



**EUROPEAN NETWORK
OF MIGRANT WOMEN**

The Future of European Integration Policies: Where do Migrant/Refugee Women Stand?

Although the integration is the most relevant durable solution for the majority of refugees and migrants in Europe, there is no specific common and coordinated EU integration policy instrument. The 2016 “Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals” presented by European Commission already expired in 2018 and it is crucial and timely to see more commitments of the EU and receive principled guidance from the EU on integration. Therefore, it is vital that integration is an integral part of the new proposed pact on asylum and migration.

Based on the analysis and experiences of the European Network of Migrant Women, this briefing shows the main gaps in the previous action plan on integration and provides a roadmap on how to fill these gaps in the New Action Plan, particularly with regards to migrant and refugee women and girls.

Focusing on the journey rather than merely on the outcomes

The current action plan puts a lot of emphasis on 'net fiscal contribution' of third-country nationals and labour market integration is considered in purely economic terms. However, many projects with migrant and refugee women (e.g. funded through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and European Social Fund Plus) show that labour market integration cannot be successful without a prior intervention looking at the development of self-confidence and psychological well-being of women. Recognising and enhancing 'soft' skills, such as confidence or self-esteem, is not easy to capture in 'hard' outcomes, but they are critical first steps for many migrants, and particularly women and their children.

Employment remains an important measure of impact but including a broader set of social indicators would better capture the reality. It is often mentioned that refugee women are not easily reachable, and they do not benefit from the services in a sustainable way. However, we can see little efforts to work on the structural and social barriers holding women back. Sustainable solutions for labour market integration of migrant and refugee women require eliminating the root causes.

Deskilling prevention

It is often stressed that migrant/refugee women are overqualified for their jobs or they are unemployed. Although labour market integration is usually promoted, constructive measures are not taken in the policy framework to avoid deskilling among migrant/refugee women. In integration policy terms, migrants' integration in the labour market is only measured with their current employment status while it is not necessarily followed if their potential and qualifications are fully utilised. Their high qualifications and skills are thus exploited to fill up labour scarcities in the secondary market. Therefore, more emphasis should be put on qualification recognition, validating skills and upskilling of those working below their skill level. It is also crucial to direct resources to supporting the women with the history of employment and established skills in entering the job market before they have lost these skills.

Special programmes for 'low-skilled' women

Migrant women are not a homogenous group in terms of skills and qualifications; certain populations of women have a particularly low educational and skill attainment.

Therefore, integration measures, labour market policies and programmes should also target high unemployment groups – low-skilled, older and long-term unemployed women – to increase their chances of entering the labour market and practice meaningful social participation in the European communities. These specific support programmes should include mentoring, assisted volunteering, pre-employment training, job placements, specialised language courses with integrated elements of skill learning, vocational training, skill recognition for women with no official qualifications.

Domestic and care workers

Migrant women constitute a large number of domestic workers in the European Union, particularly in the Mediterranean region. This sector of reproductive economy, vital for the Union's functionality, most often is not regulated by labour laws, the working conditions are exempt from labour inspections and domestic workers do not enjoy workers' rights. The New Pact on Migration must take into consideration the economic contribution of these women, the lack of protection within the sector, and should encourage the states to adopt measures supporting full labour integration of domestic workers, including through proper employment contracts, skill recognition, collective bargaining, horizontal and vertical labour mobility, in accordance with the international standards laid in [the ILO Convention 189](#) on Domestic Workers.

Urgent need for systematic disaggregated data

Migration data can be difficult to analyse due to fragmentation between organisations and agencies. Currently, disaggregated data are often missing at EU and national level, which complicates the monitoring of the integration outcomes of migrants/refugees. Data disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity and migration status must be available for policymakers to be able to develop evidence-based responses and policies. The data on labour participation should also be updated regularly to monitor not only employment status but also the duration of the employment, salary scale and progress in career.

Moving away from 'one size fits all' approach

Despite various efforts of the European Commission to develop tailored integration policies, these efforts are seldom followed and supported by the Member States. Therefore, the European Commission should develop better and more efficient communication with its Member States to take a more nuanced approach to integration and to address all the needs of migrants with tailored policies.

Children in migration: Migrant and refugee girls' specific needs

All measures on integration or asylum of children should include a sex-disaggregated approach and gender mainstreaming. Considering girls as only 'minors' without accounting for the specificities of sex-based discrimination and the risks of sex- and gender-based violence girls may be subjected to at various stages of migration, is harmful for migrant girls and young women. The Positive Actions approach described above, combined with Gender Mainstreaming, must be applied to all policies and actions for children in migration[1].

Funding

The European Commission should support grassroots migrant women organisations through continued funding of projects with a special focus on migrant/refugee women's integration and well-being. Currently, there is a scarcity of evidence about the extent of Commission projects which target migrant/refugee women, the amount of financial support and the type of partnerships which is awarded to work with migrant/refugee women. Therefore, the reporting indicators for monitoring and evaluation of funding programmes should ensure that they consider sex-disaggregated indicators throughout the process of the funding application, implementation and evaluation and in line with the gender-mainstreaming obligation stipulated in the Treaties.

Evaluation

Although the EU Action Plan on Integration expired in 2018, a systematic evaluation of it has not been carried out by the European Commission yet. It is crucial to systematically evaluate the impact of the Action Plan and relevant funding programmes on national and EU level migrant integration policies. The evaluation should use criteria governed by a set of standards which consider migrant/refugee women's integration as a specific priority both in policy framework and outcomes.

[1] More on addressing migrant girls' needs can be found in the EWL/ENOMW factsheet GirlsVoices: <http://www.migrantwomennetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/GirlsVoices-Infosheet-FINAL.pdf>

European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW) is a Europe-wide feminist secular platform of migrant women NGOs, not affiliated with any political group, advocating for the rights, freedoms and equality for migrant, refugee and ethnic minority women and girls in Europe.