

## Background paper series

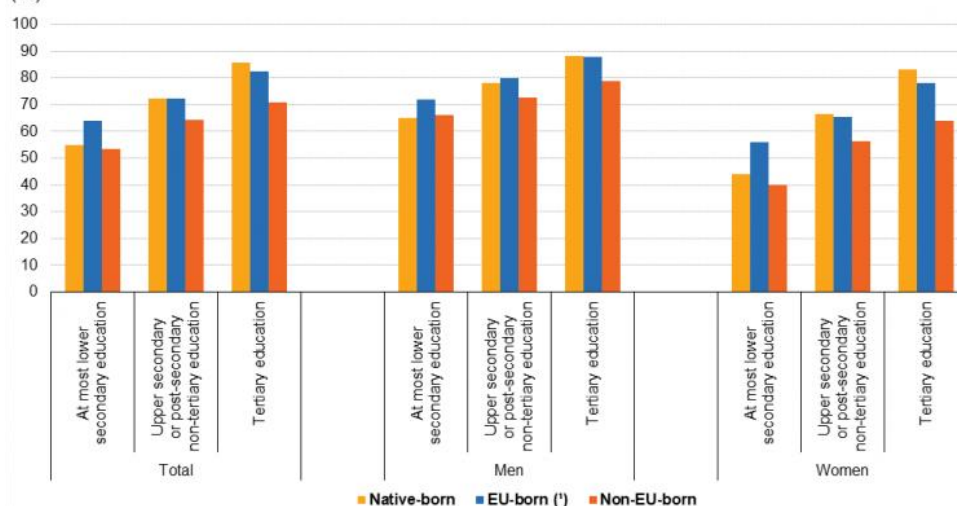
### Increasing employment opportunities for migrant women

According to the United Nations<sup>i</sup> migrant data (2020), women account for 51.2% of all migrants in the European Union. Although they are equally likely to be highly educated as non-migrant women and more likely to be highly educated than migrant men, migrant women in the EU have a higher unemployment rate than both groups<sup>ii</sup>. Employed migrant women are more likely to be overqualified for their jobs than non-migrant women.<sup>iii</sup> The latter is partially due to difficulties they encounter getting their skills recognised, as studies underline that women in developing countries are more likely than men to have skills that are not formally certified by diplomas. Also, being pushed into underemployment or lower-skilled

occupations, highly qualified migrant women face the risk of losing their skills which has negative economic and social impacts for both migrants and receiving societies.<sup>iv</sup>

In addition to a lack of formal education or certified skills, integration efforts for migrant women of all skill levels are often hindered by family responsibilities or by the impact of stereotypes. Furthermore, women are more likely to migrate for family reasons and less likely to migrate for economic or work-related reasons than men, and therefore tend to receive less integration support upon arrival in the host country, thus reinforcing gender disparities in integration.

**Employment rates for the population aged 20-64 years, by sex, education level and country of birth, EU, 2020**  
(%)



(\*) Other than in the reporting Member State.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ifsa\_ergaedcob)

eurostat

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Refugee women, compared to other migrant women, experience a ‘triple disadvantage’ when it comes to employment<sup>v</sup> and, they tend to have the highest rate of unemployment of all groups.<sup>vi</sup> Although it takes longer for refugee women to be settled in the labour market compared to refugee men, structured integration programs

which prioritises building basic skills in terms of educational attainment and host-country language training to improve labour market outcomes is limited<sup>vii</sup>. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic have contributed to more job losses and insecurities and disproportionately affected migrant women workers.<sup>viii</sup>

### Policy approaches

Despite these persistent gaps, integration policies – including labour market integration – specifically targeting migrant women remain very few and insufficient in Member States policies<sup>ix</sup>, which calls for a strengthened policy focus in this area. An EU Fundamental Rights Agency report<sup>x</sup> also confirmed that there is little evidence of national action plans and strategies with a particular focus on migrant women across the EU. At the EU level, the European Commission **Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion**

(2021-2027) underlines gender mainstreaming as a priority and aims to increase the participation of migrant women in the labour market.

Various EU funds are available to support integration, such as the European Social Fund<sup>xi</sup> and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, inter alia, which have financed many projects on the labour market integration of migrant women<sup>xii</sup>.

Canada has implemented a “**Immigrant Women’s Employment Readiness Connections programme**” that helps to match employers with internationally trained, professional women with backgrounds in the accounting, finance, administration, human resources, marketing and business sectors through free pre-employment skills training, employment assistance customized to each individual; intercultural competency training to better understand cultural viewpoints; and intensive job-development coaching. Participating women will first gain understanding about Canadian workplace culture, and then work in “innovation teams” to solve real-life employer problems by drawing on their own technical and professional backgrounds, skills and knowledge.

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## Addressing the Challenge: Policy Solutions and Promising Practices

### *Comprehensive Integration Approach and Gender Mainstreaming*

Employment and gain of independent income are key steps in the overall integration process of many migrant women. However, migrant and refugee women face multiple and intersecting discrimination based on their gender and a migrant background. Therefore, having equal access to employment for migrant women requires a comprehensive approach including vocational education and training and gender-sensitive assessment of (formal and informal) skills. Prior intervention looking at the development of self-confidence and psychological well-being is also crucial for successful labour market integration<sup>xiii</sup>. In brief, a comprehensive approach is crucial to find sustainable solutions for root causes of labour market inequalities which hold women back.

### *Investing in Entrepreneurship*

If adequately supported, self-employment and entrepreneurship represent a promising alternative option for migrants to access the labour market. This works especially well for migrant women, as self-employment can also be a pathway towards empowerment and increased gender equality. Furthermore, women entrepreneurs can use the skills that they have acquired through non-formal education. Initiatives to favour self-employment for migrant women come from both the public sector and the private sector (mainly NGOs and foundations). However, migrant entrepreneurs face several challenges, such as a lack of networks, difficulties in accessing credit and insufficient knowledge of the regulatory and financial framework.

Therefore, the European Commission encourages Member States to promote entrepreneurship among migrants through tailored training and mentoring programmes, by opening up mainstream entrepreneurship support structures to migrants and including entrepreneurship in integration programmes<sup>xiv</sup>.

**The urbagri4Women** (2016-2018 co-funded by AMIF) project was implemented in Italy, Greece, France, Austria, Cyprus, Portugal and the UK as a two-year initiative that facilitated the integration of migrant women into the labour market and society by encouraging them to participate in various urban farming initiatives. The women's entrepreneurial spirit resulted in urban rehabilitation, which has in turn brought economic, environmental, and social benefits. The project introduced the focus groups; a transnational network for knowledge sharing and capacity building; a catalogue of good practices on integration or the urban agriculture labs in each partner country.

**The Microcredits** (supported by Ministry of Employment and social affairs in Spain and Erasmus+) is an ongoing project implemented in Barcelona. The project strives to alleviate the social and financial vulnerability and foster the entrepreneurial ambitions of migrant women based in or around the city. It supports provision of microcredits, technical guidance, and social support, while also creating a community. So far, it supported 55 women of various ages and nationalities.

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### *Upskilling Pathways for Migrant Women*

It is crucial to address the complexities of the problem of underemployment and de-qualification of skilled migrant women. To put all the skills to good use, the **EU Skills Profile Tool** should be more widely and effectively used for qualification recognition and skill validation.

Low-skilled migrant women in long-term unemployment should be supported by public employment services to increase their chances of labour market participation and avoid their transition to inactivity. A holistic approach and upskilling migrant women, preferably with transversal skills such as digital competences, social competences, entrepreneurship, communication and networking, should be promoted in order to find sustainable solutions to tackle root causes of labour market inequalities which hold back women.

**I-WELCOME** (2020-2022 co-funded by Erasmus+) is implemented in Greece, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Germany, France and Bulgaria. The project aims to increase third country national women's capability to enter the labour market and social life of the host society, via the organisation of up-skilling trainings, mentoring programs and Job Shadowing Schemes. It aims to raise third country national women's awareness in regard to their rights (access to education, work); to develop self-confidence and self-determination; to provide opportunities for vocational training available from an early stage after their arrival in the host country; and to integrate gender equality and diversity management in the training programs. So far, the project developed a blended upskilling pathways program for migrant women and a multi-level and interactive portal.

### **Guiding Questions for the Workshop**

- What are innovative and alternative approaches increasing employment opportunities for migrant women?
- How can EU funding help to support sustainable and effective labour market integration for migrant women?

### References

<sup>i</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2020): [International Migrant Stock 2020](#).

<sup>ii</sup> OECD (2020): [How to strengthen the integration of migrant women?](#) Migration Policy Debate No. 25, p. 4.

<sup>iii</sup> 40.7% for migrant women in 2019, compared to 21.1% among native women (age group: 20-64), based on Eurostat, EU-LFS. See also JRC (2020), Gaps in the EU Labour Market Participation Rates: an intersectional assessment of the role of gender and migrant status.

<sup>iv</sup> Mollard, B., & Umar, S. (2012). Crushed hopes: Underemployment and deskilling among skilled migrant women. *Génova: oim, en, acceso*, 7(12), 2016.

<sup>v</sup> OECD (2018): [Triple Disadvantage? A first overview of the integration of refugee women](#), pp. 16 and 19.

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- <sup>vi</sup> UR for refugee women 21% vs. 19% for refugee men and 17% for non-refugee migrant women from outside the EU (2014); Dumont, J. C., Liebig, T., Peschner, J., Tanay, F., & Xenogiani, T. (2016). How are Refugees Faring on the Labour Market in Europe?: A First Evaluation Based on the 2014 EU Labour Force Survey Ad Hoc Module.
- <sup>vii</sup> OECD (2018): [Triple Disadvantage? A first overview of the integration of refugee women](#)
- <sup>viii</sup> IOM (2020): [COVID-19 and women migrant workers: Impacts and Implications](#).
- <sup>ix</sup> European Court of Auditors (2018). The Integration of Migrants from outside the EU [https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/Briefing\\_paper\\_Integration\\_migrants/Briefing\\_paper\\_Integration\\_migrants\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/Briefing_paper_Integration_migrants/Briefing_paper_Integration_migrants_EN.pdf)
- <sup>x</sup> FRA (2018). Together in the EU Promoting the participation of migrants and their descendants. [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2017-together-in-the-eu\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2017-together-in-the-eu_en.pdf)
- <sup>xi</sup> European Social Fund <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/home.jsp> European Social Fund Plus <https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en>
- <sup>xii</sup> ESF-funded projects in Germany, Sweden, Ireland and Slovenia <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/feature/integration-of-migrant-women>
- <sup>xiii</sup> See the report released by Danish Integration Authorities: This is how the best municipalities get refugee women in employment <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/this-is-how-the-best-municipalities-get-refugee-women-in-employment>
- <sup>xiv</sup> Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files\\_en?file=2020-11/action\\_plan\\_on\\_integration\\_and\\_inclusion\\_2021-2027.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files_en?file=2020-11/action_plan_on_integration_and_inclusion_2021-2027.pdf)

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