



I-WELCOME - Reinforcing migrant women's integration in society and the labour  
market

**EUROPEAN COMPARATIVE REPORT**

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## INFORMATION ABOUT OUTPUT

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## PROJECT INFORMATION

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## 1. General Introduction

In order to record the labour market stakeholders' perspectives in terms of supporting the integration of TCN women, a quantitative and a qualitative research was conducted. Firstly, the quantitative research took the form of an online questionnaire, which was shared with employers, managers, business owners etc. Following the questionnaire, a focus group and an interview were organized to collect more detail feedback regarding this topic.

## 2. Notes on the labour market situation

Employment rates of women in general and TCN women in particular differ greatly between the countries participating in the i-welcome project. The disparity of the overall economic situation makes it difficult to compare employment rates of TCN women. For instance, the overall unemployment rate in Greece and Spain amounts to 15%, followed by Italy with 9.7%, compared to 3.7% in Germany. Bulgaria, France and Cyprus are in between with unemployment rates ranging between 6 % to 8 %. The youth unemployment rates differ to an even greater degree, with the lowest rates in Germany (7.5%), while the highest were recorded in Spain (37.1%), Greece (30.4%) and Italy (29.4%)<sup>1</sup>. While the gender difference in employment rates is less than 10% in France and Germany, in Greece it amounts to more than 20%.

However, in all countries, women are the majority of part-time employees. Even in the relatively equal workforce of Germany, about half of all women who are employed work part-time, compared to only five to ten percent of men. In France with its very high rate of women who are employed, they are also more likely to work part time or in jobs who pay less. While the gender gap in part time employment decreased in Greece, this is largely due to the high unemployment rate and overall economic crisis.

Another aspect to keep in mind when analysing and comparing the statistics on employment according to gender and/or country of origin are the differences in legislations and policies. In most EU countries, statistics on unemployment rates are dependent on the number of people actively looking for a job and/or receiving welfare. Therefore, TCN women who are not eligible for regular jobs or for social support may not

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.destatis.de/Europa/EN/Topic/Population-Labour-Social-Issues/Labour-market/EULabourMarketCrisis.html>

be registered in the statistics. Additionally, as for instance the Italian partner mentioned, at times employees offer unofficial, clandestine work which is not registered officially.

As another common factor in all participating countries one can conclude that TCN women's labour market situation is more precarious than that of both native-born women as well as migrant men. For instance, almost 21% of TCN women were unemployed in France in the year 2017, compared to 8.5% of French women. Additionally, one can conclude that in all participating European countries women with children are more often unemployed or working part-time. Many TCN women arrive with children or become pregnant during the first year of their arrival. As they often lack access to institutional child care services as well as social support systems by friends and family to help with child care, it is even more difficult for them to find a suitable job while taking care of young children.

Beyond nationalities, women are systematically more likely to be relegated to positions below their qualifications. This is especially true for TCN women, who are overrepresented in the service, domestic and care sectors, customer service and agriculture.

While native women as well work in the care and service industries more often than men in all participating countries, TCN women are particularly vulnerable to the deregulated job placements of these sectors, such as seasonal work in agriculture or working as care givers for private employers in their own homes.

### **Challenges migrant women face in the labour market**

Across all countries, lack of knowledge of the local language was the possible obstacle which was cited the most. For women who have to take care of children, it might be difficult or even impossible to fulfil the requirements of an official language course such as attending every day for several weeks. Even TCN women who were able to visit language courses and learn the local language report difficulty in maintaining their skills afterwards due to social isolation.

Apart from posing an obstacle in obtaining qualified jobs in itself, not mastering the native language also poses a problem when it comes to administrative issues. In many countries, bureaucratic regulations – especially when it comes to labour market rights for foreigners – are difficult to understand even for native-born people. Inadequate language skills are an obstacle to getting proper information on the laws and regulations in place, as is not being familiar with local organizations.



In general, the lack of knowledge of the legal and administrative system of the host country is cited as a great challenge. A specific administrative obstacle that was named in all partner countries was the lack of recognition of education and skills. While many TCN women have obtained a low level of education, even those that do have a higher education experience difficulty in having their skills and education formally recognized. In some countries such as Spain, foreigners who intend to have their academic qualifications recognized often have to pay administrative fees and/or study for another 1 or 2 years, which poses an extreme difficulty for those without any income.

One of the difficulties cited most often both by TCN women themselves as well as employers and in research is the lack of child care opportunities. This observation is underlined by the success of projects which do offer child care support alongside language courses or other training. While finding child care opportunities proves difficult for native women as well, they profit from support systems such as friends and family TCN women lack. Additional infrastructural problems are difficulties in transportation and the lack of knowledge of the local job market and culture.

Throughout all countries, the process of acquiring a work permit and/or residence status is often intransparent, quite stressful and can take up to several years. It is often challenging for the women themselves and the supporting organizations to acquire the documents needed to become legally employed. For instance, in the case of Bulgaria, experience shows that bureaucratic procedures require at least a full working day every three months including hiring a translator.

The lack of knowledge of the local labour market and its requirements as well as of the support systems and regulations in place makes TCN women a particularly vulnerable group. As all migrants, TCN women face problems in understanding the social security system and labour regulations, and are thus more exposed to labour exploitation. Additionally, as mentioned before, the sectors TCN women do find employment in are mostly low-salaried, non-regulated and precarious jobs in the service and domestic industries, cleaning or agricultural sectors.

The stressful procedures of acquiring a working permit and official recognition of previous education have shown to cause stress as well as low self-esteem.

Almost all surveys show that prejudices, stereotypes and racism are seen as major obstacles in TCN women's access to the local job markets. Because of stereotypes on women generally and Third Country National women in particular, employers might believe that TCN women are less capable for high job positions. In any case, they might not have TCN women on their mind when looking for a new employee. Many employers

are not used to hiring foreigners and are unaware of the benefits it can provide or lack of a culture of diversity. Rather than valuing individual characteristics, TCN women are often identified with preformed assumptions on their culture.

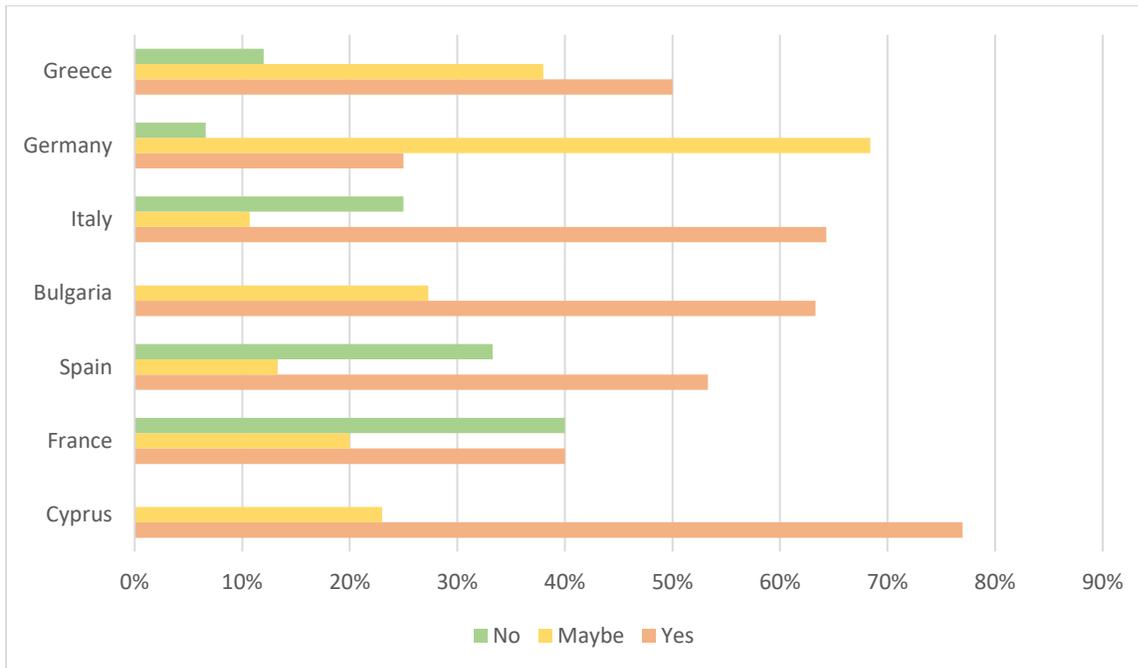
Particularly when applying for a job officially, an employer who has many applicants to choose from might be hesitant to employ a foreign-born woman. In Germany for instance, there is even a law regulating that qualified jobs may only be granted to Non-Citizens if no German citizen is available to fill the requirements. At the same time, a lot of TCN women lack the social network which would be necessary to get to know potential employers or be proposed for open positions personally. Therefore, they lack the opportunities to gain immediate access to prospective employees.

Stereotypes on migrant women feed into a lack of acknowledgement of their skills. Additionally, migrant women themselves are cited as often lacking an awareness of or confidence in their skills and education. However, apart from stereotypes, admittedly more social and personal resources will be required to successfully take on employees from a different country. Their education will be tailored to their respective home countries' requirements and they lack prior working experience in the host country. Especially small companies report hesitation or inability to put in the additional resources.

Finally, cultural differences were named often and given as a separate question asking whether participants thought they might pose an obstacle to labour market integration for TCN women.



1 Do you believe that cultural differences represent an obstacle for migrant women's access to the labour market?



### 3. Employers' perspective on recruiting migrant women

In order to gain their perspective on recruiting migrant women, a survey was conducted among Labour Market Stakeholders. The aim was to collect at least 15 answers per country. The consortium resorted to spreading the survey to all stakeholders who might be able to report on the situation on TCN women, including organisations, institutions and colleagues of migrant women. Therefore, only approximately half of the overall participants reported having experiences in recruiting TCN women themselves. Those that do have prior experience with migrant women in a working environment in general referred to the experience either as positive or as no different from working with natives. When interviewed in the focus groups, the employers who did share their experience in working with TCN women often cited the opportunity to have a different perspective, to understand other (work) cultures and a chance to counteract stereotypes and false beliefs, stating for example that “It would be beneficial to have in the working group a different perception regarding the work to be done” or “it was a great experience getting to know about other nationalities and learn about their culture.”

The few negative results are largely due to bureaucratic hurdles. Still, some of the responses reveal racist stereotypes. For instance, one of the participants from Greece mentioned they “would request a criminal record before hiring”

As the lack of knowledge of the local language is cited as the major obstacle migrant women face when entering the job market, unsurprisingly “basic knowledge of the local language” ranked high as a desired skill in all surveys: in France and Italy it was the most requested, in Cyprus and Germany the second most desired and the third or fourth most desired skill in the other surveys. However, “to be motivated and take initiative” is the most popular quality throughout all countries, ranking among the first and third most selected in all six national reports. It is followed closely by the “desire for learning and improving knowledge”. This result indicates that rather than language proficiency at the moment of entering the job market, it is the willingness to become better in language as well as other skills which is decisive. Another skill which was often requested was the ability to work in mixed-gender teams, probably revealing the rather stereotypical concern that TCN women are not used to working alongside male colleagues.

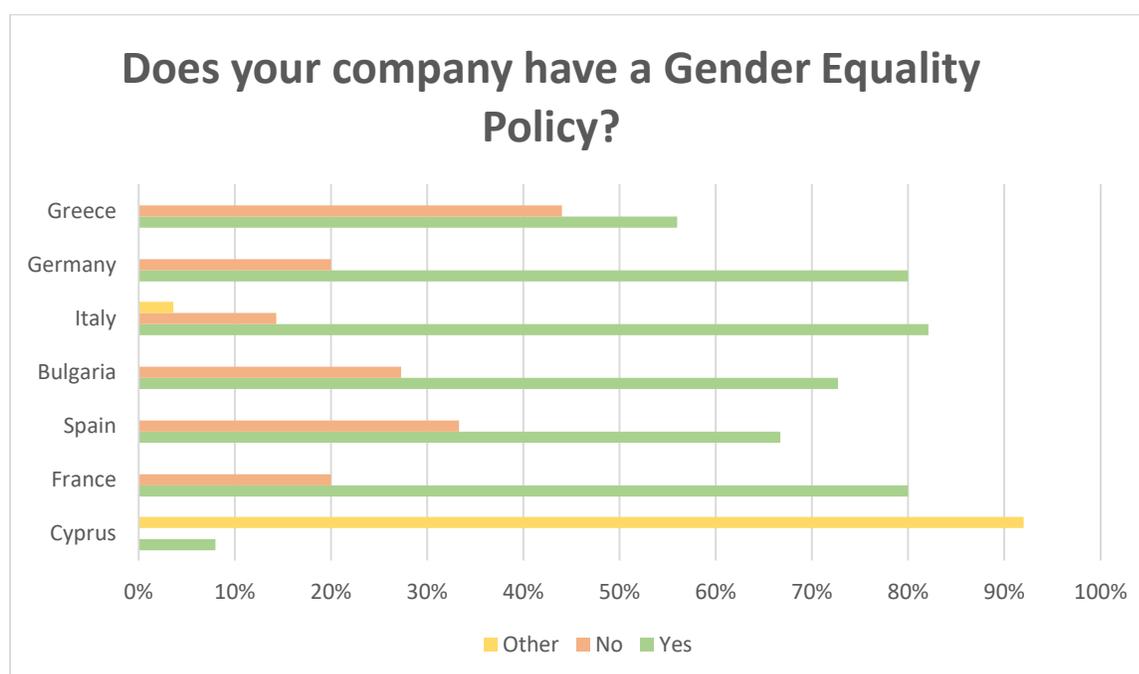
Challenges identified by the participants for the employability of the TCN women are related to racism, cultural differences, language and communication, identification of their knowledge and previous experiences, lack of education and lack of trust in their capabilities. As one participant from Spain sums up: - “Well, in addition to all the challenges that a woman faces, which are not few, we can add racist, ethnic and language problems”.



## Gender equality measurements in place

The quantitative research also asked for gender equality measures in the respective countries and the companies which were questioned. While almost all LMS questioned answered that they regard gender equality measures as an important issue, the extent to which formal policies are instituted vary among countries. Notably, in countries with gender equality laws in place such as Spain or France, companies also have formally instituted gender equality policies while others merely state a general preference for treating employees equally regardless of gender.

In France, receiving public funding is conditional on gender impact assessment and non-stereotyped gender representation, the so-called ‘ega-financement’ (equal financing). While gender equality policies are in place, they tend to homogenize the category “women” they wish to address. Age and class differences are often taken into consideration, but differences linked to migration, ethnicity or geographic location are rarely mentioned or addressed.



### 4. Perspective on job shadowing opportunities

When it comes to the opportunities of job shadowing on a national level, the Erasmus+ program was mentioned as the best-known possibility. However, this EU funded program is aimed exclusively at native students in universities and schools. Other domestic internship opportunities, if available, are primarily for high school or even

college students who are employed full time by a company for a short period of time, but are, mostly, not paid.

Job shadowing opportunities specifically for people with a migration or refugee background are mainly offered by associations, companies or initiatives that are already active in integrational work and dealing with these issues. The internships are either part of an integrative measure or short running offers, such as one-day-internships.

Only very few initiatives acquire mentors and employers who are willing to offer internships for migrant women over a longer period of time. In general, the offers are not aimed specifically at TCN women.

On a company level there were hardly good examples of job shadowing opportunities.

None of the focus group participants said they had specifically offered a job shadowing opportunity to TCN women in recent years. Thereby, according to the general research findings, job shadowing is a new practice that, on a theoretical level, offers numerous advantages for companies and educational institutions. However, many respondents indicated that it requires certain resources, such as professionals, who have the time and sufficient training to work with and supervise these groups. Some companies cite a more general diversity policy put in place by large companies to encourage diversity and a mix of employee profiles.

On a company level, one of the best examples highlighted was the Working Internship (“borsa lavoro”), in Italy. It’s an educational/training instrument to foster inclusion of vulnerable people in the labour market through work experiences. Working Internship is used to create multicultural training workplaces, to create real professional opportunities for people in a prospective of disadvantage reduction, such as refugees and asylum seekers.



## 5. Support measures for TCN women's employability in each country

This section presents training programmes/ initiatives at a local/national level directed to migrant women in the partner countries, focusing on the development of their skills and competences – for more detailed information about the employability support activities for TCN women in each country, please check each partner's country national report.



### BULGARIA

#### - **The Council of Refugee Women in Bulgaria**

The Council of Refugee Women in Bulgaria is an association founded in 2003 in Sofia by nine women who came from Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan. The association helps all refugees and asylum seekers in the process of their integration in Bulgarian society. <https://crw-bg.org/en>

#### - **Caritas Sofia's Migration and Integration Department**

Caritas Sofia provides comprehensive services to aid effective adaptation and integration of asylum-seeking people, refugees, and third country nationals. <https://www.caritas-sofia.org/en/groups/refugees-and-asylum-seekers>

#### - **Bulgarian council on refugees and migrants**

The Bulgarian council on refugees and migrants is an association of organisations acting in the field of asylum and migration in Bulgaria. <https://bcm-bg.org/en/>

#### - **St Anna Integration Centre for Refugees and Migrants in Sofia**

St Anna Integration Centre for Refugees and Migrants is a civil society organization acting in the field of asylum and migration in Bulgaria. <https://migrantlife.bg/st-anna-center-for-refugee-and-migrant-integration-cc>



### CYPRUS

#### - **HelpRefugeesWork**



HelpRefugeesWork is an innovative and free web service that brings motivated refugee job-seekers in contact with employers and training providers in Cyprus in an easy and efficient manner. <https://www.helprefugeeswork.org/>

- **Workshop “Getting ready for the job-market and job opportunities”**

The workshop aims to develop the employability skills of unemployed asylum-seekers and refugees in Cyprus, with the goal to facilitate their integration in the local society. <https://www.unhcr.org/cy/2019/05/21/employment-mentorship-workshops-for-refugees-offered-by-the-european-university-of-cyprus/>

- **Cyprus Refugee Council**

The CRC is an NGO focused on promoting the wellbeing and integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Cyprus by offering training, legal, social and psychological support. <https://cyrefugeecouncil.org/>



- **Sociolinguistic workshop : Employment**

The social centre La Pépinière in Pau offers a service adapted to migrant people, especially women, in order to develop their social, digital and professional skills through a French learning programme adapted to their needs. In this programme, there is also a childcare facility, since child care duties can be an obstacle for these women to taking part in any learning process. <https://www.pepiniere-pau.org/familles-insertion/economie-sociale-familiale/la-pepiniere-2/>

- **Project DEFI (Challenge in French) : Démarche pour l’Engagement des Femmes Immigrées**

The project offers socio-professional support to a group of women, "Les Mamas de Grigny", to help their social integration and improve their daily living conditions. This program also aims at establishing a connection between TCN women and local actors related to the job market and integration process of migrants. <https://www.grdr.org/Projet-DEFI-Demarche-pour-l-Engagement-des-Femmes-immigrees>

- **Promofemmes**



The Promofemmes Association welcomes women in a migrant situation from about sixty countries. The objective of the association is to facilitate the social and professional integration of these women. <https://www.emploi-bordeaux.fr/promofemmes/>



## GERMANY

- **MiA – Migrantinnen fit für den Arbeitsmarkt (migrant women fit for the job market)**

MiA offers individual counseling to migrant and refugee women. The women receive training according to their individual status. Among the courses offered are general and specialized language courses, digital skills, and application training. They also offer training focused on applying for jobs, networking and confidently presenting oneself as well as general support in entering the German job market. <https://www.mia-frankfurt.de/>

- **Blickpunkt: Migrant:innen (Focal point: migrant women)**

The aim is to develop and provide individual, flexible counseling, coaching and mentoring for migrant women. A special focus is placed on taking into account mobility, child care opportunities as well as part-time education and qualification measures. <https://minor-kontor.de/blickpunkt-migrantinnen/>

- **MuQ – Mütter und Qualifizierung (Mothers and Qualification)**

MuQ offers internships and additional qualification building upon the skills of migrant mothers. They offer module-based in-house qualifications which last for up to one year. All offers are accompanied by child care and free of charge. <https://www.zib-oberhausen.de/projekte/mut-muetter-und-talent>



## GREECE

- **National Strategy for integration**



This strategy is related to the social involvement, education, skills enhancement, and employability of Third Country Nationals, especially migrant women.

<http://www.opengov.gr/immigration>



- **Centro di Formazione e Alta Specializzazione (Ce.F.A.S.)**

Ce.F.A.S. provides training activities and organizes professional and specialization courses. They offer renewing activities for employees, specific formation to enterprise, high level teaching services, plan and gestion of formative projects among others. They also organize basic formation courses to increase job opportunities and transfer general knowledge for a constant update. <http://www.cefasformazione.it/>

- **Griot**

Griot is a non-profit SME that was founded with the objective to promote intercultural dialogue. It is a social cooperative managed by refugees and asylum seekers, generally hosted in psycho-physical distress projects. The Cooperative deals with different peculiar professional fields, from the cooking sector to tailoring and wood processing. <http://www.cefasformazione.it/griot-kitchen/>

- **Associazione Donne e Pari Opportunità**

ADEPO is a non-profit Association for Social Promotion. It aims to provide women empowerment and partnership opportunities, based in Morciano di Leuca (Apulia region, South of Italy). [https://www.adepoaps.it/?fbclid=IwAR0lvcTg-PSjdvkPnCZcghD6PsySDmXIQF0zCcL4eoHyL7p\\_hmqIXQnhg5Q](https://www.adepoaps.it/?fbclid=IwAR0lvcTg-PSjdvkPnCZcghD6PsySDmXIQF0zCcL4eoHyL7p_hmqIXQnhg5Q)



- **Employment Women**

The project is aimed at immigrant women from third countries with a working permit who are in a situation of unemployment and vulnerability. The support includes individual advice on financial aid, referral to immigrant experts for card renewals, emotional



support both online and face to face, workshops on personal development and job searching, digital skills workshops and more. <https://larueca.info/>

- **Social and labour integration programme addressed to immigrant women**

The social and labour integration programme is aimed at third-country national women from a gender and intercultural perspective. The programme usually lasts one year. <https://www.mzc.es/accionesocial/>

- **Socio-Labour Centre for Immigrant Women (COSMI)**

The centre promotes the participation of women in the social life of their neighbourhoods, the social inclusion of immigrant women, the prevention of racist and discriminatory behaviours and awareness-raising in favour of equality and against gender violence, paying special attention to young women. The activity covers the legal, social, psychological, entrepreneurial, and labour areas. <http://www.mujaresenigualdad.com/>

## 6. Summary / Conclusion

While most employers and other Labour Market Stakeholders interviewed on their perspectives in recruiting TCN women have a high opinion of their possible contribution to their company, there are a number of barriers and challenges to overcome. Foremost, the lack of knowledge of the local language, the local labour market, the bureaucratic procedures needed to be eligible to work in any given country and the recognition of previously attained skills and education are challenges TCN women need to overcome. However, especially the lack of knowledge of the local language and the labour market requirements can be countered by offering specialized courses accompanied by child care opportunities and specialized counselling.

A more difficult challenge requiring long term social change are the stereotypes migrant women face when entering not only the job market but the host society in general. Even LMS who took part in the survey as possible participants of the i-welcome project themselves were at times prone to racially informed stereotypes, questioning the integrity, the willingness or ability to work full-time in mixed gender teams or the expertise of TCN women. TCN women themselves often lack confidence in their own capabilities, or have experienced setbacks making it more difficult to stand up for themselves and express their interests.

When aiming to support TCN women's integration into the job market it is therefore helpful to launch projects which do not only teach skills to TCN women but also offer a

cultural and gender sensitivity training for employers, helping them to understand TCN women's situation and to counter their own stereotypical views on migrant women.



## Glossary of terms

TCN women: Third Country National women – female migrants from states outside of Europe

LMS: Labour Market Stakeholders – employers, entrepreneurs, business owners, people working in recruiting / human resources and integration workers

SME: Small and Medium Enterprises – enterprises with less than 250 staff members and a turnover of no more than 50 million Euro or a balance sheet of no more than 43 million Euro ([https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/sme-definition\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/sme-definition_en)).

