



“Adrift” unaccompanied minors: precarious living conditions and care in Brussels

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Based on research carried out jointly with Céline Graas

Research consortium



With the financial support
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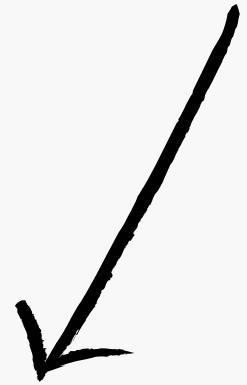


I Context and methodology

- Research underway since September 2022
- Anchored in Brussels, on the borders between three municipalities: Brussels City (Anneessens district), Anderlecht (Cureghem district) and Saint-Gilles (Porte de Hal).
- Initial observation: presence of unaccompanied foreign minors (MENAS) in the area, who use substances and whose recourse to the help and care network is questionable.

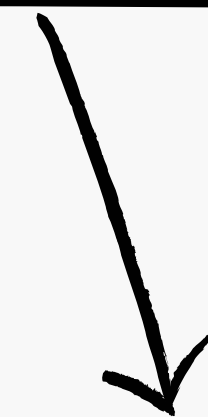


Collaborative action research



The aim is twofold:

- Co-production of knowledge about this group (living conditions, needs, social/health network, etc.)
- Formulation of courses of action and recommendations



= recognition of the equal legitimacy and non-hierarchical nature of knowledge (theoretical/professional/experiential)

I Context and methodology

Several data collection methods:

- Literature review
- Semi-structured interviews with professionals (15)
- Semi-structured interviews with MENAS (14)
- Participant observation on outreach and day centres (>40h)
- Work sessions (15 x 3h) with a cross-sector professional research group

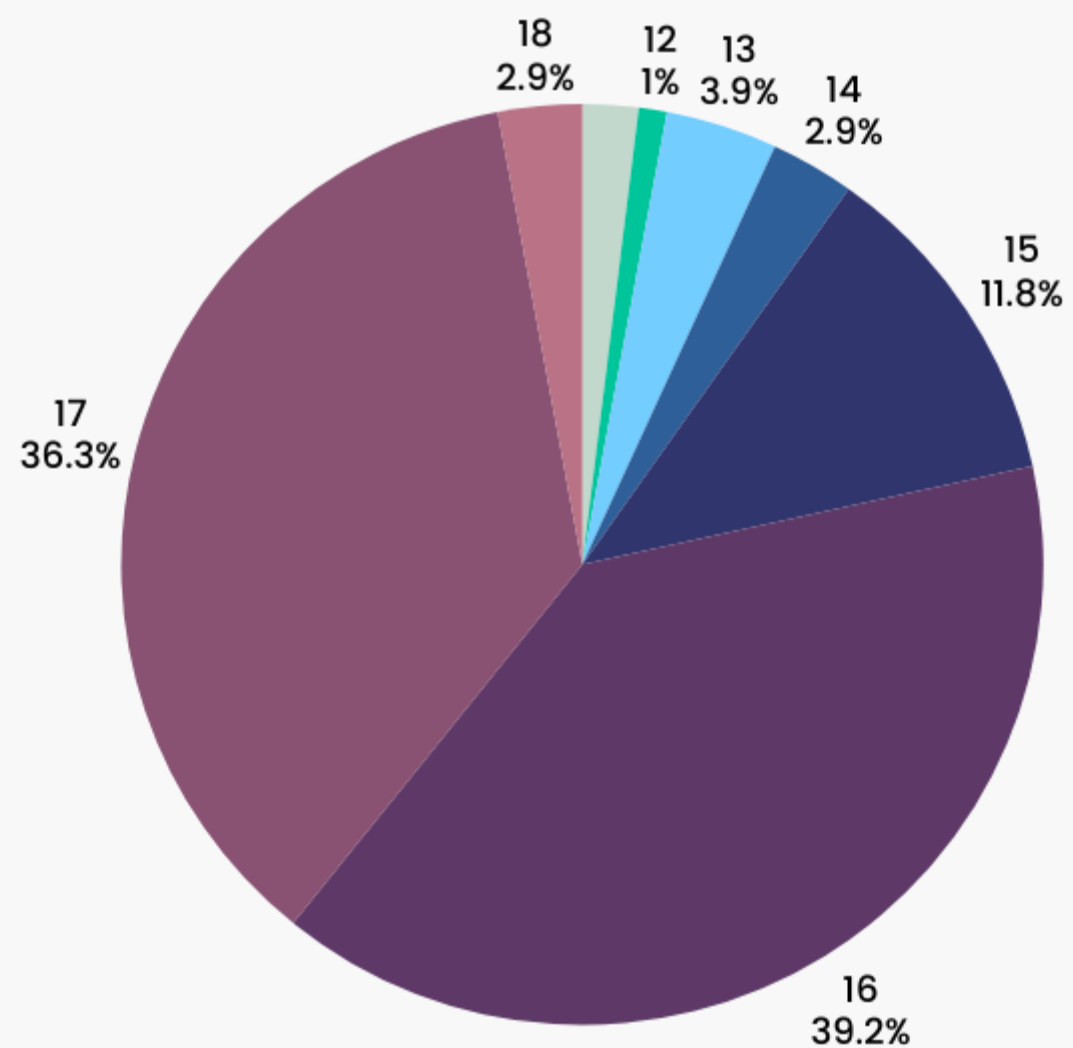


II Characteristics of the public – Socio-demographic data

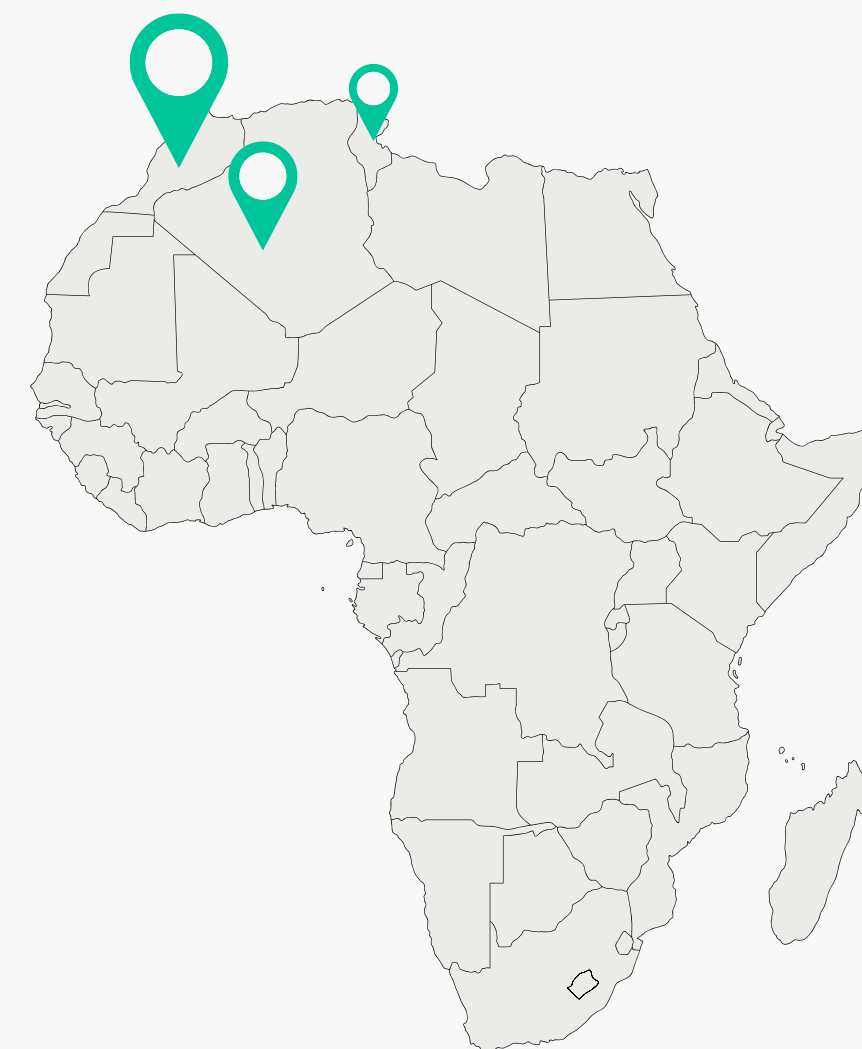
A predominantly male audience



Aged between 11 and 18



From the Maghreb



II Characteristics of the public – Unaccompanied foreign minors

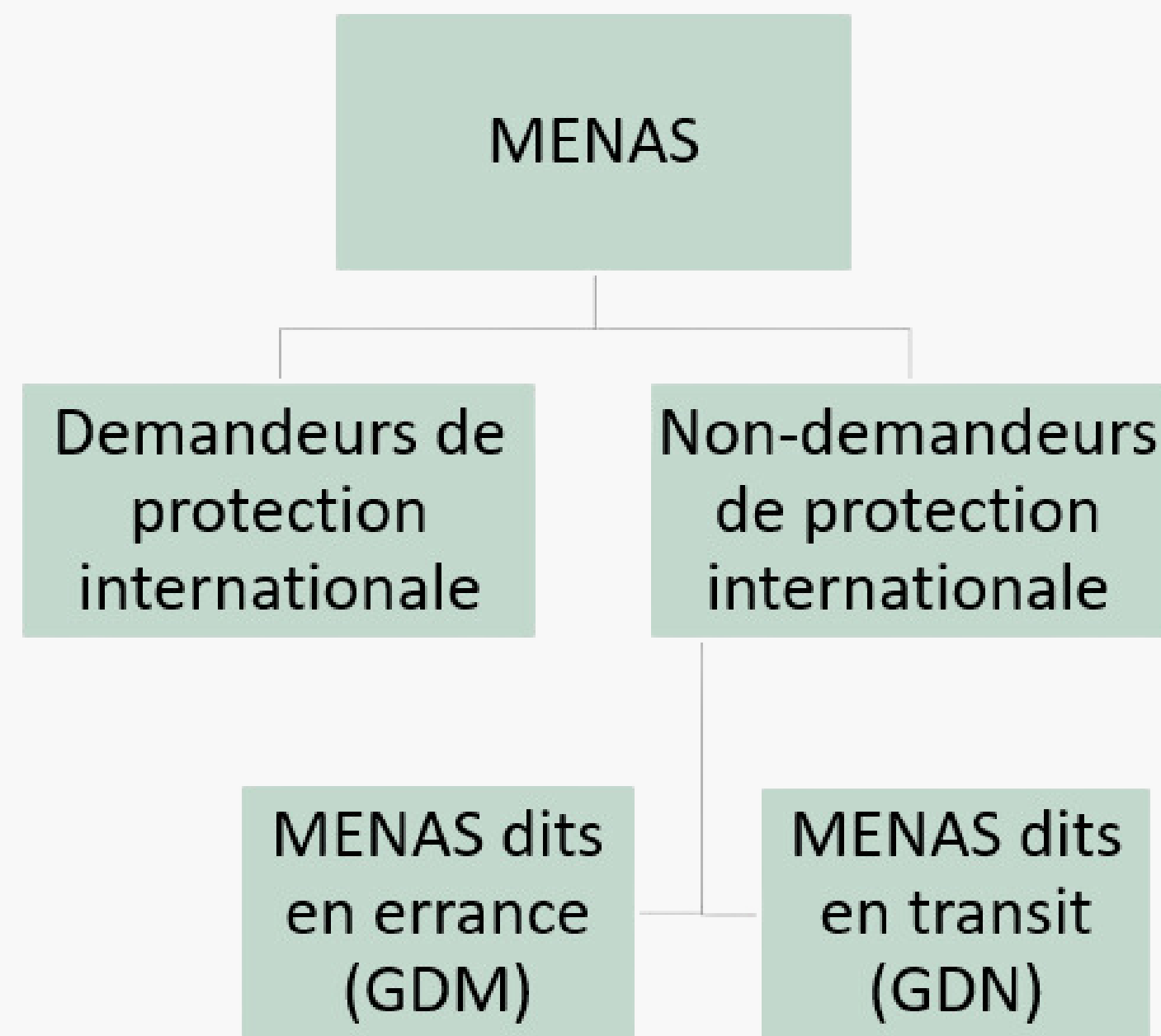
An audience that is constantly differentiated from other MENAS audiences

This differentiation can be called into question by the terms used:

- These young people are also in transit
- Other MENAS clients may also be affected by wandering issues

BUT what sets them apart is the lack of legal and administrative solutions for their right of residence.

Rights + access to care and services
differentiated according to the category in which the minor is placed



Lack of legal prospects

II Characteristics of the public – “Drifting”

What is “drifting”? “The act of wandering, of walking for a long time without a precise goal”.

Physical	Psychic
<p>Spatial mobility</p> <p>On a European scale: ultra-mobility Locally: a strong local base</p> <p>= more complex understanding of the the migration path of these young people = sequenced temporality, between time rooting and uprooting on a global scale transnational</p>	<p>Other common denominators of wandering (Le clève, 2020) :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social isolation• Social maladjustment• Dependency and addiction• Mental suffering• Risky behaviour <p>→ A tangle of issues</p> <p>→ Not homogeneous category</p>

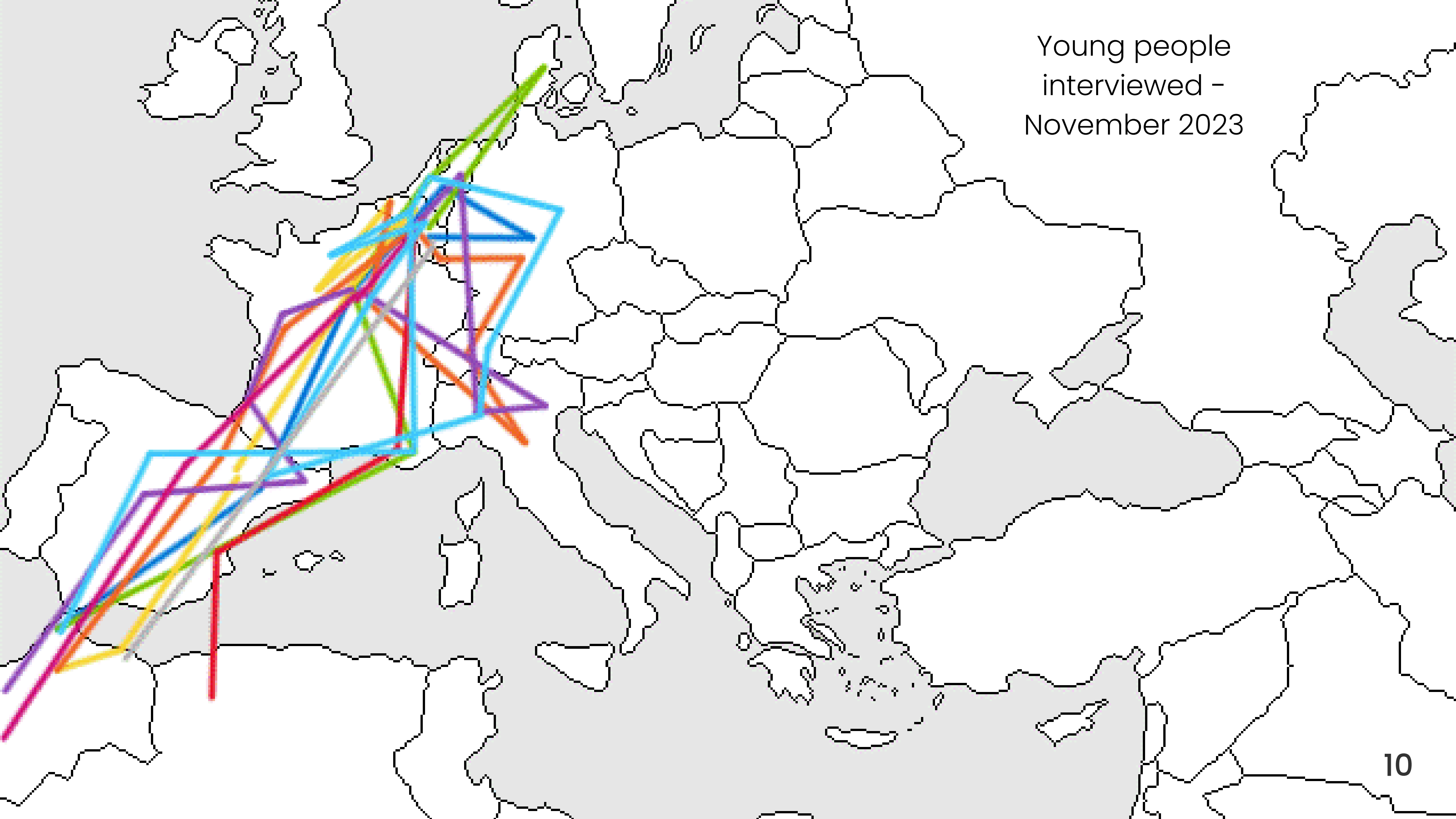
II Audience characteristics – Portrait

Karim*, 16 years old

- He left his country at a very young age: he left Morocco at the age of 11. He reached Europe by boat from the port of his home town, Tangiers.
- A non-linear career: "The first time I came to Belgium was in 2020, but after that I went back and forth (...) to Germany, Italy, France, Switzerland... I've been to all these countries. I'd come for a few weeks or a few months, depending. The longest was 8 months".
- Precarious living conditions: "I slept on the streets in France and sometimes people would open the doors of cars in the street to sleep in them. That's how I got by every day, in a way.
- Addiction – self-medication, non-recreational: "*When I was in France, I couldn't sleep, so a doctor prescribed me Valium, and when I came to Belgium I couldn't find this drug easily, so some friends advised me to try Lyrica, they said go on, try it, it'll help you sleep*".

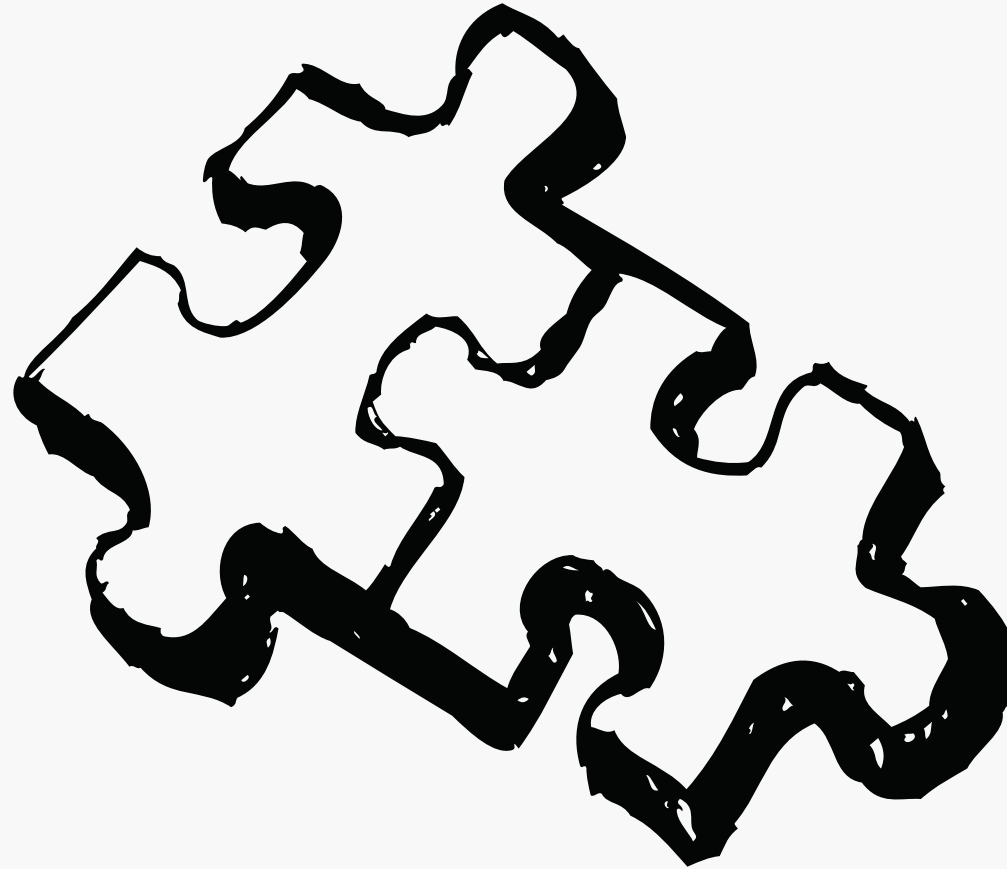


Young people
interviewed -
November 2023



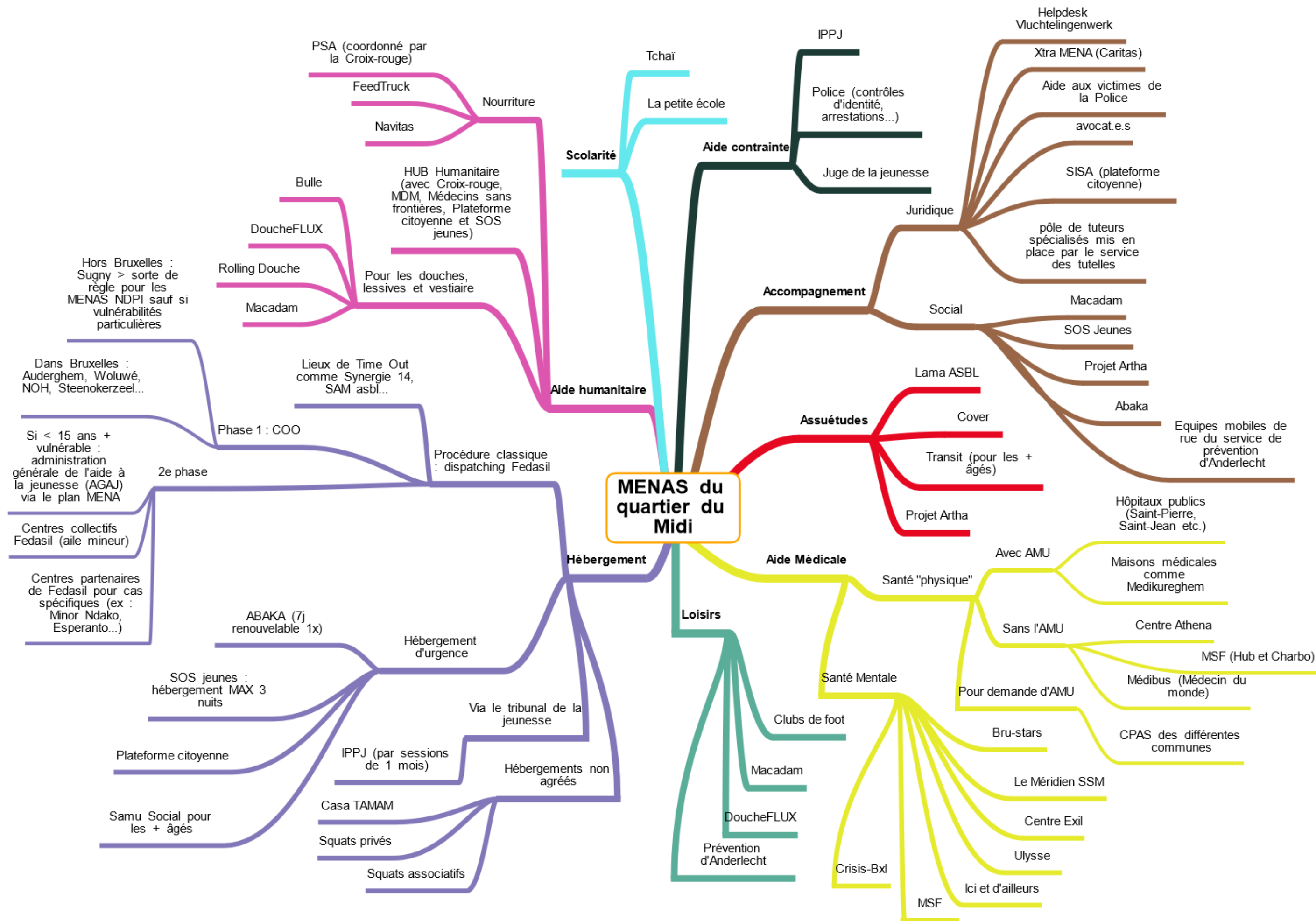
II Audience characteristics - Conclusion

- Multiple, complex and intertwined needs
- Diverse profiles, a heterogeneous group



The need to deploy a protean and adjustable approach to care that takes account of these multiple aspects

What kind of care is currently available in Brussels for this group of young people?



Mapping of players linked (directly or indirectly) to the MENAS in the Midi district - carried out in January 2023 with the RG

III Care in Brussels – Lessons from mapping

- None of these services has been **built specifically** to deal with this public – very recent creation of small specialised units
- Spread across a large **range of sectors** (with different operating frameworks and subsidiary powers)
- Difficulty in taking a **global approach** to the problem
- Involvement of **non-specialist actors** in a medico-psycho-social approach
- **Absence or under-representation of certain sectors**, despite the existence of needs

III Care in Brussels – Restrictions and unsuitability

There may seem to be a plethora of actors, but they need to be analysed in the light of their real accessibility.

(1) Reasons for exclusion

- Age: Some accommodation and care facilities are reserved for adults and vice versa.
- Consumption and mental health: Assimilation of “wandering/drift” MENAS and addiction >> stigmatisation. Such consumption would make collective accommodation in a facility unthinkable. The same applies to mental health problems.



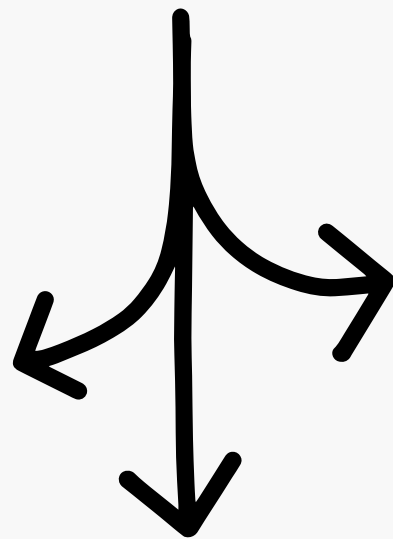
“Which world for me? (DCI Belgium, 2022)”

IV Avenues of action - Summary

3 major courses of action:

- Encouraging networking between actors (on a belgian AND european scale)
- Training and awareness-raising for professionals
- Having a point of reference : The role that could be played by a dedicated **accommodation centre** for this young people in the Brussels area

A bridge between the street
and the Brussels care
network



A place for information: for young
people and for professionals

A place to hang

Acknowledgements

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