



# Handbook for mentors and adult educators working with migrant women



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## Introduction

### European labor market and the future of migration

Author: Živilė Navikienė

Movements of people happen all around the world and all the time but today people are moving more than ever before. The stories can be positive or negative, but you will not understand migration without hearing them. People leaving their home countries with hope to find better life. Overall, there is an urgent need to move from fractured perspectives to a shared understanding of migration and a commitment to do things better in the area of social integration of migrants.

Migration as a way to go itself it is difficult. Migrants leaving home country leaves behind everything – social status, job, business, family, friends, social network, sometimes even dignity, respect, belongings - HOMES. All left things/relations in a host country you have to build/create from the beginning. You have to create a new life without feeling lost, alone, scared, stranger – OTHER. You have to prove that you are not OTHER, stranger, outsider, but the same as a host country resident. You should have a wish to integrate in a host community and honestly work.

In the past, many labor migrations were male-dominated, and women were often dealt with under the category of family reunion, even if they did take up employment. Since the 1960s, women have not only played an increasing role in labor migration, but also the awareness of women's role in migration has grown.

We can observe stereotypes that whereas male migrants are often portrayed as a threat to the host society and an obstacle to integration, female migrants are often represented in the media and public discourse as victims of their own 'patriarchal', indirect meaning we use cultures and families who needs to be 'saved' and 'liberated' via education and social integration.

Historical changes of migrant women's conception as less valued, poorly educated, dependent on man will and religious changes with women's emancipation gives a positive insight to women's freedom and integration into labor market importance.

## Labour market

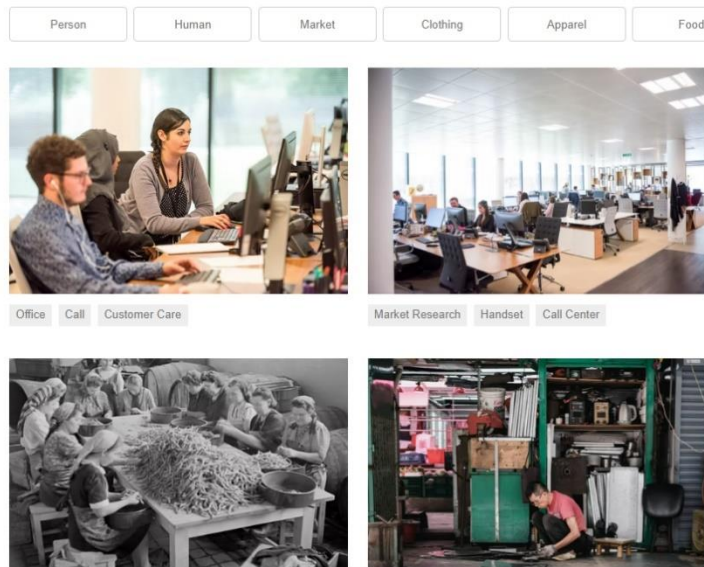


Photo made from <https://unsplash.com/s/photos/labour-market>

The reality, however, is much more complex. Some migrant women are indeed the victims of arranged marriages and women trafficking. But the **majority of female migrants are independent, entrepreneurial, well-educated and are perfectly capable of making their own decisions about their life, family, and career.**

2022 in February Russian war in Ukraine forced migration of Ukrainian women's. Women with children migration is difficult and even dangerous for many reasons. Women have to take care of children, to integrate in host community, to find a job, to learn the language and build respect through trust of host community that's a lot of tasks and responsibilities.

They often overcome tremendous difficulties on their journey to the country of destination. Migrant women are trying to maintain emotional, relational, and institutional links to their family, group, country, culture, and religion of origin, while also striving to be part of the social and political context of the receiving country.

Migration benefits are visible in demographics, changed labor market needs, new sectors growing. Migrants, expats increasing economic, social value by filling gaps of socioeconomical sectors. Newcomers enrich host communities with their culture, food, traditions. However, not only benefits but also some issues with migration appears/occurs – exploitation, abuse, trafficking.

The world is becoming more and more diverse, whether you like it or not, and more people than ever are living in countries different from their birth countries. We hope that this book will be of help to those facing the problems of immigration and cultural identity, to those who want to help migrants in their integration in a new country and to those who are worried about migrants threatening their cultural heritage. The book consists of seven chapters. In each chapter is presented migration aspects that correlates with migrant women's experience to be involved in labor market.

The goal of this book is to help both parties – migrant women and adult educators in the area of social integration of migrants – to better understand each other and to make sure that migrant women successfully integrate in the European societies and continue to contribute to European economic growth and sustainable development.

## Chapter 1

### Double discrimination of migrant women: The analysis of the current situation with women migrants in 3 partner countries

Globally, we all know, that migrants already receive lower average wages than native workers in many countries but often receive lower wages than what they were promised. We know that women working much longer hours than men. More migrants experienced health-related problems compared with natives. Existing gender, racial stereotypes put pressure and low chances to find a suitable job.



Photo made from <https://unsplash.com/s/photos/discrimination-migrant-women>

Discrimination in labor market starts when we treat migrant women differently in terms of working conditions, payment, learning possibilities, promoting, salary, benefits. Stereotypical thinking could appear or disappear with or without knowledge about another person. We suggest migrant women to present, talk, explain, share life values, daily activities with colleagues, recruiters, managers or others. Then people will find similarities or differences but they will understand different behaviour reasons. Misunderstanding shows when people do not know or do not understand something, mostly in this case should be explanation or presentation that could mitigate misunderstanding.

Researchers' findings shows that in the media and social science literature mostly represent Muslim women as passive victims of their religion who are oppressed by the patriarchal structures of their communities.

## The Netherlands

In the 1960s and 1970s, immigration was regarded by the Dutch government as a temporary phenomenon: those arriving from Morocco and Turkey, mainly guest workers and their families, were expected at some point to return home. The policy regarding cultural identities in the 1970s can be misunderstood as multiculturalist, because of the central principle that ‘guest workers’ such as those from Turkey and Morocco, should maintain their identity. The reason for this policy, however, was not to celebrate cultural differences and accommodate pluralism in the Netherlands, but to facilitate immigrants’ eventual return to their country of origin. According to Joppke (2004)<sup>1</sup>, allowing minority groups to ‘emancipate’ themselves within their own parallel institutions has fueled segregation and separation from the mainstream society.



In 1980, a change occurred in policies on naturalization and integration of migrants, leading to creation of the ‘Minorities Policy’ which was based on the recognition that

immigration

Picture. *Landverlaters*, door [Eugène Laermans](#), 1896

could be a lasting condition and “immigrant integration would be assisted by a secure residence status, equal rights, family reunification and full participation in education and the labor market” (OECD, 2011).

Over the last 15 years, however, attitudes have changed and the liberal Dutch approach to immigration and citizenship has been replaced by a narrow and restrictive policy. Unlike the integration courses offered since 1998, organized and financed by the Dutch government, the new test is offered by private institutes and paid for by the immigrants. Immigrants who fail the test or do not pass it in time are faced with fines and residence-status sanctions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joppke, Christian. 2004. “The Retreat of Multiculturalism in the Liberal State: Theory and Policy.” *British Journal of Sociology* 55(2): 237–57.

<sup>2</sup> OECD, *Naturalisation: A Passport for the Better Integration of Immigrants?*, OECD Publishing, 2011.

During the 1970s and 1980s the native Dutch became a rather homogeneous and progressive, and self-congratulatory, monoculture, but ethnic minorities were not forced to culturally assimilate into the Dutch mainstream. Hurenkamp et al. (2011) argue that since the 1990s, there has been a transition from a tolerant monoculturalism to an intolerant “culturalization of citizenship”<sup>3</sup>.

Criteria for citizenship have evolved from formal and legal dimensions into also requiring deep sentiments. Citizens are subjected to new “feeling rules.”<sup>4</sup> “Feeling Dutch”<sup>5</sup> has become the prime requirement for citizenship. If immigrants want to stay in the Netherlands, they have to adapt to so-called Dutch norms, values, and emotions, such as secularism, gender equality and the acceptance of homosexuality (Mepschen, Duyvendak and Tonkens 2010).

Essed and Trienekens (2008) says that “Dutch people of migrant ancestry continue to be seen as outsiders, despite having been born in the Netherlands, being full Dutch citizens and speaking Dutch exclusively”<sup>6</sup>. The racialization of ‘migrants with poor prospects’ of economic success, based on naturalized and essentialized notions of cultural incompatibility, ‘allows Dutch policymakers to abandon longstanding policy approaches to migrant integration and to social justice by ‘presenting ‘poor prospects’ as an inevitable characteristic of the unassimilable migrant Other rather than as a societal problem’<sup>7</sup>(Bonjour and Duyvendak, 2018).

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<sup>3</sup> Hurenkamp, Menno, Evelien Tonkens, and Jan Willem Duyvendak. 2011. “Citizenship in the Netherlands: Locally Produced, Nationally Contested.” *Citizenship Studies* 15(2): 205–25

<sup>4</sup> Verkaaik, Oskar. 2010. “The Cachet Dilemma: Ritual and Agency in New Dutch Nationalism.” *American Ethnologist* 37(1): 69–82.

<sup>5</sup> Slootman M., Jan Willem Duyvendak J.W. (2015) *Feeling Dutch: The Culturalization and Emotionalization of Citizenship and Second-Generation Belonging in the Netherlands*//In book: *Fear, Anxiety and National Identity* (pp.147-168) Chapter: 5 Publisher: New York: The Russel Sage Foundation

<sup>6</sup> Essed, P. and Trienekens, S. 2008. “‘Who wants to feel white?’: race, Dutch culture and contested identities”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, 1: 52–72.

<sup>7</sup> Bonjour, Saskia, and Jan Willem Duyvendak. 2018. “The “Migrant with Poor Prospects”: Racialized Intersections of Class and Culture in Dutch Civic Integration Debates.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41 (5): 882–900.

## Italy

In 2015 almost 154,000 refugees and asylum seekers from various countries arrived on Italian shores. While immigrants are thus becoming an increasingly important part of Italian society in terms of numbers, and although the government has started to recognize the potential benefits of immigrants for the Italian economy and for the labor market, they are still considered unwanted and not welcome in society, as can be seen in the country's strict immigration and deportation laws.

The first groups of migrants arriving in Italy in the 1970s to 1990s consisted mainly of Albanians, Moroccans and Tunisians, while migration from Romania and China has recently gained importance. This migration history is reflected in the number of naturalizations, of which Moroccans and Albanians occupy the highest share. Maurizio Ambrosini (2017) says that the acquisition of Italian citizenship was for a long time mainly based on marriage, a trend that changed in 2009 after new legislation stated that marriages have to last two years instead of the former six months before the foreign partner can apply for Italian citizenship. At the same time, the number of people granted citizenship based on their time of residence in Italy (10 years for non-EU nationals) has significantly increased. Once granted, it allows the unconditional acceptance of dual citizenship. Maurizio Ambrosini<sup>8</sup> (2017) emphasize that, access to Italian citizenship is considered more difficult than in other major immigration countries, due to the strict eligibility criteria. In addition, second-generation migrants are not granted citizenship upon birth in the country.

Alberta Giorgi (2012) analyse the category of 'migrant' that includes a large variety of situations: unskilled job-seekers as well as professional elites, UE as well non-UE citizens, single-migrants as well as families, seasonal workers as well as long-term residents, undocumented persons, and asylum seekers (see Bonizzoni, 2011). According to the public common-sense 'migrant' is often a synonym with 'foreigner', thus extending the displacement process much longer than the actual migration experience, which, instead of being an event, is turned into a status and a public identity (Bordignon and Diamanti, 2002)<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> [Maurizio Ambrosini \(a cura di\)](#) Europe: No Migrant's. Land Edizioni Epoké, 2017 ISBN 8899647240, 9788899647247

<sup>9</sup> Alberta Giorgi, «The Cultural Construction of Migrant Women in the Italian Press», *e-cadernos CES* [Online], 16 | 2012, posto online no dia 01 junho 2012, consultado o 01 agosto 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/eces/1026>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/eces.1026>

According to the official data (ISTAT, 2020), foreign citizens living in Italy represent 7,5% of the population. The migrant population is sex-balanced.

In the 1970s, migrant women mostly came from Latin and Central America, the Philippines, Cape Verde, and Eritrea (mainly Catholic countries). Middle-class families employed them as domestic workers. During the 1980s, women's migration remained an invisible process for the public sphere. In the 90s, migrant women became more visible, for different reasons, such as sex trafficking (Tognetti Bordogna, 2004). Nowadays, as Italian families become increasingly dependent on migrant women's work, they are mostly employed as caregivers in reproductive work. The Italian media sphere is characterized by a negative image of migrants. The analysis of Italian newspapers articles, published between June 2005 and July 2012, highlights the culturalization of migrant women, mainly portrayed as victims, and points to the high risk of xenophobic manipulation and political instrumentalization of migrant women's rights<sup>10</sup>.

Migrant women are mainly depicted as maids. Some articles tackle the issue of transnational maternity. Migrant women are forced to leave their children in their country of origin:



▲ Amal, siriana, con la nipotina nella stessa posizione in cui hanno viaggiato a bordo del barcone fotografato da Massimo Sestini nel 2014

*"There are immigrants who do not see their children and their parents for years. Not only because the journey is too expensive, but because, being illegally present, they cannot afford to leave Italy for the fear of not being able to come back. To those who help us to take care of our families we often deny the right to their own family. (La Repubblica)"<sup>11</sup>*

Photo used from La Repubblica [https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/05/30/news/foto\\_migranti-227511476/](https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/05/30/news/foto_migranti-227511476/)

In the late 1980s and in the 1990s, other figures emerged. First, the image of the migrant prostitute – presented as submissive, completely dependent on men, and often labelled as a 'slave'. Migrant women shown as the vulnerable subjects. 'Western women' are presented as

<sup>10</sup> Alberta Giorgi (2012). The Cultural Construction of Migrant Women in the Italian Press. A manipulação xenófoba e política dos direitos das mulheres Artigos

<sup>11</sup> Chiara Saraceno, "Quei bisogni ignorati", La Repubblica, 07.07.2009.

driven by self-esteem, autonomy, and moral values, while the behavior of ‘non-Western women’ is completely conditioned by their culture (Phillips, 2007). Cultural differences appear to be loaded with moral significance: forced marriages, female circumcision, and veiling are all included in the category of ‘culture’.

## Sweden

Sweden does not have integration requirements for permanent residence or naturalization similar to Italy and the Netherlands. In Sweden, a more state-centered and top-down approach prevails, whereby the modernizing welfare state promotes social inclusion and integrates society through equal treatment (Borevi, 2017)<sup>12</sup>. In Sweden, citizenship remains demonstrably void of national symbolism, with naturalization being an easy, largely administrative affair.

Based on Nordregio.org online magazine<sup>13</sup> “The large number of refugees and their families who were granted residency in Sweden over the last few years constitute a major challenge to Swedish society and, in particular, to the labour market. According to a recent report from the OECD, only 22 percent of newly arrived males had employment after one or two years of introductory programmes. For women, this percentage was as low as 8 per cent (OECD, 2016). However, the long-term employment rates of previously arrived refugees in Sweden are more favourable and lead us to believe that the numbers presented above will grow within the next few years.

The general 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.

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<sup>12</sup> Borevi K, Jensen KK, Mouritsen P. The civic turn of immigrant integration policies in the Scandinavian welfare states. *Comp Migr Stud.* 2017;5(1):9. doi: 10.1186/s40878-017-0052-4. Epub 2017 Mar 20. PMID: 28386533; PMCID: PMC5359368.

<sup>13</sup> <https://nordregio.org/nordregio-magazine/issues/migration-and-integration/the-labour-market-integration-of-refugees-in-sweden/>



Swedish integration policy concludes that “in Sweden the state has particular responsibility for supporting the introduction of newly arrived refugees and others in need of protection, as well as their families”.<sup>14</sup>

Photo taken from <https://www.humanium.org/en/children-in-the-shadow-of-the-swedish-migration-agency/>

However, a big effort is done to help refugees, newly-arrived immigrants and their families to integrate into a labour market.

According to the Swedish integration policy, some of the measures are:

- **Step-in jobs**

Step-in jobs are specially subsidized employment aimed at faster entry into the labour market and better language learning. Step-in jobs can be offered to unemployed newly arrived immigrants and are to be combined with courses in the Swedish language. The subsidy amounts to 75 percent of employer wage costs.

- **Introduction dialogue**

The introduction dialogue means that as soon as a residence permit has been granted, new arrivals receive information on where in Sweden there is a demand for the skills that they have or think they could acquire.

- **Mentoring schemes**

The lack of a network is one of the factors hampering the introduction of newly arrived immigrants in Sweden. The Government therefore intends to initiate a three-year mentorship project, where new arrivals are matched with mentors on the basis of their occupation and education.

- **Support to established entrepreneurs from non-Swedish backgrounds**

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.government.se/contentassets/b055a941e7a247348f1acf6ade2fd876/swedish-integration-policy-fact-sheet-in-english>

As part of this initiative, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth carried on a dialogue with employees in the banking sector concerning opportunities for immigrant entrepreneurs to receive financing. Funds were also allocated to compile up-to-date knowledge of companies run by women and men from non-Swedish backgrounds.

Despite the considerable efforts of the government and municipalities. There is still a tangible disbalance in employment vs unemployment rates among natives and immigrants in Sweden. Immigrants with academic backgrounds have even fewer chances of adequate employment. Similar to other countries, immigrant women face double discrimination.

According to the regulations both men and women have to receive equal treatment and support on their way to integration and financial independence. However, women receive less and have fewer opportunities than men do.

2020 the Swedish government announced the intensification of state support for informal education providers who organise activities for newly arrived migrant women. The specific attention was given to a target group of migrant women excluded from or unable to access the labour market, and who need support in order to enroll in formal education or find employment. The funds are distributed through Folkbildningsrådet, the Swedish National Council of Adult Education.

## Femonationalism

Poor countries increasingly provide nannies and maids who work in rich countries. The current percentage of women “in the world’s international migrants population” as the World Bank report on women’s international migrations argue, “is close to half.”<sup>15</sup> The rise of this feminized migration is the result of the increasing demand for workers in the care and domestic industry. A large number of migrant women who actively participate in the Western labor market are employed in one single branch of the economy: the care and domestic sector. In 2009, the Italian government granted an amnesty only for illegal migrants working as caregivers (*badanti*) and domestic workers, who are mostly women, since that was considered the only sector where the demand for labor could not meet the national supply.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, the image of the immigrant as male *Gastarbeiter* (guest worker) that was disseminated in the 1950s and 1960s, when Europe received the first significant flows of foreigners, has not been replaced by the figure of the migrant as a female maid. The public debate on the role of migrations in Europe represents them as victims of their own culture.



Femonationalism is the contemporary mobilization of feminist ideas by nationalist parties and neoliberal governments under the banner of the war against the perceived patriarchy of Islam. Recent discourses about multiculturalism and migrants’ integration, particularly in the case of Muslims, have been strongly marked by demands for migrants to adapt to Western culture and values, including gender equality.<sup>17</sup> Sara Farris describes ‘femonationalism’ as the cynical ‘mobilization of feminist ideas by nationalist parties and neoliberal governments

Photo taken from

<https://www.dukeupress.edu/in-the-name-of-womens-rights>

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<sup>15</sup> Andrew R. Morrison, Maurice Schiff, and Mirja Sjöblom, *The International Migration of Women* (2007).

<sup>16</sup> Sabrina Marchetti, “Che senso ha parlare di *badanti*?,” *Zeroviolenzadonne.it*, accessed June 10, 2011

<sup>17</sup> Hester Eisenstein, *Feminism Seduced: How Global Elites Use Women’s Labor and Ideas to Exploit the World* (2009)

under the banner of the war against the perceived patriarchy of Islam in particular, and of migrants from the Global South in general’<sup>18</sup>(2012, 2017).

Migrant men are regarded as the real obstacle to social and cultural integration, and thus represent a cultural threat to European society. They are depicted as job stealers, cultural clashers, and welfare provision parasites. On the contrary, migrant women are the maids who help to maintain the well-being of European families and individuals. By helping European women in the household, they allow them to become laborers in the productive labor market. Migrant women contribute to the education of children and to the survival and emotional life of the elderly.

While current media and political discourses focus on male Muslims as oppressors, the “male immigrant threat” in the 1990s was depicted as coming from Eastern Europe. The bad immigrant was then embodied by Eastern European men, usually portrayed as involved in criminal activities, while women from these countries were often depicted as victims of a backward culture<sup>19</sup>. As Helma Lutz noted, “It is through discourses of ‘racial,’ ethnic and national otherness, rather than through sexual difference, that the antagonism between the ‘European’ and the ‘other’ woman is emphasized<sup>20</sup>.

Kofman, Saharso, and Vacchelli (2013) emphasize ‘so-called ‘integration from abroad’ requires prospective migrants to pass language and cultural tests before they even set foot in the country. This policy mainly applies to family migrants from non-Western states, and is often framed as a way to fight gender inequality by protecting women against illiberal practices such as forced marriage. Its primary effect is to make it more difficult for certain family migrants to enter the country” (Kofman, Saharso, and Vacchelli 2013)<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Farris, Sara R. 2012. “Femonationalism and the “Regular” Army of Labor Called Migrant Women.” *History of the Present* 2 (2): 184–199.

Farris, Sara R. 2017. *In the Name of Women’s Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

<sup>19</sup> Eleonore Kofman et al., eds., *Gender and International Migration in Europe: Employment, Welfare and Politics* (2000).

<sup>20</sup> Helma Lutz, “The Limits of European-ness: Immigrant Women in Fortress Europe,” *Feminist Review* no. 57, Autumn (1997): 96.

<sup>21</sup> Kofman E., Vacchelli E., Saharso S. (2013) Gendered Perspectives on Integration Discourses and Measures//[International Migration](https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12102) 53(4) DOI:[10.1111/imig.12102](https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12102)

***Jane, 69, the immigrant from the UK:***

*When I came to register at the City Hall, I showed my passport and my birth certificate. I have been married to my husband for 42 years. I have my husband's surname. When I got married, there was no feminism. Women took their husband's names, and I have absolutely no problem with this. But the lady at the City Hall told me: 'No, in the Netherlands it is not your name. Here you have to have your maiden name or a double name'. So, now I am living here with this double name that sounds totally idiotic to me.*

***Anna, 51, immigrant from Russia:***

*When I applied for the Dutch passport, I had to provide my birth certificate and the complete history of my previous relationships. I had changed my last name after my first marriage and I'd decided to keep it after the divorce. The municipality official explained to me that I can return my 'real', maiden name. I replied that I am not interested in doing that. This answer made the clerk very puzzled and concerned. She told me that I have nothing to be afraid of, that here, in the Netherlands, women have exactly the same rights as men. They can keep their own name.*

*I tried to explain to her that I had practical reasons for keeping my current name. I'd married early, and I had my University diploma and a lot of other documents issued in my married name. Changing any official document in Russia is a bureaucratic nightmare. Furthermore, I was pursuing an academic career and I had already written more than 50 academic papers and a couple of books under my married name. Changing my last name would bring my visibility in the academic world and my citation index back to zero.*

*I tried to explain all that to the clerk, but she kept repeating that I am safe in the Netherlands and have nothing to fear. At that moment I fished out one of the documents from my file, a copy of the death certificate of my former husband. I showed it to her and repeated that I am fully aware of the fact that my former husband couldn't hurt me, because he'd passed away. 'Oh, I understand. You want to keep his name as a way of commemorating your relationship', said the clerk. Frankly, this idea had never occurred to me. We'd divorced long before his death, and I had no romantic feelings toward my first husband whatsoever. But I agreed to her just to finish this idiotic discussion and to go on with my life.*

***Theodora, immigrant from Romania:***

*The Dutch society is very open-minded, but even in this open-minded society you suffer from a lot of discrimination. I lost a count of people who for some reason felt obliged to tell me something about Romania. Of course, I speak with an accent, and in the beginning I was speaking English. So, the Dutch always ask me where I am coming from. If I say that I am from Romania, the next comment is: 'Oh, you are from a poor country'. 'It's a lot of corruption there, eh?' 'Ah, life is better here for you, isn't it?' And if I try to explain that I had a good education there, the Dutch are surprised: 'Oh, you have a Master's degree in Romania?' And I have to answer: 'Yes, we also have schools.'*

*A lot of people assume that I am some kind of a bride from the Internet. I had a collaborative project with other artists, and you expect artists to be a bit more open-minded than the general population. My husband came to pick me up after the event, and one of the colleagues said with surprise: 'Oh, but he is young!' His assumption was that I came here to marry an old Dutch guy and I was waiting for him to die and to inherit his money.*

*I had a workshop at school. It was called: 'Different is just normal'. Everybody was happy with the project, with the results, and discussions. There was a very old teacher who asked me: 'Where are you coming from?' because he noticed my accent. I said: 'Romania'. And he went on: 'There is a lot of corruption there. It's a very poor country, you know?' Why did he say that? It's like you meet a Dutch guy anywhere in the world and you start to say something like: 'Oh, you have the Red Light District, you smoke marihuana...'*

*There is a lot of discrimination in the Dutch society, and sometimes it is structural. For instance, once I was communicating with the job recruiters, and after that they sent me a letter with a questionnaire about the discrimination. They wanted to know whether I'd ever experienced it myself. The funny thing was that the letter was in Polish. I was really angry and I called them and said: 'I am an immigrant, but I am not from Poland. I can speak English and Dutch. Why are you trying to communicate with me in Polish? Do you think Romania is a part of Poland?' And they said: 'Oh, sorry, we just thought that everybody from Eastern Europe speaks Polish...' And I said: 'Now, this is the discrimination. You've just discriminated against me by sending me a letter in the wrong language. You know nothing about me or my country, you have your wrong assumptions about me and discriminate against me on the basis of these assumptions.'*

**Free choice is free of gender | Ingrid van Engelshoven | TEDxAmsterdamWomen**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TS94fxj43uQ>

*Ingrid reminded us that we still have a big gap to bridge in representations of what it means to be male or female. This affects the way we raise our children and the future they envision for themselves, based on what is perceived as normal.*

*“Did you know that men are quoted in the media as experts 88% of the time, and women only 12%? Or that mainstream media very rarely depict women in professional settings? Not to mention children’s toys that tell us girls are caring and that boys are adventurous. This has a lasting effect on how we view the division of labor. During her studies; Public Administration & Public Policy and Dutch Law, van Engelshoven was already into politics and has been a member of D66 ever since. Her childhood in Belgium made her aware of the consequences of being a ‘foreigner’, but it also gave her the opportunity to look at the country from an outsider’s perspective. She has worked on topics such as equal opportunities in the Dutch education system and the improvement of women’s economic independence. In 2015 she won the ‘Els Borst Network Inspiration Award’ in honor of her years of work for D66.*

*Gender stereotypes chock off the free will, unconsciously and unwillingly. Free choice should be free from prejudice and stereotypical images of husband as a breadwinner and a wife as a caretaker*

## Chapter 2

### How migrant women can help each other to become economically independent: Case studies and analysis of mentoring program

The services offered to resettled refugees, as well as to other types of migrants, in the resettlement country include various support measures: language tuition, social and cultural orientation, vocational training and assistance in accessing mainstream services such as health and education. Numerous actors are involved in the integration process, as it is understood as a process that takes place at individual, local and national level.

Studies have shown that immigrants and their children have lower incomes, lower labor market status in relation to their education, and are disproportionately likely to be unemployed. There have been various explanations for these findings, including discrimination, a lack of language property, and a few social and professional connections.

As these civil society organizations support resettled refugees, they are particularly active in recruiting volunteer citizens to act as mentors. The various roles mentors play in refugee integration depend on the type of mentorship program they participate in. Some of these have specific objectives, such as language learning, professional tutoring and support in finding accommodation. Specific mentorship schemes are reserved for vulnerable subgroups of the refugee population such as young people and women. Still other programs provide general assistance, addressing broader needs and involving some form of advocacy to improve public opinion and immigration policy.

Mentorship is an experience between the mentor and the mentee, who from the first meeting clarify the objectives of the work program. In detail, it is a transfer of knowledge and methodology in terms of soft skills. A relationship that is established in a formal, academic context, but then becomes informal as they get to know each other. Knowledge and information are transferred, based on trust, respect and understanding.

The Council of the European Union and the representatives of the Governments of the Member States established the common basic principles for immigrant integration policy in the European Union.

## The role and nature of mentor and mentee

Over time, Europe has become the continent that hosts the largest number of disadvantaged individuals, as defined above, a range that has expanded to include refugees and asylum seekers. Individuals from countries affected by civil wars, living in poverty and with limited resources, who encounter difficulties in the Member States due to unequal or inadequate reception systems.

The exponential growth of arrivals of asylum seekers, refugees and unaccompanied foreign minors in Europe, and specifically in Italy, has changed the type of interventions needed, both from a numerical point of view (in terms of the number of people to be received) and because of the typological diversity of the situations to be addressed.

The failure to define migration and integration policies that respect their needs deprives reception systems of inclusive tools for individuals who require integration into the social fabric of arrival. Some points to define mentorship are:

- A supporting relationship, beyond hierarchy;
- one relation in order to establish aims in the framework of a mentoring programme.

An effective but still developing tool, as clarified in the previous section, is mentorship, a relationship established between the mentor and the refugees (*mentees*) with whom he/she comes into contact. To clarify these two figures, it should be specified that a mentee is the family or refugee family member involved in the mentorship process. Mentors, on the other hand, are citizens of the host community who support refugee families in their integration into the host society and thus become a real resource and instrument of cooperation between the parties. People from local communities, including those who have been resettled refugees through previous programmes, thus bi-cultural and bilingual, who play a role in assisting

refugees in the prospect of their new life in the new society by "filling gaps in the provision of integration services and/or extending the type and nature of integration support offered to refugees" (ICMC 2015, 9).



Photo from <https://www.istockphoto.com/>

One of the greatest difficulties of mentorship programmes is to establish boundaries to the type of assistance provided by mentors to mentees. This is because mentors fill a role that has traditionally been entrusted to the state or other authorities and help build a bridge between refugees and local communities; they provide their informal, personalised support in accessing services; they assist refugees in the day-to-day challenges they may face; they listen to them; they help develop an understanding of the host society's culture and values; they foster social contacts, but can in turn refer to other service providers. The challenge is to avoid social isolation and to make them active within local communities that are facing rapid change, catapulted into the new community. Therefore, on the one hand 'volunteers play a crucial additional role in facilitating reception, adaptation and long-term settlement, and in promoting the building of friendships and connections in the new surroundings' (ICMC 2015, 4). On the other hand, however, the work can be made easier if they themselves are former resettled refugees, and thus can present "a valuable training and support resource, both for the newcomers and for the organisations and services that care for them" (ICMC 2015, 4). From these reflections, it follows that mentoring should be understood as a "mutually beneficial relationship" (Bond 2010, 5), both for mentees and host communities.

## Some facts about women mentoring women

- Mentor women can be either native women who were long-term residents or locals;
- Some of them are people who had lived abroad themselves and so they had first-hand experience of some of the issues migrants could face when they arrive;
- Mentor women can come from a variety of backgrounds some of them with volunteering experience who now call the host country ‘home’;

One problem is that mentors, and all operators involved in relations with migrants, find themselves dealing with situations, from an inter-linguistic and intercultural perspective, that easily fail and therefore have negative consequences on the beneficiary's integration pathway, but also on the motivational and professional level of operators, due to the absence of specific training courses. Precisely because of this failure character, it is a phenomenon that has repercussions in the training system and takes on specific relevance in the construction of integration pathways, therefore it is increasingly urgent and necessary to train those who receive and support migrants.

### Good examples

#### **Strengthening economies through refugee women' Christina Moreno | HagueTalks**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRNOR8h7VuU>

As an uprooted American who has made a home and a career for herself in The Netherlands, Christina Moreno feels a special affinity for refugees. In her talk she wants to present a fresh and exciting perspective on the refugee crisis. Despite the alarmist headlines on refugees, Moreno contends that a growing revolution is under way. She argues that the shift is driven by pragmatic, entrepreneurial people who see opportunities where others see threats, and who understand that if given the right environment and support, refugees, particularly the women, are the key to releasing the untapped potential of economies.

Moreno's views on the refugee crisis are firmly grounded in her training as an international lawyer. Her stance is that equality before the law is a basic right in the constitutions of democratic countries, and it appears in all international human rights conventions. She therefore believes that we must all be willing to challenge misguided policies that perpetuate discrimination and in favour of a human rights-based approach.

Refugees did not have a dream, they just wanted to find a job. Only 11% of refugees are employed. But they are lawyers, doctors, scientists.

She (Christina Moreno) created SheMatters B.V., specialized in matching highly skilled female newcomers with positions in international companies in the Netherlands. They're experienced in placing candidates with international experience in junior and mid-level positions in engineering, business services and IT. Our candidates are qualified and experienced professionals with fluency in multiple languages, and are seeking job opportunities in an international setting. Our recruitment consultants are not only skilled in what they do, but they're passionate about empowering our clients with diverse talent. The combination of international talent, diverse languages and diversity makes She Matters B.V. the ideal recruitment partner for international companies seeking talented professionals to strengthen their workforces with diversity. (Website: <http://www.shematters.nl>)

### **Alya, 34, migrant from Indonesia to the Netherlands**

Fell in love with a Dutch guy and moved to the Netherlands to start a family. Eight years later she is a happy mother of two kids and she works as a volunteer at a refugee center. She also organized a local community for ambitious migrants who support each other in finding new opportunities in the Dutch society. The decision to move here was not easy. In Indonesia, I had a good job and bright career prospects. I still miss my job. I was earning good money, I had savings, I was independent. And here, I've worked at the post office, sorting mail in the evenings. But in Indonesia I was also feeling lonely. When we grow older, we need our own family. I used to imagine what would've happened if I'd made a different decision. Maybe I would've had a good job, but no family. Or, if I had a family, I would've stopped working. But now I realize that I don't really know what would've happened to me if I stayed in Indonesia. You don't need to imagine a life that would never happen. You have to live now, at this moment. Now I think: actually, my life is quite nice. Why should I complain? I am

grateful for what I have. At a certain moment I decided: if I don't get a job, fine. I can just enjoy my life. But, of course, I am not sitting at home. I work as a volunteer, I've organized a local migrant community, and I am looking for a professional job. And I believe deep inside that my life will be better. I will get there one day. But it only becomes possible when we decide not to sit at home. You have to go outside, to see the world.

I work with refugees. Often, the Dutch think about refugees as being ungrateful. Sometimes it looks like they abuse the system. But sometimes the problem is not the refugees, it is mutual misunderstanding. For instance, I worked with a pregnant refugee who was about to have a baby. We wanted to help her and we collected some second-hand stuff for the baby. But when we offered these things to the woman, she refused. She said: 'No, thank you, I will buy new stuff for the baby'. Some of my colleagues were offended, they saw it as ungrateful. But the thing is that refugees get quite a big amount of money from the municipality. These people are coming from poor countries, where they could not provide for their children. And now, maybe for the first time in their life, they have money. They can buy something nice for their kids. They have the power to decide what they want to buy. So I did not see it as pride, I understand why she refused.

**Jane, 52, migrant from Indonesia to the Netherlands:**

In the beginning, I was always alone. In Indonesia, everybody knows everybody. If you are new to the neighbourhood, you just introduce yourself and talk to other people. But here, I was alone. My husband was working, and I had almost no contact with our neighbours. And that was very difficult for me. I was thinking: 'Why don't they talk to me? What's wrong with me?' I did not yet realize at that time that this is just how things work here. I said 'Hello!', they said 'Hello', and that was it. No further contact. I asked my husband: 'What did I do wrong? Why don't people want to talk to me?' And he just said: 'That's just how people normally behave here.' But I did not believe it. I was thinking that it was my fault, that I was not nice or friendly. So, I was trying to behave extra friendly towards the people, but they didn't like it. They were annoyed by my attempts to be extra nice. I understand now that this is part of the culture. We can't change this culture; it is very individualistic. And I came from a different culture. We are doing everything together.

I started to learn the language as soon as I came here. In 1,5 years, I passed the B2 exam and was able to go to college. It was relatively easy, but I wanted more. I wanted to speak fluent

Dutch as soon as possible. Other people were telling me that they understood me well and that my Dutch was fine, but I always expected more of myself. After 1,5 years I went to college to study commercial economics. I'd made this choice because in Indonesia I had experience in retail. But after I finished my studies, I've never tried to find a job in commerce. The reason was that in the world of commerce you have to talk a lot. And you better talk in perfect Dutch. And I was always thinking that my level of Dutch was not good enough. My problem was my own mindset. I was always thinking: 'You can't do it. You can't get this job.' So, I did not even apply. It was stupid of me; I realize it now. I did not have the guts to do it.

If you want to feel at home here, you have to go out, to look for a job or for volunteer work, or for education. You have to be open to change. A lot of people are coming here with their dreams or hopes for a better life. They encounter a lot of problems, but they are hesitant to talk about it. If you don't talk, you can't reach out for help. And it is much more difficult to solve your problems alone. You can talk to other people with similar experiences, you can share your problems and your experience with them and you can try to find solutions together.

If you have a good job or a good education in your country, and you come to a different society and different culture, you lose your social status. And it makes you ashamed and insecure. But you can't just keep it inside. If you don't express those feelings, you'll get sick or angry or depressed. Of course, it is not easy to talk about your problems. But if you talk and share this insecurity and shame with other people who have similar experiences, you have nothing to hide and nothing to fear. You feel freer and you can think more rationally. You can find resources and you can discover your dreams. And your dreams give you energy to move and to go on with your life.

### **Women anonymous tell her story**

F. (female): F. was a volunteer in the ICI information service and quite actively involved with Young Social Innovators. F. is a social researcher who has a keen interest in other cultures that have settled in Ireland, particularly Moldovan culture and the Commonwealth of Independent States region in general. She is interested in Uganda, having visited there for five months and got involved in projects on the ground. She is also very interested in social

entrepreneurship and lists music, reading, films and meeting people from diverse backgrounds amongst her main hobbies. Knowledgeable about the general situation

pertaining to migrants in Ireland, F. recognizes the significant challenge that migrants face in Ireland and she felt that the mentoring programme provided a perfect platform for people like her to provide relevant and necessary support to such migrants. As someone who has an interest in Uganda, in social entrepreneurship, has European Computer Driving Licence training and experience and also has experience in running an organisation she feels she was not really sure what to expect on the program and still is not sure if she was successful as a mentor.

J. (female): J. is originally from Uganda and had been living in Ireland for nearly 4 years. J. is very active in the community and is a founder member of a migrant network which seeks to empower migrant women to tackle health issues in Ireland. Her main interests are in social entrepreneurship, community work and her main hobbies are swimming, reading, meeting new people and learning about new cultures, norms and traditions. She specifically asked to be mentored in developing an information technology and communication strategy for the network to help improve the effectiveness of their service delivery. Significantly, through the match, J. has been provided with valuable support from F. in relation to hosting events. However, the match has been challenged in its latter stages by the uncertainty in J.'s immigration status in the host country and also generally not enough time or opportunities to meet.

How it's possible monitoring the relation between mentor woman and migrant women?

There is also a need to use monitoring, which is useful for calculating the progress of the work of mentors and mentees, their continuous learning, the increasing evolution of their needs and involvement in a process of constant and mutual reflection, and to ensure corrective actions for the continuation of the objectives. A further tool that can be a subsidy is a regular report on the progress of both parties, although it may prove to be an additional workload for the mentors, most of whom are volunteers. In previous mentorship projects, both mentors and mentees were asked to provide a written report with the activities conducted in each meeting and feedback on them.



Photo's made by <https://www.istockphoto.com/>

A further tool is to have mentors take snapshots of their experiences. To minimize physical distance mentors and mentees could have constantly contact using telephone, emails, social media. Feeling of having person who could support, empower and encourage in each small steps guaranty women learning progress or successful integration.

## Recommendations

In conclusion, since mentorship programmes generally last for months, it is of paramount importance to keep track of progress and progress, to make adjustments and readjust the structure of the programme when necessary, and to monitor the relevance of the activities with respect to the needs of the beneficiaries and the changing context. For these reasons, it would be preferable to complement the mentor figure with professionals to coordinate activities and provide support during the course.

The survey on the perception of the value and impact of the programme is usually carried out by recording participants' opinions and comments before and after the mentorship experience, in order to compare the initial results with the final ones, rather than opting for a purely final evaluation at the risk of wasting potential benefits of the intervention. Thus, by providing tailor-made and targeted support for integration, by assessing the quality of the relationship between mentors and mentees, these tools become a decisive factor for the success of the programme.

Finally, while it is true that the evaluation of mentorship programmes focuses mainly on assessing the effectiveness criterion, it would also be useful to document the design and implementation of activities with a view to replicability. This examination will help to understand how to design and conduct successful mentorship programmes in the future.

## Chapter 3

### Work and family life balance: Challenges and solutions for migrant women

Women often start business out of necessity, not because they are passionate about it or have a dream. They just want to be financially independent and to help their families

Women often see their business and professional life as secondary to their 'duty' as a family caretaker. They often face criticism even from their own families when they decide to pursue a business or professional career.

Trying to have it all often leads to stress and burnout. How can women change the way business is organized globally? Ariana Huffington, the founder of the Huffington Post: "If we sacrifice our health for power and money, our life is not worth living. The world has been designed by men. Now it has to be changed by women".

The participation model of immigrants remains that centered on the prevalence of male employment, which is expressed in higher quotas than those of the native population, whereas the female labor supply is significantly lower than the corresponding level of males. These are general trends that in many respects anticipate those processes of assimilation of the immigrant population's behaviour to that of the host society typically referred to second generations. As will be highlighted, foreign female employment, or rather the ways in which immigrant women participate in the labour market, give rise to an elastic behavior, much more flexible than the male model, characterized by the tendency to retreat into the condition of inactivity when the conjuncture is negative, but equally reactive at the first sign of a reversal of the trend towards positive cycles.

Women often see their business and professional life as secondary to their ‘duty’ as a family caretaker. They often face criticism even from their own families when they decide to pursue a business. Migrant women face a significant disadvantage entering the labor market, sometimes referred to as a ‘double disadvantage’



Photo from <https://unsplash.com/photos/ZKHksse8tUU>

based on being a woman and being a migrant.

In all countries, migrant women have higher unemployment rates than their native-born women. Gender differences in unemployment rates among migrants are particularly large in several Southern European countries such as Portugal, Italy and Greece, where the phenomenon is quite evident.

Based on Migration policy debates<sup>22</sup> (2020) in the OECD countries, among migrant, working women, 23% are in low-skilled employment, 8% points more than among native-born women. In the EU, the industries that employ most migrant women are often sectors with a high number of low- and middle-skilled jobs. In particular, migrant women are strongly overrepresented in household services. Close to 1 in 12 migrant women works in household services whereas the share among native-born women is a mere 1%.

Reflecting this issue are the question of policies, on the one hand, and the definition of processes of appropriation of majority cultural models, the influence of which goes as far as touching private and intimate dimensions such as those relating to family organisation and relations, on the other hand. Inevitably, the focus on which the issue of reconciliation is concentrated, i.e., the subject on which the search for appropriate solutions in the field of reconciliation continues to burden, is represented by the immigrant woman and her condition in relation to the quantitative-qualitative composition of her family unit and in relation to her ability (or possibility) to take part in the labour force.

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<sup>22</sup> Migration policy debates <https://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/migration-policy-debates-25.pdf>

## Migrant women and the higher risk of exclusion from the labour market

The number of children in the family takes on importance in determining the income capacity of men, while for women the child load has a minor influence on the search for a greater economic return from their work. Women's individual income from work is, on average, always penalised in comparison with men's, and further confirmation of this fact also emerges from the analysis of their dynamics by age group. This leads to a widening of the gap between male and female incomes, which also increases with age: from a gender pay gap of 18.4% among the under 30s to 30.8% among the over 45s.

However, migrant women are not at a particular disadvantage compared to migrant men regarding temporary employment and formal over-qualification. While migrant women are more likely than native-born women to work in temporary employment, putting them at a higher risk of job loss, they are not at a disadvantage compared to migrant men where this share is 18% among migrants and 12% among native-born.

In Sweden, through the prism of gender relations, family-work reconciliation policies take shape in terms of both actions to promote employability and measures to support the family dimension. The combined action of these two fields of intervention creates the backbone of a society in which, while recognizing gender differences, equality and equal opportunities for men and women as individuals are pursued.

The Swedish equal opportunities policy thus proves to be the main instrument through which to find new forms of balance between the family dimension and the professional field, as significant areas of each person's life. It is characterized by what we could call here the three Cs action: concreteness, coherence and continuity. It is, in fact, an action that is continuous over time and has been on the Swedish social agenda since the 1960s; it is coherent between the different parties, in which the different interests leave room for the negotiation of common goals; and finally, it is concrete, since it is pursued and verified step by step, in its ability to achieve the defined goals, and whose results are continuously monitored through follow-up activities.

## Migrant women's balance of work and family life: evidence for European countries

Migrant women's integration differs from the experience of men with regards to the work-life balance. Migrant women with a young child have an employment rate which is over 18 percentage points below that of their peers without children.

Native-born women with and without young children as well as foreign-born women without young children have equal employment rates in the EU, while the employment rate of migrant women with young children is only a mere 46%.

Migrant women face the *reconciliation* between personal and professional life differently than native-born women. The main reasons as expressed in surveys are the availability of childcare services and their cost (twice as often than native-born women).



Photos' from <https://www.istockphoto.com/>

Starting a family also has different consequences on foreign women. Native-born women take career breaks to start a family while foreign-born women are more likely to leave the labour market when having children. In fact, they may not enter it in the first place, as foreign-born women are more than twice as likely to have never worked for childcare reasons compared with local women. However, the group of foreign women who work in the labour market tend to take relatively shorter breaks than local women and are almost twice as likely as local women not to use any family leave.

## Migrant women's empowerment brings benefits to subsequent generations

There are two main dimensions through which the Swedish equal opportunities policy is explicitly expressed: the professional sphere, in which each individual as such, regardless of gender, has the right to achieve economic independence through paid employment; and the family dimension, in which the pivotal expression of equal opportunities is the guarantee for men and women of the fundamental right/duty to care. It is exactly at the juncture of these two dimensions that reconciliation policies in Sweden are situated, in terms of equal opportunities and equal responsibilities inside and outside the labour market. One cannot be achieved if not adequately supported by the other, and vice versa; thus, within the broader container of the reconciliation dimension, labour and family policies meet and influence each other. An example of such a meeting is the provision of a model of parental leave linked to the income received, such that the presence in the labour market is in turn influenced and influences the benefits deriving from the use of an instrument pertaining to the support of the family dimension.



Photos' from <https://www.istockphoto.com/>

Having had a working mother at age 14 (as opposed to a mother staying at home) increases the employment probability for local children of immigrants from a non-EU country by about twice as much as for their peers with local parents. For daughters of non-EU-origin women, the difference is most pronounced: having a working mother instead of one staying at home increases daughters' employment rate by 16%.

## Examples

### Failure is the step to success

Arianna Huffington grew up poor in Greece, went to Cambridge University, and moved to the USA. She wrote 15 books on different topics and saw the power of digital news. She was fascinated by blogs and bloggers. And she launched The Huffington Post: an aggregator of blogs around the world. It became a community, people could comment. She started with \$1 million, and sold it for \$315 million. She collapsed with burnout and stress. How to be in a world without collapsing? 'Thrive' is redefining success as a good life. She stepped down from Huffington Post and started a new company: help people live more healthy lives, and be productive and successful.



Photo made from google search sections pictures

When Arianna Huffington spots a trend, she dives in head first. Trusting her gut has helped her build a successful online media platform and put her at the forefront of the mindfulness movement.

What's a good life? Success is money and power. If we sacrifice our health for power and money, our life is not worth living. The world has been designed by men. Now it has to be changed by women. (Arianna Huffington, Online Media Mogul, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bau4\\_O9hc1c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bau4_O9hc1c))

### 3 lessons on success from an Arab businesswoman/ Leila Hoteit

Professional Arab women juggle more responsibilities than their male counterparts, and they face more cultural rigidity than Western women. What can their success teach us about tenacity, competition, priorities and progress? Tracing her career as an engineer, advocate and mother in Abu Dhabi, Leila Hoteit shares three lessons for thriving in the modern world.

1) Resilience: an ability to transform shit into fuel. Be happy: it drives people crazy! Success is the best revenge.

2) Work your life. Marry someone supportive of your career. Apply your professional skills to your personal life: recruit domestic help effectively and empower them as your colleagues at work. Block family time in your calendar. Leverage technology if you are far away.

3) Join forces, do not compete. A social skill that is very important to success is networking. In the West, women compete with other women to be the most successful woman in the room. Arab women know that by helping each other they all benefit.



Picture: <https://www.weforum.org>

Watch:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/leila\\_hoteit\\_3\\_lessons\\_on\\_success\\_from\\_an\\_arab\\_businesswoman?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/leila_hoteit_3_lessons_on_success_from_an_arab_businesswoman?language=en)

**Jane, 53, migrant from Indonesia:**

I went through a difficult period here. The language was difficult, the people were not nice to me, it was difficult to find a job. I was often angry. But now I've learned to focus on things that you can change yourself and not to concentrate on things that depend on others. You can change your attitude. But it took me years to learn how to look on the sunny side and to be more positive.

I always find it difficult to be proud of my achievements. I always concentrate on my mistakes. I was always working hard and I enjoyed learning new things, and I always wanted to do more and to learn more. Sometimes it made me ignore other things that are important in life. But as you grow older you start noticing other positive things. And this realization came to me when I was almost 50. I realized that I was too hard on myself that I need to learn to take better care of myself. If you are too hard on yourself, you also tend to be hard on other people, blame them for your own unhappiness. I attended workshops and courses on 'mindfulness', 'vitality' and 'personal leadership'. I learned a lot there, for instance, how to keep a balance between work and personal life, or how to be your own boss. I've also discovered yoga. I like to go for a walk in the forest, to stay in contact with nature. For me, relaxation comes from the spiritual side.

## Recommendations

As a consequence of this, the question of the *reconciliation* of labour market participation and domestic and family care tasks in the context of the gender division of labour takes on new significance for various segments of the immigrant population. For some, it arises as a novel issue, which in many respects significantly impacts on the culture of origin of work and family; in an even broader sense, on gender culture. Reconciliation thus imposes itself as a model on the basis of which to redefine - in the context of the migration project - the family organisation structure, and at the same time as a condition for effective female participation in the income mix.

But on the other hand, the reasons for the persistent exclusion of foreign women from the labour market i.e. in Sweden are manifold and one of the main causes lies in the fact that, as pointed out above, the economic support provided for families with children and the protection for parenthood are so generous that they turn into a real disincentive for immigrant women to participate in the labour market. The consequence of this is the persistence of an invisible distance between immigrant women and the employment services that can facilitate their entry into the labour market, of the existence of which they are often not even aware.

Another interesting aspect was the understanding that these women, frequently, because they are relegated within the domestic dimension, do not have the possibility to access this type of information except through their partners, and thus the urgency of opening an alternative and specific channel to reach them is evident. Once again, there is a need to understand how to modulate government interventions in order to trigger a cultural change strictly aimed at individuals who have built their family and gender culture in a different country than the one in which they now find themselves as parents and workers.

## Chapter 4

### Cultural diversity in modern Europe: How migrant women enrich the local culture with their creative input (case studies and examples from project results)

#### Cultural diversity benefits

In spite of the fact that each migrant story is unique, all migrants have some common psychological traits: they are more risk-takers, more ambitious and more motivated both to work hard and to change their conditions compared to people who stay in their country of origin. These qualities are valuable to increasing productivity and achieving success.

Highly educated immigrant workers can be a sizable factor of innovation. Maurizio Ambrosini (2017) emphasize benefits of ‘outsiders/migrants’, that many innovations derive from applying a different point of view that only outsiders can have<sup>23</sup>.



Diversity is part of the attractiveness of any global city. Amsterdam, for instance, which is over 50% immigrant or immigrant-origin, took ‘diversity’ as an asset to attract the ‘creative class’ and to become a ‘creative knowledge city’. The city’s Diversity Policy

Photo from <https://unsplash.com/photos/sbE9zbcuiZs>

is inspired by the notion that “Amsterdammers cannot be captured in one group. They are part of many groups<sup>24</sup>”. City subsidies are no longer given to ethnic groups but to projects

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<sup>23</sup> Maurizio Ambrosini (a cura di) Europe: No Migrant's. Land Edizioni Epoké, 2017 ISBN 8899647240, 9788899647247

<sup>24</sup> Maurizio Ambrosini (a cura di) Europe: No Migrant's. Land Edizioni Epoké, 2017 ISBN 8899647240, 9788899647247

that should assemble people of many groups that are ethnically and socially mixed to resolve concrete neighborhood problems.

## Cultural diversity acceptance

The classic immigration countries (USA, Canada and Australia) have generally seen immigrants as permanent settlers who were to be assimilated or integrated. Western European countries in the 1960s and early 1970s have tried (often unsuccessfully) to prevent permanent settlement and have generally denied citizenship and other rights to settlers.

After more than fifty years of large-scale immigration, western European societies have been dramatically transformed by the huge inflows that have altered the composition of their populations in profound ways and created new ethnic, racial, and religious diversity. A crucial question is whether the newcomers and their second-generation children, are included in, or excluded from, the prevailing national identity and come to feel that they belong.

Western European countries are debating how much and what kind of cultural diversity is to be accepted in the public domain. The debate has a nostalgic character, based on a naturalistic notion of culture. Culture in this perspective is portrayed as a closed, timeless, and conflict-free whole, carried by citizens who all basically share beliefs, norms, and traditions.

Today ‘integration’ in European societies describes the compatibility of individual members of (non-EU and non-Western) immigrant groups with an (idealized) image of ‘society’ in order to determine whether they personally belong to it. The main goal of integration measures is to distinguish who ‘integrates sufficiently’. These integration requirements constantly impose a stricter set of performances, achievements, efforts and costs on migrants who must then demonstrate and fulfill these requirements. Immigrant citizens must culturally adapt before they may be recognized as equals<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> de Waal, T. M. (2017). Conditional belonging: A legal-philosophical inquiry into integration requirements for immigrants in Europe.

European populists are very successful in framing migrants as perpetrators and of natives as victims. For instance, migration from Poland to the UK has been the biggest theme of the Brexit campaign, in spite of the fact that fiscal effects of migration on the UK economy have been positive. Not just populist movements but entire member states have decisively thrown themselves into the 'closure', opposing Europe from within by building 'illiberal democracies' that openly deny the common values upon which the EU rests.

### Super-diversity conception

Policies in Western European countries since the 1960s were mainly concerned with migrant populations from the former colonies and the so-called 'guest workers' who had been contracted to work in Western Europe. While these migrants were seen as ethno-culturally diverse as a group, they were hardly perceived as differentiated among themselves (De Bock 2015). In the 1990s, new, smaller, less organized, legally differentiated immigrant groups arrived that created 'super-diversity' (Robinson and Reeve 2005). Instead of solely focusing on the country of origin and ethnicity of immigrants, super-diversity underlines the need to recognize the complexity of migration processes in order to adequately address the needs of individual immigrants and to better understand the dynamics of their inclusion or exclusion (Vertovec 2007).

Super-diversity implies a positive view of differences in a super-diverse neighborhood where everybody will adapt to everybody. In his perspective, there is no longer a mainstream or hegemonic group. People live peacefully together, all adapting to each other.

However, this new reality does not necessarily lead to the recognition of diversity and a normalization of difference. Many policymakers and citizens, at least in Western Europe, do not embrace diversity as a normal fact of life. Quite to the contrary: over the past decade, Western European countries are heatedly debating how much and what kind of cultural differentiation is acceptable in the public domain. Moreover, while super-diversity is an empirical reality, it goes hand in hand with neo-nationalist ideologies, both in public life and in the political sphere - and an increasing focus on cultural assimilation - not diversity - as the answer to this new reality.

The rhetorical figure of the everyman whose sense of home and place has been undermined by immigration and multiculturalism has over the years come to play a central role in right-wing politics (Duyvendak 2011). Populist politicians assume that 'migrant cultures' have disrupted a sense of home and wholeness of ordinary people and generated the sense of cultural loss that these 'ordinary' people feel when they are confronted with the 'super-diverse' character of their neighborhood.

### Cosmopolitanism notion

Cosmopolitanism can be defined as 'feeling at home in the world'<sup>26</sup>[IO3 chapter/4%5eJ5chapters.docx - ftn3](#). At home we feel safe, relaxed and engaged hundred percent in the activities (job, family, learning, joy). Identification as a world person and openness to differences and experience letting easier to adapt changes in life.

Cosmopolitan person is unprejudiced: free from national prejudices, and also knowledgeable and refined: showing a breadth of knowledge and refinement from having travelled widely . Cosmopolitan person can easily disengage from his culture of origin and has personal autonomy from the culture where she originated.

Being cosmopolitan is associated with a conscious openness to the world and to cultural differences (Beck and Sznaider 2006; Hall 2002; Vertovec and Cohen 2002). Cosmopolitanism is a personal ability to make one's way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting, and reflecting, and a built-up skill in manoeuvring more or less expertly with a particular system of meanings (Hannerz, 1990). There is, first of all, a willingness to engage with the Other, an intellectual and ethical openness toward different cultural experiences.

Shared economy, cosmopolitanism, vanished borders of huge distance between countries in the world and huge industry of tourism changed understanding of cosmopolitan person notion.

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<sup>26</sup> Brennan's 1997 book "At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now".

Cultural cosmopolitanism is an ability to celebrate difference, diversity and hybridity of cultures. The cosmopolitan person is characterized by an ability to be mobile, the capacity to understand diverse cultural symbols, a willingness to take risks by encountering the 'other', the ability to reflexively observe and judge different cultures, and general openness to other people and cultures. It is an ability to bridge boundaries with people who are different from you.

Cosmopolitanism is 'openness' toward other cultures (Hannerz 1996; Tomlinson 1999; Urry 2000; Vertovec and Cohen 2002). 'Cultural openness' must involve an empathy and interest in other cultures, a strong ethical commitment to universalist values and ideas that are expected to reach beyond the local.

The global nature of some aspects of our society – especially global risk – means that phenomena like climate change or global pandemics force us into dialogue with others and open the world to a common discussion to work for common welfare.

### Examples of successful integration through learning the language

Eve is a single mom who came to the Netherlands to study, to work and to build a better future for herself and her daughter. She did not waste any time, and within two years she managed to learn Dutch well enough to find a good job.

"A lot of people feel comfortable here communicating in English, but I had never used English at work or in everyday life, so I decided to learn Dutch. Besides, when you speak the same language as the rest of the society, you understand people better, and they understand you better. The Dutch are grateful to you for your effort to learn their language. They are so happy to hear your first Dutch words!

My success in learning Dutch depends to a great extent on my motivation. At all the courses I attended, I was the best student. A lot of students were good because they were young, and at a young age it is easier to memorize new information. But nobody was working as hard as I was. The work you invest in is 80% of your success in learning the language.

I advise everybody to start working. I have a couple of friends who are married to Dutch guys, so they don't have to work. They are desperately trying to find some purpose in their lives. They don't work because they set their expectations too high: 'Why should I do a low-

paid job? I don't need money that desperately'. They keep learning Dutch and are trying to reach the perfect level or they do Dutch education hoping that it would help them to find a good job. But a good job is difficult to find. You have to start working. I did a cleaning job for several months. No shame in that. This was a chance to communicate to people, to understand that you are not alone, that there are worse situations than yours.

Therefore, my personal recipe for integration is: work, work and work again."

**Ludmila, 65, immigrant from Ukraine :**

"I grew up in a social environment where not many choices were available. I was always doing what was expected of me, what I assumed was my duty. I had responsibilities, not choices. When you are younger, nobody teaches you how to be yourself. At some point you have to do what you want and stop being a victim of the circumstances.

I retired at 55 and married at 59. When you are making a step to change your life, new possibilities present themselves. I am now learning to enjoy life and to do what I want for myself. It is important to make peace with your own life. But you have to dare, to take a risk, to take a step into the unknown.

In the beginning, I felt lonely without speaking the language. You are just observing how people enjoy their life, but you can't participate in it. For me, it was always my social environment that was giving me energy. When you move to a different country, you are thrown into a totally different environment, and you have to learn how to move around, how to be social, how to find energy and to enjoy life. In the beginning, you feel isolated and perceive this new society negatively. You don't notice good things, you only notice things that are different and therefore annoying. Now I start looking positively at things that were irritating to me in the beginning. I am now ready for the changes.

The biggest mistake some migrants make is to come here trying to change other people. The Dutch are satisfied with their life and they don't want to change. There might be better places on Earth, but if you are ready to change something in yourself, you start appreciating what you have now. If you don't concentrate on yourself and your uniqueness, but instead observe the life around you and try to find positive things, you'll learn to live 'here and now' and will be more satisfied with your life.

Your culture is your roots. If you don't pull up these roots, if you keep being attached to your old soil, then you can never grow and flourish in a different soil. If you want to accept the important things in your life or discover something new in yourself, you need to be open to change. I don't know what will happen to me in the future. But it does not matter, because I am now open to changes."

**Inge, 43, immigrant from Latvia:**

"Before I learned the language well enough to start a conversation, I really felt isolated and lonely. Horribly lonely. I felt like life was just sliding past me, and everybody was living in their happy world except for me. I was in my own lonely 'bubble', and I couldn't get out of it. It happens to everybody who lives in a foreign culture. And it happened to me in spite of the fact that Dutch people in general are very open to speaking English. It still happened. So I realized that I had to learn the language as soon as possible.

Now, when I speak Dutch well, it becomes so much easier to communicate with the Dutch people and to feel accepted by them. It was a bit like an explosion. I still haven't found an explanation for that, whether it happened because I opened up myself or purely because of the language. I had a turning point about a year ago, two years after I came here. I started communicating to people in Dutch, I dared to open my mouth, and I made so many friends that I don't feel lonely anymore. I met some really nice people. It might be a combination of language skills and feeling more confident because of that. When you know you can express yourself, you do it in a more confident way and it comes more naturally. As a more confident person you make friends more easily.

Across Europe, the responsibility for integration increasingly became framed and understood as the sole responsibility and interest of the newcomer. EU countries have made their integration requirements more punitive, burdensome and costly. Integration requirements in Europe focus on measuring who 'deserves to belong' and preventing 'belonging' of newcomers who do not deserve it. These state policies are evaluated based on the arbitrary benchmark whether an individual migrant has integrated 'enough'.

**Example:**

A migrant woman in the Netherlands wants to learn the Dutch language. Since she is unemployed, she was admitted to a language course that is obligatory for all migrants. She is

following this course during the day time. In parallel, she is looking for a job. The course is not free, she has to pay for it. After she has found a job, she asks if she can switch to the evening course. The answer is: "No. You have a job now, you are integrated enough and don't need to follow the language course anymore".

### **Recommendations for adult educators:**

Recommendations created based on adult educators' online discussion implemented in January, march 2022.

Cultural diversity to see as a benefit and emphasize that it's important to use your own culture, tradition and even maybe create it for a business. To see difference as a benefit.

Adult educators should encourage migrant women to think about business fields related to competencies or interests (for ex. Food sector (restaurant, cafeteria of own traditional kitchen, traditional kitchen workshops), Tourism (organize excursions), Coaching and all other possible labor sectors.

Develop creativity to help to see for migrant women others possibilities to create their own business

Encourage migrant women to cooperate with other different nationalities immigrants with the aim to learn and discover new ideas

Suggest migrant women getting to know differences in culture

Give examples of successful migrant women entrepreneurs

## Chapter 5

### 21st century labor skills and EU labor market: How to help migrant women in building professional career

Professional career depends on several factors: qualification and competencies and working experience. Some migrants have a high level of qualification and competencies but due different social barriers it could be not possible to work in the same professional field. Migrants and refugees are mostly involved in semi and low-skilled jobs such as those in restaurants, factories, accommodation and hotels. This is due to language barriers, non-recognition of their qualifications from the country of origin, and having low education. Furthermore, for migrant and refugee women family and childcare posed an issue.

#### Professional protectionism

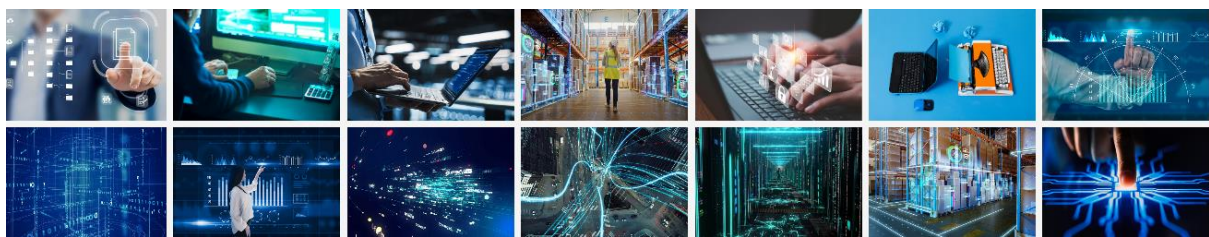
Many migrants experience a devaluation or non-recognition of their skills (Kofman and Raghuram, 2005, 2006; Williams, 2006). Excluding those highly educated migrants who hold a contract for a highly skilled job before migrating, most of those who enter European countries undergo a process of occupational downgrading and only several years after migration they manage to get a job (often partially) suited to the skills acquired in their homeland. In all European countries immigrants are more likely to be over-qualified than workers born in the country, but this is particularly pronounced in southern Europe<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> OECD, A profile of immigrant population in the 21st Century: data from OECD countries, Paris, 2008.

## Digital skills

Countries like Sweden and the Netherlands, which are more advanced in digitalization and also have a high number of migrants and refugees, have more digital skills training opportunities for migrant and refugee women compared to countries like Greece and Bulgaria which are less advanced in digitalization. Italy is advanced in digitalization and has a high number of migrants, but due to labor market discrimination, migrants are mostly trapped in domestic and care work and there are few places that offer digital training opportunities to migrant and refugee women.



Photos from <https://www.istockphoto.com/>

The current pandemic has caused a huge mindset shift towards digitalization. In order to cope with daily tasks (online banking, online shopping, making online appointments, working from home, studying from home, being connected to family by using social platforms to communicate), even those who were not so digital had to self-teach to become digitized. The labor market is in need of digital professionals and companies are advancing in providing more and more digital training to their employees.

## Integration requirements

Access to citizenship is increasingly a matter of immigrants' individual skills, and their political and social competencies – or their willingness to learn them – necessary for integration into a political community. Migrants who contribute actively to economic productivity, especially the highly skilled, are prioritized; and 'undesirable' migrants are devalued as 'the Other'.

Most European countries have introduced, since the nineties, formalized integration requirements pertaining to language, knowledge, and employment conditioning access to entry, permanent residence, citizenship, and, in some cases family reunification. However, European countries have approached immigrant integration quite differently, and these differences have increased in recent decades. Goodman's Civic Integration Policy Index ('CIVIX')<sup>28</sup> scores the extensiveness of 15 European countries' civic integration policies on three dimensions (entry, settlement, and citizenship): Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Austria are the top five, in descending order, according to the most recent public version of the index (Goodman 2014, 54).

Civic integration policies vary between states, but usually include one or more of three types of measures: courses, tests, and contracts. These measures may apply prior to arrival, prior to receiving permanent residence, or prior to receiving citizenship, and are compulsory for certain classes of migrants. In general, civic integration policies in European Union member states are intended for 'third-country nationals' (persons who are not citizens of a member state). Citizens of member states, and sometimes other wealthy states such as Switzerland and the United States, are exempt. Some countries also exempt refugees.

The measures mostly associated with civic integration are often justified as ways to motivate immigrants to acquire certain capacities, attitudes and knowledge that allows them to participate in the labor market, civil society and democracy. However, as many studies show, integration requirements also serve as a civic screening mechanism to keep out those (potential) immigrants who are more difficult to integrate (Goodman, 2011<sup>29</sup>[IO3](#)

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<sup>28</sup> Goodman, Sara Wallace. 2014. *Immigration and Membership Politics in Western Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>29</sup> Goodman, S. W. (2011). Controlling Immigration through Language and Country Knowledge Requirements. *West European Politics*, 34(2), 235–255.

[chapter/4%5eJ5chapters.docx](#) - [ftn3](#); Groenendijk, 2011; Van Oers, Ersbøll, & Kostakopoulou, 2010). Finally, civic integration policies may have symbolic goals, e.g. to signal to host populations, either that the competence and ability of governments to control the country's borders, or their concern to maintain and strengthen cultural cohesion and national identity (Goodman & Wright, 2015, p. 1891; Permoser, 2012).

One of the easiest ways to find a job is to employ yourself. Almost all migrant women facing difficulties to find job that match with competencies and interest. One of the forms how to develop hobbies, skills, competencies and to earn money is creation own business or working as a freelancer. Depending on migrant qualification it can be done immediately or migrant women can follow the courses or studies to get the right qualification. First, of all adult educators should discuss together interests, previous experience, qualifications, and further steps on how to validate, recognize or gain new qualification.

## Examples of creative businesses of migrant women in Europe

### *Evelina, a migrant from Lithuania to the Netherlands*

*Evelina is an artist, writer, founder of two NGO's, podcaster, innovator, trainer, traveller, engineer and a migrant woman living in the Netherlands for over 12 years now. In 2015, she founded Word Up Amsterdam, a non-profit organization that promotes social inclusion and diversity through spoken word poetry and other creative arts and education.*



*"The inspiration came to me after realizing that I had amazingly creative friends who couldn't find any stage to perform in English. That was back in 2011, when I started an organization called MUTE (Mutually Understood Theatrical Expression), which attracted amazing artists, mostly foreigners living in Amsterdam. With time I realized that we needed to grow and therefore Word Up was born in 2015. Our launch event was at North Sea Jazz Club in Westergasfabriek in Amsterdam. We wanted to find cosier home, and now we are at CheckPoint Charlie Café in Amsterdam. We value cooperation and long-standing relationships with the owners and support that the venue provides.*

*Word Up has several main areas: live events performing spoken word poetry, hip-hop and similar expression arts in English; workshops (including writing workshops, personal development, creativity etc.), and the podcast, which is live for almost 2 years and counting its 3rd season now. Podcast is currently hosted by myself and Bill and produced by Ennio Burleson, the founder of Burgundy Sound Studios and our events' host. Word Up is also working on international partnership, running international projects, training, youth exchanges, etc. We strongly believe in cooperation, connecting and growing together.*

*Our core team of volunteers isn't large. However, we do feel like a family and it is a very supportive group of people from all walks of life. The main challenge is always funding opportunities and realizing ideas with the limited resources as none of the crew members are paid. So we all juggle other jobs, and that gets challenging sometimes. Of course, currently with all the events being online, we are facing very different challenges of navigating global pandemics and supporting our community".*

## ***Theodora, immigrant from Romania to the Netherlands***

*Theodora is an artist from Romania who moved to the Netherlands with her Dutch husband. Now she has her own art studio and she runs art workshops for kids. "I started with art education when I was 12 and I followed this bohemian lifestyle. I did not realize that when you are moving to a new country, all these years at school don't matter. You are nothing, you have to start from scratch. Nobody knows you, you have no connections. When I moved to the Netherlands, I discovered a 'real' life. 'So, you are an artist! Nice hobby. But what are you doing, actually? How are you making money?' It was very challenging, because for the Dutch, what I was meant nothing. And it is very common for the Dutch to think that as an artist you are supposed to do things for free. For instance, if you are involved in a project, the project coordinator gets paid, but they expect an artist to work for free. And it's not fair.*

*When I came here, everything changed for me. I did not know what to do anymore. That was weird. The theme I had for my art in Romania did not fit here. I had a feeling that I would never be able to connect to people. In the first years, when I was really hurt by the aggressive attitude of the Dutch people, I realized that I was also searching for mistakes in the society. When you experience prejudice towards you, you start looking for the bad things in people, and you also become very biased and unfair. For about half a year I had a really bad time, I hated everything here.*

*I started feeling at home when I found my way in art here. And doing something for the society, opening my art studio. When I started my educational program for kids, I thought: 'Why did I wait for years to start it? Why did I have to struggle with the language for so long?' I was thinking: 'No, this language is so difficult, I would never learn it'. Now I have stopped struggling. Now I have time to see the beauty. I am not struggling anymore with becoming Dutch. I am trying to be at home.*

*What I see as a big problem is that the public does not see the difference anymore between amateur and professional art, and this is the shame. There is a way to distinguish between the two, and that was the reason I started my workshops. I believe that as an artist I am directly responsible for educating the public. A lot of artists make complaints nowadays that the public is not educated, especially those working in conceptual or abstract art. When somebody is coming with a question: 'What is this? I can do better!' So, I started doing my workshops to teach the kids how to understand art. But the first thing people assume is that I teach kids to work with their hands, to do some projects with paper, or clay, or whatever... And I say: 'No. We are going to speak about art. What is the difference between these two pieces?' And they are like: 'Oh, is there a difference?' 'Yes, there is. And why?' And then you see the teacher who is turning to me like I am completely crazy, asking: 'What are you doing here?' I never dreamed to work at schools and to do workshops for kids, because I am thinking of myself as more of a forever student than a teacher. I don't call myself a teacher. Sometimes I am thinking: 'I am not an actor anymore, I am not an artist anymore, I am also not a teacher. What am I?' But it is still beautiful to see how people get inspired. And I think: 'What does the artist do? Inspires people. So, I am still there. I am still doing the right thing.'*

*I used to dream about being on a big stage and becoming a great artist, but now I think: 'Why do I have to be on a big stage? Why do you need to make a drama out of stupid things?' I have to be happy with what I have. And I learn to enjoy this. Sometimes I drive to school on a country road, I see green meadows and a blue sky and I am thinking: 'How beautiful!'*

***Regina Shepetya, immigrant from Kazakhstan to Sweden:***

*I am an artist with a theatrical and cinema background. I also work with children and very often participate in organizing various cultural events in Stockholm. I am a very outgoing person with different interests. Having worked in the cinema industry in Kazakhstan I gained a lot of friends. After moving to Stockholm, I immediately started learning Swedish and that would be my first advice to other migrant women. In the following years I have had two children. Being a mother was a challenge. I became quite isolated in my bubble and even a little antisocial. I was at home with them all the time. But as my children got older, I started looking for some activities for them and that's how my social life began. They participated in various courses and I started leading creative courses for children's groups myself.*



*Recently, I made a short stop-motion film with children and a very serious production of four information films for medical students for Karolinska Institutet. I regularly work as an examination supervisor for various faculties at Stockholm University. I do not earn much, but it helps me to be more independent and do other more creative things.*

*When I look back on all my efforts, I can see that I achieved a lot: larger and smaller cultural projects in Stockholm on a local and international level. Right now I work with children on a new film production. My network of friends expanded a lot because of my proactivity and it brings me a lot of joy.*

## ***Darya, Belarussian migrant to Sweden***

*"I am a nature artist. I work in different media, such as watercolours, acrylics and colored pencils. My brand is called Darya Artworks. I am originally from Minsk, Belarus. I moved to Sweden in 2013 with my husband, PhD student at that time. I had never planned to live in Sweden, therefore, my first years here were very challenging. I found a job at the City Hall of Stockholm and my task was to give guided tours in Chinese, English and Russian.*

*In 2016 I became a mother, and my perception of the world changed completely. It was the first time in many years that I picked up a brush and started painting just to distract myself from the daily routines. Sitting in the kitchen at night and painting flowers became a therapy and meditation to me, and as time went by, I learned to channel my emotional and physical energy into my artwork.*

*There were many people in my surrounding who encouraged me to go further with my art and start a business. The idea itself was very tempting, but I had no idea where*



*and how to start. I only knew that I loved natural history and botanical art and wanted to show it to the world. A few years later I became more confident about my art. I painted a lot, took different courses in botanical painting, studied theory and art history. The idea of starting a business no longer seemed impossible, and I decided it was time to educate myself on the topic by reading books, listening to podcasts, exploring other artists' websites and portfolios. I had to learn a lot and develop entrepreneurial skills. There were days when I felt that I was pushing myself through countless obstacles and wanted to give up.*

*Fortunately, I didn't, and after several months of information consumption and learning, I decided to create a website where I would sell prints of my watercolor paintings. I launched a website on my own, invested a lot of money in special equipment, created Darya Artworks profiles on social media and worked very hard to promote myself as an artist.*

*I worked a lot, and it paid off. However, I would not recommend anyone to do the same: sometimes it is better to outsource certain tasks and let professionals do their job. You will win time and energy, and you will definitely need it as an artist. My website is now online, and I am very proud of it.*

*In 2020 I had a solo exhibition where I sold some of my originals and fine art prints. I am looking forward to new exhibitions. I accept art commissions and am happy to collaborate with brands. A few months ago I decided to learn digital illustration to challenge myself and expand my opportunities. Looking forward to the new adventure!*

## ***Irina Zayakina, immigrant from Russia to Sweden***

*Irina is 37 years old and come from Russia. My background is in arts, design, and history. For the past 15 years I have been working as a photographer and makeup artist and hairstylist. I have lived in Stockholm since 2018.*

*Here in Sweden I organize and participate in various fashion and photography initiatives both as a photographer and a stylist. My most recent project was the Stockholm International Fashion Fair, an event where young fashion designers from all over the world presented their collections. For my own projects I enjoy creating complete images for my models: I select clothes, styles, and locations. The most important thing, however, is to be inspired by the model and see the beauty that maybe even she cannot see herself, as often happens. Unearthing this beauty is*



*mostly psychological help essential to my work. The clearest example is 'reboot' projects for women immersed in their household chores or burned out at work. Seeing yourself turn into a superstar or a princess inspires positive changes and raises self-esteem. The same applies to charity projects for mothers of children with special needs, those projects help them switch from the daily routine and get strength to keep going and not give up.*

*I arrived in Sweden while on parental leave and the main priority was to set up the household and take care of the child while at the same time dealing with cultural shock and the difference in mindsets. Because of that I moved all creative plans and work ambitions to the background. The initial problem was quite typical – the language.*

*Another unpleasant situation was the fact that 2 university diplomas did not count here and I had to confirm my qualifications. The process is not over yet and I am still deciding on my next step.*

*I expected these difficulties in advance. What I did not expect was that the beauty standards and values are completely different as well as the attitude towards photography and demand for it. Compared to where I come from, the scene is 10 years in the past and innovation is in low demand. I felt myself inside the "Back to the Future" movie and I had to adapt. I was also surprised by the lack of rental infrastructure for small businesses. You need to have your own equipment and studio, which is quite expensive.*

### **Recommendations for migrant women from migrant women**

- ✓ To do self-evaluation and to know professional ambitions/expectations, that could be decided what to learn, what to study, and what to work.
- ✓ Have a passion. Make sure you really know and love what you want to achieve, make sure your goal is easy to explain to others and never take no for an answer or let negativity pull you down! (Evelina, The Netherlands)
- ✓ Surround yourself with people that support you and empower you and always ask for advice
- ✓ Start moving! Things do not come to you by themselves;
- ✓ Be open, tolerant and kind to all people you meet on your way. We are all different;
- ✓ Be humble, do not try to change others. If you see that you can help, offer to help;
- ✓ Be a good listener;
- ✓ Learn to appreciate the new culture and country you live in, but remember your roots because they will always be there for you. (Regina, The Netherlands)
- ✓ I would like to encourage all migrant women to follow their dreams. The path is not always easy, and you might not find the support you need in your surroundings in the beginning. Don't let it stop you. Find the people that inspire you, communicate with those that support you, listen to those who criticize you, but learn how to distinguish constructive criticism from the destructive. Educate yourself: the more you get to know, the better. Get in touch with the people who inspire you, don't be afraid to ask for advice. Don't force yourself to do something that makes you unhappy, consider asking for help. It will cost you money, but it will save your energy and time. Be kind to yourself and don't be discouraged if something goes wrong. We are all humans, and we make mistakes, and our mistakes help us gain knowledge, evolve and eventually succeed. (Darya, Sweden)
- ✓ My advice for migrant women is to start learning the local language as soon as possible, also translate and confirm your qualifications. Make yourself known as much as you can, if there is no work at the moment, focus your efforts on advertising. Meet new people and make connections. A small talk goes a long way (Irina, Sweden).

## Chapter 6

### Entrepreneurship as the strategy to increase economic and social impact of migrant women

Migrant women should develop necessary skills for achieving financial independence through employment, an enterprise or a social initiative.

Some characteristics of women-founded initiatives:

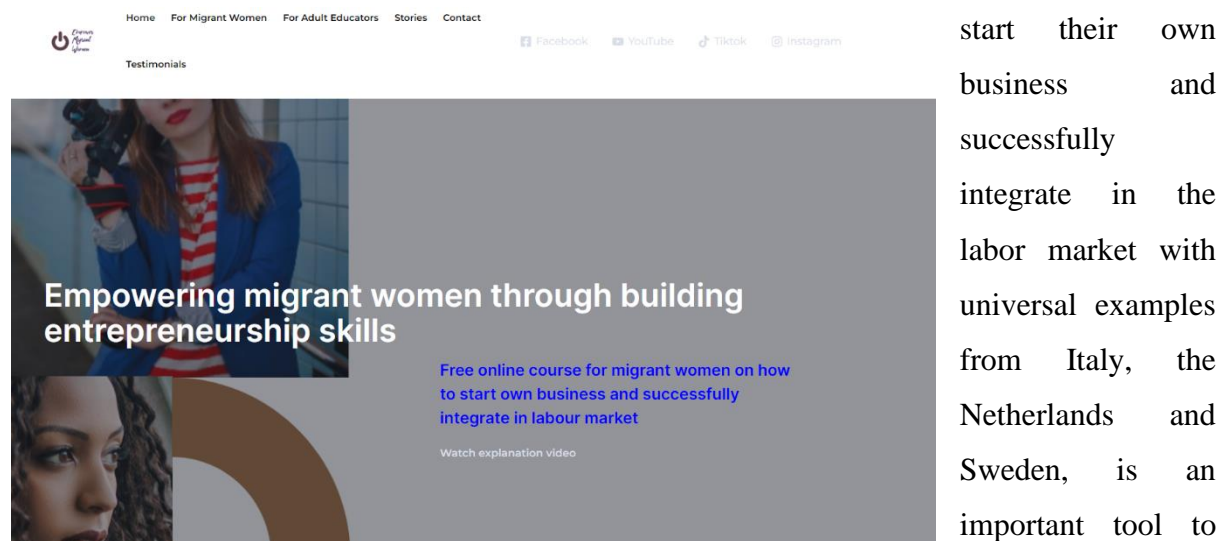
- A lot of businesses founded by women are social enterprises
- As a woman, you have to stand for your rights to be able to operate and to compete in the sphere of business
- Sharing resources and mentoring is common among successful female entrepreneurs because they know from experience how difficult it is to achieve their goals.

After the decade of intense migration to the EU, the situation intensified after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Thousands of women with or without children have fled Ukraine and received a temporary resident permit according to the EU's Temporary Protection Directive. A new massive wave of migrant women, often highly qualified and well-educated, found themselves in need of support, integration and employment in the European states. The permit gives a right to work, but finding employment without knowledge of legislation, rules and requirements, social codes and language, add to those difficulties of arranging child care is not easy. Most of them are willing to get into the labor market instantly to support themselves and/or their family in the home country immediately and the impossibility of doing that brings frustration and dismay. And this is exactly where adult educators' help is needed most at the moment.

Migrant women always need encouragement and support in order to build self-confidence. But adult educators and practitioners are not always able to understand the needs and possibilities of migrant women because they lack practical knowledge and their approach is often universal, not individual. Awareness among adult educators working with migrants about the special challenges and disadvantages of migrant women are rarely emphasized.

Diplomatic encouragement and legislative guidance as well as support from more experienced mentors can lead to new, creative and effective solutions. A flexible system of becoming and being self-employed can lead to a fast integration to the labor market for many professions or if not professions, that application of skills the women already possess (teaching, psychological help, call-centers services, physical labor or educational initiatives for children, music and drawing courses to name a few).

The developed free online course (<https://womenbusiness.eu>) for migrant women on how to



start their own business and successfully integrate in the labor market with universal examples from Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden, is an important tool to

stepping into an entrepreneurial career regardless of background, education or initial skills.

Further on, the adult educators have to also equip themselves with the updated knowledge and approach to new challenges, be able to carefully and rapidly guide the newly arrived migrants while they still have the enthusiasm, energy and optimism.

Thus to understand the success factors of migrant women practicing either professional careers or managing an enterprise, let's first look at the success stories the women decided to share with others.

Examples of successful businesses founded by migrant women that benefit society and help other (migrant) women

***Nour, Syrian refugee in Sweden:***

*My name is Nour and that means 'light' in Arabic. I am a mother of 3 wonderful children, strong wife, teacher, volunteer and chairman of the association and full-time student.*

*I studied English literature at the University of Damascus and worked as a teacher. In*



*August 2014 I came to Sweden and began a language journey in my new country. Just after a week in Sweden I went to the municipality and offered my help as a volunteer. I worked as a volunteer with a female group that met on Saturdays at an asylum accommodation center. I also made many Swedish friends, but spoke only English with them at the time. The following year I went to school and trained my new language by writing letters in Swedish to my new friends. A few months of hard work consisting of reading books, studying grammar, attending language cafes,*

*inviting Swedish friends to dinner, visiting everyone in the area where I lived, talking to people while waiting for the elevator, gave results: summer 2015 I received a grade in Swedish as a second language (my first grade in Sweden).*

*In parallel with my studies I continued with volunteering and interpreting work, as it is important for me to help and share my experience with others. A key to that in a new country is learning its language. Through extra work as a babysitter for two Swedish-speaking families, an internship at school as a teaching assistant (with aim partly to practice Swedish and partly to understand how the Swedish school works), a temporary teaching position (with responsibility for a Swedish class), I received a job offer from the principal of a language center 'Språkcentrum' to be a studying supervisor and mother tongue teacher.*

*Ultimately I managed to find my way here in Sweden with housing, language, friends and that was why I wanted to help others to succeed. I strived to do something meaningful and therefore in the middle of 2017 I founded a non-profit association 'Together we are strong' aiming to help newcomers to learn Swedish language faster, get necessary help and support in their new country, help people find jobs and right education, motivate them to be more active and take initiatives. In July 2017 I received an email from a manager of Youth Foundation Fryshuset offering me a position of teacher of 'Swedish for Foreigners' courses.*

*In 2018 I've got a permanent job. It gave me the possibility to develop my language knowledge and advance in my Swedish in order to apply for a supplementary education to legitimize my foreign education and teacher's diploma. I have a semester left to become a certified teacher in Sweden. I am also very interested in social issues and therefore I studied 60 credits in political science. That was the first step on the way to master studies in language and culture.*

*In recent years, many people moved here due to war and unrest in their home countries. Some of them want to continue their ways of life, some want to continue working or studying, but in general all have a common goal – they want to feel safe, integrate well and be able to contribute to their new society. The challenge of succeeding in these is first of all – communication and building bridges to their new society and community.*

*We established the association because it is difficult to find your way in a new country before mastering its language. As it is a challenge to be not only new, but also not to be acquainted with the country's norms and values, while it is expected that you follow them. It is also hard to know what way is the most effective. Thus the goal of the association is to help the newcomers to understand how different systems work and what authorities to turn to. It brings a feeling of safety and understanding that they have the ability to control their own lives and choose their own path. Through various activities, the association contributes to successful integration and inclusion as only by taking an active role one can find the solutions.*

*However, it is not easy to be a woman with immigrant background, a mother, an ambitious person with high goals and responsibility for other people. A desire to contribute to societal*

*development was my most important goal. It was not difficult to learn the language, get a job and know society and it was not difficult for me to show my acquaintances and friends how I contributed to the integration and society in general. What is more, everyone thinks I am a smart girl. However, it was rather difficult to get any support from someone who could guide me through an easier way to achieve my goals and ambitions. I have worked as a volunteer since I came to Sweden because I am very passionate about it. But it was difficult for me to find a job in this area to work with what I was interested in. Although I have a teaching background, I wish to work as an integration manager or coordinator because I have a great deal of experience in that.*

*Sweden is indeed a place of opportunities, an open and democratic country that also implies a responsibility. Each individual bears responsibility towards his/her own integration and development. Similarly, women-newcomers have to find effective tools and driving force within themselves and believe in it. The road is not straight, but everything will be easier after taking the first step. Then you can look ahead and see that today is better than yesterday.*

***Rut Fasil, immigrant from Eritrea to Italy***

*“I arrived in Italy in November 1983 from Eritrea and I joined my parents who had been working in Rome since 1979. The integration process was not difficult. I initially attended an Italian language course of 5 hours a day for 5 days a week for about two months. Then I started attending school until I graduated as an accountant in 1989. I was working as a trainee at an accounting firm. Since 1991 I have worked as a labor consultant accountant both as an employee and as an external consultant. Since 2000 I have opened my own business - professional advice on immigration and social inclusion of migrants.*

*This was a passion more than a business, for personal interest. I have noticed the difficulty of foreigners and also of my family in trying to orientate themselves in all the formalities to be fulfilled to remain in Italy in a legal way.*

*The difficulty of understanding the legislation, the infinite number of documents to be presented at each renewal and the ease of becoming illegal for foreigners convinced me to work in this field”.*



***Kateryna Kovalova, Ukrainian migrant to Sweden:***

*I have a Master Degree in linguistics with specialization as interpreter/translator, language pairs English-Ukrainian, Spanish-Ukrainian. I have been working with language all my life and in 2012 I moved to Sweden. I did not speak Swedish when I moved there; therefore I began my journey in the new country with a language course and several years of studying after that. Today I am a licensed community service interpreter in Ukrainian, trained interpreter in English and Russian and language tutor for other interpreters. I found my niche and switched from being employed to owning a business in the same branch.*



*Since 2017 I have been running my own enterprise that gradually developed into a limited company type. It offers interpretation, translation and teaching services for private customers and governmental authorities in Sweden.*

*One of the biggest problems that I faced in Sweden was poor competence of people who provide any type of consultancy. You would eventually get the answer to your question, but do not expect that to happen quickly. For example, first when I went to the Swedish*

*Public Employment Services office in Växjö soon after arrival, I was told that interpreters do not exist in Sweden and no one is using services of community service interpreters. Good command of Swedish is a must if you are running a company in Sweden because you are expected to understand the main laws, acts, letters, telephone calls in Swedish. That information was incorrect.*

*Secondly, the Swedish Tax Agency offers useful workshops for entrepreneurs, but they are also in Swedish. I started my company to get a work permit in Sweden and, in my opinion, the requirements from the Migration Agency are rather high. Besides, general information about*

*startups is available in open access, but searching information related to your particular business is often difficult and time-consuming. It takes a vast amount of time.*

*Luckily, I have not experienced discrimination as a white woman from Eastern Europe. The wage is not gender-based in my branch. Nevertheless, I noticed that the reception is different depending on what language you speak. You get a better reception if you speak good Swedish; less respect if you speak English, but you are from EU, the USA; no respect if you speak English and you are from Africa.*

*My experience of running a company in Sweden is positive, but there is always a price to pay for success. Your business becomes a part of you that requires all your time, efforts, attention and ideas as well as constant professional development. It follows you in your head to the kitchen when you are dishwashing, to the living-room when you are breast-feeding, to your car when you are driving. At the same time, it is rewarding to watch it grow and develop, experience new possibilities, meeting interesting people and hopefully changing someone's life by doing what you love.*

*Why do I recommend becoming an entrepreneur? You can make your skills or hobby be your dream job, work on your own conditions and flexible time schedule, and be your own boss. Every journey or idea begins with the first step, but remember that proper preparation, professionalism and diligence are the key to success.'*

***Anna Katz, immigrant to the Netherlands from Russia***

*I had an entrepreneurial experience in Russia, but I could not directly use my skills here. I had to learn and develop professionally and to find something that I truly love. As a*



*psychologist, I've always been fascinated by the four elements of life: people, physical movement, life events and personal development. In Russia, I worked as a recruiter, marketer, business trainer and corporate development consultant. I had a lot of various interests and a huge network of contacts.*

*Moving to the Netherlands was not easy. It took me a lot of time, effort and sense of*

*humor to find new opportunities and to meet new people with whom I can go on a journey of professional development. I am fascinated by human feelings, emotions and how they are related to our body and physical movements. I started going to a local sport school, at first as a client, and then I developed my own training program (Body & Mind). I am working with my clients helping them build their physical confidence through movements and to be able to express themselves in movements. I am now giving yoga lessons via Zoom. I am happy that I can help people who are dealing with a lot of stress now, during the lockdown.*

*During my life here, I was involved in many different business projects. At some point I was working on the Dutch reintegration projects, helping people to find their place in society or to return to an active social and working environment. Now I am a partner in Smart Trips, a company that organizes innovation tours and events in the Netherlands.*

*A lot of doors are closed for migrant women, especially if they came to the country as adults and did not go to school here. Education gives you certification and a professional network. For those of us who lack this network, it is difficult to find a job. So, entrepreneurship*

*becomes the most convenient and promising path. But, of course, there is no guarantee of success.*

*When I was working on the reintegration project, I had a chance to understand the life of many immigrants from different backgrounds. I realized why it is so difficult for them to start working after a long period of dependence on subsidies. Being dependent on the social welfare system is like a drug addiction. And the system itself supports this dependence. In the end, people lose their motivation for work and self-development. Try to avoid that. Understand your gifts, find your calling, follow your passion.*

*There is a lot of joy in running your own business. You have freedom to do things that are important for you, the things you believe in. There are huge possibilities for self-realization and success. But, of course, there are also downsides. The biggest one is the lack of social security and being outside of a corporate culture. I miss, for instance, regular lunch talks and dinners with colleagues.*

*Starting a business on your own is hard. There are two types of support for starters. The first type is purely technical information you can find anywhere. You can also outsource the activities you don't like or don't know how to do, such as accounting or making a website. But what is more important, especially for women, is social and psychological support. Men were ruling this world for a long time. That's why we judge ourselves more critically and have more self-doubts than men. A lot of women suffer from imposter syndrome, thinking that their success is just luck, while their failure is their own fault.*

*Besides, women have different priorities in life: success for us often means feeling good, not having more money. Our world is masculine, it is the world where feelings and emotions are undervalued. But emotions are no less important than money. And they have to be a part of the definition of success. For me, successful business means that I do what I love, I enjoy it and get paid for doing it. This is what is important in business, and it boosts your self-confidence.*

***Stanislava Delinova, came from Bulgaria to the Netherlands***

*Stanislava came to the Netherlands eight years ago from Bulgaria. She is a single mom who runs two successful businesses and takes care of her daughter with a serious chronic condition.*

*"When I came here, it was easier to start my own business than to find employment. And the easiest business was cleaning. I could speak English, and I immediately had a lot of clients. In the beginning, I needed external help with accounting, but I am now doing it myself. When I started, I was working 60 hours per week. It's only possible if you have your own business. As an employee, you can't work for more than 40 hours. But this is in my nature, I am always working hard.*

*"The Netherlands is a really good place for starting your own business. You can get advice on taxes and your business plan from local authorities and from the Chamber of Commerce. Of course, you need to know exactly what you want to do. And there are also disadvantages for small businesses. You need to take care of all the insurances, and if you have less clients, your income drops.*



*"The most difficult thing here is to establish social contacts. What I miss here is social life. For many years, I have not got any friends here. In Bulgaria, all my friends were either from school, or from the University, or from my work. How can I get a Dutch friend? I have different experiences, different problems, different interests. I feel a bit lonely here.*

*"What I want to say to migrant women: do not be afraid to start your own business. It is easy! But be realistic in your expectations. Some people are waiting for a perfect job opportunity. When I came here, I realized that I can't have the same job here as in my own country. In Bulgaria, I was working for the Justice Department. Here, I started working in cleaning, then I moved to transport and logistics, and I am not planning to expand my business. My advice is: do not wait for a perfect match, jump on every opportunity you can see. Do not think: 'No, I can't do it; I am not an expert'.*

***Olga Diakov, immigrant from Moldova to Sweden***

*In 2017 I moved to Sweden from Moldova at a fairly mature age. Before moving, I did not know about the particularities of entering into the labor market, education, and other spheres of integration into Swedish society. In that sense, networking plays an important role and it applies to all spheres of life: learning language, getting a job, attending professional events, participation in integration programs, etc.*

*The first phase after moving to Sweden was not easy. At first, I was confident that with my*



*many years background in marketing, communications, journalism and copywriting, I would be able to find a job instantly and integrate quite quickly. However, things turned out a little different. Along with an active search for a job, I began to study Swedish. I reached one of the highest levels of the language course after two years. At the same time, I also began to participate in integration and mentorship programs for professionals with a foreign*

*background that gave me an excellent knowledge of how the Swedish labor market works, how to 'sell' yourself properly with a good resume, personal letters and a good LinkedIn profile. It also gave me an excellent opportunity to build a good network of professional contacts and to get a better understanding of professional life in Sweden.*

*Thanks to my broad interests, experience and knowledge gained in the field of professional integration, I managed to become an expert in one of the Swedish programs that focused on Russian-speaking women with a professional background. As an expert, I shared my experience in the specifics of how to write the right resume or personal letters according to Swedish requirements, how to behave at job interviews and how to conduct business communication. Thanks to that program, I saw how much potential Sweden can get from foreign specialists!*

*Another area of my interest was the creation of my own project within a non-profit organization, a platform in the field of culture and art. Since I have experience in implementing cultural projects as the founder and editor-in-chief of an art magazine, I was glad to find like-minded people and we started working on a new project together. We have a lot of ideas on how to create a cultural/art platform for talents (especially immigrants) who would like to present themselves and who need support, as well as for people who love art. This project is a great opportunity to run cultural and art events, workshops, festivals, courses, etc., do what you love and at the same time help others express themselves. We will take special courses and programs for the effective management of non-profit organizations. This is an interesting area for producing multiple initiatives in the field of culture and art.*

*Currently I am completely changing my career direction from communications to IT. My goal is to be able to create digital products (websites and apps) to implement our non-profit organization team's ideas.*

*I would recommend to everyone who wants to start a business or a project in Sweden, first of all, to create a clear plan of action and a clear vision of what you want to do and what you want to achieve. That will allow you to move in the right direction and receive the necessary information that is important at every stage of the project. At the same time, I recommend to constantly gain new skills, including the digital ones to be involved in the community of people who are doing the same business as well as to find a mentor – a person who will guide or share his/her personal experience.*

*And of course the most important is to follow your dream, be confident and not be afraid to make mistakes and face difficulties!*

## Success factors of migrant women managing own enterprise

Having studied the examples above, provided by ordinary migrant women doing extraordinary things be it on a local, national or international levels, one can summarize the success factors that lead them to success:

- Ability to learn and adapt
- Confidence,
- Braveness,
- Persistence,
- Imagination and creativity,
- Social and communication skills,
- Focus,
- Necessity,
- Positive thinking,
- Proactiveness,
- Mental strength,
- Friends and family support,
- Initial support in the form of financial or human resources
- Mentoring and coaching.

They differ from those classical success factors (a good business plan, innovation, marketing, branding, financing etc.) that we considered and provided examples on video lessons of the on-line course, but they can lay a solid ground for any initiative or an enterprise.

Migrant women have unique ideas, but definitely need the ground and form on how one can possibly put them into practice and implement them in the best way in their new countries of residence. An example of that could be finding a location/premises, getting an internship, setting ads in the local media, overcoming language and social barriers, finding necessary contacts and information about legal issues.

Mentors and adult educators can integrate the exercises/examples and success stories in their courses, initiate and conduct meetings with local women entrepreneurs, facilitate mentoring and matching based on the declared needs of the migrant women.

## Chapter 7

### Migration and integration. Addressing sustainable development goals together with migrant women in Europe.

According to the researchers, to take Sweden as an example, one can see that the employment is particularly low among family and refugee immigrants. While foreign-born Europeans have fared quite well on the labor market, less than 60 percent of the men and 50 percent of the women from Africa and Asia had received employment in 2012. Only among those born in Africa and Asia who had spent about 20 or more years in Sweden were more than 70 percent employed. However, it is worth noting that the unemployed among foreign-born who had immigrated into Sweden for labor market reasons reached over 90 percent in recent years. This also applies to labor force immigrants from non-European countries.<sup>30</sup>

Employing and sustaining one's family is an ambition and frequent goal for many migrant women as in new countries they often either lack family support or find that a financial independence can lead to a liberation on social level too.

If we speak of sustainable development's goals we can see that migrant women are actually uniquely positioned to contribute to sustainable development in the EU. For instance, if you think of the circular economy, women from the developing countries know how to recycle, reuse and repair products and materials because of necessity, not because of a new trend. They can help to establish new more sustainable initiatives and enterprises. But the migrant women would definitely need guidance, support, resources and legal help on the way of putting their ideas into practice and subsequently to an enterprise.

The United Nations' "Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality" promotes a bold vision for ensuring that gender equality, women's empowerment and women's human rights will be adopted 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasize women/girls rights and give attention on successful factors implementation.

Equality and empowerment are not only important goals in their own right, but they can add a cyclical component to today's development of migrant women.

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<sup>30</sup> Integration of immigrants on the Swedish labour market <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:772778/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

## Supporting migration makes good business sense

Once you wade through the myths and misperceptions that have depicted migration so negatively in recent years, there is clear evidence that in fact migration promotes economic growth.

Europe is becoming older and older. Because of the fall in birth rates after the post-war boom, since the 1980s the new generations have been less and less numerous and, furthermore, they enter the job market later and later due to increasing access to higher education. On the other hand, thanks to huge advances in healthcare, life expectancy has increased astonishingly. In the last decades the structure of the population changed dramatically: on the one hand the share of elderly people has increased markedly, on the other people of working age and the labor force in general (which does not include young people still pursuing studies) have shrunk, in spite of an increasing activity rate for women. Nowadays in the European Union the elderly dependency ratio (people aged 65 or more relative to those aged 15-64) has reached nearly 28% and is expected to climb to 55% in 2050 should there be no immigration from abroad. To cope with the aging (and decline) of their populations, in the long run European countries also need to receive a large number of young workers from abroad.

At the lower end of the skills spectrum they fill critical gaps in the labor market, for example as nurses and domestic care. In their home countries, the money they send back lifts entire communities out of poverty, and can contribute significantly to national GDP and foreign exchange reserves, as acknowledged by the new Sustainable Development Goals.

## Intersectionality

To fully understand the specific advantages and disadvantages experienced by migrant women, we must consider how different personal factors intersect with each other, rather than thinking of these factors independently.

It's clear that many of the challenges to development affect and are affected by the experiences and concerns of migrant women. We will only be able to eliminate violence and discrimination, increase economic and educational opportunities, and achieve overall equality, including gender equality, by fully including migrant women in the development equation.

## Ways to ease migration process

The work of the institutions involved in migration processes are based on national or EU legislation and often are slow to adapt and respond to the challenges caused by rapid events, migration dynamics in particular. However, one has to take into account that changing a long-term strategy is necessary. The following are some of the shifts to be done in the nearest future on both international or national levels.

### **1. Create more legal avenues of migration**

To make applying for job permits easier and faster. If migrants are not needed, then employers would not be hiring migrants on an irregular basis. Moreover, they won't be exploited and abused because of illegal status.

### **2. Positive nature of migration**

Migration has been historically positive. Migrants bring new ideas and high motivation. They contribute to the economy of their host countries and even more to the economy of their countries of origin by sending remittances to their families. They don't take others' jobs; they often create employment and take low-paid jobs that locals find non-attractive. They transfer money back home to put food on the table, for the education of their children, for the people who are sick, and for the elderly.

We need better systems to manage migration so that people migrate under safer and better conditions, thereby allowing them to contribute optimally to the development of the communities where they belong.

### **3. Dispel the stereotypes**

There is no proof that shows that migrants have more criminal tendencies or records than nationals. It is usually the opposite. There is no proof that migrants bring in diseases. These perceptions need to be changed. Yes, it is going to take time and will be a long process. But it

has to be done and is not harder than flying to the Moon. We can look at the adaptation and integration process' cost as a long-term high revenue investment project.

Countries that have not been traditional destinations for migrants before have to learn to manage an extremely growing economic, social, religious and ethnic diversity. People who don't look or speak as we do, will join our communities in this way or another. We can share mutual values and create new initiatives together, but to start with we have to learn how to properly welcome and integrate other people in our communities.

### Integration and migrant women integration

In each country different governmental services and agencies are responsible for integration of migrants, including Municipalities, Migration Board, Social Services, Employment Agency, Adult schools and other institutions.

The integration policies are developed, implemented, analysed and revised on a regular basis. What remains constant is a lack of individual approach, more flexible reception and inclusion in terms of culture, language and labor market integration. Newly arrived persons with a resident permit or a refugee status are entitled to different benefits and enrollment in different programs, including language classes and vocational courses.

When it comes to migrant women, their situation in terms of integration remains more problematic and lags way behind. The causes of that are among others a traditional role women play in the households, taking care of children and refrain from prompt education or employment even if chance arises. That leads to a longer integration and isolation from the social sphere in a new country of residence. Thus there is a more urgent need in specialized courses directed specifically to women adapting to their social, language and educational background. Adult workers speaking their native languages and possessing knowledge of other cultures would be of particular help and demand. And why not to involve migrant women with a longer experience of living in a new country in such initiatives to double the benefits?

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[http://asprometeo.altervista.org/Associazione\\_Prometeo/Home.html](http://asprometeo.altervista.org/Associazione_Prometeo/Home.html)

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