

HOW THE EMPOWERMENT OF MIGRANT WOMEN WILL LEAD TO THE INTEGRATION INTO THE LABOUR MARKET

IO3: Guidelines Policy



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INTRODUCTION



Introduction

Labour market integration is one of the most important aspects of migrant and/or refugee women’s integration to the host country. Increasing the employment rate of women with a migrant or refugee background strengthens their social integration and contributes to economic growth and social cohesion. According to data from the European Website on Integration, many European countries lack policies that specifically address the challenges women with migrant or refugee background face when trying to find a job.

EMIRE is an Erasmus+ project, co-funded by the European Commission that aims to empower women with migrant or refugee backgrounds to support their labour market integration and to foster social inclusion. EMIRE’s objective is to develop concepts and tools for social workers, employment advisers, and volunteers to support the empowerment process enabling women to become self-effective in their own integration process. At the same time, the project strongly supports a positive perception of women with migration background in the labour market.

In the project’s framework, a **video platform** with videos of women with migration background sharing their stories and a **Toolkit** for social workers have been created. Additionally, EMIRE has a bold presence on **social media**. The present document is a **Policy Guideline** particularly designed for decision makers at local, national, and European level. The eBook’s overall purpose is to:

- Serve as a Summary of the most important project results, which are relevant for policy makers and researchers with an interest in migration, gender equality and employment as well as to NGOs and others interested in the integration of migrants and women into the labour market.
- Integrate the Project Outputs in training activities, in different social-cultural settings.
- Implement accreditation processes in their project related trainings, based on the ECVET and ECTS.
- Be used as an educational component at a public administration level.
- Inform future policies and initiatives in similar fields.
- Support the local migrant initiatives when they reach out to decision makers.
- Show how the policy structures can help and hinder the economic and social integration.





Chapter 1

OVERVIEW OF MIGRANT WOMEN'S SITUATION IN EUROPE



1. Overview of migrant women’s situation in Europe

Germany

The percentage of women among asylum seekers is increasing. Based on statistics published by BAMF, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in 2021 (BMBF, 2021), 42% of all asylum seekers are female (whilst 31% in 2015). As of June 2021, the main countries of origin of migrants and asylum seekers are Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Turkey, Somalia, Eritrea, and Nigeria, but there are also cases where the country of origin could not be determined (BPF, 2021). Most applications for asylum in 2019 were submitted by the age group of 0-15-year-olds (which currently makes them the main age group with a 50% percentage), followed by the 18-24 (15%), 25-29 (10%) and 30-34 (7%) age groups. In comparison to the 2015 statistics, the 18-24-year-olds’ percentage was 25% and the 0-15-year-olds’ was 26% (*ibid.*). A BAMF (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) analysis shows that, on average, female refugees are about three years older than male refugees (33-year-old women, 30-year-old men) (de Paiva Lareiro, 2021).

The reasons for women to migrate or to flee to Germany are diverse. First and foremost, the search for a stable political situation should be mentioned, since it must be considered that often, the decision to leave their home country does not occur voluntarily, but that external factors such as war, political persecution, economic crises, or violence are crucial for women to leave their home country and come to Germany to live in a safe environment. Furthermore, a factor for choosing Germany may be that family members already live in Germany or that possibilities for receiving higher education and work are assumed here (UNO, 2022).

Based on a UNO article (*ibid.*), there are five different ways for refugees to stay in Germany:

- Asylum
- Refugee protection
- Subsidiary protection
- Prohibition of deportation and
- Toleration

According to the BAMF (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) all asylum seekers arriving in Germany must report to a government office immediately upon or after their arrival, either at the border directly or later in Germany. Those who already register as asylum seekers upon entry go to the border authority. As proof of registration, asylum seekers receive a proof of arrival. All asylum seekers are then forwarded to the so-called first reception facilities. However, those who first apply for asylum can do so at a security authority such as the police, the foreigners’ authority or at a reception centre. Later, all asylum seekers must register in Germany to obtain insurance, apply for financial support, and, if they have children, to register them for school (BAMF, 2021).

In Germany, as part of the labour market integration, there are activation measures, *e.g.*, by the Job Centre, but also many projects offered by civil society and companies. The focus is on the following measures: skills assessment, literacy, and qualification. All measures pursue the objective of enabling women with migration or refugee or background to access the labour market. Unfortunately, the



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offers reach significantly fewer women than men, even though the motivation of women to participate is high (Ullmann & Lingen-Ali, 2018).

“There are considerable deficits in the health and psychosocial care of refugee women” (Susann, 2020). According to the AsylbLG (Asylum Seekers Act), asylum seekers have only limited access to the health system in their first 15 months in Germany, mainly for acute illnesses or pain. This restriction makes direct access for non-urgent medical examinations difficult (*ibid.*). It should be considered that women who have fled their countries or have migration background need psychological support due to the reasons of their escape and that the risk of untreated trauma or psychological problems will cause lasting problems. *“Results of the Berlin Charité study show that among the refugee women surveyed, 55% suffer from physical and 40% from mental health problems, of which only 15% consult medical professionals for physical problems and only 4% for mental health problems”* (*ibid.*).

In 2018, 49% of men with refugee background reported as part of the IAB-BAMF-SOEP survey of refugees that they have “good or very good German language skills in reading, writing and speaking” after a certain time spent in Germany. Compared to this figure, the percentage of women with refugee background was only 33%. This is also related to the fact that refugee women participate less frequently in language courses. Some “family-structural” reasons often make it difficult for women to improve their German. The roles are usually distributed in such a way that women take care of the family and the children while men take care of the income and that way have significantly more obligation and opportunities to learn the new language (de Paiva Lareiro, 2021). On average, women with refugee background participate less often than men with refugee background in social life and social events e.g., sports and/or cultural events less together with Germans (*ibid.*).

Studies across Europe show that the employment rate of women with refugee background is 17% points lower than that men with refugee background and 6% lower than the employment rate of women with migrant background. There are notable differences in the professional qualifications amongst women with refugee background who have arrived since 2015, for example illiterate women and women with little or no education. Nevertheless, refugee women are more likely to have vocational or University degrees compared to refugee men. But again, compared to male refugees, these refugee women with higher degrees hardly ever find a job with appropriate qualifications (Ullmann & Lingen-Ali, 2018).

Austria

Austria has a relatively high immigration rate in Europe. On national level, there are various policies and public sector institutions supporting third country nationals, refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers with various programmes. The relevant official institutions in the field of migration and women are the Federal Ministries of the Republic of Austria who work together:

- Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior
- Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe
- Integration and Foreign Affairs
- Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum
- Austrian Federal Ministry for Women, Family and Youth
- Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF)



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They provide official information on migration to Austria on the website: migration.gv.at with overall information on living and working in Austria.

According to the Austrian Integration Fund’s 2020 report, around 902,100 women born abroad were living in Austria at the beginning of 2020, making up a fifth (19.9%) of the total female population. 48.7% of women born abroad came from EU/EFTA countries and 51.3% were born in third countries. Most of the women were born in Germany, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, Serbia, and Romania. In 2019, 47% of around 9,700 people who were given asylum in Austria were women, mainly from Afghanistan (1,800) and Syria (1,200). Most of the women coming from third countries were younger than women coming from EU/EFTA countries. Women from Syria and Afghanistan were notably young, with an average age between 27-29 years old.

The migration reasons are different depending on the country from where they are coming. While most of the women born in Germany migrate to Austria for educational reasons such as attending university studies (14,654 as of winter semester 2019/2020). Women from other EU/EFTA countries, like Romania, come to Austria in search of better living conditions and job opportunities, but also to study whereas women from third countries as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey or Serbia migrate to Austria focusing on better living conditions and job opportunities. Afghan and Syrian women who have fled their countries because of war and armed conflicts are seeking a better and safer living environment in Austria.

The entrance and registration procedure in Austria depends on the country of residence. Migrants from EU/EFTA countries can stay up to 3 months and then prolong their stay based on educational reasons or employment by applying for “Anmeldebescheinigung”. Austria has separate categories for third country nationals that want to settle in the country and follows different procedures for residence and work permit applications:

- Highly qualified third country nationals¹
- Skilled Workers in a Shortage Occupation²
- Other key workers
- Self-employed key workers
- Start-up Founders

People from these categories can apply for a Red-White-Red Card. This card is valid for a 24-month period and entitles the holder to fixed-term settlement and employment by the employer specified in the application. Asylum seekers need to apply directly at the police station or to a police officer. Afterwards, they will be taken to a special department for their first interview. The police will ask questions about the identity of the person, the reasons why they fled and the fleeing route. The information will then be transferred to the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (BFA) who will decide whether the applicant will be admitted to the regular asylum procedure. If the person is accepted for the asylum procedure, they will receive a residence entitlement card (= white card) and

¹ People who have followed a higher education program of at least 4 years in Mathematics, Informatics, Natural Science or Technology.

² The list of shortage occupations can be found here: <https://www.migration.gv.at/en/types-of-immigration/permanent-immigration/austria-wide-shortage-occupations/>



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will be transferred to a reception facility in one of the Austrian Provinces where they will have a second interview during which more specific questions about the reasons of fleeing their country will be asked. In case of rejection, the person can make an appeal against the negative decision within a given period and can be provided legal counselling to assist their case.

One of the most pressing needs of women from third countries is learning the local language. The German language is needed in all sectors of their life, such as going to the doctor, applying for a job, working in a better job, and participating in the civil society. Language is mandatory for the integration in the Austrian society and to avoid segregation. Some institutions like Caritas and the Austrian Integration Fund offer free German courses for third country and refugee women.

Another crucial need is the need for childcare. Many women from Syria, Afghanistan and Turkey do not have a person to look after their children when participating for example in the German courses or if they want to attend a course to improve their skills. Some institutions are offering childcare, but the number is very low.

Due to the lack of language skills in German, migrant women are also pushed aside and socially excluded which has serious impact in their psychological wellbeing. At the same time, only few organizations offer psychological support with a focus on women.

Sweden

Sweden has long been cited as an example for its policy of welcoming immigrants. The goal of integration policy in Sweden is equal rights, obligations, and opportunities for all, regardless of ethnic or cultural background. The policy goals are to be achieved mainly through general measures for the whole population, regardless of country of birth or ethnic background. The general measures are supplemented by targeted support for the introduction of newly arrived immigrants in their first years in Sweden.

In 2015, Sweden welcomed no less than 163,000 asylum seekers and refugees, most of whom arrived between July and November. This corresponds to 1.6% of the population. But in 2015, the arrival of migrants was even more massive than expected. We are going to talk about this balance between the reception of refugees and the policy of the country in Europe and in Sweden by focusing on the women refugees. In September 2008, the government and the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality jointly decided on an overall strategy. This strategy is an equality between all the citizens. Targeted support for the introduction of new immigrants in Sweden in the first few years is a supplement to the general measures. These reforms will be regulated in special introductory legislation.

According to the decision of the Swedish Parliament, the reform took effect on December 1, 2010. Based on the main policy lessons of the OECD’s recent work on the integration of immigrant women:

- Achieving equal opportunities for immigrant women reducing the gap between men and women.
- Approximately one third of immigrant women in Europe have no connection with the labour market.



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- Isolated immigrant women need special attention, especially those who have migrated through their families.
- Neighbourhood initiatives, cross-cultural mediators in local communities, and “second chance” programmes.
- Affordable public childcare and information about rights and the possibility of career interruption for immigrant women.
- Encourage migrant women to participate in training or employment markets.
- Immigrant women receive and participate in training and other active labour market policies (ALMP).
- Family immigrants moving towards permanent residence need to enter the labour market and obtain integration services.
- Family immigrants need formal qualifications to obtain integration services.
- Early family reunions can support integration.
- A gender-equitable society benefits immigrant women.
- Research and evaluation of existing plans from a specific gender perspective can strengthen the evidence base including the cross-cutting and overlapping challenges.

The EU has no specific capabilities in the field of immigration integration. Therefore, it is impossible to determine any EU legislation that protects refugee women and guarantees their integration into the host society. The protection of female refugees and asylum-seekers can be effectively derived from the EU legislation and other measures within the following framework:

- International protection.
- Address discrimination based on race and gender.
- Gender equality measures.

The main legislative instruments and other measures relating to these fields are the following:

- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
- The European Parliament’s report on female immigrants: The role and status of immigrant women in the European Union (2006/2010).

Refugee women are a large and growing group. Of the immigrants who announced that they arrived in the EU for international protection reasons, 45% were women (EU Labour Force Survey, 2014). Compared with refugee men, refugee women face some integration challenges related to poor health and lower education levels and are less successful in terms of labour market outcomes. In contrast with other immigrant and refugee men, the education level of refugee women is lower. Unlike refugee men, refugee women account for a high proportion of people who lack basic qualifications, take longer to enter the labour market, and often engage in part-time jobs when they are employed.

Refugee women are at a triple disadvantage because they must simultaneously address the specific obstacles faced by immigrants, refugees, and women. They also have a harder time learning the language as many women had no formal learning or exposure to English, so when they come, they must learn both English, Swedish, how to read and write in both languages. In Sweden it is extremely



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difficult to find a job if you are not fluent in both Swedish and English. That said language training and education is at the intersection of all integration and labour market policies. This, then, embraces organizations that are disparate such as the Swedish Employment Agency and educational organizations both on a national and local level. In Sweden, language learning is under the responsibility to each municipality and made accessible for all who reside in Sweden and do not have basic knowledge of the Swedish language. Migrants including refugees from the age of 16-21 have the right to access upper secondary education and access to Swedish language training as part of this. However, asylum seekers do not have access to the education system but can access the language training.

All adult refugees and adult family members that arrive in Sweden first are entered into a program called new arrivals (*nyanlända*). They are, then, entered into an introduction program called (*Etableringsprogrammet*) they are then given access to the language program which is Swedish for immigrants (*Svenska för invandrare, SFI*). The introduction program is organized by the Swedish employment agency (*Arbetsförmiddling*). This said most immigrants arriving in Sweden do not speak Swedish and the language proficiency required by the Swedish labour market is very high. Sweden scores often measures very high in Migrant Integration Policy index and measures very low for Labour market integration of foreign born. If immigrants that arrive in Sweden are given the opportunity to find employment without the high proficiency of Swedish that the labour market requires, then, they can learn better and practice more on the job talking to Swedes and other immigrants. Another issue is that many refugees are not secure whether they will be able to stay and so they do not put in as much effort.

Despite this, the sheer number of people from these groups poses a major challenge to the healthcare system, which is underfunded and under pressure in many countries. The incidence of mental illness, emotional and substance use disorders in these groups (refugees, asylum seekers, or irregular immigrants) is usually similar to that found in the host country’s population. One exception is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is more common among refugees and asylum seekers.

Between January and December 2020, 94,800 refugees and migrants arrived in Europe. Most countries reported decreases in arrivals during the first half of 2020 due to the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, while numbers increased again in the second half of the year. In Greece, Italy, Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, UNICEF reached approximately 51,000 refugees, included women and children, around 30,000 accessed including mental health and psychosocial support. Around 9,400 women, girls, and boys benefitted from gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response interventions. In 2020, UNICEF received USD 26 million out of a USD 28 million appeal. UNICEF acknowledges and appreciates the generous contributions from all public and private sector donors to support the migrant and refugee crisis response.

By the end of December 2020, UNICEF appeal for the Refugee and Migrant Response in Europe was 93% funded (\$26 million, including carry forward from 2019 as well funding received in 2020). In 2020, UNICEF received generous contributions from the European Union (EU), the US Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM), Education Cannot Wait, the Government of Ireland, UNICEF National Committees as well as from pooled Global Thematic Humanitarian funds. The Union’s support to Greece to better manage migration and borders comes from three EU funds, including €1.71 billion



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from the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund, €450 million from the Internal Security Fund and €643.6 million from the Emergency Support Instrument. Sweden is one of UNHCR’s most important strategic partners and a generous donor. Sweden consistently provides the highest level of unearmarked funding to UNHCR. In 2020, Sweden provided USD 124.7 million to UNHCR, making it the fifth biggest donor and sixth biggest donor per capita. Sweden is the biggest multi-year donor of unearmarked funding, and in 2020, \$88.2 million of its overall funding was unearmarked.

Cyprus

Cyprus is considered to be a cosmopolitan island due to the coexistence of many different cultures. The island is a popular destination not only for tourists but also for businesses due to its temperate climate, strategic geographical position, and taxation system. Until the second half of the 20th century, most of the island’s foreign residents were primarily British citizens, Greeks, Egyptians, and Turks. After 1950’s traders started migrating to Cyprus and during 1980’s, professionals from neighbouring Arab countries started to relocate their businesses (UNHCR, 2013). During the same period and later on, Pontic Greeks migrated from former Soviet Union countries (*ibid.*).

Over the past few years, the Republic of Cyprus has become a migration pull factor. Maragkou and Stathopoulos (2011: 6), in their detailed report on migrant populations in Cyprus (based on the 2011 census), distinguish between three main migrant profiles: EU, non-EU European, and TCN migrants. As stated in the latest data by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (UN DESA, 2019) and the Republic of Cyprus Asylum Service, about 16% of the island’s total population are international migrants (*i.e.*, 191,900 in 2019, predominantly originating from the United Kingdom, Greece, Georgia, the Russian Federation, and Sri Lanka). Their mobility is mainly related to professional purposes. Concurrently, 8.5% (*ibid.*) of international migrants (*i.e.*, 16,200 in 2019) are identified as asylum seekers and have been offered subsidiary protection or have been given a recognized refugee status. As reported by the Asylum Service, during the past five years, the majority of asylum seekers and refugees come from Northern Africa and Western Asia and are citizens of Syria, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Egypt.

In the 1990’s, East Asian countries’ citizens, mainly from Philippines and Sri Lanka migrated to Cyprus. These migrants, women in their majority, were integrated to the labour market mostly as caretakers for children and/or the elderly and as housekeepers (*ibid.*). With the official enactment of the Cyprus Refugee Law in 2000 (*ibid.*), the examination of the first immigrants’ applications was launched. The applications for asylum increased radically in 2003 and 2004 (*ibid.*) (5,037 and 9,906 applications respectively) reaching the total of 13,259 in 2019 (Drousiotou, 2019: 7). According to the UNHCR’s latest report (2020: 1), in nearly two decades, the Republic of Cyprus has received a total of 85,565 applications for asylum.

Cyprus has a particular socio-political background. *Ad hoc*, the island consists of an amalgam of different cultures and Cypriots are quite sensitive towards migration. The Government strongly encourages and supports the migrants’ integration and assimilation in the society by continuous subsidiary actions. Constant improvement is a vital element for the success and sustainability of these actions.



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In recent years, the Republic of Cyprus has been a pole of attraction for asylum seekers. In 2021, the Asylum Service (AIDA, 2021) has reported 13,773 new applications whilst 18,808 cases were pending at the end of the year. The applicants were citizens of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Pakistan, India, Cameroon, Bangladesh, Somalia, Nepal, and Sierra Leone (*ibid.*). 291 people were recognised refugees and 1,983 applied for subsidiary protection (*ibid.*). Approximately 82% of these applications were rejected (*ibid.*).

In Cyprus, the Asylum application procedure is the same for both asylum seekers and people asking for subsidiary protection. The application is addressed to the Asylum Service and is lodged at the Aliens and Immigration Unit of each island district (*ibid.*). Newly arrived people are accompanied to Pournara Reception Centre along with people who have arrived at the areas under control of the Republic of Cyprus by crossing the green line³. At the Reception centre, people prepare their applications for asylum. They may remain there up to 72 days. At the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, it has become mandatory for asylum seekers to remain at the Reception Centre for up to 6 months with a possibility of extension to 9 months. This policy resulted “severe overcrowding and substandard conditions” (*ibid.*).

When the application is submitted, fingerprints are taken and from that day until the final decision, applicants are entitled the status of asylum seeker (*ibid.*). When they receive a confirmation letter, applicants must present themselves to any state health facility for medical examination. Upon completion, they receive an Alien Registration Certificate. They can remain at the reception facility and wait to be interviewed by the Asylum Service. During the interview applicants have right to legal support if necessary. The procedure can either lead to refugee, subsidiary protection, or rejection status, according to the Cypriot Refugee Law (*ibid.*). In case of rejection, the applicant has the right to appeal before the Refugee Reviewing Authority or the Administrative Court.

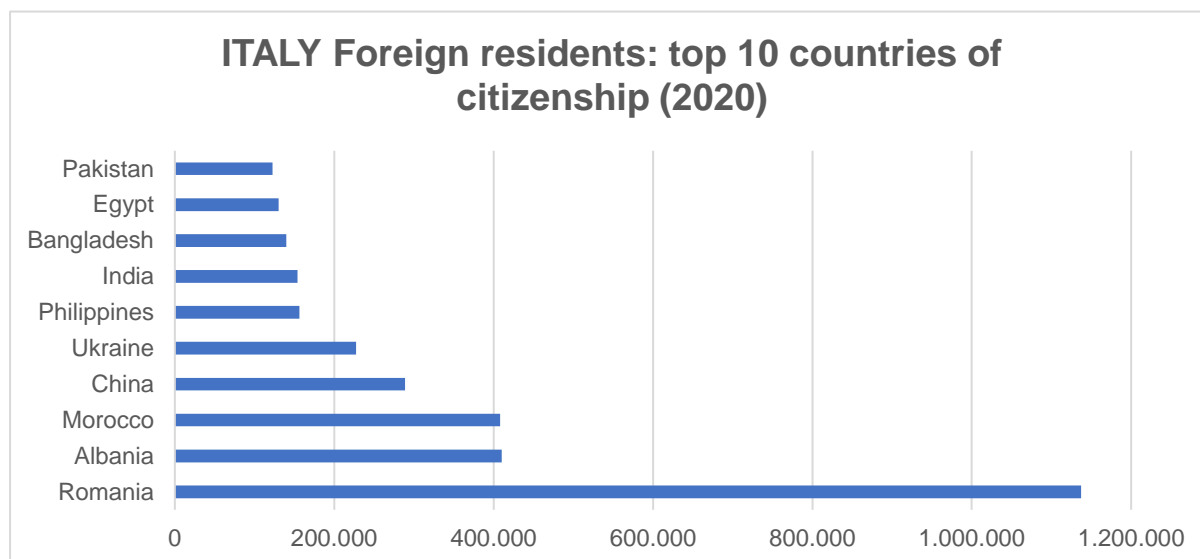
In Cyprus, immigrants have many challenges to face. The first and most important is to break the language barrier. Despite the majority of Cypriots speaking English fluently and the English language being commonly used as *lingua franca* in many professional environments, people with poor linguistic skills in Greek find it more difficult to access the labour market. According to data from an enquiry of the Cyprus Gender Research Centre (2011) “Most of the occupations the immigrant women can secure in Cyprus are low level positions such as waitressing, hairdressing, and cooking. Minor exceptions exist for women having higher education qualifications.” This study included empirical research and interviews with immigrant women. The results showed that immigrant women have to tackle low wages, discrimination, excessive workload, the language barrier, dissatisfaction with the type of work they have to do, the employer’s attitude, sexual harassment, and high cost of living (*ibid.*). Another important fact is that most immigrant women are unaware of their legal rights and do not know where to seek help when in need (*ibid.*).

³ There are several legal crossing points on the “Green line” to and from the areas under the Republic of Cyprus’ control, however, it cannot be considered as border but rather “no-man’s-land”.



Italy

In Italy, the top 10 countries of foreign citizenship are as follows:



From “Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2021” - Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS Edition (2021)

Migrants come to Italy for professional and educational opportunities, in addition to family reasons.

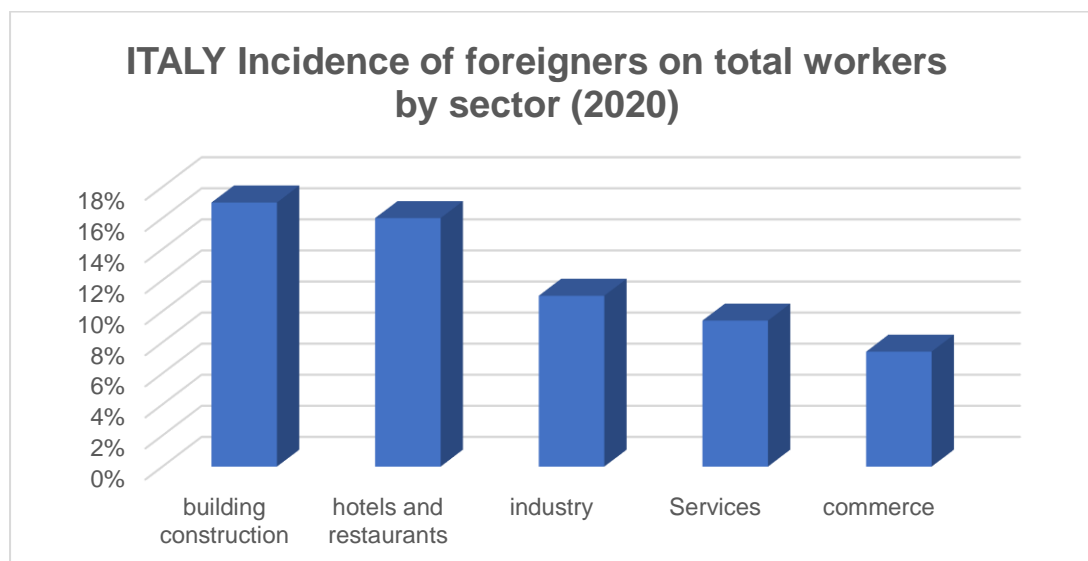
Strict measures against the spread of Covid-19 have caused an upset in the migration landscape: the closures and restrictions on mobility, the interruption of many economic and commercial activities, the suspension of services in the presence of several public services (including those for the processing of residence permits), had extremely critical repercussions on living conditions, social and occupational integration. Such changes mainly affected vulnerable people, including immigrants themselves.

The rate of foreign residents in Italy has shown the largest annual decline in the last 20 years and since 2019, new border closures due to the pandemic emergency affect the number. In addition, there are more difficulties in applying for asylum due to the reduced activity of offices during the Covid emergency. Criticalities induced by Covid in administration have contributed to drastically weakening the already precarious legal status of non-EU migrants. Besides, Italy experienced an exceptional drop in employment. In particular, foreign workers - who had been growing uninterruptedly since 2004 - fell to 2,346,000 in 2020 (-6.4% compared to 2,505,000 in 2019). Migrant women have been affected by the decline of employment in sectors such as domestic and personal care services, cleaning, catering, etc.



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Here are some statistics on the main employment sectors of foreigners:



From “Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2021” - Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS Edition (2021)

Migration implicates resettling physically and psychologically in new environments. Individuals and communities must deal with learning new languages, getting in contact with different cultures, rethinking social networks and interpersonal relations. In this framework, integration should be intended as a multidirectional process, where upcoming needs should be listened and responded. In particular, migrant women should be supported through an intercultural dialogue and effective programs aimed at their social and professional inclusion. Individual determination should be responded with adequate opportunities to promote a more effective empowerment.

The reception system in Italy consists of temporary structures, Government Centres for Asylum Seekers and Centres of the Service for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR). In the SPRAR, integrated reception provides complementary information, support, assistance, and orientation measures, through the construction of individual socio-economic integration paths. According to the differentiation regarding legal status, migrants are classified as:

- “Regular⁴” if they follow legal channels of entry and stay.
- “Irregular⁵” if they do not have a legal status in the country where they aim to reside or pass through.

In Italy, to request recognition of refugee status, it is necessary to submit a reasoned application indicating the persecution suffered and possible repercussions if returned to one’s own country. An asylum seeker is a person who applies to a country for refugee status and is awaiting a decision on their application. The legislation currently in force guarantees the right of any foreign national in Italy

⁴ Regular foreigners include refugees and asylum seekers.

⁵ In particular, the Ministry of the Interior distinguishes between “irregular” and “clandestine”: irregular foreigners have lost the necessary requisites for staying in the country (e.g., expired and non-renewed residence permit), which they possessed when they entered Italy whereas clandestine foreigners have entered the country without a regular entry permit.



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to use public health services regardless of their administrative-legal situation. Migrants in possession of a regular residency permit can register with the SSN (National Health Service) by contacting the ASL of the municipality where they live. Today, asylum seekers can only be accommodated in first reception centres and temporary facilities (CAS).

The reception phase is divided into two stages: first reception and second reception or integration. The first reception is given in the governmental reception centre where the asylum seekers complete their applications. The second reception or integration, on the other hand, is ensured at a territorial level by local authority projects in specific structures. There are special services in governmental centres which, in cooperation with health care, provide special assistance to people with “special needs”.

Non-EU citizens can access the Italian labour market either directly in Italy, if they are present on the territory and in possession of a regular residence permit allowing them to work, or from abroad, within the framework of entry quotas established annually by the Flows Decree. The maximum number (so-called quotas) of foreign citizens coming from non-EU countries who can enter Italy each year from abroad to work is defined in the Flows Decree. The decree provides for separate entry quotas for seasonal workers, self-employed workers, and non-seasonal subordinate workers. Quotas are also set for converting residence permits issued for study purposes into work or for converting residence permits issued for seasonal work into non-seasonal subordinate work. The application for work authorisation can be submitted through the online platform for work authorisation from the date indicated in the flows decree. According to Decree 2022, 69,700 foreign workers are admitted to Italy for seasonal and non-seasonal subordinate employment and self-employment in the road transport, construction, and tourism-hotel sectors for citizens of countries that have signed or are about to sign cooperation agreements on migration.

For both migration and pandemic containment policies, The EU committed the adoption of mobility criteria to the unilateral initiative of individual Member States for over a year and a half (until the agreed introduction of the introduction of the so-called “Digital Green Pass” in summer 2021). The prolongation of the pandemic has gone hand in hand with the maintenance or strengthening of restrictive measures that have made entry and movement in Europe even more prohibitive. This has led to shortages of foreign labour in several important production sectors and to an increase in the unemployment rate among all sections of the working population.

Another tragic outcome of the pandemic is the increase of victims of violence and exploitation, making them more invisible and less free to escape aggression and conditioning. At least half of migrant women are assisted in anti-violence centres and 55%-60% are hosted in refugee houses. They have a limited social network, which makes them more in need of hospitality and protection when fleeing violence. Recently, foreign women have suffered a decrease in employment and an increase in inactivity. This trend has glimpsed in 2019, emphasising how the economic crisis due to the pandemic worsened previous difficulties. During the pandemic it has been extremely difficult to find a job or adapt to remote work, especially in lack of adequate technological means. Foreign women had the greatest difficulty in finding employment. Consequently, a feeling of discouragement and consequent withdrawal from the labour market often prevailed.



Slovenia

In the last nineteen years, the population of the Republic of Slovenia has increased from 1,990,094 to 2,080,908 inhabitants (an increase of 90,814 inhabitants). The last decade has seen a steady decline in natural population growth. The natural increase in Slovenia in 2019, as in 2017 and 2018, was negative and resulting -1,260 people. Most of the population growth can be attributed to immigration.

According to SORS data, in 2019 the net migration (the difference between the number of immigrants and emigrants in a calendar year) of foreign nationals was the highest since 2009, *i.e.*, 16,213 people. Due to demographic characteristics such as the aging population and the high employment rate of women, along with the lack of state investment in public social welfare infrastructure, households are facing increasing pressures to provide care. Monetary compensation policies (e.g., care and assistance allowance) as an alternative to the organization of public services also contribute for migrant woman to stay as long-time caregivers for their families. This leads to lack of work experience and women who manage to get a job are usually being underpaid and forced to accept low-paid jobs just to have any sort of occupation. All this, however, leads to more frequent employment of migrants in the grey economy, which is the cheapest source of workers.

In 2020, there were 278,000 foreigners living in Slovenia, representing about 13% of the country's population. Almost two thirds of them were male. Their main countries of origin are from near-by European and particularly Balkan countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina (44%), Serbia, and Croatia (17%), North Macedonia (7%), and Germany (3%). The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020 and its subsequent restrictions led to a decrease in new immigrants from 27,560 in 2019 to 24,750 the year after. This also coincided with a more than 3-fold increase in returns from abroad of Slovenian emigrants, 11,360 in 2020 compared to 3,759 in 2019. Currently, immigrant flows from Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, and Serbia remain steady. Women in recent years have accounted for an ever-decreasing portion of arrivals: from 40% in 2015 to 28% in 2019; in 2020, however, there was a new increase that brings the female percentage back to 36% of the total migrant population.

In 2020, 36,110 people immigrated to Slovenia and 17,745 emigrated from it. Compared to 2019, the number of immigrants was 15% higher, and the number of emigrants 17% higher. Net migration in 2020 was the highest since 2008: 18,365 more people immigrated to the country than emigrated from it (Government of the Republic of Slovenia, 2020).

In 2020, 51.2% of Slovenian citizens and 33.4% of foreign nationals in Slovenia were women. This ratio is even lower in the group of refugees and applicants for international protection. Statistical data show that in 2018, there were 21,650 foreign nationals among immigrants aged 15 or more. Almost 80% (17,213) of them were from the former Yugoslavia. Amongst them, 21.2% were women (73.6% of which identified as inactive jobseekers, active jobseekers, 2% as unemployed, and 24% as employed). 92.4% of men were employed. More than 14% of these women had tertiary or higher education certificates, in comparison to 2%. On the other hand, almost 40% of immigrant women had primary or lower education, compared to 23.2% of men.



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In 2018, the wage gap between men and women in Slovenia was relatively low, at 8.7% (while at European level it was 16%). On the other hand, 87% of female students were enrolled in the field of education, 76% in health and social security and 66% in the social sciences, while only 15% of female students are enrolled in the field of information and communication technology. The percentage of women in management positions has been gradually increasing since 2012. In Slovenia, the share of women in management positions currently reaches 26.6%, which is more than the European average 18.6% (*ibid.*)

In Slovenia, the procedure for international protection is initiated in two phases. First, the individual expresses the intention to apply for international protection. Third-country nationals can express their intention to any state or local authority which have the duty to inform the Police. In the process of lodging the application, the individual is asked to state their personal information and describe the journey from their country of origin to their arrival in Slovenia. Additionally, they must give a brief statement about their reasons for applying for international protection. The procedure is carried out in presence of an interpreter who, at the end, orally translates the contents of the minutes for the applicant. At first instance level, the international protection procedure is carried out by the International Protection Procedures Division of the Migration Directorate which is part of the Ministry of Interior. Following the first interview on the merits, the case is referred to a “decision-maker”, who, when necessary, organises another interview on the merits, before they take an in-merit asylum decision on the individual’s case (AIDA & ECRE, 2022).

According to UNHCR, in 2020, 3,458 asylum applications by refugees were submitted in Slovenia, the majority of which came from Morocco, Afghanistan and Pakistan. A total of 727 decisions have been made on initial applications (around 10% were received a positive answer and 90% were rejected in the first instance). International protection or asylum can be applied for by a foreigner or a person without citizenship, who considers that they are systematically prosecuted in their country of origin, because of their political beliefs or because of their religious, racial, national, or ethnic affiliations. A foreigner must apply for international protection in the shortest possible time after entering the Republic of Slovenia. This is followed by a procedure during which the police check their identity, the path they used to come to the Republic of Slovenia, and hand them over to those competent in an asylum home where a foreigner applies for international protection. For the accommodation of applicants for international protection, the state (Government office for the support and integration of migrants) organizes and implements healthcare and preventive medical examinations before they are placed in an asylum centre. They are also provided with psychosocial care. In Slovenia there are the following centres:

- the first unit of the Ljubljana asylum centre
- the second unit of the Ljubljana asylum centre
- the Logatec asylum centre. The asylum centre consists of six departments: Families, Single men, Unaccompanied minors, Single women, People with special needs departments, and a Restricted Movement section, currently, not in use. The Logatec asylum centre can accommodate 203 people in total (*ibid.*).



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Amidst the latest updates from the Ukraine conflict, a total of 5,738 Ukrainian refugees have so far asked for the status of temporary protection for displaced persons in Slovenia, 2,149 of whom are underage children. The initial number was 5,919 but some refugees have since left Slovenia. Police data shows that since the Ukraine war started, 21,980 Ukrainians have entered Slovenia. The government decided that refugees from Ukraine who apply for temporary protection in Slovenia will have the right to accommodation, financial assistance, access to the labour market, and education.





Chapter 2

MAIN CHALLENGES OF MIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN ACCESSING THE LABOUR MARKET



2. Main challenges of migrant and refugee women accessing the labour market

Migrant women and girls were long considered mainly as wives and children outside the labour force, and their presence merely a consequence of the arrival of male labour. Women arriving for family reunification were therefore viewed as dependents with no personal status. Many migrant women from “third countries” in the European Union work as unskilled labour, often regardless of their education and work experience. They contribute to economic growth by taking jobs for which native workers do not apply. This means that they perform the heaviest work in poor working conditions and for very low wages. Many of them are subject to abuse, violations of workers’ rights and labour law.

Although migrant women bring a range of skills, they are often mainly confined to service jobs in less regulated sectors such as cleaning, catering, hospitality, home, and social care. Most of these jobs are unregistered, or if they are, they offer migrant worse working conditions than to native-born women: short-term contracts without the possibility of extension, low wages, long hours, and physically demanding jobs. Unemployment and underemployment are more widespread among migrant women than among native women and more widespread than among native men.

Slovenia has a public employment service - the Employment Service. It provides a list of job vacancies as well as employment counselling, career guidance, and information about the labour market. In Ljubljana and Maribor, there is a counsellor specifically hired to help refugees find jobs. Nevertheless, it is more difficult for migrant women to enter the labour market and find a job. If they came as family members (about 80% of women) and apply for family reunification, they must wait for permanent residence to enter the labour market. The unemployment rate among people without Slovenian citizenship is higher than among residents of Slovenia who have Slovenian citizenship; the unemployment rate increases mainly at the expense of women, as it is more difficult for them to enter the labour market than for men. **Labour market policies regulating the work of migrants are usually not based on prepared analyses but are designed as ad hoc mechanisms and are therefore mostly harmful to migrants.**

The situation is not different in the neighbouring countries and at the European level. “Across Europe, 35% of immigrant women are in the bottom income level and less than 5% reach the top” (Frattini & Solmone, 2022). Women coming from non-EU countries face double discrimination in the labour market based on their gender and immigrant status and the situation has, unfortunately, not changed significantly in the last decade.

Gender discrimination has different sides, from wage gaps between women and men, labour market segregation by gender and “glass-ceiling” (when women are stopped from advancing inside of their job based on their country of origin and nationality and are kept on lower positions). Most migrant women are facing one or more of these types of discrimination in comparison with the native women. Highly skilled migrant women coming from non-European countries are highly disregarded because of the national policies that are accepting highly skilled workers in professions mostly represented by men, such as ICT, engineering, and finance. At the same time, professions represented mostly by



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women such as healthcare, education and social work are not recognized as contributing to the knowledge economy (European Institute of Gender Equality, 2019).

Summing up, the main challenges that most migrant women face are discrimination from employers, difficulties in formal recognition of foreign qualifications or low transferability of skills acquired at home and lack of fluency in the host country language. (Frattini & Solmone, 2022).

In most European countries, the number of migrant women is higher than that of men, apart from Germany, Slovenia, Luxembourg, Norway, and Romania. From the countries with a long history of immigration, Italy has the highest number of migrant women 55% from the total migrant population (*ibid.*).

At European level, immigrant women are more likely to work on low-skilled and low-paid jobs than male immigrants. According to the statistics, one in four migrant women (24-25% in EU14 countries) are working in “elementary occupations” which require a low level of skills and competences as they mostly include routine and simple tasks and physical work. Some of these occupations are domestic, hotel, office cleaners and helpers – 18% of immigrant women working on these jobs compared to 4% of the native women. Another category of jobs where about 10% of immigrant women work is the care sector as “personal care workers in the health sector” which includes home-based personal care, health care workers as nurses, midwives, and childcare (*ibid.*).

The second category of jobs requires intermediate level of skills and competences, including good competencies of the local language which can be acquired just in few years after the arrival in the country. This means that for many years, women are stuck in the first category until they manage to get into the second one, if they are coming from low education backgrounds, but not only, as the language of the hosting country can create huge limitations even for well-educated migrant women.

Temporary employment is more widespread among migrant women but has declined more sharply in the last year. As in other countries, the share of temporary employment is higher among women than men in Slovenia, but the difference is greater than the EU average. In the second quarter of 2013, the share of temporary employment for men (15-64 years old) was 14.8% (0.9 percentage points lower than in the previous year), while for women in this age group it was 16.1% (1.7 percentage points lower). The number of women employed on fixed-term contracts fell by 12.7% over the year, and the number of men employed on fixed-term contracts fell by 8.5%. A greater decrease in temporary employment among women is due to reduced employment in activities that employ predominantly women, in addition to a lower volume of students (Portal GOV.SI, 2014).

The number of women with completed education is higher than that of men in higher education, secondary and primary education. In 2020, about 33% more women than men had a higher education degree at the European level (Frattini & Solmone, 2022). Current migration policies create a context of exclusion, inequality and rights violations that puts women at risk and in a situation of vulnerability.

Migrant women often experience multiple forms of discrimination. Women whose diplomas are valued and who are permanent residents can enter the labour market more easily. Depending on the country, educational levels vary, which has a major role in migrants’ labour market integration. For example, in Austria, migrant women from Turkey (62%), ex-Yugoslavia (34%), Afghanistan, the Syrian



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Arab Republic and Somalia have a lower level of education, limited to compulsory schooling, in comparison with other women from European countries (ÖIF, 2020).

“It is often very difficult for migrant women to prove their education and work experience acquired outside the reception country. Due to their non-recognition or because of overly demanding and lengthy recognition procedures, many migrants perform work that is not even close to their education; for example, an elderly medical employee works as a dishwasher and a law student does housework”. Without a comparable level of education in the reception country’s school system, it is extremely hard to find employment, especially in the public sector, due to the labour market’s system. In Slovenia, there is an option to retrain or enrol in a school program.

The skills, competences, talents, and rights of migrant women should be recognised and valued by the states and societies that receive them, and transparent procedures for the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad should be established. They should also have access to vocational training and lifelong education, as well as free language courses so that they can participate on an equal footing with native workers.

In Austria, the German, orientation, and values courses are compulsory for all migrants from third countries, the attendance percentage increased with 14 points to 47% among migrant women since the courses were made mandatory. In this way, migrant women must attend the classes and are also offered childcare services, all these through the federal institution Austrian Integration Fund. At the same time, women that were not allowed by their families to attend these classes, now they must do it, or it will influence on their future immigration processes. Migrant women are offered different opportunities for reskilling or lifelong training through the “Service for jobseekers” (AMS – Arbeitsmarktservice), so they can enhance their skills and competences and apply for higher skilled and paid jobs.

In other European countries, the situation is different depending on the host country and the social services offered to migrants. Many times, the services are different depending on the immigration status, some countries would offer more opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers and less for migrants from non-European countries. **At the end of 2019, most of the European countries policies on education were designed without a gender sensitive approach and focusing mostly on families, which in practice was considered inefficient due to different duties and roles inside the families (European Institute of Gender Equality, 2019). The language courses were mainly those offering childcare during the lessons in some of the European hosting countries, but most of the other types of courses or education were not offering such a service.**

The rush of married women into the labour market contradicts the traditional view that women must choose between family and career. One of the reasons for the high unemployment rate among younger women is the disproportionate division of care among children, the elderly, and other family members. Women are often treated differently than men because of gender stereotypes and potential motherhood. Depending on the country of origin, the role of the women in the family has a high influence on their integration on the labour market. Most of the refugee women are coming from highly patriarchal families with a gender-specific distribution of roles, which lets them without much



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time or space for a job outside of the home environment. At the same time, many of them lack the vision of what kind of jobs they would like to do and are sceptical to try something new (Heilemann, 2022).

According to Austrian Integration Fund, women coming from ex-Yugoslavia countries are integrating faster in the labour market, as they were working previously in their countries of origin also, in comparison with other migrant women from third countries where labour market participation of women is lower. Another aspect to take in consideration when putting in balance the family and career of migrant women is that most of household and childcare tasks are done by women which is an unpaid and unrecognized workload and most of the European countries don't have a policy for family leave or sick leave specially directed towards women. This makes the task of finding a job that will fit the family requirements more difficult and lets the women with not much choice. The childcare services while women are at work are an important part to be taken in consideration by the institutions and policy makers which will increase the chances of migrant women to be able to integrate into the labour market.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on every aspect of life. In the first wave of the epidemic, between April and June 2020, nearly half of all working migrant women were on hold, absent from work for various reasons. In the last quarter of 2020, in the second wave of the epidemic, their share was even higher: 27% of women were absent from work. In this quarter, as in the second quarter of 2020, this was the most common reason for being absent from work (Kralj, 2011).

The lockdowns and the consequences of the pandemic restrained drastically the jobs for immigrant women, that involved working directly with people either for elderly care, childcare or household tasks. According to a study made by UN Women (2020), 80% of women working in the domestic sector lost their jobs due to the pandemic. At the same time these tasks fall on the women in the families increasing the gender gap. According to the data collected by Adams-Prassl et al. (2020), mothers were doing about 1h 30 min of extra childcare per day during the lockdowns, which increased the household workload and place it on the women. With schools, day-care centres, and kindergartens closed, the domestic and childcare workload increased drastically and fall on the women's shoulders. With an increased, unpaid and unrecognized workload the well-being of the families, as well as of women in general had suffered.

Another sector that was hardly hit and influenced by the covid-19 pandemic was the health and social care, which is highly represented by women, globally about 70% of front-line health workers (midwives, nurses, and community health workers) are women. At the same time, this sector is overrepresented by migrant women. For example, in Italy – 72% of long-term care workers are migrants.

The main issue of working in this sector during the pandemic was the high-risk of getting infected, as well as bringing the virus back home to the families, which put an additional pressure on the mental health of migrant women working on this sector. So, besides the hardship of the work itself in a crisis-situation, migrant women had to deal with extra hardships.

Migrant families are it usually offered to live in less developed parts of cities because the price range is more suitable to their current financial situation. This is where we face immigrants' communities being self-segregate. Because of these factors, immigrants tend to settle in lower and middle-class



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housing and in neighbourhoods dominated by residents with similar socioeconomic characteristics. Immigrants, often, live in areas where they meet people from their own ethnic groups. However, on a positive side, community support positively impacts integrational processes in sense of belonging but brings negative impact in sense of social integration such as, speaking local language, knowing their local neighbours, being part of their wider local community. **Housing issues and distance challenge migrant women because most of them do not have a driving license and cannot regularly attend activities or social integration programs.**

In Slovenia, migrant women face issues of ethical affiliation. In fact, with the issue of ethical pluralization where it is difficult to separate themselves from their own ethical belonging. Mostly, this causes a sense of losing their own identity and being judged among the same ethnical group. Ethical pluralization is a great step that leads to the support of the wider community only by reducing the potential for social integration as well as the process of language learning. This problem itself leads to social exclusion not only due to lack of knowledge of the language but also to a sense of independence, dependence on others and free movement that will always seek support if not faced from the beginning.

The next problem that arises is the problem of identity as they remain strongly tied to the way of life they had in their homelands. **Finding a new identity is a difficult process for them, especially for women in their mature years who came with an already built identity as well as knowledge and skills. In this way, migrant women also experience the isolation and segregation that result from not addressing social integration issues from the beginning.**

Because of the responsibilities they have due to the family and the old way of living that binds them to their roots, integration processes are often rejected, or they take a very long time. Therefore, the position of migrant women in Slovenia is sometimes ungrateful because they mostly fight for a new identity and the fight against stereotypes and prejudices.





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Chapter 3

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION OF MIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN ACCORDING TO THEIR NEEDS



3. Practical recommendations for a more effective integration of migrant and refugee women according to their needs

Moving to a new, often unknown, country creates a very stressful and insecure situation, especially for women. Upon arrival to the host country and during their integration process, women with migration background usually need linguistic, psychological, and financial support. Being able to communicate in the host country’s language is crucial for their economic and social integration. Once they achieve adequate language skills, migrants can progress further along the job ladder, as well as have access to more benefits and increase their employability.

The European Union has designated language learning as of important significance in the field of integration and thus has invested funds, programmes, and projects in this area. The EU’s objective is that every European citizen should master two languages other than their mother tongue. According to OECD’s 2021 study, “[...] countries have become increasingly aware of the need to better integrate working-age migrants and seek to improve the capacity and performance of their language training schemes.”

The European Council has therefore encouraged member states to bolster language learning by the end of compulsory education. It also measures the language competence of each Member state. Each Member state also puts forth language policies that they have put in place for adult migrants. These policies must therefore fit the aims they are subjected to.

Germany

According to Adler and Beyer (in Stickel, 2018), “Germany is conceptually and institutionally monolingual”. The dominance of the German language is so strong it is engrained within schools, politics, the legal system, and the entire written public domain. Moreover, “English-language film productions are translated and dubbed into German” (*ibid.*). It is only recently there has been changes in the demography and the increase of multilinguals amongst the population has increased. German language is monolingual and has a strong push towards the use of a single Language. This translates to an urge for newly arrived migrants to learn the language as soon as possible to integrate both the society and the labour market. Since 2016, new immigration and integration policies have been applied. Such policies include easier access to jobs and German language courses. As a result of these policies refugees will no longer be deported during their vocational training and be given extra time to find employment.

Austria

The Austrian Federal government laid out a plan for integration in 2020. This plan is called the National Action Plan for Integration (NAP) and has been the new foundation of integration policies and objectives since. It includes actions in the fields such as:

- Language learning



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- Work and Employment
- Rule of Law and Values,
- Intercultural Dialogue
- Sports and Recreation
- Living and the regional Dimension of Integration

The field of language and education is of particular importance. German language skills are crucial and necessary for economic and social participation in Austria and therefore vital for the integration of migrants within the labour market. According to the Austrian Federal Law (RIS, 2022), the Federal Minister responsible for integration matters shall provide German courses for lawfully settled TCN’s or with temporary residence status, subsidiary protection beneficiaries, people entitled asylum from the age of 15, “which – if necessary – require literacy in Latin script and the attainment of a language level at least B1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages”.

Sweden

In Sweden, it is extremely difficult to find a job for people not fluent in both Swedish and English. That said language training and education is at the intersection of all integration and labour market policies. This then embraces organizations that are disparate such as the Swedish employment agency and educational organizations both on a national and local level. In Sweden, language learning is under municipal responsibility and is made accessible for all Sweden residents not having basic knowledge of Swedish. All immigrants, including refugees from the age of 16-21, are entitled to upper secondary education and access to Swedish language training. However, asylum seekers do not have access to the education system until after approval but can access the language training. All adult refugees and adult family members that arrive in Sweden are first entered into a program called new arrivals (nyanlända). They are, then, entered into an introduction program called (Etableringsprogrammet) they are then given access to the language program which is Swedish for immigrants (Svenska för invandrare, SFI). The introduction program is organized by the Swedish employment agency (Arbetsförmedling). For refugees who do not go to school or SFI they will not get paid, however for other immigrants SFI is optional. This will however change when language is required to acquire citizenship.

This said most immigrants arriving in Sweden do not speak Swedish and the language proficiency required by the Swedish labour market is very high. Sweden scores often measures very high in Migrant integration Policy index and measures very low for Labour market integration of foreign born. If immigrants that arrive in Sweden are given the opportunity to find employment without the high proficiency of Swedish that the labour market requires then they can learn better and practice more on the job talking to Swedes and other immigrants. Another issue is that many refugees are not secure whether they will be able to stay and so they do not put in as much effort. The language course is mandatory for all refugees and asylum seekers but for other migrants it is optional. While this is a good program to offer there is no support after this language school and no cultural activities and no support with language learning outside of this school for practicing and strengthening of language skills. It is therefore very easy to slip back into speaking your native language or English as most Swedes speak and understand English very well.



Cyprus

The official languages of Cyprus are Greek, Turkish, and English. Due to the island’s particular political status, in the Republic of Cyprus, the official spoken language is Greek, while English is widely spoken by almost all Cypriots. Public preschool, primary, and secondary education is offered in Greek, whilst almost all private schools follow the UK curriculum and offer tuition in English (with the exception of the French-Cypriot School that follows the French curriculum). Tertiary education follows the EU model and offers degrees in both Greek and English. Almost 1 in 5 Cyprus residents is not Cypriot whilst approximately 15% of school age children do not have Greek as their first language.

The Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC, 2016) Cyprus has implemented intra and extra-curricular Greek language courses for school aged children to break the language barrier in Education. Similar courses are also available for adult immigrants who wish to develop their Greek funded by both the Government and the EU. All adult immigrants wishing to learn or to improve their skills in Greek have the option to join the School of Modern Greek⁶ of the University of Cyprus or enrol in the Adult Education Centres⁷ or State Institutes for Further Education’s⁸ language courses.

Italy

There are policies in place for language learning in Italy but are poorly managed and enforced. The reason for this is the emphasis on Italian as a monolingual language. It took many years for Italian to become established as a language spoken by all Italians and it continues to coexist with different Italian dialects and regional language variations. However, in 1992 the Universities for Foreigners of Perugia and Siena were established, offering language courses and programs for the socio-linguistic inclusion of migrants. In the beginning of 2018, an Italian course for foreigners was set up in Rome to help promote integration within the labour market. This was the second edition of Italian language courses. Another initiative in Venice also exists that offers language learning and civics for migrants.

According to OECD (2021) “Vivere e Lavorare in Italia”, a language programme for migrants, “has experimented with clustering language classes with other complementary services to raise awareness and interest” [of migrants towards improving their language skills]. The “Conoscere per Integrarsi” municipal campaign “[...] provided modules in immigration legislation and basic computer science in addition to language” (*ibid.*).

Slovenia

The education system in Slovenia has recently made changes to their legislation that has now opened up more ways of access to education and support to help the inclusion of migrants. Schools are also in charge of making available intensive Slovenian language courses for upper secondary migrant

⁶ Refugees and asylum seekers are eligible to apply for a scholarship.

⁷ AECs’ courses are available with a small fee.

⁸ SIFE’s courses are offered free of charge.



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students. Those who are not Slovenian or native Slovenian speakers must have a level A2 level of Slovenian to be able to attend school. According to Migrant Integration Policy Index, Slovenian integration policies provide equality for all migrants on paper, but not as much in practice in providing opportunities for immigrants to integrate. While there are programmes and rights to language learning and education for all migrant families, these schools and programs are underfunded for the further progress of migrants’ integration. There are also no vocational training or employment related programs for refugees. All refugees in Slovenia are therefore subjects to the same conditions as everyone else which has proven to be very difficult for refugees.

Psychological support

The incidence of mental illness, emotional and substance use disorders in immigrants’ groups is usually similar to that found in the host country’s population.

Psychological support in Sweden

There are many options to receive psychological support most health clinics will refer persons. On arrival into Sweden all refugees and asylum seekers are given an exam by a psychologist and told where they can go before getting accepted. After getting accepted and given a personal identity number there are even more options for refugees and asylum seeker. There are a number of online apps available on mobile that allow you to get free health care including psychological help. There are also organizations that have persons available to give advice and psychological help such as the Red Cross.

Barriers that refugees, asylum seekers and irregular immigrants encounter in accessing mental health care:

- Lack of understanding of the host country’s healthcare system and its healthcare rights.
- Poor mastery of the host country’s language.
- Different healthcare belief systems and cultural expectations from the host country.
- Lack of trust in professionals and authorities, and concerns about permanent settlement exacerbated the situation.
- Bureaucracy
- Not enough healthcare personnel
- Long waiting times taken to process claims
- Time spent in Limbo not knowing whether you will stay or not
- Financial issues
- Long times taken to processing claims
- Long times stuck in Limbo not knowing if you will be rejected.
- Lack of activities especially during the dark months will increase the depression people face due to the lengthy periods of darkness.



Good practises to reduce mental healthcare barriers and promote effective treatment

- Cooperation between mental health, social services, and voluntary agencies.
- Provide outreach services to inform and support refugees to obtain services. NGOs usually can transcend the distrust of host country organizations.
- Coordinate different services within the healthcare system to ensure that refugees with mental health problems are correctly identified.
- Providing good information on entitlements to healthcare and available services.
- Alternative means of communicating this information such as video materials or presentations.
- Reducing language barriers by using native language speaking or use of high-quality interpretation services.
- Shorten time taken to process claims
- Reduce time stuck in limbo
- Increase the number of activities available to help with depression and the darkness
- More awareness on indicators of trauma and depression.

Many Refugees leave their home countries because of fear of prosecution, to escape wars, natural disasters or due to hardships in their home country. Many come to a new country with very little and with hope to start a new and better life in their host country. It is therefore important for them to be able to support themselves while transitioning into their new lives. For many it is hard to find jobs, learn language and survive. It is thus important and beneficial for the host country to provide financial support while they get settled.

Financial support in Germany

In Germany basic needs such as housing, food, clothes, and healthcare are given by the initial welcoming centres and immigrants are given 143€ per month for personal needs for a period of 6 months. After three months the daily allowance is raised to 216€ per month. After 15 months, or when the asylum request is approved, they can receive a basic income of 400€ per month plus cost for accommodation and home expenses.

Financial support in Austria

In Austria, asylum seekers receive medical care, and they can choose between two kinds of assistance. They are either given accommodation in a reception centre, with food and they receive 40€ per month or they are offered independent accommodation along with more money to buy food and other necessities. Since 2018, refugees are not allowed to do seasonal work while their request is being processed, they can only do charitable work, or be self-employed, but they lose all the money benefits (Refugees.Wien – Die Informationsplattform für Geflüchtete in Wien, 2022). They can also do household jobs as cleaning or taking care of gardens. They also have the right to do unpaid traineeships (*ibid.*).



Financial support in Sweden

Sweden has one of the highest proportions of asylum seekers per thousand inhabitants compared with the average in the EU. When an immigrant is seeking refuge or asylum in Sweden they can apply for financial support while looking for a job or waiting for the application to be processed or while waiting for a decision. This waiting time can take up to over a year depending on the amount of people applying.

The amount of financial support, however, depends on different variables such as age, whether one is in Sweden alone or with family, where one lives, whether one is provided accommodation and food, one’s financial situation on arriving, country of origin, the year one came and one’s cooperation with the migration agency. There are different stages before they get a job or become financially stable.

While waiting for their applications to be processed they can receive anywhere from 25€/month – 225€/month. Most refugees/asylum seekers are given food and shelter when they first arrive. If they continue to receive accommodation and food from the Migration agency, then they are given a smaller amount than those who have to find their own accommodation and food. In Sweden when refugees or asylum seekers arrive, they are checked by a doctor both for their physical and mental health. Their eyes, and teeth are also examined and are given free care if needed. They are also sent to school and given activities, volunteer work and will receive more compensation after they have completed that. After they are placed in the system and until they learn the language and or find a job, they can receive 60€- 670€/ month. A refugee/ asylum seeker can also apply for a special grant if there is something that is not covered by their daily allowance. They must however demonstrate to have a strong need for the item or service that cannot be paid for with the daily allowance. There are also other compensations that can be applied for, outside of the daily allowance. If the refugee or asylum seeker has a job and are no longer qualified for the daily allowance but cannot quite cover their housing accommodation, they can apply for accommodation compensation, and this is 85€ for a family or 35€ for a one-person household. Besides the medical care accommodation and daily allowance, a translator and legal representative is also given for free.

Financial support in Cyprus

In Cyprus, people with refugee or subsidiary protection status have the “same rights as citizens to remuneration, access to social security benefits, and other conditions of employment” (UNHCR, *n.d.*). If registered as unemployed, they can apply for the Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) which is a monthly allowance to support their everyday needs. The GMI is a monthly sum of 480€, with 240€ for spouses, 144€ for each child up to 14 years of age and 240€ for children between 14-28 years (*ibid.*). In addition to that, there is a rental allowance to support their households, shopping vouchers for clothing, and an allowance for utility bills.

Financial support in Italy

In Italy Asylum seekers receive food, medical aid, Italian lessons, and legal aid. They also receive 2.5€ per day per person as pocket money. After six months they are granted a residence permit that allows



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them to work until a final decision regarding their status in the country is made. After approval they no longer receive cash or housing. Generally, every person who arrives in Italy without documents (or it is rescued at sea) is brought to governmental centres (Cpa) where they are identified and measures for asylum seeking are started, and medical attention is provided. People who have not requested asylum or are not granted a temporary residence are moved to centres (Cpr) that will prepare to be repatriated.

Firstly, asylum seekers receive material, legal, medical, and linguistic support. Secondly only people who are granted protection, or more generally permission to reside in the country, will be guided in the labour market and in the integration process. The latter is mainly carried out by local entities and NGOs. Most of the support, therefore, is given by non-governmental organizations which use different European funds to be able to sustain immigrants. These aim at creating smaller groups of people that almost live as a community and they usually comprise of 15 to 30 people.

This has been called “integrated reception” and provides asylum seekers with a place to live as well as food, clothes, essential goods, phone subscription and public transportation tickets. This type of support, however, is not widely effective since local entities that carry it out do not receive enough funding for the amount of people that would need this service. This said, these smaller local entities receive a total amount of roughly 35€ (and up to 45€ for underage people) per day per immigrant to cover the cost of their stay. This also comprises of 2.5€ that is given directly to the asylum seeker as personal money.

During the larger flows and arrivals of immigrants, special centres (Cas) were opened to ease the pressure on the immigration system. These welcome large groups of people (hundreds) and were managed both by legal governmental bodies and by non-profit organizations.

Financial support in Slovenia

In Slovenia beneficiaries of international protection such as refugees and asylum seekers are entitled to social benefits from the national social security system and are equal to that of Slovenian citizens. Financial assistance is provided to all persons without any other means. For single person this amount is €402.18 per month and can receive additional assistance for accommodation. However, if they do receive assistance for accommodation the amount is 15 % less. For families the amount per person is less than the €402.18. The financial assistance is also complemented by other benefits but only granted if they meet a specific criterion for example child benefits, emergency assistance and kindergarten subsidies. One problem faced is not being able to get these benefits or financial assistance during the initial period after being granted status. This is because one of the preconditions in applying for social welfare is to have a registered address of residence.



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Chapter 4

THE EMIRE CONCEPT



4. The EMIRE concept

In the framework of the EMIRE project, we conducted interviews with women with migrant and refugee backgrounds who successfully integrated in the labour market. Women shared their experience about life in the host country. All the testimonials claimed that the main *difficulty* they encountered when moving to a foreign country was learning the new language, a primary goal for integration.

Hewa, a Syrian woman who lives in Austria admitted “When I came to Austria, I said to myself ‘How can I learn this difficult language?’, but then I made it... The first thing to do is learning the language. If you do so, you are halfway there!”.

Snjezana, an English language teacher from Bosnia who lives in Slovenia and presently works as a project coordinator in an NGO, added “I deal with people from different countries, and I observe that learning the language is crucial to have better opportunities in the labour market”.

Amalya, from Armenia, tell us that in her family “The priority was education, studying hard and long because results don't come if you don't put your mind to it.”

Katrin, from Bulgaria, states that when you are in a foreign country, you have to try to integrate and “The first step is to learn the language and then the culture.”

To overcome challenging difficulties in the host country, it is important to keep the determination useful to later achieve professional goals. Testimonials gave *suggestions* in this regard.

Hewa stated “Everyone must have a job to secure his or her life. Never lose hope, be patient and simply apply for jobs.”



Mariam, a Syrian woman living in Austria, added “If you don't work, you should volunteer or do internships to improve and learn. Be patient and flexible, sometimes it helps having a hobby that could also become a job one day. Look for information, acquaintances and friend who can give you the right piece of advice.”

Yen, a Vietnamese social media specialist who lives in Sweden, suggested “Be flexible and adapt to job requirements if you want to enhance yourself.”



Lejla, a Bosnian psychologist who works in Slovenia, claimed “Educate yourself and believe that you can do anything.”

Amena from Yemen works as an accountant and lives in Germany. She says that despite all the difficulties “Always think positive. Always! Even when something negative happens.”



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To achieve their professional goals, women should be ambitious and grow awareness of their potential. Nevertheless, the hosting country should also provide adequate *opportunities* for their effective integration into the labour market.

“The government should promote more integration courses, combining language and orientation”, claimed **Hewa**.

Lejla remarks that the hosting country should “enable practice, free trainings, and seminars to give equality in the labour market.”

Eliza would like to suggest that employers evaluate work experiences and not only degrees or qualifications. She says: “One idea we could change is to give more opportunities to women in more managerial or high positions.”

Wissam is a hairdresser from Morocco who lives in Italy, and she claims: “Always follow your dreams. If there is something you like, I recommend taking training courses. There are many courses you can do. There are also many free courses you can take. Even if you are an adult, there are many opportunities to expand your professional training.”

In moments of *discouragement*, it is important for migrant women to find support from the people surrounding them and to observe the positive aspects of the socio-cultural contexts the encounter in the hosting country. This can help to keep determination to fulfil their ambitions.

“My husband always told me ‘It’s going to happen somewhere, at some point’”, confided **Mariam**.

During her time in Sweden, **Yen** observed “The fact that women and men are raised very equally here allows women to be more confident”.

Katrin is convinced that it is necessary don't just limit yourself in your own community and people, but be open, open to integrate.

Ikhlas comes from Iraq and now lives in Germany; she tells us that the teachers at the vocational school have always helped and supported her, and she claims: “My family motivates me, and I, also, motivate my children to find their career paths.”

Wissam tells us: “Certainly at the beginning when they knew from my name that I was a foreigner I had difficulty finding a job, but it is important to make yourself known for what you are worth. If you show that you have the will to work, you will be successful.”

Difficulties, discouragement, opportunities, and suggestions...



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Women should build a language bridge, engage socio-cultural life, discover the possibilities in the hosting country and believe in themselves along their path of their professional integration.



Tea with Bely and “Independence”

We are sitting in front of a cup of tea in Bely’s beautiful bar in the centre of Perugia and she starts telling her story...

“I come from Bangladesh, and I arrived in Italy in 2005, for a family reunification with my parents. I went to high school and from the very beginning of my studies, I tried to focus on my future career despite all language barriers.

Then, I turned 18 and discovered how difficult it is to renew documents if you are an unemployed adult. My dream was to become an artist, but I soon began to understand that I had to financially support my family. My parents supported me in the job search, and I finally got hired in a bar of Perugia managed by Bengalis. Luckily, we are a large community here and we tend to support each other in hard times.

That job helped me to learn more about business management and I had the opportunity to improve my school knowledge. In the meantime, due to rising migratory flows in 2015, I decided to take training courses to become a linguistic and cultural mediator. I worked with asylum seekers and refugees in collaboration with private and public authorities.

In 2017, I felt ready for an important move, and I opened my own bar, naming it “Independence” as a tribute to my desire of freedom.

It was thanks to the contribution of my high school teacher that I could participate and win a call for funding... My path was not devoid of difficulties and without the help of my family and friends this would not be possible.



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I think this country offers training and study opportunities to migrants, and women could find paths for independence despite their initial status, if they are determined and willing to. I observe that Bengali women tend not to renegotiate their traditional roles when living here, despite they have the chance to make decisions more freely, in a migrant context more open to the western culture.

My advice today would be: Open your mind to independence, but don't forget where you come from... that is your value and strength.”

Mediation is the key for change

With a friendly smile, Tolu introduces herself... Tolu is a Nigerian woman who migrated to Italy 16 years ago for a family reunification with her husband. In Lagos, she graduated in Geography and shortly after she started the paperwork for the move to Italy. It took her 2 years to take that flight.

When she arrived, she was counting on her English for initial conversation. Unfortunately, she could not find many people who spoke the language, so she had to always take along a small bilingual dictionary that could help her. Later, she attended language courses, improving her Italian more quickly. When she got a driving licence by taking the test in English, she finally found a job and her life changed. Her dream was to help others, so she decided to become a cultural mediator. Currently, she is engaged in projects about migrant women, giving her contribution through ethno-clinic mediation.

She recognises the importance of mediators, often consulted only in case of intercultural and linguistic misunderstanding, as that of professionals who should be intended to even prevent conflict situations, providing correct information, and mediating cultural perspectives.

Tolu believes that dialogue is the key for change, as it brings mutual understanding. The role of a mediator is to change stereotypes and bias on migrants' identities. She also suggests creating more space dedicated to dialogue and intercultural encounters that could involve the citizenship and favour mutual acknowledgement.

“Especially women should be supported in their empowerment paths, starting from expressing who they are and what their goals are... I see many of them giving up their dream job because they do not believe it would be achievable. My suggestion is to learn the language and look for right information that could be helpful to start building a dream!”

Towards the development of a professional identity

Theory of resilience

The term *resilience* describes the competence to overcome adversity, crisis, or traumas. Ledesma (2014) defines resilience *as the ability to bounce back from adversity, frustration, and misfortune*. In other words, it is the conceptual framework of thriving, which means that a person is able to overcome their level of functioning, grow further and operate despite the endurance of repetition of stressful situations (O'Leary, 1998). The theory of resilience has usually been used in the context of risk factors

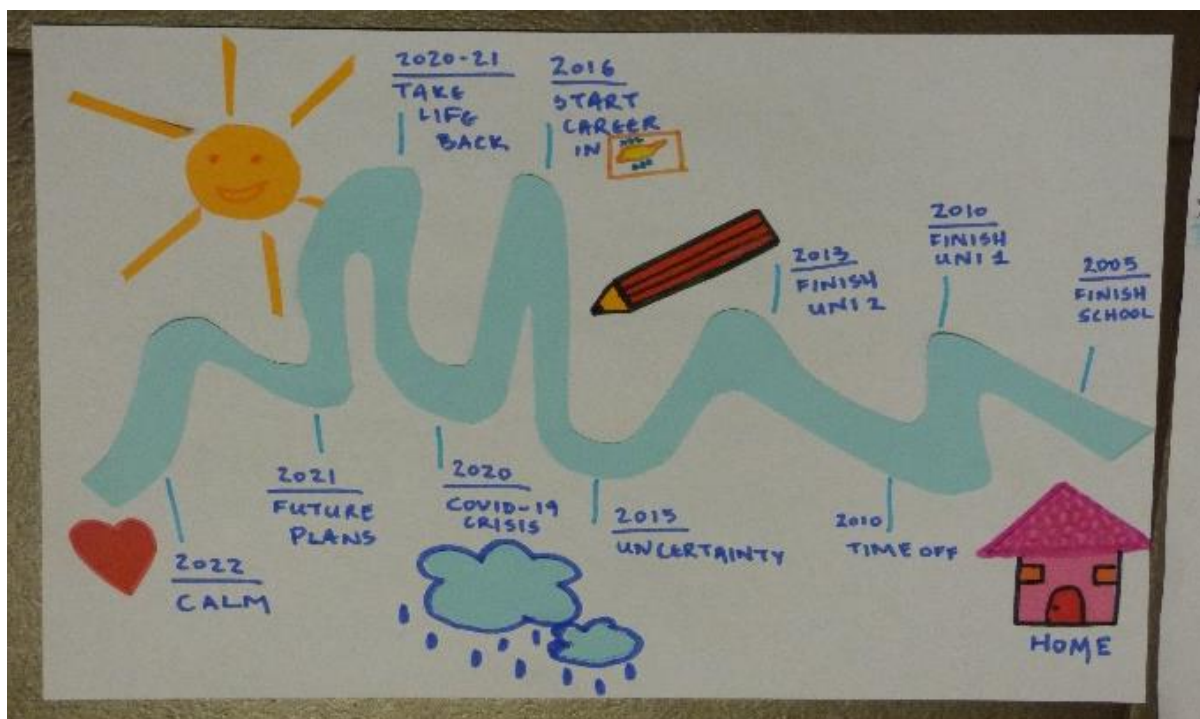


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(migration, stress, trauma) and the enhancement of positive personal development. Resilience is connected to the following aspects:

- active approach towards problem solving
- ability to sort experiences in a positive light even when they are difficult
- the competence to attract the other’s interest
- a positive way of thinking

Southwick *et al.* state that resilience can be taught and enhanced (2014). The Theory of Resilience can help social workers, advisors, and volunteers understand the different phases in which the women go through and learn how to guide them to the next steps that lead to their empowerment. In [EMIRE’s Toolkit](#), there can be found an activity in connection with the theory of resilience. The activity is called River of life and shows how to handle and communicate with people with mental health issues. It can be very empowering for the participants. With this activity, participants can share their live experiences and grow together as a group. The activity also shows the resilience of the participants. As the psychologist Lejla pointed out “[...] it can be very supportive if you only focus on the positive parts of live and leave out the negative aspects, because, here, it is very important to consider certain triggers and to have a psychologistic support while doing this activity”. Social worker Nika explained that “It could be also very helpful to do the activity first on your own to understand your own position and to be able to reflect upon this position”.



Example of a River of Life



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Theory of non-violent communication

The Theory of Non-violent communication (NVC) was first introduced by Dr Marshall B. Rosenberg. It is based on a quadrilateral model:

- *Observations* (distinguishing observation from evaluation),
- *Feelings* (emotional awareness),
- *Needs* (need awareness)
- *Requests* (need fulfilment).

To better understand the concept of NVC, Rosenberg defines it as a way of communication based on judgement, criticism, labelling others, and the concept of rightness and wrongness. On the other hand, NVC can be understood as a so-called “process language” which enables someone to listen for the needs and beliefs behind someone’s statement. NVC empowers the speaker to deal with unpleasant situations such as criticism, verbal assaults, or allegations.

The NVC model consists of four elements:

- 1) Consciousness
- 2) Language
- 3) Communication
- 4) Means of Influence.

This method creates an atmosphere of trust between the social workers/volunteers and the women with migrant or refugee background. It generates empathy and actively contributes to the empowerment process. A similar example is the Origami activity from EMIRE’s Toolkit. This activity shows how everybody has their own communication form and see and hear other things⁹. Communication is apart from being cultural also very individual.

Non-violent communication is also very important in application interviews. In EMIRE’s Toolkit (p. 78), there is a Role Play with a questionnaire attached. With this questionnaire, social workers and employment advisors could approach to migrant women to get to know their needs and their professional pathway and so to support them in their professional life. In this activity it is very important to include a cultural mediator to avoid cultural misunderstanding. It is also possible to include more personal question to get to know the person even better and so to find a good opportunity for them. Oluwaseun from Italy added that during the conversation, it is interesting to focus on financial support programmes from the state. Also, during the discussion, it came out that there is a huge need for more financial help for migrant women so they can start their own businesses and be more independent.

⁹ Further information about the activity and how to develop it can be found on p. 53 of the Toolkit.



Theory of emotional intelligence

The concept of Emotional Intelligence became popular in 1996 through psychologist Daniel Goleman. The definition of Emotional Intelligence is a person’s ability to manage and control their own emotions.

Furthermore, it can be defined as a competence to understand and be aware about their own emotions and to influence the emotion of someone else. Goleman (2000) structures Emotional Intelligence on four pillars:

1. Self-regulation
2. Internal motivation
3. Empathy
4. Social skills.

According to Castro Saucedo *et al.* (2018), Emotional Intelligence can support individual achievement and have a positive impact in the professional life of people. Emotional intelligence is important as it influences our behaviour especially in the situations such as providing and getting feedback, coping with change, and dealing with adversity and difficulties. This methodology can enable social workers and volunteers to create a safe working environment and feel intercultural competent and to give feedback towards migrant women in a positive way.

In EMIRE’s activity Understanding myself, the main goal was to take the first steps to build emotional intelligence. The activity is composed of three individual activities:

1. Taking an emotional self-test
2. Reviewing the test
3. Defining areas to be improved

With this activity, participants can self-assess their own emotions and reactions so they can discover their own strengths and weaknesses, this is important to improve themselves¹⁰.

It is important to have in mind what to do with the results of the test from the migrant women. Self-love and Self-care are very neoliberal, western aspects so it is important to show the women that every emotion is valid and accepted. One super important point is to first create a safe space and be careful with certain triggers that could come out as Anita pointed out.

The second activity connected to the theory of Emotional Intelligence proposed by EMIRE is Tell me a story. In this activity, we also find the two other theories included. Telling stories can have a huge impact on a group. So, if you share a story, you do not only tell your story rather than open up yourself. One story can motivate others, bring people closer and heal people, also listening and telling stories can have an empowerment effect. For this activity, there is an option to use an online software¹¹. One

¹⁰ Further information about this workshop is available on p. 13 of the Toolkit.

¹¹ The link to the online game can be found on p. 30 of the Toolkit.



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suggestion would be to use the game on a smartphone so that everyone can choose and switch automatically their question without being exposed to others.

Another activity connected to this theory is in the Positive Feedback round. The idea behind this activity is to give positive feedback and to empower each other in a group. Also, to get closer connection and contact between the social workers and the target group. During the Training workshop in Italy the participants had the opportunity to get to know the different methods. Here are some feedback forms that we collected:

Feedback 1



EMIRE Testimonials wanted

The aim of the project EMIRE is to support women with a migration or refugee background in integrating into the labour market and to promote social inclusion. EMIRE developed concepts and tools that support the empowerment process, promote a positive perception of women in the labour market and help women to participate in the integration process.

One product is a **toolkit for counsellors/social workers** to better support women from the target group in managing their personal journey into the labour market.

In our training course we shared our activities developed in the **toolkit** and would like to evaluate the feedback from the participants. So we would like to include some biographics and feedback statements of our participants.

Your name:	Beatrice Vatterio
Your current place of residence:	Città della Pieve (Pg) ITALY
Your age:	29
Your occupation:	Social worker

Your statement:
Inspiring workshop, where I could meet people from different countries, backgrounds and experiences who shared their knowledge to improve integration and strategies of social work.

Please note that **your statement will be published** in the project results on social networks and the project platform. If you wish, we invite you to submit a photo as well, which will be included.

Contact:
Carla Stempel
0431/8881425




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Feedback 2



Testimonials wanted

The aim of the project EMIRE is to support women with a migration or refugee background in integrating into the labour market and to promote social inclusion. EMIRE developed concepts and tools that support the empowerment process, promote a positive perception of women in the labour market and help women to participate in the integration process.



One product is a **toolkit for counsellors/social workers** to better support women from the target group in managing their **personal journey** into the labour market.

In our training course we shared our activities developed in the **toolkit** and would like to evaluate the **feedback from the participants**. So we would like to include some **biographics** and **feedback statements** of our participants.

Your name:	CAMILIA URSO
Your current place of residence:	PERUGIA, ITALY
Your age:	41
Your occupation:	SOCIAL OPERATOR / ART THERAPIST
Your statement:	<p>It was an enormous gift to attend such a positive, inclusive, open-minded and inclusive group. Relational approach was as important, and educating and nurturing as the contents provided. Thank you!</p>

Please note that **your statement will be published** in the project results on social networks and the project platform. If you wish, we invite you to submit a photo as well, which will be included.

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0431/8881425



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EXPERTS TESTIMONIALS



Experts’ Testimonials

Throughout the project cycle, we have contacted and interviewed social workers and migration experts. In this section, we have a collection of testimonials and suggestions that could improve the procedures and support women even more during their labour market integration journey. The questions were formulated collectively by EMIRE’s team of experts.

1. From our experiences in Germany, women with a refugee background experience multiple forms of discrimination. If employed, 47% of refugees work below the level they did in their country of origin. After moving to Germany, 45% mainly work in unskilled jobs, especially in elderly care or cleaning. Refugee women are paid significantly less than refugee men, even when they have the same education and work experience. What needs to be done to change this (regarding the labour market system in general and governmental laws or regulations)?

“Bureaucratic procedures should be shortened in time.”

“Currently, the political background of refugees’ countries is the main aspect considered by the national government in the hosting process. Often, examples of good integration on the territory are not evaluated as they should, and this could possibly affect the opportunities of asylum seekers to remain in the country.”

“The host country needs to give migrants and refugees equal opportunities for education, vocational training, and access to the labour market.”

“It is important for migrant families to have the opportunity to integrate their children in the school system as soon as possible.”

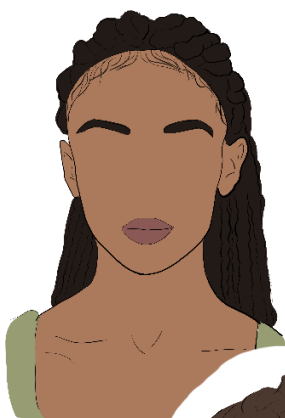
“National and local funds should be more consistent in order to guarantee long lasting and effective projects, services in connection with the community.”

“That is in my consideration a socio-economic issue too. One key issue is the welcoming state’s understanding and valuing of the education of the woman. All in all, it is about the laws concerning working conditions e.g., payment, safety, support of the company for the development of skills and status of the workers and so on.”

2. Even after their arrival in Germany, the needs of refugee women often differ from those of men. From your work experience, what would you say is the biggest need they have?

“First of all, women should be supported with linguistic courses and trainings for their professional integration.”

“Some women are trafficking victims and need adequate psychological support.”



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“They need to be made aware of both their rights and duties, in legal and civil levels. They must know that they can seek support and help, and they should not be afraid to do so when in need.”

“In order to overcome cultural barriers and enhance women towards a professional independence, it is important to build dialogue among them and the territorial realities.”

“Medical information foremost. Also, information considering the fields, they have to or are used to be being pushed (nutrition, childcare, family care, organisation of daily life etc). What they would need is information and support without bias and certain pre-set intentions.”

3. What are the socio-professional opportunities for women who migrate alone? What are the socio-professional opportunities for women who migrate with their family?

“A woman who migrates alone has the opportunity to focus on herself and dedicate time on her professional training and job research.”

“Women who are coming with their family generally must take care of their children and the housekeeping. Short time can be dedicated to their social and professional integration. Even later, since their children grow up getting education in the hosting country, they become the reference point for their mothers’ engagement with the local realities and in this way, women are never fully independent.”

“Women who migrate with their families need to have access to childcare support in order to be able to work.”

“It depends on how the family understands the woman as a person and what are their expectations and limitations too. The condition of the welcoming country can make a woman’s life to prosper, a certain kind of way a family can act towards a woman too – the same can be said for ill treatment or lack of interest and motivation towards the woman.”

4. What role can the citizenship have in the socio-professional integration of women?

“The citizenship should collaborate to the realization of events aimed at creating a mutual knowledge between the newly arrived migrants and the local people, valorising differences and building opportunities for integration.”

“It can facilitate their social integration in some countries.”

“In certain welcoming countries, it is the foundation for being able to achieve a better standard in life for oneself and definitely for one’s children.”

5. What are the job sectors that offer a better stability in the long period?

“Because of the aging of the Italian population, they are the domestic and care services and the health sector.”



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“Generally, office jobs are more stable but, on the other hand, more difficult to get, due to lack of linguistic skills, or non-recognition of qualifications. Many migrant women choose retail jobs which offer a certain stability in the long-term.”

“Whereby you need to have a certain level of training, a job, which is considered to be or valued to be a ‘good’ or at least ‘decent’ job – meaning, with a certain standard of payment and treatment.”

6. From your working experience, what percentage of women with migrant or refugee background manage to successfully integrate the labour market of the host country?

“Compared to non-EU men employed in Italy (72.1%), only 41.5% of non-EU women are employed (*Direzione Generale dell’Immigrazione e delle Politiche di Integrazione, 2021. XI Rapporto Annuale – Gli stranieri nel mercato del Lavoro in Italia, www.lavoro.gov.it/documenti-e-norme/*)”

“It depends on what you define as successfully. It seems that there is overwhelmingly only a certain section of employment open and there are very specific positions with certain challenging conditions.”

“Many of them, but it takes too much time. Immigrants who manage to learn the language manage to enter the labour market more easily and have access to better-paid jobs.”

7. From your experience, what is the main challenge mothers who migrate must tackle?

“Mothers must manage time between childcare and professional life. Besides, since in many cultures the economic responsibility relies on men, women often remain excluded from the job market.”

“Women have to fulfil all their roles simultaneously: mothers, spouses, professionals... They often struggle to find the balance in-between, and they need any kind of support which not all of them are able to get.”

“No network of support, no friends for the children, little knowledge about what they and their kids will encounter on expectations – let alone what will be asked from them how to perform and what will be asked from them to tackle as the next (stage of) development.”

8. What would you recommend as the most effective way to support newly arrived migrant or refugee women?

“Social workers and operators should be better trained in order to face the needs of immigrants concerning psychological and professional aspects of their life.”

“Offer them an info package with the host country’s laws explained in simple language (ideally translated to their mother tongue) so that they know their rights and responsibilities. Enrol them in language classes to learn the language and inform them about any traineeships they might be eligible to apply to in order to start building a professional network.”



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“An offer of relationships and a network, whereby the arriving person can choose between an attachment to a group or a single person - either of migrants from the same region with already experience in the welcoming state or like a mentor, who migrated once to the welcoming state – activities of different interest, to get to know the surroundings, to enjoy their hobbies or to learn new ones, to have people in their life for comfort or to get to know or hang with and also to get to know how the systems work in the welcoming state – furthermore, also a professional of different fields (e.g., medicine, social work, law, etc.).”



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SUMMARY



Summary

This Policy Guideline is a road map for policy and decision makers for the development of future training initiatives in national and European levels. The EMIRE project and its guide are expected to serve as a good example of implementation of a wide range of EU policies and directives related to training provision, accreditation, certification as well as social cohesion, socio-economic development, and EU advancement.

The e-book’s first section provides an outline of the current situation of women with migration background in Germany, Austria, Sweden, Cyprus, Italy, and Slovenia and their actual needs.

The second section is the result of extensive research in partner countries regarding the main challenges women with migration background face when trying to enter the host country’s labour market, whilst the third section is dedicated to recommendations that can contribute to facilitate their integration process. Along with the fourth section, they outline the project’s learning objectives and proposed accreditation methods, while they map the existing EU initiatives on transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications. Additionally, these sections provide recommendations and directions for adaptations in different, social, cultural, and organizational settings, by proposing alternatives to specific activities, tools, and content of the Educational Components of the project.

The e-book is completed by a collection of experts’ testimonials and current literature resources related to the topic.

Along with EMIRE’s Toolkit, this e-book can be useful for trainers and educators when integrating the project’s learning components in their normal training activities.



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- List of Language Education Policy Profiles (coe.int)
- Language requirements for adult migrants in Council of Europe member states: Report on a survey | European Website on Integration (europa.eu)
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