

## mimycri – from boats to bags

### WHAT

mimycri is a non-profit association based in Berlin under German Law, which applies a holistic approach to the topic of societal integration, change and migration: an international team, including people with refugee status, is designing and producing bags and backpacks out of broken rubber boats, which were used by people to reach the Greek island Chios. Through working together, strangers become friends and “rubbish” is turned into high quality products.

### HOW & WHY

mimycri’s main activities are:

- **Mutual learning through working together:** mimycri is about learning about and from each other. We want to create possibilities for people who have just arrived in Germany through societal and economic participation.
- **Upcycling of existing and otherwise discarded material:** mimycri gives new value and meaning to material that is otherwise considered as waste. Each mimycri piece fulfills the functions of saving history and at the same time embodying a new beginning.
- **Creation of touch points with the topic of migration, labeling and societal integration:** mimycri creates physical “touch points” through an everyday object. The mimycri pieces create an innovative way to interact and discuss the topic in different spaces and contexts, - media, politics, society.

### NAME AND ORIGIN

The name mimycri originates from the natural phenomena “mimicry” – resemblance and optical illusions of plants and animals, which exist to change the behavior of potential predators. mimycri is highlighting the various ways in which we are perceiving things, people and realities and hence act accordingly. It shows that changing perspective and questioning our perception can tremendously change not only our understanding but also our actions within society. Through turning a broken rubber boat into a backpack and through “un-labelling refugees”, mimycri is an awareness-raising example for the opportunities contained in changing perspective.

The co-founders Nora Azzaoui, management consultant, and Vera Günther, environmental economist started the project in December 2016. The idea originates on the Greek island Chios, where both of them volunteered several weeks in winter 2015/16. This experience has given Nora and Vera the motivation to create something positive back in Germany to showcase a positive response to a societal challenge and to raise awareness for the current global context of migration.

Since then, they have been back several times. They work closely together with the local NGO “Chios Eastern Shore Response Team” in Chios both regarding the collection of the material and the support of the overall work that is been done by the organization on the island.

## **STATUS QUO**

The association mimycri e.V. was founded in June 2017 and is operating out of the innovation space Fablab in Berlin. mimycri is aiming to increase its network of partners and supporters to scale up its impact on all levels: providing more jobs for people with refugee status in Berlin, upcycling more “waste material” and creating awareness and reflection upon societal integration and migration. Selling the bags and backpacks is the economic backbone of the project, which helps it to be financially as independent as possible.

In this context of the “German Integration Prize”, mimycri achieved place 3 out of 40 projects in a crowdfunding competition and is successfully producing the 700 pieces that have been ordered since April 2017.

In addition, mimycri is looking for artistic opportunities to use the historic material and further develop the idea of changing perspective, integration and society through art projects, which foster reflection and interaction with those topics among all members of society.

## **VISION**

mimycri envisions a change of perspective: from waste to resources and from strangers to friends and colleagues. The growing team is currently working on making this dream a reality while striving for greater impact.

The long-term vision builds upon the elements change of perspective, integrating and connecting people as well as contemporary history. mimycri may become a brand that embodies the skills and network that is needed to let people experience a change of perspective on various levels through collaboration. Formats may be installations, events, movies, exhibitions.