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Expert interviews with professionals working in the field of labour market integration for young mobile persons as part of the LYMAS project (Life strategies of Young Mobile persons in Ageing Societies)

Study Report

German Center for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM)

Project: Life strategies of Young Mobile persons in Ageing Societies (LYMAS)

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Abstract English

This report provides background on the project “Life Strategies of Young Mobile People in Ageing Societies” (LYMAS), conducted from 2023 to 2025 at the German Center for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM) as well as three European partner research institutions. The project was interested in how young people with various migration experiences deploy and adapt their strategies in ageing arrival societies. Special focus was on the context of work and education as well as the relationship with ageing family members. While the LYMAS project combined different qualitative methods, the study report focuses on expert interviews conducted with experts involved in coordinating projects that support the integration of persons with migration experiences - particularly into vocational training and the German labour market. Following a short overview of the background and different work packages, we describe how participants were approached, the themes that were addressed in the interviews and how interview materials were prepared for analysis. Moreover, we provide information about limitations as well as suggestions for further use of the interview transcripts.

Abstract German

Der vorliegende Bericht liefert Hintergrundinformationen zu dem Projekt „Life Strategies of Young Mobile People in Ageing Societies" (LYMAS), das von 2023 bis 2025 am Deutschen Zentrum für Integrations- und Migrationsforschung (DeZIM) sowie an drei europäischen Partnerforschungseinrichtungen durchgeführt wurde. Das Projekt befasste sich mit der Frage, wie junge Menschen mit unterschiedlichen Migrationserfahrungen ihre Strategien in alternden Ankunftsgesellschaften einsetzen und anpassen. Ein Fokus lag auf dem Kontext von Arbeit und Bildung sowie auf der Beziehung zu alternden Familienangehörigen. Während das LYMAS-Projekt verschiedene qualitative Methoden kombinierte, konzentriert sich der Studienreport auf Expert*inneninterviews, die mit Fachleuten im Bereich der Koordinierung von Projekten zur Unterstützung der Integration von Personen mit Migrationserfahrung – insbesondere in Ausbildung und den deutschen Arbeitsmarkt – geführt wurden. Auf einen kurzen Überblick über den Hintergrund und die verschiedenen Arbeitspakete folgen Informationen über die Rekrutierung von Studienteilnehmenden, die in den Interviews behandelten Themen und die Aufbereitung der Daten für die Analyse. Darüber hinaus thematisieren wir Herausforderungen und Einschränkungen des Studienformats sowie Vorschläge für die weitere Nutzung der Interviewtranskripte.

1 Technical Data

Staff:	PIs (international team): Dr. Edward Omeni (ORCID: 0000-0002-1067-627X) at the German Centre for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM), Germany Prof. Dr. Belachew Gebrewold (ORCID: 0000-0003-2413-1702) at MCI, Innsbruck, Austria Prof. Dr. Janine Dahinden (ORCID: 0000-0003-1806-3520) at the University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland Prof. Dr. Elżbieta Opiłowska (ORCID: 0000-0001-7084-2631) at the University of Wrocław, Poland Researchers (German team): Dr. Edward Omeni, Johanna Bastian (ORCID: 0009-0004-2656-0759), Leandra Oberg; at the German Center for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM), Berlin
Funding:	Volkswagen Stiftung (Förderkennzeichen: 9C130)
Project period:	January 2023 – December 2025
Status:	Finished
Link:	https://lymas.dezim.de/#lymas
Data:	Transcripts of 15 Expert interviews (conducted in German)
Software:	The interviews were conducted via Zoom and transcribed with a professional transcription service or the AI-based software noScribe (cf. 4.1.1). The data has been coded with MAXQDA.
Country:	Germany
Context materials:	Informed consent (in German) Interview guide (in German) Anonymisation concept (mentioned in 4.1.2)
Research area(s):	Migration research; mobility; ageing society; labour market access; labour market integration

2 Information about the Research Project and its Context

2.1 Organisational Information

LYMAS is an international collaborative research project involving teams from the German Center for Integration and Migration Research (Germany), the University of Neuchâtel (Switzerland), the University of Wrocław (Poland), and the Management Center Innsbruck (Austria). The project is funded by the Volkswagen Foundation.

The research aims at investigating the life experiences and trajectories of young mobile persons in the context of demographic ageing. Each national team conducts local case studies to examine how youth mobility interacts with ageing societies across different European regions.

The project is structured into five work packages (WPs), each addressing a distinct thematic focus.

- **WP1** explores the theme of **"Young Persons with Migration Experience and Intergenerational Relations"** by conducting individual semi-structured interviews with young mobile persons, along with expert interviews involving professionals who work in micro-contexts that engage with this group.
- **WP2** investigates **"Life Strategies of Young Mobile Persons in Ageing Societies"** through biographical interviews and collaborative filmmaking, providing space for more individualised and open expression of the perspectives and experiences of young mobile persons.
- **WP3** focuses on **"Macro and Meso Policies Shaping Strategies and Life Trajectories"** by analysing relevant policy frameworks and conducting expert interviews with local stakeholders in fields such as education, employment, health, and social care.
- **WP4** addresses **"Transnational and Intersectional Challenges of Societal Ageing"** by synthesising insights from WP1 to WP3 and promoting interdisciplinary and cross-national collaboration.
- **WP5** is dedicated to **"Project Management"**, ensuring effective coordination through tasks such as securing ethical approvals, scheduling, and organising the final conference.

Since it was intended to link the results from WP1 and WP3, during project execution the expert interviews laid out in WP1 were combined with those of WP3. A unified interview guide was developed to reflect the shared research interests of both work packages.

Although all national teams conducted interviews, this report exclusively presents the expert interviews undertaken by the German research team.

2.2 Context and Concept of the Study

The LYMAS project examined societal ageing as a combination of demographic, structural, and cultural transformations that occur as the proportion of older adults in a society increases. Although this process affects all groups of society, its impact on younger generations is often overlooked in public and political debates. LYMAS sought to address this gap by exploring the intersectional experiences of young mobile persons living in the midst of an older majority and navigating institutional structures that are increasingly compelled to respond to the needs of ageing populations. The project aimed to identify formative experiences and coping strategies of young people to the demands and opportunities that arise in these contexts. It focused on key social institutions such as family, work, and education, with particular emphasis on intergenerational relationships and the conditions and opportunities for intergenerational learning.

The project brought together different qualitative and participatory methods to better understand these dynamics and enable cross-country comparisons. The research design integrated three core methodological approaches:

- Policy analysis and expert interviews, to assess the impact of institutional frameworks on young mobile people's opportunities and life choices as well as intergenerational relationships;
- Biographical and narrative interviews, to capture individual experiences of migration and intergenerational interaction;
- Participatory film workshops, where young mobile persons co-produce short documentaries, to provide a space for more diverse and creative forms of personal expression.

Fieldwork was conducted in various European cities and regions. In Germany, these included Bavaria, North Rhine-Westphalia, and Saxony-Anhalt. Parallel research was conducted in Wrocław and Lower Silesia (Poland), the Jura Arc (Switzerland), and Burgenland, Innsbruck, Lower Austria, and Vienna (Austria).

The three German regions were selected to ensure representativeness. They reflect distinct demographic and historical developments, as well as varying economic and legal contexts.

North Rhine-Westphalia is located in western Germany and in 2024 recorded a total population of 18.034.545 (Statistisches Landesamt NRW 2026). It includes the Ruhr area, the fifth-largest metropolitan region in Europe (Ziegler et al., 2018). Historically regarded as Germany's industrial powerhouse (Lengyel et al., 2022, p. 576), the region has attracted multiple waves of immigrant labor since the late 19th century.

Saxony-Anhalt, a federal state in eastern Germany and formerly part of the GDR, has experienced the largest relative population decline of any German state since reunification in 1990, losing about one-quarter of its residents (Demografieportal, n.d. b). It also has the oldest population nationwide (Demografieportal, n.d. a). This decline results from persistently low birth rates, significant outmigration of mostly young people seeking better jobs in wealthier

western states, and a relatively low share of foreign immigration (Pastuszka, 2023, p. 130). In 2022, only 7.4% of the population were foreign nationals (Leclerque & Fritzsche, 2024, p. 7). Economically, Saxony-Anhalt remains one of Germany's weakest states (Pastuszka, 2023, p. 124), and projections indicate it will continue to experience the largest population decline in the country through 2060 (Pastuszka, 2023, p. 126).

Bavaria, located in southern Germany, is the country's largest federal state by area and its second most populous, with about 13.4 million residents as of late 2022 (Demografieportal, n.d. c, Pastuszka, 2023 p. 123). As one of Germany's most economically prosperous regions, it hosts globally recognized corporations and benefits from strong labour markets and infrastructure in its metropolitan centres (Pastuszka, 2023, p. 124). In recent decades, population growth has been driven largely by international immigration, helping to stabilize the demographic structure and mitigate labour shortages (Demografieportal, n.d. c; Pastuszka, 2023, pp. 117, 129f). In 2024, foreign nationals comprised 15.6% of the population (Statista, 2025).

Although Bavaria's population remains younger than the national average (Demografieportal, n.d. e), demographic ageing is progressing unevenly: rural areas face population decline, while central and southwestern regions continue to grow. Projections indicate modest overall growth by 2042, alongside widening regional disparities (Demografieportal, n.d. d).

As the findings from our policy review in WP3 demonstrate, the selected focus regions are also shaped by differing legal and policy approaches to migration and integration. Under Germany's system of concurrent legislation, federal states have the authority to adapt national legislation and implement their own integration policies. The federal government, however, holds the primary authority to enact legislation if issues concerning the establishment of equal living conditions or the preservation of legal and economic unity are at stake, such as in the case of residency rights. Among the five states that have exercised this option are Bavaria and North Rhine-Westphalia. In North Rhine-Westphalia, the Participation and Integration Act defines institutional responsibilities, supports the establishment of communal integration centres, and regulates financial assistance to municipalities (Schupp and Wolfarth, 2022, p. 18). By contrast, Bavaria's integration law, enacted during the 2015–2016 period of increased migration, places a strong emphasis on duties and conformity with a so-called guiding culture (ger. "Leitkultur"). The law has faced criticism for its assimilationist orientation and the threat of sanctions in cases of non-compliance. In 2019, parts of the legislation were declared unconstitutional by the Bavarian Constitutional Court (Schupp and Wolfarth, 2022, pp. 19, 21).

2.2.1 Research Interests: Focus on WP1 and WP3

Since the interviews discussed in this report relate to two work packages, the thematic focus and research goals of both WP1 and WP3 are presented in detail.

WP1, "Young Persons with Migration Experience and Intergenerational Relations", focuses on intergenerational relations involving young mobile people in ageing societies, particularly within work-related micro-contexts such as workplaces, vocational trainings, apprenticeships, and

traineeships. It investigates how these interactions are shaped, what roles older individuals play in the lives of young persons with migration experiences, and how knowledge and practices are exchanged across generations. Key questions address who participates in these intergenerational relations, the nature and quality of interactions, opportunities and barriers to intergenerational learning, and how institutional actors and social spaces influence these dynamics. The analysis adopts an intersectional perspective, paying attention to structures of power such as paternalism, sexism, ageism, and racism.

To capture both individual perspectives and institutional frameworks, WP 1 combines semi-structured interviews with young persons with migration experiences and expert interviews (Bogner et al. 2009) with professionals such as employers, trainers, and program leaders. These interviews provide insight into the everyday experiences of intergenerational exchange and how these are shaped in specific socio-institutional contexts. The interviews were conducted based on an extensive interview guide used in all four research teams. Preparing the interview guide in detail supported building thematic and conceptual competence on the side of the researchers (Meuser & Nagel 2009: 32). However, the actual interviews were approached as open interview situations, leaving space to select suitable themes depending on the area of expertise and adapt the interview guide.

An initial analysis conducted during the project's conceptualisation indicates that demographic policies in the study sites mainly focus on older populations, addressing pensions, poverty, health care, and active ageing. However, the research project aims to broaden this focus. Therefore, WP3, "Macro and Meso Policies Shaping Strategies and Life Trajectories," examines the interaction of family and youth policies, highlighting overlaps, gaps, and inconsistencies. It also investigates how demographic strategies connect with migration policies, particularly regarding skilled labour shortages. WP3 uses a multi-level approach, considering local, regional, national, and European policy frameworks, extending the analysis beyond local responses to demographic ageing.

WP3 follows a mixed-method approach. This includes a qualitative analysis of the legal framework that shapes the experiences and life trajectories of young people with different migration experiences in Germany, a literature review on societal ageing across all study areas, and interviews with local authority stakeholders.

The policy review covers migration, ageing, and employment policies adopted or discussed by European, national, and local institutions between 2010-2023. Drawing on laws, resolutions, regulations, directives and national constitutions, but also secondary literature, scientific publications and grey literature, it provides a comprehensive overview of the legal frameworks impacting directly or indirectly the experiences and decision making of young mobile persons in each study region. The literature review offers a comprehensive analysis of societal ageing in Germany. It reflects on changing demographics and related developments, focusing on the intersection with migration and labour market dynamics. The review organises findings from grey literature, policy reports, working papers, and academic studies published between 2010 and 2023. Finally, WP 3 also includes the collection of primary data through interviews with

local policymakers and stakeholders in areas such as education, employment, health, and social care.

3 Generation of Research Material: Preparation and Implementation

3.1 Sampling: Selection and Recruitment of Research Participants

The sample consists of 17 interview participants, with three based in North Rhine-Westphalia, five in Saxony-Anhalt, and seven in Bavaria.

The majority of participants are professionals, alongside a few voluntary workers, who are involved in coordinating, managing, and initiating projects that support the integration of persons with migration experiences —particularly into vocational training and the labour market in Germany. Participants represent a range of sectors, including welfare organizations, chambers of commerce, private educational institutions, and entrepreneurial initiatives. Their work focuses on facilitating access to vocational training and employment for different groups of people with migration experiences, such as people on work visa, refugees, and asylum seekers (Crawley & Skleparis 2018), developing targeted programs for youth, women, and migrant-led enterprises, and promoting intergenerational exchange and social inclusion. A further branch is supporting international skilled workers through mentoring and relocation services.

The interviews were conducted between June 2023 and November 2024 via Zoom. Audio was recorded using a separate recording device. Each interview lasted between one hour and one and a half hours.

3.1.1 Ethical Considerations for Recruiting Interview Participants

No financial incentives were provided to participants. Informed consent was obtained in advance of all interviews: consent forms were distributed electronically, signed digitally, and returned prior to participation. Subsequently, all data were anonymised before being imported into MAXQDA for analysis.

A secondary aim of the expert interviews was to engage participants as potential gatekeepers. Given their professional roles and close contact with persons with migration experiences, we sought their support in disseminating our interview call for episodic and/or biographical interviews with young persons with migration experiences. To avoid possible participants would feel pressured, we did not want the expert interview participants to personally propose the participation in our interviews to them. Instead, we asked interview participants to share our call digitally over their networks or to lay out flyers.

3.2 Interview Guide and Emerging Themes

The interview guide was developed based on theoretical insights and the project's research interest. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing for consistency

across core themes while accommodating variation based on individual participant experiences.

Main blocks of the interview guide covered the context of labour market conditions in the specific region, specifically for young persons and those with migration experiences; experiences of young mobile persons; intergenerational learning, policies and stakeholder perspectives.

The guide explored participants' professional and personal backgrounds, the role of young mobile persons in addressing labour market needs, and the conditions under which people with different migration status access employment and training opportunities. Additional areas included the impact of legal and institutional frameworks, available support structures, recruitment and integration challenges, and intergenerational dynamics in the workplace. Finally, participants were asked to reflect on the broader political context and invited to offer suggestions for improving labour market access for young mobile persons.

One emerging topic that was consistently addressed across most interviews concerned challenges to build and especially maintain infrastructures that support labour market access and integration.

4 Analysis and Reuse of the generated Material

4.1 Material Preparation and Analysis

4.1.1 Transcription, Translation and Contextualisation of Interview Material

Interviews number 1 to 12 were transcribed by a transcription service and checked for their correctness at random. Interviews number 15 to 17 were transcribed using the open software noScribe[1]. In line with data protection regulations, noScribe transcribes audio flies on a local device, based on the AI software "Whisper"[2]. They were subsequently listened to and corrected manually where necessary. All interviews were conducted and transcribed in German.

Micro data providing context for the interview transcripts were compiled in the project table. Information such as the age of interview participants was not included to ensure personal data protection. A limitation constitutes that we did not ask our participants about their gender. We however chose to include the assumed gender to the best of our conscience, based on official contact details and the respective form of address used (ger. "Frau"/"Herr").

[1] NoScribe is based on faster-whisper and pyannote and runs on a local device without accessing the internet. All interviews transcribed with noScribe have been listened to again by a member of the research team and corrected if necessary.

[2] See: Steinhardt, Isabel (2023): Automatisch, kostenlos und datenschutzkonform transkribieren. hyptohese https://sozmethode.hypotheses.org/2117 (last accessed 05.01.2026)

4.1.2 Material Protection and Anonymisation

The interviews were anonymised manually, assuring that none of the interview partners can be identified in their professional role or as a private person while at the same time preserving as much context information as possible for the reuse of the data set. The anonymisation concept is available as part of the context material.

4.1.3 Context materials

Together with the research data (15 interview transcripts), the following context materials have been provided for archiving:

- Interview guideline (in German)
- Informed consent (in German)
- Anonymisation concept (in English)

There have been no project related publications yet (February 2026). Future publications will be linked to the metadata of the LYMAS dataset in the PANGAEA online catalogue at https://doi.pangaea.de/10.1594/PANGAEA.989325 .

4.2 Reusability Potential of the Interview Transcripts

Emerging from the LYMAS project, the expert interview transcripts could be analysed applying the concept of generationalism (Charmillot & Dahinden, forthcoming). The concept proposes to analyse patterns of legitimising racist discrimination from older generations towards young migranticised persons on the premise of generational differences. It thereby critically engages with the concealing of underlying discriminatory and racist patterns in society.

Furthermore, the interviews could be used to gain a better understanding of the structural challenges professional actors in the field of labour market integration of (young) people with migration experiences face and how they deal with political changes as well as changing funding schemes.

Another lens for analysis could be the concept of “deservingness”, concerned with the ambivalence between being part of a group and having access to certain (social) services needing to be both earned (Joppke 2024) and constantly proven (Blachnicka-Ciacek et al. 2021). Many interviews depict both positions, with interview participants wanting to support and facilitate access to the labour market while at the same time discursively reproducing the ideal of the self-relying and “useful migrant” (Schultz 2021).

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