Italy to stimulate discussion and sharing of experiences regarding the dangers of irregular immigration.
4. Start new editions of the project in other countries in order to create over time a network of communities that can educate more territories "generators of migration" to an objective and aware vision of the phenomenon. This network, moreover, could help many young migrants trained by Sophia with the Borders project to return to their homeland by enhancing the skills and competencies gained through their experience. Specifically, a first edition of the project is already being developed in Conakry, Guinea.